

entertainment option is to leave the area by trailless Rat Creek; allow an extra 7 hours. NCCS II, F8.

MIKE HEATH

*Vesper Peak, North Face.* Although this face has some of the finest granite in Washington, it will never light anyone's fire. Broken by a large ledge system two-thirds of the way up, this 1200-foot face lacks any "classic" lines. Between the Vesper Glacier below and this ledge are many equally good routes waiting to be done. Above the ledge are two slabs, the east one rising at an angle of 65° or more to the summit, and a lower-angle one to the west. Here the future will be determined by ethics, since cracks are rare. On August 3, Mike Heath, B. J. Heath, Tom Oas and I left the glacier between Vesper and Big Four Mountain near the lowest point of the face and climbed up for four leads (F5 to F8). We scrambled several hundred feet and belayed one lead (F6) to the scrub tree at the lower right-hand corner of the high-angle slab. Next we climbed a small overhang (F4) and up and right along a heather ledge to its end. We ascended up and right to the edge of the slab on broken blocks (F7). The next two leads are the crux of the climb. The first goes up with poor protection to a belay bolt (F7). The next lead is about 70 feet with weak protection (F8) and generally follows the west edge of the slab to the summit. Jim Langdon, who we later discovered had traversed out onto this upper slab in 1968, climbed further to the left and encountered similar problems on these last two leads. Our approach to the peak was via the Sunshine Mine trail and over Headlee Pass, and then over the north ridge of Vesper to the glacier. Ascent from the glacier took 6 hours and required about 20 pitons and several nuts. NCCS II or III, F8.

BILL SUMNER, *unaffiliated*

*Witch Doctor Wall.* Aerial photography has illuminated the few remaining "secrets" of the North Cascades, but a newly cut logging road south of Darrington led to the 'discovery' of a marvelous 75° granite wall, which rises 1100-feet. It can be seen from the summit of Jumbo. The wall forms the east flank of a northwest spur of Helena Peak, the spur peak simply marked 4235 on the topographic map. It is as well hidden as a face can be, for flanking summits and crooked valley patterns keep it well out of view. Interestingly enough, the low summit point of this spur had likely never been reached before 1969, and is quite possibly the most difficult 4000-foot summit in the state; we are not certain what the easiest route to its top would be, but nothing simple has been apparent to date.

An exploration in the fall of 1968 led to the discovery of a simple route to the base, as well as the seemingly classic route near the center of the wall. Weather was disagreeable, and after doing two pitches we decided dry rock was essential. David Wagner, Thom Nephew, and I made the climb on July 17 and 18. We repeated the "running leap", downward from a dead-end ledge to a groove. From there on, the route nearly alternates pitches: an aid pitch followed by a free one. The discovery of a solitary, very thin face crack up what looked like a certain blank wall allowed us to keep the bolt bag in the rucksack for the entire climb. Loose blocks on the fifth pitch almost caused a "let's go down" vote, but fortunately the rock above suddenly improved. A vertical wall festooned with cedars required some interesting techniques with tie-off loops; somehow, the growth seemed more permanent than the blocks. An entire pitch of exposed nailing was followed by the alternating free pitch; this one included another "leap", but this time from tree to tree. Above here the rock became more massive with very little growth. Jam-cracks, friction, and confident nailing concluded the difficulties. We scrambled south to the point of 4235, and there encountered mild panic attempting to traverse the narrow teeth leading toward Helena. Racing a rapidly descending sun, we gave up on that and made a series of fast rappels down the western slabs. NCCS V, F7, A3.

FRED BECKEY

*Liberty Mountain, North Ridge.* For years we had looked at this steep ridge from a distance, always fearing the horrible brush fight that separated it from the distant access roads. On June 1 Ron Miller and I made the first ascent of the ridge by working our way up from the logging roads on the north side of Green Mountain; spur roads now reach the headwaters of Canyon Creek. We left them where the Windy Pass drainage enters Canyon Creek. The expected brush was there, almost all the way to Windy Pass. From our high camp at the pass we headed south on the divide and soon reached the mountain. The north ridge starts immediately up from the divide crest. The first 200 feet is Class-IV heather, brush, mixed rock, and trees, and then a level 20-foot rock bench on the ridge crest affords an excellent place to observe and plan the remainder. The next lead is 100 feet of class V rotten rock, 20 feet of which is absolutely vertical. The lead from here is 100 feet of Class IV from a worthless belay and with 500 feet of exposure below. The North Peak is soon easily reached, and we found no cairn present anywhere. We continued the ridge to the main summit on Class-IV rock, again quite rotten, and about 300