



# News

Winter 2003

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### Local Events

January	Willow Winter Carnival
February	Iron Dog Race
March	Iditarod Days Festival Iditarod Sled Dog Race Sourdough Ball
April	Baby reindeer are born
May	Salmon fishing starts!
June	Colony Days
July	Wasilla Water Festival Moose Dropping Festival Palmer Pride Picnic
August	Alaska State Fair
Sept.	Aurora Borealis start to become visible
Dec.	Colony Christmas Talkeetna Winterfest

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

Climbing to the top of Mt. McKinley was an experience to say the least. The next challenge on our month long trek...descend the north side of the mountain and hike to Wonder Lake in Denali National Park. This route is a "mountaineering classic"...at least that was what I was promised.

Denali Pass at 18,200 feet is not to be taken lightly. Now our third trip over the pass, we packed up all our climbing gear and carried it over the pass, down the north side of Mt. McKinley onto the Harper Glacier and through 16 miles of glaciers and ridges. The trip over the pass was uneventful. However, as a geologist I was excited with the rock transition from white granite to black granite. The only visible life

forms were ravens and the insects dropping to the glacier from the jet stream.

We walked late into the evening and set up camp at Brown's Tower, spending the coldest night of the trip at minus 40 F, with clear skies followed by a wonderful pink sunrise. I had to remind myself that it was the end of June.

The climb down Brown's Tower was very steep with two or three feet of fresh snow. We traversed past spectacular ice falls and started down Karstens Ridge, knife like with thousands of feet of exposure on either side and steeper than anything we encountered on our Mt. McKinley climb. Working our way down the

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*Mt. McKinley beckons*

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



*Northern Lights over Mt. McKinley*

ridge through the clouds was surreal and beautiful. It took a day to master the ridge and reach the Great Icefalls of the Muldrow Glacier.

We started our next day at 3 am to cover as much of the Muldrow Glacier before the temperature rose and the snow softened. The trek became rough with 125 lb packs on our back. As the snow warmed, we started to break through the ice bridges and drop into crevasses. Everyone in the group wore snowshoes and stayed roped together to keep each of us from falling past our waist into a crevasse. By the end of the day we were snow shoeing in glacier slush above our knees. All of us ended up breaking through the snow bridged crevasses, but our falls were arrested mostly by the gear hanging on our backs.

As we left the Muldrow Glacier we reached McGonagall Pass and could see Wonder Lake (our destination) 26 miles to the north. We set up camp for the night and consumed our remaining food supplies. It felt great to get out

of the climbing gear we had been wearing for over three weeks.

The next morning we woke to rain, but we were glad to be on solid rock and anxious to see plants and the color green again. This part of Denali National Park sees few visitors and there was little sign of any trail most of the day. We stayed on caribou trails and headed due north, crossing several fairly large streams and rivers. With the rain we are soaked to the bone so at this point river crossings didn't make much difference. Also at this point the mosquitoes became unbearable...even for Alaskans!

Our goal was to reach Wonder Lake by 6 pm to catch the last Park Service Bus to the Park entrance. At about 5 pm we reached the McKinley River, the last major hurdle. The river is about a mile wide, braided, ice cold and chest deep. We crossed the river as a group, in a line, with loaded packs on our backs, hanging on to a single spruce pole. The crossing was slow and difficult. Once on the north side of the McKinley River, there was no sign of a trail. We finally wandered onto the Park road at 10 pm a couple of miles east of Wonder Lake.

A Park employee on a bicycle happened by shortly thereafter. He was so alarmed by our appearance that he left all his food and took off to find the Park Ranger at Wonder Lake.

We had all lost at least 30 lbs or more, our clothes were hanging on our slighter frames, we were covered in mosquitoes and we probably looked like refugees from a concentration camp!

The Park Ranger found us a camp site but the Park bus driver offered to let us sleep on the bus and escape from the mosquitoes and rain.

Everyone at Wonder Lake was excited to meet climbers who had reached the summit of Mt. McKinley and hiked all the way to Wonder Lake. All the campers decided to cook us a dish. We had a great meal and enjoyed sharing stories of the climb and posed for many pictures. We didn't realize at the time that everyone kept their distance. At 6 am the next morning we took the six hour bus ride out of the Park...with all the windows open. We apologized to our bus mates...If you think about it, a month without a shower and a change of clothes really is a bit too long!



*Harvey (second from right)*

## Baby Reindeer .....the herd expands

Our last newsletter reported our reindeer herd had dwindled to one lonely reindeer, Crystal. But, on April 2, 2001, Crystal didn't come when we called her for breakfast. We searched and found her lying on the hill-top under a spruce tree. As we approached we noticed she was nestling a black ball of fur. A tiny 6 lb. male reindeer had arrived two weeks premature.

After bringing food and water to Crystal it was evident this baby reindeer was in trouble and unable to stand or nurse. We finally bundled him in a towel and drove quickly to the local reindeer vet. The vet mixed up some lambing replacement formula, gave us a lesson in tube feeding reindeer and outfitted us with the necessary supplies for bottle feeding

and antibiotic shots. After several unsuccessful bottle feeding attempts that afternoon, the calf was tube fed his evening meal with the assistance of our friend, Judy a small animal vet. Luckily after two tube feedings he decided to give the bottle a try. We then began the two hour bottle feeding schedule in freezing temperatures. After each feeding, we propped the calf under Crystal trying to teach him how to nurse. Following a couple of tiring days mother and calf finally got the knack of things and he no longer wanted the bottle.....and we could get some sleep. Soon our baby reindeer was running up and down the hill with mother Crystal chasing him and barking discipline. It was time to give this little guy his name.....Jade.

We had great fun watching



Jade quickly grow. He loves to be petted and follows us everywhere. In line with our plans for reindeer pulling a sled, we began halter training Jade within days. At times this was a challenge, but we soon worked out the bugs. When Jade realized it was a treat to go outside the pen and search for mushrooms and dandelions, he began standing at the gate waiting for his halter.

With Jade's survival, we decided to be brave and acquire another bull reindeer. We picked up one year old Silver from the Reindeer Farm in Palmer the second week of May, 2001. There was quite a commotion in the reindeer pen when Silver joined Crystal and Jade. Crystal made sure Silver knew who the boss was. Jade just wanted to play with this new guy. When they slept, we would find Jade lying in between Crystal and Silver. If reindeer have patience, Silver would be a prime example. Getting Silver used to a halter and leading him along side Jade went

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## Agate Inn Expansion

Construction of the west wing addition to the Agate Guest House was completed during 2002. The 1,800 s.f. Alaska Meeting Room provides an ideal spot for guests to hold retreats, reunions, seminars and business meetings. The 1,200 s.f. Aurora Mini-suite offers a romantic setting for watching the Aurora Borealis (Northern Lights).

Remodeling of the Knik Building is in full swing with completion scheduled for



*Agate Guest House Complex*

summer 2003. With the addition of two wheel-chair accessible suites and four mini-suites, the Agate Inn expansion will be complete...at last!



## Baby Reindeer .....the herd expands.....from page three

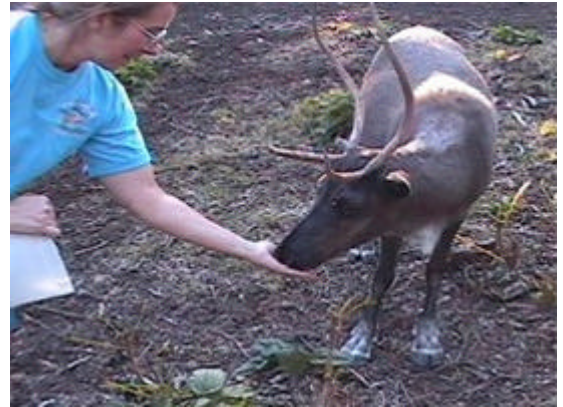
pretty smooth. But then rutting season (Sept-Oct) was a little different story. Until Crystal joined Silver in the winter pen he spent day and night running up and down the hill, barking. Then there was quite a battle followed by a week of Silver chasing Crystal up, down and around the three acre pen, barking nonstop.

Things finally settled down and on April 17, 2002, Crystal gave birth to her second baby

boy reindeer, Mica. Jade and Mica are as different as night and day. Mica was up and running from the start. We had a tough time catching the little guy, let alone convincing him that letting us put on a halter and lead him with a rope was a good thing. But finally, we managed to halter train Mica and Crystal too.

With expectation of another baby reindeer in April, 2003, the herd has grown to the point we can begin harness

training our deer. That first sleigh ride is bound to be exciting!



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