

Denali National Park & Preserve Annual Mountaineering Summary-2004



A SEASON OF SOARING TEMPERATURES

Raindrops were falling at the Kahiltna Basecamp the first week of May as unusually warm temperatures (unpleasantly) surprised early season climbers. Longtime mountaineers can't recall a season so balmy, with official temperatures throughout Alaska breaking state records. As summer temperatures soared, most of the glaciers inside Denali National Park experienced considerable melt-out. Previous landing areas on many glaciers were riddled with crevasses running every direction, thereby preventing landings after mid-July.

Denali's unpredictable potency once again became evident this climbing season when a massive rockslide at Windy Corner hurled down car-sized boulders. Tragically, this unusual, colossal event killed climber Clint West, age 47, and severely injured two others on the same rope team as they descended from the 14,200-foot camp. Ironically, this is one of the few accidents in the history of Denali mountaineering where human error was not the key factor involved.

The grave of deceased mountaineer Gary Cole eroded and was partially exposed at the 17,200-foot high camp. Cole died in 1969 from HAPE and was buried in a shallow grave by a medical research team that was on the mountain at the time of the death. The Alaska State Medical Examiner, the Alaska State Troopers, and the NPS Regional Director agreed to allow for his reburial after the identification of the climber with helpful information from the family. Gary Cole was lowered to the 14,200-foot camp and reburied by a National Park Service mountaineering patrol in a deep and undisclosed location. We can only speculate that these two unusual

events, the massive rockslide and the discovery of human remains, were precipitated by the record-breaking temperatures in the Alaska Range.

In addition to all of our wonderful mountaineering volunteers, this year we were particularly fortunate to have a patrol of seasoned Grand Teton National Park climbing rangers who performed several difficult and life saving rescues. Renny Jackson, former Denali mountaineering ranger, co-led the first patrol of the season along with Denali mountaineering ranger John Loomis. The experienced Teton patrol members saved the life of an incapacitated Korean climber just above Denali Pass. They performed this rescue in "full weather conditions" along with a strong pair of British climbers, Andy Perkins and Neil McNab, who were chosen for the 2004 Denali Pro Award for their contribution to this significant rescue.

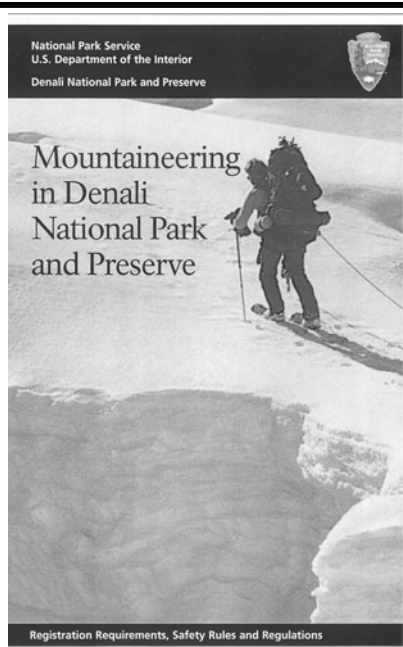
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Revised Mountaineering

Booklet now on the web!

Climbers can now access our newly updated mountaineering booklet in .pdf format at www.nps.gov/dena. The English revision is complete, and we aim to get the information translated into multiple languages within the next couple years. Currently, international climbers can access the older version of the booklet in seven languages on our website.



2004 STATISTICAL YEAR IN REVIEW

- 1,275 climbers attempted Mt. McKinley, with 51% reaching the summit. 16 attempted Mt. Foraker, four reached the top.
- The average trip length for an expedition on Mt. McKinley was 17.3 days.
- The average age of a Denali climber was 37 years old.
- Continuing a gradual upward trend, women constituted 11% of the total climbers.
- Guided expeditions as a whole (including clients and guides) accounted for 33% of Denali mountaineers.
- No surprise that June was the busiest summit month, with 510 summits recorded. 90 climbers summited in May, 56 in July.
- The liveliest days on the summit of Denali were June 4th (71 climbers), June 27th (48 climbers), and June 26th (42 climbers).

In terms of international makeup, climbers came from 42 nations. The top countries represented include:



United States	798
Canada	63
United Kingdom	52
Japan	48
Germany	39
Spain	36

If you were an American climber in 2004, chances are good you came from Alaska (130), Washington (110), Colorado (102), or California (88)!

ROUTE	NUMBER OF EXPEDITIONS	NUMBER OF CLIMBERS	SUMMITS (EXPEDITIONS)	SUMMITS (CLIMBERS)	SUMMIT PERCENTAGE
MT. MCKINLEY					
Cassin Ridge	1	2	1	2	100%
Messner Couloir	2	6	1	1	17
Muldrow Glacier	4	25	0	0	0
Muldrow Traverse	1	3	0	0	0
Northwest Buttress	1	2	0	0	0
West Buttress	289	1173	179	628	54
West Buttress Traverse	1	3	0	0	0
West Rib	15	40	7	14	35
Upper West Rib	9	21	6	11	62
TOTALS	323	1275	194	656	51%
MT. FORAKER					
Infinite Spur	1	2	0	0	0%
Northwest Ridge	1	2	0	0	0
Sultana	4	12	1	4	33
TOTALS	6	16	1	4	25%

FIRST ASCENTS AND INTERESTING STATISTICS

Only a handful of new routes were completed in 2004, with little action on non-trade routes! On Denali only three primary routes were successfully climbed, the West Buttress, the West Rib and the Cassin Ridge. Only 4 people reached the summit of Foraker, all part of a NPS ranger patrol, and local knowledge does not recall anyone reaching the summit of Mount Hunter!

In early June Zach Shlosar and Steve Lyall climbed a possible new route on the Northwest Buttress of Denali. Their line climbs the prominent couloir to the left of the Father and Sons Wall. The duo made the trip in a 34-hour round trip from the 14,200-foot camp on the West Buttress route. They descended to the Peters Glacier from the top of Motorcycle Hill to begin their route and exited across the upper Peters Glacier to the top of the fixed lines at 16,200 feet on the West Buttress.

Also in the Kahiltna area, Vince Anderson and Carl Tobin put up two new mixed routes on the southeast face of East Kahiltna Peak in May.

“Dirty Sanchez” (ED2 M6 WI7) climbs 2,000 feet of sustained difficult ice while “Filthy Jorge” climbs less technical terrain and finishes on top of the peak. Both were descended via the respective route, and each was completed without a bivouac.

The Ruth Gorge saw the bulk of the new route activity this season. Climbing March 31st to April 4th, shortly after the spring equinox, Kevin Mahoney and Ben Gilmore completed the 4,800-foot “Arctic Rage” on the East Face of The Moose’s Tooth. It took the team two efforts and they encountered WI6+ R A2 climbing on their four-day climb.

A week later, across the gorge, UK climbers Andy Sharpe and Sam Chinnery climbed a new ice/snow line on the southeast face of Mount Dickey. Surprised that the “obvious” line had not seen an ascent, the two climbers were happy to pick the plum on their second attempt. Climbing 40 pitches, the hardest rated WI 5+, with two bivouacs on April 9th and 10th they reached the

summit and descended the standard route back to the Gorge. This line saw a second ascent two weeks later by Ben Gilmore, Owen Samuel and Fredrick Wilkinson.

Back on the Moose’s Tooth a new line was completed; “Levitation and Hail Mary’s James” by James Stover and Scott Adamson just right of Ham-n-Eggs. This route was climbed alpine style over May 26th to 27th.



Climbing successes in the Ruth continued in June. On the 14th Joe Puryear and Chris McNamara completed the first one-day ascent of the Cobra Pillar on Mount Barrill. This was the fourth ascent of the route and most likely the quickest at 15 hours and 10 minutes. This team put up a 6 pitch variation to the Stump-Quinlan line on the South Face of the Stump. Unnamed, Puryear and McNamara rated the route IV 5.11a and reported the 12 pitch route to be “direct and super-solid with easy access and good fixed descent”

During a July visit to the Ruth a Norwegian team, Mars Lund, Steinak Holden, Lars Mjaavatn and Jarle Kalland, climbed several rock lines around the Gateway. On the West face of the Gargoyle their route “Electric View” (A2+ 5.11a 18 pitches) was climbed during the period from July 13th to July 25th. They also established a seven pitch route on the east face of the feature just north of Mount Barrill. “Phanerotime” is 300 meters long (graded 5.11b/A1) and was climbed on July 17th by Kallano and Mjaavatn.

One new wall route was added to the East Face of Mount Nevermore in the Kichatnas in April of this year. Mike ‘Twid’ Turner, Dai Lampard and Stuart McAleese climbed the Pillar on the furthest right of the half mile long face, which also led straight to the summit. The capsule style ascent took 6 days and is the first route on the face to reach the true summit of the peak. “The Perfect Storm” 1000 meter A1 E4 (UK) 25 pitches plus easy summit scrambling sounds like a Kichatna Classic!

RECORD-BREAKING CLIMB



(Mario, up top)

Congratulations to new Denali record-holder Mario Locatelli! Mr. Locatelli is now the oldest individual to summit Mt. McKinley. Mario (age 71 years, 6 months) reached the summit on July 5th, 2004, closely edging out longtime record-holder Donald Henry (age 71 years, 5 months at the time of his climb in 1988).



(Mario, bottoms up)

CLEAN MOUNTAIN CAN PROGRAM UPDATE

The demand for Clean Mountain Cans was astonishingly high this season, with our entire stock of 500 cans in use all over the range at a single time. This season cans were distributed at Kahiltna Basecamp for the West Buttress and at the Talkeetna Ranger Station for cans used in other parts of the Range. Our main push was to have everyone using the CMC at high camp. Unfortunately, we found that some groups did not pack their CMCs all the way up, but instead cached them along the route. To remedy this, we will go back to providing them at the 14,200 foot camp for their use up high.

Overall, the program has evolved to a new level --- the newness has worn off and the removal of waste has become the standard. Here is a statement from RMI mountain guide Dave Hahn who traditionally guides on Denali in July, after our ranger camps are removed.

"My teams of these past two years have had the slightly unique experience of taking all of their solid waste off the mountain in Clean Mountain Cans. I know that many others use them, but they have access to the "throne" at 14,000 feet whereas my teams don't. I've been interested to find that it is quite easy to accomplish taking it ALL off the hill.

Last year, my team of thirteen climbers (nine clients and four guides) took 24 days on the mountain and filled 13 cans. This year, the same sized team used about 13 for twenty days. There is a little variation, but I'll go by the rule of taking one per person on the team, plus a couple of extra just in case. We set one can up at each camp as the group latrine, rather than having each individual use their own can on each day. I have found the CMC's to be quite easy to work with and have not experienced any troubles with leakage."

Our ranger presence at high camp does keep most folks honest with using their CMC's and removing all their trash. One particularly rough storm in June found some climbers leaving a mess in the area, but our diligence and the cooperation of most climbers have kept the upper mountain from backsliding to its former condition.

As we look to the future we are currently working with the CMC manufacturer on a slightly different design that will streamline cleaning and eliminate the foam rings. We are also looking at installing a SCAT Machine in Talkeetna, enabling local cleaning and a more rapid turnaround time.

DENALI PRO AWARD — 2004

British climbers Andy Perkins and Neil McNab exemplified the true spirit of mountaineering by volunteering to assist the NPS in two hazardous rescues high on Mt. McKinley in May 2004, resulting in at least one life saved. They assisted in these rescues at tremendous risk to themselves and with the distinct possibility of losing their chance of a summit attempt.

On May 16th, Andy and Neil offered their services to assist rangers in a major lower from the 17,200-foot camp. The pair ascended with the rangers from the 14,200-foot camp to reach the start of this highly technical lowering. This lower was the first time that a 1,000-meter rope and associated techniques had been used operationally from this location. Andy and Neil's expertise in mountaineering rescue skills played an important role in making this a safe operation.

On May 21st, again Andy and Neil offered their assistance. They ascended 4,000 feet to Denali Pass in cold, stormy conditions to assist in lowering an injured Korean climber who was non-ambulatory and semi-conscious. Under extreme weather conditions they ren-

dered initial medical treatment and were instrumental in assisting the ranger patrol in lowering the patient on very technical snow and ice to the 17,200-foot camp. The following day, Perkins and McNab assisted in lowering the patient an additional 3,000 feet down to the 14,200-foot camp. Their efforts helped save this man's life.

In recognition of their selfless and exceedingly strenuous efforts to help in two technical mountaineering rescues, Denali National Park & Preserve and Pigeon Mountain Industries (PMI) would like to present Andy Perkins and Neil McNab with the 2004 Denali Pro Award. This prestigious annual award is presented to individuals or teams who make exemplary contributions to the Denali climbing community in regards to safety, self-sufficiency, and assistance to other mountaineers.

Continued thanks to climbing equipment manufacturer Pigeon Mountain Industries (PMI), without their generous support the Denali Pro Award program would not be possible.

CLIMBER LETTER: *Lucas Wickham encapsulates what we strive for in our educational efforts...*

Mr. Robinson,

Thank you for the advice and recommendations. The more I read about climbing Denali, the more I realize I've underestimated the expedition. It's certainly been a learning experience. If I do still climb in 2006, I'll most likely go with a guided climb, since that'll increase my chances for success and decrease my chances of injury by a substantial margin. I have a habit of going full-bore into new experiences, usually skipping the introductory phases and learning curves. This hasn't normally been a problem, but the more information I get about Denali, the more I realize that Denali isn't like computers or math or knitting or sailing.

Again, thank you for the advice and words of caution.

Sincerely,

Lucas Wickham

(received at the Talkeetna Ranger Station, 11/1/04)

RESCUE SUMMARY - 2004

Detailed below are fourteen search and rescue missions performed by Denali National Park and Preserve rangers in 2004. For more detailed information on the missions listed below and information on the other missions performed in 2004 refer to [Accidents in North American Mountaineering-2005](#), published by the American Alpine Club..

Climbing Fall On April 23rd, a group of three climbers were knocked off of their feet and down part of the Japanese Couloir on Mount Barrill. One climber sustained a leg injury that prevented him from walking so the group activated their ELT and summoned help from a nearby group. After making contact with a plane, their air taxi service was notified and was able to evacuate the injured party the same day. The injured climber was subsequently transported by ground to Anchorage and treated for a broken right tibia.

Aircraft Incident On May 22nd, a private Cessna 180 crashed while taking off from the 5,600 foot level on the Mountain House airstrip in the Sheldon Amphitheatre. No injuries were sustained in the accident, and the pilot and the two passengers were able to egress the aircraft under their own power. The three were subsequently transported to an Anchorage hospital by the 210th Pararescue Squadron.

Climbing Fall On May 15th, the ranger camp at 14,200-foot received CB radio notification of a climbing fall. Initial assessment was that the patient had broken his leg and was being lowered by his guide toward the 17,200-foot camp. As there were no rangers at high camp at the time, the informing party was told to contact an expedition consisting of members of the 210th Pararescue Squadron (PJ's) who were at the 17,200-foot camp. The PJ's located the injured team and escorted them back to camp, where they rendered medical aid to the patient overnight. The next morning a five-person team of rangers and volunteers were dispatched to the high camp to supervise operations. As the patient was non-ambulatory, a lowering from the high camp to the 14,200-foot camp was carried out. Owing to weather conditions, a helicopter evacuation was delayed until May 19th.

Illness, Frostbite On May 20th, the 14,200-foot ranger camp was notified of an accident regarding a climber above Denali Pass (18,000 feet). His fellow teammates at 17,200-feet went out to attempt a rescue but could not get through Denali Pass owing to bad weather. The next morning an NPS ranger team was dispatched from the 14,200-foot camp to the 17,200-foot camp to take charge

of the operation. On gaining more information and with an improvement in weather, this team went through Denali Pass and located the patient who was suffering from a head injury, hypothermia, frostbite, and exhaustion. They lowered him from Denali Pass to 17,200-foot where they rendered medical aid overnight. The following day, a helicopter evacuation was precluded due to poor weather below 7,200-feet, thus a technical lowering from 17,200-feet to 14,200-feet was performed. The patient was evacuated via helicopter on May 24th.

Overdue Climbers On June 3rd, the NPS ranger stationed at the 14,200-foot camp requested a search for two overdue climbers attempting the Cassin Ridge. According to ranger staff, the party was reported to have 5 days of food and 7 days of fuel when they departed the 14,200-foot camp 9 days prior. The pair did not carry radio communication. During an aerial search of the route, a tent was spotted on the summit by the NPS-contracted Lama helicopter. A subsequent flight confirmed that the two climbers that were camped on the summit were wearing clothing similar to that of the overdue climbers. When the two climbers reached the 17,200-foot camp, they were confirmed to be the overdue Cassin climbers.

Multiple Illnesses (two SARs) On the evening of June 6th, an expedition requested the assistance of the NPS volunteer doctor at the 17,200-foot camp because one member of the team was ill. Upon investigation, the volunteer doctor discovered the climber suffering from acute mountain sickness and possibly high altitude pulmonary edema. An NPS ranger and the doctor escorted the patient down to the 14,200-foot ranger camp where she remained on oxygen for 30 hours before descending with her team to basecamp. Several days later, another member of this same team was brought to the NPS camp at 7,200 feet. The patient was observed to be visibly limping and in some distress. Examination of the patient's right leg revealed a suspected deep vein thrombosis (DVT). Consultation with an Anchorage ER doctor recommended immediate evacuation. Attempts were made to use an ambulance helicopter from the Alaska Air National Guard rescue unit, but the climber's air taxi service ultimately carried out the evacuation. In Tal-

RESCUE SUMMARY, continued

keetna, the patient was transferred to an ambulance helicopter for final transport to Anchorage. Patient was definitively diagnosed as having a DVT and was admitted for treatment.

Illness On June 12th, a guided client began experiencing medical problems while on a summit bid. Around noon her guides decided to turn her around at Denali Pass since she was moving very slowly. The climber reached the 17,200-foot high camp with assistance from one of her guides. They immediately contacted an NPS ranger at high camp. After assessing the client's condition and weighing options, the decision was made to short-rope the patient down to the 14,200-foot high camp. After further assessment, treatment, and monitoring, the patient was released the following day to descend and fly out with her party.

Tampering On June 17th, a leader of an expedition contacted an NPS ranger at the 17,200-foot high camp requesting a tent. He stated that the group's two tents had been destroyed during the storm of the previous several days. The ranger went to retrieve a tent for the group only to find that two of its members had already entered the rescue cache and removed all the ropes it contained and were inside the container itself. This was after an encounter on June 13th resulting from the group leaving sick and injured members alone on the route and otherwise showing poor organization and a clear lack of ability to appropriately deal with conditions. The group was cited for both Disorderly Conduct and Tampering due to their negligent actions in removing items from the cache that are critical for rescue and were rendered useless by virtue of being frozen and packed with snow. The group required the assistance of NPS staff at both high camp and the 14,200-foot camp and otherwise acted in a manner that indicated a complete lack of individual and group responsibility.

Illness NPS staff stationed at the 14,200-foot camp were notified on June 18th of a climber unable to descend from 15,200 feet. NPS staff climbed to his location and found the patient presenting with an acute abdomen. The patient was litter lowered to the 14,200 foot camp and evacuated from the mountain via Lama Helicopter and LifeGuard air ambulance helicopter.

ELT Activation The Talkeetna Ranger Station was contacted on June 24th by the Rescue Coordination Center

(RCC) about Emergency locator transmitter (ELT) signals being received from the Riley Creek area. The National Park Service dispatched two helicopters to search the area. The search was suspended once it was determined that an ELT had been activated accidentally on an air strip nearby.

Mental Instability The owner of a mountain guiding concession informed the NPS that a guide in the Pika Glacier had phoned and stated that one of the clients was exhibiting mental instability and threatening the group. The guides in the field were requesting that the client be pulled out. Two NPS rangers and a State Trooper flew into the Pika Glacier at 1:15 a.m. The client was contacted and agreed to fly back to Talkeetna with the rangers and trooper without incident.

Body Recovery/Reburial On June 27th, an NPS patrol-member was contacted regarding a possible body found near the Rescue Cache on the outskirts of the 17,200-foot camp. An NPS ranger and two volunteers investigated and found the remains of a climber that was buried in a shallow grave. The body, that was later determined to be that of Thomas Gary Cole, was exhumed and lowered to the 14,200-foot camp for subsequent removal at the request of the State of Alaska Medical Examiner. After some discussion with Mr. Cole's widow and family, the NPS Alaska Region Director, the Alaska State Troopers and the State Medical Examiner, it was determined that Mr. Cole's remains should remain on the mountain. Thomas Gary Cole was re-buried in the 14,200-foot basin on July 1st.

Rockfall injuries and fatality On the evening of July 27th, a guided expedition was struck by a major rock fall while traversing the Windy Corner feature on the West Buttress route of Mount McKinley. Three clients were injured, one fatally, and required immediate helicopter evacuation.

Illness A guided team contacted NPS staff stationed at the 14,200-foot camp on June 28th, presenting a client with signs and symptoms of High Altitude Pulmonary Edema (HAPE). His medical condition was treated and monitored over the following 36 hours. The following day, the patient was released from NPS care and continued his descent with the guides.

SOUTH DISTRICT STAFF — 2004

2004 South District Staff

South District Ranger
 Lead Mountaineering Ranger
 Mountaineering Rangers

Daryl Miller
 Roger Robinson
 John Evans
 Karen Hilton
 Gordy Kito
 John Leonard
 John Loomis
 Meg Perdue
 Joe Reichert
 Mik Shain
 Dave Kreutzer
 Jim Hood
 Francisco Orlaineta
 Ray Touzeau
 Maureen McLaughlin
 Missy Smothers
 Al Gallo
 Pam Robinson
 Miriam Valentine
 Charlie Loeb
 Howard Carbone
 Laura Wright
 Vanessa Safonovs

Helicopter Manager
 Helicopter Pilots

Helicopter Mechanic
 Administrative Assistant
 Lead Visitor Use Assistant
 Visitor Use Assistants

Park Planner, South Side
 Park Planner, BCMP*
 Education Specialist
 Interpretive Ranger
 SCA Interpretive Volunteer

Medical Directors

Jennifer Dow, M.D.
 Peter Hackett, M.D.

**BCMP—Backcountry Management Plan*

**Mountaineering
 Volunteers 2004**

Scott Sample
 Brian Napier
 Heather Thamm
 Jennifer Dow
 Wayne Fuller
 Ryan Davis
 Timothy Connelly
 Jeffrey Pflueger
 Tony Thaler
 Carl Oswald
 Matthew Smith
 Lance Taysom
 Christopher Onions
 Aaron Brillhart
 Robert Klimek
 Robb McLean
 Dexter Hale
 Jay DePeter
 David Hughes
 Darren Casteel
 Michael Dong
 Hope Rocheleau
 Dan Van Der Meulen
 Shelly Denike
 Phillip Weidener
 Jessica Cheatwood
 David McGivern
 Ian Thomas
 Carl Oswald
 Mark Spencer
 Lindsay Archer
 Richard Hamilton
 Dave Schuman*
 Chris Robertson*
 Ashley Feerer
 Michael Ferrara
 Johnny Soderstrom

**Denotes Alaska Air
 National Guard 210th
 Pararescuemen*

*Special Thanks to the 'lads' from
 Jackson Hole, Wyoming!*

Renny Jackson
 Chris Harder
 David Bywater
 Jack McConnell
 Steven Rickert

The hard work put in by these (past & present) mountaineering rangers from
Grand Teton National Park
 helped make our Denali rescue season complete!