

"Seeing is believing, but sometimes  
the most real things in the world are  
the things we can't see."

- Chris Van Allsburg  
in The Polar Express

# the SCREE

## Mountaineering Club of Alaska

December  
2018

Volume 61

Number 12



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**DECEMBER MEETING:** Wednesday, December 5, at 6:30 p.m. at the BP Energy Center at 1014 Energy Court in Anchorage. Dave Hart will give a presentation on Kenai Peninsula Borough classic climbs.

**December Christmas party:** Thursday, December 13, from 6 to 10 p.m. at the Eagle River Alehouse at 11901 Old Glenn Highway in Eagle River.



# 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

*The Harding Icefield with Jen Aschoff descending from Sidewalker Peak in the Kenai Mountains.*

*Photo by Joe Nyholm*

## Hiking and Climbing Schedule

**December 21:** Flattop Mountain Sleepout. No leader.

**December 22 - 23:** Ship Creek/Arctic Valley Trail Maintenance. Trip Leader: Greg Bragiel, contact at [huts@mtclubak.org](mailto:huts@mtclubak.org).

**February 22 - March 2, 2019:** Winter Mountaineering Instructional Trip. Introductory course involving leadership, menu planning, trip planning, navigation, stream crossing, leave no trace, knots/rope/cord types, snow travel/anchors, running belay, rope handling, communication, terminology, staying warm, nutrition/hydration, glacier travel, belaying, avalanche recognition/rescue, route finding, crevasse rescue, snow shelters, gear essentials, wilderness medicine, and unexpected camping trip. Trip Leader: Greg Bragiel, contact [huts@mtclubak.org](mailto:huts@mtclubak.org).

**March 31 - April 6:** MCA Eklutna Traverse. Type: Glacier travel. Trip Leader: Greg Bragiel, [huts@mtclubak.org](mailto:huts@mtclubak.org). Sign up at the January 2 MCA Meeting.

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

## Hut Closure

The Mint Hut will be closed for member training February 22 to March 2, 2019. If you are traveling in that area, bring a tent and plan to camp outside. Greg Bragiel - Lead Instructor



*Nathan Hebda, Josh Allely, Dave Hart, Ben Still and Joe Chmielowski celebrating on the Harding Icefield after a successful ski descent of Truuli Peak, May 2018.*

*Photo Lee Helzer*

**DECEMBER MEETING:** Wednesday, December 5, at 6:30 p.m. at the BP Energy Center at 1014 Energy Court in Anchorage. <http://www.alaskageology.org/graphics/meetingmap.gif>

Dave Hart will give a presentation on Kenai Peninsula Borough classic climbs: Iliamna Volcano, Redoubt Volcano, Mount Torbert, Truuli Peak, and Isthmus Peak. Lee Helzer and Dave climbed these five ultra-prominent Kenai Peninsula Borough peaks together over the past three years with a cohort of local friends. Come see Dave's multimedia presentation of these ascents with lots of warm sunshine, big smiles, blue skies, good views, and glacier skiing. If you ever wanted to climb any of these peaks, come ask Dave and Lee questions after the show.

**December Christmas party:** Thursday, December 13, from 6 to 10 p.m. at the Eagle River Alehouse at 11901 Old Glenn Highway in Eagle River.

**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.

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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.**

## Announcements

### ***Restored Public Access is Being Pursued for the Stewart Homestead Trail***

Have you ever used the old Stewart Homestead Road in south Anchorage to gain access to the McHugh Peak area in Chugach State Park? Or just to hike, bike, or ski the old road and related trails for their own sake? This route is in the Rabbit Creek Road area, with access from Goldenvue Drive and Steamboat Drive.

If you have used this trail system, then a new group wants to document your use of these trails. Around 2015, a landowner installed a locked gate at the end of Steamboat Drive, preventing all public access by foot, ski, bike, etc. to the Stewart Homestead Road. Until this occurred, the road had not been obstructed to public pedestrian access for decades. In fact, this access route to McHugh Peak

was described in the MCA's own guidebook, edited by Bill Hauser, "30 Hikes in Alaska," in 1967.

A non-profit corporation, Friends of the Stewart Public Trail, Inc., has been formed to gather witness statements and to prepare a lawsuit to confirm this old road and related trails as a public prescriptive easement. The objective is to restore legal pedestrian use by the general public through court action, because negotiations to date have been unable to do so.

If you have used this trail system for recreation or for Chugach Park access in the past, Friends of the Stewart Public Trail wants to hear from you.

Just send an email to [friendsofthestewarttrail@gmail.com](mailto:friendsofthestewarttrail@gmail.com) for more information, or to complete a witness statement.

Tom Meacham

## Mint Hut Outhouse

Instructions for using the outhouse. Please help the MCA keep this system operational. Guide others that are uninformed.

The outhouse is ONLY for depositing human waste in the barrels, NOTHING else (i.e., trash, food, grass, toilet paper, foil packaging, etc.)

- Guideline: #1 in the sun, #2 in the loo. A urine diverter is installed to prevent urine from filling the barrels.
- In metal container burn toilet paper and nothing else (i.e., trash, foil packaging, etc.). Scatter ashes in rocks behind outhouse when flames are completely out
- The MCA expends considerable funds (approximately \$1,300) every time full barrels are helicoptered out. We CANNOT fly out urine, only solid human waste.
- There are two barrels in the holding chamber. If one of the barrels is near full (i.e., about 3 inches from the top), PLEASE do not place more human waste in OR cause overflow.
- Procedure for changing to empty barrel: Be careful when handling outhouse parts. Heavy gloves and eye protection are in the hut foyer.
- Remove blank cover (opposite side of seat / no hole).
- Lift cover containing seat/urine diverter. Remove diverter hose at connection.
- Place seat/diverter side cover over empty barrel, reconnect hose.
- Place blank cover over full barrel side.
- If both barrels in outhouse chamber are full: Remove both full barrels from outhouse chamber. Wear heavy gloves and eye protection.
- Place lids (inside outhouse) onto full barrels and secure with locking band.

- Place full barrels to right side of outhouse approximately 30 feet away.
- Place empty barrels (from hut foyer) into outhouse chamber.
- Secure chamber doors properly. No gaps. (Rain/water running down back of outhouse can leak into and fill barrels if improperly secured.)

Other considerations: If the holding chamber or inside of the outhouse needs cleaning, please take the initiative to clean it yourself. No one comes to the hut to clean. We are responsible for all hut maintenance. Bleach is in the hut foyer.

Additionally: Please clean up, straighten up when departing the hut. Leave nothing except extra liquid fuel ... NOTHING (i.e., bottles, food, canisters, clothing, etc.) ... PACK IN and PACK OUT.

If the hut is damaged ... do what you can to facilitate repairs. Tools and repair items are in the foyer.

Greg Bragiel – MCA Huts Committee Chairman

Vicky Lytle – Mint Hutmeister





# Sidewalker Peak (5550 feet), Kenai Mountains

Text by Joe Nyholm

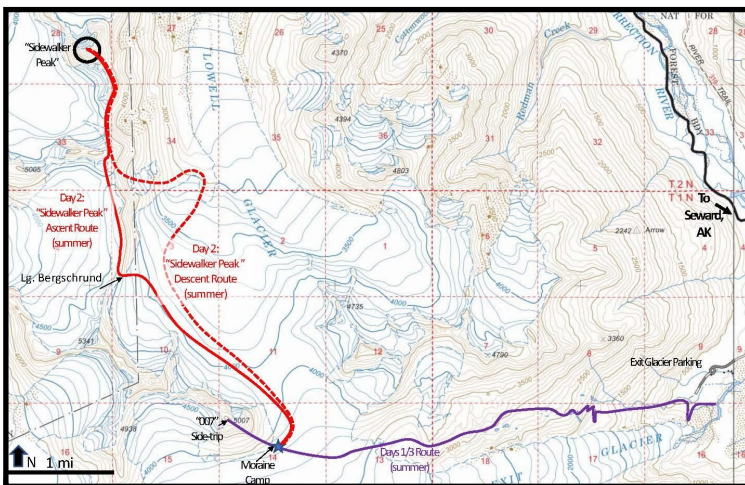
Late August and September brought some of the best weather of the year to southcentral Alaska. Labor Day weekend looked to be a good time to bag some 7000-foot Chugach State Park peaks, but fresh snow on Bombardment Pass and soggy conditions at the Eagle River Nature Center made that idea much less appealing. I had been down on the Harding Icefield the week prior and convinced my partners that the travel conditions were perfect for a fast-and-light-style trip, Jen Aschoff and Kate Fitzgerald liked that idea, and within the hour we were heading down to Seward.

Our main objective was Peak 5550, just above and west of the Lowell Glacier near Seward. I saw this peak the week prior from the summit of Refrigerator Peak (5450 feet); it was a commanding peak in the area and had the sharpest “clean pyramid” summit for many miles [Ed. note: see the November 2018 Scree]. We opted for a lightweight, 2.5-day trip to get that peak, and possibly a couple others. After re-packing gear and driving, we started at noon on Friday from the Exit Glacier parking lot and were at the top of the Harding Icefield Trail in less than three hours, from there it was about an hour of gravel “canyons” to the edge of the icefield and the transition to crampons. We trekked on the glacier up to the pass overlooking the Lowell



*Sidewalker Peak showing an overview of the ascent route up the ridge to the summit block on the left (southwest; see map). The upper 30 feet of the summit block was exposed, easy-5<sup>th</sup>-class climbing.*

*Photo by Kate Fitzgerald*



*Topographic map showing the route to Sidewalker Peak. The Day 1 route shown in purple is the route from the Exit Glacier parking lot to the campsite, including a side trip up Point 5007 (locally called 007 Peak). The Day 2 ascent route is shown as a solid red line and the descent route as a dashed red line. The team chose to climb the entire ridge for spectacular views and used a slightly-easier-on-the-knees route back. The team returned on Day 3 using the same route as on Day 1.*

Glacier and to get a glimpse of our objective, hopping over open crevasses on the way.

To our disbelief, the two-week forecasted bluebird skies started to darken and fill with clouds, obscuring our peak ... then it started to rain in typical Seward fashion. Now our light-and-fast approach was becoming less ideal with the light tent and bivy setups that we had chosen for shelter. We decided to climb Point 5007 (the Park Rangers informally call it “007 Peak”) to see if the weather would clear up as it was originally forecasted. That peak gives a wonderful view of the icefield and would make a fun and easy overnigher to the moraine



*Above: Joe Nyholm (right) and Kate Fitzgerald discuss route options up Sidewalker Peak.*

*Below: Joe Nyholm navigating through the maze of crevasses on the Lowell Glacier, which was largely exposed ice with some snow. The party traveled un-roped on exposed ice and roped on snow-covered ice.*

*Photos by Jen Aschoff*





camp (see the map) or day trip. The vast views from “007” let us scope out the route, and on the way up, the skies cleared. So, we descended and set camp for the night at the base of “007 Peak” on a rock peninsula that jutted into the icefield to give epic views.

We slept in a little and finally got moving at 9 a.m. and skirted north along the northwest side of “007 Peak” and past Refrigerator Peak. We spotted a snow ramp off of the glacier that would get us close to the ridge crest on a north-south ridge that would lead us to our objective. We got to a large, obvious bergschrund and found it provided the easiest access to the above ridge. However, loose rock in that area made the scree scramble up to the ridge-line exciting. Once on the ridge, travel was easy and spectacular due to glacier views on both sides, with the west side being more moderate with easy access to snow to climb around steep scrambles.

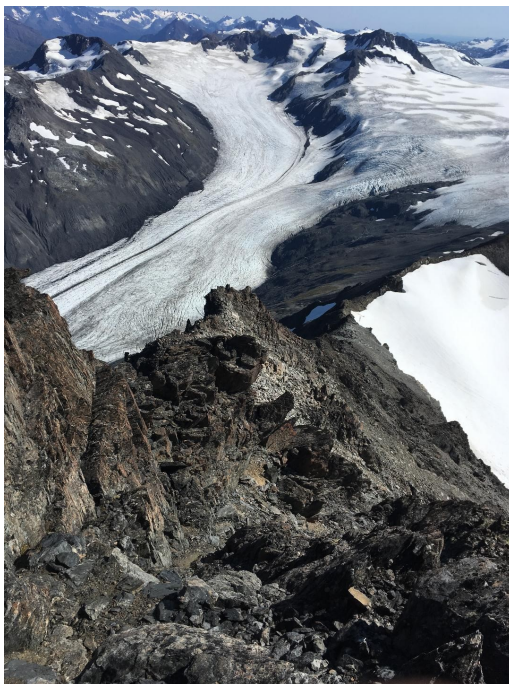
The next highpoint on the ridge put us at 4900 feet, that then led to a summit to the west that we didn't climb, but looked difficult with several false summits. From that highpoint we had our first real glimpse of the ridge climbing ahead after a 500-foot descent. The ridge from there got more involved with mostly 3<sup>rd</sup>-class travel and the occasional 4<sup>th</sup>-class bits. At 4800 feet, we ran into our first difficult step, but managed to find a steep, loose route on the east side that bypassed the need for a rope.

At 5250 feet, we ran into our next problem, which was once again solved by going to the east side of the ridge, although that route led to an even-less-stable gully that required traveling one at a time, and multiple small rockslides were produced. Immediately after that step there was a nice, flat spot on a patch of lighter-colored rocks with a clear view of the summit block to take a break, and plan the final 300-foot push to the summit. The routes we discussed all looked like easy-to-moderate-5<sup>th</sup>-class rock, so we left our glacier gear and got our rock gear ready. We brought a 60-meter rope, glacier-travel gear, a small alpine rock rack (two small cams, two small nuts, and a



*Jen Aschoff looking at her map on the ridge with a view south-east up the Lowell Glacier in the background.*

*Photo by Kate Fitzgerald*



*Hidden sidewalk that took the party to within 50 feet of the summit of Sidewalker Peak.*

*Photo by Joe Nyholm*

tricam) with some cord and a rappel ring, and that turned out to be perfect.

The summit block from that point looked challenging, steep, and very loose. We had decided on two possible routes, a far-east gully that we couldn't see the top of, or a slightly-bigger-than-body-width chimney that split the summit block down the middle. Our first choice was to try the chimney, but it had what appeared to be a chockstone two-thirds of the way up and also ended 30 feet or so below the summit onto some slab-looking features. We decided to stick to the west side of the ridge for as long as possible

and cut over to the base of the chimney. But shortly after starting our final push we found a perfect sidewalk-sized ledge system that skirted past the chimney on the west side of the ridge and put us at 30 or so feet from the summit opposite the ridge from where

the chimney would have spat us out. From there Jen racked up and we set a belay on a ledge behind a car-sized block to protect us from rockfall. The 30-foot (5.5 to 5.6) pitch followed a decent-quality, rock face that was bisected by several crack systems up to a prominent notch. The climbing was easy but exposed and with high consequences; she used one small nut and medium-sized cam to protect it. The rock quality was generally good on the face, with the crux being getting past a loose-looking, human-sized flake. A light 30-meter mountaineering rope would have sufficed for that route.

Jen used a prominent horn as an anchor and belayed up Kate. Kate cleaned the route, noting on the way up how bomber the nut was that Jen had placed, wishing she had a chock-pick. From there, there was a bit more scrambling up to a blocky

summit that was just big enough for three people. The views were second to none and we saw no previous sign of people, which led us to believe that it was probably an unclimbed peak. Although it commands the surrounding terrain, due to its location deep in the backcountry, it is probably seldom seen, even by people doing the Harding Icefield traverse, as one would have to trek to the top of the pass on the Lowell Glacier to see it.



Our descent involved rappelling off the horn for the 5<sup>th</sup>-class section and then a sunny ridge scramble back on our ascent route until we got to the 4900-foot highpoint, where we took huge scree field down to a rock glacier and then down to the lower sections of the Lowell Glacier and followed it back to our camp.

Instead of bagging more peaks we opted for an easy final day that consisted of an early-morning sunrise glacier walk and uneventful berry-picking hike down the Harding Icefield Trail with amazing glacier views. Big shout-out to the weather for this one, even if it tried to scare us off with rain. Due to the sweet sidewalk near the summit and having just climbed Spirit Walker, we got to referring to it as “Sidewalker Peak.”

22 miles, 7,100-foot climb without the 007 Peak detour, 2.5 days



*Jen Aschoff scoping out the 5th-class pitch to the summit of Sidewalker Peak.*

*Photos by Joe Nyholm*



*Early fall colors and the Exit Glacier on the hike down the Harding Icefield Trail.*



*Kate Fitzgerald on the summit of Sidewalker Peak with Jen Aschoff in the foreground.*

*Photo by Joe Nyholm*



*View south from the summit of Sidewalker Peak looking toward Refrigerator Peak and 007 Peak.*

*Photo by Joe Nyholm*



## Shark's Tooth (5750 feet), Coast Mountains, First Ascent

Text and photos by Dylan Miller



*Matt Callahan on the scenic approach to Shark's Tooth.*

Back in 2016, I made my first ascent up Dean Peak located at the end of the Juneau road system above Echo Cove. From the summit of Dean, I set eyes on a granite peak that resembled the prehistoric megalodon shark tooth that my father had. It sat all by itself, with a sheer 1,300-foot cliff face. Its image had been imprinted in my mind ever since then. I thought one day I'd have to go check out that peak. Fun that that day came a lot sooner than I'd imagined.

This past summer, the summer of 2018, my father Mike Miller, Ben Still, Matt Callahan, and I kept talking about going in to climb that peak. Ben Still said, "I've wanted to climb that mountain since I first saw it back in '97 (1997). It's on the top of my list of peaks to climb this summer." In fact I found one of Dad's old disposable-camera photos of that peak taken from the top of Dean Peak when he had climbed it some 15 years earlier. We planned and planned, but unfortunately our work schedules never lined up right; the summer was coming to a close quite fast.

On the evening of the 1<sup>st</sup> of September, Matt called me up, say-

ing that the weather looked great and he had the next two days off to go climbing. I did, too, so I couldn't say no. We threw out ideas of what to climb: Eagle Peak on Admiralty Island, Lions Head Mountain above Berners Bay, potentially another Mendenhall Towers trip ... Then Matt suggested that we go do the Shark's Tooth. I was reluctant at first because we deemed it to be a three-day round trip since the approach was a five-mile bushwhack up Davies Valley, then climbing to a 4250-foot saddle between Dean Peak and another peak (5950 feet) [*Ed. note: bivouac.com calls that peak Thiel Peak*], then descending into the next valley which was totally unknown because the topographic maps depicted glaciers where there were no longer any. A total of 10 miles, 5,000 feet of elevation gain for the first day, then climbing the remaining 2,500 feet of Shark's Tooth and then all the way back home. Matt is an animal, having run 50-kilometer races with 10,000+ feet of elevation gain and placing in the top five made it somewhat intimidating to do long days with him. But that, though, dissipated swiftly when the image of Shark's Tooth popped up in my mind's eye. I wanted badly to see that peak again. Just to look at it again ... So we



planned on it.

We set out for the well anticipated “Davies 'Shwhack,” which we had both done numerous times. At that point we had a set path that we would take to get to the back of the valley, which held the Davies icefall. The Davies Valley felt like a miniature wilderness area. I’d seen brown bear, wolf, and eagle tracks all on the same small silt bar of Davies Creek. Last year when Matt and I climbed Forgotten Peak [Ed. note: see the July 2018 Scree], we saw two moose. It was quite an adventure just to go back into Davies Valley. We tromped and thrashed through the initial two miles of devil's club and blueberry bushes that were completely soaked by the previous night's rain. The devil's club was so thick that we couldn't see our feet. They say there is ginseng in devil's club, which is a natural stimulant. I like to pretend that once the needles of the plant penetrate my skin, I get an extra boost of energy, which I honestly feel I do.

In three hours we were in the back of the valley and at the base of the 4250-foot ridge and saddle that separated the Davies Valley from the next valley in which our objective lay. That, too, was a heinous 'shwhack. There the devil's club had been stunted and irritated by avalanches in the winter; the spines were so sharp and stiff that they wouldn't even come off into our skin, rather they would slice us open like micro-razorblades. We hand-over-hand climbed up alders for 2,000 feet until we finally broke into the “magic realm” of Southeast Alaska subalpine. Heather, wild flowers, granite, and clear ponds and streams all welcomed us to some of the most beautiful country on the planet. As we climbed the remaining 2,000 feet to the saddle, the anticipation of the view of Shark's Tooth grew and grew. In less than an hour I would see it again, close up this time.

And behold! There she was ... The sun illuminated the silver walls with the backdrop of dark blue sky. The peak looked so intense, as though it might blast off into space like a massive rocket ship. If one has ever read Immanuel Kant's Observations

on the Feeling of the Beautiful and the Sublime, that was most definitely a feeling of the sublime when we looked upon that mountain. We were psyched! Yet from the saddle on, the path was completely unknown, we anticipated large cliffs that could cut our descent route to the base of the cliff carved by the glacier that had since retreated. And the approach up to the base of Shark's Tooth also looked uncertain. A glacier spewed out melt water with steep rock bands and talus; all had the potential of shutting us down.



*Matt Callahan gearing up for the first of two technical rock pitches on the east ridge of Shark's Tooth.*

We descended into the new valley, which, having just recently been deglaciated, was comprised of bare bedrock granite, and unconsolidated moraine. A good change of pace from the deep, dark, yet enchanting, forest of the Davies Valley. With some navigation Matt and I found a way down into the valley without any technical difficulties. We hopped a stream and found ourselves at the lower flanks of Shark's Tooth. From a distance we eyed a line linking benches between cliffs that would take us up 1,000 feet to an elevation of 4000 feet. We found a perfect campsite just as the last bit of sun was going behind Dean Peak. As we sat around, enjoying our camp that evening, we calculated how much time we would need to climb the remaining 1,800 feet of the peak and save enough time to get out

of Davies Valley before it would be totally dark. If we woke up at 5 a.m., we would have six hours to get up and down Shark's Tooth, leaving enough time for our exit. That brought a nervous feeling because we had no idea if we would run into some kind of crux that would consume hours to mitigate.

Our climbing route had already been picked early on. The southeast ridge of the mountain looked the least steep and thus least technical approach to the top. Gaining that ridge would require some 200 feet of climbing, which did not look easy.

So we arose at 5, got going at 6, and made our way to the southeast ridge that we had planned for. Exposed heather



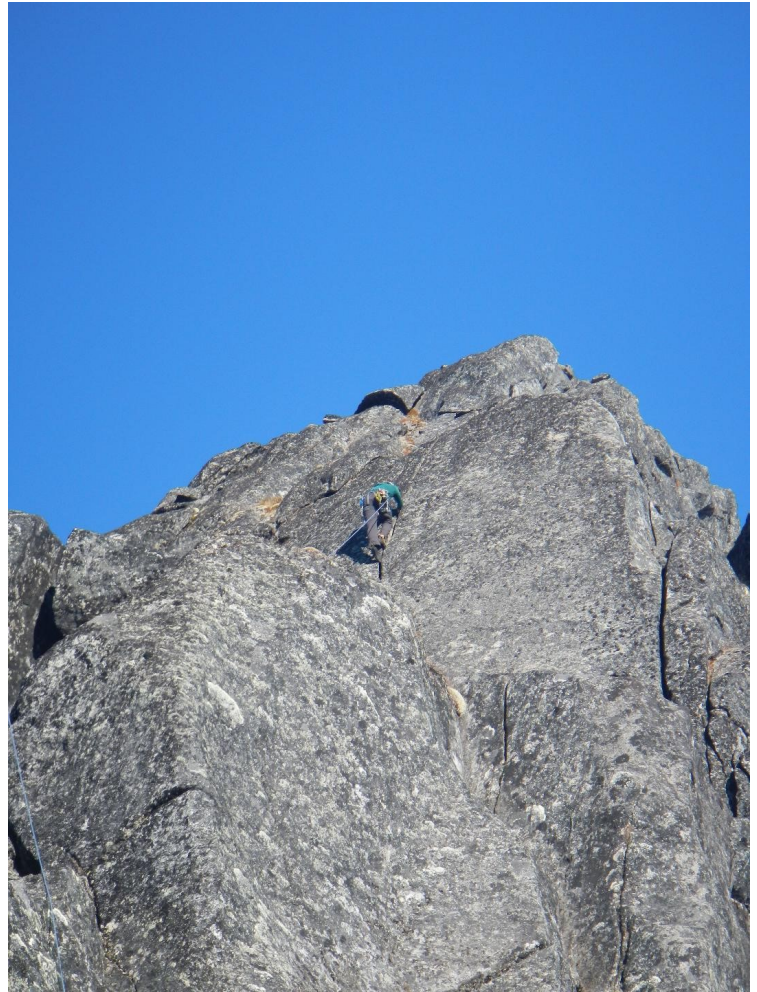
slopes and some granite slabs gave access to the lowest point in the ridge, the backbone of Shark's Tooth. There we roped up. By the looks of it, the easiest climbing was 5.7. Matt took the lead in his approach shoes. After busting some moves and climbing up 50 feet, Matt found a chimney that one could essentially walk up. That took us right to the ridge top, which was as wide as a two-lane road, and was first class for what looked like a way. So we packed the rope and ran up the ridge. We encountered a notch, which luckily allowed for easy down-climbing and climbing back out, then more first-class walking up the first of two small headwall pitches.

There we put on rock shoes, the climbing looked to be 5.6 to 5.7. with short cracks linking ledges and then easing off to first class again. I led that pitch. As we thought, the climbing was good, old, safe-and-easy 5.7. Hand jams and buckets were abundant, which was great! When the rope was out, Matt started simul-climbing (climbing simultaneously) until I reached walking ground again, where we packed the rope and took off running again.

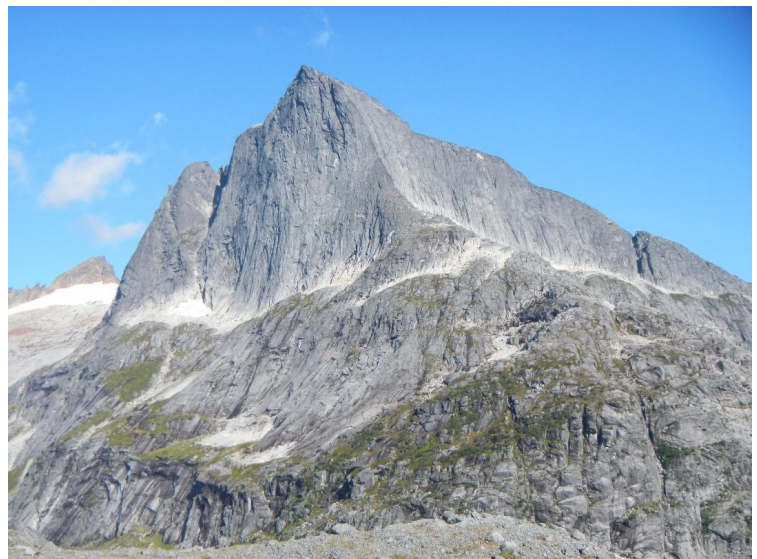
The second headwall was coming into view and looked a bit more serious than the previous one. We eyed a 30-foot splitter hand crack right up the face of the otherwise-blank, slabby headwall. Matt took that lead, starting on slightly flaring cracks, which was the crux of the ridge at a moderate 5.7. Then he was up on the splitter headwall when the rope went tight again and I started simul-climbing after him. We then found easy first- and second-class terrain again and packed the rope. That time we ran for the summit.

And there we were, five minutes later we found ourselves on top of Shark's Tooth, a literal dream come true. It took us two and three-quarters hours to get up, so we had a moment to take it all in. After the feeling of completion set in and we panned the view multiple times, we made the descent back to camp. We simul-down-climbed the two pitches we led, and rappelled down the chimney off of the ridge. We packed up camp and said goodbye to the beautiful spot, feeling like we were leaving all too soon.

We gained the saddled ridge separating the Davies and the new valley, took one last look at Shark's Tooth, and descended back into Davies Valley. We found a much easier way down into the valley via some goat and game trails through old-growth forest. We were back at the car right at dusk.



*Matt Callahan leading the remarkable 5.7 splitter hand crack up the second technical pitch of the climb.*



*One last look at the mountain before dropping into the Davies Valley. It's easy to imagine new lines.*

## Begguya North Buttress Solo Ascent: Mount Hunter (14573 feet), Alaska Range

Text and photos by Colin Haley, except where noted



*The north face of Begguya from the plane landing Mark Westman and Colin Haley at basecamp.*

In 2017 I returned to Seattle from a trip to the central Alaska Range, which was shorter than most with only two weeks of camping at Kahiltna Base Camp, but more successful than some Alaska Range trips I'd done three times the length.

In May 2012 I attempted to solo Begguya (a.k.a. Mount Hunter, the third-highest peak in the central Alaska Range) via the North Buttress, and in a state of extreme exhaustion I turned around and descended only 100 meters below the summit. It is the only time in my life that I can recall turning around on an alpine climbing objective not because of weather, not because of conditions, not because I lacked the right equipment, but simply because I was too exhausted to safely continue. My movements were getting sloppy, and I was worried I might fall. The story of that attempt is here: <http://www.colinhaley.com/solo-attempt-on-north-buttress-of-begguya/>. One hundred meters is not a lot of remaining mountain, especially on a route that gains about 2,000 meters in total, but since it was an objective that I really cared about, like our first attempt on the one-day Torre Traverse with Alex Honnold, I knew I wouldn't feel satisfied with that near-miss. So, in the past five years I have thought often about going back and finishing what I nearly accomplished in 2012. In the end, I'm actually somewhat happy that I didn't succeed in 2012, because in the intervening years I have progressed significantly as a climber, and thus the style of climb that I finished is one I'm more proud of than the style of climb I nearly completed five years earlier.

I do really love solo climbing, especially on the right objective, but I'm not some sort of extreme introvert, and the biggest disadvantage in my mind of solo climbing is missing the camaraderie of a good partner. Thus, from my perspective I had a pretty ideal arrangement on this trip: I first got to hang out and do some good warm-up climbing days with a couple good friends of mine, Mark Westman and Mikey Schaefer, and then got a window of good weather for my solo objective almost immediately afterward. So, the perfectionist control-freak in me got to have my special solo experience, but the socialite in me also got to have a good time with good friends.

I flew into Kahiltna Base Camp on April 29, with Mark Westman, his wife Lisa Roderick, who is the Kahiltna Base Camp manager, and a few others who joined us in helping to set up Lisa's base camp for the Denali climbing season. Mark had just a few days off from his work as a Denali climbing ranger, and the weather wasn't great, but on May 1st we got out for a fun day of climbing on "Bacon and Eggs," a route on the "Mini-Mini-Moonflower" that Mark established several years ago with Eamonn Walsh [*Ed. note: see pages 133 and 134 of the 2009 American Alpine Journal*]. It was a mellow day out, and when it started snowing and spindrifting, we started rappelling, rather than continuing to the top of the peak, but it was a perfect first warm up with an old friend.

A couple days later Mark flew out to Talkeetna, and my friend Mikey Schaefer flew in. Our plan was to "get two birds stoned at



once,” doing some fun climbing that would be more of a warm-up for me and a new experience for Mikey (he had never been to the Kahiltna before), and also get some photos for Patagonia of a couple new jackets. (Mikey is a professional photographer in addition to a very good climber.) Mikey is a much better rock climber than I am, especially on technical granite, so I have had some memorable days getting rope-gunned around Index and Yosemite with him. The Kahiltna Glacier being a place that is much more my realm than Mikey’s, we had a role reversal, and Mikey had the pleasure of getting dragged around somewhat out of his element, all while trying to get some good photos.



*Colin Haley approaching the North Buttress of Begguya for some cragging on "Deprivation."  
Photo by Mikey Schaefer*

On May 5 Mikey and I went “cragging” on the lower portion of Begguya’s North Buttress, climbing "Deprivation" [Ed note: see pages 11 through 14 of the 1995 AAJ] up to the first ice band, and then rappelling back down on the lower portion of the "Bibler-Klewin" route [Ed. note: see page 153 of the 1984 AAJ]. For me it was somewhat of a reconnaissance to see what conditions were like on "Deprivation." Having attempted "Deprivation" in 2011 to the “cornice bivy” (that story at: <http://www.colinhaley.com/kahiltna-2011-easy-peak-bagging-and-single-push-failures/>),

I thought it might be something I would be comfortable free-soloing when in really good condition. However, the crux pitch on "Deprivation" was in more difficult condition than it had been in 2011, and I quickly concluded that I wasn’t interested in free-soloing it. Above "Deprivation’s" crux pitch, we had an odd experience of dealing with the mess left behind by a siege attempt on "Deprivation" in 2016. Two ropes had been fixed through the crux, and unfortunately were far too frozen into the ice to be removed. We did some properly altruistic work of carrying down random junk (such as three packs of cigars and three tins of snus!), and also some more selfish work of booty-ing some nice climbing hardware! Some of that climbing hardware booty I promptly left on our descent, setting some bomber rappel anchors on the lower pitches of the

"Bibler-Klewin." Even though we had two 60-meter ropes, I intentionally set several rappel anchors only 40 meters apart, knowing that I planned to take a single 80-meter rope on my solo attempt, and hoping to avoid carrying a bunch of pitons with me on my solo attempt. I think that this “prepping” of rappel anchors is the biggest concession of style of my eventual solo ascent.



*Mikey Schaefer finishing the traverse toward the "Bibler-Klewin" on the first ice band.*

After a day of rest, Mikey and I had a second climbing day on May 7, during which we climbed most of the way up the “Mini-Moonflower.” It was snowing heavily, and torrential spindrift was one of the reasons that we decided to descend just below the summit ridge, but at least stormy weather made for some good ambiance for Mikey’s photographic agenda! We passed a couple days of stormy weather on the 8th and 9th, and racked up to go “cragging” on the North Buttress again on the 10th, perhaps even as high as the cornice bivy. Unfortunately, Mikey woke up quite sick on the morning of the 10th, feeling like crap and having been feverish all night. We scrapped our climbing plans, and Mikey flew back out to civilization. In hindsight it was a blessing in disguise, because I eventually made my solo ascent in a good window of weather on the 12th, and if I had climbed as high as the cornice bivy on the 10th, I would’ve likely been too tired on the 12th.

*Colin Haley climbing through a torrent of spindrift on the "Mini-Moonflower."  
Photo by Mikey Schaefer*



As Mikey was flying out to Talkeetna on the 10th, I went up to the North Buttress and climbed a couple hundred meters on the lower apron of "Deprivation" to do some final gear tests, principally of my 80-meter rappel rope, which I had never used before and wanted to make sure behaved well before committing to doing 1,500 meters of descent with it! On the morning of the 11th, I skied up to the base of the North Buttress again, and left my ice axes, crampons, rope, rack, harness, and helmet, simply to make my approach the following morning a bit easier. On the afternoon and evening of the 11th, I filled water bottles with hot water, and finished packing. I think that, for sure, one of the reasons I'm attracted to solo climbing is because I'm a bit of a control-freak perfectionist, and I enjoyed geeking out on all sorts of minute, mostly insignificant details that most climbers don't have the patience for!

On the 12th I woke up around 4:30 a.m., didn't bother starting the stove because I had made all my warm water the evening before, and after a bit of breakfast, departed Kahiltna Base Camp at 5:06 a.m. I skied up to base of the North Buttress, swapped my skis and poles for all the climbing hardware I had stashed the morning before, and at a deliberately relaxed pace labored up to the bergschrund, which I crossed at 6:35 a.m. Through the first rock band I climbed on essentially the same line that I had established in 2012, and while I'm sure it was the easiest route through the first rock band, it still contained two bits of trickier climbing, which were the most technical of my entire ascent. The first was a sort of dihedral between rock and serac ice, climbing with my left foot and hand on rock, and my right foot and axe on ice. It was only a few meters high, but definitely required slow, careful climbing for me to do safely. I don't remember that bit from 2012, so it might be that at that time there was a flow of ice in that location, or perhaps I went a slightly different way. The second bit of tricky climbing was a few meters of rock at the top of the rock band, to exit onto the first ice band. There I was quite sure I went in the exact same spot as in 2012, as I recognized the features. I was established on the first ice band by 7:44, about 70 minutes after crossing the bergschrund. My line through the first rock band was admittedly exposed to some serac hazard, but I'd estimate that I was only in a dangerous area for about 40 minutes – a total exposure to risk that is, in my opinion, massively less than the average party traveling up the Northeast Fork of the Kahiltna Glacier, or even the average party climbing the normal route on Mont Blanc du Tacul.

I labored up and left on the first ice band to link up with "Deprivation" at the base of the second rock band. There was dramatically less ice in the second rock band than there had been in 2012, but fortunately the climbing remained easy, moderate ice. At about 9:00, I arrived on the second ice band, and started making a big, long traverse to the right to eventually join up with the upper portion of the "Björnberg-Ireland" route [Ed. note: see pages 155

*Climbing in the first rock band during Colin Haley's solo ascent of Begguya.*



*After a long rightwards traverse on the second ice band, looking up the moderate ice that Colin Haley climbed to join the "Björnberg-Ireland" route.*



*Colin Haley's self-portrait at the cornice bivy, elated because he thought he'd follow tracks to the summit.*

and 156 of the 1981 AAJ]. After joining the "Björnberg-Ireland" I was again exposed to serac hazard for a short period, but I deliberately increased my pace there, and was out of the dangerous area in less than 30 minutes, I would guess. In 2012 I had followed the "Björnberg-Ireland" all the way to its junction with the original "Japanese Northeast Ridge" route, but the top of the couloir had contained steep, unconsolidated snow, and I finally spent perhaps an entire hour tunneling through the cornice. Knowing better this time around, I instead veered up and left, climbing up the classic final ice slope and gaining the crest of the North Buttress in the same spot as the "Bibler-Klewin" route. I reached that spot, the "cornice bivy," at 11:53, and was delighted to find a tent platform and fresh tracks in the snow. Three friends I had hung out with down in base camp, Sam, Keenan, and Mark, had started up the "Bibler-Klewin" the morning before me, and obviously had made good time. In four previous trips to the top of the North Buttress, I had only managed to reach Begguya's summit once, despite trying hard every time to do so, so I knew to not underestimate the difficulty of ascending the upper Northeast Ridge to the summit. I knew





*Looking up the upper Northeast Ridge of Begguya, from where the tracks abruptly ended.*



*Climbing on the upper Northeast Ridge of Begguya.*



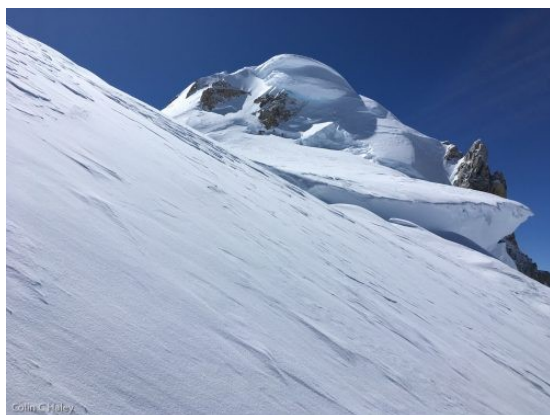
*Stoked self-portrait on the summit of Begguya.*

that fresh tracks in the snow would not only make for less effort and a faster time, but also make ascending the upper ridge unroped safer from a crevasse-hazard perspective. After a quick break to eat and drink and leave my helmet cached in a snow hole (I didn't dare leave my rope cached, even though I knew I most likely wouldn't need it above), I started gleefully up the ridge, looking forward to cruising along a trail. After a few meters I noticed that some of the tracks looked suspiciously like downhill tracks, and was having trouble spotting the track on the slopes above. A couple minutes later, only about 100 meters of distance and 10 meters of vertical from the cornice bivy, I was disappointed to see the tracks come to an abrupt end at a section of narrow ridge. After feeling briefly disheartened I continued on my way, and actually the crazy purist inside me felt a little bit relieved that I would have to "earn" my ascent all on my own, without any outside help.

The low snowpack in the central Alaska Range in 2017, perhaps combined with glacial recession, made the upper Northeast Ridge of Begguya a bit more complicated than I remembered it being in 2009, 2011, and 2012. Nonetheless, there were just a few short steps of AI3, and after some short pockets of calf-deep trail-breaking, the snow became pleasantly firm. Most of the snow on

the upper Northeast Ridge was boot-top at most, and often less, which was of course a huge boon compared to deep trail-breaking. Once past the steps of AI3, I pulled out my iPod, and enjoyed the non-technical cardio exercise, except for one section of crevasses, where I turned off my music and carefully, slowly picked my way through what I thought was the safest possible route (with one high-consequence, standing long jump!).

I arrived on Begguya's summit at 14:22, 7:47 after crossing the bergschrund. I had felt optimistic and confident before starting, but nonetheless had imagined the ascent taking much more than eight hours! I was delighted with how smoothly and easily everything had gone, and enjoyed the summit of an awesome mountain, one that was visited shockingly infrequently compared to neighboring Denali. After trying unsuccessfully to find a phone signal to call Ali-sa Owens back in Seattle, eating some food, and drinking some water, I started back down. The descent back down to the cornice bivy went easily, with just a few moments of concentration in the crevassed area and while down-climbing the AI3 steps, and unfortunately a building altitude headache. I again took a brief break on the tent platform that Sam, Keenan and Mark had chopped, and then started following their tracks down the "Bibler-Klewin," making my first rappel at 16:15. It was certainly helpful that the "Bibler-Klewin" had been descended just that morning, but since Sam, Keenan, and Mark had made 60-meter rappels, as opposed to my 40-meter rappels, I was only able to find and use about a third of their Abalakov threads. Much of the final ice band had a fair amount of snow stuck to the ice, making finding good ice for Abalakov threads difficult, and down-climbing relatively easy, so after three rappels on the upper, iciest bit, I ended up down-climbing most of the final ice band. The rest of the descent was just a long routine of putting in ice screws, making Abalakov threads, putting on my rappel de-



*Looking up toward the final summit pyramid.*

*Starting the first of what Colin Haley estimated was about 40 to 45 rappels down the North Buttress.*



vice and prusik, taking off my rappel device and prusik, pulling the rope down, and nursing my altitude headache. I stopped twice during the descent to eat an energy gel and have a sip of water, but otherwise just rappelled and rappelled. Descending 1,500 meters of steep terrain with just a single 80-meter rope of course makes for a lot of rappels, and I would guess that I made about 40 to 45. However, rappelling is probably the one type of climbing activity involving a rope that is actually faster alone than with a partner, and by 21:53 I was below the bergschrund, walking back to my skis. I popped off my crampons, harness, and helmet, and shoved them into my backpack, along with the rope, which I didn't bother coiling. I put on my skis, adjusted my poles to 140 centimeters for poling power, and at 22:20 was arranging the pink, plastic flamingos in front of Lisa's tent in a funny way – a signal that I was back safe. I trudged from Lisa's tent up the hill to mine, put on some music, took off my boots, starting making dinner, and digesting my experience.

*Self-portrait safely down, below the bergschrund.*



The entire ascent and descent had gone so quickly and easily that I almost immediately started wondering if I had built the objective up in my mind to be more difficult than it was in reality. Compared to my epic the year before on Sultana, the whole thing felt like a walk in the park. However, while I do think in any event that soloing the Infinite Spur is a greater accomplishment than my recent solo on Begguya, I think it is also easy to conflate an epic with a great accomplishment. My epic, fight-for-survival descent of Sultana does not make the accomplishment of soloing the Infinite Spur greater than if my descent had gone smoothly, and my casual,

shockingly-mellow experience on Begguya shouldn't undermine that ascent either.

I think that my solo on Begguya set a speed record regardless of what portion was being measured (5:18 bergshcrund-to-cornice-bivy, 7:47 bergschrund-to-summit, 15:22 roundtrip-from-bergschrund, 17:13 roundtrip-from-base-camp). However, climbing ropeless is always so much faster than climbing roped, that it is somewhat pointless to make comparisons to roped parties. Much more significant and meaningful to me was how much faster I was able to climb compared to my attempt in 2012. In 2012 I had taken 15:10 from the bergschrund to the cornice bivy – nearly three times as long! There were, for sure, a number of reasons why I was able to move so much faster in 2017 than I had five years earlier, but I'm sure the biggest reasons are that in those five years I had become both a better technical climber and more fit cardiovascularly as well. Those personal improvements, and the very direct, quantitative evidence of them, are the most satisfying aspects to me of my 2017 solo ascent.

Aside from being a better climber and alpinist than I was five years earlier, I think I was able to move faster in 2017 due to better conditions, better weather, better equipment, lighter equipment, and wiser strategy gained from the experiences of the preceding five years. The biggest difference in strategy compared to 2012 was that in 2017 I free-soloed everything, while in 2012 I had self-belayed a few short bits. Obviously that change in strategy was only (safely) possible by gaining a higher level of technical climbing ability, but like many changes in strategy, it had exponential benefits: 1) Not ever self-belaying saved a lot of time; 2) Not ever self-belaying allowed me to carry an ultra-lightweight, static rappel rope, while in 2012, I had carried an 80-meter twin rope, which was much heavier; and 3) Being able to self-belay conveniently, or haul one's pack on steep sections, required keeping the rope handy; in 2012 I had trailed the rope behind me for the entire ascent of the buttress (clipped to the middle of it), which, from an energy perspective, was massively less efficient than keeping the rope inside one's backpack, which I did in 2017.

Another significant change in strategy was that in 2012 I had carried a small stove to melt snow along the way, and a freeze-dried meal as well to eat at the cornice bivy. All that melting of snow took a significant amount of time, bringing water to a boil for a freeze-dried meal wasted a bunch of fuel and time, and eating and digesting a freeze-dried meal was slow. In 2017 I brought only bars and gels, and carried no stove – I filled four Platypus bottles with hot water down in base camp (and insulated them with bubble-wrap, which worked quite well!), and called it good with those four liters of water.

Since the alpine-climbing world seems ripe with incredulity these days, I've been thinking about making sure to "document" my solo



climbs well. To me it would be pretty heartbreaking to be called a liar, because honesty is something I value very highly, far more than what one has actually climbed or not. Back when I was 17 years old, I already had an experience of posting a report online of a climb that a friend and I had made (an early-season ascent of the North Ridge of Mount Stuart, in mixed conditions), and almost immediately someone online started to accuse me of fabricating the ascent. Fortunately I had photos to prove that person wrong, but the experience left me very early with a sense of the predicament one might end up in without photos when human emotions (principally jealousy) take hold of people's opinions. In any event, to that end I was experimenting on the 2017 trip a bit with leaving GPS tracks, and while I made my solo ascent I had the Gaia app running on my iPhone, recording a GPS track. I think my photos very clearly show that I made the climb that I said I did, but they don't show the timing (of course the photos actually DO have time stamps on them, but I'm guessing that is something that someone could easily edit in Photoshop?). I don't know how accurate the GPS track is, and it certainly seems to have some sort of erroneous altitude data point at one point during my descent, but in any event, here is the track for those that are curious:

<https://www.gaiagps.com/public/5hCNENzjk97uNTyxBO2jDsQ3/?layer=GaiaTopoRasterFeet>.



A topo Colin Haley made after his attempt in 2012, showing various route lines on the North Buttress of Begguya (a.k.a. Mount Hunter).

- Björnberg-Ireland, 1980. FA (First Ascent by) Billy Ireland and Ulf Björnberg.
- Bibler-Klewin, 1983. FA Todd Bibler and Doug Klewin.
- Grison-Tedeschi, 1984. FA Benoit Grison and Yves Tedeschi. Left finish is the original.
- "Deprivation," 1994. FA Mark Twight and Scott Backes. Descent by West Ridge, but traversed 100 meters below the summit.
- "Wall of Shadows," 1994. FA Michael Kennedy and Greg Child.
- Canadian variant to "Deprivation," 2009. FA Jay Mills and Dave Edgar.
- "The Cartwright Connection" variant, 2011. FA Jon Bracey and Matt Helliker. Retreat from 600 meters below the summit.
- Korean attempt and "Deprivation" variant start, 2012. FA Suk-mun Choi, Sung-wook Moon, and Jong-neung An.
- Haley solo attempt, 2012. Retreat from 100 meters below the summit.
- Aubrey-Stump attempt, 1981. FA Paul Aubrey and Mugs Stump. Retreat from 800 meters below the summit.
- Cordes-DeCapio variant attempt, 2002. FA Kelly Cordes and Scott DeCapio. Retreat from 1,000 meters below the summit.



Self-portrait back in Spungus the Tent.



The line that Colin Haley soloed on Begguya. It is roughly 2,000 meters of elevation gain from the bergschrund to the summit.

The day after my ascent I hung around base camp, hemming and hawing about what I should do next. I had some ideas of other things I was interested in trying, and had enough food to potentially stay in the mountains until the end of the month. However, I had planned to depart for the Karakorum on June 11, and already really missed spending time with Alisa, back in Seattle. Deciding to go home early felt like a slight betrayal of my ambitions, and the fear of missing out was certainly made worse by departing with a rare forecast of good weather, but I felt happy and satisfied with what I had accomplished, and certainly have not regretted my decision since getting home.

## Mount Dimond (7202 feet), Chugach Mountains: Choss Bender

Text by Mat Brunton



*Taylor Brown getting a glimpse of the route (the jagged northeast ridge of Mount Dimond above him).*

*Photo by Mat Brunton*

The perfect, early-autumn alpine-climbing conditions on Thompson Pass had me back for another weekend (September 15, 2018) of “Splitter Choss.” Well, maybe it was just “Shattered Choss” for the first objective of this trip: the presumably unclimbed northeast ridge of Mount Dimond (5.6 IV, Alaska Grade 3, D). Dimond is perhaps the crown jewel of Thompson Pass. It’s the highest peak along the road corridor, and during the snow season it has classic big-mountain ski descents on multiple aspects.

Without snow, it’s a seldom-climbed peak in a seldom-traveled area. That should change (at least traveling into the area in the non-snow season). Dimond may well remain a seldom-traveled peak during the non-snow season; it’s a serious Chugach Choss Fest with much of the route exposed to significant objective hazards (steep and loose rock, black ice under scree, a big route with no easy egress). But, there are at least two decent alpine access trails on the south side of the Richardson Highway: the Cracked Ice Trail (see [Peakbagger for the trail GPS](#)) and the Dimond area trail behind the Tsaina Lodge (see [Peakbagger for the trail GPS](#)). These trails open up vast expanses of wild Alaskan alpine terrain. The alpine trekking through these zones is absolutely world class and there are many options for multi-day, semi-technical (glacier-travel) traverses.

Dimond was about a 12-hour day for Taylor Brown and me. Because we could find no information, and our ascent route was likely a first, we brought along the alpine “bag of tricks.” However, the only technical gear we really used were crampons and a single ice tool. We did wear harnesses, and I did end up

anchoring into some black ice with an ice screw while route-finding on our descent as a steep scree slope exfoliated while I was on it and I needed to put crampons on to extract myself from the terrain feature.

The route consisted of about 1.25 miles and 1,000 feet on a rough trail that started obscurely behind the Tsaina Lodge and took us up to about 2500 feet west of Small Creek. Two miles and about 1,500 feet of rough Chugach Mountains trail-less alpine took us to the base of the northeast ridge below Point 5132. Heading north through third-class terrain for about 1,000 feet and less than a half mile brought us to the start of the more serious climbing. Beyond Point 5132 the route became predominantly fourth class, with short sections of extremely exposed and loose fifth class, and a bit of steep névé. Don’t underestimate these vast choss gardens.



*Taylor Brown catching a short break from the heady fourth- and fifth-class terrain.*

*Photo by Mat Brunton*





*Mat Brunton moving through a bit more fourth class before a steep névé section.*

*Photo by Taylor Brown*

After a six-and-a-half-hour summit push from the road, we balked at the prospect of down-climbing what we had just climbed. Judging from the map and what we could see through the passing clouds, descending the huge scree slopes down the east face to a subsidiary northeast ridge seemed promising. Between 6000 and 5500 feet, we found a gully below the east face that seemed like it would drop us into the valley east of Dimond, rather than taking the subsidiary northeast ridge. About

halfway down that gully were the remnants of past glaciation: a steep firm slope for several hundred feet with patches of black ice (especially a long streak on the skier's left side).

I knew I'd get into this, but was hoping it wasn't as steep as it ended up being. I also did not expect as much black ice to be superficially buried under loose scree that readily exfoliated



*Map of the route*

downhill when disturbed from above. I was glad to be wearing a harness and have an ice screw handy when that happened, as crampon application for extraction would have been a daunting process without the anchor. Taylor quickly realized not to descend into the super-steep and icy terrain, instead traversing skier's right to a fourth-class spine that allowed us to bypass most of the steep ice and firn except for a short traverse across it to a wide scree slope leading down to the rock glaciers in the valley. It was a good decision not to try to take the subsidiary northeast ridge that seemed reasonable from the contours on the topo; it was wildly gendarmed.

Once in the valley, we headed north and around Dimond's northeast glacier up mellow slopes behind Point 5132 to a prominent east-west col. We had planned on descending the couloir from that col west back toward the trail. It was a one-at-a-time affair due to the steep, channeled terrain with copious amounts of loose rock. I was 80 percent down and on the skier's right apron flank when Taylor started in and sent some death biscuits rocketing down slope. Between the rockfall, general sketchiness, and fatigue after a long day, he scurried back out and headed back up toward 5132 in search of a mellower ascent gully. He found one not too far to the north (Carrot Couloir). We rendezvoused at about 4500 feet below the west face of 5132 and stumbled back to the Tsaina Lodge, being as loud as possible so as not to become a pre-hibernation smorgasbord for our kin from the ursidae family ...

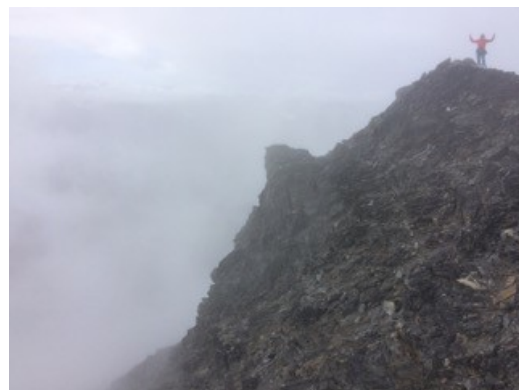


*After a long section of third- and fourth-class choss above the hard snow the summit comes into view.*

*Photo by Mat Brunton*

*Taylor Brown on the summit, and in the notorious Chugach Mountains murk.*

*Photo by Mat Brunton*





## Peak of the Month: Glacier Peak

Text by Steve Gruhn

**Mountain Range:** Wrangell Mountains

**Borough:** Unorganized Borough

**Drainage:** Flood Creek and Skolai Creek

**Latitude/Longitude:** 61° 39' 55" North, 142° 1' 17" West

**Elevation:** 8561 feet

**Adjacent Peaks:** Peak 8360 in the Flood Creek and Skolai Creek drainages and Castle Mountain (8620 feet)

**Distinctness:** 781 feet from Peak 8360

**Prominence:** 1091 feet from Castle Mountain

**USGS Maps:** 1:63,360: McCarthy (C-3) and 1:25,000: McCarthy C-3 NW

**First Recorded Ascent:** 1912 by Asa Columbus Baldwin and members of a U.S. International Boundary Commission party

**Access Point:** McCarthy



In February 1825 Russia and Great Britain established as the boundary between Russian possessions and those of the British government in North America the 141st meridian from the Arctic Ocean to an unspecified line in the vicinity of Mount Saint Elias drawn parallel to the coast of the Gulf of Alaska. In 1866 the Russian government offered to sell its North American territory to the U.S., and on March 30, 1867, the U.S. and Russia agreed to the terms of the sale. Among the provisions of the sale was that the boundary agreed upon in 1825 between Russia and Great Britain would remain the same boundary line between the Department of Alaska and Great Britain's North-Western Territory.

In July 1870 Great Britain transferred most of its North American holdings to the young nation of Canada and the territory east of the 141st meridian became known as the North-West Territories. Upon the transfer, a dispute arose over the location of the boundary in the vicinity of Mount Saint Elias, but due to the remote nature of the area, little was done to resolve the disagreement.

Interest in resolving the dispute languished until gold was

discovered in the Klondike region on August 16, 1896. News of the gold strike brought an influx of gold miners and precipitated the formation in 1898 of the Yukon Territory from the North-West Territories. Along with the influx of miners came a pressing need to mark the boundary between the territories of the U.S. and Canada. On October 20, 1903, the Alaska Boundary Tribunal resolved the boundary dispute, paving the way for a convention between the U.S. and Great Britain to provide for surveying and marking the boundary between the Yukon Territory and the District of Alaska (as it had become known in 1884). The convention was signed on April 21, 1906. Great Britain and the U.S. appointed William Frederick King and Otto Hilgard Tittmann, respectively, as commissioners to supervise the demarcation of the boundary.

In 1907 the fieldwork commenced with the survey and demarcation of the boundary between the Yukon River and the Sixtymile River. Fieldwork continued the following summers. By 1911, the boundary had been marked from near the Clarence River in the north to the vicinity of Mount Natazhat in the south.





*Southwest aspect of Glacier Peak (at left with brownish rock on its south face and southeast ridge). Castle Mountain is the prominent peak at right.*  
Photo by Danny Kost

In 1912 the field parties extended the demarcation of the boundary to the Arctic Ocean, but southward progress on the demarcation was stymied by the ice- and snow-clad region south of the Natazhah Range. The most practical alternative to marking the boundary south of Mount Natazhah was to go around the vast glaciated region by establishing a scheme of triangulation points from the head of the White River near the Russell Glacier, across Skolai Pass, down the Nizina River, and up the Chitina River to the Chitina and Anderson Glaciers. A U.S. party headed by Asa Columbus Baldwin was selected to undertake the work.

Starting from Cordova in March 1912, Baldwin's party traveled on the Copper River and Northwestern Railway to McCarthy. From there they headed for Skolai Pass with a pack train of horses dragging sleds. Poor weather greatly hindered their work, but by July the party had completed a triangulation network connecting stations along the White River to those in the Anderson Glacier area.

One of those stations, identified as Glacier, was located atop an 8561-foot peak north of Skolai Creek. Baldwin described it as "[o]n the first high snow-capped mountain to the north of Skolai Creek, and about 1½ miles west of the western foot of Russell Glacier. The station is on the second or northwest peak of the range, which connects by a low saddle with Skolai Peak [now known as Castle Mountain], 2 miles to the east. The mountain breaks off precipitously on all sides and is covered with perpetual snow." He described the station mark as a chiseled "triangle with sides about 1 inch in length, cut in native rock. It is located on a small shelf about 18 feet from the top of the peak, and about 2 feet from the wall of the shelf." From Glacier the surveyors were able to establish a survey network from Y (a 7530-foot summit in the Flood Creek drainage that was also climbed by Baldwin's party)



*South aspect of Glacier Peak (left) and Castle Mountain (right).*  
Photo by Danny Kost

and from stations near Upper Skolai Lake, near Chitistone Pass, in the Skolai Creek drainage, and on the ridge between the Frederika Glacier and the West Fork Glacier. As a result of the station name, the summit has been called Glacier Peak.

Upon completion of the season's fieldwork, Baldwin's party returned to McCarthy to find that avalanches had incapacitated the railway, so they proceeded to walk 60 miles and then descend the Copper River in overloaded small boats to return to Cordova about the end of September.

I do not know of a second ascent of Glacier Peak.

The information for this column came from the International Boundary Commission's "Joint Report upon the Survey and Demarcation of the International Boundary between the United States and Canada along the 141st Meridian from the Arctic Ocean to Mount St. Elias," dated December 15, 1918.



*South aspect of Glacier Peak (center). At left Peak 8335 partially obscures Mulgrave Peak (8840 feet). Castle Mountain dominates the right skyline.*  
Photo by Danny Kost

# Many Women Have Reached Alaska's Mountain Heights – Today More Than Ever

Text by Frank E. Baker



*Denali, "The Great One," from the eastern side.*

*Photo by Frank E. Baker*

In the annals of mountaineering history, there was a time when women were excluded from serious climbing expeditions.

In the United Kingdom, the Alpine Club was formed in 1857, but women were banned from the organization until 1975. In response, the Ladies Alpine Club was founded in London in 1907.

Women were among the founding members of the American Alpine Club in 1902, including Annie Peck and Fanny Bullock Workman. Refer to this website for more on the history of women mountaineers: <https://americanalpineclub.org/library-blog/2018/2/5/for-the-lady-mountaineer>.

In 1958 the MCA was founded, spearheaded by none other than a woman—Helga Bading.

According to a National Park Service website <https://www.nps.gov/dena/blogs/women-at-the-top.htm>, women usually make up 10% of the climbers of Denali. In 2018 there were 29 women guiding the peak and 60% of them were under 30 years old. Women made up 20% of the total guiding population.

There is a wave of talented female alpinists taking on what

many consider one of the hardest guiding assignments in the world.

What follows is a list of female mountaineers, primarily Alaskans, who have made, and are continuing to make, extraordinary achievements in the mountains, both within Alaska and in other parts of the world. When compiling such a list, one risks excluding some very accomplished female mountaineers, and for that I apologize.

**Dora Keen** (later Handy) – In 1912 she completed the first recorded ascent of the 16,286-foot East Peak of Mount Blackburn in the Wrangell Mountains.

**Barbara Washburn** – Her first ascents of 10,204-foot Mount Bertha in 1940 and 13,832-foot Mount Hayes in 1941 drew considerable attention in the mountaineering community. In 1947, she became the first woman to summit North America's highest peak, Denali, becoming an American mountaineering legend.

**Helga Bading** (now Byhre) – One of 17 honorary members of the MCA and a driving force behind its establishment, she completed 14 first recorded ascents (FRAs) in Alaska.





*Carrie Wang*  
Photo by Wayne Todd



*Former Eagle River resident Jayme Mack, now living in Girdwood, climbs frequently in the Chugach Mountains.*  
Photo courtesy of Jayme Mack



*Mountain guides Lexie Hunsaker and Kalle Rittman at Denali basecamp.*  
National Park Service photo/Melis Coody

**Helen Nienhueser** (formerly Wolfe) – Completed four FRAs in Alaska, co-authored 55 Ways to the Wilderness in South-central Alaska hiking guidebook.



*Helen Nienhueser*

**Grace Hoeman** (formerly Jansen) – Wife of famed Alaskan mountaineer Vin Hoeman, Grace climbed more than 120 peaks in Alaska, including first all-female ascent of Denali. She made about 35 first ascents in Alaska, five of them solo. She died at age 49 on April 12, 1971, in an avalanche east of the Eklutna Glacier.

**Dolly Lefever** – She was the first American woman to climb the world's seven summits (highest peak on every continent), including Mount Everest on May 10, 1993, at age 47.

**Wendy Sanem** – second person (behind Jim Saylor) to climb all 120 peaks in Chugach State Park. She climbed all 21 Western Chugach 7000-footers.

**Karen Cafmeyer** – Climbed all 21 Western Chugach 7000-footers; made two FRAs in Alaska.

**Valerie LaRue** – In 1978 became the first woman President of the MCA.

**Betty Ivanoff** (aka Betty Brown, aka Betty Menard) – Was the first Alaska Native female to climb Denali.

**Other notable women mountaineers in Alaska include:** Jayme Mack, Dona Agosti, Lois Willard, Marge Prescott, Harriet Kiester, Callie Van der Laan, Karen Courtright, Margaret Wolfe, Kathy Gorham, Jo Anne Merrick, Nina Faust, Paula Quering, Meg Leonard, Madeline Jones, Sandi McDonald, Eileen Cavanaugh, Nan De Good, Kathy Burke, Laurie Daniel, Barb Byrne, Marcy Baker, Katie Strong, Jen Aschoff, Katherine Cooper, Nancy Pfeiffer, and Lila Hobbs.

There are also Priscilla Lukens, Vicki Jorgenson, Mindy Baum, Pam Bohl, Julia Moore, Helga Bashor, Dawn Groth, Dara Lively, Kathy Zukor, Patty McPherson, Karen Herzenberg, Annette Iversen, Carlene Van Tol, SaraEllen Hutchison, Debbie Arens, Rebecca Bissette, Yvonne Lamoureux, Sarah Heck, Bridget Paule, Anmei Goldsmith, Vicky Lytle, Galen Flint, Elizabeth Bennett, Stacy Pritts, Jennifer DuFord, Deb Luper, Kathy Still, Carrie Wang, Deb Ajango, Vicky Ho, Sherrie Soltis, Meg Purdue, Leah Fortson ...

... and the list goes on. More than ever, women are hearing the siren call of Alaska's summits, whether in our backyard's Chugach Mountains; in the Kenai, Wrangell, and Talkeetna Mountains; in the higher peaks of the Alaska Range; or far to the north, in the Brooks Range ... and beyond.

*Adapted from Steve Gruhn's History Moment presentation given at the March 2016 MCA meeting.*

*Frank E. Baker is a freelance writer who lives in Eagle River with his wife Rebekah, a retired elementary school teacher.*

## Submission and Editorial Guidelines for *the Scree*

Approved by the MCA's Board of Directors on October 31, 2018

- For printing purposes, the number of pages of each issue of *the Scree* must be a multiple of four.
- The Board of Directors shall determine the maximum number of pages per issue. Currently the maximum number of pages per issue is 24. The Editor may publish fewer pages, as available material allows.
- Submissions may include trip reports, essays, instructional guides, book and equipment reviews, poetry, photographs (with or without accompanying text), maps, sketches, correspondence, trivia, or humor, but must pertain to the mission of the MCA. Political or social commentary is discouraged, and may be edited or rejected to ensure neutrality.
- No more than 25% of the material in each issue (either written or photos) shall be from any single contributor. Photos selected for the front and back cover shall be excluded from this limit.
- The Board of Directors shall determine the maximum length per submission. There is currently no maximum number of words or pages per submission, other than the 25% limit per issue mentioned above.
- Submissions will be accepted at any time, though every issue has a previous-month deadline that will be announced in *the Scree*. The current submission deadline is the 11th of each month for the following month's issue.
- Submissions will be accepted without regard to MCA membership status, provided that the topics are of potential interest to MCA members.
- Submissions are batched every month on the submission deadline for the following issue, as space permits. A backlog of submissions might create a publishing delay or a reduced length of submissions, at the exclusive discretion of the Editor.
- Publication of paid advertisements and communications from the MCA leadership about club business (such as meeting minutes, proposed budgets, hut maintenance needs, announcements, etc.) will take precedence over trip reports.
- Advertisements shall conform to the MCA's separate "Paid Advertising in *Scree*" policy.
- Cover photos of *the Scree* shall depict a person involved in an aspect of mountaineering (approach, camp, climb, descent, etc.) pertaining to the material contained in that particular issue and shall be oriented vertically (i.e., portrait format).
- Photos should be submitted with captions and photographer credits, or risk rejection if not provided by the submission deadline.
- Copyrighted material will not be accepted without the specific written consent of the owner.
- Submissions may be edited for brevity and photos may be cropped to fit available space.
- Submissions may be edited to correct typographical and grammatical errors, to improve sentence style and flow, to organize content to make the piece more logical, to remove superfluous information, to correct factual errors (such as summit elevations and names of geographic features), to add missing information, and to remove vulgarities or any other content deemed inappropriate or contrary to the MCA's mission.
- Submissions containing, or perceived as containing, taunting, disparaging, or otherwise inappropriate comments will be either rejected or edited for neutrality.
- The Editor may add notes within a submission, as appropriate (e.g., to cite a reference of a previous ascent or to mention an unofficial geographical name).
- The Editor will endeavor to obtain contributor approval of all substantive edits, but cannot delay publication for any length of time for such approval to be obtained.
- Edited submissions may be posted on the MCA's website and used in subsequent issues of *the Scree*.
- The Editor may include other items of potential interest to MCA members (equipment recalls, first or notable ascents, notable traverses, news items, etc.) at the sole discretion of the Editor.
- The Editor may include periodic editorials where relevant mountaineering-related topics are discussed in a thought-provoking manner.
- The Editor will treat all submissions in the same fair, neutral, and impartial manner.



- The Editor will not verify the veracity of a contributor's claimed accomplishments.
- Letters to the Editor are welcome and will be published in accordance with these guidelines as space permits.
- By submitting material the contributor agrees to these Submission and Editorial Guidelines.
- Constructive feedback on *the Scree* may be provided to either the Editor or the MCA's Board of Directors. Please remember all MCA leadership and service positions are voluntary, and should be treated accordingly with respect and appreciation.
- The Editor may rely on guidance from the MCA's Board of Directors in interpreting these Submission and Editorial Guidelines.

## Proposed 2019 Budget

		Proposed for 2019	Budget Change	Approved for 2018	Current for 2018
<b>REVENUE</b>					
Membership Dues	<i>received during calendar year</i>	\$13,320	\$0	\$13,320	\$11,985
Scree subscriptions		\$180	(\$220)	\$400	\$225
Training	<i>BMS, ice climbing, rock climbing, other</i>	\$5,400	(\$2,300)	\$7,700	\$4,760
Photo Calendar		\$2,300	\$0	\$2,300	\$2,901
MCA Products: T-Shirts, Patches, Etc.		\$200	(\$4,800)	\$5,000	\$95
Interest on Accounts		\$104	\$29	\$75	\$96
Other - Donations, etc	<i>Donations, check reimbursements</i>	\$0	(\$4,451)	\$4,451	\$10,140
<b>TOTAL REVENUE</b>		<b>\$21,504</b>	<b>(\$11,742)</b>	<b>\$33,246</b>	<b>\$30,201</b>
<b>EXPENSE</b>					
Training	<i>campsite, access fees, instructors, trip leaders</i>	\$5,745	\$1,373	\$4,372	\$3,914
Scree	<i>postage, mailing, printing</i>	\$1,800	(\$721)	\$2,521	\$2,164
General Meeting	<i>rent, refreshments, entertainment</i>	\$1,464	(\$36)	\$1,500	\$1,091
Administrative	<i>supplies, PO box, web site, ads, travel, misc.</i>	\$1,030	(\$25)	\$1,055	\$514
Hut Construction & Maint.	<i>materials, supplies, hut equipment, lease fees</i>	\$12,790	(\$10,420)	\$23,210	\$30,002
Insurance	<i>reincorporation fees, insurance</i>	\$110	\$3	\$107	\$104
Club Equipment	<i>climbing gear, misc. equipment, storage</i>	\$709	\$232	\$477	\$452
Library	<i>new books, periodicals, storage</i>	\$412	\$12	\$400	\$259
Other:	<i>miscellaneous expenses</i>				
Photo Calendar		\$1,828	\$53	\$1,775	\$0
MCA Products: T-Shirts, Patches, Etc.		\$0	(\$5,000)	\$5,000	\$0
Other - Awards		\$105	\$5	\$100	\$102
Other -		\$0	(\$1,000)	\$1,000	\$981
<b>TOTAL EXPENSE</b>		<b>\$25,993</b>	<b>(\$15,524)</b>	<b>\$41,517</b>	<b>\$39,584</b>
<b>DUE TO (FROM) RESERVE</b>		<b>(\$4,489)</b>	<b>\$3,782</b>	<b>(\$8,271)</b>	<b>(\$9,383)</b>
<b>CASH BALANCE - All Accounts</b>					
Beginning Balance - January 1, 2018					\$51,973
Increase (decrease) during 2018					(\$9,383)
<b>Current Balance for 2018</b>					<b>\$42,590</b>
Checking - Credit Union 1					\$16,006
Money Mkt and CDs - Credit Union 1 (0.75 - 1.89%)					\$24,890
Savings - Credit Union 1 (0.7%)					\$417
18-month CD - in trust for hut lease - Northrim Bank (1.25%)					\$1,182
Petty Cash					\$95
<b>Ending Balance Revised 11/8/18</b>					<b>\$42,590</b>

## 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>.

*Colin Haley pulling down the stuck end of a rappel rope, during the descent of the "Mini-Moonflower" on Mount Hunter (a.k.a. Begguya).  
Photo by Mikey Schaefer*

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