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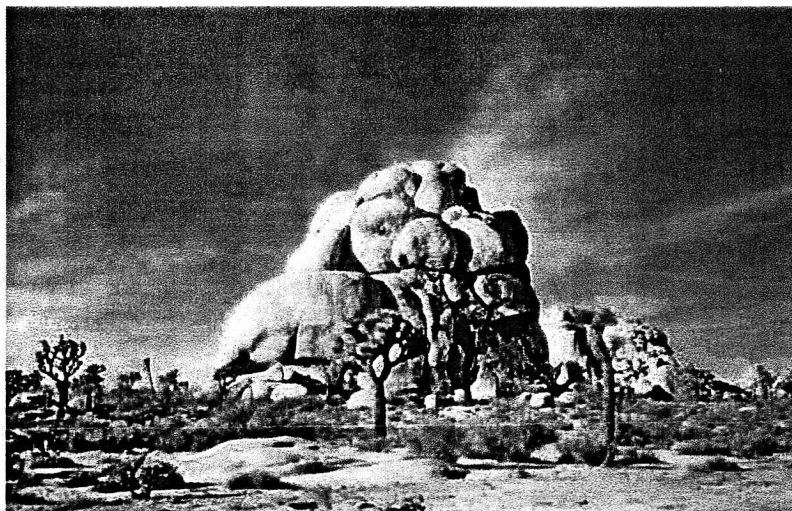
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## Joshua Tree

By Doug Halonen

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- Send Up Rope articles: UPROPE@COMCAST.NET
- Memberships Due!
- Carderock after work starts soon!

The parched lunar landscape that is Joshua Tree National Park is well worth a visit for sightseeing alone.

But the fact that there are thousands of vertical crack and slab routes on the massive granite monoliths and boulder stacks that jut up from the high desert virtually everywhere makes it a must-stop for climbers, particularly in the winter when the weather is relatively benign.

So I was counting my blessings early in January when I found myself in nearby Palm Springs, Calif., on assignment for my day job.

I had Sunday free, and enough equipment to second. So I hired Patrick Dennis, a guide from one of the four local services that regularly work the park, to show me around.

Having done most of my climbing at the local crags in the Washington area, I'd had little experience with vertical cracks. So I asked Patrick for a sampler.

I got everything I'd asked for, with a mix of routes demanding a full range of techniques, including chimneying, liebacking, slabbing, plenty of arm bars and a classic hand jam-and-foot-cam sequence.

We started early in the morning at Intersection Rock, about eight and a half miles inside the park's west entrance

from the town of Joshua Tree.

The first climb was a two-pitch 5.5 chimney to a slab finish, Secovan to Mike's Books. The second was also a two-pitch 5.5, Billabong to Bat Crack.

After lunch, we climbed a couple of long singlepitch routes on Old Woman, an adjacent outcropping, including the 5.7 Toe Jam, and the 5.7+ Double Cross.

For me, the most strenuous pitch of the day was Bat Crack. The basic move was an arm bar and foot jam while stemming with a ham, all from the right side. It didn't help that I had cams slung around my neck, and those kept dangling in the way no matter how I twisted and turned as I wormed my way up to the top.

Toe Jam seemed far easier, despite its harder rating. It was a vertical hand-jam-toe-cam sequence. Once I got the move down, I basically just had to repeat it again and again to the top. It felt surprisingly natural and comfortable, considering that I'd never really done the move before.

One of JTree's pleasant features is the convenience of the climbs. We were literally able to park at the base of the rocks, eliminating any approach. A parking lot, with pit toilets, separated the two outcroppings we climbed.

Another attractive feature, at least on the routes we climbed: bomb-proof bolt rappel anchors on top. On each outcropping, there were routes down within easy reach of a 60-meter rope.

(Continued on next page)

Compared to the schist at Great Falls, Va., the J Tree granite is also amazingly easy to smear on, even on a steep slab devoid of obvious holds.

Hundreds of climbers camp for the winter in Jtree. You can identify the true veterans immediately from their dark leathery high-desert tans. The skin of the truly hardcore cases is almost purple.

During my visit, many of the locals were free soloing. Not sure I'll ever feel compelled to follow their example, for the obvious safety reasons. Speaking of which, Patrick showed me the 5.11 route on Intersection Rock that climbing guru John Long nearly fell from while soloing several years ago and then wrote about as a cautionary tale.

I'm proud to say we didn't have any close calls. Nary a slip nor a fall. One of Patrick's giant Tri-cams popped loose. It was his first piece of protection on Toe Jam, maybe 20 feet up. It hurtled down the rope, where it could have beamed a less attentive belayer. But by that time, Patrick had clipped into a solid cam above.

It can get very cold in the park in winter, particularly when it clouds over and the wind kicks up. Sometimes it even snows. But during my stay, the day-time temperatures were ideal for climbing, reaching into the fifties and maybe even the sixties.

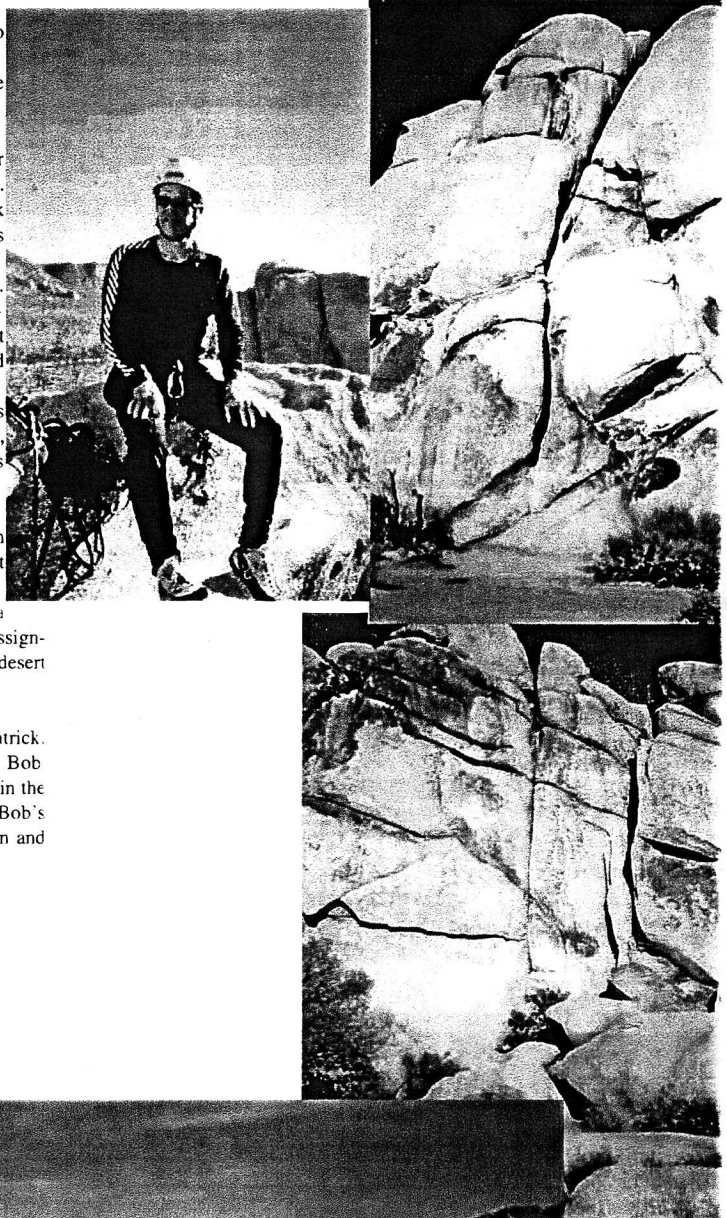
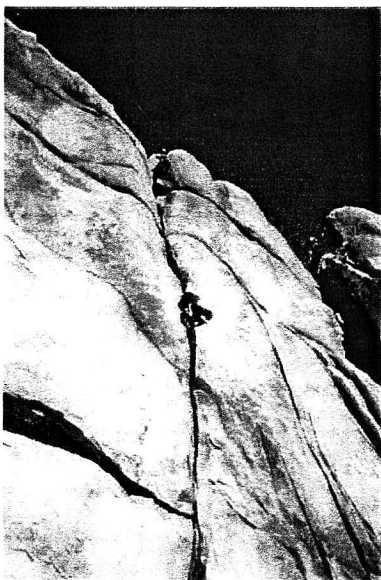
A bonus for me was that Patrick and I hit it off so well.

Turned out we had a lot in common. For starters, we were both raised in San Diego County. We were even in the same high school class, albeit at different schools. In addition, we both grew up as surfers.

We got along well enough that by day's end Patrick said to give him a call in April when I told him I was planning to be in Las Vegas, also on assignment for work. His schedule permitting, he said he might drive across the desert to climb at Red Rocks, just for fun.

If you're in the area and looking for a guide, I'd heartily recommend Patrick. I hired him through Vertical Adventures, at 800-514-8745. A plus to me: Bob Gaines, the company's owner, drove up to meet Patrick and me in the park in the morning to make sure we got off on the right foot. Patrick told me that's Bob's general policy. If for some reason a guide doesn't show, then Bob steps in and takes over.

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**A PUNTER'S HOLIDAY**

By Robert Graver

In the mid 80's as a young Infantryman stationed in the high desert of Southern California I was introduced to the wonderfully brutal game of rugby football. Not completely sure how the idea started but believe it probably must have been hatched some drunken evening in the WWII prisoner of war barracks that then served as the officer's mess for our small band of Death Valley legionnaires. I do remember the two chief antagonists were an Ivy League friend from upstate New York and a new guy from Minnesota, as I recall. Anyway, somehow we got the idea that rugby would be a good way to pass the boredom between the ten days we spent in living in the Mojave Desert every two weeks. Never mind that we didn't even have a whole side of eleven players and of the eight or ten of the founding members only two had ever even actually seen a rugby ball. The game and ball, however, both closely resembled their American football counterparts and since we all probably realized our livers could use the diversion we were all very willing accomplices.

We had our first practice, in April, just after the windy season that year. When the spring wind blows the sand, dust, and small rocks in the Mojave most (rational) creatures avoid the outdoors. Right from the start the team proved energetic and reasonably fit even if in no way skilled. We had lots of fun learning the rudiments of the game, beating ourselves up, and, drinking beers. Apparently, a heavy amount of beer drinking is an integral part of the collective rugby football experience. (PUNT) So much for the hopes we'd held for recovered livers!

After what was an extensive two or three weeks of practice we held ourselves sufficiently prepared (or at least completely inebriated enough) to begin competition following our next 10 day excursion. The only remaining shortfall was to choose a team name so we could be properly registered with league officials as well as the local hospitals and constabulary, I'm sure. After some debate and a couple (?) of cold ones we took the name of one of the reptiles we shared the Mohave with each month and the Chuckwalla Rugby Football Club or CRFC was born.

Our inaugural season, our record was about 0-30 or so but what a time we had! We played all our games on the road since no other clubs could be enticed into traveling an hour north of the thriving garden spot that is Barstow, California to play us on our home turf of sand and rock. This too, turned out to be an unexpected blessing. You see, part of the rugby, beer dinking tradition is that the home team buys the beer and hosts the visitors. Ah, yes this plan was definitely beginning to take shape! We visited locations from Las Vegas to Tijuana with stops in Bishop and Long Beach as well and played (got drubbed by) teams from as far away as New Zealand. And that brings me, albeit circuitously, to the point of this introduction—how I learned to PUNT.

We very quickly realized that we were probably not going to score, never mind, win very often. We could, however, run and tackle reasonably well. In order to appear at least earnest if not adept at the game our strategy as follows: 1) Always start the match or half by kicking off if given the chance and quickly PUNT the ball to the other team deep in their territory, 2) Whenever forced to play offense, quickly get the ball to one of our two experienced players and let them PUNT the ball deep into the opponent's territory, and 3) Take our poundings with dignity, graciously accept our hosts' post-match hospitality, and then do our best to drink them under the table! Though this strategy never netted us victory we were always invited back (even by the New Zealand national juniors team—if you can imagine!) and had the TIME OF OUR LIVES. I later managed, somehow to make and play for a more serious club (until I broke my head—but that's another story) that actually won most of its matches but I NEVER had as much fun as with the CRFC. Additionally, as I've recently come to believe, perhaps I learned a valuable lesson from the experience that continues to serve me well today as I flounder my middle-aged ass up and down snow, rock, and ice every (not many) chance I get these days. This past spring, I realized that perhaps I hadn't completely discarded the Chuckwalla strategy. Please let me try and explain.

**10 May:** Mark called today. Said something about his cardiologist and can't go to Rainier next week. Shit, shit, shit! I'm torn. On one hand I'm bummed that Mark can't go. We've been humping loads up and down Old Rag

and the surrounding hillsides every weekend for the last month and a half and were starting to feel pretty hard (or at least as hard as two middleaged, weekend climbers can feel). On the other hand, I know it's a blessing that we found this out now rather than somewhere high up in the Cascades. As much as I love my buddy, the idea of throwing a CPR lip-lock on him and having to drag him across a glacier or two is not appealing in the least. And then on the third hand, I'm now partner less for the trip—NEXT WEEK!

**17 May:** After quickly completing and submitting the NPS solo request and climbing resume, the last seven days have been a blur of faxes, phone calls, and e-mails to and from Ranger Steve at Rainier. My permit to travel above ten thousand feet on my own finally came through today. I leave out of Baltimore tomorrow.

**19 May:** Hangin' out at about 9500' just below Camp Muir and just west of Anvil Rock. Just passing time watching the spongy white cumulus clouds roll up from the valley below and join with their high cirrus brethren as they pass in front of the half moon hung in an absolutely perfect blue sky. The sun shines brightly as it prepares to set behind the crevassed glaciers and horribly broken and menacing ice cliffs that make up the Nisqually and Wilson Glaciers. My cloud friends seem to be generally following the path I intend on this springtime adventure to the south side of Mount Rainier. Up they creep from the Paradise Visitor Center to Panorama Point, then up the east side of the Muir snow fields, past Camp Muir and Gibraltar Rock at 10,600 and about 12 thousand feet respectively, and onto the 14,411 foot summit of this dormant volcano. From there my bulbous, slow-moving companions continue east to tease the sun baked desert that is the eastern slope of the Cascades with whatever moisture may have survived the journey across Columbia and Liberty Caps.

It is at Columbia Cap that our journey will diverge. As my vaporous friends continue relentlessly east across the rain shadow of the Rainier, I hope to perhaps linger for a day on the afore mentioned high points before either turning north to make my way down to Camp Shurman and Glacier Point via the Emmons, Winthrop, and Inter glaciers or simply return the way I came. That decision will be predicated upon whether or not the NPS has been able to open the road into the White River campground for the season or not. The prospect of a tacking a ten-mile road march onto the tail end of this adventure is in no way appealing to me. I have gotten mixed opinions about the possibility of the near-record snowfall being removed in time for the traditional Memorial Day opening next Friday. My buddy Mike, who accompanied me to about Moon Rocks before skiing back down to Paradise and on to his lovely wife, church, and preparations for the pending work week will keep checking the status of the road. We have a pre-planned cellular communication in a couple of evenings.

Mike and his bride Angela are great! He and I haven't seen each other for nearly four years since we were both Army officers stationed in upstate New York and climbing together on the too few weekends that we could escape to the Daks, Gunks, or the occasional longer trips into the Green Mountains of Vermont or the Whites of New Hampshire. I had never met Angela, Mike's wife of two and a half years. Even with this gap in our activities together and compounded by neglected communications on my part, Mike was eager to try and juggle his, now civilian, vacation time in order to join me when I announced my intentions ten or twelve weeks earlier. Although he believed his chances of getting away were slim he immediately offered logistical support for the adventure. That support wound up being a ride from SEATAC airport to his house just outside Seattle, a wonderful pre-climb meal (that Angela prepared on short notice), transportation to Mount Rainier National Park some three and a half hours away, and finally sharing my load most of the way up the snowfields to Camp Muir. What a friend! It was so good to see him again and to finally meet Angela. They are both obviously happy together and seeing that was a wonderful way to kick off this adventure.

(continued on next page)



**20 May:**

Moved camp up to Camp Muir early this morning from Camp Graver (aka Camp Turd – but that's another story). Came to the conclusion somewhere enroute that I had way too much shit in my pack. Came up with the plan to definitely leave the rock rack and most of the food when I depart, assuming good weather and conditions, the following day.

The place wasn't nearly as crowded as I'd imagined it would be as I watched the conga line of people heading down past my camp the previous afternoon. When I arrived there were only three or four other groups preparing for jaunts up this volcanic bump.

**21 May:**

It was kinda cool this morning as I headed up the ridge that is the Cowlitz Cleaver, watching the line of headlamps plodding across the Cowlitz Glacier below. Those tiny dots were headed up toward Cathedral Gap and then will hook a hard left toward the summit via the more standard Ingram Direct route. I wondered if they took notice of the glow of my lone headlamp headed toward that same summit by way of the route of first ascent in the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century, Gibraltar Ledges. I wondered if they thought me brave or, perhaps, just a bit mad. I could definitely empathize as those very same thoughts ran through my mind.

While I got the impression that my route had been in exceptional condition throughout the winter (the more standard season for this particular vertical conduit), I also had the feeling that perhaps I had just missed those conditions by a week or two of warm springtime temperatures. I also had a constant nagging at the back of my skull that I was, perhaps, getting in over my head. Maybe those two thoughts were simply the same thought from a different angle though. As the consummate chicken, doubt is a familiar companion. It was, however, an absolutely perfect morning (or almost morning, anyway) and so on I forged!

After a day and a half of looking at the route and scaring myself I decided that I would avoid the two obvious bergshrunds that earlier parties had wound their way through and across. I decided to stick on, or as close to, the ridge of the Cowlitz Cleaver as possible until I reached Gibraltar Rock and the beginning of the ledges that gave this route its name. My route choice lengthened that section of the route considerably, perhaps by 30% or more, but also increased the route-finding and other technical challenges as well. It was great fun! Definitely just a bit more than the "standard route" the guidebook described it as. Whereas the glacier approach to the ledges offered a much faster and relatively mellow walk to the ledges, the variation I'd chosen presented almost continuous steep snow climbing. My path weaved its way through the rock outcroppings on the east side of the ridge above what had appeared to be a narrow crevasse but turned out to be an absolutely gaping divide that was the bergshrunds some 200 feet below my heels. The route then wound its way past the prominent rock tower known as the beehive to the final steep snow slope and onto the ledges on the western side of Gibraltar Rock. And what snow slopes they were! Solid Styrofoam neve' covered with three to six inches of fluffy powder that had fallen during the night. The crystals of that downy blanket shone like a thousand diamonds in the glow of my headlamp.

My passage along the cleaver was uneventful and I got to the ledges ahead of schedule, and more importantly, ahead of the sun whose warming rays could work deadly magic on the rocks and other debris frozen in place above the ledges that I needed to traverse. It had risen a couple of hours (maybe?) earlier but I gauged that I had another couple of hours before that warming orb made it's way around the southeastern edge of Gibraltar Rock and onto the it's western face above my path. The ledges turned out to actually be a pretty mellow endeavor but the sun had obviously been there ahead of me in the preceding days. Where I'd expected to find the same Styrofoam pathway I'd been traveling all morning there was only six inches of unconsolidated sugary powder over loose scree that had fallen off the monolith above and onto the ledges over the years.

The ledges are maybe twenty meters wide and make four concave indents into the rock as you make your way toward the exit slope. That slope is a 50-60 degree snow slope that sits atop Gibraltar Chute that parallels my chosen route just to the west and an airy three to four hundred feet below my heels. I skittered my way across the first three ledges and then my bravery (foolishness?) waned. Between each of the concave sections there is a point of rock that you must traverse. The steps are no more difficult than stepping sideways across a

flat bench in the weight room but each peninsula seems a little more crumbly than the last and the exposure is absolutely horrible. Alpinism at its best— hours of dreary plodding interspersed with seconds of pure terror. Well, anyway, after making that step twice and now within a few short meters of the exit slope, it was time to dig into my rucksack for, as Reinhold Messner describes it, my "courage". Time to break out the 8mm rope and small rack (pink, red, and brown tricam, and a handful of wired nuts) that I'd carried with me. After, what seemed like an hour of finagling, I managed to get two small nuts and a pink tricam equalized in the basalt dirt— I mean rock— that makes up the lower strations of Gibraltar Rock. With this less than inspiring anchor I tied my clove hitch at the end of about 20 meters of rope, took a deep breath to bolster my courage and set off. All was going well and I was just beginning to believe that I was being overly cautious when the front points of my crampons crumpled their purchase on the ledge and set it into the breeze in the abyss on the far side of the rock bench as I stepped across. Don't panic still have two good points of contact, I told myself. My effort to drive the shaft into the snow and perhaps dirt of the ledge in an attempt to gain a third point of contact only served to crumble the ledge beneath my other foot. Oh, shit!! Now, with my ass and feet in the breeze and the only points of contact keeping me from testing my anchor being my crouch smeared desperately onto the rock outcropping and one gloved hand clutching a chunk of crumbly basalt, my efforts came to a laser focus. Breath, balance, get a foot up, breath, balance, lean back onto the main ledge (but don't pull too hard on that hand!), breath, stand up, and finally puke— I mean breath! That sucked!

Needless to say, I sat down, took stock, and tried to get my shit together for another try. I kept telling myself that I just needed to make ONE MOVE and then it would be easy sailing up the exit ramp and onto the low angled summit slopes only another hour or so from the crater rim. On the down side, that move would have to be made on front points balanced on even smaller ledges than the one that had already proven so unreliable. After an hour or two (actually only about five minutes or so) of this schizophrenic debate the Big Guy stepped in and helped me. The first rays of sun crept around the corner below me and a drop of melted water fell onto my nose from above. No time to waste— this was definitely not a place to spend a warm day. If I was to go in either direction, I needed to go NOW. With courage still shaken and pressed by the sun the decision was easy. Time to PUNT!

I quickly broke down the anchor, stuffed gear into my ruck, had a drink, and got moving back the way I'd come. I cruised quickly across the ledges and back onto the Cowlitz Cleaver— and then it got interesting. The new snowfall that was so beautiful on the way up had now only begun to transition and consolidate. It now had the consistency of a snocone and felt close to sliding in a couple of spots. I made my way down to the Beehive in my tracks from the way up. At that point, facing a traverse on unstable slopes directly above the widest section of the bergshrund, I decided to have an early lunch and weigh my options. At first, I thought I'd just bivvy on the wide ledge below the Beehive until the slopes firmed up that evening (PUNT?). After some tea, beef stick, and cheese I laid out my bivy sack and began writing a little in my journal. I quickly bored with that idea though and packed up (PUNT). Instead of continuing my traverse I fought my way up onto the ridge just below the lower side of the Beehive and then down the low-angled scree and talus field that is the western slope of the Cowlitz Cleaver until I believed I was past the openings in the glaciers on the other side. At that point I hopped back across the ridge, down climbed a couple of step sections and then strolled the easy lower ridge into Camp Muir a bit before ten AM. What a great adventure!

I hooked up with another party of soldiers and airmen a couple days later that were preparing to head to Afghanistan and needed a little more experience on their ropes. We successfully made our way to the summit via the more pedestrian Ingram Direct route before I headed down to link up with Mike for a couple more days of adventure in the North Cascades.

I definitely would have loved to summit solo but in the end, as it had been nearly twenty years earlier, it was the Chuckwalla RFC strategy of "whenever in doubt— PUNT" that made the experience so enjoyable. I grew immensely in both mountain skills and definitely confidence on this adventure, made some new friends, renewed an important friendship, and, most importantly, came home unscathed. This PUNTER had a great time!



### Trip Report - Adirondacks, NY, and Smuggler's Notch, VT December 31, 2002 through January 4, 2003

After canceling a planned rock climbing trip to Joshua Tree between Christmas and New Years, I remembered that Bob Graver was looking for a climbing partner for an ice climbing trip to New England. I called Bob, and within a few minutes a vague plan was in place for a winter excursion. We debated on the location: Mount Washington, NH, the Adirondacks, NY, Smuggler's Notch, VT, or other destinations in the northeast. We finalized on the Adirondacks and Smuggler's Notch, starting the trip on New Years Eve.

#### Tuesday, December 31

After meeting at my parents' house in the suburbs of Philadelphia, gear was transferred into Bob's Jeep and we began the long drive north. Destination: Chapel Pond in Keene Valley, just outside of Lake Placid in the Adirondacks. The drive uneventful, and went quickly as we listened to the top 1,403 classic rock hits of all time on Q104.3 (#1 song was Stairway to Heaven).

Shortly after midnight, we exited from the interstate for the last few miles towards our camping destination for the evening on the banks of Chapel Pond. Within a mile or so, however, we came to a roadblock: the road towards Keene (and our campsite at Chapel Pond) was closed due to heavy icing. After considering our options, we decided to drive north to PokeO-Moonshine to camp for the evening. Our plan was to climb there on Thursday anyway, so we'd just get there a day early, then return to Chapel Pond the following day. Bob started up Route 9, thought better of it, then turned around to get back on the interstate. He waved down the cop as he was driving past. As the police cruiser skidded 10 feet past us before coming to a halt, Bob joked, "I just wanted to see how icy the roads really are." The police officer was not amused.

#### Wednesday, January 1

Sleep came easy, and soon after sun-up we were eager to start climbing. A quick glance up at the ice and Bob and I realized that we would not be climbing at PokeO today. The ice was thin due to a warm spell and rain earlier in the week, and the first pitch of our main objective, Neurosis (NEI 3+, 400 ft), wasn't in. After a quick breakfast at nearby Mace Diner, we drove down to Chapel Pond. Chapel Pond Slab (NEI 2-3, 500 ft) was thin in spots, so we decided to tackle Chouinard's Gully (NEI 3, 300 ft). After racking up, we walked cautiously across the frozen Chapel Pond to the base of the climb. Bob led up the first pitch as loose ice from a party above crashed down around him. He soon arrived at the end of the rope, put two ice screws, and shouted "On belay, Mark."

I started up, sinking my tools and crampons into the soft ice, concentrating on keeping weight on my feet and off of my arms. The climbing was quite easy, and I quickly made my way up the pitch as small pieces of ice rained down from above. As I approached Bob at the first belay, the ice barrage from above intensified. I managed to dodge most of the ice shrapnel ricocheting down the gully, but a large, cantaloupe-sized chunk found its mark and hit me squarely on my right thigh. "I'm hit!" I screamed in agony. Bob, however, had little solace for me and urged me to continue higher to find a better place for a belay. I went on, but secretly suspected that wanted me to become a human shield and deflect the falling ice away from him! I continued onward and upward.

My first lead on ice! Woohoo! I started up, aiming for a small birch tree at the top of a short section of snow and vertical ice. I was carrying an ice screw which I was intending on placing, but the quickly surmounted the vertical ice with ease, and decided to run it out through another snow field to the belay tree higher up. I anchored myself, and quickly brought Bob up.

The next pitch was almost entirely ice, and Bob offered the lead to me. After reviewing the details of placing an ice screw (up until this time I have never placed one), I started up. About 25 feet out from the belay, I found some good ice and placed an ice screw. It seemed to be bomber, but on ice more so than on rock, I adhere to the rule that the leader "must not fall." I continued up, sunk another bomber screw 25 feet higher, then ran it out over the remaining easy ground to the belay. Bob quickly followed, taking a slightly more direct route. Since we only had one 50-m rope, four rappels and a small scramble were needed to get down to the base of the route. We made it down without incident, gathered our packs, and went in search of another climb.

The only other time I have been ice climbing in the 'daks, I did a route towards the far end of Chapel Pond Canyon, Positive Reinforcement (NEI 3+, 100 ft). As Bob and I walked down to it, we saw many rock climbs on the

Upper Beer Wall that were just begging to be done, including the amazing corner of Frosted Mug (I, 5.9, 130 ft). We'd have to save it for summer, because there was ice begging to be climbed. After making our way down to the end of the canyon, Bob racked up and started up the climb immediately to the left of Positive Reinforcement. The start of the climb was a short ice ramp, followed by a small rock wall, then a section of steeper ice at the top of a short snow field. Bob cruised the bottom portion of the route. As he neared the top of the route, he asked me several times for "just 10 more feet" of rope so he could reach a secure anchor point. By the time he was off belay, I had moved more than 30 feet from my original belay stance, and was part way up the route! I quickly followed, and we proceeded to thrash our way through the woods back to the packs, and walked back to the car with help from our headlamps.

After a quick dinner of meatloaf and hot roast beef at the NoonMark diner in Keene, we decided to head over to Smuggler's Notch, VT, a day early in hope of finding colder weather and more plentiful ice than in the 'daks. The drive went quickly and was uneventful, and I was ready to get some sleep by the time we got there. Bob, however, had other plans. Rather than park at the parking lot and hike the mile up the closed road to our camping spot in the notch, Bob had other ideas on his mind. He looked at the "Road Closed" sign, looked at me as I shook my head, looked at the sign again, then proceeded to drive up the snow covered road up to the notch. By doing this we could just dump our gear up at the top rather than lugging it up the hill.

The drive up was short and uneventful, but then things got exciting. While attempting to turn around, the front wheels of the Jeep went off the snow packed road and got stuck in loose snow. Over an hour was spent pushing, pulling, and digging while trying to free the Jeep, but to no avail. The Jeep was stuck. There was nothing else we could do this late at night, so we unloaded the Jeep, set up the tent, and got some much needed sleep.

#### Thursday, January 2

Soon after sunrise we awoke, and while Bob skied down to the hill to the resort to call a tow-truck, I started the stove and began melting snow for breakfast. It was a cold morning, with temperatures in the single digits. As much as I wanted to crawl back inside my sleeping bag to stay warm, I knew the best way to get warm was to stay active and move around as much as possible. My boots had frozen during the night, and my feet were cold. I put on my booties, and almost immediately felt a tingling sensation in my feet. For a second I became alarmed, but then realized the tingling was a good sign - my feet were



-warming up!

After a breakfast of warm oatmeal and hot chocolate, I walked around while waiting for Bob to return. Before too long, he returned with a tow truck and the Jeep was pulled out in no time. We both headed down to the resort to get money to pay our rescuer (cash only) then hiked the road back to camp. It was finally time to start climbing!

We selected the un-named gully to the left of Origin of Intelligence in Children. The climb ascends a short section of 50° ice, followed by a steeper section of ice, with the last pitch being a long snow/ice ramp. We decided to climb the first section un-rope. After about 30 feet or so, I put Bob on belay and he continued up to a good stance at the base of the snow/ice ramp. As I followed Bob, I forgot for a split-second the first rule of ice climbing- never, never, put anything metal into your mouth. After I removed an ice screw, I was fumbling around trying to clip the 'biner to my harness. I inadvertently used my mouth for a moment to help reposition it in my hand, and luckily was able to pull it away before it froze to my tongue and lips. Whew- that was close! I continued up to the belay, then led the snow/ice ramp, taking the opportunity to practice placing ice screws a few times along the way.

After arriving at the top of the climb, the next challenge was getting down. Unlike many crags where the route is rappelled or there is an easy scramble down, the descents at Smuggler's Notch are often more complicated and difficult than the actual climb. Bob led the way, following a set of footprints through the woods. After some time, he realized that the footprints were going down - the person who made them used our climbing route for the descent from his climb! Eventually we found a gully that we could rappel, and descended via two rappels and a hike down a snow field.

Melting water and making dinner took a few hours, and before long it was dark. As Bob crawled into the tent and got situated for the evening, I mentioned that I was going for a walk for a little while. "What time is it?" Bob asked. "Almost 5:30," I responded. "You want to go get a beer?" Bob asked. Within 45 minutes, we were warming up in front of a fire at the nearby ski resort with a Sam Adams in hand - life was good!

#### Friday, January 3

Our goal of the day was Hidden Gully (NEI 3). The climb follows a 500+ ft high gully to the top of the west wall of the notch, and has some short sections of vertical ice between long snow fields. The climb has more of an alpine flavor to it than pure ice climbing, but it looked fun. After a quick breakfast, Bob and I started up the steep approach. Rather than following a slide up to the base of the route, we took a shorter, more direct route through the woods. It turned out this was a mistake; much of the snow had a thin top crust, which was often times not strong enough to support our weight. We made it to the top without incident though, and before long I had Bob on belay as he climbed the first pitch. As he was climbing some flurries started falling, and a light breeze started up from the east. I quickly followed, and before long I arrived at the first belay.

Without delay, I continued up a snow field and clipped a fixed piton. From there, I climbed a 10 ft vertical section of ice, put in a screw, and continued up into yet another snow field. Before long, the rope became taught, and I realized I was at the end of the rope. In an ideal situation, there would be a nearby tree, some good ice, or rock where I could construct a decent anchor. Unfortunately, that was not the case this time. With little other choice, I sunk my ice tools as far as I could into the snow, equalized them, and put Bob on belay. I sat down, and almost on cue, the wind started blowing harder and the snow increased. The fact that the wind was being funneled up through the gully into my face where I sat didn't make things any better. Bob is a quick climber, though, and before long I saw him surmounting the vertical section of ice as he came up to where I was sitting.

From this point in the climb, there are three possibilities: continue up to the left, center, or right. The left looked the best, but harder than we were climbing. Bob chose the right side. He led up a nice section of vertical ice, and into a dirty, rocky gully. Setting up a belay, he brought me up. As I neared his belay, he instructed me to continue on up and find a better place to belay, and "don't fall." At first I thought he wanted me to look for a place out of the wind where we could take a short break without freezing, but upon looking at his location I saw the true reason. His anchor, and I use the term very loosely here,

consisted of some webbing slung around three trees, each only an inch or so in diameter. I hope he had a good stance.

I climbed onward an upward through the ever-thinning ice looking for a better belay location. Half way up the pitch, the toe-bail of my left crampon fell off rendering the crampon useless, but I had no choice to continue. Eventually I found a cluster of small trees, and I wiggled my way out to them and tied off. Bob followed quickly, and continued up through a pitch of frozen moss and rock to the top. The next challenge- getting down.

The online guide I had read "... Long confusing descent from center, often the cause of many a late night descent epic." Although it was only noon, we wanted to avoid that scenario. Our plan was to make our way across the top and descend Easy Gully, fifty yards or so to the north. We found a set of footprints, and began to follow them, hoping whomever made them knew the way to Easy Gully. After a quarter mile or so, we realized that was not the case. We broke a new trail down the slope, hoping that we wouldn't find ourselves stuck at the top of one of the high cliffs. I'm not sure if we are good, or just lucky, but we managed to make it down to camp after several hours of post holing and three rappels. Considering how long it could have taken if we went another route, I thought we did quite well.

It was too late for another climb, and too early to start dinner, so we decided to drive into Burlington for a night out on the town. Stops at Climb High and Mr. Mike's Pizza were the highlights of the evening, and before too long we were once again hiking up the road to our tent.

#### Saturday, January 4

In town the night before, we heard reports that snow was on the way. We weren't exactly sure which part of the radar we were camping at, but forecasts were calling for accumulation between 6 and 20 inches, depending on location. We awoke to an amazing sight- over 14 inches of fresh powder had fallen during the night! It was simply amazing, and snow was still coming down!

We had been talking about climbing Jefferson Slide this day, but putting two and two together (a climb with "slide" in its name and lots of loose snow) and decided it wasn't a good idea. After a quick breakfast, we walked down to the Jeep and retrieved the skis. I had never been crosscountry skiing before, but Bob assured me I wouldn't have any problems learning. Eventually I got the hang of it - at least on flat ground. Either it was the snow, the skis, or my technique (most probable), but I had the hardest time going up any slope more than a few degrees. Bob got a kick out of watching me push as hard as I could with



poles, only to slide back down the hill when I went to move them forward.

After skiing around for several hours, we thought it was best to pack up camp and start the long drive home before the rest of the storm came (we heard people saying another 12 to 24 inches was expected). We packed up camp and, with 50+ lb backpacks (I brought way too much gear with me) skied down the road to the Jeep. A quick stop by a local store to get some maple syrup (did you know that it takes almost 40 gallons of sap to make 1 gallon of syrup?) and we were on the road. Ten hours later, we pulled into my parents' driveway and unloaded the Jeep. I went inside and took a much needed shower, while Bob continued on to his parents' house near Allentown. A successful, and fun, trip all around - thanks Bob!

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**2003 POTOMAC MOUNTAIN CLUB**

**CHAIRMAN  
ANDY BRITON**

**Climbing Resume:**

I have been actively climbing since 1990 when I went on a trek to the Everest region of the Himalayas. Prior to this I was an experienced "scrambler" (class 4 stuff) having spent many vacations in the mountains of Britain. Since then I have climbed in many of the principle climbing areas of Britain, both in Summer and Winter. Besides my British climbing experience (all Trad) I have taken 2 mountaineering trips to the Alps and 1 to the Pyrenees. I have also participated in 3 unsupported expeditions to the mountains on the East coast of Greenland. Having moved to the United States I have taken several trips to New England and a couple of winter visits to both the Canadian Rockies and

Orient Bay (steep and undergraded!!!).

While in England I was the chairman of a regional Orienteering club for three years and have competed in many Orienteering events throughout Europe and Scandinavia since going to University in London.

**VICE-CHAIR  
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