

ARCTIC

Spitzbergen. There was a number of expeditions active in the mountains of Spitzbergen in the summer of 1955. An Austrian group from the Edelweiss Club in Salzburg under Dr. Walter Frauenberger of Nanga Parbat fame traveled as far as Bethasnia Bay of the inner Eisfjord with a party from Cambridge University. Thence they continued to Claas Billen Bay, where they landed at Brucebyen and established a base five days up the Stubendorff Glacier. They made 40 first ascents of peaks up to 5,575 feet and did extensive topographical and glaciological work. A Munich group was active on Western Spitzbergen between the Kreuzfjord and Liefde Bay and Woodfjord. An Austrian group made four ascents, the highest Nordensköllfyell (5,250 feet) which took only 18 days from Linz to Linz and involved no air travel.

A GEOLOGIST IN THE ARCTIC

Our member, Fred H. Roots, is one of our very few professional geologists with Arctic, Antarctic, and high mountain experience. After studying at the University of British Columbia, summers' field work with the Canadian government, a member of the Norwegian-British-Swedish Antarctic Expedition, 1949-52, further study at Princeton, then at Cambridge University and work at the Scott Polar Research Institute (where he married the assistant director), he is now with the Geological Survey of Canada. The following, taken from a letter to Henry Hall written in October 1955 covers that year's field season in the Arctic:

"Operation Franklin," as we called this year's effort in the Arctic Islands, was great fun and, I think, a worthwhile project all round. I'm not sure whether I outlined our plans to you last spring or not. What we tried to do was to make a big loop through the northern and western islands of the Arctic archipelago (the Queen Elizabeth Islands), using a combination of ski aircraft, dog teams, helicopters, and of course quite a bit of hobnails and snowshoes. Things turned out pretty well according to plan. The first of us went to Resolute Bay, Cornwallis Island, in April and after digging out the stores shipped there last year we spent May and June establishing the main camps and fuel caches, using a ski-DC-3 and dog teams. There were three main bases, in addition to the headquarters at Resolute Bay, and they were to be occupied in turn: one on the southwest corner of Ellesmere Island, one on Ellef Rignes, one on eastern Melville Island. In addition there were main fuel dumps on Devon, Cornwall, Axel Heiberg,

Loughead, and Bathurst Islands; and smaller dumps were established at many other places as the season progressed. During this time, dog-sledging trips were made on Ellesmere, Ellef Ringnes, Melville, and Somerset Islands, to determine the basic geological stratigraphy; the last dog parties did not return until the end of June (when we brought them back, dogs and all, in a helicopter). The helicopters, two Sikorsky S-55's, arrived in early June and immediately set about distributing parties at places we had already picked from air photos. We had nine field teams, each of two men; what with the helicopter crew, radio men and cooks, there were 30 in the gang altogether.

Most of the work settled down to foot traversing, with camp moves made by helicopter; but in the more mountainous areas of folded rocks we found ourselves packing the camps as usual. But the helicopters made even backpacking luxurious by Coast Range standards. We would fly over the route first, selecting the route in detail, and picking out campsites, where we would leave a cache of food. Then it was just a matter of walking or climbing from cache to cache, and rock and fossil specimens collected could be left behind in caches. At the other side you would wait for the helicopter, and then fly back, checking the geology of any doubtful areas, pick up the specimens—it really was a delightful way to get around. The S-55's always carried lots of food and camping gear, so when the weather closed in, as it did on nearly every long flight, it was just a case of sitting down and waiting it out in comfort.

The Arctic summer is always poor for flying, with persistent fog and low cloud, and this summer was a little worse than average in most parts. So we spent more than a third of the time "grounded" because of poor visibility. But the work was not hampered unduly, and the circuit of the islands was completed, except that we did less on Melville Island than we had hoped.

From the geological and topographic standpoint, one of the most interesting features of the summer was the investigation of the mountain system that runs across the islands, from Melville across Bathurst, up through Axel Heiberg and Ellesmere and across the north end of Greenland. This has been officially named the Innuitian System, and certainly ranks with the Appalachians and the Cordillera as one of the three great mountain systems of North America. From a mountain-lover's standpoint the most attractive island in this system is Axel Heiberg. Here the peaks rise to about 7,500 feet, directly from narrow fiords that reach deep into the island. The mountains are higher in parts of Ellesmere, but they are big and blocky, and large parts of the "high

country" there are rather plain icecaps; but Axel Heiberg is a nice balance of sharp peaks, twisting valley glaciers and ferocious little icefalls, while down below are relatively green meadows and quite a high population of muskox and caribou. And the rocks are interesting—fantastically exposed folds and twists of strata, whole mountains of brilliant white gypsum, banded yellow and black sediments, red lava flows and any amount of good hard black coal, so that you can enjoy a campfire 1,500 miles north of the treeline. Axel Heiberg and that part of Ellesmere just east of it have the most good summer weather of any spot known in the Arctic Islands—day after day of blue skies while the rest of the archipelago was smothered in clouds. It is no ordinary island—a great place for a holiday.

HENRY S. HALL, JR.

EUROPE

Monte Rosa, Alps. In the 1955 *American Alpine Journal* (pages 126 to 132) I have read the article by Guy M. Everett, "A Fight for Life on Monte Rosa." As he says, he was bound for the "Cresta Rey" of the Dufourspitze. He had "read the scanty details given in the guide book and looked at the drawings." Although not specified, I suppose it concerns my *Guide Book*. The "Cresta Rey" (route 198) is a simple rock rib, straight forward and without gendarme. Its description does not imply any details. You simply follow to the top of the Dufour. Mr. Everett's story is quite clear to me: he tried the so-called "Cresta Piacenza" (route 195) which is far longer and much more difficult than the "Cresta Rey" because of its many gendarmes. These two ridges (at their foot) are about one kilometer apart from one another and it sounds rather curious that Mr. Everett could confuse them.

As you can see in the Addenda to my Guide, page 275, this route 195 was followed for the first time on July 20, 1907, by Mario Piacenza and the guides Jean-Joseph Carrel and J. B. Pellissier, but Piacenza never published anything about this fine climb. The only testimonial is contained in Carrel's guide book where Piacenza writes that they took 23 hours from Bétemps to the top. Knowing the strength of this party you can imagine that this route is not easy. This testimonial was published in 1952 (in my *Guide Book*) after almost half a century. I suggested to call this bridge "Cresta Piacenza" in remembrance of the famous Italian climber and explorer. Piacenza is still alive and does well deserve this honour.

MARCEL KURZ