

culture chalk

SPRING 2012

calgary's climbing magazine



You will travel to many climbing destinations.

Letters Home:

The Weldon kids send their thanks to the Tai's

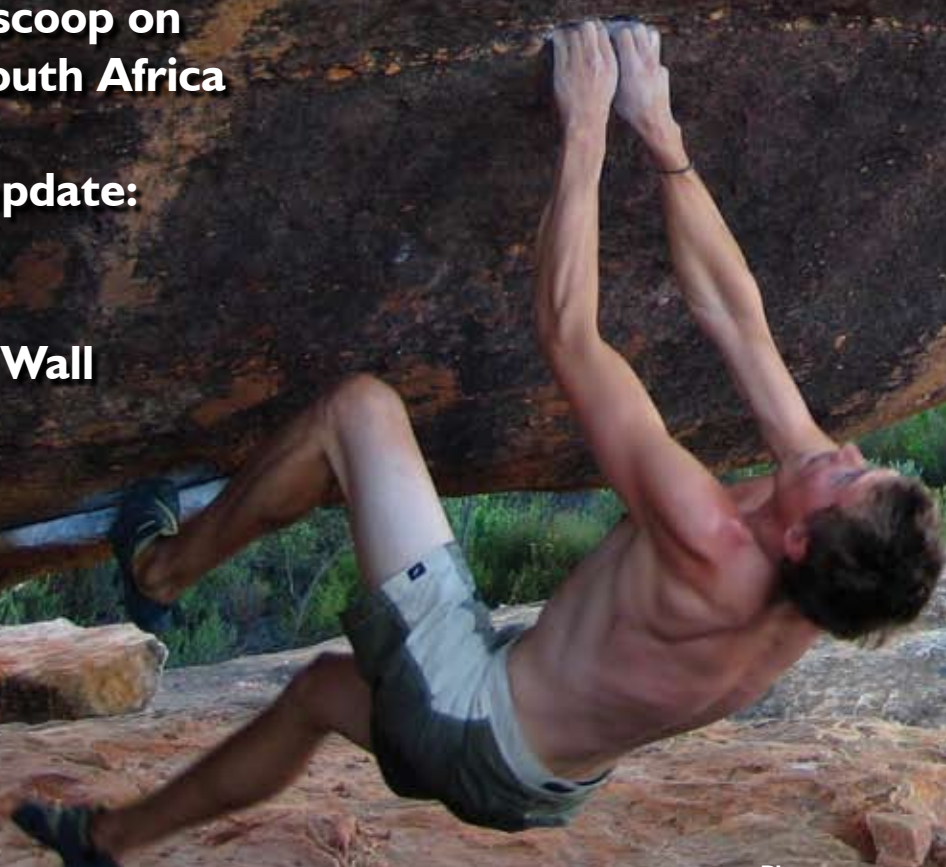
The Guidebook:

Etienne Poirier gives the insider's scoop on Rocklands, South Africa

Adult Team update:

FREE clinics

Q and A: Big Wall



Letters Home:

Chris, Stacey, Vikki and Mike send letters of thanks to Walson and Rhonda

Edited by Darla Locke

The Calgary Climbing Centre. If you wrung the place out like a wet towel, you could fill a swimming pool—a big swimming pool—with the memories within these walls. Walson and Rhonda Tai, the cofounders of the CCC, created much more than a climbing gym. They created a safe haven, a place to dream big and make those dreams a reality. Since 1995, Walson and Rhonda have dedicated their lives to the development of climbing in Canada and around the world. They have mentored and cared for numerous budding climbers, including the Weldons. Ah, the Weldon family. A boon, a bane? Who knows. Either way, here are their thanks. To Rhonda. To Walson. To the Calgary Climbing Centre.

Photos by the Weldons

I was a pain in the ass. Well, I probably still am a pain in the ass, but ask anybody who climbed at the CCC in its first five years and you'll probably get a response like: "Chris? Was he that kid who hung out at the vending machine asking for change?" or "Yah, I think I remember when somebody got pissed at him and hung him off the second draw at the back of the gym by his harness. He was up there a while." But, can you blame me? I was 13 years old, fueled by Wendy's and chocolate bars, and in the infancy of discovering what would turn out to be the biggest passion of my life, climbing. I guess I was just a little excited about it.

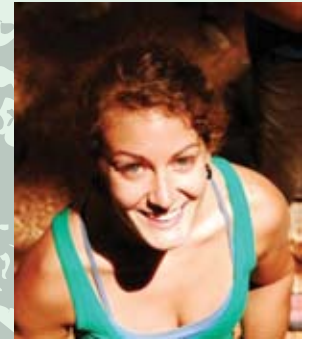


The Calgary Climbing Centre is really at fault for me annoying all those paying customers, and probably driving a few of them off. From the time I took my first lesson there I knew I had found a second home, complete with a second family. The first eight years of my climbing life revolved around the CCC. My first job was stuffing chalk balls in the back of the gym (I still think this was Walson's form of payback for driving away customers), my first road trip sans parents was with the CCC folk, to a climbing comp in Saskatoon. My first serious wedgie was received at the CCC. Basically, the CCC raised me during my teen years.

Even though I've been away from Calgary and the CCC for more than 4 years now, those countless nights spent bouldering in the back of the gym are still some of the fondest memories I have of growing up. Walson and Rhonda, you two are the best! I'm still amazed that you kept me around.

Cheers, Chris

I have always considered the CCC a second home. Spending easily just about as much time awake there as I did at the Weldon household, it's always one of the first places I head to whenever I am back in Calgary. Before joining the CCC youth team, I would tag along after gymnastics practice or soccer practice with my mom to pick up Chris from the gym. I would run to the back and clamber up the shallow side of the A-frame in my socks. I soon joined up with the team in the good ol' days when Walson was our coach, wrestling on the mats and playing American Gladiators on the old A-frame in the back ... and learning lots about climbing of course. There were, without a shadow of a doubt, days I would spend more time harassing the poor desk staff for quarters to buy Reese's-Pieces than I would on the walls, but I think I turned out all right.



I remember once for my birthday Walson tied me off half way up the front wall, and gave the rest of the team water guns and a bottle of shaving cream. Thanks Wals!

Laughing, crying, learning, even hurling my guts out after too many laps on the front wall, the CCC is filled with so many memories. I learned so much during those years, not only about climbing and competition, but also about myself. Growing up at this gym played a huge part in making me the person I am today, there is no question about that.

The CCC has changed quite a bit since those first few years, but the feeling I get walking in those front doors never changes. I'm home.

Love, Stacey

Whenever I am home in Calgary, and I leave my house, my mind is automatically set on autopilot, and I instinctively point the nose of my car on the path towards the CCC. Too many times have I found myself headed towards the gym when really I had intended to head to the grocery store, or a friend's house. My life revolved and continues to revolve around the events that took place in this building, and the people that inhabited it. My passion for climbing and my very best friends all stem from this unassuming climbing gym. I have some great memories, from the 6am practices (ok, so those memories weren't always so great, especially the 6am part) to the very first time that Walson taught me how to clean a route outside (it was a quick lesson). I remember hiding my loose chalk from Rhonda as she made her rounds, and sulking when we were caught and then made to vacuum up the mats in the gym. Those were back in the days when Flashed's refillable chalk balls reigned supreme. I remember Walson taking me aside and giving me



climbing movies to watch and magazine articles to read, as a way to inspire me and motivate me to pursue my passion. It worked. Walson and Rhonda have made a huge impact in both the world of rock climbing and in countless hearts along the way. Without these two fantastic individuals, I never would have found the sport I love, and my life would have been extremely dull. Thank you Walson and Rhonda. You two rock. Literally.

Love, Vikki

Tears streaming down my face was a common occurrence at my ol' stompin' grounds commonly referred to as the Calgary Climbing Center. I was a young buck of 6 or 7 years when I started getting the crap kicked out of me by the older boys of the day; Dan Smith, Mike Henry, and Darren Dunbar-just to name a few. It was tough love, but it was fair... I definitely asked for it. I know I wouldn't have grown up to be who I am today if it wasn't for the countless hours spent in that glorious industrial building on Fisher Road. The learning that took place there will follow me for the rest of my life and I am very grateful for the people that made that place what it was and continues to be.



I don't know if anybody remembers the old furniture they had in the front; some old couches, a chair here and there, and a coffee table to chill out at. I recall one day when I was stirring up trouble with Walson (if you can't remember his name think of the wall and then think of the sun, that's what he told me the first day I had summer camp with him) in the front of the gym. I seem to remember betting him that he couldn't pick me up or something like that. Sure enough, two minutes later I was running to my mom crying with a fat goose-egg on my head and a sizable dent in the coffee table that remained there for a couple of years.

I will never forget my days spent at that gym, whether it was two weeks or ten years ago.

Big ups, Mike

ADULT TEAM UPDATE: Free Clinics

The CCC Adult Team members have gone above and beyond this year as they offer free clinics to our community. So far, team members have hosted, amongst others, "Feet Like Claws," "Rings and Other Things," "Eat to Climb Better," "How to Use the Campus Board," and even a secret one just for women!

The Stronghold and Chinook will be hosting FREE clinics on a first come first serve basis. Free clinics require a commitment deposit of \$10. When you show up to the clinic, your money will be returned in full.



Photo by Walson Tai

Upcoming Free Clinics:

April 25	Sam Li	Stronghold	6:30-8:30	Training Yourself	Beg to Adv
April 26	Heather	Stronghold	6:30-8:30	Every Muscle counts	Beg to Adv

feature on
flashed™

**Culture Chalk asks Flashed engineer Mark Fraser,
“What is the best pad for long-haul flights?”**

“Checked luggage, especially oversize, is costly and the only solution is to have a smaller size. The Flashed Air Technology is specifically designed to be manually compressed into small rolls so the mat gets smaller for travel. The Ronin, for example, in full glory reaches out to 50x38x5in wide but packs down to 15x15x38in for travel. With a savings like that it’s time to pack the bags!” ~ Mark

STAFF ONLY:

Mark your calendars! July 20-22 is the CCC Staff Climbing Festival! This event is a two night camping and climbing extravaganza complete with clinics and competitions all in a beautiful wilderness setting. We’ll see you there!



**culture
chalk** asks

**What’s the farthest
you’ve travelled to
climb?**



“That would have to be Bishop, California. I’m going again next week!”

~ Keith Nalepa



“I’ve climbed in South Africa and that’s really far, but I had to hike for days to climb in the Annapurna in Nepal. They’re both far, but in different ways.”

~ Luke Muller



“Either Font or Majorca. I think Mallorca is further depending on how you fly.”

~ Eric Hsiung



“The farthest I’ve gone to climb is Grassi Lakes. It’s not very far, but I find that this destination has the perfect combination of sun and shade. Sometimes the best vacations are close to home”

~ Argos

Big Wall Wonders: When nature calls

By Tawny Buhler

I've never ventured into big wall climbing. The decadence of the modern climbing gym has brought the sport indoors. If nature calls while climbing in the gym the reaction is simple: take off your harness and make your way to the private stall with a ceramic commode waiting for you. With the wave of your hand the waste disappears becoming someone else's problem. Before long, you are back on the wall; the whole ordeal is really nothing to think twice about.

As an avid outdoorswoman few sans-toilette situations faze me, but what about if you are four days up on El Capitan? You can't just shed the harness for a visit to the stylish wooden toilet seats of the Stronghold. Ducking into a bush isn't even an option. To save myself the trouble of actually having to climb El Cap, I asked big wall climber Kyle McConnell something I've always wanted to know:

How do you go—you know—up there?

CC: Kyle, What does your big wall resume include?

KM: Yosemite Valley Climbing! South face Washington column; The Nose, El Capitan; Various other failed attempts at routes; one unfortunate bivy in a tree (the tree was 1000' off the ground).

CC: Sounds impressive. What was your longest climb?

KM: The Nose, it was a four day affair, start to finish.

CC: The Yosemite climbing regulations website has very few rules in place for big wall climbing. It does, however, require climbers to carry a "dry bag, plastic container, or 'poop tube' for human waste." Can you tell us which of these options works best for you?

KM: You can smell a ledge well before you get to it on a trade route. It's not great, ammonia scented air wafting your way. So here's the deal: pee in your empty water bottles, like the big gallon jug ones you'll have with you on a wall, nice and simple. Dry bags are light, don't abrade easily, and importantly don't smell. Poop tubes make great toxic missiles.

CC: Can you tell us about the emotional response you had the first time you had to use one of the options listed above?

KM: The best, freeing, scenic bowel movement of my life. Like unicorns dancing in the rain.

CC: Wow, sounds idyllic. What is the process (apart from the abhorrently obvious parts) of executing a bathroom break on the face of a climb? Can you choose to go anywhere, or are factors like scenery and safety a concern?

KM: Wag-bag and similar outdoor waste systems are fantastic. Find a flat surface, open the package and they lay out like a personal lavatory. Stay tied in, but unclip the leg loops, think deep inward thoughts and enjoy the scenery.

CC: What advice can you offer to aspiring big wall climbers about this, or any, big wall topic?

KM: I was taught two guiding philosophies by much more successful wall climbers than myself:

- 1) The only way down is up, and
- 2) Don't over think the route. Make a plan, trust yourself and your partner and do it. You'll succeed. The longer you let something big loom over you, the scarier it gets, and that is why most people don't make it to the top. Don't let fear get to you and you'll succeed.



Photo by Kyle McConnell

THE GUIDEBOOK

Rocklands, South Africa: Etienne Poirier shares first-hand experiences and offers travel tips that nobody else will give you.

Rocklands is a regrouping of bouldering areas scattered around the Pakhuis pass. The pass is located 30 minutes from the small town of Clanwilliam, 3 hours North of Cape Town in the Western Cape province. The known and documented climbing areas are:

- **Before the pass:** The Campground, The Upper Campground, Champside, and Riverside. Located before going up Pakhuis pass. Located on public land. No current access issues.
- **Top of the pass:** Road Side boulder, Road Crew boulders, Fortress boulders. Located on Cederberg Mountain reserve. You are meant to get a climbing permit. I tried in vain to obtain one. Some even drive all the way up to the ranger station in Citrusdale only to find locked doors.
- **After the pass:** Field of Joy, Plateau boulders. On private land. Must obtain a day permit at a very reasonable price. Don't try sneaking in without paying. If you stay at de Pakhuys Guest House or camp, you don't have to pay for climbing.
- **Further along:** These are mythical areas which I've only seen in pictures or heard off. No guide books or topo yet. The following need accessing with an all wheel drive vehicle with high clearance: The Austrian area, Sassy, and The American area.

Guide books: Rocklands Bouldering by Scott Noy. Climb ZA, 2010.

Clanwilliam: Right off the N7, 3.5 hours North of Cape Town, this is your last and only stop for basic supplies. You will find a grocery store (Super Spar) coffee shop, internet-cafe, a handful of restaurants, banks, and a bar. It is mainly one main street with a few houses around. The town of Bishop is huge compared to Clanwilliam.

Basic needs: Caffeine, internet, and food can be found inside Super Spar. Keep in mind that the coffee shop is not open on Sundays. You can also find an internet cafe further down Main Street.

Calling home: Seems so simple but it can turn out to be harder than sending your project. Here's the beta: Get a calling card at Super Spar, make your way toward the police station where you will find pay phones, find one that works and dial 001 + area code + number. All you need now is to link it.

Language: South Africa has 11 official languages, but most South Africans speak Afrikaans and English. You should not have problems getting around.

Currency: South Africa uses the Rand. Check the exchange rate but you can essentially live like a king on very little money so don't be afraid to be generous. Remember, a lot of the local economy depends on tourism. You can easily withdraw money from one of the many banking institutions on main street (Clanwilliam). Just make sure that you inform your financial institution of your travel plans before you leave. Keep in mind that cold hard cash is preferred to credit in many small shops so keep some with you.

Shelter: Many options here. In my opinion, the best is to get a guest house either in Clanwilliam or close to the Pakhuis pass. Prices vary based on location, season, duration of stay, and number of people. Top notch camping with showers, fridge, electricity, and Wi-Fi is also available at de Pakhuys.

Tourist info: Is at the end of Main Street on your right in an old white church. Vespar, a very nice lady, attends it. She can provide tons of useful information about the town and the latest climbing regulations.

Driving: Renting a car is mandatory and, surprisingly, very cheap. All cars have standard transmission and South Africans drive on the left side of the road. To keep to your left, think about being a knight on a horse and having to defend yourself against oncoming traffic with a sword in the right hand. Can't go wrong with that trick.

If you own a GPS, bring it with you. Getting out of Cape Town can be a real mess. Road signs are only a fairy tale. Better buy a map before leaving.

Electricity: Wall outlets are a jolting 220V.

Climbing gear: Bring all you need as you won't find anything locally except for a very limited selection at astronomical prices in Cape Town. So pack chalk, tape, and extra shoes.

Etienne Recommends:

- Stay at a guest house
- Try the yogurt flavoured Jungle bar from the Spar
- Call Olifantshuis restaurant to find out about the nights when they host the 'game buffets' and make reservations
- Go to Lambert's bay
- Get a high clearance vehicle
- Go check out the cave paintings
- Hike Table Mountain in Cape Town
- Always carry cash
- Don't wear any jewellery
- Tip well
- Drink lots of wine

Medical: Clanwilliam has a small medical clinic, dentist, and drugstore. They can handle most emergencies. World class health care can be found in Cape Town. Obviously, get full coverage medical insurance and the necessary vaccines.

Guest houses: The best way to go. On top of being much more comfortable, especially when it rains, every house comes with a laundry service which you CAN'T get anywhere else. Either you get the maid to do your laundry for a small fee or you do it yourself by hand in the river. There is no Laundromat in town. It may sound weird to get someone to handle your dirty socks, but keep in mind that a lot of the local population rely on such work to buy bread and butter.

Three options: Renting in Clanwilliam, around the Pakhuis pass, or over the pass.

Clanwilliam: Slightly more expensive but you are in town, close to the grocery store, Wi-Fi, warmth, phone, coffee shop, some restaurants, one bar, and some local 'scene.' Going climbing will take you 20 to 30 minutes of driving. I highly recommend The Daisy Cottage. Owners are fantastic. Licia and Erasmus. They live two houses down from the cottage and can assist with everything that you need.

The Pakhuis pass: First option, the Alpha farm. Run by two awesome folks, Conny and Liz, who taught me how to drink wine. Located right beside de Pakhuys guesthouse and camping. Also walking distance from Field of Joy and Plateau boulders. 20 to 30 minutes from town, can get cold and very boring at night.

Second option: de Pakhuys guest house. The owner and his family are very nice. A bit pricier but you get more luxury. Also, if you stay at de Pakhuys, you won't have to pay a daily fee to access the Field of Joy and Plateau boulders.

Over the pass: A guest farm called Traveler's rest on Wupperthal road 34 km from Clanwilliam. Really nice, big, and cheap but you are in a land far, far away. Town is 45 min away and bouldering around the pass is 15 min away. The 'Rest' became popular because there is a climbing area close by: the American area and Sassy. Don't know if they are the same or not, I have never been because a high clearance vehicle is necessary. There are rumours as well about the Austrian area being close by, but I have never been.

Rest days:

You can find more information about the following activities at tourist information.

- Visit the old prison and the Rooibos tea factory in Clanwilliam
- Go to Clanwilliam Dam for a swim

Gainer makes his own problem in Rocklands.

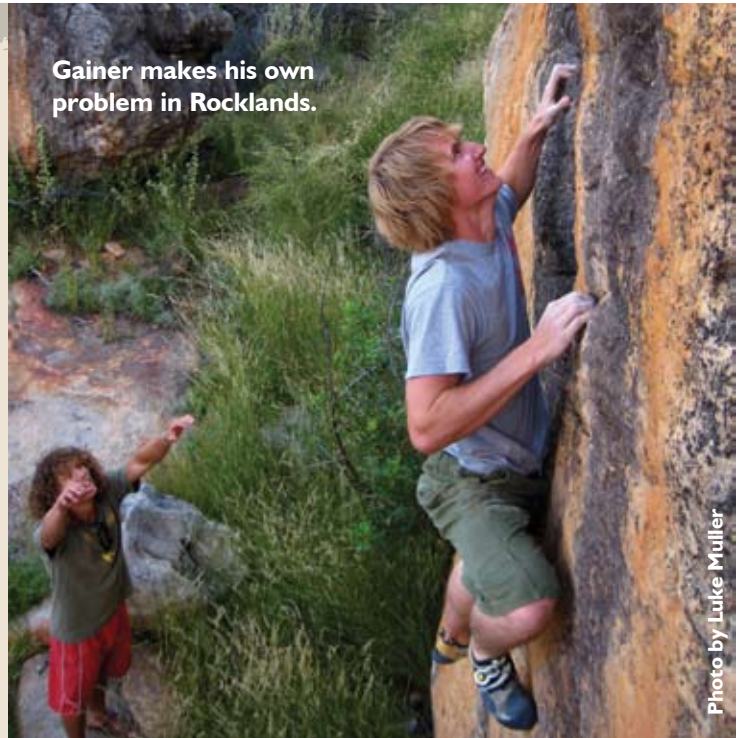


Photo by Luke Muller

- Go for a hike in the Cederberg Mountains
- Visit vineyards
- Go to Lambert's Bay
- Go boulder hunting
- Go look at prehistoric rock paintings

Climbing season: Fall and winter are the best. I strongly recommend going in the fall (mid-May to end of June). May can be hot with some days at 30 degrees but that won't stop you. Wind is always blowing, the climate is super dry, and the rock has lots of friction. You can always hide from the sun if this is an issue. Very few people climb in the fall so if you decide to go at that time of the year, bring a partner.

Most people will tell you that July-August is the way to go. For sure, those two months are the coldest (0 to 5 degrees in the pass) but also the rainiest. It can rain for days and sometimes weeks at a time. This year, all of the Americans that showed up for the July-August send fest ended up dusting off their Scrabble skills. I prefer putting on some sunscreen as opposed to bouldering around the living room fireplace.

Safety: South Africa is fairly secure. I don't recommend wondering around Johannesburg too much, but Clanwilliam and its surroundings are fine. Don't go to the slums, for whatever reason. Don't worry about big cats (lions and such), they killed them all. Rattle snakes are usually asleep but watch out for Cape Cobras, especially when going to Field of Joy or Plateau boulders.

The inevitable: Just like Squamish, it is inevitable that you will get rained on. Plan accordingly. You should also bring warm clothes such as a down jacket and a toque. If you are camping, brace yourself and prepare for cold nights.

sending off...

“I Like Rocks. A Lot.”



Photo by Tawny Buhler

Ex-Junior Team Member and Coach Dan Tersmette Reflects on How Climbing Has Actually Shaped His Entire Life.

Dan Tersmette on Stick to Your Guns 12c, Green Valley, Utah

Climbing is my life. I know what you're thinking: another article about some 14A, VI2 climber... Well, I actually haven't done either. The truth is I can't remember the last time I climbed outside and I get into the gym once a week, on a good week.

I started when I was about ten or twelve. A week-long summer camp was my first experience climbing. I was hooked. I begged my mom to start me in Junior Club that September, and the next year successfully tried out for the junior team. I can't imagine my parents expected to send skinny, unathletic Dan across the world for climbing competitions. And they were probably even more surprised when I said, “forget university, I'm going climbing for a year.”

After convincing my dad to drive me to California and leave me in an abandoned gravel quarry with a bunch of grubby

climbers, I became a climbing bum! It didn't last long, fortunately. Not showering and eating discount expired produce with equally smelly friends are novelties that wear off pretty quick.

It was on that trip that I decided to get a degree in geology. Rocks are good for more than just climbing on. Here I am, eight years after that trip with two university degrees and a full-time job, struggling to climb number grades easier than I used to and thinking that maybe I should skip my thesis defense to go to California. I wonder if I can convince my fiancée, who I met at the Calgary Climbing Centre, to drive me.

Turns out, if not for climbing I wouldn't have the education that I have, the job that I have, the friends that I have, or the fiancée that I have. I may not be climbing as much these days, but climbing is definitely my life.

culture chalk

Letter from the Editor
by Tawny Buhler

Culture Chalk is published twice a year in Spring and Fall. Contributions from community members are greatly appreciated. If you have photographs, articles, events, or ideas that you would like to see published in Culture Chalk, please contact Tawny Buhler, Editor at: tawny@calgaryclimbing.com

We look forward to your contributions and feedback!
See you out there!

If you would like to save trees, subscribe to an e-mail version by sending an e-mail to: tawny@calgaryclimbing.com.