



## AAC Publications

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### **Liberty Bell, Live Free or Die!**

Washington, North Cascades, Washington Pass

**The east face of Liberty Bell in the North Cascades is the most easily accessible major wall in the state.** In the past few years, it has seen several new variations and first free routes added to the trio of original 1960s aid routes that evenly divide the wall. During a 2014 free ascent of Independence (5.12a, Bertulis-McPherson, 1966), I noticed a beautiful two-pitch hand and finger crack that had recently been cleaned, and which featured bolted anchors and some protection bolts. These pitches were 700' up the wall and seemed to have been reached by rappel from other routes, as there was no obvious way to reach them from below. This crack is to the left of the Independence Route and to the right of Thin Red Line. Numerous inquiries failed to establish who had worked on these pitches, but they remained in the back of my mind.

Over July and August, Nathan Hadley and I used fixed ropes and top-down tactics to connect these crack pitches into a continuous route of eight pitches up to M&M Ledge, with the final four pitches to the summit shared among other routes. We had originally hoped just to make a small variation to the Independence Route, but there kept being enough climbable features that we were able to construct a route sharing only 10–15m of climbing with the existing line. We called the route Live Free or Die (1,200', 5.12+). It features mostly 5.10 and 5.11 thin face climbing, with a few short bouldery bits in the 5.12 range. The crux is a thin traverse that ends in a downclimb, with classically weird granite trickery.

Independence also saw a couple minor hardware changes during this process, eliminating two hanging belays, adding hardware at two ledges (previously not used) for belays, and replacing a piton/copperhead combo with a bolt. These changes were made only after many days of climbing on the wall and out of desire to preserve the nature of the venue.

– Blake Herrington

## Images



The east face of the Liberty Bell, near Washington Pass. The line of Live Free or Die! (5.12+), completed by Blake Herrington and Nathan Hadley in summer 2017, is shown.

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