



Mt. Wake, showing: 1. Pilier de la Tolerance (1,500m, 5c A1 90°, Desprat-Lestienne-Salles, 1996) (this is the left-hand ridge coming down to the glacier). 2. Lowney-Teale (1,500m, M4 W15, Lowney-Teale, 2002). 3. Northeast Buttress, Screaming Blue Messiah (1,500m, 5.7 A2 70°, Atkinson-Kay, 1990). 4. Wake Up. (900m, IV W15, Desprat-Lestienne-Salles, 1996). 5. Mt. Johnson, Elevator Shaft. (3,000', 5.7 A3 AI5+, Chabot-Tackle, 1995). Kelly Cordes

FFME) and Paul Robach (ENSA). Each two years, nine young climbers (age 20–25) are selected to compose this group (testing in rock, mixed and ice climbing, endurance, mountain experience) and participate in several courses and an expedition, supported by FFME.

Ruth Gorge, Mt. Wake, east face. The high pressure that centered over Alaska for three months brought clear skies and superb climbing conditions. Two weeks earlier in the Ruth, I attempted to solo Shaken Not Stirred on the Moose's Tooth, while J.J. Brooks and Charlie Sassara climbed Ham and Eggs.

Local crab fisherman Pete Lowney and I head from Valdez back to the Ruth with several objectives in mind. We end up at the base of Mount Wake and spot the obvious center route up the east face. Though the route looks exposed, in early April it's still frigid, and the face looks locked up. We strike

out on April 6 and, after surmounting a big crack, are committed. Right up the center of the face, moderate climbing with sparse pro finds us bivied before the gully entry. Second day we enter the gully, and Pete leads a little W15 pitch. Superb climbing, rock pro, and long runnels of 45° to 55° water ice, with the occasional M4 crux. Second bivy in a great spot to the side, and the isobutane stove goes out. Last time I take one stove up a route this time of year. Third day we bust a move for the top, waterless, super moderate climbing, changing from granite to the summit caprock. The exit that was obvious from the plane isn't from the route, so we just follow the ever-steepening ice to a vertical crux. One pitch from the top, our pilot Paul Roderick flies by, and I feel like I can reach out and touch his wing. We summit and race the clouds to the Wake-Bradley col, but they catch us and we bivy in a crevasse. No stove, low on food, and socked in on the backside of Wake. I tell Pete this is a classic Alaska Range situation, and we could be in this crevasse for days. We discover that our body heat can melt ice chips we place in ziplock bags, which saves us from serious consequences.

The Alaska Range is kind this spring, however, the clouds lift, and we descend uneventfully. The next day it snows in camp and socks the mountain in, but we are safe and vow to return.

BRIAN TEALE

Surprise Glacier peaks. On May 26 Steve Mock and I flew into the upper end of the southern lobe of the Surprise Glacier, a remote and lower-elevation area (Talkeetna C-5 quad map) in the southwest portion of the Alaska Range, located between Mt. Dall and Mt. Russell.

We placed our base camp in the middle of the glacier at about 5,200', and during the brief weather windows we were afforded good views as far as the distant Kichatna Spires, Mt. Dall, and Mt. Russell.

We initially had good weather and bagged a couple of nice peaks via snow couloirs and ridges. (None of the peaks in the area have established names.) Due west of our base camp we climbed a northeast couloir of Peak 6,500' (located at UTM 5 539110E 6948891N). South of base camp, at the very head of the southern lobe of the Surprise Glacier, we climbed the west ridge of Peak 6,000', passing a small rock tower along the way that looked very much like a chortenaehence "Chorten Peak" (UTM 5 539618E 6946748N).

Then the weather took a turn for the worse. Very high winds (inverted tent and broken poles), sleet, rain, and snow plagued us for the balance of our trip. During a brief respite from the bad weather, we attempted Peak 6,302' via its east ridge (from the pass at UTM 5 540827E 6947835N) but were thwarted by horrendously loose rock. This peak is south of the impressive west face of what we were calling the "Little Eiger" (Peak 7,200').

Then we ran out of beer. In 17 days we had five days of fair weather, and, needless to say, our mood was subdued. This area seemed good for solitude, ski touring, and easy peak bagging, with difficult ascent possibilities in colder temperatures. (We found unconsolidated snow and crumbly rock.) In searching AAJs and the libraries at AMH and the Talkeetna Ranger Station, and in speaking with several long-time Alaska Range climbers, including Roger Robinson and Brian Okonek, I didn't learn of anyone who'd previously been in this area.

Missing our original pickup date of June 6, we finally flew out on the 11th, in blustery weather, with many thanks to the persistent efforts of McKinley Air.

BRIAN CABE, AAC

KICHATNA SPIRES

The Citadel, east buttress. The mythical Cathedral Spires of the remote, rarely frequented Kichatna Mountains were our destination. Pictures of granite spires forcing their way through bellowing cloud had sparked our imagination. Unfortunately, journals also suggested the worst weather in Alaska. Could it be worse than a wet Llanberis winter's day? Not a chance! Worse than Scotland in winter? Surely not! Stu McAleese and I had to go.

The Kichatna Spires spike the horizon as Cerro Torre and the Towers of Paine do in Patagonia. Although less than 9,000' in elevation and encompassing only 20 square miles, they have a reputation beyond their size. Ninety miles from Talkeetna, they were among the last Alaskan mountains to be explored. Aerial photos had been taken by Austin Post and published in Summit magazine by someone perhaps trying to mislead other climbers, as the Reisenstein of British Columbia. Eventually, in 1965, New Yorker Al DeMaria resolved the enigma and visited the area with friends.

Clumping into a Talkeetna cafe, we made for the bar. We sat next to two climbers obviously just back from the hill. Thierry, the tallest, greeted us with a strong French accent. We noted his bandaged hands; most of his fingers were frostbitten. Alaskan climbing obviously had potential for unpleasantness.

We had been advised to take as much as we wanted on the plane, that weight was no problem, but arriving at the Talkeetna airport, we noted that the supercharged Cessna resembled