

*Roaring Lion Canyon, New Routes.* Many routes have recently been established in this little-known canyon, primarily on the Thin Red Line Buttress. This is the first major tower seen after crossing the river and is about a mile and a half in. Upon seeing the tower, hike up the east gully and then cross to the west side when nearly at the level of the tower. The approach is the typical Montana grunt, but the climbing is brilliant. *The Thin Red Line* starts near the southwest corner and climbs the south face for four pitches at 5.11. The crux is the third pitch and is one of the most exposed pitches I have been fortunate enough to climb. Rap the west side of the tower and climb the other half-dozen one- to two-pitch routes found there. The two-pitch *Crack Envy* (5.11a) is as good as thin hands gets. Primary route developers were Martin Cook, Chris Duross, and Eric Roberts. Grey Thompson and I also helped in the effort.

BEN OSBURN, *unaffiliated*

## ALASKA

### BROOKS RANGE

*Mt. Doonerak, First Winter Ascent, Previously Unreported.* On March 17, 1996, Jon Miller and I flew into the North Fork of the Koyukuk River and skied up Bombardment Creek, climbing a few frozen waterfalls (up to WI3) on the approach to Marshall Lake. From a camp at the lake, we climbed directly up a couloir/corner system in a series of running belays and a couple of belayed pitches over snow and thinly ice-covered rock. The climb was quite a bit more interesting than the usual summer route. It was made during a cold snap, with talk of  $-50^{\circ}\text{F}$  at nearby Bettles.

KEITH ECHELMAYER

### HAYES RANGE

*Mt. Hess, East Buttress, Second Ascent, Previously Unreported.* In May, 1997, Jon Miller and I climbed up snow and low-fifth-class rock from the upper Gillam Glacier at 4,640 feet to the upper basin (8,400') beneath the north ridge. After a storm day, we then



*Mt. Doonerack. The route climbed by Miller and Echelmeyer in winter ascends a gully/face system on the right directly to the summit.*

KEITH ECHELMAYER



*The upper half of the north side of Mt. Hess, showing the ascent via the East Buttress. The north ridge faces the camera. KEITH ECHELMMEYER*

climbed the East Buttress (Alaska Grade 4) on mixed snow, ice, and poor rock to the summit (11,940'). Descent was via the north ridge, which required a cold night out due to icy conditions. On the descent, we skied out to the Little Delta River, and paddled out this river to near Fairbanks.

KEITH ECHELMMEYER

#### DELTA RANGE

*Item Peak, North Face, New Route.* On the first Saturday of April, after driving down the Richardson Highway, Shad O'Neel and I skied up Michael Creek. We camped at the base of the Jarvis Glacier/Michael Creek Pass. The next day, we got up early and crossed over the Jarvis Glacier to the base of the north face of Item Peak (7,800'). We simulclimbed the 1,800-foot face in a few hours, finding a bit of ice, a bit of rock, and not much of

note along the way. After summiting Item Peak, we skied back out to the road on the same day. It is our understanding that this was the first ascent of the face.

JEFF APPLE BENOWITZ

#### ALASKA RANGE

*Denali National Park and Preserve, Summary.* The 2000 climbing season at Denali National Park and Preserve was one of the most tragic and one of the most memorable seasons in recent history. The terrible plane crash that happened on June 19 stunned the Denali National Park staff, the town of Talkeetna, the state of Alaska, and the entire National Park Service. The crash killed mountaineering ranger Cale Shaffer, volunteer patrol members Brian Reagan and Adam Kolff, and pilot Don Bowers. This catastrophic accident happened during the height of the season, requiring the South District staff to continue working during this heart-breaking time.

It was the last season for Annie Duquette, who, after ten years as Kahiltna Base Camp manager, and Denali's unofficial ambassador to pilots, climbers, and visitors, finally decided to retire.

For the second year in a row, there were no fatalities on Denali, although well-known climber Seth Shaw was killed on the Ruth Glacier when an ice serac collapsed on him.

It was the first year that the National Park Service initiated a comprehensive trash and

human-waste management program on Denali. Also, the mountaineering orientation program was revised with a greater emphasis on sanitation and resource management. It was the first year of modifying the NPS mountain patrol schedules to have two rangers at the 14,200-foot camp. This enabled the rangers to have increased presence and to better monitor the mountain at both the 17,200-foot high camp and the 14,200-foot camp.

There were three winter attempts on Denali, each unique because of the routes attempted: the American Direct, the West Rib, and the Muldrow Glacier. The winter on Denali turned back all of the attempts, but a pair of Canadian climbers on the West Rib reached the 19,500-foot level before descending because of the severe cold.

The 322 expeditions that attempted Denali this year met with milder weather conditions overall than last season, allowing more opportunities to attempt the summit from high camp. Of the 1,209 climbers, the weather permitted 52 percent to reach the summit, as compared to 43 percent last year.

International climbers comprised 40 percent, or 470, of the total number of climbers on Mt. McKinley this year. Climbers came from 41 different countries. The top five countries represented were the United States (739), Canada (62), United Kingdom (55), France (38), and Spain (33).

This year, the average age of mountaineers on Denali was 34. Women climbers made up ten percent of the total number, with 43 percent reaching the summit. Guided climbers comprised almost 18 percent of total climbers.

As in most years past, climbs made in the milder month of June were more successful in reaching the summit than those in May. Of those parties that both started and finished their climbs in June, 60 percent reached the top; the comparative statistic for May was 37 percent.

In 2001, our goal will be to instill a stronger climber commitment to "Leave No Trace" ethics.

DENALI NATIONAL PARK

*Mt. McKinley, Cassin Ridge, Ascent and Update.* Fredrick Wilkinson and I, both 20, made an ascent of the Cassin Ridge over June 2-3. This report is an update of the hanging serac on the route at approximately 14,200 feet. In years past, it has been necessary to make a long traverse around the serac to the left to bypass it. This is no longer necessary. A beautiful crack slightly to the right of the 14,000-foot camp has formed in the serac, allowing climbers to ascend the feature directly. This entails 40 feet of 40-degree snow and about ten to 15 feet of 60- to 70-degree rotten Alaska "snowice." This new development saves climbers a lot of effort on the route! Overall, the route was remarkably clean, with little or no fixed rope (many fixed perlon sections around rocks, though) and clean camps. An Alaskan classic!

BART PAULL

*Mt. McKinley, Slovak Route, Second Ascent.* Kevin Mahoney and I flew into the Alaska Range to climb for the month of May. We arrived on May 4 and headed up the West Buttress, intending to acclimatize at 14,000 feet for a few days. After a few cold and stormy days at that camp, we started the approach for a route on the Father and Son's Wall, but we turned back and decided to head down to lower and warmer altitudes.

Back at the airstrip, we organized and made an attempt on Mt. Hunter's *Moonflower Buttress*. Conditions on the route were good for climbing, but the weather was unsettled and we retreated from just above "The Shaft" in building wind and spindrift after 20 pitches of climbing.

Now, after two failed attempts, we were a little grumpy, albeit warmed up. We were running out of time, so with our last ten days in front of us, we decided to try for the Slovak Route on the south face of Denali.

We started climbing on May 23, and we reached the summit on May 29 after seven days of climbing. The weather was favorable but quite cold, with temperatures at night averaging -35°F. The climbing on the route was very good, with a full range of steep snow, mixed rock pitches, and spectacular ice pitches high on the route. Difficulties ranged from easy snow to WI5+, 5.9 mixed, and one pitch with some A2.\* The leader hauled his pack on four of about 34 fifth-class pitches, and we simulclimbed long sections of moderate snow and alpine ice. Occasional fixed pitons from the first ascent party and a photo of the south face kept us on track. It is truly an amazing route. We descended the mountain via the West Buttress.

BEN GILMORE

*Mt. McKinley, Slovak Route, Third Ascent.* From June 24-26, Steve House, Scott Backes and Mark Twight climbed the Slovak Route in 60 hours non-stop. They carried no bivouac gear apart from a two-pound jacket each. The trio brought two stoves and 22 ounces of fuel each in order to melt enough snow to stay hydrated. (The fuel ran out at hour 48.) A total of 55 pounds (18 of which was water) was split between two packs, leaving the leader pack-free to move quickly. The team belayed 31 (60m) pitches, simulclimbed some terrain, and soloed the rest. Difficulties ended at 16,800 feet. The original line remains independent, following easy snow slopes crisscrossed by crevasses to the summit. Backes, House, and Twight simulclimbed instead to 17,400 feet, where they joined the Cassin Ridge at hour 56 and unroped. A full account of their ascent appears earlier in this journal.

*Mt. McKinley, Reality Ridge, First Solo Ascent.* I departed on May 6 for the West Fork of the Ruth Glacier (7,000'), one-half mile from the base (7,200') of the *Reality Ridge*, with 204 pounds of equipment. I encountered 5.4-5.5 mixed climbing to 10,200 feet, which I fixed using my three 200-foot ropes, thus requiring three hauls (four trips up, three down). I climbed five percent of this unroped. The ridge from 10,200 to 12,600 feet was extensively corniced (including double cornices in two areas), had deep snow, and was like a knifeblade in two areas. There were also two sections of aid: one was about 25 feet long and slightly overhanging (A1), and both were followed by mixed climbing with minimal pro. In the crux area, I encountered a 50-degree granite slab with no edges and a 15-foot runout above an icy knifeblade, with 80-degree walls on both sides (very bad fall potential, very committing). There were also numerous short, steep sections with rotten or soft snow top-outs. Lots of traversing was encountered; extra snow protection is advised for these areas. Ice was encountered two feet below soft powder 25 percent of the time. I recommend the following gear: six deadmen, three long pickets, two short pickets, a double set of 1- to 2 1/2-inch Friends, a single set of 3- to 4-inch Friends, one 1/2 size Alien, ten stoppers, one 2-inch hex, and six ice screws.

I reached the top of *Reality Ridge* (13,100') after three weeks. After joining the Southeast Spur on May 28, I fixed two pitches, then climbed unroped to the base of the wall below the South Buttress, from which point I fixed 20 to 30 pitches to the top. This was the last time I fixed. From the South Buttress, I headed to Thayer Basin, then ascended and traversed Thayer Ridge. I then encountered some fourth class descending to Point 17,200', and descended to

\*This team took a line that diverged at 15,100 feet from that taken by the team of Backes-House-Twight. Gilmore and Mahoney found some aid where the third ascent team tackled the Ramp and its 5.9 X pitch. The Ramp was the original line.

Harper Glacier. I continued to Denali Pass, encountering one snow bridge and strong winds on June 10. I gained the summit on June 15 and descended the regular route to Kahiltna Base. On June 18, I was flown off to Talkeetna with minor frostbite to a thumb tip and small toe.

I chose *Reality Ridge* because it was a very short distance to the start of the climb and because I'd never done an expedition and had always dreamed of one.

ROBERT SHONERD

*Mounts Foraker and Hunter, Ascents, and McKinley, Ascent and Traverse.* We started skiing from the Park Highway close to Talkeetna (milepost 131?) on April 18, following skidoo trails (which misled us), the Tokositna River, and the Kanicula and Kahiltna glaciers. It took ten days to reach our base camp. We had problems with route finding. One morning there were grizzly bear tracks around the tent, and a ski broke while we were crossing a crevasse near Mt. Hunter. Our extra gear and food were flown to McKinley Base Camp by airplane.

From May 2-9, we climbed Foraker (17,400') via the Sultana Ridge; the weather was nice, but cold and windy (the route was very exposed to wind). From May 14-22, we climbed the West Ridge of Mt. Hunter (14,573'), a nice route, and more technical. We experienced bad weather, were out of food for three days, and had a storm for the descent from the summit. There were many avalanches on the ridge; it was difficult to down climb without visibility.

We then tried the West Buttress and the upper West Rib of McKinley (20,320') from May 25-June 23. On June 2, Marie-Diane developed pulmonary edema on the second night at the 17,200-foot camp. With the help of two rangers, we brought her down to 14,200 feet. On June 5, I soloed the upper West Rib in 14 hours from the 14,200-foot camp. After one week of rest, Marie-Diane was ready to climb again. We participated in a rescue on the headwall with the park rangers on June 10. On June 23, we tried to summit together but Marie-Diane again became sick. We continued over Denali Pass, where she again developed pulmonary edema. Since this is an isolated area, we had to descend without help. As we descended the Muldrow Glacier route, Marie-Diane continued to have problems with altitude sickness, and was weak. Low on the Muldrow Glacier she fell into and became wedged in a narrow crevasse, breaking two teeth and cutting her chin to the bone. She was covered with blood; it was scary walking in grizzly bear country in the tundra, since her infection smelled strongly. After, we had problems crossing the rivers. We both fell and had to swim in the McKinley River, but Marie-Diane, who is light, got carried away (probably more than a mile) by the current. The river was so cold that she suffered from hypothermia. It was by far the scariest part of our trip. Despite all of these problems, Denali was a wonderful experience we will never forget.

SACHA FRIEDLIN and MARIE-DIANE CYR, *Canada*

*Mt. Foraker, The Infinite Spur, Ascent.* On May 18, Carl Tobin and I flew into the West Fork of the Kahiltna Glacier and established our base camp to attempt the third ascent of the *Infinite Spur* on the south face of Mt. Foraker. We invested May 20-24 in an acclimatization trip up Mt. Crosson. On May 25, we skied over the first pass and buried a cache below the second pass. Skiing back to our base camp, we were absolutely surprised to meet Glen and Gren just below the first pass, hauling to attempt the same route. *The Spur's* first ascent was in 1978, the second in 1989. In 22 years it had seen two ascents and possibly a couple of attempts. Now it was seeing two parties on it at the same time. Glen and Gren are both in their

early twenties, Carl is 47, and I am 41. We dubbed Glen and Gren "the Lads."

On May 26, Carl and I skied from base camp to our cache, excavated it, and climbed over the second pass unroped, profiting from the Lads' steps. A 27-meter rappel slid us onto the glacier on the far side and we followed the Lads' steps to camp as close to the face as we felt comfortable.

On May 27 we started toward the face, passing the Lads' camp, which was framed by two recent avalanche run-outs. We spotted the Lads heading into a large gully that rises from climber's right to left and serves as drainage for any serac collapses and/or snow avalanches that fall from the left of the *Spur*. Two tumbling glaciers and two hanging glaciers with 200- to 400-foot seracs all calve into this gully. Although a route picture in Bebie's account in the 1990 *AAJ* has an ascent line drawn close to this gully, that line, and that gully, must be considered erroneous. Future parties should take note of the route line drawn in the 2000 *AAJ*: it is the safest way up the *Spur* and has been confirmed by George Lowe as the line of his ascent.

Carl led across the bergschrund and up 700 feet of fourth-class to establish us on the face. At mid-day, I heard frantic screams from the Lads, whom I could no longer see, then the thunder of an avalanche blasting down their gully. I saw the debris run out linearly onto the glacier and heard one last loud scream, then silence. I shouted and yodeled, but heard no response.

Carl and I conferred at our next stance. We hoped that the Lads were OK, and we decided that if they needed help that they would have to get themselves to the glacier, as neither of us were willing to go anywhere near their gully.

Carl led the first fifth-class pitch, which proved to be one of the cruxes of the route and indicated the nature of most of the climbing on the *Spur*: 5.4-5.9 mixed climbing with crusty snow cover from a recent moist storm, iced-up cracks in excellent granite that yielded great dry tooling (we'd resort to hand holds maybe ten percent of the time), and good protection and anchorage. What made the route very physically demanding was leading pretty much all of it with our full "Alaskan" packs, and seconding pretty much everything with them too. Repeated calls and yodels raised no response from the Lads, and Carl and I feared that they had been overwhelmed by the avalanche. From our camp atop a flattened-out snow feature capping a rock pedestal, we were unsuccessful in our attempts to contact Denali Park by radio to report a probable accident.

On May 28, Carl and I made contact with the Park in the morning and reported the possibility of an accident. The Park conducted a fixed wing reconnaissance and later in the day a military helicopter search in misty conditions. The Lads were not spotted.

Carl and I climbed on to about 10,500 feet, where he, in the lead, heard voices and was pleasantly surprised to make contact with the Lads, who were bivied down in the tumbling glacier. Carl and I climbed on to where we could pitch our tent. We were unable to make contact on the radio, but were able to talk with both of our wives on Carl's cell phone. Carl's wife relayed the fact that the Lads were alive to the Park.

On May 29, we made contact with the Park on the radio and directed their Llama helicopter to us, where they made a positive sighting of the Lads, who were thankfully abandoning their avalanche chute route and climbing over to join Carl and me on the *Infinite Spur* proper. At mid-day, we all gained the "Ice Arête," which was blanketed in several feet of snow. Half of its length was overcome with that classic climbing tool, a shovel. We left the arête for the small granite wall that parallels it as soon as we could.

Reaching the intrusive black wall atop the arête, Carl and I hacked away ice for two and a half hours until we got a partial pitch for our Bibler I-tent. The Lads dug a long narrow ledge for their bivy sacs. That night it stormed. Carl and I sat out the 36 hours of storm in relative comfort.

On May 31, we resumed climbing, opting to turn the black band on the left. Future parties should climb a beautiful grade 2/3 waterice gully between our route and the first ascent route. We couldn't see into the gully until several hard pitches put us above it.

Above, we skirted along on snow on the left side of the *Spur* for several rope lengths and ended up chopping into ice again for one and a half hours. On June 1, we all gained the horizontal finish to the *Spur*, where Carl and I again profited from the Lads' steps and shovel work. Carl and I skirted the last pale granite buttress on the left and scampered up immaculate mixed ground between it and the tumbling glacier. The Lads took the buttress direct and Glen took a 30-foot fall. Against the edge of the glacier that caps the *Spur*, Carl and I scampered right and quickly up a snow gully. The Lads caught us, profiting from our steps, and we all traversed back into the glacier and into a huge 'schrund that yielded an easy camp and bivy with no chopping.

On June 2, we continued on fourth-class ground up a large gully right and into the clouds. At the top of the gully, we unroped and by and by reached the very top of the south face and a fine flat camp against a crevasse and sheltering wall.

On June 3, Carl and I plodded over the top of Foraker and descended the *Sultana Ridge*. At 2:30 p.m., we choose to rest in the tent and brew for five and a half hours. We then continued through the night, traversing the five miles of ridge to Mt. Crosson, reaching the edge of the Kahiltna and finally the airstrip. Carl and I were very tired lads.

BARRY BLANCHARD, *Canada*

*Mt. Foraker, Infinite Spur, Ascent by Lads.* At 4 p.m. on May 26, Gren Hinton and I skied into the *Infinite Spur's* amphitheater. In the afternoon heat, the walls all around us began to wane after a storm and, restlessly stretching, began to shed the poorly adhered layers of snow. As avalanche after avalanche swept down from 6,000 feet above, we watched closely the line that offered the easiest weakness in the 3,000-foot buttress that guards the high steep ridges of the spur. Comparatively little debris entered the 2,000-foot ice couloir that split the fortress wall.

We planned to climb just 600 feet and bivy right of the couloir, waiting for night to climb the rest. Behind schedule at 11 a.m., I had topped the last pitch before making our planned traverse to safety and was just beginning to bring Gren up when I heard a rumble. Looking up, I saw our bane hurling down with immeasurable speed. I grabbed my pack, threw it over my head and threw my body against the wall with my belay arm firmly buried to protect what held my partner. Just as I hit the wall, it hit us. When the roaring and pummeling settled, I made a quick self diagnosis, and finding only a few sharp bruises, I called to Gren. Fine but also shaken, he sped up to join me, and soon we were out of the couloir and safely under the protection of the main granite buttress.

Still feeling good about the route, we began climbing at 10 p.m. and by 4 a.m. we had exited the couloir. In it we encountered at worst 5.5 and AI3; it was a cruise. We then simulclimbed another 1,000 feet between the hanging glacier and the *Spur* proper before bivouacking at 7 a.m. Again we encountered nothing worse than grade 3 glacial ice. Though very easy, this course is not recommended! During the day, we heard much of what sounded like a search and rescue. By 7 p.m. we realized that we had been missing, presumed dead (see previous note).

The next morning, as we climbed the two pitches that separated us from Carl and Barry, the NPS high-altitude Llama hovered 500 feet out and adjacent to Gren. I gave the visual confirmation they needed to bring our families the good news that their boys, soon to be dubbed

"the Lads," were still alive and kicking crampons.

Passing Carl and Barry's camp, we climbed two pitches through steep snow and ice. We had been following the obvious weaknesses, but were now forced onto steep mixed rock and snow, some of which was actually inverted. We pulled these hard mixed hooking moves (5.9) through short bands of steep rock with 60-pound packs (the technical crux of the route), then climbed through deep snow to gain the ice arête that was in fact an unprotectable steep snow slog.

Working together, Carl, Barry, Gren, and I made meticulously slow work through the next 1,000 feet. As soon as possible, we made a traverse to a rock fin we could get protection in and bivied at the top, below a large rock buttress.

The next day stormed, so we did not move. On May 31, we climbed for seven hours up a moderate mixed ridge that could have been easily bypassed in two hours via an AI2 couloir. We highly recommend the couloir. Traversing around steep rock, Gren and I headed through to gain the last corniced ridge.

The next day, we all headed up, and, just two pitches short of the end of the technical climbing, Gren and I made the biggest fool's mistake. An argument broke loose and soon budded into an exchange of blows. A fistfight at 14,000 feet on Mt. Foraker's *Infinite Spur* is not recommended!

After a day of steep snow climbing and a bivouac in a crevasse at 16,000 feet, we summited about an hour after Barry and Carl, then started down the *Sultana* and reached our starting point on the Southeast Kahiltna in a day and a half. Notable aspects of the climb are: the use of bivy sacs (semi-recommended), free climbed the whole route with packs on, round-trip from Southeast Kahiltna base camp in 11 days.

GLEN DEAL

*Mount Huntington, West Face.* At 6:30 p.m. on May 6, less than 24 hours after we left Colorado, Talkeetna Air Taxi deposited Dave Bangert and me on the Tokisitna Glacier below the west face of Mt. Huntington. It was bitterly cold. On May 8, we climbed about 2,500 feet of what has come to be known as the Nettle-Quirk route in ten hours. At the "Alcove," where the Nettle-Quirk joins the Harvard Route, we brewed for two hours as the weather deteriorated, and it began to snow lightly but steadily. We carried only one sleeping bag, one bivy sack, one stove, and no tent. After some consternation, we descended.

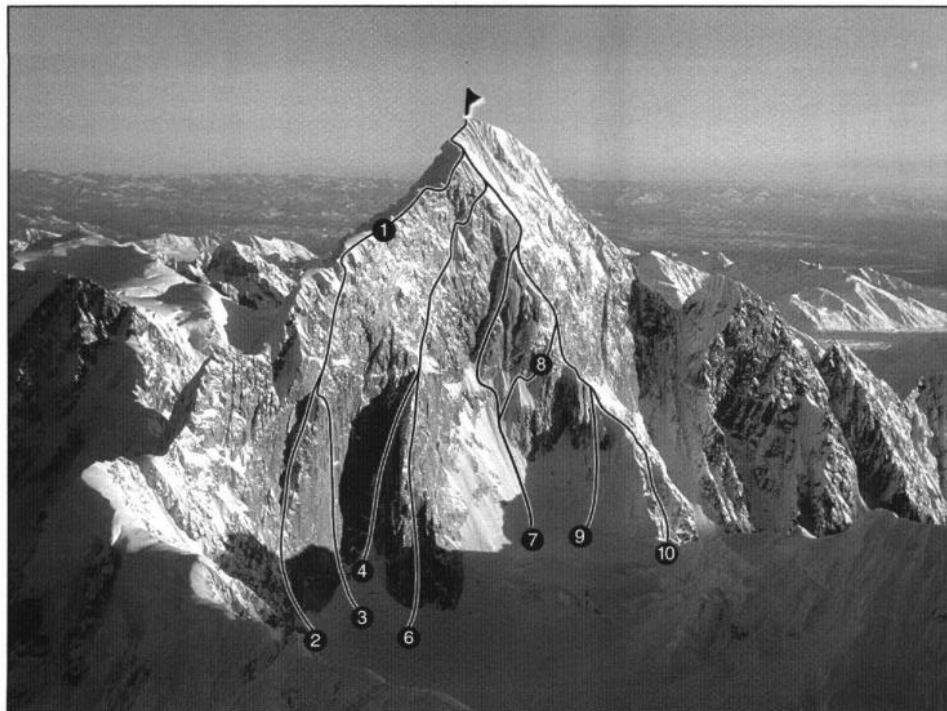
Rappelling from the V-threads Dave established, we passed Steve House and his partner, who were climbing up with heavy sacks. Steve and his partner descended and flew out on May 10, along with a party that had climbed the Harvard Route in three days, while Dave and I had sat tent-bound mulling the efficacy of our "light and fast" tactics.

Left alone on the glacier, we decided to have another go. On May 12, we left the tents at 4 a.m. carrying a stove, three liters of water, two Friends, two pins, six ice screws, three Screammers, 15 free 'biners, and some snacks. We reached the bergschrund in 1:15, the beginning of the roped climbing on the ramp in 2:15 and the Alcove in six hours. Avoiding the loss of momentum suffered in stopping to brew, we reached the French Ridge at 9:08. The weather was perfect. Dave voted for the summit, some 200 vertical corniced feet higher. I opted to descend. We arrived at the tents five hours later.

Despite the postmodern diminution of the importance of reaching the summit, I regret not standing on top of Huntington. It would have been nice to see what lay on the other side.

MICHAEL GILBERT





*Mt. Huntington. Routes and variations are as follows. 1. French Ridge (Batkin-Bernezat-Gendre-Gicquel-Martinetti-Sarthou-Soubis-Terray, 1964). 2. Polarchrome (Haberl-Rohn, 1984). 3. Golden Granite West Face (Grohusky-Gruber-Thompson-Willard, 2000). 4. Colton-Leach (Colton-Leach, 1981). 5. Colton-Leach variation to French Ridge (not shown) (Hough-Lewis, 1981). 6. Count Zero (Miller-Wadman, 1992). 7. West Face Couloir (no summit: Evans-Hogan, 1978) (to summit: Nettle-Quirk, 1989). 8. Variation to Harvard Route (Puryear-Westman, 2000). 9. Modern Start to Harvard Route (FA unknown). 10. Harvard Route (Bernd-Hale-Jensen-Roberts, 1965). 11. Phantom Wall (not shown) (Smith-Teare, 1991). 12. South Ridge (not shown) (Scott-Woolums, 1979).*

PAUL RODERICK/TALKEETNA AIR TAXI

*Mt. Huntington, Harvard Route, Ascent, and Possible New Variation.* On May 8-10, Joe Puryear and I climbed the Harvard Route on Mt. Huntington's west face. To begin the route, we climbed a possible minor variation on the west face that most likely was unclimbed. This variation involved climbing the initial 700-foot snow face used to approach the Nettle-Quirk route, following in the steps of a party who had started that route a few hours earlier. At the point where this face meets a steep rock wall and the Nettle-Quirk approach jogs left, we made a 400-foot horizontal traverse to the right across exposed snow and ice slopes and into an obvious, moderately steep ice couloir capped by a cornice. We climbed this 400-foot couloir. Behind the cornice, we joined the Harvard Route atop the second pitch of the "Spiral." By avoiding the two difficult pitches of the Spiral, this indirect but straightforward variation saved us much time. We reached the summit ridge on the second day, but due to poor weather and visibility did not climb the final 300 feet of corniced ridge.

MARK WESTMAN, *unaffiliated*

*Mt. Huntington, Golden Granite West Face, New Route.* Mentally noted in the summer of 1996, this route would take two tries to complete. A beautiful seam travels from the highest tongue of the glacial cirque of the Tokositna to the prominent tower 1,200 feet higher up. The route is surrounded by golden granite and black (active) avalanche streaks. The Colton-Leach route sits to the climber's right and *Polarchrome* is the big gash/gully starting on the left side of the face.

The climbing posed many challenges to the original party, which used a traditional aid rack, including knifeblades, in 1998 (see *AAJ* 1999, pp. 255-256). Upon return in June, new-wave aid tactics simplified the thinner sections. All but Rod Willard took turns catching big air on tormented Toucans. This new route was not finished to the summit due to whip-cream-plastered snow ramps, but the climbing party did intersect the *Polarchrome* route (see *Climbing* magazine #88).

It was our hope to ascend the French Ridge and gain the summit. Rod Willard, Mike Gruber, Mark Thompson, and I spent a total of nine days scurrying up and down the wall to position ourselves for a French Ridge bid. As sloppy wet flakes blew in all directions, we retreated and sat in our tents for an additional five days before Hudson transport could squeak through. The route deserves no name other than the *Golden Granite West Face*, although we considered "Loveline" after our devoted sponsors. Actually, we got the strongest radio signal from a station in Anchorage that broadcast the sexpot talk show "Loveline." Every night in base camp for two frickin' hours, four guys in three tents listened to women call in and talk about their sexual fantasies. I won't say much more, other than that our whiskey ran dry.

BRAD GROHUSKY

*Mt. Hunter, Deprivation.* Jeff Hollenbaugh and I would miss the Shaft, but after watching other *Moonflower* hopefuls unload their massive haulbags onto the Kahiltna, we guessed *Deprivation* might better suit our style. We wanted to climb the north buttress of Hunter as fast and light as a winter spent on warm Colorado rock, not ice, would allow. We left Kahiltna base in early May, simuled past the 'schrund and up to the couple of crux pitches of the first rockband (and of the route: hard mixed, past vertical ice). Easier snow and ice put us at a bivy midway through the next rockband.

After a late start the next day, more climbing in the 50- to 70-degree range took us near an intersection with the *Moonflower*, which offered a more direct finish that we'd planned on taking from the start. Now on the *Moonflower*, we soon stopped to bivy below the third and final rockband. From here, the plan was to leave the bivy fixed and race unencumbered to the summit and back.

Unfortunately, the weather crapped out that night. Day three had us ducking our heads through heavy spindrift up to the Bibler-Come-Again Exit. We made it five more pitches up the buttress's final 50-degree ice triangle before conditions forced us to call it a "modern ascent" and rap back down to our bivy.

That night, with the tent half folded over from avalanches, we considered the 20 60-meter raps still to go. Thankfully, the next day we onsighted the *Moonflower* descent without mishap. No joke: that was the mental crux of the climb, and stepping back onto the glacier, we were happy to be done with it.

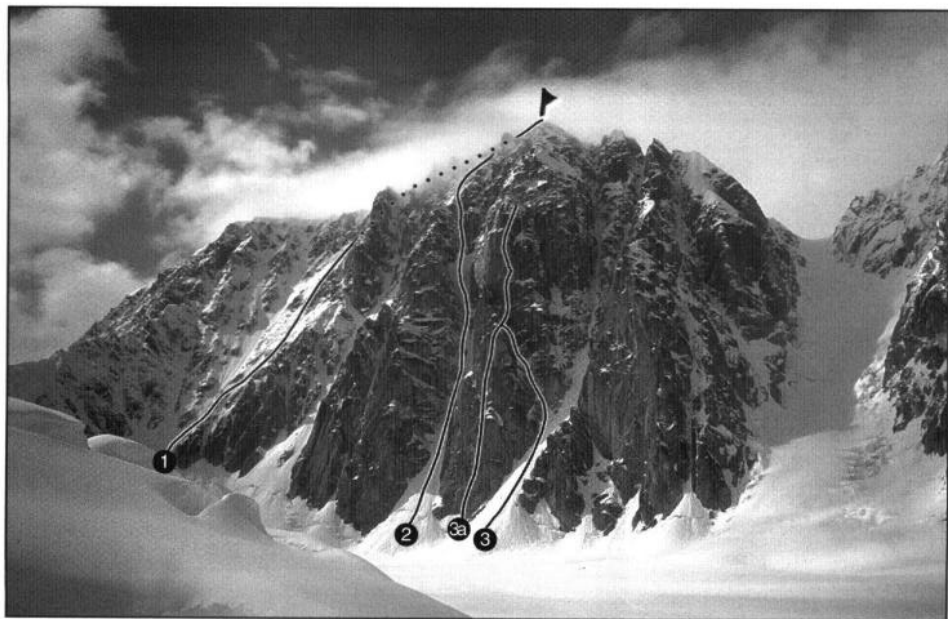
BRUCE MILLER

*Mt. Hunter, North Buttress, The Knowledge, New Route.* Britons Jules Cartwright and Ian Parnell climbed a new route, *The Knowledge* (Alaska Grade 6), on Mt. Hunter from May 25-June 6. The route shares some pitches with the *Moonflower Buttress* route, but is primarily an independent line. A full account of their climb and Parnell's superb year appears earlier in this journal.

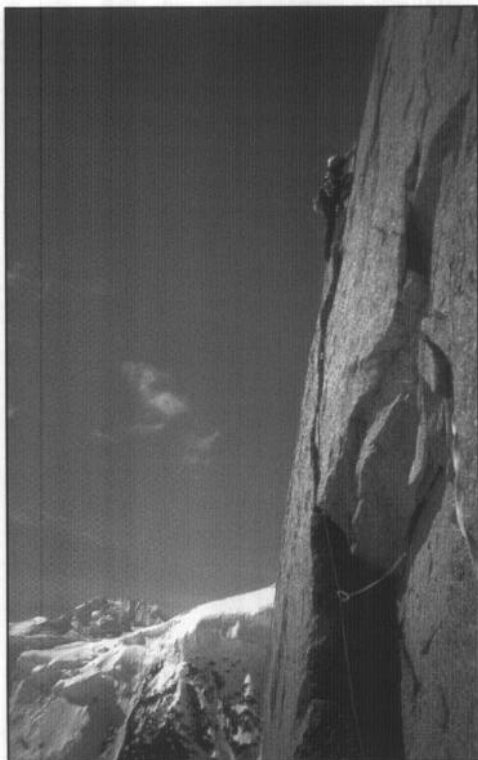
*Peak 8,920', East Face, First Ascent.* Smith Curry and I landed on the Thunder Glacier with few plans and knowledge of the area. On the flight in, we scoped out the West Buttress of Hunter, but an active serac thwarted our desire to do the route. Still lacking a plan, we proceeded to climb the highest peak along the ridge leading up to the west buttress of Mt. Hunter. Two thousand feet of snow climbing from the south and 1,000 feet of ever-steepening ice brought us to the summit of Peak 8,920' via the east face. We narcissistically assumed the peak was unclimbed and named it "Sugar Mountain" after the snow conditions of the summit ridge.

JEFF APPLE BENOWITZ

*Thunder Mountain, South Face, New Route.* In June, Jim Donini and John Bragg reunited after 25 years (the pair had not climbed together since the first ascent of Torre Egger in 1976) to climb a new route on Thunder Mountain's south face. The central rock spur, sometimes referred to as the "Lightning Spur," was climbed to a midway point above a steep rock buttress, before weather forced them down. They left a gear cache before retreating, and accessed



The south face of Thunder Mountain from the Tokositna Glacier, showing: 1. Barlow-Hornby (1993). 2. Dream Sacrifice (Hall-Ramsden-Lewis, 1997) (this was also the site of the Daly-Donini epic in 1999. See 2000 AAJ, p. 206). 3a. Initial attempt, Bragg-Donini (2000). 3. Line of continuous ascent, Bragg-Donini (2000). P. 10,600' is the subsidiary summit to the left (with the top hidden in clouds) reached by Kearney-Mascioli in 1983. JIM DONINI



John Bragg on steep rock during the first ascent of Thunder Mountain's central spur. JIM DONINI

this point on their return via a snow ramp angling in from the large couloir right of this prominent buttress. Upon reaching this point, they continued to the top of the rock spur difficulties, forgoing the summit and rappelling when the climbing angled back to rotten snow.

### Little Switzerland

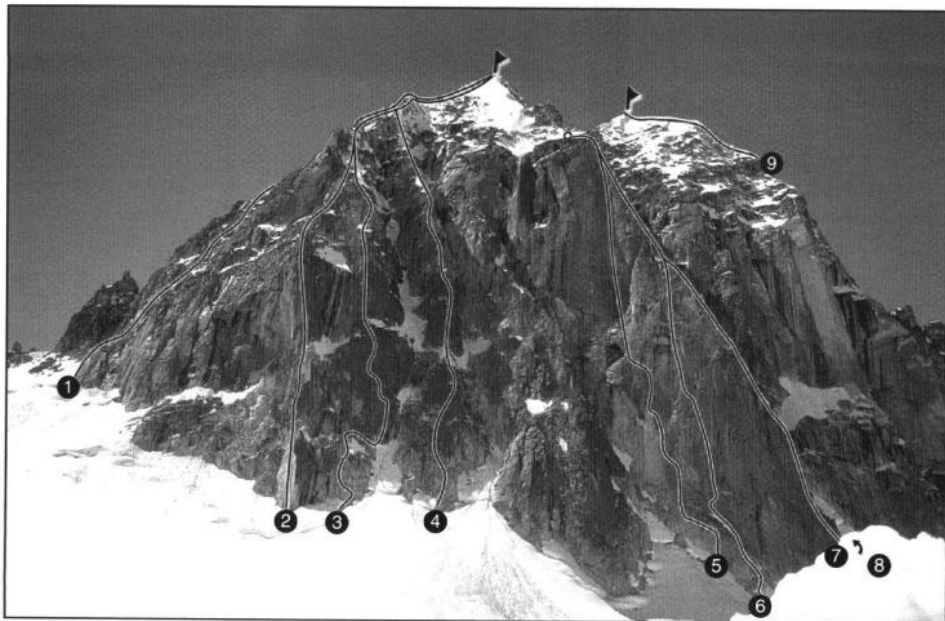
*Editor's Note:* The name "Little Switzerland" was coined by Don Sheldon, who would often fly climbers through the area, wetting their appetite. Margaret Young and James Richardson, while climbing near the "big bend" of the Kahiltna in 1964, made the first ascent of the peak later named Your Highness. The area began to receive attention after Roger Robinson and Brian Okonek climbed multiple first ascents out of the Pika Glacier in 1976. As with all climbing and wilderness areas, climbers are urged to exercise sound environmental practices in this pristine place. More information is available from the Talkeetna Ranger Station.

*Royal Tower, Arizona Highways, New Route, and Various Activity.* John Mattson, Josh Zimmerman and I had originally started a route on the southeast face of the Royal Tower in June, 1999, calling the first seven pitches *The Jester*. On June 20, Mattson, John Burnhard and I returned and finished the route to the summit, renaming it *Arizona Highways*.

The first seven pitches offer 1,000 feet of excellent rock climbing with three 5.10 pitches. In June, 1999, Mattson and I climbed a variation first pitch (crack to the right, 5.10+), calling it *The Blade*. After the first seven pitches, the route is mixed snow and rock climbing to the summit. We summited at 1 a.m. under perfectly clear skies, then made at least 20 rappels to descend the route.

Down the Pika on the east side lies a small crag of rock known as Practice Rock. It looks small from camp compared to all the other formations but offers excellent climbing on clean granite. On the northwest side, we climbed a six-pitch route (5.9) on an exposed fin of granite. This was not a first ascent, as we found webbing at several belays. We may have added a couple of new pitches, one being a fun 5.9 finger crack.

In June, 1999, Mattson flashed the old aid route on The Plunger, a spire on the base of The Throne's southeast corner, making the FFA at 5.12-. The crux is a slightly overhanging two-inch splitter on the southeast side.



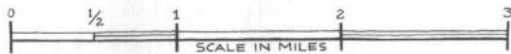
Royal Tower, showing: 1. Haeussler-Miller Route (IV 5.8, Haeussler-Miller, 1993). 2. Arizona Highways (V 5.10, Burcham-Burnhard-Mattson, 2000). 3. Di's Surprise (IV 5.9 A2, Pease-Woolridge, 1996). 4. Boomerang Buttress (IV 5.8, Mercer-Walsh, 1996). 5. The Chase (IV 5.10 A2, Munoz-Sieling, 1997, to top of buttress only). 6. The Insurrection (V 5.9 A2, Borof-Davis-Gamble-Giles, 2000; joins the Gargoyle Buttress route for its last four pitches; ends at top of buttress). 7. Gargoyle Buttress (IV 5.10, Anderson-Feeney, 1999; joins The Chase at last pitch; to top of buttress only). 8. Sweeney-McKenna (couloir indicated by arrow) (IV 5.9, 60°, McKenna-Sweeney, 1988). 9. East Face/Northeast Ridge (IV 5.10, Cook-Okonek-Robinson, 1977). The true summit of Royal Tower is the right (north) summit. JOHN BURCHAM

*Little Switzerland, Various First Ascents.* From June 20-July 10, Bill Gamble, Mark Davis, Chris Giles, and I established three new routes in the Little Switzerland area. *Eat the Queen* (V 5.9 A2+) on the Throne ascends a line through the prominent V-slot right of the south face's major prow. The line has nine roped pitches plus 400 feet of third-class to the lower summit. Due to warm weather and soft snow conditions, the corniced ridge to the main summit was dangerous and deemed by us to be unclimbable.

Our second route, *The Insurrection* (V 5.9 A2), was on the Royal Tower. This route ascends thin cracks on the east face, left of the central couloir. In the photo on page 192 of the 1999 AAJ, it is visible to the right of *The Chase*. The route was 13 pitches to the top of the rock buttress, nine of which were new, with the final four joining the existing line up the arête, left of the couloir. Thin nailing on the lower sections, and a beautiful crack out the right side of the face's golden roofs, were the highlights of this quality route. With some protection bolts, several of the route's pitches could go free.

Our final route, *The Emperor's Hanging Gardens* (V 5.10 A2), was on the Throne. This

FOLLOWING PAGES: *Map of Little Switzerland.* MIKE CLELLAND. *The peaks of Little Switzerland, with Mt. McKinley in the background to the north. The Kahiltna Glacier is visible on the left, flowing north to south.* PAUL RODERICK/TALKEETNA AIR TAXI



# Little SWITZERLAND

Reference : USGS TALKEETNA C-3 Quad

(most peak names given are unofficial and may vary between sources)



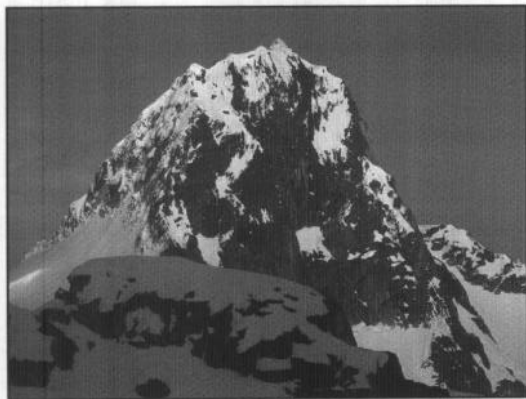
route ascends the prominent V-slot left of the south face's major prow. This route had excellent rock and would likely go free at mid-5.12 (a few protection bolts and some cleaning of vegetation from the cracks would be needed). The third pitch ascends a beautiful section of terraced rock covered in brilliant purple and yellow flowers (hence the name). This route has seven pitches of steep climbing with another 500 feet of "third-class" climbing up to 5.6 in difficulty.

All three of our routes joined existing lines for their last few pitches. We rappelled back the way we came on all routes, leaving two 3/8- by 2-inch Rawl bolts per anchor. For the first few raps of each route, we used whatever the previous parties had set up (webbing, slung horns, etc.), improving them where necessary. We had only four rain days on our trip, allowing us plenty of time and good weather.

JOSH BOROF

*Little Switzerland, Crown and Dix Glaciers, Various First Ascents.* After being airlifted by Talkeetna Air Taxi director Paul Roderick onto the previously unnamed glacier (now proposed as the East Fork of the Crown) southeast of The Crown Jewel, British climbers Brian Davison, Lindsay Griffin, and Brian Griffiths spent May 1-31 making a total of 14 probable first ascents. Eleven of these (the exceptions being the Crown Jewel twice and Your Highness) were of previously unclimbed peaks. From a base camp on the East Fork the team climbed the following: The Crown Jewel (2362m) via the East Ridge; The Crown Jewel via the South Couloir to the West Ridge; The First Witch's Hat (a.k.a. Southwest Hat, 1950m) via the West Face; the Second Witch's Hat (1950m+) via the West Face and South Ridge; the Third Witch's Hat (a.k.a. the Northeast Hat, 1980m) via the West Face, East Flank and South Face; The Tiara's East Summit (2225m) via the South Couloir and East Ridge to the base of the final three-meter monolith; Your Highness (2425m) via the South Couloir toward the broad col between this peak and Lady in Waiting (2190m), then the Southwest Ridge; the North Summit of The Coronet (2075m) via the South-Southeast Flank.

From a temporary camp on the southerly Dix Glacier, various easier peaks (Beartrack, 1830m; Merry, 1390m; Lookout, 1525m) closer to the Kahiltna Glacier were climbed, together with the fine trio of Deception (1960m), Arrowhead (1800m), and Misty (1830m)—peaks above the Brume Glacier (southeast of the Dix). Also climbed were a couple of minor tops on crests, Gendarme (2190m, just east of The Crown Jewel) and Pt. Pico (1950m, just south of The Coronet on the same ridge). All names are provisional.



*Mt. Deception. The British climbers made the first ascent of the peak via a hidden couloir on the right skyline.* LINDSAY GRIFFIN

The climbers originally hoped that at this time of year they might find ephemeral ice lines in south-facing couloirs. However, very heavy snowfall a few weeks prior to their arrival had left the spiky granite peaks that characterize this area very well plastered. Although on some routes there were sections of interesting and enjoyable "Scottish mixed" ground, deep and worryingly unconsolidated snow leading to narrow, ungradeable,



Peruvian-type ridges was the norm. Overall, the three climbers felt conditions to be as consistently bad as they had experienced anywhere. However, the weather, remarkably settled and sunny for a good portion of the time, was much less cold and harsh than on the bigger mountains to the north. Temperatures only fell as low as  $-20^{\circ}\text{C}$  early in the month, but toward the end were considerably higher.

LINDSAY GRIFFIN, *United Kingdom*

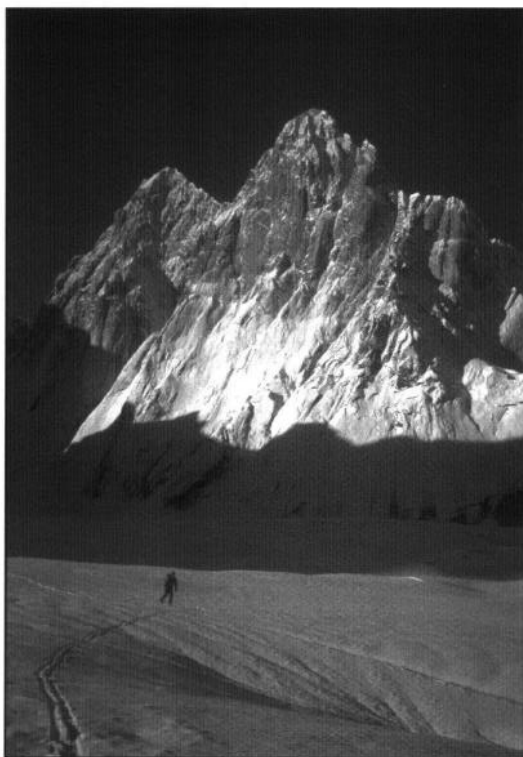
## Ruth Gorge

*Buckskin Glacier, Various Activity.* Ben Gilmore, Kevin Mahoney, Mike Wood, Scott DeCapio and I flew to the Buckskin Glacier on September 20. On September 24, the five of us made the second ascent of Mooseskin Mountain (Peak 8,300') by skis. Sliding right from the summit, we confirmed it as the best ski peak any of us had been on, with awesome views of the north and east aspects of the Moose's Tooth and the Ruth Gorge (and great snow!).

On September 28, Gilmore, Mahoney, and I climbed a new route on the south face of Mooseskin Mountain, climbing the dominant gully right of a beautiful granite pillar for six pitches of ice up to WI6. We rappelled from the ridgecrest.

On September 30, Scott DeCapio soloed the 3,160-foot south face of Peak 9,160' (square 15, Mt. McKinley A-2 quad map). This is believed to be the peak's first ascent. The peak rises from the last northern arm of the Buckskin Glacier's west end, about three miles north-northeast of the Moose's Tooth's summit. Climbing in early morning darkness on "miles of 50-degree snow, with lots of little ice steps and easy mixed up to about 70 or 80 degrees," DeCapio needed about three hours for the ascent. He down-climbed for the descent and informally dubbed the peak "Canadian Rockies Peak," based on its similarity to Mt. Assiniboine, with its black sedimentary rock.

Gilmore, Mahoney, and I started up a new route on the Moose's Tooth early on September 30. Our route began by climbing the snow gully between the Moose's Tooth and Bear's Tooth for 1,600 feet. The gully steepened, and we climbed five ice pitches (grade WI2-4) farther up the gully, before we got to the water-ice system we'd spied from the glacier. This system followed a large right-



*Ben Gilmore skiing on the Buckskin Glacier. The east faces of the Bear's Tooth (left) and the Moose's Tooth (right) are visible. KEVIN MAHONEY*

facing corner and was fed by the summit snowfields. The wall here faces southeast, and catches a lot of radiation. It was in many ways similar to the system Carpenter, Twilight, and I climbed on Mt. Bradley in March, 1998, but this time we were there at the end of summer, right after the ice had formed. The guess about timing paid off in excellent ice conditions for nearly all of the climb. In fact, only one pitch required that we use our extensive rock rack; most of the time we relied on our six ice screws. The first day we climbed nine pitches to a bivouac underneath a "sub-formed" icicle, which the next morning I aided around via a blocky, discontinuous crack system (A3). Mahoney took over and led a couple of difficult, but excellent, ice pitches that took us to the top of the corner system we were following. At this juncture, I reassumed the lead for what I considered one of the cruxes: climbing on the route's only truly bad rock (5.8 R) for 40 feet to a tension traverse to gain the next ice system. To end the second day, we climbed two pitches off the line of ascent to a large snow ledge (dubbed the "Aurora Theater Bivy" for the spectacular display of northern lights) and the view of the lights of the village of Talkeetna out in the distance. The third day we rapped back to the route, left two packs and headed to the summit. The corner system we followed finished with two pitches of steep snow (meltwater feeder slopes) and topped out right on the main summit of the Moose's Tooth, which we gained at 1:45 p.m. We completed 16 200-foot rappels (mostly V-threads) to get back to the snow gully, which we downclimbed, reaching our skis five hours after leaving the summit.

As yet, the route has not named itself, so we are simply calling it the Southeast Face.

STEVE HOUSE\*

\*Recipient of an AAC Lyman Spitzer Climbing Grant

*The Eye Tooth, West Face, The Dream in the Spirit of Mugs, Second Ascent, Previously Unreported.* On June 25, 1998, Zack Smith and I made the second ascent of *The Dream in the Spirit of Mugs* on the Eye Tooth in the Ruth Gorge. Our first attempt ended about halfway up when a wet, then cold, storm forced us to bail. We had to chop our stuck ropes and make 80-foot raps. We returned three days later and climbed quickly to our high point, then continued and finished the route. We did stop a couple of hundred feet from the true summit due to snow slopes and ridges (we only had rock shoes), but all the technical climbing was finished. The route went all free, the crux going at 5.10c. The rock was some of the best that we had seen in the Ruth: lots of cracks and excellent pro. It went in 23 long pitches, not one under 55 meters and most at 60 meters. We rapped the route using Andi Orgler's rap anchors. The route took about 18 hours camp-to-camp.

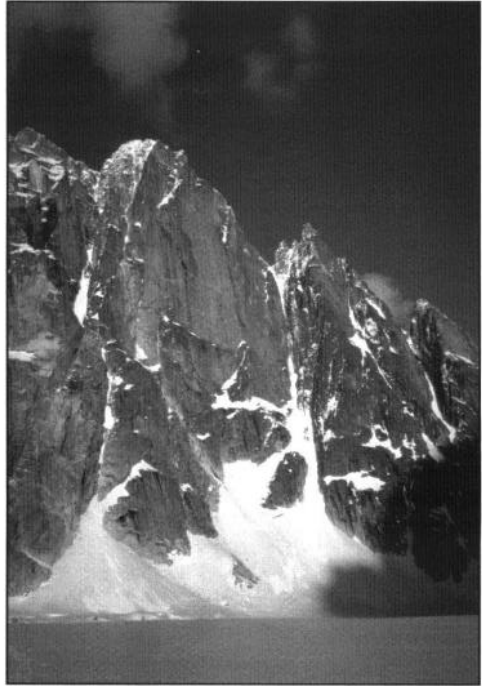
AARON MARTIN

*Ruth Gorge, Various Ascents, and The Trailer Park, New Route.* Thanks to a Mugs Stump Award grant, Scott DeCapio and I were dropped by Talkeetna Air Taxi on May 10 at our new home below Mt. Dickey in the Ruth Gorge. Despite much base camp laziness, we made numerous attempts (as defined by at least carrying our gear to the base of nine different climbs and actually getting off the ground on many before covering away) and managed three ascents (one new) during our four-week sojourn.

The first ascent was an easy, fun Bugaboosque rock route on Hut Tower, a relatively small peak on the lower east side of the lower gorge. A 1,000-foot easy snow couloir led to

the 800-foot South Ridge route, which went at about 5.8, but was mostly easier, with snowy rock to gain the summit. We rappelled from fixed stations.

Serious thought and soul-searching followed Seth Shaw's death (see below), before we decided to stay and climb. On May 27, we climbed a 3,200-foot new mixed line on a relatively unknown peak called "London Tower" (Peak 7,500'; square 29 Talkeetna D-2 map) in the lower east side of the Ruth Gorge. The route ascends a rocky couloir on the west face, left (north) of the summit and the 1990 Neswadba-Arch rock route. Of course, the groveling proved considerably harder than it looked from the glacier. In the conditions we found, the five crux pitches felt like one WI6, two M6, and two M6+. Some were without protection, but most were fairly short and appeared to have soft-snow landing zones. Many pitches of moderate, fun mixed climbing, often with good gear, and a snow slog in the middle rounded out the route. We mostly simulclimbed, taking 12 hours 'schrund to summit. After an awesome hour on top relaxing, we found an easy downclimb off the backside (east) to the Coffee Glacier. An easy walk southwest led around and up to the col south of Hut Tower (where the south ridge of Hut Tower begins, mentioned above). We butt-slid back to our skis, arriving in camp 18 hours after leaving. With thoughts of our friends, rest-day antics, and the appearance of our camp, we named it *The Trailer Park*. Like our existence in the Ruth, the climb proved a bit surly at times.



*London Tower. The Trailer Park (Cordes-DeCapio, 2000) takes the leftmost of the two couloirs. KELLY CORDES*

From midnight until 4 a.m. on a day in early June, we repeated the 1996 French route *Wake Up*, a 3,100-foot snow/ice climb to a subsidiary peak (Pt. 8,130') on the shoulder of Mt. Wake (near the Wake-Bradley col). Zack Smith and Aaron Martin had also climbed the route a few days earlier, between attempts at a new route on Dickey's south face. The route gave us the willies, felt spooky, and proved more dangerous than we had anticipated or wanted. We simulclimbed the route in two pitches, finding mostly easy climbing with a few tricky sections up to about WI4. The bad vibes continued on the descent, as I blew the bergschrund jump and was launched down slope, ass over tea kettle. Scott, a baseball player in his pre-climbing-bum days, saved the day by fielding me and making a tackle. Fortunately, I only tumbled 50 or 60 feet. The Ruth had grown weary of our foolishness, so Paul Roderick picked us up later that day and delivered us to the bustling metropolis of Talkeetna.

KELLY CORDES

*Mt. Bradley, South Face.* In July, Blair Williams and Michael Schaefer climbed a new route

(5.10 A3) on the south face of Mt. Bradley. The route takes a line to the right of *The Gift* (Carpenter-House-Twight, 1998) and left of *The Pearl* (Orgler et al) and *The Bourbon Bottle Route* (Crouch-Donini, 1997). It appears Williams and Schaefer climbed the wall and went to summit, then rapped the route in 70-meter raps. The route involved 20 pitches of technical terrain, then ascended easy ground to the summit. In the topo in the Talkeetna Ranger Station, Williams and Schaefer refer to an "amazing 1,000-foot dihedral system" that they called the "Dancing Dihedrals." They went on to write, "The route is a classic from start to finish. The Dancing Dihedrals are the most amazing dihedrals we have ever had the privilege of climbing. The rock on this route is superb (at least on the south face proper). The climbing was reminiscent of that found on classic El Cap routes."

*Mt. Sholes and Mt. Tassles, First Ascents.* In May, Geoff Hornby and Mike Smith made the first climbing visit to the Fake Peak Glacier since the August, 1906, visit and photographic session by Frederick Cook and Edward Barrill as part of their claimed first ascent of Denali. Hornby and Smith made the first ascent of Mt. Sholes (5,900'; Talkeetna D-2 Quad, near the bottom of vertical border squares #25 and #26) on May 13. This route consisted of simple snow slopes and will make for easy ski ascents. Next, they attempted the unclimbed Mt. Tassles (6,860'; roughly one mile east-southeast of Sholes, in the upper left of square 31, Talkeetna D-3) by its southwest ridge, but were stopped by granite gendarmes covered with whipped cream rolls of soft snow. Then, on May 17, they climbed Mt. Tassles by the central couloir on the west face, which led directly to the summit (WI3+, 1,600'). While scouting



*The west face of Mt. Tassles. The first attempt was via the southwest ridge, which is visible as the right skyline. Fake Peak is a subpeak farther down the ridge. The first ascent was made via the obvious couloir in the shade that leads directly to the summit. The old broken box timber was found on the rocks at the base of the left-hand ridge (running toward the camera). GEOFF HORNBY*

around the bases of the various ridges, Hornby discovered relics of wooden boxes that may date from the original Fake Peak expedition.

GEOFF HORNBY, *Alpine Climbing Group*

*Mt. Johnson, The Escalator, New Route and Tragedy.* On May 17 and 18, in warm and unsettled weather, Seth Shaw and I climbed what we believe to be a new route on Mt. Johnson. It started on a 50-degree ice runnel on the east face, left of the prominent east buttress, which led into a snow bowl and then up the southeast couloir. It was mostly moderate snow and ice and gained about 4,000 feet from the glacier. We did it in a 31-hour round-trip, but were pinned down for a while in the middle of the night during a short snowstorm while spindrift avalanches poured down the route. The descent from the summit took about 12 hours down the large gully to the south. Unfortunately, Seth was killed about a week later by serac fall.

TIM WAGNER

#### REVELATION MOUNTAINS

*Peak 9,650, Ice Schooner, New Route, and Various Activity.* On May 18, Rob Jones and his Super Cub deposited Fred Beckey, Ryan Hokanson, and I among the many other erratics on a small glacier in the Revelation Mountains, at the southwestern end of the Alaska Range. With good weather and perfect snow conditions, we excitedly moved camp to the base of our main objective, the northwest buttress of Peak 9,650'. Beckey had dubbed this peak the "Ice Schooner" during his first visit to the area in 1982.

The weather promptly deteriorated and with it went the snow conditions and our morale. In spite of this, Ryan and I remained optimistic. During one clear spell, we made a scouting mission and climbed the North Ridge of Goose Peak (a.k.a. Peak 8,215'; see *AAJ* 1996, p. 179).

More snow and bad attitudes followed, but patience, perseverance, and the time to use them prevailed. Finally it dawned clear and we headed for our primary objective. Ryan and I postholed up the initial 2,000-foot couloir thinking that conditions would be better on the ridge crest. Wrong. We continued to the summit via a snow trench, utilizing running pro where surface instability and lots of exposure made us espe-



*Ryan Hokanson on the first ascent of The Ice Schooner route. KIRBY SPANGLER*



*Peak 9,650' in the Revelation Mountains. The Ice Schooner route ascends the shaded, prominent, broad couloir on the left to the ridge, then continues to the summit (the shaded point on the right).*

KIRBY SPANGLER

cially nervous. This was the second ascent of Peak 9,650' (see AAJ 1982, p. 138) and the first ascent of what we dubbed the *Ice Schooner* route. Consisting of very aesthetic snow and ice climbing up to 50 degrees in a remote and beautiful location, it is a fine example of Fred Beckey's enduring appreciation for the beauty of mountains and the act of climbing them.

This appreciation, however, does not necessarily extend to the people who climb mountains. When Ryan and I returned from the *Ice Schooner*, we found that Fred had gathered his personal belongings and abandoned ship, seemingly unconcerned with the fate of his teammates. Now, weary and with more weather on the way, we had to wonder about Fred's fate, off alone without a tent or a stove. This situation soon resolved itself, when Fred came wandering back into camp mumbling about poor weather and sore feet.

The remainder of our stay in the Revelations was characterized by more bad weather. We scouted objectives, but bouldering on glacial erratics and a bit of skiing seemed the only reasonable options. Unfortunately, Ryan sustained a sore knee while ascending one of our local erratics.

By the day before our appointed pick up, I had had enough inactivity. The south ridge of Peak 8,472' appeared to be mostly moderate scree, an appropriate objective given the circumstances. I followed the ridge to the summit and back in poor visibility. A few hours later, Ryan and I were hanging out in camp watching the skies clear, and made radio contact with our pilot flying overhead. At this point, departure was our main objective. The weather looked great, and he would be back to get us at 8 a.m. Great news! Not only did it look like we would get out of there, but I had time to try another climb. I felt terrible leaving Ryan in camp with a sore knee, but I couldn't possibly carry him. That night I plowed my way up the beautiful north ridge of Peak 9,076' by what was likely a new route. It was one of those Alaskan all-

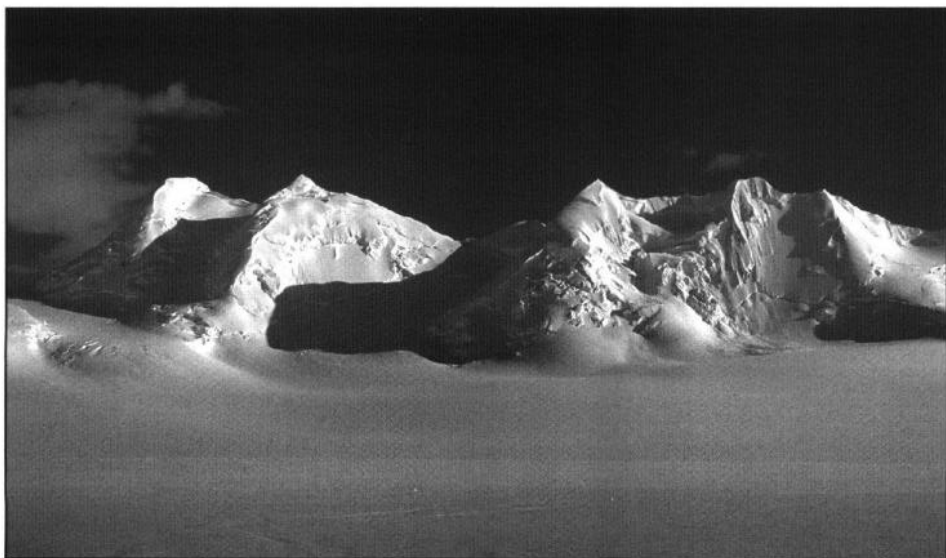
night sunset/sunrise spectaculars, with Denali and the rest of the Alaska Range spread out between me and eternity.

KIRBY SPANGLER

#### WRANGELL MOUNTAINS

*Peaks 10,630' and 10,150'. Possible New Routes.* On May 7, Kelly Bay of Wrangell Mountain Air flew me into the upper Chisana Glacier at 8,400 feet. Taking advantage of the good weather, I set up camp and immediately started skiing toward the base of Peak 10,630'. Due to circumstances, I was climbing alone. I wanted to climb two peaks I had attempted the year before while leading a guided trip. I skied up the icefall to around 9,500 feet. Here a pass between Peaks 10,630' and 10,565' afforded views to the south of Mt. Bona and Frederika Mountain. The route up Peak 10,630' from the pass is mainly ice that gradually steepens to around 50 degrees before breaking out on the corniced summit ridge. I had good weather until I reached the summit area. The clouds moved in, and the wind picked up. I hung out, waiting for an opportunity to take some photos through the clouds. Finally a few clouds broke and I took some quick photos to prove I'd been there. The downclimbing was tiring, but I eventually reached my skis and cruised back through the icefall and on to camp.

The next day, I skied up to the base of the east ridge of Peak 10,150' at around 9,000 feet. I crossed the bergschrund and kicked off my skis. The route is moderate snow for several hundred feet before steepening to around 45 to 50 degrees of harder ice. After the short section of ice, I traversed back toward the narrow ridge and straddled it for a few hundred feet. I traversed left off the ridge for a short distance before rejoining the ridge to the summit. I had



*Left to right: Peak 10,630', Peak 10,500', and Peak 10,150'. Danny Kost ascended the left-hand skyline of Peak 10,630' from the col. On Peak 10,150', he climbed the ridge that diagonals left to right to the left summit ridge (the ridge starts near the center of the photo). Peak 10,500' in the left center of the photo remains unclimbed. DANNY KOST*

spectacular views in the sunshine and made up for the previous days' abbreviated summit photo session. I then downclimbed the route and skied back to camp. Kelly surprised me by cruising through the pass later in the day to pick me up. I was happy he did, as the weather soon changed, and the next couple of weeks were marginal. Both climbs may have been first ascents, but only time will tell.

DANNY KOST

*Mt. Blackburn, New Route, Previously Unreported.* In May, 1998, Franz Mueter, Martin Truffer, and I walked in from the McCarthy Road to the Kuskalana Glacier, then up to a camp at about 5,000 feet beneath the west face of Mt. Blackburn. From there, we climbed a couloir up to the west ridge and followed the ridge for a few days to a camp where the ridge merges into the face at 12,500 feet. An attempt directly up the face encountered poor volcanic rock and improbable ice. The next day we followed a line to the north, hitting the North Ridge (the normal route) at about 15,200 feet, then walked to the summit. We retraced our route to the road. We graded the route Alaska Grade 4.

KEITH ECHELMAYER

*Mt. Schou, Peak 8625', and Peak 8778', New Routes.* In early July, Gary Green of McCarthy Air flew Chad Taylor and me to White River near Pingpong Mountain. We spent two days bushwhacking, river crossing, and scree scrambling up to our base camp on the Guerin Glacier at the base of Mt. Natazhat's (13,435') north face. The objective was a new route on the peak from the north along the northeast ridge. Our first warm-up was on nearby Peak 9,072' to the northeast, which we abandoned about 100 meters from the summit due to unstable snow conditions. Poor weather kept us tentbound, daydreaming, and writing in our journals for the next four days. The weather finally cleared, and Chad and I decided to make a second endeavor on Peak 9,072'. This time we were more fortunate, and enjoyed favorable climbing heading up the southwest ridge. By the time we had reached the summit, the weather had deteriorated and engulfed us in a whiteout. I named this peak "Mt. Schou" in memory of my grandfather, Hans Schou, a Norwegian-American adventurer and my inspiration for exploring.

We next focused our attention across the Guerin Glacier on Peak 8,625', a mountain just northwest of Mt. Natazhat. We kicked steps up a long couloir that gained the north ridge about three-quarters of the way up. We then plowed to the summit through calf- and thigh-deep snow.

Considering our time restrictions and not wanting to miss our flight out, we decided a push to the summit of Mt. Natazhat would not be feasible. Instead, we concentrated on the west face of Peak 8,778'. We climbed 50- to 70-degree ice and snow, reaching the top of the face 100 meters from the summit on the connecting northeast ridge of Natazhat, in eight hours. Satisfied with our climbing for the day, we opted to descend.

We made it back to our designated pick-up location just in time for our bird to fly us out before an incoming storm broke. To the best of our knowledge, and based on our research of the mountains in the area surrounding Mt. Natazhat, the three mountains ascended were all first ascents.

SEAN BURCH



## CHUGACH MOUNTAINS

*Mt. Herman Buhl, New Route, Previously Unreported.* Carl Oswald and his brother climbed a wicked new route up a sub-peak called "Mt. Herman Buhl" in the Chugach Mountains in November of 1997, with difficulties up to WI6 R. Further details are lacking.

EVAN PHILLIPS

*Triangle Peak, The Prism, Previously Unreported.* On October 13, 1997, Matt Porter and I hiked nine miles up the South Fork of Eagle River to the north face of Triangle Peak (5,450'). Our intended line was 1,000 feet of water ice culminating in a pillar halfway up the face. We started up 50-degree névé and made our first belay to the right of the bergschrund. Four interesting mixed pitches took us to the base of an amphitheater from which a 120-foot pillar flowed. After topping out on this WI4 pitch, we followed an exposed rib of snow and rock for another 1,500 feet to the summit ridge. On the summit, alpenglow illuminated the surrounding peaks, and ravens circled above our heads. We descended the back side, traversed around to our tracks, and slogged back to the car, arriving after 18 hours on the go. We named the route *The Prism* (IV 5.7 WI4).

EVAN PHILLIPS

*Bellicose Peak, Freer's Cheers, New Route, Previously Unreported.* In May, 1998, Carl Oswald and I headed into the Eklutna Valley with sights set on a new route up Bellicose Peak (7,640'). After biking 12 miles, we stashed our 'cycles and walked up the snout of the Eklutna Glacier. We headed up the drainage where a beautiful frozen waterfall, called Freer's Tears, after the late Catherine Freer, sits. After skirting steep rock buttresses, we gained a beautiful alpine valley nestled between Bellicose and its giant neighbor, Benign Peak. We bivied under a large boulder, surrounded by alpine flowers and crystal-clear brooks. We woke at 5 a.m. and were moving at 6. After following a pocket glacier, we headed for a steep couloir that snaked its way up the whole face. We climbed a short rock step and then followed the gully for another 300 feet to another, longer step. Carl led this 100-foot 5.8 R section with tools and crampons scratching. Two more pitches of WI3+ took us to more steep snow climbing up to 55 degrees. We exited the 2,500-face around 1 p.m. and followed the classic Northeast Ridge to the summit. Our route was the ninth recorded ascent of Bellicose since its first ascent in the early 1960s by the Bousman brothers, Tom and Bob. It was also the first route up the imposing northeast face.

We descended the shroud on the northwest side and skirted the mountain up through the Bellicose-Benign Col, arriving back in camp 14 hours after leaving. After a good night's rest, we bailed and cruised back out to our bikes and civilization. We named the route *Freer's Cheers* (IV 5.8 R WI3+) in honor of the great hardwoman.

EVAN PHILLIPS

*Peak 8,530', North Face, First Ascent.* In July, after bushwhacking up the drainage for a day and a half, Carl Oswald and Karen Hilton ascended the unclimbed north face of Peak 8,530' via 3,500 feet of alpine ice up to 70 degrees. After summiting, they did a dozen V-thread rapels to descend the route. They packrafted out Glacier Creek the next day and returned to



*Icing Peak. The north ridge is the obvious ridge ten miles in the distance.* EVAN PHILLIPS

their vehicle at the head of the Matanuska Glacier.

EVAN PHILLIPS

*Icing Peak, North Ridge, Previously Unreported.* On May 5, 1999, Carl Oswald and I began a ten-day trip up the Matanuska and Icing Glaciers to climb the unclimbed north ridge of Icing Peak (10,955'). After four days and 30 miles of glacier travel, we arrived at our base camp (5,000') on the upper Icing Glacier. In perfect weather, we set out at 2:30 a.m. on May 10. The climb began with a 500-foot, 45-degree couloir that deposited us on the apex of a perfectly symmetrical knife-edge ridge. We followed this for 1,200 feet until we were forced to climb through a bulging, hanging serac. We did running belays up the next 2,000 feet on mostly 50-degree snow. The final pitch was 75-degree ice with 4,000 feet of exposure. Views of Scandinavian Peaks and Marcus Baker were awesome. We carefully down climbed our route and were back in camp 13 hours after we left. It took four days to hike out via Mt. Sergeant Robinson (10,450') and Glacier Creek to the head of the Matanuska Glacier, where we had started ten days earlier. We traveled over 60 miles, climbing Icing Peak and circumnavigating all the peaks surrounding Mt. Wickersham. We graded the climb Alaska Grade 2/3.

EVAN PHILLIPS

*The Gorge, Various Ice Climbs.* In the Western Chugach Range, along the southeast edge of the massive Knik Glacier, lies a geological wonder known as The Gorge, a five-mile corridor lined by vertical glacial ice on one side and alpine walls on the other. Warm Pacific Chinook winds keep good flow on these walls, creating a spectacular area for waterfall ice. The gorge is about eight miles from any road, but a snow machine will allow for day climbing. The first climbs vis-

ible are on the right. The following climbs were made here in April, 1996: Steve Garvey led the dicey *Eye of Opportunity* (WI5, 150') and *Three Amigos* (WI4+, 140'). I climbed *Overflow* (WI4, 150') with Eddie Phay, while Garvey solved *Happy Daze* (WI3, 100'). Farther in, I climbed *Vice Grip* (WI3, 200') and *Chopsticks Left* (WI4, 190'), with Richard Baranow and Wendy Sanem in December, 1997. I climbed *Chopsticks Rite* (WI4, 170') and the beautiful *Emerald City* (WI3+, 420') with Jeff Jablonski. John Weiland and I climbed a 200-foot WI4 with rappel runners already in place in March, 1998. Farther into the gorge, *Goatsbeard* (WI3, 175'), *Carbide* (WI4, 200'), and *Jack Frost* (WI3, 300') decorate the walls. Dave Hart and I bashed our way up *The Other Side of Life* (WI4, 300') in minus 30-degree temps during the deep freeze of February, 1999. A small cove holds *The Roaring Silence* (WI4-, 260'). Two easy larger climbs, *Snowball*, a 250-foot hill of ice, and *Promenade* (200') follow; both are good for instruction. Jablonski and I climbed the classic *Old Blue Eyes* (WI4, 150'), *Me Weeping Eyebrow* (WI3, 165') and *Steamroller* (WI4, 200'), in February, 1999. Climbs here top out with stunning views into the heart of the Chugach Range, which includes Mt. Marcus Baker (13,176'). One-hundred-meter ropes are nice, and rappels are usually off alders. February and March are the best months to climb, with morning sun and thick plastic ice.

MARTIN MARTINEZ

#### ALASKA ST. ELIAS MOUNTAINS

*Mounts Illinois and Vermont, and Hawaii Peak, First Ascents.* Under clear skies on May 8, Kelly of Wrangell Mountain Air flew Brad Metz, Keith Schumacher and me onto a small unnamed glacier north of the Walsh Glacier near the Alaska/Yukon Border. This area is part of the Centennial Range in Alaska's St. Elias Mountains. The Centennial Range originates in Canada and consists of a series of peaks that were climbed as part of Canada's centennial celebration. For the Canadian section of the Centennials, the first ascensionists named the peaks after the Canadian provinces. While the range continues into the United States, the mountains have remained unnamed and unclimbed due to their relatively small size and remote location. Our group's objective was to continue the Canadian tradition on the U.S. side, climbing and naming the peaks after states in the U.S.

Upon landing, we set up camp and made a reconnaissance of the area. We found significant new-route opportunities.

On May 9, under a beautiful warm sun, we climbed all day to make a probable first ascent of Peak 9,547' (which we are calling "Illinois Mountain") on the U.S.-Canadian Border. The route followed a snow gully under a hanging glacier, where we climbed fast to avoid serac fall. We then simulclimbed a fourth- to low fifth-class snow/ice/rotten rock gully, gaining about 1,500 vertical feet. A ridge and open snow slopes led to the massively corniced summit. After punching two holes through the summit cornice, about 2,500 feet above the glacier, we decided to leave the last 30 feet of the cornice to bolder climbers. From the summit, we had a great view into Canada of the Mt. Logan Massif and all the satellite peaks. We also could examine the ridge route (hard but doable) that we wanted to make on the other side of the glacier. This ridge led to our main objective, Peak 9,874', labeled by our group as "Mt. Vermont."

We spent several days moving camp up the ridge, exploring the route and climbing the surrounding peaks. Unsettled weather prevented us from completing the route, and lack of supplies forced us to move camp back to the glacier.

On our last planned climbing day, the weather cleared in the morning. We headed off on skis and back up the incredible ridge, enjoying awesome glacier and mountain views, and great mountaineering over snow, ice, and rotten rock. At about 6 p.m., the clouds moved back in. We kept going. At around 7 p.m., light snow started, and one of our group fell in a crevasse. We found the key to the summit to be a couloir around the back of the mountain (now known as the Metz Couloir). We kept going, setting a turnaround time of 9 p.m. At 8:30, we were on the summit of Mt. Vermont, engulfed in the clouds and snow. Our descent involved multiple rappels and lasted until 2:30 a.m.

Along the ridge toward Mt. Vermont, Peak 8,580' (which we named "Hawaii Peak") was also climbed. The climbing involved near-vertical snow climbing to a cornice en route to the summit.

We believe that these were all first ascents. The only other climber that I am aware of who has been active in the area is Danny Kost, who climbed Peak 8,984' (see 1998 AAJ, pp. 226-7). Forty-seven peaks remain to be named to complete the U.S. side of the Centennial Range.

SAM NELSON

*Peak 10,170', Attempt, and Peaks 9,695' and 9,720', New Routes.* On April 27, John Race and I were flown onto the upper West Fork of the breathtakingly beautiful Barnard Glacier, which sits between two of the St. Elias Range's highest peaks, University Peak (14,470') to the west and Mount Bear (14,831') to the east. We planned to explore and climb a few of the easier 10,000-foot peaks in the area, many of which have never been climbed and for which there is little to no route information available.

After establishing a base camp at 7,000 feet on the glacier, we attempted Peak 10,170' on April 29 via the 8,500-foot col between Peak 10,170' and Peak 9,695', bailing due to lack of gear. On April 30, we attempted Peak 9,695' from the northeast and climbed up and over several 8,000-foot-plus sub-peaks on the approach. We then came up into a heavily crevassed area that was surrounded by recently avalanched slopes. We made several attempts over the course of the next four to five hours to find a route around these hazards before bailing. On May 1, we again attempted Peak 10,170', but bailed once more due to objective hazard and fear of a possible collapse of a cornice above us. The crux three to four pitches just below the cornice were of steep, black, 60-degree ice. Needless to say, the route was more difficult and committing than we had anticipated.

On May 2, after establishing a high camp at around 8,200 feet in the upper west fork of the Barnard Glacier Amphitheater, we attempted Peak 9,695' and its sister peak, which lay just southeast of University Peak, from the northwest. (Paul Claus indicated that a few years earlier he had climbed Peak 9,695' directly from the col that separates it from Peak 10,170'.) We got off route a couple of times but eventually topped out onto a 9,200-foot sub-peak with a great view of University Peak behind us and the summits of Peak 9,695' and its sister peak in front of us.

We then arrived at a narrow rock-covered ridge that drops off several thousand feet to the glacier floor far below. After topping out above the ridge, we began to place ice screws as we climbed a steep, snow- and ice-covered face for three pitches. We then climbed down 200 feet to a small saddle with a beautiful 70-foot blue ice cliff hanging above it. We crossed another nasty offwidth crevasse, climbed onto the 600-foot knife-edged and heavily corniced summit ridge, and scampered up and onto the summit. We believe this was the second ascent of Peak 9,695', and by a new route. We then headed back down toward the small saddle, from which we climbed up and to the right around the ice cliff and onto a fairly easy 35-degree snow slope of the sister

peak. After about 200 feet of elevation gain, we found ourselves on the narrow two-foot by 30-foot summit of Peak 9,720'. We believe this was the first ascent of this unnamed peak. We returned to high camp, broke camp, and headed back down to base camp for the evening.

On our last day, we got hit by a slab avalanche on an 8,500-foot peak due north of base camp. Fortunately we were able to stay on top of the avalanche and ride it out. Both of us ended up with sprained knees and bumps and bruises. We managed to get safely back down to base camp, where the weather had changed for the worse. The weather improved by morning, and Paul was able to fly in and pick us up at 8:30 a.m. the following day, May 5.

LEE JENKINS

*Mt. Hawkins, First Ascent.* In this modern world that we live in, true wilderness that has never seen the human foot is more and more uncommon. My family is privileged to live in the heart of one of the greatest wildernesses left in North America, the Wrangell-St. Elias National Park. This park hosts three major mountain ranges and more peaks over 14,000 feet than anywhere else in North America. Combined with Kluane National Park in the Yukon, there are more than 23 million acres, most of it mountains. Not surprisingly, very few of the peaks have names.

On April 13, I was very honored to follow my 11-year old son, Jay, the last few steps to the summit of Mt. Hawkins, likely the last named unclimbed peak in the park. Mt. Hawkins lies on the same ridgeline and about ten miles to the east of Mt. Tom White in the western reaches of the Bagley Ice Field. Jay and I had made an attempt on the mountain in 1999, turning back due to poor conditions. This time the weather was perfect, the mountain was in good shape, and we had our good friend Ruedi Homberger with us. We climbed light and fast from the 7,000-foot level, accessing the east ridge via a rib on the south face. Ruedi climbed unroped, and I roped with Jay, belaying him on about six pitches.

As we joined Jay on the summit, our altimeters read 10,900 feet. We enjoyed a round of Swiss tea and marveled at the incredible view of endless mountains in this untouched wilderness.

PAUL CLAUS, *Ultima Thule Outfitters*

*Mt. St. Elias, Mira Face, Second Ascent, and First Ski Descent of Mountain.* In late April, the Colorado team of Doug Byerly, Lorne Glick, Andy Ward, and I were flown to 7,000 feet on the Columbus Icefield at the base of Mt. St. Elias. Despite much chiding from our legendary bush pilot, Paul Claus, about our freeheel gear (don't expect to visit Alaska with tele skis and get respect from anyone), it was our intention to climb the peak and make the first ski descent. Our plan was to ascend via a much-neglected, north-facing 1916 surveyers' route on the west end of St. Elias and establish camp at their high point of 13,500 feet. We would then finish the climb via a steep, 1000-meter headwall on the south face that had seen only one previous ascent (we dubbed the impressive headwall "The Mira Face" after Czechoslovakian first ascensionist Miroslav Smid, killed climbing in Yosemite just a few months after summiting St. Elias in 1995), and follow a two-mile long ridge to the summit.

Between bad weather days, hazardous glacier terrain, and an earthquake that triggered massive avalanches and serac fall, we finally found ourselves drinking, playing cards, and slandering each other for many days in our moldy tent at high camp. We threw an offering of herbs and chocolate to the winds and asked Mother Mountain to please let us pass.

After a necessary descent for more food and fuel, we were back at high camp the morning of May 8, which dawned clear and calm. We cramponed for six hours up 45- to 50-degree



Lorne Glick on the Mira Face above Mt. Hayden. JAMES BRACKEN

snow and ice to the long, broad west ridge, which leads to the 18,008-foot summit. We summited, exhausted and with wooden toes. Concerned about our feet, our stay was brief and we anxiously clipped on the boards.

From the summit, bulletproof sastrugi on the ridge required pumpy, gorilla-stance survival turns. Drained from the altitude, I had doubts about skiing the Mira Face with its icy, 55-degree entrance, huge exposure and tight choke through a cliff band halfway down. But after a few hundred feet of intense turns, the snow sweetened to a soft sun crust, the angle relaxed, and we carved turns, grinning in the evening sun, all the way home.

JAMES BRACKEN

*Mt. St. Elias, Homberger Route, Ascent.* In April, my friend Bean Bowers and I climbed the Southeast Face (Homberger Route) on Mt. St. Elias in a three-day dash, with one day pinned down by storm at 13,500 feet. We were in Alaska for about a week from Anchorage to Anchorage. We first tried the direct (and unclimbed) north spur, reaching 10,500 feet, but the snow was deep and funky. The day after we turned back, the whole route got an earthquake-triggered, ass-whooping avalanche down it! I guess my luck is still holding out.

Our summit day was a 5,000-foot climb to the top. We then descended all the way back to base, with the last 5,000 feet being ankle-deep powder skiing, arriving by early afternoon. All told, we avoided the notorious weather that "Saint Deny-us" is known for.

DAVE NETTLE, *unaffiliated*

## ALASKA COAST MOUNTAINS

*Oasis Peak, First Ascent.* In July, Kelvin Vail and I left our homes in southern British Columbia and drove and ferried through the rain to Petersburg, where in the ferry terminal at 3 a.m. we stumbled into our climbing partner. Fred Beckey was bivied on the floor of the waiting room, where we joined him until they kicked us out in the morning.

Thanks to Fred's friend Deiter, we had shelter for the five rainy days in Petersburg, where we explored, fished, and climbed trees with ice gear until the clouds gave way to high pressure.

Although heli-alpinism isn't usually my style, the team's physical limitations required it, and no one complained that it only took us half an hour to reach the base of the mountain and the flats of the Oasis Glacier. Despite numerous attempts, the aesthetic Oasis Peak had never been summited. We waved goodbye to the pilot and quickly started packing for a higher camp. We could see our intended route outlined against blue skies: 2,500 feet of broken glacier led to a beautiful south ridge that ascended directly to the summit, with a shallow scoop in the middle about 200 meters long with steep buttresses on either side. We dubbed this feature "the Sidewalk;" it was the only class three climbing of the route. The glacier averaged only about 35 degrees but had one little icefall to negotiate and some rather large slots to work



*The southeast aspects of Oasis Peak, showing the South Ridge route (Vail-Walsh, 2000).*

DEITER KLOSE

around. By evening, the three of us had reached a col near the base of the ridge, where we set up a high camp and scoped the route.

The sky was mixed as our alarms summoned us to consciousness at 3:30 a.m. on August 2. Fred was not well rested and opted to leave the job to Kelvin and I. By headlamp, we weaved our way through the final crevasses to a notch at the start of the ridge and started climbing. A couple of exposed 5.7 moves led across cracks to more cracks, hand jams, and a gully that we climbed into the first sunshine of the day. Four more rope lengths of mostly mid-fifth class up to 5.7 took us up through two gullies and dropped us on the Sidewalk. The rock quality was not what we had hoped but was still granite, and the protection seemed good.

Some cold postholing in rock shoes and deteriorating weather finished the Sidewalk and pointed us toward the only visible route up the headwall: soaked rock from a draining snow-bowl. Things were looking grim until a hidden left-facing corner revealed itself with a four-inch crack that went for about 70 meters. This proved to be the crux of the route with sustained 5.8 to 5.9 jamming and stemming. Protection for this section largely consisted of sliding up the number 4 Camalot between smaller gear placements. More fifth-class led into the drainage gully, followed by another easy slab and a 45-degree snowfield. Luckily, we had one ice axe, which Kelvin shuttled back to me on the rope after leading the snowfield.

We were now on the scenic upper ridge, with awesome views of the Devil's Thumb, Burkett Needle, and the Stikine Icecap. The threatening storm blew away, and the sun came out in full force. Another easy fifth-class pitch led to nice 5.6 stemming up a chimney, followed by 5.6 slabs and hand cracks. The final pitch was a steep compact wall about 20 meters long, split by a beautiful 5.9 crack that widened at the top. Nothing like ending with a little offwidthing and the most strenuous moves of the day, just to make sure you got your money's worth! After swapping leads for 14 pitches, we were at the top of the rock with roughly 150 meters of low-angle snow separating us from the summit. At about 4 p.m. we got as close as we dared—15 feet from the large summit cornice, which was baking in the sun. We snapped a few quick photos, thanked the mountain, and hurried on our way back down to camp. Eleven rappels, mostly from tied-off blocks and horns, took us safely down our route and by ten o'clock, 17 hours after starting, we were back in the tent, tired but happy.

The following day we returned to base camp, surprised at how much the lower icefall had changed in two days. We spent the rest of the week climbing snow and cragging on the beautiful glacier-polished bluffs near base camp, generally having a good time.

JON WALSH

*Taku Towers, Ascents.* In June, 2000, Stefan Ricci and I flew to the south side of the Taku Towers, which are located about 15 miles north of Juneau. During our stay, we managed to climb the magnificent South Ridge of the South Tower (seven pitches, mostly at 5.7 with one hard 5.9 pitch), and the *Magic Line* on the south face of the North Tower. The route on the South Tower, being the easiest line, was not likely new. The longer east face was climbed circa 1975. *Magic Line* (IV 5.9 A1), which is probably a new route, climbs the south face directly to the summit in nine pitches, the last two ascending a left-facing corner just below the summit.

MICHAEL WOLF, *unaffiliated*