



AAC Publications

The Citadel: Westman's World

Alaska, Alaska Range, Kichatna Mountains

On April 21, after six weeks of watching from a distance as a gigantic storm system pummeled the Alaska Range, Jess Roskelley and I saw a forecast for a weather window long enough to fly into the Kichatna Spires. With our primary objective out of condition, we returned to the Citadel (8,250'), where we had climbed a new route up the east face, with Kristoffer Szilas, in 2013 (AAJ 2014). This time we set our sights on the peak's unclimbed west face, above the Cul-de-Sac Glacier. Josh Wharton and Zack Smith had attempted a line there in 2008 but retreated after Wharton took a lead fall, ripping gear and injuring Smith with his flying crampons. Jess and I planned a completely different line to the left of their attempt.

After fixing the first two pitches on day one, we returned to camp and consumed a generously rationed dinner, eating for the hunger to come. The next morning at 3 a.m., Jess and I committed to the wall. The steep rock yielded physical mixed pitches, switching between free and aid. Moving diagonally left through the lower wall and into the rightward traversing snow ramps in the middle of the face, we made our only bivy on the route when a horrendous windstorm pinned us down with driving snow. The following morning we climbed the remaining ice runnels, encountering thin, wandering ice in shallow granite grooves. Near the top we linked into familiar terrain from our ascent of the east face, three years previous. From the summit, we descended via our ascent route, completing Westman's World (4,000', VI A3 AI4 X M7 70°) in honor of our dear friend and mentor, the Alaskan legend Mark Westman. Our trip was supported by the Mugs Stump Award.

– Ben Erdmann

Images



Sunset on Kichatna Spire (8,985') from the bivy halfway up the west face of the Citadel.



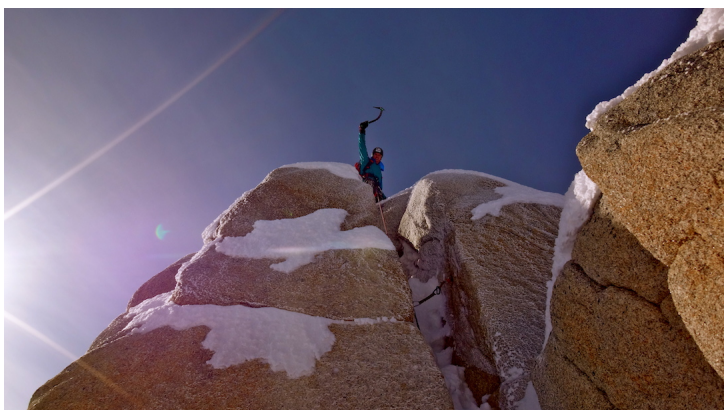
Descending to base camp after completing the first ascent of Westman's World.



Jess Roskelley coming up the final snow slope leading to the summit of the Citadel, with Kichatna Spire behind.



Jess Roskelley leading through mixed terrain on the west face of the Citadel.



Jess Roskelley atop the final summit block of the Citadel.



Ben Erdmann (left) and Jess Roskelley on the Citadel, having reached the summit for a second time via a new route. The two climbers, with Kristoffer Szilas, climbed a new route on the east face of the peak in 2013.



Traversing across steep snow slopes on the upper half of the west face of the Citadel.



The west face of the Citadel, showing Ben Erdmann and Jess Roskelley's line Westman's World, the first route to be completed on the face. In 2008, Zack Smith and Josh Wharton attempted the huge cleft to the right; their approximate high point is marked with an X.

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