

## Brazos Climbing Records

Attached below are 45 old climbing records, written between 1952 and 1990 by the original pioneers. In 1986, the Mountaineers voted not to write a guidebook to the Brazos, to preserve the wild character of these cliffs and to allow future generations of climbers to re-discover the cliffs for themselves. And indeed, nowadays the cliffs are seldom visited, and access via Corkin's Lodge is no longer granted. So this area is now being forgotten and is reverting back to the unknown, awaiting a future renaissance of adventure and exploration climbing.

At this point in time, most of the few remaining senior local climbers and Mountaineers who have climbed in the Brazos believe that we should not lose all record of the original climbing history. Accordingly, we have digitized the existing 45 descriptions, anecdotes, or sketches into a series of PDF files that are attached below. These are available for individual viewing as historical records and should be considered the copyrighted property of the Los Alamos Mountaineers. It is often hard to figure out where the original climbers actually went, so these records are NOT intended as a guide to the area. It should also be emphasized that this area is private property and is currently closed by the landowners.

I would like to thank the senior Club members who have advised me on how to treat this historic material. I would also like to thank Kei Davis for all of his help in digitizing this material, and Zack Baker for his work in loading the material onto the Club's website. Norbert Ensslin, 2026

## Contents

- i. "Trail and Timberline" article, by George Bell
- ii. "The Brazos Cliffs of New Mexico," by Don Monk
- iii. Brazos Trip Report
- iv. Historical Brazos Route sketch

### Original Climbing Records (Listed from West to East)

#### Waterfall Area

1. Waterfall Rib
2. Waterfall Middle Rib
3. Waterfall "Wrong Rib"
4. Waterfall - Hard Route
5. Monohedral Wall
6. Five Finger Towers

#### Main Cliffs

7. West Tower
8. West Ramp (Fat Ass Gully)
9. White Gully
10. White Gully - Direct Ascent
11. White Gully - Variation #3

12. Cat Burglar
13. Great Couloir - Left Error
14. Great Couloir - Normal Finish
15. Great Couloir - Direct Finish
16. Central Rib
17. Central Rib Direct
18. Easy Ridge
19. Easy Ridge - Direct Start
20. East of Easy
21. Leftovers
22. Resignation Ridge
23. Going to Jerusalem
24. Pinnacle Ridge
25. Ragged Pinnacles Route

#### Brazos Box Area

26. Heart Wall
27. Heart-Up
28. Heart of the Jungle
29. Upper Box Tower
30. Relentless Ridge
31. Great Hairy Ridge
32. Gothic Arches - Flying Buttress
33. Gothic Arches - Regular Route
34. Razor Ridge
35. Hunchback Ridge

#### The Wedge Area

36. Salud Ridge
37. West Wedge of the Ridge
38. South Face, West Wedge of the Ridge
39. West Ridge of the Wedge
40. Wicked Ridge of the Wedge
41. Wicked Ridge - East Face
42. Roofy Ridge of the Wedge
43. Rickety Ridge of the Wedge
44. Wee Wedge
45. Wee Wee Wedge

46. ADDENDUM: Recent New Routes

Some sporadic climbing continues in the Brazos. This file provides a small amount of information on some challenging new routes put up by several Los Alamos, Santa Fe, and Albuquerque climbers since 2000. The reader should be aware that access is constrained by property ownership and appropriate permissions.

# The Brazos Cliffs

G. I. Bell

[Scanned from Trail and Timberline, No. 639, March 1972, original photos scanned and added by George Bell Jr. in 2021]

**Note: The Brazos Cliffs are on private property and climbing on them is illegal.**

**The information in this guide is for historical purposes only.**

**With your help, climbing may be possible on the Brazos Cliffs in the future.**

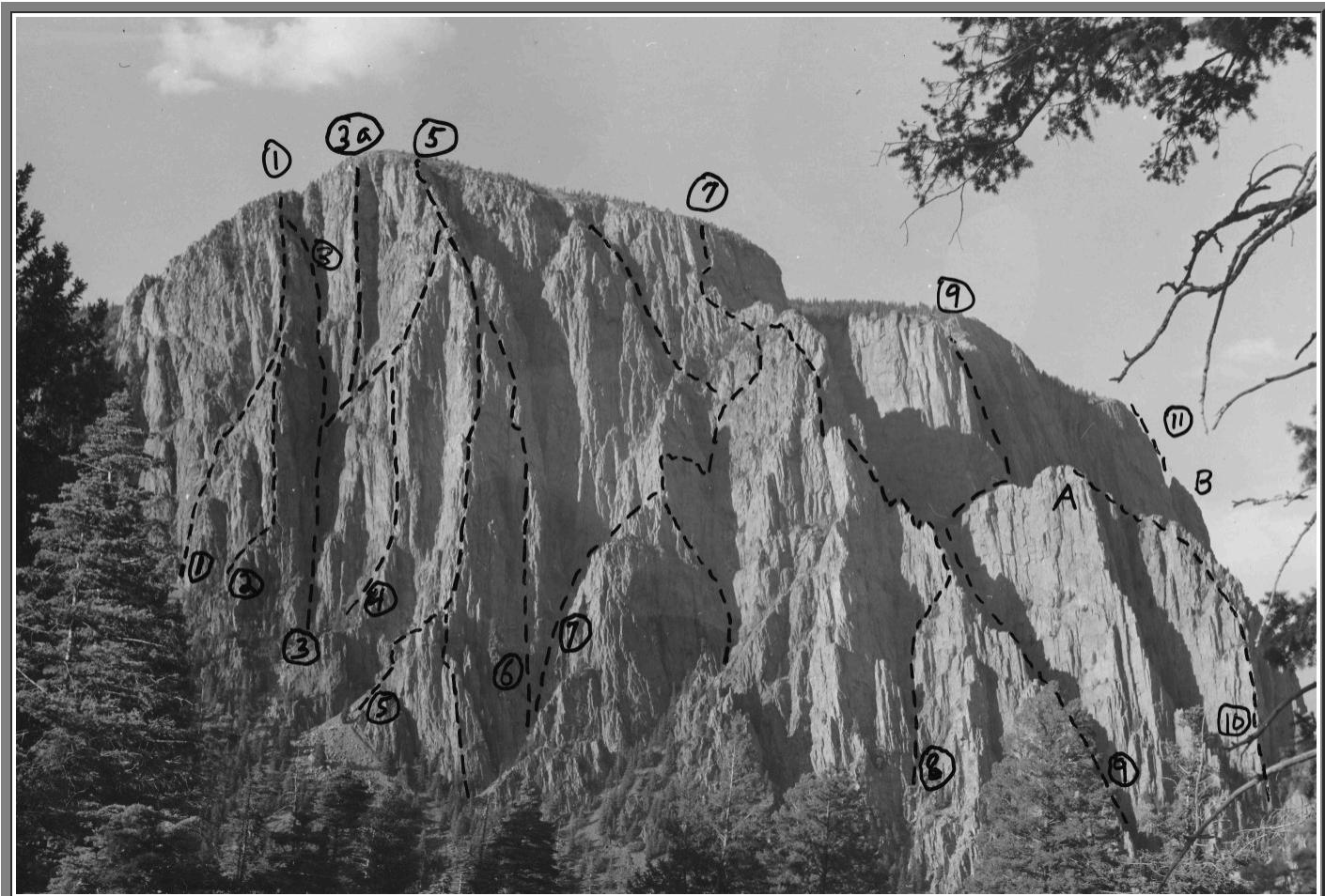


Figure 1: Main Brazos Cliffs showing some of the routes. Descent Gully is at left of photo and Box Canyon at right. 1. "White Gully", D. and A. Liska, G. Bell, and M. Williams, 1967 (5.5). 2. "Cat Burgler", D. Liska and L. Campbell, 1971 (5.7). 3. "Great Couloir", G. Bell and D. Monk, 1952 (5.6). 3a. "Great Couloir Direct", G. Bell and D. Coward, 1956 (5.6) - with subsequent variations by D. Liska et al. 4. F. de Saussure and Baily, 1956 (5.6). 5. "Easy Ridge", G. Bell, D. Monk, V. Lotz, and K. Brueckner, 1952 (5.6). 6. "East of Easy", G. Bell, W. Hendrey, C. Keller and R. Harder, 1970 (5.6). 7. "Going to Jerusalem", G. Bell, R. Mulford, and R. Thorn, 1957 (5.6). 8. "Pinnacle Ridge", G. Bell and F. de Saussure, 1958 (5.6). 9. "Cleft", G. Bell and F. de Saussure, 1958 (5.6). 10. "Box Tower", G. Bell and M. Haine, 1959 (5.5). 11. "Gothic Arches Buttress", D. Liska, G. Bell, L. Dauelsberg, and M. Williams. 1969 (5.7). A: Box Tower. B: Gothic Tower.

Nowadays, when a climber stumbles onto a particularly fine but unknown area, he is tempted to talk little about it except to a few chosen friends. Better at least to get some of the choicest routes before mentioning it in climbing journals and before encouraging the hordes of other climbers to our cliffs. So, for the last twenty years, we in Los Alamos have been enjoying our favorite Brazos Cliffs in Northern New Mexico, not exactly secretly, since who can keep two thousand foot cliffs secret when they are plainly visible from a U.S. highway eight miles

away, but at least quietly. However, age dulls the competitive appetite and moreover the word seems to be getting around. It therefore appeared that this might be an appropriate time to reveal some of the facts about our Brazos playground. For those who wish to read no farther the lesson is this: though the cliffs look nice enough from a distance they have many bad characteristics and consequently should be avoided by the inexperienced. For one thing, the rock is a particularly hard quartzite which will defeat all attempts to drill bolt holes; while cracks abound, they will frequently scratch or refuse to relinquish pitons; though good holds are common, a few areas are water polished and the rock is exceedingly slick when wet. In addition the cliffs are on private land and some of the landowners are ill disposed toward any trespassers at all, worst of ail those that are dirty, bearded, and jangling, and considered thereby to offend the nose, the eye, and the ear. Finally, while some of the routes are relatively easy to reach, others can be gained, if at all, only at low water, by wading up the treacherous rapids and icy pools of the Brazos River.

The more accessible Brazos Cliffs are the face of a 3000' fault scarp of preCambrian quartzite which separates the agricultural valleys at around 7500' near Tierra Amarilla from the high meadows and forests of the southern end of the San Juan Mountains. The Brazos River, with its headwaters in these alpine meadows, has eroded a deep canyon through the quartzite, bisecting the fault scarp, and offering some of the steepest cliffs in the area. Truly though, the river at high water is unwadable and these cliffs are often inaccessible. Views of the canyon from the rim are superb; from a level forest floor one can gaze into a half-mile-deep gorge. Each pine cone dislodged from the rim can be a hazard to fishermen below.

The cliffs are approached from U.S. highway 84, about nine miles south of Chama, New Mexico, and one mile north of the Brazos River crossing, by turning east onto NM 512 and driving seven and a half miles to Brazos Lodge which is currently the office for a land development company. All cliffs on the north side of the river are on the Lodge property and permission to continue should be sought from the genial manager, Mr. Robert Hobson. Since the roads are still incomplete, climbers are requested to leave their cars at the Lodge and to proceed to the cliffs on foot. The Lodge bar and restaurant is a pleasant place to recuperate after a strenuous day on the rock. The main cliffs, shown in figure 1 and some times known as El Ventisquero Amarillo can be reached in about an hour from the lodge.

The first technical climbs on the Brazos Cliffs were made in 1952 when Don Monk and I climbed the Easy Ridge and the Great Couloir, which with some additions and variations are still two of the longest (up to 17 pitches) and finest climbs in the area. More than 90% of the climbing has been done by members of the Los Alamos Mountaineers (LAM).

From the Brazos Lodge, the main cliffs are seen as in photo 2. Further left and more directly above the Lodge are less frequently climbed and smaller cliffs, variously broken or overhanging and thus of a reddish hue, the unweathered color of the rock. These smaller cliffs boast a handsome waterfall for a few weeks during the spring runoff. Between the main and the smaller cliffs a broad tree and scree filled gully serves as the descent route of choice, or alternatively as a nontechnical route to the top of the cliffs and to the rim of the Box Canyon. A rough trail has been worn in this gully, adjacent to the main cliffs.

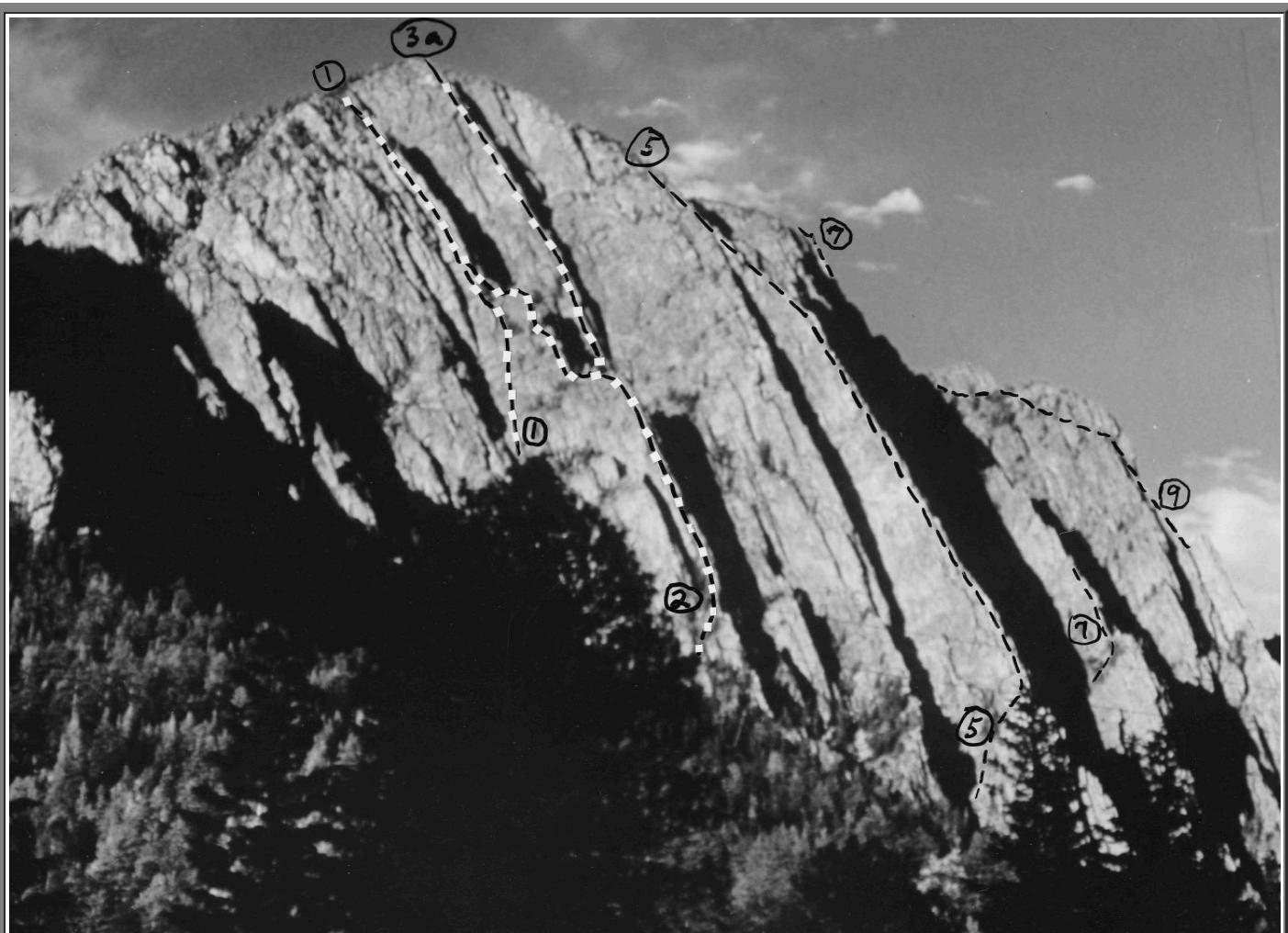


Figure 2: The main cliffs as seen from the end of the road at Brazos Lodge.  
Route numbers correspond to those shown in Figure 1.

As the main cliffs are approached through a thick forest it is difficult to identify the various routes; dim morning light on the southwest-facing rock compounds the problems. It may be helpful to note that the most prominent ridge, "Easy Ridge," terminates at its base in a 500 foot step. It is customary to start "Easy Ridge" above the step, though five nice pitches may be added by starting at the lowest point of the step. The easiest approach is to scramble up the gully left (west) of the step until nearly even with the top of the step. A broad ledge can be followed to the top of the step; then by crawling through a hole in the ridge, ascending a 50' gully, and traversing 100' left, the start of the technical climbing is reached. The first pitch leads to the crest of the ridge, the second is directly up the ridge, the third and fourth slightly west of the crest. At about the seventh and crux pitch (about 5.6, with this grading and others on the photos being perhaps a little high by present standards), the route moves to the right edge of the ridge to a delightfully exposed belay perch, the pedestal, and thereafter follows a shallow gully system just right of the ridge for 400 feet. This brings one to the top of technical climbing, though there are several hundred feet of exposed scrambling at the top of the ridge.

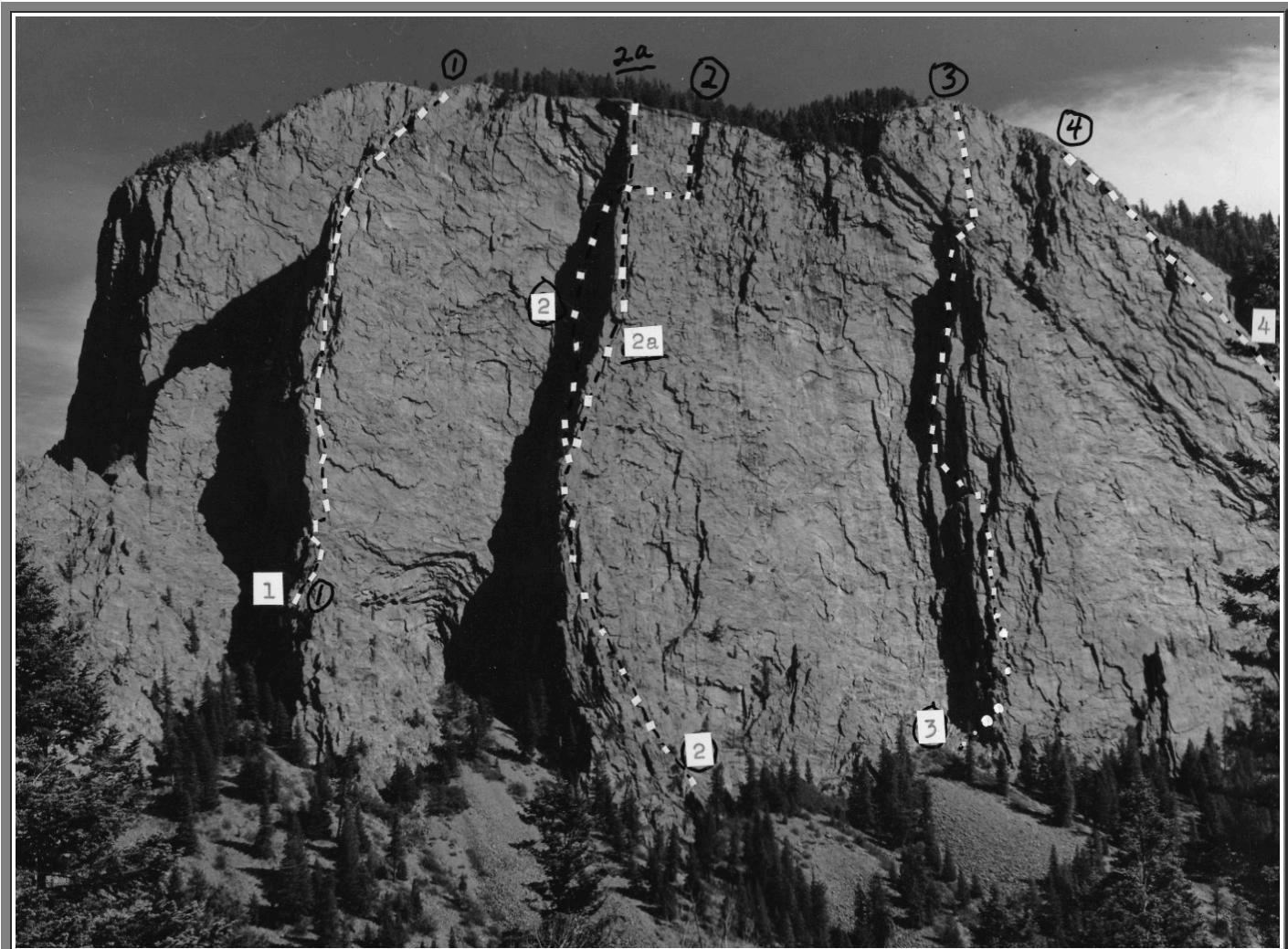


Figure 3: Southwest face of the "Wedge". Box Canyon is to the left of these cliffs. 1 "West Ridge of the Wedge", W. Hendry and C. Keller, 1970 (5.8). 2 "Wicked Ridge of the Wedge", W. Hendry and M. Hart, 1969 (5.6). 2a D. Michael and L. Dauelsberg, 1971. 3 "Roofy Ridge of the Wedge", W. Hendry, L. Dauelsberg, M. Hart, C. Keller, and M. Williams, 1969 (5.7). 4 "Rickety Ridge of the Wedge", LAM party 1968 (5.4).

The "Great Couloir" offers many attractive variations to a small party—though as with most couloirs there could be substantial rockfall hazard for a large party. The base of the couloir can be identified as a water polished inside corner; the first pitch avoids this to the right, either passing a chock stone or less strenuously, on small holds farther right. An overhang is next passed on the left and after some scrambling, the next overhanging section can be passed on either side, most pleasantly by the 200' face to its left from which the couloir is regained by an easy hand traverse. Continuing for 200 feet on the broken left wall of the gully one reaches a bowl from which various routes diverge. The original route continues up the gully for four pitches before easier rock is gained. The first pitch ascends on small holds toward the right, whence the gully proper is regained by a delicate move. On the third pitch, leave the gully via a small overhang on the left wall (5.6) where a piton may be useful as a handhold. The alternative routes are gained by scrambling right from the bowl on a large ledge with two trees (difficult move above the last tree). One can thus reach the escape route (continue up and to the right to reach ridge) or the delightful direct finish (eleven pitches more or less straight up a rib or with occasional deviations into the gully to its right). Liska's Finish, straight up the rib for the last 400 feet, is particularly recommended as a sustained and exposed climax.

On continuing east, along the fault scarp, from the main cliffs, the Brazos Box Canyon is first encountered and then "The Encinado Wedge," a thin triangular height of land lying between the fault and the Brazos River. The cliffs on the south side of Encinado Wedge (figure 3) are about 1000' high, steeper than the main cliffs, and they have yielded some fine climbs to Bill Hendry and others in the last few years. These climbs cannot be easily reached from the Brazos Lodge because the intervening land has been posted by the exclusive Corkin resort,

which caters primarily to fishermen. An alternative approach leaves the village of Encinado and follows dirt roads south of the Brazos River. The last few miles require four-wheel drive and all of the land is private but has not been posted in recent years. By this means it is possible, at least in dry weather, to get within an hour's hike of the fine routes shown in figure 3. A still easier approach can be used to reach the top of the wedge and superb views of the Box Canyon as shown in figure 4. A new road is currently being developed across the high plateau from Tierra Amarilla to Tres Piedras; it is now designated NM 553 east from Tierra Amarilla and NM 111 west from Tres Piedras and will eventually be a part of U.S. 64. From this road, around twenty miles east of Tierra Amarillo, there are views of the fault scarp and it is an easy walk of about three miles, across private land, to the brink of the wedge.

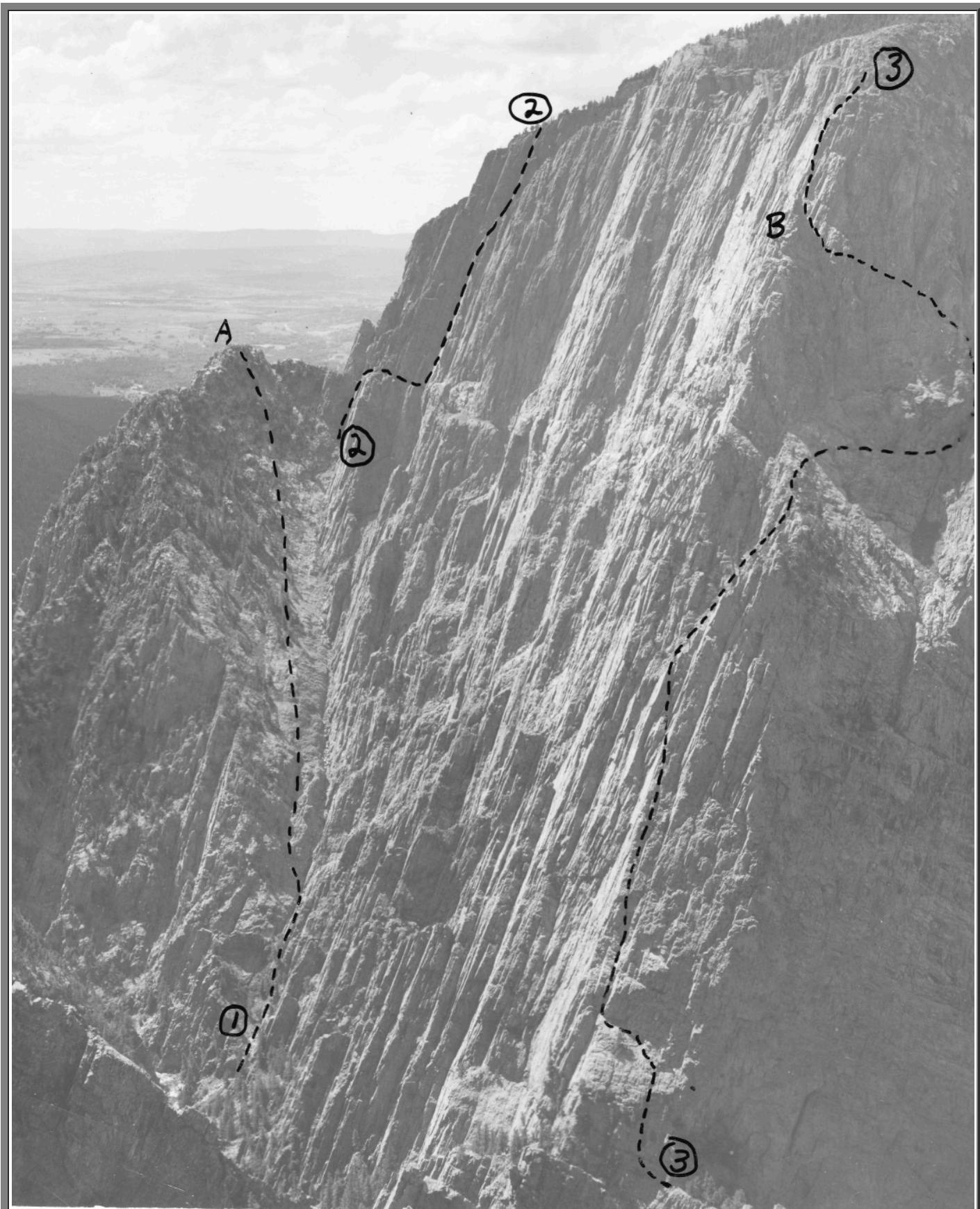


Figure 4: Part of the Brazos Box Canyon as seen from the Wedge. 1. "the Ramp", class 4. 2. "Cleft", 3 "Gothic Arches Buttress", as in Figure 1. A: Box Tower. B: Gothic Tower.

Finally there are several miles of cliffs along the Brazos Box Canyon. The first problem in approaching is to get around the posted Corkin land which extends to the mouth of the Box, and the second problem is the river itself

which pretty well fills the canyon. Nevertheless, several routes have been done on the wall of the canyon, which are up to 2200 feet high. The Gothic Arches Buttress route is shown in figure 4 and was described in the American Alpine Journal [399 (1969)]; on a second ascent last year the aid pitches were bypassed and the Gothic Tower was climbed without a bivouac. The best climbing is found on the north side of the River where the strata lead to clean walls and ledges favoring the climber.

The lands near the Brazos Cliffs have a turbulent past, a confused present, and an uncertain future. In the past, disputes involving the grants of Spanish kings and conflicting water rights have often issued in violence. At present, many people are attracted to the area by the beauty of its streams and forests or the challenge of its noble cliffs. But they come with various uses in mind. Most conspicuous and friendly are the land developers, who dream of aerial tramways to revolving restaurants atop the cliffs. Others are hostile to their inroads, like Phil Corkin who has spent his lifetime building a resort with minimal impact on the wilderness and who now depends on it with calculated fierceness. Finally, there are we mountaineers who clearly perceive that the splendid area should be preserved for all posterity with what wilderness is left and who would like to see the land acquired for that purpose. The future is in doubt.

## ii. The Brazos Cliffs of New Mexico

The Brazos Cliffs of New Mexico are located on the Brazos River, some 15 miles south of Chama. Several distinct groups of cliffs are formed by wide bands of gentler formations-- scree and wooded gullies. The largest cliff, called the main Brazos Cliff, is alpine throughout, offering no easy route to its top. This main Brazos cliff forms the south face of Brazos Peak (11,274'). The base of the cliff is roughly 9,000', beginning after some 500' of woods and scree slopes above the Brazos River. To reach the cliffs by car, drive on US 84 north of Santa Fe to the small town of Brazos, which is close to Chama and very close to the point where the Brazos River crosses US 84. From Brazos drive toward Brazos and Corkin's lodges on dirt road (which may be muddy and impassable during rainy seasons and spring snow thaw). Road information may be obtained by writing Corkin's Lodge, Parkview, N.M. At the end of the road is Corkin's lodge, 10 miles from US 84. At both lodges campgrounds are available for a fee. From Corkin's lodge walk up north a short distance to an old logging road; follow it <sup>the</sup> to end close to the main cliff.

Evidently the first serious attempts to scale the main Brazos cliff were by members of the Los Alamos Mountaineers, Los Alamos, N.M., who were encouraged to attempt the cliffs and led by George I. Bell. Two routes were contemplated, the "Easy Ridge" (the skyline ridge on the cliff as seen from the main road) and the "Great Couloir", a route starting in the first couloir on the west emptying the face.

In the fall of 1954, after two years of practice climbs on the Brazos cliffs, the Los Alamos club had perfected both of these buttes about half way to the top, leaving iron in for future attempts.

In the fall of 1954, George Bell and Don Monk made the first ascent of the "Great Couloir", alternating the leading. Arriving at the foot of the couloir about 7:30 a.m., they climbed for several rope lengths in the couloir itself, in terrain peculiar to the couloir: first a difficult pitch of perhaps a hundred feet, then a walk of several yards. A formidable wall about 600' up the couloir was avoided by traversing out onto the right hand side of the couloir, and then up a chimney to the flat portion above the wall. This flat portion represented approximately the highest point reached by previous parties. They then started up a chimney to the loft of the couloir proper and after going a short distance, traversed to the right and upwards out of the chimney near some conspicuous short pine trees. They continued on the face until regaining the couloir. From the chimney to the couloir required some direct aid. Now, at the critical portion of the climb, an overhang in the couloir, they turned to the exposed face on the left of the couloir. Bell led this portion, making a direct aid pendulum to reach the face on the left, then led up a crack to reach the top of the overhang. The couloir had now narrowed to a chimney, and the climbing was straight forward, consisting of getting around chock stones in the chimney. This continued for several rope lengths until

until they were close to the top, when they were able to traverse to the left out of the chimney and gain the summit ridge. The summit ridge was easy and the climbers unroped for the final scramble. Time for climb, 6 hours; pitons, 12, three for handholds; class, Five.

Below the first wall an interesting variation had been climbed on earlier attempts. This consisted in climbing cracks in the left side of the couloir and then traversing to the top of the first wall.

In June, 1955, the "Easy Ridge" was climbed by Los Alamos climbers. The party consisted of George Bell, Keith Brueckner, Virginia Iotz and Don Monk. Bell and Monk again alternated leads. The party arrived at the base of the ridge at 6:00 a.m., and quickly scrambled up scree in the green couloir and across loose rock to the chimney just under the blockhouse. The slopes on the right of the chimney were climbed, and then the party squirmed through a hole in the ridge, gaining the crest of the ridge. A second hole led to a chimney on the east side of the ridge, which led back to the crest of the ridge. From here a slight descent led to the roping up place, a little below a pine tree. The first lead consisted in going up an overhang above the tree, then to the ridge crest. The next section, quite sporting, consists of a rib a little to the right of the ridge itself. A short scramble then led to a tree below a perpendicular pitch. This pitch, with beautiful holds, empties upon the ridge crest again. Not too difficult scrambling then led the party to the left of the ridge, then to its right and up an open chute to an anchored belay.

beneath an overhang. Next came the first key to the climb, for the one and only way to continue was up a crack to the left of the overhang. This crack, first conquered by Bell on a previous attempt, was led by Monk with the aid of two pitons. A bulge near the top of the crack was forced directly, although a traverse to the right over the exceedingly exposed face was accomplished on a previous attempt. After this pitch the party climbed 200' in a good chimney to reach the col above the thumb, overlooking the magnificent upper part of the green couloir, with its high angle green-hued granite. Above this comfortable saddle came the second key to the climb. Bell led first near the crest of the ridge, overlooking the green face. Then a traverse to the right and a climb up a crack led to a small ledge around the corner of the immediate face of the ridge. Three pitons were used on this pitch to reach the airy ledge, which overlooked the neighboring couloir hundreds of feet below. A large step was required to get up and around the next corner to a more comfortable belay spot. The next task confronting the party was to climb a triangular shaped face, its left hand side formed by the "Easy Ridge", its right hand side by a subsidiary ridge, and its base by a precipitous change of gradient in a plunge to the floor of the couloir. The group decided upon a route well to the right of the "Easy Ridge", a system of chimneys and cracks leading up just to the right of the apex of the triangle. The climbing, although hard, seemed easier, since chimney climbing usually decreases the appearance of exposure. Four pitons were used on several leads to

debouch the foursome out of the triangle and into a virtual meadow-- grass, trees, low angle, still 600 vertical feet from the summit! This unexpected turn of events came at the point where the ridge appears from below to flatten out. From here to the summit required no more technical work, only high-grade scrambling above the "meadow." A route straight through the "meadow," then a long leftwards traverse to the "Easy Ridge", and along it to the summit was chosen. Time, eight hours; pitons, 14, one for handhold (used in the triangular face); class, five.

From the top of the cliff there is an easy descent route back to Corkin's ledge; it follows the "Easy Ridge" between the main cliff and the west cliff to the saddle between them, then down horrible scree and talus to the logging road.

Many more climbs remain to be made on the Brazos Cliffs, on the other cliffs as well as on the main cliff. In particular, the many pinnacles on the western edge of the main cliff, the west ridge pinnacle, and the "blockhouse" and "thumb" on "Easy Ridge" are examples of pinnacles yet to be climbed. Face climbs on the main cliff yet to be accomplished include the "middle ridge", the "green couloir", the "chasm couloir", and the "Basin Ridge". The possibilities are limited only by the climber's imagination. The cliffs east of the main cliff have not been explored as of this date.

The Brazos cliffs offer excellent climbing and many advantages: (1) up to 2500' of actual climbing, (2) excellent granite, (3) altitude and latitude mean cool temperate climate, and (4) accessibility to population centers in northern N.M. and southern Colo.

#### iv. Trip Report: Brazos, June 10, 1979.

Party: Twenty-three climbers signed up; thirteen had had leading experience, and the other ten were assumed to be non-leaders.

##### Organization:

In order to make it as convenient as possible for everyone interested in going on the trip it was planned to have parties climbing both days of the week-end. Thus, if possible, a person had the choice of which day to climb. Also, if it could be arranged, someone who wanted to climb both days could do so.

Our party was carefully divided into Saturday and Sunday groups. With seven climbers wishing to climb both days there were thirteen climbers slated for Saturday and seventeen for Sunday. Most people planned to drive up the night before the climb and camp out off the road to the lodge, but well away from the lodge (no campfires are permitted).

Because of stormy weather causing rain all day Friday and a forecast of rain for Saturday, we were forced to change these plans. All Saturday climbing was cancelled. Fortunately only one member of the Saturday group was unable to make it Sunday, and everyone else was rescheduled for Sunday.

Bob Hobson's phone number is 588-7220. He should be notified beforehand. It is also a good idea to ask him to make reservations at the Beef and Bottle.

##### Climbing:

The 22 climbers (12 leaders, 10 non-leaders) were arranged on five routes on the main cliffs (see list following). Six people had driven from Los Alamos early that morning, the rest had camped at a variety of locations off the road to the lodge. The entire group assembled in the lodge parking lot at about 6 A.M.

Several of the climbing parties found that, even with a route description in hand, route-finding in the Brazos is not simple. Sometimes it is difficult to find the start to the route. A sad example of this was the White Gully party, which climbed the first pitch of the Cat Burglar route before realizing its folly. After a one pitch traverse and two short rappels and some down-climbing and scrambling around, they arrived at the foot of the White Gully at 10:30 A.M. It was decided that the only practical plan was to climb the West Tower instead, and this was done without further incident.

The Great Couloir party climbed the first two or three pitches of the Great Couloir and then for obscure reasons began climbing on the west wall of the couloir, climbing out of the couloir and finishing on the last several pitches of the Cat Burglar. This was perhaps a fortunate (or wise?) occurrence because the Great Couloir is such a long climb that time spent route-finding almost ensures a very late finish.

The party on the Central Rib certainly was climbing on the Central Rib but certainly was not on the proper route for much of the time. From all indications this party had the most exciting day of all and, as in the case

of the Great Couloir party, climbed a good deal on possibly uncharted territory. This was a strong party, and that minimized the difficulties.

Two parties managed to find the start of their routes and actually follow them to their finish. These were on the West Tower and Easy Ridge. Although the Easy Ridge party was rather slow there was never any concern for them because of the great experience and good judgement of the leaders.

By 9:15 P.M. all climbers were assembled at the Beef and Bottle and all ate their dinner there. (Two people left earlier, foregoing the social hours). The majority of the group arrived home between 11:30 P.M. Sunday night and about 1 A.M. the next morning.

Comments:

Now that I have organized this trip I realize

- 1) What a pain in the butt it is,
- 2) That no amount of planning can make the trip go without a hitch.

The large number of participants, most of them wishing to climb something "new", ensures that there will be some unfamiliarity with the routes. The necessity of finding partners for all those signed up leads to mismatches of abilities and goals, making some parties quite slow. Only the good judgement of the climbers can help to avoid more serious misfortunes than occurred this year.

LOS ALAMOS MOUNTAINEERS  
TRIP SUMMARY

3

Name of trip/topos: *Brazos Rockclimb*

Date(s): June 9 and 10

Leader(s): Steve Iversen 662-5006 or 667-2194

In-town contact: Jan Iversen 662-5006  
Helen Rinker 662-7796

Difficulties

Physical: 1-2 hours hike going and coming; a good part of the day spent climbing. (approx. elevation: 8000' at lodge, 10000' at top)

Technical: Routes from 6 pitches of 5.2 to 15 pitches of 5.6-5.7.

Comparable recent trips:

Party size/makeup limits: no size limit, climbing school graduates welcome

Itinerary

Driving: 90 miles from Los Alamos on U.S. 84 to about 10 miles south of Chama turn-off to Brazos Lodge, then about 7 miles to lodge.  
Two hours driving time to lodge.

Hiking/climbing: Leave lodge at 6 AM, 1 hour (minimum) hike to cliffs, climbing by 7:30 AM.

Expected weather: fair - cool in morning, warm in afternoon. Possible clouds and showers in afternoon.

Unknown factors:

Route descriptions, technical details, additional equipment, other comments:

Option to leave town at about 3:30 AM to arrive at Brazos Lodge at 6 AM, or drive up previous evening and camp near lodge.

If there will be parties climbing both days, and if it can be arranged, some <sup>individuals</sup> may be able to climb both days.

## Climbing Teams

West Tower:	John Sarracino	Susie Butler
	Steve Luckstead	Jim Bunch
		Bill Johnson
White Gully:	Bill Sweatt	Ralph Menikoff
	Steve Iversen	Wes Horner
		Dave Hutton
Great Couloir:	George Rinker	Sue Hutton
	Dave Kozlowski	Jim Straight
Central Rib:	Karl Mueller	George Conrad
	Jack Kolle	Scott Pollat
Easy Ridge:	Eiichi Fukushima	Jean Jones
	Mark Zander	Ken Jones

# L A M Basic Equipment List

This is intended to cover only the most essential equipment and is not comprehensive. Items marked R are highly recommended, and items marked M are mandatory. Difficulties with the latter category must be settled in advance with the trip leader(s).

## Personal Equipment

- backpack
- M day pack
- sleeping bag
- sleeping bag pad
- hiking boots
- snow & ice boots
- M rock shoes/boots
- gloves/mittens
- wool sweater
- insulated parka
- insulated pants
- R rain/wind parka
- rain/wind pants
- survival kit (emergency shelter, extra matches, fire starter, whistle)
- M flashlight/headlamp
- extra batteries/bulb
- R pocket knife
- R matches in waterproof box
- R dark glasses
- compass
- cup & spoon
- R canteen (2 qts. water)
- M rappel seat & gear
- hammer
- M hard hat (see group equipment)
- R prusik loops (each team)
- slings ( )
- carabiners ( )
- ice axe
- crampons
- skis
- snowshoes
- R sun cream or lotion

Enough food and clothing to survive a night on the cliffs.

Be prepared for rain.

## Each 2-Person Group

- tent
- stove/fuel
- pots/pans
- food ( ) meals beyond car
- M first aid kit
- M climbing rope (Leaders will supply)
- M lead gear (rock) ( " " )
- lead gear (snow & ice)

## Group equipment (provided by leaders)

- ~ 6 club hard-hats available
- Club also has various pieces of hardware useful for nut extraction, etc.

## V. BRAZOS INFORMATION

6:30pm @ T → Depart TKI  
 parking lot → meet to climb Gam Lodge  
 dinner at Lodge (after 5pm)

### SOME IMPORTANT POINTS ABOUT CLIMBING IN THE BRAZOS

- ① THERE IS A 1-2 MI. APPROACH OVER TALUS; THROUGH BUSHES. ( $\frac{1}{2}$  -  $1\frac{1}{2}$  HRS)
- ② THE CLIMBS ARE 10-15 PITCHES TO THE TOP, SO AT  $\frac{3}{4}$  HR A PITCH, THE CLIMB CAN TAKE 7.5-10 HRS.
- ③ DESCENT GULLY: STEEP TALUS REQUIRING 1-2 HRS.
- ④ FACTS ①, ② & ③ ADD UP TO A LONG DAY  
 UNLESS FAST & PERFECT, MAYBE DESPITE BEING FAST & PERFECT. (9-14 HRS OR MORE)
- ⑤ UNDERSTAND: CLIMBING IN THE BRAZOS IS MOUNTAINEERING WITH ALL THE OBJECTIVE HAZARDS OF MOUNTAINEERING, I.E. ROCKFALL, WEATHER, ETC..

### REQUIRED EQUIPMENT

- ① HELMET
- ② FLASHLIGHT/HEADLAMP
- ③ RAIN GEAR
- ④ WATER (~2 QUARTS)
- ⑤ EXTRA FOOD (LUNCH PLUS EXTRA)
- ⑥ PRUSSIK SLIDES
- ⑦ RAPPEL GEAR (IF DON'T OWN ANY, CHECK WITH LEADER)
- ⑧ CLIMBING HARNESS
- ⑨ CLIMBING SHOES

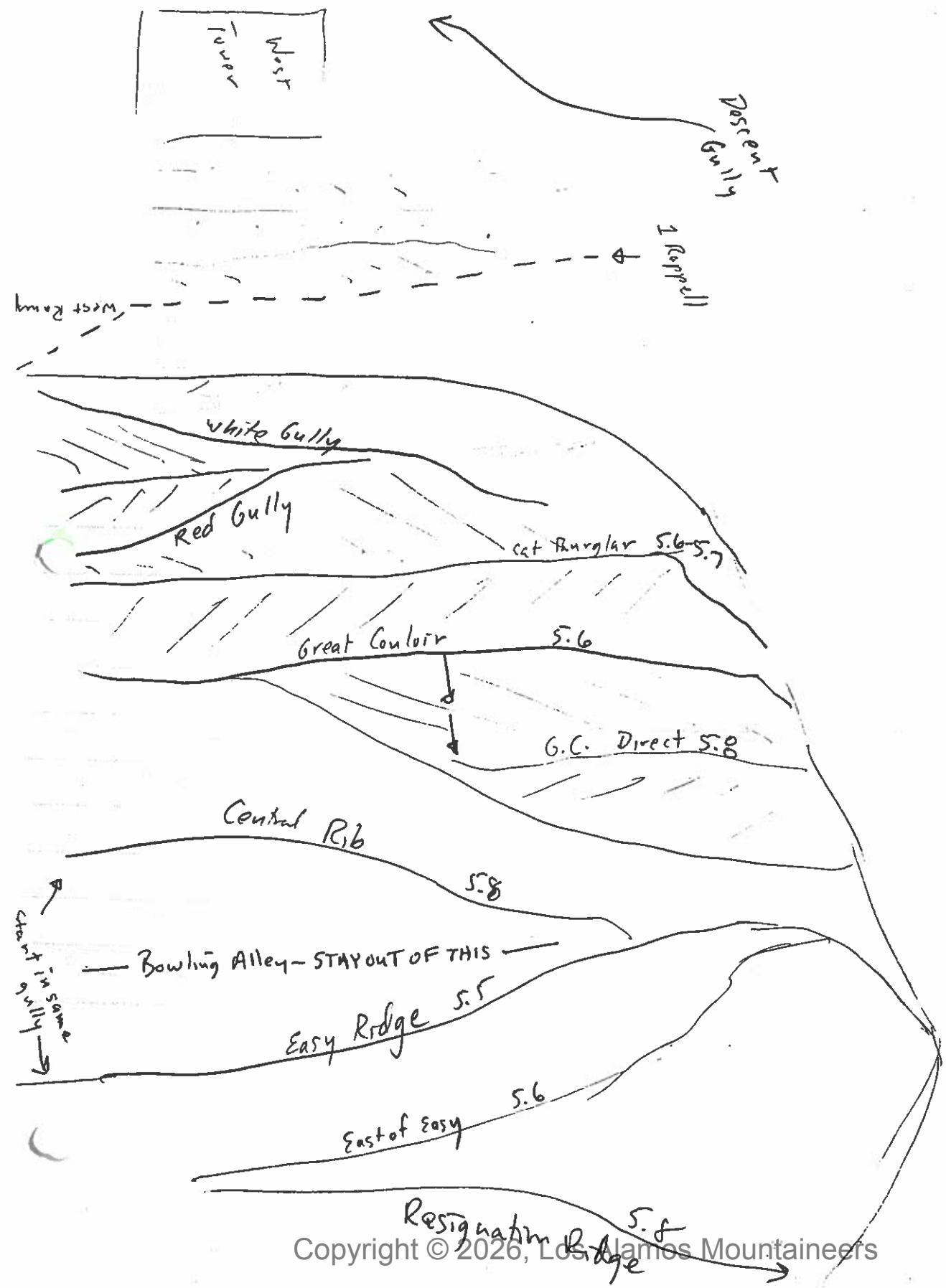
### SUGGESTED EQUIPMENT

- ① EXTRA CLOTHES
- ② SUN SCREEN
- ③ TENNIS SHOES OR ULTRALIGHT HIKING BOOTS FOR APPROACH & DESCENT
- ④ Bug Dope

### NOTE ON LOOSE ROCK & OTHER LOOSE OBJECTS:

REMEMBER: CHECK EVERY FLAKE & BLOCK, BEFORE WEIGHTING IT, TO MAKE SURE IT IS SOLID. ROCKFALL IS EXTREMELY DANGEROUS TO YOUR PARTNERS OR ANYONE ELSE ON THE CLIMB, SEEN OR UNSEEN. ANY OBJECT DROPPED DOWN THE CLIFF, WATER BOTTLE, CAMERA, ETC., BECOMES A DANGEROUS PROJECTILE.

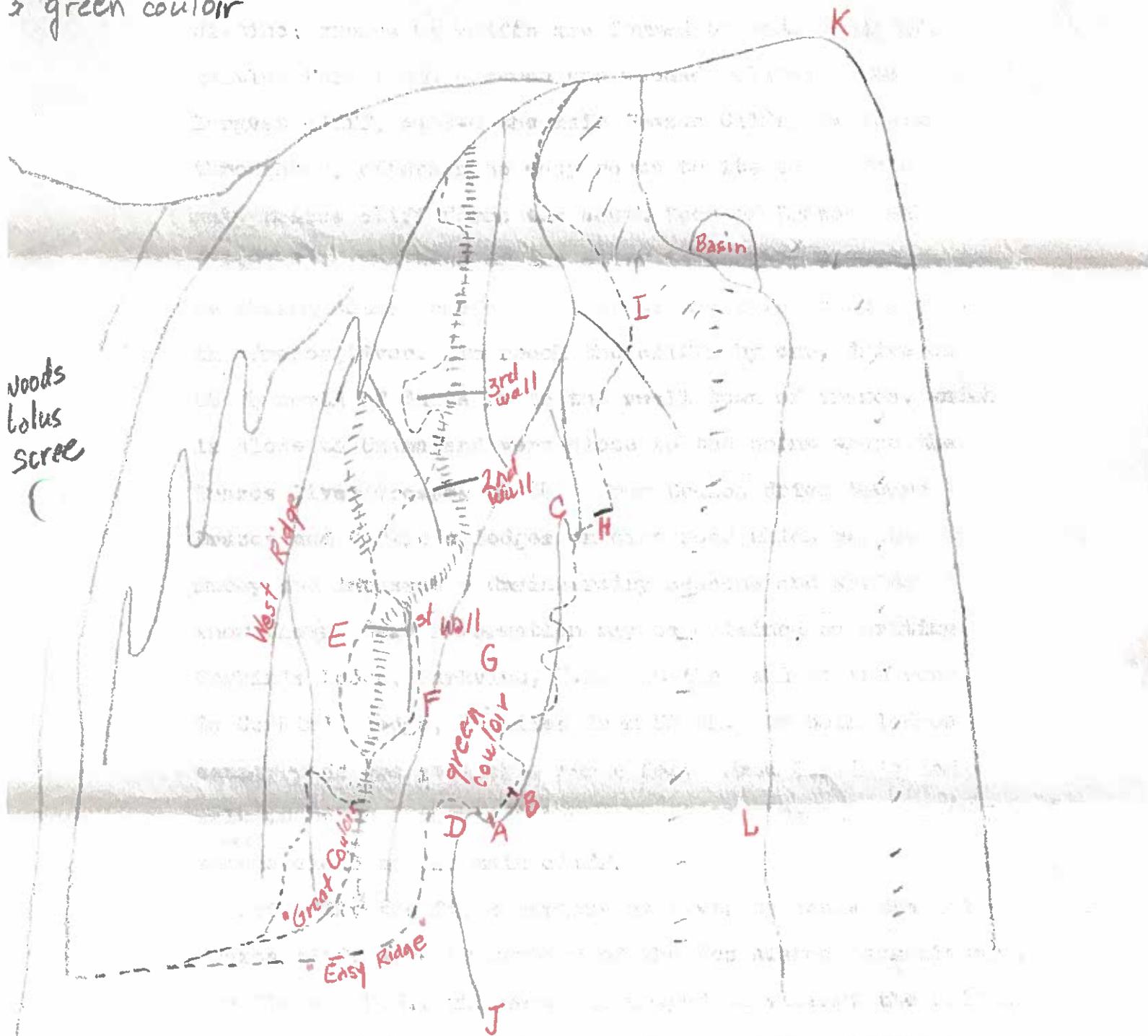
Norbert



A hole  
 B hole  
 C thumb  
 D blockhouse  
 E hand traverse variation  
 F middle ridge  
 G green couloir

H Hair Shelf  
 I the meadow  
 J bottom  
 K top  
 L Basin ridge

(6)



Sketch Map\*  
Main Brazos Cliff

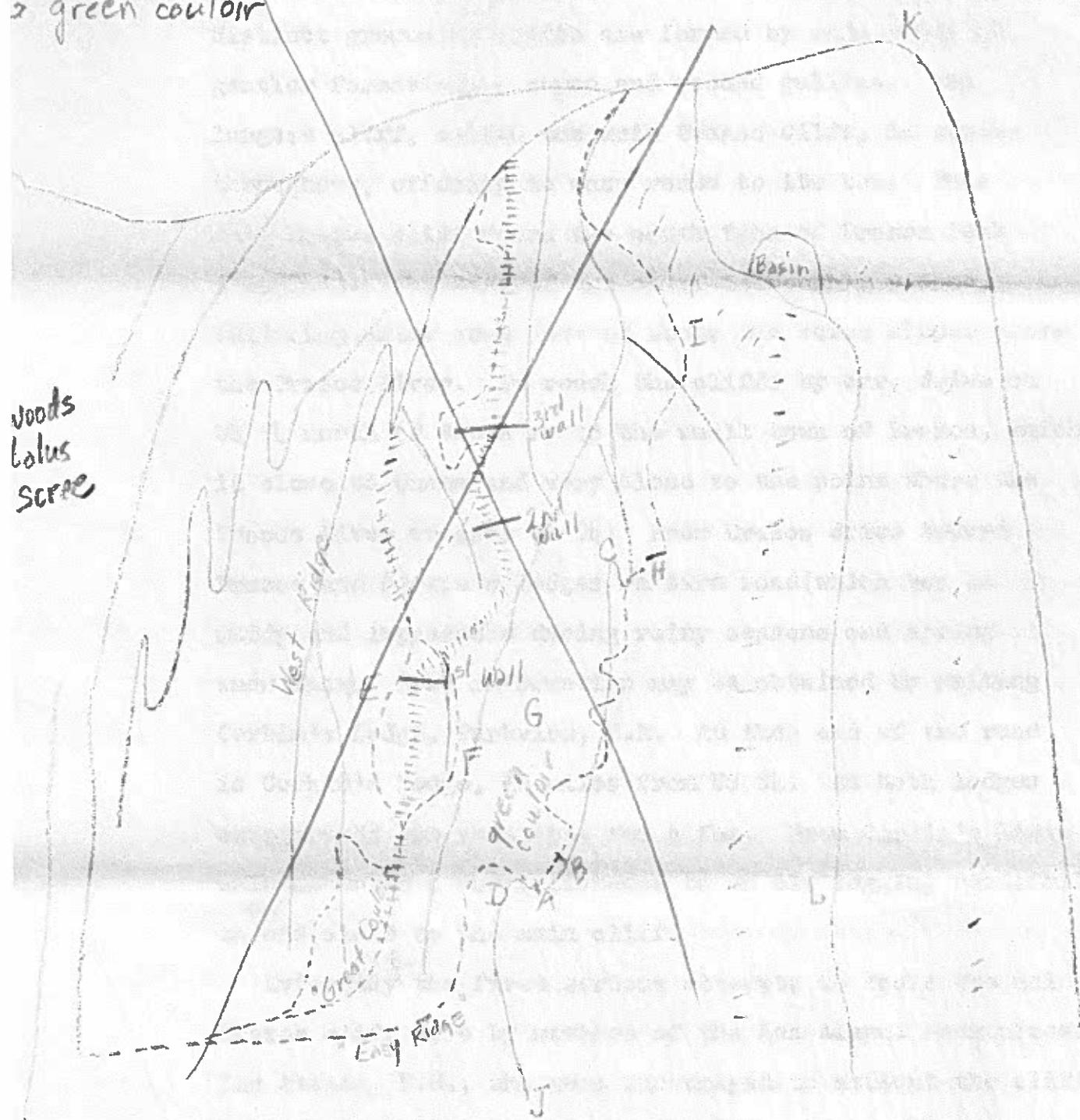
drawn from memory

Copyright © 2026, Los Alamos Mountaineers

jd monk 101

A hole  
B hole  
C thumb  
D blockhouse  
E hand traverse variation  
F middle ridge  
G green couloir

Hairy Shelf  
I the meadow  
J bottom  
K top  
L Basin ridge



Sketch Map\*  
Main Brazos Giff

## 1. Waterfall Rib

L.Dauelsberg, L. Barnet, E. Anderson, C. Mills, L. Campbell, G. Fogelsong  
October 14, 1967

07:45 Foot of waterfall, 8600'  
Scramble over ridge and up to bowl

08:20 Rope up, 8700'

Pitch 1 - Up black slabs with slightly overhanging steps, pitons, belay on shelf.  
Pitch 2 - Short, easy.

Pitch 3 - Up steep slab to R. Piton at bottom. Comes out on crest overlooking waterfall. Medium step around to L above an underhang, end on pinnacle. Cross gully behind to big chockstones.

Pitch 4 - Up R edge of slabs to base of overhang. Pass around R side into crack; up crack to bush then straddle R into second crack. Up this and traverse to good niche on ridge crest.

Pitch 5 - Continue up about 75'. Move R to lip of gully. Above this, class 3 scramble. Have been on NW edge of tributary to main waterfall. Lip of small fall is about this altitude.

11:40 On scramble above Pitch 5. Altitude 9020'. 300' in 3 hours.

13:15 Scrambling on ridge crest even with end of small "rib" SE, 9300'.

13:30 Up fine jam crack, no belay to 9400'. Continue scramble unroped up ridge crest.

14:50 At 9600', view into upper level of waterfall gully. Over top of gendarme.

15:30 Last step, 9900'. A set of low steep cliffs of rotten-looking conglomerate.

16:10 On "top" of rib. Up gentle grassy ramp in a "graben" to 10,030'. Turn NW along crest over a lump and down into a grassy meadow. Can't see N because of a ridge. To aspen grove below round-topped hill.

16:20 Trail here but lost it. Continue NW along crest, over rock outcrop (property marker here). Drop off NW into aspen. Start down grassy, open forest slope, easy walk across slabs.

17:10 At logging road, 8650'.

18:00 At lodge.

## 2. Waterfall Middle Rib

E. Anderson, G. Fraley, G. Fogelsong, D. Brown, J. Doyle  
May 3, 1970

6:00 S. Lodge, 7900'.

7:00 Foot of cliffs, 8900', scramble unroped.

7:40 On bench, 9100'. Too high for traverse. Continue up rib.

8:00 Rope up, 9250'. Two short 75' belays up Class 3 rock.

8:30 Traverse E thru gully to next rib.

8:50 Up rib (easy 3rd Class), 9550'.  
Cross to large gully E (steep and deep).  
(Rib across this has gendarmes.)  
Orange cliff in middle of our rib. Which is middle rib?  
Traverse either side (We went W?)

9:30 Above big step, 9750'.  
Rib narrow here, vertical on E. Ramp below. Easy Class 3.

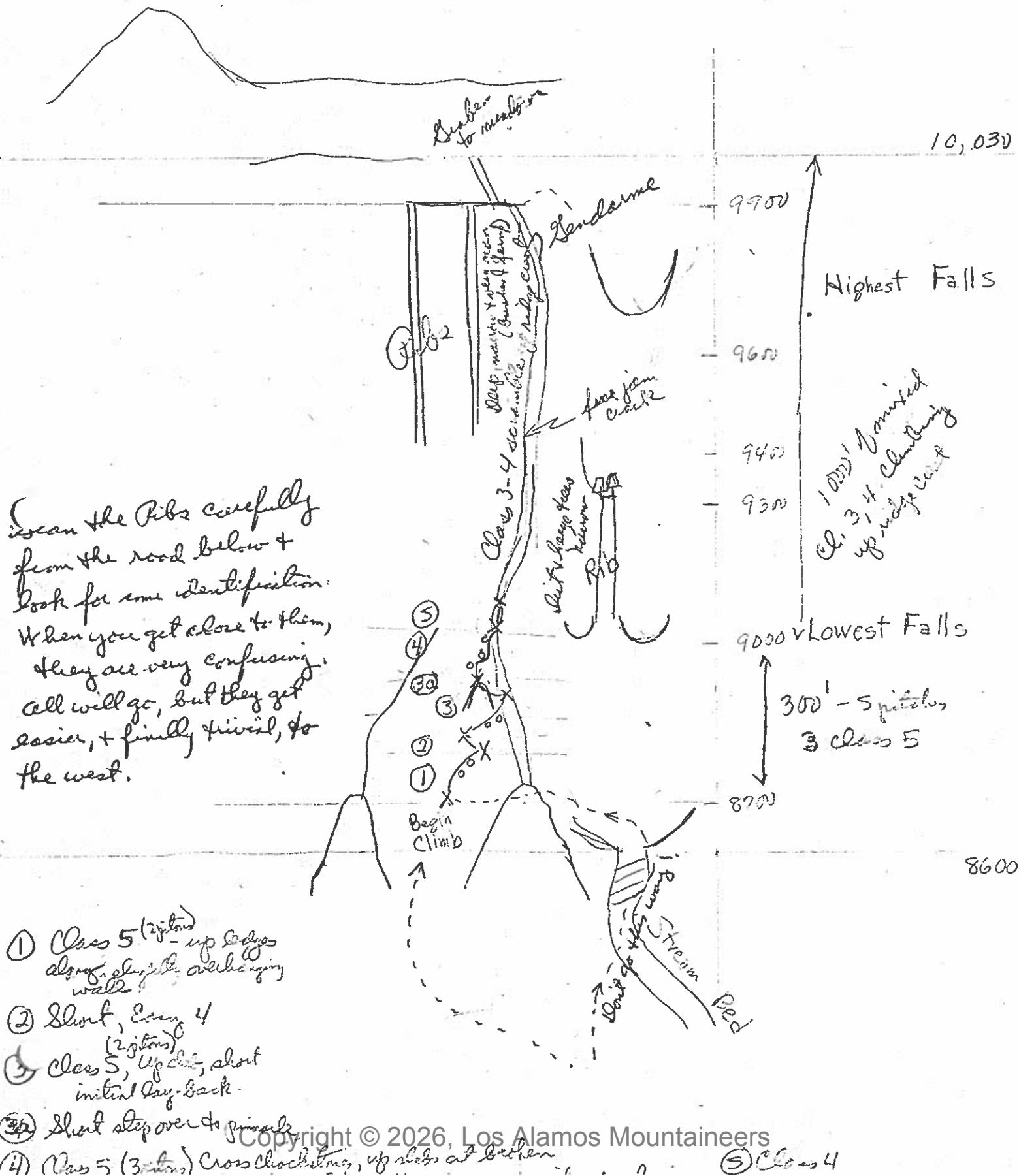
10:00 Unrope at 9900'. End of climb. Lunch.

10:40 Continue.

11:30 Top of Descent Gully.

# 3. Waterfall, "Wrong Rib"

14 Oct 67



#### 4. Waterfall - Hard Route

Len Margolin, Mark Zander  
July 13, 1974

This is a short, hard 5th Class climb. It would probably be much harder when the waterfall is running.

- 7:30 Begin at the base of a steep ramp, 10' L of the black streaks directly underneath the waterfall. Work up several hard dihedrals to comfortable belay ledge (140', 5.7).
- 8:30 Continue up and slightly R until the ramp ends under broken, orange rock. An obvious traverse here will bring you to the base of the waterfall crack about 30' R. However the second lead should end before the traverse (120', 5.6).
- 9:15 Do the traverse high on thin, water-polished holds and begin the waterfall crack. The crack is about 100' high and very difficult. This is because it is (1) steep; (2) the face to the R is polished and covered with moss; (3) several overhangs are present; and (4) good protection is scarce (though bad protection abounds). Halfway up, the crack opens into a squeeze chimney. It is recommended that the crack be done in two leads. Just below the beginning of the chimney is a join of two large rocks which can be roped for a good anchor. Crack is hard 5.8 and fairly continuous.
- 11:30 Over the lip of the waterfall. At this point, you can traverse R to the point above the Monohedral Wall. One rappel allows you to walk off. If you feel insufficiently challenged, you can do two more pitches as follows:  
  
Walk 50 yards up and slightly to the L to the base of a vertical wall. Work directly up this wall over occasional loose blocks. The whole wall is about 180', about 5.8. From the top of this wall, scramble to the top of the cliffs.

## 5. Monohedral Wall

First ascent Ray Phillips and Len Margolin,  
Sept. 1972.

Sitting at the base of the cliffs, just E of the waterfall, is a large obvious buttress, about 400' high. The W wall of this structure is steep, down-sloping, and yields four pitches of exposed, pleasant, and sustained climbing.

Begin at the middle of this wall. Climb up 60' to the obvious orange section. Continue directly up over the overhang to a ledge. About 100', 5.6.

The second pitch angles up and slightly L to a grassy non-crack system. Work up this structure and stop at a point 30' below the second overhang. This lead is very thin and the last 60' completely unprotected. Belay from a good chock (a belay seat is handy). About 100', 5.7.

There are two possibilities now. The first ascent party (Phillips and Margolin) traversed right about 40' over water-polished nubbins (also unprotected). Then worked up 70' to a short jam crack. This pitch ends at the corner of the wall in a good belay stance. About 120', 5.6.

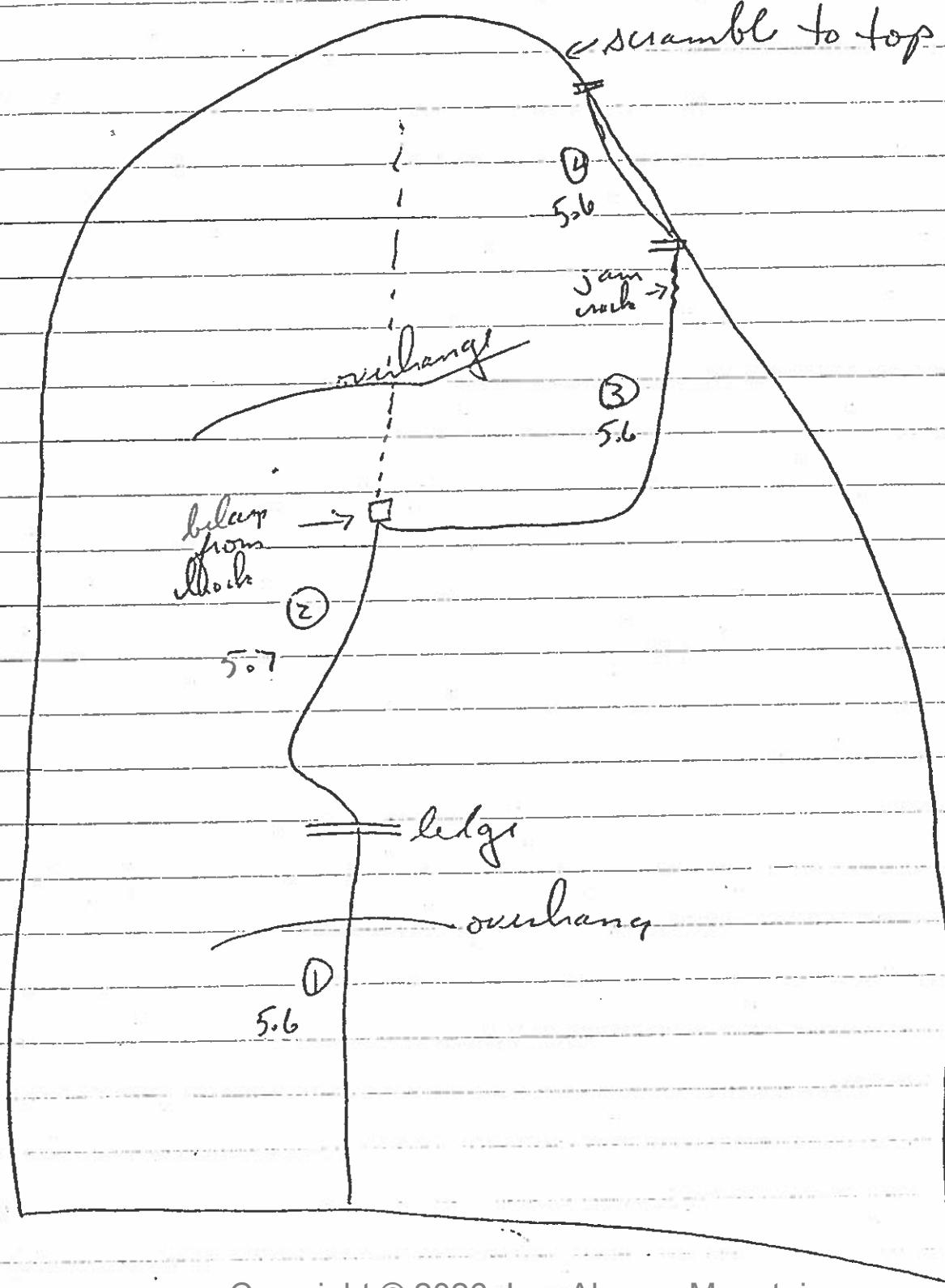
The last lead is then a short but strenuous layback and hand traverse up the R corner of the Monohedral Wall. About 30', 5.6. (Done entirely clean, about 4 hours.)

The second ascent (Foster and Margolin) did the third pitch continuing straight up to the overhang and over it. This overhang is the crux, and can be protected. About 120', 5.8 or easy 5.9.

The last pitch then continues straight up at a gradually decreasing angle. About 80', 5.5. (Chris Foster and Len Margolin, July 1973. Done entirely clean.)

The descent is an un-rope scramble off the E side of the buttress.

## 5. Mono hedral Wall

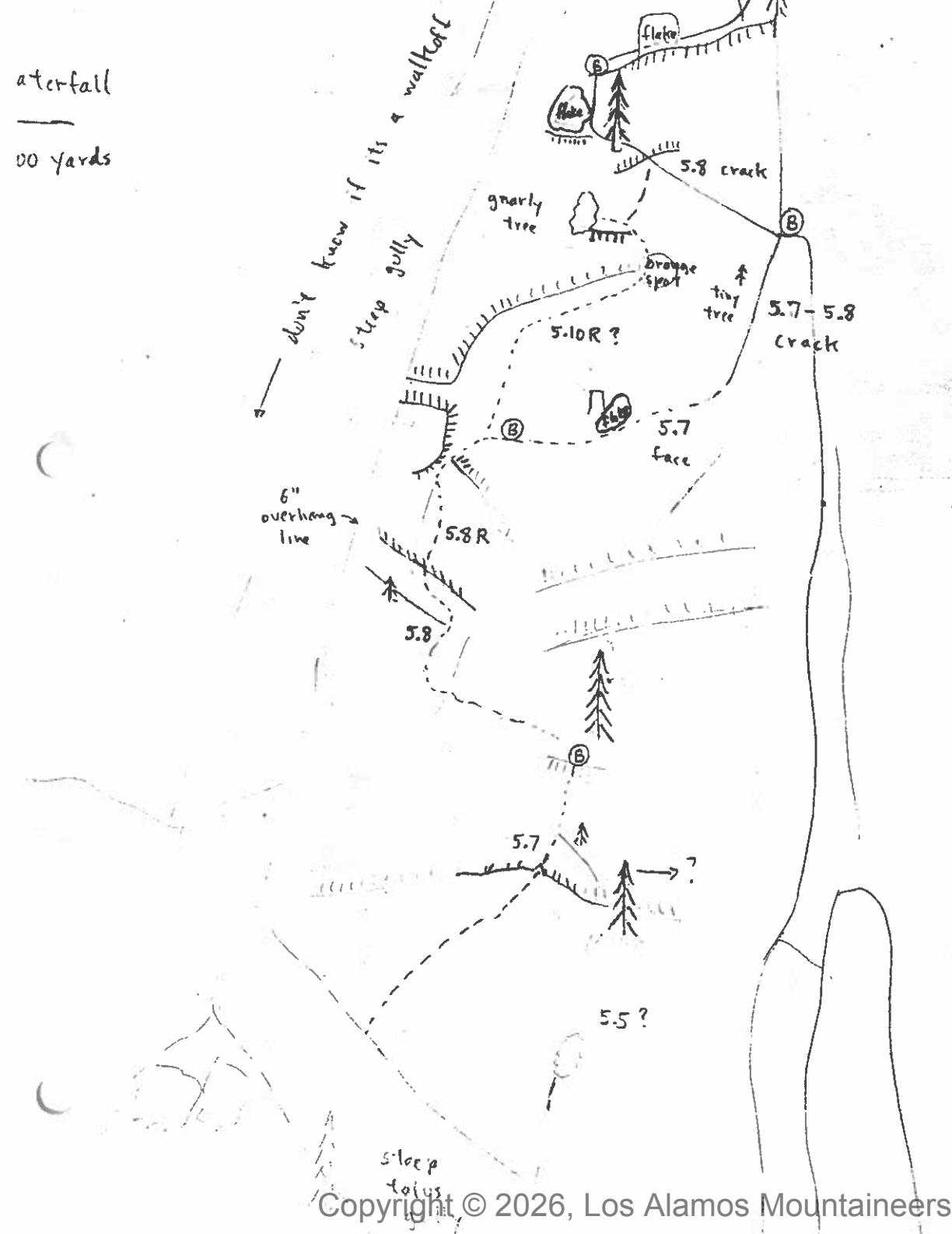


# Monohedral Wall 5.

Jim, comments,  
corrections?

more rappel or downclimb to saddle  
back side is a walk-off

waterfall  
—  
00 yards



GEAR:

- lots of small stuff
- 33, 2 1/2, 2, 1 1/2, 1, 1/2, friends
- 1 gr 3 ore TCU's
- 1, 2 rockin' roller

1/2 mile trail  
down to point  
50' past  
highest switch-  
back on road

9-17-87 Norbert Eusslin 6 a Espanola  
Bob Stawewl 7<sup>15</sup> Dagnin  
Jim - 8<sup>00</sup> start hike  
8<sup>24</sup> base climb  
9<sup>00</sup> start climb  
1<sup>00</sup> end climb  
3<sup>15</sup> at car  
5<sup>30</sup> home

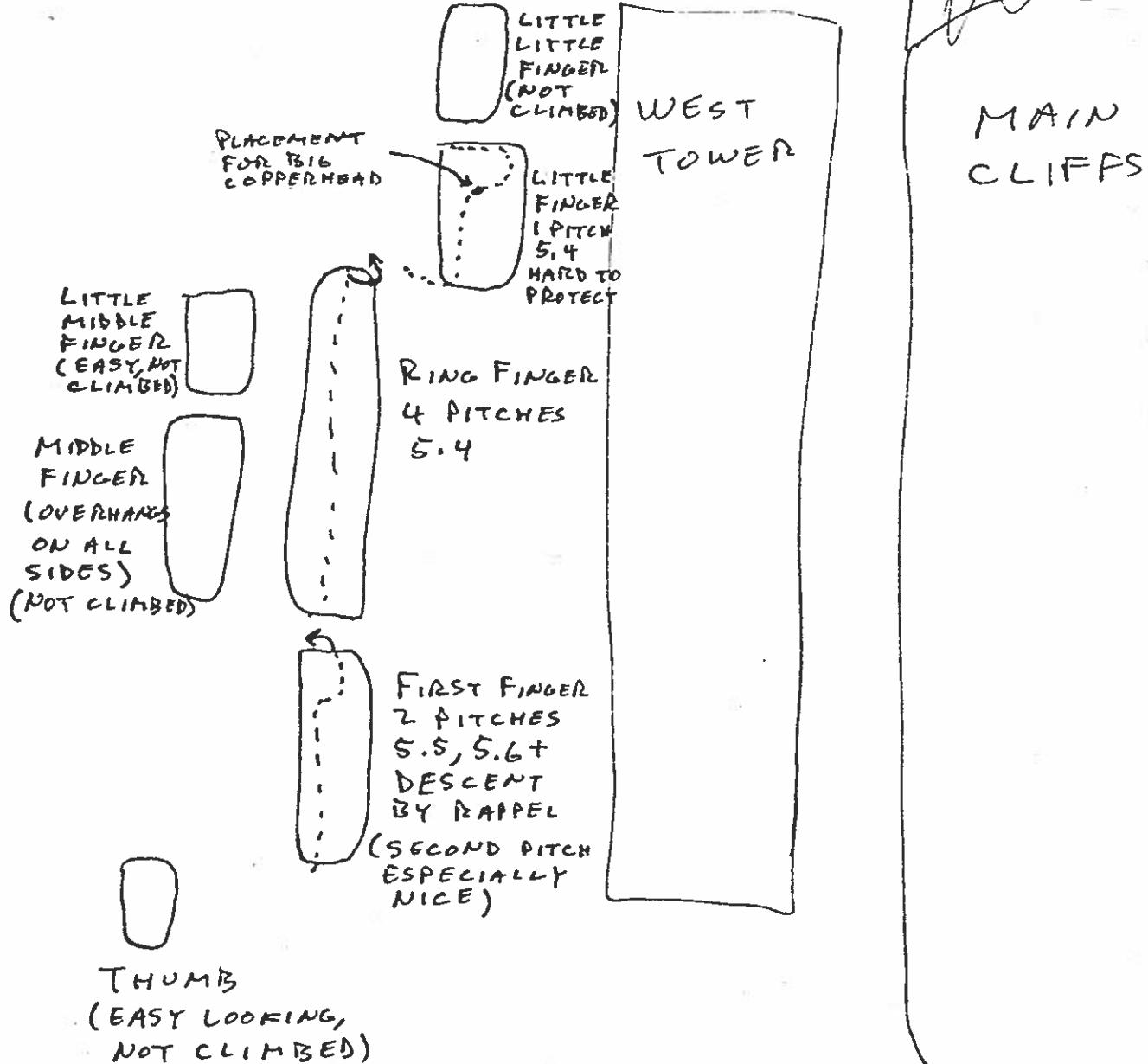
## 6. BRAZOS: FIVE FINGER TOWERS

FIRST RECORDED ASCENTS 5/25/80  
GEORGE RINKER AND SUE HUTTON

VIEW FROM ABOVE:



DESCENT GULLY



ROCK EXCELLENT, LOTS OF GOOD, SMALL, INWARD-SLOPING HOLDS ON SOUTH FACES

PITONS NOT NEEDED (OR PROBABLY EVEN USEFUL)

HEXES, STOPPERS, AND (COPPERHEAD USED)

## 7. West Tower

D. Liska, E. Anderson, H. Harold, D. Brown  
Nov. 19, 1967  
Class 5.0, 3 hours

From the end of the logging road proceed up timbered slopes toward the base of the White Couloir. From the hogsback covered with large pines, a good view of the western portion of the Brazos face can be obtained. At the extreme western edge, a prominent tower becomes apparent, split off from the main face by a very wide steep gully. Climb up talus to the base of this tower which is about 150' higher than the start of the White Couloir. A direct line up the face can be taken in two parallel cracks leading to broken rock above and a very good belay stance. Deviate R of the main crest climbing a steep piton-protected crack directly above the belay stance. An open exposed pitch follows up an almost vertical chimney on magnificent rock. This pitch requires about 140' of rope and a protective piton. Continue up on excellent rock for three more Class 4 pitches to the top of the tower. Here a short descent brings one to a deep notch from which a 70' rappel is made down into the main descent gully.

Because of the excellent quality of rock on this route, the good balance of exposure and steepness on superb holds, the relative absence of loose rock, the good belay stances, and the possibility for enjoyable variations on either side of the route described, this is considered an excellent training climb for beginning parties.

E. Anderson, M. Schillaci, E. Wilbanks, D. Hoard, S. Sym  
May 17, 1969  
11 Hours!

7:00 Start Brazos Lodge, 7900'. Scramble gully W of White Gully to foot of isolated tower which looks like ridge from below.  
8:40 Rope up, 9250'.

Pitch 1 - Up face by nice pair of parallel cracks about 2' apart (some tufts of grass). Then up rib to large tree.  
Pitch 2 - Up an easy crack at the base of a dihedral. (Now E @ of rib and just above gully.)  
Pitch 3 - Continue up crack, superb rock. Somewhat steep but easy.  
Pitch 4 - Continue, similar.  
Pitch 5 - Continue on face, belay at 9650'. (400' in 5 pitches.)  
Pitch 6 - Class 3 to 9750'. Unrope.

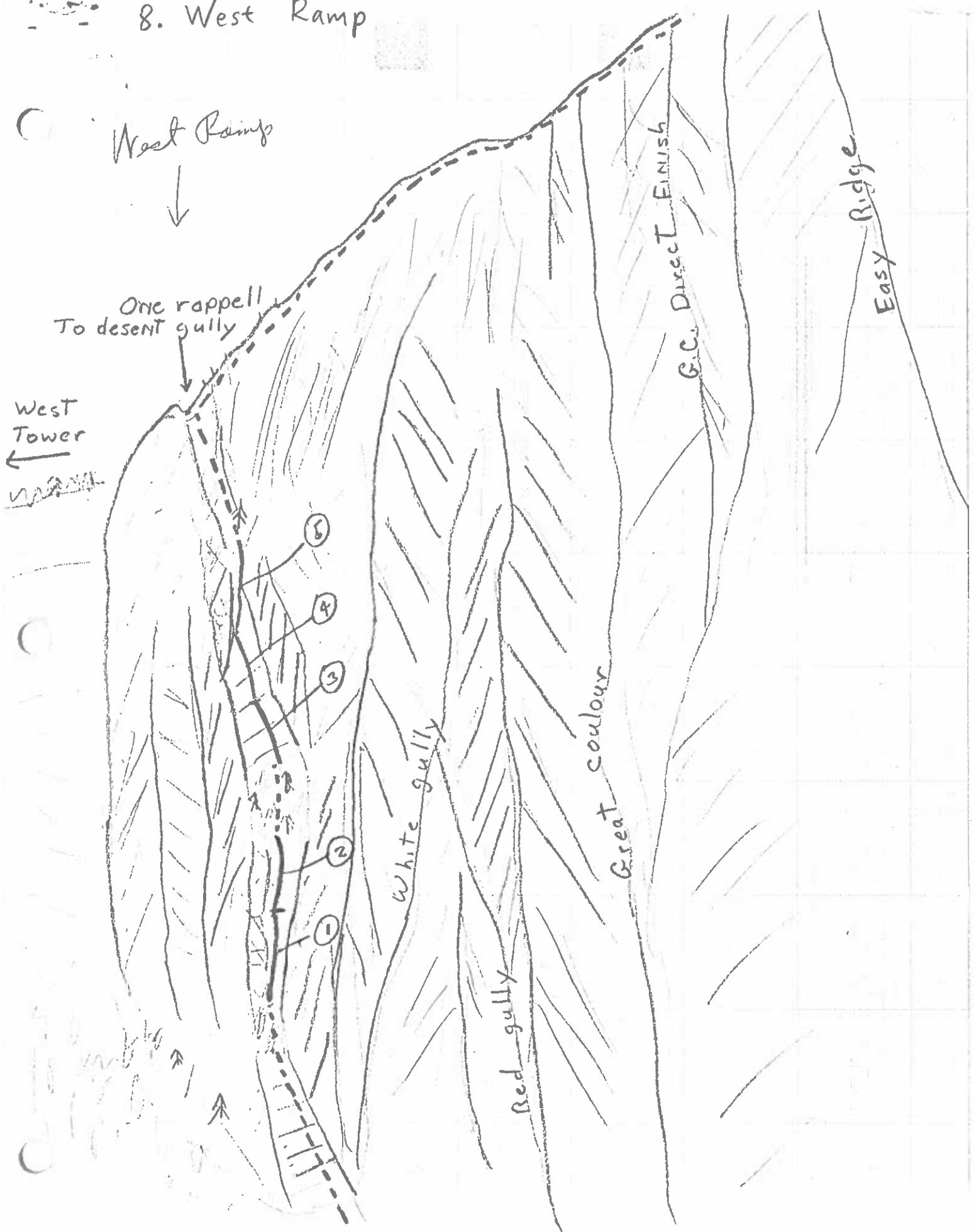
Scramble to notch in tower (Could rappel into Descent Gully from here.)  
Scramble to summit of tower. Deep crack here. 4 huge towers across the gash.  
Down climb into gash. Then rappel 70' W into Descent Gully. 18:15 PM.

## 8. West Ramp (Fat Ass Gully)

First Ascent E. Anderson, L. Dauelsberg, W. Hendry, L. Margolin, G. Shultz  
(no date)

Scramble up a broad ramp until it narrows into a gully. Climb pitches 1 and 2 up the gully (Class 4 or easy 5). Cross an open area to the base of a steep ramp. Three very enjoyable pitches follow with several route possibilities (low to medium Class 5). Pitch 5 leads into a gully, then R to a new ramp. Follow the ramp to the end. At this point it is possible to rappel to a large gully which leads to the normal descent gulley. A rope is necessary for continuation up the ridge to the top as there are some short difficult spots. (L. Dauelsberg)

## 8. West Ramp



AAC JOURNAL

NEW MEXICO

9. Brazos Cliffs, White Couloir Route;

The Brazos cliffs form a spectacular quartzite face some 1500' high over the Brazos River of northern New Mexico. Several routes pioneered by George Bell and others exist here, but large sections of the cliffs remain to be worked on. A new route was climbed on Oct. 8 by George Bell, Don\* and Alice Liska, and Mike Williams; this route begins in the white-faced gully which lies just west of the Great Couloir. Two variations were followed over the lower 400'. The White Couloir proper begins with two moderate pitches up the left side, then crosses the gully onto a series of steep tree covered ledges. Three pitches follow, terminating in a jam crack between a large flake and the wall. From here a scramble leads to the first bowl. The second variation starts just left of the gully and follows easy cracks for two pitches after which it moves onto the western rim of the gully. Face climbing follows to an awkward and poorly protected traverse after which easier pitches above finally rejoin the first variation at the bowl. Above the bowl the route works toward the east ridgecrest on moderate rock followed by mixed 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> class climbing up a steep ramp which terminates just below the head of the Great Couloir. Easy scrambling follows to the top of the normal finish of the Great Couloir route. The White Couloir route covers 13 pitches and its technical rating is Grade 2, class 5.3.

\* member AAC



# 9. White Gully

short easy pitch  
takes you to  
crest after which  
scramble leads  
to top

Entire:

I am not sure I have  
all the pitons marked  
out.

The Contour Blanche-  
Non!

White Gully

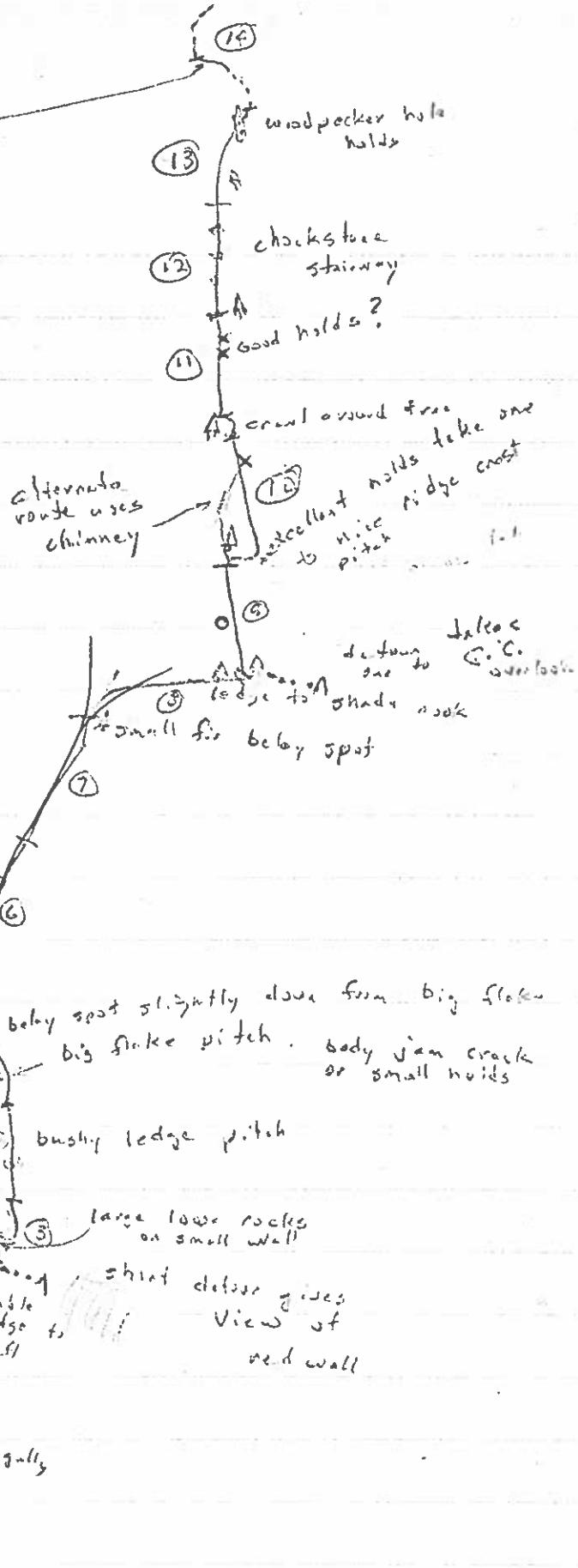
dangerous piton  
which is paying  
huge rock off  
mountain

crawl  
around tree

long lead  
over white  
smooth dangling  
ledges

start at mouth of white  
gully - step into gully and  
climb on left side

x = piton  
o = sling



Dale Willems  
10 Oct 67

## 9. White Gully

George Bell, Don and Alice Liska, and Mike Williams  
Oct. 8, 1967  
Grade II, Class 5.5

The White Gully is the couloir between the Great Couloir and the big Gully.

The Bell variation begins with two long (140') moderate pitches up the L hand side of the gully beginning in the mouth of the gully itself. The top of the second pitch ends with a traverse into the gully. From this point a short scramble leads up the gully a few feet and then out to the R along a bushy ledge. From here three short pitches, two of which are piton-protected, lead up and to the L. The first of these begins on a tree-covered ledge and continues up a short wall to a parallel ledge above. The third pitch is a jam and small hold pitch which leads up a crack between a large flake and a wall. It terminates on a narrow ledge near a tree below the top of the flake. From here a short scramble returns one to the gully where the Bell and Liska variations join.

Two easy pitches (140' and 120') up the gully lead to a small basin with a ledge running toward the R ridgecrest. From the end of the ledge the next pitch angles back along and slightly below the ridgecrest. The easiest way to continue (100') is to climb directly up the ridgecrest. The climb continues below the ridgecrest on the R. Three pitches (140') up cracks running up the steep ramp on the R side of the ridge carry one to easy scrambling near the top of the normal finish to the Great Couloir.

## 10. White Gully - Direct Ascent

Don and Alice Liska, Dave Brown, Hans Herold

June 23, 1968

Time required 5-6 hours, Class 5.5

The route starts with the first two pitches of the White Gully Route Variation No. 1. At the point where the true gully joins this initial water-washed face, Variation No. 1 branches R up a series of piney ledges which climb the eastern wall of the gully. This new route continues up the gully, easy scrambling for 100', and then directly negotiates the steep smooth slabs which bar the access to the large bowl above. A piton-protected, delicate corner move followed by smooth holdless semi-chimneys characterize this pitch. An easier gully above leads to the point just below the chockstones where the White Gully Route Variation No. 2 comes in from the west. Above the chockstones is the big bowl which forms the junction of the various White Gully routes to date. The climb continues straight up on easier pine-studded ledges to just under the beetling cliffs which form the upper part of the White Gully and its western ridge. A delicate pitch on sound rock gains access to the ridgecrest itself which is then crossed to the R into a steep but well-structured gully, one slot W of the normal White Gully route. The last two pitches are very hazardous due to large loose boulders and are very steep and confined enough to dictate extreme care against trusting any of the rock. Above a last stemming crack, the climb terminates some 250' higher than the summit of the West Tower. From here delightful scrambling in a wild rocky botanical garden leads one to the ridgecrest above the long gully which can be seen from the ledge leading practically straight up from the descent gully to the summit. This ridge eventually leads to the junction of the Great Couloir Normal Finish route and then on to the top.

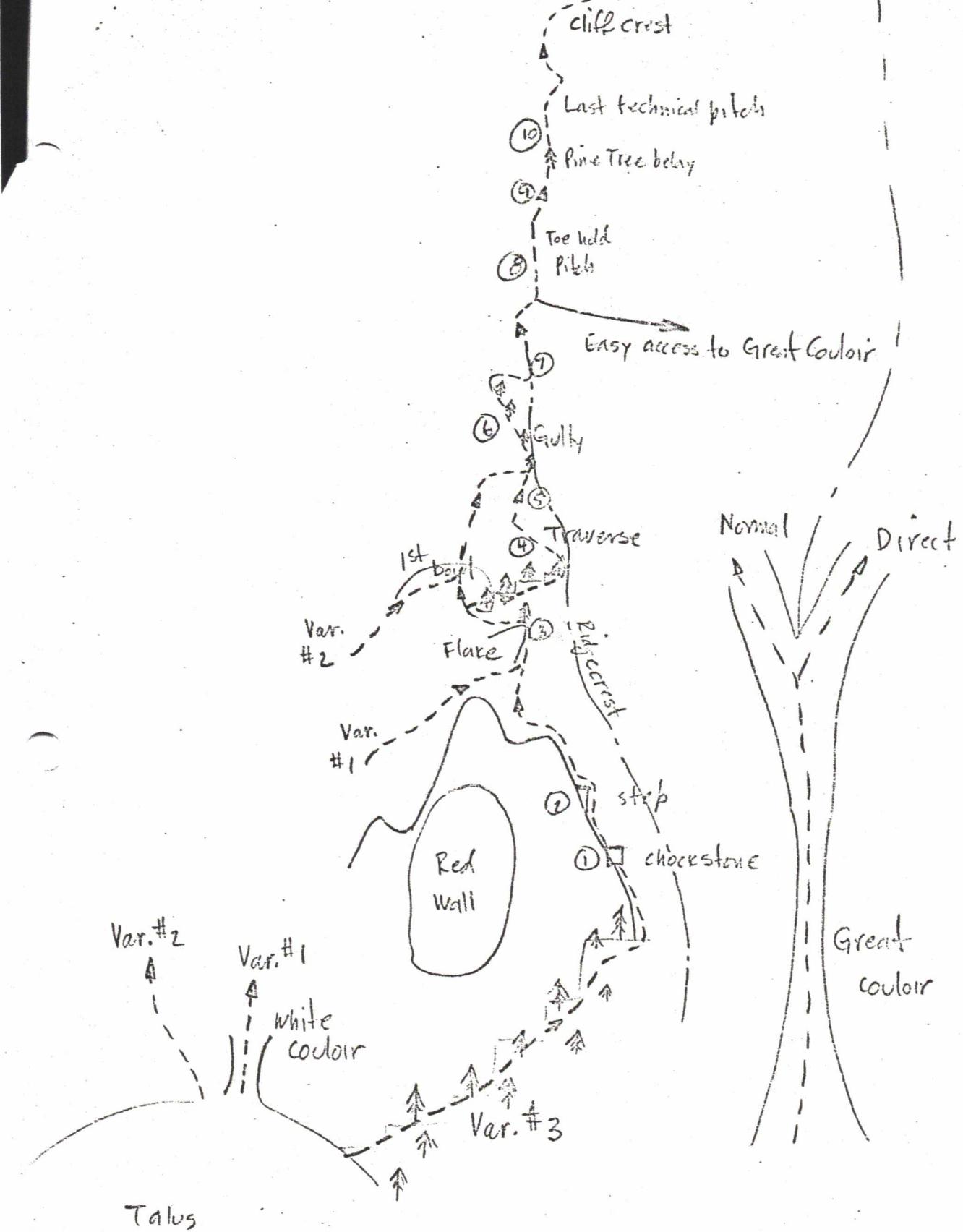
## 11. White Gully Variation No. 3

Written by Don Liska  
Undated

Starting to the R and just below the White Couloir Route (variation no. 1), we proceeded up tree-covered ledges to the highest trees R of the "Red Wall." Here a deep rock-filled cleft leads up, separating the Red Wall spire from the main mass of the ridge which lies between the White and Great Couloirs. Midway up this 300' cleft is a large chockstone which is bypassed underneath, and then a short severe step leading to easy scrambling to the top of the cleft. Here the route joins Variation no. 1 for one pitch, the Large Flake, which terminates at the first bowl where variation no. 2 comes up a chimney from the L. The route then proceeds independently once more up a tree-covered ledge system to the ridge crest which it reaches somewhat above the level of the Normal- and Direct-route split of the Great Couloir (just above pitch no. 7, the "Exposed Corner"). Here an upward inclined traverse is made on the White Couloir side of the ridgecrest leading to a large platform high above the first bowl. One more pitch on easy rock returns the route to the ridgecrest at the point where variations no. 1 and 2 come out of the White Couloir. All three variations merge here for the rest of the climb (5 more roped pitches).

One additional variation is possible two pitches up from the point of final convergence. This is an obvious ledge system which connects the White Couloir ridgecrest with the arête along which runs the Great Couloir Direct Finish. In so doing the ledge system effectively bridges the Great Couloir Normal Finish at a point above the difficult pitches on the Normal Finish. At this point the Direct Finish is in a deep gully to the R of its own ridgecrest. This prevents the ledge from forming a major route junction. At any rate, the Normal Finish is easily gained at this point and easy scrambling above leads to the cliff crest some 100' to 150' below the Brazos summit.

The White Couloir Variation No. 3 involves some ten technical pitches, five of which coincide with the other two variations. The remaining five pitches are generally short mixed climbing and the hardest is rated at Class 5.4. Total climbing time for a 2-man rope is 4-5 hours and the overall climbing difficulty for the entire climb is also Class 5.4.



## 11. White Couloir Variation No. 3

## 12. Cat Burglar

Don Liska and Larry Campbell  
July 18, 1971  
NCCS III, F7, 5 hours

### Location:

Main Brazos Cliffs between White Gully and Great Couloir. This route follows the ridge separating the White Gully and Great Couloir routes. Near the mid-point, it lies above the junction of the normal and direct Great Couloir routes, and near the top it joins the last two pitches of the normal White Gully route.

### Comments:

The name implies a climb requiring finesse on steep rock with small holds and minimum protection. The rock on this ridge is super-excellent, better than West Tower, and monolithic; thus, relatively few cracks for pitons. It requires good technique in toe-jamming in cracks too wide for pitons and too narrow to shoulder-jam. Average angle steeper than Great Couloir Direct. Five new leads, all over 120'. Uses natural chockstones for protection in several places. Time for fast 2-man team 4 1/2 - 5 hours. Six pitons, six nuts, three chocks. Exposure: fantastic! Equivalent to belay perch on Easy Ridge. May become a classic route providing best the Brazos can offer.

### Description:

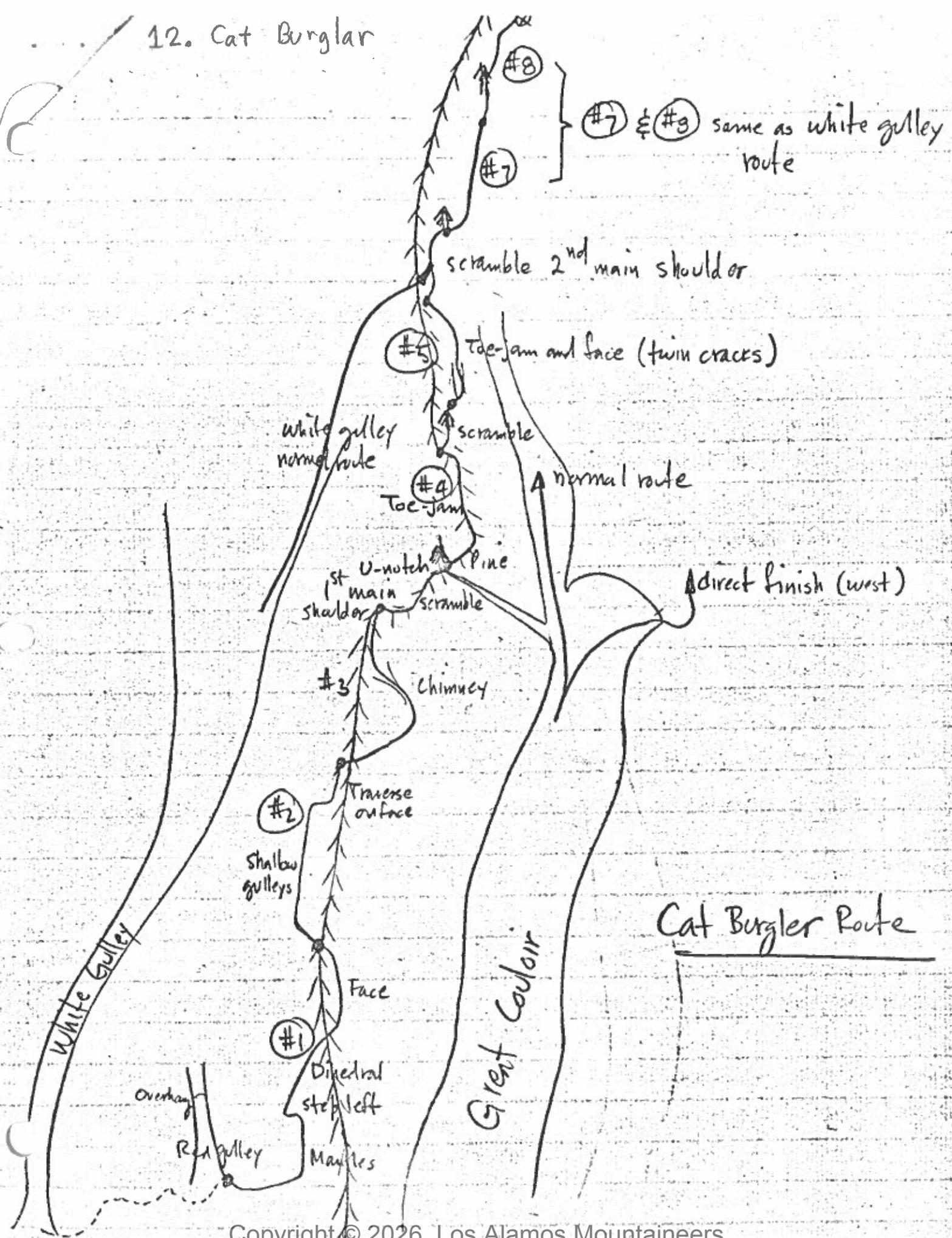
The first ascent party started at entrance to White Gully and scrambled E along easy ledges to entrance of Red Gully. Start roped climbing here, traversing S and E up steep mantles. After about 60' step across L into dihedral gully and climb on small holds to ridge crest about even with pitch 3 of Great Couloir. Continue up face of ridge to belay stance at 140'. The second pitch follows shallow gullies with delicate face climbing near top on W side of ridge crest. The third pitch traverses E over ridge crest and climbs up the E face of ridge above Great Couloir on delicate small holds. From here scramble to top of first main shoulder of ridge and eventually to pine tree in notch where ramps connect the White and Great Couloirs at the Great Couloir route junction. Attack the face directly up steep toe-jam crack using natural chockstone and runner for protection lower down. Piton crack near top. This is a unique pitch by Brazos standards and measures about 120'. Scramble above here for a ways past a small pine and up to a belay stance on a small shoulder below a large overhanging block. Pitch 5 starts at this notch and traverses horizontally E to a two-crack system. The rightmost crack is followed up and R on very steep but excellent rock to the top of the second main shoulder. From here scramble up shoulder to large pine below face pitch on White Gully route (This tree marks point where routes join. Old rappel sling or belay anchor on tree.). Finish climb as in last two pitches of normal White Gully route.

### Alternates:

Start climb on bottom where ridge meets talus at start of Great Couloir. At route junction after pitch 5, cross White Gully route and finish climb on main ridge crest just to the W. These variations could add 3 new pitches to climb.

Don Liska, 7/19/71.

## 12. Cat Burglar



12. Cat Burglar Direct 5.9

Aug 10 1986

Jim Sprinkle

Bill Eneubach

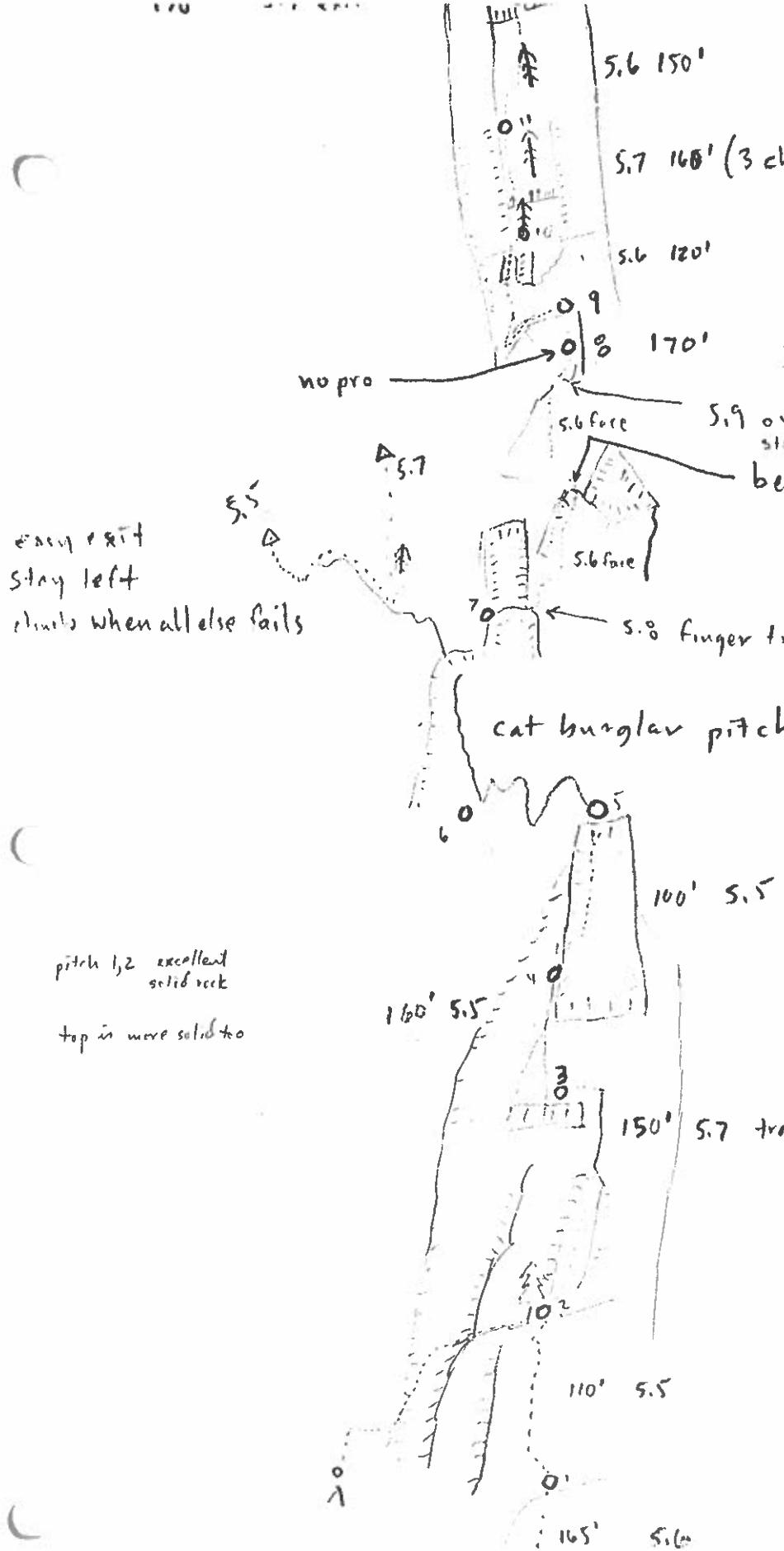
7am park car

8:30 rope up

3:00 rope off

rain

5:15 sign out



belay 2 tree is normal  
belay 1

belay 3 go left on top  
of first roof

belay 4 as soon as next  
belay 6 to boxcar  
belay 6 can be lower behind ridge  
belay 8 between 2 face  
sections is  
easier

from normal start

traverse from 2 trees in gully

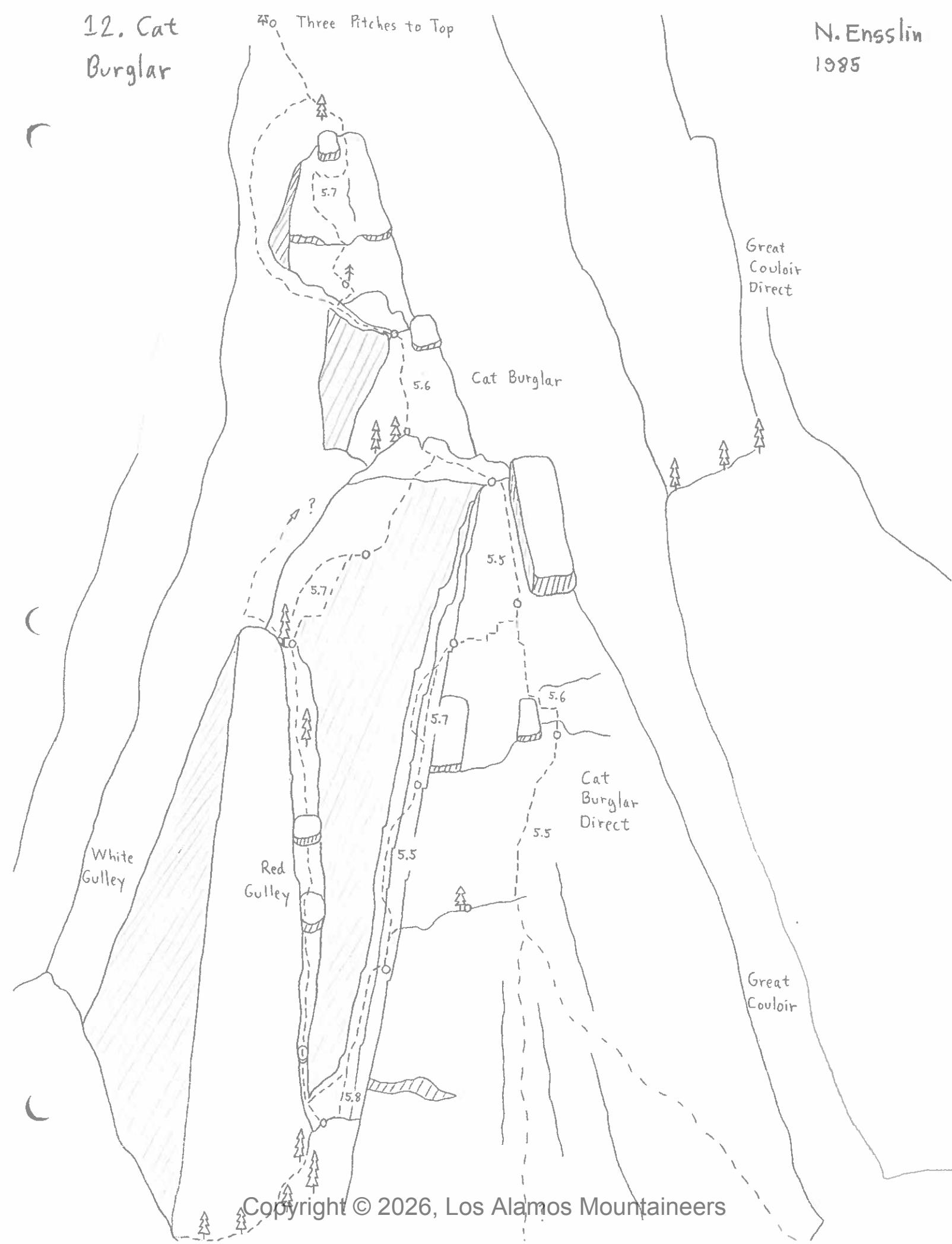
Copyright © 2026, Los Alamos Mountaineers

great couloir

## 12. Cat Burglar

40, Three Pitches to Top

N. Ensslin  
1985



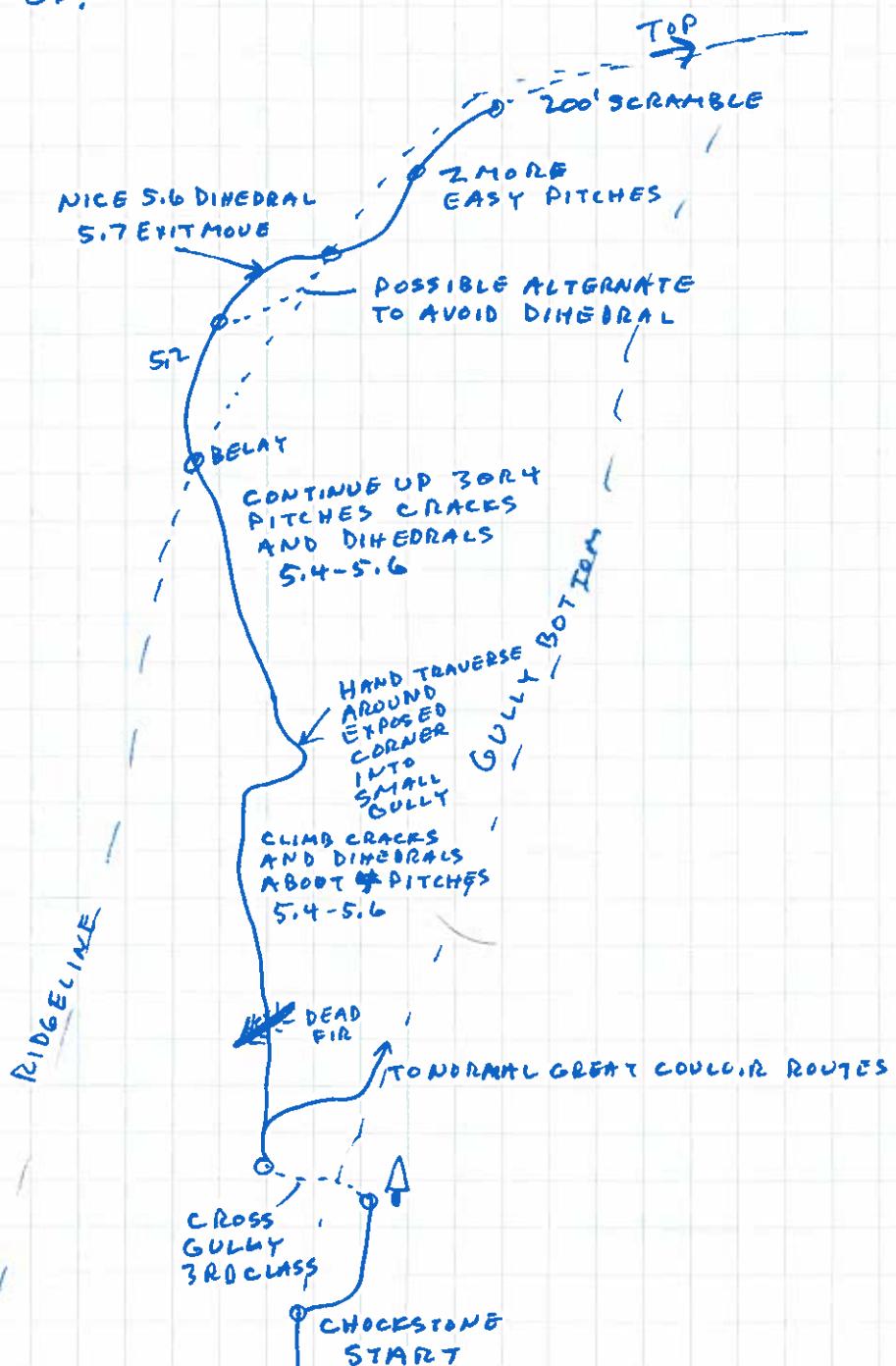
# 13. BRAZOS: GREAT COULOIR - LEFT ERROR 5.6 (5.7)

12-14 PITCHES

FIRST ASCENT: UNKNOWN

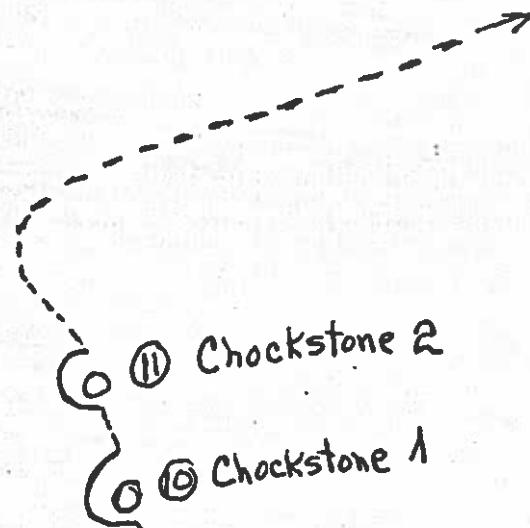
FIRST RECORDED ASCENT: 6/10/79 C. RINKER, S. HUTTON, D. KOZLOWSKI, J. STRAIGHT

OBVIOUS ROUTE, HAS PROBABLY BEEN DONE BEFORE BY MISTAKE. CRACKS AND DIHEDRALS BELOW RIDGELINE WERE SLIGHTLY WET, MUDDY, AND SLIPPERY. ROUTEFINDING STRAIGHTFORWARD EXCEPT POSSIBLY FOR HAND TRAVERSE ABOUT 1/3 OF WAY UP. USUALLY JUST KEEP GOING UP.



# 14. Brazos: Great Couloir — Normal Finish

10.5K —



10.0K —

9.5K —

9.0K —

Best Done 15. Great Couloir - Series 1 mmn  
(Strong pitch)  
pm

10.5K —

12m

11am

10K —

10am Note: There is  
an easy escape  
route by large  
ledge to normal  
finish.

9am

7.5K —

7am

Finish up face, chauld very rotten  
Spot full of dirt & loose rock.  
Directly up narrow ridge.

Top

⑯ Joe Hold Pitch

⑯ Exposed Traverse

⑯ Peter Popper ("many" pitchs)

⑯ Thin Crack

⑯ Song Chimney (2 pitchs).

⑯ zig Traverse (pitch)  
(shallow gully)

⑯ zig Traverse (slim)

⑯ Diagonal Pitch (Exposed)

⑯ Super Gully Access (Escape)  
Route

⑯ Super Pitch

Normal  
Route

⑯ Exposed Corner

⑯ Fir Tree Traverse

⑯ Easy Traverse

⑯ Thin Corner.

⑯ Song Pitch

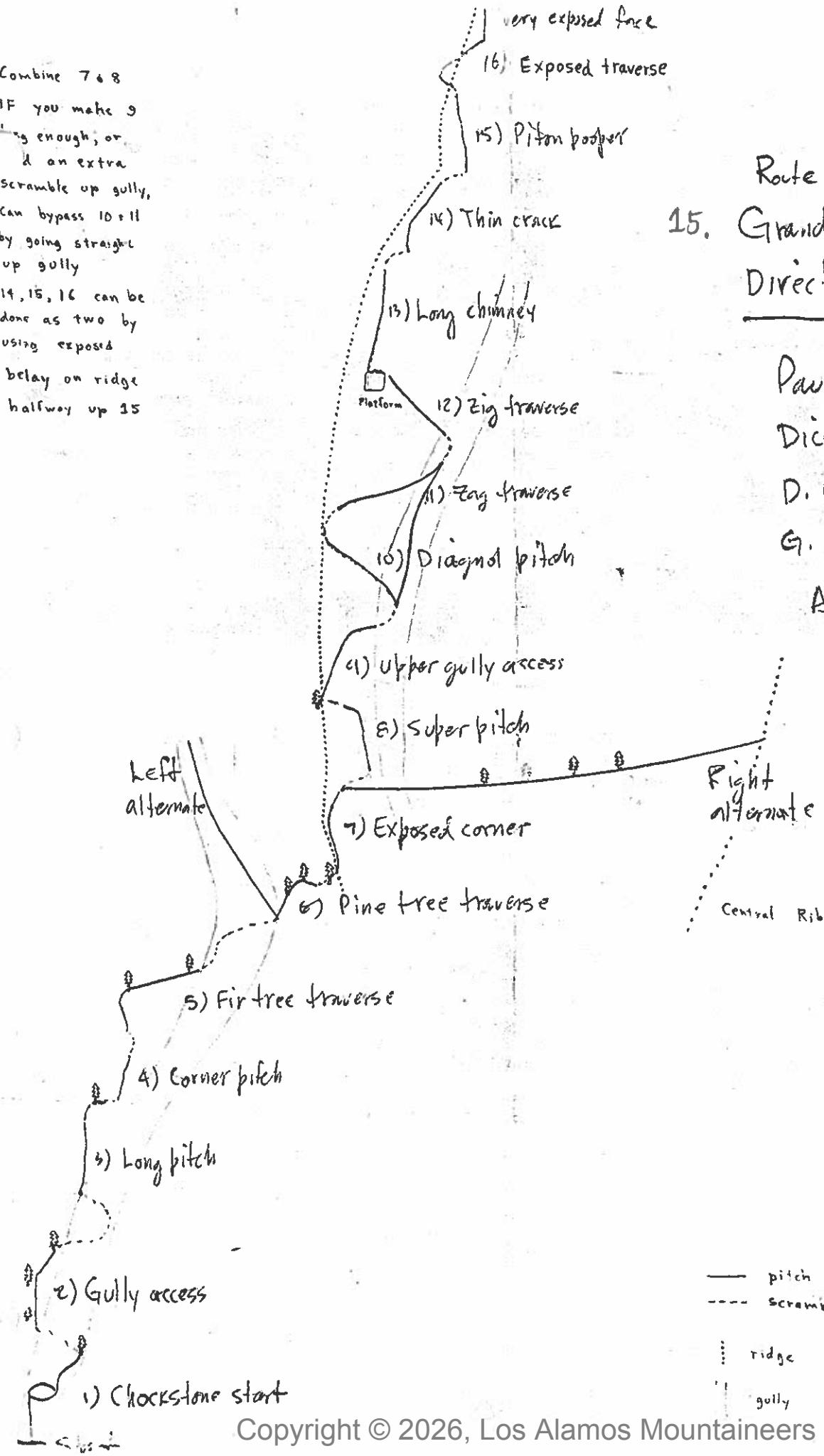
⑯

⑯ Gully Access

⑯ Chock-Stone Start  
or climbing traverse on  
ledge R

START

- Combine 7 & 8
- If you make 9 strong enough, or add an extra scramble up gully, can bypass 10 & 11 by going straight up gully
- 14, 15, 16 can be done as two by using exposed belay on ridge halfway up 15



## Route Map

### 15. Grand Couloir - Direct Finish

Paul Wholt (2)

Dick Ingram

D. Lisen

G. Goedecke

Aug. 1966

## 16. Central Rib

First Description  
Don Liska and Larry Dauelsberg  
October 27, 1968

This rib lies between the Great Couloir and Easy Ridge. It was supposedly first climbed by Las Cruces climbers about 10 years ago. In the meantime it has not been repeated, so far as is known, until the above date. (Possible climbed by F. de Saussure and Baily, 1956?) This note should serve to describe the route and its level of difficulty.

The Central Rib is recommended for small beginner parties because:

- 1) At no point is a retreat particularly hazardous. In fact, the route terminates with the Escape Ledges off the Great Couloir, so going on is also feasible in bad weather.
- 2) The route is short, 5 pitches, and nowhere particularly exposed. In fact, this is the shortest technical route which leads to the top of the cliffs.
- 3) The pitches are in good balance. Friction, small holds, down-sloping ledges, balance - all are demanded. A good exercise in technique with excellent belay protection.
- 4) Instruction in belayer protection is possible because of excellent anchor points and rock fall hazard on pitch #3.

The route starts high on tree ledges E side Great Couloir approach gully. Scramble, staying L of ridge crest, toward prominent gully. One pitch to reach base of gully. Second pitch is in gully and easy. Third pitch over flare chockstone 40' high - take either side. Protect belayer by placing him under or on opposite side from climber. Climb up, L, and up on small holds to good belay point. Now traverse L horizontally for ca. 100' crossing gully to short steep wall. Two pitons required, a third for safety and comfort to another tree ledge. From here climb straight up or go to more interesting variations to R for last pitch which leads to Escape Route Ledges. (Don Liska, 10/31/68)

## 16. Central Rib - Second Description

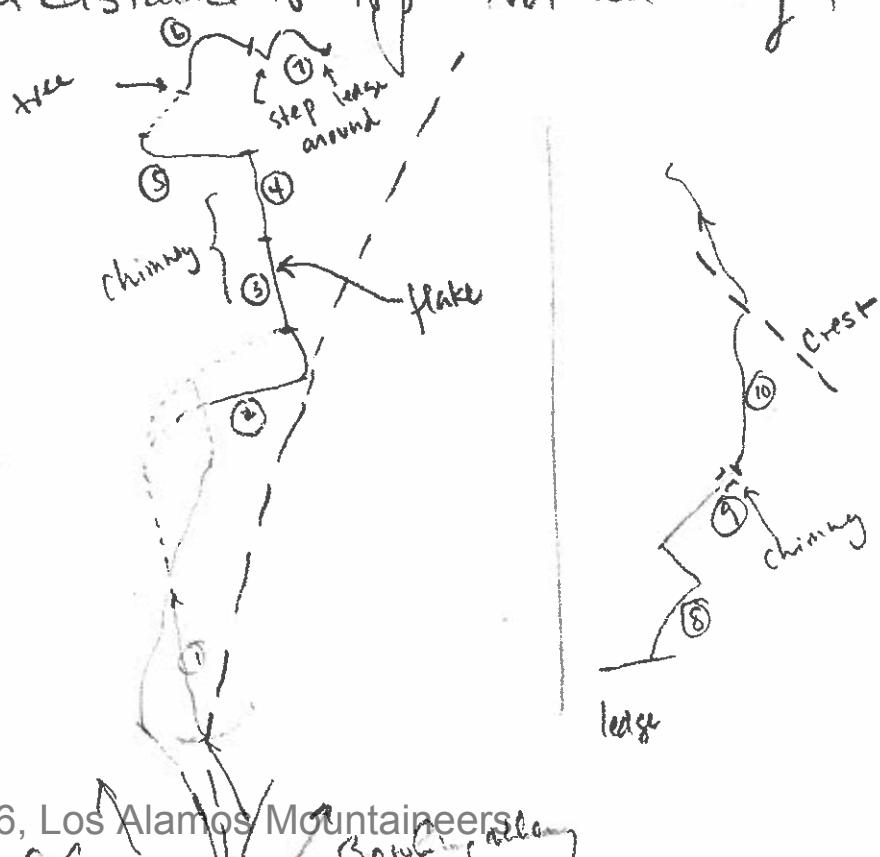
Larry Campbell, Ralph Menikoff, Eiichi Fukushima, Andrea Eddy  
June 25, 1977

1. Starting just 5' to the R of the lowest part of Central Rib, scramble one short pitch (ca 80') to the bottom of a face. Climb a short 80' pitch to some trees from where we walked into the rightmost gully of the Great Couloir. [Campbell's rope started from a large tree some 50' to the R of the L edge of face. We went up within a few feet of the edge.]
2. After scrambling in the gully, climb an easy pitch up a line of trees toward the rib crest and reach the base of a long chimney / gully which is off the crest to the W. [Campbell's rope stayed in the gully longer and scrambled up to this point.]
3. Climb two pitches in the chimney / gully. The first 120' is easy scrambling. Then there is a large flake pointing edge-on in the center of the chimney. Pass it R (mid Class 5 or even more with a pack). Belay in the chimney. The second pitch in the chimney eases off in ca. 40' and a tree can be scrambled to at full rope extension.
4. Traverse L, bypassing an impressive dihedral (40'), on small ledges overlooking the Great Couloir. Descend 10' and scramble on a wide dirt ledge (toward the S(?)). Belay at a tree against a cliff; descend another 10-15' -- easy but a blind start -- and traverse 30' to a prominent watercourse. Go up the white rock face on the L side to a fir tree 15' to the R (L?) of the watercourse just at a prominent overhang in the water course.
5. Protect the next lead with chocks as high as possible above the tree and to the R. Work straight out from the tree and climb onto the ridgecrest on the R. Climb into the watercourse and go ahead 20' to easier ground. (This is one of the two hard moves on the route -- the other is the flake near the bottom.)
6. Scramble out of watercourse to the R along a prominent dirt ledge / gully to a large tree. Climb up along one of several routes to some trees (easy).
7. Climb another pitch, following a line of trees ending in a 8'-high chimney.
8. Climb up to the ridgecrest.
9. Scramble a fair distance to top. Not all easy.

## 16. Central Rib - Second Description continued, with sketch

- ⑤ Protect the red lead with chocks as high as possible above the tree and to the right. Walk straight out from the tree and climb onto the ridgecrest on the right. Climb into the watercourse and go ahead 20 ft to easier ground. (This is one of the two hard moves on the route — the other is the flake near the bottom.)
- ⑥ Scramble out of watercourse to the right along a prominent dirt ledge/gully to a large tree. Climb up along the gully several runs to some trees. (easy)
- ⑦ Climb another pitch, following a line of trees ending in a 8ft high chimney. ~~about~~
- ⑧ Climb up to the ridgecrest
- ⑨ Scramble a fair distance to top. Not all ready.

Leave LA 700  
Arr 900  
Walk 930  
Bottom 1030  
Top 630  
Bottom 950



## 17. Central Rib Direct

Paul Horak, Lou Horak, George Rinker, Merlyn Wheeler  
July 30, 1978  
5.7 (5.8)

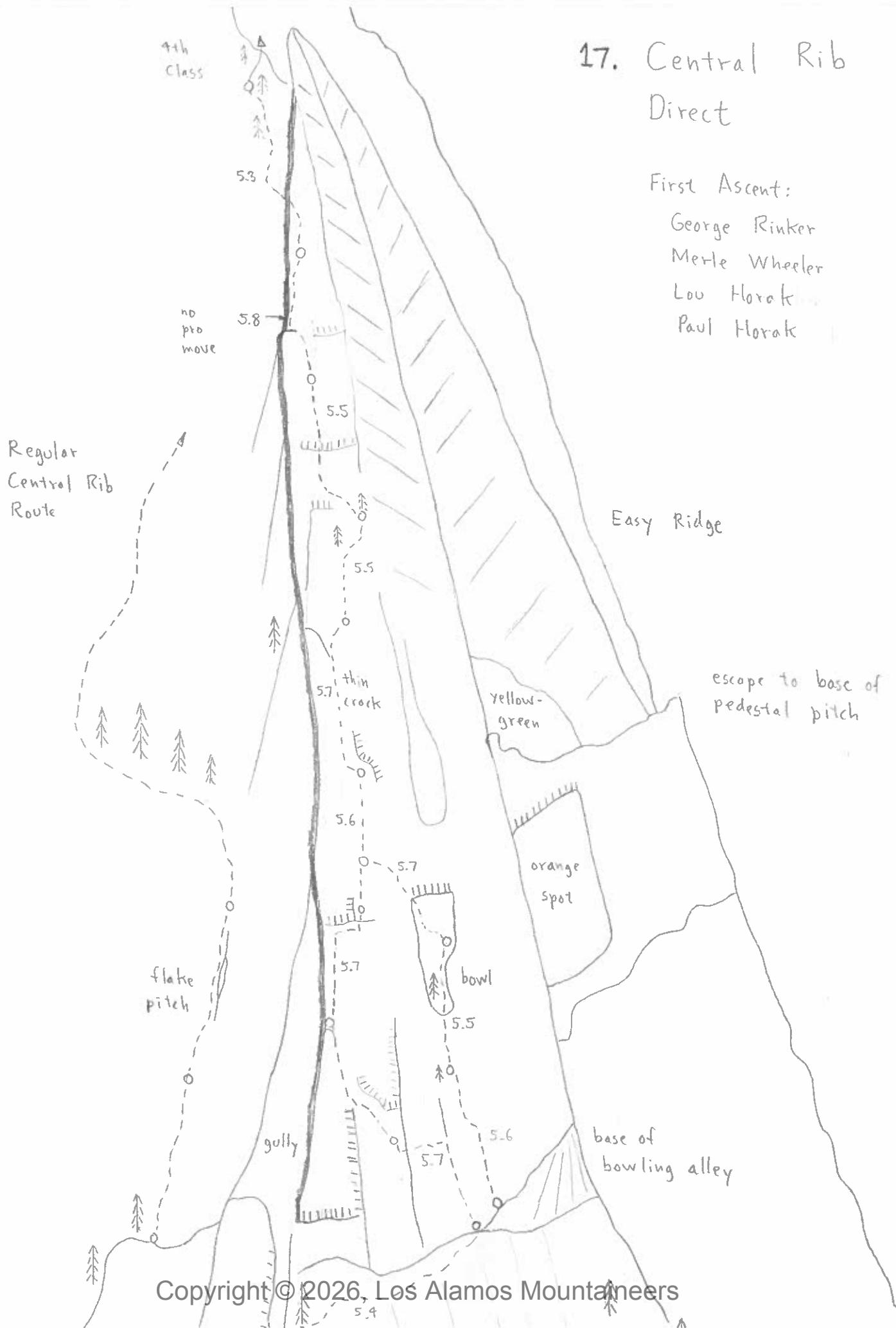
Start in the gully to the R of the ridgeline of the Central Rib and to the L (West) of Easy Ridge. Climb two pitches angling up the face on the L to the ridgeline. This brings one somewhat above the big overhangs W of the ridgeline which are prominently visible from the lodge. Continue another 6 to 8 pitches as close to the ridgeline as possible (but always on the R (East) side, where the best climbing is. Along the way an optional 5.8 crack will be found, but the climb can be done with nothing harder than 5.7, of which there is a substantial amount. This is an excellent route with lots of good sustained climbing and good protection.

We conjecture that retreat from the half of the route would be best accomplished by rappelling over the ridgeline to the W onto the Great Couloir escape ledges, but watch out for the big overhangs lower down. (From memory, George Rinker 10/15/79.)

# 17. Central Rib Direct

First Ascent:

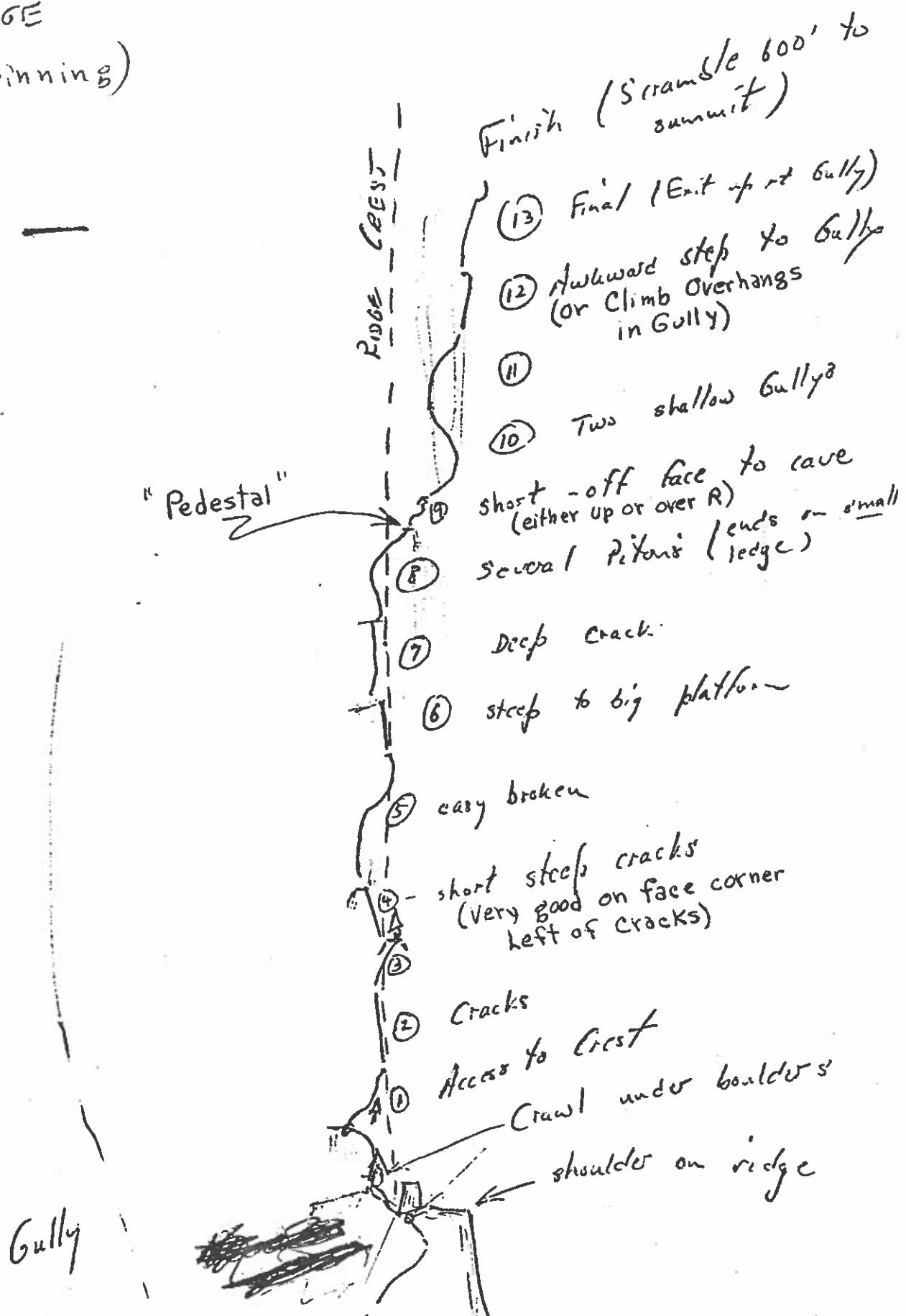
George Rinker  
Merle Wheeler  
Lou Horak  
Paul Horak



18.

Fairy Ridge  
(Normal Beginning)

10.0K —

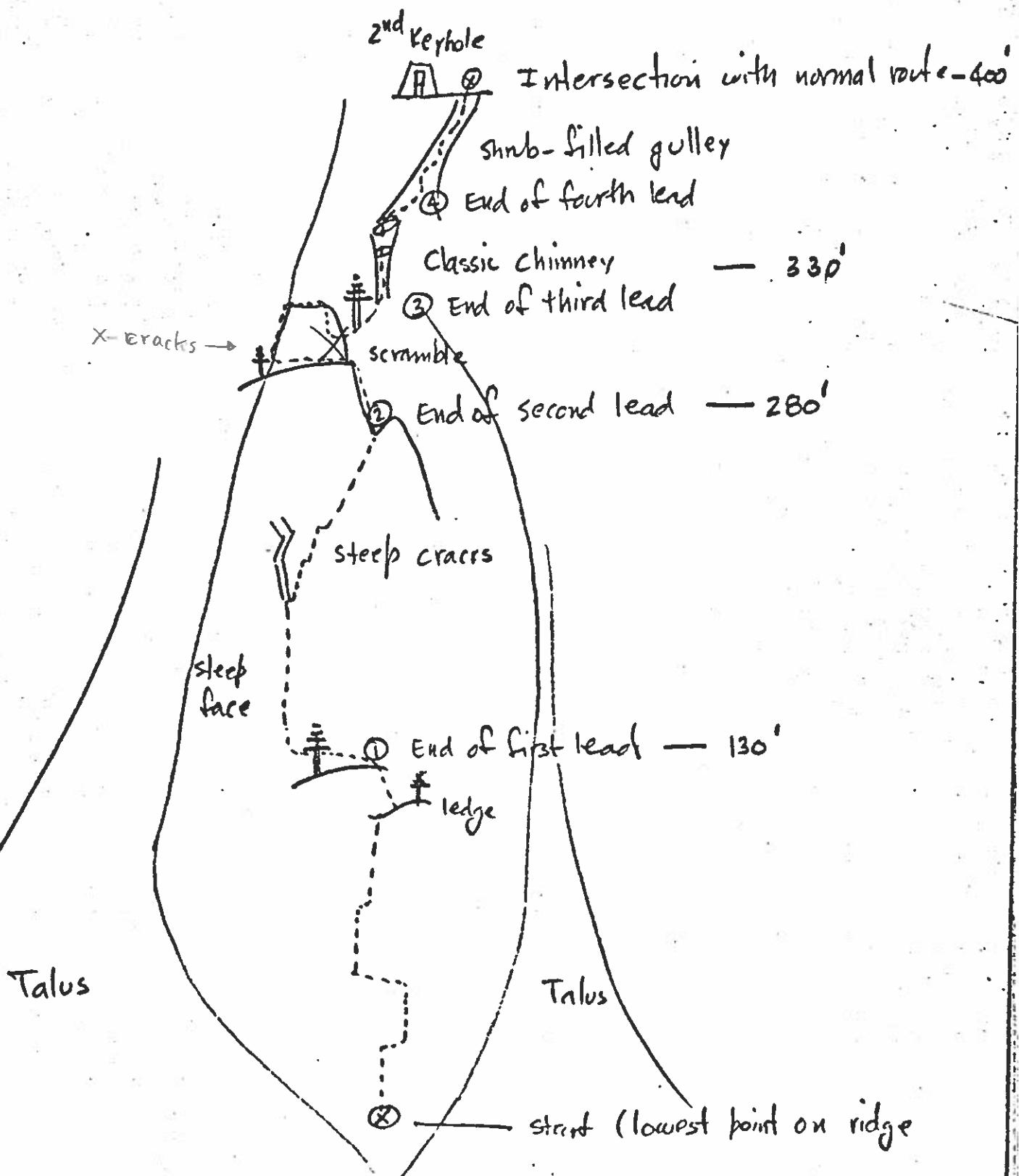


## 19. Easy Ridge - Direct Start

E. Anderson, L. Dauelsberg, D. Liska  
June 1, 1968

Easy Ridge is an arête of sound rock formed between two deep clefts in which considerable structural breakup of the face has occurred. This is evidenced by two large cones of talus and scree which intersect 400' below the "keyholes" on the normal Easy Ridge route. Here, at the lowest point of the arête, a direct route begins which considerably extends the length of the normal route. The first pitch leads 50' up a series of cracks on excellent rock to a L traverse on small holds, then up a deeper crack system to a large spruce on a fine ledge. This first lead is 140' at 5.3. From here the best route leads up and L on a steep face to a chimney system which, when reached, is followed diagonally up and R over a series of steep cracks and small ledges to a prominent notch. This notch is a full 150' above the spruce ledge at difficulty 5.5. The lead can be shortened by belaying from any of the small but firm ledges encountered along the way. At the notch is another excellent belay ledge above which scrambling leads to a large platform 30' higher. At this point a move behind a small spruce and around the corner to the L leads one onto the sheer W wall of the arête and good ledges, firm rock and a short chimney lead to a platform just under a gendarme. Alternately, this pitch can be climbed by means of a short diagonal crack on the face of the arête. From here a notch separates the gendarme from the final tower which starts in an overhang. To avoid this overhang, scramble down into the notch and climb a "classic" chimney which leads around two large chockstones to a shrub-filled gully. Easy scrambling for 80' up this gully intersects the normal Easy Ridge route just above the second keyhole. Time required for this route variation is about 2 hours which makes the direct ascent of Easy Ridge a 6-8 hour climb. (Don Liska)

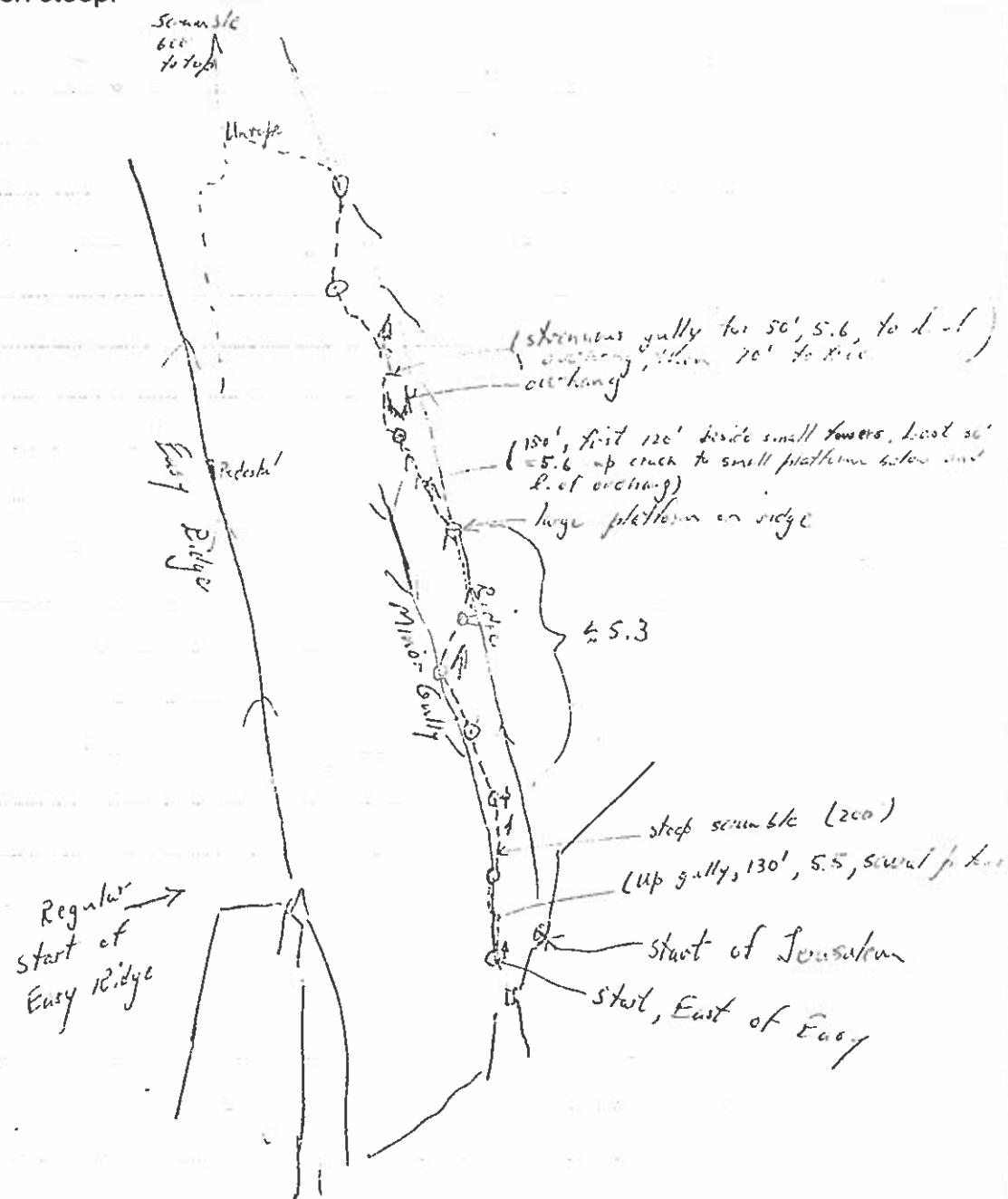
# 19. Easy Ridge - Direct Start



## 20. East of Easy

First Ascent G. Bell, R. Harder, W. Hendry, C. Keller  
Sept. 17, 1970  
Class 5.6

Route starts from Jerusalem Gully and ascends straight up, parallel to Easy Ridge and about 150 yards E of Easy Ridge. At bottom of Jerusalem Gully, one scrambles L of big chockstone. From top of scramble, do not re-enter gully but continue straight up to start of East of Easy. Difficulties are encountered in the first pitch and in passing the large overhang; aside from this the climbing is easy though often steep.



## 21. Leftovers

Paul Horak and others  
Late 70's or early 80's  
Class 5.8

Start: Same as for "East of Easy." Find large chockstone in (Jerusalem) gully and take off to L.

1st pitch: Same as "East of Easy" - up a crack and to the R of a slight overhang. Belay at tree at top. 135' pitch - 5.5.

2nd pitch: 4th Class leftwards traverse (65') then R up a crack about 65' to a couple of 1'-wide ledges. Belay on R ledge (very poor anchor - maybe better 10' higher). 5.7, protection poor.

3rd pitch: Straight up R-hand crack over two very hard overhangs. Touch and go! Switched to face at top moving off to the R and then L to a standing belay in a 7-inch-high horizontal crack. Protection excellent!! 5.8.

4th pitch: Straight up about 30' to a face with 2 cracks - one in a corner. The R one (the corner) looked harder. Took the L crack up about 80' and a R at top to an excellent anchor with a Hexentric 10. Pitch super fun, protection good. 5.7.

5th pitch: Up to R, then straight up to a large ledge for lunch. View great. 5.5.

6th pitch: 4th classed up to ledge - 25'. Up gully direct to a resident piton at top of "Easy Ridge." 150' pitch 5.3. 5.4 direct.

End with scramble to top same as on Easy Ridge.

(2nd through 5th pitches have exposure extraordinaire.)

## 22. Resignation Ridge

Len Margolin, George Rinker, Merle Wheeler, and Mark Zander

August 11, 1974

(Three days after Richard Nixon's resignation)

Sustained Class 5.7

This is a new line on the main cliffs, being the ridge just W of the Jerusalem Gully. The climb consists of 12 pitches of sustained climbing. It features excellent rock and fine exposure on what is probably the steepest route yet on the main cliffs.

The crux pitches are numbers 5 and 6, when several large overhangs must be surmounted. The problems of route finding make this an unusual climb in the Brazos and so this description has deliberately been left rather vague.

The ridge is generally easy to protect and provides fine belay ledges. A single piton was placed on the first pitch; the rest of the climb was done cleanly with chocks.

Scramble the bottom of the Jerusalem Gully to the first large bowl.

Pitches 1,2: Ascend the face to the L of the gully for two leads. The major overhang may be passed to the R (about 5.7) or may be done directly (about 5.8+).

Unrope and traverse R to the second large bowl. One can continue to scramble about 500' up the face L of the gully.

Pitches 3,4: Lead up a crack system on the L side of the face. A beautiful crack leads to the ridge which is just developing.

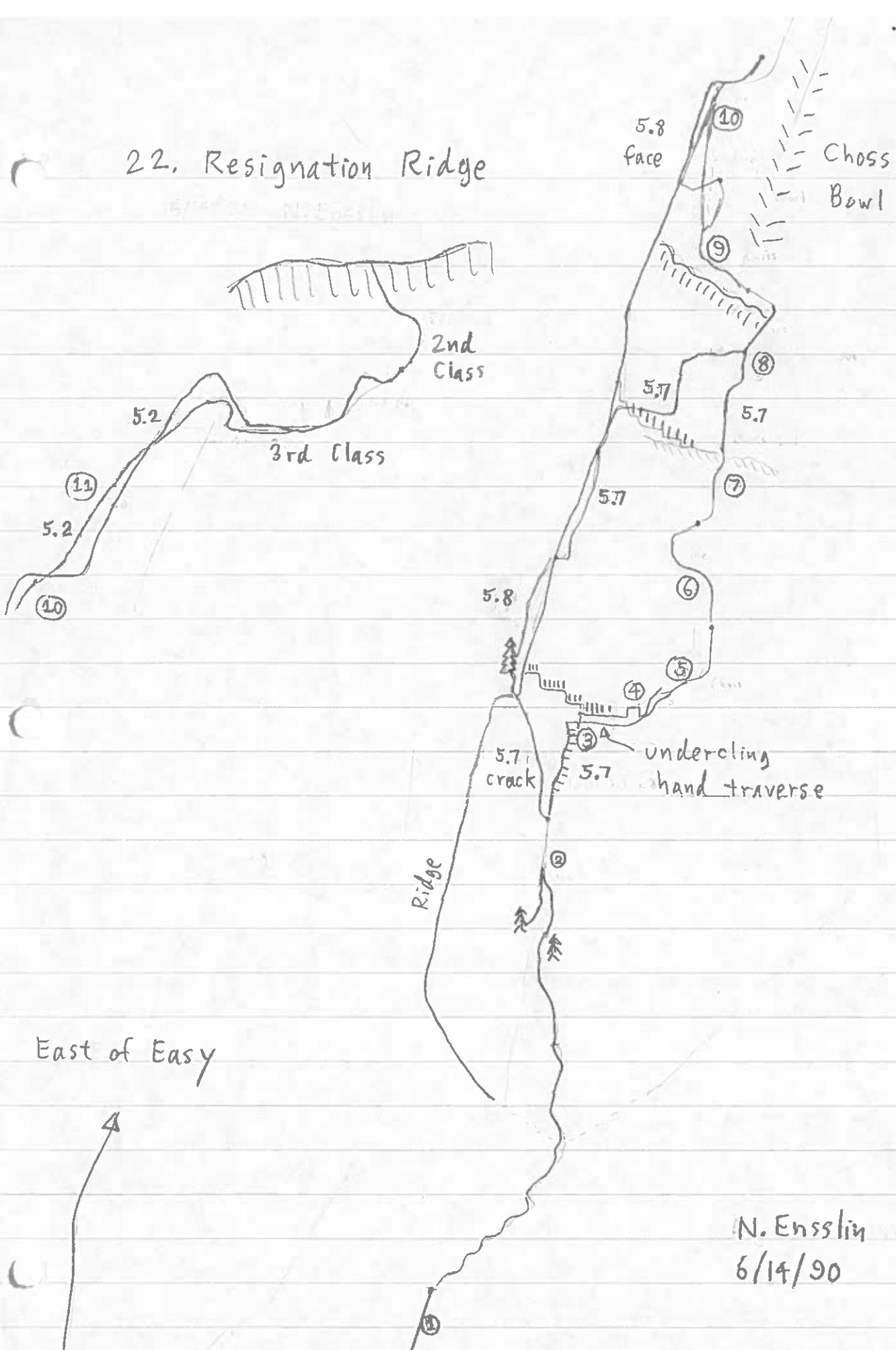
Pitches 5,6: Climb up the ridge, passing the overhangs.

Pitches 7,8,9: Very thin face climbing just R of the ridge. The exposure is beautiful, the faces being very steep. End on large step.

Pitches 10,11,12: Ascend the face R of the ridge from this step. The gully to the L does not bypass further climbing.

The top of the pinnacle connects to the main cliffs via a loose, exposed catwalk. One can then scramble about 300' to the top of the cliffs. (Len Margolin)

## 22. Resignation Ridge



## 23. Comments on Going to Jerusalem

George Bell, R. Mulford, and R. Thorn  
1957

An obvious route with possibility of a spectacular finish. First and last pitches are by far the hardest.

(1) First pitch follows rib just to R of water-worn gully. Small holds and marginal piton cracks for about 80'. It may be avoided by staying (?) low and up a minor gully to L (about 5.3?) for about 300'. It is then necessary to traverse at correct level to rejoin route.

Gully is then followed until it steepens into headwall at which point one ascends R on highest tree-covered ledge (3) to ridge. Ascend ridge 150' to level platform beyond which ridge looks very bad. Descend about 20' and then traverse (sp?) around 200' past large tree. Descend 50' to smallest tree from which one can rappel or climb down 40' to gain large "Pinnacle Gully." (This gully can be descended with two 120' rappels and much scrambling.)

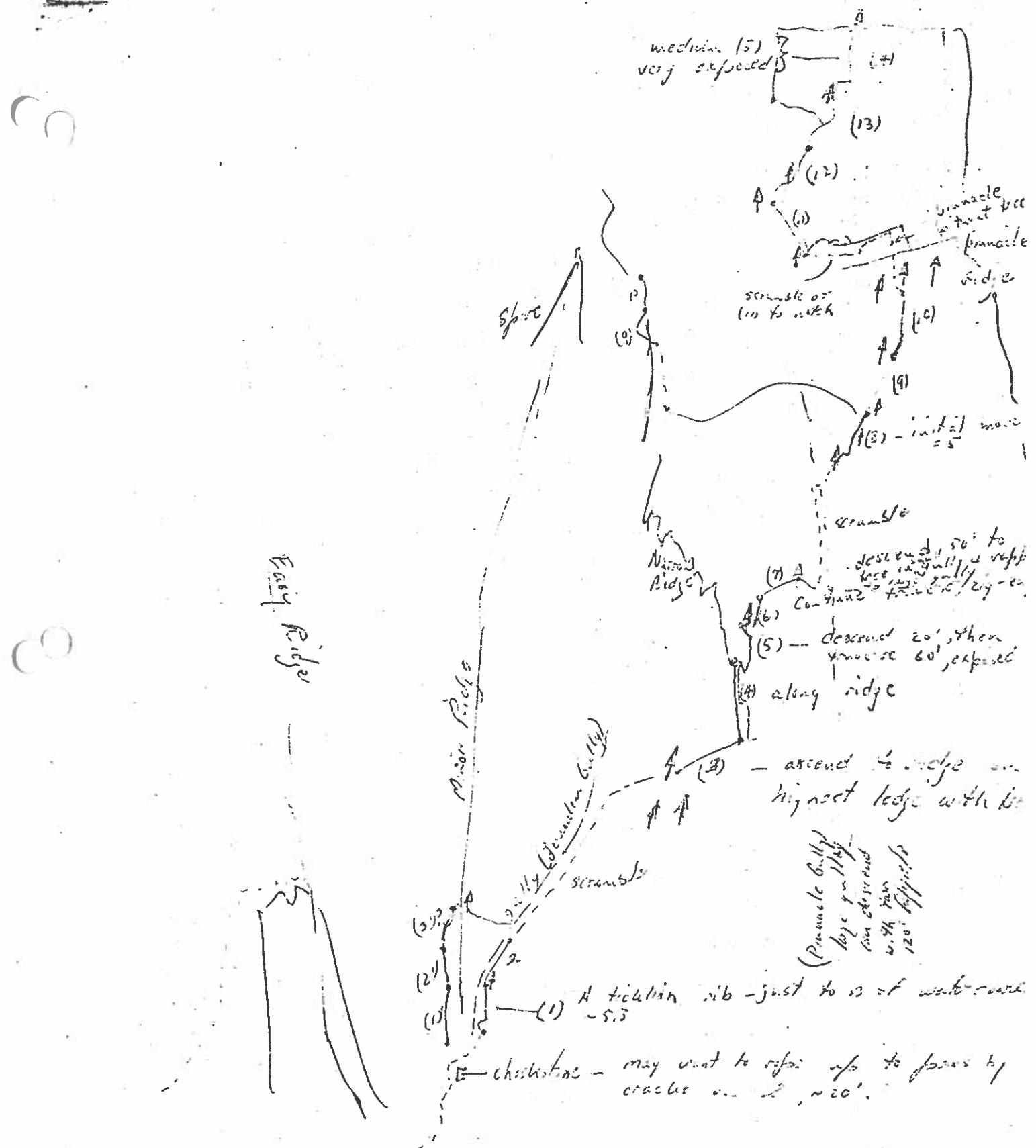
Ascend Pinnacle Gully until it steepens in headwall. Bear R up wall with several trees. A few awkward walls may be encountered here but they are short.

From top of (4), remainder of route may be shortened by traversing L over top of "Pinnacle Gully" and end of "Narrow Ridge" to join top of "Jerusalem Gully" . . . (illegible). This gully has two pitches of medium 5th climbing to pass an overhang - the remainder is scrambling.

For direct finish continue to top of . . . pinnacle for nice view of sheer E face (of pinnacle) and final 300' face. Scramble or belay to notch at base of face.

Three leads brings one to large base (sp?) for final exposed pitch, which follows small ledges and an inside corner at top of a 1200' face. Lovely flat meadow at top of pitch.

It is possible that an easier finish (and certainly less exposed) would merge (sp?) L at lead (13) and go up about 100' to L of belay tree.



23. Going to Tonsation — Direct finish.

60

## 24. Pinnacle Ridge

George Bell and F. de Saussure  
1958

A long (about 17 pitches) and sometimes spectacular climb in 3 sections (5.6).

The route may be identified as follows: As one approaches the main cliffs, walking along the road, a sharp pinnacle, with a very ragged outline, is seen on the R skyline, about halfway up the cliffs. The route reaches the notch above this pinnacle from behind (E) and ascends the buttress above the pinnacle to reach a tree-covered tower. From there the route coincides with the upper four pitches of "Going to Jerusalem." The route starts in the first gully E of "ragged pinnacle," a major gully with a large chockstone about 1/3 of the way up. The chockstone, near large trees, can be seen from the bottom and is a clear marker for the route.

Scramble up the gully and past the chockstone on the R. As the gully steepens above, two ramps with trees can be seen ascending to the R-hand ridge. The ridge was reached by the upper ramp. The first real pitch starts 30' below the lower end of the ramp, which is reached around an awkward corner (5.5). Proceed along the ramp to a belay tree. Ascend a small overhang (5.5) and continue up a gully to the ridge. Three pitches on or just R of the ridge bring one to the base of a pinnacle which appears to block the ridge with a hold-less 25' face split by a crack. Ascend the face on small holds (5.6). Above, this procedure must be repeated twice again to surmount further pinnacles (5.6), the last one on its R edge. A final delicate overhanging pinnacle blocks the ridge and must be passed by an implausible and exposed traverse on the R (5.4).

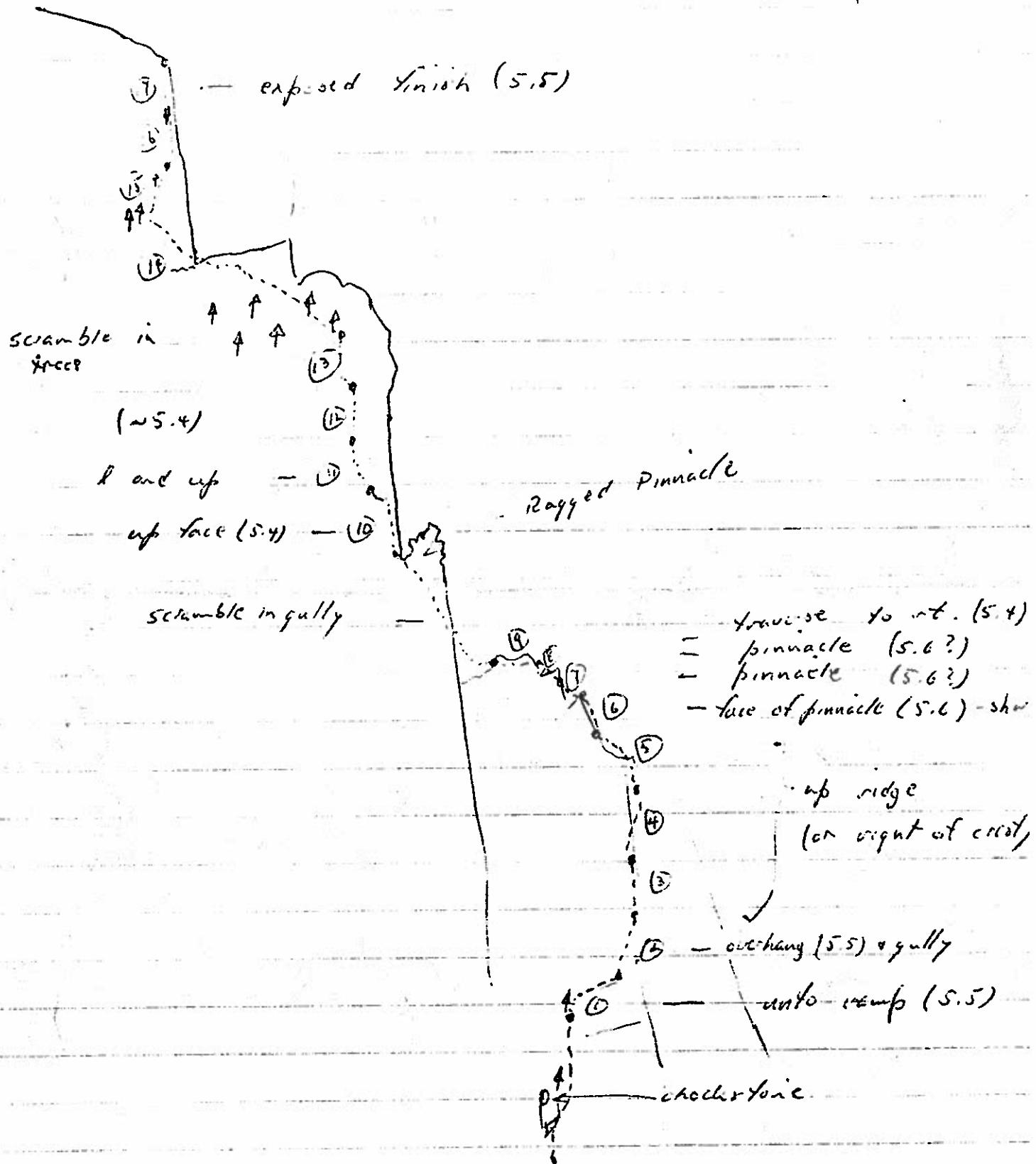
From this point a gentle gully leads to the notch behind "ragged pinnacle." Ascend the face above the pinnacle (5.4), moving L where easier. In four pitches a tree-covered ridge is reached. Traverse below the ridge crest to reach the final face which can be climbed as follows. The first pitch goes L to large trees and the second and third R - reaching a substantial belay tree. Climb 12' and traverse R (great exposure) to reach a system of vertical cracks which are followed to the top (5.5).

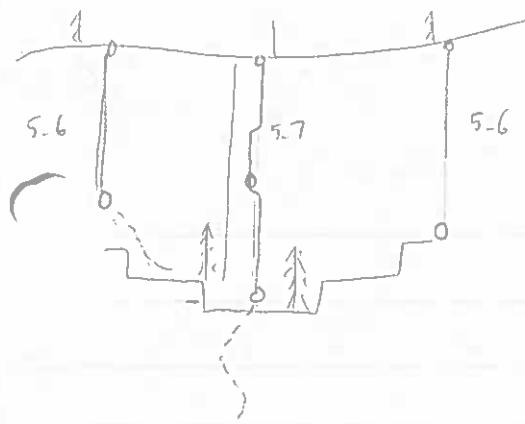
First ascent: George Bell and F. de Saussure, about 1958. Second (?) ascent from which this was written: G. Bell, E. Nelson, Fred Siebel, and Chris Foster, June 9, 1973. (First ascent may have differed in lower few pitches, perhaps continuing further up gully.)

# 24. Pinnacle Ridge

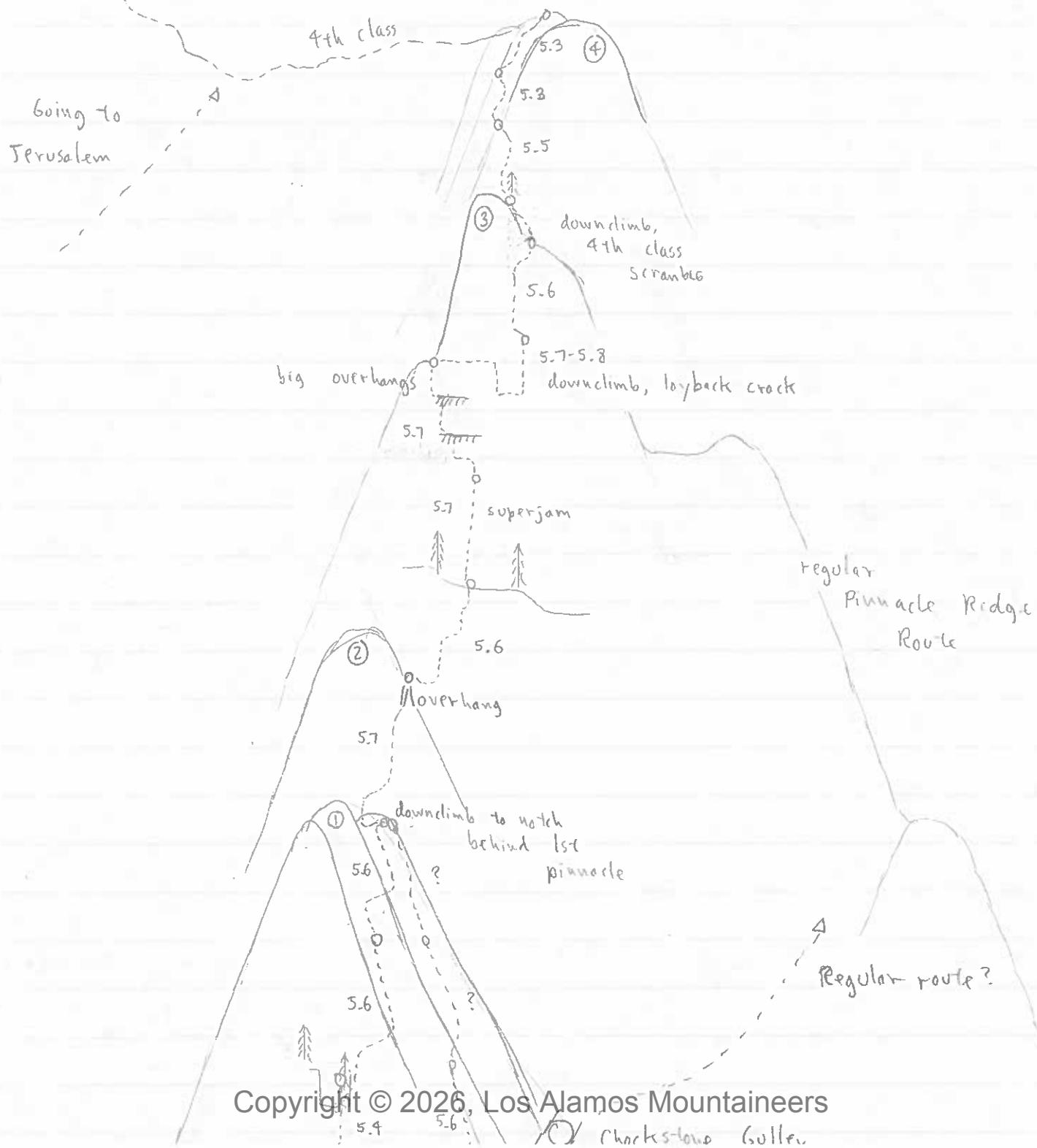
6/73

6 Fall

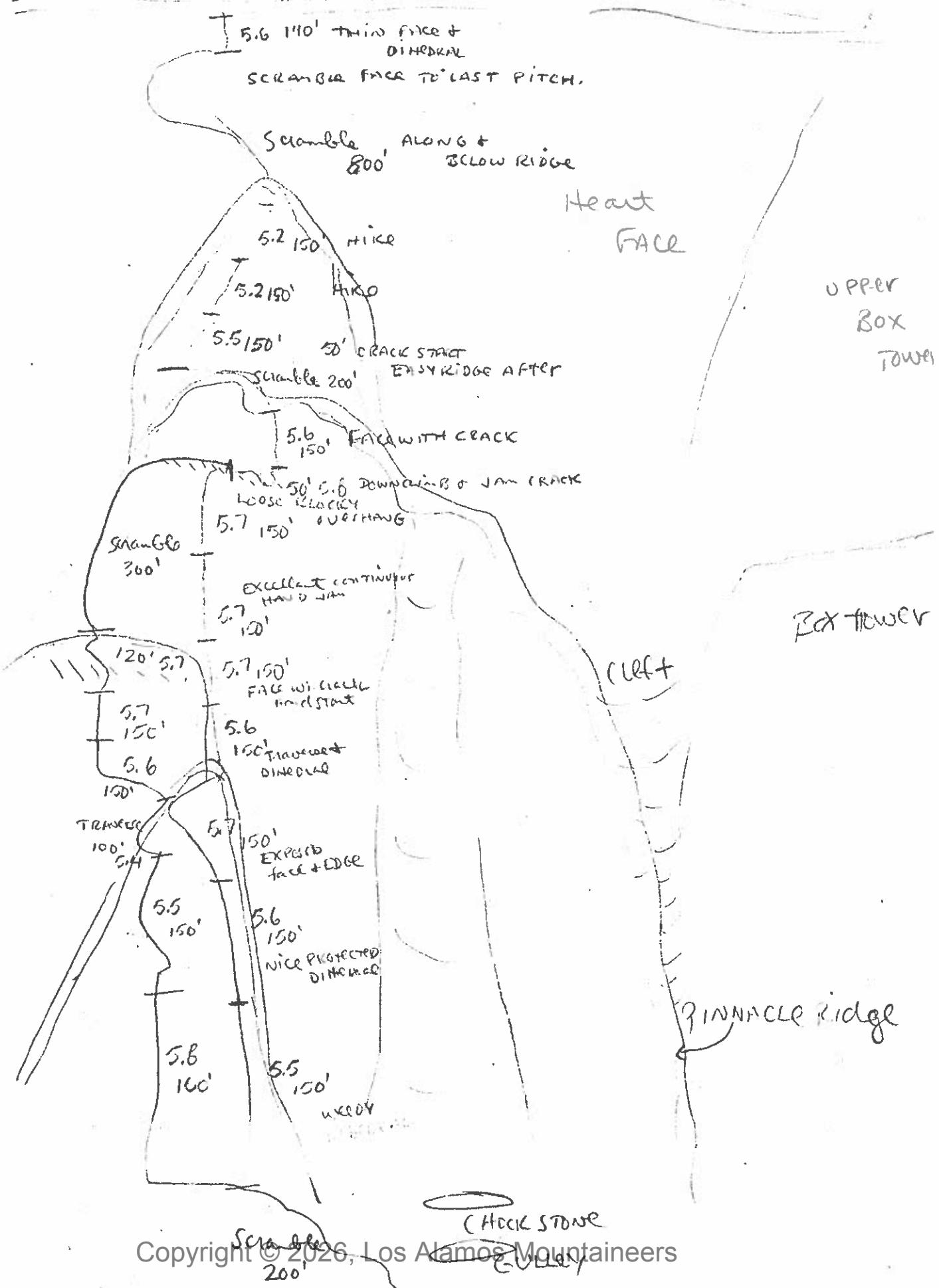




25, Ragged Pinnacles Route  
 Sept. 4, 1983  
 Chris Foster  
 Jim Keller  
 Dave Barlow  
 Jim Sprinkle  
 Ralph Menitoff  
 Norbert Ensslin



## 25. RAGGED PINNACLES EAST & WEST



## 26. Heart Wall – Central Chimney Route

(5.8, BP, \*\*\*) 8 Pitches

First ascent Dave Barlow and friends, 1986

Approach: Hike E from the Lodge along the base of the cliffs to the “Cleft.” (45 minutes of bush whacking.). Scramble up the Cleft to the base of the wall. (Another 45 minutes, some 5.6 moves may need to be belayed.). Note: The Cleft tends to collect a great quantity of snow over the winter. Scrambling up the Cleft may not be easy until the snow clears near the end of June.

Descent: Use the standard descent route down the gully W of the main cliffs.

Photo: The attached photo from Josh Smith (around 2010) shows much of the Heart Wall from near the top of the scramble up the Cleft.

Pitches 1-4: Ascend the large chimney which splits the center of the wall. Assorted chockstones block the chimney and add interest to the climb.

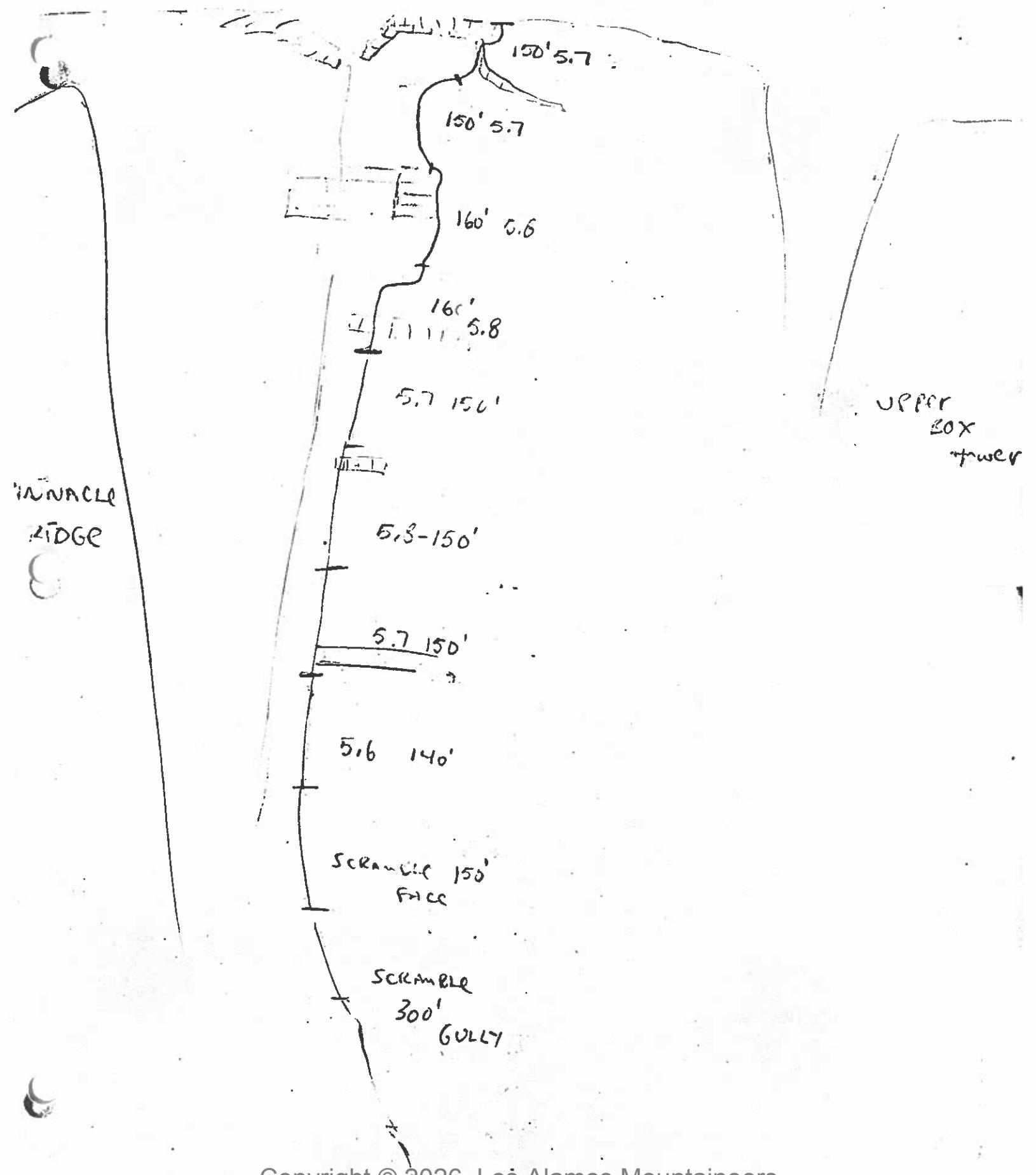
Pitch 5: Exit the chimney to the R and proceed up the wall to a narrow belay ledge. Begin to enjoy the spectacular exposure.

Pitch 6: Head for the top of the box car visible above and to the L. Two crack systems will get you there. The upper R crack is a well-protected 5.7 climb. The lower L system is also 5.7, except for a poorly-protected 5.9 finish. The choice is yours.

Pitch 7: Climb upwards 50' or so and then begin to angle R along a well-defined crack system to a good belay stance.

Pitch 8: To escape the overhangs, head for a large block which projects out from underneath the overhangs to the R. Climb on top of this, turn the corner, and head for the trees.

## 26. Heart face -





Copyright © 2026, Los Alamos Mt.

## 27. Heart Up (5.9, BP, \*\*\*) 7 Pitches

First Ascent by Chris Foster and France Cordova, 1987?  
Route is mostly 5.8 with some 5.9.

Start: The route begins about 100 feet to the R of the central chimney. Scramble up the wall about 50' to a 2'-wide belay ledge, to the start of the first pitch.

Pitch 1: Wander L up easy rock for about 50', then begin to angle R and head for the hand jam-sized crack through the overhang above. If rope drag and arm strength permit, turn the overhang and belay from a comfortable spot just above.

Pitch 2: Follow the obvious crack system. Belay when you run out of rope.

Pitch 3: Angle L for about 70', then angle R for another 70'. Belay from a point somewhere above and to the L of the large pillar on the R-hand edge of the wall.

Pitch 4: Wander straight up for about a rope length and set up a belay on a comfortable ledge. (Look for a resident wired stopper near the mid point of this pitch?)

Pitch 5: Proceed directly up the face until you reach a nice crack system. Run out the rope and belay. The face on this pitch is a little short on hand and foot holds and thin on protection.

Pitch 6: Climb up the crack system along a L-facing dihedral. Continue more or less straight up, running out the rope.

Pitch 7: Angle L and scramble up to the top. Bushes, dirt, and loose rock make this the only bad pitch on the climb.

## 28. HEART OF THE JUNGLE (5.9, BP, \*) 8 Pitches

This route follows the left and then right facing dihedral capped by a large over hang which goes up the right hand side of the Brazos Heart Wall.

Pitch 1: Start near the bottom of the large left facing dihedral on the right side of the Heart Wall. Avoid the chimney by climbing the face 30 feet to the left of it. Belay just above the overhang.

Pitches 2-3: Continue up the left facing dihedral.

Pitch 4: Fourth class up to the start of the well vegetated right facing dihedral. Scramble up high enough to be able to turn the overhang on the next pitch.

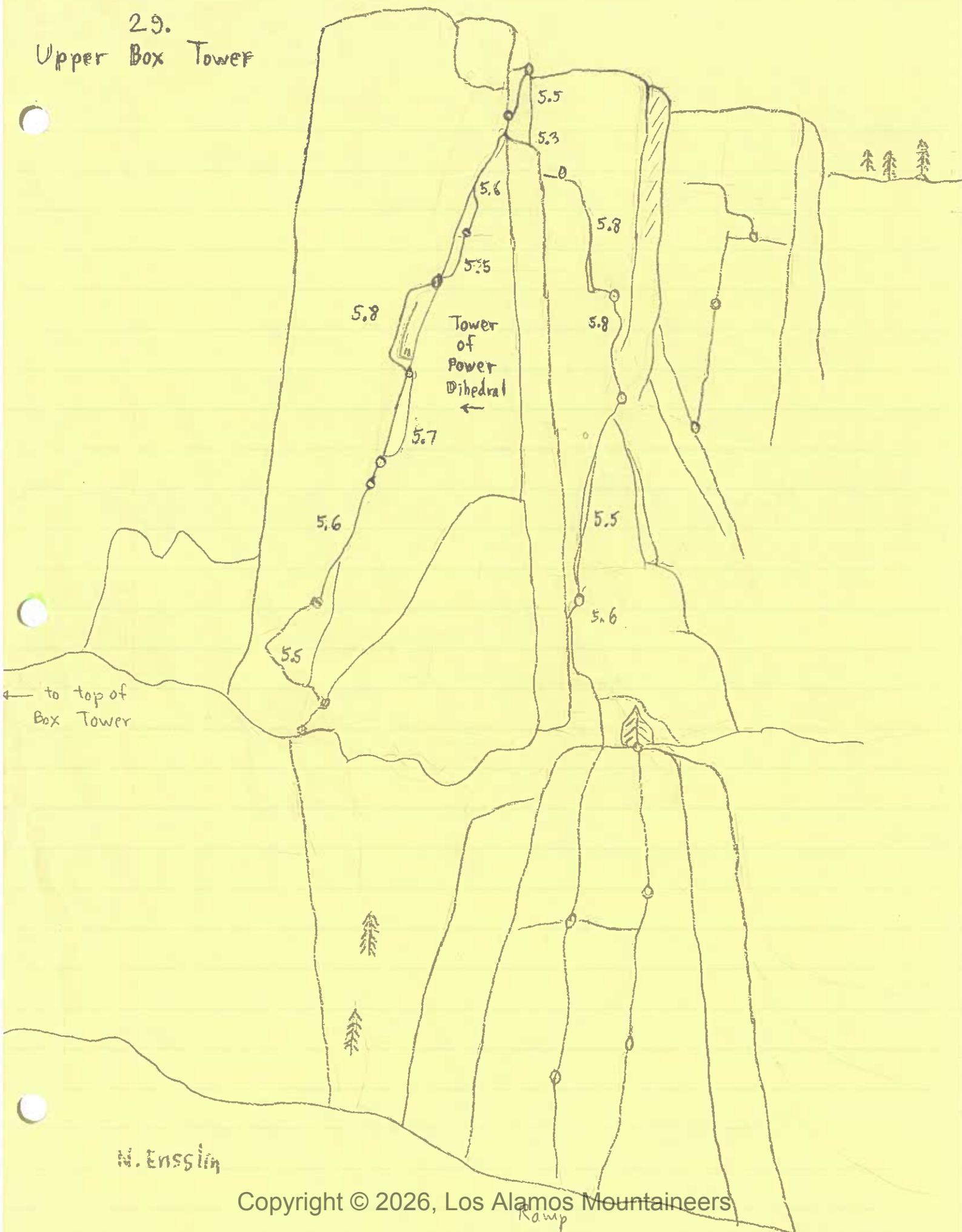
Pitch 5: Proceed up the dihedral. Turn the overhang on the right and belay 10' above. Beware of loose rock as you exit the overhang.

Pitches 6-7: Continue up the dihedral, stopping just short of the final giant overhang. The jungle of Bay Berry bushes on the 7th pitch, for which this climb is named after, can be avoided by climbing the sparsely protected but quite reasonable 5.8 face to the right.

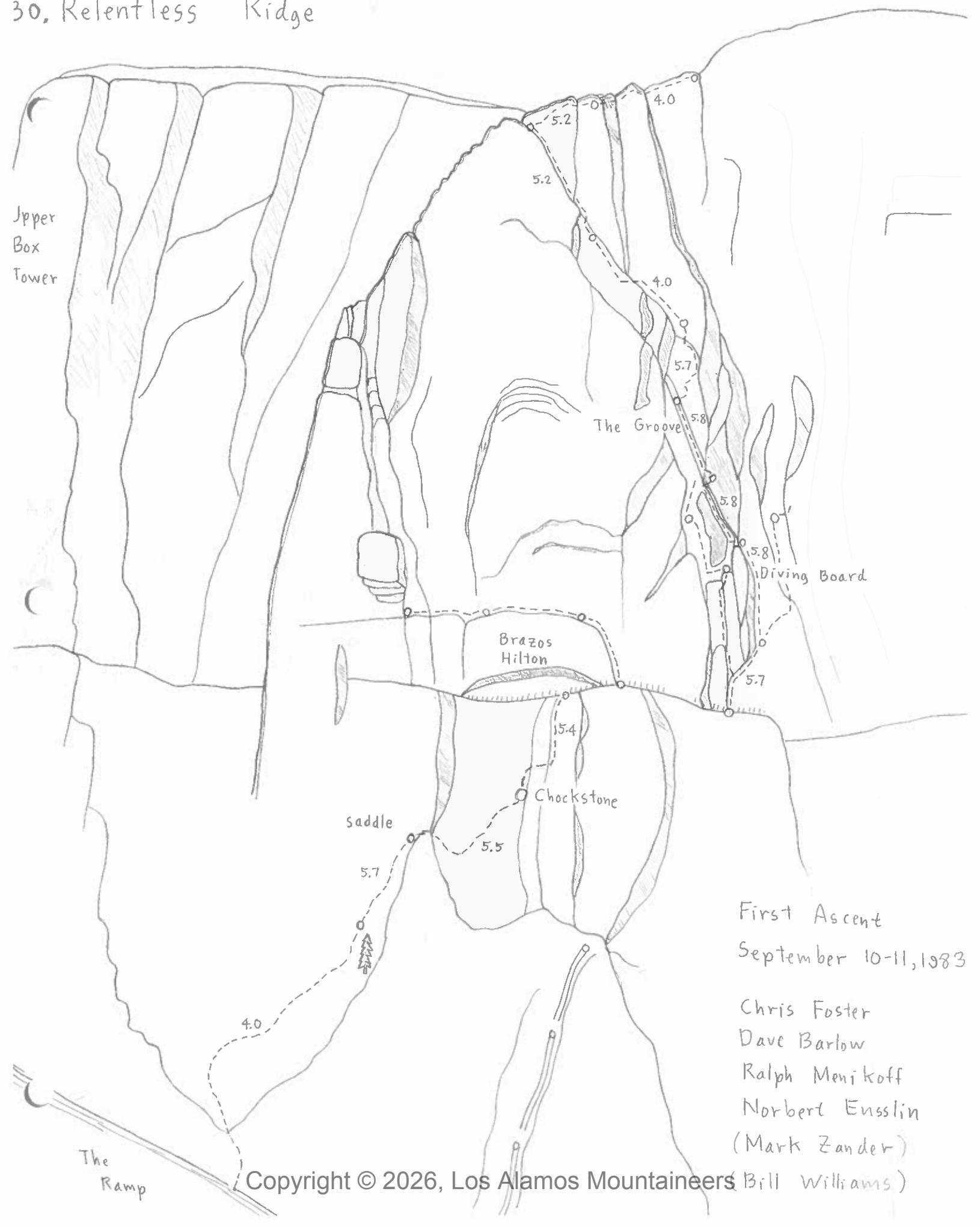
Pitch 8: The final overhang above the giant bush probably goes at 5.8, but if you forgot to bring you'r machette you can escape left along a hand traverse just short of the overhang. Continue traversing left until you get to the bottom of a short (30') blank face. Climb this to get to easier climbing and the summit above. This 5.9 variation can be protected by two or three very small wired stoppers.

29.

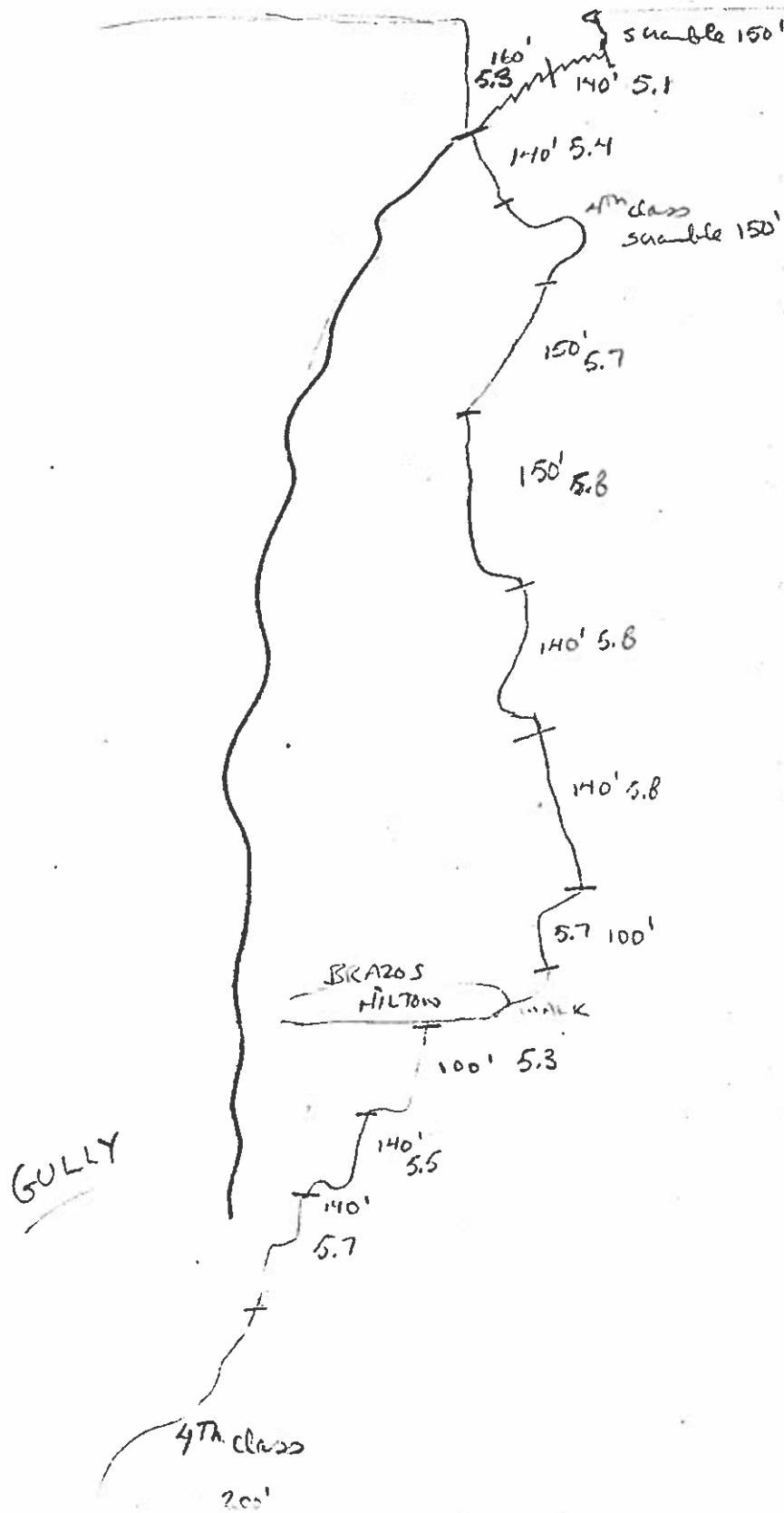
Upper Box Tower



# 30. Relentless Ridge



### 30. Relentless Ridge -



Great  
Hairy  
Ridge

### 31. Great Hairy Ridge

This route lies E of Relentless Ridge and W of Gothic Arches. Gothic Arches, at 22 pitches, may be the longest route in the Brazos, and Great Hairy Ridge must be almost this long. The attached color photo (courtesy of Josh Smith) shows this huge area of steep and sustained cliffs.

Great Hairy Ridge was climbed in the 1980's by Dave Barlow and Mark Zander, both by a ridge route and a gully route (the green lines on the photo). These are believed to be the first ascents, as there are no remaining records of earlier ascents.

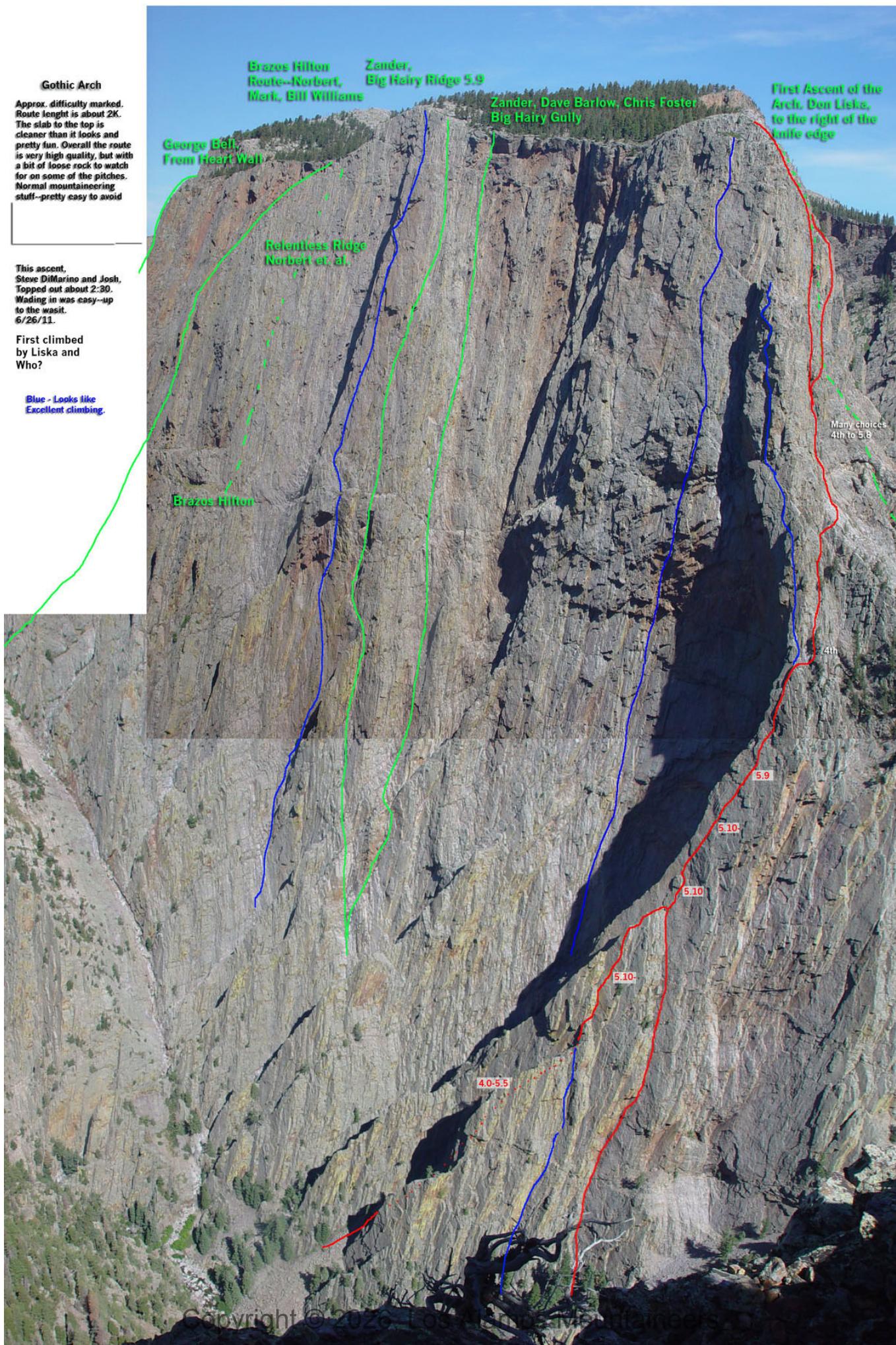
### Gothic Arch

Approx. difficulty marked. Route length is about 2K. The slab to the top is cleaner than it looks and pretty fun. Overall the route is very high quality, but with a bit of loose rock to watch for on some of the pitches. Normal mountaineering stuff--pretty easy to avoid

This ascent,  
Steve DiMarino and Josh,  
Topped out about 2:30.  
Wading in was easy--up  
to the waist.  
6/26/11.

First climbed  
by Liska and  
Who?

Blue - Looks like  
Excellent climbing.



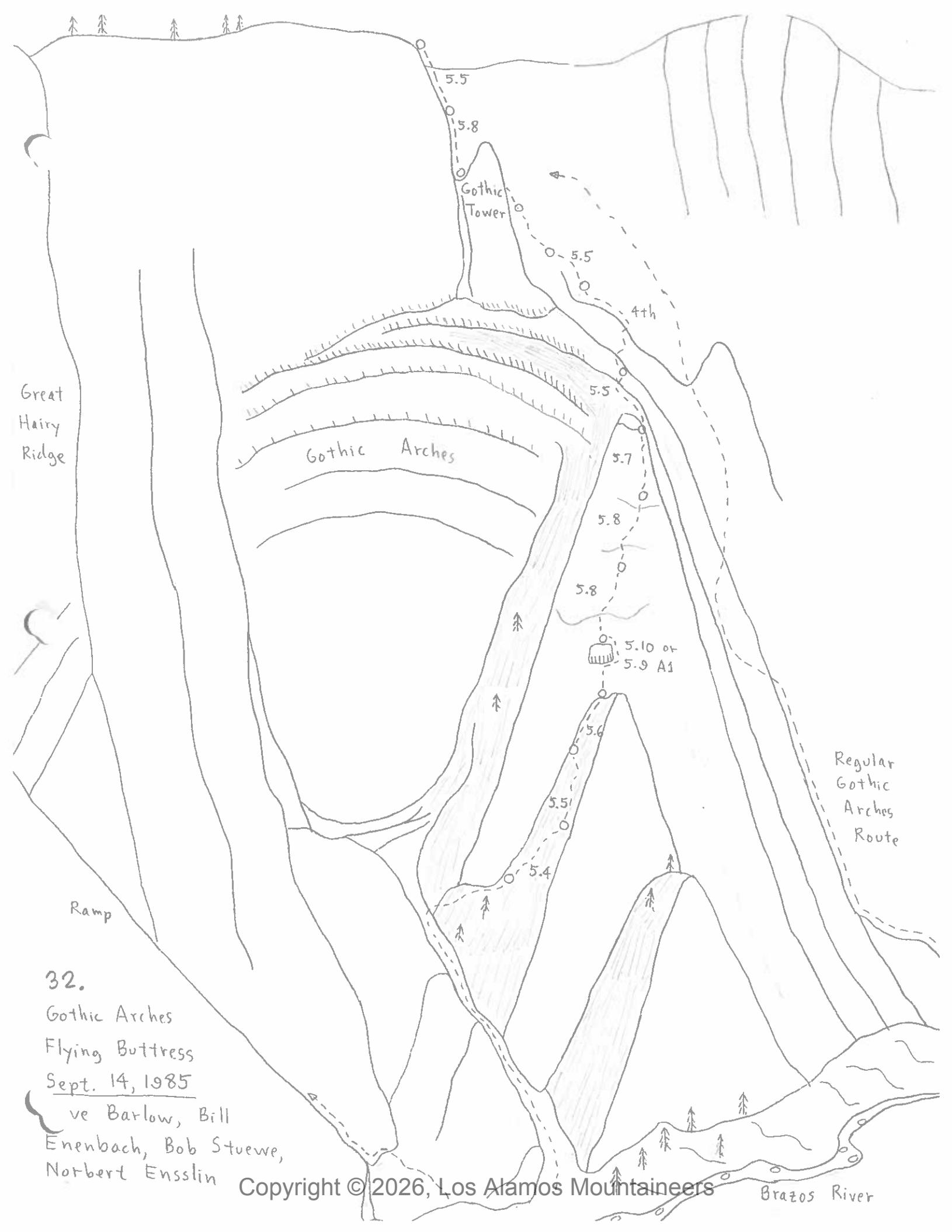
## 32. Gothic Arches -- Flying Buttress

This area is E of Great Hairy Ridge and W of the regular Gothic Arches Route. It is named for the huge curved arches that dominate the middle part of the cliffs.

There are two known routes that have been done here, both featuring an intimidating 5.10 step around a large block. The upper parts of both routes join together and then, higher up, connect to the Gothic Arches Buttress Route. They are shown in red on the attached color photo (courtesy Josh Smith).

The left route follows a mid-fifth-class corner up the left side of a large triangular slab until just below the 5.10 block. It was first climbed in Sept., 1985 by Dave Barlow, Bill Ennenbach, Bob Stuewe, and Norbert Ensslin. This route was later done as an on-site by Josh Smith and Steve DiMarino in Sept. 2012.

The right route is a first ascent by Josh Smith and Aaron Miller, called “Gothic Arches – Right Leg.” It is a direct line up the triangular slab to the base of the 5.10 block. (See Addendum: Recent New Routes.)



### 33. Gothic Arches Buttress

First ascent Don Liska and friends  
1968

This route is mentioned in George Bell's "Trail and Timberline" article, and the line is shown in Figure 4 as route 3. George Bell says that the route "was described in the American Alpine Journal [399, (1969)]; on a second ascent last year the aid pitches were bypassed and the Gothic Tower was climbed without a bivouac."

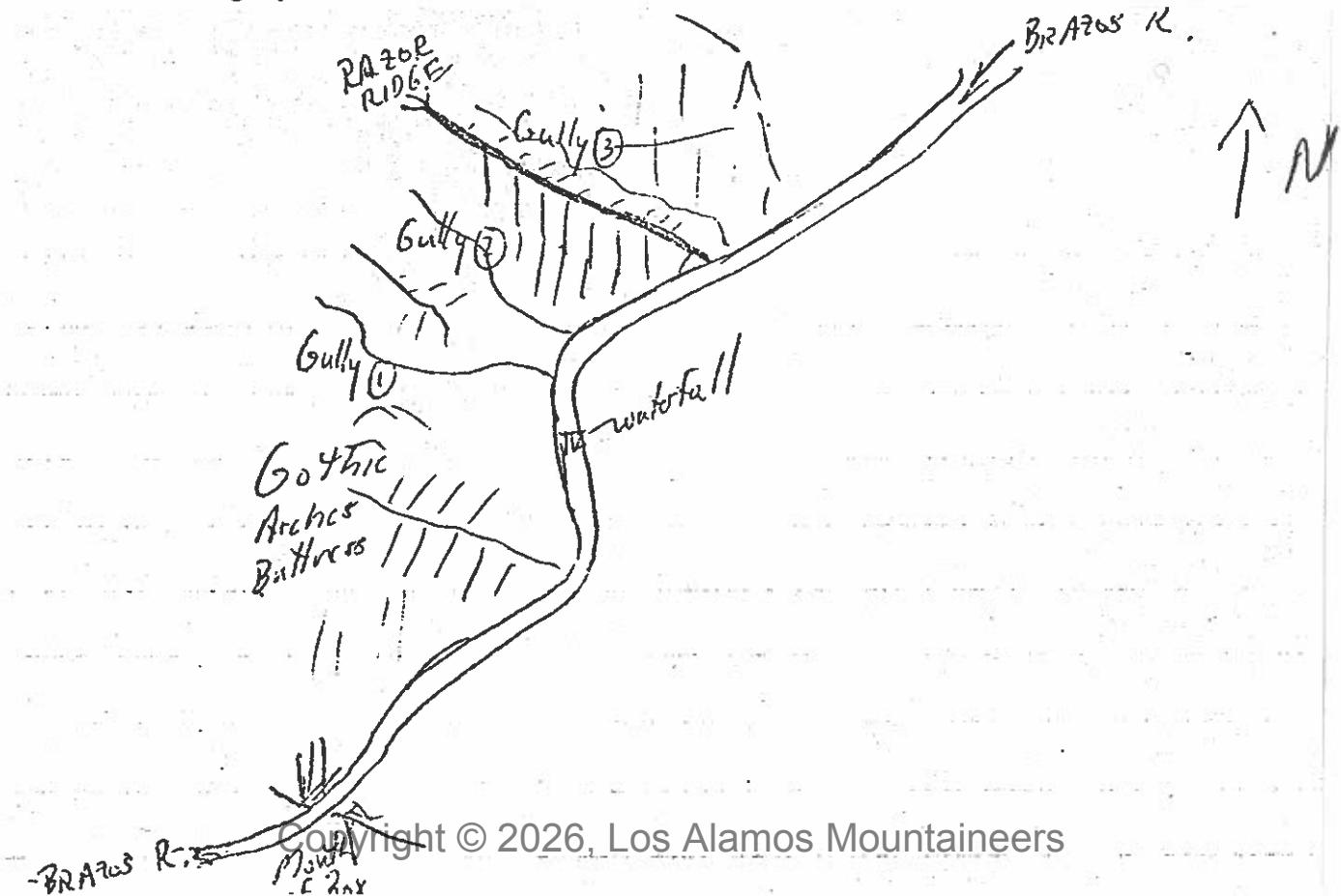
In the Los Alamos Mountaineers history. Don Liska recalled that "On the 1968 first ascent of Gothic Arches Buttress we took four weeks to work out the route, returning to Los Alamos between weekends. On the last weekend, near the top and climbing by moonlight, I zippered out a string of direct aid pitons and was caught on a 30' fall by my buddies. Gothic Arches was a high caliber route in those days, rated 5.7 and 22 pitches. Why did we climb by moonlight? Well, to have a comfortable bivouac at the top of course. Instead we had an uncomfortable bivouac on the face."

### 34. Razor Ridge

First Ascent George Bell and Carl Keller  
June 27, 1970

A moderate climb on excellent rock of about 1700' from the Box Canyon of the Brazos River, the ridge takes its name from its very sharp crest. The average angle of the ridge is moderate (about 50 degrees) and it offers about 14 pitches of mostly easy Class 5 climbing. The ridge is interrupted by numerous small steps, most of which can be climbed directly (5.5 - 5.6). The SW side of the ridge is a face which drops steeply to the river, while on the NE side the ridge drops about 200' into a gully which could serve as a fairly swift descent route in case of retreat.

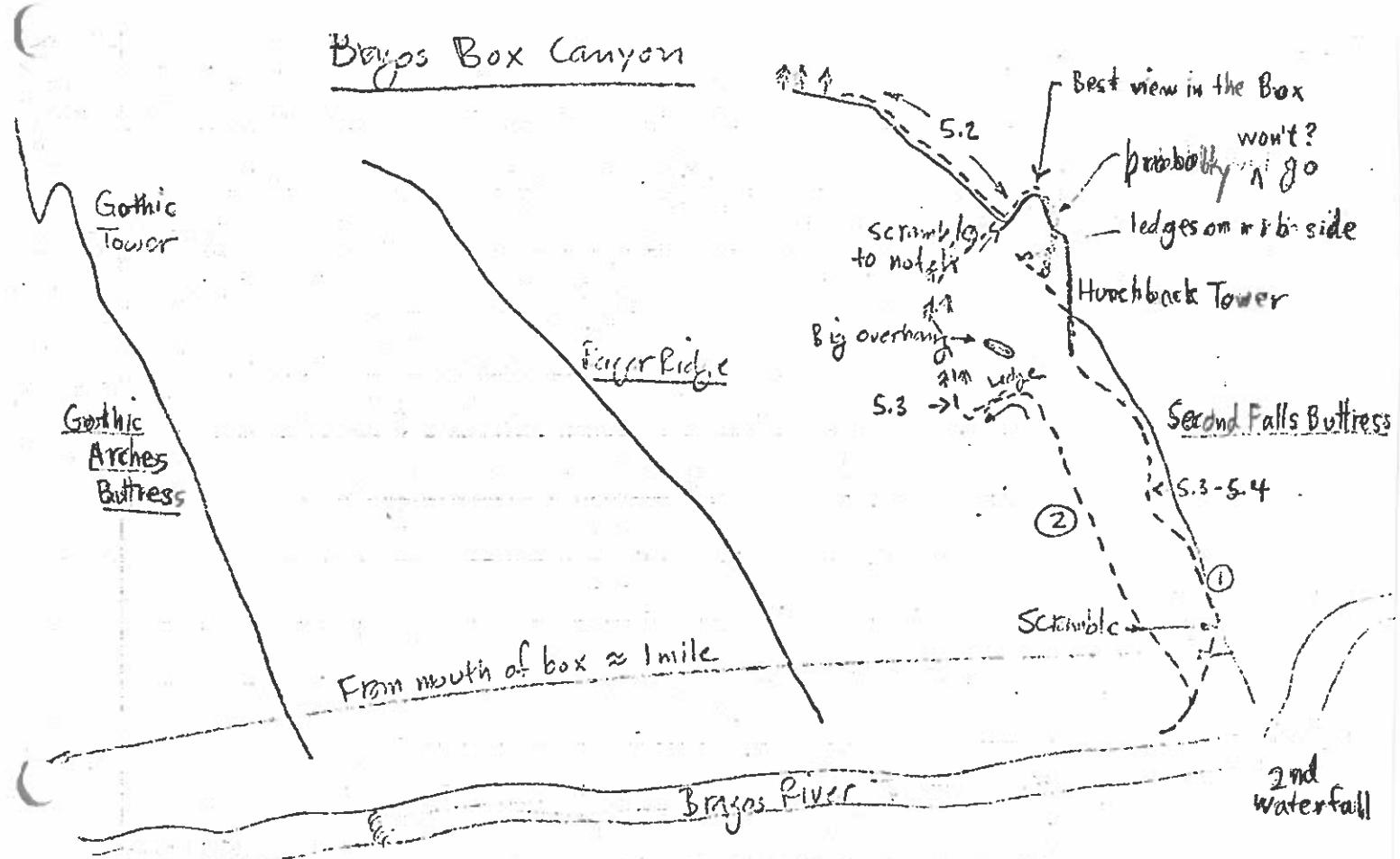
The base of the ridge can be gained by wading up the Brazos River from the mouth of the Box Canyon (impossible in high water) or by descending Gully (1) and following the river bank. The lower end of the ridge is not well-defined; it was approached up a wooded ramp from the SW (200') which led to a ridge crest adjacent to Gully (3). A steep minor gully was then followed W of the crest for 150' (5.3) and then a narrow ridge, 250' (5.4), gave access (L traverse) to a nook and tree. Scrambling (about 200') through the trees leads one to the now clearly-defined ridge crest which is then followed for 10-12 pitches to the canyon rim. Most steps were climbed directly or just L of the crest. The last step is a tower and was passed to the L. Times: 2 1/4 hour from the car at Peterson's fence, up river (barely wadable) to base of ridge; 5 hours on ridge; 3 hours down regular descent gully, across river, and climb back to car.



35. Hunchback Ridge  
Second Falls Buttress, Brazos Box Canyon

First Ascent Don Liska, Larry Dauelsberg, Jim Potter, and Len Margolin  
October 3, 1970

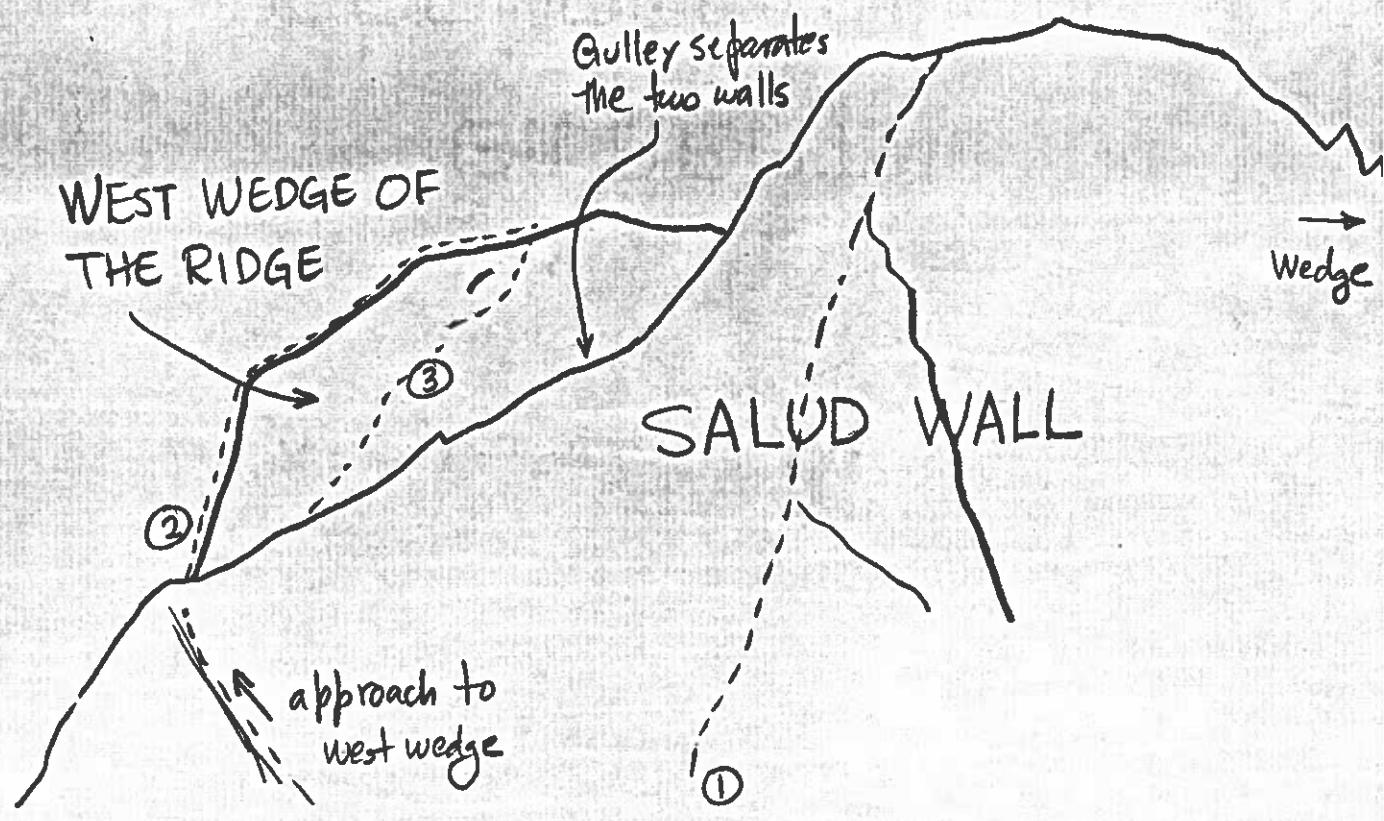
This route ascends the big buttress above the second waterfall. It is patterned after the Gothic Arches Buttress and even has a tower ("Hunchback") similar to Gothic Tower. The climbing is easy due to the very sound rock and the super abundance of finger and toe holds. The first attempt was made on Sept. 12, 1970, and followed route (1) along the ridge crest and mixed 4th Class scrambling with short 5th Class digressions to face climbing. On the N side of Hunchback Tower the route peters out on ledges above a 600' sheer face. The N side of the tower can probably be climbed from these ledges in two or three steep and exposed pitches but was not attempted due to rainstorms. The second attempt followed route (2) by means of excellent scrambling to a prominent ledge beneath the E face of the tower. A traverse was made across two arêtes and entailed one 5.3 pitch beyond which tree-filled gullies were reached. Scrambling up these gullies brings one to a notch from which Hunchback Tower can be climbed for a spectacular view. The knife-edge above the tower is very exposed to the N (800' - 1200' vertical) but composed of excellent, well-structured rock. Four roped pitches takes one to the top.



### 36. Routes on Lower Wedge

37.

38.



The three routes on the lower wedge are:

- ① Salud Ridge (Davelsberg, Liska)
- ② West Wedge of the Ridge (Liska, Liscia, Gillespie)
- ③ South Face, west wedge of the Ridge. (" " ")

On 10/9, route ② was scouted. F5.8, A2. Route ③ was climbed, F5.4. This new area is divided into two main walls as shown above, separated by an extremely steep and deep gully. It is completely separate from the wedge, connected only by a thin ridge of gendarmes.

Don Liska  
Oct. '71

### 36. Salud Ridge

First Ascent Don Liska and Larry Dauelsberg  
May 16, 1971

Salud is a cliff complex only remotely connected to the Wedge, it is an independent network of cliff faces which require their own approach and descent routes. The climbs are short and steep, starting lower than the Wedge routes. They are 6-8 pitches long.

Salud ascends the prominent ridge seen on the descent along the fisherman's road to Encinada Creek. Cross the creek at the parking circle and climb the talus, angling R to the base of the ridge. Climb a cliff and chimney complex on the W side of the crest in two 5.5 pitches to a notch behind a tree. Two easier pitches follow along the ridge crest. A strenuous 5.6 pitch along a spectacular knife-edge flows, which ends in a vertical wall climb past a tree on good holds. Two easier pitches end at the top of Salud wall. Time: 4 hrs from car. 10 pitons.

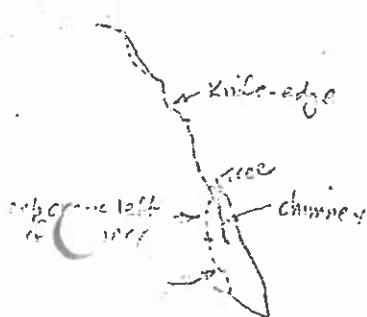
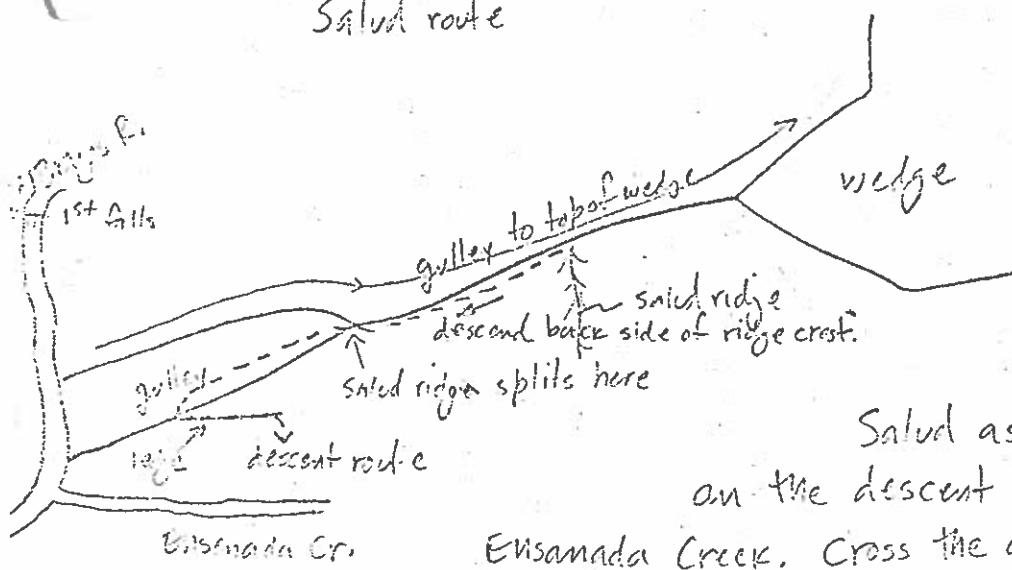
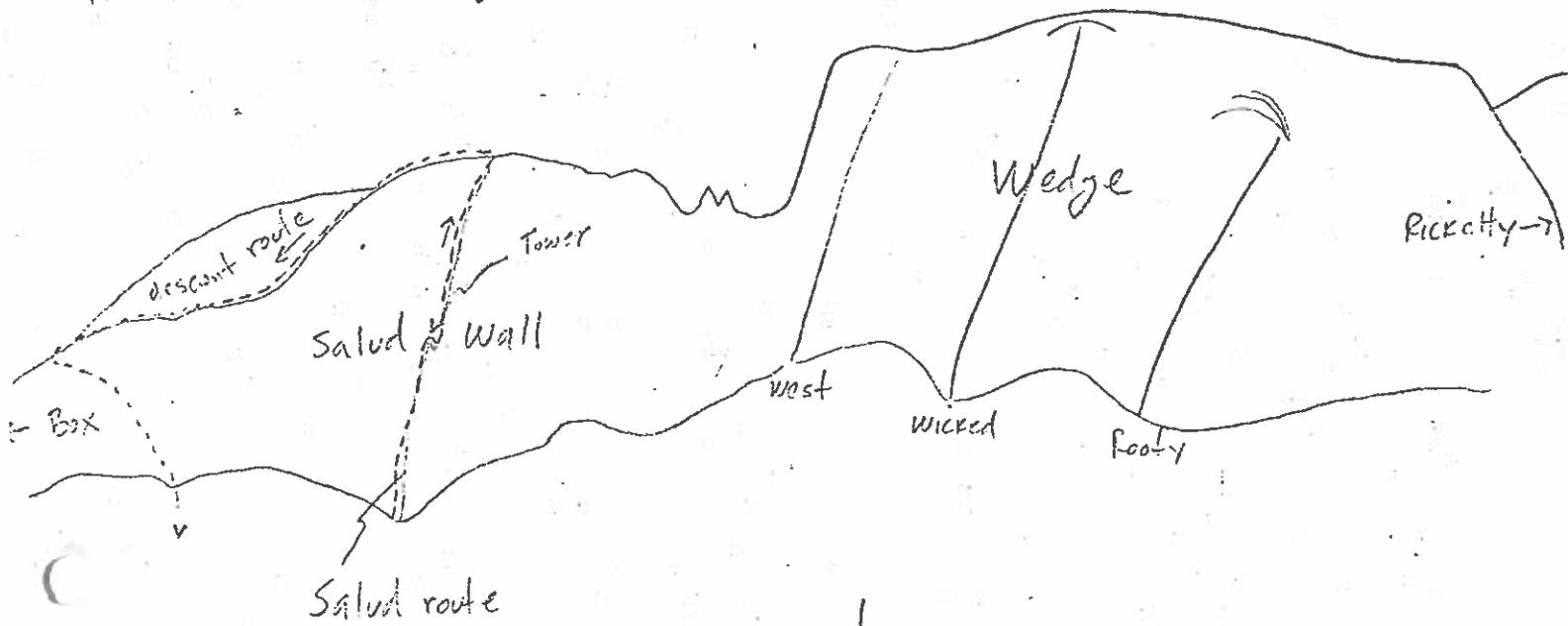
36. Salud & Salud Wall ~ Davelsong, Liska MAY 10, 2011

(1)

37.

38.

Salud is a cliff complex only remotely connected to the wedge; it is an independent network of cliff faces which require their own approach and descent routes. The climbs are short and steep, starting lower than the wedge routes. They are 6-8 pitches long.

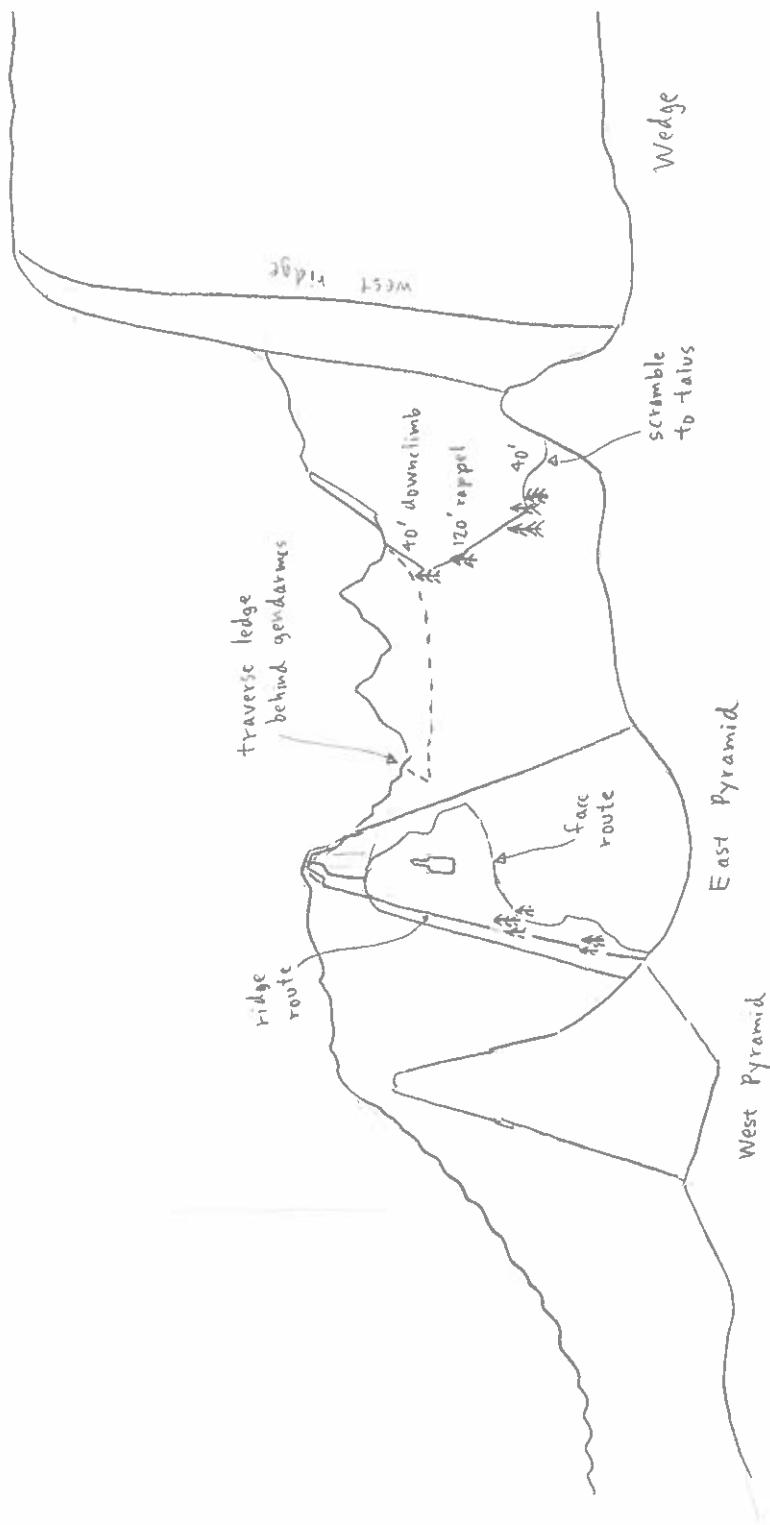


Salud ascends the prominent ridge seen on the descent along the fisherman's road to

Ensanaada Creek. Cross the creek at the parking circle and climb the talus, moving right to the base of the ridge.

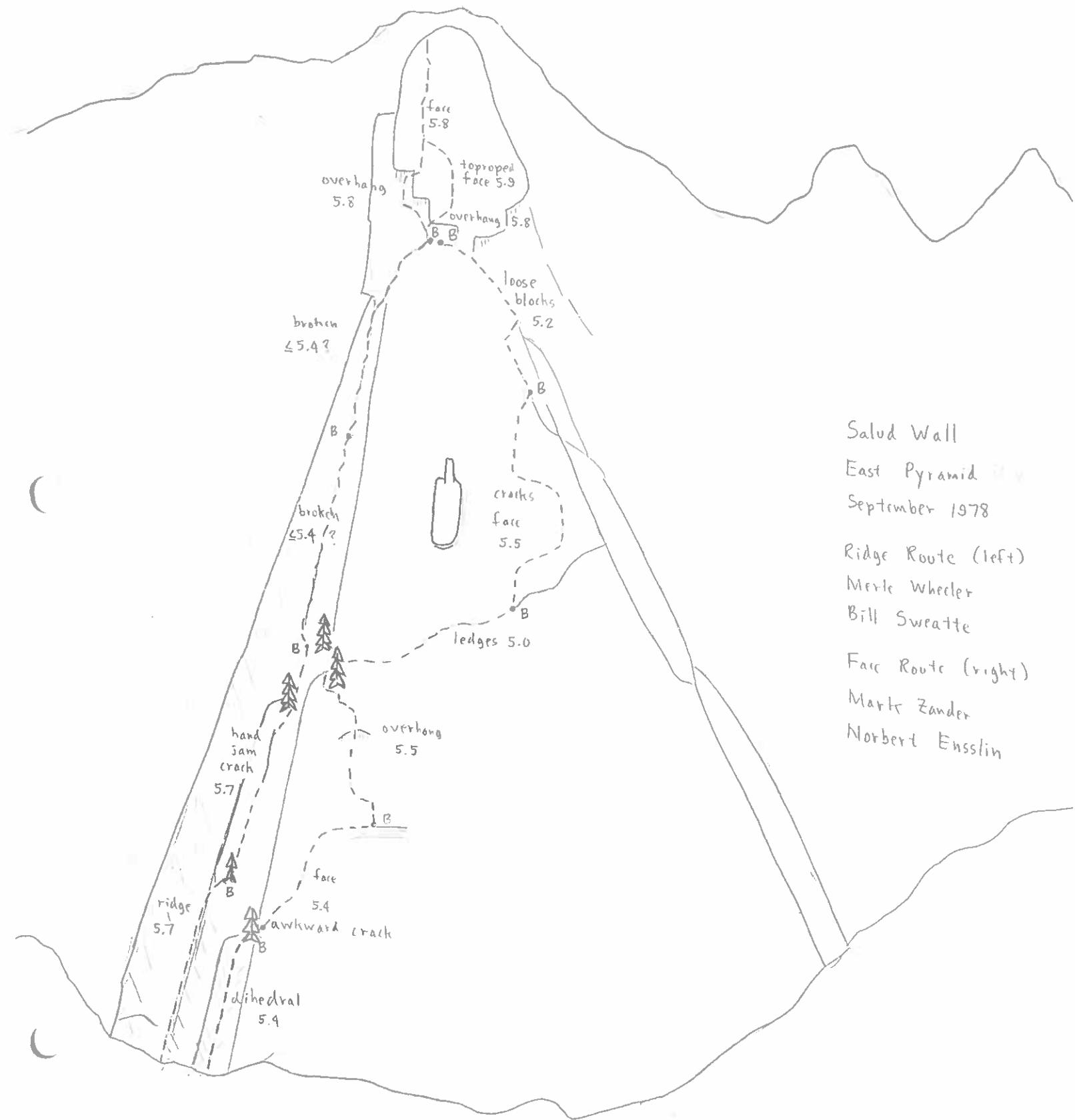
Climb a cliff and chimney complex on the west side of the crest in two 5.5 pitches to a notch behind a tree. Two easier pitches follow along the ridge crest. A strenuous 5.6 pitch along a spectacular knife-edge follows which ends in a vertical wall climb past a tree on good holds. Two easier pitches end the Salud wall. Total: 4 hrs. from car. 10 pitches.

### 36. Salud Wall



Salud Wall

# 36. Salud Wall



### 39. West Ridge of the Wedge

First Ascent Bill Hendry and Carl Keller  
August 29, 1970

West Ridge is the next ridge to the L of Wicked Ridge - as you face the cliffs. The climb is most easily begun to the L of the large buttress at the bottom. Class 4 scramble for about 150' to top of buttress. There are seven roped pitches:

- (1) Up 10' then out on face for about 30' to an easily recognized crack that runs straight up about 250'. Pitch is about 80' long to good belay spot. Two ladders used at end of pitch (5.4). Or, go past crack up 15-20' R of crack with no aid (5.8).
- (2) Straight up crack about 60' then diagonally up and R over overhangs (two ladders). Across face on very thin holds to big ledge (5.6). Or do it free (5.7).
- (3) Up and L to regain crack, then straight up. Sustained 5.6 with a variety of types of moves including a short (2 moves) layback. The belay point at end of pitch 3 is about 30' below large ledge. (Or on large ledge, see further notes below.) To L out of crack over an overhang then up face with jams and small holds (5.6). This puts you on large ledge.
- (4) Now up and slightly to R about 100'. Then L and up across face on friction foot holds and very small handholds. 5.5 if piton is used for handhold, 5.6 otherwise.
- (5) Up, but bear L, for about 150'. Pitch ends almost at ridge. If you go too far to R, the logical pitch #6 is about 40' of aid.
- (6) Increasingly easy and rotten (5.2).
- (7) Class 4 over stacks of loose boulders.

Climbing time: 4 hours from top of scree (but we had done almost the whole climb before and were scared off by rain, so it might have taken more like 6 hours had we made it then).

This is a very nice climb on excellent rock. The first four pitches are very exposed.

Further notes on the West Ridge of the Brazos Wedge:

H. Lou Horak and Cliff Naveaux  
June 16, 1973

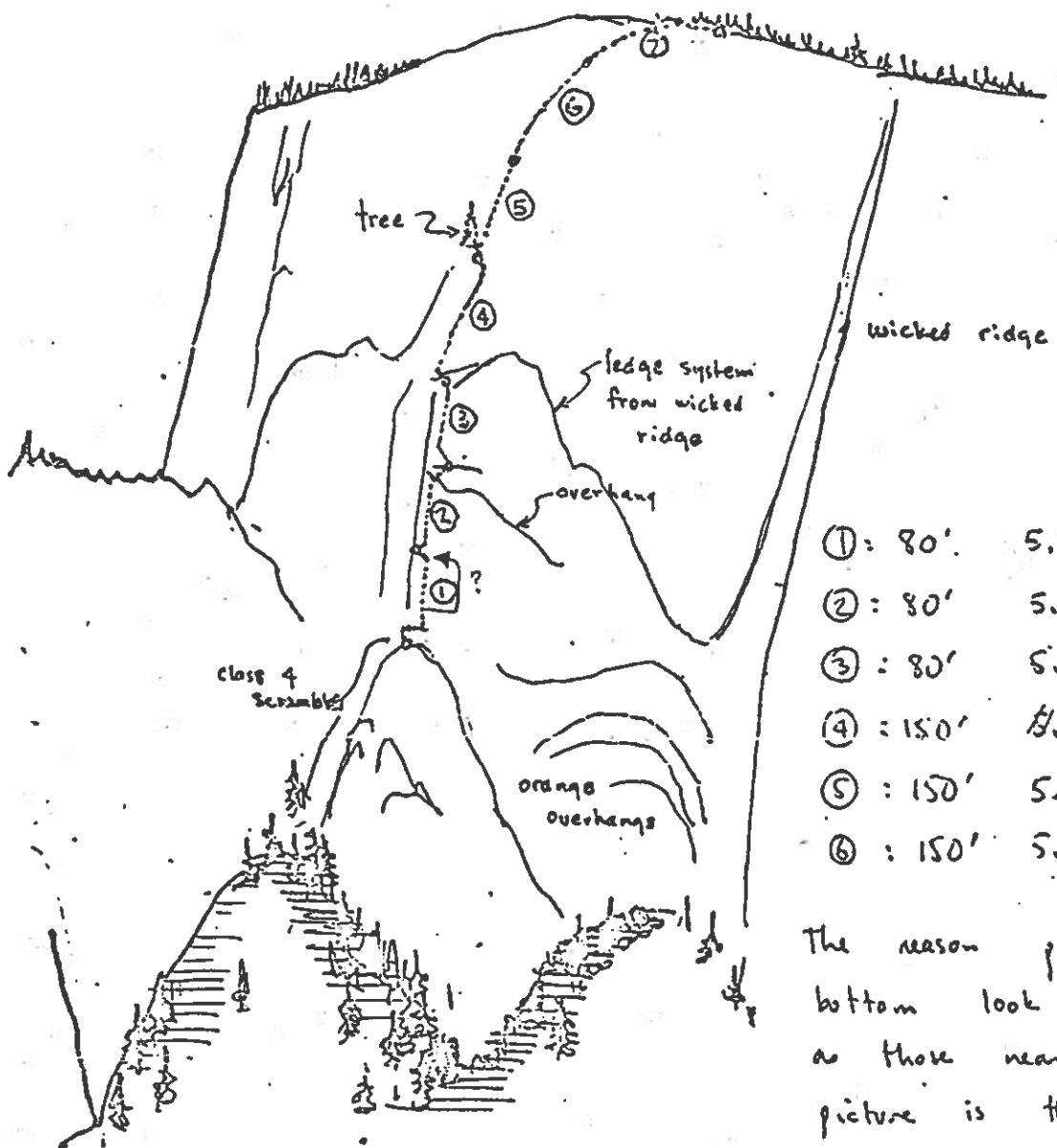
Done completely clean; small Peck wired nuts and small Choinard stoppers handy plus an assortment up to about #6 Hex.

The first pitch goes to broken area at bottom of crack. The crack where the two aiders go was done free (5.8) just above a fixed stubby angle. A fixed Lost Arrow up and to the R of this angle is then off-route.

The overhang on the second pitch is best done by getting as high as possible in the crack and stepping across and around the corner.

The third pitch is best continued to the large ledge.

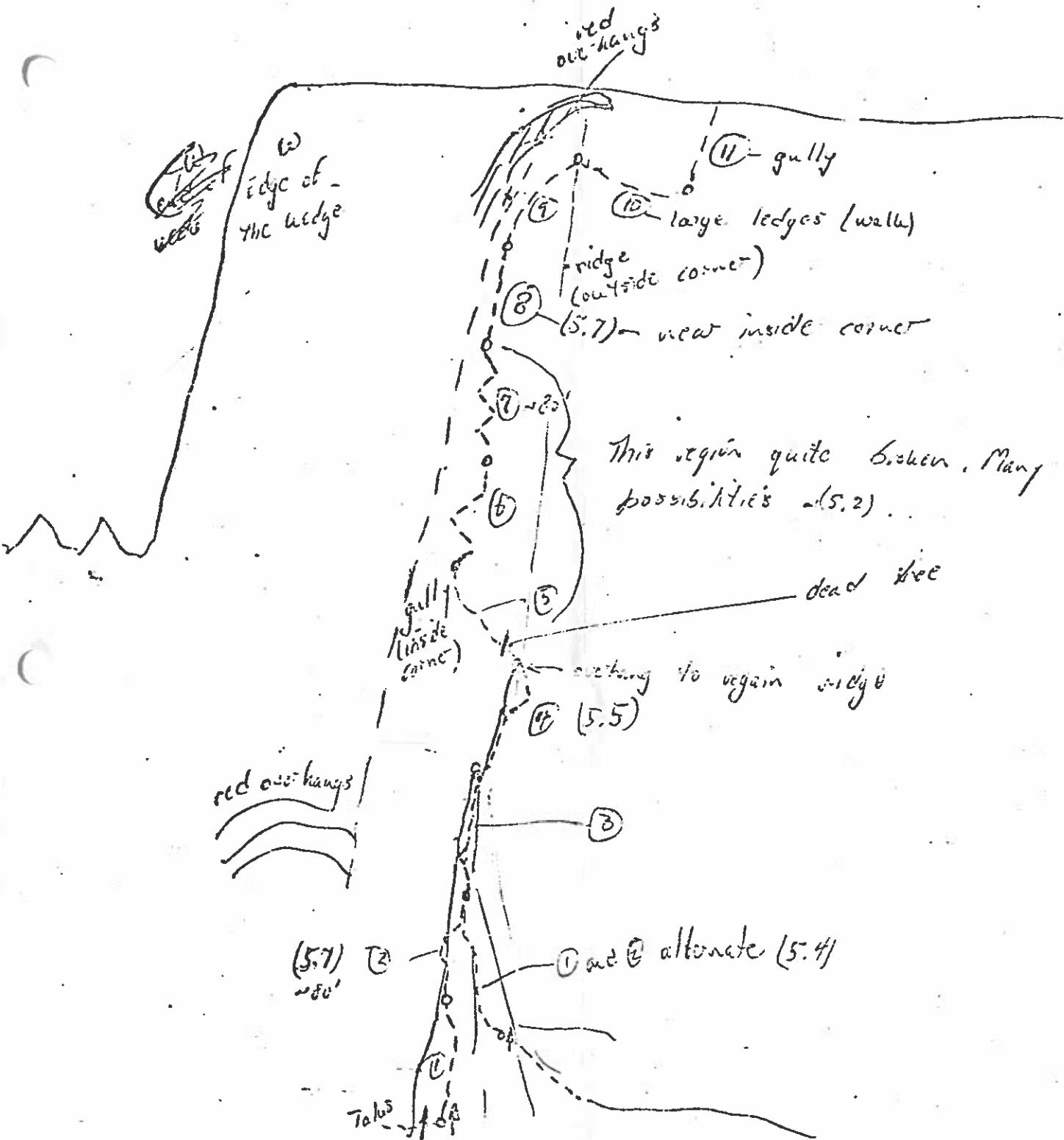
Climb is extremely vertical on the first three pitches. Virtually no strength moves involved, a large variety of technique moves, though.



- ① : 80' 5.7, A1, 5.9 free
- ② : 80' 5.7
- ③ : 80' 5.6
- ④ : 150' ~~5.7~~ 5.5
- ⑤ : 150' 5.2
- ⑥ : 150' 5.2

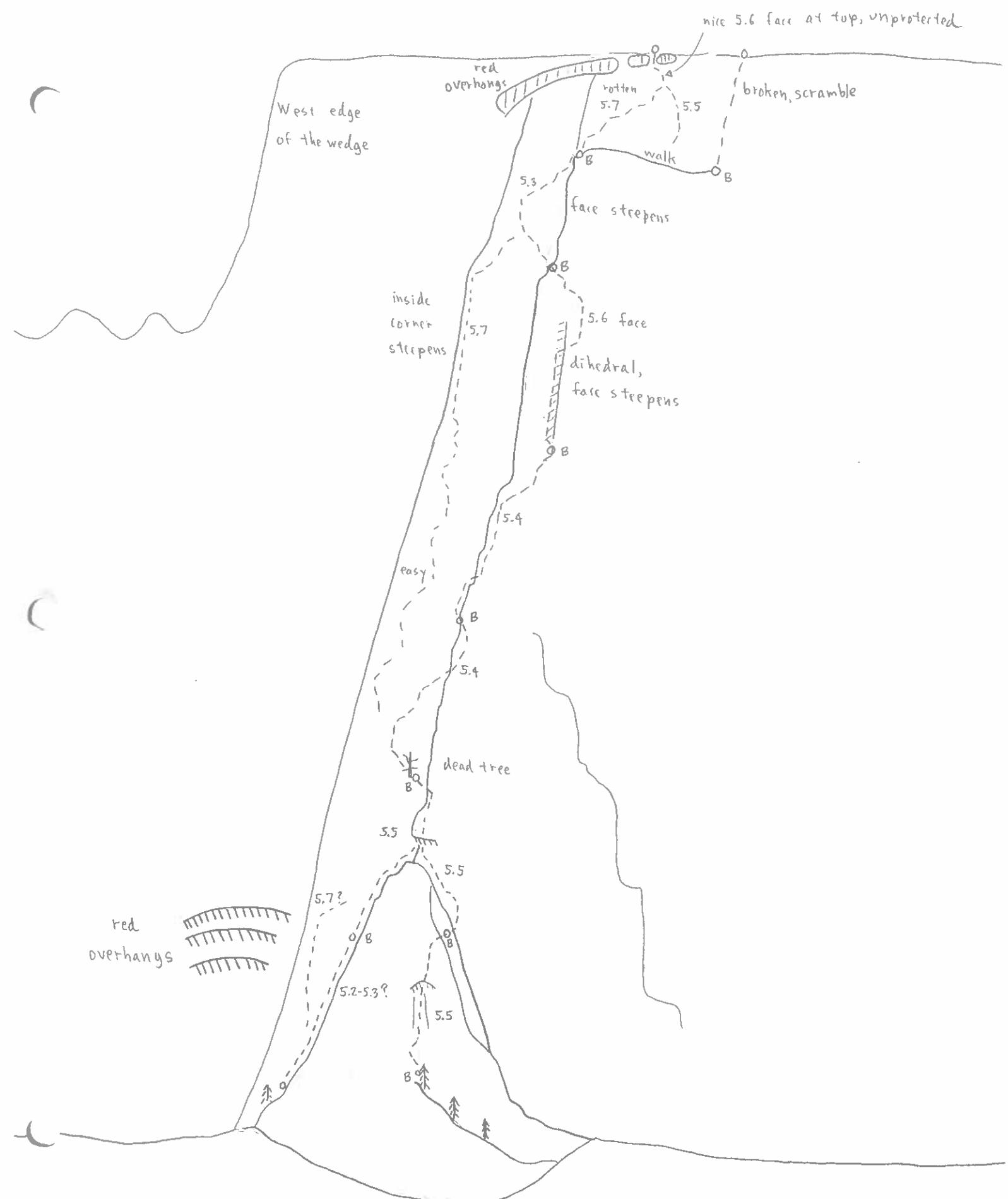
The reason pitches at bottom look as long as those near top in picture is that the angle of the first three pitches is much greater.

## 39. WEST RIDGE



40.

Wicked Ridge of wedge (on S face of wedge)  
First layer ~ 81.3 m. unless indicated



41. Wicked Ridge of the Wedge - East Face

First Ascent Merle Wheeler and friends  
Early 1980's?

There is no documentation on this climb, which went somewhere up the wide face between Wicked Ridge and Roofy Ridge. It was said that the face was good, thin climbing, but that protection was hard to find in places. (N. Ensslin)

## 42. Roofy Ridge of the Wedge

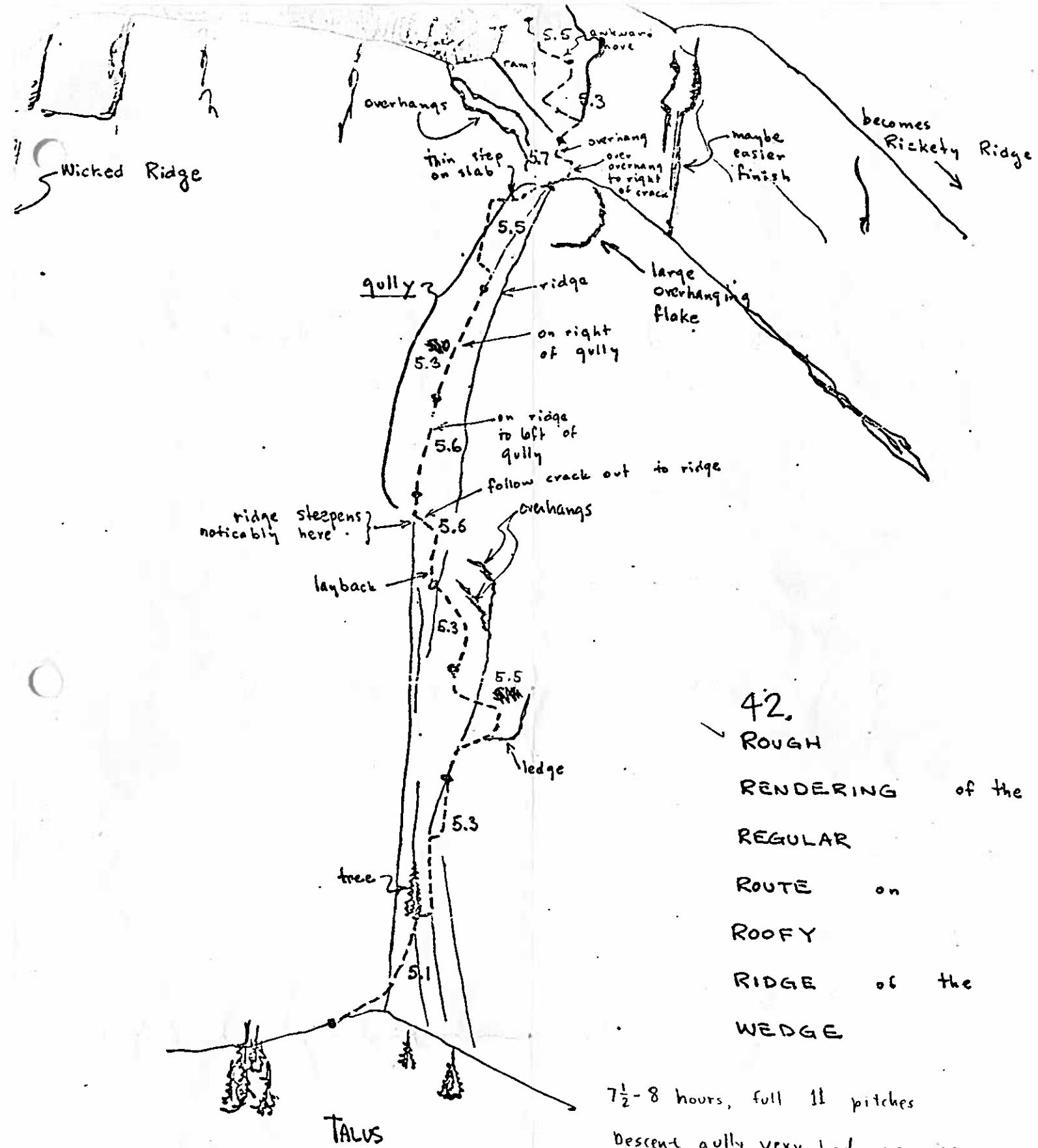
First Ascent Larry Dauelsberg, Mike Hart, Bill Hendry, Carl Keller, Mike Williams  
August 31, 1969

Roofy Ridge lies on the main face of the Encinada Wedge between Wicked Ridge and Rickety Ridge. Although steep and overhanging, there is considerable structure in this neighborhood, and other routes will doubtless be climbed -- so that the route described below will perhaps come to be called "The Regular Route on Roofy Ridge of the Wedge."

The bottom of the ridge is poorly defined -- one bears to the R (facing the main face) for about the first 4/10th of the climb, then traverses to the L to gain a gully which runs for another 4/10th, then straight up to finish.

The entire climb is Class 5, with the hardest pitch being about 5.7.

In the 2012 timeframe, Josh Smith and a partner added new 5.10 pitches on the W side of the ridge, and then completed the regular route. This is illustrated in the attached photo by Josh Smith, showing the central part of the Wedge. Roofy Ridge is just R of the middle of the photo, and Wicked Ridge bis near the L edge of the photo.



42.  
ROUGH

RENDERING of the  
REGULAR  
ROUTE on  
ROOFY  
RIDGE of the  
WEDGE

7½-8 hours, full 11 pitches

Descent gully very bad, requires rappell or exposed downclimb.

Hike from highway to top of wedge - 1 full hour.

Descent to start of climb 2½ hours  
Aug. 22, 1976



Copyright © 2026, Los Alamos Mountaineers

### 43. Ricketty Ridge of the Wedge

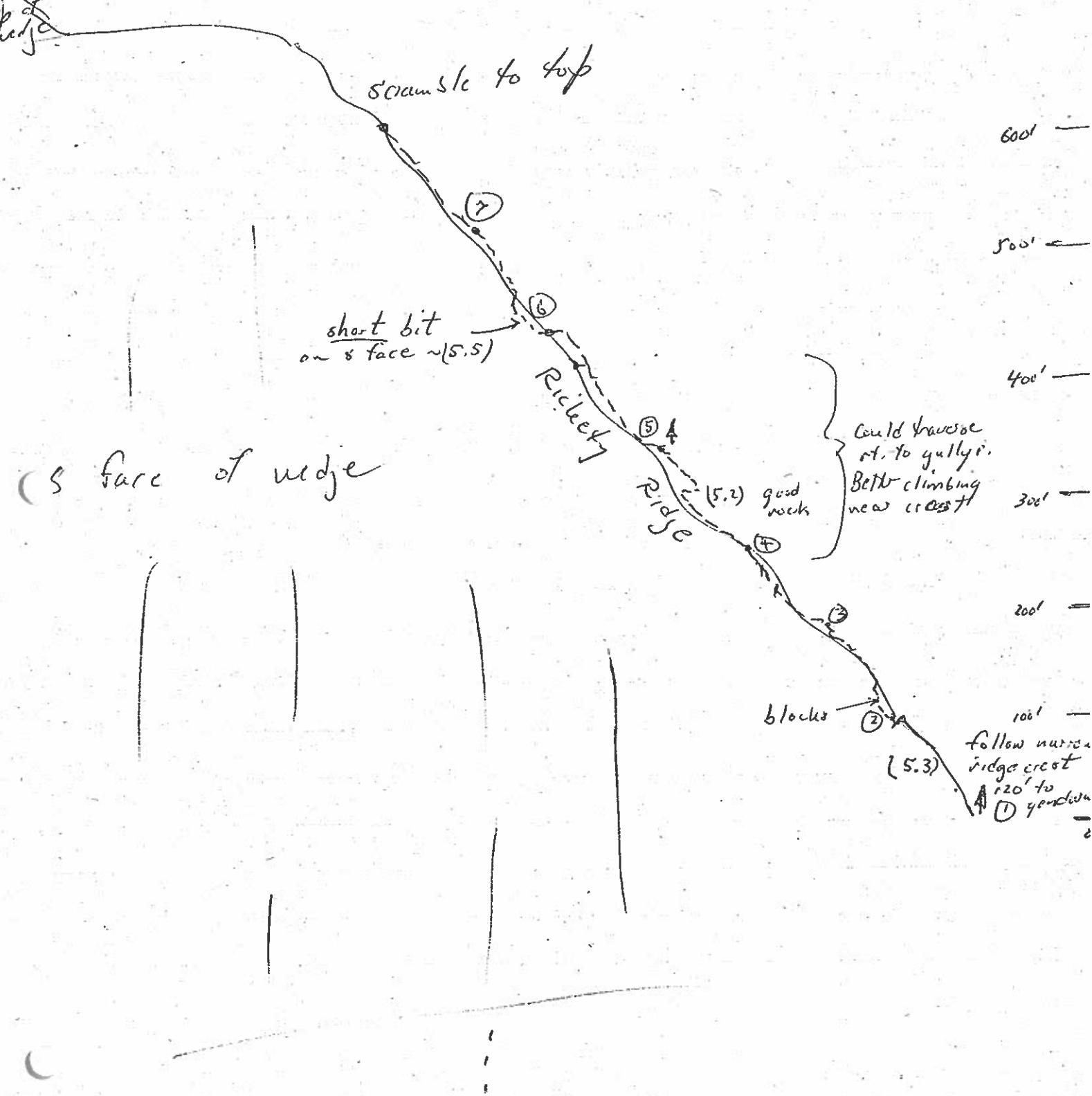
First Ascent George Bell, Mike Hart, Bill Hendry, and Mike Williams  
June 22, 1968

The Wedge is the formation between Encinado Creek and the Brazos River. It forms the S side of the Brazos Box. The S face of the Wedge is the extension of the cliffs on which most climbs have been done -- the extension up Encinado Creek.

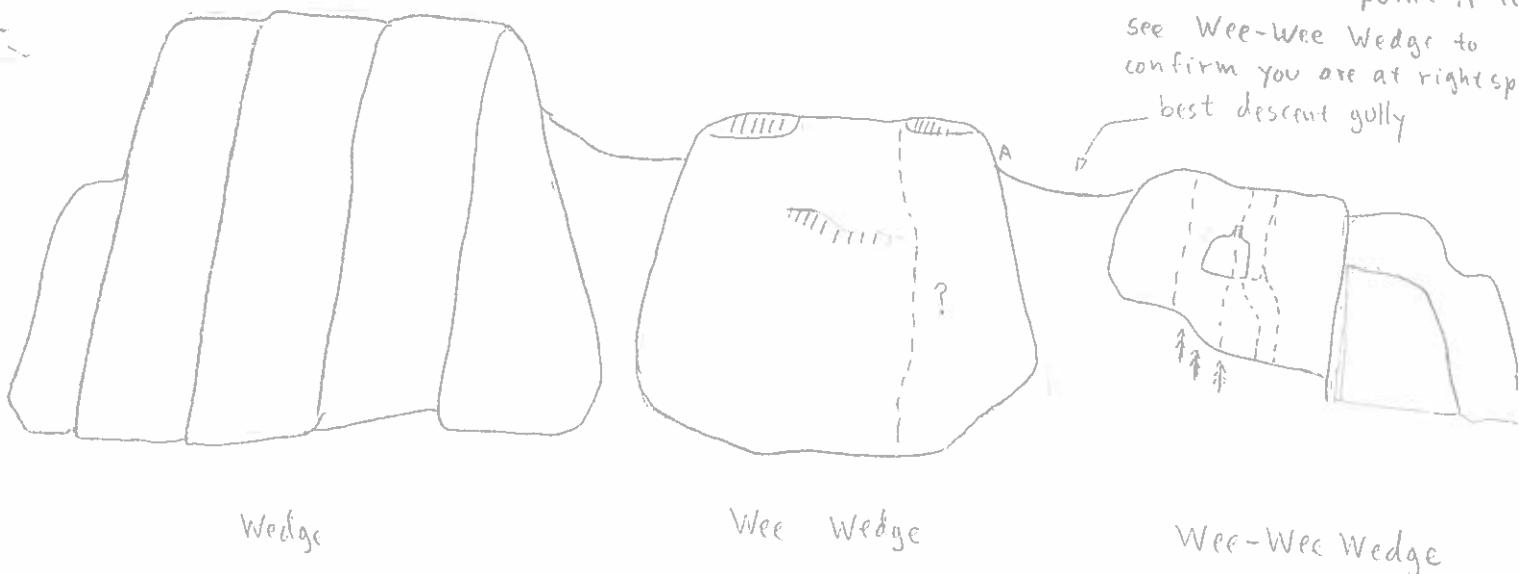
Ricketty Ridge forms the R (East) edge of the main S face of the Wedge. On its L is the steep S face while to the E is an easy broken gully. The route followed close to the ridge crest; at many points it could be made easier by traversing closer to the gully. Most of the rock is excellent but in a few areas there are many loose blocks stacked atop one another -- hence Ricketty Ridge. Around 600 vertical feet of climbing are involved, with seven leads.

To descend from the Wedge, walk E from the summit about  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile to top of next large gully beyond Ricketty Ridge Gully. Can walk down this gully, mostly on huge boulders to base of cliffs and then through woods to Encinado Creek.

# 43. Ricketty Ridge of the Wedge



## 44. Wee Wedge





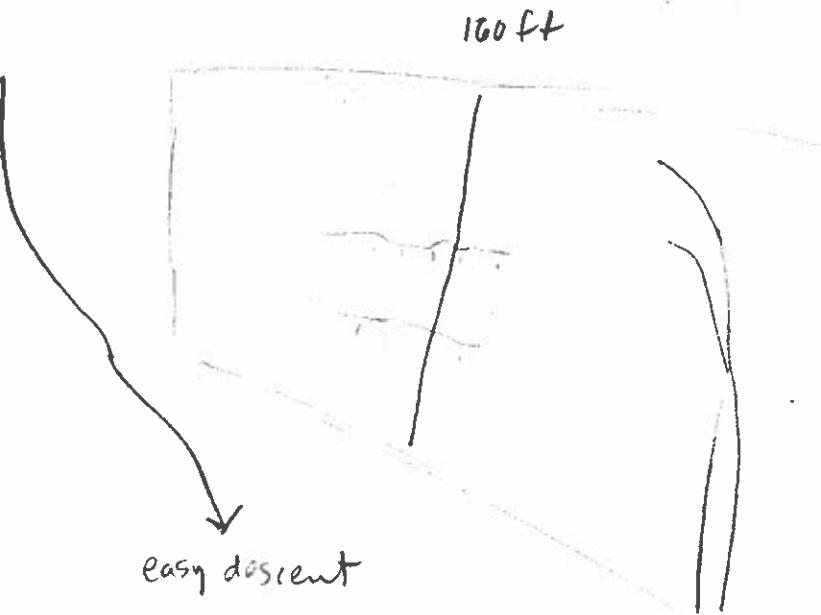
west ridge Wee Wedge  
go west below cliff  
club notch between buttress and  
west ridge  
4th class up and east

5.8 first pitch - up 6 feet then traverse  
right 15 feet. climb next to log  
pass overhang on right side  
then left to belay stance

5.8-5.5 second pitch - faces arch [or] on r.h.s.  
5.7-5.5 third pitch - " " " ridge

5.8 fourth pitch - left dihedral is  
difficult, right faces/dihedrals are  
5.5 - 5.6

### 45. Wee Wee Wedge



### Dave's Choice

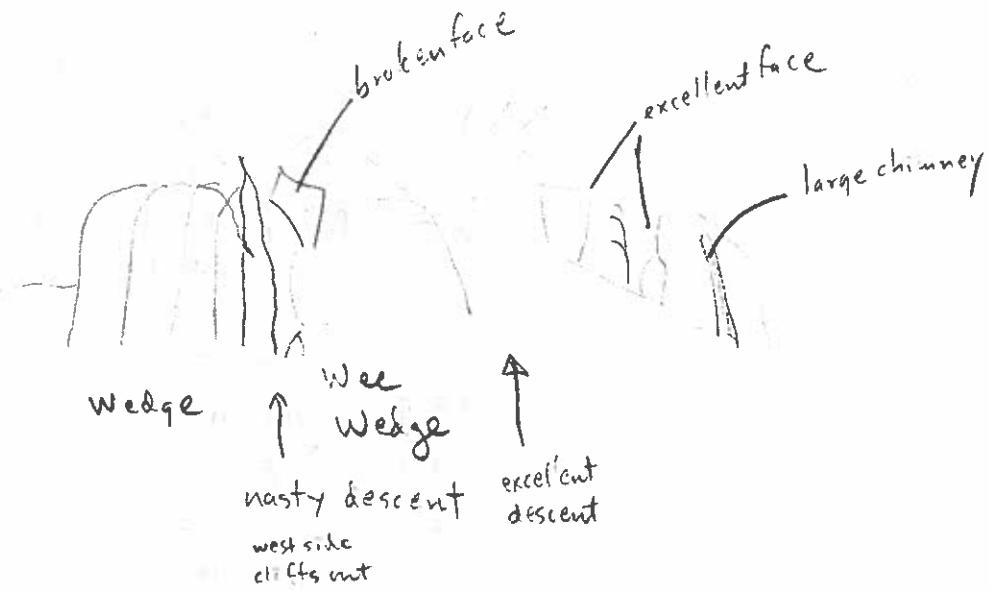
5.8 first pitch - straight up through  
4 foot wide chimney

5.9 second pitch - straight up through  
18 inch chimney and follow  
small crack

5.9 crack

5.8 chimney

# 45. Wee Wedge



Oct 5, 1986      Dave Barlow & Jim Sprinkle  
 Ralph Menikoff & Bob Stuewe

6<sup>30</sup> am 4  
 7<sup>00</sup> Poague  
 8<sup>50</sup> leave car TA-TP road  
 10<sup>30</sup> base of Wee Wedge  
 10<sup>00</sup> top of Wee Wedge } West Ridge of Wee Wedge  
 2<sup>00</sup> base Wee Wedge  
 3<sup>00</sup> top Wee Wedge }  
 3<sup>30</sup> leave for car  
 4<sup>50</sup> at car  
 7<sup>00</sup> home

ADDENDUM  
46. Recent New Routes

1. Waterfall Area: "Roybal's Horrendous Off-Width." Said to be hard 5.10. Reported by David Balz.
2. Main Cliffs: New route to the left of Resignation Ridge called Resignation Dihedrals. First ascent by Cloud Hall and Aaron Miller. "5.9+ with some beautiful and exciting climbing. Maybe about 9 pitches from bottom to top, including a solid 5.9 pitch as part of the approach to the huge ledge gully that you start the main line from. The entire route is down and left from the arête (climbers view)."
3. Main Cliffs: New route on the Heart Face, starting up from the bottom of the heart recess. 5.10 hard. First ascent by David Balz and Aaron Miller. This is "A six-pitch route up the face through the R-center side of the main face feature. There is a thin seam that goes from near the bottom to the top and exits the upper face on the R side. The whole route was maybe mid-5.10, and stunning."
4. Main Cliffs: Aaron Miller and Josh Smith also did a 9-pitch route on the Heart Face that they called the Grand Dihedrals. This is a series of dihedral pitches that start from the 6-tree ledge above the Heart Face Canyon in a topo that they posted.
5. Brazos Box Area: "The Shaft," a new route to the top of the face above The Ramp, E of the Box Tower and W of Relentless Ridge (or part of it). 5.9 start, then easier. First ascent David Balz and others.
6. Brazos Box Area: New route in the Gothic Arches area called "Gothic Arches – Right Leg." First ascent by Josh Smith and Aaron Miller. This is a direct line up the triangular slab to the base of the 5.10 block. It starts "right of the arches in a huge right-facing dihedral system in red rock for a couple of 5.9 pitches. It follows faces and corners for about 6 pitches (10- to 10c) to a section of low 5<sup>th</sup>-class face that we simul-climbed for another 500 feet to the exit pitches in a gaping chimney system where we climbed the L side for another 2-3 pitches of mid-to-hard 5.10 to top out." Josh and Aaron report that other direct lines can also be done in this general area.
7. Brazos Box Area: Josh Smith and his partner did a 1000-foot-high ice climb in the steep, shaded corner between Gothic Arches and Razor Ridge.
8. Brazos Box Area: Third Class scramble route on the N side of the river up a ridge by David Balz and others. Perhaps Razor Ridge or Hunchback Ridge?
9. In the 2012 timeframe, Josh Smith and a partner added new 5.10 pitches on the W side of the ridge, and then completed the regular route. The new pitches are shown in a photo in the Roofy Ridge PDF.

# The Heart Face - New Routes

