



CALIFORNIA CLIMBER

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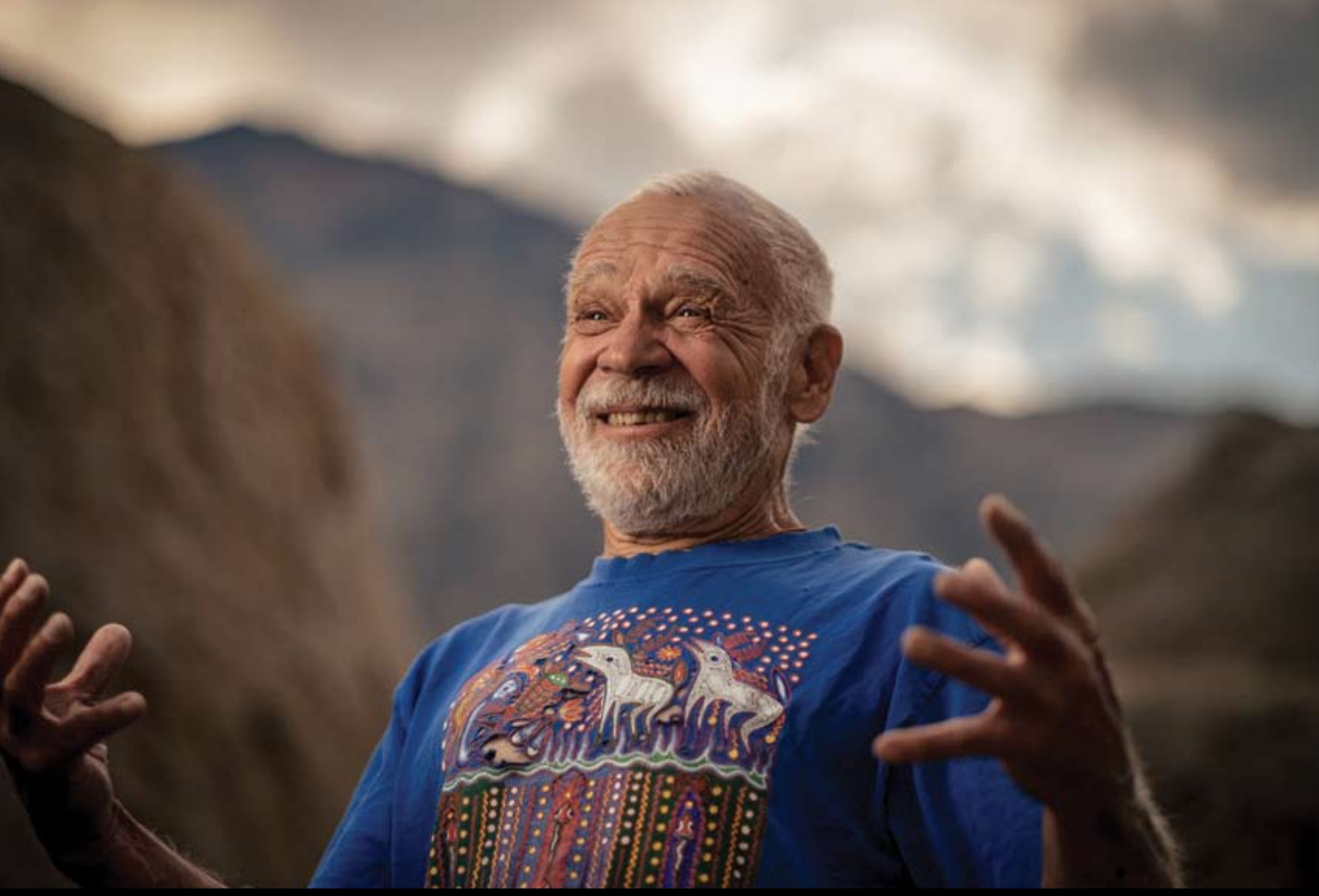
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SUMMER 2021

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Mélissa Lacasse on *Fluorescent Falcon* (5.12c), Electric Eagle Dome, Shuteye Ridge.

IMAGE + Shawn Reeder

THIS PAGE

The one and only, Doug Robinson.

IMAGE + Bruce Willey

TRANGO

prism harness



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CLIMBER: KARLY RAGER-PRIEST, SONS OF DISCOVERY, 13A



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Mo Elkhalloufi climbing 420 Shaka Brah Experience (5.7), Vent 5, Bay Area.



JIM THORNBURG

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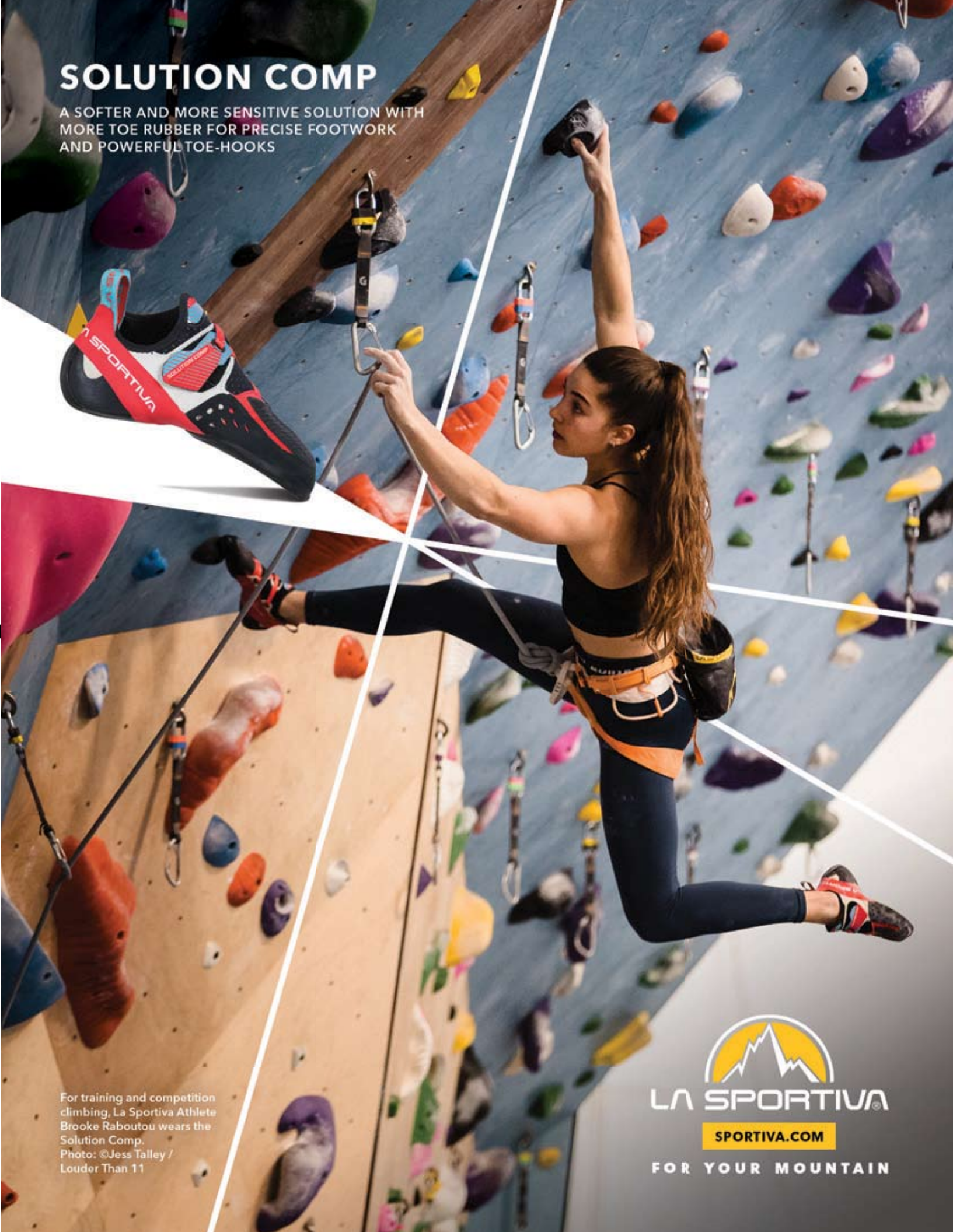


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EDITOR’S NOTE

MOVING OVER STONE

Whether climbing or scrambling, biking or kayaking, or even just going for a walk in the woods; the way humans move through the natural world influences us in ways that are as impactful as they are difficult to define. The style in which we physically interact with our environment, and the access that we are allowed for such activity, is not just therapeutic, but critical for the health of our minds and bodies. This has become obvious to most of us in hindsight of the year 2020, but what if you'd been keen to this idea for the past sixty years? What if you'd been climbing for the joy of movement, for the purity of mind, for the sake of not wasting such a precious gift, for more than half a century?

+++

As a teenager I watched and re-watched Doug Robinson’s 1988 instructional climbing film “Moving Over Stone” so many times that I literally wore it out. I can remember frantically yarding on a pair of pliers when the tape inside the aging VHS cassette finally snapped and jammed my father’s VCR. I can also vividly remember the scene in “Moving Over Stone” where Bobbi Bensman slaps her way up the laser-cut arête *Latest Rage* (5.12a) at Smith Rock. The scene where Dale Bard torques his fingers and smears his toes into *Coyne Crack* (5.11c) at Indian Creek. The scene where Lynn Hill absolutely floats the “Rose Move” on *Rude Boys* (5.13b), also at Smith. I remember Robinson himself smearing his way up an impossibly smooth slab at the Buttermilks, and I remember thinking, “Damn, Doug’s legs look ripped....” I remember wanting to be a rock climber; I just didn’t know what that meant.

In decades past I’ve had a few climbing goals. Early on I wanted to be a “5.10 Climber;” to be capable of walking up to and then leading anything rated 5.10 or easier.

+++

Later I wanted to redpoint a bunch of 5.12 cracks... then I wanted to boulder V10. I achieved some of my climbing goals but clearly failed at most of them. Yet all the while I never really questioned their purpose. Only in the past few years have I found myself wondering if these goals were actually important to me. If we are meant to be out frolicking in nature, having fun, killing time, just moving over stone, then why do we set goals for ourselves and then struggle so hard to achieve them? Why do we put pressure on ourselves to climb hard things? Why can’t we all just be happy to climb 5.6 and then go swimming?

This summer, for the first time in over twenty years, I sat down and watched “Moving Over Stone.” At an early age this film taught me how to hand jam, smear, ring lock and dyno, but I realize now that this humble instructional video also shaped who I have become, not only as a climber, but as a person who values the natural world and continues to try to understand the gift of interacting with nature on a physical and emotional level. I also realize now that testing myself early in my climbing career was valuable, not for the sake of achieving anything, or to prove anything, but so that I could move past the idea of achieving and simply... well... move over stone.

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EDITOR’S NOTE

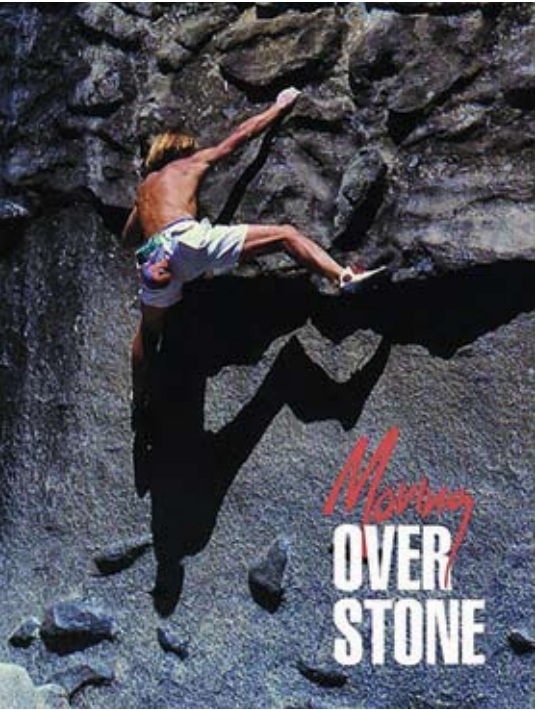
“When you’re a kid you have to prove yourself, it really doesn’t matter if it’s being a linebacker, or pirouetting on ice skates, or climbing, or skiing the John Muir Trail, and thank goodness you get past that,” says Doug Robinson in an interview conducted by Nick Miley for this edition of California Climber. “Then you get to go out and climb something relatively easy and just enjoy it,” adds Robinson “It’s just so much fun to be up there and to do the movement. So much of it is about movement. And that’s the gateway.”

As I re-watched the film “Moving Over Stone” this summer, I realized that Robinson’s ethics and lighthearted approach to rock climbing influenced me in ways that I never could have expected. At a glance Robinson’s approach to climbing movement seems purely physical as he makes statements like “Grab the holds lightly, use the least amount of pressure as possible” and “Move quickly and confidently through overhangs,” yet at closer examination we find that Robinson’s words are more than just climbing instruction; we find we are learning Doug’s method to achieve a physical form of meditation through rock climbing, which is actually pretty damn cool when you think about it.

“We climbers are really lucky to have stumbled upon a practice that’s rigorously physical, and it’s not too much to say that it’s saved us from the depression that’s all around us,” says Robinson. “I feel lucky to have stumbled upon this really rigorous lifestyle – with a little edge of danger, a lot of sweat, and having those things raise our awareness of the beauty that’s around us and the contentment that comes from living that way.”

In the wake of the year 2020 I think it’s safe to say that many of us found reprieve in a little more contentment, a little more sweat and a little edge of danger – in a practice that’s rigorously physical. When times were tough, we did what we do... we moved over stone. Find more from Doug Robinson in our California Climber department on page 20.

—DEAN FLEMING





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BAY AREA CLIMBERS COALITION:
Many Bay Area land managers still haven't reopened for public volunteer events yet, though a few have allowed smaller BACC-board-only events. We're cautiously optimistic we'll be able to do some real volunteer-oriented adopt-a-crag in fall. Watch this link for updates: <https://bayareaclimberscoalition.org/get-involved-with-bacc/upcoming-events/>

SEPTEMBER 21ST-26TH, 2021
YOSEMITE FACELIFT 2021
We are thrilled to announce Yosemite Facelift 2021! However, with the ongoing pandemic, Yosemite Facelift 2021 will be different from past Facelifts. This year, we will host a hybrid virtual event that you can join remotely, like during Facelift 2020: Act Local. We will also be providing cleanup supplies on the mall, weighing trash collected in the park, and putting on limited programs in Yosemite Valley. Last year, the park closed due to smoke from wildfires and it is possible that even with our best efforts, the Yosemite portion of Facelift may not be able to take place as we're planning. In that case, we will continue with the virtual hosting of the event.

NOVEMBER 5TH-7TH, 2021
AAC HIGHBALL CRAGGIN' CLASSIC BISHOP
Tie in with the AAC and CAMP USA for the widely anticipated return of the Bishop Craggin' Classic! Uniting climbers around the campfire at world-class climbing destinations, the Series gathers the climbing community to celebrate, to learn and develop new skills, and to give back to the crag. Films, parties, presentations, vendor villages, local food, and craft beer bring climbers together—both seasoned and new, local and visiting—to strengthen and celebrate the bonds within the community. Clinics, led by professional athletes and local guides, help you build the skills necessary to level up your climbing.

NOVEMBER 5TH-7TH, 2021
JOSHUA TREE CLIMB SMART
Out of an abundance of concern for safety and caring for the local community of Joshua Tree, Friends Of Joshua Tree's board of directors postponed the 2020 Climb Smart event to November 5-7, 2021. These are actually the regular Fall season kickoff dates that bring the climbing community together as the Fall climbing season gets underway, and we are chomping at the bit to gather again, especially in this crucial year. Joshua Tree National Park is embarking on a new Climbing Management Plan to guide policy and decision-making for the next 15-20 years. The last plan was done in 1993! Our voices as active, responsible stewards of our Park have never been more important.

If you are registered for Climb Smart 2020 your registration will automatically roll over and will be honored as full registration regardless of any price increases we may (likely) incur due to extra expenses to manage a transmission-free event. If you haven't registered, there are a few dozen spots open and the organization, in consultation with guiding organizations, the county of San Bernardino, JOSAR and Park leadership, will expand open slots accordingly as vaccines continue to mitigate the spread and threat of COVID-19, and we learn more about the behavior of the virus, effective therapies and potential variants.



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Most SAR emergencies happen when parties split up. Stay with your partners until you return to the trailhead.



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PREPARE AND TRAIN
Bring the gear you need and know how to use it before you climb.



ROUTE OF THE SEASON

WORDS & IMAGE + DEAN FLEMING

BETA

ROUTE: *La Dentista*
GRADE: 5.12c
LENGTH: 80 feet
ROCK TYPE: Volcanic/Latite
SEASON: Summer & Fall
STYLE: Sport, single pitch
RACK: Permadraws
LOCATION: Lower Tier, Columns of the Giants, Sonora Pass
APPROACH: 30:00, talus
DESCENT: Lower off, bolted anchor
GUIDEBOOK: *A Climber's Guide to the Sonora Pass Highway 2nd Edition* by Brad Young & Steve Dawson

DESCRIPTION
Two of the most prominent cave features in Central California can be found along the Highway 108 corridor. To the west, 108 passes by Jailhouse Rock, a massive cave of basaltic latite that hosts the largest number of hard routes per-square-foot in the Nation. To the east, near the summit of Sonora Pass, the highway leads directly to the base of Columns of the Giants, Jailhouse's largely forgotten, much higher elevation, twin sister. After scrambling up the steep talus and scree slopes to the base of the Columns, visiting climbers will usually hone in on the main cave and the two most obvious and unique routes at the cliff – *Delirious* (5.12a), a roof filled with jugs that is widely considered to be the steepest route of its grade in California, and *Spin Doctor* (5.12c), a giant horizontal crack system that traverses nearly the entire main cave. Yet a few hundred feet to the climbers' left of this Main Cave is a wall known as the Lower Tier, an often overlooked section of the cliff that hosts a plethora of fine routes at less extreme angles. *La Dentista* aka *Behemoth* (5.12c) is probably the best route on the Lower Tier and consists of really fun flakes and jugs past the first few bolts until a committing section of cross-through moves, sidepulls and slopers negotiates the crux. Once past the crux section, easier but engaging climbing leads to the anchor. *La Dentista* is one of the least intimidating climbs at Columns of the Giants, and area that remains one of the California's best high elevation reprieves from sweltering summer heat.

Julia MacKenzie climbing *El Dentista* aka *Behemoth* (5.12c), Columns of the Giants .



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“GHOSTFACE KILLAH”

Shayna Brown and her 2004 Dodge Ram 2500, Cummins 5.9L, Dump Truck

CC: Where did you find this monster and how much was it?

SB: “I bought it off my friend Nick, 6ft5” 200lb cowboy... giant chops, he did the custom bright pink Mexican blanket interior. I don’t know if I want to say how much, but I know I got at least \$3k into the dump bed.”

How’d you come up with the name?

“I’ve always thought that if I got the opportunity to name a string of mules I would name them after WuTang names and songs. Ghostface Killah, Old Dirty Bastard, The Ruckus, Redman... they would all be great names for mules. The truck can’t be Redman... and it’s not old enough to be Old Dirty, and it’s not quite nice enough to be called the Method Man. It’s all blacked out and it’s got tinted windows, so Ghostface Killah seemed appropriate.”

How the hell did you build that dump bed?

“Well, I was digging through shit at the scrap yard in Bishop one day and was half-ass looking at old trucks to pull the bed off when this old dude walked up and asked what I was looking for. I said, “A dump bed,” and he said he had friend with a flatbed for sale and that I could buy hydraulics and modify it. He gave me some weird directions... when I showed up the guy was super nice but the “flatbed” was made out of old rusty railroad track and angle iron. We spent hours picking through the bushes trying to find the

pieces. I talked him down to \$200 and then drove to Oregon so I could copy my Dads’ design and use his tools. I spent three weeks welding all day everyday in the pissing rain and now I have a dump bed.”

So you went through all that trouble just so you could dump hippies out of the back of your truck when they try to make drum circles?

“I was raised by Deadheads so I have some very deep-seeded childhood trauma for both hippies and drum circles. Now that I’ve got the dump bed I realize it’s also kinda useful for doing tree work sometimes.”

How does it do off road?

“One time I went to go get compost and I told them, “load it heavy; I don’t have very far to go.” I got about halfway up to the garden and started sinking into the dirt cuz it weighed so much...”

And approximately how many hippies have you dumped out of the back?

“I lost track, but well over 50.”

What are the best and worst things about your truck?

“It’s super fucking handy when you’ve got to get rid of something. The stereo works, the AC works, I can see over the steering wheel. Those are all pros. I do feel invincible when I’m driving it down the road, but I also don’t like driving something so huge all the time. I don’t like that it’s got so much electrical shit going on in it, it has a bunch of lights that always want to go on and off all the time, so if I leave it parked for a week the batteries go dead. I also get really funny looks from old redneck white men when I’m driving it, kind of horny/jealous/impressed.”

Any plans for future modifications?

“I’ve gotta put a stripper pole back there. I’ve heard that they make stripper poles that can mount on a trailer hitch. I feel like a gooseneck hitch would be easier to make solid... This truck used to have a gooseneck hitch on it before I put a dump bed on it; maybe that was the time for the stripper pole...”

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METOLIUS NOSE CONE

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If you like the idea of supporting small, non-corporate climbing gear companies, it doesn't get much better than Metolius. While Metolius might seem like a big company at a glance, in reality it consists of a bunch of friends milling around a small building in Eastern Oregon; a place where the employees of Metolius spend their days obsessing about rock climbing and essentially dedicating their lives and their livelihoods to the pursuit of quality and innovation in the field of climbing equipment. Seriously, they just tinker around and dream up new ways to make climbing gear, and from time to time, they nail it.

Like a lot of Metolius products, the first glimpse of the new Metolius Nose Cone inspires an "oh, yeah, duh, why didn't I think of that?" kind of thought. The Nose Cone's brilliance is that it's one of the simplest and therefore [one of the most efficient pieces of climbing gear](#), and it does what all good products should



do, it solves a problem that has yet to be solved. In the particular case of the Nose Cone, it actually [solves a number of problems](#). First is the most obvious problem, the fact that haul bags always hang up and get stuck on little overhangs and flakes and damn near anything protruding from the rock, which makes them an utter bitch to haul up the cliff. In addition to providing a smooth and angled surface to streamline the top of the haul bag and prevent snagging, the Nose Cone also [helps to waterproof the bag in stormy conditions](#) and also gives you a convenient place to store the extra rack, water bottle, snack bag etc for quick access. In an effort to provide complete transparency, we haven't yet physically tested the Nose Cone, but we have tested a number of Metolius haul bags which are made from the same materials, and these haul bags are [absolutely bomber](#), so we feel like we can stand behind this product in regards to durability.

FIXE/ROCA 9.2MM DOMINATOR ENDURANCE ROPE

{ \$259.95 (70M) }

Three years ago I parked behind the Fixe Hardware headquarters in Bishop, California, where Kevin Daniels and Tai Devore tossed a brand new 80-meter 9.2mm Dominator Endurance rope into the trunk of my car; "Try to destroy it..." said Kevin. And so over the next three years we tried – about as hard as old washed-up trad climbers can try – to destroy this very rope. But after three years of putting up dirty first ascents, whipping off "projects" (climbs that would probably be considered warm-ups to most our readers), rappelling off of choss, and generally dragging this cord through the mud, [we have yet to destroy it](#).

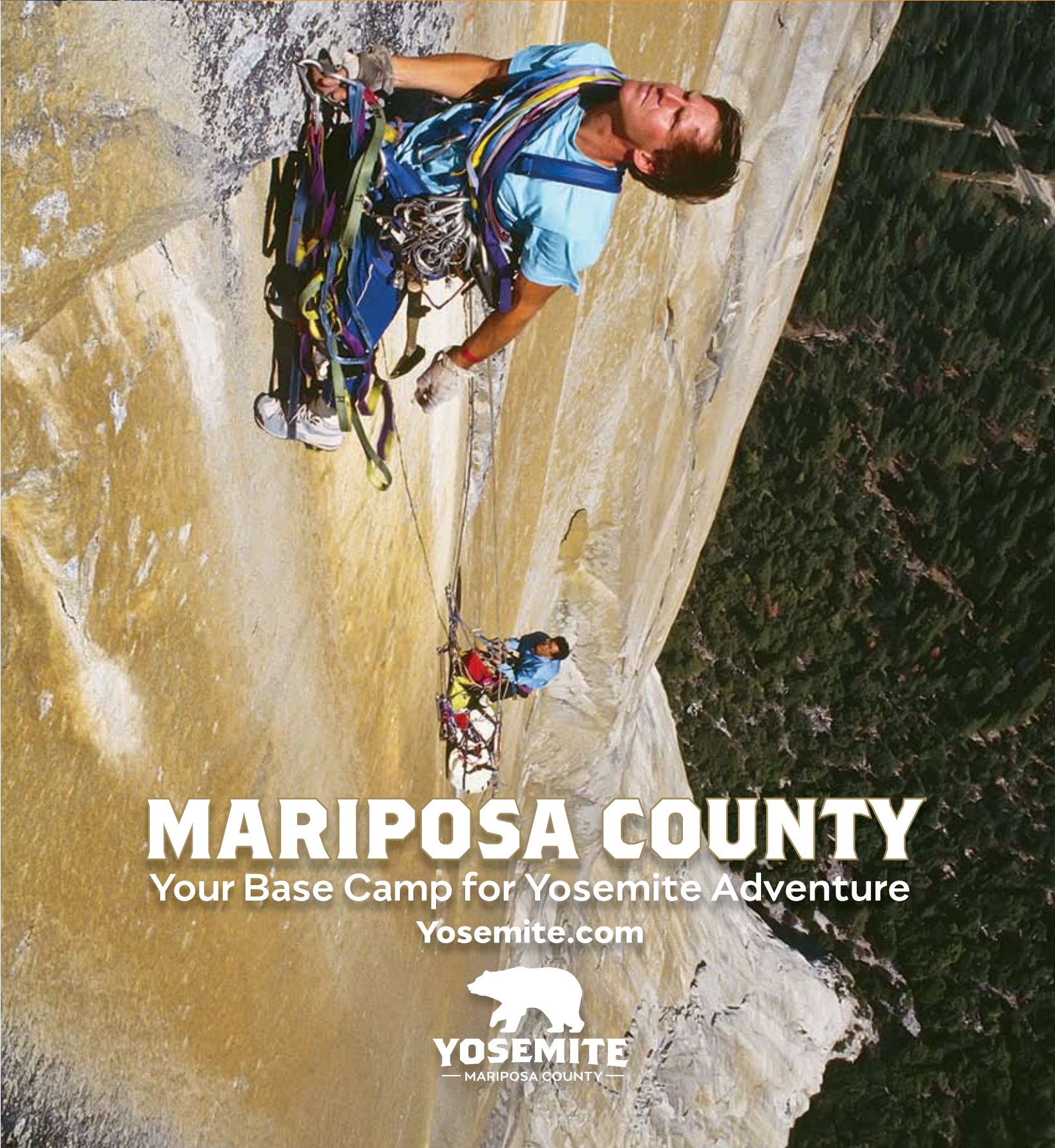
The Roca 9.2mm Dominator Endurance (dry) Rope clocks in at a scant [59 grams per meter](#) while still maintaining eight UIAA-rated falls. It is triple certified for use as a single rope, double rope or twin rope, and is built with Roca's patented Endurance sheath and



SPD technology to reduce abrasion and penetration of ice, dust and sand between the filaments. In testing we found the Dominator to be somewhat slippery out of the box – a common characteristic of most Roca cords which has both positive and negative implications depending on the user and the terrain. But after some brief use the Dominator gained a damn-near perfect texture which did run smoothly on zigzagging climbs yet also allowed for a [very safe and controlled belay](#). During falls the 8% static elongation provided a soft and safe catch but without the huge drops (the bungee cord effect) that can be felt on ropes with larger elongation figures. Simply put, the Dominator is [one of the stoutest lightweight/thin cords](#) available and thus is an [incredible value](#) for buyers who desire competitive weight specifications but aren't willing to sacrifice longevity or handling.

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TENAYA MUNDAKA

{ \$194.95 }

If you're looking for a very high-performance shoe with a soft midsole that is designed for people with wider feet, the Mundaka is well-worth trying on the next time you're waiting out a rainstorm at your local gear shop. The Mundaka is designed for **maximum sensitivity and precision** with a two-part sole that increases the shoe's capacity to adapt to the form of the rock. To make this shoe more durable, Tenaya has placed the Mundaka's rand over the heel rubber to prevent it from peeling off – a useful addition if you're going to be doing a lot of heel-hooking. The Mundaka uses Tenaya's Draxtor® lacing system with adjustable length webbing attached to a Velcro strap for **fast on-and-offs and a precise fit**. The SXRDynamics® rand is designed to prevent toe bulging and keep the climber's weight loaded precisely.



In testing we found the middle part of the Mundaka's sole to be uniquely soft, making the shoe more precise on certain terrain than other shoes in its class. Mainly this softer midsole creates really good sensitivity on overhanging routes and problems – think of your toes acting like little ugly hands, grabbing onto nubbins and wrapping into pockets. It's kind of the same effect you'll get with a really well-fitting and perfectly broken-in soft slipper, but because of the two-part sole, the Mundaka can also hold an edge. As we stated before, the Mundaka is **designed for people with wide feet** (it's the widest shoe in the Tenaya line) but in testing we actually found the Mundaka to **fit a pretty large range of feet** – we think this is because the heel of the shoe is well-formed and because the lacing system is actually pretty effective and versatile. Folks with really narrow feet found some dead-spots, but folks with "normal" feet fit well.

DMM PHANTOM CARABINER

{ \$10.50 }

The Phantom is a highly focused lightweight carabiner. I-Beam construction improves the strength to weight ratio, a **minimized gate notch reduces snagging**, and sound fundamental design encourages correct loading. The Phantom can be used to hold essentials like nut tools, knives, water bottles etc, but because of the Phantom's incredible usability and handling, we found racking gear and making lightweight quickdraws to be the Phantom's best use. In a nut shell, these carabiners are **ideal for building a lightweight rack**. The Phantom isn't the lightest carabiner in the world, but at **28 grams** it's nothing to scoff at either. The lightest carabiners in existence weigh 22 grams, so that five gram



difference multiplied over approximately 40 carabiners on your average rack equals 200 grams – not too much, but definitely noticeable. But here's the catch- it's really difficult to make an ultra-light carabiner that's easy to clip, large enough to accept a clove hitch, won't constantly flip upside-down on your rack and is functional with gloves (or usable for folks with fat fingers). Shockingly, the DMM Phantom **handles beautifully**; really, it's just like using a full-size, full-weight carabiner. To accomplish this, the DMM Phantom does weigh a few grams more than the lightest carabiners in existence – but we think its usability is **well-worth the tiny bit of extra weight**.

shaped
for
climbing

Ben Bransby, Martini Action (5.12b), The Falling Block, Eastern Big Horns, Wyoming. © Ray Wood



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Shadow



Shadow Hybrid



Alpha Sport



IMAGE + BRUCE WILLEY

CALIFORNIA
CLIMBER:

DOUG ROBINSON

INTERVIEW + NICK MILEY // IMAGES + BRUCE WILLEY AND SHAWN REEDER

The following interview was conducted after a day out at one of Doug's backyard crags – a recently developed 500-foot, tight-grained granite dome off California's Highway 88 called Emigrant Wall. Doug, who is 75 years old, remains wide-eyed and excited as a kid new to climbing. He's also trim as a ship and fighting fit, making relatively easy work of 5.8 slab in his approach boots. During rests between pitches, Doug shared a great deal more about his life than just throwing out high-water achievements. Certainly, Doug is no slouch. He's been a California climber for 62 years and that has provided plenty of opportunity for him to make his mark on the mountains and mountain culture.

Doug has been called a lot of things over the years. He's "the father of clean climbing," "the King of the Sierra," and even the "mountain guru of the High Sierra." Indeed, Doug's first all-clean ascent of the Northwest face of Half Dome in 1973, his 50+ year guiding career in the Sierra, and his month-long ski traverse of the John Muir Trail sans stove, compass, and map shows that these epithets are not mere hyperbole or jest. He is the genuine article. However, when taking in the whole Doug – climber, writer, teacher and, oh yes, philosopher, too – it seems that Galen Rowell's description is most fitting, "Doug's ideal: the mountain goat."

While Galen's choice of animals to match Doug's personality may seem like a bit of a rib, consider that the mountain goat lives in the mountains year-round, it moves nimbly over vertical stone eschewing the horizontal as pedestrian, and all the while it requires very little but it

experiences much. There are generally two types of climbers out there and, as they age, their differences become quite stark. The first has something to prove on the rock and once that's accomplished, there's little appeal left in the pursuit. It is as if they were driving en route to a destination and, having reached it, the trip ends there. The other type of climber just loves to road trip because it's simply the coolest thing they could do with their time and produces the best experiences and outcomes -- health, great people, a bit of adventure, and lots of beautiful scenery. Doug is clearly in the latter group. In fact, he is the paragon of the experience-driven mountaineer where rope and skis are the vehicles for the trip.

Doug was born in Washington D.C. just two weeks after the bombing of Hiroshima and moved out to California at age 4. When you think about all the profound changes that have come about in the world in those years and the several distinct eras in climbing that he participated in – from the golden age to stone masters to stoned monkeys and beyond – it's hard to take in the breadth of the metaphorical trip that Doug has enjoyed. He is the thread that runs through the Sierra climbing chronology linking Norman Clyde to Alex Honnold.

There can be no doubt that Doug is an indispensable resource for information about climbing – people, events, gear development, techniques, and locations. However, our conversation focused on questions that hover above the summit, so to speak. This wizened mountain goat brings three-quarters of a century of musings on the margins of society to bear as he speaks about the wonder of the world that we have the privilege to enjoy.



L & R IMAGES + SHAWN REEDER //
MIDDLE IMAGE + BRUCE WILLEY

THE ABSURDITY, OF COURSE; HOW LUCKY ARE WE TO HAVE ENDED UP ON THIS PLANET AND TO HAVE THE CONCISENESS THAT WE HAVE, AND TO HAVE THE LEISURE THAT WE HAVE TO MAKE USE OF IT.

If you choose to be out on the margins it's so easy to do – a little food, a little gas and a lot of conciseness. Conciseness is a gift. It's so interesting to delve into evolution and think about who we are, but even if you don't... What more could you want. But if we don't dig in and make the very best out of this outrageously cool situation that we've landed in, then it's our fault for not trying."

I THINK THERE'S A LOT OF MEANING IN FUN-HOGGING THE PRESENT WITHOUT MUCH REFERENCE TO WHERE IT MIGHT BE GOING.

I don't expect anything but blackness after I'm dead, and that's fine with me, it helps me pay more attention to enjoying what I have right now, this afternoon... Maybe we'll get an evening too. This is paradise right here. It's not an accident that its verdant green all around us and the planet is covered in living stuff, and we're not rooted in place and we get to roam around. We presume that we're more conscience than those trees, but they might be laughing at us."

NORMAN CLYDE USED TO SAY "I'M JUST A HOLDOVER FROM THE PLEISTOCENE; I'M ABOUT 900 HUNDRED YEARS OLD."

"I DON'T EXPECT ANYTHING BUT BLACKNESS AFTER I'M DEAD, AND THAT'S FINE WITH ME, IT HELPS ME PAY MORE ATTENTION TO ENJOYING WHAT I HAVE RIGHT NOW"

He was completely joking but he was also deadly serious. He was paying attention to where he came from, and I'm trying too as well, which is to say that the joy of this consciousness is not to be taken for granted. We got here through countless generations and we're in a sweet-spot in history right now. It's a fascinating period, our privilege to roam around the Earth and play in the mountains, when we get to dodge stuff like checking your email, or Instagram I guess... I never tried it.



IMAGES + BRUCE WILLEY

LIFE IS FULL OF BOX CANYONS.

You can get stuck in them. Older people especially get stuck and some of them are never going to get out. But if you stay a little bit nimble and lean in your life then you can dodge so many traps, at least the ones that you can see. But maybe there's one waiting for me that I can't see and I'll end up in it."

I CALL CLIMBING A PRACTICE, BECAUSE IT PUTS IT INTO THE REALM OF MEDITATION AND SPIRITUAL PRACTICES, WHICH ARE MORE OR LESS RIGOROUS WAYS TO TRAIN YOURSELF INTO HIGHER STATES OF CONCISENESS.

But climbing is rigorous too! I think our whole civilization is depressed. In 1900 50% of the population in the USA made the food, which meant that you were out in the sun busting your butt with a hoe and a shovel. Nobody thought about it then, but you got the anti-depressant effects of working hard, sweating in the hot sun and breathing hard. By the millennium that was down to 4% and almost half of us are on keyboards. So we climbers are really lucky to have stumbled upon a practice that's rigorously physical. And it's not too much to say that it's saved us from the depression that's all around us. I feel lucky to have stumbled upon this really rigorous lifestyle – with a little edge of danger, a lot of sweat, and having those things raise our awareness of the beauty that's around us and the contentment that comes from living that way. Descending, I'm still high when I hit the trailhead... and it lasts for days, maybe longer, but it's definitely there for days."

THE SUMMIT IS NOT THE SAME FOR EVERYONE.

If you plod up the backside you definitely get more of a high than if you just sat in camp, but if you climb the north face, and it's sketchy, and you're not even sure you can make it, but you do, then you have a more profound summit, because you prepared your mind, body and soul to be more alive, more awake, more appreciative of what you see. And so you and the person who plodded up the backside are standing on the summit shoulder-to-shoulder, but what you see is not the same. That photo that was in *National Geographic* was taken on the summit of Half Dome after we came up the Northwest Face having pulled off the first clean ascent. We were pretty stoked, and the tourists that came up the cables were pretty stoked too, and their stoke made them want to talk to us because they could see that we were flying. That might have been the highpoint of their lives, and good on them... they got out there, they did it."

SOMETIMES A PROFOUND STATE OF MIND CAN OVERCOME YOU ON AS LITTLE AS AN AFTERNOON JOG, OR SPONTANEOUSLY OUT OF NOWHERE, OR JUST SHUFFLING

ALONG IN THE WOODS, AND THE BEAUTY OVERWHELMS YOU.

But if you do go on a big trip and you push yourself – lots of sweat and a little fear – you have a better chance of making it into those realms of wonderment."

I'VE SPENT COUNTLESS HOURS TEACHING, HELPING PEOPLE TO UNDERSTAND ROPE SYSTEMS AND HOW TO CLIMB PHYSICALLY, BUT ULTIMATELY I WANT THEM TO MOVE OUT OF THAT AND INTO THE MIND STATE THAT IT GETS YOU IN.

Shit, we're talking about enlightenment, actually, and I hesitate to use the word because it's like, "are we worthy to use that word?" Well yeah, we are, because nobody can define it anyway. We know when we are in a higher state of conciseness or when we are not. Once you know how to keep yourself safer than on the freeway with your ropes, then you are really ready to go at it, to push yourself physically and emotionally on the rock to produce these more profound states of being.

MEDITATION IS A RED HERRING, I THINK, BECAUSE THE USUAL THOUGHT OF MEDITATION IS LIKE "OH YEAH, YOU SIT STILL ON A CUSHION AND STARE AT A BLANK WALL," AND YOU CAN DO THAT, AND PEOPLE DO IT FOR YEARS, AND THEY GET THERE, BUT I DON'T THINK IT'S AS EFFICIENT AS GOING CLIMBING.

George Leonard said "sport is western Yoga," and that stuck with me for decades because I think that getting out and moving our bodies through the mountains is more natural to the western mindset than staring at a blank wall. And we start noticing that it's changing our minds, and changing our perspectives. For many of us that was unforeseen because we were set on becoming rock climbers – it was kind of a surprise byproduct for the western mindset. Frankly I don't have the patience to sit and stare at a blank wall. But I see where people get to from doing it, and you can see how it's kind of similar to how you feel at the top of a 5.9 pitch."

IT'S SIMILAR TO HOW I FELT WHEN I TOOK LSD, WHICH I ALSO DID IN MY YOUTH.

I didn't know anything about it, nobody knew much about this stuff then, but boy did it catapult me into spaces that felt a lot like what I felt like when I went climbing. There is a quantitative difference, because you're getting bashed over the head with LSD, especially with the doses that we took in the sixties, but qualitatively they're very similar: slowing down, sense of awe, appreciation of the smallest things around us... it's the same thing. Thank goodness I found climbing instead of becoming a linebacker."



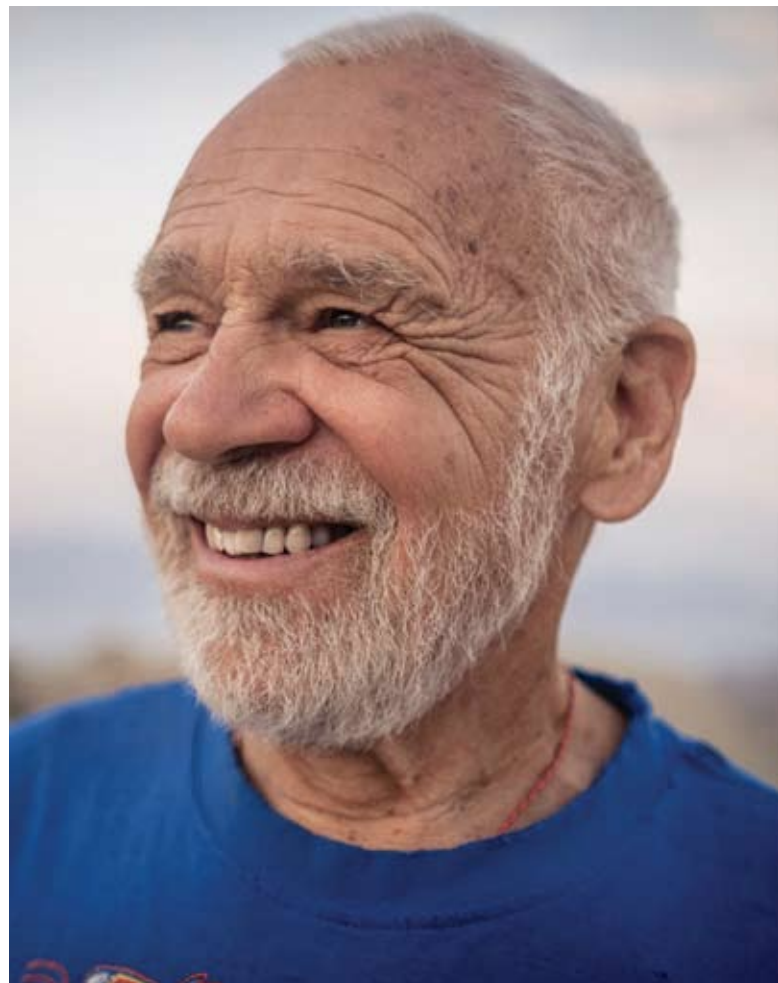
I THINK THAT IMAGINATION AND CLIMBING ARE PARALLEL PROPERTIES.

I see them as parallel, but not congruent, they are side-by-side and you're lucky if you have both. Imagination is a very cool thing, and if you get into higher states of conciseness you can make better use of imagination. Awareness and imagination together are a powerful combination."

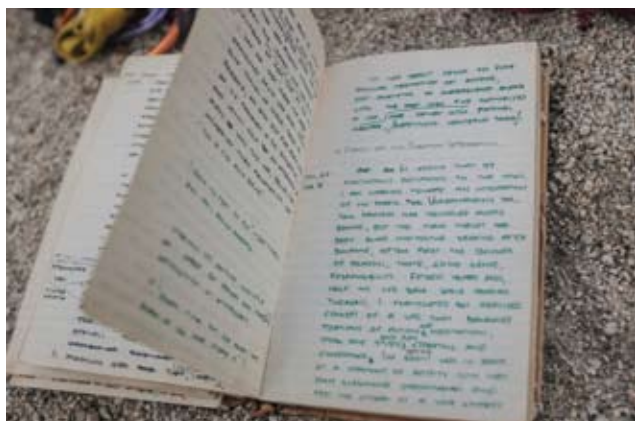
THE BEST THING ABOUT LIVING IN THE MOUNTAINS IS THAT YOU GET TO GO OUT DAMN NEAR EVERY DAY AND THERE'S GREAT ROCK EVERYWHERE...

Steep pockets are fun; low angle granite slab is really fun. I started crack climbing in Yosemite before I was out of high school, and that's a very rigorous place because you have to learn how to crack climb well or you're not getting anywhere, and that's the least intuitive form of climbing. Of course I got beaten up by that, but that made me just work harder at it. One of the great things about climbing is that it's so humbling... it's like "yeah I just did that climb and I feel like hot shit," but then on the next route it's like "oh god I'm scared."

“RATHER THAN BEING
GATEWAYS IN THEMSELVES,
ACHIEVEMENTS LIKE
THIS CANCEL OUT THE
UNCERTAINTY OF YOUTH”



IMAGES + BRUCE WILLEY



WHEN YOU'RE A KID YOU HAVE TO PROVE YOURSELF. IT REALLY DOESN'T MATTER IF IT'S BEING A LINEBACKER, OR PIROUETTING ON ICE SKATES. OR CLIMBING, OR SKIING THE JOHN MUIR TRAIL, AND THANK GOODNESS YOU GET PAST THAT.

Then you get to go out and climb something relatively easy and just enjoy it. It's just so much fun to be up there and to do the movement. So much of it is about movement. And that's the gateway. When I was a kid I had to do stuff to prove myself, and I did that, but then I went into decades of guiding where what I did everyday was lead 5.7. And I loved it because I had that quality of being easily amused, I could really enjoy climbing that same 5.7 thirty times, and not everybody's got that. I know people who would never repeat any climb – it has to be something that's new to them or they're not climbing it. And I marvel at them because I'm so different."

CATHEDRAL PEAK...

It's a great route, and when I rope up at the bottom I have no concern about finishing the climb, but I look forward to enjoying it. I think that some of the best opportunities to get into the flow state are when you're not completely gripped, when you're flowing over the stone, when your movement is really smooth and harmonious. And the more you climb the easier it is to drop into the flow state. It's like any other human function, the more you practice the easier it gets. In the physical realm the climbing gets easier and it gets more fluid, but in the emotional realm it gets easier and easier to drop into the flow state because the threshold lowers, because you've practiced it. And that's a cool place to be, and it doesn't have anything to do with difficulty."

PROBABLY THE HARDEST SINGLE PITCH I EVER DID WAS BUTTERFINGERS, I DID IT ON TOPROPE AND I TOOK TWO FALLS, BUT I GOT UP IT.

I did that when I was pretty young, about 23 or 24. Rather than being gateways in themselves, achievements like this cancel out the uncertainty of youth. It's like "OK, I'm a mountaineer now, or, I'm a rock climber now because I got up Butterfingers and that was pretty hard," so I can leave that part of my life behind. Uncertainty about who you are and what you can do is mostly a negative thing. I mean, I hate people with too much self confidence too, but those high watermarks are the threshold of adulthood, because what came before was the uncertainty of being a teenager. That was OK, but I'm not going back there. I got high on it at the moment, but I think that its real value was that I could leave it behind and be steadier on my feet. That's like opening the gateway to loving 5.8 climbs."

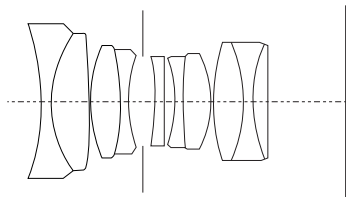
THIS FEELING, THIS STATE OF CONCISENESS THAT I KEEP CHASING, IS SO SLIPPERY AND EPHEMERAL, AND I THINK ABOUT SITTING HERE WITH A BEER AND TRYING TO DESCRIBE IT.

I think back to being on the rocks two hours ago and feeling ennobled by climbing. It's pretty hard to bring it indoors and set it down on paper, because right now I'm recalling it sitting in a chair. It's about the movement and the sensibilities that it generates. I always hated that definition of poetry, "action recollected in tranquility." It's bullshit. Let's have it as close to the raw action as possible. That's why I get excited and whip out my notebook to write something down on a ledge, or throw off my ski pack so I can sit on it and write something down, because the last 1,000 feet of climbing lead to this epiphany."



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WORDS & IMAGES + SHAWN REEDER

WITH ALMOST 2000’ OF AIR BELOW, one of the world’s tallest waterfalls falling into the abyss beside us, rainbows swirling in the mist, and a stoke that was utterly contagious, I looked through the lens to a sight that could have easily been a Beirstat painting as my good friend Sean Jones climbed towards me. We were up high on the Ribbon Falls headwall with full spring runoff sending copious amounts of water over the edge next to us, and the wind whipped spray was catching rainbows in the afternoon light.

I was down to my last roll of film and carefully changed canisters taking care not to drop precious images we had just shot into the void below. Sean climbed closer and was getting into the prime position that had brought us out here onto this awe-inspiring wall to make art together. We had only a short window of time where the sun’s angle gave us those magical rainbows below before it set behind the wall and left us in shadow. With the last roll of film in the camera and the light in its perfect position, I yelled down to Sean over the thundering sounds of the rumbling waterfall, “Now’s the time!”

This wasn’t the first time Sean and I found ourselves in some incredible location high up on a huge wall at perfect light. By this point we had spent a few years rambling around Yosemite and the Sierra shooting images of Sean’s new routes. Not many people may know, but Sean Jones is one of Yosemite’s most prolific first ascentionists. While he may not have been putting up Yosemite’s most difficult climbs, like a true artist his sense of aesthetic was second to none. Not only were his climbs in some of the most all time photogenic and scenic locations I’ve even been, but the movement when climbing his routes was always something special.

Without question, Sean has taken me to some of the most amazing locations in the Sierra that I’ve ever been; from the massive backcountry South Face of Half Dome, to the towering walls above Hetch Hetchy, to the outrageous granite domes of Shuteye Ridge, to the windswept wall above Bridalveil Falls, to the airy arete of “Close to the Edge,” to maybe one of the most unbelievable places of all, the magnificent Ribbon Falls Amphitheater Headwall.

With Sean getting into the perfect spot on that final pitch a couple thousand feet off the Valley floor, I started shooting. Back in those days, every single image mattered as I looked at the counter on my camera and watched those 36 exposures I had slowly make their way to zero. I pushed the shutter button sparingly every time I saw him get into a rad body position trying to nail those moments that really capture the spirit of what it’s like to be up high on a big wall with huge exposure and the wind in our

hair. We knew we were capturing something special that day and couldn’t contain our joy as we laughed and cackled with effervescent enthusiasm.

After clicking my last shot I started jugging back to the rim where our camp was set as Sean & Nate continued climbing to the summit. To my great surprise as I pulled over the lip and saw my first view to the north, I was greeted with a wall of ominous black clouds that was heading straight for us. I yelled over the side of the cliff, “you two better get up here FAST!!”

I feverishly started packing up camp and all of our stuff as they navigated the 11d mantle crux at the very top of that last pitch. There was an electricity in the air that was building and we were out on the most exposed promontory of rock around, not the place you want to be if the heavens were to start to unleash their fury. As I was getting all of our stuff packed Sean popped over the edge, and the look on his face said it all, we need to get the fuck out of here.

He belayed Nate up as fast as possible as I finished packing and got us ready to make a run for the woods. Minutes later we started hiking towards the trees hoping that if these black clouds started dumping on us that maybe we could at least find some cover. Not 30 seconds after we made it off the exposed rock into the cover of the forest did the sky open up and unleash a torrent of rain, thunder, and lightning.

It started raining so hard that we were instantly soaked, and all we could do was keep moving since as California Climbers we basically never had a tent or rain gear with us. Almost every single minute the thunder was deafening and the lightning was so close that we would just look at each other with bewilderment in our eyes. And we just kept walking.... Boom, boom, boom!

For over an hour thunder and lightning surrounded us in every direction and was often so close that all we could do was keep moving and hope we’d be ok. I’ve never seen so many flashes so close, blinding us and keeping us humble to the sheer power of nature. Each time the lightning boomed at the same time as the thunder, we would look around to make sure all three of us were still alive as we had spread out making our way through the forest back to civilization.

It’s moments like this that really stick with me, even almost 20 years later. Climbing shaped my life in profound ways, and there’s really nothing quite like being fully embodied and immersed in the present moment, and moving over stone in awe-inspiring nature. This to me is one of climbing’s greatest gifts, along with the friendships that form from sharing this kind of magic. I hope you enjoy this collection of images and some of the memories they’ve gifted me. Onward!













{01} **“MAMA”** - Yosemite, 2005

Hanging out in space 20’ from the wall and 1,000’ above the valley floor with Bridalveil Falls rumbling below is an experience like no other. Some places just feel more “out there” than others, and this was definitely one of those places. Here Sean climbs the 3rd pitch crux (5.12a) with waterfalls and rainbows all around.

{02} **“CHILDREN OF LIGHT”** - Yosemite, 2009

Just up above Reeds Pinnacle in a dark cool chasm is what appears to be a featureless wall, yet the most un-Yosemite-like water pockets show up in just the perfect spacing to link a stunning line up this sheer wall. As the afternoon sun starts to lower in the sky it shines a ray of light through a crack from the outside producing an illuminating beam of light on the wall on this incredible 5.11a.

{03} **“GATES OF DELIRIUM”** - Ribbon Falls, 2002

In all the years I spent shooting and climbing at some of the most awe-inspiring locations California has to offer, this was surely one of the most memorable. It was late December with a low sun and we shot and climbed our way up the first nine pitches knowing we wanted to be on P10 (5.11d) for last light. While the first nine pitches climb a striking 1,000’ dihedral with P1 being the crux at 5.12a, the 10th kicks out over the entire route below exposing the massive fin of rock that forms the left side of the dihedral and the snow cone at the base of Ribbon Falls. In typical Shawn & Sean style, we made it just in the nick of time as the sun was starting to set while we were still racing to get into position. I’ll never forget the feeling of adrenaline as I hung on the edge of a massive overhanging precipice trying desperately not to drop any film canisters as I changed rolls with the sun inching closer and closer to the horizon.

{04} **“GROWING UP”** - Half Dome, 2007

The majestic South Face of Half Dome may not get nearly the attention its more famous Northwest Face receives, but it is one of the most stunning and expansive walls I’ve ever been on. Nearly a mile wide and 2,000’ tall, it has a more remote backcountry feel and it’s easy to be the only people up on the massive wall. While the bottom twelve pitches are steep and burly, the upper wall starts to kick back a bit and offers up world-class moderate face climbing in a sublime position. Jones leads an emaculate pitch high on *Growing Up*, 5.13 A0.

{06} **“UNIVERSAL GARDEN”** - Ribbon Falls, 2001

The Ribbon Falls headwall area offers some of the airiest and most scenic climbing in all of Yosemite. It’s perched just below the rim of the Valley above the massive natural Ribbon Falls amphitheater. This exposed arête with perfect edges on the face is a “rap in” single pitch looking out towards Bridalveil Falls with the entire upper Bridalveil Creek canyon visible.

{07} **“PERSEPHONE BUTTERFLY”** - Ribbon Falls, 2001

Ribbon Falls is the longest single drop waterfall in North America, and this stunning route goes straight up the main face of the western headwall of the Ribbon Falls amphitheater. To shoot multiple routes in this area, we backpacked out for a few days and set up camp on a “ship’s prow like promontory of rock” that juts out from the Valley rim giving a breathtaking view down on Ribbon Falls and into the amphitheater below. There’s a perfectly flat spot with just enough space for three people to sleep, and there’s even a built-in lip that keeps you from rolling off the edge into the abyss with thousands of feet of air below. If there’s a better backcountry camp spot in all of Yosemite, I don’t know of it. Just below camp, Jones climbs *Persphone Butterfly’s*, (5.11d) outrageous summit pitch on its wild diorite knobs and perfect arête with a magical waterfall & rainbows dancing below.

{08} **“CLOSE TO THE EDGE”** - Yosemite, 2011

Perched over 1,500’ above the valley floor in a commanding position at the head of the valley is a super exposed, steep, airy arête that has some of the wildest climbing in Yosemite. The late Graham Hunt styles the 2nd ascent here of this mega classic line on the Nuts Only cliff.

{09} **WAPAMA ROCK** - Hetch Hetchy, 2006

Climbing at Hetch Hetchy is like nowhere else I’ve ever been. Being up on these massive granite walls above the largest body of water in all of Yosemite feels like something out of a dream. This project sits high above the thundering 1,310’ Wapama Falls, one of the highest volume waterfalls in Yosemite, and truly one of the most impressive waterfalls in all of California.

{10} **“MATHES CREST” TRAVERSE** - Tuolumne, 2000

The *Matthes Crest* is a mile-long knife blade to cresting wave of a ridge that is truly one of a kind with some of the most fun & exposed climbing in the Tuolumne backcountry. By the summer of 2000 I was enjoying my 5th summer living in Tuolumne and the Cathedral Range with all of its craggy summits, classic buttresses & wild exposed ridges was our backyard playground. Greg Haverstock gets his mind blown coming down the northern reaches of the crest climbing perfect rock on a wave that you hope never crashes.





DISPATCH:

THE BAY AREA'S CHOSS REVOLUTION

WORDS & IMAGES + JIM THORNBURG

DOGMA

/ˈdôgmə/

NOUN

A principle or set of principles laid down by an authority as incontrovertibly true.

RIGHT
Kim Pfabe on the *Woo Wall* (5.11b), Vent 5. This excellent route was discovered in the 80s, but remained unclimbed until the “choss revolution” of 2020.

Climbing originated as a bloodsport and Death was a possible outcome for its pioneers. Those early climbers were cut from different cloth than most, and understandably, they had strong opinions about what climbing meant, namely that you put your life on the line and accepted whatever challenge the mountain presented in as organic a way possible. Certainly this meant you started from the bottom and climbed to the top - no rehearsal, no pre-placing of protection, and no prior cleaning or preparing the route in any way. For the modern climber, it's hard to imagine how bad the ancient equipment was: crappy static ropes that often broke, thick boots that could blindly edge but not smear. For protection or aid they had nothing, or at best a pocketful of nails they could smash into cracks with a hammer.

Consider that the first ascent of *El Puro*, a slender 100 meter needle that splinters off a huge conglomerate cliff in Riglos, Spain, was the site of two separate 1950s attempts that ended in three deaths before its eventual conquest. With stakes so high, was it any wonder that the “rules” and “style” for climbing a route like this would be hotly contested and closely guarded?

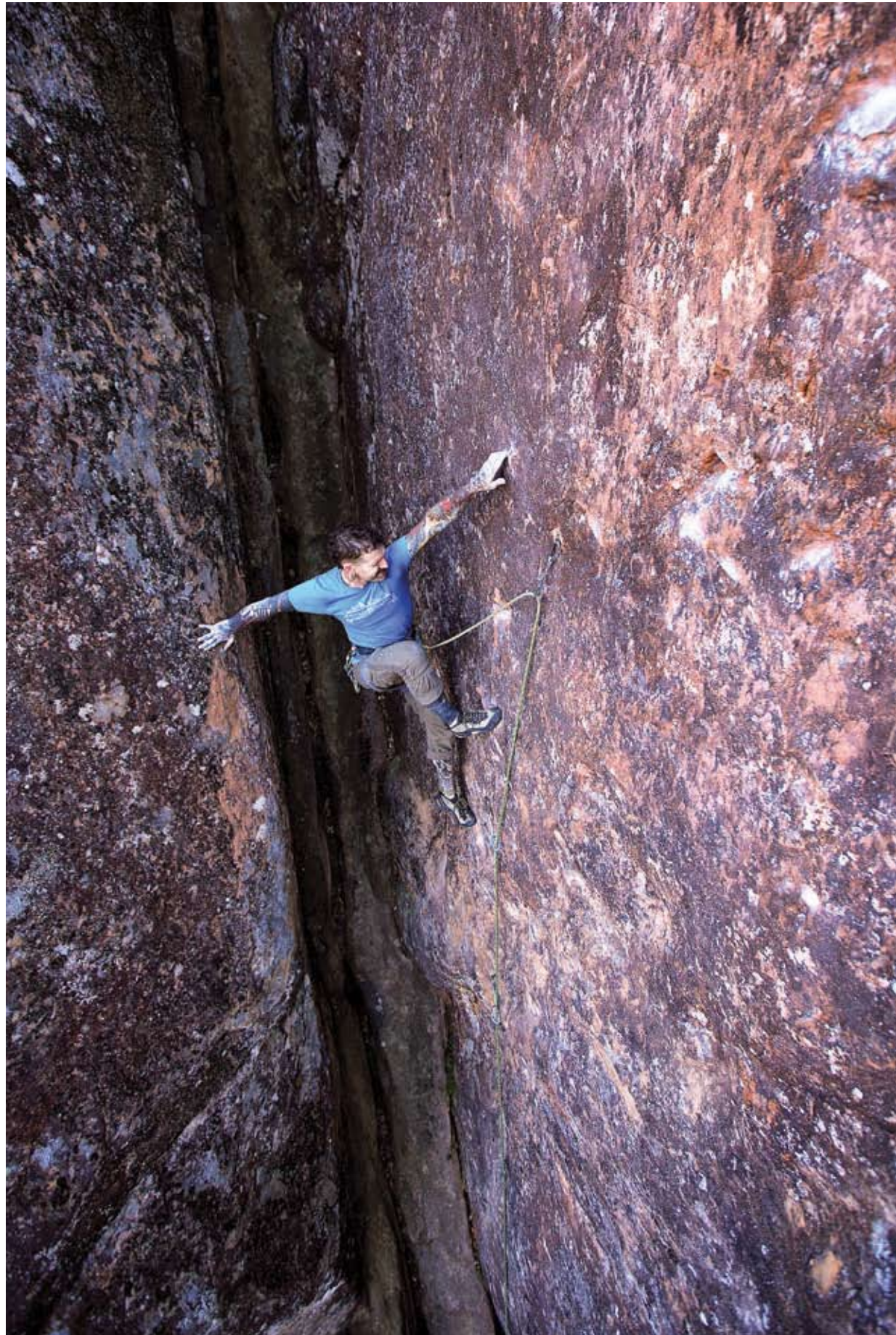
Some of the biggest challenges to climbing's most

dogmatic rules came in the 1980s when French climbers began bolting routes in the 1,000-foot deep Verdon Gorge from the top down. This was a pragmatic decision given the fact that there was a road that traced the top of the cliffs, and this “top-down” approach marked the genesis of “sport climbing.” When imported to the United States the idea was met with much resistance. John Bachar, arguably the top climber of that era was loathe to see the rules change. John embodied the Bloodsport dogma; he free-soloed near the top of the difficulty scale and established routes from the ground up with a bare minimum of equipment. When others put in bolts in a manner that broke from tradition, he, and others in his camp, chopped them.

Ironically, one enduring dogma the “Redpoint,” was born in the 1980s in resistance to the Yosemite rule of “yo-yo” climbing - where each climber in a team could push a high point with the rope left through the highest pro reached by the previous climber, while the redpoint style allowed “working” a route before ascending cleanly from the ground. It's actually a rule made to preserve the roots of climbing; the only difference is the death part.

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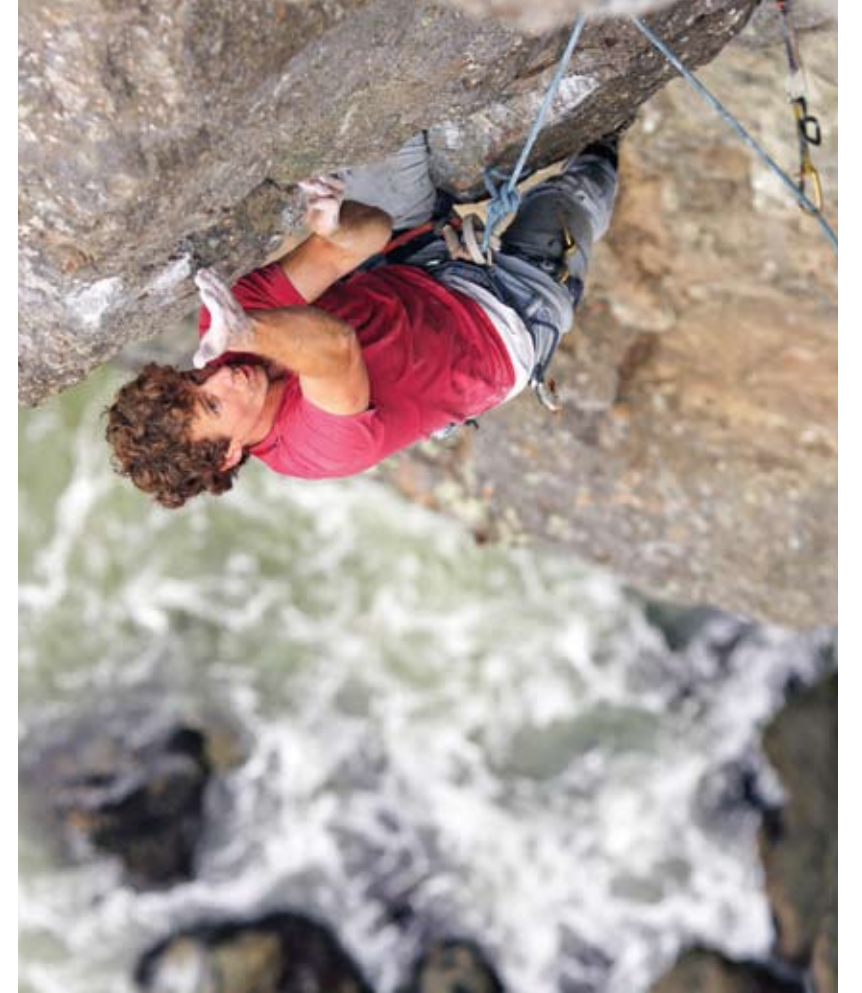


But change and the eventual examination of dogma are inevitable. Sport climbing's tide was too powerful to stem. Today's climber begins learning basic climbing techniques on day one, like how to work a route while hanging on a rope, which would have been considered sacrilege in past eras.

Though embattled, the OG climbing dogmas are still pervasive today. In places like Pinnacles National Monument, a small and dedicated band of locals have somewhat successfully defended and preserved a no rappel-bolting ethic. For most climbers this has no significance, since most of the climbs there are, for all intents and purposes, sport climbs that happen to have been established on lead, and painfully cleaned the "natural" way as loose holds break on subsequent ascents.

Here in the San Francisco Bay Area, many of our crags are small and chossy and have a climbing history that predates sport climbing. Sometimes the cracks were led, but the face climbs were almost always established as topropes and left as such. Even with the acceptance of sport climbing, local dogma enforced most of the local crags as "toprope-only" areas.

In the mid 1980s, things began to change. At Mickey's Beach, the obvious challenges – like the former *Mickey's Beach Crack* – had been climbed, both on toprope and as a traditional lead. Local climbers like Dan Goodwin, Harrison Dekker and Scott Frye, having pushed the levels on the local boulders, began exploring the then futuristic overhangs on the main rock. After top roping several of the lines, talk turned to rappel-bolting them for leading, something that hadn't yet happened in California without considerable controversy. As with all change, there was some grumbling and criticism, but for the most part, the new style was accepted, largely because it facilitated a new level for the area (5.13).



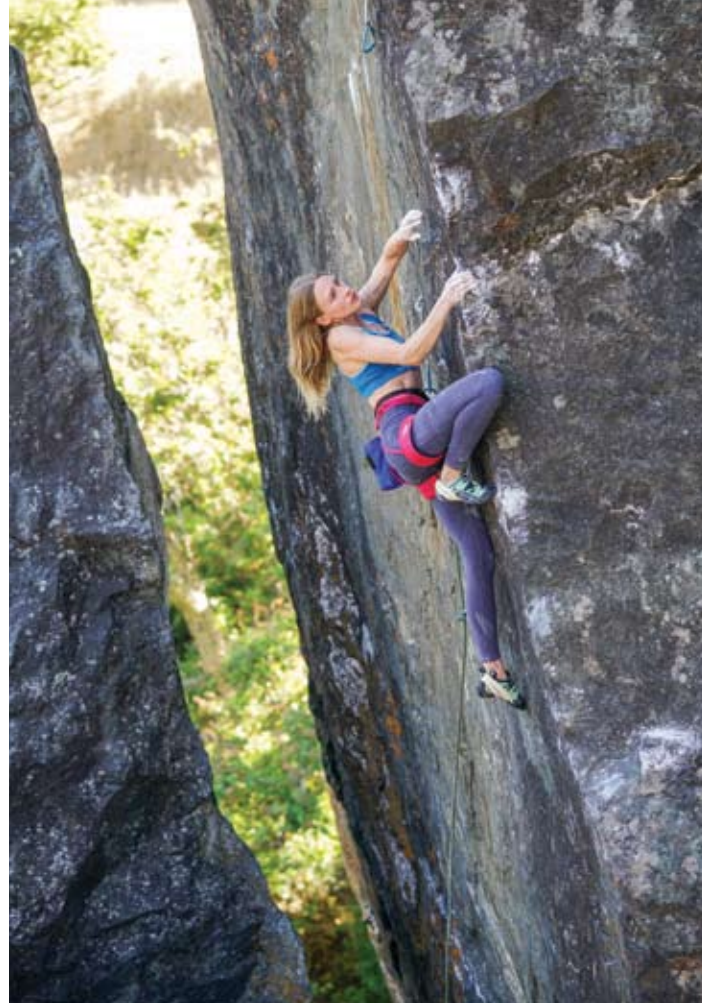
LEFT
Perry Doig makes the crux transition from the chimney to the delicate face features on *Dark Carnival*, a testy new 5.11 at Mt Diablo.

ABOVE
Conner Jeffress on *Barney Rubble* (5.12c), a route that was first explored by Alex Catlin in the 1980s. Jeffress spent weeks cleaning and bolting the line in 2020.

In the mid-90s bolts appeared on the hallowed toprope route *Amazing Face* (5.10a) a beautiful, 80-foot, skyscraper-flat face at Mt Diablo. It caused more than a little controversy. There was talk of chopping the bolts and lots of dogmatic preaching about the fact that Diablo was and always had been a "toprope-only" area. It was hard to argue that the bolts were a problem environmentally, given that the practice of top roping had carved deep grooves in the soft sandstone lip. So eventually the talk faded away, and the bay had its first five-star 5.10 sport climb. The other traditionally top roped lines at the Diablo crags have been slowly turning into sport climbs in the past few years, spearheaded by locals Rances Rodriguez, Francisco Herrera and Perry Doig.

Also in the mid-90s, at the South Bay crags of Castle Rock State Park, locals Bruce Morris, Dave Caunt and Mike Hernandez began bolting some of the faces on the taller sandstone blobs. 30 years later, it's seen as nothing but a blessing that these interesting and bouldery climbs are leadable, but at the time, they were met with staunch resistance. The arguments against bolting were familiar: don't go against tradition, the routes are too short, bolts will be an eyesore, nobody cares about leading these climbs, etc... The argument became so widespread that it unfortunately found the radar of the park managers. Not surprisingly, the park ended the squabble by placing a temporary moratorium on bolting that has now been in effect over 20 years. In 2014 the Bay Area Climbers' Coalition negotiated a deal to allow replacement of aging bolts at Castle Rock, but the new route bolting moratorium endures.

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LEFT

Too tall to boulder or too short to lead? Emilie Childress on the short but fierce top rope-turned sport climb *Code Red* (5.12a) at Sunol.

RIGHT

Lucho Rivera on *The Choss Whisperer*, a brilliant 5.12c at the newly developed MoTown. This obvious cliff was surrounded by poison oak until Mo Elkhallouf cleared the base. Next, a 3 day cleaning mission discovered a line through the initial band of choss to access the solid headwall.

THE CHOSS REVOLUTION

Generations of climbers have ogled the big cliff that looms to the south of the switchbacks on highway 29 that wind steeply up the flanks of Mt St Helena. The cliff is striking – a 250 foot tall hulk that has been a center of speculation since the 1960s, when Steve Roper and friends made some early (and one can imagine, harrowing) ascents there. Roper’s reports of rock that was little more than hard dirt served to keep most away. Those curious enough to make the hour hike from the highway could quickly confirm that the rock was indeed too fragile for climbing - who wanted to climb on holds that were very likely to break? When Aaron Rough and Dave Stallard visited in 2005, they hadn’t heard the reports of terrible rock quality and their relative lack of experience allowed their psyche to override any concerns they had. “I was a total noob when I met Aaron. On day one he taught me to put up routes at the Auburn Quarry” recalls Stallard, “I remember giant blocks raining down around me when I was belaying him and thinking, well, I guess this is rock-climbing! If I knew then what I know now, I wouldn’t have bothered, but I’m glad we did it, and I’m glad people are enjoying the routes.”

A few years later, on the north side of the highway, locals Jordy Morgan, Jerry Dodrill, and Eric Berghorn were about to embark on their own choss crusade. Once again, it was a newcomer, Ed Henicle, who shined the light. “Ed used to pester us to teach him how to put up routes” says long-time local (and sometimes curmudgeon) Jerry Dodrill, “Finally, we pointed him in the direction of some slabby choss that was down the hill from The Bubble, thinking that would keep him busy and out of our hair for a while we developed the good stuff.” Ed was mostly interested in bolting “long moderate pitches” and what he found under a thin layer of crust was exactly that – a plethora of 5.6 to 5.8 routes. After the rest of the crew realized what Ed was onto, they joined the fun and added more routes to the crag. When the dust

had settled, the group had fifteen fun and moderate routes on what has become one of the mountains most popular crags. They dubbed the new crag Blind Man’s Bluff in reference to the fact that they had been blindly walking past it for the past twenty years. Stoked on their find, the group began exploring other overlooked or forgotten crags. In turns, they developed The Near Side, Down Under and The Right Side of The Bear, nearly doubling the mountain’s pitch count over the last two years.

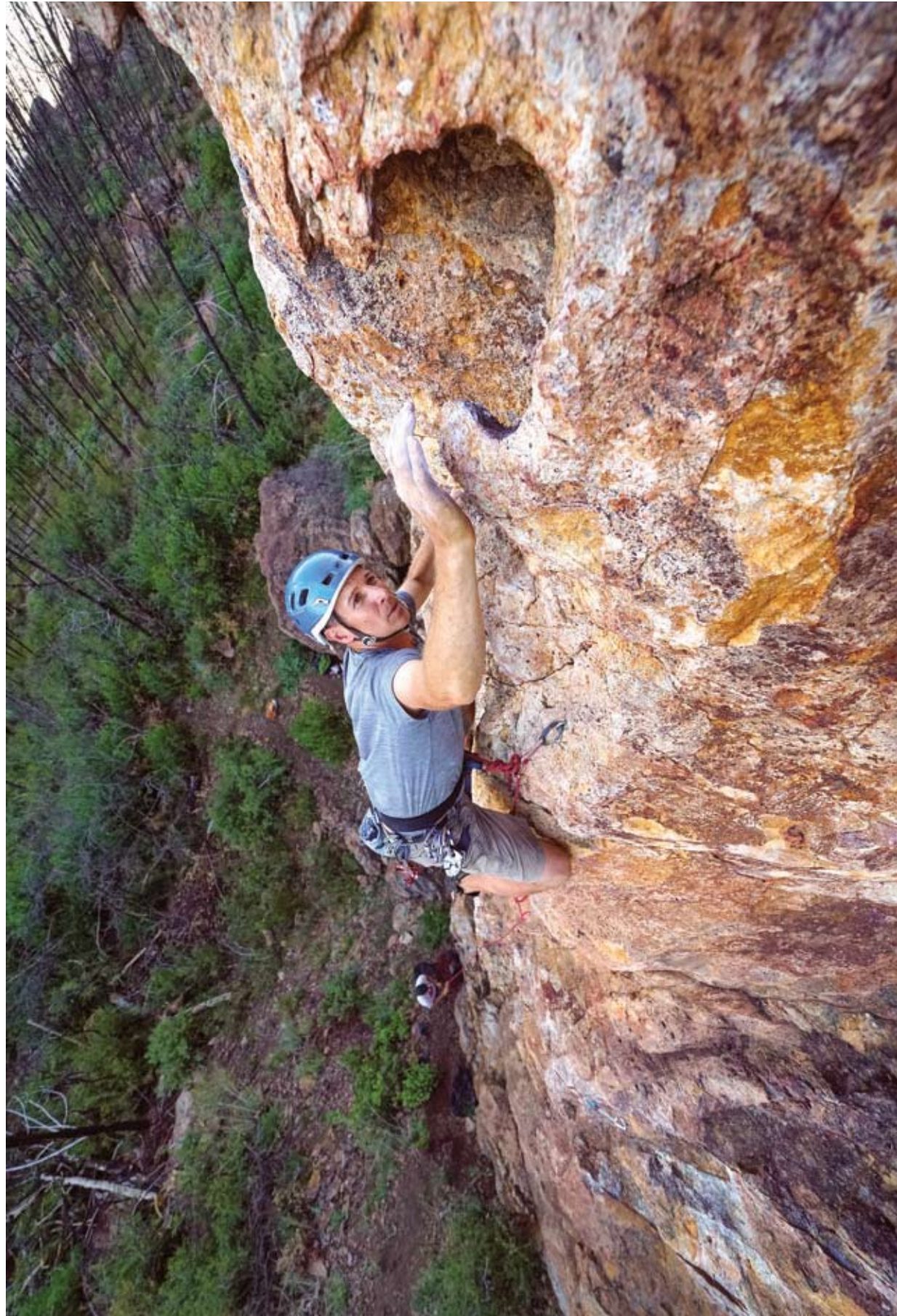
At Mt Diablo’s Pine Canyon, locals Sean Burke and Todd Worsfold have developed a keen eye for new, climbable routes amid the oceans of choss. In addition to the new routes at Pine Canyon, many of the old ones have been recently re-bolting, breathing even more new life into the area.

On the Marin coast, a similar scenario played out. In 2014, Steven Roth, a young crusher from Florida who was attending U.C. Berkeley, took a walk down to the long forgotten (and very chossy) Emperor Boulder. The obvious prow of the huge rock had seen prior attempts (or maybe even ascents) on top rope, but no one had given it a proper cleaning or seriously considered bolting it for lead. The resulting route, *The Emperor’s New Clothes* (5.12d) was an instant hit, and sparked a rethinking of what crappy coastal rock could be. In the last two years, Kim Pfabe, Lucho Rivera, Noah Dailey, Conner Jeffress Eric Dyvad and myself have established over 70 new pitches to the south of Mickey’s Beach.

While all of this new development has been accepted by most climbers as a welcome boon, there are still those who grumble, and to them I say, keep grumbling! Climbing’s dogmas, while restrictive and even suffocating at times, are an essential system of checks and balances to the health and romance of our pastime. Our dogmas were brewed in the roots of climbing, steeped in respect for the environment, and hopefully will always be considered by those would-be agents of change.



Ed Hennicle on the first ascent of *Pipeline* (5.10a), a fun, juggy route at the new Down Under Cliff.



{1} **Noah Daily**

Noah is a relative newcomer to new-routing, but has already established a handful of fun climbs on the coast: try *Starfish Enterprise* or *Whale if Yer Scared* for a lesson in old-school technique (and meaningful puns!)

{2} **JERRY DODRILL**

Ask photographer Jerry Dodrill a question about one of his routes on Mount Saint Helena and you'll get an answer full of historical tidbits. Climb one of them - *Kana Mota*, *Silverado Squatters* or *Moonwalk*, and you'll get a taste of some of the best climbing the mountain has to offer.

{3} **LUCHO RIVERA**

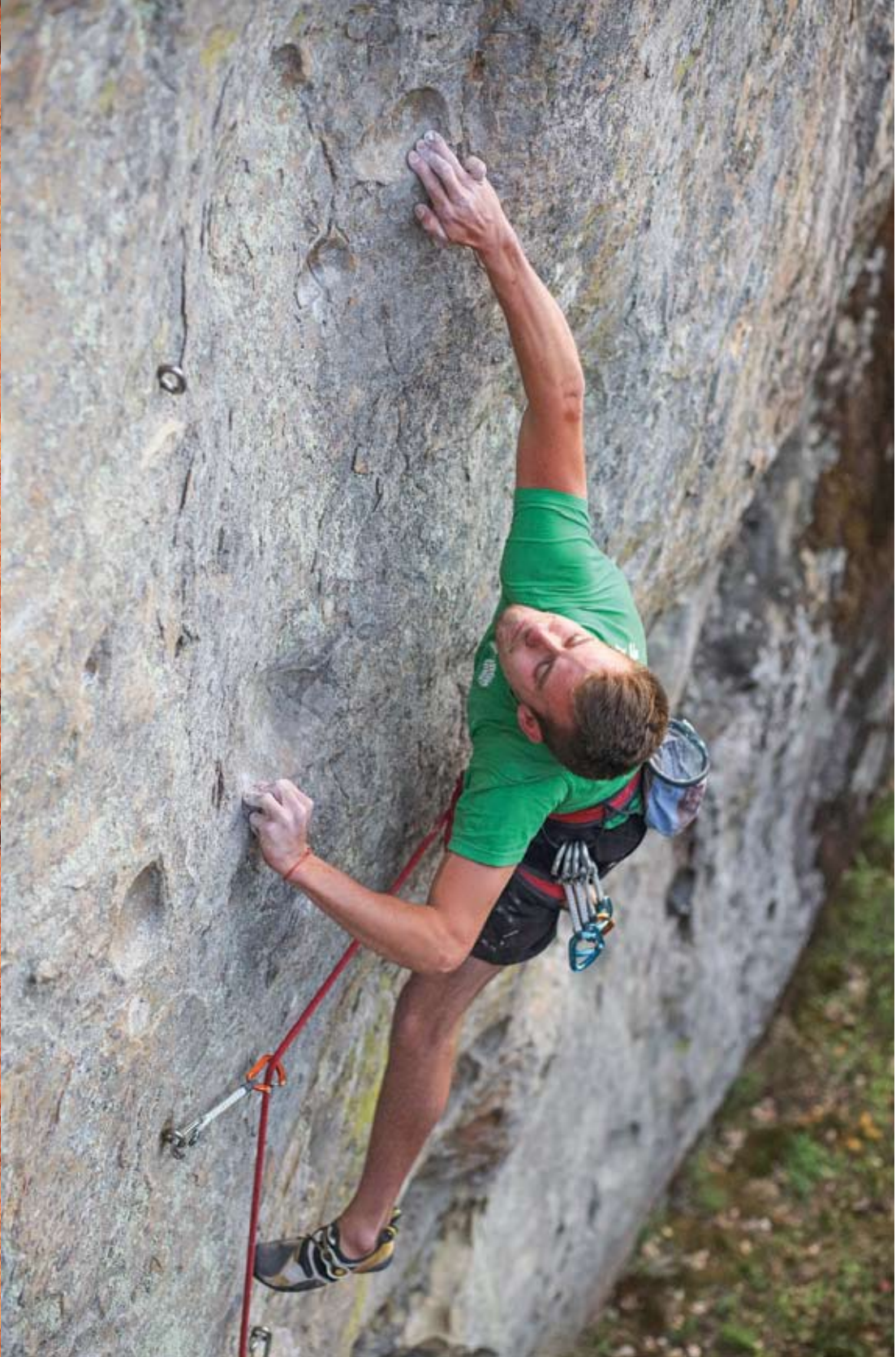
Lucho splits his time between Yosemite and the Marin Coast, climbing, bouldering and putting up routes. Check out "*The Bronze Hog*" or "*Fish 'n' Chips*" for a sample of some of his local cross craftsmanship.

{4} **JORDY MORGAN**

Jordy has been establishing routes on Mt St Helena for over 30 years. He blends a strong artistic vision with a natural instinct for herding - don't ask questions, just follow the bolts and enjoy the ride!

{5} **KIM PFABE**

On a trip to Greece in 2017, Kim was introduced to the Greek practice of "friendly bolting" and a seed was planted. Check other routes *Poozer* (5.7) or *Effervescent* (10b) for a sampling. Kim is also the Bay Area Climbers Coalition Re-bolting Director.



LEFT
Jerry Dodrill on the upper
arête of *Dystopia*, a classic
5.11 pitch on the remote
Macondo Crag at Mount
Saint Helena.

RIGHT
Steven Roth on the first
ascent of *Dueling Banjos*,
a classic, but sandbagged
5.13b at Pine Canyon,
Mount Diablo.

THE TOUR:

YOSEMITE'S 'ONE-STAR' CIRCUIT

WORDS & IMAGES + DEAN FLEMING

SPINAL TAP (5.11B)

Austin Schuler fights a wicked barn door on the extremely technical crux section of Spinal Tap (5.11b), a roadside gem that is often overlooked.





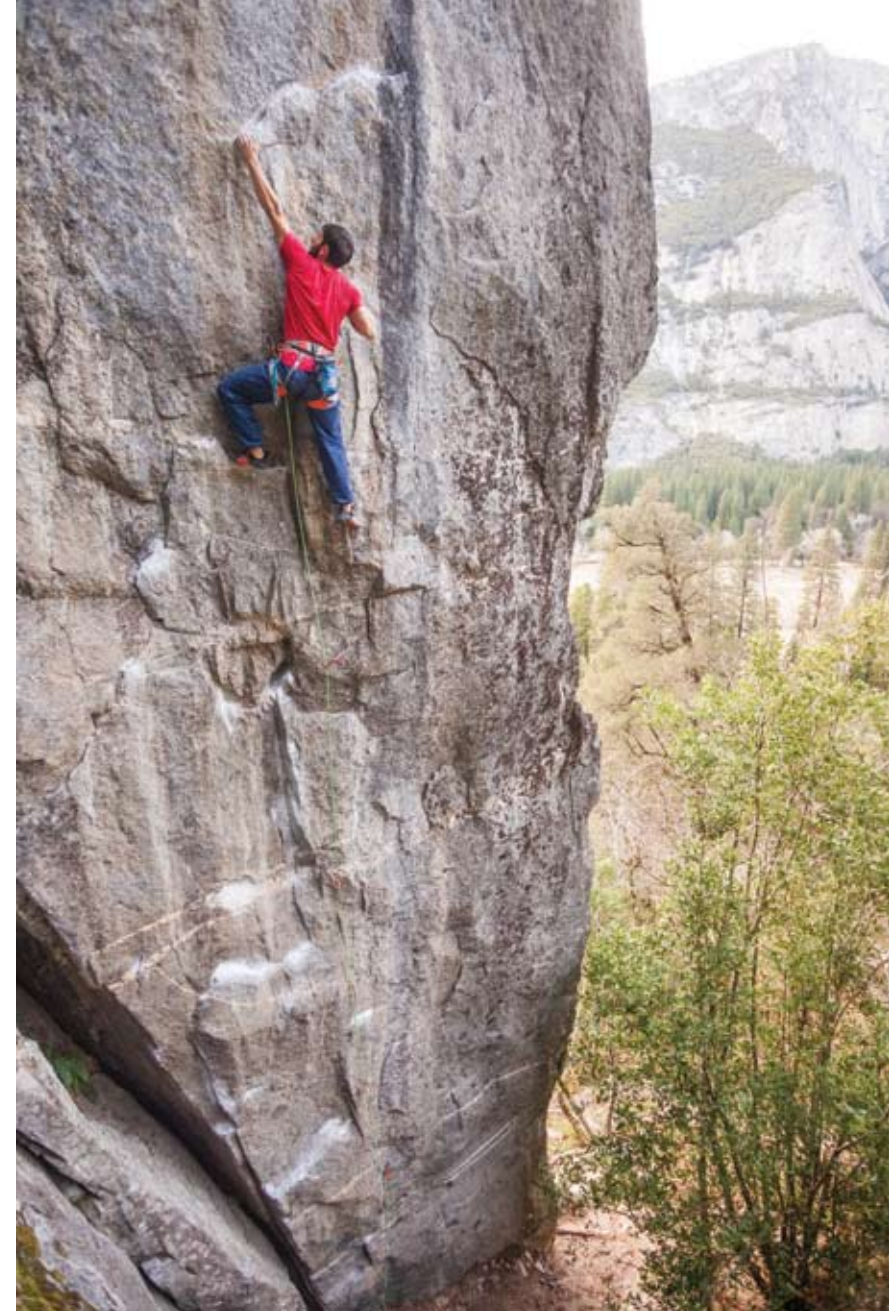
I WAS BORN IN THE SMALL FOOTHILL TOWN OF SONORA, ABOUT FIFTY MILES NORTH OF YOSEMITE, AND BEGAN CLIMBING ON SONORA PASS IN 1995 AT THE AGE OF ELEVEN. A GUIDEBOOK FOR THE SONORA PASS REGION WOULD NOT BE PUBLISHED UNTIL 1998, AND SO THOSE FIRST FEW YEARS WERE SPENT IN AN ADVENTUROUS FASHION, GAZING UP AT THE CLIFFS, GUESSING WHICH WAY TO GO UP AND HOW TO GET DOWN. WE DIDN'T KNOW IF THE CLIMBS HAD BEEN DONE BEFORE, IF THEY HAD NAMES AND GRADES, OR IF OTHERS THOUGHT THE ROUTES WERE COOL. AND WE DIDN'T CARE. WE CLIMBED THINGS BECAUSE THEY LOOKED FUN AND BECAUSE IN A TOWN AS SMALL AS SONORA, THERE WAS NOTHING BETTER TO DO.

On my first trip to Yosemite, after struggling up some unnamed 30 foot-tall crack at Swan Slabs, I sat in the meadow with my dad and watched folks rack-up for routes like The Nose, Mescalito and the Shield on El Capitan. I had dreams that one day I too would be gearing up at the base of El Capitan for an epic ascent. I thought about graduating high school, living in Yosemite full-time and falling in line with the new generation of Yosemite climbers. But years past, then decades, and I continued to spend most time climbing on Sonora Pass. When I did go to the Valley, I'd search for routes that only had one star or no stars in Don Reid's Yosemite Free Climbs guidebook. Sometimes I'd cower in the bushes, close to the ground, scraping dirt and moss out of the cracks, but sometimes I discovered some really excellent yet secluded pitches of rock climbing. —>

LEFT

HAYLEY BROWN, **SNATCH POWER (5.10C)**

The short-but-stout Snatch Power (5.10c) is located at the Lower Merced Canyon crag Finger Lickin', a fantastic set of small cliffs that house the amazing three-star routes Finger Lickin' (5.10d) and Pinky Paralysis (5.11c). These cliffs are invisible from Highway 140 and are guarded by a steep twenty minute approach up a poison oak-laced gully. If you manage to locate the approach trail and survive the steep slog up it, Snatch Power (5.10c) is the first route you'll encounter at the top of the trail. Torturous finger locks protected by bomber small cams or wires tackle the fifteen foot crux section off the ground which is shortly followed by an absolutely stunning 40-feet of steep thin hand jamming up a perfect splitter that arches through a small roof at mid-height. Directly above the route you'll find a nest of slings wrapped around the base of a small bay tree, yet a short traverse to the right will take you to a freshly bolted anchor that allows for easy lower-offs and top roping with the use of a directional.



ABOVE

WES MIRAGLIO, **96 DEGREES IN THE SHADE (5.12C)**

Yosemite's Chapel Wall is a popular and shaded sport climbing crag marked by the huge left facing corner of Heathenistic Pursuit (5.10b) just above a horse trail that leads to the base of the large wall behind the Yosemite Wedding Chapel. The main area at Chapel consists of a handful of 5.12 well-bolted climbs and two 5.10 cracks - a small zone that can become pretty crowded in summer months, especially when the north side of the Valley is baking in the sun and stuffing your hot feet into sweltering cracks sounds dreadful. A few hundred feet to climber's left of Heathenistic Pursuit is a hidden gem called 96 Degrees in the Shade (5.12c), a rare overhanging sport climb in a valley that sometimes feels devoid of positive handholds on steep rock.



KEENAN POPE, ***THE FLAKE*** (5.10B)

Although a number of difficult sport climbs can be found on Yosemite's Knobby Wall, including the often-projected Keep the Muscle, Loose the Fat (5.13b), the Knobby Wall also features a few moderate sport climbs and the steepest 5.10 crack in Yosemite: The Flake (5.10b). When standing underneath the nearly 45 degree overhanging roof and gazing out the sequence of fingerlocks and hand jams on the Flake, it's hard to believe this incredible feature can be climbed at the mortal grade of 5.10. The tricky boulder problem that guards the start of the route can be intimidating and dangerous; some climbers protect this sequence with a crash pad as the first piece of gear on the route is found after these difficult moves at a height of ten feet. After placing the first piece, strenuous laybacking protected by excellent small cams leads to a perplexing crux mantle. We'll let you figure that one out on your own, but perhaps it should be noted that superb cam placements protect this crux and a short fall into open air is your only consequence should you botch the exit moves. Once you elegantly mantle the top-out, or slither over the summit like a beached porpoise, lower off of two bolts. To clean the anchor, walk off the climber's right side of the boulder.



Yosemite is Mecca for climbers around the Globe, but the area's popularity is not always welcoming to those that seek solitude in the forest. The Valley's classic trade routes are often jam-packed with visiting climbers. On a busy summer weekend, when hiking to the base of a climb that is close to the road and features a bunch of stars in a guidebook, it's not uncommon to find up to ten parties in line to ascend it. This heavy traffic buffs the footholds, greases the handholds and wears down fixed anchors; a large contributor to Yosemite Valley's reputation for polished rock, crowded routes and sketchy descents.

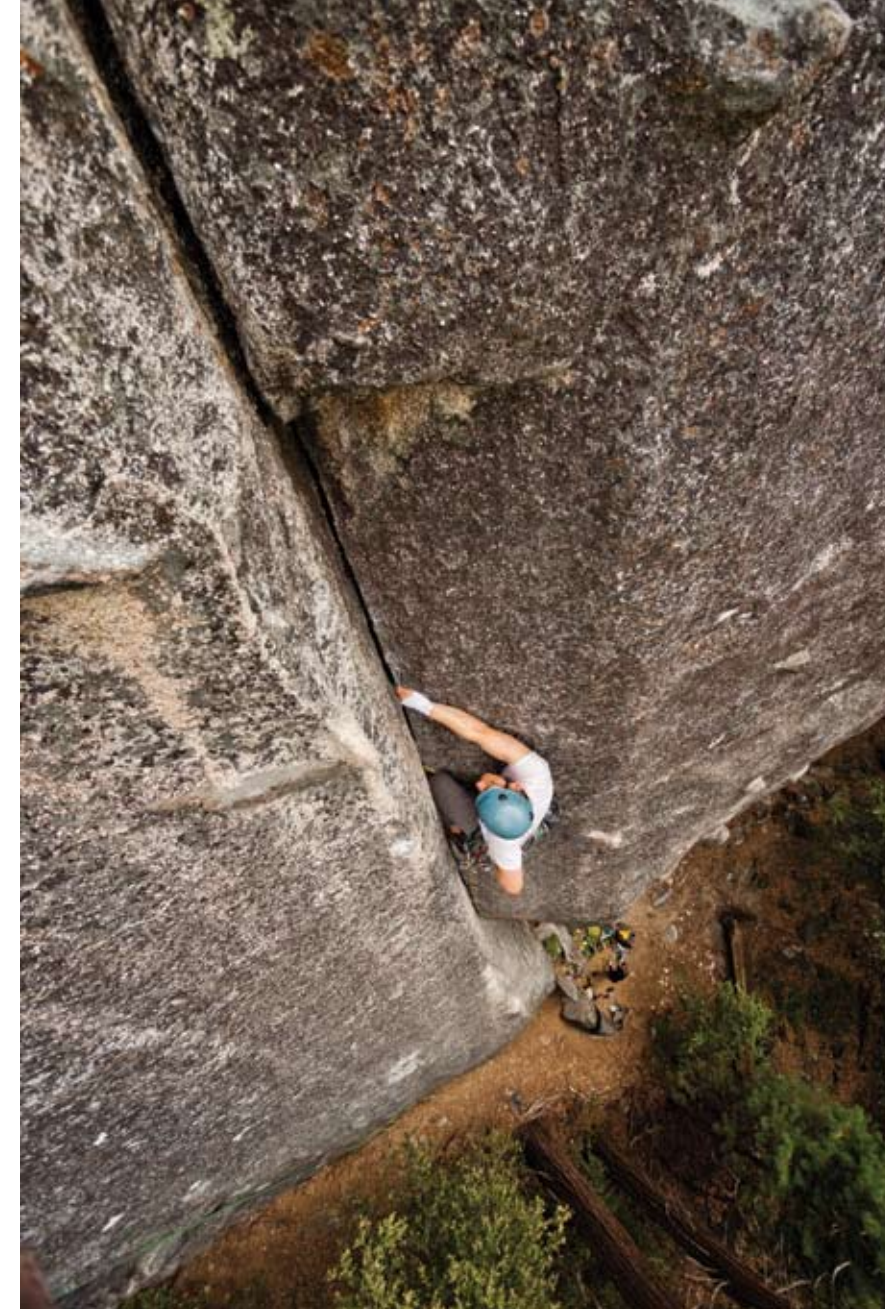
Although the classic trade routes in Yosemite are meticulously mapped, blogged about, photographed and publicized, the smaller crags in the Valley still beg to be explored. Occasionally you'll find a bit of dirt and a few bushes growing out of the cracks, but the one-star climbs in Yosemite can be good; really good. The rock on these forgotten routes is often textured, featured and solid, with sticky footholds and often perfect protection. The climbing found on Yosemite's obscurities can be excellent, and the solitude found here can provide some of the most rewarding climbing experiences in California.

If you visit Yosemite Valley you should tackle the trade routes and classic lines that made this area famous. You should do routes like Royal Arches, Nutcracker, Serenity Crack and the Central Pillar of Frenzy, and when you've honed your granite climbing skills and rope systems, you should move on to climb bigger routes like the South Face of Washington Column, the West Face of Leaning Tower, the Regular Northwest Face of Half Dome, the Nose and the Salathe Wall; for perhaps nowhere in the World boasts higher quality climbs of equal length and difficulty. But if you have the time, and you have the desire to explore a wide variety of granite crags and climbing styles, it's well-worth the effort to step off the beaten path and explore the lesser-known areas found on the Valley's forgotten little cliffs.

LEFT

KEENAN POPE, **LITTLE WING (5.10D)**

Hidden far above the Merced River, just a few feet from the Old Big Oak Flat Road, the Little Wing Buttress is an incredible escape from the Valley floor. The cliff does get a lot of sun, so be sure to visit really early or very late in the day. Three excellent routes can be found at the Little Wing Buttress, but the area's namesake route Little Wing (5.10d), is certainly the star of the show. Little Wing starts with a locker finger crack that is augmented by a few 1/2" edges that beckon to be used as footholds. At about 1/3 height, an obvious three-foot roof can either be jammed past or hero lay backed on a huge in-cut side-facing jug. The remainder of the route sports technical finger-locking, hand jamming and a few tricky sequences that lead to a scenic two-bolt belay. From the anchor, make sure to take in the view; one of the best in Yosemite. Ribbon Falls, El Capitan, Half Dome, Sentinel, Bridalveil Falls and Leaning Tower can all be seen from this stunning location. The nearby routes Honor Thy Father (5.10c), Leisure Time (5.10b) and The Riddler (5.10a) are also worth the short and scenic hike to the cliff.



ABOVE

SCOTT EVANS, **CHICKEN PIE (5.9)**

With big runouts past bolts and slung diorite knobs on almost every climb in the area, New Diversions cliff in the Lower Merced Canyon is one of the more intimidating short cliffs in Yosemite. Yet it is precisely because of its somewhat daunting reputation and vague approach trail that New Diversions can be completely void of crowds on even the busiest summer weekend. If you can muster the courage to venture out onto committing mantel maneuvers with giant slung knobs below your feet, you should definitely try the areas' namesake routes New Diversions (5.10a) and New Deviations (5.9). But if you're anything like me, and that all sounds utterly terrifying, you might want to walk down the hill to the climbers' right of New Diversions and try the excellent Chicken Pie (5.9) – a laser-cut corner with perfect fingerlocks and big edges for the feet turns into a really fun section of wide crack climbing with huge knobs to both grab and stand on. There is a new bolted anchor somewhere up there, and you can barely lower off with a 70 meter rope.

CARL MCDONALD, **DELIVERANCE (V8)**

With literally thousands of house-sized blocks of granite scattered throughout the Valley, it's surprising how few roof-crack boulder problems exist, and with that in mind, it's even more surprising that the excellent and difficult Deliverance (V8) doesn't see hoards of attempts each summer. To be fair, accessing the Deliverance Boulder isn't as easy as stumbling behind Camp 4 with a half-full 40oz of King Cobra. Honestly, I don't remember any defined approach to the boulder, but I do remember that once you find the Cedar Crack Boulder, you simply tramp up the hill to the south about 200 yards through some pretty thick trees and brush until a jumble of boulders becomes obvious. Deliverance starts sitting down or crouching near the back of a large cave in some thin hand jams. The crux maneuvers come pretty quickly as the crack pinches down to very thin hands, then to ring-locks and then finally to a sequence of secure fingerlocks out a bulge. You won't die with one pad, but about three pads make this route comfortable.

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AUSTIN SCHULER,
SPINAL TAP
(5.11B)

Spinal Tap is located directly off the Highway, yet is surprisingly hard to find. While often ignored; this knife edge arête is one of the finest technical bolted face climbs in the Ditch. The lower portion of this laser cut corner invites climbers to move past the first three bolts on positive holds. Above an otherwise featureless slab forces you into a demanding series of arête slapping maneuvers while fighting a relentless barn door on diminishing footholds. Basically *Spinal Tap* (5.11b) is a super sweet but really challenging "pure arête" about fifteen feet from the highway.



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NICOLE ZUELKE, **A DOG'S ROOF (5.12B)**

If you like short, steep cracks with incut buckets and short approaches, and you have abnormally fat, damn-near sausage-like fingers, and you enjoy dynamic moves to big holds, you'll probably love A Dog's Roof (5.12b) at the west end of Wawonna Tunnel. I actually don't have huge fingers, and I'm pretty bad at dynamic movement, so A Dog's Roof feels like mid-5.13 to me, but I still really enjoy attempting it. The climb consists of a very steep fat fingers crack (purple and tight green Camalot size) that is intersected by a gigantic jug rail. From here a sequence of very steep and sometimes terrible jams lead to a really cool incut side-pull and more jugs to the chains. A Dog's Roof is just another of Yosemite's athletic, gymnastic and very aesthetic cracks that has somehow become largely overshadowed by more obvious and glamorous objectives.

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KAI DEFTY
SHARK FIN (V1)
 HOUDA POINT

Bouldering along the Northern California Coastline lends itself to a certain amount of ambiguity. With changing tides come rising and falling sand levels which drastically change the nature of the bouldering on a monthly or even daily basis. The Shark Fin Arête (V1) at Houda Point is no exception – sometimes it's a ten-foot tall spike surrounded by soft sand, and sometimes it's a twenty-foot tall spike surrounded by jagged tide pools. Kai Defty nears the summit during low-sand conditions.

IMAGE + DEAN FLEMING

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