



## AAC Publications

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### **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 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/approach, once in 1990 and again in 1991, en route to the Phantom Wall. The so-called Valley of Death is threatened by steep icefalls on three sides. Idiot Peak was first climbed in 2005 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 2006), and it starts north of (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 1,000'–2,000' of 60° to 80° snow with short ice steps, we arrived at the technical climbing, where ribbons of water ice and mixed climbing stretched for five pitches (WI5+ M6). After reaching a good ledge we were greeted by a 30' ice column. Scott quickly discovered the column was completely detached. Avoiding the ice, he made a short tension traverse and began free climbing up rock to the right. A 10' section of A2 climbing was required to avoid a fall onto a single Pecker and gain better gear. Above this, he resumed free climbing.

After a full pitch up hard glacial ice (WI3+) and a quick brew, we continued rightward. Three pitches of steep ice and mixed climbing in a blocky chimney eventually brought us to the Thank God Mushroom Bivy around midnight, one pitch below the summit ridge. We slept in the next morning, and 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 ice traverses led us to the corniced summit, where a mere tap of the ice tool on top would have to suffice: Down the Rabbit Hole (4,200', V WI5+ M6 A2).

From the summit we climbed one pitch around the north side of the peak to reach the col between Huntington and Idiot. More rappels down ice on the west side led to a section of sketchy broken rock. 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 Phantom Wall to reach the top of the Harvard Route's access couloir. We rappelled down the couloir and reached the glacier and camp again on April 23, after four days away.

Aaron Child

## Images



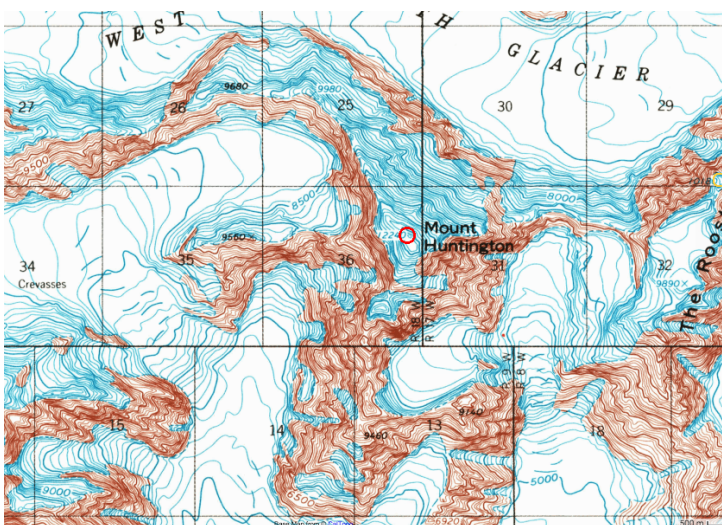
As seen from the descent, the pointy summit of Idiot Peak can be seen on the far right. The access couloir to the Harvard Route lies in the foreground.



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



Scott Adamson leading the final technical pitch to reach the south ridge.



An overview of the Mt. Huntington massif. Idiot Peak (ca 10,700') is located about halfway between Pt. 9,460' and the summit of Mt. Huntington, below its south ridge. The Valley of Death is the large glacial depression (ca 6,000') southwest of Mt. Huntington's summit.



Scott Adamson on Idiot Peak's west face.





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



Scott Adamson climbs around the detached ice column on Down the Rabbit Hole.



Hanging out at the Thank God Mushroom Bivy.



Aaron Child traversing along the south ridge of Idiot Peak.

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