

# INQUISITION OF THE ARRIGETCH



BOB WILSON GRANT APPLICATION FOR 2015-2016  
EXPEDITION LEADER: KATIE MILLS  
TEAM MEMBERS: TODD TORRES, NICK PAPPAS, CIGDEM MILOBINSKI  
PROPOSAL WRITTEN JUNE 29, 2015

## Overview

Wouldn't it be magical to have Yosemite all to yourself for 3 weeks...wonderful yes but certainly impossible. However I think I have found a place where I can almost achieve this dream; in the Arrigetch Peaks of the Brooks Range of Alaska. It seems like a playland for the enthused alpine climber, there is even a mountain called Disneyland! We are drawn to the unexplored nature of this area. Many first ascents in the area were put up in the 60s and 70s along moderate ridgelines with 5.7/5.8 ratings. Route descriptions of first ascents that do exist are often very vague such as just 'south face'. Being able to pick our own line of weaknesses to ascend into the unknown is quite an irresistible challenge. For my team and I this constitutes the trip of a lifetime.

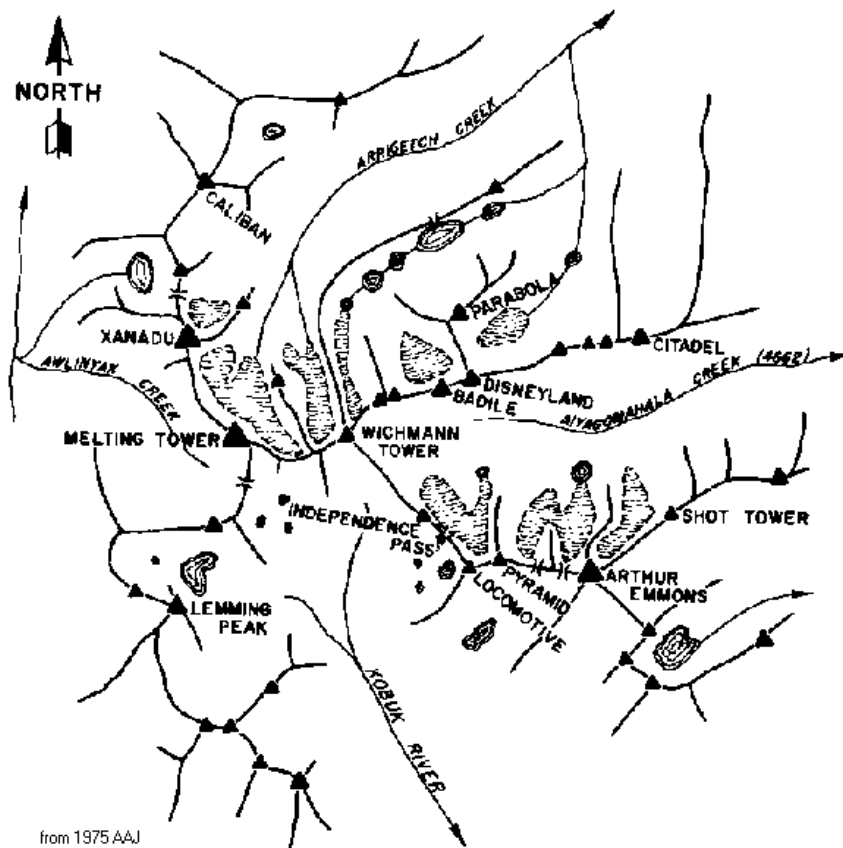
These peaks are very remote in the northern part of the state requiring a flight to Fairbanks, then a flight to the small town of Bettles, then a bush plane into the range themselves located within the Gates of the Arctic National Park. After hiking for two days with our 90 lb loads of gear and provisions we'd set up base camp along the Aiyagomahala Creek and begin exploring. We will move basecamp as necessary to the mountains we are climbing. I think our main adversaries will be mosquitoes and we will be highly vigilant towards bears.

There are a couple of helpful online archives of ascents in the area:

<http://web.stanford.edu/~clint/arrig/>

<http://www.nps.gov/gaar/learn/nature/upload/arrigetch%20final%20report%20compressed.pdf>

The peaks are geographically lined up along three separate ridges.



Some of the mountains we have become intrigued by include the following (photos from the internet without permission from the artists, not to be used for any purpose other than this grant):



Xanadu – The half dome of the arctic. An FA of the west face is intriguing as a possible big wall ascent. It will be challenging to hike in portaledge and haul bags but we may give it a try. Jon Krakauer led the first ascent up the south arête in 1974. Hayden Kennedy and Tommy Caldwell more recently put up a 5.11+ next to the west face in 2011 but lamented they did not have enough time to attempt the west face big wall style.



Albatross – Originally climbed along its SW ridge in 1969. A 5.9 ‘parallel cracks’ has been climbed on the south east face in 1993. There appears to be many more lines to be had on this majestic south face. Its NE Ridge looks aesthetically appealing as well.



Wichmann Tower –  
Discovering a route on the steep NE Face would be a first ascent. It has been climbed by its easier ridgelines to the southwest and northeast.



Elephant's Tooth –The original ascent was a 5.7 on the south face and a scramble up the east ridge was done then too. In 2010 a line was put up on the north pillar (route shown in photo). I believe more lines exist on this north face.



Badille (center of photo)– The east ridge was the first ascent, also a 5.10 southeast and 5.10 southwest buttress have been climbed. There looks to be potential for lines up the striking northwest face.

Disneyland (peak on the left) – Only has one ascent by its SW Face. I want to climb the second because I love the name.



Shot Tower – Its west ridge is the most popular route in the Arrigetch, 16 pitches long. Its NW Face has been ascended twice. We would love to climb it along its popular routes or try a new route.

## **The Team**

I have assembled a strong team of three enthusiastic rock climbers all with Yosemite aid and big wall experience and myself as the token alpinist. We all have backcountry experience and enjoy getting to spend extended amounts of time in the wilderness. With four people we can work separately on different routes in teams of two but if someone gets sick the trip is not over. Also a larger team is better protection against bears and general safety in such a remote range.

### **Katie Mills - Expedition Leader**

While the least experienced aid or free climber of the team, I also have the most alpine experience having climbed several grade IV-V rock routes, most recently the complete North Ridge of Mt. Stuart, NE Buttress of Slesse Mountain, and the Red Dihedral on the Incredible Hulk last summer. My navigation and route finding skills in the backcountry will be useful. I also have been on two other expeditions, one to attempt Aconcauga and another to the Ruth Gorge in the Central Range of Alaska so I am familiar with what planning for an expedition entails. I took AR in 2011 and am comfortable leading 5.9 trad and enjoy pushing into the 5.10 range.

### **Cigdem Milobinski**

Cigdem will be climbing with me, I met her in the 2012 Advanced Alpine Fitness Class. She has completed ascents of Washington Column and Leaning Tower in Yosemite as well as numerous trad climbs around the western US in the 5.9/5.10 range. She took AR in 2013 and has been improving her rock skills ever since at an extraordinary envy-inducing rate.

### **Todd Torres**

Todd grew up in Eugene and taught himself to trad climb on the tiny but excellent crag of Skinner's Butte. While an excellent boulderer his heart belongs to big wall climbing and he has spent a lot of time in Yosemite on El Capitan and Washington Column. He is our most experienced aid climber and has the most big wall experience and can free climb 5.10+ trad with ease. He will be mentoring all of us this upcoming year in improving our aid and big wall skills.

### **Nick Pappas**

Nick is Todd's partner for his big wall climbs. He moved to Portland two years ago from his home state of Colorado where he learned to climb on the hard cracks of El Dorado Canyon. He also happens to be my coworker and every weekend is jetting off somewhere to go climbing and every weeknight is climbing at his favorite hardman home crag, Broughton Bluff. He regularly climbs 5.10+ trad comfortably. I have been very impressed with Nick's determination in throwing himself at difficult climbing styles such as offwidths and rattly fingers which will be very beneficial in the ascent of the unknowns.

## **Itinerary**

We are planning to go for approximately three weeks when the weather starts clearing in July or August 2016. Mosquitoes can be bad in July but winter can start moving in by late August.

Day 1: fly to Fairbanks, buy supplies

Day 2: fly to Bettles, attend mandatory backcountry orientation with parks service, get bear canisters

Day 3: bushplane to Circle Lake, begin hiking to basecamp

Day 4: hike to basecamp on Aiyagomahala Creek

Day 5-24: climb/explore weather permitting

Day 25 : pick up from Circle Lake to Bettles, Bettles to Fairbanks

Day 26: fly home

## **Budget**

Bettles to Circle Lake Beaver – 1100lb limit flight \$1326 each way	\$2652
Fairbanks to Bettles flight \$340x 4	\$1360
PDX to Fairbanks \$500 x 4	\$2000
Food and fuel for 21 days @30\$ per person x4	\$2520
<u>Misc gear (sat phones, radios, climbing gear, camping gear)</u>	<u>\$2000</u>
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$10,532</b>

Please keep in mind that the government will take 25% and the state 9% of the funding we are given as ‘taxes on a prize winning’ so a \$10,000 grant is worth only \$6700 unless someone else has figured a way around this.