the **SCREE**

Mountaineering Club of Alaska

May 2025

Volume 68, Number 5

"If I have seen further, it is by standing on the shoulders of giants." - Sir Isaac Newton

May Meeting

Wednesday, May 7, 2025

6:00-8:00 p.m. at the BP Energy Center

"Minus 148," an evening with author Art Davidson

Contents:

In Memorium: Helga Byhre Passage Peak, Central Chugach Mountains Peak 5330 and New Route Attempt, Southwest Ridge of Mount Adolph Knopf, Coast Mountains Broken Knife, Kenai Mountains Eaqinaltl'il and Peak 6060, Central Chugach Mountains Central Chugach Mountains Traverse Granite Tors, Tanana Hills Peak of the Month: Peak F, Nulato Hills

The Mountaineering Club of Alaska

"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."

Cover Photo

Helga Bading on the first ascent of Mount Spurr, 1960. Photo by Bert Puchtler.

APRIL MEETING

Wednesday, May 7, 2025

6:00-8:00 p.m. at the BP Energy Center, 1014 Energy Court, Anchorage

"Minus 148," an evening with author Art Davidson

Contribute to the Scree!

Have something to share with the Alaska mountaineering community? Trip reports for all levels of mountaineering—from Flattop Mountain to Mount McKinley, from Kichatna Spire to Bodenburg Butte—are welcome and requested. We also welcome letters to the editor, notes, essays, poetry, photos, and the occasional creative writing piece. Contributions can be emailed as attachments to either mcascree@gmail.com or scree@mtnclubak.org. Material should be submitted by the 11th of each month to appear in the following month's issue. We prefer text in MicroSoft Word format. Photos should include captions and photographer credits and should not be embedded in the text. While we're not sticklers on word count, submissions that are more than six pages will be split into multiple issues.

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For the MCA Membership Application and Liability Waiver, visit https://www.mtnclubak.org/membership

Check Facebook for last-minute trips and activities. Or, schedule one that you want to organize. Follow the MCA on Instagram: @mountaineering_club_ak

Announcements

Scheduled Trips

Flattop Mountain Solstice Sleepout

June 20th, 2025

No trip leader

Summer Mountaineering Course

July 10-16, 2025. Instructor: Dave Staeheli. Maximum of 10 students.

We plan to cover a broad range of alpine skills, including snow climbing, rope travel, anchoring on both snow and rock, rappelling, prussiking, belaying, ice axe and crampon skills, etc. While not a "crevasse-rescue course," we will spend a limited amount of time on it. The course will take place at the MCA's Mint Hut. The approach is six to eight hours, eight miles, and 2400 feet of elevation gain. The newly expanded hut will be able to accommodate the entire party, as the hut will be closed to other people, so tenting is optional. No prerequisites, except to have a reasonable amount of fitness and be able to maintain oneself in a camping environment. \$100 deposit to reserve a spot in the course, refundable upon completion of the course or with cancellation at least 30 days before the start of the course. Register here: https://www.eventbrite.com/e/2025-mca-mountaineering-course-july-10-16-tickets-1279728986849.

Mint Hut Closure July 10-16, 2025

The Mint Hut will be closed July 10-16 due to use by the MCA Summer Mountaineering Course.

Nuggets in the Scree

Dave Hart emailed to report that on March 15 Lance Miller and he had climbed Tyre Peak (7490 feet) in the Cordova Glacier and Woodworth Glacier drainages of the Central Chugach Mountains. The previous day the pair made a snowmachine-assisted ascent of Peak 6665 in the Valdez Glacier drainage of the Central Chugach Mountains.

Ryan Hokanson emailed to report that on April 1 Lauren Brand, August Franzen, Tim Stephens, and he had climbed the south ridge of The Tusk (6825 feet) in The Beach and Marshall Glacier drainages of the Central Chugach Mountains.

We look forward to reading detailed accounts of these ascents in future issues of the Scree.

In Memorium: Helga Byhre

(December 14, 1926 – August 24, 2024)

Text by Steve Gruhn and Michael Bading. Photos courtesy of Michael Bading.

The MCA recently lost one of its founding members when Helga Byhre (formerly Bading) passed away in Seattle, Washington, on August 24, 2024.

Helga was born in Berlin, Germany, on December 14, 1926. In the fall of 1944, at the age of 17, she joined the German Air Force and worked on an all-women spotlight crew in eastern Germany during World War II. After the war, she escaped communist-surrounded Berlin and moved to Bremen. As an avid hiker, Helga joined the German Alpine Club while living in Bremen, where she truly found her love of climbing. She married Peter Bading in January 1951 and they both immigrated to Toronto, Canada, in 1952.

During her time in Toronto, Helga read many books on the far north and dreamed of living off the land. In 1953 Peter and Helga traveled extensively around the U.S. and eventually ended up in Vancouver, Canada. On their U.S. trip they met and befriended Bud Helmericks, who wrote a series of adventure books about his travels in the Brooks Range of Alaska. Helmericks was planning on building a hunting camp on Walker Lake in the Brooks Range. He eventually invit-





Mint Hut: 61.85677. -149.07977 ed Peter and Helga to join him in 1955 to help him build the camp. Helga and Peter spent a year living at Walker Lake, building a cabin and living off the land before moving to Anchorage in 1956.

In Anchorage Helga became a pilot, worked for Jonas Brothers furriery, and was an avid climber of many Alaskan peaks. After reading an article in the *Anchorage Daily Times* about a June 1958 attempt by four Anchorage mountaineers to climb Iliamna Volcano (10016 feet), Helga worked to bring together people with an interest in mountaineering to form the MCA. She served as the club's Secretary-Treasurer from 1958 to 1960. She made the earliest recorded ascents of 14 peaks in Alaska, including Peak 3165 in the Walker Lake drainage of the Endicott Mountains and Peak 4055 in the Walker Lake drainage of the Schwatka Mountains in 1955; Rainbow Peak (3543 feet) and South Yuyanq' Ch'ex (5005 feet) in 1958; Bashful Peak (8005 feet) in 1959; Arkose Peak (5325 feet), Middle Glacier Peak (3986 feet), Mount Spurr (11070 feet), and Tincan Proper (3950 feet) in 1960; Mount Gilbert (9638 feet) and Souvenir Peak (5820 feet) in 1961; Kickstep Mountain (4660 feet) in 1962; and Peril Peak (7040 feet) and White Lice Mountain (6676 feet) in 1964. She authored 21 trip reports in *the Scree* (contributing as recently as the January 2018 issue), gave three presentations to the MCA, and led three club-sanctioned trips.

Helga attempted to climb Mount McKinley (20310 feet) in 1960, but eventually contracted pulmonary edema high on the mountain and was rescued by the famous bush pilot, Don Sheldon. The rescue was featured in *Life* magazine.

After Helga's marriage to Peter ended, she moved away from Alaska in 1964 and settled in Washington with her two sons. She eventually married former MCA member and Seattle Mountain Rescue member Bob Byhre. She joined The Mountaineers and remained active, hiking, climbing, skiing, and kayaking throughout her life. She climbed all of the major Cascade Range peaks, including Mount Rainier (14411 feet) three times (including the second female winter ascent, in the late 1960s), the last time when she was almost 60 years of age. In the 1980s, she became an instrument-rated pilot and flew from Seattle to Alaska twice with fellow climbers and pilots. In 2011 she authored a memoir, <u>Views from the Hill</u>.

A celebration of life is planned for June 7 in Edmonds, Washington.





Above: Helga Bading, Lowell Thomas Jr., and Steve Foss after the first ascent of Mount Gilbert, 1961. Photo by Paul Crews, Sr.

Left: Helga Byhre on Mount Rainier, 1986. Photo by Betty Watson.

Passage Peak (5990 feet), Central Chugach Mountains

Text and photos by Ben Wade

Trip Planning:

Passage Peak holds a prominent place on the Whittier skyline; across Passage Canal it pokes up to nearly 6000 feet straight from the ocean. It poses several interesting challenges; the Whittier weather, the ocean, the rainforest, the Billings Glacier toe, and many more. From the information available it appears that Passage Peak has no documented ascents, leaving a lot to be determined before we could reach the summit. During the preceding year I made several kayak landings on the beach including one bushwhack to the Billings Glacier toe.

The scouting trips showed that the kayak approach requires low wind speed (3 to 5 miles per hour, with lower than 10 mile-per-hour gusts). To enable the summit push, we also needed reasonably sunny weather. These conditions are relatively rare in a place like Whittier.

Starting around 6:30 a.m., my partner Ben Americus and I loaded and launched from Lu Young Public Beach in Whittier. After a few minutes of ice-breaking, we made it to the open sea. Before sunrise we were standing on the beach east of Billings Creek. A few minutes for transitions and breakfast and we started the hiking section.

Gaining the toe of the glacier involved a very interesting slabwalk up past a massive rock hill and across a frozen lake. Under cold conditions it went fast and easy. During a previous scout trip, we had gained the top of the rock hill after numerous wa-

ter crossings. This time we proceeded directly to the toe, changing into ski boots. The next few thousand feet was straightforward skinning. A decently thick snowpack and bulletproof conditions enabled us to confidently cross multiple crevasses. During a thaw cycle or with less snow, the Billings Glacier would be a distinctly unhappy place to travel. Clouds had been forming since sunrise, but we broke through into sunshine on the accumulation zone.

The "crux" of the route on most days is glacier access; on February 9, 2025, the closest thing to a crux was the result of whatever gave me food poisoning. The hardest part of the route that day was the final ridge. Steep and hard snow was



made simple with the right tools, and we gained the summit quickly.

The descent was exciting; the glacier boasts plenty of room for wide-open turns. Skiing the tension zone to the lower glacier was slightly more nerve-wracking due to poor visibility and crevasses. Without incident we made it back to our hiking boots and then kayaks. Amazing trip, Alaska makes me feel privileged every time.



The Billings Glacier toe with Passage Peak behind.



Satellite map 3D rendering with route tracks.

Peak 5330 and New Route Attempt, Southwest Ridge of Mount Adolph Knopf (6250 feet), Coast Mountains

Text by Zack Bursell





For those willing to put in a long day on foot, the ridgelines extending into the Juneau Icefield from the nearby road system still have routes yet to be explored. On July 13, 2023, I set off alone to attempt Mount Adolph Knopf (6250 feet), via the southwest ridge extending between the Cowee and Eagle Glaciers. While this peak has seen ascents from heli-drops on the icefield, my goal was to make it to Adolph Knopf and back in one day from the Eagle Glacier Trailhead at sea level. No documentation exists for attempts on this ridgeline.

In the style of the old mountain runners of the area, I was equipped with running shoes and a small pack for this light-andfast day mission.

Attempting to take the most direct route possible, I jogged from

my car up the Eagle Glacier Trail to the unmaintained Cowee Creek Trail where I hoped to surge up into the alpine via a conveniently graded slope just off the trail. This early misstep nearly foiled the whole trip, as I found myself swimming through nearly a mile of thick vegetation. Relieved to finally see daylight again after a couple hours of bushwhacking, I emerged into open alpine tundra. Three hours into the trip, I paused briefly to let a yearling black bear move out of my path – the ridgeline finally in sight.

The ridge proved straightforward albe-

it challenging. A series of steep, rocky scrambles followed as I picked my way up and down three local summits – Thane Mountain [1006 meters (3300 feet)], Point 4153 (1266 meters), and Peak 4344 (1324 meters) – before the landscape gave way to a snowfield in the shadow of a sweeping ridge to the northeast that led to a small thumb in the distance. The nearly twomile trot across the snowfield and up the ridge was simple enough, but became dizzying as the expanding scale of the landscape revealed itself. As I made my way up the final push, which included a short section of Class 4 scrambling, I was greeted by a sheer cliff extending a thousand feet below onto the Cowee Glacier to my left and an unsettlingly steep wall of nearly two thousand feet falling into an arm of the Eagle Glacier to my right. Several miles of rock spires and glacial ice and

> snow led the way to a distant Mount Adolph Knopf.

At over six hours in and with food supplies dwindling, I was forced to be content at this unnamed and possibly unclimbed peak at about 5330 feet (58° 38' 31.0" North, 134° 45' 24.6" West). I took a moment to snap a few photos and revel in the exposure, then jogged the remaining 12 or so miles back to my car.

Zack Bursell and all his gear at the summit of Peak 5330. The Eagle Glacier is to the right below and in the background is the Juneau Icefield. Photo by Zack Bursell.



Broken Knife (3886 feet), Kenai Mountains

Text and photos by David Martindell

The peak is colloquially known as Broken Knife, though you won't see it on a map with that name, instead just a number, usually around 3800 feet. It stands as one of the finest on the skyline across Kachemak Bay. I think of those initial peaks as our "front range." Alpine Ridge (3832 feet), Poot Peak [788 meters (2585 feet)], Sadie Peak (4320 feet), Grace Ridge (956 meters [3136 feet)], and Broken Knife: the town of Homer's view.

Broken Knife is often bastardized as you hear our small outdoor community toss around ob-

jectives such as skiing Broken Knife or climbing Broken Knife. Skiing it is never skiing it, but instead gleefully skiing the ridges that gently lead to it or away from it in varying directions. A more appropriate description is skiing Jakolof Ridge. Perhaps two to four people annually do ski the notorious line known as Broken Knife Proper, but in reality, that line, too, is far from the mountain's true summit, a couloir, easily accessed with a little steep hiking.

Every now and then you will hear someone claim to have climbed Broken Knife. My ears always prick up when I hear this, and I quickly ask, "How did you access the summit?"

The distinction is relevant. Looking across the water, you see a mountain rise from the bay to a beautiful snowfield, gradually steepening until it stands up, presenting a sharp





knife-edge ridge. At the far side of this ridge, what looks to be a vertical step of rock shoots skyward. How tall is that rock face? How difficult is it to even get to that rock face? Every aspect we can study from town looks steep. If there isn't avalanche danger, there's rockfall danger. Chutes lead down in all directions – and we all know what the rock quality is like. The view offers more questions than answers, so if I hear someone claim they've climbed it, I have to know how.

Not pictured from our side of the water is the southeast aspect of the peak. While challenging to access (and requiring the dreaded bushwhack), once above the thrashing, you can continue the journey up a very manageable rocky ramp and gain the summit. I have heard of several parties that have accomplished that. I bet it's a lot of fun,

> and I wouldn't mind going for it someday – but I really only had one idea in mind for myself and Broken Knife and that was to unlock that rocky notch: the step that blocked the summit.

Around 1989, Dino Banco and Steve Stauber climbed that rock face, from the steep aspect, straight to the summit. It is believed that at that time they were the first and only people to have summited from that steep side. Dino, forever a devoted rock climber, chose late summer for his attempt, hoping for dry rock. He and Steve spent two days approaching, climbing and descending the mountain. Their report is, "Dino led the rotten rock from the notch with some stoppers and a few ham-

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Traversing under "Lynn Hill" toward the final snow slope to the ridge proper.



mered-in pitons. He called it 5.7." From the summit they slung a horn and rappelled off.

In March of 2010, I went over solo to explore around and see if I could get close enough to learn something about the challenge. It was the kind of trip we all do in our first year of "mountain climbing." I'll spare myself the embarrassing details and stick with "fledgling" as a good description of the experience. The only thing I really learned those days was that I knew very little about any of it. I spent the following 10 years learning to climb rock and ice, ski, and travel safely in the alpine. I continued to stare at Broken Knife.

Late winter 2020 found me quarantining in Jakolof Bay. I had a free cabin to live in, a new girlfriend to go on adventures with, and world-class ice climbing and skiing out the back door. While the world was in turmoil, we made the best of it.

We skied four days a week and iceclimbed two days a week, taking a day off here and there. One nice thing about touring in the mountains every day was we became intimately familiar with the snowpack. We knew areas of concern, we knew exactly what time of day the sun would hit certain places, and we developed confidence in knowing when and where we could be, while remaining safe. In the four weeks we spent there, we did the approach to the upper mountain probably five times, getting close enough to know how to access the knife-edge ridge and how long it would take to get there. We were becoming ready to try that final step.

Most of the way up the initial approach is safe, with near-zero avalanche concerns. We would skin up the "Elevator Shaft" (Mile 11 of Jakolof Bay Road – a popular skin track), tour past "Motorcycle Hill" and "Avy Hill," and finally ascend "The Moon." At that point we would be approaching the upper mountain. A steep snow slope would need to be traversed under "Lynn Hill" – a rocky spot known to release in the afternoon heat. My goal was to be done with this section, ideally up

and down, before the sun hit it.

I think the alarm went off at 2 a.m., but neither of us was sleeping. A nearly-full moon made for an enjoyable start.

I remember the day as though everything worked great. The weather and conditions were just so perfect. No foreboding thoughts or concerns – well, at least from me anyway. Jessi Dullinger was more or less along for the ride, her experiences with this sort of thing (at that time) limited. She put on a brave face and placed her trust in me. We had many unknowns ahead of us, but my mantra to her was we would figure it out when we got there.





We finished the steep traverse and then ascended the less-steep snow slope to access the knife ridge proper. Traveling along the ridge required some more traversing and crampon travel until we got to a broken section. Jessi rappelled a 20-foot steep, rocky step and then I quickly down-climbed. The terrain ahead fell away, suddenly revealing steep snowy couloirs with one more rocky notch before we could get to the base of the final rocky face/ step. We roped up there, and stayed roped-up for the duration of the climb as I led out across the airy traverse.

After the airy traverse and upon establishing ourselves at the base of the rock face, I climbed the final step in two pitches. The first pitch linked two steep, snowy sections to the base of a rocky ramp, which was coated with a thin layer of ice. I belayed Jessi from a piton and a nut after the first pitch, and after scratching up the ice-covered rock, gave a hip belay from the summit. We rappelled from the top off a natural rock bollard (Dino's horn?) and then rapped again from the one piton at the pitch below.

The down-climb and backtrack were at times painfully slow – Jessi was a much better skier than I, but her experience with crampons was still in the early learning stages. Because of this, we blew through our hope to be done with that steep snow slope before the sun's heat hit it. Regardless, it was not a problem, and our good fortune persisted. To cheer Jessi along, I played the song "John Deere Green" on my iPhone, to honor the '90s music star Joe Diffie, who passed away earlier that week. Together we laughed and merrily talked our way lower and lower and prior to ascending "The Moon," we stopped, squatted down and shared a moment together, holding hands as we took in the view one last time.

Lower down and near the main skiing area, we happened to run into several friends who were over for a day trip. We took a lap down the always-fun "Southern Comfort," skinned back up, and then skied to the road. I think that one care-free ski run, on perfect afternoon corn snow, was more important to Jessi than any of the rest of the day! I had the afterglow of succeeding on a years-long ob-

jective. I couldn't have been more pleased.

I always leave trips like this feeling immense gratitude – gratitude for this great wild place I live in and for the life of freedom to explore and challenge myself in it. We are surely lucky people to live here and have opportunities to dream up these kinds of adventures and excursions. I can't wait for the next one!



Łaqinaltl'il (6450 feet) and Peak 6060, Central Chugach Mountains

Text and photos by Ben Wade

Like all days during June in Alaska, our day started very early. Kaleb Notte and I showed up at the parking lot at the end of Maud Road. Our plan, to summit some peaks at the top of the Jim Creek drainage, was in full swing. The first leg of the journey was biking. One buggy half-hour later, we stood at the bottom of "Steeze Grater," the local advertisement for biker emergency-room visits. On foot we had nothing more challenging than mesmerizing Knik River Valley views to hold us up. It was one of the three days per year that Alaska feels hot. The Central Chugach Mountains, the areas outside the park and north of the Kenai Peninsula, get very little traffic. We were trailblazing with only the occasional goat path to aid us in our quest. "What quest?" you might ask. I am unsure of the specifics, only that we are very passionate in its pursuit. As we meandered up the valley, we collected a series of stings and scrapes from all manner of flora and fauna. At about 3000 feet, we turned the corner, breaking into more pleasant tundra that led up to the snow-covered periglacial area. With only a startled moose as company, we plodded up snowfield after boulder field to above 5000 feet. This was where the hike started to turn into a climb; we went up the west side of the pass between Łaginaltl'il (6450 feet) and Moon Mountain (5875 feet). The going was slow through last winter's rotting snow. Upon gaining the ridge we proceeded up the south ride of Łaginaltl'il. It was mixed Class 3 and 4. Reaching the top 300 feet, we encountered several chossy mixed Class 4 and 5 sections. We gained the summit without incident of placing protection. We



rappelled off a static line though the Class 5 section, making it down to the easier sections of the mountain. Upon reaching the valley we crossed and started up the east side of Peak 6060. Never in my life had I seen such an extensive pile of scree. For every step forward we



slid two steps back, the only reason we reached the top was because we gave up and turned around ... (just kidding). After some typical Chugach scree scrambling, we reached the summit to be greeted by breathtaking views of the Knik Glacier and surrounding mountains. The descent was quick; scree and snow made for a fast descent on dynamic surfaces. Overall, it was a good trip; humans have a tendency of all going to the same three places. I think it is important to spread our attention more evenly around the great outdoors. In the words of one explorer, "How neat is that? That's pretty neat."

[Ed. note: Wade's photo from this trip is the August photo in the MCA's 2025 calendar.]

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Central Chugach Mountains Traverse, April 9-17, 2024

Text and photos by Pat Riffie



In a pattern that's becoming a treasured ritual of the spring season for me and a rotating cast of Washington and Alaska folk, our Anchorage local Alex Brown picked us up at the airport on April 8th, 2024, to begin the rounds of the Yak and Yeti, Fred Meyer, and Alaska Mountaineering & Hiking. After a few hours in the house sorting and repacking food, reviewing maps, plans



within plans, terrain, and weather, we declared ourselves ready to try crossing the Central Chugach Mountains from north to south – again. In 2023 we'd tried the same thing – walking from the Glenn Highway up the Matanuska Glacier to M & M Pass near Mount Marcus Baker (13176 feet), turning back due to weather and stability to a reroute over the head of the Matanuska at Turtle Flats and down the Powell Glacier back to the Glenn Highway. Despite the change of plans, it was a huge experience and we couldn't resist giving it another go ... the plan was to go over or around Mount Marcus Baker as conditions On the first lap, he dropped me and the packs a couple of miles up the West Fork of the Matanuska Glacier, at the edge of a wall of fog that reminded me quite starkly of the conditions when we had crawled our way up the West Fork in '23. Thirty minutes later he returned with Alex and Will Govus. We thanked him, waved goodbye as the wind blew him downstream, and geared up for blind, windy glacier travel. By late afternoon we tucked camp under a small ridge near M & M Pass, waiting to see what the morning would show us.

To our relief in the morning, we had good visibility and travel

allowed, test several terrain options for a way to get south of Mount Goode (10610 feet) and eventually to the Barry Glacier and a boat pickup near Pakenham Point in Prince William Sound. We had planned for 12 days with a resupply on the south side of Mount Marcus Baker.

We chose this year to forgo the jaunt up the Matanuska, instead flying out of Sheep Mountain Ranch on the 9th with Mark Fleenor. His knowledge of the area and truly tiny helicopter got the job done, despite rapidly worsening winds and visibility.



conditions, and were able to assess stability on M & M Pass from a fairly safe spot – we decided it was stable and got over to the Marcus Baker Glacier by midmorning. Under gorgeous blue skies we cruised a few miles of lowangle cold snow, and began walking toward our next terrain decisions. The afternoon continued in complete calm, and we made camp feeling like the days had treated us well.

The morning of the 11th didn't carry on with the feeling of calm – around 4 in the morning, a wind picked up rather suddenly and carried on through breakfast, striking camp, and making less than three miles of progress before accepting the difficulties and hazards traveling into higher elevations. To liven things up we played a game – anytime the lead guy on the rope was blown down by the wind, we'd swap leads. We made camp again in the most sheltered place we could find and battened down the hatches for the afternoon and evening.

The 12th broke with good enough visibility to work our planned route over a pass and onto the Knik Glacier, which we ascended with some routefinding delays to a sheltered camp. The Knik was feeling large, and with the recent weather, we weren't too motivated to push late in the day and end up in the wind again.



The 13th showed up pretty clear, and we began working our way toward the resupply cache between Mount Marcus Baker and Mount Goode. I'm always so excited for the moments in these



trips when we reach the truly high country, with all the surrounding summits covered in massive maritime ice caps, and the scale of the terrain just goes off the map. Will had seen the wands marking our resupply cache perhaps an hour or more before we arrived – distances had become gigantic. Thanks to Mike Meekin for the flight to set the cache with Alex the week before – this was an adjustment from '23 in an effort to lighten our packs, for which I was really grateful. It was a celebratory mood that night in camp – we were ahead of schedule, with a huge pile of food and excellent weather for a few days.

On the morning of the 14th, we packed up, descended the Knik a few trouble-free miles and turned up a side valley to the south to investigate a route – perhaps the only route that would get us south of Mount Goode. We had viewed the south face of Goode and decided it was too committing for us, and on the flight to drop the cache the week prior Alex had seen the confluence of the two principle forks of the Knik was riddled with cracks and didn't look very appealing for travel. So, we had settled on a possibility that we'd only seen on maps that we'd been calling the "corner pocket," a small but ideally positioned pass with a route through that looked to be about a 45-degree couloir for 600 feet of vertical, that we hoped would allow us through. We made our way up to the pass and began to investigate - everywhere but the couloir was cliff bands, and guarded by an imposing convexity that made scouting feel quite exposed. The chute itself proved to have a bulge of water ice, and we couldn't see how far down it went. Occasionally the clouds would break and we'd see the glacier below us, beckoning. We'd included some lengths of 2"x2" wood for marking the resupply cache and had brought them with us for disposable anchor material, so we

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settled into a lengthy discussion of weather, retreat possibilities, and overall risk tolerance. Building an anchor and rappelling the upper part of the couloir was possible, but the south Knik would be difficult travel if we were turned back by the transition to the Barry Glacier, 12 miles away. We wouldn't know until the following day if our next terrain crux would work, and the next day the weather was forecast to close up. None of us felt good about trying to ice climb back up the couloir either, with the light tools and crampons we had brought. Retreat options and weather were just problematic enough that we chose to respect the Chugach and withdraw. It was a quiet, but lovely, descent back to the north Knik and setting a camp near Mount Goode. We were all disappointed to retreat, but now the weather window looked appealing for a possible visit to Mount Goode the following day.

Temperatures had been below zero every night since we had turned the corner and come up the Knik – this had been fine and everyone was doing great as we watched the sunset and went to bed that night – but a short time later, Will's sleeping pad abruptly had a failure of all the baffles and turned into a balloon. We pooled our resources and Will went to bed on a pile of clothing and packs. Far from ideal! He was stoic about it and claimed a decent night's sleep during the dream-and-sleep review during breakfast. We pondered all this, looked at Mount Goode, and decided we'd better go check it out before escaping down the Knik to warmer temps and an alternate exit plan. The climb to the saddle east of the summit was beautiful and the views of Prince William Sound definitely made it harder to leave via the Knik, but we had our time in the sun and began a descent, leaving ourselves enough time to pack camp and make some miles toward the valley. It proved to be the finest ski line of the trip, and we enjoyed excellent snow conditions back to the Knik and our camp. After a fast packing session, we were surprised to

easily cover 12 miles and descend 7500 feet to a fine, warm camp a few miles up from the toe of the glacier.

The next two days were spent finding a way off the glacier, through the moraines, through the river a few times – we saw wolverine, moose, and bear tracks, and many ptarmigan. The walking in ski boots down the Knik valley went better than expected, but by the end we were certainly ready for other footwear. In dedication to the original route and the need to keep packs light, nobody had brought other shoes ...

Not even 10 minutes after we got to the end of the road, a superbly gracious Anchorage friend arrived, who had not only come to pick us up, but brought a pile of snacks and beverages too! I'm so impressed by the flexible, enthusiastic and friendly folks that always bookend our outings with their help and excitement

for the adventure.

Despite another change of plans and not making it to Prince William Sound, the trip still felt like a success after a few days of pondering. I'm always so pleased to visit these places and share them with friends; I always head home feeling like I've been a part of something grand and memorable. See you all in April!

[Ed. note: Photos from this trip were featured on the January and May pages of the MCA's 2025 Calendar.]



Granite Tors, Tanana Hills

Text and photos by Wayne L. Todd



The definition of a tor is a rocky peak or hill. Only when you read the definition of Granite Tors (GTs) do you begin to understand these unique geological features, even though some definitions of this are "typically just fifteen feet high, or less."

The best "definition" is to visit the Granite Tors Trail 40 miles east of Fairbanks. This more-than-15mile (and 3000-footgain) loop trail passes



dozens of GTs, most are much taller than 15 feet. The initial trail has recently been rebuilt with more than a mile of board-walk. Kudos to all the trail workers: volunteer, paid government or private, or other. The boardwalk is rather slick when covered with frost, such as when we visited.

The surrounding flora is a bit subdued in early October when Carrie Wang and I traverse the area, but the walking is easy – no mud, nor snow. We do have good views of the distant Alaska Range. I think the GTs would look spectacular when blanketed with snow. If entertaining a ski trip, a counter-clockwise (CCW) loop would probably work best, so as to ascend the steep, treed trail and descend less-steep slopes. Or it might be a mis-adventure if there isn't significant snow to cover much of the rocks and shrubs. disconnected and there is no dead nor available wood in the vicinity. The last occupants left freeze-dried garbage in the stove. The water catchment system also was not connected. The lack of a good water source is also a consideration for staying, unless during snowy times, or rainy times.

On the egress, snippets of green still protrude from the ground cover, mostly from club moss and ground cedar. From a beautiful new bench made by the Fairbanks Area Hiking Club, we look back on our exit path before concluding our loop.

Oddly, we didn't see any sign for the GTs or the campground when traveling from Fairbanks. Only when we drove too far and headed back, did we see signage. The trailhead is at one of the road crossings of the Chena River.

We also travel CCW, somewhat against trail-report advice. This

direction is the most direct for reaching any GTs. Our first one – which would be fun to scamper around on for a bit, though we don't – even has a strutting spruce grouse.

Many GTs are scattered about the landscape and one could easily spend a few days up there exploring more of them. We stay focused on the main route, but still view plenty of them. A rough, small (8-foot-by-8-foot) cabin located on the GT plateau, slightly more on the east end, could offer a good stay in inclement weather. We briefly visit the cabin, which has a wood stove with potential, except the exhaust pipe is slightly



Peak of the Month: Peak F

Text by Steve Gruhn

Mountain Range: Nulato Hills

Borough: Unorganized Borough

Drainages: West Fork of the Andreafsky River and Kogok River

Latitude/Longitude: 63° 3' 22" North, 162° 10' 12" West

Elevation: 2251 feet



Adjacent Peaks: Peak 1925 in the West Fork of

the Andreafsky River and Kogok River drainages and either Peak 1955 in the West Fork of the Andreafsky River drainage or Peak 1925 in the West Fork of the Andreafsky River drainage

Distinctness: 926 feet from Peak 1925 in the West Fork of the Andreafsky River and Kogok River drainages

Prominence: 1221 feet from Iprugalet Mountain (2395 feet)

USGS Maps: 1:63,360: *Saint Michael (A-1)* and 1:25,000: *Saint Michael A-1 SE*

First Recorded Ascent: 1952 by John C. Ellerbe and a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers party

During a 1952 survey of the Nulato Hills area, John Ellerbe led a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers party to a peak overlooking the Kogok River and West Fork of the Andreafsky River drainages some 30 miles south of Saint Michael. The party erected a temporary target on the summit of the peak, which they designated Peak F, for the purposes of the survey. The target was removed upon completion of the survey.

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

On December 2, 1980, President Jimmy Carter signed the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) into law. ANILCA, in part, created the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge and the Andreafsky Wilderness within that refuge. The Andreafsky Wilderness encompassed Peak F and the surrounding area.

Peak F is the tenth-highest peak and third-most prominent peak in the Andreafsky Wilderness. There are no higher



peaks within 13 miles of its summit.

The information for this column came from transcribed U.S. Army Corps of Engineers field notes that are available at <u>https://www.ngs.noaa.gov/cgi-bin/ds_mark.prl?</u> <u>PidBox=UW3360</u> and from my correspondence with Albert E. "Skip" Theberge, Jr.

General Membership Meeting Minutes

March 12, 2025, 6:00-8:00 p.m. at the B.P. Energy Center

Announcements

- Update on budget 2025 budget was passed
 - Peter Taylor brought forth the budget; Scott Parmelee seconded the budget.
- Grant and Mint Hut renovation updates
- Summer mountaineering course announced by Dave Staeheli. More information on page 3 of the April edition of *the Scree*.

Presentation

- Chugach 120 with Azriel Sellers
 - The Chugach 120 challenge is a list of 120 peaks in Chugach State Park that all have a prominence of at least 500 feet. The list was compiled by Steve Gruhn in the early '90s.
 - Az discussed the obstacles and dedication that this challenge required. He also went over some of his favorite and more memorable peaks and gave a very entertaining presentation. The presentation provided good beta and built the stoke for anyone considering the Chugach 120 challenge.

Executive Committee Meeting Minutes

March 31, 2025, 6:30-8:30 p.m., virtual meeting

Roll Call

Peter Taylor (President) – Present Sean Kortus (Vice-President) – Apologies Allison Medland (Secretary) – Present Ragen Davey (Treasurer) – Present Lane Christenson (Director) – Present Andrew Holman (Director) – Present Scott Parmelee (Director) – Present G Platte (Director) – Apologies Reux Stearns (Director) – Apologies Lang Van Dommelen (Director) – Present

Guest in Attendance: Steve Gruhn, Annie Shane, Matt Nedom

Scribed by: Allison Medland

Financial Report

- Monthly financial report
 - o 100 checks were purchased (should last for a few years)
 - o Membership dues
- No update on insurance for club office holders (Directors and Officers Liability Insurance).

General Membership

- Next few months: Alaska Mountaineering & Hiking (AMH) discussing new gear, Art Davidson Minus 148: the first Winter Ascent of Mount McKinley, "Learning the Ropes" with Mike Gordon
- Potential for future caving presentation (have had them in the past)
- Policies Scott mentioned continued editing of no-longer-applicable parts (delete requirement for checking out library books, rental gear from AMH, etc.)

Huts

- Valdez inquiry on hut no update
- Mat-Su Trails and Parks Foundation Board of Directors has approved the **Mountaineering Club of Alaska Huts Assessment Grant for \$4,000**. This is intended to support inspection of repairs to the Dnigi Hut and scout for future hut sites.
- Mint Hut renovations have been well received, lots of positivity on huts in general.

Trips/Training

- Summer mountaineering course is almost full
 - Dave Staeheli is still looking for additional volunteer instructors.
 - Students will get refunded the cost of \$100 for course after it happens.
 - Can get refunded, if cancellation is 30 days prior to the course.
- Crevasse course thank you notes Allison for Rigging International Group and REI.
- MCA merch (stickers, shirts) been recent requests for stickers.

- Schedule two mountaineering courses for 2026? Upcoming one is nearly full and it's still three months out.
 - Schedule Eklutna Traverse trip for next winter?

General Discussion

- Club currently has stickers (albeit cheap ones made for old Nalgene bottles).
- Lots of good feedback on March presentation.

Awards

- No current update from committee.
- Possibly mandate a certain minimum number of awards per year. Policies need updates for committees. Goal is to eventually have something to vote on. (Scott)

Previous Action items

- Scott Huts Committee construction and maintenance plan to Board, write up line of inquiry for new huts/ what places are they thinking for new huts (to give to Board).
- Gerrit Verbeek let Max Neale know that President's Award requirements were revised.

Time and Location of Next Meeting-

- General Meeting at BP Energy Center, April 2, 2025, from 6 to 8 p.m.
- May Board Meeting to be determined (TBD) from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m., Location TBD.

MCA Policy Updates

The MCA board has adopted updated club policies. These updates follow a membership-voted revision to club by-laws. Policy updates are not voted on by the membership, but are provided below for information and reference.

1. General grammar and spelling updates have been made, but will not be individually discussed. These updates do not impact the meaning or interpretation of any policy.

2. Membership Applications:

Delete policy Sections 5 and 6. These sections outline membership card issuance (removed below) and out-of-date membership-application process (now defined in club by-laws).

3. Membership Card Mailing – The MCA has elected to no longer issue membership cards and this policy has been removed.

4. MCA Hut Rules -

a. Remove a portion of the background paragraph that explains an out-of-date membership-application process.

b. Remove recommendation to leave excess stove fuel in huts.

c. Remove recommendation for proper use of candles in huts; few candles are used following the adoption of electronic lighting by many users.

d. Remove sentence allowing for users to leave gear in huts from season to season.

e. Remove recommendation to fill lanterns and stove with excess fuel when leaving.

5. Commercial Use of MCA Huts – Remove background section, which consists of out-of-date hut and membership numbers.

6. Honorary Membership Committee – The MCA has merged this committee with the Awards Committee and this policy has been removed.

7. Rules for Borrowing MCA Library Books

a. Removal of membership card requirements.

b. Removal of all references to borrowing gear. All requests for borrowing gear will be evaluated by club leadership.

8. EPRIB, FRS Radio, and Avalanche Beacon Use – The MCA has elected to no longer issue these items and this policy has been removed.

9. Awards Committee – The Awards Committee has been merged with the Honorary Membership Committee and the award criteria and naming have changed. The updated policy is provided below:

MCA Honorary Membership and Awards Committee

Honorary Membership and Awards Committee Rules:

- 1. The Awards Committee will comprise 5 MCA members (an odd number being best for breaking ties) appointed by the Executive Committee.
- 2. Committee members must be MCA members in good standing and will have been a member of the club for a minimum of 6 years (not necessarily consecutively).

- 3. Committee member terms will be for 5 years (staggered terms), with one new member appointed annually by the Board.
- 4. The most senior member of the committee will act as chairperson and serve as the primary contact for the Executive Committee.
- 5. Committee members will be responsible for:
 - a. Collecting and reviewing all nominations for club awards and honorary membership annually.
 - b. Developing and maintaining the specific criteria and process that the committee will use to review nominations for club awards within guidelines provided by the Executive Committee.
 - c. Selecting award recipients and submitting those names to the Board for confirmation
 - d. Acquiring award certificates and ensuring that the names award recipients are added to the appropriate plaque.
- 6. The Committee may submit no more than two nominations for honorary membership per year. (No minimum requirement.)
- 7. a) Although recommendations may come from any source, all official nominations for honorary membership to be submitted must originate in the Honorary Membership and Awards Committee. It is important that any discussions pertaining to prospective nominees be avoided at the MCA general meeting, and that the presiding officer at the meeting defer such discussion to a committee level.
 b) In any case, any recommendation must be in the form of a written proposal.
- 8. The Executive Committee shall make the final approval for Honorary Membership through a majority vote at an Executive Committee meeting.

Criteria for Honorary Membership:

1. Past or present membership in the MCA is not necessary.

2. Must be living.

3. Must have made an outstanding contribution which is in alignment with the purposes of the club (Article II of the Articles of Incorporation).

4. Cannot be currently holding an elected office in the club.

Honorary Membership Benefits

1. Lifetime member with all the benefits of membership.

2. Certificate from the MCA.

3. Honor should be bestowed at a general MCA meeting no less than six months after election to Honorary Membership. It is desirable, but not necessary that the Honorary Member be present.

MCA Hoeman Award

In January 2001, the Board of the Mountaineering Club of Alaska created a new award to honor Vin and Grace Hoeman – two of the club's most prolific climbers, who made significant contributions to the early exploration and documentation of hiking and climbing opportunities throughout Alaska and the Yukon during the 1960s and early 1970s. As defined by the Executive Committee, the **Hoeman Award** is:

"An award given to a person(s) associated with the Mountaineering Club of Alaska (MCA), including current, former, and honorary members, who has made a significant contribution to the exploration, documentation, and promotion of hiking and climbing opportunities in Alaska's mountain ranges. The Hoeman Award is the Mountaineering Club of Alaska's most prestigious award, and, as such, shall be

bestowed only upon those who have demonstrated a long-term commitment to the exploration, documentation, and promotion of hiking and climbing opportunities in Alaska."

The Hoeman Award will consist of a permanent plaque housed in the MCA Vin Hoeman Library. A person(s) who has been selected to receive the award will have his or her name permanently engraved on the Hoeman Award plaque and will also receive a certificate suitable for framing that recognizes their achievement.

Hoeman Award Nomination Criteria:

Consider the Hoeman Award a lifetime volunteer contributor award for contribution in one or more of these areas:

- **1.** Exploration (Exploration of new or seldom visited mountaineering areas via hiking, climbing, skiing, kayaking, or packrafting access, etc.)
- 2. Documentation (trip reports, *Scree*, databases, books, presentations at MCA meetings, publications, movies, photos, peak registers, etc. MCA publications have greater weight. However, other electronic means such as websites, blogs, etc. are included.)
- **3.** Education and Community (leading MCA trips and trainings, organizing MCA events, bringing people together in ways that build community.) Paid activities are not eligible.
- 4. Facilities, Assets, and Access (construction and maintenance of MCA-owned huts, property, and infrastructure located in the mountains. Contributions toward other minimalist, public non-commercial mountain infrastructure led by other organizations are also valuable such as a basic public-use mountain hut in southeast Alaska. Trail and bridge construction and maintenance is also part of this category. Providing or maintaining access to public land and non-motorized use areas for mountaineering activities through policy, advocacy, or other initiatives.
- 5. Organizational Leadership (Board service and other administrative volunteerism that contributes to the operation and improvement of the MCA as an organization or a significant contribution to the operation and improvement of other relevant organizations that directly and significantly benefit the MCA mission – such as American Alpine Club, Juneau Alpine Club, etc.

Minimum Requirement:

- 1. 10 years of experience and contribution toward "promoting mountaineering, hiking, climbing and skiing and the preservation of the outdoors and wilderness. More recently this includes kayak and packrafting access to these activities," or
- 2. An estimated total of 1,000 hours or more volunteered/contributed toward all award criteria over the individual's lifetime.

Hoeman Award – Committee Instructions:

The MCA Executive Committee adopted the following instructions/guidelines for the Hoeman Award:

- 1. The Honorary Membership and Awards Committee will be responsible for requesting nominations for the Hoeman Award at least once per year via an announcement in the club's newsletter, *the SCREE*.
- The Honorary Membership and Awards Committee will collect all written nominations and review them for completeness, making any necessary inquiries with current and former club members to confirm the information provided in the written nomination is accurate. References should be contacted to obtain any additional information that might be desired.
- 3. The Honorary Membership and Awards Committee will develop written criteria that will be used to rank nominations and select award recipients. The criteria and process to be used by the committee to evaluate award

nominees need not be extensive, but will be submitted to the Executive Committee for approval prior to selection of the first award recipients.

- 4. The committee will retain the ranking and selection criteria in a committee handbook for future use. Revisions to established criteria must be submitted in writing to the Executive Committee for approval by a majority vote of the Executive Committee members in attendance at a scheduled Board meeting.
- 5. The Honorary Membership and Awards Committee will select the Hoeman Award recipient(s) and make a written recommendation to the Executive Committee outlining the award recipient(s) and a brief description of why she/he is deserving of the award. Award recipients will be confirmed by a majority vote of the Executive Committee members in attendance at a scheduled Board meeting.
- 6. The Honorary Membership and Awards Committee will be responsible for the design and purchase of the Hoeman Award plaque as well as the certificates to be given to awardees, subject to Board approval. The committee will also be responsible for installing the plaque in a suitable location in the Vin Hoeman Library and making sure award recipients' names are engraved on the plaque prior to bestowing the award.
- 7. The Hoeman Award will be conveyed at a regularly scheduled MCA meeting by the Honorary Membership and Awards Committee Chair (or President). An announcement stating that the award will be presented (but NOT the award recipient's name!) will be placed in the club's newsletter, *the SCREE*, at least one month prior to the meeting at which the award will be conveyed. The Honorary Membership and Awards Committee will make all attempts to ensure that the award recipient (or his/her representative) is present at the meeting in order to receive the award.

Volunteer of the Year Awards

Purpose: the purpose of the Volunteer of the Year Award is to recognize individuals who contributed to the MCA or the MCA's mission.

Eligibility: Anyone who completed a task or project that benefited the MCA or MCA's mission. Current Board members and Honorary Membership and Awards Committee members are excluded.

Quantity: At least two awards shall be given each year by the Board.

Nomination and Selection Process: Any MCA member can nominate individuals at any time. Nominations shall be submitted to the Board of Directors and must include the name of the individual and a brief description of their contribution. If there are less than three nominations from members, the Board shall select up to two individuals for the award.

Recognition Process:

- Recipients may receive an award certificate or wooden plaque (decision to provide a physical object is at the discretion of the Honorary Membership and Awards Committee) and a \$250 gift certificate to AMH.
- The Board, or an assigned individual, will be responsible for developing a brief presentation about the award recipient and their contribution for a MCA meeting. The presentation must include one or more visuals to help communicate the contribution.
- Award recipients will be invited to the MCA meeting in-person or virtually to receive the award and gift certificate.
- Award recipients will be announced in the Scree, via email, and via MCA social-media accounts.

General Membership Meeting Minutes

April 2, 2025, 6:00-8:00 p.m. at the B.P. Energy Center

Announcements

- Solstice sleepout on Flattop Mountain on June 20.
- Summer Mountaineering Course July 10 through July 16 fully booked.
- Bomber Hut update: outhouse blew over, so there are now buckets for use instead.

Presentation

- The Latest and Greatest in Outdoor Gear (Alaska Mountaineering & Hiking) with Rick Roth
 - Key takeaways: Dyneema is an upcoming material that is light, but expensive.
 - Mindset: The less you carry with you, the easier it is to go a little farther.
- Tradeoff of durability for ultra-lightness
- Importance of comfort ratings vs. survival ratings in sleeping bags
- Garmin InReach Messenger can now send photos!

Mountaineering Club of Alaska

President (term expires in 2025) Vice-President (term expires in 2026) Sean Kortus Secretary (term expires in 2026) Treasurer (term expires in 2025)

Peter Taylor Allison Medland Ragen Davey

president@mtnclubak.org vicepresident@mtnclubak.org secretary@mtnclubak.org treasurer@mtnclubak.org

Director 1 (term expires in 2025) Reux Stearns board@mtnclubak.org Director 2 (term expires in 2025) Lang Van Dommelen board@mtnclubak.org Director 3 (term expires in 2025) G Platte board@mtnclubak.org Director 4 (term expires in 2026) Andrew Holman board@mtnclubak.org Director 5 (term expires in 2026) Scott Parmelee board@mtnclubak.org Director 6 (term expires in 2026) Lane Christenson board@mtnclubak.org

Annual membership dues: Basic ("Dirtbag") \$20, Single \$30, Family \$40

Dues can be paid at any meeting or mailed to the Treasurer at the MCA address below. 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 either MCAScree@gmail.com or scree@mtnclubak.org. Material should be submitted by the 11th of the month to appear in the next month's Scree. Captions should accompany all submitted photos.

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.

Mailing list/database entry: Annie Shane-membership@mtnclubak.org Hiking and Climbing Committee: Lang Van Dommelen-hcc@mtnclubak.org Huts: Scott Parmelee-huts@mtnclubak.org Calendar: Heather Johnson-mcacalendar@mtnclubak.org Librarian: Gwen Higgins-library@mtnclubak.org Scree Editors: Steve Gruhn and Christina Bonsell- MCAScree@gmail.com or scree@mtnclubak.org Web: www.mtnclubak.org Find MCAK listserv at https://groups.io/g/MCAK

Granite Tors with Alaska Range background. Photo by Wayne L. Todd.

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