

# Climbs and Expeditions

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## UNITED STATES

### *Washington*

*New routes on Mount Rainier.* The 1957 *American Alpine Journal* had barely been mailed when the article "The Climbing History of Mount Rainier" became outdated; for before the climbing season came to an end four new routes had been pioneered to the summit.

*Mowich Face.* Rising steeply in a nearly smooth wall of ice and incipient rock-ridges, about two miles across and 4000 feet high, the northwest face of Mount Rainier directly above the heads of North Mowich and Edmunds glaciers has long discouraged efforts to pursue a new route. For most of the summer months this vast 35° to 50° wall is swept by slithering snow-, ice-, and rock-avalanches and its usual aspect is one of smooth glare ice. (See *AAJ* 1957, photo: "Routes of Ascents on the West Side of Mount Rainier.") The new route ascends directly above the head of Edmunds Glacier to Liberty Cap and is on the face north of the Sunset Ridge route.) On June 22-23, a few days after a fresh snowfall had thawed and refrozen on the upper slopes, an experienced party, composed of Fred Beckey, Don Claunch, Dr. Tom Hornbein, John Rupley, and Herb Staley, made the first attempt to scale this face. The party hiked in to Klapatche and St. Andrews parks from the West Side road and then climbed to the head of Colonnade Ridge, where an 8200-foot camp was pitched late that evening. At 5 A.M. the following morning they crossed the ice breakups of South Mowich Glacier to reach the base of the Sunset Ridge route. After ascending the lower snow slopes of this ridge, they traversed westward onto the upper reaches of Edmunds Glacier. Here long bergschrunds and crevasses forced them to contour to the center of Edmunds Glacier before they could begin the ascent of the face itself. Once above the upper bergschrund, their major problem was kicking steps directly up the ever-steepening face of crusty ice overlying powder snow. Axe belays and ice pitons were of little value in the crusty surface. The upper slope reached the angle of about 50° before rounding off toward the crest. Thickening clouds rose with the climbers, and at 2:30 P.M. when they reached Liberty Cap they found visibility so limited that their plans to descend via Tahoma Glacier had to be abandoned. Suffice it to

say that the descent of Mowich Face must be considered as great an accomplishment as the ascent.

*Wilson Glacier Headwall.* Few unclimbed and untried routes remain on the popular Paradise side of Mount Rainier. Wilson Glacier heads in a steep-walled cirque at about 10,000 feet and then flows into Nisqually Glacier below 8500 feet. Above the head of Wilson Glacier a series of steep couloirs climbs upward to join in a rather broad icefield pocketed beneath the 13,000-foot top of Wapowety Cleaver. Only 15 years ago this now quite inactive, ablated ice slope was a hanging lobe of thick ice fed by Kautz Glacier to the west. It terminated in an ice cliff which overhung the lower couloirs. Only the frequent slides of loose rock and fresh snow and occasional fragments of ice from the eastern end of the Kautz Ice Cliff down the couloirs attest to the former glories of immense ice avalanches. (See *AAJ* 1957, photo: "Routes of Ascents on South Side of Mount Rainier." The new route ascends about halfway between the Kautz and the Fuhrer Finger routes.) This route was first climbed July 20-21 by Pete Schoening and Dee Molenaar under ideal conditions, with a recent snowfall well consolidated to the ice and over the loose rock. We left Paradise Valley at 2:45 P.M., crossed Nisqually Glacier and ascended along the western edge of Wilson Glacier rapidly. After detouring around the right end of the bergschrund at the head of the glacier, we worked back and up into the central couloir, keeping close to the rock cliff at one side to avoid possible rock and ice debris. A 15-foot cliff across an avalanche-scarred constriction required delicate climbing on rock with crampons, made quickly with frequent wary glances upward. Once above this exposed gully, we climbed higher and into the protection of an overhanging rock wall. Here at 11,000 feet a narrow platform was leveled and a bivouac made at 8 P.M. After a restless but beautiful night we continued upward at 2:30 A.M. A steep diagonal traverse of the frozen snow-covered surface of the upper ice slope, followed by intermittent ice and rock climbing brought us to the top of Wapowety Cleaver by sunrise. The crater rim was reached at 6:15 A.M. After a brief pause we descended by the Gibraltar route, reaching Paradise Valley at 10 A.M.

*Curtis Ridge.* Without doubt the most frequently attempted and eagerly sought route on Mount Rainier over the past 25 years has been Curtis Ridge on the northeast side. Separating Winthrop Glacier from Willis Wall and Carbon Glacier, this steep and crumbling ridge has thwarted over a dozen serious efforts to go higher than 11,000 feet, merely by virtue of an almost continual barrage of rock which falls during all