Minutes from 7 December 2006 Meeting

AMS Wright Memorial Chapter meeting of 7 December 2006

Meeting of Chapter with Dr. Karen Kowalewsky, President.

El Rancho Grande – Fairborn, Ohio

Climate, Glaciers, and Scenery of Alaska

Dr. Mike Abel presented a spectacular pictorial overview of his 12 day June 2005 trip through Alaska. The pictures covered Alaska from Ketchikan to Fairbanks during his 12 day tour. The focus was on Alaska including the land tour from Seward to Anchorage, to Denali, to Fairbanks. In Dr. Abel’s words, he presented “…the most interesting/appropriate/in focus’ ones.” In attendance were several people who had lived and worked in Alaska, those who had visited, and those who were planning a vacation in the coming year.

Dr. Abel started his talk with a climatic overview of Alaska. The coastal regions of Alaska, stretching from the Aleutian Islands eastward through Ketchikan are classified as Marine moist climate with mild winters. Portions of southeast Alaska (a typical city would be Juneau) are extremely moist averaging over 90 inches of precipitation in a year. This area is reminiscent of the deciduous rain forests of the Washington State. Inland from the coastal areas, the climate is considered a subpolar moist climate with severe winters. This interior portion of Alaska (a typical city would be Fairbanks) has average annual precipitation near 8 inches (yet is considered a moist climate). A narrow band, that runs along the Wrangell Mountains and the Alaska Range, is considered Highland.

The first Glacier stop on the cruise was at the Mendenhall Glacier just north of Juneau. The Mendenhall Glacier flows 13.5 miles from the Juneau Icefield, which is nestled in the Coast Mountain Range. Snowfall accumulates in excess of 100 ft per year on the icefield and compacts underlying snow layers from previous years into solid ice. As glacial ice continues to build, the force of gravity pulls the ice downslope. The glacier’s speed depends on the slope of the underlying bedrock. The crystalline structure of the glacial ice creates
The Mendenhall Glacier has been receding since the mid-1700s (the end of the little Ice Age). This retreat is part of a natural cycle of glacial retreat and advance that occurs over thousands of years.

Dr. Abel stopped at the Glacier Gardens Rainforest Adventure which overlooks the Mendenhall Valley. The gardens cover 50 acres of southeast Alaskan rainforest offering landscaping, floral design, and scenic vistas. Pathways lead to ponds, bubbling waterfalls and gardens with views of the Mendenhall Valley and its surroundings. When the land was cleared for some of the gardens, some of the trees were “replanted” upside down, with their roots being used as planters for flowers. The
AMS’ers speculated that this creativity could only come from someone suffering through a really long winter.

The next stop on Dr. Abel’s tour was at Skagway, a player in the Klondike Gold Rush of 1897-1898. A large amount of gold was discovered in Rabbit Creek, a tributary of the Klondike River, some 600 miles outside of Skagway. Tlingit Indians would lead the prospectors through the Chilkoot Pass to the gold fields. The prospectors traveled by foot through difficult mountain passes until a railroad with a locomotive (and 129-ton snow plow) was built in 1899 which ran between Skagway and Whitehorse. The narrow gage railroad climbs nearly 3000 ft in 20 miles.

Glacier Bay National Park was the next stop on the trip and then onto Prince William Sound. Prince William Sound is home to many “scholarly” glaciers including Dartmouth, Yale, Harvard, and Vassar among others. These glaciers flow into the College Fjord.

The last port of call on the cruise portion of Dr. Abel’s trip was Seward. Seward is the home of the Alaska Sea Life Center, created after the Exxon Valdez incident. Created to support of marine research and rehabilitation.

Dr. Abel continued his trip toward Anchorage and stopped at the Big Game Alaska Wildlife Park. Which allowed an up close (if not somewhat dangerous) view of Alaskan Wood Bison, black and Grizzly bears (separated from viewers by a small electric fence), among other animals.

From Anchorage, they traveled to Denali National Park on the McKinley Explorer.
The train offered panoramic views in the glass enclosed cars. Unfortunately, the glass was not the best for taking pictures, so Dr. Abel spent a good deal of time between the cars taking pictures of the landscape. Denali Park is home to Mt. McKinley, America’s highest peak. Dr. Abel spent a few days in and around Denali Park. Access is very limited to the park, and is gained mostly through tour buses. While in the park, he was able to photograph a plethora of wildlife including a grizzly with cub and some bold caribou. While in the park, the view of Mt McKinley was obscured by smoke from wildfires. In general the wildfires usually take off in July, but in 2005, they were quite active in June.

From Denali, Dr. Abel continued onto Fairbanks by train. On a tour of the area, a visit was paid to Susan Butcher, four time winner of the Iditarod Trail race. A visit was also paid to Chena Village. Examples of Salmon fishing contraptions and Native Alaskan life, dress and housing were seen.

Dr. Abel was able to visit several sites around Fairbanks. The Trans-Alaskan Pipeline runs just outside of Fairbanks. The pipeline ships approximately 1 Million barrels of oil each day from Prudhoe Bay to Valdez. He also visited the Goldstream Valley Gold Dredge. Dredges were brought in to mine gold-bearing deposits in the Fairbanks mining district after 1920. A bucket-line or ladder dredge was driven by motors that enabled excavation to the depths of 28 feet. The gold-bearing gravel was sorted and washed on the dredge. The dredge was in operation until 1959. Visitors were also given the opportunity to pan for gold.

Dr. Abel ended his trip with a plane trip from Fairbanks to Anchorage, where he was finally able to get a nice picture of Mt. McKinley. A couple of interesting side notes from Dr. Abel’s visit: temperatures in Fairbanks were in the 80s and, he was able to take pictures nearly 24 hours a day with just ambient lighting. He would suggest traveling to Alaska in June, after the temperatures begin to warm up, but before the forest fires start in July. He was able to take a multitude of pictures by transferring his pictures to CD each evening with a device that transferred the pictures directly from the memory card to the CD.

**Annual AMS Meeting**

The Annual AMS meeting will be held 14-18 January in San Antonio, TX. We discussed the poster we will display as part of the Local Chapter presentations. Our chapter will be represented at the Chapter Officers’ Breakfast.
Mark your calendars now for TechFest 2007. In order for the event to be a success we need you to help out. As a reminder it falls the weekend of President’s Day.

Your dues go to pay for good stuff like prizes in local Science Fairs and our chapter poster at the Annual Meeting.

If you are interested in joining the National AMS, check out the applications for National Membership at: http://www.ametsoc.org/memb/apps/index.html

TechFest 2007

We are composing a list of questions to be printed in a pamphlet to be distributed at TechFest this year. We will be splitting the list of questions between members to write up answers. Keep in mind, our audience is from the very young to the more mature and people with all sorts of educational backgrounds. Please contact either Mary Bedrick or Karen Kowalewsky with any questions.

Financials/Dues

Annual dues were collected ($10/year). There is currently $410.23.

Attendees

Karen Kowalewsky, President  
Paul Gehred, Vice President  
Mary Bedrick, Secretary  
Mike Abel  
Patti Gehred  
Doug Kronk  
Ron Rodney  
John Turnbull  
Ed Blish  
Greg Marx  
Kirk Lehnais  
Kathryn Tennant  
Cliff Dungey

Future Meetings

The next meeting will be held at 6 pm on 7 December 2006 at El Rancho Grande, 3070 Colonel Glenn Hwy. Dr. Mike Abel will present a talk about his Alaskan trip last summer.

Calendar of Upcoming Events

January

11 January 2007 – AMS Meeting – 11:30. TBA  

February

8 February 2007 – AMS Meeting – 6pm. TBA  

March

8 March 2007 – AMS Meeting – 11:30. TBA

April

5 April 2007 – AMS Meeting – 6pm. TBA. Nominees for 2007-08 Wright Memorial Chapter Officers presented to membership.

May


From the National AMS

Renewal of your Annual AMS Membership

The time has come to renew your member dues for the coming year. Renewal notices will be mailed shortly, but why wait when you can renew your dues and subscriptions online today? Our easy-to-use online renewal form is not only the quickest and safest way to renew your membership, it
Membership in the National AMS is not required for membership in the Wright Memorial Chapter of the AMS.

General Information and Details about the Annual Meeting can be found at http://www.ametsoc.org/meet/annual/generalinfo.html.

...can also save you money. Renew online by November 30 and enjoy huge savings on dozens of AMS books, conference preprints, and CD-ROMs. Our online renewal form may be accessed from our Web site at:

http://www.ametsoc.org/memb/renewal/index.cfm

Visa, MasterCard, and American Express are accepted.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Member Services by return email or by phone at 617-227-2425.

**AMS Annual Meeting**

Everyone attending the 87th AMS Annual Meeting must register and wear a badge. Early registration rates are valid until **1 December 2006**.

Registrations forms that are faxed or mailed to AMS Headquarters will be accepted at the higher rate until **22 December 2006**. On-line registrations will be accepted through Tuesday, **16 January 2007**.

Confirmation of registration is sent once the form has been processed. Refunds (less a $25 processing fee) are granted only for **cancellations received before 29 December 2006**.

Registration information available at:

http://www.ametsoc.org/meet/annual/registrationandrates.html

**Forecast Contest**

**November 2006 Results**

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<th>Actual High</th>
<th>Actual Low</th>
<th>Peak Wind</th>
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<tr>
<td>46</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>33 knots</td>
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Points awarded:

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<th>Name</th>
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<td>Kirk Lehnies</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mary Bedrick</td>
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<td>Greg Marx</td>
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<td>John Turnbull</td>
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<td>Scott Hausman</td>
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<td>Kurt Lutz</td>
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<td>Paul Gehred</td>
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<tr>
<td>George Schewe</td>
<td>9</td>
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**December 2006 Contest**

Determine which of the following 15 locations will have a white Christmas. This will be defined by having ½ inch or more of snow on the ground at 7AM eastern time on December 25, 2006 at:

- Wright-Patterson AFB (FFO)
- Bangor, ME (BGR)
- New York City, NY (JFK)
- Minneapolis, MN (MSP)
- Spokane, WA (SHA)
- Denver, CO (DEN)
- Omaha, NE (OMA)
- St. Louis, MO (STL)
- Detroit, MI (DTW)
- Pittsburgh, PA (PIT)
- Washington, DC (IAD)
- Oklahoma City, OK (OKC)
- Reno, NV (RNO)
- Chicago, IL (ORD)
- Memphis, TN (MEM)

See our website for more details (http://www.ametsoc.org/chapters/wrightmem) and the official form. Send your forecasts to John Turnbull via mail (799 Spinning Rd. Dayton OH 45431) or via email to john.turnbull@wpafb.af.mil by **December 15, 2006**.
Attention Shutterbugs – More pictures wanted for our Picture of the Month section. Send submissions to: mary.bedrick@wpafb.af.mil

Picture of the Month

Photograph by Mike Abel. Iridescent clouds over Greene County, OH. 30 October 2006.

AMS – Wright Memorial Chapter

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Karen Kowalewsky
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Vice President:
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Treasurer:
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Web Master:
John Turnbull
John.turnbull@wpafb.af.mil

We’re on the Web!
www.ametsoc.org/chapters/wrightmem/index.html

Picture looking towards the collegiate glaciers with the Chugach Mountains in the background.