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DESCENT

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Editor: John Keller

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

A SLIDE SHOW will be given Tuesday, September 28 in Schaible Auditorium on the UAF compus. Mike Masters will show slides of his trip to the Ruth Amphitheatre with Stan Justice, et al. and also a sampling of Deltas mountaineering slides will be shown.

A CLUB TRIP will go to the Thayer Hut Saturday and Sunday, October 2 and 3. This trip will be for two purposes:(i) to introduce new climbers to the Delta mountains with a relatively easy glacier backpack and (ii) repair the hut door. Stay after the slide show if you are interested. We need both new and experienced members on this trip.

CLUB EQUIPMENT including crampons, ice axes, a 4-person tent, wands, and dead men are available for members' use. See Ken Green (a deposit may be required).

A SKI MOUNTAINEERING CLASS is usually given by the club during spring semester. This is the best time of the year to go into the mountains due to the settled weather and (usually) solid snow bridges. If you are a beginner this fall is the time to start making or otherwise obtaining needed gear, getting yourself into physical shape, and practicing your skiing techniques.

THE ARTIC NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE will be the subject of a slide show and discussion at 7 pm on Wednesday, September 29 in the Wood Center South Dining Room on the UAF campus. The show is being put on by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. This area includes some very rugged glaciated peaks of interest to mountaineers.

CLUB OFFICERS

The following officers were elected at the annual meeting of the club in March 1982 to serve for the 82-83 season: KEN GREEN is president. Ken is a fanatical outdoorsman who has climbed in Alaska since 1979. He has also wrangled horses, kayaked whitewater, and jockeyed helicopters in Vietnam. He's a psychology professor and counselor at UAF. Stan JUSTICE is vice-president. Stan is a veteran mountaineer, skier, and marathon runner. He has been a Peace Corps volunteer in Nepal and has completed several very long ski traverses in Alaska. He is currently an engineer for the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation. JOHN KELLER is secretary-treasurer and is a UAF chemistry professor when I am not typing up DESCENT. The two councilors (experienced members held in esteem by the masses) are JOANNE GROVES and BUCKY WILSON. Joanne is an experienced mountaineer and environmental activist. Bucky is a charter member of the Alaska Alpine Club and has recorded a number of first ascents in the Alaska Range including the first ascent of the Northwest Buttress of Mt. McKinley. Both work at the Geophysical Institute, Joanne as an airphoto interpreter and Bucky as a physics professor.

PETER MCKEITH MEMORIAL EXPEDITION FUND

In April 1980 Peter McKeith, a past president of the Alaska Alpine Club and then a graduate student at the Geophysical Institute, was killed in a fall from the west face of Old Snowy, a peak in the Delta Range. To honor his memory his estate donated in 1981 a \$6000 endowment to the Alaska Alpine Club the interest from which is to be donated to worthwhile mountain climbing expeditions.

The money is being managed by the Club's financial advisor and registered agent, Bucky Wilson. It has been invested in the money market and to date has accrued about \$1000 in interest. Some or all of these dividends will be awarded in March of 1983. Applications from all climbers are solicited; they are due by December 31, 1982. They should include a description of the proposed climb, a statement of financial needs and a description of the qualifica-

tions of the individual members of the party. A committee composed of the club executive committee, the registered agent and two club members of 3 years standing will evaluate the applications and make the award.

Awardees must acknowledge that the climb is partially or wholly funded by the Peter McKeith fund. Also an article describing the climb is to be published in the club journal "Descent" and a slide show is to be given to the Club. Climbers must be members of the Alaska Alpine Club at the time of the climb.

A BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO THINGS THAT CAN GO WRONG
UNDER AN OVERHANG
By Ken Green

We were sitting in a famous Fairbanks bar down in our cups because Denali had fallen through, mildly depressed with 29 days of carefully packaged food gathering dust.

"John, where's some rock climbing south of here?"

"uh, maybe in the Ruth, I don't know of any around Valdez, uh..."

"No, I mean SOUTH, like between here and Mexico."

"Oh, well, Yosemite. Best in the world."

One week later we are in that fantastic place where rock climbers go after they crater. Granite walls rising from forests and the sun always, mostly, shines. These climbs are just little jewels: Harry Daley, Jam Crack Route, Commitment, Snake Dike, Doggie Deviations, Munginella. I can't believe it. I wish I were 20 lbs. lighter. I wish hands were genetically fashioned like rhino hide.

John, rapelling down a crack, looks in: "Jesus, there's blood all over this crack. Someone really had a time here."

Me: "Careful, that's my blood."

Finally John and Moss leave. Cindy's here but is still recovering and is not in love with rock, only snow and ice. Where to find a partner? Fortunately that is an easily solved problem around Camp Four. They are perched on boulders like birds, squeezed into junky cars like squirrels, and prowl around showers and kitchens like bears. This is their habitat, and tourists come from all over the world to take their pictures. (Sign in Camp Four restroom: Tourists send us your daughters.)

Alan has been here for five months and has that lean and hungry look of a rock climber. We have a shake-out cruise on Bishop's Terrace along with a third climber. Alan, hearing of my dream to do a wall someday, suggests Washington Column-South Face. Tomorrow. Mom! I've made second string varsity! The day arrives and we start the climb with the third person. Three pitches up, and he spends an inordinate amount of time studying the next pitch. Comes time to follow Alan and he gets dizzy. We leave the

haul bag and quit for the day.

Next day Alan and I start off again. This time I get to lead because I've been there before. All the while I chatter- I've never lead before coming to Yosemite and it's really different, I've only done two aid pitches and I really like it. Is it my imagination or is Alan turning white? No, he's laughing. It's obvious on the fourth pitch when I grunt and groan on a thin crack, step on my topmost protection and force it out, hang by one hand, but finally make it.

"Boy, I thought you were going to fall on that one."

"What are you talking about? That's how I climb when I'm in CONTROL."

Finally we stroll onto Dinner Ledge. Ah, now the climbing begins. Look at that face! Sheer, clean, no top in sight. Hey, look at that overhang tight here. The notorious Kor Overhang. I beg Alan to let me take the lead. He hesitates, but he's no hosehead (later I learn a friend has told him. "Whatever you do, don't second the Overhang.")

The topo says 5.6 crack to the Overhang. I hum up the crack not feeling need for too much protection yet. Oops, the crack turns thin 15 feet short of the Overhang. Two pieces of pro in the crack, and fingers barely in the remaining 10 feet. I grab a handy pin just in time. Panting, I think I'll start aiding here (as if I had a choice). Out with the etriers and up to the ceiling. Would you look at that? How in the hell does one reach those bolts? The first bolt looks impossible. I struggle and lunge. Nothing is happenong. I long for a 6 foot gaffing hook. What's this? Between me and the bolt of a strange object, a piece of blobbed metal on the rock with a skinny wire coming out of it. Being very smart I instantly realize it's a trap: you grab the wire and the metal peels right off. No thanks!

Back to lunging at the bolt. Alan is asleep on belay. Maybe you do use that strange object. I clip into the strange object and gingerly stand up expecting to end up 20 feet lower. I can't believe it! Strange object holds, but I still can't reach the bolt. Then I see chalk marks on a shallow edge. Hanging on strange object and pulling on the edge gives me the stretch to reach the bolt. I clip in being very upside down now.

I don't remember how I get the next bolt. I think it is tensioning the rope and lunging repeatedly. Finally I'm one bolt from the lip, and I can't do it. The lunges don't work. How tall was this Kor anyway? Crestfallen I ask Alan to lower me.

Alan scampers up and tries to make me feel good, "Wow, I don't think I could have gotten these first bolts".

Fortunately he gets the last one and aids across the lip of the overhang right to a belay in slings. The wind has started to blow, and we can't talk to one another. Rope tugs tell me to go. Jumars in hand I flash up the face to

the overhang. Hmmm. Jumar upside down different from Jumar vertical, especially when you unclip from a bolt and ---wheeee!---take the 10 foot pendulum.

Two bolts shy of the lip and I decide things will go faster if I change the length of my slings from the waist to the Jumars. Clipping to a bolt I rework the lengths. I then unclip from the bolt and wheeee! again. My God! I can't move! The slings allow me to move a half inch each time. At an agonizing pace I move upward. The wind is howling, the slack ropes are blowing out dead horizontally (later Alan, a former air traffic controller estimates 40 mph gusts). I am twirling in the wind, getting desparate and dizzy. I also get stuck in a way which still amazes me. As I inch upward I actually get my hand stuck between the two Jumars. I hang from my self-made hand trap and moan. I turn in the wind, and I turn religious(I haven't been religious until now). PLease God, if you'll let me down safely I'll stay in Cindy's arms and never stray to the rock again. I'll even tithe.

Finally I begin to laugh at the absurdity of the situation. There is no way I want to read a rescue report describing how they found me. I rig up a prusik, get my weight off the Jumars, and free my hand.

It has been an hour since I started the pitch for the second time, and I am getting weak. I've been spinning in the wind 500 feet over the valley floor, haven't been able to talk to Alan, and I feel spooked. It is time to retreat. I repeatedly yell this to Alan until I hear a faint "OK". Then, while hanging, I rig up a rappel, unclip a Jumar, then realize that the last Jumar will be, well, interesting, So, wrapping the rope around my leg, I grasp the rope above the Jumar and do a pathetic one hand half pull up while I unclip the Jumar with my other hand. My plan is to now drop the Jumar and grab the rappel rope with that hand while hanging on. Unfortunately the rope has disappeared, unwrapped from around my leg and camafleged by all the aid gear! It is one of those days. I let go of the rope involuntarily and grab for my figure eight with both hands. There is a short sickening slide, and I stop. I lower down to the ledge and sit, exhausted with my head between my legs trying not to throw up.

Alan rigs his rappel and decides to clean the pitch while on rappel. The major probllem with this is that the route is a good bit off the rappel line. He tensions left across the lip of the overhang using the pieces ot hold onto while he frees other pieces. About thirty feet off the fall line the piece he is holding onto pulls unexpectedly. It is spectacular! It seems as if someone has attached him to the end of a rubber band, pulled him taut, and launched him with a snap. He catapults over the lip out and down and bobs up and down now 30 feet below the lip. I cringe because I'm sure he's hurt. However, the miracle of kernmantel allows him to lower to the ledge unhurt.

"You know, maybe I should give up climbing because nor-

mally a fall like that would scare the shit out of me, and I'm not scared at all."

We look at one another and grin.

Alan and I now spend the next hour on the ledge sipping "victory" wine and reminiscing. I initially feel bad because I feel to blame for Alan's fall but he assures me I'm not. We watch the valley below for awhile and before the sun sets we do the six rappels to the ground.

Postscript

That night we are talking and drinking as others tell me how to tackle the problem.

"You need to use a fifi hook to get more reach."

"You need to set the second Jumar pretty low below the protection you're trying to clean, clean it, and go."

And so the good advice goes on and I am starting to get the picture. I loan Alan my Jumars for his El Cap climb in two days. He tries to get me to stay on in the Valley, and we'll go back and do the Column when he gets back. I can't but we make plans to stay in touch and perhaps try it next summer. Cindy, who has heard of my previous promise to God, is laughing. Well, I told you I wasn't religious.

DENALI: THE LONG WALK by Willy Hersman

It was the spring of 1981. School had just ended for the semester and a summer job looked as unlikely as it was unappealing. I called Paul Farmer, a friend living in Anchorage who I had met on the Pacific Crest Trail three years before.

"Paul, how was your winter?"

"Slow. The best part was a mountaineering course I took at the college."

"That's interesting. I just finished a course with the Alaska Alpine Club, maybe we can get together for a climb sometime."

"How about next week? Want to climb McKinley?"

"Sure, Paul, sure."

He was not fooling. A few days later I found myself in Anchorage packing food and gear for two and still thinking we must be a little crazy. We decided that Denali should be climbed from the bottom, no fly-ins. so after just a week of planning we shouldered heavy loads at Kroto Creek (as far as the car would go) and headed overland towards the Kahilt-na Glacier. Two days of brush, mud, and mosquitoes in the Dutch Hills took us to Granite Creek at 1300'. Hey, only 19,000 feet to go!

Up the Kahiltna Glacier we proceeded, praying that ravens or bears might steal some of the load to make to

going easier. Along the route we were treated with excellent views of Little Switzerland and numerous unnamed peaks, as Foraker and Denali grew larger by the mile. Passing beneath impressive Mt. Hunter and through an ice fall we reached Kahiltna after 8 days.

Those first days put in better shape than most of the other climbers we met on their way up the West Buttress. Anyway, we simply got on the "trail" with the rest of the world and grunted our loads like everybody else and eventually made it to the 17300' high camp. Hardly a cloud halted our progress.

It was such a beautiful day on June 23rd that even though most of our gear was still below us, we went for the summit. About 12 aspirins later we were no longer looking up, but out, at the other white giants of the range. And as we staggered like drunks down to camp, one of the ironys of mountaineering struck me: it took 21 days to spend 21 minutes on top.

The next day we made two hauls over Denali Pass and proceeded to walk north to Wonder Lake, which was reached after 8 days on the Muldrow route. There were a few anxious moments on the way out... a storm on Harper Glacier, a close avalanche off Karstens Ridge, the weak bridges though the Great Icefall and of course the McKinley River, but at the end the only casualty was a sled which had been dragged 110 miles over ice, rock and tundra.

The climb was fairly routine overall with nothing unusual except that everything went right. June was a beautiful month and aside from a 3 day storm we were scorched by the Alaskan sun every day. The best part of the trip, it seemed, was when Paul and I finally unroped. Somehow we remained friends after a month of being tied together.

RURPS 'N BONGS
News About Fairbanks Climbers

ANDY EMBICK and JIM LOKKEN toured various super white water cauldrons in the Lower 48 early this summer. They also stopped in Boulder to rock climb and battle the poison ivy.

CAROL KAZSAS and JIM CAMPBELL had a baby girl, Kinder, this past spring. Carol has been mostly chasing the baby around since then but Jim spent July and August guiding in the Brooks Range.

This year's pilgrims to Scott Peak in Denali Park- DICK STOLZBERG, KEN and CINDY GREEN, and JAY HUGHES- were turned back by the usual mid-summer rotten weather that has hampered various groups in the past. Nevertheless a good farce was had by all.

HOWARD FERREN had to temporarily swear off climbing this summer because of the frantic house building activity in Fairbanks this year. Included among his projects was an outhouse for JAY HUGHES' place on top of Ester Dome.

KEN GREEN and DOUG BLOCKCOLSKY traversed White Princess Peak in July going up via the Sunday Summit /O'Brian Peak ridge and descending to the upper M'Ladies Branch of the Castner. They reported good snow conditions on the ridge itself but knocked off a couple of scary sloughs on the way down to the M'Ladies.

BUCKY WILSON, PHIL MARSHALL and DAVE FRITZ climbed Silvertip via Jarvis Glacier in August. They said that the route up and the pass above Michael Creek seems to be the easiest approach to Jarvis Glacier compared to several other drainages in the area. The east side of the Michael Creek/Jarvis Creek pass was an uncrevassed snow field and scree slope, while the other passes are guarded by crevasses on the east side.

ALASKA ALPINE CLUB TELEPHONE LIST

(contact John Keller if information is wrong or missing)

*=dues payable this fall

- Jean and Jerry AMBROSE 455-6799
- Lori BABB 479-5017
- *Bill BECIA 474-7451
- Mark BLONG 479-5454
- Dennis and Sandra BOLZ 456-6845
- Janey BRANCHEAU 474-7665
- *Michael BRODIE 474-7326
- Jim CHILES 452-2920
- Brad CLARK
- Catherine COCHRANE 479-3607
- Andrew EMBICK 835-4200 (Valdez)
- Michael FALLON 479-3607
- Howard FERREN 479-3362
- Judy FLORY 479-5454
- Bernie FOWLE 377-5488 (Eielson)
- Peggy GLYNN 452-2750
- Cindy GREEN 479-3298
- Joanne GROVES 479-3079
- Steve HACKETT 452-5809 (message)
- Cydney HANSEN 455-6537
- Gordon HERREID
- Willy HERSMAN 278-9829 (Anch)
- Jay HUGHES 479-3566
- *Kurt JOHNSON 452-2823
- Ron JOHNSON 456-7999
- Stan JUSTICE 479-5017
- *Roger KAYE 479-3449
- Gary KENDALL 455-6541
- John KELLER 479-3630
- *Tom KULEK 353-4147
- Nancy LEWIS 452-1761 (w)
- Mike MASTERS 356-5662 (message)
- Mike MEKEE 456-1658
- Moss MEAD 479-6641
- *James MERY
- Dan MCKEE 479-5205
- *Cliff and Jeanette MOORE 479-3962
- Blake MORGAN 474-7603
- *Stephen MURPHY 479-3739
- Dan OSBORNE 479-4535
- *Stephanie and Ron PAOLETTI 488-9807
- Michael PARISE 456-5792
- Barbara POWELL
- Clem RAWERT 456-6314
- John ROSE 455-6418
- Ron ROSSER 488-9785/452-2131(w)
- Nancy RYCHLIK 452-5967
- Rudi SCHMID 456-6551 (message)
- *Francia SCHULTZ 456-1041(w)
- Frank SOMMER 456-2106
- *Ed SPEER 452-1980(w)
- *Scott STARBUCK 474-7612
- *Dennis STEPHENS 479-5826
- Dick STOLZBERG 455-6103
- Bill STRAUSS 895-4840 (Delta)
- *Jack TAYLOR 479-5283
- Kathy TODD 835-4200 (Valdez)
- *Jessie VENABLE 456-2273
- Les and Teri VIERECK
- Donna WIEHS

FOR NEW AND/OR OVERDUE CLUB MEMBERS:

Send \$6.00(\$10.00 family membership)and this form, completed, to:

ALASKA ALPINE CLUB
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College, Alaska 99708

to insure your membership for the coming year. Membership includes "Descent".

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