

*Mt. Hoffman, North Face, Meteor Shower.* The north face of Mt. Hoffman is a wide face with many potential lines. In August, Sarah Schneider and I established what we believe to be the fourth technical route on the face, the farthest left one done to date. It follows the second continuous crack system from the left edge of the face (there are two lesser faces left of the “main” north face. Both of these have potential lines, but I don’t believe any routes have been done here yet). A prominent overhanging offwidth was passed via a traverse right about 150 feet up. The climbing then went up and left on flakes to regain the crack above the offwidth. In general, the route, *Meteor Shower* (III, 5.10a), slants slightly right for much of its length. The route involved four pitches, with the crux—a fist crack through a small roof—on the last one. Poor rock, continuous climbing and dicey protection and anchors seemed to be the norm on this potentially dangerous route.

ALAN BARTLETT, *unaffiliated*

*Balch Camp Flake, Flicker of Time Arête and The Passionate Life.* On February 23, David Cotter and I climbed the east (right-hand) arête of the huge Balch Camp Flake, naming it the *Flicker of Time Arête* (5.9 AO). We started on the bolt ladder of the original 1954 route, then free climbed up the arête to the top. A day later, Jay Anderson and Ann Yeagle climbed the left-hand of the two very impressive and obvious wide cracks on the south side of Balch Camp Flake. This offwidth and squeeze chimney, which they named *The Passionate Life* (5.11c), had been attempted before, but never completed.

RICHARD LEVERSEE

*The Fin, North Arête Chimney.* In June, Dave Nettle, Kevin Daniels and I climbed an obvious crack system directly up the north face of The Fin starting on the spine of the ridge that joins the base of the north face. Based on the old rusty quarter-inch bolt and sling we found about halfway up the first pitch, we think the route, the *North Arête Chimney* (III 5.10+, five pitches) had been started a long time ago.

RICHARD LEVERSEE

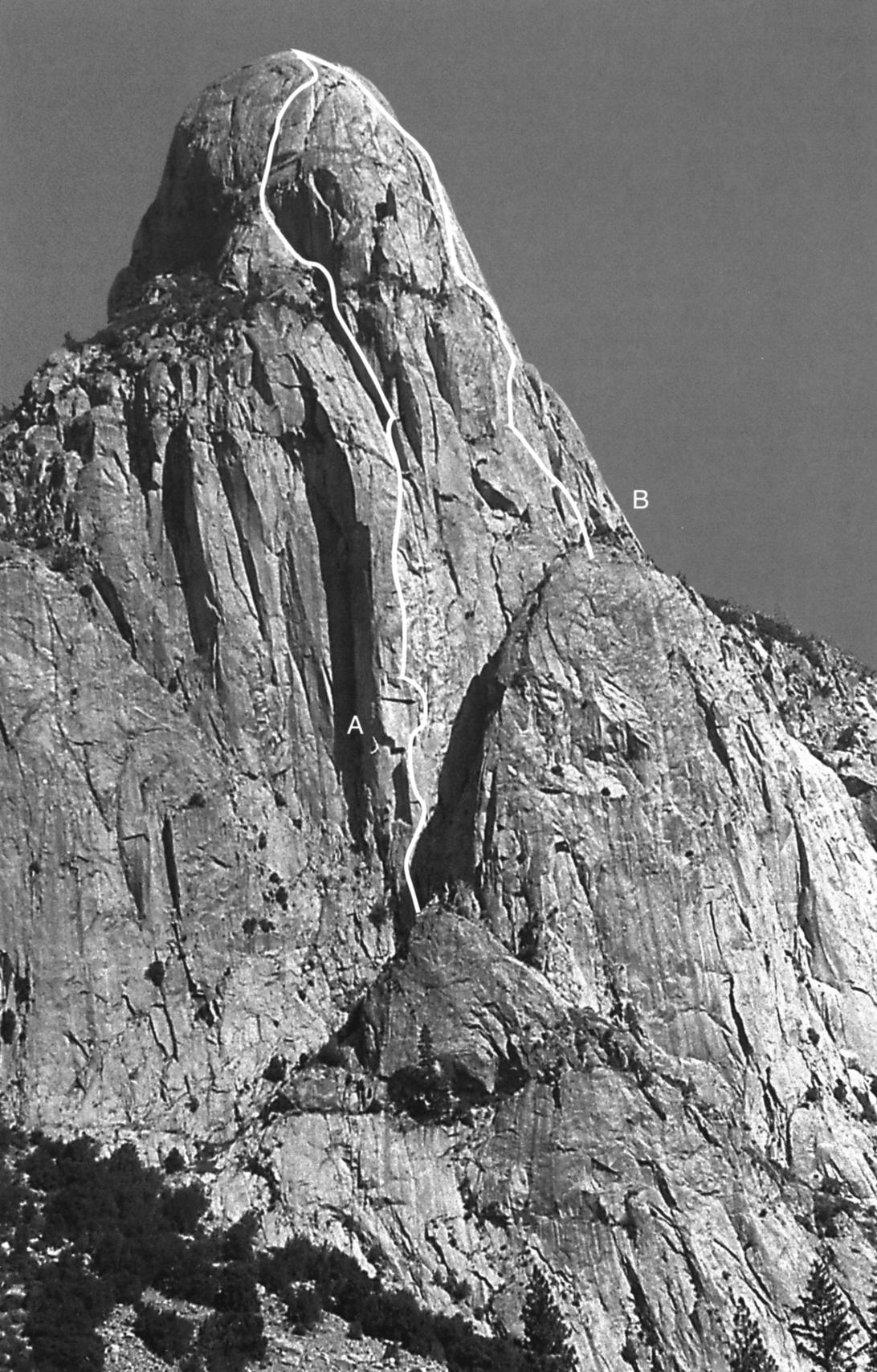
*Tehipite Dome, Too Hip.* In July, 1996, Ron Felton and I climbed a crack and face line, *Too Hip* (III 5.11, six pitches with 60-meter ropes) starting about 400 feet left and up from the point where the Kroger and Beckey routes intersect on the huge bush-covered “Halfway Ledge” high on the southwest face of the dome.

RICHARD LEVERSEE

*Tehipite Dome, Southwest Face, In the Niche of Time.* In October, spending 14 days out from the trailhead and six days climbing, Ron Felton, Guy ‘Zelly’ Zielsky and I succeeded in establishing the first completely independent and first big new route to be climbed on this immense wall in 27 years, *In the Niche of Time* (VI 5.10 A3+, 21 pitches with 60-meter ropes).

In October, 1991, John Vargas and I hiked the 20 miles to Tehipite Valley only to be overwhelmed by heavy backpacks and debilitating heat. In October, 1995, Ron Felton and I returned again and made the approach but retreated before beginning. In the autumn of 1997, we returned again, this time recruiting Guy Zielski to assist in the project. Ron and I led while Guy graciously helped with the moving of freight.

We spent a day and a half hiking in and, during the next two and a half days of welcome, cooling rain, we moved loads toward the base of the wall. After periodically hiding from the



A

B

rain in talus caves, we scrambled 500 feet to the start of our route just left of the 1970 Kroger Route and at the left side of a prominent pyramid formation.

We went left up some wet and slimy shelves to a small tree ledge to keep us out of the path of potential rockfall. On the second lead, Ron nailed up and right on a thin ramp in order to cross the prominent arête (which marked our line of ascent) to attain a crack that headed up to a huge pillar above. Ron led into the night, using all 12 of our beak pitons in the process. Upon arriving at the belay, I found him almost unresponsive and hypothermic. After warming him up and giving him a shell garment, we squeezed out a bivy back at the tree ledge. The next morning, I led a steep crack on aid to a difficult and partially loose wide section to get us to some mausoleum-like ledges behind the pillar. The climbing to the top of the pillar proved extremely difficult; Ron mixed free and aid, then traversed left to the arête, nailing a long, impressive horizontal roof.

I found spectacular climbing up steep thin cracks on the arête above, reminiscent of the headwall passage on the *Shield* of El Capitan. The illusions of steepness were confirmed each time Guy launched into space to ascend the rope to the belay. This was Guy's first wall. I was impressed by his 'go for it' attitude, especially since he had never used ascenders prior to this climb!

On the next lead, the features we had hoped were cracks turned out to be mere ripples in the sea of granite above. Ron boldly bat-hooked, riveted and beaked to just short of a good crack system. A mixed pitch followed, including some welcome hand cracks, nailing and nutting, ending in a scary mantle onto the belay stance.

Ron nailed a short section above, then climbed down and right to a diagonal ramp and a ledge at the base of a huge corner. In three long difficult free pitches, we made it to a ledge that divides the lower wall from the upper dome. That night, we split less than a quart of water and the food that remained between the three of us. The morning of our sixth day and tenth day out from the trailhead, we decided to escape, and worked our way across the ledge to water and our lives back home.

By mid-October Ron, Guy and I were able to return. Traversing back to our high point, we continued the route on the upper dome. Starting up the line of the corner which got us to the ledge from the lower wall, we moved left out onto an arête. Ron cruised up a classic, difficult steep face pitch to a blocky ledge below a steep headwall. Following straight thin cracks up through two major horizontal crack/bands allowed me to tension-traverse left to a diagonal ramp ending at a belay just below a prominent right-facing corner/chimney. Ron led up an awkward step left and then right, climbing some difficult moves up the chimney to a belay at the intersection of a wide crack from above and left. Following this crack system gave us a more direct line to the summit. Above this wide section, intricate free and aid moves headed up to a ledge just left of another, but a much easier wide crack. Belaying only about 80 feet out, we then headed right a few moves to an enjoyable left-facing corner.

In the autumn darkness, climbing toward a seemingly unreachable horizon, four more long pitches of easy but runout face climbing brought us to an unroping spot at blocky ledges well below the true summit.

E.C. JOE, *Southern Sierra Climber's Association*

*Mt. Hoffman, Southeast Face Central.* This route, the Southeast Face Central (5.8-5.9, three and a half pitches) in the Wishon Reservoir Area of the Sierra National Forest, starts to the right of the obvious 200-foot tower/buttress on the southeast face. In July, Mark Leffler and I climbed the obvious diagonal crack up and right for one and a half pitches to a good ledge

*Tehipte Dome, showing A: In the Niche of Time, and B: Beckey-Kroger Route. E.C. Joe*