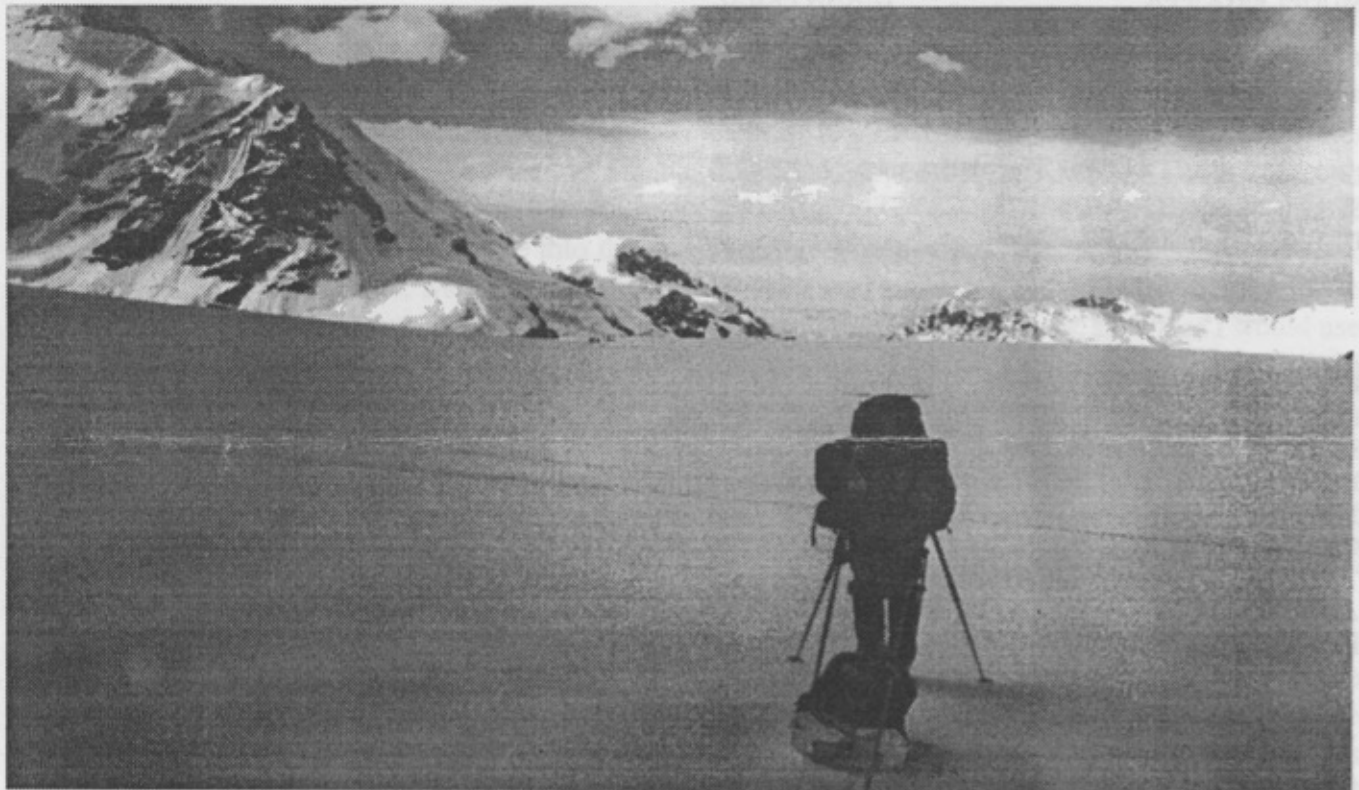


Nov 92

# MUGELNOOS

NOVEMBER 17, 1992

Number 697



## Skiing Mt. McKinley\* - June 1-22

Bill Lingle

Saturday, June 1: I arrived in Anchorage, AK after changing planes in Seattle. I met up with my friend Dr. Sherrie Serna from Lakeside, AZ, five others (Craig & Ann Knoche, John Valinz, Jack Seabrook, and Sonny Barker), and our two guides: Katherine ("Kitty") Calhoun and Paul Valinz. Kitty and Paul are professional guides from the Seattle area. The objective of this trip was to climb Mt. McKinley — and do as much of it on skis as possible. This has been my nagging libido since I first saw the MacK from an airplane several years ago. I actually started plans in early 1989, but could not get it organized, until I contacted members of the American Alpine Club, where I heard about Kitty and Paul (Note: Amongst her other achievements, Kitty was the first woman to summit Makalu; Paul was her assistant). All nine of us brought our skis: eight of us on alpine boards with Silvretta bindings, and one (Paul) on three-pins. Each of us also carried: an expedition sled, large frame backpack, and ~120 lbs of food, climbing gear, and fuel. We planned to be on the

cont. page 3

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**NEXT MEETING**

DEC. 15, 1992 7:30 PM GRIFFITH PARK RANGER STATION AUDITORIUM 4730 CRYSTAL SPRINGS DRIVE, LOS ANGELES, CA.

**NEXT ISSUE: DEC. 15 1992**

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**UPCOMING TRIPS:**

DATE	LOCATION	LEADERS
Dec 5-6	Mammoth, SMS Leader Training	Owen Maloy Kathy Crandall
Dec 31 - Jan 3	Ostrander Hut, Yosemite	Eddie Nunez Nancy Gordon
Jan 9	Local Introductory Tour	Paul Harris Walt Boge
Jan 16	XC Downhill Clinic, Local Mtns	Howard Schultz / Mark Goebel
Jan 17	Local Introductory Tour	Greg Jordan / Paul Harris
Jan 23	Mt San Jacinto	Pete Matulavich / Reiner Stenzel
Jan 30-31	Ski Mtneers Training Camp	Paul Harris / Mark Goebel
Jan 31	Jump Turn Clinic, Keller Hut	Craig Dostie Howard Schultz
Feb 6-7	Mt Baldy, San Antonio Hut	Marcia Male Nancy Gordon

Feb 13	Local Introductory Tour	Mark Goebel Eddie Nunez
Feb 13-14	Mammoth Condo Weekend	Owen Maloy Kathy Crandall
Feb 13-15	Pear Lake, Sequoia N. P.	Greg Jordan Reiner Stenzel
Feb 20-21	Snowshelter Course	Reiner Stenzel Howard Schultz
Feb 27-28	XC Downhill Practice, Keller Hut	Nancy Gordon Paul Harris
Mar 6	Mt Pinos-Mt Abel Traverse	Reiner Stenzel Nancy Gordon
Mar 6-7	Nordic Holiday Races, Yosemite	Gerry Holleman / Pat Holleman
Mar 12-14	Patriarch Grove, White Mtns	Eddie Nunez / Howard Schultz
Mar 12-14	Bodie and Buckeye Hot Springs	Reiner Stenzel / Greg Jordan
Mar 13-14	Mt Baldy, San Antonio Hut	Marcia Male / Pete Matulavich
Mar 20-21	Introductory Tour, Mammoth	Owen Maloy / Kathy Crandall
Mar 20-21	Jump Turn Clinic, Mt Baldy	Craig Dostie / Howard Schultz
Mar 27-28	SMS Wilderness Ski Race	Don Pies / Nancy Gordon
Mar 27-28	Convict Canyon	Ken McElvany / Scot Jamison
Apr 3-4	San Geronio Wilderness Area	Mark Goebel / Howard Schultz
Apr 17-18	Blue Couloir and Mammoth Tour	Gerry Holleman Pat Holleman
Apr 24-25	Orion Valley	Howard Schultz Reiner Stenzel
May 1-2	Hilton Lakes Ski Camp	Scot Jamison / Ken McElvany
May 8-9	Ski Mountaineers Peak	Gerry Holleman / Paul Harris
May 15-16	Basin Mtn Ski and Ice Fishing	Reiner Stenzel Owen Maloy
May 22-24	Mt Conness and Mt Dana	Reiner Stenzel Scot Jamison
May 28-31	Mt Shasta via Hotlum-Bolam Glacier	Nancy Gordon Bill Lingle
May 29-31	Mt Ritter, Thousand Island Lake	Reiner Stenzel Howard Schultz

**1992-1993 Ski Mountaineer Leaders**

Walt Boge 13260 Cumston St Van Nuys 91401 818 781-4576	Bill Lingle 23660 Baltar St West Hills 91304 818 884-3269
Kathy Crandall 1864 Foothill Blvd La Cahada 91011 818 790-9252	Marcia Male 1459 Westgate Ave, #1 Los Angeles 90025 310 479-0758
Craig Dostie 6438A Penn St Moorpark 93021 805 523-0413	Owen Maloy P O Box 2083 Mammoth Lakes 93546-2083 H 619 934-9511 W 619 934-4533
Mark Goebel 9522 Innsbruck Dr Huntington Beach 92646 714 963-9384	Pete Matulavich 126 Calle Candida San Dimas 91773 714 599-6148
Nancy Gordon 6550 Enenview Ave West Hills 91307 818 884-8065	Ken McElvany 2058 Shorewood Upland 91786 714 982-4780
Paul Harris PO Box 70765 Pasadena 91107 818 577-4800	Eddie Nunez 296 Chester Newport Beach 92660 714 644-0527
Gerry and Pat Holleman 1638 6th St Manhattan Beach 90266 310 374-4654	Don Pies 1606 Haynes Lane Redondo Beach 90278 310 318-6251
Scot Jamison 2517 King Way Claremont 91711-1720 H 714 626-1712 W 818 963-41 01	Howard Schultz 17045 Burton St Van Nuys 91406 818 344-8313
Greg Jordan 22633 Ticonderoga Rd Calabasas 91302 818 884-3269	Reiner Stenzel 519 Almar Ave Pacific Palisades 90272 310 454-9787

Next month "The ten Steps" how to become a ski mountaineer.

Skiing Mt. McKinley cont. from page 1

mountain for over three weeks. After everybody got acquainted over dinner, we stayed overnight in Anchorage, then left the next morning in a rented van to the small town of Talkeetna ~100 miles north.

Sunday, June 2: Talkeetna. This is where we hired a bush pilot to fly us to the Denali National Park boundary (in a ski-equipped Cessna 185), which is on the Kahiltna Glacier at ~6,500 ft. After two attempted landings that had been aborted due to poor visibility, we finally arrived on the southeast fork of the Kahiltna Glacier and finished setting up camp at ~7:30 PM. Everyone seemed to be in good spirits and excited. Our route was the west buttress via approach from the Kahiltna Glacier. Doing the MacK on skis has its distinct advantages and disadvantages, which became more obvious when we got underway.

Monday, June 3: 9:00 AM. After breakfast, we're finally off! With nine people, we broke into three rope teams each of three people. McKinley is a very heavily crevassed mountain, which requires parties to travel roped up at all times, period. We skinned up to the ~8000 ft level with about half of our supplies to set a cache. We buried these supplies here in about 3 ft of snow — which we later found out that was not deep enough. From here we skied back down to the Kahiltna "base." This is the basic "expedition" routine for climbing big mountains that we became accustomed for the next ten days — carry high, sleep low. Unfortunately, you end up climbing the bloody thing twice when you add up the elevation gain, but at least we got a lot of skiing in. Although skiing roped up while pulling sleds is probably not what most SMS'ers would like to do on vacation, I've found that this method of expedition style climbing is more: fun, efficient, and safe, while traveling on glaciers. Climbing big mountains is largely drudgery; hauling large amounts of supplies part way up, burying it, then going back down to get more. Having a ski run (or more) after a haul was (is!) the greatest boredom-breaker. Additionally, we normally would get down to a lower camp nearly three times faster than any other party on snowshoes (which is why I've since coined them as "slowshoes"). I also believed (and still do) that we would be safer on skis rather than snowshoes because you're less likely to break through a crevasse (Andy Selters' book on glacier

travel is a good reference for this). Needless to say, that the skier's ability factors heavily into this point. Any climber attempting McKinley without a priori skiing ability has no business being on skis.

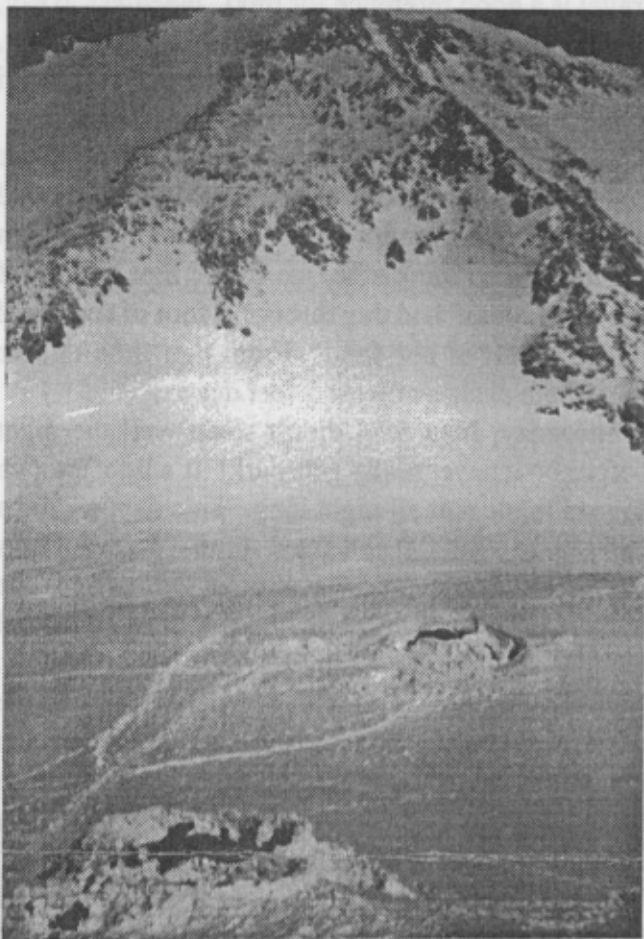
Tuesday, June 4: After packing up the rest of our camp at Kahiltna base, it started to snow as we moved up, which made for nice powder runs later on. When we made it to our cache, we found that a band of "roving ravens" had dug through a foot of snow and raided a part of our food! From that time on, we buried the caches at least 5 feet deep...

Wednesday, June 5: I didn't sleep well the night before — it never really gets dark! It's light enough to read in the tent all night long. This day, we did a carry up to ~9,800 ft and skied some wonderful runs down the slopes below Kahiltna Dome and one known as "skier's hill." If I hadn't been so tired, I could have "done turns" until 2 AM! Unfortunately, I was having problems with powder sticking to the residual glue on my ski bases, such that I would use my pole to knock it off. I realized that I had overdone this, when this exceeded my RAMER pole's shear strength when I broke off the bottom 6"! When I got back to camp; however, I repaired it with some coat hanger wire and the legendary duct tape. I fortunately had no further ski pole problems for the trip's duration.

Thursday, June 6: Pretty much the same routine as previous day; moved camp to 9,800 ft, but this time we did fun skiing along ridge between Kahiltna Dome and Kahiltna Pass — some falls, many smiles! I was skiing mostly with Sherrie and Jack; we were roped together. The element of "team skiing" was new to all of us — can't go faster than the slowest skier, and not slower than the fastest; else, the ropes would likely tangle in the skis making all three fall. Weather up to date has been fantastic — clear and sunny, but our first storm was still brewing...

Friday, June 7: Snowing lightly all day. We carried about 100 wands, so we could use some of them to mark our route up to the next camp at ~11,000 ft. Skiing down was "interesting." The visibility was ~100 yards, which gave us all an eerie "slalom course."

Saturday, June 8: Stormed stopped — ~1.5-2 ft of fresh snow and skies clear. We moved the rest of our

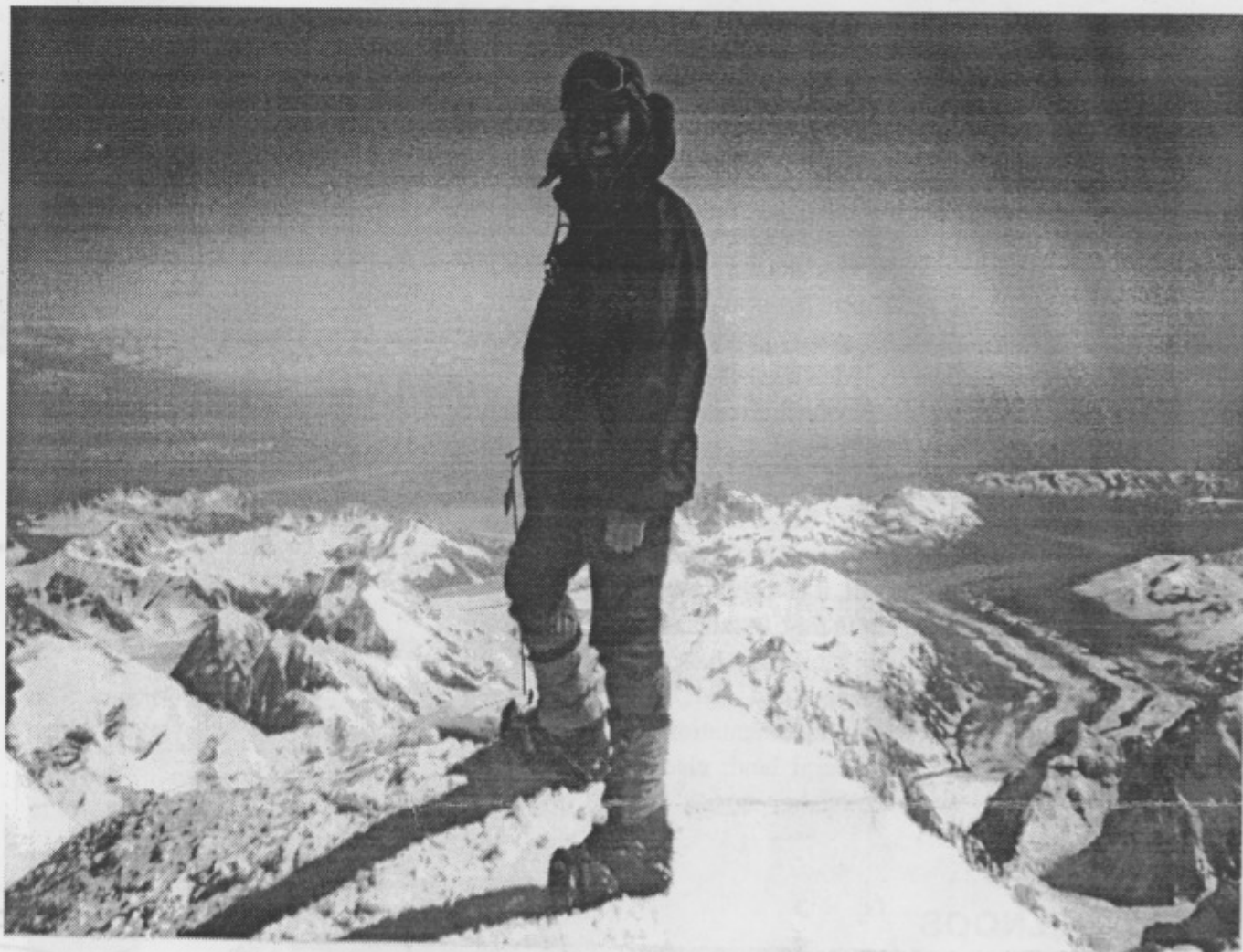


camp to 11,000 ft. An avalanche broke-off near our new camp, which nearly squelched our drive to do more "fun" skiing, but we got some runs off above Kahiltna Pass after all.

Sunday, June 9 through Wednesday, June 12: Same routine, but we're finally getting near the mountain, and it feels like it — everything's getting colder and weather's becoming far more dynamic (more avalanches). On Wednesday, we made it to ~14,200 ft, which is generally known as the "midpoint" of the route — from here on, we will be on the "upper" part of the MacK. There is a NPS ranger station located here during the regular climbing season. We observed rangers evacuate two climbers off the "West Rib" route by chopper — they both had frostbitten feet. We later did some skiing with the rangers below the west buttress. We camped near a Japanese team that packed enough cigarettes to supply a Las Vegas casino! From here on, I'm sorry to say, that we

stashed our skis and sleds along with some emergency gear for when we come down. The west buttress route gets a little too treacherous for most of us to continue on skis — from now on, we will don crampons. I will note; however, that there exists phenomenal extreme skiing above 14,200 ft for those who dare (Craig!) — the couloirs off the west buttress offer many high-angle (40-50 deg) descents. Thursday, June 13 through Wednesday, June 19: We did carries to 16,200 ft, camped, then moved up to 17,200 ft and camped. Along this section, many events occurred: we had the most technically difficult terrain of the route (the Buttress: steep ridge, steep on both sides — German cramponing technique was recommended), we had some of the worst weather I can remember (zero visibility, sub-zero chill factor, ~30 knot winds, large snow accumulation non-stop for over 3 days), and at ~15,500 ft, Dr. Sherrie — our team doctor, fainted while we were eating lunch (!). She was OK; however, after she rested awhile; she then continued with us to camp at 17,200 ft with minor problems. We had been pinned-down at 17,200 ft due to bad weather for over two days, but when the blizzard stopped late Wednesday evening, the wind continued to rage. We had enough supplies to hold out for ~3 more days at 17,200 ft; otherwise, we would have had to retreat to 14,200 ft, if the weather did not improve.

Thursday, June 20: Our prayers were heard — SUMMIT DAY! We were blessed that the wind sufficiently continued after the snow stopped to form a decent wind slab; otherwise, we would have had soft snow (2-3 ft) to contend with. We started out at 7:30 AM. The temperature was about 10 degrees below zero with no wind — a summer day on McKinley! We were concerned about avalanche hazard en route to Denali Pass (18,200 ft), but none presented themselves — no concerns other than the annoying number of cigarette butts on Denali Pass. Here we rested a little, tried to warm up, then made our push to the summit. The weather was delightful — sunny with no wind. Our group was also a delight — everybody was fully hyped. At ~4:40 PM, we made it! — after 7 hours of climbing from 17,200 ft. The good weather prevailed; and on the summit, it



even warmed up to zero degrees. We were ecstatic; all 9 of us made the peak! We took about 30 minutes taking pictures, shaking hands, and hugging each other before we began our descent. On the way down, however, we were reminded of parties not so lucky; at ~19,500 ft, just south of "The Archdeacon's Tower," lie the bodies of two European climbers left there since 1989 — their next of kin have yet to retrieve them.

Friday, June 21: Packed up our gear at 17,200 ft and climbed down to 14,200 ft, where we picked up our remaining supplies, rested a bit, packed our sleds, and put on our skis. From here, we had a ski run that went for ~6,000 vertical feet! We could have easily skied all the way back to Kahiltna base, but we wanted to do "more turns." So we set up camp on the Kahiltna near the base of Mt. Crosson and "napped" there until

midnight. We then arose for our last ski runs — doing turns on the slopes of Mt. Crosson and Mt. Frances until ~2 AM while the Alaskan alpenglow illuminated McKinley's West Buttress — skiing that I'll never forget.

Saturday, June 22: Took our lazy time getting up and packing camp. We strolled the rest of the way down the Kahiltna. The glacier was amazing mass of crevasses that had opened up since we first passed. Two members from two different parties fell into crevasses: one apparently went in up to his neck, the other up to his waist — they were on snowshoes. Their teammates extracted them unharmed. We spent a long afternoon back at Talkeetna waiting for all nine of us and our gear getting flown off the mountain. On our way back to Anchorage, we picked up some pizzas, marveled at the trees, and got

some BEER — definitely not in that order. After whooping it up in Anchorage at the "Old Musky Inn," we parted ways ending a chapter — what was the trip of my life.

\*NOTE: Regarding the name of North America's highest peak, I'm well aware of the controversy surrounding the usage of "McKinley" and that of its older name "Denali." Herein I chose to use McKinley and continue to do so to this day. Although many native Alaskans use Denali, I may note that one (out of many) native Alaskan tribe (the Athabascans) originally called it Denali, whereas other tribes had other names. More significantly, McKinley is contained within Denali National Park, which obviously implies that McKinley stands on U.S. federal government land. U.S. Geological Survey maps show the peak as McKinley. So I've decided, that I'll begin using "Denali" when the federal government changes the peak's official name — after all, it is technically their mountain. If a vote were put to the 50 states or Congress, I would more likely vote McKinley, based on the projected cost the government would incur to reissue maps and reprint all pertinent documentation. I thank God that it stands on federal land; else,

perhaps Exxon might have beat out Chevron at grabbing the park, and perhaps renaming the peak Mt. Hazelwood...

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