



## AAC Publications

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### Morning Star Peak, Vega Tower, Marvin's Ear

Washington, North Cascades

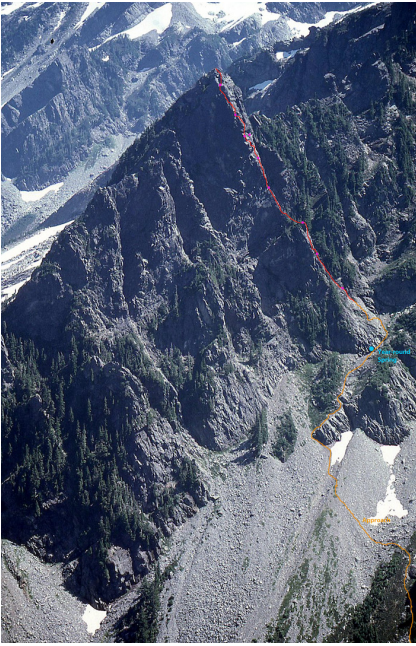
**During the Fourth of July weekend, a planned climb on Vesper Peak (6,214') turned into an alpine picnic due to my wife Shelia experiencing first-trimester morning sickness.** But another piece of rock had caught my attention during our hike over Headlee Pass: Vega Tower (5,480'), a sub-summit on the north ridge of Morning Star Peak (6,020'). [Editor's note: Vega Tower is looker's right of Vegan Tower, another sub-summit along the ridge that's home to the popular route Mile High Club (see AAJ 2016)] Vega had one technical route listed in the Beckey guide on its western aspect, called Starshot Ridge (5.8), said to have been established by Jerome Eberharter and Reese Martin in 1981. Martin passed away in 2004, but I was able to contact Eberharter, who said he was actually down in Yosemite during that time and wasn't Martin's partner for Starshot. As best I could tell, Starshot stayed to the right on blockier terrain, but the aesthetic west ridge proper appeared to be unclimbed.

A couple of weeks later, I returned with Imran Rahman. In a gully right of our intended line we thrutched our way through cedars and kicked our approach shoes into matted heather needles to a ridgeline notch, where an exposed low-fifth-class pitch brought us to the top. We rapped the crest, establishing the anchors and route line from the top down while friends hollered in the mist on the neighboring Mile High Club. After a summer of hauling batteries and supplies, chucking choss, and dulling drill bits in the ultra-hard metaconglomerate rock, a seven-pitch alpine sport climb was ready for an attempt just before the forecast was calling for snow. On September 16, Shelia and I, along with our son now five months in utero, completed the first ascent of Marvin's Ear (800', III 5.10b). The route follows the skyline ridge of the tower seen during the approach hike. It works through small roofs and overlaps, becoming quite exposed as it skirts over the north face in the upper pitches. Like Mile High Club, the climb is fully bolt protected, and although the anchors are 30m apart, a 70m rope is suggested.

In two of Tarantino's early films there is a Vega brother and a character named Marvin. A lot of hang-fire carnage was sent down to make this route safer—horrendous atrocities not unlike Vic removing Marvin's ear to the sound of Steeler's Wheel in *Reservoir Dogs*, or Vincent scattering Marvin's ears and the rest of his head over the back of a car in *Pulp Fiction*.

– Morgan Zentler

## Images



Vega Tower as seen from the summit of Sperry Peak. Vega is a prominent subsummit of Morning Star Peak, first climbed via a non-technical gully in 1962. The line of Marvin's Ear (800', III 5.10b) is shown. Only one other technical route has been reported: Starshot Ridge (5.8, Martin, 1981), although the exact line of ascent is unknown but believed to be to the right.



Shelia Zentler following a pitch high on Marvin's Ear (800', III 5.10b) on Vega Tower, a subsummit of Morning Star Peak in Washington's North Cascades. Zentler was five months pregnant when they completed the route's first ascent.

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