



AAC Publications

Scott Davis, 1948–2022

During one of his frequent visits to Yosemite in 1966, Stanford University student Scott Davis and partner emerged from an early ascent of the Lost Arrow Chimney to discover that their friends had forgotten to leave fixed ropes for them to escape from the notch behind Lost Arrow Spire. Unperturbed, determined, and very talented, Scott simply established a new route back up to the Valley rim.

Scott, together with his longtime climbing partner, Chuck Kroger, was best known for an audacious series of ascents on El Capitan during 1970. At a time when Yosemite big walls were the exclusive domain of the giants of the era (Royal Robbins, Tom Frost, Yvon Chouinard, etc.), Scott, in the words of Steve Roper, “hit the Yosemite Valley climbing scene like a whirlwind. [Their] climbs shook up the resident rock jocks, for Davis and his partner were outsiders, supposedly incapable of such feats.” In this single year, they made the third ascent of the West Buttress, the fourth ascent of the Dihedral Wall, the third ascent of the North America Wall, and the first ascent of the Heart Route, all with little fanfare and without any efforts at self-promotion. High on the Heart Route, Scott named a key section the “A5 Traverse,” because, in his words, “every El Cap route needs to have at least one A5 pitch.”

Scott grew up in Seattle, and crafted his rock climbing skills in places such as Snow Creek Wall and his mountaineering experiences in the North Cascades. Prior to arriving in Yosemite, he was already a well-known Northwest climber, having pioneered ascents with climbing luminaries such as Al Givler, Steve and John Marts, Mark Fielding, Jim Madsen, Fred Beckey, and others. Less well known were his early American ascents in the Alps. Together with John Marts, in 1968, he made one-day speed ascents of the South Face of the Fou (American Direct) and the Bonatti Pillar on the Dru. These ascents amply demonstrated that climbers who had learned their skills outside Yosemite Valley could make very rapid repeats of the Alps’ hardest rock climbs.

As a lifelong Christian Scientist, Scott was a conscientious objector to the Vietnam War and did alternative service as a social worker in Richmond, Virginia, and Seattle. Subsequently he became a carpenter, doing high-quality custom residential remodels and new construction. He continued his climbing throughout the 1990s, pioneering a new route on the Sunset Amphitheater headwall of Mt. Rainer.

The Lost Arrow episode was memorialized in his first published book, *Lost Arrow and Other True Stories*, and led him to a career in writing and publishing. In the 1990s, he travelled to Syria and wrote about his experiences in *The Road from Damascus: A Journey Through Syria*. This book received positive comments from Talcott Seelye, U.S. ambassador to Syria at the time: “Davis went far off the beaten path...and saw a Syria that escapes nearly all Western travelers.” In this same decade he established Cune Press, a small publishing company producing historical works, novels, political satire, and education, with a focus on the Middle East. He continued his publishing, writing, and carpentry activities until his passing.

— Roy Kligfield

Images



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