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Alpina

A semi-annual review of mountaineering in the greater ranges

Editor's note: This past winter, Jeffery Parrette, the journal's Alpina editor since 1984, announced his plans to retire. We will miss his careful reporting, keen analysis, ability to provide context to even the strangest political and athletic situations in the high peaks, and his dry sense of humor. Next issue we will write more about Jeff and his work. For now, we express deep gratitude, on behalf of generations of readers and the Appalachian Mountain Club, for his contributions of many hundred thousands of words toward understanding the risks and rewards of high-elevation adventures.

During this transition to a new editor or editors of this section, Steven Jervis has this report on Denali.

Denali and Environs

North America's highest peak underwent two big changes last year: It was officially named its native name, **Denali** (20,310 ft), perhaps to the distress of admirers of President William McKinley, after whom a gold prospector named the peak in 1896. And the U.S. Geological Survey reduced its measured height by 10 ft. This is unlikely to make the ascent easier.

The year 2015 was typically busy on the mountain. Nearly 1,100 attempts produced 628 successes. As has been the case for years, by far the most popular route was the West Buttress route, which saw almost 95 percent of the attempts, with a success rate of 57 percent. Those on some of the harder routes did much better: of 32 attempts on the Cassin Ridge and Upper West Rib, all but one reached the top.

Notably, all fourteen tries on the Muldrow Glacier line failed. This is the original (1913) ascent line, but geological and climate changes have made it harder and more dangerous over time. The most significant climb was likely the Denali Diamond, by Jewell Lund and Chantel Astorga. This was only the seventh ascent, and the first by an all-female team. It took five days. The first ascent of this very hard line was made over seventeen days in 1981. Also noteworthy was Lonnie DuPre's success, the first solo ever in January. The mountain was not climbed again until mid-May.

Denali Park Services reports one fatality, a soloist in May, and a number of rescues. Eight of these required a high-altitude helicopter.

On nearby **Mt Foraker** (17,400 ft), six of fifteen attempts reached the summit, all by the Sultana Ridge. A number of significant new climbs were made in the area: the northeast face of Mt Dickey, the southwest face of Peak 7,400', North Triple Peak starting by the northwest couloir, and several others—all very difficult.

The hardest of the new routes was “Illusions of the Raven,” a 5,000-ft line on the Moose’s Tooth, by Alik Berg and Skiy DeTray. The route lies to the right of another hard line called “Bird of Prey,” which Dani Arnold and David Lama pioneered in 2013. This formidable peak remained unclimbed until 1964 and now has a number of very difficult routes.

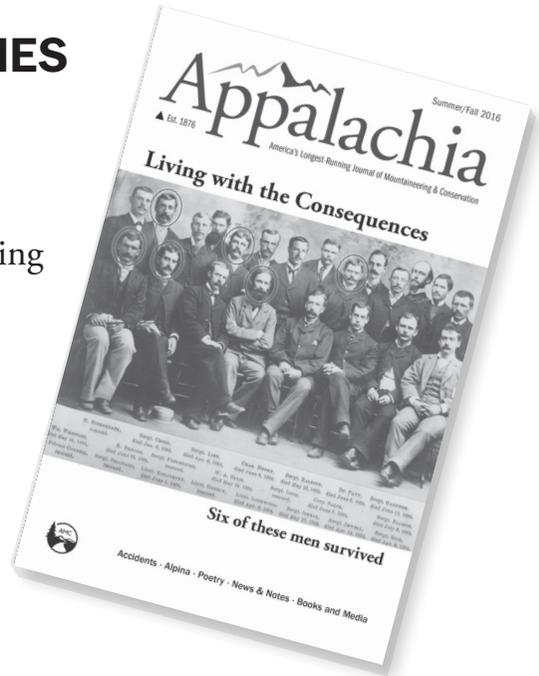
—*Steven Jervis*

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