

*El Capitan, "Flight of the Albatross."* In the spring, Will Oxx and I climbed "The Flight of the Albatross" (VI, 5.10, A3+), between Magic Mushroom and the Shield. It starts at Heart Ledge and climbs up the right of the Heart. It continues for 13 independent pitches to where it joins the Shield, one pitch below Chickenhead Ledge. The route, which is sure to become a classic, parallels the Shield route on the Shield Headwall. It climbs to a magnificent ledge, "The Canoe," which is clearly visible from near the top of the Shield Headwall. We drilled 72 holes for rivets and bolts. We spent seven days on this climb, with ropes fixed to the Heart.

JOHN MIDDENDORF

*El Capitan, "Gulf Stream," New Route on the East Face.* On September 9, Steve Gerberding, John Harpole and I completed a superb new route on El Capitan's east face. It is a mostly independent line up the eastern seaboard of the North America Wall, joining the Atlantic Ocean Route, just above its 14th belay and going independent from its 18th to the top. The climbing was continuously difficult throughout its entirety and mostly follows micro features. These systems appear very vague from the ground but always connected up with very few holes being drilled (96 total, of which 32 were belay anchors). We placed very solid belay anchors (one 3/8" and two 5/16") for most belays where natural gear was impossible. Much of the climbing was ultra-thin and delicate and we made over 200 hook moves. This was Steve Gerberding's 58th ascent of El Cap (more than anyone else) and we both felt it was the best wall route we have ever done. (Steve has done nearly all the difficult routes on El Cap.) Although Steve felt it one of the hardest he's climbed, we rate it conservatively as VI, 5.9, A4. The A4 was given the 13th pitch where Steve fell 30 feet stopped by a #3 copperhead. Had it pulled, he would have ripped the entire pitch and could have added 100 feet to his fall. Scott Stowe was replaced by John Harpole after he broke his foot during a 30-foot whipper while leading the fifth pitch; he had swung leads to that point. We completed the climb in seven days after fixing four ropes. There are 17 pitches, mostly 200-foot stretchers.

JAY SMITH

*Half Dome's Direct Northwest Face Free Climbed.* A full article on this difficult feat appears earlier in the *Journal*.

I encourage all High Sierra climbers to send corrected information on old routes that are in error, as well as new routes, to me at PO Box 5411, Pasadena, California 91117 so that future editions of my book, *The High Sierra: Peaks, Passes and Trails*, will be as complete, detailed and accurate as possible.

R.J. SECOR