



## AAC Publications

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### **Mt. Helen, Tower One; Fremont Peak, Red Tower**

Wyoming, Wind River Range

**It was an unseasonably cold, wet month in the Winds, according to the locals. And, indeed, during our four-week stay in Titcomb Basin (mid-August to mid-September), we saw only seven days of sunny, somewhat stable weather. And only half of that time allowed for climbing, as we were forced to sit and wait while fresh snow slowly melted and the walls barely dried.**

Following 10 days of protracted base-camp festering, we three could stand the stasis no longer. Ignoring the warning “red sky in morning,” Mark Evans, Oli Shaw, and I opened three new pitches on our primary objective, the 1,500’ west face of Tower One on Mt. Helen. Rain, hail, and then graupel sent us back down to camp. Two days later, on August 29, we blasted early from our deluxe cave bivouac below the face, and we succeeded in establishing a fine, nine-pitch rock climb.

Strange Bravado (IV/V 5.10 A0) is located right of West Face Left (V 5.11a, Collins-Keough, 1981) and left of West Face Center (V 5.10 A2, Beckey-Lahr-Mortenson, AAJ 1977) [see AAJ 2012 for the older route lines]. It follows a conspicuous left-facing corner system past a series of ledges at half-height. From there it solves the problem of the steep upper headwall via a cunning yet reasonably moderate line. Both of my partners dispatched their respective pitches with some brilliant onsight free climbing. However, a short and wet section of squeeze chimney (that we dubbed the Ric Flair) forced the route’s only point of aid. In drier conditions the line would easily go free, adding to this impressive backcountry wall a long, quality, well-protected—and pre-trundled—free route.

During another brief window—about three weeks into our trip—Mark and I (Oli was under the weather that day) opened a casual, three-pitch route on the south face of Red Tower, the prominent pinnacle on Fremont’s southwest buttress (right side of the sprawling west face). Red Iguana (500’, II 5.8) meanders for three pitches past obvious weaknesses to the looker’s right of the six-pitch Red Tower Arête (AAJ 2012), then continues to the pointy summit.

In our third and final break in the weather we climbed new ground to half height on Fremont’s West Pillar, on the impressive face left of West Face Dihedral (Landry, AAJ 1978, free climbed by McCord-Spohn, AAJ 2015). At this point we had only days remaining in our trip. Despite ominous signs of approaching moisture on the horizon, we went for it, only to find suffering in high winds, verglased rock, and bitter, humid cold. Upon discovering that all three of our full one-liter water bottles were frozen, Mark, Oli, and I finally decided to call it. Hopefully we’ve paid our dues in Titcomb, and when we return next summer it’ll go!

– Shingo Ohkawa

## Images



The west face of Fremont Peak, with Red Tower on the right skyline.



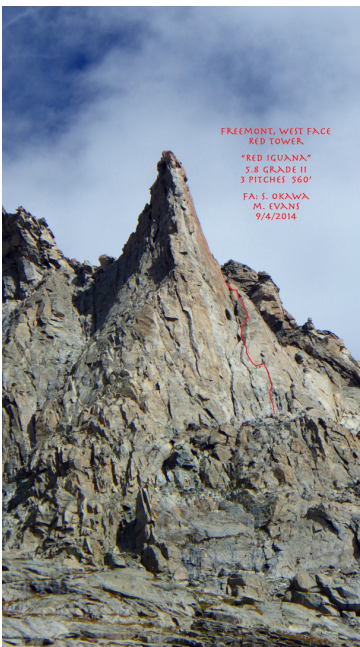
The Evans-Ohkawa-Shaw attempt (2014) on the west face of Fremont Peak.



Oli Shaw belaying Shingo Ohkawa on pitch seven of Strange Bravado.



Tower One on Mt. Helen in the alpenglow.



FREEMONT, WEST FACE  
RED TOWER  
"RED IGUANA"  
5.8 GRADE II  
3 PITCHES 560'  
FA: S. OKAWA  
M. EVANS  
9/4/2014

Close-up of the Red Tower showing the route Red Iguana (II 5.8). The six-pitch Red Tower Arête (Jenkins, AAJ 2012) climbs directly up the face just left (for that route line, see: <http://publications.americanalpineclub.org/articles/12201210502/New-Routes-on-Elephant-Head-Fremont-Peak-and-Mt-Sacagawea>).



Mt. HELEN  
TOWER 1 - WEST FACE  
"STRANGE BRAVADO"  
5.10 A0 GRADE IV/V  
9 PITCHES - 1640'  
FA: S. OKAWA  
M. EVANS  
8/29/2014

The west face of Tower One on Mt. Helen, showing Strange Bravado (IV/V 5.10 A0). The new route is located between West Face Left (V 5.11a, Collins-Keough, 1981) and West Face Center (V 5.10 A2, Beckey-Lahr-Mortenson, AAJ 1977) [see AAJ 2012 for the older route lines: [http://aac-publications.s3.amazonaws.com/documents/aaj/2012/PDF/AAJ\\_2012\\_54\\_86\\_016.pdf](http://aac-publications.s3.amazonaws.com/documents/aaj/2012/PDF/AAJ_2012_54_86_016.pdf)].

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