

CLIMBS AND EXPEDITIONS

2007

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).

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 2006 calendar year.

NORTH AMERICA

CONTIGUOUS UNITED STATES

Washington

CASCADE RANGE

Washington, summary of activity. [Note: In addition to mention in this summary, several of the bigger routes have individual reports, below—Ed.] The Cascades saw a fairly typical year of new route activity, with notable winter ascents, ski descents, and summer ascents. Backcountry ski descents continue to grow in popularity, 2006 highlights being Ross Peritore's descent of the Triple Couloir on Dragontail Peak, and Sky Sjuue's descent of the Kautz Headwall on Mt. Rainier. Sjuue teamed up with numerous partners to make notable descents on Mt. Logan, Mt. Stuart, and West McMillan Spire. A new traverse, over 30 miles, given the current access conditions, was pioneered in the Twin Sister Range.

The 2006-7 winter's smaller-than-typical windows of cold temps and high pressure limited access to a lot of winter alpine climbs, but some great lines were done. Arguably the biggest climb of the winter was the Northeast Face (IV WI4+ M3) of Three Fingers Peak by Dave Burdick and John Frieh. New routes continue to be established within an hour's drive of Seattle,

including Spindrift Daze (III AI3+) on Abiel Peak, by Kurt Hicks, Matt Cusack, and Bob Masasi, and the Conlin-Gullberg Route (III WI3+ M4), by Dave Conlin and Scott Gullberg, on the north face of Kent Peak. Wayne Wallace and Gary Yngve climbed the hardest new ice route on Snow Creek Wall, the North Dihedral Direct-Swing and a Prayer (300m, IV WI5 M6R).

Alpine ascents during 2006 demonstrated that potential still exists even at popular alpine areas. In the Alpine Lakes Wilderness, Dragontail Peak gained a new route on its northwest face, Dragonscar (2,500', IV 5.11R), by Max Hasson and Jens Holsten. At Washington Pass, Ross Peritore and Tony Bentley established the Direct West Face (8 pitches, III/IV 5.10+) on Pernod Spire. Mark Allen, Joel Kauffman, and Tom Smith established Mojo Rising (6 pitches, III 5.11 A1), a direct line on the northwest face of South Early Winters Spire.

Perhaps the most remarkable lines were climbed by Wayne Wallace, Mike Layton, and Eric Wolfe in the Picket Range. In mid-August Wallace and Layton made the first ascent of the Haunted Wall on Spectre Peak (2,100', IV 5.9+). Photos of this wall had led to years of attempts and speculation. Layton returned to the area with Eric Wolfe to make the first ascent of Plan 9 on The Blob (16 pitches, IV 5.10). But the most lauded climb of 2006 was Wayne Wallace's epic solo first ascent of Mongo Ridge (VI 5.10-), a mile-long line on West Fury Peak with 4,000' of elevation gain.

The *Northwest Mountaineering Journal* is an annual online presentation, of the accomplishments of climbers and skiers, and documents the history of our travels in the mountains from the North Cascades to Mt. Hood. *NWMJ* issues are typically published in late summer, covering activity from April 1 to March 31, and can be found at www.nwmj.org.

CHRIS SIMMONS AND ALASDAIR TURNER, *Northwest Mountaineering Journal*, AAC

Twin Sister High Route. An easily accessible alpine training ground during the 1980s, the Twin Sister Range on the western edge of the Mt. Baker Wilderness is now isolated behind miles of private and gated logging lands. From May 12-14 Mark Allen, Dr. Greg Balco, Paul Kimbrough, and I made the first known ski traverse (V class 4 AI1 50°) of the entire range, going from south to north: Step Sister Peak to North Twin Sister Peak. The first day involved whiteout navigation in the morning and ski descents of the north faces of Last Sister Peak (5,562') and Saddle Slab Peak (5,802'), as well as a traverse along the east side of the range beneath Nancy, Barbara, and Trisolace peaks, and across the third largest glacier/ice field in the range, which we christened the Ripple Glacier.

On day two we crossed to the west side of the range at Saddle Slabs, skied the North Face of Cinderella (6,480'), and watched Mark ski the proudest line of the trip—the South Couloir of Little Sister Peak (6,600'). Crossing a series of cols past Hayden and Skookum peaks led to the technical crux: crossing the range for the third time to gain the Sisters Glacier just south of South Twin Sister Peak. What we expected to be a simple mixed and steep snow climb proved to be 40m of 4th-class rock followed by 100+m of 50° ice and mixed rock. Our thin rack (one hex, two cams, four stoppers) and short 8mm ropes (one 20m, one 30m) meant that we had to pitch it out on the rock and haul packs and skis, then Mark and Paul simul-climbed on one rope while Greg and I simul-climbed on the other. When we reached the ridge at sunset, we were surprised to find not a simple ski descent, but 100+m of rappelling. Double-rope rappels and down-climbing shenanigans led to a final fixed 40m single-strand rappel with a knot pass. We started setting up camp at 2:00 a.m.

Day three was incredibly hot, and we were incredibly tired. Looking up, we realized we had crossed the ridge several hundred meters farther south than we intended and had rappelled down the tallest aspect of a buttress we tagged Mirage Peak. Reconnaissance proved that our intended ascent would have required a 5th class pitch; our actual line was the best possible. The loss of our ropes and two cams in the rappels meant that our intended climbs and descents of South and North Twin Sister Peaks had to be scrubbed, so we spent the day skiing the Sisters Glacier, crossing back to the west and hiking out the last five miles to the car.

We actually traveled for 30 hours over three days, covered 26 miles, gained 12,000', descended 14,000', skied every single permanent snowfield/ice field/glacier (except for the Twin Glacier) according to the USGS map, and made significant descents across the range.

Special thanks to John Scurlock for his aerial photography.

CHRIS SIMMONS, AAC

Spectre Peak, Haunted Wall. Wayne Wallace and I braved the round trip 50 miles of hiking and 20,000' of elevation gain to climb the south face of Spectre Peak in the Northern Pickets in August. This is in one of the most remote places in the Lower 48, and a hauntingly beautiful area. We accessed the mountain via Easy Ridge, over a col right of Challenger's summit, and a few miles down to a camp below Phantom Peak's south face.



The Haunted Wall on Spectre Peak. No other routes are known to exist in this photo. *John Scurlock*

The 2,100' of climbing was solid, but devoid of cracks for protection. Our route, the Haunted Wall (IV 5.9+), starts in the center of Spectre's south face. Runout climbing for ~800' turns into a deep, spooky chimney inside the mountain (completely enclosed at times!), then continues to the great gendarme on the prominent, towered south ridge. One rappel gets you into the notch—and fully committed—then exposed face climbing up and right of a giant offwidth leads to a long ridge traverse to the summit. Downclimbing snow on the other side of the mountain took us to an amazing series of ledges to skier's right, around Spectre back to the south face.

MIKE LAYTON

Mt. Fury, West Peak, Mongo Ridge. It started by our looking, again, at a stupid map. The coolest USGS quadrangle in the Lower 48 is, by far, the Challenger map. It contains both the Northern and Southern Picket Ranges, with long, serrated ridges and enormous vertical relief rising from remote valleys. "Mongo Ridge," as it was pre-named by local enthusiast John Roper, is the South Buttress of the West Peak of Mt. Fury. The map reveals a mile-long, 4,000' vertical rise,



The enormous Mongo Ridge (skyline) on the West Peak of Mt. Fury. Mike Layton in the foreground, during the pair's Haunted Wall trip. *Wayne Wallace*

interrupted again and again by towering monoliths and gendarmes.

Mike Layton and I gaped at it while climbing the Haunted Wall on the west face of neighboring Spectre Peak, and agreed that it was a monster of grim fantasy. I even ventured that it might never be climbed, for a number of reasons. For one, all of the possible approach routes appeared to entail several days of strenuous bushwhacking. But the key hit me one night, pre-sleep: instead of approaching up the hell known as Goodell Creek, climb East Fury and descend to the ridge! I would just need to climb a major mountain to reach the start of an even more major climb.

I tried for a couple of days to find a qualified partner. Finally, I could take it no longer. Colin Haley's slide show about a first ascent on Mt. Moffit in Alaska [see Jed Brown's feature earlier in this *Journal*] set my blood on fire. When I got home from the show, I packed and left at 4 a.m. the next day, Thursday, August 24.

My plan was to power the 60+-pound load to the top of East Fury in two brutal days, meaning I had to get through the brush of Access Creek on day one. A bee sting on the left eyelid, the usual brush, and a violent, several-hour thunderstorm reintroduced me to the gauntlet of adversity and special pain available during approaches in this range. But Friday night I slept atop East Fury, feeling utterly spent.

Despite my wishes to stop it, the planet spun around, and again I awoke to face the solar onslaught. Morning light revealed a relatively easy way down to what felt like my ultimate doom: a route you would only see in the greater ranges of the world, and one to scare the boldest of explorers. As I began my descent, my iPod played the ominous words of the Talking Heads: "And you may ask yourself: My God, What have I done?"

It quickly became apparent that it was going to be tough just cresting the ridge. After several pitches I gained a somewhat clean ridgeline, which never failed to entertain me over the next two days. On the ridge, as I set the first of a dozen rappels, I knew each subsequent descent would render retreat increasingly difficult, dramatically increasing the commitment level.

After my fourth rappel, a full-length double rappel, I reached the base of a pinnacle that could itself be a major summit. The traverse rightward across the face led to a shallow yet steep prow. Although I was going unroped as much as possible to save time, it was time to break out the hardware. Up I climbed again and again until I ran out of rope, each time returning down the rope to retrieve anchors and pack. The knobby arête offered steep and exposed climbing. A 5.10 pitch made me hope it was the most difficult section of the massive route. Hundreds of tough feet later I finally balanced atop an incredible perch.

Rappelling down the other side of these pinnacles was now becoming an awesome routine. The backside of pinnacle #3 was so steep that I dangled in space much of the way down.

Pinnacle #4 was also hard going. I was again unroped, and as I did another scary traverse left, cramps mutated my hands into grotesque arthritic shapes. As the climbing continued, the rock again proved to be of fantastic quality and solidity.

As the afternoon wore on, time seemed to tick quicker, and I grappled with a difficult knife-edge horizontal traverse. Evening rapidly approached as I neared the final obstacle. A dreaming John Roper had already named this pinnacle the “Pole of Remoteness,” figuring that it had to be the hardest place to reach in the 48 states. I wasn’t going to argue. I looked ahead for a way up and, even more, a flat place to sleep, but neither was apparent from below. It was the only pinnacle that allowed me an easy way around it; graciously I accepted a narrow ledge system to the right instead of the 5.11 headwall straight above. I reached the deep up-hill notch and found it an accommodating 5.7.

Although I found the way to its summit easily enough, I had an eerie feeling that something might happen, that attaining the summit of the “Pole of Remoteness” would extract a price. With no solid rappel anchors, I slung a loose block as a handrail/rappel line. As I descended, a rock severed the rope. Fortunately, I still had the second line.

As the sun set, I made a dash for somewhere to camp. Now climbing into the 13th hour, I spotted a small glacier clinging to the south side of the upper ridge. The moat between it and the rock would provide shelter. As I drifted off to sleep, I reflected on the hard climbing of the day, grateful to live in a state that could still provide this kind of adventure.

In the morning 500' of elevation remained to the summit of West Fury. The way eased off to class 4. Tired, but not about to let down my guard, I stood atop West Fury at 10:00 a.m.

No wonder the Picket Range is so revered. In my few trips here I have renewed my enjoyment of the sport and my appreciation for the truly wild.

The journey was still far from over. I forgot how complicated it is getting from one Fury to the next. It involved more rappelling and tons of ridge engineering. All that was left from East Fury was to retrace the long glacier and ridges to Luna Col. There I went down in a heap of pain. Spending my last night there, I rehydrated, ate, and cried when a sad song played on the player.

Some final stray thoughts: I believe the nature of sport pushes the player to reach for more and continually improve. Everyone who safely does so will see the personal accomplishment that my friend Erik Wolfe describes as “the trip you never fully come back from.” Enjoy the mountains and help keep them wild.

WAYNE WALLACE

The Blob, Plan 9. In August, Erik Wolfe and I battled our way into the remote Crescent Creek Basin of the Southern Pickets to climb the south face (IV 5.10) of The Blob (a.k.a. The Rake). Our route, the only one on the face, took a prominent, clean, and steep buttress on the left side of the face, climbing excellent rock with plenty of protection opportunities. The climb follows the center of the ridge to a series of massive gendarmes. It tops out on the first, traverses left just below the second, and tops out on the summit. We then traversed the long summit ridge east, across the spine of the peak, to the notch between the Blob and Terror. Two rappels reached the col, from where we down-climbed back to camp.

A full report with photos can be found at www.cascade-climbers.com

MIKE LAYTON



The Blob, showing Layton and Wolfe's Plan 9 (and descent). Erik Wolfe



Erik Wolfe cruising on Plan 9. Mike Layton

Mt. Buckner, Complete Southeast Ridge. On my first climb of Goode Mountain two years ago, the striking southeast ridge of Mt. Buckner caught my eye, but I was sure that such an obvious line must have been climbed decades before. After climbing Goode again in 2006, I researched Buckner and found that the ridge remained unclimbed. From the east this ridge contrasts sharply with the halves of the Buckner Glacier, which it divides. Through the climbers' grapevine, I learned that Gordy Skoog had been eyeing this climb since before I was born. We were soon in e-mail contact and planning our attempt. Gordy and I met for the first time at our rendezvous below the Buckner Glacier on August 5, Gordy having come in from the west side of the Cascades, and I from the hamlet of Stehekin to the east. We began the ridge at the bottom of the glacier and soloed several hundred feet of 4th and low 5th class to the end of the lower ridge. This natural break gives access to the last snow and bivouac spot along the route, the high point of a 1980s attempt. On the morning of the 6th we started up the steep ridge crest, apprehensive of gendarmes that we knew lie ahead. The rock was often loose and licheny, although none of the climbing felt dangerously run-out. Steep 5.8 crack climbing led to the top of one of the towers, from which we rappelled off the backside. We bypassed the summit of another tower on the left, via enjoyable, blocky climbing. We soon returned to the crest and,

after a few more pitches, reached the summit (IV 5.8). The second day's climbing had taken 12 hours, and we were rewarded with a beautiful scenic sunset during the 3rd class descent into upper Horseshoe Basin.

BLAKE HERRINGTON

Bonanza Peak, Northwest Ridge. Tim Halder and I climbed Washington's highest non-volcanic peak (9,511') via a new route (V 5.8), following a traverse from the northwest. On August 19 we left the Agnes Creek trail at Swamp Creek and climbed Needle Peak via the north ridge. We carried over Needle and made the first ascents, via low 5th class, of the north and south Anonymity Towers (*Cascade Alpine Guide*, p. 232). In late afternoon we climbed the Dark Glacier and summited Dark Peak as the sun set. Early on the 20th, after a memorable belay-jacket bivouac atop the glacier, we began climbing toward Bonanza Peak. The route follows an obvious high ridge crest that connects Dark Peak to the massive bulk of Bonanza. Climbing along the crest is wild and variable in quality, and this is not a good route to begin during unsettled weather, as you'd have to retrace your steps to retreat. Ten hours of climbing brought us to Bonanza's west summit. The tin-can summit register had two entries, from 1952 and 2003. From here we ran the knife-edge ridge to the main summit, passing some exciting *a cheval* moves and solid 5.8 climbing on the last two pitches. An evening descent down the heavily crevassed Mary Greene Glacier route ended our technical difficulties just as darkness fell.

BLAKE HERRINGTON



Halder and Herrington's Northwest Ridge route (right-hand line) on Bonanza Peak, with descent down the Mary Green Glacier. *John Scurlock*

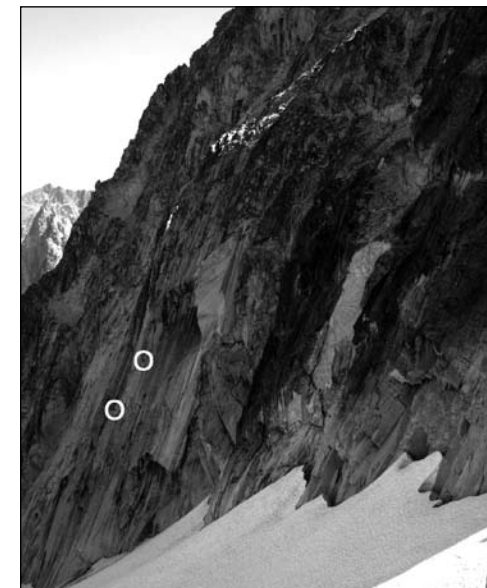
Three Fingers, North Peak, Northeast Face. On February 3, 2007, John Friehe and I climbed a new route (IV WI4+ M3) on the northeast face of Three Fingers. We approached up the Squire Creek valley to the basin under the east face in early morning. A steep gully breaches the cliffy cirque in the center of the basin. We traversed to where the climb began in a narrow gully on the right side of the face. A short pitch of WI3 led to easier climbing for several hundred feet. We exited the gully on the left wall, via an easy pitch of ice that led to a bowl under a headwall. The next three pitches ascend the 600' tier of water ice. The first of these is the crux, giving a sustained pitch of WI4+. For the second and third pitches we continued up the right side of the flow for long ropelengths of WI3+ and WI4. Above the headwall is a snow bowl that we traversed to a gully leading down from the north summit. We climbed the gully to the ridge crest, then followed a short mixed chimney and a rimed-up ramp to the summit of the North Peak. After a short bit on top we descended the north face to the Craig Lakes basin, and back into the valley below the face.



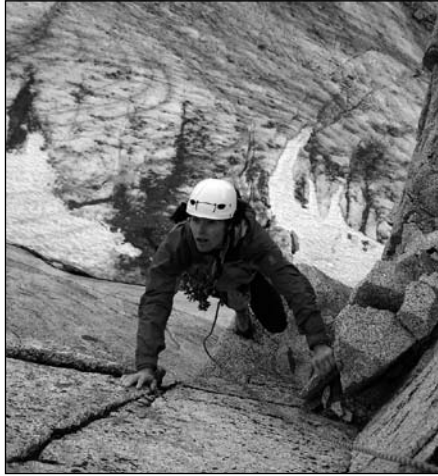
The North Peak of Three Fingers, showing the Northeast Face (Burdick-Friehe, 2007), the only route visible in this image. *John Scurlock*

DAVE BURDICK

Dragontail Peak, Dragonscar. Blessed with easy fall access to the Stuart Range, Jens Holsten and I managed a new route on the northwest face of Dragontail Peak on September 6. Starting to the west of the Boving Route, on the opposite end of the broad slab, we climbed two pitches off the glacier to the top of a small pillar. From this comfortable perch I watched Jens cruise up a beautiful stretch of crack and face climbing. The next pitch would not go so smoothly. Faced with several equally intimidating options, we were left with the crux of the route by a grueling process of elimination: a strenuous bulge through microwave-size blocks and off-size jams. One more long pitch brought us to low-angle terraces. Relieved, we took off our climbing shoes and put away the rope. Unsure of the



Jens Holsten leading pitch 3 (higher circle), with Max Hasson belaying, on the pair's new route, Dragonscar. *Nick Pope*



Jens Holsten finishing the second pitch on Dragonscar.
Max Hasson

route to the top, we wound our way through a thousand or more feet of fun alpine scrambling to the west ridge, then continued with a short hike to the summit. We dubbed the route Dragonscar (2,500', IV 5.11R) after the golden patch of exfoliation, easily spied from the lake below, that we climbed through.

MAX HASSON, AAC

Boola Boola Buttress, Black Velvet. On our fall's first foray into the obscure and unknown, on August 16 Jens Holsten and I explored the exceedingly featured granite of Boola Boola Buttress. Unable to locate the 1984 Jim Yoder route, due to a vague and confusing description, we just started climbing. We aimed for a large left-facing corner that dominates the right side

of the buttress, but deemed this feature too thin and ascended cracks to its right, just west of Michael Layton's route, Thank You, Baby Jesus. The first pitch may or may not have been virgin territory, but the rest of our path most certainly was. We found clean rock down low, culminating in a spicy dihedral on the fourth pitch, and then several ropelengths of loose scrambling. Finally we surmounted the upper headwall in two exciting pitches and topped out onto the Dragontail Plateau just as a storm approached. 1,500', IV 5.10+R.

MAX HASSON, AAC

Mt. McClellan, Granite Mountain, and Pernod Spire, various new routes. On the east face of Mt. McClellan, in the Enchantments near Leavenworth, Rolf Larson and I climbed a new route in July. The Madcap Laughs (IV 5.10+ C1) starts with four pitches on clean rock at the toe of the lower buttress (5.8). Several hundred feet of 4th and 5th class gain the upper pillar. From the notch three steep pitches right of the arête gain the summit blocks (5.10, with a C1 move freed on second). Downclimb west then follow the goats to the north.

Larson and I made the first ascent of The Central Pillar (IV 5.10+ C1) on the north face of Granite Mountain in the Stuart Range (also near Leavenworth), in August. Begin just right of the central pillar's toe, turn the lower roof on its left and continue up the buttress, remaining close to its arête for five 5.10 pitches with one C1 offwidth move (second freed at 5.11-). Stay on the knife-edge arête (5.9) for one long pitch. Several hundred feet of 4th and 5th class gain the summit. Walk off southwest.

Also in August, on the west face of Pernod Spire (Washington Pass), for Peter Hirst's birthday, he, Rolf Larson, and I established Birthday Party (IV 5.10+ C2.) From right center on the lower northwest face, follow the obvious weakness up and left for two pitches (5.8 and 5.10) to the beautiful crack midway up. Climb this crack (5.10). Continue up the steep, clean face (5.10). Trudge up to the spire and climb its apron (4th and 5th). Climb two steep furry pitches (5.10+ C2 and 5.9) directly up to the knife-edge. Follow the knife east to just below the

summit blocks. Bail to the gully (like we did) or take the original West Face (Nelson) finish. In hindsight we should have summited, via the last pitch of the West Face line, and rapped east as per that original line. Instead we rapped the West Face, scurried down, went north through Sandy Gap, and rapped the lower northwest face...highly discouraged, as our descent blows.

DANIEL J. CAPPELLINI, AAC

California

YOSEMITE VALLEY

El Capitan, Lost in Translation. Seven years ago I was inspired by Leo Houlding to find a line on El Cap and do it in perfect alpine style, from the ground to the top, free in a day. I tried this many times, but we got shut down every time. On El Capitan granite, it takes only 6' of blank rock and a 30-pitch rock climb turns to an aid line.

I scoped Lost in Translation for years and always wondered why people hadn't climbed it. It's not a big route like the Salathe, El Corazon, or the Nose, but it was a chance to accomplish a dream to put up a new free line ground-up, something that was never done before on El Capitan. I met Nico Favresse when he was working on one of the coolest free routes in Yosemite: Lappat (5.13a/b R) on Yosemite Falls wall. Nico climbed the route without placing any bolts. We talked a few times about new free lines, and then we decided to go for it on the right side of El Cap.

We scoped the line, and a perfect corner stood out. It looked from the ground that it would go free, but we thought there must be a reason why no one had free-climbed it. But our instinct kept us on track, so we decided to have fun and see where we would get, ground-up.

On August 30 at 8 a.m. we started climbing. We had a big free rack and a few pitons, copperheads, and a bolt kit. We didn't have bivy gear, only three gallons of water, and a few Power Bars. After eight pitches, a majority of them around 5.10/5.10+R, we reached the base of the big corner. We were surprised everything had gone free, with only 300' of the climb left to discover. The corner was grassy, and we couldn't see what was under the grass. It looked like people had attempted the corner before, because there were a few lead bolts and rap anchors. As the light went down we decided to stay and wait for morning. We spent the night on a small ledge dreaming of what could be under the grass. We were only two pitches from the top.

On September 1, after 10 minutes of cleaning, we knew the line would go. After cleaning holds and freeing moves, we estimate the pitch to be 5.12b/c stemming. After that the climbing eased up and allowed us to top out around 12. The dream became reality. Lost in Translation (1,200', 10 pitches, 5.12b/c R).

On September 8 we climbed the route in seven hours.

From Ninov's website, WWW.STONEMONKEYS.NET

El Capitan, Atlantis; Porcelain Wall, House of Cards. In the fall of 2005, just left of Block Party (which I established in spring '05), I completed my second new line on El Capitan, in the alcove area of the southeast face, naming it Atlantis (VI 5.9 A4). I fixed the first two pitches to the top of the alcove over two days in early October, and then committed for another 18 days alone on

the face. This route shares a few pitches with Tempest but turned out to be 75% independent, requiring 74 hand-drilled holes for belays and leading, with no drilled bat hooks. One of the cruxes came on pitch six, under the Great White Shark feature of the South Seas route. Extensive hooking up and left, with a marginal tied-off Arrow for pro, led into the continuous crack system of the route Space. I followed this route for three easier pitches until I broke off on new terrain for most of the remainder of the route. Two-thirds of the way up the wall, I came upon possibly the last major ledge on El Cap that had never been touched. This feature, Bobo Ledge, gave me somewhere to stand and sit other than my portaledge, after 13 days in aiders. Another 60+m pitch led up to the left side of the luxurious Island In The Sky, a very comfy natural ledge on the Pacific Ocean route. Climbing off this ledge I headed up the left side of the Black Tower on my way to the long-awaited summit.

Then, in spring 2006, I turned my focus to the Porcelain Wall. I headed up on another solo mission, looking for unclimbed terrain to scare myself on. Luckily I found it, 100m right of the only other route on the absurdly steep central headwall section. In 1995 Eric Kohl went to this face alone to climb a direct line right up the middle of this not-so-well-known Valley gem. But after fixing the first four pitches, he teamed up with Pete Takeda for the ascent. In similar unintended style, I fixed the first four pitches solo until my good friend Matt Meinzer showed up and wanted in. The first four pitches went very well and completely natural, but up higher remained a few stretches of blank rock, which I knew would be easier to drill through with someone to share the workload. After we regained the highpoint up my three fixed lines, we continued on for 10 more days to the summit of this beautifully colored wall. Our route, House of Cards (VI 5.9 A4+), was characterized by difficult climbing through large roofs and flakes with some rivet ladders to connect delicate features. In the early 90s a section of the wall, about 200' around, fell off, leaving the adjacent rock expanding and dangerous. We hand-drilled 114 holes, including a few into pitch 10's death flake, until I could see what I was attaching myself to. We topped out after 11 days.

DAVID TURNER, *Sacramento, California, AAC*

SIERRA NEVADA

Incredible Hulk, free activity. True to form, Dave Nettle called me in the midst of a heavy Sierra winter. As I often hear from him, "I just want to put a bug in your ear." But no bug was needed. When Dave calls, people listen.

We cruised snow most of the way up, getting to the Hulk as early as we could: early June. On day one we reached the headwall corner that forms the right-hand border of the Hulk headwall, which each of us had spied from Dave and Peter Croft's route, Venturi Effect. Yet another clean and steep corner up high. The end of the corner required bolts for free climbing, and as Dave is the human hammer, we rapidly dulled our bits. The next day we simply tidied up the first four pitches.

We returned a few weeks later, joined by Truckee resident Donald Otten. The three of us freed the pitches to the high point. Then, after a bit of aiding, cleaning, and working, we freed the upper pitches, which connect to the second-to-last Venturi Effect headwall pitch.

We put together approximately five new pitches along with seven pitches from other routes to complete the line, Tradewinds (IV/V 5.11+). It's really a piecing together of various

routes to form a direct, fairly sustained, high-quality free route.

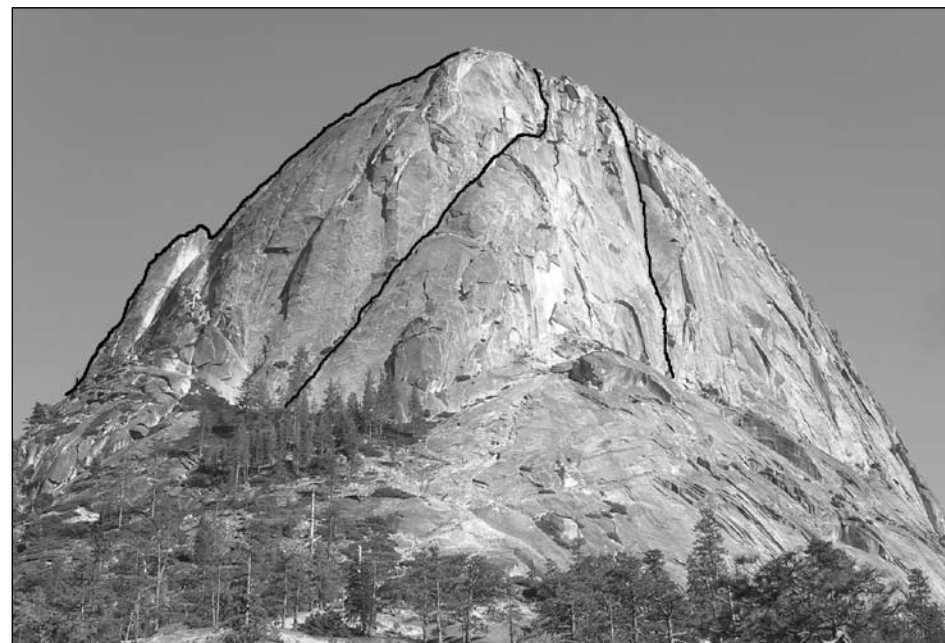
After climbing on the Hulk you won't want to quit, and neither did I. I came back with Jonny Copp, of Boulder, a few weeks later to check out other good-looking lines. We went light and brought no drill. We managed to aid/free four more new pitches between Tradewinds and Venturi Effect but were thwarted midway. We achieved the bivy ledge at about one-third height and got in another pitch-and-a-half before our vision faded into seams and flakes.

I returned again in August with Brent Obinger to free the four lower pitches. We added a few bolts to straighten out the second pitch, which is one of the few true face pitches I have climbed on the feature. The third and fourth pitches each have high-quality steep and varied cracks.

Even with the drill we couldn't piece the line together up high, as it was fraught with large loose blocks and incipient cracks. Nevertheless there is now yet another high quality, four-pitch, 5.12- variant start to a number of Hulk routes, as this line goes directly to the "mid-way ledge" from which many other routes join and depart.

NILS DAVIS

Balloon Dome, various ascents. The Crucible (IV 5.11 A1). Dave Nettle and I started this route in late October 2005 and retreated from the bivy ledge atop pitch five, due to an early winter storm. Chris LaBounty, Neal Harder, and I completed the remaining pitches during the fol-



The upper half of Balloon Dome. Left to right: Northeast Face via Leaning Tower (IV 5.8 A3, Beckey-Cundiff-Hackett, 1971; Free Dike Variation 5.11+, Harder-LaBounty-Thau, 2006), Northwest Ramp (5.10, Harder-LaBounty-Thau, 2006), Northwest Face (5.9 A3, Black-Graber, 1974). Not shown: Netherworld (somewhere right of the Beckey route, but exact line unknown, Jones-Jones, 2005) and, out-of-view to the left, the East Face (5.8) and Boku-Muru (5.9). *Chris LaBounty*



Chris LaBounty belaying Neal Harder on the 5.9+ fourth pitch of Beckey's Leaning Tower en route to the Free Dike Variation. Brandon Thau

lowing June in extreme heat. The route follows a natural line from the San Joaquin River up to the bushy ledge that divides Balloon Dome in half. This line follows a prominent drainage originating from the middle section of the dome, hence slippery rock from pitch three onward. The climb starts in a left-facing dihedral that is below and right of two parallel, splitter, wide cracks three pitches up. The route then follows the left parallel crack (5.11 fuzzy off-width). Super-slick rock leads up

to the base of a right-facing dihedral, which is on the skyline when viewing the route from the river. This dihedral is a mixture of thin A1 and 5.11a climbing for 180'. One more 200' pitch ends the technical climbing, and 3rd and 4th class bushwhacking is required to get to the base of the upper dome.

Northwest Ramp (5.10). This route follows the prominent right-leaning ramp up the northwest face of upper Balloon Dome. Four 200' pitches reach the end of the ramp, then two-and-a-half more lead up steep dihedrals to the summit. Chris LaBounty, Neal Harder and I completed this in June.

Beckey's Leaning Tower Route – Free Dike Variation (IV 5.11+). This follows the excellent Fred Beckey route to the top of the spire that leans against the east face of upper Balloon Dome. From the top of the spire, rappel 50' and belay in the notch from two bolts. Instead of climbing the A3 cracks above the notch, follow the dike that heads left and clip one bolt. Gain the intersecting dike that heads right and clip seven more bolts to the belay (5.11+). Two more pitches lead to the top. Chris LaBounty, Neal Harder, and I completed this in June.

BRANDON THAU



Mt. Clarence King, with the new Northeast Ridge route, its approach gully, and the previously climbed East Ridge indicated. Misha Logvinov, www.verglasphoto.com

Mt. Clarence King, Northeast Ridge. Pavel Kovar and I discovered and completed the first ascent of one of the few remaining unclimbed technical ridges on a major Sierra Nevada mountain, the northeast ridge of Mt. Clarence King in Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Park. We attempted this route during two separate three-day efforts in September. The final attempt, between September 15-17, involved nearly 30 miles of hiking over three high passes, 10,000'+ of vertical gain, one and a half days of technical climbing, and a cold bivouac on the summit ridge. On the approach from the east side of the Sierra, we experienced winds exceeding 50 mph and unusual cold for the time of year. The night before the climb, our thermometer registered 14°F. Fortunately, the weather improved, and we were able to continue. While on the ridge, we belayed 16 pitches and simul-climbed/soloed more than a half of the route. After approximately one mile of technical terrain, the northeast ridge merges with the previously climbed east ridge and follows it to the top of the mountain.

After running out of daylight and enduring a cold bivouac near the summit, we descended the regular route to our base camp in Sixty Lake Basin, walked 13 miles back to the Onion Valley trailhead, and drove home for seven hours, thus staying *mostly* awake for 48 hours straight.

The route features a lot of sustained and exposed ridge traversing and is rated IV+ 5.7.

MISHA LOGVINOV

Upper Castle Rocks, various ascents. Dave Nettle joined me, in May 2005, on my first excursion to Upper Castle Rocks in Sequoia National Park. We knew of only two routes in the area: The Gargoyle (5.10 A1), on South Guard, and the Beckey Route (5.8 A2) on Amphitheater Dome. After figuring out where the Gargoyle route started, we freed its 10' A1 tension traverse, at 5.10. The rock was not as clean as Castle Rock Spire or the Fin. Contrary to the Sequoia-Kings Canyon guide, The Gargoyle starts at the top of a 4th/5th class, right-leaning ramp that starts at the base of the north gully. The next day we climbed The South Arête on the Little Spire (5.11-). Our route follows the broken south ridge for three long pitches to the base of the Little Spire summit block. Two fantastic pitches lead up overhanging and well-protected face climbing to the pointed summit. The exposed belay and arête climbing on the second pitch are spectacular.

In June 2006 Chris LaBounty, Neal Harder, and I climbed three new routes. Axes of Evil (5.11) starts at the lone pine tree at the base of the South Guard/Ax gully. It follows face features for three pitches, before entering the gully for four more pitches. Golden Axe (5.11a A0) follows the only weakness on the improbable south face of the Ax. This six-pitch route starts at the base of the Ax/Amphitheater Dome gully and follows the left leg of the obvious "wishbone"



Pavel Kovar simul-climbing about halfway up the Northeast Ridge, with the summit of Mt. Clarence King in the background. Misha Logvinov, www.verglasphoto.com

crack system. We did not free the section between the third and fourth bolt on the fourth pitch, but it will likely go free. Lastly, we did an enjoyable two-pitch route near camp (point 9,081' southeast of Castle Rocks). It follows the obvious chicken-headed pillar that lies against the southeast face of the dome. One tricky 5.10 bolt-protected move guards the summit and a nice view of Sequoia.

BRANDON THAU



Polemonium Pillar, and the southwest side of Mt. Russell on the far right, home to multiple routes. David Harden

Polemonium Pillar. Approaching Mt. Russell from the Whitney-Russell col, while dropping down toward Russell's towering west face, the climber is stunned by the beautiful cracks, corners, and arêtes that make up the south and west sides of the mountain. Often overlooked is the thousand-foot-high south face that drops down from the ridgeline extending off of the long west ridge of Mt. Russell. In July Micha Miller and I climbed a route up a series of left-facing corners in the center of this face. It tops out just right of the sharp prow that forms a high point on long west ridge. To descend we traversed toward Russell and dropped down the west couloir. We named both the formation and the route Polemonium Pillar (IV 5.10b).

Most of the climbing was in the 5.9 range, with a shallow, flared crack on the third pitch providing the crux. Insecure jams and questionable pro made things interesting. Lovely blossoms of Sky Pilot (*Polemonium*) scattered on the ledges give the route its name.

DAVID HARDEN, AAC

Mt. Whitney, ...Lost. Our climb was spectacular and, compared to our expectations, epic. Not counting 8,000' vertical of carrying loads in the first 24 hours. Not counting getting snowed off



...Lost (not showing the scramble to the summit), the only climb on the entire southwest quadrant of Mt. Whitney. Doug Robinson



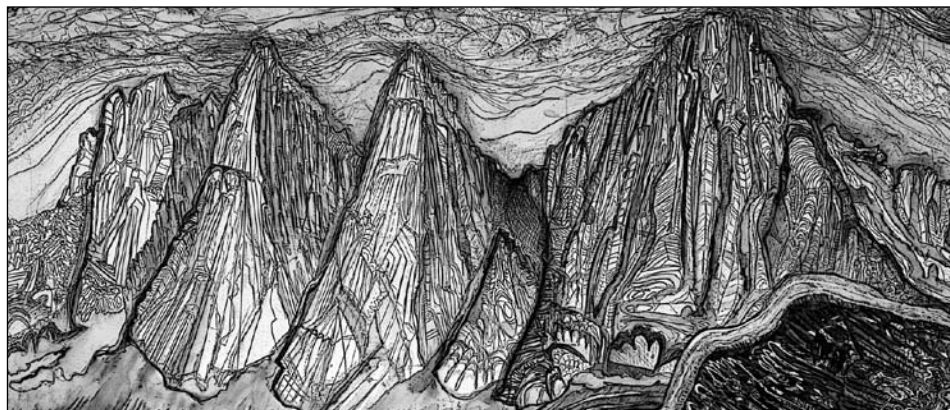
The venerable Doug Robinson, ...Lost, pitch two. Michael Thomas

the Fishhook Arête, our training climb. Not counting our tarp shelter ripping in half in the middle of the night, exposing us to a four-inch snowfall dump at 12,000'. And not to mention venturing the first moves onto the entire southwest quadrant of a fairly popular peak. No, the real epic didn't even start until Michael Thomas and I roped up at 8 a.m. on October 3, taking a middle arête among many choices. We re-climbed the nine pitches we had done before dark two years ago, including two 5.9 sections.

Then we tried to weasel around the headwall, but it forced us back to front and center. Straight up was steep and delicate and likely 5.10, but it was a relief that protection showed up. Soon after, it got dark. But the moon was nearly full, sparkling off the white granite in beautiful and climbable ways. Several hours later, a best-guess choice led us into moon shadow and under a nasty-looking block. Couldn't tell what was holding it up over our heads. In the midst of delicate climbing around it, my foot slipped and my headlamp popped off and sailed down the gully. Fortunately, that kept us from trying to further climb under that block's eerie tonnage. We found another way. To make a long story short, after 20 pitches we unroped at 2:30 a.m. It was so cold, with a biting wind blowing at 30+ mph, that with all our clothes on and walking uphill we could not stay warm. Summit at 4:00 a.m.; a three-hour nap in the stone shelter on top.

Our first ascent so much longer than expected, we called the route "...Lost." Lost for years on the backside of Whitney. Lost our way several times, as on the crux headwall and up under the threatening block. Lost a headlamp. However, "Not all who wander are lost" (J.R.R. Tolkien).

DOUG ROBINSON, AAC



The Whitney Cirque: east faces of Third, Day, and Keeler needles and Mt. Whitney. Renan Ozturk

Day Needle, new variation and Whitney Cirque linkup. In late July Jake “The Snake” Whitaker and I climbed a new direct free variation to the East Face of Day Needle in the Mt. Whitney cirque. Prior to our climb I had already learned about Jake’s horrendous epic on his initial onsight solo attempt of this line. He and his free-soloing companion had collaborated in their gusto, only to get trapped in a formidable alcove a third of the way up. After yelling for a rescue produced only useless helicopters, Jake committed to the insecure downclimb to rescue his petrified partner.

Under this suspicious pretext I agree to climb with Jake for the first time and take part in his emotional cleansing. This time, however, I was happy we could use a 100’ 9mm rope, some wires, and a set of Camalots, to #3. Above the previous high point I encountered a burly 5.10 off-fists crack, which I protected by placing RPs in a seam behind my back as Jake simuled below me. Above, Jake onsighted the crux, a brilliant 5.11 overhanging hand-and-finger crack on a golden headwall, close to the 14,000’ summit, thereby completing his catharsis.

A week later Jake and I returned to the Whitney Cirque and completed a one-day free linkup of some major faces that form the iconic California skyline. With our 100’ piece of cord we first repeated our Day Needle free variation (V 5.11), then downclimbed the classic East Face (III 5.7) of Mt. Whitney, looped back into Keeler Needle’s Harding Route (V 5.10c, onsight for me), then glissaded a snowfield and onsighted the Western Front (IV 5.10c) on Mt. Russell. During our scramble off Russell, we watched a huge lenticular of fire smoke overcome the highest point in the contiguous U.S. As the setting sun descended through this anomaly, it cast a rare neon red, day’s-end alpenglow, capping our adventure.

RENAN OZTURK, AAC

Keeler Needle, The Strassman Route. Yup. Eight days. Constant work, no rests. And that’s why I ran out of food and water. Not to mention that this was completely unknown terrain. I am not 20 years old anymore.

What would motivate a 46 year-old guy to solo a new route on a remote backcountry wall, when he knows what’s involved? As any woman knows, four things motivate men: money, sex, food, and ego. I would be deprived of the first three on the list, so it must be that seventh

deadly sin of pride. And there’s more—a race, a friendly 20-year competition to see who would be the first to climb all nine east faces of the Whitney Crest. I won and became President of the East Face Club. Five of those climbs were by first ascents. If I could now do a first ascent on each face, I would become Lord Overseer of the East Face Club.

So in September I hiked in to the east face of Keeler Needle with a light pack and food for three days that could be stretched to six. I’d left gear and ropes fixed from an earlier solo attempt that floundered after two pitches. I planned to reach my high point in a single day. But I was terribly out of shape, and the altitude didn’t help. By the time I reached the snowfield at Keeler’s base it was well past dark and well past my bedtime. With my only sleeping bag on the wall, I had to keep moving. The snowfield was frozen solid, and I had no ice axe or crampons. I inched upward through the night, arriving at the base with near frostbitten fingers, as the first light of dawn bathed me in warmth.

After a brief nap, I reached my high point and immediately ran into an overhang, followed by a perfect little ledge and another overhang. This one looked malicious, so I found the finger ledge of contentment that allowed me to traverse right into another crack system. It looked like it might end on a bivy ledge. I threw myself at the continuously wide crack, climbing high above my last piece, only to realize that what looked like a ledge above wasn’t a ledge at all. Dejected, I descended back to the ledge where I started.

The next morning I moved back into the original crack and found an exquisite hand crack in superb granite. I also found pitons and slings from climbers who had gone the wrong way on the Harding Route or were descending it. Afternoon thunder, rain, and hail spurred me upward to a magnificent ledge and the promise of low-angle scrambling. But more haul-bag hassles ate up my time. The scrambling would have to wait until tomorrow.

I could see a beautiful corner with perfect double hand-jam crack leading to the massive ledge that juts out in the middle of Keeler Needle. From the ledge easy ramps led to a slightly-less-than-vertical wall of fins. As I descended back to the big ledge, I looked up and wondered how I would fare tomorrow on a horror show that I dubbed the “Miserable Pitch.” A spectacular sunset treated me. My position on the ledge had me in the exact center of a giant half-sphere formed by Whitney and the



The Strassman Route on Keeler Needle. Several other routes climb this face. Michael Strassman

Whitney Needles. It was as if I was looking out from the inside of a crystal ball. This is why we climb in the mountains.

The next day, I attacked the Miserable Pitch. The rock quality changed to scaly loose flakes and flaring, hard-to-protect seams. I had been going on half rations and the food was nearly gone. I had maybe one swig of water left. During the entire climb I had a mental jukebox playing songs in my head. But now the jukebox had stopped. I was starting to lose it. Fatigued and confused I kept messing up simple yet essential tasks. Then I looked up at the next pitch: downward-pointing loose flakes on a deteriorating overhanging wall.

I wanted to tell someone of my predicament. What would I say? I certainly didn't want a rescue. I knew I could make it to the top. I dialed my friend Alice. "Hi this is Mike. I have no food or water. I probably will not summit until Saturday. Maybe you can convince Timmy to hike in and help carry out the gear." She cut me off. "I'm not going to be responsible for convincing him." The cell phone died.

Four days climbing Keeler Needle alone, and I was out of food and water. With much effort, and to avoid the demonic face above me, I spent the rest of the afternoon getting to a ledge that I remembered from the Harding Route. But when I finally got the haul bag and myself over to it, it wasn't the ledge at all. On this ledge I slept with my feet dangling and the continuous feeling that I would roll off the ledge into the black night.

Come morning, I got moving early. My attitude had changed. Goddamn it, I said to myself, I am going to attack that crack. It turned out to be far tamer than it looked. Above, I climbed a long continuous corner right on the edge of the south and east faces. I climbed past sunset, past exhaustion.

The next morning became the next afternoon, and I didn't feel up for climbing. But I was very close to the ledges that might get me out early. I started climbing. The next part was easy and enjoyable. I reached the ledges, but lack of food and water was playing tricks on me. I heard voices. It turned out to be hikers on Day Needle. I called out, "I've had no food or water for two days. Do you think you could help me?"

I had reached the end of my rope. The ledge system was a longer than I thought. I untied and free soloed. A thousand feet later I was on the talus field of Keeler's west slope. I ran down to the trail as the sun balanced on the horizon. There was a quart of water, some energy bars and salami and cheese. I burst into tears. I arrived back just as true darkness fell over the Whitney Needles and began hauling the bag to my sleeping spot. Of course it got stuck.

In the morning I packed the bag for a big impact: 2,000' to the snowfields below. Then I climbed to the top and yelled to people on the trail that I needed more food and water. I used a hiker's cell phone to stop any rescue attempts, and a ranger I met on the trail made an official call, but the helicopter still came. I was afraid it would land on Mt. Whitney and hand me a bill.

When the hikers heard my story, I became a bit of a celebrity. Beautiful women offered me their gorp and others wanted to know the answer to that one question: how do you go to the bathroom? Someone offered to carry my climbing gear down, and suddenly I was alone again. I staggered down the trail and back to town with a beard, burnt lips, sore muscles, hands that wouldn't close, and numb fingertips. A friend asked, "Did you learn anything?"

I learned that I could do it.

MICHAEL STRASSMAN

Mt. Chamberlain, I Fink Therefore I Am. Having long been fascinated with reports and photos of Mt. Chamberlain, deep behind the Sierra Crest, I finally made the trip in July. Ever ready for adventure, the energizer bunny himself, Jonny Copp of Boulder, was my partner.

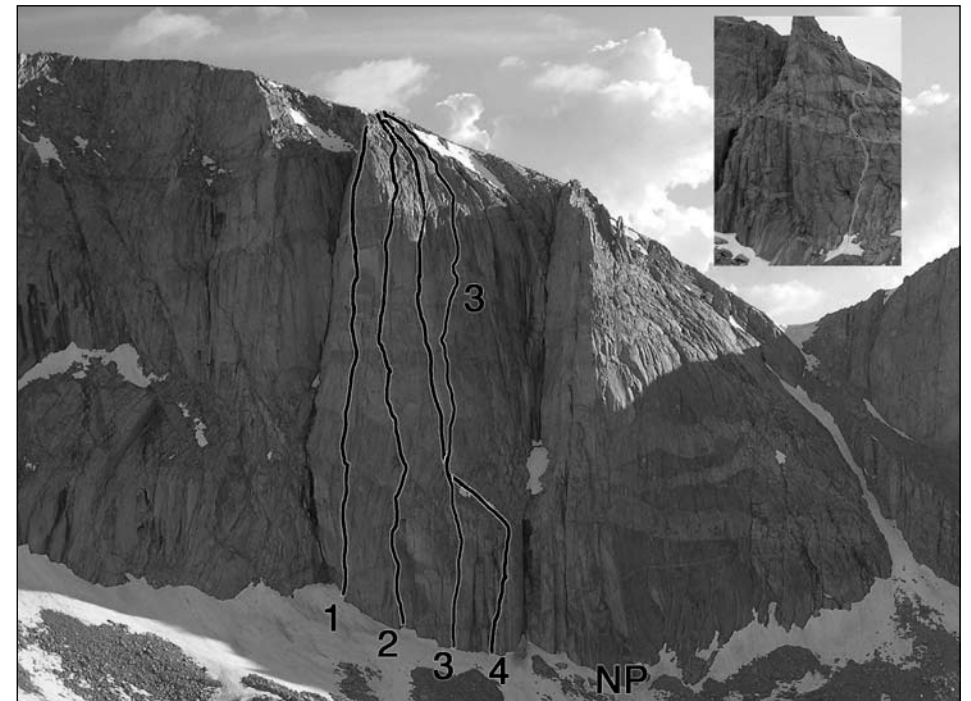
Jonny and I rendezvoused in the sleepy town of Lone Pine. He had flown to L.A. to visit family, and I dropped down from Bishop. The forecast was grim. As we organized and drove up the Whitney Portal road, the clouds conspired and swirled in blackness above the crest.

With a late afternoon start, we reached Trail Camp well after dark. As with most of my Sierra ventures, we were underequipped, with one bivy sack and no tent. It rained on us all night.

We set off the next morning damp in the fog and cold, but it's the Sierra, how bad can it be? It rained most of the way over to the camp in the Crabtree Lakes area at the base of the wall. The afternoon cleared a bit and gave us time to scope our options. The dry evening allowed us to discover bouldering reminiscent of Tuolumne Meadows.

Not sure, because of the weather, if we would climb, we were pleasantly surprised when the clouds held off just long enough for us to piece together an entirely independent eight-pitch line up the right side of the northeast face.

This line starts in a shallow corner system, fairly indistinct among the rows of these along the base of the wall. The third pitch is a scramble over a large ledge and shares a belay with the



Mt. Chamberlain: (1) Asleep at the Wheel (V 5.11+, Haden-Pennings, 2001). (2) East Pillar (V 5.11a, Brugger-DeKlerk, 1992). (3) I Fink Therefore I Am (V 5.11- A1, Copp-Davis, 2006). (4) Breaking Point (V 5.11, Nettle-Zanto), a free variation (another is Hot Dam, V 5.10d, Binder-Brennan, 1995) to the original Northeast Face (V 5.10 A2, Fiddler-Harrington, 1980). The unnamed face on the left, reputed to have bad rock, has no routes. On the North Pillar, Barracuda (5.10, Nettle-Thau, 2006; foreshortened inset photo by Brandon Thau) begins from the snowpatch just up and right of the letters "NP," while the 1979 Farrell-Rowell (V 5.10; not shown) climbs a continuous chimney/crack system to the left. Nils Davis

top of the fourth pitch of Dave Nettle's route, Breaking Point. The following pitches climb the obvious diagonal crack system splitting the face proper. The first is marked by a quartzite-like ramp; the next holds the only aid (should go free with more cleaning and possibly a bolt or two) on the route and is also the most spectacular: a 180' crack-switching splitter up a broad wall. From there, it's back to ramps and corners.

I Fink Therefore I Am, although not the quality of the Hulk or the Valley, is a quality, fun, and direct V 5.11- A1 in a beautiful and pristine setting.

NILS DAVIS

Mt. Chamberlain, Barracuda. On July 12 Dave Nettle and Brandon Thau established Barracuda (9 pitches, 5.10) to the right of the Rowell route on the North Pillar. The route is reportedly complicated to describe, and a report was unavailable at press time.

Idaho

Baron Falls Tower, Carpal Tunnel. John Friehe and I headed out to Idaho's best-kept secret, the Sawtooth Range, in mid-August with the intent of spending four days climbing some of the excellent established routes in the area. We forwent the usual routes and crowds on the Elephant's Perch and hiked back toward Warbonnet Peak. Our plan of attempting an established route changed when we got lost at 3:00 a.m. on the approach to our planned climb. Lucky for us, fortune favors the foolish, and once the sun came up John and I spotted a sweet line on the southwest face of Baron Falls Tower. We named the route Carpal Tunnel due to the finger-intensive crux, as well as the most impressive inset dike either of us has ever seen, running roughly parallel to the route approximately 100 yards to its right. We stretched out (and then some) our 70m rope on each pitch, which allowed us to complete the route in six pitches; future parties should expect additional pitches if they do not use a 70m rope, as well as simul-climb.



Carpal Tunnel on the southwest face of Baron Falls Tower. John Friehe

The route parallels the dike for the first four pitches and then joins it at the top of pitch four, where you climb under a chockstone, wedged in the dike, that is as large as a bus. Pitch five climbs wedged blocks to gain the top of the chockstone. The rock was exceptional, minus a brief section of kitty litter.

From the summit descend east via two single-rope raps to a ridge that connects Baron Falls Tower to Point 9,211'. Once across the ridge, traverse south around Point 9,263'. Cross over to the south ridge of Point 9,211' and locate a gully system that diagonals northeast across the face. Downclimb this gully until, halfway down, a different gully, trending southeast, appears. This gully requires one single-rope rappel and a lot of downclimbing.

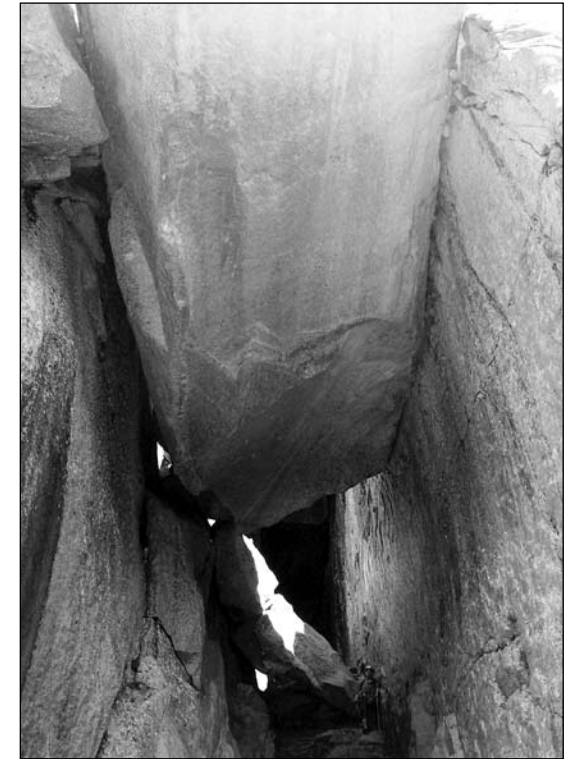
Carpal Tunnel checked in at IV 5.11- A0 and was as good as anything on the Elephant's Perch. The icing on the cake? We returned just in time to enjoy Idaho's other best-kept secret, Josh Ritter, who played a free show at the Red Fish Lake Lodge.

BRYAN SCHMITZ

Utah

ZION NATIONAL PARK

Thunderbird Wall, first free ascent. Michael Anderson and Rob Pizem made the first free ascent, with variations, of one of Zion's biggest routes, the Thunderbird Wall (16 pitches, VI 5.13- R). Both climbers led or followed every pitch free over May 31-June 1. Anderson's recent free climbing efforts in Zion have resulted in ten FFAs of grade IV or longer routes, most of them grade V or VI. See Anderson's feature earlier in this *Journal*.



John Friehe beneath the greyhound-sized chockstone on Carpal Tunnel. Bryan Schmitz

Touchstone Wall, first free ascent. The free climbing season in Zion started off with a bang, as Rob Pizem and I freed the last holdout of the trinity of classic Zion big walls. Moonlight Buttress fell in 1992, Spaceshot in 2005, and finally the Touchstone Wall in 2006. Touchstone was a reluctant project for me, despite prodding from various sources, not the least of which was Rob. I had scoured the wall with binoculars and couldn't see a free route. The last straw came from Zion pioneer Jeff Lowe, who implored me to "take care of" Touchstone. My priorities changed.

We tried the route over a January weekend, but were stymied by the brutally thin second pitch. We returned in February to explore a promising face climbing variation to the right of pitch two, which we established from the ground up. Rob placed two bolts from aid slings, but the second bolt was a spinner. From that position, I free-climbed 15' to a stance to tap in the third bolt. This was hairy. The wall's angle and small holds made the hand drilling tenuous. Meanwhile, there was a bad bolt below, followed by a ledge. I only managed a few taps of the hammer before I felt compelled to down climb to a rest and repeat.

The next day, February 12, we made our attempt. Rob led the 5.13a fist pitch easily. I followed, but struggled with the crux, a lingering effect of the lead bolting the day before. I took pitch two, but failed on my first two attempts. I was demoralized; convinced that the fatigue

from the previous day was leading to failure. In desperation, I finally linked the 5.13b crux on my third try. I traversed left to rejoin the route and barely executed the 5.12a moves over the roof to a no-hands-rest. Rob followed the pitch on his first try, letting out a few screams, which thrilled the tourists assembled below.

The 5.12d third pitch was a change of pace, as the route transitions from viciously thin face climbing to a steep finger crack. Fortunately, I redpointed it first try, as the sun was sapping our strength. Rob soon followed, and from there we blasted to the summit. Our fatigue made some of the more “trivial” pitches feel harder than they should, but we held on nevertheless. We summited (1,000', 8 pitches, IV 5.13b) and descended by 5:30 p.m., seven hours after we had started, and just in time to make the 10-hour drive back to Colorado for work on Monday morning.

MICHAEL ANDERSON, AAC

The Birthday Bash; Free Lhasa; and The Monkeys Always Send, Dude. In late winter Cedar Wright and I opened three new free climbs in Zion National Park in an “onsight in a day” style. These adventures were preceded by a gut-wrenching journey to Kashmir in which we assisted with earthquake relief in a Himalayan war zone. After flying back to Salt Lake our efforts began with a team-free repeat of the quality route Wind, Sand, and Stars in Kolob Canyon, in which we endured a frigid night atop 8,000' Paria Point. During the shiver-bivy it became clear that our experiences in Kashmir had amplified our threshold for suffering, friendship, and above all our appreciation for the rich climbing lifestyle we lead.

With this in mind we drove into Zion proper and spied an unclimbed line, to the right of Monkey Finger, ending in a dramatic roof. We started up a crack system, clipping old Olevsky-drilled angles, and continued by tip-tapping up poorly protected metallic patina. The last pitch was freed on top-rope by headlamp and is still awaits a lead. It climbs changing corners past a 00 TCU offset, an undercling out the roof, and finishes on a headwall splitter that requires wild moves to link face features above RPs and small cams. The Monkeys Always Send, Dude (900', 5.11+R C2 or 5.12).

Next, lured by a beautiful Eric Draper photo featuring a clean 500' continuous headwall splitter, we embarked to climb Mt. Kinesava roughly via Lhasa (5.11 A1, Anker-Quinn, 1990). We would follow the first few and last few pitches of the original line. After successfully freeing the lower pendi-point and encountering a wild tunnel pitch in the middle of the wall, we were shocked to find that the giant virgin splitter above was a monster offwidth—the dreaded Tatonka Knuk! Cedar began by leading a 200' varied wide crack, pushing single cams for extended sections to a perfect ledge. This set me up for the crux grovel, consisting of four-inch enduro hand stacks, capped by an exposed squeeze through a roof. The ankle gobies and bloodshed from this pitch, coupled with the three rounds of antibiotics I took in Kashmir, won me my very own systemic infection in my right leg. The Free Lhasa (1,300', 5.11+).

“Ahhh, Keflex, the breakfast of champions,” I muttered as I squeezed puss out of my ankle and racked for our third new route in the Zion area. It followed the obvious continuous system just left of the route Free or Burn and the great arch formation to its right. Cedar lead the crux second pitch, on his birthday, after two hours of work and a 40' whipper that scarred his forehead. The Birthday Bash (700', 5.12c).

I don't think the people of Kashmir could ever image a place like Zion or our dirtbag

climbing lifestyle. In the end we are compassionate for those who suffer, and grateful for our experiences on the dreamy sandstone.

RENAN OZTURK, AAC

Peak 6,482', The Reach Around; and Peak 6,482', and Slow and Delirious. In spring 2005 two routes were started on Peak 6,482', unnamed but known in the local climbing community as G-1. G-1 is short for Mt. Greer, named in honor of the Greer brothers after their successful attempt on the west face in 2005. G-1 is located east of the Nature Center in Zion Canyon, two major peaks south of Bridge Mountain. Slow and Delirious and the lower half of The Reach Around follow a major weakness up the middle of the central buttress leading to the main summit.

The best access to G-1 is by following the Watchman Trail in its entirety. The popular part of the trail ends at a viewpoint above the first and lower cliff band. From the viewpoint continue east past the sign that reads “No Trail Maintenance Beyond This Point.” This historic part of the trail takes you within 500' of the start of the routes. The Reach Around (IV 5.10+A0) is the first known route from the main canyon side of the peak and was put up by the Greer brothers, Brody and Jared, in early spring 2005, over two days with a heavy bender in



The west face of Peak 6,482' (a.k.a. G-1), showing its only routes: The Reach Around (left) and Slow and Delirious. Bryan Bird

between. On day one of their ascent Carl Oswald and I, after a serious effort at the bar, climbed the first six pitches of Slow and Delirious (not to be confused with fast and furious), while the Greers were establishing the first 300' of The Reach Around. Carl and I ran out of gas by late afternoon and descended the first chimney/gully north of the top of the tower on pitch six. After one rappel we downclimbed 400', drilled an anchor, and rappelled down to find our friends' fixed lines on The Reach Around.

The Greers finished their route the following day. The Reach Around begins roughly in the middle of the peak, 50' left of Slow and Delirious on the right side of a 100'-tall square buttress with large ponderosa pines on top. TRA starts with a low-angle crack that faces south (the rest of the route faces west). It then follows vertical cracks that lead into the major gully on the north side of the main summit ridge. Nearly halfway up the peak the route breaks left into the major gully and curls around to the summit.

A year or so later I returned with Joe French. We began by following the previously attempted Slow and Delirious line. The first pitch begins in a finger crack in a right-facing corner with a sharp roof 30' off the ground. We followed cracks up the center of the ridge. This route offers many options from its abundant ledges. We tried to follow the cleanest path of least resistance. That path turned out to be a good blend of quality cracks, corners, and chimneys, along with bits of typical Zion choss. Three pitches from the top we moved left off the main ridge, across the first chimney/gully system north of the summit, to the next buttress between that gully and The Reach Around gully. Joe and I climbed 14 pitches up to 5.10+ (5.7R) on this enjoyable route. We descended The Reach Around, which required much downclimbing and route-finding to locate the rappels. Our adventure went at IV 5.10+R and took 11-12 hours car-to-car.

BRYAN BIRD

Gatekeeper Wall, Gatekeeper Crack. In October Dave Jones, Chris Owens, and I established this route on the Gatekeeper Wall, which is the first formation lower than and east of the Watchman. We started up the canyon where the NPS has their shuttle bus storage facility. Our route follows a thin crack system that starts 35'

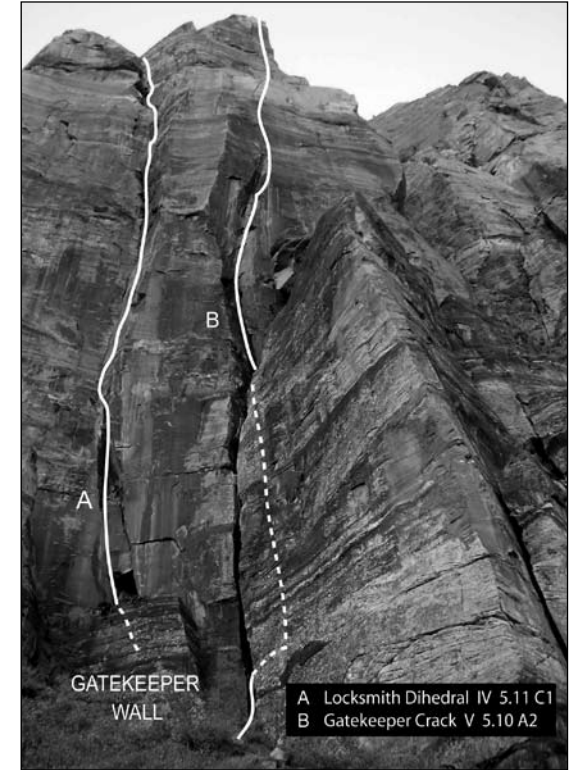
right of the Locksmith Dihedral. The first pitch uses a few points of aid past a chockstone to gain a loose section of sandy talus behind a 200' finger-like exfoliated flake. On the second pitch Dave followed a broken crack system on great rock to a small stance. That night we visited the emergency room, because Chris had lacerated his fingers when a 200-pound block rolled over them. He was now resigned to juggling, organizing belays, and heckling the leaders. The next day, on the third pitch,



Brian Smoot juggling the excellent fourth pitch of Gatekeeper Crack. Dave Jones

I followed the cracks, overhanging there, to a sling belay. Dave led the beautiful fourth pitch (C2), which mostly ascended a thin face crack for 165' to a welcome ledge, which was big enough for one person to lie down on. After a short jog right, I led through an improbable and exciting roof, with ledge-fall potential, to an exposed belay beneath the final steep headwall crack. The good rock quality continued on the last pitch, which ended at one of the best top-outs any of us had ever done. We were excited about the quality of the climbing. We rappelled the route using 60m ropes. We only placed five pitons on the climb. Otherwise every pitch, all of which had at least some aid, went clean at C1 or C2. I recommend this aid route (V 5.10 A2) because it's not too hard, has a clean, aesthetic crack system, and is away from the crowds.

BRIAN SMOOT



Gatekeeper Wall. Brian Smoot

Montana

Pensive Tower, Gloomy Ruminations. Over a gorgeous Labor Day weekend, Bryan Schmitz, Neil Kauffman, and I ventured into the West Fork of Rock Creek in the Beartooth Mountains and completed a new route on Pensive Tower. The tower's west face is bordered on each edge by aesthetic ribs, and the Kennedy-McCarty ascends the left-hand, northern rib. Our route, Gloomy Ruminations (IV 5.10) follows the right-hand rib for eight pitches, most of which were between 60m and 70m long.

We surmounted the lowest band of loose red rock via a right-leaning dihedral near the left edge of the face. Hike right across a scree field to the broken notch below the upper rib. Another blocky, easy pitch leads to the rib proper. From here, the quality of the rock and route improve greatly. Three distinct steps, separated by spacious belay ledges, form the rib. Surmount the first step via a slanting dihedral system just right of the rib crest (5.9). Both the second and third steps tackle vague corner systems just left of the crest. The rib ends in a notch of dark rock below the upper headwall. Pitch six (5.8) ascends short, stacked corners to easier terrain. The crux pitch passes several difficulties, including a tight chimney with a huge hollow flake. The final pitch takes a difficult dihedral (5.9+). Several hundred feet of 3rd and 4th class terrain leads to the summit.

TREVOR BOWMAN

Wyoming

GRAND TETON NATIONAL PARK

Mt. Moran, South Buttress Prow to top of buttress. On a cool, crisp autumn day in September, Hans Johnstone, Greg Collins, and I paddled across Leigh Lake in the dawn's early light. We hiked from the outlet of Leigh Canyon to the base of Mt. Moran's towering South Buttress and did the standard entrance pitch onto the higher of the two large ramps at the base of the South Buttress. We scrambled and soloed up the ramp to its western edge and its junction with the South Buttress route. Once here we roped up again and ran the belay to the large east-facing dihedral on the prow of the buttress. Greg led a long 5.10 pitch high into this dihedral. Hans then led a short, cryptic traverse and run-out face pitch that established us below the overhanging crack in the dihedral's left wall. This pitch fell to me. Amazingly, the pitch went free and with little cleaning, though I fell at the crux, an overhanging, lichenous, rattly finger lock. Once it was a bit cleaner, and with sausages for fingers, Greg free-climbed the pitch following it. One of the best crack pitches in the Tetons, it seemed in the 5.12b range. It overhangs perhaps 20' to 30' in its 100'. A short pitch, with a traverse left, finished our time in the dihedral and put us in position for a 5.11- finish that exits at the apex of the prow, and joins the exit to the South Buttress Direct. From here it is possible to escape east to a series of rappels that lead to the base of the buttress, or continue up 2,500' of easy 5th class to the summit. All of us, having done the shin-splinting slab-paddle to the summit, opted for the rappels. We have left to a future party the integral ascent of the line to the summit.

BEAN BOWERS, AAC

Mt. Owen, North Ridge, first winter ascent. My partner, local innkeeper Hans Johnstone, and I, a guide, completed the first winter ascent of the North Ridge of Mt. Owen on March 18, 2007. One of the longest rock climbs in Grand Teton National Park, the route took us a very long day, 18 hours from car to summit. We circumnavigated the peak, first climbing the Koven Couloir, then descending the Briggs Ski Diagonal route and crossing the Run Don't Walk Couloir before ascending the 1,000m route and descending the Koven to Glacier Gulch.

GREG COLLINS, AAC

Grand Teton, Squeeze Box to junction with Hossack-MacGowan. On February 6, 2007 Hans Johnstone and I climbed Squeeze Box (1,000', IV M7 A0), a new route [climbed to easy snow near the intersection with the Hossack-MacGowan Couloir—Ed.] on the north face of the Grand Teton. The line lies between Shea's Chute and the Alex Lowe Memorial Route and ascends a weakness up a beautiful granite buttress. I spotted the line during a flurry of activity with various partners in October 2004, which gave us the best ice conditions in the Tetons in years. Brian Harder and I attempted the line on January 28, 2007, climbing about halfway up while excavating considerable snow from the cracks, before retreating due to approaching darkness. With clear weather and high pressure continuing, I was excited to make another attempt.

Hans and I began skiing from the Taggart-Bradley trailhead at 4 a.m. and began the

more technical climbing up and onto the north face five hours later. The climbing was challenging and interesting, with technical difficulties up to M7 (5.10 rock equivalent). A challenging squeeze chimney, too narrow to climb facing in, offered little in the way of climbable ice and had me grunting and thrashing. Above was a beautiful ice gully, which brought us to the black chimney. For the next two ropelengths we climbed steep rock with axes and crampons. The second-to-last pitch involved a tension traverse across smooth slabs to reach another set of bottomed-out seams with minuscule and insecure features. In spots protection was difficult, but the route unfolded nicely, as we were treated to alpenglow on Teewinot. With great desire to complete the route, I darted up the last pitch by headlamp. Given the insecure nature of the climbing, success was never guaranteed. We rappelled the route and downclimbed across the Teton Glacier to our skis.

After switching boots and packing up, we made sweet turns on good snow down the glacier. Lower, the descent became a nightmare when we started breaking through the crust into soft and unconsolidated snow, often resulting in face-plants followed by my pack smacking the back of my head. After one of these episodes at the bottom of Glacier Gulch, while excavating myself I was excited to discover wolf tracks.

With mixed climbing techniques and skills increasing, there are countless opportunities for other new routes on the north face of the Grand Teton and throughout the range.

STEPHEN KOCH

WIND RIVER MOUNTAINS

Wind Rivers, various ascents. In the Cirque of the Towers, the south face of Wolf's Head—specifically the striking crack left of the Beckey South Face route, splitting the upper half of the face and leading up to Darth Vader tower—recently caught the attention of several talented climbers.

In fall 2005 Dave Anderson and Jamie Selda established Canus (III 5.11c), which climbs the first three pitches (5.10c, 5.11c, 5.10d) of this new crack before traversing off right (but still left of the Beckey Route) into two more excellent crack pitches (5.10d, 5.10b) to the ridgecrest.

In July Greg Collins and Kent McBride started with the first two pitches of the Beckey route, then climbed a hard traversing face pitch (5.12d), placing three bolts and two pins on lead, to gain the upper crack. The upper pitches were thin hands and fingers, 5.11a and 5.11b/c. They fixed rap anchors on the descent, which can be made with a single 70m rope. Their route, White Buffalo (260m, III 5.12d), is the hardest reported route in the Winds.

Anderson writes: "The link up of the two routes—tentatively called the White Wolf—would be, in my opinion, the 'Astroman of the Winds.' It is a little shorter than Astroman, but with an enduro-like corner, a tough squeeze/offwidth pitch, a hard boulder pitch (that can be aided/pendulumed through), and other fine jam cracks up high, it is a great climb. The rock is good overall, but a wire brush might be recommended gear for the first two pitches until they get climbed more."

Anderson also did the Cirque of the Towers Traverse (16 miles of trail, plus four miles of 3rd, 4th, and 5th class climbing, up to 5.9) in 13:25 car-to-car, and climbed Gannet Peak in 8:20 from Green River Lakes, 17 hours for the 36-mile round trip. Each time is about an hour-and-a-half faster than the previous record.

In mid-August on the fin-like feature of Ambush Peak's far-right northeast face, Renan Ozturk and Cedar Wright climbed what they think to be a new route, Attack of the Killer Clowns (5.11+ R). The route climbs past bail 'biners, steep cracks, and intimidating overhangs. At one point, some 800' up on sketchy 5.11 flakes, Wright was "shocked yet thankful" to find an old quarter-inch bolt inscribed "Banditos." Just above, he yarded past a blank slab on a fixed bashie, and the pair continued to the top. Unsatisfied due to their 5' of aid, they rappelled 600' back down and found steep climbing to the left of the Banditos passage; this comprised the crux pitch and led to the summit.

A couple of days prior, the pair headed toward Ambush's intimidating and chossy-looking Northeast Face route (Arsenault-Young, 1971), originally rated 5.8 A4. Though unclear whether they climbed the exact line of the 1971 route, they made a one-day free ascent at 5.10+ R/X and, reports Wright, were "ecstatic to find that the climbing was actually superb, following a solid streak of glacier-polished rock through what appeared from below to be a sea of choss."

Also climbing a possible new route on Ambush in mid-August were Jonny Copp and Matt Segal. They climbed a route farther left than Ozturk and Wright's possible new line, starting with several easy pitches up a gully and continuing on steeper terrain (up to 5.11) for another eight pitches to the summit. They found a bail anchor low down but no further traces higher up—and atop a 5.11+ pitch that dead-ended they left their own bail anchor, rappelled to a ledge, and found another way. Copp reports fun, roffy, and spicy climbing with circuitous routefinding, and notes that many excellent climbers have been active in the Winds over the years and not recorded their ascents in the climbing media. *Wind River Mountains* guidebook author Joe Kelsey reports, for example, that he's received information on nine new routes on Ambush, most unreported elsewhere, since the second edition of his book. "It's hard to say if it was new or not. It's definitely adventure climbing though, regardless," says Copp.

Colorado

ROCKY MOUNTAIN NATIONAL PARK

Longs Peak, Lower East Face, Endless Summer; Lower Chasm View Wall, The Invisible Wall, first free ascent. On July 31 Chip Chace and I completed Endless Summer (300m, V- 5.12- (5.11R)) on the Lower East Face of Longs Peak. This was the first free climb of the Nassewand, as it was called in the 1960s, the 1,000' Yosemite-like wall to the left of the Diagonal. During the late 1960s many attempts were made on this wall by the likes of Michael Covington, Wayne Goss, and Larry Dalke, but no one found a way through the giant wet arches of the lower part. The wall was abandoned and sat untouched for almost 20 years.

In 1987 interest in the Nassewand rekindled with two different parties completing aid lines up the wall. Jim Beyer, rope-soloing, found a dry, elegant start just left of the wet arches and forged a line up to Broadway that he called Antinuclear Tide. Also that summer Dan McGee and Layton Kor climbed a similar line, Question Mark Wall, which finished in a wet, vegetated crack. The next year Greg Davis and Todd Bibler began searching for a free climb up the Nassewand. By the time they walked away from the wall two years later they had established two lines that crossed at mid-height, each ending about 140' below Broadway. They named one



Chip Chace freeing the 5.11 third pitch of The Invisible Wall. The climb's crux pitch, the hanging crescent, arcs above and left. The wall rising in the upper left is the Diamond. Roger Briggs

line Slippery People and the other Endless Summer. Word got out that the left-hand start to the right-hand finish had all the best pitches, on dry rock, and this worthy six-pitch line received sporadic ascents during the 1990s.

In 2003 Chace and I climbed this line and added a connecting pitch from the right-hand high point to the left-hand high point. We were impressed by the superb quality of almost every pitch and the high standard of the climbing that Davis and Bibler had done. After reaching the high point, it occurred to me that the final 140' of blank marble up to Broadway might go free with a few bolts. The idea haunted me until the fall of 2005, when Chip and I rappelled off Broadway to have a close look. I came away believing it would go free, but wanted to remain within the stylistic limit of two bolts. We returned in early summer and rappelled down to place two protection bolts and fix a micro-cam. Then in late July we completed the line to Broadway. We chose the name Endless Summer as a tribute to the efforts and vision of Greg Davis and Todd Bibler 16 years earlier. This is one of the finest climbs in Rocky Mountain National Park.

Unreported from summer 2004, Chace and I did the first free ascent of The Invisible Wall (200m, IV 5.12-), a little-known Kor aid route from 1965 on the Lower Chasm View Wall of Longs. The climb has superb rock throughout and several remarkable features. Two moderate approach pitches from the right lead to the heart of the climb, three elegant and challenging pitches. The first of these is a prominent gold corner that disappears after 130', just short of an amazing hanging crescent. The next pitch is the crux and moves left under the hanging crescent, ending at the base of a final clean corner system. A final moderate pitch to the left ends on Broadway, where descent can be made via five rappels down Babys R Us.

When we climbed it there was nothing fixed and no sign of previous passage. We left it the way we found it and hoped that it would remain in this condition. However, when we

repeated the climb the next summer, hoping to add a direct start and finish, we found two fixed pitons, and 50' of beautiful vegetation had been torn out of the final corner pitch. Despite the heavy hand of another party, this is a worthwhile climb, with lots of great climbing packed into six excellent pitches.

ROGER BRIGGS

BLACK CANYON OF THE GUNNISON NATIONAL PARK

Various activity. In late May I completed my long-term project of linking The Free Nose (V+ 5.12) and Tague Yer Time (V+ 5.12), all free, in a day, leading every pitch. I began with The Free Nose and finished with Tague Yer Time, completing the link-up in 13.5 hours from North Rim to South Rim. I'm indebted to Phil Gruber and Jed Wareham-Morris (they belayed and juggled for speed) and Erinn Kelly for their generous support. In November Zack Smith and I made the first ground-up ascent of Leonard Coyne and Mick Haffner's 827 GO! (V 5.13-). Although probably slightly easier than its reported grade, the climb is without doubt a wild addition to the North Chasm View Wall and a testament to the pioneering vision and creativity of one of the Black's greatest climbers, Leonard Coyne. Unreported from 2005 is the addition by Kent Wheeler (and ?) of Stand Up Comic (IV 5.11) to the Comic Relief Buttress. The climb is of excellent quality and, like many Wheeler routes, has already become popular. Information on these climbs is available from the North Rim Ranger Station.

JOSH WHARTON, AAC

The Blacksmiths. The steep wall between Cheap Shot and Dry Hard has been the scene of aborted aid attempts due to loose rock and massive roofs. In fall 2005 and spring 2006, Jared Ogden and I tried to find a free variation, but were unable to force the line. In May we ended up climbing the first five pitches of the Earl Wiggins sketch-fest Dry Hard, and then traversed left above the roofs into a steep, airy position halfway up the wall. From there we did six new pitches on gently overhanging, high-quality rock to the rim. Four of the new pitches are 5.12, and it is the steepest bit of rock we've yet found while free climbing in the Canyon. The Blacksmiths (1,600', 5.12).

TOPHER DONAHUE, AAC

Sistine Reality. The fourth lead was mine: the first and most prominent roof. Jonny Copp handed me the rack, raised his eyebrows, and wished me luck. As I entered the hollowed chamber beneath it, the sky and ground disappeared. I no longer could tell which way was up, only out. I was inside an enclosed box a few hundred feet above the ivy-choked gully. I reached for the first jam and it was solid, deep hands. Perfect. Twelve feet later, when I pulled the lip, I trembled and fumbled with every piece of gear that I wedged into the scaly, bone-white rock. This was only my second time on the intimidating pegmatite of the Black. My confidence grew as I continued on the flaring thin-hands corner above, particles of granola-like rock crunching beneath my rubber soles. I built an anchor and glanced over my shoulder to the inner canyon. The sky had turned black, the wind roared, and an ominous rumble sounded on the horizon. Jonny arrived,

and we quickly escaped, sprinting to the car amid thunder and laughter.

Jonny took off for Alaska, and I headed home to Missouri, but we promised to return at our next opportunity. This chance didn't happen until two years later, in April 2006, although the Gothic was often on my mind. The scrappy riverside limestone in my home state offered perfect training.

Four pitches up at the belay, white dust collected in my lap. I pretended not to notice the incoming snow; maybe we could sneak by without the weather knowing we were there. We carried on. I followed the fifth pitch admiring various sections of offwidth, perfect hands, a clean slab, and eventually a broken roof. The stone looked as though it had been burning in a fire for the past hundred years, scalloped and fire red. The crux pitches beneath us, we sped up the remaining 700' of highly featured rock, connecting clean faces, deep cracks, and sharp dihedrals. The white stuff came and went, and we summited in a heavenly orange and violet sunset.

Our route begins a few hundred yards left of Kor's Route on the west face of Gothic Pillar. Approach by passing Exclamation Point, passing two gullies, and descending the third. Where it cliffs out, rap or traverse left to the next gully, descend it for 20 minutes, pass beneath a huge chockstone and continue to a large white boulder on the left. The route starts here, with the fourth pitch roof crack visible above.

On our initial attempt, I'd just returned from Rome, where I'd seen Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel painting. Inspired by the ceilings on the route, we titled our own masterpiece Sistine Reality (IV 5.11+, no bolts, no pins, no lassoes, no big whoop).

JEREMY COLLINS, *Kansas City, Missouri*, AAC

SAN JUAN MOUNTAINS

Peak 13,134', Ski Line. In late October I recruited Dave Ahrens to help me finish a project I started years ago, the north face of Peak 13,134' in the northern San Juans. The face can be clearly seen from Dallas Divide, and I had made several attempts with different partners over the past few years. The most serious attempt was with the late Johnny Soderstrom in October 2004. The route more or less follows a left-angling ramp directly through the center of the rocky north face.



Ski Line on Peak 13,134'. *Jared Vilhauer*

After a fairly short approach, the route starts with a couple of hundred feet of 50° snow. As you near what seems to be a dead end in the couloir, a beautiful cascade of water ice comes into view to the left and is the entrance to the face. We soloed the first 100' pitch of WI3 and kicked steps up more 50° snow. After a few more steps of low-angle ice, we reached the high

point of the 2004 attempt. Johnny and I had tried to follow the obvious weakness by continuing left on snow but were turned around by deep snow on slab rock. This time Dave and I left the snow and took the direct route up mixed terrain. The climbing was typical San Juan mixed climbing, solid in places, incredibly loose in others, and almost always run out. After three long pitches of good climbing, including an exciting, airy 5.8 traverse, we reached the final rock headwall. We ascended a chimney, which provided a good finish to the route, with good dry-tooling and stemming. This pitch resembled the last pitch of Birdbrain Boulevard, but at 13,000', and Dave especially enjoyed following it in the dark without a headlamp. After another 100' of snow we reached the summit in the dark, with whiteout conditions and a few lightning bolts.

While we took a break on the summit, the weather cleared enough that we could see our planned descent route. We traversed just below the south ridge and descended a bowl between Peak 13,134' and Peak 13,252'. After wandering in the forest, we found our way back to the car at Dallas Creek, labeled "Box Factory" on a map. There was no sign of previous ascent on the face and none of the locals have heard of prior climbs. The route is worthy of more ascents if conditions are right, with firm snow. The route would be hard to retreat from, though, with a lack of features for rap/belay anchors. Most of our anchors consisted of ice tools in moss and snow-seat belays. With the conditions we had, the difficulty of the 1,600' route was WI3 M5 5.8R.

JARED VILHAUER, AAC

North Carolina

Whitesides Mountain, Children of the Sun. Mark Ilgner and I had been working on a new line on Whitesides Mountain for two years. We finally completed it in December. The route climbs the left side of the headwall section, beginning between Ship of Fools and The Promised Land. It begins with three beautiful pitches of vertical or near-vertical face climbing (5.11d, 5.12a, 5.12b/c, each 110') mostly protected by bolts. Pitches four (5.10d, 130', mostly traversing) and five (5.11d, 100'), however, are almost completely protected traditionally. Pitch four follows a horizontal crack while pitch five follows a right-arching dihedral. The sixth pitch (5.12 A1, 90') climbs through the upper overhanging section of the wall and is protected by bolts. Here we encountered a blank section too difficult for us to free. Two more pitches of easier-grade climbing (5.10 and 5.5, 100' each) finish the route.

This route is absolutely amazing and requires both sport and trad skills to master. The face climbing is thin, intricate and requires much attention to balance and body position. The trad pitches follow spectacular features in extremely exposed positions. The sixth, crux, pitch has about 15' of aid on bolts, just waiting for a talented climber to free.

ARNO ILGNER, AAC