

UNITED STATES

Alaska

Denali National Park and Preserve Mountaineering Summary, 1984. In 1984, the climbing season in Denali National Park and Preserve began on two notes of sorrow. At age 59, Frances Randall died from cancer. She was known to many as the "Kahiltna Queen" and spent the last nine summers as the 7000-foot Base Camp radio operator on the Kahiltna Glacier. She will long be remembered for her charisma, warm friendship and hospitality at the Kahiltna Base Camp. The second note of tragedy involved Japanese Naomi Uemura, who in February made the first solo winter ascent of the West Buttress route of Mount McKinley. He is presumed to have died during the descent, probably above 14,300 feet. Cold, high winds and poor visibility hindered search. Uemura had completed numerous solo adventures, including the first summer solo ascent of the West Buttress route. The High Latitude Research Group from the University of Alaska did not receive funding for a third year of medical research at 14,300 feet on the West Buttress. The National Park Service Mountaineering Rangers, assisted by volunteer medical doctors and mountaineers, operated a rescue and medical camp at the same location. It reduced both the number and the cost of search and rescue incidents. It helped climbers to detect Acute Mountain Sickness early and, when necessary, coordinated rescues with acclimatized personnel who had communication capabilities. This early detection enabled climbers to descend to lower elevations to acclimatize better before continuing their climb. The Mountaineering Rangers encouraged parties to evacuate their own sick and injured whenever possible. Their evaluations of potential evacuations and better communications with Talkeetna prevented many premature or unnecessary rescues. Rangers were able to emphasize the importance of proper sanitation and trash removal. In 1984 the first littering citation was issued. An Italian party had been contacted by one of the rangers about leaving garbage and abandoning food caches. The citation was issued after they continued to do both at a popular campsite. Again this year, six commercial mountain-guiding concessions and the Outdoor Leadership School were authorized to operate on the McKinley and Foraker massifs. Rangers began actively enforcing the regulations which prohibit other guides from operating commercially on these two mountains. Two citations were issued, one to an American and another to a Japanese guide. There were 222 (31%) of the climbers on McKinley who were guided professionally. Their success rate was 45%. Most guided trips were on the West Buttress, but there were others on the Muldrow route, West Rib and Northwest Buttress. Approximately 695 climbers attempted McKinley, 562 (80%) on the West Buttress. Of those attempting the summit, 324 (46%) were successful. There were 193 (28%) from 15 foreign countries: Japan 33, Switzerland 32, West Germany 29, Austria 21, France 15, Canada 15, Spain 9, New Zealand 9, Czechoslovakia 9, Italy 7, England 6, Netherlands 4, Norway 2, Brazil 1 and Australia 1. Lower than normal temperatures and high winds

created unfavorable conditions during April and May. June weather was excellent but it deteriorated again in nearly all of July. Of the 77 climbers (12%) with symptoms of Acute Mountain Sickness, 52 (67%) were mild, 20 (26%) were moderate and 5 (7%) were severe. There were 32 (5%) who reported frostbite, of whom 3 required hospitalization. New and unusual routes were done. [Mostly reported below.—Editor.] Renato Casarotto soloed a difficult ridge on the South Buttress of McKinley but did not climb to the summit. Czechoslovaks made a difficult new route on the South Face of McKinley to the right of the Cassin. It is exposed to severe falling ice. Canadians climbed a new route on Foraker's east face. Hunter's north buttress couloir was done by a French army team. Canadians made a new route on Huntington's west face and the Rooster Comb's northwest face. In addition to Uemura's disappearance, there was only one other fatality in 1984. In early June, a Swiss guide died when he fell into a crevasse. He was skiing unroped down the West Buttress at 10,700 feet. In April, a British climber, disabled by pulmonary edema, was picked off at 14,000 feet on Foraker in an extremely hazardous helicopter rescue. The victim had disregarded symptoms of Acute Mountain Sickness and delayed his descent until he was incapacitated. Furthermore, this was the second time he had been stricken by high-altitude pulmonary edema. An Alaskan was injured and required a helicopter evacuation after a fall during a traverse of McKinley's South Buttress. The group was off-route and climbing beyond its ability. The fall occurred when the leader had unroped because the rope was too short to let him reach his objective. A German fell at 18,500 feet on the West Buttress and sustained possible internal injuries. His party completed the evacuation to the 14,300-foot medical camp from which he was flown out. The victim carried no ice axe and was probably not roped at the time of the accident. He had made an unusually long ascent that day and probably was suffering from exhaustion and some Acute Mountain Sickness. A guided party on Foraker's southeast ridge was caught in an avalanche that carried them down 800 feet. Fortunately no one was seriously hurt. The same mistakes reoccur time after time. The three most common seem to be 1. Failure to adopt a conservative ascent rate for proper acclimatization. The recommended rate is 1000 feet per day above 10,000 feet; 2. Traveling unroped on Alaska's glaciers. Again this year an experienced climber died in an unroped crevasse fall; 3. Departing for the summit with damp or improper footgear, inadequate food and water and failure to stop to rewarm cold extremities, all sure formulas for frostbite. For further information, contact me at Talkeetna Ranger Station, PO Box 327, Talkeetna, Alaska 99676.

ROBERT R. SEIBERT, *Denali National Park and Preserve*

**DENALI NATIONAL PARK AND PRESERVE
MOUNTAINEERING SUMMARY—1984**

<i>Mount McKinley</i>	<i>Expeditions</i>	<i>Climbers</i>	<i>Successful</i>
West Buttress	114	428	219
West Buttress (Guided)	19	134	79
Muldrow Glacier	3	25	3
Muldrow Glacier (Guided)	1	14	0
West Rib	3	12	2
West Rib (Guided)	3	19	0
Cassin	9	22	7
South Buttress	9	32	7
North West Buttress (Guided)	1	6	4
South Face	<u>1</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>3</u>
	163	695	324
 <i>Mount Foraker</i>	 11	 33	 10
<i>Mount Foraker (Guided)</i>	1	5	0
<i>Mount Hunter</i>	9	25	13
<i>Mount Huntington</i>	7	17	2
<i>Mooses Tooth</i>	2	5	3
<i>Kichatna Spires</i>	1	3	3
<i>Rooster Comb</i>	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>
	32	90	33
TOTAL	195	785	357

Mount McKinley, Ridge of No Return. The Ridge of No Return is the southeast-trending ridge which descends from Point 15,000 on Mount McKinley's South Buttress before ending on the west fork of the Ruth Glacier. It lies approximately one kilometer to the south-southwest of the Isis route. From Base Camp on the Ruth Glacier, I passed solo under the north face of Mount Huntington to arrive at the foot of the route. It begins on a 1000-foot-high triangular snow face at the southern or left end of the enormous snow-and-ice wall which forms the vertical east face of the southeast spur. After reaching its top, in order to continue along the southeast ridge, it is necessary to pass through a series of enormous cornices of all shapes and sizes, overhanging in different directions. Several grade-5 rock towers were passed in this section, although the climbing was predominantly snow and ice. The climbing was always very exposed and dangerous, with many vertical and overhanging sections on both snow and ice, some of the most difficult I have ever encountered. The last 3500 to 4000 vertical feet were climbed first along a snow-and-ice wall, then on mixed ground, and finally on snow and ice again. The steepest part of this section reached 65°. I left Base Camp on April 29 and reached the top of Point 15,000