

Almost immediately I began seeking a partner to attempt *Holy Moses*. Two weeks and many logistical snafus later, I was back, this time with Ryan Hokanson and Mike Jobeck. Again we cruised the first three pitches. The fourth and final pitch remained hidden from view around a corner. From the ground it had looked rather difficult, so as I started the lead, I was anxious about what awaited me. As I worked out the moves, the pitch revealed itself section by section: sustained and technical, but not especially strenuous. At mid-pitch, a snow blob collapsed under my weight and sent me for a short ride. This was but a minor setback, and soon I found myself once again at that not-so-elusive-anymore ledge. *Holy Moses* (IV WI5+) was now whole.

I wish that could be the happy ending to the story of Bureaucrat Buttress, but soon enough Jim was back. There was still a line to be done, and he wanted it bad. I had a funny feeling that morning and was glad when Jim offered to lead the crux third pitch. As I belayed the first pitch, I began to relax. As the rope paid out, I prepared to climb. Glancing up to check Jim's progress, I saw a bright flash, accompanied by a loud thunk. Instantly I was on the ground and bleeding badly. I had taken a chunk to the face. The game was up. Poor Jim got turned back again.

KIRBY SPANDANGLER, *unaffiliated*

## ALASKA

### BROOKS RANGE

*West Maiden, North Prow.* On August 1-2, Lorna Corson, Randy Farris, Mike Menoloscino and I climbed a possible new route on the north side of the West Maiden. We began our climb by traversing left across the wide ledge that is a prominent feature on the lower right side of the face. We then climbed up from the ledge at a couple of small patches of snow and ice below the second major weakness on the face above. After talking with John Markel, I believe this is where their original Markel-Duggan North Buttress route heads straight up. Our route angled up and left for four pitches and led to a corner system near the actual prow of the buttress. These pitches were wet, exposed to rockfall and not entirely enjoyable. From this point on, though, the climbing and rock improved dramatically. We climbed on, or just to the west of, the crest of the actual prow for the next 16 long pitches. The climbing was rarely easier than 5.7 and never harder than 5.9 or easy 5.10. While most of the climbing involved good crack climbing, there were also several pitches of very runout face. The last pitch avoided a chimney by climbing a perfect one-inch crack through a roof with the whole route dropping away below. We called our climb *The Maiden Voyage* (V 5.9+ R). A true classic.

For descent, we had planned to rappel the gully to the east of the East Maiden. However, as we arrived at the summit at 2:15 a.m. in a gathering storm, we were forced to descend into the Ayagomahalla Valley and suffer through a rainy and foodless 15-mile bushwhack back to our camp in Arrigetch Creek's south fork. We climbed 20 60-meter pitches, used no pitons or bolts and left the route in the same pristine shape that we found it.

NORM LARSON

*Arrigetch Peaks, Various Ascents.* In early August, Stan Justice, Dean Justice, Ian McRae,

Michael Williams and I flew into the Arrigetch Peaks of the Western Brooks Range. We cut our flight costs in half by flying from Graying Lake (near Prospect on the Dalton Highway) to Takahula Lake. We avoided mosquitoes by choosing to climb in August but paid the price with rainy, cold weather.

Most of the higher (above 6,000') peaks in the area have been climbed. We spent two lazy days bushwhacking into a valley south of Shot Tower. After making base camp in a high meadow, we split into two teams. Ian, Michael and I chose the first peak that caught our eye as our (only) objective. We climbed the North Arête of Coolage Tower (IV 5.9 A1) after two failed attempts due to rain. The climb consisted of one crack system that steadily rose for 1,500 feet. The crack size varied from offwidth to knifeblade and back again. Surmounting the final bit involved some tricky free climbing and overhanging aid. We rappelled down the east face to avoid the traversing nature of our line of ascent. The rock on our route was the best any of us had seen in Alaska.

JEFF APPLE BENOWITZ

#### ALASKA RANGE

*Mt. Crosson, South Ridge, Previously Unreported.* In May, 1996, Paul Ramsden (UK) and Andrew Brash (Canada) made the first ascent of the South Ridge of Mt. Crosson before continuing up the Sultana Ridge to the summit of Mt. Foraker. We climbed in a super lightweight style and had a great time. The South Ridge provides 6,000 feet of elevation gain and was climbed over two nights due to the high daytime temperatures. The main difficulties were found low on the ridge, where the shale pinnacles were covered in unconsolidated snow. From the summit of Mt. Crosson, we continued to the summit of Foraker over two days. Conditions on the ridge were excellent and the weather was very good. We returned to Crosson before descending the usual Southeast Ridge. The round trip took a total of five days; we gave the outing an Alaskan Grade 4 for the whole thing.

PAUL RAMSDEN, *United Kingdom*

*Denali National Park, Mountaineering Statistics.* This past climbing season is the second time since 1991 that the mountain did not claim any lives. Unrelenting high winds contributed to a summit rate of less than 20 percent during the month of May. Later in the season, stretches of moderate weather allowed more mountaineers to reach the top of McKinley. This raised the overall summit percentage for the season to 43 percent. The historical summit rate dating back to 1903 remains at 51 percent.

The 1998-'99 winter season on Denali saw intense cold weather and high winds. This led to an early retreat for three expeditions. Although no climbers summited Mt. McKinley this past winter, one climber summited Mt. Foraker, although not in time to be considered a winter ascent. (See below.)

Mountaineering in Denali National Park and Preserve has increased dramatically over the years. In 1984, 695 climbers attempted to climb McKinley; this past year, that number almost doubled to 1,183 climbers on the mountain's slopes. In 1995, the National Park Service started a three-pronged approach to attempt to reduce the number of accidents and deaths and to support those efforts using funds paid by climbers. This program consists of a 60-day pre-registration requirement, a climbing special-use fee and a preventative search and rescue and