

*Comment on the Two Ascents of the Wall of Morning Light.* After 14 years of rock climbing, I have finally been moved to written comment. What prompted this? One of the most important events I have witnessed during my years of climbing, an event which was completed on February 4, 1971, when Royal Robbins and Don Lauria without fanfare made the second ascent in 5½ days. What now could be more important than raising American rock-climbing standards? What about the fine first ascents by Robbins, Frost, Kor, Chouinard, Pratt and others of the golden generation in an age when new lines fell one after another? I often wonder if anything anywhere in the world could ever top the solo ascent of the Muir Wall. I have seen fine free and artificial climbers pushing themselves to their limit using runners, nuts, pitons, and a rare bolt occasionally for protection. Many of my companions have risked nasty falls, even their lives, trying first ascents without placing a single bolt. In the 2000 feet on the west face of El Capitan, Robbins and I kept the bolts down to one.

In November, amidst helicopters, reporters, rangers and tourists, two climbers came bolting, bat hooking and aluminum riveting over the summit of this mountain of rock which in the past has given me the finest climbing experiences of my life. It seemed to me that everyone I met, climber or not, was talking about the two on El Cap. I felt like screaming, "But they bolted the damned thing, and then they sold it to millions on television!" I wonder if the British and American teams waiting to get onto Cerro Torre felt like this when the summit was reached recently by an obsessed man with a mechanical bolt-gun who used something like 1000 bolts to bag the top. There are no laws against drilling a few holes in the rock, or even 550 holes at five-foot intervals, to eliminate all the nasty pitons and put in a *super* direct (not just a *direct*) route on El Capitan. There are dozens of new routes to be done, and on many of them we could avoid using any devious zig-zaggy cracks.

What was this most important event I witnessed in February? It was not a climb which raised American climbing standards, but rather it was the elimination of a climb which had lowered the standards. This winter Royal Robbins and Don Lauria chopped the first 300 feet of bolts out of the bolt-ladder route on El Capitan, while completing the second ascent in five-and-a-half days.

TM HERBERT

*BHOS Dome, Tenaya Canyon.* If you know where to look and you really care, BHOS Dome is visible from the Mirror Lake parking area. Last spring, Dennis Hennek, TM Herbert, Doug Scott, and I climbed the south

face — or the Mugwump Wall — in 1½ days. The route stays in a very distinct dihedral system for the first three pitches and then veers left to a wide crack system leading to the summit. The crux of the climb was trying to sleep through a Herbert tirade on the bivouac. It began about midnight during some snow flurries. “Wake up, hey you guys, wake up. Hennek, kick that damn limey. Is everybody awake? I’ve actually been sleeping. This is the first time I’ve ever slept on a bivouac. Damn it, wake up and listen to me. I’ve been sleeping. This is incredible. Hennek, is Lauria still sleeping? Wake him up. Scott, wake up. I’ve actually been sleeping. Hennek, kick that rotten limey. Damn it, Scott, you don’t seem to realize. . .” NCCS III, F7, A3.

DON LAURIA

*Half Dome, Northwest Buttress.* In September 1969, Bob Jensen and I climbed the northwest buttress of Half Dome. The route starts several hundred feet north of the regular northwest-face route at the left edge of an arch about 450 feet high. Mixed climbing leads up the arch, following detached slabs and recesses past several ledges for three pitches. From a position about 50 feet under the top of the arch, on a group of small ledges, hard nailing leads up and to the right, following the juncture of the arch and the smooth face beside it. Reaching a tiny ledge, one completes the pitch by following a horizontal row of bolts (some hangers removed) 70 feet to the right. From there, one can pendulum to a crack system, regain lost altitude, and pendulum again to get out from behind a long expanding flake. A ledge 140 feet above the end of the bolts offers a good bivouac site, after nailing first in a dihedral, then up a poor thin crack. On the next pitch, ending in a wide down-sloping ledge 150 feet up, occasional aid pins were used to ascend a deep dihedral, then pass a triangular roof on the right. The short final free pitch traverses left and then up, avoiding the summit overhangs. NCCS IV, F7, A3.

ANDREW EMBICK

*Center Route on Absolutely Free Pinnacle: Shark’s Back.* On August 7, Mark Klemens, Sheldon Smith, and I put up this route located on the Lower Brother. The climbing was marked by a little of everything, but mainly some very hard jam-cracks. A few days later, Klemens and I added a direct start. There were five pitches. NCCS III, F9.

RICK SYLVESTER