

# the SCREE

## Mountaineering Club of Alaska

March 2017

Volume 60 Number 3



"An unrecorded ascent is nothing; one badly recorded is little more."

- Sir Martin Conway

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Monthly meeting: **Change of Venue and Time!** Thursday, March 30, at 7:00 p.m. at the 49th State Brewing Company, 717 West 3rd Avenue in Anchorage. A short meeting will be followed by a screening of the Backcountry Film Festival. FREE for members, \$10 for non-members.



# 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 7:00 p.m. on March 30, 2017,

at the 49th State Brewing Company at 717 West 3rd Avenue in Anchorage, Alaska.

[https://www.google.com/maps?safe=strict&q=717+W+3rd+Ave,+Anchorage,+AK+99514+map&um=1&ie=UTF-8&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjvL7ssarSAhVL1mMKHVy0CCAQ\\_AUICCGb](https://www.google.com/maps?safe=strict&q=717+W+3rd+Ave,+Anchorage,+AK+99514+map&um=1&ie=UTF-8&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjvL7ssarSAhVL1mMKHVy0CCAQ_AUICCGb)

For the MCA Membership Application and Liability Waiver, visit

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

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## Cover Photo

Alke Staal leading the last pitch before the traverse on "Voie Originale de l'Y" of the Miroir d'Argentine in Switzerland.  
Photo by Pat Schmalix

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**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.

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**Monthly Meeting: *Change of Venue and Time! Thursday, March 30, at 7:00 p.m. at the 49th State Brewing Company, 717 West 3rd Avenue in Anchorage.*** A short meeting will be followed by a screening of the Backcountry Film Festival. FREE for members, \$10 for non-members.

## Hiking and Climbing Schedule

**April 1-9:** Bomber traverse backcountry ski touring, glacier travel. Approximately 35 miles. Visit the Snowbird, Bomber, Mint, and Dnigi Huts. Trip leader: Bragi, [unknownhiker@alaska.net](mailto:unknownhiker@alaska.net) or 350-5146. Deadline to sign up: March 11.

**June 17-18:** Flattop Mountain sleepout. No leader.

**June 23-July 1:** MCA Summer Mountaineering Instructional Trip. This is a vigorous hiking, climbing, and glacier-travel traverse through the Talkeetna Mountains, the Bomber Traverse, wherein the group stays at various locations that lend to the specific instructions. Basic mountaineering skills, snow travel, ice axe/tool use, ice climbing, glacier travel, navigation, route finding, rappelling, rock climbing, fun, exploration, leadership skills, and confidence building. Glacier travel. Approximately 30 miles. Trip leader: Greg Bragi, [unknownhiker@alaska.net](mailto:unknownhiker@alaska.net) or 350-5146. Deadline to sign up: March 23.

## Choate's Chuckle

- Tom Choate

When teaching ice climbing, have your students turn their ice axes over so they can get the point.

Online? Click me!



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

## ***Ship Creek Trail Maintenance***

The Mountaineering Club of Alaska recognizes the contributions of Anthony Munden, Bethany Munden, and Charlotte Morthorpe during the Ship Creek Trail Maintenance trip January 7 and 8, 2017. Thank you for all your hard work clearing trail from the Arctic Valley trailhead five miles southbound on the Ship Creek trail (Arctic to Indian). At least a dozen large trees and numerous smaller ones blocking the trail corridor were removed. Trip leader: Greg Bragiel.



*Anthony Munden.  
Photo by Greg Bragiel*



*Charlotte Morthorpe on left and Bethany Munden on right.  
Photo by Greg Bragiel*



*Travis McAlpine leading "Rain Check" (WI4), in Valdez on Presidents' Day Weekend.  
Photo by Mark Moller*

# Chena Dome Trailathon

Text and photos by Wayne Todd

May 23, 2015

With Jennifer DuFord and Carrie Wang



*Wayne Todd at the shelter.*

A friend calls, asking if we're interested in a long hike near Fairbanks. Carrie says yes, so we're in. The miles mentioned have me concerned.

After much driving, we pull over to camp on an old road. The mosquitoes quickly amass. Jennifer opts for a tent; Carrie and I opt for the car, but discover during the night the car is not bug-proof.

At the northern trailhead the next morning, we quickly debate day trip or overnighter. Someone suggests day trip with emergency overnight gear (it's not me). Hmmmm?

The morning is cool, but it's obvious the day will get quite warm, this being interior Alaska with blue skies above. The trail winds up through an old forest burn. A couple rare snow patches still reside in hollows. A waddling semi-familiar butt meanders up the trail. Porcupine!

Spring flowers dot the already dry-looking alpine zone. The wind increases as we ascend. Occasional cairns mark the ridge top, which seem unnecessary on this clear day, but wandering off the correct undulation (there are many) would probably be quite easy in other weather. We fully acknowledge the steady

wind is a blessing as it keeps the mosquitoes away, moderates the temperature, minimizes sweating, and maintains that hair-in-the-wind look (good or frightening).

We pass a couple who recently saw a brownie, then soon spy one for ourselves. The next encountered group is packing up, including a bear can.

After a few hours we reach Peak 3750 and descend to an area with a few bathtub size water sources (beyond Mile 7). We filter up as this route is known for minimal water sources. The passed group arrives and their dog immediately plunges into the water source, quickly making dirt soup (hopefully they have a good filter).

An hour later, after cresting Peak 4070, we see glistening metal ahead. This aircraft wreckage is quite large. Despite having crashed in 1951, all the non-ferrous parts still look repurposeable. Our visit seems appropriate over Memorial Day weekend. (This was a Curtiss C-46F Commando and had only four occupants, though it could carry up to 62 as the civilian version).

An hour later we make Chena Dome, the highpoint of the hike at 4421 feet (with communication station). There are other pos-



sible “summits” along this loop, including Peaks 3348 and 3450, for which we set out.

Due to latent snow, we have another water source an hour after the dome. Ptarmigan trot around the area. The ridgeline and trail slowly start curving to the left, back toward our starting point.

Now mostly headed back, the lone shelter along this route is seen in a ridge dip (at Mile 16+ if traveling against the clock). It looks house-sized from above, but upon arrival, the actual 10-foot-by-12-foot (?) size is revealed. There is no usable water in the catchment system. We have a nice visit with the lone male habitant from Spain. We opt to continue on, though we carry sleeping pads and insulation layers.

As the sun slowly arcs down, the worn wood mile markers gather more significance, and the hikes up the mounds are less fun. The stacked hazy ridges to the south remind me of the Smoky Mountains.

The spring bouquets are more colorful as the sun’s rays angle low. More ptarmigan entertain us. We begin our final descent and look forward to some quality sitting time. The last couple trail miles include numerous long switchbacks, which are nice for the knees, but frustrating when you want to see a trailhead. All is quiet when we reach the southern trailhead and only a few cars pass by on Chena Hot Springs Road as we hike back to the car.

My “super comfy” hikers actually caused blisters under my toenails. We weren’t really sore the next day, but it felt good just to take a short mellow hike and soak in the hot springs at Chena.

We were 15 hours for the approximately 32 miles (14 hours possible). Über-hikers or runners can factor down the time and slower hikers can factor up. Elevation gain 8500 feet. An easier option would be an out and back hike to the dome (approximately 20 miles).



*Carrie Wang, Jennifer DuFord, and Wayne Todd at the airplane crash site.*



*Carrie Wang hikes on past Mile 25 on the Chena Dome Trail.*



*Communication tote on the summit of Chena Dome.*



*Left to right: Spanish visitor, Jennifer DuFord, Carrie Wang, and Wayne Todd visiting at the shelter.*

## Eklutna Traverse: Avalanche on the Raven Headwall

Text and photos by Danny Dresher, Malcolm Herstand, Max Neale, and Dave Rhodes



*Avalanche from the Raven Headwall to the Raven Glacier.*

What's the best way to exit the Eklutna traverse when snow stability is suboptimal? The answer to that question depends on a variety of factors. Here, we share what we learned as a result of the avalanche we triggered on the Raven Headwall when exiting an Eklutna traverse in mid-February.

Our itinerary:

February 6: Two of the group of four began from the parking lot at Eklutna Lake and skied on alpine touring gear to Pichler's Perch.

February 7: Toured up the West Branch of the Eklutna Glacier.

February 8: Traveled to Hans' Hut.

February 9: Climbed and skied Insignificant and Whiteout Peaks. Two others skied from Eklutna Lake to Pichler's Perch.

February 10: Two enjoyed the protection of Hans' Hut while two others skied to Hans' Hut.

February 11: Traveled from Hans' to Crow Creek Road via the Raven Headwall. Weather forecasted to deteriorate with additional snow arriving on February 12.

Once we decided to exit to Girdwood, our options were of limited quality. We could either descend the Raven Headwall and ski down to the road – a fun, fast descent – or hike our skis down Goat Ridge, which would still require crossing avalanche terrain.

The right call might have been to use the clear, windy weather on February 11 to return to the Serenity Falls Hut from Hans' Hut, and ski to the car through deteriorating weather on February 12. Instead, our plan was to ski to the Raven Headwall on February 11 from Hans' Hut, evaluate safety, and if need be, ski back down to Rosie's Roost. The evening of February 11 we discussed ways to protect the entry to the headwall, including creating an anchor for a belayed ski cut. In the end, partly because we were cold, partly because one group member was battling the flu, and partly because snow pit results were better than expected, we decided to proceed without a belayed ski cut. That was another indication that we should have exited by a different route. The slab did seem soft enough from the pit position that the slab would fail underfoot if it did fail. Obviously this did not turn out to be the case.

Encouraged by Extended Column Test (ECT) results without propagation at the top of the headwall, each of us decided we were comfortable to ski the slope one at a time. We noted there was a possibility the top layer would slide because of the poor interface between the wind slab and the sun crust. However, we thought the consequences would be moderated by what we assessed as a low chance of step-down, and the likelihood that the slab would break at the skier's feet and not above. Besides the decision-making flaws centering on a fixed notion of finishing the trip in the Girdwood direction despite changing conditions, another major takeaway was the deconstruction of the



notion: "if X top layer goes, it won't be of Y unacceptable consequence." That we recognized that any portion of this snowpack could fail represents it was unacceptable for us to ski the slope. Another major red flag was that I'm sure all four of us would have walked away from that slope and gone back the way we came if we encountered it on a normal ski touring day where it didn't represent the portal to overall safety and the end of a trip whose safety profile was deteriorating.

Everyone in the party had beacons, shovels, and probes. We did not have airbags on account of the week-long traverse. Three people in the party had Avy Level II certifications.

Skier #1 gently skied approximately 50 vertical feet below our pit location, mostly side slipping. Each of us noted the slab changed density as he descended and sounded harder and more hollow. The slab shattered beneath his skis and the crown broke approximately 20 vertical feet above his position, propagating across the entire width of the slope, rock to rock. "BOOM!" Skier #1 lost one ski instantly in the collapse and both poles, which did not have leashes. Skiers #2 through #4 watched for signs of skier #1, but lost visual contact due to the powder cloud. Skier #1 was then seen tumbling behind the mass of debris. Skier #1 came to a stop on top of the snow, approximately 400 vertical feet below us, two-thirds of the way down the slope. The debris ran the length of the headwall and onto the glacier. Both skis released. A ski and two poles came to rest in close proximity to Skier #1, who signaled he was not severely injured, stepped into a ski that had come to rest nearby, and skied down to find his other ski in the debris pile, which washed out over a considerable distance, rendering it two to four feet deep in any given place. Skier #2 descended and made contact with Skier #1. Skiers #3 and #4 followed without incident and the teams re-roped in groups of two to descend the Raven Glacier and onward to the road.

Here are some additional technical details on the avalanche at the Raven Headwall:

### Recent Avalanches

There were two small, natural slough point releases from the bottom portion of the headwall. No witnessed slab activity, including on the surrounding terrain on our tour that day from Hans' Hut to the top of the headwall.

### Weather

Four days were mostly clear and mostly windless. February 10 was windy (gusts about 40 miles per hour at Hans' Hut) and it

snowed lightly, on and off for 24 hours from 20:00 on February 9 to 20:00 on February 10. It was difficult to find an undisturbed area to estimate depth of new snowfall, perhaps 4 inches.

### Snow Surface

Predominantly soft windslab. This transitioned to hard slab at the area of maximal loading, where the slide was triggered. Active loading noted from northerly winds transporting/

digesting snow from February 10.

- Pit depth: 40 inches.
- Location: Skier's left at the top of the headwall, above the convexity.
- Slope angle: 20 to 25 degrees.
- Profile from top to bottom:
  - top 5 inches: wind slab, 1 finger hardness
  - sun crust/melt freeze crust, 0.25 inch, pencil or knife hardness
  - next 18 inches, homogenous, 4 finger hardness
  - well bonded interface between storm snow
  - next 17 inches, homogenous, 1 to 4 finger hardness
- ECT-N17; 5-inch wind slab collapsed directly beneath the shovel at #17 (from the elbow), no lateral propagation, no "cash registering." No additional failure through #30.



*Descending the path of the avalanche from the Raven Headwall to the Raven Glacier.*



*Digging a snow pit near the Raven Headwall.*

## Two Weeks in Switzerland and France

Text and photos by Pat Schmalix

September 29, 2010



*The Gwächtenhorn with the road leading to the base. The Teirberghütte is on top of the black rocks below and right of the summit.*



*The Berghotel Almagelleralp.*

This trip started over eight years ago when I met Alke Staal during a 21-day mountaineering course in Alaska. We were both a little disappointed with the lack of technical climbing during the course with “guide training” in the title. We kept in touch and everything lined up for me to visit in the fall of 2010. We decided two weeks would be the ideal amount of time.

**Day 1.** I arrived in Geneva around 15:00 and Alke picked me up for the hour drive back to his beautiful hotel, Esprit Montagne, in La Chapelle d’Abondance, France.

**Day 2.** We drove for about an hour to Barm, Switzerland, to a nice crag to get reacquainted climbing with each other. We climbed somewhere around 10 single-pitch climbs and 3 or 4 two-pitch climbs with beautiful surroundings and the sound of cowbells all day.

**Day 3.** We climbed “Les Marmottons” (the Marmot), 5a, on Cornettes de Bise just outside of La Chapelle. It was a steady 400-plus-meter hike to the base. Alke led the first two pitches, 4c and 5a, that we combined into one on awesome limestone. I got the next two pitches, 4b and 3, that we also combined into one. At our second belay Alke told me to take the next lead, leaving the small overhanging crux pitch for him. Getting to the third belay, Alke took the small rack and



*Cornettes de Bise.*

clipped the first two bolts, 5c. Not seeing how to get up to the third bolt, he traversed right and up; somewhere along the way he lost his grip and fell. I tried pulling slack, but saw he was headed right for me, so I locked off and braced for the impact, landing on my head and neck just as the rope came tight and knocking off my sunglasses. I watched them tumble down the rock and land on a small ledge while we asked each other if we were all right. Alke took a minute or two then completed the climb. On the first rappel the rope didn’t reach the next set of anchors, so I swung right and ended up slinging a horn for the

next anchor, picking up my glasses along the way. Everything was uneventful the rest of the way to the car.

**Day 4.** Another hour’s drive put us in the parking lot for the Miroir d’Argentine. We hiked up about an hour to the base of “Voie Originale de l’Y” (the “Normal Route”), AD+/II/P2 4c, 400 meters. I took the first pitch, cruising up easy terrain. We swapped leads up until I got off route around Pitch Four. Instead of

following the bolts (that I didn’t see) up the face, I saw cord and webbing sticking out of a flake above me, so I started up. Realizing I was putting in my own gear and wasn’t passing any bolts, I began to wonder about being on route. As I went up, I was concerned with running out of rope. About 10 meters from the top of the flake, I asked how much rope was left and he said no





*Alke Staal just over halfway up the "Voie Originale de l'Y" on the Miroir d'Argentine and heading for the obvious notch.*

more than 15 meters. Thinking there had to be an anchor at the top of the flake, I continued up. Once on top of it, the only thing there was an old piton with some very weathered cord around it. I cut the cord and built an anchor using the old pin and belayed Alke up. We both expressed concern about being off route, but I thought we could climb several cracks up and left to get back on route. Alke gave me the next lead and after 20 meters and four gear placements

traversing up and left we were back on route. Everything went smoothly until we missed the second-to-last belay station due to it being covered in snow and continued up and right to the base of the summit block. We then had to traverse left along the summit block for 40 meters, clipping old pins as our only protection. Topping out through a notch in the center of the ridge, I was surprised by the view. We then had a two-plus-hour walk to the car, getting there just as it got dark.

**Day 5.** Rest day and going for a "walk." We drove a short distance above La Chapelle and walked to a lake in a beautiful bowl then proceeded to climb 450 meters up to a ridge that we traversed that involved somewhere around 4b moves without climbing gear. It was a great day, just not what I had in mind as a walk. More like a hike!

**Day 6.** We hired a guide and headed to Pointe des Ecandies and did the south-to-north traverse, D/II/5a. I forgot my gloves and by the time we got to the base it was snowing. I really didn't like the first two pitches, as I couldn't feel my hands. Warming them up in my armpits during the short belays along the way, it was very interesting to watch Bertrand climb in his boots, as we had on rock shoes. I also learned a few things from him throughout the day. Very fun day of climbing in a spectacular setting!

**Day 7.** A true rest day! No climbing, hiking, nor anything, just planning the rest of the trip. With forecasts of snow, we were

trying to figure out what to climb. Wish I had a camera for Alke's expression when we thought of skiing in Zermatt for the day.

**Day 8.** Woke up early, ate breakfast and hit the road for Zermatt. We stopped in Tasch, north of Zermatt, and took



*Summit of the Breithorn.*

the train, as there are no gas cars allowed in Zermatt. We took the lifts up to the glacier, passing the Matterhorn along the way. Once on top, we ditched our packs at the restaurant and skied for two and a half hours, on October 6th! Once we were done skiing, we ate some lunch, grabbed our packs, and started up the Breithorn (4165 meters). I knew it was a race against the clock, as I have always had problems with acute mountain sickness (AMS). About halfway up, my head started hurting and I really couldn't enjoy the summit to its fullest because of it. We took the East Ridge down, which involved a narrow ridge with relatively steep drops on each side. Just below the col my leg punched through a snow bridge, but only went about knee deep. Made it to the lifts and headed down to the car, then on to Saas-Grund and got a hotel.

**Day 9.** We slept in and went to get food for the next few days at the local grocery store. We then took the lift up out of Saas-Grund and walked an hour to the Weissmieshütte. Once we found the winter room of the hut, we dropped our sleeping gear and headed for the base of the Jegihorn (3206 meters), passing mountain goats along the way. Once at the base, we found our route, "Alpendurst" AD+/II/4c 350m, and headed up. It was very nice climbing and well protected with bolts every two to three meters, a little further spaced in the easier sections. Walking back to the hut, we noticed we would have company for the night. Two guys from Belgium were on a week-long climbing holiday and planning to climb "Alpendurst" the next day.

**Day 10.** We left the Weissmieshütte about 06:30 and started walking around to the Almagellerhütte. We stopped at the Berghotel Almagelleralp for a sandwich along the way, getting to the Almagellerhütte around 12:30. We dropped our sleeping bags and headed for the base of the Dri Horlini. We traversed the ridge, finding very few bolts along the way, placing some gear, but usually just slinging horns. We got back to the hut just as it was getting dark. Two guys from the area offered us brats and some sort of pasta. It was delicious.



*Alke Staal (left) down-climbing snow on Pointe des Ecandies in rock shoes = FUN!*

**Day 11.** People in the hut started to get up at 04:30. We were the last ones up around 06:00. I learned a valuable lesson that morning: always fill your water the night before because there won't be enough left in the morning. We started up the boulder field on our way up the Weissmies (4017 meters). I was actually doing better than expected as dehydrated as I was from the previous day. That changed about halfway from the col to the summit. My head started hurting and I slowed way down. Alke ended up taking the rope from me for the last few hundred meters before we roped up. When we got to what looked like the end of the ridge and a broad snowfield, we roped up and put on our crampons. Crossing the snowfield, I noticed another rocky ridge ahead. We crossed a knife-edge ridge to get to the upper rocky section. As we crested the rocky part I saw another snow dome ahead and thought, "Damn it. Will this thing ever end?" We crossed another knife-edge ridge to the snow dome, and as I crested over the top I saw Alke standing below me. The top was finally here. "Halfway," I thought out loud. We didn't spend much time on the summit and retraced our steps to the hut, picking up our rock and sleeping gear and continuing down to the town of Saas-Almagell (1672 meters) totaling a descent of over 2345 meters (almost 7700 feet). My feet hurt so badly toward the end that I wanted to take my boots off and hike barefoot! We caught the bus back to Saas-Grund and to a hotel and shower.

**Day 12.** We took our time driving to Sustenpass, taking the long way and detouring a few times for sightseeing. We had lunch at Hotel Steingletscher. We then drove the private road to the end parking lot. We made it up to the Tierberglihütte in just over 2:15. The hut was perched on a rock outcropping between the glacier and what seemed like a 1000-meter drop. The main door to the hut was open, but most of the rooms were locked because it was closed for the season, only having the winter room open. The wind started to pick up around 19:45, but it was forecasted to be good weather.

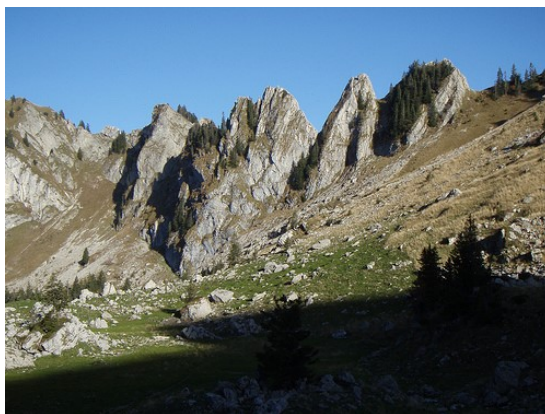
**Day 13.** Probably the best night's sleep I got the whole trip. Overslept the alarm by an hour, but got going quickly. We dropped down to the glacier and headed to the East Ridge of



*The climbing possibilities were endless everywhere we looked near the Tierberglihütte.*

We went round trip from the hut in 4:15. We grabbed our sleeping gear and continued down to the car. We decided to take a "shortcut" and drive by the Eiger on the way back to La Chapelle. Not sure how legal the shortcut was, as we thought the road was for buses only, but no harm, no foul.

**Day 14.** Drove to Champoussin where Alke worked when I met him. Beautiful views of the Dents du Midi across the valley. Met



*The Dent d'Hautaudon, our last climb of the trip, from right to left.*

the Gwächtenhorn (3420 meters), following the beaten path over and through the crevasses. When we got to the ridge the wind picked up, but the climbing was so good we didn't really notice. Moving quickly, only weaving the rope around blocks and using hip belays, we were on top quickly taking pictures due to the wind and continuing down the west side back to the hut. The guidebook said it would take three to four hours up and an hour and a half to two down.

one of Alke's old friends, an ex-professional cricket player named PJ. Then drove to the Col de Jaman and walked to the Dent d'Hautaudon (PD/I/3c, 250 meters), thinking we would have an easy last day of climbing. The ridge was easy climbing, but had quite a bit of exposure with down climbing. The rock reminded me of Quikrete and didn't feel solid, even though it was. We both agreed that if a 4a climber tried it, they would have a heck of a time.

**Day 15.** 05:45 came awfully early. We were on the road by 06:10 to the Geneva Airport, for me to catch my flight to Indiana to visit my parents.

Thanks to Alke for climbing with me for two weeks! And this trip definitely couldn't have happened without two others: Anneke, thanks for letting Alke climb with me and for the delicious food and your hospitality, and my wife Ginny Schmalix for letting me chase my dreams halfway around the world and missing her birthday again!

**Gear Notes:** A light alpine rack with a few extra draws would work for everything we climbed.

**Approach Notes:** KLM.



## Another Two Weeks in France and Switzerland

Text and photos by Pat Schmalix, unless otherwise indicated

September 16, 2013



*The Col des Portes du Soleil above Champoussin, Switzerland.*



*The view from the summit of Mont Tondou. Dômes de Miage is the last summit on the left.*

That trip started in the fall of 2012 when Alke Staal asked if I was interested in climbing Mount Kilimanjaro this year. Of course, I was intrigued and agreed on the trip. I looked into it a little and realized that it was going to cost a small fortune for airfare and for the climb. I wasn't all that excited about the financial side of it due to medical bills we had to pay, but I agreed, so I wasn't going to back out. Around February I mentioned to Alke that we needed to start planning our dates and mentioned the financial burden a trip to Kilimanjaro was going to have. He agreed and said I should just come and visit him, as it would be much cheaper for the both of us. After discussing it over with my wife, I had tickets bought within 24 hours!

**Day 1.** After leaving Sacramento around noon the day before, I arrived in Geneva at 16:20 where Alke picked me up and drove me to his hotel. Needless to say after the flight and dinner I was ready for bed.

**Day 2.** Woke up to a great view from my bed!

One of Alke's friends met us at the hotel and we headed to Mont Chauffé to do a little cragging. The climbing was all bolted on nice limestone that was super textured. I led my first 6a+ (10a) not knowing



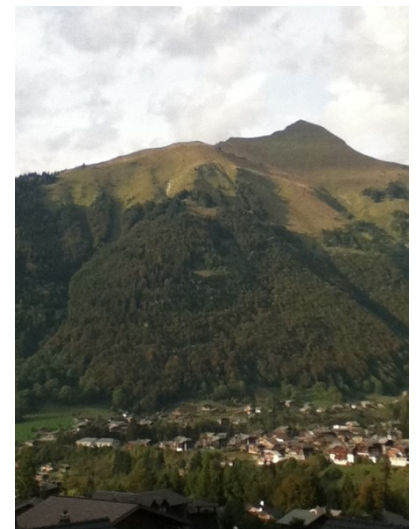
*View from the base of the crag at Portes du Soleil.*

the "+" sign was another grade altogether and not just a hard 6a.

**Day 3.** Alke, Monique Stuut, and I headed to an area above Champoussin, Switzerland, called Portes du Soleil. Alke said several times that the views were beautiful from this crag, and he wasn't lying. We started off on some easier routes and worked up to climb a couple 6a. The rock looked and felt like it was going to come off in my hand, but surprisingly ended up being very solid. The whole time we listened to the sounds of cow bells from below.

**Day 4.** Pure HELL!

About two months before my trip, Alke asked if I wanted to compete in a "Vertical K" race. He explained to me that it is a staggered-start race that climbed 1000 meters in just over 2 kilometers of distance. Not knowing any better, I agreed, but told Alke I wasn't in as good of shape as last time I visited and wouldn't do that great. Within the first five minutes of the race, I knew it wasn't going to be



*The "Vertical K" race started in the field in the lower left and followed the drainage up and right until above timberline, then up to the flat shoulder to the left of the main peak.*

good. Alke started 12 minutes after I did and ended up passing me by the 500-meter mark. I was hurting so bad that I thought about quitting at the 700-meter mark and again at the 800-meter mark. I did so poorly that I even disappointed myself. I'm too embarrassed to tell everyone my time, but I'll just say I solidified the "fat, lazy, out-of-shape American" stereotype. I knew I wasn't in the best of shape, but I'm sure the jetlag, change in diet, and lack of sleep the previous three days added to my problems.

**Day 5.** I woke up still not recovered from the day before, but luckily we had a drive to get to where we were going. We headed toward Passy, France, for a few days to do some alpine ridge climbs. When we got there we hiked up the Refuge de Tré-la-Tête. It was a nice hike that took just shy of two and a half hours. I kept thinking that night that I'd do that hike 10 times with a pack before I'd do another one of those races. This was my first experience with a hut that wasn't closed for the winter. I must say it's nice to have dinner and breakfast cooked for me.

**Day 6.** We left the Tré-la-Tête hut around 08:30 to hike up to the Refuge des Conscrips. It was a nice four-hour hike that included a Himalayan bridge. Beautiful scenery the whole day. Once we got to the Conscrips hut, we dropped most of our gear and hiked the approach for the route we would be doing the next morning in the dark.

**Day 7.** Alke and I woke up for an early breakfast and started on our way to Mont Tondu. The glacier wasn't nearly as steep as we thought it was from the hut and we made decent time up to the col. From there we climbed a snowy slope to the rocky summit ridge. It was a fun, easy, but exposed, traverse that we remained roped up for. I remember thinking that would have been real easy without crampons on! We went from the hut to the summit and back in seven hours, about what the guidebook suggested.

**Day 8.** We woke up early again and tried to climb the "Dômes de Miage Traverse." The weather had moved in and we had clouds

around the summits. We decided to continue as two other groups were also pushing on. We got the first col just as the clouds dropped and one of the groups decided to turn around. We continued up in the whiteout, following the tracks of those from the day before. We got to the second col when the guided couple decided to turn around. We continued up to the first summit and lost the trail. After a few minutes of searching and then a break, we headed down. We stopped by the Conscrips hut to pick up our extra gear and continued all the way down to the truck, parked 8000 feet below our high point. My feet were a little sore when we got to the truck. We drove back to Alke's hotel and had the best French fries I've ever had!

**Day 9.** We sort of took a rest day and did the local via ferrata. I had never done one and it was well worth the time. It would be a good way to introduce people to the exposure or a good work out if one couldn't find a climbing partner.

**Day 10.** Rough nights' sleeps the last couple days. Drove to Morzine, France, to climb a 400-meter route called "Vol du Korbé" (5c). It was beautiful limestone with the climbing getting easier the higher we climbed. At the top we traversed left below a headwall and then climbed up the left side of it.

**Day 11.** A true rest day, no climbing, no hiking, nothing. Just sitting around and watching it rain outside. I slept about 10 hours and think I finally recovered from the race.

**Day 12.** We got a little later start than we wanted and headed toward Zinal and hiked up to the Cabane du Grand Mountet for attempts on a few climbs. It was an amazing four-and-a-half-hour hike that followed the valley a little bit then climbed up to the hut. It seemed like I was doing

better on the hike than on previous days. Our plan was to climb Mammouth after the hike, but due to time, we decided to hold off. Good thing, because it rained/snowed most of the afternoon.



*One of the many exposed areas along the trail to the Refuge des Conscrips.*



*The Himalayan bridge on the trail to the Refuge des Conscrips.*



**Day 13.** We headed out before daylight to attempt the south-west ridge of Besso. It took us a little over an hour to get to the base of the chimney. With all the snow the last few days, there was still quite a bit on the route. With the snow-covered rock, we decided to rope up and pitch out the Class 3 scrambling to get to the ridge, which slowed us down considerably. Once we reached the ridge, after four pitches, we tied in short and I led up the ridge. Great exposed climbing! After traversing the ridge for a couple hours, we realized we weren't going to get to the top and back to the base before dark, and with clouds moving in, we decided to turn around soon. We were on the north side of the ridge and I decided to go up a little more to get us on the correct side before turning around. Once on the right side, I found the trail that we were supposed to follow up bypassing the section we just climbed. We followed this trail down to the approach chimney and back to the hut. Once back in the hut we looked in the guidebook and it said to be sure to note where you gain the ridge. If you miss this spot on the way down the climbing would be much harder than that on the route. That might explain why it took us so long to traverse the section that we did.

**Day 14.** Again we woke up and were out the door before daylight. This time we were headed toward Zinalrothorn. Seeing it from Besso yesterday, we decided there was too much snow-covered rock to try for the summit, so we just settled on just trying to get to the shoulder above the col and left the rock gear at the hut. The perspective of distance was totally different there. Looking at the shoulder from the hut, it looked like it would be there in no time. Several hours later we were still trying to reach the col below the shoulder. Once on the col, we followed the knife-edge ridge toward the Zinalrothorn. Just shy of the shoulder, we ran into the snow-covered rock. I attempted to get through it, but without rock gear there wasn't much protection and I decided to down-climb and call it a day. As soon as we decided to head down the sun came out and made for some great views.



*Pat Schmalix in the obligatory summit shot on the "Mammouth Traverse" with the Zinalrothorn in the background.*

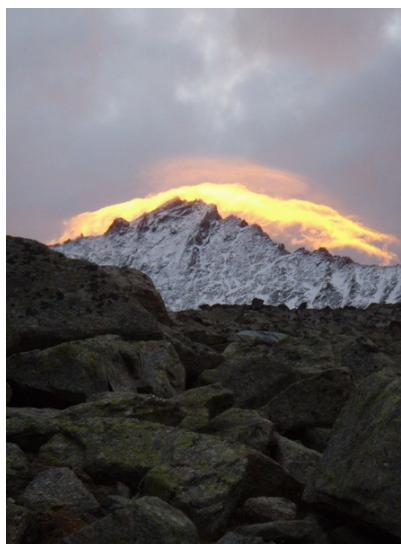
*Photo by Alke Staal.*

**Day 15.** We still had the "Mammouth Traverse" (3b) to do before we hiked out that afternoon. We hit the trail just as the sun came up and were climbing up to the ridge shortly thereafter. The hardest part of the beginning was the route finding. Once on the ridge, it was straightforward and exposed climbing. Nothing too hard and we were short roped the whole route. It took us about five hours hut to hut. We then packed our stuff up and headed down to the truck.

**Day 16.** I learned the last time not to make my return flight too early, so I booked it for 11:00. Long trip home! From Amsterdam to Seattle,

I had a little brat kicking my seat every two to three minutes and the parents did nothing to stop him. Finally made it home to Sacramento at 21:30 for a 20-plus-hour travel day.

Several people have asked me which trip I enjoyed the most. That's a hard one to answer. My first trip we had perfect weather and met all our planned objectives. This trip we had to plan around the weather and didn't summit but two of the five bigger climbs we planned. We also chose bigger objectives this time around and decided to not use a guide at all. Getting shut down is part of climbing, in my book; it can't all go as planned all the time. So I'd do either one of them over again in the blink of an eye.



*The Zinalrothorn at sunrise.*

I did learn it wasn't nearly as expensive to live there as I thought. I think I've got Ginny talked into living over there for 90 days right after I retire in a couple years! There was a lifetime of climbing there, so not sure if 90 days will be enough.

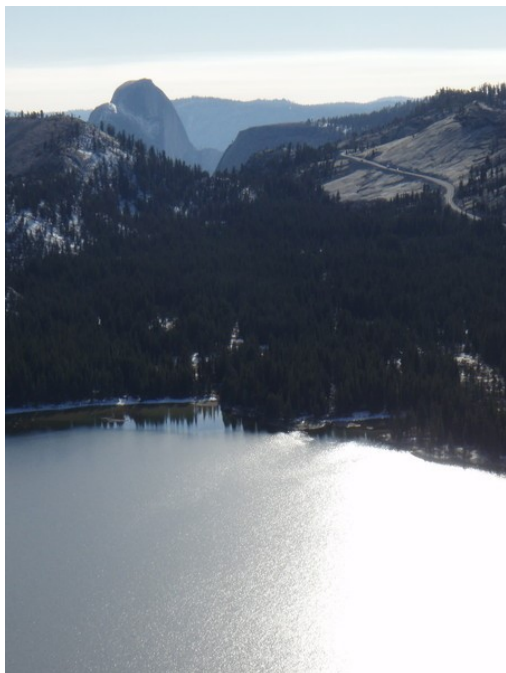
**Gear Notes:** Light alpine rack, slings, and a few extra quickdraws

**Approach Notes:** KLM was by then partnered with Delta. I booked my flight on the KLM website because I was impressed with them on my last trip. Unfortunately I got stuck flying Delta across the pond.

# Eight Days on the East Side of the Sierra Nevada in California

Text and photos by Pat Schmalix

November 9, 2013



*Half Dome from the summit of  
"Great White Book."*



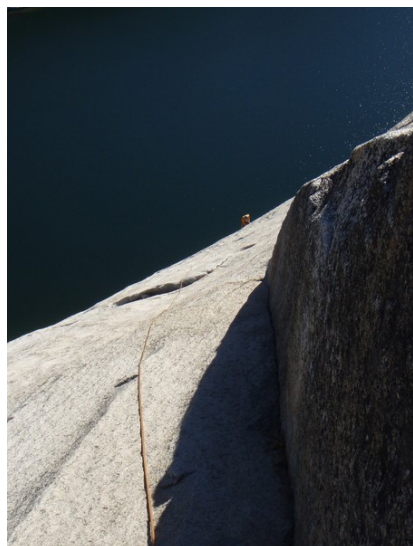
*View down the canyon from  
about halfway up to the water  
ice climbs on Day 4.*

**Day 1.** Josh Hutchison picked me up in his rig Saturday morning for a week on the east side.

With 120 being open through the park, we decided on climbing in Tuolumne along the way.

Two of the climbs right off the road that had been on my to-do list, but I'd never had the chance due to crowds in the summer were "Hermaphrodite Flake" to the "Boltway" and "The Great White Book."

As we pulled into the parking area, there was a party on the flake and another standing at the base waiting their turn. Decision was easy so we jumped on "The Great White Book" (5.6 R). I'm not sure if we climbed higher than most before belaying or what, but we ended up doing it in four pitches. The first pitch was a fun corner with decent protection that we laybacked/stemmed



*Run-out fourth pitch on "The Great White  
Book."*

our way up. The second pitch continued the stem/chimney and was where the "R" came into place. I ended up climbing to the bolts without ever placing a piece. The other two pitches were pretty run-out also, but I at least got a couple pieces in. After the exposed walk-off, we went to check out the ice in Lee Vining then to Saddlebag Lake for the night.

**Day 2.** We woke up a little before 05:00, had breakfast, and then started hiking toward North Peak as the sun was starting to come up. We followed the well-established trail around the lake and followed an old road for a bit before turning off and heading cross-country. We tried picking our way around snow patches and lakes to the base of the Northeast Couloir of North Peak. The last ¼ mile took almost an hour with the thigh-deep powder snow over boulders. We kept looking at the line to the left of the Northeast Couloir, as it was a very striking line; but as it was our first ice climb of the season, we settled on the our original objective. A few hours later we were topping out on the couloir and forwent the summit due to time. We made it back to the truck as the sun was going down.

**Day 3.** We slept in a little, then headed back up to Toulomne, and climbed "Hermaphrodite Flake" (5.4) to the "Boltway" (5.8). Josh led the tunnel-through variation, which was fun, but a bit awkward, as I had a pack hanging from my harness. I got the lead on the next two pitches that were fun climbing in a great location. Once we were done and had a quick lunch, we headed over to



Lembert Dome and climbed “Left Water Crack” (5.7R). The Super-topo book pretty much summed it up, “Awkward, strange, weird, and runout.” Not sure how this was such a popular route and don’t know if I’ll do it again. We drove to June Lake for dinner at the Tiger Bar then to Parker Lake trailhead for the night.

**Day 4.** We headed out at 05:40 and followed a beautiful trail to the east side of Parker Lake. This was where we lost the trail and I started questioning my sanity! We checked the weather the night before and it was supposed to be 70 degrees in The Valley that day. With a lifetime of routes within minutes of the car just an hour away, why in the hell was I doing a steep three-hour approach to freeze my ass off. After hearing that solid “thunk” every ice climber searches for, it all made sense.



*The ice made it worth every step.*

We decided to climb the left side of the right-hand flow first. Josh cut a deal with me and got the first lead (I would get the first lead on our trip to Alaska in 2014). He made easy work of the lower angled section down low. I could tell he had some issues as he was trying to clear the lip of the climb; it wasn’t until I followed him that I realized why. Our first waterfall ice of the season, the ice on top of the lip was breaking up leaving slick slab exposed with nothing to use the ice tools on. I was a little nervous on top rope, so I could only imagine what was going through his head on lead.

Once down, I picked a line just to the right of what he climbed and led up to a 15-foot vertical curtain. I drove a screw in at the base of it and headed up. I was thinking, “November 12th, in California, and I’m climbing water ice. Who would have thought?” We decided to rappel off a V-thread and headed to the left-hand flow for one lead each.

We lost the trail heading back down, so it put us at the truck right as it was getting dark. We drove to Mammoth for pizza and gas while trying to figure out a plan. I texted a couple friends and asked about hot springs in the area. With directions in hand we headed out. I opted to freeze that night walking to

and from the hot springs, but enjoyed the nice soak.

**Day 5.** Another lazy morning starting off with breakfast then another soak in the hot springs. Once we got ourselves motivated to hit the road, we headed farther south to Owens River Gorge (ORG). I started off on a short 5.5 route to get used to the rock, having never

been there before. I’d always heard ORG was soft in their ratings, but after climbing that, I thought there’s no way I was going to be able to climb harder than 5.8. We went around the corner and climbed a couple more routes then moved to an area called “The Warm Up Wall.” We climbed several routes in the 5.7 to 5.9 range there, and then headed back toward the truck, stopping to climb another 5.7 and 5.9. At the base of the 5.9 there was a wooden plaque honoring someone who died climbing the

route. This messed with my head the first half of the route. Once I finished that we headed back up to the truck via moonlight. We headed into Bishop for a couple things and then to the famous “Pit” campground for the night.

**Day 6.** After heading back into Bishop for a few things and stopping at the bakery, we headed back to ORG. This time we took a trad rack as we had seen a couple cracks the day before that intrigued us. The first route I led was a 5.4 fairing crack that had loose rock all the way up it. I felt it was very sketchy for a 5.4 and it reminded me of a 5.5 at Lover’s Leap called “The Farce.” Once Josh climbed it



*The famous “Pit” campground. Not bad for \$2 a night!*

we did a beautiful 5.8 called “Mile High Crack.” I’d say that was probably the single best rock pitch of the whole trip! I probably could have led it with triples of 0.5 and 0.75 and nothing else. It had good feet on the outside and decent jamming where there weren’t face holds to climb. Feeding off the high I got from it, I jumped on “Wowie Zowie,” my first 5.10a lead! Josh liked “Mile High Crack” so much that he decided to lead it afterward. We then headed farther into the gorge and climbed several routes, including another

10a lead for me and a 10c clean on top rope. Overall it was a long day of hard (for me, anyway) climbing and my fingers were raw. We had sushi on our way through Bishop heading down to the Ala-

bama Hills.

**Day 7.** It was a little windy when we woke up and chilly in the shade. We climbed a couple easier routes; one was bolted and the other was bolts with gear. We then walked to an area called “The Corridors” and climbed a couple more routes up to 5.10a. We tried one climb, but didn’t know how hard it was and neither of us could make it to the top. Josh climbed the route next to it to retrieve our bail draw. I couldn’t make it up that route, so he had to re-climb it to get our gear. We walked over to “Paul’s Paradise” area and climbed “Ted Shred” (5.9, but Mountain Project consensus was 5.7+). It would have been a fun little climb, except my fingers were so raw I could barely hold onto anything. Josh cleaned it in his approach shoes and we hiked over to “The Shark’s Fin.”

A friend told me that if I was ever in the Alabama Hills that I needed to climb it, if for nothing else the views and photo op. I lead “Shark’s Fin Arête” (5.7), though it had great views of Mount Whitney, I thought it was anticlimactic when I reached the top. If we would have had a third to get a picture of me climbing it, I might have felt a little differently about it. I climbed the other 5.7 on “The Shark’s Fin” and called it quits. Seven days of climbing with so many climbs at or near my limit yesterday really had me hurting. Josh climbed the 5.7 and moved the rope to another climb (5.10ish) and I belayed him while lying on the ground. We lay in the sun, relaxing, until the sun ducked behind the mountains and then we headed back to the truck for dinner. After dinner we headed back up to Bishop and stayed at the “Pit” again.

**Day 8.** With my fingers being so sore and with a tired body, I wasn’t sure how much climbing I would have in me that day. We headed back to ORG; that time we went to the upper gorge while toting a trad rack. We went to “All You Can Eat Wall” and climbed a fun 5.7 trad route called “Fine Dining.” It had a couple tricky sections in it, but great gear all the way. The shunts at the top were very worn and made me a little nervous being lowered on them. Once Josh cleaned it we moved over to “Alfred Hitchcrack” (5.8), which was a fun lead. There was plenty of jamming broken up by

nice face holds. “Cinderella” (5.9), a four-star bolted route was next. It looked like a nice finger crack all the way up a dihedral.

When I was back on the ground, all I told Josh was, “That’s not what I expected from that climb.” He asked what I meant and I told him, “You’ll see.” Once he climbed it, he agreed.

We moved across the canyon to a climb called “Silence of the Poodles” (5.8). I started to get a pit in my stomach while I was gearing up and fought it the whole way up that climb. Not sure if it was the climb or me, but it felt really hard. Came to find out it’s one of the hardest 5.8s in the gorge. We moved over to “My Favorite Animal is a Liger” (5.10b) where Josh led it. He cleaned everything on the way down as I wasn’t sure if I was going to lead it, top rope it, or pull the rope and move on. I decided to give it a go on

lead and somehow made it without falling for my first 10b lead! We sat and watched a guy cussing out his partner for taking him up a multi-pitch 10c. He was hanging in free air thrashing around trying to get back on the rock. Turns out it was his first multi-pitch climb. Several of us were laughing at the situation and their conversation. We moved further up the canyon where I belayed Josh

on a 10c. I passed on even attempting it and decided on a short 5.8 crack climb we had passed along the way. I geared up and tried pulling the first move and my arms wouldn’t bear any weight. I stepped off the rock and declared I was done for the day. Josh asked if I wanted to try it again and I declined, saying I didn’t want it to piss me off and I’d just save it for next time. I belayed him up it, then on another climb next to it, and then we headed out.

We grabbed Subway for the road in Bishop and decided to try and get home. I walked in my door at 10:45 after eight days of climbing. Needless to say, I was tired and ready for a shower. I didn’t envy Josh as he had another hour-and-a-half drive north to get home. Overall a great trip and I look forward to many more with a great partner.

**Approach Notes:** Really enjoyed the camper!



*Josh Hutchison cleaning “Mile High Crack.”*



*“The Shark’s Fin” with Mount Whitney in the background.*



## Five Days in Bozeman

Text and photos by Pat Schmalix

December 15, 2014



*Pat Schmalix' first climb of the season on the far left.*



*The views from the base of "Genesis I."*

This trip got planned during a climbing trip to Woodfords Canyon over Josh Hutchison's birthday in the spring of 2014. We agreed on dates for this trip and for another trip to Valdez in February 2015.

Our plan was to drive out from Sacramento, leaving early on the 13th. My wife ended up in the hospital for the previous week, so Josh and Becky Hutchison left that morning. Even though my wife and the nurses said I should leave, I just couldn't with my wife still in the hospital. She was released Saturday afternoon and I ended up flying up to Bozeman, Montana, on Monday, the 15<sup>th</sup>, getting there around midnight.

The first day I was there (Tuesday, the 16th), we just went to "Genesis I" (WI3 to WI5, 20 meters) in Hyalite Canyon. It was my first ice of the season and Josh had no problems throwing the lead to me. I climbed the left side at WI3, as I placed a few too many screws trying to get my confidence back. After a few laps we moved the rope to the right to top-rope steeper terrain (WI4). After several more laps we moved to the far right side and top roped yet another three or four laps. When we were done

Scree—March 2017

we went back to the hotel, cleaned up, and then headed to the Montana Brewing Company for some beers and pizza.

Wednesday Becky flew back home and Josh and I got a later start. We hiked up to "Genesis II" (WI3+, 50 meters), where Josh led the right side as another group was on the left. While Josh was leading, two guys from Oregon showed up. We chatted for a while before I headed up. They decided to start up the left side once the first group came down. Once we got down, we hiked over to "The Hangover" (WI3, 50 meters), where three guys were making a photo shoot out of it. We didn't expect them to take as

long as they did, so we waited to jump on it. Once they were down, I led up the easier lower section, placing few screws, as I was feeling more comfortable. At the top there was a steeper section that I backed off of and went around to the right, where it was less steep. Josh followed without incident and we rappelled down and headed over to "Upper Green Sleeves Left & Right" (WI3, 60 meters). Josh led the left one and I led the right one. Both had tricky dirt/root climbing toward the top that



*Becky Hutchison told Pat Schmalix that he couldn't beat her to the top of "Genesis I," so he stopped and took a few pictures.*

both of us found interesting on lead. We called it a day and went for burgers at Montana Ale Works.

Day three we planned on doing "Mummy Cooler II." We stopped in the Amphitheater on our way up and Josh led "Thin Chance" (WI3, 15 meters) and I took "Fat Chance" (WI3-, 15 meters). We got up to "Mummy Cooler II" (WI3+, 45 meters) with no one around; what an amazing setting! Josh offered me the lead, as he knew it was one of the climbs I wanted to do, but I passed, as it was his turn. He took one of the steeper lines up the center for a great lead and climb. We took a break for lunch and were looking at "The Scepter" (WI5, 30 meters). The top was pretty steep, but hacked out and the bottom looked fun and challenging.

After hemming and hawing around about it Josh said, "If you don't lead it, I will." That's all it took for me to tie in and start up. Looking at it from underneath was completely different than looking at it from a way back. Just under halfway up, there was a bulge that proved much harder than it looked. Being several feet above my last screw, it was pretty intimidating. After clearing the bulge there was a good rest before the steeper upper section. I'd have to say it was one of my top three hardest leads ever, but I was glad I did it. Once we finished it Josh decided he wanted to lead it and agreed that it was quite a move on lead. We headed out and went to one of the best pizza places I've been to, Audrey's Pizza Oven. After pizza we went to Lockhorn Cider House recommended by Nick Weicht in Valdez; awesome place with great cider!

Friday we headed up to "The Unnamed Wall" with intentions of getting on "The Thrill is Gone" (M4, WI4, 35 meters). It looked much harder than the M4 rating and we didn't think it protected as well as it said, so we passed. There was a solo climber on "The Fat One" (WI3, 45 meters), so we continued on to "The Elevator Shaft" (WI3+, 75 meters). Josh led it, as I was still feeling the Cider House from the night before. The center section was pretty thin with visible water running behind it, making for a more interesting lead than it



Josh Hutchison with "The Scepter" on the left and "Mummy Cooler II" on the right.



"The Elevator Shaft."

looked like. After following and rapping we pulled the rope and I led it. We then headed over to "The Fat One." I got the lead and I took the steepest line that was near vertical. While putting the second screw in, my feet blew and I almost lost it, but held on to my tools. It felt so good getting that screw in and clipped! I finished the route without incident. With nothing else in the area we were at a loss for what to do. After some discussion we decided to go to Paradise Falls. We hiked down and drove to the other parking lot. We were expecting a flat, easy hike, but were surprised that it wasn't flat. After hiking up, we found that the climb wasn't in enough for our liking, so we headed back to "Genesis I" to get some laps in.

For the last day we decided to hike in to "The Dribbles" (WI4, 155 meters), as we were hoping that doing the long approach would help us avoid the crowds on the weekend. It seemed to work, as there was just one party at the base when we showed up and they were the only ones we had seen while we were there. Josh gave me the first lead, as this is where he and Becky went the first day they were there and the fest was going on and they top-roped the first pitch. For some reason I decided to break my rule and follow up behind the other

party. Luckily I didn't get hit by anything, but it sure made me question why I decided to follow up behind them. Josh chose an impressive and sustained line for the second pitch. After "The Dribbles" we walked back down the trail and up to the "Winter Dance" area where I led "Over Easy" (WI3, 40 meters) and "Curtains" (WI4, 25 meters).

We headed home the following day, running into a pretty bad snowstorm driving down to West Yellowstone and getting back to Sacramento around 8:00 p.m. Thanks again to my wonderful wife Ginny Schmalix for letting me gallivant around the country, chasing my obsession, especially while she wasn't doing so great.

**Approach Notes:** Alaska Airlines and Josh's 4Runner



# Peak of the Month: Taunton Peak

Text by Steve Gruhn

**Mountain Range:** Eastern Chugach Mountains

**Borough:** Unorganized Borough

**Drainage:** West Fork of the Tana River

**Latitude/Longitude:** 60° 55' 29" North, 143° 2' 15" West

**Elevation:** 7689 feet

**Prominence:** 3439 feet from Goodlata Peak (8166)

**Adjacent Peaks:** Peak 7332 in the West Fork of the Tana River drainage and Yvonne Peak (7111) in the West Fork of the Tana River drainage

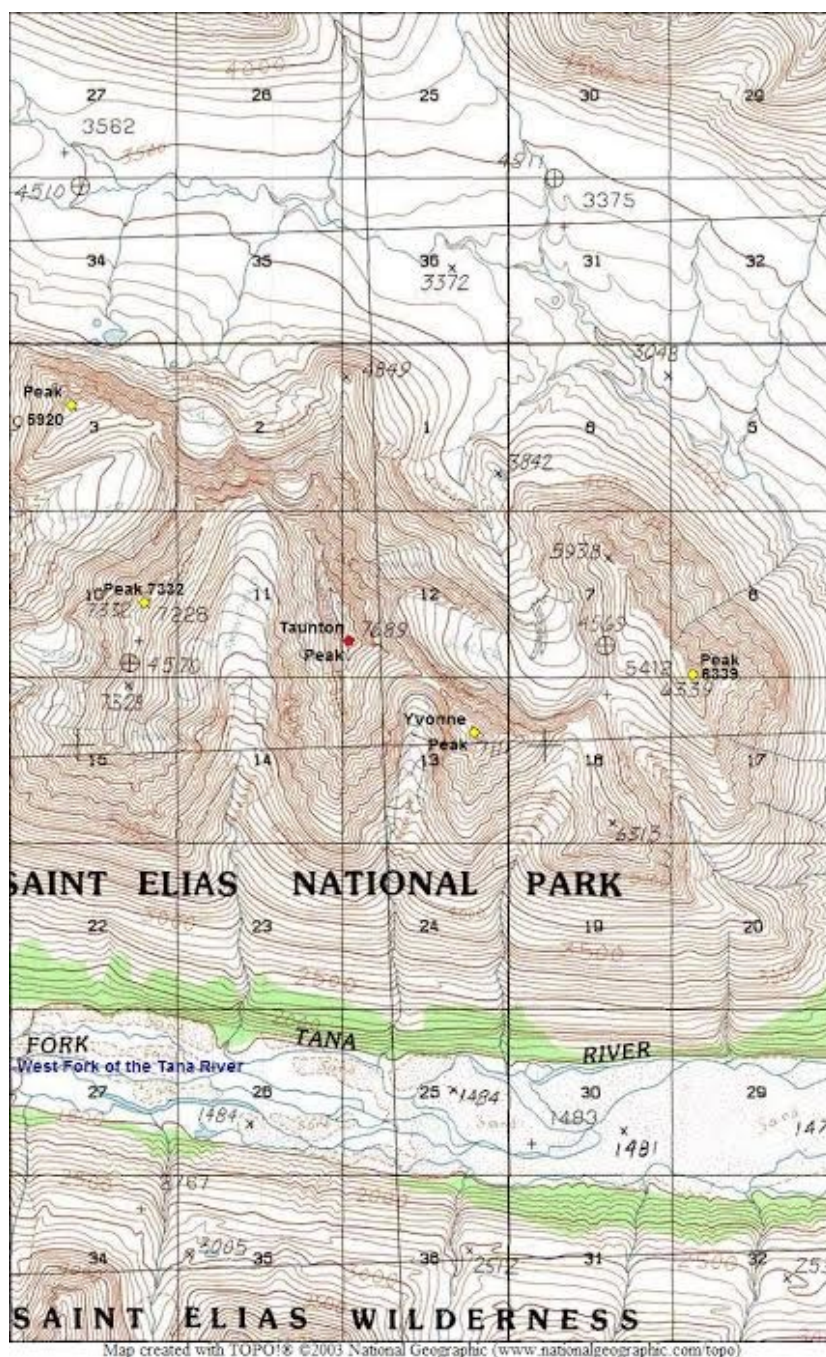
**Distinctness:** 1139 feet from Peak 7332

**USGS Map:** Bering Glacier (D-6)

**First Recorded Ascent:** July 28, 1985, by Danny Kost

**Route of First Recorded Ascent:** South ridge via the southeast face

**Access Point:** Tana River Landing Strip



On July 16, 1985, Bob Jacobs flew Danny Kost in his Stinson from McCarthy to the Tana River Landing Strip on the west side of the Tana River near the eastern edge of the Eastern Chugach Mountains. Kost then bushwhacked, at times on all fours, along the west bank of the Tana River through what he described as “treacherous country” to eventually set up a base camp on July 21 at about 3400 feet in a valley about two miles north of the West Fork of the Tana River and about five miles west of the Tana River. He had traveled about 13 miles over six days to

reach that base camp. On July 22 he climbed Peak 6148 north of the West Fork of the Tana River. The following day he moved his camp to an elevation of about 4000 feet and southeast of Boone Peak (7327), which he climbed on July 25. (He called Peak 7327 Kristin Peak after his niece and goddaughter Kristin Boyd. However, Kost never publicized that name and bivouac.com now calls Peak 7327 Boone Peak.) On July 26 Kost moved his camp north of Peak 7111 at an elevation of about 3800 feet. On July 27 he moved his camp to the 5412-foot col

overlooking the West Fork of the Tana River to the south and climbed Peak 6339 to the east.

On July 28 Kost left his camp at the col and climbed Peak 7111 via its east ridge. Noting that the northwest ridge leading toward Taunton Peak (7689) was gendarmed with broken rock, he descended the west side of the south ridge to a snowfield, which he crossed to ascend the southeast face of the south ridge of Taunton Peak. He followed Taunton Peak's south ridge to its summit, arriving just before 3 p.m. The summit and north ridge were badly corniced. Kost's descent involved retracing his steps to the snowfield and then traversing the south face of Peak 7111. The traverse involved crossing several incised gullies. Though none of the climbing was technical, the rock throughout the region was broken and loose and the climbing involved a lot of steep scrambling and snowfield crossings. He named Peak 7111 Yvonne Peak in honor of his mother, Yvonne Kost, and Peak 7689 Arlis Peak to commemorate his father, Arlis Daniel Kost, who had died in 1978. However, Danny Kost did not publicize those names and Peak 7689 is now called Taunton Peak on bivouac.com. Taunton Peak was named after Taunton Castle, which is in the county of Somerset in southwest England.

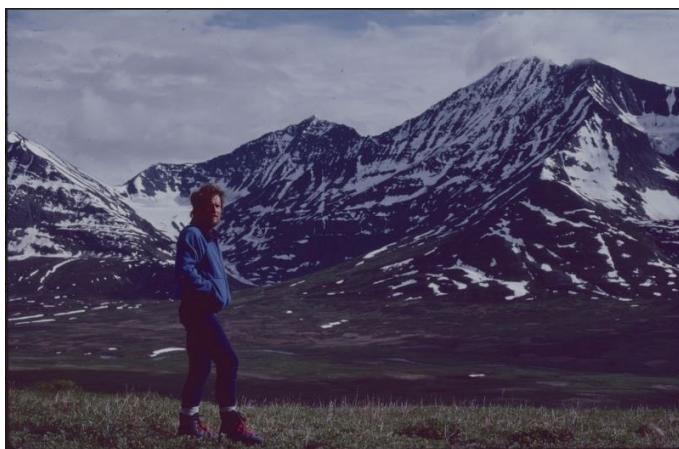
On July 29 he moved camp down to the toe of the glacier north of the saddle. The following day he moved his camp to about the 4200-foot level southeast of Peak 6119. On July 31 Danny Kost continued his exploration by climbing both Peak 7080 in the Granitic Creek, East Fork of the Chakina River, and West Fork of the Tana River drainages and Acton Peak (7550) in the Granitic Creek and East Fork of the Chakina River drainages. (Kost called Peak 7550 Knasel Peak after Yvonne Knasel, his mother's name after she had remarried. However, Kost never publicized that name and bivouac.com now calls Peak 7550 Acton Peak.) On August 3 Kost climbed Peak 101 (7234) in the West Fork of the Tana River drainage. (Kost called Peak 7234 Sandra Peak in honor of his younger sister Sandra Kost Stepro, although he never publicized that name. In 1984 the USGS published an updated Bering Glacier (D-6) map that noted a bench mark on the summit of Peak 7234 with the name Peak 101, which had been assigned by a U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey (USC&GS) party in 1953. However, Kost didn't have

access to this updated map at the time of his trip.) On August 4 Kost climbed Peak 6985 in the Granitic Creek and West Fork of the Tana River drainages. On August 6 he climbed Peak 6650 in the Willow Creek and West Fork of the Tana River drainages. Kost then descended to Willow Creek, crossed a narrow pass south of Peak 5465, and, avoiding bushwhacking except for the last few hundred feet of descent, returned to the Tana River Landing Strip, where he was picked up by Jacobs on August 8 and flown to McCarthy, completing his 24-day solo excursion into the Wrangell-Saint Elias Wilderness.

Because of their wider use than Danny Kost's unpublicized names for the peaks, I have opted to use the published bivouac.com and USC&GS names in this column.

I don't know of a second ascent of Taunton Peak.

The information for this column came from Danny Kost's report titled "P 6148, P 6206, P 6313, P 6339, P 6650, P 6985, P 7080, P 7111, P 7234, P 7327, P 7500, P 7689, Chugach Mountains," which appeared on pages 148 and 149 of the 1986 *American Alpine Journal*; from <http://bivouac.com/MtnPg.asp?MtnId=36040>; from USC&GS field notes available at <https://www.geocaching.com/mark/details.aspx?PID=UV3112>; and from my correspondence with Danny Kost.



*Danny Kost on the north side of Taunton Peak (at right). Also pictured are Peak 6339 (left) and Yvonne Peak (center).*

*Photo by Danny Kost*



# MCA Board Meeting Minutes—February 13, 2017

Attendees: Brian Miller, Charlie Sink, Cory Hinds, Jennifer DuFord, Katie Strong, Max Neale, Nathan Hebda, Ralph Baldwin, Stephen Austria

**Call to Order – 6:15 p.m.**

**Scribe** - Ralph

**Welcome Guests**

## 1. President's Report

- a. Getting out *the Scree*
  - i. Two-step process reviewed. Process should flow more smoothly going forward.
  - ii. Tasks to be completed during first week of each month.
- b. Budgeting
  - i. Charlie would like notification on larger expenses that will come before the board.
- c. Getting signed up to the Credit Union 1 account
  - i. Account signed over to new officers. Sub-account to be set up for new hut expenses.
- d. Google account
  - i. Max will assist board members requesting assistance with google docs protocols
- f. Recording of Minutes
  - i. Discussion ensued. In an attempt for efficiency, at the next meeting, draft minutes will be projected on a screen during real time. If anyone wishes to make a correction, they need to speak up. At the end of the meeting, these minutes will be considered final and adopted by the board.
  - ii. Adopted minutes need to be appended to both *the Scree* and the MCA website in a timely fashion.

## 2. Vice-President (Katie)

Report on Backcountry Film Festival at 49th State Brewing Company as a fundraiser for MCA huts

- a. Request for a budget modification from \$150 to \$550 to pay for 49<sup>th</sup> State Brewing Co. leasing costs.
- b. Discussion ensued.

**Board Motion:** To make March 30 at the 49th State Brewing Co., contingent on availability, the general meeting of the MCA for the month of March and expenses relative to the venue to be covered under General Meeting Expenses.

**Motion Proposed:** Cory

**Motion Seconded:** Stephen

**Result:** Passed unanimously.

## 3. Treasurer (Brian)

- a. Update board regarding agreed increase to library budget to \$600 for acquisitions and activities.
- b. Update board agreed to allocate \$5,000 for purchase of MCA merchandise (apparel, stickers, etc.). Goal is to be revenue neutral or positive.
- c. Updated look into Internal Revenue Service revenue regulations for our club designation.
- d. Discussion ensued. MCA is a 501(c)(7) organization and finances must comply. Brian will complete further research and advise regarding the sale of calendars and other proposed club merchandise.
- e. Cory will be added to the MCA checking sub-account to access funds for hut construction.

## 4. Secretary (Max)

- a. Update of marketing merchandise with Katie Strong and Mike Meyers.
- b. Board meetings will be the second Monday of every month except June, July, and August.
- c. Katie, Max, and Mike Meyers will discuss marketing merchandise further at Ice Festival. Regarding board meeting location, space will be sought at BP Energy Center.

## 5. Huts (Cory)

- a. New hut construction update, if any.
- b. Update: Meeting held this past week with Michael Thompson, architect. Hut construction will use pre-fabricated walls built to high-insulation standards. Foundation will use metal plates and wire mesh gabions filled with native material. Application filed with State and moving through the Division of Mining, Land & Water. Max requests to help with photovoltaic power system. Hut committee consists of Cory Hinds, Mike Thompson, Ross Noffsinger, and Stan Olsen.

## **6. New Member Engagement (Ralph)**

- a. Treasurer will lead membership signup at general meetings. One additional board member on a rotating basis will assist the Treasurer in greeting new members and answering questions.
- b. Stephen and Nathan stepped forward for the February meeting to help.

## **7. Training (Nathan)**

- a. Update of Mentorship Program. Good progress is being made, need for backcountry ski mentors still remains. Discussion ensued regarding liability. Nathan will give Cory mentor and mentee sign-up forms. Cory will get opinion from a club member who is a lawyer.
- b. Cory, Nathan, and Mike Kelty have met to discuss possible activities. Planning is on-going.
- c. Crevasse rescue, snow shelters, and snow climbing are possible training classes. Several board members voiced their interest in crevasse rescue as a top priority.

## **8. Hatcher Pass Report (Ralph)**

- a. Goodhope Creek boundary sign work party on February 4 was a success with participation by members of Hatcher Pass Snow Riders Club, Mountaineering Club of Alaska and Alaska State Parks. Signs were put in place, positive connections built among user groups and a sunny day in the mountains enjoyed by all. Goodhope Creek signage and its maintenance is a service project undertaken by MCA for the last several years.
- b. Hatcher Pass Avalanche Center is going through organizational development and now has an advisory committee.

- c. Friends of the Chugach National Forest Avalanche Information Center Marmot Weather Station webcam is being switched over from an analog to a digital wireless system and may suffer some outages during the next few weeks.

## **9. Parks Advisory (Jennifer)**

- a. No news

## **10. Hiking and Climbing (Ed Smith)**

- a. Greg Bragiel has requested help hiking some gear into the Bomber Traverse for his summer mountaineering course. Cory and Katie volunteered to help at previous board meeting.

## **11. Library (Charlotte Foley)**

- a. Update on Library: Library Social being held tonight, February 13, at REI training room, 6:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. MCA Library Survey to be sent out to membership.

## **12. New Business**

None

## **13. Announcements**

None

## **14. Board Comments**

None

## **15. Adjourned – 7:45 p.m.**

## **16. Time and Location of next Meeting**

Monday, March 13, 6:00 to 8:30 p.m. at the BP Energy Center.



*Bear Creek, Valdez.  
Photo by Mark Moller*



*Kristen Sommers crossing Bear Creek in  
Valdez on Presidents' Day Weekend.  
Photo by Mark Moller*



# Send Your Kids On A Wilderness Adventure!

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**Get them off the beaten path!**

Overlook Bear Glacier from a mountain ridge, canoe the lakes of the Swan Lake System and float the Moose River. Sea kayak from Passage Canal to Blackstone Bay, or jump on a mountain bike and hit the trails.

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Trip dates, difficulty levels and details are available online

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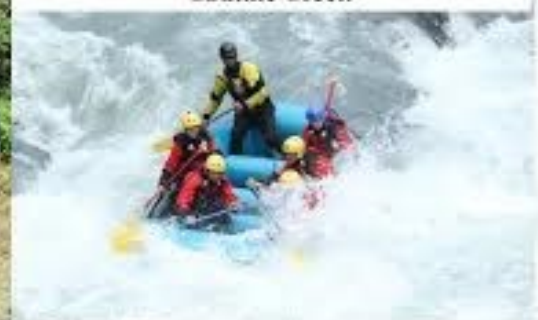
Snowscape camp above Palmer Creek



5th-7th graders on the Kenai River Trail



Sixmile Creek





## Mountaineering Club of Alaska

|                |              |              |                                     |                 |              |
|----------------|--------------|--------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------|--------------|
| President      | Charlie Sink | 258-8770     | Board member (term expires in 2017) | Stephen Austria | 402-540-7037 |
| Vice-President | Katie Strong | 441-0434     | Board member (term expires in 2017) | Nathan Hebda    | 310-3255     |
| Secretary      | Max Neale    | 207-712-1355 | Board member (term expires in 2018) | Ralph Baldwin   | 232-0897     |
| Treasurer      | Brian Miller | 517-402-8299 | Board member (term expires in 2018) | Jennifer DuFord | 227-6995     |
| Past President | Cory Hinds   | 229-6809     |                                     |                 |              |

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: Brian Miller - [membership@mtnclubak.org](mailto:membership@mtnclubak.org)

Hiking and Climbing Committee: Ed Smith - 854-5702 or [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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Find MCAK listserv at <https://groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/MCAK/info>.

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