

# CLIMBS AND EXPEDITIONS

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## 2006

*Accounts from the various climbs and expeditions of the world are listed geographically. We generally bias from north to south and from west to east within the noted countries, but the priority is on a logical flow from one mountain range to the next. We begin our coverage with the Contiguous United States and move to Alaska in order for the climbs in Alaska's Wrangell 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/AAJ](http://www.AmericanAlpineClub.org/AAJ)).*

*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 2005 calendar year.**

## NORTH AMERICA

### CONTIGUOUS UNITED STATES

#### *Washington*

##### CASCADE RANGE

*Summary of activity.* [Note: this summary supplements individual reports, mostly of bigger routes, below—Ed.] Mountaineering activity appears to be in slight decline in Washington. In recent years the Park Service has been reporting fewer climbers registering for permits at Mt. Rainier and some of the popular mountaineering destinations in the North Cascades, and climbing clubs are also reporting fewer new members. Meanwhile, growing traffic on Internet discussion boards is facilitating the exchange of information on routes and route conditions, along with pictures, stories, and detailed beta, thus more than ever funneling climbers to specific routes in specific seasons and, in some cases, stimulating new route activity. Also, the Internet publication of John Scurlock's outstanding collection of winter aerial photographs is giving climbers a tantalizing view of possibilities they never would have noticed without being able to peruse prospective new routes from home. This is playing a particularly important part in the selection of "worthy" winter projects in the north and north-central Cascades.

A prominent example of an active bulletin board is found at [www.cascadeclimbers.com](http://www.cascadeclimbers.com), and the Scurlock photos are available at [www.pbase.com/nolock/root](http://www.pbase.com/nolock/root)

The winter season of 2004-05 had one of the lowest snowfall totals on record, and the resulting relatively easy road and trail access facilitated a lot of climbing activity. In addition to those climbs reported in the 2005 *AJ*, Peter Hirst and Rolf Larson climbed a new route (III AI3+) left of the north face routes on Mount Buckner in the Cascade



Sod On Me on Castle Peak. *Mike Layton*

Pass area on February 20. They had spotted this line in one of the Scurlock aerial photos.

After near-record moisture in May, the 2005 summer season was fairly normal. However, as happened in 2004, September brought a lot of rain to the Cascades, despite this normally being a reliable month for good weather. In addition to climbs reported individually below, local climbers established many excellent rock routes. Darin Berdinka and Allen Carbert climbed the 2,000' Green Creek Arête (III 5.7) in the Green Creek cirque on the east side of the Twin Sisters Range, south of Mount Baker, on July 1. Berdinka returned with Mike Layton to climb a steep wall to the right on July 21 (Mythic Wall, III 5.10). These routes featured exciting climbing in a gorgeous setting on unique peridotite rock; their Internet reports led subsequent parties into the cirque for further exploration.

Near Lake Chelan, east of the main North Cascades crest, Blake Herrington and Tim Halder climbed the East Ridge (III+ 5.7) of Tupshin Peak on August 9. The ridge is over a mile long, with scrambling and climbing. On September 29 Darin Berdinka and Mike Layton climbed a new route up the northwest buttress of Castle Peak, on the northeast edge of the North Cascades, just a mile-and-a-half south of the Canadian border: Sod On Me (III 5.10+ A2 M4 [M for moss]).

In the Enchantments, near Leavenworth, on July 10 Rolf Larson and Mike Layton established a new route (Thank You Baby Jesus, 5.10) up the 1,500' Boola Boola Buttress. Then, on July 31 on the south face of Enchantment Peak, Dan Cappelini, Larson, and Layton climbed a possible new route (Acid Baby, IV 5.10+), though they found an old nut on pitch two. Their line ascends steep cracks to a slender ridge on a 1,000' tower, found along the approach to Asgard Pass, that blends into the skyline until one is directly beneath it.

On August 23 Peter Hirst and Eric Wehrly climbed a new line (20-Sided Dihedral, IV 5.11 A1) between the Dragonfly route and the Cauthorn-Stoddard variation of the northeast buttress on Dragontail Peak in the Stuart Range.

Closer to Seattle, Mark Hanna and Eric Gamage completed a new route on the first tower of the Tower Route on Big Four Mountain, near Granite Falls, on July 30. Hanna, with Stephen Packard and James Lescantz, had previously completed the largely bolt-protected climbing on the first five pitches, comprising what makes an interesting crag climb on pebble conglomerate

(5.10a). The full climb of the tower was grade III+ 5.10a and distinctly subalpine, perhaps even arboreal in a way that only a Cascades mountain climber can appreciate.

A rare blessing came with the formation of a deep high-pressure cell on President's Day weekend, 2006, and, bolstered by the previous weekend's report of good ice even at low elevations, along with relatively easy travel below timberline, everybody seemed to go climbing. Climbers around the state enjoyed great conditions on a variety of peaks. On the east face of Whitehorse Mountain, near the town of Darrington, on February 19 Peter Hirst and Rolf Larson climbed a line (III/IV AI4) unseen from the road but prominent from the air, which they had targeted after viewing a Scurlock aerial photo. This face had reportedly seen no prior ascents, though rumor of an unreported ascent subsequently appeared on the Internet (presumably a summer ascent).

Internet discussion and Scurlock's aerial photography continue to stimulate not only mountaineering, but a number of exciting ski descents, including formerly unskied lines on Hurry-up Peak, Jack Mountain, Mount Goode, Sinister Peak, Mount Maude, Robinson Mountain, Bonanza Peak, Spider Mountain, Argonaut Peak, Three Fingers, Big Four Mountain, Guye Peak, and Mount Formidable. Nearly all of these descents were directly stimulated by the Scurlock collection. An active bulletin board at [www.turns-all-year.com](http://www.turns-all-year.com) hosts frequent discussion of Northwest ski mountaineering.

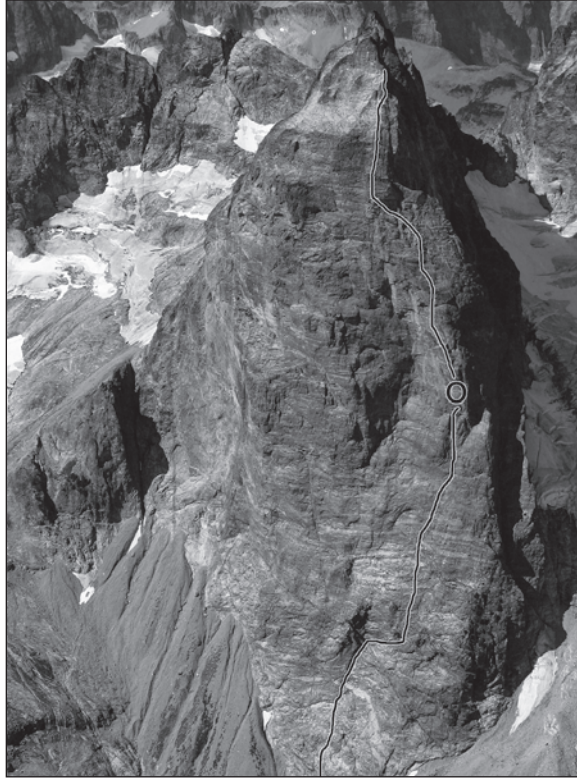
For further information about these and other climbs, see the *Northwest Mountaineering Journal* at [www.nwmj.org](http://www.nwmj.org)

MATT PERKINS, *Northwest Mountaineering Journal*, AAC

*Southeast Mox Peak, Devil's Club to top of east face.* The east face of Southeast Mox Peak (a.k.a. Southeast Twin Spire) is something I never expected to climb. The 2,400'-vertical face rises out of mist and clouds deep in the heart of the North Cascades and had an almost legendary status for being unclimbable. Its reputation came from Cascade legends like John Roper, who called it "the greatest face in the North Cascades." North Cascades historian Harry Majors wrote, "The intimidating 2,500'-high east face of Southeast Mox is one of the 'Last Great Problems' of the North Cascades, and should probably remain so. The rock on the Southeast Spire is notoriously unstable and treacherous. ... There are routes of great difficulty, which should be climbed only once, and there are routes of such great danger and unfeasibility that they should never be climbed. The central 800' of the east face of the Southeast Twin Spire probably falls into this latter category. The Northwest Spire has already proven to be deadly. The Southeast Spire has an even greater potential." I stumbled upon a description of an earlier attempt on the face: "Each hold required testing—most pulled out like drawers. Pitons could not be solidly placed, and firm projections for runners did not exist—all ledges were piled high with loose rock. It seemed that one had only to locate and pull out the keystone, and the entire mountain would collapse into a heap of smoking rubble. What, we wondered, was holding this precipitous pile of junk together? Every crack you find—and they're pretty scarce—means that something's ready to peel off the mountain." Fred Beckey had made an attempt on the face years earlier, and the experience left him shaken enough to never ever want to go back. Fred told me that it was "a good place for a funeral." Pilot John Scurlock told me that he had flown over just about every peak in the Cascades and admitted that the east face of Southeast Mox was the biggest, most awe-inspiring face he has seen. Scurlock took me on a reconnaissance flight, and when we flew over the gut-churning east face, I knew I had to climb it.

The climb did indeed live up to its reputation, once we got to it. With a 14-hour approach, spread over two brutal days in the rain, and enough bushwhacking to beat the life and every ounce of will to climb out of you, Southeast Mox must be one of the most heavily guarded mountains in the range. We will need years of therapy to deal with the dehumanizing, savage, brutal beating we received. Our path took us in and out of the ice-cold river and the carwash of sopping wet slide alder, devil's club, and blueberry bushes. Things went from shitty to wretched in the forest. It just went on and on and on in an endless valley of tangled vegetation. The forest seemed to mock forward progress and took delight at screwing us over almost every slow and horrid step of the way. I uttered the most violent string of expletives to ever pass my lips, cursing every rock, tree, bush, tree, river, mountain, and valley in this godforsaken hole. Finally, Erik Wolfe and I arrived at the Mox basin, exhausted and unable to see anything in the mist.

Unwilling to accept defeat, the next morning, August 31, we began to climb, and the clouds parted long enough for us to spend two days forcing a line up a face that did not want to be climbed. The leader could not see where the next piece of protection would be on the upper 1,500' overhanging headwall, so every move required total commitment. The climbing spiraled out of control as the run-outs grew longer



The Devil's Club on Southeast Mox, shot on a fly-by during the climbers' (circled) second day on-route. Lifelong Cascade climber John Roper said to Layton afterward: "You tamed the beast!" Layton's reply: "No, the beast tamed us." *John Scurlock*



Mike Layton on the crux pitch of The Devil's Club. *Erik Wolfe*

and the rock became steeper, coming to a climax at a 5.11- X pitch to surmount the final overhangs. The pressure of forcing a way up, constantly trying to dig for gear, and getting very little, worrying about poor belay anchors, not knowing if I'd totally blank out, and just the whole enormity of the situation almost got to me. I tried to seize control of my mind and calm down before Erik got to the anchors, so he wouldn't see how fucked up I was.

We both pushed and pushed until we were spread to the limit of our physical and mental capacity. It was full-on until the very last pitch. Our route stuck to the right edge of the east face, and I could see the summit up ahead. The rock above was devoid of cracks and solid rock, so we traversed over to the northeast ridge to get a look at our planned descent (over the summit and down the back), then traversed back to the face. It looked like a short scramble to the summit of what's been called "Hardest Mox" [the unclimbed sub-summit atop the east face but before the true summit of Southeast Mox—Ed.] would lead to a heartbreaking full day's climb over ridges and gendarmes to the true summit of Southeast Mox, then an unknown number of rappels into the extremely broken glacier on the backside. One more easy pitch to the Hardest Mox summit, but on sandy blocks of stacked garbage where we wouldn't be able to get a rappel anchor, would have committed us to another full day of trying to get off the peak. John Scurlock told me later that he saw this on his flight and hoped to God that we wouldn't try going that way to get down.

We had to regain control of the situation and get off this mountain. We had completed the east face and were so close to topping out, but we felt that if we summited we would have climbed past the point of no return. So we put a Joker playing card in a plastic bag to mark our ascent (The Devil's Club, 2,400', V+ 5.11-), shook hands, and decided to rappel the entire face, in places staying closer to the northeast ridge than our ascent line did, especially down the lower half. We placed no bolts. I can barely describe how relieved we were when we heard the whump of rope on the talus below. A few hours later, at 3:30 a.m., after wading chest-deep in the river to avoid more punishment from the alder and devil's club, we finally found our camp. We had to retrace the entire approach later that day in order to make the next morning's ferry ride back to our car; we didn't want to be reported late and deal with a rescue cluster. By the time we returned from our adventure, the rains returned and Mox Peak went back into hiding.

MIKE LAYTON, AAC

*Silver Star Mountain, Central Couloir to near West Summit.* Anne Keller and I had both noticed a classic-looking alpine couloir splitting the west face of Silver Star (8,800'), and I couldn't wait for spring. The 1,900-foot-long ribbon of steep snow and gully ice shoots the whole relief of the face and seemed to cut deep into the face at uniform width.

On March 15 we began our day at 6:15 a.m., and the morning started off with demoralizing post-holing until we gained the bare trail. We finally got to the base at 8:30 a.m. and noticed a flow of water ice marking the couloir entrance. The ice was not climbable, though, so we scrambled around on easy rock and began to simul-climb perfect névé and smears of gully ice. The walls became high around us and the couloirs slightly steeper as we progressed. We came to the first of two mixed cruxes: a large chockstone with steep ice smears pouring off both sides of the rock's interface with the couloir walls. The left side offered rotten ice, but the right side went at fun M4 for a short pitch. The couloir again narrowed and became slightly steeper, and conditions and climbing continued to improve with every step. We looked out to the Cas-

acades, the walls perfectly framing the Liberty Bell group. Before we reached the summit ridge, we met a second chockstone. This crux is shorter, at M3; we climbed it on the left up a small column of ice. Above, Anne stepped off the snow and up the final 125 feet of the line on easy rock, finishing the couloir on the flat slopes a few hundred feet north of the West Peak. We continued south up the ridge and stopped approximately 20 feet below the West Peak summit, where we took a break to grub on a flat bench. Then we descended down the glacier to Burgundy Col and back to the Methow Valley.

MARK ALLEN, AAC



The Central Couloir on the west face of Silver Star, showing conditions like those from the March 15 ascent. Only isolated snow patches remained in August during The Washington Pass Traverse, which roughly follows the skyline ridge for its middle third (through the crux climbing of the Wine Spires, the line deviated some to the NE and briefly to the SW). The Vasiliki Ridge is farther left, not shown.  
*John Scurlock*

*The Washington Pass Traverse.* At the end of day two, August 25, Mark Allen and I had just completed three-fourths of a traverse that we'd talked about for three years, and we were about to bail and go home. Mark said he had to guide in Mazama the next day, and, regardless, we were out of water. The trip was a series of heartbreaking near-failures anyhow.

The traverse was supposed to be a complete circuit of over 20 high points of the famous Silver Star massif of Washington Pass: the spine-backed ridge of Silver Star, the monoliths of the Wine Spires, and the final continuation of the long, towered Vasiliki Ridge. Although each part of the traverse is on a different mountain, the entire ridge is a continuous four-mile-long knife-edge.

The trip almost ended the first night, when I set my sleeping bag on fire during our below-freezing bivouac. Later that night we ran out of fuel, forcing us to load our camelbacks full of snow to melt against our backs. It almost ended again the next morning, when our morale plummeted after staring down the long rappel off Silver Star that led to the start of the Wine Spires traverse: 1,500 concentrated feet of climbing on four separate towers, with summits only 50-100' apart.

But after beating the odds and getting through what we thought was the worst of two days of solid climbing, carrying minimal packs that looked loaded for a day of cragging rather than a grade VI traverse, we had to go home.

"Yeah, I gotta work Saturday morning, tomorrow. Bummer," Mark said. "Mark, today is Thursday, not Friday," I exclaimed.

Instantly gaining a day, we could yet make the traverse happen. We were still out of water, though, and a tiny trickle draining from the glacier below wouldn't accommodate our bottles. But the whiskey bottle we polished off the night before fit perfectly!

The final day of climbing looked like it would go fairly quickly, but it was just as chal-

lenging as the first two days. Constant ridge climbing, tricky routefinding, and a bit of gardening on the Vasiliki Ridge led us to the final summit and the end of a long traverse: 26 summits, 28 rappels, 4 miles and 34 hours of climbing, up to 5.9+. We stuck to the ridgeline the whole way, in the process establishing new lines on several of the peaks, including the Direct East Ridge of Silver Star and new routes on Pernod, Chianti, Burgundy, and the Vasiliki Spires.

We called it the Washington Pass Traverse because the ridge is one of the most prominent lines you see in the Washington Pass area as you come up over the crest of the North Cascade Highway. This long and uninviting ridge screamed at us to climb it every time we descended to the Methow Valley. Now we can look up and rest, knowing that we finally did it. Vote for Pedro.

Note: the original trip report with photos can be found at [www.cascadeclimbers.com](http://www.cascadeclimbers.com)

MIKE LAYTON, AAC

*Northern Pickets Traverse.* No matter how content with success a climber gets atop the heights, the compulsion to gaze from one summit to the next goal is irresistible. In 2003 we had just completed my dream traverse over all 14 summits of the indescribable southern Picket Range. Even before the high fives met atop the final summit, my eyes were working out the intricate ridge of incredible summits to the north.

Cascadeclimbers.com introduced me to a character named Josh Kaplan. I could see he had the spirit for the project, based upon his discourse on the site. We planned it over the phone, eventually meeting the day of departure for our first go in 2004. But a whiteout, fog, and rain forced our retreat from the Phantom-Ghost col. I didn't think I would be back for another attempt.

The next July we made our way up Access Creek to our second bivy, at the start of the ridge itself. The view from Luna Col is one the most incredible I have seen. But the weather totally sucked again, and we had only one small fuel canister left for the traverse.

After the east summit of Fury in a whiteout, the commitment zone lay ahead. From here on, climbing would be difficult and treacherous, the descents scarce. After climbing the Furies we started a staggering series of rappels. Severe, difficult leads took us across the ridge, until we rapped into a glacier col after West Fury. We camped on the snow in a wind hollow.

On day four we rejoiced at the clear skies and raced over the remaining small peaks and ridge mazes, reaching the Spectre Plateau and finding the easy way up Swiss Peak. Phantom Peak provided some off-route fun as we went over the "Cub Scout Salute" and back. As high clouds crept in, I said, "All we need for tomorrow is six good hours to finish the climb." We were to get four.

Across Ghost Peak we zoomed together on day five, in a smooth simul. The amazing knife-edge arête of Challenger turned desperately steep and slippery, as rain began to fall. The winds picked up, and the rain briefly turned to ice pellets. Handholds were the only things keeping us up there. With all we had put into it, we simply weren't going to bail. It was as if the great range was making sure we were worthy. We came over the end with not a bang, but a whimper. I could not talk or think. I saw the same look in my partner; we had survived this time. We had pushed our lives into a zone we may deserve to be criticized for. There would be no time for celebrating; we were two days from being dry or warm. Tough-guy Josh had no rain gear, relying on a down jacket. A miserable and long night was in store, but as we reached

the valley below, the warmer air brought relief. We began celebrating the biggest thing we could have imagined.

We enjoyed our caches and early departure after six life-changing days. It was truly the greatest of times. We had gone 60+ miles, 10 of them on an alpine crest. We had crossed nine of the most remote peaks out there (VI 5.7 (old school): Luna, East Fury, West Fury, Swiss, Spectre, Phantom, Crooked Thumb, Ghost, and Challenger (and Whatcom on our previous attempt)). The mighty Pickets had been crossed.

With a heavy heart we share this jewel of a wilderness with the masses. May it be our supreme wish that all the wild lands be kept as pure as they can be.

WAYNE WALLACE

*Johannesburg Mountain, The CK Route.* On August 27, we climbed a new direct line on the 4,600' north face. In 2002 we had retreated after underestimating steep, unprotectable rock sections. The route begins in a vertical cleft with a waterfall, midway between the 1985 Desvoigne-Kloke and the northeast buttress routes. We climbed six pitches of rock, from 4th class to 5.9, to a steep, overhanging, blank wall. After an hour of scouting we skirted under this to the left to gain a ramp from which Jens led a long, overhanging, stemming pitch (5.10b) in a chimney next to a prominent eyebrow overhang, to gain easy slabs below two large ice cliffs. Above the slabs, we soloed three pitches of exposed, unprotectable rock, to 5.7, between two cascading waterfalls, to gain the amphitheater rim below the right-hand ice cliff. Shortly after we were out of the way, a large portion of the right-hand ice cliff calved and scoured the pitches we'd just soloed. After 4th class scrambling along the rim of the amphitheater, we belayed one final rock pitch along a horizontal seam and then downclimbed, to gain the glacier above a seemingly impassable crevasse. Ascending to the head of the unclimbed glacier was technical, requiring many hours of complex navigation while weaving back and forth and



The CK Route on Johannesburg Mountain's north face, shot from across-valley in upper Boston Basin. More than 10 other routes ascend this face. *Loren Campbell*



Loren Campbell climbing glacier ice on The CK Route. *Jens Klubberud*



descending into and climbing out of many crevasses. Loren led a pitch of AI3 to pass the final obstacle. A rock ramp gave access to the base of the northeast buttress snow arête. Three simul-climbed pitches of AI2 led to its crest, where we joined the 1951 and 1957 Northeast Rib routes. We reached the summit at dusk and made our descent under headlamp, via the East Ridge route. Just below the Cascade-Johannesburg col, after 22 hours of continuous climbing, we made an open bivouac. Forecast rain held off for 18 hours, and we enjoyed a cold but dry bivy and descent via Doug's Direct. We rate the route V 5.10b AI3. Pictures and a trip report are available at [www.cascadeclimber.com/theckroute.htm](http://www.cascadeclimber.com/theckroute.htm)

LOREN CAMPBELL AND JENS KLUBBERUD



Mt. Index's North Peak (A), Middle Peak (B), and Main Summit (C). From left to right: North Face (Chute-Kaartinen, 1929; first winter ascent, Callis-Davis 1963), Murphy's Law (Miller-Taylor, 2006), EDM/Supercouloir (Nelson-Bebie, 1988). *John Scurlock*

*Mt. Index, Murphy's Law.* Stuart Taylor and I went in to check out the west face of the North Peak of Mount Index (5,353') on Friday, February 17, 2006. We planned to attempt the unrepeated Eve Dearborn Memorial (EDM)/Supercouloir route. The approach wasn't that bad although the bushwhacking up the lower part of the face was tedious. We soloed the lower gully and bypassed the second ice step by mixed terrain to the far left. From there we simul-climbed the left fork of the couloir, to above where it is split by a small rock spur.

We climbed higher but moved left too early, thinking we were higher on the face than we were, essentially mistaking a lower snow patch for the upper one described in Jim Nelson's guidebook. Call it ineptitude or an inexplicable enthusiasm for steeper terrain.

The route we took leaves the EDM approach couloir and climbs an ice step, before heading up an ice runnel on the left side of the couloir. This leads to a snowfield level

with the EDM bivy site (as marked in Nelson). We bivied at the top of the snowfield, below a rock buttress.

It wasn't possible to continue up the runnels, the next pitch being discontinuous snow. Failing upwards, we traversed left about half a ropelength across the snowfield and climbed another ice system on the left side of the buttress. From there the route stays to the right and

climbs steep snowfields and ice smears for four pitches. It finishes immediately to the left of the North Peak; another ropelength leads to the summit.

After a brief trip to the summit, to make sure we were descending the right way, we traversed the ridge to the false summit of the North Peak. This required a short but awkward rappel to get across a notch in the ridge. We made it about 200' below the false summit before nightfall, and bivied. The following morning we descended the North Face route, rappelling off trees almost the whole way. We used some existing fixed anchors lower on the face. Murphy's Law (V, snow and ice to 80°, steep mixed ground).

ADE MILLER, *Redmond, WA*

## Oregon

*Oregon, various activity.* On Mt. Hood's Illumination Rock, on April 24 Mike Layton and Marcus Donaldson climbed a route that starts to the left of the south chamber on the south face of the south-west ridge. It follows a series of chimneys and crack systems for 800 feet of sustained dry-tooling on andesite rock and rime gargoyles to a point west of the main summit. They believe the line to be new (Bitchin' Camero, M6 AI4), and say it's one of the best mixed lines in the Cascades.



Bitchin' Camero on Illumination Rock. *Mike Layton*

The winter of 2005-06 produced rare cold snaps in December and February, allowing several significant ascents of ice in the Columbia River Gorge outside of Portland. Though the *Journal* rarely reports on ice routes this short, we note these routes for their rare nature and the world-class potential of the Columbia River Gorge as an ice-climbing destination. Granted, the ice hardly ever forms, but we read that climate change might actually make some areas colder, so who knows?

Many routes in the Gorge saw repeats, and in addition to several new single-pitch lines being established, the oft-tried, north-facing Ainsworth Falls (600', W15) received its first complete ascent on December 16, by Hal Burton and Marcus Donaldson. The next day, Lane Brown and Wayne Wallace established Black Dagger (600', M4 W15+), located two miles east of Multnomah Falls. The impressive line (some had dubbed it "Black Diamond") has reportedly never connected, and the pair started from the rock on the right.

## California

*Yosemite Valley, El Capitan, free ascent of the Nose and monster linkup.* On October 30-31, in a 23-hour and 23-minute continuous push, Tommy Caldwell freed both the Nose (5.14a) and Free Rider (5.12d). Earlier in October, Caldwell and Beth Rodden swung leads on a free ascent

of the Nose. Caldwell then returned and freed the route himself (leading every pitch, becoming the only person to repeat Lynn Hill's much-heralded 1994 feat) in 12 hours. He also hucked a lap on Free Rider before his linkup. For a first-hand account of Caldwell's 6,000-vertical-foot day freeing two El Cap routes, see his story earlier in this *Journal*.

*Yosemite Valley, Mama, Flying in the Mountains, Homeworld.* On January 9 I experienced the most crushing and empowering day of my life, sitting by my mother's side as she took her last breaths. One of the last things she said to me as we held each other was, "Don't worry, my son, I'll always be with you, flying in the mountains, flying in the mountains, yeah (with a big smile) flying." She was so into my climbing. So much of my love for nature comes directly from her. I always wished she could be with me on so many of my adventures, but the laws of nature didn't allow for that. But these days, with every move I make, and her words echoing in my head, all I have to do is think of her and it's like she's riding on my back. She's everywhere I go.

Anyway, we did a few routes in Yosemite with her in mind. In the Bridalveil Falls area, 150' right of Rattlesnake Buttress and 300' left of Yellow Corner, Jake Jones and I established a new free route called Mama (IV 5.12c), seven pitches and 1,000' high. Wild, steep climbing, like a Thailand route, but trad. Pro from #0 TCU to #6 Friend. Rappel the route.

At Parkline Slab, 300' right of the Cockshead, Robbie Bouchard and I put up a seven-pitch route, 1,000' long, called Flying in the Mountains (IV 5.11a). One hundred feet right of that we established Homeworld (IV 5.10c), nine pitches, also 1,000' long. Both Parkline routes require a set of stoppers and one each from #0 TCU to #3 Camelot; they meet at the last anchor. At Parkline, I led all of both routes, but Robbie freed all the moves on second and worked his butt off. The recommended rap route is Homeworld, which can be descended with a single 60m rope.

Detailed topos should be in Don Reid's new, 2006 book, *Yosemite Free Climbs*. See you in the mountains!

SEAN JONES

## SIERRA NEVADA

*Balloon Dome, Into the Pit and Netherworld; "Cat Wall," Heaven and Hell.* For the longest time I've wanted to do a route on this dome, which lies a few miles upcanyon from the Fuller Buttes. It sits in the San Joaquin River's canyon, dead center of the Sierra, and rises nearly 3,000' from the bottom of the canyon. The canyon is filled with unclimbed walls. The stone is just like Yosemite, nearly as much of it, and nearly as big. The difference is long, steep, trail-



The upper portion of Balloon Dome, with Netherworld taking the left skyline to the summit. *Blair Dixon*

less, bushy approaches. No people and no noise, except the simple things like water, wind, birds, and on occasion a mountain lion. In the fall I decided to finally get in there. I needed a partner who could take a serious beating and keep coming back for more. That would be none other than my friend Jake Jones.

We started from the Squaw Dome trailhead and headed south, cross-country, for three miles downhill (including 1,400' of rappelling) to the canyon bottom. The north face of Balloon Dome, across the canyon, faced us as we dropped into the canyon.

On our first trip in October, we planned to just scope a line up Balloon Dome, deposit huge bags of gear, then return home to stock up for the real push. But it took so much longer to reach the bottom than we expected, with all the bushwhacking and rappels, that we were committed to climbing back out by a new route. We scoped an obvious line up what looked to be a not-so-big wall and started climbing at 4:30 p.m., knowing darkness would be upon us by 7:30. The line goes directly up the center of the largest south-facing wall opposite Balloon Dome, but slightly upstream, thus taking us back toward our approach descent. We named this wall the "Cat Wall." But cracks that looked open from the ground pinched down in places and didn't all connect. Our sweet 5.9 simul-climb and jog to the beer store turned into a thin-at-times, run-out, 1,400' 5.11c. We had no bivy gear, extra food, or other way out, so we had to focus and keep pushing. We managed everything onsite and topped out at 10 p.m. on a moonless night. Wearing shorts and T-shirts, with fading headlamps and no extra batteries, we ditched our gear and bushwhacked uphill for four hours, worshipping the car like a god, when we finally found it, and drove home, arriving just before sunrise. We named the route Heaven and Hell. The route name fits the entire canyon.

During the rest of October and November we humped several loads to our base camp and pushed what I believe is the first line from the bottom of the canyon to the summit of Balloon Dome. A forested section splits the upper dome from the wall below, and a few routes exist on the upper dome. (You can approach the upper dome by a 12-mile hike from the Cassidy trailhead in the Oakhurst area, without having to descend to the river.) Fred Beckey, of course, was the first to climb the upper dome. What we did was more like two separate routes, linked during our final push.

Our line on the 2,000' lower wall, Into the Pit (V 5.11d), ascends an obvious line of cracks leading to an obvious, left-angling dike. The dike leads straight to the most amazing, splitter, right-facing corner on the whole lower wall. More straight-up cracks, then some 4th class, lead to the upper dome. Our line on the upper wall, Netherworld (1,100', 5.11c), could be accessed by the 12-mile hike (i.e., without starting from the valley bottom). It ascends our left skyline view as we approached from the opposite side of the canyon.

Whether climbing our line or any future line from the river to the summit, one should plan on a grade VI wall. As for the logistics of getting the gear and yourselves to and from the wall, plan on that being more work than the wall.

SEAN JONES

*Angel Wings, Right Wing.* Chris LaBounty and I made the first ascent of the Right Wing (IV 5.10d) on Angel Wings on July 15. This route ascends the striking arête to the right (east) of the South Arête. We approached from the start of the South Arête, by making a 35m rappel from bolts into the gully below. In 100m 3rd and 4th class becomes easy 5th. Three 5.10 pitches and

four easier pitches lead to the top of the arête. After reaching the stacked rocks atop the arête, make a 60m easy 5th class traverse west, toward the South Arête. Make a 30m rappel into the gully from a chickenhead and head north for 100m of 4th class to a notch. Continue north for 60m on a 4th class orange band into another notch. Make a 30m rappel off two fixed nuts onto the backside of Angel Wings. From here hike east, almost toward the summit of Cherubim Dome, descend the summit ridge, and follow the gully toward Upper Hamilton Lake; you will meet the High Sierra Trail.

BRANDON THAU

*Palisade Traverse in a day.* Gravity takes hold of my legs, and I stumble. My lungs still bursting, I see a flash and suddenly my father, dead seven years, turns into Norman Clyde on a bergschrund slide and screams, "Here I go to Hell!" Piss runs down my leg.

Squirming between reality and dreams, I pull myself from the nightmare and open my eyes to a full moon shining in my face. A rumble to the north brings my attention to a storm over Mammoth.

*Rough trade, this mountaineering gig,* I mutter to myself. Only seven hours in and the adventure has taken its toll on my body and mind....

California is unique in that one can ski and surf in the same afternoon, the weather almost always perfect in both climes. For me, it is the perfect place to raise a family while exorcising the demon shakes. When friends took me to these mountains, I rediscovered my childhood joy of wandering for days without the intrusion of another, while, as a climber, I understood that going up is the easy part of the battle. The mountaineers, the true climbers, of which I am not one, would recount tales of horrific approaches and descents, while the deaths reported occurred during the complacent periods. It is a Zen-like realm where awareness of one's surroundings dictates life and death. For me, it is nirvana. The mountains of California, Mecca. And in this Mecca lies a grand jewel: the Palisade Traverse, eight miles long, 26 peaks, six over 14,000'.

In July 1979 John Fischer and Jerry Adams made the first traverse of the Palisades, in seven days after spending a week caching supplies. In June 2004, after a week of caching supplies, Scott McCook and Adam Penney made the second ascent, in 12 days. The rock varies from perfect granite to jigsaw death to sandy scree. One can climb in a T-shirt and jeans while straddling blue ice, only to become embroiled in a storm worthy of Everest minutes later if caught unprepared. It is the stuff of nightmares and dreams. And during one glorious day last August I laughed, cried, and dry-heaved my way into a level of climbing that awaits those willing to sacrifice everything for the ultimate beauty of life. It was truly a grand adventure.

Strictly the facts: Palisade Traverse (VI 5.9), third ascent, in 22 hours. No supplies cached along the way. I started on August 18, 7:00 p.m., at Southfork Pass (12,560'), traversed the ridgeline, and finished on August 19, 5:00 p.m., at Bishop Pass (11,960'). By 10:00 p.m. I was back to Glacier Notch below Mt. Sill.

MICHAEL REARDON

*Sierra and Yosemite, various activity.* Climbing.com reported that Dave Turner soloed a new route, Block Party (VI 5.9 A4), on the southeast face of El Capitan. He fixed ropes for three days and spent 18 days on the wall, finishing June 21. The route shares parts of Tempest and

the Pacific Ocean Wall, but more than half of the route climbs new terrain.

In Tuolumne Meadows in July and August, Mike Schaefer and Nils Davis established a new route, ground-up, on the west face of Fairview Dome. Their six-pitch route, named Retrospective, starts 40' right of Plastic Exploding Inevitable and has five independent pitches, ending at the U-shaped bowl. Retrospective shares the fourth pitch with a previously undocumented Tom Carter route, reportedly named Quasimodo. Davis says the climbing was "nebulous and delicate at best, requiring imagination when viewed from the ground," but they found it surprisingly moderate, with only one 5.11 section. They placed 21 new bolts, including anchors, and replaced the six old bolts they encountered.

Just south of Matterhorn Peak in northern Yosemite, Dan Arnold and John Montgomery-Brown climbed a new route on the Middle Peak of Whorl Mountain. Their route, the North Ridge (III 5.6), starts with several hundred feet of scrambling from the low point between Whorl's middle and north peaks, then climbs an obvious squeeze chimney and ten pitches along the ridge with spectacular positioning.

On Mt. Winchell (13,775') in August, Bruce McDonough, Jr., established Passion (III 5.8), perhaps the first route to continue to the summit from the west. The route begins in a shallow chute in the rightmost of three right leaning, diagonal, white-orange dikes. After crossing the West Chute route, the line continues up and right on steep slabs and varied terrain to a notch high on the summit ridge, descends 50', and heads for a ridge to the summit.

## *Idaho*

*Sacajewea Peak, Broken Wings to the North Ridge.* In mid-May, Aaron Mordicai, Abe Dickerson, and I traveled up the remote canyon leading to the north face of Sacajewea Peak in the Lost River Range. This hanging canyon above the West Fork of the Pashimeroi Valley provided a beautiful half-day trek among towering limestone peaks littered with ribbons of ice dripping down their dark stone. Any one of these routes would have been a worthwhile objective, but our sights were set on the much bigger lines Brian Wood and I had photographed the year before on the north face of Sacajewea at the very back of the canyon.

We bivied below the north face and with binoculars viewed each possible line on the face. It was apparent that the deep chimney on the right side of the north face offered the most consistent ice and the least objective hazards of the possible routes. Early the next morning we climbed 180m up the initial couloir of ice bulges and steep snow. At the point where this couloir terminated, we made an exposed 60m traverse to the left on a steep, downward-slanting ramp to reach the beginning of the meter-wide ice chimney. Abe led the first chimney pitch, which offered sections of vertical ice and one large chockstone to negotiate. This exciting 60m pitch ended in a small snow pocket and provided a pin belay on the left wall of the chimney. Aaron led the next pitch, which proved to be the technical crux of the route and again offered steep, technical ice climbing to a comfortable belay on the right side, where the narrow chimney opened into a small couloir. We followed this couloir for 60m of 60° snow. The last 60m pitch consisted of verglas on an extremely steep, featureless slab in an overhanging corner for 10m, to reach 70° snow that decreased in angle near the exposed north ridge. From this point we gained the existing 4th class North Ridge route, which we



Broken Wings on Sacajewea Peak. The solid black line is drawn only to delineate the ridge from background peak.  
*Dean Lords*



Dean Lords following the first crux pitch on Broken Wings.  
*Abe Dickerson*

could have followed to the summit. We chose to descend the ridge, scrambling around its many towers and down-climbing exposed ramps to where it connected to the Southwest Ridge route of Borah Peak, just above Chicken-Out Ridge. From there we climbed down the steep south couloir of Borah Peak to regain our bivy site in the cirque below. Broken Wings (400m, WI5).

The remote location, combined with the steep and aesthetic climbing, made for one of the best alpine climbs Idaho has to offer: great ice climbing, with the occasional rock move in a meter-wide chimney on a beautiful alpine face. The other possible lines on this face and in the surrounding Pashimeroi area will

likely be the future of ephemeral mixed climbing in Idaho's alpine, producing consistent and technically challenging remote lines.

DEAN LORDS

*Goat Perch, Great Gully.* On June 4 Dusty Perkins and I made an ascent of the Great Gully (IV 5.8 M3) on the Goat Perch in the Sawtooth Mountains. This line may have been climbed in the past, but no record we know of exists. We searched past issues of the *AAJ*, as well as old records of Iowa Mountaineers outings. The Goat Perch was a regular destination of the Mountaineers during that club's 30+-year history. Hans Gmoser made the first ascent of the North Ridge, and we assume that subsequent visits followed that famous line.

Start as for Weekend Warrior (*AAJ* 2005, p. 175) but continue 300' to the col between the Goat Perch and Eagle Perch. The couloir becomes steep at its top and is guarded by a large, overhanging cornice. Depending on conditions, pass the cornice by aid or free wet rock on the left or climb snow and alpine ice (up to 85°). From the top of the couloir travel south (left) to the large gully below the northwest face of the Goat and up easy mixed terrain (Class 4) or talus and scrub-brush, depending on conditions, for 300' to the base of the summit pitch. One hundred feet of climbing on beautiful granite leads to a rappel station, with fantastic views into the heart of the Sawtooth Mountains. Two rappels and downclimbing to the west lead to the top of couloir, which we rapped and downclimbed. The round-trip from Redfish Lake Inlet camp took 13½ hours. Conditions in the couloir vary greatly. In 2004 the snow was soft and wet, with obvious difficulties, and in 2005 it was hard, and we front-pointed most of the route. Snow in the couloir can last until September, and conditions may be very different when the couloir is thin, the snow in the large gully is gone, and the rock is dry. Good pro exists throughout.

STEVE LYSNE

## *Utab*

*The Desert, various activity.* Eric Bjørnstad reports that three previously unclimbed towers saw ascents in the fall:

Tchalkovsky Overture (425', IV 5.11 A3, Dave Mealey and Joe Slansky) is located southeast of Moab, on the Wingate Sandstone between Mill Creek and Kane Creek. Approach up the right side of Mill Creek.

Odyssey (500', IV 5.11 A3, Dave Mealey et al.) is located on the north side of the Colorado River, across from mile marker 2, up Scenic Byway 128 (the River Road) northeast of Moab.

Chimney Rock (500', 5.11, A3, Layne Potter and Sheridan Potter) is obvious in the Cedar Mountain Box Flats, northeast of the San Rafael Swell.

According to other sources, the following two large, high-quality routes were established on the Amphitheater Wall near Moab:

The previously unreported Trail Of The Navajo (8 pitches, IV/V 5.11c/d, Leonard Coyne and Keith Reynolds, Spring 2002) climbs an obvious and beautiful corner system, located approximately two miles from Moab on the River Road, across the river from the highway.

About .25 miles upriver from the Trail Of The Navajo, The Hyena (9 pitches, V 5.12/5.13, Leonard Coyne and Mick Haffner, Spring 2005) ascends the largest portion of the wall, via a



discontinuous series of dihedrals linked by face climbing and ledges. The climb ends on the summit of a detached pillar.

In the northern San Rafael Swell, in May, Layne Potter and Paul Ross put up *The Worse the Heat, the Better the Beer* (300', III 5.10 C2) on *The Pinnacle*. In the Eagle Canyon area they climbed a previously virgin 600' tower, which they called *Toviah Tower* (III 5.8+R). Ross and others established many shorter routes in the region, as well. Ross reports: "There are now over sixty routes on the San Rafael Swell Eastern Reef, ranging in difficulty from 5.5 to 5.12 and in length from 300' to 2,000', bringing the total footage of the routes to over 50,000'."

For information on many of the routes in this region, see [www.mountainproject.com](http://www.mountainproject.com)

*Arch Canyon, Dreamcatcher Tower, Broken Dreams.* In beautiful Arch Canyon south of Blanding, after two previous attempts with my son Andy and Cameron Burns, I climbed the final pitch of the previously unclimbed *Dreamcatcher Tower*, by a route named *Broken Dreams* (IV 5.9 C2). This tower is close to the well-known *Dreamspeaker Tower*. Andy led the first pitch in November 2004, but we retreated due to cold (north face). We returned in September, and I led the second pitch, Andy the third. We ran out of time, water, and bolts, needing more for the descent. Finally, one year after the first attempt, I finished the final pitch to the top.

PAUL ROSS

*San Rafael Swell, various routes.* On January 30 Lance Bateman and I climbed a new route on the Eastern Reef of the San Rafael Swell. *Dreamy Clouds* (7 pitches, III 5.11d R A0) climbs the center of the "Great White Wall," left of *Three Finger Canyon*. In *Three Finger Canyon*, on November 20, we established *Reptilian Curiosity* III 5.11R. The route is ca. 300' left of *1,000 Feet of Fun* and finishes at the summit anchors of that route after six pitches. Both routes have lots of tricky run-out face climbing.

Previously unreported in *Buckhorn Wash*: In 2001 John Coulter, Mark Owen, and I established *Echoes* (III 5.9 A2), located about a mile up the road (toward *Castle Dale*) from the *Buckhorn Wash* pictograph panel. It starts in a right-facing dihedral above a closed campsite, with boulders on the east side of the road. In October 2002 Owen and I climbed a new route on the wall to the right of *Echoes*. This wall has a large pillar running all the way up the prow of the wall. There is a route of unknown origin left of the prow up good cracks in a corner system. Our route, *Life During Wartime* (V A3+), climbs a thin crack to left-leaning chocolate corners on the left side of the wall. The route is three pitches long, overhanging the entire way. Pitch two is the crux, with many beak placements in a steep, left-leaning corner. This pitch is 70m long.

BEN FOLSOM

## ZION NATIONAL PARK

*Perfect Day for Bananafish and Occam's Razor.* In *Kolob Canyons*, on the south side of the finger canyon immediately south of *Nagunt Mesa*, Simon Ahlgren and I climbed two new routes. We approached from the *Lee Pass* trailhead, leaving the trail at the appropriate creek crossing (a map is useful) and hiking about a mile into the finger canyon, at which point the routes are uphill on the right.

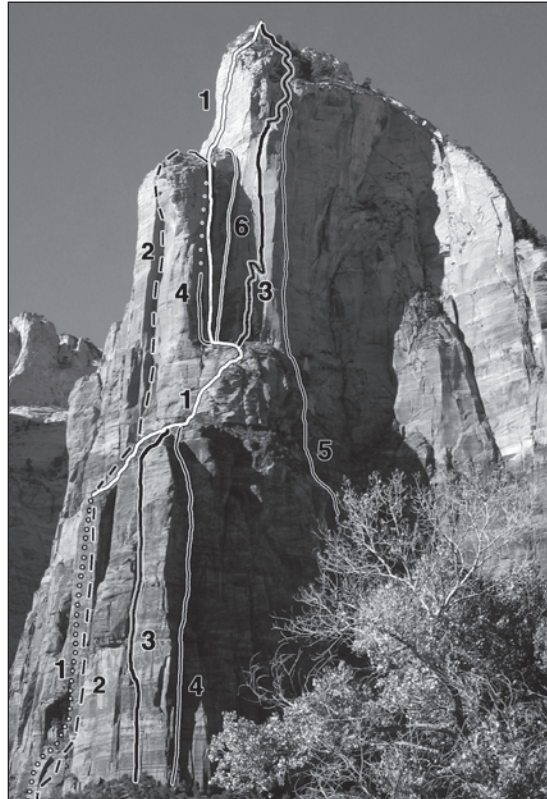
Perfect Day for Bananafish (V A3, September 2002) climbs a series of left-leaning, left-facing dihedrals, with a small tree on a ledge at mid-height (60 or 70m to the left is a striking pillar that harbors Occam's Razor, described below). The easiest path to the start of the climb involves locating the gully immediately below Occam's Razor, climbing it to the base of the wall, and then moving right to the start of Perfect Day. The route is eight pitches long and consists almost entirely of aid climbing, with much thin nailing. Bolt anchors mark the end of every pitch, and we placed an occasional rivet, so scoping with binoculars or spotting scope will reveal the line of ascent. We descended (60m ropes necessary) by rappelling the blank face to the right of the exit pitches to a two-bolt anchor, then to the belay at the end of pitch five, and then down the rest of the route.

In April 2003, immediately left of Perfect Day, we established Occam's Razor, on the right side of the eye-catching pillar. In October 2004 I returned and made the FFA (IV- 5.11+). Approach as for Perfect Day, but instead of turning right at the base of the wall, scramble uphill to the left 30m to the start of the first pitch. This route is seven pitches long (though pitches 2 and 3 are both very short) and ends atop the pillar. The first three pitches are face and friction climbing. We placed protection bolts, ground-up, only where gear placements were not possible. The crux of the route, a 12-foot section of stemming or laybacking, is two-thirds of the way up the fourth pitch. Pitches five through seven all involve hand cracks and are brilliant fun. We equipped the entire route for descent.

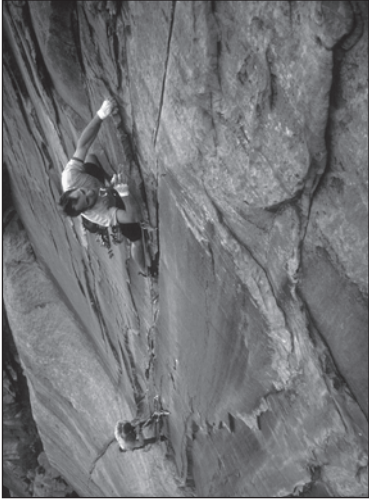
JOEL NOLTE

*Various free ascents.* I will look back on 2005 as the year I became obsessed with Zion free climbing. It started a few weeks before 2005, when I nabbed the first free ascent of Angel's Landing, via the 15-pitch Lowe Route. After that climb, I was addicted to Zion.

I returned in June with my brother Mark. Battling scorching heat, we got the first free ascent of the classic and oft-tried Spaceshot (9 pitches, 5.13a) in a one-day push on June 16. We climbed variations on three pitches, adding three bolts, in addition to the eight installed during



Routes on the right side of the broad south face of Isaac (other routes exist on the left side of the face, out-of-view): (1) Lowe Route (lower portion hidden; Beavers-Lowe-Weiland-Weis, 1972). (2) Sands of Time (dashed line; Gagner-Lovelace, 1994). (3) Tricks of the Trade (Hatcher-Hebert-Middendorf-Quinn, 1993). (4) Iron Like a Lion in Zion (Bloom-Cosentino, 1999). (5) Middle Earth (Miller-Rasmussen, 1997). (6) Freeloader (Anderson-Pizem, 2005). Rob Pizem



Mark Anderson leading pitch 5 (5.12c) on Spaceshot. Andrew Burr

a previous free attempt. It was a nostalgic climb for us, because we had cut our teeth on the route in 1998 as our first-ever big-wall climb.

Over the summer I sought cooler climates in the Kolob Canyons. I reconnoitered the route Golden Years with Colby Wayment, but decided to return later in the year when conditions were more reasonable. I returned in September, this time with a new acquaintance, Rob Pizem. On September 17 we freed Golden Years (8 pitches, 5.12d) in an exhausting 20-hour day. We added four protection bolts, with permission from first ascensionist Dave Jones.

Rob and I made a good team, so we got together for a more challenging line on Angel's Landing. The mysterious Dunn Route (Angel Hair; 11 pitches, 5.13a R/X) had been tried by the all-star team of Brian McCray and Ammon McNeely, but their attempt ended in a near-fatal brush with the loose rock that chokes the route. Nevertheless, Rob and I freed the route in a one-day push on October 22. We were proud to be able to free the route without placing any bolts or fixing other gear. This would also be the first one-day free ascent of Angel's Landing.

Not yet satisfied, Rob and I returned again in November to attempt the Lowe Route on Isaac, in the Court of the Patriarchs, having been assured by the route's namesake that it would easily go free. We were sandbagged! The opening chimney section was the most exciting and terrifying rock climbing I have ever done. Higher on the wall, we lost track of the Lowe Route, but found another line we liked. After three days of prep, we established Freeloader (12 pitches, 5.12d R) on November 24, in an all-out, one-day push.

MICHAEL ANDERSON, AAC

*Mt. Moroni, The Road to Cumorah.* In April, Chris Rowins, Dave Jones, and I climbed a new nine-pitch route on Mt. Moroni. The Road to Cumorah (IV 5.11 C1) begins at the far east end of the southwest face. We started in a short, clean, left-curving aid crack, which soon turns into a three-inch jam crack. Higher, Chris led a short, chossy 5.10 pitch to the base of a dark, mottled chimney. I exited this sparsely protected slot early, to a belay just below a 350' section of easy 5th class. This section had some big ledges. Above, Dave led a beautiful double finger-crack pitch in a right-facing corner to an intersection with the old Southwest Face route. We followed a left-slanting corner section (one short 5.11 bulge) to a shoulder behind the top. A 5.7 face pitch led to the small, airy summit. We descended by rappelling Voice from the Dust. The only aid on our climb was on the first pitch.

BRIAN SMOOT

*"Gatekeeper Wall," Locksmith Dihedral.* Dave Jones, Chris Rowins, and I established the Locksmith Dihedral (IV 5.11d C1) on the "Gatekeeper Wall." This wall, the first formation east

of the Watchman, was named by Dave, who spotted the line. In April we made the two-hour approach to the base of the climb. Being heavily laden with gear, we were relieved to see that the line looked good. Our route followed the steep, tasty-looking corner up the middle of the buttress. The first pitch began in a short chimney filled with a block. An off-size hand crack led up to a V-slot and the start of the main corner. The second pitch was one of the best finger cracks I've ever done. I used some aid, but Dave was able to follow it free at 5.11d. We descended in high spirits. The next day, two more great pitches followed, on excellent rock. The final three pitches followed wider cracks in the dihedral to the top of a prominent tower, which was just 25 feet from the rim. Since there were no more cracks, we stopped here. Lots of loose rock trundled down from this top section as we rappelled off...much to Chris's delight. The leader used some aid on three of the pitches, but with the exception of an A0 move on the fifth pitch to pass some loose blocks, we were able to second all of the pitches free.

BRIAN SMOOT

## *New Mexico*



The southwest face of the Shield: (1) Procrastination (IV 5.8, Merrill-Schum, 1970). (1a) Direct finish (IV 5.9, FRA Rumff et al, 1994). (2) Chicken Chop Suey (IV 5.9, Baker-Ware, 1973). (3) Slipping Into Darkness (IV 5.10c, Beauchamp-Hicks, 1976; FFA Brede-Prandoni). (4) The Promise Land (V 5.12c, Kear-Parker et al, 2004). (5) Rainbow Dancer (V 5.11a R, Bridgers-Prandoni, 1979). (6) Purple Haze (VI 5.11 A4+, Hammack-Kear-Lynn, 1996). (7) Orange Sunshine (V 5.9 A4, Hammack-Meleski, 1977). (8) The Rainbow Route (VI 5.9 A4, Mauldin-Roybal, 1973). *Photo and route information from John Kear*

*Shield, The Promise Land.* On Oct 3, 2004, Carolyn Parker and I completed the first ascent of our big-wall project, The Promise Land (V 5.12c), which climbs a 1,200'-tall section of the Shield's southwest face. The Shield, in the Sandia Mountains, is home to a host of routes ranging from alpine scrambles to new-wave aid routes and a lot in between. What the Shield lacked for many years was a modern, high-standard free route on good rock. The granite of the Sandias varies widely from steep and solid faces with in-cut holds to grainy and loose weaknesses of relatively poor quality. It was our vision to establish a route on the Shield that avoided the choss, even if it meant really hard face climbing. Due to an annual six-month falcon closure and my guiding schedule, the route took many forays over nearly two years to complete. To help me when Carolyn wasn't available, I enlisted our friends Marc Beverly and Alan Aiken to help clean, protect, and belay me while figuring out some of the crux pitches.

The route starts 20 feet right of Rainbow Dancer, with eight feet of climbing onto a right-trending ramp system and a step left to a steep face with crystalline knobs. The first pitch has a lot of fixed gear, since it's steep face climbing with no real cracks. The route is sustained and technical. Of the 11 pitches, two are 5.10, seven are 5.11 (three 5.11+), and two are 5.12. The rock and the positions are excellent. The continuous face climbing and discontinuous cracks made the protection devious or impossible with natural gear. Despite this, we went to great effort to add as little fixed gear as possible. The climbing is unrelenting, and the protection can be challenging but, in general, not runout. The exception is pitch six, which involves long run outs on 5.9-5.10a sections. We look forward to strong parties having a go at it. As of December 2005 it awaits a second ascent.

JOHN KEAR, AAC

## Colorado

### BLACK CANYON OF THE GUNNISON NATIONAL PARK

*Atlantis.* Several years ago Kent Wheeler identified an unclimbed buttress below and around the corner from his route Lost Cities. Kent has the eye of a tiger and experience of many years in the Black, so when he asked me to join him for a new route, my answer was easy. Over three seasons we put up a fine line on excellent rock. During a final push to the walk-off terrace atop pitch 13, we made a cold bivy in crumbling rock three pitches from the top; retreat was not a likely option. We went back in late May and put together a quality finish through a maze of unlikely pegmatite bands.

Approach via the Prisoner of Your Hairdo gully past Lost Cities, and continue down and around the corner. A small cairn at the base marks the start. Up 30' and left 30' is a greenish pillar forming a right-facing corner where pitch one begins. Pitch three has a classic Black Canyon traverse: unprotected, balancy, and committing climbing that leads into an excellent 5.11- seam. Pitch six, a full ropelength, traverses under the rotten "black eye." After this traverse a party is significantly more committed to finishing the route. The route steepens above and gives nice 5.10/5.11 climbing for the next seven pitches.

In September Kent and Jay Shotwell added three more pitches above the large terrace to finish the route at the Narrows Overlook. The first of the final three pitches is also the crux, at hard 5.11. If the day is late, however, a party can walk off left past Lost Cities to the escape gully.

Atlantis (16 pitches, V 5.11) is the name of one of the famous Lost Cities. There are likely more cities waiting to be discovered on this new wall of good rock. A topo is available at the North Rim ranger station.

JIM HOWE

*Black Canyon, various activity.* In late April Chip Chace and I linked the opening pitches of the Dylan Wall (IV+ 5.12-) with Charm School Boutique (IV+ 5.13- R) to create the hybrid route Hard Rain, completing what Topher Donahue had referred to in the 2005 *Journal* as “a mighty day.” The route is of extremely high quality, and likely the hardest free route in the Canyon that doesn’t require ice tools. A week later Chip and I linked the lower half of Shadow Boxing (V 5.12+) with the upper half of Tague Yer Time (V 5.12) to create the hybrid Cameron’s Shadow. The route is highly recommended, as it covers the best and hardest stretches of both Shadow Boxing and Tague Yer Time. On October 5 Mike Pennings and I made the first one-day ascent (3rd overall) of the notorious Serpent (VI 5.11+ R/X) on the Painted Wall. We completed the climb in 13½ hours car-to-car and found the route to be of excellent quality, worthy of more attention. Finally, in late October Zack Smith and I made the probable first free ascent of Twisted (originally IV 5.11+ A2) on the North Chasm View Wall, finding surprisingly well-protected climbing up to 5.12-.

Jared Ogden and Topher Donahue added a five-pitch direct start to the Free Diagonal route, calling the line the Rectagonal (V 5.12-). The line, reputed to be of high quality, eliminates much of the undesirable low-angle terrain previously necessary to gain the steep upper portions of the Diagonal.

In April Alan Doak and Stefan Griebel made the long-awaited first one-day ascent of Hallucinogen Wall (VI 5.10 A3 or 5.13- R D10) in 23:29. However, Jared Ogden and Ryan Nelson shattered this record on May 12, using their intimate knowledge of the route to make a base-to-rim ascent in an astonishing 8:59.

In mid-May Jonny Copp and Andy Donson climbed an oft-looked-at line that they dubbed Ouiji Board (5.12-), up the middle of the Checkerboard Ball. They climbed ground-up, trundling a truck-sized ledge and hand-placing three bolts along the way.

Leonard Coyne has been extremely active in the vicinity of Dragon Point Buttress, taking part in several new routes on the steep, shaded wall facing upriver, just across from the Dragon Point overlook. In the summer of 2004, with Keith Reynolds, Coyne established Dragon Rider (12 pitches, V+ 5.12a/b). The route ascends a striking overhanging arête with superb rock quality; Coyne compares the route’s quality to Yosemite’s Astroman. Then, in the fall of 2005, Reynolds and Coyne—this time with the help of Mick Haffner and Colin Stenhouse—opened a free variation to Black Circus, calling the line Black Snake (10 pitches, V 5.11d). Coyne and Haffner went onto establish Silent Rage (8 pitches, V 5.12a X) on a giant arête, approached via rappel, high in the gully. Also on the wall directly beneath the Dragon Point overlook, Coyne and Haffner established Black Adder (7 pitches, IV 5.11b R). Finally, as if they hadn’t been busy enough, they spent several weeks establishing 827 GO! (15 pitches, V/VI 5.13a) on the North Chasm View Wall. Combining stretches of the relatively new aid line Black Planet with the older Air City, 827 GO! achieves the long talked-about goal of free climbing Air City’s massive roof pitch. Although Coyne and Haffner free-climbed each pitch, they approached the route from the top down, and never climbed the route continuously from the ground, so a complete redpoint of the route still awaits willing suitors.

In June, Jim Beyer established Captain Hook (VI 5.10 A4), solo. According to his topo at the ranger station, the route appears to begin with the first two pitches of the Hallucinogen Wall, then angles left, shares part of LaVisage on pitch 5, and after 11 pitches joins The Diagonal to the top. Beyer's topo notes, "Adding chicken bolts for free or aid climbing is an act of war against that route and its creator. Belays 3,4, and 5 could, however, use a bolt."

Beyer also established the Diagonal Arête (V 5.10 A2), on the Diagonal Will buttress, in a 24-hour car-to-car solo effort (date unknown). His route climbs on or to the right of the arête, and shares the final three pitches of Pathfinder.

Topos for these new routes, updated topos of The Serpent and Twisted, and more detailed information concerning the Dragon Point locations and approaches are available at the North Rim ranger station.

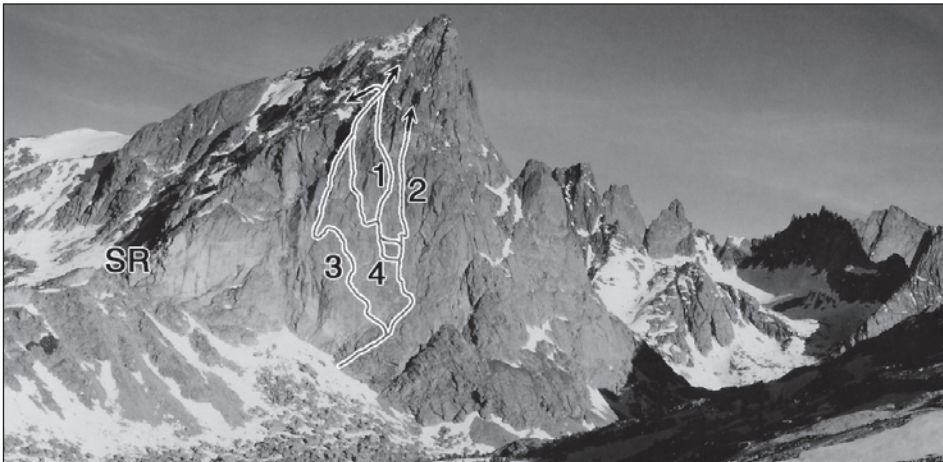
JOSH WHARTON, AAC

## Wyoming

### WIND RIVER MOUNTAINS

*Warbonnet Peak, The Neu Low.* Climbing in the Alps is Alpinism; climbing in the Andes is Andinism; climbing in the Rockies is, therefore, Rockonism. Roconismo (the Spanish version is catchier, sexier, and more memorable) is an emerging movement by a small group of climbers from the Rocky Mountain region dedicated to the pursuit of climbing, the environmental and cultural impacts of climbing, and to always having a darn good time in the backcountry.

Last summer the first Roconismo expedition went to the Cirque of the Towers. Along with several ascents of the Cirque's standard classics, Andy Neuman and I climbed a new line on the southeast face of Warbonnet Peak in early July. Climbed ground-up, in a day, and team-free (minus one pendulum by the second to avoid a difficult and dangerous down-climbing



The southeast face of Warbonnet: (1) Black Elk (Fowler-Lowe, 1981). (2) Dockery-Jenkins (1981). (3) Curate's Egg (Middlemiss-Smith, 2001). (4) The Neu Low (Barlow-Neuman, 2005). (SR) South Ridge descent. *Joe Kelsey, author of Climbing and Hiking in the Wind River Mountains*

crux), The Neu Low (IV 5.11- R) begins on the classic Black Elk but breaks left below the crux fist crack of that route, continuing up and left for five new pitches.

Our day began with a not-so-alpine start and quickly became a morning run over Jackass Pass to escape the swarming mosquitoes. We started by climbing the first two pitches of Black Elk. Upon arriving at the belay below the fist crack, we decided that the clean, splitter, well protected, and utterly classic crack didn't look all that good (silly first-ascent hungry climbers) and went left along a ledge system to another right-facing dihedral.

The next pitch had us following a clean, moderate dihedral, crossing a thin, poorly protected slab, and underclinging down along a steep dihedral (the route's crux) to a small stance. The next pitch went left around a corner, up through a somewhat loose roof, and ended with a long stretch of thin cracks and face climbing to a perch on top of a large flake, with uninspiring thin gear as an anchor. From the flake we climbed straight up a wide corner (5.10 X) to easier ground, then stepped left into a prominent crack/chimney system that reaches the upper left edge of the wall, where we were once again joined by mosquitoes. I believe Dante forgot, in his description of Hell, the circle in which one belays anchored on a granite ridge in a fog of blood-sucking insects. One more 4th-to-easy-5th-class pitch up a gully brought us to the South Ridge and the descent, which we slipped, slid, and swatted our way down.

As much as one would love to sing the glories of his creation, I can't say that The Neu Low will be the modern Cirque classic. While comparable in overall difficulty to its neighbor Black Elk, it is more sustained and serious, though not of as high a quality. The Neu Low nevertheless does serve as a reminder that there are still numerous new lines in the Cirque of the Towers awaiting future Roconistas.

CHRIS BARLOW, AAC

*Ambush Peak, Dike Route.* Ambush Peak's main face rises from a low angle apron, becoming steeper at mid-height, and is capped by large overhangs near the top. The northeast face is devoid of large overhangs, but rises at a constant angle, ending sharply at the true summit. On the extreme right side of the northeast face is a black basaltic dike that divides the main face and the shorter north buttress to the right: the site of two established routes done in the early 70's. In August, my father, Stephen, and I climbed a new 12-pitch route (IV 5.8) that ascends the granite just right of the basaltic dike. At times we were stemming between granite and basalt. The route gradually steepens, entering a wide crack system, and 400' below the summit we followed solid rock to the right, up a steep crack system.

MARK ARSENAULT, AAC



The northeast face of Ambush Peak (left to right): Northeast Face-Left (start unknown; IV 5.10+, Arsenault-Bouchard, 1972), Northeast Face-Right (IV 5.10+, Arsenault-Bouchard, 1994), Dike Route (IV 5.8, Arsenault-Arsenault, 2005). *Mark Arsenault*