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The DESCENT is published 1-4 times per year on a hit or miss basis. Copies are sent to members of the Alaska Alpine Club. Nonmembers may receive DESCENT for 50¢ per issue.

Membership in the Alaska Alpine Club is open to anyone with an interest in the mountains. Meetings are open to the public and are scheduled monthly, September through May, on the UAF campus. Tea and cookies are provided.

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edited by Barbara Powell

## President's Message

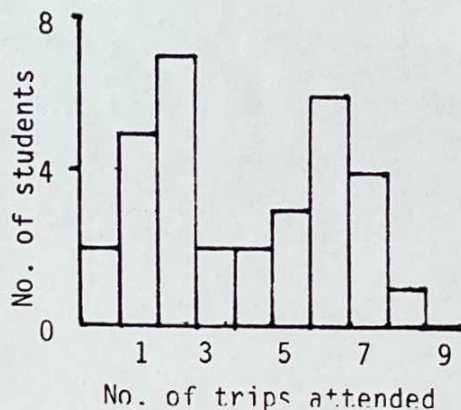
This past year was a time of growth and enjoyable activities for the club, at meetings as well as on trips. During the fall, Howard coordinated several well-attended presentations. Among these were Fall Line, an exciting film on climbing and extreme skiing; a report on the American-Tibetan Everest Expedition with slides by Galen Rowell; an interesting review of the history of climbing in the Alaska Range and Deltas by Bucky Wilson; and a workshop seminar on avalanche hazard evaluation and avoidance by Doug Fesler of the Alaska Avalanche School. We also received an article and slide show on the attempt on Mt. Shand by a team led by Doug Blockosky, one of two climbers whose groups received a Peter McKeith Climbing Grant last year. This year, grant applicants had to be members of the Alaska Alpine Club for at least one year. No applications were received. Members who are planning climbs for the next season, including those from this year's Ski Mountaineering Class, are urged to consider applying for a grant this coming year. Requirements for recipients were published in the January 1984 Descent and are available from club officers, pending possible revision next year.

Conducting a high quality ski mountaineering class absorbed essentially the total effort of club officers during the late winter and early spring, with substantial contributions of time and effort by other experienced members. Some thirty students signed up, and trips averaged 15-20 students. Approximately half were able to attend most of the trips and gain a solid introduction to ski mountaineering. For those interested, a frequency diagram of participation is presented.

I would like to extend my sincere thanks to my fellow officers and to those members who gave their time and energy to make the class highly successful and enjoyable. Some basic changes in conducting the class are essential if it is to be continued, as will be discussed below.

The Lower Canwell Hut, ravaged by marmots, parky squirrels, weather and inconsiderate users, received a new lease on life in late April. A work party directed by Howard successfully cleared away the trash and damaged building materials and replaced the outer sheathing and door. In addition to Howard, thanks are due to Donnybrook Lumber Co. for donating all of the materials used, and to Clem Rawert for transporting them up the glacier. The multiple trips involved several adventures in bottomless thawing snow and collapsing ice bridges. We greatly appreciate the extra efforts Clem and others gave to make the weekend successful. The hut, while enclosed and secure from weather, is still far from being completely repaired. Possibilities for the summer include cleaning up debris hidden by the snow, removing old paneling and insulation from the interior in preparation for replacement after more materials can be brought up, hopefully this fall, and constructing outdoor facilities.

At this spring's annual meeting, special recognition was given to Clem for his continued support of the club, in the form of an honorary lifetime



membership. Officers elected at the meeting, who will begin their terms this fall, are: President, yours truly; Vice-Pres., Stan Justice; Secy-Treas., Liz Andrews; Counselor (two year term), John Keller; and Counselor (one year term), Howard Ferren.

Looking ahead to next year, several members have expressed interest in getting together some intermediate-level climbing trips for the fall, perhaps around late October or November when snow has returned but before severe cold and darkness. With sufficient participation, another repair party to the Lower Canwell Hut would be beneficial. Suggestions have been made for a clinic in the basics of cross-country downhill techniques, either for the early spring or fall, to allow time for practice before the first spring trips.

Getting down to the promised brass tacks, the spring ski mountaineering class, while highly successful, demanded much more of the officers' time and efforts than it is reasonable to expect. As a result, no general club meetings were held during the winter and spring. Moreover, very few members are now willing to accept positions as major officers, with reason. The high participation and student satisfaction indicates that offering the class is a valuable function of the club, but one which is above and beyond the other duties of the officers. To help regain a balance, at the annual meeting the position of Class Director was established. The duties of the director, working with the other officers, include refining the class schedule and coordinating class lectures and trips. If a quality class is to be conducted in the future, class responsibilities, particularly for leading weekend trips, must be divided fairly evenly among members so that no one, including the director and elected officers, need devote most weekends to the class. I would like to thank the members, including those in this year's class, who have already offered to take on some of the work or expressed interest in the position of director. (The latter will be selected by the elected officers before the fall season; let me know if you are interested.) More participation in all aspects of the class is needed, and years of experience aren't necessary, so please give it some thought if you haven't already. More member participation will also be requested to facilitate club activities other than the class, to help avert officer burnout and enable more activities to be planned.

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MEETINGS AT THE PUMPHOUSE are being held every Tuesday at 7:30 p.m. during the summer. It is a good opportunity to organize weekend trips or find a rock climbing partner.

**\*\* IMPORTANT NOTICE \*\***

MEMBERSHIP DUES will now be due January 1 of each year for membership during that coming year. This will avoid some of the confusion members have had concerning when they owe dues and will greatly simplify the Club bookkeeping. All members should pay their 1985 dues by January 1, 1985. Anyone joining the club in the fall may be asked to pay for a 1½-year membership to avoid the need for frequent dues payment.

## Attempt on the Southeast Ridge of Mt. Hayes

by Mike Masters

Early in the morning of the 24th of March, a gray sheet of low clouds was draped from the Alaska Range to Fairbanks. Our pilot, Bill Lentsch, gave Dick Stolzberg and myself odds of 75% that he could fly up the Black Rapids Glacier to land us at the foot of Mt. Hayes, and shuttle Barb Powell and Howard Ferren from the Delta airport to join us before clouds moving in from the south would cut off access. If we hadn't such a limited time to spend on the mountain, the nine days of spring break, he suggested it would be better to wait for typical sunny early spring weather to return. As it turned out, after a few feet of new snow, a delayed return and a total of  $3\frac{1}{2}$  sunny days out of 10, he was right. As the first attempt on a big mountain in Alaska for Howard, Dick and myself, and Barb's second major climb, the trip still brought considerable learning and experience, though we reached nowhere near the summit.

Dick and I experienced a quite rough flight from the vicinity of Mt. Hayes along the north side of the range, with some views of interesting features such as the ogives on the east fork of the Trident Glacier, before Bill took us around McGinnis Peak and up the Black Rapids Glacier. After a gradual descent through broken cumulus, it was obvious that if a landing were possible at all in the flat lighting, it would be at the best area, at 7000' just southwest of the peak. Three circles later, Bill set us down smoothly. The clouds had lifted and parted by the time our group was reunited, and we loaded our red toboggans and roped up in full appreciation of the spire of 10910 at the head of the valley, and the booming of icefalls down the granite cliffs around us. Darker, less resistant rock bands lace the flanks of Hayes.

Snow conditions were ideal for skiing, although as Fairbanks dwellers we all noticed the effect of the sudden transfer to moderate elevation. Weekend practice climbs in the Deltas, while highly valuable in other respects, were insufficient to prepare us for the higher elevations of the central range. It also took several days to begin to fully appreciate the scale of a major peak. Saturday evening found us nearly at the base of the most reasonable route onto the southeast ridge, having traversed three miles of the moderately crevassed glacier surrounding the south face of Mt. Hayes and gained 1500'.

Sunrise gave us a splendid, if brief, show of alpenglow on the south summit and east face, from which ice avalanches had been cascading through the night. In the interest of avoiding the runout zones of those falls, and the snow accumulation bowl where the ridge leaves the main peak, we planned a straightforward route directly up a fairly steep snow slope to the corniced ridgetop some 3500' out from the face. Convincing our packs, and backs, to hold the six days of food and a day or so extra fuel allocated for the climb, we make our way up toward the cloud deck that hovered just above the ridgetop. Halfway up the climbing became interesting as we encountered small unstable slabs even adjacent to the icefall we chose to parallel, then had to traverse around some ice blocks to find a bridge across the bergschrund. Locating one, Dick tested the crossing. Beyond the crack the slope steepened considerably and there were no other tent sites below the ridgetop, which itself looked marginal for a camp. In lowering mists we dug platforms where we were. Light snow began to fall. At this point, the fact that we had our work cut out for us began sinking in. As had been revealed by the alpenglow, the southeast ridge

is essentially a continuation of the face. The broken glacier of the latter simply drops off over rock where the ridgeline should be. It would probably be possible, we thought, at our level of experience, but neither easy nor fast. The prospect of attempting it in marginal weather did nothing to lift our spirits.

The next morning was less than inviting; a southwest wind, light snow, and visibility a few hundred feet at best. Given our limited time, we decided to make a try in the hope that the weather would improve and allow us to at least gain the ridge and reach the next known camp where the ridge joins the face. Outfitted with our supply of pickets, Howard and Barb led up the slope of hard snow. An occasional crack coated with well developed frost hexagons cut across the slope to add interest. Conditions worsened. On belay at the last crack while Barb led the final two of the six rope lengths, I could barely make out Dick, and only occasionally Howard. Communication was out of the question. As related to me later, Barb had used up our protection during the last pitch on increasingly steep and rotten rime iced snow. None of us was interested in consulting a clinometer, but the topo map shows a 55° average slope. Near the top, 60° is not unreasonable. In addition to increasing wind, snow and cold, lack of protection and visibility dropping to a few tens of feet, the several feet of near vertical rime at the top forced Barb to make a difficult choice and an even more unpleasant downclimb to Howard's stance. Further climbing was out of the question in the storm, so we retreated to the bergschrund. Successive wands, about a rope length apart, were completely invisible. On the way down a short fall proved one of our pickets secure, and demonstrated at once the limitations of self arrest on hard snow with a full pack, the inadvisability of using the small end of a figure-eight as a belay plate with a 9 mm rope, and the shockingly rapid buildup of energy under such conditions. We managed to relocate our tent platforms, completely filled in, as dusk was falling, and concluded that digging them out, in spite of increasing avalanche potential, was the only feasible option. None of us had the energy to dig caves or descend to the skis.

By morning we might as well have been in snow caves. Both tents were buried. To the amazement of Dick and myself, that didn't stop Howard and Barb from enjoying breakfast with the top vents of their tent barely clearing the snow. With snow still falling, digging a cave seemed prudent, and occupied the better part of the day. Howard could not have designed a more accurate T-method entrance with a tape and square. The two alcove structure provided ample room, though venting proved a problem.

Weather on Wednesday morning was ideal for a second attempt at the ridge, clear with a slight north breeze. Howard and Dick led off, Barb and I setting wands at half rope lengths. Climbing was no easier, our previous route obliterated, the new snow just as firm, cracks cunningly concealed. The ski bowl below was strongly tempting compared to constant vigilance as we moved continuously with protection. Howard reached the base of the rime that guarded the ridge, cut down to solid ice for an anchor, and belayed Dick up. Over the top, he found a lot of nothing, cornices at 70° or more, some overhanging to the north, others to the south, with only the narrowest saddles between. The ridge would have been traversible for us slowly and carefully under good conditions, but not in mid afternoon with a rising south wind and an estimated couple of thousand feet of such formations between us and a camp. The rest of us went up for the view, then it was back down the second time. Collecting the pickets as the wind turned cold and picked up the snow, I found the dangling obstacles just as exasperating as had my companions, the frustration tempered only by the fact that we owed them our health, if not existence. For myself, the climbing could not be called fun. The point is

top of the peak.

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well taken that one should not plan to do a climb with a full pack at the limit of his experience. Having lost our chance for Hayes, we planned to do a minor peak along the ridge to Aurora Peak from the ski bowl over our remaining three days.

The opportunity for the minor peak was denied us as well. During our descent the pleasant morning turned into an early afternoon of wind, snow and low visibility. The latter made routefinding interesting and contributed to a couple of unplanned meetings with cracks, both fortunately providing no more than brief interludes of excitement. I misjudged the end of a large crack and found myself half suspended in the drift of soft snow over the downslope lip, and each of us but Barb was ensnared by a set of leg swallowers. Back on skis, we could make out enough of the base of the ridge to move camp to a good location to start the minor climb. Even the route was visible around sundown, the last we saw of it for the next three days. Snow and more snow fell, two or three feet in total riding in on the mild to moderate southwest wind, with only brief breaks in the whiteout. Since we were still above the crevasse field, we decided against attempting to reach the landing site. A short foray by Dick and Barb showed the sensibleness of staying put.

After much exchange of books, a friendly card game, discussions of skiing out and the start of rationing food and fuel, the storm grudgingly abated around midmorning on Monday. The less said of dragging sleds through knee-deep tracks, the better: two and a half miles in five or six hours of rotated leading took most of what we had to give. We were afforded good views of the south ridge of Hayes. A distinct snowcovered ridge, at a moderate angle and without precipitous cornices, it would be a more reasonable route at our level of experience. The problem would be getting onto it. One could traverse some 4000' along a shelf with a moderate slope on the south face, below an icefall and exposed to possible avalanche hazard. That route is described in climbing periodicals. Another possibility might be to climb a short, 400-500' steep couloir from the broken glacier at the east base of the ridge and surmount the medium-sized cornice at the top. The cornice was overhanging parts of the ridge, and had fallen from other parts. We did not get a clear view of the whole couloir or the approach to the base.

No sight was more enjoyable than Bill's 185 descending around Hayes as we toiled to break out a landing area. The plane did a much better job on its own, though it took three shuttles to the Richardson Highway to get us all out. I'm seldom glad to leave the mountains, but under the circumstances it was much nicer to watch the clouds close back in from the Black Rapids Roadhouse than from forty-odd miles up the glacier.

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EDITOR'S NOTE: The editor(s) of DESCENT will gladly accept articles or brief descriptions about climbs and mountain ski trips. Either typed or handwritten material can be sent to the club address: P.O. Box 81174, College, AK 99708.

ANOTHER SCOTT PEAK ATTEMPT was made by John Keller, Mike Masters, Barb Powell, and Dick Stolzberg during the Memorial Day weekend. It was a great trip for wildlife viewing and good spirits, but the notoriously bad weather of the McKinley Park region thwarted efforts to reach the top of the peak.

FOR 0250221

In Memory of Frances Randall

5/7/84

Long a friend of the mountains, Frances Randall died of cancer May 2 at the age of 59. Since 1975 she has run the base camp on the Kahiltna glacier for McKinley climbers every summer. She was in charge of radio communications between climbers and pilots and kept the landing strip ready. One of the reasons why she was a good person for this job was her extensive climbing background. Not only did she climb many major peaks outside Alaska but she was the 5th woman to climb McKinley in July 1964.

Frances had been living in Fairbanks for about 15 years before her death. Interests outside of mountains that kept her busy included music, foreign languages, and computer work. She played violin for the Arctic Chamber Orchestra and the Fairbanks Symphony Orchestra. Recently, she had been working on-a-a- toward a degree in foreign languages, majoring in Spanish and Russian. She did computer work for the Symphony. Though a Fairbanks resident she traveled quite a bit. Every year she would also spend time in Mexico where she had land, Washington state where her folks live, or on the Kahiltna glacier. Thus her friends were often called upon to take care of her beloved cats and dogs many times over the years while she was away.

On May 6 the Fairbanks Symphony sponsored a lovely musical memorial to honor Frances. Between music selections guest speakers talked of their special thoughts and feelings about her. Gordon Wright, Bob Gerhard, Jean Dementi, and her father all had touching memories to share.

I'll never forget France's long legged figure and wild blonde hair striding through ~~the~~ the halls of the music department at the UAF campus. She's always been a chummy fellow Symphony musician the years I played my cello there. A special, very fond memory, is of a string quartet Frances and I performed in regularly. We discovered then that we were very compatible as both musicians and as friends. She gave me two sturdy old wooden apple boxes then that I still use now for shelves in my cabin. They are friendly mementos of a wonderful person and good times shared.

Frances passed away gently, quickly, with little suffering, and with many friend's love with her. At her memorial on May 6, Bob Gerhard said a special mountain near the Kahiltna glacier ~~would~~ be named after Frances and that is where her ashes will be spread.

by,  
Bloss Mead

KATE BULL successfully climbed Mt. Hayes via the difficult northwest spur. Spectacular slides of the climb were shown in May by Andy Reynolds.

BOB SUTHERLAND led his fearless dog, Ketoka, up the ice at Ice Worm Gulch south of Fox Creek on April 22. Despite a short 30' free climb and some "hard" blue ice, the dog managed fairly well on this Sunday outing-picnic. "A picnic without ants", Bob reported.



P.O. Box 81174, Fairbanks, AK 99708  
~~Box 5960 College, Alaska 99701~~

April 24, 1984

Russell Harding  
Deputy Director  
State of Alaska, DNR, Div. of Parks  
619 Warehouse Ave., Suite 210  
Bayview Building  
Anchorage, AK 99501

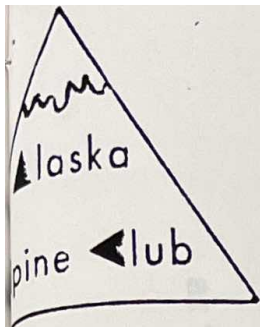
Dear Mr. Harding:

It has come to our attention that the Fairbanks North Star Borough has applied for a permit to place a relay transmitter at Granite Tors (within the Chena River Recreation Area). Due to the high recreational value of this area, the Alaska Alpine Club urges you to deny the permit.

The provision of Boroughwide emergency services is certainly a worthy reason to improve communications along the highways within the Borough. However, the necessity of using Granite Tors for this purpose has not been adequately demonstrated. The Alaska Alpine Club has the following concerns:

1. Although the Borough intends to construct a building that will "blend in", this is clearly impossible in a treeless alpine tundra area. It seems ironic that the Division of Parks would make a substantial investment in trail construction to this area and then consider permitting the construction of a building that is incompatible with the type of recreation for which the area is being managed.
2. The Granite Tors area has very high recreational value for Fairbanks residents and visitors and is used year-round for skiing, hiking, camping, and rock climbing. The granite rocks themselves are unique in providing by far the best rock climbing among the very scarce opportunities near Fairbanks. Due to BLM plans to allow motorized use in the Steese-White Mountains area, the Granite Tors may well become the only nonmotorized primitive recreation area above treeline that is easily accessible from Fairbanks. The presence of a building and antenna would certainly detract from this unique recreational opportunity.





P.O. Box 81174, Fairbanks, AK 99708  
~~Box 5260 College, Alaska 99701~~

- 3. The potential need for motorized access to maintain the transmitter is a concern because the helicopter access proposed by the Borough may be limited by high cost and bad weather.
- 4. A proliferation of communications facilities at Granite Tors, as has happened on many other high spots around Fairbanks (for example, Ester Dome), is a distinct possibility. We expect that if you grant a permit to the Borough you will receive pressure from other agencies and companies to provide the same service for them.

While the Alaska Alpine Club urges you to deny the permit for a transmitter at Granite Tors, we would be glad to work with the Fairbanks North Star Borough and the Alaska Division of Parks in locating alternative sites which would provide adequate emergency communications for Chena Hot Springs Road and resort, but have less impact on the limited opportunities for primitive recreation in the Fairbanks area.

Thank you.

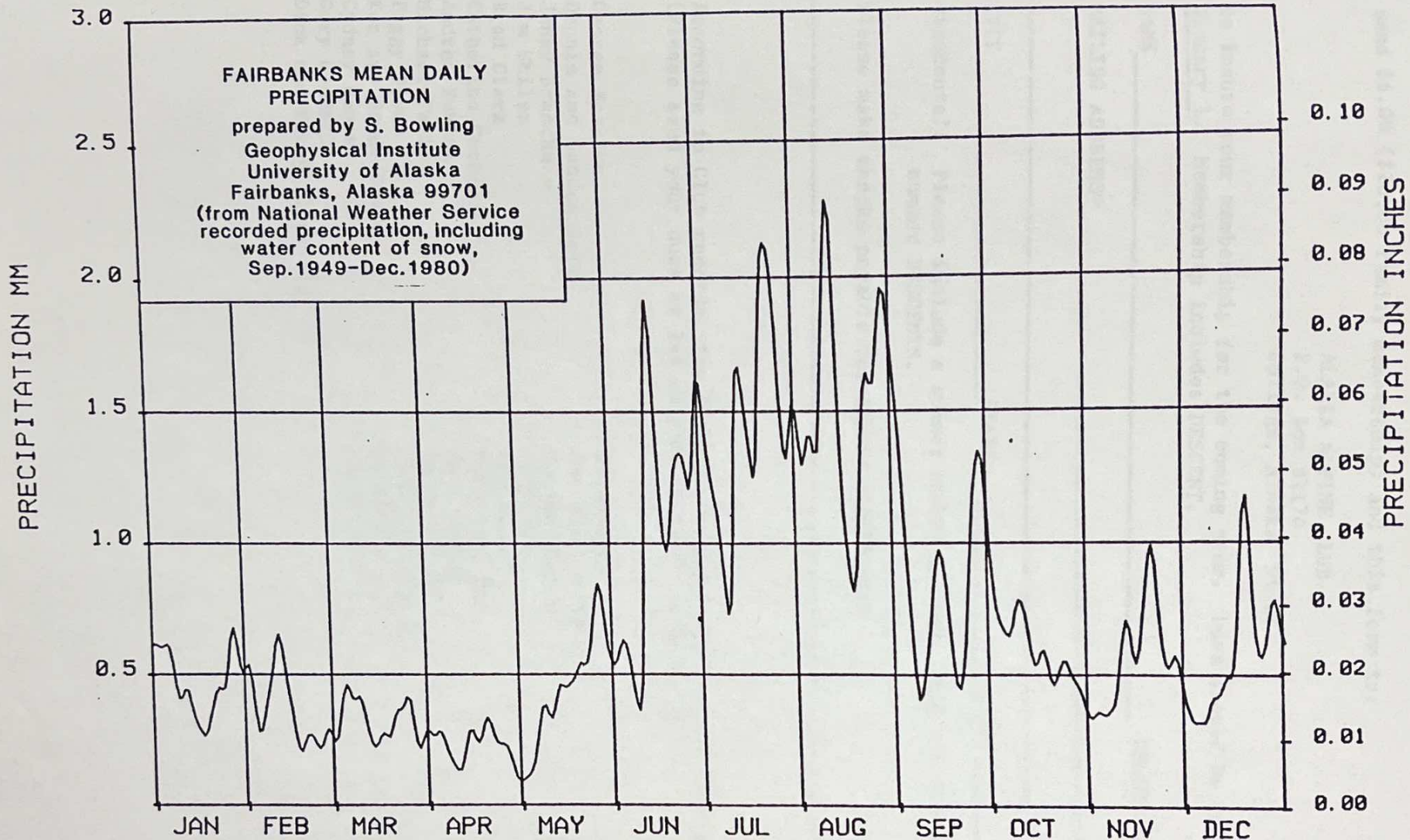
Sincerely,

Michael Masters  
President  
Alaska Alpine Club

cc: Dave Snarski

**EDITOR'S**

NOTE: For more information concerning this issue, contact Mike Masters (479-3106), Joanne Groves (479-3079), or the Alaska Division of Parks, 4418 Airport Way, Fairbanks (479-4114). Dave Snarski is the Interior District Superintendent.



MEMBERSHIP DUES:

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

ALASKA ALPINE CLUB  
P.O. Box 81174  
College, Alaska 99708

to insure your membership for the coming year. Dues should be sent by January 1. Membership includes DESCENT.

NAME \_\_\_\_\_ TELEPHONE \_\_\_\_\_

MAILING ADDRESS\* \_\_\_\_\_

CITY \_\_\_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

\*Students!! Please include a summer address, so you will not miss your summer DESCENTS.

Please make checks payable to: ALASKA ALPINE CLUB

According to Club records, the following members owe dues for this past year:  
(Please send your dues or let us know if there is an error.)

- George Bassler
- Dennis and Sandra Bolz
- Janey Brancheau
- Jim Chiles
- Brad Clark
- Catherine Cochran
- Andrew Embick
- Michael Fallon
- Peggy Glynn
- Ken and Cindy Green
- Cydney Hansen
- Gary Kendall
- Dick and Kathy Klapstein

- Fred Kowal
- Dan Aka Anu McKee
- Michael Parise
- John Rose
- Ron Rosser
- Nancy Rychlik
- Rudi Schmid
- Frank Sommer
- Dennis Stephens
- Kathleen Todd
- Donna Weihs