

Devil's Thumb and satellites, routes from the south side: (1) West Witches' Tit, southwest face, Belcourt-Rackliff, 1995; (2) West Witches' Tit, south face, Jack Hicks Memorial Route, Edwards-Millar, 2002; (3) Cat's Ears Spire, west face, Elias-McMullen, 1996; (4) Cat's Ears Spire, east face, Culbert-Douglas-Starr, 1972; (5) Cat's Ears Spire, south face, The Least Snowed-up Route, Edwards-Millar, 2002; (6) Cat's Ears Couloir to west buttress, attempt to 200' from summit, Down-Foreman-Haberl, 1990; (7) Bearzi-Klose Couloir to west buttress, attempt to 600' from summit, 1980; (8) south face, Flores-Jones-Lowe, 1973; (9) south pillar, Bebie-Pilling, 1991; (10) attempted line on south pillar-south face to 250' from summit, Elias-McMullen-Selvig, 1996; (11) Becky Route (SE face to E ridge), Becky-Craig-Schmidke, 1946; (12) Krakauer Route, 1997; (13) Bearzi-Klose variation, 1980; (14) east ridge, Culbert-Douglas-Starr, 1970. Photo and route information by Dieter Klose

## ALASKA COAST MOUNTAINS

*Correction.* On page 253 of the 2002 AAJ, the photograph is by Ryszard Pawlowski, and the drawing and photo layout is by Grzegorz Glazek.

*Juneau Icefield, ski traverse.* As a mechanical engineering undergraduate, I studied glacial mechanics on the southern portion the Juneau Icefield of southeast Alaska and northwest British Columbia with Dr. Maynard M. Miller's Glaciological Institute. I always dreamed of returning, with my father to traverse the entire length of the Icefield, commencing with the northernmost glaciers and, after traversing 120 miles along the spine of the Boundary Range, to disembark from the Icefield at its southernmost terminus and Alaska's capital, Juneau. The lure of exploring vast expanses of wilderness, some of it virtually unexplored, has always captured my imagination.

Standing at sea level in the old gold-rush town of Skagway, looking up thousands of feet into the rugged snowy mountains, I could only think that the toughest part of our expedition would be gaining the "high ice"; we were not to be disappointed. On the morning of May 27, 2001, four of us, including Charles B. Daellenbach, Allen H. Throop, and John P. Parsons, loaded our skis onto our 80lb. + packs and walked out of town past amused townsfolk and cruise ship tourists, up a forest trail and onto our first snows. For three punishing days, our team progressed upward past Upper Dewey Lake and the Devil's Punch Bowl, then in a southerly direction above

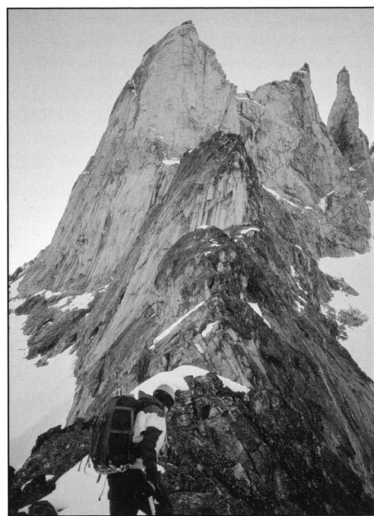


John Millar belaying on the south face of the West Witches' Tit. Guy Edwards

headwaters of Kasidaya Creek and finally east onto the locally named "Dog Sled Glacier."

We aspired to make our traverse completely self-contained and unsupported. However, on the fourth day, just as we were about to finish our grueling ascent and access the massive Denver Glacier, we found ourselves stymied by a seemingly impassable mountain face. Avalanche tracks laced the face and, high above, a corniced palisade seemed to protect the interior. We reached the unappealing conclusion that the only way to continue was to use our satellite phone to call a local helicopter charter and be deposited on the other side.

Generally our route ski-traversed the Denver, North Branch Meade, and Meade glaciers, a large unnamed glacier, and Bucher, Llewellyn, Matthes, Taku, Southwest Branch Taku, Norris, Lemon Creek, and Ptarmigan glaciers. We had a couple of days of nearly complete whiteouts during which we relied solely on map, compass, and GPS to follow our course over the huge glaciers. Leaving the accumulation area of the upper Bucher, we crossed the international border between Mt. London and Border Peak 99 and then skied across the Llewellyn's upper névé and over the highest point reached on the tour, a col on the east flank of Mt. Nesselrode at 6,960'. As we started to exit the southern Icefield, we crossed Echo Pass into Death Valley (Norris Glacier), around the east flank of Nugget Mountain past Split Thumb and dropped down onto the Lemon Creek Glacier. With nostalgia we passed Dr. Miller's research station at Camp 17 and then con-



The two Witches' Tits (West and East) and Cat's Ears Spire, with John Millar at the start of the ridge leading up to the south face. Guy Edwards

tinued our descent of the Ptarmigan Glacier and into the steep Lemon Creek drainage. We arrived in Juneau on the 15th day after leaving Skagway.

We are grateful for the financial support provided by The American Alpine Club Research Grant and a Mazama Expedition Grant, as well as the resources of the Foundation for Glacier and Environmental Research.

KEITH K. DAELLENBACH, AAC

*West Witches' Tit, south face, Jack Hicks Memorial Route; and Cat's Ears Spire, Least Snowed-up Route.* From May 16 to June 5 Guy Edwards and I visited the Devil's Thumb region of the Stikine Icecap in southeast Alaska and northwest British Columbia. We had traveled through this region the previous year and were mighty inspired to return for less touring and more climbing. Dieter Klose, the mountaineering authority on the Stikine Icecap, had put us in touch with Jack Hicks, who was more than happy to give us a boat ride across Frederick Sound to Thomas Bay, where we would start our approach to the region. However, his boat was not working, so we spent several days in Petersburg enjoying the hospitality of John Pickens and Liz Cabrera before the boat was ready.

After two and a half days of perhaps the easiest approach in the entire Coast Range, we were below the awesome northwest face of Devil's Thumb. It didn't take long to realize that we were too late in the season for this face. In very high winds we skied around to the south side of the Devil's Thumb massif. We climbed up the unpleasant icefall below the south face of Devil's Thumb and then spent three days in a deluxe snow cave. On the fourth morning we woke to our first blue-sky, "go-for-it" day. We had a splendid climb up the previously unclimbed south face of the West Witches' Tit. The rock was some of the best I've ever encountered in the mountains—vertical, white, solid granite. The next day was again good weather, so we established the Least Snowed-up Route on Cat's Ears Spire. Throughout the climb I marveled at the 1972 first ascent of the spire by Dick Culbert, Fred Douglas, and Paul Starr, and Culbert's subsequent very modest account of their climb.

These two climbs concluded the climbing component of our trip, due to the weather for the rest of the trip. We were, however, successful in route posturing. First we camped under Burkett Needle for a few days, in hopes of repeating the stunning Cauthorn–Collum–Foweraker route. We also attempted Peak 7,190' across the Burkett Glacier, and skied around to the southeast face of Devil's Thumb in hopes of trying the Beckey route. Eventually we bailed on June 4, after a very enjoyable trip that included much reading, poem memorizing, and some brief but intense and beautiful climbing.

Our first ascents: Jack Hicks Memorial Route (800m, V 5.10+ A1), south face of West Witches' Tit, and The Least Snowed-up Route, Cat's Ears Spire (900m, IV 5.10+). (Sadly, Jack Hicks died in August 2002 while on a solo hunting trip. He was an amazing person with a kind character and loving heart—a big friendly bear.)

JOHN MILLAR, *Canada*

*Editor's note: In April 2003, Edwards and Millar perished while attempting the unclimbed northwest face of the Devil's Thumb (see article earlier in this Journal). Their energy and contributions to the world will be missed.*