

Denali National Park & Preserve Annual Mountaineering Summary-2002



LIFE IS STILL FRAGILE IN THE RANGE...

Our human vulnerability became painfully evident again this year when three brothers perished on Mount Foraker in an apparent avalanche and one soloist fell to his death from Denali Pass on Mount McKinley.

National Park Service mountaineering patrols were kept busy this climbing season with numerous search and rescue incidents. As always, the patrol volunteers and the military pararescuemen were an important asset, working with the rangers in assisting other climbers in distress and providing resource protection.

All nine of the Denali mountaineering rangers climbed Mount Silverthrone in March and skied over Anderson Pass and out the West Fork Glacier on a pre-season patrol. This past season also marked the first ranger patrol since 1932 to successfully climb Denali from the north side of the Alaska Range. The foursome ascended

via the Muldrow Glacier route, successfully traversing over and down to the 14,200-foot ranger camp on the West Buttress. In other 'patrol firsts', one ranger patrol spent over two weeks at the 17,200-foot high camp at the tail end of the season, setting a new standard for high altitude camping.

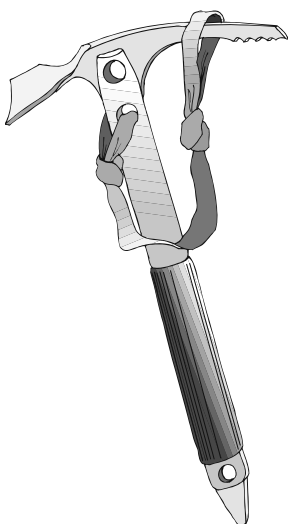
Clean Mountain Cans (CMCs) were used extensively this year above the 14,200-foot ranger camp to deal with solid human waste. Also in the resource management realm, pre-printed cache tags were implemented for the first time to uniformly indicate all expedition names, dates, and permit numbers for use in cache identification.

The weather was unseasonably warm with early May temperatures approaching overnight lows of 34 degrees Fahrenheit, causing crevasses to open in early June on the 7,200-foot Kahiltna Glacier.

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Statistical Rundown



- *1,232 climbers attempted Mt. McKinley, with 52% reaching the summit. 36 attempted Mt. Foraker, seven reached the top.*
- *The average trip length for an expedition on Mt. McKinley was 17.7 days.*
- *The average age of a Denali climber was 36 years old.*
- *Women comprised 9% of the climbers, or a total of 110 climbers.*
- *Guided clients accounted for 20% of climbers on Mt. McKinley. Guided expeditions as a whole (including clients and guides) accounted for 31% of Denali mountaineers.*
- *A total of 224 summits were made during the month of May, 391 in June, and 30 summits in July. The busiest days on the summit of Denali were June 13th (56 climbers) and June 16th (49 climbers). There were only five days in June that climbers did not reach the top.*

Denali National Park & Preserve welcomed a new Superintendent in 2002!

Superintendent Paul Anderson

came to Denali NP&P from the Alaska Regional Office of the National Park Service.

2002 STATISTICAL YEAR IN REVIEW

In terms of international makeup, climbers came from 38 nations. The top nations represented include:

United States	754
Japan	56
United Kingdom	47
Canada	43
France	39
Germany	38
Korea	36

ROUTE	NUMBER OF EXPEDITIONS	NUMBER OF CLIMBERS	SUMMITS (EXPEDITIONS)	SUMMITS (CLIMBERS)	SUMMIT PERCENTAGE
MT. MCKINLEY					
Cassin Ridge	4	7	2	4	57%
Denali Diamond	1	2	1	2	100
East Face	1	2	0	0	0
Messner Couloir	1	2	0	0	0
Muldrow Glacier	5	29	2	8	28
Muldrow Traverse	1	4	1	3	75
Northwest Buttress	1	2	0	0	0
Reality Ridge	1	2	0	0	0
Southeast Ridge	1	1	0	0	0
West Buttress	280	1093	174	575	53
West Buttress Traverse	4	18	2	12	67
West Rib	21	54	13	31	57
Upper West Rib	7	16	5	10	63
TOTALS	328	1232	200	645	52%
MT. FORAKER					
Infinite Spur	1	2	0	0	0%
Southeast Ridge	6	12	1	2	17
Sultana	7	22	2	5	23
TOTALS	14	36	3	7	19%

FIRST ASCENTS AND INTERESTING STATISTICS

Overall, the 2003 climbing season was not nearly as productive as the 2002 season in terms of first ascents. Lack of winter snow and a warm May combined to devastate the ice conditions on many mixed routes. The unusual weather also created poor snow conditions at mid elevations (8,000 to 11,000 feet) which turned around numerous parties, especially on Mount Hunter which received only one team summit this year.

Americans John Kelley and Stephen Farrand made the second true ascent of Deprivation on the North Buttress of Mt. Hunter, following the original line. The North Buttress also hosted a notable first free ascent this season. In June Jimmy Haden and Russel Mitrovich, both of California, repeated the Wall Of Shadows to the third ice band in a two day push without the use of direct aid.

On Mount McKinley the Denali Diamond received its second ascent by British climbers Ian Parnell and Kenton Cool in late May. Also on Denali, two Russian paraplegic climbers, Grigoriy Tsarkov and Igor Ushakov, reached the summit in June via the West Buttress route making direct variations up the rescue gully and from 17,200-feet to 18,800-feet. The route was prepared with fixed line by their other nine team members and then they used their mechanical ascending ski sleds to ascend with their arms.

Elsewhere in the range, four Polish climbers, Janusz Golab, Stanislaw Piecuch, Grzegorz Skorek, and Jacek Fluder, completed a new wall route on the east face of the Bear's Tooth in June. "You Can't Fly" was 1,400

meters long and 41 pitches with difficulties up to A3. The group spent 10 days on the wall climbing and waiting out poor weather.

Earlier in March, Sean Easton and Uli Steck completed a new route on Mount Dickey's East Face. Finding a runnel of ice that does not routinely form, the pair was able to climb the nearly 4,000-foot route mostly on ice. A French team made climbs on both Mount Dickey and Mount Barilles' East Face in April, further details are lacking. Americans Brian Teale and Pete Lowney completed a new route on the East Face of Mount Wake in April. This route climbs the large gully in the center of the face and is not recommended (unless in winter conditions) due to high objective hazards. They climbed the 5,000-foot route in three days and took one more to descend. Entirely on ice, the route included several grade five cruxes and over 3,500 feet of 45' to 65' ice.

Twid Turner and Stuart McAleese climbed a new route on the Citadel in the Kichatna Spires. "Off the Wall Bunkers" climbs directly up the northeast buttress on very coarse granite to where it ends at the junction with the Embick route. The summit was not reached this year.

The west side of Mount Huntington was in better condition than other peaks in that elevation range and as a result saw numerous ascents. The most notable was a 17-hour solo effort by Chris Turiano. He climbed the West Face Couloir to the summit on May 22, finding plastic ice and stable snow conditions.



DENALI PRO AWARD — 2002

The National Park Service and its partner Pigeon Mountain Industries (“PMI”) have named Thomas Laemmle as the DENALI PRO 2002 recipient of the year, for his self-initiated rescue effort that went above and beyond the call of duty.

While climbing the Messner Couloir in a single push from the 14,200-foot camp, Thomas Laemmle and his climbing partner, Steffen Voelzke, came across an abandoned ice axe on the ‘Football Field’ at approximately 19,500 feet. Thomas then noticed a yellow object off the trail approximately 300 meters to the west. Thinking it may have been a pack left by a previous expedition, Thomas went over to investigate and found an unconscious climber that was missing a glove and had his torso partially exposed. The two climbers initially thought the fallen climber was deceased, but after further investigation they realized he was severely hypothermic and possibly suffering from High Altitude Cerebral Edema (HACE). In a selfless act of true heroism Thomas, who works with a search and rescue team back home in Austria, decided to take on the responsibility of trying to rescue the climber in a place where most just struggle to take care of themselves.

Thomas quickly recruited Dr. Egfried Miller, Franz Deubler and Dr. Hans-Ernst Scharinger of the “Austrian Denali Bears” expedition; Hans-Jochen Netzar and George Forstner of the “Empor” expedition; and Miguel Mendez of the “Alaska Expedition” to help with the rescue. Thomas also fired “signal rockets” in an attempt to attract attention. The climber was administered medication by one of the doctors and became semi-conscious, but was still unable to walk. Using a makeshift litter, this small team of climbers began dragging the semi-conscious climber down toward the 17,200-foot camp. At 1:00 p.m. Hans-Jochen Netzar and Thomas’s partner Steffen Voelzke, descended toward the 17,200-foot camp for help. Thomas was able to borrow a CB radio from “Team Chola” a three person American team.

Thomas used this CB radio to contact the National Park Service (NPS) rangers at the 14,200-foot camp to inform them of the situation. Since the weather at the 17,200-foot camp and below was completely covered in



*Laemmle wearing Pro Pin
(NPS Photo)*

clouds, the NPS Rangers at the 17,200 foot camp initiated a ground rescue and headed up to meet the rescue party descending from high on the mountain.

Unable to descend any further because of a lack of manpower, Thomas stopped the rescue team at the 18,800-foot level. Thomas borrowed equipment from the rescue team and other climbers, put the stricken climber in a sleeping bag and bivy sack and waited for help to arrive. Stopping at this location was definitely one of the deciding factors in this rescue, below their location the mountain was shrouded in clouds.

The NPS rangers again made contact with Thomas. After Thomas explained his search and rescue experience and ability to make a harness for the patient out of on-site materials, it was decided the patient would be short-hauled from his current location. Short-haul is a technique in which the patient is suspended beneath the helicopter by carabiners attached to a 100-foot long rope. Armed with the knowledge of Thomas’s rescue skills, along with improving weather conditions lower on the mountain, the NPS launched the high altitude Lama helicopter to pick up the patient.

With weather moving in and only the minimum amount of fuel on board due to the extreme altitude, there was little room for error. When the helicopter arrived on scene, Thomas quickly and efficiently hooked the patient up to the 100 foot line that hung below the ship. The patient was then flown to the 7,200-foot base camp where he was met by awaiting rangers and transferred to an airplane and flown to Talkeetna. In Talkeetna the patient was again transferred, this time to the LifeGuard helicopter for transport to the hospital.

Were it not for the heroic efforts of Thomas Laemmle, this solo climber would have surely perished high on the mountain.

Continued thanks to climbing equipment manufacturer Pigeon Mountain Industries (PMI), without their generous support the Denali Pro Award program would not be possible.

DENALI BECOMES EVEN CLEANER!

During the 2002 season, climbers on Denali broke new ground in the removal of human waste. The Clean Mountain Can (CMC) that was developed in 2001 in partnership with the American Alpine Club has secured its role in the destiny of waste management on Denali. This 1.75 pound (0.8 KG) cylinder was used by over 500 climbers on Denali from 20 different nations.

In a noteworthy 2002 winter climb, Japanese soloist Masatoshi Kuriaki spent 55 days on Mt. Foraker and carried off all of his trash and human waste. This is the longest reported trip into the Alaska Range in which all human waste was packed out.

The main focus of Denali National Park's 2002 CMC project was to see if a large number of climbers could remove their human waste from the 17,200-foot high camp on the popular West Buttress. The high camp, with its lack of crevasses for waste disposal and its severe weather conditions, has been known to be exceptionally filthy. Denali National Park, in partnership with the Access Fund and the American Alpine Club, purchased 220 CMCs to be used in this project. Of these, 150 cans were given out to climbers at the 14,200-foot camp over a 30-day trial period. This translates to nearly one half of the West Buttress climbers carrying

their waste off -- certainly a major breakthrough in waste management on Denali!

The used CMCs brought back down to the 14,200-foot camp were placed in cargo nets and then sling-loaded by helicopter down to the Kahiltna basecamp. From basecamp, they were flown out of the Range in fixed wing aircraft and then commercially cleaned.

In addition to climbers on Denali, many expeditions in other areas of the range opted to use CMCs due to their convenience and minimal impact to the environment. In 2003, Park staff will be encouraging all other climbers in the Alaska Range to use them.

Due to the success of this year's test, the Clean Mountain Can will be required for the West Buttress high camp in 2003. The CMC will again be distributed from the 14,200-foot camp, although the National Park Service will be encouraging climbers to use them along the entire route. Climbers that use them all the way will receive the coveted Denali Pro pin. For climbers that plan to carry them all the way up and down Denali, please reserve them ahead of time, as the supply is limited and the demand is growing!



NPS Ranger Joe Reichert distributes CMCs to climbers at the 14,200-foot camp. The styrofoam ring serves as a seat designed for added comfort in the cold temperatures. (NPS Photo)

RESCUE SUMMARY - 2002

Detailed below are 7 search and rescue missions performed by Denali National Park and Preserve rangers in 2002. For more detailed information on the missions listed below and information on the other missions performed in 2002 refer to Accidents in North American Mountaineering-2003, published by the American Alpine Club.

The South District staff was involved in over twenty search and rescue missions this past season. These SAR missions were not limited to mountaineering accidents, nor, for that matter, were they limited to Denali National Park and Preserve. A wide range of circumstances led to these missions including climbing falls, crevasse falls, plane crashes, avalanches, gastrointestinal illness, altitude illnesses, a syncopal episode, and frostbite. Of note, five climbers fell on different occasions at Denali Pass this season, all of whom were traveling unroped at the time of the fall; four were evacuated from high camp, while one climber fell to his death, representing the first fatality on Mt. McKinley since 1998.

Instead of summarizing each of the 21 incidents this season, we have highlighted seven major SAR events. Additionally, look to the article on page 4 which details Denali Pro Award recipient Thomas Laemmle's life-saving rescue of an American soloist at the Football Field.

Fall at Denali Pass: Late on May 15th, two members of a Spanish expedition had independent falls while descending unroped from Denali Pass at 18,200 feet on the West Buttress route of Mt. McKinley. Both climbers sustained serious traumatic injuries and were brought by NPS rangers to the 17,200-foot camp. At the 17,200-foot camp, rangers stabilized the patients who were then evacuated by the NPS Lama helicopter to the 7,200-foot base camp on the morning of May 16th, 13 hours after their initial falls.

Aircraft Accident at Kahiltna Base-camp: Late night on May 24th, a Cessna 185 aircraft crashed shortly after takeoff near the 7,200-foot airstrip on the Southeast Fork of the Kahiltna Glacier. The pilot and four passengers were uninjured in the crash. National Park Service rangers and volunteers responded immediately to the accident site to attend to the passengers and to control any potential hazardous material spills. The aircraft wreckage was removed from the glacier on June 9th.



Avalanche Fatalities on Mt. Foraker: On June 17th three American climbers were found deceased at the 8,500-foot level of the southeast ridge of Mt. Foraker by an aerial search conducted by the NPS. The threesome had flown in for their climb of the Southeast Ridge on June 11th, with their last radio transmission recorded at 8:30 p.m. on June 13th, calling in from the 10,000-foot level. It is speculated that a small avalanche triggered the fall from the 10,500-foot level. Their bodies were recovered the evening of June 17th.

Fall on West Rib: On June 18th an American climber fell approximately 150-feet from the Notch Camp on the West Rib of Mt. McKinley. Unable to walk, he was initially immobilized by his two teammates. The injured climber's partners then contacted the NPS rangers at the 14,200-foot camp and requested assistance in the rescue of their injured teammate. NPS rangers and volunteers facilitated a lowering of the injured climber to the 14,200-foot camp. Due to inclement weather, the injured climber was unable to be evacuated until June 22nd. The injured climber was ultimately diagnosed with 21 fractures.

Rock Fall: On June 18th, the Denali National Park mountaineering staff received a request for assistance in the rescue of an American climber that had been struck by falling rock on the north face of Mount Augusta, a peak which straddles the border of Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Canada's Kluane National Park. On June 19th, an Alaska Air National Guard Pavehawk with NPS personnel onboard performed a winch extraction of the injured climber from the 9,200-foot level on the north face of Mt. Augusta. The climber was later diagnosed with broken vertebrae, a bruised spinal cord, along with other internal injuries.

NPS Lama shorthauls soloist—see story on page 4 (NPS Photo)

RESCUE SUMMARY - Continued

Continued from page 6

Fatal Fall at Denali Pass: Early on June 30th, a Canadian solo climber fell to his death from just below Denali Pass (approximately 18,000 feet) while descending the West Buttress route. Following a week of inclement weather, a team of NPS rangers and the NPS Lama helicopter recovered the deceased on July 7th.

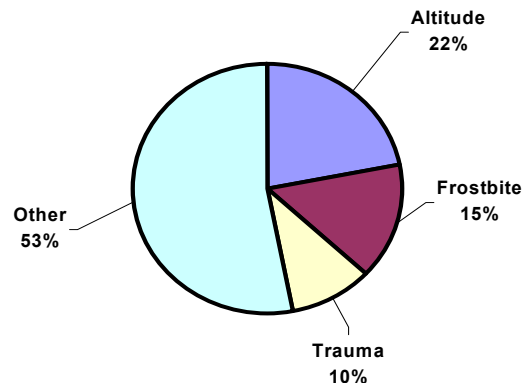
Avalanche on Harper Glacier: A 16-member guided party was hit by debris from an avalanche at approxi-

mately 17,200-feet on the Upper Harper Glacier of Mt. McKinley on July 3rd. Although no members of the party were injured in the initial incident, a substantial amount of gear was lost and a number of students ended up with mild frostbite. The National Park Service resupplied the group with requested supplies and equipment at approximately 15,100-feet on the Harper Glacier using of the NPS Lama helicopter. The entire group was then able to descend to Wonder Lake without further assistance.

MEDICAL SUMMARY

A total of 81 patients were treated for medical reasons this year by Denali National Park South District staff. This is a significant increase over last season when only 43 patients were treated, albeit similar to the number seen in 2000. There were 31 foreign climbers and 50 American climbers treated, reflecting similar percentages to those seen in the total climbers registered for Denali this season. The busiest period of activity was the week of June 16th to 28th though activity was fairly uniformly spread from mid May to the end of June. The adjoining chart shows the percentages for traumatic injuries, altitude related conditions, cold injuries and miscellaneous medical treatment.

2002 Medical Summary



DENALI BACKCOUNTRY MANAGEMENT PLAN

The Draft Denali National Park and Preserve Backcountry Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement is scheduled for public review in early in 2003. Among many other topics, this plan will address climbing and mountaineering on Mount McKinley and throughout the Alaska Range within park boundaries. Topics directly related to climbing and mountaineering include:

- Potential limits on the numbers of climbers on Mount McKinley
- Zoning of mountaineering areas for different levels of use
- Management of airplane landings
- Registration for backcountry uses
- Policies on the use of fixed anchors and power drills
- Waste removal

The plan also covers many other aspects of backcountry management, from commercial services to snowmachine use to hiking and backpacking.

The plan will soon be available for pick-up at Denali National Park Headquarters, the Talkeetna Ranger Station, and the National Park Service Regional Office in Anchorage (2525 Gambell Street). It will also be available at public libraries in Anchorage, Fairbanks, Talkeetna, and Healy, and will be available online (www.nps.gov/dena) through the "in DEPTH" link on our homepage under "Planning and Management." If you would like to receive a hard copy or CD of the document, please contact us by phone (907-683-9500) or email (dena_public_comment@nps.gov).

SOUTH DISTRICT STAFF — 2002



(NPS Photo)

1st row: G.Kito,R.Robinson,H.Carbone,N.Carbone; Middle row:L.Wright,M.Shain,S.Metcalf, S.DeNike,Superintendent Paul Anderson; Back row:M.Smothers,Chief Ranger Nick Herring, J. Evans,J. Reichert,M.Perdue,D.Miller,K.Hilton,D.Kreutzer,J.Leonard,J.March,M.McLaughlin

2002 South District Staff

South District Ranger	Daryl Miller
Division Staff Support Specialist	Miriam Valentine
Lead Mountaineering Ranger	Roger Robinson
Mountaineering Rangers	John Evans
	Karen Hilton
	Gordy Kito
	John Leonard
	Scott Metcalfe
	Meg Perdue
	Joe Reichert
	Mik Shain
Helicopter Manager	Dave Kreutzer
Helicopter Pilots	Jim Hood
	Francisco Orlaineta
Helicopter Mechanic	Ray Touzeau
Administrative Assistant	Maureen McLaughlin
Lead Visitor Use Assistant	Missy Smothers
Visitor Use Assistants	Shelly DeNike
	Julia March
Education Specialist	Howard Carbone
Interpretive Rangers	Noelle Carbone
	Laura Wright
SCA Interpretive Volunteer	Sue Peters
.....	
Medical Directors	Jennifer Dow, M.D. Peter Hackett, M.D.

Mountaineering Volunteers 2002

- Paul Barendregt*
- Tucker Chenoweth
- Oakley Cochran
- Tim Connolly
- Christopher Eng
- Ryan Davis
- Jonathan Davis*
- Jennifer Dow
- Steve Evans
- Wayne Fuller
- Josie Garton
- Pete Gautreau
- Brian Girard**
- Peter Harvey
- Matt Hendrickson
- Hans Hjelde
- Daniel Holms
- Brian Horner
- Emily Johnston
- Marty Kimble
- Julianna King
- John Loomis*
- Birgit Loppenthien
- Patty Manhire
- Scott McIntosh
- Brian Okonek
- Chad Page
- Dee Patterson***
- Billy Rankin
- John Ross
- Michael Ross
- Robert Schnell*
- James Sprott
- Jason Steigelmeyer
- Buck Tilton
- Lance Tayson
- Steve Wolfe*

**Denotes Alaska Air National Guard 210th Pararescuemen*

***Denotes member of U.S. Marine Corps*

****Mountaineering ranger on detail assignment from*