



AAC Publications

Mt. Bradley, northwest face, Névé Ruse

Alaska, Ruth Gorge

I flew into the central Alaska Range on April 23 to meet Dusty Eroh in the Ruth Gorge, where he was camped between Mt. Dickey and Mt. Bradley. The next three days consisted of condition-scouting trips to the base of a line we eventually climbed: Névé Ruse (4,000', V AI5 R/X 60°), on the western end of Mt. Bradley's north face.

From the ground, the line appeared to be "in," and the névé slabs that comprise the first four rope lengths seemed to be thicker than I had ever seen them. We decided to go for it on April 26, leaving at 3 a.m.

The route began with a steep snow slope up to the base of the névé slabs. The névé was enjoyable, most of it being 70° and thick enough for full pick penetration, with only a few steps of steeper, 80–85° climbing. There was essentially no protection on this part of the route, and we were forced to simul-climb, finding only marginal anchors to belay from. We anticipated this for these lower pitches on the route, but we expected the protection to improve once we gained a large corner system that angles up and right after the névé slabs. Unfortunately, the unprotectable nature of the route would continue to its end.

The entrance into the corner system proved to be the crux, with an over-vertical step of alpine ice. The pitch took no worthwhile protection besides a Pecker up high in the runnel above the steep climbing. After this pitch we realized that the climbing was all going to be heady and run-out. The névé continued and brought us to another crux step; it soon became overhanging as I began tunneling through endless s'nice. After tunneling up the s'nice for about one and a half hours, my tool broke through into a chasm about 50' deep and three feet wide; I was able to chimney up to the top of this and burrow another hole back out to the surface and find some good névé.

Atop this pitch, the angle of the climbing eased back a little for two rope lengths. Higher up, we climbed two steps of really enjoyable alpine ice (AI4) plastered in a right-facing corner. One more pitch of thin névé (80–85°) brought us to the upper snow slopes. It was getting late, so we found a spot to chop a bivy ledge. We spent about six hours at the bivy, between chopping and sleeping, and were on the move again around 8 a.m. The terrain on the summit ridge was generally 45–50° snow with one short step of 60° ice. Eight to ten rope lengths of climbing from our bivy site brought us to the summit around 12:30 p.m. on April 27.

We descended the west ridge to the Bradley-Wake col. The descent was straightforward in the conditions we had, and we only made two rappels, one on the ridge and one over the cornice at the col. After this we were able to downclimb and jump over the filled-in bergschrund. We then picked up an old ski track through the icefall back to camp. We made it to camp 39 hours after leaving.

Todd Tumolo

Images



The northwest flanks of Mt, Bradley, showing the line of Névé Ruse. Spice Factory lies just out of frame around the left skyline to the east. Further to the east: Welcome to Alaska, Heavy Mettle, and the East Buttress.



A foreshortened view of Névé Ruse, from beneath the wall.

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