MOUNTAINEERING SUMMARY 1979

About 680 mountaineers climbed the major peaks of Mount McKinley National Park and Denali National Monument. As in previous years, nearly a third of the climbers travelled to Alaska from foreign countries. Eighteen Japanese expeditions and eight German parties climbed in the park and monument along with groups from Belgium, Ireland, Korea, Switzerland, Sweden, Mexico, England, Canada, France, and Iceland.

The overall success ratio for climbers was approximately 60%. Sixteen climbers were involved in major accidents, and three climbers were killed in accidents on Mount Hunter and Mount McKinley.

The Northeast Ridge of Mount Foraker (via Mount Crosson) was climbed for the first time by an Alaskan party who completed their winter ascent in March. All sections of the route had been previously climbed but this was the first time that the entire route was completed in one trip. Later in the summer, a climbing team from Oregon made the first ascents of the South Ridge of Mount Huntington and the South Face of the South Peak of the Rooster's Comb.

Another "first" was recorded in May when an Alaskan dog team reached the summit of Mount McKinley via the West Buttress route.

A Japanese climber was killed and another injured early in May when a corniced ridge they were traversing collapsed on the West Ridge of Mount Hunter. The injured climber was able to make his way alone back to the landing spot on the Kahiltna Glacier.

Two Korean climbers were killed and one was seriously injured when they fell descending the upper part of the West Rib on Mount McKinley. The team had reached the summit and were descending when one member lost his footing. The exhausted team was unable to stop the fall and slid 1,500-2,000 feet down the slope.

Three West German climbers were evacuated from the West Buttress route after two became seriously ill from cerebral and pulmonary edema. The group had climbed up the mountain far too fast for proper acclimatization, reaching 18,000 feet only four days after beginning their climb. Two other cases of high altitude pulmonary edema were also caused by rapid ascents.

Five cases of pulmonary edema, three cases of cerebral edema, and at least ten cases of acute mountain sickness were reported. Eight climbers reported falls and twenty-two reported receiving some frostbite. More minor cases of acute mountain sickness and frostbite probably occurred but were not reported.

The National Park Service was involved in twelve separate incidents where climbing parties required outside assistance or evacuation. These incidents cost the National Park Service approximately $10,000. Several climbing groups voluntarily paid for the costs of their rescues.

Trash left by mountaineers continues to plague the more popular routes on Mount McKinley. Most is left by groups who do not carefully plan in advance. Repacking food into plastic bags before the climb can eliminate a great deal of the foil and unnecessary wrappings. This will greatly reduce the amount of trash to be dealt with while on the climb. Groups should carefully plan how much food is necessary for their climb to avoid the necessity of abandoning excess food on the mountain. On certain routes, fixed ropes litters many sections. Fixed ropes should be used as infrequently as is safely possible and should be removed after each climb when feasible. Most importantly, all climbers must make a commitment before they start their climbs that they will bring everything back down with them that they have carried up. Only if this is done will future climbers be able to enjoy the beauty and cleanliness of Alaska's mountains as they should.

MOUNTAINEERING SUMMARY 1979

	Expeditions	Climbers	Successful Climbers
Mount McKinley			
West Buttress	64	240	124
West Buttress (guided)	14	188	165
Muldrow Glacier	1	5	0
Cassin Ridge	8	28	24
Cassin Ridge (guided)	1	3	3
South Face	1	4	0
West Rib	12	54	31
South Buttress	2	9	4
Southeast Face	1	2	0
	104	533	351
Mount Foraker			
Southeast Ridge	3	13	0
Northeast Ridge	2	5	3
Northeast Ridge (guided)	1	6	5
Infinite Spur	1	4	0
	7	28	8
Mount Hunter	7	19	8
Mount Huntington	4	11	4
Ruth Gorge Peaks	9	32	16
Peak 12,380'	3	6	2
Moose's Tooth	6	16	0
Rooster's Comb	2	4	4
Mount Silverthrone	1	2	0
Mount Mather	1	18	0
Mount Brooks	1	2	2
Other Peaks	4	9	3
GRAND TOTAL	149	680	398

GUIDED ACTIVITIES 1979

Guide Service:	Route	Number of Expeditions	Total Climbers	Successful Climbers
1. Alaska Mountain Guides	West Buttress	4	69	67
2. Rainier Mountaineering Inc.	West Buttress	3	39	38
	Mount Foraker	1	6	5
3. Mountain Trip	West Buttress	3	31	16
	Ruth Gorge	1	5	5
4. Fantasy Ridge	Cassin Ridge	1	3	3
Non-Profit, Educational Organizations:				
5. Anchorage Community College	West Buttress	2	19	17
6. Nat'l Outdoor Leadership School	West Buttress	1	20	18
7. Infinite Odyssey	West Buttress	1	10	9
Other expeditions which appeared to be guided expeditions but which may or may not have been:				
8. Hans Brunner	West Buttress	2	5	4
9. Claude Rey	West Buttress	1	14	13
10. Eiselin Sports	West Buttress	1	8	5
11. Fortitude Vincimus	West Buttress	1	9	9
12. Traleika 79	West Buttress	1	11	2