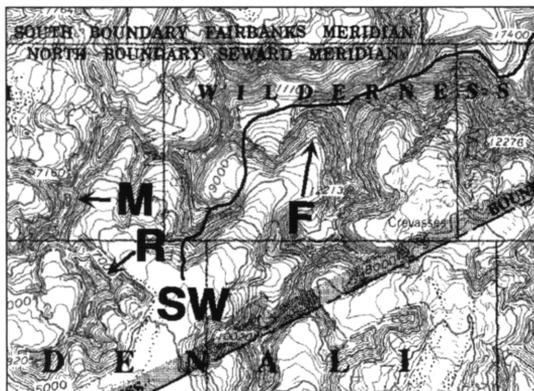


adventurous approach up the complex icefall in the right-hand fork at the head of the Yentna's northeast fork. They also made the first ascents of two peaks in the left-hand split of the Yentna's northeast fork: ca 8,900' "Rogue Peak" via the northeast face (3,500', M5, Doucette-Wilkinson), and ca 9,300' "Mantok 1" via the east-facing All Talk Couloir (3,500', M5, Doucette-Gilmore-Wilkinson). See Wilkinson's feature earlier in this *Journal*.

*The Throne, Swisser than Swiss Chocolate; Royal Tower, Got Lucky to summit slopes.* Where in Alaska would two Swiss go to climb but Little Switzerland? On May 16 Lucas Iten and I landed on the Pika Glacier and quickly got to work. Most of the rock was still covered in snow, but we warmed up by repeating *The Lost Marsupials* (10 pitches, ca 5.8) on *The Throne* (7,390') in alpine boots. A few days later we donned our climbing shoes and climbed *The Throne* again, this time via an excellent 12-pitch route, which at the time we believed to be new but later learned had previously been climbed. The route, mostly 5.9-10, with one 5.10+ crux (FA unknown) starts near the right side of the South Face Gully, just left of the noticeable orange-stained rock.

American Jack Sasser, who would join us later in the trip, had been a volunteer ranger on the Pika the previous summer with NPS ranger Gordy Kito, and they had drawn up a list of the most attractive unclimbed lines in the area. Three days after our previous *Throne* outing we climbed a new route, *Swisser than Swiss Chocolate* (10 pitches, 5.11+), on the steep west face of *The Throne* just right of a



The Yentna Glacier's northeast fork, showing (R) Rogue Peak, (M) Mantok 1, (F) Fin Wall—see Freddie Wilkinson's feature earlier in this *Journal*. For reference, the Southwest Ridge of Mt. Foraker (SW) is also indicated. From Talkeetna D-3 and D-4 maps, courtesy [www.topozone.com](http://www.topozone.com)



Got Lucky, on the south face of Royal Tower, rising from the Crown Glacier. *Martin Gutmann*

massive rock scar and left of a giant roof. Pitch after pitch of 5.10-ish climbing over slabs, up offwidths, and past heavenly cracks led straight to the summit snow slopes. Lucas onsighted the crux pitch at 7a (approximately 5.11d). Since we had already been on the summit twice, we then rappelled a neighboring route.

On May 25 Jack arrived, and we immediately got drunk with the Alaskans camped next to us. The next day we didn't leave camp until noon for one of our main objectives: the giant unclimbed pillar on the south side of Royal Tower (8,130'). Unlike most routes on the Tower, which start from the Pika, this route begins from the Crown Glacier. Despite our wicked hangovers, we experienced one of our most enjoyable days of climbing ever. We picked a route up the lowest rock band and climbed straight toward the pillar, finding pitch after pitch of perfect granite. Most pitches were in the 5.9-5.10 range with two 5.11 cruxes, one a slightly overhanging offwidth and the second a barely protectable stretch of face-climbing. After ending at the unstable summit snow slopes, we began rappelling Got Lucky (14 pitches, 5.11) at midnight, and arrived back at camp in time for another round of partying with our Alaskan campmates.

With terrible weather, we spent the next week and a half playing botchy ball, drinking Appenzeller (Swiss version of Jaegermeister), and trying to avoid the black bear that kept wandering through camp. We did make two unsuccessful attempts on unclimbed faces, one on Italy's Boot (ca 7,700') and another on Your Highness (ca 7,800').

MARTIN GUTMANN, *Swiss Alpine Club*

*Mt. Grosvenor, West Ridge to summit gendarme, and various activity.* Located west of the Great Gorge and unnamed on most maps, the Backside Glacier affords access to several large peaks by their comparatively tame western ramparts. The lower-angled glaciated slopes and sweeping ridgelines appeared the perfect venue for Alaska-sized ski mountaineering objectives.

On April 11 Paul Roderick of Talkeetna Air Taxi flew in Ben Traxler (Boulder, CO) and me. This being our first visit to the range, we were surprised and a little intimidated to learn that in the veteran pilot's many years of experience, we were the first party he'd delivered onto the Backside Glacier.

We spent our first several days exploring route options and evaluating the unstable snow at lower elevations and on the unnamed peaks to the west.

On our first objective, the west ridge of Mt. Wake, we climbed low-fifth-class and moderate rock and technical post-holing to 65°, before being thwarted by unstable snow and by rock with Butterfinger®-like characteristics in a prominent notch at 7,600', just below Mt. Wake's glaciated summit dome. Descending near our route of ascent, we discovered a more direct couloir up to 50° steep.

The following day we skied south toward "Backside Lake" and attempted the south face of Mt. Church in low visibility. After crossing several massive old wet slides, we skied to just below the prominent Church-Grosvenor col before retreating in inclement weather.

Making the most of several weather-induced "rest-days," we skied a few of the numerous east-facing couloirs, up to 50°, flanking the unnamed 6,500' summit bordering the west side of Backside Glacier. This summit is likely unclimbed and would make a nice short daytrip from base camp.

As high pressure took hold on April 21, we focused on the west ridge of Mt. Grosvenor and skied and climbed the snowy ridge (to 50°), before intersecting the striking summit