

Up Rope

FOUNDED BY
HERB AND JAN CONN

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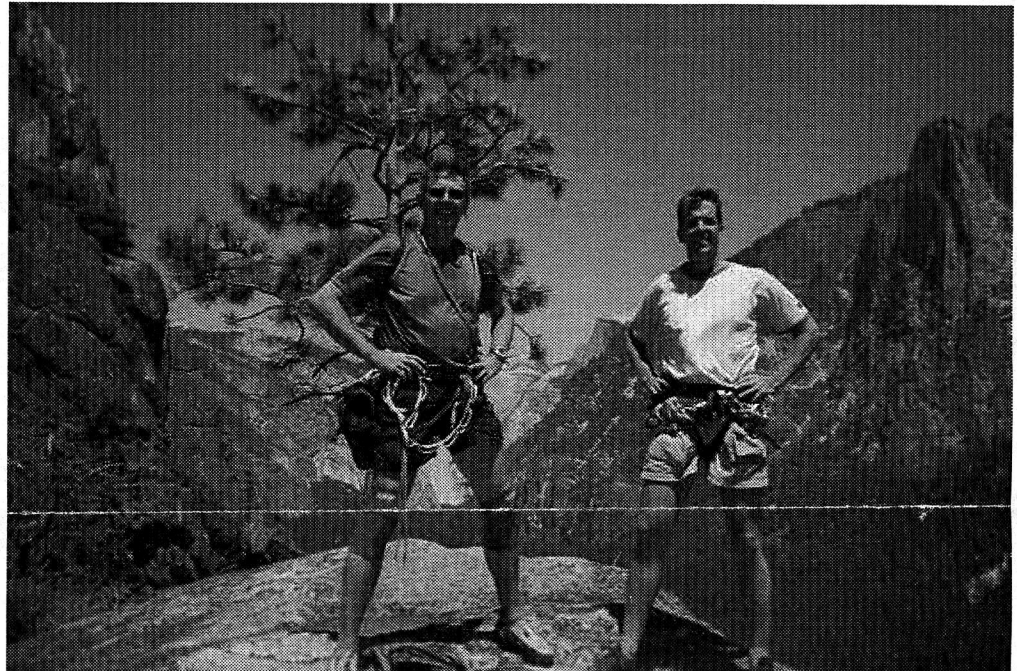
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Marty Comisky and Lee Jenkins topping out "After Six (5.7)" in Yosemite

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Cord Strength	2
Photo Contest Winners	3
GUNKS TRIP REPORT	6
Climbers Calendar	6

ROCKFALL

- Photo contest can be viewed in color on our website!
- Send Up Rope articles to new email address:
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Yosemite

Observations on a First Time Trip

By
Comisky and Jenkins

Yosemite - anyone who climbs, knows about Yosemite; the myths, the "facts", the legends. In June, I made my first visit to the famous valley. On a ten day trip, Lee Jenkins and I climbed in Yosemite Valley and Tuolumne Meadows (the high alpine area of Yosemite national park).

Where I was a "newbie" to the park, Lee had made several earlier visits (none of them for climbing, i.e. normal tourist trips, hiking outings &/or winter visits). So here we were two Yosemite climbing virgins in paradise. The trip was everything I expected (and more) - great views of mountains and waterfalls, great scenery and hiking, great climbing and adventure.

Where and what does one climb in Yosemite when there are literally thousands of climbs? I bought the two Falcon Book guides to free climbing in Yosemite Valley and Tuolumne Meadows but they were-

(continued on page 5)

Single-Handed

by Simon Carr

The game plan was to leave early, cruise down to Swanage, warm up on **The Conger**, tick off **Ocean Boulevard**, finish the day with an easy HVS or two...a plan concocted (as usual) in the realms of fantasy.

Of course we left late, and traffic was heavy on the M27. We stopped for the usual greasy breakfast in a cafe. So it was mid morning when we arrived at Fisherman's Ledge, where an attack of realism suggested a VS to start with before attending to the plan.

There were two other climbers at the top of the descent to **The Conger**, a man and a woman. Judging from the scattered, well used gear, they appeared exceedingly competent. He had that unmistakable "I'm good" look about him. She was just gorgeous; further verification of my theory about climbing (and) talent.

(continued on page 4)

Comparative Testing of High Strength Cord

While surfing the web recently I came across an interesting article from the 2000 International Technical Rescue Symposium entitled "Comparative Testing of High Strength Cord." Two of the authors are employees of Black Diamond Equipment. The full article (all eight pages) can be viewed at "<http://www.xmission.com/~tmoyer/testing>." I will attempt here to summarize the key findings of this study.

The use of cordelettes (18 foot length of accessory cord) has gained wide use in recent years for rigging anchors and for self rescue applications. Initially, climbers used easily accessible 7 mm nylon cord.

Today, climbers have a wide variety of materials to choose from, including:

- Vectran
- Technora
- Spectra
- Kevlar
- Kevlar/Spectra blends
- Spectra/Nylon
- Nylon cord and webbing

To quote the authors "This study tests and compares the strength of different knots in these materials, in both static and dynamic loading, along with their resistance to cyclic flexing, in order to judge their suitability as tools for climbers and rescuers."

Like most things in life, one's decision has tradeoffs. Each of the above mentioned materials has it's pros and cons.

Some of the positive points include:

- high strength (in smaller diameter)
- high melting point
- low stretch
- low moisture absorption
- low weight

On the negative side, some of these materials have:

- high weight/ volume (clumsy/awkward to carry)
- low melting point
- poor fatigue properties

- slippery nature (doesn't hold knots well)
- difficult (i.e. expensive) manufacturing process

In a perfect world, one material would have all the positive and none of the negative traits. It would be strong, light weight, cheap, hold knots well, wouldn't stretch, wouldn't fatigue, etc. But that's not the case. Whichever material you choose, you get something and you give up something.

All the materials were tested by using slow pull tests, drop tests and flex cycle tests. They were tested "au natural" (full length -no knots), with figure-8 knots and loop knots (double and triple Fisherman's and water knot) as well as various friction knots (i.e. self rescue-prusiking).

The full report has complete tables showing all the testing results.

Some of the more interesting (and surprising) results include:


- 7mm Nylon cord kept 92 % of it's tensile strength when knotted with a figure 8 (the best case for the samples tested)
- Vectran kept only 48% of its tensile strength when knotted (the lowest strength of the samples)
- The three highest bend knots samples included the "low tech" 7mm Nylon cord, 1" tubular webbing and the Mountain Tools Web-o-lette.
- used with a friction knot, all the cords did better than the webbing samples
- as a cordelette, in a worst case using the UIAA max impact force spec. some of these materials would fail a UIAA drop test.

I have to admit, I'm a "gear head." I like to go through catalogs, peruse the latest equipment and try to stay on the leading technical edge. In the past I have used a Vectran cordelette. After reading this test report I am retiring it to top rope anchor material.

To sum it all up, the lowly 7 mm "Nylon cord and webbing may be the best of all. Although heavier, they are cheap, strong, universally available, and seem to have a virtually unlimited flex life." (they can also be readily and cheaply cut up for emergency rappel slings).

Have fun out there and be careful.

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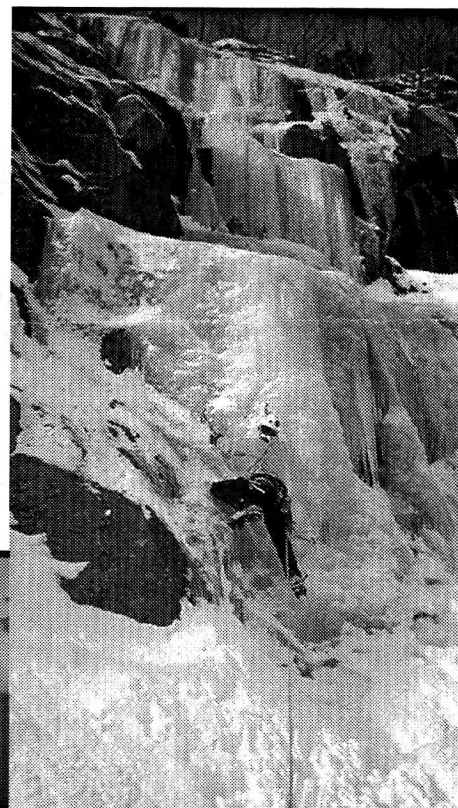
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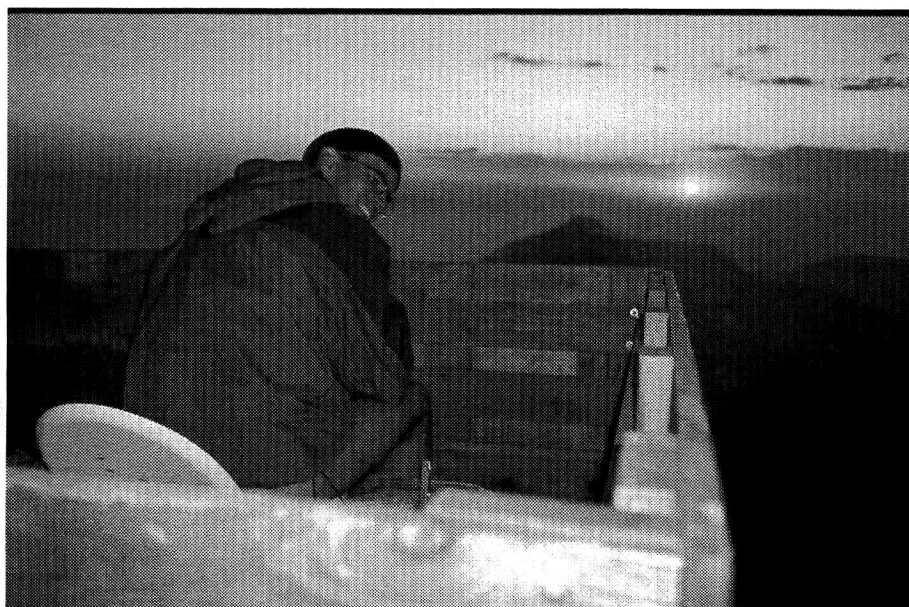
2002 2nd ANNUAL PHOTOGRAPHY CONTEST WINNERS



Best Climbing Photo
Lee Jenkins on Smear (III/IV) Frankenstein, NH
taken by Bill Duvall



Best Scenic Photo
Popocatepetl volcano from Ixtazihuatl volcano,
Mexico
taken by Ozana Halik



Best Humor Photo
Best View in Wyoming
(lower saddle on Grand Teton)
taken by Ozana Halik

Single Handed (con't)

I asked what they were planning on doing. "The Conger" the woman replied. "We won't be long - I'm going to solo it" she said. I affirmed that we were there for the same route. She added "I don't think I've ever seen anyone do this route with a rope" thus consigning our intended ascent to the dustbin of history.

My climbing companion, John Cox, innocently asked the man "Have you done this before?" "Often" was the reply....at which point John noticed a copy of *Deep Water Soloing in Dorset* on the ground. The photographs in the guide revealed that our conversationalist was Crispin Waddy, a pioneer of the *deep water=no rope* style of climbing. The guide also indicated that ascents with ropes and gear were passé for this area of Swanage; soloing was the norm. If soloing was too tame, then apparently riding bicycles into the sea from 20m up was a popular alternative.

Ms Gorgeous was now ready; t-shirt tucked into lycra tights, rock boots on, chalk bag attached. I prepared to follow; same basic gear, plus helmet, two ropes, full rack of Friends and wires, prussik, extra slings. As we soloed down the descent ramp, I felt particularly stupid following Ms Gorgeous as she traversed daintily to the start of the route.

The Conger packs a lot of excitement into 35 m of climbing. It is a diagonally rising traverse leftwards across the wall above a large sea cave, where falls are likely to leave the climber either in space or in the sea. The first 20m are not too hard technically, across often wet slabs to the arête that forms the left edge of a bottomless chimney. The crux 5c moves, originally aided with now-missing pegs, require swinging around the arête to stand awkwardly on a small sloping foothold on the overhanging left wall of the chimney. From here another couple of difficult moves lead up the bulging wall until it is possible to reach the top of the chimney and bridge across. Another 15m of easier traversing continues left from the chimney to the top of the cliff.

As with most sea cliff routes, communication between leader and second is impossible once out of sight. And because of the overhanging nature of the cliff, from the belay at the top you can only see the last 5m of the route.

The sea was a bit rough, and the starting traverse was wave-washed. My legs and rock-boots were already wet when I reached the small alcove at the start of the route. It appeared that Miss Gorgeous was (literally) climbing alone; Mr Waddy was the ground party, providing moral fibre, photographic coverage and lifeguard assistance if required. Staying in the alcove would guarantee getting wet as there was insufficient room for Mr Waddy, John and myself, so I gave Miss G a 5m start, and followed her chalk.

The initial moves were tricky, with a backwards fall into the sea as the consequences of a cockup. I decided to forgo runners, as the potential for major rope drag was high. Once on the slabs above the sea cave, I put some gear in and immediately felt better. The rock was slippery, and had clearly been in the spray zone if not the high water zone quite recently. I looked back to see a particularly large wave break over the alcove, soaking the residents up to their waists. "Ferry passing by" commented Mr. Waddy wringing out his pile jacket.

Ms G was just in front of me and not enjoying herself. The step from the first slab onto the second slab was tricky, with the sea slobbering noisily below like some feeding animal. It took her a few attempts to commit to the moves. So as not to crowd her, I stayed on the first slab, with John relaying progress reports. Mr. Waddy was meanwhile making encouraging noises to Ms G along the lines of "You won't have any problem - it's only 5c".

The crux moves onto the sloping ledge took Ms G even longer. I couldn't understand why until I reached there some minutes later, but by now she was 10m off the sea, 20m away from the main cliff, and still standing on the foothold on the arête. So I occupied myself placing more runners to compensate for the missing pegs, and while I was doing this, there was a sudden whoosh, the sound of 50kg plummeting into the water. She had jumped off!

I looked down to see Ms G paddling back to the descent ramp, her hair spread out on the water in a very fetching manner. Later conversations with Mr. Waddy revealed that the experienced deep water soloist brings multiple chalk bags and pairs of boots on a day's outing.

As I had now filled up the available nut slots, there was nothing else to do but climb on....technical moves up the arête, hard for those of puny reach

like myself, and I struggled inelegantly onto the foothold. It was hard to stay there; my respect for Ms G rose, and I started evaluating the probable trajectory of a 65kg mass.....fortunately a degree of cunning mixed with fear revealed a wire placement near my feet, and one on the overhanging wall above. After about 20 mediocre attempts to leave the foothold, I finally climbed too far to reverse down, and kept going up the wall until I could reach the jugs at the top of the chimney. With much relief I bridged across for a rest. There was a perfect thread runner, to take, as articles used to say, a "full weight sling". The remainder of the route was anticlimactic, except for the dreadful rope drag. At the belay, there was one good wire, but the nearest backups were 10m away and I could hardly move the rope. So I put the good nut in, added a Friend for cosmetic appearances, and brought John up.

He climbed slowly at first, which was no surprise given the greasy nature of the slabs. Mr Waddy and Ms G had returned to the top of the cliff while I was finishing the pitch, and after drying off abseiled down another steeply overhanging bit of cliff. I guessed that John was somewhere near the crux from the rope I'd taken in, but could not see or hear him. Now John is a good climber, or any case had burnt me off at the climbing wall the previous week, so when the rope came tight I naturally assumed he wanted slack to climb back to the foothold. So I fed out 2m (my estimate) or 6m (his claim) but surprisingly his weight did not come off the rope. I couldn't understand it.

Now John is a bit heavier than me, and after ten minutes the pain on my waist was becoming uncomfortable, and after 15 minutes excruciating. Repeated yelling achieved zilch; I couldn't hear him, he couldn't hear me. I had carefully placed all prussiks and other spare gear out of reach, so there was no chance of tying him off to the belay. Given the quality of the anchor a rapid descent into the sea for both of us would have been the probable result. I was preparing to lower him into the water, on the grounds that he would get wet regardless but I might as well stay dry, when Mr Waddy appeared (sans rope) from below.

I suggested that he might see what John was doing. On his return, he replied "Lower him into the sea". I looked at him in amazement and he changed this to "Well actually he's trying to prussik." As he had been trying to prussik for 20 minutes now, I felt more decisive tactics were needed, and asked Mr Waddy to help me pull John up. With his assistance, John reached the rock at the top of the chimney, but incompetently left behind the wire on the left wall.

Back on *terra horizontalis*, some suitable gesture to restore credibility in the dewy eyes of Ms G was needed. So we mumbled something about "Boulder Ruckle West" to try a couple of routes".

I threw the spare rope down what I thought was the recommended abseil. However, over the edge it was clear that we were above **Ocean Boulevard**, and the increasing distance of the rope from the cliff as we descended removed that route from immediate tick lists. With the late start, the full breakfast, and the Conger contretemps, it was now approaching dusk. We opted for **Black Sunshine**, a mere VS but another *South West Climbs* tick so it was acceptable. John led the first pitch. His complete job of rope mismanagement was exceeded by mine on the second pitch, when in my hurry to get off before dark I failed to extend a runner under a roof. Not only did this slow progress to a crawl, but seriously increased the grip factor on the loose and poorly protected exit. With some relief I finally tied onto a stake at the top. By now it was dark.

The original plan had been to stay two days, but the forecast was poor and it was clouding over with rain imminent. So we walked back to the packs, and started to haul up the abseil rope. I busily untied the sling from one stake, John untied the other, and we stood up together. We looked at each other - *no rope* - comprehension dawned. The abseil rope was now somehow at the foot of the wall, 40m below in the darkness. Neither of us had a head torch, either in our packs or in the car.

So we spent the night - not doubt illegally - in the National Trust car park at Spywell Farm. John slept outside the car in his bivy bag. I had to get in the car in the middle of the night when it rained (no bivy bag - another technical oversight).

It was still raining next morning at the top of the cliff. John abseiled down to get the rope and I belayed him back up a severe. He wanted to retrieve the missing wire; something about a *matter of principle*. I'd had enough with overhanging sea cliffs, so vetoed this plan. It was my wire.

"I'll have to come back", he said as we walked to the car, "Solo I think next time".

Yosemite (con't)

-still overwhelming in the number of climbs described. Lee and I both purchased e-book guides over the Internet from Supertopo. This was a great purchase (\$10 each with excellent descriptions of the best classic climbs with outstanding full color pictures and topos with gear requirements and descent information). Their web address is www.supertopo.com.

Of course there is very difficult climbing in Yosemite, but there is also much moderate climbing as well. Lee and I are 5.8 leaders (at best) and there was more than enough to keep us busy and challenged on our visit (we probably could have climbed at this level for months there is so much to do there).

The climbing was outstanding; I would definitely recommend a trip to the valley for anyone (climbers and non-climbers alike). Yes, the valley can be crowded. We did have some heavy traffic on the weekend. However, on the weekdays the place was relatively empty.

Of course we had a tick list of climbs and for the most part we got to do everything we wanted with little or no waiting (not the case in Tuolumne).

Some highlights:

- I took my first leader fall
- We did our longest trad climb to date - 15 pitches and 11 rappels
- Great weather - sunny and mild the whole time
- Did some touristy sightseeing
- Got to climb "The Nose" - at least the first 10 feet
- Took a swim in an alpine lake (god, it was cold)
- Had 2 great meals at a gourmet restaurant located in the middle of the desert.

On our first day climbing in the valley we went to Church Bowl. It has an approach of about 45 seconds. In consists of mostly one pitch climbs and this is where I got spanked by the rock. On our second climb of the day we were doing a 5.7 offwidth (Uncle Fanny), something you don't get to practice much here at Great Falls or Seneca. Lee led the first pitch and spent a good 20 minutes stuck in the chimney before deciding to bail and give me a chance at the route.

I also got stuck and decided to abandon the chimney and so I went out onto the face. Before I knew it, I was falling. Not much notice so I didn't (or forgot) to call out "Falling!!" to alert Lee. Thankfully, the pro that Lee had set earlier was solid

(I really love cams) and I only fell about 8-10 feet, scraping my ankle, knee and thigh and then landing on my butt on a small bulge before the rope caught my fall. What a way to start our trip - first day out, second pitch and already I'm hurting. I eventually got up the route. Still not doing the 5.7 chimney I moved out left and led the 5.9-5.10 face - go figure.

While in the valley, we had reservations and "camped" at Curry Village - canvas tents on wooden platforms. This was hardly camping, but it was nice not to have to sleep on the ground - each cabin had real beds and linens. The only problem was that it was very noisy and night and interrupted our beauty sleep. All the regular camp grounds were full and we didn't want to take a chance getting shut out at Camp 4 which doesn't take reservations.



Our big adventure climb in

the valley was Royal Arches - a 15 pitch/11 rappel 5.7 A0 route with one aided pendulum on a fixed rope. This is one of the "50 Classic Climbs of North America" and we were warned that the route is very popular and crowded. However, we only encountered a single other party, a solo climber who quickly passed us on the 5th. pitch.

We had a little difficulty in route finding often stopping to look at the topos, took some leisurely stops along the way to enjoy the view, got off route on the rappel descent so our day car-to-car was about 12 hours (the record for the climb is 48 minutes!!) This climb is a definite "must do" when you come to Yosemite.

Marty on Royal Arches (15 pitches-5.7 A0)

(continued on page 7)

CLIMBER'S CALENDER

October 11th - 14th (*Columbus day weekend*)

Shawangunks, New York (*multi-pitch*)

The Annual Columbus Day Weekend trip to Shawangunks-- a multi-pitch lead climbing area. All participants must have had training or experience in leading or seconding trad routes. An exception can be made only if an experienced climber agrees to take a newbie under his/her wing and assume full responsibility for the new person's training and safety for the entire duration of the event. Experience in leading sport routes is insufficient to qualify for trad leading or seconding. There's not much more I can say beyond what's in the guide books. Basically, ratings are fair, and route descriptions reasonable. Most climbs are two or three pitches. Trapps is the recommended climbing area for first-timers. After topping out, either rappel from established anchors or hike out to Uberfall and descend to the undercliff road there. I personally recommend the walkdown. It's a wonderful chance to discuss the just completed climb with your partner; besides, there are times when rappelling interferes with others who are doing routes in the vicinity of rappel lines. After finishing each climb, look around the Uberfall area for other group members and consider switching partners, etc..

For more information and to sign-up, see <<http://www.roadnrock.com/trip/index.html>>.

Meeting time: 7:00 a.m.

Meeting place: College Diner, New Paltz, NY

Trip leader: Mitch Hyman at MitchHyman@aol.com or (202) 244-0148



Labor Day Gunks Trip Report

by Robert Graver

How did -- did the Gunks trip go?

The weather looked a bit iffy as we were departing FRI evening.

And now, just a short trip report, if I may. Guess where I spent the long Labor Day weekend? The Gunks? The Daks? ----- How about both!! A friend and I did a midnight (of course) ride THURS night after I put the kids to bed and, after a couple hours sleep (yes, getting soft in my old age) we spent FRI climbing at the Gunks. We climbed MIDDLE EARTH, a three pitch 5.6+ that I wanted to get on for years and then DRUNKARD'S DELIGHT, a three pitch 5.8 with some scary, ankle breaking boulder moves right off the ground and then the absolute coolest roof at the start of the second pitch.

Can you imagine pulling a 5-6 foot roof at about 5.3/4? Can you say JUG-HAUL? I let Mark lead the scary part since he'd been climbing more steadily than this old guy and since I'd had the pleasure a couple years ago when I was climbing harder (and the guidebook was only calling it (5.7+).

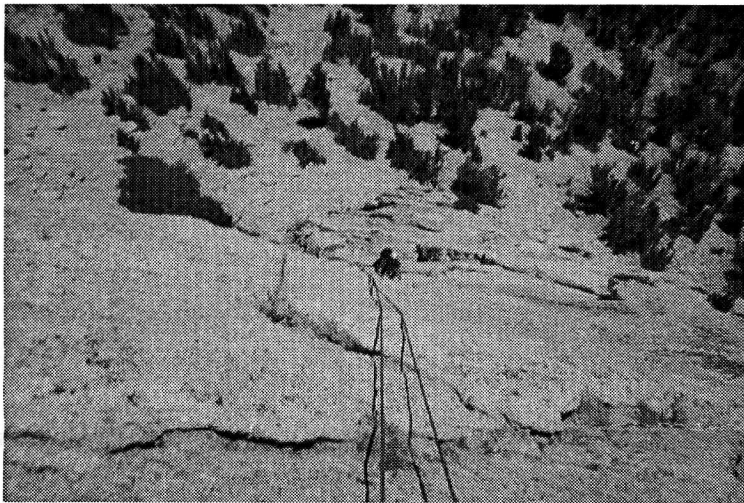
From there we headed to the Daks after a quick stop at Rock and Snow of course. At the Daks, we continued to climb our asses off. We camped at the sight right next to Chapel Pond and never moved the car for the next two days. We climbed so much, we never even made it the mile or so down the road to the Mountaineer, can you imagine? We started with one of the routes on Chapel Pond Slabs (Full pitch runouts on great rough granite 5-700 feet off the deck above the pond). From there we climbed an adventurous (read dirty and scary) two pitch route on the Case Wall. It was a good adventure on a cliff I'd never been to --- and will never return to. We finished SAT at the Creature Wall across the road from the pond where I lead (with some significant hang time) a sandbagged 5.7 called Hobgoblin. 90+ feet of sloping, right angling hands/fist crack. Mark and a couple other climbers on a route next to us called it more like HARD 5.8. Like I said, a lot of hang time at the crux, but I ultimately made all the moves on lead with no falls.

The next day we headed up to the Upper Washbowl Cliff, the tallest point across the road from the pond and climbed the Weisner route (5.5 and 3 pitches) to it's top. A great route in a great position. I had the feeling we were climbing on a postcard for most of the time we spent in the Daks this weekend. We also drooled a bit over the great dihedrals of Hesitation but the runout second pitch made us decide to leave that one until the next trip. This cliff had the longest approach as well (all of 15 minutes - maybe). While on this route we notice some other climbers climbing what looked to be a pretty cool route on the other side of the pond just to the left of Chouinard's Gully Ice route. We scampered over there and elbowed a guided party top roping aside while we lead a 5.7 finger crack version of a route called Tillman's Arête-- GREAT ROUTE!! We finished the day at the Beer Walls where I lead a great (5.7) hands crack, Mark lead a BIG 5.6+ roof, and I finished the day with a 5.8- hands/fist crack with no hangs or falls (I did lower once to get a piece of gear I needed for the crux). Felt Great!!



In our 4 days in the valley, we did:

- Three single pitch routes at Church Bowl (*Black is Brown* 5.8, *Uncle Fanny* 5.7 & *Church Bowl Lieback* 5.8)
- *After Six* (a six pitch 5.7)
- *Munginella* (a three pitch 5.6)
- *Royal Arches* (15 pitch 5.7 A0)
- We also managed to sprinkle in some sightseeing/good eating/beer drinking/hiking/ etc.



We then left for Tuolumne Meadows and took a leisurely rest day driving to the high country and setting up camp. Lee wanted to do "the" Tuolumne Classic Cathedral Peak (5.7) so the next morning we got up early and hit the trail for the 2 hour approach. To me hiking is a means to an end so I'm sure Lee enjoyed the two hour approach more than I did. Someday I'm going to write the "I Hate to Hike Climbing Guide" listing only short approach climbs.

Cathedral Peak is a magnificent sight. It is visible from the road and when you see it you just say "I have to climb that!" Apparently everyone else in the park said the same thing. So despite an early start there were lines forming at the base of the climb when we arrived. There are several routes at the base, ranging from 5.6 to 5.9 but unfortunately they all merge together near the top. This caused an extreme back up and lots of waiting. Some teams were in over their heads and bailed half way up. By the end of the fourth pitch we had four teams hanging out at the belay. Literally, we spent several hours on the climb just waiting for people above us to move.

We finally topped out by taking a last pitch 5.8 varia-

tion around the crowd. We had planned on doing another climb, Eichorn's Pinnacle on the back side of Cathedral, but there was a line there as well. It was getting late so we hiked out. It's still on our tick list so I guess we will have to go back some day - not a bad idea.

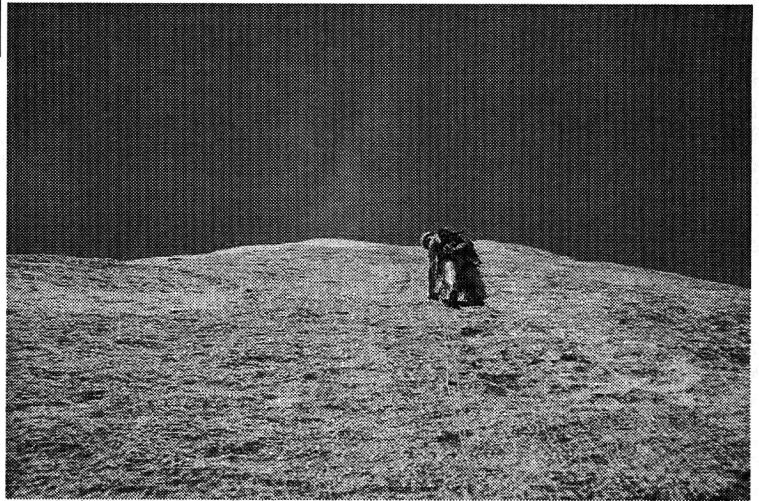
After a week of climbing in the valley and Tuolumne, to be honest, I was getting tired; tired of sleeping on the ground, tired of sore muscles, tired of aching feet, tired of the aches and pains from my earlier leader fall, just tired!

So on our last day we did an easier climb. We parked our car literally at the base of the climb (you could use the bumper as a belay anchor). Our last climb, West Country 5.7, on Stately Pleasure Dome, was four pitches of face, crack and liebacks with the 3rd. pitch bolted with a lot of runout as there was no natural pro. I've been told that runout is typical for many of the climbs in Tuolumne.

Other observations:

- the mosquitoes in Tuolumne are everything they say - nasty and ubiquitous
- if you go to the meadows, definitely drive east of the park and visit the little town of Lee Vining and Mono Lake. There is a great gourmet restaurant, Whoa Nellie Deli, operating out of the Mobil gas station. And on a slow day, the owner will take you outside and give you lessons on a full scale circus trapeze.

Marty on Cathedral Peak 5.7



Lee on 3rd pitch of Stately Pleasure Dome in Tuolumne

All in all, this was a great trip. Lee and I have already discussed going back.



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