

Edmunds Headwall trip report

Dave Welles

7/30/10-8/1/10



With a perfect weekend forecast Parker Montgomery, Jeff Tinnea and I of the set off to climb the Edmunds Headwall route on Thursday eve 7/29/10. We car camped near the Carbon River ranger station and got up on Friday to get our climbing permits. We were on the trail and moving by

10:15 a.m. and heading up the trail to spray park @ apx 5800 ft. –



...then onto Ptarmigan ridge past Observation Rock and then followed the ridge up to apx 8400ft where we descended 800ft of a scree field down to the north Mowich glacier.





– here we traveled on the North Mowich through some crevasses and then the Edmunds and climbed steadily up to our high camp on a prominent saddle looking directly to the headwall @ 8600 ft.



We arrived at camp at 8:45 PM after apx 10 hours of hiking. Parker and I pitched a tent and bivy on a good level spot with a good water source 20 feet away on a saddle, while Jeff melted water and cooked a good ramen and tuna dinner for us.



We were bedded down by 9:30 with a wakeup time of 4am. We thought we would get a later start since the headwall is shaded all morning. Around 1am Jeff woke me up – (Jeff and I shared the tent and Parker had the bivy) and said that it had completely clouded over and a storm was coming in fast – I couldn't believe it as had seen a clear sky with stars when we went to bed – just goes to show you that you should always be prepared for anything despite a good forecast.



The weather kept getting nastier and nastier and with much lightning – we consider here we might hide if it got worse – but decided there was nowhere we could go - just stay on our sleeping pads and hope if anything hit close that we would stay insulated – I the meantime it rained cats and dogs. We went back to sleep and when I woke up at 4 there were stars out again – later Jeff said the storm had ended about 2am.

We awoke at 4am, had a good breakfast, roped up and at 5:15 headed up towards the bergschrund at the base of the headwall just as we saw first light. We stayed to the west of a large rock formation for about 1400ft on the glacier with no open crevasses and good cramponing to the base of the bergschrund.



—we debated the best approach and eventually at Jeff's suggestion we went to the east side of the bergschrund — I led up through it being belayed from below and worked my way through mixed sift snow and ice through the crack — (somewhere in here I lost my main sunglasses which slid into the bergschrund - the first gear casualty) as soon as I was up I belayed Jeff then Parker up.



We took a quick breather un-roped and headed up the headwall. We had earlier taken a vote and decided unless we used protection up the entire headwall it would be safest to stay un-roped. We slowly worked our way up the headwall taking turns kicking steps – the slope was around 55 degrees.



– we decided also to avoid skirting the Mowich face bergschrund to the right and instead went up the chute between the rocks just to the right of the face. We eventually topped out where sunset ridge meets the upper Edmunds headwall (it took us several hours to reach this point as going was slower than we anticipated – none of checked the time at this point) where we took a quick breather and climbed the rocks to our left leading right on top the upper Mowich face.



For about 100 feet we were able to traverse in snow well over the bergschrund along the ridge - we had originally projected the headwall to take us 5 hours but it took much longer.

Now we had to do a climbing traverse to the east over the Mowich face – we immediately encountered ice under a few inches of snow – we each had two glacier axes (ice tools would have been nice) and Jeff at least had good front point mixed ice crampons. We put in a screw and we made my way past the last section of rocks towards a large open face. We regretted not buying a 5th screw at this point as it would have made for less pitches - we had 30 meters of rope – and it took us four pitches slow up the slope – we later estimated it much have been around 5PM when we started this section and it took a couple hours to complete – for every screw placed we had to dig down through about 4-6 inches of snow to get to good to marginal ice – as the temp dropped we also had a lot of trouble keeping the screws clear of frozen ice inside and it was quite difficult to get them started. It was in the second or third pitch that our tent removed

itself from Parker's pack and slid all the way down the face, bouncing over the bergschrund, landing on a visible ledge, far out of reach.



Parker wisely suggested that we concentrate on the job a hand , i.e. getting up the face and then consider how we would sleep that night – that left us with only one bivy for three of us – (although I still had the tent poles and we had foil emergency bivy). Eventually we topped out at the bottom of Liberty Cap as the sun set towards the north lower side of the cap. (We also figured out that Jeff's altimeter watch had been in the rolled u tent that we lost).

The sun was setting and we found a good spot in some meter length rime and quickly dug and stomped out a camp – we pooled what we had and we had one bivy, one space bag, one space blanket and three bags varying between 0 and 20 degree. We decided to stay close together all night and hope no storms came through again – there was a contact wind through the night, but we all stayed warm enough and actually got some sleep – we estimated that it got down to 10

degrees or lower and all boots, gears harnesses were frozen solid the next day and covered with thick frost except for water we had left in our packs.



We all woke up several times in the night to check conditions as we had decided to go as soon as we could see – (when we bedded down it was clear but soon was white out) We wanted to wait to see the route so we couldn't get off course in the white out – eventually getting breaks enough to see between 7:30 and 8 am – at which time we had packed up (miserable with the frost) and left. We slowly made our way over the cap - and at the flats by 10:30 am.



- And the only thing left was the summit cone. We traversed out way across the flats of the cap and then up through the scree of the cone and arrived on top at about 1:15. SUMMIT!





There we lingered until 2:30 and we started our descent down the Emmons. The Emmons was in good shape and still firm for midafternoon-and not too much balling up until we got about the flats where Jeff who was now leading broke through a snow bridge entirely – after some deliberation we jumped it as we could not end run the crevasse. We arrive at camp Sherman at 5:30 and left at 6 or so after giving the next parties a heads up about the blown out snow bridge. We filled up our water bottles at a good spring right near the saddle then the big glissade down the Interglacier – we encountered no open crevasses on the rout down the Inter. We went down the main trail to white river campground and arrived at the car at 9PM. The new trail section is awesome!!! – thanks for getting it open!!!

We then stopped in Enumclaw for a quick burger and some coffee and finally got to our first car at Mowich Lake PL @ 11:30 PM where we quickly separated gear and split up – Jeff went straight home and Parker and I went towards the Eastgate park and ride where we had met on that the beginning of the trip – as we went through Enumclaw we were pulled over and let go with no explanation – I suspect my car was too dusty and then through much construction then then Parker and I both home by 2:45 a.m. 4 screws and one picket – route is in great condition,

though I'm not sure how much longer - good snow ice cover and few open crevasses on north
Mowich/Edmunds – headwall and face in good shape. - Dave Welles 8/5/10