



AAC Publications

Whitney Portal Buttress, The Never Ending Story; El Segundo area, new routes

California, Sierra Nevada

In 2011 and 2012, I completed five new routes on the Whitney Portal Buttress and surrounding walls with various partners. The longest of these is the Never Ending Story (12 pitches, V 5.12 or 5.11 A0) on the Whitney Portal Buttress proper. On the first attempt of this route, Amy Ness, Paul Lebouisue, and I spent six days and five nights on the wall, climbing capsule-style. We had to bail 400' from the summit due to lack of supplies and hardware. Amy and I returned later for another four-day push to finish the route. During that time we experienced wind so strong it was able lift up our portaledge. This route, which contains some of the best crack climbing on the Portal Buttress, follows the massive arch above the only giant pine on the wall. It then dances around, grabbing the most aesthetic features, with eight pitches of perfect cracks and four pitches of slab. The 5.12 crux comes at the end of pitch 10—a full 70m slab. The desperate slab crux can make for a big winger, but it can be bypassed with a lasso to a roof. The climbing up to that point is mostly 5.10–5.11.

Next up, Neil Woodruff and I took on a massive divide in the center of Whitney Portal Buttress, which can only be called “The Butt Crack.” Neil and I spent four days on the wall to reach this chasm. During that time we experienced spectacular waterfalls and thunderous skies. The second pitch involved a very stout 5.11 lieback to a button-head ladder with mandatory free moves between the rivets. The next pitch also went at 5.11. The gem pitches were inside the wide upper crack. Full on hand-and-foot-bridging spanned the seven-foot gap and made for a wild and airy scenario. From here, we had to leap from one massive chockstone to another, and yet another, which brought us to the final chockstone boulder crux, which exits the large chasm (5.11). Two more pitches led to the top of the central tower just below a massive block, completing Skid Marks (8 pitches, IV 5.11 A0).

The next three routes were climbed on walls adjacent to the Portal Buttress. High in the northeast corner of the canyon, and up behind El Segundo Buttress, is a prominent pillar with cracks that run clean and true. I made the first ascent of this route with Phil Bircheff and later returned with Amy Ness to free the entire climb, calling the route Pillar Altisimo (6 pitches, 5.11)

Pitch one is the crux, with two bolts protecting a wide trough (5.11). Pitch two, the Dulcimer Pitch, is wildly exposed, and the third pitch is the highlight, with two parallel cracks that run for 120' with sinker 5.9 jams. After this, the route follows the obvious crack system (5.7–5.8) to a ramp with bushes on the west face, where it climbs a broken dike to the spire summit. Five rappels down the east side take one to the base.

To the right of Pillar Altisimo, on the far eastern arête, Amy Ness, Phil Bircheff, and I established Altisimo Arête (5 pitches, III 5.10c). The climb begins in a gully, moving east with some third-class scrambling to the start. A 5.5 crack goes to a ledge with a small pine. The second pitch is marked by a fixed piton and passes a giant roof to the right. Knifeblades were used to protect around the roof for the crux (5.10c) on the first ascent. The third and fourth pitches are very clean and memorable splitter cracks, and the route finishes with a short pitch and mantel onto the summit block. Subsequent parties should bring a small rack of knifeblade pitons and a hammer, or a drill, to make the route properly equipped.

To the left of Pillar Altisimo and to the right of Moonstone Buttress, Amy Ness and I climbed a massive four-pitch dihedral, which we called Sombra De La Luna (6 pitches, 5.11). The climb starts in

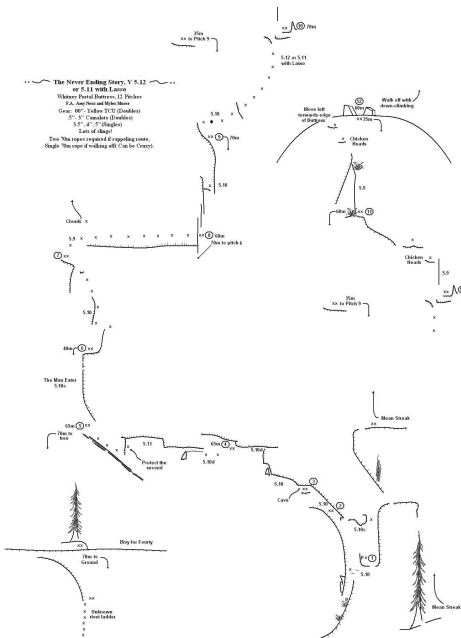
a large flake system (5.9) and reaches a brushy ledge. From the ledge, the corner above offers consistent 5.10–5.11 climbing. The third-pitch corner blanks out and forces the climber onto the face before regaining the upper dihedral. We turned the dihedral on the left, which brought us onto the face below an arching corner. Exciting slab and knob climbing eventually brought us to an offwidth with a perfect belay. From the anchor, the sixth pitch moves up and right through a small roof, past a bolt, and into a left-trending arch with one final airy move into a wide crack. After reaching the summit block, we dubbed the last pitch the Shadow of the Moon and then rappelled down Apollo 13. The climb required six protection bolts, six anchor bolts, and three pitons to complete.

Myles Moser, AAC

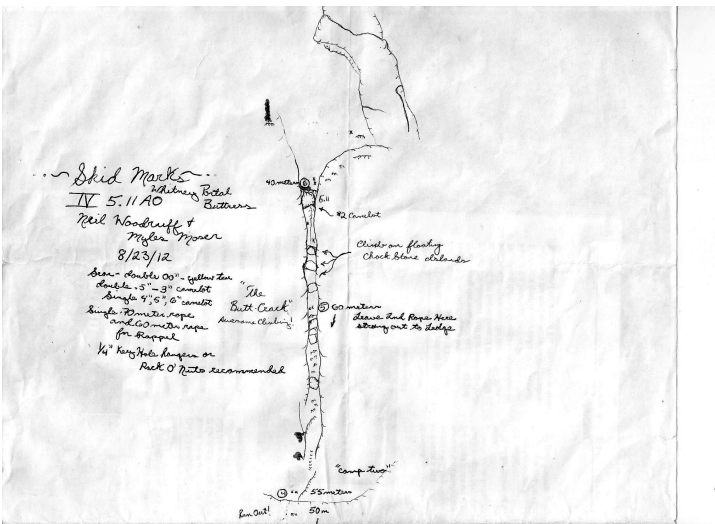
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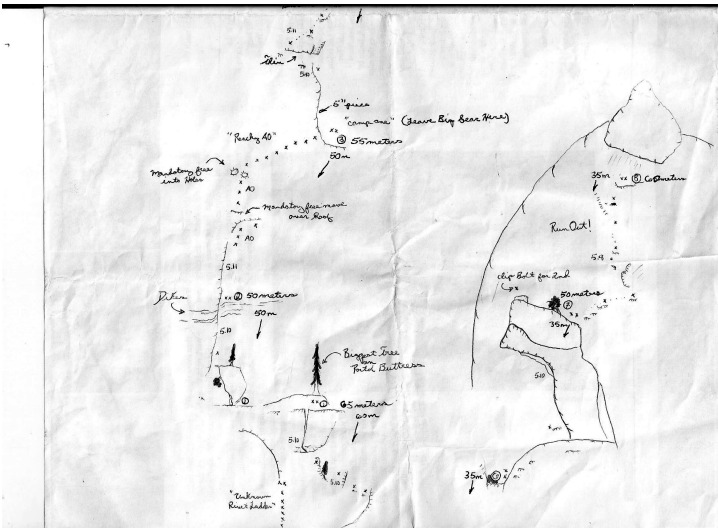
Skid Marks (left) and Never Ending Story (right), new routes on the Whitney Portal Buttress.



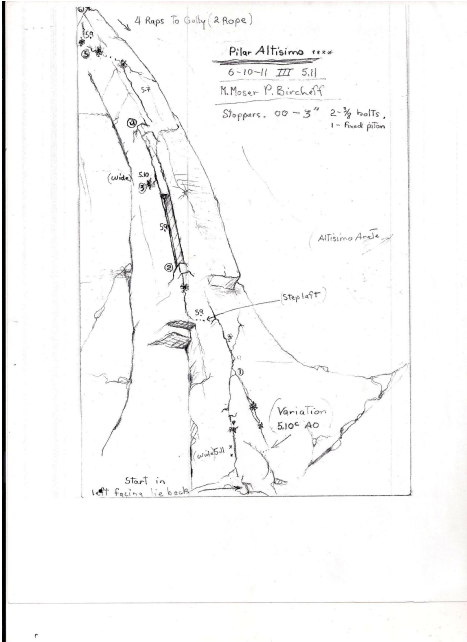
Never Ending Story topo.



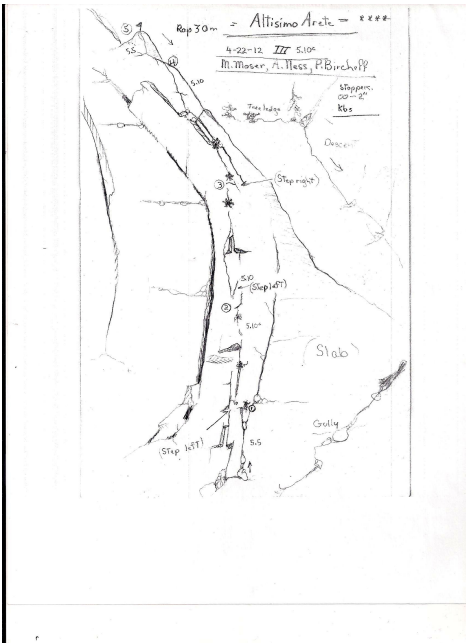
Skid Marks topo 1.



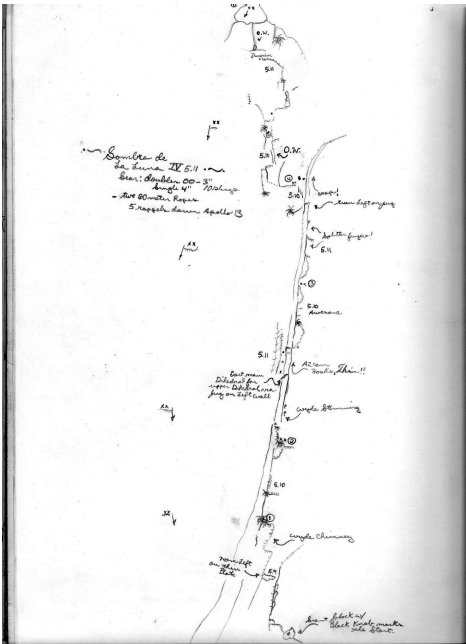
Skid Marks topo 2.



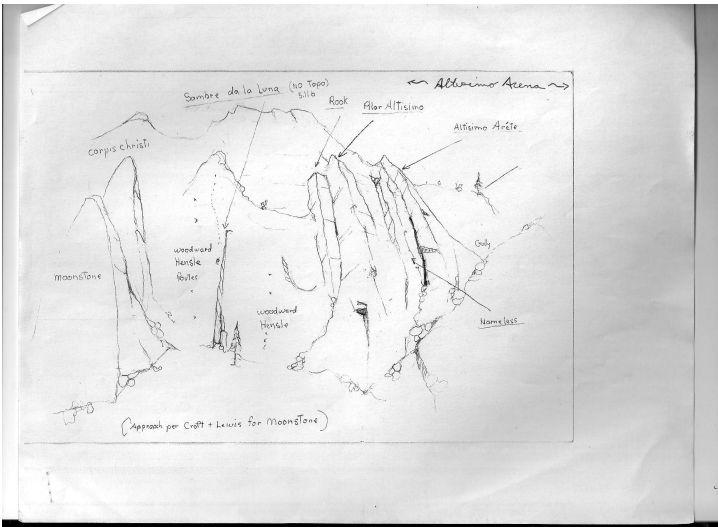
Pillar Altissimo topo.



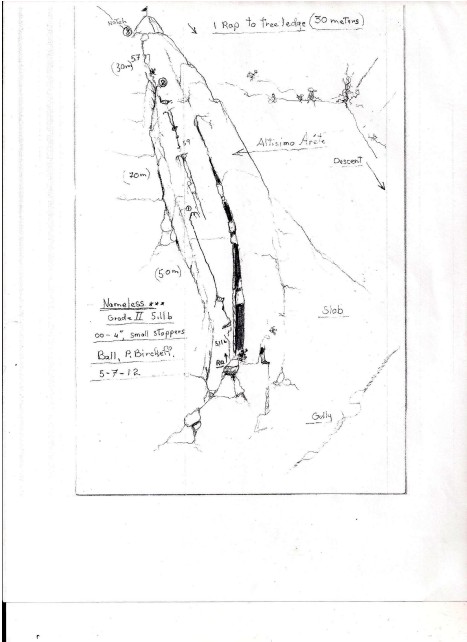
Altísimo Arete topo.



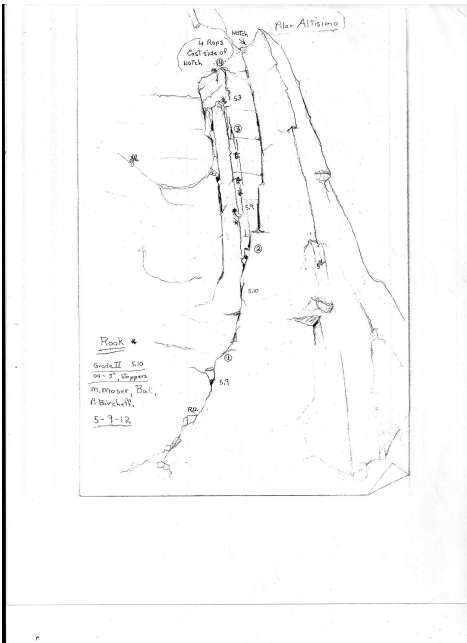
Sombra De La Luna topo.



Altísimo Arena overview topo.



Nameless topo.



The Rook topo.

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