

Mt. Clarence King, Northeast Ridge.

Pavel Kovar and I discovered and completed the first ascent of one of the few remaining unclimbed technical ridges on a major Sierra Nevada mountain, the northeast ridge of Mt. Clarence King in Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Park. We attempted this route during two separate three-day efforts in September. The final attempt, between September 15-17, involved nearly 30 miles of hiking over three high passes, 10,000'+ of vertical gain, one and



Pavel Kovar simul-climbing about halfway up the Northeast Ridge, with the summit of Mt. Clarence King in the background. Misha Logvinov, www.verglasphoto.com

a half days of technical climbing, and a cold bivouac on the summit ridge. On the approach from the east side of the Sierra, we experienced winds exceeding 50 mph and unusual cold for the time of year. The night before the climb, our thermometer registered 14°F. Fortunately, the weather improved, and we were able to continue. While on the ridge, we belayed 16 pitches and simul-climbed/soloed more than a half of the route. After approximately one mile of technical terrain, the northeast ridge merges with the previously climbed east ridge and follows it to the top of the mountain.

After running out of daylight and enduring a cold bivouac near the summit, we descended the regular route to our base camp in Sixty Lake Basin, walked 13 miles back to the Onion Valley trailhead, and drove home for seven hours, thus staying *mostly* awake for 48 hours straight.

The route features a lot of sustained and exposed ridge traversing and is rated IV+ 5.7.

MISHA LOGVINOV

Upper Castle Rocks, various ascents. Dave Nettle joined me, in May 2005, on my first excursion to Upper Castle Rocks in Sequoia National Park. We knew of only two routes in the area: The Gargoyle (5.10 A1), on South Guard, and the Beckey Route (5.8 A2) on Amphitheater Dome. After figuring out where the Gargoyle route started, we freed its 10' A1 tension traverse, at 5.10. The rock was not as clean as Castle Rock Spire or the Fin. Contrary to the Sequoia-Kings Canyon guide, The Gargoyle starts at the top of a 4th/5th class, right-leaning ramp that starts at the base of the north gully. The next day we climbed The South Arête on the Little Spire (5.11-). Our route follows the broken south ridge for three long pitches to the base of the Little Spire summit block. Two fantastic pitches lead up overhanging and well-protected face climbing to the pointed summit. The exposed belay and arête climbing on the second pitch are spectacular.

In June 2006 Chris LaBounty, Neal Harder, and I climbed three new routes. Axes of Evil (5.11) starts at the lone pine tree at the base of the South Guard/Ax gully. It follows face features for three pitches, before entering the gully for four more pitches. Golden Axe (5.11a A0) follows the only weakness on the improbable south face of the Ax. This six-pitch route starts at the base of the Ax/Amphitheater Dome gully and follows the left leg of the obvious "wishbone"

crack system. We did not free the section between the third and fourth bolt on the fourth pitch, but it will likely go free. Lastly, we did an enjoyable two-pitch route near camp (point 9,081' southeast of Castle Rocks). It follows the obvious chicken-headed pillar that lies against the southeast face of the dome. One tricky 5.10 bolt-protected move guards the summit and a nice view of Sequoia.

BRANDON THAU



Polemonium Pillar, and the southwest side of Mt. Russell on the far right, home to multiple routes. David Harden

Polemonium Pillar. Approaching Mt. Russell from the Whitney-Russell col, while dropping down toward Russell's towering west face, the climber is stunned by the beautiful cracks, corners, and arêtes that make up the south and west sides of the mountain. Often overlooked is the thousand-foot-high south face that drops down from the ridgeline extending off of the long west ridge of Mt. Russell. In July Micha Miller and I climbed a route up a series of left-facing corners in the center of this face. It tops out just right of the sharp prow that forms a high point on long west ridge. To descend we traversed toward Russell and dropped down the west couloir. We named both the formation and the route Polemonium Pillar (IV 5.10b).

Most of the climbing was in the 5.9 range, with a shallow, flared crack on the third pitch providing the crux. Insecure jams and questionable pro made things interesting. Lovely blossoms of Sky Pilot (*Polemonium*) scattered on the ledges give the route its name.

DAVID HARDEN, AAC

Mt. Whitney, ...Lost. Our climb was spectacular and, compared to our expectations, epic. Not counting 8,000' vertical of carrying loads in the first 24 hours. Not counting getting snowed off