

Climb

• Continued from Page 1E
together, their goal is to complete a vertical mile — an estimated minimum 108 routes (or “pitches”), per their calculations.

TWO LEFT FEET

At 10:30 a.m. Reece tugs on the rope, still looped into the bolt at the top of the cliff. He expects to yell, “Rope,” a courtesy warning, which should be followed by a satisfying thud.

Instead he yells, “Are you ... kidding me?” The rope is stuck.

Borgeson is back at the car, about a quarter of a mile away. Turns out, he brought two left climbing shoes. He climbed his first two routes in sandals.

Reece groans, coughs and tugs again. “Man, the fates are not favoring us!”

He’s climbing on antibiotics and steroids. Two days ago, he was diagnosed with strep throat.

“In the time that he’ll be gone, we could’ve gotten, like, four more each. Right now we each have two. So it sucks. Especially on the front. You want to get as much as you can before you get tired,” he says.

11 a.m. Per tradition, the first group yelp rounds the canyon (each hour, on the hour, everyone yelps in unison). Borgeson is back, on belay (manning the safety rope), while Reece climbs.

HARD KNOCK LIFE

At noon, the North Fort’s Circus Wall lives up to its name, with climbers forming lines to scramble up routes such as Bearded Lady, Lion Tamer, Trapeze Artist and Green Goblin.

Dick Dower waits for a route to clear. At 66, Dower, from Nevada, is the oldest competitor. (The youngest is 18.) Dower has climbed 24HH all 10 years, but 10 months ago, after forgetting to clip into an auto-belay at his gym, he fell 30 feet and injured his spine.

“I have a titanium plate in my neck ... I can’t open this hand or close it,” he says, failing to make a left fist.

In 2014, he completed 152 routes, but he says this year will be his last.

“Climbing isn’t fun for me ... Every move is hard. I can’t flow. My hands hurt. I’m trying to get 24 reps in ...”

Nearby, Duc Nguyen, 39, appears dazed. A few minutes ago, he fell off a wall, landing in a pile of dirt, leaves and decaying branches.

He doesn’t think he smacked his head, but he has a headache to complement the melted-flesh smear across his palm, where he grabbed the rope on his way down.

He touches the back of his head tentatively. “I think it’s more the adrenaline and the freak-out,” he says, trying to decide if he wants to get back on the wall.

THINGS THAT STING

At 2:30 p.m. the walkie-talkies crackle to life on the porch of the volunteer cabin.

“You remember that yellow jackets’ nest?”

“No, but I don’t remember what I ate for breakfast.”

“It was probably oatmeal, and we have a yellow jackets’ nest,” a staccato voice says.

Chris Shultes, 22, from Tulsa, stabs a pocket knife at a plastic, fold-out Patagonia bowl.

“What are you doing?” someone asks.

“Making a strainer. I want mac-n-cheese,” Shultes replies.

Over the walkie-talkies, the yellow jackets have been upgraded to wasps. A fourth volunteer suggests pouring gas down the hole.



Hannah Trice and Faye McConnell use a Horseshoe Canyon guidebook to plan their routes in the wee morning hours.

Horseshoe Hell stats

- 152 12-hour competitors
- 276 24-hour competitors
- 90 volunteers
- 40+ vendor representatives
- 500+ spectators
- Men’s individual route record: 260 (Wayne Hartlerode and Everett Pauls, 2015)
- Women’s individual route record: 160 (Natalie Neal Dower, 2015)
- Individual points record: 43,490 (Alex Honnold, 2014)

—Cherie Franco

CHICKENS AND RICE

5:20 p.m., back at the North Forty, Faye McConnell, 22, of Fayetteville and Hannah Trice, 26, of Conway are climbing as “Chickens of the Sandstone Sea.” (Because they’re chicken, according to McConnell.)

McConnell, a pre-nursing student, is already at 50 routes. They look like miners, their faces ringed in black. McConnell’s buzz-cut depicts a sun rising over a mountain.

Borgeson and Reece, climbing in grandpa pajamas, have an unprintable team name, haircuts that suggest male-pattern baldness, and they’ve sprayed their heads gray. On Monday, all three climbers will shave their heads completely.

Trice, a yoga teacher, gymnastics coach, model and student, squats to read the label on a package of sponsored fruit treats. The first ingredient is sugar. She shrugs and puts it back in her bag.

“I brought some rice and fish,” she says.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

6:30 p.m. Game of Stones, a team from Michigan, sets up a route, gesturing with fur capes and referring to each other only by character name. But “Ygritte” confesses that she has never seen the HBO show.

“Dae ah kill him, or dae he kill me?” she asks in a Scottish accent.

“I can’t really remember, but I think he kills you. It’s maybe self-sacrifice on your part,” McConnell’s roommate, Hannah McCulloch, tells her.

Ygritte turns to Jon Snow. “Yew bastard,” she snarls.

“Yew kilt me.” (Actually, he doesn’t. Ygritte was killed by Ollie, Jon Snow’s steward.)

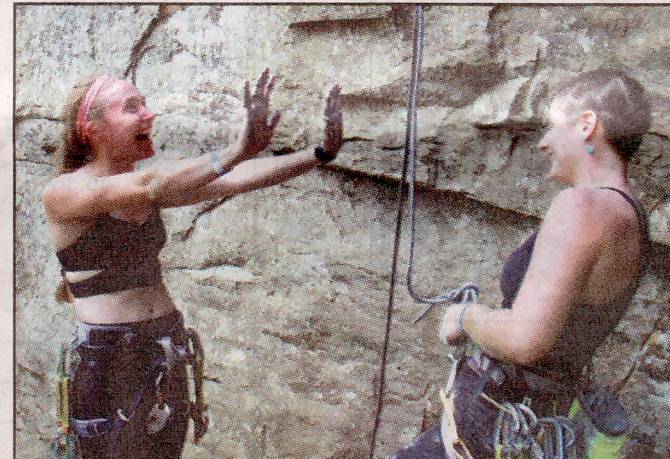
7:15 p.m. “We’re on pace,” Borgeson says. “It’s just going to really start sucking here in a few hours. I can feel it. The fun part is starting to end.”

Reece says, “Dude, something smells!” He whirls around. A woman just behind him eats salmon from a pouch.

“It’s that!” he shouts.

MOLEHILLS FROM MOUNTAINS

2 a.m. Saturday: Chickens of the Sandstone Sea trekked across the valley to climb the, at times, 65-foot



Hannah Trice (left) waits for Faye McConnell to match her high five.

walls of the East Side about seven hours ago. Trice has eaten four packets of the fruit snacks she dismissed nine hours back. She’s sipping an organic energy drink (“I think caffeine would give me a heart attack,” she says) and McConnell sips Red Bull. They have eight hours left.

3:50 a.m. Reece and Borgeson, also at the East Side, lack just over 1,000 feet. Reece hacks hard. “My throat feels horrible. I have this feeling like I’m going to be really sick tomorrow night,” he says hoarsely.

4:05 a.m. McConnell plays Cherub’s “Doses and Mimosas” from her phone, and Jon Snow — who happens to be nearby — shouts “Dance party!”

Ygritte switches her headlamp to strobe, and the Stones and the Chickens bounce.

Around 5 a.m. Reece falls off maybe the easiest route he has climbed all day. He’s at the top of the wall, just about to clip the anchor (which makes the route “count”), when he misses a hold and crashes through tree branches. Borgeson, lounging on the ground while belaying, is jerked to his feet by the sudden dead weight at the other end of his rope.

5:32 a.m. People lose manes.

A team of guys jumps ahead of the Chickens, setting up on a route that the women obviously were waiting for. McConnell sighs and leads the way to another route.

“I was going to fight for it,” Trice says.

Usually McConnell is the bold one, but her fight is drained. “He’ll feel like an [unprintable] while climbing it. Hopefully,” she says.

THE SUN ALSO RISES

Around 7 a.m., the sun peeks over the east side of the ridge. McConnell’s parents rest on a North Forty boulder, perplexed but snapping pictures. They left Little Rock at 3:30 a.m. to witness the final stretch.

Her mother greeted McConnell with, “Oh, you got a haircut.” Her father compares her to Sinead O’Connor. He’s right. McConnell and O’Connor have similar bone structure.



Traci Berry of Little Rock packed cheeseburgers to fend off pain. But “I wore some thin socks, and they slipped over my heels and are crunching at my toes. So I’m fighting that,” she says.

blackened palms in a high-five position for at least 30 seconds, grinning goofily, before McConnell catches on, meeting them with her own taped hands.

‘MY MAMA WANTS TO HAVE YOUR BABIES’

It’s 9:30 a.m. Most climbers are heading to the Trading Post to turn in their score cards before 10 a.m. But a few climbers still grunt through routes — in the case of one climber, literally and noisily.

Adam Ashlock of Missouri, a volunteer, offers his brand of encouragement. “Hey, I heard Alex Honnold [a pro climber] couldn’t climb this last year!”

“There’s no response from the wall. Ashlock tries again. “You look like a true alpinist!”

This time, he gets a grunt-laugh. “My mama wants to have your babies!” Ashlock yells.

At that, the climber clips the anchor and chuckles to rival his earlier grunts. A dozen onlookers clap.

Route counts won’t be



arkansasonline.com/galleries

At 8:55 a.m. Trice says, “I’m just tired. And a little delicious. But it’s OK, it’s almost over.”

She peels off her long-sleeve shirt and wrinkles her nose. “It smells disgusting,” she says. Then she giggles.

The Chickens have been subsisting on giggles for several hours now. They don’t know their route count, and McConnell doesn’t even notice when, 20 minutes later, they’ve each completed their requisite “pitch” for the final hour.

Trice holds her bloodied,

lamb to stoke, and the Stones and the Chickens bounce.

Trice holds her bloodied,

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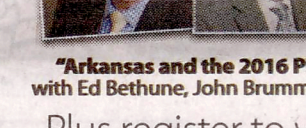
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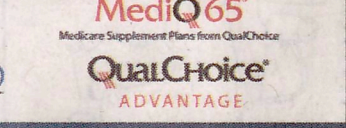
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Hours of sitting are bad for kids, too

GRETCHEN REYNOLDS
THE NEW YORK TIMES

Children who sit too much face adult-size health consequences, a new study of healthy girls suggests. The study found that after a single session of prolonged inactivity, the children developed changes in their blood flow and arteries that, in grownups, would signal the start of serious cardiovascular problems.

There is plenty of evidence, of course, that uninterrupted sitting dents the health of adults. Many epidemiological studies have found associations between multiple hours of inactivity and increased risks for diabetes, obesity, heart disease, liver disease, metabolic syndrome and other conditions, including premature death. Most worrying, these risks remain elevated even if someone exercises but then settles into a chair for the rest of the day.

But those studies involved adults. Few experiments have directly examined the effects of sedentary time on young, otherwise healthy bodies, so it has not been clear whether children are affected by sitting too much to the same extent as their parents.

So for the new study, “Impact of Prolonged Sitting on Vascular Function in Young Girls,” published Sept. 15 in *Experimental Physiology*, Ali McManus, an associate professor of pediatric exercise physiology at the University of British Columbia in Kelowna, and her colleagues decided to ask children to sit still.

In general, today’s children are doing plenty of that. A recent large-scale epidemiological study published in *Medicine & Science in Sports & Exercise* (bit.ly/ILYP-IM) reported that children across the globe sat for about 8.5 hours every day.

Another study published in October by the same journal (Lusa.gov/1ZsYhu) found that activity levels among children dropped precipitously after about age 8 and continued to fall through adolescence, with young people trading movement for sitting. This decline in activity, the study concluded, is most pronounced among girls.

For those and other reasons, the scientists focused their new study on girls age 9 to 12. They recruited nine of them, two of whom were overweight. The others’ weights were normal.

Because the researchers were interested in what happens in the short term while someone sits for hours, they chose to look at vascular function. Past studies in adults had shown that when people sit for hours, the arteries in their legs stop expanding as they should to allow healthy blood flow. Instead, those arteries constrict, impeding blood flow, raising blood pressure and, over time, contributing to the development of cardiovascular disease.

The scientists began by testing

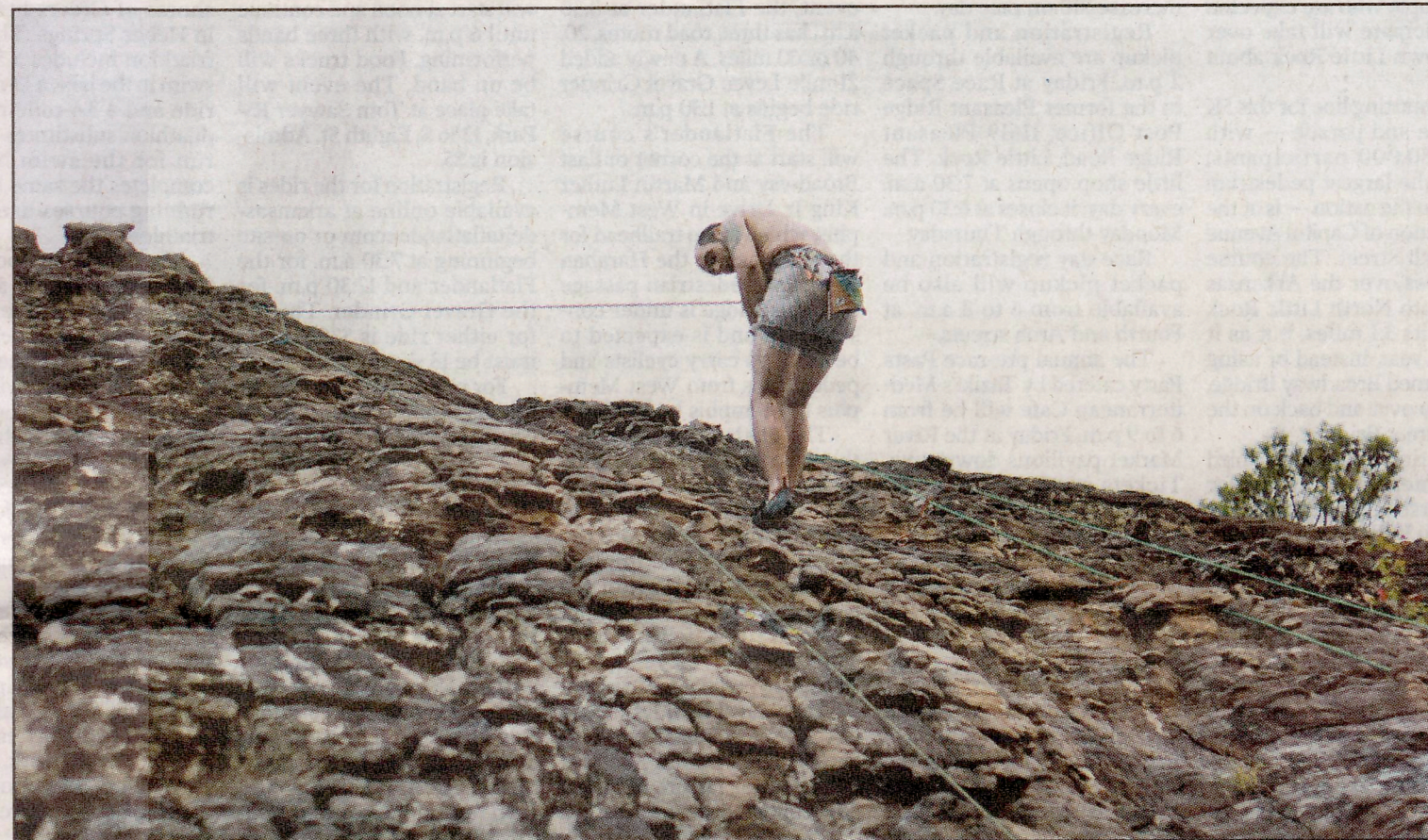
See SITTING on Page 3E

STYLE

Arkansas Democrat-Gazette

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MONDAY, OCTOBER 5, 2015



J.D. Borgeson says climbing is an identity rather than a hobby. “Climbers have a specific personality ... outdoorsy, laid-back, kind of humble, ready to help ...”

Rock around the clock

Annual 24-hour climbing marathon brings together community of daring, fun-loving individuals

STORY AND PHOTOS

BY CHERIE FRANCO
ARKANSAS DEMOCRAT-GAZETTE

JASPER — The entrance to the ranch — a high sign between two posts — perches atop a hill. The road is narrow and rutted, overhung, claustrophobic at night. If you’re approaching by car, bats cut through headlights, and it seems there’s an abyss just beyond that sign.

You slip down the hill, faster than you’d like. Your brakes catch before your breath because, directly ahead on the road, there’s practically a pond. You wonder if your pseudo-SUV treads water. You creep forward, hugging the rock shelf to the far left.

Soon the road opens to pasture, but shadowy mounds loom in the distance, a crescent ringing the valley. Fog shrouds the nearly full moon and dust clouds billow. Welcome to Hell.

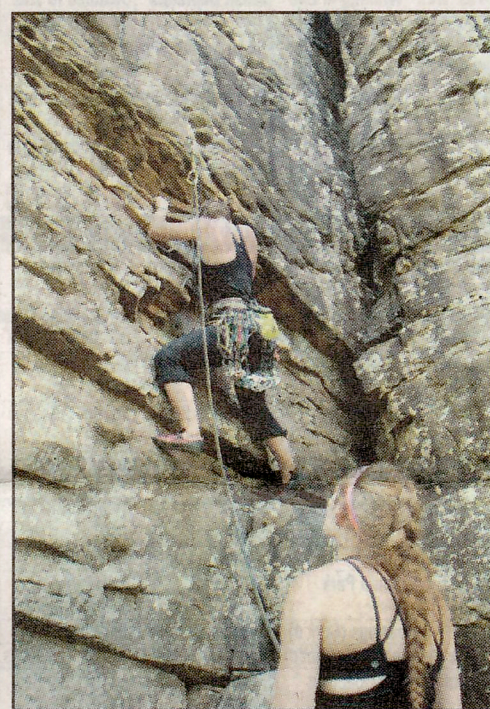
24 HOURS OF HORSESHOE HELL

Every September for the past decade, Horseshoe Canyon Ranch has hosted a 24-hour endurance climbing competition, premised on participants’ completing at least one route per hour. There are several 12-hour competitions elsewhere (two years ago, Horseshoe Hell added one, which means this year, six die-hards climbed 12 hours, rested 14, then climbed 24), but 24 Hours of Horseshoe Hell (24HH) is the only all-day, all-night competition.

Competitors climb not for official rankings but to beat personal records. They keep their own scores, and high scores win gear. With about 400 routes — some of which are too difficult for all but elite competitors — Horseshoe Canyon can accommodate about 280 climbers. The first year, 24HH had 120 competitors. In 2012, registration filled up in four minutes. The next year, founder Andy Chastain of Oklahoma City instituted a lottery system, but past competitors who break 100 routes are grandfathered in.

12-HOUR THURSDAY

With 152 climbers on the crags, vendors sell electrolyte drinks, finger salve and savory energy bars (Texas BBQ, anyone?),



“We’ve been really lucky so far. Every route we walk up to, there’s not a line, and then suddenly people are like, ‘Hey, is anybody doing this route?’ and we’re like, ‘We are,’” says Faye McConnell (on the wall). She and Hannah Trice (on belay) climb as Chickens of the Sandstone Sea.

transforming the trading post yard into a pop-up frontier town. The hum of an electric razor underlines chatter, as mountain peaks and tiger stripes are carved into buzz-cuts.

The 12 hours ends at 7:30 p.m. By 9 p.m., the day’s climbers have slouched off to tents and hammocks. Tomorrow’s climbers settle on the grass before a large screen, as mollified as post-recess kindergartners.

Pro climber Tommy Caldwell (a projected version; the live version has made 24HH appearances in previous years) talks about completing the first free ascent of the Dawn Wall at Yosemite’s El Capitan.

By 11 p.m., most everyone has stumbled to camp. In 11 hours, they’ll answer to the gunshot.

‘99 PROBLEMS, 100 PITCHES AIN’T ONE’

By 9 a.m. Friday, the climbers have been up for hours. They’ve packed bags and stashed water behind rocks. Some of them frequent the 350 acres of Horseshoe Canyon. Some have arrived early to scout routes. But some climbers have no idea where anything is.

“I’m worried about finding routes and doing it quickly,” says Lauren De Remer of California. She and her climbing partner are seated on the grass, taping their fingers. “Our goals are pretty small. We just want to be able to stay in it without quitting. Even if we just do two an hour, we’ll be stoked.”

Climbers, many in costume, jostle anxiously while the list of (mostly unprintable) team names is read.

“Cliff Bangers ... Climb Crack, Don’t

Smoke It ...

“Smoke ice!” someone yells from the crowd.)

“Dave Uses Both Hands ... Don’t Stick Your Fingers Anywhere You Wouldn’t Stick Your Face ...”

“I had to go inside,” Barry Johnson, the ranch proprietor, confesses. “I got embarrassed.”

From there, things move quickly. Aaron Mady leaps up front, drops to one knee, and proposes to Katie Zwit, whom he met at Little Rock Climbing Center. She nods, says yes, buries her face in his shoulder.

The music for Jay-Z’s “99 Problems” starts up, and New York’s climber/DJ Kris “Oduh” Hampton leads the group in modified lyrics: *Get my stamina strong / 24 aren’t hard / Check the whole North Forty / off my score card / There’s one thing / that I know for sure / My 12 hour score / beats your 24.*

Climbers face their partners, raise their right hands and swear not to drop them.

At 10 a.m. a (blank) shot fires, and the crowd moves en masse.

Little Rock architect Baxter Reece and engineer J.D. Borgeson, both 26, jog up the hill toward the North Forty, an area of concentrated routes. In their second 24HH

See CLIMB on Page 6E

Happy Trails

CROWLEY’S RIDGE STATE PARK

Location: Park is 5.8 miles west of Paragould on Arkansas 168 North. The trailhead is to the left behind the visitor center.

GPS: 36.044169, -90.665993

Length: Get a trail guide at the center. Combine Danc-ing Rabbit Trail, the access trail, then the Spider Creek and Lake Ponder trails for a moderately easy 2.42 miles.

Main attractions: Deep scenic woods, ravines, a 54-foot suspension bridge, creeks, a lake and a Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) overlook make for a nicely varied hike.

Hazards: None. **Dog, bike, tyke friendly?** No bikes on trails, but dogs (on a leash) will love it.

Small fry will enjoy the paved lake trail the most.

Video: ArkansasOnline.com/happytrails

Rating (out of five): ★ ★ ★ ★

—Michael Storey

Know a good trail for a hike? Email mstorey@arkansasonline.com



A wishing well and flume overlook Lake Ponder near the visitor center.

Heads up! Injuries to walkers on rise

ASHLEY HALSEY III

THE WASHINGTON POST

Zombie-like creatures walk among us, moseying along with their eyes fixed on a tiny screen that rests in the palm of a hand.

A recent survey suggests Americans overwhelmingly think this is OK. It is not.

“It’s just really dangerous,” said Deborah Hersman, who heads the National Safety Council and is a former chairman of the National Transportation Safety Board. “Everybody walking down the sidewalk either has their headphones on or is looking down at their phone. It’s a sad commentary on our society when you look at how distracted people are.”

By now, it’s not news that talking or texting while driving gets people killed