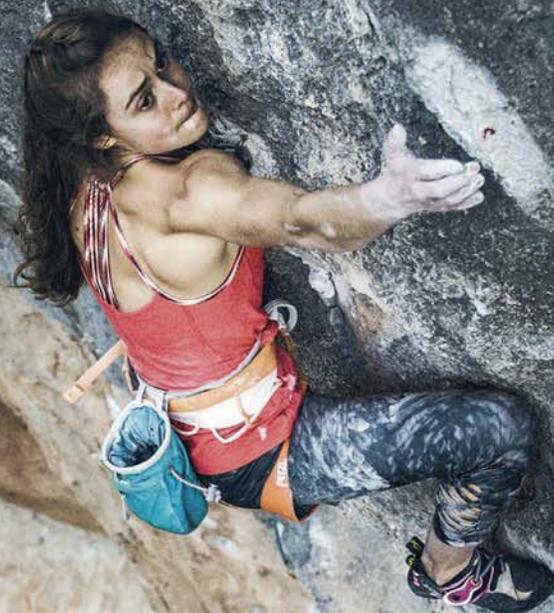


THE PUSH AN EXCERPT FROM TOMMY CALDWELL'S NEW MEMOIR

Climbing

**FIRST
FEMALE
5.15**

HAYES MAKES HISTORY



+
**THE RED
RIVER
GORGE'S
SECRET
PAST**

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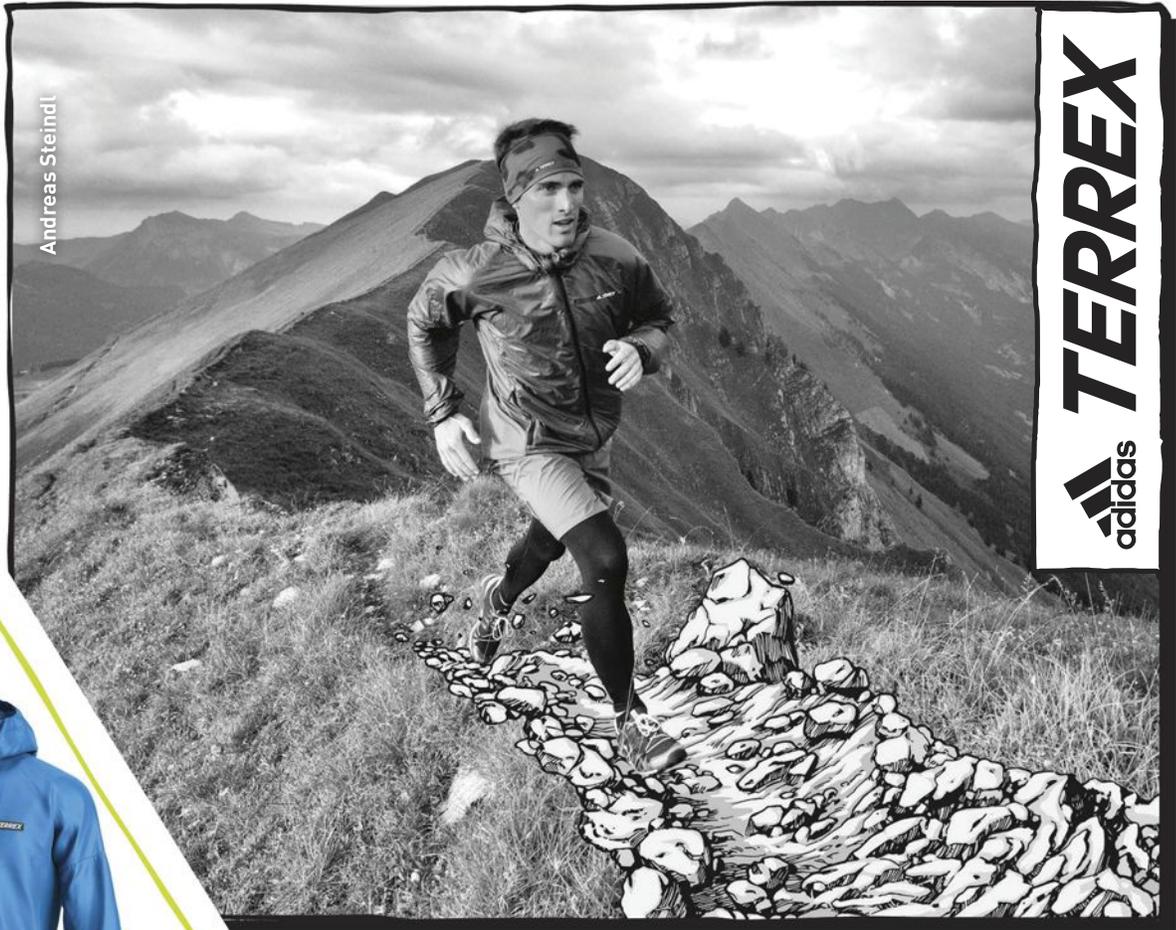
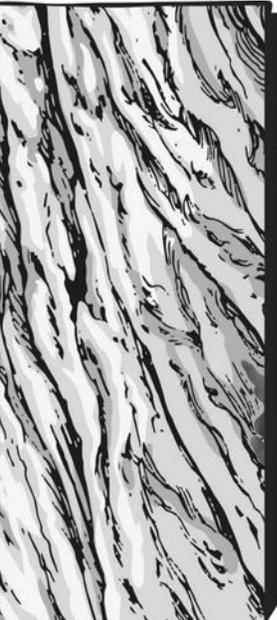
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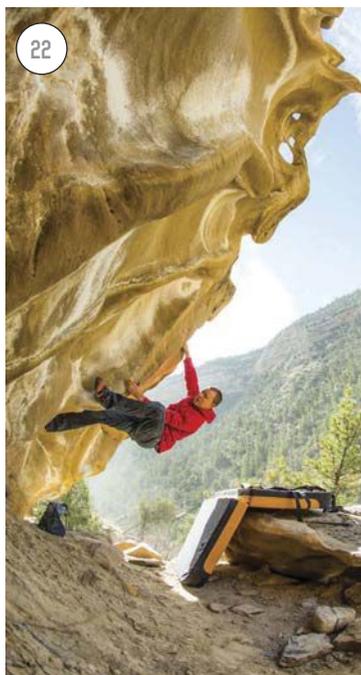
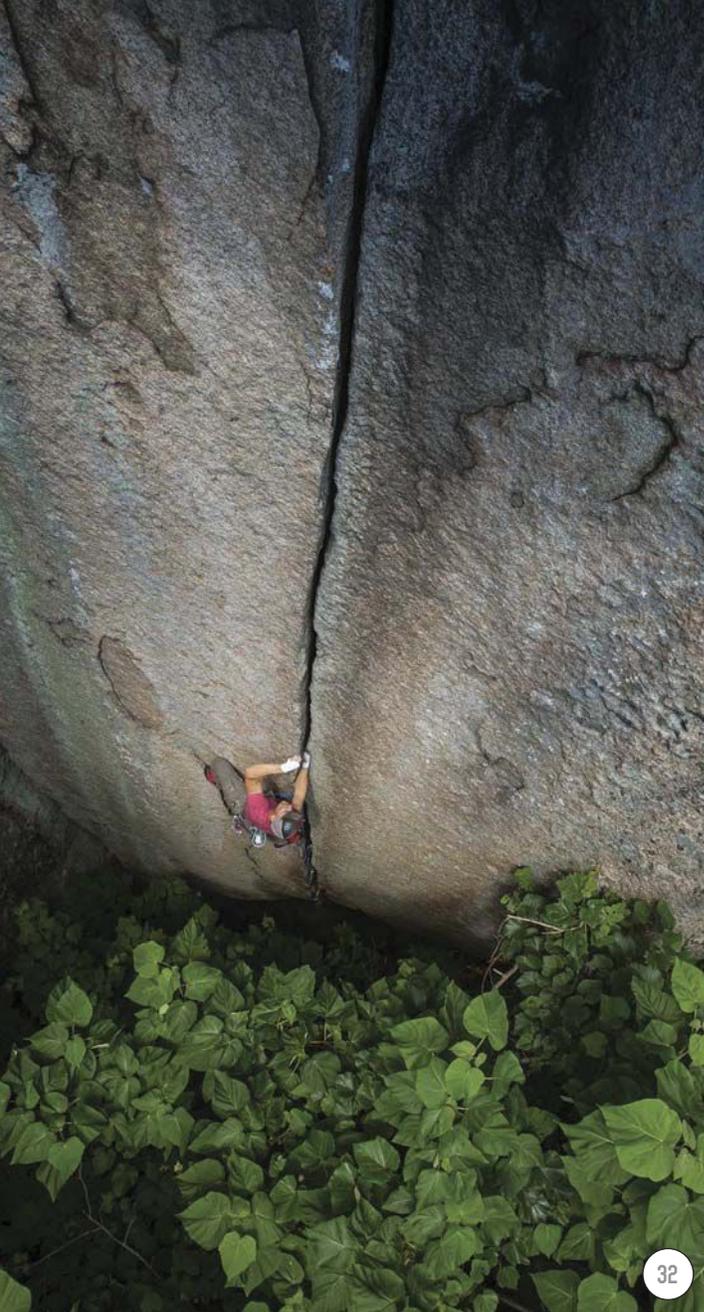


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CONTENTS



8 FLASH

THE APPROACH

17 EDITOR'S NOTE

20 OFF THE WALL

Latino Outdoors is engaging the Latino community in outdoor recreation.

21 UNBELAYVABLE

THE CLIMB

22 TALK OF THE CRAG

Climbers, federal agencies, and locals are working to preserve Joe's Valley.

24 PORTRAIT

Kris Hampton's rise from a rough past to coaching stardom.

29 THAT ONE TIME

Paige Claassen tries a uniquely Russian diet.

31 THE BETA

Margo Hayes's historic 5.15 send of *La Rambla*, by the numbers.

32 THE PLACE

Long hikes, bushwhacking, and hard rock at Virginia's trad-climbing mecca.

36 TOPO

5.9 climbing and 5.14 exposure on one of the Gunks' least-climbed routes.

38 UNSENT

Five simple tips guaranteed to not make you a better climber.

GEAR

40 SHOE DESIGN

Fred Nicole applies his knowledge from top-end bouldering to the subtle art of shoe design.

44 TESTED

The latest from our diligent testers.

CLINICS

47 TRAINING

Improve endurance and power-endurance on a rotating climbing wall.

48 IN SESSION

Learn to eat strategically for consistent energy and better climbing.

50 GUIDE'S TIP

Lower a climber safely while using a device in guide mode.

80 THE DESCENT

FEATURE

The Push, p.52

For the first time, Tommy Caldwell tells the story of his group's capture in Kyrgyzstan in 2000 in his own words, excerpted from his gripping, new memoir.

FEATURE

Towers of Power, p.58

Photographer John Evans lists five must-do moderate Moab towers that keep the difficulty manageable at 5.10 or below, while topping some of the desert's most spectacular summits.

FEATURE

From Portugal with Love, p.66

The intertwined history of Miguel's Pizza and the Red River Gorge, and how Miguel's made the Red what it is today.

ALYSE DIETEL TAGS THE MODERATE SOUTH FACE (5.7) OF SOUTH SIX SHOOTER PEAK, MOAB, UTAH.



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Climbing

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Front cover: About to bag a first ascent in the recently opened Kishwar region of Kashmir, India - Mark Wilford



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FLASH





CLIMBER
Shelma Jun

ROUTE
Bowling Pin (V4)

LOCATION
**Buttermilks,
Bishop, California**

In 2014, then 32-year-old New Yorker Shelma Jun started an Instagram account named Flash Foxy to inspire and connect with other women climbers. Two years later, Flash Foxy held their first Women's Climbing Festival in Bishop, California. This year, the event returned to the East Side of the Sierra with 300 women attending panel discussions, clinics, slideshows, and stewardship projects. As Jun puts it, Flash Foxy's goal is to "create a space where women can feel inspired, supported, connected to each other, in a place where conversations can happen to take down barriers to climbing as well as overall in their lives." Jun hopes to expand the event in coming years and has been at the forefront of addressing the sport's changing demographics—in particular, the increase in minority and female climbers—speaking at the American Alpine Club and the Access Fund on redefining access and the socioeconomic and gender barriers to climbing. See tinyurl.com/molts7c for more on this year's event.

 JULIE ELLISON



CLIMBERS

Siebe Vanhee, Sean Villanueva O'Driscoll, Nicolas Favresse

ROUTE

El Regalo de Mwono (5.13c; 1,200 meters)

LOCATION

East face of Torre Central, Torres del Paine, Patagonia

Nineteen days of Patagonian suffering, rationed food, freezing temps, and difficult free climbing brought Siebe Vanhee, Sean Villanueva O'Driscoll, and Nicolas Favresse the first free ascent of *El Regalo de Mwono*, established by UK climbers Paul Pritchard, Simon Yates, Sean Smith, and Noel Craine in 1991/92 at VI 5.10 A4. After fixing the first three ropelengths on the steep, continuous crack line, the team committed to the wall, climbing capsule style and completing the route in 26 pitches, placing no bolts and using small wires for protection. On February 14, their fifteenth day on the wall, the team summited, yet the 5.13 thirteenth pitch (pictured, with Vanhee on lead), a slight variation to the original line, remained unfreed. With dwindling rations, the trio returned to their portaledge and waited out four days of storm to try the 30-meter tips crack. "It's not the obstacle that makes the suffering," O'Driscoll said. "It's the attitude toward the obstacle." On day 19, Favresse freed this money pitch, completing a team-free ascent of the wall. The trio descended, hiked out, rode a bus to Puerto Natales, and slept under the stars, until the middle of the night when rain ripped them from their sleep.

NICOLAS FAVRESSE





CLIMBER
Michaela Kiersch

ROUTE
Southern Smoke (5.14c)

LOCATION
**Red River Gorge,
Kentucky**

In late February and early March, over an eight-day window, 22-year-old Chicago native Michaela Kiersch doubled her number of 5.14c sends. The DePaul University science major ticked off her fourth, fifth, and sixth 5.14c's with *Twenty Four Karats*, *Southern Smoke*, and *50 Words for Pump*, the first at the Gold Coast, the latter two at Bob Marley Crag. "It must have been these Starbucks drinks I'm into," Kiersch said, referring to the Doubleshot Energy drinks she downs on the seven-hour drive to the cliffs. Finished with her rock goals for the season, Kiersch competed at USA Sport Climbing Nationals the weekend after her big sends, placing fifth. She'll return to the Red where she's hoping to climb a few projects before heading to Ceüse for the summer.

📷 TARA KERZHNER



CLIMBER

Royal Robbins

ROUTE

**The Nose (VI 5.9 A2),
El Capitan**

LOCATION

**Yosemite Valley,
California**

On Tuesday, March 14, California rock-climbing and big-wall pioneer Royal Robbins, perhaps the leading light of American climbing's Golden Age, passed away at age 82. Robbins pushed free-climbing standards to 5.9 with his 1952 ascent of *Open Book* in Tahquitz, California. Five years later, he made the first ascent of the Northwest Face of Half Dome with Jerry Gallwas and Mike Sherrick, America's first VI big wall. With his wife, Liz, Robbins established the classic *Nutcracker* (5.8) in Yosemite, where they used passive protection, climbing clean, instead of bashing in rock-harming pitons. He taught many climbers critical ropework and climbing techniques through his books *Basic Rockcraft* and *Advanced Rockcraft*. In 1960, Robbins along with Joe Fitschen, Chuck Pratt, and Tom Frost made the second ascent of the *Nose* (pictured) without siege tactics. Through his climbing, Robbins defined big-wall style, climbing with few bolts and total commitment. "Getting to the top is nothing," Robbins said. "But the way you do it is everything." He is survived by Liz and his children, Tamara and Damon. Visit tinyurl.com/mjwzprx for a full obituary.

TOM FROST / AURORA PHOTOS





CLIMBER

Nina Williams

ROUTE

Ambrosia (V11/5.14 X)

LOCATION

**Buttermilks,
Bishop, California**

On Tuesday February 28, Nina Williams made the first female ascent of *Ambrosia*, a 50-foot V11 (5.14 X) on the Grandpa Peabody Boulder in the Buttermilks, California. In the early 1990s, California climber Tommy Herbert drilled anchor bolts above the problem to try it on top rope, and named it *Ambrosia* after the food of the Greek gods. In 2009, Kevin Jorgeson made the first ascent, ropeless, climbing through difficult moves to a rest hueco at 17 feet then tackling the upper section of V6/5.12+ climbing. Over four days of effort, Williams lowpointed the route on top rope until she had done it twice from the second move to the summit. She wanted to complete a trifecta of highballs on Grandpa Peabody including the 50-foot *Footprints* (V9) and the 55-foot *Evolution Direct* (V11), both of which she'd already sent. At the end of February, she hiked 15 pads to the base and casually climbed *Ambrosia*. A few days later, she taught a clinic on fear management at the Flash Foxy event.

 NAYTON ROSALES



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[Background] Steven Reinhold [Lower Left] Alicia Martinez [Middle Left] Aaron Thomas



2017 CLIMBS

- YEAR ROUND **CREATE YOUR OWN**
- MARCH 4-10 **PICO DE ORIZABA**
- APRIL 13-16 **MT. WHITNEY**
- JUNE 1-3 **MT. SHASTA: WEST FACE**
- JUNE 23-28 **MT. RAINIER**
- JUNE 24-25 **MT. HOOD**
- JULY 7-9 **MT. SHASTA: NORTHEAST FACE**
- JULY 7-10 **THE GRAND TETON**
- JULY 10-12 **MT. SHASTA: WOMEN'S CLIMB**
- JULY 17-21 **MT. OLYMPUS**
- JULY 28-30 **THE GRAND TETON**
- AUG. 4-14 **MT. KILIMANJARO**
- AUG. 25-27 **LONGS PEAK: CABLES ROUTE**
- SEPT. 9-12 **WHITNEY, RUSSELL, MUIR TRAVERSE**
- SEPT. 15-17 **PRESIDENTIAL TRAVERSE**
- OCT. 9-30 **EVEREST BASECAMP**



CONTRIBUTORS



[Rob Coppolillo]

Rob Coppolillo is a writer and American Mountain Guides Association (AMGA) and IFMGA-licensed mountain guide based in Boulder, Colorado. During his AMGA preparation and exams, he survived three courses taught by Marc Chauvin, his co-writer on “The LSD Lower” (p.50). He co-owns Vetta Mountain Guides in Boulder, where he lives with his wife and six-year-old twin boys.



[Marc Chauvin]

Marc Chauvin is an AMGA/IFMGA mountain guide who has been guiding for 39 years. Chauvin helped create the AMGA Certification Program and has assisted in developing AMGA curricula over the past quarter century. He’s a past AMGA president, Alpine Discipline Coordinator, and Instructor Team Member. Turn to page 50 to learn from Chauvin and Coppolillo’s “The LSD Lower.”



[Amanda Ashley]

Nineteen years after her first submission and countless pitches later, Amanda Ashley has a byline in *Climbing*. A longtime New River Gorge local, she now calls Salt Lake City home. A mom, avid belayer, and wannabe climber, Ashley writes about climbers and the business of climbing, and land-use policy. Turn to page 24 for her Portrait of Power Company Climbing founder Kris Hampton.

APPROACH

ED NOTE

Hello, Again

IN 2017, CLIMBERS, APPARENTLY, ARE “SENDING” CARS. ANDREW BURR CRANKS AT CARHENG, NEBRASKA.



“LET’S TALK ABOUT THIS YEAR,” read a cryptic email from Julie Ellison, then the editor of *Climbing*. It was January. Bitter winds blew off the Continental Divide west of Boulder, Colorado, and I figured this was it: I was being canned. I’d been splitting my time copyediting between *Yoga Journal* and *Climbing*, hanging on by a financial thread as I struggled to keep our family of four housed and fed, wondering if a husband and wife, two boys, cat, and a dog could all live in a refrigerator box, and which underpass had the best hobo fights.

“I’m leaving,” Julie said, as we sat in her office. “I want to hit the road and get back to writing and shooting. I think you’d do a great job as editor.” I’d held the job from 2007 to 2010; seven years off is a long “rest day,” but perhaps I could shoe up and give it another burn. Julie is now our editor at large, providing killer content as she has been for years. And, it seems, I’m editor again. So here we go.

As much as the landscape has stayed the same in the past seven years—climbing, after all, is still climbing—it’s also shifted and grown. The sport is bigger, bolder, more self-aware, and more inclusive. Great things are happening. Women are now climbing consensus 5.15 (did anyone other than misogynist Internet trolls doubt this would happen?)—turn to page 31 to learn about Margo Hayes’s road to *La Rambla*. People of all ethnicities and backgrounds are taking their rightful place at the table in a sport that, with structural and economic barriers to entry, has for too long been primarily the playground of upper-middle-class white people—see page 20 for Julie’s piece on Latino Outdoors. The Access Fund and local climber organizations are more creative and proactive than ever in forming partnerships with land managers and nonclimbing locals to protect and promote our crags—see page 22 for Carolyn Webber’s piece on exciting developments at Joe’s Valley, Utah. And, on a tougher note, one of our sport’s greatest legends, Royal Robbins, has passed away (see page 12).

I’m psyched to be back at *Climbing* again. It’s a new era, one of big numbers, big gyms, big crowds, and Big Internet, but the need for great storytelling about and imagery of our sport remains. That, in the unpredictable maelstrom we call life, might be the only constant. **MATT SAMET, EDITOR**

UNSOLICITED BETA

ROYAL ROBBINS

Back in 1997, I was living in Boulder, Colorado, and climbing every free moment. Royal Robbins was one of my idols. One day, during a staff meeting, I found out that my assistant manager was Royal's daughter, Tamara. I was in shock. All I could say was, "Oh...so you're from Modesto." Months passed, and Tamara and I became good friends. We never spoke of her father until one day when I was considering driving up to Jackson Hole, Wyoming, to climb the *Exum Ridge* on the Grand Teton. I had only minor experience in that type of climbing and asked Tamara casually, "The next time you talk to your dad, ask him if he thinks a solid-5.9 climber can handle the *Exum Ridge*." A few hours later, Tamara yelled from the office, "Chad, my dad's on line two for you!" I nearly shit my shorts. I ended up having a five-minute phone conversation with the Godfather of Rock Climbing. I was in such a panic I didn't even know what to say. His deep voice greeted me. He asked me ques-

tions about my climbing experience and then reminisced about the last time he'd climbed the Grand Teton. The entire call, I did my best not to sound like a giddy school-girl. He ended the call saying I should go for it and to have a great time. It was truly one of the coolest things that has ever happened to me. Thank you, Royal, for all that you did for the climbing community and for me, and for hooking up Magnum P.I. with Billy Goat shorts! Rest in peace.

—Chad Baird, via *Climbing.com*

OLYMPIC CLIMBING

Re. Cedar Wright's column "Gold Medal" (tinyurl.com/klny644), top young climbers in the United States today are far removed from all the romanticized dirtbaggery that was championed during my formative years as a climber. Growing up to become adults leading balanced, productive lives now seems to be the trajectory for most top climbers, and if that means chucking all the directionless HoBohemianism of preceding climbing generations, all the better. The sooner people stop falling for this Jack Kerouac/Neal Cassady BS, the happier they will be in the long run. Climbing is now a mainstream sport appealing to the well-adjusted.

—Marco Pervo, via *Climbing.com*

I wanted to say thanks for the Wright Stuff column on the Olympics, and to point out how climbers today have no grasp or understanding of adventure/exploratory climbing. As a new climber who got into the sport to be able to climb in the Valley and the Bugaboos, and to hopefully pursue mountaineering as well, I'm constantly frustrated by the lack of people wanting to get outside and learn trad or just scramble for that matter. It's hard to learn these skills without paying a guide, and the whole concept of "finding a mentor" is difficult when you live in a major city where people only climb in the gym. I'm struggling to get better in the gym so that as

I gain these skills, I'll be able to get outside and put them to use. (FYI: Teaching yourself fingerlocks and hand stacks in the gym sucks.) Thanks for bringing some awareness to the issue—it was a great read!

—Vinny Mullin, via *Facebook*



STERLING SILVER
BOLT-AND-QUICKDRAW
EARRINGS.

CLIMBING BLING

I am a jeweler madly in love with climbing. This led me to designing a climbing jewelry collection. See cococlimbingjewelry.com.

—Cosmin Popa, via *email*

MARGO HAYES

In response to the *Climbing.com* news article "Margo Hayes Climbs La Rambla, Becomes First Woman to Send 5.15a," I can't wait until this is reversed—when we hear about the men who are the first of their gender to repeat women's first ascents. As a gymnast in college, I damn well knew that the women were all-around better athletes. We men had more muscle mass—that's it. Technical proficiency and grace easily overcome brute strength. Women are poised to take the lead in climbing.

—George O'Connor, via *Facebook*

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#ClimberBivy

Waking up on the side of a wall, cramped on a tiny ledge, or in your own backyard is one of the best parts of climbing. We compiled shots of a few of our readers' favorite bivy spots.



Nothing better than sitting in front of your tent and watching the sun set after a long day climbing in the Alps.

—LEON BUCHHOLZ



Bernd and Finn Zeugswetter wake up after a rainy-night bivy under their backyard oak.

—BERND ZEUGSWETTER



El Cap casts quite the shadow, as seen from our bivy on Muir Wall.

—ANNA KIRKWOOD



The Jackie Treehorn Bivy on *Big Lebowski* in Zion National Park, Utah.

—GREG TROUTMAN



Daniel Jeffcoach just feels lucky we found a ledge at all. Way up there and out there in Tehipite Valley, Kings Canyon, California.

—BRIAN PRICE



Back in the duvet-and-wool times of 1982 on Coll de Nou Fonts in the Catalan Pyrenees.

—MOISES COLL



I'm not sure you can really call it a bivy, but we called this bivy, at the base of Spearhead in Rocky Mountain National Park, Colorado, "the Marriott."

—JON BANKS



A 4'x8' ledge, freezing temps, two Clif bars, and one water bottle for four climbers stuck on the *Scenic Cruise* in the Black Canyon of the Gunnison, Colorado. I gave it three stars on Yelp.

—TYLER CASEY



Sam Lien and Eric Bluemn bivied at the halfway point of the Torment-Forbidden Traverse in the North Cascades on a warmish August weekend.

—SAM LIEN



GRACIELA CABELLO
(STANDING, FAR RIGHT)
AND LATINO OUTDOORS
IN BISHOP, CA.

Latino Outdoors

BY JULIE ELLISON



LATINO OUTDOORS' national director, outdoorswoman Gabriela Cabello, wants to bring more diversity to climbing. The group's story began in 2013, when after unsuccessfully trying to enter the conservation field, its founder José González realized that Latinos were vastly underrepresented in the outdoor world. So he started a blog to engage the Latino community in outdoor recreation, stewardship, and policy. The first Latino Outdoors group outings happened in California in 2014, and by 2017, there were 40 volunteer leaders in 14 U.S. regions. With more than 55 million Hispanics making up 17 percent of the U.S. population, getting Latinos involved in the outdoor world, and in climbing specifically, is more important than ever, especially in today's political climate. We spoke to Cabello about Latino Outdoors' presence in the climbing community.

What do you do for Latino Outdoors?

I work with José on executing the mission and vision of the organization. Together, we support the volunteers with their regional programs and events, like snowshoe or kayak outings, hikes, family campouts, group runs, yoga in the park, and indoor rock climbing. Our work focuses on growing our overall capacity and impact through fundraising, managing grants, establishing partnerships with conservation organizations and outdoor retailers, and everything else it takes to run a nonprofit.

What does Latino Outdoors do specifically?

We're focused on three key areas. The first is in supporting Latino leadership in the outdoors and conservation by building a strong network of outdoor leaders and providing opportunities for professional development. The sec-

ond is growing Latino engagement in outdoor spaces and public lands by leading outings. The third is the storytelling component. We want to ensure our community has a voice and a platform to share our cultural and historical connections to nature and the outdoors, so we curate stories and create content for our website (*latinooutdoors.org*) and social media channels.

Why is getting more Latinos outside important, especially to try a sport like climbing?

Having access to nature is a basic human need and right. From a health perspective, Latinos and people of color tend to have less access to green space while also having the highest rates of obesity and diabetes. It's important for everyone to understand how our public parks, lands, and open spaces exist to support healthier lifestyles and stronger communities. Climbing tends to have more barriers to entry: It's expensive, technical, and restricted by location, and a partner or mentor is necessary. Even when you remove the economic barriers, there are still social and cultural barriers. We have a small group of climbers who encourage participation in the sport by attending events like the Women's Climbing Festival and the Red Rock Rendezvous. It's important for our community to see themselves reflected in these spaces.

It's also critical to the conservation and environmental movement. Latinos are the fastest-growing U.S. demographic, and diversity in the outdoors and getting more people of color engaged is the key to creating more advocates, stewards, and champions, and ensuring conservation remains relevant for future generations.

How does Latino Outdoors fit into the larger climbing community?

The climbing community is evolving. I've seen the demographics change with gyms opening up all over metropolitan areas. I see Latino Outdoors as a supportive platform to help with resources for those wanting to learn in a gym or transition to outdoor climbing. We have partners who want to support diversity, but it's not always easy for organizations to do outreach to communities of color. It's much more direct to reach out to an established group or organization [like Latino Outdoors]. This month, our coordinator, Ana Beatriz-Cholo, is working with Mountain Gear and the American Alpine Institute on a diversity initiative for the Red Rock Rendezvous. Paul Fish, president and CEO of Mountain Gear, and Jason Martin, director of operations at American Alpine Institute, have been working with us to figure out how we can collectively impact such events.

UNBELAYVABLE

Scary (and true) tales from a crag near you

I was ice climbing at Moffat Tunnel, one of the closest ice crags to Denver with easy access to set up topropes. Naturally, it attracts a lot of new ice climbers and crowds. I was dry-tooling on the side of the main flow. A woman (we'll call her "Lucky") was ice climbing, for the first time, 15 feet from me. A second woman (let's call her "Gumby") had just topped out on the left side and was cleaning her group's anchors. In doing so, she mistakenly also dropped the top rope that Lucky was climbing on. Lucky was now free soloing about 20 feet off the ground. Luckily for Lucky, a nearby photographer and a free rope hung a few feet away. The photographer grabbed the free rope, tied a figure-eight on a bight, clipped a biner to the knot, and passed it to Lucky, who clipped it to her belay loop. Gumby was also lucky, because she didn't even get a tongue-lashing.

—Brandon; Colorado

LESSON: Especially in a crowded area like this, it's important to be mindful of how your actions will affect other climbers around you. In this case, it sounds like, done with climbing for the day, Gumby was going through the motions of breaking down her group's anchors without much thought. There are plenty of things she could have done to confirm if the rope she dropped was in use—yelling down to the climbers below, for example—but the first step is to be present and work with care, reasoning out all of your actions and considering any potential consequences.

During a busy day at the climbing gym, I heard an argument. A climber halfway up the wall was yelling at his belayer. He was angry. Safety-wise, everything looked kosher: The climber had his weight on the rope, his knot looked good, and his belayer had both hands on the brake. Their issue was communication. The climber was insisting he be lowered. His belayer—trying to

motivate him—was shouting that he needed to keep going before he'd be lowered. This went on for a few minutes. The belayer gave in when the climber began kicking the wall and yelling louder. They left shortly after.

—Spencer; Columbus, Ohio

LESSON: First and foremost, rock climbing is supposed to be fun. If you cause your partner to have a tantrum on the wall, you're doing it wrong. New climbers need to be allowed to adjust on their own terms. Climbing is scary, don't forget. If you push someone too far out of their comfort zone, it's only going to make them more afraid. Second: It's the climber's call if he wants to be lowered. The belayer takes orders from the climber. Sure, one motivational "You can do it!" is OK. You can even follow it up with an "Are you sure?" But if the person you're belaying asks you to lower them, then lower them. Ignoring their commands is a huge breach of trust.

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A New Joe's

Climbers, federal land agencies, and locals work to preserve Joe's Valley

BY CAROLYN WEBBER

➤ *COFFEE, INTERNET, AND SHOWERS.* That's all the boulderers asked for. After years of lurking outside the Orangeville Branch Library to borrow Wi-Fi, taking sink baths, and swallowing gritty gas-station coffee, the climbers found their call answered by entrepreneurial locals in this once-booming coal-extraction region in central Utah's high desert. As these climbers were civilized by their new amenities, the boulder fields got a makeover, too—complete with designated trails, restrooms, and campgrounds. Climbers, who have been coming since the mid-1990s, couldn't deny the growth at Joe's. Neither could the locals, who were ready to cash in on the recreation boom, especially in Orangeville (pop. 1,439) and Castle Dale (pop. 1,605), both less than 15 miles from the boulders.

"We decided that, even though we don't have a lot of money," says Orangeville resident Doug Stilson, "let's bootstrap it out of our house."

In the first week of March, Stilson opened the doors to the only coffee shop in an 11-mile radius, Cup of Joe's, in the front parlor of his home. Photos of climbers and the surrounding sandstone boulders and bluffs line the shop walls, and the Wi-Fi is free.

"It's not just a fad that's going to phase out," Stilson says of all the boulderers. "Climbing is here to stay."

BEFORE THE CURRENT DAYS of bumper-to-bumper parking on the side of Joe's Left Fork, there was not much going on at Joe's, at least climbing-wise. In 1995, the climbing video *Three Weeks & a Day* brought attention to the black sandstone blocks, featuring Dale Goddard and Boone Speed climbing cutting-edge problems like *Smokin' Joe* and *3 Weeks and a Day*. Since then, the area has swollen to encompass 188 bouldering sites with thousands of problems from V0 to V14. According to Jordan Leonard, the economic director for Emery County, some 15,000 climbers visit annually.

"It's the right band of good rock that broke off the cliff at just the right height

so that they could be dispersed around flat landings," says Justin Wood, a former Joe's Valley liaison for the Salt Lake Climber's Alliance (SLCA). Considering the many bouldering sites; the scenic beauty of the canyons, side canyons, and piñon-studded gulches and hills; and temperatures that rarely drop below 30 or top 75, it's no wonder boulderers flood in year-round.

Popularity has its drawbacks, though. The high-desert environment is fragile, with sandy soil and sparse vegetation to anchor it. Heavy rains wash away the roads, like the steep Left Fork Road (Highway 29), as water rushes down the side drainages, pushing rocks downhill. At popular areas like Riverside in Left Fork and Warm-Up in Right Fork, crashpad usage and high foot traffic have sped up erosion—witness the "bath rings" on the rock that mark for-



LUKE KRETSCHMAR
CLIMBS GLOW WORM
(V6), IN THE LEFT FORK
OF JOE'S VALLEY.

PHOTO BY ANDREW BURR

“Visitors have been coming for years,” Emery County BLM public lands administrator Ray Petersen says. “Our challenge is to see how we can benefit economically.”

mer soil levels, or boulders like Resident Evil and Goat Milk that have lost vegetation at the base. Social trails cause problems, too, since the brittle desert soil crumbles as climber feet trample through.

Something needed to be done, and climbers sprang into action: In 2008, the SLCA installed two seasonal latrines, in New Joe’s and Mansize Camp in Right Fork, and six years later, they brought in land managers to help address the impact issues.

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Price Field Office and Price Ranger District of the Manti-La Sal National Forest split the management of the Joe’s Valley boulders. In 2014, the SLCA conducted a baseline assessment of Joe’s, measuring the level of use, location of routes and trails, and impacts on the environment, bringing the data to the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) and the BLM in 2014.

Under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the USFS and BLM are building off SLCA’s work to map the climbing areas and trails, and determine the best sites for campgrounds and toilets. The two federal land agencies are finalizing an Environmental Assessment draft that should open by May for a 30-day public-review. Then, both the BLM and USFS can begin conservation work.

Ray Petersen, public lands administrator of the Emery County BLM Office, says the partnership with climbers has been positive, especially since the SLCA began hosting an annual Adopt a Crag in 2014, clearing out trash and reinforcing landings. The SLCA also spends \$2,500 annually to maintain the latrines, a cost currently sponsored by climbing companies, grants, and membership dollars.

To fund the future conservation effort, the BLM and USFS received Recreational Trails Program (RTP) grants. The Access Fund, which plans to do a large amount of the trail work, received a \$40,000 Resource Allocation Committee (RAC) grant and \$45,000 grant from the Utah Office of Outdoor Recreation for 2017 and 2018. With that money, the Access Fund will bring a conservation team to Joe’s this fall for five weeks.

“We’re hoping to home folks onto a single, sustainable route instead of multiple paths,” says Ty Tyler, stewardship director of the Access Fund. Next season, they will begin a two-year project to tackle “high-priority areas that are seeing really severe erosion,” employing retaining walls, patio-type structures, and water diversion techniques. For their part, the USFS and BLM plan to use their RTP funds to help with trail building, as well as restroom and campground construction. With all this change may come growing pains.

“There’s talk of getting an established campground, and that will definitely change the feel,” Wood says. But the Access Fund, SLCA, and land agencies are set on preserving the boulders and trails over time while not drastically altering the primitive vibes.

“Our intent is to maintain the existing character so it doesn’t look all that different when we’re done,” Tyler says.

If the BLM decides to establish the two campgrounds they are planning, fees are likely to follow. While that could anger some

climbers, Tyler hopes that the long-needed facilities, such as bathrooms and parking lots, will make it worth it. Realistically, most climbers will still pile into dispersed campsites anyway.

AS CLIMBERS ALIGN with land agencies to protect the boulders, they’re also making connections in the neighboring towns. Before coal mines in and around Orangeville and Castle Dale dwindled to two because of the nation’s decreasing demand for coal energy, everyone either worked in coal or on the alfalfa and corn farms. The coal and power-generation jobs had a \$200 million economic impact on the towns annually, a figure that today has dropped to \$137 million. Residents need alternative ways to pick these towns out of the economic dust.

“What do we have that no one else around us does?” the towns asked themselves. Blessed with the boulders and surrounded by awe-inspiring national and state parks, they had the answer in their backyard. “Visitors have been coming for years—not just to boulder—but our outdoor recreation in the last decade has exploded,” Petersen says. “Our challenge is to see how we can benefit economically.”

Locals have come on board to connect climbers and the community. Amanda Leonard, Emery County events coordinator, messaged the Joe’s Valley Bouldering Facebook page to facilitate a bouldering event.

Steven Jeffrey and Adriana Chimaras, climbers who are writing a new guidebook for Joe’s (due spring 2018), planned the first annual Joe’s Valley Bouldering Festival with Leonard. Now in its third year, the festival’s attendance tripled in size from the first year to the next, with 150 climbers and an estimated \$25,500 brought into the community. Along with yoga clinics and climbing meet-ups, the festival also connects climbers to the local community through ghost tours, local artisan clinics, and a rodeo in which climbers race on cowhides dragged by cowboys.

For Leonard, the goal of the festival, besides fostering camaraderie, is to show the private sector why they should bring restaurants and hotels to Emery County. Without it, the towns are missing out on climber dollars. Castle Dale’s new (and only) vacation-rental home, Cox Lodging, might start a trend for Airbnbs or other homestays. Meanwhile, the Food Ranch, the local all-you-need store in Orangeville, started capitalizing on the climbers years ago by selling chalk, crashpads, and their world-famous Butterfinger donuts.

“Anything that climbers want and we can get, we bring it,” says Drew Leroy, owner of Food Ranch. If that means hummus and microbrews, then the Food Ranch will stock it. At his shop, Leroy notes, an average climber will spend up to \$60 a day on food, gear, and pad rentals. In fact, the Food Ranch did around \$4,500 in crashpad sales and rentals, tape, chalk, chalk bags, and camping-supply business last year. To accommodate climbers, Leroy even built a 12,000-square-foot refuge upstairs from his shop: The Spartan Den, named for the local high school mascot. Leroy advocated to the city council, BLM, and the USFS to improve amenities in town as well as in the canyon, helping in the push for Orangeville’s Welcome Park to include bathrooms and showers. Now, those restrooms are scheduled to open in April.

“This is a viable part of tourism that we want to capture. [The climbers] have already proved their worth,” Leroy says. “We want them to be able to go up to the canyon and have the experience that they want.” Outside Leroy’s shop hangs a simple sign. It reads, “We Love Our Climbers.”

Understanding What You're Part Of

KRIS "ODUB" HAMPTON'S RISE FROM A ROUGH PAST TO RED RIVER, RAP, AND POWER COMPANY CLIMBING TRAINING STARDOM

By Amanda Ashley

“I HAVE TO COMMIT NOW,” Kris Hampton thought halfway up the swell of *Transworld Depravity* (5.14a) at the Motherlode, in the Red River Gorge. “There’s no choice.” On a weekend trip to the RRG in late spring 2014, a few weeks before his fortieth birthday, Hampton had tied in below his project. If he sent, it would be his first 5.14. Drainage from the forest above soaked the top third of the route. But Hampton had been training, putting his own self-developed principles into practice, and he felt strong. It was now or never.

At the second crux, a lateral move off sloping crimps, Hampton surprised himself and the crowd of about 35 climbers watching below as he linked through the section. The crowd roared. A final 50-foot stretch of wet 5.13b guarded the chains. Hampton sprinted for a pair of incut crimps where he hoped to shake out. Unfortunately, his hands landed in puddles. He kept climbing. One move from the anchors, with wet hands and swollen forearms, Hampton fell. As he was being lowered, he remembers thinking, “I’ve never felt as good climbing as I did being lowered off that route with the chains unclipped.” Later that year, in October, Hampton returned for a proper send, but the failed attempt had been much more meaningful. “Everyone was going crazy, and in that moment, it all came together,” recalls Hampton. “I thought, ‘This is my tribe and these are my people.’”



TODAY, KRIS HAMPTON is 42. Raised in Cincinnati, where he lived for decades, he’s now in the process of moving to Lander, Wyoming. Hampton has always been the quiet guy in the corner. At 5’8” with a lean, muscled 145-pound frame, Hampton exudes a steadfast presence behind a pair of glacial-blue eyes. His calm perhaps comes from his roots, having to remain centered while growing up amidst a turbulent family life in Cincinnati, baggage he carried through his early-adult years when he earned a criminal conviction for stealing car stereos. Or perhaps it’s just who he is, an

For years, a young Kris Hampton “appropriated” mattresses to practice gymnastics in a local park.

observant, intense, considered presence. Throughout it all, Hampton has been a self-made man—you may know him through his fame as a climbing emcee, using the handle “Oduub,” a nickname based on his traddy/offwidth days at the Red. Or perhaps you’ve heard of him more recently, as his Power Company Climbing training business takes off, both at the Engine Room at RockQuest Climbing Center, his home gym in Cincinnati, and in digital form through his podcast and apps. Or perhaps you even know him as a dad on the ABS circuit, where his daughter, Katy, was a competitor from 2006 to 2009.

In 1987, Kris Hampton, then 13, was just another kid playing on the streets of Cincinnati’s gritty Highpoint neighborhood. The area was populated by Appalachian families who’d migrated north for factory work—it was an all-white, racist, rough community. One day on his way home from school, Hampton wandered by Queen City Gymnastics, stopping to watch the gymnasts practice through the windows.

The way they moved—their grace and power and athleticism—fascinated him. He crawled into a dumpster behind a mattress factory and fished out some discarded mattresses. For the next three years, Hampton “appropriated” the mattresses to practice gymnastics in the park. At 16, he stopped watching and took a class at Queen City; within six months, he started teaching and coaching. Back at home, he clashed with his stepdad, who was only 10 years his senior. A fight between the two led his mom to press assault charges against the young Hampton. He spent a few weeks at the Hamilton County Juvenile Detention Center, and then never returned home.

Having escaped family tensions, Hampton focused on the art programs at high school. His art teacher became his second mother, and art became his second escape. Hampton studied the simple, stark, and lonely paintings of Edward Hopper, whose portrayal of light and captured “emptiness” struck him. Meanwhile, music, specifically hip-hop, spoke to him. In 1986,

when the Beastie Boys’ *Licensed to Ill* came out, rapper Mike D wore a VW symbol on a chain. Hampton stole a VW bus logo and wore it for a few days to emulate his musical inspiration. He left the logo hanging in a friend’s basement and moved on to stealing stereos and cars. “I never sold or kept the stereos or cars,” Hampton says, “I gave it all away. I have no idea where any of that stuff ended up.” In 1993, his luck ran out, and Hampton along with three friends was arrested for stealing car stereos in Springdale, Ohio.

The day he finished his six-month sentence at the Queensgate Correctional Facility, Hampton bought a gym membership at Climb Time in Cincinnati—Hampton had climbed at the gym twice before, and he knew he’d need a passion upon his re-entry into society to stay out of trouble. After the first month, he started sweeping the gym floors in exchange for a membership. Indoor climbing quickly led to climbing at the Red River Gorge, two and a half hours away. Within a few months, he climbed *Ro Shampo* (5.12a) and led his first trad route, the 120-foot dihedral crack *Roadside Attraction* (5.7), with his friend Ray Ellington, the RRG guidebook author. As Hampton set off on the lead, Ellington passed him the rack and said only, “If they don’t fall out, then you placed them right.” The ethical rigor and obscurity of trad climbing drew Hampton in. Teamed up with



MOLLY RENNIE AND HAMPTON TRAIN AT STONE AGE CLIMBING GYM IN ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO.



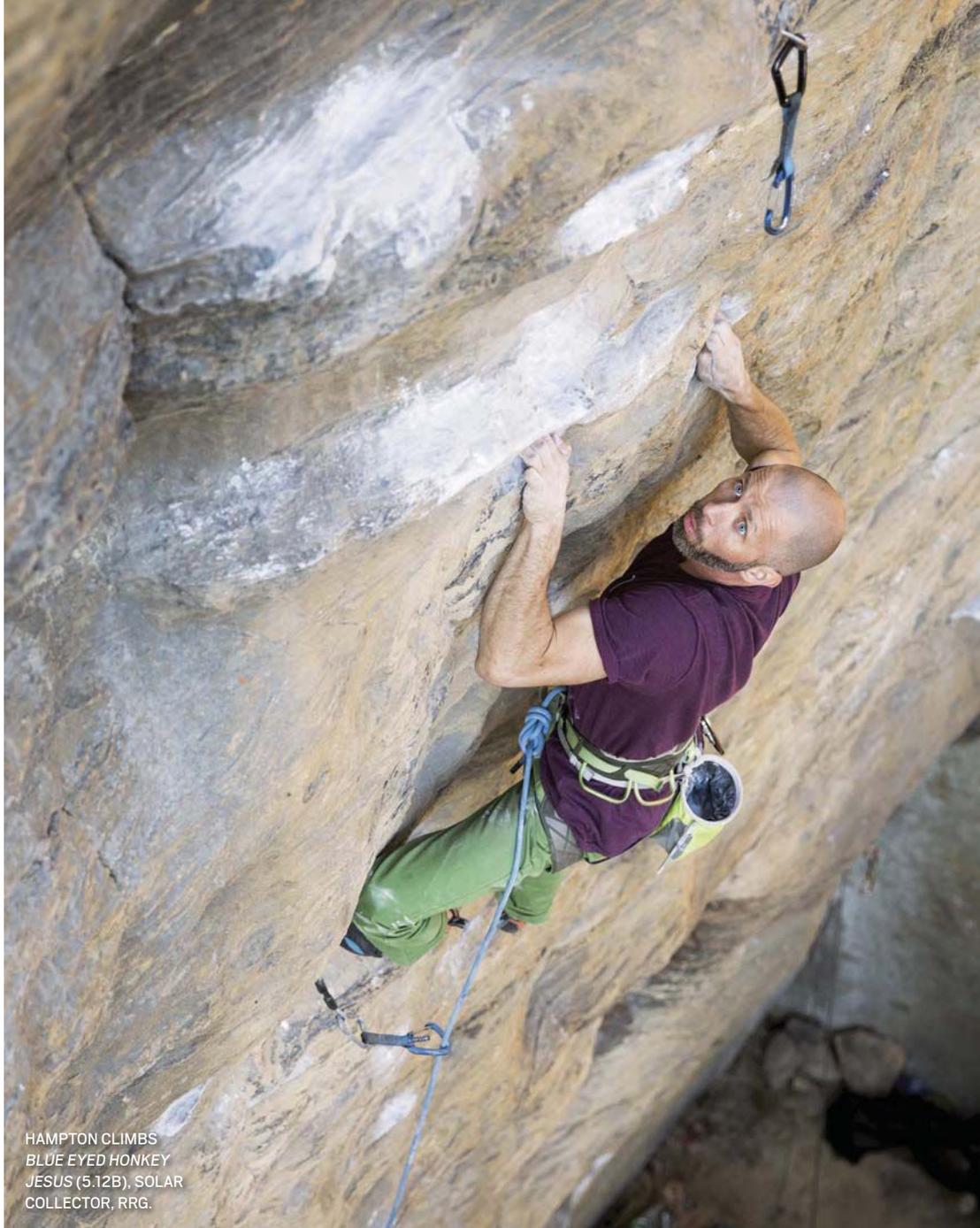
HAMPTON JOINS THE PARTY AT 24 HOURS OF HORSESHOE HELL.

Ellington, he pushed trad standards at the Red, with such first ascents as *Country Lovin'* (5.12b), an offwidth roof at the Indian Creek crag; *Vascular Massacre* (5.12a), a dihedral at Clear-cut Wall; and Pistol Ridge's 40-foot offwidth roof boulder problem *When Doves Cry* (5.12b/V5).

In 1997, Hampton became a father. He'd dated Katy's mother, but they were no longer together when she learned of her pregnancy. The pair tried to make it work, but different parenting styles forced them apart. Learning to become a father meant realizing how he'd been raised and observing who was successful as a parent and who wasn't. Hampton made sure Katy felt loved, safe, and happy. She spent her youth in the USA Climbing competition circuit, going on climbing trips with her father. "I loved climbing with him—it was our bonding time," says Katy. "He was a big inspiration with climbing, but music is super important to me, and when we'd be in the car, we always sang along. I knew most rap songs by the time I was six."

The same year Katy was born, Hampton began painting murals and decorative wall finishes, a job he held until 2015. He often spent weeks perfecting an installation on a ceiling, walls, or floors. His work consisted mainly of landscapes, old-world finishes, and faux-wood graining.

STARTING IN EARLY 2002, Hampton took a four-year hiatus from climbing. Still, it remained an influence. He wrote songs about his passion for offwidth climbing, which the studio guys at Powerblast Worldwide in Cincinnati found hilarious. They began calling him "Offwidth," which was quickly shortened to "Odub." His music gained traction online, promoted through Myspace and online music sharing. Hampton emceed climbing festivals like the New River Rendezvous, Outdoor Retailer, 24 Hours of Horseshoe Hell, the International Climbers Festival in Lander, and countless gym events. He recorded a half-dozen albums with Risk Recording, made mixtapes, and contributed music to a half-dozen climbing films. In 2009, Hampton recorded "Float," a song he wrote and performed with Misty Murphy, as a tribute to Todd Skinner, who died in Yosemite in 2006. Through "Float" he became close friends with Skinner's wife, Amy, and her family, who introduced him to his fiancée, Annalissa Purdum.



HAMPTON CLIMBS
BLUE EYED HONKEY
JESUS (5.12B), SOLAR
COLLECTOR, RRG.

In time, performing for the climbing community led Hampton back to the rock. Here, he struggled on easy climbs. Wanting to improve, Hampton dove into research: He recalled his gymnastics coaching, studied Eric Horst's *Training for Climbing* and Douglas Hunter's *The Self-Coached Climber*, and read and reread every climbing-magazine training article he could find. Seeking motivation, he recalled a comment that the RRG guidebook author John Bronaugh once made on an online message board: "Kris Hampton in not an overachiever. He is an underachiever. He does just enough to get noticed and then he disappears." Bronaugh was right—Hampton had never truly applied himself. He made 5.13 his goal and began training for the Red's enduro-blast style. On October 27, 2007, roughly a year after returning to climbing, he sent *Appalachian Spring*, a 5.13a at Funk Rock City in the Eastern Gorge. As other climbers at the gym

"He's unique among coaches because he tests his suggestions out on himself first."

—YASMEEN FOWLER

and in the Red saw the results, Hampton became an informal coach.

Seeing others succeed in turn inspired Hampton. The more he trained others, the more he liked it. He started a blog, named it the Power Company, and began recording what he was learning about coaching and training. Hampton soon developed a following of climbers who appreciated his straightforward, dedicated approach. He trained fellow Cincinnatians and started writing training plans and coaching clients long-distance. “He’s unique among coaches because he tests his suggestions out on himself first,” longtime friend and climber Yasmeeen Fowler says. “He trains alongside you instead of just coaching you. You witness his accomplishments that were attained using the same training techniques he’s prescribing for you.”

For Hampton, life was good: He was working as a successful artist, climbing better than ever, and developing a reputation as a coach. Then, in 2015, it all tore apart—literally. His right shoulder, compromised from 18 years of repetitive use at work, finally gave way. Commissioned to replicate a hundred-year-old room, Hampton hand-applied, sanded, and polished nine layers of stain and wax. The work tore his labrum and supraspinatus, as well as partially tearing and shredding his bicep tendon. He struggled to lift his arm. Surgery in April 2015 repaired the tears and resulted in a bicep tenodesis: Doctors cut out the shredded piece of bicep tendon and attached what was remaining to the humerus, rather than to the labrum. After surgery, Hampton threw himself into rehabilitation and training; his shoulder healed well. He could climb six months post-op, but it took 18 months to regain full strength. The downtime gave Hampton the opportunity to realize the full potential of a project he’d been working on for a long time.

As Hampton recovered, he developed the Power Company into an online, app-based training protocol, based off his old blogs and training plans. He launched a podcast, improved his website, and expanded Power Company Climbing. “The thing I find most valuable about Kris as a coach is that he personalizes and continually evolves the training plans,” says Power Company athlete Meghan McGuire, a 43-year-old mom, actress, and marketing manager for a Fortune 500 company who climbs mid-5.11s. The Power Company has thousands of clients doing ebook plans and almost 100 people using the app. Their Facebook community group features lively, interesting discussions on training—part of the community aspect of his work that Hampton finds so rewarding.

In early March 2017, Hampton traveled to Albuquerque, New Mexico, to work with Molly Rennie, a mom and high school teacher whom he’d been coaching online since November 2015. “He started showing me the way the body moves and how to make it move better,” Rennie says. In the past two years, Rennie’s ability skyrocketed. She placed fourteenth at Bouldering Nationals in January 2016, has sent double-digit boulders, and competed at the Vail World Cup. In New Mexico, the pair bouldered on *Triple Mullet*, a V10 at a collection of welded-tuff boulders called the Pond, near Ponderosa. The climb traverses upwards on slopey rails to a powerful move to a gaston. Together, they spent an hour deciphering the beta. They both eventually hucked to the gaston. Neither quite stuck it, but for Rennie it was solid progress on a local project. She was stoked.

“That’s why I do this,” Hampton says. “That same high that you get when you make a breakthrough, I get it when I watch that light-bulb come on for a client.”

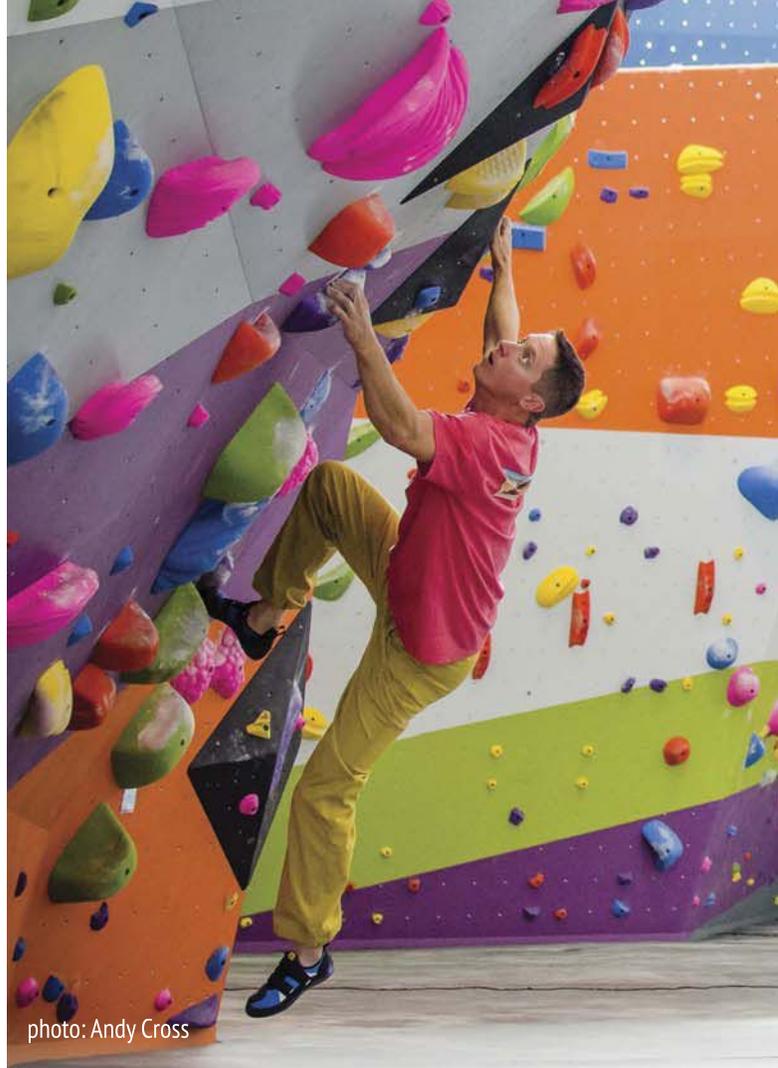


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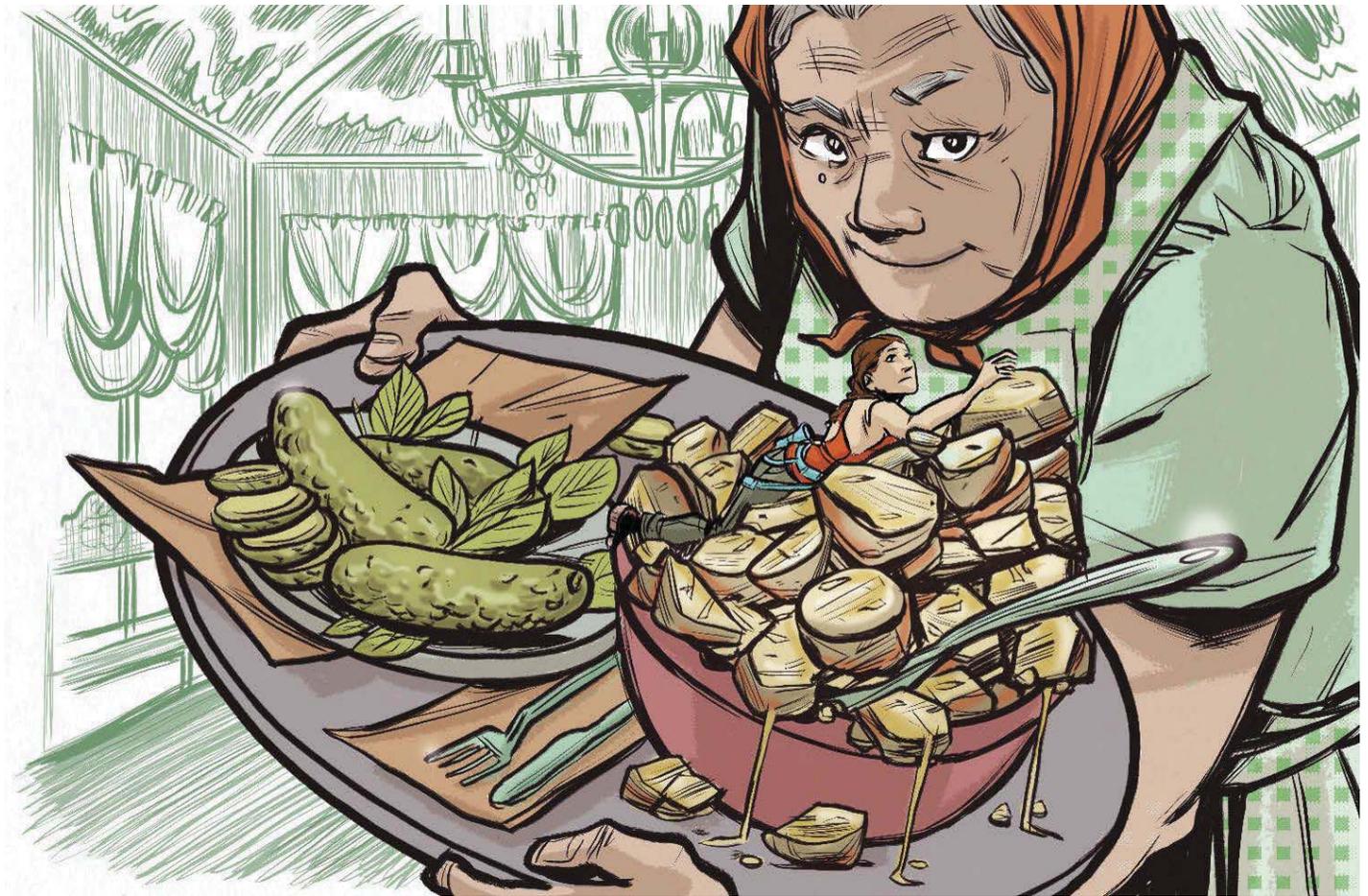
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Breakfast (and Dinner) of Champions

BY PAIGE CLAASSEN • ILLUSTRATION BY THOMAS PITILLI



WE PULLED UP TO the Russian farmhouse, our home for the next month. A cluster of well-fed, smiling faces greeted us: the three members of the Гражулис family. It was the second stop of our 2013 Lead Now Tour, in which Jon Glassberg and I spent nine months traveling to climb and raise money for community-oriented nonprofits. The Гражулис had fixed up an off-the-grid rental cabin, our home base as we climbed at nearby Triangular Lake, a granite bouldering and cragging area near the Finnish border. I had my eye on one of the forest's few sport routes: *Catharsis* (5.14c), a powerful overhang that culminated in a sideways dyno. The family didn't speak a word of English; we didn't speak a word of Russian. My stomach churned with nerves, but hugs and hand gestures formed a shared, calming sign language.

As we sat down to breakfast the following morning, Babushka ("Grandmother") set out a large plate of pickles. She then brought a mountain of fried potatoes, dripping in oil. Not what I had in mind, but Babushka ran the kitchen, and you ate what Babushka served. As the family chowed down, I hesitantly took a bite. I could feel the oil coat my mouth, throat, and stomach.

After a full day of climbing, we were greeted with a hearty recovery dinner: pickles and potatoes. Again. And again. And again. To be polite, I forced myself to eat this same fare twice a day for the next 30 days. As I fought my hardest to send *Catharsis*, I could feel the heavy, starchy diet weighing me down. Babushka seemed to think that this skinny climber girl needed to be fattened up, and it was working.

In the end, Babushka won. On my best burn, I leapt for the final dyno and missed. She also convinced me that maybe—just maybe—I might like pickles, but only if they're prepared fresh from the garden by a stout Russian grandmother. And please, not for breakfast.

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APRIL

18	The Mountain Air	San Luis Obispo, CA	6:30 PM
19	Sunrise Mountain Sports	Livermore, CA	6:30 PM
20	Redding Sports LTD	Redding, CA	6:30 PM
25	REI, Fresno Store* <i>rei.com/stores/fresno.html</i>	Fresno, CA	6:30 PM
27	REI, Flagstaff Store* <i>rei.com/stores/flagstaff.html</i>	Flagstaff, AZ	6:00 PM

MAY

4	REI, Jacksonville Store* <i>rei.com/stores/jacksonville.html</i>	Jacksonville, FL	6:30 PM
6	REI, Winter Park Store* <i>visit backpacker.com/getoutmore for details</i>	Winter Park, FL	Time TBD
9	The Local Hiker	Spartanburg, SC	6:00 PM
10	MAST General Store	Columbia, SC	6:30 PM
11	MAST General Store	Boone, NC	6:30 PM
16	MAST General Store	Knoxville, TN	6:30 PM
19-21	TRAIL DAYS	Damascus, VA	
23	Great Outdoor Provision Co.	Winston-Salem, NC	6:30 PM
24	Diamond Brand Outdoors	Asheville, NC	6:30 PM

JUNE

6	Fin and Feather	Iowa City, IA	6:30 PM
7	Canfield's Sporting Goods	Omaha, NE	6:30 PM
8	Alpine Shop	Kirkwood, MO	6:30 PM
10	Life Outside Festival	Creve Coeur Lake, Memorial Park	10-4 PM
20	REI, Spokane Store* <i>rei.com/stores/spokane.html</i>	Spokane, WA	6:00 PM
21	REI, Boise Store* <i>rei.com/stores/boise.html</i>	Boise, ID	7:00 PM
27	Midwest Mountaineering	Minneapolis, MN	6:00 PM
29	Appalachian Outfitters	Peninsula, OH	6:00 PM

*Registration Recommended



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Let's Get Ready to *Rambla!*

MARGO HAYES AND THE ROAD TO 5.15

BY ZOE GATES



ON FEBRUARY 26, Margo Hayes of Boulder, Colorado, became the first woman to send a consensus 5.15 with her ascent of *La Rambla* (5.15a) at the El Pati sector in Siurana, Spain. The benchmark route defines 5.15a/9a+. Alex Huber originally sent it to a lower anchor at 5.14c in 1994, but the full pitch wasn't redpointed until 2003, when Ramón Julián Puigblanque (Ramonet) put to bed a project that had eluded other top climbers, including Dani Andrada. "I am so grateful for those who had the vision, dedicated their time, and committed to making this beautiful line climbable!" says Hayes. The following facts and figures provide an inside look at her process.



MARGO HAYES
CRIMPS DOWN ON
LA RAMBLA'S (5.15A)
UPPER HEADWALL.

14

The number of 5.14s Hayes climbed in the last year. On her 18th birthday in February 2016, Hayes set a goal: climb 14 5.14s before she turned 19. "I like figures, and their association with specific goals," says Hayes. "If I climbed enough 5.14s, I'd get a better sense of the grade." Ticks included *Pure Imagination* (5.14c) at the Red River Gorge and the first female ascent of *Bad Girls Club* (5.14d) at Rifle.

7th

Hayes's placing at ABS Nationals in February after taking first in semifinals and fighting through a difficult final round.

Five

The number of days per week Hayes bouldered to get ready for ABS Nationals and, ultimately, *La Rambla*. She would boulder 2 to 4 hours at the gym, and go on 1- to 4-mile runs throughout the week. "I did not specifically train for *La Rambla*; however, I was physically fit and I knew that my endurance would increase quickly once on the wall," she says.

3

The number of Boulder-based climbers, including Hayes, who were in Siurana to try *La Rambla*. Matty Hong and Jon Cardwell completed the trio. Recalls Hayes, "Matty was the first to send, and that was motivating. It was so inspiring; I had never seen anyone climb a 5.15 before."

2nd

Hayes's results at the SCS Nationals in March a few short weeks after her ascent. After Hayes and Ashima Shiraishi tied in the final round, the podium was decided by their performance in the semifinals.

1994

The year Alexander Huber made the first ascent of *La Rambla Original*. After a hold broke, Huber lowered the anchors. Ramonet later sent the integral pitch. The route has since seen over a dozen repeats from the likes of Chris Sharma, Adam Ondra, and Alexander Megos.

7

The number of days Hayes spent working *La Rambla* before her redpoint.

35 minutes

The approximate amount of time Hayes spent on the wall on her redpoint. A sizable crowd was present to witness her ascent. "It was an amazing feeling when I could hear the cheers from across the canyon. We are part of such an amazing community," she says.

1

The number of women who have sent consensus 5.15. Though Ashima Shiraishi and Basque climber Josune Bereziartu have come close with ticks of 5.14d/5.15a, Hayes is the first woman to climb a confirmed, solid 5.15. Go, Margo!

One year

The amount of time Hayes spent researching *La Rambla*, watching videos, poring over pictures, and reading about the route's history: "I was inspired by its history, its length, and beauty," she says.

45 meters

The length of *La Rambla*—in other words, 150 feet of overhanging endurance climbing.

Two

The average number of burns Hayes could give each day. On the second attempt of her seventh day, she sent. It was approximately her 17th attempt overall.

"Although on my first attempt [of the day] I fell a couple of holds lower than my previous highpoint, I felt stronger on the route than I ever had before," says Hayes. "My fingers were bleeding, so I considered calling it a day, but I decided to give it another try, because, just maybe, the magic would happen."

5.12c

The grade Hayes warmed up on that morning. *Mandragora* sits in the sun all morning and is one of Hayes's favorite routes. Feeling ready to roll, she then went directly to *La Rambla*.

Old Dominion Granite

LONG HIKES, BUSHWHACKING, AND HARD ROCK AT OLD RAG, VIRGINIA'S TRAD-CLIMBING MECCA

By Seth Derr | Photos by Andrew Burr

➤ *THE HUMID SMARM* that accompanies summertime in Virginia stuck to every ounce of my body. I wished I had a can of WD-40 to spray between my ass and my underwear. The July heat would have been enough to make sucking margaritas by the pool a chore. My friend Kyle Matulevich and I had passed the summit of Old Rag Mountain—home to 100-plus routes on granite spread over five main zones and countless outcroppings—and thrashed through the stinging nettles to a craglet on the side of the hill. I had just finished taping up below *Bushwhack Crack* (5.10c), a perfect hand crack through a low roof, when I heard Andrew Burr's voice boom through the jungle: "I am going to murder you!" I knew this was going to be a good day.

Located near Shenandoah National Park's Skyline Drive in the Blue Ridge Mountains of Northern Virginia, only 90 miles west of Washington, D.C., Old Rag features some of the best hiking in the Mid-Atlantic region. On any given sunny weekend, the mountain bustles with visitors trekking the rocky 9.1 miles from car to car, scrambling their way to the 3,291' summit. The National Park Service estimates that 85,000 people walk these trails each year, making Old Rag one of the most visited mountains in the country. While hikers have visited Shenandoah National Park since before its establishment in 1935, climbing development has been slower.

In the 1940s, members of the Potomac Appalachian Trail Club, a volunteer organization founded in 1927 to oversee the local section of the then newly formed Appalachian Trail, completed the first few, unnamed ascents on the granite outcroppings and boulders on the mountain's flanks. In 1951, according to Eric Horst's guidebook *Rock Climbing: Virginia, West Virginia, and Maryland*, Arnold Wexler completed the first recorded route on Old Rag when he thrashed up *Jaws Chimney* (5.6) at the Reflector Oven. Other climbers aided

and freed moderate crack lines through the 1960s, but few ascents were recorded. As climbing standards progressed through the 1970s and '80s, climbers discovered and freed harder lines. Rumor has it that Greg Collins onsight free soloed *Bushwhack Crack* in the early 1980s for its first ascent. Collins began working a steep, hard aid line to the right. In 1989, John Bercaw made the first free ascent of this 45-foot off-fingers 5.13 painfest known as *The The* at the difficult-to-find Wall That Dreams Are Made Of. The early 1990s saw the addition of bolts to the unprotectable faces. At first, developers drilled on lead; in the latter part of the decade, they rap-bolted a handful of sport climbs, including perhaps the mountain's best clip-up, the steep, aesthetic arête *Gone Fishing* (5.11d) at Middle Sunset.

In spite of about 40 bolted routes scattered about the various



KYLE MATULEVICH
FIGHTS UP REPORT TO
SICKBAY (5.10C).



THE CLIFFS ON OLD RAG
MOUNTAIN, SHENANDOAH
NATIONAL PARK, VA.



THE CLASSIC
BUSHWHACK CRACK
(5.10C) SWALLOWS SETH
DERR'S MITTS.

crag, traditionally protected jamming and friction make up the majority of the climbing. Crystal-laden cracks from rattly fingers to sinker hands, burly offwidths, and bombay chimneys cleave formations of stacked, rounded boulders. Friction slabs up to 300 feet long and runout face climbs that utilize the ubiquitous big, sharp grains dot the hillside. For traditional climbers, Old Rag is an East Coast heaven.

Considering Old Rag is the only granite between the Adirondacks in Upstate New York and North Carolina's Cashiers Valley, one might expect perpetual overcrowding. However, that is not the case. The same attractions—namely rugged terrain and steep, strenuous trails—that lure in the backpackers, day hikers, trail runners, and vanloads of Amish tourists make Old Rag a major undertaking for rock climbers. The two-hour, three-mile uphill hike rivals any approach east of the Mississippi, and the park service prohibits camping above 2,800 feet—so you need to undertake the trudge anew each day. Even the climbing wards off the weak, as the large-grained crystals make crack climbing here akin to practicing crocodile dentistry. In spite of a well-written guidebook, finding the crags can be the crux, especially if you show up between May and October, when summer's jungle of lush thorns, poison ivy, and head-high forests of stinging nettles obscures the cliffs. Meanwhile, copperheads and rattlesnakes, ticks, and bears hide amongst the dense vegetation, awaiting wayward climbers.

ON MY FIRST trip to Old Rag, in July 2011, unaware of the camping ban, my partner and I each packed in two gallons of water, tents, sleeping bags, pads, climbing gear, and supplies enough for a couple nights. As we floundered about in the woods, trying to find the elusive Tree With Three Trunks, the formation marking the path to some of the cragging, we encountered three rattlers and three bears. Soon, we'd depleted our water, drained dry by heat in the mid-90s and 80 percent humidity. Around 3 p.m., after hours of fruitless hiking, we headed back to the car. We'd hiked 11.5 miles, carrying 60 pounds each, without seeing climbable rock. That same July, my friend Chris Bursey and his partner Justin "Smitty" Smith got hopelessly lost in a nasty patch of nettles while searching for the Wall That Dreams Are Made Of. They'd neglected to read Horst's guidebook note stating, "The approach is only passable from November through April—it's a jungle in the summer." Frustrated, Smitty threw an all-points-off bully fit and smashed their water on a rock. They retreated the five miles to their car with dry mouths. *Was this supposed trad heaven even worth the price of admission?*

Chris, Smitty, and I tried again that January, this time guided to the does-it-really-exist? Wall That Dreams Are Made Of by our mutual friend Patrick Andrews, who had helped establish an unnamed 5.11d mixed climb at the Reflector Oven and knew the area well. The perpetually psyched Patrick wanted to share his Old Rag knowledge. Sick with an upper-respiratory infection but keen to learn about the mountain, I spent most of the first day huddled in a cave overdosing on Dayquil while my friends scurried up the cracks. The following day, feeling a bit less like dying, I jammed my way up *Strawberry Fields* (5.9) and *Bushwhack Crack*.

"While the approach is Old Rag's longest (and carries a nightmarish reputation)," Horst writes in his guide, "I believe it's 100 percent worth the effort just to climb the wonderful *Bushwhack Crack*." Horst was right. I loved the climbing. I sunk my hands into the cracks,

twisting them painfully in the sharp rock. At the top, with shredded mitts, I discovered the intrinsic pleasure and pain of Old Rag. And though I'd only climbed a little, I'd learned that in winter the temps cool, the ticks disappear, the snakes sleep, the leaves fall off the trees, and the climbers' trails transform into recognizable paths. It's then that Old Rag becomes a trad paradise.

OVER THE LAST SIX YEARS, I've continued to explore and fall in love with Old Rag. The Reflector Oven and The Wall That Dreams Are Made Of catch morning sun, and the God's Area Crags soak in the last rays before the sun dips behind the mountain, making a sunny winter's day perfect for battling cracks. While many of the routes deserve just a one- or two-star rating, the battle to simply reach and find the climbing at Old Rag taken with the few five-star classics makes it worth the fight. There are never crowds; recently, over a long weekend in November when temperatures pushed into the 60s, a group of us climbed for three straight days without seeing a single other climber.

Which brings me back to Burr's meltdown on our trip, in July 2015, to take pictures for this article. Earlier that week, Kyle Matulevich and I had made plans to meet Burr at the only restaurant in Sperryville, about twenty minutes from Old Rag, at 8 a.m. Three times he drove past us in his rental car, and three times we waved, but without cell service we couldn't connect. Kyle and I gave up and headed out to climb, hoping Burr had the same idea. Fortunately, Burr pulled up the approach beta on Mountain Project. Cell service up near the summit allowed a text exchange to direct him toward our perch at *Bushwhack Crack*. He plowed through the stinging nettles, shorts-clad legs sliced to ribbons, and met us at the cliff in a pool of blood, sweat, and curses.

"Don't you guys do any trail work?" he said as he emerged from the jungle. We regrouped at the base then Burr scrambled to the top of the formation to photograph *Bushwhack Crack* and the surrounding woods.

For the next few hours, Kyle and I fought the heat and climbed while Burr scrambled around the mountain taking pictures. We convinced Burr who "doesn't climb" to climb *Strawberry Fields* so he could get in place to photograph *Report to Sickbay* (5.10); for someone who "doesn't climb," Burr sure flew up the route, placing only a couple of cams. Kyle hopped on *Sickbay's* chimney and climbed halfway up before bailing at the crux fingerlock roof; Andrew and I lobbed insults, but in the end, it wasn't enough to chide him on.





ANDREW BURR CLIMBS THE LOOKS-BETTER-THAN-IT-IS PICTURE PERFECT (5.8).

Later, Burr photographed *Oh My God Dihedral* (5.10), a fingers-to-fists open book with a crack in its spine. Directly across from the Reflector Oven, the crack sports some of the best views at Old Rag. After the granite stemming and liebacking, Kyle and I trekked to the summit and removed our tape gloves.

“One more photo,” Burr said. He thrust his camera into my hands and charged up *Picture Perfect* (5.8), a two-tiered slab to a vegetated crack. Burr wore the brightest blue pants I’d ever seen (pants he’d had in his pack all day, by the way), a colorful counterpoint to the Old Dominion State that fell away behind him—rolling, wooded hills in an endless sea of green.

On the hike out, I looked at Kyle and Burr. Old Rag had chewed them up. The cracks had bit into their hands and the thorns had left racing stripes along their legs (let’s hope those were

from the thorns, anyway), and it called to mind my ill-fated first visit years ago, when I’d sworn never to return. Yet here I was at the end of one of the most fun days I’d ever had on Old Rag, sweat-stained shirt and all, in the middle of July. In the end, rock climbing is about the stories you get to tell when the day is done, and Old Rag always makes for one hell of a tale.

BETA

WHEN/SEASON: Late October through early May.

WHERE: Shenandoah National Park, Sperryville, Virginia. From Sperryville, drive to the Old Rag Mountain trailheads. Berry Hollow parking area provides the best approach to most of the crags.

CAMPING: Backcountry camping

is permitted below 2,800 feet with a permit. Other campgrounds exist within Shenandoah National Park and in the surrounding countryside.

CLASSICS: *Chasm Crack* (5.8), *Strawberry Fields* (5.9+), *Oh My God Dihedral* (5.10c), *Bushwhack Crack* (5.10c), *Sunset Crack* (5.11a), *Gone Fishing* (5.11d), *The The* (5.13b).

RACK BETA: Doubles to wide hands, a single fist-sized cam, and a set of nuts are sufficient for most routes. If you want to get funky and wide, bring doubles to no. 6.

RESOURCES: *Rock Climbing: Virginia, West Virginia, and Maryland* (Falcon, 2001) by Eric Horst offers the best beta. There are no known guide services.

Traverse of the Clods

Amazing views, good gear, thoughtful 5.9 climbing, and 5.14 exposure: One of the least-climbed Gunks routes is also one of the most classic.

BY LIZ HAAS

Beginning on the Trapps's Grand Traverse Ledge, most easily accessed by climbing the first pitch of *Andrew* (5.4 PG; 100 feet), the 250-foot *Traverse of the Clods* moves right above a massive white overhang. This freakishly exposed ceiling also features *Twilight Zone*, one of the Gunk's most classic 5.13s, and the area's two hardest pitches, the 5.14s *Ozone* and *Bro-Zone*. Threading through such wild terrain while climbing "mere" 5.9 is almost unheard of, and the airiness only increases as you go.

From a dizzying hanging belay, you begin the "walking the plank traverse." Says Gunks local Christian Fracchia, "It's like riding a mountain bike along a railing, except when the railing ends you have to do a 5.9 move." This move, a long reach to a jug, comes just after a scrunched mantel.

Traverse of the Clods tops out at the highest point on the Trapps Ridge, providing views of the Skytop Tower at the Mohonk Mountain House and of climbers ascending the Trapps mega-classic *High Exposure* (5.6). While *High E* sees up to 30 ascents on busy weekends, *Traverse of the Clods* rarely sees more than one party a day, likely due to its paltry one- and two-star ratings in early guidebooks. However, the current Gunks Apps guide bumped it up to four stars for interesting movement, exhilarating exposure, and incredible views.

Traverse of the Clods requires good route-finding skills, a strong partnership, and creative gear placements, as the leader must place pieces a few feet above or below the climbing line to safeguard the second against a pendulum. With judicious ropework and at least 10 alpine draws plus four 4-foot slings, you can skip the hanging belay and climb from the Grand Traverse Ledge to the summit in a single pitch. Bring a standard rack with doubles from micro-cams through thin hands—and a stomach for exposure.

LOCATION
**Shawangunks,
New Paltz,
New York**

GRADE
5.9 PG-13

TYPE
Traditional

LENGTH
250 feet

FIRST ASCENT
1976

Ivan Rezuca,
Paul Potters

ANDREW BUNN WALKS
THE PLANK WHILE PIERRE
DE ST. CROIX BELAYS
THE SECOND PITCH ON
TRAVERSE OF THE CLODS.

How to Not Train

BY KEVIN CORRIGAN

➤ **FOREARMS SO VASCULAR** they attract sharks. Back muscles so ripped you could map them topographically. Fingers so strong they could crush stone like wet spaghetti. In my seven years as a rock climber, I have not achieved any of these things. Follow my five simple, experience-driven not-training tips below, and I promise that in just six weeks you will be no better of a climber than you are today—and possibly worse.

1 Buy Books

Sure, you could follow a simple resistance-training program for reliable gains like 99 percent of athletes do in other sports, but you're a rock climber. That's not how we do. Some experts would suggest you read a climbing-training book and then design a plan based on that book. I'm here to tell you that you can get the same satisfaction with none of the results by just buying books.

Eric Horst's *Training for Climbing* is a great place to start. While you're waiting for that to arrive, listen to the Training Beta podcast. Hear the Anderson brothers explain their research-driven approach. Take *Training for Climbing* out of the Amazon box and put it directly on the shelf. Order *The Rock Climber's Training Manual*. Ah, better: This is clearly the only training book you'll ever need. Though that Steve Bechtel guy has some interesting ideas. Hmm, OK: Anderson bros out, Bechtel's *Strength: Foundational Training for Rock Climbing* in. Or maybe *Training for the New Alpinism* is what you need. Or *How to Climb 5.12*. Or *The Self-Coached Climber*.

I'll let you in on a secret: It doesn't matter which books you buy, as long as you don't read them.

2 Change Programs Frequently

Having not read up on all the latest training lore, it's now time to scrape together a plan based on what is probably in those books. Dumbbell rows. Planks. Hangboard repeaters at 9 seconds on, 2.27 seconds off. Go at it with enthusiasm for a week, and then start doubting yourself. You've planked twice, and you're still slipping off jugs. There are probably better exercises. Start over. Squats. Deadlifts. Max-weight deadhangs. Hit the iron hard until you read an Internet forum on which a bunch of teenagers agree that climbing is the best way to train for climbing. Barbells out. Boulder- ing 4x4s in. Waffle early and often. The trick to not training is to never stick with any one exercise long enough for your body to adapt.

3 Join a High-Intensity Workout Program*

It turns out designing and executing a training plan is hard. And boring. It's easier to pay

someone to tell you what to do. You've made fun of high-intensity training in the past, but people like it—even some normal people, though their pullups are suspicious. Eh, you might as well give it a shot.

Holy shit, that's hard!

You'll have to skip climbing tonight, but your new regimen is going to get you in shape fast. You should probably skip climbing tomorrow, too. You're going to be sore. And then it'll be time to train again. Lose interest in climbing and go all out at the box. Set a record for flipping a truck tire over the most times before projectile-vomiting. Celebrate with burpees and a trip to the ER for rhabdomyolysis-induced kidney failure.

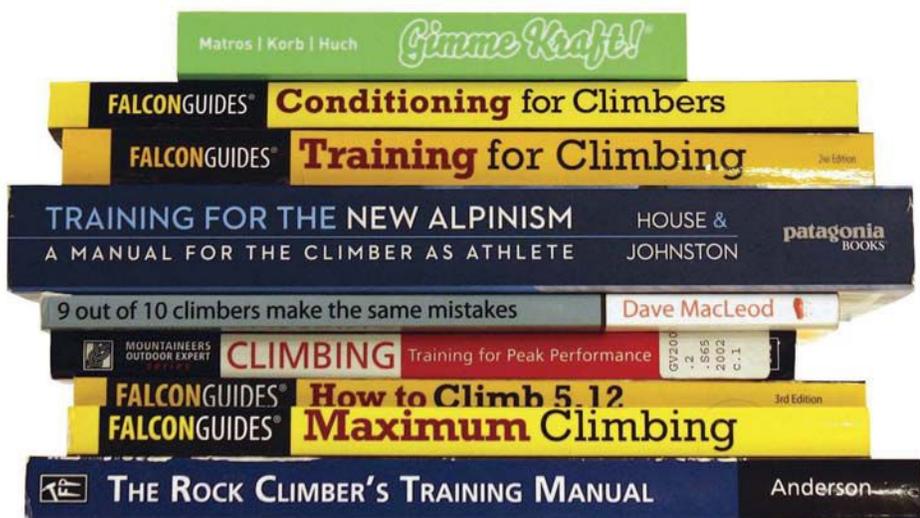
*You can achieve similar results by running ultramarathons.

4 Get Hurt

It's good to have you back in the climbing gym—you went off the rails there for a bit. To make up for lost time, go all in on the hangboard. One session per day, no rest days ever. Before the end of the first week, your ring finger will become achy, stiff, and tender to the touch. These are warning signs. Ignore them. Keep hangboarding until your A2 pulley explodes like a gunshot, prompting everyone in the gym to duck behind cover. Finger permanently damaged, spend the next two years doing nothing, afraid that you'll reinjure yourself if you go near a rock.

5 Repeat

If you've followed the above steps correctly, you shouldn't be fitter than ever; you should be weaker, poorer, and older. Repeat the routine for as long as you'd like to be stuck at 5.10, which you might as well, because climbing above that grade is impossible. Trust me. I've tried everything short of committing and sticking to a training plan.



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FRED NICOLE GRINDS
A NEARLY FINISHED
ROCK SHOE TO GET THE
RUBBER JUST RIGHT.

Swiss Precision Instrument

FRED NICOLE APPLIES HIS KNOWLEDGE FROM TOP-END BOULDERING TO THE SUBTLE ART OF SHOE DESIGN

BY BRENDAN BLANCHARD | PHOTOS BY CAMERON MAIER



FRED NICOLE HAS BEEN an important figure in bouldering since the 1990s. In 1996, he established the world's first V14, *Radja*, and then in 2000, the first V15: *Dreamtime*. In 2016, at age 46, Nicole put up *Chakijana*, a V14/15 boulder problem in Rocklands, South Africa. Though he's stepped out of the climbing spotlight in recent years and has always been a reclusive, enigmatic figure—a soft-spoken “man of the forest”—he'll have something new to offer the community this fall: climbing shoes.



More than 15 years ago, Nicole began working at Gecko Supply GmbH in Zurich, Switzerland, resoling climbing shoes. Here, he began tinkering with his own shoes, looking for ways to improve them, taking apart the original Five Ten Anasazi Velcro and rebuilding the shoe on his own last. Now, he gets to design his shoes from top to bottom. It's been an interesting transition: While only Nicole's personal investment in a boulder problem is at stake with each attempt, a rock shoe will make an impression on thousands of people.

“For me and a boulder problem, it will just be a personal feeling,” Nicole says. “But when you make a climbing shoe, it will be mainly about what others think.”

Living in Zurich, where he's been for 20-plus years, Nicole does most of his work at Gecko Supply. He talks frequently with designers at Five Ten via Skype, email, and phone, and also travels to Five Ten's HQ in Redlands, California. Throughout, Nicole has applied the traits that have defined his bouldering career—vision, creativity, refinement, and perseverance.

VISION

Walking through the woods of Cresciano, Switzerland, in early 2000, Nicole found what would become Dreamtime. It was on a hillside in an area he hadn't climbed at before. On a 30-degree overhang, crimps and clean-cut slopers swooped out steel-blue stone.

At first, the moves felt improbable, but piece-by-piece they began to come together.

For Nicole, designing a shoe is the personal process of figuring out how to create a seamless union of climber and rock. With his project for Five Ten, he will likely be designing multiple models.

“I'm not specifically making one type of shoe, because I don't like the same shoe for every type of climbing,” he said. “Even if I like sensitive shoes, I would like to be able to design an edging shoe that still has that sensitivity. There should be a good interaction between you and the shoe. That's the point, I guess: to have something working and reacting well with your body.”

Nicole has approached shoe design with the same openness with which he first approaches a boulder problem. After several short trips out to the boulder, *Dreamtime* was “like a sketch drawing,” he says. He could do some of the moves and had a vague idea of the line, but it would still take many days of effort to tease out the details. “It was hard to read and understand how to use the handholds at first,” he says. “You have to be creative to be able to interpret the rock, and translate it to movement.”

Similarly, piecing together a prototype from an idea for the “perfect shoe” isn't easy. “I know how a shoe should ideally react, but it's not always easy to transfer what is more like a feeling to an actual shoe,” says Nicole.

CREATIVITY

Dreamtime didn't strike Nicole as an incredible problem because of any one move. Instead, “the aesthetic of the line is what struck me,” he says. Though it became a new standard for bouldering, he didn't climb it for the sheer difficulty. “The rock itself is something unique. I did it for the purity of the line,” he says.

In the small room of a three-story brick building in Zurich, home to Gecko Supply, Nicole wears a mask to protect against the fumes from sanding rubber and strong glues. Though the room gets plenty of natural light from the single-pane windows, each piece of machinery has its own overhead light so Nicole can scrutinize the details. Industrial belt sanders create the workshop's heavy feel, while shelves lined with skin-colored foot models (lasts) sit below pictures of his past ascents and travels. Scraps of rubber cover the floor—for a single shoe model, he might cut five different types of rubber.



NICOLE INSPECTS A PROTOTYPE AFTER PUTTING IT THROUGH THE RAND GRINDER AT FIVE TEN'S HQ IN REDLANDS, CALIFORNIA.

Sketches and notes from past attempts help him adjust his working model.

Nicole has been sponsored by Five Ten since 1994. He remembers quite a few “favorite shoes” he’d love to climb in again, but he doesn’t want to rehash old classics. “It would be great to find a new way to get that same kind of performance,” he says.

As you create a new rock shoe, you face dozens of options at every turn, each of which can have a profound effect on overall fit and feel. Just changing the rand rubber can change the tension you feel when toeing onto an edge, even though no part of the rand makes contact with the rock. Similarly, making a soft midsole will allow you to use the tension throughout the shoe to toe-hook, whereas a stiffer midsole will benefit edging performance.

On one recent model, Nicole experimented by adding extra rubber to the arch for support. At first, he started with a softer rubber made for a more sensitive shoe, but once the shoe had set over several days, he found that it no longer held tension. And so, it was back to the drawing board.

Today, just over six months into the design process, “I feel more comfortable with the creative part of designing, but I’m slowly learning to be more methodical and pre-

cise,” Nicole says. “It’s an empirical method, where you test and adjust until it works.”

To track his progress, Nicole keeps a detailed notebook to record all the tiny changes and adjustments he’s made to each model. Prior to a shoe’s final prototype, when it’s ready for testing, Nicole will compile 20 or more pages of drawings and notes.

REFINEMENT

While working Dreamtime, Nicole surprised himself by figuring out the basic movements over a handful of sessions. But, after that, the details became important. The tiny crimps and slopers didn’t give way unless each move was done just right—late into his first season on Dreamtime, he fell close to a dozen times on the final moves. Subtle changes to the starting beta—picking the exact location for each foothold and making micro-adjustments in body position—were the only way to avoid falling at the end.

A rock shoe comes together when the designer has picked a last, the material for the upper, the midsole, the sole, and the rand rubber (see “8 Steps to a New Rock Shoe”). Each aspect has an important effect on the overall feel, but that integral effect might not be obvious until the shoe is assembled and tested.

“Once the shoe is built and randed, you do tests with your colleagues and make changes until a few are happy with it. Then, we can start to share them with sponsored climbers to test and get their feedback,” Nicole says.

For the past two years, Nicole has been working closely with Five Ten as a tester. He’s learned firsthand how this process works. If a shoe passes muster, it might continue toward production with only a few tweaks, or it could face a complete overhaul and retesting. Now that Nicole’s on the other side of the fence, he’s found that not everything is as easy as he’d like: “That first feeling is generally not what the shoe will be in the end,” Nicole says.

Though he can’t talk details on models in production, Nicole is anticipating the first tests on one of his designs. “I am quite happy with what I have right now. It’s something that really fits my foot, but we will have to see with others,” he says. Nicole has been testing with fellow Swiss climbers on the Alps’ limestone, granite, and sandstone. “I try to use them on different terrain, all types of features and types of rock,” Nicole says. But, as he’s said, it can be hard to translate that impression into a better shoe. Couple that with different feet and it becomes more challenging—it isn’t just a matter of making

a shoe stiff or sensitive, or downturned or flat, but tailoring the overall fit and tension so that the shoe will work in a similar fashion for many different climbers.

PERSEVERANCE

Nicole traveled to South Africa and Australia after his first season on Dreamtime, which made coming back to it in autumn 2000 more difficult. Some days it was just about showing up and trying, even if the holds felt slick with October's warmth. Though he was into his second season now and approaching 20 days of effort, sending wasn't his only goal; he also wanted to enjoy the process—even if that meant failing on the last moves repeatedly. "It can be even more frustrating to focus on the end goal," he said. "I tried my best on each attempt, but I was not always thinking about the send." As November brought cooler temps, Nicole topped out the block.

While it's easy to look back on his ascent of Dreamtime, Nicole is reluctant to sum up his experience with Five Ten just yet. "Right now, we are really in the process...so it's hard to talk about it," he says. "The climbing shoe is living its own story."

As for the factors within his control, Nicole has one lesson he's been able to apply directly from climbing: "It is one of my mistakes in climbing," he says. "Generally, when I do find a way to do a move, I often stick with it. Many things I've done have been



done later with better beta, and now I'm a little more aware of that." A prime example might be *Radja*: Other climbers later found a different—almost separate—line not tried by Nicole that dropped the grade to V13. With shoe design, Nicole is trying not to develop tunnel vision.

"It's especially tough when you imagine something being really great and it doesn't turn out that way at all. Being able to question yourself over and over is the key," he

says. "I am learning, which is good."

Much as Nicole has patiently spent days and sometimes months learning the nuances of the world's hardest boulder problems, he has now happily immersed himself in a design apprenticeship. "I like it and it's an interesting process, and it's a new direction in my life as well," says Nicole. "Before, I was just kind of wearing a shoe, but now I am looking at how to make and test a new shoe to see what is really good or not."

8 Steps to a New Rock Shoe

Before we start, a few key terms:

LAST: The unique, foot-shaped mold around which the shoe will be built.

SOLE: Where the rubber meets the rock—the shoe-bottom rubber you climb on.

MIDSOLE: This interior sole brings the shoe together; different materials and variations will change overall feel.

FOOTBED: The fabric your foot will be in contact with.

UPPER: The socklike upper portion of the shoe, often

made of leather or a synthetic material.

RAND: The thin layer of rubber that covers the bottom and sides of the shoe.

1) There are two ways to build a last:

- **Board-lasting:** The shoe designer will take a "board," the stiff toe-to-heel shape of the shoe bottom, and attach it to the footbed. The upper is then fit around the last and attached to the footbed and board, creating a stiff shoe from end to end.

- **Slip-lasting:** Slip-lasted shoes begin by first attaching the footbed to

the upper, then slipping the combined footbed and upper over the last. Resembling a sock with an extra-thick bottom, slip-lasted shoes have very little structure until the midsole is attached. Because of this, they are much more versatile, and are used in most modern shoe designs.

2) Designers pick which material they'll build the shoe with: leather or synthetic. Leather shoes will stretch, often up to half a size, whereas synthetics tend to hold their shape better.

3) Designers attach the midsole, giving

the shoe its shape as well as determining its intended usage. Using a stiff, firmly attached midsole will yield a rigid, edging-type shoe, while a softer midsole makes for a more sensitive shoe that can also smear, heel-hook, toe-hook, and grab edges.

4) Next, warm rand rubber is fit around the base of the shoe. This thin layer covers the shoe bottom and sides. The sole attaches to this.

5) The thicker sole rubber is glued over the rand, which is still visible around the heel and toe box, though many

brands will add additional rubber to fortify certain high-traffic sites.

6) Specialized machinery presses the final, glued shoe to make sure each part seals firmly into the next.

7) After the shoe has had a few days to dry, the sole is hand-machined to have crisp edges and a polished look.

8) The shoe is distributed to the testing team for feedback. From there, there may be further revisions based on that feedback or even a complete reimagining before market.

Field Notes

THE LATEST AND GREATEST FROM OUR DILIGENT TESTERS

By the Editors



[Versatile campstove]

PRIMUS TUPIKE STOVE

Veteran stovemaker Primus has produced a two-burner 9.9-pound gas stove perfect for the car-camping chef. This versatile cooker runs on normal 16.4-oz propane cylinders or smaller backpacking gas canisters, and comes complete with windscreens and foldout legs. The piezo igniter kept the matches to a minimum; the included nonstick griddle plate meant you could grill burgers over one burner while pan-frying sweet-potato fries on the other. Afterwards, the drip tray slid out easily to clean up any mess. The stainless-steel construction and slim size make the Tupike a sturdy, stowable road-trip companion. [\\$229; primus.us](#)



[View finders]

METOLIUS BELAY GLASSES

Belay glasses have been around a minute, and these days any smart cragger who wants to avoid the dreaded “belay neck” owns a pair. Metolius has crafted affordable, comfortable, stable belay specs—so stable, in fact, that our snowflake tester, who usually gets motion sick using belay specs, was a convert. “I couldn’t see *not* using them,” he said after testing in the gym and up in Colorado’s Flatirons. The glasses weigh a reassuring 1.6 ounces and come with a bomber carrying case; their prismatic lenses offered a wide field of view, while the slim frame afforded good peripheral vision, which came in handy while lowering. [\\$60; metoliusclimbing.com](#)

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Available in 5 colors



[Globetrotters]

BLACK DIAMOND ALPINE PANT

These trousers have everything you want in a climbing pant, including four-way stretch, DWR finish, a cinchable ankle hem, and zippered pockets to hold sundries. Our tester rocked them from the snowfields and rock ridges of the Tetons to the sunbaked sandstone of Jordan, and sang their praises around the globe. “They’re stretchy and lightweight, perfect for 60° and sunny, or 40° and cloudy,” she said. “But they really shine for the built-in belt.” A sewn-in webbing strap attaches with a quick-release buckle for when nature makes a call, and it’s fully adjustable for all sizes and shapes. The pants, she said, stayed put for both long approaches and hard climbs, and fit seamlessly under a harness or hip belt.

\$129; black
diamondequipment.com



[Magical Czech dancing feet]

LA SPORTIVA MIURA XX

La Sportiva has revamped their classic performance shoe the Miura with the help of Adam Ondra. Only sold for a year and produced in limited quantities, the downturned Miura XX has added Sportiva’s P3 Platform to help the shoe retain its shape over time; meanwhile, the lacing system has been modified to improve toe hooking. The XX retains the Miura’s asymmetric shape and precision edging, adding increased integrity. Our tester, who used them on 5.14 sport routes at southern Utah’s Cathedral, noted the “robust heel,” which worked close to perfectly, and the snugger fit. “Wow, these things are tight,” he said. “Now, I probably will climb like Ondra—fast and screaming!”

\$200; sportiva.com



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Rotating-Wall Workouts

BY HAILEY MOORE



TRAIN FOR BETTER ENDURANCE AND POWER-ENDURANCE ON THE “GERBIL WHEEL”

Providing solitude in crowded gyms and the ability to customize your workouts, the rotating climbing wall helps shatter climbing plateaus.

The body uses two energy systems to power its muscles: aerobic and anaerobic. Conditioning the aerobic energy system, through Aerobic Restoration and Capillarity (ARC) training, a term coined by Mike and Mark Anderson in *The Rock Climber's Training Manual*, translates to increased efficiency, faster recovery, and a foundation of fitness. The ARC method targets the forearms; maintaining a steady stress load on this muscle group will result in more local capillaries, meaning better blood flow and less pump. Meanwhile, anaerobic training involves high-intensity climbing for durations of two minutes or less. Increasing anaerobic capacity helps with harder bursts of crux climbing on sport routes or with long boulder problems.

MEGA-ENDURO ARC WORKOUT

Bill Ramsey, first ascensionist of *Omaha Beach* and *Transworld Depravity* (two 5.14a's at the Red River Gorge), has used rotating-wall ARC training for two decades. Because you can gradually increase resistance, by steepening the angle, adding a weight vest, or increasing the speed, Ramsey says, “It's the best way to break through a typical plateau that is due to insufficient endurance or an inability to recover properly at a rest.”

An effective ARC workout involves pinpointing the level at which you can sustain climbing despite feeling a low-level pump—roughly three to four letter grades below your redpoint. Flamed forearms are not the goal. (The Andersons recommend completing ARC training workouts two to three days a week over four to six weeks. See their book for more.)

Start your timer (or a podcast, playlist, or album that lasts the set duration) and begin climbing. Aim for three sets of 20–30 minutes each, though you can also do two 45-minute sessions.

Sweating and heavier breathing after about 10 minutes indicate the right intensity, but you should never feel at risk of falling.

Practice inhaling through the nose then exhaling strongly through the mouth as you climb. Focus on efficient movement, and find counterintuitive rest positions, stems, highsteps, and holds where you need to alternate hands. Set a jug on the side of the wall

within reach of the on/off switch to stop the wall and shake out for a few seconds periodically.

After each ARC session, rest as long as the time spent on the wall, or until the pump has subsided.

GET DIALED

A few tips, before you give the old gerbil wheel a spin:

- ▣ **Pad well:** With 4–5 inches of dense foam.
- ▣ **Motor on:** Look for motorized walls that can change angles. Manual versions, or those powered by the climber's momentum, can feel slow. Brewer Fitness and ClimbStation offer both motorized and angle-adjustable models.
- ▣ **Get swole:** To up the ante, wear a weight vest during higher-intensity training. Start with between 5 and 10 percent of your body weight. Add weight up to 15 percent of body weight. When that becomes too easy, change the hold sequence or steepness to add difficulty.
- ▣ **Get set:** For longer routes, number the holds in addition to having them color-coded or taped—doing so lets you “skip” holds on the fly, keeping you from gravitating toward the same sequences and helping to prevent repetitive-use injuries.
- ▣ **Clock in:** Keep a stopwatch or smartphone with timing app handy. To stay cool as the pump mounts, use a fan.

RAETHER-INSPIRED INTERVAL WORKOUT

Andy Raether, who made the first ascent of *The Eggporkalypse* (5.14d, Nevada), uses the wall for ultra-high-intensity training. This means, says Raether, that you can “barely finish” each set—going full anaerobic. Once you see improvements, you can increase the wall's angle or add a weight vest. For best results, complete this workout twice a week, with one or two days of rest between sessions.

Map out a 30-move route. Pre-run the route to ensure that the moves are at a high intensity relative to your ability—think hard flash or onsight.

Complete five sets, resting 2 minutes between each. Raether monitors his heart rate during the intervals, aiming to keep it at or below 90 percent of his max heart rate. (The average max heart rate for 20-year-olds is 200 beats per minute, for 30-year-olds 190 bpm, and for 40-year-olds 180 bpm.)

Climb at a steady pace and in a precise manner. Focus on proper breathing, grabbing holds well, and precision hand and foot placement. This will translate to better performance on difficult projects later.



HAILEY MOORE began climbing in the North Carolina mountains and crisscrossed the U.S. before landing in Boulder, Colorado, for a *Climbing* internship. An avid boulderer, and vegetarian of 12 years, Moore plans to continue exploring climbing throughout the States, though, “Boone might still be my favorite place to climb.”

Performance Climbing Nutrition

BY JULIA DELVES



EAT STRATEGICALLY TO CLIMB BETTER

Does your climbing performance vary from day to day? Do you send hard only to feel like a wet rag the next time out? Do you feel a constant need to snack to avoid getting “hangry” or crave coffee to battle a midday crash? The biggest gains in climbing come when your energy level is consistently high. This allows you to climb stronger, longer, and more frequently. Strategic eating optimizes energy levels and strength, and minimizes recovery time. After years of climbing in Northern California, experimenting on myself and working with clients to develop the Trailside Method, a four-week program of strategic eating for active outdoor lifestyles, I developed these strategies to help you eat your way to “next-level” performance.

STEP 1:

Eat Balanced Meals

Eating balanced meals and snacks will stabilize your energy at a high level, even out your appetite, and prevent midday crashes. Balancing meals and snacks means that every time you eat, you’re ingesting some form of carbohydrates, protein, and fat.

Carbohydrates: These are your body’s main fuel source—the gas that gets the car running. Carbs break down in your digestive tract to glucose, your body’s most readily available fuel, which then passes into your blood to fire cellular activity. How quickly you absorb glucose depends on the type of carb you eat. Both types come in refined (processed) and unrefined (whole) forms. Unrefined simple and complex carbohydrates are best: The easiest way to know how a carbohydrate is going to act is to eat it in its natural, unrefined state, as Mother Nature intended.

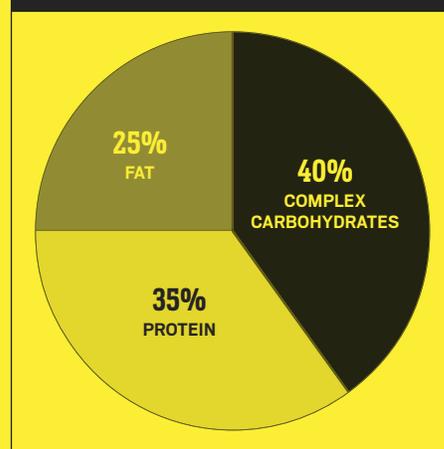
- **Simple carbohydrates:** These are the quickest source of fuel and the most easily digested. Because of this, your blood sugar will spike and crash rapidly. A simple carb is like trying to keep a bonfire going all night with newspaper, leaving you with short bursts of flames. Some examples of unrefined simple carbs include honey, molasses, and maple syrup, while refined simple carbs include cane sugar and high-fructose corn syrup.
- **Complex carbohydrates:** These have a

carbohydrate structure that is harder to break down and usually present with fiber; therefore, they’re slower to digest, giving a steady, more gradually increased and decreased supply of glucose to the blood. Complex carbohydrates are a slow-burning log that gives off better heat and requires less maintenance. Some examples of unrefined complex carbs include most vegetables, legumes, nuts, and seeds, while refined complex carbs often come in the form of breads, pasta, and baked goods.

Protein: The protein structure is a chain of amino acids that your body breaks down and uses for different functions. The main function of protein in climbing is to aid in rebuilding muscle tissue after exercise. So, if carbohydrates are the gas for the car, protein is the mechanic repairing and rebuilding damaged parts at a pit stop. Animal proteins such as meat, poultry, eggs, and cheese are the best for repairing muscle tissues. Vegetarian proteins such as tempeh, legumes, whole grains, nuts, and seeds can also provide adequate repairing power if eaten together in a diverse diet.

Fat: The main function of fat is to slow digestion, to keep you full and control the rate at which you use your carbohydrate fuel. If carbs are the gas and protein is the mechanic, then fat is the brake pedal. Eating fat will slow down the digestion of both simple and complex carbohydrates. Some examples of good fats include avocado, nuts, olives, coconut, and butter.

RATIO FOR REST DAY



STEP 2:

Ratios of Carbohydrates, Proteins, and Fats

Knowing the different roles that carbohydrates, protein, and fat play allows climbers to customize food to our specific needs. In a primarily strength-focused sport like climbing, higher-protein and lower-carb food choices work best for rest days or light climbing days, since you’ll need more mechanics on duty to repair muscles after exercise and less immediate energy. As your intensity level increases, so will your carbohydrate requirement.

The ratio in the pie chart above assumes

REAL -LIFE EXAMPLE: REST -DAY LUNCH



Canned tuna mixed with mashed avocado and eaten with fruit and vegetables.

you're taking in enough calories for your weight and activity level. To figure out how much you should be eating, try this test: After dinner, wait 15 to 20 minutes before going back for seconds to give your brain time to catch up with your stomach. If you're still hungry after the wait time, proceed; if not, then you've eaten enough. If you can go four to five hours before getting hungry, then you're getting enough calories. If you get hungry before then, ask yourself:

→ *Was there too much or too little protein, carbohydrates, or fat?*

→ *Did I eat enough?*

STEP 3: Combining Ratios and Timing, Across Disciplines

Timing and food ratios allow climbers to fine-tune and manipulate food for optimal performance. If carbs are the gas, protein is the mechanic, and fat is the pedals, timing is how you upgrade your mini-van to a sports car.

For any climbing day, start off with a meal that includes 40 percent complex carbs, 35 percent protein, and 25 percent fat. Then, within 45 minutes after you finish climbing

for the day, eat a snack or meal with the ratio of 30 percent simple carbohydrates, 60 percent protein, and 10 percent fat. This ratio will change based on the type and intensity of your climbing. Below, we've given ratios and sample meals and snacks for each climbing discipline. (Note: As you climb, right before or after a pitch or problem is the perfect time for unrefined simple carbohydrates. When exercising, your body can take in more fuel and use those quick-acting simple carbs for a power boost. They are also a good way to quickly refill your glycogen stores post-climbing, which aids with recovery.)

FOR A HALF DAY OF BOULDERING:

If you need fuel to send, have a snack that is 50 percent simple carbs, 30 percent protein, and 20 percent fat. After climbing, stop for a recovery lunch that is 30 percent simple carbs, 60 percent protein, and 10 percent fat. Drink water to stay hydrated all day long.

Breakfast:
Five-grain porridge with butter, sea salt, and hardboiled eggs

Snack:
Banana with peanut butter

Lunch:
Lettuce-wrapped burger with sweet potato fries

FOR A DAY OF SPORT CLIMBING:

To help clip the chains, have a snack that is 60 percent simple carbs, 25 percent protein, and 15 percent fat. When you're done climbing, stop for a recovery meal that is 40 percent simple carbs, 50 percent protein, and 10 percent fat. Drink water to stay hydrated all day long.

Breakfast:
Smoked salmon and goat cheese frittata with tomatoes, onions, and green lentils

**Snack/
lunch:**
Apple slices wrapped in prosciutto

Dinner:
Rotisserie chicken with mashed potatoes and broccoli

FOR A LONG DAY OF TRAD OR ALPINE/ICE CLIMBING:

Start your day with a bigger meal that incorporates the normal ratios. As you climb, have small, easy-to-digest snacks that are 70 percent simple carbs, 20 percent protein, and 10 percent fat. When you've returned to the car, stop for a recovery meal that is 60 percent simple carbs, 30 percent protein, and 10 percent fat. Drink a homemade electrolyte beverage to stay hydrated all day long.

Breakfast:
Quinoa bowl with scrambled eggs, black beans, bacon, and avocado

Snacks:
Oatmeal and fruit-squeeze pouches, dates and almonds, or sweet potato chips with almond-butter pouch

Dinner:
Beef stew with potatoes, carrots, and celery

The goal of strategic eating is to make climbing nutrition actionable so that you can focus on the real goal, which is getting the most enjoyment out of doing what you love. So eat balanced meals, incorporate ratios, and time your simple carbs around exercise. If you feel great, you'll climb better on a more consistent basis and can recover quickly, which means more pitches, problems, and sends.



JULIA DELVES is the founder of Trailside Kitchen and developer of the Trailside Method, a 4-week program of strategic eating for active outdoor lifestyles. Learn more at trailsidekitchen.com.

The LSD Lower

BY ROB COPPOLILLO AND MARC CHAUVIN

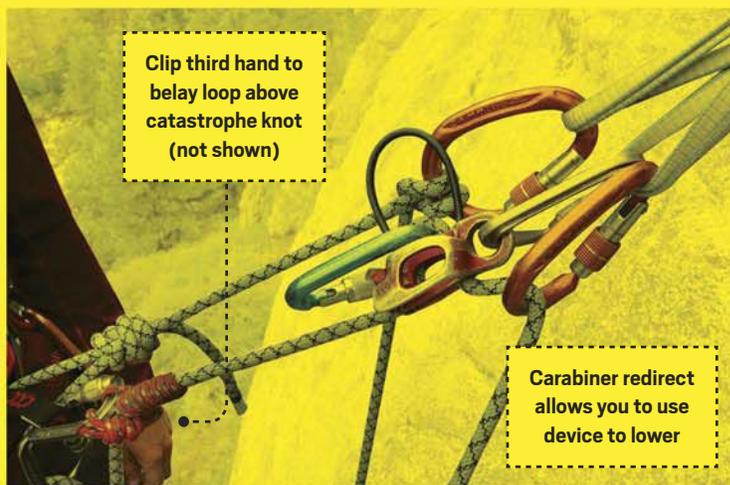


LEARN TO LOWER A CLIMBER WHILE USING A BELAY DEVICE IN GUIDE MODE

More than a decade ago, “guide mode” belay devices appeared on the market. These tools let you belay one or two followers using an assisted-braking function—the device would arrest a follower’s fall practically on its own, worked directly off the anchor, and required less belayer control. However, if the follower needed to downclimb or lower to retrieve stuck gear, work a crux, or take a photo, “releasing” the device to lower became complicated. The load-strand direct (LSD) lower offers a simple, smooth, easy-to-set-up lower.

OVERVIEW

When belaying a follower in guide mode, the belay device will be clipped to the anchor, with a locking carabiner holding the rope in place. (For a tutorial, see tinyurl.com/kvprbgd.) The LSD lower uses an additional biner on the anchor to allow for lowering and to defeat the autolocking function of guide mode.



BACK UP THE SYSTEM

First, build a back-up. This is mandatory for any complex technique or when system failure would be catastrophic. Tie an overhand-on-a-bight in the brake strand 4 to 5 feet behind the device and then clip this “catastrophe knot” to your belay loop with a locking carabiner.

Before lowering, build an autoblock with a Prusik on the brake strand above the catastrophe knot. Clip it to your belay loop with a locker. This functions as your “third hand,” freeing up your mitts for the LSD lower. Cinch the autoblock up the rope so there’s an inch or two of slack. Now, there is no way to drop the second.

SET THE LSD

To begin your lower, hang a locking carabiner off the anchor, in front of the device. Ask the climber to unweight the rope. As he does so, clip his rope strand through the locker and lock it, and then he can sit back. At this point you’ve defeated the

device and a bit of rope will slip through—your autoblock should engage and you’re now in the LSD lower. (If the autoblock does not engage, the catastrophe knot will save the day.)

Once the autoblock is holding, undo the catastrophe knot and lower your climber using the Prusik. When he’s ready to climb again, he can unweight the rope momentarily, at which point you pop his strand out of the locking carabiner in front of the device. Bam—he’s back in guide mode. (Consider rebuilding your catastrophe knot during the transition back to belayed climbing.) Once he’s climbing again, remove your third-hand backup and belay as before.



ROB COPPOLILLO and **MARC CHAUVIN** are both IFMGA-licensed mountain guides. Chauvin owns Chauvin Guides in

North Conway, New Hampshire, and Coppolillo co-owns Vetta Mountain Guides in Boulder, Colorado. Their *The Mountain Guide Manual* is in stores May 1.

The Temporary Ledge

If your climber can’t unweight the rope, you’ll need to build a “temporary ledge” to clip the locking carabiner in front of the device. You’ll need a shoulder-length sling and a locking carabiner. Here’s how:

1. Clip a catastrophe knot to your belay loop.
2. Build your autoblock backup above the catastrophe knot, on the brake strand.
3. Take another sling or cord and tie a friction-hitch onto the loaded, climber’s strand of the rope; clip a locking carabiner to it.
4. Take the loose, back-side strand of the anchor knot (the loose side of the rope going into the stack) and tie a Munter-mule-overhand (MMO) on the carabiner and sling from step 3.
5. Lever the blocking carabiner in the belay device back and forth. This allows slack to develop so the climber’s weight comes onto the MMO/sling combination.
6. With the slack, clip a locking carabiner in front of the belay device and clip the climber’s strand into it; lock the carabiner.
7. Release the MMO and gradually load the device, which is now in LSD lower mode. Once the autoblock engages reliably, remove the sling/MMO, undo your catastrophe knot, and continue the LSD lower.

CLIMB UP so kids can GROW UP

Pair your adventures with a goal to help others. The primary purpose of Climb Ups are to raise funds which go directly to support AFCA's programs, helping children affected and/or infected by AIDS. As added benefits, you will learn about different cultures while pushing yourself physically. Great beauty will surround you, but better yet—the knowledge that you are helping children who desperately need care will motivate you to reach a summit or hike just a bit further.

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www.AFCAids.org @AFCAids



THE PUSH

An excerpt from Tommy Caldwell's gripping, new memoir

BY TOMMY CALDWELL



On August 11, 2000, four young American climbers—Tommy Caldwell, Beth Rodden, Jason “Singer” Smith, and John Dickey—were forced down at gunpoint off a formation called the Yellow Wall, in the remote Ak Su Valley of Kyrgyzstan. (Caldwell and Rodden were a couple at the time.) Their captors were members of a militia called the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU); they’d been led to the location by a Kyrgyz army soldier named Turat, who’d been patrolling the valleys in this alpine border region and knew where to find the climbers. The Americans were held hostage for six days, surviving on stream water, scraps of energy bars, and sheer grit. They were ferried around the mountains as the rebels—among them Abdul and Sharipov (Su)—engaged in firefights with the Kyrgyz army. On the first day, the IMU executed Turat within earshot of the Americans. As the days wore on, the climbers began plotting their escape. Though their story has been told before, and Caldwell is now a household name thanks to his 2015 first free ascent of the Dawn Wall (VI 5.14d) of El Capitan with Kevin Jorgeson, this marks the first time Caldwell has written about their capture and subsequent escape in the first person.

BIG WALLS DIVIDING THE AK SU AND KARA SU VALLEYS, KYRGYZSTAN. IN 2000, CALDWELL, BETH RODDEN, JASON “SINGER” SMITH, AND JOHN DICKEY WERE KIDNAPPED AND HELD HOSTAGE IN THIS UNFORGIVING TERRAIN.

From *The Push: A Climber’s Journey of Endurance, Risk, and Going Beyond Limits* by Tommy Caldwell, to be published on May 16 by Viking, an imprint of Penguin Publishing Group, a division of Penguin Random House LLC. Copyright © 2017 by Tommy Caldwell.

BETH RODDEN AND
TOMMY CALDWELL ON
LURKING FEAR
(VI 5.13C) IN 2000.

We huddled beside Turat's body as it grew cold. A pool of blood had spilled from his head, and as the hours passed the maroon color lost its sheen, leaving only a dark stain on the sandy soil. He lay with his limbs twisted, his fingers curled. I tried not to look, but found my eyes drawn to him. Turat's was the first dead body I'd seen. I willed strength into my legs to keep me from wobbling.

I turned to Beth, expecting to see my own terror reflected in her expression. As if Turat's strength had infused Beth the moment she saw him dead, she spoke to me calmly, enunciating every word: "Keep your eyes locked on mine. Do not look away no matter what."

Rock dust rained onto us as bullets continued to ricochet off the boulders. The noise rang in my ears. I shut my eyes. When I opened them again, the evening alpenglow shone on the horizon. How could something so lovely occur simultaneously with such horror? Suddenly, another whistle. We flinched as an object sailed overhead. Abdul snatched an apple from the sky and stuffed it into his mouth. The rebel who had tossed it resumed fire. Abdul adjusted his weapon. He let the apple fall from his mouth into his hand. He stood and munched away, as if he was at home watching television.

The fire intensified, both sides trying harder to kill in the day's last light. What seemed like hours passed in minutes as the sun dropped, and Abdul and the other three rebels laid down their guns and rolled out mats. Another rocket-propelled grenade exploded on the hillside. The four of them turned toward Mecca, knelt, and began to pray.

Once the sky turned black, the shooting stopped. Along with our captors we fled, leaving Turat's body. Later that night, two of the rebels left, searching for a goat to slaughter for food. They never returned; we would later learn that they were picked off by Kyrgyz forces. Only Abdul and Sharipov, whom we would know as Su, remained. Su was 20 years old, the same age as Beth. A prominent mole protruded from his upper lip. Hair sprouted from beneath his wool cap, and stubble tried to take hold on his chin. At times he looked frightened, had that wide-eyed look of someone lost and dazed.

We were hostages, but in a way so were our captors, hunted by the Kyrgyz military. We bolted through the night; I shadowed Beth. The frantic pace and terror had overwhelmed us, leaving me numb, shocked, and pulsing through a surreal existence. At sunrise, we hid. To keep us weak, Abdul split us into two groups. He took Beth and Dickey, and sent Singer and me with Su. When we knew what was happening, Beth and I turned to each other.

"We're going to be OK," she said. "Just do what they ask."

"I will."

"Promise me? Nothing stupid, OK?"

"I'll see you soon."

I feared I would never see Beth again. I had vowed to stay with her, to protect her, and in that I had found purpose, a shred of hope. But our fate no longer belonged to us.

For the next 14 hours, while the sun shined outside, Singer, Su, and I sat stuffed in a damp hole, covering our heads with reeds and branches, 30 feet from the mist of a fast-moving

river. Our clothes soaked up the moisture, adding to the chill. Our suffering warped time. Almost a day had passed since our last sip of water or bite of food. Complacency washed through me in waves. Minutes felt like hours, hours like days of bone-rattling cold.

When the sun set again and we emerged from our hiding place, we milled around as stiff as old men. But when I saw Beth, I straightened and felt revitalized. She was alive, standing in front of me. She even managed a smile. We stood on the bank of a river, the water roaring so loudly that we couldn't talk unless we shouted. So we hugged. Then we looked each other in the eyes until we knew we were OK. I wanted to hold her forever.

Soon after, under cover of darkness, we ate our daily meal—one PowerBar split among the six of us. Away from the river and able to speak, I learned how much worse the day had been for Beth and Dickey. Abdul had forced them under a riverside boulder. During the mid-day swell, the water had come into their cave, soaking them. The riverbanks had eroded, and they worried that the boulder would collapse on them. Beth would later tell me that Dickey was like a father figure, holding her shivering body tight to keep her warm.

We continued moving, Abdul in the lead. We crossed small rivers, as we did each night, which provided our only opportunities to drink. Silty liquid left sand grinding in our teeth, but each sip gave us energy. As the days wore on, Singer and Dickey insisted on devising an escape plan. They argued we were four, they were two. We could overpower them, take their guns. We had to act. When the eastern sky brightened, we would hide from our pursuers, our potential saviors—the Kyrgyz military—and then, under cover of darkness, move toward a bleak future.

The Kyrgyz army continued its pursuit. At times, we could see them from our daytime hideouts, hear their helicopters. The skirmishes lessened, but sporadically flared up with gunfire exchanges. Like constant reminders, we could hear distant rounds—clashes between the army and nearby IMU militants. The nights wore on. Sometimes I stopped caring. The army had herded us off. We were moving in a circle north of the Ak Su and Kara Su valleys.

While we were hiding, Singer droned on, plotting. Inside some hellish hole or beneath thick bushes, he spoke in a low voice, “When Su is sleeping I will grab a rock and bash in his skull, then I’ll grab his gun—the safety is just behind the trig-



CALDWELL, RODDEN,
SMITH, AND DICKEY
AFTER THEIR ORDEAL.

ger on the right side. We can shoot Abdul before he even knows what is happening.”

I could hear him talking to Dickey during safe moments when we came together. Beth remained resolute: Better to spend months in captivity than resort to the evil that personified the IMU. But Singer wouldn't stop. I willed him to shut up. He kept going. I stared at him with cold eyes. We couldn't kill. Killing is wrong. Killing is what separates us from them.

But we were wasting away, losing energy. Losing our will. Beth's angelic face was hollowed and drawn. She'd lost 15 pounds. As our bodies grew weaker, I wondered if Singer was right. If we were to live, we might have to kill. In one way, we had the upper hand. We were in a foreign land, but as the military forced us onto steepening ground, we had to guide our captors up the rocky terrain. We even put our hands on their backs and spotted them. I would hear Singer talking with Dickey about throwing them off. *When? Now! Do it!*

Only now can I see Singer's strategic brilliance, even if it tears at me. These weren't nice men. They weren't holding us until some fairy-tale moment, when they would set us free. What were we waiting for? Were the Navy SEALs going to rescue four climbers in the Kyrgyzstan mountains?

We would have been hostages until the ends of our lives.

For all my uncertainty, I had confidence in one element: my ability to endure. I seemed to be holding up better than the others. And I didn't fear death. I fear losing the people I love, but death itself, my own death, leaves a blank spot in my mind.

I came to accept that the violence I detested was our only way out. I came to another realization: Nobody else was going to do it.

You feel starvation first in your stomach, a nauseating pain low in your gut. Your breathing becomes labored and your body slows. Your face turns solemn. Any movement seems like too much bother. Your mind goes next. Indifference takes over, emotions dull. I still don't know how it happened or where it came from, but as everyone else grew weaker, I felt stronger.

I noticed my night vision improving. Lines became crisp. By the sixth night, I was aware of every sound, every movement. I felt a lightness, a vitality, as though I could race straight uphill without my heart rate rising. The others stumbled every few feet. Delusional or not, I saw myself as a warrior.

With my confidence came acceptance. Singer was smarter, but I was stronger. Singer could be the commander; I was the soldier. Clarity overtook me. I willed my heart to harden.

On our sixth night, our captors hatched a plan. They, too, were starving and cold, so Abdul would return to our base-camp to scavenge any remaining food and clothes. The rest of us would ascend a 2,000-foot mountainside, a mixture of talus fields and cliff bands. To us it was easy terrain. Abdul, after gathering more rations, would come up a less treacherous way. For the first time, we were alone with Su.

The moon plays tricks in the darkness, casting shadows that dance across the cliffs. A jumbled mess of stone disappears below. Blackness. Far in the distance, stars illuminate the jagged spires and snow-covered mountains.

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Su's feet skid and he lets out a pained grunt. I watch as Singer guides him, pointing out footholds and handholds. The plan had been for Beth and me to stay above, out of the fall line.

We climb higher. Su wobbles again and I hear the clatter of rocks tumbling down the nearly sheer dropoff.

Now. Now.

Silently, I'm urging them to do it. Willing them to do it.

Dickey and Singer resume their guiding. More spots pass where Su is exposed and insecure. I try not to think about what it is that I'm wishing they would do.

As the top nears, Su gains confidence and scrambles ahead of them, using his hands to keep his balance. At a difficult section just 50 feet from the top, but 20 feet to our right, he slows. Singer and Dickey are still below. I glance down. Our eyes meet. They nod.

I look at Beth. "I'm going to have to do this," I whisper. "It has to be me."

She trembles. Shadows cross her face. Her lips open slightly, but no sounds escape. For a moment, we stare at one another. She dips her head.

I know.

The strength has been growing into a monster inside me, emerging from nowhere, from everywhere, unlike anything I've known. I accelerate with the swiftness of a mountain goat, staying silent though the shadows. Fifteen, ten, five feet away and still Su doesn't see me coming. The barrel of his rifle glistens under the stars. I see the outline of the mole on his upper lip. My foot dislodges a chunk of rock.

He pivots toward me. Our eyes lock. I lunge for the strap of the gun slung around his chest. I pull as hard as I can and push his shoulder. His body arches backward through the blackness, outlined by the moon. He cries out in surprise and fear. His body lands on a ledge with a sickening thud, and then bounces toward oblivion.

For a moment, I hear and feel nothing. Then vertigo strikes me. I think the sun is rising. Glimmers of light blur into long, indistinct streaks, somehow real and surreal at the same time. Suddenly, as if a stone has crashed down on my head, every muscle in my body contracts and I squeeze my eyes shut as hard as I can. I scramble and sprint the remaining distance to the top of the mountain where I stand alone, panting. I drop to the ground and tuck into a ball. I rock back and forth, sobbing. Everything I've held inside floods out of me.



CALDWELL'S BLOODY
HANDS SANS FINGER.

Upon returning to America after their Kyrgyzstan ordeal, Caldwell faced his trauma and angst head-on; it was an angst he'd soon channel into his climbing.

Along the way, Caldwell and Rodden married; Caldwell accidentally amputated his left index finger while doing home improvements, yet returned to top form nonetheless; and, in time, the two divorced. Still, the one constant remained: Caldwell's love affair with El Capitan, culminating with the Dawn Wall. Throughout the process, he found a new love—his wife, Becca—and started a family—his son, Fitz, and daughter, Ingrid. For Caldwell, the push has stayed with him.

A couple of months before Kevin and my final climb of the Dawn Wall, Becca, Fitz, and I were playing in an area in Yosemite called the Church Bowl. A warm morning breeze fluttered down from the thousand-foot slabs up-valley. Leaves blanketed the ground. Becca and I sat together and watched Fitz, on his eighteen-month-old legs, stagger over to a short, table-shaped boulder in a soft, grassy area.

He looked over at us as if to say, "Watch me."

Becca said, "It's a mantel move."

"Man-tel," Fitz imitated. He drummed his hands on the boulder, then he started to climb—it's such a natural activity for kids. His feet skittered and he stepped back down, and then tried the move again.

"Man-tel," he said, with slight frustration.

Becca rose and walked over to him, encouraging, "You can do it, buddy."

"Man-tel," Fitz said, more neutrally this time. For a couple of long minutes he struggled, glancing at Becca as if to say, "Help me." He whimpered.

"Remember, Fitz," she said, "you've got to try hard and focus." He climbed a little farther, dropped back down, looked around, and cried a little harder.

Becca spoke in a higher, sweeter voice, "Try hard, Fitz."

He took exaggerated, forceful breaths, a habit he'd picked up from watching me. He committed more on his next attempt, getting halfway over the mantel. He looked like he was about to fall.

"Help," he said.

My heart was breaking.

I glanced at Becca. Becca did not help him.

Instead she encouraged him in her sweetest voice: "Stick with it, you can do it. You got it, push hard."

Fitz bore down, grunted through his tears, and kept trying. He found his footing and pulled his body halfway over. His feet kicked in the air. He set his knee on the top, crawled forward, stood up, and clapped.

"Good perseverance," Becca said, walking over. "Nice mantel, buddy."



CALDWELL CLIMBS
THE CRUX PITCH OF
DAWN WALL (VI 5.14D)
ON EL CAP.



FITZ, INGRID,
BECCA, AND TOMMY
CALDWELL.

Fitz glowed. She gave him a high five. Fitz smiled and swatted at her hand.

“Boom,” he said.

My life today is much different than it was two short years ago—the aftermath of the *Dawn Wall* has surprised and overwhelmed me. In March 2016, Becca and I welcomed Ingrid Wilde, our daughter, into our family. My children enlighten me to life’s infinite possibilities, while causing me to reevaluate the meaning of risk. I used to think that adventure and risking one’s life were intrinsically linked. I now realize that adventure might be more about embracing the unknown. That’s not to say that I no longer feel the call of the mountains, but simply that life’s big goals have always felt a bit like thunderstorms, appearing with little warning and leaving me no option but to become engulfed.

Last summer, my friend Adam Stack, the guy who climbed with me on the *Dihedral Wall* in 2004, called. He had a hare-brained idea to climb a big wall on the north face of Mount Hooker, in Wyoming’s Wind River Range, car to car in 24 hours. The face rises 2,000 vertical feet, and is 15 miles from the nearest road. It gets climbed a few times every year, and the standard approach is to horsepack in, make camp, then spend a few days climbing the wall. Typically, it’s a weeklong outing. When Adam asked me to go, Ingrid was four months old and not sleeping through the night, and I had spent the last year deep in the writing cave for this book.

“I bet if we run I can get you back to the family in 48 hours,” Adam argued. “You’re not getting light on me, are you?”

“Sounds like a pretty bad idea to me,” I said.

“Yeah, definitely a stupid idea. I’m so psyched,” Adam said.

We set out from the car at 2 a.m. We jogged through pine forests, headlamps scanning the hoof prints. The steam of our breath pulsed before us. For the first several miles I felt lethargic, and I struggled to keep up with Adam, who had been furiously training. By 4 a.m., however, my body started to remember the flow. At mile 12, we filled our water bottles in an alpine lake, as lavender and red twinkled on the horizon. We jogged down a steep, dusty hill as daybreak illuminated a cirque of pyramid-shaped, snowcapped peaks.

Adam was flushed but as happy as I had ever seen him. We scrambled toward the wall through a maze of house-sized boulders. My body hummed with endorphins. At the base of the wall, we roped up. Our plan was to simulclimb in 400- to 600-foot blocks.

I started up, wandering between face holds and intermittent cracks. The rock was solid and the gear good. After 150 feet, Adam let out a “Whoop!” and we started climbing together. We judged each other’s progress by the tension in the rope. When Adam slowed, I would put in more gear and keep the rope between us tight. When I slowed, Adam would watch me closely. Through trust and faith in each other’s judgment, we moved as if we were one. I thought about how different this was from the last big wall I had climbed. No camera team, no cell phone service, no expectations beyond our own. I thought about how the *Dawn Wall* had fulfilled a desire to explore limits, but had somehow left me longing for something deeper.

We kept climbing, and I thought of my friends Chris Sharma, Alex Honnold, and Corey Rich. I thought of my friendships that had been forged through climbing. I thought of my mom and dad, and Becca, Fitz, and Ingrid. How lucky I am to have been shaped by the mountains into a man who can love so deeply.

Five hours later, we crested the top of the wall. We lay our sweaty backs on sun-warmed slabs and shared an energy bar. Looking out at the surrounding landscape, I was struck by what I couldn’t see. No roads, no people.

“Only six more hours of jogging and we get to sleep,” I said.

“This wasn’t such a dumb idea, was it?” Adam said with a smile.

“We’ll see if we still feel that way when we get back.” I slapped Adam’s arm and pushed myself to my feet to begin the descent.

By the time we finished, every muscle and bone in my body screamed. But I was flooded with the contentment that only deep fatigue can bring. It was a hell of an adventure. And I never once thought I might die. *Embrace the unknown. Push through the difficult moments, work with them.*

Just like Fitz on that mantel problem, when it gets hard is when we grow. Forty-eight hours after I’d left, I walked back into the house, and Fitz ran across the room, latched on to my weary legs, and squeezed them tight.

“Come look at my epic train tracks, Daddy!” He looked up at me with his huge green eyes.

I picked him up and gave him a big squeeze. Becca came out of the bedroom holding Ingrid, telling her, “Daddy’s here!” She walked over and gave me a kiss. It was good to be home.

Tommy Caldwell is a writer and professional climber living in Estes Park, Colorado.

TOWERS OF POWER

FIVE MUST-DO MOAB MODERATE SPIRES

STORY AND PHOTOS BY JOHN EVANS

"On a desert tower, the standard is not to be measured in difficulty, but adventure."

— JOHN SHERMAN

Southern Utah is home to more tower formations than anywhere else in the United States. Formed from rock dating back to Jurassic times, these striking sandstone spires represent the last untapped remnants

of ancient seabeds that have never worn down by erosion's never-ending course.

For most climbers, towers have a special allure. Perhaps it's their defined summits, the fact that they're only accessible via technical means, how climbing them feels like being on the side of a skyscraper, or just the sheer adventure of it all. Because of their overwhelming sense of exposure is

the fact that they often perch high atop talus cones, exposed to the elements. Even in the desert, swift-moving thunderstorms can descend in minutes, bringing lightning, hail, and other nasty surprises to tower aspirants.

The five towers outlined here are all, at 5.10 or easier, within reach of most mere mortals. For many, they've proved to be the launching point for a life-

time of tower-climbing exploits. As a photographer, it was great to revisit these routes, some of which I first climbed almost 20 years ago. Along with the magic of spending time in the desert, the highlight of this project was introducing people to Ancient Art, a precarious swirl of Cutler sandstone in the Fisher Towers that astounds even the most jaded and accomplished climbers.



JAY ANDERSON
APPROACHES THE TOP
OF OWL ROCK, MOAB'S
FINEST INTRODUCTORY
TOWER.

OWL ROCK, WEST CRACK (I 5.8)

ARCHES NATIONAL PARK



Owl Rock perches high on the Arches plateau, with views south to the La Sal Mountains.

It's composed of the same soft Entrada sandstone that forms most of the park's arches.

"It was my first desert tower,

and started the whole adventure," says Jay Anderson, a guide who has climbed 30-plus towers since Owl Rock, 34 years ago. "The next day I climbed Castleton ... Owl Rock was my gateway drug/tower."

Follow the obvious crack on the west face, protecting in its

depths and using the occasional hand jam between slopey jugs. Though the climbing gets progressively harder, protection remains relatively abundant. An intermediate belay/rap station is set just below the summit.

FIRST ASCENT: Ron Olevsky, 1968

RACK: Standard single rack

RAPPEL: Rap to the ground with a single 70-meter rope from the anchor just below the summit.

GETTING THERE: Drive 9 miles past the Arches entrance, turn right at Windows Road, drive another mile, and turn left into a scenic pullout.



CASTLETON TOWER, KOR- INGALLS (III 5.9+)

CASTLE VALLEY

Made famous in Steve Roper and Allan Steck's *Fifty Classic Climbs of North America*, Castleton Tower perches atop a huge talus cone and features superlative views. Castle Valley, Round Mountain, and the Porcupine Rim spread out before you. To the south loom the La Sal Mountains, Utah's second highest range. These mountains remain snowcapped much of the year in contrast to the red desert below.

The route follows the obvious chimney system on the south face for four pitches of steep, in-your-face terrain. Pitch three is the money pitch and a great intro to desert offwidth, with two bolts down low providing much-needed protection. Higher, the crack widens to swallow you whole—you may want a no. 6 cam. The final pitch feels a bit spicy, but protection appears just when you need it. The summit is expansive—in fact, in the 1960s, Chevy famously helicoptered a car onto it for a TV ad.

Expect lines: Arrive early and preferably on a weekday.

FIRST ASCENT: Layton Kor and Huntley Ingalls, 1961

RACK: Standard rack with doubles of no. 2 and 3, single no. 4 (optional no. 6)

RAPPEL: Either rap the route—four rappels with two 60-meter ropes—or rap the North Face via three double-rope rappels.

GETTING THERE: From Moab, follow Highway 128 east. In around 15 miles, turn right toward Castle Valley on the La Sal Mountain Loop, where a 2002 Utah Open Lands (UOL) purchase helped open a low-key climbers' campground below the tower. A small donation is recommended. The campground makes a great base for Castleton and the Fisher Towers. Follow the climber's trail for 1.4 miles and a gain of about 1,400 feet.

DEAN COOL WORKING
FOR IT ON THE
CALCITE-COATED
OFFWIDTH CRUX OF
THE KOR-INGALLS.





ALYSE DIEMEL
STAYS FOCUSED
ON THE MANTEL
MOVE, SOUTH SIX
SHOOTER.



SOUTH SIX SHOOTER PEAK, SOUTH FACE (II 5.7)

INDIAN CREEK

Located between Indian Creek and Canyonlands National Park, the South Six Shooter provides moderate desert tower climbing on an iconic formation. Its South Face makes for a great adventure for the novice climber or a fun, easy outing for those on a rest day at Indian Creek.

The South Six Shooter is situated between the Needles district of Canyonlands and the sunlit walls of Indian Creek. Here, technicolor washes fan out in all directions and the silence is overpowering. The nearby syringe-shaped North Six Shooter is a summit straight out of an old Western.

The straightforward first pitch starts up the obvious broken crack system (5.5) that begins a step down and left of the main south face. The climb ascends a series of simple cracks, chimneys, and ledges as it wanders around the south face for three pitches. A tenuous, heady crux mantel guards the summit, but good sandstone holds await above.

FIRST ASCENT: Bill Roos, Denver Collins, and Burnham Arndt, 1969

RACK: Standard single rack

RAPPEL: Rap the route with one 60-meter rope.

GETTING THERE: From Moab, take Highway 191 south for 62 miles and then head west on Highway 211. Stay on 211 for another 21 miles, passing Newspaper Rock, Supercrack Butte, and the Beef Basin Road; after passing the Superbowl Campground, go less than a mile and turn left onto Davis Canyon Road. Head south for around 20 minutes on a rough, sandy 4WD road until you're south of the talus cone. Look for obvious cairns that lead 1,000 feet up through a weakness, then to a wash, and then to the final switchbacks up the south side of the cone.



ANCIENT ART, STOLEN CHIMNEY (III 5.8 AO OR 5.11)

FISHER TOWERS

Located in the Fisher Towers, a cluster of fluted red-brown spires up to 900 feet high, Ancient Art is considered by tower aficionados to be one of the best moderate spires on the planet. The start heads up the “Stolen Chimney” for two pitches of fun stemming (5.8 AO or 5.11). Despite the Fishers’ reputation as hardy mud, the rock is remarkably sound. After the chimney, you reach “Party Ledge.” From here, it’s a short pitch to the infamous boardwalk, a narrow neck with nearly 400 feet of exposure to either side—just enough for a BASE jump.

Next, it’s time to mount the “Diving Board.” Most climbers perform a bold belly-flop style mantel. (Note: This maneuver is friction dependent, so leave the puffy at the belay.) Once on the Diving Board, head up the corkscrew, passing a couple of bolts. The move off the Diving Board is the crux: slopey and requiring balance and tension. It would likely be trivial if not for the considerable air beneath.

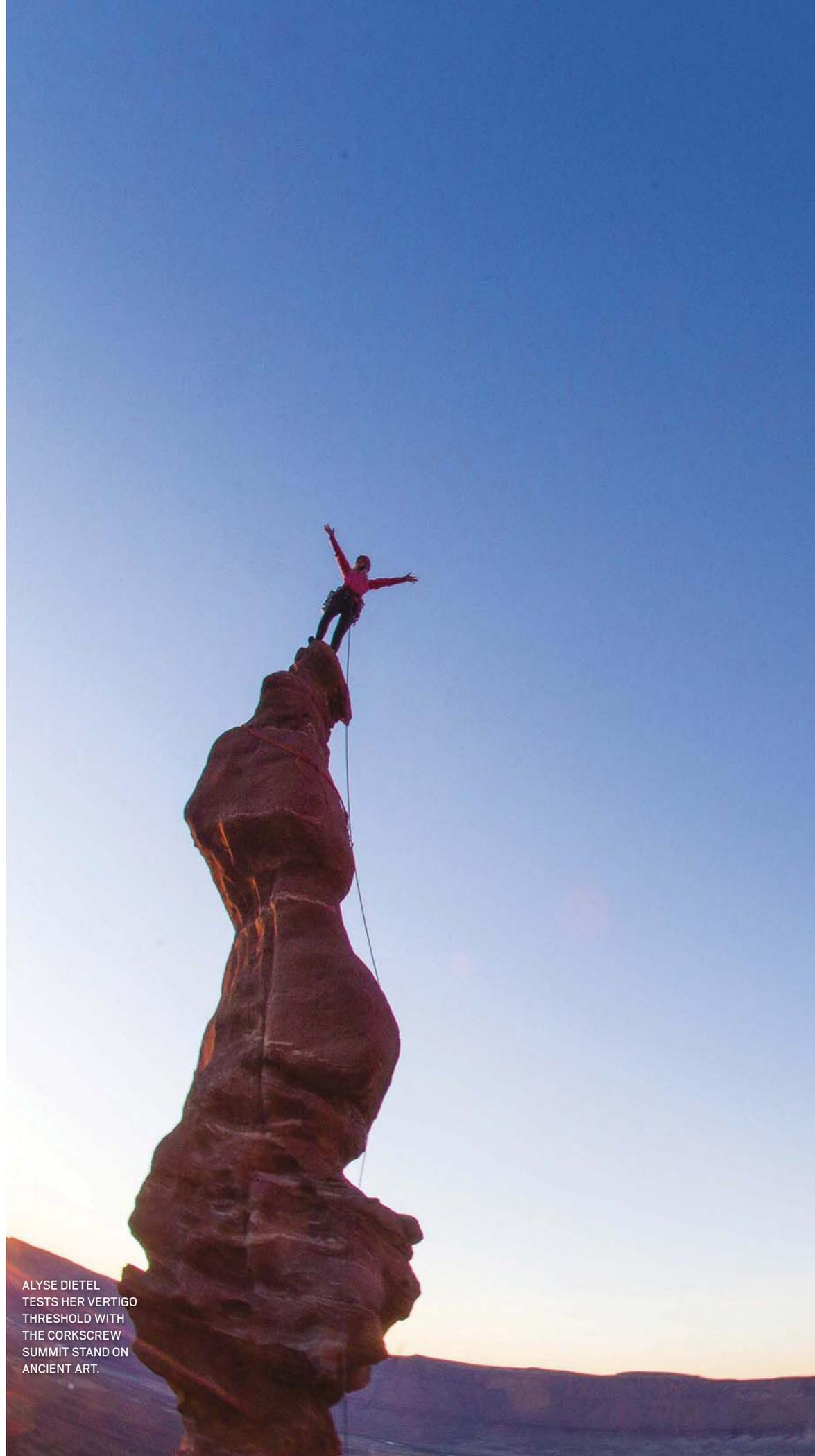
Try not to fall off the barstool-sized summit while having your belayer get the obligatory hero shot. Lower off tied slings and head back to the belay. The route is as popular as it is awesome—best to hit it midweek.

FIRST ASCENT: Paul Sibley and Bill Roos, 1969

RACK: Standard rack, with quickdraws for the AO sections

RAPPEL: A double 70-meter-rope rappel from Party Ledge gets you back to the ground.

GETTING THERE: From Moab, head north out of town on Highway 191 to Highway 128, which follows the Colorado River. Turn right and drive east 20 miles to the sign for Fisher Towers on the right. A short drive up the dirt road leads to parking. Take the Fisher Towers trail to the first climber’s path on the left (signed).



ALYSE DIETEL
TESTS HER VERTIGO
THRESHOLD WITH
THE CORKSCREW
SUMMIT STAND ON
ANCIENT ART.





EASTER ISLAND, THUNDERBOLTS (5.10)

BRIDGER JACK MESA,
INDIAN CREEK

The Bridger Jack Mesa formation, a serrated ridge that separates Beef Basin from Davis Canyon (the large valley containing the Six Shooters) in Indian Creek, is home to some of the Creek's best towers. Though Easter Island stands among the shortest towers in the Bridger Jacks, it does provide quality and varied climbing. The first pitch is a flaring hand crack that has ratings all over the map: Let's just call it 5.9+. It leads to a large, sloping belay ledge. From here, head right and slowly wind around the tower to a bolted, technical face.

Airy exposure and sandy crimping make the second pitch feel like old-school 5.10. Be sure to use long runners early on; rope drag could ruin your day as you tiptoe and balance your way up its tiny edges. The kitchen-sized summit is a great hangout, and the free-hanging rappel is fun and straightforward.

FIRST ASCENT: Jeff Achey, Easter 1985

RACK: Standard rack with draws, plus a couple of long runners for the bolted face

RAPPEL: Double 70-meter rap to the ground.

GETTING THERE: From Moab, take Highway 191 south for 62 miles and then head west on Highway 211. Stay on 211 for another 21 miles, passing Newspaper Rock and Supercrack Buttress to reach Beef Basin Road on your left. Turn here, and less than a mile down, turn right and drive toward the Bridger Jacks (4WD required) for around a mile. Follow the obvious trail a half-mile to the towers.



RITA YOUNG SHIN
TRUSTS HER FEET
AND HER CLIPPING
SKILLS ON THE 5.10
SECOND PITCH OF
THUNDERBOLTS.



TOWER TIPS

- Wear a helmet on desert climbs. Expect loose rock and parties climbing above.
- Use caution on the approaches to protect the fragile cryptobiotic soil. Stay on the climbers' trails, and keep on bedrock whenever possible.
- Fill up your water jugs with free filtered tap water (and perhaps pick up a no. 6 Camelot) in town at GearHeads Outdoor Store (moabgear.com).

GUIDE SERVICES: Red River Adventures (reddriveradventures.com) and Moab Desert Adventures (moabdesertadventures.com) offer guiding on all of these climbs with the exception of Owl Rock, due to its location within Arches National Park.

GUIDEBOOKS: *High on Moab* by Karl Kelley (Sharp End Publishing); *Indian Creek, A Climbing Guide* by David Bloom (Sharp End).

TOWER HISTORY: *Desert Towers* by Steve "Crusher" Bartlett (Sharp End) is the definitive historical and photographic resource.



JOHN EVANS is a Salt Lake City-based photographer with over 25 years climbing experience. Despite a tick-list that includes Half Dome and the Titan, he thinks of himself as a determined mere mortal who happens to have great climbing partners. See more of his images and work at johnnevansphoto.com.

A person wearing a denim shirt and a green apron is shown from the chest down. They are holding a pizza dough with a red-handled pizza peel. The apron has a yellow cartoon character and the word 'Miguel' written on it. The background is dark and out of focus.

**FROM PORTUGAL
WITH LOVE**

**HOW MIGUEL'S
PIZZA MADE
THE RED RIVER
GORGE WHAT
IT IS TODAY**

**BY WHITNEY BOLAND
PHOTOS BY
FRANÇOIS LEBEAU**



Miguel Ventura works the dough for the day's pizza.

"He won't talk to you on the phone," Dario Ventura said of his father, Miguel Ventura, owner of his namesake restaurant in Eastern Kentucky's Red River Gorge. The restaurant was closed for two more weeks during Miguel's annual winter break. Over the course of its many iterations, Miguel's Pizza has been an ice-cream shop, then pizzeria, then pizzeria-turned-climber-doss-turned-mega-campground-turned-Climber-Ground-Zero, all linked with the history of climbing at the Red. "Can you just come down?" Dario asked.

I considered this from snowy New York. Perhaps Dario, the go-between, thought Miguel would be too reticent on the phone. So I bought a \$100 round-trip ticket, borrowed a car, and hit the Bert T. Combs Mountain Parkway east out of Lexington with few words from Dario other than, "Be here at 10 a.m."

In typical Ventura fashion, there was no plan. Dario, unbeknownst to me, had culled together Hugh Loeffler, Chris Snyder, and Porter Jarrard—three still-active Red climbing legends who helped launch the sport revolution here—in a makeshift, crag-side interview ("Some dude named Whit is going to interview you guys..." Dario had told them), followed by an impromptu nine-person dinner up at Miguel and his wife, Susan's, house on the bluff above the restaurant.

We scoured through signatures, relics really, within old guestbooks from the shop. Miguel had misplaced some of the earliest ones, like the one in which on Jarrard's first visit he left Miguel his phone number and a note: "I'm interested in bolting routes." (Jarrard is still waiting for Miguel's response.) Books from the late 1990s and early 2000s contained other noteworthy signatures: Dave Hume, the quiet strongman who established stiff, no-nonsense routes like *True Love* (5.13d) at Gold Coast and *Thanatopsis* (5.14b) at the Motherlode, and Kenny Barker, who discovered and opened routes at Purgatory.

Being back in my home state reminded me why I miss the Red. It's an amalgam of amphitheaters and walls and mini-towers of perfect orange and brown Corbin sandstone, home to thousands of routes amidst rolling, thickly forested Appalachian hills.

When I began climbing here in 2001, I was drawn in by the cliffs' mélange of colors and impossibly perfect routes that unfurl magnificent hold after magnificent hold. But soon I blended into the community when Miguel employed me in his kitchen, where I worked for two seasons prepping veggies and making pizzas. When I left to head West, Miguel gifted me a tiny hand-carved spoon, saying only, "I carved this for you." As I've learned, it's a gift he gives all of his former employees.



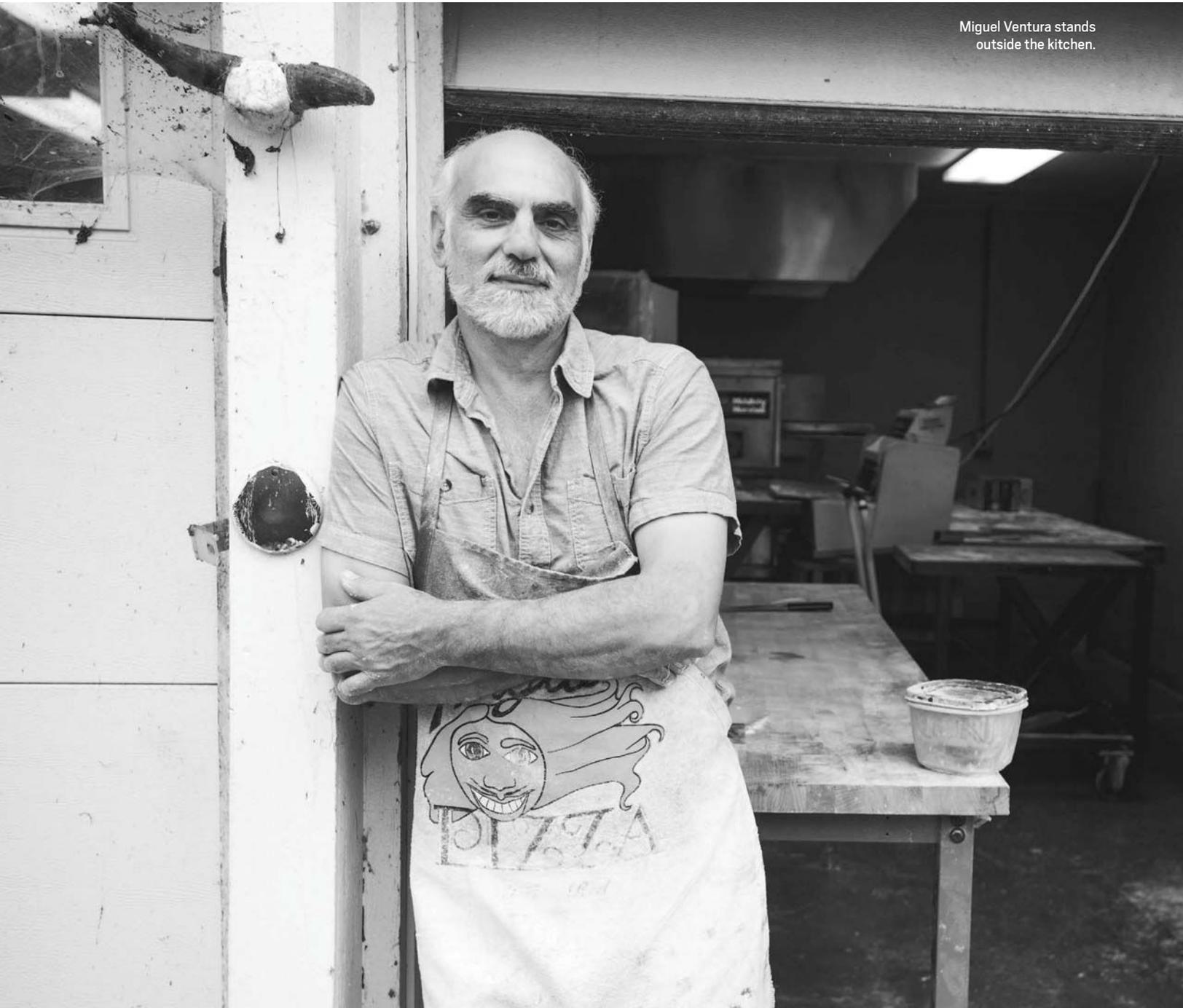
Sasha DiGiulian climbs Dario Ventura's route *Witness the Citrus* (5.11c) at Fruit Wall.

FROM PORTUGAL WITH LOVE

Miguel himself is not chatty; he's reserved even—a mystery behind his olive skin and dark, moody eyes hooded by thick, paintbrush-stroked brows. Flour from pizza-making or paint from his art marks his hands, chafed from a lifetime of use. But he's always quick with a smile. Miguel's laid-back nature appealed to me, and, surely, the gobs of other transient climbers Miguel has helped mold under his watchful tutelage of employment. Always inspiring you to work harder, dream bigger, and perfectly slice the potatoes, one of 48 pizza toppings—including pasta spirals and mango salsa—you can order here.

The shop was Miguel's *biga*: a starter dough. By letting climbers auger in long-term, Miguel allowed a local community to form, which has allowed America's best cragging venue to ferment and rise. Miguel's now, with its welter of outbuildings and additions, includ-

ing a pavilion, bathrooms, shower shed, and even rental rooms in a home out back, would not be recognizable to a visitor in 1986, when the shop initially transformed from a rarely visited ice-cream shop to a pizzeria. In fact, the only thing they might find familiar is the iconic "rainbow door," hand-carved from poplar by Miguel, or the grinning face on the eponymous sign above the shop that now adorns the immediately recognizable T-shirts. ("Oh, you've been to the Red?" you might ask a German climber wearing one in Kalymnos.) And they'd likely feel overwhelmed by the hundreds of visitors who overnight at Miguel's on peak weekends during high season, in September and October. But the fact would remain: Without Miguel's, and the berth and grub that it's provided to climbers for the past 30 years, there really would be no Red—at least, the Red would not be what it is today.



Miguel Ventura stands
outside the kitchen.

SET IT ASIDE, LET IT RISE

Miguel is an only child from Maçores, a small village in northwest Portugal. He was raised by parents Dario and Maria, who worked in the family mill. The semi-arid climate is reminiscent of Sacramento, but the patchwork fields of almonds and olives and grapes stitched together into a quilt of earthy colors are uniquely European.

Miguel remembers watching his grandmother knead dough and his grandfather mill wheat in the family's traditional, water-powered, hand-built gristmill—fellow villagers would come collect the flour on horseback. The village ethos was communal: People bartered goods and baked bread in a village-owned oven powered by wild sagebrush. "It was a social place," says Miguel.

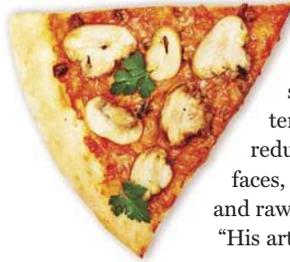
In 1959, Miguel, then seven, and his parents emigrated to Connecticut. A transplant in the industrial city of Waterbury ("a ghetto," says Miguel), he didn't speak much English, and took to communicating in images when his sixth-grade teacher sat him in the back of the class with crayons. "Art gave me an escape," says Miguel. "It gave me a direction." Early on, he gravitated toward media like metal etchings; murals, which he painted in the hallways of the town's small Catholic Church; and sign-making—he worked in a master sign-maker's studio cleaning brushes. He was a visual learner, all kinetics, and in 1971 Miguel was accepted into the Rhode Island School of Design, though he declined for financial reasons. Instead, with buddy Neville Pohl, he drove a 30-foot rental truck stuffed with artwork to California on a commissioned trip for a former art teacher.

Miguel stayed; he bought a printmaking press and opened up studio.

The work I've seen from this time—mostly sketches hanging in Dario's house or at his sister, Sarah Sutherland's, house—has simple lines, reductionist in nature, with eerie colors focusing on faces, oversized hands, and moments. It is emotive and raw.

"His art has an abstract feel," says Sutherland, an artist

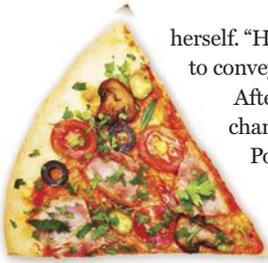
Angie Scarth-Johnson climbs on *God's Own Stone*, a 5.14a at the Gold Coast.



A chicken walks through a climber tent city in the meadow at Miguel's.



FROM PORTUGAL WITH LOVE



herself. “He doesn’t get stuck on the details. His art tries to convey a feeling ... an actual moment that he felt.”

After five or six years in California, something changed. In an interview on Kris Hampton’s Power Company Climbing podcast, Miguel said, “Art becomes part of your ego ... that got to me.” As Miguel recounted, the epiphany came when he drew a cartoon character lifting up the costume of an artist and getting inside. “You don’t need a costume to be a person; you just need to be yourself,” said Miguel. “I threw that outfit out and became who I am today: a pizza man.”

Miguel returned back east to the cow town of Middlebury, Connecticut, where he worked as a maintenance man. In 1978, he met Susan, who in 1980 became his wife. As a team, they represent the perfect balance of left- (her) and right-brained (him) thinking, and in separate interviews, each described the other as “hard-working.” In 1983, Susan, close to finishing a bachelor’s degree in nutrition, became pregnant with Dario. Then, they got a call:

“Hey, Miguel!”

It was Pohl, now living in Lexington and part of a holistic healing center. He had a proposition: He owned land in Slade, Kentucky, a collection of dwellings tucked in the side canyons off the Mountain Parkway, with a few other guys from the center. Did Miguel want in?

Woods, a garden, a fresh start? Sure, what the hell. He and Susan bought into the land with \$4,000 savings. It even had a name: Andorra.

It was an artist’s drafty garret existence, a farmhouse with no electricity nestled in the green-blue hills of Appalachia. “I was culture-shocked, homesick, and pregnant,” says Susan. “It was a major change.”

Brainstorming ensued. Miguel and Susan renovated an abandoned building on the partners’ property skirting Highway 11 to create an ice-cream parlor. The last touch, and the start of a mythology, was the door, which Miguel had hand-carved on commission for a Connecticut health-food store that in the end wanted something more traditional. The red-haired face at center, Miguel explains, is Susan. “I was looking out the tent’s screen at the moon when we were camping. And the moon created all these rays of light around her,” he recalls. The door still hangs to this day, its paint as bright as ever with just a single retouch.

“The gorge at that time was where people came to party and where the hippies went,” says Keith Phelps, an early 1980s climbing regular from Cincinnati, “[and] the door really fit in with the old hippie-hangout title.” Not only did the Red attract the outdoorsy type, but also those craving escape and seclusion, especially with the area’s reputation as a pot-growing paradise obscured by thickets of poison ivy and dense fog.

But whether Miguel and Susan’s new way of life was, as Loeffler, now an internist in Lexington, puts it, “a utopia experiment” or a nod to Miguel’s simple, resourceful Portuguese past, didn’t matter. In middle-of-nowhere, economically busted Appalachia there weren’t that many people. And without people, there’s no one to buy ice cream, no income, and no utopia.

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Just another night of accordion jamming at Miguel's.

Other America, states: “The irony is deep, for everything that turns the landscape into an idyll for the urban traveler conspires to hold the people down. They suffer terribly at the hands of beauty.”

At the same time, the hard-scrabble landscape enticed a different type of visitor: the outdoor enthusiast interested in the area’s plethora of caves and rivers and lakes and trails. Though climbers had been visiting since the 1950s (when the rumored first climb, *Caver’s Route*, was established), the 1970s marked the biggest initial surge. Frank Becker (the area’s

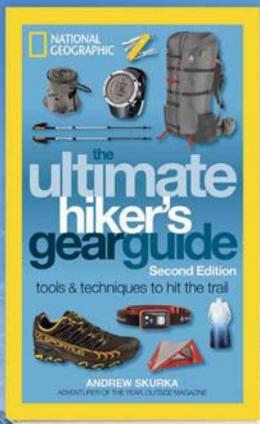
first guidebook author; 1975), Larry Day (who established one of the Red’s first 5.11s, *Insanity Ceiling*, in 1979), Ellen and Tom Siebert, and Ed Pearsall sought cracks that cut the cliff from bottom to top. Then, two brawny, self-effacing Cincinnati boys, Tom Souders and Jeff Koenig (the “Beene Brothers”), showed up. Loeffler remembers Souders training inside downtown Cincinnati’s drained Eden Park Reservoir, traversing its retaining walls on tip edges while wearing a 40-pound pack.

“Anything hard pre-Porter was Souders,” says Loeffler.

HOMEGROWN PIES

The mountains east of Lexington had not always been so poverty stricken. In the late 1800s and early 1900s, the booming coal and timber industries brought jobs and money. But the area’s rugged, secluded geography ultimately worked against it. According to a 2014 *New York Times* article, “Those rolling hills might be picturesque. But those country roads make it hard to ship goods in and out, in turn making it more expensive to build a warehouse or a factory.” And as Michael Harrington’s seminal 1962 work on poverty, *The*

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Balls of Miguel's famous pizza dough, made fresh each morning and destined to become pies by night.



The Beene Brothers established routes like *Inhibitor* at Skybridge Ridge (a burly 5.11a following thin hands to grovelly offwidth; 1983) and *Pink Feat* at Military Wall (a groundbreaking, R-rated 5.11+; 1983), followed shortly by a prolific output from Martin Hackworth, who published another guide, *Stones of Years*, in 1984. Bob Compton, Tom Fyffe, Matt Flach—these scruffy guys hit the shores in the early 1980s. The climbers were beginning to come.

Still, Miguel and Susan lived a lean existence—more optimism than opportunity. After Dario was born, in 1984, Miguel kept the growing family running on the store's meager income and co-op farming. He raised goats, using them for milk, meat, and homemade cheese—think rennet made inside a slaughtered baby goat's stomach, extracted and tied up like a balloon, drying by a fire.

"That's how we made it," says Miguel. "Back out in the woods, if you're struggling. That's how you make it."

With the store's optimal highway-side location, it didn't take long for the two worlds to collide. Climbers began stopping in for ice cream, and Miguel welcomed them—he liked their Bohemian vibe. In 1985, Hackworth opened a gear shop, Search for Adventure, in a dusty corner of the shop, and the Ventura-climber fusion began.

"That was right when Miguel started making bread for us," says Phelps. The bread—similar to the triangular sandwich loaves he still makes—emerged not from a secret family recipe but instead from Miguel's own tinkering. Ciabatta-like but less oily, the bread has an almost crusty exterior, with an interior full of flavor, richness, and complexity. You can still buy the loaves, on which Miguel serves his sandwiches, starting at six bucks.

For Miguel, breadmaking was his way to provide heartier fare for the climbers who were ravenous after long days bushwhacking through dense rhododendron thickets to develop routes. Miguel was the creator, and Susan the businesswoman during the store's pivotal transformation, in 1986, into a pizzeria. Their pies used a portion of ingredients from their farm. The rest came from a local co-op set up through the pizzeria.

After the pizzeria opened, Miguel and his family played hopscotch

with various houses on the property until, finally, they landed in their custom-built house up the hill. They spent candlelit nights heating water on the stove for a bath, or lying on the floor, heated by a hand-built Korean-style wood stove under the home. The garden fed the family, and Dario and Sarah would help each morning by weeding, picking out bugs, and spreading goat manure. Then was homeschool, taught by Susan; or art class, taught by Miguel.

"We'd paint or chip wood together," says Sarah, who with her father would scour beaver dams behind the house for sticks that were gnawed off and pointy. "We'd gather that wood and carve totem poles," she says.

The kids spent most of their free time outside, playing games or chasing goats. On Saturday nights, after a day of fasting that was the family's own form of Sabbath, the kids would charge down to the shop to devour pizza. Here, they'd hang out with the climbers, soaking up mid-1980s dirtbag lingo and culture: "heinous jams" and "epic whips," all set to the tunes of the Red Hot Chili Peppers playing around a campfire. The climbers, taped up and covered in blood, would overtake the picnic tables out front to sort their racks. Still, even with the climbers coming in, as Phelps recalls, if Miguel sold a dozen pizzas, it was a busy Saturday night. "It was always a small group, maybe one or two dozen people, and we would sit inside and talk everything from politics to literature to astrophysics," says Phelps. "When I look back on it, the climbing was awesome... but the nights at Miguel's are what I remember more than anything."

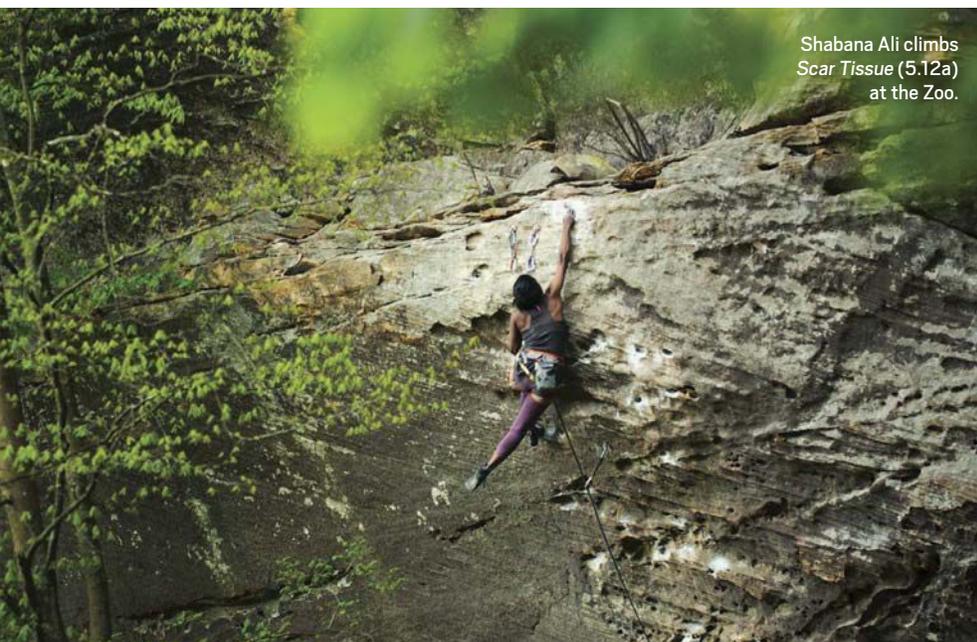
Miguel both fostered and tolerated his "dirtbag salon": "No one paid up front," he says. "And then people would start drinking beer and we'd have people pay forever after they ate. Months." His business was a patchwork endeavor—no blueprints, no master plan—but he was, whether deliberately or not, growing the climbing community. Someone had to: The local coal-centric community remained leery of the Lycra-wearing hippies.

Soon, it all became a routine and a ritual.

"We served the people in the morning—coffee, we didn't do breakfast yet. And then no one would come in during the day and... I'd sit in front of the store peeling garlic into a bucket for the evening meal, and that was my job," says Miguel. Later, the climbers would roll in and it was time to make the pizza. "That was the lifestyle. That was the routine, and we had Mondays and Tuesdays off," he recalls. For Miguel, this was simply what he did.

LOVE SHACK, BABY

Throughout the late 1980s, the Red remained a climbing backwater, especially compared to other East Coast areas like the New River Gorge. It was Hackworth who put up the area's first sport climb, in 1984: *Close to the Edge*, at Hens Nest. "We were all looking for vertical, New-esque routes," says Loeffler. "Mark Williams and I and a couple of other guys put up some routes out at Purple Valley—terrible, they sucked—then we put up the stuff at Roadside."



Shabana Ali climbs
Scar Tissue (5.12a)
at the Zoo.

FROM PORTUGAL WITH LOVE

These included Williams's four-star 5.10s *Dragonslayer*, *Crazyfingers*, and *A.W.O.L.* Flach, Souders, Greg Williams—those who followed suit are too many to name, but nobody had yet developed the eye for the futuristic super-steep walls. In fall 1990, Porter Jarrard, a loquacious powerhouse who earned his chops on the steep, grey quartzite walls of North Carolina's Moore's Wall, showed up. Armed with a power drill, he would become the trigeminal nerve innervating the new, overhanging face of Red River Gorge climbing.

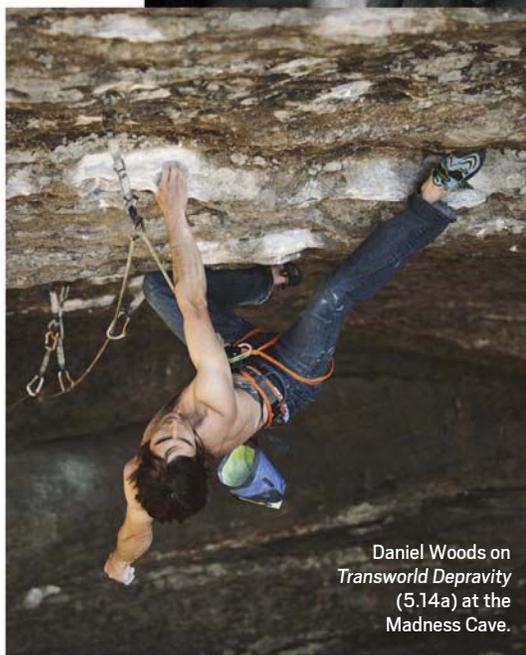
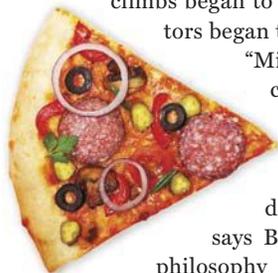
"Porter started looking at all the stuff we were just walking past," says Loeffler. Within three or four years, Jarrard established over 150 routes. He systematically worked through Hackworth's guide, visiting the cliffs, cherrypicking five-star overhanging lines like *Tissue Tiger* and *Gung Ho* at Military Wall and *Table of Colors* at Left Flank. This multicolored beauty, established in 1990, would become the Red's first 5.13.

But while sport climbing was getting its electric start, the shop was still holding on by a thread. You might call this the "Love Shack" era: After Miguel and Susan moved up the hill, a series of transient climbers passed through the old farmhouse. The Love Shack (perhaps named after the B-52s' song—no one seems to know) was without heat, hot water, or electricity, but it was good enough for the climbers, allowing them to form the core of new-route development. Here, they took to cooking on a wok over a kerosene heater (not recommended) that Miguel lent them. Jarrard: "We would cook everything over that kerosene ... poisoning ourselves. That's why I'm brain damaged right now." Loeffler: "A contributing factor. We slept well, though."

"Miguel was still just trying to make it work," says Snyder. "I remember him saying, 'Buy my pizzas or I'm going to have to eat my goats.'" But soon, as word about the high quality of the new climbs began to leak out, out-of-state visitors began trickling in.

"Miguel's wound up being this central place where information was being disseminated ... that's why I think a lot of the development took place,"

says Bill Ramsey, at the time a philosophy professor at Notre Dame



Daniel Woods on *Transworld Depravity* (5.14a) at the Madness Cave.

HUECO PETE'S: "THE MIGUEL'S OF THE SOUTHWEST" AND THE BIRTH OF MODERN BOULDERING

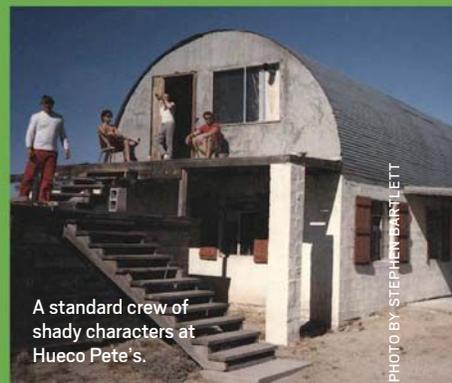
Every great American climbing area has one: a gathering place where the scene can gel and evolve. Here, roadtrippers, lifers, oddballs, scammers, and layabouts form a community and push standards.

At Yosemite, it was Camp 4; at the Red, Miguel's; and at Hueco, the Hueco Tanks Country Store, aka Hueco Pete's. In an aluminum Quonset hut above the shop, climbers from the 1980s onward would return after sessioning Hueco's steps to compare notes: *What went down today?* And also, *What went up?*

While climbing activity began at Hueco in the 1950s with the late Royal Robbins, stationed nearby at Fort Bliss, it wasn't until

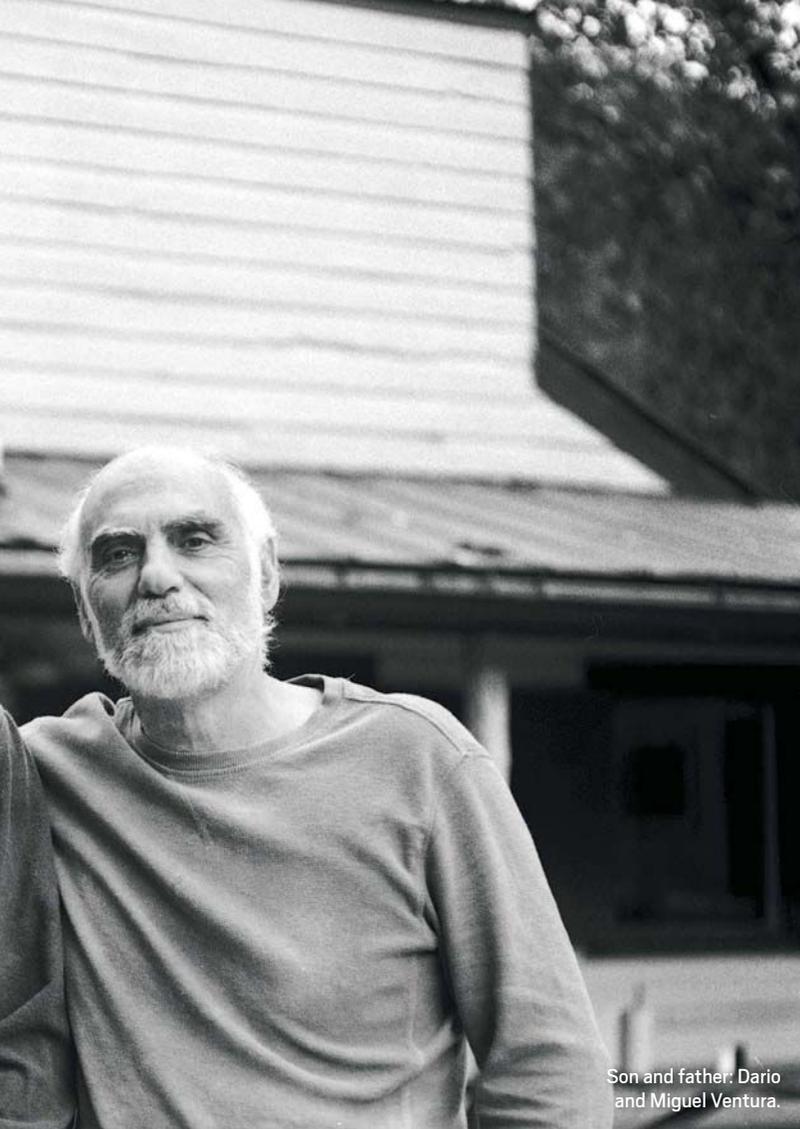
the late 1970s and into the '80s that climbing activity surged. Mike and Dave Head (no relation), Fred Nakovic, James Crump, and others climbed up to 5.12 on the syenite porphyry, while Bob Murray, Mike Head, and John Sherman opened stout boulder problems.

Back then, you could either camp in the park or bivy in the desert. Then came Hueco Pete's and with it an accretion of the scene that birthed the first Rock Rodeo (1989) and the first proper



A standard crew of shady characters at Hueco Pete's.

PHOTO BY STEPHEN BARTLETT



Son and father: Dario and Miguel Ventura.

and today teaching at the University of Las Vegas. In the early 1990s, Ramsey, who'd been Alan Watts's regular partner at Smith Rock, Oregon, during the early 1980s when Watts began his pioneering sport-climbing efforts there, would drive 14 hours round-trip every weekend to the Red. In time, Ramsey put up enduring testpieces like *Omaha Beach* and *Transworld Depravity*, both 5.14s at the Motherlode, an OG Chris Snyder-Porter Jarrard area.

An almost magical evolution took place. Miguel started charging a couple of dollars for camping and made a few renovations. He upgraded the pizza oven to one that now held three 16-inch pizzas at a time, set into the wall and propped upright by a sturdy branch. Miguel's 15-hour workday would begin before 4 a.m. when he would start the dough and then hand-shred the cheese. His humility, quiet

Tanks bouldering book (1991), which introduced the V-scale. According to an article by Steve Crye at huecotanks.com, in 1982 Todd Skinner approached Pedro Zavala Jr. (later "Hueco Pete") about turning the Quonset hut into a crash pad. Skinner would clean the place up for room-and-board. As local Don Morrill recalls in the story, Skinner "got some cats from the Humane Society and let them loose. They disappeared down a hole in the

floor and ate rats for a month."

Soon, as climbers began coming to the park and staying longer, Pete's became the dirtbag hang. It was the staging venue for the rodeos, and it was here, in the parking lot, that you might see Sherman handing out questionnaires to the dozen-odd climbers he'd corralled to assign V-grades to the park's classics to reach consensus ratings for the 1991 book. With these grades as benchmarks—think *Mushroom*

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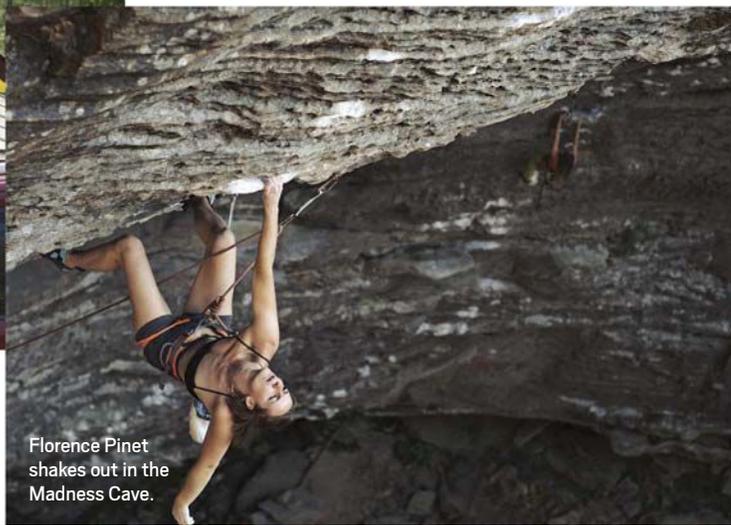
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Miguel's, with its world-famous sign, an icon of the Red.



Florence Pinet shakes out in the Madness Cave.

demeanor, and monk-like tolerance for just about anything all conspired to make him a little mysterious.

“The lore of Miguel is across the names of my climbing routes,” says Jarrard. “He was like this luminary figure. Kind of enigmatic... Living up in the hills.”

Camped out in the Love Shack but with no regular weekday partners, Jarrard took to solo bolting missions, with many of his route names inspired by the Ventura family. At Military Wall, there were *Sunshine* and *Moonbeam*, which he named after Dario and Sarah (whose names he couldn't remember). And at Left Flank, there was *Mercy the Huff*, named for Miguel's exclamation upon entering a roomful of guys having a toke.

BOOMTOWN

Activity slowed with a bolting ban imposed by the National Forest Service in 1993, based off the misperception that climbers were trashing formerly pristine areas, as well as swirlings of tension between sport and trad climbers that had even resulted in bolt chopping. While the total ban was lifted in 1996, restrictions about bolting on the NFS land have remained in place. One upshot of this was that it spurred development in the Southern Region, where Snyder had found the Motherlode. That same year, Miguel and Susan's third child, Mark, was born and the family was complete.

The Motherlode was a jackpot of steep sport climbing, and ushered in a flurry of devolvement in the early 2000s, such as at the Pendergrass-Murray Recreational Preserve—a crown jewel and milestone in climber-owned crags—which includes Dark Side, Gold

Coast, Drive-By, and Purgatory. Ramsey, Hume, and Ben Cassel established a number of 5.14s on these walls. As more routes were bolted, people started to realize that the Red's sport climbs were better than anything they had seen in America. Then, in 2007, the Petzl Roc Trip happened, and the Red exploded. Miguel continued accommodating climbers by slowly expanding his enterprise, one kitchen or campground addition at a time. It was a careful, organic growth, much in our sport's anti-materialistic vein, an artifact of its counter-cultural roots.

“There wasn't some capitalist narrative going on. I remember the accretion on the outside of the building and how it sprouted out like a little mushroom into other parts of the kitchen,” recalls Jarrard. “It's a complete country, vernacular architecture-style... he would expand only when he had to.”

The image of dirt and of growth was fitting. Something that survived and grew in the scruffiest of circumstances. Something that on its own accord found its place to survive and prosper. In this single image was a compressed story: not only of Miguel, and not only of the store, but of all the climbers who have come through. The miscreants, the wayward, all welcomed as interesting, different, and colorful—out of this backwater climbing area, they grew and flourished, making the Red what it is today.

Roof at V8 or *Sex After Death* at V9—the V-scale later expanded with the park's first V10, *Full Service*, and double-digit bouldering was born.

The hut was a world unto itself. While Pete and his wife, Queta, kept the convenience store and modest kitchen/Mexican restaurant downstairs tidy, it was left to the hut's denizens to “clean up after themselves.” This soon spelled unchecked filth and debauchery. As Sherman wrote in his 1989 *Climbing* feature “Texas

Tall Tales,” “Pete's upstairs is a veritable science-fair project. The floor is a petri dish covered with a nourishing medium of dirt and moldy food scraps. Above this is a layer of sleeping bags filled with unwashed climbers.” Or, you could always bivvy in the parking lot.

For me and my buddies, who'd drive down from Albuquerque then Colorado in the 1980s and '90s, “the Hut” was paradise. Here, we swilled beer and rubbed elbows with fellow misfits: scraggly Brits

who'd wear the same unseemly tights for weeks on end, snowbirds selling T-shirts out of their vans, burgeoning luminaries like Conrad Anker and Dean Potter, and the occasional nonplussed Euro couple. A smoke-belching woodstove “heated” the place, and you could “watch” network shows on a half-busted TV. You might also peruse the porno and climbing magazines left on the coffee table.

When the health department eventually shut down the hut due

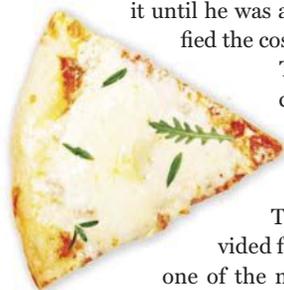
to code violations, climbers took over the parking lot. The rates at Pete's stayed modest—we paid \$2 per night per person on our last visit, in 2000—and the Zavalas loved their climber family. They would look after the climber-orphaned, giving them jobs in the kitchen or letting payment slide.

Per the Crye article, near the end of his life Pete told Queta that he wanted “all the climbers to know that he loved them all, they were special to him, and that the

“Miguel created this organic place for community to occur and let the community define itself,” says Loeffler. “It’s always been this pure, authentic thing.”

It’s certain that Miguel is a sort of genius, but whether his genius is one of forward thinking or more one of surrender to the natural course of events—of not following a predetermined plan, but of instead laying down a blank canvas and then hoping for the best—it’s hard to tell. “Now we’re open seven days a week for nine months,” says Miguel. Supported by 22 employees plus Dario, the store is constantly growing. The parking lot has expanded several times, pavilions have been added, and camping has overtaken the goat field and the Love Shack, which was leveled with a ceremonious bonfire. Miguel bought out all existing partners in the original co-op, and bought all the houses up on the hill and down the street. One house serves as the gear store and pizza-dough and ingredient-prepping space, while another is reserved for rental rooms. These days, on a busy night, hundreds of climbers might stay in the compound, and Dario estimates that they’ll make and sell out 200 pizza crusts.

“I think Miguel could teach a course at the Harvard Business School on sustainable growth,” says Loeffler. “He is the archetype of how to grow a business sustainably... he grew it very slowly and never grew it until he was already busting at the seams and already justified the cost of what he was about to do.”



Today, the Red River Gorge has about 7,500 climbers visiting annually according to a recent Eastern Kentucky University study, and climbers bring in an estimated \$3.6 million to the six counties around the Red.

The RRG, thanks to the rich soil Miguel provided for the area’s climbing to take root, has become one of the most well-known cliffs on earth, drawing pro climbers and an international following. And though Miguel’s seems to reach max capacity every year as the spring-breakers, with their tiki torches and djembe drums, reach new, deafening densities, Miguel’s is still ground zero. No visit is complete without a pizza.

“It’s always been the case that world-class climbing destinations have these very special places associated with them that aren’t necessarily the place where you’re climbing,” says Ramsey. “They’re not the cliffs themselves, but they’re where you come home after.”

WHITNEY BOLAND, A WRITER AND CLIMBER LIVING IN NEW PALTZ, NEW YORK, STILL HAS HER MEMENTO SPOON AND HOPES TO BUY A PIECE OF MIGUEL’S ART AS SOON AS HE STARTS SELLING (NUDGE-NUDGE).

best part of his life was the years he ran the store for them.” Pete passed away in 2006 and was buried with military honors at Fort Bliss. His health had begun to decline in 1998 (he was diabetic and had heart issues) along with his business, which dwindled when the park put its permitting system in place, reducing traffic from the boom years of the 1990s when Fred Nicole and other top boulderers brought world-class standards. Though the store

went under in 2005, in 2012, local climber Lowell Stevenson purchased the property. In 2013, he reopened it as the Mountain Hut Hueco Tanks Climbing Shop, which today offers camping, guiding, rentals, instruction, and a gear shop. Meanwhile, Stevenson has plans for a 300-square-foot bouldering cave, “Bivi Hut Kitchen and Lounge,” and new showers, while Queta still lives in her house behind the shop.

—MATT SAMET

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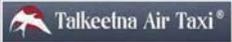
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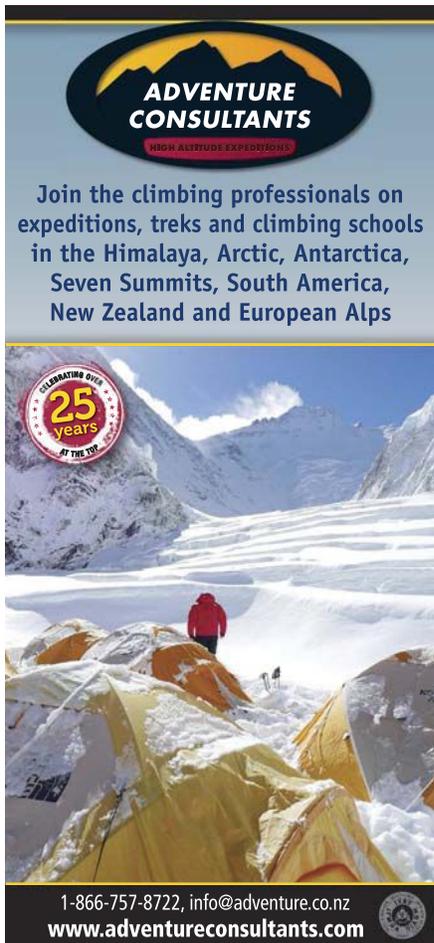
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Climbers love spring: The sun arches high across the sky, temperatures warm, and the rock reappears from beneath the snow and ice. But with balmy weather also comes one of my least favorite things: ticks. Not “tick” as in, “I ticked my proj, bru,” or, “Why didn’t those dreadlocked Euros brush their two-foot tick marks off this giant jug?” Ticks as in tiny, parasitic arachnids, the kind that carry blood-borne ailments like Lyme disease. Unfortunately for us climbers, ticks evolved to hunt mammals by certain traits: body heat (got your puffy on?), body odor (no comment), and vibrations (the approach to the crag). Unable to fly or jump, they chill on reeds, bushes, or blades of grass as they quest for victims with outstretched front legs. Hopefully this season, your tick check at day’s end yields more project “ticks” than eight-legged bloodsuckers.

—ANDREW BURR



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