

there are three large chockstones. By the time I reached the second, I realized I had again underestimated a route. The three boulders were like chess problems with obscure solutions. Each was a pleasure to solve, and each was protected by excellent natural runners—even nuts were unnecessary. The *Second Petite Boulder* was the hardest. It was a knight's move. I easily chimneyed up alongside it, but near the top the gully widened and I was forced to bridge by pushing my feet against one side and wedging my shoulders against the other, while my body slowly oozed onto the boulder in a mortifying bellyroll which left me gasping, abraded and wondering how Chouinard would have done it. "Oh well," I thought, "I'll give Liz a little tension on that one and the rest should be easy." It was not. We had started out not using pitons—because the runners were good and because it was more exciting and interesting risking falls on nuts and runners rather than on pitons. We continued in this style past the *Third Petite Boulder*, past *Giant* and *Mammoth Boulders* to *Colossus*, with always a decent nut or runner for protection. Always? Actually, not quite. There is a section in the gully where it is best to follow a ledge system to the left to avoid unpleasantries in the bottom of the trough. This pitch was about F6 and the nuts were not much. *Colossus*, the last major boulder, demands concentration. Climb the right wall. First follow a crack in a dihedral. A loose flake juts from the crack 25 feet up. Just below it, go right across the face to a corner and then up a layback and a face where you almost wish you had a 1-inch Chouinard angle for protection. You *think* you know the nuts are good and so you finish anyhow, trembling but with a slight smirk in your soul, for you know the worst is over and you have used no pitons. When the four of us were finally atop *Colossus*, the sun was setting and the party degenerating. Liz was tired, I was panicky, and Vic and his friend were frustrated and slightly annoyed at my bad judgment. We bivouacked 300 feet above *Colossus*—in T-shirts and shorts! Luckily Vic was a smoker and had brought matches, and there was firewood, and the night was exceptionally mild. We even slept a bit. At dawn, we groggily scrambled 200 feet higher and walked out onto a buttress where we found a 40-foot pine tree. It made a good rappel anchor; we rappelled from it and made seven more to the ground, whence we scurried to camp eager for ham and eggs and lots of strong, steaming coffee.

ROYAL ROBBINS

Nutcracker, Manure Pile Buttress, Yosemite. Two years ago Yvon Chouinard discovered the remarkable potential of a 600-foot rock sitting

modestly between El Capitan and the Three Brothers, a rock used as a training ground by the Park Service but largely ignored by others. Chouinard returned one evening to Camp 4 voluble about an easy route he had just found on Manure Pile Buttress (named for its proximity to a horse-dung dump). He christened his route "After Six," for it was climbable in the coolness of a Yosemite summer evening. This pleasant route starts in a dihedral with a little tree 30 feet up, and follows (more or less) the crest of a rounded ridge all the way. The first pitch is F7, the rest easier; and one can take weaker parties around to the left to avoid the first pitch.

Last spring my wife Liz and I did "Nutcracker," a new route of exciting and varied but never severe free climbing. Two weeks later Chouinard and I found a direct and more logical finish which rounds out the climb nicely. What is unusual about Nutcracker is that it is a 600-foot Yosemite climb and pitons are unnecessary. It can reasonably be done with nuts (artificial chockstones) and natural runners alone. The first ascent went like this: In May, we turned off onto a dirt road halfway between the Lower Brother and the east buttress of El Capitan and drove to the base of the rock. Starting 200 feet east of the dihedral of After Six, we scrambled up 20 feet to a tree and climbed a 50-foot jam-crack-squeeze-chimney to a good stance. Then easy face-climbing and a nut in a corner, a traverse out right and a runner on a flake and I was nose to nose with the hard part. So I fitted a so-so nut and draped a so-so runner on a so-so crystal (be brave, I thought, that's a good runner on the flake below) and moved up. Then it was fingertips and toes across to the dihedral on the right, and easily up this corner to a good ledge, but with a belay in the corner because I did not have a 180-foot rope. The next pitch is terrific: jams, laybacks, and face-climbing for 150 feet with 7 nuts and 2 runners along the way. You can fix the stance at the end with belays through holes in the rock. Before the leader takes off on the next pitch, move the belay up 10 feet. He can use the extra rope. A good slotted nut in a little overhang starts the next pitch; 15 feet higher I slipped in a couple of little wedges which would probably hold the sort of sliding, bouncing fall one would take here slipping off the friction on the traverse, I told myself moving carefully left. I next went straight up past an overhang that required first thinking and then resolution; next it was marvelously sustained low-angle face-climbing where I could have placed twice as many nuts as I did. Reaching a small ledge bristling with quartz crystals, I climbed a bit higher to fix some nuts for the belay. Liz had some trouble on the overhang, but the rest went fine and she soon joined

me. It was late and cold, and so we traversed off and went up easy rock to the top. When Yvon and I did the direct finish, he cracked the headwall in an open corner on the left—there are a couple of funny moves here—and then went slightly right and straight up. The finish is a bit thin, but if you don't like it you can end in a bushy gully on the left. A selection of about a dozen nuts plus several runners will do. And a couple of the smallest Clog wedges are useful. Take them. NCCS II, F7.

ROYAL ROBBINS

Washington Column, East Face. The east face of Washington Column was climbed by Layton Kor, Jim Madsen and Kim Schmitz in May. The climb, which took three days, was rated as NCCS VI, F8, A5.

Higher Cathedral Rock, East Face. In June, Chris Fredericks and Jim Bridwell made the first ascent of the east face of Higher Cathedral Rock, which they rated at NCCS VI, A4, F9.

Washington Column, South Face. The first ascent of the south face of Washington Column was made in October by Jim Bridwell and Joe Faint.

Castle Rock Spire. In September TM Herbert and Tom Frost did a new route on the face of Castle Rock Spire. The climb follows a crack system that eventually connects with the original route about two-thirds of the way up the face. The first two pitches are nailing over rotten rock; nuts were used frequently in places where pitons might have dislodged blocks. After the third pitch a bivouac was made on a good ledge. The fifth pitch went free and the sixth was mixed. From here the summit was reached by climbing the last four pitches of the standard route. NCCS V, F8, A4.

New Routes on Daff and Fairview Domes, Tuolumne Meadows, Yosemite. On July 2 Bob Kamps and I climbed a new route on Daff Dome and called it "The Cooke Book" after the blacksmith-climber, Bruce Cooke. The route ascends the obvious left-facing open-book on the west face and is quite sustained fifth-class climbing. An awkward undercling (5.10) begins the last pitch, which is a long, left-slanting layback to the summit ridge. (III, 5.10). Fairview Dome is the most impressive and clearly visible of the Tuolumne domes. We climbed two new routes on it: Lucky Streaks (IV, 5.9) and Always Arches (IV, 5.10). The former