

involved, and the legal assistance of Armando Menocal, founder of The Access Fund, I moved to found the American Safe Climbing Association, a California non-profit organization. Our mission is simple: The ASCA wants to make America's rock climbs safer by educating climbers about how to maintain safe fixed anchors, as well as to advance wilderness causes generally. To date, the ASCA has replaced over 500 bolts in Yosemite Valley, Indian Creek and Zion National Park. For more information about which routes have been replaced as well as how you can help, check out the ASCA website at www.safeclimbing.org.

CHRIS McNAMARA, *American Safe Climbing Association*

Yosemite Valley, Various Ascents. For the third year in a row, action on the *Salathé Wall* led the headlines. This time, it was Yuji Hirayama (Japan) who stole the show with attempts to onsight the entire route. Training for weeks in Yosemite, Hirayama onsighted, among other serious crack leads, *Love Supreme*, a 5.13a crack in Tuolumne. His onsight hopes for the *Salathé* were dashed, however, on pitch 24, where he fell on the Skinner variation. He then pulled his rope and sent the Huber (5.13a) variation first try. After a bivy on the Block, Hirayama then flashed to the headwall. He fell on both headwall pitches, but, amazingly, after working the moves, did both pitches (5.13b) on his second try. Accompanied by Hans Florine and Hidetaka Suzuki, Hirayama finished the climb a mere 38 hours after starting. Previously, the *Salathé* had been climbed free only after months of effort. When asked how he felt about the climb, Hirayama replied "Yeah, I'm pretty happy." This was the fourth free ascent of the *Salathé*.

Many hard El Cap routes saw repeats this year. *The Reticent Wall* (VI 5.9 A5), known as possibly the hardest route on El Cap, saw four repeats. Chris Kalous, Mark Synnott, and Kevin Thaw made the second ascent over seven days in May, finding the climbing sustained and consistent. They also reported that the A2 climbing seemed harder than anything on *Zenyatta Mondatta*. The third ascent came at the hands of two Spaniards, Sylvia Vidal and Pep Masip (see Vidal's account below). In early October, Chris McNamara and Eric Sloan made the fourth ascent, with McNamara leading every pitch. The fifth ascent went to Warren Hollinger and Russel Mitrovitch later that season.

Eric Kohl's routes on El Capitan all saw repeats this year. *The Surgeon General* (VI 5.9 A5) was repeated, except for the last two pitches, by Brad Bond and John Rzezeczycki, who drilled five rivets past the "Crystal Chandelier," which had fallen off several years before. The pair bailed onto Zodiac two pitches from the top. *Get Whacked* (VI 5.10 A5) saw a second ascent by Gabor Berecz (Hungary) and Thomas Tivadar (Germany). The pair also established *Cool Pool* (VI 5.8 A5), a 14-pitch route on Glacier Point Apron's 9 O'Clock Wall. Hungarians Oskar Nadasdi and Enci Szentirmai made the second ascent of *High Plains Dripper* (VI 5.11 A5). Lastly, Chris Kalous and Kevin Thaw made the second ascent of *Plastic Surgery Disaster* (VI 5.8 A5). Thaw was especially entertained on the "Trust Your Mechanic" pitch, which sports a loose flake that must be hooked for progress. All four routes were established by Eric Kohl, two with partners, and two by himself.

The Gulf Stream (VI 5.10 A4), known for its extensive hooking sections, saw four repeats this year. Conrad Anker and Thomas Huber made the fourth ascent, with Brendon Thau and partner making the sixth. The route then received two solos, first from Wally Barker, and then from Chris Kalous.

Other notable repeats were the fifth ascent of *Kaos* (VI 5.10 A4) by Erik Erikson, Bill Leventhal, and Kevin Thaw. Nate Beckwith and partner also made a fifth ascent, this time on *Jolly Roger* (VI 5.10 A5). Another fifth ascent, on *Shortest Straw* (VI 5.10 A4), came solo at the hands of Cameron Lawson. *Scorched Earth* had a solo by Southern Californian "Eric."

Reportedly, he avoided the 5.11 offwidth with a new variation.

The season's only new route was *Continental Drift* (VI 5.10 A4), which was established by Anker, Gerberding, and Thaw. They spent 12 days on the wall, four of them storm-bound. Of its 15 long pitches, just two and a half were shared by other routes. The route takes a line near *New Jersey Turnpike* and *Heartland*.

Two El Cap routes received their first clean ascents. *Mescalito* (VI 5.9 A4) was climbed without hammer by Dave Dyess and A.C. Robertson, and the *North America Wall* (VI 5.8 A3) was climbed clean by Dougald MacDonald and Chris McNamara.

On Half Dome, Chris McNamara finished a new five-pitch line to the left of the Regular Northwest Face. The second pitch took "Mac" 15 hours to lead over two days, and at one point sports a string of 22 beads in a row.

Elsewhere in the Valley, Kohl, partnered with Brian Law, made the first ascent of *Clusterfuck 2000* (VI 5.10 A3+) on the Yosemite Falls Wall. Eric Rasmussen and Mike Zawaski established *A Sad State of Affairs* (VI 5.? A3+) on Glacier Point's Firefall Wall. The route is mostly overhanging and finishes at the snack bar. [Rasmussen also climbed *Ashes to Ashes* (VI A4) on the Firefall Wall with the late Chris Purnell in 1995, *40 Ounces of Freedom* (VI 5.10 A3) on Mount Broderick, and *Ecstasy of Gold* (VI 5.10 A3+) in the Ribbon Falls Amphitheater.]

As usual, several Valley speed records were broken. *Lost in America* (VI 5.10 A5) was climbed on sight in 24:47 by McNamara, Synnott, and Thaw. Synnott broke his ankle part-way up, but still kept leading! Peter Coward, Hans Florine, and Steve Schneider flew up *Eagle's Way* in 14:27. Willie Benegas, Cameron Lawson, and Jared Ogden sailed the *Atlantic Ocean Wall* (VI 5.10 A5) in 50 hours. Dave Bengston, Steve Gerberding, and Scott Stowe drove *New Jersey Turnpike* (VI 5.10 A4+) in 24:48. Coward, Florine, and Schneider stayed dry on the *Waterfall Route* (VI 5.10 A4), turning in a time of 18:12, amidst a frenetic week for Florine and Schneider. The pair climbed seven walls (Grade V or more) in seven days. Day one was the West Face of Sentinel in five hours; day two was the *Waterfall Route*; day three was the Direct North Buttress in four hours; day four was *Skull Queen* in 5:21 (record, and also clean); day five was the *Rostrum*; day six was Half Dome for Florine and Abby Watkins, while Schneider did Leaning Tower with Greg Murphy; and day seven was the *Prow* for Florine and Murphy, and *Astroman* for Schneider and Sue McDevitt. McDevitt teamed up with Nancy Feagin for the fastest female ascent of the *Salathé*, turning in a time of just over 30 hours. Fatigued near the top, the women slept a few hours before continuing.

STEVE SCHNEIDER

The Porcelain Wall, Sarganata. From August 22 to 27, Pep Masip and I put up a new route on the Porcelain Wall. We took six days, with five bivouacs (no pre-fixing), to do 12 60-meter pitches. Initially, we wanted to repeat Pete Takeda and Erik Kohl's *When Hell Was In Session* (A5) which, along with Warren Harding's *Porcelain Wall*, were the only two routes on the wall. While hauling loads, we saw a line of cracks, more to the right of the two aforementioned routes. It was very obvious and logical, and we decided to climb it. *Sarganata* means lizard, as we waited for the sun like the lizards do.

The first six pitches are simple aid with a bit of free climbing. If it were repeated, it would result in more of a free route, because the crack had a lot of shrubbery. The last six pitches are very vertical and technical. I'd like to point out that there are no bolts on any pitch, nor in the six first belays. There are nine bolts in the last six belays.

Later, with Pep Masip, we did a third ascent of the *Reticent Wall* on El Cap. We were on