

the Regular Route on Half Dome in 23 hours. They didn't jumar any pitches, because, writes Herson, "Pete hates to jug and I don't know how to jug." Herson tried, "much to Peter's dismay" (because of the time factor), to free the Salathé in the process. He didn't quite pull it off.

On El Cap, several routes saw their first one-day ascents. Two were by Brian McCray and Ammon McNeely: Get Whacked (VI 5.10R A5, in 12:47) and Plastic Surgery Disaster (VI 5.8 A5, in 21:37). McNeely also climbed, with Jose Pereyra and Chongo Chuck, Lunar Eclipse (VI 5.10 A4) in 19:47.

Other speed records made on El Cap in 2001 include: Flight of the Albatross (14:50; variation for first 6 pitches; Florine, McCray, Kelly Simard), Muir (19:56; Nils Davis, McCray), New Jersey Turn Pike (16:09; Heather Baer, Florine, Schneider), Zenyatta Mondatta (26:25; McCray, Pereyra), Mr. Midwest (7:40; Hans & Jacqueline Florine, Schneider), East Buttress (2:05 CTC; Smith), and Lurking Fear (4:27; Smith, Wright).

Notable records on other Valley formations include Southern Man on Washington's Column (2:38; Smith, Wright) and the East Buttress of Middle Cathedral (34 minutes—1:15 car-to-car; Smith). Also, on Higher Cathedral Spire, Andrew and Matt Wilder set records on the Regular Route (37 minutes) and the East Corner (1:15).

The best documentation of Yosemite speed climbing action, including these ascents, is found on Hans Florine's site, www.speedclimb.com.

KELLY CORDES, AAC

Leaning Tower, West Face. On May 16 Jason Pickles and I climbed the West Face of the Leaning Tower free except for the initial insanely steep bolt ladder. Royal Robbins called the Tower, first climbed by Warren Harding in 1961 with heavy use of bolts, "the steepest wall in North America." The Tower's west face is comparable in angle to Kilnsey North Buttress but a thousand feet high. Harding's rusty bolts were replaced by the American Safe Climbing Association in 1997, a commendable effort.

We began free climbing where the bolt ladder ends at a small ledge in a shallow, steep groove. The 160-foot crux pitch (5.13b or E7 6c) leads one to Ahwahnee Ledge, a five-star perch named after the exclusive hotel in the Valley. The pitch can be broken in two, utilizing the "gay belay," at 5.13a (E6 6c). A unique and enjoyable hanging ramp pitch, then a full 60-meter stamina fest, both around 5.12c (E5 6b) bring you to the big roof. Its size is deceptive, but when you pull into its depths, all becomes clear: about 20 feet of horizontal laybacking, then another 20 feet of bridging up a 45-degree overhanging groove. Every hold is a jug, and it's a wild pitch, extremely exposed (5.13a or E6 6c). A final typically steep corner completes the outstanding, sustained route. The incredible view of El Cap obtained from the summit makes the final mantle perhaps the most spectacular topout in the world. Achievable in a day and of a semisport nature, this route is set to become a classic of its grade.

Several days later we made the fastest aid ascent of the same route while retrieving a jammed rope. Our time of one hour and 59 minutes sheds an hour and 20 minutes off the previous speed record. The same afternoon Jason caught his bus out of the Valley.

LEO HOULDING, *United Kingdom*

El Capitan, Muir Wall. "Oh my God, he's actually going to step off this ledge!" This was my