

weather and snow conditions led to a higher-than-normal number of students who will require a second year to graduate from the basic course. There were 34 applicants for basic course equivalency; 17 were granted. Also, 79 students enrolled in the intermediate climbing course and 13 others graduated from the multi-year class. Mountaineers members, in a club-wide vote, supported and affirmed the climbing program practice of requiring students to volunteer time toward conservation service in order to practice a lifelong commitment to stewardship. This requirement for graduation from the basic climbing course was introduced over the last two years.

After an extensive review of belay practices under the direction of Barb McCann, a significant change was approved for course curriculum. The hip belay is now only demonstrated for basic climbing course students, who are required to learn a belay technique that utilizes either a belay device or muenster hitch. Instruction in the hip belay is now reserved for the intermediate climbing course. In order to challenge and retain experienced climbers, Advanced Climbing Experiences (ACE) are being scheduled in addition to our many seminars. This year's ACE activities included an ice climbing trip to Banff.

In the spring, The Mountaineers published the first *Washington Backcountry Almanac* for National Parks, National Forests and wilderness areas within the state. The 112-page guide answers questions critical to hikers, climbers and outdoor users, such as where backcountry camping is allowed and the procedure for obtaining overnight permits and dealing with other regulations. Also included are telephone numbers of agencies that provide information not in the guide. It is a book of up-to-date facts that can readily be used as a trip planner. This insightful publication, spearheaded by Mountaineers president Marcia Hanson, is now in its second printing. With over 400 copies sold, the book is expected to be revised annually.

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*Mountaineering Club of Alaska.* On April 12, 1996, Paul Claus, Carlos Buhler, Ruedi Homberger, Reto Ruesch and Charlie Sassara made the first ascent of Mount Miller on the Bagley ice field in the Wrangell/St. Elias Mountains. The ascent followed a large, rounded southern spur that joins the west ridge at about 8,000 feet. From this juncture, the west ridge continues three and a half miles over increasingly difficult terrain to the summit (ca. 11,500').

During April 611, Dave Hart, Harry Hunt, Dave Lucey and Paul Berry made the second ascent of Mount Natazhat (13,435'), 83 years after the first ascent on June 18, 1913. The peak is in the Wrangell/St. Elias Mountains on the Klutlan Glacier. The climbers made their ascent along the 7,000-foot, four-and-a-half mile narrow to knife-edged northeast ridge.

During May 110, Paul Barry, Kurt Bauer, Jacques Boutet, Brad Gessner, Dave Hart and John Lapkass climbed the south ridge of Mount St. Elias (18,008'), following the route pioneered in 1947 by the Harvard Mountaineering Club expedition led by Maynard Miller. During May 25 to June 3, Peter Haeussler and Soren Orley attempted Mount Hunter's southwest ridge, but were turned back by high winds at 12,800 feet. None of the 40 climbers who attempted Mount Hunter in 1996 were successful.

The MCA offered various training activities during the year. In January, ice climbing instruction was held at a local waterfall, and an ice climbing class was held at Matanuska Glacier September 28-29. On March 26-28, an outdoor leadership class was taught by a local University instructor. The purpose of the class, which consisted of two classroom sessions and one outdoor session, was to improve leadership skills for the development of new trip leaders. The focus was on non-technical skills, safety and group dynamics. In April, a map and compass class was held, and in May, glacier travel/crevasse rescue training was given at the Matanuska Glacier.

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