

### California

*Northeast Ridge of the Thumb, Palisade Group, Sierra Nevada.* The Thumb had never been climbed from the east or northeast by any of the nine parties that had ascended the peak prior to 1957. From a high camp on the southern Middle Palisade Glacier, Leigh and Irene Ortenburger noticed a deep couloir leading up the northeast side of the peak to the northeast ridge. This we climbed September 12, 1957. Three chockstones provide interest but no real difficulty. We abandoned the couloir near its head and climbed the wall to the right to gain a knife-edged ridge which led directly to the main northeast ridge. The climbing was exposed and enjoyable until the final step was reached. Here it was necessary to work out onto the left face of the ridge, where an interesting system of ledges led upwards. Once this was passed, we easily reached the summit, which affords an excellent view of the southern portion of the Palisades. On the descent we rappelled to pass the steep step in the ridge.

LEIGH ORTENBURGER

### ALASKA

*Attempt on Mount McKinley.* On June 25 an eight-man expedition sponsored by The Mountaineers, consisting of Jon Hisey, Jerry Cate, Alan Van Buskirk, Larry Heggerness, Aldon Haug, LeRoy Annis, Larry Annis, and Kenn Carpenter (leader), arrived at McGonagall Pass eight days from Wonder Lake, enroute to Mount McKinley by the usual Muldrow Glacier route. Three of the eight days were used crossing the mile-wide McKinley River whose illogical antics caused several near tragedies. Some 20 channels across its width were between two and five feet deep, and their depth changed seemingly by the hour as the swift current ate out one and filled up another. Equally frustrating was the irregular water level which rose 16 inches in a 20-hour period, and at one time four inches in two hours. Since rainfall was negligible, the strange run-off can only be attributed to the phenomenal glacier conditions on the Muldrow.

At McGonagall Pass a *new* and disheartening Muldrow Glacier stretched for miles before us. Where last year's photos show a relatively smooth glacier, there was now a continuous maze of jumbled séracs and huge crevasses 50 feet wide that stretched half a mile across the glacier. In many places the glacier had dropped hundreds of feet, as if a huge melt-cavern underneath had collapsed, leaving a 500-foot ice cliff clinging to the north valley wall, the ridge on which we were standing. With dimmed hopes we selected a route up the glacier edge, always traveling on top of the hanging ice cliff with the ever present drop-off on our left. Eight

miles up the glacier and four days later we unanimously called it quits. Beyond this point, because of impending rock cliffs, we would have to go up the middle of the glacier, but there we could see absolutely no feasible route. Moreover, the hanging ice cliff by which we had just traveled was daily deteriorating. Gigantic chunks of ice, some the size of a small house, were breaking off with great regularity to go booming down to the glacier below.

On the return, two days were spent at Gunsight Pass making observations. The low point of the main glacier here was 830 feet below the pass, with the ice cliff consisting of an upper 260-foot pitch and a lower 250-foot pitch separated by a shelf 350 feet wide. From the pass we climbed Gunsight Peak on the north, and on June 30 the first main peak on the ridge to the south. Thirteen gallons of kerosene were cached at Gunsight Pass.

KENN CARPENTER, *Mountaineers*

*Ascents above the Lower Muldrow Glacier, McKinley Range.* Our group was unusual because of age. Leaving me out, but counting our "old men"—Harvard graduate students Harold Boeschstein and Roger Dane, and the latter's wife Lee—our average was only 19 years. The others, Douglas Bingham, James Estabrook, Francis Blake and Barrett Morgan, were all schoolboys. We were there at an interesting time, for the normally stagnant, black lower Muldrow Glacier was in utter turmoil. Something, possibly an earthquake, in the spring of the year had apparently upset the equilibrium of the glacier and had set it in headlong motion, in much the same way as the Black Rapids Glacier in 1937. Aerial photographs show an unprecedented rate of advance. The usually flat surface of the lower Muldrow was contorted into an unstable, everchanging gallery of huge, fancifully sculptured séracs. Different every day, we found black and white pandas, busty old women, white rabbits with long ears, even a black mammy helping her pickaninny up the cliff. On the central Muldrow these grotesque statues crashed continually into the fingerlike acres of blue lakes formed by trapped melt-water which could find no exit.

On June 23, 1957 we left the road to Wonder Lake at Mile 87½ to pack our supplies 15 miles up the eastern trough of the Muldrow to Base Camp in a flowery meadow at the foot of Anderson Pass. The pack route was good; it rained every night but never while we were working. On June 30 we set up Base Camp in the shadow of icy peaks that rose 5000 feet above us.

Although worried that the side glaciers which enter the Muldrow might