

*Mosquito Pass Wall (Peak 2,911'), Hidden Couloir.* On a cold day in February, Jeff Collins and I snow-machined in to Mosquito Pass and climbed a narrow, 1,700' sinuous couloir (with some WI2 and M3) on the wall of gneiss to the west of Mosquito Pass.

IAN MCRAE

*Note: Reports of several previously unreported new routes in the Kigluaik are posted at [aaj.americanalpineclub.org](http://aaj.americanalpineclub.org)*

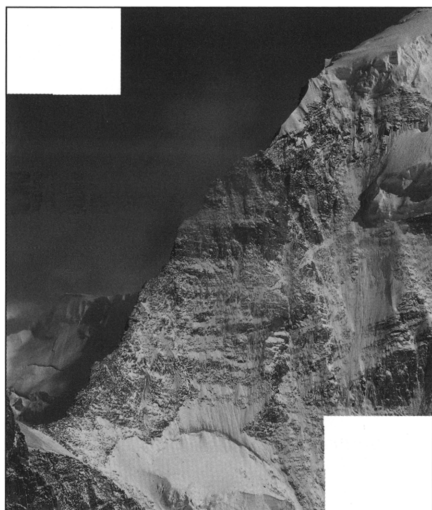
## ALASKA RANGE

*Geographical note: While the well-known peaks in Denali National Park are often called "The Alaska Range," these peaks form just one part of the immense Alaska Range, which contains many significant subranges, including the Hayes and Delta ranges, and the Revelation, Kichatna, and Tordrillo mountains.*

## HAYES RANGE

*Mt. Balchen, Alchemy Ridge.* When my 2009 expedition plans fell through due to partner injury, I scrambled to salvage the season and found a partner in fellow Fairbanks climber Matt Klick. At home in Fairbanks we waited two days to fly in to a gravel strip at the base of the northwest ridge of Mt. Hayes in Rob Wing's Super Cub. From the base of Hayes, we walked seven miles to our base camp in the Hayes basin at 6,500'. After arriving at base camp, we did some recon and made plans to attempt the north ridge of Mt. Balchen as our first objective. Due to bad weather it would be the only route we attempted, and we received only five hours of clear weather while on route. Of our 15 days from June 10–24, 12 had bad weather.

As we left base camp we could see a dense haze approaching from the north and told ourselves we'd bail if the weather got too nasty. Over about 36 hours to and from base camp, we battled marginal weather to complete the first ascent of Balchen's Alchemy (north) Ridge in 14 long pitches. We climbed a beautiful line true to the ridge (V AI4 M7 in the conditions we found, could be IV when dry). To descend we made six raps onto the east face, then downclimbed to the 'schrund and ran under a serac to return to our skis. The route would be a classic in a more traveled range, as would the other routes on Balchen. In dry or even just non-stormy conditions, it would be a pleasurable outing, with many options through the



Alchemy Ridge on Mt. Balchen. Johnson and Klick started from the opposite (Hayes Glacier) side of this photo, climbed to the col and ascended the skyline ridge. Jeff apple Benowitz

two steeper rock bands, and could be completed in one day from our base camp below the Hayes basin. That was the plan, but due to the weather we endured a sitting bivy on a ledge chopped into a 70° rime slope, with just bivy sacks and belay jackets. It was a very cold night.

SAMUEL JOHNSON, AAC

## DENALI NATIONAL PARK

*Denali National Park and Preserve, summary.* The 2009 climbing season once again featured great triumphs and moving tragedies. Four deaths occurred on Mt. McKinley, and 47 climbers were stricken with injuries or illnesses that required medical intervention by the National Park ranger staff and volunteers.

Two Colorado women, Sarah Fritz and Irena Overeem, received the Denali Pro Award for initiating and leading an independent technical rescue of an injured climber on the Moose's Tooth. Starting in 2010, the award will be renamed the Mislow-Swanson/PMI Denali Pro Award to honor former recipients John Mislow and Andrew Swanson, who died on a 2009 climb of the West Rib.

Quick Statistics—Mt. McKinley and Mt. Foraker:

- Mt. McKinley: Average trip length: 16.4 days. Busiest summit day: June 7, with 77 summits. Average age: 38. Women constituted 12.4% of all climbers.
- The five most represented nations on Mt. McKinley were: U.S. (698 climbers), Poland (47) Canada (44), Japan (38), and U.K. (38).
- McKinley was attempted by 1,161 climbers, with 59% reaching the summit; 1,078 attempted the West Buttress, with 60% summiting. Fifteen climbers attempted Mt. Foraker, with eight summiting.
- The complete Mountaineering Summary can be found at [www.nps.gov/dena/planyourvisit/summaryreports.htm](http://www.nps.gov/dena/planyourvisit/summaryreports.htm)

Summarized from the DENALI NATIONAL PARK & PRESERVE ANNUAL MOUNTAINEERING SUMMARY

*Other notable activity.* On April 12 Norwegians Nils Nielsen and Eiliv Ruud climbed a likely new six-pitch variation (AI4/5) of the modern classic Shaken Not Stirred, on the Moose's Tooth. They took a rarely forming ice smear to the left of the Narrows section (marked "possible new variation" on the topo in Joe Puryear's *Alaska Climbing*) for three pitches and continued up snow and ice, rejoining Shaken Not Stirred one pitch below the col. They climbed the route in a 15-hour round-trip from camp in the Ruth Gorge.

After an impressive effort on Mt. Huntington's Harvard Route (27 hours round-trip, with retreat just below the summit), on May 21 Chris Thomas and Rick Vance returned and climbed a difficult new variation. The Community College Couloir (1,000', M7+ W15) starts on the West Face Couloir and angles to the Harvard Route, joining it at the Nose pitch, before



Sam Johnson on cruxy mixed ground on Alchemy Ridge. Matt Klick