



AAC Publications

The Guardian, North and Northeast Faces, Possible New Routes

Colorado, San Juan Mountains

Early on July 3, Jay Bachhuber, Michael Crouch, Jeff Woodward, and I forded the Rio Grande in a Toyota Tacoma and drove to the Hunchback Pass trailhead. Our party of four approached the Guardian (13,617') that morning, crossing Vallecito Creek by a large beaver dam. We ascended alpine meadows to a camp just northeast of the snowfields that border the mountain's north face. Between bouts of rain we scouted the peak's north and northeast aspects and found two lines that appeared unclimbed.

The next day we split into two parties. Michael Crouch and Jay Bachhuber climbed a new route on the northeast buttress of the peak, ascending a natural line visible from the Guardian-Silex cirque. They called it Theory of the Leisure Class (1,600', IV 5.8). Jeff Woodward and I continued up the snow and scree to an unclimbed corner system at the base of the north face, slightly downslope from the "Biblical Couloir" that splits the face. From here we

climbed the steep lower section of the Guardian's north face in five pitches and then simul-climbed the remaining fourth- and fifth-class terrain. We called the route A Prayer to Earl and Valerie: The John Joline Memorial Route (1,400', IV 5.9). Both routes top out on the Guardian's eastern apex; access to the true summit is separated from this point by a narrow chasm that cleaves the peak and we forwent the summit. We descended the east face.

John Joline was our late climbing mentor. John often spoke of Earl and Valerie, gods of weather, and thus patron gods of climbers. His pre-trip libations to them ("Water for sustenance, beer for revelry, and orange juice for good health...and vitamin C!") will not be forgotten, and the high and lonely Grenadiers held a special place in his heart.

[Editor's note: The four known technical routes on the northeast and north faces are as follows, from left to right: Theory of the Leisure Class, Weather Window Waltz (**AAJ 2012**), Serpentine Son Rise (2013), John Joline Memorial Route. It's likely that other climbs have occurred on Guardian's northern aspects and gone unreported. Please report any routes completed on the Guardian prior to 2011 to the AAJ editors.]

– Ben Chapman

Images



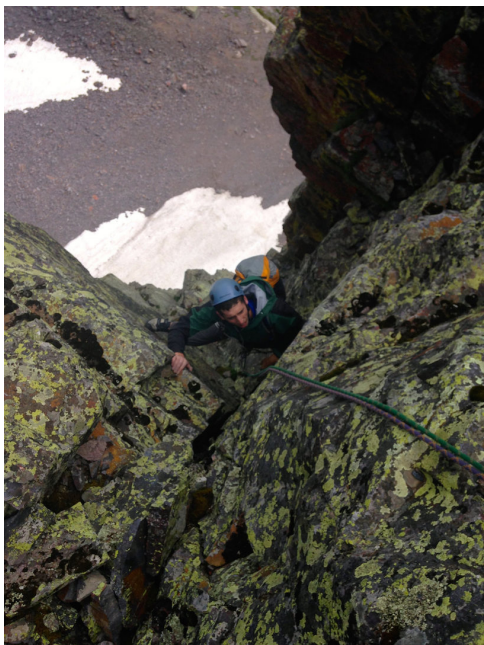
Looking down the defining dihedral of Theory of the Leisure Class (1,600', IV 5.8).



The opening dihedral of Theory of the Leisure Class (1,600', IV 5.8).



The line of A Prayer to Earl and Valerie: The John Joline Memorial (1,400', IV 5.9).



Ben Chapman on pitch five of A Prayer to Earl and Valerie: The John Joline Memorial Route (1,400', IV 5.9).



The line of Theory of the Leisure Class (1,600', IV 5.8) on Guardian.

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