

Beckey's original Darrington & Index guide, but rumors of blank rock and nasty approaches kept most away. Surprisingly, the near end of Squire Creek Wall has a fairly civilized approach. The massif is reached after a 1½-mile walk along a decommissioned logging road. From the road a quick descent to the creek leads to a crossing immediately beneath the route itself. Slab Daddy takes the obvious full-height stroke of rock on the northern end of the wall and tops out on the fin-like ridge at nearly 4,400'.

Several excellent bivouac ledges exist, the most usable being the Reservoir Bivy at the top of the 6th pitch and the Balcony Bivy at the top of the 11th, where we spent many nights. The Reservoir Bivy features a large pocket that holds water through much of the season.

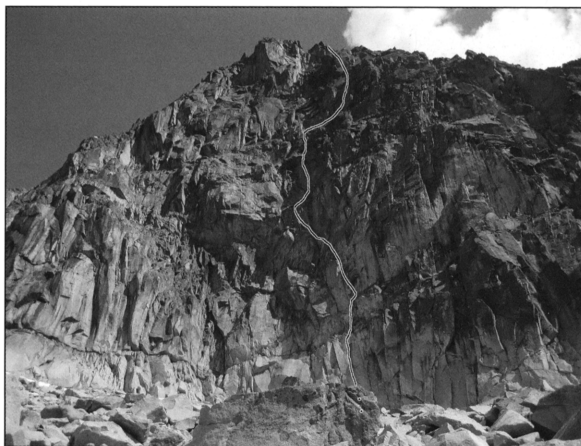
The 2009 season marked a 40-year history of rock-climbing on the Darrington crags. Until recently almost all of that history had taken place in the adjacent Clear Creek drainage, and indeed features like Exfoliation Dome, Three O'Clock Rock, and the Green Giant Buttress, though far from climbed out, could be said to be approaching mature status. Now the feature once thought least accessible turns out to be among the more easily reached. After 40 years, this and Chris Greyell's new routes on the Illusion Wall and Salish Peak point to an exciting future for climbing in the backcountry of Darrington's domelands.



Slab Daddy, on Squire Creek Wall. *David Whitelaw*

DAVID WHITELAW

*Mt. Stuart, Gorillas in the Mist.* Mt. Stuart is a Cascades icon, featuring 3,000' climbs on excellent stone or dependable ice. I'd assumed its major faces and ridges had been completed, until I saw photos of an unclimbed 1,000' buttress towering over the glacier, between Stuart Pass and Goat Pass. While winter trip planning, Sol Wertkin and I dubbed this the "West Face Wall."



Gorillas in the Mist. Steve Smith

We dreamed of sunny rock and exchanged e-mails from two parties who'd attempted the climb. Phrases like "giant roof," "full pitch of thin nailing," and "all day...at least" brought cautious inspiration. Jens Holsten, who had attempted the wall in 2006, joined us at the last minute. We set off as a trio at 5 a.m. on July 8.

Above treeline we entered a swirling fog that made locating the climb an adventure in itself. Jens had predicted sunny skies, and Sol's wedding anniversary was the next day, so our

gear consisted of wind shirts, climbing equipment, and two daypacks. We started up a splitter crack, just right of looming orange overhangs. Two pitches of corners and arêtes led to a bolted anchor stamped "1993." We'd later hear from the 1993 climbers, who climbed three-fourths of the wall in big-wall style.

Jens unlocked the key route-finding puzzle on pitch 3, leading the rightward "Monkey Traverse" while pausing, mid-crux, to trundle. We followed flakes and corners for six more foggy pitches until joining the West Ridge route amid decreasing temperature and visibility. While negotiating icy towers, Sol and I got separated from Jens, who'd soloed while we'd simulated. Hours of nervous shouting through howling winds resulted in three sore throats but eventual reunion. Under darkening gloom we settled for a bivy and hardcore cuddling. The coldest night of our lives (but best spooning) ended at 4 a.m. We reached a sunrise summit under clearing conditions, fingers still too numb to manipulate iced-up cams. *Gorillas in the Mist* (IV+ 5.11).

The Sherpa Glacier downclimb and hike out went quickly, as we knew friends would be worried. Bouncing down the dirt road, we encountered an all-star rescue squad, hastily assembled by Sol's nervous wife. She was happy to have her husband back and treated Jens and me to the best homemade sandwiches of our lives. Their marital bliss preserved, we avoided the potential for jealousy and never mentioned the spooning.

BLAKE HERRINGTON, AAC

*Colchuck Balanced Rock, The Scoop.* After an early June ascent to check out and clean the more difficult pitches, Matt Clifton, Evan Cabodi, and I returned to Colchuck Balanced Rock (CBR) on August 9 and completed a free ascent of our new line. The Scoop (III+ 5.11c), named for the crux pitch, which looks like it was carved by a giant ice cream scoop, follows a line of beautiful cracks, linked with excellent belay ledges, to the right of the West Face and the Tempest.

The first three pitches provided climbing up to 5.10a, to reach "Launch Ledge" and the base of the Scoop pitch. On our exploratory ascent we found it clogged with black lichen; the overhanging upper half of the 60m pitch looked to be a difficult seam requiring much clean-