

## HAYES RANGE

*Mt. McGinnis, east face, Cutthroat Couloir.* In early March Jed Brown and I skied in to attempt the unclimbed direct east face of McGinnis. The left-hand serac, and constant spew showering down the lower gully of the face, had us choose to repeat Cutthroat Couloir instead. We found thin, overhanging ice (Grade V/VI) and easy mixed in the 3,000' slot. Rockfall, even in the cold of March, was a major issue (wear a titanium sombrero). We descended the corniced northeast ridge after summiting from our only bivy spot (a snow cave at the top of the Cutthroat). It was the second ascent of the classic 1986 Comstock–Dial route and took seven days road-to-road. I strongly recommend only attempting the line in extreme cold, due to rockfall considerations. It was my third summiting of McGinnis, via a different route each time.

JEFF BENOWITZ

## DELTA RANGE

*Item Peak, North Face.* In February, Jed Brown (18 years old) and I (33) ascended a direct line on the north face of Item Peak, to the left of the route I did in 2000. Jed and I found snow up to 65° and avoided all rock bands by stepping left around them. We only roped up for the summit cornice.

JEFF BENOWITZ

## ALASKA RANGE

*Denali National Park and Preserve, summary.* Life is still fragile in the rangeæour human vulnerability became painfully evident again this year when three brothers perished on Mt. Foraker in an apparent avalanche, and one soloist fell to his death from Denali Pass on Mt. McKinley.

National Park Service mountaineering patrols were kept busy with numerous search-and-rescue incidents. As always, the patrol volunteers and the military pararescuemen were an important asset, working with the rangers in assisting other climbers in distress and providing resource protection.

On a pre-season patrol in March, all nine Denali mountaineering rangers climbed Mt. Silverthorne and skied over Anderson Pass and out the West Fork Glacier. This past season also marked the first ranger patrol since 1932 to successfully climb Denali from the north side of the Alaska Range. A foursome ascended via the Muldrow Glacier route, traversing over and down to the 14,200' ranger camp on the West Buttress route. In other patrol firsts, one ranger patrol spent over two weeks at the 17,200' high camp at the end of the season, setting a new standard for high-altitude camping.

Clean Mountain Cans (CMCs) were used extensively above the 14,200' ranger camp to deal with solid human waste. Also in the resource-management realm, preprinted tags were used for the first time to uniformly identify all caches in terms of expedition names, dates, and permit numbers.

The weather was unseasonably warm, with early May temperatures approaching overnight lows of 34°F, causing crevasses to open in early June on the 7,200' Kahiltna Glacier.

Of 1,232 climbers attempting Mt. McKinley (1,093 via the West Buttress), 645 (52%) reached the summit. Of 36 attempting Mt. Foraker, 7 (19%) reached the top. The average trip length for an expedition on Mt. McKinley was 17.7 days, and the average age of a Denali climber was 36. The total of 110 women represented 9% of the climbers.

Guided clients accounted for 20% of climbers on Mt. McKinley. Guided expeditions as a whole (including clients and guides) accounted for 31%.

Also on Denali, two Russian paraplegic climbers, Grigoriy Tsarkov and Igor Ushakov, reached the summit in June via the West Buttress, making direct variations up the rescue gully and from 17,200' to 18,800'. The route was prepared with fixed line by the other nine team members, and then Tsarkov and Ushakov used their mechanical ascending ski sleds to ascend with their arms.

A total of 224 summittings were made during May, 391 in June, and 30 in July. The busiest days on the summit of Denali were June 13th (56 climbers) and June 16th (49). There were only five days in June when climbers did not reach the top.

Climbers came from 38 nations, with the most coming from the United States (754), Japan (56), United Kingdom (47), Canada (43), France (39), Germany (38), and Korea (36).

DENALI NATIONAL PARK

*Mt. McKinley, Denali Diamond, second ascent.* Kenton Cool and I arrived in the Alaska Range at the beginning of May, hoping to steal a march on other potential suitors to a new line on Foraker. After failing to climb the standard West Butt route for acclimatization, with Kenton turned back by dizzy spells around 20,000' and myself not even able to get out of the tent at 17,000', we returned for a peep at Foraker. After a day and night spent staring at the face, I'd about convinced myself that my optimistic guess at "only" three or four hours beneath the myriad death seracs overhanging the lower third of the route was an acceptable risk for the prize. Luckily, Kenton was still thinking straight and vetoed the plan, an example of our partnership kicking in to make sensible decisions.

As a fine consolation we managed the second ascent of the Denali Diamond in five days. It surprised us that this route, first climbed in 1983, hadn't seen a repeat, but perhaps the epic 17 days spent on the first ascent and talk of a 25' A3 roof had put people off. Unbeknown to us, as soon as we left base camp the forecast changed—typical. Having opted for a lightweight approach with one-season bags and a one-person tent to share, and plans to snooze in the afternoon sun, we were shocked to encounter snow for the final four days and no sun at all. Other events of interest were the tent poles breaking beyond repair, a dropped axe just before the crux pitches, and a malfunctioning stove. Our solace was that at least we opted out of our original single-push plan.

The climbing itself was superb, with sustained mixed climbing, several pitches of vertical ice, and a trio of crux pitches that gave me my best day's climbing yet in the mountains. The first of these proved the hardest—a cracked wall with overhanging sections that bypassed the aid roof. I was able to dry tool this with one rest point and a tension point. All free, it would rate Grade VIII, 8 in Scotland. The personal crux for me, however, occurred the following day when I had one of my worst days in the mountains. Plodding on the upper reaches of the Cassin