

the SCREE

Mountaineering Club
of Alaska

October 2016

Volume 59 Number 10



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Monthly meeting: John Giraldo
will give a presentation on ice
climbing in Southcentral Alaska.

"Human life is far more important than just getting to the top of a mountain."

- Edmund Hillary

The Mountaineering Club of Alaska

www.mtnclubak.org

"To maintain, promote, and perpetuate the association of persons who are interested in promoting, sponsoring, improving, stimulating, and contributing to the exercise of skill and safety in the Art and Science of Mountaineering."

Join us for our club meeting at 6:30 p.m. on Tuesday, October 18, at the BP Energy Center at 1014 Energy Court in Anchorage, Alaska.

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

For the MCA Membership Application and Liability Waiver, visit

<http://www.mtnclubak.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=members.form>.

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Cover Photo

Ben Still (left) and Carrie Wang cramponing up Peak 4950
in the Chigmit Mountains.
Photo by Wayne Todd

Article Submission: Text and photography submissions for *the Scree* can be sent as attachments to mcascree@gmail.com. Articles should be submitted by the 24th 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. 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 submit captions with photos.

Monthly Meeting: Tuesday, October 18, at 6:30 p.m. John Giraldo will give a presentation on ice climbing in Southcentral Alaska.

Hiking and Climbing Schedule

December 23: Flattop Mountain sleepout. No leader.

Choate's Chuckle

- Tom Choate

When are horses the same as climbers?

(Answer: When they are harnessed up.)

Calendar:

We will need all entries for the 2017 MCA Calendar by 6:30 p.m. at the start of the October Meeting. Please have 8-by-10 horizontal photos with your name, phone number, and email address on the back. The categories are climbing, people, hiking, and scenery. If you are concerned about people handling the photos, please have a plastic cover. We will vote at the October Meeting to decide which photos make it into the 2017 calendar. The Calendar Committee is still looking for a layout specialist. You can expect to be busy the last week in October and the first week of November. Contact Calendar Committee Chair Stu Grenier at stugrenier@gmail.com or 337-5127 if you have questions. You can see a copy of the 2016 MCA Calendar at Alaska Mountaineering & Hiking if you are interested.

Online? Click me!



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

Friday the 13th on Iliamna Volcano

Text and photos by Wayne L. Todd

With Dave Hart (leader), Lee Helzer, Ben Still, and Carrie Wang.

May 13-15, 2016



Looking north from the summit of Iliamna Volcano toward Redoubt Volcano and many other peaks in the Chigmit Mountains.

After numerous plan, participant, and flight changes, Carrie Wang and I loaded into a wheel-skied Bush Hawk around noon at Alaska West Air (AWA). Nikiski was warm, sunny, and a little buggy. Summer had started early.

After the scenic water-and-snow-glistening flight, we're deftly landed to Dave Hart's, Ben Still's, and Lee Helzer's site at 3900 feet on the west side of Iliamna Volcano. Direct and reflected sun on the pervasive snow felt even warmer than Nikiski. After our quick camp setup, we skinned east toward the sun as two rope teams, Carrie and I following Dave, Lee, and Ben.

It'd been a while since I'd been on glaciated mountains, but I mostly controlled my urge to take endless pictures so as to keep pace with the other team. The glistening rain-runneled snow patterns with mountain frosting were mesmerizing.

A couple miles and a few thousand feet later (and a couple dozen pictures), we removed skis due to increasing slope angle and snow hardness. Ben broke trail up and

right, and right, and up, and up ... After three heavier guys had stepped up, lightweights Carrie and I had very firm steps.



Carrie Wang heading up the west ridge of Iliamna Volcano with the other rope team behind her.

Our route was mostly crevasse free, but around the corner blue ice faces and dark holes added to the splendor. To the right a distant conical snow-covered peak was surrounded by water, Augustine Volcano. Spin-drift blew our direction off the top.

The soft snow segued to hard snow on the steepening ridge. After a mix of various leaders with crampons on and off, Dave led up into the buffeting wind with all members layered and cramponed up. The closer to the top, the windier it got. Where the ridge abruptly tapered to the mellow broad summit, the full wind was experienced, entrained with small ice pieces (estimated 40 miles per hour with gusts to 60). I stepped forward, but found myself moving three steps to the right. We trudged on with occasional sidesteps and brief wind-brace stops. The top of Redoubt Volcano capped our flat summit view to the north. Ben, Lee, and Dave passed by with their rope arcing above



From left: Ben Still, Lee Helzer, and Dave Hart taking a break at the ski stash during the ascent of Iliamna Volcano.



Dave Hart (left) and Carrie Wang on the west flank of Iliamna Volcano with Augustine Volcano in the distance.

the ground like a jump rope frozen in time. Carrie and I traveled to the east side for better views of Cook Inlet and the barely visible Chugach and Kenai Mountains.

We turned about and trailed the others by some minutes, relieved when we stepped back out of the blasting wind onto the steeper ridge. We down-climbed briefly and then hiked down and down as the sun dropped toward the western horizon. Their tracks were filling in rather quickly from the wind-transported snice.

Soft orange light bathed our surroundings as we clicked into skis. The top inches of snow were still soft as we gleefully made turns alongside our up-track, now unroped. Occasional umph, umph, umph rattled reality back in when we crossed rain runnels. A couple short up sections involved various techniques. I used the one-ski-on-the-downslope-leg technique with reasonable results. A short crossing of fresh avalanche debris, no loitering there, and then final turns down into camp with dark orange surroundings concluded our 11-hour day.

Brewing up for midnight dinner and drinks led to much-anticipated sleep after the long day and previous short night. The increasing wind was mostly unnoticed until stoves were shut off and we snuggled down into sleeping bags. Brief high

winds caused very noisy tent flapping, alternating with even briefer disturbing calm and quiet, all night long. Ear plugs were futile.

After a near-sleepless night, we roused into a calming sunny morning. Early afternoon we rallied for a climb of Peak 6260, skinning northeast from camp and crossing over many rain runnels. At the first pass the easy snow slope ascent, as seen from the air, was blocked by a steep rock wall with a shedding glacier on top. We quickly-as-possible skinned over avalanche serac debris to a second pass to stunning views of the very seraced glacial northwest face of Iliamna. That would be a dangerous route and made us appreciate our low-risk straightforward western route. A small plume rose from the left skyline, which explained the sulfur smell up high on the previous day.

Focusing on our intended climb, about a thousand feet of 45-degree snow awaited. After a brief risk discussion we skinned up zigzag style. At a transition point to crampons, we again discussed the warming snow and decided to retreat. On the return to camp we skinned, then climbed, up a spire-capped mound (Point 4850). Our plans of a high-speed ski descent to regain elevation were thwarted by very grabby snow, but amazingly no wipe outs.



From left: Dave Hart, Lee Helzer, Ben Still, and Carrie Wang taking a break on the west flank of Iliamna Volcano.



Carrie Wang in the wind on the summit of Iliamna Volcano with Redoubt Volcano on the right in the background.

From camp that evening, Dave, Ben, and Lee skinned up Point 4330. Carrie and I futilely tried to level out the myriad trail-size rain runnels (as per pilots' requests).

That night we experienced "calm winds," much cooler temperatures (below freezing), and sleep.

In the morning Doug Brewer of AWA was concerned about the plane hazard on frozen rain runnels, so we agreed to a noon pickup to let the runnels soften.

Ben suggested we climb nearby Peak 4950, so a rash of quick packing and we're across glacier. The north ascent snow was pleasant mild crampon hard and soon Dave and Lee were scouting the top section. Dave led a fifty-foot mild rock pitch and we're all soon belayed on top, just big enough for five. Grand views of Iliamna were to the east and myriad other peaks all around. Also noted were the avalanches on the glacier, which were running at much lower angles than 20 degrees (consideration for camp placements and routes).

We're back in plenty of time for our noon pickup by AWA for Lee, Carrie, and me. Ben and Dave flew out soon after with their friend Conor McManamin.

An amazing 48-hour climbing excursion concluded as a large storm system overtook southcentral Alaska.



Dave Hart belays from the top of Peak 4950.



From left: Ben Still, Dave Hart, and Lee Helzer approaching the spire of Point 4850.



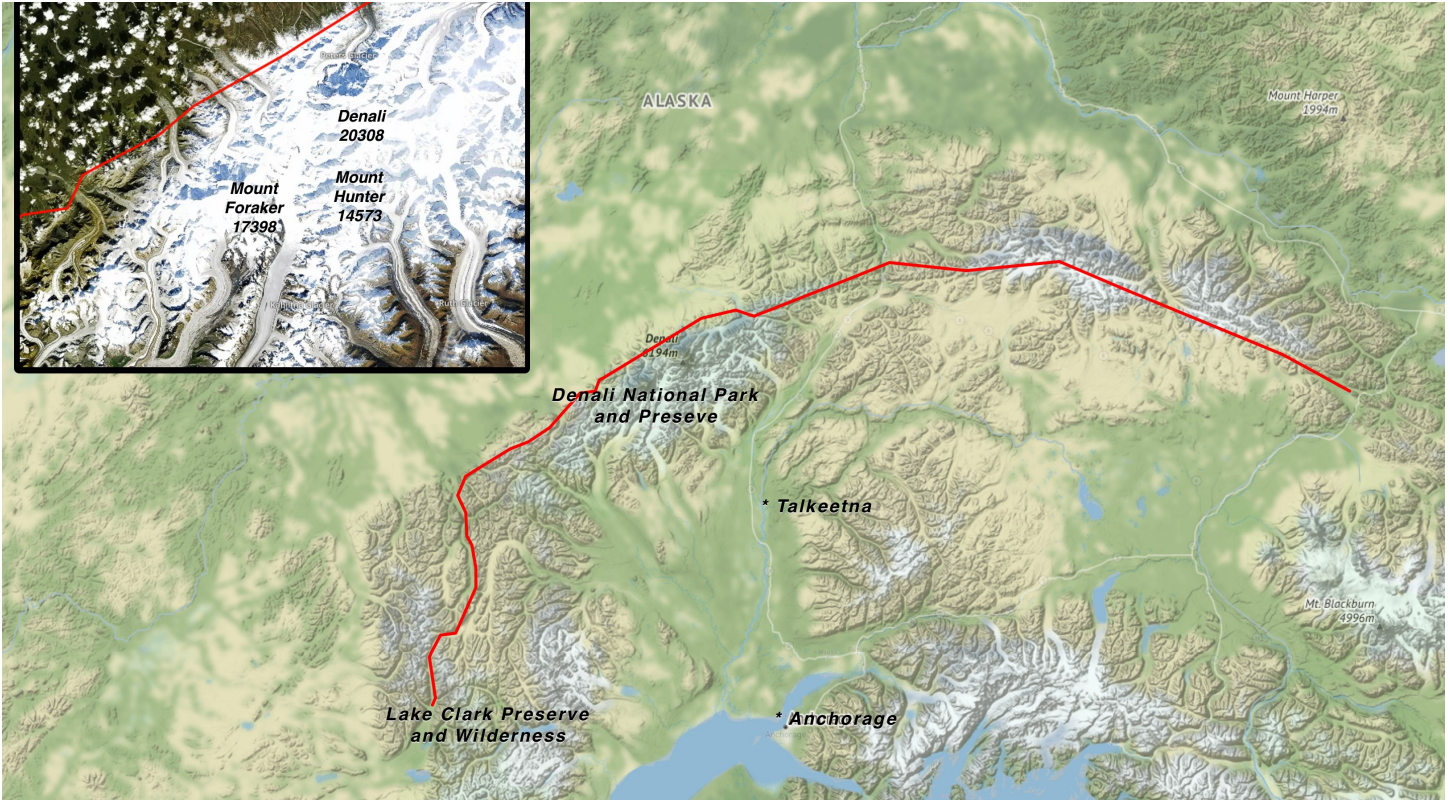
From left: Ben Still, Lee Helzer, and Dave Hart admiring the northwest face of Iliamna Volcano.



Early-morning shadowed rain runnels at camp, backdropped by Peak 4950.

Under the Midnight Sun: A Paragliding Traverse of the Alaska Range

Text by Gavin McClurg



To understand this story you have to understand that I'm not crazy. Sure, I've had some close calls, but that doesn't mean I've a death wish. There was that time in Mexico when I got stuffed in a waterfall kayaking a first descent and spent over five minutes underwater. And there was the time we got knocked down and nearly run over by an ocean freighter sailing in hurricane-force winds and 35-foot seas off Cape Mendocino, California. Ah, and there was that time I landed my paraglider in a river above a heinous waterfall in the Dominican Republic; *that* was a close call, for sure. And I do have to admit to spending a particularly spooky 10 hours swimming in a Pacific atoll filled with sharks after a night-dive went really wrong. And I really got close that time my kite exploded in a howling gale kitesurfing in the Outer Hebrides, Scotland, forcing me to dump my gear and swim for several hours in 10-degree-Celsius water against the wind to make landfall. But, I promise I didn't do any of these things for the adrenaline rush. And I didn't do them because I'm careless, or because I didn't understand the risks. By definition, expedition means going into the unknown. By definition, adventure means something is going to go wrong. What I'm guilty of is sometimes pushing too hard. And sometimes I'm probably

guilty of dreaming a little too big.

But, that's the thing about setting out to pursue your dreams. When you take the leap and pull it off, it sets a precedent. It builds confidence, and because we are human and are inclined to want more ... we want more. Young children think that anything is possible because they haven't been told yet that it isn't. They don't fully understand the consequences. Why not jump? Time and school and adults and society and all the other things that shape us inevitably erode our compulsive curiosity and limitless confidence and something terrible happens: we stop dancing naked in front of everyone because instead of being impulsive and fun it becomes embarrassing. And, I suppose ... illegal.

I tried to fit in; I tried to tow the line. I got a job after university that required me to sometimes wear a tie and sometimes sit in an office. The office didn't have windows and I was terrible at tying a tie, so I quit and went kayaking instead. I got pretty good at kayaking and started running rivers that were on the difficulty level where one wrong move could lead to serious consequences. After the Mexico episode I decided I should back off a

bit, sail around the world and take like-minded adventurers kitesurfing instead. Other than the hurricane incident and a few mishaps with reefs and getting stranded on an island and spending a night with sharks, it all went pretty well and I ended up going around the globe twice over a 13-year span, visiting, and in some cases living, in some 99 countries along the way.



Scouting the line, the immensity of the project became clear.

Photo by Gavin McClurg

Somewhere along the way I met a girl. All good stories have a girl. This girl handed me a paraglider and hucked me off a small hill in New Zealand, which was unfortunate for the girl because the paraglider became my one true love. I began flying everywhere I could. I soared above the Matterhorn in the Alps; woke up encased in ice near Manali in the Himalaya Mountains; rode camels to launch in the high Atlas Mountains of Morocco; traversed the long, serrated spine of the Canadian Rockies to the U.S. border; and wound up the length of the California Sierra Nevada to the Oregon border, completing the longest vol-biv (French for “fly-camp”) that had ever been done. I left sailing and kitesurfing and kayaking and surfing behind because they weren’t as magical as flying. Navigating a piece of plastic and string across a mountain range using nothing but invisible thermals and your own skill was more implausible than the most vivid dreams.

Six years ago I found myself riding shotgun in a Super Cub bush plane in the Alaska Range. My paraglider was in the back seat and my brother-in-law Kenny MacDonald was at the controls up front. I’d never seen terrain like that in my life. Massive, jagged ice-and-snow-covered peaks stretched to the horizon and beyond and were only



View from the paraglider in the Hayes Range.

Photo by Gavin McClurg

separated by deep meandering glaciers and thundering, silty rivers. There was no humanity; in fact there was nothing but raw, deafening, stunning and intimidating WILDerness. In the Alps there were gondolas and ski resorts and sign-posted hiking trails that led to huts selling ice cream and espresso. In the Himalayas and Andes and Caucasus and Zagros Mountains, villages perch in the most unlikely places. But in the Alaska Range there was nothing but an unending hugeness. No roads, no trails,

no villages, no people.

The range stretches 480 miles in a northward half-moon arc from west to east, bordered by the Aleutian Range at one end and the Wrangell-Saint Elias National Park on the other. It climbs to the highest point on the North American continent at Denali (20310 feet). At one point in the flight, we flew through a pass from the south side of the range to the north and suddenly the air got very turbulent. Turbulence means thermals and I got a half-baked idea that it may be possible to traverse the entire range by foot and paraglider.

Eventually the idea gelled into an obsession and I couldn’t stop imagining it’s possible. I told other pilots about my dream and the unequivocal response was that I was crazy. But I was not crazy, as I’d already demonstrated! My friends pointed out that there are many reasons no one has attempted it. “What about the bears?” “How will you cross the glaciers and rivers?” “It’s too far north!” “How will you get across Denali National Park?” (It is legal to fly across U.S. National Parks, but illegal to launch or land in them.)

Which just made me a lot more excited. No one had flown across one of the most iconic and remote mountain ranges in the world! I couldn't think of anything that would be more magnificent and grand, and it hadn't even been attempted! I studied weather patterns and maps and possible routes and some of the major hurdles like food. It would only be possible in May and June, during the longest days of the year. There was too much snow in April, and by July it would be too rainy. At that time of year you couldn't legally hunt anything but bear, which wasn't very appealing, and the salmon weren't high enough in the rivers, so I settled on putting in food caches in advance. There were a lot more questions than answers, and I worked on solving them for six straight years.

May 14th, 2016. Day 2

We climbed up out of the glacial-fed river onto a deep snow bank soaked to our core, our bodies shivering uncontrollably. My feet were completely numb as they had been for most of the day, a prelude of a condition we would battle for the coming weeks, which would eventually lead to trench foot, a condition more common to people marching in a war than people just trying to have some fun. We'd been walking down the river for three hours because it was easier than the nine hours of post-holing across deep, completely rotten spring snow that preceded it. Post-holing, a term used to describe misery is an activity whereby you walk one or two steps on top of deep snow, thinking you've finally found some stability and then, WHOOSH, you break through the crust and sink into your crotch or beyond and begin the whole process over, and over, and over again. Sixteen hours of effort and we were less than two miles closer to our goal than we'd been that morning. Four hundred seventy miles to go. We stomped out a couple of tent platforms, erected our thin



*Crossing the West Fork Glacier.
Photo by Gavin McClurg*



Gavin McClurg takes an elated selfie on the last flight of the expedition over the Susitna Glacier.

houses, and looked at our dizzying surroundings. Fierce, absolute, merciless mountains loomed at every point of the compass. It was as beautiful as it was daunting. I removed my frozen boots and assessed my deteriorating feet and considered for not the first or last time ... "What in the hell was I thinking?"

My partner Dave Turner stood nearly a foot taller than I. To keep up with his moderate walking pace I had to shuffle along in a near run. "Solo Dave"

got his nickname climbing some of the hardest and most-dangerous big walls on the planet, most of them alone. He spent 34 days in Patagonia ascending Cerro Escudo in 2008, to this day the largest climb opened by a solo alpinist. He'd spent weeks alone on multiple arctic kite-skiing trips, living in the frozen darkness by a combination of ingenuity and skill and a monumental confidence in his own substantial abilities. He seemed unfazed by our situation as he tucked into his sleeping bag, laughing as he unholstered a .40-caliber hand cannon and packed away his Tenkara rod. "Who takes a gun and fishing pole on a paragliding trip?"

The gun was there not for hunting, but protection. There would be no human trails on the entire traverse, but there were plenty of game trails. Sheep, moose, caribou, wolves, wolverines, fox, and a lot more reside in very healthy numbers across the range and grizzly bears were at the top of the food chain. Every "trail" we found had been used by bears. The meandering trails rarely took us in the direction we desired (I supposed because animals were not seeking para-

gliding launches!), but they were easier to negotiate than bashing through endless dense alder forests, which was maybe the least-pleasant way of travel I had yet experienced in my 44 years on Earth. By Day Five of the traverse, if you had offered me the option of walking barefoot through a sewer or bashing

across another alder slope, I would have happily dove head-first into the sewage and done the breaststroke. [Ed. note: That was about the time that McClurg and Turner had bashed through alders and waded through snow to reach the summit of Peak 3350 above the Jones River in the Kichatna Mountains, only to find that conditions were not favorable to launching.] When people moved around Alaska they mostly did so by bush plane, not by foot or automobile. This was because the terrain didn't lend itself to walking, and there were very few roads. Dave had chosen to increase his chances by packing a gun. I'd chosen bear spray, which a few days later we learned wasn't actually proper bear spray, but protection spray, the kind people use in cities to keep bad guys at bay. It would indeed help in the event someone wanted to rape me in Alaska, but would be useless if a bear decided to make me dinner. I'd have to stick pretty close to Dave.

We carried everything we needed to survive in packs that weighed 60 pounds without water. That was *not* your standard backpacking kit and included our wings, harness, helmet, flying instruments, solar panel, tent, first aid and other safety gear, trekking poles, cooking kit, and all the other essentials needed to survive and more critically – nothing we didn't. Every ounce had been thoroughly considered. Could we take two pairs of socks or three? How about a second lighter?

How much line in the repair kit? What belonged in the first-aid kit? How much 6-mil p-cord in case we landed in a tree and

needed to rappel? One sewing needle or two? Every additional piece of gear we carried meant we were less efficient on the ground, and less efficient in the air. A film crew was documenting the attempt, but we were allowed zero outside support.



*Not a bad view of the Hayes Range for Gavin McClurg.
Photo by Gavin McClurg*

tion. Our camp was within meters of the park boundary at the west end and it was 110 miles in a straight line to the eastern boundary. We'd cross all of the iconic peaks of the range – Mount Hunter, Mount Foraker, and the tallest of them all, Denali, if we could pull it off. If we couldn't make it, we'd declare

an emergency landing and have to walk the remaining distance, through an area one of the park rangers informed us before the trip was more populated with grizzlies than anywhere else in Alaska.

We're nearly a month into the traverse and we'd finished less than 25 percent of the route. A good deal of the time so far had been spent starving. On most days we burnt thousands of calories in long pushes on



*Stuck on Heart Mountain for eight days, the team rationed food.
Photo by Jody MacDonald*

the ground and replaced a fraction of that with diminishing and inadequate food supplies. Much of our gear was broken and the alders had trashed most of our clothes. Dave and I spent most

waking hours talking about food. As we waded across beaver dams, crawled through alder forests, slogged through swampy meadows, and navigated over crevasse-strewn glaciers, we talked about what we would eat if we could, and added to the growing list of what our first real meal would include when we got out. There had been a few glorious, albeit short, flights where we covered ground fast with minimal effort. The flights lifted our spirits, but more importantly they gave us hope. The sun stayed in the sky all day and the thermals were strong. If we could get some decent weather we could fly a long way. But decent weather hadn't been in long supply.

What we're doing was totally experimental. None of the studying and planning we did before the trip had prepared us for the reality. None of the questions had answers until we began and most of them remained. None of our strategies had worked. We'd tried waiting for good flying weather and conserved our food and energy; and we tried pushing hard on the ground, burning up resources in the interest of ticking off miles. But the only thing that had paid off was a belligerent stubbornness to keep pushing onward. Dave and I had had a lot of disagreements, but we're holding it together as a team. We still believed it could be done.

We'd been pinned down in our tents for eight days. I'd been reading e-books, listening to podcasts, enjoying the silence, and contentedly relishing how little there was to stress about other than just staying alive. There were no to-do lists to check off out there. No bills to pay, no emails to answer, no social media updates to craft. The largeness of Alaska was something that's impossible to articulate. It caught me off guard every time I opened my eyes. It made me realize just exactly how inconsequential I was. How little I mattered. And how silly it was to worry about all the things we thought were so important. Alaska didn't care that we were there and wouldn't care once we're gone. I'd had time to reflect, something I rarely did back in the "real world." The reflection made me wonder; did we set out on expeditions to achieve something, or did we set out on them to leave something behind?

I laid out my wing on the fresh snow a few thousand feet above the valley floor next to Dave's. Denali and Foraker beckoned thousands of feet above us to our east as rain clouds swelled to our north. Our bluebird morning was deteriorating rapidly, but we had to give it a try. One, two, three ... run.

Imagine for a moment the highest mountains in North America towering above you. The snow and ice in some places are miles thick. The exposure and vertigo is on par with climbing Yosemite's grand El Capitán, but you're in one of the most inhospitable places in the world. Denali is considered one of the coldest and

cruellest alpine climbing objectives there is. Now imagine that you are flying, dangling under a piece of thin fabric with no sound but the wind and your variometer beeping as a strong thermal thrusts you into a dark cloud. You begin to shake with cold and you struggle to maintain your sense of direction and sense of up and down. At times you could swear your wing is below you, but you remind yourself to breathe and not to panic and focus on your compass and try to silence the screaming doubt in your brain. Finally you escape 20 agonizing minutes later. Your face and wing and harness are completely encased in rime ice. You get separated from your partner as you whisk past Denali, getting a brief glimpse of her glory as you hold your breath flying over yet another long, slithering, perilous glacier. Was that the third or the fourth? Or maybe the sixth? The wind increases and so does your speed. The miles fly by.

An eagle spreads her wings mere feet from your wingtip and you climb together, circling round and round as the ground drops away. You've dreamt of this flight a million times. You've planned it. You've drawn the lines. Six years of planning. You've put in thousands of hours of training for this one moment and now it's happening. You know you will never do it again. It isn't repeatable because no flight ever is. Every flight is unique, but this one hasn't been done in any form, and it might not ever be repeated.

June 13th. Day 33, Panorama Mountain

When the weather finally broke I was alone. Dave had other commitments and was out of time, and the film crew was out of money. When everyone left we were only 60 percent across the traverse. We'd made it across Denali National Park, but the least-known part of the range still beckoned. I wasn't ready to quit. If the outside world were allowed a brief glimpse into my own on the 33rd day of the expedition, my sanity would certainly be questioned. But like a great painting on closer inspection, another reality would emerge. Underneath the rotten feet and filthy clothes and broken gear was a guy living at a level of simplicity that was nearly impossible to achieve in today's ethernet-paced society. My muscles had adapted to the strain; my lungs were full of pure, clean air; my mind wasn't clouded by frivolous responsibilities. I regaled in my one simple task, the task of staying alive.

Having a partner on a dangerous mission is important because it makes you feel a little less crazy. If there is someone else beside you sharing and suffering and risking his life along with you it makes you feel more confident that you haven't gone off the deep end.

But paragliding is a distinctly solo sport. You and only you are the pilot in command and flying is not forgiving of mistakes. No

one can save you if you screw up. There is no stop button. When you first learn to paraglide, you fly established sites with reliable weather forecasts that have known launches and landings in conditions that suit your skill level, often with many other people in the air, which assists with finding thermals and “reading” the invisible air. When you land, you jump in a car or train or bus and go home. At the polar opposite end of the sport is flying across Alaska. There are no known launches and landings. Weather is deciphered on the fly because forecasts are meaningless. There is no history of other flights to follow. No track logs to study. The decisions are too many to list. Where to launch; *should* I launch; is it flyable; what route to take; what’s on the other side of that col; is the wind getting too strong; is the weather still safe to remain in the air; should I land now or push on a little bit farther; how the hell do I get across that river; holy s—t, that’s a big bear!

On one hand when you are a team, making decisions is easier. You can talk it through, judge the plusses and minuses and find a consensus. On the other hand, the weight of making those decisions is heavier because if the decision is wrong, it doesn’t just affect you; it affects your partner. Animosity is inevitable, even between good friends. When Dave left I missed having the comfort of his gun and his humor and most of all his friendship, but now I could move at my own pace. My decisions only affected me. The reward of making a good call was more exhilarating, the price of making a bad call easier to forgive.

Over the next four days miles ticked by steadily as I flew in some of the strongest wind and most challenging conditions I’d yet experienced as a pilot. I glided in step with an eagle over a twisted glacier above the Susitna River drainage and had only my thoughts and a horizon that seemed to stretch to eternity for company. I warily paralleled a bear trail up a thrashing river and found an ice bridge to cross, only to be boxed in by another river, which required the most peculiar flight of my life to cross. I circled over a herd of caribou just feet off the ground before finding a thermal that carried me 15,000 feet skyward, where the beauty and rawness of the range reminded me to temper my elation even as it became obvious I would reach the end.

On the 37th and final morning of the traverse, as I was trying to find my way across yet another glacier, I kept reminding myself that reaching the end didn’t matter. It was the *journey* that mattered. That enjoying the solitude, breathing it all in and just being present was what really mattered. An overwhelming sense of gratitude took hold that I fantasized I could hold onto forever. “Gavin, when you get to the end, you don’t ever need to do anything like this again. You don’t need to take this kind of risk. You came up with this dream six years ago and now you’ve done it. Be happy with that. Be done now. Stop scaring

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your mom to death!” This was my internal discussion. Be content. Be grateful. Be thankful. And I was, overwhelmingly so. When I landed at Mentasta Lake, the official end of the traverse, I was actually crying with joy. I thought I could pack up my wing, stick out my thumb, jump in a car and hold onto the feeling forever.

But two hours later I sat in my tent and the gratitude and sense of accomplishment did the inevitable. It began fading away. I was already planning the next mission, wondering how I could “beat” Alaska. And then it hit me. And it wasn’t profound, nor was it new. Taking great risk, going on expeditions, doing things no one had done before, living a life of adventure was totally self-serving – and really completely meaningless. The Alaska traverse was outrageous and hard and absurdly fun, but it wouldn’t better humanity and it wouldn’t make the world a better place. But for me personally there was an unexpected takeaway that had grown stronger since that final day and it’s that takeaway that I believed made expeditions and adventures worthwhile. Returning to the arms of my girlfriend, returning to the smiles of my friends, returning ... *home* made me realize what’s really important. It made me realize what I should have really been grateful for. And it’s that lesson I would never forget.



Gavin McClurg and his gear. Pre-trip gear checks lasted three months.

Photo by Gavin McClurg

Second Ascent of Celeno Peak via Challenging New West Face Route

Text by Chris Wright and Graham Zimmerman

We have returned from a fantastic and fruitful expedition to the Wrangell Mountains of Alaska that resulted in the first ascent of the West Face Direct (M6, 5.10X, A2+, 95 degrees, 6000 feet) of Celeno Peak (13395).

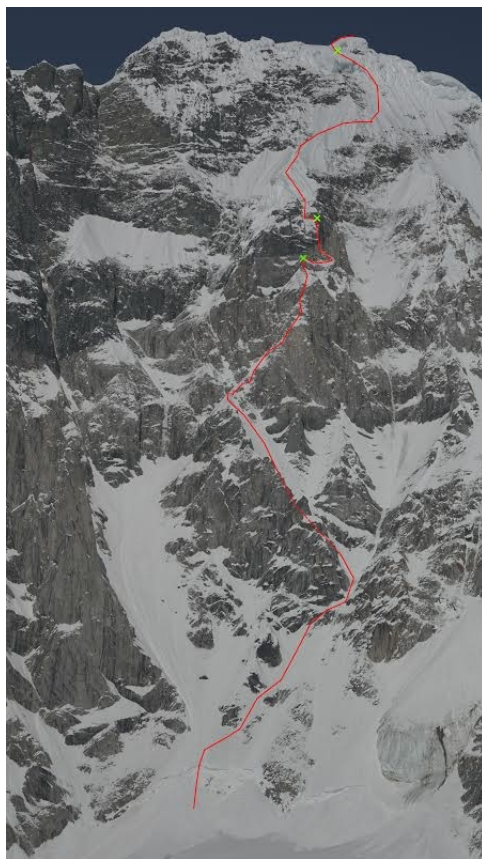
We departed from our home in Bend, Oregon, on the 6th of May and traveled to the small town of McCarthy by way of Anchorage. We arrived in McCarthy in the late morning of the 8th and were picked up by Jay Claus from Ultima Thule Lodge who flew us to the Canyon Creek Glacier. The Canyon Creek was nestled into the western side of a group of three peaks within the University Range of the Saint Elias Mountains known as The Twaharpies. Rising from the head of the glacier was the West Face of Celeno Peak, our objective.

Jay Claus and Kevin Ditzler made the first ascent of the peak in April 2012 (see pages 159 through 161 of the 2013 *American Alpine Journal*). It was fortuitous that Claus flew us to the glacier. As we flew, he was able to provide very precise beta on the best descent options from the peak. We were very thankful to Claus for that beta as well as for the flight to base camp.

This was our first trip into the Saint Elias Mountains. The stunning beauty of the peaks and the expanse of range impressed us immensely; alongside the Wrangell Mountains, these peaks continued to the horizon in every direction during the flight to the glacier.

In base camp, a storm pounded the range the evening of the 8th and the 9th before clearing on the 10th. A forecast then showed a week-long weather window, prompting us to launch on a direct line up the West Face of Celeno Peak at 1 a.m. on the 12th after waiting two days for the mountain to clear.

The route began with 2,000 feet of snow-and-ice climbing to 70 degrees, which we ascended unroped. A small section of that climbing had to be completed while exposed to objective hazard from above. With an impetus placed on climbing quickly, we spent less than 15 minutes exposed to the hazard. This



The West Face of Celeno Peak with route and bivies indicated.

Photo by Graham Zimmerman

placed us on a mixed spur we planned to climb directly to the summit of the peak.

Graham led the day's first block of pitches through fantastic mixed climbing, sustained at M4 to M5 with a stout M6 chimney crux. Chris then led two moderate, yet extremely loose, pitches that placed us at 3,000 feet above the start of the route. There, we stopped in the late afternoon to bivouac. We dug a platform into a thin snow ridge on the crest of the spur, which offered a relatively comfortable bivouac free of objective hazard.

One hundred feet above that bivouac was a geological contact between the granitic lower half of the route and the metamorphic rock that defined the upper half. That metamorphic rock presented above our bivouac as a severely overhanging headwall.

Chris continued his block on the morning of the 13th, leading two moderate pitches that led to what appeared to be a weakness in the wall above. He then spent more than three hours leading the route's crux, a wildly steep and loose pitch of 5.10X A2+ that can only be described as totally f---d and a very compelling reason for this route not to be repeated by future parties. The culmination of the pitch came while he was making the final aid moves through a roof and dislodged a large section of rocks, damaging one of the ropes and crushing a carabiner lower on the pitch.



Chris Wright seconding an M6 Chimney on Day 1.

Photo by Graham Zimmerman

After dealing with the damaged rope (fortunately the core shot was close to one of the ends), Graham took the lead and carried us through two more loose, but moderate, pitches of rock climbing to the top of the rock band and a 3-foot-by-4-foot platform on which we melted water and sat out the heat of the day. While that day resulted in less than 500 feet of progress, it allowed access to generally low-angle climbing above.

Departing our small perch at 2 a.m., Graham led through the final two high-quality pitches of easy mixed climbing before the route changed in nature from rock and mixed climbing to steep snow and ice. We simul-climbed to the top of the spur before cutting hard right to reach an iced gully that led to the summit. A short section of that traverse was subject to exposure from a medium-sized serac and we moved through that section as quickly as possible. The day's climbing consisted of approximately 2,500 feet of sustained 70-degree ice with short sections of 90- to 95-degree ice and snow as we crossed over flutings and between runnels. During that time the weather deteriorated, resulting in visibility being reduced to about 100 feet. It came as a huge relief when we reached a large flat snow ledge just below the summit in the early afternoon. Due to fatigue and the lack of visibility, we bivied on that ledge for the remainder of the day and evening.

On the 15th we once again started before sunrise and made our way up 200 feet of moderate snow to the summit of the peak under clear skies. As the sun rose over the range, we marveled at the stunning ocean of mountains surrounding us with Mount Logan, Mount Saint Elias, University Peak, and the Atna Peaks standing predominant.

The rest of the day was then spent following the first ascent route down the northwest ridge to a couloir that provided access to the glacier below. The three miles of ridge climbing proved stunningly elegant, reminiscent of sections of the West Ridge of Mount Hunter in the central Alaska Range. Reaching the couloir at around 1 p.m., we waited until the evening to



Graham Zimmerman ascending a snow arête on the first day of climbing.

Photo by Chris Wright



Graham Zimmerman juggling the crux pitch.

Photo by Chris Wright

rappel and down-climb the 4,000-foot couloir to the glacier below. That section was unpleasant and rather dangerous due to the low quality of rock that comprised the walls of the couloir.

Finally at 11:30 p.m., we reached our skis on the glacier below, and at 12:30 a.m. reached base camp exhausted and hungry.

The following morning the weather was still fair, but the forecast was deteriorating significantly, so we called Jay Claus for a pickup. He graciously came out nearly immediately and picked us up, dropping us off in McCarthy in the early afternoon. We rallied back to Anchorage and on home to Oregon.

This trip was partially funded by the Mount Everest Foundation and the New Zealand Alpine Club with additional support coming from Outdoor Research, Julbo USA, CiloGear, Petzl, Picky Bars, Exped USA, Trail Butter, Scarpa, Iridium Communications, and CW-X. Transportation into the range was provided by Ultima Thule Outfitters, which proved to be a top rate operator. Forecasting on the trip was provided by Shannon McDowell and based on weather models from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the University of Washington. We would like to express a huge amount of gratitude to all of these folks for their support and to our families and friends who supported and encouraged our climbing efforts.



Chris Wright and Graham Zimmerman on the summit of Celeno Peak

The “Berry Traverse” Trip Report

1 September 2016

Text and photos by Matt Green



The “Berry Traverse” from Blueberry Hill.

On a windless, bluebird day, I managed to have a day to myself to explore the Berry Peaks southeast of Girdwood. It was my first time to climb any of these, so I thought I might try to put them all together to make a classic Chugach ridge traverse through some of the most scenic country in Alaska.

At 07:30 I left the car parked at the communications tower and started up the southwest slope of Blueberry Hill through the hemlock forest with light devil’s club. I made steady upward progress – it definitely could have been much worse!

There is an awesome blueberry patch near the knoll at 1600 feet. I surprised a medium black bear feasting on the bounty, which promptly scampered high up a tree and started grunting at me as I passed about 15 meters away. Above timberline, I somehow became suckered into a hard, smooth dirt slope covered in light gravel that was rather treacherous (Crux #1). I would recommend staying either on steep grass, or scramble up rock. I was very thankful for bringing a Whippet.

I reached Blueberry Hill’s summit (4531 feet; 1381 meters) by about 11:00 for a panoramic view of Turnagain Arm and the Twentymile River. I could see the entire traverse ahead from there and then realized that there was an awful lot of up-and-

down Chugach scrambling ahead. When looking at the map the previous night, I should have paid more attention to the elevations of the saddles and not just the elevations of the peaks!

Peterson Point (4160 feet; 1268 meters) required some narrow, airy ridge hiking to get there. On the descent, instead of dropping off the summit and directly heading toward the saddle with Lowbush Peak (Crux #2), next time I would try going down the north-northeast ridge and then climbing back up to the saddle. Looking back from Lowbush, the north-northeast ridge appeared to be less steep than the treacherous gully systems that I somehow managed to negotiate.

I reached Lowbush Peak (4229 feet; 1289 meters) at about 13:00, probably the most remote part of the hike overlooking the Punchbowl Glacier with the summer camp right in the middle. I sat there for a while, contemplating the ridge out to Kinnikinnick Mountain. It was the time to tag it, but it would have been a major detour, added another four-plus miles, and was not exactly flat walking. I decided to continue the traverse. I passed the first snow patch of the traverse on the way down and filled my water bottles with snow to melt in the sun.

I reached Highbush Peak (4669 feet; 1423 meters) at 14:30

after a steep scramble. I descended the northeast ridge (Crux #3). A somewhat sketchy descent that involved a few middle-fifth-class down-climb moves with high consequence should there be a slip. There had to be a better way – looking back at the face, perhaps a little more on the north side might have been better. Halfway down, Alpine Air started flying two helicopters in and out of the Punchbowl Glacier camp, hauling out gear for the rest of the day. While entertaining, it did detract from the wilderness experience.

Lingon Mountain (4098 feet; 1249 meters) was a relatively straightforward, 1,000-foot slog up loose rock, only to descend all the way down to the same elevation. A few stagnant ponds were in the saddle there – if I had brought some iodine tablets, that water would have been very welcome.

I arrived at Nagoon Mountain (4403 feet; 1342 meters) at 17:45. There was more of a scramble up this one. I could look back along the entire traverse from there. It was only about 4.5 linear miles back to Blueberry Hill, but it seemed a lot longer. I had an easy descent down the east-northeast ridge.

I circled around to Berry Pass, and found the first stream for a welcome hydration stop. Then I joined the overgrown Winner Creek Trail for a nervous jog back, looking directly into the sun with a bear spray canister in hand. There was no sign of any bear, though. I reached the hotel at 20:30 with still plenty of light.

I did blow out the little toe of my right trail runner on the trip, which not only made the scrambling difficult due to an unstable foot, but I also managed to catch my toe on a couple of roots over the last few miles, which was rather painful. Other than that, it was a safe trip. The batteries on the GPS were dead at the car, so I have no distance or elevation gain/descent to report. I'm sure that someone could work it out.

Overall, other than the easily avoidable steep dirt slope on Blueberry Hill (Crux #1), I do not remember climbing anything that I could not down-climb. With the other two cruxes being the descents off Peterson Point and Highbush Peak, I think the traverse from north to south might be slightly easier technically as you could have a good look at the routes up these peaks. However, I really enjoyed having the sun at my back for most of the day, and the long jog out was probably more enjoyable than a hemlock-and-devil's-club bushwhack late in the day.

This was a high-caliber, very aesthetic, Chugach ridge traverse that linked most of the Berry Peaks. It stayed above 3000 feet for virtually the entire distance, had relatively few flat spots, and there was significant elevation gain and drop between each of the peaks. I called it the "Berry Traverse."



Matt Green on Lingon Mountain with Nagoon Mountain in the background.



The Punchbowl Glacier and the "Berry Traverse" from Nagoon Mountain.



Blown out trail runner with Kinnikinnick Mountain in the background.

Peak 4716 (Alaska Range; Amphitheater Mountains; Whistle Ridge; Osar Lake and Phalarope Lake)

Text by Steve Gruhn

On September 10 Dave Hart, his 11-year-old son Tate, and I started hiking from a pullout on the north side of the Denali Highway east of Maclaren Summit. Dave had selected Peak 4716 on Whistle Ridge in the Amphitheater Mountains as an objective that would involve about a mile (round-trip) of hiking near the highest point of the Denali Highway. We hoped the hike would be easy and afford us great views of the Hayes Range to the north. On that clear day we were not disappointed.

The hike up the north side of the northwest ridge went quite quickly. Boulder fields meandered through the tundra and solid footing was easy to find. The 700-foot climb to the flat, rocky summit was over in about a half hour. On the summit we noted several cairns, some litter, and a caribou carcass with its rib cage intact. Tate spied a survey marker that had been placed there in 1950 by a U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey party led by Philip C. Doran.

The views to the north were well worth the ascent. Mount Hayes, Moby Dick, and Mount Shand reached into the blue sky.

We chose a steeper northerly descent route to the highway, avoiding boulders and brush. All told, our little jaunt had taken a mere hour. The memories of the views, though, would last for much longer.



*Dave Hart (left) and his son Tate atop Peak 4716 with Mount Hayes, Moby Dick, Mount Shand, and McGinnis Peak (left to right) in the background.
Photo by Steve Gruhn*



*Tate Hart on the summit of Peak 4716 with the Amphitheater Mountains in the background.
Photo by Dave Hart*



*Tate Hart (left) and Steve Gruhn on the summit of Peak 4716 with the Alphabet Hills in the background.
Photo by Dave Hart*

Iceberg Lake to the Bremner Mine

Text and photos by Colleen Metzger



Plane drop-off

I was having trouble wrapping my mind around the reality of the situation. On Monday I had been in Massachusetts, where I had been working for a theatre company all summer. Barely 48 hours later, I was above McCarthy in a small plane, headed into the wild backcountry of Wrangell – Saint Elias National Park.

There were four of us in the plane: Maureen Peterson, Janetta Norvel Smith, Shane Docherty, and I, and we were embarking on an ambitious hike from Iceberg Lake to the historical mining town of Bremner. Maureen heard about the beauty of Iceberg Lake from a friend and posed the idea of a fly-in trip as we day-dreamed our way through frigid winter hiking trips. Shane had heard of the traverse to Bremner, and we started to develop an itinerary, assisted by descriptions of the trip posted by Wrangell Mountain Air and *Backpacker Magazine*. Shane and Maureen were the masterminds behind our trek, donating countless hours to drafting our route.

After dipping and weaving through several glaciated valleys, the plane landed on a dusty airstrip of glacial silt. The pilot hauled our packs out of the plane and unwrapped our canisters of bear spray, which had traveled hilariously duct-taped to a strut of the plane as a safety precaution. The plane zoomed away and silence abruptly set in. A knot formed in my stomach. I was no

stranger to backcountry travel, but I had never done a fly-in trip before. Usually to get to the middle of nowhere, I have to walk. The sudden solitude was unnerving and exhilarating at the same time.

We shrugged into our backpacks, but only meandered about half a mile before we set up camp. We spent the first day hiking away from our destination in order to check out Iceberg Lake. Day One was therefore pretty laid back, which I was grateful for since 11 days worth of food rendered my pack unpleasantly heavy. The valley we were in was breathtaking; the once-glaciated valley was full of rolling dunes of silt, lending the place an otherworldly, desolate quality. But every once in a while we would turn a corner and a burbling brook would cut through the bleak landscape, a ribbon of electric green moss and vibrant purple and pink flowers. Each peak seemed to cradle a glacier, and rivulets of water sloshed down the rock faces, filling deep teal tarns. The official Iceberg Lake, a jökulhlaup-inducing lake, was not filled, but we headed up a moraine and suddenly a dynamic glacier stretched in front of us, a tributary of the Tana Glacier. And pooling in front of the glacier was a lake, the well-spring of Iceberg Lake, choked with Volkswagen-sized icebergs.



Iceberg Lake

Over the next few days we fell into a pattern: cross a river, cross a glacier, bushwhack, cross some boulders, repeat. We were isolated in a stunning location, but the tradeoff was the utter lack of trails that made progress arduous and occasionally frustrating. Our second day required several water crossings, including one in glacial runoff so bitterly cold my feet felt like they were being filleted by a million tiny knives. My entire body was cramped and so badly wracked with shivering I could barely pull my boots back on. But we climbed onto the West Chisma Glacier, and were able to cruise along for several miles with no obstacles. We picked our way off the glacier through a boulder field, into a totally different landscape: lush, green, sunny. I was originally awed by the vibrant greenery, but found myself dreaming of an alpine environment as we spent Day Three bushwhacking uphill, slipping on slick grasses, and bashing through towering willows and cow parsnip in order to gain a serene, rolling ridgeline that offered views of the Bremner Glacier and led us into our first pass. The views were spectacular, but the uphill bushwhacking was unanimously voted one of the most grueling moments of the trip.

We hiked along, aiming to camp at a lake nestled at the end of the pass. We started heading downhill, lake in sight, when something caught my eye: a glowing orange tent stationed in front of the lake. It was shocking to see other hikers after days of utter solitude. We often crossed ghostly footprints of hikers past, but until now our trek had been remarkably void of human evidence. It is rare to go for a hike without spying a blackened fire ring, the flutter of garbage snagged on a branch, or a bald tent site, but this was the first indication that we were not alone. The company was beneficial; as the hikers had come from the Bremner Mine, they provided valuable advice regard-

ing the journey ahead.

Day Four was perhaps the most difficult day of our entire trek. We needed to cross the Bremner Glacier, and from early morning we could see our objective: a large boulder on the edge of the glacier. It looked so close. But to reach it, we had to hike down a boulder field. Then we had to hike down a waterfall. Then we had to skid down a steep wall of sand and scree. Then we had to go up and over a moraine. What looked so simple from above took hours to carefully negotiate. More nerve-wracking was the fact that there was only one route down onto the glacier – many routes looked more accessible and appealing than the route we chose. But the literature – and our friends from the last camp – all reiterated that there was only one route onto the glacier. So we paused frequently to check the maps, and confirm with the GPS – the only time on the trip we used our GPS – that we were on the correct route. Once we reached the glacier we had to cross several moraines, picking our way over ice covered in loose boulders. We finally reached the large boulder that had been in our crosshairs all day, and exited the glacier and made camp by an iceberg-choked lake framed by a sheer wall of ice.

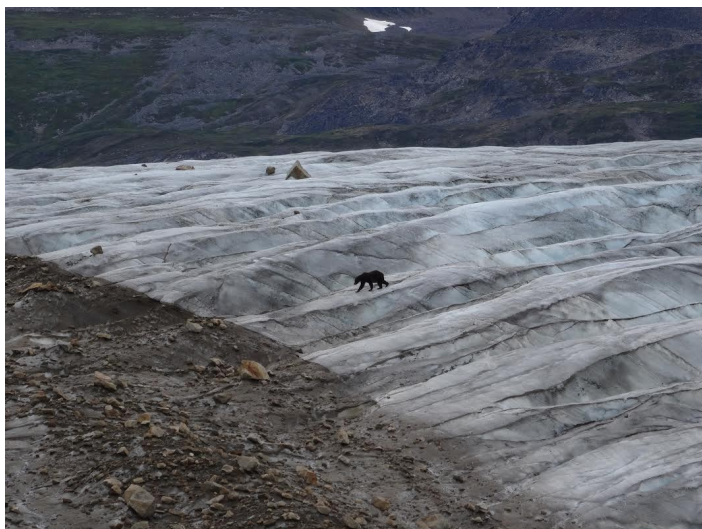


View from camp just off the Bremner Glacier.

I found myself reluctant to close my eyes with such a spectacular view, so I lay for a long time watching the sun dim over the monolithic ice walls. I finally drifted off, only to be jerked awake at 2:00 in the morning, startled by the thunderous cracking of the glacier. I felt a primitive awe, fear, and respect for the ancient behemoth.

The next morning was easily the most remarkable moment of the trip. While hiking, we had seen tons of fresh bear scat. Countless bear paw prints mingled with the footprints of

past hikers. And my dreams were constantly wracked with images of bears snuffling through camp. But we didn't see a single bear until Day Five. I was getting water for breakfast when Shane hollered to come look at the glacier. There, padding majestically across the lip of the cerulean blue glacier and silhouetted by the morning sun, was a massive grizzly bear.



Bear on the Bremner Glacier

We started the day heading uphill, toward our second pass, and saw a second bear in the distance, no doubt enjoying the globe-sized blueberries that blanketed much of the terrain. Day Five involved a lot of bushwhacking. The first push uphill was very manageable. Since the route occasionally hosted guided trips, we were able to pick out a faint trail that helped us avoid another day of bushwhacking uphill. But the trail we were following petered out, and the bushwhacking set in. We had to sidehill along the mountain through thick alders, until a clear route allowed us to drop to the valley floor and cross two unnamed creeks. Then we bushwhacked back uphill in order to traverse our next pass to the Monahan Creek headwaters. We had a stunning view of the Bremner Glacier all day, and the verdant valley floor was charming, but after a few hours in the brush, I was eager to return to an alpine elevation, which I was thrilled to hit the next day.

Day Six we headed through the rocky pass to a string of alpine tarns. Again, the landscape took a dramatic turn – from choking vegetation to desolate peaks comprised of shards of rock within half a mile. We entered the pass, and decided to call a half-day. We camped near a charming lake ringed with snowy peaks thrusting raggedly out of the valley of scree, and spent the rest of the day bathing in the chilly lake, doing laundry, and relaxing.

The next morning we meandered gently downhill, leaving the grey scree-shattered peaks and easing back into a lush valley

floor. We crossed Monahan Creek, and immediately started chugging uphill to our next pass. It was steep and it was scree, but the desolate beauty and staggering views made time fly by. That night, we went through the pass and camped near an idyllic, mirror-smooth tarn.



Alpine infinity pool near the headwaters of Monahan Creek.

On Day Eight, we were in the home stretch. We started heading downhill, leaving the pass behind, and suddenly ... the end was in sight. We turned a corner and saw the Bremner Airstrip in the distance, a wide ribbon of salvation in the dusty floor of the valley. The best part of hitting the airstrip was, for the first time on the trip, finding a well-trod trail winding down to the valley floor, past the airstrip, and into the dilapidated town of Bremner. After scree, bushwhacking, slick grasses, and countless river crossings, the trail felt like hiking on a red carpet.

In its heyday, Bremner was a mining town, and the last few miles of the trip were littered with rusted detritus left by miners. We finished the trek with a few days to spare, so we decided to explore the area around Bremner, which had old buildings and abandoned mines scattered through the valley, along with faint trails leading up to distant peaks. Bremner had a caretaker that lived in one of the old bunkhouses over the summer, since theft and vandalism plagued the historical village in the past. The next morning it was pouring rain, so we spent the day relaxing in the old bunkhouse, where the caretaker encouraged visitors to create a work of art with provided supplies or flip through books on Alaskan wildlife. Our weather had been remarkably mild, and I was grateful the only all-day downpour we encountered occurred on a day we could spend mostly indoors. That night the rain slowed, and we watched George, the resident bear, amble through the valley, before retiring to our tents for the last time.

On our last day, we meandered up a footpath, following the pipe system of the old pump house to a charming mountain steam, stopping frequently to gobble handfuls of swollen blueberries where we had seen George snacking the night before. We then headed down the valley and had lunch at sparkling Jack Snipe Lake. On our trek back, we explored the Lucky Girl Mine, picking our way through collapsed houses, forgotten cables, and rusted wheelbarrows of the surprisingly intact mine site.

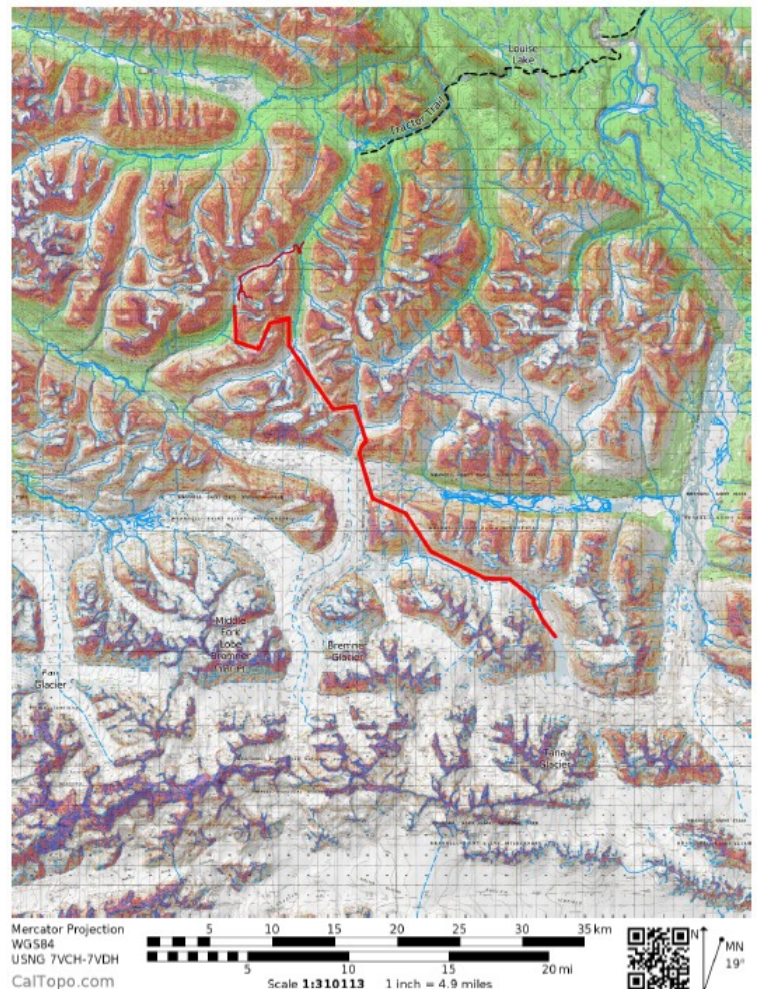
Then we shouldered our packs and headed back to the airstrip. The most stressful moment of the trip was waiting for the whine of the airplane engine – hoping our pilot did not forget us! We cheered when the little plane came zooming out from between the mountain peaks, our deliverance back to the land of beer and showers.

The flight out left me awestruck, as we sped over a prowling bear, and caught a fleeting glance of a black wolf. We landed and spent the night in McCarthy, celebrating our achievement over burgers and beer, already discussing our next adventure, tasked with the near-impossible task of topping the stunning views and countless challenges of our time in the Eastern Chugach Mountains.

If you plan to do the trip, I recommend using Wrangell Mountain Air. For more information, tips, or stories, don't hesitate to email me at colleenalexis@gmail.com.



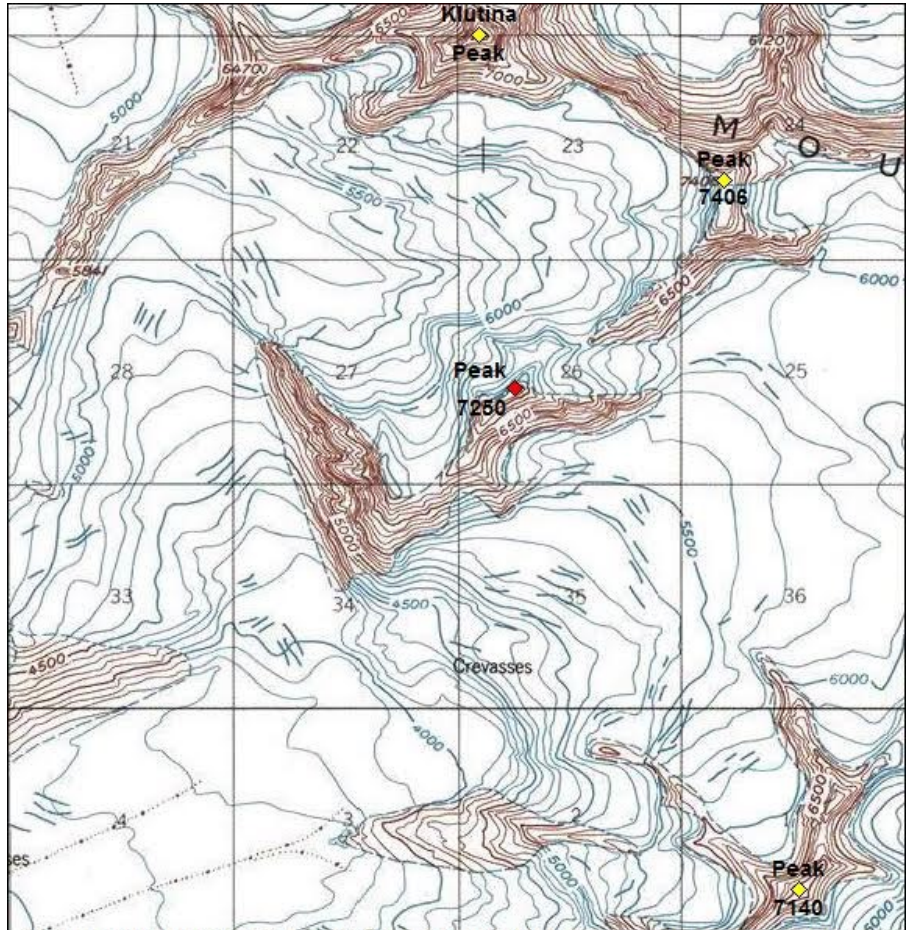
Model A Ford dump truck at the Bremner Mine.



Peak of the Month: Peak 7250

Text by Steve Gruhn

- Mountain Range:** Chugach Mountains
- Borough:** Unorganized Borough
- Drainage:** Valdez Glacier
- Latitude/Longitude:** 61° 19' 2" North, 146° 4' 54" West
- Elevation:** 7250 (±50) feet
- Prominence:** 800 feet from Peak 7406 in the Valdez Glacier and Klutina Lake drainages
- Adjacent Peak:** Peak 7406
- Distinctness:** 800 feet from Peak 7406
- USGS Maps:** Valdez (B-6) and Valdez B-6 SW
- First Recorded Ascent:** May 14, 2004, by Glen Hearn, Craig Hollinger, and David E. Williams
- Route of First Recorded Ascent:** East face to the northeast ridge
- Access Point:** Northeast of the Knik River Bridge on the Old Glenn Highway



Map created with TOPO!® ©2003 National Geographic (www.nationalgeographic.com/topo)

On April 24, 2004, Glen Hearn, Craig Hollinger, and David Williams were dropped off at the end of a road north and east of the Knik River Bridge on the Old Glenn Highway. They set out up the Knik River Valley to make a west-to-east traverse of the Chugach Mountains. They made their way up the north side of the Knik River to Metal Creek, which they crossed to reach the Knik Glacier. They then dropped into Grasshopper Valley and ascended the Marcus Baker Glacier to 8900-foot M&M Pass, from which they descended to the West Fork of the Matanuska Glacier. On May 1 they climbed Peak 9330 between the West Fork of the Matanuska Glacier and the East Fork of the Matanuska Glacier via its southern aspect. On May 3 they left their camp on the East Fork of the Matanuska Glacier and climbed the north ridge of Rhino Peak (10930). The trio then skied to the Powell Glacier, crossed 7200-foot Harrison Pass to the Sylvester Glacier, and crossed a col to the Tarr Glacier. On May 5 the party moved their camp from the Tarr Glacier to a col about a mile north of Mount Siegfried (9205), skied to the southwest ridge of Mount Siegfried, which they ascended to its

summit, and then returned to their col camp. The team then descended to the Nelchina Glacier. On May 7 they climbed Appalachia Peak (9260) via its east-northeast ridge and skied through 7000-foot Science Pass to the Science Glacier. On May 8 they climbed the east-northeast aspect of Mount Fafnir (10620) to its summit. The next day they descended the Science Glacier to the Tazlina Glacier and continued south to 6300-foot Cashman Pass. They crossed Cashman Pass and descended the Valdez Glacier to about the 3100-foot level, where a tributary glacier flowed in from the east. They ascended this tributary glacier to a 5700-foot col, where they set up camp. On May 12 the team climbed the northwest aspect to the southwest ridge of Peak 7086 above the Valdez Glacier and continued to the summit. That same day they also climbed Abercrombie Mountain via its east ridge and then moved camp to the 5600-foot pass overlooking the Tonsina Glacier. On May 13 the party climbed the northeast ridge of Peak 7145 in the Tsina Glacier and Valdez Glacier drainages to its summit, moved camp to about the 5000-foot level a mile and a half down the Tonsina

Glacier, and Hearn and Williams climbed Peak 6120 in the Tonsina Glacier and Klutina Lake drainages via its southwest ridge.

On May 14, Day 22 of their trip, Hearn, Hollinger, and Williams skied four miles west from their camp and then booted up the east face of Peak 7250 to the upper northeast ridge and onto the small, icy summit. Hearn and Williams then skied two and a half miles southeast and climbed a 6950-foot point on the southwest ridge of Peak 7310 in the Valdez Glacier and Klutina Lake drainages, and the entire party returned to their camp on the Tonsina Glacier.

On May 15, the team moved their camp down the Tonsina Glacier to the Tonsina River, briefly interrupting their sledding to ascend a 5100-foot col between the Tonsina Glacier and the

Tsina Glacier, ski the upper reaches of a tributary of the Tsina Glacier, and boot up the west ridge of Peak 6430 in the Tonsina Glacier and Tsina Glacier drainages. On May 16 they crossed the 3200-foot pass and descended to Stuart Creek. They followed the south side of Stuart Creek to an access road for the Trans-Alaska Pipeline, which they walked to the Richardson Highway, and then continued southward to the Alaska Rendezvous Lodge. The traverse had taken them 24 days.

I don't know of a second ascent of Peak 7250.

The information for this article came from Williams' report titled "Sunny Days in the Chugach Mountains," which appeared on pages 86 through 88 of the 2005 *Canadian Alpine Journal*; and from my correspondence with both Hollinger and Williams.

MCA Board Meeting Agenda — Thursday, September 8, 2016

Attendees: Cory Hinds, Jayme Mack, Jennifer DuFord, Ed Smith, Stephen Austria

1. VP-Programs (Galen Flint)

- a. September: Ice Fest registration/check
- b. October: Ice climbing (TBD)
- c. TBD – new Board

2. Treasurer's report (Aaron Gallagher)

- a. Revenue exceeding expenses, as expected since we did not construct the new hut
- b. Money is available for helicopter support for waste barrels at existing huts this year

3. Status on action items we decided to pursue:

- a. Huts fundraiser (Max Neale, Galen Flint, Jennifer, Aaron)
 - i. Update: possible large donor identified. Suggest holding off on fundraiser until we see how things develop.
- b. Welcoming new members
 - i. Expect new members after Ice Fest
 - ii. Max to generate welcome message
 - iii. Ed Smith to organize an event for new members (climb at the new Rock Gym then social gathering at Moose's Tooth?)
 - iv. Provide information on our huts

c. Huts

- i. Completed March 15 presentation
- ii. Max will ask presenters to update slideshow for members

4. Training:

- a. Ice Fest - Jayme
- b. Trip leader training – Ed. Set a date, get in *the Scree* and website, email listserv.

5. Huts

- a. New Hut
 - i. Lease application/development plan prepared and submitted to Department of Natural Resources. Application accepted with no changes. Paid \$100 lease fee. Awaiting assignment to DNR adjudicator.
 - ii. 2017 construction

6. Mentoring

- a. Want to keep the program going. Action item for new board.
- b. Social event with Mentors and Mentees? No decision.

7. Nominations for officers/board members

- a. Elections are in October

- b. Board is tasked to assemble possible nominations for board and officer positions

8. Human Waste at Mint Hut

- a. MCA and Greg Bragiel have been struggling with issue for a long time. Barrel system working OK, but not great. Urine diverter installed. Greg mentioned option of getting rid of barrels, letting waste “disintegrate.” Seems like backsliding. Board would rather spend money for more regular emptying of barrels. Give urine separator a chance.

9. Review Individual Action Items

- a. Cory:
 - i. Run board and general meetings.
 - ii. Organize the design/budget/construction of new hut.
 - iii. Ask members to lead trips and be mentors.
- b. Galen:
 - i. Organize Huts presentation.
 - ii. Arrange and announce upcoming programs, summer outings.
 - iii. Ask members to lead trips and be mentors.
- c. Aaron:
 - i. Work with Max, Galen, Jennifer on huts fundraiser in the fall.
 - ii. Assist with organization of another summer rock-climbing course?
 - iii. Ask members to lead trips and be mentors.
- d. Max:
 - i. Arrange a meeting place.
 - ii. Type up greeting for new members.
 - iii. Update and distribute huts presentation.
 - iv. Ask members to lead trips and be mentors.
- e. Carlene Van Tol: Resigning from the Board due to heavy workload. Will still be involved in the MCA, but needs to step aside for a while.
- f. Nathan Hebda:
 - i. Work with Rachad Rayess on continued organization for mentor program
 - ii. Organize signup for snow-climbing training
 - iii. Research stove options for new hut

- iv. Ask members to lead trips and be mentors.

g. Stephen:

- i. Liaison with Ed Smith. Communicate Board agenda and actions.
- ii. Help organize trip-leader training.
- iii. Ask members to lead trips and be mentors.

h. Jennifer:

- i. Planning for summer picnic event.
- ii. Work with Max, Galen, and Aaron on huts fundraiser in the fall
- iii. Focus on Parks Advisory.
- iv. Ask members to lead trips and be mentors.

i. Jayme:

- i. Help identify other training we can offer MCA, taught by professionals.
- ii. Focus on Ice Festival
- iii. Ask members to lead trips and be mentors.

j. Ed Smith:

- i. Continue to get trips posted in *the Scree* and on website
- ii. Organize an event for new members
- iii. Ask members to lead trips and be mentors.

10. Next meeting board meeting: 13 October

11. Adjournment

Mountaineering Club of Alaska

President	Cory Hinds	229-6809	Board member (term expires in 2016)	Jamye Mack	382-0212
Vice-President	Galen Flint	650-207-0810	Board member (term expires in 2016)	vacant	
Secretary	Max Neale	207-712-1355	Board member (term expires in 2017)	Nathan Hebda	310-3255
Treasurer	Aaron Gallagher	250-9555	Board member (term expires in 2017)	Stephen Austria	402-540-7037
			Board member (term expires in 2016)	Jennifer DuFord	227-6995

Annual membership dues: Single \$20, Family \$25

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.

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. Articles should be submitted by the 24th 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.

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: Aaron Gallagher - membership@mtnclubak.org

Hiking and Climbing Committee: Ed Smith - 854-5702 or hcc@mtnclubak.org

Huts: Greg Bragiel - 569-3008 or huts@mtnclubak.org

Calendar: Stuart Grenier - 337-5127 or stugrenier@gmail.com

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Web: www.mtnclubak.org

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

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