



Up & Over

FOUNDED BY
HERB AND JAN CONN

Volume 61 Issue ONE

Winter 2006

Left to right :
John Oster,
Dave Green,
Mack Muir,
and John Wat-
son-Jones.

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"Katahdin - Heck Yeah"

By

Duncan Thomson, John Watson-Jones, and Dave Green

On Wednesday, January 11, 2006, after innumerable training hikes and e-mails clogging up the list server, the PATC-MS Katahdin expedition members met for a final gear check. Team members were: Bob Graver (leader), Dave Raboy, Judy Wu, Mack Muir, John Watson-Jones, John Oster, Dave "Sherpa" Green, Kathleen Steinle, Jason Sandridge, and Duncan Thomson. With a week's food, climbing and skiing gear, and enough clothing for the extreme cold we expected (more on that later!), the loads were huge, typically 70 pounds. But we weren't too worried, because all of us except Dave Green planned to haul the loads in sleds. Judy Wu had researched the sled designs and, with help from Duncan, built four of the sleds for the team. After going through the gear checklist one

last time, we loaded sleds, bags, packs, skis, poles, boots, and snowshoes into Dave Raboy's Suburban, filling it literally to the roof.

On the morning of Friday the 13th the advance road team set off in Dave's truck for the 770-mile trip to north-central Maine, with the remainder of the team leaving PATC headquarters that evening in Jason's and Mack's cars.

Saturday morning found the 3 vehicles converging on Millinocket, just south of Baxter State Park. Temperatures over 50 degrees got us worrying about conditions on the mountain; even that far north it was raining, and there was disconcertingly little snow on the ground. But a reconnaissance of the trailhead showed enough ground cover to ski and drag the sleds, so we checked into the EconoLodge, aka Katahdin Inn ,which proved very hospitable. (continued on page 18)

Frostbite: Meditations on an ice climbing pinky

By Dave Raboy

The Daks trip was very successful, and a lot of good climbing was done. It was slightly marred by two cases of frostbite, one of which was unfortunately mine. There were, I believe, some unique aspects about these two cases, so I thought it might be useful to discuss the cases, and the somewhat unique conclusions that result. There are plenty of good web sites with general information on frostbite, so I won't bore you with a general discourse, focusing instead on particular risks to ice climbers under special conditions.

First my story, which will require a little past history. In March of 2002, when I knew nothing about frostbite, I skinned up Marcy by myself. Above tree line it was extremely windy (gusts up to 70 mph, I think, knock you over sort of stuff), but it wasn't that cold, about 15-20 degrees F. The summit was an ice ball, so skiing up and down was not an option. Hiking up on crampons was. I took off my gloves to put on crampons and wind pants for a few minutes. All of my fingers quickly felt different than they ever did before. I continued to the summit and descended, but had lost all feeling in my finger tips. The result, I learned from a guide in North Conway a couple days later, was 1st degree frostbite. White, hard waxy fingers, no blisters, and it took about 5 months to regain feeling in the fingers. No permanent damage but afterwards my fingers have been very sensitive to cold (my left pinky always goes numb when I ice climb, sometimes the feeling doesn't return for a couple of days, but no whiteness or other frostbite symptoms). Lesson learned that time -- wind chill really counts when talking of frostbite.

I am now meticulous with glove systems. In fact I became obsessive about protecting my fingers. Which makes what happened in the Daks all the more troubling.

Fast forward to this weekend. We arrived early Friday in the rain. When it stopped, we went over to Chouinard's, which was running a lot of water, especially on P1. Ted led P1, and I seconded through the torrent. Then I led P2 (we simul-climbed some to do it in 2 pitches). By P2, it was much colder. I was wearing BD Ice gloves, but obviously my hand



must have gotten wet on P1. We rapped on frozen ropes, but I thought I was being very careful. I wasn't aware of any damage until I got into the motel, when I noticed a discoloration on the front of my left pinky. The damage was very minor, maybe 1st degree (no blisters, only numbness and some discoloration on the pad of the tip of my left pinky). I decided to watch it carefully but wasn't terribly concerned.

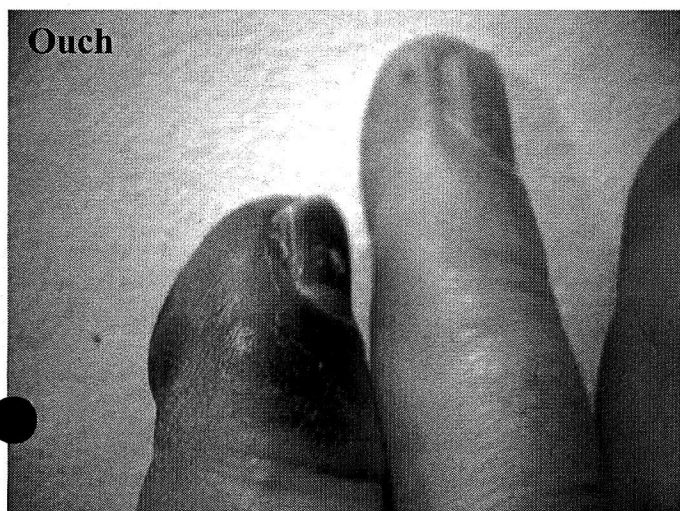
Saturday we TR'd at Pitchoff Quarry. I was zero or below. I used heavy gloves to belay (BD Guide), and the BD Ice gloves to climb. I should also note that throughout the weekend I used hand warmers (usually 2 per glove). I got back to the motel on Saturday before dinner, and there was no additional damage.

Then came Sunday, when most of the damage seems to have occurred. We climbed Weeping Winds on NF of Pitchoff. The temperature was about 5 F, moderate wind, but the ice was extremely brittle, making screw placements difficult. I led the first 2 pitches, and Ted led the 3rd. I thought my hands were nice and warm. I tend to place screws with my right hand, so the left pinky is against the ice a lot as I hang off my left tool. Because the ice was the most brittle up high, the 3rd pitch went very slow, and I was at the belay for a long time. When I seconded it, the fingers were numb, but I didn't think anything of it as they warmed up quickly at the belay before we started our raps. The pinky was probably numb, but it always is. Again I was removing screws with my right hand, so the left pinky was in contact with the ice for a long time.

(continued on next page)

(Frostbite, con't)

It wasn't until we got down and I took off my glove that I saw that things had changed. Black blisters and a fully black finger nail. Long story short, went to the doctor when I got home and was diagnosed with 3rd degree frostbite. I'll see a hand surgeon next week simply to make sure that the damage was properly assessed, but there will be no cutting.



The prognosis is good. Apparently no underlying muscle or bone damage, so I'll lose all the skin and the nail but it will grow back. There will not be any permanent damage.

The second case happened to Kathleen's friend Brian. I'll let him tell it in his own words:

"The first thing you should know is I have climbed for at least the last ten years with neoprene scuba gloves where the trade off b/w warmth and dexterity is the issue. I know I have experienced frostnip to first degree a number of times, but have managed to avoid any real damage until now, and was willing to deal with cold hands. Never had any medical issue."

This Saturday, I was halfway through the 2nd pitch of a route and spent maybe ten or fifteen minutes sorting out a screw placement etc. and really iced up my hands good. With neoprene you're gonna suffer sometimes. We got lunch and later climbed another route in the late afternoon. No problem there.

When we met you all for dinner I felt I'd had a more than usual cold day for the hands (it was darn cold!)

but I didn't think or recognize that I may have had 1st degree on the pinkies. I certainly did, though and would likely have been ok the next morning (although potentially setting myself up for worse with another bout of cold?). However around 1:30 AM I woke up and made the HUGE mistake of rubbing my fingers. When rubbing my pinky I did so a bit aggressively and succeeded in bursting the capillaries. Rookie mistake. I didn't realize my hands were still compromised even those many hours later. I could feel the finger eventually squish under my pressure, and turned on the light to see the blister that had just welled up.

"I rubbed myself right into 2nd degree damage."

The one obvious commonality is that we both suffered damage to the pinky. I think that this would be pretty typical for ice climbers who are otherwise taking good precautions because when placing gear, or extracting it, the pinky of the "anchor-tool" hand is in constant contact with the ice. 10 or 15 minutes of contact on a -2 F day can do a lot of damage, especially in neoprene gloves. In my case, prior damage probably added to the sensitivity, so damage was done even with good gloves.

The unique lessons are, I believe, the following:

1. Ice climbers need to be especially aware of frostbite danger on days when the ice is very brittle and one hand is in contact with the ice more than normal due to the difficulties associated with placing screws, removing screws, or simply hanging on a tool trying to get the other tool to stick.
2. The pinky is especially vulnerable. It is the finger most in contact with the ice. All of your other fingers can feel fine, and it is easy to dismiss numbness in your pinky. But serious damage can occur quickly, without your knowing it.
3. Damage can occur even with the best gloves, when you are taking proper precautions. This means you should probably regularly check for any damage, and at the first sign of frostbite, retreat.

(Continued on next page)

(Frostbite, con't)

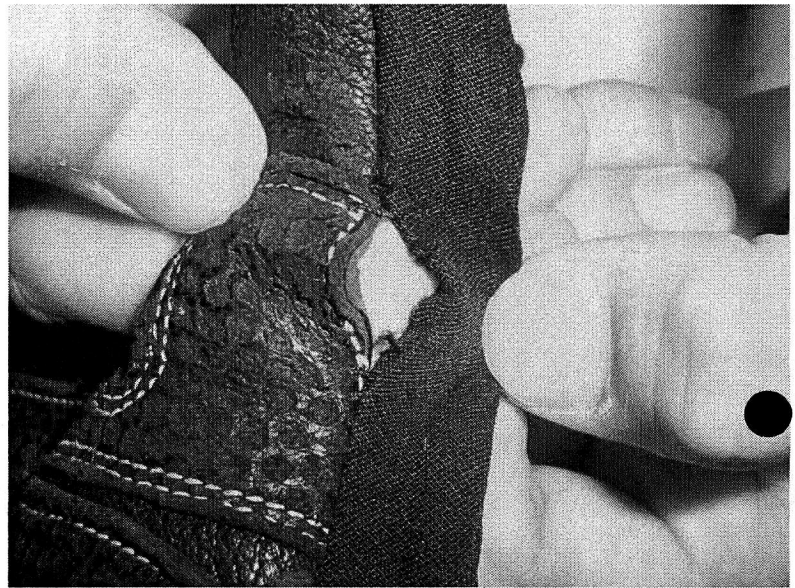
PS After posting my original report on the incident, some very helpful suggestions were made, many involving jerry-rigging extra protection to the pinkies of ice climbing gloves. I found Jim and Neil's suggestions on adding closed cell foam to sensitive areas especially useful. Unfortunately, it was this suggestion that caused me to determine the reason for the extent of the damage to my pinky --A MANUFACTURING DEFECT IN THE GLOVE.

After reading Neil and Jim's suggestions, I finally unpacked my gear to see if such a strategy was feasible. I had been climbing with brand-new BD ice gloves. Imagine my surprise when I discovered an abrasion in the Schoeller on the sides of the pinkies that went all the way through. Shouldn't happen with new gloves, I'm not that tough on them, right Ted?

But that wasn't the crucial defect. Upon further inspection I DISCOVERED A HALF INCH GAP WHERE THE SCHOELLER FABRIC ON THE SIDE WAS NOT STITCHED AT ALL TO THE LEATHER ON THE FINGER. Because the fabric overlaps substantially, this gap was not obvious, indeed I was playing with the glove, looking at the abrasion for several minutes before I discovered

it. You don't notice the gap even when wearing the gloves. The gap corresponds exactly to the area of greatest damage on my pinky. So essentially the left pinky was exposed to the icy water during the Chouinard's climb (which would explain the initial damage) and throughout the Weeping Winds climb.

This may not explain the fact of the frostbite, but it certainly explains the severity.



Climbers Calendar 2006

Carderock Wednesdays Begins	April 5
Self Rescue Seminar Earth Treks See Current events & Notices	Every Mon. April
Little Stoneman Cliffs	April 22
Talking Headwall	April 29
Buzzard Rocks	May 6
SugarLoaf Mountain	May 13th
Crescent Rocks	May 20th
Annapolis Rocks or New River Gorge	May 27th
Talking Head Wall	June 3rd

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North Conway

By Wayne Stone

I went up to North Conway last weekend - rain - rain - rain on Saturday. We drove around and looked at the ice. Several ice climbs had rivers flowing down them and others were completely gone that should have been there according to my friend.

On Sunday, it was cloudy and windy. My friend, Peter, and I drove up to Frankenstein and surveyed climbs on our way to standard. Pegasus (I think) still had water flowing down it and Penguin looked thinnish. We decided to do standard as had several parties that got to the parking lot the same time we did. To guys started up directly under the cave on Standard and started upward, but he forgot to take the caps off his screws - retreat and start again. I moved out left up a ramp, put in the "death fall" screw and started to ascend. The ice was pretty soft and in some places water percolated under the ice. I made it up to the cave (where two bolts are) and decided to just keep going up instead of belaying Peter to the cave. After about 10 more minutes, I located a suitable belay spot to place a screw, use a V-Thread and my 2 axes. Shortly after Peter joined me at the belay. We traversed to our right to a tree to rap from. We descended to the cave and used another group's rope to get all the way down. Here is a pic of what it looked like in Jan 16 - http://www.neclimbs.com/image_popup.php?ImagePath=currentContent/iceReport/ice_images/standardRoute.jpg&Title=standardRoute.

We decided to walk back towards the car on the tracks and check out another climb. We ended up at an area called "Walk in the Woods." Peter decided to lead right up the middle of the pitch. After lacing 3 screws, his next swing caused a horizontal crack to spread as far as he could see to his left and right. He yelled down to me that it was hollow underneath also. After some debating, he decided not to proceed upwards and a group beside us offered him their top rope setup to lower off on. He accepted. After Peter got down, we headed for the car, beer and food. I suppose it was a somewhat successful day given the conditions.



Standard Route

One of the goals was to climb Pinnacle Gully on Mount Washington. According to all the weather reports, it was nasty up there. On Sunday night, they recorded 141 mph winds at the observatory and were predicting gusts up to 100 mph on Monday. So, Pinnacle was out. In addition, I frost-nipped my fingers while Peter was debating what to do the day before - they were tingly and I decided that climbing on Monday was a no go for me. So, we drove the Kangamangas Highway over to Cannon Mountain to have a look at the Black Dike - too foggy. Oh, well - I guess that is NE.

Submitting Articles

- Keep articles 1000 words or LESS.
- Most picture formats will work (Prefer JPEGs)
- Most text documents (Prefer WORD).
- Send pictures separately and please do not imbed pictures in text documents; it makes for formatting nightmares.

How to join the Potomac Mountain Club

1. Down Load membership form from the following website:
2. http://www.patc.net/chapters/mtn_sect/join.html
3. Mail in \$15.
4. Sign up for the LISTSERVER at the following:
5. http://www.patc.net/chapters/mtn_sect/listserv.html
6. Go climbing

ROCKFALL

- Membership Renewals due by April 15th
- Club Directory mailed at the end of April

NOTICE

2007 Membership Renewals due by February 15th, 2007

Renewals received after this deadline will be charged a \$5 administration fee. Applies to current members ONLY. We currently allow a ridiculous 4 1/2 month renewal window which is grossly counter-productive to club operations. 4 1/2 MONTHS FOR \$15???

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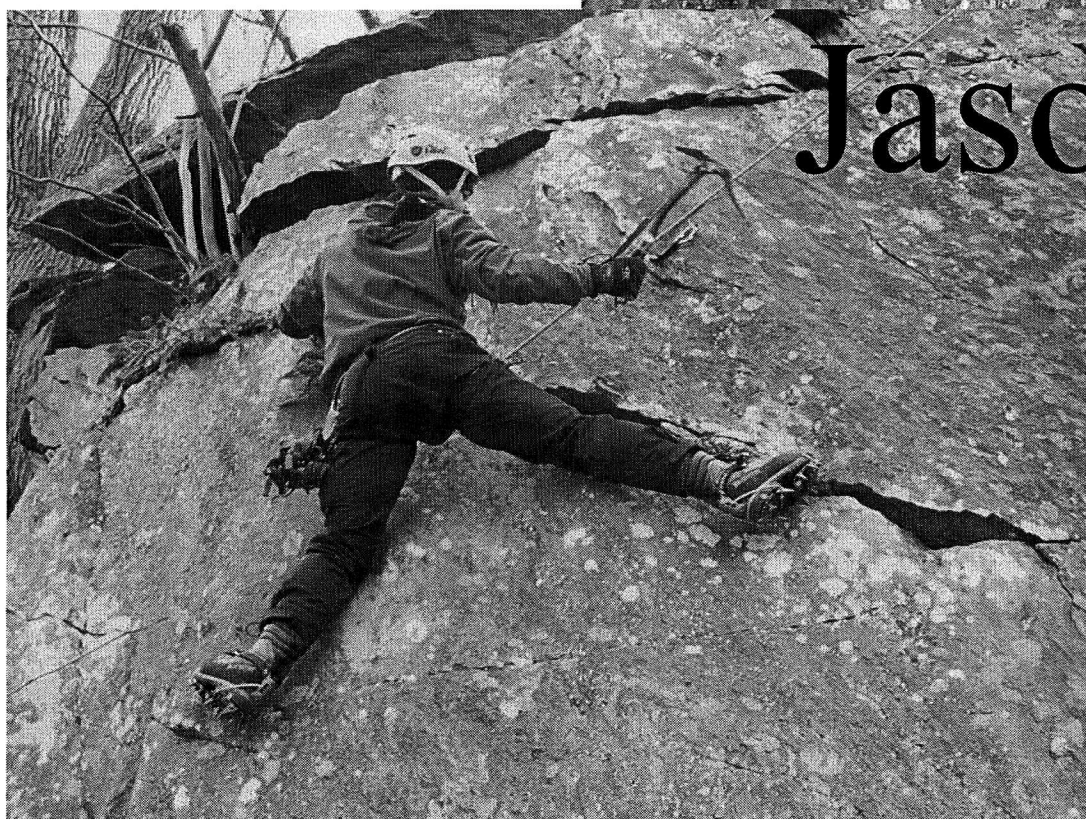
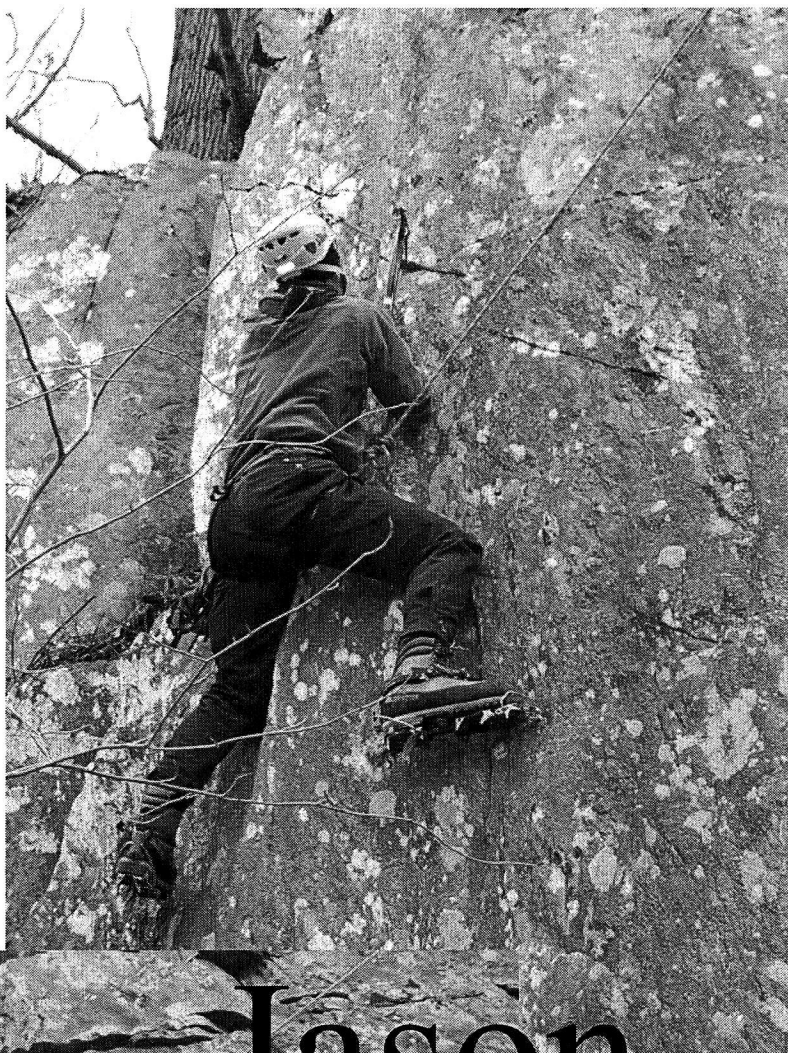
Boucher Rocks

By Jason Sandridge

There were four of us: Simon Carr, Andy Huttner, Jason and Rupa. Jason Sandridge led the trip. We arrived at Boucher Rocks around 11:15 with great weather. We set up two ropes (climbs) and practiced dry-tooling, ie climbing with crampons and ice axes; not the easiest thing to do.

To get to Boucher Rocks, take 495 and exit on Georgetown Pike towards the inside of the Beltway (opposite direction of Great Falls); make your first left (short distance), then make your next first left (ignore entrances or driveways). You cross back over 495 and the road bends sharply to the right. Follow to the end and park along the cul-de-sac. The trail leads down on the right. Cross under the 495 bridge and Boucher Rocks is in front of you.

®



Jason

A Silly Question

by Matt Morrison and John Oster

This past fall we headed down to the Linville Gorge area of North Carolina to attempt The Daddy, a 5-pitch classic 5.6. We were getting together for our somewhat-annual climbing trip. It's after 10 p.m. on a Thursday night when we stop for gas south of Staunton on I-81. Ominously cold air hits us as we emerge from the van. What will it be like at 4000 ft in the NC Mountains? Matt crashes in back for a 90-minute nap, while John takes over the late night driving. We are on a tight schedule and are hopeful

we can make it all the way to Table Rock before stealing a few hours of sleep. Finally, the sign for Gingercake acres comes into view and we start heading up the Table Rock dirt road. There's a large camp spot open about 3 miles in and we stop to grab a few winks. It's around 4 a.m. The left rear tire is swiftly going flat as we set up camp. Hmmm...

Up and moving by 8 a.m., we change the tire. A few locals stop and chat, including an old salt climber taking his son to Table Rock.

(continued on next page)



A Silly Question (continued from p. 8)

Reminded of the time, we quickly pack up and organize. Let's hope that semi-deflated compact spare does okay on the last 5 miles of dirt road. At the parking lot, it seems like the spare is worse. We run into the old salt again. He gives us just the encouragement we need; 'Easier or on par with Seneca 5.6'. We are hiking by 10 and reach the Amphitheater descent about an hour later. Our original plan was to spend tonight on top of the Prow buttress nearby. Scouting out a campsite and prepping for the descent robs us of a precious hour. As we thrash about through dense undergrowth including

small trees with compound leaves and wicked needles on stalk, we're both thinking, 'This can't be the easiest way to the top of the Prow. People camp here all the time.' Freed from all our bivy gear, we descend steeply to the base of the Mummy buttress.

John points

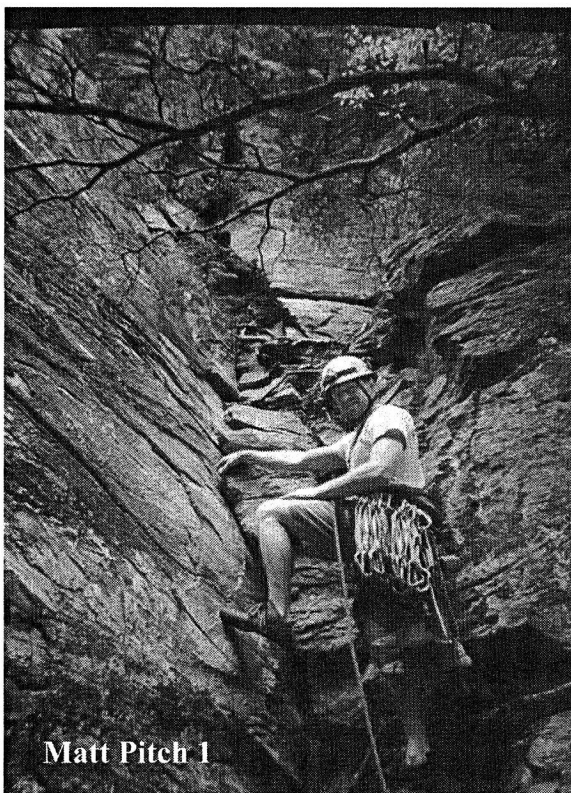
out the tree marking the *Mummy* start with "M4" and "M1" carved into its trunk. The Daddy is a short distance downhill, and easy to find.

Matt takes the first lead and starts climbing about 12:30 pm. He's feeling rusty and awkward, even though it's only 5.4. It's been nearly a year since we tackled Conn's East together. Pro seems sparse, probably from not noticing placements. Some pieces are in awkward places and have to be removed and reset.

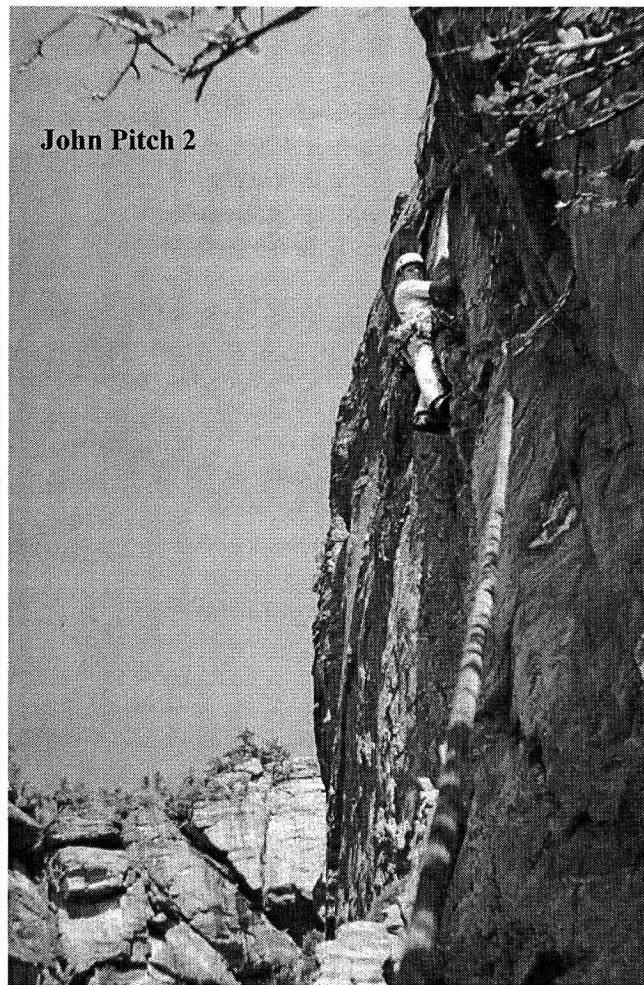
The first platform is at 50ft, on top of a deep corner. A

blue sling on a tree proves too short and rope drag is severe, a good lesson. The second corner tops out on a comfortable belay ledge. Nice, smooth rock, and flat with a moss "lawn" on the edge. The perfect sunny conditions: perfect temperatures, breezy not cold, no bugs; one of those endless October days.

Awkwardness melts away; I'm climbing again! Matt looks upward to see a billowing ocean of rock; we have a long way to go!



Matt Pitch 1



John Pitch 2

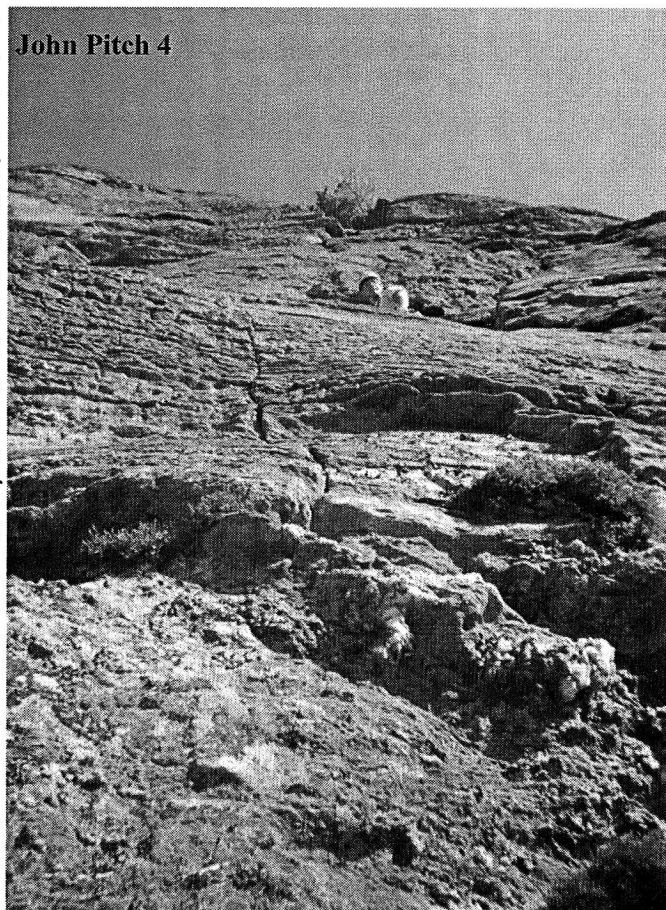
John is up by 2 pm, and the swap takes longer than optimal; we're not in a rhythm yet. John heads up P2 to Matt's delight. P2 starts as a 25-foot, steep, featured face with a nice crack for pro, 5.6ish. Then the difficulty eases to another nice belay at a tree, the traditional end of a pitch. Matt's up soon. John comments on the lead, "It got my attention". This time the swap takes 10 minutes; we're finding a rhythm. "We have 3 hours to do the next 3 pitches".

(continued on p. 10)

Silly Question (continued from p.9)

Matt contemplates the real possibility of climbing in darkness, but is not worried. Matt heads up P3 at 4 pm. P3 is somewhat trivial, with a traverse over a huge ledge. The purpose is to set the party up for P4. Matt's getting his game on now, working on making realistic assessments of risk while setting pro, not trying to mitigate every possibility and weighing the cost of delay. There's another nice belay with a slung boulder for an anchor. John is up and we've completed P3 in an efficient 45 minutes. We'll be glad we saved time later on. P4 meanders, but follows the obvious weakness in the face. As John heads up, Matt notes the progress of the west rim's shadow up our side of the gorge. Trees that were in sunlight one moment are shadowed ten minutes later. Vultures all around are playing in the breeze. Some fly into the head of the amphitheater then tuck wings and rocket down into the gorge. One or two look like they go right behind John. We're realizing how the day is unbelievably perfect. John is having an awesome time on this pitch. The pro is good at first, but then a section of horizontal, flaring cracks make a 30 foot run-out section exciting. This is good practice on keeping your nerves in check. A funky finger of rock presents itself as a place for a chicken neck. John slings the rock, expecting to get some laughter out of Matt when he passes it. There is a nook just below the belay spot. This will be the last placement of the pitch. To reach the belay, a chimney must be surmounted. John chooses to head up the airy face adjacent to the chimney and gingerly work back on top of the nook. There's no pro, so footwork is very deliberate now. "Man, this pitch just gets better and better." Matt follows up the pitch. Spying the next placement, he sees a slipknot around a jutting finger of rock. He yells out "Nice chicken neck"! The shadow is now at the base

John Pitch 4



of the cliff. It's an awesome classic pitch. Matt reaches the fourth belay "nook"; "Nice lead"!

The final pitch is next. We can only see the first section, a 15-foot vertical corner to a platform. What comes after that? It's Matt's turn to lead. This looks like solid 5.6 and somewhat similar to a longer pitch he's led, but had to hang on gear 2/3 the way up. We consult the guidebook: "Two corners with platforms, then last 15 feet vertical". The beginning already looks pretty freakin' vertical to us! Shadows move in and we will be climbing in dusky light. The temperature is still perfect, but for how long? John is ready to lead this pitch, but allowing Matt to decide whether or not he wants to give it a go. Matt decides to let John lead due to time and the uncertainty of what the rest of the pitch is like; we can't see past the first platform, although we know a tree at the top must be close. John leads the first part smoothly; then enthusiastically

shouts, "Dude, we're there!" Once on top of the first corner, the top is in sight....and totally doable. The last 15 feet is steep, airy, and takes no pro. It's a fun pitch to second, and in hindsight, a good decision was made. We are off belay at 7 pm, almost exactly 24 hrs since we left Matt's house. We hoot and holler. People on the Prow buttress wave. An audience magically appears to witness the moment of our success. What a classic summit feel, with gnarled pines scattered amongst broad rock surfaces. We take pictures and pack up to go.

(Continued on p. 11)

Questions

(continued from p.10)

The temperature is still perfect. Searching for the walk-off trail in dusk, we soon switch to headlamps. The backsides of the buttress and descent gully are massive and beautiful. We are feeling intense, yet mellow, euphoria and satisfaction as we follow the rim trail. It's that warm fuzzy natural high. Sounds are swallowed by the darkness. The chasm, at times mere inches from the edge of the trail, displays itself by the blackness of empty

space. The roughness of the trail makes us use our whole bodies to hike; now grabbing a tree for a big step down, now swinging legs over blowdown. This movement by headlamp, loaded with quietly clanking gear makes Matt nostalgic for past adventures. Exiting after a long trip the team moves silently and wearily, yet forged into a brotherhood of skill and accom-

plishment. Basking in the afterglow is almost the best part; I don't want this hike to end. All too soon it does. Back at the packs we munch on Gouda and tomatoes with the vast sky and spotted Milky Way laid out before us. The Linville River's muffled roar serenades us from the inky gorge. Distant valley lights outline the contours of the land. Why do we climb? What a silly question!

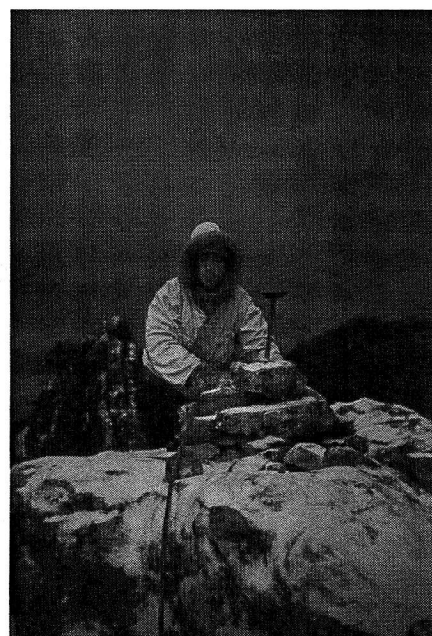


John and Matt at the top

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Winter Ascent of South Peak, ca 1955. Tommy Marshall at cairn on South Peak. The mop handle was there for years. Latest garb: Army surplus reversible parka. Photo by the other guy on the rope,

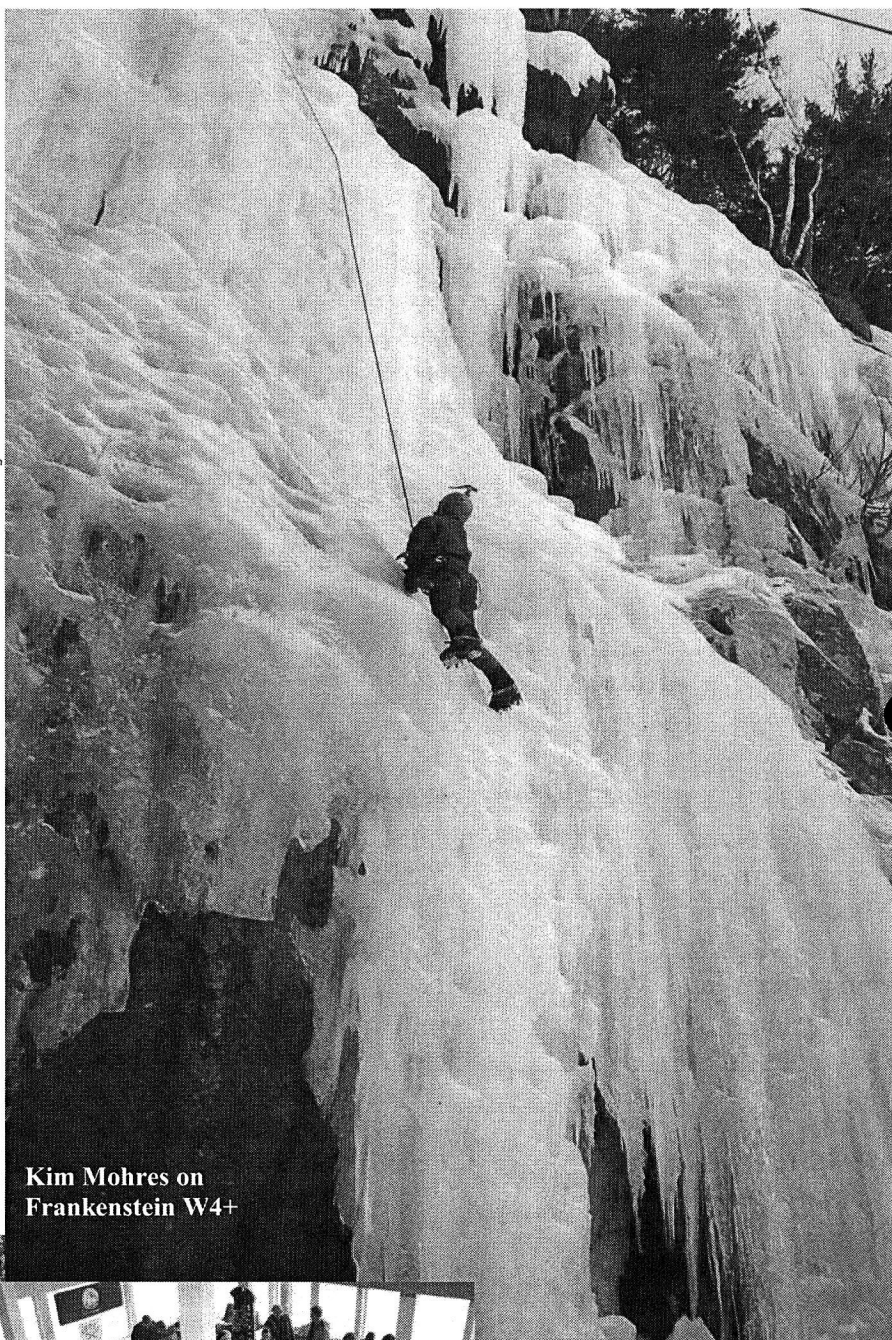
**John
Christian.**



2006 Mt. Washington Ice Festival in North Conway, NH

by Vincent Penoso

For years I have been a rock climber, often scoffing at advances by fellow ice climbers to join the madness at an ice festival. The Mt. Washington Ice Festival is held every year in the town of North Conway, N.H.. Flights from BWI were \$34 to Manchester, N.H. and the hotel rooms were about \$45 a night. The clinics were \$140 a day and it included ALL the gear. The Festival Breakfast Buffet was a great place to meet your guides and get all hopped up on Starbucks before freezing your ass on the ice. The sponsors at the gear fit included Patagonia, Petzl Chalet, Mammut, Asolo, LASportiva, Black Diamond, Grivel, and others. Expert guides gave clinics from basic ice climbing to crevasse rescue, with celebrity guides making this festival really shine. If you have an interest in ice climbing or a related alpine mountaineering discipline, the Festivals are the place to get your feet wet, I mean frost-bit! In our steep class, we had Mark Wilford, a Patagonia sponsored guide who taught invaluable steep ice techniques. The four day event has a draw from all over the world: Mizuki from Singapore; Jimba Sherpa from Kathmandu; Paul from Boston; mark boren from H.H.; and the PMC crew-Kim Mohres, Emilio Ungerfeld, Mack Muir, John Smith, and Myself... with rumor of Mike Damkot, Simon Carr, Jeanette Helfrich lurking somewhere on steep ice..



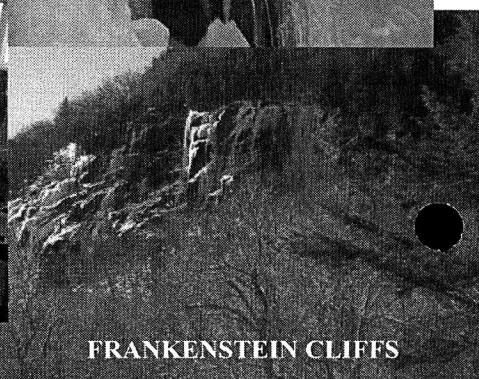
Kim Mohres on
Frankenstein W4+



Paul, Vincent, Mark, Kim, Pete, Mark, Jimba



GEAR FIT 7am



FRANKENSTEIN CLIFFS

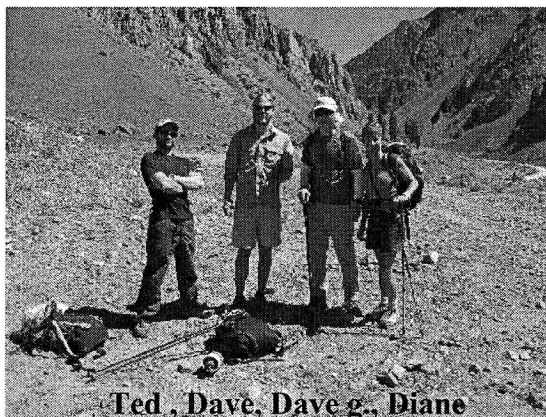
Aconcagua — My Third of the Seven Summits by Dave Green

Aconcagua, the Stone Sentinel, at roughly 22,840 feet holds the allure of being the highest peak in South America and also the tallest outside of the Himalayas. I relied on R. J. Secor's Aconcagua — A Climbing Guide to determine that I wanted to do a circular traverse of the mountain, avoiding the more technical routes and the giant scree climbs that have earned the mountain the reputation of "an intolerably monotonous slag-pile." After reviewing various options I settled on Alaska Mountain Guides (AMG)' Vacas Valley / Relinchos Valley / False Polish Glacier / Normal Route traverse. I chose AMG on the recommendation of a friend and on their price of \$3330 including early booking discount.

The recommended travel itinerary was via Santiago, Chile to Mendoza, Argentina rather than Buenos Aires where luggage can be lost during the cross-town transfer between the international and national air terminals. I checked my duffle from Reagan National to Mendoza and stayed in the in-transit terminal in Santiago to avoid the \$100 Chilean entry fee. My travel was really cheap, since I used Delta frequent flier miles.

When I arrived in Mendoza, I was relieved to find my duffle and the rest of the team waiting for me. There were supposed to be 2 guides and 6 clients, but due to non-bookings and cancellations, we had 2 guides and 2 clients. The lead guide was Dave Dement, a proud 26-year old blond, bearded, and pony-tailed Texan, and his assistant was Ted Roxbury, a 22-year old dark haired flute maker from New Jersey. The other client was Diane Laplante, a 52-year old 5'-2" French-Canadian woman from Montreal. She was a nurse on a 6-month sabbatical in South America and happened to be married to a 54-year old highway engineer (my personal profile). This was her first expedition climb, but her ability to deal with adversity earned her my respect.

There was no time to acquaint myself with Mendoza, as we quickly paid our permit fees and headed to Penitentes via van for the first night. Penitentes consists of a motel, ski area, gas station, and restaurant at 8500' on the road to Santiago. Fernando Granjales Expeditions also has an office here that coordinates 60 percent of



Ted, Dave, Dave G., Diane

Aconcagua traffic. AMG and many other American companies use Granjales for mules and base camp support.

February 10: After a night in the Penitentes motel, we started our approach and acclimation with an easy 7-mile walk north along the Vacas River to Pampa de Lenas at 9500'. Three days earlier I had started taking 125 mg of Diamox during the day and 250 mg at night to aid in acclimation. For the hike we only needed daypacks because mules were carrying our supplies. Pampa de Lenas consists of a ranger station and flush toilets. Disposal methods for human feces became increasingly disgusting the higher we went.

February 11: We continued our northward approach with an 8-mile walk to Casa de Piedra, an old guard station built into a large boulder at 10,600'. Here we got our first view of the east side of Aconcagua and the Polish Glacier.



Aconcagua Penitentes

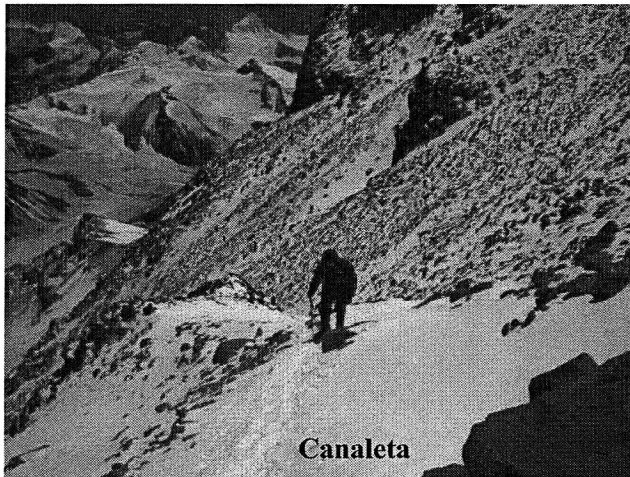
Aconcagua (continued)

February 12: Before the sun hit the valley, we made a frigid ford of the Vacas River and headed west up the Relinchos Valley. The Relinchos approach is more scenic because of the views it offers of Aconcagua, but many expeditions continue north into the Guanaco Valley because it is less crowded. Since our trip was at the end of the December-through-February climbing season, crowds were never a problem. There were several more stream crossings on this day before we ended up at Plaza Argentina at 13,800'. This is the base camp for expeditions approaching Aconcagua from the east and Granjales has a tent compound there where we enjoyed a steak dinner. Plaza Argentina is also the end of the line for the mules.

February 13: We did a light carry to cache some supplies at 15,200'. On this day we also met Con Severis, a Mountain Trip guide, and his client, Scott Slauson, a Wisconsin asphalt paving contractor, who like me is involved in planning Boy Scout high adventure activities. Con and Scott were planning to climb the Polish Glacier route and camped beside us at Plaza Argentina. I learned that many teams go to Aconcagua with the Polish Glacier route as their objective, but very few actually do it. It also was becoming evident that Diane was a slower hiker and was unable to carry heavy loads, but she acknowledged her inadequacies and kept a cheerful attitude. In a pattern that would become standard for the rest of the trip, I would accompany Dave and Ted would hang back with Diane. Ted had an incentive to keep Diane going, since it would also be the end of his trip if she quit. Although I had to haul heavier loads including our 12-pound Kelty Orb 3 tent, it was a relief to me to be able to climb at my own pace without being pushed by a more fit and competent team.

February 14: We did a carry from Plaza Argentina to Camp 1 at 16,300'. There were some steep rock and scree slopes on this route and Diane really

struggled with her load. But when she made it through she still had her good attitude and cheerful disposition. I was breathing hard too, but as I puffed Dave kept me entertained with his repertoire of country western music. My only other acclimation problem was a headache, but fortunately it always disappeared with the evening meal. The mountain also demonstrated some of its fury today as we retreated to Plaza Argentina in a thunder, lightening, and snow storm.



Canaleta

February 15: We again made the 2500' climb to Camp 1 – this time to move our camp from Plaza Argentina to Camp 1. We met some Chileans who reported that the Polish Glacier was covered with 3 feet of unconsolidated snow and was unclimbable. It was still snowing on and off during the day and when Dave and I reached Camp 1, we had no poles to set up a tent. Dave finally went back down the hill to help Diane and Ted brought his poles up. Diane was beat, her fingertips were bleeding from the dry air and cold and her feet had blisters, but she showed no sign of wanting to quit.

February 16: Ted, Diane, and I retrieved our cache at 15,200'. Con and Scott also joined us at Camp 1.

February 17: The sun was shining again and we did a carry to Camp 2 at 19,500' at the base of the Polish Glacier. This was a grueling 3200' climb and I slowed too as I crossed the snow fields on the approach to Camp 2. Diane was way back, but slowly and steadily completed the climb without complaint. At Camp 2 we met an Alpine Ascents International (AAI) team led by Vern Tejas. Vern has 40 Denali climbs including the first winter solo ascent, 5 Everest climbs, and 16 other Aconcagua climbs on his resume. I recognized his assistant, Joe Stock, as a frequent visitor to our camp on my 2003 Denali climb. Vern carried a guitar to Camp 2 and allowed me to take his picture in his 8000-meter suit if I promised not to sell it to National Geographic. Today was also my wife's birthday, but I was unable to get through to her on our satellite phone.

Aconcagua (continued)

February 18: We repeated the grueling 3200' climb as we moved our camp from Camp 1 to Camp 2. Con and Scott took a rest day as they waited in vain for the Polish Glacier to consolidate. I continued to be bothered by headaches. Another snow storm moved in and there was concern for a team that had left for the summit before daylight and had not returned by dusk. Our plan was to establish an even higher camp at White Rocks at 20,000' for our summit attempt. The AAI team was going even higher to Black Rocks at 20,500' for its high camp.

February 19: We made the relatively easy traverse up to White Rocks to carry supplies. On the return it started snowing again and my headache returned with a vengeance. Con and Scott joined us at Camp 2 on this date.

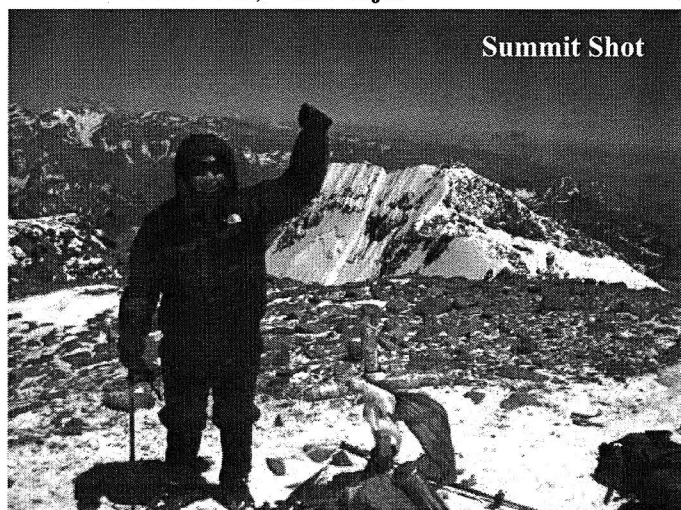
February 20: We moved our camp to White Rocks in spite of a heavy wind. Dave's plan was to continue advancing as long as the weather allowed. Con and Scott were the only ones left at Camp 2 and they wished us luck. By the time we reached White Rocks the wind had died.

February 21: We were up a 4:30 am and climbing by 6:15 am. It was about 10 °F, so we had all our layers on including down jacket and insulated pants and since the route to the summit was snow covered, we also wore crampons. We were the first team on the route, but there were about 15 other individuals following us including the AAI team and a German team with instruments to install on the summit. About 500' above White Rocks we joined the Normal Route and followed it to the Independence Hut at 21,000'. At that point the winds were strong and Diane was feeling nauseous. Dave considered turning Diane and Ted around, but Diane insisted on continuing. The route was made easier by the snow cover over the scree. I was really having difficulty getting enough oxygen and resorted to pressure breathing and at one point - 5 deep breaths per step. It was a clear day and as we approached the summit the wind died. Dave and I lingered on the summit for about 15 minutes and then headed down. We met Diane and Ted on their way up the Canaleta, the last steep section before the summit. Diane was still in good spirits and was clearly going to make it. At one point Vern jogged by us in his long

underwear. He said he couldn't stop to talk, because he didn't have any clothes on, but he did mention that he had only been on the summit of Aconcagua one other time when the weather was so clear and calm. When I got back to White Rocks, I was exhausted and went straight to my sleeping bag. Amazingly, I did not have a headache. Con and Scott had given up their attempt to climb the Polish Glacier and had moved to White Rocks. Ted and Diane were a long time returning. Diane fell coming off the summit and though not hurt had torn her down jacket. Ted put her on a rope for the rest of the way down. We rejoiced that night having all made the summit on such a beautiful day, but the winds picked up again that night.

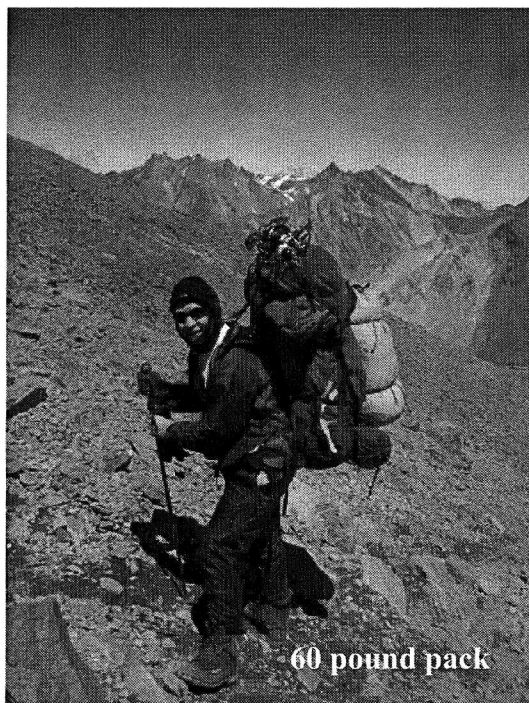


Joe Stock, Vern Tejas



Summit Shot

February 22: Dave told us we needed to get packed up and out of high camp without breakfast. I didn't realize it at first, but our tents were coming apart. We were surprised to find Con and Scott had gone for the summit. The winds that were now blowing at 50 mph at White Rocks and there was a big lenticular cloud over the summit. Since we were evacuating high camp with a single carry, all our packs were heavy – Dave had 70 pounds, Ted and I 60 pounds each, and



60 pound pack

Diane 50 pounds. It was a steep 6000' descent over snow, ice, and scree to Plaza de Mulas, the 14,000' base camp for the Normal Route. Dave and I made it down without incident, but Diane couldn't make it. At one point she tried rolling her pack down to Plaza

be carried down the mountain. Scott showed up sometime later – not a happy camper. With their equipment gone, they spent an uncomfortable night in the hotel at Plaza de Mulas.

February 23: We did the 22-mile hike south from Plaza de Mulas to the ranger station at Horcones at 9700'. We had mules carrying our equipment, so it was a fairly easy downhill hike with a few notable stream crossings and some nice views of Aconcagua. However, the hike out was not kind to Diane's already sore feet and she ended up with major blisters and lost toenails. With all her bandages, I noted that she was beginning to look like a mummy. Con and Scott opted to ride the mules out, but based on their descriptions and sore behinds, this was a mistake. We arrived back in Mendoza just in time for the traditional Argentine midnight dinner hour. We had a wonderful steak dinner with salads and wine, all for under \$20 per person.

For the next few days we joined Con and Scott in enjoying the good life of cheap but excellent food, wine and relaxation in Mendoza's waning summer. The fruits of the harvest abounded and it was wine festival time. We even went on a \$10 wine tour. The climb was difficult and arduous, but an important attribute of a mountaineer is the lack of a short-term memory. The memories of the hardships are fading now and I'm left with the remembrance of good times, wonderful people, and a great sense of accomplishment. Even Diane is looking forward to her next mountain – I think she'd make it up Everest!

de Mulas, but Ted was able to find a porter for \$140 to carry it the rest of the way. Grajales also had a compound here and we moved into one of the canvas huts, since our tents were damaged. Fernando Grajales, the 25-year old owner who was serving as a second guide on one of his own expeditions, stopped by to say hello. We were just sitting down to another steak dinner when Con appeared to relay the story of their horrendous day. He and Scott were successful though they were unable to stand up on the summit. When they returned to White Rocks, they found the fly of their North Face expedition tent torn in half and the tent blown away. They were at 20,000' with no shelter or sleeping bags and had no choice but to evacuate, despite their exhausted condition. All was not lost though, as there was a bag of trash and some heavy climbing gear that had not blown away and needed to



Scott, Diane, Dave, Con, Ted, Dave g.

Mount Washington Ice Climbing

By Jason Sandridge

On March 4th, Kathleen Steinle and I traveled to New Hampshire for a few days of alpine ice climbing in Mt Washington's Huntington Ravine. While climbing on Katahdin in January, we had decided to team up for the unguided version of the PMC's expedition to Peru. Our plan was to spend March 5th climbing harder routes on the Frankenstein Cliffs then hike of that evening to the Harvard Cabin in Huntington Ravine. Kathleen and I wanted to get one last weekend of training in before the ice season was over and figured that the long, moderate alpine routes in Huntington Ravine would be perfect training for Alpmayo. Our (always) ambitious plan was to climb Pinnacle Gulley on Monday, March 6th as fast as possible using minimal gear. After summiting Mt. Washington and rapping the route (again, for training purposes...Alpmayo involves rapping more than 900'), we would recover in the Harvard Cabin, knock off Odell's Gulley on Tuesday, hike out, drive to Boston, and catch a 9:30 pm flight to Dulles. NO PROBLEM (right?)!

The trip started off well with no hitches along the way to New Hampshire and a favorable weather forecast for the weekend. At Frankenstein we had an awesome day climbing the Pegasus Rock Finish (NEI 3+, 5.6) and Chia Direct (NEI 4+). While rapping off of Pegasus, we heard the unmistakable voice of Simon Carr, who just happened to be in New England for some sort of business that just happened to involve ice climbing (I'm sure his trip report has already been submitted). Having had a couple of enjoyable climbs, we called it a day at 2:30 pm, had dinner at the Red Parka, and drove to Pinkham Notch. After rearranging our gear, we hiked up to Harvard Cabin and arrived (exhausted, but in one piece) at 7:30.

After an excellent night at the cozy Harvard Cabin, we woke up to a beautiful morning on Mt. Washington. The summit weather forecast was unbelievable: a high temperature of 18°F, mostly sunny skies, and 15-25 mph winds that would diminish in the afternoon. Having been shut down twice on Mt. Washington due to

weather, I was naturally skeptical.

We started hiking into Huntington Ravine at 8:15 am in light wind and a strong sun. We wore too much clothing for the approach, so we took our time and didn't begin climbing the gulley until 10:15. Pinnacle was in good shape and the climbing was awesome. We installed v-threads at each belay in anticipation of rapping the route and there was good fixed pro in the left rock wall. Despite trying to blowout a water dam and a bad case of the butterfingers, we topped out onto Pinnacle Butte to perfect weather at 2:30 pm. Running a little behind schedule, we were faced with the option of rapping the route for training purposes (and to retrieve the 3 biners, 3 slings, knife, and screamer I managed to drop over the previous 4 hours), or taking advantage of an amazing day and run to the summit.

Convincing ourselves we might be able to do both, we coiled the ropes and pressed on to the summit. After 1,000' of perfect nerve, Kathleen and I reached the summit a few minutes before 4:00 in perfect conditions and still winds (that's right...not calm, but still!). At 18 degrees, the summit of Mt. Washington felt like the beach! Behind schedule again, we bailed on the rappel (never thought I'd have to say that). We raced down the Lion's Head Trail and were back at the Harvard Cabin by 5:30. An awesome day on Mt. Washington.

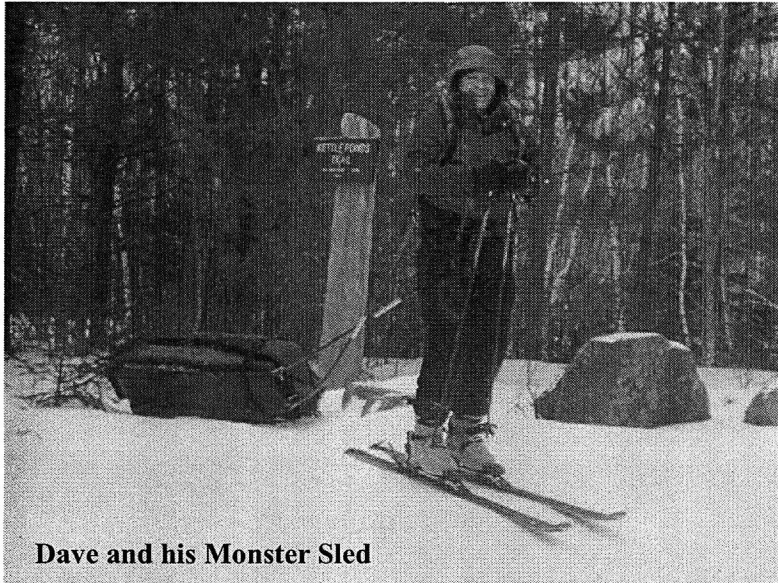
Now that we were Mt. Washington snobs and decided that we would never feel the need to summit the mountain in anything but beach-like conditions, we decided that we didn't really need to climb Odell's the next day (the realization that we wouldn't be able to make it to Boston in time to catch our flight home and the fact that another team had been so kind as to retrieve some of my dropped gear might have contributed to our decision). Since we first climbed together on Katahdin, Kathleen and I had each had our best ice seasons ever. We decided that we had just had the perfect end to an awesome season. We slept in Tuesday morning, practiced building some snow anchors, and hiked down to Pinkham Notch. After a good meal and a couple of beers at the Red Parka, we drove to Boston while discussing the impending rock season and Peru details!



Kathleen Steinle on Traverse

Katahdin, (continued from cover)

But things do not always go as planned... Ranger Jody met us at the hotel with the news that rains were forecast, and she "strongly recommended" that we wait a day. Much grumbling and mumbling ensued, as everyone was champing at the bit, but in the end we agreed with her reasoning. Jason offered to get up

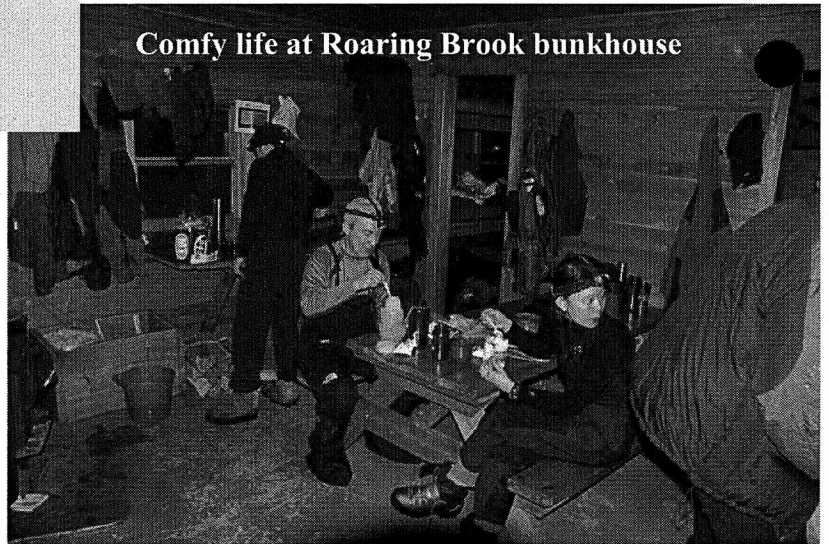


Dave and his Monster Sled

cooperated: 2 degrees F, partly sunny, and just enough snow had fallen during the night on top of the icy base for skiing and hauling sleds. Family-band radios proved useful when an advance group tried a "short cut" up Rum Pond Trail. Mack's warning, "Don't come up here, this way is horrible!" saved grief for those behind. Meanwhile, Bob's skiing wipeouts on the rough trail were a source of great amusement. Later, it was fun to see moose tracks along the way too.

Grim-faced members of another party bore tales of an epic bushwhack coming down from Chimney Pond, due to a flooded stream crossing. This was to weigh heavy in our minds later in the week, as the time for our own trek out drew near...

After a pleasant but long day -- 12 miles, 750' elevation gain, 6 to 11 hours -- we arrived in good form at the Roaring Brook bunkhouse - warm and comfy with a woodburning stove and a supply of

Comfy life at Roaring Brook bunkhouse

early in the morning to check conditions. However, shortly after that the party got rolling in the hotel rooms, with the Scotch and beer flowing freely. Much carousing ensued, including a battle with kids in the indoor pool onto which the room windows opened. The kids nailed the climbers through the open window with their "nerf" missile, but, not to be outdone, and demonstrating the considerable maturity and good judgement of which storm-bound climbers are capable, Jason and Duncan scored a successful ambush on the pool-dwellers with buckets of ice.

The upshot was that no one remembers whether Jason ever actually did get up to check conditions Sunday morning. Those climbers would certainly not have been in any shape to drag themselves out of bed and hit the trail if conditions had been good, but in fact the weather was bad enough, as were the hangovers. So we practiced avalanche rescue, watched more football playoffs, hung Judy's prayer flags, and hoped for cold and snow.

Before 7 a.m. Monday, we set off into the park by headlamp, at the Appalachian Trail by Abol Bridge, headed for Roaring Brook camp. The weather

water from the brook. Dave Green, the sole hiker without a sled, amazed us by getting there first! Judy and Dave Raboy came in by headlamp - Judy having trouble with her boots beating up her shins - and Dave listening to his MP3 player. Tea was brewed, freeze-dried dinners were reconstituted, and all retired for the night.

Tuesday morning, Kathleen valiantly re-lit the stove, and Duncan took the cabin's plastic water bucket down to the creek, wearing his long-johns and ski-boot liners. (continued on page 19)

KATAHDIN (Continued from p. 18)

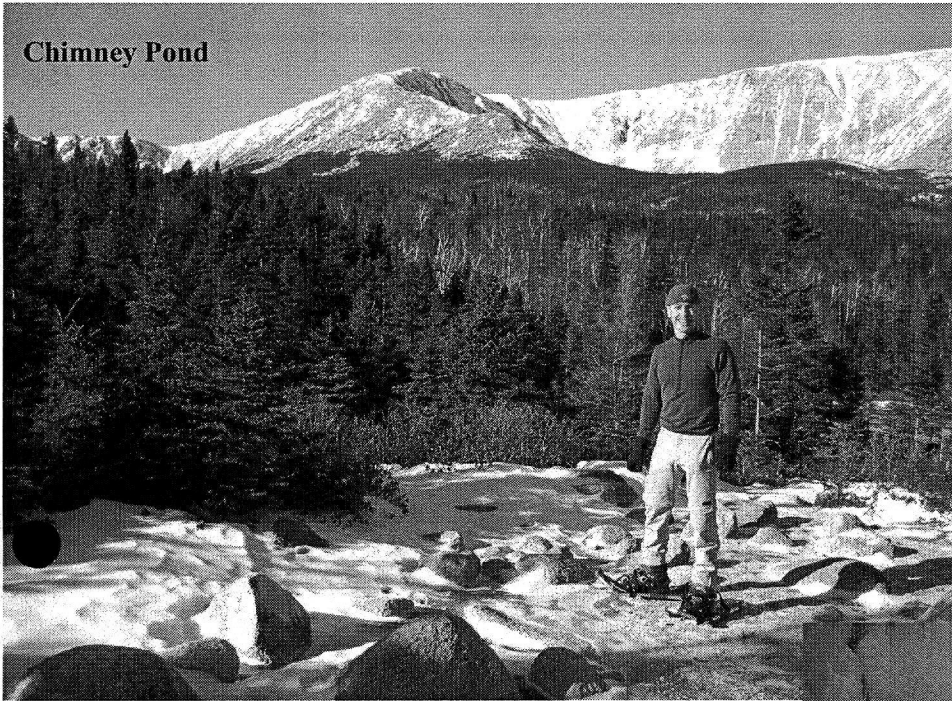
He returned sometime later, with not only the bucket but also his boot liners full of water, and long-johns wet to the knees! Approaching the creek, he had slipped and, desperate to avoid sliding into the creek, dropped the bucket, which had rolled into the creek and

sarily follow wherever a snowmobile has crossed -- breaking through the ice on his snowshoes but managing to scramble back in time to avoid getting his feet wet once again!

After 1,500 vertical feet and over 3 miles, we arrived at the bunkhouse and lean-tos at Chimney Pond, and were rewarded with spectacular views of the Pamola Ice Cliffs and the South Basin. Some were even greeted by Pine Martens. The sight of all that ice was too much for Jason and John Oster to bear. They told the ranger they were heading up to reconnoiter the cliffs, but they just happened to have a full ice rack in their packs, so who could blame them for jumping on Mini-Pinnacle #2? Thus they bagged the first ice route of the trip. Our two intrepid climbers finished the route by headlamp, rapped off a column

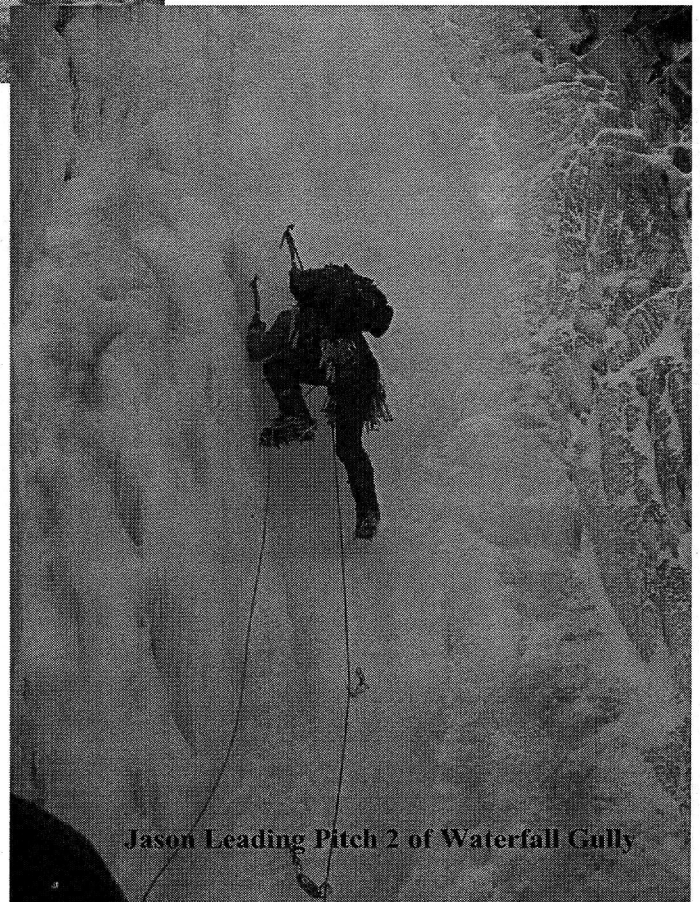
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Chimney Pond



was quickly swept away. A wild chase ensued, with Duncan running through the pines along the creek after the bucket. It came close to shore a couple of times, but never close enough to grab. Finally, out of breath and out of patience, he simply waded into the freezing creek and grabbed the bucket. [Editor's note: limerick, anyone?] Luckily, he had brought both mountaineering and ski boots, so he was able to dry out.

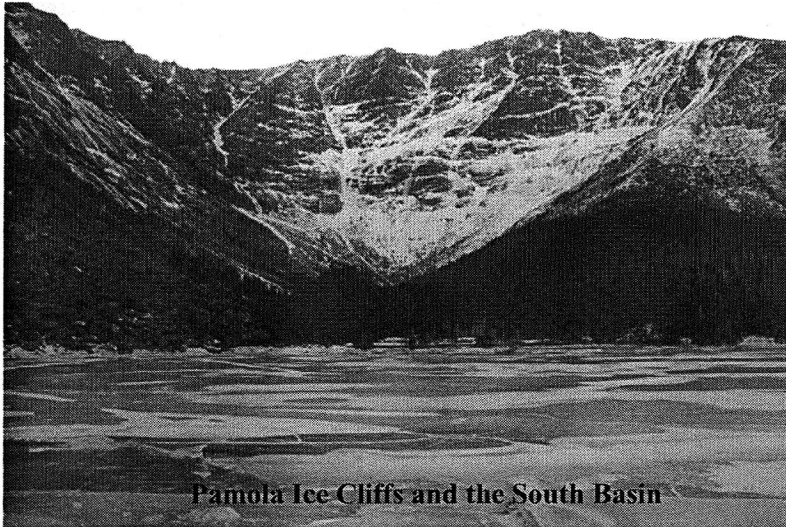
The excitement of the bucket chase over, the team packed up and began the hike up to Chimney Pond. The weather was great, best day of the trip - blue skies and cold temperatures. Bob made his way up the steep trail on skis and skins, but most went on foot or snowshoes. Judy and John Oster stashed their skis under the ranger's cabin at Roaring Brook. Again the radios came in handy, allowing those behind to hear the woes of those ahead struggling to get the sleds through a rough section of trail, and instead to follow the tracks of the ranger's snowmobile across the lake. At the dreaded (fortunately frozen) stream crossing, however, Duncan discovered that a hiker cannot neces-



Jason Leading Pitch 2 of Waterfall Gully

KATAHDIN (CONTINUED)

of ice, and managed the tricky descent of the verglassed boulder field back to Chimney Pond, where they were chided by the ranger, but met with cheers by the rest of the team



Pamola Ice Cliffs and the South Basin

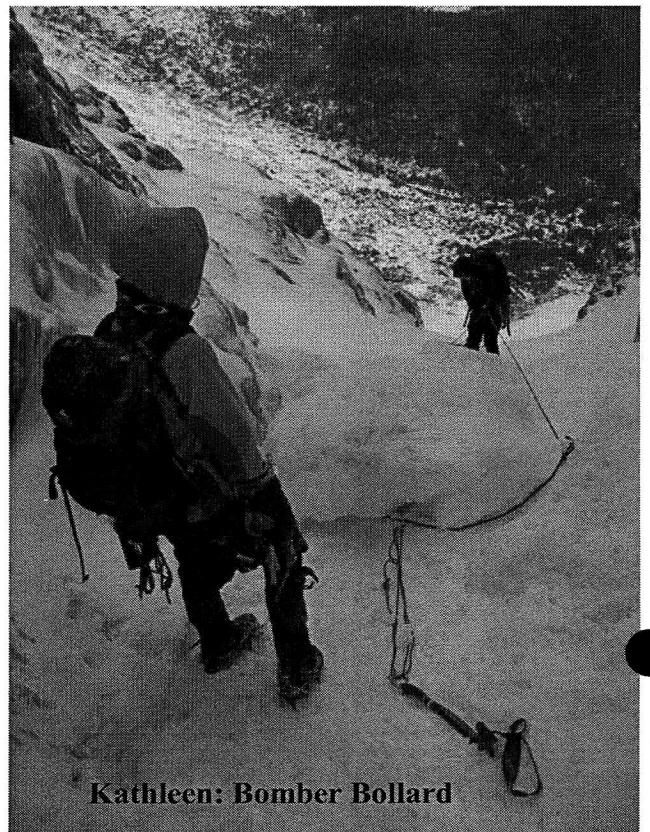
. True to the forecast, the weather Wednesday morning was socked in and blowing wet snow, so most of the team resigned themselves to a rest day. The ranger, prophesying doom, declared a Code Red, meaning no climbing above treeline, and warned us that the stream might rise and delay our departure; whereupon he roared off on his snowmobile while the getting was good! Boredom set in. Limericks were composed. Duncan and Bob went for a ski—reaching Blueberry Knoll with its great views of the North Basin - well, there might have been great views if it hadn't been totally socked in. Jason and Kathleen took a shot at Zorro on the Pamola Ice Cliffs, and made the bushwhack up through the trees and boulders. They were just getting geared up to climb when the snow stopped falling and the gloom deepened. "This doesn't feel right," said Kathleen, and sure enough, it began to pour. (So much for the expected extreme cold temperatures of Maine in January!) As rain cascaded over the ice, they abandoned the climb and bushwhacked back to Chimney Pond. The rest of the team, anxiously awaiting their return while Dave Green whupped everyone at Spades in the bunkhouse, saw their headlamps returning through the gloom, and let out the team cheer of "Katahdin!" - to which the response was a resounding "Heck Yeah!". (Except it wasn't really "Heck"; stronger language seemed called

for at the time.)

Meanwhile before it rained, Mack and the 2 Johns followed the trail to the Pamola Caves. With rain turning the snow to mush, tenters in the lean-tos had no worries, but out in the open, Dave Green's tent stakes came loose, and we learned that he can raise his voice when he has to! Dave Raboy brought out his supply of single malt scotch and excellent tequila, for medicinal purposes only, of course, and, with tongues loosened, a stimulating debate of philosophy and politics commenced! Finally, giving up on converting each other to our own views, we went to bed, still friends.

Thursday dawned colder but extremely windy, with some fresh snow. Duncan, Bob, Jason, and Kathleen set off to climb the start of Chauvin Cole. The top of the route looked bare, so the plan was to escape by one of the gullies to the right. As Kathleen crossed Chimney Pond, despite being weighed down by as much gear and rope as the guy could load onto her, the wind kicked up and almost knocked her down and blew her into the open water.

(continued on next page)



Kathleen: Bomber Bollard

KATAHDIN (continued from p.21)

At that point, Jason and Kathleen decided that discretion was the better part of valor, and turned back. Bob and Duncan continued on, post-holing and thrashing through trees and scree to the base of the route. The wind was ferocious, really not suitable for climbing, but the weather was supposed to improve, and occasional glimpses of blue sky seemed like a good sign. More important, as Bob pointed out, if they didn't do the climb they'd have to bushwhack back! The choice seemed clear, and the two began climbing. The ice was perfect plastic water ice, and the snow was hard neve over a well consolidated base - perfect conditions. A snow picket came in extremely handy for belays. A successful ascent of what was probably Piggy Wiggy (WI3) resulted, despite the wind. The pair reached the ridge in strong winds, limited visibility, with the temperature at 10 degrees F.

Luckily, they soon encountered and followed the blazes and cairns of the Saddle Trail, which was extremely steep and icy. Back in the woods, they lost the trail, necessitating a short but truly heinous bushwhack to regain it. They arrived at the hut before dark to respond to Raboy's "Katahdin!" with a vigorous "Heck Yeah!". (Except, again, it wasn't really "Heck").

Meanwhile, Jason and Kathleen joined Dave Raboy, John Oster, and Judy on a trip up to a nice fat ice covered slab to the left of the Pamola mini-pinnacles. Judy climbed her first ice, and John Oster did his first ice lead.

Early in the morning of the same day, Mack, Dave Green, and John W-J tried to summit via the Cathedral Trail, but were turned back by the wind at 4,000'. After lunch, Mack and John W-J traded short leads on Mini-Pinnacle #3, returning to the hut by headlamp. (The rangers aren't reading this, we hope.)

The next day, Friday, was our last chance to get some climbing in. Weather conditions were not great, but not terrible: overcast, with the temperature rising from the 20s into the 30s. Jason, Duncan, and Kathleen set off to climb Waterfall Gully (WI4). After another wonderful South Basin bushwhack, the trio ar-



Jason on Waterfall Gully

rived at the base of the route. Duncan led the first (WI3) pitch up excellent plastic ice. The team then moved up to the base of the crux pitch, and Jason racked up to take the sharp end. He sewed up the steep section with screws, resulting in very good protection, but leaving him short of screws for the top section and the belay. He cleverly improvised protection by equalizing two stubby screws and getting a thread behind a pillar, before finishing the final crux up wet, plastic, chandeliered ice. Duncan and Kathleen soon followed. Arriving at the belay somewhat wet (there's a reason it's called "Waterfall Gully"), and without a strong desire to climb the snow pitches above, the trio decided to retreat. Raps from a boulder, a bomber bollard, and a couple of V-threads got the group down, and they thrashed back to the hut.

Meanwhile, Mack, Dave Green, and both Johns, using crampons and ice ax but no rope, ascended Saddle Trail to Katahdin's true summit, Baxter Peak, where they unfurled the expedition flag, so beautifully made by Judy. They could see Jason below in Waterfall Gully, and announced the high point of the expedition over the radio, to the great delight of all the rest of the team.

While all this was going on, Dave Raboy and Bob skied up and down the lower Saddle Trail.

KATAHDIN (Continued)

We spent Friday evening preparing for an early start down, including making plans for coping with an unfrozen stream crossing. We need not have worried. Saturday morning found the stream frozen at the crossing -- whew! -- and each of us took about 2 hours to reach Roaring Brook camp. Rain threatened but held off till evening, and another 5 to 8 hours found everyone back at the vehicles, whether by boot, snowshoe, or ski. On some of the icy parts, skiers exceeded the 20-mph speed limit! Despite these occasional good downhill runs, on the flat or uphill sections the skiers would look over their shoulders to see Sherpa Dave catching up fast, hoofing along as if his huge pack weighed no more than a few ounces. The boot problems that Judy had experienced on the way in recurred with a vengeance, and she earned the fortitude award for making it all the way out with a bad case of shin-bang.

Unfortunately, when we arrived back at the trailhead we discovered that Jason's back window was broken, though nothing stolen.

The ever-accommodating EconoLodge had our luggage, and Bob treated us to pizza by the pool. Thanks to Bob for the treat, and thanks to the entire team for making it such a great trip. Despite the warm weather, we had done a lot and had a great time!

The drive home Sunday the 22nd was sunny, and all arrived safely - all fingers and toes, and all friends.



Bob Starting out from Chimney Pond

Snow Skills Clinic ♠ On Saturday, March 25, Any Britton led a snow skills class at Whitetail Ski Area. Although the weather reports called for rain/snow, it turned out to be a fabulous day. We met at 8:45 at the main entrance and hiked up to the ski slopes. ♦ We started off practicing ice axe arrest techniques for several types of falls. We next practiced the techniques of establishing solid belays, making a proper snow bollard, and setting up various types of anchors. We finished by practicing roped travel and further arrest techniques. We headed back home around 1:30 PM. ♥ Participating were Don MacKenzie, Chris Biow and his daughter Abigail, Judy Wu, Emilo Ungerfeld and myself (I'm not in any of the pictures). ♣ Our thanks to any Britton for the great job he did teaching this class.

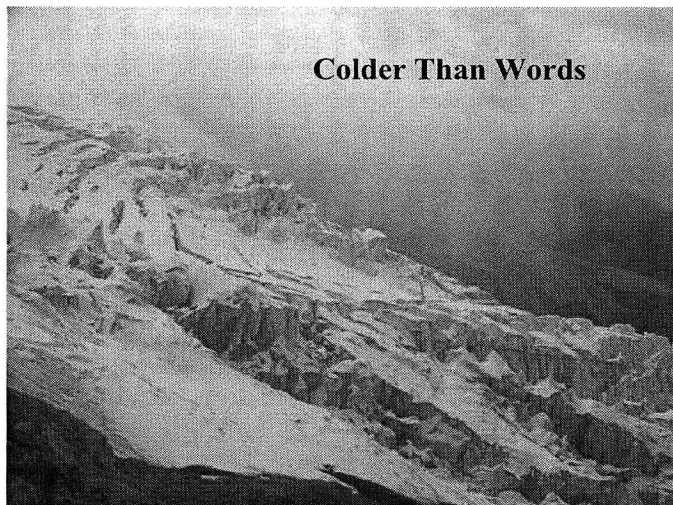


Pichincha, Cayambe, and Cotopaxi

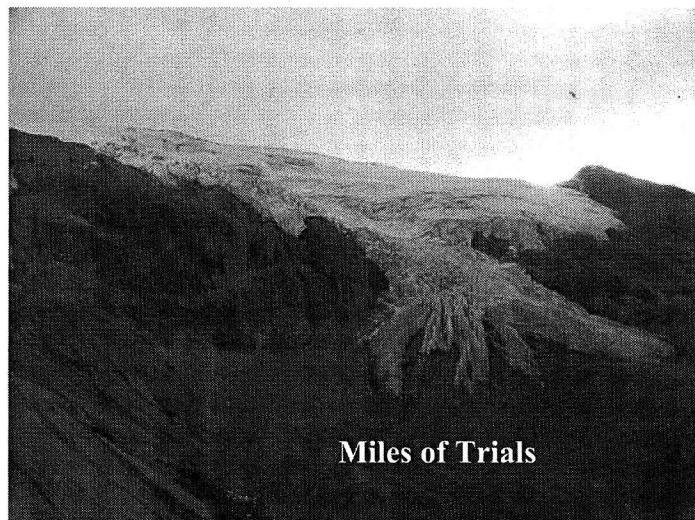
By Kim Mohres

In January, I was a member of the Extended Ecuador Expedition guided by Earth Treks. We climbed three mountains: Pichincha, Cayambe, and Cotopaxi. Our acclimatization peak, Pichincha, a 15,700 ft. dormant volcano, had a gorgeous rock ridge at its summit. The beautiful mushroom shaped summit of Cayambe allowed only one client (unfortunately not me!) and the local guide (who climbed only Cayambe with us) a path to her summit. The expedition culminated with a rare occurrence on any mountain: all five clients and two guides submitted Cotopaxi! I had fun every minute during the two weeks I spent in Ecuador...as far as the high point of the trip for me, that's very simple...even though we didn't make it to the summit, it was climbing Cayambe! This will always remain my most special climb. The route took us along a fourth class rock ridge and then up a broad glacier, crossing countless crevasses. And the headwall brings one along a 55-plus degree climbing toward the final mushroom. While it was the first time I had stayed in a climber's hut, my first alpine start to a climb, and the first time I was truly at high altitude, climbing Cayambe was so special to me because I was able to climb her how I had only dreamt about climbing a mountain.

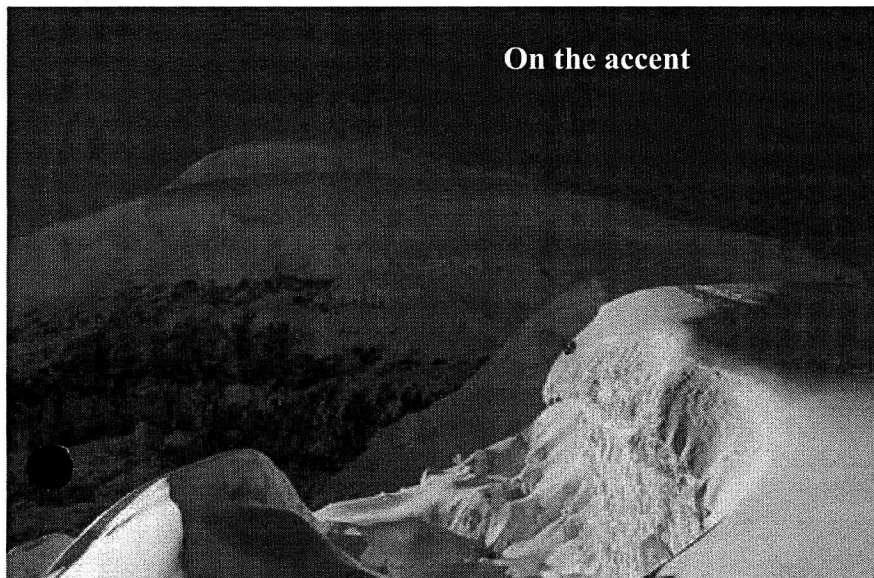
Colder Than Words



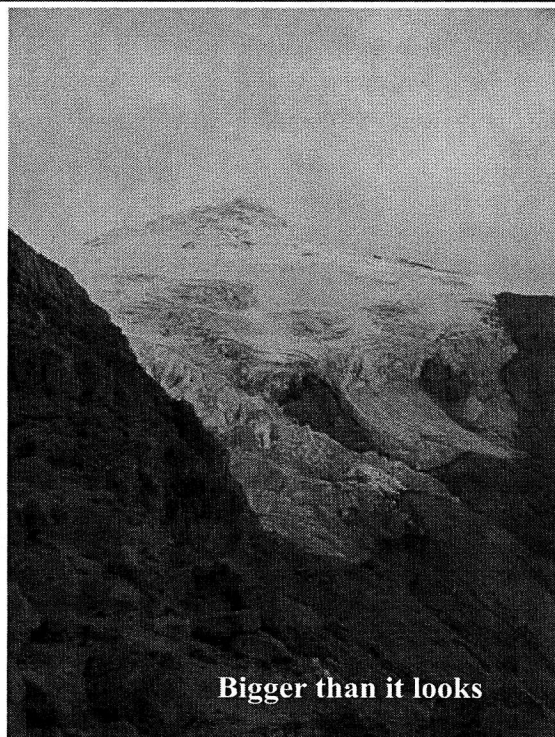
Miles of Trials



On the ascent



Bigger than it looks



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