



AAC Publications

DAVE JONES, 1956 – 2021

A legendary desert climber, Dave Jones, 65, unexpectedly passed away at his home on December 27, 2021. He was much too young. Born in Connecticut, Dave graduated with a degree in geology from Dartmouth College in 1978. Moving to Tucson, he received his master's degree at the University of Arizona. He began climbing in college and continued actively for more than 40 years.

Dave did much of his geological work in Mexico, where he discovered some of Mexico's largest gold deposits, including the Los Filos and El Limon deposits. He had other unique experiences as a geologist, including surviving two helicopter crashes and rowing through the Grand Canyon with no prior rafting experience.

Dave was a strong, bold, and talented all-around climber. His adventures took him to Canada and Alaska, where he made fast ascents of Mt. Edith Cavell, Mt. Robson, and Mt. Huntington. He climbed many walls in Yosemite, including some obscure ones, but his real passion was the virgin big walls of Zion, where the countless bottom-to-top crack systems beckoned. He has over 20 big-wall first ascents in Zion, as well as many shorter climbs. These include the classics Spaceshot, Shune's Buttress, The Vigil, Silmaril, Chastity Crack, and others. Two of his early wall routes were the canyon's first A5 climbs: Empty Pages and Wages of Sin. On the latter, which he climbed with Steve Chardon, Dave stacked and equalized RURPs (pre-beaks) to get up thin sections with ground fall-potential.

Many of the classics he climbed included offwidth cracks, which at the time were avoided by most climbers because of the lack of wide-crack protection in the 1980s. His adventurous, bold leads on climbs like Golden Years (5.11 C2), Lovelace (5.10 C1), Rites of Passage (5.11), Cowboy Bob Goes to Zion (5.10 A2), The Vigil (5.11) and others were legendary. Mike Anderson, a leading modern free climber in Zion, said of Golden Years, "Pitch six is the hardman pitch! It's a slanting offwidth that you really have to commit to. It just goes to show that even 20 years ago, in a virtual vacuum, there was some pretty impressive free climbing being done in Zion."

With boundless energy, Dave climbed four new big-wall routes in Zion during a two-week trip to Zion in the 1980s. In 2007, he climbed two first ascents in a single four-day weekend. Together, we had just finished a nine-pitch route on Mt. Moroni, and the next day he was prodding us to do a new line next to the Watchman. One time, on a rest day, he accidentally slipped in a creek and fell down a waterfall, sustaining a concussion. That night was spent in a hospital. After a rest day he climbed the first ascent of the difficult classic Rites of Passage (5.11) on Shune's Buttress. Dave also had strong ethics about preserving the fragile sandstone in Zion and keeping bolts down to a minimum. He loved scoping new routes in Zion Canyon, having a great eye for beautiful lines. He was always appreciative of the beauties of nature.

Another passion was caving. Dave made many trips to the Guadalupe Mountains and the Lechuguilla Cave in New Mexico, where he mapped out new sections of that beautiful and unique cavern. He was also actively exploring new cave systems in southern Mexico. At the time of his death, he was preparing for a major caving expedition to Mexico.

Dave was an excellent climbing partner, as he was very confident, positive, funny, and patient. He was a solid alpha. Although Dave was plenty aware that he was not the best climber around, he liked to joke about himself and his efforts as "valiant, heroic, and virile". When you asked him how he was doing, he would say "Great—getting younger and better looking!" He was a great writer and storyteller,

as well as being skilled at the guitar.

I will never forget his famous “I told you so” smile when I arrived at a belay after climbing something excellent that he had discovered. His unique personality, enthusiasm, knowledge, and friendship will be sorely missed.

– **Brian Smoot**

Images



Dave Jones atop Golden Years in Zion.



Dave Jones during the first ascent of Lost in Transit on Twin Brothers in Zion.

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