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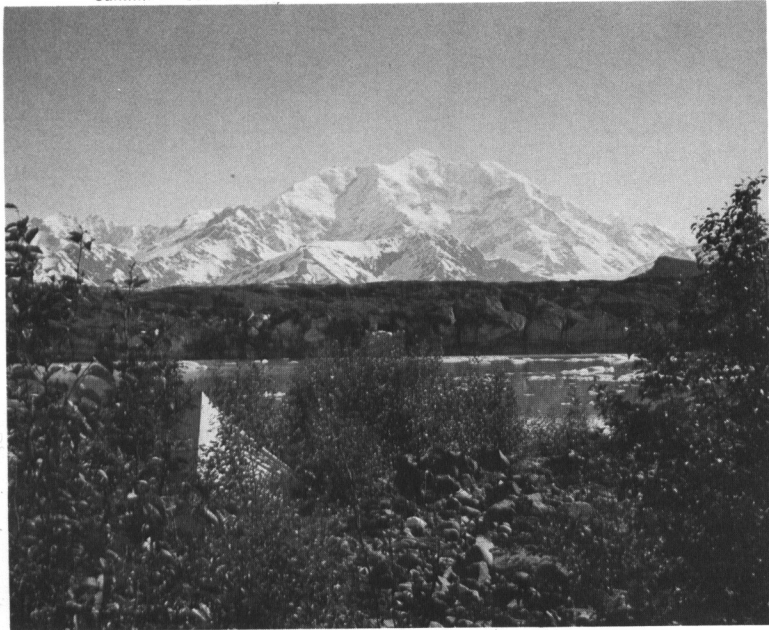
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Cover: Slabs in Mulvey Creek, Valhalla Range *Peter Rowat*

On Mt. Hubbard *Doug Dolginow*

Mt. Fairweather from sea level. South west ridge is central ridge to left of summit *Lincoln Stoller*



South west ridge, Fairweather Glacier and sea from camp 1 *Lincoln Stoller*



St. Elias Mountains and the Yukon

Mt. Fairweather

On 10 June Henry Florchutz, Toby O'Brien, Pete Metcalf and I headed west from New York in a VW van loaded to the brim. We arrived in Prince Rupert in 2½ days to board the ferry to Juneau where we met our bush pilot, Ken Loken, and another party consisting of Fred Beckey, Jim Wickwire, Dusan Jagersky and Greg Markov. Our aim was the virgin south west ridge of Mt. Fairweather (15,320'), chosen for the remoteness of the area, the infrequent ascents, expected difficulty and an unclimbed ridge. Soon after our decision became final I received a distressed call

from Fred Beckey. This was his objective also and, understandably, he tried tempting us with alternatives. When we stuck to our plans Fred changed his objective to unclimbed Mt. Salsburg, one of Fairweather's neighbors. Now, not knowing quite how to react, we shook hands and smiled apprehensively.

On the 18th, after a spell of bad weather, a Lokins 8-man turbo prop took us to a small inlet at Cape Fairweather, 100 miles north west of Juneau. The hum of his engines droned into the distance. We were left only with the pounding surf, stormy sky, our huge pile of equipment and a queezy feeling in our stomachs.

Next morning we awoke to a sparkling sky. Twenty miles inland Fairweather extended massive ridges like tentacles. The good weather soon deteriorated and for the next week and a half cold storms accompanied us. The packing up the terribly crevassed Fairweather Glacier, with 90 lb. loads, was harder than any of us had expected. Terrain progressed from sand and earth to dense tree covered ice. Rolling plains of boulder covered ice were followed by miles of crevasses and flat glacier, thigh deep slush pools and finally snow and the first icefall. In the centre of the glacier below the first icefall we experienced our worst storm, a battering by heavy winds, rain and snow. Here we went out through the icefall, off the glacier and up the slopes along the side. Above the icefall a furtive attempt to find a way through the crevasses and across the first step of the glacier forced us onto a circular route skirting the second icefall, gaining 500 extra altitude and cutting back across the upper glacier. The last and most difficult icefall was unexpected, hidden in a trough at the sides of the glacier. Finally we slogged up the easy slopes to our first objective, base camp at 4000 ft.

During the next few days we moved supplies up some dangerous avalanche slopes to a col in the ridge at 5500 ft. Below the rock band and at the beginning of our route we established an advanced base camp. Reconnaissance showed the only way out of the col and ridge—straight up the 200 ft rock band above, then a 3000 ft snow ramp leading to a great rock wall above.

On the 29th we made our first attempts at pushing a route up the rock, trying to avoid being directly below the snow ramp. Visibility was very bad. The climbing was 5.4 in a gully also serving as a small avalanche chute. Waiting for Henry to finish the lead we were startled by a low rumble. A few hundred feet to one side tons of wet snow roared over the lip of the cliff to disappear into the clouds below. The rock was terribly rotten. After attempting to set up a fixed line jumaring and later rappelling off we pulled out our anchor with our fingers. We settled for reascending the gully, self-belayed with a Gibbs ascender, each morning.

Next morning we were up at 2 a.m. Bright alpen glow encircled the horizon. We were over the rock by sunrise at 3 a.m. Peter and I led up the ramp, emerging on the left top at 8000 ft to look over the other side of the ridge for the first time. The glaciers far below were dark and deep. Clouds parted revealing the sea miles away. We put down our packs to rest when suddenly I thought I was dizzy. The sky reeled, the whole earth rose and fell beneath my feet. I slammed my axe into the snow to keep from falling over, my image of the impregnable mountain shattered. "Holy shit— an earthquake!" Across the valleys tremendous avalanches descended.

Up the crest then skirt to the north around a large tower to a protected indentation at 9300 ft and camp 1. The next three days were spent supplying the camp and putting 1800 ft of fixed rope in the main snow ramp and on difficult spots on the ridge above.

On the serrated ridge crest above we avoided the last tower by traversing along the steep north side of the ridge, rejoining it by tunneling through the overhanging cornices. The new gain in altitude plus heavy packs, the usual horrible snow conditions and lack of visibility made the going extremely slow. At 12 a.m., when the altimeter read 12,300 ft we stopped and began chopping a platform in the 25° slope. We sweltered yet it only was 21°F. After two hours hacking at the ice, we made a platform big enough for our two tents set end to end. The late hour meant we were unable to get the early start necessary for the summit the next day. Bad weather kept us two days—eating, sleeping reading, playing cards and trying to survive in tents that got as hot as 90°F.

The morning of the 10th was a clear and crisp 14°. Above a sea of clouds we made good time on firm snow up the base of the summit pyramid at almost 14,500 ft. We had a quick glance down the north side before large cloud masses began to move in from the south. As we ascended the ridge of the summit pyramid the wind came up and it began to snow heavily. We were up to our thighs in crusty powder. The altimeter said 15,400 ft yet there was no sign of the summit. Then I heard Peter whooping up

ahead and strained up that last 100 ft. The summit was a broad plateau. It was 7.25, there was no visibility, it was a windy 7° and snowing. The altimeter read a deceptive 15,800 ft—the summit has been known for unusually low pressure on previous ascents. Elated we took pictures of each other, tired but satisfied.

After 20 minutes with no improvement in the weather we began the descent. Then at 13,000 ft the weather broke. Hedged in by the main massif we were only able to see south, but the view was magnificent nonetheless. Clouds swirled in the valleys. We could trace our route all the way from the beach.

Leaving camp 2 a small avalanche swept one of our packs off the ledge. Rolling it glanced off my shoulder and went tumbling into oblivion. Consequently the four of us spent the next night in one two man tent at camp 1, two of us sharing a sleeping bag and being \$400 poorer.

We descended quickly and, having a route through one of the icefalls that had stopped us on the ascent, got to the lower glacier in a few days. By chance we spotted Beckey's party also on the way out. They too made the summit of Fairweather by a new route up the east ridge, having reached the summit on the 9th. Next day Fred, Greg, Peter and I continued down the glacier in a nightmare trip lasting 14 hours.

The morning of the 17th we awoke to one of the best days and soon heard Lokens sea-plane. An hour after a memorable flight through the now familiar area we arrived in Juneau, amazed that after 30 days it was all over and we were back again to hamburgers and civilization

Lincoln Stoller

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