



DOING THE DOME

1990

Just thinking of Yosemite makes my heart pound. We used to go there almost every year when my son was young. To me it has always been one of the most beautiful places I have ever seen. There's a feeling that takes your breath away and grips you as you look at the glory that stretches as far as the eye can see. Monstrous granite rocks reach high

into the sky and stand proud. Awe inspiring.... these rocks dare to be challenged.

One feels blessed being close to the power and majesty of one of nature's masterpieces.

When we were there, we always wandered far away from the "maddening" crowds where we discovered places hidden from most of the tourists. We biked, hiked, walked or climbed any trail we could find. And every one....offered a gift of glory to us. Whether it be the sight of a wild bear, the rush of a river or the crash of a waterfall, it was always nature at it's best. Even the rainbows were doubled in brilliant color and size. Yet....yet every time I was in Yosemite, I felt selfish anger. I didn't like to hear noise or see people having a party or acting careless around the camp sites. To me Yosemite Valley was like an outdoor cathedral, it seemed to demand reverence. I was humbled just being in the presence of such grandeur.

One day as I was gazing up at Half Dome....I thought, I wonder what it's like....so high up there? Could I climb that? Would I dare to try climbing this world landmark? Just thinking about it took some courage. We did some planning, and decided to go for it. This is a 12 hour trek and the trail was almost straight up for eight miles! We climbed over hundreds of granite boulders, passed rivers and waterfalls, valleys and swimming holes. We stopped only to be amazed at the panoramic views in all directions. Get's my heart pounding just thinking about DOING THE DOME. When we finally got to the bottom of the "summit", there was another 900 feet to go. But this time we would be at a 45 degree angle and there are only cables to use as hand rails. Add to that the fatigue, fear and an 8,000 foot altitude, made this super scary! Yes....some people have actually fallen and yes....if you do, you will probably die. At that point I started to tremble with fear. My voice literally quivered and I definitely didn't think I could pull myself up on those cables to do the rest of the hike. Although at the time, I was physically okay to continue, I was frozen with psychological fear. Bill was softly encouraging me. He kept saying...."Just take your time. I know you can do it". And so with a death defying grip on each rail, I started to climb...one slow, terrifying step at a time.

I never stopped or dared to look down until I made it over the top. And the reward still gives me chills. It was a sight only given to those who dare to challenge this majestic wonder. It's hard for me to put into words the feeling of joy and accomplishment we shared by conquering "The Dome". We lingered an hour or so and soon it was time to think about HOW to get down those cables. Yikes. Actually it was easier for me.....perhaps the elation of it all had evaporated some of my fear. But without incident, we made it safely down and back to camp in time for dinner. The moon was full that night and I remember that it lit the Dome as if it were in a spotlight. I looked up and could hardly believe I was "there". On top of the world. For me, it remains an awesome life time experience.