South Ridge of MT. ST. ELIAS from 10,000' Camp 9.

THE
AMERICAN ALPINE JOURNAL

VOLUME VI 1947 NUMBER 3

Yahtsétesha

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AS far N. as one can go in Southeastern Alaska, before the Panhandle fades and the International Boundary swings poleward, lies what has been referred to as the greatest ice mountain in all of North America. For centuries the Indians of the coast called it Yahtsé-tesha, "the mountain away back of bay, from which water flows." Dominating the whole eastern rim of the gulf of Alaska, this 18,008-ft. summit became quite naturally to these natives a guiding compass, their weather prophet, and the home of their spirit god. White men's interest in the mountain began in 1741 when Vitus Bering sighted it from the *St. Peter,* about 120 nautical miles away.[1]

Rising higher immediately above sea level than any other mountain on the globe, it is now remembered also, with the range of its name, as lying in the midst of the greatest mass of glacial ice anywhere outside the Arctic and Antarctic regions. In appearance its steep pyramidal summit and great W. shoulder are not unlike the classic view of Everest. Small wonder that Mount St. Elias beckoned the first mountaineering expeditions to Alaska, and that it has had a long and fascinating reputation abroad as well as in America.

At least nine expeditions have tried to reach its summit; but only one, led by the Duke of the Abruzzi in 1897, was successful, making the ascent from the E. via Dome Pass and the Newton Glacier. The first two attempts were made by the Karr-Schwatka party in 1886 and by the Topham-Williams expedition in 1888. The latter group tried for the huge S. W. ridge around Haydon Peak, going in from the Pacific side over glacial terrain which, be-

[1] See F. A. Golder, *Bering's Voyages,* American Geographical Society Research Series, Nos. 1 and 2 (New York, 1922, 1925), I, 92, 93, 271, 332; II, 33, 42.

cause of ice recession, subsequently became Icy Bay.[2] Both these parties proclaimed the S. W. route hardly feasible, compared to what would be encountered on the northern or eastern flanks of the massif.

Inspired by some of Bradford Washburn's recent aerial photographs of this ridge, and fascinated by William Williams' account of the unbelievable country over which one must pass to get into this region from the W., the Harvard Mountaineering Club became interested in an attempt from Icy Bay. Andrew Kauffman, William Putnam, and myself, representing the Wartime Council of the H.M.C., began laying groundwork for such an expedition a full year before the war ended. Our letters discussing preparation went to and from the South Pacific, Washington, D. C., and Italy; and, by the time uniforms were shed, plans were well under way. Realizing that this mountain and the surrounding area offered ideal arctic and mountain conditions for certain types of experiments and tests, several institutions and organizations became interested in the venture. The Harvard Fatigue Laboratory asked us to carry on some extensive physiological tests, including pulse rate analyses and food ration sampling. In addition, the Army Quartermaster Corps and the Army Air Forces asked us to subject a large amount of mountain and cold weather equipment to thermal, functional and structural tests. Being on terminal leave from the Navy and in good position to organize these plans, I was asked to manage preliminary arrangements for the expedition and to that end coordinated final preparations by the time our party was assembled in Yakutat, Alaska, on the 12th of June.

These plans had been laid for a party of eight. In addition to Kauffman, Putnam and myself, the members were William Latady, this year's president of the H.M.C., who, with Putnam, was to be in charge of equipment; Betty Kauffman, Andy's wife, who, with him, was to constitute the food committee; Dee Molenaar, of Los Angeles, who joined us as photographer; his brother Cornelius, our meteorologist; and Lt. Benjamin Ferris, of the Climatic Research Laboratory in Lawrence, Mass., who was to act in the capacity of Army observer for the QMC and as medical officer for the Fatigue Laboratory. All in the party are members of the American Alpine Club, and have had considerable experience in

[2] William Williams, "Reminiscences of Mt. St. Elias," *A. A. J.*, IV, 355-61.

other expeditions to Alaska and Canada, to the Alps and to Peru. Oddly enough, four past presidents of the Harvard Mountaineering Club were included in the roster.

The Tenth Rescue Squadron from Anchorage had been assigned to give us air support in order to conduct a series of practical training exercises and to experiment with rescue operations recently developed by the Army. For this reason we spent four busy days in Yakutat repacking the hundred-odd bundles of freight shipped from Seattle six weeks before. A ton and a half of food and equipment was apportioned into 64 different packages, all thoroughly tagged, with snow-streamers attached, for aerial delivery at three separate pre-arranged camps. Captain Roy Holdiman and one of the Rescue Crews had brought a DC-3 down from Anchorage, so we made a two-hour reconnaissance flight over the peak with the midnight sun for light. The next morning a conference was held on procedure and emergency signals before the plane flew back to Elmendorf Field and we resumed our packing. Another 3000 lbs. of gear was stowed on board the *Grace N.*, a 40-ft. fishing boat which was to take us the 65 miles up the coast to Icy Bay.

Finally, on the night of the 16th of June, preparations were completed to set sail. All were anxious to get the ocean voyage over with and to land for the attack. It had been raining ever since our arrival in Yakutat, and the weather was not ordained to get better. A wicked night of tossing waves and driving rain let us know the expedition was launched in a storm. The small skiff being towed along behind was torn from its mooring five times during the night, and nearly everyone on board became miserably seasick before daylight broke.

A 12-hour run found the *Grace N.* dodging icebergs in the mouth of Icy Bay; and at noon, still in a soaking rain, we unloaded supplies onto a barren sub-arctic beach nearly obscured by low-lying fog. Originally the plan had been to cruise far up into the bay and land near the discharging fronts of the Guyot and Tyndall Glaciers, but pack ice and a bad wind prevented unloading any farther inside than a spit near the first large glacial river descending from the Malaspina Ice Cap. We had felt quite lucky to be able to land far enough in to escape having to cross this river. Then, in trying to relay loads farther up the eastern shore, we discovered another glacial torrent well over 100 ft. wide and much too deep to ford. Our dismay can be imagined. This meant that we were to

spend three days setting up the first camp and crossing this torrent one mile farther on. Putnam and Dee Molenaar hiked nearly to the headwaters of the stream; and by wading chest-high, roped, they crossed the river. On the evening of the 18th they had constructed on the opposite side of the stream a huge stanchion from boulders and prehistoric wood recently uncovered by stream action on the glacial outwash plain. A similar imposing structure had been fashioned on our side. By rigging a Tyrolean traverse between this elaborate set of supports, and by using five nylon climbing ropes and a combination of carabiners and reepschnur, we were quite successful eventually in passing all equipment and personnel across the hundred feet of rushing water. Putnam supplied the appropriate name: "Colossal Creek."

Camps Two and Three were then set up in rapid succession on the N. river bank and on a jumbled morainic hill bordering the bay, but still three miles from the ice fronts. It was necessary to make time from here on if we expected to be at the base of the mountain on the day of our first scheduled aerial drop. It was a long four miles from Camp Three, which we later considered as Base Camp, to the location of Camp Four at 1000 ft. on the N. W. extremity of the Chaix Hills. There we could at last look down on the dirty broken ice of the Tyndall Glacier, our route into the interior. This camp we affectionately named "Palm Beach," because of the beautiful little glacial bathing pools near-by, in which some of us braved the chill and bathed. From here it was 14 miles to the actual base of Haydon Peak, an 11,920-ft. summit which we had to traverse before getting onto Mount St. Elias itself.

Heavy relaying went on while Latady and I went out for a three-day reconnaissance to find the most feasible route up the broken and heavily crevassed Tyndall. Good fortune prevailed the morning we left; the skies opened up, and a week of sky-blue weather came on. The great bulk of St. Elias and its neighboring peaks, so imposing in bold, icy relief above, made us begin to realize as never before the magnitude of the job ahead. Three relays of 80 lbs. each were made between camps Four and Seven. Camps

ON THE SUMMIT (18,008 FEET), 16 JULY 1946
Left to right: Miller, Latady, Ferris, Mrs. Kauffman, C. Molenaar, Kauffman
Photo, H. M. C.-D. Molenaar

IN ANCHORAGE, 6 AUGUST 1946
The H. M. C. party with some of the 10th Rescue Squadron personnel. Front row, left to right: Latady, Miller, C. Molenaar, Mrs. Kauffman, Kauffman, D. Molenaar. Rear row, left to right: Lt. Ferris, Capt. H. Klimetz, Capt. L. A. Freeman, Capt. R. L. Holdiman, Maj. C. E. Mosse, Sgt. J. Blankenship, S/Sgt. R. T. Amon, T/Sgt. H. Hartman, T/Sgt. R. Naseth, T/Sgt. E. C. Guttridge. Putnam had remained in Yakutat
Photo, H. M. C.


10th RESCU
SQUADRO

Five and Six, being situated in the midst of the Tyndall Glacier, were surrounded for miles by a maze of crevasses and séracs. The camps were a full day's march apart with a fair load, Five being at 1500 ft. and Six at 2000 ft. The glacier reconnaissance showed that we must skirt three sets of tremendous icefalls and do a great deal of backtracking and cross-cutting before reaching the June snow line and the easier going on the upper reaches of the glacier. We travelled the white ice as much as possible. Sometimes it was necessary to do some technically fancy climbing even on this low-level ice stream, and at all times it was necessary to go roped. There were numerous questionable snow bridges, all to disappear and leave great gaping holes by the time we were to come out along this route some weeks later.

Camp Seven, at a little over 3000 ft., was consolidated on the 27th of June with the first receipt of supplies from the sky. Here, on a gently sloping acre of snow, Captain Holdiman and his crew dropped by free fall and by parachute 1200 lbs. of gear. This camp was thereafter considered a veritable Shangri-La, well stocked and situated on a small, isolated grassy swath at the base of our climbing ridge, in the midst of an infinity of ice, snow and jagged rock, all surrounded by unexplored peaks as precipitous and awe-evoking as any on earth. Here also we had incomparable skiing and ptarmigan hunting, and 15 varieties of mountain flowers, and a mat of heather six inches deep: a little world in itself, forgotten by the ice age and left intact for us. As we looked up and saw the 15,000 ft. yet to be climbed, somebody may even have said, "Let's stay right here for the summer." From here on, the real ascent began. But, with a well consolidated base and enough food for several weeks on the ridge, no one was unduly pessimistic.

While the others were making one more relay from Camp Six on June 28th, Putnam and Kauffman scouted the steep rock ridge above Seven, reaching about 6000 ft. Their report was not encouraging. In order to make sure of getting to the next scheduled drop site on time, Latady, Putnam and I started up on the following afternoon, each carrying a 60-lb. load including enough food for four days. The route lay up a rotten rock and snow ridge to the 7300-ft. level. Topping this ridge at sundown, we negotiated a few hundred feet of extremely steep and loose sandstone cliff and

CAMP 7—"HEATHER MEADOW" (3000 FEET)
Note AAF test tents. Mount Huxley (12,560 feet) is in the background
Photo, M. M. Miller

HAYDON RIDGE CAMP (10,300 FEET)
Photo, M. M. Miller

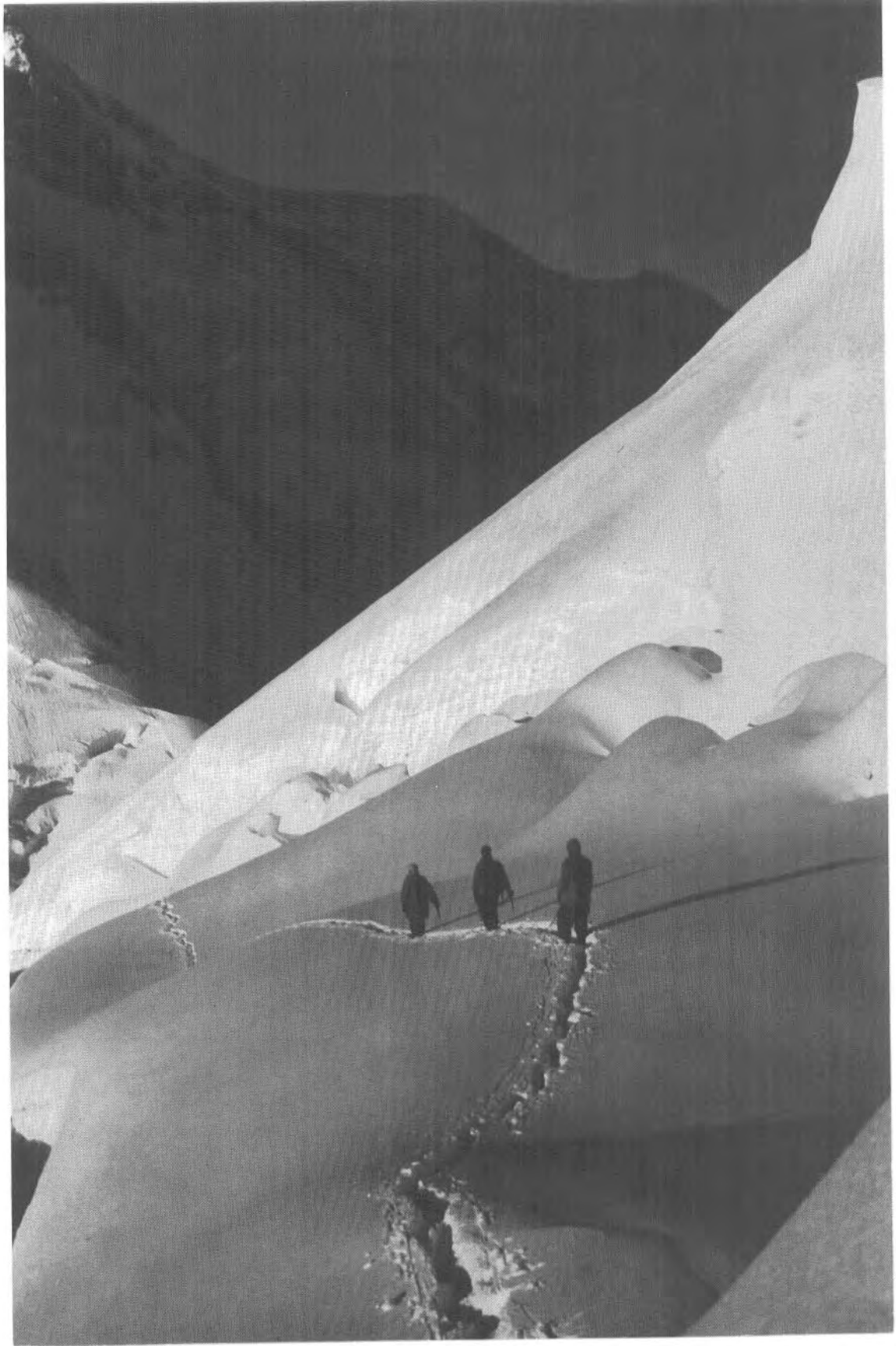
came out on a shelf of low dipping but badly shattered shale, an ideal spot for the establishment of Camp Eight. After placing an orange marker and throwing down 200 ft. of fixed rope, we crawled into a mountain tent and got some rest.

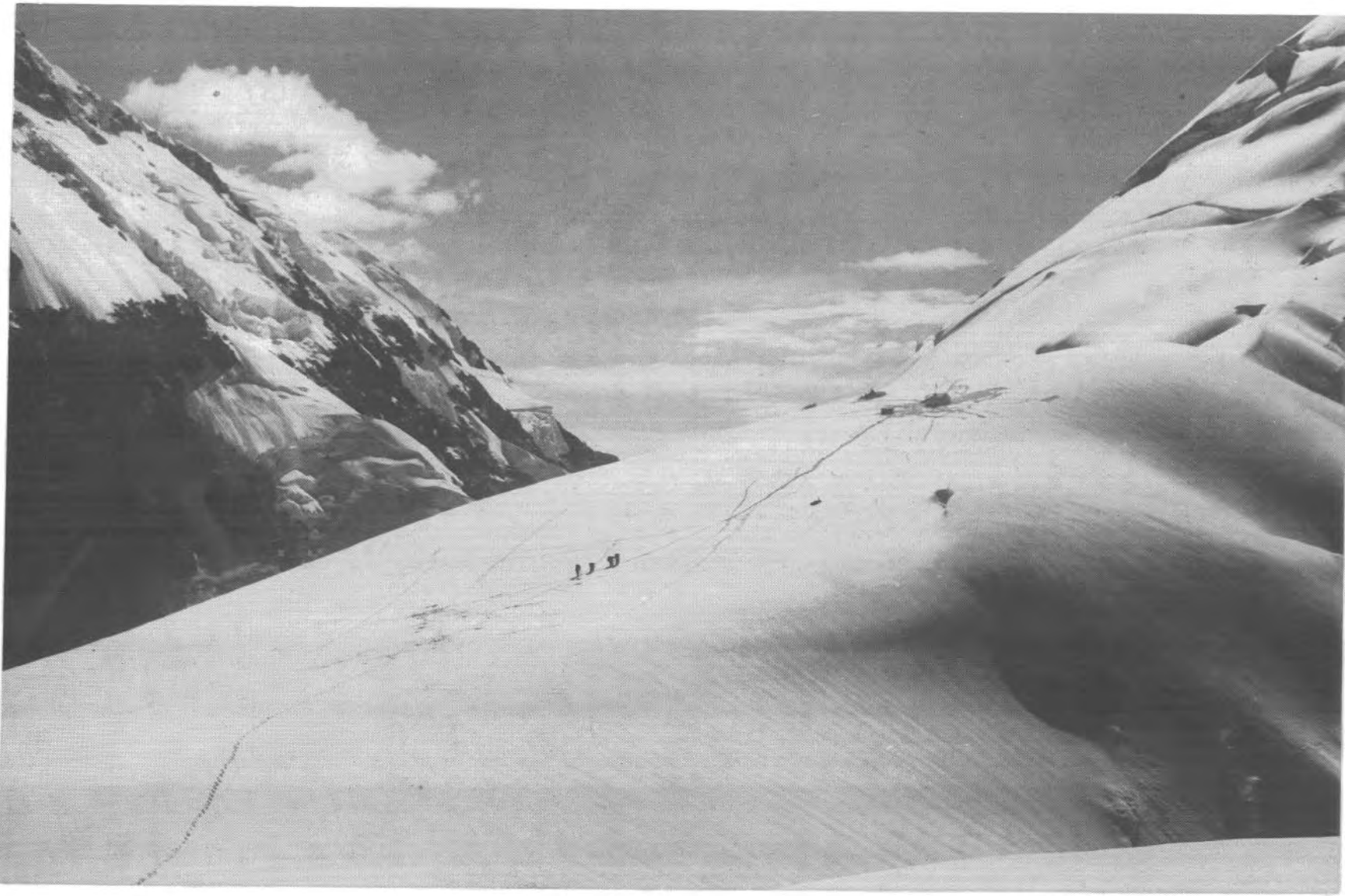
In the morning a cloudless sky permitted a clear view of the route ahead—leading along the glaciated rim of a huge cirque curving for miles around to the summit of Haydon Peak. Looking down into the great basin below, we were glad that the original plan to drop supplies here had been changed. Not only was the cirque floor a thousand feet down; in addition, it was so broken as to be utterly impractical for a drop area. Furthermore, it was continually bombarded by avalanches, especially on the kind of day ahead of us, with intense glare and softening snows. While the others began a relay of loads to this point, we moved on and upward along the steep western edge of the cirque, through a maze of crevasses and beneath a huge avalanche face. There was no alternative route. Here, on two occasions, large avalanches of soft wet snow slithered down over a sheer base of blue ice and nearly inundated us. It seemed as if pressures had been built up everywhere at the same time, causing the whole mountain to spit forth at once. Having crossed one narrow couloir just 30 seconds before it became a nozzle spouting another avalanche out into space, we decided that from here on travel under such conditions should be limited to night. But, with a rendezvous to make on the morrow, we could not wait for nightfall. With great care we mounted another 2000 ft. of steep snow, scree, mixed ice and arkose and conglomerate cliffs. By late afternoon, through knee-deep, sun-softened snow that required more fixed ropes at two bad spots, we punctured a cornice at 10,000 ft. and emerged onto the great long Haydon Peak ridge. Here, at least, there was no avalanche danger, and hard packed snow lay beneath our feet.

Dusk had fallen before Camp Nine was dug in at the juncture of this ridge and the 2000-ft. summit dome of Haydon Peak. In the lingering sub-arctic twilight, at 11, we hiked without loads to a position on the steep N. slope of Haydon Peak, whence we could look into the 10,000-ft. col between this mountain and St. Elias, the pre-arranged location for our second aerial delivery. With

APPROACH TO ST. ELIAS VIA THE NORTH SLOPE OF HAYDON PEAK
Haydon-St. Elias col (10,000 feet) is in left background
Photo, H. M. C.-D. Molenaar

SECOND DROP AREA: CAMP 9 (10,300 FEET)
St. Elias is on the left, and Haydon Peak on the right
Photo, H. M. C.-D. Molenaar





one glance we saw it was much too sheer and heavily crevassed to receive any loads from the air. Half would be lost in holes or down the steep bordering cliffs, and also the col seemed too exposed to avalanches from the ice faces on either side above. Returning to our tent, we made the decision to tramp-in a 100-yard drop square on the smooth snow at the very top of the cirque ridge, and to use that location for the drops. This meant an early rise to get our work done before the DC-3 should arrive.

At 7 A.M. we were awakened by the soft, sickeningly ominous patter of dry powder hitting the tent wall. A southeaster had descended during the night, obscuring all tracks of the day before, and making visibility zero. A silent shift of wind and a thickening atmosphere the evening before had given forewarning, but we had hardly expected the storm to blow in so soon. At 10 A.M. the plane was heard high overhead, but of course it was useless. Again at 2 P.M. it tried to get through, and later on in the evening a reassuring sound of motors could be heard, far off in the distance. As our radio refused to function, all that we could do was wait. For seven dreary days this continued, with the Rescue Squadron making repeated efforts to get through. We were hardly comfortable—three of us cooped up in a two-man mountain tent, while the snow drifted higher, and our physical condition became more and more stagnant. On the fourth day it cleared slightly in the afternoon, enough so that the tent could be dried out, but unfortunately there was no plane. In the evening, with all food gone, we had to descend to Camp Eight, pick up a bag of 16 man-days of rations, and hurry back up the ridge before morning. Each day, to mark the drop area, we again stamped out the square in newly fallen snow.

On the 8th of July our aerial supplies came through—a day perfect in weather and perfect in coordination. All of the 27 bundles dropped or chuted landed within the marked area, a masterpiece of precision bombing. Most delightful among the discoveries was a package of mail fresh from the States, tied in with two more experimental radios, neither of which was to work. (Having slept with our other Walkie-Talkie for five nights to keep it warm, all to no purpose, I was personally ready to be skeptical.) All communications to plane and ground were made by snow writing, a technique we found later to be very successful, and one which was written up

STORM CLOUDS AT 13,000 FEET, BELOW CAMP 10
Photo, M. M. Miller

GREAT SOUTHWEST FACE AND SUMMIT OF MOUNT ST. ELIAS
The 10th Rescue Squadron DC-3 seen in the middle distance has just dropped supplies at Camp 9
Photo, M. M. Miller

in newspapers all over the country when the Tenth Rescue Squadron brought back its reports.

From Camp Nine we observed the most magnificent avalanches any of us had ever seen—tons of new snow crashing down a two-and-one-half-mile height of the W. face of Mount St. Elias, some of them spewing out into free space for upwards of 6000 ft. After hearing the rumbling avalanche music every night, we found a thrill in seeing whence it came.

After dragging all loads into camp and setting up two new tents, and storing equipment in them and in the "igloo" that Putnam had constructed one day during the storm, we made preparations to go down. Taking to heart our own advice, we took off at 9 o'clock that evening and by travelling all night descended nearly 8000 ft. to Camp Seven. The rest of the party, whom we had not seen for ten days, were asleep at Eight and planned to come up in the morning; but we roused them just before dawn with a fistful of mail and the cautious admonition to travel at night on these higher reaches. This plan, we pointed out, also permitted one to make double time. They had been relaying loads to Eight during the interim, below the storm, and had made several minor ascents in a small chain of rock pinnacles and nunataks E. of Camp Seven, dubbed by the Molenaars the "Morse Peaks" because they looked like a series of dots and dashes coming out of the snow. This left us three with the last relay loads to bring up from Shangri-La two days later. It also gave us a chance to bask in sunlight at our heather meadow for a day of recuperation.

On the 11th of July we were all together again at Camp Nine. Dee Molenaar and Kauffman had scouted the ice cliff above the Haydon-St. Elias col to 12,000 ft. and determined that it would "go" with light loads—but safely only if done with crampons and at night. Since the next air drop had been scheduled for the 13th, there was plenty of time to send five men up to consolidate Camp Ten on the 13,400-ft. ledge above the huge face of blue ice leading up from the col. On the 12th the party climbed Haydon Peak and placed the Harvard Mountaineering Club banner on its corniced summit to register a first ascent. An attempt on the col ice face by the two Molenaars and myself that night was rebuffed by lowering storm clouds and wind; however, it cleared sufficiently the following evening for another try. This time, only Putnam and Ferris remained behind to try to establish radio contact with the plane,

while the rest of us started out at midnight with fair loads to arrive no later than 9 in the morning at the lower ledge. The first reconnaissance had shown 1500 ft. of the slope beneath this ledge to be 40 to 60 degrees of blue ice, enough to rouse considerable apprehension; but by chopping a number of steps and using ice pitons with 450 ft. of fixed rope, we avoided suffering too much delay. Some of the slowest and most difficult parts encountered were on stretches of granite wall rock, severely weathered and broken, lying exposed at several spots on the route. The plane arrived an hour after we hit the ledge; it gave us that much time to rest before we had to dig duffle bags and boxes out of the snow. A drop area only 50 yards square could be stepped off here, because the ledge was banked on two sides by sheer ice and rock cliffs and on the mountain side by wide bergschrunds and crevasses. After one of our group fell in a crevasse in the middle of camp, no one walked very far without being roped.

Because of the exposure, the smallness of the drop area, and the fact that a lingering cloud blew in on a sudden strong blast, just as the last boxes were being dropped from the plane, a miscalculation occurred; and 32 man-days of food went down the eastern cliff. Two food boxes exploded on contact with the 70-degree ice, and some of the contents cascaded perhaps 9000 ft. to the Libbey Glacier below. Our grief at this loss was somewhat assuaged by a surprise package of four large and luscious apple pies, carefully packed in sawdust, and dropped with the compliments of the Yakutat Bakery. But morale hit a low ebb when we realized that nothing could be salvaged from the loss and that it looked as if another storm were threatening to break. With six days of supplies on hand, we could make it if good weather prevailed; but the margin of safety was slim. We decided to put out the yellow tarp emergency marker and signal for the emergency rations stored in Yakutat. The plane made one more pass over camp on its way to Anchorage and "rogered" recognition of our appeal, just as the rapidly forming clouds came down in earnest. Decision to move up no longer hinged on weather or aircraft. It became essential to get to the high ledge at 16,000 ft. and dig in a camp as soon as possible. Then, with the first break in the weather, we could push on to the summit. At least, in this way, we should have enough food to last out a short storm and get back to the ample supplies at Camp Nine. The wind-blown mist closed in and prevented further activity that evening.

At 7 A.M. Putnam and Ferris arrived in camp with more gasoline and some extra food. Being already somewhat acclimated, the rest of us moved up with very heavy loads through deep soft snow to see what could be done about a high camp. Breaking out of a dense ceiling at 15,200 ft., we climbed 400 ft. higher and made camp at sunset in zero temperature. Not until later did we realize that our tents were pitched on a huge cornice overhanging the mountain's S. face. This we came to know as Camp Eleven, High Camp, or the Upper Ledge.

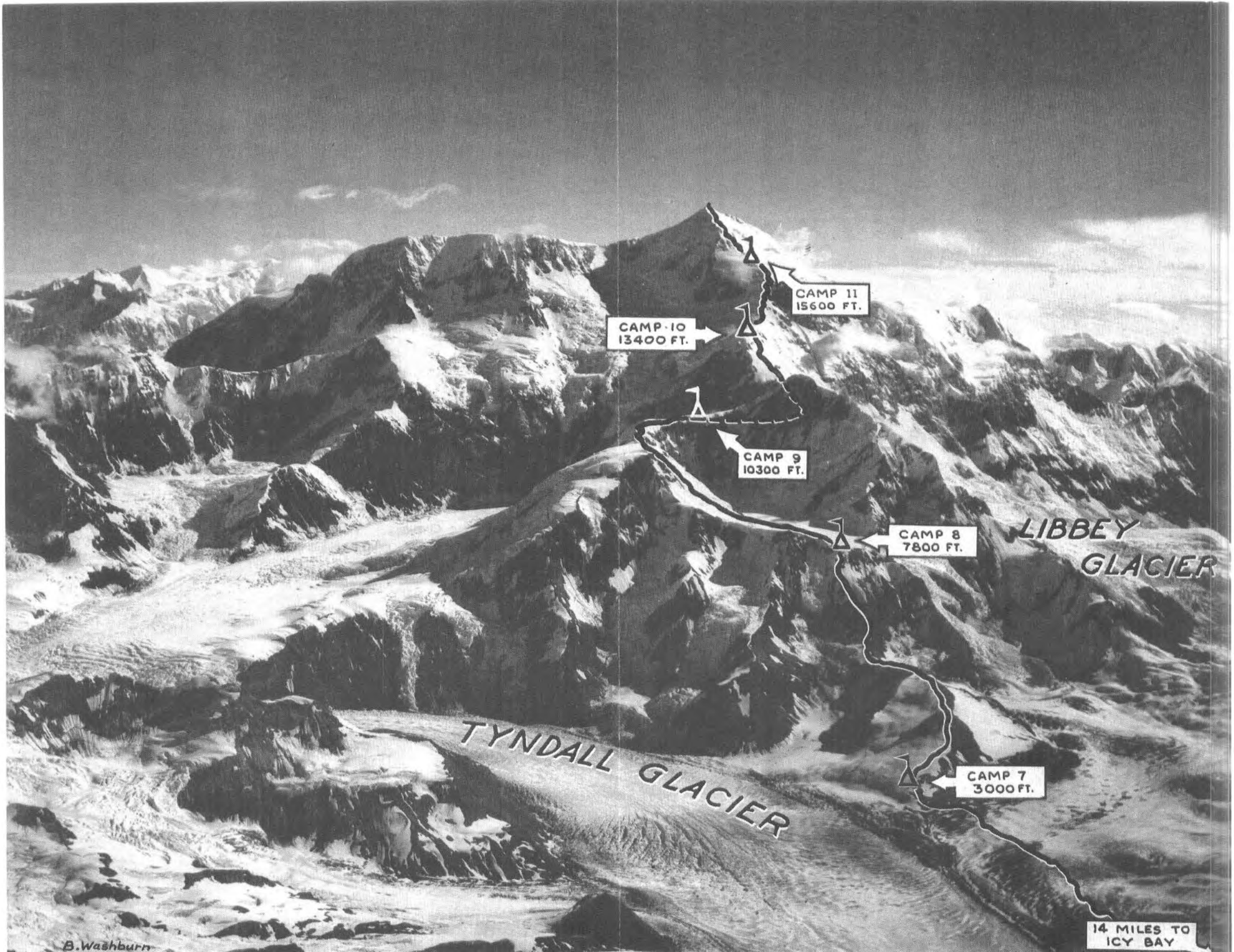
On the following day the other two climbed up from Camp Ten and joined us in waiting for better weather. An abortive attempt was made to reach the final rock ridge leading to the summit from this high ledge, but more wind and thick clouds made it too hazardous even to cross the upper shelf. The lead man's fall into a large crevasse from a collapsed snow bridge made us decide to turn back and wait out another night of freezing cold. Actually, this additional rest was welcome, for we all needed more acclimatization after the strain of recent heavy loads.

It was the 16th day of July. I awoke at 5 A.M. and—with fingers crossed—undid the tent flap for a look. Thin wisps of cloud covered the summit. Ominously, the steep black rock ridge was trailing plumes of wind-blown powder. The overhead was clearing. Soon, in the other tents, could be heard the mumble of voices from the warm sleeping bags; and it was not long before all were awake to the signs. A 40-mile-an-hour wind was shifting to the N., still bitter cold, but hardly discouraging. If bad weather had continued for two more days, we should have had to turn back; but, thanks to Providence, here was the break we had hoped for. It was about 7 o'clock before the sun's rays hit camp and drove off the unbearable cold, and by then we were roped up and away. A cloud layer below at 12,000 ft. was still black and churning around the dwarfed 12,000- to 14,000-ft. summits of Mount Huxley, The Hump, Haydon Peak and Mount Augusta; but the atmosphere overhead was crystal-clear.

At the start, we began alternating leads to save ourselves for what looked like severe pitches on the rock and ice ridge above. As we hit the steep rock rising up from our 16,000-ft. ledge, Putnam, because of a lung injury received while he was with the Mountain Troops in Italy, reached his ceiling and had to turn back to High Camp. Consolidating now on two ropes, we moved slowly and

MOUNT ST. ELIAS
The route of the 1946 expedition

Photo, B. Washburn


CAMP 11
15600 FT.
CAMP 10
13400 FT.
CAMP 9
10300 FT.
CAMP 8
7800 FT.
LIBBEY
GLACIER
TYNDALL GLACIER
CAMP 7
3000 FT.
14 MILES TO
ICY BAY
B. Washburn

carefully over several steep rock and ice faces and up through two arduous ice couloirs. At 17,000 ft., more steep rock of firm schists was encountered in 100-ft. stretches requiring delicate balance. This type of climbing we had hardly expected. Several hundred feet higher, there began a series of huge feathered ice bosses similar to those described as being on parts of the Kangchenjunga ridge. It required much time to cut up and around these bosses. Two more vertical ice funnels called for fixed ropes, also to aid us on the descent. Between the sets of feathered ice humps we found ourselves foundering in pockets of snow nearly waist-deep, grading off into steep avalanche slopes. It was essential to alternate the leads every length of the rope.

The summit itself was achieved via a short snow arête leading up from a small ledge of ice that required carefully chopped steps. With five more feet of slack, the first rope was on top, followed a few minutes later by the second. Ten weary but exciting hours were completed as we all stepped on the highest mound together at 5.30 P.M. Temperature was still zero, but a wind of only 30 miles an hour whipped the H.M.C. flag planted on a jeep aerial at this point. The summit is no more than 100 yards long and perhaps 50 wide, dropping off steeply on all sides. Thirty miles to the E., Mount Logan's elongated and massive bulk pierced the cloud layers at its base, appearing more like a whole range than like one mountain. The other giants of the St. Elias Range could be seen, but were disappointingly diminished when looked upon from this height.

Before starting down at 7 o'clock, we unfurled and photographed the American and Canadian flags donated by the Arctic Institute of North America to be planted here where the International Boundary passes over this remote and little known point between Alaska and the Yukon. The fact of the extension of our friendly border into this fantastic and unapproachable area was most impressive.

On the descent our route was for the most part in shadow, and we were able to make good time on steep crampon snow, skirting some of the worst stretches of the ascent. We were back at the 16,000-ft. shelf a little after 10 P.M. and arrived in camp just as the sun passed behind the great W. shoulder. Sleep was welcome and undisturbed that night. The only misfortune of the ascent to be recalled was that Latady's toes were severely frostbitten.

On the 17th the plane came over with emergency rations and, circling over the summit, took photographs of the flag left there, and of our steps. Our mission having been accomplished, we signalled that we had no need for supplies and that we should like the boat at Icy Bay in three weeks.

TOP—16th; BOAT 8/4

Seeing this message written in the snow, the DC-3 circled back once more, dipped its wings in acknowledgment, and flew off to the N. W. A day later, the southeaster we had been fearing broke in all fury, piling up several feet of snow and tying us in at the Haydon ridge camp for several days. Bad weather continued during the long trek out to Icy Bay and scarcely permitted a view of the mountain again in the three weeks of descent and return to the coast. Amazing changes in the Tyndall Glacier made this part of the journey infinitely worse than it had been on the way in.

On August 4th, sailing back to Yakutat, we saw the whole mountain again for the first time. It was covered completely with a new and deep mantle of snow, a truly magnificent sight, but impressively reminiscent of the storms, snow, sleet and rain battled all the way down. Most of all, we were mindful of the good fortune which had allowed us to make the top just in time.

Upon being welcomed in Yakutat we learned a strange fact: July 16th, the day on which clear skies had put us on top, was not only one month from the day we had left Yakutat, but also the anniversary of the day when Vitus Bering's party had first sighted the mountain over 200 years ago. Moreover, according to the Yakutat missionary, this date was known locally as St. Elias' Day. We like to think that the patron saint had been looking with favor on our efforts.