



## AAC Publications

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### **Jack Roberts, 1952-2012**

Jack Roberts, a mountain guide and guidebook author best known for desperate first ascents in Alaska, died on January 15, 2012, while climbing Bridalveil Falls, near Telluride, Colorado. Jack was almost 60 years old when he fell, which speaks volumes of his passion and skill over a long career.

Jack began climbing in Los Angeles, making the progression from the boulders of Stoney Point to the multi-pitch routes of Tahquitz Rock and on to the big walls of Yosemite. He first gained attention on the spectacular direct aid routes of El Capitan, accompanying Hugh Burton on the second ascents of El Capitan's Shield and Zodiac, and the second ascent of Cosmos with Rob Muir.

Roberts was still an alpine apprentice in 1977 when he and I met in Chamonix and teamed up for the North Face of Les Droites. A week later, he and Steve Shea climbed a direct route up the 700-meter north couloir of the Dru. On this trip he met a British climber, Simon McCartney, and they became fast friends, exchanging visits between their homes in London and Santa Monica.

In 1978, Roberts and McCartney set their sights on the unclimbed north face of Mt. Huntington. Provisioned to take four days, they made the first ascent and first traverse of the mountain in nine, overcoming leader falls, injuries, frostbite, and days without food. *Mountain* magazine hailed it as "a major step in alpine-style ascents."

Earlier that year, Roberts had overcome brutal conditions with Tobin Sorenson during the first winter ascent of the Grand Central Couloir on Mt. Kitchener in the Canadian Rockies. The pair survived only by running in place through a long night high on the face. Roberts had become an expert in punishing, multi-day ascents that tested the limits of difficulty, endurance, and suffering.

Roberts moved to Boulder in the early 1980s, and here he met Pam Ranger, a schoolteacher with a matching love of outdoor adventure. Friends would comment on how, in the later years of his life, Jack seemed remarkably at peace, and Pam was the reason. That they were soul mates could not be more apparent.

In Colorado, Jack made the first ascents of numerous ice and mixed routes, and used his vast local knowledge to publish a guidebook to ice climbs. His guiding business similarly focused on ice and alpine climbing.

On Pair of Jacks, the first ascent of the north face of Mt. Kennedy, Roberts and Tackle ascended a line of 6,000 feet, with ice, rock and mixed climbing, bivouacking inside a portaledge perched on the steep face. After reaching their base camp after yet another alpine odyssey that pushed him to the limit, Roberts wrote:

The route we've just accomplished comes into full view. It is no less steep or intimidating for our passing. As I scan the pitches we have just climbed and mentally track the events of the past 12 days I begin to notice the warm glow of success building in my stomach. I am proud of what we've done.

I expect that Jack had that same warm glow of accomplishment and pride when he looked back on an extraordinary climbing career.

## Images



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