THE PARACHUTE BRIGADE ALASKA EXPEDITION, 1956

By CAPTAIN E. J. E. MILLS, R.A.S.C.

THE idea of an expedition to Alaska came to me early in 1955. I was seeking an objective for a small expedition to one of the little-known mountain regions. An afternoon at the library of the Royal Geographical Society convinced me that the area of the Alaska Range dominated by Mount McKinley, 20,300 ft., fulfilled all my requirements. It had not been visited by any British expedition, arctic conditions prevailed and vast glaciers flowed through the mountains. Lack of porters, the use of air supply and the enormous distance from Britain posed unique problems. The challenge was irresistible.

The planning was to prove complicated and difficult and took place over twelve months. There was very little practical information in Britain and to obtain this I had to write to climbers and authorities in America. I decided on a party of four, and three other members of the Brigade Mountaineering Club were selected on the basis of experience and the ability to put up £60 towards the cost. They were Captain Donald Kinloch, R.A.M.C., and 2nd Lieutenant Derek Pritchard, both of 3rd Parachute Battalion, and Sergeant K. Stanley of the Airborne Forces Depot. The problem of the expense of the 16,000 miles journey I tried to overcome by seeking assistance from the Royal Canadian Air Force for a flight across the Atlantic, and this proposal was put to the Canadians by the War Office. However, all hopes of an expedition in 1955 were destroyed when in August the R.C.A.F. replied saying that they could not carry us at the time required. We still had, however, backing from the War Office, the support of the C.I.G.S. (who agreed at the request of the Canadians that the expedition could be on duty to fly in their aircraft) and my own Brigade Commander, Brigadier Gordon. It was therefore decided to plan the expedition for 1956 and a second request was put to the Canadians. The scope of the expedition work was widened and the programme laid down was as follows :

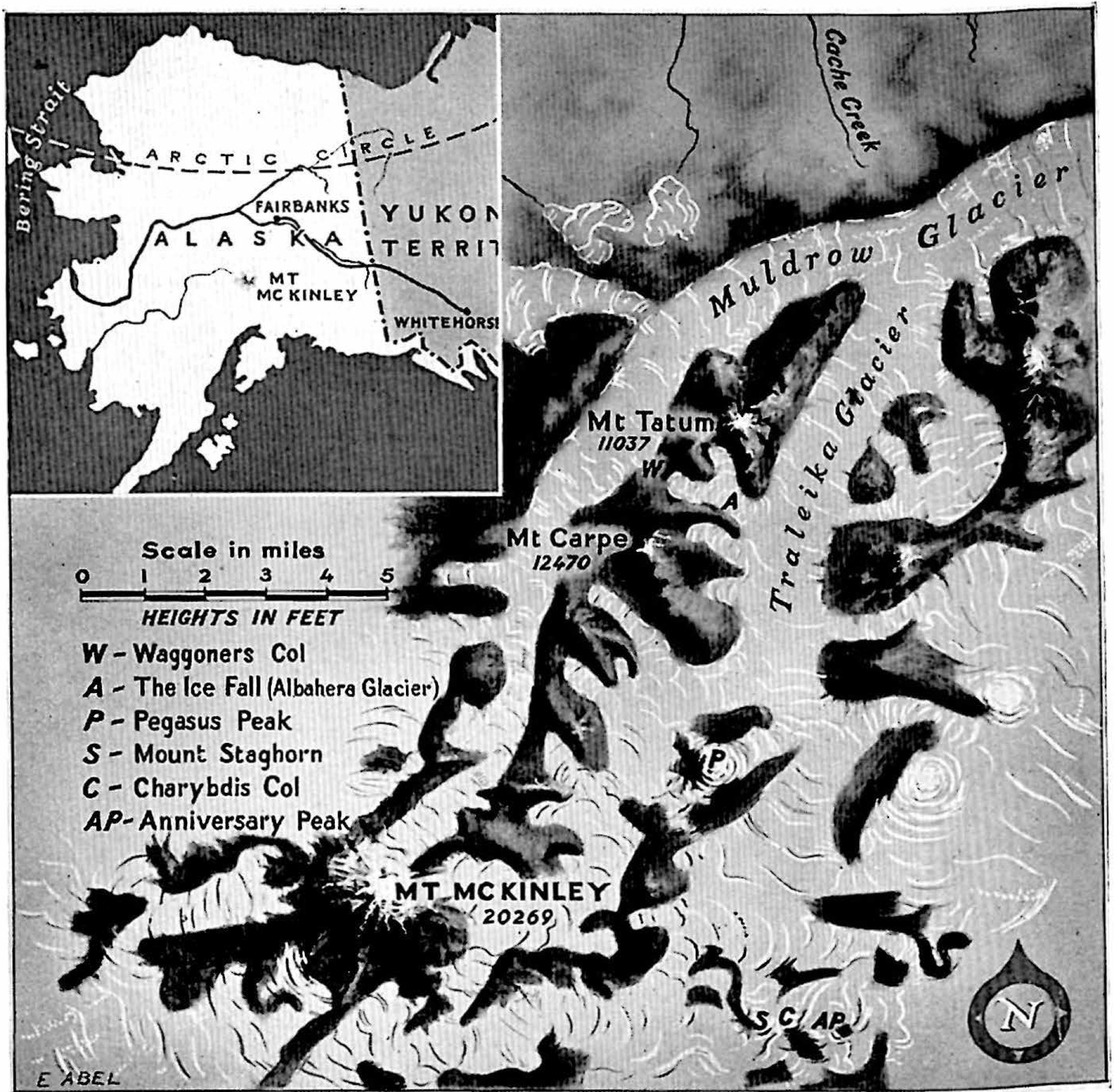
1. To explore the Traleika Glacier system and to attempt unclimbed peaks around it.
2. To carry out medical and physiological research under the advice of the Medical Research Council.
3. To make a geological collection.
4. To test and report on rations and equipment.
5. To make meteorological observations.
6. To make a film of the expedition.

Captain Warwick Deacock of 2nd Parachute Battalion came in as second-in-command of the expedition, in place of Sergeant Stanley, who was now unable to accompany us, and the planning continued. The American authorities insisted that the expedition should have adequate rescue cover ; fortunately, through the enthusiastic work of Squadron-Leaders Daly and Cropper of the Royal Air Force, who were on the staff of Alaskan Air Command, this was arranged. The U.S.A.F. also generously agreed to fly in the party and equipment as close to the glaciers as possible, as well as to fly us out.

For the second time the R.C.A.F. was unable to assist us and despite requests made to the other services at a very high level no more help was forthcoming. The organisation of the expedition was further complicated by the fact that in January 1956 I was posted to 108 Company R.A.S.C. in Germany, and a few days later Donald Kinloch went to Cyprus with the 3rd Parachute Battalion. Derek Pritchard had left the Army three months before, and was studying art in London, while Warwick Deacock was still in Aldershot recovering from injuries received from a 100-ft. fall when climbing in Wales. We now had to find enough money to finance the whole expedition. By March, however, having enlisted the services of a literary agent, a contract had been arranged for a book and serial rights obtained. We had also received tremendous help in getting our cine-film. This, with a grant-in-aid from the Everest Trust and increased contributions from the members, brought our funds up to the required amount of £1,300. Berths were booked for the Atlantic crossing, and travel arrangements completed.

We met in Aldershot on April 26. At this late stage the Treasury suddenly decided that we could not go on duty and would receive pay for only six weeks. Fortunately, General Bray, the Director of Land Air Warfare, took up our case with tremendous enthusiasm and energy, and the Treasury compromised by giving us special paid leave of absence for the whole period. At the same time British officialdom in Canada asked for War Office assurance that we would not require help in Canada and this was given. After these ultimate shocks the remaining few days were spent in a frenzy of last-minute preparations. At one time one member was in North Wales testing equipment, one in Somerset collecting rations, another in London receiving instruction on cine-photography and myself in Aldershot. Finally, at two o'clock on the morning of May 5, we finished packing and at eight o'clock were on the quay at Southampton. Over 400 letters lay in the files as eloquent evidence of the effort required to achieve this day.

We travelled third-class in a small cabin low down in the ship with a temperature like that of an oven. We lived in a cosmopolitan atmosphere, the ship was Greek owned, with a German crew, registered in Panama and the passengers were mostly central European emigrants.



MAP OF THE MOUNT MCKINLEY DISTRICT.
(By courtesy of the Editor, British Army Review.)

Our days were taken up with conferences on our scientific programme; we also scripted the film and talked interminably about climbing techniques and the Alaskan mountains. On deck we practised our crevasse rescue methods, did more step tests and tried to keep fit. So the days passed and we arrived at Montreal on the 16th. The five-day journey from Montreal to Dawson Creek was made by train. We could not afford sleepers and at nights Donald dispensed sleeping pills to give us oblivion for at least eight hours. We learned that these drugs and a little whisky had the same effect as several large drinks, so it was in a mellow state that we fell asleep at nights as the train rolled on acoss the prairie. From Dawson Creek we flew to Whitehorse ; a town of log cabins and concrete buildings, with the atmosphere of the Klondike days ; then on to Fairbanks to land in the pale glow of the Northern night. When we left the aircraft we were met by Squadron-Leader Cropper and a battery of photographers and then driven to Ladd Air Force base. In the few days at Ladd we met all the people who were to assist us, and with them planned the fly in. The whole business of being projected into the mountains by air seemed to us like the start of an airborne operation rather than an expedition. We were given a radio to speak to the pilot of the aircraft which was to fly over us twice a week. Teams of para-medics would stand by all the time we were in the mountains and mail and supply drops would also be part of the plan. Flights in two jet fighters were also arranged so that we could get an advance view of the mountains.

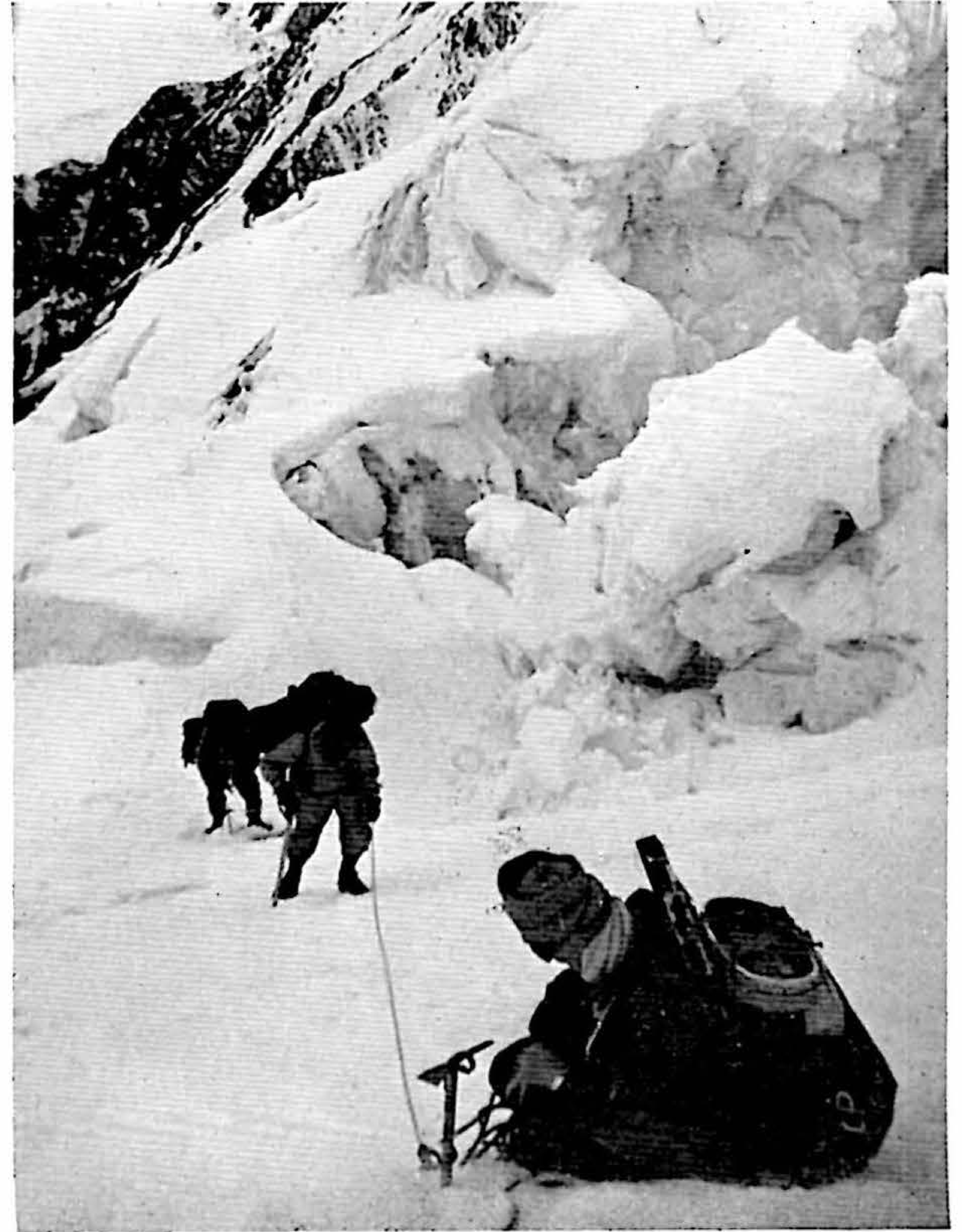
An operational atmosphere surrounds all flying activities at Ladd. It is the nearest aerodrome to Russia on U.S. soil. Less than 50 miles separate Alaska from the U.S.S.R. across the Bering Straits and this base is regarded as the front line one for North America. From the three fighter squadrons patrols and interceptions are flown twenty-four hours a day. All guns are loaded and frequent alarms and scrambles keep the whole organisation constantly on the alert. Everyone on this vast base is well aware of the importance of effective action against any attack and their awareness is shown by the efficiency and alertness which characterise all their activities.

At six o'clock on the morning of May 26 we took off on the 200-miles flight to Lake Minchumina and the operation was launched. On the dusty airstrip the helicopter was waiting and by eight o'clock it whirled up carrying Warwick and Derek with 200 lb. of food and equipment and sidled across the sky to the mountains 60 miles away. Fortunately, weather conditions were ideal and the helicopter after reconnaissance and several ferries was able to land the first pair and equipment on the glacier. At half-past four that afternoon I was set down on the glacier and moments later stood with the others by the tents watching the helicopter swing across the sky and drop below the ridge

Official U.S. Air Force photograph]

British Parachute Brigade Alaska Expedition. The party shown climbing Anniversary Peak below Mt. McKinley, Alaska, around the 12,000 ft. level.

Lieut. Pritchard roping down ice pitch on Anniversary Peak.



Climbing the Albuhera icefall to Waggoners' Col. Capt. Mills belaying the party.

which rimmed the ice. Its engine noise died away and we were left alone in the appalling silence.

The next day we sorted out food and equipment into 'tactical' loads and in the evening sledged out up the glacier. Over the weeks ahead we gradually evolved what we thought to be the safest and most efficient method of hauling the plastic boat-shaped sledge. We pulled with all four in front on different length traces, we being in addition tied together with a climbing rope. The rear two men pulled the sledge whilst the third occasionally helped, but chiefly protected the leader; whilst he, in front, guided the party through and over the crevasses and séracs. It took us eight days of hard grinding work to sledge our rations and stores up the untrodden Traleika Glacier. With twenty-four hours of daylight we found it better to work at night when temperatures were lowest and good snow conditions made it safer to travel over the crevasses.

Our scientific programme started on the first day and every available spare moment was spent on our various tasks. We were soon fully conscious of the risks of working over crevasses all the time. We could never move more than a few feet unroped; the strain of leading the party was considerable, requiring the utmost concentration; every yard had to be probed with the axe. Alpine glaciers were 'child's play' compared to the Alaskan tracts. An enormous strain is imposed on the people above to raise even one man and on some of the longer snow bridges two and sometimes three of us ran the risk of going down together should there be a collapse. I pessimistically calculated that if two people went down more than 6 ft. there would be no hope of extricating them. After thirty minutes down a crevasse a man, even if uninjured, is almost incapable of serious effort.

On the fourth day, dead on time, the huge four-engined C54 cruised over and we contacted the pilot by radio. We took a time check, weather forecast and gave our proposed position in three days' time. As a typically British 'ploy', we asked for the Test scores.

Our immediate plans were to try and reach, via a steep ice-fall, a col between Mounts Tatum and Carpe and from a camp there attempt the two peaks. At the same time we would start the geological collection. After two days spent resting, consolidating our camp and repacking stores we started off at midnight across the glacier towards the ice-fall. We carried four days' food, plus a 24-hour emergency ration, and our packs weighed just over 50 lb. each. The full length of our route up the ice-fall was threatened on the right by avalanches and speed was essential if we were to get beyond the danger zone before the effects of the sun were felt on the masses of ice and snow hanging over our path. For hours with scarcely any rest we moved across the glacier and through the dangerous unstable maze of sérac and crevasse in the

ice-fall. In places we cut steps across long ice traverses and in others we inched our way, each belaying the other, over fragile snow bridges. Slowly we drew our caterpillar length through the threatened area and on to the smoother slopes beyond. At eleven o'clock with the col still 500 ft. above us we halted for lunch on a patch of stones covering some bare ice. The sun, trapped in this upper bowl of the glacier, overpowered us, we were soaked in sweat, and the glare was blinding. We were very tired.

After a meal of lemonade, biscuits and chocolate we got to our feet and reluctantly heaved on our packs. Warwick Deacock moved off, probing as he went, whilst I belayed him with the rope round my shoulders. He stopped when almost at the full extent of the rope and called over his shoulder, 'I think I'm on a snow bridge'. He made another thrust with his axe then, without warning and in complete silence, he suddenly disappeared from view. I tried desperately to check the rope but could not. There was a tremendous pull as it jerked taut which impelled me forward in a few staggering steps until I fell face downwards and was towed towards the crevasse. I dug my elbow and snowshoes in and managed to stop my headlong progress. The others quickly anchored Warwick's rope with an axe and I crawled forward to look down into the grey-blue mistiness of the crevasse and called to Warwick. A faint reply assured me that he was well and held firmly just above a tiny ledge. We let him down to the ledge and then I lowered a rope to which his kit was fastened and pulled up. After an exhausting struggle lasting twenty-five minutes, Warwick was hauled over the crevasse lip and dragged to safety. We were now very much more tired and Warwick was shaken and exhausted so, acting on the advice of Donald, we put up the tent on the island of stones and after a quick meal went to bed.

The next morning we had not fully recovered from the efforts of the day before, and the climb to the col was a ghastly grind ; the last part up a 50-degree ice slope. From the col, which I had named Waggoners' Col, we enjoyed magnificent views down into the Muldrow Glacier and the tundra beyond. Just below the crest we built a tiny rock platform and pitched the tent, then having prepared our kit for the proposed ascent of Tatum we got into sleeping bags. Sleeping four in a space 6½ ft. by 4½ ft. is not comfortable; the last man in did not touch the floor all night, while the outside man bulged out over 500 ft. of space held hammock-like only by the thin wall of the tent. Cooking in such a confined space is the ultimate in the contortionist's art. To live in one tent for days on end unable to get out except for short periods, as we were to do later, requires extreme patience and tolerance. There were times when I hated the other three bearded ruffians who all had more space than I, whose feet were always in my face ; in comparison

to my perfect tent manners, they all seemed bad-tempered and bloody-minded.

Early the following day we set off climbing on two ropes and reached the summit of Tatum in five hours. The highlight of the climb was a steep ice-ridge which knifed its way into the sky and vibrated under the blows of our axes, its sides falling away for thousands of feet. The descent was made without incident but in poor visibility and for the last hour we came through a light snowstorm. The snow continued for the rest of that day and all the next and our attempt on Carpe was frustrated. With all our food gone except for the emergency rations we were forced to start down on the fifth day and after eight hours we arrived on the glacier. For the next hour and a half we made an intricate course through sérac and crevasse with the glacier creaking and groaning beneath our feet. Occasionally a dull roar would come from below us and it felt as though we were walking across the ceiling of a vast room from which one by one the chandeliers were falling to the ground. At any moment we expected parts of the 'ceiling' to fall in, but luckily we were spared.

The following days were spent in resting and sledging our loads in two ferries further up the glacier to our next base camp. This camp we called Raven's Camp, after one of these birds which had attacked our food and eaten two days' rations. Here we were snowed in for forty-eight hours before being able to sledge up two more loads to the final camp at the head of the glacier. At this next camp we were close under a vast cirque of glistening mountain walls rising sheerly from the glacier. The lowest point was a col 3,000 ft. above us. Our plan was to establish a camp on this col and then to climb the peaks on each side. From the knowledge gained from these climbs we would decide if it was possible to force a way across the barrier to the other side or, more eastwards, to a high plateau from which we might climb at least one peak which rose from it.

We took nine days' rations and set off in deep soft snow, again with only one tent to save weight, yet our packs weighed 70 lb. On our first day we were slowed up by thick mist and the deep snow and were forced to camp on a sérac surrounded by deep chasms half-way up the col. Again all the next day we were prevented from moving by a snowstorm. The final climb to the col was made in the worst weather we had met so far; an hour after starting we were enveloped in mist and climbing in a shrieking blizzard. On the top an extraordinary jumble of sérac and cornice posed problems which we could not cope with in that weather. For two hours we searched for a way through to the col but finally gave up and pitched the tent under an ice-wall. It was bitterly cold and large chunks of ice froze our beards to our Anorak hoods and our clothes and gloves were stiff and wood-like. For the

next two days we endured cramped inactivity in the tent while the snow fell heavily hour after hour. The tent was completely snowed in and we had to use a shovel to get out.

On the third day we split up into two parties. Derek and Donald to try the right-hand peak and Warwick and I the other. In mist and snow we set off and climbed to the ridge above the camp. After some hours of battling in the driving snow along the narrow ridge we turned back, as climbing in such conditions was unjustifiably dangerous. When we arrived at the tent the others were brewing tea, having just returned. They had climbed their peak, which they had christened 'Mount Staghorn'. It was the expedition's second ascent, not including the two cols which in their way were as significant and satisfying as new peaks. As it was my wedding anniversary we decided to call the left-hand mountain 'Anniversary Peak', and we settled down to sleep at mid-day determined to make an all-out attempt on it that night. The snow continued to fall and again we were confined to the tent. The hours dragged by and even reading and talking was too much of an effort and one's mental horizon was bounded by the next brew of tea or meal. Our morale declined and we grew self-pitying. Luckily someone started to sing and in that half-buried tiny yellow tent, high up on this arctic col, we roared out song after song. Climbers' songs, parachuting songs, French rounds, songs sung around pianos in messes, songs about O'Reilly's daughter, songs about lively lobsters, they came out one after the other. We went to bed hoarse but very cheerful.

That night the weather cleared but our start was late and after negotiating the knife-like ridge we turned after six hours, as the snow was too unstable for safety. We did, however, leave a fixed rope on a long ice pitch which would speed our attempt the next day. By half past four the next morning we were back on the ridge above the fixed rope and two hours later, after some nerve-racking climbing across the face below the cornices, I broke through on to the great western face and cut a platform in the 60-degree slope. One by one the others joined me and Derek took the lead cutting, then kicking, steps upwards towards the summit ridge. We had been climbing for an hour when the C54 came into sight miles away above the glacier. Somehow the pilot must have seen us and the plane throbbed by, glinting in the sun. Twice he flew by and on the second run he came in close throttling back and from the door dropped a package on an orange streamer. It fell with incredible accuracy almost on our tracks hundreds of feet below. This was the first aircraft we had seen since the bad weather had set in and we wondered if the package contained mail or a message from the U.S.A.F.

We climbed slowly on through deep snow and late in the day I took the lead again and traversed left and upwards under vast cornices across

the face towards the summit. The snow became deeper until it was thigh deep and underneath my crampons bit into ice, above us the cornices were melting and occasionally ice and snow broke off and slithered down : 200 ft. of high-angle slope separated us from the top. How this kind of snow was sticking to a face at such an angle I did not know, but a decision had to be taken as to whether to go on or not, for the whole slope was likely to avalanche at any moment. We were strung out below the murderous dripping cornices with scarcely a good belay. It was difficult to acknowledge what I knew to be good mountaineering sense, the summit seemed so near. I looked at the others standing in their steps pinned to the face with their ice axes. I told them that we should go down. They agreed. The descent took a long time in worsening weather with the temperature dropping fast. We abseiled down the ice pitch, then plodded down the channel of our track back to the camp, picking up the package which proved to be mail. We had been away fifteen hours and supper was very welcome although there was little of it, for we were down to living on half rations. Our defeat had been disappointing, but the snow storms of the past few days had proved decisive. Later, while the primus roared softly under a last brew of hot lemon, we drew consolation from our letters from home.

It was cold again that night but we slept well in the frozen tent and awoke about nine o'clock the next morning. Our total food supplies were our emergency rations and a few meagre left-overs ; we had to get down whatever the weather. We packed up and left at half-past-four in the afternoon and I led down into the snow-laden gloom. On the steep slopes the snow threatened to avalanche with every step we took and lower down the descent was nightmarish in the mist as we negotiated ice-cliffs and enormous gaping crevasses. At one point I went waist deep into crevasses five times in a few yards. We picked up the tent and sledge at the last camp on the glacier and sledged in to Raven's Camp at half past three in the morning.

The following day we rested, sorted our food and made a geological expedition to add to my growing collection. Time was running out and we still had to explore the right-hand fork of the glacier and attempt a peak which stood at the fork and dominated the whole glacier. We had long since named it Pegasus Peak.

Our journey the next day was again made in thick mist and bad snow and the sledging was particularly exhausting. It is perhaps the most temper-fraying business I know, especially for the rear man whose main concern is the sledge. Despite the efficient manner in which we now travelled, frequently when fatigue had dulled the thoughts of the first three men, the rear sledger often found himself being hauled by his companions into a crevasse, which the drag of the sledge prevented him

from jumping. Or, as he struggled to unstick the sledge in bad snow during a pause whilst the leader searched for a crevasse, the others would often start forward without warning, and with devastating suddenness he would be jerked off his balance into the snow. As he floundered to his feet in a tangle of harness and rope, the others would look on in listless amusement whilst he swore and raged at them for their thoughtlessness. At these times the rear man felt the victim of some cruel persecution by the others and even the inanimate sledge assumed a lively malignancy.

We returned to Raven's Camp after three days, with Warwick limping from a sprained ankle sustained when he had put a foot through into a crevasse. The farthest point of our journey had brought us under the ice and granite ramparts of McKinley, which had towered 8,000 ft. above us. We had also confirmed a possible new route up the mountain from Pegasus Peak and seen a col from which access could be gained to Mount Carpe and also to Koven, a mountain which we had originally hoped to climb. A second route had also been revealed on Pegasus Peak which we had rejected after some consideration because of its steepness and lack of places to put a tent.

Immediately after our return to Raven's Camp three of us set out on a reconnaissance of the lower part of Pegasus Peak, leaving Warwick to rest his ankle. We found a possible route through the lower defences of crevasse, sérac, ice and rock cliffs and returned delighted with our success.

That afternoon the aircraft came and we spoke to the pilot on the radio. As we could not hear him we asked the pilot to waggle his wings if he had received and understood our message. We were relieved to see the great machine gently bank back and forth in reply as it cruised round high above us. Our rendezvous, at about 4,000 ft. in Cache Creek, was confirmed for noon on July 7 and then they left us.

The climb was 6–7,000 ft. and to ensure success we made up light loads of 30 lb. each which included a tent, sleeping bag, two days' food, a stove and fuel. We needed low temperatures and good conditions to do this climb successfully and that night the temperature barely fell below freezing point and at short intervals came the crash of avalanches. We camped amid old avalanche debris and lay fearfully wondering if the next roar would herald a torrent of ice and snow rolling towards us. We decided that conditions were not good enough to warrant an attempt.

For many days now the hot sun in the afternoon had prevented us from sleeping ; even sleeping pills had failed to bring relief. Perhaps we would get a fitful hour of sleep between eight and nine in the evening when we rose, but little more. The lack of sleep was beginning to sap our energy and determination. A rising wind blew all the next day and

in the evening gusts of 60 m.p.h. smashed into the tents and robbed us of sleep again. We debated whether to try for the peak; it seemed stupid in such a wind but in sheer desperation we set off at eleven o'clock that evening.

Conditions underfoot were good and the wind dropped slightly, although gusts blew us out of our tracks and sometimes stopped us. We were soon through the séracs and over the bergschrund. The ice and rock pitches proved less difficult than expected and we made good progress up to the beginning of the snow slopes. Cramponing steadily up the first slope, climbing in pairs, we crossed the shelf and began the long climb up through the ice-cliffs, sometimes cutting steps, but all the time moving well and marking our route with flags. After several hours we reached the plateau below the final ridge. It was terribly cold and to eat our lunch we took shelter in a half-filled crevasse. In the face of the wind we plodded through deep snow and started to move up the summit buttress. The slope grew steeper and for hours we kicked steps changing the lead frequently. I was feeling terribly tired and relished every halt, whilst Warwick was falling asleep in his steps, but luckily Donald and Derek were going well. After an age we came out on the ridge and 200 yards away to our left was the summit cornice. We did not stay long on the summit, it was too cold and mist obscured the view. A red beret with a note was hurriedly buried, and after eating a tin of jam mixed with snow we started down. The descent was uneventful, enlivened only when I fell for about 200 ft. and was saved by Derek's prompt belaying. The continuing low temperatures made the passage under the ice-cliffs safe and we made rapid progress. Luckily the ice-bridge across the bergschrund still held and, eighteen hours after our start, we arrived back in the camp.

We slept a little better that night and rose at seven o'clock to a calm sunny day. We had only two days to get to the Cache Creek, a journey that had taken us eight days of sledging and relaying so we made a dump of all non-essentials to make loads as light as possible. When we moved out at midnight dragging our sledge we left one tent standing. In the dying rays of the sun, with its walls flapping gently to a slight breeze, we left it for the last time, an almost pathetic reminder in the utter loneliness of the frozen mountain silence of our transient presence.

By six o'clock in the morning further progress with the sledge became impossible because of vast open crevasses and we abandoned it with all our kit except that which we could carry. Our packs weighed over 90 lb. and in mine were 15 lb of rock specimens. We slogged on under the sun. There were now no snow bridges across the crevasses, so where we could we jumped them. If they were too wide we cut steps down inside until we could get across to a ledge and then climb out. At one stage we moved only a hundred yards in ninety minutes, but

gradually the crevasses became narrower and crossing places became easier to find. Each time we jumped across the crushing shock of the packs as we landed drove us to our knees. Hour after hour this continued, sometimes balancing along knife edges to circumvent the chasms, at others we jumped double crevasses separated only by a narrow strip of ice, or trusted our judgment to land on impossibly narrow ledges. All this over blue-black gaping voids, alternating a ballerina-like precision with our fast, laden, shambling gait on the level stretches. At eight o'clock after twenty hours we came upon our old cairn on the site of Helicopter Camp and found three days' food intact.

After three hours' sleep we were off again across the Muldrow Glacier moving fast over the bare ice. Two hours' irksome delay was forced upon us by a glacial lake which we had to skirt, and only by roping down an 80-foot cliff did we finally escape from the glacier. To be free of the rope after weeks of being connected one to the other gave us a wonderful sense of freedom. Then later in Cache Creek to tread earth again and smell living plants was absolute joy.

We made camp on a bank and dived into the tent to escape the clouds of mosquitoes. It started to rain, and as we sat eating our last few biscuits pools of water began to form on the floor. At four o'clock the helicopter had not arrived and we were resigned to walking out to Wonder Lake. We sat dozing, huddled together, our clothes soaked. Quite suddenly we heard an aircraft ; overhead was the C54 and below far off was the helicopter, a silver globe in the sky. We lit flares, talked on the radio and began packing all at the same time. Five minutes after landing the helicopter was away again with Donald and Derek and all their kit. By nine o'clock that evening we were at Ladd, having been transported out by helicopter, sea-plane and Dakota.

Perhaps a comment on the climbing and the mountains themselves is worthwhile. Any journeys made in these mountains demand not only normal climbing techniques but also the methods and approach of an arctic expedition. The scale is vast and certainly appears more Himalayan than Alpine. All ascents start on ice and snow and the height difference from glacier to summit is immense, usually at least 5,000 ft. There is little or none of the Himalayan problem of high altitude but there are no porters. The choice of route must be based on the capabilities of heavily laden climbers, but even so a great deal of technically difficult climbing must be undertaken carrying large and often awkward loads of considerable weight.

Two days later we started on the long journey home. The Canadian Army was tremendously helpful and, amongst other things, found transport to take us 1,300 miles down the Alaska Highway. We sailed from Montreal on July 26 and arrived at Southampton on August 4. After ten busy days of seeing people, writing more letters, making

broadcasts on radio and TV, and tidying up some of the aftermath of the expedition I motored back to Germany with my wife.

Two days later I went to see my new O.C., David Morgan. He asked me a few questions about the expedition and then went on to talk about more immediate things. He said, 'Well, the exercise season's just about over and now we have the inspection season coming on. The Adm., the C.I.V.—we'll have to work out a programme . . .' I was back !