



JUNE MEETING

Wednesday

June 16, 7:30 pm

Pioneer Schoolhouse, 3rd & Eagle Streets
Downtown Anchorage

Slide Show: *Kenai Backcountry and Huts*
by John Wolfe, Jr.

July: MCA Picnic.

HIKING AND CLIMBING SCHEDULE

Jun 18-20 Solstice Backpacking Trip on Kenai
Class B. Annual backpacking trip in the Kenai mountains. The location hasn't been decided since there is still a lot of snow! We leave Friday evening, backpack in, climb a peak on Saturday, and hike out Sunday. Details at the next meeting. Trip Leaders: Matt Nedom 278-3648, Tom Choate 333-5309.

Jul 10 Tikishla Peak
Western Chugach. One of the Front Range 5,000-footers. Start from Stuckagain Heights. Class D. 5150 feet.
Leader: Dennis Morford 522-1179 h, 269-0639 w

Jul 24 - Aug 7 Jago River, Arctic National Wildlife
Refuge

Backpacking and nontechnical climbing trip to explore the Jago River drainage and surrounding mountain peaks (7000-8000 feet). Fly in trip by charter out of Fairbanks, Alaska. Costs \$750 per person. Trip will include about 30 to 40 miles of backpacking (Class B-C) over the two week trip with several camps along the river with 2 to 3 days of day hikes at each camp. We will return to the same airstrip that we will be flown into.

Leader: Don Hansen, 243-7184

TRIP REPORTS

Mt. Killiak South Face

by Dave Hart



Memorial Day 1999 was sunny, sunny, and sunny. Our ambitious goal for Monday May 31 was a day climb up one of the twenty-one 7000-foot peaks in the Chugach State Park. Mt. Killiak is located six miles up valley from the Eagle River Nature Center, and towers above Icicle Glacier. Our seven MCA climbers included Kathy Still, Jim Sprott, Josh Sonkiss, Mark Miraglia, Todd Steele, Niles Wood and myself. In addition, we had three members who accompanied us up to the Icicle Glacier - Per Pedersen, David Peters and Brian Feltier.

After a 5:00AM rendezvous at Carrs, we started hiking from the Nature Center (elevation 500) at 6:00AM. Unfortunately, Todd realized he had left his boots back in Anchorage, so we agreed to meet him at the Heritage Falls campsite 5.3 miles up the trail as soon as he could get there. Amazingly, Todd was only 20 minutes behind us in reaching the campsite after driving all the way home for his boots, then jogging with his backpack in an effort to catch us. We left the Eagle River/Crow Pass trail at this campsite and headed northeast up through the burn. Minimal bushwhacking and a lone bear sitting found us on an elusive hunters' trail which affords access into the Icicle drainage, at least early in the summer before the brush arrives in full force. By 11:00AM we were in the Icicle basin at 2500 enjoying a snack at a trashed out hunters' camp below the Big Boulder. Those of us with running shoes switched into our climbing boots, then started up the 1000-foot scree slope due south of the peak at 3000. This scree slope allows access into the impressive basin located at 5000 below the standard south face couloirs. It is not recommended to continue on to the saddle between Killiak and Peters Peak (7100) for an ascent of Killiak. From the basin we chose to follow the prominent central couloir up the south face which took us all the way to the southwest ridge crest at 7200. We could now peer northwest down into the Killiak Glacier drainage several thousand feet below. The couloir was 40-45 degrees with one 40-foot ice step around 6000. It was nice to have seven of us to share trail breaking (wallowing) duty. From the ridge crest, we turned right and scrambled the final 250 feet to the summit, passing one rappel station along the way.

At 4:45PM all seven of us were enjoying the view from the cloudless and windless summit. It had taken us just under 11 hours to reach the summit. What a view - we could even see downtown Anchorage in the distance, over thirty miles away. During the summit photos, Niles dropped his camera case and we all helplessly watched as it fall off the east face, likely not to stop for at least a couple thousand feet.

At 5:15PM, our thirty minutes on the summit had ended. We made one 100-foot rappel off the summit ridge into the central couloir, then one more 50-foot rappel over the ice step. By 8:00PM we reached the trashed hunters' camp and two hours later intersected the Eagle River/Crow Pass trail. As described in the trip description, whining was not allowed - the penalty being Josh's can of whoop-ass, which he kept threatening to open on all of us. The final five miles to the trailhead was a surprisingly peaceful and enjoyable end our long day. We cheerfully straggled into the Nature center parking lot at 11:30PM, after a 17-1/2 hour absence.

Treasure Hunting in the Chugach

by Josh Sonkiss



Most people like shiny things, and I am no exception. On the northern border of the Chugach, the four-thousand foot central couloir splitting the north face of Amulet Peak shines like a diamond in its setting of stone, as stunning and beautiful as any treasure the range has to offer. I drove past the icy jewel for years, and each time it called out to be climbed. But like anything in life, there was always a reason not to do it: bad weather and bitter cold, the threat of avalanche, and of course, in the summer, the river. Guarded by the gray silty waters of the Matanuska, Amulet remains mysterious and inaccessible to passing motorists. But on a hot day in May, with time on my hands, I felt that I was out of excuses. So I packed up some gear and a couple days' food and threw it haphazardly in the back of the Subaru, in the cavalier fashion that had taken years to perfect. That night I turned in early and slept the dreamless sleep of a man who expected a big day ahead.

But when the alarm sounded at six a.m., I jerked the cord out of the wall. Thoughts of the climb flashed briefly through my mind, but from



under the blanket the mountain seemed abstract and remote. I went back to sleep. I woke up again at eleven, ate a leisurely breakfast and read the paper. By one o'clock, I was beginning to feel ashamed of my indolence. I decided I'd better get going.

A long drive later, I arrived at the riverside; it was three-thirty in the afternoon. The sky was blue, the air was hot and the river was roaring. I'd brought a kayak along to shuttle gear to the south side, but at the last moment decided to cut corners by wading the stream instead. I put on my pack, cinched down the waist belt and staggered toward the water.

I noticed right away that the river was deeper, wider and faster than it had first appeared. I was just thinking that the rocks on the bottom offered awfully poor footing for such a swift current, when one of them rolled out from under me and I fell in. As I floated downstream, I found out that a fifty-pound pack has an annoying tendency to hold one's head underwater. If I ever find myself in that situation again, I will remember to use my hands and elbows to keep my head from bouncing off the bottom. Running short on good humor, I scratched and clawed my way to the other side.

As I crawled up the opposite bank, it was difficult to maintain a positive attitude. I slouched down the gravel bar, imagining the nightmarish tangle of devil's club and alder-infested hell waiting at the mouth of Monument Creek. But when I arrived there, fate smiled on me: The brush on the east side parted like the Red Sea, and a hunters' trail opened up before my eyes, leading up toward heaven. I followed it. After four hours, I left the jungle and its swarming mosquitoes and began post-holing through wet spring snow. After two more hours of slogging, I had caught up with winter again—and darkness was catching up with me. I fell into a mote on the rock glacier, and decided it was as good a place as any to spend the night.

As I cooked my supper, I watched the north face of Amulet turn pink in the alpenglow. Dark streaks shadowed the upper reaches of the central couloir, a thousand feet below the summit cornice. What could they be? To the northwest, the familiar jagged peaks of the Talkeetnas rose in silhouette against the fading twilight, provoking bittersweet memories of climbs and sunsets long past.

In the morning, I awoke to the roar of avalanches thundering down nearby slopes.

Loosened by blazing morning sunshine, they were coming down everywhere, running to the ground, rocks falling, slush and gravel flowing in an unending stream. Watching winter give way to spring, it was easy to imagine how the mountains had been shaped by such forces gouging and grinding away over millennia. But for the moment, my own route remained shaded, cold and quiet.

I donned snowshoes for the first thousand feet up the avalanche cone at the base of the couloir. The snow was soft and deep, and made for difficult hiking. I crossed the tracks of a bear, two or three days old. The bear's feet had not plunged through the fragile crust as mine were doing, which seemed unfair; but as I gained elevation and entered the frigid shadows of the couloir, the snow hardened. I abandoned the snowshoes atop a rocky outcrop, safe from the avalanches that would come later that day when the sun struck the lower third of the face. Looking up, I could see the summit cornices hanging high above. The route looked straightforward, but I was in a hurry: The air was getting warmer, and rockslides and wet snow continued pouring down the lower slopes. I decided to travel light and fast, continuing up with only crampons, ice tools and a jacket.

Although it looks frightfully steep from a distance, the couloir continued for two thousand feet at a comfortable angle of forty-five degrees. I ascended rapidly, kicking steps in perfect snow: It seemed easier than I deserved. Higher up, the angle grew steeper and I entered a deep furrow, a snow-blanketed hallway flanked by walls of gray ice. These were the dark streaks I had spotted from my bivouac, the tracks of uncounted tons of ice and debris tumbling down the face with the force of a thousand bulldozers. As the incline grew steeper still, snow cover thinned until just a few inches of powder remained clinging to the ice. Footing became tenuous. To my left, snow stuck to the slope at an angle that I would not have believed possible. Beneath me, my tracks receded downward, vanishing into uniform whiteness that swept thousands of feet to the valley floor.

Just a few hundred feet below the summit, the icy trench wound sinuously through a band of loose rock. Treacherous fingers of sunlight began creeping around near the summit, threatening to make me a sitting duck in a natural shooting gallery, so I exited the furrow and skirted to the east of the rocks. Climbing in the shadow of a



great dark boulder, the route degenerated into pure ice with a frosting of sugar snow whose consistency made it difficult to assess the penetration of picks and front points. I had left my rappel rope in the pack far below, and even as I hacked my way most ungracefully through this section I shuddered at the thought of downclimbing it. Nevertheless, I continued. At last, circumventing a second boulder and clambering awkwardly over a cornice, I emerged into brilliant sunshine at the crest of the northeast ridge, just a few steps from the summit. I lingered briefly on top, watching storm clouds gather over lofty peaks to the south, a mysterious world to explore some other day.

I descended the northeast ridge for some distance to avoid downclimbing the ice. This was a mistake: There was no way to get back out onto the face without climbing over improbable-looking snow mushrooms whose stability seemed questionable. I had to jam in my axe shafts and hang from them, hoping for the best while seeking purchase for my feet. The only feasible route through the mushrooms led out onto the steep face that I had avoided on the way up, where snow seemed to adhere through sheer force of habit. When at last I succeeded in traversing back to my route of ascent, I felt like a juvenile delinquent who had just gotten away with something. Hurrying back the way I had come, I found the lower couloir wiped clean of my early morning tracks by the wet snow avalanches of midafternoon. I scurried down in the cool evening air, broke camp and continued hastily back to the river, fueled by an urgent sense that I had received more charity than I could reasonably expect from this mountain. I swam the river once again, had the last laugh on the other side, and arrived at the car cold and wet. But looking back at the jewel sparkling in the twilight, for just a moment, I felt at peace.

Escalante River Hikes

by Bill Wakeland



Eight MCAers returned in May from two weeks of delightful ramblings in the Staircase Escalante National Monument in Utah: Don Hansen, Fred Kampfer, Linda White, Chuck Kennedy, Stan Aarsund, Janet Lund, Laila Eklund and me — all veterans of numerous Grand Canyon and Brooks Range hikes,

except Laila, who was tough hiker and adapted rapidly. A most startling revelation on this, our first hike in the area, was how cold it could get in the morning after a clear night! Like 27 to 30 degrees! We had to come back to Alaska to get warm!

We assembled at the Las Vegas airport late on April 24th, and got everyone safely out of "slotville" via rented van, piloted by Fred, and my Subaru, and headed for Escalante, Utah to play a different kind of slot. Overnighing some 100 miles from Las Vegas at St. George, we drove another 260 miles to the trailhead and started hiking the next day.

The Escalante River meanders through some wild terrain, draining into Lake Powell, all in southern Utah. Most hikes to the river are from trailheads off the "Hole in the Wall" road, 50 miles long from Highway 12 to Lake Powell. We lucked out on this route and the trailhead "roads," because they become impassable after a little rain.

Hike #1 was down Hurricane Wash and Coyote Gulch to the river from a trailhead at mile 33. This is the most well known and popular hike, with lots of natural attractions like arches, caverns, bridges, vertical rock, etc., and is pretty easy going until you get almost to the river. It was a good choice for us neophytes to break in, and we had quite a lot of company, from all over the world. I was especially impressed with the number of good-looking young gals travelling in pairs or groups!

The Hurricane trailhead is at 4500 feet and starts out down a shallow drainage, now dry, and gets deeper, with some "slots" before reaching Coyote. We camped several miles down, about where a trickle of clear water showed. We treated all water, except a few hillside springs. At the Coyote there was more water and the gorge got deeper, as we headed east toward the river, wading more and more to avoid brush or cliffs.

We all wore footgear suitable for both rock and water - or so we thought. Stan seemed to have the best combination - regular light hiking boots and some special little slipper things for wading, which he wore most of the time. My "ideal" boots were lightweight, mostly fabric and well cushioned for wear in and out of water. Only they never got dry, and were heavy and wet all the time. Another surprise was the lack of bugs and ticks.



You must see photos or go there to appreciate the terrain and colors. From high vistas where you can see forever to snow-clad mountains, to the deep, colorful canyons with contrasting reds, spring greens and azure skies.

The next two camps were down Coyote in the vicinity of Jacob Hamblin Arch, Coyote Bridge, ancient petroglyphs and various walls, cliffs, cottonwoods and the like, requiring many feet of film! But a long day hike down to the river, to about 3700 feet, proved to be more work than fun, with some route-finding problems, boulder strewn creeks and eventually a slick rock slab that turned us around just short of the river. We had not allowed enough time for all this.

Backtracking up Coyote with packs we went beyond Hurricane - the way to the cars - to a wide spot in the gorge where we spent two nights - a luxury we dream about! Day hikes included finding a rare vertical hole in a rock with a tiny dried-up corncob in it. Three of us found a "pour-off" pond, isolated by thick brush, that Chuck beat his way through and dove in for a swim. Back at our camp, we were spread out all over, including up a slope to a big afternoon sun shelf in a cavern, from which Linda loved to watch lizards!

We also found an easy way out of the gorge here, and explored the rolling terrain far above, where we could see in all directions and realized how easily one could get lost up there. We packed up and hiked out on day 6 to clean up, re-supply and pig out at Escalante.

We did a car shuttle to leave the van at the Harris Wash trailhead and my Subaru at the "Egypt" trailhead, where we would exit in case of rain. Like the first hike, this one starts down a shallow broad wash, but this one has some water, so we started wading earlier. There were a couple of "mazes" to go through, fence openings which cattle cannot negotiate. The new monument is free of cows close to the river, thanks to the efforts of outfits like SUWA, South Utah Wilderness Alliance. The grazing leases were bought out. Hurray! We need more of that. A few cattle can waste a huge area by over-grazing and mucking up the streams and springs.

Harris Wash and the river proved to be more pristine than Coyote, with fewer people, less trail and a wider variety of terrain and vegetation. From huge old cottonwoods along the streams to dense thickets of brush (including exotics) and

open meadows, arches, verticals, caves, plus some real slot canyons on the east side of the Escalante.

We had another two-day camp on days 3 and 4, well down the river from Harris Wash, in a large, open area under cottonwoods. Day hikes included a long one up Chop Rock Canyon, a real crazy slot, barely wide enough to get through, yet towering hundreds of feet overhead. Lots of wading, but even more and much deeper out on the river itself, where we got in over knees at times.

Another day hike took a group of us up the route of a former "stock trail," where rock "rails" and actual little steps of a sort had been constructed to get cattle out of the gorge to higher grass lands. So once again we got to look around up in the rolling rock and juniper country, and down to the winding, green river gorge...

The last night of the hike was at the mouth of Fence Canyon in a pretty setting along a tiny creek. A steep hike out over slickrock to our trailhead at Egypt, another car shuttle and we were on our way. With a day to spare, we drove up Highway 12 to camp at Cave Creek, then breakfast at Boulder, Utah and a spin over the Hells Backbone route to Escalante, climbing to over 9000 feet. Then a southerly route to camp at Kodachrome Park, over the Cockscomb route to Highway 89, then to St. George to clean up and pig out before Las Vegas and home.

Many thanks to the whole group for their good company, their help when I needed it, and forbearance when things got a little sticky!

ADZE



For Sale

Marmot gore-tex down
jacket, brand-new, never
used men's size large.

\$150.00

Josh 245-1943



MINUTES

MAY MEETING

The meeting was called to order: 19:50. Three people introduced themselves. Tom Choate presiding.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Looks Good! We are at about 64% of the projected membership.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Hiking and Climbing

Trips were announced and described. **Scott Bailey** announced the Trails Day and a climb up Eagle Peak.

Huts

Nick Parker talked about the new park service hut to be installed at the head of Eklutna River. The exact location is being debated. Nick also brought up another concern, that of the human waste problem at the huts. There is a true health problem at some of the sites due to the arctic nature of the environment, and the number of visitors.

Parks Advisory

Scott Bailey announced that Chugach Powder Guides had their guide/helicopter service permit revoked from Chugach National Forest. Let them, the National Forest people and Chugach Powder Guides, know if you have concerns with this.

Training

The club is looking for a volunteer to be the new training chairperson. Anyone interested should contact a board member.

OLD BUSINESS

The guiding companies who want **to use MCA huts** are being asked to sign their participants up as MCA members, as per our contract with the State of Alaska. No one is denied use of the huts, however, a signed waiver is highly desirable for all users. The State is not taking a position on enforcement.

The **road signs project** for climbing areas is rolling along. A sign up sheet for those interested in helping has been out at the meetings. Please call Matt Nedom, 278-3648, if you can help in any way.

The climbing **awards program** is still to be decided.

NEW BUSINESS

None.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Alaska Rock Gym will present a slide show with **Alex Lowe** in May.

John Hess announced his **Tuesday night hiking** group, with hikes ranging from O'Malley to 'bring the kids!' Contact John to get on his e-mail list. 348-7363
wa

An excellent slide show was presented by Dave Blanchett on Prince William Sound.

Respectfully Submitted,

Matt Nedom

Secretary

BOARD MEETING

5/18/99

In attendance - Mark Miraglia, Tom Choate, Kirk Towner, Matt Nedom and Nick Parker. The following were discussed:

Annual Outstanding Hiking & Climbing Achievement Award

Some opposition to cost & intent of award, might foster excessive competition and put off new members. Decision made to table for further discussion before full board.

Update on Commercial Use of MCA Huts

Dave Staeheli, Alpine Guides Alaska, has agreed to comply with MCA request to have all commercial operators sign up their clients as MCA members and have them sign waiver. Evan Phillips will be in town this weekend and Mark Miraglia will contact him regarding his commercial use of the Eklutna Traverse huts.

Hut Outhouses

Will discuss further looking into use of Mt. Hood style human waste bags with modified toilet seat and requirement for all hut users to fly out feces. This might become hut wide. Bomber Hut Outhouse – fly in new prefab – Kirk to request pricing from ERA to fly in outhouse, Nick or Mark will contact Garth @ 210th ANG regarding possibility of them flying it in. Mt. Hood Waste Disposal Bags – looking for source of supply – Mark is trying to find source of supply from Mt. Hood National Park so that MCA can decide on how best to pursue problems regarding human waste disposal at club huts.



Avalanche Training

Pricing from Reed Bahnson looks pretty expensive. Will discuss further to decide what type of training club wants to provide and at what cost.

Trail Clean-Up

Gold Mint Trail June 4th thru 7th – Scott Bailey – Will see if Dennis Morford can reschedule his Hidden Peak climb so as not to conflict with trail clean-up.

Update Eklutna Cabin Project

Grant of \$30K awarded from SOA TRAK Program. Art Weiner and Pete Panarese will handle bureaucratic red tape. Check should be in hand first part of July. Kirk will open separate account at bank to deposit grant money. Reed Bahnson will do an avalanche survey at site on west side of river over last bridge by old outhouses. Determination to be made later regarding feasibility of using old outhouses or repairing them compared to installing new outhouse at site on east side of river.

Respectfully Submitted,
Mark Miraglia



Eklutna Cabin Schedule

7/15 - 7/30 Brush clearing and ground preparation
8/1 Site survey/layout - toilet construction
8/10 Re-evaluate budget
9/10 Deliver materials to site
9/11 Foundation work
9/15 - 9/30 Cabin construction

The Eklutna Cabin project has been awarded \$30K from the State of Alaska. This cabin is to be built with volunteer labor from the MCA, AAC, and CSP. A few volunteers are needed to assist in toilet construction in August. This should take a couple of days. About a dozen volunteers are needed for cabin construction in September. This should take one to two weeks. If you would like to volunteer contact Mark Miraglia 338-0705.

