

the SCREE

Mountaineering Club of Alaska

February 2014

Volume 57 Number 2



Never measure the height of the mountain until you have reached the top. Then you will see how low it was.

-Dag Hammarskjöld

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Monthly meeting:

6:30 p.m., Tuesday,

February 18

**Program: Tanya Leinicke and Jon Cobb share
"The Secret to Loving Alaska Ice."**

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 February 18 at the BP Energy Center, 1014 Energy Court, Anchorage, Alaska.

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

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Cover Photo

Ryan Hokanson heading up terrain typical of much of the route on the *Direct West Face* of Mount Hayes, climbing toward spectacular ice and rime gargoyles beneath the summit ridge. Photo by Sam Johnson.

Please note: Starting in 2014, MCA meetings are held on the third Tuesday of the month.

Article Submission: Text and photography submissions for the *Scree* can be sent as attachments to mcascreed@gmail.com. Articles should be submitted by the 24th of each month to appear in the next issue of the *Scree*. Do not submit material in the body of the email. Do not submit photos embedded in the text file. Send the photo files separately. 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 oriented photo for consideration for the cover. Please submit captions with photos.

Monthly Meeting: Tuesday, February 18, at 6:30 p.m.

Program: Tanya Leinicke and Jon Cobb share "The Secret to Loving Alaska Ice."

Correction: Paul May noted an error in the August 2013 *Scree*. I erroneously credited Paul with the 1993 first recorded ascent of the Peak of the Month, Peak 1950 in the Contact Glacier and Derickson Bay drainages of the Kenai Mountains. However, the peak Paul reportedly climbed in 1993 was Peak 2153 a couple miles to the southeast in the Nellie Juan Glacier drainage. Tim Kelley and Tammy Thiele made the first recorded ascent of Peak 1950 on July 21, 2011. Steve Gruhn

Hiking and Climbing Schedule

⇒ **Flattop Flyer Touring Ski:** Join us for an evening ski from Flattop (Glen Alps) Parking Lot to Service High School. This is a fast, fun, but challenging, ski. There are some steep narrow sections, flat stretches, and sharp corners in the dark. Must be an intermediate skier and be able to snowplow with the best of them! Total one-way distance is about 8+ miles and requires a four-wheel drive carpool. Limited to six participants. Participants with four-wheel drive vehicles will have preference if we are short vehicles. Hosted by Travis Taylor; 382-4823, alaskantrav@hotmail.com.

Date: First Wednesday of every month. February 5th, March 5th, April 2nd.

Timing: 5:45 p.m. meet at Service High parking lot to carpool, 6:00 p.m. start vehicle shuttle – carpool with four-wheel drive vehicles begins, 6:15 p.m. start skiing at Glen Alps, 8:30 p.m. finish at Service High (alternate is Hilltop), 9:00 p.m. complete carpool.

Things to bring: Headlamp, warm clothes, water bottle, snacks, waxless skis/poles – three-pin touring skis with metal edges work best. Randonee skis work, too, but it will be a bit slower and you will have trouble on the flats. No skinny skis!

⇒ **February 22-25 Seward to Cooper Landing (Trip 1)–36 miles.** See details below.

⇒ **February 25-March 2 Cooper Landing to Hope. (Trip 2)–41 miles.** Cabin camping with one possible tent camp. Non-technical ski touring. Maximum of six participants each trip. Participants will share cabin rental fees. A \$20 deposit is required when signing on for each trip. Trip leader Greg Bragiel. To sign up, email unknownhiker@alaska.net.

⇒ **March 15, Tit Mountain.** Contact Steve Gruhn at scgruhn@gmail.com or 344-1219 by March 13 to sign up.

⇒ **April 5-13, Eklutna Traverse/ Bomber Traverse/ K'esugi Ridge Traverse.** We will do one of these classic ski-mountaineering traverses. Order of preference as listed. Sign up at February MCA meeting or email Greg Bragiel at unknownhiker@alaska.net. Mandatory trip preparation day March 29.

⇒ **July 5-13 Summer Mountaineering Instructional Trip.** Glacier Travel, Technical. Lots of elevation gain and loss. About 31 miles distance. Trip leaders: Greg Bragiel and Tom Choate. Learn the basics of mountaineering, including: food preparation, navigation, route finding, snow travel, knots, ice climbing, glacier travel, crevasse rescue, bouldering, rock climbing, leadership, and much more. Participants will share expenses. \$50 deposit required to sign up. Sign up at the March MCA meeting.

Online? Click me!



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

Mount Hayes Solo Report

Text and photos by Sam Johnson

When my partner Ryan Johnson arrived in mid-April, interior Alaska was experiencing its coldest spring since 1924. We had won a 2013 Mugs Stump Award from the American Alpine Club, and had only 10 days or so to try to make a trip happen. As so often happens, we spent some time in town waiting for the weather to look promising. With five days remaining, we heard the weather was going to be slightly less harsh; we threw our belongings in my truck and made way to Fairbanks. We stayed with my good friend Wayne Pence while we prayed the weather would allow us to fly the next day. To our surprise the marginal conditions in town gave way to a bumpy, but uneventful, flight onto the relatively uniform upper Trident Glacier. In 2012, I flew in with Jason Stuckey for the line to find it in excellent condition; only, we couldn't land. There were huge, exposed ice mounds where we later found excellent glacier surface. Rob Wing flew Ryan in first and me second. With Rob puffing away on his tobacco, the sun kicked off the runway and within minutes was pushing minus 30. By night, the temperatures dipped into the minus 40s. We thought to ourselves, "Here we are trying to climb this huge face, fast" accompanied by "How are we going to avoid freezing injuries?" to "Oh, no, this means we need to go heavy to survive." Little did we know, the strong New England team of Bayard Russell, Eliot Gaddy, and Michael Wejchert was simultaneously freezing and doubting their decision-making only miles away in an otherwise empty range.

The Hayes Range presents special circumstances, sometimes surprisingly forgiving, sometimes incredibly brutal. There is a feeling of seriousness simply because conditions are considera-

bly more variable in the short term than one finds in the central Alaska Range, and there are usually no other climbers. During four Hayes Range ascents, I have experienced serious inclement weather on route on two and quite questionable weather on another. An attempt on our Plan A route ended in hypothermia, doubting our drive and balls while I dangled from my incredibly pumped arms, trying to surmount an extremely overhanging 35-foot bergschrund that lacked even consolidated ice

lenses for tool placements. Demoralized, we examined our kit and decided that we couldn't pack the gear that we needed to be able to climb or stay warm enough to survive. Lacking any peace of mind about whether we were risking imminent cold injury, we returned to our base camp to shiver through another night at minus 40. We spoke of alternatives and developed a plan to climb together on the sunnier southeast face, presenting a clean sweep of 6,500 vertical feet with miles of climbing. The southeast face had one ascent that we knew of by Alaska climbers John Bauman and the late Tom Walter in 1988. Unable to find a suitable bivy, John and Tom were forced to continue climbing into the night, traversing right for some time to gain the ridge and construct a snow cave.

Their climb continued for the next three days as they battled inclement weather to top out and make the lengthy descent down the East Ridge back to base camp. [Ed. note: See Bauman's account on pages 137 and 138 of the 1989 American Alpine Journal]. Ryan and I hoped to have clear weather and make the climb round-trip in less than 24 hours, as I had in 2010 with my brother-in-law Ryan Hokanson on the *Direct West Face* of Mount Hayes. [Ed. note: See Hokanson's account on pages 107 through 109 of the





Sam Johnson nearing the top of the lower third of the face.

2011 AAJ]. During the night, however, Ryan developed a cough and remained awake for all the wee hours and reported still feeling ill in the morning.

With the deck seemingly stacked against us, we considered our options:

1. Stay in the tent and wait for Rob to come pick us up in 36 hours if the weather holds;
2. Go try to climb the face together, with Ryan not feeling well, in extremely cold temps; and
3. Roll the dice.

After a short discussion with Ryan in which we dismissed the first two options, we decided to roll the dice: I would put in a solo attempt. I decided I would at least like to have a look and get across the bergschrund, if possible. The face comprised three parts, each approximately a third of the vertical gain: first, a lower angle snowfield; next, a steeper hourglass-shaped icefield leading to a steep rock wall; and finally, a series of runnels zigzagging through rock outcrops. I left camp after spending some time with Ryan and making a high-calorie breakfast. I brought a single 8.5-mil half rope, three ice screws, several nuts, and three small camalots. Due to the extreme cold, I

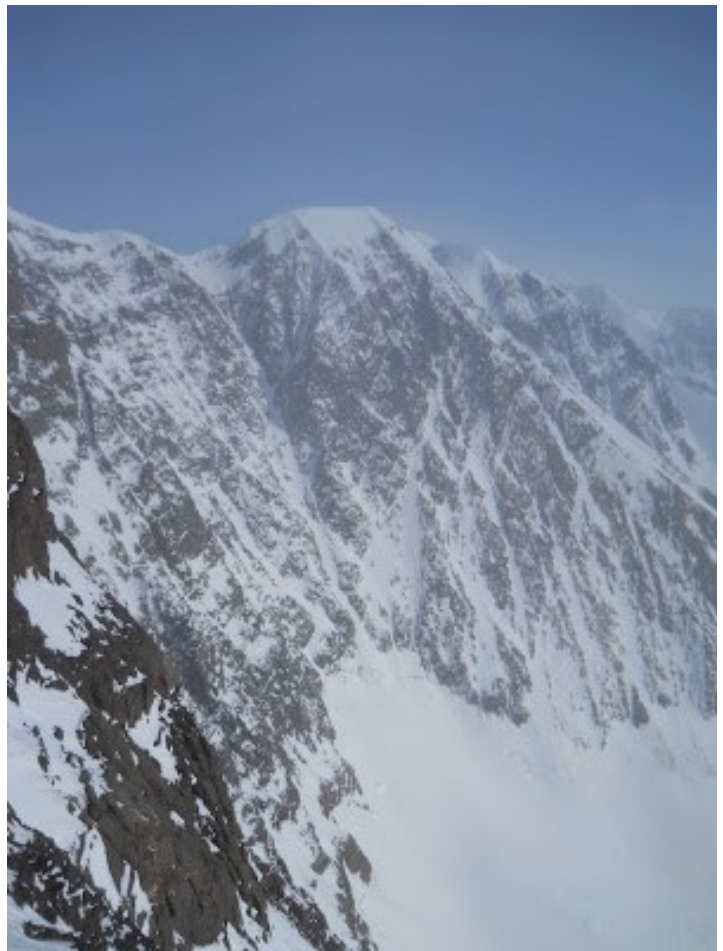
brought some extras, such as several pairs of gloves, including some super-warm prototypes from Arc'teryx along with overmitts, handwarmers, a scarf, and two pairs of extra socks. I planned to change layers if possible once I hit the summit ridge as I knew I would be sweaty from moving quickly on the face, which could make my life extremely uncomfortable for the descent, which would occur during the dark and extremely cold hours of the night.

I headed out from base camp and stashed my skis at a previous reconnaissance spot. I then began boot packing over to the base of the southeast face, examining my route choices and working to stay away from crevasses. The snow up to and above the bergschrund was not encouraging as I punched in to my knees over and over. A thousand feet or so above the 'schrund, things began to improve and I began to be able to move at a pace I felt more comfortable with in terms of being able to manage conditions, my exposure to objective dangers, such as weather, avalanche potential, rockfall, and exposure to bone-chilling temperatures. I reached the transition between the lower snowfield and the hourglass icefield and stopped to clip into a screw, chug some water, and down a few calories. I considered this my point of commitment, as the terrain would begin to grow steeper with much exposed alpine ice that would be unpleasant to down-climb and costly in terms of time and exposure to rappel with a single line and limited gear. My energy level felt great, and conditions were cold, but decent, so I decided to commit to the upper two-thirds of the face. As I moved through some more delicate terrain to access the hourglass icefield, my thoughts flew and I entered a meditative, joyful state. I moved through the dense alpine ice of the central face as Ryan watched from the glacier. The terrain grew steeper and a little more delicate again as I cut around the edge of the rock wall marking two-thirds height on the face. Here I headed straight up, shooting for the summit ridge. With burning calves, feeling the massive exposure of the face below me, I linked together patches of neve via sections of bullet-hard ice. Clouds and light precipitation began falling in the afternoon, as often occurs in the Hayes Range. Due to the exposure and increasing altitude, the last thousand feet to the ridge seemed to take an eternity.

Finally, I rolled over onto a relatively flat spot on the East Ridge a short climb from the summit. With some daylight left, I consumed water, changed socks and gloves, added a hat and scarf to protect my face and pulled drawstrings on jackets until I started to warm up. Clouds and light precipitation continued as I made my way to the summit of Mount Hayes for the second time in the past few years. Sadly this time, I had no friend with me to provide comfort or safety navigating the lengthy descent.

Last time Ryan Hokanson and I down-climbed and rappelled the north ridge and west face in June. This time I would be conducting an onsight descent of Hayes' 6,500-foot East Ridge into the night, alone, in the coldest April since the second decade of the 1900s. I knew from hearing accounts from others' climbs on the East Ridge of Hayes that it is notoriously crevassed. I hoped that I would be able to navigate the delicate balance between entering lower-angle snowy terrain where crevasses would be hidden, and steeper icy terrain that would provide less security and more exposure to the vast fall potential of the southeast face. Though had I had no one tied to the end of the rope, I pulled out my 8.5-millimeter half rope and tied in, dragging the rope with me as I downclimbed and walked my way down the East Ridge. At least with this precaution I would have the rope immediately at hand in the event of a crevasse fall to begin to conduct a self rescue if possible. If I were to fall off the other side of the ridge, I would have no recourse as for the most part the fall potential on the southeast face would result in an unrecoverable gain in momentum and, thereby, death.

For the most part the descent was pleasantly uneventful. A short jolt of adrenaline as a piece of ice broke out of the ridge crest provided the impetus necessary to maintain my attention on the task at hand. After almost four hours, I reached the col below Levi's Bump and stopped to brew up and huddle in my parka until I became too cold. I then climbed the narrow ridge to Levi's Bump at 9,800 feet and began what I hoped would be the easiest segment of my descent. As usual, the Hayes Range served up something slightly unexpected and I found myself on low-angle ice, too dense to walk down and too thin to rappel. Several inches of ice covered useless, crumbling gravel as I made my way down from Levi's Bump; occasionally I would find a section with useful neve or a rappel anchor. Rappelling 30-degree ice was humiliating, but safer than trying to walk on dense ice at minus 40 with dulled crampons and a huge climb under my belt. Finally I reached friendly terrain and stomped my way down to the Trident. I saw a head lamp somewhere off on the glacier and realized that Ryan was awake. Wandering through contoured terrain on the edge of the glacier, I tried to find my way onto the flats and more uniform, safer terrain. All of a sudden, a ghost appeared out of the darkness and yelled my name. I had found my way back to Ryan after 18 hours on the go, and he spoke with relief apparent in his voice. With the snow, the coming of night, and my snail's pace down from Levi's Bump, he had been worried that I was injured or suffering the results of exposure and possibly frostbitten. When he realized that I was alive and well and in a good mood (albeit exhausted) he regaled me with his tale of watching me on the face, losing sight as the afternoon weather moved in, and wor-



Levi's Bump (9800 feet) from the southeast face of Mount Hayes.

rying that I might not be OK. He fed me snacks and hot chocolate and we walked the short distance back to the tent. As soon as I threw my pack off and crawled in the tent I felt incapacitated and had to struggle to manage my sweaty clothes and boots to crawl into my sleeping bag after eating a few calories to shiver my way through the night. The snow returned and when we awoke in the morning on the day of our departure, we thought that Rob wouldn't be able to fly. In early afternoon, he defied our expectations and arrived to take Ryan out. I stayed to reflect on my experience and flew out later that afternoon. I am still unsure of how this experience has changed me, but know that it has. Completing a new variation to the Walter-Bauman route, solo and in a push, was a unique and rewarding experience for me. Thanks to our friends and family, the American Alpine Club, Black Diamond, GU Energy, and Arc'teryx for supporting Ryan and me in our continued journey to explore our potential.

[Ed. note: To view Sam's blog with additional photos and a post-mortem video, click on <http://www.alpineessence.com/>.]

Climbing above the Clouds Helps Combat Winter Doldrums

Text and photo by Frank E. Baker

While Anchorage and the surrounding area were blanketed in dense clouds in early January, Joe Chmielowski and I struck out on two different climbs in the Chugach Mountains to see if we could find some sunshine to brighten our day. Joe headed south to 4,880-foot Ptarmigan Peak and I ascended to the west ridge above the South Fork of the Eagle River valley not far from home.



Sun peeks over the ridge west of Temptation Peak above clouds that blanket Anchorage.

After a couple hours of snowshoeing from the Glen Alps parking lot to the base of Ptarmigan Peak in Chugach State Park, Chmielowski wondered if he'd ever get out of a dense layer of clouds that hung over the entire Anchorage Bowl, diminishing the already limited daylight. The only signs of life were two sets of wolf tracks and numerous rabbit tracks.

At the base of Ptarmigan, visibility was severely limited and even though a huge mountain stood right in front of him, he could not see it. However, he had been on the mountain before and knew the route. He assessed the snow conditions on a couloir that reached about 3,000 feet all the way to the summit – and determined that the slopes were stable and that avalanche danger was minimal. He replaced his snowshoes with crampons and with ice axe in hand, headed up the ramp-like couloir.

Somewhere in the gloom he could hear the clucking of ptarmigan. Curious about what they eat, he followed their tracks and found that they were digging up and eating frozen crowberries from last August. "I guess that solves that mystery and there is indeed an abundant supply of food if you like old frozen crowberries," he thought.

Joe said he prefers fresh ripe crowberries – a common Alaskan berry. "Most folks don't like the bitter black skins or numerous seeds, but if you grow up in interior Alaska, they are often the only berry available and the subtle sweet flavor is an acquired taste," he said.

Joe broke through the clouds at about 3,800 feet and while Rabbit Creek was obscured, it was clear to the north over the Eagle River.

"At the summit it was 10 degrees Fahrenheit and rocks were covered with rime ice and crystals – quite beautiful formations," he recalled. "It was great to look around at all the mountains peeking above the clouds, and it

was nice to have the whole mountain, or entire Chugach Range – all to myself. It was hard to imagine that a city of 300,000 people existed so nearby. If you really want to escape Anchorage, just climb to the top of any peak in the winter and you feel like you are instantly transported to a remote location in Tibet."

After a rest break and three-fourths of a frozen peanut butter sandwich, he began the return trip, satisfied to have gotten outdoors and broken winter's spell.

South Fork of the Eagle River: Sitting in my Eagle River home on January 11 and looking out at the window in South Fork Valley, I waited for three hours for the clouds to lift. About 11 a.m., I decided to take a gamble and like Joe, just head into obscurity in hopes of getting above it. My gamble paid off about 2:30 in the afternoon as I broke out of the clouds at about 3,000 feet on the ridge overlooking South Fork Valley.

On my way up I also came across scratching in the snow where ptarmigan were after last year's berry crop. I brought snowshoes, but didn't need them on the wind-blown slopes. A few spots had glare ice beneath a thin layer of snow, but my Kahtoola grippers helped a lot.

Like Joe, I was really glad to get out and ascend above the clouds. My climb was less ambitious than his, but atop the ridge I enjoyed about an hour of sunshine and actually observed the "green flash" as it dipped below the ridge that connects to Temptation Peak, towering above Ship Creek Valley.

Punchbowl Wall – Regular Route, 5.6 GR. 3

Text and photos by Scott Kruis, unless otherwise noted



I started climbing in the late 1980s and soon after met my long-time climbing partner Mark Fitch. Of the many classic climbs that we were fortunate to share, our climb of Punchbowl Wall in July 1994 was perhaps the pinnacle of our climbing adventures together. The setting was a classic one. It was in a very pristine and mountainous ocean environment called Misty Fjords National Monument near Ketchikan, Alaska. After the climb, I wrote the following story to share with fellow climbers, but it ended up in a folder.

Thank you to Steve Gruhn for contacting me and expressing interest in this climb. The folder was found, the writing cleaned up and typed, and here is the story from nearly 20 years ago.

The climb of Punchbowl Wall is moderate, well within the range of most climbers. For those who might be interested in climbing it, the climb is long, how to descend a major consideration, and the epic potential is high. It would probably take most parties two or more days. This is believed to be the first and only ascent of this wall. Local stories have it that climbing legend Fred Beckey attempted it in the late '70s, but found mostly rain. This climb needs to be shared with fellow climbers.

The Climb of Punchbowl Wall - originally written in 1994

Ketchikan is located in the southernmost part of Southeast Alaska and lies exposed to the Pacific Ocean. It is known as the salmon capital of the world and ranks near the top among the

wettest places on the continent. On a clear day it is also one of the most beautiful places. Ketchikan averages about 160 inches of rain a year, enough to drown most climbing efforts, but given a stretch of nice summer weather there is a classic waiting to be climbed.

Misty Fjords National Monument is located about 40 miles southeast of Ketchikan. In Misty, as the locals call it, there are many big walls of granite rising out of the various bays and Punchbowl Wall is one of the most stunning of them all. It is seen in many advertisements, brochures, and books about the area. Punchbowl Wall is 3,465 feet in elevation, much taller to climb if taking into account the slope, and extends along the coast for more than 2 miles.

I first saw Punchbowl Wall in 1988. I was on an Alaskan sight-seeing cruise to Misty Fjords. My first view upon entering Rudyerd Bay was of a very immense granite wall at the far end of Punchbowl Cove. This view of the appropriately named Punchbowl Wall became deeply imprinted upon my memory. Over the next few years, I was part of two kayaking trips where we paddled throughout the various fjords. Often I would find myself floating in front of Punchbowl Wall gazing at it and thinking of what it would take to climb it.

In the summer of '93, my friend Mark Andrew and I made a reconnaissance attempt on the wall. Our plan was to make it up the lower-angled approach and climb several pitches of the



Scott Kruis on Punchbowl Wall. Photo by Mark Fitch.

exposed wall to get an idea of what it would take to reach the top. We anchored the boat near the base of the wall, rafted to shore, and scrambled through steep thick brush to a big ledge at about 800 feet where the wall became endless rock above. We harnessed up and climbed four pitches of moderate, but exposed and exhilarating, climbing. From our high point we had incredible views of Rudyerd Bay and out to the waterways of the ocean.

In the summer of '94, I finally talked my longtime friend and climbing partner, Mark Fitch from Michigan, into coming for a try on Punchbowl Wall. Ketchikan is known for its transient population and upon drinking a beer with a new climber in town, Norene Highleyman from Utah, we were a team of three. We developed a plan to reach Misty by floatplane and meet up with two kayakers with three extra kayaks that were dropped off the previous day. We would paddle to the base of the wall and leave the three kayaks in a hollowed out notch just above

water line. The two kayakers would take pictures from the water and be our support team.

We flew in just as a light rain started. With too much gear and plenty of food to wait out the rain, we scrambled to the ledge at 800 feet ferrying loads over two trips. We pitched our tents on the ledge, anchoring them with bolts near the start of the climb and watched as the rain got harder and harder. Our intended route soon became a major waterfall crashing several feet from the tents. Now we learned why this section of the wall had the cleanest rock. Did Fred Beckey also come this way and see the proposed route turn into a waterfall? One thing we knew for sure, this section of the wall wasn't a good place to be with a squall coming in.

It rained four straight days with no signs of letting up. Our support team had left after a couple of days and we became worried the kayaks had washed away. The remaining food bars that Norene had made for the climb were soggy and unappetizing. We had all finished reading the Terry Tempest Williams book Refuge: An Unnatural History of Family and Place that Norene had kindly ripped into three sections. And Norene was becoming flooded out of her tent. It was time to head down. With the decision made, we quickly bailed and made a rappel route the fastest way down, which followed waterfalls through the steep brushy approach. It took eight very wet rappels to reach the kayaks, thankfully still tied up in the notch.

We called the Misty Fjords cruise boat just coming into the bay and asked for a pickup. They nosed in to the base of the wall; we loaded our gear and kayaks, and jumped aboard. The tourists who had come to see the fjords now had the added attraction of soaked climbers and their stories for entertainment!

Returning to Ketchikan, the rains stopped and everything started drying. Norene flew to Seattle to visit her boyfriend. After a few days of recovering, Mark still had two days left on his visit and we began looking for some adventure. We started packing to hike up the local Deer Mountain for the night and watch the sunset. While packing for the hike, Mark started commenting how Punchbowl might be dry. I let the first couple of comments slip by, but with the next one, I knew we had to give it a try and see how far we could go.

On short notice we found a pilot to fly us to the wall in his floatplane. By 7 p.m. we were scrambling up the approach to the ledge, reaching it just after dark. No tents as we bivied and watched the stars come out overhead. First light found us climbing and the first three pitches went fast. We rated one pitch at 5.6 and the others 5.4. It was Mark's lead and he would take the climb past my previous high point. It was a 4-inch crack in an open book. Mark found some chock stones in

the crack to sling, climbed a full rope length, and was into what we had noted from below as the X on the wall. I quickly climbed up to my partner who had a big grin as he sat in a 30-foot deep notch in the wall.

The next pitch was mine up a short sidewall out of the notch and then I would see the upper section of the wall close up for the first time. After a couple of 5.6 moves, I was on the upper wall. The rock was low angle and about 50 to 55 degrees to the top. What looked to be a large crack from the water and even from the plane turned out to be an amazing natural rock stairway to the top. A band of rock a few feet wide had eroded into the granite wall a few feet deep and formed a blocky staircase. This stairway wandered toward the top with smooth granite faces on both sides. I quickly brought Mark up to see this very interesting upper wall.

We started simul-climbing, placing protection every 50 to 100 feet and swapping leads every several hundred feet. The climbing was relaxed fourth class mixed in with some fifth-class boulder problems. With the lower angle it was most likely over 2,000 feet to the top. In several places, the stairway was filled with moss and brush and we climbed out on the rock faces. We made it to the top about 8 hours after our morning start. We had climbed over 3,000 feet of rock in eight pitches and it felt good to finally see the other side. After the customary photo session, we started down, knowing we had to move fast to meet the flight out at noon the next day.

Our rappel route went in slow, but sure. We had packed a Bosch hammer drill, spare battery, slings and bolts to get us back to the ledge. After a couple of rappels, placing bolt anchors as we went, we glanced over to a gully and watched several mountain goats climbing comfortably among some lower angle slabs. They weren't quite sure what to make of us. We continued rappelling a few more pitches until it became too dark to see and found a couple of ledges that were more uncomfortable than they were flat. After a bit of dozing, the blackness of night gave way

to early morning gray and we continued on. It took a total of 15 double-rope rappels and nearly all of our bolts to reach the ledge. Then we jumped on to the rappel route through the now-dry waterfalls from the previous weekend.

Our radio was dead, our one watch had been lost, and we were hoping to be on time for the flight out. It wasn't to be that easy. At about 100 feet above the water when setting up for the last rappel, we could see our plane heading back to Ketchikan through the brush. We had missed the pickup. After making the shore and waving down a boat, we were told that our pilot was thinking the worst. He had gone to get more gas so he could search for us. After two hours, he returned and was relieved to see us, but our adventure wasn't over just yet. The floatplane was now overloaded with full fuel tanks, passengers, gear, and couldn't get enough speed to take off from the water. We taxied for about an hour until we could find open water with enough wind to lift the plane and finally headed back to Ketchikan hoping for enough time to catch Mark's flight back to Michigan.

It should be noted that in Ketchikan, you need to take a ferry to another island where the airport is located. If you miss the last ferry before your flight, then you get to watch your plane take off from the far shore. We made the last ferry just in time and raced through the airport. There was just enough time to visit the bar for a quick celebratory drink before they started closing the door and Mark had to board the plane. It was with much



This is the floatplane dropping us off at the start of the approach. Photo by Scott Kruis and Mark Fitch.

sadness that I watched my climbing companion of many years, adventures, and epics board the plane. But I knew we would be together again in two weeks for our fourth annual trip to the North Ridge of Mount Stuart in the Washington Cascades!

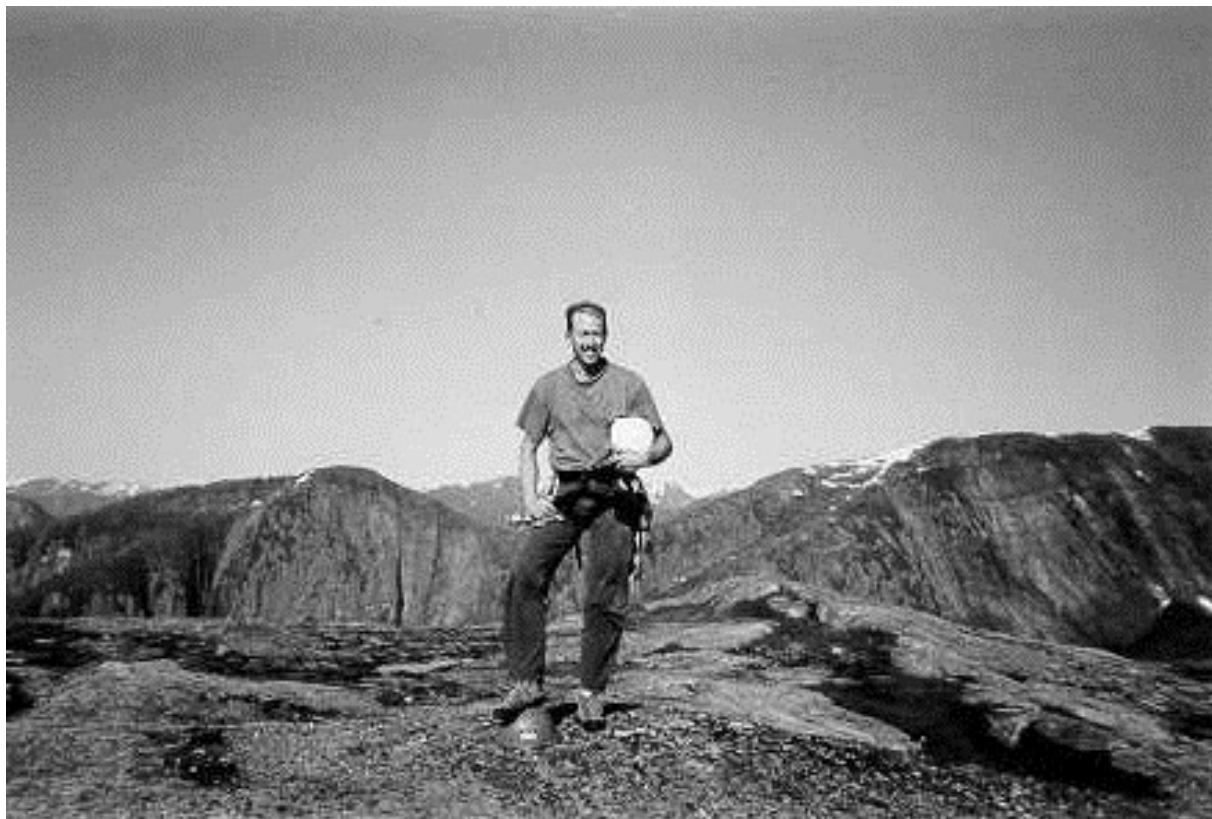
CLIMBING LOGISTICS:

Access: There are two ways to access the Misty

Fjords National Monument, either by boat or floatplane out of Ketchikan. The approach starts at a notch just above the shoreline near the middle of Punchbowl Wall in Rudyerd Bay. The notch can be approached by kayaks, rafts, boats, or floatplane. The water is quite deep here.

Approach: We found two ways to approach the ledge at 800 feet where the roped climbing started. To the climbers' left, it is a very steep forested slope. Grab trees and work your way up through the brush. Once to the ledge traverse to the right. The trees are pretty open in early season, and the brush becomes very thick later in the season. Alternatively, this became our standard approach, climb up the waterfalls making a few easy fifth-class moves where needed until you get to a headwall, work your way to climbers right and then up steep brushy slopes climbing under or through brush as needed. Keep observant for bears on both sides. We liked to use rubber boots (Ketchikan sneakers) and leather gloves for the approach. The ledge at 800 feet is several feet wide in places and can support a tent or two.

The Climb: From the water, you can see what appear to be two cracks making a very tall narrow X. We climbed the left leg of the X, and then the upper left arm of the X. The notch was in the middle of the X and was reached after four pitches. We used a standard rack of nuts, and a selection of cams to 3 inches. There is a long 4-inch crack in Pitch 4 where we used slings



Mark Fitch on top of Punchbowl Wall.

on chock stones. Four-inch cams could be helpful here. The first five pitches have pretty good protection; once reaching the upper wall the type of climbing changes with a fourth- and easy fifth-class stairway and not many places for protection. The first five pitches were rated 5.6, 5.4, 5.4, 5.6, and 5.6. The crux was found on the fourth pitch, a long, sustained 5.6 four-inch crack in an open book.

The Descent: We installed a rappel route from the top starting about 100 feet to climbers' right. Note: This had several sections of easy fourth-class down-climbing. The bolts were 3/8-inch expansion type bolts, two for each rappel station. Twenty years later they may be questionable and the slings would not be good. Several of the rappel stations were also locations for belays, especially lower on the wall. The rappel route may not be easy to find, or may be questionable after so many years. There are not a lot of cracks to leave gear behind. The rock would be treacherous if wet. The wall has been hiked up from the back side. This may be a good descent route, but should not be used unless already familiar with it. It is very steep rainforest terrain on the back side.

Let There be Light...

Text and photos by Frank E. Baker

We northerners have developed a finely-tuned obsession with light, given our absence of it during the long winters. I'll admit that the day after the Winter Solstice, December 21, I began counting the daily light increases as reported in the *Anchorage Daily News*. If I recall, the gain was about nine seconds on December 23, about 20 seconds on December 24 and as of January 10, it's built up to more than three minutes per day. By late February it will be up to about five minutes per day as the earth races around the sun, bringing us closer to summer and the

exact opposite – endless daylight.

But in our perennial obsession, we do more than count the daylight gains.

Some plot them on graphs.

We talk about it with friends

and neighbors.

About midday

we might look south, where the sun rises and sets, and wait for a glimpse of that elusive orb. We might linger and take in a few moments of those glass-filtered photons, hoping that the brightness might kick in some endorphins or activate our hormonally-deprived pineal glands.

My home in Eagle River faces south and during the darkest days of December and early January, I receive about one and a half hours of direct sunlight through a gap in the mountains, provided there are no clouds. During that brief interlude, if I happen to be home, I am drawn to the window like a moth to a light

bulb. In a zombie-like daze, I am transfixed by the brightness. If I break the spell and venture somewhere else in the house – perhaps to have a cup of coffee – when I return to the window, the sun has stealthily slipped behind the mountain.

We wait impatiently for full moons. With all our snow a full moon illuminates the land like floodlights in a football stadium. Between the moon and stars, there is enough light to cross-country ski, snowshoe, or ice skate without a headlight. Re-

flected off snow the light is amplified significantly.

What's really interesting to me is how our eyes adapt to low-level light conditions. I don't know the exact candlepower equivalent, but moonlight is insufficient to activate

the cones in our eyes, which provide color. Have you ever noticed that in a full moon one only sees in black and white? Only the eyes' rods are at work. Thus, the lyrics of an old Moody Blues song: "Cold-hearted orb that rules the night, removes the colors from my sight..."

We anticipate aurora borealis displays the way people in the Lower 48 states wait for the announcement of lottery winners. It's not just the excitement of seeing the mysterious, ghost-like colors dancing across the sky. As in our communion with the moon, with its reflected light, seeing the aurora reminds us that



Sun bathes the ridge leading from the South Fork of the Eagle River to the summit of Harp Mountain in alpenglow, Chugach Mountains.



Sunrise near Hurricane Valley in the Talkeetna Mountains.

somewhere out there in space, there is a sun and it is creating this remarkable spectacle.

I lived in Texas for five years, where daylight loss is at most a couple of hours. I found it nearly impossible explain to someone how captivated Alaskans are with light.

Some people I know have a full-spectrum lighting kit and sit in front of it for about 20 minutes per day. Most report it pumps up their energy level. We all take extra Vitamin D. We watch television programs that show warm places, such as the HGTV selling real estate in Hawaii. Some of us travel south to get away from the high latitudes for a while. However, with recent weather reports, it sounds as if a trip to the eastern U.S. in early January would not be a good idea. It's warmer here in Alaska.

In winter I go outdoors a lot. I climb onto south-facing mountain ridges that I know receive about four hours of direct sunlight a day, crawl behind a rock that puts me out of the wind and garbed in multiple layers, soak in the low-angled sun. A thermos of hot coffee makes for an enjoyable winter outing.

My wife thinks I'm certifiably crazy, and I don't dispute her assessment.

Of course, farther north it's even worse. At Prudhoe Bay on Alaska's North Slope, the sun dipped below the horizon about November 23rd last year. After a 56-day absence, it will be first seen again peeking above the horizon on January 18th. North Slope workers have developed many ways of coping with the endless darkness. One of the key methods, I've learned, is simply staying busy. Many of them don't seem to have time to even notice the absence of sunlight.

So as we move into a New Year, our light is gradually returning. Our reward comes in mid-May, when 24-hour sunlight begins.

But until then, we carefully, habitually, incessantly, watch the light. We observe how it reflects off the snow in our yards and how it lights up the distant mountains. We notice how it casts a warm glow on the horizon – hinting that it is about to emerge, teasing us out of winter's lassitude. It taunts and beckons and we watch, unable to help ourselves. We are obsessed.

Peak of the Month: Peak A-117

By Steve Gruhn

Mountain Range: Alaska Range; Hayes Range

Borough: Unorganized Borough

Drainages: Eureka Glacier and Locket Glacier

Latitude/Longitude: 63° 23' 5" North, 146° 24' 1" West

Elevation: 8950 ± 50 feet

Prominence: 3000 feet from Moby Dick (12360)

Adjacent Peaks: Peak 8355 in the Locket Glacier and Maclaren Glacier drainages, Peak 7760 in the Locket Glacier drainage, Peak 8040 in the Black Rapids Glacier and Eureka Glacier drainages, Peak 7850 in the Maclaren Glacier drainage, and Peak 7285 in the Eureka Glacier and Maclaren Glacier drainages

Distinctness: 1200 feet from Peak 8355

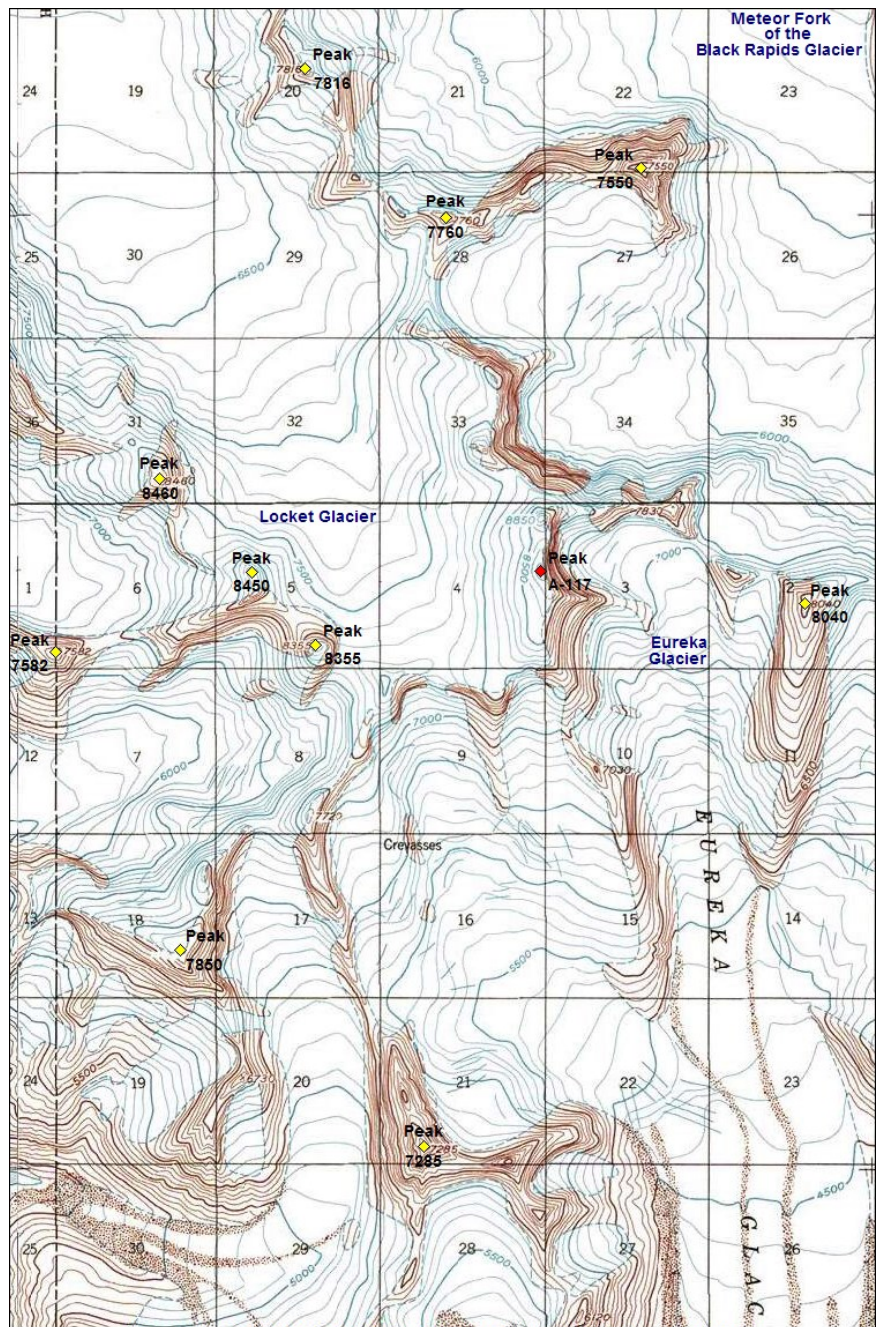
USGS Map: Mount Hayes (B-5)

First Recorded Ascent: This peak might be unclimbed.

Peak A-117 is the highest peak in the Hayes Range south of the Black Rapids and Susitna Glaciers and the highest point on the Mount Hayes (B-5) quadrangle.

In his unpublished manuscript on Alaska's mountains, Vin Hoeman identified prominent Alaska peaks that he thought were worthy of climbing. Because the number of such prominent peaks was large, he cataloged them by mountain range and incorporated the first letter of that range into his naming scheme. Thus, his name for the 117th unnamed Alaska Range peak in his manuscript was Peak A-117. In his manuscript, Hoeman wrote that Peak A-117 was "a double-peaked ridge" that would be "very easily approached from the west." Hoeman's unpublished manuscript is part of the Grace and John Vincent Hoeman Collection, which is available in the Archives and Special Collections section of the University of Alaska Anchorage/Alaska Pacific University Consortium Library.

Nearly 50 years have elapsed since Vin Hoeman identified Peak A-117 to be worth climbing, but I don't know of any ascents of



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

this peak. For parties seeking to make a first ascent in the Hayes Range, Peak A-117 would surely be a gem. And because Peak A-117 is less than 18 miles from the nearest road, the prospect of an expensive air charter need not dissuade budget-conscious parties.

MCA Minutes

Board Meeting

11 November 2013

Attendance: Jayme Mack, Greg Encelewski, Rachad Rayess, Elizabeth Bennett, Galen Flint, Seth Weingarten, Andy Mamrol, Josh Clark, and Matt Hickey, Stacy Pritts

I. Call to Order 6:35 pm.

II. Old Business:

Hut Reservation System – It was previously proposed that a hut reservation system be put in place to 1) Minimize non-human powered access and use of the huts; 2) Generate revenue; 3) Decrease overuse and user conflicts. The reservation system would entail either an on-line or over the phone booking process. The huts would NOT be locked as this would pose risk to those who need to use the huts in emergency. Deliberations and a decision will be made at a future meeting.

Hatcher Pass Hut User Conflict – The user conflict between human and non-human powered users of the MCA Hatcher Pass Huts was discussed. It was recommended that the MCA take a proactive role in reaching out to snowmachiners by 1) Attending their association meetings; 2) Disseminating information at Hatcher Pass parking lots; 3) Educating snowmachiners of access boundaries during Alaska Avalanche School courses; 4) Allowing the Hatcher Pass Mountain Hut Group (HPMHG) to represent the MCA in all matters pertaining to this issue.

Dnigi Hut – The Dnigi Hut has digressed to a structural status that requires MCA action. The MCA must decide whether to repair the hut at a significant financial cost and renew the DNR lease or pay to tear the hut down and completely sanitize the site (also at a financial cost). The hut is rarely used by non-human powered “accessers” so another option is for the MCA to turn the hut over to the snowmachine association of the Mat-Su Valley and allow them to repair the hut if they so desire. No decision made.

JayHawk Air Invoice – an invoice of about \$3,000 was billed to the MCA for services never provided. The MCA canceled their reservation of JayHawk’s services within the 72-hour no cancellation window and was still billed, with no future credit. The amount was paid in full in order to not become past 90 days delinquent.

III. New Business:

Hatcher Pass Hut Support of Resolution – It was resolved that the MCA Board of Directors will support the efforts of the HPMHG to actively explore resolution of user conflict issues related to the huts and nearby mountain areas in the Hatcher Pass Management Area, and authorizes the group to represent the MCA at meetings with the Alaska Department of Natural Resources and other user groups.

Christmas Party – The annual Christmas Party will likely be held at UAA. The primary meal will be pizza as to not incur a large burden upon any one individual’s turkey cooking abilities, time commitment and finances. MCA members will bring side dishes.

Meeting Time Change and Format Variations – Beginning January 2014 monthly MCA meetings will occur on the **THIRD TUESDAY** of every month. Time of day and location will remain the same. Altering the sequence

of events at the meetings was proposed and received support. Expediting the “business” portion of the meeting was highly encouraged as most members attend for the lecture, slideshow or presentation during the second half of the meeting. Members have expressed the desire for more socializing and interaction at meetings. It was therefore proposed that in lieu of lectures/slideshows/presentations the meeting contain an interactive “workshop, class, or discussion” every three to four meetings. All personnel at the meeting were required to provide three ideas for topics and/or activities to Galen via email. Galen was also going to use an online survey to poll MCA members what they would like to see and do at meetings.

Maps at Meetings – To facilitate discussion, interaction and participation at meetings it was proposed that two maps, one of Alaska and one of the greater Anchorage/Mat-Su area be brought to and displayed at every MCA meeting. Matt Hickey and Josh Clark were going to use their contacts to obtain such maps.

IV. Announcements:

None.

V. Next Board Meeting: Monday, December 9th

MCA Minutes

Club Meeting

20 November 2013

Attendance: Many people. Meeting led by President Greg Encelewski. Presentation given by Clint Helander of his 2013 ascent of Mount Hunter via the Moonflower Buttress and descent down the West Ridge.

I. Trips:

1. Flattop solstice camp out (December 21-22)
2. Climb of The Wedge
3. Ship Creek Cleanup (December 7-8)
4. Eklutna Traverse (April)

II. Training:

1. Basic Mountaineering Course (January)
2. Introduction to Ice Climbing (January).

III. Huts:

Dnigi Hut is in need of major repairs. An MCA member has approached a snowmachiner in the valley about hauling in supplies for repairs.

IV. Scree Deadline:

25 November is the deadline for Scree article submissions for December issue.

V. MCA Calendar 2014:

The calendar will be present at the December MCA meeting. It will cost approximately \$13.

VI. Christmas Party:

The annual Christmas Party will likely be held at UAA. The primary meal will be pizza. MCA members will bring side dishes.

VII. Meeting Time Change:

Beginning January 2014 monthly MCA meetings will occur on the **THIRD TUESDAY** of every month. Time of day and location will remain the same.

VIII. UAF Denali Exhibit:

University of Alaska Fairbanks is presenting a Denali exhibit celebrating the 100th anniversary of the mountain's first ascent. It will be on display until April.

Next MCA Meeting: Wednesday, December 18th at UAA at a time to be announced.

MCA Minutes

Board Meeting @ BP Energy Center

09 December 2013

Attendance: Jayme Mack, Greg Encelewski, Rachad Rayess, Elizabeth Bennett, Carlene Van Tol, Stacy Pritts, Andy Mamrol, Josh Clark, and Matt Hickey

I. Call to Order 6:35 pm

II. Old Business:

Christmas Party:

Pizza – Jayme

Signs – Rachad

General Membership Meeting Format Variations:

1. 15-minute break after business portion of meeting.
2. Announced start time remains 6:30 p.m. and business will begin promptly.
3. Send three ideas to Galen Flint for “interactive meetings.”

III. New Business:

Proposed 2014 Budget:

Revenue:

Membership Dues: \$8,500

Scree: \$200

Training: \$9,000

Photo Calendar: \$3,000

MCA Merchandise: \$0

Interest on accounts: \$100

Donations: \$0

Total: \$20,800

Expense

Training: \$6,000

Scree: \$2,300

General Meeting: \$1,700

Administrative: \$900

Huts: \$4,000*

Insurance: \$0

Club Equipment: \$500

Library: \$100

Photo Calendar: \$2,600**

MCA Products: \$0

Awards: \$600 (at least six awards due)

Other: \$0

Total: \$18,700

\$2,100 Surplus

The board deliberated and approved the budget amounts with the understanding that the President would ask the Huts Committee and Calendar Committee chairs if they have a budget recommendation that is significantly different, and if so the board would consider amending the proposed budget.

Lane Hut Replacement:

The Lane Hut will be removed during the summer of 2014. Huts committee chair (Greg Bragiel) has proposed that the Board deliberate putting money toward a new hut in its place. The Board agreed that money would NOT be directed towards a new hut, but would encourage individual MCA members to volunteer.

Advertising on Website:

Board agreement on no advertising.

Topics of Discussion:

1. Snow Cave Making Competition – site of competition near Anchorage. Competition would have multiple events as per the number of people creating the caves (i.e., two-person team creates a cave large enough for

two people, etc.). Hatcher Pass is a suitable location due to proximity to parking lot and lodge. Question: Would a permit be required from State Parks? Possible registration fee. Formal committee is not needed.

2. Jayme Mack will attend an upcoming Snowmachine Club Meeting on behalf of the Hatcher Pass Mountaineering Huts Group and as an MCA member. She will introduce the user access conflict to the club. The goal is to educate their club on the boundaries of motorized access and to initiate a friendly discussion in regards to conflict of interest. Jayme Mack, Ralph Baldwin, Cory Hinds, Harry Hunt, and Cindi Squire represent the HPMHG.

3. Seeking volunteers to disseminate leaflets in the Hatcher Pass area when snowmachine access is granted to the area. Volunteers would meet Jayme Mack in the Gold Mint and/or Fishhook parking lots in the morning or afternoon and bring the leaflets to the Hatcher Pass Huts (Snowbird, Mint, and Bomber) and to snow-machiners.

IV. Announcements:

None.

V. Next Board Meeting: Monday January 13th at 6:30 p.m. at BP Energy Center.

MCA Regular Membership Meeting Minutes:

January 21, 2014

Calendar: Stuart Grenier announced the MCA 2014 calendar was a success and has sold out.

Training: Greg Bragiel announced the Summer Mountaineering Trip is a nine-day vigorous hiking, climbing, and glacier travel trip. The trip will take place on the Bomber Traverse July 5-13, 2014. The group will stay at various hut and tent camping locations for specific instructions: Snow travel, ice tool use, ice climbing, glacier travel, navigation, route finding, knots, rope work, belaying, rappelling, rock climbing, bouldering, fun, exploration and team building. Additionally there will be a hut service project(s).

Greg Bragiel also announced BOW is a national program to instruct females in outdoor skills. He is seeking help from qualified individuals to help March 9, 2014, at Victory Bible Camp to instruct Avalanche companion rescue skills.

Slide Show Presentation: Anchorage climber Jay Rowe presented "20 Years to the Summit." The program highlighted 20 years of climbing in the Alaska Range, including ascents of the five major peaks of The Mooses Tooth group, as well as his recent ascent on Broken Tooth.

Mountaineering Club of Alaska

2014 PROPOSED BUDGET

		Proposed for 2014	Approved for 2013	Change
REVENUE				
Membership Dues	<i>received during calendar year</i>	\$8,500	\$7,000	\$1,500
Scree subscriptions		\$200	\$250	(\$50)
Training	<i>BMS, ice climbing, rock climbing, other</i>	\$9,000	\$8,000	\$1,000
Photo Calendar		\$3,000	\$3,000	\$0
MCA Products: T-Shirts, Patches, Etc.		\$0	\$0	\$0
Other - Interest on Accounts		\$100	\$200	(\$100)
Other - Donations, etc		\$0	\$0	\$0
TOTAL REVENUE		\$20,800	\$18,450	\$2,350
EXPENSE				
Training	<i>campsite, access fees, instructors, trip leaders</i>	\$6,000	\$6,000	\$0
Scree	<i>postage, mailing, printing</i>	\$2,300	\$2,300	\$0
General Meeting	<i>rent, refreshments, entertainment</i>	\$1,700	\$2,000	(\$300)
Administrative	<i>supplies, PO box, web site, ads, travel, misc.</i>	\$900	\$1,000	(\$100)
Hut Construction & Maint.	<i>materials, supplies, hut equipment, lease fees</i>	\$4,000	\$8,000	(\$4,000)
Insurance	<i>reincorporation fees, insurance</i>	\$0	\$3,000	(\$3,000)
Club Equipment	<i>climbing gear, misc equipment</i>	\$500	\$1,000	(\$500)
Library	<i>new books, periodicals, Scree binding</i>	\$100	\$600	(\$500)
Other:	<i>miscellaneous expenses</i>			
Photo Calendar		\$2,600	\$2,600	\$0
MCA Products: T-Shirts, Patches, Etc.		\$0	\$0	\$0
Other - Awards		\$600	\$600	\$0
Other -		\$0	\$0	\$0
TOTAL EXPENSE		\$18,700	\$27,100	(\$8,400)
DUE TO (FROM) RESERVE		\$2,100	(\$8,650)	\$10,750

Mountaineering Club of Alaska

President	Greg Encelewski	360-0274	Board member (term expires in 2014)	Andy Mamrol	717-6893
Vice-President	Carlene Van Tol	748-5270	Board member (term expires in 2014)	Elizabeth Bennett	830-9656
Secretary	Matt Hickey	651-270-4492	Board member (term expires in 2015)	Rachad Rayess	617-309-6566
Treasurer	Stacy Pritts	538-7546	Board member (term expires in 2015)	Joshua Clark	887-1888
Past President	Jayme Mack	382-0212			

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

Dues can be paid at any meeting or mailed to the Treasurer at the MCA address below. 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 24th 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: Stacy Pritts - membership@mtnclubak.org

Hiking and Climbing Committee: Vicky Lytle - hcc@mtnclubak.org

Huts: Greg Bragiel - 569-3008 or huts@mtnclubak.org

Calendar: Stuart Grenier - 337-5127 or stugrenier@gmail.com

Scree Editor: MCAScree@gmail.com Steve Gruhn (344-1219) assisted by Elizabeth Ellis (elizabeth.anne.russo@gmail.com)

Web: www.mtnclubak.org

Mailing list service: MCAK@yahoogroups.com

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