

and nuts; the climb and return to camp took 12 hours. The combination of excellent rock, continuous exposure, and challenging but never severe climbing should make this route a classic in this increasingly popular alpine area. NCCS III, F8.

MIKE HEATH

*“Little Mac Spire”*. On June 19, naively contemplating a one-day east-west traverse of all the McMillan Spires, Bill Sumner and I made the first ascent of this unnamed pinnacle immediately east of East McMillan Spire in the Southern Pickets, via a “spaghetti” route on its 500-foot south face. We climbed broken rock and ledges from the glacier at the bottom of the face to the steep central section. A large heather and rock ledge was followed left for about 100 feet, and then the route went up steep cracks and projections to a belay on the top of a large pedestal. A short, thin traverse to the right and a vertical crack led to a belay where the angle eased temporarily. A traverse across steep, slabby rock brought us to a good ledge on the upper face 200 feet below the summit. With F8 climbing over steep and somewhat loose rock, followed by a short lead around a block and up a narrow chimney, we reached the top. We rappelled into the notch west of the summit and then climbed the upper 400 feet of the east face of East McMillan Spire to allow a descent by the steep couloir between East and West McMillan Spires. About 20 pitons and nuts were needed, with 6 hours required for the ascent and another 4 hours for the rather complicated descent route. NCCS III, F8.

MIKE HEATH

### California-Sierra Nevada

*Mount Powell, East Face*. Mount Powell (13,360 feet) raises its turret-like summit from the crest of the Sierra near Bishop. Unlike most Sierra peaks, Mount Powell is composed of slabby monolithic granite, more like that of Yosemite than the usual Sierra “pile of bricks”. Early one morning in June, Fred Beckey, Dan McHale, and I crossed the glacier from our camp to the base of Powell’s east face. Soon we were swinging leads up the sweeping cracks formed by the intersection of huge monolithic blocks on the face. An ice-filled squeeze chimney was avoided by climbing an overhanging direct-aid crack. Pitch after pitch of steep clean face climbing put us on the summit in the late afternoon. NCCS III or IV, F7, A2.

GALEN ROWELL

*Castle Rock Spire, West Face.* Fred Beckey, Mort Hempel, Ben Borson, and I feared the rugged nine-hour approach to Castle Rock Spire deserved a higher rating than the beautiful plumb-like crack system we had spotted from the roadhead. Our fears were unfounded. Closer inspection revealed that the cracks started a full 250 feet above the ground. After seven hours of bolting, penduluming, and nailing overhangs we finally set up a belay in slings from a bolt a scant 100 feet up the wall. On the next pitch I was confronted by an overhang of downward hanging rotten flakes. A piton under a flake, a tied-off loose chockstone, a bolt placed in a one-inch hole drilled completely through one of the flakes, and a shaky piton got me past the crux and into the crack system. My lack of seniority gave me the next lead, which began in a nice easy crack, but soon led to an overhanging, rotten, crackless manzanita field. The field was negotiated by testing the brittle bushes and tying them off for direct aid. I tried to shut out the recurring mental image of a climber hanging in space, spinning in circles after a fall, with bunches of silly bushes tied to the rope at regular intervals above him. As the sun set I reached the top of the manzanita overhang and belayed Fred up. We were only a few hundred feet off the ground, so we rappelled and got a good night's sleep. Fred and I prussiked back up the next morning. We found the upper wall to be made up of clean hard rock with continuous cracks all the way to the summit. The first pitch of the day overhung in one spot and widened out into a jam-crack for about twenty feet. A ledge at the end of the jam was welcomed with mixed emotion since its very presence on the otherwise vertical wall was made possible by a rather mean-looking overhang above it. The overhang was split by a single two-inch crack with rough edges. As I attempted to do the crack free, Fred nervously and repeatedly voiced the merits of aid climbing in situations like mine. After a brief rest on a piton, I finished the crack in good alpine but rather poor Yosemite style. The final pitch was a serene finish. After nailing a short overhang, we found a single crack splitting the smooth 70° headwall leading to the summit. We dispensed with pitons and threaded the crack with jam nuts for its entire length. For three days the walls of the canyon and the spire had hidden the view of the Sierra. We were rewarded with an exquisite view of the peaks of the Great Western Divide as we mantled onto the summit ridge. By evening we had rappelled, packed up, hiked out, and blended into the faceless crowd and the never ending procession of tourists. NCCS IV, F9, A4.

GALEN ROWELL

*Mount Morrison, North Buttress Direct.* On January 5, Les Wilson,