

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.