

*Third Recess Peak, Northeast Buttress, Previously Unreported.* Third Recess Peak is the unnamed peak on the right as you hike up into Third Recess. Lara Wilkinson and I climbed the Northeast Buttress (IV 5.10, 1,600') in June, 1994, in 11 pitches. The route offers a variety of climbing challenges in a remote location. Begin climbing on slabs to the right of a prominent right-facing dihedral (this dihedral may offer a more direct way up the lower section). A small chimney is followed by thin seams (5.10) leading to a large ledge. From the left side of the ledge, climb blocks to a left-facing corner. At the top of the corner, traverse left into the top of the prominent dihedral. Follow the dihedral to a beautiful ledge on the buttress. Traverse to the right of the first tower and ascend a corner to the prow of an arête. Follow the prow of the narrow arête past towers to the base of a large tower. Climb a beautiful hand crack/corner around the left side of the tower. From here the climbing is mostly fourth class, with a few fifth-class sections.

MICHAEL STRASSMAN

*Michael Minaret, West Ridge, The Crescent, Previously Unreported.* After the Minaret Traverse and the South Face of Clyde, the West Ridge (IV 5.8) is the longest route in the Minarets. It was first climbed by Lynn Bowering and me. Approach via North Notch or Amphitheater Col between Michael and Adams Minaret. The ridge is shaped like the crescent moon: low angle at the start, steepening to vertical in the middle and overhanging at the top. Begin at the base of the ridge and climb unroped for 300 or 400 feet (look for Norman Clyde's cairn that marks Clyde's ledges on the way up). Stay directly on the ridge, climbing easy cracks and a series of low-angle roofs, then skirt left past horror show detached blocks on the ridge. A giant ledge provides a perfect view of the superb next pitch, where a series of ceilings capped by a 30-foot overhang blocks the way to the summit ridge. From directly on the ridge, ascend a finger crack in a corner to the first roof. Skirt this on the right and step back over the lip to gain a crack leading to the final overhang. Either jam underneath or pass the overhang on the left by stepping on the lip of the overhang beneath it. This is one of the finest pitches I have ever climbed in the High Sierra. Two more arête pitches, past the pinnacle that resembles the profile of Walter Starr, lead to the summit. Descend via four rappels straight down to Amphitheater Col.

MICHAEL STRASSMAN

*Seven Gables, The Golden Thread Arête.* The north side of Peak 12,840', the northernmost point in the Seven Gables Massif, bears a strong resemblance to Temple Crag in the Palisades, 20 miles to the southeast. Six major buttresses and arêtes drop steeply away from the summit ridge for over 1,500 feet. On September 5, Stuart Polack and I made the first ascent of the most aesthetically pleasing line on the north face of this peak, the curving arête immediately west of the summit. We began climbing in a large recess low on the left flank of the arête. Three pitches up an ever-steepening ramp and crack system (some 5.8) took us to its crest. The first pitch along the arête is a very rude eye opener. What appeared from below to be a gentle slab is a steep face split by a poorly protected 5.8 finger crack. Although most of route is moderate scrambling (5.5-5.7), the steep flanks and narrow crest of the arête force commitment early on. The ninth pitch is the crux, a flared 5.8 corner at the top of which you stem left into a 5.9 lieback. At the end of the 12th pitch, our noses not so gently bumped into the end of the arête, a nearly featureless headwall barring direct access to the summit. We traversed into the couloir to our right, climbed a steep ramp to a large ledge, then followed disconnected 5.7

cracks to the summit ridge 100 feet below the top. Back in camp that evening, we watched rays from the setting sun paint a slender thread of golden light along the path of our route, *The Golden Thread Arête* (IV 5.9, 14 pitches).

WALT VENNUM

## NEVADA

### Red Rocks

*Rainbow Wall, Sauron's Eye and Emerald City.* Brian McCray and I had eyed the most obvious feature of the Rainbow Wall, a huge arch in the center of the wall that expands up half the wall, for some time. Mike Ward had started a route on the right side of this arch. In February, Brian added a new aid line, *Sauron's Eye* (5.10R A4), up the left side of the arch. The fourth pitch, the crux (A4), climbs out the top of the arch on knifeblades and through a 25-foot roof. Warren Hollinger took an unfortunate 50-foot fall and broke his back while participating in the first ascent of this route.

*Emerald City* was an old aid line (5.10 A2) that had (probably) not been climbed in years; it looked like the next possible free line on the Rainbow Wall. On June 12, I climbed the first pitch, an easy but interesting 5.10, using everything from a #2 tcu to a #5 Camalot. The next pitch was a thin crack, coming in at 5.12a, which led to ten to 15 feet of completely blank corner. Brian and I aided it and then worked the moves on top rope. They were very difficult, and although we could do it on top-rope we were unsure about doing it on lead. We started trying, each vying for the first ascent of this pitch. We'd get our nerve up, grab the gear and then head out. With hands perspiring, toes aching and sores on our palms, we'd try one more time to get through this blank section of rock. We'd fall and then come down and let the other try. I was sure I had perfected the move and now only had my mind to blame for not completing it. This time I did it (5.12d) and we moved on. The next notable pitch was the fifth (5.12a). It climbed a thin, technical face and arête and required a smear move on mossy, smooth rock at the crux. Although pitch 6 was only 5.10, it would have been the most difficult pitch on the route for me. It climbs up an extremely loose pillar with little gear. It then traverses a ledge with much loose rock. Brian styled it and set up a solid belay on the huge bivy ledge. When I reached the anchor, we were struck by the sound of what had to have been a swarm of bee creatures and sat silent for a moment as they passed below us. The next several pitches were nice 5.11 and 5.10 cracks. These led to a classic dark offwidth. We finished the route on 200 feet of #4 and #5 sized crack. We completed the route in just under 24 hours. We added one bolt to the route on the .12d pitch and actually removed a bolt (not there on the first ascent) on the first pitch. *Emerald City's* 13 pitches were free at 5.10, 5.12+, 5.10-, 5.10, 5.12-, 5.10, 5.11, 5.10, 5.11, fourth class, 5.9 (OW), 5.6 (OW).

ROXANNA BROCK

## UTAH

*The Desert, Various Activity, Previously Unreported.* Utah 95 passes through Comb Ridge, a dramatic, deep cut in the Navajo sandstone. In March, 1997, Mike Baker and Leslie Henderson put up *Magic Man*, a five-pitch, 250-foot 5.10+ route on the Prayer Stick, a column that leans