

rain in talus caves, we scrambled 500 feet to the start of our route just left of the 1970 Kroger Route and at the left side of a prominent pyramid formation.

We went left up some wet and slimy shelves to a small tree ledge to keep us out of the path of potential rockfall. On the second lead, Ron nailed up and right on a thin ramp in order to cross the prominent arête (which marked our line of ascent) to attain a crack that headed up to a huge pillar above. Ron led into the night, using all 12 of our beak pitons in the process. Upon arriving at the belay, I found him almost unresponsive and hypothermic. After warming him up and giving him a shell garment, we squeezed out a bivy back at the tree ledge. The next morning, I led a steep crack on aid to a difficult and partially loose wide section to get us to some mausoleum-like ledges behind the pillar. The climbing to the top of the pillar proved extremely difficult; Ron mixed free and aid, then traversed left to the arête, nailing a long, impressive horizontal roof.

I found spectacular climbing up steep thin cracks on the arête above, reminiscent of the headwall passage on the *Shield* of El Capitan. The illusions of steepness were confirmed each time Guy launched into space to ascend the rope to the belay. This was Guy's first wall. I was impressed by his 'go for it' attitude, especially since he had never used ascenders prior to this climb!

On the next lead, the features we had hoped were cracks turned out to be mere ripples in the sea of granite above. Ron boldly bat-hooked, riveted and beaked to just short of a good crack system. A mixed pitch followed, including some welcome hand cracks, nailing and nutting, ending in a scary mantle onto the belay stance.

Ron nailed a short section above, then climbed down and right to a diagonal ramp and a ledge at the base of a huge corner. In three long difficult free pitches, we made it to a ledge that divides the lower wall from the upper dome. That night, we split less than a quart of water and the food that remained between the three of us. The morning of our sixth day and tenth day out from the trailhead, we decided to escape, and worked our way across the ledge to water and our lives back home.

By mid-October Ron, Guy and I were able to return. Traversing back to our high point, we continued the route on the upper dome. Starting up the line of the corner which got us to the ledge from the lower wall, we moved left out onto an arête. Ron cruised up a classic, difficult steep face pitch to a blocky ledge below a steep headwall. Following straight thin cracks up through two major horizontal crack/bands allowed me to tension-traverse left to a diagonal ramp ending at a belay just below a prominent right-facing corner/chimney. Ron led up an awkward step left and then right, climbing some difficult moves up the chimney to a belay at the intersection of a wide crack from above and left. Following this crack system gave us a more direct line to the summit. Above this wide section, intricate free and aid moves headed up to a ledge just left of another, but a much easier wide crack. Belaying only about 80 feet out, we then headed right a few moves to an enjoyable left-facing corner.

In the autumn darkness, climbing toward a seemingly unreachable horizon, four more long pitches of easy but runout face climbing brought us to an unroping spot at blocky ledges well below the true summit.

E.C. JOE, *Southern Sierra Climber's Association*

*Mt. Hoffman, Southeast Face Central.* This route, the Southeast Face Central (5.8-5.9, three and a half pitches) in the Wishon Reservoir Area of the Sierra National Forest, starts to the right of the obvious 200-foot tower/buttness on the southeast face. In July, Mark Leffler and I climbed the obvious diagonal crack up and right for one and a half pitches to a good ledge

*Tehiptite Dome, showing A: In the Niche of Time, and B: Beckey-Kroger Route. E.C. Joe*



*Peter Croft on the first traverse of the Evolution Peaks. GALEN ROWELL*

below a long right-facing corner/arch that heads toward the top. We followed this corner, then moved right to an obvious crack and belay. The last pitch followed this crack to the top. We walked off for the descent. The approach is made via the dirt road and trail cross-country from the Wishon Reservoir.

RICHARD LEVERSEE

*Finger Rock, Boldfinger.* A long time ago (1970s?), Fred Beckey and crew climbed a route on the south side of Finger Rock, which is a short drive/hike from the Wishon Reservoir. On the east face of Finger Rock are a couple distinct features. There is an obvious diagonal line of weakness going up from the lower left to upper right. This ends below an ominous, rust-colored overhanging headwall chock-full of wild huecos, chickenheads and plate flakes in the center of the east face. This featured section is directly above several gigantic boulders on the slope below the east face. Climb up the diagonal ramp for two pitches until directly below the wild central headwall above a short (30') chimney. Belay at a flake covered in bird droppings. The next pitch is steep and wild, heading up and right through the incredible featured headwall. It ends on a huge ledge 50 feet below the top. Descent is third class off the back (north) side. Mark Leffler and I did the route in July, calling it *Boldfinger* (5.10+, three pitches).

RICHARD LEVERSEE

*Evolution Peaks, Grand Traverse.* The Evolution Peaks were judged to be the scenic culmination of the High Sierra by the 19th century scrambler Theodore Solomons, who named them after the great evolutionary scientists and thinkers of the time. Located far from road-heads at the middle of the John Muir Trail, they have had very little technical rock climbing. Peter Croft and I followed this tradition by not using ropes or hardware on the first traverse of the Evolution range in mid-July.

At 4:30 a.m., we started by headlamp from our camp at 10,800 feet on Evolution Lake, climbing a 4th class route on Mount Mendel to reach the summit ridge at dawn. From there, a mile of knife-edged ridge (4th and 5th-class climbing) brought us to the summit pinnacle of Mount Darwin (13,831"). As we continued south, we came to the crux of the day, which involved exposed, unroped 5.9 climbing with some loose rock along a series of pinnacles just below Darwin.

We continued traversing several more 13,000-foot peaks with spots of 5.8 until we reached the easier classic Northwest Arête of Mount Haeckel. Having completed all the peaks on the main crest, and with hands that could barely touch the rock, I decided to descend. Peter continued alone, veering off the main crest to traverse over mounts Wallace, Fiske, Warlow, and Huxley to complete the entire arc of Evolution Peaks. He returned to camp at about 7 p.m., having traversed 35,000 feet of horizontal rock climbing with close to 10,000 feet of vertical gain, which he considered to be more than the equivalent of a one-day Grade VI wall climb.

GALEN ROWELL

*Mount Darwin, Southwest Arête.* While camped at Evolution Lake in July, I noticed a surprisingly clean and well-defined granite arête on the 13,831-foot Mt. Darwin's jumbled and broken southern wall. The arête rises continuously apart from the main wall for more than 2,000 feet from a bench above the inlet of the lake. I set out alone one morning with a 9mm rope and a few cams to self-belay if necessary. Third-class scrambling brought me to a steep