

MOUNT RAINIER & MOUNT MCKINLEY EXPEDITION

June 22 – July 12, 1985

Tape recorded log
of Peter von S. Stanley

[Richmond, Va.] The following log begins 22 June 1985 at 11:14 a.m.... packing up.

I am now on the Piedmont flight to Washington, having checked three bags—I don't know where the little string bag is—by and large, though, I feel pretty well organized.

I'm now at Seattle airport. I met Sam in Minneapolis, flew in and saw Mt. Rainier in gorgeous splendor—absolutely startling view of Mt. Rainier in clear weather on the port side of the airplane. Incredibly, we have managed to jam four bags a piece—that's almost 20 bags—5 backpacks—in a little Buick Century stationwagon.

It is now 9:57 on 24 June. I'm at the Paradise Lodge. God, the pace of this place is incredible—the mental strain!

We're now at Camp Muir at 10,000 feet. I'm walking over the ice, looking in a northeasterly direction. In a southeasterly direction I can see Mt. Adams, Mt. Hood—which is in Oregon—and Mt. St. Helens. It's incredible to me, we hiked up 5,000 ft. from Paradise Lodge to the ice field from which we will make a summit dash beginning at 2:30 or 3:00 in the morning. It's now 9:23 p.m. on 24 June '85. I've found that the greatest strain of this is not physical but mental. It's trying to remember everything and recall what's in what bag and where everything is so that you'll be prepared. And actually, so far, my experience has been that I am better prepared than I fear I am. The morning before last when we were trying to pack in the motel, I felt terrified because I couldn't figure where to put everything in my pack. I was trying to figure out how to be prepared for really cold weather.

Here I am, standing on a windy ledge, probably 15 degrees, maybe 20—it will probably be 10 degrees on top with 40 mile per hour winds but I know I have my polypro underwear and stuff and I'm going to put it on before I get in my bag. Coming to the last pitch Sam really got tired. Yesterday the guide took off at incredible speed. We were with packs and we were going out to do some crevasse training and we started uphill. I've got to go to bed—it's getting so late. I'll tell these tales later.

It's now approximately 3:30 a.m. on the 25th of June and I'm looking out at the very crack of dawn, looking up in the sky. The temperature is probably 12 degrees. I'm walking on a very hard snow pack. I can see Cassiopeia. The wind is blowing pretty hard. God, it's an incredible view because the sun is just beginning to light the northern horizon. There is a very definite dawn over there. Would you believe 3:30 from 10,000 feet!

[In the Rainier summit crater] Well, here we are... hum hum. The time is 10:42 on 25 June. We're here on the summit of Mt. Rainier, we're one tired bunch... don't know if this recorder is working.

[On 14,410 ft. Columbia Crest across summit crater] We pressed on across to the actual summit side of Mt. Rainier... balmy and my mouth is all cold. We've taken pictures. We are all tired and spent.

The previous words were recorded on the summit and it is now the following morning down at Camp Muir—a misnomer for a camp—it's unlikely you can get as much as a cup of water here unless you melt your own snow, but it's a snow field at the 10,000 foot level where everyone gathers prior to the summit attempt if they're using the route of Disappointment Cleaver, which we took yesterday. My comments at the summit were brief partly because I was spent and partly because I wasn't sure that tape recorder was working. We rose at 3:00 a.m. yesterday and got off at 5:00, climbed basically to the summit from Camp Muir... approximately 4,400 feet. We'd climbed 5,000 feet the day before from Paradise. At 5:00 we took off and hiked for approximately one hour... our general hike times were about one hour... and after one hour we'd climbed about 1000 feet which we all felt was a pretty impressive rate of climb.

There were several traverses underneath areas where avalanches were inevitable... they'd happen sooner or later. In addition, there were places we had to go across where warmth would have resulted in rocks falling and we could see where the rocks had fallen the previous day or in days past. And one of our reasons for an early departure was to try and reach the summit early enough and begin the descent prior to the sun's melting the snow and making it easier for either snow slides or rock falls to occur.

At the beginning of the hike there was a pair of climbers who had left a half-hour or more before us, and we began to catch up with them in an area involving a lot of rock scree that was difficult to walk through... also the rocks were very unstable. The climbers yelled "Rocks!". Indeed, there were some coming down, productive of a great amount of adrenaline in my case as I sat there tied in and seeing the rocks falling and knowing there was no way I could get out of the way if any significant amount of rocks began to come.

In the beginning I was not aware of the altitude change except to note that I was tired. The temperature was probably 15 degrees and at the beginning there was not much in the way of wind, but the wind began to build as we got higher. We walked across some pretty impressive crevasses. I wish I'd taken some pictures. I was afraid my camera wouldn't work. I should have tried it anyway - wish I had. But when you walk across a crevasse... there was none that involved more than a couple of feet from one lip to the next.... We knew that the lips were stable because there were footprints of other climbers who had gone before us, so we had at least some assurance that they were stable. When you look down into the abyss of the crevasse and realize what you are walking across and how unstable it really is, it can be a genuinely soul-throbbing experience.

I think we had about four or five rests on the way to the summit, and the time the altitude really began to affect me was about 13,000 feet. At that point the wind really picked up - it must have gotten to about 40 miles per hour - not so much that we were in fear of being blown off or blown down, we were just buffeted heavily by the wind which required a lot of energy just to overcome - or it seemed so.

The sun was out and very bright all the way. Without our sun goggles on even for an hour or two I think we would have been in great peril because I don't think our eyes would have lasted, or certainly mine wouldn't, being sensitive to sun anyway.

It was as if there were no oxygen up there. There was plenty of air but no oxygen. The air was evidenced by the heavy blowing and the buffeting by the winds. And then as we approached the summit, Jeff Detweiler and his client from California who had preceded us came down. We had passed the group that had knocked some rocks down, and I don't think they ever made it to the summit. They looked very discouraged and dejected, I think, as we went by. They had to "heave to" and let us pass.

But little by little we made our way on up beyond the 13,500 – 14,000 foot mark. We rested about 600 feet beneath the lip which is a crater on Rainier; and at about, I would guess, 10:30 we heaved about the lip on what I think is the eastern side of the crater. We went on over and down into the crater and gave each other a few slaps on the back. But mostly we just lay down on the ground totally exhausted, and I recorded the little bit that was on this tape earlier.

Larry, as we sat there said, "Well, crossing this lip represents completion of the climb of Rainier, but there is another peak over on the other side of the crater that's a little higher than this one." And then we looked at our map and decided that it was about a third of a mile across and maybe 200 feet higher. And somewhere from within our group came the will to cross and climb that final peak, even though it was not necessary for the record books. It certainly wasn't my idea. I would have been perfectly happy, I think... although I'm very glad we did it, I would have been perfectly happy at that point to take comfort and satisfaction from the technicality of having obtained the summit rather than actually having set foot on the absolute highest point. But I think it was Stuart or Matt who said, "Well, we might go on across and get up that final peak." The next thing I knew Larry had picked up his ice axe and Larry and I were going across and then Sam and then Matthew and Stuart. And pretty soon we were standing on top of the highest point (Columbia Crest, 14,400 feet) maybe twenty-five or thirty minutes later. There I took some pictures of Sam and Sam with his camera took some pictures of me looking - the background was Mt. St. Helens which has been smoking the whole time we have been climbing, and we have been hearing that there is a chance of an eruption.

Now we are getting ready to pack up our gear and glissade and hike on down the 5,000 feet of descent to Paradise. We've had three days in a row now of vigorous, vigorous indeed, athletic endeavor, and I am very sore. But I guess the only time I felt really washed out was in that last bid for the summit.

It's now 1:53 a.m. 27 June, Thursday and we're at the same motel in Seattle that we stayed at en route. Today we came down from Camp Muir. It was 56 minutes to Pebble Rocks and then another 56 minutes to Paradise at a pace that I think would be hard to duplicate if there wasn't (packed) snow. We were really moving down fast or kind of semi-skiing. So that was a hard two hours' and we all feel thoroughly tired.... It's now almost 2:30 in the morning. We've got to make an 8:35 a.m. flight, and I 'm just about ready to turn in. I should have no trouble getting plenty of sleep or rather going to sleep—I won't be able to get plenty... but...

Driving down out of Rainier National Park... I began... my adrenaline really began pumping. It's a very "high" time. There is something compellingly powerful about pitting your all against a mountain. I just finished going over my gear. It's now 3:14 a.m. on 27 June... Thursday... we've got to get up at 6:00 a.m. to catch the plane. Shutting down.....

It's now 5:18 p.m. on 27 June, Thursday, and I'm standing in the back yard of the Talkeetna Motel where we are spending the night. We raced this morning to the Seattle airport with our zillion bags and managed to get them all on the flight... incredibly. I guess we've got 20 or 25 bags. Anyway we made it all through and we got to the airport and lo and behold John O'Hara and Michael Sheehan were awaiting us. Michael offered to drive us all the way to Talkeetna in his van, which was really nice of him. But then I paged Tom Waite and Eric Simonson appeared. Jeff Detweiler is getting flown up some time tonight, apparently, and we will be set and ready to go out tomorrow morning in theory if not in practice. I'm about ready to sort gear, and Sam and everybody has gone over to help Eric get the food. I'm trying to resort my stuff which I really... probably shouldn't do because it's not going to do me much good. I have let that become a painful meditation... and I herewith cease on that. I'm not going to know... there's no way I can know what's going to work on the mountain because I have never been on the mountain... just have to listen to what the guide says, and if he says what I've got is right I'll say "O.K., I'll take what you say." I think I'll have to accept the fact that it's simply a matter of following instructions.

We are now on the Kahiltna Glacier (about 6,900 ft.). The time is 11:38 a.m. on the 28th of June, Friday. Cliff Hudson and his son, Jay, flew us in. One of Cliff's words of warning was that we had best stay roped up in view of the fact that two people have already died this year as the result of falling into crevasses... just as a result of not being roped up. One was the leader of a (German) party. Looking approximately east, judging from the sun angle, I can see the summit of McKinley. I said to Sam that it doesn't look too far away. He commented that I should be sure to put that on tape. We hear falling snow... right now... (avalanche).

I slept perfectly abysmally last night (in Talkeetna) as I tried to think through my gear which seemed to me to be terribly disorganized, and I concluded as I wrestled with the problems that I was probably mentally unfit for this trip. I didn't take a sleeping pill last night or the night before and neither night did I get much sleep at all. I think one of the problems is just being wired. Larry says he's really wired too.

(At rest stop) Well, we hooked up our gear and put it on sleds and roped up and headed down the hill a ways where we turn right to go up this vast... I would guess you'd call it the West Buttress amphitheater, maybe, with Mt. Foraker on one side.

(Trudging) It's now twenty minutes after the last recording. Stuart just stepped into a crevasse. He did not fall through, fortunately. It may be a much bigger crevasse, and we all have to walk over it.

(We spent the night at Camp I, 6,860 ft.)

(Trudging) Well, it is now the next morning... Saturday (June 29) and I am trudging up a hill pulling a sled and toting a pack. We're on two roped heading up the hill. McKinley's summit is very much in evidence. This seems too easy somehow. I'm packing maybe a seventy-pound pack and pulling a sled with probably the same weight on it. It's a little windy and maybe 25 or 30 degrees... maybe a little colder than that. But this is just gorgeous! How could this be fun? (laughing) This is just great right now... first rays of sun are just peaking over. It's about 6:00

a.m... we got up at four... like to travel in the cool of the day and then Eric like to... I just let my rope get caught under my sled which will foul Matt up ahead. The problem that I have is trying to hold back and not go too fast. Because if I go too fast then there is slack in the rope, and if he falls into a crevasse I can't arrest his fall. By the same token, if I fall into a crevasse I've got another twenty feet or so to fall before I get caught. Here comes that sun. The burn is pretty incredible and it really will fry you up here. It's probably worse than the desert or the beach. In any event things are going awfully well!

(Saturday, June 29, Camp II, 7,900 ft.) Well, it's now 6:00 in the evening... same day. We reached camp after a four mile hike up the Kahiltna Glacier. And as it worked out we got up at 4:00... started hiking at about a quarter to seven... and it took us four and a quarter hours to get to where we have camped. It has gotten a lot warmer and now it's raining. During most of today's climb we have been able to see an awful lot of the West Buttress route. It was explained to me by Jeff Detweiler that to go to Windy Corner from where we were this morning is equivalent to going from Pebble Rocks on Rainier up to the summit (of Mt. Rainier). Eric is really anxious to get done with the sledding part of this. He indicated that he really wants to get up... which we will, I guess, tomorrow or the next day... beyond the place where you can pull sleds because the slope just gets too darn steep. It's already getting pretty steep. He just says he'd rather double carry, using packs, than sled. He's about the most incredibly, in my opinion, marvelous, "easy does it" guide imaginable. He doesn't get rattled over anything. He believes that the way to climb this mountain is to take it real slow and easy and take really good care of yourself and... then you'll get there. His comments about other climbers that have run into difficulty generally reflect his disapproval of the fact that they push themselves too hard. When I think back about the difference between the way we're doing this mountain and the way we did Rainier... there's quite a dramatic difference. Part of it, though is the style of mountaineering. Rainier is an alpine-style mountain, or at least it's certainly climbed that way, and this is an expedition-style mountain. Alpine style means go light and go fast. Expedition-style means take what you need and take your time.

An interesting aside about Ray Genet. Eric met Ray in Katmandu in September of 1979 just before Genet died on Everest. He was going up Everest to the summit. Apparently he was behind, taking the leader's wife, Anne Marie Schmatz. Eric's feeling was that Genet was trying to take care of her and make sure she got to the summit, and his decision to do so probably killed him. One of Eric's comments was that "that's what you get for trying to guide on Everest." In any event, in October of that year, '79, Genet and Anne Marie Schmatz made the summit, were coming down, were forced to bivouac. Her body is still there. Genet's has never been found. Eric's comment was, "Isn't that marvelous, to hit the top and keep on going!"

(At Camp II, 7,900 ft.) It is 8:25 a.m. on Sunday 30 June. Yesterday it rained like crazy. Eric said that's the first time that's ever happened. I took out the tent door here and I see it's beginning to break up and the sun is coming through. I really slept like a log last night... did not take a sleeping pill which makes me feel fine. I just feel really good this morning. My face is really blistered, lips and cheek on the left side from the sun. Don't know what the answer to that is except time and stay out of the sun.

It's now 10:00 a.m. on Sunday. Several of the ridges on McKinley have become very clear in this light. I got some really good pictures which show the Cassin and the West Rib and one just beyond the Cassin that's very clear and that should be apparent in some photographs I've taken... one in particular with Sam in the foreground. Eric has decided that we will break to double load mode of

transportation... full sleds only for a couple of hours with light packs, return and spend the night in our tents, having left the sleds, just taking pack loads. The wind seems to be picking up a little bit... and incredible avalanche that we can see right now (audible sound of avalanche).

(At Camp II, 7,900 ft.) It's now 9:38 a.m. on the first of July. That was an avalanche we were watching yesterday. After we got through packing up our gear, we loaded everything that was in our packs, practically, plus all the food and headed up over two fairly steep ascents pulling a sled... steep for sled pulling anyway... and carrying loaded packs. It took us, I would guess, two and a half hours or three hours of hauling. We dug a deep hole and buried everything making a cache and put wands on top of it after covering the gear with snow. A lot of stuff bags, it seemed to me, were covered with that snow and I was concerned that if it rained it might get them wet. Eric didn't think that was too likely. Anyway, we headed on down. It took us 38 minutes on snowshoes. We had gone out on snowshoes and we came back on snowshoes... 38 minutes on snowshoes to make it back to camp coming downhill using ski poles and snowshoes and lightly loaded packs with the sleds stuffed down inside the packs. The sun was as bright as it could be, and I pulled the sleeves up on my polypro lightweight undershirt with a turtleneck so that I'd get some sun on my arms... also it was hot. The sun was really beating down on us going up and I pulled the sleeves down when I got to the top. So I guess I have two and a half hours of sun on my arms, and they feel like they are fried. The interesting thing is that they were burned as much from the bottom as they were from the top. The sun on this snow reflects up almost as brightly as it shines down. A climber passing the other day said that the place he had been burned the worst was on the inside of his earlobes! My nose has begun to peel... the smile mark on the left hand side of my face is probably the worst burned of all... it's pretty puffy, and I've had some blisters on my lips.

In any event yesterday we got off at 6:00 or 7:00 and got back to camp certainly by noon. We watched it get colder and colder, and it looks like we're going to have a good packing day today to take the rest of the gear up... which isn't very much... we don't have much to take up, but as you can hear from listening it's raining, and this is the Alaska that I remember. This reminds me of the eleven days on the ridge (in '72) when it rained solidly and Christopher and Virginia and I were in our tent listening to a tape recorder and singing "Bobbie McGee" and Tom and Judy Harvey and Steve and Chris Mahay... everyone was suffering like mad... but we made it through.

So here we are in Camp II at 7,900 feet. We stashed our gear at 9,400 feet... and I expect Camp III will be higher than the cache. We want to get up and around the corner up there. Camp I, I believe, was at 6,860... or something like that. I will double check that for the record. I've discovered a method of taking a picture through the lens of my goggles which produces an interesting effect. It certainly brings out the sky versus the clouds more brilliantly... to the eye it does... I don't know how it's going to work on film. I've been reading "To Have and Have Not" by Ernest Hemingway. We've torn it up into pieces so that each person can read it. Matthew is reading it. I've read the first 74 pages and finished my first tear section, so I've got to get up and go get another section from Matthew.

Sam and I have had two games of chess. He won number one and I won number two. We are tied in the great chess tournament of the McKinley expedition.

I've been taking careful care of the blisters on my feet. I've got them on both ankle bones on my right ankle and the left heel and they are healing up well. By and large I've felt really good. I think the thing that's been the key to my feeling better made a very wise decision three nights ago to take that sleeping pill. Somehow I had all this nervous energy and I just couldn't get to sleep. It's like battle fatigue... I think it was really a wise decision.

(Camp II, 7,900 ft.) Well, it's now 11:41 a.m. on Monday the first of July. It seems to be getting a little bit colder. The snow is beginning to mix in with the rain and maybe in a while it will clear up. Sam and Larry had erected a tarp... a quasi tarp... over the cooking area... I wore my Goretex and we served up cereal and coffee and cocoa to Jeff and Eric and Stuart and Matt who stayed in their tents. At this point I don't know when Eric is going to decide to move out. With the wisdom of hindsight it would have been better to take everything up yesterday rather than ferry back. We could have done it.

(We ended up taking a full rest day at Camp II.)

(Camp II, 7,900 ft.) It's now 4:22 a.m. on Tuesday the second and we have already struck camp... we're about to have breakfast. Our packs are packed, and we are probably going to head back up to the place where we cached everything. We're in whiteout conditions. We saw some clear sky at 3:00 a.m. If we'd waited 'til 4:00 it would have been clouded over again.

(Camp III, 11,200 ft.) It's now later. The progression was that we went on through a whiteout... we took off even though it was snowing and raining a little bit. We were confronted with whiteout conditions as we took our light load back up to where we had cached all our equipment. I noted that an awful lot of the stuff that I had had in stuff bags had gotten soaking wet. Anyway we loaded all of that gear up and having departed from 7,900 feet we are now making camp (Camp III) at about 11,400. We've risen 3,500 feet today and we will camp here again tomorrow night for acclimatization purposes. I don't quite know how to pinpoint where we are on the map. From where we are we go up a very steep incline. I guess we will abandon the sleds. The sleds are no longer useful. It was a real backbreaker pulling them up on this last haul. We hiked for a solid, I guess, eight hours and feel genuinely tired... or at least I do. We can no longer see the summit of McKinley. When we arrived at this little bowl... which is a bowl from which we have to proceed up a steep grade in an approximately... in an easterly direction. At the top of that grade... it looks like it is about a quarter of a mile long... we turn a sharp right and then head up toward Windy Corner, I understand. When we got here my guesstimate is that it was about 15 degrees and blowing at about thirty miles an hour. Sam and I put up tents and Stuart and Matthew dug an ice cave... or snow cave... which I am a little leery of because it could cave in. My hands were really cold. It seems like a really hostile environment but subsequently we have really tamed it. We've put up the Everest tents... both of these Jansport tents were on the Mt. Everest expedition. We are walking on two ropes. It's Eric, Larry, Sam & Stuart... on the second rope Jeff, myself and Matthew. I was mentioning that the weather was pretty abusive when we first got here, but since then the temperature has risen to... I don't know... the sun's really baking down. Clouds are just swarming out of a pass and occasionally blow up here, but the inside of the tent Sam and I figure is 65 or 70 degrees because of the sun's heat.

(At Camp III, 11,200 ft.) It is now July 3rd, early in the morning... about 8:30, actually. We went to bed and got a full 12 hours sleep, or darn close to it last night which really felt great. I got up to "relieve" myself. It's snowing... temperature maybe 20 degrees. I've got on long johns, my down booties, neoprene overboots and my pile jacket. God! What gorgeous country this is! It's also very cold, so I'm going to head back to the tent. The wind's blowing pretty hard. Eric says we can handle a carry today in spite of the fact that the weather's not that great. I can't even see my tent at

this point. I don't know where it is... there it is! This is just gorgeous country... this whole experience is just great! I really want to get out and do some winter camping with the kids... Christopher, George and Jimmy, who are not really "kids" so much anymore. But they should experience this.

It's now 5:00 in the afternoon on July 3rd. I'm back at Camp III and I'm in the tent... and you can hear the snow/rain coming down. Eric was ambivalent about our taking off given the way the weather is, and we finally ended up leaving at 12:15 p.m.... correction, 12:45. We wore crampons... were packing personal gear plus food that could be stashed up higher, and I was pulling a sled with a couple gallons of fuel on it. We used crampons going up the initial pitch, which is very steep, and as we climbed the wind got stronger and the snow blew harder. We reached the top of the pitch in about an hour, I guess, maybe a little bit less than that. We finally turned right and headed up another pitch ending up caching our gear under a massive granite boulder. It looked like igneous rock... first piece of rock I've gotten close to on this mountain. The snow was really blowing... we were in blizzard conditions. The temperature was maybe 20-25, not very cold... winds maybe 30-35 miles an hour. The incredible thing about this kind of mountaineering is that weather can change so extremely rapidly. You can be baking in the sun one minute and be hit by a blowing, snowing blizzard twenty minutes later. In any event, as we were dumping the stuff in the cache Eric really wanted to get out of there. He wanted to get down. We were a thousand feet above our camp which we figure now is at 11,200 feet, so we were about 12,200 at the cache. We headed down on snowshoes. I think it took us 2 1/2 to 3 hours to get up there. We went on snowshoes to the last pitch... which was the first pitch going up and on which we had used crampons... and again, we used crampons going down. Eric commented that this is one of the most problematical expeditions he has been on from a weather standpoint. We have certainly had a terrific variety. We have had conditions that threaten hypothermia, but we haven't had anything where we have been in severe danger of frostbite... on McKinley, anyway. I'm a little concerned having awakened this morning with a headache and I've had one most of the day. Eric has asked me to keep him apprised of that because that could indicate... well, he thinks that's a really important symptom of altitude sickness. If you get over 'em that means you're acclimatizing. If you don't, you're not. He says it's not a good idea to take bad headaches higher.

(At Camp III) It's now the fourth of July... an absolutely gorgeous, crystal... not crystal clear but just a gorgeous morning. I'm standing over here by the "relief" station, as we shall term it. We moved our tents after we got back. We did not, however, move the relief station, and I realize that the reason that the tents were moved... or rather, Larry's and Eric's tents... was because the tents had been pitched directly under an absolutely incredible avalanche wall, and I'm standing under it right now looking up at it. I must be looking up at a... I would guess a seventy degree angle at a snow bank that could come tearing down at me. Except I don't think it will because it's cold this morning. It's 14 according to Larry's thermometer and that's been reading high. It read 20 yesterday morning. And with the temperature low I don't think the wall's going to go... and with the sun not on the wall. But if it did go I would have to run... very fast! The sun is over the West Buttress which is clearly visible here. I'm looking now at Stuart and Matthew's incredible snow cave that they built, which has been our place of eating for the last two days. The tents were moved yesterday by Eric and Jeff. Also Larry moved his tent. Sam and I had pitched ours in a place that was safe. It looks like it's going to be a gorgeous day. I have the feeling that at the end of this day we're all going to know what to be tired is because our current plan is to go given good weather, which it seems to me we have, from 11 to 14 thousand and sleep at 14 picking up our gear cached yesterday at twelve. From an altitude acclimatization consideration we will be violating the rule of "climb high, sleep low". We'll be going to 14 and sleeping at 14. Normally, when you carry a load up you carry to the higher altitude and then sleep at the lower altitude. But I feel fine this morning.

I don't have any headache... everything seems to be in great shape so I would presume that I am acclimatizing well.

It's now 2:45 p.m. on four July, Independence Day. We reached our cache in about two hours flat and went on above to a plateau just before the pitch up to Windy Corner, and from where we sit right here looking in a northerly and westerly direction the whole vista from about... I would guess Southwest to Northeast is available for view. We are way above the clouds... maybe 1,500 feet above the clouds, and I can see no mountains peaking up as high as we are. I cannot see the ground below, but the sky above is a deep, deep blue. The view from here, in short, is, to use a much overexpressed term on this expedition, "awesome." But it expresses it well.

It's now 7:25 p.m. on Independence Day and we are... we've climbed beyond Windy Corner. We're at 13,500 feet where we have decided to make camp (Camp IV). I can really feel the altitude here... so can Sam... so can everybody. We really are noticing it now. I mean... there just seems to be no nourishment in what there is to breathe. One of my most frequent sensations is the feeling that I have run a hundred yards and have forgotten to breathe for 30 seconds, and then all of a sudden I really have an incredible need to get some air, and when I breathe it's hard to make up for the oxygen debt.

We started out this morning at ten degrees. It got warmer as we hiked and the sun came out. We're now standing in probably one of the most inhospitable places on the face of the earth at certain times, and yet at this particular instant it's lovely. I'm looking at Mt. Foraker... in a west by southwest direction, I would guess. I have taken my shirt off. I have darn well got my head covered where I've been burned to death, but I took my polypropylene shirt off and I'm standing here shirtless looking all around... I can see up the West Buttress. I see where we are supposed to go pitch camp, and see where I think the 17,000 foot camp is. It's in a little notch up there at the head of what appears to be a slide which reminds me of the "Orient Express." Looking at the cloud cover below I would estimate that the cloud cover is at about ten thousand feet, and we are certainly a good 3,500 above what I can see. I can see for mile, and miles, and miles... It's just that there's nothing to see but clouds, except for things like Mount Foraker which stands out very boldly here. Foraker, if I remember correctly, is 17,000 feet, so I see where my level is relative to Foraker. Curiously, the altitude seems to be having more effect on me since we got up here than it did on the way up. I noticed it certainly, but now that I'm here... with Sam and me putting up the tent poles in the tent... just seemed like and excruciatingly difficult job.

Slightly to the west of due north of here the headwall goes up very abruptly. That's not the West Buttress, I suspect. I am not sure what it is, but I will find out at some point when I get a chance to check a map. When we laid our tents out I was very careful to lay our tent as far away from what appeared to me to be an avalanche line as I could get. Down below there are very obvious crevasses in this glacier which we think is still part of the Kahiltna Glacier.

[At Camp IV, 13,500 ft.] It's now July 5th. Last night the sun disappeared behind a corner of the mountain at 8:24 p.m. and within a half an hour the temperature had dropped certainly 30 degrees. It was "shirtsleeve" or "no-shirt-at-all" warm when the sun was shining on us, and then when I got up at 3:00 a.m. I'd estimate that the temperature was around zero. Larry's thermometer, which was inside his pack, registered 4 during the night, but I don't think it got down as low as the actual temperature was. So once again we have another example of how the temperature... weather conditions... can be extraordinarily extreme from one minute to the next. When I woke up at 3:00

a.m. I had a throbbing headache... got up... looked at Foraker, took a picture of it... tried to do some heavy duty hyperventilating, although I am not persuaded that that necessarily does much good. I think the thing that helps the most is just spending time.

This morning we headed down with empty packs and sleds to the 12,200 foot level where we had a lot of gear stashed [the cache beneath the granite boulder]. It took us one hour to get down there and pack up our stuff and two hours to pack our way back up. We are planning to lie low for two, or three, or four hours maybe, and have dinner and then pack it up to 14,000 feet with a supply of stuff and then come back down here and spend the night.

Last night Sam commented that during that final traverse into camp (IV) just above Windy Corner he was really at the point where he was counting steps. He was trying to figure out if he could make the next forty or the next fifty... or whatever. That was a rough time for me too... though I seem to recall that coming into Camp III was worse than coming into this camp, Camp IV, and if we'd had to push that much further, I don't think I would have been able to do it.

There's another party on the mountain here... Genet Expeditions... led by a guy named Harry Johnson, I think, and they are traveling Alpine style, which means they pack everything all at once, and they kill themselves... and they try to make a lot of altitude fairly fast. They are moving up from 11,000 to 14,000 with a full load. Eric says he has seen that done before and watched pulmonary edema develop. He has really urged us to be careful to watch for symptoms of mountain sickness or altitude sickness. Feeling the altitude is normally reflected in a severe headache plus the recognition of breathlessness and, boy, I've certainly had both of those symptoms! But a hacking cough followed by raspy respiration and congested lungs is a sign of pulmonary edema, and... I don't know how you know you're getting cerebral edema. I probably ought to do my homework, but I'm just going to tell Eric what I feel and trust that his judgement is good. I am sure it will be. He's an impeccable guide, I'd say.

(At Camp V, 14,200 ft.) It's now 6 July at 7:42 p.m. We are getting down to the nitty gritty here. Last night we packed about 700 feet up from our 13,500 foot campsite up to a new one at 14,200 feet (Camp V) about, which is a gorgeous bowl that looks out at both Mt. Hunter and Mt. Foraker... plus an incredible view of the West Buttress and the chute that has been termed "The Orient Express". Looking in, I guess, a northerly direction is the ascent from here... 2,000 feet. We use the Jumar ascenders at the top where there are fixed ropes, but according to Eric it's about a five hour haul up that 2,000 foot, very steep pitch. There is a bergeschrund about two-thirds of the way up. That's where the glacier breaks off. Today we saw some people sliding down that...just literally sliding down that section without ropes...which I find genuinely terrifying.

This morning we got off at about noon and it took us about two hours to pack up to here where we dug up the stuff that we had cached last night and just lay around in the sun. The temperature this morning, we all estimated, was about zero, though Jeff thought it was below zero. It's incredible because I had been shirtless in the afternoon, and then it went to zero last night. We packed up to here, and the sun was so bright that Eric, Jeff and Matt put on bathing suits and walked around... got scorched. The temperature in the sun according to Larry's thermometer was 115. Right now, I guess, the temperature's probably dropped... the sun's beginning to head for the hills, and when it goes behind that chunk of the Buttress... I guess that's a portion of the Buttress... the temperature will very rapidly drop, and I imagine it will go down to zero again, anyway. Eric figures we lose about four degrees of temperature for each thousand feet of ascent, so, between here and the summit it should drop off another sixteen degrees or so. From an acclimatization standpoint... last night I woke up at 3:00 a.m. but I felt great! I felt just fine. I did sleep rather fitfully after that but I have gotten tons of sleep on this trip. I slept some this afternoon. I woke up this morning and checked my pulse... it was 62. Yesterday during the day it was hard for me to get it below 90.

Clearly the altitude has had its effect, because I can tell even in dictating here that I am shorter of breath than I would be at sea level.

The push at the moment... we are anxious to climb 2,000 feet in order to get the use of a snow cave (at 16,200 ft.). Eric doesn't think this good weather is going to last but so much longer. The weather forecast from Anchorage suggests that about Sunday, which is tomorrow, things should start clouding up. For it to stay like this would be marvelous, but it's not likely, judging from my experience with Alaskan weather. So we probably ought to expect a storm, and maybe we will have to hole up for a day, or two, or three, or whatever, waiting for a good summit day. But we'll press on, probably the day after tomorrow, from 16,000 feet to 17,000 feet, and from 17,000 feet we will make our assault on the summit, which normally is a fourteen-hour day. We did pass a group last night that had made it on the fourth of July. They seemed to be euphoric and ecstatic... said that the summit had been windless and that it had taken them, I believe, eighteen hours on summit day to go from camp to the summit and back. Of course, they had spent three days, he explained, in a snow cave waiting for a storm to clear.

(At Camp VI, 16,200 feet) Well, the time now is 7:36 p.m. We are at 16,000 feet, about, and it's Sunday, the 7th of Janu... July. Today was certainly one of the toughest days I've had on this mountain and expect I will have in the future... I hope! We had decided to "put the pedal to the metal" in our conference about what to do... actually Eric had, yesterday. And the plan was we'd get up at 4:30 a.m.... set the alarms for 4:40... get up as soon as possible and get off heading up that 2,000 foot climb from where we were going to where we are now... (verbal slip due to malfunctioning brain)... and I don't know what the names of them are. But this is right up at the top of the buttress... we're at sixteen something...and one more day and we will get to seventeen and from there we can shoot for the summit. In any event we did get off at about seven or shortly thereafter with packs. We're not taking any sleds so that means we had to pack everything up precisely right and discard all the stuff we didn't need so that we wouldn't carry too much weight. I culled over everything in the afternoon. I found that terribly stressful because I just haven't had enough experience knowing well enough what I will need under these kinds of conditions.

We could see the full expanse of where we were going today... from the bottom to the top. Well, off we went... (getting off at 7:10 a.m. ahead of the Genet Expeditions group)... and we went up the first pitch and took a little rest, and Eric figured it would take us five hours. And then we got to the fixed lines... the only part of this climb where you really have to have fixed lines to get up. We needed Junar ascenders to tie in. Never having used a Junar ascender before, I had gotten Eric to put the necessary stirrup or strap on it to hook into my harness. I hooked in and snapped onto the rope and began heading on up. My left leg went right spank into a crevasse and I was caught by the Junar ascender and the fixed rope. Anyway, on we pushed, and there was a Genet Expeditions group... very practiced... I think they had cached a lot of gear up here. They came smoking up that trail trying to get by us, it seemed to me... though, perhaps not. They started after us but caught up enroute.

In any event I don't know when I have been so tired and so frustrated. We made it to the top. My pack had seemed to be off balance all the time. It was very hard to do a French step or a rest step or anything. When we got here Eric had found two snow caves and I am rendering this report looking out of a snow cave. It's ten degrees in here. I guess the ceiling is about three and a half feet high and I'm about to climb into my sleeping bag. I also have a throbbing headache from the change in altitude which is to be expected. Eric seems to be a little bit concerned about my acclimatization, and he suggested that I take some codeine tonight for the headache and see if it is still there in the morning, and if it isn't... that's good! (Eric also gave me a Diamox tablet at dinner.)

(At Camp VI) Well, it's now the afternoon, (Monday, July 8) and we are at 16,200 feet. We are taking a rest day today. And we have spent a lot of time talking to the folks in the Genet party. I guess what I have come to note is that everybody goes through a lot of the same experiences, and I was talking to this gal named Holly Parker in this group... I think it's Harry Johnson who is the guide. There's a party of about eight... plus the couple that's been sort of following along seems to have joined up with this group. They are in kind of rough shape, and what I conclude is that the folks in the Genet group are probably not as well fixed as we are even though... from a distance when you see a group climbing it seems they are doing just fine. But they've been suffering from. I think I've been suffering more than anyone else from the altitude, and I've suffered also, I think, from an absence of knowledge of how I would respond to going to heights higher than I've ever been before, because I have never been as high as I am at this instant before now. But I was talking with Dave and a guy named Scott von Eschen... he went to Dartmouth, he's now in the investment banking world in mergers and acquisitions at Morgan, Stanley. He's in the Genet group. We were talking about emotional highs and low and he said it was absolutely incredible. It's so different, he said he's done triathalons and marathons, he says, but there's something about a mountain like this and the conditions that you run into where... how one's going to get out of the situation one is in is so less predictable. There's always a hot shower and a hot bath at the end of a marathon... you're not going to freeze. But there is no easy way to get warm here. It's just not as predictable.

The view from where I'm standing is absolutely incredible. From this campsite... right now there are... one, two, three, four, five tents which is the Genet party plus a couple that joined the Genet party. And then there are the snow caves which we are inhabiting. As I look out in a westerly direction or northwesterly direction I see cloud, just a huge thick cloudbank at 10,000 feet, and I can see for miles and miles and mile and miles but I can't see anything but clouds. Foraker and Hunter, both of them stick their heads above the clouds but they seem so much lower than they did a couple of days ago. The people in the Genet party had a thermometer out this morning that said it was 15 below... was the low point. In our cave it has been a consistent 10 above. I would guess the temperature now is about fifteen above. It's still plenty cold and a little windy. But it's just a gorgeous day.

Last night I woke up at 2:00 a.m. As I was going to bed... turning into my sleeping bag in that ice cave, one of the things that I was plagued with was a sense of claustrophobia because I couldn't breathe. Eric told me that this would be my worst night on the mountain from an acclimatization standpoint and, by golly, he was absolutely right. But a lot of this is psychological. You can rationally say, "I'm not going to expire at 16,000 feet in a snow cave," but when you get there and you recognize you can't breathe and you can't sit up because there isn't room, it's very easy to feel claustrophobic. And I finally borrowed Sam's book that had been given to him by his mother in 1961 called "The Practice of the Presence of God." And I read through that. Even that's hard to do because your hands get cold at ten. It's hard to read a book. And there's no light in the cave except what manages to filter through the snow and a little through the entrance. But that was a source of great help to me and I recognize the validity of the program of AA and, I mean, that's where the ultimate sense of peace comes from, for me. I miss the meetings. I could've sure used a meeting last night because my head was really going bananas, and I think at about, just before I went to sleep if someone had said, "There's Cliff Hudson's plane right out there on the strip. Would you like a flight back to Talkeetna?", I might have just jumped right on board. And the hardest part was that last night I didn't feel very comfortable about sharing with Sam and Larry how screwy I felt, whereas today it's been easy to walk around and talk to the people in the Genet group and talk to Larry and Sam. Everybody was willing to acknowledge that one of the most characteristic aspects of this life in the high mountains is the very high highs and the very low lows, and somehow you have got to have the wherewithal within to recognize that the rough times will pass.

It's now just about dinner time (July 8) at the 16,200 foot Camp VI. The time is 6:47 p.m. We'll probably take off in the morning. We've spent a rest day here. As always, I think Eric's instinctive calls have been good. I certainly feel a lot better than I felt yesterday. It's also been a lot of fun today to talk to the Genet Expeditions party led by Harry Johnson who has purchased Genet Expeditions from Kathy Sullivan, Genet's common law wife, I guess. Everybody found yesterday to be a singularly tough day and no one, it seemed, to whom I talked found it any less than the most difficult day since we have been on the mountain. Holly Parker... I think, is her name, a gal from down near Alyeska, was talking about how she just couldn't... she didn't have anything else to reach down for. She almost burst into tears in the middle of the climb, but she knew she couldn't stop, and she couldn't go any slower, and she certainly couldn't go any faster... and I must say I felt exactly the same way.

As I mentioned briefly on the other tape, there was a three man team that came up behind the three man rope team led by Jeff of which I was the middle man and Matthew was the end man. And they were passing us on the left, and I thought, "Gods, they just must be much better climbers." It turns out that was Harry Johnson and two others that were sprinting, in effect, toward the 16,200 foot level with very light loads. So now I don't feel so badly about that at all since they were traveling light. I hadn't realized that they had cached a lot of stuff and they were going to sprint up and secure a camping area and then head back down for their equipment. As it turned out Eric (first rope: Eric, Larry, Sam & Stuart) got up here before anyone else did, and I think one of the contentions is that he secured the snow caves ahead of the other party. I think they were looking forward to getting one of the snow caves to cook in. Actually today not having a snow cave is a great benefit, because I think camping in a tent is very nice. I'm impressed by these North Face tents designed by Buckminster Fuller that are here.

Tomorrow we are planning to take off at about, maybe, 9 or 10 or 11 and haul for about three hours up to the 17,200 foot level. We'll be carrying full loads again, so we'll no doubt be tired at the end. But it will probably not be as hard a day as yesterday... I hope. All of us are noting the breathlessness. Sam was talking to me earlier about how he really is short of breath no matter what he does or however far he walks, but it has seemed to me that when I get on the trail and I've got a load on my back I can generally keep going, particularly if the weather is good. Somehow bad weather makes it harder. Bad weather and high wind makes it hard for me to put out. Another thing I notice is that when I am putting out a maximum for me, which doesn't mean moving very fast with a seventy or eighty pound load at this altitude, anything that obstructs my breathing is a terrific impediment... Like just the little strap on my Goretex shell occasionally flies in front of my mouth... it's only a little piece of tape, but just the feeling that there is anything that cuts down on my access to air becomes a real nuisance that's psychologically impairing, in a way.

I took a nap... I put on my down pants which means I've now got expedition-weight polypro, Moonstone pile pants, Goretex shell and down pants, in that order from inside to out. I've also got on my Koflac boots... I do not have on the overboots... and on top I've got a sweater, the down pants bib, and my Wilderness Experience parka, which is certainly ample clothing in addition to the Helly Hanson shelled insulated mitts. I was very comfortable and warm out here, and then I went into the cave, put on my down pants, lay down on my sleeping bag and went to sleep and woke up with cold feet and feeling generally chilly. I think that's because ice caves are colder than being outdoors in the sunshine. Ice caves are cozy in severe storms, and I think they are fine at sea level where you can probably put a couple of candles in there and warm them way up. But up here I would feel uncomfortable putting any kind of a burning flame in the cave for fear that carbon monoxide develop and the little bit of oxygen that's there get used up. They're not very pleasant because they're cold and the humidity is 100%. So nothing dries out... everything's kind of damp.

We've had a beautiful day up to now, but the clouds are beginning to move in and obscure the incredible view... and maybe they'll bring some weather with them, but it might be just the weather breaking up... and it might be a good omen for what's coming for tomorrow.

Tim, from Pittsburgh, took a nap at the same time that I did and woke up with a severe headache. I think I'm doing pretty well from an acclimatization standpoint. (Thanks largely to the Diamox, I suspect.)

(At Camp VI, 16,200 ft.) It's now 9:30 p.m. (July 8) I'm about to turn in. I think Sam and Larry have already turned in. I spent a lot of time talking to Eric about guiding... the six concessions in Denali Park and the fact that RMI owns one and we were also talking about the fact that he's been selected as "climbing leader" for the '87 Everest Expedition organized out of Arkansas, and he is going to go for that. That could be a major thing for him.

The wind is blowing pretty hard. It's probably eight degrees... ten degrees. I'm going to turn in and talk about all this tomorrow. I feel a lot better... a million-fold better than I did last night. I still don't like the idea of climbing into an ice cave. But I think I'll make it through the night, and the way I see it now, tomorrow's going to be the last hard day of full pack climbing, because we will get up to the camp that, hopefully, we will shoot for the summit from. That will be a full load day, but after that it's downhill. We talked a light load to the summit. It will be a long day, just pray for good weather. We'll take a light load, if we do it, to the North Peak and then it's all downhill. We hike from the 17,000 foot camp all the way down to 14,000, pick up stuff, maybe go on down further to 11,500... well, we could get out of here by the 15th, we figure. We could summit by the day after tomorrow, the 10th or the 11th.

It's now 7:00 p.m. on July 9th, Tuesday, and we are at 17,200 feet, Camp VII, "high camp." When we woke up this morning (at Camp VI), I went out and checked... the temperature was two degrees and the wind was blowing really hard. Sam during the night got up and, fortunately, shoveled out the entrance to our cave... we had absolutely been buried in the snow, and when I got up first thing this morning, we had been buried almost again... not quite... and I shoveled us out which took ten or fifteen minutes and I went over to the other cave and they were buried. But they seem to have very little regard or at least Matthew and Stuart don't seem to worry too much about being asphyxiated. Nonetheless I dug them out and went in and we had breakfast.

We notice that the Genet party looked pretty well decimated because their cooking area in particular was in disarray... the snow had drifted all over their pots and pans and they were all in their tents. Nobody had gotten up.

We went back and packed up, ready to move out, put goggles on, warm gear and headed out up the route to high camp which was the most spectacular climbing I've ever experienced in my life. We had unbelievable exposure. Starting off, going up that pitch, after five steps I felt so out of breath I was afraid I couldn't take another step.

The order of the ropes was changed this morning. The first rope was Eric followed by me, followed by Sam, followed by Larry. Second rope was Jeff, followed by Matthew, followed by Stuart. We climbed a ridge that gives phenomenal exposure, showing Mt. Hunter which seems like it's way below now, Foraker, but specifically we could look down to Camp IV and V, we could really see the whole route that we had come up from the Kahiltna Glacier on. We could see just about all of our campsites. The one that was particularly apparent was 14,200 (Camp V). No one seems to be following us up the mountain at the moment with the exception of the Genet

Expedition group led by Harry Johnson, but it doesn't look to me as if he's going to make it up here today. I think they probably stayed back.

It's now 9:56 p.m. at the high camp, Camp VII. You can't see the summit from here, but the sky is certainly going through some radical shifts and changes. Looking in the summit direction, it's absolutely clear. there are some cirrus clouds. The wind is blowing but it's been dying down quite a bit. I've all of a sudden started feeling just great, really up for the march to the summit. Sam and Larry both have gotten bad headaches and Eric has given them Diamox and suggested that Sam take some codeine which he has done and he is down asleep in the tent. He and I have gotten to put a tent up... as far as I'm concerned I'd just as soon never spend another night in a snow cave at ten degrees and 98% relative humidity. I was asking Eric what would happen... we were talking about the tents we are using and how they were at Camp II on Mt. Everest which is close to being as high as we are right now, and I was asking what would happen if someone were brought up to this altitude without acclimatizing as we have done, and he says that probably they would be dead within 48 hours. In thinking about this trip I guess one of the pervasive messages that comes from everybody that climbs is that the highs and lows are extreme. I know that when we started out this morning from 16,200 after about ten steps I couldn't breathe, there was just no air, I was exhausted, I felt like I couldn't do a thing. Later checking with Sam, he said it was exactly the same way and at the first rest stop he had apologized for letting the rope go taut because, he said, he just couldn't go any faster. Before we started out, Eric... first time he's ever raised his voice as far as I know... I was trying to get my stuff together... I put my mittens on, and the wind was blowing like crazy... temperature was zero... and I hadn't buckled the waistband to my pack... and he said, "Peter, buckle the buckle to your pack before you put your mittens on! Think! Get it together!"... you know, and I couldn't get it together... it's really hard to get it together up here. You can't think straight 'cause there's no oxygen, and... although at times one thinks one is, one has to be suspect of one's judgement.

Well, I think I've got together the things that if we go to the summit tomorrow I want to take... the banners, George's pocket knife which he wanted me to take to the summit. I might even try to scratch his name on it on the summit. I have got to get a roll of film in the camera... I think I have gotten good photographs.

We are up here among the rocks and the rocks are very granitic... some look very old and some look metamorphosed. I kind of like being among rocks as opposed to just snow and ice, which was the case way down below on the glacier. There's something solid about rocks.

Well, I am going to turn in because I am beginning to freeze... it's probably five or ten degrees... I don't know... maybe it's as cold as zero. The sun is not shining, and as soon as the sun goes behind a cloud or behind part of the mountain the temperature drops very fast.

It's interesting to note some of the other things we have talked about. Larry suffered from a severely sunburned tongue just from leaving his mouth open. The gal down below talked about having sunburned gums from the way she smiles and keeps her mouth open. My lips have blistered and my left cheek has scabbed over, the scab has fallen off, my nose has peeled, and the trouble with "Sunblock 15" is that it freezes. You have to put the stuff on when it's zero degrees and there's no way to keep all the stuff warm that you have to keep warm. You have to keep your water bottle in your sleeping bag, and your boot liners in your sleeping bag, and your sunblock in your sleeping bag... your wet clothes in your sleeping bag to try to dry them out... a lot of hard things to do... and most of the time they don't get done... or a lot of the time they don't, but things seem to work out pretty well anyway.

Reading Sam's little book on the presence of God really helped me, and I have been having hymns running through my head a lot as we've been coming up here, specifically that one "Almighty Father strong to save who's arm hath bound the restless wave..." I've thought about a verse that would apply to climbers.

Well, it's incredible to just have that one big objective of hitting the summit... you know... it's going to be great. I'm really looking forward to it. I hope we got tomorrow and I pray for sunshine and no wind. I don't care if it's cold, but, oh..., if only we could have some sunshine and not too much wind.

Note to the log: It is 9:59 a.m. It would appear that we have a summit day on 10 July... any comments

Stuart?

(Stuart) "Yaba daba do."

Starting out. First rope with Eric, followed by Stuart, followed by myself and then Larry...

(While climbing) It is now 3:52 p.m. We're just below the final pitch trying to get up to the summit and I don't ever want to forget how much this hurts. We're, I'd guess about 19,800, maybe 19,900. Maybe we're right at the 20,000 foot mark. The thing is it doesn't do you much good to rest any more when you get up this high because you're beyond your acclimatization limit. I'm going to save... some tape... for crossing ... the summit... if I can.

Now we're... only... maybe... five minutes... from the summit... (Heavy panting)

The sound of the ice axe on the snow (very pronounced here) I hope I will not forget either. Sobering though... that many pent (pant) have lost their lives trying to gain this summit. Sobering... even more... that even more men have lost their lives trying to get down.

(At the base of the summit cone where we left our packs:)

(Eric yelling) "Peter!"

(Peter) "Yeah! Where are we?"

(Eric) "Yeah, that's what I want to know. Where the F*%@% are we?"

(Peter) "Is this technically it?"

(Stuart) "No! No!"

(Eric) "Keep coming, Peter, come over here."

(Peter) "Oh, I see."

(Some 20 minutes of climbing later) We are ten feet or so from the summit, and I am unsnapping on the advice of Eric... or trying to... (pant), and we will walk the final ten without belay. There it is!... there it is! the top of the cotton picking North American continent!

(Peter) "Let Larry go first... Did you get."

(Eric), "I'll just fire away. I've got 24 pictures on here."

(Peter) "How many have you got on there?"

(Eric) "I've shot 11 or 12."

(Peter) "Great! I just want to get... Oh, God! ...Ahhh! Ahhh!"

(Stuart) "Tenzing!" (exclaimed when Peter held his ice axe in the air for the photograph)

(Peter) "I need a banner! Have you got your banner?"

(Larry) "Yup!"

(Peter) "Oh, I've got to get my banner too.:"

(Peter to Larry) "Well, one side of your dream is complete!"

(Larry) "Yeah! This one goes with the Bermuda Race... Terrific! Oh, this is wonderful!"

(Stuart) "I'm the tallest person in North America right now!"

(Stuart) "I tell you, when we got to the top of this cone here, I looked over at the summit... I thought the summit was, you know, eight miles away. Didn't it look like eight miles away?"

(Peter) "Boy, it sure did!"

It is now 5:51 p.m. (a few hours after the flight back from Kahiltna Base) on the 12th, Friday, and we're back in Talkeetna, but I want to report on all the things that happened subsequent to our having attained the summit. On the way back down the mountain upon urinating it appeared that my urine had blood in it. This absolutely shocked Eric and Larry. We thought there might be some relationship between that and the Diamox I had taken and the contention was that probably I was severely dehydrated and that I probably ought to be flown off the mountain as soon as possible. We proceeded on down to the 17,200 foot camp, Camp VII. I climbed into my sleeping bag having taken one spill on the way down. I was really weak. The spill consisted of... we were traversing above the 17,200 foot Camp VII, maybe three quarters of a mile along the trail toward Denali Pass. My crampons tangled with my neoprene overboots and I went down the side, but didn't have any fear. I just did what I had to do with the ice axe and self-arrested. But at the same time that I self arrested, Larry was in front of me and Eric was behind and both their ropes went taut and both of them were in position, particularly Eric who was just absolutely dug in, ready for me to fall and he could have caught anything. I think Larry could have too. Anyway, I kicked out snow steps just by throwing my feel out and slamming them into the side of the mountain and managed to dig my way back up to the trail and I was absolutely breathless by the time I got to the trail again. Maybe a

quarter of a mile further down when it leveled out and we got past the crevasses, Larry said I should take my pack off and he and Stuart and the others would relieve me of some of the load. And they did. I carried practically an empty pack back the last quarter of a mile and then climbed into my sleeping bag. It was cold. Maybe, I guess it was ten degrees or something like that... five or ten. The party that went on to the top following us that we passed -- the Genet group en route to high camp... we were on en route to high camp, they were en route to the summit... we'd gotten to the summit at five o'clock, they got to the summit about 1:00 a.m. and it was twenty below according to their thermometer when they reached the summit.

We ended up in effect not turning in until after midnight and the plan was to get off to a leisurely start in the early afternoon. And we ended up getting off, carrying full loads, from the 17,200 foot Camp VII at about 1:30 p.m. (July 11). We just sailed down the mountain and I felt enormously revitalized by the increased supply of oxygen as we moved down.

We got to the 16,200 foot camp which was Camp VI for us, the snow caves, in I think it was 38 minutes after walking through an absolutely gorgeous section of very steep, marvelously exposed portion of the West Buttress. I let Eric use the camera and I think we probably got some good shots out of that.

We then proceeded down the fixed ropes which were almost as devastatingly difficult on the way down as they had been on the way up. I remember on the way up I was just about ready to toss in the sponge, but on the way down it wasn't so much a question of breathlessness as it was balance and the snow conditions... we were going through what seemed like corn snow. Well it was more powdery than corn, I guess, because it was cold enough to be thoroughly frozen. But obviously another 16 or 18 inches of snow, it seems to me, had fallen, maybe not quite that much, since we had come up.

We paused for a while at the 14,000, I believe it was 14,200 camp where we had cached a lot of supplies on the way up. We dug up our sleds and then we reallocated the weight between our sled and our packs plus we picked up a whole lot of gear. We ran into another RMI expedition heading up the mountain and Jeff and Eric had a long chat with the guide. We tried to give them as much of our gear as we could so we wouldn't have to take it down. They only took one sled full of fuel and food.

After a couple of hours' stop, I guess, maybe an hour and a half, and some hot drinks and lunch and whatever, we headed on down really making marvelously good time. We just smoked on down past our old campsites until we got down below 10,000 feet and then we even considered going all the way down to Kahiltna Base that night. We figured we could make it by two or three a.m. But then we decided to turn in... I guess it was roughly about 9,600(?) feet in an area that was just above our second camp. We were walking without snowshoes or crampons after the 14,200 camp which was Camp V. We proceeded down, we started off with Eric in front, me second, Stuart third and Larry last. On the second rope was Jeff, followed by Sam and Matthew. We descended just under 10,000 feet total for the day, ending up between our original Camp II and Camp III. We stopped when the snow began to get soft as we got to lower altitudes and the temperature went up. The next morning I awoke at 7:00 a.m., got up and tried to get a cup of coffee together, spent an hour getting the ice melted and trying to get everything together and then we headed on down, leaving at 9:30 a.m., arriving at the Kahiltna base after a very hard push at roughly 1:00 p.m.

Doug Geeting of the Talkeetna Air Taxi flew in... He had seen us coming down and thought we were the Genet group and he flew in to fly us off and upon discovering that we weren't the Genet group, went ahead and took Larry and Sam and very soon after they had departed, within about half an hour, Lowell Thomas, Jr. flew in in his turbo-charged plane (Heliocourier) and took Stuart and me to the FAA strip where Cliff Hudson met us.

Matthew and Jeff were brought in later on in the afternoon. There was some concern as we flew out that the weather was closing in and maybe they wouldn't be able to get out that day.

We had a marvelous dinner at the Teepee and we ended up sitting up in the Teepee bar talking to Holly Parker and Scott von Eschen and Dick the doctor and Tim the U.S. Air climber whose address I have. I was advised by the doc that I might have a lesion in my bladder and that probably I should get it checked if any problems persist.

(Sound of bagpipes in Talkeetna Moose Festival parade)

I woke up early Saturday morning, got out in time to record the parade which you heard a little while ago. There I met Chris Mahay with her three boys. Larry and Sam and Eric made plans to head south.

(End of log.)