



AAC Publications

Idiot Peak, West Face, Down the Rabbit Hole

Alaska, Central Alaska Range

"Does everyone have a good feeling about this?" Scott said, before we descended south 2,000' into the formidable Valley of Death of the Tokositna Glacier. Scott Adamson, Andy Knight, and I were hoping to climb a new route up the center of the west face of Idiot Peak (ca 10,700'), a sub-peak located just south of Mt. Huntington's south ridge. Down the rabbit hole we plunged, and after navigating some seracs, steep ice, and crevasses we slept at a small, sheltered bivy.

[Editor's note: Jay Smith and Paul Teare are the only other climbers known to have used this descent, once in 1990 and again in 1991. After rappelling off the Stegosaurus Ridge, the zone is threatened by steep icefalls on three sides. **Idiot Peak was climbed for the first time in 2004** by Will Mayo and Chris Thomas, who climbed the Harvard Route's access couloir and traversed under the Phantom Wall to reach the steep northwest face, their route is called Mini-Intellectual (AAJ 2005), and it starts north (climber's left) and 1,500' higher than Down the Rabbit Hole.]

We awoke at 4 a.m. and traversed right (south) 500' to a long snow slope (ca 6,500') that led to the main, rocky west face of Idiot Peak. After soloing between 1,000'-2,000' of 60° to 80° snow with short ice steps, we arrived at the first technical pitch. A long ribbon of water ice led up a left-facing corner to a rocky section. We were all surprised by the lack of protection on the mixed climbing (M6), which would be the hardest climbing on the route. After this, a pitch of thick ice and a traverse led to another pitch up easy ice in a right-facing corner. The fourth and fifth leads involved a drool of clear water ice in a squeeze chimney followed by more mixed climbing (WI5+ M5). After reaching a good ledge we were greeted by a 30' column of ice—what should have been the money pitch. However, as Scott took the lead he quickly discovered brittle ice and that the column was completely detached from the rock behind it. Avoiding the ice, he made a 20' pendulum right and aided thin, flaring cracks for 10' (A2) before reaching lower angle glacier ice. With better conditions, this column could be exceptional.

After a full pitch up hard glacial ice (WI3+) and a quick brew, we continued rightward up a line of glacial ice. Three pitches of steep ice and some mixed climbing in a blocky chimney eventually brought us to the Thank God Mushroom Bivy around midnight, just one pitch below the summit ridge. We slept in the next morning, enjoying our position, and then one more mixed pitch led to the south ridge, where the traversing began. After navigating around a big gendarme, we stayed mostly below the corniced ridge crest. Five pitches of snow wallowing and spicy ice traverses led us to the heavily corniced summit, where a mere tap of the ice tool on top would have to suffice.

The descent was quite involved. From the summit we climbed one pitch around the north side of the peak to reach the col between Mt. Huntington and Idiot Peak. After rappelling into the col, more rappels down ice on the west side led to a section of sketchy broken rock that Will Mayo had noted after his first ascent of the mountain. We rappelled through the broken rock to the base of a major snow slope left of Idiot Peak. From there we traversed left 500' and then up 800' on 70° snow to reach yet another technical pitch leading to a large ledge that traverses under the Phantom Wall. We bivied in a rocky cave just below this pitch. The next morning we climbed up and then traversed under the massive Phantom Wall to reach the top of the Harvard Route's access couloir. We rappelled down the couloir and reached the glacier just before some weather rolled in.

Inexplicably good weather left us feeling lucky that we'd completed our main objective so quickly, and without any major setbacks: Down the Rabbit Hole (4,200', VI WI5+ M6 A2). It was now April 23 and

after four days away from base camp our pulled pork victory burritos made us all realize how awesome base camp really is.

Aaron Child

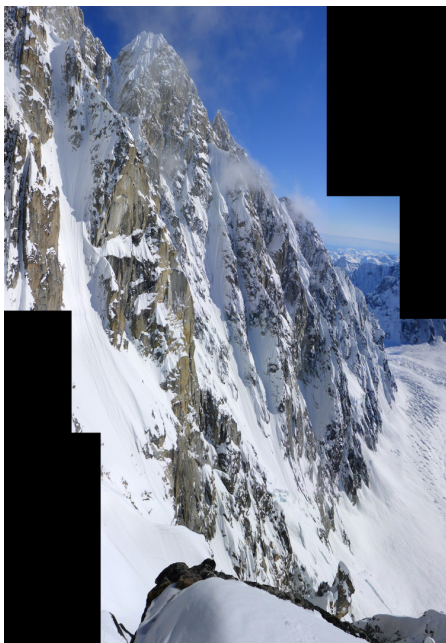
Images



The line of Down the Rabbit Hole (4,200', VI WI5+ M6 A2) on the west face of Idiot Peak.



The line of Mini-Intellectual (Mayo-Thomas, 2004) which lies north (left) of Down the Rabbit Hole.



As seen from the descent, the pointy summit of Idiot Peak can be seen on the far right. The access couloir to the Harvard Route lies in the foreground.



Scott Adamson in aid mode to gain good glacial ice above the column.



Aaron Child and Scott Adamson following moderate terrain after the ropes came out.



Scott Adamson on Idiot Peak's west face.



Scott Adamson starting up the detached ice pillar before deciding to pendulum right onto the rock.



Hanging out at the Thank God Mushroom Bivy.



Aaron Child traversing along the south ridge of Idiot Peak.



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