

# Twaharpies—American-Japanese Joint Expedition

ALVIN E. and FRANCES RANDALL

FOR EACH of us, the American-Japanese Joint Expedition became a reality as we jumped out of the Cessnas onto the east branch of the Russell Glacier near Mount Bona. Though it was April 13, we immediately zipped up our parkas against subzero temperatures. Pete Haase and Kunikazu Hagihara greeted us. They had been there nearly a week, setting up Base Camp, building igloos and putting up a huge sign which read, "Welcome Main Party—Russell Glacier Hotel—AJJEX 1967."

The fourteen Japanese and fifteen Americans were led by Al Randall, who had accepted overall responsibility. The Japanese leader was Hiroshi Fujita. Our objectives were to climb the highest peak of the Twaharpies\* group and other mountains in the area and to further friendship between our two countries through a joint mountaineering venture. We were sponsored by the Seattle Mountaineers and the Mountaineering Union of Hyogo Prefecture to commemorate the tenth anniversary of the Seattle-Kobe Sister-City Affiliation.

Months of preparation and planning were behind us. Four and a half tons of Japanese and American equipment, medical supplies and food had already been shipped to the jumping-off place for the expedition, Northway, Alaska. Part of this had already been ferried to Base Camp as weather had permitted.

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\* The name Twaharpies was officially adopted in November, 1967 by the U. S. Board on Geographic Names, as published in Decision List 6704, for the group of three peaks in the University Range between the heads of the Hawkins, Russell and Twaharpies glaciers. The three mountains themselves are now officially Aello Peak (14,445 feet; 61°21'55" N, 141°53'55" W), Ocypete Peak (c. 13,550 feet; 61°20'30" N, 141°56'30" W), and Celeno Peak (c. 13,300 feet; 61°20'20" N, 141°58'10" W).

The Harpies were creatures from ancient Greek mythology, whose name literally means "snatchers." They were the personification of whirlwinds and hurricanes. With head and trunk of a woman and wings, claws and tail of a bird, ravenous and filthy, these repulsive beings served as the ministers of divine vengeance and defiled all they touched. Homer names only one; Hesiod, two: Aello and Ocypete. Later authors added a third: Celeno.

Fred Beckey, Jim Mays, Alex Bertulis and Herb Staley spent a month of the summer of 1965 trying the peaks. General bad weather and a final avalanche at 12,000 feet forced them to abandon the peak.—*Editor*.

On the evening of our arrival at Northway, the Japanese hosted the Americans and local citizens to a delightful *sukiyaki* party. Mr. Tatsuo Miyazaki, deputy mayor of Kobe, Mr. Shuji Tsuda, president of the Hyogo Mountaineering Union and past president of the Japanese Alpine Club, and Mr. Ishida, head of the Seattle-Kobe Trade Information Office, attended. They were planning to fly to Base Camp for a few minutes and then back to Fairbanks.

Cliff Hudson, our pilot from Talkeetna, had flown for the Americans many times before, and considering him one of the finest Alaskan bush pilots, we gave him the responsibility of selecting the location of Base Camp. Cliff enlisted the capable services of Floyd Miller of Northway to aid in flying equipment and personnel.

For nearly five days bad weather delayed our flying to Base Camp with the remaining equipment. Then another week was spent establishing camps on the mountain before we were in a position really to begin climbing. Base Camp was located at 7000 feet, on the east fork of the part of the Russell Glacier which flows off Mount Bona, Camp I on a shelf above an icefall at 10,000 feet, Camp II at 12,000 feet, and Camp III, our Advanced Base, in a col on the shoulder of the west peak of Bona at 12,600 feet. We eventually established a temporary Camp IV at the base of Aello Peak at 12,200 feet and two ice caves, one on the summit ridge of Aello and the other between the western and main peaks of Mount Bona at 15,200 feet. The Japanese mostly used their wind-resistant, colorful nylon tents for shelter, while the Americans spent only a small portion of the time in their McKinley tents, preferring to live in warmer ice caves or igloos at Base Camp and Camp III. However at the base of Aello Peak, both Americans and Japanese stayed in the Japanese tents, while at the other two temporary camps, the ice caves were used by both parties.

Our main climbing objective, Aello Peak, was inspiring. Its corniced top was connected by a low ridge with the Bona group, but it obscured the two lower Twaharpies: Ocypete and Celeno Peaks. Aello took on unforgettable moods as clouds either partially obliterated it or formed an awesome backdrop. The sharp, icy beauty and inaccessibility of the Twaharpies emphasized the appropriateness of their name, recalling those Greek mythological half-women, half-birds, who carried men off to their dooms.

Vacations were not long enough to allow the main group of Americans to attempt Aello, and so the less technical western shoulder of Bona was scheduled for the mass climb of the joint effort of the two groups. This

spur, which had been climbed by Bona's first-ascent party of Terris Moore, Allen Carpé and Andy Taylor in 1930, rises to 15,660 feet to the west of Mount Bona. Its broad table top was reached on April 22 by thirteen Americans and three Japanese, of whom five Americans and two Japanese continued on to climb the west ridge to the summit of Bona (16,500 feet) \*

The following day, almost all Americans and Japanese made an easy ascent of a broad 12,800-foot shoulder west of the col where Camp III was located. It afforded a panoramic view of the Wrangell Range with Mounts Blackburn and Regal to the northwest, Aello's ice face and rock cliffs to the southwest, Bona and Churchill to the northeast and the Russell Glacier to the north. For obvious reasons, it came to be known as "Bonaparte." Good weather and esprit de corps of both teams had combined to make this a truly memorable occasion.

Unfortunately, most of the Americans had to leave as jobs and home obligations called, but their descent was not to be as simple as we thought. In the early afternoon, shortly after the departure of a few of the climbers down the mountain to Base Camp, Terry Hirni complained of a stomach-ache. Since within the next hour he got steadily worse, two climbers raced to catch up with and bring back the descending Japanese physician. Upon his arrival back at Camp III, to the relief of everyone, Dr. Inatome found Terry suffering not from appendicitis but from acute gastroenteritis. By radio we arranged for more medical supplies to be brought up from Base Camp. As the day and then the evening wore on, Terry's pains and nausea became even worse, but around midnight, he finally went to sleep, at last managing to keep down pills. When dawn came, after the long vigil of those attending him, he felt much better, although desperately weak. Soon the medical supplies and skis to construct a sled arrived from Base, but Terry was able to descend the mountain under his own power that same day, accompanied by Al Randall and Norm Benton.

Herb Staley was to organize setting up Camp IV at the base of the Twaharpies the following day and then to start establishing a route up the face of Aello. On the morning of April 25, they departed for Camp IV, while Al and Norm started back up to Camp III with pickets, pitons and rope for the ascent of Aello. Early the next morning, Al and Norm carried the extra gear to Camp IV before returning to Camp III for much needed rest.

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\* This year's ascent followed nearly identically the route taken by the first-ascent party.

During the day the climbers from Camp IV slowly inched their way up the difficult and treacherous face of Aello on slopes up to 50° below overhanging cornices. They spent some fourteen hours installing fixed ropes to the saddle between "The Claw" and the main peak of Aello at approximately 13,700 feet. Progress was closely monitored from Camp III. Late in the day, Herb told Al over the radio that the route was too dangerous to descend that evening and that they planned to bivouac in an ice cave which they had dug at the col. Since the climbing group was short of food and water, Al and Norm would bring the needed supplies the next day. They departed the following morning at two o'clock for the ascent of Aello.

At 8:45 that morning the first group of climbers radioed that they had reached the first peak of the summit of Aello (14,445 feet) at 8:21 and planned to traverse the summit ridge to a lower second peak. The weather was unusually good and the summit ridge offered no particular difficulties. As the fatigued group returned to the first peak, Al and Norm greeted them with food and water. This pair went on from the summit of the east peak to climb the second and also the farthest peak of the Aello ridge. Altimeters verified that there was no apparent difference in height between the first and third peaks.

Except for Herb Staley, Ramona Hammerly and the two of us, all the Americans had to return home.

The Japanese who had not yet done so, with the exception of the Fujitas, went on to climb Aello. Matsumoto, who had already made the ascent, climbed it again. Most of them climbed "The Claw." The Japanese proved exceptionally agile on steep ice faces. Just after the return of the main Japanese climbing team from the Twaharpies, thousands of tons of ice broke loose from "The Claw" and wiped out half the route on the face. The bird-ladies of ancient Greek mythology had barely allowed us to trespass on their domain.

During the remaining time at Camp III, the most easterly of Aello's summits was ascended and the western spur of Bona was again climbed and traversed. We dug an ice cave between the west and main peaks of Bona for the night of May 2. Hiroshi Fujita, Nakajima and Kubota arose early the next morning to climb Bona proper and then returned to Camp III. Hagihara, Staley, Ramona and we two climbed over the top of Mount Bona and down the other side. After descending 1500 feet to the saddle between Bona and Churchill, we followed the ridge to the summit of Mount Churchill (15,638 feet). After this, we retraced our route over the



top of Bona to the ice caves for the night. On the following day a storm developed as we returned to Camp III.

After the storm, on May 5 Camp III was abandoned and Base Camp reoccupied. A small contingent of the Japanese climbers made several ascents from the west fork of the Russell Glacier, where they established temporary camps. Members of both teams on May 8 made an ascent of the mountain which we called "AJJEX." This was northwest of the junction of the two forks of the Russell Glacier. On May 10 Hagihara and Staley climbed challenging Grand Parapet. This also lies on the western side of the west fork of the glacier.

We were fortunate that the weather was so good during the expedition and that we were able to achieve so much. In spite of the difficult communication problems between the groups, the feeling of friendship and mutual understanding was ever present. East and West had met, sharing our common interest in mountain climbing.

#### *Summary of Statistics.*

AREA: Twaharpies group, University Range and Mount Bona, Alaska.

ASCENTS: P 10,845, on ridge dividing east and west forks of Russell Glacier, April 19, 1967 (Haase, Haneda, Morikawa, Nakajima).

Mount Bona, 16,500 feet, fifth ascent, April 22, 1967 (Staley, Haase, McBee, Benton, Boulton, Onishi, Kubota); May 3, 1967 (Morikawa, Nakajima, H. Fujita); May 3, 1967, double traverse (A. and F. Randall, Hammerly, Staley, Hagihara).

Mount Churchill, 15,638 feet, third ascent, May 3, 1967 (A. and F. Randall, Hammerly, Staley, Hagihara).

Aello Peak (highest of Twaharpies), 14,445 feet, first ascent, April 27, 1967 (Staley, McBee, Boulton, A. Randall, Benton, Ono, Matsumoto, Hagihara); April 29, 1967 (Morikawa, Nakajima, Kubota); April 30, 1967 (Okamota, Araki, Inatome, Haneda, Matsumoto, Shimoyama).

"The Claw," 13,700 feet,  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile east of Aello (most of the Japanese).

East Aello, 13,700 feet,  $1\frac{1}{4}$  miles east of main summit, first ascent, April 29, 1967 (A. and F. Randall, Hammerly, Staley, H. Fujita, Ono).

"AJJEX," 9735 feet,  $61^{\circ}29'15''\text{N}$ ,  $141^{\circ}56'40''\text{W}$ , first ascent, May 8, 1967 (A. Randall, Hammerly, H. Fujita, Nakajima, Shimoyama).

Grand Parapet, 11,930 feet,  $61^{\circ}24'20''\text{N}$ ,  $142^{\circ}01'40''\text{W}$ , first ascent, May 10, 1967 (Staley, Hagihara).

P 9750,  $1\frac{3}{4}$  miles northeast of Grand Parapet (Shimoyama, Inatome, Haneda).

P 10,360, 3 miles northeast of Grand Parapet, (Shimoyama, Inatome, Haneda).

PERSONNEL: Alvin E. Randall, *overall and American leader*; Hiroshi Fujita, *Japanese leader*; Mitsuhiro Ono, Kunikazu Hagihara, Shigeo Fujita, Noburu Morikawa, Hiromasa Haneda, Takehiko Matsumoto, Tetsuo Kubota, Takami Shimoyama, Ryu Nakajima, Soichi Araki, Yoshio Onishi, Shuzo Okamoto, Dr. Tetsuya Inatome, *Japanese*; Frances Randall, Ramona Hammerly, Herbert Staley, Jack Berrian, Robert Basset, Norman Benton, Edward Boulton, Gerry Burdette, Roscoe Carnahan, Claude Glenn, Peter Haase, Richard Hickock, Terry Hirni, Galen McBee, *Americans*.

