

It was time to rappel, for the forest beneath was becoming murkey. NCCS III (possibly approaching IV), F8, A2.

FRED BECKEY

*Sorcerer Needle, East Face.* In The Needles, there are a number of interesting crack systems. Seen from a distant perspective, the break in the wall on the east face of the Wizard-Sorcerer massif, appears as a "natural". Jim Stoddard and I packed to its base on May 9, then spent several hours discovering that while the rock was superb, the crack system had not been designed by the Creator for easy climbing. Jamming and stemming brought us to a tiny platform; aid up a thin, resisting crack brought us to the crux: above an awkward hanging belay the crack veered out, overhanging. In the morning, this proved to be a technique demander, with little good protection and many qualms; at one point a bolt was placed, for the exposure was considerable and the protection non-existent. Once above this strenuous section, the system had adequate ledges to break the still-demanding crack climbing. It also had a few overly adequate bushes that provided a chorus of cursing. The climbing on to the Wizard-Sorcerer notch was continuously interesting, mostly free but with a final short aid problem. An icy, unseasonably cold wind made us hurry up the final pitches to the once-visited summit of Sorcerer. Shivering hard, we made the steep rappel to the upper notch. The climb would be rated as NCCS III, F7 or F8, A2.

FRED BECKEY

*Hermit Spire, South Face.* An interesting edifice of nature highlights the rolling subalpine hills west of the Little Kern River, closely north of Lloyd Meadows (several miles north of The Needles). Its base is shaped like a typical Sierra dome, but about 600 feet higher its walls slenderize to form a crest-like spire. Dan McHale and I spent Nov. 29 and 30, 1969 climbing the south face, which had to be reached by some cross-country effort. The climbing was spectacular but with a rough (unglaciated) surface of minute horns, hollows, knobs, and spikes. We began up a chimney and jam-crack system that brought some early strenuous moves to the climb. After three pitches and some awkward moments, the route eased through some zigzag ledges to the base of the face's principal feature: a great dihedral system that carried up to a platform just east of the thin summit crown. First there was delightful face climbing to its right, then a full pitch — mostly a dog-leg crack — hanging onto the dihedral. A pitch of semi-overhanging bonging provided some workmanlike aid maneuvers.

From the platform a smooth face on the left (very small holds) went to the crest of the south arête. In a biting wind and approaching darkness we climbed an awkward aid route on the frontal-right corner of the summit tower. There was no sign of an earlier visit, and the rappel down the "back" led us to believe Hermit had not been climbed before our visit. NCCS IV, F8, A3.

FRED BECKEY

*Mount Clarence King, Southeast Face.* This 12,909-foot mountain dominates the upper watershed of the Kings Canyon region although it is surrounded by higher peaks. On the southeast side of the beautiful horn-shaped mountain is a steep 800-foot face which Greg Henzie and I climbed in August. We found the climbing to be varied and interesting on the clean white High Sierra granite. Two F8 cracks proved to be the principle obstacles on our route which is directly in line with the main summit of the mountain. NCCS III, F8.

GALEN ROWELL

*Mount Humphreys, Northeast Face.* In May Joe Faint and I climbed the 1600-foot face in superb alpine conditions. Our route on this 13,986-foot mountain begins near the center of the face and ends forty feet to the left of the summit. Entries in the register indicate that other routes have been made on the left side of the face, ending on the east ridge of the mountain. About 30% of our climbing was cramponing on steep frozen snow, while moderately difficult rock climbing accounted for the remainder. The climb took eight hours and is rated NCCS III, F7.

GALEN ROWELL

*The Watchtower, Northeast Arête, Tokopah Valley.* Hidden in a small dead-end valley, this huge granite prow has escaped the notice of most California climbers. It rises in a spire-like blade about 1000 feet high and only 75 feet wide. Greg Henzie and I spent two days on the smooth and virtually ledgeless face on Labor Day weekend. Much of the climbing was intricate direct aid up discontinuous cracks, although as we neared the summit the last pitches were entirely free. Our route is near the left edge of the prow and did not require a single bolt. The most elegant line on the prow is parallel and only fifty feet right of ours. However, it will entail liberal use of a bolt kit in several places. NCCS V, F8, A4.

GALEN ROWELL