

days in early July. Another tragic event involved the perplexing disappearance of two highly skilled Japanese climbers. Tracks in the snow indicate that Tatsuro Yamada and Yuto Inoue had completed an entire traverse of the Kahiltna Peaks, west to east, and continued directly up the prow of the Cassin Ridge. Their tracks vanished at 19,200' and, despite an exhaustive aerial search, no decisive evidence materialized. After their disappearance the Cassin Ridge was climbed by a record-breaking nine expeditions, but no more clues were found.

Bengt Bern and Jan Vinterek were selected for the 2008 Denali Pro Award for demonstrating the highest standards for safety, self-sufficiency, assisting fellow mountaineers, and clean climbing. Revered South District Ranger Daryl Miller retired after 18 years of working in the Denali mountaineering program.

Quick Statistics—Mt. McKinley and Mt. Foraker:

Mt. McKinley: Average trip length: 16.9 days. Busiest summit day: May 30, with 91 summits. Average age: 37. Women constituted 9% of all climbers.

Fifty-one nations were represented on Mt. McKinley and Mt. Foraker, including U.S. (692 climbers), Canada (72), U.K. (69), Germany (47), and Spain (42).

McKinley was attempted by 1,272 climbers, with 59% reaching the summit; 1,123 attempted the West Buttress, with 58% summiting. Sixteen climbers attempted Mt. Foraker, with only one summiting.

The complete Mountaineering Summary can be found at www.nps.gov/dena/planyourvisit/summaryreports.htm

Summarized from the DENALI NATIONAL PARK & PRESERVE ANNUAL MOUNTAINEERING SUMMARY

Denali, Isis Face and Slovak Route, enchainment. After warming-up with a difficult new route on the northeast face of the Bear Tooth (report below) and a rapid free attempt of Mt. Hunter's Moonflower Buttress (retreat above the Bibler Come Again Exit, at the base of the fourth ice band), from May 11-18 Japanese "Giri-Giri Boys" Katsutaka Yokoyama, Yusuke Sato, and Fumitaka Ichimura made a historic enchainment on Denali. They began their awesome effort by climbing the 7,200' Isis Face on the south buttress. They descended the Ramp Route into the East Fork of the Kahiltna and, without re-supply, climbed the 9,000' Slovak Direct, perhaps the most difficult route on Denali. After summiting, they descended the West Buttress. See Yokoyama's feature article earlier in this *Journal*.

Kahiltna Peaks, traverse. Japanese climbers Tatsuro Yamada and Yuto Inoue traversed the Kahiltna Peaks from west to east, then continued high on the Cassin Ridge in attempting a massive enchainment. Although specifics will never be known, clues from extensive aerial searches indicate that they reached 19,000' or higher on the Cassin before disappearing. The pair was part of an ambitious crew of Japanese climbers called the "Giri-Giri Boys," who have climbed many impressive new routes in the Alaska Range and elsewhere in the past several years, as covered in recent AAJs, including *AAJ 2008's* feature article by Yamada on the Ruth Gorge.

Bat's Ears, first ascent. Paul Roderick of TAT landed Maxime Turgeon, Freddie Wilkinson, and I on the eastern edge of the upper Yentna Glacier, right at the edge of the wilderness boundary and about four miles from where we made our base camp. In this same area the previous year, Freddie and I climbed the Fin Wall with Peter Doucette, and we were back with Max to try another new route on a nearby unclimbed peak we had started calling the Bat's Ears (Peak

11,044', 2.6 miles due south of the Fin Wall).

We installed base camp under blue skies and reveled in the quiet, remote feeling of the place before the weather shut down for about five days. On the first clear day we explored the 3,000' approach to the Bat's Ears and carried some gear to the base of the wall. Back at base camp it snowed on and off for another two days. Our preview of the approach, combined with more tent-boredom angst, convinced us to try the route in a single push when the weather cleared.

Stars were out on May 1, and we skied out of camp at 1:30 a.m. After the approach, the climbing was fun and hard enough to stay interesting, but not desperate. The route follows mixed and thin-ice terrain up the obvious gully system in the middle of the south-southwest face. It was mostly 60° to 80° in the gully, with several short vertical cruxes. We switched leads every two or three pitches for a total of about 15 pitches and two sections of simul-climbing. Rock quality on the sides of the gully was excellent fractured granite, but the gully seemed to be a rotten dike. A lot of the ice climbing felt like climbing frozen gravel, and our picks constantly bounced off rock. Max kicked steps up the last section of simul-climbing and brought us to the summit at 6 p.m. The panorama was amazing, especially the straight-on view of the Fin Wall just north of us. It was tempting to start down right away, but we had ascended almost 6,000' that day, and we were still unsure about the descent. Freddie fired up the stove, and we consumed fluids and a meal that made a big difference. As we traversed the summit ridge clouds started building again, intensifying both the views and our feeling that we should start down while we could still see our descent. Luckily the descent turned out to be an easy walk-off down the southwest ridge, with only one rappel in a short gully. We were happily back to base camp at 12:30 a.m., and it started snowing about an hour later.



The line of first ascent (solid), with approach and descent, on the Bat's Ears. Inset: Freddie Wilkinson on the first mixed pitch. *Ben Gilmore*

With a week remaining, we called for a bump flight over to the Kahiltna Glacier, where, in 52 hours round-trip from base camp, we climbed the Moonflower Buttress to the summit of Mt. Hunter.

Our deepest thanks to the American Alpine Club for supporting our climb with the Lyman Spitzer Cutting Edge Award.

BEN GILMORE, AAC

Mini-Moonflower, Dempster-Wilson. On May 19 my cousin Kyle Dempster and I departed Kahiltna Base camp for the Mini-Moonflower, just beyond Mt. Hunter's renowned North Buttress. This day held special importance for us, marking the three-year anniversary of my brother's death on Baffin Island on a climbing expedition with Kyle.

We intended to climb the North Couloir but changed our plans when we discovered another party beginning to chop their way up the route. Our eyes turned to the steep north face. After a brief discussion, we chose a line that began on the right side of the lower wall and gradually traversed to the left side of the upper wall. We figured the traverse to the left side would give us a better chance of topping-out, by allowing us to navigate around the large overhanging cornices crowning the summit ridge and putting us in position to descend the North Couloir.

For the first 1,000' we simul-climbed—over the bergschrund and through a long vertical ice runnel that required occasional dry tooling, then a long diagonal traverse across the prominent 60° ice shelf that separates the lower wall from the upper wall. We were moving well and



The north face of the Mini-Moonflower: (1) Dempster-Wilson, 2008. (2) Cool-Parnell, 2001. (3) Koch-Prezelj, 2001. (2) and (3) stop below the extensive summit cornices, which are not well shown in this angle. Kyle Dempster