

**"You are never too old to set another goal or dream a new dream."  
- Les Brown**

# the **SCREE** Mountaineering Club of Alaska

February 2019

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Number 2

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## **FEBRUARY MEETING:**

**Wednesday, February 6, at 6:30 p.m. at the BP Energy Center at 1014 Energy Court in Anchorage. Kelsey Gray will talk about what it means to invest a significant portion of your life to rock climbing from route-setting to books and photography.**

**"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

Caro North ascending the northeast face of South Duke early in the day.

Photo by Brette Harrington

**FEBRUARY MEETING:** Wednesday, February 6, at 6:30 p.m. at the BP Energy Center at 1014 Energy Court in Anchorage. <http://www.alaskageology.org/graphics/meetingmap.gif> Kelsey Gray will talk about what it means to invest a significant portion of your life to rock climbing from route-setting to books and photography. Come join as we talk about past exploits, new projects and the future of Alaska rock climbing.

Photo by:  
John Borland



## Hiking and Climbing Schedule

**February 8-10:** Serenity Falls Ice Climbing Weekend. Hang out at Serenity Falls Cabin and climb ice for a weekend! This is not a formal trip; you are responsible for gear, transportation, and your own safety. RSVP via the MCA Facebook page. The cabin has 13 bunks; first come, first served!

**February 22 - March 2:** 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@mtnclubak.org](mailto:huts@mtnclubak.org).

**March 8-10:** Ship Lake Pass Winter Camping Trip. Hike Glen Alps to Ship Lake Pass and play for a day or camp! Learn winter camping skills, ski easy terrain and explore the area. Contact Gerrit Verbeek at [vicepresident@mtnclubak.org](mailto:vicepresident@mtnclubak.org).

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

Also see the "Flattop Flyer" announcement on page 3.

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

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**Article Submission:** Text and photography submissions for *the Scree* can be sent as attachments to [mcascree@gmail.com](mailto:mcascree@gmail.com). Articles should be submitted by the 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.

## Geographic Names

The Alaska Historical Commission has requested comments from the MCA regarding a proposal to officially name Mount Mary, a 4883-foot peak in the Godwin Glacier and Shelf Glacier drainages of the Kenai Mountains. Please provide comments to Steve Gruhn at [geographicnames@mtclubak.org](mailto:geographicnames@mtclubak.org) by February 1 so that he can incorporate them into the MCA's formal comments to the Alaska Historical Commission. Email Steve for a copy of the proposal, the request for comment, and the Alaska Historical Commission's guidelines for geographic names.

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## "Flattop Flyer" evening ski trip

Date: Usually one of the full-moon Wednesdays of every winter month with snow coverage.

Winter 2019 dates: January 30th, February 20th, March 6th, March 20th

Contact Travis Taylor at 382-4823 or [Alaskantrav@hotmail.com](mailto:Alaskantrav@hotmail.com) for details.

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*Raina Peak (6798 feet), in the Western Chugach Mountains, taken November 29, 2018, from the western side along Eagle River Road.*

*Photo by Frank E. Baker*

## Peak 8505, Neacola Mountains

Text by Tess Ferguson

It was the autumn of 2016 when I came across an article titled “Recon: The Neacola Mountains.” This piece, put together by Erik Rieger in the *American Alpine Journal*, was a feast for the exploratory climber in me [Ed. note: see pages 74 through 85 of the 2016 AAJ]. I had never been to Alaska, but I figured with the right partner and reasonable expectations, I could pull together a good first trip.

On May 3rd, 2017, Barry Smith and I touched down on the South Fork of the Pitchfork Glacier, which to our knowledge had yet to be explored by climbers. Our goal was to climb two adjacent virgin summits, Peaks 8908 and 8505, as well as survey the climbing potential of the valley.

We shuttled loads to a base camp higher on the glacier, and waited for a weather window. During the first break we attempted a feature we called The Gnome, a 7050-foot point on the west ridge of Peak 8908, via a couloir left of the summit on the southeast face. We climbed 800 feet, with difficulties up to WI4, until it joined the summit ridge. From there it was an easy choice to descend; we wanted nothing to do with the unconsolidated rock that continued to the top. The initial ice pitches, however, were wonderfully thought-provoking, with icy chockstone squeezes and strange, claustrophobic chimney climbing.

Two days later we headed off to attempt Peak 8505 via its southeast flank. [Ed. note: In his unpublished manuscript on Alaska's mountains, Vin Hoeman called that summit Peak A-9]. We ascended around 2,000 feet of mostly moderate snow and a small step of mixed climbing, but eventually had to stop due to unstable conditions and increased avalanche activity. After waiting out the midday heat, we returned to camp and rested.

That night we went back to climb the route to the summit when conditions were more stable, this time bypassing the mixed pitch in lieu of a pleasant water-ice section we had noticed on the rappels the attempt prior (3,000 feet, 55 degrees, WI2).

Shortly after that we had one final window, during which we attempted The Gnome once again, this time from its northeast ridge. We were turned around after several loose mixed pitches. We flew out on May 20th.



*The team's route up the southeast slopes of Peak 8505.*

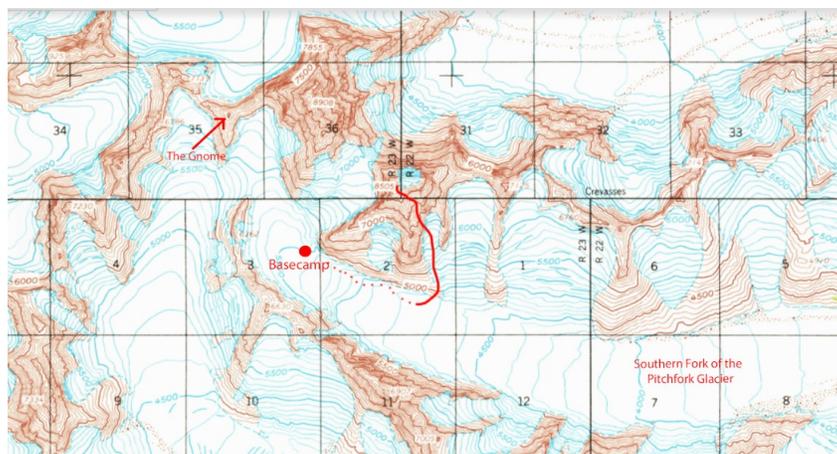
*Photo by Barry Smith*

We certainly enjoyed our trip to the range and our time on the South Fork, but that prong left much to be desired, particularly when compared to its northern counterparts. The solid granite of Dog Tooth, Citadel Peak, and other notable peaks in the Neacolas did not present itself farther south, and the rock in its place wasn't the most pleasant. However, there is still plenty of adventure out there.



*Right: Barry Smith approaching the couloir on the southeast face of The Gnome.*

*Photo by Tess Ferguson*



## Peak 3750, K'esugi Ridge

Text and photos by Lupe Lunde (and her SPHP)



*Skies hadn't cleared as much over by Peak 3750 (center) yet, but looked like they would soon. Photo looks east-northeast.*



*Lupe bathed in sunlight at the top of Ermine Hill. Photo looks southeast.*

*Day 32 of Lupe's 2018 dingo vacation to the Yukon, Northwest Territories, and Alaska!*

September 4, 2018, 1:10 p.m. – Was that dingo ever going to wake up? Dead to the world, comfortably ensconced in a hollow among the odd rock formations on Ermine Hill, Lupe snoozed peacefully. Meanwhile, good things were happening. The cloud cover was breaking up! Patches of blue sky appeared.

This was Loop's big chance to climb Peak 3750!

Lupe had been to Ermine Hill on K'esugi Ridge in Denali State Park once before, over a year ago. It was then that the Carolina Dog had first seen an intriguing higher and more remote hill more than three miles to the east-northeast. That hill was Peak 3750.

Peak 3750 should have been a cinch to climb, merely a scenic trek to the high point at the far end of a long ridge. Lupe and SPHP (slow-plodding human porter) had been inspired to make an attempt, but luck ran out. After great progress, threatening weather forced a hugely disappointing retreat. The American dingo probably wouldn't ever get another chance.

Yet, Lupe **had** returned! Thousands of miles from home, here she was at this very moment, back again at the top of Ermine Hill with Peak 3750 in sight. Sadly, after a month of other adventures, apparently too exhausted to care.

After more than two hours on Ermine Hill, most of it spent

zonked, Miss Sleepyhead finally stirred.

*Welcome back to the land of the living, Loopster!*

*Did I drift off?*

*Umm, yeah, sort of. Twice, actually. So, how are you feeling? Still up for Peak 3750?*

*Oh, much better, thanks. Yes, let's do this!*

Lupe was much better, too! That long dingo nap had been the miracle cure. Suddenly she was full of energy again. The Carolina Dog leapt up onto Ermine Hill's highest rock. For a few glorious moments, Lupe stood bathed in sunlight at the unique and beautiful true summit.

Then it was time to get serious about making tracks for Peak 3750!

Loop left Ermine Hill heading east-southeast back down to the Ermine Hill Trail.

Loop turned northeast on the K'esugi Ridge Trail. The trail crossed a marsh in the broad saddle east of the lake. Lupe forded a small stream before the trail started uphill again.

After passing through stands of tall bushes, the trail steepened, heading north up a ravine. Lupe regained most of the elevation she'd lost coming down off Ermine Hill.

Upon leaving the ravine, the K'esugi Ridge Trail leveled out going northwest along the base of a hillside. That area was also marshy. Beyond the marsh, a short side trail led west to a view-



*A short spur trail off the main K'esugi Ridge Trail led to this panorama of the Ermine Hill (center) region.*

*Photo looks west.*

point. Lupe enjoyed a sweeping panorama of the entire Ermine Hill region.

Returning to the K'esugi Ridge trail, Lupe headed northeast. Soon she was high enough to see the long ridge leading to Peak 3750.

The K'esugi Ridge Trail wouldn't take Lupe to Peak 3750. No trail went that way. However, after crossing a small stream, the trail brought her to the west end of the ridge leading to it. Peak 3750 was still two miles due east. Full of enthusiasm, Loop and SPHP left the K'esugi Ridge Trail and began to climb.

The ridge leading to Peak 3750 was broad and strewn with countless rocks. Many were covered with the crunchy black lichens common in parts of Alaska. The pristine, trackless tundra was gorgeous. So many brilliant colors! Such exquisite detail!

It was an easy climb. Lupe wandered from one modest high point to the next. No tree or bush existed to impede progress or block any of the tremendous views. Natural beauties were everywhere from the tiny to the vast.



*Following the huge ridge leading to Peak 3750 was easy!*

*Photo looks east.*

Full of joy, Lupe ran great distances. She explored and sniffed. Her pink tongue dangled, her chest heaved. The dingo's bright eyes spoke of the wonders she was seeing and sensing all around.

SPHP fully shared Looper's enthusiasm. Except for the clouds still hiding the mighty, but ever bashful, Alaska Range, conditions were perfect. This trek was 10,000 delights – pure fun! The excitement grew as Lupe reached the area where she had been forced to turn back in 2017.

Not this time!

Lupe pressed on. The American dingo stayed on high ground toward the north edge of the ridge. Gradually the tundra became more sparse. The route grew rockier. Lupe crossed one boulder field of white rocks. Nothing too steep or long or difficult.

One more high point to go! Lupe led the way up onto a long, rocky ridge 30 to 50 feet wide. That ridge wasn't all rocks; there was tundra up here, too. The highest rocks were still a bit farther east. A quick, easy stroll and Lupe had done it! She stood poised atop the highest rock on Peak 3750.

SPHP was thrilled to congratulate Lupe on her grand success.

Lupe was happy, but tired! The Carolina dog had burnt herself out again with all her enthusiastic exploratory exertions.



*Success! After a fabulous journey, Lupe stands atop Peak 3750.*

*Photo looks northeast.*

Fortunately, right next to the highest rock was a wonderfully convenient dingo shelter. It had a soft tundra floor, solid rock walls on three sides, and the highest rock on the mountain even overhung it to provide a partial roof. Looper took an immediate liking to it. She curled up there, while SPHP sat on the highest rock, gazing out at all the wonders to be seen from Peak 3750.

Some of the most fascinating sights from Peak 3750 were of wonders only hinted at today. Although the afternoon had become mostly sunny over K'esugi Ridge, clouds off to the northwest refused to abandon Denali and the Alaska Range. Every now and then, though, they parted enough to offer tantalizing glimpses of mighty white peaks.

A hundred yards east of the highest rock, Peak 3750 dropped away sharply. After a short respite in the dingo shelter, Loop accompanied SPHP toward that end of the ridge for a look at the

Susitna River Valley. Lupe could see a huge expanse of Alaskan wilderness.

It was all magnificent, but Lupe had seen enough. Running all over mountains was exhausting work! Peak 3750 had a dingo shelter, and the American dingo fully intended to make good use of it! SPHP helped her get comfy. Then, while SPHP sat only a few feet above her on the official highest rock, it was lights out for the Carolina dog.

A glorious hour at the top of Peak 3750 slipped away. Lupe awakened, batteries freshly recharged. She sat for a few minutes with SPHP on the highest rock. The inevitable moment had arrived.

It was sad to leave, but hours of fun remained. The return trip was a blast! The American Dingo streaked across the incredibly gorgeous tundra roaming far and wide, spectacular panoramas on all sides!



*Lupe on Peak 3750's summit rock.  
Photo looks west-southwest.*

It was dark when Lupe made it back to the G6 at the Ermine Hill Trailhead, all tuckered out once more. What a fabulous day it had been, though! Lupe really had returned to K'esugi Ridge. She'd revisited beautiful Ermine Hill, and this time had actually made it to Peak 3750.

Not that any of it had been all that difficult. Quite the contrary! All it had taken was a little cooperation from the weather, and Lupe's love of adventure. Of course, a few Dingo naps along the way hadn't hurt a thing, either! (*End 10:12 p.m., 51° Fahrenheit*)

Note: The Ermine Hill Trailhead in Denali State Park is at Milepost 156.5 of the George Parks Highway.

*Revised and condensed from a blog post on The (Mostly) True Adventures of Lupe*

<http://www.adventuresoflupe.com/?p=16794>).

*Like Ermine Hill, Peak 3750 is merely one of a number of significant high points along K'esugi Ridge in Denali State Park. The trail system offers spectacular day hiking and backpacking opportunities, but with the exception of Golog Hill, doesn't visit the most prominent summits. Photo looks southwest.*



*On the Ermine Hill Trail returning from Peak 3750,  
Denali State Park, September 4, 2018.*



*Looper near the east end of Peak 3750 with a commanding view of the Susitna River Valley.  
Photo looks east.*



# Juneau Ice Cap

Text by Caro North

With Brette Harrington, June 1 – 13, 2018



*East aspect of The Dukes.  
Photo by Brette Harrington*



*The northeast face of South Duke (5.10b, M5+, 85 degrees, 500 meters) on The Dukes, Taku Range. First ascent by Brette Harrington and Caro North on June 2, 2018.*

*Photo by Brette Harrington*

## **Northeast face of South Duke: 5.10b, M5+, 85 degrees, 500 meters**

Brette Harrington and I flew onto the ice cap on June 1, 2018. The following day we established a new line on the northeast face of South Duke, navigating our way through mixed terrain, hard to protect, and avoiding loose blocks up to M5+, joining a snow couloir (85°) and finishing with two rock pitches (5.10b). We dedicated our climb to Marc-André Leclerc and Ryan Johnson; for their inspiration, creativity, and dedication to the mountains.



*Brette Harrington rappelling into the notch before making a tension traverse onto the south face while descending South Duke.*

*Photo by Caro North*

*Brette Harrington leading Pitch 4 of the west face of North Taku Tower.*

*Photo by Caro North*

## **Southeast Couloir of Devils Paw: Ski Descent 1,000 meters, 45 to 50 degrees**

On June 6th we started walking on our skis the 20 miles to Devils Paw, which took us two days. In the early morning of the 8th, we hiked up the southeast couloir of Devils Paw, which involved exhausting opening tracks and some passages on frontpoints. The day was overcast, so the couloir stayed really hard and was tricky to ski and we had to sideslip several parts. But we could do the whole descent on skis. Afterward we walked the 20 miles back, arriving at our base camp the 9th of June.

## **North Taku Tower West Face: 5.10+**

After three days of storm, it finally cleared up on the 12th of June and we managed to climb a new line on the North Taku Tower. We found awesome granite, featured with holds and cracks, ideal



for rock climbing. The climbing was steep and sustained at 5.10+ with some run-outs because of the compact rock. We climbed five pitches up to the ridge line and rappelled our route.

The following day we packed all our stuff and flew back to Juneau.

## West Kahiltna Peak (12835 feet), Kahiltna Peaks

Text and photos by Kurt Ross



*The line up the southwest face of West Kahiltna Peak follows continuous ice runnels straight up the middle of the face.*

While guiding the West Buttress slog up Denali, Nik Mirhashemi spotted a beautiful and direct line up the southwest face of West Kahiltna Peak that followed continuous ice runnels and chimneys.

On April 13th, he, Steven VanSickle, and I flew into a ghostly empty Kahiltna base camp. A few weeks later in the season, there would be a kerfuffle of seven-summiters and moonies rigging up sleds or wallowing around waiting for a positive weather forecast, but there wasn't a soul to be seen at that time. We stashed some extra gear and dragged sleds to an advanced base near Camp 1 of the main route up Denali. Because snow conditions were firm and the forecast was good for the next handful of days, we set out the next morning toward the face with loaded packs.<sup>1</sup> The approach to the apron was straightforward and the bergschrund was filled in well, so we crossed without issue. Steven volunteered to take the first block. The climbing was immediately high quality and difficult. Steven "VanMissile" efficiently zipped up the first pitches on the sharp end. We laughed to each other because the climbing was so great: "How has this gem in plain sight of the Denali conga line gone unattempted for so long?"

Steven continued his block up another nice-looking pitch, but it turned out to have a long stretch of unprotected climbing through its crux,<sup>2</sup> which involved pulling over an overhung lip using sun-rotted ice and bad feet on smooth, slabby rock. While he made those moves, an ice patch

fractured, sending Steven tumbling down the chimney. He ripped a bad screw out of the rotten ice before catching on a better one below. He fell about 20 pinballing meters down the chimney before catching at about the same level as I was belaying him from. It was one of the scariest things I'd ever seen.

"I think my ankle is broken."

We excavated a platform and lowered Steven onto it. When I unlaced his boot and started to explore, I immediately felt a big lump on the outside of his ankle that substantiated his suspicion. We considered our options and decided that we would request a helicopter as our first choice because assisted lowers and a sled drag would have been extremely painful and damaging to his injured limb. We texted Talkeetna Air Taxi on the InReach, who got in touch with Park Service. Luckily, the perfectly clear skies and highly skilled rescue crew in the area allowed for Steven to be plucked into the air within a couple hours of the fall. They offered to take Nik and me, too, but Steven said we should stay to get the gear from camp and try to do more climbing if we could.

Seeing a superhero like Steven take a big fall like that smacked the illusion of infallibility out of my mind. It hurts to live and then re-live these experiences in memory, but as painful as it is to think about a bud getting hurt, I want to let these occurrences sear on the surface of my psyche as a sobering reminder that my partners and I are not tapped into magic and could be hurt or killed at any time. Climbing is amazing and worth some risk to me, but I want to feel that fear because it keeps me on my toes, and hopefully makes me force some added security into these turbulent situations.

Nik and I somberly regrouped and descended. At the base of the route, I was surprised to hear him propose the option of getting back on the face. I had considered that before he brought it up,



*Nik Mirhashemi follows the fifth roped pitch. Nearly all of the mixed steps were separated by comfortable belays on snow.*

but didn't mention anything because I wasn't willing to lead the pitch that Steven fell from. Nik said he would and I tried to reason that my hesitance to try it again was more emotional than logical since we wouldn't have felt uneasy about trying another route of similar difficulty. We discussed it for a while and jokingly asked "What would Mark Westman do?" So we stashed our packs and descended down the glacier to prepare for another attempt.

The next morning (is 2 a.m. morning yet?) we repeated the soul-aching alpine start, then slogged and climbed to our high point of the previous day. We decided that hauling the leader's pack would be worthwhile for the hard climbing, so Nik clipped one rope and tagged the other. He cautiously pulled the difficult moves where Steven had fallen, but managed OK with a few healthy grunts. He found that the ice above was too rotten to climb, but creatively managed to French-free a thin crack to the right and traverse back to the ice where it improved. A couple more fantastic pitches of ice chimneys put us on a massive snow ledge that split the upper and lower headwalls.<sup>3</sup> It was still early, so we brewed up and continued through the increasingly high-quality ice-runnel system above. That amazing section of the climb was something like a longer, harder version of "Ames Ice Hose" in Colorado. On the third pitch up the upper headwall, we traversed left to find a good ledge. At about 10 p.m., the Alaskan light was dimming fast, so we hacked a ledge out of the ice and set up camp for the night. We were able to fit nearly the whole tent onto our ledge, so we rested well.<sup>4</sup>



*The bivi a few pitches from the top of the difficult climbing required quite a bit of ice chopping, but was large enough for both Nik Mirhashemi and Kurt Ross to fit comfortably and rest well.*

Feeling refreshed the next morning, we jumped straight into a difficult, leaning chimney that brought us back to the direct line that we had followed to that point. An involved ice pillar and some more chimneying put the hard climbing behind us. Once we reached the calf-burning summit ice slope, we took the ropes off and started huffing air. We reached the summit around 5:30 p.m. on our second day of climbing.

We had planned to descend by climbing down the col between West Kahiltna and East Kahiltna Peak, then summiting East Kahiltna before heading down the non-technical mountaineering route of the south ridge, but when we reached the col, we believed we could descend directly down to the south in relative safety, so we continued down with a handful of Abalakov rappels and a bunch of down-climbing. Some serac exposure that we didn't expect appeared once we were most of the way down the col, so I wouldn't recommend that option for future parties. I think rappelling the route might be the best choice, even if that means spending another night out.

<sup>1</sup>We carried three days of food, 16 ounces of isobutane, a First-light tent, a bivi sack, a single set of cams from .1 to #4 Camalot (the #4 was not necessary), nine screws, six pins, two racks of nuts, and two 70-meter ropes

<sup>2</sup>We believe these were the most dangerous moves on the route. Some moves on the pitch above this one (our fourth pitch) might have been more difficult, but were protected with reasonable rock gear.

<sup>3</sup>This ledge would make a good bivi, especially if it were tucked up against the rock to the left of the route line where objective hazard might be minimized.

<sup>4</sup>Before this route I had scarcely brought a full bivi setup on route, opting instead to take advantage of the long Alaskan days with a single-push style using minimal gear, but it turns out that sleep is pretty damn helpful when it comes to hard, focused climbing.



*Nok Mirhashemi quickly descends easy, but serac-threatened, terrain between the Kahiltna Peaks. Due to this objective hazard, future parties should plan to either descend the route or climb to the summit of East Kahiltna Peak before descending the south ridge. Ross recommends the former option because the terrain would be familiar and one's legs might be tired..*



*Much stoke was in the air while Leighan Falley dropped off Steven VanSickle, Nik Mirhashemi, and Kurt Ross at an empty Kahiltna Base Camp with a bluebird weather forecast.*

## "Charlie Zulu" (IV, 5.10, 55 degrees) on Serendipity Spire (6850 [±50] feet), Cathedral Spires

Text by Zach Lovell



*Northwest aspect of Serendipity Spire framed by Mount Jeffers (at left) and Peak 7270 (at right).*

*Photo by Zach Lovell*

"When is this storm gonna end?" a pilot contemplated. Speculation erupted from almost every weary patron in Conscious Coffee, Talkeetna's finest (though only) coffee shop. I debated contributing to the pessimism, but a thesaurus would have been merited to find another synonym for "never." The Alaska Range was in the throes of a historic bullfight against a persistent storm and the mountains were unfortunately playing the role of the bull. The storm ("el matador") was unrelenting, jabbing foot after foot of new snow into the range's flanks. The days of un-flyable weather were growing to double digits and I started creating a mental tally of pilots who told me, "I've never seen it this bad." This was the start to the summer 2018 season in Alaska.

Charles Dickens, with his iconic opener, "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times ..." was actually predicting weather patterns of Southcentral Alaska rather than setting the stage for A Tale of Two Cities. As such, the weather did, in fact, turn and while superhuman feats were occurring on Denali (speed record on the Cassin Ridge, second ascent of "Light Traveler," ascent of "Slovak Direct"), the game of mini-golf alpinism was afoot in the Cathedral Spires of the Kichatna Mountains.

My first trip I had the pleasure of climbing with Tad "poppyseed" McCrea, team name: "Muffin Wizards." We ended up baking up some delicious climbing off the Tatina Glacier on Peak 7984, though our recipe lacked enough yeast to rise to the top of the formation, climbing 2,500 feet before poor conditions shut us down a few hundred feet shy of the summit. Most of our route was simul-climbed and difficulties up to M5 85 degrees were en-



*Route of "Charlie Zulu" on Serendipity Spire.*

*Photo by Zach Lovell*

countered. The proposed line goes up a couloir that was climbed in 2010 by Dean Mounsey and Adrian Nelhams [*Ed. note: See pages 327 and 328 of the 2010-2011 Alpine Journal and pages 24 through 28 of the July/August 2017 Climb (issue 139) for more information on Mounsey's and Nelhams' "Beat Surrender"*] before busting right at a weakness up more sustained mixed terrain. The remainder of our trip was rooted in reconnaissance, exploring other baked goods in the Monolith Glacier zone and we were anxious to return to an area that held so much fantastic rock.

A few weeks later, I had the opportunity to head right back to the Tatina Glacier to show Chris Robertson the joys of the Kichatnas and the Alaska Range. While more time was allotted for our expedition, weather forecasts indicated we would be gifted a beautiful, yet short, weather window for us to climb and fly out. We set our sights for the south-southwest side of Serendipity Spire (about 6850 feet), a relatively small formation for the Kichatnas. In a long day, Chris and I climbed the west-southwest face of the spire to

the south ridge, where the Kichatnas' high-quality band of beige granite beckoned. Our route generally favored the west face, only crossing the south ridge to the east face up high near the summit, seeking the cleanest and most appealing splitter cracks to the summit (there were several from which to choose). "Charlie Zulu" (IV, 5.10, 55 degrees) is 12 "formal" pitches in length, with a few more low-5th-class pitches up near the summit. The 1,800-foot route was all free climbed and the formation is certainly worth considering for parties only gifted a small weather window where time would only allow for a "Lower-48" sized objective.



*Tad McCrea high up in the couloir of "Tentative Muffin" on Peak 7984 above the Tatina Glacier.*

*Photo by Zach Lovell*



*Tad McCrea climbing through the narrows on "Tentative Muffin" on Peak 7984 above the Tatina Glacier.*

*Photo by Zach Lovell*



*Chris Robertson looking toward Middle Triple Peak.*

*Photo by Zach Lovell*



*Chris Robertson above the Cul-de-sac Glacier while ascending "Charlie Zulu" on Serendipity Spire.*

*Photo by Zach Lovell*

*Zach Lovell leading "Charlie Zulu" on Serendipity Spire.*

*Photo by Chris Robertson*



# Bumps 594 Meters, 830 Meters, 855 Meters, and 1145 Meters, Thunder Bird Ridge:

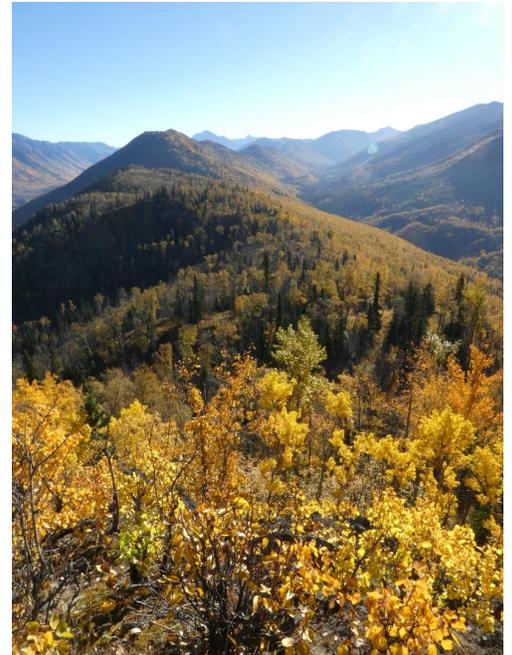
## Bumpin' It

Text and photos by Wayne L. Todd

October 2018



*Looking southeast from Bump 594 meters (1949 feet).*



*Southeast view of the ridge from Bump 594 meters (1949 feet).*

For a few years I've been intrigued by a ridge that lies between the Thunder Bird Creek drainage and the Eklutna River drainage. On a map the route looks very straightforward: start at the Thunderbird Falls Trailhead and follow this ridge until above Eklutna Lake, then drop to the Eklutna Lake Trailhead. My original plan had been to leave a bike at Eklutna Lake to bike back to my vehicle at Thunder Bird Falls, but Carrie Wang volunteers to pick me up.

Due to my distinct concerns of possibly crossing private property and encountering quality brush down low, I don't invite anyone along. And I also wonder about bear encounters and the route out from Bump 1145 meters (3757 feet).

I hike into shadowed morning light along the very wide Thunder Bird Falls Trail. I'm prepped for brush and steeper terrain with leather gloves and Whippet. Toward the end of the trail, I exit onto a lightly ordained devil's club slope. At the top I find a light trail, which likely ties into the official trail lower down. Quietly walking this trail, I note GAIA shows that this ridge trail never crosses private property. Delete one concern. This trail continues, but I need to cross Thunder Bird Creek to gain my ridge; continuing would put me on the Mount Eklutna ridge. A sock liner crossing is swift, but only knee deep. This crossing could be dangerous during warm-

er weather.

I'm excited to now officially be on the ridge, especially with minimal brush. Nearby trees filter the views of yellow-leafed, sunny slopes beyond. When not on a moose trail, my travel is through grass. The harmonica is deployed for animal annoyance. I enter the sun zone on Bump 594 meters (1949 feet) with views of the entire ridge route. The birds are singing and it's warm, so it's break time. A baseball cap is a nice amenity for the sun-in-the-face travel.

A stand of intensely yellow trees awaits just below the short, but very steep, backside of Bump 594 meters. "This traverse will take less than my estimated time," but between Bump 594 meters and Bump 830 meters (2723 feet), endless fields of sunlit seeded grass amidst fallen and dead standing spruce soon have me

"back on schedule." The beauty and warmth create numerous photo and nature-appreciation stops, along with a few near face plants from downed trees hidden in the chest-high grass.

From the west, Bump 830 meters looks more like a peak than a bump, regarding incline elevation. At the saddle between bumps, a major animal trail of



*Looking east up the ridge with Eklutna Lake, Bold Peak, Bashful Peak, and Thunder Bird Peak in the background.*

moose and bear tracks runs perpendicular to the ridge, presumably for travel between valleys. The steeper hiking is good, but not as easy as the alpine that I was expecting. The harmonica is shelved by the top due to my excessive moisture loss. "HEY O"s create much less slobber. On Bump 830 meters an intense alder cluster stubbornly grows, but beyond the route looks to be gentle alpine. I find a blueberry-intense rest spot. Cell coverage is still good here, so I report in that I'll probably be behind schedule.

The view northeast is a completely new perspective of Mount POW/MIA, Goat Rock, and West Twin Peak, areas that I've spent some time on. And there are those pervasive lesser snow bumps in the distance to the north. Tan, sculpted cliffs edge the Eklutna River on the north side, reminiscent of the southwestern United States.

There's now even a ridge trail lined with blueberries, for which I make a few (dozen) mini-stops. Soon golden-bordered Eklutna Lake is in view, and that, coupled with the spruce-dappled ridge, creates a few mandatory photo stops. About the time I'm wondering if anyone ever comes up here, an old, green, military jerry can marks the trail. And shortly thereafter, some very rusted tin can remnants. Mini-intense tussock slopes face north (what makes those again?).

My pace slows while ascending Bump 855 meters (2805 feet), "One does need to remember that while looking along the ridge, most of the elevation drops are obscured." A toppled survey pipe marks the top for another deserved blueberry break. I'm fairly sure I'll be later than planned, but there is no longer any cell service. "What kind of wilderness is this?"

Traveling on, I mostly ignore the millions of beckoning little blue devils, "Eat me, and me," as I'm now pushing a bit for time. I briefly consider dropping early to the Eklutna Valley, but repeated gunshots are a good deterrent. A late, but prime, blooming lupine catches my eye.

"Wow, that is quite a drop, and incline, to Bump 1145 meters;" time to really use those poles. This is the ridge I'd seen from afar that looked to be the Thunder Bird Ridge.

The sunlit ridge is still so pleasant, there are still blueberry patches, and darkness is a few hours away. But there's the lurking shadowed side toward Eklutna Lake. On Bump 1145 meters the views abound from the ridge ahead to Thunder Bird Peak to the views behind of the four-bump ridge and many peaks in between. A blueberry-free break includes viewing and deciding which way to descend.

And I'm "on time" (if you don't count the descent time). I opt to drop directly north, as it looks to have less brush. "Woo," I immediately discover the bright, but saturated, reindeer lichen is slick and rips out underfoot, so it becomes connect-the-talus-fingers. Alpine

quickly transitions to wet grass, then horizontal jaunts to avoid brush. Entering downed-tree zone, I discover stepping over them with clingy wet pants is effortful. As the brush zone intensifies, I slow my pace and realize frequent lateral moves "mostly avoid" brush. The harmonica is deployed so I can focus on route. I really don't want to encounter the brush factor encountered some years ago while starting out from the spillway.

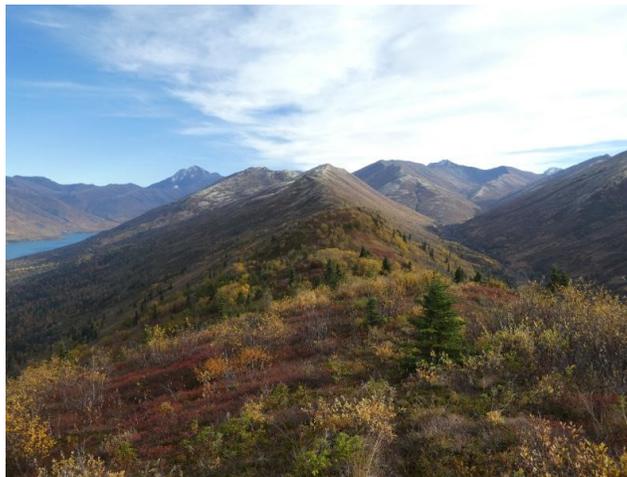
I've been bordering a small stream and now am relieved to be on the flats and even find flagging. This trail (?) is

soon lost amidst the endless moose tracks, but I'm excited at my progress and proximity to the spillway, so go "moose mode." I'm already soaked from the waist down, so tromp directly across the bogs and squeeze through many black spruce. My pocketed phone is rather wet, but the spillway is close (via GAIA). I hit a solid recognizable trail going left, full speed ahead, harmonitalk, and "HEY, I recognize that person waiting at the spillway." A quick chilly walk back to the car, donning of all clothes and dry shoes, and dinner at Pizza Man. NICE! (And rather glad I didn't have a bike ride awaiting.)

10\* hours, 12 miles, about 5,200 feet of elevation gain. \*includes all berry, summit, and photo breaks, about eight hours of travel time.

I recommend this trip in the fall. This could be a fun route for the mountain runners? I'm looking forward to skiing this high to low when there's some good snow depth. If a trail were to exist from the spillway to the alpine below Bump 1145 meters, the unpleasant section of the route would be highly mitigated.

Bumps 594, 830, 855, and 1145 meters have only between 300 and 400 feet of prominence, hence are not true summits (i.e., bumps).



*Looking southeast with Eklutna Lake, Bold Peak, and Thunder Bird Peak in the background.*



*Wayne Todd on Bump 1145 meters (3757 feet) about to descend the dark side of the ridge with Mount POW/MIA, Goat Rock, the Twin Peaks, and Eklutna Lake in the background.*

## Hike on Hope Point Trail Offers a Respite from the Political Season

Text and photos by Frank E. Baker



*Turnagain Arm at sunset from the Hope Point Trail on the Kenai Peninsula.*

About 3:30 p.m. on November 4th, the sun we had enjoyed for most of the day slipped below the mountains to our south and the temperature dropped by at least five degrees. We knew we were running out of daylight, but with resolve we kept climbing higher toward Hope Point's 3705-foot summit, located near the community of Hope on the Kenai Peninsula.

"We still have about a thousand feet to reach the top," I told hiking buddy Scott Sims. "It would take us about an hour and a half to get there and would put us kind of late getting back."

A cold breeze whisked across the ridges from the northwest and we ducked behind some rocks for a break. It didn't take us long to agree this would be a good turnaround spot.

"I think we've done pretty well for the day for the amount of time we've been out," Scott said. I agreed, and before 4 p.m., we were on our way down – aware that we'd been robbed of an hour of afternoon daylight by the November 4th switch off Daylight Saving Time.

**Getting started:** We'd begun our hike at about 11:45 a.m. and were glad to see only a few inches of snow on the roughly 7.5-mile (round-trip) trail, which was improved in recent years by the U.S. Forest Service. What was once a very steep ascent now has a wider tread way, with long switchbacks that make the trail suitable for family outings.

The trail crosses steep slopes, however, that cross potential avalanche areas. With snow accumulations later in winter, the trail could become unsafe. From spring to fall are generally the best times to hike this trail. We went this late in the year knowing that the snow accumulation was low.

One generally spots wildlife on this trail. On a September 2016 hike with Eagle River's Pete Panarese, we observed several goats on the way to the summit, and from the top saw beluga whales swimming near the shore of Cook Inlet. And on the descent, a black bear swiftly crossed the trail few hundred yards ahead of us.

Scott and I noticed snowshoe hare tracks along the side of the trail, and higher up, the shallow tracks of willow ptarmigan.

As we worked our way back down the trail, the Chugach Mountains ringing Cook Inlet were beginning to shift into sunset alpenglow, a salmon-pink that slowly painted the sky into a deep lavender and cobalt blue.

"It's a great time to be out," Scott remarked.

I agreed, unconcerned that we missed the summit and that we might have to finish the last mile with headlamps.

Below us, lights of the small community of Hope were blinking on, and across Turnagain Arm, we could see car headlights

steadily moving along the Seward Highway at the base of the mountains.

I told Scott that Hope was my all-time favorite town in Alaska.

People will tell me there's nothing going on in Hope – that there's hardly anything there, and I reply: "Precisely."

But more than 100 years ago, there was a lot happening, when thousands of gold seekers swarmed to the area and established the community of Sunrise and farther west, Hope, at the mouth of Resurrection Creek. The latter town was established in 1896 and appropriately named Hope, after a young prospector named Percy Hope.

"I first visited Hope back in the 1950s when my parents lived in Seward," I commented. "Some of the old log houses are still around. I've always loved the quietness of Hope, which I can guess is the exact opposite of what it was like back in the early 1900s when the gold-rush frenzy was building."

It was dark by the time we reached the car, but the temperature was not unpleasant – still in the low 20s. We agreed it was rejuvenating to get out and hike in such an exquisitely beautiful area.

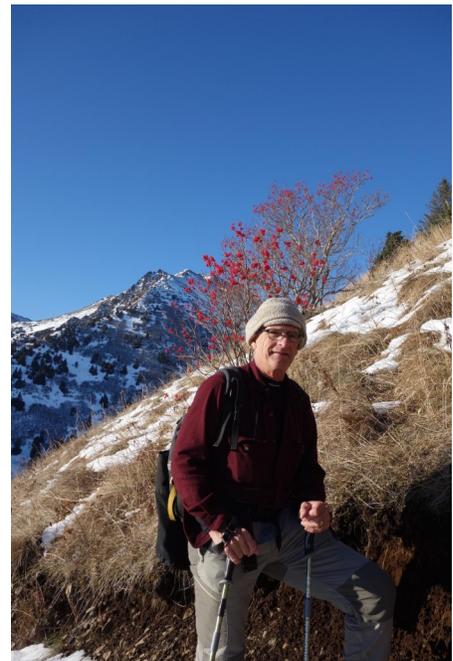
And perhaps best of all, it was great to not hear a political advertisement for the entire day!

**Getting there:** At Mile 56.5 of the Seward Highway, turn north onto the Hope Highway after crossing the Canyon Creek Bridge. Drive 17.8 miles, take a left 500 feet before Porcupine Creek Campground, and drive ¼ mile to the trailhead.

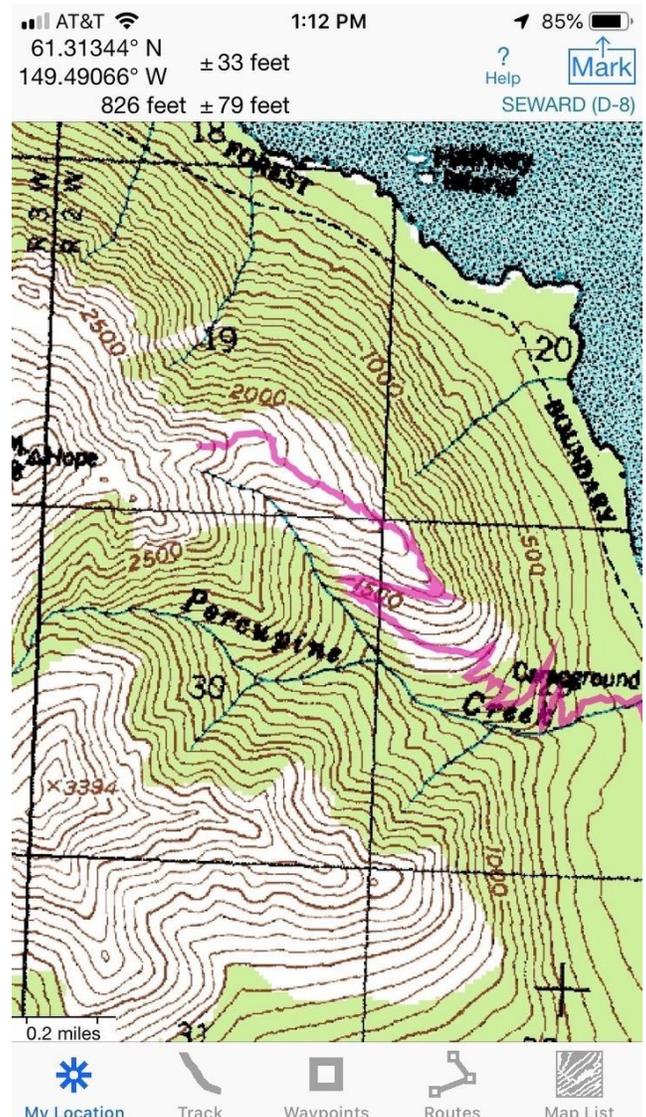
Frank Baker is a freelance writer and MCA member who lives in Eagle River with his wife Rebekah, a retired elementary school teacher.



Frank Baker on the ascent at about 2700 feet.



Eagle River's Scott Sims on the Hope Point Trail.



## The Hunt for the Seth Holden Hut

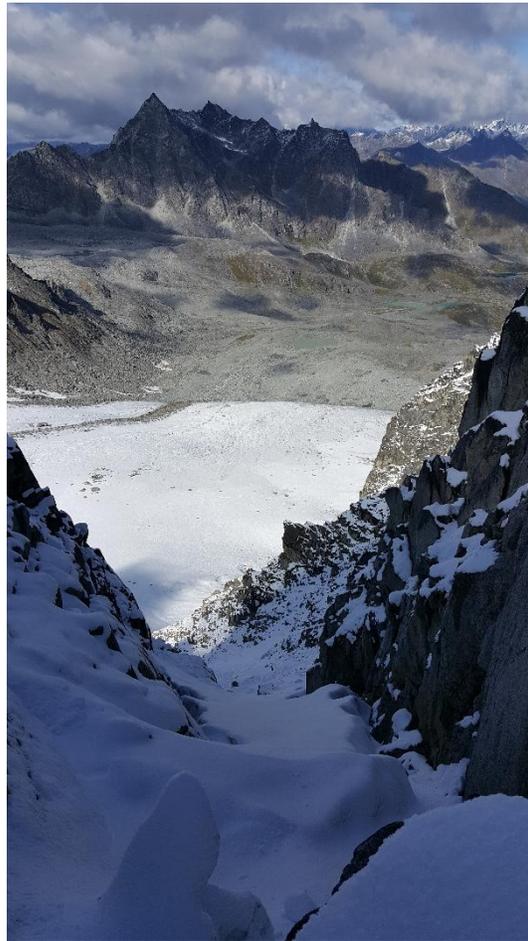
Text and photos by Jonathan Rupp

The Seth Holden Hut was completed this July, opening up a new area of possible misadventures in the Hatcher Pass zone. My ski buddies and I were keen to get to know the routes back there, before the coming winter snow raised the ante. Katie Strong and I had originally planned to join the construction crew, but scheduling didn't work out. After a cool and wet August, Labor Day weekend was shaping up to be fine weather for it, so Charles Cacciola and I started looking at the maps again.

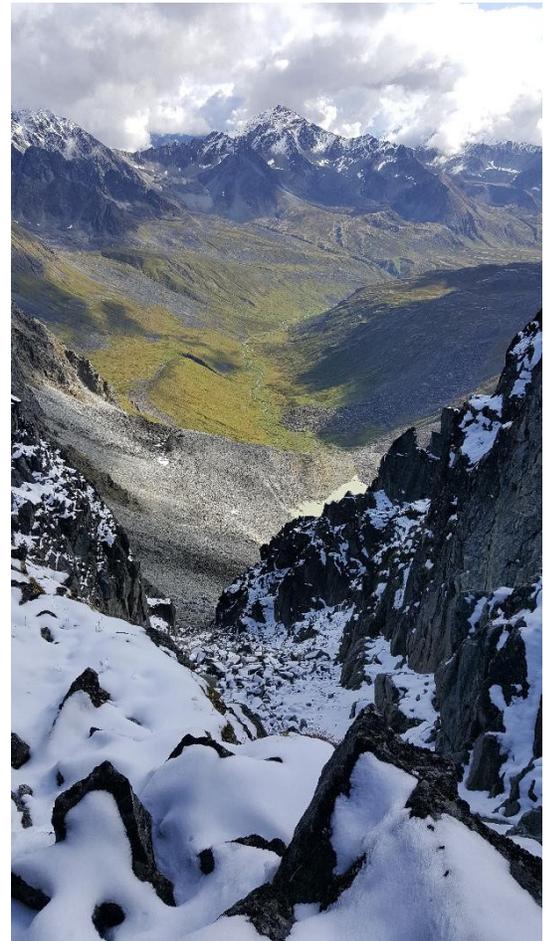
We knew the route from the Bomber Hut over Ozone was solid, because the construction crew had used it. But what about the other side, from the Mint and Dnigi Huts? An old map labeled the saddle between Montana Peak and Dewlap Peak as being "Moosehead Pass," so I figured that would be a good option. However, there was the worry that glacial recession had interrupted the route. Charles independently scoped satellite imagery, noticed a chute up to that same saddle, and sent me a pin. Perfect, let's go check it out! We brought gear for a rappel, so that if the north side did end up cliffing out, we could still complete the loop.

Charles and I left Anchorage after work on Friday, August 31<sup>st</sup>, 2018, headed for the Mint Hut. At some point, maybe after leaving town, we realized there was a discrepancy between the old map and the excellent new one by Paxson Woelber. The new map had Moosehead Pass on the east side of the Moose Creek valley.<sup>1</sup> So was this ever a hike/ski route? Or was it impassible without more skill/gear/ambition than we were bringing? Hmm. Driving into the pass, things were wetter than expected. The Gold-Mint trail had a good amount of muddy or underwater sections. We got to the hut around midnight, glad to see the party there still up, so we could get settled without waking them.

Saturday we had a leisurely morning, enjoying the splendor of



*Looking north from the gap. The Seth Holden Hut is in the frame, but too small to see.*



*Looking back south from the gap.*

waking up at the head of the Little Susitna valley. We set out at 9 a.m., and headed up to Grizzly Pass. We briefly discussed heading all the way up the Mint Glacier and cutting over between Montana Peak and Spearmint Spire, but decided that one unknown up-and-over was enough for the day. The travel to Grizzly was fine, with a few inches of this year's snow by the time we reached the top. From there we descended toward Moose Creek to about 4500 feet, where the east ridges of Spearmint no longer blocked northward travel.

We stopped for lunch and admired the imposingly steep flanks of Dewlap Peak, while doubts about the viability of our route increased further. I had been encouraged by photos showing the north slopes of the Dewlap-Montana ridge, taken during the Holden Hut construction (thanks, David Crane). However, our vantage then allowed us to evaluate the Montana-Dewlap ridge itself, and it was clearly not a ridge walk. A walkable ridge would have allowed one option we'd discussed: ascending the gully, then traversing west along the ridge to where the glacier on the north side

still reached it. Now it was clear that option was not within our means, and if the far side looked like the side, we were currently admiring, our route would be a dead end. At that point, Charles turned back for the Mint, grumbling something about being old and fat and Labor Day honoring the Haymarket massacre and Blair Mountain. We briefly discussed parting ways for more than just a day, but I was not carrying communications and didn't want anyone to worry. So I dropped my pack at our lunch spot and continued on a solo scouting mission.

Suddenly on a time crunch, I picked up the pace. Also, no longer equipped for a rappel, the odds of the route being viable seemed even more diminished. Hustling up to the base of the ridge, it was encouraging to see the way to the top looking well within reach, confirming our satellite imagery reconnaissance. However, it was the far side we had doubted. Clamoring up the chute, the question of what this pass was called kept rattling in my mind. I was hoping it was Dew a Lap Gap, not Double Back Gap. And lo, upon reaching the top, an appealing snow gully descended all the way down to the glacier. Minutes later I was cruising down the lower glacier, shedding all layers and looking forward to taking a peek at the Holden Hut.

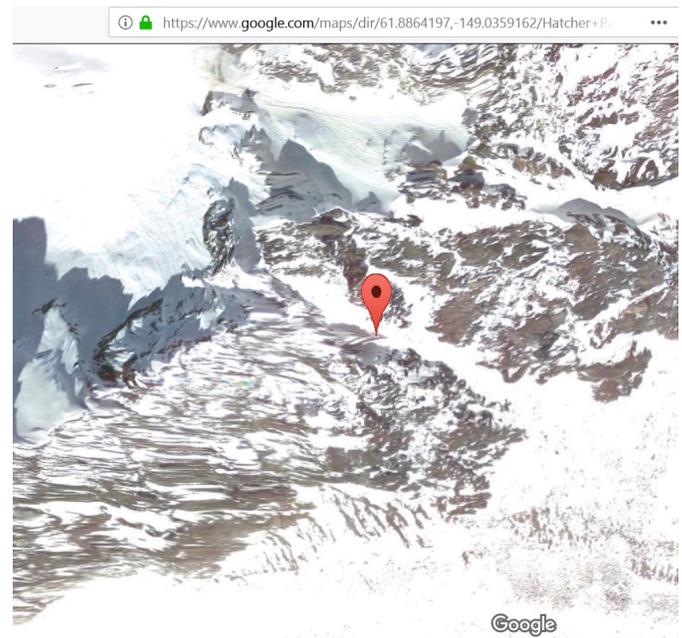
High on success, I pondered whether I could truly do a lap, and go back via Ozone. I might have tried (I did have a headlamp) if I'd left my gear at the Mint Hut, not on Spearmint's remote eastern flanks. The Holden Hut was sublime, of course, well made, and with good MCA flavor, though it's still so clean and new that it feels a bit stark. Or maybe that was just the feeling of loneliness because no one else was around. After making some water and sunbathing on the back deck, I hoofed it back to the Mint Hut, reversing my route. I arrived around 9:30 p.m., a little before dark, in time to greet the half-dozen tents and many friendly faces out for a fantastic Labor Day weekend. The new hut is all the buzz, and getting to share some ground truth was fun.

On Sunday, I exited the Little Su valley via Tenemint Gap, crossed the upper Penny Royal Glacier, descended to the bomber wreckage, and continued out Reed Lakes. Descending from the Penny Royal to the Bomber Glacier was the sketchiest part of the whole weekend. I wondered if I might get to use the rappel gear after all, but after a couple steps on frozen kitty litter, I was able to sneak through. I got back to the trailhead around 4 p.m., amazed at how truly wonderful our hut system was.

<sup>1</sup> Steve Gruhn has since confirmed the older map was in error.



Charles Cacciola crossing the Mint Glacier.



Satellite imagery appearing to show a couloir to the ridge.



Different maps conflict on the location of "Moosehead Pass."

# Peak of the Month: Mount Talachulitna

Text by Steve Gruhn

**Mountain Range:** Alaska Range; Tordrillo Mountains

**Borough:** Matanuska-Susitna Borough

**Adjacent Pass:** Tri-Hayes Pass

**Latitude/Longitude:** 61° 30' 34" North, 152° 26' 41" West

**Elevation:** 11150 (±50) feet

**Adjacent Peaks:** Hayes Point (10510 feet), Peak 9255 in the Triumvirate Glacier drainage, Peak 9556 in the West Fork of the Hayes Glacier and Hoeman Glacier drainages, Peak 9540 in the South Twin Glacier drainage, and Peak 8540 in the North Twin Glacier and South Twin Glacier drainages

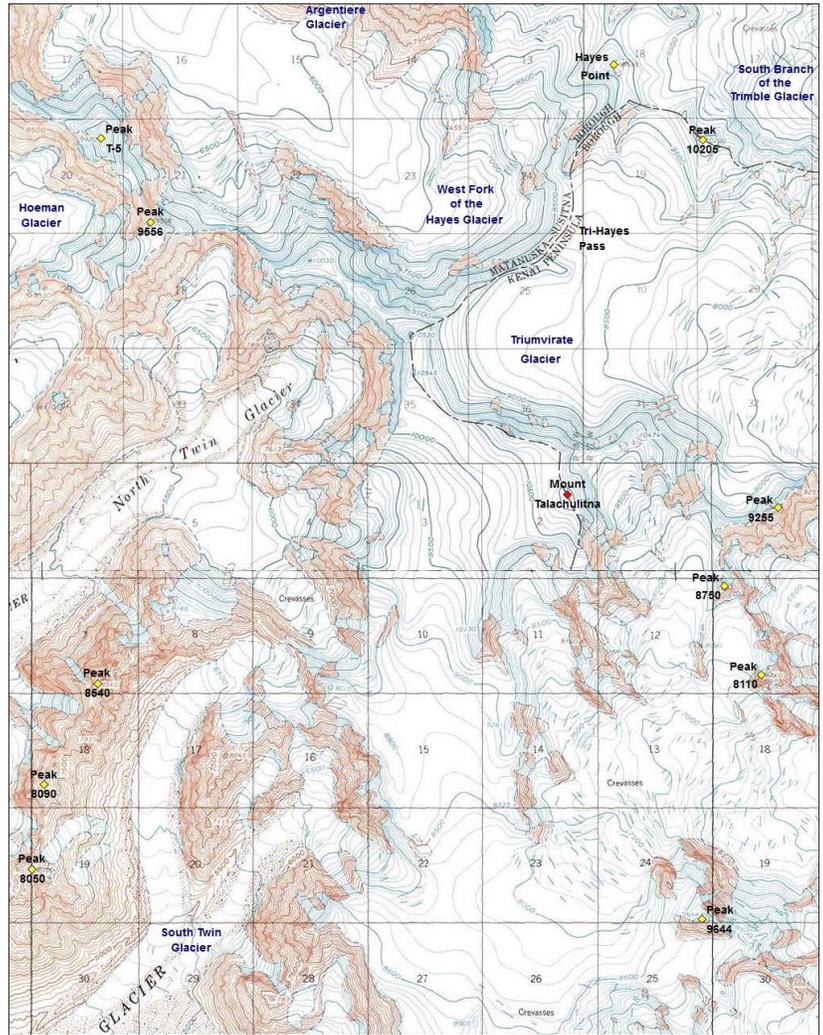
**Distinctness:** 2,500 feet from either Hayes Point or Peak 9255

**Prominence:** 2,500 feet from Mount Gerdine (11258 feet)

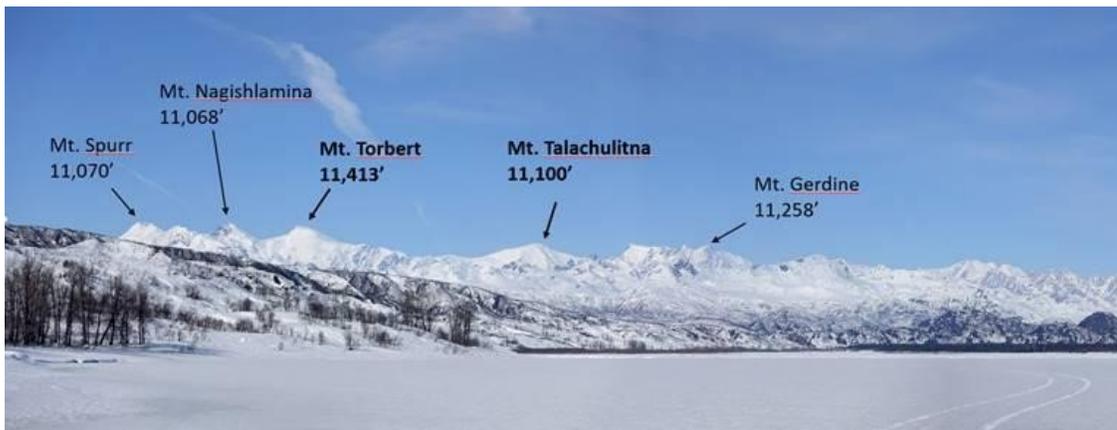
**USGS Maps:** 1:63,360: Tyonek (C-7); 1:25,000: Tyonek C -7 SW

**First Recorded Ascent:** June 21, 1967, by Seiji Hirokawa, Minoru Tanaka, and Tomayasu Yagai

**Route of First Recorded Ascent:** South aspect



**Access Point:** 4500-foot level of the Triumvirate Glacier about 6-½ miles east-southeast of the summit



*Panorama from Beluga Lake.  
Photo by Lee Helzer*

In January 1964 Vin Hoeman led an expedition to attempt to climb the highest peak in the Tordrillo Mountains, 11413-foot Mount Torbert. Weather conditions and an iceberg-studded lake thwarted the team's plans and they switched to an alternate

objective, a 5550-foot nunatak above the Triumvirate Glacier. The party retreated after reaching the 3100-foot level of the Triumvirate Glacier. But a row of three peaks, spaced equally apart and each higher than the previous one, had caught Hoeman's eye. In his unpublished manuscript on Alaska's mountains, he named them Anchorman Mountain, Middleman Peak, and Leader Peak, perhaps a reference to the three members of his rope team. Anchorman Mountain referred to their 5550-foot alternate objective. Middleman Peak was assigned to an 8150-foot peak in the

Triumvirate Glacier drainage about five miles north and west of Anchorman Mountain. Hoeman assigned the name Leader Peak to the 11150-foot second-highest peak in the Triumvirate Glacier drainage.

On May 24, 1967, Erik Barnes flew a six-member team from Tokyo Electrical Engineering College flew from Anchorage to the 4500-foot level of the Triumvirate Glacier. The objectives of the team were to climb 11258-foot Mount Gerdine, Mount Torbert, and 11070-foot Mount Spurr. The party pushed northwest up an icefall to an advanced base camp at the 7300-foot level of the Triumvirate Glacier. In the ensuing days Keichiro Noda, Tomayasu Yagai, and Tatsuo Yoshizawa reached the 10510-foot summit of Hayes Point and on June 11 the summit of Mount Gerdine. After returning to their advanced base camp, the party set out to attempt Mount Torbert. They crossed an 8650-foot pass to the southwest of their advanced base camp and established a camp at about 8300 feet on a tributary to the Triumvirate Glacier. After heading south and west, they established another camp at about the 8000-foot level of the Torbert Plateau. From that camp they set out to climb Mount Torbert, but were turned back by a huge crevasse at the 11000-foot level of the peak. They abandoned their plans to traverse Mount Torbert and ascend Mount Spurr and returned to their 8000-foot camp. They then turned their attention northward to Hoeman's Leader Peak, which, not knowing of Hoeman's name, they called Nameless Peak. On June 21 Seiji Hirokawa, Minoru Tanaka, and Yagai reached the summit of their Nameless Peak. On June 23 Jim Cassidy flew Hirokawa, Noda, Tanaka, and Yoshizawa from their 4500-foot base camp to Anchorage. A photo caption in the June 23, 1967, *Anchorage Daily Times* stated that the team had successfully climbed Mount Gerdine and Nameless Peak. Cassidy flew team leader Shinji Kaneko and Yagai from their base camp to Anchorage the following day.

On May 20, 1988, Lowell Thomas, Jr., flew Tom Choate, Gary Lawton, Jerry Minick, and Ken Zafren to the 8300-foot level of the Torbert Plateau. The next day they climbed Mount



*Lee Helzer looking at the south aspect of Mount Talachulitna from camp at 9000 feet just west of Peak 9550.*

*Photo by Dave Hart*



*Lee Helzer on the summit of Peak 9550 above the Triumvirate Glacier with the southern aspect of Mount Talachulitna at right.*

*Photo by Dave Hart*

Torbert. On May 26, after a few days of stormy weather, the team skied up and down the 11150-foot peak that Hoeman had called Leader Peak and that the Tokyo Electrical Engineering College party had called Nameless Peak. On May 27 Choate and Zafren climbed Peak 9644 in the Triumvirate Glacier drainage. On May 29 the team returned to Anchorage.

In 1999 Rodman Wilson and Paul Crews, Sr., two of the Tordrillo Mountains' pioneering climbers, co-authored a book documenting the

mountaineering history of the Tordrillo Mountains. In that book they proposed to apply the name Talachulitna from Talachulitna Creek, Talachulitna Lake, and the Talachulitna River to the east to replace Hoeman's Leader Peak and the Tokyo Electrical Engineering College party's Nameless Peak. The name was derived from a corruption of a Dena'ina name that First Lieutenant Joseph S. Herron had recorded in 1899 as Tu-lu-shu-lit-na. In 1987 James Kari, a linguist specializing in the Dene and Athabascan languages, and James A. Fall, a cultural anthropologist, co-authored a book documenting the Dena'ina place names throughout the upper Cook Inlet area and relating stories from Shem Pete, a Dena'ina historian. In that text they reported the Dena'ina name for the Talachulitna River as Tununitch'ulyutnu, meaning "river where people killed each other in water." Pete's story of how the river got its name involved three men who headed to the mouth of the Talachulitna River on a cold day, only one of whom had a warm coat – a nice ground-squirrel parka. To steal the coat, the other two men fatally stabbed the parka's owner in the back as he was taking it off to share it.

On May 16, 2008, Doug Brewer of Alaska West Air flew Joe Stock, Dylan Taylor, and Andrew Wexler from Nikiski to a 2400-foot bench on the south slopes of Mount Spurr. Later that day, the party climbed Crater Peak and camped at about 7100 feet. The next day they climbed Mount Spurr and camped at about 9800 feet. The following day the team camped at a 4550-foot pass between the Capps Glacier and the Triumvirate Glacier. The next day they pushed through the icefall

and established a camp at the 7000-foot level of a tributary to the Triumvirate Glacier below the Torbert Plateau. On May 20 the trio climbed both Mount Torbert and the southwest aspect of Mount Talachulitna and returned to their camp. Continuing northward, the party climbed Mount Gerdine on the 22nd. On the 24th the team reached the Skwentna River and Mike Meekin flew them to Skwentna.

On April 13, 2017, Conor McManamin flew Dave Hart and Lee Helzer in a Cessna 180 and Ben Gray flew Josh Allely in a Super Cub from Lake Hood to the 9000-foot level of the Torbert Plateau three miles northwest of Mount Torbert. The next day Allely, Hart, and Helzer climbed Mount Torbert and Peak 9550 in the South Twin Glacier and Triumvirate Glacier drainages. On April 15 the trio skied northward from their base camp to the broad southwest ridge of Mount Talachulitna. They were able to ski to within 100 yards of the summit, where a two-foot wide crevasse and an icy slope prompted them to hike to the summit. They returned to camp and on April 16 McManamin returned to fly them to Beluga Lake in two trips. Taking off from a lower elevation, McManamin was able to fly the team in a single flight from Beluga Lake to Anchorage.

I don't know of a fifth ascent of Mount Talachulitna.

The information in this column came from Gary Hansen's trip report titled "Mt. Torbert Expedition January 1-9, 1964," which appeared in the February 1964 *Scree*; from Hoeman's unpublished manuscript on Alaska's mountains, which is archived in the Grace and John Vincent Hoeman papers at the University of Alaska Anchorage/Alaska Pacific University Consortium Library; from a photo caption titled "Successful Climbers Return," which appeared on page 1 of the June 23, 1967, *Anchorage Daily Times*; from a report titled "Mount Gerdine," which appeared on page 122 of the 1968 *American Alpine Journal*; from Kari's and Fall's Shem Pete's Alaska: The Territory of the Upper Cook Inlet Dena'ina; from Zafren's report titled "Mount Torbert and Other Peaks, Tordrillo Mountains," which appeared on page 138 of the 1989 *AAJ*; from Wilson's and Crews' Tordrillo: Pioneer Climbs and Flights in the Tordrillo Mountains of Alaska, 1957 – 1997; from Stock's report titled "Tordrillo Mountains, first full-length traverse," which appeared on page 129 of the 2009 *AAJ*; from Wexler's article titled "Tordrillo Traverse Take Two," which appeared on pages 156 and 157 of the 2009 *Canadian Alpine Journal*; from Hart's trip report titled "Mount Torbert (11413 feet) Northwest Ridge, Mount Talachulitna (11150 feet) Southwest Ridge, and Peak 9550, Tordrillo Mountains," which appeared in the October 2017 *Scree*; and from my correspondence with Hart, Helzer, and Stock.



*Lee Helzer descending the north ridge of Peak 9550, returning to camp after an ascent of Mount Torbert. Mount Talachulitna is the high point on the horizon at right.*

*Photo by Dave Hart*



*Dave Hart and Josh Allely skiing down-glacier from their 9000-foot camp, approaching the southern glaciated slopes of Mount Talachulitna (at right).*

*Photo by Lee Helzer*

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THEN SIGN, INITIAL AND DATE IT IN THE BLANKS INDICATED.

I \_\_\_\_\_ (print name) am aware that mountaineering and wilderness activities (including without limitation hiking; backpacking; rock, snow, and ice climbing; mountaineering; skiing; ski mountaineering; snowshoeing, ice-skating, mountain-biking, using watercraft of all types, access by aircraft, and the use of remote backcountry huts) ARE INHERENTLY HAZARDOUS ACTIVITIES WITH THE POTENTIAL TO CAUSE DEATH, BODILY INJURY AND/OR PROPERTY DAMAGE. I wish to participate in and/or receive instruction in these activities with the Mountaineering Club of Alaska, Inc. (MCA). I RECOGNIZE THAT THESE ACTIVITIES INVOLVE NUMEROUS RISKS, which include, by way of example only, falling while biking, hiking, climbing, skiing or crossing rivers or glaciers; falling into a crevasse or over a cliff; drowning; failure of a belay; being struck by climbing equipment or falling rock, ice or snow; avalanches; lightning; fire; asphyxiation, hypothermia; frostbite; defective or malfunctioning equipment; and attack by insects or animals. I further recognize that the remoteness of these activities may preclude prompt medical care or rescue. I ALSO RECOGNIZE THAT RISKS OF DEATH OR INJURY MAY BE CAUSED OR INCREASED BY MISTAKES, NEGLIGENCE OR RECKLESS CONDUCT on the part of my fellow participants; or by MCA officers, directors, instructors, or trip leaders; or by the State of Alaska and its employees regarding MCA backcountry huts. As used in this Liability Release, "MCA" includes its officers, directors, instructors and trip leaders. I nevertheless agree to accept all risks of injury, death, or property damage that may occur in connection with any MCA activity, including use of MCA-furnished equipment and MCA backcountry huts, and all risks of third-party negligence, in conformity with Alaska Statutes 09.65.290(a) and (d). \_\_\_\_\_ (initial here that you have read and understood this paragraph)

**GIVING UP MY LEGAL RIGHTS:** I hereby give up, for myself and for my heirs, dependents, and/or personal representative, all legal rights that I might otherwise claim against MCA, my fellow participants in MCA activities (except to the extent that insurance coverage is provided by automobile insurance policies), and against the State of Alaska and its employees regarding MCA backcountry huts. I GIVE UP THESE LEGAL RIGHTS KNOWINGLY, AND REGARDLESS OF WHETHER THE DEATH, INJURY OR PROPERTY DAMAGE RESULTED FROM MISTAKES, NEGLIGENCE OR RECKLESS CONDUCT OF MYSELF OR OTHER PERSONS. I understand that this Liability Release agreement shall remain in effect unless I provide to MCA a signed, dated, written notice of my revocation of this Liability Release, concurrent with the mandatory relinquishment of my MCA membership. \_\_\_\_\_ (initial here that you have read and understood this paragraph)

**MY PROMISE NOT TO SUE:** I will not sue or otherwise make any claim against the MCA, my fellow participants in MCA activities (except as noted above for automobile accidents), and/or the State of Alaska and its employees regarding use of MCA backcountry huts, for any death, injury or property damage which occurs in the course of my participation or instruction in mountaineering and wilderness activities. The provisions of this release are severable, and if any part is held unenforceable, the remaining provisions shall remain in effect. Any lawsuit relating to MCA activities or the validity of this Liability Release shall be filed only in the Alaska Superior Court in Anchorage, Alaska. \_\_\_\_\_ (initial here that you have read and understood this paragraph)

**MY RELEASE OF LIABILITY:** I hereby release and discharge the MCA, my fellow participants in MCA activities, and the State of Alaska and its employees regarding use of MCA backcountry huts, from any and all actions, claims, or demands, both for myself and for my heirs, dependents, and/or personal representative, for any death, injury or property damage occurring in the course of my instruction or participation in MCA mountaineering and wilderness activities, and the use of MCA-furnished equipment and backcountry huts. \_\_\_\_\_ (initial here that you have read and understood this paragraph)

**MY PROMISE TO INDEMNIFY:** I will pay all expenses, including attorney fees and court costs, that MCA, my fellow participants in MCA activities, and the State of Alaska and its employees may incur as a consequence of any legal action arising out of death, injury, or property damage suffered by me in connection with any MCA activity or the use of any MCA-furnished equipment or backcountry huts. \_\_\_\_\_ (initial here that you have read and understood this paragraph)

**MY CONSENT TO MEDICAL TREATMENT:** I consent to any hospital or medical care that may become necessary as a result of my participation in MCA activities. I agree that I am solely responsible for all charges for such medical treatment, including evacuation and/or rescue costs. \_\_\_\_\_ (initial here that you have read and understood this paragraph)

I execute this this Liability Release freely and knowingly, and specifically in consideration for my opportunity to participate as an MCA member in MCA instruction and activities, and to use MCA-furnished equipment and backcountry huts.

I HAVE CAREFULLY READ THIS LIABILITY RELEASE AGREEMENT. I UNDERSTAND AND AGREE TO ITS CONTENTS. I RECOGNIZE THAT THIS LIABILITY RELEASE IS A BINDING LEGAL AGREEMENT.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Parent or Legal Guardian of named individual (if between 16 and 18 years of age):

\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ (Form Approved \_\_\_\_\_ 2019).

# January 2 General Meeting Minutes

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The January general meeting was held January 2 with roughly 65 in attendance for the budget vote and 70 for Dave Hart's presentation.

The budget was passed by a membership vote, 50 For and 1 Against, after the following discussion:

## Budget Discussion Minutes

The 2019 proposed budget was displayed and Mike Meyers (President) invited general questions. There were no questions at that time.

Katherine Cooper (Treasurer) presented the proposed 2019 budget with the following points:

The primary change from 2018 to 2019 is a reduction in the Huts Expenses from roughly \$30,000 to \$12,790 due to completion of the Holden Hut construction.

The bulk of the Training expenses and revenues are related to IceFest. The Training budget has been expanded to allow for other training.

In general the budget includes a low revenue projection and a high expense projection. The current revenue projection does not include significant fundraising or MCA-branded gear sales. The Board is also exploring the option for adding a donation field to the membership payment form so that members could pay more than the minimum if they chose. The projected 2019 budget shortfall (roughly \$4,500) could be covered by additional revenue.

Membership questions included:

Question: Is the \$12,790 annual expense for Huts what the club should expect for maintenance in future years?

Answer: In theory, yes, that is a rough annual maintenance cost for the near-term future. The Huts Committee is meeting this month to continue discussing priorities and actions.

A comment was made that Huts expenses are roughly equal to total revenue from membership fees.

Question: Are there better ways to attract membership that the Board has not considered, to increase membership revenue?

Answer: The Board is attempting to increase trips and training, which are the current main draws for new membership. Since we are not allowed to charge for Hut access due to the terms of our lease, and many other perks are available to the public, there has not been much advantage to become a dues-paying member in the recent past, aside from membership discounts to several vendors.

Question: Why has the expenses for Trips and Training increased, but not the anticipated revenue?

Answer: The majority of expenses and revenue is related to IceFest. The increase in expenses is to allow for other training. The Board is considering fees for the new training, but does not yet have a plan in place, so a revenue projection was not included. (Note: the one "Nay" in the Budget vote appeared to be in opposition to the idea that the MCA might charge for training)

Question: The Club membership roll contains 600 to 700 members, only about one-third of whom are active members. Can the Board consider a reconnect effort to get inactive members involved again?

Answer: Good idea which will be considered

## Other Announcements:

A monthly "Flattop Flyer" ski trip from Flattop Mountain to Service High via ski trails.

The "Borealis" Alaska chapter of the Sierra Club meets at 7 p.m. on the third Wednesday of the month (next: January 16) in Anchorage at the Arctic Recreation Center, 4855 Arctic Boulevard. Our membership is invited and the Club was asked to help spread the word.

Calendars and stickers were available for sale and other locations where they could be bought around town were announced.

Dave Hart's presentation was a success. We have the PowerPoint presentation, an audio recording, and a video recording of the screen and will be working to get it into a consolidated digital format. Three people who could not attend had asked if it would be available.

## Mountaineering Club of Alaska

President Mike Meyers [mcmeyers24@msn.com](mailto:mcmeyers24@msn.com)  
Vice-President Gerrit Verbeek 903-512-4286  
Secretary Jen Aschoff [jlaschoff@gmail.com](mailto:jlaschoff@gmail.com)  
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)

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

*Nik Mirhashemi walks across the summit of West Kahiltna Peak while the south face of Denali looms in the background.*

*Photo by Kurt Ross*

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