

By this time, our relationship was progressing, but still in its infancy, and neither of us could bear some obstacles, such as using the poop tube in front of each other. So when nature's call became a shout, one of us would quickly climb a pitch while the other answered the call.

Pitch 11 was a short 5.13a corner that led to one of the finest but strangest sections of climbing either of us had ever seen. *Lurking Fear* joins the West Buttress at this point and follows the long roof of the Grand Traverse. Having bumped into Steve Schneider in El Cap Meadows one day, we knew the peculiar beta for this pitch, thank heavens. If you first traverse beneath the roof and then follow a crack above the roof, a sit-down rest appears (note: the aid line goes directly beneath the roof). After catching your breath, you traverse a few feet above the lip, downclimb back under the roof for a few undercling moves, and finally finish the pitch with yet more great slab climbing.

After a case of heat exhaustion sent us to the ground one day, we quickly returned the next to fire the pitch. After clipping the anchors, Beth's enthusiasm to finish the route reached its peak. She suggested that we blast for the top, doing the last eight pitches that day. A 5.12c thin corner and an overhanging 5.11d offwidth still lay ahead. Luckily we completed all the remaining pitches first try and summited with daylight to spare. Special thanks goes out to Steve Schneider, Alan Lester, and Jeff Schoen for their vision of seeing this as a free climb, and for the preparation of the free variations.

TOMMY CALDWELL, *unaffiliated*

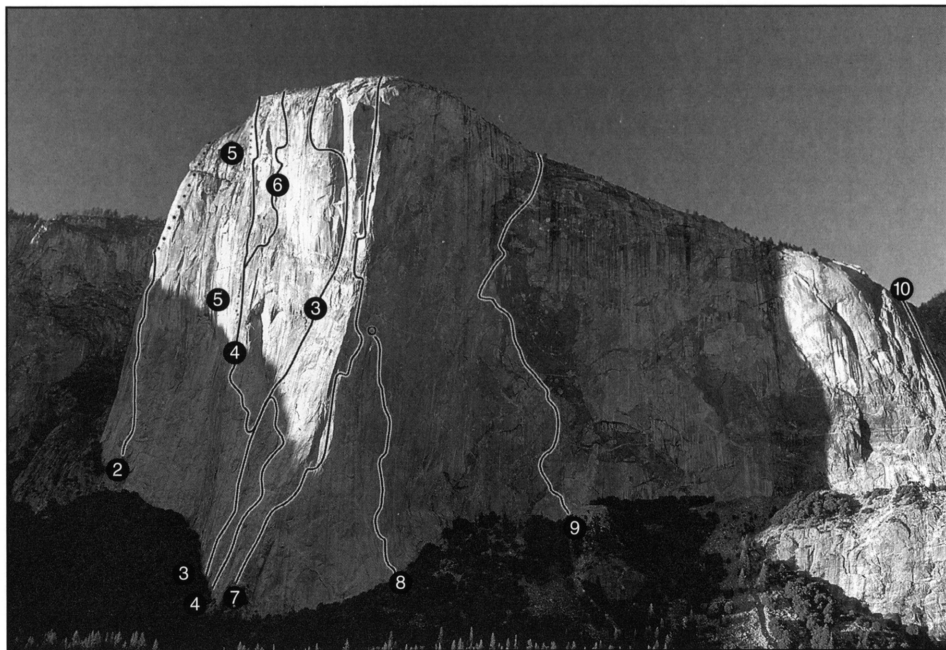
*El Capitan, Golden Gate, New Route.* Freeclimbing on El Capitan: days on a wall, high exposure, awkward chimneys and offwidth stuff, and, last but not least, mostly natural pro—all ingredients for a particularly interesting game. Lynn Hill's ascent of the *Nose* was an exploit, an event in the climbing world, an earthquake not just for women but for us all. Her comment, "It goes, boys!" was straight, tough, but nonetheless correct. In a provoking yet charming manner, she passed men's dominance in climbing and left them behind. She discovered El Capitan from a new angle and demonstrated that there was plenty left to explore!

The result: *Lurking Fear*, *Salathé*, the *Nose*, *El Niño* (a.k.a. the free variation to the *North America Wall*), and the *Free Rider*, as the easiest breakthrough on these gigantic walls, are now all free. Last but not least, the *Shaft*, a stunning 1000-meter free climb with only two meters of aid left, awaits a continuous and complete free ascent.

I saw another possibility for a free climb: the *Heart Route*, opened in 1970 by Chuck Kroger and Scott Davis. It was one of the first routes on El Cap and therefore primarily follows the bigger features of the face, giving the best chances for a continuous free climb.

On September 20, I started to solo up a new line that escapes from the *Salathé* at the height of El Cap Spire. The route joins the *Heart Route* after four pitches. From there, most of the climb is along the original route; only the muddy and wet "Rainy Day Woman" crack is bypassed on the left. On the fifth day of the first ascent, I reached the huge "Fat City" ramp, which is the exit of the *Heart Route*, and found a fantastic freeclimbing solution to it: a 300-foot flake rips through the highly exposed and overhanging headwall to the left—the perfect exit to the new free climb, *Golden Gate*!

At the beginning of October, my brother, Thomas, arrived in Yosemite and we immediately began to work on a free ascent of the route. On Friday, October 13, we climbed the *Salathé* halfway up to the El Cap Spire, where we spent our first bivy. On the second day of climbing we did face problems. On the route's first 5.13a pitch, I had been sent down twice



*El Capitan: The free routes (with first free ascensionists listed). 1. The West Face (on left, not shown) (V 5.11c, Jardine-Price, 1979). 2. Lurking Fear (VI 5.13c, Caldwell-Rodden, 2000). 3. The Shaft (8-pitch free variation to the Muir Wall; 5.13b, with 20 feet of A1 remaining to be freed) (Cosgrove-Epperson-Smith, 1994). 4. The Salathé (VI 5.13b, Piana-Skinner, 1988). 5. Free Rider (dotted lines) (5.12d, four-pitch variation to the Salathé) (A. Huber, 1998). 6. Golden Gate (a combination of the Salathé and Heart routes, 5.13b, Huber-Huber, 2000). 7. The Nose (VI 5.13d, L. Hill, 1993). 8. Passage to Freedom (13 pitches to the top of El Cap Tower, 5.13c A0, L. Houlding, 1999). 9. El Niño (a free variation to the North America Wall) (VI 5.13c A0, Huber-Huber, 1998). 10. East Buttress (IV 5.10b, Sacherer-Reed, 1964). CHRIS FALKENSTEIN*

by breaking holds, so I needed a third attempt to redpoint that pitch, and too much time and power was wasted to exit the route the same day. After another bivy on the wall, we reached the summit of El Cap, having freeclimbed *Golden Gate* in a single push: 41 pitches, one at 5.13b, two at 5.13a and five at 5.12.

ALEXANDER HUBER, *Germany*

*Lower Cathedral Rock, North Face, Children of the Corn, New Route.* On May 20, Steve Gerberding, Dave Griffith, and I left our comfy bivy to push for the summit of Lower Cathedral Rock's north face. Four days earlier, in perfect, hot weather, we had begun our climb. *Children of the Corn* (VI 5.12 A4+ R) takes the line straight up the middle of the north face via ten long pitches mostly of very hard aid climbing on dangerous rock, some of which is loose and expanding.

After a well-protected 5.12a pitch, the climb soon becomes hard. The second lead has no bolts and climbs its first 80 feet on body-weight (barely) gear above a ledge. The pitch ends on sporty runout hooking that risks 100-foot-plus falls. Steve claims the pitch is only A3, but it's very state of the art. Seldom does the climb let up and never is there an easy