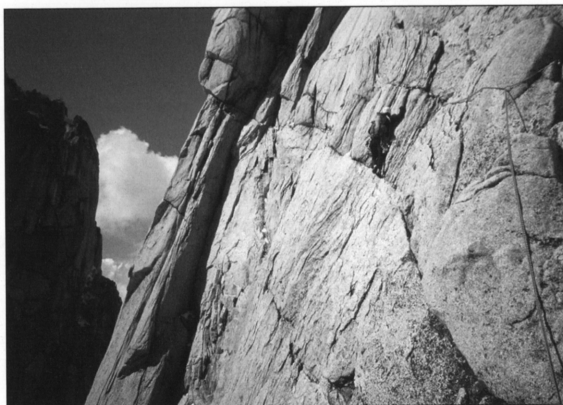


The ridge, however, dead-ended into a steep headwall 900 feet below the summit. Somewhat discouraged, we considered our options. Straight up, a 100-foot offwidth disappeared into blank slabs. To the right, overhanging cracks and chimneys offered little hope. But to the left, the most amazing feature became apparent. Two dead-horizontal seams jutted for 200 feet into what could be construed as more promising terrain. Chad led out. One for the feet and one for the hands, these near perfect “cracks” gained instant



Chad Kellogg leading the key horizontal traverse, where the ridge intersects the upper headwall, on Black Crystal Arête. Joe Puryear

2,000-foot exposure over the south face. It was an amazing traverse and another major key to the route. Above, I got the “Icebox Desperado” pitch—an ice-smearred vertical chimney that required some brilliantly nasty aid and free up disintegrating cracks and whatnot.

Several more pitches led directly to the summit ridge, only 200 feet from the summit. An easy boulder move got us up the summit block. We were on top in the late evening, not a breath of wind, and hardly a cloud in the sky. We spent nearly 45 minutes on the summit before starting the long and cold descent. A repeat of the traverse with frozen fingers and toes and 20 rappels later, we reached the western cirque of the aptly named Shadows Glacier as the rising sun again warmed us. We named the route for magnificent, near-faultless black quartz crystals on the ridge. Some were upwards of two feet long!

We also made two attempts on the Citadel. The first was a week spent on its sheer east wall, where continuous rain hampered our efforts. We also made a single-push attempt on the peak’s south ridge, reaching a point 800 feet below the summit before descending.

Also of note, we had to leave earlier than planned because the Shadows Glacier was quickly melting. Each day we would watch the fern line rapidly move up toward our airstrip. A combination of warm temperatures and less-than-normal snow pack was surely a factor. In general it looks like the Kichatna glaciers have recently been taking a real hit. We called Paul Roderick of Talkeetna Air Taxi to come rescue us, before we might have had to walk out.

JOE PURYEAR, AAC

Denali National Park, other ascents. The following information supplements the individual reports above. Ian Welsted and Chris Brazeau started up the Denali Diamond after the Japanese party (see above), and though they skipped the upper four pitches (including the crux), traversing off left to the Kahiltna Horn, they spent 44 hours on the face and a mere 73 hours round-trip from the landing strip.

On Mt. Foraker, the Talkeetna Ridge, known for its elaborate cornices and having only two prior ascents (the 1968 FA and 1986 first alpine-style ascent), saw two rapid ascents in early May. Both parties, Sue Nott and John Varco, then Dave Nettle and Aaron Zanto a week

later, found fun, moderate climbing without any significant cornices—likely due to the exceptionally warm and dry season and the effects of climate change experienced throughout the range and beyond. Nettle and Zanto used a variant start: “We followed the ridge closely, except for a logical direct variation up a 3,000-foot thin ribbon of snow that splits a large triangular face above the upper Lacuna Glacier and joins the main ridge at 12,000’.” Nott and Varco also climbed McKinley and Hunter, becoming the fourth and fifth people to climb the three prominent peaks in one season.

As another example of typically fearsome corniced ridges being in excellent condition, on May 19-20, Nate Opp and Eric Pallister climbed Mt. Huntington’s French Ridge from base camp in a 26-hour round trip.

On Mt. Barrill in the Ruth Gorge, on June 29, Ryan Nelson and Jared Ogden made the fifth ascent of the Cobra Pillar and the first free ascent of both the route (with variations) and the east face. On the third and final previous aid section, a hooking headwall on pitch 18, they found a wet crack variation to the right. They rated the route 5.11+ and made incredible time, climbing the route in 15 hours (20 hours roundtrip from camp).

CHUGACH MOUNTAINS

Mt. Marcus Baker, Sanctuary Ridge. After abandoning our original objective, the northwest ridge of Mt. Marcus Baker (13,176’), because of extremely fractured rock at 8,400’, we cast about for an alternative objective. We selected a rib dividing the walls of the amphitheater to the west of the summit of Marcus Baker, safe from the serac fall that threatened the rest of the face. To avoid the difficulty of climbing with an overnight pack, we decided on a single push.

At 7:00 a.m. on May 9 we left camp at just over 7,000’ on a south branch of the Marcus Baker Glacier, a little less than three miles west-northwest of the summit of the peak. We skied south, circumventing the lowest rock face (capped with a hanging glacier) to the left, ascending gentle slopes. We left our skis on the glacier above this lowest face and climbed 150’ of névé and ice (up to 60°) to the ridge coming off to climber’s right of a flat-topped projection extending a couple hundred out from the main face. As the ridge steepened, we traversed right onto the face, and up on to the flat-topped projection, which dead-ends in the face proper, at about 8,700’. From here we ascended the broad rib, winding around crevasses and seracs and crossing bergschrunds and crevasses. All were either bridged or narrow enough to lean across and plant tools, then pull across and up to the slope above. Being north-facing and relatively protected from wind, most of this ridge was soft snow. With the exception of two short sections, the entire ridge was less than 40° until the top 300’, which became icy and steeper toward the top, cresting at about 60°. We achieved the main west ridge of Marcus Baker at about 10,800’. Following the ridge toward the summit was easy walking on gentle ice and névé slopes, until the rise to the summit of the subpeak labeled 12,207’ on the USGS Anchorage B-3 15-minute quadrangle map. Our altimeters, which read accurately on the summit, gave the elevation of this subpeak as 12,000’. The slope leading to this peak was névé, becoming ice as it steepened, with about 600’ steeper than 40°, maximum about 50°. It may be possible to avoid the steeper ice by climbing the knife-edge ridge, on the left side of the face, that divides the Marcus Baker and Knik Glaciers. From peak 12,207’ it is a gentle 250’ descent on névé to the broad saddle between the subpeak and the summit. On the main summit dome we ascended right, hoping