



**AUG 17** KYLE MILLER AND CREW COMPLETE FIRST SPLIT TRAVERSE OF THE PICKETT RANGE

For those who have glimpsed the jagged teeth of the *Picket Range*, it represents a powerful impasse of incredible gnar. For others who haven't seen the towering crags of a sub-range many call *the most rugged and isolated in Washington*, just the peak names should be enough to spark caution, concern and imagination. Mt. Fury, Mt. Terror and Mt. Challenger are just a handful of the craggy, glaciated peaks that speak to the intensity of a remote subrange marked by rarely travelled routes and defined by peaks climbed only by the committed few. But for ski mountaineers, the Picket Traverse has loomed as a crown jewel of career accomplishment in the Pacific Northwest since Carl Skoog, Lowell Skoog and Jens Kieler completed the first ski traverse of the range.

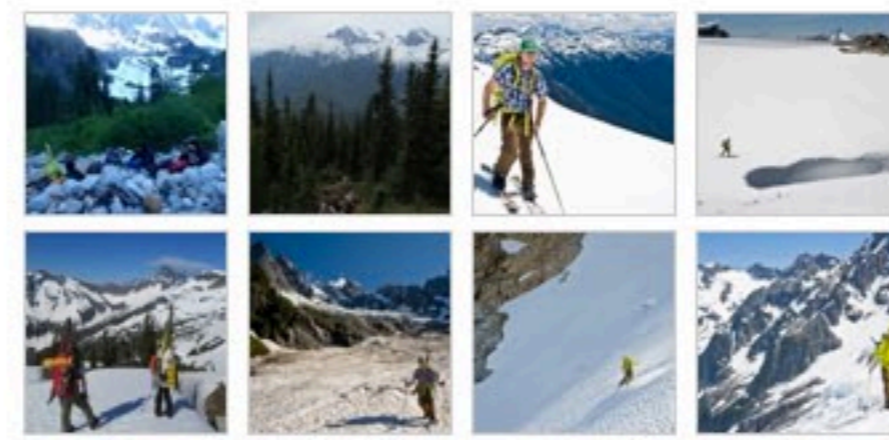
In 2010 photographer Jason Hummel and Forest McBrien became the second successful party to ski across the sub-range, repeating the iconic first traverse and documenting this unforgiving zone with incredible imagery. First Ascent splitboarder Kyle Miller started out on the trip but, making a very tough call, decided to turn back three days out due to sketchy avalanche conditions that just didn't feel right. Controversy swirled when Hummel was quoted as saying that a splitboard was not the right tool for the job. But that bold skier's challenge brought Miller back this past summer, this time with three fellow snowboard mountaineers to complete the first ever splitboard traverse of the Picket Range. The crew travelled more than 50 miles and 35,000 vertical feet but with great effort etched their names in the history of Northwest mountaineering, ski or snowboard. Below is Miller's post-trip report.



Words by Kyle Miller, Images by Kyle Miller, Seth Holton and Scott McAllister

It all started three years ago with the intention of pulling off the unheard of, a traverse of a region of the cascades called the Picket Range. In mountains known for isolation, jagged glacier covered slopes this area is regarded as the crux or as we call it "The Teeth of the Cascades" An area known to make grown men cry and to have dirtbag mountaineers ditch their backpacks filled with thousands of dollars of gear. I had originally ventured out to there with Jason Hummel and Forest McBrien to attempt a midwinter traverse but decided I felt more comfortable turning back solo three days into the trip then to confront what I saw to be extreme avy conditions. Fortunate for them they were able to pull off the traverse, elevating themselves as the 2nd group to ever pull off the ski traverse. When word got out and reports were written, my concerns of avys was overshadowed by the fact that I was on a splitboard and in Jason's words, "It was not the tool for the job." Deep inside I knew I would have to go back one day to close this chapter of my life and prove as a splitboarder that it's not the equipment but how you use it.

Some people spend months if not years planning for a trip such as this but our crew put the plans together in a total of two days. There is something to living your life in the moment that allows such freedom and it came with a break in the mundane weather. Starting on the 4th of July we would travel for six days and over 50 miles through the crème de la crème of ruggedness in the Cascades. The 4th of July is a very significant day to me as last year I was in Machu Picchu, the year before that I was doing a 7-day day traverse of the Alpine Lakes Wilderness and the year before that it was another 7-day traverse of the Dakobed Range, so the Pickets was not only worth but more than fitting to these adventures. A few brief email exchanges of potential routes and possibilities confirmed that Frankie Delvo, Seth Holton and Scott McAllister were all game for such a grand adventure and more importantly we had a splitboard specific crew.



FIRST ASCENT EMAIL SIGNUP

DOWNLOAD WALLPAPER



LATEST EXPEDITION



PAST EXPEDITIONS



BE FIRST



Our Be First program is an opportunity to get sponsored for your own adventures. to learn more and submit your proposals, visit [Be First](#).

PARTNERS

- [Adventure Travel »](#)
- [Airstream »](#)
- [American Mountaineering Museum »](#)
- [Birds of Prey World Cup »](#)
- [Blue Legacy »](#)
- [The Explorers Club »](#)
- [Global Relief - American Forests »](#)
- [Leave No Trace »](#)
- [Mountainfilm in Telluride »](#)
- [Rainier Mountaineering, Inc. »](#)
- [Southeast Alaska Backcountry Adventures \(SEABA\) »](#)
- [Steamboat Ski Resort »](#)