

# Denali National Park & Preserve Annual Mountaineering Summary—2003



## MOUNTAIN NEWS

The 2003 mountaineering season was eclipsed by the tragic crash of a McKinley Air Service flight in late May. While en route to basecamp, all four on board died when the plane crashed at South Hunter Pass. We lost several good friends, including Keli Mahoney, a wonderful pilot who had flown many missions for the NPS over the years, and Bruce Andrews, a gifted guide with Alaska Mountaineering School.

The number of climbers was down slightly from previous years, with 1,179 climbers attempting Denali this year and 34 climbers attempting Mount Foraker. Elsewhere in the park, new routes were climbed on several peaks including a ski descent of Mount Hunter; a new route on the East Face of the Citadel in the Kichatna Spires; and a new route on the Mother and Sons Wall. Clean Mountain Cans (CMCs) were used successfully again at the 17,200-foot high camp on the West Buttress which made a huge difference in keeping the camp free of human waste. The season saw several high altitude rescues, a couple of which, in retrospect, were of questionable necessity considering the post-incident victim interviews. These rescues were very distressing for all of us, particularly in light of the heightened risk they put our pilot, Jim Hood, at in performing the high altitude short-hauls.

A crew from National Geographic “Ultimate Explorer” filmed the mountaineering ranger operations this season, spending three months filming both on Denali and throughout Talkeetna. The two-hour film aired on MSNBC in early November. In exchange for our cooperation in making the film, the Park will receive digital footage for an informational film that will be used at the new visitor center currently under construction in Denali Park.

This season, we were again privileged to operate under the medical direction of Dr. Jen Dow and Dr. Peter Hackett,

along with the many capable medical volunteers who made a difference for a lot of climbers on the mountain.

The partnership between Denali’s mountaineering rangers and the mountaineering Volunteers-In-Parks (VIPs) was honored in Washington, DC at the annual “Take Pride in America” awards ceremony (*for more, see page 8*). The National Outdoor Leadership School (NOLS) recognized Roger Robinson, Denali Mountaineering Ranger, for his dedication to wilderness education and innovative land management. Roger was presented the distinguished Stewardship Award in October at the 14th annual NOLS award ceremony in Lander, Wyoming. Congratulations Roger!

*(Daryl Miller)*

### 2003 TALKEETNA RANGER STATION STAFF

South District Ranger	Daryl Miller
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
Staff Support Specialist	Miriam Valentine
Administrative Clerk	Maureen McLaughlin
Lead Visitor Use Assistant	Missy Smothers
Visitor Use Assistants	Shelly DeNike Al Gallo
Education Specialist	Howard Carbone
Interpretive Ranger	Noelle Carbone
SCA Interpretive Volunteer	Brian Napier
Medical Directors	Jennifer Dow, M.D. Peter Hackett, M.D.

## 2003 STATISTICAL YEAR IN REVIEW

*The average expedition lasted 17.8 days*

*The average age of a Denali or Foraker climber was 35 years old  
125 women attempted Mt. McKinley - 11% of the total*

*Guided expeditions accounted for 30% of climbers on Denali. Guided groups were more likely to reach the top this season, posting an summit percentage of 65% (relative to a 58% overall average)*

*45 nations were represented on Denali this season. Most (685) came from the United States; 87 were from the United Kingdom; 52 from Canada; 41 from France; and 34 from Spain.*

*Climbers also came from Costa Rica, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Sri Lanka, and Zimbabwe. Of the American climbers, most came from Washington (133), Alaska (100), or Colorado (91).*

*June 12 was a record setting summit day with 115 climbers reaching the top  
The second busiest day was June 22 with 42 summits*

	NUMBER OF EXPEDITIONS	NUMBER OF CLIMBERS	SUMMITS (EXPEDITIONS)	SUMMITS (CLIMBERS)	SUMMIT PERCENTAGE
<b>MT. MCKINLEY</b>					
Cassin Ridge	5	10	3	5	50%
Isis Face	1	4	0	0	0
Messner Couloir	2	5	1	2	40
Muldrow Glacier	3	19	2	17	89
Milan Krissak Memorial	1	2	1	2	100
New Route	1	2	0	0	0
Northwest Buttress	1	6	1	3	50
Orient Express	1	8	1	3	38
Thunder Ridge	2	5	0	0	0
West Buttress	261	952	173	556	58
West Buttress Traverse	8	53	8	47	89
West Rib	21	65	10	20	31
Upper West Rib	18	48	12	33	69
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>325</b>	<b>1,179</b>	<b>212</b>	<b>688</b>	<b>58%</b>
<b>MT. FORAKER</b>					
Infinite Spur	1	2	0	0	0%
Northwest Ridge	1	2	0	0	0
Southeast Ridge	2	6	0	0	0
Sultana	8	22	1	2	9
Viper Ridge	1	2	0	0	0
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>6%</b>

*(Statistics compiled by Missy Smothers)*

## FIRST ASCENTS AND INTERESTING STATISTICS

Noteworthy expeditions during the 2003 season involved a wide array of activities from the first complete ski descent of Mount Hunter to long ice climbs in the Kichatnas. There were no winter summits on Denali or Foraker this year and activity coincided with the most popular time period on Denali -- May and June.

On May 15, a group of four made the first continuous ski descent of Mount Hunter via the West Ridge to the newly coined Ramen Couloir. From their advanced base camp on a spur glacier immediately south of the West Ridge, Lorne Glick, John Whedon, Armond DuBoque and Andrew McLean climbed to the summit in 12.5 hours and made their descent in four hours.

Also based out of the Kahiltna International Airstrip were climbers Kelly Cordes and Johnny Copp. After various outings they made a new ascent on an unnamed peak on the south border of the east fork of the Kahiltna Glacier. "Going Monk" on point 13,790 was established on May 30. This route begins in the northwest bowl or face and then continues on the west ridge to the summit for a total gain of 4,300 feet. Crux pitches were rated AI6 and M6 and the route was climbed in 24 hours round trip from a base camp in the east fork. The team has proposed naming point 13,790 "Mt. Andrews" for Bruce Andrews who perished in a local plane crash the previous week.

Technical ice climbing was added to the Kichatna Spires predominantly rock climbing repertoire in May when a British team made the first ascent of the "Supa Dupa Couloir" on the east face of the Citadel. Mike Turner, Stuart McAleese and Ollie Sanders climbed this brilliant couloir in 21 pitches over 3 days in May and rated it Scottish 6. Their summit day, May 3, coincided with a summit by the only other group in the Kichatnas; Chris Belczynski, Dawid Kaszlikowski and Marcin Tomaszewski who were wrapping up "the Last Cry of the Butterfly". This wall route was completed over 12 days on the East face of the Citadel and is rated A4.

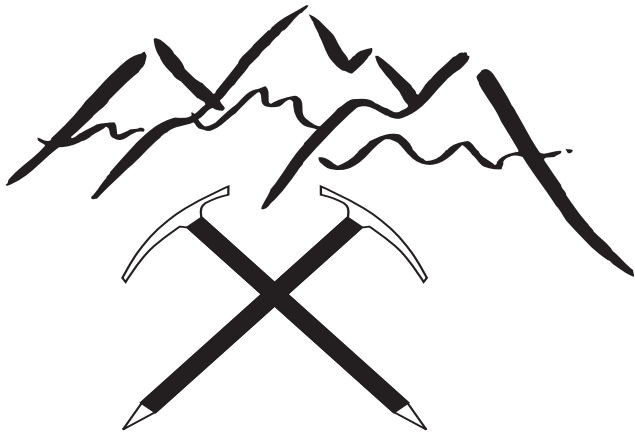


On Denali, two new routes were climbed this season, as well as a speedy ascent of the West Buttress. From June 14th to 16th, British climbers Paul Ramsden and Guy Willett climbed another line on the Father-and-Sons wall, to the right of the existing routes, dubbed "Great White Fright". A day later, Robert Adams and Brendon Cusick added another variation to the West Buttress Direct. Their line "Patience for Purity" is situated to the left of all of the routes indicated on page 106 of [High Alaska](#) that begin above Motorcycle Hill.

As training for an alpine speed climbing competition in Central Asia, Chad Kellogg made a speedy ascent of the West Buttress. On June 17 at 2:15 am, Kellogg departed base camp, climbed the entire West Buttress Route in 14 hours and 22 minutes, and was back in base camp before the day was over! (total time of 23 hours and 55 minutes) Kellogg had climbed to the summit twice the previous week once via the Upper West Rib in order to acclimatize.

Over on the Tokositna Glacier, three new routes were established from the seldom traveled Northwest Fork. Malcolm Bass and Simon Yearsley from the United Kingdom climbed two ice lines on the south face of Kahiltna Queen during the first week of May. A week later, Pat Deavoll and Marty Beave made a probable first ascent of a couloir on the north side of point 11,520, directly south of Kahiltna Queen -- a local name for the pyramidal peak that sits at the head of the Southeast Fork of the Kahiltna Glacier, dividing this from the Ruth and Tokositna glaciers. *(Joe Reichert)*

## DENALI - THE NATION'S HIGHEST CLASSROOM



For many climbers, the mountains are among our greatest teachers. We learn about self-sufficiency, teamwork, judgement, the natural world, and how to achieve a seemingly unattainable goal. Until now, Denali's wild and remote setting has made Mt. McKinley and its lessons accessible to only a determined few. Now, through some innovative education programs, young people across the country are using Denali as a living classroom, where they can see natural processes at work, discover exciting new challenges, and be inspired toward higher achievement.

*Climbing Denali: America's Highest Challenge* is a virtual climb of Mt. McKinley for students around the world. Denali National Park Education Specialists Howard Carbone and Martha Tomeo worked with a web designer to create a program that will take learners along on a simulated climbing expedition. In the online program, students will learn about geology, geography, weather, glaciers, clean climbing, and the challenges of climbing North America's highest peak. It will include an email Q&A session and a live chat with one of Denali's Mountaineering Rangers. The program is free, and will be online from mid-February until June 2004 at [www.eFieldTrips.org](http://www.eFieldTrips.org).

Another new program will break down the walls of Alaska's middle school science classrooms. *Denali: A Living Classroom* is a "traveling trunk" full of activities, experiments, and demonstrations that teachers can incorporate into their existing science curriculum. The lessons are based on Alaska State education standards, and teach geology, geography, weather, and physiology through explorations of the Denali Landscape. For more information, please call Howard Carbone at (907) 733-9111.

## DENALI PRO AWARD - 2003

This year we deviated from naming a climber as the Denali Pro Award winner, and instead honor one of our Park partners, Paul Roderick, owner of Talkeetna Air Taxi. Roderick, both a pilot and a climber, contributed to our efforts to maintain Denali's pristine qualities. Paul embraced the Clean Mountain Can (CMC) program this season, flying a considerable number of dirty CMCs out of basecamp on his own volition, as well as encouraging his staff pilots to do the same. This was the most extensive and successful season ever in the removal of human waste from Denali, and Paul's help contributed to the success of this nationally recognized program.



(Paul Roderick - TAT Photo)

Roderick also performed a rescue this season — picking up two injured climbers on the glacier below the "Ham and Eggs" route on the Moose's Tooth. He performed this evacuation with no prompting or assistance from the National Park Service.

Paul receives the 2003 Denali Pro Award for these acts of goodwill and his selfless drive in promoting Denali's "Climb Clean" program. The Denali Pro Award program is supported by climbing equipment manufacturer Pigeon Mountain Industries (PMI), a partner of Denali National Park & Preserve.  
(Staff)

## 'CLIMB CLEAN' UPDATE

This year saw a significant breakthrough in human waste removal on Denali. Almost every climber ascending to the heavily used 17,200 foot high camp on the West Buttress removed their waste using Clean Mountain Cans (CMC). This equated to over 1,000 climbers from forty countries participating in this year's project. Of these, 148 climbers carried their human waste all the way back to basecamp, earning those climbers the coveted 2003 Denali Pro pin. The remaining climbers turned in their CMCs to the rangers at the 14,200-foot camp.

The Clean Mountain Can had its beginnings in 2001. (For a history, look to: [www.nps.gov/dena/home/mountaineering/cm/cans.html](http://www.nps.gov/dena/home/mountaineering/cm/cans.html)). Through financial support from the American Alpine Club, 50 prototype cylinders (1-3/4 gallon) were designed and distributed to anyone wishing to volunteer and attempt to remove their human waste. In that first year, twenty-one groups used the CMCs. Just three years later, the program has grown to over 400 CMCs being used throughout the Alaska Range. The program has become so successful that at times we were unable to give CMCs to everyone that asked for one.

"CMC – GREAT – PERFECT" was the comment was made by the five person "Austrian-German 2003 expedition. We heard similar responses over and over as climbers returned from their trips. Rainier Mountaineering Inc. took one step further and purchased 50 of their own CMCs using them in addition to ones borrowed from the Park. Two RMI guided expeditions (17 clients and guides) used CMC's for their entire climb. For the third year, the American Alpine Institute continued to use CMCs all the way on their West Buttress guided ascents (three climbs which included 25 clients and guides).

With our strict 'Climb Clean' policies and increased ranger presence at the 17,200-foot high camp, the human impact on this desolate location has significantly

improved. This location was once heavily contaminated with human waste and garbage. Due to the efforts of many volunteers and park rangers, the trash has been eliminated and through the invention of the Clean Mountain Can, almost all-human waste is carried off. Only a few climbers still pollute -- although those caught are fined \$100 dollars.

We continued to check that all garbage was returned to basecamp, and generally had very good compliance. In 2004, we plan to distribute the CMCs from basecamp (7,200 feet) to be carried up and down the mountain with the primary focus for their use at high camp. We'll also encourage all other climbers that fly into remote glacier strips to use them for their basecamps.



*(Ranger Roger Robinson at 14,200 camp with CMCs)*

We would like to thank everyone involved in the CMC project. This project would not be where it is today without the support and dedication of the climbing community, Denali mountain guides, the Talkeetna flight services, The American Alpine Club, and The Access Fund. *(Roger Robinson)*

## RESCUE SUMMARY – 2003

The South District Staff was involved in 14 search and rescue missions this past season, including aircraft accidents, traumatic injuries, and many medical-related rescues and evacuations.

Several incidents this season generated concern over the factors going into climbers' decisions when calling for a rescue. In response, the National Park Service has instituted a policy that all individuals who are ground rescued or evacuated must return to Talkeetna at their own cost prior to reinitiating any climbs that season. This will ensure that accurate information about each incident can be gathered as well as ensuring that individuals are prepared to return to the mountains.

Another point worth noting, in the previous season (2002), five climber falls at Denali Pass required ranger intervention, including one fatality. At the start of the 2003 season, NPS placed pickets along the length of the traverse to Denali Pass - a measure taken not only for the protection of rangers performing rescues, but also for the benefit of climbers that chose to use them. As a result, this season there were no major incidents here and at least one instance (witnessed by a ranger) where the pickets helped to arrest the fall of a climber who had chosen to use them as part of a running belay.

### **ABDOMINAL DISTRESS – WEST BUTTRESS:**

On May 19<sup>th</sup> an American climber was evacuated from the 14,200-foot camp by the NPS Lama helicopter (on contract from Evergreen Helicopters). The climber was suffering from severe and prolonged abdominal pain that persisted more than 24 hours and did not resolve with treatment (intravenous fluid therapy and analgesics).

**FROSTBITE – WEST RIB:** On May 17<sup>th</sup> an American climber frostbit three fingers while ascending the West Rib couloir. Three days later, his team requested a rescue and he was evacuated from 14,500 feet on the West Rib. He was rescued using the NPS Lama helicopter utilizing a short haul technique with a rescue basket. The climber's frostbite turned out to be minor.

**AIRCRAFT FATALITIES:** A Cessna 185 operated by McKinley Air Service crashed on the east side of South Hunter Pass on May 28. A pilot flying for Talkeetna Air Taxi discovered the wreckage and relayed the crash information to the National Park Service. The Lama helicopter flew to the site and confirmed four fatalities, including pilot Keli Mahoney of Talkeetna, AK; mountain guide Bruce Andrews (Lafayette, Colorado); climber Mark Wagoner (Snow Camp, North Carolina); and flightseer Carolyn Disselbrett (Salem, Oregon). The bodies were recovered and the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) initiated an investigation with cooperation from the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and the National Park Service (NPS).

**FALL – WEST BUTTRESS:** On May 30<sup>th</sup> an American climber was evacuated from the 14,200-foot camp by the NPS Lama helicopter due to a disabling knee injury. The climber requested a rescue the previous day from below the fixed lines and had to be lowered back to the 14,200-foot camp. The climber had originally injured the knee on May 28<sup>th</sup> but chose to do a carry the next day anyway, at which time he sustained further injury that required rescue. Additionally, his partner was evacuated along with him due to safety concerns about her minimal climbing experience and the fact that she was now solo.

### **FROSTBITE, HYPOTHERMIA, EXHAUSTION – MESSNER COULOIR:**

On June 4<sup>th</sup> three climbers, one Colombian and two Czechs, were evacuated from 19,000 feet in the Messner Couloir by the NPS Lama helicopter utilizing a short haul technique with a rescue basket. Due to the extreme altitude and resultant weight restrictions, three separate missions were flown between base camp and 19,000 feet. The party had requested a rescue when the Colombian climber became incapacitated, reportedly suffering from frostbite to his toes, hypothermia, and exhaustion. The two Czechs decided they were too exhausted to descend under their own power due to their prolonged stay with their injured teammate, and were evacuated. At the time they requested a rescue, the party had taken more than 17

## RESCUE SUMMARY – Continued

hours to climb the approximately 5,000 vertical feet from the 14,200-foot camp to their location.

**HAPE – MESSNER COULOIR:** On June 5<sup>th</sup> a Czech climber was treated at the 17,200-foot camp by NPS personnel for High Altitude Pulmonary Edema. He was assisted down to the base of the fixed lines by a Canadian expedition where he was met by NPS personnel who descended with him to the 14,200-foot camp. The climber was treated and monitored for two days and released on June 7<sup>th</sup> to descend with his party.

**AIRCRAFT MISHAP – RUTH GLACIER:** On June 9<sup>th</sup> a Cessna 185 crash landed while attempting to take off from the 5,600 foot level of the Mountain House airstrip in the Sheldon Amphitheater. The four passengers aboard the flightseeing aircraft were uninjured, although the pilot sustained minor injuries.

**HACE – WEST BUTTRESS:** On June 13<sup>th</sup> an American climber was found unconscious in his tent by his teammates at the 17,200-foot high camp. They summoned NPS personnel camped nearby who rendered medical care that resulted in the climber regaining consciousness. They performed a ground evacuation of the climber using short-rope techniques to the 14,200-foot camp where he was monitored overnight. He was released on June 14<sup>th</sup> to descend with his team to the 7,200-foot base camp. The team arrived at base camp in the early morning hours of June 15<sup>th</sup> where the climber again lapsed into unconsciousness and his team contacted NPS personnel. He was again treated, regained consciousness and was monitored until he was evacuated to Anchorage Regional Hospital via Air National Guard Pavehawk helicopter on June 16<sup>th</sup>.

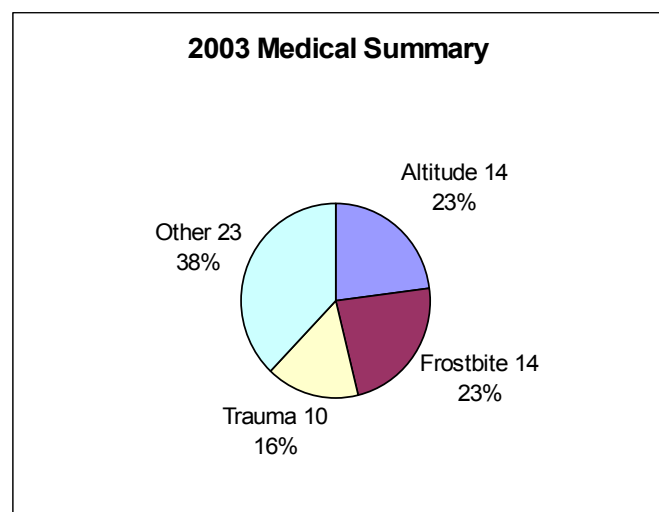
*(Compiled by Gordy Kito and Meg Perdue)*

## MEDICAL SUMMARY

Every year, Denali National Park and Preserve South District staff treat numerous climbers that become ill or injured while on their expeditions. Mountaineering rangers and patrol members are available to assist those who find themselves in emergency situations and or circumstances that they or their teammates cannot manage. This medical assistance would not be possible if not for the many doctors, nurses, and paramedics that participate in mountaineering patrols, as well as the medical direction, support, and instruction provided by Denali National Park and Preserve South District medical advisors Dr. Jen Dow and Dr. Peter Hackett.

A total of 61 patients were treated for medical reasons this year by Denali National Park and Preserve South District staff. Numerous other medical contacts were made with climbers that did not require treatment.

*(John Leonard)*



## SOUTH DISTRICT STAFF - 2003

### Congratulations to the Denali Mountaineering Volunteers!

On September 26, 2003, Secretary of the Interior Gale Norton presented the Denali Mountaineering Volunteers with one of 15 national 'Take Pride in America' awards. Volunteer Dahr Jamail and mountaineering ranger Meg Perdue accepted the award on behalf of the program at the ceremony held in Washington, D.C. As members of the National Park Service's Volunteers In Parks (VIP) Program, Denali's mountaineering volunteers were honored for their outstanding stewardship of public lands - tasked with such duties as protecting the mountain from illegal trash and human waste disposal; participating in rescue and emergency medical operations; and helping provide resource and route information to climbers on Mt. McKinley and throughout the Alaska Range. *(Maureen McLaughlin)*



*(L to R) USA Freedom Corps Director John Brickland; VIP Dahr Jamail; Ranger Meg Perdue; Secretary of the Interior Gale Norton*

***Thank you to the hundreds of Volunteers who have participated in the Denali mountaineering program over the past several decades. Your hard work has been invaluable!***

### Mountaineering Volunteers 2003

Rob Bjelland  
Tucker Chenoweth  
Adam Clark  
John Culberson  
Ryan Davis  
Michael Dong  
Leighan Falley  
Michael Gatling  
Dexter Hale  
Karl Hangartner  
Dave Hanning  
Brandon Hausmann  
Dan Hehir  
Hans Hjelde  
Dahr Jamail  
Michelle Jedlicka  
Nina Kempel  
Edric Lysne  
Patty Manhire  
Brian McCullough  
Heather Morning  
Rachel Moscarella  
Matt Murphy  
Bjorn Olson  
Carl Osborne  
Nettie Pardue  
Ethan Passant  
Jeffrey Pflueger  
Dave Porter  
George Rodway  
Mike Ross  
Scott Sample  
Ryan Schuster  
Mark Stasik  
Stephen Stine  
Keith Thompson\*  
Brian Von Tersch  
Greg Wozniak\*\*  
Kevin Wright

*\*Denotes member of  
U.S. Navy*

*\*\*Park Ranger on detail  
assignment from Great  
Smoky Mountains  
National Park*