



## AAC Publications

---

### **Cleaver, South Face, Chronic Harmonic**

California, Sierra Nevada

**Nate Ricklin:** Since first seeing the Cleaver (ca 13,000') from the northeast ridge of Lone Pine Peak, I was drawn to it—a wide, 850' tall, white granite wall. I climbed two new routes on the cliff in 2008 along with others from the Pullharder Alpine Club (AAJ 2009). Prior to our adventures, it had only one known route (Condon-Killian, 1961). The amazing thing about the Cleaver is its location only two miles from Whitney Portal; however, it's hidden from view on the approach to Mt. Whitney or Mt. Russell. I was left mesmerized by the upper dihedrals in the center of the wall, directly below the summit. Long and perfect, they looked tricky to reach, as the wall is concave, blank, and steep directly below.

In May 2010, Konstantin Stoletov and I made our first recon, aiming straight up the center of the wall. We bivied before our attempt, when the entire valley was choked with snow and freezing cold. We made it up nearly two pitches, placing seven bolts on the second pitch: a hard water groove. We placed our last bolt at a stance out in space on an arête and vowed to come back when it was warmer.

We returned in September 2010. With a poor forecast, we tried for a car-to-car attempt. We finished the second pitch and placed a bolt at the start of the third pitch before snow flurries forced us down. From that high point I had no idea where to go. Hanging death flakes danced up and right, and going straight up looked loose and gearless. We knew that just 50' more would probably connect the dots into the upper wall.

The project sat for some time afterward. In 2014, I told Shaun Reed I'd take a week off to scope new lines with him in the Wind River Range. However, the forecast was awful. On a whim I checked the weather in Lone Pine—sun! We made a last-minute, 18-hour drive from Colorado to the Whitney Portal.

**Shaun Reed:** With a completely clear forecast in the Sierra we didn't even bring a tent. Carrying 30 bolts, a 300' static line, and giant cams, it took us four hours to reach the Cleaver. On our first morning we decided to climb up to the previous high point and see if we could push it a bit further. Nate fired the initial 5.10 pitch, and I attempted the 5.11+ second pitch, but it proved hard with smudges of kitty litter in all the wrong places. Nate took the 5.11- third pitch up an innocuous flake through a couple of small roofs. The rock quality on this pitch was amazing—the best on the route. On the fourth pitch we went up a corner to a delicate flake and then through an easy roof to reach another fun corner. We called it for the day, planning to come back the next day and go for a complete free ascent.

The following day, we sent the first four pitches, the second being the crux of the route. The fifth pitch gained access into the upper dihedrals that Nate had been dreaming about. Avoiding bad rock above, an unlikely, right-trending foot traverse reached a nice 5.10 corner. A final easy pitch brought us to the top. Once topping out, we found the unobvious descent gully with cairns to climber's left of the Cleaver, which got us back to the base. Our new route is called Chronic Harmonic (IV 5.11+).

– Nate Ricklin and Shaun Reed, Pullharder Alpine Club

## Images



Shaun Reed pulling the crux of the second pitch (5.11+).



Shaun Reed on the superb rock of third pitch (5.11-).



Nate Ricklin and Shaun Reed posing on the summit of the Cleaver.



An overview of the south face of the Cleaver. From left to right: Bloody Cleaver (Othemr-Weiss, 2010), South Face (Condon-Killian, 1961; a free ascent of this route was reported in 1980 but may climb variations to the original route), Cleavage Dreamer (Ricklin-Stamatiou, 2008), Chronic Harmonic (Ricklin-Reed, 2014), Southeast Arete (FA Unknwon).

## Article Details

Author	Nate Ricklin & Shaun Reed
Publication	AAJ
Volume	58
Issue	90
Page	0
Copyright Date	2016
Article Type	Climbs and expeditions