



AAC Publications

Mt. Hood, Three Little Monkeys

Oregon

Wayne Wallace had mentioned that there was some unclimbed potential on the left side of the Black Spider, a concave rock wall that spans the last thousand vertical feet of Mt. Hood's northeast aspect, left of the classic Cooper Spur route. A quick scouting mission showed a beautiful vein of ice between the Fric-Amos route and the Elder-Russell summer line. A fat, long ice line it was not, but it seemed to have smears in all the right places, so Walter Burkhardt and I gave it a go.

We left Timberline at 5 a.m. on March 31 with perfect high cloud cover that promised to keep the sun off the east-facing, concave wall. We crossed the bergschrund at 8:15 and started right in on what we thought would be the crux pitch (WI4+). A few vertical mixed moves brought me to the hanging, detached ice dagger, which proved fragile and delaminated. I was able to carefully scratch my way up it and through some more mixed climbing above to establish a belay on the shelf from which the icicle hung.

I brought Walter up and then set off to try and connect to another hanging dagger directly above, but huge, unsupported snow mushrooms guarded it. After sending one down on Walter, I decided to try to the right. This proved to be the psychological crux pitch of the route (M5R) as rotten snow over near-vertical mud led to two distinct vertical mud chimneys. The second one was protectable, the first was not.

For the third pitch, I jogged left again, trying to get back on the plumb line, which proved a good guess as the narrow passage we found above held sound rock with interesting mixed moves and wonderful water ice that took good screws.

From here I climbed the fourth pitch up the narrow gully (WI3), and was hoping to veer left and drop into the upper bowl through which the Fric-Amos route finishes. At this point it was getting late and we were looking for a quick exit, but to my surprise the bowl was guarded by a vertical snow fin that would have involved about 50' of unprotectable downclimbing. Thankfully, when I veered right and then straight up, I found a path through wild gold-colored gendarmes that rose like turrets over the upper face. This ended up being a rope stretcher pitch with a couple hundred feet of simul-climbing, but when we popped into the sun, we knew we were home free. One final pitch of steep snow and low angle ice led to the summit ridge. We called the line Three Little Monkeys (1,100', WI4+ M5R).

I was lucky to share this experience with Walter. He was a great mentor to me when I first started going to the mountains, and I owe him a good deal of credit for keeping me safe and motivated over the years.

In retrospect, it's worth mentioning that the face was pretty dry when we climbed it. The start of Arachnophobia and the visible parts of the center drip looked more like rotten snow than solid alpine ice. I think when the face is fat, this line would be a very reasonable outing. I was surprised at how direct, steep, and sustained it was.

– Michael Getlin

Images



The Black Spider on Mt. Hood, showing the line of Three Little Monkeys (1,100', WI4+ M5R). The route connect ice smears and mixed terrain between the Fric-Amos route and Elder-Russell summer route.



The Black Spider on Mt. Hood from below the bergschrund. The start of Three Little Monkeys (1,100', WI4+ M5R) is marked with an arrow.

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