



AAC Publications

South Yuyanq' Ch'ex, We Fear Change

Alaska, Chugach Mountains

On October 30, Dana Drummond and I walked five miles to South Yuyanq' Ch'ex to attempt a line I had previously spotted on the northwest side of the mountain. (Formerly known as the Suicide Peaks, North and South Yuyanq' Ch'ex were officially renamed in 2022; the new name is derived from a Dena'ina expression meaning "heaven's breath.") Our route began in a snowy gully climber's right of the main ice line. After a short, scrappy pitch, we traversed left on moderate terrain toward what looked to be the first bit of climbable ice. Getting established onto the thin ice proved to be a little challenging, but after a few committing moves, cracks and gear reappeared a bit higher.

Dana climbed a thinly iced slab on the next lead, which deposited us below a prominent ice pillar, the feature that had drawn me to this line in the first place. Despite the somewhat brittle and delaminated nature of the pitch, I felt comfortable with the four short screws I was able to place for protection. At the top I found a place to string together a few decent pins for a belay and brought Dana up.

Now we were on the northern end of the west face, and from there the angle eased for a bit. We stashed the ropes in our packs and took turns breaking trail up the gully through steep and deep snow. After about 500' of gain, the gully narrowed to a meter or two wide, and a buttress rose up on our right. We continued up the couloir as it began to wrap around on to the north-facing aspect of the mountain. The snow ended at a small rock overhang, where we built an anchor.

After tying back in, Dana climbed a somewhat loose and marginally protected pitch. Clouds were starting to build, but despite the gray skies and wind, the conditions were pretty good. I grabbed a little gear from Dana for the last moderate pitch of mixed terrain to the ridge, and then found a nice belay stance overlooking the north face to bring him up. From there we simul-climbed for a bit on the 3rd-class ridgeline, and when the terrain eased we unroped, unharnessed, and walked up to the summit.

With cold and windy conditions, we snapped a couple photos and headed down to the northeast toward Hauser's Gully. Windy Gap, between the north and south peaks, was as wind-scoured as usual, and the descent down to Rabbit Lake went smoothly. As usual with these Chugach objectives, the rest of the adventure involved trudging out to the car, once again in the gathering darkness.

We Fear Change (1,700', WI4 M4) is a fun moderate alpine route that is definitely worth doing if the ice comes in. It is likely that the first two traversing pitches could be eliminated with a long direct pitch if someone caught it when the ice came all the way down. It is great to find new lines so close to Anchorage, and trips like these always get me more excited to keep exploring the mountains and seeing what's over the next ridge—hopefully more climbs like this.

— Elliot Gaddy

Images



Elliot Gaddy at the base of the pitch-five ice pillar during the first ascent of We Fear Change (1,700', WI4 M4) on the northwest face of South Yuyanq' Ch'ex in the Chugach Mountains outside Anchorage.



The northwest face of South Yuyanq'Ch'ex in the Chugach Mountains, showing the line of We Fear Change (1,700', WI4 M4). Dana Drummond and Elliot Gaddy climbed this new line in October 2022.

Article Details

Author	Elliot Gaddy
Publication	AAJ
Volume	65
Issue	97
Page	
Copyright Date	2023
Article Type	Climbs and expeditions