

"I hope I can be the autumn leaf, who looked at the sky and lived. And when it was time to leave, gracefully it knew life was a gift."

– Dodinsky

# the SCREE

## Mountaineering Club of Alaska

October 2020

Volume 63, Number 10



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**OCTOBER MEETING:** Wednesday, October 7 at 6:30. Virtual.

Join us to hear the stories behind some of the winning photos which will be printed in the 2021 calendar. Luke Konarzewski and Eric Roberts will present their photos.

***"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—Gerrit Verbeek assisted by Dawn Munroe*

## Cover Photo

Bill Finley on the south ridge of Golden Crown, spring 2017.  
Photo by Eric Parsons

## OCTOBER MEETING

Wednesday October 7, at 6:30 p.m.

Join us to hear the stories behind some of the winning photos which will be printed in the 2021 calendar. Luke Konarzewski and Eric Roberts will present their photos, and some other contestants may join as well. Thanks to all involved!

Check the Facebook page or MCA website calendar, or join directly via this link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89790449766?pwd=M0drcFh4ZFNaUzVak1sWTE0WW5RUT09>

## COVID-19 Announcement

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all MCA-sponsored trips, training or other activities will require a COVID-19 waiver to be signed by each participant at the beginning of the trip, until further notice. MCA trip leaders and event organizers will have hard copies of the waiver signed by all participants, including the leaders, before the sponsored activity starts.

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

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## Trips

**Sept:** MCA Ice Fest officially canceled due to the COVID pandemic.

**Dec 19:** Winter Solstice sleepout (no leader).

## Obituary

The MCA would like to offer our sincere condolences to the friends and family of Eric "Viking" Opland who died in an unfortunate accident late September. Eric was central figure in the Southcentral Alaska backcountry ski community for decades and his pure and endless enthusiasm for skiing inspired many over the years. He had a impeccable memory that could detail almost every ski run in Southcentral Alaska - and he had a part in naming dozens of them. If you have skied for any time around Anchorage chances are you have skied on one of Eric's runs. Details concerning Eric's legacy and life will be published at a later date, and those who want to honor his memory are encouraged to hike up to the Snowbird Glacier for early season turns.



**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.

Online? Click me!



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



## Announcements

### MCA Calendar

Votes are tallied for the 2021 MCA Calendar! Winners, categories, and brief captions are as follows:

Eric Roberts (Skiing) - "No Sticks" -Kirsten Kremer taking a micro-moment before descending on a ski recovery mission high above Cleave Creek Glacier, Chugach Mountains.

Dmitry Surnin (Skiing) - Eric Dahl enjoying the steep in Turnagain Pass

Eric Parsons (Skiing) - Max Neale getting first light while traversing the summit ridge on Hut Peak during a January cold spell.

Luke Konarzewski (Hiking/Mountaineering/Slogging) - Camping in the face of Denali, Denali National Park

Luke Konarzewski (Hiking/Mountaineering/Slogging) - Enjoying sunrise high on Donoho Peak, Wrangell St. Elias National Park

Emily Sullivan (Hiking/Mountaineering/Slogging) - Eric Parsons descends from Cantata Peak

Brendan Lee (Hiking/Mountaineering/Slogging) - At the edge of the Western Chugach, Daniel Glatz works up the South Ridge of Mountaineers Peak.

Sherrie Soltis (Climbing) - Dusty getting to the top of the Puritan Pillar

Michael Meyers (Climbing) - FA 'Fortress of Solitude' (M7, W15) Dane Katner and Matt Tucker.

Michael Meyers (Climbing) - FA 'Fortress of Solitude' (M7, W15) Dane Katner and Matt Tucker.

Andrew Holman (Scenery/Landscape) - The Bettles River and Dillon Mountain from the summit of Sukakpak Mountain.

Luke Konarzewski (Scenery/Landscape) - Sunrise on the North Peak of Denali. Viewed from the summit of Scott Peak.

Sherrie Soltis (Scenery/Landscape) - Looking down to the 14,000 ft camp on Denali

### Bomber Hut Urgent Repair Needed

All windows on the main floor are boarded up and need repair or replacement (see the bear incident described in the August 2020 *Scree* edition) Visqueen, duct tape, and caulk closure is needed on the outsides of first floor windows to prevent rain/snow incursion. See the website or contact Greg Bragiel for details at (907)-350-5146

<http://www.mtnclubak.org/index.cfm/Huts/Hut-Inventory-and-Needs>.

- Greg Bragiel

### MCA Meetings and the COVID-19 Pandemic

As well as making the usual MCA monthly membership meetings impossible, the COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted MCA's normal procedures for electing officers and considering new By-Laws. This disruption was not foreseen by anyone. Consequently, the existing MCA By-Laws are not designed to effectively work around our inability to have actual, in-person monthly general MCA meetings and our annual October general business meeting.

The Board is currently reviewing the Club By-Laws to determine whether or not the annual meeting and election of officers may only take place as an in-person meeting. The MCA Board has been meeting virtually for a number of months, and with Zoom and a small group, it seems to have worked well. There is no specific By-Law requirement for face-to-face Board meetings, and pre-COVID Board meetings have included telephonic participants. However, the logistics and procedures for virtual meetings becomes much more difficult where issues that must be presented to the general membership are involved, especially in the absence of adopted provisions for virtual membership participation and voting.

The present By-Laws provide that the Club's officers "shall serve for one year from date of election, or until their successor is elected." Thus, if the Club is not able to hold in-person elections at the October general business meeting, the present officers will continue in office until an in-person election can be held at a general membership meeting. (Under the Covid-19 circumstances, the membership could ratify an election occurring at the earliest date that a general in-person MCA membership meeting can be held, without waiting for the next October business meeting).

The present By-Laws are not explicit about Board members also continuing in office until their successors are elected, but the context strongly implies that this "continuation" provision also applies to Board members. In any event, we have only two Board members with terms expiring in October 2020, so perhaps they can be persuaded to remain on the Board until an election can be held.

If you are interested in becoming an Officer, Director, or volunteer in some other capacity, please contact a Board member.

## New Chugach State Park 120 Peak Challenge Complete – Billy Finley

Text by MCA Board, photos by Eric Parsons



*Roost Peak!*

*Phot by Eric Parsons*

On Saturday, September 5, 2020, Billy Finley stood atop Kelly Peak to complete his quest to climb the 120 recognized peaks in Chugach State Park. He becomes the seventh recorded person to complete this challenge. Congratulations, Billy! The list of Chugach State Park peakbaggers now includes:

Jim Sayler / 1998

Wendy Sanem / 2001

Richard Baranow / 2006

Wayne Todd / 2012

Ross Noffsinger / 2016

Dave Hart / 2018

Billy Finley / 2020

These 120 peaks dotting the half-million acres of the Chugach State Park share the common distinction of having 500 feet (or more) of vertical relief between themselves and the next higher summit, with some leniency given due to uncertainty from 100-foot contour intervals on USGS topographic maps. Due to the accuracy of the maps and the detail with which they can be read, peaks close to the 500-foot mark are included to list all

peaks with a possibility of meeting the criterion. Certain peaks have become more prominent over the years due to glacial recession, but for the sake of consistency those peaks have not been added to the challenge. It can be said that peakbagging is more art than science.

The list is printed in full below. How many can you check off?

Locations of Unnamed Peaks:

#55, Peak 5538: Peters Creek and Thunder Bird Creek

#59, Peak 5505: Four Mile Creek, Nine Mile Creek, and Thunder Bird Creek

#73, Peak 5320: Falling Water Creek and Peters Creek

#74, Peak 5285: Goat Creek and Yuditna Creek

#84, Peak Kelly Peak: East Fork of the Eklutna River

#93, Peak 4744: Penguin Creek

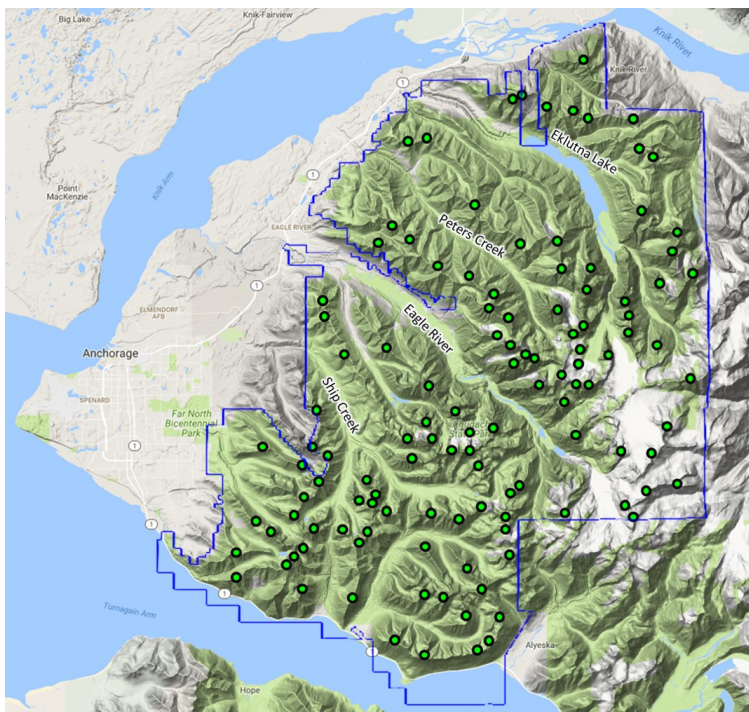
#99, Peak 4515: Bird Creek Pass

#113, Peak 4009: Four Mile Creek and Thunder Bird Creek

#114, Peak 3980: Ship Creek and South Fork of the Eagle River



Rank	Peak	Elevation in feet	Rank	Peak	Elevation in feet	Rank	Peak	Elevation in feet
1	Bashful Peak	8005	41	Bee's Heaven Peak	6385	81	West Kinglet Peak	5050
2	Baleful Peak	7990	42	Ovis Peak	6350	82	Nest Peak	5030
3	Bellicose Peak	7640	43	Moonlight Mountain	6270	83	Vista Peak	5026
4	Mount Yukla	7535	44	Finch Peak	6150	84	Kelly Peak	5010
5	Mount Rumble	7530	45	Hurdygurdy Mountain	5994	85	South Suicide Peak	5005
6	Bold Peak	7522	46	East Twin Peak	5873	86	Harp Mountain	5001
7	Mount West Kiliak	7450	47	Camp Robber Peak	5855	87	Rubbletop Mountain	4987
8	Mount Beelzebub	7280	48	Cumulus Mountain	5815	88	California Peak	4974
9	Benign Peak	7235	49	Magpie Peak	5812	89	Bird's Eye Peak	4970
10	Mount Soggy	7190	50	Vertigo Peak	5775	90	Tail Feather Peak	4960
11	East Kiliak Peak	7150	51	Grey Jay Peak	5750	91	Ptarmigan Peak	4950
12	Whiteout Peak	7135	52	Bright Peak	5745	92	The Wing	4930
13	Insignificant Peak	7053	53	Yudikench Peak	5732	93	Peak 4744	4744
14	Peril Peak	7040	54	Synthesizer Peak	5638	94	The Beak	4730
15	Korohusk Peak	7030	55	Peak 5538	5538	95	Mount Elliott	4710
16	Organ Mountain	6980	56	Delgga Mountain	5510	96	Homicide Peak	4660
17	Peeking Mountain	6925	57	Bird Peak	5505	97	The Wedge	4660
18	Eagle Peak	6909	58	Concerto Peak	5505	98	Bird Ridge Overlook	4625
19	Peters Peak	6885	59	Peak 5505	5505	99	Peak 4515	4515
20	Boisterous Peak	6865	60	Triangle Peak	5495	100	Flaketop Peak	4510
21	Nantina Point	6850	61	Baneful Peak	5495	101	Wolverine Peak	4491
22	Calliope Mountain	6821	62	Paradise Peak	5477	102	Indianhouse Mountain	4350
23	Bounty Peak	6810	63	West Twin Peak	5472	103	Penguin Peak	4334
24	Raina Peak	6798	64	Mount Significant	5456	104	McHugh Peak	4311
25	Devil's Mistress	6750	65	Salt Peak	5455	105	Mount Magnificent	4272
26	Hut Peak	6695	66	Bleak Peak	5430	106	The Sail	4255
27	Rook Mountain	6685	67	Pepper Peak	5423	107	Gentoo Peak	4196
28	White Lice Mountain	6675	68	Mount Williwaw	5420	108	Mount Gordon Lyon	4135
29	The Mitre	6651	69	Compass Butte	5390	109	Rendezvous Peak	4084
30	Flute Peak	6634	70	Temptation Peak	5384	110	Mount Eklutna	4065
31	Golden Crown	6618	71	Tanaina Peak	5358	111	Esbay Peak	4050
32	Roost Peak	6618	72	Mile High Peak	5331	112	Shaman Dome	4010
33	Polar Bear Peak	6614	73	Peak 5320	5320	113	Peak 4009	4009
34	Thunder Bird Peak	6588	74	Peak 5285	5285	114	Peak 3980	3980
35	Bunting Peak	6585	75	The Ramp	5240	115	Bidarka Peak	3835
36	Pleasant Mountain	6463	76	East Kinglet Peak	5190	116	Adelie Point	3825
37	The Watchman	6410	77	Emerald Peak	5185	117	Chinstrap Peak	3619
38	Pioneer Peak	6398	78	Koktoya Peak	5148	118	Rainbow Peak	3543
39	Cantata Peak	6391	79	Avalanche Mountain	5075	119	Crested Peak	3530
40	Sunlight Mountain	6390	80	North Suicide Peak	5065	120	Bird Ridge Point	3505



*Location map of Chugach State Park peaks.  
Chugach State Park boundary shown in blue.*



*Billy Finley on  
Finch Peak.*



*Above: West Kiliak Peak.  
Below: Eklutna—Whiteout divide. 9/5/20*



*On the ridge  
between  
West Kiliak  
Peak and  
Nantina  
Point.*

*Photos by  
Eric Parsons*



*Scree—October 2020*



*Hiking the  
bench above  
the Eklutna  
Glacier and  
Peril Peak  
after climbing  
Bellicose, July  
2020.*



## Chugach State Park celebrates its 50th birthday

Text and photos by Frank E. Baker



*Winter scenic from Mount Magnificent, Chugach Mountains.*

The coronavirus has awoken thousands of Alaskans to the beauty and wonder of Anchorage's vast, back-yard wilderness – Chugach State Park (CSP). This summer marks the 50th Anniversary of the park's opening. There have been more people tromping its trails than I've ever seen, and I've been a frequent visitor since the early 1960s before the area became a park.

It is truly a wondrous place, especially when you consider it borders Anchorage's largest city of roughly 300,000 people—nearly half of the state's population. With half a million acres, it is the third-largest state park in the United States. It is larger than the state of Rhode Island and comprises some 40 percent of Municipality of Anchorage Land. Annually, it receives about 1.5 million visitors.

Because of its size, the park allows people to easily escape the crush of civilization and find diverse outdoor recreation that includes hiking, biking, skiing, hunting, camping, wildlife viewing, photography, snow machining, packrafting, kayaking, ATV operation, climbing, and much more.

For some, the park has become more than a venue for outdoor activities. It has become a spiritual refuge, or what some have called a "sanctuary for the soul." From northeast to southwest, its glacier-carved valleys are like long fingers of outstretched hands, reaching for the ocean. For more than half a century I've hiked in many of those valleys, climbed their adjacent mountain ridges and



*Eagle River's Scott Sims enjoys the fall colors in Ram Valley.*

peaks. Today, I can't imagine what my life would have been like without this gift of nature.

But as I pass recreationists on the park's far flung trails, I'm not sure if many know how CSP was created 50 years ago, and what an amazing undertaking it was.



*Approach to Triangle Peak, with 6,391-foot Cantata Peak on left and 6,821-foot Calliope Mountain at center in photo.*

In the mid-1960s Anchorage was experiencing a burst of growth and expanding into the mountains above and east of Anchorage. Traditional access roads to the mountains were being blocked by homestead sales. Concern about these threats came to a head with the tentative sale of logging rights to the Bird and Indian valleys, south of Anchorage.

In 1969, a small group of concerned citizens formed the Chugach State Park Ad Hoc Committee. Members of the grassroots organization included Sharon Cissna, Pete Martin, Art Davidson, Mark Ganapole; as well as legislators Lowell Thomas Jr. and Helen Beirne. By early 1970, the group had gained support from the Alaska Legislature, including Chancey Croft, Nick Begich, Joe Josephson and Jay Hammond.

The group proposed that the mountains surrounding Anchorage should be protected for generations to come, and they gained broad support from the community. The committee lobbied the Alaska Legislature for the available 490,866 acres. The proposed park's westernmost boundary would lie in the western foothills of the Chugach Mountain Range and a mere seven miles to the east of downtown Anchorage. The park would be defined by the Knik

Arm on the north, Turnagain Arm on the south, and Upper and Lower Lake George and Chugach National Forest on the east.

"We optimistically drew a large line around the designated area and were really surprised when the Legislature approved it all," recounts Sharon Cissna, who some have called the "mother of CSP."

In 1970, Governor Keith Miller signed the bill creating CSP. It officially opened in August of that year with a dedication at the Upper O'Malley entrance.

To me, the grit and determination of the people who endowed us with this enduring legacy represent the can-do spirit I've witnessed among Alaskans all my life. And today—the people within the Division of State Parks and Outdoor Recreation who operate and maintain the park, as well as the many volunteers who contribute tirelessly without fanfare—exemplify that same spirit.

With a limited budget, the Chugach State Park management and staff have a herculean job, particularly with the current park usage level. That job includes maintaining four campgrounds, out-houses, parking facilities, seven public use cabins and more than 200 miles of trails.

For a brochure of CSP: <http://dnr.alaska.gov/parks/brochures/chugachbrochure91710.pdf>

Because of state budget constraints, volunteerism in the park has grown significantly in recent years. One group, Alaska Trails, has been very active in maintaining trails and building new ones. This summer, Alaska Trails has been working on a reroute of the Little O'Malley Peak Trail to access what is called the "Ball Field." This beautiful alpine area is across the South Fork of Campbell Creek from Flattop. Supporting this and other ongoing trail efforts is the Chugach Park Fund, established three years ago. The fund receives contributions from private and corporate sources.

You can support the Fund's work financially through its portal on the Alaska Community Foundation website. Alaska Trails is also able to use material donations and volunteers. If you have questions or want to discuss the Fund's role in detail, contact [chugachparkfund@gmail.com](mailto:chugachparkfund@gmail.com)

Through newspaper columns and other writings over the years, I've championed the benefits of outdoor recreation, focusing often on CSP. I was once quite covetous of remote areas that became very special to me – areas that were relatively unvisited. But over the years I became less selfish. I learned that the park is so



*Pete Panarese atop 5,001-foot Harp Mountain overlooking South Fork (Eagle River) Valley.*

much distance, I am aware of many within MCA who have gone higher and farther.

It's not only a landscape with seemingly boundless horizons, but a place that expands human horizons; or in the words of poet T.S. Eliot: "Only those who will risk going too far can possibly find out how far they can go."

On its 50th birthday, if CSP were hovering over its special cake and making a wish, I think it would whisper to all of us: "Be proud of me, respect me, learn from me, take good care of me, make me look as good as you can for today's visitors and future generations."

*A lifetime Alaska resident since 1946, Frank E. Baker is an MCA member, former member of the Chugach State Park Citizens Advisory Board and freelance writer who lives in Eagle River with his wife Rebekah, a retired elementary school teacher.*



*Frank E. Baker and daughter Emily in Hanging Valley, Chugach State Park.*

big that it's not that difficult to find and re-find those kind of secret places. Even with Anchorage's large population—double what it was when the park was established—there seems to be room for everyone.

I've summited 7,522-foot Bold Peak overlooking Eklutna Lake eight times and bivouacked twice on its top. I have had experiences in CSP that changed my life. After accumulating more than 250 vertical miles and who knows how



*Eklutna Lake Reflections. Photo: Frank E. Baker on the 5,495-foot summit of Triangle Peak in the Chugach Mountains.*



## An Interview with Cody Townsend

Text by Cody Townsend, Transcribed by Gerrit Verbeek

Edited and condensed for clarity. Part 1 of 2.



Episode One of The Fifty video series. Intro and Messner Couloir. [Watch online!](#)



'Peak Obsession.' Chugach lines from The Fifty. [Watch online!](#)

On May 31st, 2020, Cody Townsend got on the phone with the MCA to discuss his project: becoming the first person to ski all fifty classic ski lines in *50 Classic Ski Descents of North America* (Davenport, Newhard, Burrows, 2010). The catch: Cody will ski each mountain with a human-powered ascent, a significant departure after a career in free-skiing with helicopters and chairlifts. Follow along with Cody's progress at [www.skithefifty.com](http://www.skithefifty.com), or follow his video series at <https://www.youtube.com/user/hucknorris83>.

**How's life treating you these days as another winter season draws to a close?**

"It was a massive bummer but not being able to ski is very small-potatoes in the context of what's really going on with hundreds of thousands of people dying and millions and millions losing their jobs. I will say though, there was one point when I was checking the weather and seeing a massive high pressure sitting on Mt. St. Elias for ten or twelve days straight literally during the time I was supposed to be there (which is right now). And hearing from friends - we were on our way to go to Revelstoke to start shooting up there because I had a lot of lines in Central B.C. I was getting a lot of calls from buddies

in April saying this is the best alpine season they've seen in over a decade.

That moment was just crushing. We could have been so on-point and all our schedules working out with perfect timing and perfect weather. You take this year off, this one year where I could have ticked off eight really challenging lines which might now take three years. It might not be like that ever again. So those things are plaguing your mind. So in the context, whatever, but if it's your dream and it's a thing you're working on and it gets shut down because of something outside of it, yeah, every once in a

while I sit back and think “Damnit, this sucks!”

I will say I am on a little secret adventure right now... In the mountains we learn to navigate through a dangerous environment, and mountains are inherently dangerous. This project is a lot about that navigation and adaptation to it and training for it. We’re trying to take some of those lessons into our everyday life, because I still think it’s not super black-and-white, cut-and-dry. There are a lot of things that you can do, and there’s things that you shouldn’t do. We’re taking what we think is safe and respectable to do and adapting to it. I won’t go into it right now, there will be a movie coming out about it this fall about it but it’s travel and mountain climbing amid the context of global pandemic.”

### **On the Media Aspects of ‘The Fifty’**

“When I set out for this, the goal came first. The dream of trying to ski all these was bubbling up in my head for years before I even thought of the media side of it. The media side of it came up because, well, I’m a professional skier and this is how I make my living. So how would I tell this story? And one of the things I found so fascinating and so interesting about the ski mountaineering game and the human-powered game is everything leading up to the actual ski descent and/or even the climb. I found these trips I would go on where it would be two weeks working on just one line, and as you get to the bigger and bigger lines there are years going into that. That’s what I found super fascinating, and I kind of wanted to share that side of the story. And the best way to share that side of the story is not in movie form, but in episodic form where we can tell... I always say to people that the videos are 90% Not Skiing, it’s everything that goes into it and then a minute and a half of skiing. That’s the process, that’s what’s interesting.”

### **On Early Influences: Shane McConkey and Squaw Valley**

“Shane was my hero, friend, mentor, everything. At his core and in his movies he just looked like he was having more fun than any other person on the planet. And that’s super infectious.

It’s interesting because I grew up in Santa Cruz and I grew up actually surfing. I grew up being a weekend warrior driving up to the mountains because my parents had a little tiny Forest Service cabin. I fell in love with skiing at a really young age but I also surfed.

And the cultures between surfing and skiing couldn’t be farther apart. Surfing, especially in Santa Cruz, the town where I was growing up, is very serious. There’s a lot of localism, a lot of silence. It’s a very alpha, macho sport. You’re not supposed to smile, you’re not supposed to talk to people. You do your thing, you get your wave, it’s a very serious sport and it’s determined by who is the alpha male in the line-up. It’s cold. I love the act of surfing, but as a culture I’m not that into it.

And then there’s Shane. Having more fun, joking around, being

completely irreverent, making fun of himself and everything about skiing, or anything. That’s what I want to be a part of!

I have that same joy in skiing. I just naturally get done at the bottom of a line and I act like an idiot because I’m just so happy that I’m in the mountains. It’s always stuck in my head that ‘Skiing Is Fun.’ At its core there’s not many other reasons to do it, so show that side of it. When it comes to my ski career, I wanted to make sure to always share the fun.

It’s not like it’s mimicry, it definitely comes naturally to me, but I think it was influenced from the culture of growing up in Squaw. And it was a Squaw thing, for sure. I think it bled out to a lot of the freeskiing world, just being irreverent and whacky and goofy, but that’s because Shane was possibly the most influential skier ever, or at least in the past 50 years.”

### **It seems like you’ve hit a lot of distinct phases during your life, and I was wondering how you perceive your hobbies and what happens to them ‘afterwards’?**

“For me, skiing is that central core. I am a skier at its most basic, and I will always be a skier. But there’s off-season and other hobbies to do. What I’ve realized, once you get older and you start to look back and take note of things you’ve done, [is that] I’m a very obsessive person and I’ll find something new and do that thing and learn everything about it and read every book and just dive headfirst into it. I want to know how to do everything and get by on my own and be competent and/or good at that hobby or sport.

Nothing has quite captured me like skiing. I tend to find something else new and then really go down that path of learning and enjoyment and just trying to figure it all out. Lately I don’t fly fish as much, but I can pick up a rod and fish any river in the world and really, really love it. So it’s this skillset that I built, and I have it. Motorcycles: I actually still haven’t shared my final project, but over the past 4 years I rebuilt a 1983 motorcycle into something totally new, and it’s something I’ve gotten heavy into. But would I do it right now? No...

I kind of realize too, with The Fifty, that I try to take that obsession and passion that I have for certain things and learning and diving into a new sport, and refocus it into skiing. Ski mountaineering and human-powered ascents is something that was relatively new to me before I started this project. I kind of took the inspiration that here’s your goal to climb and ski all Fifty, something no one’s ever done before, and put everything in your life that you have into it. Everything else is just a minor diversion. Every day I’m thinking about this project, and thinking about how to get through it safely, enjoy the heck out of it, survive through it, and maybe finish it one day.”



### **What is it about skiing that has caught you?**

"I think, obviously the sensations of flying down a mountain and speed and jumping off stuff and powder. The sensations are amazing. But I think what has captured me about the sport is the unlimited nature of challenging yourself and the variety of ways of doing it. I look at my own ski path and career.

I started learning on the ski teams, then I alpine ski-raced forever and really dove into that until I was about 20 years old, then I got super heavy into freeskiing and was in the park learning tricks, to backcountry lines to big lines... there's so many little things within the sport that you can challenge yourself on, whether it's daily or yearly or lifetime.

I've been a professional skier sponsored for more than 20 years, making a living at it for seventeen years I think now - some crazy thing I never thought was possible. And here I'm diving into The Fifty and it feels like I'm learning skiing and the mountains in a whole new way. Where, after a 15 year professional basketball career there's not much more you can learn. There's one goal, one thing.

Whereas with skiing I feel like this chapter of my life is going to at some point close, and I feel I can say 'Cool, now I'm going to do This Thing of skiing.' It's a lifetime sport. It's captured me."

**At this point in the project do you still feel very much like a freeskiier climbing up mountains, or are you starting to feel more like a ski mountaineer? Ultimately, is there some category you want to be in or skillset you want to have at the end of The Fifty project?**

"I would call myself more of a ski mountaineer now, or a human-powered skier. I still think of my roots in freeskiing, but I just look at the mountains in a different way. How to approach big lines from bottom-to-top, climbing up them and getting down them. I'm not looking at the mountains the way I used to, which is finding a creative line to jump off stuff or trick off stuff and waiting for the perfect powder days. Now it's waiting for the perfect window of safety and conditions that allow for climbing and skiing.

I guess that's how I'd categorize myself now which is really weird, because ten years ago if you had told me a majority of my lines would be all foot-powered, I'd say 'you're an idiot! I would never be a ski mountaineer! I hate that stuff. It's stupid, it's boring!' That's kind of the phase of skiing I was going through. In the end, I think I just want to be labeled as a skier: all the different various forms of it, maybe good at them or excelled at them at some point.

It's this borderline of safety quite often. When you approach mountains from the top down you're on the slope for such a short period of time that you can mitigate your hazards quite easily. As

long as stability is essentially OK you can get down it pretty easily. [Versus] all of a sudden exposing yourself under a face for 5 or 6 hours, trudging through deep snow which elongates your time there to then changing weather conditions. If I'm in a helicopter I'm skiing a line the moment it gets the first hint of sun. That might not be the case where you're ski mountaineering an east-facing slope. The sun is hitting first thing in the morning and that whole thing warms up.

You're trying to find the sweet spot of snow being soft and fun to ski, but climbable and safe. It's actually quite rare when it comes to ski mountaineering and climbing for your lines to find those perfect conditions. And honestly, it just makes it that much sweeter when it does happen. When it does happen, it's something that's truly, truly special."

**For the lines you've completed, what's that ratio of hitting that sweet spot?**

"Because of the speed of the project, we're focusing on safety first. I'm looking for massive high pressures and low avalanche danger. I would say, unfortunately, 'skiing down it but it being terrible' is a little bit exceeding 'skiing down it when it's amazing,' though I will say we've had a few unbelievable times. This year we skied Mt. Shuksan, near Mt. Baker, in really good conditions. We skied Mt. Moran in the Tetons in just about as perfect of conditions as you could ever imagine. And even for Pontoon last year, and Meteorite, those were pretty dang good conditions considering the climbs that you had to get up. So we have some on one side that are about as good as it gets for climbing and skiing, and we have a handful on each, about five on each side. Everything else is in the middle - not amazing but it's not terrible."

**Where does 'Conquering the Useless' fit in this skimo timeline?**

"[It was] my first foray into this world and essentially I spent 10 years filming your typical MSP/TGR ski movies. [Matchstick Productions and Teton Gravity Research] and I had reached what I thought was kind of my pinnacle in that avenue of sport. I was noticing that I was starting to lose the passion, lose the drive, and was only getting up for some of the most dangerous lines and some of the gnarliest stuff. You know, there's the context of a lot of friends that have died doing this sport, the context of being like 'if you're not super passionate about this you're probably gonna hurt yourself or you're just gonna get slowly worse at it. You're gonna be robotic, you're gonna be mailing it in and getting shots for a ski movie but not enjoying it.'

I don't want this job as a professional skier to ever burn me out on skiing. I've seen a lot of people that happened to. I want to make sure I'm always doing this for the right reasons, which is because I want to do it. And so that first year I told Matchstick Productions,

a longtime film company that I was filming with, that I would stop filming with them. Not for any other reason than I just needed a change. I knew there was something else out there.

I was really inspired by my buddy Dave Treadway and this movie he made called 'Let's Go Get Small' where they did this huge 150 mile snowmobile ride in to a remote mountain range and then hiked and climbed all these rad peaks in central B.C., north of Pemberton by a couple hundred miles. I thought it was so amazing, and thought I wanted to do something like that.

So I enlisted Dave and Chris Rubens. That was the first time I really climbed anything steep, did exploration, didn't have guides there. That first year in general, 2015, when I made that movie was the first year I went to Svalbard, where I actually met Bjarne [Salén, cinematographer for *The Fifty*], first time I winter camped, first time I put on crampons, first time I put an ice axe in my hand, all of the above. So 2015 was this real testing to see if this was my future. Testing to see if it was something I liked. And I did like it. It kind of bit me. [*The Fifty*] came directly out of that project.

My favorite mountains in the world stretch from my home in California, the Sierras, all the way up the west coast to Alaska. It's not one continuous mountain range, but it almost kind of is, and if I had to spend the rest of my life skiing nothing else than those mountains I'd be perfectly happy."

## On Current Progress and Philosophy

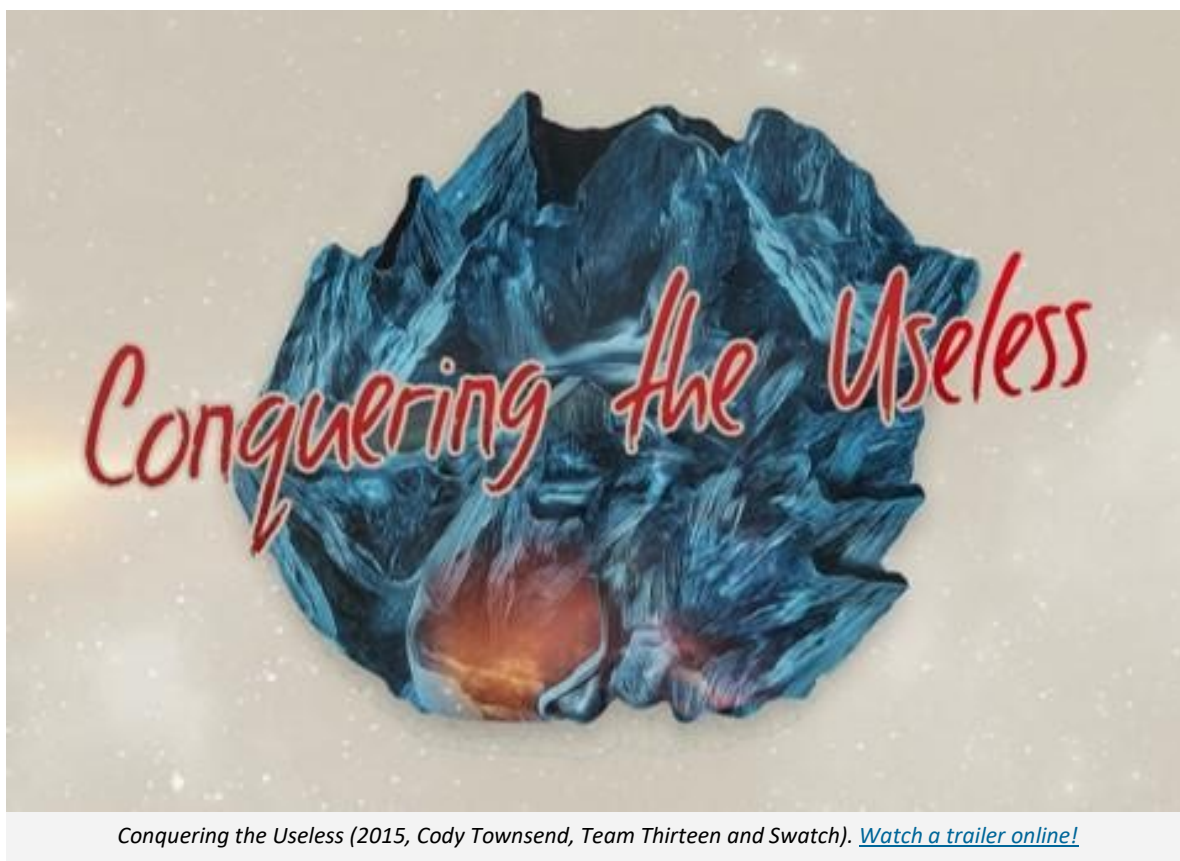
*(27 of 50 Classic Descents completed as of May 2020, including 3 out of 6 Alaskan lines: Denali's Messner Couloir, Meteorite Mountain and Pontoon Peak)*

"We have to come back for Sphinx. Even though we skied the face, to me it wasn't the true line which is right from the tippy top of the diamond of the Sphinx. We were about 200 feet below that. In my book, it doesn't really count. So I've got Sphinx and University and Mt. St Elias, two really big cruxes left.

When it comes to approaches, I'm definitely more 'use whatever means necessary.' I'm not a guy who promotes very strict ethical borderlines of this counts, this doesn't count. I always say 'well, it's way cooler if you do it by human power'. So we're mainly trying to do human power, but Pontoon is a 45 mile walk-in, so we flew in!

Meteorite and Pontoon and Sphinx are classic heli lines. I actually spoke with Chris Davenport before we went up there and he's like 'Dude, you don't have to climb them, they were meant to be heli lines!'

I want to climb them! That's the cool way I want to do it. I could go hit those in a morning out of a heli; I did that for a long enough time. I want to climb!"



*Conquering the Useless* (2015, Cody Townsend, Team Thirteen and Swatch). [Watch a trailer online!](#)



## Be Prepared: 8 Days At The Mint

Text and photos by Dawson Stamberg (Life Scout) and Michael Warren (Troop 144 Mentor)



*The “Bomber Boys” and their guides.*

*From left to right: Nolan Warren, Dr. Greg Bragiel, Creed Cvancara, Paul Cvancara, Dawson Stamberg, Mr. Bill Posanka, Ms. Martha Christensen, Mr. Michael Warren, Simon Nelson.*

*Photo by Britt Jacobs*

Hello all Scree readers! Under the direct supervision and instruction of MCA members Dr. Greg Bragiel and Mr. Bill Posanka, five scouts and two leaders from Troop 144 (ChangePoint, Anchorage) made their way to the Mint Hut in mid-July for a nine-day expeditionary learning experience. We ended up being there eight days, and this trip proved to be an excellent practicum in emergency preparedness, climbing, backpacking, and achieving measurable goals, all anchored in the Scouting ethos.

In preparation, participants completed training hikes, modules in climbing, backpacking, food prep, and contingency planning, and engaging with an “inbox full” of planning documents that had to be attended to and read before exploring the backcountry. When July 17th finally came, we were ready! As predicted and forecasted, our team experienced all four seasons of weather (sometimes daily), but our packing lists proved perfect, as we utilized every single piece of gear we carried in our packs.

We were able to put our trip contingency planning into immediate action upon arrival at the Mint Hut. Just a week before, to stretch out our legs, we decided to “hike in our metal” on an

overnight 20-mile round trip to the Mint, stashing crampons, ice axes, and climbing gear in a nearby cave. Upon retrieval, eager to gather up the hidden gear, Creed, one of our scouts, slipped and fell onto the bag containing the ice axes and impaled his armpit. Imagine the heartbreak and disappointment for a young man waiting weeks for this learning experience when he learned he would be immediately medevacked out for stitches (more on Creed to come...).

Day 2 was a full day of new experiences. Dr. Bragiel taught us how to



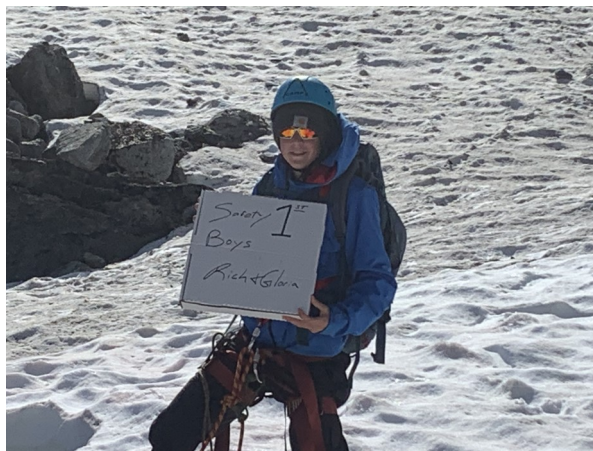
*Practicing self-arrest with ice axes*  
*Photo by Michael Warren*



travel on snowy inclines, to safely use an ice axe for self-arrest, and to expertly arrange anchoring systems for crevasse rescue. After a full day on the snow fields, we began our daily “Spiritual Module,” reading Letters from a Skeptic (Boyd), sharing perspectives on spirituality and personal relationships with God.

On day 3, we welcomed instructors and MCA members Mr. Richard Rasch and Mrs. Gloria Rasch who taught us how to ice climb. It was a good day hike to the Mint Glacier, passing beautiful mountain lakes on the way. True to the unpredictability of backcountry weather, we ended our ice climbing soaking wet and trembling with cold. Throughout our trip, Mr. Posanka took every “good weather” opportunity to teach us our navigation lessons with good old map and compass. However, foul weather days were also chances to practice dead reckoning, calculating distances traveled by paces, and finding our way around boulders in the fog. This was also our “service day” to complete much needed maintenance on the toilets, hut, and surrounding area. A special thank you to everyone who crossed our path and were willing to pack out trash that accumulated at the Mint.

On day 4, the fog rolled in with Backdoor Gap completely obscured from view. The plan all along was to complete the entire traverse over the nine days, but daily decisions were made to modify our plan due to changing weather patterns and wise decision making. Satellite phone calls and our flexible “visiting instructors” continually made it possible for us to achieve our learning goals on this trip without compromising safety – and fun! Mint Hut was to become our base camp for the entire trip. And, “Are we going to get over Backdoor Gap today?” became the new “are we there yet?” mantra of our group. The Mint Hut also became our classroom on day 4 with in-depth discussions, hands-on practice, and comprehensive lessons on wilderness safety by our competent and winsome scout leader Martha Christensen, RN. To our surprise, while resting that evening at the Hut, there was a knock at the door. Creed returned! This time instead of helicopter transport, his dedicated and athletic parents hiked the round trip 20-miles so he could join back up with the group.



*Our surprise pizza lunch from Rich and Gloria.*

*Photo by Michael Warren*

The sun returned for long enough on day 5 to practice crevasse rescue on a snow field near the hut. At about lunch time a circling red helicopter got our attention. We didn’t call for a helicopter this time. Our new friend and guide Mr. Rasch returned to check in on us with hand delivered pizzas, king-sized Twix bars, and a weather report. He and Gloria appropriately wrote on the top of the pizza boxes, “Safety First Boys.” It was at this point that we came to terms with the global decision that we would not

complete the traverse, instead declaring the Mint as “home” and inviting our instructors to come to us. We were so grateful for the flexibility, creativity, and kindness extended to us to modify our trip plans along the way.

Backdoor Gap was in clear view from the breakfast table on day 6 from the window of the Mint, so we decided to get as close to the Bomber wreckage as safely as possible. Over the gap we went and across the Pennyroyal Glacier we scrambled for at least a clear view of the Bomber. After pictures and a welcome break, we headed back to the Mint, satisfied that we could at least see from afar the milestone view we all anticipated.



*On our way to Mint Glacier for a day of ice climbing.*

*Photo by Michael Warren*

On day 7 we welcomed MCA member Mr. Cory Hinds, who expertly roped-up three diverse level 5+ climbs, belays, and rappels giving us experience with differing climbing skills and techniques. His instruction and encouragement made it possible for all scouts to complete the requirements for the elusive and hard to achieve Climbing Merit Badge.

Heavy rain returned again on day 8, “final exam” day. After demon-

strating our learning in anchoring systems for crevasse rescue in the cold rain and 8 full-days of backcountry living, we were worn-out mentally and physically. Just shortly after returning to the Mint hut once again, a group of 17 hikers arrived, mildly hypothermic and with limited gear and preparedness. The Scout Motto, “Be Prepared,” flew into action. Our group quickly moved to prepare warm drinks and dry sleeping bags, assisting these weary and wet hikers to get settled and organized. Because the Mint Hut wasn’t built for 25, we decided to hike out and yield the space.



We returned to our vehicles at 11 p.m. for our ride to Taco Bell in Palmer. We're not sure if their drive through ever received an order for 54 soft tacos before. At 1 a.m. all participants were safe at home with hearts full of memories. This trip was amazing.

On behalf of Troop 144, I would like to thank MCA for allowing us to use the Mint Hut. We were glad to complete the needed maintenance and cleaning, as community service is a significant part of our mission and goals. This trip would not have been possible without the excellent teaching and coaching from our guides. In addition to the leaders mentioned in this narrative, we would also like to thank Mrs. Mary Beth Bragiel for helping with all of the in-town communication responsibilities, and the LifeMed pilots and medics who helped transport one of our

scouts safely. We're so grateful for each of our parents and family for driving us to meetings, helping us obtain all of our gear, and encouraging us while we were getting ready for this trip. Mr. Posanka, Mrs. Christensen, and Mr. Warren all deserve a big thank you for teaching us and supervising on the trip. Thank you to Mr. and Mrs. Cvancara (Creed's mom and dad) for hiking Creed back in to join us, for the much needed candy bars, and another trash haul-out. We're thankful to God for keeping us safe, for helping us build relationships, and for watching over us out there as we made memories of a lifetime. Our biggest heartfelt thanks goes to Dr. Greg Bragiel for putting up with us for eight days and for meticulously guiding us on how to safely engage the backcountry. The biggest take-away for all of us... Be Prepared!



*Climbing near the Mint Hut.*  
*Photo by Michael Warren*



*Sorting our gear at the Goldmint trailhead.*  
*Michael Warren*



*Saying our "temporary farewell" to Creed.*  
*Photo by Michael Warren*



61.857, -149.080



## Peak 6069, Talkeetna Mountains

Text and photos by Gerrit Verbeek



On Labor Day weekend, Sophie Tidler, Chelsea Grimstad, and I set out with two canine companions to reconnoiter an unfamiliar area for all of us: the Kings River and Chickaloon River valleys. Our route began at the Permanente Trailhead, traveled up the Kings River Valley, crossed over Peak 6069 near the headwaters of its easternmost branch, and headed down the Chickaloon River Valley back to the highway. The choice to start at Kings River was, speaking frankly, driven primarily by a reputation of vandalism around Chickaloon trailheads.

Kings River, Castle Mountain, and the entire Matanuska River Valley is primarily the realm of the motorized or traditionalists on horseback. Our foot-powered fellowship set off from the only car at the Permanente lot without a trailer and headed up the gravel-or-mud roadbed, occasionally stepping around puddles and abandoned car bumpers or standing aside for some winch-and-snorkel Jeeps. But there was never much traffic or trash, and every interaction was courteous: polite waves and nods from the mounted nobility when we made way for them, and careful driving to not fling mud. Chivalry is not dead.

Nonetheless we ditched the human trail at the first set of forks, where Kings River splits around a peak known only by its Ahtna Athabaskan name (Stael Dghilaaye', meaning 'Wide Mountain'). At that point the ATV trail forded the river in swift, clear, thigh-deep water and continues up the eastern fork on the north bank. Since we intended to stay on the southeastern shore to eventually cross over to the Chickaloon River Valley, we chose to make our own way from there. Faith in nature mostly paid off, although we hit a few bogs and dense thickets. A theme for the weekend was constantly encountering game trails to

rival anything a human could make. The moose and sheep run their own DOT up there!

We stopped pretty far up the valley that evening, stripped out of soaked shoes and stretched painfully wrinkled toes, and enjoyed cold beers which Sophie had thoughtfully carried in as a surprise. Just as we were congratulating ourselves on forging our way deep into a river valley to sights unseen by most humans... an ATV pattered past with another offroad vehicle close behind, eliciting confused barks from the dogs. We watched as they turned up the creek, drove just out of view, and began to set up one of those Coleman tent palaces weighing over ten pounds. Different strokes for different folks, but there was plenty of backcountry to go around and neither party disturbed the other.

The next day we realized we had stopped about 80 yards above the ATV trail, which finally emerges from the valley bottom to end at the same creek we chose to camp. We continued up valley, crossed a beautiful waterfall and started up the west ridge of Peak 6069. The terrain was easy and we were treated to interesting conglomerated rocks, a picturesque spire, and wonderful views. The summit had no signs of a human visit but, given its ease of access and location, we have no illusions of being the first. The views all around were spectacular: cliffy, forested mesas above the Chickaloon, glaciers and bare granite above the Kings River. Tyrant's Tor beckoned from the head of the valley (first recorded ascent and named by Tim Kelley and Bill Spencer, see Scree 11/94).

From there we opted to drop to the Chickaloon River directly, heading

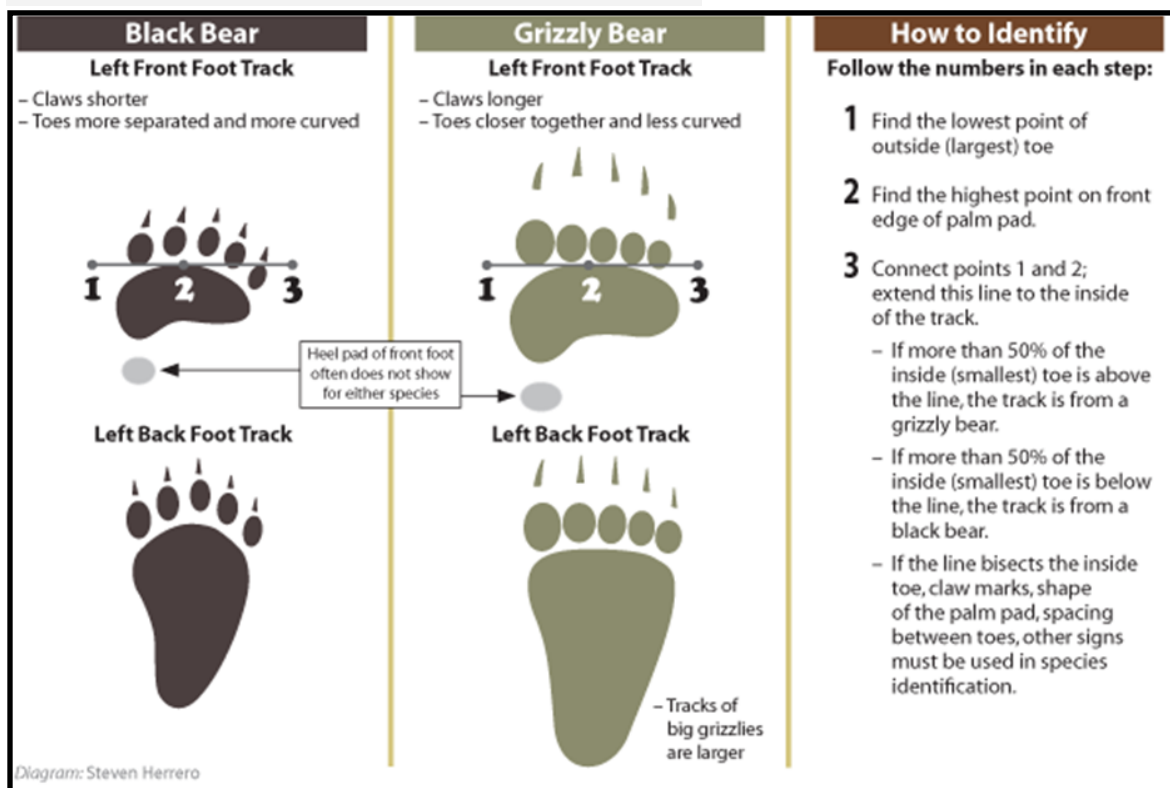


down the face and valley to the east of the summit. There was some tricky navigation around some waterfalls, counterbalanced by finding an absolutely textbook sheep trail traversing a steep hillside covered in blueberries. Getting down to the valley was fairly straightforward, although once there finding a faint human trail among dozens of moose trails was a challenge. Strangely enough, although we saw fresh scat of all varieties, trees lathed by beaver teeth, and other signs of life, we did not see any actual animals. Perhaps it was their Labor Day too.

That evening we walked past a rustic horse camp and set up tents on a gravel bar at a riverbend where driftwood had thoughtfully piled up and dried itself out for our pyro pleasure. The next morning brought an easy exit, except for one little section where the old human trail around where Eightmile Cabin once stood. It appears that the trail was rerouted at some point, but sections of the old trail are still convincing enough to lead you astray. We spent some time thrashing around and eventually emerged at an unmistakable ATV trail. That led back to pavement in the outer neighborhoods of Chickaloon, which are decorated with more 'Private Property: Keep Out' signs than would be in stock at an average hardware store. Back at the highway, an easy hitch-hike back to the Permanente Trailhead finished the loop (with gratitude to some thru-hiker nurses at Alaska Regional for the lift).



PS: We spotted some recent bear tracks near Chickaloon. At the time we tried to recall how to tell brown and black bear tracks apart and could not remember, so here's a refresher for us all:



Source: Steven Herrero / [WesternWildlife.org](http://WesternWildlife.org)



61.957, -148.378

## The 'Teacher Gene'

Text and photos by Greg Bragiel



*Nolan Warren, Cory Hinds, Creed Cvancara, Simon Nelson near Mint Hut- July 2020.*



*Samantha, Gloria Rasch, Richard Rasch near Mint Hut- July 2020.*

The Human Genome Project has estimated 100,000 human genes. Some of us have extra, specialized genes and I call one of them the 'teacher gene'. During many years of involvement with the Alaska Mountain Rescue Group (AMRG), American Heritage Girls (AHG), Boy Scouts of America (BSA), Mountaineering Club of Alaska (MCA), Trail Life Scouts and other groups, I have worked with numerous mentors and instructors. One of my greatest mountaineering mentors is The Goat, Tom Choate. Tom led trips for the Boy Scouts for many years, instructing young men in basic mountaineering skills. I first met Tom when he led an MCA Bomber Traverse trip and then became involved in helping Tom instruct Scouts in 2003 to fulfill a requirement for Wood Badge (Adult Scouting leadership training). It was fantastic! After assisting for a few years I had the opportunity to lead Mountaineering Instructional trips. It has been a joy for me to introduce people to the mountains and, potentially, start others on great mountaineering adventures. Team members typically finish trips excited and enthused to become mountain climbers and '...climb everything...' At the end of one trip I overheard two Scouts conversing "... let's climb Everest..." My reply "...Wow that's ambitious son, but don't you think you should get some more practice in the Chugach, then maybe the Cascades and Denali?"

Many trips have allowed me the joy of instructing MCA adults; such as the MCA Winter Mountaineering School February 21-29, 2020.

The Scouts Summer Mountaineering Trip July 17-24, 2020 with Scout Troop 144 was a success instructing basic mountain skills,

and the group had an opportunity to see how unprepared others can be (lessons learned).

These recent trips have allowed me to reflect on the many individuals that have helped over the years. I've had the pleasure of serving/instructing with many members of the MCA, AMRG, Scouters and other friends, including (see table on next page).

It is likely I have missed a few names (regrets). Many of these teachers have helped instruct numerous times. I am honored and humbled that each of them took the time to work with me. I thank and honor all for their dedication to help others while sharing their time, talents and energy. All have the 'teacher' gene. To them I say "It has been a tremendous pleasure serving with you and I look forward to working with you in the future. Consider the thousands of individuals you have taught, interacted with and helped. Amazing!!"

My lessons learned over the years: Train with a mentor that has a skill level slightly above yours. Individuals that teach and lead trips take significant time, training and energy to organize and conduct trainings and trips. Leaders- Screen your trip members carefully: Not everyone that applies belongs on your training or trip. There may be significant risk in the activity we teach or lead. Be prepared!! When things look bad or danger appears eminent, turn around NOW; retreat or go home to try again on another day. Do not take unnecessary risks. For serious, life threatening, limb or eyesight medical emergencies call The State Troopers. For less serious medical, non-ambulatory evacuations contact the least costly resource. Avoid disappointments, aggravation and poor behavior; set expectations at the start of a training or trip. Be



friends at the completion of an event; allow the relationships and friendships to flourish.

Why be teacher/ instructor/trip leader? Consider the help you received when you began learning. Give back of your time and talent. Teach others. Help others avoid problems, mistakes, injuries or worse. Speed your learning; if you can instruct a topic you likely have good knowledge of it. Honor God, each other and the terrain you traverse in your outdoor pursuits. Pay it forward.

Closing thoughts and important information for students: Listen to your leader, mentor, trainer, partner. Do not ignore or take

advice lightly. Bring the recommended gear. Do not exaggerate or embellish your outdoor experience. Be honest with yourself and your leader. Talk to your leader/ ask questions/ be transparent in your communications i.e. health, physical condition, medication, attitude. Communicate when things START to go bad; do not hesitate. Instructors, trip leaders are there to help.

Do you have the 'teacher gene'? What will you do with it?

Walk worthy and teach others,

Greg Bragiel

Corey Aist	Brian Ajo	Carol Akerson	Frank Amodemo
Jim Amundsen	Andrea Andraschko	Robert Armstrong	Sally Balchin
Richard Baranow	Carl Battreall	Matt Beckage	Melissa Becker
Scott Bohne	Mike Boese	Brian Brettschneider	Marco Carter
Susan Casey	Bill Casler	Brian Cherry	Tom Choate
Ben Clayton	Curtiss Clifton	Pam Clifton	Sean Clifton
Katherine Cooper	Terry Cosgriff	Tom Crockett	Andrew Cutting
Morgan Diemer	John Diffenderfer	Kevin Downie	Doug Drury
Edmund Eilbacher	Dr. Herman Ellemberger	Scott Erikson	George Ferry
Mike Foster	Galen Flint	Liz Fuller	Calvin Frey
Scott Geuss	Brian Goodman	Mike Goodwin	Amanda Goss
Matt Green	Stu Grenier	Dick Griffith	Kevin Griswold
Forrest Hannan	Bill Haines	John Hauth	Tom Harrison
Kurt Hensel	Matt Hill	Cory Hinds	Elena Hinds
Peter Hinds	Lila Hobbs	Eric Holloway	Randy Howell
Dave Hutchings	George Hyde	Meg Inokuma	Bev Kirk
Dona Klecka	Dean Knapp	Ray Kolesar	Jon Konkler
Dave Kranich	Joe Kurtak	Trish Kurtak	Bill Laxson
Jeremy Lilly	Fr. Tom Lilly	Anthony Lutes	Laura Mack
Jayme Mack	Amy Maclean	Mark Miraglia	Frank Marley
Colleen Metzger	Mark Mobley	Jeff Montague	Mike Morganson
Mike Moxness	Ranger Amy O'Connor	Stan Olsen	Steve Parry
Sam Pepper	Jessica Pooler	Bill Posanka	Jose Ramos-Leon
Gloria Rasch	Richard Rasch	Dr Andy Rembert	Greg Rothwell
Bill Romberg	Ranger Stan Rymen	Dr Mike Sage	Denise Saigh
Ashley Saupe	Ben Schiller	Hans Schlegel	John Scott
Greg Schmidt	Ken Schoolcraft	Gordon Scott	Joe Seidel
Jack Seymour	Sarah Shimer	Eugene Singer	Tom Smayda
Blaine Smith	James Szender	Alex Tatum	Travis Taylor
Jacob Thompson	Wayne Todd	Chris Tomsen	Ray Untiet
Dorn Van Dommelen	Whitney Vogel	Allyson Youngblood	Sherry Wall
Gordon Ward	Carrie Wang	Ace Worley	Chris Wrobel

And the legendary Roman Dial

# Peak of the Month: Peak 3940, Kenai Mountains

Text by Steve Gruhn

**Mountain Range:** Kenai Mountains

**Borough:** Kenai Peninsula Borough

**Drainages:** Dike Creek and Trout Lake

**Latitude/Longitude:** 60° 32' 54" North, 149° 55' 53" West

**Elevation:** 3940 feet

**Adjacent Peaks:** Peak 3850 in the Dike Creek and Thurman Creek drainages and Peak 3835 in the Dike Creek and Juneau Creek drainages

**Distinctness:** 680 feet from Peak 3850

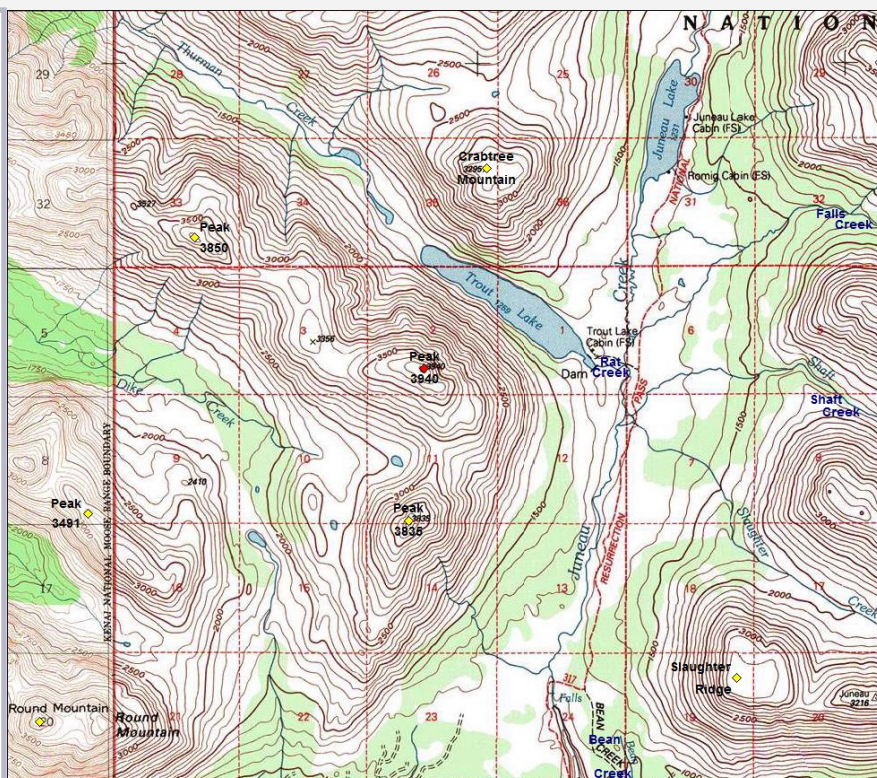
**Prominence:** 2650 feet from Peak 4373 in the Thurman Creek drainage

**USGS Maps:** 1:63,360: Seward C-8; 1:25,000: Seward C-8 SW

**First Recorded Ascent:** February 1, 2014, by Steve Gruhn and Ben Still

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

**Access Point:** Resurrection Pass South Trailhead



Peak 3940 is the 35th-most prominent peak in the Kenai Mountains. The 1996 Seward C-8, AK, USGS map depicted a summit elevation of 3940 feet, but the 2017 Seward C-8 SW USGS map indicated the summit was between 3880 and 3920 feet. Because the newer maps have several errors, I use the summit elevation data from the older map and call this summit Peak 3940.

On February 1, 2014, Ben Still and I departed from the southern Resurrection Pass South Trailhead off the Sterling Highway. Instead of hiking north up the Resurrection Trail, though, we walked west about 100 feet to an unmarked gated road on the north side of the Sterling Highway. The road had been labeled as Juneau Creek Road on some maps and called West Juneau Road on a U.S. Forest Service website, but there were no road signs identifying it. We headed northward up the road for a little over a mile until we reached a side road at an elevation of about 950 feet. The side road quickly petered out into a game (or trapper) trail through the alders, so we tried connecting

clearings to reach the south ridge of Peak 3835. That worked well, but we were unable to avoid a couple 100-yard patches of alders. Once we attained the south ridge of Peak 3835 at about 1500 feet, we were able to quickly navigate through alders and spruce until we reached open country at about 2400 feet. We reached the summit of Peak 3835 and descended the north ridge to the 2910-foot saddle.

From the saddle we hiked up the south ridge of Peak 3940 to the summit. We descended the south ridge to the saddle and hiked most of the way up Peak 3835's north ridge. At about 3500 feet we began traversing across the east face of Peak 3835 and once we were on the southeast aspect, we dropped into a gully and descended to the valley floor, where we connected frozen swamps to return to the road network. The trip took about nine hours. We had carried snowshoes for travel above

timberline; we didn't need them. The region west of Cooper Landing and north of the Kenai River lies in a precipitation shadow and tends to be significantly drier than areas to the east and can



*East aspect of Peak 3940 (right) and northeast aspect of Peak 3835 from the intersection of the Trout Lake Trail and the Resurrection Trail  
Photo by Dave Hart*



often serve as a low-snow destination in the shoulder seasons.

Mat Brunton climbed Peak 3835 and ascended Peak 3940 on October 27, 2017.

On November 30, 2019, Martin Bril and Dan Glatz climbed Peak 3940.

Dave Hart climbed Peak 3835 and ascended Peak 3940 on May 10, 2020.

All four known ascents were via the south ridge. I don't know of a fifth ascent of Peak 3940.

Information for this column came from Still's trip report titled "Peak 3940 and Peak 3835 near Cooper Landing," which appeared in the March 2014 *Scree*; from [peakbagger.com](http://peakbagger.com); and from my correspondence with Brunton, Glatz, Hart, and Still.



*North aspect of Peak 3940 from the summit of Crabtree Mountain.*

*Photo by Dave Hart*



*Southwest aspects of Peak 3940 (left) and Peak 3835 from the summit of Round Mountain. Washington Peak (4810 feet) is on the skyline to the right of Peak 3835.*

*Photo by Ben Still*



*South aspect of Peak 3940 from the summit of Peak 3835.*

*Photo by Dave Hart*



*South aspect of Peak 3940 from the saddle between it and Peak 3835.*

*Photo by Ben Still*



*Steve Gruhn on the summit of Peak 3835 with the south aspect of Peak 3940 in the center background.*

*Photo by Ben Still*

# Board of Directors Meeting Minutes

August 26, 2020, at 6:00-8:00 p.m., conducted online via Zoom

## Roll Call

Mike Meyers (President) - Present  
Gerrit Verbeek (Vice-President) - Present  
Curtis Townsend (Secretary) - Present  
Katherine Cooper (Treasurer) - Present  
Tom Meacham (Director) - Present  
Jonathan Rupp Strong (Director) - Present  
Lila Hobbs (Director) - Present  
Andy Kubic (Director) - Present  
Heather Johnson (Director) - Present  
Nathan Pooler (Director) - Present  
Visitors: Jayme Mack, David Staheli, Greg Bragiel, Brad Nelson  
**Scribe:** Curtis Townsend

## Committee Reports

### President (Mike Myers)

- Jayme Mack confirmed that Icefest is cancelled, discussed some access issues in Hatcher Pass
- Calendar payment not yet received from REI. Curtis to look into this.
- MCA stickers are almost gone
- Mike discussed staggering the board and director positions.

### Vice President (Gerrit Verbeek)

- Sept 2nd online speaker, Nate Menninger via Zoom.

### Secretary (Curtis Townsend)

- BP energy center has been reserved through August 2021, general and board meetings. No general meetings during the summer. BP Energy Center is currently closed through September 30, 2020 due to COVID
- A Zoom Pro account has been purchased at \$149.90/year/license. Curtis volunteered to manage the Zoom login information for the club.

### Treasurer (Katherine Cooper)

- Create a MCA volunteer thank you fund for 2020.

### Liability Committee (Tom Meacham)

- Amended by-laws require officer signatures.

Awards Committee (Tom Meacham, Charlie Sink, Max Neale)  
Steve Gruhn has been informed about Honorary membership. Presentation to be when meetings are held again (COVID)

### Trips Committee

- Nathan & Tom created a COVID waiver that gets signed before trips (as well as MCA waiver)

### Training Committee

- Recording a trip leader training event to use for future training is in the best interest of the club.

Huts Committee (Jonathan Rupp Strong, Greg Bragiel, Cory Hinds, Vicky Lytle)

- \$500 donation received for the Bomber Hut. Thank you!
- John, Greg, Dave and Brad led a discussion about replacing the windows at Bomber Hut. Immediate needs are to make sure the huts are weathertight for the winter.
- Lila will review information and add some language to the huts pages .

### Mentorship (Lila Hobbs, Katherine Cooper)

- Mentorship matches are on hold, need someone to take this on.

### Communications Committee (Lila Hobbs)

- Who will provide list of volunteers to recognize in Scree? Would this be a monthly volunteer spotlight?
- Stan Olsen and Sally Balchin deserve recognition for all their huts work.

Calendar Committee (Vicky Ho, Lila Hobbs, Heather Johnson, Mike Meyers)

- Calendar contest closing in a few days.

## Date and Location of next Meeting

- General Meeting – cancelled until September unless we stream the meeting.
- Next Board Meeting on September 30, 2020 from 6:00-8:00 pm via Zoom??





*Denali taken from Bald Mountain in Talkeetna.  
Photo by Dawn Munroe*



*Bald Mountain in Talkeetna Mountains.  
Photo by Dawn Munroe*

## Mountaineering Club of Alaska

President Mike Meyers [president@mtnclubak.org](mailto:president@mtnclubak.org)  
Vice-President Gerrit Verbeek 903-513-4286  
Secretary Curtis Townsend 355-9820  
Treasurer Katherine Cooper 209-253-8489

Director 1 (term expires in 2020) Jonathan Rupp Strong 202-6484  
Director 2 (term expires in 2020) Lila Hobbs 229-3754  
Director 3 (term expires in 2021) Tom Meacham 346-1077  
Director 4 (term expires in 2021) Heather Johnson [hjohnson@mdausa.org](mailto:hjohnson@mdausa.org)  
Director 5 (term expires in 2021) Andy Kubic [andy.kubic@gmail.com](mailto:andy.kubic@gmail.com)  
Director 6 (term expires in 2021) Nathan Pooler [Nathan.lee.pooler@gmail.com](mailto:Nathan.lee.pooler@gmail.com)

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). Material 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 — [membership@mtnclubak.org](mailto:membership@mtnclubak.org)

Hiking and Climbing Committee: Vacant — [training@mtnclubak.org](mailto:training@mtnclubak.org)

Mentorship: Katherine Cooper and Lila Hobbs — [mentorship@mtnclubak.org](mailto:mentorship@mtnclubak.org)

Huts: Greg Bragiel — 350-5146 or [huts@mtnclubak.org](mailto:huts@mtnclubak.org)

Calendar: Vicky Ho — 512-470-8640 or [hovcky@gmail.com](mailto:hovcky@gmail.com)

Librarian: Gwen Higgins — [library@mtnclubak.org](mailto:library@mtnclubak.org)

*Scree* Editor: Gerrit Verbeek — [MCAScree@gmail.com](mailto:MCAScree@gmail.com) assisted by Dawn Munroe (350-5121 or [dawn.talbott@yahoo.com](mailto:dawn.talbott@yahoo.com))

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

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

*Frank E. Baker with old-school wooden snow shoes on Eagle Lake.*

*Photo by Frank E. Baker*

Mountaineering Club of Alaska  
Box 243561  
Anchorage, AK 99524-3561