

The next day we climbed a loose chimney (5.9) and traversed again to a right-hand ridge (M5). Some troublesome rock, covered with soft snow, led us to a final ice field (70°) and the summit at 1 p.m. It was snowing with poor visibility, so we started our descent. On the way down we found so many places for natural anchors—rock horns and V-threads—that the 19 rappels were relatively easy. We returned to the Buckskin Glacier after 38 hours roundtrip. Our route, Before the Dawn (1,000m, 23 pitches, Alaska Grade 5, 5.9 WI4+ M6), follows obvious snow and ice systems in the center of the north face. The climbing was not too difficult, with relatively stable rock and ice climbing. I suppose this route could someday become a classic.

We then flew to the Kahiltna Glacier and completed Deprivation (6,000', Alaska Grade 6, ED+ 90°, Backes-Twight 1994) on the North Buttress of Mt. Hunter (14,570'). We did it in 72 hours roundtrip, with the West Ridge descent. Once on the wall, the climbing conditions were not as bad as some people said or as I could imagine. Deprivation follows a natural line of weakness, and the whole route was fun.

KATSUTAKA YOKOYAMA, *Japan*

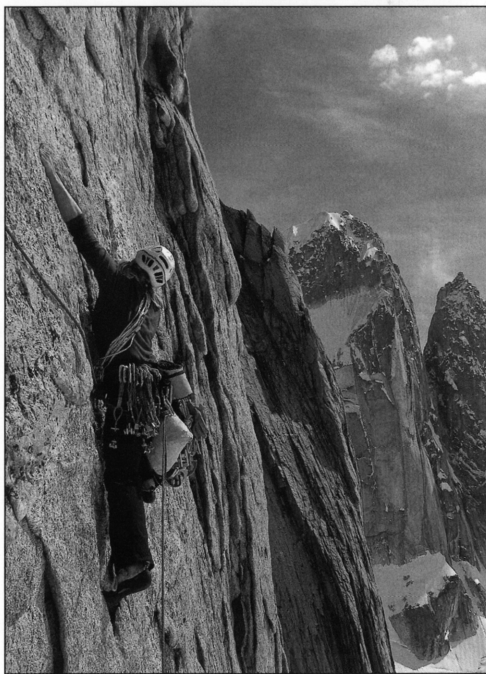
KICHATNA SPIRES

Various activity. Jen Olson (Canmore, Alberta) and I (Vancouver, B.C.) arrived in Talkeetna on May 23. That same day Paul Roderick of Talkeetna Air Taxi flew us to the Cul-de-Sac Glacier in the heart of the Kichatna Spires. The weather gods were with us then, but we would pay our dues eventually.

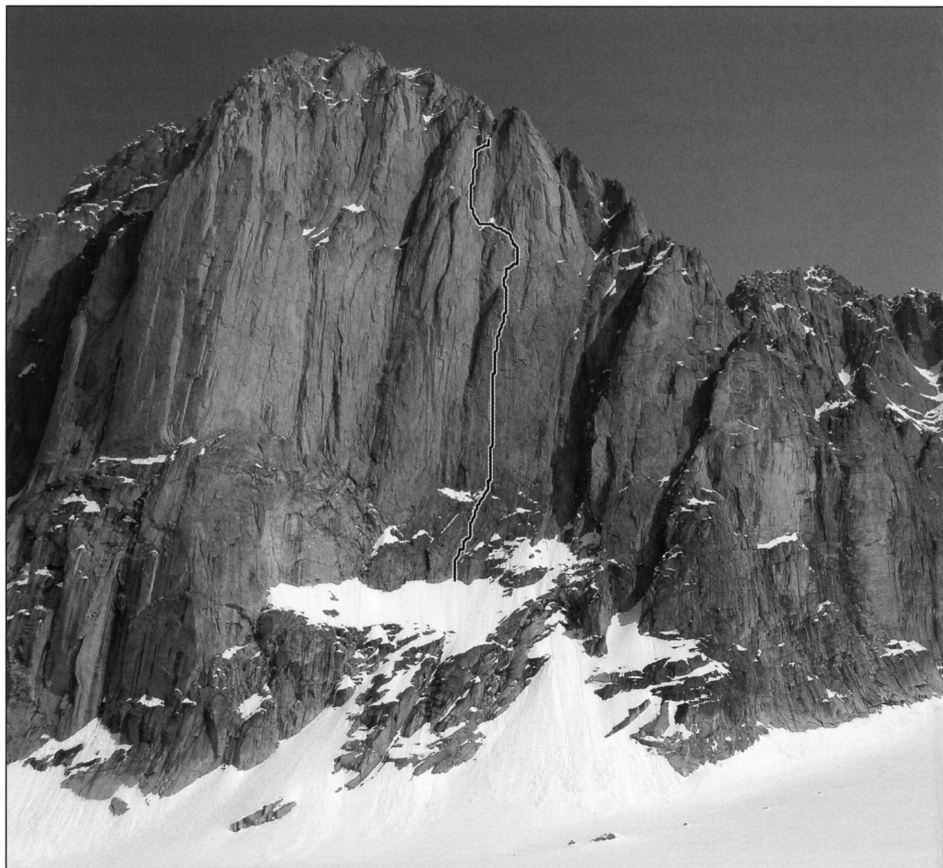
Paul planted us directly below our main objective: the southwest face of Sunrise Spire, which rises for 800m above the glacier. The face is divided into four buttresses by three distinctive weaknesses. We intended to attempt a crack system on the better rock to the right of the right-most weakness, following Klemen Mali's 2002 attempt. Surrounding us on all sides were the impressive faces of the Citadel, the Steeple, the intimidating north face of Kichatna, Mt. Jeffers, the Dark Tower, and Cemetery Spire.

For the next two weeks we woke to blue skies every morning. We climbed Sunrise Spire via the Southeast Couloir, which we hoped would be our descent option from the southwest face. On the southwest face we fixed 150m of rope and made a summit bid.

The rock we encountered on Sunrise was friable and gritty. The 200m that formed the steepest part of our climb were charac-



Jen Olson on Pitch 5 of the Sunrise Spire attempt. Katherine Fraser



The southwest face of Sunrise Spire, showing the Fraser-Olson attempt. Rumors of a Russian line up a pillar on the left side of the face, where old fixed ropes remain, could not be confirmed. *Katherine Fraser*

terized by loose, flaky rock and seamed-out cracks. The aiding and climbing above our fixed lines (which we threw off, intending to get them later since we planned to descend the east side) was tenuous and engaging. Past the steep buttress we had anticipated less demanding terrain. However, we encountered burly pitches of rock that could be described as kitty litter. A strenuous 60m icy, overhanging offwidth capped our day in the dwindling 1 a.m. light. We huddled together for a couple of hours of frozen head-nodding. In the morning we climbed another snowy offwidth, to a heartbreaking 50m below the summit ridge, before bailing the way we had come and retrieving our fixed ropes. The decision to retreat was especially hard, as we knew descending the couloir on the backside would be far less demanding than rappelling the entire face.

After several rest days we climbed 450m of new ground on Cemetery Spire, following an obvious couloir that diagonally splits the west face. We were stopped, though, 50m below the summit by a lack of wide gear. Two days later we climbed Peak 7,270', beside Mt. Jeffers, by a Grade II route and called Paul for a ride out of Dodge.

The weather gods decided we'd had too much high pressure. The skies closed in, and the winds picked up. We waited eight days by eating, drinking, reading, and going crazy, before

Paul was able to come and pick us up, 23 days after dropping us off, for breakfast at the Roadhouse Grill in Talkeetna. We came out to the tragic news of the disappearance and deaths of Karen McNeill and Sue Nott. If we had forgotten amidst our own drama, this reminded us that the most important part of going out is not getting to the top, but coming home.

We thank the Mugs Stump Award for the generous support.

KATHERINE FRASER, *Canada*

NEACOLA MOUNTAINS

Neacola Mountains, first full-length ski traverse. Next time you're in Anchorage on a sunny evening, go downtown to Fourth Street and have a pint at Simon and Seafort's Grill. As you hydrate, look through the picture windows across Cook Inlet. The big mountains you're seeing are the Tordrillos. At their left end is Mt. Spurr, with a tiny pompom of steam venting from the summit. Below the left side of Mt. Spurr is Lake Chakachamna, visible as a large break in the mountains. Farther left, beyond Lake Chakachamna, the Neacolas stretch southwest for 81 miles to the Tlikakila River and Lake Clark.

On April 6 Doug Brewer of Alaska Air West in Nikiski flew us to 5,000' on the Glacier Fork where we cached 150 lbs of booze and food. Doug then shuttled us to the east end of Lake Chakachamna. With six days of food and a 1:250,000-scale map, we headed back to our cache, across the high névés of the McArthur, Blockade, and Tanaina glaciers. Once at our cache, we base-camped on the Glacier Fork, Neacola Glacier, and North Fork for 10 days, fighting constant storms, skiing deep powder and couloirs including the likely first descent of The Gorilla Finger (2,600' vertical) off the west side of the North Fork Glacier at 4,150'. The final five days we toured onto the Tlikakila River via the Kijik River, Portage Lake, and Otter Lake, making another likely first descent of a couloir we dubbed Immortal Technique (3,000' vertical). The final 15 miles were alder 'shwacking on grizzly trails to Lake Clark. On April 27 Doug fetched us in his DeHavilland Beaver on a gravel bar.

We found the Neacola Mountains to be a heavily glaciated version of the North Cascades, with granite peaks rising to 9,000'. Along our tour, we compared 10 WAAS GPS elevations to 1958 1:63,360 USGS maps and found an average elevation drop of 70'. Our Neacola traverse was about 100 miles and 20,000 vertical feet. We skied 57,000 total vertical feet.

JOE STOCK, AAC, ANDREW WEXLER, and DYLAN TAYLOR, AAC

CHUGACH MOUNTAINS

Pt. 6,000' of Mt. Yukla, Gank'd and Slayed. Often the crux of climbing in Alaska is finding a partner with the same goals and ambitions. Things came together for John Kelley and me in the second week of February, 2007, and we headed out to the northwest face of Mt. Yukla (7,535') with a new grade V route in our sights. We approached from Eagle River's Icicle Creek and topped out on the 6,000' subpeak that is roughly 0.75 mile northeast of Yukla's true summit.

An unclimbed left-trending ramp, a narrow chimney (climbed by Kelley and Varney [pp. 193-194, including photo, *AJ* 2006]) and a right-trending snow-and-ice couloir make up three forks, just to the right from the toe of the Icicle Glacier.