

HAYES RANGE

Mt. McGinnis, east face, Cutthroat Couloir. In early March Jed Brown and I skied in to attempt the unclimbed direct east face of McGinnis. The left-hand serac, and constant spew showering down the lower gully of the face, had us choose to repeat Cutthroat Couloir instead. We found thin, overhanging ice (Grade V/VI) and easy mixed in the 3,000' slot. Rockfall, even in the cold of March, was a major issue (wear a titanium sombrero). We descended the corniced northeast ridge after summiting from our only bivy spot (a snow cave at the top of the Cutthroat). It was the second ascent of the classic 1986 Comstock–Dial route and took seven days road-to-road. I strongly recommend only attempting the line in extreme cold, due to rockfall considerations. It was my third summiting of McGinnis, via a different route each time.

JEFF BENOWITZ

DELTA RANGE

Item Peak, North Face. In February, Jed Brown (18 years old) and I (33) ascended a direct line on the north face of Item Peak, to the left of the route I did in 2000. Jed and I found snow up to 65° and avoided all rock bands by stepping left around them. We only roped up for the summit cornice.

JEFF BENOWITZ

ALASKA RANGE

Denali National Park and Preserve, summary. Life is still fragile in the rangeæour human vulnerability became painfully evident again this year when three brothers perished on Mt. Foraker in an apparent avalanche, and one soloist fell to his death from Denali Pass on Mt. McKinley.

National Park Service mountaineering patrols were kept busy with numerous search-and-rescue incidents. As always, the patrol volunteers and the military pararescuemen were an important asset, working with the rangers in assisting other climbers in distress and providing resource protection.

On a preseason patrol in March, all nine Denali mountaineering rangers climbed Mt. Silverthrone and skied over Anderson Pass and out the West Fork Glacier. This past season also marked the first ranger patrol since 1932 to successfully climb Denali from the north side of the Alaska Range. A foursome ascended via the Muldrow Glacier route, traversing over and down to the 14,200' ranger camp on the West Buttress route. In other patrol firsts, one ranger patrol spent over two weeks at the 17,200' high camp at the end of the season, setting a new standard for high-altitude camping.

Clean Mountain Cans (CMCs) were used extensively above the 14,200' ranger camp to deal with solid human waste. Also in the resource-management realm, preprinted tags were used for the first time to uniformly identify all caches in terms of expedition names, dates, and permit numbers.