# Chapter Thirteen: A Century of Mountaineering

### Early History of Alaska Range Climbs

As noted in Chapter 1, local residents were familiar with Mount McKinley—its beauty, its predominance, and its majesty—for thousands of years before non-Native visitors began to filter into the area. Non-Native visitors, in turn, spent 150 years gazing at the mountain from afar before they ever made a closer inspection. The mountain did not acquire its present, geographically-accepted name until 1897, and for the next twenty years almost everyone who visited the immediate vicinity of the massif did so in search of exploration or climbing, not for its wildlife.

In 1902, the Alfred H. Brooks expedition made an eastbound traverse across the high valleys north of the Alaska Range and made a brief, on-the-spot, and ultimately unsuccessful attempt to climb Mount McKinley. But the first serious attempt to climb the mountain began the following May, when a four-man party headed by James A. Wickersham left Fairbanks and headed down the Chena River on the steamer *Tanana Chief* (see Chapter 2). They ascended the Kantishna River, then hiked south to Peters Glacier and Jeffrey Glacier (both of which were just south of Jeffrey Dome) before they were turned back at what would later be named the "Wickersham Wall," a 10,000-foot-high, near-vertical mass near Peters Dome. A few weeks later, an 18-man party led by Dr. Frederick Cook approached the mountain. Cook, like Wickersham, attempted to climb McKinley via Peters Glacier but was unable to ascend beyond the glacier.[1]

Although Charles Sheldon's two trips to the countryside north of the Alaska Range—an initial 1906 foray, with another in 1907-08—were key to the area's eventual inclusion in a national park, most of those who ventured to this area were climbers who hoped to summit the highest point in North America. In 1906, Frederick Cook returned to the area as part of a four-man party; after an initial unsuccessful attempt, he tried again with just one companion, Robert Barrill. Upon returning home, Cook told others that he had surmounted the peak, though others were dubious of his achievement. Four years later, two of Cook's previous climbing companions returned to the mountain and debunked Cook's claim.

That same year, four Fairbanks "sourdoughs," all of whom had been Kantishna-area miners, made a new attempt on the mountain. Together, they hauled a 14-foot-long spruce pole up the slopes of Mount McKinley, and two in their party—Billy Taylor and Pete Anderson—planted the pole near the summit of 19,470-foot North Peak, where it could be plainly seen from Fairbanks. In 1912, a new assault on the mountain began when Belmore Browne and two others ascended to within 200 yards of Mount McKinley's South Peak (elevation 20,320) before twice being driven back by a snow-driven gale.

Hoping for better luck, a four-man party headed by Archdeacon Hudson Stuck (the group's organizer) and Harry Karstens (the climb leader)

All of the early attempts to climb Mt. McKinley involved a long and difficult approach to reach the geographically remote mountain before the actual climbing commenced. This photograph shows the 1912 Belmore Browne expedition on their dog team approach from Seward to and across the Alaska Range to reach the north side of Mt. McKinley, where their climb began. Merl La Voy Photo, from Belmore Browne, *The Conquest of Mt. McKinley*

Archdeacon Henry Stuck, left, is pictured here at their Clearwater Creek camp with Harry Karstens, his carefully selected colleague for the climb of Mt. McKinley in 1913. This party approached the great mountain from the north, transporting supplies as close to the mountain as possible by navigable rivers during open water, and then travelling overland by dog team. Hudson Stuck, *The Ascent of Denali*

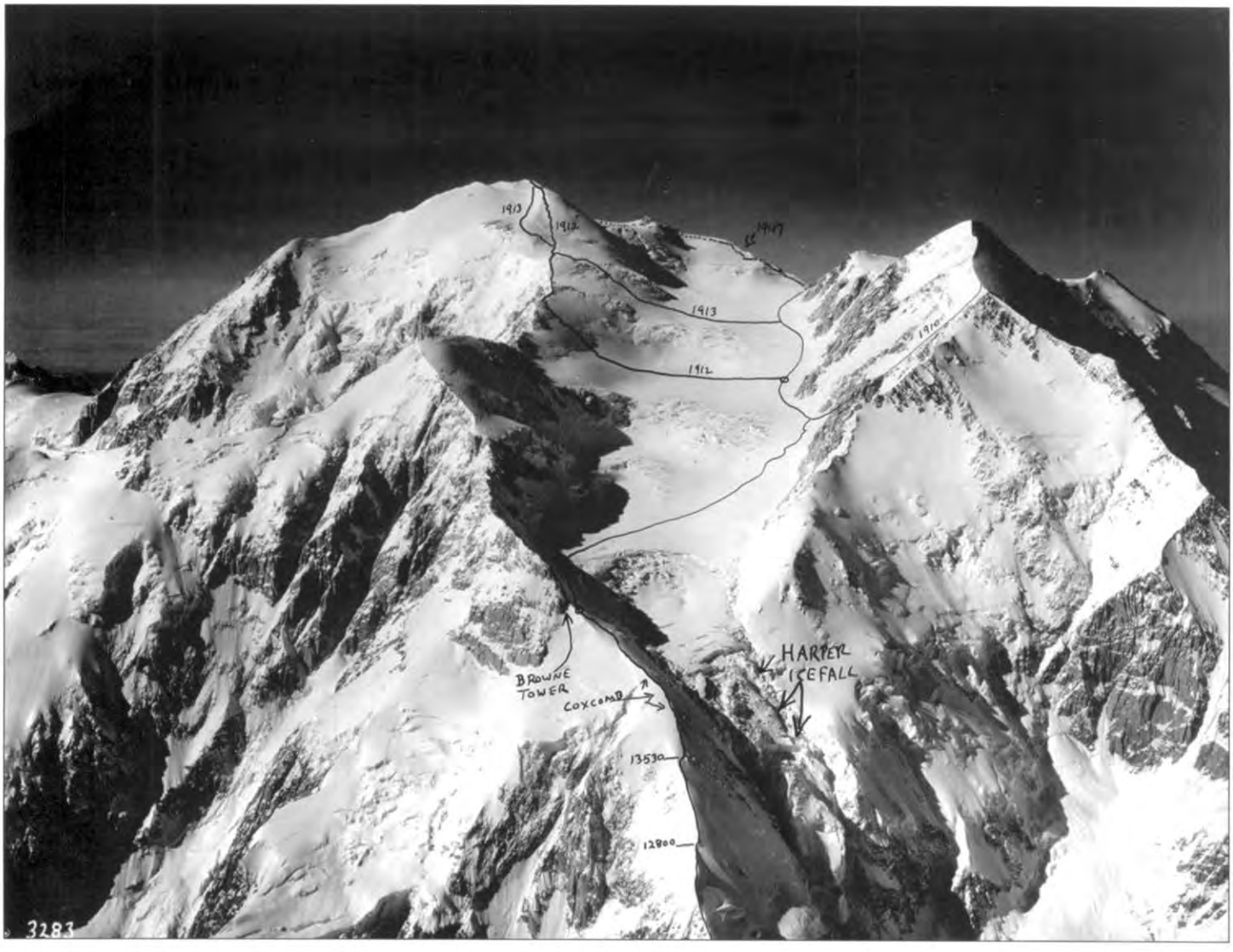
**Figure 3. Mount McKinley (South Peak) Climbing Statistics, 1913 to Present**

| Year | # of attempts | # of summits | % successful | # of deaths |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1913** | 4 | 4 | 100 | 0 |
| | | | | |
| **1932** | 9 | 4 | 44 | 2 |
| | | | | |
| **1942** | 8 | 7 | 88 | 0 |
| | | | | |
| **1947** | 14 | 10 | 71 | 0 |
| **1948** | 3 | 3 | 100 | 0 |
| | | | | |
| **1951** | 8 | 8 | 100 | 0 |
| **1952** | 29 | 10 | 34 | 0 |
| **1953** | 9 | 3 | 33 | 0 |
| **1954** | 13 | 13 | 100 | 1 |
| **1955** | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| **1956** | 18 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| **1957** | 8 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| **1958** | 12 | 10 | 83 | 0 |
| **1959** | 8 | 4 | 50 | 0 |
| **1960** | 24 | 23 | 96 | 0 |
| **1961** | 31 | 20 | 65 | 0 |
| **1962** | 40 | 25 | 63 | 0 |
| **1963** | 50 | 29 | 58 | 0 |
| **1964** | 37 | 25 | 68 | 0 |
| **1965** | 31 | 3 | 10 | 0 |
| **1966** | 22 | 7 | 32 | 0 |
| **1967** | 83 | 63 | 76 | 8 |
| **1968** | 40 | 30 | 75 | 0 |
| **1969** | 71 | 49 | 69 | 1 |
| **1970** | 124 | 72 | 58 | 2 |
| **1971** | 163 | 48 | 29 | 2 |
| **1972** | 181 | 80 | 44 | 3 |
| **1973** | 203 | 108 | 53 | 0 |
| **1974** | 282 | 139 | 49 | 2 |
| **1975** | 362 | 131 | 36 | 0 |
| **1976** | 508 | 339 | 67 | 4 |
| **1977** | 360 | 284 | 79 | 0 |
| **1978** | 459 | 270 | 59 | 0 |
| **1979** | 533 | 351 | 66 | 2 |
| **1980** | 659 | 283 | 43 | 8 |
| **1981** | 612 | 321 | 52 | 6 |
| **1982** | 696 | 310 | 45 | 0 |
| **1983** | 709 | 474 | 67 | 2 |
| **1984** | 695 | 324 | 47 | 2 |
| **1985** | 645 | 321 | 50 | 2 |
| **1986** | 755 | 406 | 54 | 4 |
| **1987** | 817 | 251 | 31 | 2 |
| **1988** | 916 | 551 | 60 | 2 |
| **1989** | 1,009 | 517 | 51 | 6 |
| **1990** | 998 | 573 | 57 | 3 |
| **1991** | 935 | 557 | 60 | 0 |
| **1992** | 1,070 | 515 | 48 | 11 |
| **1993** | 1,108 | 670 | 60 | 1 |
| **1994** | 1,277 | 702 | 55 | 3 |
| **1995** | 1,220 | 523 | 43 | 6 |
| **1996** | 1,148 | 489 | 43 | 2 |
| **1997** | 1,110 | 561 | 51 | 1 |
| **1998** | 1,166 | 420 | 36 | 3 |
| **1999** | 1,183 | 508 | 43 | 0 |
| **2000** | 1,209 | 630 | 52 | 0 |
| **2001** | 1,305 | 772 | 59 | 0 |
| **2002** | 1,232 | 645 | 52 | 1 |
| **2003** | 1,179 | 688 | 58 | 0 |
| **2004** | 1,275 | 656 | 51 | 1 |
| **2005** | 1,340 | 775 | 58 | 2 |
| **2006** | 1,152 | 581 | 50 | 1 |
| **2007** | 1,218 | 573 | 47 | 2 |

Source: NPS, "Mount McKinley South Peak (20,320 feet) Attempts and Summits," and NPS, "Climbing Deaths on Denali," both in Talkeetna Ranger Station files, courtesy Roger Robinson and Daryl Miller.

left Fairbanks in mid-March 1913. Together with two younger compatriots, Walter Harper and Robert Tatum, Stuck and Karstens headed up the Kantishna and Bearpaw rivers, then struck out over the snow on routes that two previous climbing parties had assayed. After arriving at McGonagall Pass, the group ascended the Muldrow Glacier, again following in the footsteps of earlier climbers. Despite additional difficulties brought on by the effects of a June 1912 earthquake, the four men inched up Harper Glacier to Karstens Ridge.[2] Shortly after noon on June 7, 1913, Harper—followed soon afterward by Karstens, Tatum, and an exhausted Stuck—reached the top of the South Peak of Mount McKinley. After almost three months of work and tedium, victory was theirs. Within two weeks, the party had safely returned to civilization.[3] Given their successful expedition, no further attempts were made to climb the mountain for another nineteen years (see Figure 3).

During the year-long period of debate that preceded the establishment of Mount McKinley National Park, both the Interior Department




**Bradford Washburn traced the early climbing routes of the upper portion of Mt. McKinley on this aerial photograph of the mountain taken from the northeast. ©Bradford Washburn, courtesy Panopticon Gallery, Boston, MA**

and the U.S. Congress made several references to the peak. In a May 1916 Senate hearing, for instance, the Committee on Territories noted that:

> Mount McKinley is not only the highest mountain in North America, but is most unique in its conformation. It reaches in altitude 20,300 feet. While this mountain is remarkable by reason of its extraordinary height, it is unique through the fact that it rises almost abruptly from the foothills and plains surrounding its base, which only have an altitude of two or three thousand feet. ... This mountain is covered by perpetual snow for a distance of about 18,000 feet below the summit. It is studded with many large glaciers, and its sides are cut with torrential mountain streams.

In the parlance of a later generation, the area immediately surrounding Mount McKinley consisted of "rocks and ice," and preserving this expanse was entirely consistent with the "worthless lands" thesis that was an undercurrent of so many of the early national parks. For this reason, no one in a position of executive or legislative authority expressed any particular opposition to including the mountain massif in a proposed national park. And the fact that the new park would be named for the great peak doubtless helped assure the bill's success in the legislature. Executive and legislative officials, therefore, concentrated their debates and discussions on game conditions, budgetary matters, and other aspects of the proposed Mount McKinley National Park. And according to Congress, nothing about the mountain itself was noted among any of the principal reasons delineated for the park's establishment.[4]

### Climbing Expeditions in 1932

As noted in Chapter 3, the first park superintendent – indeed, the only park employee for more than six months – was Harry Karstens, a Klondike gold rush veteran who led the first party up

Alfred Lindley, Erling Strom, Harry Liek and Grant Pearson (left to right) made up the 1932 McKinley expedition that was the first to reach the summit of both the south and north peaks. This group utilized dog teams to transport their supplies up to the 11,000 foot level of the Muldrow Glacier. Strom, a ski enthusiast, and his teammates pioneered the use of skis on the climb. DENA 3848, Denali National Park and Preserve Museum Collection

Mount McKinley. The fact that he had climbed the pre-eminent feature in the park gave him considerable credibility to Alaska residents, and the story he gave of his 1913 exploit provided such great entertainment to Outside tourists that he recounted the details of his climb numerous times to park visitors.[5]

In September 1928 Karstens resigned, to be replaced soon afterward by Harry J. Liek. The former assistant chief ranger for Yellowstone National Park, Liek had a sinewy, ramrod-straight profile. But during the winter of 1929-30, NPS Director Horace Albright began to criticize him for, among other things, spending too much time on construction work rather than on patrol. By early 1931, Albright further noted that

> I hear nothing particularly adverse [about your job performance] just as I find no particular interest in you or enthusiasm for you ... you are doing nothing outstanding and ... you are really spending a good deal of time at headquarters instead of moving about the park studying its problems....

A month later, an angry Liek responded point by point to Albright's numerous criticisms. He did, however, agree that he had made little headway with Alaska public opinion because "Alaska people do not visit the park like the people in the states do." And he further averred that "Right now it would be hard for a person to do anything conspicuous here unless it was to climb Mt. McKinley."[6]

Just a few months later, the wheels were set in motion for Liek to do just that. In the spring of 1931, Erling Strom (a Norwegian outdoorsman) and Alfred Lindley (a Minneapolis attorney) met and discussed the idea of a Mt. McKinley climb. That summer Lindley went to Alaska and visited the park; when Liek heard of their plans, he told them "if the Park Service is in on the climb, you can use park dogs to haul supplies free of charge." Liek, thus accepted, then convinced the two organizers to bring park ranger Grant Pearson along as well. On April 4, 1932, the party headed west from headquarters, and six weeks later it achieved what had never been done before. The foursome climbed both of McKinley's summits: South Peak on May 8 and North Peak a day later. On May 15 they were back, safely, at headquarters.[7] Theirs was the first party to climb either peak since the 1913 Stuck-Karstens expedition.

Another party attempted to climb Mt. McKinley that same spring, but its primary goal was scientific research, not the thrill of mountain climbing. During this period, many in the scientific community were excited about cosmic ray research. This field of inquiry had been launched in 1911 by Austrian scientist Victor F. Hess, who ascended in a hot-air balloon up to the 17,500-foot level with a gold leaf spectrometer, a device that counted radiation. Hess made his balloon flight because he, and other scientists, knew that there was more radiation in the environment than they could account for by the known sources of natural background activity. Hess, hoping to learn about new sources of radiation, was surprised to find that the higher he climbed, the more he (and the spectrometer)

**Three months after the Lindley-Liek group discovered the deaths of Allen Carpé and Theodore Koven, the first two fatalities on Mt. McKinley, a recovery party dug Koven's body out from nearly ten feet of snow and brought it back to Koven's mother. The retrieval party consisted of Merl La Voy, a veteran of the Parker-Browne expeditions of 1910 and 1912, Andy Taylor, George Pitiff, and park ranger Grant Pearson. DENA 3065, Grant Pearson Album, Denali National Park and Preserve Museum Collection**

were subjected to a new, previously unknown form of "penetrating radiation" that came from an unknown location in outer space. At first, few believed that Hess had discovered anything significant; they felt that this radiation came from well-known, predictable sources. But in a series of subsequent experiments, Werner Kohlhörster confirmed Hess's hypotheses. By 1919, many in the scientific community recognized that these sub-atomic, high-energy particles (what Hess called "cosmic radiation") represented a new phenomenon, and in 1936 Hess was awarded the Nobel Prize in physics for the research related to his balloon flight and similar efforts during the 1911-13 period.[8]

The excitement surrounding Hess's research, and the questions posed by his conclusions, stimulated others to discover more about these particles, that soon came to be known as cosmic "rays" because Robert Millikan—another Nobel prizewinner in physics—theorized in 1925 that these particles were gamma rays from space. Four years later, Kohlhörster along with fellow physicists Dimitry Skobelzyn and Walter Bothe did further work on cosmic rays.[9] Each of these efforts, which were confined to various university laboratories, stimulated others to perform field research to gather additional data. In particular, Dr. Arthur H. Compton of the University of Chicago hoped to institute a "wide program of investigations of cosmic rays at high elevations in different parts of the earth." Out of research came a recognition that cosmic ray intensity increased in high latitudes as well as high elevations. For that reason, a popular publication stated that "likely points for finding the cosmic ray are believed to exist in Alaska, Hawaii, New Zealand, Australia, Peru and Mexico." By January 1932, a brilliant electrical engineer from Bell Telephone Laboratories, Allen Carpé, had won a grant to pursue cosmic ray research, and he planned to carry out many of his measurements "at high elevations on Mount McKinley." In addition to his scientific talent, Carpé was an accomplished mountaineer, with several first ascents to his credit, and to assist him with his endeavor were Theodore Koven and three other colleagues.[10]

Carpé and his party planned to set up a research camp high on the mountain's slopes; he planned to fly in some of his supplies but hoped to have other supplies brought in by dog team. He soon made his plans known to park superintendent Harry Liek, who because of the expedition's scientific nature agreed to haul supplies from McKinley Park Station to the research camp. Carpé and "a most impressive pile of mountain climbing equipment" arrived at the station on March 27.[11] The three-man contingent that left headquarters on April 4 hauled most of the cosmic ray party's gear as well as that of the Lindley-Liek expedition. Then, on April 25, bush pilot Joe Crosson made the first of two flights hauling Carpé, Koven, and most of their remaining

**In 1934, the first party summited Mt. Foraker's north and south peaks. The three men on the right–Chychele Waterston, Charles F. Houston, and Dr. T. Graham Brown (left to right)–reached the top of the two peaks after braving wet and snowy weather, with 30 inches of snow from one storm at their high camp. Shown at the park superintendent's house, the trio was supported on the climb by Charles Storey (left) and by Houston's father, along with their horse packer, Carl Anderson (not pictured). DENA 3065, Grant Pearson Album, Denali National Park and Preserve Museum Collection.**

equipment from Nenana to the 6,100-foot level of the Muldrow Glacier, which was opposite Gunsight Pass. (This was the first-ever instance in which a mountaineering expedition in the park was supplied by an airplane.)[12] And shortly afterwards, Crosson airdropped additional supplies to them at the 11,000-foot level. By May 3, Carpé and Koven were set up in camp, and they began their measurements. Several days later, however, tragedy struck. Carpé, apparently in the midst of a snowstorm, fell into a huge crevasse. Koven then descended into the crevasse in an attempt to retrieve Carpé. Though unsuccessful in his goal, Koven was somehow able to drag himself out of the crevasse. But due to head and leg injuries sustained during his attempted rescue, he died soon afterward. On May 11, the returning Lindley-Liek expedition members stumbled across the party's empty campsite, discovered Koven's frozen remains, and tried to piece together the grim events that led to two deaths. Their search for Carpé, however, proved fruitless; his body, entombed in the ice, was never found.[13]

### Early Climbing Management

In July and August 1934, a party headed by Charles Houston made the initial ascent of Mount Foraker. In early July, the six-man party drove more than sixty miles out the park road, and then headed southwest with pack horses to Mt. Foraker's base. Three climbers ascended Foraker's north peak (17,400 feet) on August 6 and its lower south peak (16,812 feet) on August 11. The entire party returned to Savage Camp on August 28.[14]

Two years later, Bradford Washburn made his first trip to Mount McKinley. The man who would climb McKinley three times (once with his wife Barbara), and whose name would become virtually synonymous with high-quality photographs and detailed mapping of the mountain, came to the Mount McKinley area in mid-July 1936 at the behest of Gilbert M. Grosvenor, the longtime editor of *National Geographic Magazine*. Washburn had done his first Alaska mountain climbing in 1930, just out of his freshman year at Harvard, and because of a series of well-publicized climbs and treks he had become well-known to both his fellow climbers and to *National Geographic* readers. (Indeed, in early 1935, Grosvenor had offered Washburn a position at the National Geographic Society.) Because one of the primary reasons for the success of Washburn's 1935 Yukon expedition had been the daring, innovative photography he had taken, it should have been no surprise that Grosvenor hired him to take a series of photographs of Mount McKinley as well.[15] Taking off from Fairbanks, Washburn and his pilot flew on a circular route just below the peak's summit. Washburn, wearing an oxygen mask, mittens, and a cold-weather flying suit, sat on an old gas can and took photos from an open-air compartment (the plane's door having been removed). After enduring these conditions for two days, he noted that his "interest in [McKin-

**Bradford Washburn's intense interest in Mt. McKinley and the surrounding region, and his extensive work photographing and mapping the area, increased the knowledge of climbing possibilities in the region. From aerial reconnaissance and photographs he studied new climbing routes on the mountain. This 1947 picture of Bradford Washburn shows him preparing for one of his many aerial photography flights, which began in July 1936. DENA 5438, Denali National Park and Preserve Museum Collection**

ley's] peaks and glaciers was so whetted that I returned in 1937 and 1938" to make additional photographic reconnaissances.[16] So far as is known, Washburn never set foot in the national park at any time during the 1930s.

In the years prior to World War II, mountain climbing was practiced by a relative handful of outdoorsmen, and only a smattering of those in the climbing fraternity plied their craft within the boundaries of the various national park units. Mountain climbers, then as now, could be notoriously independent, and for the most part they bridled at the imposition of any restrictive regulations. NPS officials, to a large extent, were comfortable with their hands-off role, and prior to the 1930s, there were no agencywide published rules regarding mountain climbing. The NPS's only administrative direction, in fact, was the encouraging language of the so-called Lane letter of 1918, which noted that "All outdoor sports which may be maintained consistently with the observation of the safeguards thrown around the national parks by law will be heartily endorsed and aided wherever possible," with "mountain climbing" being first on the list of Lane's "favorite sports." This broad encouragement was repeated, almost verbatim, seven years later by Interior Secretary Hubert Work.[17] At Mount Rainier and Grand Teton national parks (established in 1899 and 1929, respectively), the NPS had sanctioned licensing and guiding activities, but the agency had not attempted to regulate the climbers themselves.[18]

In 1936, the year in which the *Federal Register* was first published, Interior Secretary Harold L. Ickes issued the NPS's first detailed, agencywide Rules and Regulations. Included in its provisions were statements on "mountain summit climbing" that applied to just two of the agency's national parks. Section 31 read as follows:

From the 1940s through much of the 1960s, NPS regulations directed superintendents to appoint a ranger, familiar with local climbing, to meet climbers and discuss their proposed ascents with them. Here, in July 1956, Chief Ranger Robert Branges inspects equipment of the Mexican Explorers Club climbing party prior to their attempt on Mt. McKinley. DENA 17-24, Denali National Park and Preserve Museum Collection

> In Mount McKinley and Mount Rainier National Parks, mountain climbing shall be undertaken only with the permission of the superintendent of the park. To insure reasonable chances of success, he shall not grant such permission until he is satisfied that all members of the party are properly clothed, equipped, and shod, are qualified physically and through previous experience to make the climb, and that the necessary supplies are carried. No individual will be permitted to start alone for the summit of Mount McKinley or Mount Rainier.
>
> While the Government assumes no responsibility in connection with any kind of accident to mountain-climbing parties, all persons starting to ascend Mount McKinley or Mount Rainier will fill out an information blank furnished by the superintendent and shall report to him upon return.
>
> When the superintendent deems such action necessary he may prohibit all mountain climbing in the park.[19]

But by the late 1930s, the rising number of climbers throughout the country—and more specifically the recognition that occasional, well-publicized accidents demanded some sort of response—caused NPS officials to more seriously consider a broader agencywide regulatory role. As one letter to an NPS superintendent noted in a less-than-diplomatic fashion, should a climber "have the right to commit suicide if he wants to"?[20] Or should the NPS play a stronger role in ensuring the protection of climbing parties?

In the spring of 1940, NPS Director Arno Cammerer, after consulting with the Advisory Committee on Hiking, wrote a memo discussing the agency's role as it pertained to mountain climbing. He noted that:

> From time to time, it has been suggested that regulations be issued to control hazardous climbing in the national parks. ... The consensus is that it would be inadvisable to impose restrictions because most climbing is done out of range of effective control. Therefore, no general regulations prohibiting climbing or other hazardous ventures will be issued at this time. ... Existing regulations and guiding practices at Mount Rainier, Mount McKinley, and Grand Teton National Parks will not be changed.[21]

Cammerer did, however, suggest the implementation of several voluntary measures. For example, he urged park staff to have climbers fill out a registration form, both before and after their hike. (As noted above, this action was consistent with language in the 1936 regulations.) He also urged each superintendent to appoint a ranger, "who is acquainted with local conditions and

climbing technique, to discuss intelligently with climbers the wisdom of proposed climbs." For those climbers who insisted on making an ascent which was "unduly hazardous or inadvisable," however, the ranger should tell the climbers that the trip was being made "in spite of an official warning." Finally, Cammerer noted that "rescue work continues to be the responsibility of the National Park Service," primarily because "there seems to be no practicable procedure whereby the individual or organization concerned can be required to pay for the expenses of rescue." He did, however, hope that privately-operated rescue patrols ("similar to the winter ski patrols") could be organized so that they could play some role in park rescue efforts.[22]

As Pearson and others have noted, Mount McKinley became increasingly popular during the 1940s and early 1950s: just one party attempted to summit during the first half of the 1940s, four more parties made an attempt in the second half of the decade, and six attempts took place during the four years between 1950 and 1953, inclusively.[23] Some were successful ventures, while others were not.

Climbing management during this period continued to be fairly minimal. As noted in Cammerer's 1940 climbing guidelines, potential climbers were required to register with the NPS and were urged to speak with a designated staffer about route choice, food, equipment, and general preparedness.[24] After the 1947 season (which featured three expeditions, two of which successfully summited Mount McKinley), those guidelines were expanded. Park staff, under Supt. Been's direction, prepared a mimeographed outline which compiled mountain climbers' "mandatory requirements" plus a list of recommended supplies and equipment. This outline was sent on to the agency's regional office and, still in draft form, was "sent on to various Park Service offices and to individuals and organizations with the request for suggestions." These materials were first distributed in May 1948.[25] Park officials expected that the materials in the mimeographed information packet would eventually be incorporated as federal regulations. Mountain climbing groups, however, vigorously protested the move, so instead, the materials distributed by park staff remained informational.[26] Park officials, over the years, modified the materials in the information packet several times as circumstances demanded.[27] But by way of contrast, agencywide climbing regulations—that is, those which appeared in the *Federal Register*—underwent only minor changes during this same period.[28]

Given these regulations and the updated information materials, the NPS was in a strong position to manage would-be climbers in the park. Most of those who tried to climb Mt. McKinley during this period contacted the park well in advance of their trip; others, however, arrived unannounced at park headquarters and explained their plans to the NPS at that time. Attempting to climb McKinley during this period without informing NPS would have been difficult if not impossible, considering the fact that all but one of the Mount McKinley climbing expeditions

**This 1957 Mt. McKinley expedition, approaching overland from the park road to the Muldrow Glacier, is making the classic preparations for their overland trek, organizing food and equipment amidst that great challenge of the tundra, the mosquitoes of the Wonder Lake area. DENA 17-29, Denali National Park and Preserve Museum Collection**

had taken what Grant Pearson called the "well-tramped-out McGonagall-Muldrow route" that began near Wonder Lake.[29]

The NPS's climbing policy seemed to work well during this period. Inasmuch as Grant Pearson, who was familiar with conditions in the Alaska Range, served on the park staff (as either chief ranger or superintendent) during much of this period, he was able to provide skilled advice to potential climbers. In most cases, as it turned out, the climbing parties were adequately prepared for their venture. In only one instance did Pearson intervene. He recalled that in 1952, the Mexican Explorers Club

> attempted the climb without proper equipment. [I] at first refused to let them go, because they did not have enough food. Park regulations required a 30 days' supply; they had only 10 days'. Finally, ... I said, "I'll let you go if you'll promise to come back when you have only two days' food left." They agreed. The four reached 8,500 feet on Muldrow, got down to their food limit, and came back.[30]

Despite Cammerer's dictum, in his 1940 memo, that "rescue work continues to be the responsibility of the National Park Service," park personnel during the 1940s had no effective rescue capability because of a lack of mountaineering equipment. And given the great distance and poor communications between the high peaks and park staff, NPS personnel were in no position to know if a mountaineering party was in distress. In only one instance—after the September 1944 crash of an Army Transport Command plane near Mount Deception—was a park ranger called upon to undertake a rescue effort (see Chapter 5). This effort took place only because military authorities forced the issue and provided all necessary equipment and supplies. In September 1948, ranger William Clemons represented the park at the agency's first-ever mountain climbing and rescue training school, which was held at Mount Rainier National Park, but there is no evidence that the park increased its rescue capabilities as a result or that Clemons himself attempted to climb any of the park's higher peaks.[31]

#### Mount McKinley as a Scientific Operations Base, 1947-1963

As noted above, scientific research on Mount McKinley in 1932 commenced when Allen Carpé and his assistant, Theodore Koven, performed cosmic ray experiments at the 11,000-foot level of Muldrow Glacier. Fifteen years later another expedition, of which Bradford Washburn was a key member, had cosmic ray research as a "major scientific goal."[32]

The genesis of that 1947 expedition, however, was not science but Hollywood. In 1945, James Ramsay Ullman had written a wartime adventure novel (*The White Tower*) about the Weissturm, a mythical peak in the Alps. A year later RKO Pictures, a leading movie production company, purchased the rights to Ullman's novel, and soon afterward a studio executive named Paul Hollister called Washburn and pitched the idea of an expedition in order to obtain movie footage. Hollister showed an initial interest in Mount Everest, but Washburn convinced him that Mount McKinley, due to easier accessibility, would be a more feasible option. Washburn, given his role as the head of the New England Museum of Natural History, wanted to include science as part of the filming project; more specifically, he hoped to make it "financially possible for the museum to carry out a number of purely scientific objectives." Hollister readily agreed to Washburn's proposal, because a short public relations film about scientific research on the mountain would potentially be an excellent marketing tool for the upcoming feature film.[33]

Hollister then contacted several Harvard scientists, after which he asked Washburn to work with them "to suggest how many ways [the] expedition might make a real scientific contribution." Before long, their inquiries reached the U.S. Navy's Office of Naval Research (ONR), which at that time was the primary federal agency supporting academic research. Harvard scientists, meanwhile, mentioned the upcoming expedition to several colleagues, and before long Dr. Marcel Schein, a University of Chicago physicist specializing in cosmic ray research, stepped forward and expressed an interest in the project.[34]

Washburn, meanwhile, had been making his own plans regarding the mountain's research possibilities, and it soon emerged that both he and Schein hoped to establish a high-altitude scientific camp. Washburn, by mid-October 1946, was envisioning a camp at Denali Pass (at elevation 18,180 feet) where "high altitude survey work and other projects ... could be carried out from a reasonably warm and comfortable base." Scientific supplies would be parachuted to the camp, which would be the "highest observatory ever established anywhere in the world." Schein, for his part, proposed in January 1947 a scientific program requiring a large research hut that would house a system of 300-pound telescopes, high-voltage batteries, photographic recorders,

Movie footage of background mountain scenery was filmed by RKO Radio Pictures on Mt. McKinley during Bradford Washburn's 1947 "Operation White Tower" expedition. The actual movie was filmed in the Swiss Alps. Operation White Tower Collection, Denali National Park and Preserve Museum Collection

heaters, and an ionization chamber. Given a recognition that "the major scientific goal of the expedition was Cosmic Ray research in Denali Pass," Washburn noted, "the Army Air Force agreed to furnish air support, in order to effect the establishment of this special camp."[35]

The expedition, dubbed "Operation White Tower," was organized in Anchorage in mid-March 1947, and the initial base camp (at McGonagall Pass) was established on March 30. The large support contingent was assembled at base camp in mid-April, after which expedition members began inching up Muldrow Glacier. Unusually poor weather retarded progress, but by May 20 Washburn and a colleague had established the beginnings of a new camp at the 16,400-foot level. That evening, however, a "wild blizzard" began that would last for 18 hours; that blizzard, it turned out, was the beginning of the so-called "Great Storm" that would last for another nine days. Given the expedition's slow progress, Washburn on May 25 began to question the feasibility of conducting any cosmic ray work. He soon learned that the Geiger counters necessary for the research program had all been destroyed, and on May 27 he canceled the program. Upon hearing the news, Schein (who was not on the mountain, and communicated to the party via radio) protested Washburn's decision and demanded that replacement Geiger counters be flown in to Denali Pass.[36]

The Great Storm finally ended on May 30. A week later, on June 6, eight expedition members climbed Mount McKinley's South Peak; among

The Operation White Tower expedition base camp was established at McGonagall Pass. The Muldrow Glacier is seen beyond the camp. Operation White Tower Collection, Denali National Park and Preserve Museum Collection

them was Barbara Washburn, the first woman to reach North America's highest elevation. Then, the following day, several members continued on and climbed North Peak. Meanwhile, a military plane airdropped the constituent parts for the insulated, 9-foot-square cosmic ray hut; team members finished erecting the structure on June 10, and replacement Geiger counters were on hand by June 16. Hugo Victoreen, the on-site director of the cosmic ray research program, conducted his research from June 17 through June 27. Schein, Victoreen, and his colleagues later reported that the data collected at Denali Pass was of great research value because,

This insulated hut was airdropped at Denali Pass, near the 18,000-foot elevation on Mt. McKinley, where Hugo Victoreen, pictured here, performed cosmic ray research for 10 days in June 1947. Operation White Tower Collection, Denali National Park and Preserve Museum Collection

Supplies were delivered to the Operation White Tower base camp at McGonagall Pass by this ski-equipped aircraft, landing near the center of the Muldrow Glacier. Operation White Tower Collection, Denali National Park and Preserve Museum Collection

among other reasons, such data had previously been "attainable only in short-duration plane flights."[37] Several months later, Washburn wrote a report to his sponsors on the "Cosmic Ray Reconnaissance." In that report, he reiterated that of all possible sites on the mountain, Denali Pass "appears to be the most practical point for the erection and operation of the highest cosmic ray station on the mountain to be occupied by personnel for any extended period of time," and he further posited that "the safest, shortest, and most practical route of ground approach to Denali Pass is from Wonder Lake via McGonagall Pass, Muldrow Glacier, Karstens Ridge and Parker Pass."[38]

During the planning period leading up to the "White Tower" expedition—and probably unbeknownst to both military authorities and park leaders at the time—the agency was moving to establish a policy that promised to restrict the role of aircraft in park climbing expeditions. The NPS did not have a prior policy regarding aircraft landings, but in mid-March 1947—during the same week that "White Tower" participants were meeting in Anchorage—the agency issued its initial aircraft regulations. It noted that

> The landing of commercial and private aircraft within the national parks and monuments is generally incompatible with the purposes for which the parks and monuments are administered. No person shall land aircraft on land or water, on any federally owned area within any national

**The Operation White Tower expedition to Mt. McKinley utilized traditional and new transportation technologies, dog team and aircraft. Earl Norris freighted supplies and equipment with his dog team to the 11,000-foot level on the Muldrow Glacier. Operation White Tower Collection, Denali National Park and Preserve Museum Collection**

> park or monument, except for emergency rescue in accordance with the directions of the officer in charge of the park or monument or where such landing is caused by unforeseeable circumstances beyond the control of such person.

The NPS allowed exceptions to its general rule in five park units, one of which was Mount McKinley National Park. Landings in the park were sanctioned at the "McKinley Park Station airport" (at the east end of the park) and—perhaps in deference to the location where Bradford Washburn had conducted some of his research efforts—landings were also allowed on Wonder Lake. The slopes of Mount McKinley were officially off-limits.[39]

The Navy's Chief of Naval Research, Rear Admiral T.A. Solberg, retained a high degree of interest in cosmic ray research, and two years after the White Tower climb, Washburn announced to the press that Mount McKinley, after a site-selection survey, had "been proposed for the world's highest permanent cosmic ray laboratory." Based on his 1947 work, he averred that a site at Denali Pass was "feasible" and that "the laboratory could be occupied for a maximum of six weeks." Helicopters, he noted, "could be used to transport personnel 7,000 feet up the mountain, reducing the climb by at least a week."[40]

Members of the small but influential Wilderness Society read the press reports, and before long the Society's president, Olaus Murie, expressed his concerns about the proposed project to NPS Director Newton Drury. He noted that

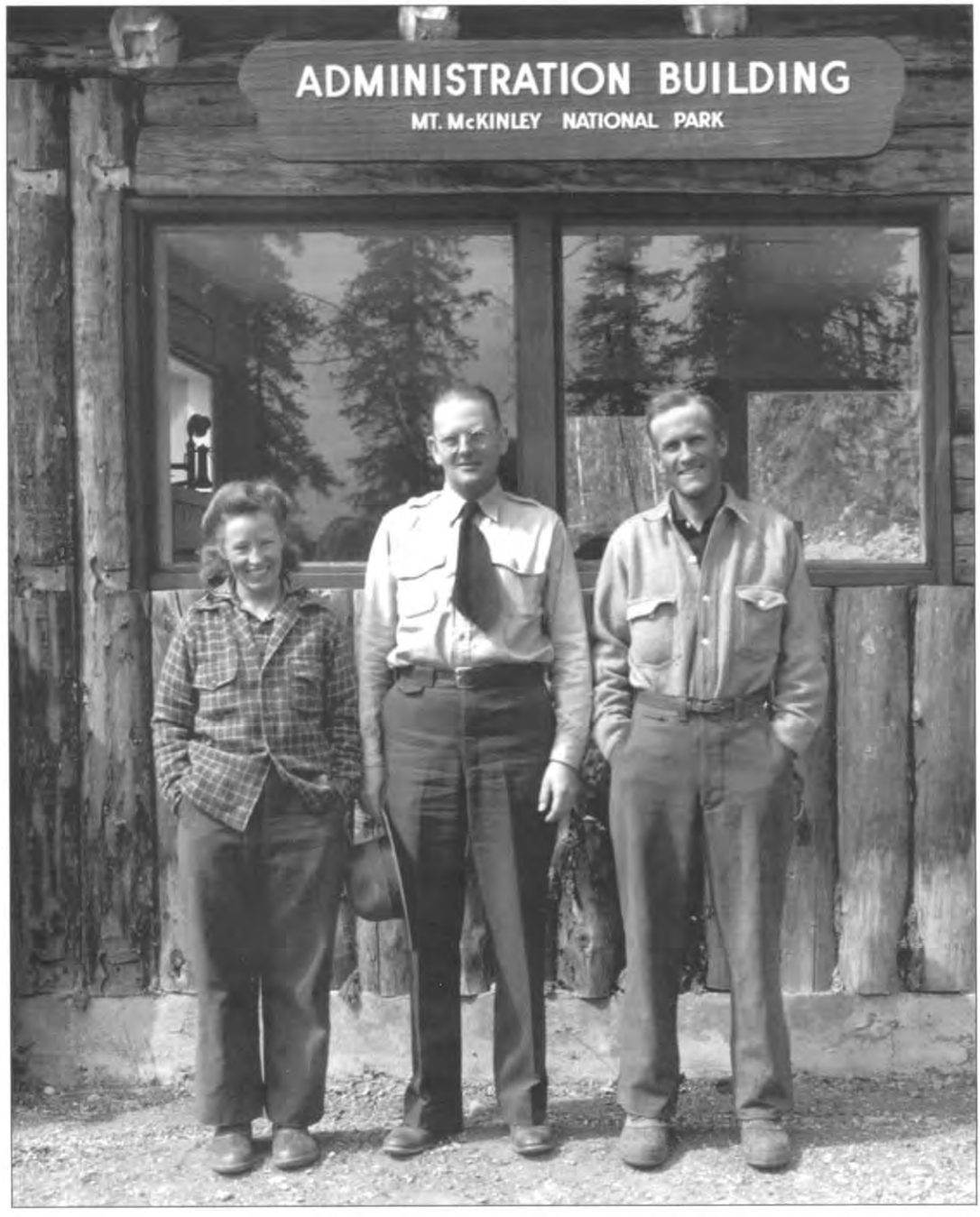
> It may appear to some that so long as ... no road is built, or any trail, that no harm is done. ... But there are other aspects to this. I think we all agree that a national park is not merely scenery ... it embodies history, a way of life, primitive experience, early environment. ... A national park is specifically dedicated to those intangible and imponderable qualities. ... It comes as a shock that there is a proposal to invade Denali itself with the attendant aircraft traffic. To those who are sensitive to mountains ... the knowledge that Denali is no longer "the most high", that it has been lit-

> tered with the impediments of man's modern mechanical experimentation, would lower the great mountain from its pedestal, would remove the present aura of remoteness and put it in the commonplace. Why leave it a national park after that?[41]

Murie that day penned similar letters to Rear Admiral Solberg of the Office of Naval Research and to Dr. A.L. Washburn, the Director of the Arctic Institute.

Meanwhile, voices in the NPS spoke out. Landscape Architect Alfred Kuehl, the agency's "Alaska hand" in the San Francisco regional office, had no objection to a structure at Denali Pass because it "would not be visible from any point on the ground" (i.e., along the park road or the Alaska Railroad). Superintendent Pearson did not disagree with Kuehl's specific statement; he did, however, feel that "never the less [the station] would do great harm to the spirit of remoteness we associate with the mountain [and] would also detract from the type of esthetics we are fostering in our National Parks." He concluded by saying, "It is not the Superintendent's intention to object to any developments which are absolutely necessary. Is this Cosmic Ray Station necessary?"[42]

In late January, an Office of Naval Research official responded to Murie's letter. He was equivocal. On the one hand, he stated that




**Pictured here in front of the Mt. McKinley National Park Administration Building are Barbara Washburn, Park Superintendent Frank Been, and Bradford Washburn after the couple spent 90 days on the Operation White Tower expedition to Mt. McKinley. Barbara Washburn participated as one of the members of the climbing team and became the first woman to reach the summit of Mt. McKinley. Operation White Tower Collection, Denali National Park and Preserve Museum Collection**

"nowhere else on the North American Continent will we be able to make continuous measurements of conditions at 18,000 feet other than on Mt. McKinley" and that "These measurements have certain importance in the scheme of things." He also said, however, that "It is not planned at the present time to establish a laboratory on Mt. McKinley ... and will only plan it as a last resort."[43]

Drury, upon being apprised of the ONR letter, warned Murie that "there is ... no indication that the project is given up. We must not relax efforts to preserve the mountain, the significance of which you have presented most clearly." Murie, soon afterward, passed his concerns on to Washburn; he stated that "I assure you I fully understand the problems that you face in nuclear research," but he also said "that if you and others concerned with this proposal can find it possible to discover another location, it would ease the situation greatly...".[44] Washburn, by this time, had mentioned to NPS official O.A. Tomlinson that these studies might be carried out just as successfully at the 16,000 to 18,000 foot level; if so, Washburn would recommend "another mountain in the general vicinity of Mount McKinley, which would be much easier to climb." The Sierra Club's board of directors, aware that 16,237-foot Mount Sanford (in Alaska's Wrangell Mountains) was also being considered as a cosmic ray investigation site, asked the Navy in early May to give "full consideration ... to possible alternative mountain sites." A month later, Washburn gave the Sierra Club president a message that both NPS and conservation officials were glad to receive: that as a result of a June 4 meeting attended by a variety of cosmic ray physicists, "a location other than Mt. McKinley has been agreed upon as most practical for reasons of a scientific nature, as well as climbing safety and economy of field operations."[45] The proposed cosmic-ray station on Mount McKinley, for the time being at least, was shelved.[46]

Later in 1950, the park was briefly utilized as a backdrop for new form of scientific investigation. In mid-October, the park superintendent noted that "a special group of military investigators" arrived at the park. These researchers told park staff that "the maximum intensity of the Aurora Borealis is located between McKinley Park and Fairbanks," and based on that assumption, they brought "cameras and other equipment to study the effects of the northern lights upon radio waves and to measure their base elevation." Their stay was apparently brief, and they did not return.[47]

Despite his setback on behalf of the Navy during 1949-50, Brad Washburn persisted in suggesting Mount McKinley as a potential development site. In May 1951, just before his proposed West Buttress attempt, Washburn told a University of Alaska audience that Mount McKinley and other high Alaska peaks were being mapped for use as radar stations, weather observation points and centers of nuclear research. Two months later, after Washburn returned from his successful ascent, a Fairbanks reporter noted that "the mountain might be used in the future as a site for a fixed position radar station or cosmic ray laboratory, if such an installation is desired above the 18,000-foot level." Days later, however, he told the Anchorage press that "a point at the 17,000-foot level" of the mountain "offers the world's most favorable spot for a cosmic-ray station for the advancement of atomic research." As late as 1953, he suggested in a *National Geographic* article that "McKinley's heights also provide a lookout for observing cosmic rays." Washburn's 1953 article reported the results of his West Buttress climb, and although scientific goals constituted two of the three reasons for the ascent, cosmic ray research was not included as a trip justification.[48] Washburn, though unsuccessful in establishing a research station on the mountain, may have influenced a 1952 climber, Army Capt. William Hackett, to conduct some scientific research. Hackett, a veteran of successful climbs in 1947 and 1951, led a four-man party that agreed to carry "several nuclear plates coated with special emulsions to record the effect of cosmic rays striking the earth." Whether the atomic scientists who supplied the plates gained much information, or even if the plates were hauled up the mountain, is unclear.[49]

The last known proposal to utilize the upper slopes of Mount McKinley emerged during the late 1950s. After the Soviet Union successfully launched the Sputnik 1 satellite in early October 1957, U.S. authorities became far more aware of their defense vulnerabilities. Less than three months later, the U.S. responded by successfully launching its own satellite (Explorer 1), and it expanded its defensive posture through the conversion of many Nike Ajax missile sites into Nike Hercules sites, the latter missiles offering greater range and flexibility.

Given the Cold War climate and the impending space race, a Hughes Aircraft engineer named Vernal Tyler proposed the construction of a long, vertical tunnel under Mount McKinley, the primary purpose of which would be to launch high altitude space missiles. Tyler, who unveiled the plan in July 1959, noted that the idea "would be of great interest to geologists, mineralo-

gists and should capture the imagination of the public." Implementing the plan, however, would require the construction of a 52-mile railroad spur from the Gold Creek flag stop (south of Chulitna Pass), the construction of an 18-mile horizontal tunnel, and the boring of two 10,000-foot-long vertical shafts under Mount McKinley. Tyler anticipated that his plan would not be well received by conservation groups. His most important concern, however, was selling Washington officials on a project that would cost an estimated $80 million. Tyler, so far as is known, made little or no headway with his scheme, but four years later, two other engineers aired much the same proposal – and had similar results.[50]

### The Rise and Fall of Science as a Climbing Justification

The various parties who climbed—or attempted to climb—Mount McKinley during the 1940s were similar to their forebears in that they approached the mountain from the north side, and did not depend on air support. But in June 1951, a climbing party tried something new. Pilot Terris Moore, who at the time was the University of Alaska's president, landed Brad Washburn and his party at the 8,500-foot level of the Kahiltna Glacier. Before long, Washburn and seven compatriots set off and climbed to the top of Mount McKinley, then retraced their route back the way they came. Moore met the party at its base camp, at the 10,000-foot level of Kahiltna, and flew them back to Fairbanks.[51]

Both of Moore's landings, which were part of a scientific expedition, took place within Mount McKinley National Park. Several months later, in February 1952, the Harvard Mountaineering Club contacted the park and requested permission to allow supplies to be air-dropped at McGonagall Pass as part of a planned climb up Mount McKinley later that year.[52] These two actions stirred the agency to review its March 1947 regulations about airplane landings in the park. After receiving suggestions from both agency officials and Brad Washburn, NPS Director Conrad Wirth tentatively recommended a modified policy. Although he rejected any notion of allowing airdrops, he suggested that planes could legally land on the glaciers surrounding Mount McKinley *if* they were connected to "a scientific party." Washburn, after reading Wirth's policy, generally agreed with its intent. He was worried, however, that a "scientific" rationale could be defined too loosely, so he hoped that the agency would limit "air support permission to real scientific expeditions. Unless such a policy is [adopted], a great many very fine climbers [in the pursuit of science], who have high standards of integrity, will be prevented from using air support" and, if expeditions were subject to lax regulation, air support would be available to parties "that have been organized primarily for the pursuit of adventure." Washburn went so far as to offer a series of specific criteria to define a "scientific expedition" in the park.[53] Park and regional officials reacted positively to Washburn's suggestions and made only slight changes to them, and on June 16, 1952, Wirth's office issued a policy statement relating to aircraft support. That statement noted that "the use of aircraft in connection with mountain and canyon expeditions is prohibited" except by scientific parties, and the policy provided three specific criteria for those parties. The policy did, however, give park superintendents broad discretion to permit aircraft support.[54]

The agency's new policy helped guide its response to the Harvard Mountaineering Club who, as noted above, had written to Pearson requesting permission for air support. The club's president noted that the proposed ten-man expedition planned "to test new Army equipment on McKinley proper," and it also planned "to conduct survey operations and geological collecting in the [Mount] Brooks area" using "a high powered theodolite supplied by Harvard University."[55] In response, Pearson stated that the agency was "unable to grant permission for air support." He further elaborated on why the action was necessary:

> We feel that the use of air support in any but bona fide scientific expeditions will result in increasing pressures both here and in other areas of a similar nature. We feel that the climb of Mount McKinley is one of the few true mountaineering experiences remaining on this continent and that it should remain such, a conquest which yields only to those who seek to conquer without quarter asked or given.
>
> Toward this end, it has been necessary to revise and define our concept of a scientific expedition. Its objective must be clearly within the realm of scientific, military, Federal or educational research and the application for air support must originate with the directive head of such organizations; time in the field must be spent in the pursuit of the authorized objective; and technical personnel must exist in the party at least in the ratio of one out of four. These requirements, plus final approval of the Superintendent

Members of the 1955 Kowalik Mt. McKinley Expedition were granted permission for limited aircraft use in support of their planned scientific studies for the U. S. Weather Bureau and the Bureau of Land Management. The four-man group from Anchorage, Alaska is pictured here with their pilot, Don Sheldon, second from left, at the McKinley Park airstrip. DENA 17-23, Denali National Park and Preserve Museum Collection

> and an agreement of the party to file a formal report of results with the Director of the National Park Service, must be met.[56]

Wirth's policy regarding a "scientific" need for glacier landings remained in place for years afterward. In the spring of 1954, for example, Superintendent Pearson noted that a five-man climbing party had asked if it could land supplies on Straightaway Glacier, northwest of Mount McKinley; in response, Pearson noted that the party "had permission for air support as they are making tests for the Ladd Field Aero Medical Laboratory and the UpJohn Pharmical [Upjohn Pharmaceutical] Company." And a year later, Pearson reiterated that NPS "auth ority for limited use of aircraft was granted" to a four-man party hoping to climb the mountain because one member worked for the U.S. Weather Bureau, another worked for the Bureau of Land Management, and they planned to make scientific studies for their respective agencies.[57]

After the 1955 season, however, park superintendent Grant Pearson began to have second thoughts about the park's aircraft policy. For the past several years, climbers had been telling him that inasmuch as they had "limited time to make the climb ... too much time [was] consumed in the shuttling process" involved in carrying goods up from the Wonder Lake starting point. Because the NPS's regulations increased both the time and expense of any climbing in the park, "mountain climbers [were increasingly] resorting to subterfuge" (by "attempting to ... assume the position of being a scientific venture") in "an attempt to evade the issues set forth in our regulations." Pearson, trying to respond to those demands, said that "one suggestion [which] may have some merit ... would be to allow one air drop of equipment and supplies per party at the base of the mountain." (This "base" was practically defined as a "low elevation base camp such as at McGonagall Pass.") Pearson's suggestion met with general approval, and on March 19, 1956, Wirth issued an aircraft policy statement that cancelled his earlier (June 1952) statement. It instead noted that the "approval of requests for permission to utilize aircraft for delivering supplies to mountain climbing or canyon expeditions will be made at the discretion of the Superintendent on the merit of the individual case."[58]

The new rule was widely approved and appeared to have the potential to fundamentally change the way in which climbers organized their expeditions. The reality of the change, however, was that of the four expeditions that tried to climb Mount McKinley in 1956, the only one that requested an air drop lost most of its supplies in a Muldrow Glacier crevasse. And during the winter of 1956-57, a new event made the air-drop rule largely irrelevant. The Muldrow Glacier (according to Grant Pearson) "made a sudden rapid downhill movement" that "was still heaving and shifting" in June 1957. This "galloping glacier" forced at least one mountaineering party—intent on using the Muldrow—to turn back.[59]

Given the lack of a north-side alternative, all nine parties that climbed Mount McKinley

between 1958 and 1960, inclusive, used Kahiltna Glacier as their access point. Because most of these parties did not have scientific permits, Talkeetna pilot Don Sheldon and his associates landed climbers just south of the park boundary, where they established their base camps and started their climbs.[60] (Brad Washburn, back in 1953, had clearly marked the location where the park boundary crossed the Kahiltna in a map published in the *American Alpine Journal*.[61]) Trip logs suggest that between 1958 and 1963, Sheldon landed most if not all climbers on the Kahiltna's main stem (at or near the 6,700-foot level). But beginning in 1962 or 1963, Sheldon and other pilots began using the Kahiltna's southeast fork, at or near the 7,000-foot level (and just inside the park boundary), a practice that became the norm in later years.[62] During the 1950s, climbers ascending from the Kahiltna were unable to take advantage of air support, but in 1960 the NPS approved a new rule that allowed "all necessary flights [that were] required to place the desired food, gasoline, etc. at a site at 8,000 feet or lower."[63]

Throughout this period, the Park Service's "scientific" requirements remained in place; as late as May 1960, author James Greiner noted that "All expeditions that are airlifted to points on the mountain within the geographical borders of Mount McKinley National Park must be conducted under scientific permits issued by park authorities." Greiner also noted that a would-be climber that spring, John Day, had "secured authorization for a 'photographic' expedition, a marginal category only occasionally acknowledged by authorities."[64]

**The Evolution of Rescue Operations**

Given the increasing popularity of mountaineering outside of Alaska, climbers and climbing groups began to recognize the value of safety and rescue operations. In 1947, for example, the American Alpine Club (AAC) published its first annual edition of *Mountaineering Safety*, which reported climbing accidents and recommended safety measures to prevent their recurrence. Over the next several years, a number of mountain rescue teams were established, and by 1958 these groups—operating under the AAC's auspices—formed the Mountain Rescue Association and held an initial meeting.[65]

In Alaska, however, no civilian rescue groups had yet formed. Climbers—including those intent on tackling Mount McKinley—knew that they were on their own. Language in the agency's 1936 climbing regulations, as noted above, stated that "the Government assumes no responsibility in connection with any kind of accident to mountain-climbing parties," and prospective climbing parties were apprised that NPS personnel did not have the technical expertise to perform most rescue missions.

The question of who should coordinate rescue operations (if and when they did occur) changed during the 1940s. In 1940, as noted above, the NPS director noted that "rescue work [within all park units] continues to be the responsibility of the National Park Service." But in Alaska, the U.S. military—both the Army Air Corps and the Navy assumed an increasing search-and-rescue role during World War II. Military authorities

**The 1954 Thayer Expedition, George Argus, Elton Thayer, Morton "Woody" Wood, and Les Viereck, departed by train from McKinley Station. On April 17th they began snowshoeing from Curry on the Alaska Railroad to Wonder Lake, completing the first south-north traverse of Mt. McKinley and the first ascent via the South Buttress. The group had successfully reached the summit and was descending by Karstens Ridge when Thayer was killed in a fall. DENA 17-15, Denali National Park and Preserve Museum Collection**

willingly offered their support, and resources, during civilian wartime emergencies, and when hostilities ended, the military continued to offer search-and-rescue assistance. By the spring of 1945, the U.S. Air Force had established a search and rescue center at Ladd Air Force Base, near Fairbanks, and in December of that year, the military's role was formalized when the newly-established Alaskan Air Command assumed control of rescue coordination activities on the territorial mainland. (Three months later, Air Force officials in the "Lower 48" established the Headquarters Air Rescue Service. It later evolved into the Air Force Rescue Coordination Center, which played a role in rescue activities throughout the country.)[66]

After that date, the military continued to have an official role in search and rescue activities in the park (as well as elsewhere in Alaska), and by the spring of 1952—when NPS authorities began demanding that climbers have a "stand-by party who can come to their aid in case of emergency"—the military's 10th Rescue Squadron assumed that role.[67] The Alaska Rescue Coordination Center's role lay untested, however, until May 1954, when two different events demanded the military's rescue capabilities. Early that month, a five-man party led by Dr. Donald McLean tried to ascend Mount McKinley via the previously-untried Northwest Buttress route. Beginning their ascent on Straightaway Glacier, the party successfully climbed North Peak, but a small plane supplying the expedition was not so lucky. The Piper, piloted by Lake Minchumina resident Richard Collins and with his wife Jeanne on board, was forced down by wind turbulence at the 8,500-foot level of Peters Basin. Hours later winds demolished the plane; the Collinses, however, were unhurt. The next day, the U.S. Air Force's 74th Air Rescue Squadron arrived with a helicopter and hauled them to safety. The Collins's plane remained on Peters Glacier until a 1987 glacial surge pulverized and buried what was left of it.[68]

During the same month that the McLean party was on the mountain, a four-man party led by NPS Ranger Elton Thayer was climbing the peak via Ruth Glacier and the South Buttress. All four summited successfully, and they seemed well on the way toward completing the first traverse of Mount McKinley. But on the way down, at the 13,800-foot level of Karstens Ridge, Thayer—who was roped to the other climbers—tumbled down a 1,000-foot slope and was killed. The other expedition members fell as well; George Argus seriously injured his hip and also suffered additional injuries. Leslie Viereck and Morton Wood, though shaken and battered in the fall, did what they could to help. They fashioned a litter that brought Argus down to the 11,000-foot level of Muldrow Glacier, where they made Argus as comfortable as possible and left him with food and fuel; they then headed down to Kantishna, where they met NPS Superintendent Pearson and Chief Ranger Dick, who were out on the season's first patrol. NPS authorities then called the Air Force, and on May 26th—ten days after the group's accident—a helicopter from the 74th Air Rescue Squadron, based at the Army Arctic Indoctrination School at Big Delta, landed at the 5,600-foot level of Muldrow Glacier. (No available helicopter, in those days, could land at a higher elevation.) Squadron members then hiked up to Argus. Six days later, the eight-man contingent—one of whom was Dr. John McCall, who had climbed the peak in 1948—flew to the Kantishna Airstrip. Argus was then taken to an Anchorage hospital where he underwent extensive treatment for his injuries.[69]

In 1956, the responsibility for Alaska search and rescue operations was formalized in the first-ever National Search and Rescue Plan, which was signed by President Eisenhower. That document stated that the U.S. Air Force would be the single federal agency responsible for federal-level search and rescue for the inland regions (throughout the Lower 48) and throughout Alaska. And regulations issued in the wake of that plan stated that the Air Force's Alaskan Air Command was responsible for all Alaska search and rescue operations outside of southeastern Alaska and the Aleutian Islands. This nationwide plan has been revised a number of times during the last half-century, but in all of these revisions, the U.S. Air Force has remained the primary co-ordinating entity for all search and rescue activities in Mount McKinley (later Denali) National Park and elsewhere on the Alaskan mainland.[70]

By the late 1950s, the locus of the military's rescue activities had shifted to Anchorage, because in the spring of 1958, a spokesman for the Air Force's 374th Air Rescue Squadron, located at Elmendorf Air Force Base, announced that "in case of serious injury to a person in a remote area" of the park, it would "remove the victim ... by helicopter," but only at the NPS's request and only in "life or death" situations.[71] The following year, student members of the University of Alaska's Alpine Club offered to "stand by to assist if necessary" in rescue efforts. Rescue groups were not needed in either 1958 or 1959, however.[72]

A major air rescue effort took place in May 1960 because of distress among two Mount McKinley climbing parties. Helga Bading of Anchorage, who headed a five-person party, began to suffer

from a "moaning hysteria" brought about by cerebral edema, then known as "altitude sickness." At the same time a nearby four-man party had fallen 400 feet resulting in a broken leg (to John Day), a concussion (to Pete Schoening), and lesser injuries to the two other climbers (brothers Lou and Jim Whitaker). Given this "double disaster," a member of Bading's party radioed for help to Air Force's Tenth Rescue Squadron, in Anchorage, which was the operating unit for the Alaska Rescue Coordination Center. This call resulted in chaos: poorly-prepared Army helicopters raced to the scene—only to be forced back—and more than fifty climbers from Seattle, Portland, and Anchorage gathered in Talkeetna, where they awaited further instructions.

Bradford Washburn, upon hearing (while he was home in Boston) about Bading's precarious situation, asked veteran Talkeetna fixed-wing pilot Don Sheldon to help. Sheldon, in a daring move, landed on a "fairly level glacier" at the 14,200-foot level and took Bading to safety. But another small plane, with a civilian pilot and a U.S. Air Force observer, met with tragedy; while trying to drop supplies to Day, the plane stalled in a turn and crashed into a cliff, instantly killing both occupants. Shortly afterward, a Hughes Helicopter Service pilot, Link Luckett of Anchorage, was able to land on a 17,230-foot ledge near Day. Luckett then removed Day, and later Schoening, down to the makeshift, 14,200-foot-elevation airstrip that Sheldon had just pioneered. Sheldon then hauled them, along with many of the Lower 48 climbers who were assisting in the rescue effort, to another glacier airstrip at elevation 10,200 feet and on to Talkeetna.[73] (Because they were inside park boundaries, use of the 14,200-foot and 10,200-foot "airstrips" were allowed only in emergency situations.) A month later, a member of the eight-man Glenn Kelsey party also required an air rescue; Sheldon had to evacuate him due to "mountain sickness."[74]

The deaths, and the haphazard approach to the Day-Bading parties' plea for help, demanded a new look at search and rescue operations in the park. Two solutions quickly came forth. First, "a group of mountain climbers, skiers, riverboat enthusiasts and skin divers" calling themselves the Alaska Rescue Group (ARG) formed in the summer of 1960. They were primarily based in Anchorage, and among their membership, "nearly a dozen have climbed Mt. McKinley, and others participated in the recent Day Party rescue effort." NPS officials welcomed the new group and approved their interest in becoming a standby party for future Mt. McKinley climbs, and they quickly revised their mountaineering information sheet to suggest that the new group would be the climbers' primary standby party. In December 1960, park officials met with the group and recommended that "a formal rescue agreement between the park and the rescue group should be formulated."[75] Soon afterward, however, they learned of the U.S. Air Force's coordinating role. Within a month the NPS had formulated a new, draft agreement between the military, the NPS, and the ARG. But Alaskan Air Command officials, upon seeing the agreement, let NPS officials know that given the Air Force's role, "it would be impossible to commit the Alaskan Air Command to an agreement such as you suggest."[76] To resolve the matter, representatives from the Air Force, the NPS, and the ARG met at Elmendorf Air Force Base in late April 1961. They mutually agreed that "since the RCC [the Air Force Rescue Coordination Center] directs and is responsible for any assistance required, ... no agreement is needed between the NPS and the Alaska Rescue Group." Climbing parties, however, were free to "contact the Alaska Rescue Group for their standby party, as the ARG will be the first group to be contacted in an emergency by the RCC." The Air Force promised to keep NPS officials informed about any search and rescue operations that it coordinated. The NPS, for its part, stated that it retained the right to "take initial search and rescue action if such appears advisable." This arrangement laid the groundwork for future search and rescue operations, and it continued for most of the remainder of that decade.[77]

The second response to the Day-Bading parties' difficulties was the Park Service's decision to recommend changes to the existing mountaineering requirements. The American Alpine Club was asked to coordinate that effort, and to that end representatives from the NPS, the Boston Museum of Science, and the American Geographical Society met with the club president in New York in January 1961. The group suggested specific changes related to the "scientific expeditions" criteria, air drops, radio availability, and other topics.[78] These proposals were forwarded to NPS Director Conrad Wirth. Minor changes were then made by Washington and regional officials, and they were implemented in time for the 1961 mountaineering season.[79]

### Mountaineering Growth, 1961-1966

As the previous sections have suggested, climbing Mount McKinley during the years prior to 1960 was a singular feat; it was done very occasionally and was considered newsworthy because of its rarity. During both the 1940s and the 1950s, there were many years in which no one successfully summited either North Peak or South Peak, and the busiest year on the mountain had been 1954, when a record three parties

**The town of Talkeetna became the hub for mountaineering access to Mt. McKinley by airplane. The airport was a small village strip adjacent to the town, and can be seen at the end of the road in this 1956 photo, which looks south. Alaska Railroad Collection, BL79-2-3857, Anchorage Museum of History & Art**

and fourteen mountaineers reached the top. At the close of the 1959 climbing season—almost fifty years after the Sourdoughs' first successful ascent—only 17 parties had climbed one or both of McKinley's two highest peaks. Those parties constituted 81 members. But James Gale climbed it twice (in 1947 and 1951); Brad Washburn climbed it three times (1942, 1947, and 1951), and Capt. William Hackett climbed it five times (1947, 1951, 1952, 1954, and 1958). Given those repeat climbs, just 74 people (73 men and 1 woman, Barbara Washburn) had successfully summited Mount McKinley between 1910 and 1959, inclusively.[80]

Beginning in 1960, however, climbing Mount McKinley became a less intimidating activity, and attempts to ascend the peak became increasingly commonplace. As noted above, several parties climbed the peak in 1960; that year, 23 men reached the top. Each year since that time, at least two parties have successfully climbed Mount McKinley, and during the 1960-66 period an average of more than 20 climbers summited each year. Gone were the days in which merely climbing the mountain was a triumph; instead, those who made news on the mountain did so when they by climbing new routes. Parties during this period, to an increasing degree, included either women or older climbers. In addition, the mountain—which previously had been of interest primarily to Americans—became a magnet to climbers from all over the world. One observer noted that "as the decade [of the 1960s] began, climbing in the McKinley Group [of peaks] was attaining a decidedly international flavor. ... The laughing, mostly non-English-speaking groups of Oriental climbers have become commonplace on the gravel main street of Talkeetna." And a few years later, a local resident noted that "it became common place to hear the Japanese, French, German and Swiss languages on Talkeetna's Main Street."[81]

The village of Talkeetna, indeed, was the new center of activity for all those interested in climbing Mount McKinley and other Alaska Range peaks. As noted above, climber Brad Washburn and pilot Terris Moore had pioneered a new, shorter route up McKinley in 1951 that began at an improvised airstrip on Kahiltna Glacier. Moore, that year, flew his party in from Fairbanks.[82] But beginning in 1958, the great majority of McKinley climbs began at Talkeetna (which in 1960 had a population of 76), because the village was neatly sandwiched between Anchorage and the Alaska Range. It had a railroad station where climbers could detrain, and it also had an airstrip for small planes. Talkeetna became more accessible in 1962 when a dirt spur road was pushed through from Anchorage.[83]

Talkeetna, because of its airstrip, had pilots willing to take climbers to Kahiltna Glacier. The

Aviation pioneer Cliff Hudson is pictured here at the Kahiltna Glacier base camp with his wheel- and ski-equipped aircraft. NPS Photo, Roger Robinson Collection

first such pilot was Glen Hudson, who arrived in 1947 and first flew to Kahiltna Glacier—apparently unrelated to a mountain climbing expedition—in a ski-equipped Aeronca.[84] Another was Don Sheldon, who had run Talkeetna Air Service since 1948; he had been working with recreational climbers since 1953, and "as the 1950s drew to a close" (according to his biographer), "Sheldon's name and reputation were well known in mountain-climbing circles the world over."[85] Sheldon had two employees, Mike Fisher and Frances Twigg, who also took climbers to and from Kahiltna Glacier. Given the escalating popularity of mountain climbing, new pilots appeared on the scene. They included Cliff Hudson (who was already a pilot by the time his brother died in an August 1951 plane crash) and Ken Holland; these men, like Sheldon, also served other clients including miners, hunters, and highway construction crews.[86] These pilots blazed the pathway for today's glacier pilots.[87] The exact location of the Kahiltna landing area, as noted above, was on the Kahiltna's main stem (and outside of the park) during the late 1950s and early 1960s, but beginning in 1962 or 1963, Sheldon located a new landing spot on the glacier's southeast fork (and just inside the park boundary). An NPS mountaineering ranger from the mid- to late 1960s stated that the landing area, so far as he knew, was inside the park and that the agency accepted the arrangement because it was "sort of an established thing." But a longtime air-taxi operator felt that the landing area during this period was outside of the park, and Art Davidson, who landed there in January 1967 to begin his winter ascent, noted in *Minus 148°* that "Sheldon cruised low over the Kahiltna, turned east to a tributary glacier, and landed just outside the McKinley Park boundary at an altitude of seven thousand feet."[88]

Given the southward shift in mountain climbing activity, NPS officials at first responded with on-site inspections; in April 1960, for example, park rangers traveled to Talkeetna and met with two Japanese climbers to inspect their gear and assess their preparedness. As the 1960s unfolded, however, rangers curtailed their inspections and instead relied on a two-pronged management strategy. First, they carefully scrutinized all applications and corresponded sufficiently with climbers to ensure that applicants were prepared for what lay ahead of them. (Many climbers also corresponded with Brad Washburn during this period, because he was considered the mountain's top authority during this period.) And second, NPS continued the rescue policy that had been set in 1960. That policy stated that all climbers had to obtain the approval of a qualified, Alaska-based rescue organization such as the Alaska Rescue Group or, later, the Mountaineering Club of Alaska. Obtaining this policy ensured that the designated rescue group would, if necessary, come to the aid of a distressed party. But these organizations, even more than the NPS, were so demanding in their approval requirements that none but the most well-prepared climbing groups were given permission to climb in Mount McKinley National Park.[89]

Throughout the early to mid-1960s, Alaska's (and Mount McKinley's) search and rescue

**Don Sheldon, who established his Talkeetna Air Service in 1948, is pictured here with his airplane in 1955. Bradford Washburn Collection, 57-6105, Denali National Park and Preserve Museum Collection**

center was the Rescue Coordination Control Center, which operated out of Elmendorf Air Force Base beginning in 1961. The military, as it had for years, continued to play a titular role in mountain rescues. Pragmatically, however, their role was fairly limited. As noted in a January 1961 interagency agreement, the NPS (and more specifically, the park superintendent) played the primary coordinating role. If needed, the NPS (as noted above) would call on the Alaska Rescue Group or other approved group; the military, for its part, pledged to provide transportation to the mountain for rescue-group members. But the NPS also had the option to call on private entities for help. As it turned out, there were relatively few McKinley rescue calls during the early to mid-1960s. When rescuers did request help, NPS officials in most cases called on Don Sheldon, the Talkeetna pilot.[90]

Prior to the early 1960s, all parties attempting to climb Mount McKinley or other nearby peaks made their own arrangements. But given the growing popularity of climbing during this period, the demand grew for guided mountaineering, and in the fall of 1962, Richard McGowan from Edmonds, Washington (who had climbed the West Buttress route that June) initiated paperwork with NPS officials for a guiding permit. Since 1956, McGowan had been Mount Rainier's chief guide, and he had also climbed on Mount Everest. Representing the Mountain Climbing

The Sheldon Mountain House has been used as a base camp for skiers, mountaineers, and sightseers from 1966 to the present. Brian Okonek Photo

Guide Service, he received a special use permit in time for the 1963 climbing season.[91] Soon afterward, however, he ran into problems. The Alaska Rescue Group, which had offered backup assistance to virtually all climbing parties for the past several years, refused to serve as a standby party for a commercial venture; the sole party that McGowan guided up the mountain failed to reach the summit; and in late 1963, the agency suspended his special use permit.[92] For the next several years, no guides were authorized to lead climbs up Mount McKinley or other park peaks.

During the mid-1960s, a new way of enjoying McKinley's high country opened up that did not require advanced mountaineering techniques thanks to Don Sheldon, of Talkeetna Air Service. Sheldon, who had first explored the wonders of the Ruth Amphitheater in April 1955, recognized the surging interest in Mount McKinley as a tourist destination, so during the winter of 1965-66 he decided to build a hexagonal, 16-foot diameter structure on a rocky spire at the southern end of the amphitheatre, just west of Mount Barrille. After flying in materials, he and several friends built the prefabricated "Mountain House." On May 11, 1966 he invited more than 30 friends to the site for a grand opening "luau." Six months later, he filed on a 4.9-acre headquarters site surrounding the crag. Sheldon anticipated that the structure would be used as a summertime base camp for skiing, mountain climbing, and sightseeing.[93] Don patented the parcel in June 1973. After his death in January 1975 his widow, Roberta, managed the site for the next 30-plus years.[94]

As noted above, the 1957 Muldrow Glacier surge had a strong impact on how climbers ascended Mount McKinley. Although almost all climbers before June 1957 approached the mountain from the north side and brought their supplies along with them, the great majority of post-1957 climbers started their treks on the Kahiltna Glacier after flying there from Talkeetna. This pattern was not universally true, however, and beginning in 1961, at least one climbing party each year during the early to mid-1960s (except 1965) headed up the mountain's north side from the park road.[95]

### The 1967 Wilcox Disaster and Its Impact on Climbing Policy

The year 1967, in which Alaskans celebrated the centennial of the Alaska Purchase from Russia, proved to be the most popular year to date for climbing Mount McKinley. Early that year, an eight-man party set out to make the peak's first-ever winter ascent. One died on the way up.[96] On March 1, three of the remaining seven—Ray Genet, Dave Johnston, and Art Davidson—reached the summit. Immediately afterward, however, an unprecedented week-long storm descended on the group, and as Davidson noted in his book *Minus 148°*, the men nearly died as a result.[97] An expensive rescue effort was undertaken, complete with a helicopter (brought up from Seattle) that airlifted out three climbers.[98]

Later in March, the NPS issued a new version of *Mountaineering in Mount McKinley National Park*, a mimeographed guide to would-be climbers in the park. This guide, as noted above, had first been produced in 1947-48 and had been

Pictured here is the twelve-man Wilcox-McKinley Expedition, made up of the nine-man Wilcox party and the three-man Colorado McKinley Expedition, which attempted to climb Mt. McKinley in July 1967. A combination of severe weather and other obstacles resulted in the deaths of seven climbers from this expedition. Mountaineering Records, DENA 13611, Denali National Park and Preserve Museum Collection

revised several times since then, most recently in 1961, 1962, and 1963.[99] The guide had become more detailed over time; the 1952 revision, for example, had been just 4 pages long, but by 1967 it had grown to 9 pages. It incorporated the agency's federal regulations pertaining to park climbing, but in addition it contained warnings, food and equipment advice, reporting requirements, recommended ascent routes, and references for further information. The 1967 revision, which reflected a tightening of the rules since the early 1960s, stated that air support of any kind (air drops included) was "not permitted within the National Parks and Monuments without the written permission of the Superintendent." It reiterated a rule, that had been in place since 1959 if not earlier, that all climbing parties "must consist of at least four members;" ideally, the group should be larger than four members because of its "greater inherent strength and self-rescue capability." It also continued to recommend, as it had since late 1960, that climbers make written arrangements with "the Alaska Rescue Group or other qualified groups" in case of an emergency. Finally, it stated that, beginning in January 1968, all future "extended" expeditions in the park needed to carry a two-way radio.[100]

More than 60 mountaineers summited Mount McKinley in 1967, more than twice the number of any previous year. Most went by way of the West Buttress route and climbed the mountain safely and without incident. But that July, a twelve-man group called the Wilcox-McKinley Expedition met with disaster on the mountain. The expedition—which was an NPS-mandated amalgamation of a nine-man group headed by Joe Wilcox and the three-man Colorado McKinley Expedition, headed by Howard Snyder—decided to climb the peak up the north side, via Karstens Ridge. Internal conflicts between the two groups, a tremendous (Class 6) windstorm that descended on the mountain, poor radio communications, a confusing, tardy rescue effort, and perhaps other factors played a role in the deaths of seven climbers. The seven, all part of Wilcox's original group, died high on the mountain, at the 17,900-foot level or above.[101]

The scope of the disaster, plus the attendant publicity that it generated, forced both NPS officials and the climbing community to examine what went wrong. Some of that post-accident analysis was fairly immediate; additional thoughts came many years later.[102] The American Alpine Club, and others in the climbing community, had been pushing for some time for a relaxation of the NPS's climbing rules, which called for rangers to check climbers' gear, among other provisions. That effort, which continued in the months after the climbers' tragedy, eventually brought about a change in policy. As a latter-day superintendent noted, the agency sought a new rule "primarily because mountaineers objected to [the existing

Lenticular clouds engulfing Mt. McKinley indicate the presence of high winds. The Wilcox-McKinley Expedition encountered extreme winds at their highest camp, compounding their troubles. NPS Photo, Denali National Park and Preserve

rule]."[103] The NPS provided its own reason for steering a new course; as chief ranger Arthur Hayes noted at the time, "While every effort is made to increase climber safety by a fair and rigorous screening [of climbers' gear], it is impossible to be sure that correct judgments are made in all cases."[104]

Three years later, NPS officials enshrined the new climbing philosophy as agency rules. In March 1970, the agency proposed three park climbing regulations. First, all parties interested in climbing either Mount McKinley or Mount Foraker[105] needed to register, and registration needed to include both a statement of each member's climbing experience and a doctor's statement testifying to each member's physical fitness to undertake such a climb. Second, all parties needed to carry "a two-way radio capable of reaching another manned station in ready contact with park headquarters." And third, "as soon as practicable" after the climb, party members needed to "report in with park headquarters." This proposed rule proved noncontroversial, and after minor modifications it was finalized in mid-August 1970.[106]

These rules, however, were not enforced, and several of them were apparently honored in the breach. As noted in a 1974 news editorial,

> Since 1967, there has been no requirement to have a permit before climbing the mountain. The old system granted permission only after a park official checked gear and evaluated the team. Now the philosophy is that Mt. McKinley is the people's mountain, and it's up to the climber to arm himself with gear and judgment before climbing it. Park officials do make an effort to inform climbers of dangers and ask them to report back, but no one [will] be denied a chance to climb the mountain.[107]

A substantially different idea that surfaced in the wake of the tragic 1967 climbing season was the construction of a structure at the 17,200-foot level of Mount McKinley's West Buttress. Dr. Peter Morrison of the University of Alaska's Institute of Arctic Biology proposed the structure, with the full support of Bradford Washburn from the Boston Museum of Science. He envisioned that it would serve three purposes: a rescue base for search parties, "a laboratory for both planned experiments and for observations on climbers ascending and descending," and an emergency shelter. Morrison, who had applied for a $200,000 Defense Department grant that would provide funding for such a structure, pitched the idea to park superintendent George Hall, who was "extremely cordial and cooperative" with him. Morrison, at the time, was also proposing the establishment of an Alaska Mountaineering Center at the University of Alaska campus, of which the West Buttress structure would play a key role.[108] Later that fall, Washburn pushed for

a support structure farther down the mountain. In a letter to Washington-based NPS officials, Washburn stated that

> I don't know of any other major peak in the world that is climbed as frequently as is McKinley that hasn't got adequate shelter somewhere on its slopes, let alone at its base. A shelter of appropriate design and moderate size at, say, McGonagall Pass would not only serve as a valuable spot in which to safeguard supplies and provide shelter at the beginning of an ascent, but it would also provide a much-needed headquarters for rescue operation in time of tragedy.[109]

Washburn's suggestion (which he had previously made during the mid-1950s) made little headway, but Morrison's Institute of Arctic Biology was successful in his grant request, and according to a news report, "a team of science specialists" gathered in Fairbanks in late 1967 "to determine what physiological and psychological tests could best measure men's performance, both on the mountain and in the institute's laboratories." With the "full cooperation" of the NPS, and with logistical help from Don Sheldon and Wien Consolidated Airlines, researchers representing "Project Themis" moved to establish field research camps at both the 14,200-foot and 17,200-foot levels of Mount McKinley. Operations began in June 1968. Due to high winds, the lower camp was not successful, but on the "flank of McKinley's Denali Pass area," Morrison—assisted by Art Davidson—established and ran a tent camp. For two weeks in July, researchers collected meteorological data and "explor[ed] for the first time the debilitating effects imposed on climbers by altitude, stress, and environmental extremes." They were only partially successful, however; they conducted tests only on themselves, not on mountaineers.[110]

**Mountaineering, 1968-1975: Growth, Guides, and Garbage**

As noted above, mountain climbing swelled in popularity during the 1960s. Prior to 1960, climbing Mount McKinley was a rare feat—never before had there been more than three successful expeditions per year—but during the early- to mid-1960s an annual average of more than four expeditions and 20 individuals reached the top. During the Alaska Purchase Centennial year of 1967, a remarkable 14 expeditions and 63 people reached the top of Mount McKinley, and not long afterwards even greater numbers were being tallied. Between 1968 and 1975, in fact, an annual average of 16 expeditions and 83 climbers summited Mount McKinley, while additional expeditions climbed Mount Foraker and other Alaska Range peaks.[111]

At the request of Cliff Hudson, longtime climber Frances Randall became the first Kahiltna Glacier Base Camp manager, serving for nine summers. Every evening Frances would broadcast the mountain weather forecast over the radio and would often repeat it in fluent Japanese, Spanish, Russian and French. She played violin in the Fairbanks Symphony Orchestra and took her violin with her to the glacier. NPS Photo, Roger Robinson Collection

In order to provide access for the swelling ranks of mountaineers, various Talkeetna-based air taxi operations (as noted above) appeared on the scene during the 1960s. By 1975, takeoffs and landings at the 7,200-foot level of Kahiltna Glacier were so common that Cliff Hudson, of

Annie Duquette was the second long-term base camp manager working for the combined Talkeetna air taxi services. She stayed for the entire climbing season of about 80 days. NPS Photo, Roger Robinson Collection

Hudson Air Service in Talkeetna, supported an informal base camp where climbers could find shelter at the beginning and end of their expeditions.[112] Volunteer Frances Randall stepped forward to staff this camp. Back in 1964, as part of a 15-person party, she had been only the fourth woman to summit Mount McKinley. Randall loved the job at the Kahiltna base camp and became a fixture there through the 1983 season. Her death, of cancer in 1984, was a loss keenly felt by Alaska's climbing community.[113] The other well-known Kahiltna personality over the years—variously described as an "air-traffic controller, messenger, nurse, surrogate mother, and shrink"—was Annie Duquette ("Base Camp Annie"), who worked there from 1991 to 2000.[114]

Between the late 1960s and the mid-1970s, a major new element in Mount McKinley mountain climbing was the emergence of professional guiding. The first such long-term guide was Raymond E. Genet. In 1967, as noted above, he had taken part in the first successful wintertime ascent of McKinley, and he followed that feat with additional McKinley summits in August 1967 and May 1968. Soon afterward he applied to the NPS for a special use permit, and in June and July 1969, he successfully led a six-person party to the top of Mount McKinley. The following year, he led three more parties up the mountain: a group of three in May and June, a group of thirteen in July, and a group of four in August and September.[115]

Between 1971 and 1975, Genet and his company—variously called Alaska Mountain Guides, Inc. and Genet Expeditions—was the primary avenue by which commercial clients were guided up Mount McKinley.[116] Genet, as an Alaska-based provider, assumed—or perhaps hoped—that he would be able to serve as either an exclusive or preferred guide.[117] NPS officials, however, had no specific prohibitions over the issuance of special use permits to Lower 48-based guiding companies, so as a result, Bay Area-based Mountain Travel, Inc. led trips up McKinley beginning in 1970, and Tacoma-based Rainier Mountaineering led trips up the mountain beginning in 1974. Several other companies during this period advertised trips up McKinley; it is not known, however, if they actually guided parties on the mountain. (A permit was also issued to a resident of nearby Hurricane, but the permit holder may not have used it.)[118]

Another person that was part of the park guiding scene during this period was Berle Mercer, a rancher from Lignite.[119] In the summer of 1967, Mercer had supplied horse packing services for the ill-fated Wilcox-McKinley Expedition.[120] His involvement with the park, however, extended back a decade or more. In 1957, NPS officials had been in touch with him because his cattle—grazing

**Berle Mercer (left) operated a business that transported climbers' food and equipment with pack horses and mules from the park road at Wonder Lake to McGonagall Pass. He often aided climbers by carrying them across the McKinley River on horseback. Interp. Collection #365, Denali National Park and Preserve**

in the Savage River drainage—had inadvertently wandered south into the park.[121] Then, in early 1961, Mercer had approached NPS officials with an interest in conducting a summertime horseback-riding concession. The agency provided him a special use permit for that purpose, and for several years thereafter he brought horses into the park for recreational rides.[122] Mercer and his horses supported north-side climbing expeditions beginning in 1967. After that date, most years featured at least one Mount McKinley expedition that approached from the north side of the Alaska Range. Mercer's involvement with park climbing expeditions continued until June 1981.[123]

By the early 1970s, the large and growing number of climbers on Mount McKinley (see Figure 4) was beginning to emerge as a public issue. A 1970 climbing-magazine article, for example, spoke of the "excessive number of people" on the West Buttress, and a 1973 news article was headlined "McKinley Like Grand Central."[124] Given the fact that most climbers used the same route, garbage emerged as a problem. A veteran of climbs in both 1969 and 1970 noted that the

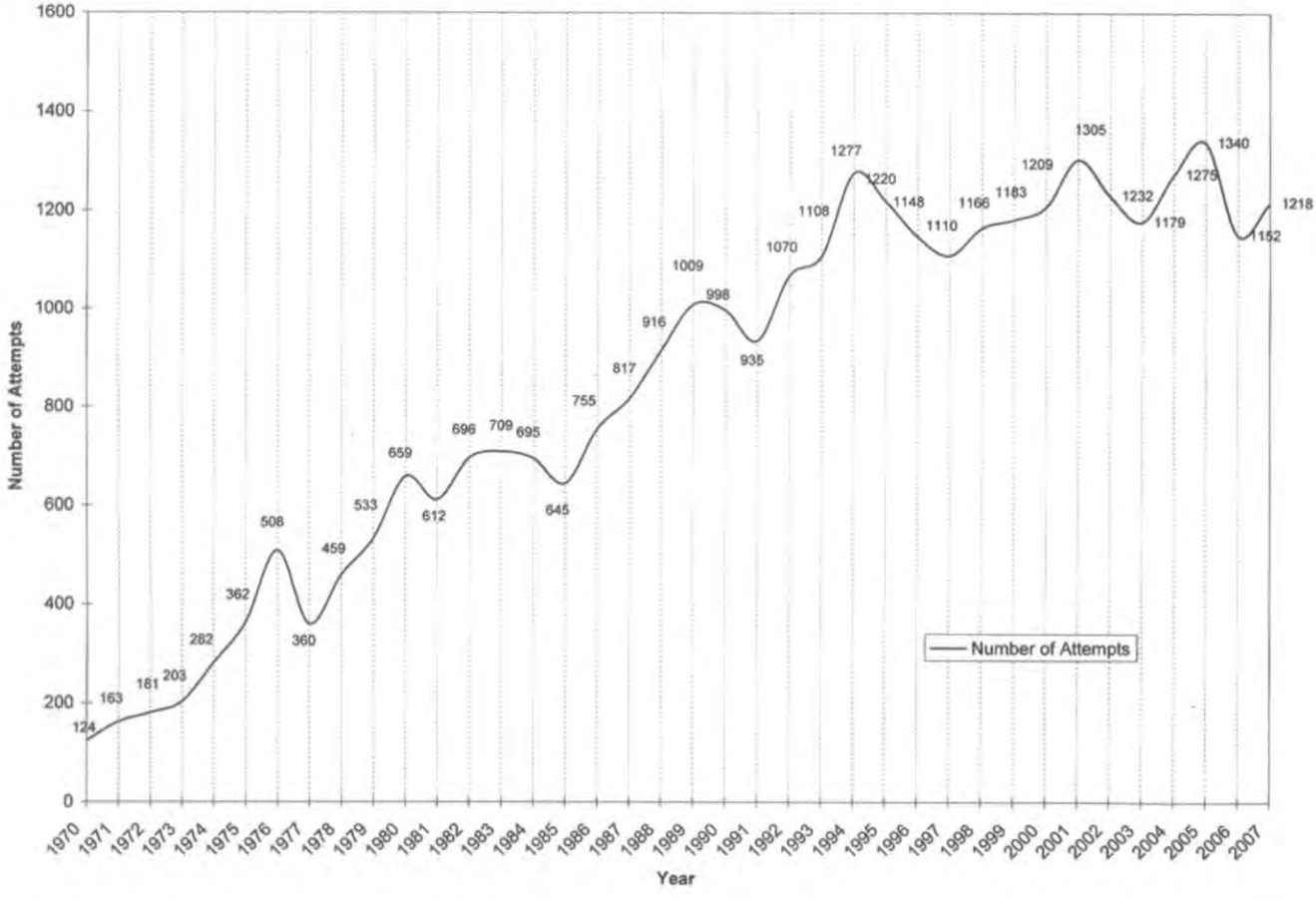
> Residue of camps, their caches and garbage, are everywhere. The camps were fairly neat, but the garbage problem became ghastly at times. In 1969 the Kahiltna Glacier was such a mess that one could easily sight from the air where camps had been located. This year, at 17,250 feet on the West Buttress, the usual high camp for the route, the site was a literal dump. Trash was everywhere. ... It takes little energy and sometimes a short amount of time, if one is up high, to dig a garbage hole three or four feet deep. ... I appeal to my fellow climbers to please make the effort and dig a hole.[125]

The NPS, in response, could do little. For years it had asked hikers and others in the park's backcountry (as it had in other national parks) to follow a pack-it-in, pack-it-out philosophy, but without staff on the mountain, anti-littering rules were impossible to enforce. One writer noted that rangers "put much of the blame on inexperienced climbers who packed in more equipment than needed, then discarded it. They also pointed to increasing numbers of foreign climbers who hadn't developed a 'Keep America Clean' consciousness."[126]

To help, a seven-man expedition from the University of Oregon Outdoor Program, led by Gary

**Figure 4. The increase in numbers of climbers attempting to climb Mt. McKinley each year, from 1970 through 2007, is illustrated by this graph. NPS, Talkeetna Ranger Station, Denali National Park and Preserve**

**Figure 4. Number of Attempts on Mount McKinley by Year**



Gary Grimm, Director of the University of Oregon's outdoor program, organized the first cleanup efforts on Mt. McKinley and continued to lead that movement throughout the 1970s. Roger Robinson Photo

Grimm, made a summit climb in May 1971. When the group reached the 17,200-foot level, it found a large dump containing paper, cans, bottles, food, new and broken equipment, underwear—even plywood doors—plus a large scatter of human waste. According to a news report, the group "burned what they could, smashed what they couldn't burn, and back-packed as much as they could" (about 380 pounds) back down the mountain. Grimm noted that guides had left most of the trash; "they won't bother to bring it back because their clients don't pay to carry garbage." He suggested that much more needed to be done, including a greater regulation of guides. The group returned to the mountain, with much the same results, in 1973.[127]

A more large-scale attempt to remove trash from the mountain took place in July and August 1974, when 16 soldiers from Fort Richardson's 172nd Arctic Light Infantry Brigade were flown by helicopter to the 10,000-foot level of Kahiltna Glacier. Assisted by two NPS rangers, they hiked up the mountain and back down to the 6,500-foot level; they burned more than a ton of flammable debris and hauled another half-ton of garbage back to Anchorage.[128] The following year, in August and September, the same military unit returned to the mountain and hauled another ton of trash away.[129]

Meanwhile, the University of Oregon continued in its cleanup efforts. In 1975 its Outdoor Program made two climbs, for a total of "more than a half dozen" expeditions since it began in 1971. Grimm counseled future climbers that—however charitable their motivation might be—they should not leave caches of food, fuel, or equipment on the mountain. He also urged the NPS to stop the practice of allowing air drops to climbers; in addition, Grimm stated that climbers should be compelled to take down their own refuse or face stiff penalties. Climbers in the program, later called the Denali Rehabilitation Project, climbed again in 1976.[130]

Searching for a way to deal with the ever-increasing problems of accidents, garbage, and other people-related problems, Roger Robinson, who was an avocational climber at the time, recommended that the agency 1) limit both the size and number of parties climbing on the West Buttress, 2) have more NPS contact with climbing parties and better enforcement of existing regulations, and 3) publicize the mountain's problems to national organizations and clubs, both in the U.S. and elsewhere. Gary Brown, the park's chief ranger, largely agreed with Robinson. He noted that "adequate enforcement is our present void, as is enforcement of all our mountaineering requirements." To address the problem, he stated that the agency planned to have two park rangers working "between Talkeetna and the West Buttress" during the 1976 climbing season. "This would provide us with an improved check-in and check-out system. This should also provide us with improved control over trash and equipment removal," he noted. Brown recognized that his plan did not solve the human waste problem. The "real" answer, he explained, was to limit the annual number of

Official NPS policy in 1975 recommended that climbers burn their trash. Roger Robinson Photo

On June 3, 1976, pilot Buddy Woods, in a Hiller 12-J-3 helicopter, landed one time at 20,300 feet, a few yards southeast of Mt. McKinley's summit, to drop off Ray Genet, who assisted with the rescue of two climbers. For this rescue Woods also landed two times at 16,000 feet, four times at 18,700 feet, two times at 19,600 feet, and once at 20,100 feet. Genet Photo, courtesy Talkeetna Ranger Station

expeditions, climbers, or party size. He was not yet ready to do that; he did say, however, that "we are closely reviewing the numbers crisis and look to future limitations."[131]

### The Bicentennial Climbing Season and Its Aftermath

NPS officials, anticipating a big climbing season in 1976, moved to put rangers on the mountain for the first time since 1961, when Richard Stenmark had been part of a successful four-man summit party. In January 1976, the agency hired Robert Gerhard, a former climbing ranger at Mount Rainier National Park, as the new East District ranger.[132] That June, Gerhard led a six-man NPS team on what proved to be a successful 35-day traverse from Kahiltna Glacier to Wonder Lake via Denali Pass and Muldrow Glacier.[133] That experience, which included at least one rescue, proved invaluable to the agency's understanding of climbers' problems and issues, and it proved to be a harbinger of future NPS ranger activities in the Mount McKinley vicinity.[134]

The rangers' presence came none too soon because in 1976, climbers flocked to the slopes of Mount McKinley in unprecedented numbers. To some extent, the mountain's popularity that year was bolstered by the nation's bicentennial; it was, therefore, reminiscent of the surge in climbing interest nine years earlier due to the Alaska Purchase centennial. Perhaps buoyed by a growing reputation among climbers that Mount McKinley was a "technically easy mountain," 73 parties and 508 climbers (114 led by professional guides) started up the mountain, and 339 made it to the top. All of these figures were far greater than in any previous year. Many tried to arrange their treks so as to reach the summit on July 4; and although weather prevented any summit attempts that day, a record 70-plus climbers reached the crest of South Peak on July 6.[135] The season was remarkable for a number of "firsts:" Tayomi Oishi skied all the way from the summit to Kahiltna Glacier; three hang gliders took the same general route, although more quickly; and guide Ray Genet helped set a helicopter altitude record when he jumped out of a helicopter on the summit plateau.[136] Also for the first time, a high Interior Department official—Assistant Secretary Jack Horton—successfully climbed the mountain.[137] But the season had a fair share of tragedy, too. Four climbers died on Mount McKinley and another six on Mount Foraker. In addition, 33 climbers were injured so seriously that they had to be evacuated. The Park Service, which was called on to coordinate rescue activities, was prepared logistically for the tasks at hand. These 21 rescues, however, proved expensive; by season's end the agency was stuck with an $82,142 bill for these unanticipated operations (See Figure 5).[138]

The season's tragedies, and expenses, brought forth an open, public debate on the degree to which mountaineering in the park should be regulated. At one end of the spectrum were those who felt that government had no business regulating climbers, while others felt that in the interests of public safety and expense, government needed to scrutinize all future climbers and, if necessary, reduce the number of climbers. Most people advocated a course midway between those extremes. As Gerhard noted in his year-end report,

> Many people (mostly non-climbers, but also some mountaineers) began

**Figure 5. South District Climbing and Rescue Data, 1976 to Present**

| Year | Number of attempts | Number of summits | Number of deaths | Search and rescues | No. of climbers assisted | Total cost of search and rescues |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1976** | 508 | 339 | 4 | 26 | 43 | $82,142 |
| **1977** | 360 | 284 | 0 | 8 | 16 | 3,369 |
| **1978** | 459 | 270 | 0 | 7 | 13 | 13,816 |
| **1979** | 533 | 351 | 2 | 12 | 22 | 10,000 |
| **1980** | 659 | 283 | 8 | 16 | 23 | 47,335 |
| **1981** | 612 | 321 | 6 | 15 | 30 | 28,171 |
| **1982** | 696 | 310 | 0 | 16 | 27 | 74,871 |
| **1983** | 709 | 474 | 2 | 12 | 15 | 35,939 |
| **1984** | 695 | 324 | 2 | 12 | 14 | 46,432 |
| **1985** | 645 | 321 | 2 | 8 | 10 | 18,113 |
| **1986** | 755 | 406 | 4 | 8 | 12 | 42,990 |
| **1987** | 817 | 251 | 2 | 11 | 12 | 59,205 |
| **1988** | 916 | 551 | 2 | 12 | 18 | 16,790 |
| **1989** | 1,009 | 517 | 6 | 6 | 16 | 42,975 |
| **1990** | 998 | 573 | 3 | 8 | 13 | n.a. |
| **1991** | 935 | 557 | 0 | 8 | 15 | n.a.** |
| **1992** | 1,070 | 515 | 11 | 22 | 28 | 206,000 |
| **1993** | 1,108 | 670 | 1 | 16 | 24 | 70,800 |
| **1994** | 1,277 | 702 | 3 | 21 | 41 | 87,631 |
| **1995** | 1,220 | 523 | 6 | 13 | 32 | 147,167 |
| **1996** | 1,148 | 489 | 2 | 14 | 17 | 173,500 |
| **1997** | 1,110 | 561 | 1 | 13 | 22 | 157,776 |
| **1998** | 1,166 | 420 | 3 | 12 | 23 | 211,189 |
| **1999** | 1,183 | 508 | 0 | 9 | 14 | 103,950 |
| **2000** | 1,209 | 630 | 0 | 15 | 20 | 188,496 |
| **2001** | 1,305 | 772 | 0 | 10 | 12 | 56,137 |
| **2002** | 1,232 | 645 | 1 | 21 | 47 | 159,562 |
| **2003** | 1,179 | 688 | 0 | 14 | 16 | 121,312 |
| **2004** | 1,275 | 656 | 1 | 16 | 19 | 138,987 |
| **2005** | 1,340 | 775 | 2 | 13 | 17 | 115,497 |
| **2006** | 1,152 | 581 | 1 | 19 | 27 | 297,140 |
| **2007** | 1,218 | 573 | 2 | 19 | 23 | 210,857 |

Note: Data on summit attempts, successful summits, and deaths pertain to the South Peak of Mount McKinley, while search and rescue data pertain to all of the park unit's South District.

n.a. – Information not available. Data in italics are approximate.

** - In 1991, the NPS began contracting for the use of a Aerospatiale Lama high-altitude helicopter, which was based at the Talkeetna Airport throughout the climbing season. The cost of this helicopter was not included in the cost data noted above.

Source: NPS, "Mount McKinley South Peak (20,320 feet) Attempts and Summits;" NPS, "Climbing Deaths on Denali," both in Talkeetna Ranger Station files. Rescue data from NPS, "South District Search and Rescue Cost Summary," courtesy of Maureen McLaughlin.

demanding that the climbing parties who need to be rescued should pay the costs of their rescue. Others feel that all climbing parties should post a bond or show proof of insurance before being allowed to climb McKinley. Several outdoor organizations have proposed that all government agencies, except the military, stop providing assistance to parties that request a rescue. Many people feel that the National Park Service should re-institute the old regulations which gave us the authority to screen applicants and their equipment and deny them the right to climb if we did not feel they were qualified. A few climbers feel that guide services should not be allowed to operate on Mount McKinley since this activity allows less experienced climbers to be on the mountain.[139]

In response to these questions, Gerhard suggested only that "the National Park Service regulate mountaineering activity as little as possible, with necessary restriction being recommended by or agreed to by mountaineers and mountaineering organizations." The agency's regional director, Russell Dickenson, agreed; he stated that "I don't believe the Park Service ought to be making that kind of judgment. ... If it ever gets to the point where restrictions are required, it ought to be done by one's peers." Gerhard further noted that no major changes would be implemented in 1977. To find out more about climbers' attitudes, he sent an informational newsletter to the leader of every 1976 climbing party. Fewer than half of those leaders responded, however, and climbers' apparent lack of interest prevented the survey's completion.[140] Meanwhile, Interior Department officials made their voices known. Assistant Interior Secretary Jack Horton, who had summited the mountain in late June, told an Anchorage reporter that he did not encourage "further government encroachment" in the form of regulating climbers. Several months later, Dickenson went a step further and told a Spokane audience that "there should be a responsibility on an organized climbing party to at least partially reimburse the government or provide for its own rescue."[141]

In 1977 the NPS, as promised, stationed two mountaineering rangers (Bob Butts and Nick Hartzell) at Talkeetna.[142] According to an NPS report, they "contacted each expedition prior to climbing. These rangers discussed routes, equipment, medical problems, hazards, and rate of ascent with virtually every climber approaching the mountains from the south side of the park." Given the fact that the difficulties of 1976 had been so well publicized, climbers were apparently either better prepared or more prudent. As a result, no one died in the high Alaska Range in 1977. Only two helicopter evacuations were needed (one on Mt. McKinley, the other on Mt. Foraker) and just two fixed-wing rescue operations were conducted (both on Mount McKinley). As a result, air evacuation costs plum-

**Rangers Nick Hartzell and Bob Butts created this simple outhouse design and constructed it in Talkeetna in 1977. The outhouse was placed above a 10-foot hole in the glacier. The last year for pit toilets at the Kahiltna Glacier Base Camp was 2005. Roger Robinson Photo**

meted more than 95 percent, to just $3,369; the government's costs for the fixed-wing rescues, moreover, were paid for by the injured climbers. The two NPS rangers played a direct role in managing climbing activities that year; they carried out two ten-day patrols along the West Buttress route, and gave three injured climbers sufficient assistance that they were able to avoid an air evacuation.[143]

Recognizing the growing waste-disposal problem, Park Service rangers in 1977 initiated a "climb clean" policy that required climbers to pack out all gear, refuse, and fixed line. Their emphasis was on educating mountaineers about the policy as part of their pre-climb orientation, in Talkeetna. Rangers that year also helped install the first pit toilet on the mountain, at the Kahiltna base camp.[144] Climbers were reminded that "all trash, equipment, and unused food must be removed from the Park. If you carry it up, you can carry it back down." This advice, however, did little at first to ameliorate the problem; the following year, a mountaineering ranger noted that McKinley's "well-publicized garbage problem continues ... this year it appeared worse than in previous years."[145]

In 1978, managing McKinley's climbers became more difficult. The number of climbers increased after the previous year's dip, and the weather—which had been generally good the previous two years—proved relatively stormy. The mountain, moreover, again attracted people who had no business being on the mountain. (A climber from Colorado was responsible for a "poorly organized and poorly led" 13-member group that unsuccessfully attempted the West Buttress route, and soon afterward, a climber at the 17,200-foot level requested an evacuation from both the NPS and local air services because he had a "very important business engagement" in Africa.) Two Japanese climbers were killed on Mount Foraker; in addition, eleven climbers sustained accidents that required an air evacuation; expenses related to the seven rescue operations cost the NPS $13,816. Talkeetna-based rangers Dave Buchanan and Nick Hartzell conducted much the same program—complete with two 10-day West Buttress patrols—that agency rangers had done in 1977.[146]

Recognizing the increasing—and public—costs associated with air rescues, various people began to clamor for climbers to offset rescue costs by posting a bond. This suggestion, as noted above, had been aired by Robert Gerhard in 1976. As far back as July 1972, however, the *Anchorage Daily Times* had called for the adoption of either bonding or insurance; in May 1976, in the midst of the mountain's most accident-prone climbing season, it reiterated that call. Then, in early 1978, Alaska Rep. Larry Carpenter (R-Fairbanks), asked U.S. Senator Ted Stevens to get the NPS's views on the subject. In response, NPS Associate Director Daniel Tobin noted that his agency had the legal authority to recover rescue costs, through either direct billing or a bonding requirement. Tobin noted, however, that

> The cost of a major search or rescue operation is well beyond the ability of most people to pay directly. Inquiries thus far have revealed that bonding, short of a full cost deposit, is not available and that conventional carriers will not underwrite insurance. Registration fees sufficient to offset rescue costs would be prohibitive to many climbers. Further, any system of recovering costs would penalize the responsible, self-sufficient, and well-conditioned parties, along with those who use poor judgment or suffer from an accident or illness. [Given that] no charges should be assessed in a way that would discourage one in distress from asking for assistance ... we question the feasibility of holding [climbers] liable for the entire financial burden. ... We believe that more intensive management of climbing activities ... will tend to keep costs at a relatively low level. ... Another year or two of experience will tell.[147]

**Guide Regulation**

As noted above, the first person sanctioned to conduct guiding activities in the park was Richard McGowan, who obtained a special use permit and led a single, unsuccessful 1963 trip. The second Mount McKinley guide was Ray Genet, who led six clients to the top in June and July 1969. Until the mid-1970s, Genet's Alaska Mountain Guides was the primary guide service on the mountain, although several others were active as well. Bay Area-based Mountain Travel, Inc. began leading trips in 1970, the nonprofit National Outdoor Leadership School began in 1971, and Tacoma-based Rainier Mountaineering started there in 1974.[148]

In 1976, the mountain was far more popular than in previous years, and of the 508 climbers who reached the top, 114 (22.5 percent) were led by professional guides. Five companies guided clients up the mountain that year: three veteran groups (Alaska Mountain Guides, Mountain Travel, and Rainier Mountaineering) along with two new organizations (Mountain Trip from

Anchorage and Fantasy Ridge Mount McKinley Expedition from Estes Park, Colorado). Most groups were well-prepared and were escorted in relatively small groups. Genet, however, amassed 44 climbers in three closely-spaced groups and shepherded them all up the mountain at the same time. Other guides complained about Genet's methods, claiming that he was "spreading [him]self too thin," and one of his clients died (of pulmonary edema) at the 17,200-foot level. During the winter of 1976-77, the NPS responded to the criticism by roughing out a proposal to issue four-year concession permits to a limited number of guides; to retain that permit, moreover, guides would need to demonstrate minimum qualifications regarding previous experience, technical climbing ability, customer satisfaction, and other criteria.[149] Late in 1978 they again considered the matter, but as Gerhard noted, "many questions about management of Alaska lands will remain cloudy or unanswered until after Congress acts on an Alaska Lands Bill, and permits for mountain guide service operations are caught in that current." As a result, the NPS instead chose to issue six special use permits that year to mountaineering guide services.[150]

In 1980, Congress finally passed the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act. That same year, NPS authorities went ahead with its long-delayed plan. On May 1, the agency issued a prospectus for mountain guide services and asked all interested applicants to provide relevant information about their qualifications and experience, particularly as it pertained to Mount McKinley and adjacent peaks. Fifteen firms responded to the prospectus. Between August and November of that year, a three-person panel weighed a variety of factors and offered four-year concession permits (until December 1984) to the six top candidates: 1) Aerie Northwest of Seattle, 2) Fantasy Ridge Alpinism of Estes Park, 3) Genet Expeditions of Talkeetna, 4) Mountain Trip of Kasilof, 5) North Cascades Alpine School of Bellingham, and 6) Rainier Mountaineering of Tacoma.[151]

Shortly after the permits were issued, an *Anchorage Daily Times* reporter spoke to Denali National Park and Preserve Superintendent Robert Cunningham about the new permit system. Cunningham noted that

> the change to a concession system was made for several reasons ... including meeting Park Service regulations that require the use of bidding to select firms conducting commercial operations in national parks. ... [T]he new system will provide reasonable insurance to clients that their guides are experienced and economically capable of handling the demands of expeditions on Mount McKinley and other mountains. Also, ... the system will control and restrict climbers on the mountain. Commercial expeditions will be limited to 15 clients. No firm can start a second party up a mountain within 15 days of its first group's start.[152]

Not surprisingly, a handful of companies that were not selected openly questioned the agency's methodology. One of those companies was the National Outdoor Leadership School (NOLS), which was based in Wyoming but with an Alaska office in Palmer. The company had been active throughout the 1970s, and as noted in a 1976 article, the school "had a reputation for safety and good logistics on the mountain." The problem stemmed from an honest difference of opinion on how the nonprofit organization reported its revenues, and by February 1981 NPS personnel recognized that the agency "may have erred during the evaluation process." In June 1981, park personnel granted NOLS the right to continue guiding at historical usage levels (which was a single trip up the mountain) that year. That December, the solicitor's interpretation of the newly-enacted Alaska park regulations allowed a continuation of that practice in 1982, and in October 1982 the park superintendent issued a regular, four-year concessions permit (retroac-

**In 1979 Ray Genet, left, and Brian Okonek, who took this picture, guided the first ascent of Mt. McKinley with a dog team. Mushers Susan Butcher and Joe Redington Sr., center, took part of their dog team to the summit by the West Buttress route. The lead dog appears on the left side of this summit photo. Brian Okonek Collection**

Mountaineering and aviation have been partners on Mt. McKinley since 1932. Lowell Thomas Jr., of Talkeetna Air Taxi, tested his Helio Courier on this first landing at 14,200 feet in 1983. This aircraft is capable of short takeoffs and landings, and he found it worked well for resupplying the medical camp and assisting with rescues at this location. Roger Robinson Photo

tive to January 1981) that gave NOLS much the same status as the six commercial services that had been awarded concession permits in late 1980.[153]

Despite the careful, deliberative process that resulted in the selection of seven carefully-screened concessions permittees, NPS officials were slow to enforce its regulations against non-selected companies. The agency's 1981 mountaineering summary, for example, listed two unauthorized, active commercial guides from Germany and a third from Japan, and in 1983 it listed two unauthorized, active climbs conducted by nonprofit educational organizations.[154] The agency finally began to enforce the regulations in 1984. Citations were issued to an American and a Japanese guide; in 1985 a German guide was cited; and in 1986 violation notices were issued to two Americans and a New Zealander.[155]

Given the fact that commercial guides escorted between 20 and 25 percent of Mount McKinley climbers up the mountain during this period, and because there was a consistently high interest in climbing McKinley in the years that followed, the companies that the NPS selected as permittees in December 1980 could count on a predictable clientele. It is perhaps not surprising, therefore, that four of these six companies remained as commercial guides on Mount McKinley for ten years or more.[156]

These permits, however, pertained only to activities within the so-called "old park," and according to language in the newly-passed Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act, there were no limits on the number of enterprises that could conduct mountaineering guiding activities on lands beyond the "old park" boundaries. At first, companies showed lukewarm interest in "new park" guiding activities, but by 1983 nine different firms were signed on as commercial use licensees. Only one of these (NOLS) was also serving as an "old park" guide.[157]

The various Talkeetna flying services also began to be regulated at this time. When Congress passed ANILCA in 1980 and "old" Mount McKinley National Park tripled in size, Kahiltna Glacier and other popular landing areas were included in Denali National Park. Flying onto glaciers south of the Alaska Range was a well-established use by this time, and the only bureaucratic impact of the park's expansion was that the flying services using the park needed to obtain a NPS commercial use license (CUL), just as "new park" mountaineering guides did. For the first few years after ANILCA's passage, those who held CULs for air taxi and air tour services included Hudson Air Service, K2 Aviation, Talkeetna Air Taxi, and Lowell Thomas, Jr. During the early and mid-1980s, companies doing business in the park engaged primarily in pickup and dropoff services for Alaska Range mountaineers. By the late 1980s, however, flightseeing had become so popular that it was becoming a significant part of air tour companies' revenues. Some flightseeing companies offered visitors the opportunity to walk on an Alaska Range glacier, but many other tourist flights remained airborne outside of Talkeetna.[158]

The National Park Service Kahiltna Glacier base camp is established each spring at the beginning of the climbing season. The camp provides support for independent and guided climbing expeditions during the main climbing season. NPS Photo, Roger Robinson Collection

During this period, changes in the park guides were also being manifested on the north side of the Alaska Range. As noted above, horse-packer Berle Mercer had begun supplying mountaineers' expeditions beginning in the mid-1960s, and given the continued interest in north-side ascents, Mercer continued his service until 1981. Continuing in his stead was Dennis Kogl, a McKinley Park-based operator who had run commercial sled dog trips into the park since 1973 under the name Denali Dog Tours and Wilderness Freighters. Beginning in the winter of 1977-78, Kogl began to provide freight support to mountaineers who started their climbs on the north side of the Alaska Range. (See Chapter 8.) By 1982, he was considered an exclusive provider of dog sled transportation in the park.[159] Kogl continued operating his business until 1985; in more recent years, others have stepped in to provide similar services.[160]

### Climbing Management, 1979-1984

As noted above, the popularity of climbing dropped by more than 25 percent between 1976 (the popular bicentennial year) and 1977. Afterward, however, the numbers resumed their steady upward climb. By 1979 the number of McKinley summit attempts—533—was higher than it had been in 1976, and in 1983 more than 700 people registered to climb Mount McKinley.[161] Not surprisingly, the weather for climbers was better in some years that in others, and perhaps for that reason, seasons that had a high degree of rescue activity, injuries, and deaths (1980 had eight deaths and 1981 had six, for example) alternated with years that had a relative lull in these areas.[162] Years having a large number of rescues and deaths, not surprisingly, brought on a spate of news articles. But every year brought the need for at least seven rescues, and the supposedly "safe" year of 1982, when there were no Mount McKinley climbing deaths, demanded sixteen. (See Figure 5.) Each year, therefore, brought forth editorials and letters to the editor calling for climbers to pay their own way by either posting a bond, obtaining insurance, or paying the NPS a fee.[163]

During the late 1970s, climbers started pressuring NPS officials to once again relax the agency's decade-old regulations. As noted above, a park-specific regulation applied in 1970 called for all climbers to register before their ascent; to provide information on previous climbing experience; to submit physician's statements certifying the physical fitness of each mountaineer; to have each party carry a two-way radio; and to require a member of each party report to park headquarters after the climb.[164] But in the fall of 1979, the Alaskan Alpine Club began to lobby for fewer regulations. The NPS recognized that climbing was no longer an isolated activity. They also knew "that better and more sophisticated equipment, techniques, and clothing have reduced the need for regulated safety considerations." Furthermore, as an NPS official later stated, "we could find no correlation between the requirements and who did or did not get in trouble on Mount McKinley." In May 1980, therefore, it proposed to eliminate all park-specific regulations except for a pre-climb registration.[165] Both Anchorage newspapers protested; the *News* noted that "the government does have responsibility to ensure that parties embarking on expeditions in a National Park meet some standards," while the more

conservative *Times* stated that "many taxpayers see stricter regulations as the key to reduced government costs." But as the *Times* also noted, "climbers hope the regulations ... are on the way out. Rules beget rules, and soon their freedom is gone, they say." It further noted that some climbers balked even at the minimal registration requirement, because "any sort of regimentation goes against the grain of those who are motivated to climb mountains."[166] During the public comment period, several protested the relaxation of climbing regulation, and several also recommended requiring that "all climbers provide evidence of financial means or post a bond." NPS authorities felt that the Talkeetna-based rangers provided a sufficient technical role, and that "charging individuals for public safety services" was too all-encompassing to be addressed in such a specific rule. The final rule was implemented, as proposed, on December 26, 1980.[167]

During this period, rescue techniques were continuously modified and improved. In 1978, the military's High Altitude Rescue Team—which had been founded in 1972 and was based at Elmendorf Air Force Base—began training on Mount McKinley. The following year it rescued a Japanese climber from Mt. McKinley's 16,000-foot level, and the team continued its activities—from either Elmendorf or Fort Wainwright—for years afterward.[168]

An equally important innovation was the commencement of a major health program. As a government report noted in late 1981,

> The High Latitude Health Research Project of the University of Alaska Anchorage began what is hoped to be a several year medical research program on Mount McKinley this summer. ... a lengthy questionnaire ... was given to climbers as they returned from their climbs [which] dealt with such issues as type of equipment used, speed of ascent, weather conditions, and medical problems encountered. ... Although funding and logistical problems are not yet solved, the Project hopes to place teams of physicians on the mountain next year and in succeeding years. These teams will staff camps at the Kahiltna base camp and also at the 14,200 feet on the West Buttress during at least a major portion of the climbing season.[169]

The following year, medical personnel were indeed stationed on the mountain. During most of May and June 1982, teams of doctors staffed the two above-named camps, and "though their primary mission was to conduct medical research, the doctors also assisted numerous climbers with minor to major medical problems." The *Anchorage Times* lauded the teams, noting that "in at least two instances in 1982, lives were saved by doctors who were serving in these camps. ... [T]he stationing of a couple [of] physicians along the way seems like a good idea" and "should be considered for future seasons."[170] The High Latitude Research Project (or Group) continued its valuable work

**Dr. Peter Hackett's medical research program, based at the 14,200-foot camp on Mt. McKinley, also provided medical assistance to climbers in distress. NPS Photo, Roger Robinson Collection**

The first NPS ranger residence in Talkeetna was this mobile home, located just west of the railroad tracks. Roger Robinson Photo

in 1983—a government report that year stated that "this research team was surely instrumental in saving several lives, and their presence on the mountain will be sought in coming years." A lack of funding after that season, however, forced the program's discontinuance. Worried that "without the HLRG camp, climbers [would] have to again take the responsibility to caution themselves," the NPS in 1984 set up a medical and rescue camp at the 14,200-foot level. Rangers established the camp that was operated by volunteer medical doctors and volunteer mountaineers. The camp proved "successful in reducing both the number and the costs of search and rescue incidents on Mt. McKinley."[171]

The problems of garbage, which had been out of the news since the various University of Oregon climbs during the 1970s, re-emerged as an issue in 1983. An NPS overview outlined the problem in this way:

> Over the last ten years, organizations and individuals in the climbing community along with the NPS have waged an intensive campaign to reduce the amount of litter on Mount McKinley. [W]e are satisfied that the mountaineers of today are climbing Mount McKinley with a much more sensitive ethic regarding litter and abandoned gear. But for the most part the question of human waste has not been dealt with. ... As the number of climbers keeps increasing, it becomes harder and harder to find clean snow for cooking and drinking. So this year, the climbing rangers ... made a special point of urging all climbers to bag their human wastes and to dump the bags into deep crevasses [rather than burying them near often-used camps]. Plastic bags were provided by the NPS for those who needed them. [We] are confident that climbers in future years will be even more sensitive to the proper handling of human wastes.[172]

In 1984, mountaineering rangers (according to their annual report) personally contacted "nearly all of the West Buttress climbers and emphasize[d] the importance of proper sanitation and trash removal practices." And, for the first time, the agency required all climbers to deposit human waste into crevasses (and not in hastily-dug pit latrines, as had previously been the common practice). Those measures—backed by a citation and $250 fine issued to one non-complying European party—"seems to have made a significant contribution toward cleaner campsites."[173]

The NPS established a slightly stronger presence in Talkeetna during this period. After two years of makeshift operations in the local fire hall, rangers—courtesy of owner Jim Sharp—moved to the Talkeetna Air Taxi hangar. Then, in April 1980, the NPS obtained a five-year lease on a 100' x 50' parcel just west of the Alaska Railroad tracks and just south of the old railroad depot.[174] Shortly afterward, NPS personnel moved a

East District Ranger Bob Gerhard directed the NPS mountaineering program from his post at park headquarters. Here, inside the trailer facility in 1983, he was preparing for a spring backcountry patrol. NPS Photo, Roger Robinson Collection

single-wide trailer from Fairbanks to the parcel, after which it was occupied by two seasonal rangers and a Student Conservation Association employee. Throughout this period, East District Ranger Robert Gerhard oversaw the park's mountaineering program. But in May 1984, Gerhard transferred to Lake Clark National Park and Preserve, and Robert Seibert, who moved to the area from Hawaii Volcanoes National Park, became the park's first South District Ranger (and the park's first year-round south-side employee).[175] During midsummer 1984, Seibert opened up the agency's first Talkeetna office in a log cabin it leased near Main Street and just south of the Fairview Inn. The cabin was owned by Roberta Sheldon and was locally known as the Genet Building, because guide Ray Genet and his clients had constructed it during the late 1970s. Beginning in the spring of 1985, NPS personnel used the building for climbing orientations.[176]

### New Regulations: Their Context and Consequences, 1985-1995

In 1983, as noted above, the number of Mount McKinley climbers topped 700 for the first time.

In 1984 the NPS leased a cabin to be used as a ranger contact station. Shown center, the log cabin was located in downtown Talkeetna and provided an opportunity to contact climbers going to or coming from Mt. McKinley. NPS Photo, Roger Robinson Collection

Recognizing the importance of improving foreign outreach, ranger Roger Robinson, in 1982, provided orientation to a Japanese climbing group at the 14,200-foot camp. NPS Photo, Roger Robinson Collection

The mountain's popularity dropped modestly for the next two years (in 1985, 645 people tried to summit the peak) but they rose quickly for the next three years, and in 1989 more than a thousand people headed up Mount McKinley's slopes. And for the next several years the mountain remained popular, consistently attracting more than 900 climbers per year.[177]

The great majority of those climbers got up and down the mountain safely and without incident. But in every year save one, one or more lives were lost on its slopes.[178] And every year both the NPS and the military were called on to conduct numerous rescue operations. The military absorbed (and did not detail) its annual rescue costs, but the NPS, which was more forthcoming, spent tens of thousands of dollars each year on Mount McKinley rescue operations. These costs, as in previous years, caused some taxpayers to conclude that because mountaineering (as noted in one news article) was "purely a self-centered recreation, with few practical social benefits," climbers should therefore have to pay their own rescue bills. Others, however, argued that rescues for mountaineers should be treated no differently than for boaters or recreational pilots; the cost of mountain rescues, in this context, paled by comparison. A May 1988 search for seven Gambell walrus hunters, for example, cost the Coast Guard and the Alaska Department of Public Safety more than $1 million, and a May 1992 search for five fishermen lost in a Cessna near Yakutat cost the Air National Guard more than $1.1 million.[179]

Throughout this period, the NPS worked with others to maintain a camp at the 14,200-foot level of Mount McKinley. Funding for the High Latitude Research Project (also known as the Denali Medical Research Project) proved spotty—it operated in 1985 and again in 1988-89 before closing down—and the NPS did what it could to assist Dr. Peter Hackett in his work. Rangers occupied the site as well, during years when the research camp was both active and inactive, because their presence at the site allowed them "more reliably able to determine" if rescues were really needed. To assist rangers with their rescue work, the NPS in 1987 installed a rescue storage box at the 17,200-foot level.[180]

Park Service rangers, during this period, recognized that foreigners accounted for a disproportionate number of search-and-rescue incidents. More specifically, foreign climbers in 1986 comprised about 25 percent of all climbers but 90 percent of search-and-rescue operations. To improve its foreign outreach—which until then had been limited to German and Japanese mountaineering brochures—agency staff prepared German, Japanese, and English-language slide/tape programs on climbing safety and ethics. And the following year, similar programs were made for French- and Spanish-speaking climbers. The NPS continued its outreach efforts through periodic updates of its foreign-language mountaineering brochures, both in the late 1980s and the mid-1990s. Rangers also carried on correspondence with foreign climbers' organizations, including groups in Korea. But after

several Koreans died on the mountain in 1992 (see below), the agency sent ranger J.D. Swed on a well-publicized nine-day trip to Korea, where he warned climbing groups about the mountain's difficulty and urged caution.[181]

After the disastrous years of 1980 and 1981, which recorded eight and six deaths respectively, the following decade witnessed two difficult years: 1986, with four deaths, and 1989, with six. None of these deaths produced more than incident-specific press coverage. In 1990 the NPS, working with Alan Ewert of the U.S. Forest Service, surveyed climbers on how Mount McKinley should be managed. What provoked the survey, however, was not the 1989 deaths but instead the thousand-plus climbers on the mountain that year, because the survey's purpose was "to determine users' perceptions of sanitation, trash and crowding issues." Bob Seibert, asked in 1990 about the survey's repercussions, stated that rangers might try to steer climbers away from the May-June peak season, and "eventually" the agency might need to institute a permit system on the mountain, particularly on the West Buttress route.[182] The study's results, however, were surprising. Seibert stated that "although there is obvious room for improvement, the study showed that trash, sanitation and crowding are still within acceptable limits for most Mount McKinley users."[183]

The public's attitude toward mountaineering safety changed abruptly in 1992 when eleven people died on the slopes of Mount McKinley. Among them were two Italians, a Swiss, three Koreans, four Canadians, and one American guide: the well-respected mountaineer Terrance "Mugs" Stump. The large number of victims—three more than in any previous year—plus Stump's prominence among climbers provoked a major press reaction, with articles in both local newspapers and in major magazines such as *Newsweek* and the *Economist*.[184]

In the inevitable postmortem that followed these deaths, commentators traced three to inexperience, with one article noting that "some have never even climbed before." Inasmuch as foreigners had accounted for more than 90 percent of recent deaths, South District ranger J.D. Swed stated that many felt they could "do" McKinley in a week and thus didn't bring the food and equipment needed to survive extended weather delays. But the other eight who died, like Stump, were well-equipped and experienced. One factor that did not play a role in the deaths was the combined rescue effort, which included 22 rescues. As the *Newsweek* writer noted, "The death toll could easily have doubled but for intrepid rescues by National Park rangers, who plucked two climbers from crevasses and evacuated half a dozen others."[185] The NPS that year spent some $206,000 rescuing climbers and removing bodies from Mount McKinley, and the military expended an additional $225,000. The lion's share of the NPS's expenses—about $180,000—were fixed costs associated with having an Aerospatiale Lama high-altitude helicopter on standby at the Talkeetna airport.[186] The agency had first arranged for the helicopter—and had first borne the

**Denali's first full-time South District Ranger, Robert Seibert, on the phone, coordinated the winter rescue of three missing Japanese climbers in 1989. Regional Public Information Officer, John Quinley, right, prepares for a media statement at the Talkeetna trailer. NPS Photo, Roger Robinson Collection**

**A Lama high-altitude helicopter was first contracted in 1991 to stand by for administrative and rescue work in Denali National Park. That year a Korean climber with altitude illness was evacuated from the 14,200-foot camp and taken to the Kahiltna Glacier base camp for further transport. NPS Photo, Roger Robinson Collection**

higher costs—during the 1991 climbing season. The move was necessary because the U.S. Army, due to Persian Gulf war commitments, was unable to supply a Chinook helicopter, as it had for more than a decade. After 1992, rescue costs remained high; in 1995, for example, the NPS spent $126,000 and the military another $292,000.[187]

The 1993 climbing season proved a pleasant contrast to the events of the previous year. Just one person died, and only 14 needed to be rescued.[188] Officials in the new Clinton administration, however, felt that the $190,000 spent on those rescues (and similarly high costs at other parks) was too high. On August 31, the NPS announced that it was working on a nationwide plan to have climbers and other adventure travelers pay their own way by requiring either a bond, fee, or rescue insurance. The plan would be tested during the spring of 1994 at two national parks: Mount Rainier in Washington and Denali in Alaska. If the plan proved successful other risk takers, such as kayakers and hang-gliders, might face similar charges in the other fifty national parks.[189] The new costs were justified by Assistant Interior Secretary Bonnie Cohen, who stated that

> A basic level of public safety should clearly be provided by government, but the increasing participation in high-risk recreation has pushed the cost of search and rescue to record levels. We want the Interior Department to be the leader in finding fair methods to provide for search and rescue capabilities in our parks without bankrupting other missions, such as resource protection and visitor service.

Cohen's boss, Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt, justified the new fees within a larger context; just as grazing fees were being raised and below-market timber sales were being phased out, the person who used the outdoors for sport might need to pay more. And given the fact that climbers paid an average $4,249 for their expedition (according to an NPS estimate that year), the proposed fee was relatively modest. But climbers, not surprisingly, hated the idea; they protested that levying a fee on climbers (but not on hunters or private pilots) was unfair, and as one journalist noted, "most climbers would prefer the government simply get out of the rescue business and get rid of the standby helicopter."[190]

In October 1993, NPS officials announced that they would delay the fees for a year; they admit-

This overview of the 17,200-foot camp shows the most extreme established camp on the West Buttress route of Mt. McKinley. The NPS attempts to maintain a ranger presence at this location to assist climbers suffering from the debilitating effects of altitude, cold and high winds. The trail leading out of camp climbs to Denali Pass, a section of the route with a high accident rate. NPS Photo, Roger Robinson Collection

ted at the time that specifics of the plan had not yet been worked out. But by early March 1994, Cohen had worked out the remaining details. Each climber, according to the plan, would be required to pay a $200 fee. A month later, the NPS held a series of April public meetings; at those meetings, climbers told officials that they were just as dissatisfied with the plan as they had been the previous September. As a practical matter, however, the NPS needed the additional revenues; as climbing ranger J.D. Swed later remarked, "With increasing numbers of climbers and decreasing budgets, the NPS designed this program to share a portion of these costs with those who benefit directly from the service provided."[191]

The NPS, over the next six months, reconsidered the matter and decided to reduce the proposed fee (that would apply to both Mt. McKinley and Mt. Foraker) from $200 to $150. Late that fall, when it became known that the fee would be imposed, the American Alpine Club threatened a lawsuit over the matter, noting that billing climbers without similar charges for backpackers, rafters, kayakers and others was clearly discriminatory. Despite that threat, the NPS issued a regulatory notice for its "new mountaineering program" in mid-December 1994; it stated that the fee would be imposed for the 1995 climbing season.[192] The fees were justified as follows:

> The fee ... will help offset mountaineering administrative costs associated with prepositioning and maintaining the high-altitude ranger camp at 14,200 feet on the West Buttress route, mountaineering patrol salaries, education materials aimed at reducing the number of accidents, transportation and supplies. The cost of administering the international mountaineering program (climbers represented 23 countries in 1994) has increased over the past several years and consumes a disproportionate amount of the park budget.[193]

The fees were imposed as scheduled, and the NPS collected $159,925 from climbers that year, followed by approximate revenues of $152,000 and $159,000 in 1996 and 1997, respectively.[194]

As part of its December 1994 notice, the NPS also included language requiring all climbers to register at least 60 days prior to their expeditions.[195]

Guides work to prepare their clients for climbing Mt. McKinley by practicing skills such as crevasse rescue. Brian Okonek Photo

In an attempt to enforce this provision and make it effective for the 1995 climbing season, the agency issued an interim rule on the subject on March 31, 1995, just a few weeks before the climbing season began. The rule was to have become effective immediately. But because of the late issuance date for both the notice and the interim rule, many foreign climbers were unaware of the early-application deadline, and in response, the NPS waived the requirement for 1995. That September, the agency issued a proposed (permanent) rule regarding both the fee and the 60-day preregistration. No one responded during the public comment period, so in February 1996 the agency published a final rule, which became effective on March 25.[196] Rangers that year made a "lenient transition" toward both the fee imposition and the 60-day requirement; beginning in 1997 both rules were strictly enforced.[197]

Between the mid-1980s and the mid-1990s, modest changes were made in the regulation of the park's guides. As noted above, the number of guides operating in the "old park" was limited beginning in the 1981 climbing season, and for more than a decade the NPS issued just seven mountaineering permits per year. Outside of the old park, the number of annual CULs issued to guiding companies was more fluid; between 1985 and 1995, the number of such companies was as high as fourteen or as low as two. During this period, guides led about 30 percent of Mount McKinley climbers.[198]

Most guiding companies, in both the old and new parks, played by the rules and had no problem obtaining their annual permits or licenses. But during the late 1980s, Genet Expeditions began to come under scrutiny. This company, as noted above, was one of six that had been awarded an Old Park concessions permit during the winter of 1980-81. The company, formerly based in Talkeetna, was purchased by Harry Johnson of Anchorage in 1983. Johnson, with little difficulty, renewed the company's four-year permit during the winter of 1984-1985 and again during the winter of 1988-89.[199] In addition, the company received a CUL for New Park guiding beginning in 1985 and continuing for the remainder of the decade.[200] By the early 1990s the company—which offered the services of such well-known climbers as Vern Tejas, Dave Staeheli, and John Michaud—was guiding 13 to 15 expeditions, with about 60 to 90 clients, each season. But both NPS rangers and rival guide services were criticizing the firm (according to one account) because of "its aggressive promotions and for being too gung-ho" about reaching McKinley's summit. In 1988, a Genet client had died soon after summiting the peak, in part because her guide was inadequately prepared. The NPS, in response, gave the company an unsatisfactory rating that year. But the company allowed this "pattern of unsafe practices" to continue, and it received poor NPS evaluations in both 1989 and 1991. Given the company's 1991 performance, the NPS revoked Genet's concession permit in January 1992, effective immediately.

Johnson, Genet's leader, appealed the revocation, calling it "arbitrary, subjective and unsubstantiated."[201] But in mid-March, NPS Director

In 1985, the pit toilet at the 14,200-foot camp on the West Buttress of Mt. McKinley provided quite a spectacular view. NPS Photo, Roger Robinson Collection

James Ridenour denied the appeal and noted that his decision was "the final administrative decision in this matter." A month later, the firm filed suit against the NPS in district court over its 1991 NPS evaluation. In early May, Judge James Singleton ruled that while the NPS may have treated the company unfairly, the "ultrahazardous" activity in question gave the agency the authority to rule against guides in order to protect climber safety.[202] Later that year another judicial decision reinstated the company's permit, but it was a Pyrrhic victory inasmuch as the permit was set to expire in December 1992.[203]

Late in 1992, NPS officials advertised for a seventh permittee and chose Alpine Ascents International (AAI), operated by Todd Burleson of Woodinville, Washington. AAI was awarded the permit in 1993. But because this award was not in time for the year's climbing season, the practical effect of the NPS's award was that the park had six active mountaineering permittees in 1992 and 1993 but seven permittees in 1994.[204]

In mid-November 1993, not long after the AAI received its permit, Bob Jacobs—who owned a company that had not been chosen—filed suit against the NPS, because he believed that the selection process had been unfair. In mid-June 1994, District Court Judge John Sedwick ruled on the matter. He stated that the NPS's selection had been "arbitrary" and "capricious." In a surprising twist, however, he voided AAI's permit because Burleson—apparently unbeknownst to NPS authorities—had been an illegal guide on Mount McKinley in June 1992, just before he had applied for the concessions permit. Sedwick, therefore, stated that "the award to AAI must be sent back to the Park Service for further consideration."[205] In July 1994, Sedwick gave the NPS three options on how to proceed, one of which stated that the agency could "proceed for the time-being with one fewer concessioner." The NPS, in response, decided to not advertise for a replacement. Since that time, just six companies have guided clients up Mount McKinley and Mount Foraker.[206]

Burleson, it turned out, was not the only illegal guide on the mountain during this period. One guide was cited for illegal guiding in 1991, and in 1993 "several" miscreants were on the mountain, two of which were cited and fined a total of $9,100. A year later the NPS cited Rainer Bolesch, who was leading a group of 14 clients up the mountain, and deported him back to Germany, and that same year, Wayne Mushrush—a former Genet guide—was arrested for illegally guiding two Georgia men up the mountain. The men, moreover, were only part of a larger problem; as ranger J.D. Swed noted, "We've got a couple [of other people] that we're pretty convinced are guiding, and a couple we're not sure." Swed and other NPS officials were well aware that "bandit guides" had been operating on the mountain for years—perhaps as early as the mid-1980s—but 1994 was the first time in several years that the agency decided to crack down on the practice.[207]

Given the ever-increasing parade of climbers up McKinley each spring, the management of

**In 1991 the suggested treatment for human waste was to bag it in biodegradable plastic bags and deposit it in a deep crevasse. NPS Photo, Roger Robinson Photo**

garbage—both trash and human waste—was a continuing problem area. Before the 1980s, the only latrine on the mountain was at the Kahiltna base camp; it had been installed in 1977. But between 1982 and 1989, managers demanded the installation of latrines at the 14,200-foot camp, in the Sheldon Amphitheater, and at the 17,200-foot level.[208] A report by climbing ranger Bob Seibert in 1989 warned that it was "more important than ever for mountaineers to properly dispose of their human waste to prevent the contamination of snow. ... When moving camp, tie the bags off and toss into a deep crevasse. The use of biodegradable plastic bags is recommended." And regarding rubbish disposal, he wrote that "many expeditions are hauling their trash to base camp where it is flown off the mountain. Still others continue to crevasse their trash. ... Mountaineers of all nationalities must take the responsibility for, and the initiative in, preserving the quality of the world's mountain environments. A combination of education, leading by example, and peer pressure are probably the most effective tools...." Seibert, in another article, noted that foreigners appeared particularly negligent about packing out their garbage because they had traditionally littered and abandoned their gear during expeditions.[209] His advice, repeated in later years, apparently worked; by July 1991, he was able to state that the mountain was cleaner than at any time in its recent history. In order to effectively manage the problem, his successor J.D. Swed experimented in 1993 with the removal of human waste in barrels by helicopter from the various mountain camps. (The NPS also issued citations for littering in both of those years.) In 1995, Swed dispatched two rangers to the Kahiltna base camp area for trash removal, human waste cleanup, and crevasse-marking duties. Rangers continued these duties in the years that followed.[210]

As noted above, NPS Talkeetna-based rangers during the mid-1980s lived in a mobile home near the town's railroad depot, and they worked at the rustic Genet Building, just south of Main Street near the Fairview Inn. Shortly after the NPS occupied this new office, tourists began visiting the facility. To cater to their interests the agency installed an interpretive kiosk just outside the building, and an Alaska Natural History Association outlet opened there, operated by a seasonal staff person. In 1990, the NPS replaced the trailer with a new two-storey residence, which was now on land owned by the state-owned Alaska Railroad. (See Chapter 9.) After it was completed, it served as a district ranger's office as well as a seasonal rangers' residence. The agency, by 1984, also added a rescue cache, in a Conex trailer, which was located on a separate parcel just north of the ranger residence.[211]

Seibert continued serving as the South District Ranger until the fall of 1991, when J.D. Swed replaced him. An administrative assistant was added to the agency's workforce soon afterward. In 1995, two rangers were added to establish a greater presence at the Kahiltna base camp for the various cleanup duties noted above; each year since then, a ranger has spent most of each climbing season at the Kahiltna base camp engaged in a variety of duties.[212] The NPS,

NPS rangers experimented with different methods of managing human waste on Mt. McKinley. Roger Robinson, in 2000, loaded a commercial river toilet tank onto the first fixed-wing flight commissioned by the NPS to transport human waste from the Kahiltna Glacier base camp to Talkeetna. This flight carried three tanks, holding the accumulated human waste from a 3-week ranger patrol on Mt. McKinley, demonstrating the feasibility of removing human waste from the mountain. NPS Photo, Roger Robinson Collection

during this period, considerably beefed up its staff; whereas the agency's only presence in 1984 was the South District Ranger along with three seasonal mountaineering rangers and a Student Conservation Association (SCA) employee, and civilian mountain-patrol volunteers, new permanent personnel were added in 1990. By 1995 the agency had a district ranger, five mountaineering rangers, a four-person seasonal helicopter crew, an administrative technician, three fee collectors, an SCA employee, and more than 30 mountaineering volunteers from both the civilian and military ranks.[213]

### Recent Trends: Rescue, Access, and Waste Management

The popularity of Alaska Range mountaineering soared during the 1970s and 1980s; the number of people each year attempting to climb Mount McKinley, for example, shot up more than 400 percent during the 1970s (from 124 in 1970 to 659 in 1980), and during the 1980s it increased another 50 percent or more (from 659 to 998 in 1990). Between 1990 and 1995 it climbed another 22 percent, to 1,220 climbers. Since 1995 the annual number of climbers has stabilized; it has ranged from 1,110 (in 1997) up to 1,340 (in 2005), with an average figure of about 1,210 climbers per year.[214]

Beginning in 1995, mountaineers attempting to climb either Mt. McKinley or Mt. Foraker were required to pay a $150 fee to offset the costs of the park's mountaineering program. This fee, as specifically described in the December 1994 regulation, did not include rescue costs. Historically, the costs of rescues—to the NPS, to the State of Alaska, and to military authorities—had been largely dependent on the number of rescues performed and had typically totaled $10,000 to $50,000 per year. (See Figure 5.) But beginning in 1991, substantial new fixed costs had been added because the NPS had a contract to station a high-altitude Lama helicopter at Talkeetna during the three-month climbing season. The costs of helicopter rental was $160,000 or more each year, to which were added incident-specific rescue costs (for the NPS) plus additional costs to the State of Alaska and the military. Because the cost of Alaska Range mountaineering rescues was a relatively small part of all Alaska rescue costs, it was widely recognized that the money spent on rescues—regardless of their cause—was a valid public expense.

An incident in June 1998, however, caused officials to reconsider the status quo. A party of six British climbers on Mount McKinley disregarded warnings and advice from park rangers; injured and sick, the six climbers had to be rescued by helicopter from the 19,000-foot level, and the cost of that rescue totaled $221,818.[215] This widely-publicized incident, which resulted in Denali's highest-ever rescue bill, caused Sen. Frank Murkowski, who chaired the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, to take another look at rescue costs.[216] As a Senate report noted,

> As the mountaineering program at Denali [about $742,000] accounts for almost one-third of the total cost of

The Talkeetna ranger trailer was replaced in 1990 by a new 5-bedroom residence on the same site. Tom Habecker Collection

> the annual search and rescue activities for the entire National Park System, some have questioned whether such expenditures for a very small and select group of park users is appropriate, and whether some sort of reimbursement for the cost of rescues should be collected.[217]

To find out more, Murkowski came to Anchorage in late August 1998 and held a committee hearing at the Anchorage Museum of History and Art. At that hearing were various NPS representatives along with mountaineering guides, air taxi operators, and military officers in charge of search and rescue operations. At that hearing, it was recognized that the cost of McKinley rescue operations—both civilian and military—totaled roughly $1 million per year. Murkowski, looking for ways to recoup some of those costs, asked the various witnesses if it was time to start requiring climbers to have insurance, post a bond, or pay a higher fee.[218]

No consistent recommendations emerged from that hearing, so Murkowski sought counsel from

By 1995 the Talkeetna Ranger Station staff had grown considerably. Front row, left to right, are Joe Reichert, helicopter mechanic Stan Bridges with his wife and baby, and Daryl Miller; middle row, Miriam Valentine, 'Punky' Moore, Grete Perkins, Elaine Sutton, SCA Elena Hinds; and back row, Kevin Moore, Dave Kreutzer, South District Ranger J. D. Swed, Eric Martin, Helicopter Pilot Doug Drury, and Roger Robinson. NPS Photo, Roger Robinson Collection

**On a typical afternoon in May 2001, one would see groups of climbers at the top of the headwall on the West Buttress route. The safety concerns about congestion in this area have contributed to an annual limit of 1500 climbers on Mt. McKinley. NPS Photo, Roger Robinson Collection**

the Interior Department staff. On October 15, 1998, in the closing days of the 105th Congress, he introduced a bill calling for the Interior Secretary to "submit a report on the feasibility and desirability of recovering the costs of high altitude lifesaving missions on Mount McKinley in Denali National Park and Preserve, Alaska." The primary cost-recovery methods to be considered in the report would be either "proof of insurance or a bond that is sufficient to pay the costs of a rescue" or "proof of health insurance that is sufficient to pay medical and hospital costs of treatment for injuries that may reasonably be anticipated to be sustained on a climb."[219]

The following March, Senator Murkowski submitted a new bill for the 106th Congress to consider. Slightly modified from the previous bill, it dropped previous language specifying a discussion of insurance or a bond. Instead, it had three provisions: to "report on the suitability and feasibility of recovering the costs of high altitude rescues on Mt. McKinley," to comment on the need for proof of medical insurance, and to "review the amount of fees charged for a climbing permit and make such recommendations for changing the fee structure as the Secretary deems appropriate."[220] Murkowski held a May 13 hearing on the bill; at that hearing, Interior Department official Stephen C. Saunders approved two of the bill's provisions, but urged the removal of the medical-insurance provision because "this is an issue between the private citizen, his family and his doctors," not the federal government. Despite his testimony, the Energy and Natural Resources Committee unanimously passed the original bill, which on June 9 was reported to the full Senate. On November 19, 1999 the full Senate passed it—still unamended—by unanimous consent. Action then moved on to the House of Representatives, where it was hurriedly passed on October 24, 2000, in the waning days of the 106th Congress. President Clinton signed the bill on November 9.[221]

The bill stated that the Interior Department would have a report back to Congress on the matter within nine months of the bill's passage. In response, the NPS detailed Mount Rainier's lead mountaineering ranger, Mike Gauthier, to complete a mountain climber rescue cost recovery study. Gauthier worked with a variety of NPS staff as well as the American Alpine Club on the report, and he also gathered public comment from a wide variety of agencies and private organizations. The NPS completed the report, as required by Congress, in August 2001, and the Interior Department issued the final

**In 1987, summer tourists, as well as climbers, were greeted at the log cabin ranger station in Talkeetna. NPS Photo, Roger Robinson Collection**

report in early 2002.[222] The agency responded to the report's three provisions as follows: 1) it recommended "that the current policy of not charging for search and rescue be continued," 2) it recommended "not requiring proof of medical insurance at this time," and 3) it stated that "an additional $50.00 fee should be added to the current $150.00 registration fee" and that all climbers in the park and preserve—not just those on Mount McKinley and Mount Foraker—should be required to register.[223] The NPS made no immediate moves to raise fees or institute other regulations; it did, however, note that additional climbing fees could be expected in the not-too-distant future. Thus it was not particularly surprising when, in 2005, fees were raised from $150 to $200 per climber.[224]

Parkwide planning efforts also began to impact Alaska Range mountaineers during this time. The park's 1983-86 general management plan, for example, made no attempt to regulate southside activities (instead, it encouraged greater use by both mountaineers and fly-in visitors), and the 1993-97 South Side (South Slope) Development Concept Plan similarly avoided any management actions related to mountaineering and glacier access.[225] But during the 1997 climbing season, park managers recognized (see Chapter 10) that some regulation needed to be applied to the various air taxi and flightseeing tour operators that shuttled between Talkeetna and various glacier airstrips. They decided, therefore, to issue concessions permits rather than incidental business permits to the eight existing firms that carried on that trade. Eight of these five-year permits were issued in 1997 and early 1998. The agency's action did not limit the total number of flights to and from the park's glaciers; it did, however, limit the number of companies that could continue these flights.[226] Due to mergers and attrition, the number of active air-taxi and flightseeing services in 2006 was just half that of 1998; in early 2007, the NPS issued ten-year permits to these four carriers.[227]

Recognizing the problems associated with long-term growth in backcountry visitation—and more specifically in the number of climbers, snowmachiners, flightseeing tourists and air taxi patrons—park management in 1999 began to prepare a backcountry management plan. (Superintendent Steve Martin, who spearheaded the effort, candidly noted that "It isn't that we have a lot of problems right now, but we need to plan ahead to know where we're going.") Preparing the draft plan, as noted in Chapter 10, was subject to several delays, but by February 2003 park staff had completed and released the park's *Backcountry Management Plan, General Management Plan, [and] Environmental Statement.* As Superintendent Paul Anderson (Martin's replacement) noted somewhat later, the plan's purpose was to "describe the future for glacier landings, air taxi operators, the number of climbers on Mount McKinley and managing snowmachining in the park additions."[228]

The draft plan recognized the increased importance in several ways. All of the four action

Summer visitors have the option of flightseeing in the Alaska Range, and can also experience landing on a glacier. Tourism has grown in numbers and variety of opportunities. NPS Photo

alternatives, for example, delineated the Kahiltna Glacier-West Buttress route up Mount McKinley as a 9,907-acre "mountaineering special use area" which allowed for "established climbing routes and administrative camps." (The intended "overall character" in that area "feels like a series of established wilderness camps connected by a trail – remote in location yet very social with many signs of human presence.") Visitors to that area might "encounter up to 200 climbers per day" between April and July.[229] Aircraft noise, even at the highest elevations, was also a concern.[230] In addition, all alternatives incorporated a series of "portal areas" and "climbing and mountaineering study areas" to encompass other popular glacier landing sites and climbing routes. The plan identified ten small portal areas, where relatively high use levels and interaction levels were anticipated; these areas were located within five larger-sized mountaineering study areas, where use levels—though lower than in portal areas—would be higher than in the surrounding countryside.[231]

Alternative D, the NPS's preferred alternative, stated that the agency would limit to 1,500 the number of annual permits it issued to Mount McKinley climbers. This limit was a compromise between a 1,300-permit limit (as recommended in alternatives B and C) and Alternative E, which set no annual limits. The plan made no limitations on where air taxi landings could take place in the New Park. Regarding scenic tour (i.e., flightseeing) landings, the alternative stated that at three of the ten portal areas—Ruth Amphitheater, Kahiltna Base Camp, and Pika Glacier (in Little Switzerland)—the NPS "would allow higher levels of scenic tour use than would be true of the surrounding management area," and at Kahiltna Base Camp, there would be no limitation on the number of scenic landings. Scenic tour landings would also be allowed in many other areas south of the Alaska Range, though the NPS would work with flight services on "contract provisions to achieve desired resource conditions."[232]

As noted in Chapter 10, NPS officials spoke with various major user groups about their opposition to the draft plan, some of whom represented mountaineering-related interests. Point-to-point air taxi operators were able to move from a series of prescriptive actions (as stated in the draft plan) to a series of desired conditions. And scenic air tour operators, who had grumbled that the NPS was on the verge of setting up a quota system, were able to work out a system in which their activities were governed by encounter rates and activity levels rather than simple volume. A final area of contention dealt with climbing. Here, language in the draft remained; American Alpine Club leaders, despite initial protests, came to recognize that an annual limit of 1,500 climbers made sense.[233]

In April 2005, the agency released a revised draft of its backcountry management plan. This plan, consistent with the draft, had a 9,907-acre West

This 2007 photo shows the Kahiltna Glacier base camp as a busy airport, with aircraft arriving and departing and climbers waiting for flights. NPS Photo, Roger Robinson Collection

Buttress Special Use area that provided a "seasonal route to the summit of Mount McKinley that can accommodate large numbers of climbers during the primary climbing season." The revised plan retained a 1,500-climber annual limit for Mount McKinley. As to air access, it stated that the agency "would impose new registration requirements only in areas where use levels are sufficient enough that user conflicts and/or resource damage are occurring" or were likely to occur. The plan, moreover, stated that "it is likely that overnight use and winter day use from the Kahiltna Glacier east would meet these criteria in the near future." Air taxi landings would be allowed throughout the New Park, but scenic air tour landings would be allowed in all of the portal areas that had been identified in the draft plan. Landings would not be restricted at the Kahiltna Base Camp, but only if landings took place before July 1. Finally, the plan beefed up its wilderness management recommendations by adding a detailed climbers' guidance on the use of fixed and removable anchors.[234]

The final backcountry management plan, which was issued in January 2006 and became effective in mid-March, was virtually identical to the revised draft as it pertained to mountaineering and Alaska Range aircraft access.[235] The approval of that plan had few immediate impacts. Later that year, the NPS announced that beginning in 2007, it would begin enforcing the 1,500-climber limit on Mount McKinley. This was not expected to have any short-term implications, however, inasmuch as the annual number of climbers had stabilized in recent years and had not yet exceeded 1,350.[236] Another by-product of the plan's passage was that glacier tour operators' flights would be limited to a 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. window and that landings would be allowed only in previously-popular areas. The NPS, however, spent considerable time with the Talkeetna air services on these changes, the results being that the limits merely codified standard business practices.[237]

The problem of trash and human waste, which had been a focus of NPS concern since the 1970s, has been attacked in new and innovative ways in recent years. As noted above, NPS rangers during the 1980s responded to the growing number of climbers (and what they left behind) by instituting a formal orientation to climbers at the agency's Talkeetna Ranger Station; by providing booklets in several languages encouraging a "pack it in-pack it out" philosophy; by installing pit toilets on the mountain (in 1982 one had been installed at the 14,200-foot camp, plus another in 1989 at the 17,200-foot level, to supplement the 1977 facility at the Kahiltna base camp); and by levying littering citations. By the late 1980s, mountaineering rangers were asking climbers to haul their trash back to base camp, and they were asking climbers to deposit human waste in biodegradable plastic bags and discard them "into a deep crevasse." Given these measures, climbing ranger Bob Seibert stated in 1991 that the mountain was cleaner than at any time in its recent history.

**A common sight on the West Buttress route in recent years, this line of climbers is ascending the steepest, most difficult section of the West Buttress headwall between 15,500 feet and 16,200 feet. The fixed ropes are now managed by the National Park Service for use by all. NPS Photo, Roger Robinson Collection**

But the ongoing crush of climbers—more than a thousand per year, the great majority of them along the concentrated West Buttress route—demanded additional measures to fully address the problem. In 1995—thanks to the fee-based revenue—new versions of the park's mountaineering brochures (last produced in the late 1980s) became available in Korean, Italian, and Russian as well as German, French, Spanish, Japanese, and English.[238] Those booklets, produced by the Alaska Natural History Association, asked climbers to carry all litter and garbage off the mountain, to leave no permanent food or supply caches, to carefully protect temporary food caches (primarily from damage caused by ravens), and to remove all privately-installed fixed climbing lines.[239]

Most climbers, in response to the new booklets, took the anti-littering message to heart. But some—particularly foreigners—paid scant attention to it, and rangers in 1995 reported that "trash, left by inconsiderate climbers, is found along the West Buttress route especially on the lower glacier. ... It is mandatory to pack out all trash, extra food and fuel." This trash buildup forced rangers, in 1996, to remove some 2,000 pounds of debris from the lower Kahiltna, and in 1997, one mountaineering patrol cleaned up more than 700 pounds of garbage from the 14,200-foot camp alone. Recognizing that much of the generated trash consisted of one-gallon fuel cans, a Prescott College student named Eric Remza looked into the problem during the summer of 1998 and discovered that almost one-third of all expeditions left at least one fuel can on the mountain. NPS rangers, in response, initiated a mandatory fuel-can return system in 1999, and more than 90 percent of those surveyed complied with the new rule.[240]

Encouraged by these results, and hoping to do much more, Denali rangers in 2000 initiated a comprehensive trash and human waste management program. To each climber, they distributed blue plastic bags (to be used for garbage) and clear plastic bags (to be used for human waste). In order to monitor climbers' garbage, rangers weighed climbers' food at the beginning of each ascent and then weighed the climbers' trash and remaining food upon their return. Rangers quickly discovered (according to their annual report) that "trash return rates improved simply because of the increased attention" paid climbers by NPS staff. "Rangers reported a significant decrease in garbage found in the popular camps," it

Lead Mountaineering Ranger Roger Robinson holds a Clean Mountain Can, the second model produced, in 2002. This particular CMC had been dropped by accident from the West Buttress headwall and had fallen and rolled over 2000 feet, surviving without damage, proving the durability of this newly-invented container. NPS Photo, Roger Robinson Collection

noted, "and Denali appeared to be much cleaner than in years past." The following year, this process was applied more broadly, both to trash and to fuel cans. The data collected in 2001, in turn, gave rangers the information they needed so that future expeditions could package their food in order to minimize waste.[241] Rangers, in later years, continued to require that climbers haul all of their garbage back to the Kahiltna base camp, and after the 2003 season, they noted that they "generally had very good compliance."[242]

As to human waste, most climbers in 2000 were asked to use clear plastic bags, which could be "slotted" into crevasses. That same year, however, mountaineering ranger Roger Robinson implemented a new idea: the use of plastic, rectangular containers that could serve as a portable toilet. These boxes were already in use for river travelers, and to test the concept on the mountain, he asked four staff volunteers to try it out during a 20-day patrol. He discovered that the system, while not perfect, was feasible for more large-scale use.[243] During the following winter, Robinson worked with a manufacturer on an improved concept, and together they worked out the lighter, smaller, and cylindrical Clean Mountain Can (CMC). With a $2,400 grant from the American Alpine Club, 50 prototype canisters were produced, which was sufficient to supply

Joe Reichert (right) provides Clean Mountain Cans to climbers at the 14,200-foot camp. NPS Photo, Roger Robinson Collection

21 expeditions during the 2001 climbing season. Most of these groups headed up the West Buttress, and a few took CMCs all the way up to the 17,200-foot "high camp." The response from users that year was generally positive; as Robinson noted, "There's no question it's a doable thing." The cans, he stated, were "the way of the future."[244]

Robinson recognized that the 17,200-foot "high camp" was one of the most heavily-impacted human waste areas on the mountain, even though a latrine had been located there since 1989, and climbers knew that the site was "exceptionally filthy." To prevent further deterioration at the camp, he required all climbers using the camp for a 20-day period during 2002 to use a CMC.[245] In order to implement the new requirement, the NPS purchased 220 of these cylinders and distributed 150 of them at the rangers' 14,200-foot camp during a 30-day trial period. It proved so popular that in 2003, almost every climber who visited "high camp" brought along a CMC, and the idea also gained wide support from several of the commercial guiding firms. By the end of the 2003 season, Robinson was able to report that "at the 17,200-foot high camp, the human impact on this desolate location has significantly improved. ... the trash has been eliminated and ... almost all human waste is carried off." Indeed, the high camp latrine was itself hauled away that year.[246]

Emboldened by the success of the program thus far, the NPS rangers decided to purchase hundreds of new CMCs and distribute them during the 2004 climbing season to all climbers at either the Kahiltna base camp (for West Buttress climbers) or Talkeetna (for those attempting other Alaska Range climbs). The experiment proved less than successful, however, because some West Buttress climbers cached their CMC during their ascents. Rangers, as a result, decided to go back to their earlier pattern of distributing them at the 14,200-foot camp to ensure their use on Mount McKinley's higher slopes.[247]

In 2006, NPS rangers started distributing CMCs in Talkeetna as part of the check-in process; since that time, climbers have been asked to keep the cans throughout their trek and return them to Talkeetna afterward. The park's backcountry management plan, which was approved in February of that year, stated that climbers would be required to use CMCs for all human waste above 14,200 feet elevation on the West Buttress route and within one-half mile of air taxi landing sites. A compendium entry issued in 2007 was even more comprehensive. It required that West Buttress route climbers deposit all waste in a container; below the 15,000-foot level, waste could be bagged and tossed into a crevasse, but above that elevation, CMCs were necessary for all human waste.[248]

These two major efforts—to eliminate litter and human waste—were remarkably successful in cleaning up Mount McKinley, particularly the West Buttress route, and a number of longtime climbers provided testimonials to how clean the route was in comparison to climbs during the 1970s and 1980s. Rangers were only too aware,

however, that some climbers still did not seem to be environmentally aware. (Robinson, in 2003, noted that "some climbers still pollute—although those caught are fined 100 dollars.") Sanitation and garbage would always be a concern because, according to Robinson, "if the Park Service wasn't there to police people, they'd go back to their old ways." And, indeed, experience in recent years has underscored the fact that many mountaineers—perhaps due to their sheer exhaustion from climbing—are unlikely to keep high-altitude camps clean without the prodding of either a guide or ranger.[249]

Finally, recent years have also witnessed the establishment of a fully functional facility which integrated the needs of Alaska Range climbers, the park's south side visitors, and park staff. As noted above, Talkeetna-based NPS rangers had lived in ad hoc, temporary quarters until 1983 when it was able to lease Ray Genet's log cabin; rangers moved into the facility in 1984 and began using the site for both mountaineering orientation and visitor contacts in the spring of 1985. The cabin, however, was "definitely Alaskan" and substandard; it was heated with a woodstove and had neither plumbing nor an outhouse. Rangers, during this period, lived in a single-wide trailer near the Alaska Railroad tracks. But during the late 1980s, NPS officials recognized the need for more substantial facilities. In 1990, the agency built a new, two-storey residence on its parcel near the railroad, and when completed, it served as the district ranger's office as well as a residence. Meanwhile, the agency was also moving to secure a more substantial facility to replace the Genet cabin. In fiscal year 1989, the NPS allotted funds for purchasing a site for a future Talkeetna "visitor contact center." Interest initially focused on purchasing and improving the property containing the Genet cabin.[250] But in June 1990, Talkeetna resident Phillip Wallona told NPS officials of his interest in selling a 22,500-square-foot (0.48-acre) three-lot tract at the northeast corner of First Avenue and B Street. In December 1990, joint owners Phillip and Judy Wallona accepted the Park Service's $74,500 offer to purchase the property, and the formal property transfer took place on August 16, 1991.[251]

During the period that the Wallonas and the NPS agreed to terms, planners in the agency's Denver Service Center were working on a document that might have brought a much larger visitor facility to the Talkeetna area. As noted in Chapter 9, planners issued a preliminary version of the so-called South Slope Development Concept Plan in late 1990; that plan, among its other provisions, envisioned a visitor center either in Talkeetna or within Denali State Park. Then, in March 1991, planners completed a draft environmental assessment that proposed a $15 million, 14,000-square-foot visitor center on a bluff about a mile south of Talkeetna. Many local residents were opposed to the visitor center; more than 500, in fact, signed a petition asking the agency to place the facility elsewhere. In February 1992, the NPS issued an "alternatives workbook" for the plan. That workbook offered four alternatives, one of which recommended a Talkeetna-area visitor center.[252]

**The new Talkeetna Ranger Station opened in the spring of 1997. It provides offices for the Talkeetna NPS staff, areas for mountaineer orientation and visitor contacts, and a base for search and rescue operations. NPS Photo**

First hired by the NPS as a permanent mountaineering ranger in June 1991, Daryl Miller became the South District Lead Mountaineering Ranger in 1997, in charge of all mountain operations. Daryl, pictured here on the West Buttress of Mt. McKinley in 1998, became the South District Ranger in 2000. Daryl Miller Collection

Despite continued opposition, the NPS in May 1993 released its draft South Slope Development Concept Plan. The agency's proposed action called for the immediate construction of a 10,000-square-foot visitor center elsewhere combined with the possible future construction of a 16,000-square-foot visitor center near Talkeetna, "but only if the need for a south slope hotel/recreational complex there was clearly established."[253] Of those opposed to the plan, those most vehement were Talkeetna-area residents, who loudly denounced any plan that included a visitor center or hotel in their midst. So strong was their opposition that park superintendent Russ Berry agreed to proceed no further with the south slope planning process, and serious discussion of a major Talkeetna facility evaporated soon afterward.[254] The ongoing visitor center proposals made Talkeetna residents understandably wary of the NPS's intentions, and in response the agency assured residents that the proposed facility at the west end of the Talkeetna townsite would be a mountaineering center and not a general-purpose visitor center.

Throughout this period, the NPS tried to secure construction funding for the center. In 1993, Superintendent Berry glumly reported that "construction of the mountaineering contact station ... fell behind schedule [this year] and must be now readied for 1995." Meanwhile, design work was well underway by early 1994, and in 1995 the NPS awarded a contract to Wolverine Supply, Inc. of Wasilla. Construction began later that year.[255] Thanks to the efforts of NPS architect Brad Richie, the "spacious and functional new building" was completed in December 1996 (see Chapter 11). The following spring, the center opened its doors to both climbers and the public, and on June 6, Bradford and Barbara Washburn brought a crowd to the center to help celebrate the 50th anniversary of Ms. Washburn's Mount McKinley conquest as part of "Operation White Tower."[256]

The Talkeetna Mountaineering Center, known more informally as the Talkeetna Ranger Station, quickly became popular with both mountaineers and other tourists, and before long the NPS recognized the need for an adjacent parking area. In 2002, it had the opportunity to purchase property just north of the Wallonas' original parcel. James and Susan Kellard offered the NPS an 8,750 square foot (0.20-acre) tract that encompassed portions of three town lots. That September, the NPS purchased the unimproved tract for $66,000.[257]

Since 1995, the park's mountaineering staff has gradually increased in number. In 1995, as noted above, South District Ranger J.D. Swed led a crew of five mountaineering rangers, a four-person seasonal helicopter crew, an administrative technician, three fee collectors, a Student Conservation Association employee, and more than 30 volunteers. In 2000, Swed left Denali for a park unit in Indiana. Soon afterward he was replaced by Daryl Miller, who had served as a mountaineering ranger at the park since 1991; and Roger Robinson, who had first worked as a

mountaineering ranger in 1980, became the Lead Mountaineering Ranger. Since the mid-1990s the district's mission has broadened considerably, and in 2006 the Talkeetna-based staff included Miller, Robinson, eight mountaineering rangers (about half of them permanent employees), a four-person helicopter crew, three visitor use assistants, an interpretive ranger, a park planner, a janitor, and almost 40 mountaineering volunteers.[258]

## Notes - Chapter 13

[1] Tom Walker, *Kantishna: Miners, Mushers, and Mountaineers* (Missoula, Pictorial Histories, 2005), 6-14.
[2] These two geographical features were unnamed at the time but were later named for members of this party.
[3] Walker, *Kantishna*, 161-78.
[4] 64th Congress, 1st Session, *Senate Report No. 440*, May 15, 1916; *Congressional Record* 64 (February 19, 1917), 3630.
[5] See, for example, NPS, "Superintendent's Monthly Report" for Mount McKinley National Park, June 1923, 2-3.
[6] William E. Brown, *A History of the Denali-Mount McKinley Region, Alaska* (Santa Fe, NPS, 1991), 174-76.
[7] SAR, April 1932, 3; May 1932, 1, 3; Grant H. Pearson with Philip Newill, *My Life of High Adventure*, 125-28, 150-58.
[8] R.A. Mewaldt, "Cosmic Rays," in http://www.srl.caltech.edu/personnel/dick/cos-encyc.html; "What Are Cosmic Rays?," in http://www.ast.leeds.ac.uk/haverah/cosrays.shtml; "Victor F. Hess," in http://nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/physics/laureates/1936/hess-bio.html; Eric William Grashorn, *A Search for a Cosmic Ray Point Source with the MINOS Far Detector* (unpublished M.S. thesis), University of Minnesota, August 2005; Germaine Beiser and Arthur Beiser, *The Story of Cosmic Rays* (New York, E. P. Dutton, 1962), 21-23.
[9] "The History of Cosmic Ray Studies, 1900-1949," in http://helios.gsfc.nasa.gov/hist_1900.html; Michael Sfraga, *Bradford Washburn, a Life of Exploration* (Corvallis, Oregon State Univ. Press, 2004), 155.
[10] Beiser and Beiser, *The Story of Cosmic Rays*, 25-27, 32-33; Brown, *A History*, 191; Seward Gateway, April 18, 1932, 3; Pearson, *My Life of High Adventure*, 128, 158-59.
[11] Pearson, *My Life of High Adventure*, 128; SMR, March 1932, 3.
[12] Brown, *A History*, 191.
[13] Pearson, *My Life of High Adventure*, 159-64, 226; SMR, April 1932, 3; May 1932, 3. During the summer of 1932, rangers retrieved Koven's body and had it transported to his widow in New Jersey. SMR, July 1932, 3; August 1932, 3.
[14] SMR, July 1934, 8; August 1934, 1, 7-8; Brown, *A History*, 191; Roger Robinson email, January 30, 2007.
[15] Sfraga, *Bradford Washburn*, 35-38, 87-88, 173.
[16] *Ibid.*, 174.
[17] Lary M. Dilsaver, ed., *America's National Park System: the Critical Documents* (Lanham, Md., Rowman and Littlefield, 1994), 50, 63.
[18] As noted in Theodore Catton, *Wonderland: An Administrative History of Mount Rainier National Park* (Seattle, NPS, May 1996), pp. 99 and 258, the Mount Rainier National Park superintendent was licensing the park's climbing guides by 1911; six years later, this service was assumed by the park concessioner. In the Grand Tetons, climber Paul Petzoldt began serving as the area's first professional guide in 1924, five years before Congress established the park. Reynold G. Jackson, "Park of the Matterhorns," in John Daughtery, *A Place Called Jackson Hole: a Historic Resource Study of Grand Teton National Park* (Moose, Wyo., Grand Teton Natural History Association, 1999), Chapter 16.
[19] *Federal Register* 1 (June 27, 1936), 676.
[20] Bestor Robinson to Frank Been, November 14, 1939, in File 201.15, Box 74, CCF, RG 79, NARA SB.
[21] Arno B. Cammerer, "Memorandum for the Washington Office and all Field Offices," March 29, 1940, in File 201.15, see above. Indeed, a revised edition of the NPS's rules and regulations, published in the spring of 1941 (see *Federal Register* 6 [March 26, 1941], 1629), was identical to the original (1936) version except that the new edition added the various Teton Range peaks—Grand Teton, Middle Teton, and South Teton—to regulations that had previously been applied only to peaks in Mount McKinley and Mount Rainier national parks. A later action (*Federal Register* 7 [April 18, 1942], 2906) extended those regulations to Devils Tower in Devils Tower National Monument.
[22] Arno B. Cammerer, "Memorandum for the Washington Office and all Field Offices," March 29, 1940, in File 201.15, see above.
[23] Pearson, *My Life of High Adventure*, 226-29.
[24] *Federal Register* 9 (September 7, 1944), 11009.
[25] SMR, September 1947, 1; November 1948, 2; Jerrol G. Coates to Dave Johnston, November 27, 1962, in Folder 65, Series 2, Denali Mountaineering Records Collection (DMRC), DENA Archives. Charles R. "Butch" Farabee, Jr., in *Death Daring and Disaster; Search and Rescue in the National Parks* (Lanham, Md., Roberts Rinehart, 2001), 145, states that park staff completed and distributed the first "formal guidelines" for climbing Mount McKinley in December 1948.
[26] O. A. Tomlinson to Director NPS, February 9, 1949; Grant Pearson to RD/R4, April 19, 1949; all in Folder 16, Series 2, DMRC.
[27] These materials were revised in 1949, in 1952, and perhaps in other years as well. See O. A. Tomlinson to Supt. MOMC, May 4, 1949, in Folder 16, Series 2, DMRC; Ronald F. Lee to Washburn, April 1, 1952; Lawrence

C. Merriam (RD/R4) to Director NPS, May 2, 1952; Pearson, "Climbing Mount McKinley and Other High Mountains in Mount McKinley National Park, Alaska;" all in File 201.15, noted above.

[28] The mountain-climbing section in the *Code of Federal Regulations*, Title 36, 1949, Section 1.14 (pp. 150-51) is a reflection of the *Federal Register's* rules and regulations issued in 1936 and 1941. For minor changes to the regulations during the 1950s, none of which had a perceptible impact on Mount McKinley climbers, see the following Federal Register citations: December 11, 1952 (vol. 17, p. 11197); February 5, 1957 (vol. 22, p. 720); and December 8, 1959 (vol. 24, pp. 9850-51).

[29] Pearson, *My Life of High Adventure*, 227-28. The one instance prior to 1958 in which climbers did not begin at Wonder Lake was with Bradford Washburn on his 1951 West Buttress climb.

[30] Pearson, *My Life of High Adventure*, 229; Pearson to American Alpine Club, December 29, 1952, in Folder 19, Series 2, DMRC. Pearson had been part of expeditions into the high Alaska Range in the spring of 1932, the fall of 1944, and the spring of 1947.

[31] O. A. Tomlinson to Supt. MOMC, etc., July 13, 1948; Clemons, "Report of Attendance at NPS Mountain Climbing and Rescue Training School, MORA, September 13-17, 1948;" both in Folder 14, Series 2, DMRC; Farabee, *Death Daring and Disaster*, 145.

[32] Sfraga, *Bradford Washburn*, 162-63, 168-69, 172-73.

[33] Sfraga, *Bradford Washburn*, 156-57; James Ramsey Ullman, *The White Tower* (Philadelphia, Lippincott), 1945. During the late 1940s, the New England Museum of Natural History changed its name to the Boston Museum of Science, a name it retains today. See Sfraga, *Bradford Washburn*, 149, 163; *Anchorage Daily Times*, August 29, 1949, 4.

[34] Sfraga, *Bradford Washburn*, 159-62.

[35] *Ibid.*, 160, 162.

[36] *Ibid.*, 164-68; Pearson, *My Life of High Adventure*, 204-10; SMR, March 1947, 1; SMR, April 1947, 1-2; SMR, May, 1947, 1.

[37] Sfraga, *Bradford Washburn*, 168-73; SAR, 1948, 4. The hut and other expedition materials were not removed from the mountain, and remaining evidence is still often seen by climbers and park staff. Roger Robinson, review comment, July 11, 2007.

[38] Newton Drury to Olaus J. Murie memo (attachment), January 9, 1950, in File 845 ("Research"), CCF, RG 79, NARA SB. Washburn, in this case, was assuming a dependence on ground transport. He noted that "the only other practical route, via the great western buttress of McKinley, requires a ground approach via Peters Glacier (or Peters Pass).... McGonagall Pass can be easily reached afoot from Wonder Lake in bad weather or emergency, while the western approach would present a long, complicated journey except by air."

[39] *Federal Register* 12 (March 13, 1947), 1723-24. Landings at Wonder Lake were allowed until September 1959; see *Federal Register* 24 (June 3, 1959), 4519 and *Federal Register* 24 (September 16, 1959), 7458-59.

[40] SMR, August 1949, 1; SMR, September 1949, 1; *Anchorage Daily Times*, September 12, 1949, 1; Newton Drury to Olaus J. Murie, January 9, 1950, in File 845 ("Research"), see above.

[41] Olaus J. Murie to Newton B. Drury, January 17, 1950, in File 845 (see above).

[42] Howard Stagner to Herbert Maier, n.d. (January 1950?); Pearson to Regional Director, Region Four, January 18, 1950; both in File 845 (above).

[43] Urner Liddel to Olaus J. Murie, January 31, 1950, in File 845 (above).

[44] Drury to Murie, February 20, 1950; Murie to Washburn, April 29, 1950; both in File 845 (above).

[45] O.A. Tomlinson to Murie, February 16, 1950; Lewis F. Clark to Urner Liddel, June 5, 1950; Washburn to Clark, June 9, 1950; all in File 845 (above).

[46] More than a decade later, Murie noted the episode in the article "Mount McKinley; Wilderness Park of the North Country," *National Parks Magazine* 37 (April 1963), 5.

[47] SMR, October 1950, 4.

[48] *New York Times*, May 22, 1951, 2; *Anchorage Daily Times*, July 14, 1951, 8; *Los Angeles Times*, July 19, 1951, 22. Author James Greiner, who spoke to Washburn during the 1970s, stated that the new 1951 route was "motivated by [Washburn's] desire to find a short route that offered less crevasse danger for use by the Office of Naval Research in subsequent cosmic-ray experiments and other scientific work on the mountain." Washburn, putting a positive spin on his efforts, suggested that the cosmic ray work "actually never took place because the levels of energy produced by man-made accelerators soon made cosmic-ray research of this sort no longer practical or necessary." Greiner, *Wager With the Wind: The Don Sheldon Story* (Chicago, Rand McNally, 1974), 78; Washburn, "Mount McKinley Conquered by New Route," *National Geographic Magazine* 104 (August 1953), 219.

[49] Pearson, *My Life of High Adventure*, 227-28; *New York Times*, June 18, 1952, 5.

[50] *Anchorage Daily Times*, July 15, 1959, 16; January 15, 1964, 9.

[51] Sfraga, *Bradford Washburn*, 180-88; SMR, June 1951, 1; July 1951, 1; Pearson, *My Life of High Adventure*, 228; Bradford Washburn and David Roberts, *Mount McKinley: the Conquest of Denali* (New York, Abrams,

1991), 72, 111. Washburn and Roberts (p. 111) note that Washburn and others were dropped off at elevation 7,650 feet, not 8,500 feet.

[52] Herbert Maier to Supt. MOMC, February 7, 1952, in Folder 19, Series 2, DMRC.

[53] Washburn to Wirth, March 20, 1952, in File 201.15, Box 74, CCF, RG 79, NARA SB.

[54] Grant Pearson to American Alpine Club, December 29, 1952, in Folder 19, Series 2, DMRC.

[55] Thayer Scudder to Pearson, May 3, 1952, in File 201.15, noted above.

[56] Pearson to Henry S. Francis, Jr., May 7, 1952, in File 201.15, noted above.

[57] SMR, May 1954, 2; May 1955, 4.

[58] Pearson to RD/R4, December 13, 1955, in Folder 29; Ronald F. Lee to RD/R4, March 21, 1956, in Folder 35; Jerrol Coates to Dave Johnston, October 23, 1962, in Folder 67; all in Series 2, DMRC. Washburn, noting climbers' changing time requirements, had advocated the allowance of airdrops four years earlier. Ever the development advocate, Washburn also urged the construction of a "small but rugged ... shelter in McGonagall Pass," an idea that was not shared by NPS officials. Washburn to Director NPS, February 18, 1952, in Folder 19; Washburn to Pearson, March 11, 1955, in Folder 29; Washburn to Wirth, May 29, 1956, in Folder 35; all in Series 2, DMRC.

[59] Pearson, *My Life of High Adventure*, 230-31; SMR, May 1957, 5; June 1957, 5-6; July 1957, 3-4.

[60] Greiner, *Wager With the Wind*, 162; Pearson, *My Life of High Adventure*, 231-34; SMR, various issues, July 1958 to June 1960. In late 1960, park superintendent Samuel King told a potential climber that "the Muldrow Glacier has settled a great deal, but it is not known if it will be sufficiently settled for climbing in 1961." A five-man party was, in fact, able to ascend the Muldrow in July 1961 on its way up North Peak. King to Robert Gardner, September 7, 1960, in Folder 48, Series 2, DMRC.

[61] *American Alpine Journal*, Vol. 8, issue 27 (1953), p. 480. To further clarify the boundary location, Bradford Washburn in 1961 sent Sheldon a copy of his recently-issued Mount McKinley map which showed "the southern boundary of McKinley Park marked on it as accurately as the USGS can do it." He did so "because of the constant problem of expeditions that want to be delivered 'as near the Park boundary as possible!'" Washburn to Sheldon, September 18, 1961, in Folder 59, Series 2, DMRC.

[62] Various correspondence in Folders 44, 49, 55, 60, 80, 82, 86, and 91; all in Series 2, DMRC, courtesy of Roger Robinson, DENA. Mike Fisher and Frances Twigg, both of whom flew for Don Sheldon during the early- to mid-1960s, knew that the southeast fork's landing site was inside the park; Twigg, in fact, stated that "Don moved the airstrip 700 feet inside the park so that climbers would have less distance for their climb." Mike Fisher interview, June 28, 2007, and Frances Twigg interview, July 20, 2007; both interviews conducted by Roger Robinson.

[63] Jerrol Coates to Dave Johnston, October 23, 1962, in Folder 67; Coates to Tom Goldenberg, October 23, 1962, in Folder 69; both in Series 2, DMRC, courtesy of Roger Robinson, DENA. Airdrops for Kahiltna-based climbers apparently continued until the early 1970s, as noted in the University of Oregon discussion.

[64] Greiner, *Wager With the Wind*, 160-61.

[65] Charley Shimanski, "Rescue Cost Recovery, DENA," c. 2001, p. 3; see www.americanalpineclub.org/pdfs/MRcost.pdf.

[66] Lyman L. Woodman, *Duty Station Northwest; the U.S. Army in Alaska and Western Canada, 1867-1987: Volume Three, 1945-1987* (Anchorage, Alaska Historical Society, 1999), 36; Greiner, *Wager With the Wind*, 76; Douglas Beckstead, letter to the author, July 30, 2007; Farabee, *Death Daring and Disaster*, 144. During the mid-to-late 1940s, the U.S. Navy continued to coordinate search and rescue activities for the offshore waters and islands, but in August 1950 the U.S. Air Force assumed control over all territorial search and rescue activities.

[67] NPS, "Climbing Mount McKinley and Other High Mountains in Mount McKinley National Park, Alaska," ca. 1952, in "Mountain Climbing Policy" (file 201.15), CCF, RG 79, NARA SB; Pearson to William D. Hackett, June 9, 1952, in Folder 19, Series 2, DMRC.

[68] Pearson, *My Life of High Adventure*, 230; SMR, May 1954, 2; Roger Robinson, review comment, July 11, 2007; Robinson email, August 22, 2007; Richard and Florence Collins interview, by Jane Bryant, March 2002, in DENA Archives.

[69] *New York Times*, May 27, 1954, 16; May 31, 1954, 14; *Ptarmigan Tracks* (Camp Denali newsletter), November 2004, 1; SMR, April 1954, 4; May 1954, 4; June 1954, 5; Pearson, *My Life of High Adventure*, 229-30; Morton S. Wood, 'The First Traverse of Mt. McKinley," *American Alpine Journal*, 1955, pp. 51-69; Jane Bryant emails, March 29-30, 2007; Robert Gerhard, "Denali Dilemma," *American Alpine Journal* 21:1 (1977), 96; Jane Bryant review comments, September 17, 2007.

[70] "National SAR School History" (www.acc.af.mil/afrcc/nationalsarschool/index.asp); James H. Isbell to Samuel A. King, March 13, 1961, in Folder 59, Series 2, DMRC.

[71] SMR, May 1958, 3.

[72] *Fairbanks Daily News-Miner*, March 14, 1959, 1.

[73] Pearson, *My Life of High Adventure*, 232-33; Greiner, *Wager with the Wind*, 159-75; SMR, May 1960, 5; Charles Champlin, "Intrepid Men vs. Mighty Mac," *Life Magazine* 48 (June 6, 1960), 24-31. Those killed in the small-plane crash were Anchorage contractor William Stevenson and Technical Sergeant Robert Elliott from Elmendorf AFB.

[74] SMR, June 1960, 6; *Anchorage Daily Times*, June 24, 1960, 13; June 27, 1960, 13.

[75] Paul B. Crews to Samuel A. King, September 9, 1960; King to Crews, September 13, 1960; Richard J. Stenmark to Supt. MOMC, December 12, 1960; Neil J. Reid to RD/R4, December 14, 1960; all in Folder 48, Series 2, DMRC.

[76] NPS, "Recommended Procedures Involving the NPS, the ARG, the USAFRCC, and Volunteering Private Individuals in Rescue Situations on National Park Lands" (draft), January 11, 1961; James H. Isbell to Samuel A. King, March 13, 1960; both in Folder 59, Series 2, DMRC.

[77] Elroy W. Bohlin to RD/R4, May 1, 1961; Lawrence Merriam to Supt. MOMC, May 11, 1961, both in Folder 59, Series 2, DMRC; SMR, April 1961, 3. Joe Wilcox, in his book *White Winds* (Los Alamitos, Calif., Hwong Publishing, 1981, pp. 36-37), notes that as he prepared for his 1967 expedition, the NPS demanded that climbers "secure the agreement of a qualified rescue group to come to their aid should an emergency occur. The most prominent such group was the ARG.... Previous expeditions had indicated that Park Service permission was routine once ARG approval was given."

[78] John H. Johnston to Robert Bates, December 30, 1960, in Folder 48; Robert Bates to Conrad Wirth, January 6, 1961, in Folder 59; both in Series 2, DMRC; SMR, January 1961, 3, 5.

[79] E.T. Scoyen to RD/R4, March 21, 1961; Merriam to Supt. MOMC, March 29, 1961; Washburn to Scoyen, April 13, 1961; all in Folder 59, Series 2, DMRC.

[80] NPS, "Climbing History of Mount McKinley, Successful Ascents," c. 1970, in "H14, Historical Notes, 1964-70" folder, Box 7, ARCC-00183, AKRO Archives.

[81] *Ibid.*; Pearson, *My Life of High Adventure*, 224-34; Greiner, *Wager With the Wind*, 207-08; Roberta Sheldon, *The Heritage of Talkeetna* (Talkeetna, Talkeetna Editions, 1995), 161. Before 1960, the only non-Americans who had attempted the climb were two Mexican parties in 1952 (one of which was successful), along with a British party that had made an unsuccessful 1956 attempt.

[82] Michael Sfraga (*Bradford Washburn*, 180-81) notes that Moore lived in Fairbanks (and thus began his flight there) but picked up two expedition members at Chelatna Lake (southwest of Mount McKinley) before landing the party on Kahiltna Glacier.

[83] Sheldon, *Heritage of Talkeetna*, 157; *Milepost*, 1963 edition, 183.

[84] Rupert Pratt, *Touching the Ancient One: A True Story of Tragedy and Reunion* (Tucson, Wheatmark, April 2006), 45; Marilyn Hudson email, May 10, 2007; *Anchorage Daily News*, August 20, 1951, 1; *Anchorage Daily Times*, August 20, 1951, 1.

[85] Sheldon, *Heritage of Talkeetna*, 128-29; Greiner, *Wager With the Wind*, 59, 98, 135, 143.

[86] Sheldon, *Heritage of Talkeetna*, 142, 148-49; Bruce McAllister, *Wings Over Denali; a Photographic History of Aviation in Denali National Park* (Boulder, Roundup Press, 2004), 106, 112-13. The 1964 *Milepost*, published shortly after Talkeetna was reached by road, featured (p. 183) a large advertisement for Talkeetna Air Service and Rainbow Lodge, plus a smaller ad for Cliff Hudson Fishing and Boating Service.

[87] *Anchorage Daily News*, April 27, 1992, E-8. Roger Robinson (telephone call, April 6, 2007) notes that after Sheldon died in January 1975, his widow Roberta continued to run the business and employed Fred Richards, and later Buddy Woods, as pilots. In 1976, Jim Sharp purchased the firm and changed its name to Talkeetna Air Taxi; Sharp later sold it to Leonard (Sonny) Kragness. Subsequent owners were Lowell Thomas, Jr., Doug Geeting, and David Lee. Holland ran his business until 1979, when he sold it to Kitty Banner and Kimball Forrest, who founded K2 Aviation; they stayed in business until 1981, when the firm was sold to Jim Okonek, who owned it until the mid-1990s. Hudson Air Service is still owned by the Hudson family and is managed by Jay, Cliff's son. In 1985 a new competitor appeared when Doug Geeting, formerly of Hudson and Talkeetna Air Taxi, began Doug Geeting Aviation. The four companies—Talkeetna Air Taxi, K2 Aviation, Hudson Air Service, and Doug Geeting Aviation—competed from the mid-1980s into the 1990s. *Anchorage Daily News*, June 18, 1989, N-7; June 25, 1989, F-1; NPS/AKRO, *Commercial Visitor Service Directory*, 1984 and 1985 issues.

[88] Wayne Merry interview, May 7, 2007; Jay Hudson interview, May 8, 2007; Art Davidson, *Minus 148°: First Winter Ascent of Mt. McKinley* (Seattle, the Mountaineers, 1999), 30.

[89] SMR, April 1960, 4; April 1964, 2; Wayne Merry interview, May 7, 2007; Art Davidson interview, April 24, 2007.

[90] SMR, June 1963, 3; April 1964, 2; Greiner, *Wager With the Wind*, 210; *Anchorage Daily Times*, June 4, 1978, D-1; Jim Okonek, interview by Bill Brown, February 26 and 27, 1992, on "Project Jukebox" website (http://uaf-db.uaf.edu/jukebox/denalil/html/jiok.him); Supt. MOMC to RD/R4, January 11, 1961 in Folder 59, Series 2, DMRC.

[91] SMR, November 1962, 2; April 1963, 2; Catton, *Wonderland: An Administrative History of Mount Rainier National Park*, 472; McGowan obituary, April 27, 2007, on www.sfgate.com. As noted in NPS correspondence (William E. Davis to Jerrol Coates, November 23, 1962, in Folder 65, Series 2, DMRC), Hans Metz—who had summited McKinley via the West Buttress a month earlier than McGowan—also expressed an interest in becoming a climbing guide but did not obtain a special use permit.

[92] Various correspondence in Folder 75, Series 2, DMRC.

[93] Greiner, *Wager With the Wind*, 122-23, 247; *Anchorage Daily Times*, May 12, 1966, 1-2; May 13, 1966, 1.

[94] BLM, "Serial Register Page" for AA-445; Patent No. 50-73-0203; both in Parcel DENA 10-102 file, AKRO Lands Office. Ms. Sheldon owned the parcel until early 2006, when she granted it to a company called Mountain House LLC. Each year the cabin, which comfortably sleeps four, is open from March to mid-July. Jennifer Forker, "Marooned at the Mountain House," *Alaska* 65 (February 1999), 38-41.

[95] NPS, "Climbing History of Mount McKinley," see above, states that nine climbing parties successfully climbed Mount McKinley from the north (via Karstens Ridge, Pioneer Ridge, or Wickersham Wall) between 1961 and 1966, inclusively.

[96] SMR, December 1966, 2; January 1967, 2-3.

[97] Davidson, *Minus 148°*, 138, 204-06, 213.

[98] Wilcox, *White Winds*, 2-3.

[99] SMR, January 1961, 3, 5; November 1962, 2; December 1963, 2.

[100] NPS, *Mountaineering in Mount McKinley National Park*, March 1967, in "Mountaineering Documents, 1966-67, George Hall Collection" folder, DENA AH Collection.

[101] Wilcox, *White Winds*, 68, 176-79, 183-84, 191, 213-15, 475-77.

[102] The American Alpine Club, after a thorough analysis of the disaster (in *Accidents in North American Mountaineering*, 1968, pp. 20-30), assigned some blame to NPS rangers, who (in their view) should have radioed a message to the ill-fated "upper party" and ordered them to retreat. Years later, both Wilcox and Snyder wrote books about the expedition and tried to discern what went wrong. Snyder, who wrote *The Hall of the Mountain King* in 1973 (New York, Scribner's, pp. 177-82), stated that the expedition "had tragically bad luck," but he also suggested "circumstances and actions which contributed to the disaster," including inexperience among the Wilcox team, complacence based on the large group size, and poor food and mountaineering skills. Wilcox, who wrote *White Winds* eight years later, felt that rescuers relied too heavily on fixed-wing pilot Don Sheldon instead of helicopter support, and he cited other contributing factors. But he also stated (p. 476) that "it is doubtful that anything could have been done to aid the upper party" because of the extreme wind severity. Jonathan Waterman tried to offer a more objective, nuanced analysis in his *In the Shadow of Denali: Life and Death on Alaska's Mount McKinley* (New York, Lyons Press, 1998), while James M. Tabor wrote a more pointed book about the tragedy in *Forever on the Mountain* (New York, Norton, 2007).

[103] Wayne Merry interview, May 7, 2007; Nancy Doherty, "McKinley Sees Tragic Season," *Alaska* 42 (October 1976), 8.

[104] *Anchorage Daily News*, March 2, 1994, E-5.

[105] Park climbing guides, since the early 1950s if not before, had applied to all high peaks in the park; and previous *Federal Register* regulations had similarly been applicable to all high peaks in the park. Thus the 1970 regulation, which applied to only Mt. McKinley and Mt. Foraker, was relatively limited in its scope.

[106] *Federal Register* 35 (March 14, 1970), 4554; *Federal Register* 35 (August 15, 1970), 13017.

[107] *Anchorage Daily News*, July 10, 1974, 4.

[108] Institute of Arctic Biology, UAF, "Climbing Problems on Mt. McKinley" (draft), November 1, 1967, in "Mountaineering Documents" file, above.

[109] Washburn to Harthon L. Bill, November 17, 1967, in "Mountaineering Documents" file, above.

[110] *Anchorage Daily News*, July 21, 1968, 17; Art Davidson interview, April 24, 2007; Arthur L. Davidson, "High Altitude Research on Mount McKinley," *American Alpine Journal* (1969), 371; various 1968 correspondence in Folder 118, Series 2, DMRC. Roger Robinson (review comments, July 11, 2007) notes that park rangers, in the 1990s, "began to uncover large caches of supplies that [Institute personnel] had buried at the 17,200 foot camp." New evidence of the 1968 camp was being uncovered as late as 2006.

[111] Dan Kuehn to Greg Wolf, December 13, 1974, in "K3417 Press Releases – by MOMC, 1974-75" file, Box 2, Collection 00495, DENA Archives; NPS, "Mount McKinley South Peak, Attempts and Summits," on DENA mountaineering website (http://www.nps.gov/dena/planyourvisit/mountaineering.htm); Roger Robinson telephone call, April 6, 2007.

[112] Roger Robinson, review comment, July 11, 2007. Beginning in the late 1980s, camp operations were jointly sponsored by a variety of local air services.

[113] Peter Robinson, "Frances Randall," *American Alpine Journal*, 1985, 369; NPS, "Mountaineering Summary Report – 1984," on DENA mountaineering website (http://www.nps.gov/dena/planyourvisit/summaryreports.htm). Roger Robinson wrote the *AAJ* obituary, which the editor inadvertently applied to a fellow Alaska climber with the same surname.

[114] *Anchorage Daily News*, June 23, 1981, D-1, D-4; *Anchorage Daily Times*, September 6, 1983, B-5; *Anchorage Daily News*, April 27, 2000, B-1.

[115] NPS, "Climbing History of Mount McKinley," see above; *New York Times*, August 24, 1969, X:23; Eberhard Hantsch, "Eight Days to the Top," *Alaska* 36 (October 1970), 45-47. Further information about Genet is found in Judy Shuler, "A Man and His Mountain," *Alaskafest*, June 1977, 27-31; Richard Loren Doege, "Ray Genet" (obituary), *American Alpine Journal* 22:2 (1980), 693-94; various *Anchorage Daily Times* and *Anchorage Daily News* articles for October 8-9, 1979; and Waterman, *In the Shadow of Denali*, 96-104. Genet apparently did not participate in a 1964 summiting of Mt. Huntington, eight miles south of Mt. McKinley, as noted in Davidson's *Minus 148°* (p. 24).

[116] Genet's company was apparently Alaska Mountain Guides in 1971 and 1975 but Genet Expeditions in 1973; see Genet to Ernest Borgman, April 30, 1971, in File NR 1-2 (1971), Series 88, RG 01, ASA; Daniel Kuehn to Genet, July 6, 1973, in "Correspondence, AMG/Genet Expeditions, 1977" file, Box 1, Collection 00495, DENA Archives; Gary Brown to Allen Steck, October 24, 1975, in "Correspondence, Mountain Travel, 1977" file, Box 1, Collection 00495, DENA Archives; NPS, "Record of Active Revocable Permits," 1971, in "Special Use Permits" file, Box 99, Series 1, DARC, DENA Archives.

[117] Genet, as shown by various letters and memos during this period (see files directly above and below), exhibited a distinctly independent streak; he often creatively interpreted NPS regulations, and customers complained because he overextended himself or exhibited poor customer service. In 1973, NPS officials allowed his special use permit to lapse, but soon afterward they renewed it.

[118] See Robert A. Gerhard to Joe Horiskey, October 18, 1977, in "Correspondence, Rainier Mountaineering, 1977" file, Box 1, Collection 00495, DENA Archives; Allen Steck to Gary Brown, October 16, 1975, in "Correspondence, Mountain Travel, 1977" file, noted above; Genet to Borgman, April 30, 1971, noted above; SAR, 1974, 5.

[119] Lignite is an Alaska Railroad stop located just north of Healy; the Mercer Ranch is located at the end of Lignite Road, which extends east from the Parks Highway.

[120] Wilcox, *White Winds*, 59, 69.

[121] SMR, August 1957, 5; September 1957, 5.

[122] SMR, April 1961, 3; February 1964, 2; August 1964, 5; Roger Robinson, review comment, July 11, 2007.

[123] NPS, "Climbing History of Mount McKinley," see above; NPS, "Annual Mountaineering and Search and Rescue Report" for MOMC, January 7, 1971, in "Annual Reports, 1953-72" file, Box 5, ARCC-00183, AKSO; Jane Bryant email, January 4, 2007; Roger Robinson, review comment, July 11, 2007.

[124] *Anchorage Daily Times*, June 26, 1973, 23.

[125] Jeb Schenck, "Mt. McKinley—Littered Overcrowded Route," *Summit* 16 (December 1970), 24-25.

[126] Bill Sherwonit, "Mountain of Trash: Decades of Climbers Have Fouled Denali," *Alaska* 68 (May-June 2002), 35.

[127] *Tacoma News-Tribune*, May 26, 1971, C-2; Doris M. Ewing, "A Mt. McKinley Attack on Trash," *Smithsonian* 3 (May 1972), 54-57; *Anchorage Daily Times*, November 20, 1972, 49; July 11, 1973, 35.

[128] *Anchorage Daily News*, August 31, 1974, 2; "News & Notes," *Off Belay* #21 (June 1975), 39.

[129] Gary Brown, "And a Reply," *American Alpine News* #136 (March 1976), 15.

[130] *New York Times*, November 16, 1975, X:5, and Gail Miller Menschel, "Crowd at the Top," *Alaska* 42 (November 1976), 98. Bill Sherwonit, in "Mountain of Trash," 34-35, notes that Grimm continued to bring cleanup crews to the mountain until 1977.

[131] Roger Robinson, "Crisis on Denali," pp. 15, 17; Gary Brown, "And a Reply," pp. 15, 19; both in *American Alpine News* #136, March 1976.

[132] Gerhard replaced Bruce Wadlington, who managed climbers' activities but showed little interest in spending extended periods on the mountain.

[133] Robert Gerhard, interview by Frank Norris, April 28, 2005; "NPS Bicentennial Denali Expedition" folder (#300) in Series 2, DMRC, DENA Archives. Gerhard's team included park carpenter Tommy Adams, interpretive specialist Bill Garry, mountaineering ranger Nick Hartzell, backcountry ranger Jack Hebert, and seasonal ranger Johnny Johnson. The climb was one of two park bicentennial projects; the other was the living history demonstration at the Upper Toklat (Pearson) cabin, described in Chapter 12.

[134] Gerhard, "Denali Dilemma," 100. Gerhard's remarks were largely duplicated in his article "McKinley: What Does the Future Hold?" *Summit* 23 (February-March 1977), 14-19. Details of the rescue are noted in Ralph Baldwin, "The Crisis on Denali," *Off Belay* #30 (December 1976), 8.

[135] Doherty, "McKinley Sees Tragic Season," 8; Gerhard, "Denali Dilemma," 96.

[136] Baldwin, "The Crisis on Denali," 3.

[137] Articles mentioning Horton's trip, and his policies toward McKinley climbing, include *Anchorage Daily Times*, August 3, 1976, 4; August 12, 1976, 16; and August 14, 1976, 4.

[138] Baldwin, "Crisis on Denali," 3; Doherty, "McKinley Sees Tragic Season," 8; Robert Gerhard, "McKinley: What Does the Future Hold?" *Summit* 23 (February-March 1977), 15; Gerhard, "Denali Dilemma," 97; SAR, 1977, 4.

[139] Gerhard, "Denali Dilemma," 97; Shuler, "A Man and His Mountain," 28. Baldwin, "Crisis on Denali," pp. 8-9 explains each policy option and its feasibility and short-term applicability. He concluded his remarks by recommending that the NPS launch an educational campaign instead of various Draconian alternatives, and that Mount McKinley climbers adopt a "fundamental responsibility ... to prepare himself for the task at hand."
[140] Gerhard, "Denali Dilemma," 99-100; Baldwin, "Crisis on Denali," 9. The study is noted in the *Anchorage Daily News*, August 5, 1976, 8, and the *Seattle Times*, September 26, 1976, A-25.
[141] *Anchorage Daily Times*, August 12, 1976, 16; November 1, 1976, 23; November 2, 1976, 4.
[142] Climbing ranger Roger Robinson, in a January 2007 interview, noted that during the 1977 and 1978 climbing seasons, the two seasonal rangers stayed in a small room at the Talkeetna Fire Hall. They typically met climbers at either the railroad depot or the village airstrip.
[143] SAR, 1977, 3-4; Robert Gerhard, "Climbing in Mount McKinley National Park," *American Alpine Journal* 21:2 (1978), 503-04; Tom Walker, "High Landing," *Alaska* 43 (September 1977), 81.
[144] Sherwonit, "Mountain of Trash," 35, 68; NPS, "2000 Mountaineering Summary, DENA," 2.
[145] Gerhard, "Climbing in Mount McKinley National Park," 504; Gerhard, "Mountaineering in Mount McKinley National Park," *American Alpine Journal* 22:1 (1979), 163.
[146] SAR, 1978, 1-2; Gerhard, "Mountaineering in Mount McKinley National Park," 161-63; Joe Van Horn interview, April 20, 2007.
[147] Daniel J. Tobin, Jr. to Ted Stevens, February 16, 1978, in "Climbing Policy" file, DENA AH Collection, AKRO; *Anchorage Daily Times*, July 3, 1978, 4.
[148] Bob Gerhard to Joe Alston and Ralph Tingey, December 1, 1981, in "NOLS 80-86" folder, in "Mountain Guides 82-84" box, DENA Concessions office; Carlene Dickey, "Finding Aid, Denali Mountaineering Records, 1906-1994" (Denver, NPS, 2002), 54-79, in DENA Archives.
[149] Robert Gerhard interview, September 23, 2003; Richard Meehan to Supt. MOMC, June 4, 1979, in "Correspondence, Alaska Mountain Guides, Genet Expeditions, 1977" file, Box 1, Collection 00495, DENA Archives; Gerhard to Joe Horiskey, October 18, 1977, in "Correspondence, Rainier Mountaineering, 1977" file, Box 1, Collection 00495, DENA Archives.
[150] SAR, 1978, 1-2; Gerhard to W. Gerald Lynch, April 20, 1979, in "Correspondence, Rainier Mountaineering, 1977" file, see above.
[151] NPS, "Mountaineering Summary Report – 1981" on Denali mountaineering website; Evaluation Panel to Supt. MOMC, November 18, 1980, in "Evaluation and Recommendation, Concession Permits, Mountaineering Guide Services" folder, "1980 and 1993 Mountaineering Prospectus" box, DENA Concessions office. In 1980, Genet Expeditions was under new management, inasmuch as Ray Genet had died on October 2, 1979, shortly after summiting Mt. Everest.
[152] *Anchorage Daily Times*, January 5, 1981, B-1; January 2, 1981, A-7.
[153] Robert Gerhard interview, September 23, 2003; Baldwin, "The Crisis on Denali," 6; Bob Gerhard draft memo, February 4, 1981, in "Evaluation and Recommendation" folder (see above). Also, William Truesdell to Jim Ratz, June 9, 1981; Robert Cunningham to Ratz, December 30, 1981; and NPS, "Concession Permit No. CX9830-2-0001," all in "NOLS 80-86" folder, "Mountain Guides 82-84" box, DENA Concessions office.
[154] NPS, "Mountaineering Summary Report," 1981 and 1983 editions.
[155] NPS, "Mountaineering Summary Report," 1984 through 1986 editions.
[156] *Anchorage Daily Times*, January 5, 1981, B-1; NPS, "Mount McKinley South Peak, Attempts and Summits," DENA Mountaineering website; NPS/AKSO, *Commercial Visitor Service Directory*, various issues, 1981-2006.
[157] NPS/AKSO, *Commercial Visitor Service Directory*, various issues, 1981-1983.
[158] *Ibid.*, various issues, 1981-1989. See the *Anchorage Daily News*, June 25, 1989, F-1 for the trend from air tours to flightseeing. Beginning in 1988, NPS concessions personnel required flying services to obtain separate CULs for air tour and flightseeing operations.
[159] Jane Bryant email, May 5, 2006; NPS, *Commercial Park Users* (DENA directory), June 1982, in AKRO-EC files; NPS, "Record of Active Revocable Permits" (chart), 1971, in "Special Use Permits" file, Folder 99, Series 1, DARC, DENA Archives; Laura Larsen with Sandy Kogl, "Dog Teams on Mount McKinley," *Alaska* 41 (March 1975), 33.
[160] Jane Bryant email, May 5, 2006; Will and Linda Forsberg to Jane Bryant, September 24, 2007; NPS/AKSO, *Commercial Visitor Service Directory*, various issues, 1982-present.
[161] NPS, "Mount McKinley South Peak, Attempts and Summits," on NPS/DENA Mountaineering website (see above).
[162] [Daryl Miller], "Climbing Deaths on Denali," on NPS/DENA Mountaineering website (see above).
[163] *Anchorage Daily Times*, October 17, 1979, 13; July 1, 1980, A-6; July 3, 1980, A-9; July 28, 1981, A-6; June 9, 1982, A-10; September 23, 1982, A-10; *Anchorage Daily News*, May 16, 1981, A-1; July 17, 1988, J-1, J-3.
[164] *Federal Register* 35 (August 15, 1970), 13017.
[165] Doug Buchanan to Cecil Andrus, October 12, 1979; *Anchorage Daily Times*, September 6, 1983, B-5; *Federal Register* 45 (May 22, 1980), 34759.

[166] *Anchorage Daily News*, June 20, 1980, A-8; *Anchorage Daily Times*, June 22, 1980, E-1; July 1, 1980, A-6.
[167] *Federal Register* 45 (November 25, 1980), 78119-20; *Anchorage Daily Times*, June 23, 1980, A-7; *Anchorage Daily News*, July 10, 1980, A-9; Robert A. Gerhard, "Revised Regulations for Mountaineering Within Mount McKinley National Park," Summit 26 (November-December 1980), 1. As late as 1993 (*Anchorage Daily News*, August 3, 1993, E-3), an article noted that "at present climbers can register the day they arrive in Talkeetna."
[168] *Anchorage Daily Times*, June 25, 1978, E-12; *Anchorage Daily News*, July 30, 1979, A-3; May 16, 1981, A-1, A-10; May 30, 1982, A-1, A-12; Woodman, *Duty Station Northwest, Volume Three*, 172-73, 201, 214, 224, 266.
[169] NPS, "Mountaineering Summary Report – 1981," on Denali mountaineering web site (see above). Nine years earlier, a group called Life Bound, Ltd. had proposed the placing of rescue equipment (including emergency oxygen) on an "icy ledge" at the 17,500-foot level of Mt. McKinley. So far as is known, however, the equipment was never delivered. *Anchorage Daily Times*, May 5, 1972, 5; *Anchorage Daily News*, May 7, 1972, 18.
[170] NPS, "Mountaineering Summary Report – 1982," on Denali mountaineering web site (see above); *Anchorage Daily Times*, September 23, 1982, A-10 and B-5; October 5, 1982, A-11.
[171] NPS, "Mountaineering Summary Report," 1983 and 1984 editions, on Denali mountaineering web site (see above); SAR, 1983, 2; Jon Waterman, "Mt. McKinley: Alaska's Highest Ranger Station," *Courier* 30 (January 1985), 1-2.
[172] NPS, "Mountaineering Summary Report – 1983;" *Anchorage Daily Times*, May 23, 1983, B-4; *Anchorage Daily News*, May 22, 1983, A-1, A-12; May 26, 1983, A-12.
[173] NPS, "Mountaineering Summary Report," 1984, 1985, and 2000 editions; *Anchorage Daily News*, July 19, 1984, C-1; *Anchorage Daily Times*, July 18, 1984, B-1; July 20, 1984, A-10; July 21, 1984, A-10.
[174] Alaska Railroad, "Memorandum of Rental Agreement" (Contract 69-25-0003-5165), April 14, 1980, in "Front Misc." file, Box 1, Collection 00495, DENA Archives.
[175] Biographical sketches of Gerhard and Seibert are noted in the *Anchorage Daily News* issues of May 13, 1984, O-4 and July 14, 1991, O-10, respectively.
[176] SAR, 1984, 2; Roger Robinson interview, January 2007;
[177] NPS, "Mount McKinley South Peak, Attempts and Summits" (chart), DENA Mountaineering website. The 1989 crowds, more than half of whom reached the summit, prompted climbing ranger Bob Seibert to quip "Believe it or not, we do have people standing in line waiting for their turn on Mount McKinley." Yereth Rosen, ed., "From Ketchikan to Barrow," *Alaska* 56 (February 1990), 11.
[178] [Daryl Miller], "Climbing Deaths on Denali," on Denali mountaineering web site. During the 1985-1995 period, at least two climbers died on Mount McKinley in every year except 1991 (which had no deaths) and 1993 (which had one).
[179] *Anchorage Daily News*, July 17, 1988, J-1; August 9, 1991, M-1; August 11, 1992, B-3.
[180] NPS, "Mountaineering Summary Report," 1985 through 1995 editions; SAR, 1987, 6.
[181] SAR, 1986, 2; SAR, 1987, 6; "The Mountain That Eats Koreans," *Economist* 323 (June 20, 1992), 28; *Anchorage Daily News*, August 3, 1993, E-3. The two foreign language brochures had been produced in 1983; see NPS, "Mountaineering Summary Report," 1983, 1987, 1988, 1992, and 1995 editions.
[182] *Anchorage Daily News*, June 23, 1990, B-3; Rosen, "From Ketchikan to Barrow," 11; NPS, "Mountaineering Summary Report – 1990."
[183] Seibert, "Denali National Park and Preserve Mountaineering Summary, 1990," *American Alpine Journal* 33 (1991), 154; Alan Ewert, "High Altitude Mountaineering Setting: Visitor Characteristics and Management Preferences," unpub. mss., August 1992, in Talkeetna Mountaineering Center (NPS) files.
[184] *Anchorage Daily News*, May 27, 1992, B-6 and June 7, 1992, E-1; *New York Times*, May 19, 1992, A-17; May 24, 1992, 32; and June 2, 1992, A-14; Michael Meyer, "Deathwatch on Mount McKinley," *Newsweek* 119 (June 8, 1992), 31; "The Mountain That Eats Koreans," 28.
[185] "Deathwatch on Mount McKinley," 31; *Anchorage Daily News*, June 7, 1992, E-1, E-4.
[186] *Anchorage Daily News*, August 11, 1992, B-1, B-3; October 7, 1993, E-1; NPS, "Mountaineering Summary Report," 1992 edition.
[187] SAR, 1991, 7; NPS, "Mountaineering Summary Report," 1995 edition, on DENA website. The Army had first used a Chinook on the mountain in April 1976, when it rescued Hanspeter Trachsel from the 17,200-foot level. Even earlier, in April 1972, the Army had helicopters capable of summit-level rescue operations, but did not employ them until later. Greiner, *Wager With the Wind*, 242; [Roger Robinson], "Chronology of Firsts in Aviation History on Mt. McKinley" (chart), in Talkeetna Mountaineering Center files.
[188] *Anchorage Daily News*, August 3, 1993, E-1, E-3.
[189] *New York Times*, July 11, 1993, V:3; "Pre-Paid Deliverance," *Economist* 328 (September 11, 1993), 23; *Anchorage Daily News*, October 7, 1993, E-1.

[190] *Anchorage Daily News*, September 12, 1993, D-1; February 28, 1994, D-2; *New York Times*, September 14, 1993, A-18; "Climbing Costs," *Alaska* 61 (April 1995), 13.
[191] *Anchorage Daily News*, October 7, 1993, E-1; March 2, 1994, E-1, E-5; April 6, 1994, C-1, C-6; NPS, "Mountaineering Summary Report – 1995," on DENA website.
[192] *Anchorage Daily News*, December 9, 1994, E-1, E-3; *Federal Register* 59 (December 15, 1994), 64696-97; "Climb Up, Pay Up," *Alaska Business Monthly* 11 (January 1995), 10; "Climbing Costs," *Alaska* 61 (April 1995), 13.
[193] *Federal Register* 59 (December 15, 1994), 64697.
[194] SAR, 1995, 1, 9; SAR, 1997, 10-11. In 1995, climbers on Mount Rainier also began paying a fee; it was just $15, or $25 for a season pass. See *Anchorage Daily News*, December 9, 1994, E-3; Hal Clifford, "After the Fall," *National Parks* 71 (March/April 1997), 34-37.
[195] The NPS had been trying to get climbing groups to preregister since 1992. The agency stated that year that beginning in 1994, all groups would need to preregister by February 15. That action, however, did not appear in the *Federal Register* until December 1994 (see above). NPS, "Mountaineering Summary Report," 1992 and 1993 editions, on DENA website.
[196] *Federal Register* 60 (March 31, 1995), 16579-80; September 13, 1995, 47513-14; February 23, 1996, 6943-44; NPS, "Mountaineering Summary Report – 1995."
[197] NPS, "Mountaineering Summary Report – 1996."
[198] NPS/AKSO, *Commercial Visitor Service Directory*, various issues, 1985 to 1995; *Anchorage Daily News*, April 27, 1992, E-8.
[199] See "1984/85 Fact Sheet, Mountaineering Guides" and "88/89 Fact Sheet" folders, in DENA Concessions office; *Federal Register* 54 (February 3, 1989), 5555. On January 30, 1985, NPS Regional Director Roger Contor wrote U.S. Senator Ted Stevens and noted that the agency was pleased with the record of all seven mountaineering guide services.
[200] NPS/AKSO, *Commercial Visitor Service Directory*, various issues, 1981-1989.
[201] *Anchorage Daily News*, February 19, 1992, A-1, A-8.
[202] *Anchorage Daily News*, March 19, 1992, B-1, B-3; April 12, 1992, E-1, E-9; April 16, 1992, B-2; April 27, 1992, E-8; May 10, 1992, J-1, J-3.
[203] NPS, "Mountaineering Summary Report – 1992," on DENA website. The Genet Expeditions story is told, primarily from Harry Johnson's point of view, in Peter Porco's "Fall from Grace," in *Alaska* 64 (May-June 1994), pp. 30-37.
[204] NPS/AKSO, *Commercial Visitor Service Directory*, 1992 through 1994 editions; NPS, "Mountaineering Summary Report – 1993," on DENA website.
[205] Deb Ajango, "The Concessionaire Question," *Alaska Business Monthly* 10 (May 1994), 57; *Anchorage Daily News*, July 4, 1994, B-1, B-3; Jeannie Woodring, "Court Orders Concessionaire Off Mountain," *Alaska Business Monthly* 10 (August 1994), 10; *Jacobs vs.U.S.A., et al.*, June 16, 1994, p. 22, in Jacobs Lawsuit file, DENA Concessions office.
[206] Concessions Analyst, ARO to Chief of Concessions, ARO, September 1, 1994, in "Mountaineering Prospectus" folder [1994-95], Current Files, DENA Concessions office; NPS/AKSO, *Commercial Visitor Service Directory*, 1995 through 2006 editions. In an ironic footnote, AAI—despite having its permit taken away—soon returned as an Old Park mountaineering guide because the company, in November 1998, purchased Fantasy Ridge Alpinism, Inc., which had held a concessions permit since 1989. It is still one of the six permit holders. Mary Wysong interview, May 15, 2007.
[207] *Anchorage Daily News*, May 6, 1994, E-1; NPS, "Mountaineering Summary Report," 1991 and 1993 through 1995 editions.
[208] NPS, "Mountaineering Summary Report," 1985 and 1989 editions.
[209] NPS, "Mountaineering Summary Report – 1989," on DENA website; Rosen, "From Ketchikan to Barrow," 11.
[210] *Anchorage Daily News*, July 14, 1991, O-10; NPS, "Mountaineering Summary Report," 1993 and 1995 editions, on DENA website.
[211] Martin Hansen (AKRO Lands Division), in an October 24, 2007 email, notes that the lease for the rescue-cache property was signed in 1990.
[212] Roger Robinson interview, January 2007 and May 1, 2007; NPS, "Mountaineering Summary Report," 1989, 1990 and 1995 editions.
[213] Roger Robinson interview, see above; NPS, "Mountaineering Summary Report," 1995 edition.
[214] [Daryl Miller], "Mount McKinley South Peak, Attempts and Summits," on DENA mountaineering website.
[215] *Anchorage Daily News*, June 21-24, 1998, A-1.
[216] *Anchorage Daily News*, August 14, 1998, A-1; August 23, 1998, A-1. The lengthy August 23 article gives an excellent description of the pros and cons of insurance, bonds, fees, and other revenue-enhancing possibilities.

[217] 106th Congress, 1st Session, "Denali National Park and Preserve Rescues" (*Senate Report 106-71*), June 9, 1999, 2.
[218] 105th Congress, 2nd Session, "Mount McKinley Rescue Activities" (*Senate Hearing 105-775*), August 24, 1998, *passim.*; *Anchorage Daily News*, August 25, 1998, A-1; *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, August 28, 1998, C-9.
[219] U.S. Senate, 105th Congress, 2nd Session, S. 2639, introduced October 15, 1998.
[220] U.S. Senate, 106th Congress, 1st Session, S. 698, introduced March 24, 1999.
[221] *Senate Report 106-71*, June 9, 1999, 5-6; U.S. Senate, 106th Congress, 1st Session, S. 698, various references in www.thomas.loc.gov. After the president signed it, the bill became Public Law 106-486.
[222] NPS, "Mountaineering Summary Report – 2001," on DENA mountaineering website.
[223] NPS, *Analysis of Cost Recovery for High-altitude Rescues on Mt. McKinley, Denali National Park and Preserve, Alaska*, August 2001, in Talkeetna Mountaineering Center files.
[224] *Anchorage Daily News*, April 25, 2005, B-1, B-2.
[225] NPS, *General Management Plan*, November 1986, 21, 27; NPS, "Mountaineering Summary – 1991," on DENA mountaineering website; NPS, etc., *Development Concept Plan, South Side, Denali, Alaska*, February 1997, 14-16.
[226] Robert K. Yearout (WASO) to Regional Director, Alaska Region, June 11, 1997, in "C3823 IBP Converted to CP (Air Taxi Operation DENA)" file, AKRO Concessions Collection.
[227] *Federal Register* 67 (November 8, 2002), 68157-58; *Anchorage Daily News*, March 15, 2006, G-1; Jill Morgan emails, May 1, 2007 and May 7, 2007. Between 2002 and 2007, the various carriers were issued a series of one-year permit extensions.
[228] *Anchorage Daily News*, October 15, 1999, C-1; January 18, 2002, B-3; June 15, 2005, B-3; NPS, "Mountaineering Summary Report," 2001 and 2002 editions.
[229] NPS, *Draft Backcountry Management Plan, DENA*, February 2003, 39, 49-61, 92-95.
[230] Roger Robinson, review comment, August 22, 2007; also see Vern Tejas's comment in the NPS's *Backcountry Management Plan, DENA*, January 2006, 347-48.
[231] NPS, *Draft Backcountry Management Plan, DENA*, February 2003, 39, 42, 96.
[232] *Ibid.*, 50-63.
[233] *Ibid.*, 105; NPS, *Revised Draft Backcountry Management Plan*, DENA (April 2005), 193, 442-68; Mike Tranel interview, October 19, 2006.
[234] NPS, *Revised Draft Backcountry Management Plan, DENA*, April 2005, 43, 55-56, 71-72, 101, 193.
[235] NPS, *Final Backcountry Management Plan, DENA*, January 2006, 38, 48, 54.
[236] *Anchorage Daily News*, March 5, 2006, K-1.
[237] *Anchorage Daily News*, March 15, 2006, G-1, G-10.
[238] NPS, "Mountaineering Summary Report," 1995 and 2000 editions, on DENA mountaineering website.
[239] Sherwonit, "Mountain of Trash," 35; NPS, *Mountaineering, Denali National Park and Preserve*, on DENA mountaineering website.
[240] NPS, "Mountaineering Summary Report," 1995, 1996, and 2000 editions; Roger Robinson interview, May 1, 2007.
[241] NPS, "Mountaineering Summary Report," 2000 and 2001 editions; Tom Bol, "Denali Patrol: Rangers Protect Climbers and the Mountain," *Alaska* 68 (May-June 2002), 26.
[242] NPS, "Mountaineering Summary Report," 2003 edition.
[243] NPS, "Mountaineering Summary Report," 2000 edition; Sherwonit, "Mountain of Trash," 68, 70.
[244] NPS, "Mountaineering Summary Report," 2001 and 2003 editions; Sherwonit, "Mountain of Trash," 70; *Anchorage Daily News*, July 6, 2001, H-10; July 23, 2001, B-1; March 3, 2002, B-3.
[245] NPS, "Mountaineering Summary Report," 2001 edition; Sherwonit, "Mountain of Trash," 70;
[246] NPS, "Mountaineering Summary Report," 2002 and 2003 editions; Roger Robinson interview, May 1, 2007.
[247] NPS, "Mountaineering Summary Report," 2004 edition.
[248] Robinson interview, May 1, 2007; NPS, *Final Backcountry Management Plan*, January 2006, 51-52; NPS, *DENA, Compendium*, Sec. 2.14(b); 2006 edition, p. 14, and 2007 edition, p. 10.
[249] Sherwonit, "Mountain of Trash," 35, 68, 70; NPS, "Mountaineering Summary Report," 2003 and 2004 editions. In 2001, one ranger noted that "we find a cache about every hundred yards at the end of the season that needs to be cleaned up." Bol, "Denali Patrol," 26.
[250] Garey Coatney to Associate Regional Director, Operations, May 5, 1989; Rebecca Hallgarth to Chief Ranger, South District, DENA, October 30, 1989; both in "Talkeetna Visitor Center/Roberta Sheldon, DENA-O" folder, AKRO Lands Division files; NPS, "Mountaineering Summary Report," 1989 edition.
[251] NPS, "Mountaineering Summary Report," 1990 edition; Joe Durrenberger to Rebecca Hallgarth, July 9, 1990; Regional Director to Chief, Land Resources Division, WASO, December 24, 1990; Regional Director to Regional Solicitor, December 11, 1991; all in "Retired File/Phillip Wallona, DENA-O" folder, AKRO Lands Division files.
[252] *Anchorage Daily News*, March 25, 1992, B-2.

[253] NPS, *Draft Development Concept Plan, Environmental Statement, South Slope, DENA* (May 1993), 19.
[254] Despite that rejection, however, the idea of a Talkeetna-area visitor center remained. The report of the Denali Task Force, in October 1994, recommended small visitor centers at Talkeetna and two other south slope sites, and in March 1996 (see Chapter 10), the revised draft DCP called for visitor facilities and services to be developed at Talkeetna and other points "when the need and opportunity to do so are established."
[255] SAR, 1993, 7; SAR, 1995, 9; NPS, "Mountaineering Summary Report – 1995;" Brad Richie interview, April 30, 2007; NPS, *Design Analysis, Mountaineering Contact Station*, April 1994, in TIC Collection (184/D-285).
[256] SAR, 1996, 5; SAR, 1997, 5; NPS, "Mountaineering Summary Report – 1996;" *Anchorage Daily News*, June 7, 1997, B-1.
[257] "James and Susan Kellard 00008/Talkeetna Parking (Mountaineering Center)/DENA" folder (DENA O-29), AKRO Lands Division.
[258] NPS, "Mountaineering Summary Report," 2001 and 2006 editions.