

North America 1999

The final year of the Millennium was not a time of rest and relaxation for climbers in North America. Alaska saw a number of fine new routes being established, while free climbers continued to push the long free routes in venues such as Yosemite, the Black Canyon of the Gunnison, and Canada's Bugaboos. Mixed climbing remains intensely popular, and climbers everywhere continued to rally together to fight the access problems that are cropping up across the country. Stay tuned: Y2K will do doubt bring more of the same!

Alaska

The 9000ft South Face of **Mt. Foraker** was the location of a big route climbed over 10 days in June by Joe Terravecchia and Steve Larson. The *Terravecchia-Larson Route* ascends terrain to the right of *The Infinite Spur* and includes a huge diamond-shaped buttress crux that required 7 pitches of difficult mixed climbing. Russian soloist Valerie Babanov spent a week ascending *Forever More*, a 23-pitch VI 5.10 A3 line on the NE Face of **Mt. Barrille** in the Ruth Gorge. Also in the Ruth, Renny Jackson and Doug Chabot were active 22 June-5 July on the E Buttress of **Mt. Johnson**, a line previously attempted three times by Mugs Stump. The pair were forced to turn back 38 pitches (VI 5.10+ A3+) into the route; the rock was so bad Jackson had to cut steps in it with his axe. The **Bears Tooth** was climbed during two weeks in May from the Buckskin Glacier. The 5000-foot E Face gave Jim Bridwell, Brian McCray, Glenn Dumire, Terry Christensen, and Brian Jonas *The Useless Emotion* (5.9 WI4 A3+).

Elsewhere in the Alaska Range, the 1975 Jon Krakauer route *Ham and Eggs* on the 3000ft S Face of the **Mooses Tooth** saw its second through fifth repeats in May and June. Ascensionists noted that *Ham and Eggs*, which leads directly to the true (E) summit, is ready to become the classic route on the mountain. In Little Switzerland, Rob Feeney and Dave Anderson put up some climbs, including *Gargoyle Buttress* (IV 5.10) on the **Royal Tower's** E Buttress. North of Fairbanks, on the wild granite walls of the Arrigetch in the Brooks Range, the north prow of the **West Maiden** was climbed by Norm Larson, Lorna Corson, Randy Ferris, and Mike Menoloscino via *The Maiden Voyage* (V 5.9R). Meanwhile, Ian McRae, Michael Williams, and Jeff 'Apple' Benowitz did the *North Arête* (IV 5.9 A1) on **Coolage Tower**.

In the Wrangell-St. Elias range, **Northwest Cook (3687m)** was climbed for the first time by Greg Brown, Bertrand Eynard, Dave Hiles, and Alun Hubbard. They then traversed up the unclimbed NW Ridge of **Mt. Cook (4194m)** for the second ascent of the peak. Meanwhile, Paul Knott and Ade Miller made the first ascent of the E Ridge of **Mt. Seattle's** N Summit. And the French, those lovers of controversy, ignited another one when they chose Lionel Daudet and

Sebastien Foissac's ascent of the S Face of the **Burkett Needle** in the Stikine Wilderness as the recipient of this year's Piolet d'Or. The climb, which beat out other contenders such as Tomaz Humar's solo of the S Face of Dhaulagiri, the Spanish route on Amin Brakk, and the Russian ascent of the N Buttress of Thalay Sagar, caused Jean-Claude Marmier, one of the Piolet d'Or's founders, to call for an international boycott of the event in protest.

Canada

In the northern Fairweather Range a group was engaged in ski/snowboard descents and various ascents including the 4500ft N Face of **Mt. Watson** (V 5.7 80° ice) by Chris Trimble and Jim Earl. In the Vampire Peaks area of the Logan Mountains Jack Childress and Pike Howard climbed *Rabies Shot* (IV 5.10 A2+) on **The Canine** and *The Undead* (V 5.10+ A2+), a variation to *The Infusion* on **Vampire Spire**. Their real challenge was surviving a week without food after a grizzly bear raid. Another team, consisting of Brad Jackson, Pat Goodman, and Nan Darkis, established two new lines, both rated V 5.11 A2+, on **Vampire Spire**: *Lair of the White Worm* and *Sanguin Solution*.

The Bugaboos saw considerable action. The last major unclimbed face, the W Face of **Central Howser Tower**, was done in four days of bad weather in August by Todd Offenbacher and Nils Davis. *Fear and Desire* was rated VI 5.10 A3+. A few days later Sean Isaac and Brian Webster followed that route for three pitches and then launched onto *Chocolate Fudge Brownie* (VI 5.9 A2), which would have gone all free were it not for an incredibly precarious flake. Offenbacher and Davis also contributed *Wide Awake* (V 5.10 A2) on the SW Buttress of **Pigeonfeather**. Mike Pennings and Jonathan Copp took an awesome line up the headwall on the W Face of **North Howser Tower** resulting in *Armageddon* (VI 5.11+ A1). On the **South Howser Minaret**, 600ft of new climbing was added to join the SW Pillar; Bob Schultz named their VI 5.9 A3 line *Doubting the Millennium*. The FFA of the *South Face Direct* on **Snowpatch Spire** was done by Guy Edwards and Micah Jessup who rated it 5.11+R.

The 3500ft E Face of **Howse Peak** in the Rockies saw its first two routes in March. Dave Marra and Dave Edgar climbed the big waterfall on the left side of the face. Steve House, Barry Blanchard, and Scott Backes did *M-16* (VI A2 WI7+); the crux, led by House, was described by Blanchard as 'the hardest thing I've ever seen led in the mountains'. Difficult mixed climbs continue to be put up in the Rockies, including the 350m *Rocket Man* (M7+ WI5+) in the **Mt. Patterson** amphitheatre by Dave Thomson, Kafira Allen, Eric Dumerac, and Raphael Slawinski. The **Ships Prow**, which overhangs in its entirety for 2000ft, is located on Scott Island in the eastern fjords of Baffin Island. Mike Libeck soloed the first route there, *The Hirayana Wall* (VI 5.9 A3). Elsewhere on Baffin Island **The Citadel** in the Stewart Valley was climbed by Mike Turner, Louise Thomas, Jerry Gore and Shaun Hutson. The 900m, 20-pitch climb named *The Endless Day* featured leads of A3+ and M6 and took the best part of a month to do. In the Gibbs Fjord locale, Steph Davis, Russ Mitrovich and Brandon Kanniuier spent 21 days on *Zen and the Art of Leadership* (VI 5.11 A4) on **Joshua Tower**, the first wall done in the area.

Continental United States

Yosemite was host to a celebration for Camp 4, where heartening progress has been made to preserve this historic landmark. The large gathering was attended by legends from the great days of many climbing generations, including Frost, Robbins, Pratt, Chouinard, Harding, Brower, Steck, Schmidt, Bachar, Croft and hundreds of others.

On **El Capitan**, Leo Houlding, assisted by José Pereyra, established the dynamic *Passage to Freedom* (runout 5.13c/d), a free variation of *New Dawn* to the top of El Cap Tower. Meanwhile, Michael Mayr and Richard Schipflinger made the third ascent of *El Niño*, and Tommy Caldwell the fourth free ascent of *The Salathe*. Elsewhere, Bryan Law and Eric George put in *Strange World*, an 11-pitch aid line on the Porcelan Wall. Karl McConachie and Jay Smith did a girdle across **Half Dome's** NW Face; their route, *Peripheral Vision*, had 16 long new pitches. Back on El Cap, 81-year-old Gerry Blach jumared the 25-pitch *Aquarian Wall* in 11 days with Mike Corbett. Beth Coats, who has no use of her legs, did *Zodiac* in 4½ days with Russ Mitrovich and Steph Davis, while paraplegic Mark Wellman spent 11 days on *The Nose* with Corbett. A sobering event was the big rockfall on Glacier Point Apron, which killed a climber and damaged existing routes. Speed climbing big routes throughout the Valley continued to be popular; aficionados such as Dean Potter, Miles Smart and Tim O'Neill used both belayed and ropeless methods to establish numerous astounding new records.

In the **Sierra Nevada**, **Lone Pine Peak's** S Face was the scene of *Windhorse* (V 5.10 A3) by Bruce Bindner and Em Holland. A difficult variation of *El Niño* on **Moro Rock** gave *The Little Prince* (V 5.10 A4) to Brandon Thau and Grant Gardner. Thau also put in *My Own Private Idaho* (V 5.10 A2) on **North Dome** with Jennifer Pollard.

Rockfall on the **Right Twin Brother** in Utah's **Zion National Park** destroyed a large section of wall, affecting the classic *Peyote Dreams*. It may have also damaged the new line climbed in May by Luke Miller and Chris McNamara, *Los Banditos* (VI 5.8R A4). Cam Burns, Chris Eng, and James Garrett did *Wigs in Space* (IV 5.9 A1) on **Red Arch Mountain**. Elsewhere in Utah, the first ascent of the remote Arch Canyon tower **Cathedral Arch** was done by Jeff Lowe and Freddie Snalam via *Bats in the Belfry* (V 5.10 A3).

In Arizona, Jim Beyer soloed *Freak of Nature* (VI 5.10 A5), a new route on the E Face of **Baboquivari Peak**. In New Mexico, Beyer spent 11 days alone on *West Sanctum* (VI 5.10 A5+) on the W Face of **Shiprock**. He also soloed *Parallel Reality* (IV A5b/c) and *On a Tear* (VI A5+) on the nearby **Sextant**.

Significant rockfall was also reported from Colorado. A large rock came out of the fourth pitch of Eldorado's celebrated *Naked Edge*, making the affected moves perhaps 5.10c rather than 5.9. In Rocky Mountain National Park a massive rockfall ravaged much of the lower part of the famous *Northcutt-Carter* on **Hallett Peak**.

In the Black Canyon of the **Gunnison**, the Painted Wall was the scene of *The Serpent* (VI 5.11+R), a 14-pitch free variation of *The Dragon*. The 2200ft route was established by Jeff Achey and Kennan Harvey and repeated a few days

later by Topher Donahue and Jeff Ofsanko. On nearby North Chasm View Wall, Mike Pennings and Johnny Copp climbed *No Pig Deal* (V 5.11+R). Soloist Jim Beyer did a 5-pitch variant to the Hallucinogin Wall resulting in *Happy Trails* (VI 5.10 A5).

The backwaters of Wyoming's **Wind Rivers** were stirred by Galen Rowell and Chris McNamara on the SE Buttress of **Cathedral Peak**. The *South Tower Direct* (V 5.11b A2) climbs the wall left of the obvious couloir. On **Wolverine Peak's** E Face, *The Illness* (IV 5.10 A3) was ascended by Ryan Hokanson, James Garrett, and John Chilton, supported by Kris Pietryga and Fred Beckey, while on **Squaretop**, the father-and-son team of Andy and Dan Carson climbed *The East Pillar* (IV 5.10). In **Grand Teton National Park**, Zack Martin teamed with Jim Beyer for two routes on the E Face of the **Grand Teton**: *The Golden Arête* (V 5.11d) and *Offspring* (III 5.11 A1). Beyer also continued his solo efforts on the mountain, climbing the *Crystal Tower* (III 5.10) near the base of the Underhill Ridge, and putting up *Got to Kill Captain Stupid* (III 5.9+) on the steep wall above the Wall Street Couloir to the left of the *Jackson-Rickert Route*.

Mexico

Development continues in both Basaseachic Falls National Park (Sierra de Chihuahua), where Celia Bull and Carlos Garcia Ayala established the second aid route on the 4000-foot **El Gigante**, and in El Potrero Chico, with numerous bolted routes continuing to go up on the soaring limestone walls.

The Millennium (IV 5.10c A1 or 5.11b) was climbed on **El Gran Trono Blanco** in Baja by Gary Anderson and John Smallwood. The route links the *Happy Hooker* to the SE Buttress with several new pitches. Also on Trono Blanco, Werner Landry and Mark Richards ascended the 13-pitch *Leaving on a Jet Plane* (VI 5.10 A3+) between *Giraffe* and *Pan Am*.