



## AAC Publications

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### **Crown Glacier, Peasant Pillar**

Alaska, Central Alaska Range

**One of my favorite parts of "going to school" in the Alaska Range are the annual lessons in adaptation.** Both of my expeditions in June shared several elements: week-long weather delays, landing on backup glaciers, and healthy (or some may argue unhealthy) amounts of "Chappelle's Show."

The first expedition was with Tad McCrea and Mark Westman in the Kichatnas, where our Plan B objectives still yielded a great trip. My second trip was also planned for the Kichatnas, but with questionable landing conditions, Joseph Hobby, Chris Robertson, and I ended up in Little Switzerland, focusing on objectives off the Crown Glacier near the terminus of the Kahiltna. The Crown Glacier has several south-facing rock walls between Your Highness and Royal Tower that I had sighted while ski touring in April a few years ago. These walls are relatively small for Alaska (ranging from 800' to 2,000') but the most important landscape for us was having fun—a focus that can all too often be forgotten.

On June 28, Joseph, Chris, and I flew onto the Pika Glacier and headed due west to the Crown for two days of line-scoping and summer skiing. One shield of rock, in particular, caught our eye, due to the apparent quality of the rock and potentially connecting crack systems.

Two days later, the three of us skied to the base of the proposed route and climbed moderate snow into easy 5th-class rock for 500', until we reached the start of the shield. Seeing this up close revealed good rock but also a sea of question marks. These questions were answered with a comical effort involving a few starting attempts, a tension traverse, some wandering flakes, and a thank-god ledge to line us up with the main crack system.

Aside from a few brief bits of moss concealing the crack, we found wonderful splitters on the ever-steepening shield, starting with the 55m "Black Crack Pitch." The route's crux ended up being pitch 11, which started with some wild traversing shenanigans before reaching an exposed hands to offwidth crack near the prow of the shield. Under the glow of evening light, this memorable pitch put us on top of the main wall.

We climbed a few more pitches of blocky steps that ultimately led to the ridge running between Your Highness and Royal Tower, and then descended back the way we came via a few brief downclimbs and several rappels. After being up for 25 hours, we flew out to Talkeetna to enjoy a sunny start to July and some sense of normalcy during a COVID lull, with a buzzing crowd at the Fairview.

Peasant Pillar (1,400', 15 pitches, 5.10+ C2) took us 20 hours base-to-base and was climbed predominantly free, with approximately 10 percent of the route utilizing aid tactics to connect the route's dots. Like most of the neighboring walls on the Crown and similar routes off the nearby Pika Glacier, Peasant Pillar doesn't lead to a summit; it ends at the previously mentioned ridgeline. It is, however, the first route up this wall. This route surprised me with its high-quality rock, which seems like a rarity in the Alaska Range, where so many routes have the proverbial "choss toll" in order to complete a line.



## Images



View of the Crown Glacier cirque from the plane, showing the location of Your Highness and Peasant Pillar. Mt. Foraker is in the background.



Joseph Hobby leading the amazing "Black Crack Pitch" during the first ascent of Peasant Pillar (1,400', 5.10+ C2) above the Crown Glacier.





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Peasant Pillar (1,400', 5.10+ C2), above the Crown Glacier near the terminus of the Kahiltna Glacier.



Joseph Hobby on the pitch-12 traverse during the first ascent of Peasant Pillar (1,400', 5.10+ C2) on the Crown Glacier.



A closer view of the line taken up the Shield, a quality panel of rock that comprises the bulk of Peasant Pillar (1,400', 5.10+ C2).



Zach Lovell leading the crux pitch during the first ascent of Peasant Pillar (1,400', 5.10+ C2), above the Crown Glacier in the central Alaska Range.

## Article Details

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