

**"The true wilderness experience is one, not of escaping, but of finding one's self by seeking the wilderness."**

**- Howard Zahniser**

# the SCREE

## Mountaineering Club of Alaska

**November 2018**

**Volume 61 Number 11**



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**November monthly meeting: Wednesday, November 7, at 6:30 p.m. at the BP Energy Center at 1014 Energy Court in Anchorage. Cory Hinds will give a presentation on "The Construction of the Holden Hut."**



# 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."***

*This issue brought to you by: Editor—Steve Gruhn assisted by Dawn Munroe*

## Cover Photo

Zeb Engberg nailing his way up Silvia's Seam on "Golden Petals" on Xanadu Peak's west face, a pitch named in honor of Catalan aid soloist Silvia Vidal, who established a new route on Xanadu Peak's west face around the same time. This pitch would eventually go free at 5.13+.

Photo by Billy Braasch

**NOVEMBER MEETING:** Wednesday, November 7, at 6:30 p.m. at the BP Energy Center at 1014 Energy Court in Anchorage.

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

Cory Hinds will give the presentation on "The Construction of the Holden Hut."

## Scree Correction

In the September issue the names of the author and photographer for the Mount Ascension trip report were inadvertently omitted. Steve Gruhn was the author and Wayne Todd was the photographer. A corrected version has been archived on the MCA's website.

## Hiking and Climbing Schedule

December 21 - Flattop Mountain Sleepout. No leader.

For the MCA Membership Application and Liability Waiver, visit <http://www.mtnclubak.org/index.cfm?useaction=members.form>.

## Climbing Notes

Richard Baranow reported that between September 29 and October 2 Ross Noffsinger and he climbed Hover Peak, P4290, and P4578 between the East and West Forks of the Twentymile River. The ascents marked Richard's final summits of the 174 peaks of the "Greater Western Chugach Mountains."

Congratulations, Richard!

See pages 11 and 17 of this issue for additional reports of peak-list completions.

**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 11th 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. Send high-resolution file photos separately, including captions for each photo. 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 don't forget to submit photo captions.

## Choate's Chuckle - Tom Choate

Q: The newbie rock climber brought along a jar of strawberry preserves. Was it for lunch?

*Answer on page 23.*

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Online? Click me!



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

## Arthur Peak (3650 feet) and Peak 3850, Coast Mountains

Text by Dylan Miller

On June 1<sup>st</sup>, 2018, Evan Hartung, Brian Delay, Mike Miller, and I, Dylan Miller, jumped in one of Ward Air's de Havilland Beaver floatplanes en route to Taku Harbor, located 10 miles south of Juneau. Our intention was to climb a mountain in that area that likely had never seen an ascent. The peak was visible from the Juneau road system and appeared to host a rather dark and pointy summit, which we assumed would require some technicalities. Our route plan was to climb Arthur Peak, which lay above Taku Harbor, camp there, then the next day make the six-mile, round-trip traverse to Peak 3850, camp in the same location, and head back down to the harbor the next morning.

We landed in Taku Harbor at 5 p.m., threw on our boots and headed up the well-anticipated bushwhack that the Southeast area offered. We found open forest with some blueberry bushes and devil's club here and there. All in all it was an easy approach to the subalpine, which we hit at 7:30, and found camp on the side of Arthur Peak just in time to watch the immaculate sunset happen. That was a most-spectacular setting. With a view looking northwest, we had a perfect side view of the Juneau Icefield, which offered a new perspective on the peaks. I kept saying it looked like Patagonia or something.

The next morning we set off for Peak 3850. We climbed up the beautiful heather and white granite hills of Arthur Peak, which to reiterate, had just a spectacular view of the Juneau Icefield. From the summit of Arthur Peak, we walked the ridge that connected to 3850, losing and gaining elevation as we went. As we approached Peak 3850 we started to see that the summit peak

would be cruxy – steep, rotten rock covered with stunted mountain hemlock and heather slopes. Yet we eyed a sloping rock ramp that gained access to a less-steep heather ramp to the top of the mountain. That turned out to be our only option, for all other options seemed “sketchy.”

The rock ramp required some Class-4 rock moves for about 50 feet. And just below the summit there were some steep 50-degree heather slopes that we almost needed crampons to keep our footing. We topped out and were psyched. We all took a little power nap/resting time on the summit when two very large billy mountain goats approached us from less than 70 feet away. Both parties were intimidated (the goats and us), we all looked at each other for a moment and the goats dropped back down the ridge that they had come up.

So we made our way back to camp; our descent was the way we came up, which required a short rappel off a 2-foot-tall-by-2-inch-diameter tree down the 4<sup>th</sup>-class rock we had come up. Then we made the scenic walk back to camp, at which we once again arrived at the perfect time to enjoy another stunning sunset.

The next morning, to our surprise, though the forecast called for it, it was socked in and raining. We were worried that the floatplane wouldn't be able to pick us up. Luckily there was cell service and a quick call to Ward Air confirmed our 12 p.m. departure. So, we headed down in the rain and back to the dock where the plane would find us.



*Polar Bear Peak  
Photo by Frank E. Baker*

# Refrigerator Peak (5450 feet), Kenai Mountains

Text and photos by Joe Nyholm

August 24th, 2018

17.6 miles, 6600 feet of elevation gain, Eight hours, 40 minutes



*Summit of Refrigerator Peak looking at the route.*

On a sunny Friday in Seward, I decided I wasn't up for solo bush-whacking and decided on climbing a peak on the Harding Icefield that caught my eye last year. I was unsure of how the snow cover on the ice was going to be, but I was betting that it would be snow free enough for solo travel.

The hike up the Harding Icefield Trail was hot and ripe with salmonberries, but otherwise uneventful. Upon reaching the highpoint and end of the established trail, I made my way directly west through what I have called the gravel canyons from previous ventures. This took roughly 45 minutes from the trail highpoint to putting crampons on for the ice.

Once on the ice, I made a slight northbound route up toward the top of the Lowell Glacier to decrease the amount of snow-covered glacier travel. Conditions on the glacier were soggy. I then proceeded directly west just south of the peak unofficially named 007 Peak by the rangers of the park. 007 was the point I climbed in 2017 to get a look at my current objective. That section had some unexpected crevasses that bordered the dry land and had lots of snow cover to the south, some sections had me side-hilling Peak 007 to avoid the worst of it.

Then I crossed a wide bowl that gained elevation and became the

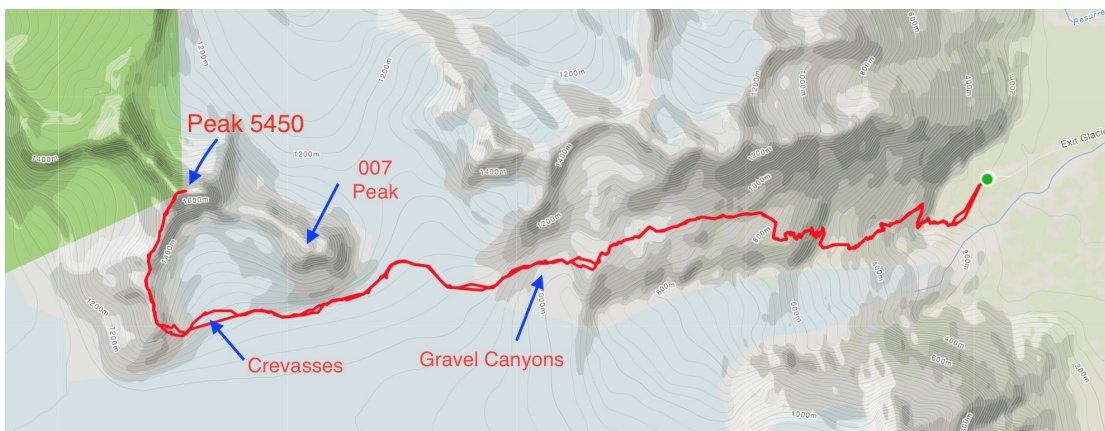
crux of the navigation due to zigzagging through a crevasse field. Across that bowl led to the west ridge of the peak that was a steep grassy slope to start, but then turned into a spectacular ridge walk that was relatively flat with amazing 360-degree views of the icefield. The ridge turned north and eventually started to turn east toward the summit. From there the boulder-hopping started, first with large television-sized boulders, then small textbook-sized boulders; and finally the summit block was a mix of some of the



*Spooky crevasses*



loosest rock I had encountered. On the south face of the summit there was an overhanging stack of blocks that were refrigerator-like in both size and shape. I elected to stay northwest of those blocks, but still had a challenging time gaining the summit. That last bit to the summit was roughly 200 feet and by far the steepest part of the route, definitely helmet territory, even going solo, and one-at-a-time travel in a group.



*Strava map of the route.*

The summit views of the whole icefield were breathtaking. There was a second, eastern summit, but it looked shorter and the views were probably better from the west summit. The ridge continuing north also looked very committing and following that ridgeline led my eyes to the peak that I decided to try on my next Harding adventure, Peak 5550.

The descent was uneventful as I reversed my route, until I got back onto the ice and partway through the crevasse field, at which point one of my crampons broke. That was a little worrying, but I still had the back part tied down and managed to make it out of there easily and avoided any sketchy crevasse hopping. The rest of the glacier travel was slow and toward the end a fog bank was creeping in, but I managed to get off the ice before it caught up. The rest of the hike down was quick and easy.

There was no evidence of previous ascents, but it is fairly hard to imagine anyone not climbing it as it is relatively close to the Exit Glacier, but it could have been ignored this long due to its larger and bigger neighbors to the south and southwest, such as Truuli Peak. Because it didn't have a name, and due to its blocky sum-



*Slushy glacier solo travel*

mit, I've started referring to it as Refrigerator Peak unofficially.



*Grassy ridge walking surrounded by ice*



*Superb gentle ridge travel toward the summit of Refrigerator Peak.*

## "Golden Petals" on Xanadu Peak (7160 feet), Arrigetch Peaks

Text by Zeb Engberg



*The west face of Xanadu Peak in the Arrigetch Peaks, which prior to summer 2017 had never been climbed. In 2017 three new routes went up on the face. The first ascent of the wall was made by Billy Braasch, David Bain, Gabe Boning, and Zeb Engberg via "Golden Petals" (1,500 feet, V 5.13+ or 5.12 A0), shown in green, second from right. Shortly after, Catalan soloist Silvia Vidal climbed a new aid line called "Un Pas Més" (530 meters, 6a A4/A4+), shown in red. Xanadu's first ascent, shown at far right in purple, was made in 1974 via the right-hand skyline (Krakauer-Bullard, 1975 American Alpine Journal). Shown in far yellow at left, the third new route in 2017, "Arctic Knight" (1,600 feet, IV 5.11+ R), was established by Adam Ferro, Vitaliy Musiyenko, and Brian Prince (see the December 2017 Scree).*

*Photo by Zeb Engberg*

I sagged deeply into my harness and absently stared upward into the mesmerizing plane of granite. I was doing my best to optimize my hanging position to keep the moist, arctic wind from blasting my skin. Despite donning every article of clothing that I packed for that month-long trip in the Arrigetch Peaks, the wind was still beating me. With only two days left in the trip, our team was feeling pressure to successfully free-climb the wall before our hike out. Billy Braasch was below me, screaming as I reeled in his slack. There was no blood in his icy fingers as he tried to manhandle the granite knobs. He screamed as he chalked up before reaching for the crux holds, he even screamed as he gasped for air. He could feel nothing as he powered his way upward to our hanging belay. David Bain and I looked at each other, eked out a delighted smile, and shared a love for the brutal situation into which we had thrown ourselves.

David Bain, Gabe Boning, Billy Braasch, and I began dreaming of Scree—November 2018

this trip after our close friend Chris Vale died in a rappelling accident on the East Ledges descent of El Capitan in September 2016. The five of us connected through our involvement in the Dartmouth Mountaineering Club. We wanted to do something to celebrate and commemorate Chris' enthusiasm and sense of adventure. It seemed appropriate to attempt a first ascent in his honor. We were drawn to the wildness and the remoteness of the Arrigetch Peaks. With a combined age of 102, we were young, but not entirely inexperienced. I had previously climbed the Cassin Ridge on Denali in 2014, but my three partners had never taken a climbing expedition of this magnitude. We were eager, excited, and hopeful as we dove into researching the area, seeking out the adventure of a lifetime.

Xanadu Peak was the centerpiece of the Arrigetch, which were above the Arctic Circle in the Endicott Mountains of the Brooks Range. At 7160 feet, the summit was not strictly the highest in the



region, but the peak's ever-present mass, the aesthetic geometry and sheer steepness of its walls, and its situation at the headwaters of Arrigetch Creek gave it a feeling of utmost prominence within the range. Its northeastern aspect was shadowed, stark, and glaciated, whereas its western side appeared fertile for climbing. Under a cloudless sky, the west face was illuminated in glowing, golden light from noon until midnight.



*Xanadu Peak's west face together with the west face of Point 6850, the gray-streaked wall seen appearing at right. "Deep in the Alaskan Bush," the 5.11+ X M2 route established by Tommy Caldwell, Hayden Kennedy, and Corey Rich in 2011, climbs up the center of this face.*

*Photo by Zeb Engberg*

Xanadu's west face had been a piece of folklore within the climbing community for decades, and knowledge of the face had been passed by word of mouth through various climbing circles. The late Mugs Stump dreamed of climbing the west face, and the wall lured Tommy Caldwell, the late Hayden Kennedy, and Corey Rich into making a trip into the Arrigetch in 2011 (see pages 112 and 113 of the 2012 *American Alpine Journal*). We learned of Xanadu's west face from Jon Krakauer, who, together with Bill Bullard, made the only known ascent of Xanadu, in 1974, via its south ridge (see pages 37 through 42 of the 1975 *AAJ*). While I was apprehensive to reach out to such a well-known figure, Jon and I had both attended

Hampshire College, and I hoped this connection would compel Jon to respond. I was star-struck and grateful when I received an enthusiastic response from Jon almost immediately. Between email exchanges and phone calls, he provided valuable information, insight, and encouragement, withholding nothing and all the while sincerely hoping for our success. Jon vividly described his vision of the climbing on the west face – beautiful and bold face climbing through vertical, and occasionally overhanging, granite flakes. His hypothetical route up the west face turned out to closely match what would become reality.

After three days of hiking heavy loads through arctic grasslands and glacial valleys, David Bain, Gabe Boning, Billy Braasch, and I caught our first glimpse of the gold-plated west face of Xanadu. Until that moment, all of the granite we had seen while walking up Arrigetch Creek had seemed cold and dreary. While some faces begged to be climbed, most peaks in the Arrigetch shunned human interaction. Though we were weary and contemplated stopping for the night, the sight of Xanadu rejuvenated us like a jolt of caffeine. We looked at the sun-drenched west face and then at each other. We shared a sense of mutual awe and amazement. Without words, we unanimously decided to push on, setting up a base camp for the next few weeks in a lush alpine meadow below that massive piece of rock that we couldn't resist.

We gazed through binoculars, looking for vertical weaknesses and possibilities. The 1,500-foot wall was mostly devoid of cracks – instead, it was a mosaic of flakes. Although such features tend to encourage free climbing, we had read enough trip reports of loose, rope-chopping flakes in the Arrigetch to feel suspicious. After much deliberation, we set our sights on a flake system beginning below the looming overhang that capped the ridge first climbed by Krakauer and Bullard.

As we contemplated our strategy, we contrasted our plan with that of Silvia Vidal, a world-renowned aid-climber. We first encountered Silvia on our hike into Xanadu. We were shocked to see another person, and even more surprised to learn that her goal was the same as ours. Silvia also hoped to climb Xanadu's west face, and this was about the only thing we had in common with her. When we met Silvia on the hike, she was taking a rest day because her eyes were swollen shut from 11 days of non-stop exertion ferrying loads to the base. She was alone (without any form of satellite communication) and somewhat wiggled out from a bear encounter the previous night. Silvia had budgeted nearly two months for her incredible solo mission. She planned to aid-climb the face, hauling an immense kit including a portaledge, without returning to a cushy base camp like ours. Her style was rugged, ambitious, and inspiring. Arriving at the wall a few days after us, Silvia picked a tenuous line directly up the center of the face, left of, and independent of, our route. Every couple of days we would shout a "Hi, Silvia!" across the sea of granite. She would chime back with a



*David Bain approaching Escape Col with Arrigetch Creek far below. Bain, Billy Braasch, Gabe Boning, and Zeb Engberg made the first ascent of Xanadu Peak's west face ground-up before returning to free climb the route at 5.13+.*

*Photo by Zeb Engberg*



friendly “Hello!” Most days, though, we tried to honor her solitary journey by not bothering her with our boyish shenanigans. Silvia topped out her masterpiece as we were flying out of the Arrigetch.

As a party of four, we split ourselves into teams of two and alternated days on the wall. Although our ultimate goal was to open a free climb, we knew that our initial climbing strategy might involve yo-yoing, French freeing, and occasional direct aid to make progress. We had carried in enough rope to fix three-quarters of the wall, and we put it to use.

Between our base camp at 4200 feet and the base of the wall at 5800 feet sat a loose and shifting talus field as well as the standard death slab. Studying the slab through binoculars from camp, we noticed a mysterious peach-colored object strung out halfway up it. Taking turns looking through the binoculars, we speculated what it might be. “Is it a piece of parachute?” “Or maybe trash from a 1970s air-drop?” “No way! It’s a giant bag of Cheetos!” “It’s too big to be Cheetos! Could it be a tent that blew away?” “No, I think it’s just a REALLY big bag of Cheetos.” “God, I hope so.” We soon discovered a 65-meter static rope, abandoned by a previous party. Bonus! Though it had clearly been absorbing ultraviolet light, vast amounts of water runoff, and rockfall for several years, we resourcefully put that bonus rope to use. (Later, we carried out the rope and gave it to our bush pilots, who used it to tie their planes to shore.)

Atop the death slab we approached the intimidating vertical wall, anxiously pressing our palms against it, hoping for a sign. We soon discovered a thin, overhanging seam that would allow upward progress. Using blades and beak-style pitons, I nailed my way up what we christened Silvia’s Seam, an homage to our new friend. Above, the angle of the wall eased, but the protection also evaporated. A scary moment of mandatory 5.10 R face-climbing allowed me to gain the main flake system, and our first pitch was established. That first pitch was indicative of what was to come; the climbing was slow and intricate, and on many days, we only succeeded in advancing our route several hundred feet higher.



*Gabe Boning contemplates the seeping flared feature on pitch three that the team nicknamed The Buttcrack, while David Bain belays from below.*

*Photo by Zeb Engberg*

The next day, David set off from my high point, leading several pitches of thin cracks and enticing laybacks. The rock was solid enough to pull on, but the protection was often questionable. We frequently placed small beaks, and our anchors morphed into nests of slings and cams. Gabe pushed the rope higher, aiding through a seeping and overhanging flared crack dubbed The Buttcrack. From there, Billy took the lead, moving through a beautiful collage of layered and disconnected orange flakes. That long and mostly free lead, the Corn Flakes Pitch, brought us up to July 4th Ledge at the end of our third day of climb-

ing. That ledge system was an incredible catenary that extended across the whole wall, above which the rock abruptly changed into a shimmering golden hue. The granite was varnished and mostly bomber, and a closer look revealed swirls and a precise crystalline structure. Despite that, the flakes themselves (behind which we were placing protection) felt hollow under our reverberating fist-tapping probes. The terrain we had covered was steep and exhilarating, and though we did not hesitate to aid through difficult sections, it seemed as though nearly all of it could go free.

Above July 4th Ledge, progress accelerated as David and Gabe climbed several stunning pitches to gain the Boomerang Ledge, a broken system that marked the halfway point up the wall. We then had unobstructed views of the looming mushroom capping the face. The vertical system we had been climbing then dwindled into a labyrinth of isolated flakes. Billy and I meandered higher, negotiating the astonishing Portal Flake and the evocative Frosted Flakes: beautiful expanses of metamorphic granite foretold by Jon Krakauer. Jugging my lead, Billy was clustering at a nest of small nuts, thoroughly tangled in an assortment of etriers, rope, a backpack, and hammer. “Billy, hammer in a piton or leave several nuts,” I suggested, dubious of the protection. “It looks bomber,” he responded. As Billy began the 40-foot, entirely horizontal lower-out, I adroitly stepped to the other side of the rope to avoid getting clotheslined by a possible Billy-pendulum. The next moment, I heard the soft pop of a small brass nut and saw a Billy free-falling, surrounded by



*David Bain laybacking through The Buttcrack on pitch three of “Golden Petals” (1,500 feet, V 5.13+ or 5.12 A0), while Gabe Boning belays from below. Xanadu Peak’s expansive lower slabs can be seen below.*

*Photo by Zeb Engberg*



the cloud of climbing gear clipped to his harness. "I'M OK!" he optimistically screamed as he swung below me at high speed. The Billy-pendulum eventually dampened, and we felt relieved to be alive as Billy juggled the rest of the way to the anchor.

Reaching the 7-Hour Ledge, an awkward hanging stance with which Gabe and David would become intimately familiar later in the trip, we had nearly fixed all of our 1,000 feet of rope (including the bootied orange rope). The angle of the wall steepened once again, and the flakes above us changed, appearing fractal-like and menacing. We had visions of falling onto the jagged edges of these flakes and slicing our rope.

David took over on the sharp end, slowly aiding up the run-out Pepper Flake Pitch. The pitch was puzzling and required creative protection, including many beaks and micro-nuts. "I want to come down, but I'll try to get in just one more piece of gear," David shouted down for the sixth time. Gabe encouraged from the uncomfortable belay at the 7-Hour Ledge as David continued to inch his way up the pitch. After several hours, having finished most of the pitch, but unsure of the possibility of building a gear anchor higher up and untrained on drilling bolts, David lowered and he and Gabe rappelled back to camp.

The next day, the weather deteriorated into rain, fog, and thorough dampness. Up until that point we had been lucky to have had about 15 days of good weather with 6 days spent on the wall. We took that gloomy opportunity to inventory our food. To our chagrin, we discovered that there were not sufficient calories remaining for us to continue our high rate of consumption. We had already devoured the bonus bars and sugary snacks that had been lovingly snuck into our food supplies by our thoughtful partners back at home. For two days, we ate half rations and moped in our soggy tents.

The next night at around 8 p.m., Billy realized that no rain had fallen that afternoon. With a jester-like grin Billy said, "Hey, wad-dya say we head up there and finish up that Pepper Flake? Climb through the night?" Knowing Billy was too heavy to hang on the



*Billy Braasch connecting the golden plates of the Corn Flakes Pitch (5.11) on "Golden Petals" (1,500 feet, V 5.13+ or 5.12 A0) as David Bain belays from below.*

*Photo by Zeb Engberg*

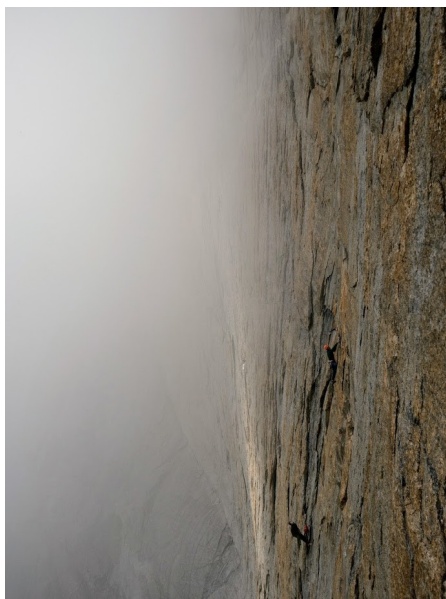
body-weight placements that David had hammered in, I knew I would get to lead, and that the exertion would keep me warm. Billy was bluffing, but I was game to try. "Game on, my swole." Surprised, but psyched, Billy responded, "Seriously? All right, let's do it!" The wall was mostly obscured by blowing fog, yet there was a possibility of dry rock behind the veil of water vapor. We juggled the fixed ropes, getting to the 7-Hour Ledge around midnight.

I launched upward, yo-yoing into David's Pepper Flake Pitch, gaining a small belay stance, and hammering

in a bolt for the belay. Billy took over at that point, leading a bold pitch of 5.12 face climbing. That S Pitch, named for the wandering nature of the runout slab, involved thin smears and committing high steps above dubious protection. Another pitch of early morning runout 5.10+ face climbing brought us to a ramp system directly beneath the mushroom. That seeping ramp led to a notch on the upper south ridge, between the mushroom and Xanadu's true summit. Worked and destroyed, I was relieved to discover that ramp, a much easier alternative than the mushroom itself. Billy was leading, though, and in his exhausted stupor he tried to go straight up the steep overhang. "What are you doing up there? Why aren't you taking this nice ramp?" I asked. "Oh, I don't know, it just looked like it was at my 'bad angle,'" a phrase Billy used to describe low-angle friction smearing. Reluctantly, he moved onto

the ramp. In the mushroom notch, we found an ancient nut and blue webbing, likely from the 1974 Krakauer-Bullard ascent. We felt comfort in seeing that minuscule sign of civilization.

Billy and I continued up the easy, lichen-covered summit ridge to the apex of Xanadu. We embraced and stood in awe of the huge vertical relief in all directions. We thought of our friend Chris and knew he'd have been proud of our success. We heard David and Gabe bellowing below – the two had spent seven hours on the namesake ledge, waiting for us to come down so that they could make their own summit pilgrimage. We slowly descended and passed the torch to David and Gabe, who topped out that afternoon in pea-soup fog. It was July 12, and we felt extremely



*Zeb Engberg gaining the Frosted Flakes, belayed by Billy Braasch, as Xanadu Peak's expansive west face becomes engulfed in fog.*

*Photo by Gabe Boning*

privileged to make what was likely the second ascent of Xanadu and the first complete ascent of its west face.

Back on terra firma, we reflected on the three weeks that had passed since getting dropped off at Circle Lake. We still had about a week remaining before we were to be picked up, and we knew that we could climb our route in a better style. We headed back up and got to work.

First, we set about cleaning up our anchors, some of which consisted of half a dozen equalized cams strung out over 10-foot swaths of rock. Although we had made a point of avoiding placing bolts mid-pitch, we decided to leave robust fixed anchors in place. To some, that decision might go against wilderness principles, and we did agonize over that decision. We were proud of our line, and knowing that we'd need to leave fixed anchors of some form in order to rappel, we decided that both we and future parties would benefit from high-quality anchors that would last decades. We placed a total of 17 bolts on the rappel stations on our route.

We then focused our energies on free-climbing, rehearsing the moves that were accessible from our fixed ropes. The quality of the movement was outstanding. Because much of the terrain was steep and flake-covered, the climbing often involved delicate lay-backing over thin, smeared feet. Thought-provoking handholds serendipitously appeared when the macro-feature we had been climbing faded. Of the 14 pitches of technical climbing, many fell within the 5.9 to 5.11 range, and nearly every pitch would be a classic on its own.

Though we didn't achieve the big-wall holy grail of a ground-up free ascent, we did manage to free every pitch on the route. Starting late one night, Gabe and David swung leads and freed from the second pitch through the eleventh. Then, over two consecutive windy and cold days at the tail end of our trip, Billy and I free-climbed the route from the second pitch all the way to the top, leading and following each pitch without falls. Finally, on the last climbing day of our trip, I successfully led the crux first pitch, Silvia's Seam. Essentially a V10 boulder problem, that pitch required thin granite edging, unlikely foot pastes, and assorted granite wizardry.

The west face of Xanadu could have been blank or perilously loose, but instead it permitted a demanding free route as good as anything we had ever climbed. We called our line "Golden Petals."

One that last day, while Billy and I toiled on Silvia's Seam, David and Gabe repeated the Bullard-Krakauer route to the top of Xanadu. They came down from their climb with huge grins covering their faces, describing the endless Type 1 fun they'd encountered and displaying a 1970s-era hex they had bootied from the ascent 43 years prior.

We felt catharsis in leaving our base camp to trek back to Circle Lake. Throughout our trip, we were constantly reminded of the unique ways in which Chris had entered each of our lives. Memories of Chris flowed through our minds as we silently parted with the wall that had come to mean so much to us. Chris never said no to an adventure and he would have gladly taken the sharp end on any of the runout pitches that left us shaking in our TC-pros.

*Summary: First ascent of the west face of Xanadu Peak in the Arrigetch Peaks by David Bain, Gabe Boning, Billy Braasch, and Zeb Engberg. "Golden Petals" (1,500 feet, V 5.13+ or 5.12 A0) was established over 25 days in July 2017, using a mix of aid- and free-climbing. Every pitch was subsequently free-climbed.*

*This trip was supported in part by the Dartmouth Outing Club's Chris Vale Adventure Fund and the Copp-Dash Inspire Award.*

*About the author: Zeb Engberg is proud of his New England roots and has been climbing since a young age. He participates in, cherishes, and respects all styles of climbing. After earning a Ph.D. in mathematics, Zeb moved to Utah where he currently teaches math and climbs as often as possible.*

*For additional information on Xanadu Peak, visit:*

<http://publications.americanalpineclub.org/articles/12201211200/Deep-in-the-Alaskan-Bush>,

<http://publications.americanalpineclub.org/articles/12197503700/New-Arrigetch-Climbs>,

<http://publications.americanalpineclub.org/articles/13201214492/Arrigetch-Peaks-Xanadu-Un-Pas-Ms>,

*and see the December 2017 Scree.*



*Left to right: Billy Braasch, David Bain, Gabe Boning, and Zeb Engberg posing in the meadow after the first ascent of the west face of Xanadu Peak.*

*Photo by Zeb Engberg*



## Compass Butte (5390 feet) and the Chugach State Park 120, Western Chugach Mountains

Text by Joe Chmielowski



*Joe Chmielowski in camp on the Organ Glacier at the base of the southwest ridge of Compass Butte.*

*Photo by Dave Hart*



*Dave Hart enjoys French champagne on the summit of Compass Butte with Polar Bear Peak behind.*

*Photo by Joe Chmielowski*

On July 21, 2017, Dave Hart and I climbed Baleful Peak (reference the September 2017 *Scree*). That was his 21<sup>st</sup>, and final, Western Chugach 7000-foot peak and his 119<sup>th</sup> out of 120 Chugach State Park (CSP) peaks. That left only one final peak – his nemesis, Compass Butte – for him to be the sixth person to complete the elusive CSP 120. The reason it was his nemesis is that he had attempted it on four prior occasions and due to one thing or another, it never panned out. In May 2010, Dave joined Ross Noffsinger and David Stchyrba on the standard northwest ridge. Dave turned back several hundred feet below the summit, hesitant to continue up the exposed snow slope without ropes while Ross and David pressed onward. In April 2012, Dave returned with Joe McLaughlin and attempted both the southwest ridge and east face, but again turned back on exposed terrain without ropes. He returned the following month with Richard Baranow and Jeannie Wall, but turned back at the Heritage Falls approach due to poor weather. A fourth trip in April 2013 with Ben Still and Greg Encelewski again ended several hundred feet below the summit on the north ridge due to exposed terrain. For those reading this article, this is an excellent lesson. It is always better to turn back than get summit fever. The mountain will always be there. We've all heard that saying, "There are bold climbers, and old climbers, but no old bold climbers."

With that in mind, a couple months after the successful Baleful trip, in October 2017, Dave and a crew cleared the Heritage Falls approach trail from Eagle River to the base of Polar Bear

Peak (reference the December 2017 *Scree* for a map, photos, and GPS tracks). That would help ensure that his next attempt would result in success. His thought was to ski in during the spring of 2018 and finish his quest. However, the spring of 2018 presented significant avalanche dangers and instead he bided his spring time with successful Redoubt Volcano and Truuli Peak expeditions. Dave then patiently waited for summer.

Not letting any grass grow under his feet, Dave headed off to Europe for three weeks of ultra-prominent peakbagging and bike touring as he waited for the Chugach snow to clear. He returned on July 15 when I texted him, "It looks like a great weather window this weekend; wanna hit Compass Butte?"

Dave picked me up at 5:00 a.m. in his peakbaggin' wagon and we drove to the South Fork of the Eagle River Trailhead because we did not want to cross the extremely high North Fork of the Eagle River via the Nature Center and Crow Pass Trail approach. I guess all that brush clearing Dave did last fall was for naught. That said, we arrived at an eerily empty parking lot before noticing multiple brown bear signs warning hikers that a sow with two cubs had been charging people, weeks following a fatal bear mauling nearby. It was a bit unnerving, but Dave had his .44 pistol and bear spray, and I had bear spray and an air horn. We figured that we were appropriately experienced and prepared and committed ourselves to making a lot of noise on the trail.

The mosquitoes were horrible and the beaver dams behind

Eagle Lake were challenging, but we pressed onward and ascended the Flute Glacier just after lunch. The glacier was in good shape, so there was no need to rope up and we then ascended the 1690-meter col north of Flute Peak, which provided an easy descent onto the Organ Glacier. At that point we were unsure how the Organ Glacier would be (open cracks?), but due to the late spring, it was also in good shape. We did rope up and the crossing was easy with a few crevasses to circumnavigate near the bottom. As I had anticipated, we reached the south-facing base of Compass Butte at 4:00 p.m. and stopped to have a quick snack and deposit our camping gear. It had taken 10 hours to hike the 13.5 miles to there.

That was the same spot that Dave and Joe McLaughlin had attempted to climb Compass Butte in April 2012. Dave said they had run into exposed wintry terrain 300 feet below the summit, but that wouldn't be the case with us. We had a perfect blue-bird day, plenty of time, and if we couldn't make it that evening, we had all of the following day. In order to increase our chances of success, we began working our way up the gully with heavy packs containing crampons, axe, rope, rock protection, etc. No fast-and-light travel for us; we were dressed for success, and wouldn't let lack of gear prevent success this time.

The initial scree/dirt gully was very steep right off the glacier, with horrible, dry, cement-like dirt and extremely touchy scree. It felt like 5<sup>th</sup>-class dirt climbing and at one point I was tempted to don my crampons for grip. As is typical in these Chugach gullies, it was best to climb close to the rock wall and use one hand for grip on the wall and avoid the main gully chute with loose debris. After 100 feet, near the top, we got cliffed out and worked our way climber's left and attained the southwest

Scree—November 2018



*Joe Chmielowski ascending toward the southwest ridge of Compass Butte with the Organ Glacier behind.*

*Photo by Dave Hart*

ridgeline proper. Once on the ridge, there was a beautiful green grass sheep bed overlooking the Organ Glacier and the views were fantastic. That had been Dave and Joe's high point from their attempt, above which the ridge looked tricky. We still weren't sure if the ridge would go.

At that point, there were two gendarmes between us and the final ridge leading to the summit. From there, our first option was to continue up the initial dirt gully then below us and into a steep rocky chimney

through the cliff band. That looked possible, but very difficult. So in classic Chugach style, Dave said, "Let me check the back side of the ridge to the left." He disappeared for a few minutes, and to be honest, it wasn't looking good. But he traversed left about 100 feet on small grassy/moss ledges with some big exposure above the steep west face. I followed, not liking the grass/moss handholds, until we got to some better rock. At that point, there was a rock chimney heading straight up about 30 feet and that was when I felt great. No rope was needed. We reached the upper southwest ridge and headed up to easier terrain! The crux was over and we simply walked up to the summit.

As we approached the summit, I filmed Dave on my i-phone and about 10 feet away, he stopped and said, "I can't go on! I got sunscreen running into in my eyes." It was that hot and sun-

ny, with not a breath of wind. He bent over, wiped his eyes and then continued the final few steps to the summit. Hell, I guess if I ever climb all 120 peaks I might get a bit misty-eyed, too. What an accomplishment! It had taken just over an hour to reach the top from the glacier. On the summit, we found a "FILGO" summit register and Dave plopped down to sign it. There was a message inside from Lee Helzer that said something to the effect of, "Dave, if you are reading this, congratulations!



*Joe Chmielowski traversing grassy ledges on the southwest ridge. The Organ Glacier and Flute Peak are just left of center.*

*Photo by Dave Hart*



Lee & Josh.”

As a surprise, and to properly celebrate, I pulled a small mini-bottle of champagne out of my pack, a bag of homemade chocolate-chip cookies and a sign that read “120.” It was sunny and even hotter at the top and we spent a full hour enjoying the views, eating cookies, and drinking champagne. We took a tour of the summit block and walked completely around the peak looking at views of Flute Peak, Organ Mountain, Polar Bear Peak, and Eagle Peak. Most of the sides of Compass Butte were cliffs about 1,000 to 1,500 feet tall and the surrounding peaks 1,000 to 1,500 feet taller. The views were spectacular.

Just before 7 p.m., we reluctantly headed down and I was dreading the grass/moss downclimb. But that time, we stayed exactly on the ridgeline and walked up and over both gendarmes to the sheep bed and it was much safer to stay 100% on the rock. Once again, no rope nor rappel stations. For future climbers, I would recommend climbing up and over both gendarmes and totally avoiding the grass/moss back side. At the base of the gully, we retrieved our camping gear, which was spread out and beat up due to the abundant scree falling from us, and we pitched my Black Diamond Megamid on the glacier because there were no suitable flat spots at the base of the mountain.

The hike out the following morning was uneventful as we simply followed our tracks back across the Organ and Flute Glaciers. When we retrieved our cached running shoes and Dave’s pistol from behind a large boulder near the waterfall at the base of Eagle Peak, we found that our items had been disturbed and spread out across the tundra. Dave’s pistol and chest holster had chew marks all over it and we saw the culprit, a ground squirrel, chattering at us across the way. Thankfully, that ended up being our only wildlife encounter the whole trip and when we got back to the car we high-fived each other in the empty parking lot. Congratulations, Dave, on completing the Chugach State Park 120!

### Chugach State Park 120-Peak Summitters

Jim Saylor 1998  
Wendy Sanem 2001  
Richard Baranow 2006  
Wayne Todd 2012  
Ross Noffsinger 2016  
Dave Hart 2018

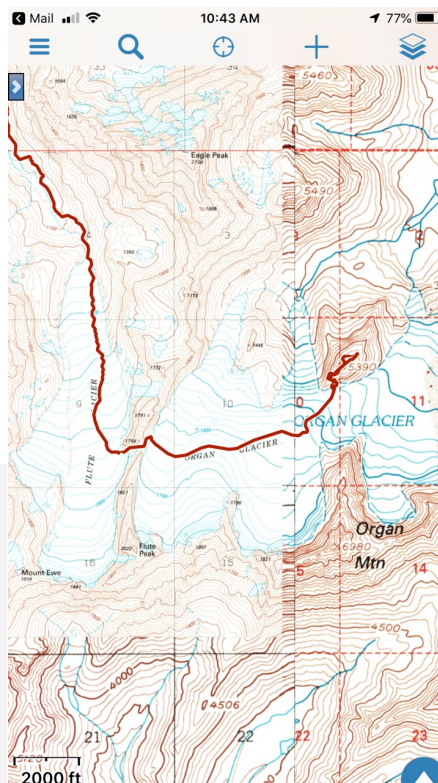
*Right: Maps and GPS tracks of the southwest ridge ascent route and approach, including a GPS track of the traditional Heritage Falls approach from the north, which was not used for this ascent.*



*Above: Dave Hart on the summit of Compass Butte with Flute Peak and the Organ Glacier behind.  
Photo by Joe Chmielewski*



*Right: Dave Hart  
Photo by Joe Chmielewski*





# Beyond Anthracite Ridge: The Mound (6646 feet), Monument Mountain (6875 feet), and Strelshla Mountain (5450 feet), Talkeetna Mountains

Text and photos by Shane Ohms

July 27-29<sup>th</sup>, 2018



*View from along Anthracite Ridge, showing, from left to right, The Mound, Monument Mountain, and Mount Monarch.*

Beyond Anthracite Ridge there is a string of 6000-foot mountains having an excess of 1,000 feet of prominence. These mountains, whether intentionally named so or not, all start with the “mon” sound; 6646-foot The Mound, 6875-foot Monument Mountain, and 7108-foot Mount Monarch. Anthracite Ridge, as I have come to learn, is a destination in and of itself and doubles as an efficient gateway to the first two of these “mon” mountains. As I locked my car doors, however, I had only the information gleaned from an hour’s preliminary study of Google Earth and CalTopo and my expectations of succeeding on multiple objectives were low.

My original plan was to do a loop of Sheep Mountain because the weather up north looked better than in the Chugach Mountains. But as the week went by, it became evident that I was not going to have any hiking companions. That was concerning because I’d rather not run into a bear while alone. Friday after work I raced home and looked on Google Earth for places nearby (to keep myself in the good weather) that had minimal miles spent below timberline. Anthracite Ridge shot up right from the road; I would only be in the trees for a mile at the beginning and end of the trip! And because I was solo, nobody would be there to criticize my affinity for traveling “fast ‘n’ furious,” or in other words, bivying intentionally.

I parked the car on a little pullout by a horse ranch near Victory Bible Camp at 8:40 p.m. Friday night. I had mentally prepared myself for a mile of s---y uphill bushwhacking, but was instead set upon a godsend trail that followed above the cliff on the west side of Packsaddle Gulch. I ground hard, gained



*Bivouacking behind a big rock for a windbreak. In the center of the photo is the 6347-foot high-ground point of Anthracite Ridge, known as Settler.*

1500 feet of elevation, spooked one lone momma moose, and in an hour I was out of timberline. Now that I was in more open territory, I slowed the pace and in due time, saw myself on Anthracite Ridge. I followed Anthracite Ridge in dwindling light until I reached Point 6280 at 12:40 a.m. and could not travel any farther in the dark. I bivied at 6200 feet, nestled between the ridge and a prominent rock just west of the summit. Wind gusts were around 25 miles per hour that night and there was a light shower for a few hours. I wore two pairs of socks, but my feet were still chilly. I didn’t get any sleep.

At 5:20 a.m., it was light again and I warmed up as soon as I started moving toward The Mound. Apparently some sheep had spent the night at the saddle between me and The Mound and were quite surprised by my presence. They disappeared up The Mound’s southern ridge, so I decided to follow them up, then quickly decided they were more hardcore than I and that I would need another route. The southern scree slopes looked slow, but non-threatening; so I made my way over and saw myself upon The Mound around 7 a.m. The clouds in the valley below me were retreating. At that point I had covered much more ground than anticipated and realized I would likely have the time to do Monument Mountain, so I descended the southeastern ridge for 500 feet then went in and out of the northern gullies until I found a nice one that deposited me near the toe of a rock glacier.

I was about out of my four liters of water and the creek



*Shane Ohms on the summit of The Mound. The summit of Monument Mountain is at far left and to the left of Ohms' right shoulder is the gully he descended.*



below the rock glacier was the first water source I'd come across. I refilled and continued up, down, up, down, and up toward Monument Mountain. I struck a mellow pace and soaked in the vivid colors in the valleys. At one point I came across a zone of loose red dirt with deep hoof tracks sprouting beautiful forget-me-nots. The scenery in that corner of the Talkeetna Mountains was quite different from anything I'd seen.



*Blue, red, green, and orange. A rainbow is packed into this cute little valley.*

At the base of Monument Mountain, I dropped some weight and left out my socks to dry. I took just water, camera, and two Clif bars and started up its southern scree field. The summit block looked intimidating from afar and was no better in person. I went up to the eastern ridge, hoping to stumble upon a clean back door, but didn't find any. I dropped a little and went up the first potential gully. It deposited me higher on the east ridge and I toured over a few lower blocks before landing on the true summit around 2 p.m. Reversing that route would have been scary, but doable. I took in the summit views for a bit and searched for a better way down. There was a white sling that someone must've used to descend the southwest col once upon a time. But alas, I found another gully that looked like a better way to get off of the summit block. It was a gully that I had passed up on my ascent, but it turned out to be the easiest

route for Monument Mountain. At right is a picture of the gully at its entrance for future climbers' reference.

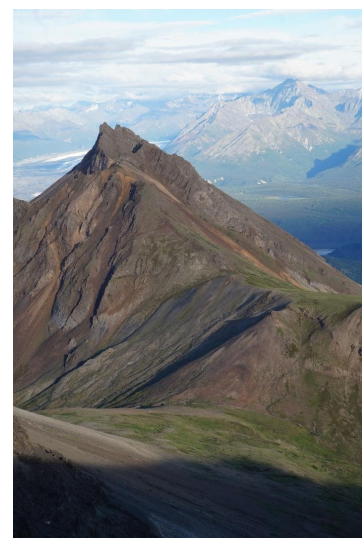


I then retraced my way back to my gear cache. It would have been an uneventful descent, except half way down I came upon the top half of an old sheep skull. Then I made my way down, up, down, up, and down to the stream below The Mound and topped off my four

liters. Some rain started up, and it hastened my exit. I went around The Mound, following the main stream to its head leading up to the saddle between Anthracite Ridge and The Mound. A little below the saddle, I found a shredded red sleeping bag, old cans, fuel bottles, a two-foot length of garden hose, and a motherload of plastic trapped under a rock pile. At least they had the decency to weigh down the plastic. I packed out all except the heavy, wet sleeping bag. Back on Anthracite Ridge, the rain went away and I debated doing the nearby Strelshla Mountain and bivving for a second night. It was a very one-sided debate. I was going for it!

I traversed Anthracite Ridge on sheep trails at the 5500-foot level, dipped down to 4500 feet, dropped my pack on a 4700-foot plateau west of Strelshla Mountain, and began a west ridge ascent. The west ridge seemed trafficked and there was just one spot where I ditched the ridge in favor of the north side. The summit block was tame and I could pick from a multitude of ways up the south face. The summit register confirmed that the west ridge was a pretty standard route, seeing nearly annual ascents from (presumably) Victory Bible Camp participants. The hour was 9:50 p.m. and the sun was setting. I reversed the route to my backpack. The second night was warmer with little wind and no rain. I had clear views of all the giant Chugach Mountains across the Matanuska River drainage. After the long Saturday tour, I slept well and I slept in.

The morning sky and light provided even better reconnaissance photography. After soaking it in again, I packed up and soon realized exactly how tired my muscles were. I had to do just 1000 vertical feet to make it back to the 5500-foot sheep trails and it was the most difficult leg of the trip. After that, everything was downhill, to the delight of my muscles and agony of my knees. No bears were encountered. My little exploratory Talkeetna Mountains trip turned out to be more amazing than I could have hoped for.



*Northwest aspect of Strelshla Mountain.*



*Above: Saturday night view from the 4700-foot plateau on the west ridge of Strelshla Mountain.*



## Dnigi Peak (6790 ± 10 feet), Talkeetna Mountains

Text and photos by Mat Brunton



*Dnigi Hut and Dnigi Peak (snow-covered peaks above and right of the hut).*

Over Labor Day weekend 2018, Jessica Tran and I climbed Dnigi Peak in the southwestern Talkeetna Mountains. It is the highpoint of the east side of the Moose Creek valley, and the prominent mountain behind the Dnigi Hut. Dnigi is a fine skiing objective, as well as a summer scramble. However, only one of three possible gendarmes southeast of Point 6780 that contend for the “true summit” seemed climbable without a rope and rack (even with a rope and rack, we did not attempt to ascend two of three gendarmes due to rockfall hazard and wet, snow-covered rock).

It's possible to scramble via 4<sup>th</sup>-class routes to the possible summit gendarme west of Dnigi's prominent southwest-facing cou-

loir (the obvious couloir seen behind the hut and from Hatcher-Pass-area peaks along the ridgeline east of the Little Susitna River). The other two gendarme contenders for true summit, east of the southwest couloir, seemed like they would be at least mid-5<sup>th</sup>-class, very loose, and covered with large flakes of black lichen. For comparison, the rock was much looser on Dnigi than in the Hatcher Pass area and on Granite Peak (6729 feet). There are many possible options for gaining the summit ridge of Dnigi. The easiest, by far, would be to ascend the prominent southwest couloir when filled with snow and objective hazards (i.e., rockfall and avalanche danger) permit. Check out the MCA website for approach information to the Dnigi Hut.



*Looking down the Moose Creek valley from the prominent talus cirque below Dnigi Peak.*



*View north from the possible summit gendarme that's west of the southwest couloir top-out (Point 6780 is the the snowy point at left of photo).*



*View northeast from Point 6780.*



## Peak 6010, Chugach Mountains: Finale

July 3, 2018

Text by Wayne Todd with Carrie Wang



*Carrie Wang approaching the bergschrund on Peak 6010.*

Carrie Wang swings perpendicular to the snow bridge and tensions the rope. At least pole deep there's snow, but this snow bridge is sagging, the snow is isothermic and a glance to the right reveals a 50-plus-foot slot, beautifully blue but ... "Slack" and I leap over with no abrupt gravity experiences. I tight-rope Carrie over, also without issue. Crossing over smaller cracks onto a rock plateau is less stressful. We're crevasse-leery as Carrie nearly took a serious header in one yesterday on a spot where I had just stood. Despite our early morning start, by 7:30 a.m., the snow is already softening under the intense sun.



*Carrie Wang approaching a crevasse on Lake George Glacier.*

As the northeast rock ridge becomes profiled, the steepness sets in, above my pay grade. We're now leaving shin-deep steps. Around the corner the north snow ridge gets profiled, continuous snow and more-reasonable angle – now we're talking, though a large bergschrund creates doubt. Also, debris fans out below the bergschrund. A ship-sized half-pipe below the saddle dictates our more direct route. Possible skin tracks also lead the way. We cross another large crevasse, but at least concavity gives some assurance. There are definite, old, swollen boot tracks that seem to enter the bergschrund.

The only way up is far right, where a finger of snow connects upper and lower snow slopes. As we move that way – WHUMP – a vehicle-sized snow chunk impacts the top of the bergschrund – not a place to hang out. It's my lead day, so – hmmm – I step down into the bergschrund on various snow chunks. Fifteen feet later I plant tools on the upper snow slope, "sweet," and the snow route looks good, except for the top section.

I scoop down a foot for a picket placement, but the near-isothermic snow is continuous, so sling and angle it best as I know, stomp it even farther, add my tool and then belay Carrie over. Steps kick in nicely but the 45-degree angle causes avalanche wonder. Every 20 yards I belay Carrie in and then lead again. We both

know to tread lightly on the footsteps. Despite leading, now in the shade with a stiff wind, I'm also chilling down. I really don't like the looks of the upcoming steeper snow section with rock chunks protruding, very difficult to protect. Ah, but now to our right, the snow has melted back from the rock ridge just enough to create a narrow pathway. On terra firma, despite the scratchy, scratchy of crampons on rock, I am relieved, confident in the boulders I sling as we run the belay. This is good, as a fall to the right would be permanently bad. Soon there's just the snow top to the left and after kicking a few steps, I pop out into sun, windless warmth, and a summit boulder waiting to be sat upon.

We're relieved to be on top and take a good, long break, basking in the views, but there's the nagging softening snow waiting below. I so dislike the crampons on rock that I go boot full-Monty with gloved left hand for tool placements in the snow wall and bare right hand for secure down climbing. Back on snow, we very carefully down-climb, in our steps, moving only one extremity at a time, very slowly. At a smaller bergschrund, I body belay with more confidence than the pickets. We reverse the 'schrund moves incident free, and then, well below the debris, take another break, back in the sweltering heat.

Even more concerned about inner crevasse views, we remain geared up with helmets, crampons, and hybrid tools until safely over the sagging snow bridges.

This peak was the last of the 175 Chugach peaks for me west of the Lake George and Twentymile Glaciers, from Bashful Peak to Wedding Knoll and many in between. I lightly began playing in the Chugach Mountains about 40 years ago, with no focus on any larger goals. I wonder how quickly someone focused early on with such a goal might complete these and if someone will ever truly access them all human powered.



*Above: Carrie Wang entering the bergschrund.*

*Below: Carrie Wang descending the rock rib.*



*Left: Carrie Wang exiting the bergschrund*  
*Above: Wayne Todd and Carrie Wang on Peak 6010, looking north.*  
*Right: Wayne Todd belaying at a crevasse.*





## Peak of the Month: Cul de Sac Peak

Text by Steve Gruhn

**Mountain Range:** Talkeetna Mountains

**Borough:** Matanuska Susitna Borough

**Drainage:** Centennial Glacier

**Latitude/Longitude:** 62° 8' 50" North, 148° 34' 55" West

**Elevation:** 8060 feet ± 20 feet

**Adjacent Peaks:** Sovereign Mountain (8849 feet) and Peak 7605 in the Centennial Glacier and Talkeetna Glacier drainages

**Distinctness:** 480 feet from Sovereign Mountain

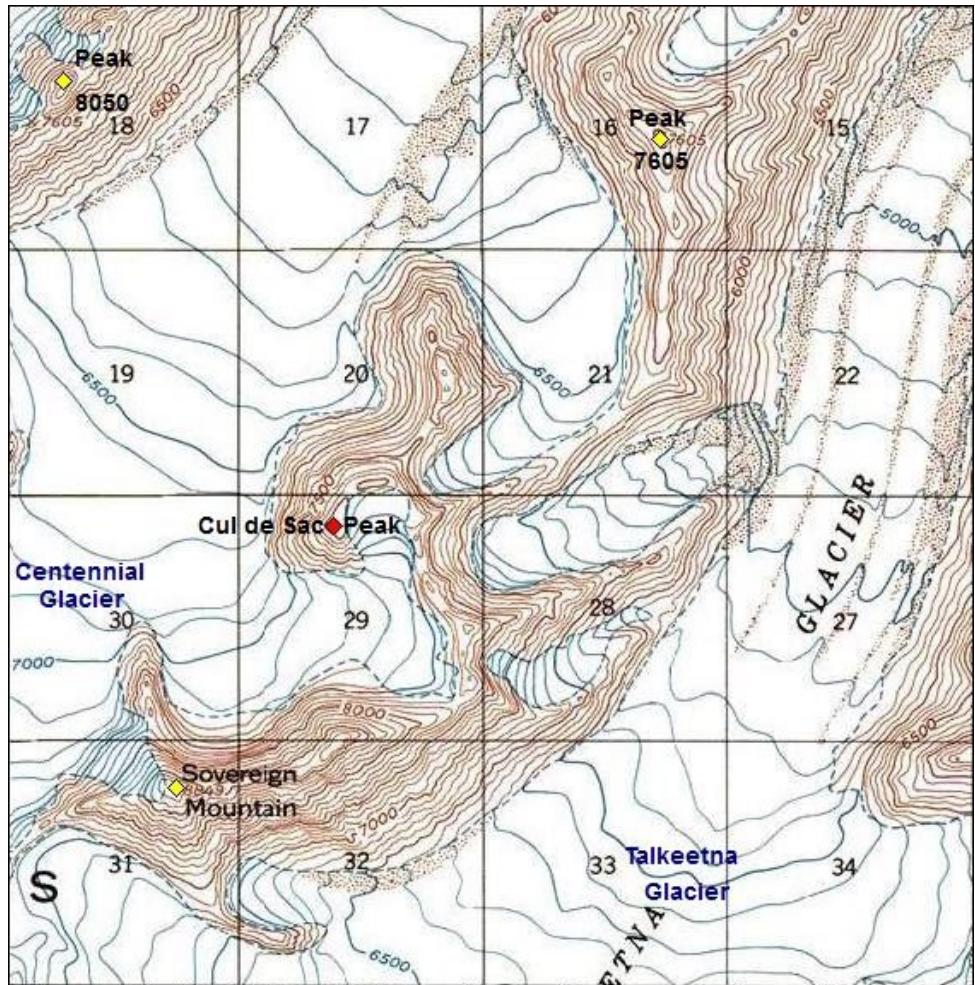
**Prominence:** 480 feet from Sovereign Mountain

**USGS Maps:** 1:63,360: Talkeetna Mountains (A-4), 1:25,000: Talkeetna Mountains A-4 NE

**First Recorded Ascent:** Early May 1967 by R.N. "Slim" Empson and Charles A. McLaughlin

**Route of First Recorded Ascent:** East face

**Access Point:** 7300-Foot level of the Centennial Glacier



On the morning of May 2, 1967, Bob "Bud" Wood flew Chuck McLaughlin and Slim Empson in his Piper Super Cub from Palmer to about the 7300-foot level of the Centennial Glacier. McLaughlin and Empson immediately set out for the highest peak in the Talkeetna Mountains, which they summited via the west ridge that evening, calling it Mount Sentry. That name was later rejected by the Alaska State Geographic Board, so the MCA's Geographic Names Committee subsequently proposed the name Mount Sovereign, which became official in 1969 upon approval by the U.S. Board on Geographic Names. McLaughlin and Empson returned to their unpitched campsite at 1 a.m. on May 3.

Later on their trip, the duo traveled to a cirque about a mile northeast of Sovereign Mountain. They called this bowl the Cul de Sac Cirque. The team climbed the east face of the peak on the northwest side of the cirque, dubbing it Cul de Sac Peak. The 1963 edition of the 1949 1:63,360 Talkeetna Mountains (A-4) USGS

quadrangle in use at the time of the ascent indicated the summit elevation was between 8100 and 8200 feet. Consequently, Empson's and McLaughlin's reports referenced an 8100-foot summit. The 2016 1:25,000 Talkeetna Mountains A-4 NE quadrangle indicated the summit elevation of Cul de Sac Peak was between 8040 and 8080 feet.

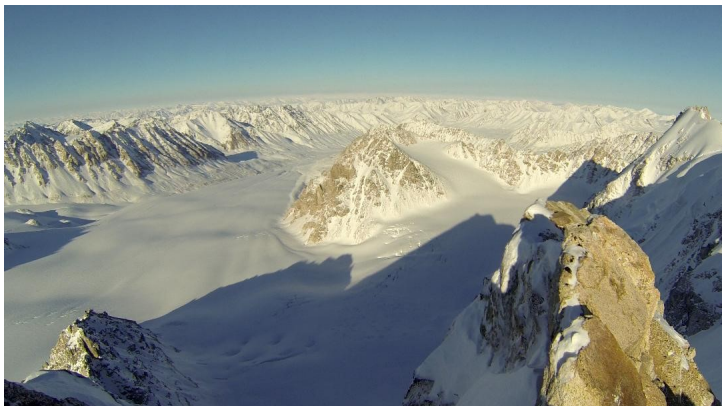
In the ensuing days the party also climbed the 8517-foot peak two miles south of Sovereign Mountain in the South Fork of the Talkeetna Glacier and Sheep River drainages and named it Lonely Peak.

In mid-May (McLaughlin reported May 13 and Empson reported May 14), Wood returned to fly the team back to Palmer.

I don't know of a second ascent of Cul de Sac Peak.

The information for this column came from McLaughlin's trip report

titled "Mount Sentry," which appeared in the September 1967 *Scree*; and from Empson's report titled "P 8849, Talkeetna Mountains," which appeared on page 123 of the 1968 *American Alpine Journal*.



*Southwest aspect of Cul de Sac Peak from the summit of Sovereign Mountain.*  
Photo by Lee Helzer



*West aspect of Cul de Sac Peak above the Centennial Glacier.*  
Photo by Dave Hart

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## Board of Directors Meeting Minutes August 30, 2018

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### Roll Call

Charlie Sink (President) - Absent  
Mike Meyers (Vice-President) - Present  
Jen Aschoff (Secretary) - Present  
Mark Smith (Treasurer) - Present  
Ralph Baldwin (Director) - Present  
Jennifer DuFord (Director) - Present  
Max Neale (Director) - Present  
Tom Meacham (Director) - Present  
Marcin Ksok (Director) - Absent  
Visitor: Steve Gruhn

### Scribe

Jen Aschoff  
Call to order at 6:05

### President's Report

Summer work--Strategic Plan and Holden Hut Construction

### Committee Reports

President (absent)

### Vice-President (Mike Meyers)

- Several speakers lined up. David Hart, Bill Long, Billy Finley
- Christmas Party for December
- Max suggested more women speakers and we brainstormed Dolly Lefever (first American woman to climb all seven summits), Leigha Falley (Talkeetna Air Taxi), Katherine Delia Cooper, Merrick Johnston, and Jennifer Johnston.

For Black Diamond discounts, MCA members will have to show proof of membership.

### Treasurer (Mark Smith)

- Approved budget sheet was handed out, hut funds were transferred to checking to pay for hut expenses. There's a little bit of money (about \$3,000) left in the hut account.
- Need member approval to increase the general meeting category of the budget in order to pay for the Christmas party this year.
- Treasurer paid bills as required for new hut expenses and previous budget had cost overrun.
- Ralph would like the Treasurer to summarize the cost overrun of the hut as well as the added income from donations.
- We need to have President write thank-you letters to the donors.



We need list of duties for incoming board members.

#### Secretary (Jen Aschoff)

- Problems with booking the BP Energy Center – we must book the room for each month separately a year in advance on the first day of the month.
- The consensus was that we will book first Wednesday of the month from now on.

We won't put the dates on the physical calendar to avoid confusion in the future due to the uncertainty associated with getting a venue or specific dates.

#### Huts (Marcin Ksok)

- No report
- Ralph – Cory Hinds wants a few minutes to thank hut volunteers at the general meeting.

Max – Concerns about the conditions of the Mint Hut. Regular maintenance, size of the hut might need to be expanded (?). Need an action item to revisit issues with our most popular hut – Mint Hut.

#### Training (Max Neale)

- Mentorship update – Alexandra Janczewska volunteered to head up the mentorship program. We are waiting for an update from her.
- Rock-climbing training in July went well.

Icefest is on the schedule for September. Talk to Jayme Mack for details. Board would like more clarity in finances of Icefest.

#### Parks Advisory (Tom Meacham and Ralph Baldwin)

- Ralph – nothing to report.
- Tom – will now be able to go to the meetings with Advisory Board since MCA board meetings are on a different night.

Tom – U.S. Forest Service is releasing an environmental assessment soon, open for comment. Board might want to comment on the current management policy by Chugach National Forest to prohibit fixed-wing airplanes on Harriman and Columbia Glaciers. Area has been closed due to wilderness-area study considerations for 30 years

#### Hiking and Climbing (Mike Meyers and Jen Aschoff)

Jen proposed two Tuesday night training group hikes, skis, or runs per month for membership to start after Bonny Sosa Tuesday night runs.

#### Library (Charlotte Foley)

- Max will check with Charlotte on her time availability to continue as library chair.

Also, what happens to MCA library when REI moves its location?

#### Scree (Dave Hart)

- Steve Gruhn represented Dave to say that *the Scree* might need a new editor. Steve will serve as a temporary editor through the October *Scree*.
- *Scree* submission deadline needs to change to the 11th of the month.

Ralph suggested recruiting a journalism student if Dave decides to resign.

#### Liability and Waivers Committee

- This committee consists of Tom, Ralph, and Charlie. Tom is the chairperson.

The board requested a report from this committee by the end of the summer. The committee requested more time to draft a document for the September Board Meeting.

### Old Business

#### Geographic Naming Request

- Steve – Geographic Names Committee would not endorse naming a peak after a person as a matter of policy. The committee suggests that we endorse Santa Ana Peak, but not Mount Mary.
- Motion was passed suggesting that we write a letter endorsing the proposed naming of Santa Ana Peak.

Motion "As a board of directors we endorse the naming of Santa Ana Peak and we rescind our previous motion to name both peaks based on feedback from the MCA Geographic Names Committee." Steve will write a letter of support and send to Mike, Jen, and Charlie.

#### Strategic Plan

- Ralph – strategic plan should be put on the website as a pdf in same location as articles of incorporation, bylaws, and policies under the "About Us" tab.

Max – priorities from the plan are needed; all board members need to respond with a vote on their top three priorities from the strategic plan. Max offered to compile responses.

## New Business

- Nominating committee established to find potential candidates. Will be Ralph and Jennifer. All board members to submit names of potential candidates to committee
- High-contributing member award discussion. President's Award will be used for an award for our highest-contributing member. The "Policies" of the MCA state that there is a limit of \$50 for the President's Award.
- Motion made and approved: "Change the maximum amount for the President's Award to \$150." Unanimous vote.
- Mike plans to submit a motion to increase the board executive member terms to two years in the future.
- Board members are expected to write the job description for their current role based on MCA bylaws and policies. This will better inform incoming board members of their roles and expectations.

- A nominating committee was formed for the upcoming MCA elections to solicit known members who would be good fits for the vacant positions. The 2018 election includes six open positions: President, Vice-President, Treasurer, Secretary, Director 1, and Director 2. Jen and Mike plan to run for a board position. Max and Tom will continue on the board in the second year of their two-year term. Charlie will continue as Past President. The board identified a need to recruit candidates for the Treasurer position. The Secretary and Treasurer positions require specific skill sets that may be difficult to find. Writing job descriptions may facilitate recruiting board-member candidates.

Ralph is heading up the nominating committee and suggested that a matrix be devised to illustrate how the different board terms overlap.

## Time and location of next meeting

September Board Meeting is September 27, 6 p.m. at ConocoPhillips Integrated Science Building Room 105A on the University of Alaska – Anchorage campus.

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# Board of Directors Meeting Minutes

## September 27, 2018

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## Roll Call

Charlie Sink (President) - Absent  
Mike Meyers (Vice-President) - Present  
Jen Aschoff (Secretary) - Absent  
Mark Smith (Treasurer) - Present  
Ralph Baldwin (Director) - Present  
Jennifer DuFord (Director) - Present  
Max Neale (Director) - Present  
Tom Meacham (Director) - Present  
Marcin Ksok (Director) - Absent  
Visitors: Greg Bragiel and Steve Gruhn

## Scribe

Max Neale

## President's Report

Discussion of membership cards. Mark will ask Tim Silvers about the member area of the website.

## Committee Reports

President (absent)

Vice-President (Mike Meyers)

- Guest speakers
- Black Diamond membership discount finalized

Treasurer (Mark Smith)

- Shared 2019 budget projections .
- Recent additional expense for Holden Hut materials delivery .

Secretary (Jen Aschoff)

- Discussion of need to take minutes at general meeting to capture decision-making.

Huts (Marcin Ksok)

- Greg shared updated maintenance needs, which are on the website. Dnigi Hut needs an evaluation and possible replacement. Bomber Hut could use a foyer and the installation of new windows, a possible project for next summer.
- Discussion of addressing overcrowding at Mint Hut. One idea is caretakers. Will be addressed in forthcoming Huts Com-



mittee.

- Discussion of liability issue. Tom will report next month.
- Greg will write up instructions for urine diverter.

#### Training (Max Neale)

- MCA Ice Fest discussion. Jayme Mack is stepping down.
- Mentorship update: Alexandra Janczewska is seeking mentees and mentors.

#### Strategic Plan Task Force (Max Neale)

- Results from board member vote on priorities for the next year, in order of priority:
  1. Liability
  2. Trips
  3. Training
  4. Huts and strategic-planning task force (tie)
  5. Revise committee structure, obtain paid support, recruit new members (tie).

#### Parks Advisory (Tom Meacham and Ralph Baldwin)

- Hatcher Pass superintendent stepping down. Position is open to internal candidates.

#### Scree (Steve Gruhn)

- Difficult to have the President position disseminating *the Scree*. Unanimous approval of motion for *the Scree* editor

to distribute *the Scree* to the membership. (This will require the editor having access to membership contact information.)

#### Hiking and Climbing (Mike Meyers and Jen Aschoff)

Waiting on board to address liability issue.

#### Library (Charlotte Foley)

Library is relocating to the Hoarding Marmot. Charlotte will gather volunteers and catalog all books

#### Liability and Waivers Committee

- Tom shared a brief update on his research and will share a full report at the next meeting.

#### Strategic Plan Task Force

Ralph and Jennifer reported on their discussions with potential new board members.

#### **Action Items**

Mark: ask Tim Silvers about member area of website.

Mark: contact Stu Grenier about calendar revenue.

Tom: liability report

Greg: write up instructions for urine diverter.

#### **Time and location of next meeting**

6 p.m. to 8 p.m. on October 31, 2018, at the first-floor conference room (left side of atrium) at the ConocoPhillips Integrated Science Building, 3101 Science Circle in Anchorage, Alaska.

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## **General Meeting Minutes**

### **October 3, 2018**

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#### **Voting**

Membership voted on the photos for the 2019 Calendar, which is organized by Stuart Grenier. Calendars should be available sometime in November.

Membership voted for members of the new Executive Board for the MCA including four executive positions and two director positions. Ralph Baldwin coordinated the voting. The results were as follows: Mike Meyers (President), Gerrit Verbeek (Vice-President), Jen Aschoff (Secretary), Katherine Cooper (Treasurer), Jonathan Rupp (Director), and Lila Hobbs (Director).

The membership also voted to increase the budget for the Christmas party to \$400.

Submitted by Jen Aschoff

**Choate's Chuckle** - Tom Choate

A: No, he heard there was a jam crack.

## Mountaineering Club of Alaska

President	Mike Meyers	<a href="mailto:mcmeyers24@msn.com">mcmeyers24@msn.com</a>
Vice-President	Gerrit Verbeek	903-512-4286
Secretary	Jen Aschoff	<a href="mailto:jlaschoff@gmail.com">jlaschoff@gmail.com</a>
Treasurer	Katherine Cooper	209-253-8489

Director 1 (term expires in 2019)	Tom Meacham	346-1077
Director 2 (term expires in 2019)	Max Neale	207-712-1355
Director 3 (term expires in 2020)	Jonathan Rupp	202-6484
Director 4 (term expires in 2020)	Lila Hobbs	229-3754
Past President	Charlie Sink	529-7910

Annual membership dues: Single \$20, Family \$30

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 11th 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: Katherine Cooper—209-253-8489 or [membership@mtnclubak.org](mailto:membership@mtnclubak.org)

Hiking and Climbing Committee: Mike Meyers—[mcmeyers24@msn.com](mailto:mcmeyers24@msn.com), Jen Aschoff—[jlaschoff@gmail.com](mailto:jlaschoff@gmail.com) 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)

Librarian: Charlotte Foley—603-493-7146 or [library@mtnclubak.org](mailto:library@mtnclubak.org)

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

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

*Carrie Wang on the Lake George Glacier en route to  
Peak 6010 in the Chugach Mountains.  
Photo by Wayne Todd*

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