

Arch Canyon, Mud Shark, How Big a Boy are You; and The Fortress, The Poop Chute. Arch Canyon, one of the most isolated canyons in southern Utah, has had my attention for years. Home to one of the state's finest towers, Texas Tower, Arch Canyon holds an abundance of adventure and new-route potential—if one is willing to drive the ever-worsening 4x4 road, spend countless hours cursing the soft Cedar Mesa Sandstone, and confront wide cracks. Most parties repeating routes in the canyon rappel in, climb, then jug back out in a day—a long day.

Justin Carter and I, after repeating a few of the classics, turned our attention to an unclimbed tower at the junction of Arch and Texas canyons. The 600' tower, later dubbed the "Mud Shark," juts out from the canyon floor like a shark fin. Our route—How Big a Boy are You (IV 5.10+R C2)—climbs the northwest face in four long pitches. Consisting of bold offwidth climbing and a few points of clean aid (bring some big Friends and tubes), with a crux (5.10 C2) second pitch that overhangs in its entirety, it's freeable to someone willing to take on the 12-inch crack. After the third pitch we traversed around to the east on a spacious ledge to a sandy slab (5.10+R), reaching the summit on May 19, 2000. We descended the north face via three 200-foot raps. One hole was drilled on the last pitch for pro; rap stations are also equipped with bolts. How big a boy are ya?

After we stopped shaking, Justin and I returned to climb what seemed to us the largest free-standing formation in the canyon, the 750-foot Fortress. We thought for sure such a gem had to have had an ascent, till we discovered all crack lines either petered out or ended up turning into a horribly steep and wide nightmare. We chose what we thought would be the sanest route on the southwest face. We first tried The Fortress in March 2001, following a thin aid crack for almost 500 feet, using mostly beaks, knife blades, and Lost Arrows. We then traversed to the left (west) for 30 feet into another thin crack system, which brought us to a large ledge. Here we got our first good look at the "liquid sky trainer"—180 feet of overhanging and seemingly unprotectable squeeze chimney. After about 50 feet of thrashing I was maxed, could barely fit in the crack, could not make upward progress, and we bailed. More than a month passed before we could get back to The Fortress. During that time I discussed technique possibilities with my friend Brad Jackson, and he suggested I try what he did on the second ascent of the Levitator pitch on Scorched Earth in Yosemite: climb sideways. So there I was back at my high point, horizontal, my head barely sticking out from the depths of hell. One arm held me while my other pushed me upward, my feet scrambling for any sort of purchase. It worked! After 110 feet we found ourselves deep inside the yawning gap that splits the upper portion of The Fortress. One more short, cool pitch up a rare featured face inside the chimney landed us on the summit on April 10. We called our route The Poop Chute (V 5.11R A3+). Six protection bolts were placed, and all raps have bolted stations.

PAT GOODMAN

ZION NATIONAL PARK

Great White Throne, new route. In mid-November, my brother Jonathan Smoot and I climbed a moderate new seven-pitch route up the blank south face of the Great White Throne (III or IV 5.8 A0). Our route followed a unique series of narrow, diagonal rib-like ledges most of the way to the summit. The climbing was mostly clean and enjoyable, bolt-protected face and slab. It

was mostly 5.4 with occasional 5.8 moves. Threatening clouds, our diminishing supply of bolts, and routefinding challenges kept the adventure level high. We rappelled the route, finishing with not much light left. This route could become popular.

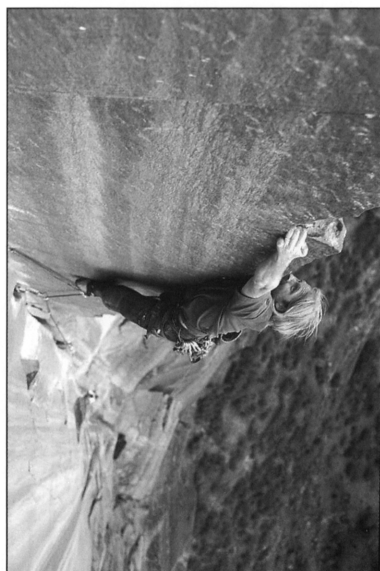
BRIAN SMOOT

Zion, new routes and speed ascents. I was fortunate in 2003 to have good partners and lots of climbing time in Zion N.P. My season started on February 15. My partner Ammon McNeely and I arrived in the park Saturday morning after working late on a rigging job Friday night. Saturday afternoon we hiked to the base of the Streaked Wall and climbed two or three “approach” pitches, arriving at the luxurious Rubicon Ledge well after dark. The next morning we woke and made the first one-day ascent of Latitudes (VI 5.9 A4+), in 18 hours and 40 minutes. Paul Gagner, of the first-ascent party, was helpful with approach and descent information. I feel this speed ascent is as noteworthy as any other big wall alpine ascent that I know of. The size and technical difficulty of this wall brought us one step closer to achieving fast ascents on the hardest routes in the big mountains of the world.

Two weeks later Ammon and I attempted to climb five Zion walls in a day. Our achievement was cut short by fatigue, darkness, and cold, but we were successful on three walls that day, all in record time. We first climbed Prodigal Sun (V 5.8 C2) in 2:36. (Thank you to Ron Olevsky for the first ascent. I believe first ascensionists are not appreciated enough for their efforts.) From the summit of Angel’s Landing we ran to the top of Moonlight Buttress (V 5.10 C1), rappelled, and climbed Moonlight in 1:57. I apologize to the party that was high on Moonlight filming a video for obscenities I uttered. I point out to the public that the trade routes in Zion see a lot of traffic, and rock and anchors must often be shared. Expect traffic jams on trade routes—you won’t be disappointed if you don’t find them. Ammon and I finished with an ascent of Lunar Ecstasy (V 5.9 C2+) in 4:09. We were out of gas after rappelling Moonlight again, in the dark, and opted for burritos at the local Bit and Spur.

I worked on the FFA of the seven-pitch Ball and Chain on Angel’s Landing during September weekends. This work finally came to fruition October 1. The route was free-climbed except for having to stand on the belay from the fifth anchor. There were three 5.12+ pitches in a row, with each pitch requiring mastery of a different technique. I added three bolts to the route but none to the existing aid path.

On October 12 Ammon and I climbed Spaceshot in 1:36:54. This left us time to get to town and attend our friends Dean and Jill’s wedding. In 37:14 during the next two days Ammon, Kurt Arend, and I did a new hard route on the right side of Angel’s Landing. This route was named South of Heaven (VI 5.8 A4+), and has six pitches: A4, A3+, 5.8 A2, A3, A4+, and 5.5. Hole count: five for belays, four for protection, one Threader.



Ball and Chain’s crux. Andrew McGarry