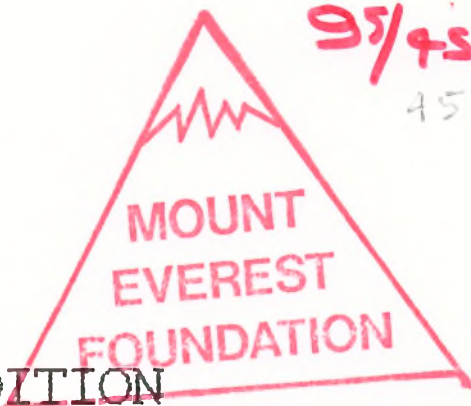


ac 26313

95/45
45



REPORT
MOUNT HUNTINGTON EXPEDITION
ALASKA 1995



+443

RESEARCH MATERIALS:

For articles and books referring to Huntington and Alaska in general see the Bibliography section (Appendix 1).

Many of the references can be studied at:

Alpine Club Library, 55-56 Charlotte Road, Hackney, London, EC2A 3QT. Tel : 0171-613 0755.

or:

Alan Rouse Memorial Library, The Sports Library & Information Centre, 67 Surrey Street, Sheffield S1. Tel: 01142-735929.

Books available from:

Standfords International Map Centre, 12 Long Acre, Convent Garden, London WC2. Tel: 0171-8361321.

Any of the books not available in Britain can be mail ordered from : Michael Chessler Books, P.O. Box 399, 26030 Highway 74, Kittredge, Colorado 80457, U.S.A. Tel: (303) 670-0093.

Many climbers travel up to Alaska via Seattle. If you're spending any time in Seattle, the comprehensive library at the "Mountaineers" Club is worth a visit, and can be used by non-members.

Mountaineers Headquarters, 300 Third Av. W., Seattle. Tel: 284-6310.

The Talkeetna Ranger Station (Talkeetna is the small town where the Air Taxi Services operate ski flights out to the Alaska Range.) has a comprehensive library of American Alpine Journals, various magazines and files of the excellent Bradford Washburn aerial photos covering the Alaska Range including Huntington. They issue a free booklet "Mountaineering: Denali National Park and Preserve", which contains a lot of relevant information on climbing in the Park.

Contact: Talkeetna Ranger Station, Denali National Park & Preserve, P.O. Box 588, Talkeetna, Alaska 99676.

Maps: The Bradford Washburn 1:50 000 map "Mount McKinley" is excellent, covering an area of approximately 20 square miles centred on the summit of Mount McKinley, and including Mount Huntington and it's approaches.

Also for a general overview is the "Map of Denali National Park and Preserve", scale 1:250 000.

All the maps can be studied at the Map Room :

Royal Geographical Society, 1/2 Kensington Gore, London SW7 2AR.
Tel : 0171-581 2057. Open Monday - Friday 10 a.m. - 5 p.m..

A Xerox machine is available at R.G.S. for photocopying (subject to copyright regulations), for which a service charge is made.

For map mail orders contact :

Alaska Distribution Section, U.S. Geological Survey, Federal Building, Box 12, 101 Twelfth Avenue, Fairbanks, Alaska 99701.
Tel : (907) 456-0244.

Determine your map needs from the 'Index to Topographic Maps of Alaska' from :

U.S. Geological Survey, Distribution Section, Federal Center, Denver, Colorado 80225.

Alaskan maps can be ordered in Britain through :

Standfords International Map Centre, 12 Long Acre, Convent Garden, London WC2. Tel : 071-8361321.

An excellent map atlas of the whole of the Alaskan state which covers all the mountain areas at 1 : 300,000 scale is 'The Alaskan Atlas and Gazetteer', published by Delorme Mapping, P.O. Box 298, Freeport, Maine, 04032.

Exceptional quality aerial photos of many of Alaska's mountains, including Huntington, were taken by Bradford Washburn. These are a great aid in planning as the clarity of the 8" x 10" black and white negatives is near perfect. Brad has indexed his thousands of negatives by giving each one a specific photo number. You must have the photo numbers of the negatives required to purchase them.

You need to write to Brad, with the description of the mountain/route, to get the appropriate photo number.

Bradford Washburn, The Museum of Science, Boston, MA 02114. Tel: 617-589 0229.

The negatives themselves can then be purchased from:

c/o Marge Heath, Alaska & Polar Region Department, U.A.F. Science Park, Fairbanks, AK 99775-1005. Tel: 907-474 6773.

Alaska aerial photos also from:

Dave Hirst, Photo Lab, Ice & Climate Project, U.S. Geological Survey, University of Puget Sound, Tacoma, WA 98416. Tel : 206 - 593 - 6516.

Other useful contacts for reference:

The Alaskan State Division of Tourism, Pouch E-402, Juneau, Alaska 99811. Tel: (907) 465 2010.

Alaska Alpine Club, 3641 Sandvik, Fairbanks, Alaska 99701.

PERMISSION:

No formal permission is necessary to climb Mount Huntington.

The only peaks within the Denali National Park that require permission are Mount McKinley and Mount Foraker.

It is worth checking in with the Rangers at the Talkeetna Ranger Station before you fly out to Huntington, as it is the Rangers that would be organising your rescue if so needed.

Contact:

Talkeetna Ranger Station, Denali National Park & Preserve, P.O. Box 588, Talkeetna, Alaska 99676.

FINANCE & FUND-RAISING:

See Appendix 2 for a summary of expedition accounts.

Initially we applied for various expedition grants.

Sent for grant application forms from:

W.H. Ruthven, Mount Everest Foundation, Gowrie, Cardwell Close, Warton, Preston, PR4 1SH. Tel: 01772-635346.

Completed application forms have to be submitted by 31 December in the year prior to your Alaska expedition.

The initial screening process for a grant from the British Mountaineering Council takes place as part of the MEF screening process.

Overseas Expedition Development Support, The Sports Council of Wales, Sophia Gardens, Cardiff, CF1 9SW. Tel: 01222-397571.

Completed application forms have to be submitted by 31st Dec., the year prior to your expedition.

For Nick Estcourt Award, contact: The Secretary, 24 Grange Road, Bowdon, Altrincham, Cheshire, WA14 3EE. Tel: Day 0161-928 6613, Evening 0161-928 2882.

From past experience we did not feel it was worth the effort to send out a multitude of letters to private companies asking for financial sponsorship. We just applied to the above grant giving organisations along with various climbing equipment and food companies for sponsorship in kind.

INSURANCE:

We took out expedition insurance through the BMC. Policy : Expeditions to Medium Range Mountains.

Contact: Insurance Department, B.M.C. Services Ltd, 177-179 Burton Road, West Didsbury, Manchester, M20 2BB. Tel: 0161-445 4747.

TRAVEL:

There are various air routes to Anchorage from London. The two we used were:

N.W. Airlines : London - Minneapolis - Anchorage.

B.A. : London - Seattle United Airlines : Seattle - Anchorage.

The weight allowance for checked baggage for flights to U.S.A. is 2 pieces of baggage, each up to 70 lbs. in weight, so can usually take out all your expedition supplies from Britain.

If you are making a connection through Seattle, it's worth stopping for a couple of days, if possible, before or after the trip. Seattle is one of N. America's Mountaineering centres, with a wealth of Alpine climbing in the nearby Cascade and Olympic Ranges. It is possible to totally kit out your expedition here, in Seattle's numerous climbing stores. Therm-a-rest mats and MSR stoves are a lot cheaper here than in the UK, and it's possible to hire snow-shoes or skis here.

Cheapest place to stay in Seattle is the 'Seattle International Hostel', 84 Union Street at Western Avenue. Tel : 622 - 5433. Only takes members of International Youth Hostel Federation (IYHF) in summer. Also Park Plaza Hotel, 4401 Aurora Avenue North. Tel : 632 - 2101.

Climbing shops in Seattle:

Recreational Equipment, Inc.
E. Pine St & 11th Ave.
Seattle.

North Face
1st Ave. & Spring St.
Seattle.

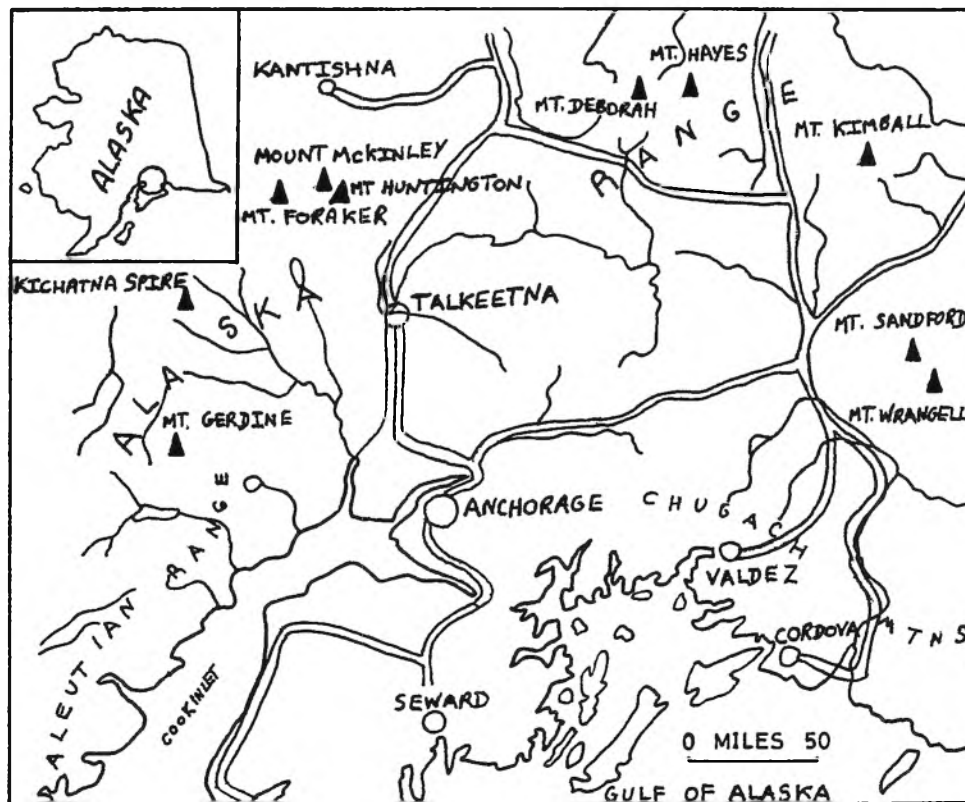
As with Seattle, you can also supply a whole expedition in Anchorage. Anchorage is an expensive place for accommodation, the cheapest is The Anchorage Youth Hostel, 700 H Street-No.2, Anchorage, AK 99501. Tel: 907-276 3635. Also, the Snow Shoe Inn, 826 K Street, Anchorage, AK 99501. Tel: 907-258 7669.

Climbing shops Anchorage:

Recreational Equipment, Inc.
2710 Spenard Road
Anchorage AK 99503.
Tel: 907-272 4565.

Alaska Mountaineering and Hiking
2633 Spenard Road
Anchorage AK 99503.
Tel: 907-272 1811.

Figure 2: Location of Alaska Range.



Daily trains (in the summer) run from Anchorage to Talkeetna, 112 miles. Contact: Alaska Railroad Corporation, PO Box 107500, Anchorage AK 99510. Tel: 907-265 2494.

Denali Overland is a Talkeetna company that runs a taxi shuttle service between Anchorage and Talkeetna for climbers. Contact: Denali Overland Transportation, PO Box 330, Talkeetna AK 99676. Tel: 907-733 2384.

Talkeetna is a small, old gold miners town about 40 miles south of the Alaska Range. There are a couple of food stores, a small climbing shop but no bank. Accommodation is usually in free bunkhouses owned by the Air-Taxi services in the town. In clear weather there is a fantastic view of the Alaska Range from the banks of the Susitna River at the northern end of the town.

There are 4 ski-plane Air-Taxi services in Talkeetna that will fly you out to the approach glaciers of Huntington. Talkeetna Air Taxi have the most experience of landing climbers at the spot we used on the East Fork of the Upper Tokositna Glacier.

Talkeetna Air Taxi Services:

Talkeetna Air Taxi
PO Box 73
Talkeetna
AK 99676.
Tel: 907-733 2218.

K2 Aviation
PO Box 545
Talkeetna
AK 99676.
Tel: 907-733 2291.

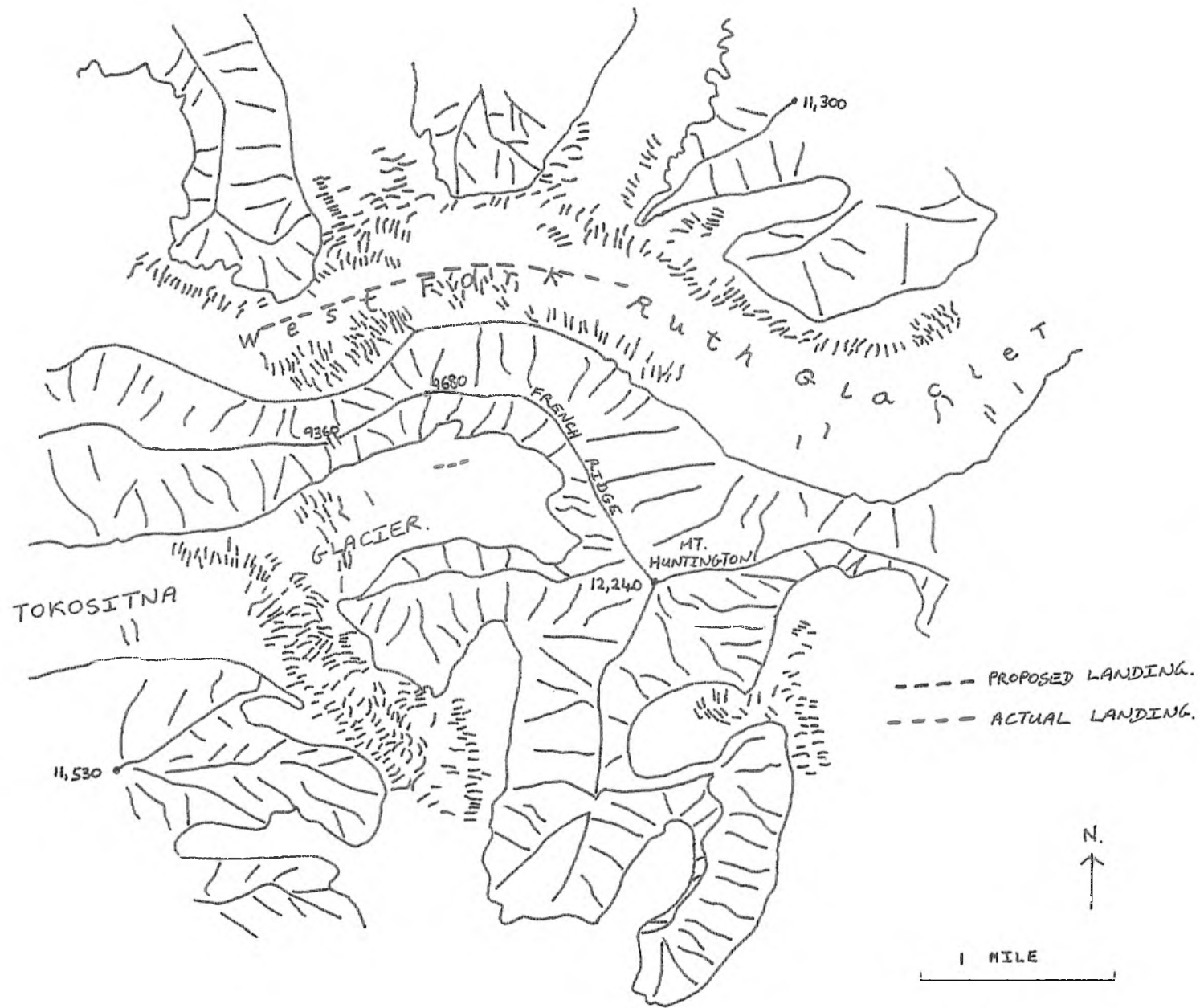
Doug Geeting Aviation
PO Box 42
Talkeetna
AK 99676.
Tel: 907-733 2366.

Hudson Air Service
PO Box 82
Talkeetna
AK 99676.
Tel: 907-733 2321.

Ski-flights out to Mount Huntington from Talkeetna take about 40 minutes. The normal landing spot for the French Ridge was at between 7,000 ft and 8,000 ft on the West Fork of the Ruth Glacier. From here parties would access the French Ridge from it's avalanche prone northern flank. We took the advice of Talkeetna Air Taxi and landed at 8,200 ft on the East Fork of the Upper Tokositna Glacier, on the south flank of the French Ridge (see Figure 3). Access to the French Ridge from this landing spot is straightforward and safer than the northern flank.

The East Fork of the Upper Tokositna Glacier lies within a tight bowl west of Huntington's summit. This bowl tends to hold the cloud and after bad weather has dissipated from the rest of the Range, the bowl can often remain clouded in ("socked in" as they say in Alaska). So it's wise to have enough spare food and fuel at base camp to wait out a possible delay on pick up.

Figure 3: Mount Huntington and its approaches.



FOOD AND FUEL:

There are certain restrictions on food items being imported into Alaska. Foods containing Beef and Pork are not allowed even if dehydrated, whereas foods with Chicken and Vegetarian products are allowed.

For a leaflet covering which food products you can import write to: United States Department of Agriculture, A.P.H.I.S. P.P.Q., 6505 Belcrest Road, Hyattsville, MD 20782, U.S.A..

'White Gas' or 'Blazo' is the standard fuel used in Alaska. You need an M.S.R. or Optimus type stove to use it. This fuel seems to burn very well at very low temperatures. Some fuels prove difficult as wax impurities in them separate out at low temperatures and tend to block fuel lines and jets. Usually calculate on using 1/4 - 1/2 pint of fuel per person per day. Can purchase your fuel requirements, in one gallon cans, from the Air-Taxi Service which you are flying into the mountains with.

ROUTE REPORT:

Basically the 3 mile long French Ridge is split into a number of distinct steps (see Photos 1,2 and 3).

First Step : Approximately 9800/9900 ft - 10400/10500 ft.

This is the technical crux of the route involving steep snow/ice. Near the base of the step is a 80-100 foot vertical to slightly overhanging rock tower. The first ascent party climbed a thin crack splitting the tower, but we climbed a very steep 70 degree ice gully, immediately north of the tower.

Second Step: Approx. 10400/10500 ft - 10900/11000 ft.

Has a steep 200 foot ice headwall.

Third Step : Approx. 10900/11000 ft - 11,200 ft.

Easier climbing but with the largest cornices on the Ridge.

Lacework : Approx. 11,200 ft - 11600 ft.

An area of very delicate, thin corniced ridge.

Fourth Step: Approx. 11600 ft - 11900 ft.

Some steep ice with a lot of exposure.

Above the Fourth Step, from 11900 ft to the summit, the ridge consists of an easy summit slope.

Photo 1: Mount Huntington from the N.W. (Bradford Washburn).

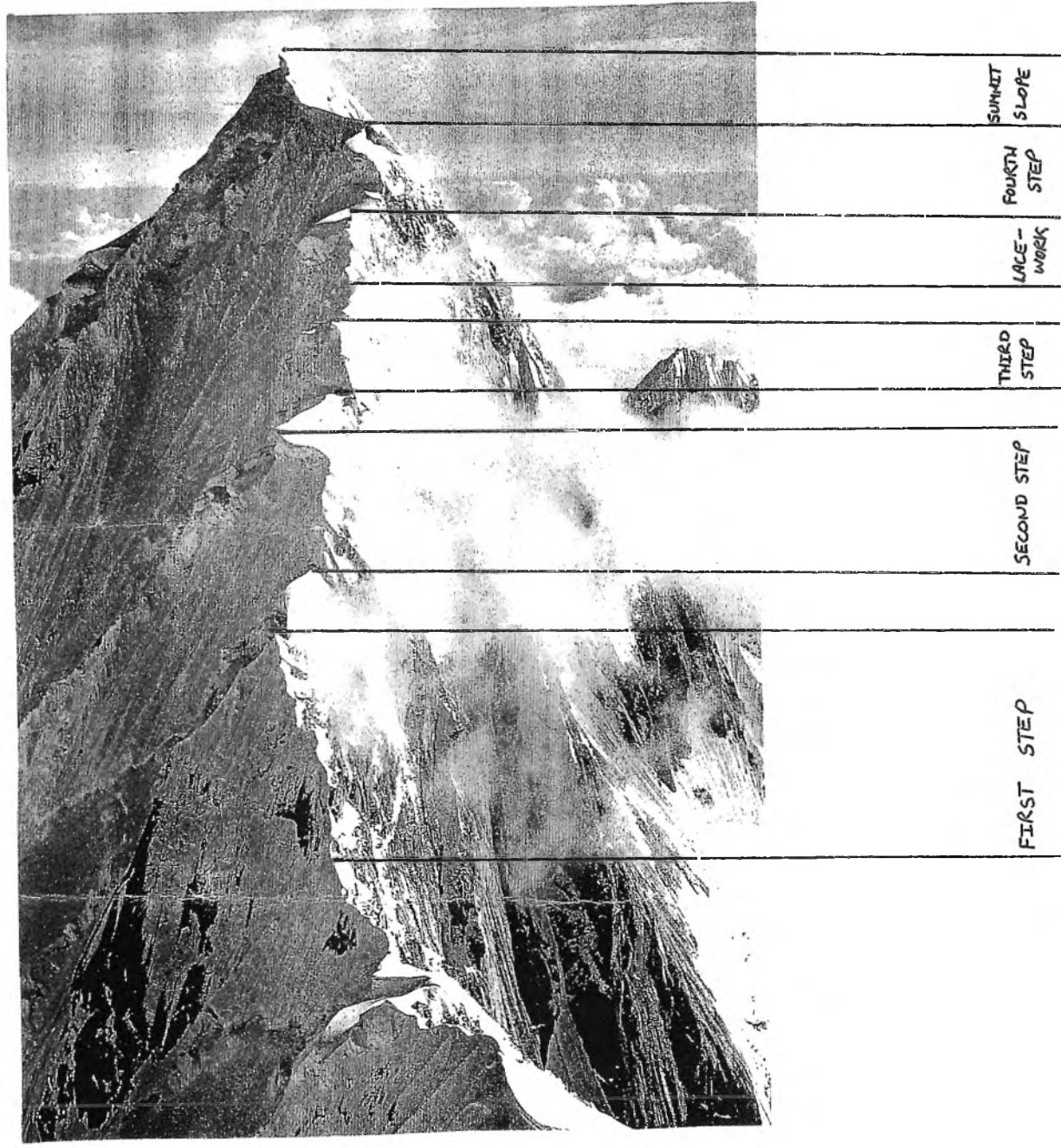


Photo 2: Mt. Huntington from the West (Bradford Washburn).

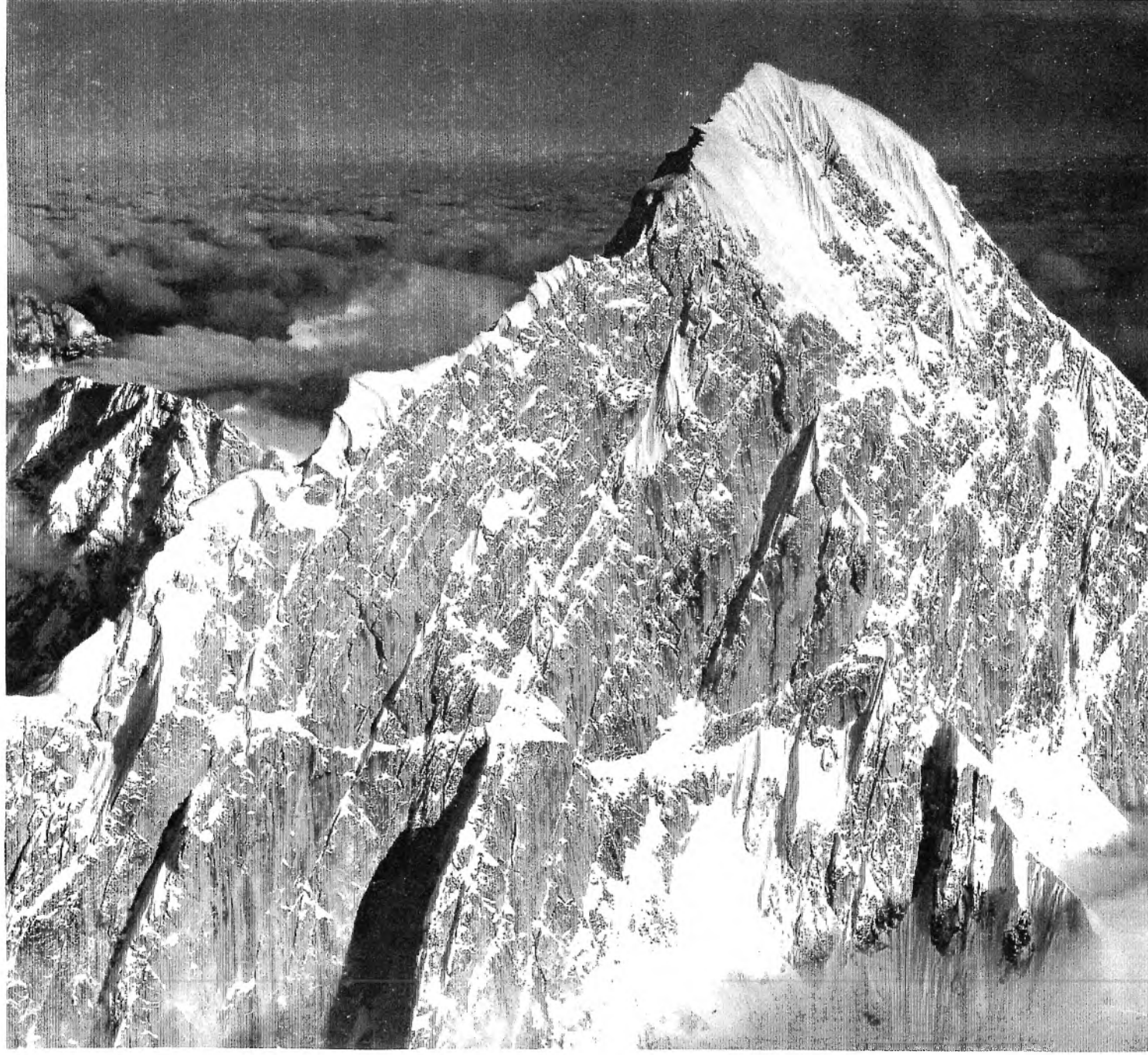


Photo 3: Mt. Huntington from the North (Bradford Washburn).



Our proposed camp sites were:

Camp I : 9400 ft - 9500 ft. At the col on the French Ridge.

Camp II : 10400 ft - 10500 ft. On a broad snow saddle at the base of the Second Step.

Temporary

Camp III: 10900 ft - 11000 ft. On the domed section of ridge, near the top of the 2nd Step.

Immediately S.E. of the summit of Huntington is a surprisingly large summit plateau, where a safe camp or snowhole can be placed in an emergency.

After our record breaking 12 day wait in Talkeetna, for good flying conditions, we landed at 8,200 ft on the East Fork of the Upper Tokositna Glacier, below the impressive West Face of Huntington. Base camp was set up at our landing spot at 8,200 ft (see Figure 3)

From our base camp we climbed a snow couloir (grade I/II Scottish), leading directly from the glacier up to a col at 9400 - 9500 ft on the French Ridge. This was the first time the French Ridge had been accessed from the South (Tokositna Glacier). On all previous attempts, parties had reached the Ridge from the avalanche prone north slopes, from the West Fork of the Ruth Glacier (see Figure 3).

We set up Camp I at the 9400/9500 foot Col, which is immediately east of Point 9680 ft on the Bradford Washburn map of Mt. McKinley. From our col camp we climbed 2/3 of a mile of undulating snow ridge becoming very thin and corniced, to camp II at approx. 9800/9900 ft at the base of the First Step in the ridge. From Camp II we climbed a very steep ice gully (about 100 ft) immediately north of the distinct rock tower near the base of the First Step. This section is apparently the technical crux of the whole ridge. We climbed to a high point of approx. 10200/10300 ft on the First Step, before turning back due to dangerous snow conditions.

EXPEDITION CHRONOLOGY

Expedition Dates : May 15 - June 12.

May 15 - 16 : Travel from UK to Talkeetna via Anchorage.

May 16 - 27 : Wait in Talkeetna for good flying weather, our proposed landing site on the Upper Tokositna Glacier was continuously clouded in.

May 27 : Fly Talkeetna to Upper Tokositna Glacier.

May 27 -
June 8 : Time at base camp and climbing French Ridge of Mt. Huntington.

June 8 : Fly Upper Tokositna Glacier to Talkeetna.

June 8 -12 : Dry out in Talkeetna and fly home.

EQUIPMENT:

Skis:

These are an essential piece of kit for any Alaskan expedition. You don't have to be an expert skier to use skis in Alaska, as usually you are just skinning up a glacier approach rather than skiing down a steep mountainside. Skis have a big advantage in safety over snowshoes. As on skis your weight is distributed over a greater area and you are far less likely to break through into crevasses, a major danger in Alaska. We used standard ski-mountaineering skis, Silvretta 404 bindings and our Asolo climbing boots.

Snowshoes:

These are also widely used in Alaska, the standard model used is the "Sherpa Snow Claw". There are various circumstances where snowshoes still have an advantage over skis, such as ascending in deep powder snow. Snowshoes can often be rented off the Ski Taxi Services in Talkeetna, or from either the 2 main climbing shops in Anchorage, or R.E.I. climbing store in Seattle (see the Travel section).

Sleds:

These are invaluable on any Alaskan expedition, even if it's just to transport all the gear from your landing spot to and from base camp. Useful for moving a lot of supplies up and down glacial approaches and a good makeshift stretcher to evacuate casualties. Sleds are available from the Air Taxi Services in Talkeetna.

Snow Shovels/Saws:

Essential for Huntington and any Alaskan expedition.

Snow Stakes:

Pickets as they are known in N. America. We took many of these of varying lengths to suit the extremely variable conditions of Alaskan snow.

Wands:

These thin 3-4 foot bamboo wands are available from the Air Taxi Services in Talkeetna. Brightly coloured Surveyor tape is normally tied to the tops of the wands for easier recognition. Useful for marking the route and caches, food is always buried in Alaska away from the ravenous Alaskan crows.

COMMUNICATIONS:

Radios are recommended but not required by the Park Authorities.

5 Watt CB radios are the ones most commonly used in this part of the Alaska Range. These are line of sight radios. Channel 19 is the most commonly used by the ski pilots.

The crystals in the Radios begin to go off frequency in severe cold so the radios and batteries must be warmed before transmission. Spare batteries should be carried.

CB radios can be rented from the Air-Taxi Services in Talkeetna. You usually have to reserve a rental on a radio in advance.

Radios can be purchased or rented from the following address also :

Alaska Mountaineering and Hiking, 2633 Spenard Road, Anchorage, Alaska 99503. Tel : (907) 272-1811.

On Huntington, we found there were numerous ski planes passing over us on the clear days, so that a message could be easily relayed to our ski pilot in Talkeetna.

Access Couloir above base camp.



Rock Band in initial couloir below Camp I.



Climbing between Camp I and Camp II.



Climbing above Camp I.



French Ridge at Approx 9600 ft, Mt. Hunter in Background.



French Ridge, looking N.W., at Approx. 9700 ft.



CONCLUSIONS

The French Ridge on Huntington proved to be the classic mountaineering route we had hoped for. Even though the route is not particularly technical, it is an extremely serious undertaking. This is due to it's 3 mile length, over which the route is rarely easy, normally heavily corniced and very exposed.

During our wait of 12 days in Talkeetna, before flying out to Huntington, the area around the mountain received approximately 7 foot of fresh snow. While we were on Huntington, the area received another 3-4 foot of fresh snow. The snow conditions were therefore extremely dangerous this season on the mountain and we turned back from our high point due to deep unconsolidated snow covering the steep surfaces we were crossing.

The route we used to access the French Ridge, from 8,200 ft on the East Fork of the Upper Tokositna Glacier, was straight forward and seemed a lot safer than the normal route of access from the West Fork of the Ruth Glacier. As the glacial bowl of the East Fork of the Upper Tokositna often holds the bad weather, come to Talkeetna with lots of spare time, patience and keep spare food in base camp for a delay in your final pick up.

Rock Tower at base of First Step.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

The Expedition would like to thank the following Sponsors and organisations that helped us.

We received financial grants from:

The Mount Everest Foundation
The Sports Council of Wales
The British Mountaineering Council

Also received equipment/supplies from the following:

BERGHAUS:

They supplied us with goretex jackets, salopettes, overboots, and expedition rucksacks.

NORTHCAPE:

Supplied Thermal underwear and Mittens.

JDS COMPONENTS:

Supplied a 4 man survival shelter and 1 Tactyl/fibre-pile smock to test.

RAB DOWN EQUIPMENT:

Supplied expedition Down Mitts and Windsuit.

LLEWELYN WYNNE:

Supplied Wynnster freeze dried meals.

OUTDOOR PANTRY:

Supplied dehydrated meals.

MARS:

Supplied chocolate bars.

APPENDIX 1: BIBLIOGRAPHY.

1. 'Mount Huntington', Lionel Terray, 1965, American Alpine Journal.
2. 'The Conquest of Mount Huntington', Lionel Terray, 1964/65, Mountain World, The Swiss Foundation for Alpine Research.
3. 'Fool's Luck: Mount Huntington an Alaskan Classic', Lance Leslie, No. 129 Dec 91/Jan 92, 'Climbing' magazine. Account of an alpine style ascent of the French Ridge with excellent photos.
4. 'Mount Huntington, Second Ascent of Northwest Ridge.', Ed Newille, 1977, American Alpine Journal.
5. 'Wager with the Wind : The Don Sheldon Story', James Greiner 1982.
Sheldon invented the techniques of glacier landing and mountain flying that have made the Alaskan mountains easily accessible. Also section on the first ascent of Huntington with photos.
6. The Early Climbs : Deborah and the Mountain of my Fear', David Roberts, 1991, The Mountaineers. Includes classic account of first ascent of Harvard Route on Huntington's difficult West Face.
7. 'Climbing in North America', Chris Jones, 1976, Diadem Books Ltd. Excellent history of N. American climbing, including account of first ascent of Huntington and fine pictures of the ridge.

For General Information :

BMC Alaska Factsheet, Dean James. Comprehensive factsheet covering all of Alaska and Canadian Yukon, available from BMC or Dean James, 2 Milbourne Terrace, Merthyr Tydfil, Mid Glam CF47 OUG.

'Organisation of an Alaskan Expedition', Boyd Everett, 1984. Covering the Alaska Range, Wrangells, Chugach and St. Elias Mountains.

'Mountaineering: Denali National Park and Preserve', 1994, Written by the Mountaineering Rangers of Denali National Park, a booklet which contains a lot of relevant information on climbing in the Park. Obtain free from: Talkeetna Ranger Station, Denali National Park & Preserve, P.O. Box 588, Talkeetna, Alaska 99676.

'Mt. McKinley Climber's Handbook', 1984, Glen Randall, Genet Expeditions.

'Alaska's Mountain Ranges', George Wuerthner, 1988, American Geographic Publishing, Helena, MT, USA.

'Alaska's Parklands', Nancy Lange Simmerman, 1991, The Mountaineers. General information guidebook to all Alaska's parks.

'Surviving Denali : A Study of Accidents on Mount McKinley 1910 - 1982', Jonathan Waterman, American Alpine Club.

'Mountain Sickness : Prevention, Recognition and Treatment', Peter Hakett M.D., 1980, American Alpine Journal. Mountain Sickness made simple and easily understandable.

'Medicine for Mountaineering', J.A. Wilkerson M.D., 1985, The Mountaineers.

'Hypothermia, Frostbite and other Cold Injuries', J.A. Wilkerson M.D., 1986, The Mountaineers.

APPENDIX 2: EXPEDITION ACCOUNTS:

The following accounts are based on the expenses incurred by the 5 British climbers on the expedition. The 6th Member, Jim Bouchard a local climber from Alaska, joined up at the last minute because one of our members did not turn up. The expedition paid for Jim's ski-flight out to Huntington.

<u>Expenditure</u>			<u>Income</u>	
		(£)		(£)
U.K. Travel	:	250	M.E.F.	: 900
Overseas Travel	:	3200	B.M.C.	: 900
Ski Flights (includes recky flight and radio hire)	:	1190	Sports Council of Wales.	: 500
Accommodation & Food	:	750		
Expedition Equipment	:	500		
Insurance	:	750		
Reports	:	100		
Photocopy	:	50		
TOTAL Expenditure	:	6790	TOTAL Income	: 2300
BALANCE	:			£4490
Expedition Cost per Person	:			£898