

CLIMBS AND EXPEDITIONS

2004

Accounts from the various climbs and expeditions of the world are listed geographically from north to south and from west to east within the noted countries. We begin our coverage with the Contiguous United States and move to Alaska in order for the climbs in Alaska's Wrangell–St. Elias Mountains to segue into the St. Elias climbs in Canada.

We encourage all climbers to submit accounts of notable activity, especially long new routes (generally defined as U.S. commitment Grade IV—full-day climbs—or longer). Please submit reports as early as possible (see Submissions Guidelines at www.AmericanAlpineClub.org).

For conversions of meters to feet, multiply by 3.28; for feet to meters, multiply by 0.30.

Unless otherwise noted, all reports are from the 2003 calendar year.

NORTH AMERICA

CONTIGUOUS UNITED STATES

Washington

Washington, trends and new routes. The summer of 2003 unfolded as the driest in a century, with rainfall 70-85% below normal. Seattle temperatures topped 70 degrees for a record 61 consecutive days. The unusual number of hot, dry days resulted in closed campgrounds, limited wilderness access, and fire bans. Pesky fires like the Farewell Creek in the Pasayten Wilderness, which was spotted June 29, obscured views throughout the Cascades, burned until autumn rains, and exhausted federal funds. Alpine glaciers and snow routes took on new character, as new climbing options appeared in the receding wake. A project by Lowell Skoog documented change by retracing, 50 years to the date, the photography of Tom Miller and the Mountaineers' crossing of the Ptarmigan Traverse (www.alpenglow.org/climbing/ptarmigan-1953/index.html). What characteristically would be easy glacier and snow travel in late summer turned to ankle-bending kilometers of talus and scree and mind-numbing on/off crampon cycles. Washington's weather did, however, promote a number of luxurious and comfortable high alpine traverses. To further support the record of regional climbing, local enthusiasts established the Northwest Mountaineering Journal site (www.nwmj.org/). The goal is to collect regional accounts of mountaineering that does not meet the AAJ criterion of Grade IV. In addition to individual reports below, the following summarizes other significant new alpine routes.

On the northeast side of Vasiliki Ridge (a mountain with a broad summit from which many pinnacles rise), Jordan Peters and Mike Layton established the Carlo Rossi Memorial Tower route (III 5.10dX), up a tower that had likely been climbed before. The route, climbed on September 13, ascends the tower's east ridge for many pitches, traverses to the south face of the summit tower, and continues to the summit. The crux was a 5.10dX offwidth on which the rock was "total garbage." In general, however, the rock is good. Other pitches included a 5.8 open book with a fun roof, and a summit pitch that required "walking the plank."

In April, also on the northeast side of Vasiliki Ridge, Mark Bunker and Colin Haley climbed what is likely a new route on Ares Tower that is parallel to, and just right of, the route Never Enough. Their route (IV AI3 M4) followed gullies and chimneys on generally good rock.

Paisiano Pinnacle received a new route (III 5.10c) in mid-July from Scott Harpell and partner. The route starts at the West Ridge notch, climbs roofs and cracks up and across to the dihedral route, Rampage, then toward the skyline, following more cracks, an offwidth, and a final chimney.

Jay Brazier and Eric Sweet climbed a new line on the western flank of Mt. Shuksan on November 8, between the Upper Curtis Glacier and the Sulphide Glacier. The route (Satan's Sidewalk, 280m, III 5.7X, WI3+) is the obvious late-season ice flow 200m left of Hell's Highway. Access to the ice was gained by climbing corners and ramps to the left for 60m. The second pitch traversed right, onto the ice. The remaining three pitches followed the ice to the Sulphide Glacier.

In July 1999 Mike Preiss soloed a new route (III 5.8) on the south face of Mt. Garfield's West Peak onsite, without bolts or pins, self-belaying the harder pitches, with one bivy. The March 2004 *Rock and Ice* reported a variation (Infinite Bliss, 23 pitches, V 5.10b, by Steve Martin and Leland Windham) which is a fully bolted sport route that climbs the upper face straight-on. The middle third of the original solo and the variation are approximately the same line. On the original solo, a traverse in from the trees to a large shelf bypassed the four- to five-pitch lower third of the bolted variation. On the upper third Mike climbed a chimney/corner on the left and finished with four or five pitches on a rock rib (5.8), exiting the face 40-50' left of the highest point.

On February 6-7 Sean Courage, Tim Matsui, and Andreas Schmidt made what they believe to be the first winter ascent of Mt. Buckner. They'd planned to traverse Sahale Peak and climb Buckner's North Face, but due to wind and "general lethargy" ascended the Southwest Face. Schmidt traversed to the slightly lower East Summit, as they couldn't recall which summit was higher.

On Pyramid Peak's northeast face, a new route (and the first on the face) was climbed on February 9 by Robert Rogoz, Coley Gentzel, and Chris Koziarz. The route (IV+ M4) climbed 400' up the gully on the far left side of the face before cutting to the right, up a groove, and onto the northeast face proper. From here they climbed seven pitches of steep névé, thin ice, and difficult mixed climbing to the summit. While leading the crux pitch, Rogoz jammed the shafts of his ice tools into a vertical crack. The climbers descended by the standard southeast slopes and Colonial Glacier. The route name, It Ain't Over MFers (a Polish rap song by Liroy), was decided upon after wandering around in the dark returning to the car, then getting in a car wreck at 2 a.m. It is recommended that teams bring a set of nuts, a set of cams, several pitons, a few short screws, and protection for frozen turf.

Southern Picket Range, Complete Enchainment. In July this long-standing east-to-west challenge was completed by Mark Bunker, Colin Haley, and Wayne Wallace. All 14 major summits in the southern Pickets were climbed during the four-day traverse, several by new routes. The peaks along the Complete Southern Pickets Traverse (VI 5.10+) are as follows: July 25: Little McMillan Spire, southeast face, III 5.8; East McMillan Spire, east ridge, II 5.6; West McMillan Spire, east ridge/face, III 5.8. July 26: Inspiration Peak, east ridge, III 5.9; Pyramid Peak, east ridge/face, II 5.8; Mt. Degenhart, east ridge, class 4; Mt. Terror, east ridge, II 5.6; The Rake, east ridge, IV 5.9. July 27: East Twin Needle, southeast ridge/face, II 5.10a; West Twin Needle, east ridge, class 3; Himmelhorn, east ridge/north face, II 5.10+; Ottohorn, east ridge, class 4; Frenzespitz, southeast ridge/face, II 5.6. July 28: Chopping Block, northeast face, II 5.6. A total of about 50 technical pitches in all. Three routes were first ascents: The Rake, East Twin Needle, and Himmelhorn. For more information, see Wallace's article earlier in this Journal.

The Chopping Block, first winter ascent. On February 14, 2004, I hiked in via Goodell Creek and The Barrier to climb the Southeast Face route. The next day, from below the east face, I climbed a steep, north-facing gully to gain the southeast ridge, which consisted mostly of steep, wind packed snow and had two short but tricky mixed sections. I descended by the southeast ridge as well, rappelling over the mixed sections from pitons and a shrub, and downclimbing the rest. After returning to camp I immediately packed up and hiked out, because the week-old snow crust was being rapidly covered by fresh, unstable snow.

COLIN HALEY, AAC

Inspiration Peak, first winter ascent. On February 7 Forrest Murphy and I left the Goodell Creek trailhead early and, using snowshoes, made it to a camp midway up the Terror Glacier that afternoon. The unusually low snowpack helped make the approach reasonable. On the 8th we snowshoed the rest of the way up the Terror Glacier to the base of Inspiration's south face, at its far left side. We climbed the south-facing gully, which was mostly steep snow, to the col between Inspiration Peak and the Pyramid. Halfway up this gully, we were pleased to find that a flow of water-ice came down the right side of a chockstone that otherwise would be the crux of the route. From the Inspiration-Pyramid col we climbed the West Ridge in three 60m pitches. The rock was covered in rime ice which was, in places, thick enough that we could gingerly swing our ice tools. We downclimbed our last pitch and made three single-rope rappels, off of pitons and a chockstone, back to the Pyramid-Inspiration col. As the sun was now shining on our ascent gully, we hurriedly downclimbed most of it, but made one rappel over the chockstone and one directly below it. We returned to camp on the Terror Glacier, packed up, began the long hike out, and reached the car at 10 p.m.

COLIN HALEY, AAC

Graybeard, north face routes. In November 2002, I climbed two separate routes on the north face of Graybeard, both of which I believe to be new. The first began from the prominent field of névé at the base of the 1984 Skoog-Skoog Route. From the right side of the névé I climbed a short 5th-class chimney to gain the rib immediately right of their couloir and followed that rib to the west ridge. The climbing was mostly low-5th- and 4th-class rock, with sections of steep

snow. The second route was completed several days later and followed a large left-facing ramp/dihedral system that leads to a prominent gully/funnel on the upper third of the face. I found enjoyable but not overly steep water ice in the corner system, broken by steep bits of rock which I circumvented wherever possible. I back-roped a few times to pitons, which remain on the face. I enjoyed firm snow in the upper funnel, which led to a spectacular notch in the ridge. Both routes continued to the summit and descended via the broken west ridge to Easy Pass, and each was completed as a day-trip. I had excellent fall conditions, with wet October snow cemented onto the face by a cold spell that lasted for three weeks in late November and early December. Others expecting to repeat these routes should endeavor to find similar conditions, as the climbing would be loose and dangerous with less-cemented snow and boring with more snow (as in the spring).

STEVE HOUSE, AAC

Easy-Heather Traverse, repeat with variations. In July 2001 I traversed the ridgeline of peaks from Easy Pass to Heather Pass along the north boundary of the south block of North Cascades National Park. I began at 6:06 a.m. from the Easy Pass trailhead and followed the trail to Easy Pass. I left the trail and climbed the first peak, Graybeard, and continued along the crest, covering 15 miles, with 11,000' of elevation gain and 10,000' of elevation loss, before I returned to the North Cascades Highway at the Heather Pass trailhead at 6:34 p.m. I went to the highest point of every summit, including Graybeard, Fisher Peak, Little Horn, all of the Ragged Ridge summits, Black Peak, and Corteo Peak.

I know that part of my traverse covered new terrain, but I don't know which parts. Beckey only mentions the summits (obviously), but there are big parts of this ridgeline that were technical but not near summits, so probably had not been traveled. That said, there were lots of little "summits" along the ridge that I went to because I figured no one had been there, and it was part of the game I'd set for myself. The conditions were very dry. I wore sticky-rubber running shoes and carried a camel-back. I could only get water at one location, just before Fisher Peak, about one-third of the way across. The climbing was up to about 5.7, the downclimbing and traversing up to about 5.6, and there was lots and lots of 4th/easy 5th, which is why it was worthwhile.

STEVE HOUSE, AAC

Mount Logan, Northwest Ridge. So ends my fascination this year with remote Mt. Logan. My first solo foray led to the fastest ascent to date: just over 24 hours car-to-car. That was a long day in July. On October 1 I found my own little version of the Hummingbird Ridge, the previously unclimbed, endless Northwest Ridge (V 5.8X). The topo map doesn't lie: the ridge is over a mile long and has almost 3,000' of vertical. Just getting there took more than I bargained for. After leaving the trail at Junction Camp, I bushwhacked through to the second lake, and then was lucky to find the "Wrinkle In Time" to reach the fantastic Logan Creek Valley. The Wrinkle, which I followed on a deer path from the second lake, is a bizarre triangle-shaped terrain feature that is separated from the west side of the Logan Creek Valley. It forms two valleys, one of which actually flows up the Logan Creek Valley. It was the only way I could see to get into the otherwise impenetrable valley. You may find it on a close-up topo, but neither the lakes nor The Wrinkle

show up on the Green Trails map. Good bivy among bear scat. The climb itself is endless, exposed, and committing, involving much fourth class and five rappels to clear its abundant gendarmes. It gets harder as it goes, too. There are two reasons this route wasn't done before: it's almost unreachable, and the climbing is in big-fear territory. Not that it's all that loose, but the ambiance is intimidating, and if you blow the route-finding, the going is desperate and scary.

WAYNE WALLACE, AAC



Kurt Buchwald and Peter Avolio cruising on the Northeast Buttress of Bonanza Peak. *Martin Volken*

Bonanza Peak, three-summit traverse. On August 21 and 22 Kurt Buchwald, Peter Avolio, and I completed the first ridge traverse (V 5.7/5.8) of all three summits of Bonanza Peak. The route involves an approach via the Mary Green Glacier, climbing the Northeast Buttress to the main summit, a link-up to the west summit and from there a link-up to the southwest summit. Getting off the mountain meant descending from there to the Isella Glacier, traversing the glacier to the base of the Holden Ridge, crossing the ridge, and descending the Mary Green Glacier to Holden Lake. The approach was made to climber's

right of the Mary Green Glacier, which provided easy access to the base of the Northeast Buttress at 8,350' (three hours from Holden Lake). The ridge got steep and narrow right away. The rock was mostly solid but lichen-covered. At several spots we climbed on or around the crest, in the 5.7 range, with wild exposure. It took a little less than four hours on the ridge to the main summit, and the Northeast Buttress alone is worth the trip. From the main summit we descended northwest on a steep and scary talus-covered ridge for 100', turned north, and downclimbed to a notch via exposed 4th and easy 5th class. Continuing, we stayed on or slightly north of the ridge until we got to the base of a smaller summit 150' horizontally from the main summit. This wild section was one of the many highlights of the traverse. On the second half of the main-to-west-summit traverse the exposure was the same, but the climbing turned into a class 4 "walk on the wild side." From the west summit we continued toward the southwest summit on mediocre but easy rock to where the ridge narrowed, and the rock quality tested our nerves. Avoiding the ridge on the north side at times, we eventually got to a greenish tower that had a fresh-looking breakout zone on its north side. We crossed to the south side, where the terrain mellowed, and bivied next to a snow patch just below the crest and above the Isella Glacier. From the bivy site we descended the next morning, in blustery conditions, toward a notch at around 9,000'. This notch forms the top of a 1,000-foot couloir, which is used for the Isella Glacier route. From the notch we continued on easy ridges and ledges, until the steepening

south face forced us onto the ridge. We followed the ridge until an obvious talus-filled gully on the north side let us make quick progress. The terrain stayed easy and guided us around to the south side. Toward the end we traversed under a steep wall, until easy terrain let us proceed to the summit. From the southwest summit we descended easy, but somewhat dangerous, ledges down to the upper snowfields of the Isella Glacier. From here we traversed high on the Isella Glacier toward the Southeast (a.k.a. Holden) Ridge and a chimney that leads up to the saddle on that ridge. The chimney went at about 5.7 (near its start) on solid rock with loose surface stones. We belayed a full pitch that got us to easy fourth class terrain, which led to the col. A long rappel then brought us to the safety of the Mary Green Glacier, from which we reached our ascent route. The route is a full Cascadian adventure in a spectacular setting. You get to climb on an exposed ridge at over 9,000' for many hours, which is rare in the Cascades. Total time from Lake Holden to Lake Holden was about 19 hours.

MARTIN VOLKEN

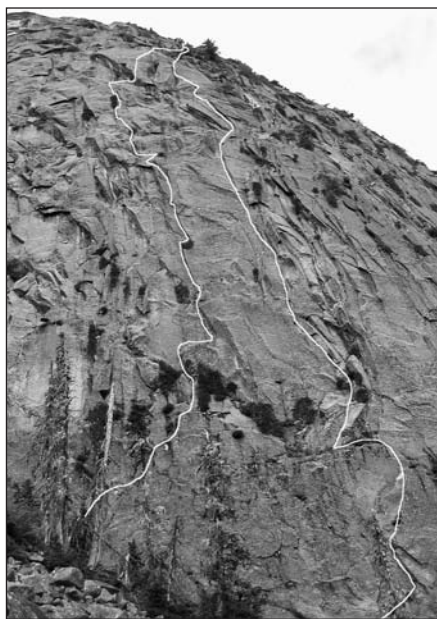


Mt. Formidable. The complete East Ridge follows the crest from the Spider-Formidable Col to the summit. *Martin Volken*

Mt. Formidable, complete East Ridge. On July 30 Kurt Buchwald and I completed the ridgcrest traverse (IV 5.7) from the Spider-Formidable Col to the summit of Mt. Formidable. From the Spider-Formidable col at 7,350', we moved northwest and around a rotten tower on the left into the first notch, to get onto better rock. We then climbed generally near the crest to a flat, easy ridge. Next we climbed a blocky ridge on good rock, generally staying a bit north of the crest to the top of a first distinct tower. Then a rappel (or downclimb) was made into the next notch on the north side of the ridge, reaching a spot at the base of a two-pitch headwall, which leads toward the distinct summit that we called the "Two County Summit" (Chelan and Skagit). Climbing the two-pitch headwall (5.6 or 5.7) slightly north of the ridge, we found good rock

and awesome ambiance. An easy but exposed blocky ridge brought us to the Two County Summit. Climbing over small towers, we gained horizontal, walkable terrain with stunning exposure and continued down easily to the next notch (first ideal bailout spot to the south). We continued up a steep, narrow tower with exposure and good rock. We next encountered a series of lofty gendarmes that involved steep rappels, which made for slower going and harder bailouts. Eventually we gained the notch that leads to a distinct summit just east of the Formidable Glacier (another north or south bailout option). From the Formidable Glacier col we stayed on the crest, crossing over the subsummit (not very good rock) to the summit proper, which didn't present any new challenges. This last section takes a little longer than the southern ledges described in the Beckey guide, but the scenery is wild and the rock good. We descended the summit ridge a short way and then a distinct couloir heading south. The route can be split into three sections: section one goes from the Spider-Formidable col to the Two County Summit. Section two goes from that summit to the Formidable Glacier. Section three goes from the Formidable Glacier to the summit. The second section is certainly the most complex and time-consuming, even though the hardest climbing occurs on the way to the Two County Summit. The ridge is about 2km long, involves a lot of exposed 4th- and easy 5th-class climbing, and offers pitches of 5.6 to 5.7 in the center section. We spent 11 hours moving from the Col to the summit of Formidable and approximately 13 hours from camp to camp. It resembles the Torment-Forbidden traverse in many ways. The route features more complicated ups and downs than the T-F traverse, but it is more reasonable to bail in two or three places.

MARTIN VOLKEN



The 1,100-foot Witch Doctor Wall of Exfoliation Dome, showing Voodoo Wall on the left, and Solaris on the right. *Dave Burdick*

Witch Doctor Wall, Voodoo Wall and Solaris. The summer saw two aid climbs put up on Exfoliation Dome's 1,100' Witch Doctor Wall in the Darrington area. The Voodoo Wall (IV 5.10 A2), established by David Burdick and Michael Swanicke, starts on stepped ledges 400 feet uphill from the original 1969 route. The climb then follows a series of steep left-facing flakes and corners for seven pitches to the ridge crest. A moderate amount of nailing is required, though most of the route consists of clean aid and free climbing.

David Whitelaw, Chris Greyell, and Mark Hanna established Solaris (IV 5.10b A2+), a slightly longer and more sustained climb featuring a long and elegant offwidth, as well as many sections of thin nailing. Solaris is located 200 feet to the right of the Voodoo Wall. Both routes are equipped with bolted chain belays and are featured in the new guidebook *Rattle & Slim: Darrington Selected Rock Climbs*.

DAVID BURDICK

Little Big Chief Mountain, Falcon Route. Jeff Hansell and I made this new route (IV 5.9) on September 10, 2001. Little Big Chief Mountain is located in the seldom-visited Summit Chief Valley in the North Central Cascades. The Summit Chief Valley is a tributary of the Middle Fork of the Snoqualmie River Valley. The route is never really hard, but is remote and demands a variety of alpine skills. From the end of the Middle Fork Valley Road, hike up the valley for about three hours. At a small steel bridge, leave the trail and hike cross-country in a southerly direction to the entrance of the Summit Chief Valley. The objective should be visible on the east side of the valley. Hike up into the Summit Chief Valley until you reach the flat gravel wash at about 4,650'. There are great low-impact camp spots.

From camp ascend a talus field for 900 feet to the base of the route at a prominent left-trending gully. Follow this for 50 feet; move right to a dead tree. Go up and right to another dead tree and continue to easier terrain. Ascend sloping heather benches to the prominent right-trending ramp and follow it to the beginning of difficulties, just left of the prominent chimney. The first pitch features an undercling to the right (5.8). On the second pitch, climb a groove for 60 feet, then move left onto a rib and into another groove. On pitch four climb a steep headwall (5.9) to yet another groove. Follow this groove on pitches five and six (5.7/5.8) to easy terrain and a big ledge, which is at the elevation of the top of the prow to your left. Pitch seven trends slightly right to a ridge near the summit crest. On pitch eight keep traversing right on exposed rock to the crest (5.7). Class 4 climbing on the narrow ridge leads to the 7,225' summit.

Descend the ridge to the south for several hundred feet, then turn left and gain a pocket glacier. Go down the pocket glacier and trend left over glacier-polished slabs. Keep trending left and reach the ridge crest at 5,400'. One to two rappels then take you back into the Summit Chief Valley. Continue trending left, follow goat ledges, then descend through steep forest to camp.

MARTIN VOLKEN

Blockhouse, East Face Route. On June 14 Ron Cotman and I completed an aesthetic, complicated route on the Blockhouse's east face, in Leavenworth's Cashmere Crags group, accessed by the Hook Creek drainage in the Icicle Canyon. Our original ascent took three days and seven belays, due to hand-drilling and technical aid sections, but a competent party should be able to complete the ascent in a day or two and only five pitches. A few sections were originally aided due to the need for cleaning cracks for gear placements, but could probably be repeated free by a competent party.

Approach toward the gully between the Blockhouse and the Crocodile Fang. The route starts just a few feet up from a large tree, with a short traverse onto a ledge (5.9) and a move up into a black corner (C1) that ends at a ledge. Pitch two climbs to another ledge and past a large flake to a bolt (A1 or 5.10). Climb above the bolt to the base of a hand crack. Pass the belay bolt and climb the crack to an exposed traverse left on a large ledge. Pitch three climbs the crack past a small roof (C1) and continues leftward past the roof to a crack (A2+). Climb the crack trending leftward to a tree snag (A2+). The fourth pitch climbs up past a large loose block into a slot chimney (5.9) and face climbs up and right to the base of a corner (5.10). The fifth pitch climbs the corner (5.10) to the base of a headwall. Climb the headwall (A1) and a short free section at the top. Grade III 5.10 A2+. Bring a large rack, to 4", that includes knifeblades, Bugaboos, angles, and Lost Arrows and bring two ropes for rappels. Descend the route via tricky rappels, at the tree snag continuing to a station 150 feet below.

TONY BENTLEY

Dragontail Peak, first winter ascent of Serpentine Ridge. Ade Miller (Alpine Club, U.K.) and I climbed Dragontail Peak (8,840') by the popular summer line The Serpentine Ridge on March 13, 2004. The route starts with a single pitch ice smear (AI3) to a snowfield traverse and two mixed pitches to the ledge below the 5.8 twin cracks, approximately following the summer line. From this point we climbed the rock of the summer route. Several pitches of 5.7 and 5.8 climbing with some aid moves (A0) led to a moderately angled iced up crack, which proved to be the crux of the route. The climbing above this point eased, and several areas of unpleasant loose rock in the summer were covered by snow making the upper section of the route very enjoyable. The final short rock pitch to the summit was easily skirted to the left via a short snow gully (4th class in summer). We summited just before dark after twelve and a half hours on the route and descended back to our bivy site via Asgard Pass.

ALASDAIR TURNER

Mt. Snoqualmie, North Face, first free ascent and speed ascent of New York Gully. Thanks to a weak snow year and cold temperatures in January and February, N.Y.G. received more ascents over a few weeks than the handful it's seen since its first ascent by Jim Ruche and Bob Cotter in February 1991. This 1,300-foot alpine line was climbed originally at grade IV 5.8 A2 WI4, with most teams bypassing the final aid pitch via an unconsolidated snow ramp to the right or a snow-covered 5.7 face to the left. On February 13 Andreas Schmidt and I, both from Seattle, left the car at 7:50 a.m., with hopes for an under-eight-hour car-to-car ascent and a free climb of the aid finish. Prior teams experienced sloppy post-holing on the approach and downclimb, making for a long day. We lucked out with a hard snowpack and gained the 1,100-foot flank of the Phantom Slide in 35 minutes, stashed our packs, and dropped over and down the northwest ridge for 500 feet to the base of the gully. We simul-climbed the first 700 feet of easy 5th class over snow-and-ice-covered rock to the base of a long chimney/corner. For two pitches, excellent climbing up frozen moss, and blocks connected by thin, insipient ice smears allowed us to move fast with good protection. On the final pitch Andreas quickly worked the crux, starting with a perfect 15-foot crack that pinched down to a bottomed corner, exposing just enough ice for delicate movement. Dry-tooling and clipping fixed pins for pro, he finished the pitch in no time, feeling the moves to be around M5+/6-. After Andreas brought me up for our standard cheesy high-five, we glissaded in 10 minutes down just-firm-enough snow to our packs—only to discover that one of my tools had popped out of my pack. Just great. Andreas snickered, knowing how I despise hiking, especially when it's brought on by my own gaucherie. He quickly made it back to my SUV to punch the clock at 12:22 p.m., while I scorned myself for having to climb back up 500 feet to retrieve my tool. Small price, I guess, for such a great outing in Washington's illusive winter alpine conditions.

ROGER STRONG, *Seattle, Washington*

California

YOSEMITE VALLEY

Yosemite Valley, various activity. The big news in the Valley this year, once again, was the freeing of big wall routes, specifically on El Capitan. While this activity has become more popular, the usual suspects remain at the forefront. Yuji Hirayama continued his quest to be the first person to onsight one of the big free climbs. He's onsighted 5.13 on Washington Column and Sentinel Rock, but never a complete route on El Cap. Hirayama tried to onsight the Salathé in 1998, but took three falls. This year he attempted El Niño (30 pitches, 5.13c or 5.14a, two falls, fifth free ascent, five days) and Golden Gate (41 pitches, 5.13b, three falls, third free ascent, two days). While he fell just short of the onsights, he did complete the free ascents of both routes. A route that eluded Hirayama's free attempts was Lurking Fear, whose crux slab pitches have baffled all but Tommy Caldwell and Beth Rodden. Hirayama had to be satisfied with the speed record on Lurking Fear. Climbing with Nick Fowler, he led the entire route, and they topped out in 3h04m. Hirayama used short-fixing techniques, as on most aid speed climbs, but he'd free climb mid-5.12 cracks with 60 feet of slack, while Nick juggled. He didn't self-belay, save for the short-fixed rope. Hirayama brought no piece larger than for hand-size cracks and led the notorious 100-foot fist crack without one piece of gear.

The Huber brothers were once again pushing the boundaries, with a visionary effort to free the Zodiac—the first radically steep route on El Cap to go free. It didn't fall easily, though, as the Hubers worked on it all spring without success. Like Yuji, they consoled themselves with the speed record (2h31m20s—the fastest ascent of any grade VI on El Cap), continuing the trend of cutting-edge free climbing to annihilate previous marks that primarily used aid techniques. They pushed the boundaries further than Hirayama and Fowler by constant use of short-fixing. When the second arrived at the short-fixed anchor, the leader would immediately short-fix the rope again, no matter where he was, frequently using a single piece of protection as the short anchor, thus combining 5.13 climbing with radically dangerous aid techniques.

The Hubers returned in October to complete a continuous free ascent, utilizing a number of variations, including a start that doesn't really join the route until the sixth pitch. This leads one to wonder what it means to free a route and where the true free crux of the Zodiac lies (hint: it's within the first six pitches). Their route should be known as the Free Zodiac, like the free variations to the Nose and the Salathé.

Tommy Caldwell, still interested in freeing big walls, had two impressive ticks. Climbing with his wife Beth Rodden, he freed every pitch on the West Buttress of El Cap, though not in a single push. Matt Wilder had previously freed all but one pitch and had, according to Caldwell, already freed the hardest pitch, at 5.13c. Rodden was stopped just short of a free ascent by one of those pesky offwidths, this one 5.12c. Caldwell, climbing with Topher Donahue, also nabbed the second (or third, if we count Alex and Thomas separately) free ascent of the Zodiac shortly after the Hubers.

Jim Herson finally consummated his multiyear love affair, some would say obsession, with the Salathé Wall. After numerous attempts with various partners, Herson became the fifth person to free-climb the route. While he did have to break the headwall into three pitches, ala Piana-Skinner, he became the only person to lead the crux 5.13c 19th pitch in a single go.

All other free ascents either broke up this pitch or avoided it via the Bermuda Dunes' offwidths.

Half Dome saw more free attention this year, and the original 5.11d rating for the ZigZags is apparently a sandbag. First, Micah Dash and David Bloom made possibly the first all-free (entire team) one-day ascent. Dash rated the last ZigZag pitch at 5.12b/c or "Boulder Canyon 5.13b." Dash and Bloom climbed the Higbee Hedral (5.12a) to bypass the bolt ladder and pendulum of the Robbins Traverse.

El Niño, the Huber's free variation to the North American Wall, drew attention besides Hirayama's ascent, and saw a change in the rating. A broken hold on an upper pitch turned that pitch into the crux, and Iker Pou first free climbed it at 5.14a while sending the rest of the route free. Steve Schneider and Brian Cork, with support from Schneider's wife Heather Baer, also freed the route, using a new four-pitch 5.13a variation to avoid the upper troublesome pitch.

Nick Martino continued his impressive speed climbing. With Renan Ozturk he joined the elite group of people to link the Nose and the Northwest Face of Half Dome in less than 24 hours. Ammon McNeely and Ben Vander Klooster broke the speed record on Wet Denim Daydream on the west face of the Leaning Tower. They did the A4 route in 5h6m40s, onsight, and car-to-car in eight hours.

New routes this year included Nick Fowler's Hard Farm Labor (IV 5.12?), an eight-pitch route left of The Rostrum. The original line hasn't gone free, but James Adamson freed a 5.11c variation to the sixth pitch. Adamson called the route "a real gift."

Eric Kohl was once again solo, once again on the Falls Wall (in autumn, when Yosemite Falls is dry), and, once again rated a route PDK (Pretty Damn Klaus). Does this guy need to learn a new tune? The most memorable pitch of the new route, called Witching Hour, involved 27 consecutive heads.

Higher Cathedral Rock saw lots of new route action. Rob Miller put up Gemini on the beautiful shield feature to the left of the Northeast Buttress. Jon Blair, Mark Garbarini, and Bryan "Coiler" Kay put up The Wild Apes' Route (V 5.9 A3+), which starts left of Mary's Tears and angles up right to the striking Banana Chute, just left of the Crucifix. It finishes out the Gravity Ceiling, which was partially free-climbed by Cedar Wright at 5.13a. The entire route has not gone free. On the north face of Higher Cathedral Rock, Kay teamed with Josh Thompson and Jamie Mundo to create The High Life (V 5.9 A3), an 11-pitch route.

On Washington Column, between the Great Slab Route and the Bad Wall, Kay and Thompson put up Tora Bora (V 5.9 A3+).

Finally in the new route arena, Ammon McNeely, with his brother Gabriel and his son Austin, linked Shortest Straw to Surgeon General to the Zodiac, including two new pitches. They named the route Jose Memorial Variation in honor of Jose Pereyra and Joe Crowe, who both perished in climbing accidents. Austin, at 13 years of age, becomes the youngest person involved in a first ascent on El Capitan.

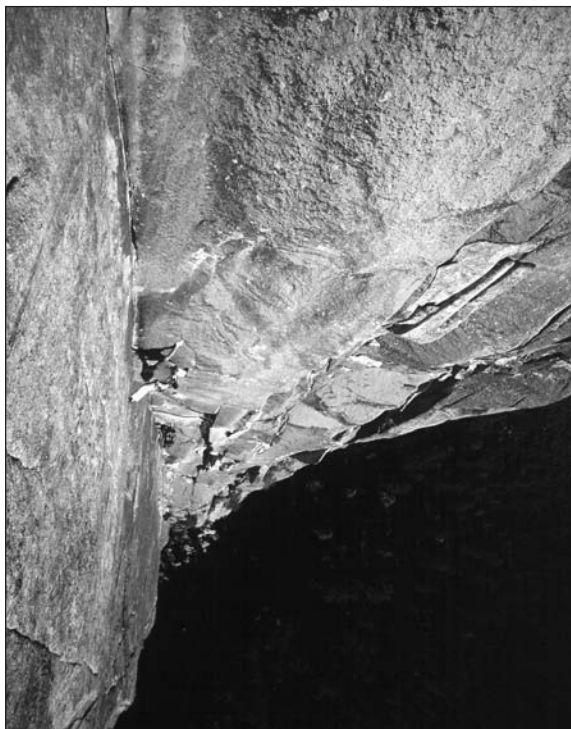
Previously unreported is route activity in the Ribbon Falls area by Sean Jones and friends in recent years. The two outstanding routes are Gates of Delirium (19 pitches, V 5.12c) and Sky People linked to Persephone Butterfly (17 pitches, V 5.11d). Delirium is no harder than 5.11d after the crux entry pitch, and only two pitches are harder than 5.11b. The route is reportedly high-quality crack climbing, and fixed anchors up to the top of the tenth pitch allow for rappelling the route or continuing to the summit.

BILL WRIGHT, AAC, *Satan's Minions Scrambling Club*

Ribbon Falls area, new routes. Nearly a decade after the passing of my father, I was searching for the ideal place to put a route up in his honor, and so my journey to Ribbon Falls began. On Father's Day 2000 I hiked to the top, camped, and started in on the headwall, a 300-foot steep, golden wall littered with unclimbed cracks. A strip of forest separates the headwall from the 1,700-foot wall below. From this trip and many others we ended up with 17 pitches, ranging from 5.10a to 5.12a. The routes include Harold (5.11b), White Eagle Woman (5.10a), The Dreaming Tree (5.12a), Zeus (5.10c), Paiute Pride (5.10b), Universal Garden (5.11d), and Persephone Butterfly (5.11d). Partners included Tucker Tech, Blair Dixson, Boone Jones, Lonnie Kauk, and Brian Ketron. This wall became dedicated to an array of people, past and present.

In spring 2001 I went to the bottom of the amphitheatre with Phil Kettner and established Sky People, a 14-pitch Grade V 5.11d. The route went onsight and has only one protection bolt. Pro includes doubles to 2" and one each to 4". The climbing on Sky People is comparable to Sentinel, similar to the Chouinard-Herbert. It takes you to the forested ledge, giving you a choice of the exits listed above. Combining Sky People with any of the upper routes, you get 17 pitches in about 2,000 feet.

I then turned my focus to the right side of the amphitheatre. Jake Jones and I aided the 1,000-foot corner up the right side of the



Sean Jones repeating his new route, Gates of Delirium. Shawn Reader

golden fin to inspect the potential for a new free route. After 1,000 feet it became apparent that the route would go, as it there joins Keel Haul, East Portal Route, and Solar Power Arête routes. Knowing that these routes go at 5.9, we descended, headed home, and waited for the weather to cooperate.

We returned on November 18, 2002, and in 10 hours redpointed our new route, The Gates of Delirium (V 5.12c). It is 19 pitches long, with pro including wires and double cams to 2", one each to 4-1/2". The route has fixed anchors for the first 10 pitches, to allow for retreat if you don't summit. These 10 pitches are similar to The Rostrum or Astroman. The second half of the route kicks back in angle and becomes more of a scenic adventure, for a total length of about 2,200 feet.

The technical crux comes on pitch one, a 5.12 houdini funk corner into a 5.11d finger crack. Lots of 5.10 jamming and stemming fill the middle of the route. Pitch eight may prove to be the real crux for some, a burly 5.10c offwidth. Pitch nine offers a steep chimney into 5.11b finger-and-stemming section and an incredible belay atop the fin. The 5.11d 10th pitch is wild and steep, and projects you out over the route below. This steep pitch is capped by a bombay chimney and another 5.11 crux of flared fingers and stemming. With the harder climbing behind you, 1,200 feet of 5.9 and under takes you to the summit.

The views and exposure on these routes are amazing. In three years and many trips back I've seen no one, only ravens and a million rainbows. Oh the rainbows...maybe I have seen someone after all.

SEAN JONES

El Capitan, West Buttress, first free ascent; Free Zodiac, second free ascent. I get more obsessed with Yosemite every year. No matter how many times I see El Cap, my palms sweat and my heartbeat quickens. I spend hours examining its cracks, contours, and faces. Someday my energy will focus elsewhere, but for now I thrive on El Cap.

In spring 2003 my wife Beth Rodden and I decided to try to free climb the West Buttress. Steve Schneider had attempted it as a free climb many years ago, and Matt Wilder had been working on it the previous spring. It is an obvious weakness and therefore a candidate for a free climb. In early May Beth and I headed up for a one-day recon. The climbing went smoothly until early afternoon. As I led out the 200-foot traverse of pitch 11, clouds came out of nowhere. Within 10 minutes we were in a downpour, and for several hours were pounded by sleet and rain. Just before hypothermia set in we managed to traverse to nearby Lurking Fear and rappel to the ground. We ended the day exhausted and humbled, wondering if we should ever go up on the big stone again.

As adventure climbers know, the pain soon faded, and within a few days we were starting up again. We projected the climb for six weeks. Beth redpointed the crux pitches, but it became clear that at this speed we would not be able to finish the climb within our allotted time. She traded her chalk bag for jumars and supported me to the top.

I later learned that Matt Wilder had done more than just attempt the route; he had nearly completed the first free ascent. He had established some improbable free variations and equipped and cleaned the route for free climbing. In short, he put a hell of a lot of work into it and deserves more credit for the first free ascent than I do. When I learned about Matt's efforts I felt horrible. New free routes on El Cap are like gold, and I felt like I had stolen it from him. I

contacted him, explained, and told him that I was sorry. He said that there were no hard feelings and he was glad we had a good time on the climb.

I had aid climbed Zodiac with my dad in early October. We passed the Huber brothers, who were working on the first free ascent. The free climbing in the middle of the route looked like some of the wildest climbing I had ever seen. I made plans to return over Thanksgiving with my friend Topher Donahue. With good weather I was able to free-climb the route over six days. Topher free-climbed all but three pitches. On both of my 2003 El Cap free-climbs, I climbed with partners who hoped to free-climb the routes. In both cases they abandoned their free-climbing goals to ensure that I was successful. I can't believe how lucky I am to have such great friends.

TOMMY CALDWELL, AAC

El Capitan, Zodiac, warp speed and free variation. After an exploratory ascent in spring 2002 with Valley local Ammon McNeely, I knew that the Zodiac could be climbed free. In spring 2003 my brother Thomas and I started working to free-climb it. We succeeded in doing all the moves free on a variation, but failed to do a continuous redpoint ascent. We planned to return in the fall to complete the redpoint, but did not leave before setting the speed record. After ascents in 4h07m and 3h08m, we climbed the Zodiac in 2h31m20s. This time was made possible by rigorous short fixing-tactics.

The continuous redpoint ascent finally happened at the beginning of October. In our quest for cooler conditions, however, we made one serious miscalculation: Zodiac gets no afternoon shade in the fall. We could only climb the friction-intensive crux pitches in early morning or late evening, when the sun was below the rim. This resulted in serious ledge time, the consumption of several books, and 68 hours needed for the redpoint—though the time spent actually climbing was no more than 18 hours.

Typical of El Cap routes, several sections of the original aid line did not go free. Our free variation begins 60m right of Zodiac, in the gray rock, and links various corners and ramps to meet Zodiac after four pitches. Another variation avoids the long bolt ladder on Zodiac's fifth pitch. This variation rejoins the original just before the short bolt ladder of the sixth pitch. The free crux lies in the heart of the Gray Circle, an El Cap landmark and the route's most conspicuous feature. The third Circle pitch involves a holdless 5.13+ stemming corner. Next comes the route's crux, the 5.13d Nipple pitch, so named for the arching fingertip pin-scar undercling that runs out the overhanging main wall and culminates at a point, the Nipple, where the crack widens abruptly to four inches, ending the difficulties. After that the doors are open, and the free line, more or less, follows the original line to the top.

ALEXANDER HUBER, *Germany*

SIERRA NEVADA

Ruby Wall Cirque, Boom Town and Billy from the Hills. In June 2000 Jason Lakey and I completed a new route in the Ruby Wall Cirque in Little Lakes Valley above Rock Creek Lake. We climbed the main formation right of the descent gully used for Pteradon. [The third tower, with the second tower hosting the route Pteradon and the first being the main Ruby Wall—Ed.] Our

route, Boom Town (IV 5.10b), was done ground-up, onsight, with no bolts drilled. The pitches are new except the first, where we found a drilled anchor at the ledge where the pitch ends. We were told by Mike Strassman that whoever did the first pitch went no farther. We returned during the summer of 2001 and did a route to the left of Boom Town. This route, Billy from the Hills (IV 5.10b C1), was also done ground-up, onsight, with a few moves of C1 at the end of the first pitch. We swung leads on both of the nine-pitch routes, using a 70m rope for both ascents. Two ropes are required for the descent for an overhanging 60m rappel to exit the gully. Rumor has it that Boom Town was the first route to have summited the formation.

DAVID LANE, AAC

Mt. Mills, Northwest Ridge. Jackie Carroll and I climbed this spectacular ridge in an unintended two-day push from Rock Creek Lake. From Mills Lake we crested the North Ridge of Mt. Mills, only to find that our dog had followed us over 4th class ground. Sending her back to camp, we crossed the ridge and descended via one rappel into the Fourth Recess. We crossed Fourth Recess and began Mills's northwest ridge where the divide between the Fourth and Third Recesses meet the ridge. (One could add to the adventure by starting the ridge between this point and Third Recess Peak, undoubtedly a Grade V, or climb one of the Grade IV's on Third Recess Peak to access the ridge.) Airy class 5 climbing led over several gendarmes and knife-edge arêtes for many pitches, including an exposed 5.8 overhanging mantle. Beyond several large towers, a gap in the ridge required a short rappel. We thought the ridge would become easier, but no. Exposed climbing on the north side of the ridge (and a tunnel inside the ridge) past snow-covered ledges and ice-filled cracks found us below the summit plateau at nightfall. Without sleeping bags, food, or water, we shivered the night away in below-freezing temperatures, summiting at 8 a.m. the next day. We descended the chute to the north of the standard 3rd class route, which we found horribly loose and sandy for a standard route, necessitating belays and short-ropeing. The dog greeted us at the base after spending an epic night on the north ridge, and we arrived in camp at sunset the following day. We rated the route IV 5.8. Total number of pitches was around 20.

MIKE STRASSMAN, AAC

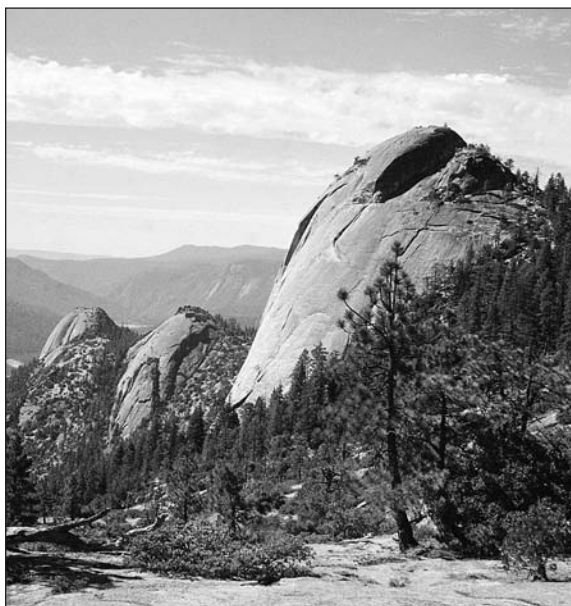
Birch Mountain, north ridge, attempt and tragedy. I had scoped out a line on this long ridge and questioned Sierra veteran Doug Robinson as to whether it had been ascended. He became secretive, and, probing further, I discovered that he also intended to make the first ascent that spring. We decided to do it together, but I live in the eastern Sierra and he doesn't, so I went without him. On the first attempt we didn't even leave the car, as a spring snowstorm had the ridge looking like K2. The second attempt, with Cindy Springer, showed what a long winter it had been. One look at the slog up the 2,000 feet of talus from base camp turned that trip into a reconnaissance. On the third attempt, in mid-July, I was in better shape and had enlisted the rope-gun talents of mountain guide Seth Dilles. A last-minute addition to the party was Keith Kramer, a long-time big-wall partner of Seth's from Yosemite. I feared that three on a rope might make the ridge a difficult undertaking to achieve in one day, but Seth felt that Keith was strong enough and experienced enough to move quickly. A recent fire had made the approach up Birch Creek relatively easy, but the 2,000-foot talus slog was another matter. Keith began

exhibiting classic signs of altitude sickness, and we urged him to rest and drink water. After he vomited several times we suggested that descent was the best medicine and offered to lead him back to a meadow at 10,000'. He assured us he could make it down, and his footing seemed strong and balanced as he walked down the talus. This was the last time we saw Keith Kramer.

We started to fix the first pitch, an overhanging crack, and Seth took a stout fall, and he too vomited. The altitude didn't seem to be affecting any of us benevolently. We bivied at the base and woke up before sunrise to attack the ridge. The first 10 pitches were high Sierra granite at a moderate grade. We saw smoke in the meadow below and could hear Keith yelling words of encouragement, so we figured he was all right. After ascending the first tower in 13 pitches, we realized that we were only a third of the way up the ridge and would not make the summit by nightfall. We retreated via two shaky rappels, tricky downclimbing, and traversing two ridges to the west. Out of food and water, we found a waterfall, then were dumped on by an afternoon storm, just as we found a comfortable cave. We arrived at the base of the ridge at sunset and quickly made our way down the talus to the meadow, where a stick in the ground assured us that Keith had been there and was surely on his way down. But upon arriving at the car at 2 a.m., it was obvious that Keith had not made it out. We searched the lower reaches of the canyon until dawn, and then called Search and Rescue. Keith was found the following day tangled in the willows of the creek. The coroner ruled the cause of death as exposure. Keith Kramer was a jovial man who was well-known in the Mammoth Lakes community for his crazy antics and light heart. He will be sorely missed. Seth Dilles, Doug Robinson, and I intend to climb the ridge in spring 2004, name it for Keith Kramer (K2), and spread his ashes from the summit.

MIKE STRASSMAN, AAC

East Fuller Butte, Walking with Walt. After three false starts over 18 months, two due to 110°+ summer temperatures and one due to a "10% chance of light, scattered showers" that turned into a blizzard in September 2002, Sigrid and Lynnea Anderson, Kenny Rose, and I finally completed this route (V 5.10d C2) in mid-October 2003. This route features 11 pitches of enjoyable, clean rock in the wilderness setting of the upper San Joaquin River and has fine views of the upper San Joaquin River Gorge and the Sierra high country. It also features a one-hour downhill approach, a mostly level one-hour return, and a year-round spring at the base of the climb. Although the free-climbing is rated 5.10d, and

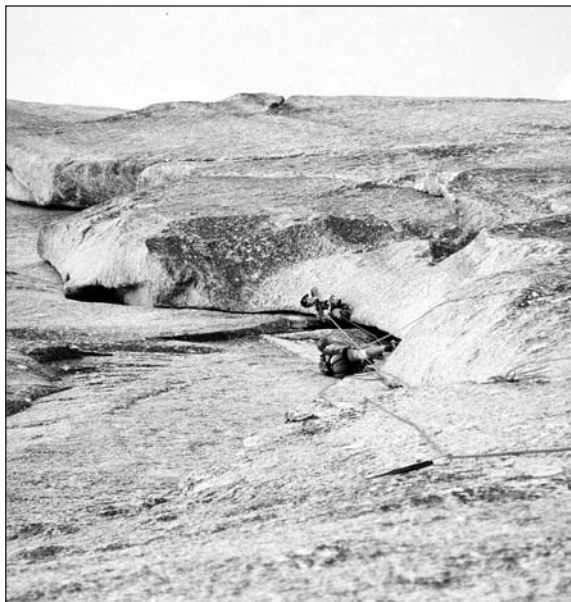


East Fuller Butte. The route follows the left skyline and the bottom 400 feet are hidden by the trees. *Jerry Anderson*

much of the route either does or will go free, there is no mandatory free-climbing over 5.5. We used three Lost Arrows on each of the first two pitches, but after a few ascents the route should go entirely clean, and all but pitch eight are C1. The route was named for the late Walt Shipley.

The climb begins several hundred feet downhill and to the left of the Fred Beckey Southeast Face Route (IV 5.8 A2), done in 1972. It starts just right of a small left-facing corner and follows a perfect, straight-in, right-arching crack leading to a large left-facing corner system. From there the route follows the only possible line.

There is a poor bivy ledge for three or four people at the end of the fourth pitch, but excellent portaledge bivies at the end of pitches five and seven. Please check with the Sierra National Forest North Fork office for possible Peregrine Falcon closures lasting through midsummer. For topo and additional information, e-mail campfour_org@hotmail.com.



Let's see, where does the route go? Perfect Sierra granite on East Fuller Butte. *Jerry Anderson*

JERRY ANDERSON, AAC

The Obelisk, Far Out and other new routes. Lucho Rivera and I enjoyed several summer adventures in the rock-climbing wonderland that is the Sierra Nevada. First was a new route on the steep face of the East Ridge of Mt. Russell. The route offered six pitches of continuous, devious 5.10. Clouds moved in throughout the day, and we topped out 10 minutes before a downpour. Psyched by our route on Mt. Russell and our repeats of classics on *The Incredible Hulk*, we wanted to explore other rock formations of the Sierra. We somewhat arbitrarily settled on *The Obelisk*, a free-standing dome overlooking Kings Canyon. Without a topographic map or accurate directions, we were off-route from the get-go and tacked five miles onto the 12-mile approach. What we thought would be a one-day approach took two days. When we finally arrived we were disappointed to see that most of the obvious lines on *The Obelisk* had been done, but, after consulting the guidebook, we realized the steepest face had not been climbed. The giant roof 200 feet from the summit looked like it would require aid, but I have had enough experience to know that you never know if something is free-climbable until you're there, so the next day Lucho and I went for it. We carried a hammer and a few pins in case the upper bit required aid. Each pitch had a meant-to-be feel to it, with smooth and golden footholds and edges appearing where and when they were needed. After five classic crack and dihedral pitches, we were at the base of the roof. I cleared rocks from the stance and called for the hammer and pins so that I could get protection

between me and the belay. As Lucho pulled the hammer and pins out of the haul bag, the hammer mysteriously came untied from its sling and plummeted down the face. I lamented having thrown all the big rocks off, but scrounged a small one and pounded in a somewhat solid Lost Arrow. After a few minutes of climbing up and down, I committed to a mantle on chickenheads at the lip of the body-length roof and reveled in the glory of an overhanging 5.9 chickenheaded headwall. We called the route Far Out, for the long approach and the airy final pitch. We descended via the famous 150-foot free-hanging rappel off a microwave-sized chickenhead and headed for the prominent spire that flanks the tallest face of The Obelisk. We climbed the spire's tallest face, encountering two classic 5.10 chickenhead-and-crack pitches, followed by a terrifying 5.11R/X pitch on sloping and overhanging chickenheads. We found no sign of passage on the summit and believe that we were the first people to stand on top of it. Lucho and I basked in the setting sun, realizing that we had climbed two of our best first ascents in one long day.

CEDAR WRIGHT, AAC

Mt. Tyndall, East-Facing Grave. On August 25, 2002, Becka Bracy and I intended to do the 5.8 East Chimney as a date climb. A date climb is when you climb something easy, so as to get in some climbing, while you still spend time with a girl. In this case, a lot more climbing than I was interested in. The newest Moynier guidebook described the route as the left of two chimneys on the east face. These chimneys are left of the Direct East Face and around the corner, out of sight to the left as you round the base of the mountain. But I didn't remember all that, and walked around the base until I got to the second chimney I saw and thought, "that doesn't look too bad." So we started up the left of the two chimneys RIGHT of the Direct East Face with one rope, stoppers, a set of cams to 2.5" and me in shorts with no helmet. You'd think this story was heading for the other AAC publication. Being tired from the hot 12-mile hike with a big elevation gain, loss, and another gain, we did not leave camp until 9 a.m. and arrived at the base of the descent route at 11, where we racked and scrambled around looking for our climb. We climbed the 1,600-foot face to the summit ridge in eight pitches and in about seven hours, with climbing up to 5.11b (5.10+/11-R and 5.10X). The line is easy to pick: the massive chimney/gully just right of Galen Rowell's Direct East Face, and at 2/3 height (where it gets really wide) it climbs the left face of the gully.

We eventually became committed to our gully, with its smooth walls, lack of gear placements, and our small rack. At one point we heard what sounded like a Volkswagen coming down the gully, but it turned out to be only football-sized, flying way overhead. Later, I realized that I had gotten used to the sound of rocks hitting my girlfriend's helmet. I knew if anything happened to me, this would probably become for both of us an east-facing grave. We were benighted during the descent and arrived at the base at 9 p.m. We failed to find our packs, tried to bivvy, and finally hiked the two hours to camp in our climbing shoes. Becka later lost a toenail. The next day we found our packs underneath the rock that I thought we'd left them on top of.

One highlight was climbing a dihedral. It looked like there would be a good belay under a five-foot roof. When I got there it was no good. With two feet of rope left, I got a green alien in halfway out the roof and, hoping the crack above would be good for a belay, shoved my fat tips in, laybacked off the left wall, and reached out to the lip of the roof. It was positive, so I reached out with my right hand too—and my feet cut loose. The lip crumbled, and I fell, lip in

hand. So I yelled down, “On belay! Climb when ready!” Becka didn’t feel the fall, and as she climbed I lowered until I could clip my webalette to pieces I’d placed on the way up, then landed perfectly on a small stance.

ERIK ROED

Arizona

Grand Canyon, Clay Tank Castle, first ascent. Andy Martin, while searching topo maps for high points, discovered that the second highest butte in the Canyon was an unnamed, unclimbed redwall butte in the far west end of the Grand Canyon. He told me about it, and a friend flew me over it for scouting. I contacted Aaron Tomasi to see if he’d climb it with me. He said sure, so I got a permit from Grand Canyon National Park, and in May we rafted the 55-mile lower section of the Colorado River in the Canyon from Diamond Creek to get to the base of what we called Clay Tank Castle. It took a lot of class 4 route-finding to get to the last redwall section, the north fin. Due to the poor rock, I ended up free-soloing the last 200 feet or so, maybe 5.6 at the worst, but the exposure was XXX for a good 100 feet.

This castle, north-northwest of Clay Tank Canyon (Spencer Canyon quad, 29N13W), may have been the last unclimbed butte in Arizona (and even the Lower 48), with over 1,000 feet of shoulder/prominence (the elevation difference between the summit and the lowest contour that encircles it and no higher summit). A map of the butte is at: <http://www.topozone.com/map.asp?z=12&n=3970405&e=257560&s=25&size=m&symshow> [try zooming out to a smaller scale to find the butte.—Ed.].

TOM MARTIN, *River Runners For Wilderness*

Utah

The Desert, various activity. In 2003 Paul Ross and partners added 23 multipitch routes in the southwest desert, 18 of which were on the Eastern Reef Slabs of the San Rafael Swell. [Note: Only the longer routes are presented here, and route length-pitch count discrepancies are due to frequent 4th-class unroped climbing on the routes—Ed.] Most of the routes on the slabs follow the major features; however, many other possibilities remain in the side canyons between the major slabs. There are now 31 routes on the Eastern Reef Slabs, amounting to over 36,000 feet of climbing. The longer new routes from 2003 include Dedication (1,440', 5 pitches, 5.7+; to the left of Sinister Slab), by Layne Potter and Ross, and, just right of Dedication, Seduction of Stone (1,600', 5.7+R), put up by those two and Sheridan Potter. On the slab formation just right of Three Finger Canyon, Layne Potter and Ross established Layne Potter and the Sorcerers Stone (760', 5.9R). On the Great White Wall, left of Three Finger Canyon, the pair established Senile Dementia, 1,000 feet, 5.6 (they forgot drill bits for setting up descent raps—fun epic!) and Everlastingyes (1,160', 5.8 R).

Three routes were climbed on the Triple Slab Buttress area in March (though pictured in the 2003 *AAJ*, p. 203) by the Layne Potter and Ross team: The Giraffe (1,130', 7 pitches, 5.9R), The Jack Russell Buttress (980', 5.6R)—named for Paul Ross’s other preoccupation, breeding and judging Jack Russell Terriers—and the classic Mellow Yellow (1,060', 6 pitches, 5.9R).

The team also climbed 1,000 Feet of Fun (1,000', 5.6); located 15 minutes through Three Finger Canyon, it ascends the unmistakable white slab that angles through chocolate-colored rock. They also put up Death By Chocolate (1,700', 9 pitches, 5.8) and The Arrowhead (820', 6 pitches, 5.8R). These routes are two of the best on the slabs. Ross and Billy Rothstein established Day of Atonement (1,600', 5.8+, 9 pitches), another classic slab route on very good rock, just right of Death by Chocolate.

In Arches National Park, The Prow (800', 9 pitches, 5.12+, 5 stars) was climbed by Mick Haffner, Keith Reynolds, Mike Ritter, Colin Stenhowe, and Leonard Coyne in April. The left-facing dihedral is approached by a raft crossing of the Colorado River from the River Road, two miles upstream from US 191 at Moab. The descriptions of many of these new routes, including shorter ones not listed here, can be found on the web: www.climbingmoab.com.

ERIC BJØRNSTAD, AAC



A little diversity in the desert: The Three Gargoyles. Joe Slansky

The Three Gargoyles. This new tower route in Arches National Park is on the same formation as Zenyatta Endrada, around the right, or southeast, side, and was established by Jimmy Dunn, Hellen Heaven, Joe Slansky, and Bill Guymon. It climbs the towers that look like either a prairie dog or an alien and are separated from the Tower of Babel by a gash. It's odd and incredible. One climbs 50 feet, goes left 250 feet on the Ray Charles traverse, through a cavern formation, up an aid seam, a slab for a slob, around the corner to a hand-crack groove, then a star chimney to the first Gargoyle head, leap over to the second head, and an R-rated boulder move to the highest head. Seven pitches, IV 5.11 A2. Jimmy raved for months that it was the most interesting climb he'd ever Dunn.

JOE SLANSKY

Arch Canyon, Mud Shark, How Big a Boy are You; and The Fortress, The Poop Chute. Arch Canyon, one of the most isolated canyons in southern Utah, has had my attention for years. Home to one of the state's finest towers, Texas Tower, Arch Canyon holds an abundance of adventure and new-route potential—if one is willing to drive the ever-worsening 4x4 road, spend countless hours cursing the soft Cedar Mesa Sandstone, and confront wide cracks. Most parties repeating routes in the canyon rappel in, climb, then jug back out in a day—a long day.

Justin Carter and I, after repeating a few of the classics, turned our attention to an unclimbed tower at the junction of Arch and Texas canyons. The 600' tower, later dubbed the "Mud Shark," juts out from the canyon floor like a shark fin. Our route—How Big a Boy are You (IV 5.10+R C2)—climbs the northwest face in four long pitches. Consisting of bold offwidth climbing and a few points of clean aid (bring some big Friends and tubes), with a crux (5.10 C2) second pitch that overhangs in its entirety, it's freeable to someone willing to take on the 12-inch crack. After the third pitch we traversed around to the east on a spacious ledge to a sandy slab (5.10+R), reaching the summit on May 19, 2000. We descended the north face via three 200-foot raps. One hole was drilled on the last pitch for pro; rap stations are also equipped with bolts. How big a boy are ya?

After we stopped shaking, Justin and I returned to climb what seemed to us the largest free-standing formation in the canyon, the 750-foot Fortress. We thought for sure such a gem had to have had an ascent, till we discovered all crack lines either petered out or ended up turning into a horribly steep and wide nightmare. We chose what we thought would be the sanest route on the southwest face. We first tried The Fortress in March 2001, following a thin aid crack for almost 500 feet, using mostly beaks, knife blades, and Lost Arrows. We then traversed to the left (west) for 30 feet into another thin crack system, which brought us to a large ledge. Here we got our first good look at the "liquid sky trainer"—180 feet of overhanging and seemingly unprotectable squeeze chimney. After about 50 feet of thrashing I was maxed, could barely fit in the crack, could not make upward progress, and we bailed. More than a month passed before we could get back to The Fortress. During that time I discussed technique possibilities with my friend Brad Jackson, and he suggested I try what he did on the second ascent of the Levitator pitch on Scorched Earth in Yosemite: climb sideways. So there I was back at my high point, horizontal, my head barely sticking out from the depths of hell. One arm held me while my other pushed me upward, my feet scrambling for any sort of purchase. It worked! After 110 feet we found ourselves deep inside the yawning gap that splits the upper portion of The Fortress. One more short, cool pitch up a rare featured face inside the chimney landed us on the summit on April 10. We called our route The Poop Chute (V 5.11R A3+). Six protection bolts were placed, and all raps have bolted stations.

PAT GOODMAN

ZION NATIONAL PARK

Great White Throne, new route. In mid-November, my brother Jonathan Smoot and I climbed a moderate new seven-pitch route up the blank south face of the Great White Throne (III or IV 5.8 A0). Our route followed a unique series of narrow, diagonal rib-like ledges most of the way to the summit. The climbing was mostly clean and enjoyable, bolt-protected face and slab. It

was mostly 5.4 with occasional 5.8 moves. Threatening clouds, our diminishing supply of bolts, and routefinding challenges kept the adventure level high. We rapped the route, finishing with not much light left. This route could become popular.

BRIAN SMOOT

Zion, new routes and speed ascents. I was fortunate in 2003 to have good partners and lots of climbing time in Zion N.P. My season started on February 15. My partner Ammon McNeely and I arrived in the park Saturday morning after working late on a rigging job Friday night. Saturday afternoon we hiked to the base of the Streaked Wall and climbed two or three “approach” pitches, arriving at the luxurious Rubicon Ledge well after dark. The next morning we woke and made the first one-day ascent of Latitudes (VI 5.9 A4+), in 18 hours and 40 minutes. Paul Gagner, of the first-ascent party, was helpful with approach and descent information. I feel this speed ascent is as noteworthy as any other big wall alpine ascent that I know of. The size and technical difficulty of this wall brought us one step closer to achieving fast ascents on the hardest routes in the big mountains of the world.

Two weeks later Ammon and I attempted to climb five Zion walls in a day. Our achievement was cut short by fatigue, darkness, and cold, but we were successful on three walls that day, all in record time. We first climbed Prodigal Sun (V 5.8 C2) in 2:36. (Thank you to Ron Olevsky for the first ascent. I believe first ascensionists are not appreciated enough for their efforts.) From the summit of Angel’s Landing we ran to the top of Moonlight Buttress (V 5.10 C1), rappelled, and climbed Moonlight in 1:57. I apologize to the party that was high on Moonlight filming a video for obcenities I uttered. I point out to the public that the trade routes in Zion see a lot of traffic, and rock and anchors must often be shared. Expect traffic jams on trade routes—you won’t be disappointed if you don’t find them. Ammon and I finished with an ascent of Lunar Ecstasy (V 5.9 C2+) in 4:09. We were out of gas after rappelling Moonlight again, in the dark, and opted for burritos at the local Bit and Spur.

I worked on the FFA of the seven-pitch Ball and Chain on Angel’s Landing during September weekends. This work finally came to fruition October 1. The route was free-climbed except for having to stand on the belay from the fifth anchor. There were three 5.12+ pitches in a row, with each pitch requiring mastery of a different technique. I added three bolts to the route but none to the existing aid path.

On October 12 Ammon and I climbed Spaceshot in 1:36:54. This left us time to get to town and attend our friends Dean and Jill’s wedding. In 37:14 during the next two days Ammon, Kurt Arend, and I did a new hard route on the right side of Angel’s Landing. This route was named South of Heaven (VI 5.8 A4+), and has six pitches: A4, A3+, 5.8 A2, A3, A4+, and 5.5. Hole count: five for belays, four for protection, one Threader.



Ball and Chain’s crux. Andrew McGarry

In December I came back to the park with Kurt and did a new route up the center of Red Arch Mountain. This route, eyeballed by many over the years, is now a reality. It is named Red Awakening (VI 5.7 A4+) and starts left of center up a bushy, dirty section to a small, open pad, continuing up the face via cracks and thin seams under the impressive red arch. The massive roof, climbed with knifeblades, is not to be missed. The steep next pitch did not offer the features we hoped for and accounted for a lot of holes. Six belay holes and 43 lead holes were drilled in the eight pitches (5.7, A1, 5.6 A1, A3, A4+, A3+, A4, and 5.6 A4). For topos and in-depth stories about these ascents, visit Ammon's site www.rocknrun.net or Zion Rock and Mountain Guides in Springdale.

BRIAN MCCRAY

Colorado

Rocky Mountain National Park, rapid ascents and enchainments. On the Diamond of Long's Peak in early July, Tommy Caldwell and Topher Donahue climbed five routes, totaling 30 guidebook pitches, in 23 hours car-to-car (probably the most routes climbed on the Diamond in a day), in the process doubling the number of Diamond routes Caldwell has climbed. The pair rappelled from Table Ledge to Broadway, where they had food and water, after each route. The five routes were Yellow Wall (5.11a), Pervertical Sanctuary (5.10d), D7 (5.11c), Curving Vine (5.11a/b), and Casual Route (5.10a). Donahue reports, "We climbed on twin ropes and did minimal simul-climbing. We never climbed faster than seemed fun, and although we wanted to see how many routes we could do, we weren't really gunning for a goal or anything. With true speed-climbing tactics it would be possible to squeeze in another one or do our link-up a lot faster."

Also in July Jonny Copp and Kelly Cordes completed what's likely the first enchainment of the three biggest technical rock faces in the park. They climbed the east face of Long's Peak (14,255') via the Crack of Delight (5.7) to the Casual Route (5.10a), with the Forrest Finish (5.9), then the northwest face of Chief's Head (13,579') via Path of Elders (5.9) to Birds of Fire (5.10d), and finally the Central Ramp (5.8) route on the east face of Mt. Alice (13,310'). They tagged each summit, covered about 20 horizontal miles and climbed 28 guidebook pitches (but simul-climbed throughout). Total time from the Long's trailhead to the Wild Basin trailhead was roughly 22 hours, 45 minutes.

In March 2004 Copp and Josh Wharton made the fastest winter ascent of the Diamond, via the most logical winter route, D7. Traveling incredibly light for winter on the Diamond (a single rope, for example), they reached Broadway via the North Chimney, climbed D7 with short-fixing techniques in one block lead, and finished with upper Kiener's route, continuing to the summit and descending the North Face. They returned to the Long's trailhead 14 hours and 17 minutes after leaving—an impressive time even for a summer round-trip.

Compiled from conversations with the climbers

BLACK CANYON OF THE GUNNISON

Cheap Hooker. The Black Canyon hosts some of the country's most adventurous rock climbs and is notorious for epics, runout climbing, difficult route finding, and chossy rock. This past year saw Topher Donahue and I up a few new routes. The Hooker Buttress saw its first ascent

in May 1975, by Michael Covington and Billy Westbay, with another route added in 1984, by Katie Cassidy and Earl Wiggins. These routes, The Hooker (IV 5.10+R) and Cheap Shot (V 5.10X), which from the overlooks on both South and North Chasm Views look really impressive, have had only a handful of ascents. The guidebook characterizes these routes as poorly protected, with long runouts, and “hard, consistent, and serious.”

Topher and I, lured by these descriptions, hatched a plan to do a new route on the Hooker Buttress. It would take us three tries to complete. We started by rappelling 800 feet off the rim, in between The Hooker and Cheap Shot, to try to see how good the climbing could be. After reaching a ledge under a roof, we set off on our recon. The roof looked large, intimidating, run out, and questionable. Topher climbed a corner out to the lip of the roof at 5.11+ and made a stellar hand-and-face traverse for a 160-foot pitch. The trail rope hung 20 feet out. Two pitches later we ran into the crux 5.12- crack as it started to rain. Topher freed this pitch, having placed two pins in a seam below a thin, technical face, and I finished up in a long, unprotected corner. The top section of the route proved to be on hard granite with incredible exposure and great free-climbing. We returned to try it from the bottom, but only made it up four pitches before we ran out of time and hiked out.

Seven months later we hiked back into the canyon with two gallons of water and clothing for a bivy. The first pitch is a 70m 5.9 corner. On the second pitch traverse on solid crispy edges up a slab, past a bolt, to a technical 5.11 face and a belay below a pegmatite band. Pitch three starts up a corner into a peg band and traverses left for over 100 feet, with only two bolts and a few RPs in peg crystals for pro. It's runout, but you're climbing at the top edge of the pegmatite on solid black 5.9 edges.

Head up a corner on bullet-hard face holds to a cam placement and run out another peg band to a belay. Climbing past a roof and up a corner leads into the third peg band. There is one bolt on this 70-foot-plus 5.9 section, which leads to the main corner of the upper wall. Topher then climbed a stellar 5.10+ corner pitch on the best rock I've seen in the canyon. Battleship-gray, laser-cut sheer granite with bomber gear and excellent face climbing leads to the belay we had rapped to the previous year, and we continued to the top.

This route (V 5.12- [5.9X]) is exceptionally good and well worth the effort. We drilled six bolts, on lead, and left the three pins in place. This 10-pitch route is about 1,700-feet long, not including the 400-foot scrambling approach, and was completed in a day, all free and with no falls, on May 27.

JARED OGDEN

Woke Up Punk. Zack Smith and I climbed a new 10-pitch route in the Black Canyon in the fall. Our route is located in the SOB Gully, in the area between Debutante's Ball and Casual Route. The first three pitches were climbed by Scott Hollander and me in the spring. *Woke Up Punk* (5.12- PG/R) connects features up the middle of this strip of rock. No bolts were placed, but a pin was fixed on pitch three and at the belay on pitch four. The climbing was on good rock with unique features. The bouldery crux appeared on pitch four. Good second day route for a strong party. Topo can be found at the North Rim ranger station.

JOSH GROSS, *Moab, UT*

Wishmaker, first free ascent. In September Topher Donahue and I made the first free ascent on sight of Wishmaker (IV 5.11+R [5.10X]), a route just to the right of Lost Cities, in the Hairdo Gully on the north side of the canyon. Pike Howard made the first ascent but aided a few sections and suggested we try to free it. Wishmaker shares its first pitch with Lost Cities, then branches off right into a series of thin cracks and slabby faces. The second pitch follows a diagonal crack to a ledge. The third pitch follows a barn-door crack off a ledge (hard to protect—tiny cams and RPs) to a scary mantle, followed by unprotectable 5.10 climbing. Falling on this pitch is not an option. I suggest that the next party add a bolt. The crux fourth pitch climbs a sustained finger crack leading to a traverse and is a bit runout. The fifth pitch climbs a funky roof slot to a great crack that finishes below a roof on a ledge. Pitch six climbs steep hands-and-fingers to a big ledge. Pitch seven climbs out a roof to a hands crack, traverses a face, and finishes up a corner. We hiked out from here, but you could climb the last four pitches of Lost Cities to the rim. We removed a lot of loose rock, so the route is safer for future parties.

JARED OGDEN

Hallucinogen Wall, free attempt. In September and October I tried to free climb this route twice. On the first attempt, with Mike Shepard, we rappelled to pitch 14 and climbed out from the top of pitch 14, all free at 5.12. Pitch 14 is a bolt ladder and will never go free. On the second attempt Topher Donahue and I climbed all free up to pitch five, at 5.11-. From here I led free past three bolts and finished through the pendulum to Fantasy Island using some aid. Topher followed to the pendulum point, lowered to a series of face holds leading left from my free high point, and on top rope climbed across this face to Fantasy Island at 5.12c/d. He then led pitch seven free, at 5.12a. Pitch eight is protected by RPs and rusty fixed heads, so I freed between them, with Topher following free at 5.11+. The next five pitches are A3 heading, hooking, and bolt ladders and will never be free climbed. We found free passage up to pitch nine in a day and rappelled. At least future parties know that much of the route can be free-climbed. We didn't add any bolts or change the route in any way.

JARED OGDEN

Charm School Boutique and Dylan Wall free. In spring 2003 Allan Porter and I completed a new line on North Chasm View Wall, beginning on the Journey Home route and finishing on the Cruise, climbing the smooth shield between those two major crack lines. From the large belay ledge at the top of the first pitch of Journey Home, we traversed 60 feet left (reversing a traverse on the Dylan Wall and Highway 61 routes) to a belay stance, putting us at the start of an unclimbed crack system.

The first pitch above the traverse—an overhanging dihedral leading to technical seams and corners, with very thin gear—was 5.12, took several trips to redpoint, and ends at a small belay ledge where we placed the route's only bolt. From the ledge we aided a thin, vertical corner (50 feet of A2+, with a few pins left fixed, the only aid), hand-traversed left, then finished over bulges to another belay. A short corner ended in the biggest blank section on the route, passed via a very long, old-school 5.10+ pitch with runouts and pegmatite. Allan led the last independent pitch late in the day, through a weird-smelling cave and out across a band of roofs to hit the upper Cruise at bolts on the ninth guidebook pitch, 300 feet below the top of the wall.

The name Charm School Boutique comes from a funky women's shop in Glenwood Springs, where you could find all sorts of bizarre and startling things, kind of like our route.

I first saw the line a year or so earlier with Jason Keith, during an ascent of the Dylan Wall. We climbed that route almost all free (the first "near-free" ascent probably was done by Robert Warren in the mid-1990s), and then explored the lower part of the line that would become Charm School. Later, Tracy Martin and I freed the remaining aid on the Dylan Wall (about 10 feet) at 5.12-, traversing off into the gully once we joined the Journey Home. (The first ascent of the Dylan Wall, we learned from Colorado Springs climbers, included the first ascent of all but the first pitch of the popular Journey Home, which is now started much higher in the approach gully.)

Charm School Boutique is a logical direct finish for the Dylan Wall, avoiding the traverse to the Journey Home crack system. On the last of a half dozen forays, involving lots of approaching and retreating in the gully, Allan and I climbed the last of the missing pieces of this line, but the full link-up and 50 feet of aid remains. Done free, the A2+ will probably be hard 5.12, and exciting but passably safe without bolts.

JEFF ACHEY

Wyoming

GRAND TETON NATIONAL PARK

Ice conditions. The most-classic ice routes of Grand Teton National Park melted out for the second year in a row. The Black Ice Couloir on the Grand Teton became unclimbable in the midsummer (2003), and the ice in the Northwest Couloir of Middle Teton was mostly gone as well. Even the usually reliable Enclosure Couloir on the Grand showed gaps near the top. Rangers blamed ongoing drought and eight consecutive weeks of 90-degree heat in the Jackson area for the meltdown.

DOUGALD MACDONALD, AAC, *adapted from www.climbing.com*

Grand Traverse, first winter ascent. On January 24, 2004, after more than three weeks of unseasonably dry and warm weather, two parties set out to complete a long-standing project in the Tetons: the Grand Traverse in winter. Perennial winter activists Renny Jackson and Hans Johnstone set out around 3 a.m., and Stephen Koch and I followed around 3:30. Both parties skied to near Glacier Gulch and climbed couloirs and ramps up the South-southwest shoulder of Teewinot to start the traverse. Renny and Hans set a blistering pace over mostly firm, crusty snow, topping out on Teewinot around 10 a.m. Stephen and I didn't catch up with them until just past the West Prong of Teewinot. The steep, narrow ridge between there and the East Prong of Mt. Owen is some of the trickier terrain on the traverse and was the site of a near miss the previous year when Renny stepped off of a collapsing cornice just in time. The four of us moved together and shared ropes during rappels off the south ridge of Owen into Gunsight Notch and out onto the Grandstand. Hans broke trail into the dark to the top of the Grandstand, where the four of us bivvied just below the North Ridge. One of Renny's boot liners was soaked, and his foot badly needed warming. The next day he had to climb the five technical pitches (up to

5.6) up a variation of the Italian Cracks in bitterly cold conditions with numb toes. He and Hans stopped at the Lower Saddle and availed themselves of a tent and stove from the Climbing Rangers' rescue cache to dry Renny's liner. Stephen and I, with an eye on threatening clouds, pushed on up the Northwest Couloir of Middle Teton, to bivy between the Middle and South Teton. That night a minor storm moved in, with moderate winds and light snow.

The next day Stephen and I hesitantly continued through poor visibility and periods of heavy snow with gusty winds. Hans and Renny spent that day and a second night on the Lower Saddle before completing the Traverse on day four in better weather. Stephen and I bypassed two features, an unnamed hump between Ice Cream Cone and Gilkey's Tower and one of the twin summits on Gilkey's Tower, which Renny and Hans apparently climbed. Stephen and I had carried snowshoes in case my wife, Carina Ostberg, wasn't able to dig up an extra pair for me and stash them in Garnet Canyon. Turns out we needn't have, as the delivery came through, and there were skis waiting at the Platforms in Garnet Canyon. Hans and Renny had cached skis in the Meadows in Garnet Canyon, so neither party had to suffer an ignoble and tedious slog back to the car after a truly satisfying winter foray.

MARK NEWCOMB, AAC

Grand Teton, The Golden Pillar and other new Teton free climbs. On July 11 Hans Johnstone and I opened a classic, flashable, hard crack line (V 5.12-) on the golden pillar of overhanging rock west of the normal North Face route on the Grand Teton. The purity of the line, combined with the quality rock and hard climbing, should make this route a Teton classic. Armed for alpine free climbing, Hans and I spiked up the glacier, jumped the 'schrund, chimneyed the remnant snow block, and sprinted under the barrage of stonefall out onto the Grandstand. We 3rd classed to the base of the Golden Pillar and readied ourselves for sustained jamming. After a short 5.7 pitch, we cranked the steep, gold finger-and-hand crack (48m, 5.11b) that still had chalk on it from our 2002 attempt. The crack continues at 5.10b. A step left brings you to the crux: an overhanging corner and fist crack through a roof. Unload the big cams and pump and scum to the lip (45m, 5.12a). The roof pitch deposits you on the first ledge. We followed the normal route to the third ledge. Forty meters east of the Pendulum Pitch we climbed the Rugged Prima Donna Pitch in a shallow left-facing corner. Use your pitons here as you boulder, stem, and lieback to a nice ledge (31m, 5.11aR/X). The last pitch is a classic problem, with bouldering on small crimps into perfect fingerlocks followed by steep stemming and jamming (5.12a). From here it's a wee scramble of 150m to the summit.

On Cathedral Rock in Death Canyon, Evan Howe, Doug Workman, and I established The Fountainhead (IV 5.12a) in September. This 200m route climbs the steep, clean left side of the wall right of Lots Slot. Much ground-up work created a worthy seven-pitch free climb. Also of note is the maturity of Rock Springs Buttress, south of the ski area. It's accessed by aerial tram and is 170m tall, at an altitude of over 9,000'. Rock Springs Buttress could be one of the best new summer crags in the country. Important new routes here include Raspberry Arete (5.12a), Sole Super Power (5.13b), and Zion Storm Trooper (5.12d). A free topo can be found at the Teton Rock Gym in Jackson.

GREG COLLINS

SOUTH FORK OF SHOSHONE RIVER

Needle Mountain, north face. To climb the north face of Needle Mountain (12,106') has long been a goal of mine. After three unsuccessful attempts I finally made it to the top on September 27-28—7,000 feet from the floor of the South Fork's valley near Cody, 3,000-4,000 feet of which were vertical rock and ice.

My previous attempts were in the winter and spring; knowing how difficult access is, I decided to try in the fall. After the first good snow we decided this was our window of opportunity. We had three days of good weather to get up and back down. It was nearly 3,000 feet of bushwhacking before we got to put our harnesses on. The route goes up the east side of the north face, following a chimney system. Most of the route was 3rd classed, climbing runnels of ice and steep rock at a moderate grade.

My partner, Dave Elphinstone of Colorado, and I moved light and fast, packing no sleeping bags or tent, only climbing gear and water. All we packed to eat were Power Bars and GU. We began at 6 a.m. on September 27 and were on top of the peak by 6 p.m.

We were out of water by the time we reached the top, and an alpinist's nightmare became our reality. The stove would not fire up; my bad luck on this mountain was continuing. We worked down the ridgeline for five hours, carrying snow in our helmets and packs, before we found wood for a fire. We rested for a few hours while melting snow and rehydrating. Without sleeping bags or a tent, we had to keep the fire going. We made our way back to the base by the next noon. We were on the move for 30 hours with a few hours' rest. We traveled about 23 miles with over 13,000 feet of elevation gain and loss. The route has a high level of commitment, being so remote. [Further information on this and other routes in the Cody area can be found at: www.coldfear.com.—Ed.]

AARON MULKEY

Idaho

Old Hyndman Peak, Bear/Chicken Variation. Brian Wood and I set out in early October 2000 to explore the northeast face of Old Hyndman Peak in the Pioneer Range for possible early season ice climbs. We bivied at the base of the north ridge and the following morning ascended the ice couloir climbed as part of the 1975 Northeast Face route. We found the couloir in good condition and climbed nearly 1,000 feet of alpine ice up to 65°, with occasional short sections of verglas-covered slabs and an interesting chimney pitch of about M4. At the second major left bend in the couloir, where the 1975 route exits onto fourth-class terrain, Brian and I continued up and left via an icy corner and ramp for one full pitch of sustained mixed climbing, to reach a broad ledge. From this ledge we followed the path of least resistance: ice runnels and steep friable rock, up to 5.9, for five pitches. Protection was difficult to obtain on several of the pitches, and the rock is of poor quality. The rock quality improved for the last two pitches of steep corner-and-crack climbing on the left margin of the northeast face. We descended the East Ridge in the dark and traversed the cirque to the east, ascending two other peaks before finding a reasonable descent back into Wildhorse Canyon. Our route was 2,500 feet long, 5.9 mixed, and took 23 hours round trip from the moraine below the northeast face.

DEAN LORDS

Peak 11, 308', White Line Couloir. In May, Travis Michaelis, Abe Dickerson, and I made the first complete ascent of the 1,200-foot White Line Couloir, on Peak 11,308' (2.3 miles southwest of Borah Peak, in the Lost River Range). I previously climbed just the couloir in 1996 but due to avalanche conditions I descended without reaching the summit. The southwest face of 11,308' is a complex series of towers and couloirs. The White Line ascends the leftmost couloir on this face. The route starts in a chimney on the left edge of the couloir, thus avoiding a large chockstone, before entering the couloir proper. Once in the couloir, 50° snow with short sections of 60° water ice wind upward for 700'. At this point the couloir cuts left, and a steep chimney in the left wall is climbed for a ropelength. This pitch is the crux (M5 WI4+). Continue up the narrow couloir for two more pitches of enjoyable mixed climbing until the top of the ridge is reached. Pass underneath the chockstone and descend 100 feet into the west face bowl. About 800 feet of snow climbing on the extreme right edge of the bowl reaches the summit. We then descended one of the many south couloirs. Travis and Abe confirmed both the difficulty and aesthetics of the route, calling it a sure classic. Ten hours round trip from Whiskey Springs.

DEAN LORDS

Borah Peak, Psycho Therapy. On September 18, following the first major snow of the year, Brian Wood and I established Psycho Therapy (1,200', 5.9+ M6 AI4) on the north face of Borah Peak. This route follows the obvious couloir and black shaft of rock on the far right side of the face. The route starts with two pitches of alpine ice and a few mixed sections, before entering the shaft (a.k.a. Shock Treatment). The shaft is sustained for three pitches and involves steep climbing on icy runnels, snow-covered rock, and two large chockstones. After the second chockstone the angle eases and one and a half pitches of ice and rock in a wild setting finish in a steep notch on the northwest ridge. Brian and I spent 22 hours round trip from the mouth of Rock Creek. With more ice in the shaft, this route could be less difficult.

DEAN LORDS



Borah Peak, where Psycho Therapy follows the obvious shaft. *Dean Lords*

Bell Mountain, Hell's Bells. Brian Wood and I took advantage of a cold spell in early June, 2002, to establish Hell's Bells (1,100 feet) on the northwest face of Bell Mountain in the Lemhi Range. The northwest face is cut by two large gully systems. Hell's Bells ascends the left-hand gully for three pitches of thin ice and easy mixed climbing. The second pitch was the crux, consisting of a thin WI3+ flow, followed by several tricky M4 moves to regain the narrow gully. The third pitch reached a large bowl in the center of the face. From the bowl we climbed up and right for a pitch to reach a buttress. The buttress involved two fun and exposed rock pitches (easy fifth

class on solid rock) to reach the north ridge. From the north ridge a few hundred feet of exposed scrambling led to the summit and an easy descent down the southwest gully. Thirteen hours round trip from Basinger Canyon.

DEAN LORDS

Montana

Mt. Brown, Mile of Smiles. The gullies on the lower northwest face of Mt. Brown (8,365'), in Glacier National Park, have become popular early-season climbs. They offer endless WI 2-4 climbing 15 minutes from the road. Many climbers announce they're headed to the summit 5,200 feet above, only to run out of time or energy before they run out of ice. Include me among those suitors, at least until November 2, when everything fell into place. My route took me up the west (right) gully to the prominent falls, through a hidden cleft where the gully forks at 6,200', up the west side of the face above, and out the summit ridge. The 2,500 feet of climbing below the fork consisted of a frozen creek bed and short steps, followed by a 75-foot WI 3+ curtain and nearly 1,000 feet of WI 3 gullies and steps. At the fork, I climbed left up a series of beautiful, narrow pillars to a deep chimney with rotten-looking ice. Lower-angle terrain to the right seemed to offer better ice, but mixed moves on snow-covered rock led onto a series of sloping ledges and steps frosted with thin, brittle ice. The climbing was delicate and committing. My mom would have nightmares, if she knew. The ice eventually improved, and after 200 feet I exited over a short pillar of good ice at 6,900'. The next 1,200 feet consisted of third class climbing up snow, rock, and intermittent WI 2-3 ice on the west side of the face. I exited the face just west of the false summit, at 8,200'. From the false summit, I traversed out the summit ridge and back, which proved the slowest part of the climb. The ridge involved over a quarter mile of 4th- and easy 5th-class climbing on snow-covered rock. Strong winds and single-digit temperatures kept me from lingering at the summit. I regained the false summit eight hours after I started climbing, then trotted down to the fire lookout and the trail. I reached my car (thankfully shuttled by friends) two hours later, just at dark. The climb was one of the most enjoyable days I've ever spent in the mountains. Mile of Smiles, 5,200 feet, IV 5.2 WI3+.

BLASE REARDON