

The South Face of Mount McKinley

RICCARDO CASSIN

Translated by Marco T. Einaudi

EVEN THE BIRTH OF OUR EXPEDITION

was difficult and — sorrowful: the idea of our climb on Mount McKinley had been urged by the well known climber from Lecco, Carlo Mauri, but a skiing accident at Courmayeur in February prevented his participation. We finally chose our group from climbers of the Lecco Section of the Italian Alpine Club: Annibale Zucchi, Gigi Alippi, Luigino Airoldi, Jack Canali and Romano Perego.

On June 5, I set foot for the first time on American soil, a country which is still somewhat legendary for Europeans: legendary her history, legendary her numerous great men, her progress, her spirit of liberty. And, I say it with complete sincerity, I was not disillusioned by this first contact with the United States; only, at times, I was astonished by people and customs which were new to me. Almost as if in a dream, the great conglomeration of New York and later of Boston returns to mind; and suddenly, quite clearly I see the kind face of Dr. Washburn, who hardly knows his great and unselfish contribution to our expedition: photographs, maps, explanations. He gave me essential insight into our undertaking, which, added to facts given to me in Italy by Piero Meciani, gave me, even before arriving, a clear picture of the difficulties which awaited us.

In Anchorage, Alaska, on June 11, I met Don Sheldon, the flyer who, with his small airplane equipped with skis, would transport men and equipment to the base of the south face of McKinley. Together we left by plane for Talkeetna, the last inhabited place on our itinerary, and from there we approached McKinley; in this way I examined at first hand this majestic mountain. I saw the south face: an imposing wall of rock and ice where it would be difficult to pioneer a route. Not that I had to come this far to realize this, but it is always different to find one's self physically in front of the adversary.

By previous understanding, Bob Goodwin, a well known American climber, was to join us, but time went by without news from him. I decided we could no longer count on him. The days passed quickly as we worked

intensely, moving men and equipment from Anchorage to Talkeetna and from there to the actual base of the south face. On June 17 Bob Goodwin reached me by telephone in Anchorage; he was late in getting in touch with me because he had been on Mount Russell.

Our starting point, chosen from information given by Dr. Washburn, had been fixed as close to the actual start of the climb as could be reached by Sheldon. With experienced skill, Don Sheldon transferred men and equipment to the zone of action. A large part of the equipment was dropped four miles higher, to keep the climbers' work to a minimum. Unfortunately, the spot where we were left was not exactly the prearranged one. The misunderstanding was cleared up when it was shown that it would have been impossible to land on the exact spot because of snow conditions, but this cost us considerable effort in the succeeding days. In reality we were on the Northeast Kahiltna Glacier instead of the East Kahiltna. Jack Canali, Gigi Alippi and Bob Goodwin remained to recover equipment, while I returned to rejoin the rest in Talkeetna. For the first time the area began to show its true character: bad weather seemed to have taken up permanent residence there. Don Sheldon was able to fly shuttle again only on June 24, but he could land as late as nine P.M., because in this high latitude, it never becomes absolutely dark. With varying results, I have taken photographs as late as eleven P.M.

No one else can help us from here: only our own discipline, self-sacrifice and physical resistance. Slowly, slowly, almost as a miracle in the frozen solitude of the mountains, our small camp grows, a few brightly colored tents on the white expanse of the glacier. The south face of McKinley rises imposingly above us, and our eyes frequently rest on it with unconcealed apprehension. Our hopes of conquest remain high. Bob Goodwin is a good climber, skillful and in good physical condition. It is too bad that he will not be able, because of his job, to stay with us for the final victory.

Besides the exhilaration of climbing a mountain such as McKinley by a new and difficult route, there are daily chores: cleaning tents, cooking, washing dishes, shoveling snow, greasing boots. As expedition leader, I have other tasks too, such as acting as "head of the family", holding morale high, keeping my diary up to date, writing letters to remain in touch with the rest of the world, and taking movie films and photographs. My diary records negatively on the weather; it was snowing on July 1, snowing on July 2, snowing on July 3, though on the first we had been able to reach the landing area to transfer more equipment to the tents at Base Camp. I dedicated that evening to the preparation of a very fine meal. In our ice-box (vast, spectacular, economical, as large and picturesque as all the

surrounding panorama) were trout, caught during the days of bad weather at Talkeetna. What a joy it was to cook and later to watch my companions devour the fish, including Goodwin, an excellent companion, whom I had chosen for tentmate. It was unfortunate that the reciprocal ignorance of the other's language hindered our conversations. This may be why Goodwin slept, slept. How he slept!

July 4. The weather is still bad. Only in the afternoon can we take a quick trip to the landing area, from which we return loaded with equipment. In the tent, we discuss the program for the coming days. Since it never gets quite dark, we often forget the time and stay up too late, though we need the sleep.

July 5. At last towards noon the sun comes out. We decide to attack the couloir, which we climb on the right side where a few rocks crop out, and reach a smaller gully. Here it starts to snow again. We continue nevertheless until it gets late and fix ropes on the return. It is 8:30 as we arrive at the tents, where Luigino and Bob have prepared the hoped-for supper. Then the usual discussions, the usual chatter.

July 6. Finally a beautiful day, though a turbulent cloud at the bottom of the valley warns us against excessive illusions about the weather's stability. We climb the couloir with the help of the fixed ropes, though the steps we cut yesterday have disappeared. We are heavily loaded. At yesterday's high point, we go to work on rock covered with *verglas*; Jack Canali leads and has to exert himself to overcome the passage. Gigi Alippi climbs the even more difficult next rope-length. It has started to snow, but we continue. Gigi surmounts an overhang with the use of a stirrup. At a small saddle a large granite block appears in front of us; Gigi climbs it with difficulty but announces that it is impossible to continue higher. I give immediate instructions to Romano Perego to traverse to the left, where it appears it might "go". I join him at the end of the traverse and we gaze upwards together, but the fog is too thick; it is getting late. We arrive at our tents at nine P.M.; we shall have to start much earlier in the morning. One thing is certain: the couloir which we shall have to climb above our highest point of today is not the one marked on the map by Dr. Washburn at 11,690 feet, but rather an adjoining one which ends 650 feet higher. When we return to Base Camp, Bob and Luigino, who is recovering from a minor infection, have just returned from the landing site with a heavy load of food and a tent.

July 7. Rapidly we arrive at the saddle we reached yesterday. Annibale, Jack, Gigi and Romano make the traverse to the left. Meanwhile, after having dug an adequate shelf and cached food and equipment, Bob and I descend. The others remain to reconnoiter. After the group returns, I decide

that it is useless and harmful to continue to work the south face *en masse*, until we have found the key to the passage which bars our movement.

July 8. Yesterday, before returning to Base Camp, I had caught a glimpse of a possible route. Today Annibale, Romano and I investigate it. But also on this side it will not "go". Again we descend to Base Camp without appreciable progress.

July 9. Luigino insists that his "convalescence" has ended and today he will climb with Jack and Gigi. From the high point they succeed in reaching the previously sighted, open chimney, encountering difficulties of grades 4 and 5. The chimney is discouraging, but there they finally catch a glimpse of the solution: to descend the couloir which leads to the other saddle above the tower. The saddle is just below the narrow ridge which ascends to the hanging glacier situated halfway up the face and clearly shows on Dr. Washburn's map. The climbers descend *en rappel*, cross the couloir, climb the adjoining wall, and return to the couloir above the overhang. Meanwhile it has gotten late and, as usual, it is snowing. But before turning back, during a brief break in the weather, they catch a glimpse of the upper saddle above the couloir. There is no doubt that it can be reached, but it will be difficult.

July 10. A strong wind has been blowing all night. Several times we have had to check the tent guys. Then the sun comes out but down the valley we see the usual indications of unstable weather. Shortly after seven Jack, Gigi and Bob leave. I finish writing, but the wind does not stop; on the contrary it increases to the point where it nearly flattens the "Pamir" tent. Luckily the material is so strong that it resists extremely well. The wind-lashed cloth sounds like a machine-gun nest in action. When I leave the tent to check the food, a gust of wind almost knocks me off my feet. Then the wind dies down, and logically it starts to snow. Worrying about our three companions, I frequently go out to examine the couloir and to listen. Finally at 9:30 P.M., I see all three appear, encrusted with ice.

July 11. Luigino is first on the rope; Annibale is carrying the "Pamir" tent which will be used at Camp I; I, as usual am lugging cameras. We reach the ledge under the granite tower where I had thought of placing Camp I. Our intent is to get to the narrow snow ridge which leads to the glacier. Luigino first tries but can not continue. Annibale takes over, this time a little to the right in the direction of the gully, and hammering in four pitons, he succeeds in climbing 40 meters. He continues upwards towards the ridge in dangerous knee-deep, new snow. He gains the ridge, but the fog is so thick that we can not see what lies above. It is already nine P.M., and we descend as fast as possible along the fixed ropes to Base Camp.

July 12. Romano, Gigi and Jack leave at 7:30, heavily loaded, to establish Camp I on the second saddle and to reconnoiter the snow ridge. Meanwhile the rest of us remain at Base Camp.

July 13. With heavy loads, Annibale, Luigino and I arrive at Camp I around three and are just about to leave when Jack, Gigi and Romano return from reconnaissance above. They have seen the ridge. It is almost a kilometer long and of dry, unstable snow, lying on a base of hard ice. They have pitched a "Nepal" tent at the site of Camp II. We others return to Base Camp, while Jack and Gigi remain at Camp I to spend the night. Tomorrow Jack and Gigi will carry loads to Camp II and then reconnoiter a route through the initial icefall of the hanging glacier. Annibale and Romano will ascend, fully equipped, from Base Camp to Camp I. Luigino and I will go to the landing area to collect mail.

July 14. Yesterday Bob Goodwin, waiting for Sheldon at the landing area, could catch only a glimpse of the climbers on the ridge through the clouds. Today, however, is a beautiful day. McKinley is a spectacle to see! With binoculars we can pick out the smallest details of the route which separates us from the summit. At one o'clock we distinctly see Jack and Gigi, as silhouettes, emerge above the first icefall of the hanging glacier and head towards the center where the rock buttress outcrops. We see them disappear among the rocks. From where we stand it would seem more logical to ascend the ice gully on the left. Though we had hoped to wait for Sheldon's arrival, we must return to Base Camp. We say goodbye to our dear friend, Bob Goodwin, whose work at home demands his return with Don's next flight.

July 15. From Camp I, Annibale and Romano reach Camp II. They then continue to the gully reached by Jack and Gigi and beyond, climbing an icy, open chimney and encountering grade 5 difficulties. Much higher, at 17,000 feet, they find an adequate site for Camp III. They descend to spend the night at Camp II. Meanwhile Luigino and I reach Camp I with a "Pamir" tent. During the climb we meet Jack and Gigi, who are on their way to Base Camp.

July 16. Bad, foggy weather! Luigino and I climb to Camp II and set up a "Pamir" and a "Nepal" tent. The weather gets worse and it snows all night. From Base Camp, Jack and Gigi have reached Camp I and spend the night there with the other two.

July 17. Since it is still snowing heavily, Luigino and I descend to Camp I where we find the others, laughing and joking, all in one tent. Towards five, the weather clears. I give the alarm and, fully equipped, we leave happily for Camp II, reaching it at ten o'clock, still in daylight.

July 18. At seven, in lovely weather, we set out in two ropes of three for Camp III. Halfway up the hanging glacier, we see Sheldon's plane land. After taking off, he attempts to reach us with his small plane, spiral after spiral; but with his and Bob's weight, he can not get up to our altitude! With shovel and ice axes we level off a small area at Camp III and erect our two small tents. It is very cold and we are extremely cramped for space.

July 19 and 20. All six of us leave Camp III early, Annibale, Romano and Luigino on the first rope and Gigi, Jack and me on the second. We proceed now into unknown and treacherous terrain in fair weather. Climbing diagonally to the left and then surmounting a very difficult chimney, we arrive at a seemingly endless ice couloir, which we follow to its top. A short slope leads us under a difficult-looking rock wall. After a bite to eat, I decide to try to the left. Another ice couloir leads us to within sight of the summit rocks. Driven by a hard, desperately cold wind, gusts of very fine snow continually lash us furiously and penetrate every opening in our clothing. We feel the altitude. It has become terribly tiring to advance. At one moment we are on hard ice; at another, in dry snow where uncomfortably the crampons do not bite into the ice beneath; then on crust which breaks under our weight. The moment has come when mind and body must be driven forward, the time when we must clench our teeth and push on, making believe that each step is the last one before the summit.

I can no longer use the camera because the wind-driven snow encrusts the lens. The summit rocks are difficult, especially for the first rope-lengths. A reconnaissance plane circles closely above us. We feel relief, consolation, as if we suddenly were less isolated in our painful fatigue, closer to the rest of the world! At nine in the evening we surmount the rock; then a steep ice slope takes us to the summit. Jack again complains of cold feet. We are all congealed.

It is eleven P.M. With stiff, cold hands we open the packs; out come the banners. In this strange, unreal light, their bright colors blend — flags of the United States, Alaska, Italy, Lecco and the Club Alpino Italiano. We shall also leave statuettes of saints and a crucifix given us in Italy in testimony of many things. I shall attempt to take some photographs, but the lack of light and the snow make it nearly impossible. As always, not one of us is in the proper mental state to feel the joy of our conquest. The difficulties are not over until everyone has descended to safety. We can not utter a word in the intense cold. A short, silent embrace by six frigid men, tried by fatigue, ends the short moment on the summit. We must descend. The satisfaction of victory will come later.

As we are about to leave the summit rocks, I see Jack, who has given his

all, bend over with nausea on the snow. We have been climbing for 17 hours, having eaten only a little cooked fruit. Miraculously, Jack recovers. A little later, while Gigi descends a very steep slope, a sudden, sinister rustle makes me turn my head; seeing Jack hurtling downwards, I spring onto my ice axe and drive it into the snow. As the rope tightens violently, Jack comes to a halt. He is nauseated again. I take over as anchor man in order to watch what goes on below me. Jack descends with great difficulty, complaining of extremely cold feet. At the bottom of the ice couloir, we abandon pitons and carabiners, equipment we shall no longer need, and we start the traverse.

Jack seems to have recovered. He is a strong person and is now moving faster. Annibale, Gigi, Luigino and Romano are in good shape. When we arrive at the chimney, where we have to rappel, Annibale and Jack lower themselves first, for Jack's suffering from frostbite increases and he must descend as fast as possible. Yet it is six the next morning before we are all together again in Camp III, after climbing for 23 hours, 17 on the ascent and six on the descent, in continually bad weather. It is snowing heavily and the wind is strong. After removing crampons and ropes, we go to work. We have to melt snow for a comforting drink and something to eat. I immediately start to rub Jack's feet, already blue and lacking all feeling. We all try to cheer him up, but even in the eyes of Gigi I seem to read the question which weighs heavily on my mind: with our companion in this condition, how will he reach Base Camp? Gigi has prepared a hot orange drink, which disappears quickly. After the massage with Foile cream, Jack's feet are covered with two pairs of wool socks and the "elephant foot". We drink some warm milk with Ovaltine and eat something solid. But everybody's thoughts are fixed on our friend Jack, even though no one speaks. If his condition were so bad that he could not stand, what would happen to all of us? Also Romano and Luigino reveal slightly frostbitten hands and feet. We crowd into the small tents, tents which are small even for two people. No one sleeps; no one thinks of moving; the hours pass in dozing anxiety. Every gust of wind which hits the tent makes me jump. I listen for sounds from Jack, but I hear nothing. He seems to be sleeping.

Around two P.M. I check the weather. Though it is still snowing and very cold, the wind has died down. I decide to continue the descent. Jack and Romano at first can not fit on their boots, but finally Romano succeeds with a painful effort. Jack is unsuccessful, so Gigi generously offers him his reindeer boots and protects his own feet with four pairs of socks covered with boot covers. It has become colder and the wind has resumed. We therefore put off the departure and take refuge in the tents once again. By

now I notice that my feet are also very cold. We pass the time nibbling food and I massage Jack's feet. They have swollen and lost all color — worse than before. He does not even feel my most vigorous rubbing. Finally physical fatigue wins and I fall asleep. Many times during the night I awaken from the cold and the wind. I too have lost feeling in my feet.

July 21. It is still snowing but the wind has stopped. It is eight o'clock; I decide to continue the descent. We take the tents and load ourselves with the indispensable. Luigino, Gigi and Romano go ahead; Annibale and I follow with Jack between us. Gigi, with only boot covers on his feet and no crampons, is helped by Romano on the difficult parts. We proceed well on the glacier; the fixed ropes are our salvation and an absolute necessity for Gigi with his footgear. About halfway down the hanging glacier, Gigi slips. Romano's belay does not hold, but by some miracle, I grab their rope and stop the fall. Meanwhile Luigino can not find the exit to the icefall in the fog. He finally finds the stake, buried in the fresh snow, with the rope hanging from it. Romano, exhausted by the job of continually helping Gigi, slips and ends up below the icefall on a level spot covered with new snow. He is unhurt.

We finally reach Camp II, where Gigi, Romano and Luigino will spend the night. Gigi will be able to put on a pair of spare boots. Annibale, Jack and I must continue on at all costs — a long halt might let Jack's condition become so much worse that he could no longer stand. We disappear into the thick mist and push on gropingly to Camp I, where we stop to sleep. Jack, despite his condition, is a prodigy of physical and moral strength; Annibale is inexhaustible. A lack of fuel keeps us from preparing enough liquid to quench the terrible thirst which torments us. We can only prepare a small amount of warm orange drink; everything else is frozen and inedible. We resign ourselves to eating sugar mixed with snow and ovaltine. Jack starts to complain about his feet. The massage done with Gelovit has started to work, but the reaction is so painful that poor Jack can not remain still, groaning and tossing about continuously. We can not sleep until towards morning he calms down. Several times we had to leave the tent to free it of heavily falling snow. But we can not complain — the "Pamir" tent is a palace compared to the small "Nepal" tents!

July 22. It is still snowing, but at ten we decide to leave. Jack has great difficulty in climbing, but he manages well in the couloir where one silent slide of fresh, fluffy snow follows another. Though not dangerous, the sliding snow penetrates into every opening and fold of our clothing. We reach the stirrups; Jack manages beautifully. On the rock below, one of my crampons comes loose, and with anguish I watch it plunge towards the valley. We finally reach the traverse of the first glacier. We cross to the

top of the first couloir. Our hopes rest on the fixed ropes, often hard to find in the new snow. Towards the bottom of the couloir, a heavy slide sweeps over me, snatches me downwards and crushes me for an eternity against the icy slope. "I am finished," I think automatically, but I manage to cling to the rope. When at last it is over, I notice that I have lost the other crampon. I can not remember where I am, but Jack's voice brings me back. No damage, but it will be difficult without crampons. We continue downwards, reach the bergschrund, where a thick layer of fresh snow awaits us. We fight the white blanket and swim through it. And, at last, we reach the tents of Base Camp . . . back to life!

We unrope remove our packs and dive into the big tent, where our infernal thirst is quenched by some good beer. We light the stove and are at long last able to heat up some decent drinks, some fruit juice . . . we drink and eat; finally we feel alive once more! I settle Jack in my tent. We massage his feet and put a flask of warm lemonade next to him. Annibale and I put the camp to order before trying to catch some sleep. But it is destined to be another sleepless night; Jack can not keep from moaning from pain. Towards morning he quiets down, and we fall into a fitful sleep.

July 23. At nine o'clock I stick my head out of the tent to look around. The sky is cloudless; the panorama is a resplendant white. The mountains are in movement. Continuous snow slides disturb the apparent calm, breaking the silence with their soft whispers. We can not help but worry about our companions who are still up there. Today the couloir is the scene of heavier slides, accompanied by blocks of ice and rock. I make a quick calculation—it has been snowing for 75 hours without an appreciable break! At 8:30 P.M. we hear distant voices. We scramble out of the tents. There they are! They are at the top of the first couloir, which has been swept clean, down to black ice.

July 24. This evening we improvise a sled of canvas and with Jack seated on it, we joyfully make our way to the landing site. Even before we get there, we spot Sheldon's plane. Don lands and comes on foot to greet us. He is surprised at Jack's condition, but when we tell him of our victory, he explodes into resounding shouts of joy. We load Jack onto the plane. Don will return tomorrow for us, as we still have equipment to gather at the landing site.

July 25. When I return with the second load from Base Camp, I notice that Sheldon has taken away Luigino and Romano. A short time later he is back and I leave with all the equipment possible, leaving Gigi and Annibale to be picked up the next day. At Talkeetna I find Luigino and Romano waiting for me. We immediately board a plane for Anchorage. Luigino and Romano are brought right to the hospital, where Jack is undergoing treat-

ment, for they too have suffered frostbite. Happily Jack will recover and will be able to climb again. Only Gigi and Annibale remain unscathed from this contact with McKinley. They arrive in Talkeetna the following day, where I have returned to await them.

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To think back on the expedition to McKinley is a joy to me. We had the feeling that in our modest undertaking there was something substantial and valid for everyone: a human or ethical content, valid even for those who are not climbers which repaid us for all our suffering and all our sacrifices.

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Technical Account

(Translated by Ursula Corning)

From the landing place for Don Sheldon's Pipercub on the northeast Kahiltna Glacier, keeping towards the rocks on the extreme left of the huge glacier, we climbed up to 3450 meters (11,319 feet), where we established Base Camp, between two crevasses, right under the enormous spur of the south face of Mount McKinley. At the same altitude and 200 meters from Base Camp, we started the attack on the steep ice couloir. The description of the route follows. After crossing the bergschrund, keep somewhat to the right of the couloir until you reach a large rock overhang (about 100m above the bergschrund). Here keep to the edge of the rocks to avoid rockfall (about another 100m). Leave the rocks and ascend the ice slope for another four rope-lengths (about 150m) until the couloir narrows. Here keep to the right between the rocks and ice for another two rope-lengths (about 80m). Cross the couloir, which is now extremely narrow, and climb the rocks on the left (about 40m). Here begins a very difficult rock climb (grade 4+). Finally the couloir becomes a mere funnel (2 rope-lengths, about 80m). The last obstacle before reaching the arête is an overhanging rock face (grade 5 superior). Cut steps on ice and snow for one rope-length (about 40m.). For this first couloir we used about 10 ice pitons, 15 rock pitons and 500m of fixed rope.

On the left side of the arête, go diagonally down for about 40m; then climb for 5m up a small face. Traverse an ice slope for about 60m until a rock is reached. From here traverse approximately another 20m and then climb diagonally to the left for about 40m up difficult pitches of rock and ice (grade 4), which lead to the foot of some smooth granite slabs. Continue to bear left, climbing gradually below granite slabs for 40m. From here climb straight up the slabs by a number of cracks and ledges (grade 4 to 5 for about 40m), arriving at some broad shelves covered with ice. Two more rope-lengths with rock and ice lead to a snowy terrace under an enormous, reddish-granite overhang (about 50m). Turn left, ascending an icy funnel; then skirt a huge rock to reach the base of a large, smooth, overhanging dihedral. From the first couloir to this point we used about 230m of fixed rope, 4 ice pitons and 15 rock pitons.

From here, climb about 40m by means of fixed ropes and stirrups to a very steep ice couloir under a big overhang of green ice (40m, grade 6). Cross the couloir to the rocks on its left, ascend very difficult pitches of rock and ice (about 40m), keeping to the left and then bear right still on difficult rock covered with ice for one

rope length until you reach the steep couloir above the ice overhang. Another five rope-lengths reach the col. By this means the impossible rock towers are avoided. From the crossing of the second couloir to the col we used 320m of fixed rope, 7 ice pitons and 15 rock pitons.

Camp I: 1 "Pamir" tent, 1 "Nepal" tent, 13,300 feet.

From Camp I traverse upward to the right to below a crack in the rock face above the camp (2 rope-lengths). Climb the rock face by a very difficult pitch (80m with fixed ropes). Traverse to the left, climbing diagonally up snow and ice slopes for one rope-length to the ice arête covered with powder snow. Follow this treacherous and difficult ridge for about 700m till you reach the hanging glacier of the spur. As well as the 80m of fixed rope, we used 5 rock pitons and 2 ice pitons.

Camp II: 1 "Pamir" tent, 2 "Nepal" tents, 14,200 feet.

Climb about 200m to the left above Camp II under the hanging glacier to the first crevasse, which cuts the whole breadth of the glacier. Ascend the ice overhang on the left, taking the easiest line (3 ice pitons, 2 wooden pickets and about 25m of fixed rope). Continue this fatiguing climb on the hanging glacier, keeping diagonally to the right and finally reaching a strategic point on the final bergschrund (length of the hanging glacier from the first crevasse to the top is about 350m). Cross the bergschrund and continue the ascent up some very difficult pitches. Three rope-lengths towards the right and towards the spur lead to an even more difficult rock pitch. Climb a difficult rock dihedral the edge of which is covered with *verglas* for two rope-lengths before getting onto easier terrain. One final rope-length leads to a difficult rock passage (50m, grade 5). Then an easy ascent leads to Camp III. From the hanging glacier to Camp III, 220m of fixed rope, 8 ice pitons, 17 rock pitons.

Camp III: 2 "Nepal" tents, 5200 meters (17,061 feet).

From Camp III climb 200m up snow and ice bearing left to an ice-filled couloir, which is very difficult. Leave the couloir on the left for two rope-lengths (8 rock pitons). Grade 4 or 5 climbing to the left leads to a long, steep snow couloir. Five rope-lengths lead to a large, flattish snowfield with a rock bastion at its upper end. Follow the snowfield to under the rocks and traverse for about 100m on mixed ice and rock up to a steep ice slope. Continue to the left and then climb diagonally for several rope-lengths to a flat place at the foot of a long, steep snow couloir (about 400m long). At its upper end climb diagonally to the right over mixed ice and rock to the spur. Continue climbing to the foot of a rock tower, which is ascended by means of a chimney with one very difficult pitch (2 rock pitons). Continue up the spur to the summit. From Camp III to the summit, 15 rock pitons, 100m of fixed rope; 17 hours to the summit, 6 hours for the return to Camp III.

Total time for ascent and descent: 19 days.

Summary of Statistics

AREA: Alaska Range.

ASCENT: Mount McKinley, 20,320 feet, July 19, 1961 (whole party except Goodwin)—first ascent of the South Face.

PERSONNEL: Riccardo Cassin, leader; Luigi Airolidi, Luigi Alippi, Giancarlo Canali, Romano Perego, Annibale Zucchi, Italians; Robert Goodwin, American.

