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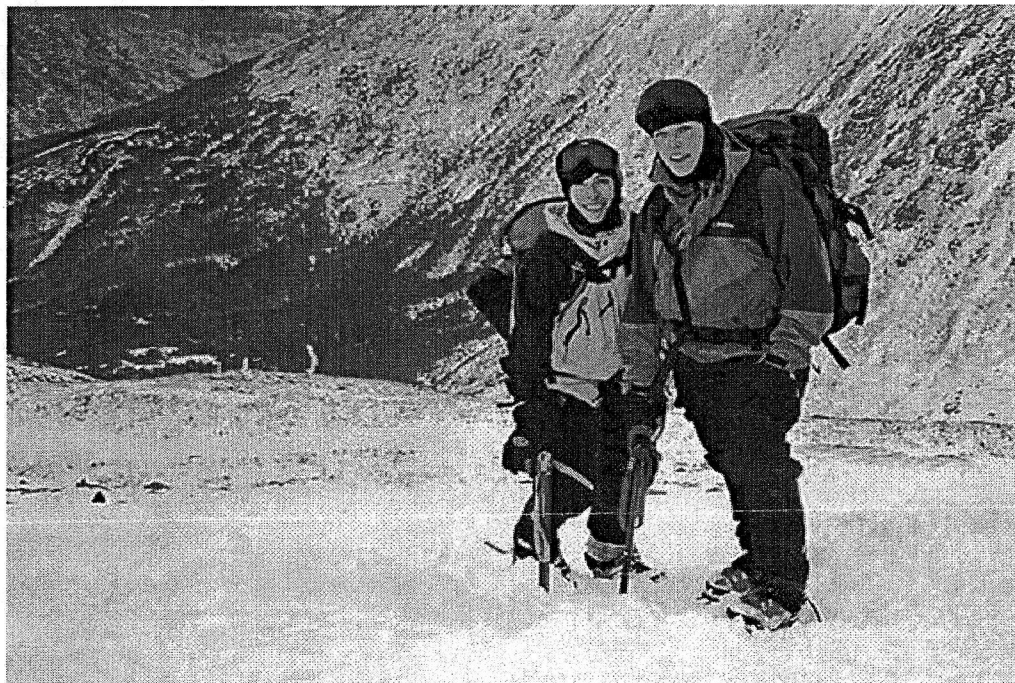
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Carolyn and Deidre above Tuckerman's

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- 3rd Annual Photo contest this summer. Get Ready!
- New Climber born May 30th, Araceli Ellen to Jennifer & Vincent Penoso.

New Hampshire Heats Up

By Carolyn McHale

This February, I was lucky to travel to New Hampshire. Unluckily, both times were by car (a long trip from DC), but thankfully in good company. Being new to the Northeast's winter climbing, I had no idea what to expect, and was intimidated by the tales of New England's fabled hardmen and harder weather.

Upon arrival we headed into the heart of North Conway, a town focused on recreation with many outdoors stores and hotels. After a delicious meal at Gunther's, it was time to meet up with my friends Tim and Resa over at Craggers and shop! I finally bought my own crampons, and got to watch 4 men struggle with cutting them down to my size with a hacksaw. Apparently the gear manufacturers think that only men, or women with big feet, do winter mountain sports.

The next day, Tim and I went to tackle Cinema Gully. After an easy hike in, we started up the grade II ice with Tim on the sharp end. We were soon surpassed by uberlegend Alain Comeau, who I greatly impressed with my tales of BASE jumping mice at the Gunks, and my coolest freezingmy-butt-off dance, which is much like my pee-pee dance, but with my hands in my armpits.

My calves were burning from the low angle by the top of pitch 3, and it was getting late in the day, so we joined my friends to rap off Frankenstein. This then set us up for the craziest glissade in the East—steep and narrow, with plenty of trees to break things on—like my neck. We got down amid a lot of shrieking and mad giggling, and that was the boys—I was too scared to make a noise, with all my concentration focused on not dying on my second ever glissade.

(continued on next page)

That night we joined locals, visiting sheclimbers and Mack Muir from PATC for a literal ton of food and to celebrate our conquering death (ha!) with much to drink. We made plans for the next day while being inspired by tales of ice climbing in Alaska and Iceland.



Sprockets—now we dance! Carolyn and Bruce doing a tango on the Lion's Head)

The next day Scott, John and I went to climb Chia (ch-ch-ch-chia!), a grade III/III+ climb that was the vertical stuff I was more used to. We parked next to a car with a sheclimbs bumper sticker on it—cool! The hike in was short, but steep, and took us to an area packed with climbers. Trying to find a private pee spot was an exercise in futility, and despite lines for all the routes almost everyone was friendly. Scott led Chia even though he was really sick. I seconded, and managed to fall once I'd gotten to the easy part of the route, despite the ice being quite fat and plastic. Hugely annoyed at myself, and having now experienced my first ice fall, I was glad to have not been leading, and moved back up the hard section for the second time—grrrr.

After Chia, we realized that we were pooped, and decided to go play on easy ice again, and went over to Willy's Slide. This is an awesome playground of grade II ice that can be bailed off of at any time by traversing to the ice slope's edge. The downside is that the trek in is all the same angle, and so my calves were back to aching again. After a couple of pitches, and John's first ice lead, my calves were not just burning, they were ready to spontaneously combust. We were rewarded with a real waterpark slide of a glissade on our way back down to the car.

Two weeks later I headed back up to taste Mt. Washington. After reading about killer avalanches in Tuckerman's Ravine earlier in the season, and reading through the Web site of this mountain with "the worst weather in the world" I was seriously intimidated. Although only 6,288 feet, this seemingly benign mountain has a Web site that boasts sections titled things like "surviving Mt. Washington" and offers friendly bits of advice like: "WARNING! ICE FALL DANGER! Massive blocks of ice the size of automobiles travel at high speeds, hit rocks, and send deadly shrapnel in all directions." Yikes.

Thankfully I was with my usual mountaineering partners Bruce and Tony, who had both spent way too much time in the White Mountains, and Deidre, fellow DC PATC member, sheclimber, and partner in crime. We made a quick stop in town, crowded with folks for the annual ice festival and Chicks with Picks workshops. We bumped into Kim Csizmasia, who taught our sheclimbs ice clinic in 2001 with Abby Watkins. Deidre made the observation that climbing is one of the few sports where you can actually meet the elite athletes. Good luck meeting Mark McGuire, Dion Sanders or Andre Agassi. Not only that, but I doubt those fellows are as nice as the climbers I've met.

We broke trail on a side spur completely buried in snow, postholing

through drifts that we sometimes punched through up to our hips. It was fun in a maddening sort of way, and stream crossings became very exciting. We settled in at the shelter, letting it all hang out and were named in the log as the "liveliest group in Harvard Cabin" by Matt, the caretaker.

Our alpine start was thwarted when Tony turned off his alarm at 4:00 am, and the rest of us woke when the summit radioed down the weather report at 7:00 am. A storm was coming in, so we needed to get going. Since Deidre and I were such neophytes, we chose the Lion's Head Winter Route, which had the lowest avalanche danger, and was essentially a very hard hike with some scrambling.

Deidre and I only saw three other women on the mountain that day, and there were a ton of people out climbing. The views were incredible, and we watched some crazy snowboarders on Hillman's Highway. The weather was actually beautiful, save the suspicious-looking cloud that slowly encroached on the surrounding mountains. Some of the people coming down were reporting deteriorating conditions up top. Just shy of the summit by 10 minutes, we made the decision to turn around as the weather was steadily worsening and we were not only inexperienced, but unroped. Bruce couldn't believe we were turning around, and stood 50 feet ahead of us repeatedly saying, "But it's right there!" We let him continue, while we retreated—no sense becoming a statistic. Bruce caught up later reporting that the summit was approaching white out conditions and that he'd gotten off route on his descent. Deidre, Tony and I were very pleased with our decision to be safe and turn around when we did.

The descent went well, with a fun glissade, and a stop for a crampon tango on the Lion's Head (complete with a red rose!). We had the bonus of getting to see climber Erik Weißenmayer glissade past. Erik won an ESPN's Espy award in 2002 and climbed all the seven summits when he summited Mt. Kosciuszko (Australia) in September. This is remarkable in itself, but know that Erik has been blind since he was 13. It was impressive to see this man who I admire (and wrote about in our Autumn 2002 Gazette), and see how he climbs, descends and glissades on his own by following someone with a bell. We serenaded him with the disco hit "Ring My Bell" and offered our congrats. We hit a clot of people above the steep sections that must be downclimbed, and I sweetly shoved my way through, but Deidre and Bruce got stuck in the jam. Their hold up gave them a great story though... At the top of the vertical bit of trail, Erik's entourage was debating whether or not to put their crampons back on. Erik made his choice known by saying, "I survived Everest. I'm not going to die on this mountain." Yeah, what he said!

Weeks later Deidre and I would marvel that all the pics of us on the mountain didn't reflect how we felt at the time. The photos didn't show the snoticles or our fatigue, but did reflect the name of our expedition, which Tony came up with on our ascent... We did look like proud, fabulous members of the Climb of the Happenin' Bitches.



Carolyn McHale and Deidre Pflaumer on their way up the Lion's Head)

Red Rocks Trip

by
Doug Halonen

It's hard to believe that I had been going to Las Vegas for work every spring for the past 20 years and mostly dreading the experience for its fat sweaty waste and glittery hedonism.

To me, Vegas had always been a monument to the dark underside of the American Dream, a place where a hooker with a makeup-caked sore on her lip propositioned me in a casino, a grandmotherly checkout clerk tried to shortchange me at a supermarket and somebody ran up a couple hundred dollars of bar bills on my hotel room.

But that was before I started trad climbing last fall and discovered that Vegas is also home to Red Rocks, one of the premier trad-climbing areas in the world.

What a difference that made. This year, I could hardly wait for my annual pilgrimage, and when I checked into Bally's, my suitcase was bulging from the added cargo of a helmet, rock shoes and harness.

Jed Workman, the guide I had hired in advance through Jackson Hole Mountain Guides, met me at the company's Sin City office early the next morning. A half hour later, we were on our approach on a desert trail to the towering Red Rocks edifices, a world away from the Strip.

It was early in April and had been quite

cold for the past several days. So Jed picked a route with a sunny southern exposure: Johnny Vegas, a 5.7, to Solar Slab, a 5.6.

I confess to feeling some apprehension when we were setting up at the base of the climb. Sure, I had done a dozen or so multi-pitch climbs at Seneca Rocks, Gunks and other venues. But most of those topped out at maybe four pitches. The Red Rocks sandstone soars several thousand feet into a lonely sky, and our plan was to climb 10 pitches, almost a quarter mile or so up the side of it.

But once we started climbing, I went into my usual climbing bubble, so focused on the next move that I didn't dwell on how high we were getting. That attitude seems to work for me, as long as there is something secure to cling to.

As it turned out, there were plenty of good holds on this route. The only adrenaline pumping move for me on Johnny Vegas was a short traverse on to a sandy exposed slab around an overhang. There were also a couple of crimpers and a short vertical crack sequence on Solar Slab. But for most of the day, the chief challenge was deciding which great jug, knob or hueco to lock on to, almost like climbing a ladder. The route was easy enough that Jed was climbing in his approach shoes.

The one negative to Johnny Vegas for me was that there didn't seem to be a lot of good protection opportunities. That didn't seem to bother Jed because he didn't place much more than a half dozen pieces of proper pitch anyway.

Despite the lack of great protection, there were solid belay/rappel bolts in place throughout the route, even though not all of the ones on Solar Slab

were documented in the topo we were using. It's also worth noting that some of the belay ledges were small and exposed, requiring airy, leaning belays.

We had one iffy moment on our way down. We were rappelling on two ropes when the knot apparently got hung up on one of those great holds on the roof above us, still a couple pitches up Johnny Vegas. I was tired enough that I didn't relish having to climb the rope to free it, particularly over the roof. The rope finally popped free, but only after some determined, full-body-weight tugging. Jed said he would rappel that section on a single rope the next time to avoid the knot problem.

The only injury I suffered occurred the second I finished the final rappel. I had just stepped down on to solid ground, when a yellow jacket got trapped beneath my glasses and stung me on the side of my nose.

The only time we seriously off route was on the hike back to my rental car. Somehow we wandered off the main path and had to scramble over several hundred yards of boulders in a dry creek bed.

After being in my rock shoes and leaning from uncomfortable belay stations all day, my feet hurt so bad that I soaked them in ice after I got back to my hotel. I also had a mild sunburn because I had forgotten to bring along sunscreen. But I was already planning next year's trip: I was thinking of either Crimson Chrysalis, a nine-pitch 5.8, or Epinephrine, a 15-pitch 5.9 with a 600-foot chimney.

What can I say? For me, from now on it's Viva Las Vegas, baby!

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Climbers Calendar

June 22nd (Sunday) Caudy's Castle, West Virginia

Caudy's Castle offers something for almost everyone: top roping, leading, and sport climbing. All is not peaches and cream, however: Caudy's (a.k.a. Castle Rock) is on private land and access is sensitive and limited. I ask all participants to be on their best behavior- not that we've had any problems in that area -- to increase the likelihood of being able to climb in this unique location for years to come. I'm going to limit the group size so this is not the place to bring your non-climbing partners or barking dogs. As always, be prepared to take out all trash you may generate. There is limited parking at Caudy's so we need to pile up into as few cars as practicable and car pool it to the rocks. If we get the key from the owner, we will park within a 100' or so from the rocks; if not, we hike for 20-30 minutes. Meeting time: TBD Meeting place: TBD Trip leader: patc_climb@yahoo.com

July 4th - 7th (July 4th Weekend) Seneca Rocks, West Virginia (Multi-pitch climbing)

The annual July 4th trip to Seneca Rocks. This trip is for multipitch climbers only. Participants are expected to find their own partners (leaders/followers). Individuals may contact the trip leader to help locate partners. For more information on Seneca Rocks, check out the website <<http://www.seneca-rocks.com/index.htm>> Details to follow. Meeting time: TBD Meeting place: TBD Trip leader: patc_climb@yahoo.com

July 20th (Sunday) Great Falls, Virginia Details to follow Meeting time: 8:00 a.m. Meeting place: Climbers Lot Trip leader: patc_climb@yahoo.com

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