



## AAC Publications

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### **Fallen Angel Peak, Act Like You're Having Fun!**

Washington, North Cascades

**In mid-September, Eric Wehrly and I snagged a new and aesthetic line within a day's "walk" from the road in the North Cascades. It was my first rock FA in the range and a chance to learn from Eric, who has many first ascents to his name.**

We parked near the measuring station on the west fork of Newhalem Creek and followed the creek to a junction where we turned west. We followed this drainage up into an alpine basin beneath the north aspect of Fallen Angel (ca 6,840'). On the approach we encountered just about every terrain obstacle the Cascades' subalpine zones have to offer, perhaps even meriting a "New Wave" bushwhack rating. A physical, but not mental, respite from the eight-hour approach was offered by a sustained and exposed stretch of moss-coated, fifth-class chimney climbing, which granted passage through the lower cliff bands.

The climb itself was great. After 100' or so of easy soloing, we climbed eight roped pitches to the summit. The rock was quite solid and clean, even on the junky-looking first pitch, requiring only sporadic, to-be-expected alpine gardening. The harder technical climbing followed high-quality crack systems up bright gneiss.

Swapping leads, I drew the spectacular crux pitch (5.10+), which follows a striking arête that we named the Scythe, in reference to Cascades climber (and Fallen Angel first ascensionist) John Roper's original name for the north-northeast-facing prow that defines this side of the peak: the Grim Reaper Arête. On this pitch I avoided a belayer-slayer block, which Eric inadvertently trundled while following. Unfortunately, this marred our otherwise pure ascent as Eric weighted the rope to avoid a crushed foot. When the flake went rocketing through our previous belay stance, we were reminded that you can't afford to lose focus for a second out there. The final ridge to the summit afforded views of the area's devil-themed peaks and other peaks of the North Cascades.

We descended the south face via four 65m rappels, then followed fourth-class ledges east to a notch in the ridge. We returned to our camp on the slabs beneath the route at 4 p.m., and, knowing the descent to the car would require a lot of daylight and luck, we spent a beautiful night in the alpine recounting the day over beers. Despite our best efforts to learn from our route-finding mistakes on the way in, it took us nearly nine hours to descend the six miles back to the car. The grueling nature of the approach has prompted Eric to offer a six-pack to anyone who repeats it. We had to jokingly remind each other to smile in any photos taken. Thus the name: Act Like You're Having Fun! (1,000', III 5.10+).

– Chris Mutzel

## Images



Eric Wehrly searches for well-anchored turf as he navigates mossy gully systems and steep, bushy slopes on the approach to Fallen Angel Peak.



Eric Wehrly leads up crack systems toward the striking arête on Fallen Angel Peak, originally named the Grim Reaper Arête by John Roper, who did the first ascent of Fallen Angel in 1982.



Eric Wehlry starting the magnificent 5.10+ pitch of Act Like You're Having Fun! Just above his position in this photo, he trundled a large block that ripped through the previous belay stance on the route.



Eric Wehlry near the top of the crux pitch on Act Like You're Having Fun! (5.10+) on the north side of Fallen Angel Peak. This small section of dirty rock near the arête required trusting mossy and slabby foot placements while cleaning out the crack for finger locks and gear placements.





Chris Mutzel starting the glory pitch of Act Like You're Having Fun! (5.10+), featuring an Index-quality flare and hand crack, followed by a hand traverse and a tips-crack crux, right on the airy edge of the arête.



The north side of Fallen Angel Peak, showing the line of Act Like You're Having Fun! (8 pitches, 5.10+). The route follows broken terrain under the face before gaining the arête via fun, clean-crack systems on bright gneiss

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