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99/13



REPORT MEF REF 99/13.

MOUNT HUNTER 4442 METERS ALASKA.
ATTEMPT UPON A NEW ROUTE ON THE NORTH BUTTRESS
30 MAY TO 30 JUNE 1999. ALPINE STYLE AND SOLO.

AS STATED IN MY APPLICATION FOR A GRANT F. MARSIGNY AND MYSELF INTENDED TO CLIMB ON THE EAST SIDE OF THE FACE DOING A ROUTE OF A BIG WALL CHARACTER TAKING ALONG A PORTALEDGE FIXED ROPE ETC. AND BEING ON THE FACE FOR A WEEK OR MORE. FOLLOWING AN ATTEMPT THE YEAR BEFORE, A YEAR WHEN WE DIDNT EVEN TOUCH THE WALL AS IT SNOWED NEARLY CONSTANTLY STILL WE HAD AMPLE OPPORTUNITY TO STUDY THE POSSIBILITIES FOR NEW CLIMBS THERE .

WE DECIDED UPON RETURNING, LEAVING GEAR STORED THERE WITH OUR PILOT PAUL RODERICK OF TALKEETNA AIR TAXI. OUR ORIGINAL IDEA WAS TO GO AT THE BEGINNING OF MAY BUT DUE TO LACK OF FUNDS (THE GRANT DIDNT COME THROUGH UNTIL QUITE LATE) AND FRANCOIS' HESITATION WE FINISHED BY LEAVING AT THE END OF MAY. A SHAME AS WE APPARENTLY MISSED A COUPLE OF WEEKS GOOD WEATHER.

LEAVING EUROPE ON THE 27 MAY WE HAD A COUPLE OF DAYS IN ANCHORAGE BUYING FOOD AND LAST MINUTE BITS OF KIT LIKE A REPLACEMENT STOVE ETC. WE FIXED UP WITH A LOCAL SHUTTLE COMPANY TO TAKE US TO THE VILLAGE OF TALKEETNA A 120 MILES OR SO TO THE NORTH. THERE WE RE PACKED GEAR AND HAD ARRANGED TO FLY INTO THE PARK WHEN FRANCOIS CALLING HOME ONE LAST TIME. ANNOUNCED HIS DOUBTS. THINGS WERENT GO ING WELL ON THE FAMILY FRONT AND HE HAD HIS DOUBTS BASED ON WHAT WE HAD EXPERIENCED THE YEAR BEFORE AS TO WETHER IT WAS WORTH HIM GOING IN AT ALL . HE KNEW THAT ID TALKED ABOUT GOING ALONE WHEN BEFORE LEAVING HE HAD WAVERED. I STATED THAT IF HE WASNT MOTIVATED THERE REALLY WASNT MUCH POINT IN HIM THINKING ABOUT CLIMBING. I AM NOT EASILY PUT OFF AN OBJECTIVE AND SECRETLY RELISHED THE IDEA OF SOLOING THIS MOUNTAIN. SO HE LEFT AND I FLEW IN TO THE S.E. FORK OF THE KAHILTNA GLACIER ON THE 30 MAY.

THERE WAS NO POINT ME CARRYING ON THE ORIGINAL PLAN. THAT WOULD BE TO SLOW A CLIMB ALONE, TOO HARD AND TOO MUCH WORK. BASED UPON OUR LOOKING FOR A CLIMB THE YEAR BEFORE ID FOUND THE PERFECT ONE FOR ME. ON THE RIGHT OF THE FACE NEAR THE CLIMB "DEPRIVATION" 1994, WAS ANOTHER LINE MORE DIRECT AND THE QUICKEST WAY UP THE BUTTRESS FOR ME. THREE ROCK BANDS SPLIT BY TWO SNOW SLOPES GAVE ACCESS TO THE UPPER PART OF THE FACE WHERE IT JOINED THE MOONFLOWER ROUTE AND THE WAY TO THE SUMMIT. I COULD DESCEND THE RIB OF THE MOON/ FLOWER AS DUE TO THE ODD ASCENT SINCE IT WAS DONE IN '83 AND VARIOUS ATTEMPTS IT WAS AT LEAST PARTIALLY EQUIPED FOR A DESCENT. OTHER THAN THAT THE MT. IS USUALLY DESCENDED VIA THE WEST RIDGE '55. ROUTE BUT BEING DOUBLE CORNICED, AVALANCHE PRONE AND CREVASSED - NOT SUCH A GOOD IDEA ON MY OWN.

APART FROM THAT THERE WAS THE NORTH EAST RIDGE POSSIBLY THE FAST EST WAY OF THE NORTH SUMMIT OF HUNTER BUT AGAIN PRONE TO FORMING WIND SLAB. THE OPTIONS WHERE THERE AT LEAST. I JUST HAD TO GET MY SELF IN TO POSITION NOW.

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AS SEEN FROM THE AIR THE FACE LOOKED IN GREAT CONDITION. I SKIED UP TO GET A CLOSER LOOK SAW THAT THE HIDDEN GULLY UP ON THE 3RD BAND WAS THERE AND NOW ONLY HAD TO WAIT FOR MY CLIMBING GEAR TO ARRIVE WITH ONE OF THE OTHER FLIGHTS. I WAS LUCKY, AND AS SOON AS I COULD PACKED UP A SLEDGE LOAD OF STUFF TO TAKE UP AND CACHE ON THE UPPER GLACIER, WELL WANDERED WITH AN AVALANCHE PROBE AS THE POSSIBILITY OF LOOSING IT ALL (IF IT REALLY SNOWS) EXISTS. IT DID SNOW BUT NOT SO MUCH AND THE NEXT DAY I WATCHED THE FACE CLEAR OF SNOW AND THAT NIGHT SET OFF TO PICK UP MY CACHE AND CARRY ON TO ESTABLISH MY ADVANCE BASE AT THE FOOT OF THE MOONFLOWER BUTTRESS. NOT TOO NEAR THOUGH IN CASE ANYTHING CAME OFF THE FACE THEN AGAIN NOT TOO FAR AWAY EITHER AS ON BOTH SIDES AVALANCHES ROAR DOWN PARTICULARLY THE RIGHT SIDE OUT OF THE COULOIR AND FROM REALLY HIGH UP TO. I'VE SEEN STUFF COME DOWN FROM 2000 METERS UP SERACS UNDER THE SUMMIT-AND SWEEP ACROSS THE GLACIER AND GO UP THE OPPOSITE MOUNTAIN. I DUG A BIG PIT PUT THE TENT IN IT AND THEN BUILT A BIG ANTI AVALANCHE WALL AROUND THE SITE. I WAS DUSTED A LOT WHILST LIVING HERE. EVEN THE APPROACH IS THREATENED AND I WAS COVERED IN SNOW FROM THE BLAST EVEN ON THE ROUTE. THE NEXT DAY I CARRIED GEAR TO THE BERGSCHRUND PUTTING TRACKS TOO FOR AN ATTEMPT THE NEXT DAY AS THE WEATHER SEEMED TO BE HOLDING. AS WELL I DUG INTO THE VERTICAL WALL OF SNOW TO REMOVE THE LOOSE STUFF AND GET TO ICE THIS WAY IT WOULD FREEZE SO THAT I COULD CLIMB IT. THE NIGHT WAS CLEAR, THE SCHRUND WENT WITH A BIT OF AN EFFORT BUT THE SLOPE ABOVE IT WAS COVERED WITH A SORT OF BAD CRUST OF RE-FROZEN SNOW THAT HAD TO BE SCRAPED AWAY. SLOW AND DANGEROUS. I OPTED TO TRAVERSE THEN CLIMB UP TOWARDS THE START OF "DEPRIVATION" INSTEAD OF CONTINUING AROUND THE CORNER TO PICK UP AN EASIER LINE. AT LEAST I COULD START CLIMBING PROPERLY AND GET THE SAC OFF MY BACK. I HAD BIVVY GEAR FOOD AND GAS FOR ABOUT FIVE OR SIX DAYS. AS I WOULD BE SELF BELAYING I HAD A 55 METER 10 MM ROPE, A "GRIGRI" DEVICE I HAD DOCTORED FOR ATTACHING TO A CHEST HARNESS FOR MY BELAY SYSTEM. AS WELL I HAD A 55 METER 8 MM ROPE FOR THE SAC. THIS WITH A BIG RACK OF GEAR PITONS, NUTS, CAMALOTS, SCREWS PLUS LOTS OF SLINGS FOR RETREATING MEANT I WAS VERY HEAVY. TO THE RIGHT OF THE ROUTE "DEPRIVATION" IS AN OTHER SYSTEM OF ICE RUNNELS AND MIXED GROUND THAT LEADS TO A SLOPE AND ANOTHER GROOVE TO GET OFF A 1ST BAND AND ONTO THE SNOWFIELD ABOVE. I CLIMBED UP TO THE GROOVE VIA GRADE 6 ICE AND A BIT OF AID (A1/2) AND AS THINGS HAD WARMED UP A BIT TOO MUCH I FIXED OUT LEFT FROM A SHELTERED BIVVY SPOT. THE FACE WAS STILL SHEDDING SNOW FROM THE LAST STORM. ALL SORTS OF BLOCKS OF ICE WERE COMING DOWN MY LINE. STILL NEXT MORNING IT WAS QUITE OVERHANGING AID (A1) LED TO A THIN ICE AND LOOSE BLOCK GULLY WHICH IN TURN LED TO A ROTTEN RED CORNER AND A SENSATIONAL A1 VERTICAL WALL. HERE I GOT BLASTED BY A POWDER AVALANCHE COMING DOWN THE RIGHT HAND COULOIR. AFTER THIS CAME THE 1ST SNOW FIELD. KICKING STEPS UP THIS WAS TIRING AND DANGEROUS-NO SECURITY JUST BALANCE. SOME 200 METERS LATER I WAS BACK ON ROCK THEN ICE AND FINALLY FINISHED UP AN AWKWARD AI AND FREE CORNER. AT THIS POINT I COULD TRAVERSE TO MORE SNOW AND GAIN AN HIDDEN ICE GULLY. PUSHING ON I REACHED THE WALL BELOW THE 2ND SNOW FIELD AND CALLED IT A DAY. I HACKED OUT A BAD LEDGE AND SLEPT BADLY AS A RESULT. SOME CLOUDS NEXT MORNING HAD ME THINKING ABOUT MY POSITION 1/2 WAY UP THE WALL BUT I CARRIED ON, FEELING A WAY UP THROUGH THE ICE AND LOOKING FOR A WAY ONTO THE SNOW ABOVE. BRITTLE ICE GOT ME THERE AND NOW I COULD SEE THE 3RD ROCK BAND AND SOME WHERE IN THERE WAS MY GULLY FULL OF ICE AND THE KEY TO THE UPPER PART OF THE FACE. OUT TO MY RIGHT WENT THE BACKS/TWIGHT ROUTE "DEPRIVATION" THEY CUT ACROSS THE SNOW SLOPE TO JOIN EASY RAMPS? LEADING BACK LEFT TOWARDS THE MOONFLOWER CLIMB. FOR ME THAT COULD BE AN OPTION. I SET OFF UP THE SNOW KICKING INTO FIRM TOO FIRM SNOW. WHAT WAS

IT? SOMETHING WASNT RIGHT . THE SNOW I WAS ON, WINDSLAB! I SLOWLY DOWN CLIMBED BACK TO THE ROCKS AND THEN DUG INTO PACK, ALL THE WAY TO THE UNDER LYING LAYER AND THERE I SAW AN AIR SPACE OF ABOUT 2 INCHES . ICAST AROUND FOR AN OTHER ROUTE BUT NOTHING APPEARED. SO NEAR I ESTIMATED THAT I HAD 2 PITCHES OF HARD CLIMBING TO CLEAR THE ROCK THEN IT WAS STAIGHT FORWARD SNOW AND MIXED TO THE TOP. DOWN I WENT ! AFTER 3 DAYS HARD WORK, AS HARD AS ANY ID DONE. ITS JUST NOT FAIR I THOUGHT BUT THEN AGAIN I COULD TRY AGAIN . THIS WAS ONLY THE END OF THE FIRST WEEK I HAD A MONTH. LOTS OF RAPPELS FOLLOWED SOME ON V THREADS IN THE ICE . IN THE BANDS OF ROCK NUTS, PITONS THEN BACK TO ICE THREADS IN THE SPINDRIFT RUNNELS WHERE THE SNOW CRUST HAD BEEN CLEARED OFF. A FINAL RAPP OFF A DODGY SNOW MUSHROOM SAW ME OVER THE SCHRUND AS THE FACE STARTED TO SHED DEBRIS. THE TEMPERATURE HAD REALLY GONE UP DOWN HERE AT GLACIER LEVEL THERE WAS A SORT OF INVERSION. SOAKED, THE GEAR IN TATTERS I SKIED OFF TO BASE CAMP BEFORE THE STATE OF THE GLACIER BECAME ANY WORSE.

A WEEK WENT BY AS STORMS CAME THROUGH THE FACE CLEARED AND THE TEMPERATURES RETURNED TO COOLER, MORE RESONABLE ONES. AS IT WAS NOW MUCH WARMER I DECIDED TO DISPENSE WITH A SLEEPING BAG TAKING JUST A BIVVY BAG AND DOWN JACKET. THE FOOD AND GAS I REDUCED TO 3 DAYS WORTH AND ABANDONED THE PLAN OF SELF BELAYING. IKNEW THE PITCHES, WOULD AVOID THE FIRST AND HARDEST AS THEY HAD FALLEN DOWN IN ANY CASE. THAT LEFT THE UNKOWN 3RD BAND. 2 GOOD PITCHES AND I COULD GET ROUND THE DANGEROUS SLOPE VIA A RUNNEL CREATED BY THE AVALANCHES. I HAD TO RE CLIMB THE SCHRUND BY ANOTHER WAY BUT THE SLOPE ABOVE WAS A LOT BETTER AND I FOLLOWED IT ROUND TO THE RIGHT AND FOUND EASIER SNOW BANDS TO CLIMB. ICLIMBED THE AID USING LOTS OF LONG SLINGS ATTACHED TO MULTIPLE POINTS, THE ICE I FREE SOLOED AND REACHED THE 2ND ROCK WALL EARLY IN THE AFTER NOON. IT WAS HOT ALREADY SO I FOUND A GOOD SAFE SPOT TO CHOP OUT A LEDGE AND MADE MY SELF COMFORTABLE. IT SEEMED I COULD DO THE 2ND AND 3RD ROCK BANDS IN THE NIGHT AND THEN SEE ABOUT TOPPING OUT DURING THE DAY. IT MAY WELL HAVE WORKED OUT LIKE THAT TO. STILL I DIDNT PLAN ON CLOUDS MASSING OVER TO THE SOUTH AND EAST THEN COMING MY WAY AND FINALLY UNLEASHING A MASS OF SNOW ON TOP OF MY MOUNTAIN. I FROZE ALL NIGHT INSTEAD OF CLIMBING AND AS THINGS LET UP A BIT AT ABOUT 5.00 AM DECIDED TO BAIL OUT WHILST I COULD AND BEFORE EVERY THING STARTED TO FALL OFF AGAIN. IT WASNT EASY ALL MY GEAR WAS FROZEN STIFF AND RAPPELLING WAS A TRICKY BUSINESS STILL I COULD COUNT ON FINDING MY OLD ANCHORS. ONCE AGAIN AS I REACHED THE SAFETY OF THE GLACIER THE WHOLE LOT BEGAN TO PEEL OFF THE WALL.

THERE FOLLOWED A PERIOD OF LESS STABLE WEATHER INTERSPERSED WITH GOOD CLEAR DAYS BUT RARELY COLD ENOUGH TO STABILISE THE FACE AFTER THE STORMS. I GOT INTO THE HABIT OF SKIING UP THE GLACIER TO PROBE FOR THE EVER CHANGING BRIDGES OVER CREVASSES AND RE MARK THEM. EVERY TIME I WENT UP TO CLIMB, BIG NIGHT LONG STORMS PUT DOWN TOO MUCH TO CONSIDER TRYING AGAIN. WITH THE END OF JUNE I REALISED MY CHANCES WERE FINISHED AND CLEARED MY A.B.C. AND ALL MARKER WANDS READY TO LEAVE. THE NIGHT BEFORE FLYING OUT FROM THE BASE CAMP IT DID UNEXPECTEDLY GET COLD AGAIN. THE WEATHER DID LOOK GOOD BUT I WAS ALREADY LEAVING. LIFE BACK HOME BECKONED.

TO SUM UP I SHOULD HAVE BEEN THERE EARLIER, AS PLANNED IN EARLY MAY. AT THESE LOW ALTITUDES WITH THE LONG SUNLIGHT HOURS IT MAKES FOR POSSIBILITIES OF CLIMBING LIGHTER AND FASTER AS OPPOSED TO DURING THE COLDER PERIODS BUT THEN AGAIN CONDITIONS DETERIORATE RAPIDLY. GLACIER TRAVEL BECOMES MORE RISKY AND ESPECIALLY ALONE, IS NOT REALLY REASONABLE. FOR HUNTER ITS DANGEROUS JUST GETTING TO THE FOOT OF THE CLIMB. THE AVALANCHE RISK IS HIGH. THE QUALITY OF THE CLIMBING IS ALSO HIGH. I PUSHED MY PERSONAL LIMIT OF SOLOING AND LEVEL OF COMMITMENT AND DID ENOUGH CLIMBING TO PLEASE ME.

FINANCIAL DETAILS.

AS FRANCOIS DIDNT CONTINUE BEYOND TALKEETNA JOINT EXPENES ARE ONLY TO TALKEETNA.

AS THE CHEAPEST OPTION FOR ACCOMMADATION IN ANCHORAGE IS THE YOUTH HOSTEL AND IT WAS FULLY BOOKED WE WERE OBLIGED TO STAY IN AN HOTEL.

EXTRA EXPENSES WERE INCURRED DUE TO THE NECCESSITY OF BUYING ITEMS OF EQUIPMENT WE HAD COUNTED UPON GETTING FREE.

GENEVA TO ANCHORAGE	1200 FRANCS.
CHAMONIX TO GENEVA	600 FRANCS.
ACCOMADATION ANCHORAGE	2170 DOLLARS.
FOOD AND EQUIPMENT	500 DOLLARS.
SHUTTLE TO TALKEETNA	
SHUTTLE TO ANCHORAGE	130 DOLLARS.
PLUS OTHER TRANSPORT.	
FLIGHT TO GLACIER	
INCLUDING STOVE FUEL AND	
SLEDGE HIRE	278 DOLLARS.
MISCELLANEOUS	150 DOLLARS.
TOTAL IN POUNDS STERLING	2241 POUNDS.

SPONSORS FOR EQUIPEMENT INCLUDED.

MOUNTAIN EQUIPEMENT. SCARPA. DMM. BLACK DIAMOND. MACPAC. MARLOW ROPES.

FINANCIAL SUPPORT ALMOST WHOLELY THE M.E.F. AND THE B.M.C. WITH PERSONAL CONTRIBUTIONS.