

*Middle Cathedral Rock, Center Route on Northeast Face.* In 1960 Yvon Chouinard and I ascended the central crack system on the northeast face of Middle Cathedral Rock, hoping to establish a direct route to the summit of the rock. After an uncomfortable bivouac we succeeded in reaching the prominent U-shaped bowl 1100 feet above the ground, but a storm forced us to retreat from the wall via the upper pitches of the route which Mark Powell and Wally Reed had established several years before. Still challenged by the possibility of creating a direct route to the summit, I returned with Bob Kamps in 1964. After a far more comfortable bivouac, we did succeed in climbing the steep face above the bowl, which involved four pitches of mixed free and artificial climbing. The knife-blade cracks which we found, although time-consuming and difficult, were a welcome relief after the strenuous, dirt-filled cracks below the bowl. Eventually we reached an area so low-angled and so broken that we were able to climb third and fourth class for 200 feet. We saw that to continue to the summit in a direct line would mean deliberately picking the most difficult line possible on a wall which was bounded on either side by third-class ledges. We were somewhat depressed by the seeming futility of nailing a crack 40 feet from third-class climbing. Rationalizing that the climbing we had just completed would stand as a separate and appealing route, we abandoned the climb and continued third class to the Katwalk and the eventual descent to the Valley.

Several months passed and in the fall my interest in the route flared up again. Layton Kor had arrived in the Valley in September and hoping that a logical and direct route could still be made to the summit if we just kept climbing, Layton and I returned to the wall which had become so familiar to me. We reached the high point established by Bob and me and continued climbing. We were met at once with the same problem as before. I found myself nailing a strenuous, dirt-filled openbook while less than 100 feet to my right was an unbroken series of third and fourth class ledges forming part of the north buttress of Middle Cathedral Rock. The logical, direct line which we hoped for never appeared. Eventually Kor made a lead which merely followed the line of least resistance. A traverse brought us off the steep portion of the face to the upper pitches of the north buttress. Our "direct" line had degenerated completely and we had to traverse back again in order to continue nailing 50 feet away. There is still climbing to be done on the northeast face, for those who wish to press the point and who can tolerate nailing so close to third and fourth class climbing. I have lost all interest. 1500 feet of climbing. (NCCS V, F8, A3)

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