



AAC Publications

Revelation Mountains, New Routes and Summits

Alaska, Alaska Range

Our table football skills had started to improve when we finally heard "weather is good for flying, get ready." It was mid-March, and Miha Zupin and I enjoyed the beautiful views flying into the Alaska Range, passing Denali, the Kichatna Spires, and more. Our first stop was the Fish Glacier, where a Dutch team exited the plane. There was almost a meter of powder on the glacier, and as we took off again and flew over to the Revelation Glacier, we worried about conditions there. However, we were surprised to find no new snow on the Revelation Glacier, and we happily began to prepare base camp.

The next day we decided to try the west face of Pyramid Peak. The alarm clock woke us up, but we had mixed feelings about climbing due to strong winds. We decided to stay in camp, and when we got out of tent we found that our kitchen was filled with snow. Digging out the food and improving the wall around the tent was our main work for the day.

The next morning was about the same, but we decided to go for Pyramid Peak anyway. We were shut down on the first pitch due to windblown snow in a corner, but from there we saw a nice ridge to the south, on the previously unclimbed north summit of the Four Horsemen (ca 2,600m). We immediately switched gears. Our route followed a gully to a col, and from there we followed the east ridge. The first technical pitch in the gully was a bouldery M6 with some loose blocks. The next pitches were easier, climbing left and right to find the way to the col. Traversing the ridge was demanding due to the strong winds, which occasionally forced us to crawl on our knees. We did one short rappel from the crest of the ridge and then climbed to the summit.

We descended south to reach the couloir between the summit and the main Four Horsemen summit and headed down to the glacier from there. We were happy with the climb and thinking about dinner, but base camp reality was not what we had hoped for—collapsed snow walls and a misshapen tent covered with snow. We worked through the night to dig out in the continuing winds, and luckily our tent poles were just bent not broken.

After a full day improving snow walls and working around camp, we went to attempt Golgotha, where a chimney system on the east face offered demanding climbing. Conditions got worse as we got higher, and nine pitches up we decided to go down. As we started to rappel, the weather got worse and spindrift made the descent demanding.

We rested for three days and then went back to Golgotha. An easier line on the right side of the east face had attracted our attention. The first half was more "walking" than climbing, but the upper part was steeper, with perfect snow conditions. We belayed for three pitches. Clear weather at the top offered us an endless view to all directions. We downclimbed the first ascent route (AAJ 2013), returning to the base of the east face by a snow couloir.

After two rest days, we went to an unnamed peak above the cirque at the head of the Revelation Glacier, between Golgotha and Hydra. The 700m northeast face, which we named the Wailing Wall, had looked smaller from base camp. We followed a corner with perfect snow and ice conditions, climbing unroped for the first 350m. The crux was a corner filled with thin ice. The route then followed ice smears through a big chimney under a chockstone with an overhanging exit. From there we followed the ridge and climbed the summit block. The descent continued along the ridge and dropped to a gully, right of our route, with some downclimbing and rappelling to reach the glacier.

The weather forecast was good, so after a rest day we went down the glacier to climb a line we had checked out a few days before—a gully on the northwest face of unclimbed Apocalypse North. After 300m up to 80°, we reached a vertical, dry, and loose corner, which we bypassed to the left. The first pitch was thin ice and hard to protect. The next pitches had perfect conditions up to 85° with one pitch of M6. We then regained the main gully and followed it for 300m. We did not know what to expect in the upper part because it previously had been obscured by clouds. The climbing was sketchy, with thin ice and unconsolidated snow over rock, but not too difficult. We found an easy passage through the final rock band and then followed the ridge to the top.

We did not want to descend our route due to the steep and unconsolidated snow and hard-to-protect rock. We tried to follow the ridgeline to the northeast, but cornices made it impossible to reach a col from which we could descend to the Revelation Glacier. Instead we downclimbed and rappelled to the east and reached the west fork of the Big River Glacier. We did not know if it was possible to return to the Revelation Glacier from here so we were very happy when we saw a snow gully leading to a col from which we knew we could descend. The next few days were colder and windier, so three rest days felt good.

Before we flew out, we decided to try a line on the northeast face of Seraph. Our line is an obvious gully left of the 2018 French line (see AAJ 2019). The first 300m were easier than they looked, until we reached a chockstone and steep chimney where we started to belay. It was not easy to clear the snow, and an overhanging exit did not make it any easier, but the climbing was enjoyable for the second. The next pitch was easier with a steep, bouldery crux. We passed two anchors for rappels in this section, likely from an unreported attempt. Now we were standing below a chimney that we hadn't seen from the ground. The first part was narrow with ice, sometimes with barely enough room to swing an axe. The exit was, again, blown with snow, worse than the first pitch, and it took me a while to remove all the snow. The crux was thin ice followed by an overhang, and my competition experience proved very useful here. [The author was a frequent finalist in World Cup ice competitions until 2017.] After an easier pitch we coiled the rope and followed easier terrain to the top, discovering **two crevasses along the way**. [Editor's Note: Thinking that the true summit of Seraph was a false summit, Svoljšak and Zupin continued a quarter-mile southwest along the ridge to also make the likely first summit of Peak 8,650', which is 100' higher.] **Our descent followed the ridge to the east and then to a gully, which led us back to the base of the route.**

The weather the next day did not allow for a flight, and on April 7 we packed up our equipment and flew to Talkeetna.

– Janez Svoljšak, Slovenia

Summary of Activity: First ascent of unclimbed north summit of the Four Horseman (ca 8,530') via the east ridge (600m, M6 70° A1). Father (900m, AI5 70°) on the east face of Golgotha (8,940'). First ascent of Wailing Wall (ca 8,040') via Secret (750m, AI6). First ascent of Apocalypse North (ca 9,020') via the Slovenian Route (1,300m, AI4+ R M6 80°). The Last Supper for Snow Strugglers (700m, M7 80°) on the northeast face of Seraph (8,540'). Likely first ascent of Peak 8,650'.

Tragically, a few months after this expedition, Janez Svoljšak died at base camp from unknown causes after descending from an attempt on Tahu Rutum in Pakistan. He was 25 years old.

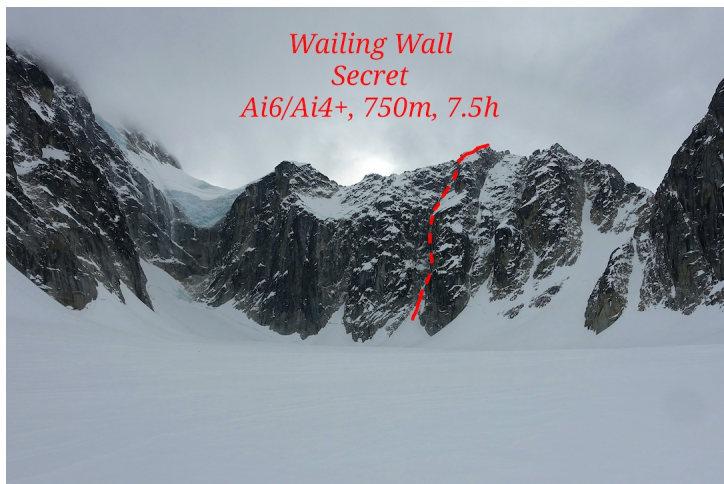
Images



The north face of the unclimbed northern summit of the Four Horsemen (ca 8,530') showing the line of the east ridge (600m, M6 70° A1) climbed by Janez Svoljšak and Miha Zupin in spring 2019. This was the last unclimbed summit of the distinct peaks that make up the Four Horsemen.



The east face of Golgotha (8,940') showing the line of Father (900m, Ai5 70°). This was one of five new routes that Janez Svoljšak and Miha Zupin climbed in spring 2019. They descended by the first ascent route (Helander-Trocki, 2012), dropping south behind the left skyline and then down the obvious snow couloir to the base of the east face.

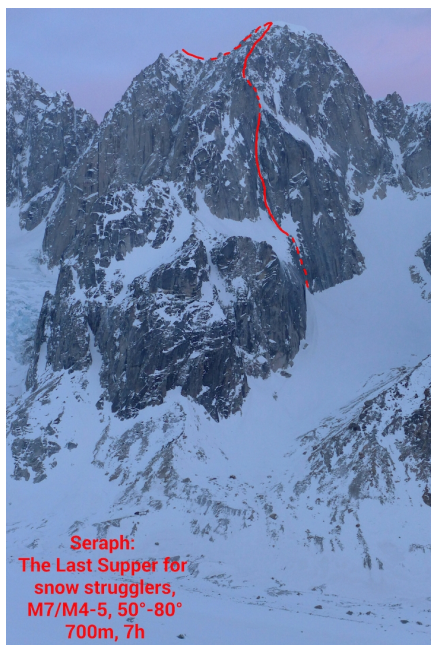


The northeast face of a previously unclimbed formation at the head of the Revelation Glacier, which

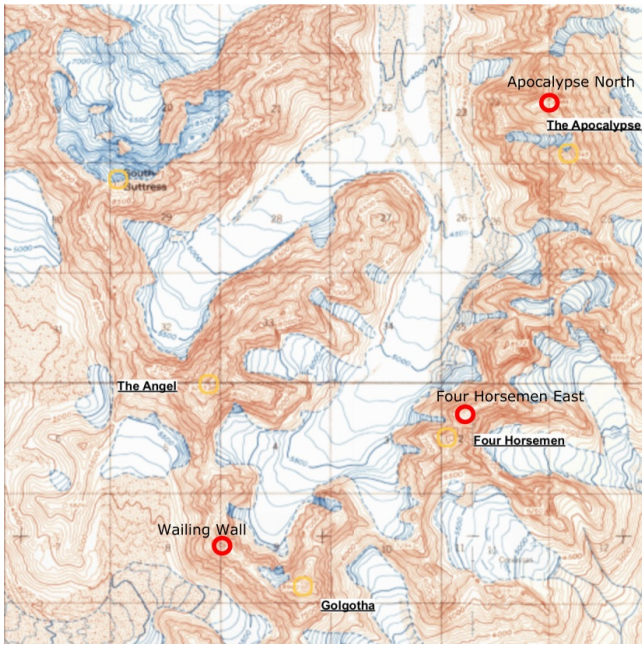
Janez Svoljšak and Miha Zupin named the Wailing Wall (ca 8,040') after climbing Secret (750m, AI6).



The northwest face of Apocalypse North (ca 9,020') showing the line of the Slovenian Route (1,300m, AI4+ R M6 80°). This route, climbed by Janez Svoljšak and Miha Zupin in the spring of 2019, also marked the first ascent of the peak, a distinct summit to the north of Apocalypse (9,345'), which was first climbed by Clint Helander and Jason Stuckey in 2013.



The northeast face of Seraph (8,540'), showing the line of the Last Supper for Snow Strugglers (700m, M7 80°).



A map showing the activity of the Slovenian team during their trip into the Revelation Mountains in late March and early April 2019. The pair climbed five new routes, three of which reached previously unclimbed summits (marked with red circles). Other notable peaks around the Revelation Glacier are marked as well.



Janez Svoljšak climbing an aesthetic ice pitch on the upper portion of Secret (750m, AI6), during the first ascent of a previously unclimbed formation they named the Wailing Wall.



Miha Zupin leading the crux pitch of the Slovenian Route (1,300m, AI4+ R M6 80°) on Apocalypse North in the Revelation Mountains. This was also the first ascent of this peak, a distinct summit just to the north of Apocalypse.



Janez Svoljšak leading along the east ridge of the northern summit of the Four Horsemen (ca 8,530') during the first ascent of the route and the peak. This distinct summit is the most northeastly of the peaks that make up the Four Horsemen massif.



Miha Zupin coming up one of the final pitches through a giant chockstone, during the first ascent of Secret (750m, AI6) on a previously unclimbed formation the Slovenians named the Wailing Wall.



Janez Svolfjak strolling the final ridge to the summit of Apolcalypse North after making the first ascent of the Slovenian Route (1300m, AI4+ R M6 80°). Svolfjak and Miha Zupin made the first ascent of this previously unclimbed summit, a distinct peak just to the north of Apolcalypse (9,345').



Miha Zupin and Janez Svoljšak on top of Apocalypse North (ca 9,020') after making the first ascent of the Slovenian Route (1300m, AI4+ R M6 80°), as well as the first ascent of the peak.



Janez Svoljšak enjoying perfect conditions on the northeast face of Apocalypse North during the first ascent by the Slovenian Route (1,300m, AI4+ R M6 80°).



Janez Svoljšak on top of the Wailing Wall (ca 8,040') after making the first ascent of the formation via Secret (750m, AI6). This peak lies along a ridge at the head of the Revelation Glacier, between Golgotha and Hydra.



Miha Zupin enjoying perfect conditions while soloing the moderate lower section of Secret (750m, AI6) on the Wailing Wall (ca 8,040'), a previously unclimbed formation at the head of the Revelation Glacier.



Miha Zupin traversing the summit ridge to the top of Seraph (8,540') during the first ascent of the Last Supper for Snow Strugglers (700m, M7 80°).

Article Details

Author	Janez Svoljsak
Publication	AAJ
Volume	62
Issue	94
Page	131
Copyright Date	2020
Article Type	Climbs and expeditions