

the SCREE

Mountaineering Club of Alaska

April 2013

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Peak of the Month: Mount Dagelet

Monthly meeting:

6:30 p.m., Wednesday, April 17

Program: Blaine Smith will present

"Making, Maintaining, and Managing

Chugach State Park Trails."

**"Chasing angels or fleeing demons,
go to the mountains."**

-Jeffrey Rasley



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 meeting at 6:30 p.m. on April 17 at the BP Energy Center, 1014 Energy Court, Anchorage, Alaska

<http://www.alaskageology.org/graphics/meetingmap.gif>

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Cover Photo

Sam Thompson approaching Siri's Peak, with Imperial Gul-
ly visible, leading slightly to the left of the summit.
Photo by Boris Korzh.

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 each month to appear in the next issue of 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 at least one vertically orientated photo for consideration for the cover. Please submit captions with photos.

Monthly Meeting: Wednesday, April 17, at 6:30 p.m.

Program: Blaine Smith will present, "Making, Maintaining, and Managing Chugach State Park Trails."

Hiking and Climbing Schedule

- ⇒ **April 1-7, Scandinavian Peaks Hut Maintenance Trip.** We are looking for a few more fun people with glacier travel experience. The trip objectives are hut maintenance, glacier travel, ski touring, and climbing. Trip will be six people maximum and a flight into the hut is required (estimated at \$350 per person). There will be a flight deposit. Group meals. Contact either Travis Taylor via email at alaskantrav@hotmail.com or via cell phone at 907-382-4823 or Greg Bragiel via email at unknownhiker@alaska.net if interested.
- ⇒ **July 6-15, MCA Summer Mountaineering/Instructional Trip.** If you are an experienced backpacker and wish to learn basic mountaineering skills, this is the trip for you. Learn: Snow travel, glacier travel, ice climbing, navigation, route finding, rock climbing, leadership, and more while hiking the Bomber Traverse in the Talkeetna Mountains. Tom Choate and Greg Bragiel invite your inquiries at the next MCA meeting April 17, 2013.
- ⇒ **August 5-11, Lake Clark National Park, Twin Lakes.** Set up base camp at Upper Twin Lake and go on day hikes, exploring the area and visiting the former cabin of Richard Proenneke, author of *One Man's Wilderness* and film "Alone in the Wilderness." To sign up, contact Don Hansen at donjoehansen@msn.com.

Online? Click me!



Check the Meetup site and Facebook for last minute trips and activities. Or, schedule one that you want to organize.

Imperial College Alaska Expedition 2012: Fraser and Jefferies Glaciers, Saint Elias Mountains

Text and Photos by Boris Korzh, unless otherwise noted

Between June 5 and July 5, 2013, a multinational team of four students including Sara Arbos Torrent (Catalan), Boris Korzh (United Kingdom [UK]), Sam Thompson (UK), and Arnaud Sors (France), from Imperial College London set off on a ski mountaineering and alpine climbing expedition in the Saint Elias Mountains. The team spent 31 days on the Jefferies and Fraser Glaciers, which are located about 30 miles north of Mount

Saint Elias, next to the Yukon-Alaska border. The peaks in the area rise to between 10,000 and 12,000 feet, and with the glacier base typically being at about 8,000 feet, this makes the area excellent for attempting multiple single-day objectives from mobile camps. Prior research revealed that although the area had been visited on a couple of occasions, many first ascent and new route opportunities still remained. The team managed to

summit 13 peaks, of which 9 are believed to be first ascents and 3 of the ascents were via new routes, with difficulties ranging from Alpine F to D.

Access to the area was organized through Paul Claus at Ultima Thule Outfitters, who made the drop off with a turbine Otter aircraft. Thanks to the fact that two members of the team headed to Anchorage a few days before the drop off, to make the final equipment and food preparations, Arnaud and Boris actually managed to make the full transfer from London, UK, to the Jefferies Glacier in under 36 hours, a testament to the quality and ease of expedition logistics in Alaska.

The time of year was a good compromise between the allegedly worse weather of the previous month and the fact that glaciers start to open and become more difficult to travel on

later in July. Great spring snow conditions were encountered for skiing, and the climbing ranged from hard ice on the north faces to gullies that would often hold excellent neve, especially in the early parts of the day. Rock routes were avoided due to the poor quality of the encountered shale rock, although it was noticed that two of the highest peaks, namely Siri's Peak (12,050 feet) and Flying Peak (11,330 feet), were formed of

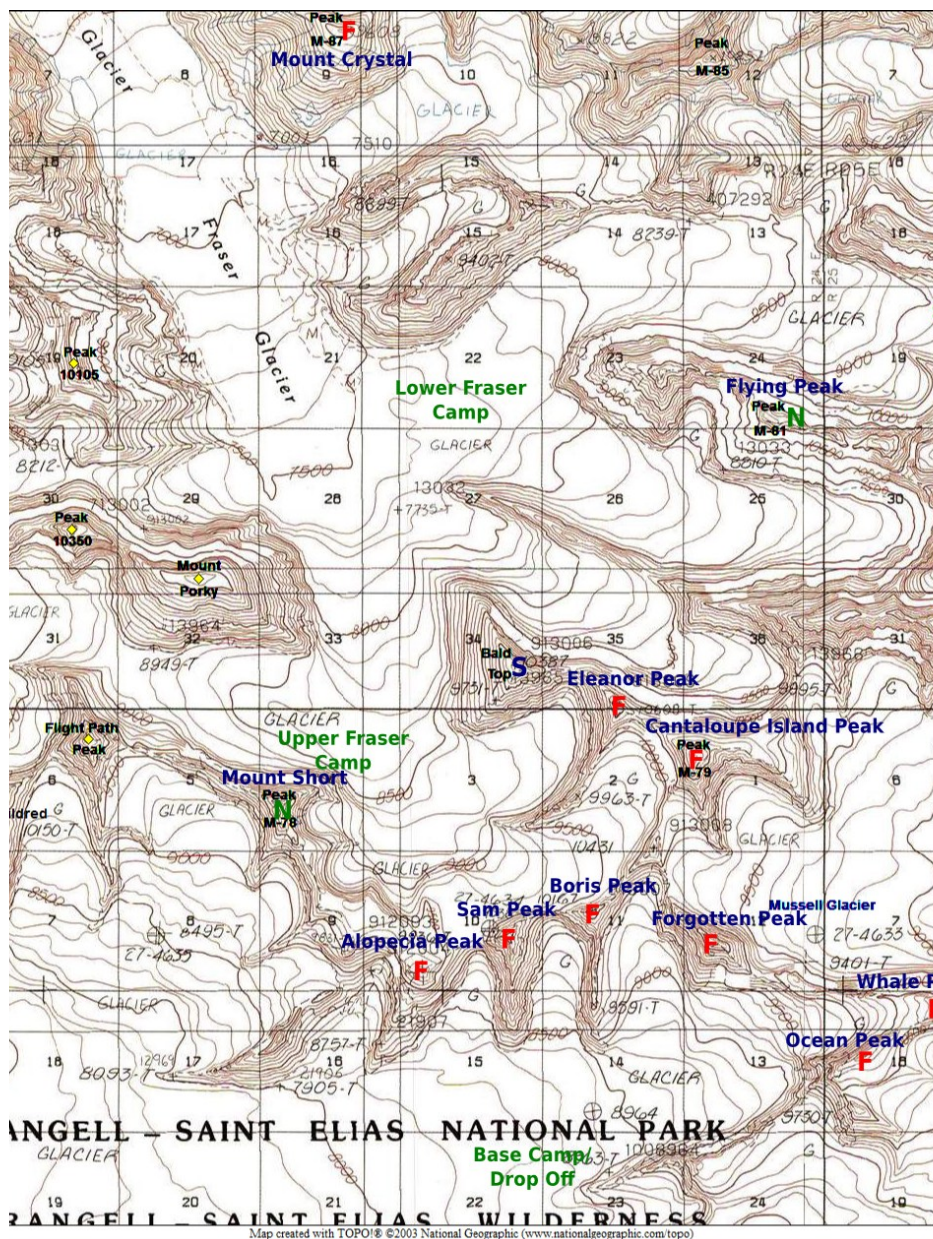
granite. The weather was mixed, sometimes excellent, but long white-outs and several cloudy days in a row were also encountered more than once.

The expedition was split up into several periods. On several occasions, the camp was relocated in order to explore different areas and have access to multi-



View of Ocean Peak from base camp, with Korzh Couloir leading to the summit. Whale Peak is visible at left with the glacier rising directly to the summit.

ple peaks. The first week was spent at the main base camp established directly at the drop-off point near the head of the Jefferies Glacier. From here, ski ascents of Alopecia Peak (9,936 feet on the map, 10,213 feet with GPS) and Whale Peak (10,730 feet with GPS) were undertaken, both including full ski descents. The initial ascents allowed other possible climbs, including vital descents, to be reconnoitered, culminating in the ascent of Ocean Peak (11,050 feet) via two different lines. Boris and Sam took a steep and beautiful 2,000-foot couloir (Korzh Couloir) directly to the summit ridge, followed by a traverse of the summit and a ski down the other side and the glacier below the impressive north face. At the same time, Sara and Arnaud started in the couloir and deviated slightly onto the north face.



Map of Fraser and Jefferies Glaciers, with first ascents marked with a red "F," peaks climbed via a new route marked with a green "N," and other summits with a blue "S." Camp locations are marked in green text.

With a good start to mountaineering near base camp within the first week, it was time to start moving to a new area. We planned to return to base camp one week before the anticipated pick-up date. We packed two weeks' worth of lightweight dehydrated food and equipment onto pulks, reaching the head of the Fraser Glacier within one day. One of the most dominating peaks in the area was Mount Short (10,360 feet on the map, 11,003 feet with GPS) with a steep and icy north face. Boris and Sam climbed this in about seven hours, encountering a large ice bulge halfway up that proved quite difficult to negotiate. The ice became poor toward the top, especially near the cornice. We overcame the cornice with a large sigh of relief. We made the descent via the southeast

ridge, which completed a nice loop back to camp. In the meantime Sara and Arnaud ascended "Midnight Express" on the west face of Bald Top Peak (10,387 feet), followed by what was undoubtedly the ski descent highlight of the expedition, all in the presence of a beautiful sunset.

The group joined up again to carry out a linked traverse of the northwest ridge of Eleanor Peak (10,153 feet with GPS) and east ridge of Bald Top Peak, to take advantage of the excellent snow conditions. Just before moving onto the next area, which would be further down the Fraser Glacier, three more summits were completed, once again climbing in pairs to increase efficiency. Sam Peak (10,050 feet on the map, 10,112 feet with GPS) was a short technical peak climbed by the north face. The descent was via the east ridge to join the base of Boris Peak (10,167 feet on the map, 10,223 feet with GPS). The west ridge of Boris Peak proved tricky in sections due to sizable gendarmes that were difficult to traverse on loose rock. However, the crux of the day was encountered during the descent, when Boris suddenly vanished whilst crossing the bergschrund. Luckily the situation proved more amusing than grave, after some horizontal digging and swimming. In the meantime Sara and Arnaud climbed the south face of Cantaloupe Island Peak (11,350 feet), which presented few difficulties apart from the cornice and a steep and icy descent of the northwest ridge.

Attention turned to the highest summit in the area, Siri's Peak, which is one of the few that had previously been climbed. However, there are still a number of excellent unclimbed lines on the mountain. One of the unclimbed lines was also the most obvious, seen directly from the glacial approach and taking a 2,000-foot couloir directly from the glacier all the way to the summit. We named it "Imperial Gully." Boris and Sam bivied near the bottom of the gully and, starting at 6 a.m. the following day, made very quick progress on solid neve and ice, summing in two and a half hours. It was extremely cold at the top, so even though the views were magnificent we did not hang around for long and hastily made a descent down the north side of the mountain that followed



Boris Korzh on the summit of Forgotten Peak early in the morning. Photo by Arnaud Sors.

the original ascent route, making it back to the bivy site for lunch.

Unfortunately the day was not to end smoothly, as a radio call from Arnaud indicated that Sara had tripped on the descent from Flying Peak and had several deep cuts on her knee and thigh. Their route, “Inception,” took some traditional snow and ice gullies on the south side, followed by a 60-meter ice pitch and more featured terrain with frequent deep snow. Down-climbing the northwest ridge turned out to be substantially more serious and technical than expected, involving digging through several cornices and down-climbing steep ice sections, which slowed progress significantly. At this point the slopes were very unstable, which culminated in Sara's loss of footing, probably due to balling up of crampons. It was possible to reach the camp safely, whereupon examining and treating the wound, it was decided in common agreement that it would be better for Sara to be evacuated in order to get proper medical care.

After making contact via satellite phone, Paul Claus arrived early the next morning in his Turbine Otter and evacuated Sara to the Kennecott Ranger Station. From there Wrangell Mountain Air flew her to Anchorage's Providence Hospital where the cuts were treated. The rest of the team remained on the glacier for the remainder of the expedition.

Before setting off back to the main base camp, a ski ascent of Mount Crystal (9,608 feet) was achieved via the east face, the approach to which revealed a beautiful glacial lake, making for a nice change of scenery. In the last week only one ascent was carried out due to poor weather conditions. However, the team managed to keep busy with activities ranging from crevasse ice climbing to kite-powered aerial video. Forgotten Peak (10,750 feet on the map, 10,985 feet with GPS) proved to be quite an experience. When the weather and visibility finally improved around sunset, after several days of bad weather, we were not going to lose the opportunity and started the approach immediately. Climbing in the early hours of the morning in the Alaskan twilight was a surreal and magical experience and is one, along with all of the other unique experiences during the expedition, which will not be forgotten in a hurry.

The team also wishes to thank all of the financial and equipment sponsors: Imperial College London, Gino Watkins Memorial Fund, the Old Centralians Trust, Mount Everest Foundation, the Alpine Club, Andrew Croft Memorial Fund, Eagle Ski Club, British Mountaineering Council, Photonics Academy of Wales, Augustine Courtauld Trust, Black Diamond, Zag Skis, Plum Bindings, Mountain House, and Lyon Outdoor.

To contact Boris, email bkorzh@gmail.com.

From Sea to Summit and Back Again

An Adventurous Tale of Sea Kayaking and Ski Mountaineering in Alaska's Kenai Fjords

Text and Photos by Killian Sump, unless otherwise noted



Looking southward down Aialik Bay. The asterisk marks the summit of Poseidon.

It was early June. I was returning to Aialik Bay for the third summer in a row, standing on the bow deck of the *Weather or Knot*, a water taxi out based out of Seward, Alaska. The boat fled Resurrection Bay, passed the wide Bear Glacier, and worked its way around the cape alongside granite cliffs and hundreds of seabirds, bouncing with the rolling sea as the captain, Brent Pikolas, made his way into the next fjord. As we rounded the bend and headed into Aialik Bay, an impressive bay system composed of towering peaks, islands, rainforest, and tidewater glaciers, something stood out to me that was quite different than the years previous: there was So. Much. Snow. The banks of the sea were stacked with 3 to 4 feet of corn snow, and the mountains were filled in, white against the blue sky, with *clear* lines up peaks that I had previously never imagined climbing due to the loose composition of the slate rock. To say the least, I was ecstatic. I was here as a sea kayaking guide, and I was starting work for the lodge tomorrow, but all that was on my mind was when I'd have the weather and time off to get out into the mountains. Kenai Fjords is a wet place, characterized by shrouds of mist and constant light rainfall, averaging about 50 inches of rain in the summer months alone; I was praying for high pressure.

It was June 21st. Geoff Jans and I had our kayaks ready on the cobblestone beach, loaded with climbing and skiing gear, as we said our goodbyes to friends and family who had been celebrating the summer solstice around the campfire in the tidal flats. Our minds were elsewhere. It was 1:30 a.m., and we had just awakened from an evening nap in preparation for what was to come, opting out of the group festivities and taking rest in our cabins, with feelings of excitement and nervous-

ness for what we had planned. The weather was perfect – not a cloud in the sky, not even a breeze went by as we stared out at the peak. We pushed off the shore, and started paddling up the fjord, gliding through smooth and glassy water in the early morning light, intent on our mission.

"We've been looking up at this mountain for years," I said, "Can you believe today's the day?" "I know, this is perfect", Geoff responded knowingly. We kept paddling toward the peak, heading for the base, a small bouldery beach about five miles off in the distance. This is the largest peak on the Aialik Peninsula, a majestic 3,768-foot mountain that towers over the rest with a noble stature. A massive buttress builds up to a large glacial bowl, with one steep and long couloir that rises up to the upper face of the peak, which sits just below the corniced summit fin. She's an elegant peak, one that we were hoping to climb and ski in its entirety; a long day trip. An hour and a half later, we landed our kayaks and on the beach and started unloading gear. A calm morning paddle is the perfect meditative way to prepare for a day in the mountains. The Aialik Glacier rumbled behind us, adding to the ominous atmosphere as we prepared ourselves for the climb. It was humbling. I felt intense, but good about everything so far. We set our boats a little way into the brush and started skinning through the leaf-less alders and devil's club, getting above timberline fairly quickly.

As we toured into the alpine and toward the main saddle, Geoff yelled, "There are iceworms everywhere; this is insane!" Sure enough, we found ourselves faced with a peculiar phenomenon: thousands of iceworms, crawling about on the snow in the flats before the saddle climb; everywhere we



Clear and calm morning approach, looking southward.

looked, the tiny black worms were squirming around. We cruised along worm-infested snow for a few hundred meters, but they dissipated as the slope steepened. We worked our way to the top of the first saddle, where some wildflowers greeted us as we rested for a few minutes and took in the view of the bay. Mount Addison, the massive peak above the Pedersen Lagoon that acts as a border for the Harding Icefield, and the wide face of the Aialik Glacier were painted pink-orange with the morning glow, reflecting completely on the still surface of the fjord. The air was calm, and it was quiet up there. Geoff and I exchanged looks of awe, turning to observe what lay ahead for us. We were going to climb the north ridge from the saddle, a steep rocky ridge laden with wildflowers and grasses, before descending into the backside bowl at the base of the main couloir.

We stared up into the steep, long couloir and began attaching our crampons to our boots. I pulled my ice axe and helmet off my pack, grinning with the thought of skiing the line. We started booting up the couloir, step by step, with Geoff leading. After moving for five minutes, it didn't seem like we were going anywhere – that's when the vastness of this mountain really set in for me. As it got steeper, we quickly rose in elevation, sending the mountainous elevator of snow. There were entrenched runnels in the middle of the double-fall-line ramp, evidence of many days of melt and small wet slides. Rocks littered the snow alongside the cliff walls – a summertime, weathered-out pack of rotten corn snow. But it worked. We were aiming to climb the whole peak while still in the shade of

morning. After an hour, we were two-thirds of the way up, peering out from the route toward the open ocean to the south. Low-lying fog was beginning to sweep in from the Gulf of Alaska, covering the water, shores, and forests of much of the fjord with a thick white blanket. We moved in a rhythm, the sounds of our boots kicking steps and the sliding and punching of our ice axes creating a sort of alpine music in the surrounding empty air space. The great thing

about ski mountaineering is the whole way up, you're inspecting the ski route and imagining what it's going to be like to be on it for the descent, constantly scouting for the best places to arc your turns and make the most of the terrain – a long contemplation before the moments of bliss – gravity-fed soul food, flying down mountains.

We finally reached the top of the couloir to find ourselves on a knife-edge snow ridge, with another snow-filled chute of equal proportions on the opposite aspect, dropping all the way down to the Lechner Glacier valley to the north. Resting on our implanted axes we munched on some food and drank some water, remarking about the couloir and how close the summit appeared to be. We'd be walking a knife-edge ridge, climbing a steep face, and then climbing a final steep snow ridge to the base of the summit cornice. I led down the knife edge, stepping gingerly, but firmly – a catwalk between two 2,000-foot couloirs. After ascending the upper face, we climbed the final and steepest part of the route, a 60-degree ridge, which was manageable with an ice axe and a pole with the basket removed. "How's the cornice look?" Geoff yelled from below, as I was halfway up the ridge. "Looks like we'll be able to just pull right over it," I replied, not realizing the actual distance I still was from it. When I reached the top of the ridge at the cornice, I found it to be about 10 feet tall, with a small notch at the base. We worked our way along the base of the cornice to the north, eventually wrapping around to the north end of the peak and finding a spot where the cornice was minimal. I plunged my tools and boots into the snow a

few more times before pulling over and onto the summit fin, into the bright morning sunshine. The snow on the summit sparkled in the sun, perfectly arcing up to the high point. There was no breeze at all – just stillness and I looked around at my surroundings. Bear Lagoon was directly below us to the east, a massive pool of blue glacial and tidal water, punctuated with enormous icebergs that looked tiny from where we were. I looked down to the south, at all the peaks of the peninsula getting lower and lower until dropping off into the



Skinning high above Bear Glacier Lake.

endless ocean, now a sea of low clouds, engulfing portions of the Chiswell Islands and the islands south of Resurrection Bay. Looking to the west one looks down at the Harding Icefield, a 750-square-mile expanse of ice, with rocky peaks emerging from the surface, finally exposed to the air after thousands of

years of being sculpted by the ice. We sat up on the summit for about an hour, reveling in our joy and taking in the purity of the moment on a peak we weren't sure anyone had ever even set foot on before. We called it Poseidon, the god of the sea.



The mountains of the Aialik Peninsula extend southward for about 25 miles before dropping off into the Gulf of Alaska. Photo by Geoff Jans.

It was time to ski 20 minutes after my brother Riley had given us the radio call from the Pedersen Bight letting us know that the sun was hitting the line. I was a little nervous as I clipped into my skis, running the line through my head, trying to keep my focus instead of thinking about the consequences. We were both amped. It was a go. A few shuffles and a shift of the weight and we were off, traversing underneath the cornice, holding our edges as we made our way over to the steep snow ridge that led to our sunny and epic line – the steep upper face, down to the huge couloir, all the way down to the lower south bowl. Geoff and I exchanged a few words, deciding to send the entire line in one run, individually. With an optimistic, “See ya at the bottom!” Geoff hopped right into his first turn, making some controlled jump turns in the shade, sliding over into the sun as the ridge mellowed out. With one look down the face, he took a huge ski cut, sending reflective bits of icy corn snow scattering down the fall line: a good sign, not too warm yet. After finding that the line was bomber, Geoff started arcing fast and graceful turns down the mountain, traversing over right to the top of the couloir and proceeding to send the chute with elegance and control.

What a relief to see Geoff all the way down at the bottom, pole raised, safe and sound. But this meant it was my turn. Before I could second-guess myself, I shifted my weight and started side slipping down the steep summit ridge, flying confidently onto the upper face, shredding huge turns as gravity pulled me downward, feeling the crispness of the snow on my edges, constantly watching the ocean in the distance through my peripheral vision. I pumped a big turn into the side of a curved wind lip, and proceeded to traverse into the couloir, laying steep turn after steep turn down the fall line as corn snow sprayed off the surface into the sky, eventually funneling down into the runnels. I skied beside the runnels as the slope evened out, watching my slough ride down the mountain along with me, finding a good spot to cross his face as through

the toe of it, cruising right down to reconvene with Geoff, and dodging melted out rock-holes for the last few hundred feet. He had a massive grin on we high-fived and wrapped into a hug, stoked on the success of the mission. After numerous spouts of happiness and whoops to no one, we proceeded to climb a small nearby gully that topped out above the massive bowl of the west facing aspect. In the saddle, we took some time to be on the mountain one last time before ripping down a narrow and curving couloir into the bowl, skiing the face of the bowl and picking our way through the facet-ridden alders to find our kayaks still resting beside the shoreline, about a 4,000-vertical-foot descent. I stepped onto the sunny cobblestones of the beach with waves lapping up on the shore, flying

high after such a monumental experience. We went for a dunk in one of the nearby freshwater lagoons, laying out on the warm cobbles and soaking in the mid-afternoon rays, perfect.

After about an hour and a half, we found the motivation to load our gear back into our boats and get back on the ocean. Ten minutes later we were paddling back across the fjord, with a slight sea breeze from the south creating a little swell, our kayaks rocking about on the

fluid surface. Paddling is such a phenomenal way to finish a good long day in the mountains, returning to the sea to reflect on the day, getting back into the original meditative groove that is so characteristic of paddling on the ocean. Five miles later, we arrived back on the beach we had left 14 hours ago, a solid day’s mission. It felt great to be back, having been full circle at this point, returning to my home on the Pedersen Lagoon, the most peaceful place I have ever known on this planet. Content with our journey, we finally put our skis away for the season. This was the third of three first ascents and descents I was blessed to put up during the month of June in Aialik Bay. It will be a month to remember for the rest of my life, forever an inspiration to keep exploring the untouched alpine wilderness that is southcentral Alaska.

* Check out the line at <https://vimeo.com/62588430> *



A bold line on an elegant peak - 3,768 feet above the sea. Killian Sump in the foreground. Photo by Acacia Johnson.

El Tercero, a Kenai Mountain Ski Adventure

Text and Photos by Ben Still

Danielle Pratt and I started skiing from the Manitoba Mountain parking lot around 8:45 a.m. on March 17, 2013, a beautiful clear day, with the intention of skiing up El Tercero via Mills Creek. El Tercero sits far up Mills Creek, and at 5450 feet high is the highest point in the group of mountains bounded by the Johnson Trail and the Seward Highway making it a prominent

claim. A small camouflage wall tent, sluice box, and an old bulldozer sat half buried in the snow. Lucky for us somebody had skied Spirit Walker (5050) the previous day, so a skin track continued on weaving around alder patches and back onto the partially overgrown road on the west side of Mills Creek. A few alders had to be beaten, but nothing bad at all. After a



Danielle negotiating the final bit of the summit ridge of El Tercero.

peak with 4,000 feet of prominence. We followed the skin track down through the woods to the bridge and the new cabin, which looked very warm and inviting on this cold morning, and on up a few switchbacks to the normal cutoff to Manitoba Mountain. We continued along the old mining road, staying high above Juneau Creek to avoid the lower canyons of Mills Creek and Juneau Creek. Eventually the road works its way down to Juneau Creek and crosses and continues up a hill and then on down to Mills Creek where there is an active mining

short while the skin track turned, crossed Mills Creek and went up the steep west face of Spirit Walker with several nice ski tracks wiggling down the mountain. We continued upvalley weaving around alders and moving up and down the slopes until the valley substantially flattened out a half mile past Timberline Creek and the alders pretty much disappeared. Several miles upvalley we could see the sun hitting the valley floor. We looked forward to the warmth of the sun.

Breaking trail was not difficult and was only through 4 to 5 inches of snow on a firm base. We moved quickly upvalley, breaking out into the sun, passing Stormy Creek, and then, at about 2500 feet in the valley, we were at our turnoff. It was noon, so we took a short break and ate some frozen goodies while talking about how our feet didn't seem to enjoy skiing across long flat valleys, but preferred steep uphill slopes. For some reason we had been sticking to the flats lately and had just skied 30 miles in and out of Mount Sanford via Boulder Creek. We were unsuccessful on that trip due to high winds and thin snow bridges, so we really wanted to get up El Tercero.

We switchbacked up the lower slopes into a hanging basin and up another steep slope to what appeared to be an old terminal moraine of a glacier at 3800 feet. We made one long arcing switchback across the south face of El Tercero and gained the west ridge around 4900 feet. Skinning along the ridge was breezy and cold. Small plumes of snow blew around my feet and off the south face. We had to boot a small section and suddenly we were standing on the summit. We could see south down to Caines Head and north to Denali with the spread of the Kenai and Chugach Mountains before us. We took a few mandatory summit photos and dropped a few feet down the south side and out of the wind. The warmth of the spring sun could be felt on our faces. We made the summit at 3 p.m. and hung out in the sun for 30 minutes before we began the fun ski descent.



Danielle making turns below the moraine.



Summit shot.

The upper 1,000 feet of skiing off the summit was a mixture of wind-board and wind-buffed powder. The skiing below the moraine was excellent with 6 inches of powder to speed down the mountain. We were back at the valley floor before 4 p.m. and continued double-poling and scooting along the very slight decline nearly all the way to Timberline Creek. There we had to put our skins back on and began the undulating weave through alders and across the creek. We made it back to the car by 7:15 p.m. for a 10.5-hour day, which is not bad for 23 miles round trip and 5000 feet of vertical.

What a Difference Some Snow Makes

Text and Photos by Amy Murphy, unless otherwise noted

After last year's record snowfall with fantastic ski conditions, I think most of us were hoping for a repeat this year, with lots of snow dumps leaving behind light, fluffy powder delightful for skiing. Unfortunately the 2012-13 ski season was pretty much a dud here in Anchorage and the nearby Chugach Mountains, at least until a couple months ago.

In mid-December we were desperate to go skiing so we headed up to Turnagain Pass, hoping to find better ski conditions than the Chugach offered (i.e. more snow than rocks and roots). Dwight Iverson, Vicky Lytle, John McCormick, Wayne Todd, Carrie Wang, Qianyu Sun, John Recktenwald, Charlie Sink, Tom Dolan, and I drove up to Turnagain Pass with the plan to ski up to Center Ridge. We were happy to see some snow, even though there wasn't much, maybe a foot. We strapped on our skis and headed up the trail, immediately noticing that there was much more bushwhacking involved than usual.

Due to lack of enough snow to cover the thick bushes, we had to deviate from the normal approach trail and ended up skiing through the trees, up and over a ridge. When we got to the base of the slope we normally ski up (with the weather station at the top), we were chagrined to discover thick alder bushes covering the whole area, extending most of the way up the slope. Normally these alders are covered by snow and we ski right over them, but not this trip.

We decided to "Lewis and Clark" it and blazed a new trail, traversing over to a steeper slope farther up the drainage, bush-

whacking through a horrible group of pesky alders. Eventually we found an area free of bushes and started climbing upward, making sure our avalanche beacons were on, as the slope was steep and the avalanche potential was high in this whole area. The loose, sugary snow was hard to break trail through, as it didn't want to pack down or stay in place.

It wasn't very far until we ran into more thick alders, which I think were cackling at the twisting gyrations required to force our way through. In a few places some of us ended up taking our skis off and crawling through the steep, uphill, convoluted mess of branches. I was sorely disappointed I didn't have my trusty loppers or folding saw with me.

We finally made it to an open area near the top of the ridge and took a much-appreciated snack break. It was quite an ordeal just to get this far and it felt good to know that we wouldn't have to bushwhack for a while.

We headed up to the promontory that overlooks a steep downhill slope and took another break, pondering our options. Usually this slope is fun to ski down, but things

were different today due to the lack of snow. Naughty alder bushes covered the slope, taunting us, waving their branches, encouraging us to come on down, anticipating the opportunity to trip us up. I'm sure they were bored by the lack of skiers so far this season and were looking for victims to humiliate and snicker at.

Hmmm..... bushwhacking through irksome alders or heading back to the cars???



Amy Murphy in the upper part of the Tincan Creek drainage. Photo by John McCormick.

We all agreed to turn around, enjoying skiing through the deep snow at the top of the ridge as long as it lasted. When we got to the weather station we had to start bushwhacking through the annoying alders again, but at least it was downhill. We didn't ski many miles this day, but we had a heck of a workout and shared fun camaraderie. And, as the saying goes, the worst day of skiing beats the best day of work!

On March 16, 2013, Rick Hagen, John McCormick, and I drove up to Center Ridge, thrilled to discover deep snow covering this area, especially the pesky alders. We wouldn't have to engage in any brutal bushwhacking! As we skied up the slope past the weather station on up to the top of the ridge, it felt like a piece of cake compared to the December ski trip. The sun was shining, the wind was calm, the skies were blue, and the temperature started out in the high teens and warmed up throughout the afternoon. Spring ski conditions were perfect, with several inches of powder on top of a packed base. Yeehaw! Plus, there were several groups in front of us breaking trail. Double yeehaw!

At the far end of the ridge we dropped down to the Tincan Creek drainage and skied up that valley to do some exploring, as none of us had been there before. Once again we marveled at the stunning scenery this area provides, thankful to have

countless places like this to escape to for a physical challenge and mental relaxation. None of us were in a hurry to return to the hustle and bustle of Anchorage's city life so, to honor one of John Recktenwald's traditions, we stopped to "smell the roses" (nap) and soak up some warm sunshine.

After our nap we double-poled all the way down the valley, staying on the north side of Tincan Creek. We weren't exactly sure how to get back to the trailhead, but we knew if we headed for the powerline, that would get us back to the cars. We skied downhill through the fresh powder, enjoying the challenge of trying to maintain control during the fast descent while avoiding numerous trees. I found this exit route to be more fun than skiing out down Lyon Creek, but I'm sure that depends on snow conditions.

On our way home we compared this ski trip to the previous one in December and mentioned what a big difference snow depth can make. However, one truly important thing never changes. That is the pleasure of sharing quality time in the mountains with good friends, no matter what the conditions are like!

And it is trips like the December one that remind me why I enjoy trail clearing so much.



Rick Hagen and John McCormick soaking up the sunrays in the Tincan Creek drainage.

Skiing Man Symbol on Trail Markers

Text by Amy Murphy

Every time we do the Arctic-to-Indian ski traverse, we try to locate the trail markers with the “skiing man” symbol on them, just for fun. The first time I did this traverse, a group of us posed by the sign to have our photo taken, for posterity. And it works – now we’ll be famous after having our photo published in “The Scree!”

On two different fun trips this past March, John McCormick kindly struck the skiing man pose so I could take his photo. I hope this tradition continues. Therefore, I encourage other folks doing the Arctic-to-Indian traverse to look for the skiing man sign and pose for a photo. Or, be spontaneous like John, and strike the pose at the end of successful ski trips. Let’s have fun and post your photos on the MCA Facebook page!



Original “skiing man” group photo: Jeff Suave, Annette Iverson, Amy Murphy, and Tom Dolan. Photo by John McCormick.

Face to Face with the Knik Glacier

Text and Photo by Frank Baker

Conditions were ideal on March 6th this year as I skied along the frozen Knik River in a set ski track that had apparently been put in earlier that morning. The sky was deep blue, the sun felt warm on my face, and there was no wind coming out of the east at the terminus of Knik Glacier.

I started skiing about 11 a.m. from Hunter Creek near the end of Knik River Road. My goal for the day was to see how close I could get to the glacier's face, and it was sheer luxury having a set track.

Early into the trip I met two fat-tire bikers -- a man and a woman -- who were walking their bikes, sometimes on and sometimes off the set trail. Apparently their tires were sinking in too deeply for them to ride.

They told me that the ski track had been made by friends of theirs who were going in about 10 miles toward The Gorge that leads to Inner Lake George. The pair said they planned to catch up

with their friends and camp. They asked me if there was a hardened snowmachine trail nearby.

"If there is," I replied, "it's probably in the middle of the valley. The main four-wheeler and snowmachine thoroughfare always seems to stay out there."

I wished them luck and skied on, moving swiftly in the track that hugged the right, or south, side of the valley. All of the Knik River's channels were frozen solid and covered by a 4-inch layer of snow, a welcome relief after previous trips that included difficult maneuvering around open water.

Now about 4 miles into the ski, the Knik Glacier's vertical face slowly grew larger and larger, as it crouched in front of Mount

Goode and ramped up toward the Chugach Mountains' giant -- Mount Marcus Baker -- out of sight and lying to the northeast.

The set track allowed a fast pace and about four hours into the ski, I was about a mile from the glacier's face. The sun disappeared behind the mountains to the south and I decided to save the "up close and personal" visit to the glacier for another day, perhaps along with a campout and an extended trip around the bend to Inner Lake George.

The return trip to Hunter Creek wasn't nearly as easy. The fat-tire bikers had gone in about 5 miles and camped. In those 5

miles they completely destroyed the ski track. Their bike's wide grooves and ruts were now frozen. My skis didn't know where to go, acting as if they had a mind of their own. It was almost easier to cut a new trail.

I've seen more and more of the fat-tire bikers in recent years, but I had no idea what damage they could inflict on a ski trail. A friend had the same thing happen to him in

the Middle Fork area above Glen Alps.

I arrived back at Hunter Creek about 6:30 p.m., promising myself I'd return -- which I did a week later with friend Pete Panarese. The trail was still demolished for the first 5 miles, and now more icy and difficult to negotiate than ever. We only went in about 8 miles, and those last miles in the set ski track, still there, were glorious -- thanks to those earlier skiers.

But for the rest of the trail, with its deep ruts and grooves, "no thanks" to the fat-tire bikers. I really believe in tolerance and co-existence regarding other outdoor adventurers, but I don't think bike trails and ski trails mix, and vice-versa.

But I'll still go back someday to meet the Knik Glacier face to face.



The Knik Glacier with Grasshopper Valley at left.

Ballad of a Mountain Climber

*There once was a guy who would try and try, but each path would lead him to strife.
Then he saw a mountain that looked like a fountain of youth and renewal in life.
So he climbed up high and on toward the sky, over some hills and a cliff.
He endured the pain and the muscle strain, and his back got sore and stiff.
After some hours he lay among flowers and wondered if his body would make it.
But soon he arose and got on his toes, convinced that his legs could still take it.
The going was slow when he entered the snow and he often punched through to his knees.
His socks were now wet and he began to fret that his toes were starting to freeze.
He kicked and stamped and onward he tramped, no longer daring to stop.
The snow was deep, the going was steep; at long last he reached the top.
He stood on a ledge and looked over the edge and marveled at the world down below.
The reward was so great it's impossible to state the feeling all climbers will know.
So if you don't shirk from all the hard work, it gets better and better, it seems.
We each need to try and reach for the sky, and achieve the peak of our dreams.*

Tom Choate January 2013

Peak of the Month: Mount Dagelet

Text by Steve Gruhn

Mountain Range: Saint Elias Mountains; Fairweather Range

Borough: Unorganized Borough

Drainage: Dagelet Glacier

Latitude/Longitude: 58° 35' 46" North, 137° 10' 29" West

Elevation: 9850 (+50) feet

Prominence: 1500 feet from Mount Crillon (12726)

Adjacent Peak: Plateau Peak (9440)

Distinctness: 1500 feet from Plateau Peak

USGS Map: Mount Fairweather (C-4)

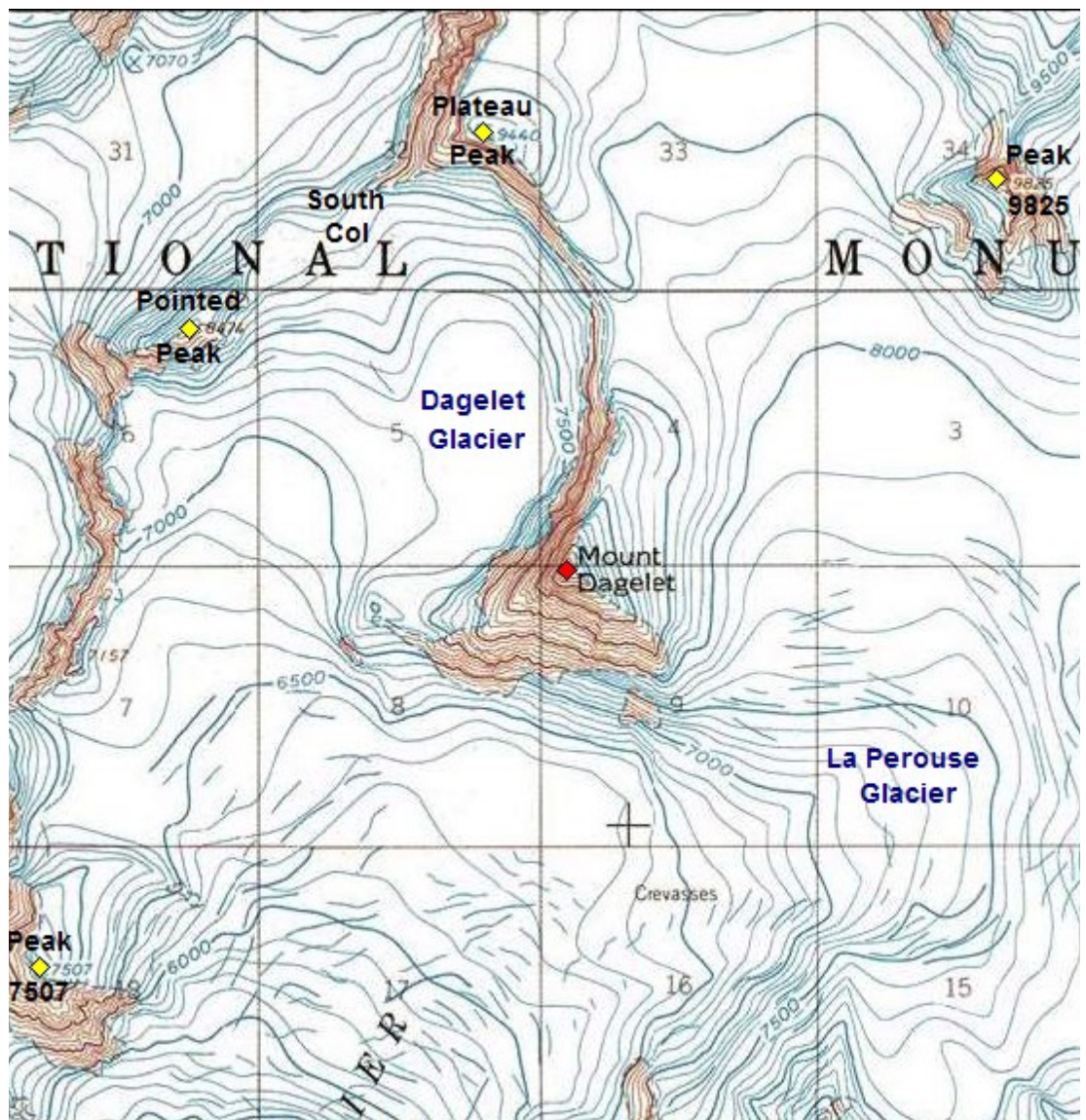
First Recorded Ascent: July 29, 1933, by Hubert Adams Carter, Jr., William Spencer Child, and Charles Snead Houston

Route of First Recorded Ascent: East face

Access Point: Crillon Lake

In August 1785 Jean-Francois de Galaup, Comte de Lapero-
use, a commodore in the French Navy, set sail from France on an around-the-world scientific expedition. He had two ships under his command - the *Astrolabe*, captained by Fleuriot de Langle, and the *Boussole*. Among the 114-man crew of the *Boussole* were 10 scientists who were employed to provide accurate documentations of the explorative journey. The expedition was a popular one and not all of the men who applied were selected to make the voyage. One of the officers and mathematicians who was turned down was a young Napoleon Bonaparte. Instead, Joseph Lepaute Dagelet (1751-1788), an astronomer and mathematician, was selected as one of the scientists on the *Boussole*.

From June to August 1786, the expedition explored the coast of the Fairweather Range and the outer coast of southeastern Alaska and Dagelet made a rough estimate of the elevation of



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

Mount Saint Elias. In July of that year, de Langle, Dagelet, and several other officers attempted to ascend the Lituya Glacier. After traveling six miles up the crevassed glacier, the party turned around, incorrectly surmising that the glacier originated from Mount Fairweather. Later that month 21 sailors drowned when two boats were wrecked at the entrance to Lituya Bay. To honor the dead, Lapero-
use placed a cenotaph on the southern end of the large island in the bay. He named the island Cenotaph Island.

In March 1788 after reaching his halfway point in Australia, Lapero-
use sent his journals and charts back to France for safe-keeping. The expedition then sailed off to the Solomon Islands where both ships were wrecked on reefs near Tikopia. None

of the expedition members ever returned to France and all hands were presumed dead, but Laperouse's records of their explorations eventually did reach their homeland.

Having read the English translation of Laperouse's journals, William Healey Dall of the U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey named Mount Dagelet in 1874 in recognition of Dagelet's exploration.

In 1933 Henry Bradford Washburn, Jr., led a nine-member Harvard-Dartmouth expedition to attempt Mount Crillon. The party was comprised of three geologists - Russell W. Dow, Richard P. Goldthwait, and Howard M. Platts - and six climbers - Robert Hicks Bates, Ad Carter, Bill Child, Walter C. Everett, Charlie Houston, and Bradford Washburn. Bill Child, who turned 24 during the early part of the trip, was the oldest member of the expedition. Platts, at 17, was the youngest. With Bob Bates, Ad Carter, Charlie Houston, and Brad Washburn in the same party, this expedition was the only one to bring together four of the so-called "Harvard Five," lacking only Terris Moore. On June 24, 1933, the gasboat *Pheasant*, captained by Bert Wilcox, delivered Carter, Child, Houston, Platts, and another member of the party from Juneau to Cenotaph Island. The advance party set out for Crillon Inlet at the head of Lituya Bay and began to carry a canoe three miles over the North Crillon and South Crillon Glaciers to Crillon Lake. On July 1 Gene Meyring flew Washburn and the three remaining members of the party in a Lockheed Vega from Juneau to Cenotaph Island. With the aid of the airplane, they transferred 2,400 pounds of equipment and supplies, as well as the remaining members of the party, from Cenotaph Island to the northeast end of Crillon Lake, where they established their base camp.

The next day the party packed loads to the Kloocho Glacier and up the moraine-covered ice to a second camp at 2,200 feet in alpine meadows south of the Kloocho Glacier. The six climbers in the party continued upward. Their second pack led over Ptarmigan Dome and up a thousand feet of loose snow to a narrow ridge of loose, crumbling rock that led to a knoll. Their third camp, and first camp on snow, was at 5600 feet in the lee of that knoll. From their third camp, Washburn, Bates, and Houston set out on skis to reconnoiter a route around the southeast corner of Mount Kloocho (7661) to South Col. This they did. However, during the reconnaissance Houston and Washburn got into a bitter dispute about route finding. As leader of the expedition, Washburn prevailed, but Houston never climbed with Washburn again. For years later, Washburn would relate the cautionary tale: had they followed Houston's route, the team would likely have been caught in an avalanche and killed.

With the route around "Kloocho Corner" identified, the scout trio returned to their third camp to await better weather. At 9 p.m. on July 14, the six climbers set out in two rope teams to travel on crusted snow. They crossed the bergschrund, ascended the slope above, and traveled across the glacier and up the 30-degree slope to South Col, where they rested before crossing the Dagelet Glacier and climbing the 1,000-foot, 57-degree ice slope to the saddle between Mount Dagelet and Plateau Peak. At the top of the ice slope, Washburn hacked through a cornice to create a route. But a snowstorm compelled them to retreat. They installed four pickets and placed 400 feet of fixed rope. They returned to their third camp exhausted at 9 a.m. on July 16.

There they rested, waiting for favorable weather. During the wait, they retrieved supplies from their base camp. On July 23 they set out once again. They established their fourth camp closer to "Kloocho Corner." On the 24th the team began navigating heavy loads through the crevasses of "Kloocho Corner." They installed Camp 5 at 6600 feet on July 24th. At 4 a.m. the next morning, the team ferried 900 pounds of equipment and supplies over South Col and down to the base of the slope below their fixed lines. They returned to Camp 5 to rest.

At 6:30 a.m. on July 28, the team began their climb to the top of South Col. After reaching the col, they skied to their cache of supplies and climbed the ice slope to the top of their fixed lines. There they erected a single small tent to establish Camp 6. At 2 p.m. the two rope teams began to set a route north-eastward to Mount Crillon. Three miles later at 11,500 feet, a blizzard enveloped the team, so they retreated to a cramped Camp 6, arriving at 11:30 p.m.

Two hours later Washburn noticed that the storm had blown away. Immediately he decided that he, Bates, and Everett were in the best shape to make another attempt. They departed at 2 a.m. on July 29th. At 4 a.m. Carter, Child, and Houston resolved to attempt Mount Dagelet. They set a diagonal course between two large crevasses that split the upper east slope. They reached the corniced summit at 6 a.m. Carter left his shirt hanging from a ski pole as a summit marker. The trio then departed the summit and returned to Camp 5. Having been prevented by poor snow conditions from reaching Mount Crillon's summit, the other team removed Camp 6 and arrived at Camp 5 at 11 p.m.

As a final consolation prize, all six climbers ascended Pointed Peak (8474) before hauling their equipment down to Camp 2 the following day. They returned to their base camp the next day. Meyring later flew them from Crillon Lake to Juneau in the Lockheed Vega.



*Western aspect of Mount Dagelet (right) peeking out from behind the south ridge of Pointed Peak (left).
Photo by Bradford Washburn, courtesy of the American Alpine Journal.*

I know of no other ascents of Mount Dagelet, although Loren Adkins and Paul Barnes reportedly unsuccessfully attempted to climb the peak in 1988.

Most of the members of the 1933 party went on to have distinguished Alaskan mountaineering careers. Houston, who was 19 when he climbed Mount Dagelet, made the first ascent of Mount Foraker and some nearby peaks the next year. Carter, also 19 on Mount Dagelet, later made numerous first ascents in the Alaska Range and, with Washburn, made the first ascent of Mount Crillon in 1934. Washburn, who was 23 in 1933, later pioneered the West Buttress route on Mount McKinley and also made the first ascents of Mount Marcus Baker, Mount Sanford, Mount Bertha, Mount Hayes, Mount Deception, McGonagall Mountain, Kahiltna Dome, and Mount Dickey, among other peaks. Dow, who was 18 in 1933, made the first ascent of The Pinnacle in the Talkeetna Mountains. Bates, who was 22 in 1933, later made the first ascents of Mount Alverstone and Mount Hubbard. First Child, and later Carter, went on to serve as Editor of the *American Alpine Journal*.

The information in this article was obtained from Laperouse's A Voyage Round the World, Performed in the Years 1785,

1786, 1787, and 1788, by the Boussole and Astrolabe, under the Command of J.F.G. de la Perouse, which was translated into English and published posthumously in 1807; from Child's article titled "Crillon 1933," which appeared in the 1934 *AAJ*; from an uncredited article titled "Mt. Crillon, 1934" that appeared in the 1936 *Harvard Mountaineering*; from Donald J. Orth's 1971 Dictionary of Alaska Place Names; from Francis E. Caldwell's 1986 Land of the Ocean Mists: The Wild Ocean Coast West of Glacier Bay; from Michael Sfraga's 2004 Bradford Washburn: A Life of Exploration; from David Roberts' 2009 The Last of His Kind: The Life and Adventures of Bradford Washburn, America's Boldest Mountaineer; and from the National Park Service's "Glacier Bay Mountaineering History," which was updated by Katie Unertl in 2012.

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