

Climbs and Expeditions

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UNITED STATES

Alaska

Climbing in Mount McKinley National Park. About 680 mountaineers climbed on the major peaks of Mount McKinley National Park and Denali National Monument. As in previous years, nearly a third of the climbers travelled to Alaska from foreign countries. Eighteen Japanese expeditions and eight German parties climbed in the park and monument along with groups from Belgium, Ireland, Korea, Switzerland, Sweden, Mexico, England, Canada, France, and Iceland. The overall success ratio for climbers was approximately 60%. Sixteen climbers were involved in major accidents and three climbers were killed in accidents on Mount Hunter and Mount McKinley. The northeast ridge of Mount Foraker (via Mount Crosson) was climbed for the first time by an Alaskan party who completed their winter ascent in March. All sections of the route had been previously climbed but this was the first time that the entire route was completed in one trip. Later in the summer, a climbing team from Oregon made first ascents of the south ridge of Mount Huntington and the south face of the South Peak of the Rooster Comb. Another "first" was recorded in May when an Alaskan dog team reached the summit of Mount McKinley via the West Buttress route. A Japanese climber was killed and another injured early in May when a corniced ridge they were traversing collapsed on the west ridge of Mount Hunter. The injured climber was able to make his way alone back to the landing spot on the Kahiltna Glacier. Two Korean climbers were killed and one was seriously injured when they fell descending the upper part of the West Rib on Mount McKinley. The team had reached the summit and were descending when one member lost his footing. The exhausted team

NOTE: All dates in this section refer to 1979 unless otherwise stated.

was unable to stop the fall and slid 1500-2000 feet down the slope. Three West German climbers were evacuated from the West Buttress route after two became seriously ill from cerebral and pulmonary edema. The group had climbed up the mountain far too fast for proper acclimatization, reaching 18,000 feet only four days after beginning their climb. Two other cases of high-altitude pulmonary edema were also caused by rapid ascents. Five cases of pulmonary edema, three cases of cerebral edema, and at least ten cases of acute mountain sickness were reported. Eight climbers reported falls and twenty-two reported receiving some frostbite. More minor cases of acute mountain sickness and frostbite probably occurred but were not reported. The National Park Service was involved in twelve separate incidents where climbing parties required outside assistance or evacuation. These incidents cost the National Park Service approximately \$10,000. Several climbing groups voluntarily paid for the costs of their rescues. Trash left by mountaineers continues to plague the more popular routes on Mount McKinley. Most is left by groups who do not carefully plan in advance. Repacking food into plastic bags before the climb can eliminate a great deal of foil and unnecessary wrappings. This will greatly reduce the amount of trash to be dealt with while on the climb. Groups should carefully plan how much food is necessary for their climb to avoid the necessity of abandoning excess food on the mountain. On certain routes, fixed ropes litter many sections. Fixed ropes should be used as infrequently as is safely possible and should be removed after each climb when feasible. Most importantly, all climbers must make a commitment before they start their climbs that they will bring everything back down with them that they have carried up. Only if this is done will future climbers be able to enjoy the beauty and cleanliness of Alaska's mountains.

MOUNTAINEERING SUMMARY 1979

	<i>Expeditions</i>	<i>Climbers</i>	<i>Successful Climbers</i>
Mount McKinley			
West Buttress	64	240	124
West Buttress (guided)	14	188	165
Muldrow Glacier	1	5	0
Cassin Ridge	8	28	24
Cassin Ridge (guided)	1	3	3
South Face	1	4	0
West Rib	12	54	31
South Buttress	2	9	4
Southeast Face	1	2	0
	<hr/> 104	<hr/> 533	<hr/> 351

Mount Foraker			
Southeast Ridge	3	13	0
Northeast Ridge	2	5	3
Northeast Ridge (guided)	1	6	5
Infinite Spur	1	4	0
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	7	28	8
Mount Hunter	7	19	8
Mount Huntington	4	11	4
Ruth Gorge Peaks	9	32	16
P 12,380	3	6	2
Moose's Tooth	6	16	0
Rooster Comb	2	4	4
Mount Silverthrone	1	2	0
Mount Mather	1	18	0
Mount Brooks	1	2	2
Other Peaks	4	9	3
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GRAND TOTAL	149	680	398

ROBERT GERHARD, *Ranger, Mount McKinley National Park*

Mount Foraker, Sultana Ridge. Roger Cowles, Brian Okonek and I made the second winter ascent of Foraker on March 15 by a route which had been unsuccessfully tried eight times. Eight-and-a-half miles long, it begins only four miles from Kahiltna International, climbs the southeast ridge of 12,800-foot Mount Crosson, traverses P 12,472, then undulates south to Foraker, gaining 14,072 feet and losing 3672 feet in all. From where the northeast ridge begins on Foraker itself, it rises at 35° to 40° for 5750 feet. These final slopes have been climbed at least twice by the Japanese, the top part of their hari-kiri route from the Kahiltna. Every part of the route had been climbed; it just hadn't been done all together. Views of Denali, Hunter and down to the spruce and cottonwood at the ends of the Foraker and Straightaway Glaciers are superb. The route is technically easy, but exposed to any weather that comes along. Take extra food, fuel and books; most attempts run out and rescues have had to be made. We named the ridge "Sultana" to preserve the Tanana name for the peak. Previous experience taught us well. We carried three shovels and no tent, digging caves at 11,000, 11,250, and 12,300 feet. We utilized nearly all climbable weather: seven full and four half-days out of 22. The route can be avalanche-prone in summer.

DAVID JOHNSTON

Mount Foraker, Sultana Ridge, Second Ascent. Phil Ershler, leader, Michael Semansky, Paul Slota, Mark Rowan and I made the second