

I cut my teeth—so to speak—learning how to climb—bouldering in Rocky Mountain National Park. Chaos Canyon is not known for its plethora of moderate climbs but this was my home and back yard so I used it—eventually. I started climbing in 2000. Having lived in Estes Park since 1996 I had many trad climbing friends and co-workers but being totally afraid of heights I never thought it was for me. After being asked many times I did venture out for a slab pitch or two--usually hung over because I agreed to the adventure after work and a few drinks. These hung over desperate slab excursions never won me over—not really shocking :). I continued to celebrate my entry into adulthood (for me life after college) by partying like I was still in college. Then one day I decided to go for a run. After a ½ of a mile around Lake Estes I was coughing, wheezing and desperate. *“At 26 years old how could I not even run a half mile,”* I questioned myself with much frustration and disappointment. *“If someone was chasing me I’d never have a chance”* I thought. Right then and there I vowed to change. I needed something to do—a reason to wake up and not sleep until my shift started. Surrounded by passionate climbers I decided to give climbing a real try. I made plans to climb with some friends at the Monastery on Storm Mountain outside of Drake, CO. And I made golf lessons for later that day. I was determined. Life for me was going to change!

As you can imagine the hike to the Monastery almost killed me after not being able to run a half-mile. But it was made with good friends and we laughed as made our way to the cliff. To sum it up I was won over. A beautiful walk through the woods, hanging on top-rope staring at the top of the climb I knew I needed to get to the top. Something in me was determined. It was the same drive that wanted me to change my life made me want to get to the top of that rock! And I did, eventually. Then booked it out of there to make it to my golf lesson. I have been climbing and golfing ever since.

So I was hooked—now who would climb with me? I assembled my rack and waited for the weekend warriors to partner with and headed to Lumpy Ridge. But working at nights in the restaurant business left me mostly weekdays available and the climbing I could do without a partner was bouldering. I ventured out with my foam to the Boxcar Boulder in Wild Basin and the “pebbles” at the base of Lumpy Ridge. I was in love with bouldering. Figuring out moves then putting together sequences—the small accomplishments, the power and try hard right off the ground all are all aspects of bouldering that fit me and my personality perfectly.

I heard about some boulders that were being developed by local Tommy Caldwell and someone named Dave Graham. I followed in their footsteps hiking up with other locals who were also developing, Paul Otis and Jim Belcer. I projected their warm ups and loved every minute of it. I fell in love with Rocky in those first days. The bouldering in the Park shaped my life. It took a young girl with no direction and gave her a passion that helped define who I am today, helped make me a strong determined person and gave me a wonderful community. Learning how to climb in the Park was a challenge but it went hand in hand with my personality. I am happy to do a move on a problem, I am happy figuring out the next piece of the

puzzle, I am happy to get stronger each day in one of the most beautiful places surrounded by alpine lakes, mountain peaks and rocks and a place I called home.

After suffering a severe electrical accident which changed the proportions of my hands I am lucky to be alive, lucky to have any semblance of hands, and lucky to get back to climbing. I have already started to ease back into climbing less than a year later. I intend to return to bouldering in the Park that gave me life this summer. I will revisit problems that are old friends and see how my new hands learn how to hold grips that used to be familiar. I will once again learn how to climb in Rocky. I will also return to volunteering in RMNP. I was the first bouldering volunteer/steward allowed in RMNP helping spread the word of leave of trace and the privilege of climbing access—giving back to The Park that has given me so much.