

I should expect “a lot of rotten rock, and a really good adventure.”

As it turned out, the rock is often solid sandstone and limestone, with a liberal sprinkling of decomposing layers. Comanche Ridge came in at about 17 belayed or simul-climbed pitches, plus considerable 3rd and 4th class scrambling. On October 6, immediately following the UIAA General Assembly meetings in Flagstaff, Anne Arrans (U.K.), Roger Payne (U.K.), Nikolay Petkov (Bulgaria), and I (U.S.) hiked the Tanner Trail to Tanner Rapids and spent the night. The next morning we gained the wall at about 4,600', at the back of the scooped wall just above a rockslide. The entrance overhang had a 5.10 move, followed by scrambling, a 5.8 corner, then easy 5th class along the ridgecrest. The knife-edge part of the ridge (Annie's Arête) was broken by short buttresses (50' to 250' each) offering 5.7 to 5.9 climbing. We bivied on a huge ledge in the middle of the red band after about nine pitches. At the top of the red band we bypassed a couple of beautiful 5.11-looking cracks on the buttress via a 5.7 corner to the left, then scrambled to the left side of the huge greenish buttress, which we climbed in three full pitches of 5.9 to 5.10 (we bypassed the dangerous sofa-sized Monster Pillar via a thin crack on the left). We then moved left to steep scrambling, crossed the ridge at Comanche Point Pinnacle, and continued to the summit via 5.7 to 5.8 cracks, with a couple of sections of scrambling. We arrived on top just as the sun went down on the second day of climbing, thus avoiding a waterless night out. Six or so miles of cross-country and dirt road in the dark led back to Desert View. I think the route is well worth repeating by anyone with a taste for big alpine-style ridges in a spectacular desert environment, provided they don't mind some portable handholds.

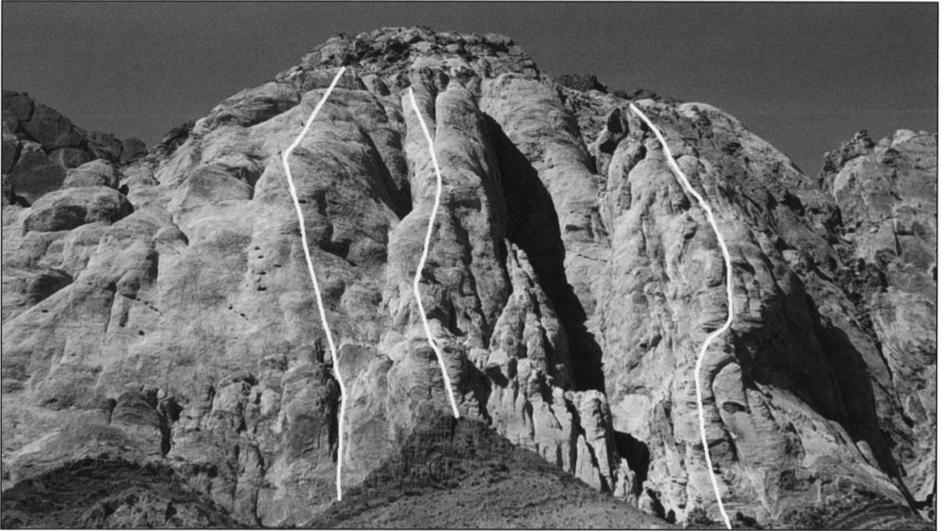
JOHN HARLIN III, *Hood River Crag Rats*, AAC

Lost Horizon, first free ascent. On January 29 Ty Mack and I made the first free ascent of the stunning Lost Horizon route, located in Lost Canyon in Sedona, AZ. Lost Horizon follows an impeccable corner system for four long pitches. The climbing is both strenuous and technical. We added three protection bolts where natural gear was not possible. The four pitches are rated 5.12c, 5.13a, 5.12c/d, and 5.11. Lost Canyon, also the location of the ultraclassic five-pitch 5.12, Shangri-La, now features a stellar concentration of hard long free climbs.

MATT CHILDERS

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The Desert, various activity. Significant new routes were established on the Navajo Sandstone of the Colorado Plateau in 2002. Paul Ross, age 65, has been extremely active on the long slabs of the imposing reef at the eastern edge of the San Rafael Swell, known as the San Rafael Reef. Ross writes of his activity, “Just too much unclimbed rock in the desert; it's enough to tire an old guy out. My climbing mate, Layne Potter, added up the footage of the slabs we have climbed in the Swell area since March 2002, and it came to over 23,000'. No wonder I'm wearing out my Tricouni-nailed boots.” Some of his longer and better routes, established with a variety of partners, are Reefer Madness (1,780', 9 pitches, III 5.9R), Surfing the Swell (1,400', 7 pitches, III 5.9R), Slipnot Slab (1,400', 7 pitches, III 5.7R/X), Tsunami (1,200', 7 pitches, III 5.9R), Sinister Slab (1,200', 6 pitches, III 5.7R), Slab Happy (1,360', 5 pitches, III 5.8 R), Sunshine Slab (1,520', III 5.6R) the North Ridge route (2,000', III 5.6) on North Peak, and Hot Tin Slab (1,390', 6 pitches,



The Triple Slab Buttress in the San Rafael Swell, showing (left to right): The Giraffe (1,130', 5.9R, four stars), Jack Russell Buttress (980', 5.6R), Mellow Yellow (1,060', 5.9R, four stars). Paul Ross



The Eastern Reef Slabs (the climbing area is about six miles long), showing (A) Triple Slab Buttress area, (B) Surfing The Swell formation (1,800', 5.9), (C) Reefer Madness Slab (1,700', 5.9R), (D) North Peak and North Ridge route (2,000', 5.6R). Paul Ross

III 5.8R). "The route was climbed in extreme heat, hence the name. The temperature in the shade at 2 p.m. was 105°."

In the northern San Rafael Swell, Ross and Paul Marshall (U.K.) established Brits in the Belfry (310', III 5.9 C1) on Belfry Spire.

In April, in the Lost World Butte section (covered in the new *Desert Rock IV*, by Bjornstad) of the Island in the Sky area west of Moab, Paul Ross and Paul Marshall established The Gift

(360', III 5.8 C2) on The Tombstone. The route ascends an open book 100' left of Keswick Lads' Day Out.

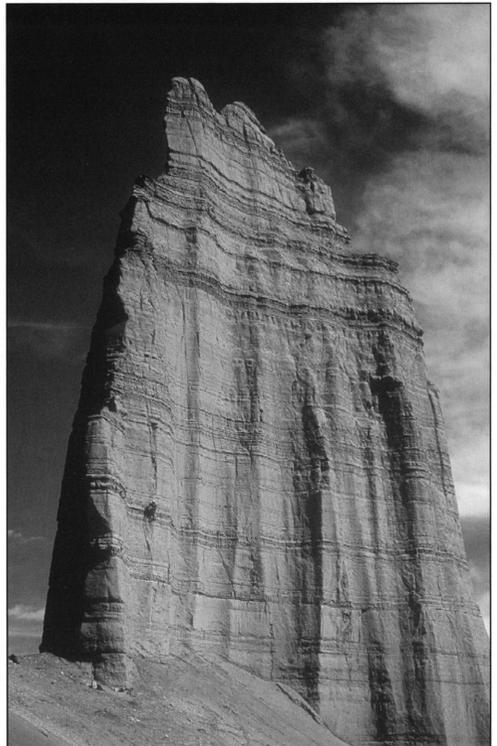
In the Fisher Towers in May, Stevie Haston made the first free ascent of Sundevil Chimney (previously VI 5.9 A3) on The Titan. Haston's impressive ascent included five pitches of 5.12 or 5.12+ and a crux 5.13-. As with his free ascents of Echo Tower, The Hindu, and The Mongoose, Haston climbed clean, with a basic free rack—no pins or hammer.

In the west desert, on the north face of Notch Peak, Jim Howe and Dave Shewell established an intimidating 20-pitch line which Paul Ross calls "The best effort in the Southwest in 2002." The route was established ground-up and reportedly goes at run-out, loose 5.11+.

Two major new routes were established in Texas and Arch canyons of southern Utah. Cameron Burns describes the area as "a wildly remote area of spires, buttes, and mesas. It is easily one of the most beautiful areas in the desert southwest. The rock climbs are true wilderness experiences that require hard driving, long approaches, and difficult, sometimes scary, climbing." In June Paul Ross and Jeff Pheasant put up a route on the east face of Texas Tower, the most popular of the dozen-plus towers in these remote canyons. In Arch Canyon, a new route was established on Dream Speaker via its north face (280', III 5.9 C2) by Paul Ross, Andy Ross, and Paul Marshall in October.

Compiled primarily by ERIC BJORNSTAD

San Rafael Swell, Mudstrosity. In March Strappo Hughes and I climbed the Mudstrosity (350', V- A3+). This tower is in the southern San Rafael Swell, located 10 miles northwest of Factory Butte (the summit of which provides a wild view of the whole area). It is approached by a confusing series of washes and old roads (high clearance required). USGS maps refer to the area as Salt Wash, just south of the Moroni Slopes. From a distance the Mudstrosity looks like a pint-sized Titan. Our route starts on the left side of the southeast face, at a relatively prominent crack. No free climbing here; this is some of the rottenest stuff I've ever climbed on. Every non-vertical surface is deeply rotted. Luckily, vertical faces hold some higher quality rock. Sustained aid, using everything from birdbeaks to lost arrows and specters, nuts used as "stopper-heads," and various cams, led to a two-bolt hanging belay just below the south shoulder. This excellent 200' pitch evolved as a two-day joint effort. A short nasty pitch across the shoulder led to a small ledge below the



Mudstrosity, living up to its name. Steve Crusher Bartlett