

Liberty Cap routes: (1) Passport to the Sky, V 7a A1 (Gary-Jason-Segura, 2006). (2) Scarface, V 5.8 A3 (Bosque-Mucci, 2010). (3) West Buttress, V 5.10 A3 (Bosque-Corbett, 1985). (4) The Patriot Act, V 5.9 A3+ (Bosque-Johnson-Mucci, 2011). (5) Southwest Face, V 5.8 C3 (Faint-Harding-Rowell, 1969). (6) Direct Southwest Face, VI 5.10 A3+ (Braun-Cashner, 1982). (7) Turkey Shoot, V 5.9 A3 (Bosque-Yager, 1988). (8) A Joint Adventure, V 5.9 A3+ (Barbella-Gagner-McConachie, 1979, out of sight on right). Route lines and info courtesy Josh Mucci. Joe Hornof/qitnl.com



Looking back on A2 money-pitch corner on the Patriot Act. Josh Mucci

After joining the West Buttress for a pitch, a long traverse left led into Scarface. We geared up for the final push up the last three pitches. I had led this path last year, so I started racking up under questionable weather. As soon as I stepped into my ladder, it started to rain. Eventually I was climbing in a low-angle waterfall from a lightning storm directly above Liberty Cap. Mildly hypothermic when I reached the belay, I was relieved that the rain turned to hail.

Our relaxed trip had suddenly turned hasty—the opposite of when we climbed these pitches in brutal heat the year before. Steve and Lars were soaked from the runoff at the belay and, having dealt with the pigs in the pool, so to speak, were inclined to let me lead to the summit, which we reached on September 24.

We spent seven days on the climb, after fixing four pitches. We drilled and filled 53 holes. At 62 Lars is the oldest person recorded as completing a big wall first ascent in Yosemite. He had also undergone cancer surgery five months prior to our climb. We named the route The Patriot Act (13 pitches, V 5.9 A3+).

JOSH MUCCI

SIERRA NEVADA

*Merriam Peak, north buttress, two new routes.* Late last summer Lisa Rand and I headed up from the old mine ruins in Pine Creek to the high alpine of Royce Lakes basin. The hike starts out bizarre: in a mile or so you look down on what looks like a Lord of the Rings movie set, with bombed-out buildings, rusted machinery, and creepy tunnels. Mounds of discarded crap rock look like the pooped out innards of the mountain looming above. All of which makes the peaks and snowfields feel that much more like paradise. From our lakeside base camp in late August, we watched icebergs floating like hunchbacked swans.

Merriam's north face is home to one of the classics of the range: Clevenger and Harringtons' North Buttress. Good as it is, this route follows a line left of the buttress itself. On a previous visit I'd ogled some overhanging cracks that appeared to lead up the very crest. This is what we came for.

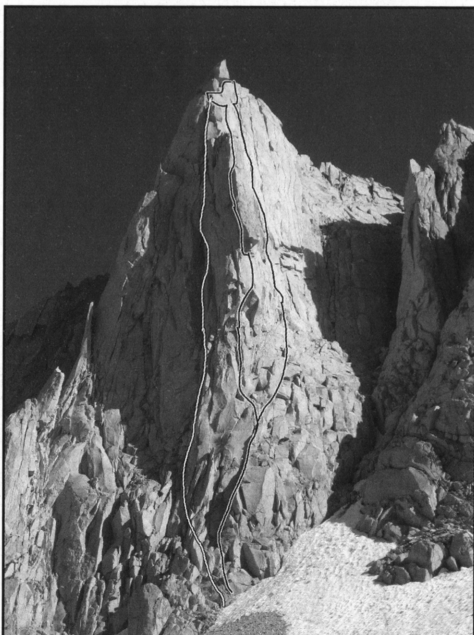
Early next morning we stamped up sun-cupped snow to the base, arriving just behind two climbers headed for the reg route. After a long moderate pitch and a 5.11 stemming section, we arrived at the overhanging cracks. Expecting a 5.12 struggle, I instead found perfect hands in perfect rock. Above the lip the crack swept up until it pinched off below a large roof. At the last moment, edges led left to another crack and up to sling belay. A pitch higher we ran into another discontinuity: a 40' vertical headwall of orange ripples above a big ledge.

Fortunately for my nervous ankles, a few decent gear pods showed up, but I still overgripped the twisty-turny holds and huffed and puffed. Lisa, of course, made it look easy. From there another corner and a short traverse got us to the reg route and to the summit by 3 p.m. Lisa asked if new routing always went so smoothly. Uh, no!

After such good climbing we thought the trip was complete, but on the descent we perved out on another line on the right side of the buttress. The cracks looked to connect, but one pitch in particular looked either futuristic or impossible. Next morning we decided we at least had to check out this other line. A couple of 70m rope-stretchers led us into overhanging terrain and luckily the first of a series of perfect ledges. Above, the futuristic turned fantastic—probably the best alpine 5.11 pitch I've done. Crazy good fingers and stemming led to another cool perch. Watching Lisa follow this pitch with the ropes out in space was better than Cliffhanger. Amazingly clean fingers-to-fist led for three more pitches to the ridge crest. If anything, this route was even better than the first.

Again on top by 3 p.m. All we had to do was the dozen-mile death march back to Mordor.

PETER CROFT, AAC



Merriam Peak, showing the Clevenger-Harrington North Buttress Route on the left and the two new Croft-Rands routes on the right. *Peter Croft*



Peter Croft enjoying perfect Sierra granite on one of his north buttress routes on Merriam Peak. *Lisa Rand*

*Disappearing Dome, Disappearing in Plain Sight.* In July Hunter Sibbald and I climbed a new route on Disappearing Dome, in the southern Yosemite area overlooking the Middle Fork of the San Joaquin River. We called it Disappearing in Plain Sight (IV 5.11b). We climbed ground-up, placing