

four easier pitches lead to the top of the arête. After reaching the stacked rocks atop the arête, make a 60m easy 5th class traverse west, toward the South Arête. Make a 30m rappel into the gully from a chickenhead and head north for 100m of 4th class to a notch. Continue north for 60m on a 4th class orange band into another notch. Make a 30m rappel off two fixed nuts onto the backside of Angel Wings. From here hike east, almost toward the summit of Cherubim Dome, descend the summit ridge, and follow the gully toward Upper Hamilton Lake; you will meet the High Sierra Trail.

BRANDON THAU

Palisade Traverse in a day. Gravity takes hold of my legs, and I stumble. My lungs still bursting, I see a flash and suddenly my father, dead seven years, turns into Norman Clyde on a bergschrund slide and screams, "Here I go to Hell!" Piss runs down my leg.

Squirming between reality and dreams, I pull myself from the nightmare and open my eyes to a full moon shining in my face. A rumble to the north brings my attention to a storm over Mammoth.

Rough trade, this mountaineering gig, I mutter to myself. Only seven hours in and the adventure has taken its toll on my body and mind....

California is unique in that one can ski and surf in the same afternoon, the weather almost always perfect in both climes. For me, it is the perfect place to raise a family while exorcising the demon shakes. When friends took me to these mountains, I rediscovered my childhood joy of wandering for days without the intrusion of another, while, as a climber, I understood that going up is the easy part of the battle. The mountaineers, the true climbers, of which I am not one, would recount tales of horrific approaches and descents, while the deaths reported occurred during the complacent periods. It is a Zen-like realm where awareness of one's surroundings dictates life and death. For me, it is nirvana. The mountains of California, Mecca. And in this Mecca lies a grand jewel: the Palisade Traverse, eight miles long, 26 peaks, six over 14,000'.

In July 1979 John Fischer and Jerry Adams made the first traverse of the Palisades, in seven days after spending a week caching supplies. In June 2004, after a week of caching supplies, Scott McCook and Adam Penney made the second ascent, in 12 days. The rock varies from perfect granite to jigsaw death to sandy scree. One can climb in a T-shirt and jeans while straddling blue ice, only to become embroiled in a storm worthy of Everest minutes later if caught unprepared. It is the stuff of nightmares and dreams. And during one glorious day last August I laughed, cried, and dry-heaved my way into a level of climbing that awaits those willing to sacrifice everything for the ultimate beauty of life. It was truly a grand adventure.

Strictly the facts: Palisade Traverse (VI 5.9), third ascent, in 22 hours. No supplies cached along the way. I started on August 18, 7:00 p.m., at Southfork Pass (12,560'), traversed the ridgeline, and finished on August 19, 5:00 p.m., at Bishop Pass (11,960'). By 10:00 p.m. I was back to Glacier Notch below Mt. Sill.

MICHAEL REARDON

Sierra and Yosemite, various activity. Climbing.com reported that Dave Turner soloed a new route, Block Party (VI 5.9 A4), on the southeast face of El Capitan. He fixed ropes for three days and spent 18 days on the wall, finishing June 21. The route shares parts of Tempest and