

## Cascade Climbs, 1945

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### *North Peak of Mount Index*

ONE of the more interesting phases of climbing in Washington's Cascades is the successive realization of goals, previously unattained. With the advent of the climbing season, prolonged somewhat because of the late spring snows, I undertook to visit some of the more accessible of these desired summits.

The first trip to materialize was to the spectacular North Peak of Mt. Index, which thrusts its bold precipices so imposingly above the Stevens Pass Highway. Several pre-war attempts having been foiled by lack of time and storms, I had an insatiable desire to cross the peak from my list.

Early on July 1st, my brother Helmy and I reached its northern base via the rather depleted Lake Serene trail and a big rock-slide. Here we roped and climbed up the lower rounded N. E. face, negotiating slabby rocks to the base of a great vertical cliff. Swinging to the left we climbed across a difficult rib into a gully which overhung menacingly beneath. Here we looked across the great E. face, where Tom Campbell and I ran out of piton cracks about mid-face, in 1941, after a most exposed and difficult climb.

Some hidden connecting ledges to our right and a smooth overhanging block formed the crux of a tricky route. This was a dangerous lead for there were no handholds and I had to resort to several cedar twigs that leaned down from a bush above. On some of the more exposed pitches the only safeguard was snapping the rope into a carabiner attached to a Prusik-knot sling on twigs.

From a shallow basin in mid-face, over steep rocks, we reached the arête, which gave us the most enjoyable part of the climb, because of its difficult but safe rock work for four rope-lengths.

Difficulties decreased as we wandered over the heather and broken rock slopes, ascending a sharp arête, over several false summits to the top. This 2400-ft. rock climb had taken eight hours, somewhat of an improvement on that of the previous party, which spent the night atop.

The first ascent was made some 15 years ago, by Lionel Chute and two others, a fact few believed until recently. This is the longest roped climb of any peak in Washington, via its easiest

route and is considered more difficult than Canada's Bugaboo Spire.

*Mount Adams via Adams Glacier*

Mt. Adams' largest glacier pitches steeply from the summit ice-cap between two rock walls on the N. W. face. Visible from Paradise Valley on Mt. Rainier, this unclimbed face had long tempted me. On July 8th at 12.15 A.M. Dave Lind, Bob Mulhall and I started on the Killen Creek Trail, 8000 ft. below the summit and seven miles distant.

Under a starry sky, we followed easy heather and moraine fields beyond the trail's end to the lower Adams Glacier. Full daylight and a brisk, chilly north wind greeted us when we reached 8500 ft., where the great icefall begins. The crevasses and séracs looked somewhat menacing, but due to the late snow conditions most of the chasms were still bridged.

Here we donned our crampons, and roped up, soon climbing a steep avalanche track to the first bergschrund. A leaning ice fragment made the crossing easier, and with but a few chopped ice-steps I gained the ensuing ice slope.

Keeping near the left side of the icefall, to avoid some enormous crevasses and séracs in the center, we wove our way tortuously upward. Our crampons bit firmly into the ice as we ascended two 50° slopes. At 10,000 ft. Dave took the lead, following our pattern of ascent by way of the left side of the icefall. After scaling several more steep ice slopes, the angle suddenly decreased from an average of over 40° to about 30°. The hollow-faced glacier here offered a greater variety of routes, but we kept a course leading directly to the summit ice cap just as the sun struck us for the first time. Swerving to the right, we completed a first ascent by a new route at 9.15 A.M.

We basked in the sun on the leeward side of the summit cabin for an hour. We left reluctantly, as insurance against glacier lassitude on the lower slopes, descending the easy N. ridge.

To those interested in early summer ice climbs, Mt. Adams via the Adams Glacier is recommended.

*Warrior Peak (Olympics)*

One week later I took a jaunt across Puget Sound into the Olympic Mountains, to visit the unclimbed second highest peak

in the eastern front range. Its 7300-ft. double summit lies just north of Mt. Constance. Via Marmot Pass and the upper Dungeness Trail, the trip proved to be a marathon, the round trip distance in one day being 27 miles with 8000 ft. of altitude gained. More than once I fervently wished that I had had some sleep the previous night.

The actual climb was from the W. up a conglomerate 300-ft. rock pyramid. One 20-ft. vertical spot proved somewhat thrilling. As expected, there was no record on this or the slightly lower W. summit, so I took the liberty of building a cairn and gave the peak the name, "Warrior Peak."

### *Mount Hagan*

From the top of Mt. Blum in the wild region E. of Mt. Baker, Keith Rankin and I were beckoned by the pointed virgin rock peaks of 7050-ft. Mt. Hagan. Relief is great considering the Baker River at its western base is only 600 ft. Access to the shining glacier and sharp rock summits was a problem because of brushy mountain sides and low-altitude cliffs.

July 16th, in the late afternoon, found us with Martin Ochsner, Herb Staley, and Melvin Marcus at the end of the four-mile Noisy Creek Trail. From 2200 ft. we climbed a heavily forested mountain side, steering clear of the brush, to a quaint hanging valley N. W. of Bacon Peak. There we camped for the night.

At the day break we left for the alpine ridge above, here seeing our objective some two miles N., being separated from us by two passes and a high ridge hump. From a ridge lake at the second pass, we ascended to the 6700-ft. ridge above the glacier edge. The latter we followed in an arc to the northern base of the south peak, which appeared highest.

Dividing the party into two ropes, we moved easily up the lower rocks in tennis shoes to a small notch. The final 150-ft. of the jagged summit tower had its obstacles to offer, the worst being a strenuous layback and some high-angle slab work.

After leaving our regards to future vagabonds in our cairn, we descended to the glacier, and climbed the two easy middle summits. Attention then focused on the hostile 60-ft. pinnacle of the slightly lower N. peak.

We reached it by the glacier and some ridge scrambling, and

as before divided the party, Ochsner and Rankin climbing the E. face: Marcus, Staley and I up the S. face. Both routes approached the vertical throughout; but good handholds insured success as we gradually worked our way up the last new climb for that day.

#### *East Wilmon Spire (Monte Cristo Region)*

In the days when Monte Cristo was a booming mining town, the Wilmon brothers had offered a \$500 reward to anyone who would ascend either of the Spires. Herb Staley and I came just a half century too late!

On July 19th we climbed up a long gully, past old mines and rusted mining equipment, to a col between the spires, from where we saw the unascended East Spire, some 300 ft. high on the W. and S., and 200 ft. on the E., with a huge drop on the N. to Glacier Basin. The rock dipped sharply to the W., which would have made the E. face preferable for the climb, had it not been leaning outwards and much eroded. Our hopes rose when we spied a rotten but easy ledge across the S. face to the western edge, about 150 ft. from the summit. Changing to tennis shoes, we made the first pitch easily, but the second required more care due to the exposure. I placed several safety pitons in very solid granite schist, reaching a point high on the bold W. face.

After belaying Herb, I worked across the S. face on a delicate sporting traverse, requiring a safety piton to a belay spot on the upper edge of the E. face's overhang. The final 50 ft. required the utmost caution, but were not as tricky as was anticipated.

After a short stay on the meager summit, we made a slow descent because of the exposure and scanty belay stances.

#### *Mount Shuksan via N.E. Face*

The summer was drawing to a close. The N. face of Mt. Shuksan (9038 ft.) had never been disturbed by human feet, being the last unclimbed face. On the week-end of September 9th, Jach Schwabland, Bill Granston and I left the North Fork Nooksack spur road (2000 ft.) at 1.30 A.M. With flashlights we followed the trail, river bed, and a long rocky gully to the alpine ridge at 5000 ft. The huge steep face rose dimly in the early morning light, showing fresh snow everywhere on the upper stones. Heavy

rain had dampened our enthusiasm on a previous trip, but now a clear sky gave us an incentive to push forward.

After climbing a lower section of the glacier, we took off our crampons, crossing a rocky rib on our right to the main glacier. A traverse brought us to serious ice-climbing as we slowly wormed our way upward through crevasse fields and exposed ice slopes. Luckily we had been in the shadow, or the new snow, only half frozen to the glare ice beneath, would have been an avalanche danger.

The final steep pitch, before reaching temporarily easier slopes, was a great ice dome that required steps in addition to the usual ankle strain. We came to the great bergschrund series below the final ice chute shortly after 10.00 A.M. A steep 55° ice slope on the left was the quickest route to the Curtis Glacier near the summit, but the avalanche danger decided us to "sneak" along the right side of the bergschrund series between the ice and rock.

We slowly worked our way up some seven rope lengths of diagonal ascent on very steep snow covered rock, having little choice of route, for the wall overhung above and the huge chasm beneath made a cleavage between rock and ice. I had to brush frozen new snow from the rock, to search for handholds and placed pitons several times as a safeguard, as the belay stances were generally poor.

Above the schrunds we climbed to the top of the chute on treacherous steep ice, descending then into a wind eroded cavity before gaining the edge of the Curtis Glacier. The latter was quickly traversed to the summit pyramid, the top of which was reached at 5.00 P.M.

We left immediately on the regular route, thus also making a first E.-W. traverse. Darkness had enveloped us as we reached the Austin Pass Trail. Before the next Sunday, Mt. Shuksan had thrown about his shoulders a white mantle of new snow.