

holds (F6) climb up 120 feet to a short aid crack (A1, 2 pitons) just below a prominent belay ledge. Follow the ramp above this ledge, then go left up giant steps via a steep jam-crack to a large platform below the summit. A vertical crack with several chockstones (F7) leads to the chimney-like notch separating the south (false) summit from the large, smooth summit bulge to the north. 3 bolts were placed above the notch to reach small nubbins leading to the top. NCCS II, F7, A1.

MICHAEL HEATH

*Warlock Needle, South Face.* Almost a classic combination of a smooth dome and a pointed spire, the magnificent upthrust in the central portion of the Needles was certainly image-evoking. On my first climbing venture to the attractive group of “new” climbing problems, it was apparent they were not only a physical but an aesthetic playground. It was early April. Surely the three of us, Mike Heath, Dan McHale, and I, had a self-righteous feeling about the region. Among other pleasures, we had the freedom of choice: what to climb? It took little discussion: a continuing crack system seemed to lead up the sunny face of the magnificent central spire. The name, Warlock, came later, when we conspired to adopt names to the various summits. Climbing unroped, we frictioned and squirmed up a gully that bit into the south face, near the lowest rock on the spire. It was apparent that we had to go where the cracks led. With a deceptive start, a chute bore right, to end the lead at a large pine. We continued up a gully, then traversed right to a hard jam-crack; this was ascended to a ledge. Then a right-facing open-book led to the top of a pedestal. The route dropped left, then came a struggle and squirm up a deep chimney. Now the massive upper wall towered above a lofty platform; a recess near the southeast corner provided a spacious belay. The following lead worked up and right on a slab, then into good but awkward nailing. Exciting, exposed free climbing up a long chimney ended at a belay position deep in a cave. A new lead continued up the chimney with some tricky moves, until it was possible to traverse right onto the face-margin; cracks showed the way to a widening gully/trough. Following an awkward stemming start, the gully provided the answer to the slabs under the summit blocks. Here a meandering down-traverse-up method across the upper east face led to a prominent jam-crack that split into the notch between the summit blocks. A struggle with a block that capped its top brought us to the notch. We slabbed up to the south summit block to find an earlier cairn. Approaching darkness did not allow the climb of the higher north block on this venture.

It was time to rappel, for the forest beneath was becoming murkey. NCCS III (possibly approaching IV), F8, A2.

FRED BECKEY

*Sorcerer Needle, East Face.* In The Needles, there are a number of interesting crack systems. Seen from a distant perspective, the break in the wall on the east face of the Wizard-Sorcerer massif, appears as a "natural". Jim Stoddard and I packed to its base on May 9, then spent several hours discovering that while the rock was superb, the crack system had not been designed by the Creator for easy climbing. Jamming and stemming brought us to a tiny platform; aid up a thin, resisting crack brought us to the crux: above an awkward hanging belay the crack veered out, overhanging. In the morning, this proved to be a technique demander, with little good protection and many qualms; at one point a bolt was placed, for the exposure was considerable and the protection non-existent. Once above this strenuous section, the system had adequate ledges to break the still-demanding crack climbing. It also had a few overly adequate bushes that provided a chorus of cursing. The climbing on to the Wizard-Sorcerer notch was continuously interesting, mostly free but with a final short aid problem. An icy, unseasonably cold wind made us hurry up the final pitches to the once-visited summit of Sorcerer. Shivering hard, we made the steep rappel to the upper notch. The climb would be rated as NCCS III, F7 or F8, A2.

FRED BECKEY

*Hermit Spire, South Face.* An interesting edifice of nature highlights the rolling subalpine hills west of the Little Kern River, closely north of Lloyd Meadows (several miles north of The Needles). Its base is shaped like a typical Sierra dome, but about 600 feet higher its walls slenderize to form a crest-like spire. Dan McHale and I spent Nov. 29 and 30, 1969 climbing the south face, which had to be reached by some cross-country effort. The climbing was spectacular but with a rough (unglaciated) surface of minute horns, hollows, knobs, and spikes. We began up a chimney and jam-crack system that brought some early strenuous moves to the climb. After three pitches and some awkward moments, the route eased through some zigzag ledges to the base of the face's principal feature: a great dihedral system that carried up to a platform just east of the thin summit crown. First there was delightful face climbing to its right, then a full pitch — mostly a dog-leg crack — hanging onto the dihedral. A pitch of semi-overhanging bonging provided some workmanlike aid maneuvers.