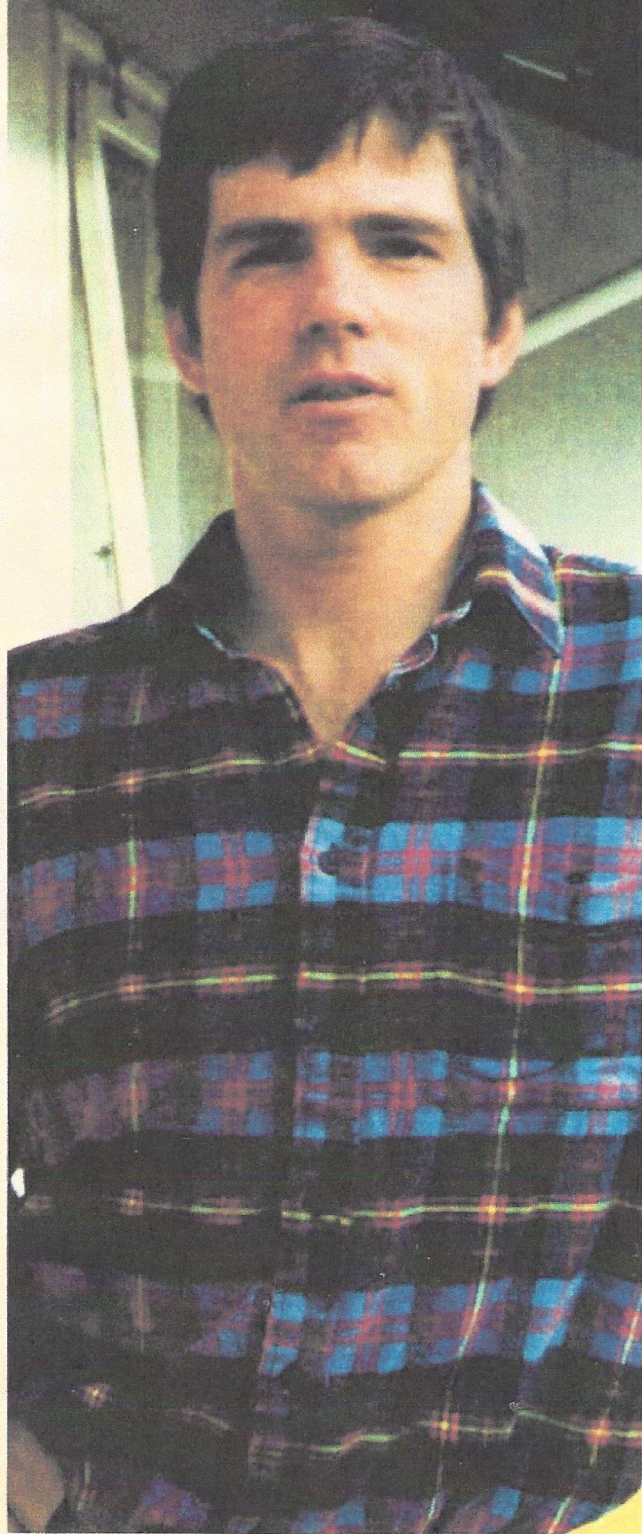


last run

Chris Rice



When & where Born Dec. 14, 1962, and raised in New London, N.H., the ski free (heel) or die state.

Lives Winters at Whiteface Mountain, N.Y.; rest of year in Pinkham Notch, N.H., a quarter-mile from Wildcat Mountain and about three miles from Tuckerman Ravine.

Tops in telemarking No. 1 ranked telemark racer in U.S.; defending national champion; consistent top 10 finisher in World Cup telemark races; has finished as high as third in World Telemark Championships.

The beginning, alpine "I began alpine skiing when I was about 5 at a little local place called Temple Mountain."

Fast times, slow times "I raced alpine in junior Eastern competition and then in high school. But I stopped racing—skiing, really—in college because I couldn't afford it."

The beginning, telemarking "In 1986, I started working in construction for the Appalachian Mountain Club, which maintains trails and huts in the White Mountains of New Hampshire. A friend gave me a pair of telemark skis and we went through the woods over to Wildcat. It was hairy, but I had a blast."

History train "The historic Sherburne Trail—where classic races were held in the Thirties and Forties—comes down right behind where I live in Pinkham Notch. When I first started telemarking, I used to train on the Sherburne Trail, cutting off 7-foot lengths of flexible plastic water pipe and sticking them in the snow for gates. By 1990 I was racing for real all over the country."

Free the heels, free the body "There's so much dynamic, physical movement in telemarking. Your legs are scissoring back and forth, and it feels so thrilling, so athletic."

The ups "Being outside on a mountain in the winter in the cold is such a part of me. Spiritually, physically, socially."

The downs "The showy, glitzy side of skiing bothers me. You know, crowded mountains full of people who spend oodles of money to ski and then sit in the lodge and complain about the conditions."

On banded knee for the king "Franz Klammer was my idol. I went to a World Cup race in 1979 and got his autograph on the sleeve of my giant slalom suit. I still have that old suit, and I brought it out of the closet last year to wear at the World Championships in Norway. I was psyched that Franz was on my sleeve."

The skinny on skinny skis "Telemarking will continue to grow. It won't have a big flash of growth like snowboarding. But we hope to have telemarking at least as an exhibition sport at the 2002 Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City." —Reade Bailey