

*"The only way of finding the limits of the possible is by going
beyond them into the impossible."*

--Arthur C. Clarke

the SCREE

Mountaineering Club of Alaska

July 2012

Volume 55 Number 7



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Wednesday, July 18, at 6:00 p.m.

**Different time and location!*

Program:

Summer picnic at
Abbott Loop Community Park.
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The Mountaineering Club of Alaska

www.mtnclubak.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, Alaska

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

Cover Photo: Glenn Wilson, James Kesterson, and Paul Muscat on the summit of Gerbil's Tooth.
Photo by Joe Stock.

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Peak of the Month: South Taku Tower

July Program

Date: Wednesday, July 18, 6:00 p.m.

Program: Annual Picnic at Abbott Loop Community Park

The July monthly meeting will not be at the BP Energy Center. The annual MCA summer potluck picnic will be Wednesday, July 18, from 6 to 9 p.m. at Abbott Loop Community Park at 8101 Elmore Road. The park is on the east side of Elmore Road between Lore Road and 84th Avenue. Here's a link to the park page: <http://www.anchorageparkfoundation.org/directory/abbott.htm>.

It's a potluck! Bring something to share based on the first letter of your last name:

A-H: Side dish

I-R: Dessert

S-Z: Salad

Hot dogs, hamburgers, veggie burgers, fixings, and drinks will be provided by the MCA. We reserved the picnic shelter in case of bad weather. No alcohol is allowed at the MCA picnic.

Be green and bring your own utensils, cup, and plate (we have to pack out what we bring in).

Article Submission

Text and photography submissions for the Scree can be sent as attachments to mcascree@gmail.com. Articles should be submitted by the 25th of the month to appear in the Scree. Do not submit material in the body of the email. We prefer articles that are under 1,000 words. If you have a blog, website, video or photo links, send us the link. Cover photo selections are based on portraits of human endeavor in the outdoors. **Please submit captions with photos.**

Hiking and Climbing Schedule

August 6th to August 11th, 2012:

Lake Clark National Park Twin Lakes. Setup base camp at upper Twin Lake and go on day hikes exploring the area. We'll also visit Richard Proenneke's cabin, author of One Man's Wilderness and film "Alone in the Wilderness." To sign up contact Don Hansen at donjoehansen@msn.com or phone 243-7184.

Rock-Climbing Training

We are working on putting together two days of Hatcher Pass rock-climbing training tentatively the weekend of July 21 and 22, pending confirmation of volunteer instructors. The class may be held at Purinton Creek area if the weather is bad at Hatcher Pass. The cost of the class is \$60 and you need to be a current MCA member to participate. Training topics will likely include: climbing-safety basics, climbing techniques and movement on rock, rappelling, basic anchors, sport climbing, traditional and multi-pitch climbing. Climbers of all abilities will learn new skills and enjoy the class. If you are interested in signing up for this, please email Tim Silvers at President@mtnclubak.org.

Don't forget to check the Meetup site and the Facebook page for last minute trips and activities. Or, schedule one that you want to organize.

On-line? – click me



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



Joe Stock on the summit of Eeffoc Java Peak (8000+). Photo by Glenn Wilson.

Talkeetna Summit Serv

by Glenn Wilson

Photos by Joe Stock (except where noted)

"There really isn't anybody out here but us!" It finally sank in by about the third day of our nine days in the central Talkeetna Mountains. We covered a wide area and in six days of climbing we reached 10 summits. We never saw a trace of anybody having been there but us and this helped create a sense of being in true wilderness – a wilderness where most glaciers and peaks are unnamed and the summits are rarely visited.

On May 17, 2012, four of us were flown in by Dave King of Last Frontier Air Ventures in his Astar 350B2 helicopter. We landed at 6850 feet on the Sheep River Glacier, 0.25 mile south of the tip of the southwest ridge of Point 7820 (a sub-peak on the southwest ridge of Guard Peak [8100+]) and 1.25 miles south of Chickaloon Pass. We set up a grand base camp, complete with a spacious group tent and lawn chairs. Our plan was to radiate out and climb something different every day. Joe Stock (Stock Alpine LLC, www.stockalpine.com) assembled the team, organized everything,

guided the whole trip, and brought his French-press coffee maker. The rest of the group consisted of James Kesterson from North Carolina, Paul Muscat from Maine, and me from Oklahoma. We are all previous clients of Joe's from other trips and we share a passion for mountain adventure and having fun outdoors.

The climbing started on Day 2 when we snowshoed 1.25 miles southeast across the glacier. Then with crampons, we kicked steps to the top of dome-shaped Point 7800+, which we had seen from base camp and thought it looked like a good warm-up climb. This we called Daylight Donuts, the first in a series of names from the logos on our favorite plastic insulated coffee mugs. From there we descended and climbed a steeper slope on the next peak to the northeast, Point 7700+, cramponing on firm snow up to what we expected was going to be the top. It then appeared that a 300-foot-long, narrow, exposed, snow-capped ridge separated

us from the summit. This set the tone for a few of the climbs on our trip, with Joe leading, setting pickets, and preparing the route to make a narrow ridge passable so we could get to the summit. When we reached the top of this one, we named it QuikTrip.

For Day 3 we went 1.75 miles north from base camp to a pass connecting the Sheep River Glacier and the unnamed glacier to the north. From there we went 1 mile north-northeast to the flank of Point 8500+, a sub-peak 0.5 mile east along the ridge from Peak T-3 (8780). Space on the summit was limited so we took turns climbing the final 20-foot section as Joe belayed us. Point 8500+ became known as Aladdin. We climbed down and snowshoed back to the pass. On the west side of the pass we climbed a sharp point we had seen from base camp, Point 8100+, which we named Little America. High on the summit ridge there was a steeper challenging section of scrambling on loosely consolidated snow over rock. It had this in common with a few of the peaks we climbed on the trip.



Joe Stock preparing for the summit of Little America (8100+). Photo by Glenn Wilson.



On the summit of Aladdin.

On most days we were out of camp by 5:00 or 6:00 a.m. and on the move for about 10 hours. Day 4 was shorter – we were back in time for lunch at 12:30. Our objective was White Knight Peak (8450), the base of which was a mile east-northeast from camp. This rocky peak has a snow-filled couloir, the West Gully, that goes from the base to very near the top. We snowshoed across the glacier and, then with crampons, kicked steps 1,200 feet up the West Gully, which gradually increased to about 45 degrees. The consistency of the snow was just right for big, solid steps. Joe placed a couple of pickets along the way, particularly up high near the likely bergschrund. Just above that and a little below the top, the trance-inducing rhythm of the climbing stopped and the rest of us looked up to see Joe on his hands and knees, with his head inside a mostly hidden crevasse. He found

a big one and was determined to see where it went. With some back tracking, then, we were able to get around it and make our way to the summit. The down-climb from the top in the solid steps was every bit as hypnotizing as on the way up.

On Day 5 we packed some camping gear, including two smaller tents, and left for an overnight backpacking trip. We were getting so comfortable with the trappings of our cushy base camp that we thought it might be good to get away for a while. That would also put us closer to our most exciting objective of the trip, Peak 8000+, which we had scoped out two days before from the summit of Aladdin. From information that Joe received from Steve Gruhn a few days before we left Anchorage, we understood that there was no record of a previous ascent of Peak 8000+. We headed 1.75 miles north from base camp to the pass we had crossed on Day 3 and then down the glacier 1 mile northwest to where we would camp in a level area at 7350 feet. Weather had been moving in that morning and by the time we got there it looked like it might turn to snow later on. We wasted no time stashing our camping gear and quickly continued on. A group of large crevasses was located just down the glacier, so we traversed to the glacier's north side before proceeding downward. We followed the glacier down to about 6800 feet and then traversed northwest to the base of the east ridge of Peak 8000+. We changed to crampons to ascend the ridge and then along the ridge to a final section of steep rock and snow. We scrambled up a 30-foot section on belay and proceeded along the exposed ridge that Joe had prepared by kicking steps, shoveling snow, placing pickets, and slinging a sturdy rock. We lined up for a hurried photo on the summit of what we called Eeffoc Java Peak. Descending along the ridge we found a crevasse we had missed on the way up, but with a bounding leap we got past it. Back at camp we set up the tents just in time for the snow.

On Day 6 it was still snowing at 3:00 a.m., but within a few hours it cleared enough for us to pack up and leave for the hike back to base camp. Near the pass we chose to take an alternate route up and over a point 0.3 mile west of Little America and descend the next ramp over from the one we had come up. With full packs we ascended Point 8100+ and started down to the saddle on the west side. The descent route had some hard ice, so Joe placed ice screws for a belay.

A circuit of three peaks was planned for Day 7. We hiked 1.75 miles due south across the glacier and then ascended Point 7400+, 0.75 mile southwest of Tyrant's Tor (8150). Next came Point 7200+, 0.5 mile southwest. It is a dramatic point that we called Gerbil's Tooth. It was no more than 200 feet above the surrounding plateau, but it climbed steeply from its base to the top. "Oh! ... Don't put your hand in there," Joe called down from a ledge at the top



Descending back into the West Gully on White Knight Peak.

of a steep section just short of the summit ridge. I followed, scrambling up the steep section, which had more of that poorly consolidated snow on rock. When I got up to where he had been, I understood. There was a round hole in the snow lined with ice, a foot across with a matching hole in the rock underneath it. Something lived there and it was probably in our best interest not to disturb it. Paul, James, and I quickly learned the skill of gently tiptoeing in crampons across a narrow, uneven, snow-covered rock ledge. The summit was narrow, so we bunched up for the summit photo.

After Gerbil's Tooth we continued 0.75 mile south-southwest to snowshoe up Point 7500+ which we named Thermos Point. From the summit, we had good views of Denali, 107 miles to the northwest, and Mount Marcus Baker, 48 miles to the southeast.

It was snowing when we woke up on Day 8 and it had warmed-up considerably. There was concern that the snow slopes were becoming unstable, so we opted to sleep in. Later we called for a weather report and confirmed that the conditions were not likely to improve. We then decided to arrange our pick-up for the next morning. It continued to snow, so most of the day was spent in our cavernous tent. By the next morning the weather had cleared enough for Dave to come and fly us out.

Joe, Paul, James, and I had a blast on this base camp-style climbing trip in the spectacularly wild surroundings of the central Talkeetna Mountains. The jovial atmosphere that we enjoyed in base camp followed us to the summits in the form of teamwork and fun. There was also great excitement in summiting things that are seldom climbed, or possibly even never climbed before.

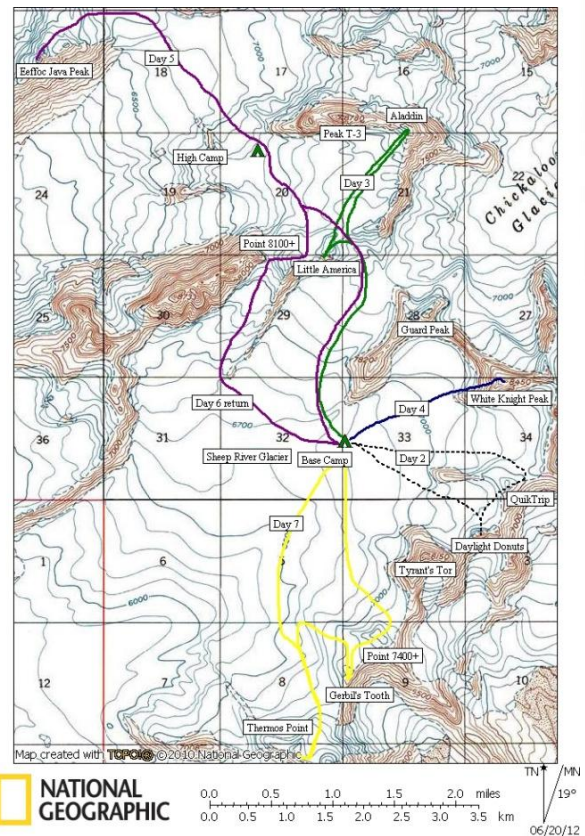
See more photos on Joe's site:
www.stockalpine.com/posts/



Glenn Wilson, James Kesterson, and Paul Muscat at a base camp tent on the Sheep River Glacier.



Glenn Wilson belaying James Kesterson and Paul Muscat to the summit of Eefoc Java.



Paul Muscat, James Kesterson, and Glenn Wilson on the summit of White Knight Peak.



Peak 7800+ south-southwest of the Eefoc Java Peak summit. Photo by Glenn Wilson.



Eagle River's Pete Panarese descending from the 3,550-foot Crow Pass summit.

Photos by Frank Baker.

Snowy Crow Pass Crossing Elicits Thoughts of Early Pioneers

By Frank E. Baker

On the morning of June 2nd this year, the Crow Pass Trail was a world of snow as Pete Panarese and I trudged and slogged our way uphill from the Girdwood side. It was a brilliant sunny day with no wind and temperatures in the 40s.

The hike had been my idea. We immediately began to sink in the snow. "I thought the snow would be more firm than this," I said apologetically. "At least there are some old

footprints we can follow." I should have known. One of the lessons I've learned (but apparently not too well) over the years is that you can never assume conditions will be the same from year to year. In this case, I thought that this early in the year, with evening temperatures as cool as they had been, the snow would be firm to walk upon. It was that way 12 years ago when I ambled over the top of Crow Pass like I was on an Anchorage city sidewalk and taking my time, reached the Eagle River Nature Center in about nine hours.

I know, some racers can do it in less than three hours, but they're a heck of a lot younger!

We continued sinking into the snow, but it could have been worse. The footprints made by someone coming from the opposite direction were generally holding us up. We reached the 3,550-foot summit in about three hours and were surprised to see a new U.S. Forest Service cabin and outhouse. They had been located away from the trail to a position overlooking Crystal Lake, which was now only a smooth expanse of snow.

Flashing back: Hiking through the pass in near-winter conditions made me think about the early pioneers – freight teams, miners, mail carriers – who 100 years ago routinely drove their dog teams through this area in perilous conditions that included extreme cold, wind, and avalanches. The 24-mile Girdwood-to-Eagle-River leg is part of the historic Iditarod Trail to Nome. In elevation, it was the highest point mushers would reach on the 1,150-mile journey.

After leaving Turnagain Arm they made a steep ascent from Girdwood, which was established in 1906 as a place to rest and re-provision before crossing over the Chugach Mountains.

Reaching the summit, they probably breathed a sigh of relief to see the Eagle River Valley far below. I'm not sure what maps were available to these early travelers, but when they emerged from the pass and saw the Eagle River Valley, with the glacier about a mile closer than it is today, they must have known that turning left, or north, was their only option.

Traveling through the then uninhabited Eagle River Valley, they then journeyed around Knik Arm and northward to the trading post of Knik, the largest town on the Upper Cook Inlet until the railroad town of Anchorage was founded in 1915.

We had lunch just over the summit on a bare patch of mossy ground with a grand view of the Raven Glacier, almost completely covered with snow except for some exposed crevasses at its face. Through binoculars I could barely make out a pair of footprints headed up the middle of the deceptively smooth expanse. Concealed beneath that snow were huge crevasses that could swallow a hiker or an object the size of a school bus.

Looking at our route ahead, there were a lot of big snow patches. We knew the snow would be softening as the day wore on. Fully rested, we began the long afternoon descent into the Eagle River Valley. Before the first big stream, Clear Creek, we were treated to a 500-foot glissade.



Looking down the route to the North Fork of the Eagle River.



The new Crow Pass Cabin and outhouse.

With a full view of the bottom and a flat run-out, I didn't try to brake and just let it fly. "Why walk when you can ride!" I yelled.

About a quarter of a mile behind us were three women hikers and as we moved down the trail we could hear them whoop and holler as they followed our butt-sledding grooves.

Back to summer: As we emerged from the pass into the Eagle River Valley, the first thing we noticed was green in the bushes and trees. In a matter of hours we had traveled from summer to winter and back again.

We had planned to take a shortcut and cut into the Eagle River drainage toward Raven Creek, but weren't sure of the trail so continued to the right – upvalley – following the main trail. We made an easy river crossing, however, about ½-mile below the regular location. The bone-numbing water wasn't much above our knees.

From about Turbid Creek (about 18 miles from the Nature Center) to Icicle Creek at Mile 6, there was a lot of deadfall across the trail – some really big stuff – and patches of overgrowth.

"This is a national historic trail and one of the state's premier hiking locations," commented Panarese, a retired State Parks official and member of the Chugach State Park Advisory

Board. "It's a shame it doesn't receive more attention in the form of regular maintenance."

Maintenance is surely needed, I thought, if the Crow Pass Crossing racers in July intend to set good times.

Trail's end: There were no bear sightings, but we did observe five moose, a dozen sheep, and 22 other folks along the route. A growing population of beavers is evident throughout the valley. Without blisters or bruises, but bone weary, we finished the hike at 11:30 p.m., with two cold ones on ice waiting in Pete's car at the Eagle River Nature Center (Mile 12 on Eagle River Road). Fourteen hours – not exactly a record, but considering the trail conditions and the fact neither of us are spring chickens, perhaps not so bad.

On the drive home I thought again about those intrepid pioneers from a century ago. With a good freight dog team, which back in those days generally averaged about 20 dogs (lesser for mail runs), and decent trail conditions, they could have made the journey in one-third our time. But in extreme winter conditions, particularly with avalanches, I'm sure there were probably some who didn't make it all.



The Raven Glacier.



Glacier Lake is visible in the distance.



Pat Rinehart puzzling out the crux of the route, the start of Pitch 3.
Photo by Laron Thomas.

“Instant Classic”

Southernmost West Buttress of Subpeak on Indianhouse Mountain

By Laron Thomas

June 5, 2012

On two separate climbs up South Suicide Peak via Falls Creek, I found myself searching for possible rock routes on the cliffs to the east of Falls Lake. Little did I know that a month later Pat Rinehart, who did a much better job scouting possibilities, would invite me on such an exploration. Before then, the cliffs had remained a figment of my fantasies. “Perhaps some later time I’ll explore those cliffs,” I thought, “when I have more time and am a better rock climber.” Surprisingly the opportunity came much sooner than I ever could have anticipated.

We agreed to meet at Carrs Huffman on Tuesday, June 5 at 7 a.m. to go check it out. A nice, short drive along Turnagain Arm was followed by a brisk hike up the trail into the low lying cloud cover. From town, we noticed a thin veneer of clouds with bluebird above. Perfect! We reached the edge of the cliffs, put on our snowshoes and scampered up to the base of the potential route. The snow was nice and solid until we reached within a couple hundred feet of the rock, where we had to plow over a couple cracks.

I pushed my pole down into the topmost one testing it out. And “Woompf!” My pole went deep down in. I got slightly off balance as my head went way over and down before it bobbed back up again. “Shoot! My hat went down the crack!” I shouted to Pat. Apparently it was hungry for my Minnesota Twinkies hat. I still prodded with my ski pole hoping it wouldn’t be too far down and out of reach. Unfortunately, I haven’t seen it since.

Pitch 1: 100 feet; easy 5th class

Putting on his rock shoes and getting the rack ready, Pat took off up a short face of rock leading into an alcove of Chugach rock covered in a fine layer of lichen. I lost sight of him, but continued paying out the rope wondering what the climbing was like. I was so happy that soon he shouted, “Off belay, Laron!” I put on a pair of dry socks and my rock shoes, the “Red Rockets,” and after confirming that I was on belay with a relay of shouts, I was climbing!!! Up I climbed passing one cam and to a nice short friction section to the roomy belay anchor. Sweet!



Laron Thomas, hysterical from the moss climbing, finishing the 4th pitch, the “moss” pitch. Photo by Pat Rinehart.

Pitch 2: 150 feet; 5.6

Pat had a couple of choices to start the second pitch and elected to go left up a short, but sweet, hand crack and up a nice bit of sustained, fun climbing. It was weathered Chugach rock at its best. After the rope stopped going out regularly, it performed a seemingly interminable dance going up and coming down, going up and coming down. I really didn't mind waiting now that I had gotten feeling back into my feet. My mind drifted as I waited for Pat to communicate. Finally, the “off belay” call and soon after I was working my way up slowly but surely, thinking “Wow! This is excellent climbing, and a bit challenging.” When I reached the ledge system, I was a little dismayed to see an anchor that was less than confidence inspiring. We decided that it would be best for me to traverse right 20 feet or so to a huge chunk of choss, which I looped a long strand of webbing around. I equalized it with two small cams in decent choss placements. We were happy with the three pieces for the next pitch. The piece brought us peace.

Pitch 3: 150 feet; 5.8+

From the belay Pat was immediately met with a steep headwall, which began up a nasty little section of rock about 12 feet tall. We both talked about that nasty layer of rock that streaked across the whole face of the cliff diagonally. After the 12-foot section, the rock looked much better. The problem was just getting up and over the crummy section. He searched around and decided that it would be the way to go, if anything would go successfully. He went up to the rock. He went back from the rock. He went back up and touched it, hit it with his open hand. He climbed a couple feet up and then, after standing there for a couple minutes, climbed back down. Many more trials ensued as well as plenty of cleaning of the most crumbly rock before he could get a satisfactory piece in and commit to the first set of moves up to the good rock.

Stuffing the little finger crack above the crummy stuff with three pieces of pro – one stopper and two cams – leftward he went around the blank looking face to an arête. A long reach led to a dynamic move, a hollered hoot, and out of sight he climbed rather quickly up to the next belay. I stayed between the slung block and the overhanging cliff face trying to stay out of the fall path of little rocks and pebbles soaring passed.

Woohoo! It was my turn. A short bit of some absolutely fun climbing up the choss to the good stuff all led to where I committed to the slightly dynamic move of reaching around the corner onto the arête. Some super fun climbing up the arête followed before I made it to the belay station, which was situated underneath a huge, steep block.

Pitch 4: 100 feet; 5.7

Pat moved up and right on some nice face moves until he left my view once again. A ghostly vision all day long! Then, slowly, very slowly, he worked his way up. The rope seemed to stop for a little while then moved a few feet. Then it repeated that motion. All the while, I listened as Pat made noises, sang, spoke, and puzzled out the route above. I wondered what he was doing as I kept watching mats of moss floating down below me.

When I climbed up, I couldn't help but laugh and grunt myself. Laughter exploded as I hit one tuft of moss after another. The protection was good, but the climbing was heinous at best. I do need to get better at moss climbing! I grunted through the crux as I put my right hand as high and far back into a clump of moss as I could. Then I matched the two hands together. I couldn't help smiling knowing that I was held to the cliff by a small, square piece of moss, 1 foot by 1 foot. I maneuvered my feet under my body and then out left. Finally, I reached out left into another clump of moss and pulled up mantling my right hand on the previous piece of moss, which had gained more of my confidence by now. I was enthralled to make the belay to start Pitch 5.

Pitch 5: 100 feet; 5.7

Situated under a looming overhanging boulder, Pat led out right on an airy traverse cleaning a little loose rock here and there. He was ecstatic to find protection in and pull a short overhanging step, which led into a small chimney. Up he went through the chimney with care as I again belayed by feel. Suddenly, he said that he was on top. I quickly followed savoring every move up to the top of the buttress in the sun, my smile a mile wide when I got to the belay. We did it!

After that we unroped and scrambled up to the ridge top then down the ridge to some snow. We stepped through deep, sun-weakened snow across some gullies until we reached our stashed gear. I actually preferred wearing my rock shoes to my tennies because they didn't get so filled with snow. And off we went down the trail, savoring the sun, snow, and elation of an apparent first ascent. And here in the Chugach, there are still plenty of quality first ascents to be had on surprisingly decent rock. Put a little sweat and blood, and a lot of slow climbing, and clean protectable rock routes can be ascended here, there, and almost everywhere we look.

Pat emphatically points out the quality of the route, "It's perhaps worth mentioning again the quality of the route. I thought the route was surprisingly clean and steep with hundreds of feet of sustained 5.6 climbing. There was also a bunch of highly weathered, featured rock and some really fun jugs on the steep parts."

Summary: 1-1/2 hours up left fork of the Falls Creek Trail, 5 pitches; 600 feet; 5.8+. No fixed anchors and walk-off descent.



**Left: Pat
Rinehart at the
belay station
atop Pitch 2.
Photo by
Laron Thomas.**



**Right:
The route.
Photo by
Laron Thomas.**

The Other Day I Met a Bear

By Ben Radakovich

On Sunday, June 10th, 2012, I left my car at the Bird Creek Trailhead and began hiking up the Bird Creek Trail. I was prepared for a very long day or a possible overnight trip. I told my wife not worry unless she didn't hear from me by noon on June 11th. I had hiked up the Penguin Creek Trail three days previous, and had made it to about the 4,000-foot elevation level of Nest Peak before I turned around due to weather conditions. Today my goal was to climb both Nest Peak, in the Penguin Creek drainage, and its neighbor to the east, Bird Peak. After about 20 minutes of hiking, I crossed the bridge over Penguin Creek and took an immediate right onto the Penguin Creek Trail. As I gradually climbed up the Penguin Creek Valley, I noticed clear views of Nest Peak. My spirits were high, noting that weather would not likely deter me from my goal.

I had bears on my mind. I had traveled this stretch of trail three days earlier and seen ample bear sign. I had also made a mental note that the trail was narrow and hemmed in by brush. "This would be the perfect situation for a surprise encounter with a bear," I remember thinking. As I continued up the trail, I made an effort to alert any bears of my presence, as I always do on trails with poor visibility. Every few seconds I would shout, "Hey, bear. Out of my way, bear," while hitting my trekking poles together. I also remember making a conscious effort to round all curves wide to maximize visibility of what was coming ahead. I even remember looking at trees at various times and thinking, "If a bear charged me here, would I be able to climb that tree?" I am not usually as paranoid about encountering bears as I was on this particular day, but for some reason bears were all I could think

about as I continued up the trail. I was hypersensitive to my surroundings, and any little noise in the brush would make me jump. I remember thinking, "Why am I so paranoid today?" and "I don't like the creek so close to the trail. I hope the bears can hear me coming."

Our eyes met as I was rounding one of those curves. She was standing in the middle of the trail, poised to charge whatever was coming around that curve. I've been asked by several people why I didn't immediately grab my bear spray. I don't know the answer to that question, except to say that many things happened in a very short period of time. Four things happened almost simultaneously. I lifted my trekking poles to make myself look big; I began to shout; I took one step back with my left foot; and the bear charged. It wasn't until she began to charge that I could see that she had been protecting a cub, which was behind her on the trail. At this point instinct took over, and I began to shout and wave my poles at the charging sow. It couldn't have been more than a second until she was almost on top of me. I began to brace for what I thought would be a powerful impact, but at the very last moment she swerved from the trail and came at me from the back. I turned around and continued yelling and waving my poles at her. She circled around me as I continued to face her, all the while yelling like a madman. She lunged at me three different times, but each time I slashed at her with my poles and she jumped back. Finally, I remembered the bear spray. As I let go of the trekking pole in my right hand, and reached for the spray, I knew I was in trouble. The bear was coming at me and I knew I was reacting too slowly. I managed to get the bear spray out of the holster, popped the safety off, and started to raise it before the bear jumped on me from the front. The spray was knocked out of my hand. When I hit the ground I flipped over on my stomach and tried to protect my head. I had a climbing helmet in the back of my pack, and I remember hearing the bear's teeth trying to get a grip on it and slipping off a couple of times. Then the bear violently sunk its teeth into my

lower back. It felt like I was being lifted off the ground as she shook me a few times, before putting me down and sinking her teeth in again. I remember thinking that I should play dead, but I was absolutely terrified that the bear wasn't going to stop. I suddenly had the thought that I might be able to climb one of the trees I had passed just before seeing the bear. I sat up in a desperate attempt to try and make a break for it. This was a mistake. I was hit in the side of the neck very hard by something unseen. I can only assume this was her paw. Almost simultaneously, the bear bit into my neck and took me to the ground.

This is where things get fuzzy. I don't know what happened next. I don't know how much time passed. A few seconds? A minute? I just remember sitting there confused, realizing that the bear was gone. I unstrapped my pack and dialed 911. I told the operator my location and asked for an ambulance. I said that I was hurt, but that I was going to try to hike to the trailhead. As I was talking I remember getting the sickening sense that something was behind me. I turned around and saw the bear coming out of the trees with her head down, slowly walking toward me. I didn't know what she planned on doing, but I wasn't going to wait around to find out. I hung up the phone, shoved it in my pocket, and sprinted for the tree. I could hear the bear huffing and pursuing me as I ran. I made it to the tree and began climbing. I've never experienced anything quite like the state I was in as I was climbing the tree. I remember it being so effortless to rapidly climb up that tree that I didn't even have to think about it. It was as if my arms, hands, and legs were working all by themselves to propel me up the tree. It wasn't until later that I realized the amount of pain I was in.

I felt safe in that tree. The bear stopped several feet from the tree and did not pursue me any further. I remember looking down, right into the bear's eyes for several seconds, before turning away and calling 911 again. Once I was confident that help was on the way and that the

bleeding was under control, I called my wife. It was a great comfort to hear her voice, but I can only imagine the thoughts that were racing through her head after getting a call like that. The bear left and came back three different times while I was in the tree. She would just come walking out of the trees, look at me for a while, and then turn around and leave. I had the morbid thought that maybe she liked the taste of my blood and was waiting to see if I'd come down. I hung onto the tree until help arrived two hours later. I only vaguely remember the faces of the troopers, park rangers, and paramedics who helped get me safely to the helicopter. I only remember that they made every effort to make me comfortable and turned a traumatic experience into a bearable one (no pun intended). Someday I will find out who they are and thank them properly.

My wounds turned out to be relatively minor, in comparison to how serious they could have been. I'll make a full recovery, and eventually venture out into bear country again. My purpose in writing this article is to illustrate that there are no clear rules people can follow that will guarantee safety around bears. I made noise and the bear knew I was coming.

However, instead of leaving the area, she waited watchfully for me to come around that curve in the trail. I had bear spray in a readily accessible location, but everything just happened too fast for it to be effective. The only two things I could have done differently were to have traveled in a larger group of people or to have carried a gun. However, even larger groups can be vulnerable, especially when encountering sows with cubs. Would a gun have scared the sow away? Could I have made an accurate shot, and brought

the animal down in the short amount of time I had to react? Maybe. Maybe not. I'm glad I didn't have the chance to find out, and I'm grateful this magnificent animal will live to raise those cubs. I'm also grateful for the chance to raise my own kids and enjoy my own wife and family for hopefully many more years.

I definitely have a newfound respect for just how fast, agile, and powerful these creatures are, and how utterly defenseless a hiker or climber in the woods is against an angry, surprised bear. I've received a lot of criticism for how unprepared people assume I was. People have even gone so far as to question my IQ. We tell ourselves we are safe in bear country if we follow certain rules. This makes us feel better. However, the reality is that what happened to me can happen to anyone in the blink of an eye, no matter how smart or how prepared you think you are. May you have faster reflexes than I and may luck be on your side if it does. So, does anybody want to join me for a hike up Penguin Creek? I hear Bird Peak has great views.



The East Fork of the Matanuska River from 6,441-foot Gunsight Mountain in the Talkeetna Mountains. Photo by Frank Baker.

The Seventh Sense

By Thomas S. Choate

Have you seen the salmon dancing the jig around the campfire?

Have you heard the fox playing the flute as the winter sun rises?

Have you smelled the aurora singing rainbows as the planets die?

Can you taste the bitter rose as it flies inside the glacier's heart?

Can you feel the snow-flames rising as a lynx becomes a tree?

Try lying in the arms of an old mountain covered in ferns of ice;

Let the deep, slow vibrations seep through your body and soul.

Quiet your heart, still your mind, search for the hidden senses.

Slowly, unknowingly, you will find understanding of the universe.

Perhaps then you will know a thousand flowers can fly at sunset.



Southwest face of South Taku Tower.
Photo Ben Still.

Peak of the Month: South Taku Tower

By Steve Gruhn

Mountain Range: Coast Mountains; Taku Range; Taku Towers
Borough: City and Borough of Juneau
Drainage: Taku Glacier

Latitude/Longitude: 58° 35' 51" North,
134° 22' 14" West

Elevation: 6605 feet

Prominence: 555 feet from North Taku Tower (6653±48)

Adjacent Peaks: North Taku Tower and Emperor Peak (6805)

Distinctness: 555 feet from North Taku Tower

USGS Map: Juneau (C-2)

First Recorded Ascent: Summer 1973
by Daniel A. Reid and others

Route of First Recorded Ascent: East face

Access Point: Taku Glacier

The name Taku Towers was first published in an article by William Lowell Putnam entitled "Across the Icefield to Juneau: Another 'Colossal Enterprise'," which appeared on pages 415 through 421 of the December 1949 *Appalachia*. The name refers to the Taku subdivision of the Tlingit Indians. In the Tlingit language, taku means "where geese gather" or "where geese set down" and refers to a location on Taku Inlet

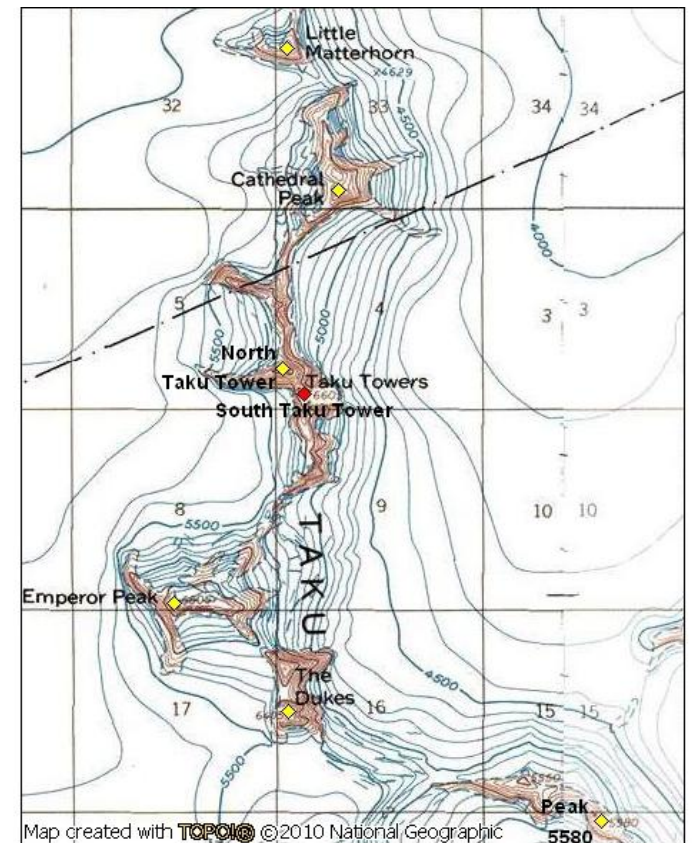
where Canada geese may be found seasonally.

In 1973 Dan Reid and others climbed the east face of South Taku Tower. They placed no bolts and found an F8, A4 standard. Good weather allowed the party to continue across the Juneau Icefield and climb Devils Paw (8584).

In June 2000 Stefan Ricci and Michael Wolf flew to the 5,200-foot elevation of the Taku Glacier southwest of the Taku Towers. They ascended the south ridge of South Taku Tower in seven pitches of mostly 5.7 climbing with one hard 5.9 pitch. The two also climbed

a line on the south face of North Taku Tower.

The information for this article came from Putnam's article, from Andrew Griscom's article entitled "Juneau Icefield Traverse" on pages 6 through 17 of the June 1951 *Harvard Mountaineering*, from page 141 of the 1974 *American Alpine Journal*, from J. Bruce McCubbrey's obituary of Reid on page 291 of the 1992 AAJ, from Wolf's report entitled "Taku Towers, Ascents" on pages 226 and 227 of the 2001 AAJ, and from Ann Chandonnet's article in the March 3, 2002, *Juneau Empire* entitled "Native Place Names: Offering Clues to Juneau's Past."



MCA Board Meeting Minutes, June 6, 2012

Members Present: Tim Silvers (President), Randy Plant (Treasurer), Galen Flint (Vice-President) Directors: Vicky Lytle, Brian Aho, John Recktenwald, Greg Encelewski

1. Library – Vicky reported that the library books have been moved to a free storage site at Best Storage. She will be finalizing an inventory of the items in the library and Tim will have it published on the MCA website. Tim has placed the journals in members' homes where they can be requested. The inventory includes about 800 books, some of which are duplicates. Vicky will lead an effort to create a mountaineering corner that will house our books, as well as other mountaineering resources. It was noted that Jim Sellers has been talking to REI about housing the books. He will hand that effort over to Vicky in the next couple days. The club will also ask for a member volunteer to serve as club librarian.

2. Insurance – Jim will be contacting the insurance carrier to ask for a new quote (the old one has expired) and will send that quote, as well as the expired policy, to the board members.

3. Picnic – Galen is coordinating the purchase of food and supplies for the July picnic, to be held at Abbott Loop Community Park.

4. Meeting presentations – Galen stated that she was having some difficulty getting a presenter for the August meeting and asked if anybody had other ideas for presentations.

5. WAG bags – Galen was concerned that information presented to the members at the last meeting about WAG bags may have been incorrect, and she will therefore put together a webpage with proper protocol for waste management at the huts.

There will be no July meeting due to conflict with the 4th of July holiday. The next board meeting is August 1, 2012.

--Randall Plant, Treasurer

MCA General Meeting Minutes, June 20, 2012

Equipment: Linda and Jason helped with shelves and organizing gear. Volunteers requested to inventory gear, especially the ropes with inspections of them.

Library: REI has agreed to house the MCA library in its training room. There likely won't be enough space for all of the roughly 700 books in our collection. Some books may be kept in storage and others given away to members. There is a list of titles and authors. Please contact Vicky Lytle for the list and offer your opinion on which books should be kept. Volunteers will also be needed to move the books to REI, rotate the books every 6 to 12 months, and keep the books in order. For the journals in the MCA's library, certain members were named who are the keepers of different journal collections and will make them available to members upon request.

Huts: Huts chairman Greg Bragiel said he needs help. He thanked the MCA for recognizing his service and thanked past hut volunteers by name. Hut needs are listed on the website. Greg highlighted some of the huts' current needs. If you are at a hut and see a repair need, please fix it if you are able. He recognized Alpine Air's extraordinary service to the MCA in cleaning up after a waste blue barrel displaced by wind at Rosie's Roost and hauling it inside the aircraft. Barrels should be fixed by the door in the lee of the wind. To clear up any confusion, Greg stated the priority methods of disposing of human waste: 1) Use wag bags and pack out--DO NOT put wag bags in the blue barrels; 2) trash compactor bags--pack out; 3) trash compactor bags with no pee into the blue barrels--no liquid in the blue barrels; 4) bags into a crevasse (controversial and least preferred method of disposal).

Slide Show Presentation: Skiy Detray – attempt of the Norwegian Pillar on the Great Trango Tower in Pakistan's Karakoram Mountains.

Next general meeting: Picnic at Abbott Loop Community Park, Wednesday, July 18, at 6:00 p.m. Bring a side dish based on the first letter of your last name. Be green; please bring your own dishes.

Update on the Library

Thanks for everyone's help and suggestions in finding a new home for the Library. We have had an offer from REI to house our books in their meeting room. We really appreciate their help with this, and are looking forward to making the MCA books available. Give REI your thanks when you go in!

For those of you who don't know, the MCA has a collection of over 700 books, some of them over 100 years old. They cover mountaineering in all its aspects and all over the world. It is really quite an amazing set of books, but it has been in storage for several years. We also have an extensive set of mountaineering and climbing journals. At the moment the journals are housed by different members, and are available for research.

Hopefully, by the end of this summer you will once again have access to this fantastic set of books. BUT, I need some help getting this to happen. First of all we need to weed out the duplicate books, decide what is no longer useful in the library, and organize the books in general. Then, we need to buy bookshelves and physically move the shelves and books to REI. Note, it is likely that all the books will not fit in the space available, so we will try to rotate them once or twice per year depending on demand.

Please consider helping with any or all of the following tasks:

1. Go through the list of books (on a spreadsheet) and mark the books that you don't think should be in the MCA library. e.g., do we really want "Plants of Yellowstone?" What about an old climbing

guide to the 'Gunks? Contact me and I'll send you the list. I'd like to get as many opinions as possible.

2. Help with physically sorting through and removing duplicates, and moving the collection to REI. I expect this will take a couple afternoons to complete.
3. Become the Librarian or an Assistant Librarian. Help keep the library neat and tidy, arrange times for people to check out books, rotate the collection as needed. This can be as little or as much time as you would like to volunteer, although I ask that you commit to helping over the next year until we get all the details worked out. We also need someone to be the liaison with people who are storing the journals.

I need all the help I can get, the more, the

merrier! Contact me at Victoria.lytle@gmail.com with any questions or an offer to help.

Thanks to Volunteers Storing Magazines and Journals

The MCA would like to thank those who volunteered to store the various sets of magazines and journals that were part of the MCA library. These volunteers are also willing to arrange for MCA members to access these periodicals for research. The MCA President or Librarian (volunteers please!) can put you in contact with the following people and the collections they are storing:

- Andy Mamrol (*Summit* 1961-1995)
- Steve Gruhn (*Appalachia* 1936-1980)
- Laron Thomas (*High Mountain Sports* 1996-2002)
- Liz Bennett (*Rock and Ice* 1985-2004)
- Tim Silvers (*Climbing* 1970-1985)
- Dan Koepke (*Climbing* 1986-2002, *Mountain* 1959-1988, *Off Belay* 1972-1976, *American Alpine Journal* 1939-2010, *Accidents in North American Mountaineering* 1961-late 1990s)



North Taku Tower (left) and South Taku Tower (right of center) in Alpenglow.
Photo by Ben Still.

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Treasurer	Randy Plant	243-1438	Board member	John Recktenwald	346-2589
			Board member	Jim Sellers	360-2560

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 Membership Committee at membership@mtnclubak.org.

The 'Scree' is a monthly publication of the Mountaineering Club of Alaska. Articles, notes and letters submitted for publication in the newsletter should be emailed to MCAScree@gmail.com. Articles should be submitted by the 25th of the month to appear in the next month's Scree.

Paid ads may be submitted to the attention of the Vice-President at the club address and should be in electronic format and pre-paid. Ads can be emailed to vicepresident@mtnclubak.org.

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: Vicky Lytle - hcc@mtnclubak.org

Huts: Greg Bragiel - 569-3008

Calendar: Stuart Grenier - 337-5127

Scree Editor: MCAScree@gmail.com Steve Gruhn (344-1219) assisted by Amy Murphy (338-3979)

Web: www.mtnclubak.org (change your address here)

Mailing list service: MCAK@yahoogroups.com

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