

CALIFORNIA CLIMBER

SPRING 2013
N°04

FREE



DESTINATIONS

34 / VACAVILLE

46 / TABLE MOUNTAIN

60 / TUNNEL BOULDERS



Designing
Testing
Climbing
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In
CALIFORNIA



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Dec 7th, 5-10pm



METALMARK
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Fresno, CA 93726
559.229.7900

Jan 26th, 12-5pm



SACRAMENTO PIPEWORKS
116 N. 16th St.
Sacramento, CA 95814
916.341.0100

Feb 22nd, 5-10pm



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925.602.1000

Mar 15th, 5-10pm



GREAT WESTERN POWER CO
520 20th St.
Oakland, CA 94612
510.452.2022

Apr 19th, 5-10pm



DOGPATCH BOULDERS
2573 Third St.
San Francisco, CA

May 4th



The "Live Your Dream" Climbing Grants are developed and administered locally with community support. For the Western Region, the "Live Your Dream" Climbing Grant seeks to support climbers from a range of ages and experience levels, as well as a range of climbing disciplines (sport climbing, bouldering, traditional rock climbing, ice climbing, mountaineering, etc.). Climbers from California, Nevada, Arizona, and Hawaii are eligible for the Western Region grant.



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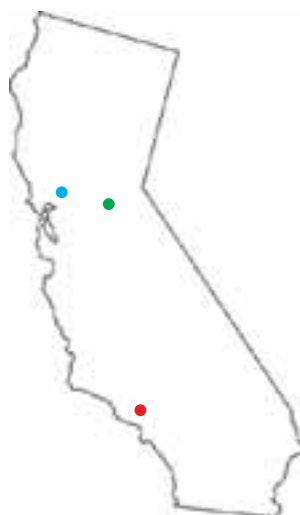
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ON THE COVER:
Chad Suchoski on Straight
Shooter V1, Nut Tree Boul-
ders, Vacaville.
IMAGE + JIM THORNBURG
THIS PAGE:
Trevor Carter on *Go With
the Flow* (5.9), The Grotto,
Jamestown.
IMAGE + DEAN FLEMING

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ROPES

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THE GREAT NUT TREE

IN 1859, Josiah Allison planted a black wal-
nut where the State Highway (now I-80) meets
Vacaville, California. The nut Josiah planted was
found earlier that year on the banks of the Gila
River in Arizona by a member of a party crossing
the plains to California. Over the following 93
years the nut sprouted above the fertile grass,
turning from seed to sapling, baring walnuts of
its own and eventually growing to a staggering
size.

In 1921 the Powers family set up a modest
fruit stand along I-80 in Vacaville. They decided
to name their fruit stand after the great walnut
tree – at that time a symbol of Vacaville’s prom-
ising agricultural capability. The Nut Tree, as
they dubbed it, quickly grew from a modest fruit
stand into California’s first major road-stop.

Vacaville is now a shopping Mecca for
both Central Valley and Bay Area residents. As

the city of Vacaville has grown to host more commerce than agriculture, the Nut Tree road-
stop has taken on an analogous form. Vacaville’s iconic walnut tree died in 1952. In the years
that followed the Nut Tree road-stop expanded into an enormous venue, complete with a large
retail store, restaurant, plaza and even its own airport. While the little fruit stand on I-80 has
expanded to match Vacaville’s consumer mentality, on some level - perhaps in name alone - the
Nut Tree road-stop has continued to carry the legacy of this region’s abundant grasslands.

For this issue’s cover story, Vacaville resident Chad Suchoski and El Cerrito resident
Jim Thornburg take us out of the bustling shopping centers to the vibrant green slopes of the
Vacaville hills (page 30); a place where 413 acres of enormous valley oaks and basalt boulders
have been set aside into Open Space designation.

Each spring California’s foothills reach their scenic pinnacle, yet it is also a time when
many climbers in the Golden State are eagerly awaiting the opening of the High Sierra passes.
In addition to some wonderfully scenic spring climbing destinations, this season we bring
you an in-depth review of some ultra-light ropes; perfect for backcountry ascents and seri-
ous redpoint attempts (page 15). We are also excited to reveal a new department dedicated to
highlighting some of California’s finest routes. For all the beta and first ascent details of Sugar
Loaf’s *Taurus* (5.11b), check out Route of the Season with Mammoth resident Charlie Barrett on
the next page. - [DEAN FLEMING](#)



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Kevin Jorgeson on Taurus (5.11b).

[THE FIRST ASCENT]

Mark Hudon, 1976

In 1976, Mark Hudon had already claimed early ascents of high end Valley testpieces like *Crucifix* (5.12bR IV) and *Freestone* (5.11c V) - routes that remain formidable Yosemite ticks. In the fall of 1976, Hudon visited Sugar Loaf and nabbed the first free ascent of *Taurus* 5.11b.

"I don't remember it exactly but there is a one finger hole at the start that I cranked on for everything it was worth and then pulled up onto better holds" said Mark. "I got to a little spot below the layback, placed some gear and probably placed a nut before climbing the underling. Neither of the two guys I was climbing with that day were able to climb it free. We didn't know if it had been free climbed before but I rated it 5.11c." A few years later Mark went back and free-soloed *Taurus* - an impressive feat to this day.

BETA

ROUTE		GRADE	LENGTH
Taurus		5.11b	80'
ROCK TYPE	STYLE	RACK	
granite	gear to bolted anchor	Gear to 2 inches, mostly 1/2 inch to 1 1/2 inch	
LOCATION		APPROACH	DESCENT
Sugarloaf, Kyburz, CA		15 min - steep	Lower off/rappel route, single 60m
SEASON	GUIDEBOOK/S		
spring & fall	Climbing Lake Tahoe, by Mike Carville & South Lake Tahoe Climbing, by Supertopo		

DESCRIPTION

Taurus is a great route for someone breaking into the 5.11 grade on gear. This beautiful route features amazing Yosemite style rock and fun, stylish moves to add to the experience. *Taurus* is a classic mix of thin crack and flake climbing - a great mix of the best crack techniques around. The crux is encountered within the first 15 feet

and consists of bouldery, thin fingerlocks that'll bring you to a relieving stance. From the stance head up the left-facing fingers/layback corner to a fun and pumpy undercling flake heading left. Once you mantle onto the flake walk up it to a two bolt anchor.

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BRYAN “COILER” KAY

The plane’s whirring engine coughed and then died. Our flight path from the Sierra foothills to Yosemite Valley suddenly took a deadly turn. In the summer of 2008, I pressed my gorilla shoulders into the cockpit of Coiler’s 1961 Cessna. I stared at the chimp pilot and gripped the seat, ready to die. “Houston we have a problem.” Coiler whipped the plane around. “Look for landings.”

In May of 1990, Bryan Kay suffered his first major disaster. While on Highway 84, returning to Yosemite from a visit with friends in the bay area, a car crossed the double yellow and hit Kay’s Volkswagen bus head on. A second car sped around the blind corner and plowed into Kay’s flipped bus. The first impact crushed Kay’s leg below the knee, breaking it in 70 places. The second impact broke his wrist. The accident forced the long time Yosemite climber to rest.

“I figured the weather and lack of rock would prevent me from trying to climb too early on my bum leg,” Kay said of relocating to Humboldt shortly after the accident. “I was wrong on both counts.”

Kay arrived in Humboldt in the middle of a “land rush.” The beaches contained thousands of feet of unclimbed terrain. The new climbing seduced Kay to the point where he bouldered at Lufenholtz beach with his leg brace still on. “It was first ascent heaven,” Kay said.

Even beyond first ascents, Humboldt left a lasting mark on Kay. After one particularly serious night on the town, Kay met Cade Loyd at Humboldt’s Elephant rock. Kay barely had the energy to belay and passed out below the cliff. Loyd stared down at the long curly locks matted into the earth, his head on a rock, the crumpled and stained clothes, and Kay’s green hung-over face. “Look at you laying there, like a big steamy coiler, festering in the sun,” yelled Loyd.

Upon his return to Yosemite, Kay became Coiler. His classic nickname provided inspiration and other Valley locals lost their birth names. Perhaps because of his nickname or more likely because of his wit, Coiler changed James, Josh, and Mark into Shaggy, Trundlesby, and Tea Bag.

In between working stints as a chain monkey outside of Lover’s Leap, Coiler worked on YOSAR for three years. Riding helicopters to the summit of El Capitan and pulling people off the *Shield* headwall broke the monotony of helping people crutch down the Yosemite Falls trail, which was 90% of the work. On a descent into Zombie Gully, he helped someone who needed it, a solid trait of Coiler’s.

“It felt like a true rescue,” Coiler said of his descent into the steep gully above Mirror Lake. Two climbers lost their way trying to hike down from the summit of *Royal Arches*. For four days they shivered underneath a waterfall. YOSAR flew Coiler to the top of Washington’s Column. He hiked to the gully above Mirror Lake where tourist had heard the cries of the climbers.

“He looked like he was gonna die any minute,” Coiler said upon rappelling down to the climbers. Coiler provided one of the climbers with a warm jacket and hot soup. “It was like angels had come down to rescue him.”

On sunny days in Chinese Camp, a town of 126 people located in the Sierra foothills, Coiler enjoys his new escape. He sands the hull of the *Sea Monkey*, a 23 foot 1969 Corondo with a fixed keel. “Sailing is just like climbing,” Coiler said of his latest passion, “Pulling on ropes, tying knots, and getting that feeling that it’s maybe not such a good idea, then relying on your skill and cunning to pull the stunt off. It’s a combination of flying and climbing.” Where he once explored the walls of Yosemite, now he plans on sailing the seas.

In the cockpit of the Cessna 150A, Coiler’s hands darted between the knobs. The plane’s engine roared back to life. “Happens sometimes when the temperature’s between forty and seventy. I diverted some heat into the engine,” Coiler said. Apparently, the carburetors of Cessna C 150A’s constantly ice up, earning them the nickname Ice Trays. “It’s the heinous carabiner shift of flying.” Coiler grinned, and arced the plane back towards Yosemite to fly over El Capitan.



1996



1998



2004



2006



2010



2012

SETTING THE STANDARD

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REVIEW: ULTRA-LIGHT ROPES

FOR BACKCOUNTRY ASCENTS, LONG ROUTES AND

serious redpoint attempts, a lightweight rope can shave significant ounces (in some cases pounds) from the climber’s rack. This season California Climber decided to review three of the most innovative ultra-light ropes in today’s market. Over the last few years our testers have used these ropes for massive link-ups in Yosemite and backcountry first ascents. Pushing these cords to their limits, our testers lowered and rap-pelled over everything from the abrasive knobs of Tuolumne Meadows to the sharp towers of Indian Creek and took monster falls off steep sport climbs and El Cap free routes.



Eric Sanchez using the Sterling Fusion Nano 9.2mm on *Warp Factor* (5.13a) on Donner Pass’ Star Walls.
IMAGE + ALTON RICHARDSON



STERLING - FUSION NANO

(\$249.99)

TESTER / CODY SIMS

SPECS

DIAMETER > 9.2MM
LENGTH > 50, 60, 70, 80 METERS
WEIGHT > 53 GRAMS PER-METER
MIDDLE MARKER > BI-COLOR OPTION
DRY TREATMEMNT > YES

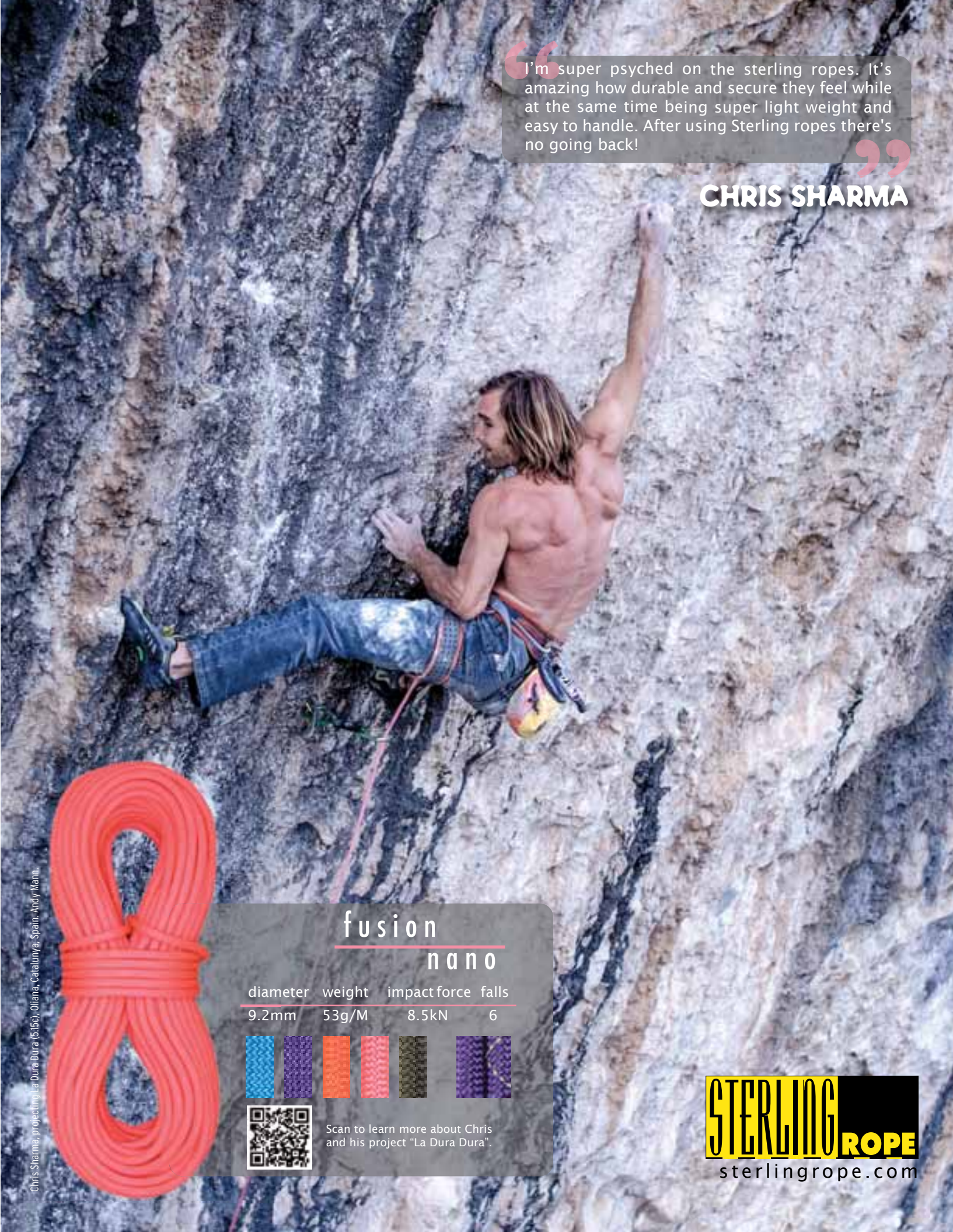
OVERVIEW: I started climbing with the Sterling Nano five years ago. Since that time the Nano has become my standard big wall free climbing rope. Initially I had major reservations about using this rope on the big stone, specifically with regard to jumaring because of the rope’s exaggerated elasticity. The thin diameter of the rope also piqued my imagination when I considered the possibility of slicing it in half along a sharp granite edge during a big fall. Fortunately, the Nano has maintained my faith after catching me on two separate 60+ foot falls. The rope has withstood a 4.5 hour ascent of the Nose and a 30 hour free link up of El Cap and Half Dome with partners jugging tirelessly on it.

Last spring I took a heinous whip on *Freerider* (VI 5.12d). My rope became filleted over the edge of the Scotty Burke offwidth when I tumbled out of it halfway up the pitch. The fall was due to a poorly placed directional which pulled the rope over a razor sharp edge. Thankfully the Nano survived the fall with all its core strands intact. Even after my unsuspecting partner followed the pitch on jumars, bouncing obliviously on what was left of the sheath, the Nano still did not cut. I would absolutely recommend this rope to anyone looking to push faster and lighter on long routes.

OUT OF THE PACKAGE: The rope has a smooth finish that is easy to handle and yet is not slippery. I have had a problem with one Nano twisting severely from my improper un-spooling of the rope. I would prefer a manufacturer coil their ropes instead of spooling.

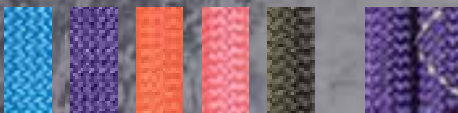
DURABILITY: I abuse ropes in a maniacal fashion and I’ve never had any rope last me longer than two years. I’m pleased to have gotten full years of use out of the Nano. I have intentionally chopped apart a completely abused Nano that has been up El Cap 3 times and spent numerous days afterwards getting hammered on sport routes and in the gym. I’ve found that no matter how soft the sheath becomes with this rope, the integrity of the core and the elasticity of the core strands do not become compromised.

“I’m super psyched on the sterling ropes. It’s amazing how durable and secure they feel while at the same time being super light weight and easy to handle. After using Sterling ropes there’s no going back!”
CHRIS SHARMA



fusion
nano

diameter	weight	impact force	falls
9.2mm	53g/M	8.5kN	6



Scan to learn more about Chris and his project “La Dura Dura”.

STERLING ROPE
sterlingrope.com

METOLIUS - MONSTER

(S264, 70M)

TESTER / DEAN FLEMING

SPECS

DIAMETER > 9.2MM
LENGTH > 60, 70, 100 METERS
WEIGHT > 53 GRAMS PER-METER
MIDDLE MARKER > YES
DRY TREATMEMNT > YES

OVERVIEW: I have been climbing on the 70 meter Monster 9.2mm for over six years. During that time the rope has been used for everything from steep sport climbing to long traditional routes and as a haul line for overnight walls. It has been stashed in a bucket for three summer seasons, left as a fixed line on first ascents and dropped into a murky lake.

The sheath has held up to tremendous amounts of abuse. At year five the rope remained in almost perfect condition with the exception of the middle markings wearing to nearly invisible. Out of the package the rope had some issues with tangling but after several uses it was free of kinks. The exceptional features of this rope are its extremely light (53 grams per-meter) weight and smooth running through carabiners. The combination of these two elements made for extraordinary reductions in rope drag on even the most wondering pitches. I would highly recommend this rope to experienced climbers who enjoy long routes or anything in the backcountry.

OUT OF THE PACKAGE: The rope kept some factory tangles out of the package, but not as bad as other thin cords I've used. It ran very nicely through belay and rappel devices during the first uses. The rope kept tight knots and hitches right out of the bag.

DURABILITY: After five years of use the rope's sheath was in near-perfect condition. At year six, a few flat-spots could be found in the rope. One core-shot within 30 feet of one end occurred at year six, as well as another near core-shot in the middle.

The middle markings and quarter markings were worn down significantly after one year of normal use. The rope's ends maintained perfect factory splicing and showed no signs of depression.



ROCA-DOMINATOR

(S250, 70m)

TESTER / CHARLIE BARRETT

SPECS

DIAMETER > 9.2MM
LENGTH > 60, 70, METERS
WEIGHT > 56 GRAMS PER-METER
MIDDLE MARKER > NO
DRY TREATMEMNT > YES

OVERVIEW: I got this rope at the end of the 2012 summer season and took it into the Sierra high country for some cragging. It held up great right out the package running over sharp edges and rough rock.

Later, I took the rope with me on a three month long road trip from Indian Creek to Eldorado Canyon and the Red River Gorge. It took lots of abuse, multiple 30+ foot whippers and lots of mileage running over rough stone. The rope ran through the belay device pretty fast at first, but with time it became less slick and started to run fine. I would definitely recommend this rope for every type of climbing - it clips great on sport climbs and handles perfectly at the belay of a multi-pitch route.

OUT OF THE PACKAGE: The rope came out of the package very nicely, very minimal kinks or twists. The rope held knots perfectly, I never had a problem with knots or hitches loosening or slipping. The rope ran very quickly through the belay device at first use (after a month or two of normal usage it ran fine).

DURABILITY: Super tough sheath. The rope ran over many edges with very minimal damage. No sign of the core exiting through the sheath after six months of usage. The rope is very stiff which means it holds its life for along time but still lent itself to super soft whips.

John Sherman

Beth Rodden

Jimmy Webb

Tara Reynvaan

Jonathan Siegrist

Chris Sharma

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TEAM

①

②

③

④

⑤

⑥

"Super Chalk, it's almost like cheating."
- Chris Sharma

match the hands

Answers are available at www.metoliusclimbing.com



HIPPOPOTABUS

Tim Tuomey and his 1971, Volkswagen Westfalia

CCMAG: “Where did you find this beast?”

TT: “I found my bus in 1987 in a farmer’s field just outside of Gafney in South Carolina. A friend told me about this bus just sitting on a farmer’s property. I went to see it and couldn’t believe my eyes. The damn thing was buried 3 feet into the ground and the farmer was using it as target practice. No engine, no wheels, no transmission - just a hulking body. I spoke to the farmer and after a little bit of haggling I got it for \$200, 100 paper targets and a case of Budweiser.”

“Sounds like you had to do a lot of renovations.”

“Where do I start? The Engine is a 2160cc (2.0 liter) type IV stroker design with dual webbers. I put in a 091 desert racing transmission. The bus reactor (engine) was built to carry heavy loads in the mountains. I can pass a Lexus going up a hill... in reverse... in a snow storm. I rebuilt all the cabinets to accommodate and hide my climbing gear. My bed is full-size and is the most comfortable place I know to sleep. I have a pop-top and can sleep upstairs on warm nights. It’s a great place to stare at stars on the eastside. I built in a stove close to the bed so in the morning I can just turn the knob and have coffee brewing before I get out of bed. It also has hardwood floors which are nice if something is spilt. The passenger seat is on a swivel. This is cool because it gives the occupants one more place to sit during dinner. I also have a net hammock that hangs down below the upper bed.”

Damn dude, I really want to be in the swivel chair when you’re passing a Lexus in reverse in a snowstorm. Of all the renovations what’s your favorite?
“I love my satellite radio. I can tune into a Giants game in remote areas like Indian Creek or Joshua Tree.”

“How’s the gas mileage?”

“It gets 26mpg on the highway and 22mpg in the City.”

“You’ve probably had a million good times in the Hippopotabus, but does one moment really stand out?”

I have enough stories to fill 100 encyclopedia-size books, but one does stand out. My partner and I were on our way to the Bugaboo when the bus’s coil gave up the ghost. We were miles from any kind of parts store. All of the sudden a white van pulls up and a group of Franciscan Monks get out asking if we needed help... Um sure.... They asked if we had a place to stay. We just pointed at the bus; I guess we’ll be sleeping on the side of the road. They offered us beds at their monastery located just outside of Kootenay National Park. One of the monks drives away, and then returns with a tow truck. My partner and I climb into the truck and travel back to their monastery. That night they fed us and put us in a bunk house with very comfortable beds. The next morning we are awoken by the smell of bacon and eggs and someone wrenching on my bus. Come to find out one of the monks was a local mechanic - he had the coil and knew how to dial in Italian carbs at altitude. As we sat in their company I was reminded of the kindness of strangers - it was truly a moment in my life I’ll never forget.”

“Have you had as good of luck with rangers as you did with the monks?”

“Yosemite rangers have tried the best they could to harass me. These amateur cops thought they’d find something to bust me but all they found was a block of month old cheese and one empty beer can. I contacted the Department of the Interior to file harassment complaints and then followed up with my local congressional representative with a formal inquiry. I was told later that the said ranger was relocated. If anyone has this happen to them I suggest you follow the same steps. The power of the pen is mightier than the sword.”

“During a hailstorm would you rather sleep in your bus or a portaledge.”

“Bus! Every time. Someday I’ll be buried in my bus like some big wall Viking. Put all my climbing gear in the bus, place it on top of El Cap, douse it in kerosene, light it on fire and shove it over the edge. Then the rangers can have something to search and rescue...”

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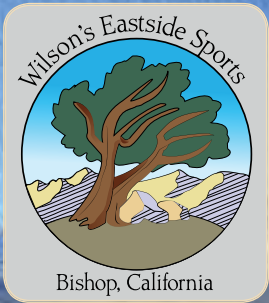
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Sara Everson showing off her skills in our last Friction Series.



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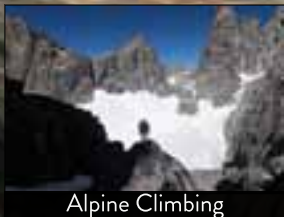
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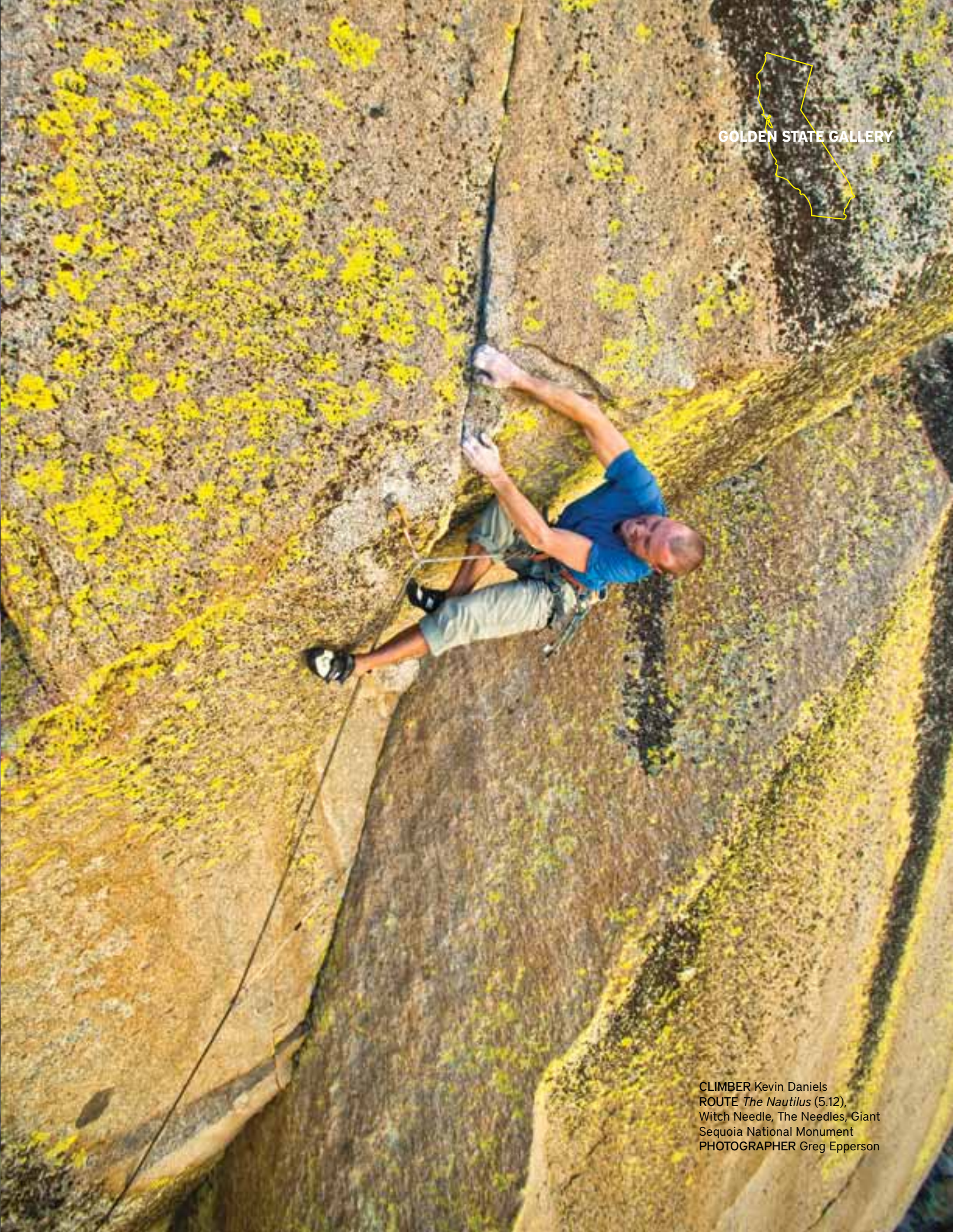


GOLDEN STATE GALLERY

CLIMBER Jason Dunbar (1976-2011)
ROUTE Bouldering somewhere near Visalia.
PHOTOGRAPHER Jim Thornburg
You are remembered and missed by many, Jason.



CLIMBER Russ McBride
ROUTE *Rostrum Direct Finish* (5.12b),
Yosemite Valley
PHOTOGRAPHER Jim Thornburg



GOLDEN STATE GALLERY

CLIMBER Kevin Daniels
ROUTE *The Nautilus* (5.12),
Witch Needle, The Needles, Giant
Sequoia National Monument
PHOTOGRAPHER Greg Epperson



CLIMBER Phil Bone
ROUTE Project, The Fissures, Table Mountain
PHOTOGRAPHER Dean Fleming

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Tim Terry and Jessica Flynn on Separation Anxiety, 5.9 Mt. St. Helena, Photo: Jerry Dodrill

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..kuaat..
racks

Photo by Tim Matsui www.timmatsui.com



GIVING UP EXCUSES

LEAVING THE HANDICAPS BEHIND ON THE SPORT PROJECT

WORDS + JAMES LUCAS
IMAGE + DEAN FLEMING

I REACHED FOR THE EDGE, a full pad crimp. The pumpy, overhanging basalt of the Fugitive Extension weighed down my crooked left arm. The anchors taunted me. I failed in slow motion. 20 seconds later and 20 feet below, I hung dejected at the end of the rope. I wanted to scream at Jailhouse, the steep sport crag in the Sierra foothills. The move was impossible. I immediately made excuses for myself. I settled on one quickly. I was handicapped.

+++

SEVEN YEARS AGO, I fell from the top of Intersection Rock in Joshua Tree. I was onsite free soloing the *North Overhang* (5.9) when I made a grievous error. I passed the crux of the climb and stared at the summit, a few meters away. I felt secure knowing I'd sent the crux, 100 feet of space swimming below me. Then I repositioned my feet, moving them underneath my body, a slight miscalculation. I started to barndoor, my balance suddenly gone. I fell. After 70 feet I hit a ledge. I was ecstatic. I had stuck it. I was still alive. Then I fell off the ledge and went another 30 feet to the ground.

Other climbers, out for a mid December weekend at the National Park, saw my fall and helped facilitate a rescue. I had a stroke shortly after I hit. My brain swelled inside my cracked skull, threatening to kill me. A helicopter flew me to the ICU in Palm Springs. I barely made it to the hospital. Spinal and ankle fusion, pin and rods in my elbow, a vana cavity filter to stop a blood clot from entering my heart, brain damage from hitting my head, a broken clavicle, nerve damage. I spent 3 weeks in the ICU and 81 days in the hospital that year. I laid prone in a hospital bed for over 2 months before I fought to sit up. There's nothing inspirational about learning how to walk again. It's a painful process. To facilitate my recovery, I fixated on climbing. I took the steps to get back to the crag.

After the ICU, I went to a spine and physical rehabilitation center in Los Gatos, California, near where I was attending school at UC Santa Cruz. I learned to stand, then to stumble, and finally to walk. I focused on recovering, and returning to climbing. Every step brought me closer to the crag. I wanted to climb more than ever.

"Maybe you should take up something safer, like cycling," Paul Dossick, a South Bay area orthopedist, told me in his office. Dossick tore through the scar tissue that had healed from my last surgery. "Or take up bowling."

The geriatrics waiting outside for their knee and hip replacements heard my yell through the small office. I nearly fainted from the pain.

More painful than Dossick's wrenching through the tender scars of my elbow was his bowling suggestion. It was a recurring theme in my recovery. Doctors and physical therapists told me that climbing led to injury. I pretended not to notice. I just wanted to climb again, it was crucial to my recovery.

Dossick removed two screws and a plate from my elbow during a second surgery. The orthopedist increased the range of motion in my arm. He could do nothing about the metal in my ankle or the rods in my back. The bottom of my tricep would never return and I lost an inch of my reach. I went to physical therapy and worked the muscle out. I push harder with my triceps when I mantle, I stand harder on my feet, I open my hip to crack climb on my fused ankle, I smear my knee to make up for the rods in my back, I learned to compensate for my various injuries.

+++

"SUPER PETE" CHASSE reached for the edge on the *Fugitive Extension*. He grabbed the crimp, wavered a little hitting the undercling, and then clipped the anchors. Solid. The 40 year old sport climber lowered 30 meters down the overhanging 5.13b. Hobbling to the base of the route on the right side of Jailhouse, he unscrewed his urethane foam foot, replacing his custom fabricated climbing shoe with the foot he used to walk in.

Pete worked as a steel fabricator for a pier building company in Lake Tahoe and he often moved large dirt-sifting equipment. A week after sending a 5.14b at Jailhouse, Pete was lowering an enormous piece of machinery. One of the hooks attached to the chains holding the equipment fell off. 6,000 pounds of metal fell onto Pete and pinned his leg. The doctors gave Pete two choices: a dozen surgeries and maybe partial function of his leg or cut off the limb. Pete didn't

AFTER 70 FEET
I HIT A LEDGE.
THEN I FELL
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GROUND.

give the options much thought, he let go of the dead limb. Pete bought two prosthetic feet to attach to his new "leg." The first foot he walked in. The second he ground down into a little shoe, he made a stiff edge on it, pointed the toe a little, glued sticky rubber onto it, and created a climbing shoe. Pete's returned to the rocks four months after his accident.

"I never see the use in making excuses," Pete told me over the phone as he drove back from Bishop this spring. Over the weekend he climbed *High Plains Drifter*, a high V7 at the Buttermilks that he had broken his heel on earlier that season. "There are certain things you can't do but there are other things you can do to make up it for it." Because of the prosthetic, Pete is unable to kneebar but he can stand on his prosthetic forever; his artificial foot never gets pumped on slabby terrain. For Pete the loss of his leg didn't handicap his climbing, it just changed it.

"Grab the sidepull and reach straight for that crimp." Pete told me at the crag. He had just hiked the route and I desperately wanted to do it too. I started to show Pete my arm, to give an excuse of why I couldn't reach straight with a crooked arm. I wanted to tell him about my handicap. I looked at his prosthetic leg, and remembered how he didn't use any of the dozen of kneebar rests that I used on the route. I could only nod in response.

+++

THIS SPRING AT JAILHOUSE, I pantomimed the beta to Jake Whittaker, a tall bespectacled Yosemite friend, as we sat at the pillar start of the *Fugitive Extension*.

Jake, a master slab climber, once forgot his blown out shoes on his way to the Camp 4 boulders. He climbed anyway, trying the notoriously difficult V5 slab Blue Suede Shoes. Jake crimped his way up the problem barefoot, ignoring the extra difficulty.

I jumped in the air showing the dyno after the crux. I wobbled slightly showing the delicate traverse move and flapped my arms wildly pretending to fall going to the anchor. I pointed to my elbow, indicating my six-year-old injury. Jake smiled.

"So, if you'd sent that 5.9, you could have sent this 13b?"

+++

FOR A YEAR, I thought the move was impossible. I tried and I fell. I had a good excuse for not being able to do the route but Pete had a better excuse. There are thousands of hard climbers who, like Pete, fight through adversity. American aphorist Mason Cooley, wrote "Excuses change nothing, but make everyone feel better." As Jake suggested, if I had sent the *North Overhang* of Intersection Rock, it wouldn't change whether or not I could climb my current sport project. I decided to crimp harder on the side pull to compensate for my crooked elbow. I fell. But I was closer. This spring, my raw hands grated across the basalt for the third time of the day. As I approached the crux of the *Fugitive Extension*, I didn't fixate on my broken elbow and I didn't think about the moves ahead. I breathed. I stepped into the move, reached for the crimp, and latched it. I fought a few more feet and clipped the anchors.



Dan Arnold faces the facts while working *Fugitive* (5.13a) at Jailhouse.

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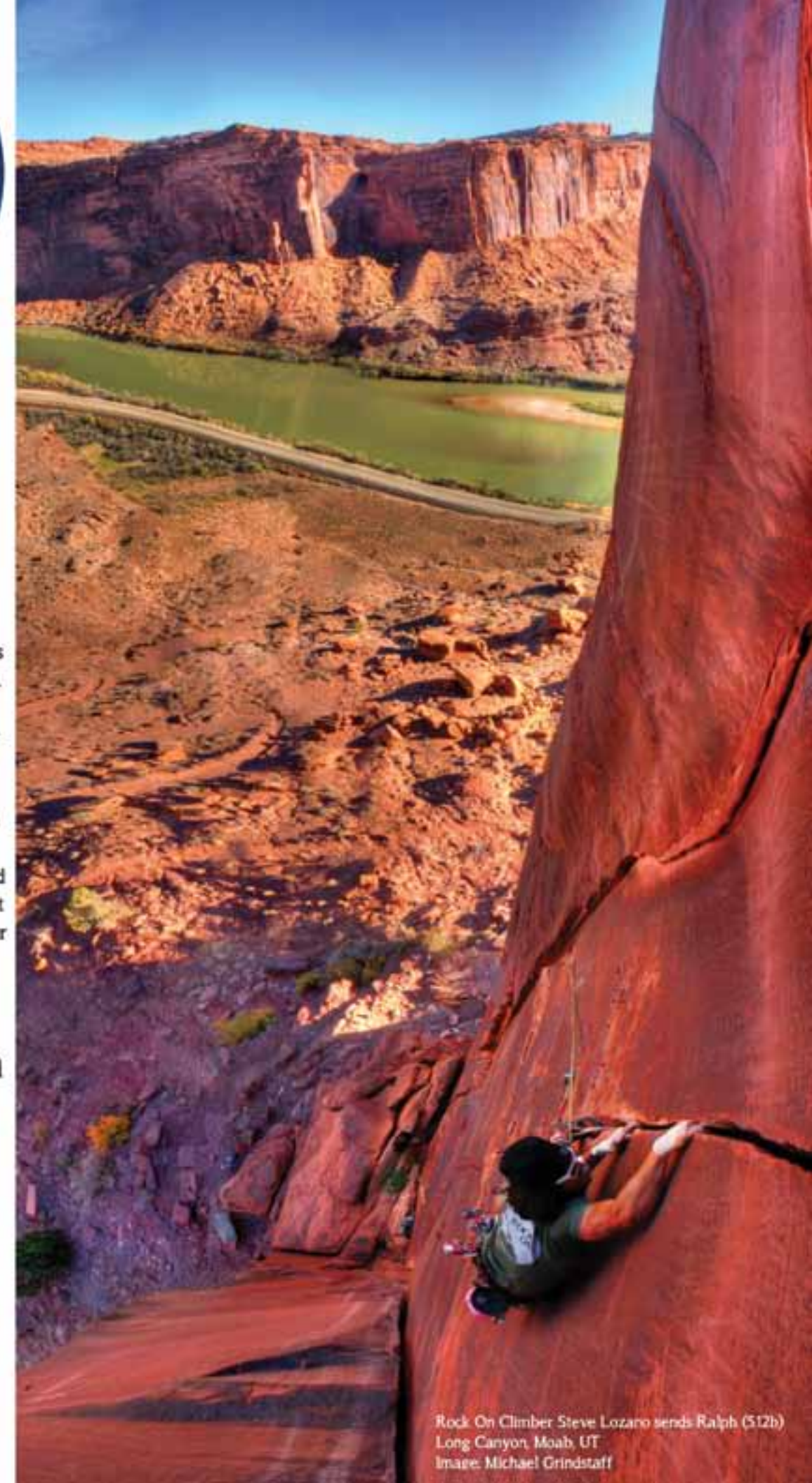
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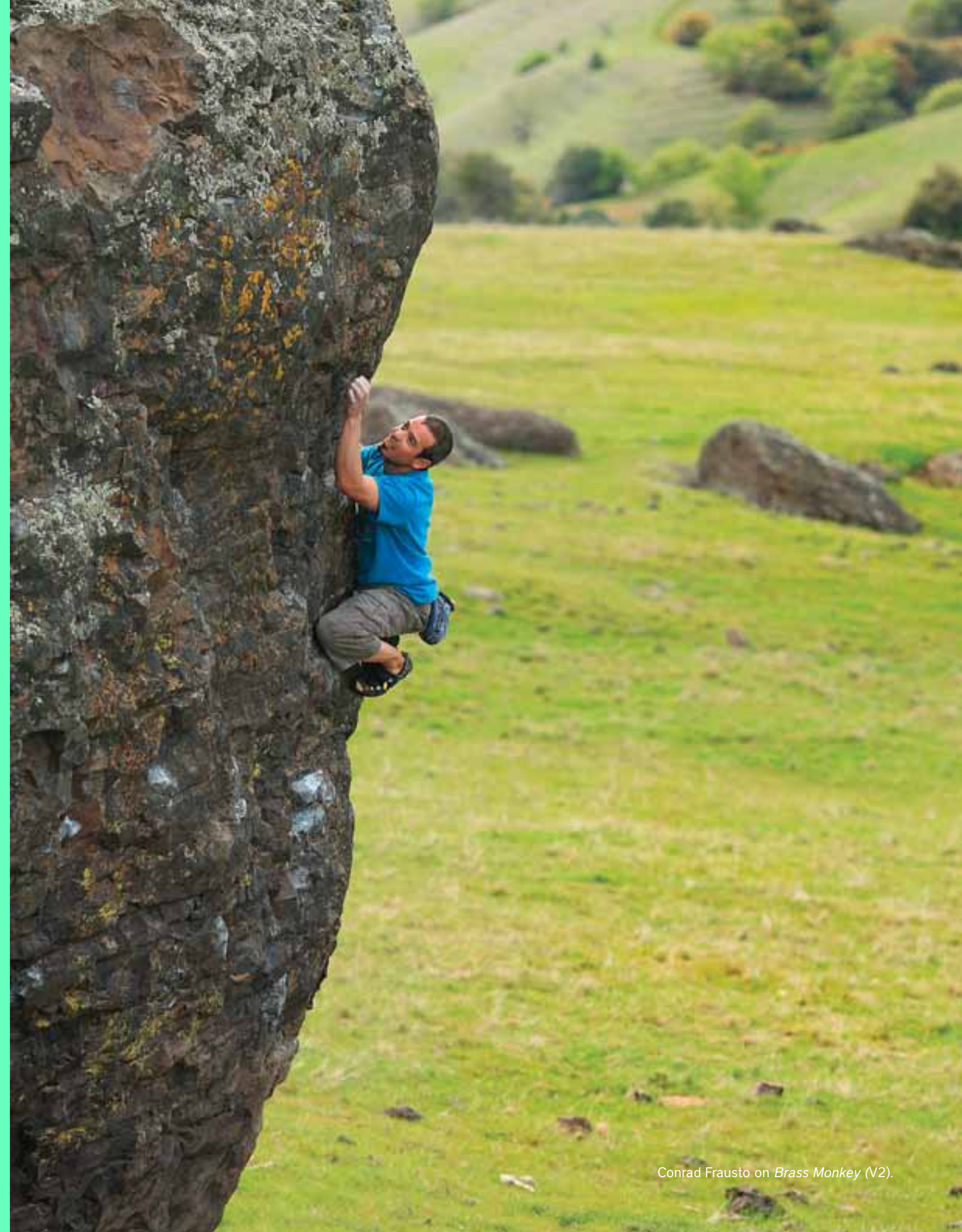


NUT TREE



VACAVILLE'S BASALT BLOCKS

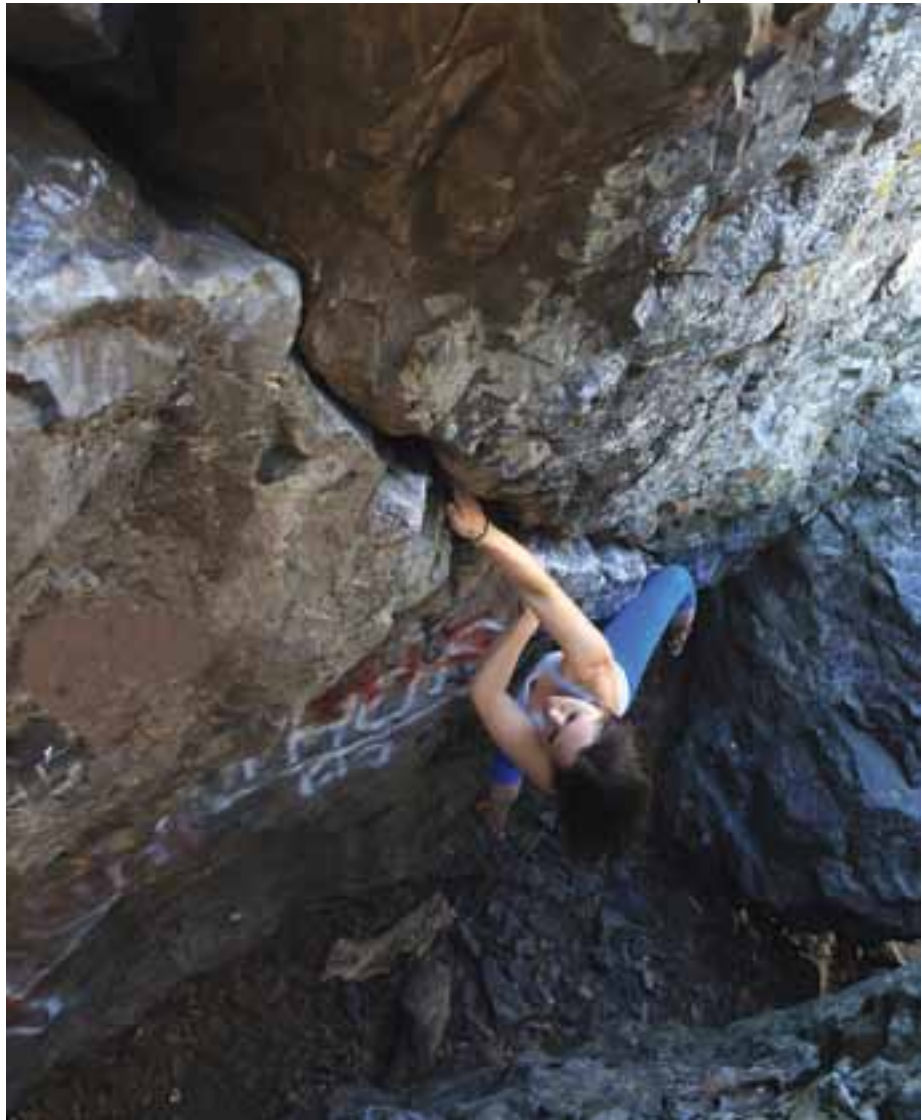
WORDS + CHAD SUCHOSKI
IMAGES + JIM THORNBURG



Conrad Frausto on *Brass Monkey* (V2).

Chris Summit on
Gimme My 40,
Sucka' (V1).





LEFT Alexandra Witte on a *Nutcracker* (V2).

THERE ARE
PLENTY OF
HIGH QUALITY
FACE ROUTES,
HIGHBALLS,
SIT STARTS,
ELIMINATES
AND EVEN A
FEW CRACKS

Stonewall Boulder as evidenced by early historical accounts and the amount of artifacts they left behind. Shards of obsidian, arrowheads, beads and even a mortar and pestle used for grinding dried salmon are among some of the artifacts found in recent years. With no video games or Television to occupy their minds, it’s not hard to imagine these early visitors climbing on the rocks. No different than today’s children, with their instinctive monkey-like behavior, the young Ululatos probably nabbed some coveted first accents.

Although rock climbers have known about the Nut Tree Boulders for at least 50 years, the blocks have somehow escaped popularity. Perhaps it’s because there were no big name climbers, breakthrough routes, or community of motivated locals to spread the word. Or maybe the notoriously loose “key lock” holds and surface choss of the many undeveloped routes turned early climbers away. Whatever it was, the Nut Tree Boulders remained a seldom visited area until the late 1990s, when practically overnight several groups of motivated boulderers almost simultaneously rediscovered the area. Charlie Wyatt, Sean Brady, Aaron Rough, Mike Papciak, Chris Summit, Scott Fry and Jim Thornburg were among the first climbers to record their ascents. These climbers nabbed some of the Nut Tree Boulders’ most sought after lines and established many of the hardest routes on the hillside.

+++

THE NUT TREE BOULDERS are spread out over 415 acres of open space. There are three main areas that are most frequently visited: the Woodcrest, Boxcar and Hillcrest boulders. All three areas host a variety of unique routes and a wide range of grades. There are plenty of high quality face routes, highballs, sit starts, eliminates and even a few cracks, yet the real gems are found on the area’s many traverses. These long, relentless, powerful and sequential stretches of stone (currently ranging from V0 to V9) provide everything from short 10 foot warm-ups to long 80 foot endurance test-pieces.



Chris Summit on *Coulda Been Jimi’s* (V4).

In the heart of the California’s grasslands resides the small suburban town of Vacaville. Like most centrally located towns on the outskirts of the San Francisco Bay Area, Vacaville is home to factory stores, strip malls and sprawling suburbs. While modern expansion has covered much of the region with parking lots and subdivisions, the town’s developers have set aside a few hundred acres of land as open space, curbing the spread of homes along the area’s scenic hillsides. Today the hills themselves seem almost unnatural in the urban environment; landscapes full of old growth oak trees yet still open enough for 360 degree views along the ridge tops. On a typical day it’s easy to forget you’re surrounded by a suburban jungle, feeling more like you’re on the frontier looking into a vast unexplored wilderness. From many vantage points on the outskirts of Vacaville, one can see for 100 miles in any direction, from Mt Lassen to the north and the crest of the Sierra to the east.

High above a typical middleclass neighborhood near the edge of town, a scrappy band of edgy basalt boulders augment Vacaville’s green grassy knolls and enormous valley oaks. The Nut Tree Boulders are not nearly as expansive as California’s bouldering destinations, but each square-cut block provides an astonishing number of potential holds, offering a myriad of crimps, slopers, pinches, razor edges and full-on buckets. Yet perhaps the most pleasant feature of this area is found while wandering between the boulders - quietly searching for the perfect place to stretch out and forget the rigors of daily life.

+++

THE FIRST VISITORS to the Nut Tree Boulders were not (as we often tend to believe) an eclectic band of marauding climbers or some eccentric youth looking for adventure. It was the Southern Patwin or more specifically, Ululatos Native Americans who settled in along these foothills over 4,000 years ago. The Nut Tree Boulders were once a prime hunting ground for the Ululatos. They took refuge from the sun among the boulders, setting up hunting camps behind the popular

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OF GREAT POTENTIAL
FOR NEW ROUTES.

Colin Kenneth on
Stoned Dangler
(V5).





Rebecca Taggart on the *Stoned Dangler Traverse* (V5).



Many of the traverses at the Nut Tree Boulders are low to the ground and easy to work in sections. Climbers visiting this area should sample the big reaches, small crimps and undercut feet of the *Stoned Dangler* (V5). Those interested in working endurance, should not miss the incredibly long *Boxcar Traverse* (V5). This 80 foot rectangular boulder starts off with a relaxing 30 feet of square-cut edges over V0 terrain, then 10 feet of easy slab to warm up your feet before turning the corner and quickly building the burn with another 30 feet of slightly overhanging V2 slopers and pinches. Finally, the *Boxcar Traverse* pulls around another corner where the route forces climbers to commit to 10 feet of steep and sequential V5.

Those interested in taller problems can stack pads below the areas committing highballs. A few of the stand-out problems with intimidating top-outs include *Mother Nature* (V1), *Brass Monkey* (V2) and *Natural Disaster* (V3). *Mother Nature* climbs 25 feet up an aesthetic arête to pull a heady crux at the top. *Natural Disaster* was once a notoriously spooky route with a loose topout. Fortunately, the climb cleaned itself up a few years ago during a cold snap, shedding its loose topout and upping the difficulty to desperately thin V3. A few feet to the right of *Natural Disaster*, the striking arête *Brass Monkey* begs to be climbed. Positive but hard-to-locate holds at the top thwart many onsite attempts of this 20 foot-tall feature.

+++

THE FEW BASALT BLOCKS on the outskirts of Vacaville’s suburbs make-up a relatively small portion of the Bay Area’s bouldering. Yet as time wears on, more and more climbers are beginning to realize just how much fun these scrappy boulders can offer. Over the past decade, a few dedicated climbers have spent countless spring days at the boulders grooming landings, cleaning up loose holds and chalking new routes. Meanwhile, wtw

With no cutting-edge problems and little storied or colorful history the Nut Tree Boulders could never hope to reach destination status. But perhaps that is the area’s greatest feature. The boulders are stuffed between two of California’s biggest cities with almost no other climbing for 50 miles in any direction. The rolling green hills and magnificent oaks are surrounded by 10 million people. Yet the grass-land that surrounds the rocks below the great nut trees remains a quite little place – a spot where you can stretch out, forget the bustling suburbs below and enjoy a boulder all to yourself.



CENTER Alexandra Witte on a V1 above Vacaville.
ABOVE Colin Kenneth on *Bloody Madness* (V3).

THE BETA

GETTING THERE: From San Francisco take I-80 east to Vacaville. Take the Allison Drive Exit and then turn left onto Brown’s Valley Parkway. Street-side parking can be found near the corner of Wrentham Drive and Woodcrest Drive and farther down Wrentham Drive at Hillcrest Drive.

WHERE TO STAY: Camping can be found for \$20 per-night north of Vacaville near Lake Barryessa at Putah Creek State Wildlife Area. Putah Creek Park is located at 7600 Knoxville Road in Napa. Amenities include partial and full

electric hook up, bathrooms with hot showers, picnic area and grocery store.

GUIDEBOOK: Jim Thornburg’s *Bay Area Rock* has the most up-to-date route descriptions and approach information for this area.

TICKLIST:
Mother Nature (V1)
Natural Disaster (V3)
Brass Monkey (V2)
Boxcar Traverse (V5)
Stoned Dangler (V5)



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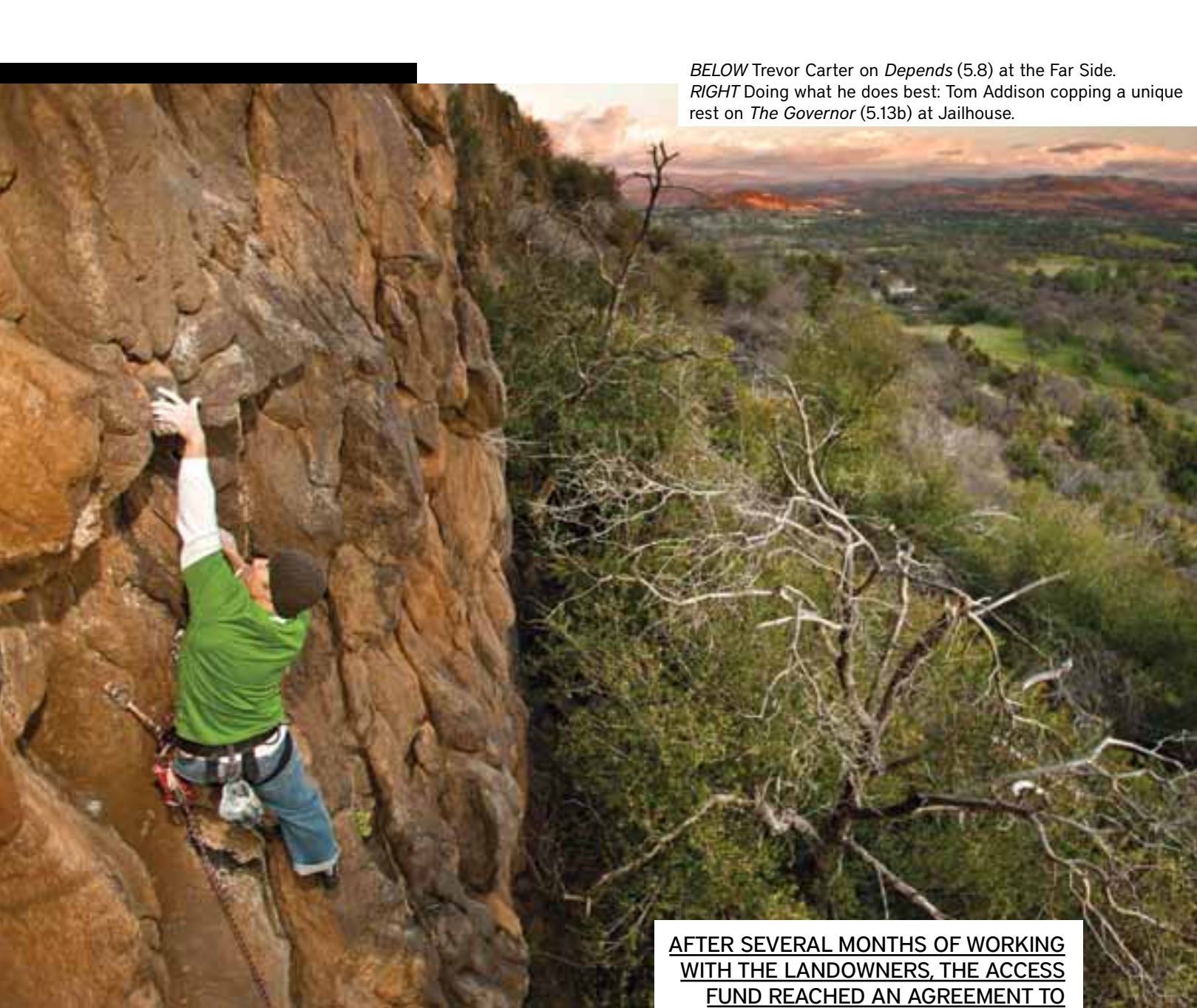
THE MOTHER LODGE
SPRING CRAGGING AT TABLE MOUNTAIN

WORDS & IMAGES
DEAN FLEMING



THE MOTHER LODGE

Cody Sims on *Rawhide* (5.10d) at the Grotto.



BELOW Trevor Carter on *Depends* (5.8) at the Far Side.
RIGHT Doing what he does best: Tom Addison copping a unique rest on *The Governor* (5.13b) at Jailhouse.

during the early stages of development. Because the cliff and its approach sit squarely on private property, Jailhouse has been something of a secret for the last 20 years. The landowners have historically allowed access to the cliff, but requested there be no guidebook and no publicity. In 2010, El Cerrito resident and long-time Jailhouse climber Tom Addison realized that an approved subdivision (which included the trailhead and initial approach trail) would threaten future access to the crag.

Addison contacted the Access Fund and the landowners who immediately began hatching a plan to conserve Jailhouse for future generations. After several months of working with the landowners, the Access Fund reached an agreement to protect the crag through a complex conservation development partnership. Part of the effort to “unlock Jailhouse” culminated in the construction of a nice new parking area and a shorter trail to the cliff. The conservation easement also came with a few requests from the landowners. No dogs, amplified music or camping is allowed on the premises. For the complete list of Jailhouse details and the code to access the new parking area on O’Byrnes Ferry Road, please visit accessfund.org/jailhouse.

+++

Table Mountain’s diverse and thriving plant life is both a blessing and a burden for local climbers. At many of the more obscure crags and less frequented walls, lichens and ferns thrive on un-chalked holds. The quality of the rock at Table Mountain’s cliffs can change from excellent to choss in a few hundred feet. This phenomenon has produced superb quality routes just feet

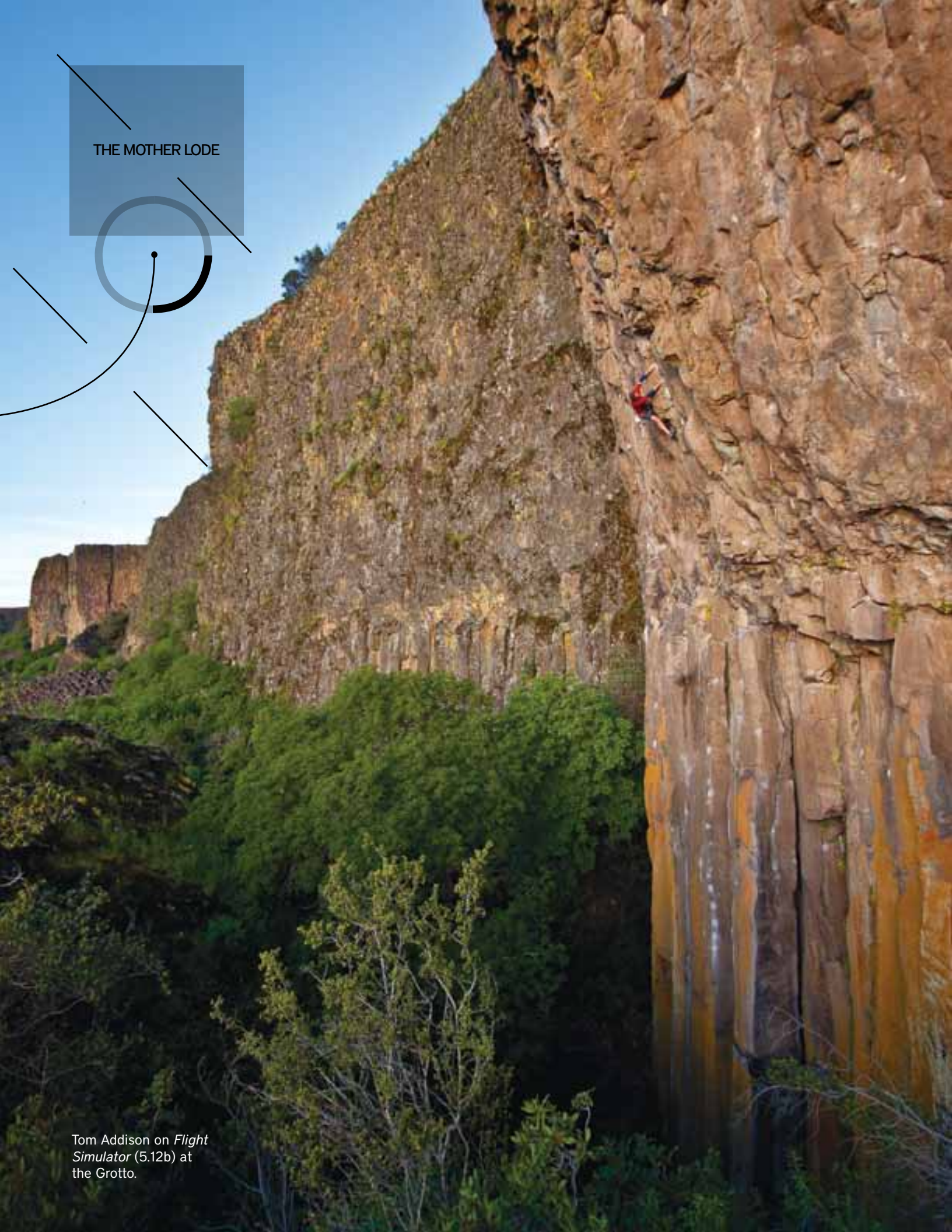
from intimidating adventure climbing while also hosting an ideal habitat for unique plant and animal species.

The rock quality at Table Mountain certainly sets it aside from world-class climbing areas, but the diverse cragging options, short approaches and incredible scenery have quickly turned this expansive area into a fantastic resource for central California based climbers. As the sun sets over the reservoirs to the west, climbers hike out of the Grotto, down the green slopes from Jailhouse and across the perfectly flat summit of Table Mountain. Just before the wildflowers close their leaves the horses that pasture in the ranchlands settle in among the tall grasses and stately oaks. It is on these spring evenings, when the light filters through the clouds and illuminates the vibrant colors of the valleys below, that Table Mountain’s visitors observe an unsurpassed vision of the California Foothills.





Evan Pearce on *Supreme Being* (5.12c), Jailhouse.



Tom Addison on *Flight Simulator* (5.12b) at the Grotto.



TOP Andrea Batt on *Granted* (5.9) at the Grotto.
BELOW One of the many succulents that grow on the Grotto's Ort Wall - Micha Miller climbing *Clip Clip Wow* (5.10d).

THE BETA

GETTING THERE: From the Bay Area take the 580 east to the 205. In Manteca merge onto Highway 120 east. Just before the town of Jamestown Highway 120 turns into Highway 180; follow this to Jamestown and turn left onto Rawhide Road (at the only stoplight in Jamestown). Stay on Rawhide for about 1 mile until you see signs for Shell Road at a prominent Y. Turn left onto Shell Road and proceed for approximately half a mile until you reach the first of two unlocked horse gates where Shell Road makes a transition from pavement to dirt. Either begin your hike here or continue down dirt Shell Road (4 wheel drive and high clearance recommended) past the second horse gate and park near the bathrooms. Please close the horse gates behind you as you drive Shell Road!

WHERE TO STAY: Please DO NOT camp anywhere on Shell Road, or near the parking area for Table Mountain in Jamestown or at the Jailhouse parking area. If camping occurs at these locations access will be threatened. Hotels are very cheap in winter and can be a good option if you're staying a short time. New Melones Reservoir offers the closest camping to the crags but is expensive at \$18.00 a night. Marble Quarry RV Park is \$15.00 per night and is within 15 minutes of the crag.

GUIDEBOOK: *A Climber's Guide to the Sonora Pass Highway*, 2nd Edition by Brad Young and Steve Dawson is expected to be out by the summer of 2013. This will be the only comprehensive guidebook to the Grotto, Fissures, Midwall, Farside and White Room. *Bay Area Rock*, 7th Edition by Jim Thornburg offers a great selection of climbs at the Grotto and a comprehensive guide to Jailhouse.

THE TICKLIST:
Rawhide (5.10d): The crack that many call the "best splitter north of Yosemite." Although that is not true, it's still an amazing little crack worth losing some skin in.

Repo Man (5.11a): A nice little parallel crack leads to a technical face-climbing crux beside an exposed arête.

Squealer (5.11c): Climb Go with the Flow (a nice 5.9 hand crack) to the base of a tall headwall. Punch up the headwall through amazing steep jugs. A 70 meter rope is needed to get back to the ground.

Funny Man (5.12a): One of the most overlooked climbs on Table Mountain, Funny Man climbs an intricate face to an exposed, steep battleship prow.

Soap on a Rope (5.12d): Is it 13a or 12d? It often depends on how you're feeling, how you knee-bar and how much cardio training you've done. Soap is a classic line that climbs straight up the center of the main cave at Jailhouse.





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LOST IN THE CANYONS

THE TUNNEL BOULDERS

WORDS & IMAGES + DEVLIN GANDY

Morgan Roth on the
Malibu Lieback (V0).



Lucas Gaona sending *Thrust* (V7).



CENTER Joshua Roth feeling out the *Test Tube* (V0).
RIGHT Jesse Weiner sticking the crux of *Terminator* (V7).



IT'S 90 DEGREES. Cars are filling up the highway as far as I can see. It's rush hour and I'm leaving Los Angeles. Heading down the road I see clouds over the canyon. I roll the window down and a breeze picks up, the temperature begins to drop ever so slightly. I pull to the side and park, grab my pad and walk down the road to strange looks from passing motorists. If I'm lucky, someone I know will pass by and I'll have one more person to climb with this afternoon. In a few minutes time, walking along the canyon between the creek and the cars, the temperature drops some 15 degrees and fog blocks out the sun. As I turn a bend in the road, a strong wind picks up and my crashpad feels like a sail. As the hot air from the valley rises behind me it continually sucks in the cool ocean air. This weather phenomenon leaves the Tunnel Boulders in an ideal microclimate for most of the year.

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THE TUNNEL BOULDERS are a swath of large sandstone blocks in Malibu Canyon, just down the creek from the more famous Malibu Creek State Park. Malibu Creek is known for its breccia pocket pulling, yet the Tunnel Boulders house a wide variety of features. Crimps, slopers, rails, flakes, pinches and cobbles provide unique movement on the otherwise smooth sandstone. The area is lush and green with boulders strewn about the creek and shores from the surrounding mountains. Over the eons the force of the water has left much of the rock strengthened, sculpted, and polished to some degree. Most of the problems are between V0 and V6, although there are two-dozen or so harder lines and a number of projects still awaiting a send.

I started climbing at Tunnel Boulders about five years ago. Back then, the place had fallen into obscurity. Stoney Point was the rage and the sandstone of Malibu canyon was just an addendum in the Southern California Bouldering guide, more whispers than real. On my first visit I bushwhacked down a steep hillside, sliding on loose dirt and through poison oak and finally made it to the first boulder in the canyon, The Cube. I stared in awe. The location was surreal, a river flowing behind me, flowering orchids surrounding the problems, oak and bay trees hedged in the boulders, wilderness stood above. Thankfully I found the trail on the way out and was amazed that I was just a minute from the road. I couldn't understand why no one I knew climbed here. I quickly became a regular, spending more days than I remember. At the same time, a renaissance took place.

+++

TODAY THE FOG KEEPS THE CANYON COOL; it can't be more than 70 degrees. My eyes pry apart the moves of the boulder that's evaded me for the better part of two weeks. The rock is cold and there's a light breeze. I lay my pad down on the flat sand landing, positioning it where I think I'll fall if I bust the move at the lip. It's a 15 foot fall and I'm on my own today.

Avalon (V9) was put up by Bill Leventhal in the 1990s. At the time it was one of the hardest boulder problems in Southern California. A few of his other climbs in the area are still unrepeated and still graded B2- many are tall, delicate, and scary with horrible landings. My hat is off to Bill for sending them in the first place.

The conditions couldn't be much better and I am feeling good. I reach for the starting in-cut rail and pull off the ground. I grab a good sloper and gaston into an in-cut. I move fast and effortlessly and before I know it I have one hand over the lip and the other holding on harder than it should to the last crimp. I commit, shooting my left hand high up to a bread loaf pinch. High-stepping over the lip I start to shake. I'm alone; I'm high off the deck and one move away from the hardest thing I've ever climbed. I'm holding on too hard. My body

tenses and my focus shakes as my foot slips off the lip. My stomach slides over the lip in a double take of surprise and my hands keep holding, I'm falling in slow motion. Thunk... sand goes flying.

Back on the ground I take a moment to recuperate. My stomach is scraped up and there's a foot deep crater from where my foot missed the pad. All things considered, I'm fine and a little shaken. I go to the creek and breath. I realize that the mistakes that caused me to fall were all in my head. Twenty minutes later, I collect myself, put on some music and try to silence the voice of fear (or is that reason?) in my head. Some people yell to break barriers, I listen to music to silence my doubts. Something about the nature of a beat, the rhythm of movement, the flow of a line - it all melds together so seamlessly. I grab the in-cut and climb back up. My foot reaches high onto the lip. I breathe deep and reach the finishing rail. I stand on the top as the song peaks, I feel like I'm in a movie or a dream.

+++

THAT WAS A FEW YEARS AGO NOW. Avalon is just another trick in the hat at this point, but that summer became the dawn of a renaissance at the Tunnels. Dimitrius Fritz, Spencer Church, and others established a slew of new problems up and down the canyon. Unclimbed lines were everywhere waiting to be seen by a discerning eye. Other climbers visited as well, establishing some notable climbs like *Microwave* (V8, X) on the El Diablo Boulder, a 30-foot high beast of a problem climbed by Garret Gregor and Aron Couzens on the tallest and most obvious boulder at the Tunnels. The line is still awaiting subsequent repeats. We found new areas up and down the creek, establishing some 30 new problems that summer in what was widely regarded as a "climbed out" area. Even now, projects are still waiting to be sent.

Five years later, the place still carries the solitude and beauty that awed me that very first day. There is still rarely another person in the canyon on a weekday or weekend afternoon. Seasons have come and gone, each year bringing new projects, new friends and new ascents. This year being no exception, the first month of the year saw a new V12 at the Tunnels. *The Prow SDS* (V12) at Tunnels is currently the hardest boulder problem in Los Angeles.

+++

ATOP A ROUNDED BOULDER, I breathe in deep as the river roars below. A hawk flies in the distance and I feel that cool inland breeze coming in like clockwork. All around me the oaks rustle and the sycamores bow with the waves of the wind. Taking it all in, it seems almost like an orchestrated performance. Surreal and sublime, the Tunnels are the epitome of all I love here in Los Angeles: freedom, beauty, nature, solitude, adventure, and potential. I've found them all here, and though my quest for Avalon is complete, the Tunnels keep calling me back.



THE BETA

GETTING THERE: From Los Angeles take the 101 North, exit Las Virgenes Canyon Road in the town of Calabasas heading south. Drive past Malibu Creek State park and take a left at the first stoplight after the park, this is Piuma road. Park in a dirt-pullout at this intersection. If the lot is full, pay parking (\$7) can be found 500 feet further down Las Virgenes on the right. From the parking areas, proceed down the canyon (toward the ocean) on the creek side of the road. After a 10-minute walk you will come to an obvious boulder on the side of the road, take the trail just in front of the boulder down into the canyon. This will bring you into the main area.

WHERE TO STAY: Malibu Creek State Park is located only a few miles up the road and offers excellent (but ridiculously expensive) group camping starting at \$45 for up to 8 people. A better option is located a 15 minutes drive up the coast from Las Virgenes Canyon, at Thornhill Broome Beach. The campsites are right on the beach, include a fire pit and table, and offer wonderful oceanfront views starting at \$35. Spaces go fast on weekends and in the summer, reserve a campsite at reserveamerica.com. If you would rather sleep indoors, the Good Night Inn offers rooms starting at \$50 and is a 5-minute drive away, located near the intersection of Agoura Rd. and Las Virgenes Canyon Rd.

GUIDEBOOK: There are two guidebooks for the area: Craig Fry's *Southern California Bouldering Guide* and Louie Anderson's *Sport Climbing in the Santa Monica Mountains*. Of the two, Louie's book is preferred, with photos and diagrams showing many problems and boulders. For some of the newer development, simply head down creek and look for boulders on the right. Free topos of the newer areas can be found at Obscure-boulders.blogspot.com.

THE TICKLIST: *Test Tube*, V0
Feel The Rush, V2
X Problem, V3
Terminator, V7
Avalon, V9



ABOVE Jesse Weiner on a twilight send of *Leah* (V8/9).
BELOW Morgan Roth entering the crux of *Crocodile Rock* (V6).

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This is the one we came for - this is the one we took home.
Thanks to our Belgian friends for leaving us this pitch -
we had a freaking good time!
Alexander and Thomas Huber, Mario Walder

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