

*Peaks Above Harding Icefield, Kenai Mountains.* Months of planning for Peru and everything begins to go wrong. Eventually comes the blow which really shakes us up. May 31 is a quiet Sunday until the news of the earthquake. Now it is impossible. Pouring over old *American Alpine Journals*, Dick Webster runs across an article by Vin Hoeman about the glories of the Harding Icefield. Why not drive up there to go for some of its unclimbed peaks? While descending into Anchorage in a driving rain, we (Webster, Bobbie Day, Woody Stark and I) pick up a broadcast. Grace Hoeman and her party are caught in a snowstorm after their successful ascent of Mount McKinley. Our expected contact is incommunicado; we will commit ourselves to the Kenai peninsula without knowing if the peaks we want are still unclimbed. Undaunted, we arrange to fly across Tustumena Lake to the toe of the Tustumena Glacier and have an airdrop in the Base Camp area. Amid persistent foul weather we try for an aerial reconnaissance but get nowhere. Impatiently we take off the next day for our airdrop. Flying to what we think is the Base Camp area, we push out four duffels of food and gear but see nothing of our peaks in the mist. Do they exist? By July 13 we take a float plane across the lake and are committed for 16 days. Midnight finds us floundering a half-mile up the Tustumena Glacier in an impassable morass of crevasses with 70-pound Kelties. We return to a pristine wilderness cabin with our rapidly dwindling two-day supply of food. Again we head for our airdrop, this time cross-country, and learn what alders are! Two days of walking through and under slippery alders in the rain put us in position to cross the glacier higher up opposite our airdrop. But where is it? With luck we spot it after we have gone nearly a mile above it, a speck of orange tape, only three miles farther down the glacier than we wanted. After a well deserved day of rest, we try on July 20 the peak nearest to Base Camp, P 6025, later called "Kidjakatsik" in honor of the porcupines found in its shadow. It is at the head of the south fork of Indian Canyon. After an easy walk-up, the full panorama of the Harding Icefield opens, the smooth, ill-defined icefield like a mist with the fluted teeth of the nunatak peaks and the blue Pacific beyond. It is only noon. We finally decide to head for the next nearest peak, P6200+, north along the same ridge at the head of Indian Canyon, adhering to Vin Hoeman's 1000-foot criterion. Another easy bag before we plod for hours along the icefield in soft snow, quietly cursing the impatience which led to the error in the airdrop and glowing over two firsts in one long day. Back at Base the wind comes up and we spend a day holding the tent together. The following day, July 22, we set off in a whiteout to P 6200+, a nunatak 5½ miles east of P 6025. The route runs north of the peak to an enormous bergschrund, eerie in the gloom, around it and to the summit with absolutely no view. Naturally it clears five

minutes off the summit. And so we head south toward P 6200+ on the connecting ridge to P 6197. Around nine P.M. we find ourselves under an enormous cornice on unconsolidated snow that won't even hold a step. Back we go to Base with one peak for a very long day's effort. It's time for a rest day. We build a snow cave and dry out wet gear. Then on July 24 Stark Webster and I head to the "Grand Tustumena", P 6400+, on the east end of the ridge running along the north side of the glacier. Its similarity to the Grand Teton suggested the name. The route is up a steep snow chute to the ridge, whence it goes along incredibly messy rock, up a double-corniced ridge to a fourth-class scramble on the summit block. Only Webster and I have the energy the next afternoon to take a go at the P 6200+ which turned us back before. We had seen a new route from the Tustumena ridge up the west side. Again the horribly long slog up the icefield where you move but never seem to progress, points of reference being so far away. Finally we climb the course of a slab avalanche to the summit. We have found peace and serenity for a moment. A successful expedition!

WILLIAM BRIGGS

*Kilbuck Mountains, Western Alaska.* During the course of an 18-day kayak trip on the Tikchik Lakes in July, my wife Sharon and I caught glimpses of an intriguing range of mountains, one which, it is safe to say, no mountaineer has yet explored. Less than ten miles northwest of the head of Lake Chauekuktuli lies a string of glaciated 5000-foot peaks, some of which are clearly rugged, although possibly of bad rock. Just southwest of the head of Nuyakuk Lake there is another group of peaks, not quite so high or so glaciated, but easier to get to and apparently of good rock. The weather in this part of Alaska is better than that found in the Alaska Range, but not as good as the Brooks Range's. The greatest obstacle to exploring the mountains is a cover of horribly thick brush, ubiquitous to 1500 feet. Best approach would be via float plane from Dillingham. The area has the distinction of being Alaska's poorest-mapped: the mountains, on Goodnews and Bethel quads, are shown only in 1000-foot contours, the glaciers are vague circles, and even the rivers are somewhat misdrawn.

DAVID ROBERTS