

# the SCREE

## Mountaineering Club of Alaska

September 2015

Volume 58 Number 9



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Revelation Mountains

"West Face with Sit Start" on Peak 11301 and

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"Second Breakfast" on The Dragon's Spine

Mile 5: Gold Mint Trail

Peak of the Month: Camel's Hump

Monthly meeting: 6:30 p.m., Tuesday, September 15. Slideshow on the West Ridge of Mount Blackburn by Dave Staeheli.

*"Life moves pretty fast. If you don't stop and look around once in a while, you could miss it."*

- Ferris Bueller

# The Mountaineering Club of Alaska

[www.mtnclubak.org](http://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 Tuesday, September 15, at the BP Energy Center, 1014 Energy Court, Anchorage, Alaska.

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

For the MCA Membership Application and Liability Waiver, visit

<http://www.mtnclubak.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=members.form>.

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## Cover Photo

Pete Panarese near the summit of Pepper Peak on May 2, 2015.

Photo by Frank Baker.

**Article Submission:** Text and photography submissions for *the Scree* can be sent as attachments to [mcascree@gmail.com](mailto:mcascree@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, September 15, at 6:30 p.m.** Monthly meeting: Slideshow on the West Ridge of Mount Blackburn by Dave Staeheli.

## Hiking and Climbing Schedule

**September 25-27:** MCA Ice Festival at the Matanuska Glacier. Contact Jayme Mack at [jaymelynnemack@gmail.com](mailto:jaymelynnemack@gmail.com) for details. See page 3 for more details.

**September 27-29:** Glacier Creek mountain climb. Come join the fun of wading the icy Matanuska River and exploring the wilds of Glacier Creek after the Ice Festival. Typically this is a hiking trip with some possible scrambling. Destination may be a first ascent. Class D. Leader: Cory Hinds; email [chinds100@gmail.com](mailto:chinds100@gmail.com).

## Obituary

Edward Earl, 51, drowned while attempting to cross the Jago River on June 19, 2015, after attempting to climb Mount Isto, highest point in the Brooks Range. He was a prolific hiker, scrambler, climber, and peakbagger who was the first (and so far, only) person to climb all 149 peaks in the Lower 48 with 4000 feet of prominence. He was also a distinguished Ph.D. scientist who developed software to automatically calculate prominence data for mountains. He had a deep love for Alaska that dates from 1997, when he rented a small plane to fly from Fairbanks to Umiat. He subsequently made attempts on Denali (2001), Mount Fairweather (2008) and Redoubt Volcano (2013), and he successfully summited Denali in 2004, Nourse Peak (the highpoint of the Municipality of Skagway; see the July 2010 *Scree*) in 2008, Mount Torbert in 2013, and Mount Angayukaqsraq and Mount Osborn, both in 2014.

-- Greg Slayden

Online? Click me!



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

## Mountaineering Club of Alaska Ice Fest 2015

Want to learn to ice climb or improve your current techniques?

When: September 25th – September 27th, 2015

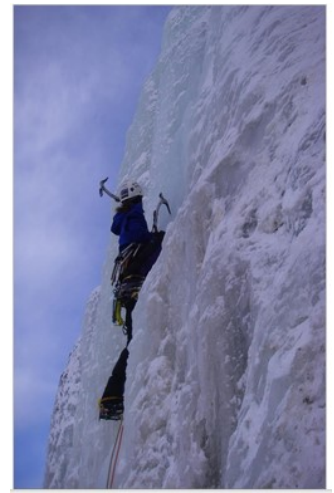
Learn modern ice climbing techniques, rope management skills and socialize with other local climbers in a weekend out on a local glacier. All abilities welcome. Must be 18 years old.

Cost: \$75. (MCA membership required \$20-25).

Registration is only available online and opens September 1st. Registration will close September 18th.

Visit [www.mtnclubak.org](http://www.mtnclubak.org) and the Training web-page for more information or email:

[mcaicefest@gmail.com](mailto:mcaicefest@gmail.com). Contact: Jayme Mack, 907-382-0212



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### Climbing Notes

Ben Still reported climbing several peaks in Prince William Sound. On August 15 he climbed Chenega Peak. On August 18 with Andy Milauskas, he climbed Peak 1870 in the Port Chalmers drainage of Montague Island and reported that his GPS indicated a summit elevation of 1877 feet. A note at the U.S. Forest Service's Port Chalmers Cabin indicated that this summit had been reached in 2001. That day he also climbed Peak 2950 in the same drainage and reported that his GPS indicated a summit elevation of 2959 feet and that the summit was higher than Peak 2923 a mile to the east. On August 19 he climbed to the highest point on Montague Island, Peak 2999, with Jon Cannon and Andy Milauskas. On August 22 with Jon Cannon he ascended Horn Mountain and Peak 2034 in the Hogan Bay, Northeast Arm, and Thumb Bay drainages of Knight Island. He reported that Peak 2034 was higher than the 2,000-foot point a quarter mile to the west. He didn't observe any evidence of prior ascents on Peak 2959, Peak 2999, or Peak 2034. We look forward to reading a detailed trip report in a future issue of *the Scree*.

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### Letter to the Editor

**Tatshenshini/Alsek Climbing Pictures:** If anyone is looking for pictures of mountains along the Tatshenshini and Alsek Rivers, I have many available for climbing purposes. They were taken in June 2015.

--Wayne Todd

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### Trivia

### Mountain Goat Geography Quiz

By Tom Choate

#### WORLD MOUNTAINS

Answers on page 12.

- Which of these well-known 17,000-foot peaks is the highest?
  - Mount Foraker (Alaska)
  - Volcán Popocatepetl (Mexico)
  - Gora Dykh-Tau (Russia)
  - Nevado del Tolima (Colombia)
  - Mount Kenya (Kenya)
- Which of these well-known 13,000-foot peaks is the highest?
  - Jungfrau (Switzerland)
  - Jebel Toubkal (Morocco)
  - Volcán Tajumulco (Guatemala)
  - Mauna Kea (Hawaii)
  - Gunung Kinabalu (Malaysia)
- Which of these oceanic island peaks is the highest?
  - Gunung Kinabalu (Borneo)
  - Mount Cook (South Island)
  - Gunnbjørn Fjeld (Greenland)
  - Fuji-san (Honshu)
  - Gunung Kerinci (Sumatra)

#### WORLD RIVERS

- Which river is the longest?
  - Danube River (including the Breg River)
  - Indus River
  - Rio Grande
  - Euphrates River (including the Shatt al-Arab)
  - Yukon River

# Silvestre Graham Revelation Mountains 2015 - Expedition Report

Text and photos by Peter Graham unless otherwise indicated.



*Route of "Hoar of Babylon" on the East Summit of Jezebel Peak.*

## Team members:

Ben Silvestre, 25, British, Leader

Peter Graham, 28, British

Duration: March 25 until April 12, 2015

## Location and brief summary:

Revelation Mountains. First ascent of the east face and East Summit of Jezebel Peak (9450 feet). This summit could well have been considered the highest unclimbed peak in the range, as it was a distinctly separate summit from Jezebel's true summit.

Our initial objective was to climb the central couloir on Pyramid Peak (8572). We then found out we wouldn't be able to land on the Revelation Glacier and chose to attempt the unclimbed north face of Jezebel Peak from the Fish Creek Glacier, but found a more suitable and inspiring objective on the also unclimbed and more easily accessible (from our base camp) east face of the East Summit of Jezebel Peak. Having climbed our route, we discovered that we'd unintentionally made the first ascent of the East Summit.

## Attempts and endeavors:

- One failed attempt and one successful attempt at climbing the same line on the east face of the East Summit of Jezebel Peak.
- Successful passage from the Fish Creek Glacier to the north side of Jezebel Peak via the col northeast of the East Summit of

Jezebel Peak.

- Unsuccessful passage from the east to the south side of the East Summit of Jezebel Peak via a col. The attempt was thwarted by bad snow conditions, but if possible would make a viable route to the Fish Creek Glacier from the south side, as there is an easy gully on the south face of Jezebel Peak, which would be by far the easiest descent.

## Expedition Diary

*March 23:* Flew to Anchorage, stayed in Super 8

*March 24:* Shopped for supplies and gear in Anchorage. Got a taxi to Talkeetna. Stayed in Talkeetna Air Taxi's office.

*March 25:* Breakfast at Road Inn (highly recommended). Flew to Fish Creek Glacier. Set up camp. Learned to ski.

*March 26:* Skinned up to col to look at the north face of Jezebel Peak, but it was too cloudy to see anything. Walked back down to leave a trail. Skied up the Fish Creek Glacier to look at objectives on the east face.

*March 27:* Skied up the Fish Creek Glacier to climb up to a col, but found bad weather and snow conditions. Looked at more objectives on the east face. Decided to attempt the central couloir the next day.

*March 28:* Awoke at 6. Snowing, so went back to sleep. Weather improved during the day. Decided to try again the next day.

*March 29:* Awoke at 6 to clear skies. Difficult slog up cone to bottom of first step. First step looked hard. Steep, thin ice. Ben tried, but came down. Pete tried, thought it was possible, but needed more screws and it was getting late. We abseiled off and skied around to check out the face some more.

*March 30:* Awoke to more snow. Lazed around in tent.

*March 31:* O.K. weather, but bad forecast. So sat around and then went back to look at the face some more.

*April 1:* Same as previous day. Packed bags for 2.5-day attempt next day.

*April 2 – 4:* Climbed central couloir on east face. Named route “Hoar of Babylon.”

*April 5:* Ate lots, slept lots, listened to good tunes, basked in success and relative warmth.

*April 6:* Same as previous day. Storm began.

*April 7:* Storm with lots of snow. Had to dig out tent repeatedly.

*April 8:* Storm with lots of snow. Had to dig out tent repeatedly. Decided that we didn't have enough time for snow conditions to become safe enough to climb another route. Rang Paul to ask to get picked up as soon as possible.

*April 9 – 11:* Dug out tent. Repeatedly rebuilt runway. Rang Paul. Waited in vain for weather to improve enough to get picked up.

*April 12:* Got picked up. Flew back to Talkeetna. Lots of food and beer in the West Rib. Stayed in TAT's bunkhouse.

*April 13 – 14:* Enjoyed more food and beer in Talkeetna.

*April 15 – 22:* Got taxi back to Anchorage. Hired car and

explored the Kenai Peninsula.

*April 23:* Peter flew home. Ben flew down to Utah to thaw out.



*Peter Graham on steep, delicate ice on the crux pitch.  
Photo by Ben Silvestre*

#### **Detailed summary of expedition:**

We flew into the range on the 25th of March and landed on the Fish Creek Glacier to the southeast of the East Summit of Jezebel Peak directly below the east face. We had never even seen any pictures of the east face before and were very impressed and excited to be dropped below such an amazing face that we didn't even know about and had never been climbed before.

We did not direct our attention away from the north face straight away. On our first day after landing we skinned up to the col to the northeast of the East Summit of Jezebel Peak to try to get a look at the north face. It took us four hours to reach the col and by the time we got there, cloud and snow blocked our view of the face.

On our way back down to base camp, we decided it would make much more sense to try a line on the east face, as it looked as good, if not better, than the north face and would not require an approach day.



*Ben Silvestre leads the snow-filled chimney pitch.*

The next few days were mostly mediocre weather, but we managed to ski up and down the glacier to check out potential lines on the east face. The face was quite complex with lots of couloirs and pinnacles, so it took a lot of viewing from different angles to pick out our line. Our main concern was what we thought was a small step at the start of the couloir.

After one false start due to bad weather, we made our first attempt on the line with 1.5 days of food and eight ice screws. We climbed around 180 meters of steep snow to get to the base of what we thought was the small step. The small step, however, turned out to be a 30-plus-meter pitch of

vertical and overhanging ice, which wept around a roof. With three screws in the belay, we only had five screws to climb the pitch. We both had a go at climbing the pitch, but realized that we would need more ice screws and more food to climb the route, so we abseiled off. Lesson 1: things in Alaska are bigger than they seem.

We spent a few more days waiting out bad weather to get on the route again, but eventually got a good enough forecast to make another attempt. With 14 screws the first hard pitch still put up a good fight and turned out to be the crux of the route, being very steep with quite a lot of hollow organ-pipe-type ice and some structural dubiousness, not something I'd be running back to lead again, but an awesome pitch nonetheless. The next pitch also required care with an overhanging section up a fin of ice, like the wing of an airplane tilted 95 degrees, which screws went in and out the other side. After that was a steep chimney pitch filled with overhanging snow that required a good two-hour effort of stubborn excavation, precarious back and footing and convoluted aid techniques from Ben. This put us into the couloir proper. A few hundred meters of more straightforward gully climbing up this, led us to an excellent



*Ben Silvestre approaching the ice pencil.*

bivouac on a prow to the right of the couloir, which we reached at around midnight.

The next day a couple of easy pitches led us to the base of an excellent steep ice chimney. This was maybe the best pitch of

the route. A 50-meter pitch of steep good ice in the back of a tight chimney reminiscent of Exocet in Patagonia. A few more pitches up mixed ground led us to the top of a tower we had jokingly named the "Tower of Commitment" while checking out the line, because we could see that there was an easy couloir behind and to the left of the tower, but we were unsure of whether we would be able to easily descend into the couloir without horribly committing ourselves. We were slightly disappointed to find a steep rock wall between us and the couloir, but we could see that there was only easy climbing remaining up the couloir to the summit. Fortunately our 60-meter ropes just reached the easy couloir so we fixed one of our ropes and abseiled into the couloir, leaving the rope in place so we could re-ascend it on our way down. We continued up the rest of the route with one rope. We topped out on the East Summit of Jezebel Peak just before dark and descended a few pitches to a chopped out sitting bivy.

We then abseiled and down climbed the rest of the route the next day, re-ascending our ropes to regain the "Tower of Commitment." We reached the glacier in bad weather just after dark, feeling very relieved to be back on the ground.

A short, elated glide on skis led us back to our tent, where we gorged ourselves on fried food and booze until the early hours. A fitting end to an awesome adventure.

We spent the next three days getting re-psyched to climb something else before a big storm hit dumping over a meter of snow and we realized it was time to escape. We had another five tentbound days with occasional trips outside to dig our tent out of the rapidly building snow, before we could get picked up.

#### **General information for climbing in the Revelations:**

There is a lot of great information in Clint Helander's article here: <http://publications.americanalpineclub.org/articles/13201212387/Recon-Revelations>.

We flew to Anchorage from Manchester and spent a night in a Super 8 Motel without a booking. The following day we bought a load of food from Wal-Mart, and rang <http://www.gopurpleshuttle.com>, which picked us up two hours later despite having no booking and ferried us with all our bags to Talkeetna. The drive was around two hours. Go Purple was friendly and cheap, and we would recommend it, although it would be worth booking in high summer. They said they often stop for climbers to buy their food supplies en route to Talkeetna. There were no major food outlets in Talkeetna and everything should be bought beforehand.

In Talkeetna we spent a night camped on the floor of TAT's

office (they have a free bunkhouse, in which we stayed on the way out, but wasn't yet open on the way in). Alternatively there are many hostels, etc. Though a small place, Talkeetna has many great bars and eateries that made staying there rather enjoyable.

Paul Roderick, TAT's climbing expedition supervisor, was extremely helpful prior to and during our expedition. It was an extremely low snow year and the fact that we managed to land at all was a testament to Paul's 30-plus years of experience flying in the Alaska Range. The flights were \$1,600 per person with 250 pounds of luggage per person, and a charge of \$1 per extra pound. We brought a lot of canned food, which added a lot of extra weight and thus cost. In future we would bring more freeze-dried food.

Talkeetna is situated approximately 140 miles from the Revelations, which meant that predicting landable weather conditions could be very unreliable. We were extremely lucky to get flown in immediately. Rob Jones from <http://www.randrhunting.com/RRH/Home.html> has a hunting lodge near the range, and flying into the range via a stay in the lodge would be a far more reliable way of getting in/out, as weather windows can be quite short. Rob quoted us \$4,500 all in.

A few points to note:

- The prime time to climb is from the middle of March to late April. Temperatures before the middle of March can reach -40° Celsius, but then quickly rise to above -20° Celsius. We had no thermometer, but the coldest nights reached -18° Celsius on the forecast. Most days were cloudy and thus considerably warmer, and we could often relax in base camp without gloves.
- It snowed a lot. Of our 19 days on the glacier, there were only two during which it didn't snow at all. This was normal weather in the Revelations.
- The granite on the east face of the East Summit of Jezebel Peak was of the highest quality and there would be countless rock objectives, but getting there in summer would necessitate a long and expensive helicopter flight, as the snow on the glaciers melts off. Rob Jones might be able to work something out.
- The most reliable glaciers to land on are the east facing ones, due to snow conditions. TAT no longer lands on the Revelation Glacier due to dryness in recent years. Rob Jones seemed more confident in that respect (he has a smaller plane).
- We were camped in a sheltered northeast-facing valley, and except for a few violent days experienced next to no wind. Clint Helander, at a similar time, was buffeted near

constantly by violent winds. He was camped in an adjacent northwest-facing valley, south of Jezebel. We were told the prevailing wind was westerly, but the evidence suggests otherwise. That said, we may have just been lucky.

- The Revelations are outside of Denali National Park and so no permit was necessary for climbing there.

- We downloaded some very accurate and free maps from <http://www.usgs.gov>.

#### **Budget:**

##### **Income**

£1,650 – Mount Everest Foundation grant  
£1,200 – British Mountaineering Council grant  
£1,000 – Austrian Alpine Club United Kingdom  
£600 – British Alpine club  
£2,085 – Personal contributions  
Total – £6535

##### **Expenditure**

£1,500 – Flights to Anchorage  
£535 – Excess baggage  
£500 – Insurance  
£2,300 – Air taxi  
£550 – Food  
£400 – Travel and accommodation in Alaska  
£250 – Satellite phone rental  
£500 – Fuel/equipment/other  
Total – £6,535

#### **Many thanks to:**

The Mount Everest Foundation, the BMC, the Austrian Alpine Club UK, and the British Alpine Club for their financial support; Rab, Mountain House UK for their jackets and freeze-dried meals; everyone at TAT, especially Paul Roderick, for the morale-boosting sat-phone calls; Rob Jones, for reporting on the condition of our landing site; Clint Helander, Darren Vonk, Pedro Angel Galan Diaz, and Tad McCrea for general beta for climbing in the area; Malcolm Scott, Tom Ripley, and Rick and Jenny Graham for texting weather reports; Malcolm Scott and Steve Reid for the grant references; Tessa Lyons and Rick Graham for lifts to and from the Manchester Airport; and Gary at Go Purple Shuttle for the excellent commentary on our drive to Talkeetna and for the peanut butter cookies.

# **“West Face with Sit Start” on Peak 11301 and “The Devil’s Advocate” on Reality Peak on the Southeast Spur of Mount McKinley**

Text and photos by Seth Timpano

Willis Brown, Sam Hennessey, and I climbed two long, sustained ice-mixed routes in the West Fork of the Ruth Glacier in the Alaska Range between May 11<sup>th</sup> and May 21<sup>st</sup>. The first route was on the West Face of Peak 11301, while the second route climbed the West Face of Reality Ridge and then summited Peak 13100, “Reality Peak,” on the Southeast Spur of Mount McKinley – (see the reports on the 2013 Holsten-Timpano-Vilhauer route known as “The Reality Face” in the November 2013 Scree and on page 142 of the 2014 American Alpine Journal). Both routes were of the highest quality and offered continuous stretches of moderate-to-steep ice climbing with a few excellent mixed pitches in very good granite.

## **West Face of Peak 11301, May 13 and 14, 2015**



*West Face of Peak 11301*

We followed the straightest line possible, which included an incredible three-pitch mixed “sit start” that went at M4, M5, and M4. A few hundred feet of snow brought us to three pitches of alpine-ice-filled gullies, with steepness up to 85 degrees. Another long stretch of steep snow (800 feet) put us at the upper headwall. We climbed this aesthetic section in

three rope lengths with ice up to 90 degrees. Once through this section, the angle eased off for the final 400 feet to the ridge,



*West Face of Peak 11301*

with ice up to 70 degrees. The weather started to deteriorate when we reached the ridge. We climbed three pitches of steep snow with extensive cornicing before deciding to turn around at 11000 feet due to poor visibility and complex route finding amongst the summit seracs. We rappelled through the night with much spindrift. Conditions eased off for us toward the bottom and we crossed the bergschrund on our 20<sup>th</sup> double-rope rappel. It should be noted that we found an oval carabiner on a fixed nut two-thirds of the way up the route. After much research we had thought the route was new, as there was nothing documented in the AAJ – however, that ‘biner suggested otherwise. We felt the “sit start” was most certainly new ground, even if the upper stretches had been climbed before, but either way we didn’t summit. This was an excellent route that deserves to be climbed as much as the infinitely more popular Southwest Ridge for those confident on Grade 5 ice and moderate mixed terrain. It should be noted that on first inspection the route appears to be very threatened by the

summit serac. Upon further inspection and after having climbed the route we felt most of the route was free from that overhead hazard. “West Face with Sit Start” (M5, AI5, 3,200 feet).

### **West Face of Reality Peak, May 18-21, 2015**

After recovering from the previous climb, we had the idea there might exist a safe and climbable line on the West Face of Reality Peak. After skiing up the pocket glacier that separates said face from the Isis Face, we were fortunate to see such a line. We headed back to our camp at the landing strip on the West Fork



*West Face of Reality Peak*

and prepared, then left the following morning. We left our flotation and crossed the ‘schrund at 8900 feet. Five hundred feet of perfect névé got us to the base of the first ice pitch. We climbed steep, continuous ice for 10 rope lengths, two of which had 90-degree ice. Once out of these steeper gullies, the angle eased slightly for the final 600 feet to where it joined the heavily corniced Reality Ridge at 12000 feet. Steep snow tunneling with ice traversing got us to the same bivy I had used during the ascent of The Reality Face in 2013. We arrived at 10 p.m. and all crammed into a Black Diamond Firstlight. This massive football field provided a safe and comfortable bivy after continuous climbing. Not unlike our climb of The Reality Face, the following day was bad weather with poor visibility, slight snowfall, and moderate winds. We hung tight for a day and the following morning proved to have better weather. We climbed through the Reality Ridge on steep snow and some funky ice and topped

out on Peak 13100 after about six hours of climbing. We reversed the ridge, brewed up in our tent, and then started the



*Sam Hennessey (left) and Willis Brown on Reality Ridge.*

descent. It was possible to rappel most of the route, with the exception of the ridge both above and below our bivy. This required some straightforward, but tedious, down-climbing. The West Face proved straightforward to rap (18 doubles with 60-meter ropes) and we found V-threads most of the way down. This was an exceptional route and deserves to be repeated. We proposed the name “The Devil’s Advocate” (M4, AI5, 4,200 feet).



*West Face of Reality Peak*

# Summer Solstice on Southeast Alaska's Snow Tower (6572)

By Dave Hart

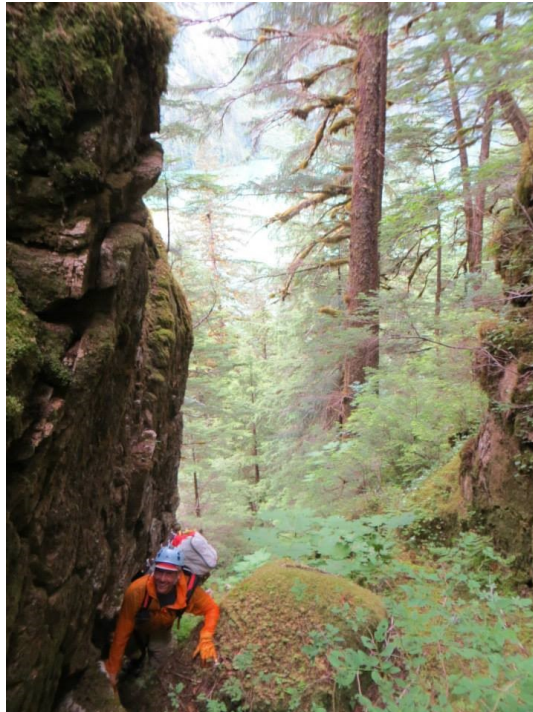
Snow Tower (6572) is an obscure peak in southeast Alaska with a unique distinction. It is one of 64 U.S. peaks with a topographic prominence of over 6,000 feet. Topographic prominence is a measure of the vertical rise between a peak and the lowest contour line that encircles it and no higher mountain. In short, it describes how distinct a mountain is from its nearest higher neighbor. For many climbers, prominence is as important as absolute elevation in choosing an objective. Not surprisingly, Alaska has a majority (35) of these ultra-prominent U.S. peaks.

Over the winter, Ben Still and I hatched a plan to attempt Snow Tower, which had never seen an ascent. Ben asked his friends Mike Miller from Juneau and Will Wacker from Haines to join us for a long weekend once summer arrived. Our schedules didn't quite match, so we ended up a week behind Mike and Will, who made the first ascent of Snow Tower over three days, summiting on June 15, 2015.

Ben and I flew to Juneau on Friday night, June 19. We spent the night at Mike's place, where he shared some photos of their successful trip only a few days prior. Saturday morning we met our chartered Admiralty Air floatplane at 7 a.m. It took us 25 minutes to fly the 40 miles east to Crescent Lake (elevation 174 feet) under overcast skies. We left a small cache in a bear canister and dove into the thick brush with four days of supplies at 8 a.m.

Ben has climbed dozens of similar remote southeast Alaska peaks and has an uncanny ability sniff out the optimal route through dense brush, hidden cliffs, devil's

club, alders, and salmonberry thickets. Plus we had the added benefit of Mike's and Will's route description. The crux of the



*Dave Hart ascending through the steep rain forest.*

bushwhack would be threading a lower and upper set of cliffs along a hidden ledge at about 1500 feet. By 10 a.m. we found Mike's and Will's occasional boot tracks in the rain forest. We followed them sporadically through at times steep hand-over-hand forest climbing, and found the secret passage at 11 a.m. Above this, dense spruce transitioned to hemlocks and eventually brushy tundra at 2000 feet. We continued on to a wonderful heather-and-grass ledge at 3300 feet next to a stream. We made camp at 1:30 p.m. under still-overcast skies with a 4000-foot ceiling. This was my first overnight climb of the season, so I was glad to have an early day to rest up for what would be a long summit day. We dozed that afternoon in the

tent, avoiding the aggressive mosquitoes and white socks. We woke for dinner then went back to bed by 9 p.m.

Our 4 a.m. alarm was welcome after all our sleep. Sunday was also Father's Day and summer solstice. The clouds were still



*Dave Hart at the 3300-foot campsite.*

thick above 5000 feet, which would make route finding difficult on the glacier and technical rocky summit ridge. We left camp by 5:50 a.m., hoping the weather improved as predicted. It had taken Mike and Will 16 hours round trip to the summit from their camp an hour below us at 2,000' so we figured we were in for a long day. By 7:30 a.m. we were roping up at the 4600-foot glacier. By 8 a.m. the clouds started to thin and dark rocky spires appeared from the mist 1,500 feet straight above us. Our

first views of Snow Tower were impressive.

After climbing up to 5200 feet, the route traversed southeast for a mile, paralleling large crevasses and across occasional snow bridges. Later in the summer this glacier would be much more challenging. We finally reached the southwestern extent of the summit towers and climbed up and left for our first views of the final headwall. Mike and Will chose the direct west face, a 1,000-foot, 40- to 50-degree, snow slope above a couple questionable and melting bergschrunds. At 10 a.m. we tiptoed across the bergschrunds, hoping the snow ledges didn't choose that moment to slough off. Halfway up the face the morning sun crested the ridge, allowing for good photos, but hot climbing. Ninety minutes later we reached the top of the increasingly steep face onto the final rocky summit ridge at 6400 feet. We welcomed the chance to sit down and take a break.

Looking ahead on the rocky ridge was quite intimidating. The false summit was only a few hundred yards north of us and 150 feet higher. But Mike and Will had warned us of the many hours they spent on the traverse through poor rock and technical climbing. Ben led out at 11:50 a.m. with our full rock rack, trailing our 60-meter rope. He made solid progress, setting running-belay anchors as needed. Up, down, around, and across Ben went and disappeared from sight. Eventually the rope went taut and I followed, moving together. After three pitches Ben set a belay at the base of the false summit spire. It turned out that the climbing was more exposed and rotten than difficult, maybe 5<sup>th</sup> class in spots. We re-grouped and Ben led up the final 50-foot, low-5<sup>th</sup>-class crux cliff. From there an easy 100-foot walk led to the false summit and the prominent notch between the two summits. A 50-foot drop led to the true

summit spire, only 15 vertical feet above us. We could have thrown a rock across the gap. It was then two hours since we had roped up on the ridge. We rappelled into the notch and continued another 50 feet down the west notch gully. Mike and Will had described their traverse continuing farther north into a parallel snow-filled gully that allowed easy access back up to the summit. But it was not obvious.

I continued climbing down the gully, looking for an exit. It became apparent we had missed the traverse when I got cliffed out on all sides. I climbed back up to Ben, handed over the rack and he climbed up a 15-foot cliff above our belay. Success. An easy

one-pitch scramble north found the snow-filled gully, which we climbed 50 feet to the summit ridge. A final 10-foot boulder problem guarded the summit cairn and register from six days prior. Ben signed in at 2:50 p.m., three hours after starting across the ridge and nine hours after leaving camp. We enjoyed 25 minutes on top in the sun. Having never climbed in this part of the state, the views were new and exciting for me. Ben pointed out several of the peaks he knew in the area.

We were a bit nervous about how long it would take to descend the technical ridge and down-climb the steep snow face, so we didn't linger too long. By 3:15 p.m. we started our descent after our 25-minute break. We managed down-climbing with running belays for all but one 50-foot rappel off the crux cliff. Knowing the route allowed much faster travel, and by 4:45 p.m. we were back at the start of the ridge – only half the time it took to ascend. I hate down-climbing snow, so I scrambled down the ridge a couple

hundred feet to see if we could, in fact, descend the southwest ridge all the way to an obvious pass 800 feet below us and walk onto the glacier. Fortune was on our side as the walk-off route looked super easy. Thirty minutes later we were at the base of



*Dave Hart (left) and Ben Still below the sharp summit of Snow Tower at right.*



*Dave Hart about to crest the ridge at 6400 feet.*



*Dave Hart (left) and Ben Still at the summit of Snow Tower.*

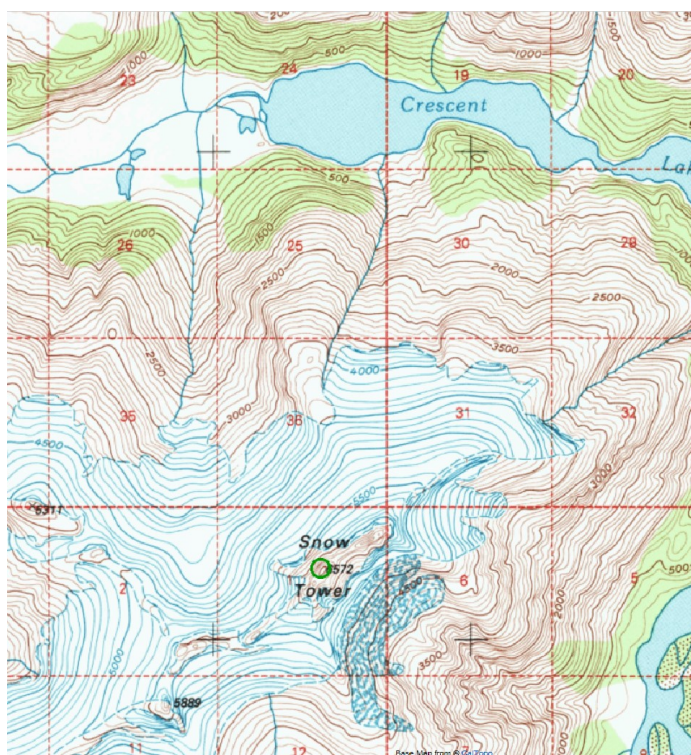
the snow face, and 30 minutes after that we were un-ropeing off the glacier. We finished the last of a quart of chocolate milk we had stashed and sauntered down the final 3/4 mile to camp, arriving at 6:45 p.m. After our nine-hour ascent, we were surprised to have descended in only 3-1/2 hours.

Our weather window started closing and high clouds socked in the summit as we cooked dinner. We were asleep by 10 p.m. after reminiscing in the fun climbing and beautiful scenery of the day. We slept in until 6 a.m., packed camp, and hit the trail by 7:30 a.m. My GPS was giving us problems and I lost the ascent waypoints from two days prior. Fortunately, Ben managed to sleuth out our route and find the secret ledge through the forested cliff bands. We rappelled two of the steeper forested slopes that we had scrambled up. We reached the lake at 11 a.m., much earlier than we had expected.

Mike and Will had a totally different descent experience. They

had missed the descent route and had ended up cliffed out, re-ascending, and eventually rappelling the cliff bands. They had reached the lake 1/4 mile east of us and had ended up swimming back to their cache, as cliffs blocked hiking the shore. To make matters worse, a bear had destroyed their cache, punctured their bear canister, punctured a bear-spray can, and shredded one of their two packrafts they had planned to use to float out.

Ben and I called our pilot, Gary, and he said he would be in to pick us up at 1 p.m. We had some time to relax and enjoy the scenery next to a campfire before returning to the hustle and bustle of life. We flew back to Anchorage that evening.



## Answers to Geography Quiz from page 3.

### WORLD MOUNTAINS

1. Which of these well-known 17,000-foot peaks is the highest?
2. Which of these well-known 13,000-foot peaks is the highest?
3. Which of these oceanic island peaks is the highest?

### WORLD RIVERS

1. Which river is the longest?

- B. Volcán Popocatepetl (Mexico) 17717 feet
- C. Volcán Tajumulco (Guatemala) 13845 feet
- A. Gunung Kinabalu (Borneo) 13435 feet
- E. Euphrates River 2236 miles

## Pepper Peak Climb Includes a Dash of Salt

Text and photos by Frank E. Baker



*Salt Peak summit with the “FILGO” marker. No register found.*

Unlike the salt and pepper shakers on our kitchen tables, the Chugach Mountain peaks of the same name are not very close together, or so I learned August 3<sup>rd</sup> on one of the hottest days in Southcentral Alaska’s history. It topped out, I learned, at 79 degrees Fahrenheit.

I’d climbed 5,423-foot Pepper Peak several times over the years, including a trip with my daughter Emily in 1997 when she was 10 years old. The route to Pepper Peak is a continuation of the Twin Peaks Trail that begins at Eklutna Lake. You can go straight up the ridge from the first wooden bench, or take the longer, more gradual approach up the Twin Peaks Trail to the second wooden bench, at about 2-1/2 miles. From there you angle south up onto the ridge at about 3,000 feet and then follow it about a mile to Pepper’s summit. There is a bit of rock scrambling on the last 400 feet, but nothing that requires advanced mountaineering skills.

On many Pepper Peak climbs over the years, I always looked longingly east toward Salt Peak, which at 5,455 feet, is roughly the same elevation. As the crow flies, Salt Peak is only about 1-3/4 miles from Pepper. But to get there one must descend about 700 feet along a ridge, follow a sheep trail around another mountain – known only by its elevation, Point 5089

(1551 meters) – and descend another 200 feet into a small saddle, or pass. From there you need to reclaim the lost 900 feet to reach Salt’s summit.

I’d started this solo hike from the Eklutna Lake parking lot at 10:30 a.m. under brilliant blue skies. By 2:30 p.m., I crossed over Pepper Peak’s summit and began the ridge descent to the east. By 5 p.m. I was on top of Salt Peak. Sweating profusely in what we Alaskans call “sweltering heat,” I was thankful for



*Sheep trail to Salt Peak*

intermittent breezes from the north. I remained in shorts and T-shirt the entire day.

Along the way, counting those I saw at the base of Twin Peaks, I spotted a total of about 35 Dall sheep. They were all too distant to tell if there were any rams. At first I thought I saw a few soaring eagles, but they turned out to be ravens. I was impressed by their ability to mimic the soar of hawks and eagles. Thankfully, I spotted no bears or sign on my trek, but had pepper spray at the ready. Unlike many trips over the years, bug annoyance was minimal.



*Looking back to Pepper Peak*

The trip going in didn't concern me that much. It was the return. Should I completely retrace my steps, which meant climbing roughly 900 feet back up to the summit of Pepper Peak, and descend on a good trail? Or should I top out or skirt around Point 5089, descend southwest on that ridge directly for Eklutna Lake and end up with more than a mile of brush-bashing in order to connect with the Eklutna Lakeside Trail?

Water was an issue. I'd packed two quarts and by the time I'd reached the half-way point in my hike, on top of Salt Peak, I had consumed one and was still quite thirsty. During most parts of the year one can find snow to mix in the water bottles to create more water. I searched north-facing slopes, but snow was not to be found on this hot August day. I thought about my return for quite a while and decided on a known route. I opted to retrace my steps all the way back to Pepper Peak. But already leg-weary, I wasn't keen on the 900-foot climb.

From the low point on the ridge that connects with Pepper Peak,

I decided to proceed on a cross-slope, downward angle. I would skirt around the mountain to join into the Pepper Peak ridge trail. It was a tactical error, and at the same time, a godsend. It

was extremely difficult traversing very steep grassy slopes and loose scree that took me across no less than three large gullies. But on the bright side, I found a small stream tucked into one of those gullies and refilled both quart bottles. I quickly downed nearly an entire quart right there. I was amazed at how far it was to reach the Pepper Peak ridge. I was basically side-hilling around the southern side of the entire

mountain – a distance of about 1-1/2 miles.

Reaching the Pepper Peak ridge about 7:30 p.m., I plopped down for a much deserved rest. I had plenty of water now and drank greedily, even pouring some over my head. On this day I discovered sweat glands I didn't know I had.



*Fireweed en route to Pepper Peak*

Arriving at the parking lot about 9 p.m., I was about an hour past the estimated time of arrival I had given my wife. But all was right with the world. I'd finally added a dash of Salt to my Pepper, with a reminder that in the future, I must study maps more closely before setting out into relatively unknown territory.

*Frank E. Baker is a MCA member and freelance writer who lives in Eagle River. To contact Frank, email him at [frankedwardbaker@gmail.com](mailto:frankedwardbaker@gmail.com).*

## Mount Ripinski

Text and photos by Elizabeth Ellis

Tyndall Ellis and I have been in Haines for almost a week, and want to get out, stretch some different muscles, and go for a hike. Our friend Nick recommends Mount Ripinski. There's a trailhead on Piedad Street a quarter of a mile from his place. From there, he says the trail climbs up toward the ridge, and connects with the main Mount Ripinski Trail.



*Tyndall Ellis checks out the view of Mud Bay from Mount Ripinski.*

We pack second breakfast, a few snacks, water, layers and head out.

Immediately, the trail begins climbing. In some spots, I think it's more ladder-like than trail-like. Devil's club covers the forest floor, and big, tall, skinny trees reach up toward the sky. Trees like this don't exist in Southcentral, I think.

My legs are tuned for biking, and they protest when I ask them to hike. I give them a break under the guise of stopping to take photos. Closer to the top, the trees become short and squat. The devil's club disappears. Water trickles down the trail, and I imagine the mud on a rainy day.

Looking behind every now and then offers a view of Haines below. The Holland America ship the *Oosterdam* is in town and dwarfs everything. The muddy water of the Ferebee River mixes with the blue ocean water on one side, and the Chilkat River flows into Chilkat Inlet on the other. Clouds float around below us.

Forest gives way to fields of wildflowers just past their prime. Everything is lush and green. There are a few lingering patches of snow that make me long for a real winter.

I reach the top after Tyndall and take a moment to appreciate the view, before donning my hat and coat and sitting down to eat and drink. The trail continues along the ridge, then drops

down to the Haines Highway at Mile 7 in six miles, but we decide to turn around and go back the way we came.

In the middle of a discussion about taking it easy on the way down due to our lack of proper health insurance, I slip and take a tumble. There's no permanent damage, but I vow to be more careful after that.

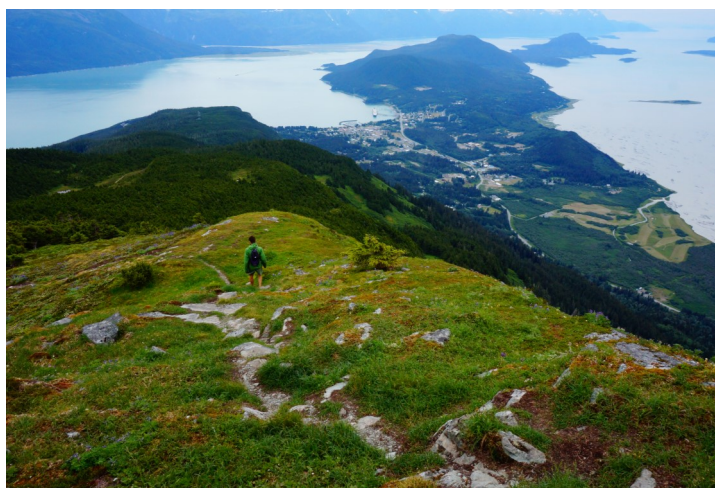
Back down past the wildflowers, the short, squat trees, and devil's club we go, one foot in front of the other. Raindrops begin to fall just as we reach the bottom. This short hike was the perfect way to spend a morning in Haines.

Elizabeth Ellis and her husband Tyndall are on a two year bike journey. You can follow along at:

<https://pedalingperspectives.wordpress.com>.



*Tyndall Ellis ascends the lower portion of the Mount Ripinski Trail.*



*Tyndall Ellis descends Mount Ripinski.*

**First Ascent “Second Breakfast” (Alaska Grade III, 5.9R, 850 feet), The Dragon’s Spine, Little Switzerland, Alaska Range**

**Third Ascent “The Two Towers” (Alaska Grade IV, 5.10+, 3,000 feet), The Dragon’s Spine, Little Switzerland, Alaska Range**

**Failed Attempt on the “Complete Dragon Spine Traverse” (~4,600 feet), The Dragon’s Spine, Little Switzerland, Alaska Range**

Text and photos by Brady Deal



*Aerial photo of The Dragon's Spine.*



*Route of "Second Breakfast" on The Dragon's Spine.*

“Are you boys going to try The Dragon’s Spine?”

“You going for the Spine?”

All the staff at Sheldon Air Service seem very familiar with this climb, mainly due to the fact that one of the first people to try it, Zach Clanton, works for them and has shared many of his photos with the crew at Sheldon.

Up to this point, we hadn’t completely decided on trying “The Dragon’s Spine Traverse.” Several possibilities had floated between my partner Lang Van Dommelen and me, such as exploring the remote Granite Creek Glacier and establishing routes on the back of The Trolls, The Throne, or The Battleship. For whatever reasons, Sheldon Air Service had flipped a switch in our subconscious and we had both personally decided that we should go for it. Why not? We were both accomplished rock climbers, having climbed handfuls of 5.12 sport routes and 5.11 trad routes. Still, there was trepidation, at least in my mind. Our one problem was that the largest thing we have climbed together was a six-pitch classic in Hatcher Pass called “Toto” (5.10). Neither of us are what you would call hard men alpine climbers, and we were both nervous to get on the biggest route of our lives. Perhaps my Mountain

Trip jacket I was wearing would add to my credibility? (I had guided a Denali trip for Mountain Trip earlier in the summer). Unfortunately, this “credibility” I thought I had was instantly negated by Lang’s Amish-style beard and cotton shirt he was wearing and planned to fly onto the glacier in.

The Dragon’s Spine formation rises 3,000 feet at its highest point, and would require roughly 4,600 feet of technical climbing to reach its lofty summit. Our biggest hazard quickly changed from technical ability to something that shuts down expeditions constantly, weather. We presumed that we would need three days at most to complete the traverse; from intuition as well as very vague information from previous climbers that have made attempts. Although two parties have tried the traverse before, the sheer size does not lend itself to sharing adequate information regarding route direction and difficulty. Lang and I knew that this was essentially an onsite attempt, as were the previous ascents.

Landing on the Pika Glacier at 2:00 p.m., we waved bye to our pilot David Lee, set up a very crude, shanty basecamp, and sorted gear.

“Approach shoes or mountain boots?”

"Should we bring the #4 Camelot?"

"Do you have enough 'tat' to rappel?"

Before any second guesses were made, we were skiing downglacier by 4:00 p.m. Two hours and two crevasse punches later, we were stashing gear in the moraine and walking to the base of the Dragon's Footstool. Through thin seams, sparse cracks, and good chicken heads, I wove my way up the Footstool through my lead block and a quick two hours later we stood on top, having established a new route in the Alaska Range. We were psyched to say the least. Keeping with Roger Robinson's Lord of The Rings theme, we named this route "Second Breakfast" (Alaska Grade III, 5.9R, 850 feet).

Our first signs of humans were the rappel slings on the back of the tower, placed by Zach Clanton and James Gustafson nearly three years before.

Clip. On rappel. Off rappel. Pull ropes. Stack ropes. Climb on.

Several easy pitches up the First Tower led to the routes crux pitches, a 5.10 "thuggy" off-width immediately followed by "The Cracks of Doom" (5.10+). After a lot of swearing and gear pulling, Lang managed to pull through both of the cruxes. Thankful that these weren't on my lead block, any smug thoughts I had soon disappeared as I was forced to climb these two pitches with the follower's pack. Ouch.



*Lang Van Dommelen on the First Tower.*

Several low-angle pitches in the dark led to our fist bivy site. Around 2:00 a.m., seven hours into the climb, we dropped packs on a bivy ledge barely large enough for us, used the last of our water to make some food, and promptly passed out. The 7:00 a.m. wakeup was both a blessing and a curse – a blessing by the fact that we didn't have to shiver any more, a curse by the fact that we were extremely sleep deprived, having been up



*The Dragon's Spine from the base.*

for a full 19 hours the day before.

A quick start ensued, knowing that we would find snow at the top of the tower to quench our very dehydrated bodies. Three more pitches from the bivy brought us to the top of the tower, where we could clearly see the terrain ahead. We were calm and confident, but knew that this would be the wrong place to be if the weather decided to shift. Thankful for low-angle terrain, we switched to the approach shoes we had packed, relishing in the newfound comfort for our toes.

It was at this point, when I began digging into my pack for my food bag, that my stomach curled up into my throat. Dump out the pack. Re-pack. Dump out again. Where was my food bag? I quickly scanned the ground around me. Nada. The classic alpine epic had slowly crept up on me. I had no food, halfway into an almost-mile-long traverse. "I've read about this s--t happening to Steve House and laughed!" I told Lang. "F---g karma!" Maybe this wasn't as epic as Steve House losing a boot shell halfway up a climb, then duct-taping a crampon to his liner, but in the moment it felt pretty close. My confidence in my ability to go without food for the next day overshadowed the need to call off the climb for my silly mistake. I mean, I had one Clif Bar left. That should be enough, right?

Two very wandery pitches, involving me having to post-hole up to my knees in my approach shoes, switch to climbing shoes, and then climb a beautiful 5.9 corner pitch, only to be greeted by a 1,000-foot foot drop at the top. I promptly down-climbed and retraced my steps through the snow, this time in my climbing shoes. After over an hour of confused fumbling around, trying to find the right line through the very large choss blocks that sat teetering on the ridge, I reveled in a



*Brady Deal (left) and Lang Van Dommelen in Talkeetna.*

discovery. "I found tat!" I shouted back at Lang, who gave a whoop of delight, finally realizing we were in the right place.

Our glee was soon clouded with fear and we examined the rappel situation. A somewhat good anchor (if you call a slung chockstone wedged in between more chockstones, all balanced on a block the size of an average coffee table a good anchor) appeared to lead into the abyss, with 1,000-foot-plus drops on either side and a polished, smooth gendarme in front that blocked direct access to the second tower of The Dragon's Spine. Many thoughts floated through our heads, concerned with the quality of the anchor, the length of the rappels, and the tower to come. Seconds stretched into minutes, and we both look at the sky, then at each other.

Huge cumulus clouds had begun forming up over the Granite Creek Glacier, and we knew they would be an instant threat as they began spilling their way over the peaks of Little Switzerland. Game over. Weather window closed. Time to rappel. After retracing our steps back to the first tower, we made five painless rappels straight down the face of the first tower. After chopping a rope on the last rappel and down-climbing what we dubbed the "über choss gulley" in the dark at 2:00 a.m., we deemed it too unsafe to travel the glacier in our weary state and thus begun our second shivery bivy, only this time in a light rain.

After a rest day, we leisurely climbed the Middle Troll (Alaska Grade II, 5.8, 1,300 feet) and The Plunger (5.12a/b) before a serious weather system moved in and we were pinned in our tent for four days to endure thunder, lightning, and unrelenting rain. Many pancakes were eaten and hands of rummy were played after we read our two books we had brought (big mistake). With reports of worse weather to come, we quickly texted our pilot David at Sheldon Air Service as soon as the torrential downpour ceased. He swooped in, plucked us out, and before we knew it we were enjoying cookies on the hot tarmac of the Talkeetna Airport.

All told, we climbed roughly 2,300 feet of terrain over the course of 20 hours, making one bivy en route. We established "Second Breakfast" (Alaska Grade III, 5.9R, 850 feet), and presumably made the third ascent of "The Two Towers" (Alaska Grade IV, 5.10+, 3,000 feet). This turned out to be the wildest trip of my life and the largest climb I have ever completed. It is apparent to me that this is a very complex route, which will require several attempts to work out its hidden intricacy that it has thrown at all the climbers who have ventured onto the spine. The Dragon isn't going to relax its snatch any time soon.



*Lang Van Dommelen ascends "The Cracks of Doom."*

## Mile 5: Gold Mint Trail

Text by Chris Wright



*Chris Wright and Jewel Lake near the base of the Mint Glacier.*

*Photo by Robb Christenson*

On a clear Saturday morning two friends and I embarked on what was intended as a roughly 25-mile, two-day hike that included a hike up the Gold Mint Trail to the Mint Hut and the Mint Glacier, a traverse through Back Door Gap to the Bomber Glacier and the 1950s-era bomber crash remains, and back down to Archangel Road to complete the loop.

A mile or two into the hike, the beauty was already stunning with plenty of wildflowers when we spotted a beautiful several-hundred-foot waterfall way in the distance that was running from the start of the Little Susitna River. The river begins at the Mint Glacier, forming a lake and then the waterfall. We passed the Mile 4 marker with the waterfall still off in the distance and the trail becoming a bit rougher and eventually

climbing up a steep, rocky, muddy slope. After reaching the Mint Hut we were able to leave our packs and hike what seemed like a few miles to the glacier and to the top of the waterfall. But we still had not reached the Mile 5 marker.

The next morning we began our trek to find the Mile 5 marker and the bomber, but ultimately took a wrong route as we headed up a very steep ridge with loose boulders and required scrambling. I'm guessing about 1,000 feet.

As I climbed a relatively steep hill, sometimes using all fours, I moved too quickly. Suddenly I found myself a little ledged out with a tough climbing move – but nothing I had not done before. So I made a good lunge climbing move, extending my right arm all the way and my shoulder dislocated as I slipped a little. Immediately, I slid back four to five feet, stopping on a tiny ledge with two relatively good footholds, my shoulder dislocated and arm pointed up holding a handhold and my left hand with a good hold, also.

We were headed up a sometimes grassy, sometimes boulders, sometimes loose scree and the three of us were trying not to push boulders down on each other. I had taken a route around a group of rocks while my two friends went to the left. I saw them moments before my predicament that left me out of sight. But we still had not reached the Mile 5 marker.

I started yelling for help – but they couldn't hear me. So, there I was on a ledge with a 20- to 30-foot drop to a sidehill boulder area and a 4-foot climb to a grassy hill (it was all steeper than it



*Mint Hut*

*Photo by Chris Wright*



*Waterfall en route to the Mint Glacier*

*Photo by Chris Wright*

seemed) that would be safe. This happened about 9:00 a.m. Sunday morning. A fall from that spot would have been very, very bad. The position of my arm and shoulder was manageable at that point from a pain standpoint, but any slight movement or weight on it created tremendous pain. So I was stuck. And we still had not reached the Mile 5 marker.

Stupidly I was using a new Osprey Atmos backpack, but that meant my whistle attached to my old Gregory pack was left at home. So I yelled. At some point I was able to get my water bottle, which was in my right-side backpack pouch. It actually took quite a bit of effort to maintain balance and manage the pain of opening the Nalgene to drink. I continued to yell for almost two hours. Later I found out my friends had a whistle and used it a lot, but I could never hear it. And they couldn't hear me. The waterfall was way across the valley (probably a few miles), but its roar was audible. And we still had not reached the Mile 5 marker.

My legs began to quiver a bit. I could go back and shift weight back and forth, but the feet were also starting to tingle. My left foot was on a hold about the size of half my foot and my right foot was wedged into a crack. I was left with a decision on whether I should try to climb out on my own with one arm or jump down. To my left was a grassy area that gave me some hope that I could stop or bounce there before falling another 10 feet to rocks. Up was a good foothold for my left foot, and another good foothold for my right foot. I thought perhaps with luck I



*Jay Pullins climbs up toward the Mint Glacier.*

*Photo by Robb Christenson*

could do a quick one, two, three dynamo move to get up using my left arm for counterbalance. I was really hoping we would make it to the Mile 5 marker soon!

I gave myself an 11 a.m. deadline before I would try the move. I didn't want to wait so long that my legs would be shaking uncontrollably.

And right at 11 way down the chute, my buddies finally appeared in sight. They had reached the top of the ridge, realized it was the wrong route, looked for me a while, but assumed I realized the same thing and headed back down. They were climbing back up to where I was when we spotted each other. I was already becoming hoarse even after drinking my



*Waterfall above the Little Susitna River.*

*Photo by Jay Pullins*

liter of water. It took them about 10 minutes to climb to me and we realized it was even worse than I thought. The grassy area above me was nothing close to flat and they had nothing to anchor onto. So one guy climbed down next to me somehow and helped guide my feet up, while the guy above me basically dragged me on my face up the hill. All of this movement was creating unbearable pain in my shoulder, but they got me up. It took me quite a while to even drag my body to a safer area 10 feet away. My friends also had not yet seen the Mile 5 marker.

So then I told the guys this had happened to me before (playing basketball in a gym), and there was no way I could move and hike unless we got the shoulder back in. I tried to guide them through it, but it just



*Chris Wright (left) and Jay Pullins with Jewel Lake and the Mint Glacier in the background.*

*Photo by Robb Christenson*

wasn't working. As stupid as this sounds, the best pain management was them literally pulling against me and me pulling against them like tug a rope with my arm. That made the pain manageable, but we were trying every kind of rotation back in and it wasn't working. At this point we were probably about 1,000 feet up a very steep hill and 10 to 12 miles from a car with another 40-minute drive to a hospital. No cell service at all. There were not a lot of options. They had left their backpacks about 500 feet down and I was out of water so couldn't even take the pain meds I had in my pack. Finally frustrated, and tiring my buddies out with pulling my arm, I tried something different. With my arm pointing mostly straight down I bent straight over to pick up the biggest rock I could hold. That made the pain manageable, so leaning to my left up the hill I started down. And it was working! I was desperately hoping to find that Mile 5 marker.

There was a long way to go and a couple very steep sections. The trail was often muddy and sometimes in calf-deep water, unless you could balance on the side of the trail. I couldn't sit on my butt and slide because I always had to lean left to make sure I never rolled toward my right arm. My buddies were taking turns carrying my 30-pound pack. Any slight loss of balance and the pain was tremendous, even though my arm wasn't touching anything. We made it down off the boulder scree area. At this point, with 10 miles left, I told them I thought I could carry my pack. The weight wouldn't be on my shoulder and it was killing them. So we tried that. My arm was mostly in a slightly sideways and down ridiculous "Heil, Hitler" pose. So I just started going. It hurt no more to hike fast than it did to hike slower, so I moved as fast as I could. At times it was a very narrow and muddy trail with high brush and trees on both sides, so I would have to hike sideways because of my arm

sticking out. A couple times it caught on very small branches and bushes and I would yelp in pain.

I was very excited when we reached the Mile 4 marker. We made it to the car by 7:30 p.m. and to the hospital by 8. I begged the doctors to immediately just get it in – even before an x-ray and the doctor tried. But I think my muscles were just too locked in. They did an x-ray, got me some muscle relaxers and pain med/sedation and got it in finally. It was a pretty heavy sedative, because at that point I only remember bits and pieces. There was no fracture. I've seen an orthopedist and he allowed me to get rid of the sling, as long as I promised to be extremely careful not to re-dislocate the arm. There is very little pain, although the arm and muscles are quite sore. The entire arm feels like dead weight. I can write and type without discomfort, but can't bear any weight.

The last time my shoulder dislocated was five years ago, and all I did was physical therapy. He told me that surgery was an option and every time it happens, it makes it more likely it can happen again. He also said I have an incredible range of flexibility and motion with both arms, which can allow positions making me more susceptible. The MRI showed a torn labrum and I will have surgery in a few weeks. Although I am sure it won't be foolproof, I cannot risk being in that kind of situation again.

I am still processing the ordeal. To hike 10 to 12 miles and down what I did with a dislocated arm was insane. I can't wait to go find that Mile 5 marker and finish the trip we started!

Pictures of the hike are on my facebook page:

<https://m.facebook.com/christopher.wright.79230/albums/10205884128121481/?ref=bookmarks>.

To view a Robb Christenson's video of the trip, visit

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=youtu.be&v=cV3K50qCjfs&app=desktop>.



*View from the Mint Hut toward Mint Glacier Waterfall.*

*Photo by Chris Wright*

# Peak of the Month: Camel's Hump

By Steve Gruhn

**Mountain Range:** Chugach Mountains

**Borough:** Matanuska-Susitna Borough

**Drainages:** East Fork of the Matanuska Glacier and Harvard Glacier

**Latitude/Longitude:** 61° 29' 57" North, 147° 18' 32" West

**Elevation:** 11020 (± 20) feet

**Prominence:** 1,500 feet from Mount Thor (12521)

**Adjacent Peaks:** Rhino Peak (10930) and Snowshoe Peak (10715)

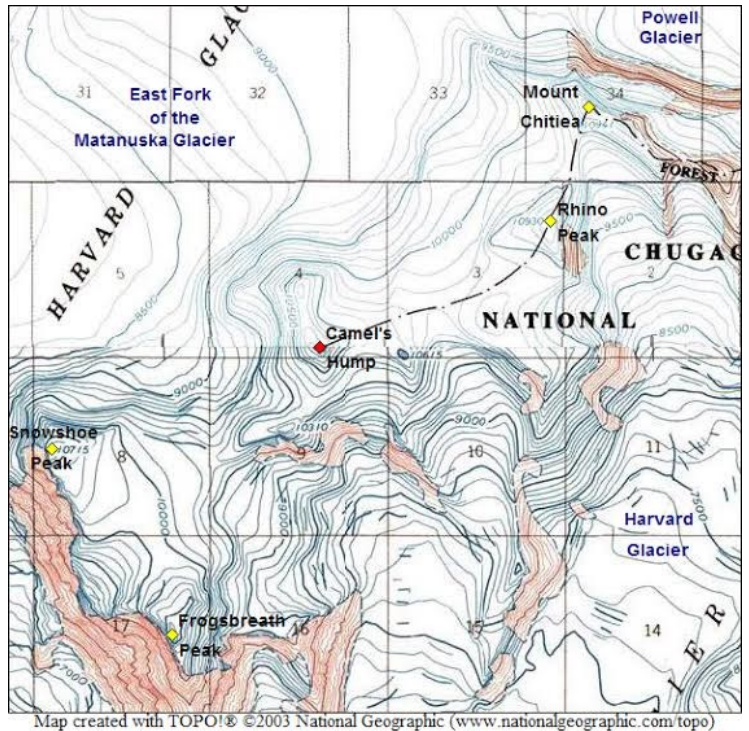
**Distinctness:** 800 feet from Rhino Peak

**USGS Maps:** Anchorage (B-1) (1:63,360) and Anchorage B-1 NW (1:25,000)

**First Recorded Ascent:** 1990 by a National Outdoor Leadership School party

**Route of First Recorded Ascent:** Northeast face to the north ridge

**Access Point:** East Fork of the Matanuska Glacier



This peak is denoted by an enclosed 11000-foot contour on the Anchorage (B-1) USGS map with 100-foot contours and is indicated by an enclosed 10920-foot contour on the Anchorage B-1 NW USGS map with 120-foot contours. Combining the information from both maps indicates that the summit elevation is somewhere between 11000 and 11040 feet. Splitting the difference, I call it 11020 feet. Camel's Hump is, by my count, the 17th highest peak in the central Chugach Mountains, excluding the Eastern Chugach Mountains east of the Copper River, and it is the 181st highest peak in Alaska.

At the time of his death in 1969, Vin Hoeman had been working on a manuscript about the mountains of Alaska and the Yukon Territory. In that manuscript he identified numerous mountains and assigned alphanumeric designations to the unnamed peaks he deemed worthy of attention. One of those peaks in the Chugach Mountains, which Hoeman labeled as Peak C-27 in his unpublished manuscript, is the subject of this month's Peak of the Month.

This double-summitted peak didn't receive much further attention until 1989 when Tom Choate led a party intent on climbing it, but high winds prevented the pilot from landing at

the desired location. After an attempt was thwarted early on by weather, a crevasse fall, and a sprained back, the party, which included Gary Lawton, aborted the attempt and instead set out to work on establishing a potential site for the future Scandinavian Peaks Hut.

In 1990 a National Outdoor Leadership School party climbed the peak, ascending the northeast face and climbed to the saddle between the two summits. From there they climbed to the south summit. They named the double-summitted peak Camel's Hump.

A few years later the folks at bivouac.com also noted Camel's Hump and, not knowing of the NOLS' name, assigned the name Teleost Peak.

The information for this article came from the Grace and Jon Vincent Hoeman Collection archived at the University of Alaska Anchorage/Alaska Pacific University Consortium Library, from Tom's article titled "The Scandinavian Peaks and Matanuska Hut Site," which appeared in the May 1989 *Scree*, from records obtained at the NOLS facility off Farm Loop Road north of Palmer, and from bivouac.com

(<http://bivouac.com/MtnPg.asp?MtnId=22740>).

# AUGUST BOARD MEETING MINUTES

August 14, 2015

## **VP-Upcoming programs (Galen Flint)**

August: Meeting at McHugh and hiking to Resolution Bluff and back for and introduction to this cool climbing area. Will bring ropes and see if there is interest to climb. Could use a hand to carry ropes and set up some anchors.

September: Cory Hinds is lining up speaker in next week or so (before Scree deadline).

Dave Staeheli – West Ridge of Mount Blackburn

October – To be determined; Galen's court.

Treasurer's report (Aaron Gallagher is out; here is his summary)

Revenue Year-to-Date: \$6,721

Expenses YTD: \$16,068

Huts expenditures: \$12,545 (Pichler's Perch \$12,010)

**Secretary's report** (Not available; Max Neale is out of town; I will send him notes.)

## **Huts (Cory)**

Pichler's Perch re-skin. Complete. Need volunteer to help put together a poster or other acknowledgement for our sponsors Rain Proof Roofing and Arctic Insulation.

Dnigi Hut relocation. Hut condition assessment and visit to new hut location later this summer.

## **New hut site visits**

Cory – winter attempt, turned back, possible avalanche danger

Dave Staeheli – summer attempt, not feasible via Sobriety Pass

Need to try another variation to see if it is feasible to get there! May need to fly it.

Visit Dnigi Hut and conduct assessment. Cory is discussing with Stan Olsen.

Mint Hut. September 4th Dave Rhodes planning trip and work party to decant barrel and install urine-separating toilet. Stan Olsen – Suggestion to wash lower walls with trisodium phosphate (TSP) and install vent to cut mold growth.

Bomber Hut. Stan Olsen – Suggestion to wash lower walls with TSP.

Scandinavian Peaks Hut. Boris Babaev and Nica Zlatkovski will fly in with Meekin's Air Service on August 19th to fix broken window.

Greg Bragiel doing a great job fielding reports and getting info posted on website.

Leases on Department of Natural Resources land need to be updated every five years. Cory's court; no action yet.

## **Training**

Summer rock course – big success and a lot of fun. The key seemed to be getting a lot of ropes up, enabling everyone to get

tons of climbing. Should try to keep this going as annual course.

Ice Fest – Jayme Mack is organizing; announcements have been posted. Registration opens September 1, online only, and closes September 18th. Help needed for gear check: contact Jayme.

Winter Basic Mountaineering School. Plan to line up a selection of courses with combination of volunteer and paid instruction. Josh Clark to help organize. (For example: Ascending Path – ice climbing, Alaska Avalanche School – avalanche training, Dave Staeheli – snow climbing, volunteers for snow shelters, Brian Aho for crevasse rescue). Request this be assembled by September meeting for announcement.

Jayme is stepping down as training chairperson. Need a replacement. Any volunteers please contact Cory.

## **Hiking and Climbing**

Need a volunteer on the Board to help find a replacement for the Hiking and Climbing Committee Chair; Vicky Lytle is stepping down. Cory requests that Greg Encelewski and Carlene Van Tol work on this.

Request all Board members contact at least one leader and ask them to do a fall/winter trip. Or lead a trip themselves. Deadline: August Scree, August 24th.

Mentoring (Rachad Rayess)

Plan to continue the program. Rachad to lead.

## **Library (Cory)**

Recommend \$50 Alaska Mountain and Hiking gift certificate to recognize Charlotte Foley for the good work and leadership in getting the books straightened out. Approved. Cory to pick it up.

## **Equipment (Josh)**

Equipment was moved from Arctic to Best. Arctic storage now closed. May grab a couple ropes for August meeting hike to Resolution Buff.

**Parks Advisory** – no report.

## **New Business**

Peak Lists and names: to keep or not to keep.

Review website

Discussion. Tim Silvers present.

Decision: motion passed to:

Keep existing lists as-is and add names as needed to existing lists.

Hold off adding any new lists (e.g., Western Chugach). Can be evaluated by future Board.

Need new venue for Christmas Party, so we can bring food. Galen to follow up on some options.

**Next Board meeting:** September 14

## Mountaineering Club of Alaska

|                |                 |              |                                     |                 |              |
|----------------|-----------------|--------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------|--------------|
| President      | Cory Hinds      | 229-6809     | Board member (term expires in 2015) | Rachad Rayess   | 617-309-6566 |
| Vice-President | Galen Flint     | 650-207-0810 | Board member (term expires in 2015) | Joshua Clark    | 887-1888     |
| Secretary      | Max Neale       | 207-712-1355 | Board member (term expires in 2016) | Jayne Mack      | 382-0212     |
| Treasurer      | Aaron Gallagher | 250-9555     | Board member (term expires in 2016) | Carlene Van Tol | 748-5270     |
| Past President | Greg Encelewski | 360-0274     |                                     |                 |              |

Annual membership dues: Single \$20, Family \$25

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](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto: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: Aaron Gallagher - [membership@mtnclubak.org](mailto:membership@mtnclubak.org)

Hiking and Climbing Committee: Vicky Lytle - [hcc@mtnclubak.org](mailto:hcc@mtnclubak.org)

Huts: Greg Bragiel - 569-3008 or [huts@mtnclubak.org](mailto:huts@mtnclubak.org)

Calendar: Stuart Grenier - 337-5127 or [stugrenier@gmail.com](mailto:stugrenier@gmail.com)

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Web: [www.mtnclubak.org](http://www.mtnclubak.org)

Find MCAK listserv at <https://groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/MCAK/info>.

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