

Mount Fairweather Conquered

AS we go to press, comes the splendid news of the first ascent of Mount Fairweather (15,399 ft.) by the American Alpine Club expedition on June 8, 1931, two months after reaching Lituya Bay (which is within twenty miles of the summit), despite a harrowing siege of bad weather and other disappointments. During May they had eighteen consecutive days of rain and snow. The weather station at Juneau reported only nineteen hours of sunshine in that month.

From April 18th to the end of May, the party back-packed along the ocean beach and then some twenty miles up Fairweather glacier to a beautiful base camp at 5,000 ft. Mr. Allen Carpé writes under date of June 14th as follows:

"We got a tent up very steep slopes to 9,000 ft. on May 25th, but had to come down again the next day. After another week of storm, with three feet more of new snow, on June 2nd, we went up again to the tent. On June 3rd we all climbed to within a few hundred feet of the top of Fairweather, when we were again met by a storm. We were cutting ice-steps under a sort of bulge and did not have a view towards the summit when the clouds closed in. We could not find a way in the direction we had started and there was danger of losing the trail back, so we had to come down.

"This was quite disheartening in view of the very long and tiring climb which would have to be uselessly repeated for the sake of a few hundred uneventful feet on the summit cone that had already been within our grasp. No one knew how long the storm might last, and supplies, while still ample, naturally were dwindling. Under the circumstances, Ladd felt that he would not return for another attempt on the summit. He and Andy Taylor went down,¹ much to my regret. Terris Moore and I spent several rather uncomfortable days of storm at the high camp, a good deal more snow falling.

"At about 10.00 P.M., June 7th, there being a clearing, we started up again. The snow conditions were bad, the temperature was below zero and some of the slopes were as steep as sixty degrees

¹To conserve the supplies and give the others the best chance to make the top! This severe storm, with snow and fog, lasted for four days.—Ed.

by clinometer. However, the snow held us up better than I had expected and we were on top about 8.00 A.M. We put up a seven-foot jointed steel tent pole, with a parka tied to it, which we later could see through the glasses from the valley.

"The descent both from summit to high camp, and also from that camp down, was worse than the ascent, as the sun got to working on the snow. We got down in a hurry, however, and hiked right out to Lituya, where we found that a boat had just arrived.

"The route is from the south side, between Mount Lituya and Mount Fairweather, but is not the so-called south or southeast ridge. It follows a subsidiary rib up the center of the face, being on ice and snow entirely, save for two short rock buttresses.

"The organization of the supplies worked out very efficiently."

Warmest congratulations to the intrepid party which has subdued so triumphantly this forbidding peak of southeastern Alaska! Messrs. Carpc and Ladd first attempted Mount Fairweather in 1926³ after the great success of the Mount Logan expedition in 1925. Then came the ascent of Mount Bona in 1930, and now, finally, Mount Fairweather is added to the laurels of the crown by an expedition which unquestionably will take high rank in the annals of Alaskan mountaineering, distinguished as they already are.

³ *Appalachia*, Vol. XVI, 442.