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TOTALLY FORAKERED EXPEDITION  
ALASKA 2001

01/38



Kenton Cool about to descend into the Peters Basin at the start of the 46 ½ hour push on Denali  
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# TOTALLY FORAKERED EXPEDITION

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## Expedition Summary

The stated aim of our expedition was the first ascent of 3 new routes in the Alaska Range; a technical warm up route on the West Face of Kahiltna Peak West, a slim ice couloir on the North West Face of the West Buttress (The Washburn Wall) of Denali and finally if we had any energy left a new line on the South East Face of Foraker. In the end we did none of these proposed lines instead we did 3 routes, a repeat (almost free but not to summit) of the classic Mount Hunter test piece the Moonflower, plus two new routes. The first on the "mini-moonflower" feature on the ridge of Mount Hunter gave 15 pitches of top quality technical ice and mixed climbing, our final route was a new line on the 2200m Fathers and Sons wall (South West Face of the North West buttress) of Denali. These two lines were both a step up from our first two original objectives and we were able to learn a lot more about the Foraker line in preparation for a return in 2002.

On top of the particular routes we also set out to push the limits of our approach to the mountains. On both new routes we used "single push style" with the Denali route in particular being a 46 1/2-hour push. The rewards and lessons learned were amazing. I also feel that the two of us learnt a lot more about working together as a partnership and we can't wait to apply this knowledge next year back in the range.

## Team Members

**Kenton Cool.** British, 27, High access worker. 9 winter and 10 summer alpine seasons. Climbed 7b+, E5, Scottish VIII, M8, ED3 and A3+

First ascent Arwa Spire (6195m), Indian Garwhal  
New route North Face Kusum Kanguru (6400m)  
6 new routes to E2, Torssuqatoq Spires, Southern Greenland  
4 new routes to ED+, Switzerland area in East Greenland  
New route NW Face Olan (Ecrins) ED 2/3  
Winter ascent North Face Triglav, Slovenia  
Shield and Zodiac, El Cap, Yosemite

**Ian Parnell.** British, 32, Writer and photographer. 3 winter and 5 summer alpine seasons. Climbed 7b onsight, E6 onsight, Scottish VIII, ED4 and A4

First ascent Arwa Spire.  
New route "The Knowledge" on North Buttress, Mount Hunter ED4, Alaska  
First ascent The Thumbnail, Southern Greenland, 4450ft 31 pitches to E6 6b, no bolts  
8 new routes Kara Su, Kyrgyzstan up to 1300m and E5, including "The isolationist" E2, 1300m first ascent solo in 5 hours.  
3<sup>rd</sup> and fastest winter ascent Sphinx Route, North Face Triglav, Slovenia  
8 grade VI routes in Yosemite including Wyoming Sheep Ranch and Shortest Straw both new wave A4.

## Expedition Details

I visited the Alaska Range for the first time in 2000 climbing a new route on the North Buttress of Mount Hunter (The Knowledge) with Jules Cartwright. This range is amazing; really big mountains but with few of the altitude issues of the Himalayas together with some of the world's best mixed climbing on granite which at it's best is the equal of Mont Blanc. The area is also highly accessible and apart from the registration process has little of the bureaucratic nightmares of Asia. The result is that you can concentrate on the climbing and really push yourself. Our route in 2000 was technically tough and required for us at that time a slightly heavyweight approach to alpine style, taking a portaledge, hauling and following several pitches on jumar (we however used no fixed ropes or bolts). This year Kenton and I were

keen to search out similarly technical climbing but following a dispiriting attempt at a big wall in India wanted to go lightweight and fast.

While I was in Alaska in 2000 I spent time at base camp with the Americans Mark Twight, Scott Backes and Steve House exponents of Alaskan single-push climbing. As we left the range they set out on a 60-hour single push up the Czech Direct, the hardest route on Denali. I was hugely inspired by their efforts and even more inspired by the possibilities I saw there. Jules and I had hoped to follow up our Hunter ascent with a first ascent on the Washburn Wall of Denali but conditions were against us. This route became the centrepiece of this year's expedition. We were also interested in the West face of Kahiltna Peak West, which looked to offer fine mixed climbing as a warm up. We also had the huge face of Foraker in the back of our minds, but this was always with the rider that we would see how things went first on Denali.

#### Mount Hunter Mini Moonflower – new route - “Kiss me where the sun don't shine”

With Alaska as long as the weather is stable you can be flying in from Talkeetna to the glacier within 2 days of leaving Britain and we were lucky that the weather was in our favour. In fact the weather for most of our stay was excellent. Bearing in mind the minimal weather window Jules and I had experienced the previous year Kenton and I set out within a day of landing for our warm up route. I had been researching during the months prior to trip and had recalled the very fine pointed buttress just to the left of Hunter's North Buttress, which we dubbed the “Mini Moonflower”. This looked to give a nicely sized route between 6-700m high with harder technical climbing than our initial proposed warm up. Kenton and I were keen to try out our single push tactics before committing to a big route on Denali so we set off at 1am with only 1 light sack between us. We took 8 litres of water, some snack bars and a dozen “Cliff shots” a carbohydrate gel that could be quickly downed while on the move.

After a slow approach including me leaving my camera beneath The North Buttress of Hunter we started up a line slightly left of centre. Over the next 18 hours we linked a fairly continuous and logical ribbon of ice at times thin (2cm), at times steep (vertical) at times both. Pitch 13 proved to be the crux with a trying traverse on disintegrating snow-ice followed by overhanging mixed climbing. We climbed two more pitches to within two pitches of the summit of the buttress. Here we turned round to a combination of fatigue and gathering snowfall. We had “mountain—tested” our lightweight approach enough.

After a few days rest we set off for an acclimatisation trip up the West Buttress of Denali hoping to reach the 14,000ft camp after 3 days and then perhaps spend 2 days resting there before 1 day up to 17,000ft and then a return to base camp. In the event we didn't get close. On our second day the worst weather of our trip hit and we were pinned down in driving snow and a white out at 10,000ft for 3 days. The snow repeatedly drifted over our tent threatening to crush our two-man mountain tent. After 3 days spent digging out we abandoned our acclimatisation efforts and returned to a much more peaceful base camp.

#### Mount Hunter North Buttress – Moonflower repeat ascent

Having failed to acclimatise we were keen for some productive action. Kenton had fallen in love with The Moonflower as we passed it during our first route. The area's classic mixed climbing test piece on the North Buttress of Mount Hunter is recognised as one of the world's great mixed climbs and it didn't disappoint. To our knowledge the route had 2 pendulums and a pitch of aid still to be freed and I set my heart on a free attempt. I had heard rumours that Steve House (during a roped solo attempt) thought the crux pitch might go free reasonably easily and that he had described it as a fist crack. Seen as I chatted with him at base camp almost everyday in retrospect it seems a little bizarre that I didn't check with him in detail.

We waited while American friends of ours made their attempt (retreating due to slow progress hauling a heavy bag – this is a route which benefits from a traditional alpine approach). After their attempt we skied up at breakfast time carrying a lightweight leaders sack and a heavier second's sack. We took a stove plus a litre of fuel, food, mountain tent and very lightweight sleeping bags (mine had 300grams of down which proved too cold to sleep properly). Approaching the base we met two other British climbers who were considering an attempt on "Deprivation". We had over the previous few days talked regularly about the conditions and weather and again began weighing up the options. Eventually we bid our farewells and made a circuitous approach to the base of the route to avoid fall out from the threatening seracs to the right of the North Buttress. Immediately upon arriving at the base of the route said seracs promptly cut loose an avalanche that swept a cloud directly over our British friends and gave us a fair dusting. When the cloud had cleared we weren't surprised to see that their decision had been made and they were hot-tailing back to base camp.

Our climbing day started with a couple of pitches of easy ice before I made an attempt to access the Klewin Couloir. Perhaps I was too high, but after carving off several huge snow mushrooms and finding little protection we decided to head back out left and try a higher entrance to the Moonflower. Barry Blanchard and Johnny Blitz had used this approach a week earlier during their ascent. This proved fine and after 2 pitches we were back on line and enjoying superb thin runnels of ice. The Prow was the remaining aid pitch and I began to get psyched as the rock tower loomed overhead. I was surprised to have to tackle a tricky approach pitch, which proved to be bold grade 6 mixed climbing. For the Prow planning for the fist crack I donned rock shoes and loaded up my harness with rack, axes, crampons and plastic boots. My choice of footwear proved helpful on the initial 30 ft wall of VS/HVS rock however above that the corner line contained not a fist crack but a thin crack/seam. Perhaps I should have changed into plastic boots here as Kenton later found during seconding that the crack was perfect for axe torques. I continued however smearing and bridging, tricky climbing that felt E2, which was further complicated by verglas on the walls and a foot wide tongue of ice that I needed to remove by smashing with my fists! I finally came to a halt 25 ft up the corner where I changed to more appropriate winter footwear, used 3 points of aid or rest and then continued with the ice ramp. Despite failing to completely free the pitch it had proved to be one of the most interesting pitches I had led in the mountains.

The Prow led to a very dramatic pendulum (off a bolt!), which I vaguely looked at freeing (It looked hard and probably the crux of a free Moonflower) and then just got on with swinging around on the rope. Round the corner we were back on top quality ice and Kenton took the lead bringing us to the Tenyana's traverse. This traverse is one of the more committing pitches on the route and in unstable snow was a good lead by Kenton, those hauling would find problems here. A short mixed pitch led to the first ice field and our planned first camp. We were lucky here and throughout the route to find the pre-cut ledges of the 2 previous ascentionists this season hacked out of the ice. Half an hour of work by us contrasted with I expect 2 or more hours needed to first establish a flat tent spot.

After a night of minimal sleep due to our flimsy bags we set off towards the Shaft, the routes legendary ice crux. First however we had to climb beneath a huge snow mushroom that a few years back had fallen off killing Steve Mascoli. Luckily I was able to take a thin left-hand line, which gave excellent and safer climbing, which led to the base of the Shaft. Here Kenton took control stringing the first two pitches together in an impressive display of ice technique including overhanging ice and some rotten honeycombed bulges. I struggled to follow with the heavier sack. Above the Shaft we kept moving across the second ice field working up towards the final pendulum. Starting with very thin ice 1-3 cm 80 degrees I reached a divergence of 3 possibilities, where I chose the middle snowed ramp line. This gave perhaps the most exciting climbing for myself with torques and laybacking on tools with crampon

points on chicken heads in the rock. Nearing the top both tools popped out mid layback and it was only with an impulse reaction that I managed to whip them back into contact and finish this fantastic pitch.

On the third ice field we were again able to take advantage of pre carved tent spots. The following morning dawned with snowfall and Kenton retching up the contents of his breakfast. I had hoped to continue above the buttress to the summit of Hunter, having missed out during the previous year's ascent of the Knowledge, but with the snow it looked unlikely. We headed up none the less, determined to at least finish the technical climbing. The final rock band was familiar to me having climbed these pitches as a finish to the Knowledge never the less I took a fall on the short sharp "Come Again Bibler exit" due to a combination of spindrift avalanche and poor ice. By now the spindrift avalanches were getting heavy and pouring off at 2-minute intervals, we turned round at the finish of the technical difficulties and began our abseil descent. This took us about 12 or so hours and included a particularly exciting episode around the top of the shaft where Kenton missed the anchor and his shouts were heard by a search party (for other climbers). 3 pitches from the base I also managed to rip an abalakov thread while bounce testing which proved the worth of that testing procedure.

We eventually arrived back at base camp early morning having made a roughly 3 day round trip (the standard time is usually 6 days to summit) and having made a decent attempt at freeing the line.

#### Denali Father and Sons Wall – New route – "Extra Terrestrial Brothers"

Following several days recovering we packed supplies in our sledges and shuffled on skis up to the 14,000ft camp on Denali. On the way up we passed our American friends Ben Gilmore, Kevin Mahoney and Bruce Miller who had just climbed our planned line on the Washburn Wall naming it "Common Knowledge". While a little disappointed I knew immediately what would have to be our alternative target – The Fathers and Sons Wall, to some extent a bigger more remote challenge. We planned to acclimatize first with a trip up to 16,000ft and then another to 17,200 and hopefully the summit. Unfortunately after heading up to 16,000ft we received a weather forecast that suggested a probable storm in 4-5 days time. The rumour amongst the camp including the rangers was that this might be a big one with a lot of talk about '92 when several climbers died and numerous folk needed rescuing. Not wanting to sit out a big storm potentially till the end of our stay we abandoned further acclimatization and packed for an attempt on the Father and Sons Wall the following evening.

The following day we attempted to snooze knowing that over the next 48 hours or more we would be able to take few opportunities to rest. Eventually we got fed up at not sleeping and set off at around 8pm. Watching us heading down with one tiny sack between us late in the evening must have been puzzling for many. We had earlier cashed gear at the overlook at 12,000ft on the West Buttress but we arrived to find it frozen into one solid ice block. Chipping extricated the wires but our 3 cams proved useless on the route. The rack was trimmed to one set of nuts, 3 cams, 2 hexs, 6 quickdraws and 3 pegs. The descent down to the lower Peters Glacier had been glissaded down by Steve House 5 or so years previously but had Gilmore, Mahoney and Miller had found it time consuming having to make 7 abs. We found it pretty serious with avalanche potential and many seracs to weave through forcing us to make 2 abseils.

Once on the Peters glacier we crossed as quickly as possible, being particularly aware of the serac fed howser of a couloir in between the Fathers and Sons and The Washburn Wall which seemed to be firing every 30 minutes. The bergshroud at the bottom of the face (bottom of face 9,000ft, top of buttress 15,400ft) was fairly easy to cross but again we were aware of a sizeable serac up high left and so moved together for 250m up a gradually narrowing easy ice field. At its head we traversed

up and left towards an ice line that would take us into the centre of the wall. 20mins of punching through 85 degree slush and honeycomb junk (sun rotten at this low altitude) soon had me retreating and from then on we were forced to improvise. This wall is huge and complex and we fought to compare features with our inadequate photo. A long traverse past various glimmers of weakness and we headed to the top of another wide ice field to access a fine ice gully. Above this Kenton led an exposed rock traverse where I led through on interesting mixed terrain, which put us on a rib above a steep inaccessible gully close beneath the hanging serac on the left side of the face.

Higher on this rib we found the technical crux a short overhanging corner with panicky torques and laybacking directly above the belayer's head. This pitch finished with 80-degree snow and a perch atop the spur. From here the way forward was not obvious at all and it was with some trepidation that we headed back rightwards. Luckily we broke out into a wide bay where we felt we could see the upper section of "First Born" House and Helmuth's previous route on this wall. After a few pitches we took advantage of a flat spot at the base of a gendarme and decided to take a rest and brew session. We had brought a petrol stove and half a litre of fuel but no sleeping bags or tent. We did however have a "bothy bag" which we pulled over our heads and tucked beneath our legs. This proved surprisingly effective and after cooking a little dinner we managed to get an hour of sleep (in all we stopped for 4 hours).

Kenton led off after a painful start getting his damaged ankles (Broken in a rock climbing fall 5 years previously) working again. Progress went well for the next hour or two before we again met another big steep wall. Kenton's "I'll just look around the corner" came up trumps however with a thin couloir piercing the side of the wall and taking us to the ends of the technical difficulties. Above as the angle eased the rock deteriorated to a terrible black coal like substance and the ice became rock hard covered by a layer of snow. We simul climbed alternating between the coal and the black ice unable to find any secure ground. We had been watching the North West Ridge draw gradually closer and eventually postholed leftwards towards it. This was long and heart breaking work with snow several feet deep. When we finally reached the ridge we stopped in a draughty ice cave and attempted to rest and brew but after a 30-minute stop and half a cup each we were frozen and had to continue.

Approaching the ridge we released numerous small slab avalanches and during the final pitch to gain the edge of the Upper Peters Glacier was rendered almost blind by the wind and spindrift. Talking on the ridge proved tricky, further mini avalanches continually released and as we battled up towards the North summit we were repeatedly knocked sideways. On top of this Kenton was experiencing hallucinations and our general fatigue coupled with the altitude meant progress was slow. After an hour or more we had a "discussion" about continuing up the North West Buttress (high point 16,300ft) and decided to descend direct to the Upper Peters Glacier. Hard ice, blunt crampons and a sizeable bergshrund meant this wasn't trivial but with 2 abseils we made it to the Upper Peters. Luckily this proved to be minimally crevassed and we were relieved to find the slope up to the West Buttress largely perfect neve. We crested the West Buttress 46 hours having left the 14,000ft camp and within half an hour were back at our tents. Interestingly the threatened storm didn't materialise.

## Thanks

Our thanks for generous grant support from the Mount Everest Foundation, UK Sport and the British Mountaineering Council. We also received valuable equipment support. Many thanks to Gaz and Keith at the North Face, Rab Equipment and Sandy at Urban Rock. Without your support we wouldn't be able to take British alpinism forward.

## Budget

In		Out	
Flights	£1400	MEF	£650
Air taxi	£400	BMC	£1200
Food	£400	Personal contributions	£750(x2)
Peak Fees	£200		
Taxis and Buses	£200		
Equipment	£200		
Accommodation	£100		
Fuel	£50		
Total	£3350		£3350

## Articles

An article was published (in slightly amended forms) in Climber, Rock and Ice, Montagne and magazines.

### **Alaska Article – Ian Parnell – Climber – September 2001 Issue Looking for the easy life – 47 hours on Denali**

Captain Alaska twists towards me, his toothless grin widens as he takes both hands off the wheel of his battered Chevy truck to offer me a swig of his beer. Nervously I grab the can, I reason the more I drink the less there will be for my over-steamed chauffeur. “Dude! what yo’ doin’ in da land ‘o da free?” It’s Captain Alaska’s buddy Caribou Dundee. One eye fixes me straight while the other darts between the cans of “Ice” (a redneck version of McEwans Export) in each of his hands. “Been, err climbing” I croak. “Wez been robbin’ banks” he drawls in return. As my Alaskan guides erupt into hoots and yee-has of laughter the battered Chevy takes a veer across both lanes and heads towards the Alaskan bush. I take a deep swig to numb the anticipated impact “if only life could be as simple as climbing” I muse. Caribou thrusts a second beer into my other hand “Welcome to Alaska Mr England. Things be a bit different here!”

I’d travelled over 6000miles round the globe in search of simplicity. Simple unadulterated climbing, nothing else. Just grab those ice tools and run. Mugs Stump, who made the first ascent of the Alaska’s world class mixed climbing test-piece The Moonflower described imagining it’s final crack continuing indefinitely upwards, never stopping the perfect climbing. His spiritual belief and utter engagement with the act of climbing led people to dub his life “Living the dream”. I’m heading with another British alpinist Kenton Cool for a new route on the Fathers and Sons Wall of Denali, it was a big part of Stump’s dream. “The Fathers and Sons has become a big part of me.” He wrote, “The style I believe it can be accomplished in is part of me too. It can be done on sight, solo, extreme and big and at altitude.”

Stump’s deep connection with climbing is something I’m beginning to recognise. We are hoping to climb a new route on the Fathers and Sons and hope to emulate his light and fast style. Despite the extreme risk of cutting so many safety lines, to go this light has logic. Firstly it makes the most of the 24 hour daylight up here in June and with Alaska’s fickle weather a rapid single push ascent would hopefully see us up and off the face within two days, a potentially predictable weather window. But the real reason is that I’m looking for adventure, trying something this uncertain will ask questions of myself that don’t get asked anywhere else in my life. Whether I will like the answers is another matter but I’m willing to find out.

But as climbing’s worth becomes clearer to me it seems harder to explain it’s reward to others. Holed up in the tent at 14,000ft Kenton remarks “No—one even has a clue what we do, not even other climbers. They just think we’re snow plodding!” Alaskan



regular and alpine punk prophet Mark Twight says that if people can't even be bothered to learn the basic language then it isn't worth explaining to them. Mark isn't here this season but the lessons I'd learnt from him during my time in the range last year echo through my plans now. That time Mark together with Scot Backes and Steve House repeated the hardest route on Denali in a ground-breaking single push of 60 hours.

Steve is here together with Rolando "Rolo" Garibotti, a warm, friendly, modest Argentinean resident in the US. Despite Rolo's reticence I'm fully aware of his achievements; one of the world's fastest climbers with a long list of lightning fast climbs from Yosemite to Patagonia. Partnered with Steve whose tongue in cheek nickname is "the great white hope of American alpinism" the pair make an extraordinarily strong team, their sights set on a one-day ascent of The Infinite Spur on Foraker. The audacity of their plan staggers; three times the length of the classic in a day test-piece El Capitan's Nose with the full vagaries of bottomless snow and ice conditions topped off with a 5 mile long descent of the highest commitment. But they are not the only ones with big ideas here this season. Kahiltna base camp has become a gathering of American mountaineering's elite. I was here last year and there seemed to be less than a handful of teams actually taking on the copious hard challenges offered by the range. This year there's a collective atmosphere of drive and confidence. Everyone is raising their game taking on unrepeated routes with enormous reputations or tackling the remaining last great-unclimbed lines. The buzz is amplified by the fact that everyone seems to be tuning their approach up a notch adopting the lighter and faster attitude.

Kenton and myself feed off the communal energy. We are beginners at this superlight game. It's thrilling but potentially deadly play so we feel our way with a 15 pitch new route on a feature dubbed the Mini Moonflower on the North side of Hunter. Climbed in 18 hours we reassure ourselves about our nutrition and hydration strategies, gulping down 8 litres of water between us and popping a packet of energy gel every belay. It seems to work as we develop a rhythm flowing up beautiful thin ribbons of ice woven between the dark overhangs of rock. We'd passed the Moonflower on Hunter's North Buttress and Kenton fell in love. 2 ½ days later and the route exceeds all expectations. Surely one of the world's best mixed routes, every pitch grabbing your attention. The purity of the Prow's corner, the exposure of Tamara's Traverse, the soaring Shaft and a truly memorable layback, crampons scratching on chicken heads across The Vision. Half guidebook time and almost the first free ascent; our confidence soars. Of course when you're surrounded by some of the World's best alpinists everything quickly gets put into perspective. Our friends Marko Prezelj, from Slovenia and Stephen Koch from the US quickly knock almost a day off our time cleaning up the remaining aid in the process. Plying them with endless brews we share their achievement, the effort painted on their drawn faces. Their inspiration leaves me wanting more and I feel the Fathers and Sons beckoning.

Hour -10. It's midday we are supposed to be sleeping in preparation for our attempt, but the adrenaline brings monsters when we close our eyes. What if the major storm forecast for later in the week comes a day early? The rangers say it will be similar to 1992 when six people died and another seven were rescued. The fears chase doubt around my mind. Have I really got it in me to keep going for two days and nights in a row? Some friends had quietly worried about my fitness before I left. Self confidently I replied it was all in the mind but now their concerns ring loud withering my bravado.

Hour -4. We've had the brews going all afternoon; hydration is going to be one of the keys to success over the next two days. The usual British approach of shoving a litre bottle in the bottom of the sacs will leave us crawling a quarter of the way up the route. Tests show that hard exercise for 4 hours without drinking causes the heart rate to be up to 30 beats higher than normal, if that's true we'll need heart massage by half height. In an ideal world we'd aim to take on a litre of fluids every hour. However the alpine world is never ideal and we expect to disappoint the scientists.

Hour 0. We'd planned to leave at midnight, but at 10pm I turn to Kenton, his eyes expectant, "Shall we have it, then?" A grin cracks through the stubble. Within minutes we're striding out of camp. There's no fanfare, no good byes, a few climbers pause to look wondering what two climbers are doing leaving this late with only one half full day sack between them. Perhaps they assume we have left our heavy sacks here after an acclimatisation carry, none of them would believe for a moment that we are heading off this light to try the most committing route of our lives.

Hour 1 1/2 The light is incredible the skyline burning gold, the fire reflected off Wonder Lake 80 miles to the north and Mount Hunter and Foraker glowing crimson. We're at 12,000ft overlooking the Peters Glacier peering through the sulphur green cloud to catch a glimpse of the huge bulk of the Fathers and Sons Wall. It would be a relief to get at least a quick view of our planned line but it looks like we will be travelling blind. The time has come for commitment. A deep breath and we step off into the deep end. We plunge up to our waists through deep snow descending towards the Peters glacier 3000ft below. From Steve House's description we had expected this descent to be casual but our senses are on red alert. The slope seems to echo our tensions; it feels like it could release at any moment avalanching us over the 500ft wave of seracs below. We have no idea what lurks beneath the snows surface, each step into the unknown. But it's this doubt that makes alpinism so special, if we knew all the answers; it wouldn't be worth questioning ourselves like this.

Hour 5. The chaotic helter-skelter of my heart gradually regains some rhythm as my gulps of arctic night air try to catch the beat. We've almost been running for the last hour across the Peters Glacier. If it weren't for the 200ft high serac above our heads we would be safe now. Luckily we are now out of the firing line of "the gully of doom" a gravity fed howitzer of ice from the Upper Peters Glacier. It's been marking the hour during our descent with a thunderous volley sending billowing avalanches across our approach path. At least at 9000ft from now on we will be gaining height and within half an hour we should be protected from the now silent menace of the serac above. Kenton's not wasting time, handing me the sac he kicks off into the dawn and finding the rhythm of his tools on the first ice ramp.

Hour 6 1/2. Moving together, rediscovering that bond of trust between us necessary for the 60metre run outs. The telekinesis of action not to question but to keep moving; the secret to keeping the speed up on something this big. Kenton tows me 250m to the first ice fall but within minutes it is obvious it's sun-rotted one inch-thick skin is too fragile to climb. So it's time to improvise, I expected not to be able to plot a line for long on a face this big but it's surprising to be following our noses this early on.

Hour 11. The intuition is kicking in; the mountain sense that can sniff out the ice couloir hidden round the corner or believe the overhanging walls will part as we approach them. We've been running this way for the last 4 or 5 hours and gradually the hanging seracs that earlier were such a threat are being reeled in. Kenton is on a rock traverse, his heels catching 2000ft of air beneath him, as he leads us into the heart of the wall. Looking over my shoulder I can see dots at the viewpoint on the West Buttress, I know to them we will be lost in the face.

Hour 15. Kenton's head is inches below my crampon-clad heels, unable to avoid an impaling on the hanging belay. The overhanging corner pushes me out, I try sticking my front points into the belay krabs but that's even worse. We're out on a thin rib 2,500ft up, there are no alternatives; a dead end is not an option. OK, time to turn it on! I shove a hand jam in deep and weight it gradually until my glove stops rolling off, torqued front points of my left foot just bite in the crack below, right boot on nothing. Deep breaths then claw up in the jam, desperate scraping of the axe and I get an adze torque. Got to swop feet, talking out loud now telling them what to do, both feet pop but get the right one back on just in time. Want to scream but got to keep the energy in. "Watch me, Kenny" I recognise the panic in my wavering falsetto. I'm staring left, there's got to be some sort of foothold but it's covered by a

blanket of snow. I highstep but my foot skids off wildly, I'm committed now though so it will have to be a rock-over onto my knee, testing the frictional qualities of Gore-tex on 80 degree snow covered rock. It holds for a second and that's all I need. As my knee careers off I use the arc to swing my left up near my hands barn-dooring round into a layback. A couple of full-blooded pulls on my tools and I'm on a foothold and can scream now. So much for snow plodding!

Hour 20. The last few hours have been full of tension. To be honest we were lost and running out of ideas. Kenton gradually got us back on track inching across a barely frozen stack of jagged boulders. I played down the seriousness, pretending it was casual to get him onto it; we had little alternative. Now we can see First Born, the wall's only other ascent, about 400m to the right and we regain our bearings. We've also cut a ledge out of the ice and the stove's roaring with a mix of soup and mash. I'm perched on the sac and Kenton has the ropes for a seat, with no sleeping bags I wrap the bothy bag we're sharing tighter round me. I can't believe with legs this cold we will ever get our planned one-hour of sleep.

Hour 28. I'd woken suddenly on the hour amazed that rest had been possible, but it seemed to work I felt refreshed. Kenton had trouble massaging his stumps back to life. 6 years previously he'd fallen 10ft and crushed his heels to pulp, he still can't walk properly. After a big climb or a night's clubbing he's forced to crawl for half an hour before circulation returns. He rarely complains and doesn't let it slow him down. While I watch him suffer I think of all the able-bodied climber's I know back home who always find excuses not to do anything. But this is one of the reasons why I'm here with Kenton. I'm reminded of more reasons higher up at 4,500ft. Kenton leaves the belay still screaming with hot aches, in the shade the arctic winds bite through our layers. We later learn that the temperatures are minus 25c. It seems we've reached another impasse; above is a vertical blank wall and to the left a huge void filled with swirling cloud. Kenton goes searching right, after 100ft he gets some gear in and as he disappears from view the rope runs out so I start climbing too. Just as I unclip the protection a shout echoes down he's found a couloir and it looks like it leads to easy ground.

Hour 34. I know we should be almost there but this wall is just endless. Proper snow plodding now, I rest every ten steps. Hunched over and hyperventilating, I can hear Kenton behind me "You're the man, awesome effort", every time I stop. My ego responds and I rage at the waist deep snow staggering to a collapse another 10 steps further on. It's not until later that I realise that Kenton's praise is a strategy to keep me breaking trail.

Hour 39. The top of the wall is less than a pitch away but it seems the Fathers and sons isn't finished yet. We've set off three avalanches in the last 100 feet and the wind throws up great dramatic plumes of snow from the ridge top, which then whip down to blind us. I'm still dreaming of the summit of Denali, in 10 minutes we'll find out the reality of that desire.

Hour 42. The 40-mile an hour wind knocks us across the ridge, the rope comes tight again. This is ridiculous shouts Kenton; he's been having hallucinations for the last couple of hours. Tanks dry I guess the brain becomes fuel. On the verge of control the decision is obvious. I turn my back on the summit and start to work out how to get us out of here.

Hour 44. It's my turn to loose the plot. I'd assured Kenton we could down climb the 60-degree blue ice to the Upper Peter's Glacier and while he calmly tapped his way down. I felt the panic and exhaustion well up. Couldn't I just let go and glissade down, my momentum shooting me over the bergshroud. Kenton talks sense back into me, guiding me to a belay and then lowering me over the bottomless bergshroud. At the bottom I rejuvenate a little with the knowledge that as long as one of us keeps it together we are going to make it.

Hour 46. I wait as the blur clears and the multiple horizons settle back into one. Kenton joins me at 16,000ft on the West Buttress in front of us there is only the sun setting over the range for the third time during our adventure. Below only half an hour away is warmth, safety, food, drink, and friends. The simple essentials in life. Kenton and I can't stop congratulating each other. It's good to be home.

Two days later and I'm no longer counting hours, we don't say too much about the climb. When asked we shake our heads trying to get something out eventually looking at each other grinning. We know where we've been and what it took within ourselves. Kenton and I share a deeply personal experience. We certainly didn't find the easy life, but by simplifying things down to a climber's core essentials, rack, rope and a friend we found so much more. We weren't as fast as Steve or Rolo nor did we solo like Mugs Stump had hoped to but I feel we climbed with spirit and were able to share a little of the dream.

"Kiss me where the sun don't shine."

New route on "Mini Moonflower" left of North Buttress, Hunter

Alaska 4/5?

ED 2

650m Scottish VII

1st ascent 19th May 2001

Ian Parnell

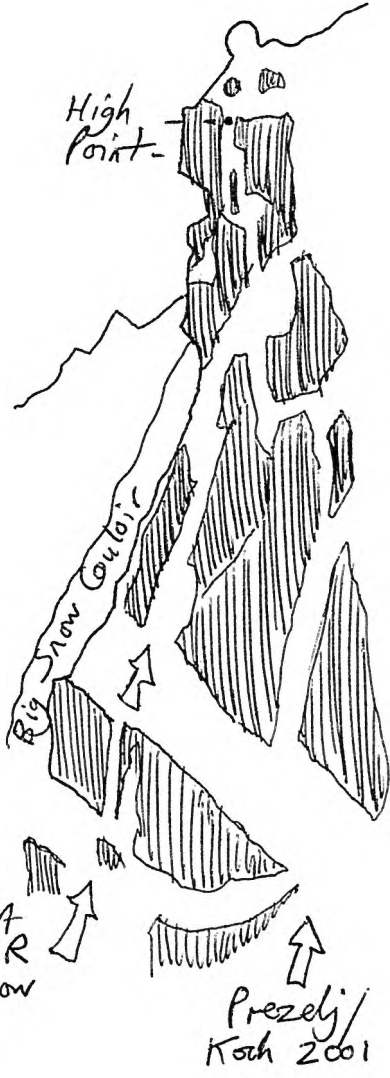
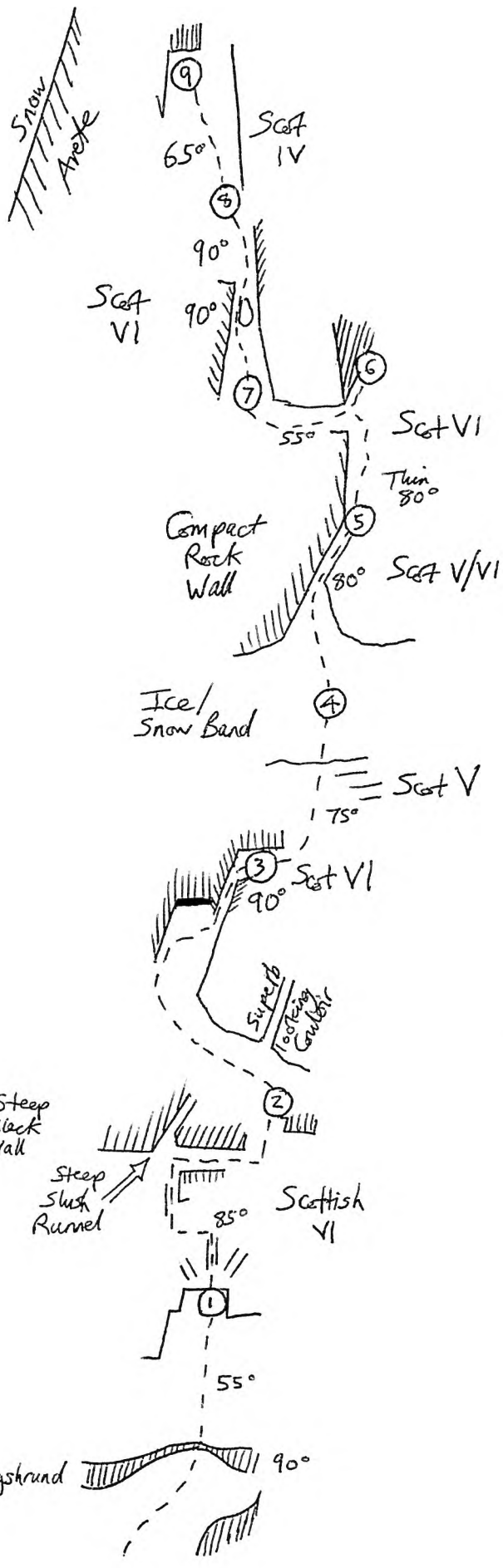
Kenton Coe

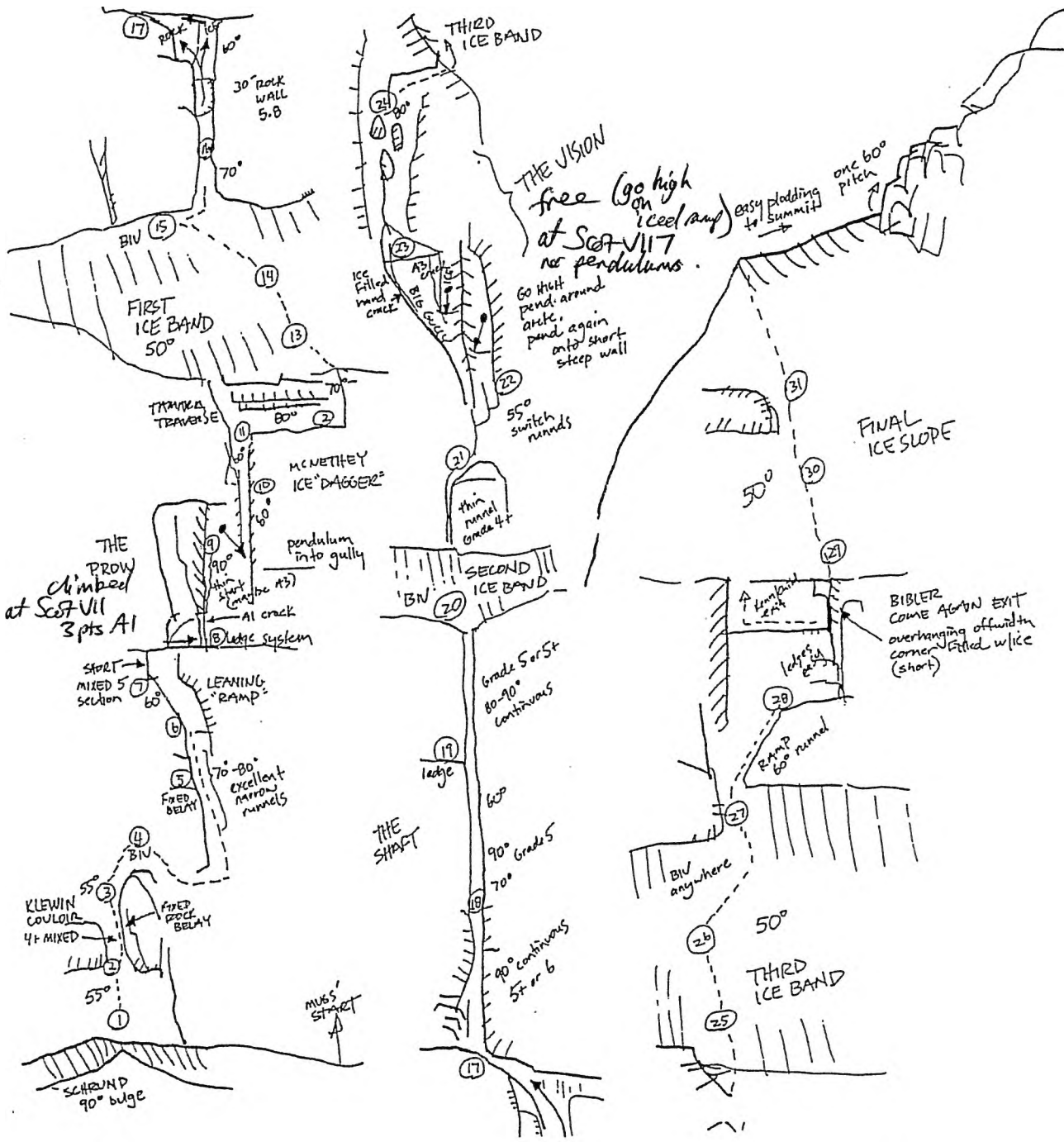
18 hours climbing.

(note to end pitch 15 not to summit)

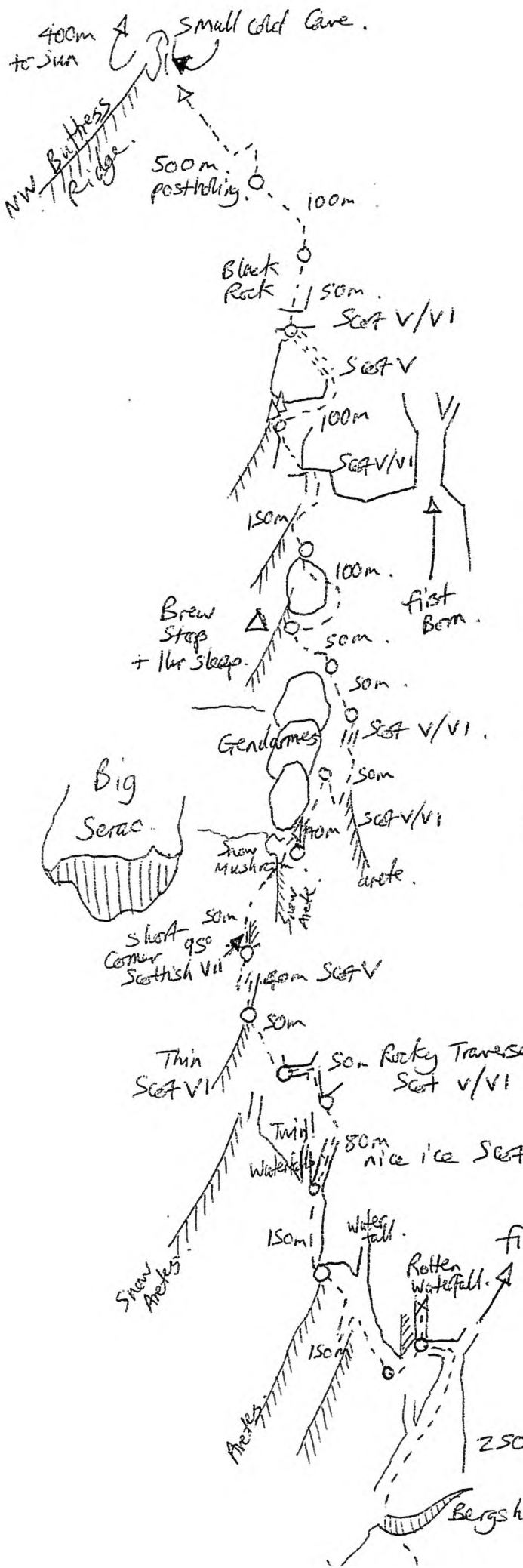
Scottish VII = AI 6?

Scottish VI = AI 5?





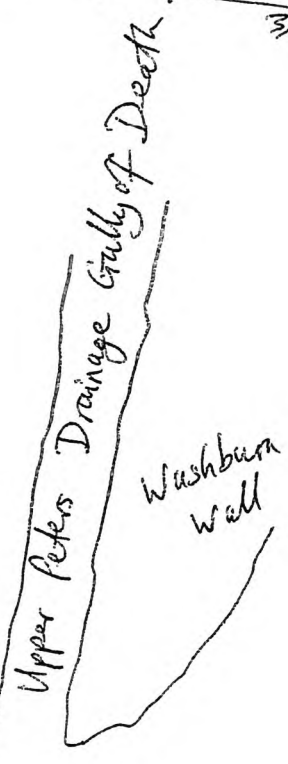
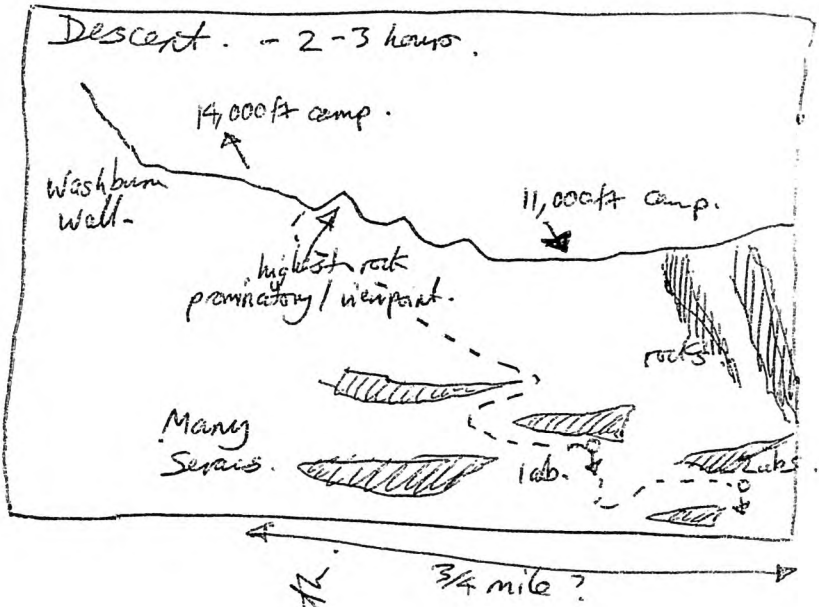
MT. HUNTER  
 NORTH BUTTRESS ROUTE  
 VI A16 A3 S.B  
 The Moonflower



New Route Fathers + Sons Wall  
 "Second Coming."  
 Alaskan 5 Scottish VII ED 2/3  
 First Ascent Kerton Cool  
 Ian Parrell.

9th June 2001.

46 1/2 round trip from 14,000ft  
 6 hrs to base route.  
 34 hrs climbing.  
 4 hrs attempt on North Summit  
 2 1/2 hrs to 16,000ft camp +  
 down fixed lines.



000  
Coff / Parnell 2001

000 first 50m (approx)  
House / Helmut 1995

attemp on  
North  
Summit

40 hours  
from  
14,000ft

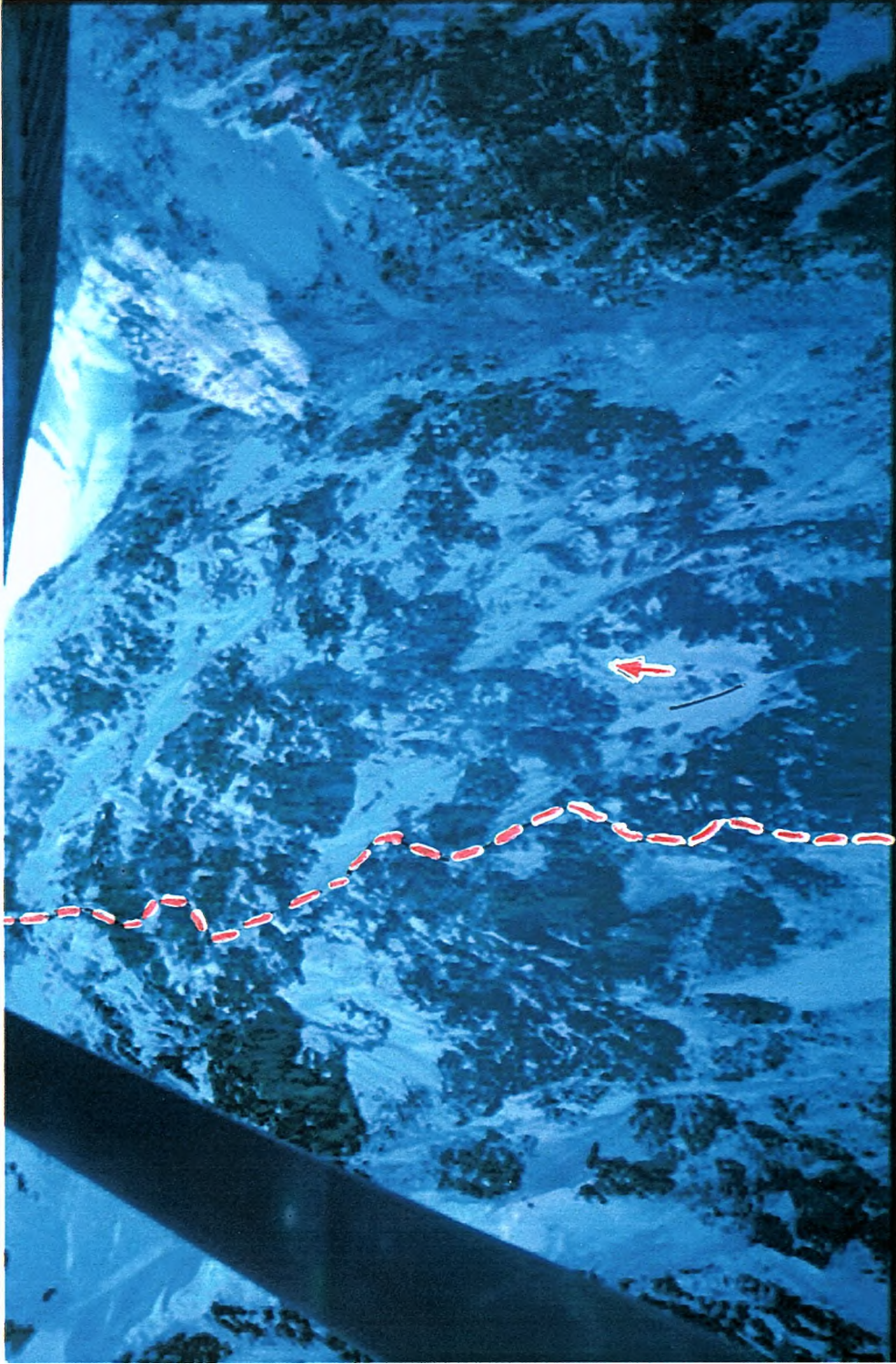
hrs  
from 14,000ft  
to 16,000ft  
Camp

△ Brew  
Step 20 hours  
from 14,000ft





FATHERS + SONS WALL DENALI



→ First Bivouac (Horse, Helmuth 95)  
(approx)

Extra Terrestrial Brothers (Corn/Finch  
2001)



**"Kiss me where the sun don't shine"  
Mini Moonflower Above Kenton  
belaying on Pitch 13. Left Kenton  
climbing on pitch 10**



*The **Mini-Moonflower** -  
home of the warm-up  
route. 15 pitches up to  
Scottish 7, some warm up.*



**"The Moonflower" Mount Hunter  
Above Kenton on pitch 6  
Right Kenton on the third ice band**



Kenton Kool at 700m on  
*Extra-terrestrial Brothers*,  
the *Fathers and Sons Wall*, Denali.  
PHOTO: IAN PARNELL



**Extra-terrestrial Brothers, Denali**  
Above Kenton at 700m  
Below Kenton at 900m

