

on. It was time to go home—not the planned time, not the scheduled time, but nonetheless, it was time.

Mike Spagnum, Mark Hartley, and I were flown to Plummer Hut on the Tellot Glacier and packed a week's worth of food to a beautiful sheltered campsite on a rock knoll above the Cataract Icefall. We were a disjointed group for most of the trip: Mark was brooding over his love life and seemed ambivalent about the climbing, Mike was suffering from altitude but was still really driven to do a big route, and I was on holidays. The first week was low energy; we climbed the East Ridge of Stiletto, the West Ridge of McCormick and a short new route on the southeast side of Shand. The week culminated in an 11 p.m. start to get solid ice for the Northeast Face of Sera III—and it was well worth it!

After the mid-trip trudge back to the hut to get our cached food and run up the ultra classic West Ridge of Claw Peak, a day enlivened by my plunge 15 feet down a crevasse, we looked at our options. We chose a shorter line that we thought would go in one day, and Mike decided to sit it out and take a rest day.

The next dawn, Mark and I started up the prominent 650-meter buttress on the northeast face of Shand. We found many pitches of fourth- and low-fifth-class leading to where the buttress narrows and becomes more defined. It was good rock with solid pro and relatively clean for six to eight pitches (up to 5.9). The crux was high up in a right-facing corner: an unfortunate moss mantle in an otherwise stunning pitch. The rib ends in a small gendarme that marks the “Kitty Litter” pitch, which is a broad horizontal band of poor-quality rock that crosses the entire face. Mark, being a Rockies climber, merrily trundled across this to the base of the final headwall. Some ledges and 80 meters of 5.8 squeeze chimney led to the summit rim. A short walk down the central snowfield dropped us back to our tracks on the glacier and the trail home.

After that climb we had time left, but no motivation. We hiked back to Plummer and tried the radio to call for a pick-up, but it had been left on. Bailing wire, duct tape, a Petzl headlamp battery, two double As, and some prayer....

“Plummer Hut to Whitesaddle?” (Please work, please work, please work, please work!)

“Whitesaddle to Plummer. Go ahead.”

LORNE HOOVER, *Canada*

Mt. Plinth, North Face, New Route and Ski Descent. On February 11, Jia Condon, Sean “Woody” Tribe, Chris “Beeker” Rameski, and Darrel White snowmobiled 50 kilometers to Meager Hot Springs, where they spent a relaxing night. Way early the next morning, they backtracked about eight kilometers and then continued up the Lilloet River drainage to 6,700 feet below the summit of Mt. Plinth. It took about three hours of skinning and about six hours of climbing through deep snow to ascend the north face. Due to a building storm, they spent a few anxious moments on the summit and then the next hour skiing down the north face, negotiating 55- to 60-degree sections to their sleds. From there, it was back to Meager Hot Springs for more lounging and whisky.

JIA CONDON, *Canada*

Squamish

Squamish Chief, Grand Wall, First Free Ascent. On July 18 at 7 a.m., Annie Overlin and I



The north face of Mt. Plinth, showing the line of ascent and descent. JIA CONDON

embarked on what would become a historical day. Our plan was to make the first free ascent of the Grand Wall. I planned on red-pointing every pitch, and Annie would follow carrying a 70-ounce Camelback and four assorted energy bars. I carried an extra shirt, five cams and two stoppers.

We arrived at the base at 8 a.m., Annie feeling great and me suffering from nerves. With a 70-meter rope, my plan was to link pitches to obvious no-hands rests. I believe that to use hanging stations is cheating and poor style and doesn't count as a free ascent.

Once boot hit rock, my confidence soared, and I fired the first two pitches of *Apron Strings* in one pitch. I quickly ran up the two-pitch *Mercy Me* in similar style. We did a short pitch to the belay below the bolt ladder to the right side of the Split Pillar. Taking the sporty start to the left-side 11c crack, I traversed right via a 12b move to gain the Pillar's right side. Though very capable of the traverse, Annie agreed to just swing across to save time and shade. I then led a long pitch to the large ledge about one-third of the way up the sword pitch, the same place where the Hamish Fraser route *Geni Loci* ends.

From the ledge, the "Underfling" that had provided many anxious moments in my restless pre-climb sleep loomed out right. After nearly slipping off the rest stance, I powered past the old hanging station and with a mantle and a hard crimp pulled onto a large no-hands rest, completing what I felt to be the first true ascent of that pitch (all other ascents used an unnecessary sling belay). I also felt that the pitch is now solid 13a. Annie swung across and joined me. After three falls and a few frustrated outbursts, I pulled my rope, stopped taking it so seriously, and focused into the hard, easy-to-blow crux, barely redpointing the gently traversing final link. Annie joined me at the station, where we hugged and I apologized for my outburst, and this time screamed a victory shout over the sleeping town. We cruised up to Belly-Good

Ledge, arriving tired, red-tipped, and nearly out of food and water.

Still determined to do things right, we dragged butt up the last four pitches of the Roman Chimneys, taking the easiest line. On top, we smoked the peace pipe and praised the gods for our good luck.

Previous to my redpoint, I worked the route eight times from the ground up. I never rappelled in to work the cruxes. We added a bolt to supplement the two old fixed pins in the Underfling and added the new station. Finally, I added a bolt to the last moves of the final traversing link. In keeping with local tradition, I named the final traverse The Chief after my half-Indian friend Peary Beckman, whose friendship, support, and vision led to my success. I'd also like to thank the wonderful community of Squamish for their friendship, support, and good vibes. You have my humble regard.

SCOTT COSGROVE

Squamish Chief, The Fortress. In September, Hamish Fraser and I completed a new free route on the Sheriff's Badge, a 1,000-foot formation on the northern section of the Squamish Chief. This was the last of the three main walls to go free. *The Fortress* (V 5.12, 9 pitches) starts on the *Daily Planet* and climbs the big corner in an amazing 60-meter pitch that exits that route via a foot-swinging roof to the left, where the *Planet* jogs right. Bolted face climbing followed by thin cracks leads several hundred feet to the "Big Roof." Arapiles-like jugging out the roof lands you at a cool belay at the lip. The last two pitches basically follow left-leaning corners.

Hamish, Greg Foweraker and I spent a number of days that summer exploring upward and hitting deadends until finally breaking through to the lip of the "Big Roof" that cuts across the entire cliff. I came back later with Dave Humphries and aid climbed the last two pitches to the top. Some days after that, Greg and I rappelled in and dug and scrubbed these last two in lousy weather. We hoped that the rain would wash away the residue that our efforts had scattered. It didn't work out that way.

On my last available climbing day before flying home to California, Hamish and I went for the big push. Things went smoothly until we cleared the Roof and met the unfreed last two pitches. The crux 5.12 holds were wet and above that the route was slathered in muck. Easy sections were hard and hard sections were absolutely pooping. We topped out as night fell.

On the down side, there was no shining summit, I had to yo-yo the wet 5.12 pitch and, worst of all, Greg wasn't there. On the up side, we got buttered in mud and after finishing our climb after sunset, had to feel our way down in pitch dark, on all fours, like bugs. Perfect.

PETER CROFT, *unaffiliated*

Squamish Chief, Bald Egos, New Route. In June, Conny Amelunxen and I braved rain, long falls, the unknown, and more rain in an attempt to put up the longest aid route on the Squamish Chief, *Bald Egos* (5.9 A4). We climbed the wall in impeccable Squamish style using an "anything goes" combination of siege tactics, fixed lines, and capsule-style pushes, climbing the wall in ten days spread out over a three-week period (anything to insure that we always climbed in the rain, for which we achieved a remarkable 80 percent success rate).

Our route links 1,500 feet of discontinuous features over two distinct walls, venturing onto a previously unclimbed section of the Chief for the second part of the route. It was here that we committed to capsule-style climbing when a friend who had joined us for the two previous pitches rappelled down, taking our two extra ropes with him from halfway up the wall. It