

were stuck for three days while the weather was simply Alaskan. Our route, Dad and Son (5.10 A2 WI5), was the last remaining unclimbed ridge on Denali from the Northeast Fork of the Kahiltna.

MARTY SCHMIDT, *New Zealand*

West Kahiltna Peak (3,914m/12,835'), west ridge. West Kahiltna Peak is just off of the Kahiltna Glacier, and every West Buttress ascensionist looks at its west ridge of as they make their home at Camp 1. It is the obvious ridge closest to the northeast fork of the Kahiltna and may have been climbed previously, but there were no recorded ascents prior to 2011.

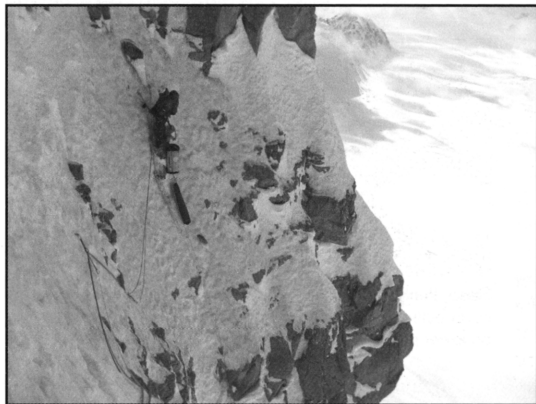
On May 23 two Italians, Diego Giovannini and Fabio Meraldi, ascended the ridge in 12 hours and reported finding 75° ice and 5.8 on their Grade 4 route. The climbing was generally moderate and enjoyable, but the final section of the ridge was dangerously threatened by an overhanging serac. They descended the route by downclimbing and rappelling.

Japanese Yuto Inoue and Tatsuro Yamada may have climbed this line in 2008, while traversing West and East Kahiltna Peaks before ascending the Cassin Ridge. However, they perished near the summit of Denali, and as friends could not confirm their line of ascent, the truth may never be known. For now the Italians' feat stands as the first recorded ascent.

MARK WESTMAN, *Denali National Park and Preserve*

Mt. Hunter, north buttress to Cornice Bivouac, the Cartwright Connection. Unrelenting spindrift avalanches and gusty winds blasted and buffeted the portaledge. Our small cocoon of safety on this harsh mountain was slowly being engulfed, as we nervously watched the snow level rise up the fly walls. It had taken five of the toughest days' climbing of our lives to get to this point, and our chances of reaching the top of the north buttress were diminishing. The forecast was for more snow and stronger winds over the upcoming days.

The first day went smoothly, according to plan. Not that night, though, as Matt Helliker and I realized the perils of hanging our portaledge on a 60° ice slope. We were awakened when it collapsed and transformed into a hammock. On day two we faced many uncertainties, as we found a way through steep, complex terrain, with many overhanging snow mushrooms. Matt



Jon Bracey on belay with haul bag, Cartwright Connection.
Matt Helliker

fought hard in the lead all day and at 2 a.m. had us below the steepest rock band of the climb. In overcoming these difficulties our confidence had grown, and I started to think we might have a chance of getting up this climb. Day three was steep and scary—thinly iced slabs, overhanging cracks, aid on loose rock, a pitch of vertical ice, and more. We finally got to bed at 6 a.m. Day four we joined the Bibler-Klewin/Moonflower route; we just needed luck with the weather. Day five it snowed and wind blew.