ARCTIC

Arctic Alpine Ascents on Bylot Island. During the past summer I was a member of an expedition sponsored by the Arctic Institute of North America and the New York Zoological Society. The expedition went to Bylot Island, north of Baffin Island at 73° north latitude in the northwest territories of Canada. As a part of the expedition activity Ned Ames and I undertook to explore and climb some of the inland area. On July 2, accompanied by Bill and May Drury and Idlout, our Eskimo, we left the party's base camp on the west side of the Aktinek River at 3 P.M. and travelled east over the sea ice of Eclipse Sound to the Sermelik Glacier by dog sled. After the usual seal hunting and a visit to an eskimo camp on the way, we reached the Sermelik Glacier at 9:30 P.M. Since Ned and I anticipated largely night climbing to take advantage of the coolness and more solid snow conditions, we shouldered our packs and started up along the west side of the Sermelik Glacier. Our goal was an old glacier bed, now a river valley which led up to the west from near the snout of the Sermelik and which ended in Eclipse Sound. We traversed the hills on the south side of the river for three hours and then set up a camp on a fine heather meadow at 2 P.M. The next morning was glorious and we enjoyed pleasing views of a truly alpine nature around us. We continued our traverse but soon realized that this was an error and descended to the river bed which was covered with ice and some of the largest ice crystals I have seen. Progress became much easier and we rapidly approached a glacier snout not on our map, where we had lunch. After lunch we came immediately to a large river flowing over the frozen outflow tract of this glacier. We doubled back and were able to reach the old lateral moraine by means of a spectacular overhanging portion of this frozen area. We followed the moraine in a westerly direction and reached the southern slopes of the range which culminated in Mt. Thule. We traversed these slopes and finally came to the terminal moraine and stream bed of the meltwater from the glacier on the south CWM of Mt. Thule. The upper reaches of this bed were still filled with snow and travel was arduous. When we reached the ablating snout and found a snow-free area we camped at 10 P.M.

The following day, July 4th, was spent in sleeping, eating, and improving the navigability of the local stream. At 8 P.M. after supper we felt that conditions had improved and we started for Mt. Thule which lay about due north (true). We continued up the valley a short distance and then started up the slopes to the west of the glacier. We made good progress and reached the upper portion of the glacier at 9 P.M. Here we roped up and started around the western side of the glacier toward the final cone of Mt. Thule. Progress was easy over the glacier. As the slope steepened, steps had to be kicked. The snow was of good consistency and we climbed steadily along the western edge of the south CWM, close to the rocks. The central portion was ice covered by a thin veneer of wet snow which produced what Ames called 'slushalances.' We reached the southwest ridge about 10 P.M. and Ned took the lead. The ridge was easy climbing over rotten sandstone rocks and then snow and ice.

As the ridge steepened and became more icy, we put on crampons and climbed rapidly to the first summit and on to the final summit which we reached at 12:50 A.M., July 5th. The sun was still up and the air was deathly still. Since no survey work had been done, we sighted on various peaks farther inland on the Island to determine how many were higher than Mt. Thule, which had been triangulated at 5700 ft. As a rough estimate from our Brunton compass there were 10 peaks higher. One of these, which lay N.NW. of Mt. Thule, we decided should be next on our agenda. The descent was by the same route and uneventful. We reached camp at 4:30 A.M. and turned in.

Shortly after midnight, July 6th, we broke camp and moved up to the glacier just to the west. This glacier was the same one whose snout we had passed two days previously. It makes a large curve to the east at its snout and is then at a right angle to its original course (south). Here we cached supplies for our return and then continued on snowshoes up the glacier. Our progress was uneventful except for one stream crossing where my snowshoe broke through and uncovered a kind of artesian well. We established our third camp on the glacier at the final rise before our unnamed peak at about 4100 feet elevation.

At about 7:30 P.M., July 6, feeling we had rested enough, we snowshoed up the slope facing us and reached an out-crop-

ping of rocks. Here we left the snowshoes and put on crampons. The surface, firm with ice below the snow, gradually became largely ice with small trickles of melted water coursing the surface. We made rapid progress and reached the summit at 9 P.M., where we repeated our rough surveying. There were still 4 or 5 peaks higher; the highest was probably below 7,000 feet. We estimated our altitude at 6,100 feet. Trotting steadily, we reached camp in 45 minutes.

The weather continued excellent and we were apprehensive lest it deteriorate. We had seen a considerable portion of the interior of the island which was a jumble of peaks and glaciers, and since the peaks in our area presented no serious mountaineering problems, we decided to complete our circuit and return to the base camp.

We left our third camp at 6:30 P.M., July 7, descended the glacier, and picked up our cache. After crossing the glacier, our route led us to another frozen river or lake bottom which lay between the hook-shaped glacier and the Aktinek Glacier. As we crossed this area, it was apparent that glaciers had previously filled this valley, since there was evidence of glacial activity high above us on the bare slopes to the north. We reached the Aktinek, still on snowshoes, and continued down it about two miles where we established our last camp.

July 8th was overcast and we left camp at 6:30 P.M., hoping that the melting would be minimal and that the Aktinek River would be at a low level when we had to cross it. The lower end of the Aktinek is scoured by many surface streams often of large volume and presenting real problems in crossing. Fortunately we had to cross only minor ones and then could parallel the others as we descended the eastern edge of the glacier. The snout was ablating and we descended on crampons to the river bottom.

We crossed a small tributary easily and then at 1 A.M., July 9, reached the main branch of the Aktinek River which drained the western side of the glacier. Roped to Ames, I made the first attempt to cross, but found that it was too fast and deep about 20 feet from the opposite shore. I retreated and Ames tried farther upstream where it was nearly a rope length broader—and less rapid. He was successful. Our last real obstacle past, we cele-

brated with hot tea and then pushed on to base camp which we reached in a nasty blowing rain at 4:30 A.M.

BENJAMIN G. FERRIS, JR.

Spitzbergen. A group from the Österraichischen Alpenverein, under the leadership of Hans Gsellmann, spent five weeks in Spitzbergen from the end of June 1954 on. They made 25 ascents, all but three of them new climbs. Some of these were very difficult and took 25 to 30 hours.

SOUTH AMERICA

Andes, Argentine. Jesús Casanova, Ricardo Gallop, and Renzo Vidoni of the Club Andinista Mendoza made the first ascent of all three of the Tres Picos del Amor (18,054, 18,044, and 17,933 feet). After a long approach they established their high camp at 16,000 feet. On their first attempt they were driven back by wind and verglas. On March 3, 1954, after traversing a large field of *nieves penetentes,* they continued on to the main summit and followed the sharp ridge to the central and south peaks. The descent, which necessitated various rappels, was completed after 17 hours of climbing.

A group from the Club Andista Mendoza and the Club Pehuenche made the second ascent of Cerro Sosneado (15,896 feet) on February 13, 1954.

Aconcagua. The 23,036-foot summit of the Americas was climbed several times in the past year. The most notable was the French ascent of the South Face, which rises 10,000 feet above Puente del Inca in the Horcones Valley. The climbers compared it to two Eiger North Faces, one on top of the other. Under the leadership of René Ferlet, Lucien Bernadini, Andrien Dagory, Edmond Denis, Pierre Lasueur, Robert Pagarot, and Guy Poulet established their base camp at 14,100 feet on a rocky point above the Horcones Glacier. On the central rock rib between Camp 1 (14,750 feet) and Camp 2 (17,060 feet) the climbing on the vertical towers of rotten rock was so difficult that they fixed 1300 feet of rope. Camp 3 was placed at the foot of a band of rock below a hanging glacier, which continually threatened