

Are you flying there?"

"Yes, I'm looking for you!" he answered. "Where are you crazy boys?" A few minutes later, Paul landed not far from us in his legendary Beaver, then flew us to base camp, where we spent three more days.

This was partially the second, partially the third ascent of the *Thunderbird Variation* of the *Hummingbird Ridge*. We chose the direct exit onto the ridge north of Shovel Ridge. The *Thunderbird Variation* leads out of the couloir to the left through a ca. 700-meter ice flank to the ridge. The route in total was ca. 3600 vertical meters from Camp I to the summit. The time of ascent in pure alpine style was 26 hours.

WERNER STUCKI, *Switzerland*

Mt. Baird, First Ascent. In July and August, Dave Hildes, Jay Burbee (Canada), and I planned to join up the ridge of peaks that connect Mt. Augusta to Mt. St. Elias on the west side of the range. The reality, after delays and team and transport problems, was that we found ourselves dumped on the upper Seward Glacier with about ten days on our hands. Mixed weather with much whiteout frustrated attempts to weave through the icefalls at the base of the north ridge of Mt. Augusta. Jay, who had been on the same ridge the previous year after a successful Logan expedition, marveled at the contrast in snow conditions while wading chest-deep through this icefall. After attaining a high point of around 2900 meters, it dawned on us that we were just too late in the season to navigate this maze of seracs and chasms that barred a relatively straightforward route to the summit.

Hence, we attempted to push a route through the icefalls guarding the Augusta-Baird col. Being considerably gentler in slope, the climbing (with some interesting overhanging cruddy snow/ice climbing) gave way to a fine camp at the col (ca. 2800m) after a couple of days. From this position, a straightforward 40- to 50-degree snow slog in varied conditions got us up the East Ridge (Alaskan Grade III) of Mt. Baird (3550m) for the mountain's first ascent. The final two pitches gave additional exciting climbing, but the summit arête was fortunately devoid of the cornices usually associated with exposed ridges on the west side of the range. From the summit, we continued along the west ridge and subsequently dropped onto the relatively safer east face to descend to camp at the col. With the weather deteriorating again, we backtracked down the icefall and headed back to our pick-up spot where, after a few frustrating days and some inspired (or desperate) radio repairs, our plane landed to claim us from impending winter. Short, sweet, and, compared to the usual epics, cheating?

ALUN HUBBARD, *United Kingdom*

Mt. Kennedy, North Buttress, First Alpine-Style Ascent. The 6,000-foot North Buttress of Mt. Kennedy was an obviously orgasmic and well-known alpine-style objective in the St. Elias Range. The buttress had been climbed twice before (1968 and 1977) using siege tactics. Andy Cave and I started up the route in good weather on May 25. By the morning of the 28th, one meter of snow had fallen and we had been stationary, on a slightly elevated spur, for two days. It was disturbing to be trapped in one place for so long with such nasty avalanches roaring past on either side. Andy calmed his nerves with deep and meaningful reading whilst I contented myself with Harry Potter books, with which my daughter had complained I was not conversant.

The snow moderated on the 28th and we continued, reaching the obvious crux, two-thirds of the way up, on May 29. The first (siege) ascensionists had recorded some A3 pitches some-

where around here and their photographs showed distressingly steep blank walls. We linked up some intermittent ice streaks to the right of the sieged line, and directly below the upper crest, to gain prominent dolerite bands leading to the base of the summit icefield. We found this section challenging due to both the steep ground and the return of heavy snowfall. But the gods liked us, and from a bivy below the icefield we were able to reach the summit in perfect weather at 5 p.m. on May 30. We managed our first contact with Kurt Gloyer, our pilot, from the top and arranged to be picked up from the Cathedral Glacier (on the south side of Kennedy) the following afternoon. Fortunately, the pick-up went according to plan, and we were back in Yakutat that evening. In retrospect, we both found the experience very pleasurable.

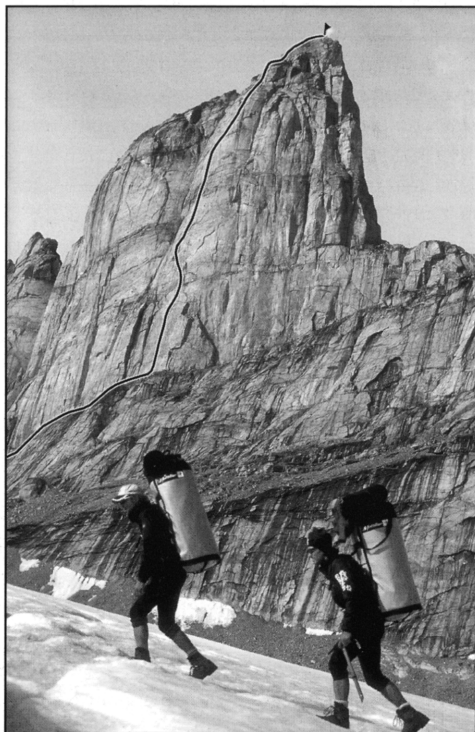
MICK FOWLER, *United Kingdom*

BAFFIN ISLAND

Polar Bear Spire, First Ascent. Gerhard Heidorn, Stefan Glowacz, Holger Heuber, and I arrived in Clyde River, Baffin Island, on August 7. In the months of August and September, the sea is normally free of ice and can be traversed by boat. We wanted to use our own power in historical Eskimo style, that is, by kayak, to reach the fjords lying 200 kilometers away. Moreover, we wanted to freeclimb a first ascent.

We had to distribute about 500 kilos of necessary material among four boats. Although we'd already sent most of our baggage (about 140 kilos of dried food for 30 days, the climbing equipment, and the kayaks) two months earlier, it still had not arrived. Only three days later, after countless telephone calls with the airline company, were we finally able to begin our odyssey. On August 10, we put to sea at Cape Christian, an abandoned former U.S. airbase about 12 kilometers away from Clyde River. An Inuit gave us his Winchester pump-action shotgun and ammunition so we could defend ourselves against polar bears. During the next 25 days, until our return to Clyde River, we had contact with polar bears more than 20 times.

It was supposed to take a good week to cover the ca. 200 kilometers to the end of Eglinton Fjord. Heavy seas, unfavorable currents, and winds thwarted our plans to press on farther north to Sam Ford Fjord or even Gibbs Fjord. Confronting a 20-kilometer-long passage over open, rough seas and paddling into the wind, it wasn't difficult to decide to turn west into Eglinton Fjord, especially since the thickly nestled contour lines on the map promised huge cliffs here, too.



Polar Bear Spire, showing Odyssey 2000 (Albert Glowacz-Heidorn-Heuber, 2000).

GERHARD HEIDORN