



News

Winter 2001

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From Harvey and Sandy Bowers

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Local Events

- January Willow Winter Carnival
- February Iron Dog Race
- March Iditarod Days Festival
Iditarod Sled Dog Race
Sourdough Ball
- May Salmon fishing starts!
- June Colony Days
- July Wasilla Water Festival
Moose Dropping Festival
Palmer Pride Picnic
- August Alaska State Fair
- Dec. Colony Christmas
Talkeetna Winterfest

Climbing To The Top...Mt. McKinley 20,320 feet by Harvey Bowers

Our Winter 2000 newsletter left our readers hanging at the base of Denali Pass, 17,000 feet, poised for our attempt at the summit of Mt. McKinley.

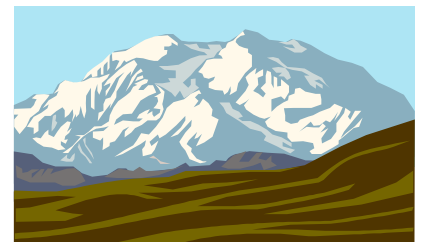
Severe weather, coupled with the thin air at high altitude, is what makes Mt. McKinley one of the hardest mountains to climb. At 17,000 feet the jet stream can hit you with 100 to 200 mile per hour winds at any time. It is impossible to just pitch a tent for shelter. We dig pits in the snow. The tents are then dug into the pits with snow block walls resembling a 14th century fortress. Without the snow pits, our tents would simply blow off the mountain.

At 17,000 feet we were hit by a three day storm which dropped approximately six feet of new snow. At this altitude you don't have much energy, it is hard to sleep and you don't have much appetite. We spent most of our days melting snow for water, digging the drifting snow from around our tents, visiting with each other, sharing stories and reading material. It wasn't long before everyone read everything available in camp. We had some very interesting climbing parties

sharing out camp during the storm. A 12 year old girl from Anchorage became the youngest to climb Mt. McKinley. We also visited with an amazing climber, blind from birth, from Phoenix, Arizona.

On June 27 the storm started to lift. We gathered our gear and headed for the summit. This was our second trip up

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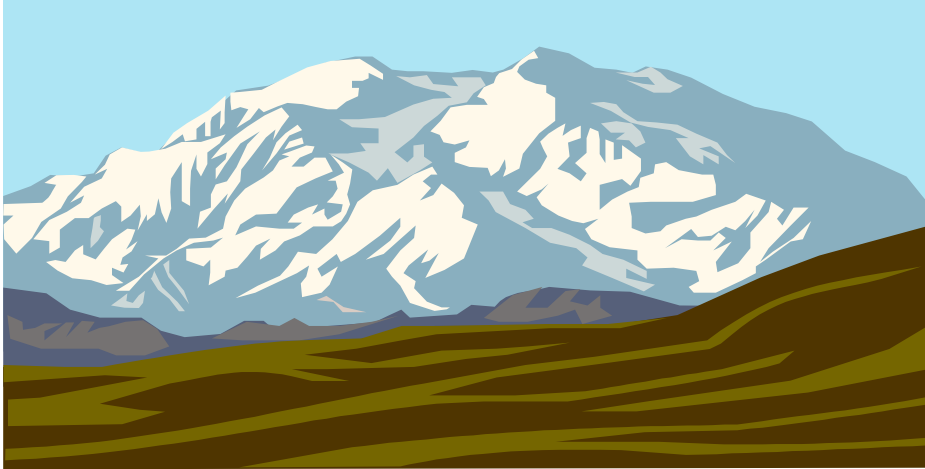
2001 Fishing Forecast

Local fishing guides forecast the 2001 King Salmon season should be excellent for our local rivers. Larger Kings are expected this year. The Little Susitna River near the Inn should see King Salmon ranging between 35 and 50 pounds.

The later running Red and Silver Salmon will have a

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Climbing To The Top.....Mt. McKinley 20,320 feet by Harvey Bowers..... from page one



Mt. McKinley, Northern View

Denali Pass. The area is very steep and has huge crevasses near the bottom of the pass. The pass is extremely windy. About ten days before us, two Navy commanders fell at this point and one slipped into a crevasse never to be seen again. The second one survived and wrote about his climb for Reader's Digest.

Our climb was pretty slow and monotonous. One step, breathe real hard three times, take another step....being ever so careful with your footing and making sure the climbing rope is kept taut to catch your climbing mates if they slip.

After what seemed like an eternity, we arrived at the Football Field, 19,500 feet, a large bowl area next to summit ridge. The area is deceptive. It appears to be a good area for shelter if the weather catches you. But with the altitude and

winds, those that take shelter here do not make it through the night. The previous week, five climbers from Asia were caught here by a storm. The rescue was very challenging and those that did survive had severe frost bite.

Once you make it to summit ridge the endless view and the sky that looks almost black is inspiring. We summited Mt. McKinley at 3:30 pm on June 25, 1995, just short of our 4:00 pm turnaround time. We stayed on the summit for about thirty minutes. We took pictures of each other and I helped take pictures for two German climbers, both age 65.

We started back down summit ridge, keeping in mind this is the point that accidents usually occur. You are weak, very tired and just can't afford to take a wrong step. In our case, bad weather was quickly descending upon us. By the time we reached

the top of Denali Pass it was snowing hard. On the last stretch back to camp at 17,000 feet, the snow was falling and drifting so fast I could not see the person 50 feet in front of me, nor could I see his tracks in the snow...just follow the rope! Each of us was breaking new trail through the snow back to camp. When we finally reached camp, everyone was so tired it was very hard to get out of our climbing gear. I basically collapsed in the tent. My two tent mates were at least an hour behind me somewhere on Denali Pass. After an hour or so, I regained enough energy and got hot water and food ready for my returning tent mates. It was an incredible day.

The next day our party split into two groups. Three climbers returned down the mountain the way we had come. The remaining eight climbers, including myself, prepared to once again cross Denali Pass and begin our trek over the north side of Mt. McKinley descending to Wonder Lake and Denali National Park's only road out.

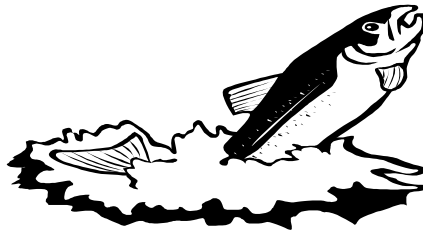
Catch the next issue of Agate Inn News for the descent from Mt. McKinley.

2001 Fishing Forecast... from page one

hard time topping last year. Our guests last summer complained that the Salmon were too easy to catch! We finally asked guests and friends not to leave any more Salmon with us. We ran out of freezer space and we ran out of people to give Salmon to. We are still eating King, Red and Silver Salmon at least twice a week.

Local fishing guide, Andy Couch of FishTale River Guides

predicted the 2000 Salmon season would be better than normal in July, August, and September. His prediction certainly was accurate. Andy expects that 2001 should be about normal for Red, Silver



and Chum Salmon.

The Agate Inn and FishTale River Guides offer Salmon fishing packages with 3 or 5 six-hour guided fishing trips starting at \$625.00 per person.. Give us a call at 800-770-2290 or check out the *Salmon Connection* link at <http://www.agateinn.com>

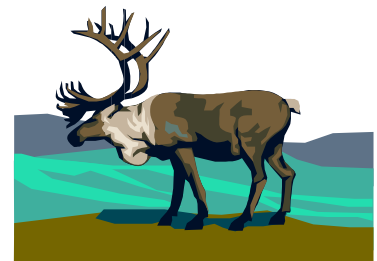
Reindeer Herding.....the good and the bad.....

Our reindeer herding skills improved throughout the past year, although we never managed to teach our deer how to fly....let alone how to pull a sled. With our confidence level high, we acquired a young bull reindeer, Jasper, and hopes for little reindeer on the horizon. The truth is, if we couldn't teach Agatha Christie and Crystal how to pull a sled, we would just have to start with younger pupils!

We had fun learning how to handle a male reindeer during rutting season. Harvey quickly learned how to show Jasper who was the boss. In wrestling this might be termed pinning. We seriously wondered what next year would be like when Jasper gained 150 to 200 pounds.

Unfortunately, we soon

experienced the downsides of reindeer herding. On November 1, we moved the deer to their winter pen between the guest house and our home. As darkness fell, after only a few hours in the new pen, a stray dog found its way into the pen. Agatha Christie and Crystal fled toward the old pen and jumped the six foot fence. Jasper never left the pen. Crystal, other than losing a 12 inch square area of winter fur, stayed near the pen and was standing at the gate the next morning waiting to be let back in. Agatha kept on running, became hopelessly lost two miles from the Inn and was struck by a car. The dog was caught a few nights later and turned over to animal control. Catching the dog was no consolation to losing Agatha Christie and her unborn calf.



A few weeks later, Jasper had a bloating problem. Reindeer and Moose for some reason are attracted to plastic shopping bags. Occasionally plastic shopping bags blow into the pen. We were convinced Jasper had eaten plastic and it was lodged in one of the four compartments of his stomach. During the holidays, our large animal vet visited and tubed Jasper to relieve the gas build up. He improved, but again on January 6, Jasper bloated. Later that afternoon, Jasper died from heart failure. Two vets and a wildlife biologist performed a necropsy that evening. There was no sign of plastic. Jasper had a deformity of the esophagus.

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Reindeer Herding...from page

When he ate natural vegetation it caught and wedged at the base of his esophagus. Bloating caused stress on his organs. Jasper was especially friendly and it didn't take long to become attached.

Crystal is strong and healthy. We are keeping our fingers crossed that she will have a healthy calf in April. So, our plans for the first sleigh ride have been postponed, but not forgotten. In the meantime, we enjoy partaking in Crystal's reindeer games.



Archaeology Dig 2001.....

Join the 2001 archaeological dig at the Old Knik Townsite just south of Wasilla. Guest volunteers who would like to work for one or two weeks can register with the dig for \$100 per week. Undergraduate and graduate university credit is available through the University of Alaska.

During the 2000 dig, the home of an assayer was recovered with a lot of assayer's equipment. Opening a toolbox/bench is

planned for the 2001 excavations.

To check on dig schedules, contact Fran Seager-Boss at 907-745-9859.



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