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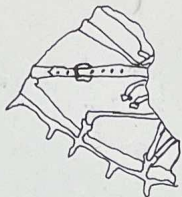
UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA
NOV 29 1984

DESCENT

ALASKA
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The three charming editors:

Christine Crema
Karma Krelle
Donna Weihs



Mucho Thanks to Monty Vandervuilt for computer help.

COVERS: Last issue taken from photograph by J. R. Powell of the Needle's Eye S.D. on the cover of "Climbing" Oct 78.

This issue's cover photo by the adroit Peter Mackwith of Denali from the window of an Alaska Airlines jet.

NOTE BIEN: We still have \$10.00 for the future feature article - that hasn't been written yet!!! Get your words together!!!

Annual Meeting

- continuing saga to be held
Tuesday March 13 - 1979 7-11 PM.

Agenda

- 1) Elections - Yahoo - the real thing! (Bring banana creme pies ^{hahaha})
 - 2) Equipment fund
 - 3) A new hut?
 - 4) Budget for "DESCENT"
- Bring Beer
Come!!!
if you can not attend, send a signed ballot w/someone who can.

Meeting place changed to Buck Wilsons
See Map →

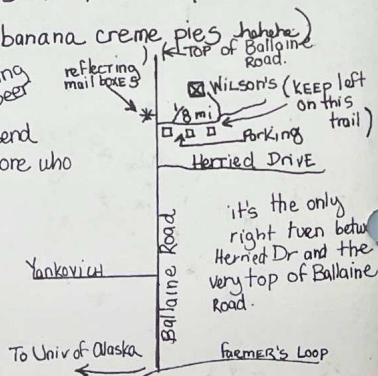
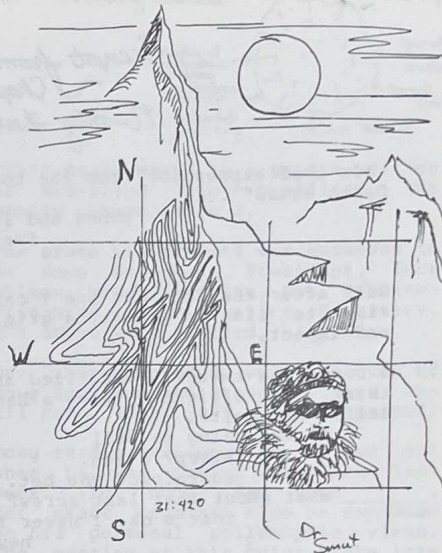


Table of Contents

	page
Canwell Stampede	1
Ninety feet of Silent Scream by Clifton Moore	2
Alpine Club Meeting Minutes	3
Letters Sent by Doug Buchanan and Steve Clautice	5
Glacier Judgias	7
National Park Service letter to Alaska Alpine Club	8
Alaska Rescue Council by Fran Bennis	10
Back in California by Coert Olmsted	11
Editorial Comment	12
AAC response to NPS	13
Letters to the Editors	14
The Mountain Snowpack by Jim and Steve Hackett	16
Down with Mountain Climbing by Edward Carrigan	19



The annual Canwell Glacier Stampede will take place the weekend of April 21-22. This unsponsored outing offers the opportunity for individuals to ski up the Canwell Glacier on a weekend when many like-minded people will be there. Things to remember: Car pool to reduce parking congestion. The trail up the glacier will be marked. Pack for bad weather travel camping. Nothing is provided. You must bring everything you use plus a little extra to leave at the hut emergency food cache. Leave no garbage at the hut. Above all, please be so kind as to leave NOT SO MUCH AS A SINGLE GUM WRAPPER ON THE GLACIER, so we can all have a good time and remember it in good light.

IF THE WEEKEND BRINGS STORM WEATHER, A CANCELLATION NOTICE WILL BE ANNOUNCED.

DON'T FORGET YOUR RANGIOS!!!

The following are reprints of statements voted upon at the meeting.

The office holders of this organization must, as of tonight, be able to work as a cohesive unit supporting a common goal for the benefit of the club members and the climbers of the state. In light of the fact that both Cliff and Dan have previously announced their intention to not seek re-election, I am tonight introducing a single slate of candidates to fill the official primary positions of this club. They are: Doug Buchanan for president, Buck Wilson for vice-president, and Steve Clautice for secretary. Subsequent to discussion and further nominations I propose an election and to place those elected in office immediately until the 13 March, 1979, annual meeting. Also, Dan Osborne was elected for treasurer. VOTE: Aye 20, Nay 0. The above were elected.

The Alaska Alpine Club, because of our unique status as an ultimate symbol in the minds of men, and despite our relatively small numbers, has the opportunity to step into a prominent and important position in the policy making structure influencing the future status of wilderness in this state. A great deal of behind the scenes work has put us into this position. Because much of the impact of the D-2 legislation has unavoidably fallen on the recreational wilderness user, we would be unacceptably remiss if we neglected our duty to accept this responsibility. In light of the magnitude of the problem, the importance of the business we must conduct tonight, and our crucially short time in which to work I am requesting that this meeting be declared an emergency meeting. This means that by historically court upheld written law, all votes taken tonight are binding despite technicalities imposed by our club charter, constitution, or bylaws. VOTE: Aye 14, Nay 1. The statement is accepted.

Advisory Vote

Is the Alaska Alpine Club willing to amend Article I of the Articles of Incorporation to reflect the addition to the name, the chapter title: Fairbanks. By referring to the Alaska Alpine Club Fairbanks, we open the opportunity to establish the Alaska Alpine Club as a state federation of completely autonomous chapters denoted by their chapter name, such as; Fairbanks, Anchorage, Juneau, Petersburg, etc. This mechanism facilitates our already established and recognized leadership in statewide climbing circles. VOTE: Aye 14, Nay, 0. The statement is accepted.

In light of the complex ramifications of the imposition of the Antiquities Act and D-2 legislation, the Alaska Alpine Club hereby resolves to undertake a political effort to effect the ultimate outcome of those acts. Our guiding principles for this effort are as follows:

We will strive to gain congressional limits on the powers of the land controlling agencies that have traditionally restricted the wilderness adventurer.

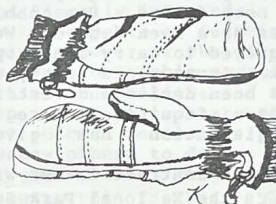
We will strive to insure these limits are oriented only towards matters affecting the wilderness user holding our ethics. This principle offers some latitude for question among ourselves but is an attempt to describe the limited scope of our endeavor while allowing latitude for effective political action.

We will consider acceptance of responsibility for future policy matters relating to mountain climbers on a statewide level.

Greater than usual efforts will be made to keep the club members informed as to the events and progress of this endeavor. This may entail

some brief meetings on short notice. It will require the cooperation and assistance of all members to spread the word.

Exact vote uncertain, but this statement was NOT passed. The outcome of the discussion resulting from this vote is explained in the Editorial Comment on page _____, this issue.



Doug Buchanan sent the following letters (in 3 sections) to the listed parties:

Cecil Andrus
Gov. Hammond
Sen. Stevens
Sen. Gravel
Cong. Young
McKinley NPS
Mountain
Climbing
Sierra Club, San Francisco
REI
A Japanese climbing magazine.
Seattle Mountaineers
Summit Magazine
American Alpine Club, New York
possibly others not listed here.

12 FEBRUARY 1979

THE ALASKA ALPINE CLUB IS DIRECTLY OPPOSED TO THE RESTRICTIVE REGULATIONS IMPOSED BY PRESIDENT CARTER'S ANTIQUITIES ACT AND THE CONGRESSIONAL D-2 LEGISLATION, WHICH SERVES NO BETTER PURPOSE THAN TO RESTRICT, CONTROL AND DENY OUR PASSAGE ON THE VERY LANDS WE HAVE SWORN TO PROTECT. THE CONCEPT OF PERMIT SYSTEMS IS IN DIRECT CONTRADICTION TO THE PHILOSOPHY OF FREEDOM; TRADITIONAL TO THE MOUNTAINS AND WILDERNESS AREAS. WITH THE SUPPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT ALASKAN MOUNTAIN CLIMBERS OF FAIRBANKS, ANCHORAGE, JUNEAU, AND OUTLYING BUSH AREAS, WE WILL DEFIANTLY VIOLATE THE RESTRICTION AND PERMIT SYSTEMS IMPOSED BY THESE ACTS.

PRESIDENT
DOUGLAS L. BUCHANAN

LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE

STEVEN CLAUTICE
CLEM RAWERT
JAMES BRADY

ALASKA ALPINE CLUB
BOX 81200
COLLEGE, ALASKA 99708

copies: National and
International

Since the pioneer climbs of Denali in the early 1900's, Alaskan climbers have been exploring the continent's most awesome realms without any restrictions other than those imposed by the natural environment itself. We are now faced with the imposition of arbitrary federal regulations which will severely restrict our freedom to enter and enjoy almost all Alaskan mountain ranges. There is nothing in the history of our treatment of the mountains that justifies the abolition of the freedom of the

hills. As climbers we assume total responsibility for our own actions and will continue to visit the mountains. We will observe the same respect for the mountain environment as we have in the past, and we will willfully ignore all other dictates.

The history of McKinley Park, as opposed to Alaska's unregulated mountains, is a sorry story of arbitrary restrictions, big brotherism and commercialism. The creation of this park, as others, popularized an attraction that has induced overcrowding. A prominent aspect of this problem has been the extensive mountain rescues that resulted from the overcrowding and inept handling of inappropriate regulations. The permit system dupes inexperienced climbers into believing that since they are officially approved, ultimate responsibility for their safety lies with the government. The big brother philosophy results in such capricious actions as the recently rescinded thirty year ban on ski mountaineering.

The Park Service's record in the lower 48 is even worse. We climbers have been denied permission to climb routes on Devil's Tower, the Diamond of Long's Peak and several other mountains simply to protect us from ourselves. The regulations have been particularly oppressive in Mt. Rainier National Park. The fact that climbing rules are more reasonable in some other parks simply points out the arbitrary nature of Park Service management. We are protecting the freedom of the world's last major unrestricted mountain wilderness. We see no recourse other than the defiant violation of federal actions limiting the freedom of any person to explore Alaska's mountains.

Sincerely,

Steve Clautice
Chairman
Legislative Committee
Alaska Alpine Club

It is unfortunate that we have arrived at this point. However, we, the wilderness users who have proven our respect for the land, have over the years been directly faced with ever changing arbitrary restrictions and hassles that served no meaningful end. As the restrictions we face are created by the arbitrary discretion of agency directors; each year and at different places, we find different requirements. For short periods (one to several years) we have been arbitrarily denied the right to climb certain mountains and certain routes on mountains. Routes have been dictated. We have been subject to illegal search and inspection of our packs and equipment. Access has been denied. Reasonable access modes have been denied. We have been required to carry inappropriate equipment. Appropriate safety equipment has been denied and restricted. We have been required to register, when registration has given us nothing.

In stark contrast to our wilderness ethics the National Park Service has artificially promoted and developed intensive use of previously pristine areas.

Certainly there are among us, as in every group, those very few who hold less respect for the land, for example: those who litter. But government law has never stopped public littering. Within our group, by peer pressure we exert a far more effective control of those transgressions. We welcome assistance with such valid matters. Sadly the agencies no longer address themselves to these matters. They have instead worked for omnipotent control.

We have not been treated as adults. In nearly every case we have been told these actions were for our own good. Nothing could be further from the case. We have invariably proven our capabilities to be far greater than the government agency controlling us. We have been subject to being used as an excuse for the

need for greater agency control. The most publicized example is with mountain rescue. The extensive, highly competent, volunteer mountain rescue units and climbers over the entire nation have for years been telling the N.P.S. to get out of the mountain rescue business. N.P.S. rescue units have never attained any level of competence. And yet, we have continued to hear the N.P.S. use the mountain rescue excuse for higher monetary appropriations and greater control over climbers. Specific examples are extensive.

We can just no longer accept agency treatment which contradicts the very concept of simple freedom. We are a small group. We are traditionally independent minded. We are not capable of fighting the overwhelming power of the government. We can see no viable course to freedom within our abilities. In frustration, we will violate these government edicts and will publicly encourage others to do so.

We welcome the opportunity to discuss this further. There is much to be said.

Sincerely,

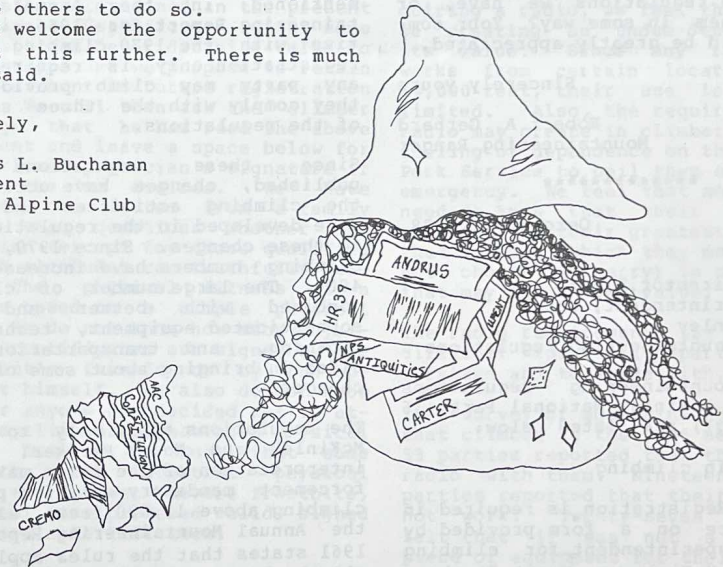
Douglas L. Buchanan
President
Alaska Alpine Club

*Glacier Judges Recipe
(Black Rapids Version)*

- BOILED IN SIG POT OVER MSR STOVE
1. MARGARINE - MELTED.
 2. A LITTLE WATER.
 3. A LITTLE BROWN SUGAR.
 4. THICK CHOCOLATE PUDIING MIX.
 5. LEFTOVER COCOA MIX.
 6. TWO MELTED CADBURY BARS.
 7. JUST ABOUT THAT MUCH OREGANO.

EAT THIS GOOEY MIXTURE
AND WAIT 1 TO 24 HOURS

by Dan Solie



"I hate clubs."

United States Dept of the Interior
National park Service
Mount McKinley National Park
Post office Box 9
McKinley Park, Alaska 99755
December 29, 1978

Alaska Alpine Club
Box 81200
College, Alaska 99701

Dear Sirs:

The enclosed memorandum reflects our feelings concerning the need for mountaineering regulations in Mount McKinley National Park. We have requested permission to make these changes but before we go any further we would like to get your input.

Do you feel that there is a need for a regulation or regulations governing mountaineering activities within the park? Do you feel that we should retain the regulations we have, or change them in some way? Your comments would be greatly appreciated.

Sincerely yours

Robert A. Gerhard
Mountaineering Ranger

October 27, 1978.

Memorandum

To: Area Director, Alaska
From: Superintendent, Mount
McKinley
Subject: Mountaineering regulations

Current mountaineering regulations for Mount McKinley National Park (36 CFR 7.44 (g)) are listed below:

(g) Mountain climbing

(1) Registration is required in advance on a form provided by the Superintendent for climbing Mount McKinley or Mount Foraker.

Registration shall also include a statement of previous climbing experience for each member of the climbing party and a physician's statement certifying the current physical fitness for the climb for each member. (2) A two-way radio capable of reaching another manned station in ready contact with Park Headquarters must be carried by the climbing party. (3) The leader of the registered party, or his designee, is required to report in with Park Headquarters as soon as practical upon return from the climb.

These regulations were apparently adopted in 1970, and were actually a liberalization of the previous regulations which required park approval for all applicants or else permission to climb was not granted. A "doctor's certificate" was first mentioned in the Annual Mountaineering Report for 1956. Effective with the 1970 climbing season, registration only is required, and any party may climb provided that they comply with the three sections of the regulations.

Since these regulations were published, changes have occurred in the climbing activities and flaws have developed in the regulations due to these changes. Since 1970, annual climbing numbers have increased over 400%. The large number of climbers combined with better and more sophisticated equipment, techniques, clothing, and transportation have aided in bringing about some of these changes.

The regulations apply only to Mount McKinley and Mount Foraker. A park interpretation of the rules makes enforcement mandatory only for parties climbing above 12,000 feet, although the Annual Mountaineering Report for 1961 states that the rules apply for all climbs over 10,000 feet.

NO CLIMBING

Originally Mount McKinley and Mount Foraker were the goals for nearly all climbing parties in the park. Now, a much greater percentage of mountaineering activities occurs on lesser peaks. With current regulations, parties need not register for climbs on Mount Russell, Mount Silverthron, Mount Mather, Scott Peak, or numerous other mountains. Also, if proposed extensions are added to the park, hundreds of other peaks will become part of the park. We feel that a new regulation must be adopted to include all mountains within the park.

Secondly, we do not feel that the mandatory doctor's signature on the Physician's Certificate is reasonable or practical for all mountaineering activity in the park. However, the information contained in the present Physician's Certificate (with some changes) can be of definite value to mountaineers and we propose to retain the statement in future registration forms. We will then ask the climber to sign that he has read the above statement and leave a space below for an optional physician's signature if he or she so desires. We have received one letter from a family doctor that questions whether any physician (except for those qualified in high altitude) can truthfully certify the physical fitness of a climber based on a simple physical exam. We do not know how many physician's certificates are signed by the applicant's friends or by the applicant himself. We also do not know whether anyone has decided not to attempt a climb after having a physical exam, but we do know that some climbers with doubtful physical histories (recent severe frostbite, diabetes) have produced valid, signed Physician's Certificates.

Thirdly, the mandatory need for a radio with each climbing party has decreased greatly with the increased numbers of climbers in the park. In

1963, the first year that radios were required, there were only seven parties registered for climbing. In 1978, we had 107 registered parties. It is no longer reasonable to insist that every party carry a radio. Currently, some climbers are climbing Mount McKinley and Mount Foraker without radios. Although this violates our regulations, we have done little about it other than to advise people on the value of a radio. We do not feel that it is in our best interests to deny a party the right to climb after they have travelled anywhere from several thousand miles to 12,000 miles to make the attempt. A radio can be a very valuable tool in an emergency situation, and we feel that we should still strongly recommend that all parties carry one. However, by requiring a radio, we feel that we may be creating an undue dependence on its value. Since any radio only works from certain locations above 14,000 feet, their use is somewhat limited. Also, the requirement of a radio may create in climber's minds a feeling of dependence on the National Park Service to bail them out in an emergency. We feel that mountaineers need to know that their own party strength is their greatest asset and that a radio (which they may or may not choose to carry) is only a tool that may be of some value.

The radio requirement is especially difficult for foreign parties to understand and to abide with.

In a survey of mountaineering parties that climbed in the 1976 season 42 of 53 parties reported that they had a radio with them. Nineteen out of 45 parties reported that their radio did not work. Twenty-seven out of 49 felt that it was not a necessary piece of equipment for their climb.

A radio is the only piece of equipment that we require a climbing party to carry with them. We do not re-

quire ropes, ice axes, crampons, stoves or any other more valuable pieces of equipment. We feel that if we drop the mandatory requirement for radios that the majority of climbing parties will still carry them. When the regulation was established in 1968, radios were relatively expensive or difficult to obtain. Now, with the popularity of CB radio communications, they are much easier to get and cheaper.

Therefore, we propose that all of the current regulations be dropped from the Code of Federal Regulations and be replaced with the following:

"Registration with the Superintendent is required prior to any mountaineering in the Alaska Range above the 5,000 foot level. Upon completion of the trip, the registrant is required to check out in the manner specified by the registering official".

It may be necessary to add another sentence to the above regulation similar to the regulation written for Rocky Mountain National Park (36 CFR 7.7).

"Mountaineering means any multi-day trip requiring a significant amount of roped travel."

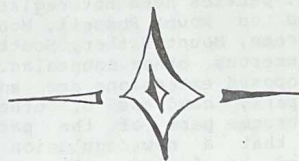
This sentence would more clearly define what types of activities we want people to register for. It would eliminate, for example, the need for a mountaineering registration for a party hiking to McGonagall Pass.

These regulations appear to be very reasonable. They reflect a concern that anyone attempting a climb in Mount McKinley National Park be adequately informed. They demonstrate that the National Park Service, as

the responsible agency, has exercised legitimate control over this activity without undue constraint.

We would appreciate your comments on these proposed changes.

Frank J. Betts



The Alaska Rescue Council from Anchorage sponsored a 3 day Avalanche Training School Jan. 12,13, 14. The 25 hour course was held at the performing Arts Center at UAA. Two days of lecture, as well as discussion groups, covered topics ranging from snow crystal structure and metamorphism, to route finding through what could be considered "avalanche threatening terrain." Lecturers also spoke on weather conditions, avalanche dynamics and zoning. The third day of the school was devoted to a field session held at Arctic Valley Ski Area. The class was broken down into three groups which were rotated through stations. Exercises included backcountry rescue, organized rescue (recovery), and snow grain structure analysis within a given deposition. A demonstration by D.O.G.S. search and rescue squad was also given, showing the admirable speed and accuracy of these trained dogs to locate a live avalanche victim. 250 people attended the school, gaining knowledge to be able to make an educated guess on slope/ snow conditions. And as far as avalanches go - it's certainly better than no guess at all.

bye Fran Bennis

Back in California

Start this trip in Pacific Heights at 0600 December 26. Load pack, skis and half sorted food into a Morris Minor and drive to Palo Alto. Rendezvous with instrument pilot and solid Beechcraft who punch us out of 500 ft. cover over San Jose at midmorn. The central valley being invisible, is easy to ignore. About an hour to the east the Sierras await us, bright in the sun. Fly up Yosemite valley, out over Agnew Pass, and land at Mammoth Lakes (7,100ft). Here begins the most difficult segment of the trip - GETTING FROM THE AIRPORT TO THE SNOW. Luck persists and we become friendly with an LA family who skis together. Their Tradesman van has lots of room and we are half way to the lodge. Next an hour of walking to improve the human outlook and appreciate the creative California culture. Then an application (\$5) of California roadskills gets us a lift with a part time ski instructor in a VW bus. More California skills are required to convince her that she deserves the dough. By mid afternoon we are skiing and soon make Minaret Summit (9175ft) where we are greeted by our host for the next three days - the high rugged crest of the Ritter Range.

After a few minutes of introduction and appreciation, we survey the intervening territory - the steep, deep valley whence falls the head waters of the San Joaquin River and decide to stay high and dry. The Eastern Sierras are great mountains for big views and this is one of the biggest. It is not hard to decide that our time is too short to reach the summits. So sure are we, in fact, that we have left behind the axes. A leisure ski tour is just what we need. After all, this is California and we are mellow. Sunshine most of the time. Lounge around for lunch in shirt sleeves watching the coyotes and rabbits.

All too soon we are as high as we can get in half a day without the packs. Having fun falling down in front of big pine trees. After another camp at Deadman Pass we are back at the lodge. Thence take the parking lot shuttle bus (cab cost \$20) to the end of the line. Ski down a toboggan rutted, suicide, powderline chute through the back yards of cedar shingled condos. Then a long walk on increasingly trafficked blacktop road until taken pity upon by a teenaged car rental agent. She drives us to the airport at a smoking pace where we hang bored until our Lockheed pilot, driving a Cessna this time, touches down at 1500 to the minute, as agreed. Well, what can you expect from an Astrophysicist with two degrees from Harvard.

After flying out over some very interesting granite domes, we strictly reverse the route - landing at San Jose airport 4 mins ahead of a PAL 727 who was 5 miles in front of his reported position as corrected by the calm radio voice of the tower. Same Morris back to Stiener St. where we pick up a Datsun and spin over to San Rafael to enjoy white veal & turnips a la Maurice et Charles Bistros.

On the way, we claimed first ascent of Vista Point, but you will have to get there before the next storm if you want to be able to read the sign.

Editorial Comment

by Karma Kelle

For those of you out there who are still confused, I'll make an attempt to clarify the present political situation of the AAC. Keep in mind though, that in addition to cold hard facts, there is also a certain amount of heresay, rumor, voices in the night, etc., involved in the information process, not to mention yelling at an interview over beer in the pub at 1 A.M.

We as an organization have the opportunity to have our collective voice heard within the structure of public hearings in Anchorage. The opportunity to meet with Stevens in a closed caucus has passed. Our ticket to the hearings lies in associating ourselves with other organizations, such as Alaskans Unite, that already have a spot in the hearing. (We can't have our say without getting a legitimate spot.) This process, that of making oneself heard politically, requires more manpower than we have available to us, being small, and generally preoccupied with work, school, etc. If we do associate with another organization that might have the ability to carry through with some of our own goals, with which organization do we associate? Should we support only the cause of the mountaineers, or work with a wider based group of nonmotorized wilderness users? This brings up the question of just what is "The Freedom of the Hills", and what other groups would support our own particular goals.

This point of who to associate with, was the center of much discussion. Either we could go in with a group such as Alaskans Unite, in hopes that at least some of our final goals would be reached, at the price of compromising many more.

As an alternative, we could drop the political approach altogether and hope for the best. In this case, we could still deal with the NPS on a

group basis, trying to find fulfillment from the inside ranks.

In the end, this last alternative was agreed upon. Since we as a club had lost our chance to be heard as a separate entity, it was decided that it would be better if we did not compromise our goals by association with another organization. It was preferred that we deal with the NPS itself in an effort to reach our objectives.

In this light, the following letter will be sent to Ranger Gerhard of the NPS in McKinley Park as a statement from the Alaska Alpine Club:



Thank you for sending me your letter of 2/16/79. Indeed such letters in the past have on occasion been referred to committee and lost in the process. Such must have been the case this time. Our statement of 12 February (see reprint of this statement in this DESCENT, ed. note) was not an answer to your December 29 letter.

The history of conflict and ill feeling between the mountain climbers and the National Park Service can be readily summarized from your own memorandum on mountaineering regulations. From the beginning, we did not see the need for those radios, that seldom worked, to be mandatory by regulation. From the beginning, we realized the ultimate inconsistency of those health certificates. They were often filled out by fellow climbers. That they were mandatory only created the disrespect that is now more pervasive.

Please consider our unprecedented situation. In the past, those Alaskan mountain climbers who believed and benefitted from the concept of the "Freedom of the Hills" could readily avoid the local national parks and climb amidst less high, but free mountains. The concept of freedom in the mountains is very profound and very serious. Now, all of a sudden, the Park Service has jurisdiction over nearly all the mountains in Alaska. I think you can understand the impact to the active mountain climber.

Your recommended changes to the regulations are indeed an improvement. I respect those two specific requirements you dropped. But those are not nearly commensurate with the impact of your mandatory registration, now for nearly all our mountains. In all honesty, we just cannot accept mandatory registration. We do not consider ourselves aliens or subversives. We are free citizens of a free nation. Our high ethics for land use have been proven. Mandatory registration gives us nothing we want, nothing the public really needs, and nothing for the land itself. It imposes needless difficulties on us as individuals and a needless burden on the taxpayer. As long as there is mandatory registration there will be conflict with mountain climbers and other free people. Voluntary registration would be a welcome opportunity for those who felt they needed it. We can readily understand a value of periodic statistics for area use. Finite census programs can cover these needs.

Unfortunately, the broad sweeping powers of the National Park Service have historically been used against climbers for what invariably proved to be meaningless difficulties. I think you can also understand the frustration that we face in that we are a small group with nonpaid staff to professionally counter the cyclic restrictions put upon us. Because of

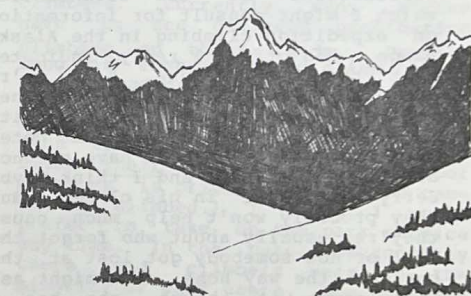
this frustration, we are now launching an intensive program to make a major effort, on the basis of these restrictions, to develop a statewide program to facilitate this end. Alaskan mountains were indeed the last major free mountains in the world. This will have to be guaranteed by law, not by annual allowance by a particular agency.

We also feel it would be an excellent opportunity for the United States National Park Service to lead this concept, so long held by active mountain climbers. That opportunity exists.

We would welcome the chance to discuss this further. I will call you as soon as possible so we can get a proposed date for an appropriate meeting.

Doug Buchanan
President
Alaska Alpine Club, Fairbanks

and talking with Doug later.... "We were the mouse that was going to roar but for the fear of our own voice, we are left being only the mouse."



Letters to the Editors

Dear Editors,

I can agree with the Park's new policy of unrecorded first ascents for unnamed peaks. It is a fine distinction to be sure, and one which has some spirit of tradition in our club. DESCENT reporting is noted neither for its polish nor its clarity. [We resent that, ed.] First or nick names are used - reporters remain anonymous. Details of the location and route of a climb may be presented in a way which is apparent to one familiar with the area but which would be logistically useless, to say an Argentinian whose climbing experience was primarily in Argentina.

In 1975, I set out from California to explore climbing in Alaska. A preliminary library search was unrewarding. Aside from historical and "big" climbs in the AAJ or CAJ, there was very little secondary information on Alaskan climbing. "Snow sloggers guide to the Eastern Deltas" or "Hints on Why Silvertip is the First to Get a Cloud and the Last to Lose It" - or how to pronounce Hyducovich.

Two years ago I informally asked an official of the AAC whether there were any records or other regular publications of the organization which I might consult for information on expedition climbing in the Alaska Range. His official reply indicated that there were none. "Oh, we're supposed to have DESCENT published regularly but it usually ends up with somebody mimeographing off some notes 3 or 4 times a year. I have a bunch of notes and copies and I think maybe Jerry has some in his closet. But they probably won't help much cause they're usually about who forgot the fuel or how somebody got lost at the bar on the way home. You might ask Laura about it though, she has a great recipe for Logan Bread, and if you find something interesting, let us know- we need articles for DESCENT."

Not knowing either Jerry or Laura, I wrote it off as a dead-end and did what most new Alaskan climbers do - which is push it yourself and pump the locals for all the information you can get. Good Luck!

On the large, humans are sensationalists. They will find out who was the first to hang glide from the summit of Denali and to try to conceal that fact would be absurd. Whoever is the first to chop a route up the south side of the Brook's gap will deserve a special kind of glory as well, but it will not get published in Mariah.

On the other hand, if 12 strong climbers expire falling into the great cleft at the base of Donna Lee Dome, I want to hear about it.

Coert Olmsted



Dear Editors,

I should like to express a few thoughts on current events within the club. First, I am glad to see a DESCENT again. Also, I am very glad to see the names of the authors attached to the articles. I never understood the reason why the club would pay to print articles to which the author was too ashamed to sign his/her name. I was also ashamed to see such DESCENTS mailed out to long standing club members. Although I am not certain, I feel that perhaps Terris Moore and I shared a similar disgust for what seemed a contest to write the most meaningless paragraphs.

The history of the club in the last month would fill many books. An absolutely mind-bending experience has just passed with the last meeting of 23 Feb., 8-11:30 p.m. There have been so many formal and informal, emergency, and spur of the moment meetings; I do hope that the membership has followed what has happened. I am not sure that I have. But I do hope what has happened is healthy for the club as well as climbers. Sometimes, climbers must give up their natural disdain for clubs and other such organizations, and work at something different from their next foot placement or worry about the weight of their packs.

For the past several years, things have been happening that climbers want to ignore. In 1969, it seemed that we would lose our rocks to the incroaching pipeline. Several years of hard work by many climbers saved these rocks. Since the construction of the pipeline, pipeline jobs and pipeline money to spend on climbing and air charters has changed the face of climbing locally. Few climbers have given thought to where that money came from and how Alaska has changed to want even more pipeline type booms.

We are used to using whatever techniques we can afford to get to the peaks. Sure we have ethics, we climb the last few feet on our own. But the places where one can climb into the unknown are rapidly disappearing. The places where you can walk and think "No one has ever been here on this glacier, ridge, peak, snow cave or crevasse before," are also disappearing. Others have taken an interest in preserving these diminishing areas. Their ways are sometimes foreign to us. But just like many newly arrived Alaskans, they also want to close off the Alaska highway behind them. I don't blame them. They have seen and lived

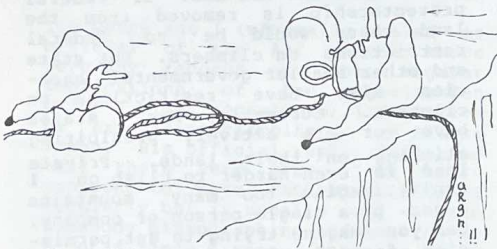
in the lower 48 or watched Alaska become too much like the lower 48, and they want to preserve what is left. Some of them are some of us. The few of us that are, should get involved and make sure the saving effort does not exclude us from enjoying our wilderness. We also must remember that without others' help, we might lose our mountains altogether. We realize that we must have legal wilderness as well as legally set aside lands and rivers. The bird watchers and wildflower sniffers need climbers and we need them. We need to work with them to make sure these preserved lands and rivers are also open to be appreciated in a manner that is mutually enjoyable but will not harm the land for future bird watchers, flower sniffers, and snow stomping, reach for the sky, climbers.

We must be careful, for some think we would be better off by joining with those others who do not like parks and would prefer to develop the land. The reasons are not bad. If Federal protectorship is removed from the land there would be no federal restrictions on climbers. But state and other smaller governmental agencies also have restrictions on climbers. Currently, many states have or are actively prohibiting climbing on their lands. Private land is even harder to climb on. I can't imagine too many mountains owned by a single person or company. Can you imagine trying to get permission from 20 persons or companies to climb their mountain? (Remember shiprock is privately owned and cannot be climbed.) I think I would prefer to take on the park service any time. In the past, backcountry users and climbers were in the minority of park users. Now we are a rapidly growing group of some size. We have power and the Park Service is required to serve us. They are our parks. Recently actions over the

... Stability Evaluation of the
Snowpack ...

last several years have shown that the National Park Service is willing to work with climbers. I know of no other land owner or agency mandated by law, except the park service, to be responsive to its non-motorized recreational users. If we get in early in the new parks and work with the new land managers we can mold the regulations to be beneficial for climbers. I challenge all climbers to look at their ethics and to decide for themselves the future of climbing in Alaska. We have the last free expedition/exploring type of climbing area left. Will it remain as such, to be re-discovered as new and unexplored for future climbers? Make your mind up, then work to those ends. Use your own means or join with the club. The club itself does nothing, its members do it all. Team work on a mountain works, so does team work in achieving victories such as moving a pump station. WE can decide the fate of climbing in Alaska if we get involved - all of us - not just a few.

DAN OSBORNE



Dear Editors,

The Alaska Alpine Club is being run by a minority of people that are not concerned with the opinions of the majority.

JOHN WATERMAN.

A stability evaluation is an estimate of the likelihood that avalanches will release in a given region and within a given time interval. Avalanche prediction situations usually involve skiers or mountaineers who are on potentially hazardous mountain slopes both in the backcountry, and within developed ski areas. Any suspected instability in the snowpack involves a risk that should motivate some sort of protective action or hazard control by skiers. Stability evaluations are based generally on the following six criteria.

1. Current and past avalanche activity.
2. Snow cover distribution.
3. Snowpack structure.
4. Local meteorological conditions.
5. National weather service information.
6. Ski and explosive tests.

The most significant input to stability evaluation is the knowledge of recent avalanche activity in the area. If avalanches have occurred very recently, it is more likely that additional snow releases will occur and the snowpack is probably still unstable. Skiers should be critically aware of slopes with common aspect and elevation, small wet snow slides and active sluffing. Slopes that have previously avalanched that winter should be avoided. Statistics show that once a snow slope slides, it will more than likely avalanche again.

SNOW COVER DISTRIBUTION is assessed by visual observation of the potential avalanche path to determine if it is filled with enough snow to release. Significant avalanches usually do not occur on a given avalanche path until terrain irregularities, such as boulders, are covered over with older snow and then new or additional snow is deposited on this smooth foundation. For most slide paths this requires about 3 ft. or 1 meter of new snow in the starting zone and track. Susceptible situations are avalanche paths on

permanent snowfields, smooth rock outcrops, dirt grass, etc., where snow may slide with very new snow cover.

Diagnosis of the SNOWPACK STRUCTURE involves searching for weak layers and hard crusts. The most effective way of determining unstable snow layers is to dig a trench into the snow, and inventory the snowpack. Weak layers and crust can also be determined by pushing a ski pole (without a basket) or probe pole down though the snowpack while being aware of the resistance on the pole. Although a hard crust cannot be considered a weakness, there is evidence that instability is greatly intensified when a weak layer is immediately above or beneath a firm crust. The crust can become a good sliding surface if a weak layer above fails. Also the crust could support the weight of a skier or skiers could cause the crust to fail. With a weak layer below the crust and nothing to support the weight of the snowpack the snow above consequently could fail and avalanche.

LOCAL METEOROLOGICAL DATA is also important when evaluating snow. Precipitation (snow or rain) is a very important parameter in avalanche forecasting due to loading, additional weight and subsequent snow failure. The rate and total amount of snow fall should be noted. Snowfall intensity (the rate of accumulation) which exceeds one inch per hour is considered critical. Under these conditions the new snow does not have time to settle or the new crystals to sinter together and become stable. The water equivalency of the snow should also be noted - the higher the water content (Kg/cm³), the heavier the snow weight. If the snowpack is known to have a weak structure, the critical values of precipitation intensity and the total water equivalency can be reduced. Similarly, if the snowpack has a

relatively strong structure it is possible to have increased critical values of snow rate and weight. Wind direction and speed should also be considered in any avalanche potential evaluation. For example if the winds were blowing from the southeast towards the northwest, the lee-slopes would be expected to load with snow. Wind speed in excess of 10 MPH for over 8 to 10 hours could move enough snow onto the lee-slopes and cause a potentially critical avalanche situation. Critical loading due to wind transport is always possible. Wind redistribution of snow is greatest for a few days after a new snowfall, but transport may occur as long as the surface snow remains uncrusted. In evaluating wet snow instability, the amount of rainfall should be considered. Radiation from the snow or clouds, rising air temperatures, and heavy rain can create wet snow instability by adding weight, and decreasing cohesion in the snow surface layers. Any free water on a crust could cause lubrication for an above snow layer to slide upon. Air temperature trends may be correlated with snow instability. Rising air temperature during a storm could cause an unstable condition with heavy wetter snow being deposited on lighter dry snow. When the temperature falls at the end of a storm it will generally help stabilize the snowpack. When storms follow each other in a relatively short time, especially when later storms are warmer or when old cold dry snow is under the new warmer heavier snow, an unstable condition will occur.

It is extremely beneficial to know NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE FORECASTS AND REPORTS for the area and region of potential concern. This information can give valuable indications of the weather trends and data at the higher elevations in remote areas. In the greater Anchorage area, the evening television show "Aviation Weather" viewed on the educational

channel is excellent for monitoring regional weather trends. Marine forecasts on a few radio stations can also be informative.

SKI AND EXPLOSIVE TESTS can be used to help determine the stability of the snow in a specific area. Test skiing potential avalanche slopes in the backcountry is not recommended for everyone. Potential avalanche areas in questionable snow situations should be completely avoided. Ski testing snow slopes involves some high risks and requires strict safety precautions and procedures. Test precautions are not readily available in most backcountry situations. Explosive charges are used for testing snow stability but their use is limited. Hand thrown explosives are usually thrown into the starting zone of an avalanche path. Explosives and other mechanical means are generally limited to developed areas which include alpine ski areas and mountainous highway systems. Artillery can be used for firing explosive projectiles into starting zones up to 7 miles (11,350M) away. Large recoilless rifles, such as the 105 mm military piece, are commonly used for this type of avalanche control. Skiers and mountaineers must be aware that avalanche conditions may exist at any time. There are two main points to keep in mind; 90% of most avalanche activity occurs during or shortly after snow storms. Regardless of other influences the probability of instability on a given avalanche path rises rapidly as the path is loaded with snow. Travellers in the mountains should consider the ten main contributing factors when evaluating snow stability.

1. Depth to base.
2. Stability of base.
3. Surface of base.
4. Amount of snow.
5. Speed of wind.
6. Direction of wind.
7. Settlement of new snow.
8. Type of snow.

9. Density of snow.
10. Intensity of snow.

Whatever avalanche hazards a skier encounter, he or she must remember that numerous factors determine snow stability. There are general laws that help specify the vague science of evaluating the stability of the snowpack. These rules however, are not hard and fast. This article has attempted to outline the basic factors that a person might use to determine snowpack "stability". Other factors needed to successfully evaluate the avalanche hazard are an honest respect of the mountains and experience dealing with nature's rules.

*bye Jim and Steve
Hackett*



a Happy Mountaineer

Dr. Smut

~18~

DOWN WITH MOUNTAIN CLIMBING BY EDWARD CARRIGAN

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Climbing a mountain has no discernable purpose, unless there is someone at its summit whom the climber urgently wants to meet. A mountain peak is not the kind of place which, once a person has arrived, is very profitable to stay at. It has neither comfortable accommodations nor facilities for recreation.

Being on the top of a mountain does not create expansive new vistas for adventurous human activity. The only practical course open to a person finding himself on the peak of a mountain is to come down again before being overcome by cold, starvation, or trench foot.

People who devote a considerable amount of time to climbing mountains are not the kind of people most persons would be tempted to entrust with enterprises of great moment. A due regard for personal safety seems a reasonable part of people with a sense of responsibility, but mountain climbers show an almost fanatical dedication to frivolity.

With disquieting regularity, announcements are made of mountains and rocky places of a lower order of grandeur being climbed by unlikely people like pensioners and political activist groups.

There is a presumption that something has been accomplished. The overcoming of difficulty in itself does not constitute accomplishment, notably when the difficulty can be avoided by persons of any ordinary prudence. Mountain climbing is simply a journey over difficult terrain for purposes of emotional gratification.

Commuting to work often requires some stamina, moral character, and a willingness to endure the constant danger of death and disfigurement. It achieves a worthwhile purpose, but is a routine feature of urban living and persons who fight their way to work through congested highways win few laurels.

The British team which made the first recorded trip to the pinnacle of Mt. Everest in 1953 said they did it because it was there. It would have made better sense to say they had done it because they expected it would not be there after they had returned from their climb.

The British "conquest" of Mt. Everest followed a coronation of Queen Elizabeth II and was widely interpreted as a favorable portent for her reign. In fact, it marked the beginning of the disintegration of the British Empire.

The sides and tops of mountains have never appealed to me as an agreeable environment. For some perverse reason, the summits are covered with snow, which makes walking on them uncomfortable.

When I was a child, I speculated that the tops of mountains, being nearer to the sun, would be hotter than the plains in which most of us live. In adulthood, I have never discovered the flaw in this theory.

Scaling mountains adds nothing to the total of human enlightenment, and provides few opportunities for meaningful interpersonal relationships. None of the immensity of mankind's social and economic problems is rendered less intractable.

The opportunities for personal gain in mountain climbing are not great. It provides only a modest amount of healthful exercise at the cost of

~19~

much time and money and of risks most people on rational reflection would not consider acceptable.

Mountain climbing shows a morbid curiosity about places inaccessible to conventional modes of travel which must be almost pathological in intensity. Left in peace, mountains harm few people and have a certain majesty for people of romantic temperament.

If I ever woke up saying to myself that I must set aside all personal business in order to climb a mountain, rock face, or passably difficult defile, I would not leave my bed, for so depressing an impulse is a bad omen. On some days, sleep is the only profitable occupation.

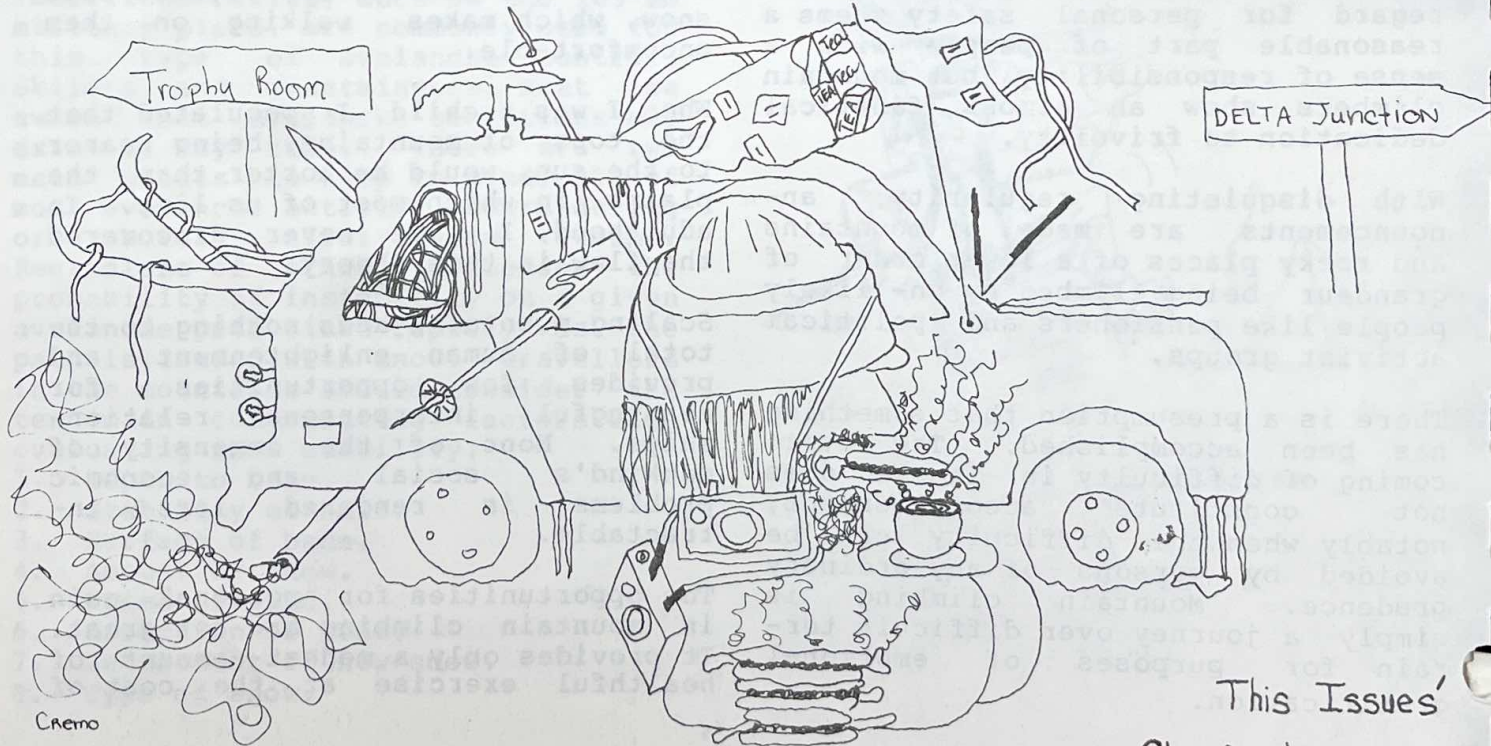
Mountains are best appreciated at a safe distance. People afflicted with destructive urges to explore them at length should not be encouraged by extravagant publicity.

CARRIGAN IS A FREE-LANCE CORRESPONDENT IN TORONTO.



We will be printing the next "Descent" in Algot - a language understood by specimen and computer - as there is little in English to print for next month's issue. Your written contributions are needed - as usual - we may grimace in disgust at the poor spelling, but the articles are wildly celebrated! If words do not describe your alpine experiences, perhaps an abstract drawing will come to your weird little minds and capture our hearts. May the wizard of good grace bless you all with creativity!

The above



Creemo

*This Issue's
Caricature ~*

PETER MacKeith