

## Alaska

### BROOKS RANGE

*Brooks Range, first complete traverse.* In September of 2001 I completed the first crossing of the North American Brooks Range, from Point Hope to the Mackenzie River. This crossing required many expeditions over a number of years. Viewed from Point Hope in the west, the route proceeds to the source of the Ipswuk, across the Wulik

Peaks and the DeLong Mountains to the source of the Kuguruk. It continues along the Kuguruk to the Noatak and then through the Noatak basin to Portage Pass and the upper Alatna. It then reaches across the Killik Basin to the Okomilaga, Chandler Lake, and Anaktuvuk Pass (by way of Kollutuk). I had lived in Anaktuvuk Pass in my teens and it was here that I first conceived of the project to comprehensively explore the entire range. In those days, hunting caribou and traveling by dog sled, I traveled as far as the Killik in the west and the Itkillik in the east. I made the first historical winter ascents in February of 1966, and two years later began a series of summer mountaineering expeditions that spread eventually throughout the entire range and into Canada. Countless peaks were climbed, passes crossed, and icefields explored. It was an orgy of mountain exploration that I thought was perhaps historically obtrusive. Like many mountaineers of that time I was desperately trying to touch something that no other human being had touched. And wherever I went there was always someone not far behind me.

In the 1980s and 1990s a good deal of time was spent in the Franklin and Romanzof icefields, climbing the most appealing of the ice peaks. Much of the eastern half of the route across the entire range was accomplished in this period. Looking east from Anaktuvuk Pass the route continues into the Anaktiktok Basin and through the Nanushuk, Itkillik, and Atigun Basins. It then proceeds up Accomplishment Creek over the summit lake, down the Ribdon headwaters to the upper Wind River and down the Ivishak. From here a pioneering descent of the Echooka was made with Deirdre Hammond. But the main route east follows the upper Canning and crosses the icefields of the upper Jago to find the most northerly point on the American Continental Divide (1991). The route goes south of the Continental Divide here into the upper Sheenjek at the fork of the great arch. A pass into the upper Kongakut leads to a region of limestone river tunnels. The lower Kongakut turns to Pagilak Creek and the Yukon border. The softer contours of the British Mountains then loom along the Malcolm River to Sheep Creek and the Firth River. We crossed from the Firth to the Babbage in 2000.

In September of 2001 the final expedition crossed the Barn Range through the canyons of Fish Hole Creek and a succession of passes to the Blow River at the very end of the mountains. Geologically, this point is the eastern edge of the Brooks Range. We ended at Bonnet Lake. The Richardson Mountains beyond had been crossed from the Mackenzie in 1999. A great deal of knowledge was acquired in the course of these expeditions in fields ranging from linguistics to natural history and geography. Many persons contributed to our success. I feel compelled to mention most especially Rebecca LeCheminant, Ruthmary Deuel, Craig Deutche, Patrick



Colgan, Walter Rogers, Paul Lencioni, Peter Balwin, Ed Hartley, Deirdre Hammond, John Morry, Olive Morry, John Hugo, and Pat and Clem Rawert.

DENNIS SCHMITT

## HAYES RANGE

*Peak 12,360' South Ridge.* In mid-April Jon Miller and I left Fairbanks for a climb of the obvious line on the south face of Peak 12,360'. Situated between Mt. Hayes and Mt. Shand, this unnamed peak is the third highest peak in the Hayes Range. We flew into a small tributary glacier that feeds into the Black Rapids-Susitna Glacier pass, landing at about 5,500 feet. After bundling the plane up for a few nights, we skied up to the base of a prominent couloir that intersects the south ridge at about 9,000 feet. We climbed unroped up the snowy couloir to the ridge, then continued on ice and snow to the south basin at about 10,000 feet. The next morning we climbed hard snow and rime ice up the southwest ridge from the basin. At one point unstable rime mushrooms required a rappel from the ridge onto the west face. From there we followed hard water ice and more rime to the summit, feeling the altitude in our low-life Fairbanks lungs. We made the mistake of descending directly along the east ridge to the col between Peak 12,360' and Whale's Tail, the next small peak toward Aurora Peak. This required steep downclimbing on icy slopes and several rappels. (It would have been better to walk down the northwestern slopes and traverse easy ground to the col.) From this col we downclimbed to the basin, returning to our tent just at dark. The next day we descended to the plane, warmed it up, and flew back to Fairbanks. We believe that this enjoyable line had not been climbed before.

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