

COLORADO

Rocky Mountain National Park

Longs Peak, East Face, The Casual Route, First Solo, and Other Activity, Previously Unreported. I soloed (what is now called) the *Casual Route* on Longs Peak on July 14, 1980, all free; it took me two hours something. My girlfriend walked up and met me on top. I always assumed it had been done before until I read the guidebook recently, which credits the first solo to Charlie Fowler in 1984. I also soloed the Regular Route on the northwest face of Half Dome that same summer on September 27 in six hours something—which is not quite as fast as Dean Potter’s ascent last year, but was done almost 20 years before! My ascent was mostly free but with a backrope on two bolt-ladder pitches down low and on the pitches above Big Sandy. I met up with Steve Bell (and Roger Mear, I think) on Big Sandy.

STEVE MONKS, *United Kingdom*

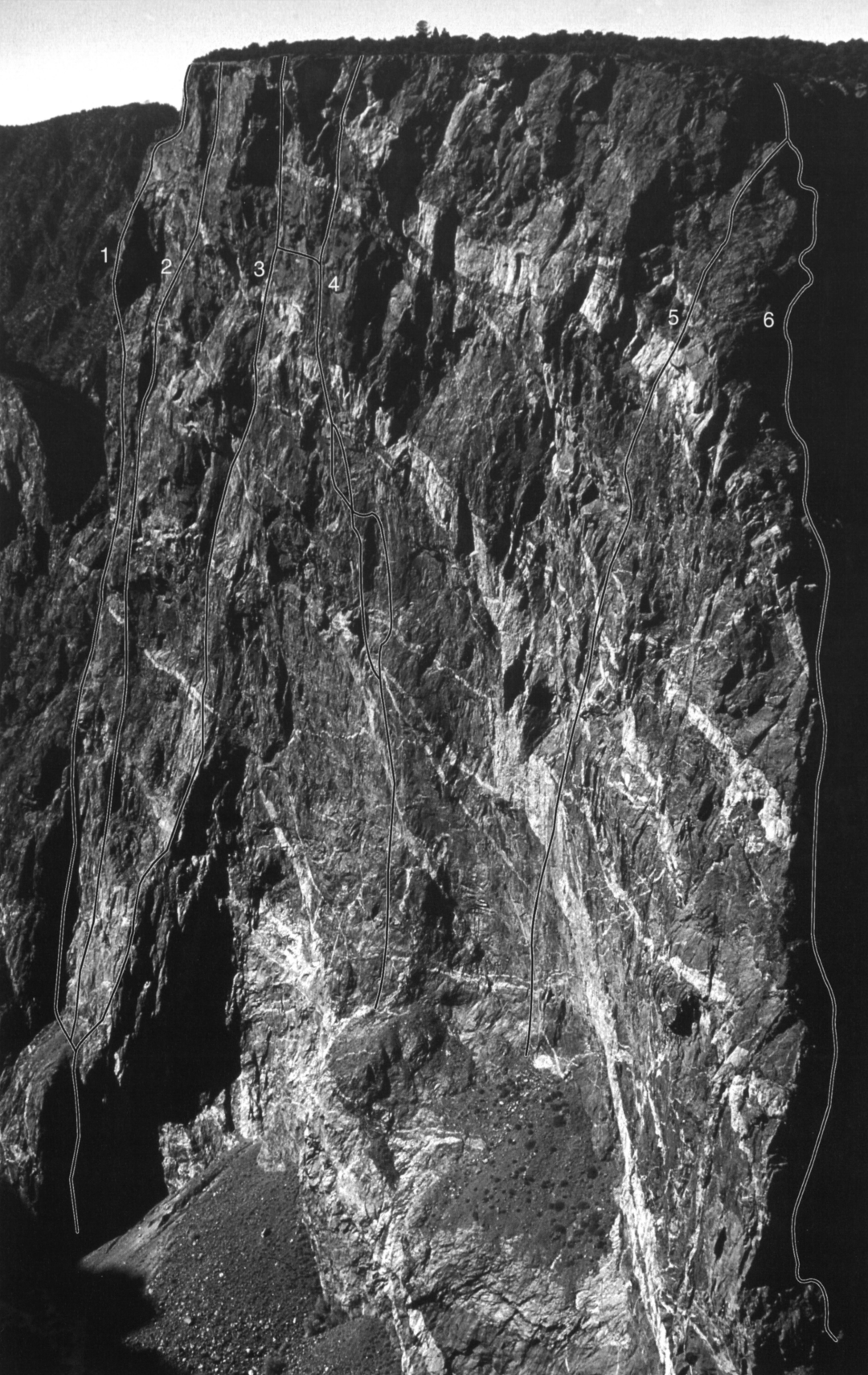
Longs Peak, East Face, Gear and Clothing, Previously Unreported. In August, 1998, Cameron Tague and I did the second ascent of *Gear and Clothing* (IV 5.9 A4) on the Diamond. The ascent itself is not significant; however, the amount of free climbing on the route is worth mentioning. We freed several of the aid pitches at 5.10-ish. One pitch, an A2 corner, was freed by Cameron at 5.12 and was excellent. The A4 pitch might go free as well, as would the pitches on the upper headwall, to a patient party. Watch out for the death flake on the pitch below Table Overhang; it could take out your belayer and all those slow starters in the North Chimney.

KENT MCCLANNAN

Keyboard of the Winds, Various Ascents. In early July, Nigel Gregory approached me with a gleam in his eyes. “Are you up for a little new routing?” he asked. Nigel’s British upbringing made me immediately suspicious. I hesitantly said, “I don’t know; maybe.” He took that for an enthusiastic “yes,” and before I knew it we were off to explore a beautiful group of small, unclimbed spires in Rocky Mountain National Park.

Perched on the ridge between Longs Peak and Pagoda Peak are five independent spires called the Keyboard of the Winds. Although they look a bit slabby when viewed from Black Lake, they are quite steep and offer interesting climbing. The spires range from 250 to 700 feet tall and we found the rock to be fairly solid, despite the occasional loose block and some thick lichen. It all made for a marvelous adventure! However, the climbs were not without incident. Nigel fell from the first pitch of *Mr. Stubbs*, and one of his double ropes was severed two-thirds of the way through by the gate of a carabiner. Unconcerned by the event, he simply pulled out a knife, cut off the damaged bit and carried on to the belay.

In total, we climbed a new route on the northwest face of each of the five towers. At least two of the spires had never been summited, and four of the towers had never been climbed by a technical route. Generally, we followed the path of least resistance up obvious crack systems. Starting from Pagoda Peak and heading northeast, the towers and routes are as follows. *Picking Plums* (5.10c) on Sievers Tower; *Brass in Pocket* (5.11b) on Jackpot Tower; *Cools the Burning* (5.10a) on Mrs. Stubbs; *Stubbs Fights Back* (5.11a) on Mr. Stubbs; and *Step-in-stein* (5.10a) on The Dark Tower. It is easiest to descend off the back of the spires via one mandatory



rappel or some easy scrambling.

DAVE SHELDON

Rocky Mountain National Park, Enchainment. In August, Mike Pennings and I left the Longs Peak parking lot at 3 a.m. and climbed *Pervertical Sanctuary* (5.10) on the Diamond. We then dropped over the west side of Longs and soloed the North Ridge of Spearhead (5.6) before traversing around to climb the Petit Grepon's South Face (5.8). From there we kicked steps up Andrew's Glacier onto the Continental Divide and continued north to where we could glissade Tyndal Glacier to reach the north face of Hallet's. We started up the classic Northcutt-Carter (5.7), but found a massive rockfall had eliminated the second pitch just days before. We were able to do a variation to the right, which was runout and 5.10. The rest of the route is the same as before, but the first two pitches could be unstable; finding an alternative is recommended. We summited on Hallet's and continued along the Divide to where we could glissade Ptarmigan Glacier to reach the south face of Notchtop. There, darkness caught us and we climbed the *Spiral Route* (5.4) by headlamp. We reached the Bear Lake parking lot at 1:30 a.m.

Our effort bagged 5,000 feet of climbing in about 20 miles of cross-country hiking but, as Pennings pointed out, our climbathalon was just the beginning of possible enchainments in the Park. Add Mt. Alice, Chief's Head and Shark's Tooth to the package for a full day.

TOPHER DONAHUE

Chief's Head, The Headdress. Following a wet summer, a cold September caused ice to form in unusual places in RMNP. Eli Helmuth and I climbed a smear originally found by Duncan Ferguson on the north face of Mt. Meeker. A week later, Helmuth was guiding Longs Peak and saw a much larger flow on Chief's Head. We went in with Simon Fryer and climbed the feature at the end of September. To the right of the rock climb *Much Ado About Nothing*, we found five pitches, including the crux 60-meter pitch, which inspired the name *The Headdress* (M5+ WI5+). At the end of October, I returned to try another line in the area and *The Headdress* was gone.

TOPHER DONAHUE

Black Canyon of the Gunnison

Painted Wall, The Serpent. In mid-October, Kennan Harvey and I climbed an all-free variation to the *Dragon* route on the Painted Wall. We climbed in classic wall style, with the leader free climbing and the second following on jumars. A "true" free ascent is left for future European rock stars. We followed the original *Dragon Route* (Baillie-Baxter-Lovejoy-Karlstrom, 1972) for 600 feet to Kor's Cave, a huge overhang sheltering what was once a spacious bivy ledge that has since fallen off. From the remnants of this ledge where the *Dragon* goes right, we went left under the roof, climbing three complex pitches diagonally up and left to rejoin the *Dragon* in its "Stygian Traverse." At the end of this traverse, we continued left

The Painted Wall, showing 1. Southern Arête (Dalke-Goss-Kor-Logan, late 1960s). 2. Journey Through Mirkwood (approximate) (Newberry-Pearson-Pulaski-Rosholt, late 1970s). 3. Forest-Walker (1972)/Stratosfear (Coyne-Leavitt, 1984) (Forest-Walker finishes direct to the rim; Stratosfear traverses right to connect with the Dragon Route. Traverse shown). 4. Dragon Route (Baillie-Baxter-Karlstrom-Lovejoy, 1972). The Serpent variation (Achey-Harvey, 1999) takes the leftmost paths (shown). 5. Beyer route (Jim Beyer, solo, date unknown). 6. Northern Arête (Disney-Kor, 1962). JEFF ACHEY