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# DESCENT

Volume XV: Number 2

January 1984

Editors: Barbara Powell and Mike Masters

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## ANNOUNCEMENTS

**CLUB EQUIPMENT:** A new home will have to be found for the club equipment. For several years it has been in a storeroom at Patty Gym, but the club was asked to remove it to provide badly needed space for other activities in the building. Temporarily the various ropes, crampons, ice axes, and miscellaneous boxes will be located at officers' homes. In addition, members who discover they still have club equipment stashed away somewhere can call Howard Ferren (479-3362) to arrange its return in time for use by the 1984 spring class (or just bring it to an AAC meeting and give it to one of the club officers: Mike Masters, Howard Ferren, Barbara Powell).

**ANNUAL MEETING:** Don't forget the annual meeting which is in April this year. The meeting will include the election of new officers and the announcement of the 1984 recipients of Peter MacKeith Climbing Grants. The meeting will be on Monday, April 23 at 7:30 P.M. in Schaible Auditorium.

**MAPS:** Alaska Alpine Club maps (vintage 1971) of the Delta Mountains are available for 50¢ (to cover future revisions and printing costs).

**AVALANCHE BOOKS:** The avalanche handbook, Avalanche Safety for Skiers and Climbers, which sold out at the avalanche workshop are available for sale at club meetings for \$8.00. This book is highly recommended.

**AVALANCHE BEACONS:** Club members can order Ramer ECHO 2 avalanche rescue transceivers at a discount through the club. One beacon costs \$63.00 through the club as compared to \$79.00 retail cost. This is a good opportunity to obtain a potentially life-saving piece of equipment. Contact Howard Ferren (479-3362) soon to order one (or two). Other Ramer products may be available this way also.

**ARE YOU MISSING MEETING ANNOUNCEMENTS?** Generally posters are put up a week before the meeting. You will always find posters on the UAF campus, on the inside of the door at Clem's Backpacking, on the outside bulletin board at Beaver Sports, and at the entrance to the College Liquor Store. On a hit or miss basis you will find posters at other locations. In addition, KUAC radio usually announces the meeting a day or two ahead on their "What's Happening" spot and often the "City News in Brief" column on page 3 of the Daily News-Miner will list a brief announcement.

**WE NEED YOUR HELP!** Experienced members are needed to assist with the spring Ski Mountaineering Class, especially on the weekend class trips. If you can help, please contact Mike Masters (wk) 479-3104, Howard Ferren (hm) 479-3362, Barbara Powell (wk) 452-4761, ext. 277, or Joanne Groves (hm) 479-3079, (wk) 474-7870.

**SKI MOUNTAINEERING COURSE:** This year's course schedule is contained in this issue of the DESCENT.

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

This fall has seen a full slate of events in terms of Alaska Alpine Club meetings rounded up by Vice-President Howard Ferren. After a couple of tries and several other enjoyable (and thought-provoking) films, we succeeded in receiving two exciting films on ski mountaineering: "Falline" and "Listen to the Mountains." Both, and particularly the former, were well-received by the large audience of those who persevered to the actual showing.

Communications with Doug Fesler, organizer of the Alaska Avalanche School, led to an equally well-attended two day series on avalanche hazard evaluation and avoidance aimed at anyone who ventures into the mountains, whether for ski touring or climbing. As younger climbers from the Interior have been involved in a disproportionate number of avalanche incidents in recent years, it was particularly appropriate to arrange this session for the Fairbanks community. While the nearly nonexistent snow cover made field exercises impractical, well-organized instruction, slides of avalanche scenes, a decisionmaking scenario kept the audience involved and laid the groundwork for practical learning in the mountains.

The 1983 American-Tibetan Everest Expedition was the subject of another meeting. Robin Houston, M.D., put on a lively show taking the climbers through Tibetan towns and up to the 26,000-foot level on the West Ridge, where pre-monsoon snows forced the climbers to descend without the summit. The slides, many by Galen Rowell, were outstanding in composition and effect.

On the local scene, Bucky Wilson presented an excellent introduction to climbing in the Delta Mountains, including a history of early climbs made by Alaska Alpine Club members. Even in that popular area, not all of the views of the peaks could be identified with certainty, illustrating the diversity of climbs available. Doug Blockolsky showed slides of his party's attempt on Mount Shand via the Black Rapids Glacier. Afterwards Larry Mayo, a glaciologist, explained the research he has been conducting on the movements of the Black Rapids Glacier and some of the interesting features which can be seen there. Peter MacKeith climbing grants, one of which helped support the Mount Shand attempt, will be available again this year. Application procedures are detailed in this Descent, and all club members considering climbs are urged to apply.

While an early soggy snowfall eliminated any interest in an introductory fall club trip to the mountains, Howard Ferren made an inspection trip to the Lower Canwell Hut. Marmots have made off with most of the floor and have begun to help themselves to the walls, and the wind has removed the door and some of the roofing. Repairs are planned for the spring season.

Upcoming activities include the spring Ski Mountaineering Course. Experienced members are needed to share their knowledge and are encouraged to offer their help.

Mike Masters

## 1984 SKI MOUNTAINEERING COURSE

CLASS	DISCUSSION	FIELD TRIP
Feb. 6	Frostbite and hypothermia	-----
Feb. 13	Winter camping/gear	-----
Feb. 20	Snow shelters	Canwell Glacier
Feb. 27	Glaciers/ropes/harnesses	Castner Glacier
March 5	Crevasse rescue	Patty Gym and Deltas
March 12	Snow climbing: techniques/tools	Panorama Peak
March 19	Avalanche awareness	-----
-----SPRING BREAK-----		
April 3	Ice Climbing	Healy
April 9	"Putting it all together"	McCallum Peak Ascent
April 16	Hut Repair Planning	Canwell Glacier
April 23	AAC General Meeting	-----
April 30	Rock climbing	Granite Tors, Angel Creek Rocks

Notes: Should questions arise, please contact Mike Masters (wk) 479-3106, Howard Ferren (hm) 479-3362, Barbara Powell (wk) 452-4761, ext. 277, or Joanne Groves (hm) 479-3079, (wk) 474-7870.

Course fee of \$20.00 includes AAC membership, access to club gear, free issues of Descent and ... an opportunity.

## Peter MacKeith Expedition Climbing Grants

The "Peter MacKeith Memorial Endowment Fund for Climbing" was established in 1981 by the family of Peter MacKeith, late president of the Alaska Alpine Club, in honor of Peter's love for climbing and of his climbing achievements in Alaska, Afghanistan, Greenland, and Iceland. The Alaska Alpine Club was given the responsibility of distributing the earnings from the endowment for the purpose of supporting worthwhile mountaineering ventures by Club members in Alaska or elsewhere in the world.

### Requirements for submitting a proposal:

- 1.) All expedition members must be Alaska Alpine Club members for at least a year prior to receiving the grant.
- 2.) The proposal must contain the following:
  - a.) names, addresses, and resume of climbing experience for each expedition member.
  - b.) a description of the climbing objective.
  - c.) a description of how the party plans to carry out the climb and approximate dates of the climb.
  - d.) a budget for the expedition explaining how a climbing grant will be used.
- 3.) DEADLINE for submitting a proposal is March 1 of each year.

### Obligations of the expedition upon receiving a grant:

- 1.) Use the grant money for the original climbing expedition described in the proposal or return the money to the Alaska Alpine Club.
- 2.) Provide an acknowledgement that the expedition has received a Peter MacKeith Climbing Grant from the Alaska Alpine Club.
- 3.) Submit an article (with pictures if possible) about the climb for the Club's publication DESCENT.
- 4.) Present a slide show about the climb for the Alaska Alpine Club.

(NOTE: These obligations hold even when the objective of the climb is not attained.)

### General:

- 1.) Grants will be awarded at the March Annual Meeting of the Alaska Alpine Club.
- 2.) Expeditions are not limited to Alaska or the United States.
- 3.) Expeditions are not limited to first ascents or climbs of unusual difficulty although these aspects will be taken into consideration.
- 4.) The financial need of the expedition's climbers will be given high priority.
- 5.) The Alaska Alpine Club does not assume any liability for the expedition.
- 6.) In any given year, the Club may distribute the entire earnings of the endowment, part of it, or none of it, depending on the merits of the proposals. Grants may be awarded to one or several expeditions.

## Mount Shand Expedition

On April 8, 1983 Bernie Kikta, Doug Blockolsky, Bruce Rasmussen and Ev Wenrick headed up the Black Rapids Glacier for an attempt on the southwest face of Mt. Shand, 12,660 feet. We were the recipients of a generous portion of the Peter MacKeith Climbing Grant from the Alaska Alpine Club. We wanted to complete a climb that Peter had twice attempted and, in the process, establish a new route on Mt. Shand.

Peter had selected a route up a precipitous and gendarmed ridge capped by an ice face leading to a point at 10,310 feet. From this point the way was "clear" to the summit, or so we assumed.

After several days and occasional glimpses of this route through windows of weather we decided to reconnoiter other possible routes. We headed up the glacier. Given the daily snowfall, threatening avalanches, and a measurement of our survival instincts we decided to safe-keep Peter's route for another time. We favored a route up and over Aurora Peak, 10,065 feet, and from a basin between Aurora and Shand, up the slim northwest ridge to the summit.

We dug snowpits and practiced locating buried avalanche beacons while waiting for the snow to stop. The attempt up Aurora Peak was aborted when we set off an avalanche from the top of the ridge. Our decision to turn back was forced on us by the realization that hard slabs lay over yards of depth hoar. This was confirmed by USGS glaciologist Dennis Trabant whom we met on the way out.

We returned on April 22. We wish to thank the Alaska Alpine Club for the climbing grant. The mountain awaits another attempt.

by Ev Wenrick

## MOUNTAINEERING IN THE HAYES RANGE

Alston Paige

The Hayes Range consists of a narrow wedge of rugged peaks about 60 miles in length stretching eastward from the head of the Yanert River to the Black Rapids Glacier. There are four major peaks in the Hayes Range, and when looking south from Fairbanks, from left to right, they are: Mt. Shand, (13,000 ft.), Mt. Hayes, (13,740 ft.), Mt. Hess, (12,030 ft.), and Mt. Deborah, (12,540 ft.).

Until 1935 no recorded climbing had been done in the Hayes Range. In that year two students from the University of Alaska succeeded in reaching an altitude of about 9,000 ft. on the great easterly ridge which swings in a long arc from the summit toward the head of the Dry Delta River. In 1937 Oscar Houston of New York led another attempt on Mt. Hayes; however, they were unsuccessful due to bad weather and lack of time. In July of 1941 another party, led by Bradford Washburn, and consisting of his wife, Mrs. Washburn, Sterling Hendricks, Benjamin Ferris, William Shand and Lt. Robin Montgomery, made the first successful ascent of Mt. Hayes(1). After the Hayes ascent, two members of the party, Ferris and Shand, broke off and made an attempt and first ascent of the 13,000 ft. peak to the east of Mt. Hayes--Mt. Shand(2).

No further climbing was done in the Hayes Range until 1949, when one of the last major unclimbed peaks in the range was attempted by a party of five from the University of Alaska. This party was led by John McCall, and consisted of Jim Allen, Merritt Mitchell, Ian Marsh, and Al Paige. They were flown to a small air strip on Portage Creek, a tributary of the Little Delta River, by Jack Hegdahl, another student of the University of Alaska. From the airstrip the party walked into the base of Mt. Hess in four days.

Mt. Hess soars 10,000 ft from its base on the Meyers Glacier to the summit. It consists of a main mountain mass, running approximately north and south. The summit is separated from the mass by a deep saddle, then rises in a fantastic pyramid of hard, blue ice and rock.

The first party attempted a ridge on the east side of the mountain. The ridge narrowed and steepened progressively until it culminated in a large cirque about half way up the mountain. The climbing became more and more difficult until the climbers were finally stopped by several knife-like slabs of sheer rock about 30 ft. high. They were within 40 yards of the cirque at that point. A bad storm of several days' duration prevented any further work on the mountain. The party made a seven-day trek through the mountains to the west, down the Yanert Glacier and the Yanert River to the McKinley Park Hotel.

In September of that same year, Ian Marsh and Jack Hegdahl returned to Mt. Hess and made another attempt, following the same ridge as before. After some very difficult and technical rock work, they were able to surmount the "gendarmes" and gain the cirque. Once again they were stopped. It was late in the summer, and the cirque was reduced to a maze of crevasses that were impossible to negotiate.

May of 1950 saw another attempt on Mt. Hess. Dick Holdren and Les Rodgers, both students at the University of Alaska, made up the third party to attempt the peak. They chose a route up the north face which offered a maximum of ice climbing. After gaining a point about one-third the altitude of the mountain, they were

stopped by extremely difficult rock, plus a continuous bombardment of rock melting out of the ice from above. And so for the third time, Mt. Hess emerged victorious.

The next year in May, 1951, Mt. Hess was again assaulted, this time by a much stronger party than before. The party was led by Al Paige, and consisted of Ed Huizer, Elton Thayer, Dick Holdren, and Howard Bowman, all experienced climbers and hardened by a winter of long ski trips and training climbs.

The route remained the same, a flight to the Portage Creek airstrip, a two or three day walk into the base of the mountain, setting up a base camp, reconnaissance, and the push for the summit.

Mt. Hess and Mt. Deborah are joined by a giant headwall of jumbled and broken ice. This mass is broken slightly by a bench and then falls in a maze of ice blocks and avalanche debris, much like a frozen waterfall. About half way up Mt. Hess, a small glacier--very narrow and steep like a trough set against the side of the mountain--comes into this mass at a right angle. Our projected route lay up this ice fall, into the saddle between the main mountain mass and the summit peak, and thence to the summit.

This route turned out to be successful, and after 18 exhausting hours of technical ice climbing, wading in deep snow across potential avalanche slopes, and crossing bad crevasses and bergschrunds, we stood on the summit of Mt. Hess.

The view from the summit was magnificent beyond description. The vastness of the country and the majestic splendor of the mountains made a sight to humble any man. After taking several photographs, we spent the next seven hours returning to our high camp, making a total of 27 hours of continuous climbing, a murderous grind, but well worth it(3).

Mt. Deborah, sister peak to Mt. Hess, still remains unattempted and unclimbed. From the north it is a beautiful and terrorizing looking peak. The north face rises in a sheer cliff at least 8,000 ft. high, without offering the slightest hope for a route. Mt. Deborah, parallel to Mt. Hess, is separated from the main mountain mass by saddle and a most unbelievable ridge of 68-70 degrees of hard, blue ice, terribly corniced, fluted, and wind polished. The summit itself is completely surrounded by a very unusual formation of snow and ice. Essentially it is a cornice that completely overhangs all the way around the summit. Truly, Mt. Deborah offers the ultimate in ice climbing technique.

Besides the four major peaks in the Hayes Range, there are numerous smaller peaks ranging from 9,000 ft. to 11,000 ft., most of which appear quite rugged and offer unlimited climbing problems.

- (1) American Alpine Club Journal, 1942.
- (2) Ibid.
- (3) American Alpine Club Journal, 1952.



DENALI NATIONAL PARK AND PRESERVE  
MOUNTAINEERING SUMMARY - 1983

by Robert Gerhard,  
Mountaineering Ranger

The two climbers successfully reached the top of a difficult first ascent in the Alaska Range, but their luck ran out on the descent. After a serious fall where injuries occurred, they were unable to continue. Without a two-way radio, they were not able to call for assistance. Only after what must have been a long and difficult five days were they discovered and evacuated by helicopter --back to civilization and medical attention. Both climbers were very experienced climbers, with previous experience in the Alaska Range, but their climb this year very nearly ended up with more tragic consequences.

The above climb would be noteworthy at any time, but what makes it even more interesting is that it happened not once, but twice, in the Alaska Range in 1983--once on Mount Foraker and once on Mount Huntington.

A number of impressive first or second ascents were made in 1983 on Mount McKinley and nearby peaks in the Range, but it is interesting to note that of the seven climbs described below, five were marred by serious accident and/or rescue. A string of "bad luck" perhaps? Or are first ascents just getting harder to come by? Maybe climbers--knowing that rescue facilities are nearby--are becoming too callous towards the hazards of the difficult routes in the Alaska Range? Whatever the reason, climbers in the future should pay heed to these incidents and learn from their mistakes. In some cases, only "good luck" may have prevented more serious incidents.

A group of four Alaskan climbers completed the first winter ascent of Mount McKinley's West Rib route in March, and became only the third group to successfully climb the mountain in winter. Two of the four climbers reached the summit, but on the descent to their high camp one of the two--not roped to his partner--apparently slipped and fell over 4000 feet down the route. His body was never found.

Since the Wickersham Wall was first climbed by two separate routes in 1963, there have been no further successful ascents--until 1983 when the Wall was again climbed twice, by two American groups. In May, four climbers completed the second ascent of the Canadian route on the western edge of the Wall, but one of the four was injured in a fall and was later evacuated from the West Buttress route. When she fell, the climber was not roped to her partner and her ice axe was in her pack where it could do her no good. A month later, a group of three made a successful climb on a new variation of the Canadian route, deviating from the original route between 15,000 and 18,000 feet.

In the first of two noteworthy climbs on the South Face of Mount McKinley, a pair of climbers from Colorado added a new route to the Southwest Face. Their route--possibly the most difficult route ever done on the mountain--lies between the Cassin Ridge and the Roberts/McCartney route. One of the two suffered

severely frostbitten feet as they ascended. He was able to complete the climb but was evacuated from the West Buttress route as they descended.

On the opposite side of the South Face, two Japanese climbers made an impressive, incident-free second ascent of the American Direct route, and were strong enough on their descent to help lower an injured climber partway down the mountain.

A remote north ridge of Mount Foraker (one of two ridges between the original 1934 route and the Archangel Ridge) was climbed for the first time by two American climbers. On their descent of the Southeast Ridge, one of the two--suffering from high altitude pulmonary edema--lost control and tumbled off the route, falling over 1000 feet. As with the West Rib and Wickersham Wall incidents, this climber was not roped together with his partner. Luckily, he stopped his fall and was able to regain the route with his partner's help. Five days later, both were evacuated by helicopter from their 15,600-foot camp.

The last ascent--a new route on the East Buttress of Mount Huntington--was climbed by two American climbers. Nearing the end of their descent, both fell and tumbled to the bottom of the couloir they were in. They were both injured but one of the two was able to get assistance five days later by struggling up a ridge overlooking the Sheldon Amphitheater and yelling down to a climbing party below. A helicopter evacuation was arranged shortly thereafter.

The High Latitude Research Group (HLRG) of the University of Alaska-Anchorage completed its second summer of medical research at the 14,300-foot camp on Mount McKinley's West Buttress. Once again, the group provided an invaluable service to climbers in trouble on the mountain. This summer, the HLRG installed excellent radio-telephones both at the 14,300-foot camp and at the Kahiltna Base Camp. These radios--along with the willingness of the HLRG crew to assist whenever needed--were greatly appreciated by climbers and by the National Park Service who regularly depended on the HLRG during rescues.

Unfortunately, such a good thing will not last forever. At the present time, funding constraints and other considerations make it seem unlikely that the HLRG will be back up on the mountain in 1984. If this is the case, climbers will again be on their own on the upper parts of the mountain. Without excellent communications and a team of well-acclimatized climbing doctors at the 14,300-foot camp, it is likely that there may be more accidents, and minor incidents may well become more serious. The HLRG doctors, noting minor or sometimes major signs of altitude problems in climbers at this camp, have had to caution the climbers to slow down their rate of ascent or to cancel their climb. Without the HLRG camp, climbers will have to again take the responsibility to caution themselves.

The handling of trash and human waste on Mount McKinley has been the subject of debate for many years, but in past years the discussion has focussed primarily on the issue of trash. In the early 70's it became evident that, with hundreds climbing the mountain every year instead of the relatively few who had done so previously, climbers could no longer simply leave trash or discarded food and equipment on the mountain. Before this time, it was considered 'proper' to leave food and equipment caches for succeeding groups to use in an emergency. Most of these caches simply became lost or destroyed by wind, weather, or ravens. But over the last ten years, organizations and individuals in the climbing community along with the National Park Service have waged an intensive campaign to reduce the amount of litter on Mount McKinley. Although we certainly have not reached 100% of our goal, we are satisfied that the mountaineers of today are climbing Mount McKinley with a much more sensitive ethic regarding litter and abandoned gear.

But for the most part the question of human waste has not been dealt with. Most climbers, at least until this summer, continued to defecate and urinate in shallow latrines dug into the snow. This worked reasonably well in areas where snowfall exceeds snowmelt, but not nearly so well in areas where snowmelt regularly exposes old, abandoned latrines, or in areas high on the mountain where high winds blow away any new snow.

A number of times in recent years climbers suffering gastrointestinal complaints have blamed the "yellow snow" near the popular camping locations. As the numbers of climbers keeps increasing, it becomes harder and harder to find clean snow for cooking and drinking. So this year, the climbing rangers at the Talkeetna Ranger Station made a special point of urging all climbers to bag their human wastes and to dump the bags into deep crevasses. Plastic bags were provided by the National Park Service for those who needed them.

We by no means believe that this is the final solution to the handling of human wastes on Mount McKinley, but we do feel that it is a reasonably realistic intermediate step, and it should help solve the immediate health hazard. We were satisfied with the compliance in our first year of this effort, and are confident that climbers in future years will be even more sensitive to the proper handling of human wastes. At the same time, we intend to continue our efforts to find the best way--that is reasonable, practical, and effective--to do so.

As in most years, a large number of climbers from foreign countries travelled to Alaska to attempt Mount McKinley. This year, 161 climbers from fourteen different nations were on the mountain. The largest numbers came from Great Britain, Germany, and Japan, but there were also climbers from Austria, France, Canada, Switzerland, Denmark, New Zealand, Taiwan, Italy, Spain, Sweden, and Norway.

## DENALI NATIONAL PARK AND PRESERVE

## MOUNTAINEERING SUMMARY - 1983

	<u>Expeditions</u>	<u>Total Climbers</u>	<u>Successful</u>
<u>Mount McKinley</u>			
West Buttress	99	351	222
West Buttress (guided)	20	177	130
Muldrow	7	41	28
Muldrow (guided)	2	33	32
West Rib entire	8	21	19
West Rib entire (guided)	1	9	0
West Rib via W. Buttress	8	27	24
W. Rib via W. Buttress(guided)	1	5	0
Cassin Ridge	6	13	8
South Buttress	5	13	0
Northwest Buttress	2	8	2
Wickersham Wall	2	7	5
Southwest Face	1	2	2
American Direct	1	2	2
TOTAL	<u>163</u>	<u>709</u>	<u>474</u>
Mount Foraker	12	37	15
Mount Foraker (guided)	1	6	0
Mount Hunter	12	34	16
Mount Huntington	6	14	4
Mount Huntington (guided)	1	6	0
Mooses Tooth	5	13	13
Kitchatna Spires	1	4	4
Mount Crosson	4	8	8
Ruth Peaks	5	24	14
Little Switzerland	5	33	27
Mount Brooks	4	9	2
TOTAL	<u>56</u>	<u>188</u>	<u>103</u>
GRAND TOTAL	219	897	577

First Annual New Year's Eve Approach to the MacKeith Hut  
by: Sir Quentin Farquhar: BBL, FDGR, HMQTS

Wouldn't it be nice to go to the Upper Canwell Hut (MacKeith Hut), see the mountains, ski around, and get out of town over New Year's? With this enticing line, I was able to get Sue and John Keller into the darkness, wind, fog, and optical illusions of the Deltas. (It is really amazing how many people don't want to venture forth into 19 hours of guaranteed darkness.)

As if to demonstrate his certainty that the trip would be truly spectacular, the author (well known for late morning somnambulance) arrived at the Keller's 5 minutes early at 5:55AM. John, doing his part to ensure a successful trip, observed that all of the gear that we had piled onto the top of the truck would not fit through the garage door. Sue commented that we were all a bit daft. Zounds! They made it out of town, and the 2 inches of snow on the roads was gone by the time they were halfway to Delta.

The ski up to the area of the lower hut was uneventful. Warm (10F), no wind, trail broken. Fine adventures in mountaineering occurred with regularity after the first day. Dinners and desserts of first quality. Ah, brownies. Ah, baclava. Ah, sardines (chocolate covered, of course). Now, agreed, the weather was a tad marginal. It got mighty close to +30 for 3 days running. The fog did get thick. Ask Sue about the wind. (It only knocked her over a few times). It is instructive to dig a snow cave without the option of philosophizing about snow depth, potential for sun shining in the front door, or if setting up the tent would be less work. This is not the crux of the story, of course.

We all know that somewhere--in the fog, behind the snow drift, hiding in the cavernous railroad eating crevasse 1/2 mile away that turns out to be a small hole 10 steps away--there is a small, yet attractive hut, with solid walls and a marginally interesting library. A place to relax in. Or so we have been lead to believe. Perhaps it is actually there. Perhaps it disappears every January 1 for a couple of days. Perhaps its true location is a carefully guarded secret. The very bottom line is this. Next year when I cajole those few insightful climbers into skiing under blue skies for 2 days at New Year's, you can be sure that we'll either find the hut or I'll have to write about the second annual approach. I'm not about to do that if I've the option.

Translated from the original Serbo-Croatian by Dick Stolzberg

## Radio Relay Transmitter Station Proposed at Granite Tors

by Mike Masters

The Fairbanks North Star Borough Emergency Services Department is negotiating with the Alaska Division of Parks to obtain permission to place a radio relay transmitter building and antenna atop the middle peak at Granite Tors. The Granite Tors section of the Chena Recreation Area is the only section open only to non-motorized use, and contains the only examples of these striking rock formations easily accessible from Fairbanks. The Division of Parks recently completed two excellent foot trails which provide the opportunity for a loop hike that crosses the proposed transmitter site. Although the transmitter would not interfere with rock climbing itself, the visual aesthetics of this alpine area would be compromised, and pressure for improved surface access could easily develop.

The director of Borough Emergency Services says he wants to please the public, while meeting Borough needs. If you feel that he should seriously consider alternative sites for the relay transmitter, your letter or phone call could help convince him that people do care about maintaining the recreation values of Granite Tors. Negotiations have been going on since November 1983, so a timely response would be most effective.

Empowered by a two to one voter approval at the last election, the Borough Emergency Services department needs to establish a line-of-sight radio relay transmitter for 150 mhz VHF-FM communications used by ambulances and other emergency vehicles to cover Chena Hot Springs Resort and the far end of Chena Hot Springs Road, currently a blind area at this frequency. The Borough talked with Communications Equipment and Service Co., and the Ham Radio Club and selected this location. The transmitter will be designed to handle ham frequencies as well. Other locations were not seriously considered. A peak north of 25 mi CHSR (also in the Chena Rec. Area) was suggested as an alternative by the public, but the latest word is that it may be used for a second transmitter, not to substitute for the Tors site.

The transmitter would be housed in an 8' x 12' plastidome building, painted to blend in with the surrounding area, and utilize a 12' to 18' whip antenna guyed atop the building. Access to the solar powered transmitter would be by helicopter, required only twice yearly. Some likely problems with the Borough's ideal scenario are these. A building doesn't look like a rock, and alpine vegetation can't hide one. Geologists who worked in the Tors agree that for all but perhaps 10-15 days of the year, a helicopter could be used to enable rapid repair of the station. Even neglecting helicopter cost, it is unlikely that a delay of even a day or two in repairing an emergency service facility would be tolerated during bad weather, and even more unlikely that, as the Borough claims, a technician would walk in to make repairs. A snowmobile or three-wheeler would be the only alternative, demanding an appropriate trail and inviting mechanized use by the public. Proliferation of other antennas at a Borough-approved site, similar

to what occurred at Ester Dome, would not be unlikely and could eventually result in demand for a road.

Public response resulted in the Tors area being classified for nonmotorized use, and convinced the Division of Parks to remove old 55 gallon drums from the Tors near the proposed transmitter site. To voice your opinion on this issue, contact:

At the Borough, P.O. Box 1267, Fairbanks, AK 99707 (tel. 452-4761)

Bob Cavanaugh, Borough Emergency Services. Stress serious consideration of alternative sites.

Bill B. Allen, Borough Mayor. Praise Cavanaugh's willingness to consider alternatives.

Sandra Stringer, Borough Assembly. The only Assembly member likely to favor an alternative site.

At Division of Parks, which must approve the site. Suggest that any site avoid high value recreation areas like the Tors.

Russell Harding, Deputy Director  
State of Alaska, Dept. of Natural Resources  
Division of Parks  
619 Warehouse Ave., Suite 210  
Bayview Building  
Anchorage, AK 99501

More influential than  
the local representative  
below.

David J. Snarski  
District Superintendent  
State of Alaska, DNR, Division of Parks  
4420 Airport Way  
Fairbanks, AK 99701

FOR NEW AND/OR OVERDUE CLUB MEMBERS:

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