

was unlikely at best, we encountered pitons from the first ascent, driven directly into the rock, as David Roberts had explained to Jon Waterman in a letter we had seen a copy of. On the next pitch we encountered the only bolt placed on the 1974 ascent. While not overly joyous about a 29-year-old 1/4" bolt, I was thrilled to know we were on a route that was climbable. We pendulumed right, into the only obvious system, and I led into the night, mostly on aid, as snow began falling at 10:20 p.m. Three pitches and a short leader-fall later, I arrived at a snow arête that could be chopped down to form a platform; it was 2:15 a.m. The ledge was too small for cooking, the snow blowing too hard, and us too tired. We rigged a small tarp over us and tried to sleep.

On the third morning Steve led a 5.9 mixed pitch to a good ledge, where we were able to brew up. The three or four inches of new snow made climbing difficult and slow. Five more pitches (up to 5.9 A0) in constant snow brought us to the exit ledge, which we simul-climbed for 500' to the top of the face proper. Climbing moderate snow for another 650', we arrived at the summit plateau in a whiteout at 4:30 p.m. The altimeter told us we were within 100' of the summit, but had we been standing on it, we would not have known, the visibility was so poor.

The heavily crevassed descent was arduous in zero-visibility, though the compass bearings Steve had plotted proved invaluable. As we navigated major crevasses and a serac band, at times he was obscured 100' away. As darkness fell, just below 747 Pass, Steve fell in a large crevasse; the tight rope between us kept the event minor. Around midnight we found our tent, crawled in, brewed, and repaired ourselves with sleep.

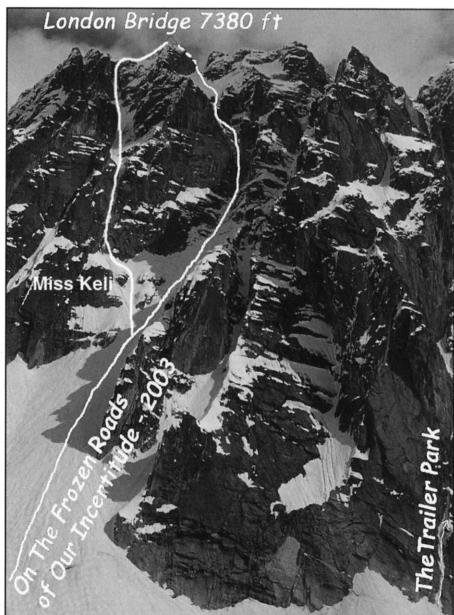
It should be mentioned that while the first-ascent team fixed five pitches (ca 900') and had a cache on the summit plateau, their climbing this route in only three days in 1974 was an amazing achievement. Twenty-nine years after, we did little to improve on the style or time of the first ascent.

The climbing was never easy (much 5.7-5.9 in double boots and, on occasion, crampons), and we belayed the entire face in pitches. The vertical relief is almost exactly 5,000', and we climbed 31 pitches, up to 5.9 A2. Given the length of the route, the poor rock is minimal. Where it is poor, it is extremely so, but nothing worse than one would encounter in other great alpine ranges.

This was Steve's second trip to Alaska at the end of September, and he is now "three for two," having climbed a new route on the Moose's Tooth on his first September trip, in 2000. Alaskans we talked to said there is usually a high-pressure spell sometime in September; we were lucky enough to hit it. Historically September is one of the greater precipitation months. A year ago Colby Coombs was trapped on the Eldridge Glacier in 6' feet of unpackable snow during the same dates as our trip this year. Just as teams have been able to start the Alaska season earlier in March and April and come away with great results, there is perhaps a good opportunity for late-season routes as well.

JEFF "POUCHE" HOLLENBAUGH

*London Bridge, Miss Keli, and various activity.* We (Iwan Wolf, Urs Stöcker, Markus Stofer, Bruno Hasler) took advantage of the first sunny day to fly into the Ruth Gorge with Talkeetna Air Taxi, on May 7. We set up our base camp at the base of Mt. Dickey's southeast ridge. During the next couple of days accumulating snow created severe avalanche danger, which forced us to abandon our original plan to climb Mt. Johnson's east ridge. The impressive red pillar of Mt. Dickey's



The London Bridge formation's two new routes and the start of The Trailer Park (Cordes-DeCapio, 2000) for reference. *Seb Constant*

lenging exit at the end. We succeeded in doing an attractive first ascent with the rating 5.9 WI4 M6+. The scenic route allows efficient climbing in good conditions. Descending over the Coffee Glacier and Coffee Glacier Col, we did not encounter exceptional difficulties. Back in BC experienced glacier pilot Keli Mahoney offered us two six-packs of cold beer. However, on May 28 Keli died in a plane crash. In her honor we named our route "Miss Keli."

Next we set up camp on the West Fork Ruth Glacier. On May 24, shortly after midnight, we left to climb Mt. Huntington's French Ridge in an uncompromisingly light alpine style—without technical equipment, sleeping bags, or a tent. The climbing on the French Ridge turned out to be very challenging, with the snow being badly bound. Possibilities for belaying were scarce. The ridge was full of dangerous cornices, and I experienced a breathtaking fall. After 24 hours of non-stop climbing, we had to bring our adventure to an end only 50m below the summit because objective dangers were too high. Nevertheless, we succeeded in a speed ascent of [most of] the French Ridge, compared to the five days normally necessary for this route. We descended the West Face Couloir to the Tokositna Glacier and then flew to the West Fork Ruth Glacier. It was snowing so heavily that we had to use a compass and GPS to find base camp.

BRUNO HASLER, Switzerland

*London Bridge, On the Frozen Roads of Our Incertitudes, and various repeats.* P.J. from Doug Geeting Aviation dropped Jerome Mercader and I on the Ruth Glacier, below Mt. Barrill, on May 1. The following day we climbed the Ham and Eggs Gully (15h round trip from our base camp) to warm up. But then clouds came from the south, bringing bad weather. Our tent, like

south face caught our attention instead, but after two days on the wall, we turned around because of technical difficulties and bad rock. On a second attempt, we made our way up in teams of two and climbed nine pitches, totaling 480m. The difficulties did not surpass 5.9 A3 M4 50°. The quality of the rock became worse and worse, until we felt like we were digging in deep sand. A No. 5 angle, hammered into crackless rock, could be retrieved with one finger. Belaying was impossible. As the rock did not seem to be improving, we turned around again, and finally combed Mt. Dickey on skis by the west-southwest ridge. Via Pittcock Col and Mountain Hut we then cruised down to BC.

As Iwan, Urs, and I approached our next project, the nearly 1,000m-high west face of London Bridge, Markus headed back to Talkeetna. Urs mastered the first pitch through tricky, unstable ice structures. Parts of these ice structures broke when I was following. The route became more friendly as we made our way up, only to confront us again with a chal-