

Climbers on Mt. Hunter are not required to register with the National Park Service, so statistics are not complete. However, reports indicate that none of the attempts on the mountain were successful.

DENALI NATIONAL PARK REPORTS

Denali, Youngest climber to Reach the Summit. Korean climber Kim Young Sik celebrated his 12th birthday two days before he summited via the West Buttress route on June 27.

DENALI NATIONAL PARK REPORTS

Denali, First Double Amputee to Summit. Korean climber Kim Hong Bin became the first double amputee to summit Denali, which he did via the West Buttress route. Bin had lost both hands to frostbite on a 1991 Denali accident.

DENALI NATIONAL PARK REPORTS

Mt. Hunter, Northeast Buttress, North Couloir. Scott DeCario and I landed on the Kahiltna Glacier's Southeast Fork in mid-May with aspirations to try the *Moonflower* on Mt. Hunter's north buttress. However, the complete absence of high-pressure days failed to elicit the requisite melt-freeze cycles for ice formation on the route. Thus we spent our time wandering aimlessly about the glacier on skis, exploring crevasse fields and cragging on the stable ice seracs at the base of Mt. Francis's east face. One day in late May we decided to head toward a route we had heard of just beyond Hunter's north buttress. In low visibility, we skied to where we guessed the route to be, then sat on our packs and waited for a view. Through a brief clearing emerged a tapering couloir that snaked up the left side of the triangular peak immediately past the North Buttress Couloir and icefall. This peak (*not* the Kahiltna Queen, which is farther northeast) has been called the Northeast Buttress of Mt. Hunter, and is a spur peak off the flanks of Hunter. We crossed the bergschrund and climbed pitch after pitch of old gray ice, with the couloir steepening to 70° as it narrowed toward the obvious crux pitch 1,500 feet up the route. The crux proved to be very difficult thin manky ice and dry-tooling up to 95° with terrible protection. I suspect this pitch is filled with ice and considerably easier in more typical years (when enough sun results in melt-freeze ice). Five hundred more feet of 50-70° ice led to the summit ridge. On the last pitch, ice fall split a large gash in my forehead and eye, causing additional excitement and worry. However, my eyesight returned and the bleeding slowed, so we elected to continue to the summit of the buttress via another 500 feet of easy snow and ice. We rappelled the 2,500-foot route in a storm, being pummeled by constant spindrift avalanches. At Kahiltna base, 21 hours after leaving, we ate, drank, cared for my eye, and called Paul Roderick of T.A.T. for a flight to the comforts of Talkeetna.

KELLY CORDES, *unaffiliated*

Ruth Gorge

Mt. Bradley, South Face, The Gift (That Keeps On Giving). Taking advantage of weather patterns allegedly caused by El Niño, and assurances by Park Ranger Darryl Miller that the win-

ter in the Alaska Range had been “extremely mild,” Jonny Blitz, Steve House and I flew onto the Ruth Glacier on February 28. The first few nights at our 4,400-foot base camp were quite cold (-25 to -30°F), but temperatures moderated thereafter. The camp received approximately ten hours of daylight, increasing by seven minutes per day, and just five hours of sunlight, as the sun rose from behind the Hut Tower and disappeared behind Mt. Wake.

After some reconnaissance and ski touring, we chose a line on Mt. Bradley. Our first attempt ended in retreat. Ice conditions were not ideal: much of what we counted on being ice was thin ice over powder snow or simply frothy snow plastered on the rock. I made a false start on pitch two before backing off and traversing around the offending difficulties. Jonny ran out of rope and ice and eventually, after spending a lot of time searching for anchors, had to belay off his tools. Steve made two attempts on pitch four before finally hanging his pack



Steve House on pitch 11 of The Gift (That Keeps on Giving). MARK F. TWIGHT

on a screw and leading through without it. Unfortunately, these mistakes ate up the daylight and after deciding no one was psyched to lead the sixth pitch, and with no way to aid climb around it, we retreated.

On March 7, we attempted the line again. The sixth pitch, dubbed the “Super Third Eye Opener,” though quite dangerous, wasn’t as difficult as expected and led us out of the initial dead-end gully. We climbed ten pitches the first day, fixing a rope and bivouacking at the bottom of the ninth pitch. Climbing through the headwall on day two was hard enough that we only managed four pitches before another bivy. The most striking pitch on the route, pitch 14, “The Super Giant Waterfall of Love,” was led by House. Steep, bottomless snow led to moderate mixed climbing into a cave behind a free-hanging icicle. House pulled on to the icicle



The south face of Mt. Bradley, showing The Gift (That Keeps on Giving). MARK F. TWIGHT

and made three moves before it snapped off above his tools. He rode it down, ripping the first piece of gear before simultaneously hitting the snow slope and being stopped by a good cam. After a rest, he climbed back into the cave, onto the remaining ice, and through to a steep, but thin pillar. The pitch was very sustained, with dubious protection for 35 meters to a semi-hanging belay below a huge chockstone and snow mushroom—a true two-and-a-half hour lead.

On day three, we opted to leave the bivy gear behind and go as fast as we could for the top or to where difficulty stopped us—“fast” being a relative term, as the 15th pitch (A3) took Blitz three hours to lead. The “Super Three-Hour Pitch” involved aiding off ice tools used as hooks, tied-off knifeblades, real hooks and a lot of back-cleaning (the rack was too small for the type of climbing encountered). The gully opened up above it and we made good progress to a dead-end below another massive chockstone. Two difficult mixed pitches got us past it on the right, and led to more moderate snow. As darkness fell, we confronted yet another chockstone, but managed to sneak through “The Glory Hole” behind it on 90° ice. At 8 p.m. we reached the col at 8,700 feet. Four hundred feet of easy snow separated us from the summit, but true to my nature, we started rappelling, reaching our bivy at 1:30 a.m. We arrived at Base Camp on March 10 after a leisurely descent the next afternoon.

The Gift (That Keeps On Giving) follows a huge gully system west of *The Pearl*, a difficult rock route put up by Andy Orgler on the most obvious pillar dominating the south face. *The Gift...* is 3,200 feet high, and 23 (60m) pitches if you use the rope all the way. Thirteen of these pitches are “hard.” The technical ratings are 5.9 A3 WI6 XX. Our grade, a Texas “two star,” is as ambiguous as any other alpine grade and means absolutely nothing.

MARK F. TWIGHT, *Groupe de la Haute Montagne*

Mt. Huntington, West Face, Attempt. After flying over 1,200 miles of seamless clouds, Brad Grohusky and I were assured that the rumors of a particularly wet season in Alaska were true. The clouds looked just as permanent from below as the Talkeetna Shuttle Service van drove us to the end of the road. Four wet days later, we were still waiting for the weather to clear from the narrow entrance to the Tokositna Glacier. In a magnanimous gesture, our pilot, Jay Hudson, turned around from another flight destination when he saw a window in the weather, and at 10 p.m. on June 13 we moved into our Base Camp on the upper Tokositna Glacier.

Our objective was a new route on the west face of Mt. Huntington that consists of about half rock wall and half mixed climbing. After scoping out the wall and assessing the sizeable avalanche hazard (a result of heavy recent snows), we decided to set our immediate goal as getting up the wall, at which point we would re-evaluate the snow-choked upper sections. On June 14, we hastily packed the haul bag and then broke trail to the base of the wall, thus beginning our daily commute.

The rock was excellent Alaskan granite, although it was even more compact than we'd reckoned from the ground. We soon fell into a routine of getting to the base of the wall before the morning sun made the bergschrund too soft to ascend easily and then alternating days on the lead. Thankfully, the route is well situated and steep enough that any rock/ice fall was off to the sides. This allowed the leader to concentrate on the thin (A3) nailing that comprised the majority of each pitch. At night, the belayer would handle all of the camp chores and we would crawl into our sleeping bags after a typically long Alaskan day.