

its northern end and climb through a short open-book and a chimney up to the south ridge. Climb over the ridge without difficulty to the top. This was an enjoyable climb on excellent rock. NCCS II, F5.

RICHARD HECHTEL

*Hetch Hetchy Dome, South Face.* It was no ordinary ledge on which we were bivouacked, — over 100 feet wide, 400 feet long, and inaccessible except by roped climbing. So far our route had seemed difficult and yet in some ways, tame. Even though we had climbed five pitches on our first day over F8 difficulty, and twice resorted to skyhooks, bolts and Bat hooks, the ledge was so commodious that the climb seemed to have lost some of the seriousness we had experienced several hours earlier when the sun was setting as we drilled bolt holes 200 feet below the ledge. The last of us reached the ledge in total darkness, but now we sat around a campfire eating steaks and drinking hot tea. Nearby a trickle oozed from a natural spring in a crack, giving us an adequate supply of drinking water. We were used to the Yosemite facts of life, where the big walls are vertical deserts and only the barest essentials are crammed into one's hauling bag. Here we had a fire, hot food and drinks, and a level place to sleep. Above us the final 700 feet of the dome rose in a single vertical sweep. The entire dome seemed to be composed of smooth granite armor plate with no possible route except for a single, too-good-to-be-true, straight-in crack system directly in the center of the wall. Was it just my eyes, or did the system seem to end before it reached the summit?

In the morning, Chris Jones, Joe Faint and I awoke in a cloud. Gray masses of vapor were moving over and through us with great speed. Below, the view of the reservoir flickered on and off as we built a fire and discussed the merits of continuing the climb. Our decision was made by the silent advent of a few snowflakes sifting noiselessly down from the sky. By the time we had our gear packed, the air was white and an inch of snow had fallen. Having had previous bad experience with rappelling in such conditions without fixed ropes, I convinced Joe and Chris that we should traverse off the ledge to the right and ascend a gully to the rim of the valley, from where we could walk back the five miles to our car. The traverse was partly fifth class and quite engaging in the existing conditions. After a long trudge we reached the rim. Six inches of snow had fallen and visibility was about a hundred feet. Napoleon's retreat from Moscow was hardly accomplished with more style and finesse than our stumble in the fog back to the car.

The next weekend found Joe unavailable, so Chris and I returned alone. We found the bottom pitches to be just as hard as the week before. One is a F9 crack which is possibly the most formidable free climbing I have encountered on a big wall. Again it took us almost a full day to reach the big ledge, where we were able to fix one pitch above before dark. We spent a restful night except for occasional forages by a ring-tailed cat who had a strange appetite for the Juicy Fruit lying in a package near my head. Morning dawned brilliant and clear, but all was not well. Chris was sick, with all the symptoms of a bad case of flu. He did not know if he could continue, but finally he decided to go on if he would not have to lead. As I write this account, I am home with the flu and I can't imagine myself prusiking up a wall and cleaning seven pitches of mostly direct aid. Of course I can't imagine myself making a dozen rappels right now either, which was his only alternative. For several leads the climbing went well. Small bursts of free climbing were interspersed with long sections of aid up steep well defined cracks. A pendulum was required when a crack ended, but as we had seen from below, a new crack began just twenty feet to the right. One pitch higher we reached a dilemma. Our crack continued above us but blended into a water streak before it reached a ledge near the summit. To our right was a tempting 50° ramp-ledge which led 75 feet to what appeared to be a better crack system. I chose the ramp and used delicate friction and a bolt for protection to reach its end, where the crack didn't begin until ten feet above me. Two Bat hooks brought me to a thin crack, but after two more pin placements a flake broke off and I was suddenly dangling just above the end of the ramp again. Behind the flake was a better placement and soon I reached a ledge at the end of the lead with nothing more than a skinned elbow and a bruised ego. Above the ledge, but invisible from below, was another short blank section. While Chris cleaned the awkward traverse using two ropes, I placed a couple of strategic bolts above the ledge which later enabled me to safely free climb the last few feet to the blank area. I reached a small dihedral which led 120 feet to a huge ledge very near the top. Another short F7 pitch led us to third-class climbing on the summit slabs. NCCS VI, F9, A4.

GALEN ROWELL

*The Crack of Destiny.* In March Joe Faint and I climbed a continuation of the Crack of Doom route which ends at the summit of Elephant Rock, instead of in the middle. Although three different routes go to the midpoint of the rock, a blank-appearing section had stopped efforts beyond, especially since there seems to be an unwritten taboo against aid climbing on Elephant Rock. The Crack of Doom proved a difficult start