



## AAC Publications

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### **Mt. Index, North Norwegian Buttress, Jötnar**

Washington, Central Cascades

The North Norwegian Buttress, part of the northeast face of Mt. Index, showing (1) Jötnar (2,000', 16 pitches, VI 5.9 A3+), (2) Doorish Route (Pete Doorish, 1980s), and (3) Voodoo Proj (VI 5.10 R A4, Williams-Karner-Strong-Thorpe, 2002). Photo by Sam Boyce

**Right above Highway 2 and the town of Index lives one of the biggest walls in the Lower 48: the North Norwegian Buttress on Mt. Index.** The buttress received its first ascent back in the '80s, solo by Pete Doorish. His line has remained unclimbed ever since. In the early 2000s, Blair Williams, with help from Todd Karner, Roger Strong, and William Thorpe, put up an also-unrepeated direct start to this line that he named the Voodoo Project (see AAJ 2003).

In 2019, I convinced my friend Lani Chapko to make an attempt on the Doorish line. We climbed about 800', but turned back after a partial anchor failure. We had only brought a few bolts to place at anchors, but it looked like all the bolts and rivets would need replacement. Over the winter, we contemplated the wall and decided climbing a new route would require no more work than repeating the Doorish line.

The next June we set off, having chosen a line from photos: a continuous crack system on the left side of the buttress, about 100 yards to the left of the Doorish line. This time we had enlisted our over-stoker friend Kyle Willis to help out. We packed for seven days with a decent weather window. The winter before had an above-average snowpack, and it was soon revealed that the lower half of our line climbed through a seasonal water streak. Occasional light drizzles amplified the situation and made for heinous, often hilarious conditions as we climbed through a waterfall. The climbing was chossy and sustained hard nailing, and even in full Gore-Tex, the leader would only be able to sustain a pitch or so of water torture before needing to return to camp. After five days we had only climbed 700', and we made the decision to turn back and use some of our time to clean and prepare the line for a return.

Our next window was three weeks later in late July. Kyle had obligations and couldn't join until a couple of days later, so the first day Lani and I climbed and hauled back to our high point, fixing lines along the way. We returned to the ground that night and prepared the haul bags, and the next day we hauled and set up a portaledge camp. After eating dinner, Lani set off on the first pitch of new terrain. This pitch was wicked steep, overhanging about 40' over the course of a 100' pitch and requiring a fixed line in order to descend. The next day Kyle arrived, hauling our remaining gear and bringing the fixed lines up, while Lani and I used the remainder of the rope to push the route higher, climbing a few pitches of moderate nailing and challenging hooking through a surprisingly high-quality band of gneiss.

After moving our camp higher the next day, I started leading an extremely exposed pitch of natural hooks and rivets on the prow of the southeast ridge. Kyle set off on the next pitch, free climbing with questionable beaks for protection, leading to a chossy wide crack. Kyle went to battle with the choss and bushes, sending down multiple toaster- to microwave-sized rocks, eventually ripping a blind offset cam and taking a pretty sizable fall. With minor injuries, he placed a number of rivets to avoid further shenanigans and put in an anchor. We all descended to camp to find a rock had pierced a portaledge fly.

We figured we were poised to push to the summit and packed accordingly the next morning, but

some miscommunication meant half of our water for the day was forgotten. Kyle's hand was a little messed up from his fall, so I went up to finish his lead. From the top of the rivet ladder, I was able to free climb up to a large ledge with a blueberry bush and put in an anchor. At this point we were all starting to feel a little delirious from dehydration. We managed to keep each other in check and pushed onward.

We linked larger features with free climbing between big ledges to reach the top of the tower. Having long been out of water, we decided not to climb the moderate terrain to the summit of Middle Index. After descending to camp, we each drank at least six liters of water before passing out. The next day we descended a few pitches and executed a 1,000' lower of Kyle riding the haul bags. Once all of the bags were on the ground, Lani and I dropped all but two ropes and rappelled the route with minimal kit.

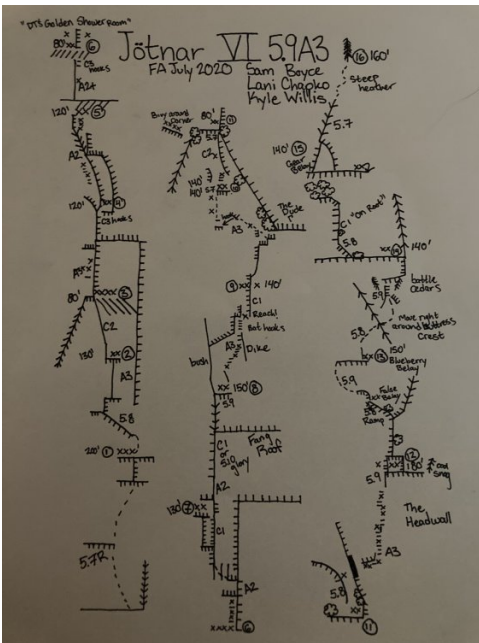
Jötnar (2,000', 16 pitches, VI 5.9 A3+) took seven days of climbing to complete to the summit of North Norwegian Buttress. We named the route after the race of giants in Norse mythology.

– Sam Boyce

## Images



The North Norwegian Wall, part of the northeast face of Mt. Index in the Cascades, showing completed routes on the wall: (1) Jöttnar (2,000', 16 pitches, VI 5.9 A3+, 2020). (2) Doorish Route (Pete Doorish, 1980s). (3) Voodoo Project (VI 5.1 OR A4, 2002).



Topo for Jöttnar (2,000', 16 pitches, VI 5.9 A3+) on the North Norwegian Wall of Mt. Index in the west-central Cascades.



Sam Boyce leading pitch four of Jöttnar (2,000', 16 pitches, VI 5.9 A3+) on the North Norwegian Wall of Mt. Index.



Lani Chapko hanging in the portaledge partway up the North Norwegian Wall on Mt. Index during the first ascent of Jöttnar (2,000', 16 pitches, VI 5.9 A3+).



Sam Boyce, Lani Chapko, and Kyle Willis on the summit of the North Norwegian Wall of Mt. Index after completing the first ascent of Jöttnar (2,000', 16 pitches, VI 5.9 A3+).

## Article Details

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