

NORTH AMERICAN NOTES

BY KENNETH A. HENDERSON

A GAIN in 1962, the major interest of the climbing season seems to have been focused on Mt. McKinley, 20,320 ft., where there were a number of important developments. The most important climb was probably the first ascent of the South-east spur, made by Boyd N. Everett, Jr., Henry Abrons, Samuel Cochrane, Charles Hollister, Samuel Silverstein and Christopher Wren. Of significance in the development of this route was that the ten camps used were placed relatively close together, so that the entire camp could be moved in one day with relays.

On June 9, the party was flown from Talkeetna to a point on the Ruth glacier, one mile from the East arm of the South-east spur. Base Camp was established at 7,700 ft., and Camp 2 at 9,300 ft., just above the first ice-wall. Following a three-day storm, a northerly wind cleared the air but destroyed one of the tents. During the succeeding six days of good weather, the party overcame a number of ice-walls and cornices. Camp 3 was established at 10,800 ft., above the Corner which proved to be the crux of the climb. Here snow steps had to be made on 65° ice; a rappel was made on ice, and a cornice was tunneled. Eight days of snow now retarded the ascent considerably. Above Camp 5 (11,800 ft.) there were no technical problems as far as the top of the South-east spur at 13,100 ft., but 3 ft. of new snow in two days slowed up trail-breaking and high winds made the conditions difficult. Camp 8 was established at 13,800 ft. on June 26, and the party found themselves running out of time. As a result, all members carried a camp 2,000 ft. higher to the South Buttress, where they established Camp 9 at 7 p.m. on June 27 in a temperature of 2° Fahrenheit, leaving Everett and Cochrane to make a summit attempt. Next day, these two established Camp 10 at 17,000 ft., from which on June 29 (the first clear day since the 20th) they climbed the South-east face of the summit cone. When they reached the summit plateau (19,000 ft.) at 2.30 p.m., they faced a stiff 50 to 60 m.p.h. north wind, requiring use of heavy down jackets and face masks. Five hours later (7.30 p.m.) they reached the summit, returning to camp at 1.30 a.m. after an eighteen-hour day. The descent was made in the next three days, and they were flown out on July 4.

Another doubly significant ascent of Mt. McKinley was made by an Alaskan party under Keith Jones who, with Anore Bicknell and four

men, left Fairbanks on April 16 and reached the summit on May 20, via the Muldrow glacier route, the first time that this has been used since the earthquake of 1957. Miss Bicknell was the second woman to reach the summit of Mt. McKinley. Another party of two was successful on this route on June 24.

A German party ascended Mt. McKinley by the West Buttress route, reaching the summit on May 17. A British party of the British Joint Services Alaska Expedition, composed of Major M. E. B. Banks, Chief Technician John Hinde and Lt. H. J. Wiltshire, reached the summit on July 3, and an American group of eight on July 10. This included Miss Frances Chamberlin, the third woman to reach the summit.

The first ascent of Mt. Russell (11,670 ft.) was made by a mixed German-American expedition. Owing mainly to bad visibility on the descent, the summit party, Peter Hennig, Dr. Klaus Eckerlein and Bob Goodwin, were out for fifty-six hours. Subsequently most members of this expedition were flown to the Kahiltna glacier, from which they attempted Mt. Foraker, 17,375 ft. A two-day snowstorm deposited 2 ft. of new snow on the mountain, and the party found the route completely barred by a crevasse which could not be turned without incurring severe avalanche danger. The attempt was abandoned.

In the same area, Moose's Tooth, 10,335 ft., and Mt. Dan Beard were climbed by a British party, Barrie Biven and Anthony Smythe.¹ Mt. Barrille (third ascent) and Peak 9,260 ft. were climbed by Major Banks' party after the ascent of Mt. McKinley.

The Juneau Ice-field Programme continued during the summer of 1962, and a group made the first ascent of Mt. Bressler, 8,000 ft., between Mt. Ogilvie and Nesselrode (near the borders of British Columbia). In the Saint Elias Mountains, the Ice-field Ranges Research Project under the direction of Walter Wood of New York continued its glaciological programme near the Hubbard-Kaskawulch Divide. Three of the members made the second ascent of Mt. Walsh, 14,780 ft.

In the Fairweather Range, a party made the first ascents of Mt. Quincy Adams, 13,680 ft., and Mt. Lituya, 11,910 ft., Mt. Quincy Adams being climbed by its South ridge.

There were several interesting climbs in the Coast Range of British Columbia. Mt. Waddington was climbed a number of times despite bad weather conditions. The first Canadian ascent of the main, or rock, summit of the mountain was made by Kenneth Baker, Byron Olson and Dr. David Kennedy. Another Canadian group, composed of Martin and Esther Kafer and seven others, reached both summits of Mt. Waddington, Mrs. Kafer being the first woman to reach the higher summit. The first ascent of Mt. Ottarasko, 10,013 ft., twenty miles

¹ *Supra*, pp. 262-268.

west of Tattlayoko Lake, was another notable ascent in the Coast Range.

In the Caribou Mts., two parties were active, one making a number of first ascents in the area between the Canoe river and the North Thompson, while the other made the first ascent of Mt. Aspiration from Kiwa Creek. Several new ascents were made in the Selkirks, most notable being the ascent of Mt. Cooper, 10,135 ft., a somewhat legendary peak in the South Selkirks, which had been seen but never before reached. A group from Seattle made three attempts, one in June, one in July and one in August, the last being successful.

In the Canadian Rockies, Fred Beckey, Don Gordon and Brian Greenwood made the first ascent of the East face of Mt. Oubliette, 10,100 ft., in the Rampart group. Near Lake Louise, a new route was made on the South-east face of Mt. Temple, 11,636 ft.; also the first ascent of the East peak of Mt. Stutfield, the only unclimbed 11,000 ft. peak in the area.

In the Cascade Range of Washington, two new routes were made on Mt. Adams, one by the East face via Victory ridge and one by the Mazama glacier ice-fall.

In Wyoming, a number of new ascents were made in the Teton and Wind River Ranges. Seven new routes were made on Mt. Moran, 12,594 ft., in the Tetons, one of them, curiously enough, proving to be one of the easiest on the mountain. In the Wind River Range a number of new routes were done in the southern area around Lonesome Lake: the Wolf's Head, 12,150 ft., the East peak of Warrior, 12,500 ft., and Pingora, 11,884 ft., were all climbed by their East faces, and Warbonnet by its North-east face, this being a new route on a face already ascended. Fred Beckey and Daniel Davis made the first ascent of the West face of Gannett Peak, 13,785 ft., the highest mountain in Wyoming. They were able to crampon up a snow finger to within 1,000 ft. of the summit, and reported that the rock above that point was very sound and provided good climbing, contrary to expectation.

Several spectacular ascents were made in the Yosemite valley. Sentinel Rock was climbed by a new direct route on the North Wall, and El Capitan was climbed by two new routes. Some idea of the type of climbing can be derived from an inventory of the equipment used by the party which completed the last of these routes on November 25, 1962. Total climbing time was $42\frac{1}{2}$ days. Five nights were spent in ropes, twelve other nights on the wall, and the final ascent, which took $6\frac{1}{2}$ days, required six nights on the wall. The party spent two more nights on it taking down the ropes, making a total of twenty-five nights on the wall. 3,300 ft. of rope were used, which included two 150-ft. climbing ropes and a 300-ft. hauling rope. Seventy-five pitons were used, some 600 to 700 times. Seventy-five or eighty bolts were used.

Six hammers were broken. 310 lb. of water were used, of which 55 lb. were used in the final assault. 15,600 ft., or approximately three miles, of distance was gained by prusiking up ropes and 11,100 ft., or two miles, was accomplished prusiking down ropes. They rappelled 2,800 ft. down fixed ropes. In the first 2,000 ft. there were only four stances, and in the entire climb there was only one ledge for bivouac purposes, at 2,580 ft. Temperatures ranged from 100° to 23°.

This type of climbing on exfoliated granite has developed a number of new techniques. Among them are the use of pitons made of tempered duraluminium and chrome molybdenum steel, the theory being that a hard metal holds better in the type of crack found in this region because it has a spring action binding against the small crystals on either side of the crack. Some cracks are wide and filled with dirt which precludes the use of wooden wedges, so that an angular piece of hard steel or duraluminium, varying in width from half an inch to 4½ inches, is used. As these sound something like cowbells when banged against another piece of metal, they have received the name 'bong bongs'. The narrow and shallow cracks led to the development of a very thin piton of wafer thickness and extremely short. Although some of these were not much larger than a postage stamp, they are still too large for some cracks, so that a new and smaller piton was developed, no thicker than a postage stamp and certainly no larger. These have received the name 'rurp', from their description, the 'realised ultimate reality piton'.