

Accounts from the various climbs and expeditions of the world are listed geographically from north to south and from west to east within the noted countries. We begin our coverage with the Contiguous United States and move to Alaska in order for the climbs in the Alaska's Wrangell Mountains to segue into the St. Elias climbs in Canada.

Unless noted otherwise, accounts cover activity in the 1999 calendar year (January 1-December 31). First-person accounts from winter 1999-2000 activity and shoulder-season areas (e.g., Patagonia) are included when possible. Climbers returning from the southern hemisphere can help us in future volumes by submitting accounts as soon as they return home. We encourage climbers to submit accounts of other notable activity from the various Greater Ranges to help us maintain complete records.

A chart on page 447 gives a useful comparison of the various rock climbing ratings readers will find in the accounts below. For conversions of meters to feet, multiply by 3.28; for feet to meters, divide by 0.30.

The UIAA Expeditions Commission is attempting to compile first ascent information on routes established in the Greater Ranges. In addition to recording ascent information, the purpose of the project is to give contact addresses of the climbers involved to facilitate access to more details by interested climbers. Information on the project, as well as results from the past records, are available at the UIAA web site: <http://www.mountaineering.org>.

NORTH AMERICA

CONTIGUOUS UNITED STATES

CALIFORNIA

SIERRA NEVADA

Mt. Ritter, South Ridge. As we climbed the Southwest Ridge of Mt. Ritter, Ben Craft and I were amazed at the dramatic ridges dropping off to the west and south from the summit. After doing some research, it appeared that the section from Ritter Pass to the summit of Mt. Ritter—i.e., the south ridge—had not yet been traversed. On October 2, 6 a.m. found us at Ritter Pass just as it was light enough to climb without headlamps. Four hours of simul-climbing over fourth- and fifth-class rock on the crest of the ridge got us to the prominent tower that looms over the Southeast Glacier. After this, the ridge doglegs west and hooks up with the last part of the southwest ridge. Most of this first part of the ridge was classic Sierra ridge climbing, with long exposed fourth-class catwalks broken up by steep steps and gendarmes.

The technical crux of the route came with the high tower that connects the south ridge and the southwest ridge. The climbing was typical of the area: smooth (sometimes slick) rock

with many razor-cut edges, and a bit runout in places because of the lack of continuous crack systems. After climbing the tower, we downclimbed its west side (fourth class) to the site of our bivy a few weeks earlier on the southwest ridge, then continued over familiar ground to the summit of Mt. Ritter. We summited at 4:30 p.m. and got back to camp just as it was getting dark.

The South Ridge (V 5.8) of Mt. Ritter is a less serious climb than the Southwest Ridge, with less continuous exposure and more third-class terrain. Still, it was long enough that we thought it deserved a grade V, as we climbed almost non-stop for ten and a half hours simulating most the way. A party using standard pitch-by-pitch climbing techniques would be hard pressed to complete the route in a day.

CRAIG CLARENCE

Kings Canyon National Park

North Dome, My Own Private Idaho. During June 21-23, Matt and Jennifer Pollard and I established a line on North Dome in the unexplored territory between *Freak Show* and *North to the Bone*. *My Own Private Idaho* (V 5.10 A2) uses the big right-facing dihedral on the apron to gain the base of the main wall. The line then goes up a black streak to small ledge with a flake, where it follows superb cracks up and right to a long ledge. The rest of the climb has mixed aid and face climbing. An old rusty bolt with a bail sling 30 feet up the main wall indicated there was an earlier attempt on this line.

BRANDON THAU

Yosemite Valley

Yosemite Valley, Various Activity. (An excellent overview of the new Valley speed ascents appears earlier in this journal in an article by Timothy O'Neill. The information provided there supplements the routes and times described below.—Editor)

In 1999, Yosemite Valley was the scene of an unprecedented number of speed climbs with records being broken almost daily, sometimes on the same route. Many of these climbs were made by a newer, younger and most often faster generation of climbers. Some routes that had periodically seen minutes shaved off their times by successively faster teams had their times practically halved by this upstart crowd. In the process, huge risks were taken by climbers whose “style places a premium on speed and audacity—but mostly speed.” (*Outside* magazine, Feb. 2000)

Not to be overlooked, however, were the valiant efforts of Tommy Caldwell, who not only free climbed all the pitches consecutively on the *Salathé* (VI 5.13b), becoming the first American to do so, but took only one fall on the entire climb. Caldwell had climbed the route in 1998, vowing to come back and free it, which he did last spring in three days with his friend Mike Cassidy. His one fall came on the Teflon corner pitch above El Cap Spire, which also thwarted Yuji's onsite effort of 1998. As with all subsequent ascents since the Piana/Skinner free ascent, Caldwell avoided the first crux of the right double crack (5.13b) by linking to *Bermuda Dunes*—the left double crack—via 5.12a face climbing.

Scott Burk and Sam Shannon were also active near the *Salathé*, making the third ascent of *Freerider* (VI 5.12d) in June. This easier variation of the *Salathé* was pioneered by the