

basin in the afternoon, we rested and enjoyed a leisurely dinner while waiting for the sun to leave the lower couloir. We started off at 7:30 p.m., but deep soft snow still made progress into the main descent couloir extremely slow. Once gained, however, the snow was considerably firmer and the descent rapid. We returned to camp in steady snowfall, arriving at 1:30 a.m.

DAVE WILLS, *United Kingdom*

Thunder Mountain, Attempt and Air Time. On May 12, Jim Donini and I flew into the Tokositna Glacier to attempt a route on the south side of Thunder Mountain. The climb, which splits two huge rock buttresses, is a 3,000-foot alpine gully capped with a beautiful 600-foot ice ribbon leading to the summit snowfields.

On our first attempt it was still dark when we got to the base of the initial icefall, a pillar of overhanging choss that wouldn't take any protection and barely held tools. Donini found a traverse to the left that in seven pitches took us around the icefall and deposited us 150 feet above the start of the icefall. A few pitches of steep gunbarrel-type gullies led to the icefield below the ribbon, and by 5:30 p.m., we were looking up at four pitches of incredible ice. Unfortunately, it was dumping heavily on us, the descent was going to be an exploration and Donini had broken a crampon. So we bailed, leaving a fixed rope over the rotten ice so we could cruise it on our return.

The next time up, I was belaying Donini in the gunbarrel when a chunk of something came down and whacked me in the arm. Bailed again.

Finally on May 21, we got ourselves to the ribbon at a decent hour. It was 8:30 a.m. when I swung my tool into the start of 600 feet of perfect Alaskan ice. Donini got the next pitch, a stepped, rampy kind of thing that ended in a hanging belay below the final steep pitch. The first 80 feet was another section of perfect plastic, and I protected it with three bomber screws. Then it ramped back to 50 feet of névé and snow and was capped by the final 15 vertical feet that led to the summit snowfields. The ice here was rotten, though, and a stubby screw that barely held its own weight was about ten feet below me when I fell. It pulled, of course, so there was about 80 feet of slack in the rope when I went flying by Donini, harpooning him with my crampons on the way past.

When I came to, I realized that both my feet were hosed. I put in a couple of screws, equalized them and tied in, and Donini rapped down to me, discovering on the way that I had chopped the rope almost in two. We splinted my feet with an ice tool and two rolls of tape and self-evac'd to the top of the icefield. The splint didn't work and I started to bleed a lot, so we made the difficult decision to go for help. Donini chopped me a ledge, tied me in, then rapped and downclimbed the gully to base camp. By some miracle, our pilot, Paul Roderick of Talkeetna Air Taxi, decided to do a late evening fly-by, and Jim was able to flag him down. By 9 p.m., a rescue was underway.

Bad weather kept them from short-hauling me on the 22nd, but they were able to get me off early on the morning of the 23rd. I was admitted to Providence Hospital in Anchorage with two frostbitten feet, a compound fracture of my left tib/fib, hairline fracture of my left talus, a shattered right talus and a broken left pinky. The route still awaits an ascent.

MALCOLM DALY

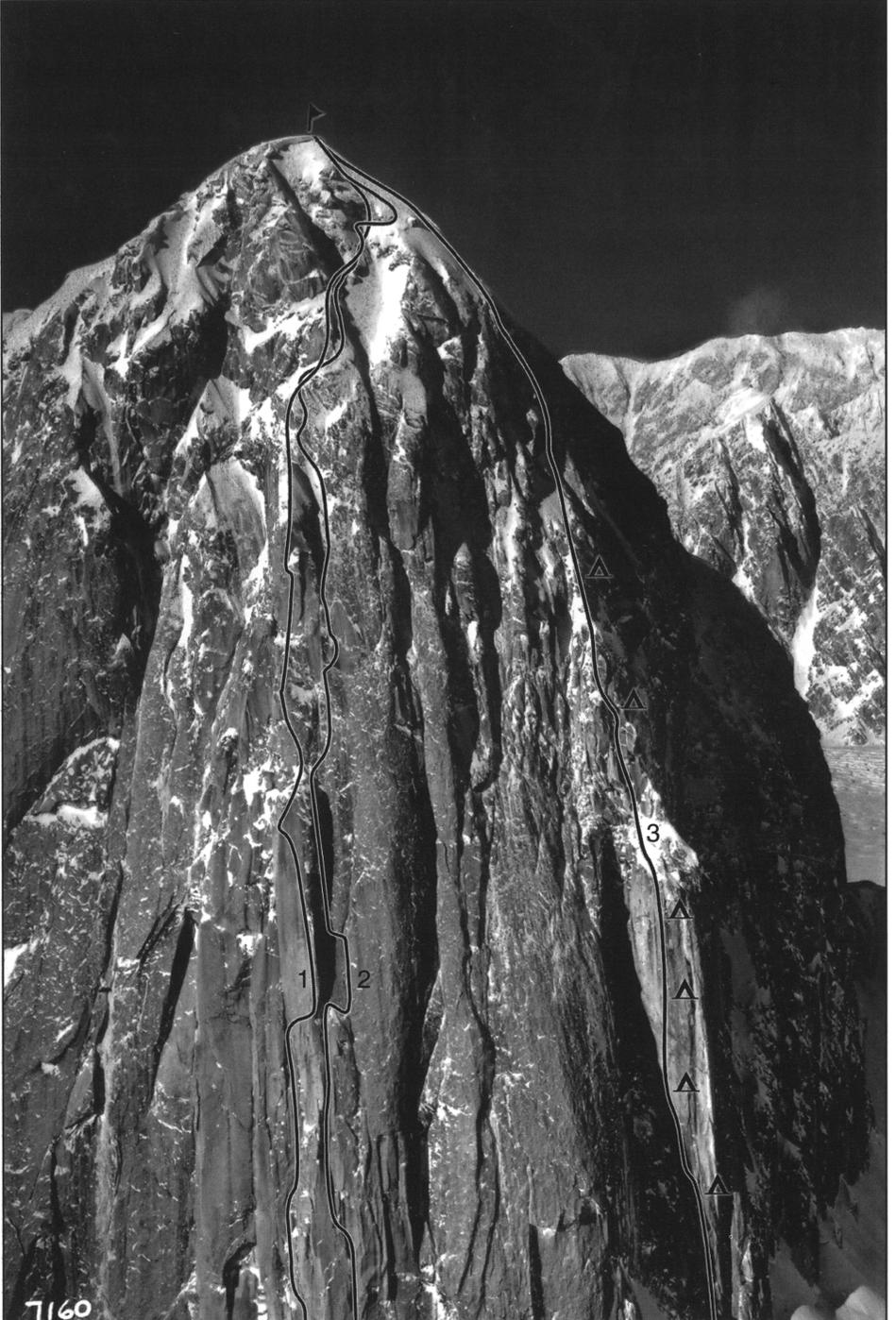
Mt. Huntington, East Face. Paul Roderick of TAT dropped off Alex Lowe and me on the West



The east face of Mt. Huntington, showing the 1983 Kimbrough-Tuckey line and the camps and high point of the direct attempt by Doug Chabot and Alex Lowe. BRADFORD WASHBURN #8196

Fork of the Ruth Glacier under perfect skies. A high pressure had settled into the Alaska Range, and we were psyched to take full advantage of it. We unloaded the plane at noon on May 12, left our base camp gear in the haul bag and immediately started climbing. Our objective was to climb the East Face, which was done in 1983 (Kimbrough-Tuckey), but to try and finish via the large rock buttress guarding the top. Alex had tried this route with Steve Swenson a few years prior but got hit with a rather prolonged storm that made retreat from the Rooster Comb Col quite terrifying.

We climbed up and over the Rooster Comb Col. Ankle-deep snow with a firm base and some easy-angled ice made climbing quick and enjoyable. Within four hours, we set up our first camp on a shelf directly across from the East Face (which looked awesome). The next day, we climbed the 1983 route, which consisted of long snow ramps with rock bands and ice steps. It was a beautiful line. We veered off the '83 route near the base of the buttress and set up our first camp at 10,030 feet. The following day, the 14th, I led up the buttress. The first pitch was mixed climbing up a granite corner that steepened to a 5.10 hand crack for pitch 2. I couldn't believe our luck: no gloves, no loose rock and climbing in rock shoes. Unfortunately, after a few more rock pitches we got shut down. I tried in vain to push up through a corner system that ended in a blank slab with overhanging snow. Alex tried too, but had no luck. This was the obvious way to go, as there was no other weakness that we could



The east face of Barille, showing 1. Cobra Pillar (Donini-Tackle, 1992), 2. East Face (Bonapace-Orgler, 1988) 3. Forever More (Valeri Babanov, 1999). BRADFORD WASHBURN #7160

find. So we admitted defeat with the buttress, rappelled down and set up camp.

Once again we awoke to perfect skies and took off to finish the East Face via the '83 route. The climbing on the upper part of the route was stellar. The rock steps, serac band and ice runnels reminded me of the clean, beautiful climbing on the Cassin. The last pitch was an overhanging, loose, ice/snow step that capped off the summit ice serac. Alex led this surprise crux fluidly and quickly. We summited by 1 p.m. and then started down the west face. Downclimbing the upper face with the aid of a photo, we were able to find the top of the Nettle-Quirk Route, which we then rappelled. At the bottom of the route, just like clockwork, Paul zoomed overhead in the Cessna 185, checking up on us. At 8:30 p.m., we were on the Tokasitna, and Paul landed shortly thereafter to pick us up. We shuttled over to our still-packed base camp, threw it all in the plane, cracked open the celebratory Foster's Oil Cans and flew back home. Two nights on the mountain, a summit and traverse on the most beautiful 12,000-foot peak in the world. It was our last climb together, and one of my best. Thank you, Alex.

DOUG CHABOT

Ruth Gorge

Mt. Barille, Northeast Buttress, Forever More. I arrived on the Ruth Glacier on May 21. A 12-day storm kept me in my tent until June 2. The next day, I undertook an attempt of a new route on the south face of Mount Dickey, but the granite was so greatly affected that it would in no way allow me to get any safe protection or set up a secure anchor. Though there already existed two routes on the east face of Barille, the northeast buttress—2,700 feet high and 1,200 feet of it a sheer buttress cut by several roofs and ledges—still remained unexplored. On June 7, I passed over the heavily torn glacier at the foot of the peak and then reached the rock itself. Starting in a dihedral system, I managed to climb 300 feet that day and fix the rope. I spent the night in the tent and the next day continued the ascent. Using the same technique, I reached a big roof that stuck out six feet beyond the face. I climbed it precisely with cams and reached the headwall. Fifty feet higher was the beginning of a wide crack almost 300 feet high. I had to use sky hooks. The whole next day was devoted to climbing that long stretch of offwidth. On the fourth day of the ascent, when I was already in the upper part of the buttress, I came across a small sloping ledge that turned out to be a stretch of pulpy rotten granite. This ledge cost me a lot of nerves.

On June 12, I finally reached the top of the rock buttress. Above was a series of simple rock and big ledges. Climbing it, I encountered loose stones and blocks. That relatively easy part of the face was followed by another buttress that was not so sheer as the previous one. I spent the fifth night of the ascent in the middle of the buttress. The sixth day was the longest. After climbing another 450 feet, I reached the snowfield. To get to the summit, I had to climb the 300-foot snowfield, two moderately difficult rocky stretches, and about 900 feet of snow slope that smoothly transformed itself into the ridge. I decided to leave the tent behind. It took me four hours, sticking deeply in the molten snow, before I reached the summit of Mount Barille.

The sky turned black with storm. Descending cost me an hour and a half. I reached the tent in the company of strong wind and heavy rain. Such dreadful weather lasted until midnight. The entire next day, June 14, I retraced my way down. At 10 p.m., I crawled into the lonely tent on the glacier, very tired. I called the route *Forever More* (ED+ VI 5.10 A3, 900m).

VALERI BABANOV, *Russia*