

CHUGACH RANGE

Monument Peak and Mt. Awesome, Ascents. In March, Willy Peabody and I climbed Monument Peak at the head of the Monument Glacier in the Chugach Range via the north ridge. We then made the second ascent of Mt. Awesome via the south face.

MIKE WOOD, *unaffiliated*

Mt. Fairweather, Winter Ascent. On February 15, Nancy Juergens and I were landed in the foam of heavy surf approximately three miles south of Cape Fairweather. At low tide on the following day, our partners, Jeff Carter and Josephine Warden, joined us, and we began shuttling our 480 pounds of supplies through wonderful old growth rain forest. During the first week, we based out of a camp in the woods only two miles from the beach. Traveling with skis on our backs through devil's club, route-finding challenges and even mosquitoes combined to prevent rapid progress. The second week found us on the glacier—for one camp. We were forced into the vegetation again by an ice fall below firn line. Leaving the brush behind at our third camp, we settled into a routine of: one full carry the first day; move camp the next; on the third, two people retrieved the final load while two scouted ahead with light loads to determine the route. By the end of the third week, we had bypassed two major ice falls by traversing the hillsides on the east margin of the Fairweather Glacier and had our seventh camp at 4,300 feet, the standard Base Camp for the route.

Only a week of food and fuel remained to attempt the route. Our strategy during the planning phase of this climb was to allow many days to move up the mountain slowly, but this was no longer feasible. Following a day of rest at Base Camp, we broke trail up 3,000 feet of the route. On the next day, we moved into a cave camp at the 8,000-foot level. The ensuing day was one of scouting and rest. Jeff and Josephine decided that they would not continue up in order to give the expedition the best chance of success. On the 23rd day of the trip, Nancy and I moved into a cave near the 12,000-foot level with a couple of extra days of food and fuel to support our summit bid. Two days of wind and snow confined us to the entertainment of a Tom Clancy novel and the joys of a temperamental stove. With a "let's see how far we can get" attitude, we departed high camp at 8 a.m. on March 12. Our enthusiasm was dispirited by ominous black clouds building in the southern sky. As we cramponed up 45° wind-scoured slopes, traversed corniced ridges and avoided crevasses, we constantly watched the clouds to the south and kept tabs on each other's energy levels. Summiting at 3 p.m., we were thrilled that the clouds remained high, allowing us to see St. Elias and Logan to the north and Glacier Bay to the south. The alpenglow that enveloped us as the sun set between the clouds and the horizon lit up St. Elias like a beacon and was a highlight of the trip. The nerve-wracking after-dark return to high camp heightened our appreciation of our accomplishment.

The following morning we embarked on our exciting 7,700-foot descent back to Base Camp. A speedy 2,000-foot glissade aided in getting us back to the 4,300-foot camp by sunset. Our partners welcomed us with hot drinks and homemade pizza. Work commitments dictated that we be in Talkeetna mid-month, so we regretfully decided to get picked up at base camp at 4,300 feet, thereby foregoing our adventure back to the sea. A couple of fixed ropes on the rocky section of the ridge were the only sign of previous visitation that we saw, which lent to the overall sense of satisfaction and accomplishment that we all feel about our expedition.

JOE REICHERT