



## AAC Publications

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### **Mt. Johnson, point 7,500', Twisted Stair**

Alaska, Ruth Gorge

From April 20–21, Silas Rossi and I established a new climb on a ca 7,500' satellite peak of Mt. Johnson (8,460'): Twisted Stair (2,300', V WI6 R/X M6+).

We flew into the Ruth Gorge on April 10 with the goal of climbing something and not sacrificing too many fingers and toes. Still in the grasp of winter, day- and night-time temperatures were frigid, ranging from 0°F to –35°F during our first week. We maintained our psych by skiing and scheming, while waiting for a bump in the mercury. We eventually attempted routes on Mt. Bradley and Mt. Dickey, with excellent climbing and good weather, but weren't able to finish either climb due to mega-snow mushrooms or other objective hazards. Ten days into our trip, we headed for a line we'd spied the previous season.

Twisted Stair climbs a clean and obvious line directly to Pt. 7,500', at the back of an east-facing amphitheater between Mt. Johnson and Mt. Wake, on the far right end of Johnson's west ridge. We started in the same chimney system as the Ladder Tube (Ichimura-Sato-Yamada, AAJ 2008), splitting right from its first pitch to climb what we believe is entirely new ground. Reaching the toe of the route requires broken, arduous glacier travel and affords an unflinching perspective on Mt. Johnson's north face. The sight instills a feeling of equal parts awe and intimidation, and includes a rare close-up view of the Elevator Shaft (Chabot-Tackle, AAJ 1996).

We started climbing on April 20, completing the climb and descent over two days, with one snow-cave bivy below the crux ice smear. We were inspired by the quality and sustained nature of the climbing, finding many physical and committing "blue collar" Alaskan pitches—one right after the other. Bergschrund to summit cornice, there was little reprieve as we navigated steep s'nice, mixed terrain, and a dizzying and delicate WI6 R/X ice smear at two-thirds height.

We rappelled—with a few variations to our line of ascent—from many V-threads and nuts under a clear night sky and moon shadow. The ski back to our camp below Mt. Dickey ended at Hour 49 on April 22. We left Alaska grateful, with more projects in mind for next season and the same number of functional fingers and toes with which we started.

Peter Doucette

## Images



The line of Twisted Stair on the right, topping out at Pt. 7,500'; the approximate line of the Ladder Tube to the left. The Elevator Shaft lies one chimney system left of the Ladder Tube [see AAJ 2008 for photo of these routes]. Both the Ladder Tube and the Elevator Shaft followed Johnson's west ridge to the summit (out of view, left).



Silas Rossi leading a rock traverse.



Silas Rossi approaching Mt. Johnson.



Peter Doucette leading the WI6 R/X ice smear.



Peter Doucette gets committed on the crux WI6 ice smear of Twisted Stair.

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