

## Rock Climbers Have Difficult Job - Weak Of Heart Need Not Apply

**BY AL HOGUE** Staff Writer

Classified ads for their job might read outside worker needed, must like to climb rocks, someone who wants to achieve great heights, doesn't mind trusting his life to a one-half inch rope while dangling over the side of a cliff almost 1,000 feet high.

The team of four men who are working at Lake Willoughby in Westmore don't consider their jobs dangerous.

They work for Janod Enterprises, a rock stabilization firm from Vaudreuil-Dorion, Quebec. The application on their Web site states: "Weak of Heart Need Not Apply."

They have been given the task of shoring up the area of the rockslide that occurred March 29, sending heavy boulders tumbling down onto Route 5A. Some of the rocks jumped over the guardrail and broke through ice on the edge of the lake.

The Vermont Agency of Transportation had crews from Derby working last week clearing trees and underbrush from the area of the slide. That was necessary to allow the climbers access to the hill without their ropes becoming entangled.

Friday, two of the men, Brian Blais of Highgate, and Roman Gallund, from Portland, Ore., hooked up their climbing harnesses and started to ascend the hill.

The area of the rock slide is about 80 feet high, at an angle of about 70 degrees.

Blais and Gallund made their way to the top, one step at a time, hand over hand, using the ropes to hoist themselves up.

Once on top, they worked on a system to get needed tools to the top, where they will begin the process of "scaling", a term used to describe the removal of loose rocks that may break loose at a later time and fall.

They will be working on that mission for the next several days. Once they can no longer break the rocks loose by hand and pry bars, they will use small inflatable bags stuffed into cracks in the rock surface. Air compressors will then inflate the bags, breaking the rocks loose.

If that doesn't do it, then the rocks will be considered safe.

The project manager of the scene is technician Pierre Rousseau, an employee for four years.

"It's fun, exciting and challenging," said Rousseau. "I get to travel a lot and I really like to see what we are accomplishing. It is very hard on family life though."

He doesn't consider his trade dangerous. To those who may pause to watch any member of his team operate, they may disagree.

A recent job Rousseau talks about is one in California, where a new aerial tram was being installed.

A helicopter lowered him to a small rock ledge over 6,900 feet up. From there, he was on his own. He just laughs about it.

Another crew member, Darryl Anderson from Kansas City, Mo., proudly shows a series of photos, taken last month on a job in New Jersey.

They were stabilizing a rock ledge over 850 feet high. Anderson said that job was his personal highest.

Many of the jobs they do go unnoticed. Motorists driving through mountainous terrain may notice wire netting alongside rocky cliffs. The nets contain any possible rocks from rolling down the hill, becoming a hazard to anyone using the highway.

Another interesting project by Janod was the installation of a snow avalanche system in the Washington State Snoqualmie Pass. That job, the first of its kind, was installed to protect homes below that were threatened by the dangerous avalanches.

The area where the team is working in Westmore is closed to the public; however, the work crews are finding the barricades on the highway tossed aside almost everyday since they have been there.

Highway crews from AOT are stressing that the area is still considered dangerous and caution motorists not to enter the area. Janod's crew estimates their task at Westmore may take about three more weeks.

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