



## AAC Publications

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### **A Peak, Two New Routes**

Montana, Cabinet Mountains

**On March 31, I soloed a 2,200' new route on the north face of A Peak (8,634'), above Granite Lake. The Bull River Prowler climbs at AI4 M4 with snow to 70°.**

The route begins 400' west of Canmore Wedding Party (2,500', AI5 M7, Coldiron-Roskelley, 2018) in a 1,000' snow couloir that leads to a one-pitch ice smear. The top of this ice pitch brought me to a ledge where I traversed steep snow to a runnel, which granted access to the lower of two large snowfields. I trended up and left until I reached a steep, doglegging chute that brought me to the upper snowfield. Above lay mixed terrain. I chose a relatively direct path up a chimney and corner system. Near the top, I tunneled through a snow mushroom blocking the chimney.

All that stood between me and the summit was the cornice—which proved to be the crux of the route. Patient digging from an airy perch revealed positive rock edges for my crampons. After I'd removed enough snow from the bulging cornice, I peeked over the summit ridge, plunged my tools in, and manteled up.

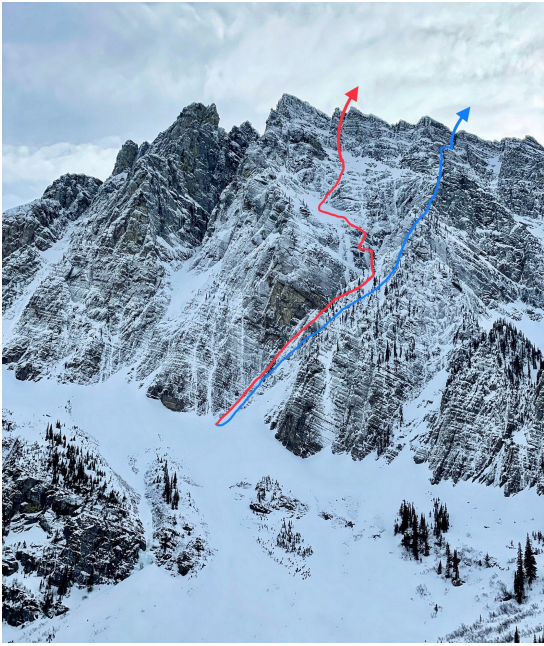
Without a rope to aid me, I struggled to locate a safe path down the northeast shoulder to return to Granite Lake and opted to post-hole nine miles out to Highway 56 on the west side of the mountain range, opposite from where I drove in. I emerged from the drainage of the North Fork of the Bull River at midnight and knocked on some doors to see if I could borrow a phone to call someone and get picked up. A startled homeowner reported me to the police as a "prowler." Soon afterward, Officer Phillips responded and gave me a pleasant ride to the Lincoln County Sheriff's Office in Libby, where my girlfriend graciously picked me up at 4 a.m.

On April 25, Marlin Thorman and I headed back into Granite Lake to see if we could put up another new line on the north face of A Peak. Our route shares the same snow-couloir start as The Bull River Prowler. At the top of the couloir, it heads climber's right into 1,000' of mixed climbing. The route has two distinct dry-tooling cruxes, the first harder than the second. Marlin sent the first after finding a key offset nut to protect it. During my pitch, a snow ledge I was stemming against collapsed in the warming temps, and I was left dangling from a pick I'd hammered in upside down behind a flake. I was able to recover and finish the pitch without incident.

On the final headwall, I passed through a birth-canal-like slot in the limestone and emerged back onto the face. After some more cam-protected terrain, I was once again burrowing through a massive cornice to the summit. We named our route Knickerbocker and the Bull Moose (2,000', IV AI4 M5), a reference to both the wool knickers I wore and to a moose that would routinely post-hole along our approach trail, ruining it.

— Earl Lunceford

## Images



In red, The Bull River Prowler (AI4 M4 70°), and in blue, Knickerbocker and the Bull Moose (2,000', IV AI4 M5), on the north face of A Peak (8,634'). The routes start about 400' right of Canmore Wedding Party (Coldiron-Roskelley, 2018), the first known winter route up the north face of A Peak.



The couloir entrance marking the beginning of The Bull River Prowler (AI4 M4 70°) on the north face of A Peak, Cabinet Mountains, Montana. The same couloir was followed the next month to reach the start of Knickerbocker and the Bull Moose.



Looking up at the pinstripe ice flows on the north face of A Peak. The Bull River Prowler (AI4 M4 70°) ascends the right-hand flow.



Looking down from a stance just below the summit-ridge cornice on the north face of A Peak, during the solo first ascent of The Bull River Prowler (AI4 M4 70°).



The cornice guarding the summit ridge of A Peak during the solo first ascent of The Bull River Prowler (AI4 M4 70°), Cabinet Mountains, Montana.





Looking down the crux M5+ pitch of Knickerbocker and the Bull Moose (2,000', IV AI4 M5), on the north face of A Peak (8,634'), Cabinet Mountains, Montana, climbed by Earl Lunceford and Marlin Thorman on April 25, 2022.



Earl Lunceford on the thin corner at the start of pitch three on Knickerbocker and the Bull Moose (2,000', IV AI4 M5), on the north face of A Peak (8,634'), Cabinet Mountains, Montana.



Earl Lunceford leading ice on pitch six of Knickerbocker and the Bull Moose on the north face of A Peak.

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