

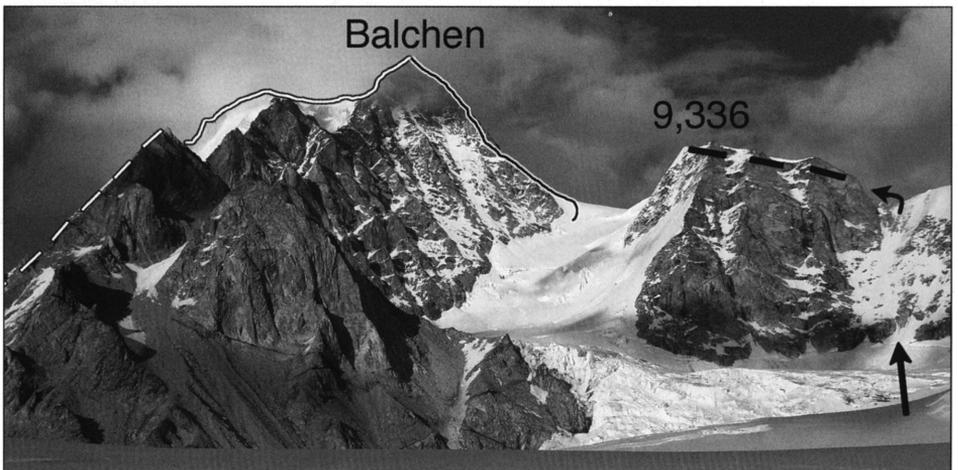
The south face of Nenana Spire (Peak 7,480') consists of numerous slots connected by steep headwalls of, in places, decent granite. The slot we chose, in the center of the face, had a crux pitch that was the route's namesake: Midget Porn (2,000', IV 5.5). We saw summit after unclimbed summit from the top, but sadly we also saw our 40-mile ski out—Wing had moose to count. The ski out was fast by gimp standards, but we cursed moose all the way to the road. Of note: We saw no rockfall in the region, while in summer the place is a pinball machine.

JEFF APPLE BENOWITZ

Peak 9,336', West Face. In late May Andy Stern and I skied, walked, and swam into McGinnis to attempt the north ridge route's second first ascent. But we had to take down my Bibler and bail as the wind whipped up my arse hole, while I screamed at Andy to get all his stuff on, because in two minutes everything was about to blow away through the skylight that opened in our tent. Andy is all jacked from a spinal injury 20 years ago, so I have to carry ridiculous loads when I'm with him, do all the trail-breaking, all the leading, all the cooking, and always keep an eye on him, because his brain is focused on moving his legs. We walked out dragging skis and sleds over gravel.

After that trip, flying into the mountains sounded great, but pilot Rob Wing's skis were being repaired. This meant a 15-mile walk from the lowlands to our base camp in the upper east fork of the Gillam Glacier. Our objectives involved both science and climbing. Since the science involved collecting over 250 pounds of rocks, walking down to the lower gravel strip was not something we looked forward to, or even thought possible. We collected countless 3kg samples over a 15km grid for my Ph.D. dissertation on the uplift history of the eastern Alaska Range. We also climbed two small 8,000' granite peaks. I won't describe them in detail, so others can have the pleasure of making the second first ascent of them. Or possibly the third; it is hard to keep track when no one is counting.

For our main objective we settled on enchaining Peak 9,336', via its west face, with a route I had done previously on Mt. Balchen. The original approach to the "Handicapped Ramp" had



Mt. Balchen (11,140'), showing the West Face (Benowitz-Williams, 2003) route on the left and the Handicapped Ramp (Adams-Benowitz-Brown, 2005). Balchen's only other route is the East Ridge. On Peak 9,336': the West Face route (Benowitz-Stern, 2008). Dashes indicate hidden portions. *Jeff apple Benowitz*

no climbing on it and was subject to serac fall and avalanches. The crux of our mid-June 2,000-foot climb of Peak 9,336' was the overhanging bergschrund. It had some grade-something-mixed on it, but it was short. We appreciated the occasional cam and nut placement, but how do you give a grade to tip-toeing onto the undercut edge of a huge detached block of snow, overhanging the abyss, and then climbing overhanging unconsolidated snow while your belayer has 50' of slack wrapped around his feet because he is trying to remember how to short-rope and walk at the same time, while you're trying to high-step on a leg with no ankle?

By the time we got to the summit of 9,336' (by GPS; ca 9,150' on map), Balchen was in a tempest and so we failed on the Bal n' Enchainment. I have been to the upper east Gillam four times now and there is still endless potential for new routes and second first ascents in the area.

After 16 days of backbreaking rock carrying, we dialed Wing. A few hours later he landed and took us and our rocks home. In terms of science, the short of it is the Alaska Range is a lot older than previously believed. Amazing, considering the rate at which it is falling down. This climb and my research were supported by the American Alpine Club research fund.

JEFF APPLE BENOWITZ

TORDRILLO MOUNTAINS

Tordrillo Mountains, first full-length traverse. Over nine days in May, Andrew Wexler, Dylan Taylor, and I, using skis, made the first full-length traverse of the Tordrillo Mountains. We covered 100 miles from south to north, climbing 38,000 vertical feet and making ski descents off the range's four highest peaks: Mt. Spurr (11,069'), Mt. Torbert (11,413'), Mt. Talachulitna (11,150'), and Mt. Gerdine (11,258'). The previous most significant crossing was by Scott Woolums and Mark Jonas in March 1982 as documented in *Tordrillo—Pioneer Climbs and Flights in the Tordrillo Mountains of Alaska*.

On May 16 Doug Brewer of Alaska West Air flew us across Cook Inlet to a 2,400' ash bench on the south slopes of Mt. Spurr. Dylan had skied from Spurr's rounded summit in 2004. Volcanic activity in 2006 turned the summit into a 300' deep crater lined with crevasses and venting lung-burning sulfur gasses. We skied from the high point and camped at 10,000' on the Spurr Plateau, from where we descended a complex 4,000' icefall to the Capps Glacier—the first crux of the expedition. We spent our fourth and fifth nights at 7,000' on the Triumvirate Glacier below the Torbert Plateau. From this camp we day-toured 20 miles and 8,000 vertical feet to the summits of Mts. Torbert and Talachulitna.

The next crux was downclimbing the Great Wall, a 14-mile serac-ridden barrier that straddles the range and stopped our 2007 traverse attempt. This time we succeeded by downclimbing four pitches of steep, snow-covered ice to a northern lobe of the Triumvirate Glacier. After skiing Mt. Gerdine, we toured another two days to the tippy north end of the Tordrillos at the Iditarod Trail. There Chugach pilot Mike Meekin shuttled us to the Skwentna Roadhouse, and a Spernak Airways charter took us to Merrill Field in Anchorage.

The Hans Saari Memorial Fund and the Shipton-Tilman award made this trip possible.

JOE STOCK, AAC

DENALI NATIONAL PARK

Denali National Park and Preserve, summary. Our staff responded to 18 major incidents this year, including frostbite, altitude illness, trauma, and cardiac illness. In an unusual turn of events, two clients from separate guided groups experienced sudden fatal collapses within three