

WEATHER OBSERVATIONS (By B.N.)

The weather in this region gets progressively better as one proceeds inland. The route to the interior is across the Malaspina Glacier, which is liable to give a misleading impression of the weather conditions in the region as a whole.

The winds, warmed by the Japanese Current, blow in across the Glacier where they are cooled, the result being an almost continual low-hanging fog during the day and a drizzling rain during the night. Frequently the fog will burn off during the forenoon and the sun will shine for a few hours, offering an excellent opportunity to dry wet clothing and gear. Equipment dries very fast in this region and in a few hours things will be back to their normal dry state, ready for the next rain the following evening.

As we proceed up the Seward Glacier the weather begins to look better. The fog will be seen hanging low over the Malaspina and only occasionally will it creep onto the upper Seward. At these times it will sneak around back of Mt. Cook, past Mt. Vancouver, and then head down toward the Columbus Glacier.

If you are unfortunate enough to be on the Seward when the fog comes in, and you haven't marked out your path with willow wands prepare for a rest of from one to four days. This fog condition does not necessarily indicate approaching bad weather. It was observed several times from higher on the mountain, where the weather was excellent.

We found a rule of thumb which predicted the weather fairly accurately: If the clouds are coming in at one level (Glacier fog or high clouds) the weather will continue to be good; if the clouds are coming in at two levels (Glacier fog and high clouds) count on a storm within a day or two; if the clouds are coming in at three levels, count on a storm within an hour or two.

Most of the storms came from the south, and were not too severe, if one was prepared for them. They consisted of brisk winds, light to medium snowfall, and temperatures (depending on the elevation) from 10° F. on up. One afternoon at 14,000 feet the outside temperature was in the low fifties, and a wet snow was falling. The sun shone through the fog, however, and raised the temperature in the tent to 105°. That night the mercury dropped to zero and we had clear weather for a week. It might be noted that during this week the wind was consistently from the north. Minimum temperatures at 15,000 were always below zero.

During the early part of the summer it is possible to climb throughout the night, when the snow is frozen, there being only three to four hours of semi-darkness. By August the period of darkness will increase to about 6 hours. This means that good route-finding is not possible during the night and in places it will be necessary to wait for daylight. About this time the stars will start to come out and the northern lights will become visible.