

## NORTH AMERICAN NOTES

BY KENNETH A. HENDERSON

THE summer of 1961 saw a spate of activity in the mountains of Alaska and northern Canada. On Mt. McKinley alone two new routes were made and one new one attempted with considerable success. In addition three ascents were made by the West Buttress route.

The outstanding climb of the season was probably the ascent of the South Peak, 20,230 ft., of Mt. McKinley by the South face by the Italian party under the leadership of Riccardo Cassin. He was accompanied by five other Italians, Luigi Airoidi, Luigi Alippi, Giancarlo Canali, Romano Perego, Annibale Zucchi, and one American, Robert Goodwin, who had just come from a previous attempt on Mt. Russell and was unable to stay for the entire climb. They were flown in by Bob Sheldon to the North-east Kahiltna glacier which is outside the park boundary. They established their Base Camp at 11,300 ft. shortly above the landing place, directly underneath the spur on the South face. The climb was one of exceeding difficulty containing pitches of between IV and VI Grade. Some idea of the difficulty encountered may be had by the fact that in the first section to the ridge, where Grade V climbing was required, the party used ten ice pitons, fifteen rock pitons and 1,500 ft. of fixed rope to reach the ridge. On the next section on the spur itself four ice pitons, five rock pitons and 1,700 ft. of fixed rope were used. On the face an overhang of green ice was then encountered involving Grade VI climbing in which seven ice, fifteen rock pitons and 1,000 ft. of fixed rope were used to reach Camp I at 13,300 ft. To establish the next camp at 14,200 ft. the going was somewhat easier, only two ice, five rock pitons and 250 ft. of fixed rope being used. From here, the way led up a glacier and rock face and required eight ice, seventeen rock pitons and 1,700 ft. of fixed rope to Camp III at 17,000 ft. From here, the principal difficulties were over, and the climb to the summit was made in a single day. Weather was bad a good deal of the time and several of the party suffered frost-bite. The entire ascent and descent took nineteen days, the party returning, as they had come, by plane.

Pioneer ridge on Mt. McKinley was used to reach the North Peak, 19,470 ft., by a Canadian party consisting of Adolf Baur (Ottawa), Don Lyon, Larry Fowler, Dietrich Hausman, and Sev Heiberg. This group

reached Mt. McKinley by car and used an air drop for their supplies on the mountain. They left the road at Wonder Lake in two groups on June 30 and July 5, and by July 13 had established a camp on the ridge 12,500 ft. above the Flat-iron. In spite of intense cold and high winds they were able to establish a high camp at 17,000 ft. from which they reached the summit on July 23, returning by the same route without crossing over to the South Peak.

A very fine attempt was made on the Wickersham Wall of Mt. McKinley but was frustrated by an avalanche carrying away all the supplies. Dan Davis, Stu Ferguson, Warren Bleser and Don Gordon on May 20 left Mile 65 on the Wonder Lake Road. In a week's time they had reached their air drop at 7,100 ft., fifty miles away, across extremely rugged country. They crossed the Peters glacier and on June 1 established camp at 10,000 ft. above the main ice-fall, thus surmounting the main problem of this route which lies between 8,000 and 10,000 ft. By June 7 they had established the main camp at 12,000 ft. on a  $40^\circ$  slope, about 300 ft. below the crest of the ridge. During the night a heavy storm set in which deposited 3 ft. of snow. At 10.30 the next morning an avalanche started on the ridge above and swept the entire slope, carrying both tents down. Fortunately, the Logan tent in which the men were staying came to a stop about 70 ft. further down, near a crevasse, and just above a 1,000 ft. drop. The small tent with supplies, however, continued on over the wall. The party were very fortunate to be able to extricate themselves from this situation and dug a snow cave near the crest of the ridge in which they sat out the rest of the storm. Probing in the deep snow they managed to rescue several bits of equipment, cameras, etc., but inasmuch as their ropes and all their food had gone, they were unable to continue the climb, and, of course, returned.

Mt. McKinley was climbed three times by the West Buttress by three parties, using the same route and being flown in by Don Sheldon to a landing strip on the glacier at 6,600 ft. The Canadian party, composed of Werner Himmelbach, Jim Woodfield, John Wilson and Ralph Hutchinson, used an air drop at 8,200 ft. in addition. Another party, composed of John Graham, with Swiss guides, Adolf Rirst and Felix Julen, and the park ranger, Richard Stenmark, had arrived a bit earlier and reached the summit on May 11, and, although suffering from frost-bite occasioned by the extreme cold of  $-30^\circ\text{F}$  and high winds at 30-50 m.p.h., returned safely. The Canadian party, however, was beset by even higher winds and with the lower temperatures involved, suffered severe frost-bite. They reached the summit at 5.30 p.m. on May 21 and returned as rapidly as possible. A special radio call was sent out to Don Sheldon, the pilot, to come in early, and Woodfield and Hutchinson were taken to the hospital on May 23, suffering from severe frost-bite.

Five days later the others were evacuated. Later in the summer a California party, composed of W. E. Blanchard, Jules Eichorn, Richard Kenetman, Dr. Jack Henry, Dr. Bruce Meyer, Mornay Alford, Charles Sayer and Don Gordon, reached the summit over the same route on July 14. It is interesting to note that this completes a total of 110 persons who have reached the South Peak in twenty-three ascents, and twenty-seven persons on the North Peak in seven ascents, since the first one in 1913. Thirteen people have reached both summits, one of whom was a woman.

Mt. Russell, 12,670 ft., south-west of Mt. McKinley in the Alaska Range, was attempted during May and June by a party of four, Gene Wescott, Buck Wilson, Bob Goodwin and Jon Garday. They flew in from Fairbanks to an airstrip twenty-five miles north of the mountain on May 28, and in six days of travel up the Chedotlothna glacier managed to place a camp at the north base of the mountain. In good weather they continued up the north-west side to a high camp at 7,200 ft. Beyond this point, the route was subject to avalanches so they decided to run for it in a one-day ascent instead of trying to place a higher camp. A four-day storm, however, put so much snow on the mountain that further progress was impossible and they had to retreat. They were flown out on June 14.

Several ascents were made in the eastern portion of the Alaska Range. Old Snowy, 9,700 ft., on the Castner glacier, was climbed on a week-end trip on March 26 by Gene Wescott and Buck Wilson. Starting on March 23, after a two-day ski trip they established Base Camp at 7,200 ft. on the south-west side of the peak. On the third day they ascended to the summit from the south, using crampons, via the South ridge. They skied out in less than five hours. In a July week-end Mt. Blackcap, 9,850 ft., at the head of the Castner glacier, was climbed by a party of four, John Hodsdon, Jim Mack, Ron Dewitt and Charles R. Wilson. They travelled three miles up the glacier to camp on Friday afternoon, and on Saturday, established camp at 7,000 ft., eight miles up the glacier, using snowshoes above the 5,000 ft. level. The ascent was made the next day in five hours up the glacier on the north side of the mountain, and from thence by the West ridge to the summit cone. On the return the soft snow required careful belaying down to 8,500 ft. The entire trip to the highway took fifteen hours.

In the Chugach Range, Mt. Gilbert, 9,646 ft., was climbed on May 29. A party of five, Helga Bading, Hans Metz, Bob Bailey, Steve Foss and Paul B. Crews, were flown in by Lowell Thomas, Jr. from Palmer to 2,500 ft. on the Surprise glacier in two trips. Thence, they proceeded up a tributary on the South face of the peak which they climbed up a steep ice-chute to a point 500 ft. below the summit, which was then reached along the ridge. The descent from the summit was made in a

storm which lasted for two more days, at the end of which they returned to the lower glacier to be flown out.

The St. Elias Mountains were the scene of considerable activity this past summer. Mt. McArthur, 14,000 ft., in the Logan Massif, was ascended on August 4 by a party composed of Barbara Lilley, Alex McDermott, Don Monk, Seymour Ossosky and George Wallerstein. They left the road at Kluane Lake after first making an air drop of supplies on July 20 at distances of forty-five miles, sixty-five miles and ninety miles from the road. The first day they travelled twenty miles to the Kaskawulsh glacier. By the 23rd they had reached Dr. Walter Wood's research station on the upper glacier. The next day they crossed the divide and descended to the Hubbard glacier ten miles to their third drop. Up to this point they had had good weather; but from here on they were plagued with storms. They ascended the mountain by the North ridge, using crampons. Camp I was established at 9,400 ft. A strenuous double-carry the next day established Camp II at 11,000 ft. Above here the route was worked on in advance and, leaving the high camp on August 4 at 4 a.m., they proceeded to the plateau and thence to the South-east ridge of the summit cone up which they climbed to the top by 11 a.m., and the return to camp was made by 3.30 p.m. The following day they returned to the Base Camp and by August 7 had reached Dr. Wood's camp where they were royally received. In another  $3\frac{1}{2}$  days they had covered the remaining sixty-five miles to the highway. Previous to this ascent, an attempt had been made between July 7 and July 20 by Dick Wahlstrom, Lute Jerstad, Steve Johnson, Ron Priebe and Gary D. Rose. They reached a point 400 ft. from the top in a month of bad weather but had to return because of weather and lack of supplies.

This same area was visited by a twenty-person group of the Seattle Mountaineers in June and early July during which a party consisting of Ann Hughes, Dwight Hughes, Kenneth Davis, Stella Degenhardt, R. Gene Dodson, Leon M. Israel and Arthur C. Nation reached the summit of Mt. Queen Mary, 13,000 ft., for a first ascent. From their Base Camp on the Kaskawulsh glacier, eleven miles from the mountain, they placed a camp four miles away and 4,000 ft. up the North-east ridge. On June 24 they left this camp at 3.30 p.m. arriving on the summit at 2 a.m. June 25. Before returning, they also climbed a 9,700 ft. peak next to the col at which they had camped. The others in the group made a number of other ascents in the area.

A Harvard Mountaineering party consisting of Boyd Everett, Leif Patterson, Albert Nickerson, Edw. Carman and Walter Gove, made a second ascent of the East ridge of Mt. Logan. They also visited Dr. Wood's research camp on their journey in and out. They ascended the North face of the East ridge to a 9,000 ft. level, and from thence they

followed the crest to 17,000 ft. From here, they were beset by a twelve day storm and, as they had only fifteen days' food, did not have very much margin. Nickerson and Patterson reached the East Peak in a blizzard but because of the weather did not continue on to the Central Peak.

In Canada a small group of three, Edward Arnold from the University of Michigan, Al Povey from Princeton, and John Milton visited the southern Logan Mountains. On June 25 they flew from Watson Lake to Hole-in-the-Wall Lake at 4,000 ft. Unfortunately, within a week Povey developed an illness and had to be flown out. The other two spent several months in ecological study in the area discovering a number of hot springs and some very interesting flora and fauna surrounding them. They attempted the ascent of Thunder Dome but were stopped shortly below the summit by an exfoliated granite wall in which the exfoliation had resulted in a large number of overhangs above the smooth faces. They did, however, accomplish the ascent of Wolf's Fang by the South-west ridge. They started on a traverse of the entire range via the Hole-in-the-Wall Valley but, after crossing several passes and discovering a red rock glacier, got into the Night-Wind Creek Valley where Arnold twisted his knee, and Milton made a solo first ascent of Mt. Savage by the West face. He used the southernmost of the two snow couloirs, some 2,500 ft., to the ridge which he reached at about 500 ft. from the summit. The ridge had several overhangs which he traversed. On the descent a thunder-storm came up which caught him in the couloir where he was overtaken by an avalanche. Fortunately, he was able to stop himself before going too far. Because of Arnold's knee they were forced to return by a more circuitous, but more level, route down the Night-wind Valley and around to their air pickup at Hole-in-the-Wall Lake.

In the Northern Rockies a group consisting of Bob West, Mike Petrilak, Scott Arighi and Arthur Maki, mostly from the University of Washington, flew from Fort St. John, B.C. to Red Fern Lake. In this area they climbed Great Snow Mountain and Great Rock Peak. They proceeded to the Ulysses Group, where they climbed Mt. Penelope, Mt. Eurylochos, Mt. Calypso, Mt. Telemachos and Mt. Ulysses.

Mt. Robson, the highest peak in the Canadian Rockies, was ascended a number of times during the summer, the most noteworthy climbs being the first ascent of the Emperor ridge and the third ascent of the Kain route. On July 18 Ron Perla and T. M. Spencer made the first ascent of the Emperor ridge in a high wind. Because of the storm and their unfamiliarity with the Wishbone arête, they bivouacked at 7.30 p.m. on the summit in a snow cave. As the weather was still bad the next day, they descended the regular route to Kinney Lake. On July 20 Peter Geiser and William Buckingham made the ascent of the Kain

route from the Helmet-Rear Guard Col. Leaving camp at 2 a.m. they reached the summit at 11 a.m., returning to camp at 9 p.m.

A few miles further south on July 20-21 Fred Beckey, Vron Chouinard and Daniel Doody made the first ascent of the North side of Edith Cavell, 11,033 ft. Two of this same group, Beckey and Chouinard, also made a spectacular new route a month later, August 16, on the West face of the South Tower of the Howser Spire in the Purcells.