



## AAC Publications

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### **Richard Leversee, 1958 – 2022**

**The climbing community and many friends have been saddened by the passing of Richard Leversee on January 12, 2022.** Although the term Stonemaster is somewhat overused, Richard embraced the ethos, and will be sincerely remembered as one. Thankfully, Richard's first ascents are still with us—as both lasting memory and fine legacy.

It all began when Richard—a geeky high school freshman—signed up for a climbing class in Pasadena, California. Attempting to escape the Los Angeles suburbs, Richard first sought solace in backpacking. Boundlessly bored, Richard's heart soon intuitively realized that climbing was the next step. After his first climb, at Mt. Pacifico in the Angeles National Forest, Richard was hooked. His soon-to-be-famous energy and inspiration were placed into overdrive when, that same year, the 1972 Chouinard Equipment catalog was released. The pivotal clean climbing revolution had begun, and Richard was all in. With fresh and audacious challenges, climbing became religion and the climbing community became Richard's tribe.

His teen life was typical, avoiding family functions. Every opportunity to climb was taken instead. Nonetheless, epiphany came when “forced” to participate in a family holiday at their cabin in Camp Nelson, California. An ensuing hike to the Needles was magically empowering—befitting the Magician, Witch, Warlock, and Sorcerer's vibrations found there. The pristine, mysterious, and enchanting Needles and Dome Rock completely blew the lid off Richard's ideas on where to climb. With advancing technique and energy, Richard soon became the area's first resident climber.

In due time, Richard met E.C. Joe at Dome Rock in 1975. Richard was on a new route when E.C. and friends passed below. “ROCK!” After dodging Richard's plummeting bolt kit, E.C. soon discovered that he and Richard were kindred spirits. This simpatico enthusiasm and infectious momentum, across the ensuing years, led to many fine and coveted backcountry climbs. Two of his own favorites, reflecting his core wilderness commitment and high standards, are Archangel on Cherubim Dome and Crystal Bonsai on Bubbs Creek Wall. The following timeless routes are also worthy of any bucket list: White Punks on Dope and Imaginary Voyage at the Needles, Close to the Edge, Windjammer, and The Spectrum at Dome Rock, and The Sun Also Rises at Patterson Bluff.

Equally, the pair shared a desire to preserve history, without sacrificing adventure; the resulting co-authored Stonemasher Rockclimbing Guide to the Kern River Canyon and Environs (1983) accomplished that vision and helped preserve the boldness and high ethical quality of these classic routes.

Although Richard planned to teach English, he again followed his heart as a Chouinard Equipment sales representative. This 13-year run was in part a dream job, and also a fine opportunity to expand opportunities for adventure—now a very natural part of Richard's soul. During these years, Richard was at the top of his game, highly respected for his climbing, skiing, snowboarding, and photography.

Naturally, as time passed, priorities changed, as happens to us all. Despite his passion, Richard became weary of life on the road. So, he followed his heart once more and wisely chose to spend his time with the love of his life, his wife, Cari. He left his outdoor pursuits and found equal reward helping people heal as a massage therapist.

What a fine legacy is left to embrace—following your heart with dynamic energy, to do what you love. The memory of Richard’s adventurous enthusiasm—whether in or out of the mountains—will always be a brilliant and haunting force. No matter in tempest, diamond sky, calming starlight, or enchanted cloud, the rock eternally remembers as well. It too has been forever changed by Richard’s touch and passing—quietly whispering back, if you listen. To discover this legacy and the soaring freedom created, climbing any one of Richard’s prolific and bold Sierra Nevada first ascents will suffice.

— E.C. Joe and David Ohst

## Images



Richard Leverage on El Capitan.



Richard Leverage.

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