

OUTDOORS...

One Bold Worko

Horsetooth Reservoir provides worldclass bouldering and an unriv

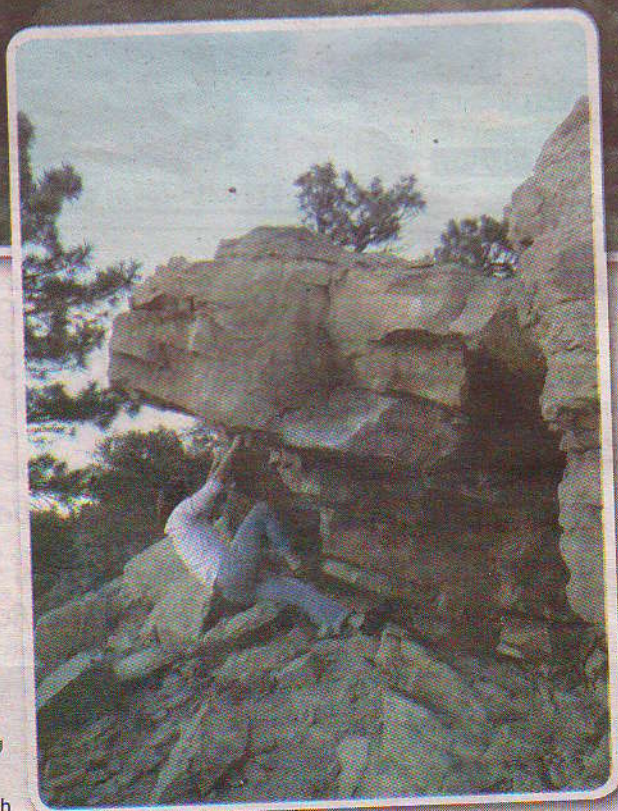


Photo by
Felix Wong
Nicholas
Clark on
Roof Reach

Friday, April 11, 2008

970.493.1011

FORTCOLLINS: NOW

30

BY FELIX WONG

For Fort Collins Now

Off to my right was a buddy rolling around on what looked like a makeshift mattress, and on my left was another friend reaching for a bag of a fine white powder and muttering something about “wanting to do some crack.”

Before you think they were engaging in illicit activity at a wild, drug-laced party, it should be noted that we were outside, in broad daylight, and the only rocks around were of the Dakota sandstone type, not cocaine. At this point we were “high” only in the literal sense of the word, having hiked to a spot a hundred feet above Centennial Drive, west of Fort Collins, to do some bouldering.

ut

led experience

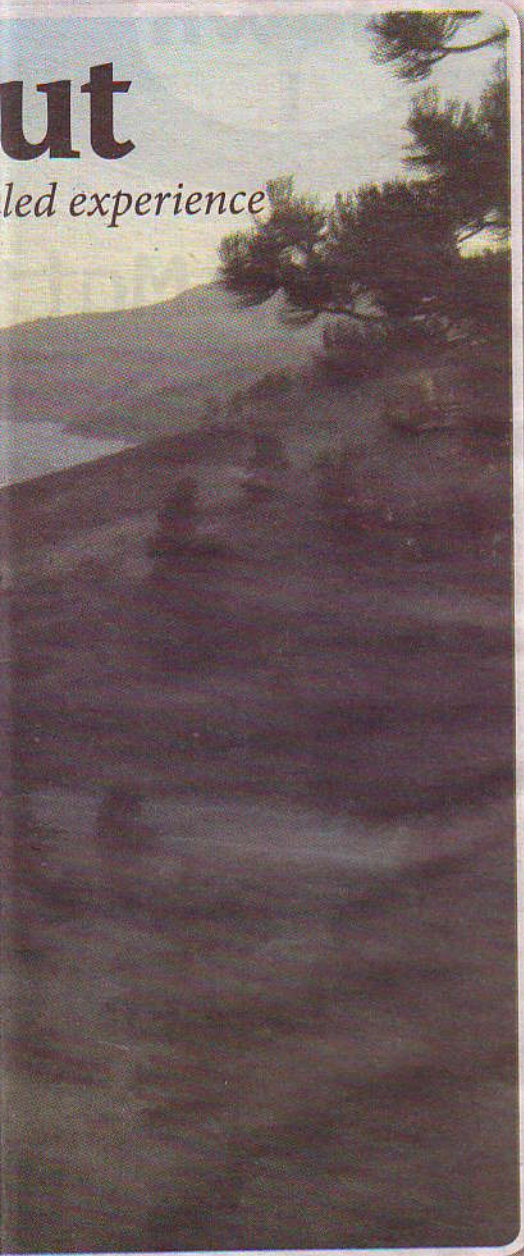


Photo by Felix Wong

The view of Horsetooth Reservoir from Piano Ridge.

"It's great to be back on some real rock again," I exclaimed. During the winter, the only climbing we had done was inside a heated gymnasium. While that was fun, colorful, plastic holds just do not feel as good as highly textured, mineralized boulders. Neither does fluorescent lighting compare to warm full-spectrum rays of the brilliant, Colorado sun, or recycled nitrogen and oxygen pumped out of a furnace versus the fresh air of the Great Outdoors.

Black fabric-covered flooring also cannot compete with the view of Horsetooth Reservoir glistening below, blue as the sky above. And then there is a matter of history.

Bouldering's documented roots date back to the late 1800s in the United Kingdom, France and Italy,

mainly as a form of training for climbers. It wasn't until the second half of the 20th century when Jim Gill—a mathematician and amateur gymnast widely regarded as the Father of Modern Bouldering—advocated bouldering as a legitimate sport in and of itself. Soon there was a new generation of boulderers, including the likes of Rich Borgman and Jim Holloway.

It just so happened that Gill, Borgman and Holloway spent much of their time establishing new boulder problems in the 1960s and '70s in Fort Collins. Since then, the west side of the Horsetooth Reservoir has been recognized by publications such as *Rock & Ice Magazine* as one of the top bouldering venues in the world, including classic problems such as Mental Block and Pinch Overhang at Rotary Park and the Torture Chamber Traverse near 38E and Centennial Drive.

On this day, we did none of those classics because we were at Piano Ridge (about a quarter-mile north of 38E along the east side of Centennial Drive). Besides, those problems would have been beyond our abilities. Bouldering has its own rating system, ranging from V0 to a most difficult V16. We focused on easier-level routes including Roof Reach (V1+) and Piano Ridge Traverse (V1-).

Despite taking on some of the easier problems, I was glad we brought a crash pad, as I was making good use of it, falling off Roof Reach three times before figuring out a successful sequence of stretching,

stepping and mantling to make it to the top. Boulderers generally should not go higher than 10-15 feet, and the higher one scales, the more essential it is to have a spotter and a crash pad in case of a fall.

Aside from a crash pad, bouldering needs little equipment, including rock climbing shoes with soft rubber soles and (optionally) a bag of chalk that can be used to help keep sweaty hands dry. Unlike rock climbing—where one ascends to heights too dangerous to attempt without ropes and harnesses—bouldering requires almost no setup time.

Indeed, bouldering is such an efficient workout that after a mere 45 minutes, my forearms were sore enough to do only one more problem: Roof Crack (V1). This problem entailed jamming one's hands into a three-inch-wide crack before kicking my feet out and over a low overhanging section, pulling up with the biceps, and lunging for the top of the rock. I managed to complete it on my first try, and in an emphatic show of success, I pumped my arms up to the sky and proclaimed victory.

It turned out that "doing crack" was a nice way to end the day, achieving a natural high unrivaled by any illegal drug. ❧

Felix Wong is an avid outdoors enthusiast in Fort Collins. His personal blog is at felixwong.com and he can be contacted at fen@felixwong.com. More information about bouldering at Horsetooth can be found at <http://mountainproject.com>.



It's that time

Join us April 15th
Avenue wheat be
on one of our pat
\$2 wheat beers a

COOPERS SMITH'S
PUB & BREW

5 Old Town Square | 498-0483 | www.coopersmiths.com

JOIN FORT COLLINS NOW
AND THE FOOD BANK FOR
LARIMER COUNTY FOR
A SPECIAL EVENING OF
DRAMA WITH OPENSTAGE
THEATRE'S PRODUCTION OF
MAN OF LA MANCHA.

OPEN STAGE THEATRE'S Man of la Mancha

FRIDAY, MAY 23, 2008

@THE LINCOLN CENTER, 417 W. MAGNOLIA, FORT COLLINS

6 P.M. RECEPTION IN THE SCULPTURE GARDEN • 7:30 P.M. PERFORMANCE

TICKETS ARE ONLY \$35 AND INCLUDE THE COCKTAIL RECEPTION AND SHOW

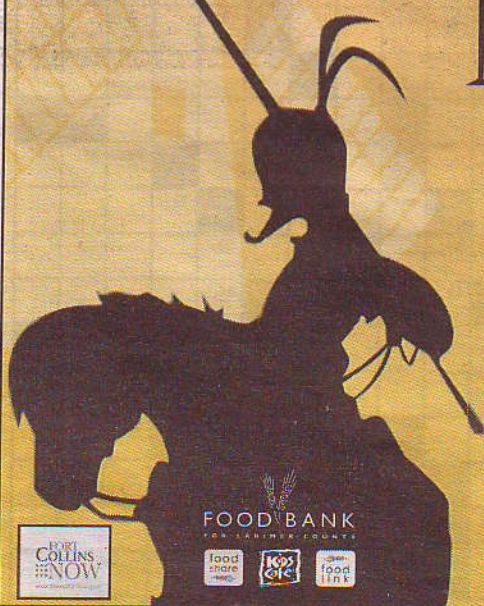
TICKETS ARE AVAILABLE AT: FOOD BANK FOR LARIMER COUNTY
1301 BLUE SPRUCE IN FORT COLLINS. OR BY CALLING 970.493.4477

100 PERCENT
FROM TICKETS
GO TO THE
LARIMER COUNTY

LAST YEAR,
FOR LARIMER
5.6 MILLION
TO LOW-INCOME
LARIMER COUNTY

THE FOOD BANK
FOR LARIMER COUNTY
FOOD PANTRY

FOOD SHARE
TO MORE THAN
EACH MONTH
FORT COLLINS
FOR EVERY \$1
FOOD BANK CO
MEALS WORTH
FAMILY IN NE



FOOD BANK
FOR LARIMER COUNTY

