

No. 652 - August 19, 1987

A 10 Page Issue

A newsheet published by and for the Ski Mountaineers and Rock Climbing Sections of the Sierra Club's Angeles Chapter since 1938. Send Subscriptions and address changes to Pat Holleman, 1838 6th St., Manhattan Beach, CA 90266 \$7 per year due in October.

BEAR CREEK SPIRE

During July 10-12, 1987, six RCS'ers ventured into Little Lakes Valley at Rock Creek, and set up camp at Dade Lake. The Northeast Ridge of Bear Creek Spire was climbed by Claude Lane (solo), Warren Davis, and Mike Jelf. Alois Smrz and Robert Somoano climbed the North Arete route (5.8). This is an enjoyable route, involving 12-13 pitches of modest technical climbing. There are 20-30 feet of 5.8 and two-three pitches of 5.6/5.7 in the first half of the climb. The remainder of the route is low class-five and class-four, although one can find harder rock (5.4-5.7) if one desires. One is able to enjoy technical rock at fairly high altitude (13,000 ft) in spectacular surroundings. We recommend this climb, especially as an alternative to the East Ridge which is usually climbed on RCS trips to Rock Creek. The weather was excellent and a fine time was had by all. Alois Smrz has prepared a topo (see this issue) of the route. Thanks to Greg Vernon for info on the climb.

RBS

Alois adds the following: "After considerable difficulties with conflicting schedules, the RCS trip to Bear Creek Spire finally went. RCS/AAC member Claude Lane soloed the Northeast Buttress of BCS in about 3-1/2 hours on Saturday and reported 4th and 5th class climbing. Bob Somoano and I climbed the Grade III North Frow in 8 hours. Sunday, Warren Davis and Mike Jelf also climbed the Northeast Buttress in good style. Sorry that I wasn't able to accommodate more climbers; I hope to do better in that regard next time." His topo of the North Frow follows with these comments: "The Climber's Guide to the High Sierra (by Roper) uses a three sentence article to describe this route. As with a lot of climbs in the Sierra, this one too deserves more than what has been written. This is truly a great outing in one of the most easily accessible places in the Eastern Sierra" AS

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A BASE CAMP CASUALTY

SMS Member Bill Voss writes: "The article in the June issue of Mugelnoos (ed. -- No. 650) about the reunion of Base Camp members (pre-WW2) forgot to include me as one of the residents of the Base Camp. My memory is a bit hazy about when I joined the enclave, but it was about spring, 1941. I was the last B.C. member to leave, which was in March 1942, to join the Army. Glen Warner left shortly before me. Yours truly...Bill Voss. P.S.: I have a pre-War ice axe for sale, 39-1/2 inches long, moderately used."

(ed. -- ANYONE NEED AN AXE TO GRIND !)

BV

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NEXT ISSUE.....16 September 1987
 COPY DEADLINE....9 September 1987
 PHOTO DEADLINE...6 September 1987

SUBSCRIPTIONS.....see front page

MEETINGS: RCS - Third Wednesday of the month. SMS/SPS - Second Wednesday of the month. Time and place for both meetings is 7:30pm Griffith Park Ranger Auditorium 4730 Crystal Springs Drive, L.A.

SEPTEMBER RCS PROGRAM
Peruvian Mountaineering

Peru's hard to beat for challenging alpine climbing, easy approaches, and good weather. Rich Henke will present a slide show on climbs of 3 6,000 meter peaks, including a 6-1/2 day solo ascent of Huascaran, which at 22,000 ft. is the highest peak in Peru. RH

CHINESE YOSEMITE

Join famous mountaineer, climber, and author Rick Ridgeway on a Keltly testing expedition to the spectacular Sigunian Valley in Tibet. September 25 - October 18. \$3500 including airfare, etc. For applications write: CHINA TREK, 2265 Westwood Blvd., Suite 777, Los Angeles, CA 90064. (ed. --- CHINA TREK, and this Tibetan trek in particular, is the brainchild of frequent RCS slide show host - Peter Klika.) PK

Rich Henke seeks trekkers for a "laid back" NEPAL TREK" this fall in the Jugal Himal. Cost for the trip, which Rich will be leading, is \$2300 including airfare. Oct. 16 to Nov. 9, 1987. Call Rich at H(213)545-3812, or W(213)535-1817 for details or an application. RH

SAFETY COMMITTEE

The next RCS Safety Committee meeting will be held at 7:30 p.m. Tuesday, September 15, at the home of Margo Koss. Call her if you need directions (H 227-4973, W 222-0319, both 213 area code).
 MK

CLIMBING SCHEDULE

Aug. 20-23.....Charlotte Dome
 Erb/Rutherford
 Aug. 29-30.....Tahquitz
 Bailey/Jelf
 Sept. 5-7.....Tuolumne Meadow
 Hudson/O'Shaughnessy
 Sept. 19-20...Christmas Tree Pass
 Bob Havens/Koss
 Sept. 26-27.....Suicide
 ?? / ?? **
 Oct. 3-4.....Joshua Tree
 Koss/O'Shaughnessy

** Leaders are not scheduled for this trip. RCS LEADERS: Call to volunteer now!! CLIMBERS: Call any RCS Officer prior to going on this trip!!

An unofficial trip --- the Second Annual Tahquitz Dinner Climb, is being organized by Pat Lysgaard & Bob Delsner for September 12. Pat has reserved 2 campsites for this event and looks forward to RSVP's from any RCS'ers. Meal items will be assigned. Utensils will be provided; bring your own liquids. Appropriate attire is requested; If interested, please contact Pat at H(714)827-3977. JO

SMS CENTRAL COMMITTEE OFFICERS

The SMS officers for the 87-88 ski season are:

Gerry Holleman	Chair
R.J. Secor	Vice Chair
Pete Matulovich	Secretary
Eddie Nunez	Outings & Safety
Owen Maloy	Treasurer
Andy Fried	Programs

SMS AND RCS TO MEET TOGETHER AGAIN

After one season of meetings with the Sierra Peaks Section, the SMS is returning to hold joint Mugelnoos meetings with the RCS. The SMS will chair the meetings starting with the November meeting. Mugelnoos meetings will continue to be in Griffith Park on the 3rd Wed of each month.
 GH

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NORTH ARETE OF BEAR CREEK SPIRE (13,713 FT)
GRADE III, 5.8

Permits can be obtained on a first come, first serve basis at the Rock Creek Ranger station at Toms Place. The ranger comes in at 06:00 am. Be there early.

From the Mosquito Flat parking lot, follow the Little Lakes Valley trail to Gem Lake, then Climb the long talus field to Dade Lake (many good campsites) 3 hrs. As you walk the Little Lakes Valley trail, the long, step like East Ridge of Bear Creek Spire rises from the left. The Northeast rib is the prominent rib between the East Ridge and the impressive North Arete that sweeps down directly from the summit. The Grade III route follows this steep Arete for 13 long pitches.

Approach time from Dade Lake to the Arete 1.5 hours

PITCH 1

About 100 ft above the lowest point of the Arete is a large ledge. Climb to this ledge 5.6

PITCH 2

Move to the left past the large, left facing dihedral. The next crack encountered is thin, steep crack with small flakes and is located about 15 ft left of the large dihedral 5.7

PITCH 3

Pitch 2 ends in 4th class chimney. Downclimb 15 ft, then traverse left about 6 ft in to a crack. This soon widens into a chimney. Difficult climbing leads to the end of the chimney and up a thin crack 5.8-5.9

PITCH 4

Move a bit to the left and climb over many steps of 4th and 5th class. Keep on the Arete where possible. The huge tower of the false summit will be visible at the end of this pitch 5.4

PITCH 5

The route seems blocked by short, steep walls. These can be easily bypassed to the right. The pitch ends at the base of the false summit tower 5.2

PITCH 6

Several choices, all difficult lie ahead. Move left past the two prominent (and difficult looking) cracks of the tower. Aim for the left margin where a third, bit broken crack system is found. This crack is steep and has some sharp ridges or flakes about 40 ft higher 5.7

PITCH 7

Walk about 10 ft to the right, then climb a easy ramp till progress is blocked by a smooth wall. Find a triangular hole at the base of the wall and squeeze through to the left side of the Arete. The true summit will now be visible some 800 ft higher and slightly left 5.0

PITCHES 8 TO 12

Easy 5th class with a few harder moves (to 5.6) for 5 pitches. The route diagonals slightly left and meets the summit ridge about 100 ft right of the summit block. The ridge is crossed on the 12th pitch and a 4th class ramp leads to easier ground.

PITCH 13

Approximately 100 ft of class 4 will lead to the summit register.

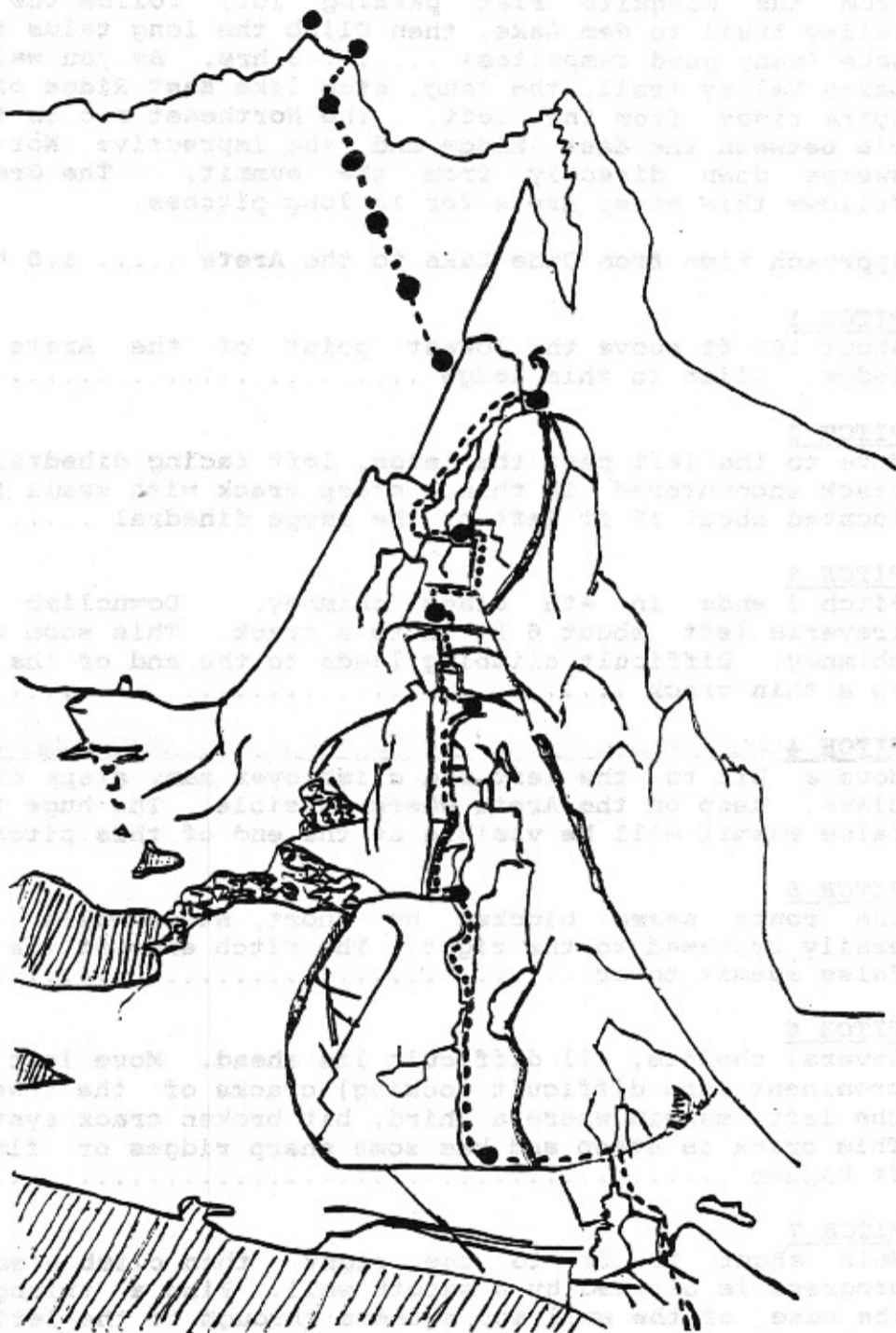
DESCENT

Follow the 3rd class gullies down the West Ridge. From the saddle descend scree and talus to your gear, then continue down to Dade Lake 2.5 hours from summit.

A. S.

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NORTH ARETE OF BEAR CREEK SPIRE (13,713 FT)
GRADE III, 5.8

**HARDWARE:**

Boots, ice axe, ... (crampons depending on season).

One 165 ft rope, friction shoes.

Complete set of friends and wired nuts.

Three small Lowe tricams.

Twenty carabiners and 10 single runners.

We left our boots and ice axes at the base. On our descent we crossed the soft snow slopes in our friction shoes back to our gear.

Should the snow remain firm, ice axe and light crampons (4 pt Salewa) or your mountain boots will have to be carried on the climb.

A. S.

Cerebral Impact

Last week I nearly reddened the local craigs. I'd like to share the lessons.

I was teaching my friend, Jeff, to aid climb on the back side of Stoney Point. A #0 TCU popped and he took an 7 foot grounder. I took over. I was 22 feet up on a slightly overhanging wall. I placed a #1 TCU 5 feet above my last placement. I bounce tested it, moved up, clipped my cows tail and the rope. I reached up to make my next placement. My feet were against the wall and I was leaning back against the cows tail, the TCU popped. I peeled off backwards and was immediately inverted. I instinctively grabbed at the rope as I fell. I thought, 'Be cool and enjoy the ride, its only an overhung 10 footer,' but it seemed to last too long. The rope finally started to tighten up. It tore through my hand. I was pulled into a prone position before I let go. I came to a gentle stop as the rope stretched. I turned my head and I saw I was less than a foot off the ground. I looked up and I saw Jeff dangling over my head. I yelled, "What the hell are you doing up there?"

He let go of the rope and I hit the ground. It was a close call. If the fall had been 2 feet longer or if I hadn't grabbed the rope I would have cratered, head first, splattering my brains, with a helmet I might have lived as a quad.

So what went wrong? I fell over twice as far as I should have. Jeff casually belayed me while sitting on a rock 12 feet from the wall without an anchor. Jeffs weights only 7 lbs. less than me. He was belaying at ground level, and this was aid climbing. I never ran out more than 5 feet of rope. So why bother setting an anchor? He wasn't going anywhere. Many of us commonly skip the anchors at Joshua Tree.

I fell 10 feet before loading up the rope. The first piece, a #2 TCU, was head height so the force was almost straight outwards. The piece wasn't placed to take a outwards pull, it popped, giving me a few more feet of acceleration. When the force hit Jeff he was yanked off his perch. It lifted him only two feet but he was pulled 12 feet into the wall. The moral is always tie in and belay under the rope unless the pro is placed to take an outwards pull.

The second lesson concerns the limitations of TCUs. In less than 1/2 hour we pulled 3. I've been very happy using TCUs in granite. I've found they require a little more care than Friends, but they cut down the placement time considerably (of upmost importance on hard cracks) and they've heralded a new era of moderate, clean, aid climbing. State of the art equipment has rendered Angles and Lost Arrows obsolete. (Unfortunately there are still no clean replacements for Knifeblades, RURPs, and Copperheads.)

I believe our difficulties at Stoney Point were due to the nature of sandstone. When placing a TCU in a parallel or flaring crack, one depends on the integrity of the surface layer of rock. A #0 Metolius TCU has a very small area of contact. The force of a fall concentrated onto a few square millimeters probably exceeded the weak bonding forces holding the grains of sand. Once loose the sand functioned as ball bearings.

A second reason for the failures is that I clipped directly into the biner attached to the TCU. This is standard practice in aid climbing, but the pieces have a greater tendency to rotate in the crack. In the case of sandstone this abrades off the outside layer and again leading to the ball bearing effect. All my TCUs are now slung and I will be careful when using TCUs in sandstone climbing areas such as the Red Rocks and Zion.

BL

ROSTERS: Finally, the RCS roster is ready! As you receive this rag in the mail, the roster should be on its way to all regular, associate and candidate (applicant) members as well as students. It will be included in a packet containing the climbing schedule for the rest of the year, a general RCS information sheet, and a cover letter advising each member of his or her status. If any person fails to receive this packet, and feels that they are entitled to one, please contact Margo Koss (H 213-227-4973 / W 213-222-0319) or Mike Meyer (H 818-447-0755 / W 818-812-1643) and plead your case.

MSM

FIRST AID KITS: Anyone who has an RCS First Aid Kit should please contact Margo Koss (H 213-227-4973 / W 213-222-0319) as soon as possible. MK

Two's Company, Three's a Crowd

July 4, 4 A.M. Claude Lane and I turn on our headlamps and head out of camp hoping for an early start and to be first on the route. We'd hardly gone a hundred yards when two more headlamps came racing after us. Unfortunately, they already knew the approach route and (lacking helmets) had better motivation. At the base of the route everybody decided to be reasonable and we amicably agreed to join forces for the ascent. Bill and Kent, also from Los Angeles, were our partners for the rest of the day.

Our route was the southeast face of Clyde Minaret - of "50 Classic Climbs" fame. Last year Bob Somano and Alois Smrz did the route and based on their enthusiasm for the route Claude and I (Mark Maier) decided to make it an annual event. The climb, and the day, truly deserved to be called "classic."

7 A.M. After an hour on the rock two pitches had already flown by. Above us, however, real route finding difficulties had begun to appear. Bill, who was in the lead, slowed to a stop in the middle of a blank appearing face. I started simultaneously wandering around trying to find a better route. Eventually a corner containing an offwidth crack and excellent stemming opportunities presented itself. Unfortunately, it also contained a 4 foot by 3 foot flake of rock that peeled off when I tested a friend placed behind it. Everybody dove for cover with hearts pounding. When the dust cleared we found that the damage was luckily limited to my jacket. We quickly finished the pitch and we were off and running again.

10 A.M. According to the route guide we should have been on a large ledge with a bolt and a jamcrack above. We were certainly on a large ledge but there was no sign of a bolt or the described jam crack. The dihedral that we knew is the key to route was tantalizingly close, but how do we get to it? It turned out to be surprisingly easy as a descending traverse on partially hidden holds took us directly into it. While I was belaying a third party arrived at the ledge. It was starting to feel like Tahquitz not the Sierras.

Noon. The first dihedral pitch was behind us and Claude led up the "White Scar Pitch." The climbing on this pitch is especially interesting. The rock on the face is often like smooth marble and impossible to climb with face or friction technique. But this pitch climbs vertical to gently overhanging sections of open face. The pitch is possible because of the many sharp edges and ledges available for pullups and mantles. Of course, at 12,000 feet this kind of climbing get strenuous! At the top of the pitch we sat on a large ledge and contemplated the "Ninety Foot Dihedral."

1 P.M. The dihedral is behind us and we're ready for the summit. The dihedral was a wonderful pitch of continuous finger locking and stemming. Very often it looks like it won't go, but as you move up hidden finger locks and sharp edges magically appear. From this point Roper says that the "improbable traverse" goes to the left. Where it goes to the left none of us could tell. We decided to follow the dihedral all the way although we were warned it contained some loose blocks. It did, and they were big.

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3:30 P.M. After successfully negotiating the loose blocks and four ropelengths along the summit ridge we were on the summit. The Sierras were arrayed around us with hardly a cloud in the sky. Even the wind stayed calm. R. J. Secor and Bill Oliver, who climbed the Rock Route in the morning, left us a greeting and a hot water coupon in the summit register.

The Descent: After hearing the stories of Bob and Alois's epic descent when the snow couloir was frozen, we were determined to get down before it got cold. Even in the fairly warm afternoon the snow below the rap station proved tricky. I stayed down in the moat, which in this low snow year was fully passable. After retrieving our boots and ice axes at the base of the face we happily glissaded and plunge stepped back to camp and dinner.

Now that RCS members have done this route on the Fourth of July two years in a row, perhaps it should be considered an annual event. Certainly the route is well worth doing and is within the capacities of other teams. Bob and Alois's route guide has now been updated in use by me and will be available for the asking. Be prepared for much 5.8, a little loose rock, and fantastic views.

MWM

Southeast Face of Clyde Minaret Route Description

Approach:

A permit for the area can be obtained either in advance or on a first come, first served basis from the Mammoth Lakes ranger station. From the Mammoth Lakes resort a road leads over Minaret Summit to either Agnew Meadow or Reds Meadow. Note that the road is gated closed to entering traffic between 7 A.M. and 5:30 P.M. daily. Between those hours entry is by shuttle bus. The recommended basecamp is at Cecile lake where good campsites can be found on the south side. To reach Cecile lake, either hike from Reds Meadow/Devils Postpile about eight miles to Minaret lake or from Agnew Meadow to Lake Ediza. From either lake Cecile lake is easily reached by rough trails and some scrambling. From the south side of Cecile lake the face lies about a thousand feet of gain away up talus or snow.

Pitch 1: Making the correct start is one of the keys to a successful ascent. To find the first pitch proceed up to the couloir between Ken and Clyde Minaret. When approximately level with the toe of the East Buttress of Ken Minaret begin looking for the start. Depending on your perceptions, the start will be from level with to one hundred feet above the toe. In "50 Classic Climbs" the description is accurate but the picture with the route marked is not. The start is best recognized as a distinct, though subtle, nearly horizontal break in the vertical flutings of the face. When observed from the start of the pitch the break ends at an obvious ledge on the right skyline. The first pitch follows the break to the ledge, where one or more fixed pins will be found. In 1987 there was an angle and a Bugaboo. 5.6

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Pitches 2 - 5: Because of the complexity of the lower part of the face, it is probably futile to give an exact description of the next four pitches. Many variations are possible that contain no climbing harder than 5.7. In general, climb up and slowly right aiming for a large ledge left of the base of the great dihedral. It is better to avoid moving very far to the right, especially for the first two pitches. This part of the face is characterized by many ledge like formations slanting up and to the right. Following any of the ledges too far to the right will result in much harder climbing.

Pitch 6: You should now be on a large ledge approximately 50 by 4 feet. On the right end of the ledge is a pedestal with a ring piton on top. From past parties experience it is possible that there is more than one such ledge. One party made a slightly descending traverse right from the ring piton (5.7) to a belay stance at the base of the lower portion of the dihedral. Another party found no ring piton but did find a bolt above a pedestal. They moved up on a jam crack past the bolt and then traversed right on 5.8 friction to enter the dihedral of pitch 7.

Pitch 7: Climb the dihedral above you via stemming and hand jams to an obvious belay alcove. The picture with at the end of the article in 50 Classic Climbs shows this alcove and the upper part of the pitch. Entering this dihedral and making it to the belay alcove is very important. From whatever ledge you find you must find a route into the dihedral. 5.8

Pitch 8: From the alcove climb vertically up at first past a fixed pin. Then tend to the right toward a prominent white scar. Pass the white scar a few feet from its left edge and then continue up and slightly left for nearly a full rope length. Beyond the white scar the climbing contains several mantles past slightly overhanging blocks. Several fixed pieces were found on this section in 1987, including both a wired stopper and a pin. The pitch ends on large ledges at the base of the prominent upper dihedral visible from the base. 5.8

Pitch 9: Climb the dihedral for about 90 feet with excellent finger locks and stemming. 5.8+

Pitch 10: It is at this point that the original route apparently went left on the "improbable traverse." Since the traverse has looked worse than "improbable" to recent parties another option is described. From the belay stance the dihedral can be easily climbed in one pitch to the summit ridge. About forty feet above the belay, however, are some large loose blocks. The loose section is short and the belay stance protected if care is exercised. 5.8

The Summit Ridge: From the top of the dihedral the summit is about four rope lengths away. A route that is fourth class with a few low class five moves can be found. A general recommendation is to traverse back out onto the south face (the left hand side of the ridge) for the first ropelength, and stay on right hand side or the prow for the remaining pitches. If you really want to say you climbed the South Face it is evidently possible to stay on the South Face until nearly at the summit.

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Descent: Scramble north along the crest for several hundred feet and drop down the second gully encountered. The crest is followed nearly into the Clyde-Eichorn notch. Continue down to the Clyde-Ken notch at the head of the couloir originally entered at the start of the climb. After some downclimbing a rappel station is encountered at the righthand side of a chockstone. From the rappel station a single rope rappel will bring you into the gully. From here you can walk (if snow conditions allow) to any gear you may have left at the base of the climb. If there is much snow present and it is late in the day the snow below the rappel station may be frozen. If you have the misfortune to encounter this you will need to have with you either ice axe and crampons, lots of rappel anchors, or bivy gear. In good conditions the descent takes approximately two hours.

Gear and Comments:

No particular items of gear are required for the climb, but a wide selection should be taken. A full set of stoppers and a full set of Friends should be adequate. The only unusual gear to consider are one or two Lost Arrow pitons. There are many vertical slots behind blocks on the climb that might be protectable by hand slotted pitons where other means are difficult. Helmets should be worn. Also, because of the circuitous nature of much of the climbing, many slings are advisable.

The increasing popularity of this route in spite of its relatively remote location - compared to Tahquitz or Yosemite - comes as no surprise to anyone who has done the route. The route provides an outstanding variety of challenges at a sustained, moderate level. Some of the pitches, especially in the dihedral, would rate multiple stars at Tahquitz or Joshua Tree, and have the added attraction of Sierra high country scenery. Because of the occasional loose rock, general presence of debris, and many ledge systems, this climb is certainly not as safe as a similar undertaking in a regular rock climbing area. For a party already experienced and strong on 5.8 - 5.9 rock, however, the rewards can easily outweigh the problems.

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*** Carabiners:

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