

Alaska

BROOKS RANGE

Caliban, Pillar Arête; West Maiden, repeat of North Ridge. In the second half of August, Ryan Hokanson and I enjoyed a great trip to the remote Arrigetch Peaks in Gates of the Arctic National Park. After flying for an hour from Fairbanks to Bettles, then another hour to Circle Lake, we walked for two days with 95-pound loads up Arrigetch Creek to our base camp.

Upon arriving we explored the area, sat out some rain, and then launched from base camp to repeat the West Maiden's North Ridge (V 5.9). We climbed for 16 hours, finding 22 60m+ pitches up to 5.9R. The route was originally done in 30 pitches. After topping out, we spent 13 hours stumbling through talus down Hot Springs Creek, on the south side of the peak, and over a nasty pass to return to base camp 29 hours after roping up.

Following a couple of rest days, we inspected the south face of Parabola but found flaky rock. As an alternative, we checked out the Aquarius Valley and the opposite side of Arrigetch Creek, inspecting the eastern ridge and arête of Caliban (eastern summit 6,994'), settling upon this as our next objective. The next morning we walked three or four miles up-valley to the base of Caliban. We spent a couple of hours scrambling up the 3rd/4th-class talus ridge to access the beginning of what became the Pillar Arête (V 5.10b). We spent another 15 hours or so climbing in exposed terrain, navigating the serrated arête that splits Caliban's southeastern and northern faces. We climbed past four separate towers, rappelling from their tops as we problem solved each. Finally we climbed the summit pyramid, which is the fifth and final tower. During the course of the route, we climbed about 16 pitches, plus a bunch of simul-climbing, with four



Looking east across the Arrigetch from near the top of Caliban's Pillar Arête. The big, sweeping, double ridges in the upper left are the Maidens. The big peak in the center, flanked by glaciers, is Wichmann Tower. The sunlit fin just left of Sam Johnson's knee is Albatross. The river below is Arrigetch Creek. Ryan Hokanson

rappels on the route. After topping out, we rappelled the southwest ridge to a col, descended 4,000' of talus and heather to the valley floor, and walked down-valley back to base camp. Several days later we packed up our belongings and walked for a day and a half to Takahula Lake, where we were picked up by Brooks Range Aviation.

SAMUEL JOHNSON, AAC

ALASKA RANGE

Geographical note: While the well-known peaks in Denali National Park are often called "The Alaska Range," these peaks form just one part of the immense Alaska Range, which contains many significant subranges, including the Hayes and Delta ranges, and the Revelation, Kichatna, and Tordrillo mountains.

HAYES RANGE

Nenana Spire, Midget Porn. In early March, Tim Cosik had a Swedish lady he had just met (who would soon become his pregnant wife) drop us at an obscure Fairbanks hangar. We knew we were in for an adventure when a kid met us at the door with a roll of duct tape in hand. Flying with a new glacier pilot is always stressful. As new climbing partners do, new pilots want to "prove themselves" to their clients. Rob Wing, third generation pilot, has a fitting name indeed. I'm his main climbing business, while moose surveys for Fish and Game pay on a regular basis.

The first flight, into the windswept upper Yanert Valley, was a tad interesting, with the small Cub barely making headway between the gusts. After Rob hand-started his prop and left us behind, it became apparent that the six-mile slog to the upper Hotel Glacier was going to take awhile. Our skis were no match for the chest-deep unconsolidated snow and alder traps between us and our objective. After three days of crawling we were finally at the base. Neither of us wanted to discuss the fact that our objective was as dry as a Mormon liquor cabinet, nor think of the 40 miles between us and the road. As the temperature plummeted like D.B. Cooper with a sack full of Benjamins, we changed plans.



Caliban, with the Pillar Arête roughly following the right skyline ridge over the prominent towers. Ryan Hokanson



Looking out from the depths of Midget Porn: the ca 2,250' virgin north face of Mt. Nenana. Jeff apple Benowitz

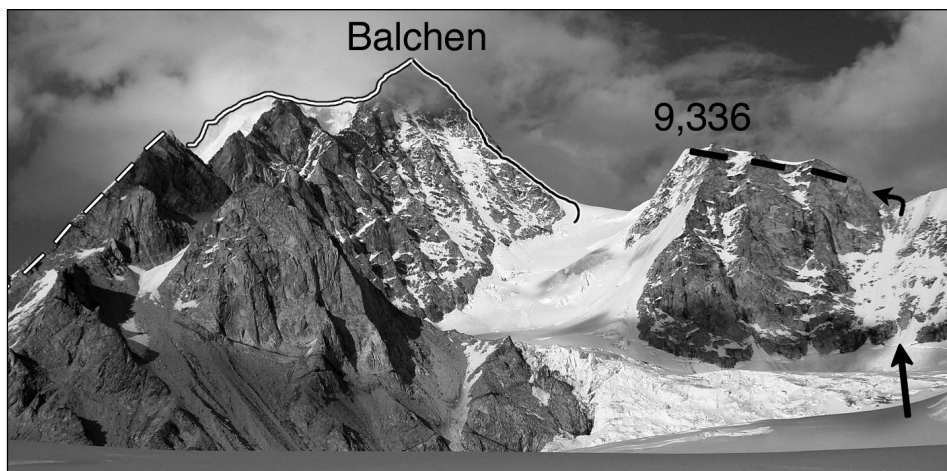
The south face of Nenana Spire (Peak 7,480') consists of numerous slots connected by steep headwalls of, in places, decent granite. The slot we chose, in the center of the face, had a crux pitch that was the route's namesake: Midget Porn (2,000', IV 5.5). We saw summit after unclimbed summit from the top, but sadly we also saw our 40-mile ski out—Wing had moose to count. The ski out was fast by gimp standards, but we cursed moose all the way to the road. Of note: We saw no rockfall in the region, while in summer the place is a pinball machine.

JEFF APPLE BENOWITZ

Peak 9,336', West Face. In late May Andy Stern and I skied, walked, and swam into McGinnis to attempt the north ridge route's second first ascent. But we had to take down my Bibler and bail as the wind whipped up my arse hole, while I screamed at Andy to get all his stuff on, because in two minutes everything was about to blow away through the skylight that opened in our tent. Andy is all jacked from a spinal injury 20 years ago, so I have to carry ridiculous loads when I'm with him, do all the trail-breaking, all the leading, all the cooking, and always keep an eye on him, because his brain is focused on moving his legs. We walked out dragging skis and sleds over gravel.

After that trip, flying into the mountains sounded great, but pilot Rob Wing's skis were being repaired. This meant a 15-mile walk from the lowlands to our base camp in the upper east fork of the Gillam Glacier. Our objectives involved both science and climbing. Since the science involved collecting over 250 pounds of rocks, walking down to the lower gravel strip was not something we looked forward to, or even thought possible. We collected countless 3kg samples over a 15km grid for my Ph.D. dissertation on the uplift history of the eastern Alaska Range. We also climbed two small 8,000' granite peaks. I won't describe them in detail, so others can have the pleasure of making the second first ascent of them. Or possibly the third; it is hard to keep track when no one is counting.

For our main objective we settled on enchainning Peak 9,336', via its west face, with a route I had done previously on Mt. Balchen. The original approach to the "Handicapped Ramp" had



Mt. Balchen (11,140'), showing the West Face (Benowitz-Williams, 2003) route on the left and the Handicapped Ramp (Adams-Benowitz-Brown, 2005). Balchen's only other route is the East Ridge. On Peak 9,336': the West Face route (Benowitz-Stern, 2008). Dashes indicate hidden portions. Jeff Apple Benowitz

no climbing on it and was subject to serac fall and avalanches. The crux of our mid-June 2,000-foot climb of Peak 9,336' was the overhanging bergschrund. It had some grade-something-mixed on it, but it was short. We appreciated the occasional cam and nut placement, but how do you give a grade to tip-toeing onto the undercut edge of a huge detached block of snow, overhanging the abyss, and then climbing overhanging unconsolidated snow while your belayer has 50' of slack wrapped around his feet because he is trying to remember how to short-rope and walk at the same time, while you're trying to high-step on a leg with no ankle?

By the time we got to the summit of 9,336' (by GPS; ca 9,150' on map), Balchen was in a tempest and so we failed on the Bal n' Enchainment. I have been to the upper east Gillam four times now and there is still endless potential for new routes and second first ascents in the area.

After 16 days of backbreaking rock carrying, we dialed Wing. A few hours later he landed and took us and our rocks home. In terms of science, the short of it is the Alaska Range is a lot older than previously believed. Amazing, considering the rate at which it is falling down. This climb and my research were supported by the American Alpine Club research fund.

JEFF APPLE BENOWITZ

TORDRILLO MOUNTAINS

Tordrillo Mountains, first full-length traverse. Over nine days in May, Andrew Wexler, Dylan Taylor, and I, using skis, made the first full-length traverse of the Tordrillo Mountains. We covered 100 miles from south to north, climbing 38,000 vertical feet and making ski descents off the range's four highest peaks: Mt. Spurr (11,069'), Mt. Torbert (11,413'), Mt. Talachulitna (11,150'), and Mt. Gerdine (11,258'). The previous most significant crossing was by Scott Woolums and Mark Jonas in March 1982 as documented in *Tordrillo—Pioneer Climbs and Flights in the Tordrillo Mountains of Alaska*.

On May 16 Doug Brewer of Alaska West Air flew us across Cook Inlet to a 2,400' ash bench on the south slopes of Mt. Spurr. Dylan had skied from Spurr's rounded summit in 2004. Volcanic activity in 2006 turned the summit into a 300' deep crater lined with crevasses and venting lung-burning sulfur gasses. We skied from the high point and camped at 10,000' on the Spurr Plateau, from where we descended a complex 4,000' icefall to the Capps Glacier—the first crux of the expedition. We spent our fourth and fifth nights at 7,000' on the Triumvirate Glacier below the Torbert Plateau. From this camp we day-toured 20 miles and 8,000 vertical feet to the summits of Mts. Torbert and Talachulitna.

The next crux was downclimbing the Great Wall, a 14-mile serac-ridden barrier that straddles the range and stopped our 2007 traverse attempt. This time we succeeded by downclimbing four pitches of steep, snow-covered ice to a northern lobe of the Triumvirate Glacier. After skiing Mt. Gerdine, we toured another two days to the tippy north end of the Tordrillos at the Iditarod Trail. There Chugach pilot Mike Meekin shuttled us to the Skwentna Roadhouse, and a Spennak Airways charter took us to Merrill Field in Anchorage.

The Hans Saari Memorial Fund and the Shipton-Tilman award made this trip possible.

JOE STOCK, AAC

DENALI NATIONAL PARK

Denali National Park and Preserve, summary. Our staff responded to 18 major incidents this year, including frostbite, altitude illness, trauma, and cardiac illness. In an unusual turn of events, two clients from separate guided groups experienced sudden fatal collapses within three

days in early July. Another tragic event involved the perplexing disappearance of two highly skilled Japanese climbers. Tracks in the snow indicate that Tatsuro Yamada and Yuto Inoue had completed an entire traverse of the Kahiltna Peaks, west to east, and continued directly up the prow of the Cassin Ridge. Their tracks vanished at 19,200' and, despite an exhaustive aerial search, no decisive evidence materialized. After their disappearance the Cassin Ridge was climbed by a record-breaking nine expeditions, but no more clues were found.

Bengt Bern and Jan Vinterek were selected for the 2008 Denali Pro Award for demonstrating the highest standards for safety, self-sufficiency, assisting fellow mountaineers, and clean climbing. Revered South District Ranger Daryl Miller retired after 18 years of working in the Denali mountaineering program.

Quick Statistics—Mt. McKinley and Mt. Foraker:

Mt. McKinley: Average trip length: 16.9 days. Busiest summit day: May 30, with 91 summits. Average age: 37. Women constituted 9% of all climbers.

Fifty-one nations were represented on Mt. McKinley and Mt. Foraker, including U.S. (692 climbers), Canada (72), U.K. (69), Germany (47), and Spain (42).

McKinley was attempted by 1,272 climbers, with 59% reaching the summit; 1,123 attempted the West Buttress, with 58% summiting. Sixteen climbers attempted Mt. Foraker, with only one summiting.

The complete Mountaineering Summary can be found at www.nps.gov/dena/planyourvisit/summaryreports.htm

Summarized from the DENALI NATIONAL PARK & PRESERVE ANNUAL MOUNTAINEERING SUMMARY

Denali, Isis Face and Slovak Route, enchainment. After warming-up with a difficult new route on the northeast face of the Bear Tooth (report below) and a rapid free attempt of Mt. Hunter's Moonflower Buttress (retreat above the Bibler Come Again Exit, at the base of the fourth ice band), from May 11-18 Japanese "Giri-Giri Boys" Katsutaka Yokoyama, Yusuke Sato, and Fumitaka Ichimura made a historic enchainment on Denali. They began their awesome effort by climbing the 7,200' Isis Face on the south buttress. They descended the Ramp Route into the East Fork of the Kahiltna and, without re-supply, climbed the 9,000' Slovak Direct, perhaps the most difficult route on Denali. After summiting, they descended the West Buttress. See Yokoyama's feature article earlier in this *Journal*.

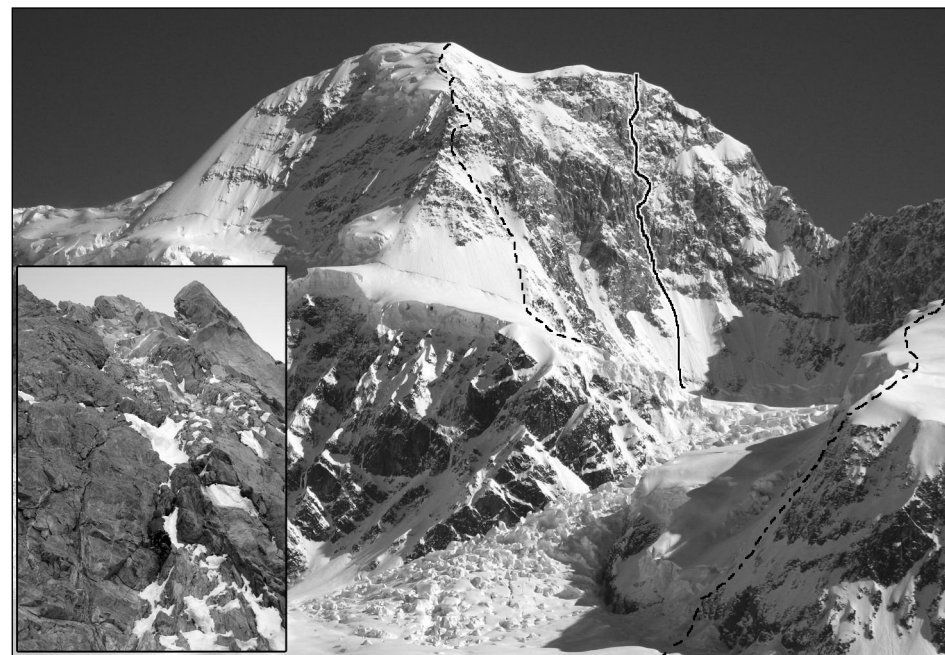
Kahiltna Peaks, traverse. Japanese climbers Tatsuro Yamada and Yuto Inoue traversed the Kahiltna Peaks from west to east, then continued high on the Cassin Ridge in attempting a massive enchainment. Although specifics will never be known, clues from extensive aerial searches indicate that they reached 19,000' or higher on the Cassin before disappearing. The pair was part of an ambitious crew of Japanese climbers called the "Giri-Giri Boys," who have climbed many impressive new routes in the Alaska Range and elsewhere in the past several years, as covered in recent AAJs, including AAJ 2008's feature article by Yamada on the Ruth Gorge.

Bat's Ears, first ascent. Paul Roderick of TAT landed Maxime Turgeon, Freddie Wilkinson, and I on the eastern edge of the upper Yentna Glacier, right at the edge of the wilderness boundary and about four miles from where we made our base camp. In this same area the previous year, Freddie and I climbed the Fin Wall with Peter Doucette, and we were back with Max to try another new route on a nearby unclimbed peak we had started calling the Bat's Ears (Peak

11,044', 2.6 miles due south of the Fin Wall).

We installed base camp under blue skies and reveled in the quiet, remote feeling of the place before the weather shut down for about five days. On the first clear day we explored the 3,000' approach to the Bat's Ears and carried some gear to the base of the wall. Back at base camp it snowed on and off for another two days. Our preview of the approach, combined with more tent-boredom angst, convinced us to try the route in a single push when the weather cleared.

Stars were out on May 1, and we skied out of camp at 1:30 a.m. After the approach, the climbing was fun and hard enough to stay interesting, but not desperate. The route follows mixed and thin-ice terrain up the obvious gully system in the middle of the south-southwest face. It was mostly 60° to 80° in the gully, with several short vertical cruxes. We switched leads every two or three pitches for a total of about 15 pitches and two sections of simul-climbing. Rock quality on the sides of the gully was excellent fractured granite, but the gully seemed to be a rotten dike. A lot of the ice climbing felt like climbing frozen gravel, and our picks constantly bounced off rock. Max kicked steps up the last section of simul-climbing and brought us to the summit at 6 p.m. The panorama was amazing, especially the straight-on view of the Fin Wall just north of us. It was tempting to start down right away, but we had ascended almost 6,000' that day, and we were still unsure about the descent. Freddie fired up the stove, and we consumed fluids and a meal that made a big difference. As we traversed the summit ridge clouds started building again, intensifying both the views and our feeling that we should start down while we could still see our descent. Luckily the descent turned out to be an easy walk-off down the southwest ridge, with only one rappel in a short gully. We were happily back to base camp at 12:30 a.m., and it started snowing about an hour later.



The line of first ascent (solid), with approach and descent, on the Bat's Ears. Inset: Freddie Wilkinson on the first mixed pitch. Ben Gilmore

With a week remaining, we called for a bump flight over to the Kahiltna Glacier, where, in 52 hours round-trip from base camp, we climbed the Moonflower Buttress to the summit of Mt. Hunter.

Our deepest thanks to the American Alpine Club for supporting our climb with the Lyman Spitzer Cutting Edge Award.

BEN GILMORE, AAC

Mini-Moonflower, Dempster-Wilson. On May 19 my cousin Kyle Dempster and I departed Kahiltna Base camp for the Mini-Moonflower, just beyond Mt. Hunter's renowned North Buttress. This day held special importance for us, marking the three-year anniversary of my brother's death on Baffin Island on a climbing expedition with Kyle.

We intended to climb the North Couloir but changed our plans when we discovered another party beginning to chop their way up the route. Our eyes turned to the steep north face. After a brief discussion, we chose a line that began on the right side of the lower wall and gradually traversed to the left side of the upper wall. We figured the traverse to the left side would give us a better chance of topping-out, by allowing us to navigate around the large overhanging cornices crowning the summit ridge and putting us in position to descend the North Couloir.

For the first 1,000' we simul-climbed—over the bergschrund and through a long vertical ice runnel that required occasional dry tooling, then a long diagonal traverse across the prominent 60° ice shelf that separates the lower wall from the upper wall. We were moving well and



The north face of the Mini-Moonflower: (1) Dempster-Wilson, 2008. (2) Cool-Parnell, 2001. (3) Koch-Prezelj, 2001. (2) and (3) stop below the extensive summit cornices, which are not well shown in this angle. Kyle Dempster

feeling great, enjoying the rhythm of our movements and the excitement of the unknown.

The top half of the wall offered another 1,000' of steep climbing. We connected ice runnels, moving over long sections of alpine ice and short sections of mixed climbing. Kyle led a strenuous overhanging mixed section. A few pitches later and after 11 hours of continuous climbing, I set an anchor at the beginning of the steep snow shelf 300' below the summit.

We traversed the snow shelf, and Kyle led through 400' of steep half-consolidated snow, while I followed with extra care, realizing he was unable to place any protection. After two hours of nervous tiptoeing we reached the summit ridge, exhausted and dehydrated, and continued up another 100', which seemed as close to the actual summit (which is just a *huge* cornice) as one would want to go without risk of riding the white wave down the face.

It took another four hours of down-climbing and V-thread rappels down the North Couloir to reach the glacier. Back on safe ground, fatigue and the satisfaction of achievement mixed with the memory of our fallen brother. We both miss his irreplaceable presence.

The route (2,300', V M7 AI6) probably serves as a great test for parties aspiring to climb Mt. Hunter's North Buttress.

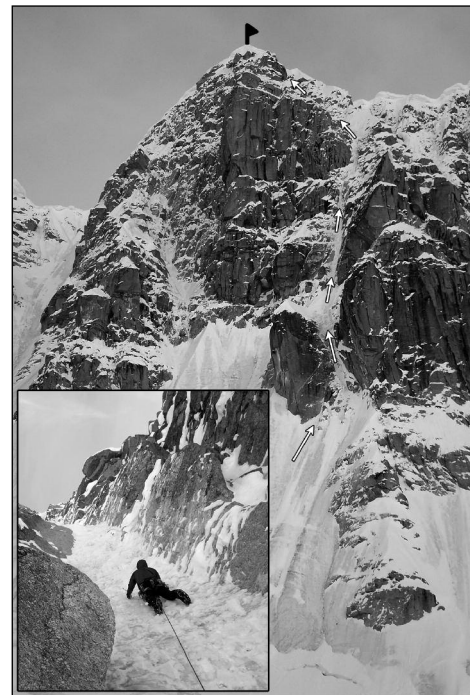
ERIN WILSON

Mini-Mini Moonflower, Bacon and Eggs. On the evening of May 17 Eamonn Walsh and I began climbing Denali's Isis Face. We completed the 7,200' face in just under 48 hours, for the route's fourth ascent, and descended the South Buttress directly to Kahiltna base camp the next day.

While Isis's technical difficulties were more moderate than we had anticipated, it was nonetheless a serious and committing undertaking with unbeatable positions and scenery.

On May 26 we climbed a fine-looking ice line on a small tower on Mt. Hunter's Northeast Ridge, rising above the upper southeast fork of the Kahiltna Glacier. This is the next prominent tower on the ridge up-glacier from the Mini Moonflower, and we'd referred to it as the "Mini-Mini Moonflower." This spring, in the right-center of the tower, an obvious, stunning ice hose poured down, a feature that, due to lack of ice, I had not previously noted during numerous visits over many years.

A difficult bergschrund led to 55° ice. Easy mixed climbing and a pitch of near-vertical perfect ice led to the route's highlight, 150m of beautiful ice in a shallow corner averaging 70-80°. More excellent ice climbing led to steep snow and the final rock band, where thick ice laced granite runnels and offered easier-than-expected passage. The summit cornice was enormous and



Bacon and Eggs on the Mini-Mini Moonflower. Mark Westman. Inset: Westman leading pitch 4, the start of the ice hose. Eamonn Walsh

intimidating, but we continued up, traversed right, then excavated through and up to the summit.

We later learned that a week earlier, Minnesota climbers Matt Giambrone and Dean Einerson ascended this same route but did not climb the final pitch through the cornice. In subsequent research I have not found any reports of this line having been climbed or attempted. We named the route Bacon and Eggs (III/IV AI4 85°, 9 pitches) as a play on the classic Ham and Eggs, and most of all as homage to the great breakfasts prepared for us by my wife, Lisa, who is the Kahiltna base camp manager. The route is a safe, fun, and highly recommendable day outing. By comparison, the popular North Couloir route of the Mini Moonflower is longer and contains a single, more difficult crux pitch. The climbing on Bacon and Eggs is, in our opinion, more sustained and aesthetic. In thinner conditions, it would make a demanding testpiece.

MARK WESTMAN, *Talkeetna, AK, AAC*

Unnamed Peak, Couloir Canalla. On May 18 Luis Red Angel (Spain), Simon from Germany (I don't know his last name), and I climbed a new route on an unnamed peak on the Tokositna Glacier. The route, Couloir Canalla, was 700m long, with snow up to 70° and a short mixed section. After an attempt at the West Face Couloir route on Mt. Huntington, we saw this attractive line on the other side of the glacier, to the left of the start of the French Ridge, about a half hour from base camp. The broad, east-facing couloir was short, but steep enough that less snow accumulated, making it less dangerous. When the weather cleared, we waited two days for the snow to stabilize, as constant avalanches came down all around. Finally we moved... then it started snowing. Shit! We waited, it cleared a little, and we continued in mixed weather. We climbed through good snow, deep snow, and a little easy mixed. On the summit we sank hip-deep. It began snowing hard, and we snapped photos and started down. After 13 rappels we crossed the 'schrund in the middle of a growing storm. The hostile Tokositna!



Couloir Canalla on the Tokositna Glacier. *Cecilia Buil*

We reached base camp, where our Wyoming neighbors gave us a beer, and we called for our flight out. On the next day we enjoyed an unmatched view of these wild mountains and glaciers, and the pleasure of not having cold feet anymore.

CECILIA BUIL, *Spain*

Mt. Dickey, Move Your Ass and Your Mind Will Follow. We left for Alaska in April, with the goal of opening the northeast ridge of Mt. Dickey, a line that others, including French mountaineers, had previously attempted. Christophe Moulin had talked of the project for a year, and we couldn't wait to see what the Ruth Gorge looked like. [This trip was part of a youth alpine climbing mentoring program through the Groupe Excellence Alpinisme of the Federation of French Alpine Clubs; Moulin is one of the trainers—Ed.]

There were eight of us, and we chose two projects. A team of four (François Delas, Titi Gentet, Seb Ratel, and Damien Tomasi) attempted the Roberts-Rowell-Ward route on the southeast buttress of Mt. Dickey. Mathieu Detrie, Sebastien Ibanez, Patrick Pessi, and I attempted the northeast ridge of Dickey. We spent the first day sussing things out before fixing a rope up a short, steep passage and heading back to base camp confident of what lay ahead.

We set out two days later with four days of food and gear, focused on working our way past the main upper headwall, which appeared to be the crux of the route. Our progress was slow, however. We felt heavy, and the snow conditions were tough; we were often on dodgy snow plaques, with protection difficult. The higher we climbed, the steeper and trickier the wall became, and we began having second thoughts. When bad weather arrived during our first bivouac, we realized we had underestimated the scale of the task and headed down, gathering our gear as we went.

Once the other group got back with their mission in the bag [likely the Roberts-Rowell-Ward route's third ascent] and news of a week's good weather ahead, we decided to try again. This time we took six days of food and discovered what seemed like an easier starting point farther left on the wall.

The first day passed quickly, because we knew the way, and on the second day we reached the foot of the headwall. We chose the best-defined crack, and after two days of artificial climbing (A3) we made it through. A final pitch of mixed climbing brought us to the top of the headwall the evening of day four. It was midnight as we went to bed, but our spirits were high. The enormous snow mushroom that had been looming over us was now just ahead. As it turned out, the next day brought an unforgettable bivouac on top of the mushroom itself; we knew that the next day we'd summit.

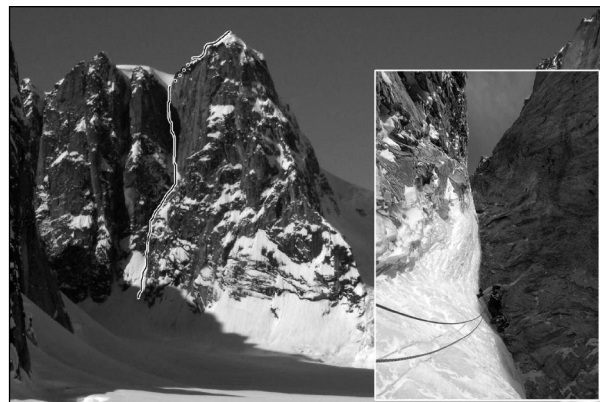


Mt. Dickey from the northeast, showing Move Your Ass and Your Mind Will Follow (Detrie-Ibanez-Maynadier-Pessi, 2008). For reference, starts to: (1) Gross-Kormarkova (1977). (2) Wine Bottle (Bonapace-Orgler, 1988). (3) Byrch-McNeill (2003). Several other routes exist left of (2), but are poorly seen in this angle. See AAJ 2006 p. 95 for a complete overview. *Mathieu Maynadier*

The evening of the sixth day, we hit the summit. We named our route Move Your Ass and Your Mind Will Follow (1,600m, ED, 5+ A3+ M5). The rest of our group watched our triumph through binoculars from base camp, before heading up to meet us with skis. That night we celebrated back at base camp.

MATHIEU MAYNADIER, *France*

“Peak 747,” Kuriositeten. Between April 7 and May 3 Eiliv Ruud and I had a great time in the Ruth Gorge. Though bad ice and long sections of vertical or overhanging snow turned us back from four new route attempts, we climbed several outstanding classics. Our best memory from the trip, however, is from establishing Kuriositeten (Norwegian for “Rarity”; ca 800m, AI5 M3+) on the east face of the mountain between Mt. Bradley (9,100') and Mt.



Kuriositeten, near 747 Pass. Nils Nielsen. Inset: Nielsen on the crux pitch. Eiliv Ruud

Dickey (9,545'), a.k.a. Peak 747. Our research, including communication with Alaskan climbing luminaries Kelly Cordes and Joe Puryear, revealed no recorded ascents of this line.

I don't know if the mountain has an official name, but it sits near 747 Pass, so “Peak 747” seems reasonable. We had been calling it “Litlefjellet,” which means “small mountain” in Romsdalen dialect. The mountain is small only compared to its massive neighbors.

We left camp at 3 a.m. on April 28 and started climbing two hours later. The first pitch consisted of 20-30m of vertical snow followed by a huge chockstone. This was interesting and fun, and I would give it a grade of M3+ ST4 (ST = Snow Tunneling). After that, the couloir widened and we simul-climbed steep snow, with sections of ice (AI3-4) for 300-400m. I was then the lucky winner: Just as the sun hit I got the sharp end on the crux pitch, which had 60m of steep, perfect ice through the couloir's narrowest point. This has to be one of the best ice pitches I have ever climbed. Higher the couloir opened up again, and we then followed the ridge with short mixed steps to the summit, which we reached at 9 a.m.

We descended via the west face and walked through 747 Pass, getting back to camp by 1 p.m. The route was repeated twice in the next two weeks, by Matt Tuttle and Jason Kue and later by a French team. Due to the route's short approach from the Gorge, its moderate difficulty and the fact that most parties can easily climb it in a day, Kuriositeten has potential to become a classic.

NILS NIELSEN, *Norway*

London Tower, Battle of Britain. In May, Tristan Gray-Le Coz and I, both of Ouray, Colorado, repeated several Ruth classics, established one new route, and had one new bail. While soloing Freezy Nuts to the summit of London Tower, I noticed a 10' wide runnel of 4-5"-thick ice ascending the left side of the wall about one-third of the way up the couloir. On May 9 we returned, establishing the Battle of Britain (3,200', V WI5 M4 5.9R; topo at the Talkeetna

Ranger Station). Vertical ice led to an ice slot, then an interesting mixed shallow corner, and a small roof that I passed on the left. We then trended up and right, encountering wet chimneys devoid of ice, so instead we climbed rock steps, steep hanging snowfields, and a few memorable run-out traversing pitches. We gained the ridge and traversed right to the southeast face, where we intersected my tracks from two days before and followed them to the summit. We descended the Freezy Nuts couloir, which was already equipped with V-threads by previous parties. We returned to our base camp in the Ruth in just under 24 hours. The route earned its name after the pummeling we both received at belays and the chop we barely avoided when a large block came whizzing by from an unseen source.

On May 20 we headed for a steep hanging couloir on the east face of the Rooster Comb. We negotiated unconsolidated Peruvian snow flutings, climbed three excellent mixed pitches, up to M5, and three steep pitches of shoulder-width AI5+ ice to reach the final rock band. We then climbed 600' of snow-covered compact rock and steep snow before bailing. Our goal was the summit but we enjoyed some excellent pitches on our new bail.

Before leaving Talkeetna we checked the ranger station and believe both the route on London Tower and the terrain covered on the Rooster Comb to be new, although such an obvious feature on the latter may have been climbed in fatter conditions, leaving no sign of passage.

JAMES TURNER, *Ouray, CO, AAC*

Moose's Tooth, There's a Moose Loose About This Hoose to north ridge. Matt Helliker and I climbed a new route on the amazing east face of the Moose's Tooth, rising from the Buckskin Glacier. There's a Moose Loose About This Hoose (1,400m, ED 4, M8 A2 AI6) climbs the obvious big fault line, attempted by Christophe Dumarest and Aymeric Clouet in 2006, to the right



Matt Helliker on the loose, unprotected crux pitch, day two on the Moose's Tooth. Jon Bracey

of Arctic Rage (VI WI6+R A2, Gilmore-Mahoney, 2004). I was initially inspired to check out the area by Paul Roderick's spectacular photo of the east face of Moose's Tooth in *Alpinist* magazine, issue #4.

Setting off on May 3 in good weather, we found excellent conditions, enabling fast progress up the initial easy ground, before the line narrowed to a series of steeper pitches on snow-ice. By midday the weather had deteriorated, and we suffered a constant bombardment of spindrift for nearly two hours, with Matt almost suffocating at one point. This eventually eased, allowing us to continue.

Above, the gully reared into an overhanging amphitheatre with spooky snow mushrooms hanging all around. Some cunning routefinding by Matt, followed by a hard pitch of mixed and aid climbing, saw me at the lip of a roof. After an eternity psyching up, I eventually committed to the thin ice curtain above and somehow avoided a big lob into space.

The difficulties continued above, with Matt pulling off a very hard, serious lead that thankfully brought us to a small snow patch out left for a bivy. Tired after an 18-hour day, we brewed up for a couple of hours and sat in our sleeping bags for a bit before continuing.

The morning greeted us with okay weather and the crux of the route: a sustained, overhanging pitch up less-than-perfect rock, which Matt dispatched in good style. After three more pitches we gained the upper snow slopes of the north ridge and stashed most of our kit before continuing on. We were stopped ca 100m below the summit by a menacing serac. Happy with our efforts, we started the long descent and made it back to our skis by 1 a.m. after another 18-hour day.

JON BRACEY, U.K.

Bear Tooth, Climbing Is Believing. Yusuke Sato, Fumitaka Ichimura, and I flew in to the Buckskin Glacier on April 7. Our aim was the east face of the Bear Tooth, on which we had been driven back in 2006. However, we found the face drier than two years ago and abandoned the route. Instead we decided on an obvious corner in the center of the northeast face. Although climbers had attempted the line, we knew it to be still unclimbed.

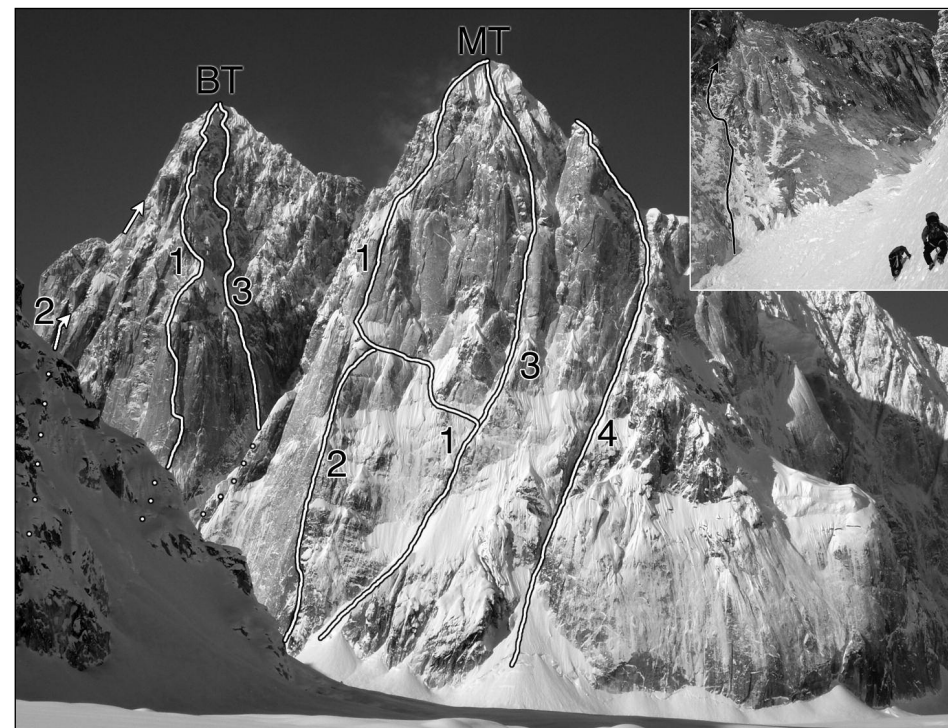
On April 13 we climbed the east gully and two more pitches on the northeast face before being defeated by sudden snowfall. It continued for three days.

We resumed climbing on April 18, continuing with delicate climbing up thin ice/snow in a steep dihedral (AI5R). The crux in the lower section overhung partially and required some aid (M6+R A1+). We bivouacked on the obvious snowfield.

The next day we ascended the upper portion of the face, also steep, though solid rock and stable ice allowed good progress. The crux in the upper portion was the 10th pitch. We overcame it with delicate hooking and run-out climbing (M7R). Above we encountered many



Yusuke Sato leading the crux 10th pitch of Climbing Is Believing. Katsutaka Yokoyama



The Bear Tooth (left) and Moose's Tooth from the northeast. BT: (1) Useless Emotion (Bridwell-Christensen-Dunmire-Jonas-McCray, 1999). (2) You Can't Fly (Fluder-Golab-Piecuch-Skorek, 2002). (3) Climbing Is Believing (Ichimura-Sato-Yokoyama, 2008). MT: (1) Dance of the Woo Li Masters (Bridwell-Stump, 1981). (2) The Beast (Bridwell-Pfingsten, 2001). (3) Arctic Rage (Gilmore-Mahoney, 2004). (4) There's a Moose Loose About This Moose (Bracey-Helliker, 2008). Not visible: House of the Rising Sun (Billmeier-Shlosar-Vilhauer, 2007) on the southeast face of BT, and the Southeast Face route (Gilmore-House-Mahoney, 2000) on the MT (starts in same gully as (3) on BT). Katsutaka Yokoyama. Inset: Approaching (3) on the BT. Yusuke Sato

colorful pitches with verglas, corners, and icicles. A big cornice barred the final section. We found our way through its left-hand flank on the 16th pitch and a right-slanting crack on the 17th (5.10a), emerging on the final snow face that brought us to the summit.

After bivouacking below the summit, the next day we descended via the col between the Moose's Tooth and the Bear Tooth, then down the east gully. Our route, which we christened Climbing Is Believing (1,250m, Alaska Grade 6, ED4 5.10a AI5 M7R A1+), is obvious and requires colorful techniques. I will soon try again for the unfinished adventure, the east face of Bear Tooth.

KATSUTAKA YOKOYAMA, Japan (translated by Tsunemichi Ikeda)

Coffee Spire, first ascent, Greater Reward. On June 13 Paul Roderick, of Talkeetna Air Taxi, landed Cody Arnold and me, both of Anchorage, at 5,600' on the northwest fork of the Coffee Glacier, a.k.a. Middle Coffee Glacier, just east of the Ruth Gorge. Our initial objective was the second ascent of the Southwest Ridge of Broken Tooth, but a rotten rock step turned us back late on the first day. We turned our attention to a 1,700' unclimbed rock spire on the north side of the glacier. A huge sloping dihedral, which looked wide and wet, splits the lower face; a prominent block

caps the main face; and farther back on a ridge is a striking summit tower.

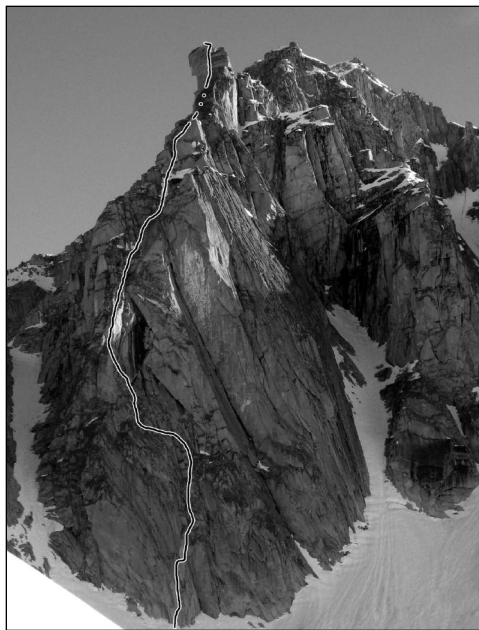
When the weather cleared, we made the leisurely 30-minute approach, and at 4 p.m. I started up a series of rotten flakes to the left of the steep white corner situated at the lowest part of the wall. After a couple of pitches we got back in the corner, and the rock quality improved and gave way to 30' of thin 5.11 to a square ledge beneath blocky roofs. I then led right through a series of steep, arching hand cracks and outstanding rock, followed by a leftward easy-fifth-class pitch that brought us to a sharp ridge crest with a perfect 5.9 hand crack. Three pitches of fourth- and easy-fifth-class had us to a waist-deep 70° snow couloir that I tried to lead in rock shoes. It was 3 a.m., the snow wet, and within minutes I was soaked, numb, and shivering. We threw in the towel and shivered through seven rappels back to the glacier.

After three days of foggy drizzle the weather cleared, we left camp early and climbed to our previous high point much faster than before. We started farther left, avoiding much of the loose rock of the first pitch. Once at our high point, we switched into boots and shell gear and climbed the snow pitch to a notch just left of the main face summit block. Two more pitches of fourth-class scrambling brought us to the base of a striking white tower. Initially the rock was some of the cleanest I had ever seen, but then three dangerous, rubble-covered blocky ledges interrupted the pitch. The exposed summit offered spectacular views. We believe the next peak to the north is Mt. Cosmic Debris, separated from our spire by a 1,000' dead-vertical plunge into a rotten black gully, complete with a constant barrage of rock and ice fall. Looking over that edge made us feel privileged to be the first people to stand atop what we called Coffee Spire. We named the route the Greater Reward (IV 5.11 70°), realizing that this virgin summit was a richer experience than a second ascent on Broken Tooth.

JAY ROWE, AAC

KICHATNA SPIRES

Kichatna Spire, The Message or the Money. After three days of pulling on plastic, playing ping pong, and having a few too many in Talkeetna, Zack Smith and I finally caught a break in the weather for a flight into the Kichatna Spires. On May 26 we settled into our enormous tent on the Cul de Sac Glacier. On the 27th the weather seemed good enough for an attempt on our primary objective, Kichatna Spire, so we skied up for a closer look. After ruling out the oft-tried laser gully on the north face, due to an abundance of snow mushrooms and a lack of ice, we decided on an obvious moderate ice gully to the left of Voice of Unreason (AAJ 2006, pp. 187-189). After easy climbing up the gully, we gained a col and launched into steep mixed



The Greater Reward on Coffee Spire. Jay Rowe

climbing. The mixed terrain was fantastic—some of the best I've climbed in the mountains—and led us on a circuitous path up the northwest face. At two-thirds height we intersected the North Ridge route proper, and followed it to the summit in deteriorating weather. After a few summit photos, we backtracked across the North Ridge and descended our route of ascent. We named the climb The Message or the Money, after a song by our favorite MC, Immortal Technique, and also as a good-natured jab at “new” routes that end far away from the summit, or even at the proverbial “end of the difficulties.” We climbed the route all-free with passages up to M6, and in 8½ hours ‘schrund to summit.

JOSH WHARTON, AAC

Citadel, variation, and various activity. For two weeks in late April and early May, Chris Nance, Dave Ahrens, and I visited the Shadows Glacier. We think we did a new variation to the 1972 route on the 3,400' north face of the Citadel. The route was mostly 40-60° snow and ice, starting with the obvious couloir to a hanging snowfield, then climbing several mixed pitches through rock bands (probably left of the original route), and eventually gaining the summit ridge.

We also made an ascent of the previously climbed Northwest Couloir on Gurney Peak, which starts from the top of the pass separating the Shadows Glacier and the Sunshine Glacier. On one of last days Dave and I went for one more route, the unclimbed west face gash on Vertex Peak. After a bit of climbing we bailed due to rope damage and lack of protection in the thin ice and polished rock. This route, however, would be a good, hard mixed route in a more favorable ice year.

Dave thanks Mountain Trip for funding his share of the trip expenses.

JARED VILHAUER

REVELATION MOUNTAINS
Exodus, first ascent, Lefternliet Couloir; Ice Pyramid, attempt. On April 29 Rob Jones of R&R Guide Services flew Seth Holden, Steve Sinor, and me to the Big River



Zack Smith attempting an unclimbed mixed line on the Citadel a few days after The Message or the Money. Josh Wharton



The Ahrens-Nance-Vilhauer variation on the north face of the Citadel. Jared Vilhauer



The Exodus and its line of first ascent, the Lefternliest Couloir. *Clint Helander*

Glacier, where a gorgeous unclimbed mountain marked as Peak 8,385' rose above the confluence of the three forks of the Big River Glacier. We climbed the peak's 3,300-vertical-foot south face via what we called the Lefternliest Couloir. A long entrance couloir led to a small hanging glacier. From there we took a moderate gash, with the two final pitches containing exciting but relatively easy scrambling. In keeping with Revelation tradition, we gave the peak a somewhat biblical name, the Exodus, due to its prominent X-like couloirs.

Unclimbed Cerro Torre-like spires rose to the east, and we realized why a 9,200' unclimbed peak, which we'd heard called the Ice Pyramid, got its name. An initial attempt on its west-southwest ridge, the real prize, got us five pitches up before a large gendarme stopped us. We returned with three days of food and fuel and quickly navigated past our previous high point. On day three, atop the 18th pitch, a long, corniced, knife-edge ridge separated us from the summit. With weather constantly on our minds and a long descent ahead, we bailed. We reached the glacier on day four exhausted, wet, and cold, as the weather came in and came in



Untouched cragging just southeast of Exodus, in the same massif. *Clint Helander*

strong. Over the next two days we hiked 22 miles to Rob Jones' lodge on the Big River. "The Revelations sure know how to blow!" Rob said. We agreed, and agreed that our attempt on the Ice Pyramid was the best experience any of us had ever had in the mountains.

CLINT HELANDER, AAC (*Recipient of an AAC Mountain Fellowship Fund Grant*)

WRANGELL—ST. ELIAS NATIONAL PARK

Tana and Bremner glaciers, first ascents. On June 8 Paul Claus landed Mike Crafts, Phil Tatman, Ben Traxler, and me on the col between the Tana and Bremner glaciers. Paul had not landed before in this area, which is covered on the Bering Glacier quad map. After establishing base camp, we climbed a small spire and identified several possible objectives. Over the next several days we climbed three of these, two of which were probably first ascents, but were unsuccessful on two others due to poor weather and soft snow. Our first climb, on June 10 to the top of Peak 7,724' (long. 143.18808, lat. 60.75875, immediately north of the col between the two named glaciers; FA DiStacio-Dorsch-Kost, 1989), started as a moderate glacier climb up the south face with few routefinding difficulties. After passing through a small rock band, we suddenly found ourselves in a totally different situation: we were standing on a huge cornice, prompting us afterward to name the route Highway to the Danger Zone (south face to northwest ridge, III 70°). A line of steep, soft-snow pinnacles guarded the northwest summit ridge, which Ben tamed with an armful of pickets. It was a bluebird day, and we had no trouble seeing the entire range from Logan and St. Elias to the east, to Blackburn and Sanford in the west.

On June 11 we climbed Peak 7,123', a small dolphin-shaped fin on the Bremner side of the col (long. 143.22701, lat. 60.72376) via a snow slope on the southwest flank. Hungry for more, we moved camp on Friday the 13th, but two days of fog and drizzle forced us to scrub our plans for Peak 7,677', a beautiful snow dome. We did grab one high point in the cirque as a consolation prize: Peak 6,200'+ (long. 143.10225, lat. 60.72753, Tana drainage) via the south face. Running low on food, we returned to base camp and set out the next day for our last objective: the northeast face of Peak 9,344' (long. 143.24504, lat. 60.69104, Tana drainage). This peak, on the Mt. Hawkins massif, like many of the peaks in the range has a large serac band and unstable rock ridges guarding a delicate summit pyramid. Despite a midnight start, we were unable to pass the seracs before the snow bridges became dangerously weak.

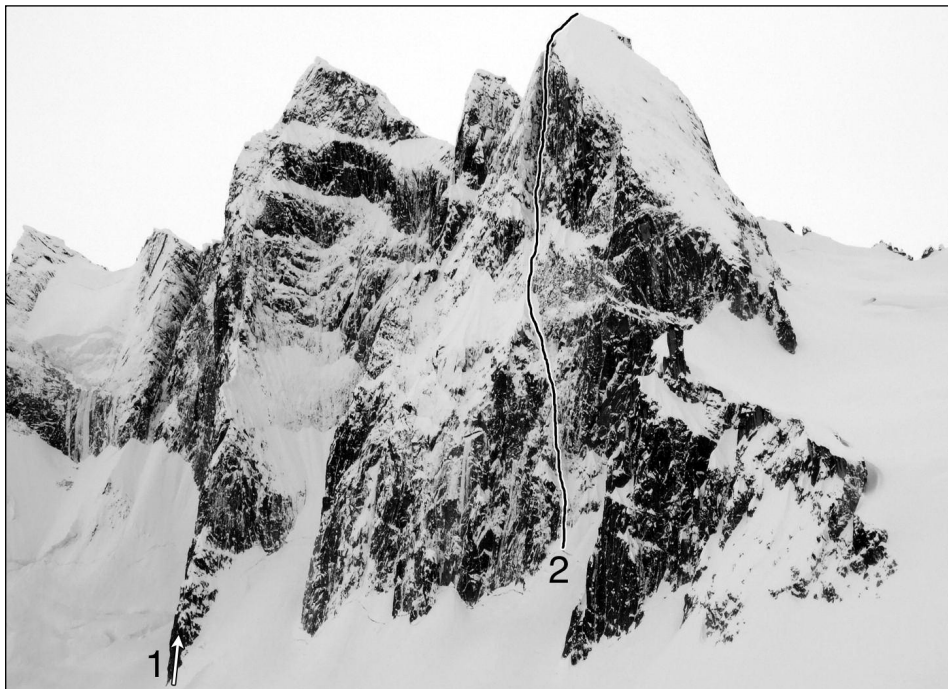
None of us protested when Paul Claus arrived a day ahead of schedule, offering to take us out before a large weather system closed in. We recommend future parties consider starting earlier in the year for solider conditions.

JOHN MCQUESTON, AAC

COAST MOUNTAINS

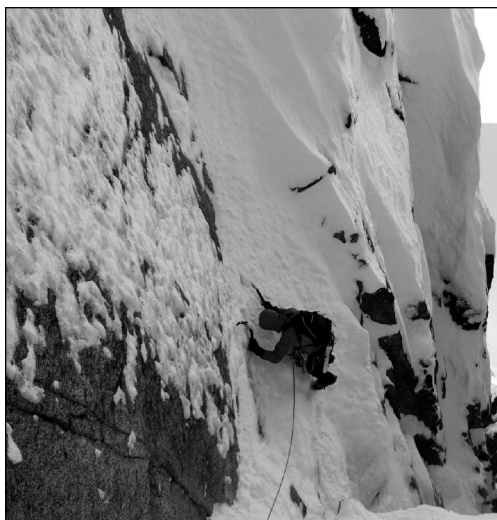
West Mendenhall Tower, Great White Conqueror. In March, with the help of a Mugs Stump Award, my new friend Sam Magro and I went looking for steep ice and mixed lines on the north side of the Mendenhall Towers. After we arrived the weather fell apart, and for two weeks we endured the most extreme storm either of us had known. We had to abandon terrestrial life and spend five days in a snow cave, leaving only occasionally to relieve ourselves. After dropping 20'+ of snow, the storm left to make someone else's life miserable. So we were left with this 2,500' unclimbed north face of the West Tower and blue skies.

The first day out, we started up the face to the left of the central gully, but it didn't have much ice on it. I took a little whipper [40-footer—Ed.], and we called it a day. We returned the



The Mendenhall Towers: (1) Rain, Heavy at Times (Maselko-Pawlowski-Sorric, 2001), climbs the north arête of the East Tower. (2) Great White Conqueror (Johnson-Magro, 2008), on the West Tower. *Ryan Johnson*

next morning, and, after some pick-dulling frustration, we gave up on that objective and around noon started up the central gully. It was perfect 80° névé, overhanging at times and with lots of sustained steep mixed climbing. We found a cozy little bivy, crawled into our sleeping bag, and caught a few hours of shuteye. The next morning we got a reasonable start and began the upper headwall. It seemed like every pitch had massive chockstones, but just when the climbing started to feel a little dicey, you would swing into bomber névé. We punched our way to the top just before sunset and enjoyed a 100-mile view in every direction. A two-hour descent down the west ridge, with a single rappel, had us back on the glacier on March 28.



Sam Magro on the Great White Conqueror. *Ryan Johnson*

The Great White Conqueror (2,500', V M5 AI4 A1) was the first ascent of the north face of the West Mendenhall Tower.

RYAN JOHNSON, AAC