

human-waste management program on Denali. Also, the mountaineering orientation program was revised with a greater emphasis on sanitation and resource management. It was the first year of modifying the NPS mountain patrol schedules to have two rangers at the 14,200-foot camp. This enabled the rangers to have increased presence and to better monitor the mountain at both the 17,200-foot high camp and the 14,200-foot camp.

There were three winter attempts on Denali, each unique because of the routes attempted: the American Direct, the West Rib, and the Muldrow Glacier. The winter on Denali turned back all of the attempts, but a pair of Canadian climbers on the West Rib reached the 19,500-foot level before descending because of the severe cold.

The 322 expeditions that attempted Denali this year met with milder weather conditions overall than last season, allowing more opportunities to attempt the summit from high camp. Of the 1,209 climbers, the weather permitted 52 percent to reach the summit, as compared to 43 percent last year.

International climbers comprised 40 percent, or 470, of the total number of climbers on Mt. McKinley this year. Climbers came from 41 different countries. The top five countries represented were the United States (739), Canada (62), United Kingdom (55), France (38), and Spain (33).

This year, the average age of mountaineers on Denali was 34. Women climbers made up ten percent of the total number, with 43 percent reaching the summit. Guided climbers comprised almost 18 percent of total climbers.

As in most years past, climbs made in the milder month of June were more successful in reaching the summit than those in May. Of those parties that both started and finished their climbs in June, 60 percent reached the top; the comparative statistic for May was 37 percent.

In 2001, our goal will be to instill a stronger climber commitment to "Leave No Trace" ethics.

DENALI NATIONAL PARK

Mt. McKinley, Cassin Ridge, Ascent and Update. Fredrick Wilkinson and I, both 20, made an ascent of the Cassin Ridge over June 2-3. This report is an update of the hanging serac on the route at approximately 14,200 feet. In years past, it has been necessary to make a long traverse around the serac to the left to bypass it. This is no longer necessary. A beautiful crack slightly to the right of the 14,000-foot camp has formed in the serac, allowing climbers to ascend the feature directly. This entails 40 feet of 40-degree snow and about ten to 15 feet of 60- to 70-degree rotten Alaska "snowice." This new development saves climbers a lot of effort on the route! Overall, the route was remarkably clean, with little or no fixed rope (many fixed perlon sections around rocks, though) and clean camps. An Alaskan classic!

BART PAULL

Mt. McKinley, Slovak Route, Second Ascent. Kevin Mahoney and I flew into the Alaska Range to climb for the month of May. We arrived on May 4 and headed up the West Buttress, intending to acclimatize at 14,000 feet for a few days. After a few cold and stormy days at that camp, we started the approach for a route on the Father and Son's Wall, but we turned back and decided to head down to lower and warmer altitudes.

Back at the airstrip, we organized and made an attempt on Mt. Hunter's *Moonflower Buttress*. Conditions on the route were good for climbing, but the weather was unsettled and we retreated from just above "The Shaft" in building wind and spindrift after 20 pitches of climbing.

Now, after two failed attempts, we were a little grumpy, albeit warmed up. We were running out of time, so with our last ten days in front of us, we decided to try for the Slovak Route on the south face of Denali.

We started climbing on May 23, and we reached the summit on May 29 after seven days of climbing. The weather was favorable but quite cold, with temperatures at night averaging -35°F. The climbing on the route was very good, with a full range of steep snow, mixed rock pitches, and spectacular ice pitches high on the route. Difficulties ranged from easy snow to WI5+, 5.9 mixed, and one pitch with some A2.* The leader hauled his pack on four of about 34 fifth-class pitches, and we simulclimbed long sections of moderate snow and alpine ice. Occasional fixed pitons from the first ascent party and a photo of the south face kept us on track. It is truly an amazing route. We descended the mountain via the West Buttress.

BEN GILMORE

Mt. McKinley, Slovak Route, Third Ascent. From June 24-26, Steve House, Scott Backes and Mark Twight climbed the Slovak Route in 60 hours non-stop. They carried no bivouac gear apart from a two-pound jacket each. The trio brought two stoves and 22 ounces of fuel each in order to melt enough snow to stay hydrated. (The fuel ran out at hour 48.) A total of 55 pounds (18 of which was water) was split between two packs, leaving the leader pack-free to move quickly. The team belayed 31 (60m) pitches, simulclimbed some terrain, and soloed the rest. Difficulties ended at 16,800 feet. The original line remains independent, following easy snow slopes crisscrossed by crevasses to the summit. Backes, House, and Twight simulclimbed instead to 17,400 feet, where they joined the Cassin Ridge at hour 56 and unroped. A full account of their ascent appears earlier in this journal.

Mt. McKinley, Reality Ridge, First Solo Ascent. I departed on May 6 for the West Fork of the Ruth Glacier (7,000'), one-half mile from the base (7,200') of the *Reality Ridge*, with 204 pounds of equipment. I encountered 5.4-5.5 mixed climbing to 10,200 feet, which I fixed using my three 200-foot ropes, thus requiring three hauls (four trips up, three down). I climbed five percent of this unroped. The ridge from 10,200 to 12,600 feet was extensively corniced (including double cornices in two areas), had deep snow, and was like a knifeblade in two areas. There were also two sections of aid: one was about 25 feet long and slightly overhanging (A1), and both were followed by mixed climbing with minimal pro. In the crux area, I encountered a 50-degree granite slab with no edges and a 15-foot runout above an icy knifeblade, with 80-degree walls on both sides (very bad fall potential, very committing). There were also numerous short, steep sections with rotten or soft snow top-outs. Lots of traversing was encountered; extra snow protection is advised for these areas. Ice was encountered two feet below soft powder 25 percent of the time. I recommend the following gear: six deadmen, three long pickets, two short pickets, a double set of 1- to 2 1/2-inch Friends, a single set of 3- to 4-inch Friends, one 1/2 size Alien, ten stoppers, one 2-inch hex, and six ice screws.

I reached the top of *Reality Ridge* (13,100') after three weeks. After joining the Southeast Spur on May 28, I fixed two pitches, then climbed unroped to the base of the wall below the South Buttress, from which point I fixed 20 to 30 pitches to the top. This was the last time I fixed. From the South Buttress, I headed to Thayer Basin, then ascended and traversed Thayer Ridge. I then encountered some fourth class descending to Point 17,200', and descended to

*This team took a line that diverged at 15,100 feet from that taken by the team of Backes-House-Twight. Gilmore and Mahoney found some aid where the third ascent team tackled the Ramp and its 5.9 X pitch. The Ramp was the original line.