

We rappelled and down-climbed Deadbeat in the shade, hitting the skis 24 hours after leaving. I'd been saving a route name from one of my favorite Johnny Cash songs. The name seemed fitting: Ring of Fire.

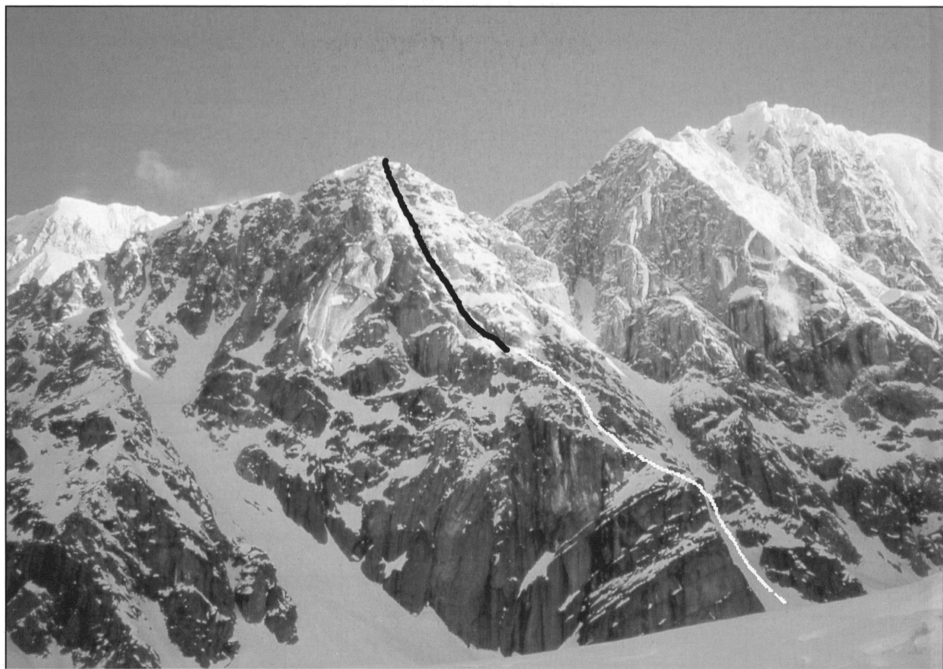
Paul Roderick then flew us to Mt. Huntington, which supposedly hadn't been climbed in under a day. It was an obvious candidate for a lightweight sprint. But we did know that its summit is notoriously hard to reach. We left our 8,200-foot camp at 10:30 p.m. on June 8, crossed the 'schrund an hour later, and roped-up at the prominent ice ramp/couloir splitting the west face. Motivated by pizza and beer, we figured if we pulled this off, we could feel good about flying out. The couloir, with fixed pro and bomber moderate ice (a couple of steps of WI4, then easier), was a blast. Five hours from camp, we were starting up the broad summit slopes. These final 1,000 vertical feet proved terrifying, unquestionably the most challenging climbing of the route, with steep, unconsolidated mank snow, worthless ice, cornices, and, of course, no protection. Vertical trenching through collapsing sugar. At least we were tied together for the potential 4,000-footer. Now I understand why folks sometimes stop at, ahem, "the end of the difficulties" on Huntington. We summited at 7:30 a.m. but, not psyched about any descent route, we were unable to enjoy the spectacular view. The sun would hit the face in a few hours, and at this point in the trip we felt worked. Scott's deadpan statement said it all, "I want my mom so bad right now. I hate alpine climbing." The downclimbing part of reversing our path was a bit unnerving, but 16 hours after leaving camp we were back, enjoying whiskey and a fresh bag of Twizzlers. In an unprecedented display of will power, I had kept them unopened for a final celebration. "Yeah, ya know, alpine climbing ain't so bad."

KELLY CORDES, AAC

*Thunder Mountain, Walk of the Schnitzelkings.* On April 6, 1999, German climbers Christoph Duepper and Thomas Traxler climbed the right-hand fork of the split couloir to the right (east) of the central spur—the Lightning Spur—on Thunder Mountain's south face. This is the couloir starting at the "3" on p. 205 of the 2001 AAJ. After 1,000 feet the couloir forks. The route Deadbeat ascends the left fork, while the German route goes right. Duepper and Traxler climbed much of their 3,000-foot route unroped, encountering mostly 50-degree snow except for four short pitches of 80- to 90-degree ice. After about six hours of climbing, they reached the narrow col atop the couloir and rappelled.

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*Ruth Glacier, Peak 10,370'; Peak 11,300' attempt; Moose's Tooth, Shaken Not Stirred.* On May 15 Jared Ogden and I were dropped by Talkeetna Air Taxi on the West Fork of the Ruth Glacier. Our plan was to try the east face of Mt. Huntington, but the weather was not cooperating. On our second day in camp we climbed a couloir in the middle of the east face of a 10,370-foot peak just north of our camp. The knife-edge ridge at the top involved a mandatory rappel, and since there was no anchor, we think we may have done a new route. We turned back in a white-out about 200 feet below the top and had an exciting descent down a different route from what we climbed. After an aborted attempt on the Southwest Ridge of Peak 11,300', during which a snow cave collapsed on us, we packed up our sleds and headed down to the Ruth Amphitheater, where the weather was clearly better.



Peak 10,370', a bump along Mt. McKinley's Reality Ridge, directly north from the standard base camp on the west fork of the Ruth Glacier. *Mark Synnott*

We bivied below Mt. Barille and the next day made the long climb up to the hanging glacier below the south face of the Moose's Tooth. We lay around in our bags for a few hours, then at 3 a.m. began climbing a gully called Shaken Not Stirred. Conditions were excellent. Most of the climbing was straightforward, with the exception of one difficult chockstone capped with an overhang of unconsolidated sugar snow. We arrived at the Englishman's Col at about 9 a.m., having simul-climbed most of the route. From there, rather than heading left to the west summit and a descent of the west ridge, we headed right, toward the middle summit. The first pitch from the col onto the ridge was very difficult, involving vertical climbing on unconsolidated snow and ice, but it deposited us onto a wild Peruvian-style ridge. After more simul-climbing we reached the middle summit about noon. We paused briefly, then continued along the ridge. Our plan was to continue traversing until we found Ham and Eggs, a popular route that has fixed rappel anchors. Unfortunately, we had only brought one 8-mm rope and a small rack. There is a lot more ridge up there than we thought, and a lot of gullies that all look the same, so when we arrived at one with a rappel sling around a horn at the top, we dropped in. One thousand feet down, we got cliffed out by a 1,500-foot wall and realized we'd have to climb back up. Then a storm blew in. We had to climb some hard mixed pitches to get back to the ridge, all done in a whiteout with spindrift pouring on our heads. We eventually found the salvation of Ham and Eggs, but with only one rope we had to do a lot of downclimbing and install many V-threads to get down.

MARK SYNNOTT, AAC