

of three drips on Bubba's Moonshine Wall, and like the remaining two routes, rewards a long, dangerous approach with an airy, fantastic position. Two days later, Spangler and Venery returned with Ryan Hokanson. The trio climbed *The Fountainhead* (IV WI4, 275'), a steep pillar below and left of *Monument Falls*. Spangler and Hokanson rested another day, then followed Kelly Cordes up *Treehugger* (III WI4, 200'). This route is located 300-400 feet above the outlet of the lake, in an amphitheater on the lower reaches of Bearhat Mountain.

BLASE REARDON, *unaffiliated*

*North Face of Mt. Edwards, Ascent.* Chris Trimble and I hiked in to an igloo constructed at Lower Snyder Lake late in the evening on April 2. At 7 a.m. the next morning, we were looking up at the north face of Mt. Edwards immediately above Upper Snyder Lake. The vertical gain from the lake to the summit is 3,500 feet, with the lower third being a rock band. Chris and I had climbed *Baby Semmler* on this wall previously, but our goal this trip was to continue on the upper two-thirds of the mountain to the summit.

We climbed *Six Pack of Beer and Nothing to Do*, a 1,400-foot WI4 done previously by Kalispell locals, reaching the top of this climb at 4 p.m. We slogged on to intersect the north ridge at around 7,700 feet. Despite the early hour, we elected to bivy here because of the pleasantness of the evening and the spectacular position of this bivy spot, surrounded by the peaks of Glacier National Park.

In the morning we continued for three hours of steep snowy climbing on the north ridge of Mt. Edwards with an occasional excavated rock move to the summit. We descended the east ridge toward Comeau Pass, then down the small ice climb below the pass between Mt. Edwards and the Little Matterhorn. Firm snow conditions at the time made this route safe, feasible, and enjoyable. The route (V WI4 5.8) is very good ice/alpine route, but is not recommended in summer or during periods of high avalanche danger.

JIM EARL

## ALASKA

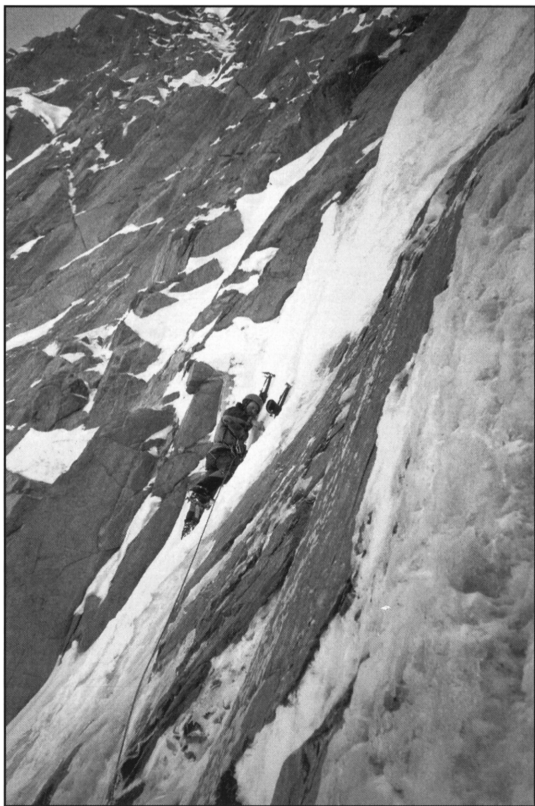
*Thorn Peak, East Face, 100 Years of Solitude.* During late July, 1992, I traversed the Gakona Range from the range's high peak (misabeled on most maps) of Gakona over to Thorn Peak (Peak 9200'). My main memory of the climb was banging in a ringing angle piton, taking a peek down the east face of Thorn through the mist and then blindly rappelling down the south face.

February, 1995. Convincing neophyte climber Rick Studley to attempt a winter ascent of the unclimbed and unseen east face of the Thorn was easy. Skiing 40 miles up a frozen river covered with a foot and a half of water was not. Five miles from the road and two days into the slog from hell, we turned around.

February, 1996. Ian McRae didn't want to ski 40 miles to climb a face I had no photos of. When we got a grant to fly in, he bit the hook. After taking all our money, our pilot landed us a week from our objective. Ian and I proceeded to spend the next 17 days in -50°F weather hating life, digging snowcaves, and trying to stay warm. By the time we got to the base of the face, we were complete-

LEFT: Ian McRae at the base of the east face of Thorn Peak during the 1996 attempt.

JEFF APPLE BENOWITZ



*Rick Studley on 100 Years of Solitude, east face of Mt. Thorn. JEFF APPLE BENOWITZ*

ly spent. Climbing 3,000 feet of technical ground at those temperatures was not going to happen.

April, 1997. Photos in hand, I thought it would be easy to get a partner for the obvious gem of a line. Landing in a Super Cub at the base of the face alone, I knew I needed to work on my salesmanship. Climbing half the face and finding the crux rock band devoid of ice and me devoid of aid gear left me nowhere to go but down and out. Skiing the 40 miles to the road was a chore—then one of my skis broke in half. Let's just say I had an adventure.

Early March, 1998. Rick Studley, an old man by now in the climbing world of Fairbanks, was once again easy to convince to try the still-unclimbed east face of the Thorn. With a paved snowmobile trail leading two-thirds of the way in, the ski took only three days. When we reached the base of the rock band, it was obvious that March was the month. Thin but climbable ice headed straight up for 800 feet. After fixing our one rope and a few aiders on the

crux two pitches (WI5 5.5), we dug a cave and holed up for the -30F° night. The next day the sun was strong. We ate ramen, then swung leads up thin, but plastic ice. Soon the ice was behind us and two pitches of scary snow tunneling brought us onto an arête near the summit. Rick ran up the snow and rock arête and belayed from a place I had reached six years ago. Descending the highly corniced north ridge and then down a 2,000-foot snow gully quickly brought us back to our skis at the base of the climb. Skiing out in a marathon two days was uneventful.

The route was named *100 Years of Solitude* for the only book I had to read on my solo attempt and because it will probably be 100 years before this hidden gem gets climbed again.

JEFF APPLE BENOWITZ, *unaffiliated*

## ALASKA RANGE

*Denali National Park, Mountaineering Statistics.* Most weather forecasters will attribute the strange 1998 climbing season facts to El Niño: the Park saw a 100% success rate this past year for winter ascents of Mt. McKinley, and a 36% success rate during the peak climbing season. The three mountaineers who made it to the top of North America's highest peak in