

heinously corniced ridge. Pickets or deadman-type devices proved mostly worthless in the unconsolidated fluff that graced a lot of the ridgetop; they were, however, far superior to ice tools when mining up steep, shitty snow, and we used them the same way we would use the shaft of an ice tool.

We groveled up to stand on the South Ridge. Officially, we had completed the Southeast Spur, but it only marked a middle point in the climb. The South Ridge lay ahead. Waterman had done the first ascent of the South Ridge, too. It resembled a troupe of cone-hatted gnomes who had been tortured, strung on a line, and frozen in hell. There was no respite in sight for us.

The famed "Happy Cowboys Pinnacle" was only a few difficult rope lengths away from our initial camp on the South Ridge. Snaking, fluttering blades of snow and rock radiated out in all directions along this stretch of ridge. Small portions of the pinnacle needed to be scooted across cowboy-style; Jeff led a foot-wide piece of snow with vertical sides by straddling it and spurring his way forward. As it is theoretically safe for the second person, I walked the tight rope upright. An enormous adrenaline buzz fueled me as we polished off the next section of ridge and made camp within sight of the end.

On the ninth day of the trip, we tackled the final obstacle, the "Changabang Arête," a 900-foot arête composed of all the alpine mediums. There were rock moves, some sloppy ridge, and several hundred feet of orgasmic ice. The order of the day was traversing up and left over castle-like fortifications of snow and ice that steepened to near vertical, with one section of overhanging styrofoam snow. Eventually, it was Jeff's lead again. I begged it from him. The rest of the route consisted of moderate, solid blue ice.

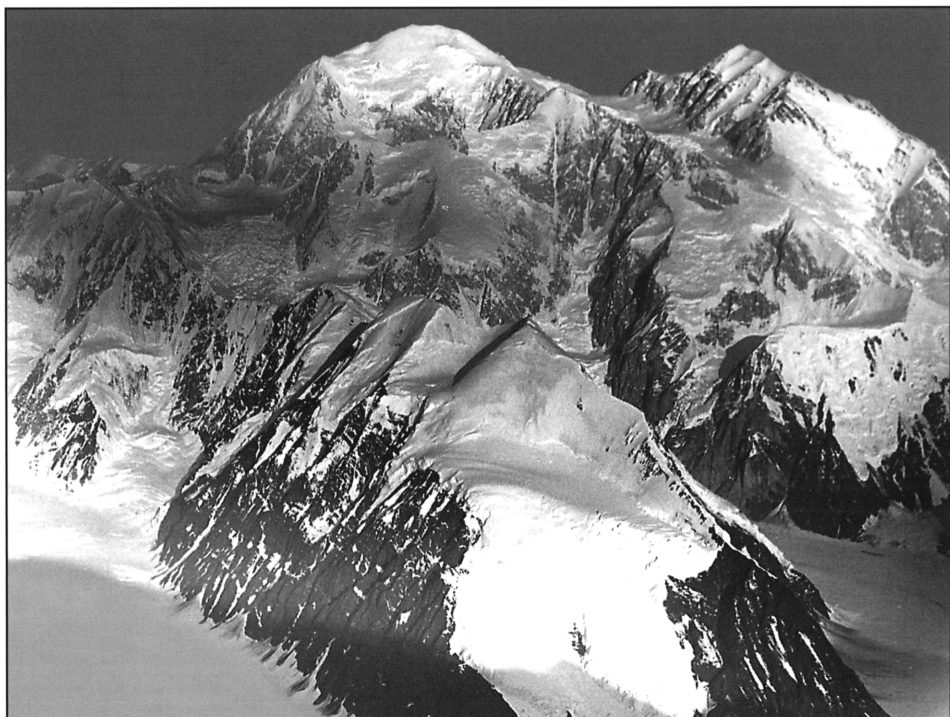
I belayed Jeff over the abrupt lip that separated the South Ridge from the 13,000-foot summit plateau. We shared a bagel and a hug. It was a quick transition from the steep ice of the arête to the horizontal expanse of the plateau. We could only begin to ponder how it had felt to John after nearly three months of solo climbing. On a day when the rest of the universe huddled in clouds, we waltzed to the top sans shirts for some hero photos. It took us seven more days to reach base camp via the north summit. We descended the West Ridge to the Northwest Basin route and back to base camp, where Base Camp Annie greeted us warmly. She was happy to see us.

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Denali, New Route. The northeast side of Mt. McKinley attracted our attention even before literature about the region became accessible to us. After reading Jon Waterman's book *High Alaska*, it became clear that our route would closely follow the *Traleika Spur* route, which was climbed for the only time in 1973. The members of our team were Fedor Lounev (Leader, 40), Otto Chkhetiani (35), Iliya Mikhalev (35) and Dimitry Oborotov (33), all from Moscow; all had experience in high-altitude ascents and long glacier expeditions in the Pamir and Tien Shan mountains.

We started from Wonder Lake on June 20. After fording the McKinley River and shuttling loads, we established base camp on McGonagall Pass on June 25. To acclimatize and view an ascent route from the side, we went into the upper Brooks Glacier to Silverthrone Col. We began to move at night. In this mode, we made it up to 11,000 feet. We made an easy ascent of Mt. Silverthrone on June 30. Before us, excellent views of the east side of McKinley and the nearest Alaskan Range peaks opened up. (On the pass, we found an old cache, presumably from World War II times). We descended to the main fork of the Traleika Glacier on the



The north and south peaks of Denali, with the Traleika Spur in the foreground, from Mt. Silverthrone.

OTTO CHKHETIANI

western side of the pass (ice up to 35-45°). To ascend the ridge that divides the west and east forks of the Traleika Glacier we decided on a new, straightforward route that brought us to a steep 3,200-foot ice slope with a small icefall below, then rising directly up to a col at 11,500 feet (Camp III in 1973).

The beginning part of the 1973 route was, in our opinion, quite avalanche prone. We left camp at 8,300 feet on Traleika Glacier on July 5. The angle of the slope varied from 35 to 45°, with sections up to 50° (on which we used ice screws). The narrowest part of the icefall, in the bottom of the gorge, required fast passage for safety. An intermediate (and safe) camp was placed on the right side at 10,400 feet. At the top of the icefall we found areas of windslab. After a two-day snow storm we continued our advance on the ridge, where we encountered big cornices and ice climbing up to 50°. We rested for a day on July 10, then continued up from the saddle at 11,500 feet to the base of the upper icefall. The next snowfall made a detour of the icefall on the northern slopes of the East Buttress extremely dangerous, so we rose directly up the icefall into Thayer Basin. Movement through the icefall was extremely tiresome because of the deep snow; in addition, we experienced strong winds.

On July 14, after a day of dense fog, we climbed a 35 to 40° slope of hard water ice on the northeast ridge. In the previous days, the mountain was wrapped in clouds that would open up for only a few hours at night. On July 16, the elevations below 16,000 feet were in dense clouds. McKinley was completely open. After six hours of climbing we were on top, with excellent views of Foraker and Huntington. The next front of clouds bore in on us from the west. Before we made it back to camp we were hit by strong winds. We made our descent via Karstens Ridge; the only difficulties were in "swimming" up to our waists in the deep snow

on the Muldrow Glacier between 8,000 and 7,000 feet. We made it back to McGonagall Pass on the night of July 19-20.

Fedor and Dimitry had decided previously to return via a known "shortcut" to Wonder Lake. Iliya and I preferred the original plan, an 80-kilometer route east to the Trans-Alaskan highway through Anderson Pass and on the West Fork River Valley, which we made in four days. It was not simple; we had to ford separate streams of the West Fork River and climb rocks and forested slopes. (We flew the last 11 kilometers in a helicopter we met at random).

For Fedor, the journey to Wonder Lake was his last. Three kilometers from the park road, while fording the McKinley River for the fourth time on the trip, he was tragically lost. Dimitry and the rescuers could not resuscitate him.

OTTO CHKHETIANI, *Russia*

Denali, Attempt, and Ascent of Browne Tower; Mt. Koven, Second Ascent; and Mt. Tatum, North Rib. Our goal was an ascent of Browne Tower and the subsequent rocky ridge line to the summit of Mt. McKinley. The upper portion of this ridge (above the mound at 17,425') previously has been climbed during various ascents of the East Buttress and Traleika Spur. Browne Tower itself and the ridge line to 17,425 feet remained unclimbed. From April 29 to May 20, Stephen Leary, Peter Way, Paul Weber and I, all from New Zealand and Australia, established a camp at the base of the tower following an approach via the Muldrow Glacier and Karstens Ridge. Before attempting the tower, we ascended the Harper Glacier by the standard route, acclimatized at a camp at 16,500 feet, and placed a food cache at 17,200 feet on the upper ridge before returning to camp at Browne Tower. On May 16, we climbed the Tower via a direct line up from the crest of the upper Coxcomb. After initial scrambling on mixed ground, we encountered three pitches of mixed rock and ice-filled cracks (5.7) followed by more mixed scrambling to the top of the tower. The rock was of excellent quality, beautiful orange granite blocks that continued to stud the ridge for almost a mile beyond the tower. Progress along this ridge was free and fast with spectacular views of the east face and steeply down to the West Fork Traleika icefalls. Unfortunately, strong afternoon winds forced us to abandon the ridge at 15,800 feet via a couloir onto the Harper Glacier. The storm that followed kept us tent-bound for four days and prevented completion of the route.

We made camp for the ascent of Mt. Koven's Northwest Face at 10,000 feet on the Muldrow Glacier. On the morning of May 22, it was snowing lightly and we left camp at 11:30 a.m., intending to reconnoiter the route. Access onto the face proved to be straightforward. A large bergschrund wall at about 10,400 feet was negotiated via an ice pitch up a convenient serac and an airy step across to the iceslopes above. At 11,200 feet, another 'schrund cut across the entire face but still was bridged in places by the season's snowfall. At this point, we broke through the morning cloud layer into a gloriously calm and sunny afternoon. The ice before us swept to the summit ridge at about 60° and tempted more than a reconnoiter.

A broken rib protruded from the face just left of center. Our line followed hard ice up to the right of this rib, then onto the blocks of the rib itself at about 12,000 feet. Negotiating the seracs and crevasses of the upper rib, we arrived at a beautiful summit icecap at about 6 p.m. With breathtaking views of Karsten's Ridge, Browne Tower and the summit of Denali less than five miles away across the Harper icefall, it is remarkable that this peak has received so few visitors. Descending by the same route with several rappels, we were back at camp on the Muldrow by 11:30 p.m., content to enjoy a most memorable cheesecake prepared by Paul for his 26th birthday.

A prominent ice rib protrudes from the jumbled crevasse fields and icefalls of the north