

FEATURES

Community center drives rock-climbing enthusiasts up a wall

By Anna Meadows
Staff Writer

Sweating but invigorated, the young man stepped away from the wall and let go of the rope he had used to help him climb.

"Awesome, awesome," he said as he passed by.

Most people who use the simulated rock-climbing wall at the Chapel Hill Community Center agree that the experience is awesome, challenging and just a lot of fun.

"It was scary at first," said Gwen Petty, a senior from Weddington. She said she had been coming to the community center for two years.

"My brother first got me into it at UNC-Charlotte," Petty said. "They have an outdoor rock-climbing course there."

"I played sports in high school, and I never got into the competitiveness," she said. Rock climbing lacks the competition of other sports because the indi-

vidual competes only with himself.

The Chapel Hill Community Center wall was the first indoor community rock-climbing wall in the United States, said Bill Webster, administrative officer for the Chapel Hill Parks and Recreation Department. The department wants to build an outdoor facility, but lacks necessary funding, Webster said.

The wall at the community center consists of pink and blue sheets of plywood mounted on the gym wall in an area approximately 30 feet tall and 60 feet across.

Holes perforate the plywood at regular intervals and have what are called "holds" placed in them. The holds jut out slightly from the wall and provide the "stepping stones" that climbers use to move upward. The holds are made of materials simulating rock. Experienced climbers move the holds constantly so that the routes up the wall aren't always the same.

Climbers wear harnesses that are at-

tached to a support rope so they won't fall from the wall.

"When it first started, we were afraid because so few people were interested in it," said Susan Patenaude, a graduate student from Chapel Hill who climbs the wall every week. "We were worried we couldn't keep it open. It's so crowded now, we have to wait in line," she said.

And there are lines, despite the odd hours the climbers are forced to use because of the gym's full schedule. Climbers can use the wall Tuesdays and Thursdays from 10 p.m. to midnight, Saturday 8 p.m. to 10 p.m. and Sundays 10 a.m. to noon.

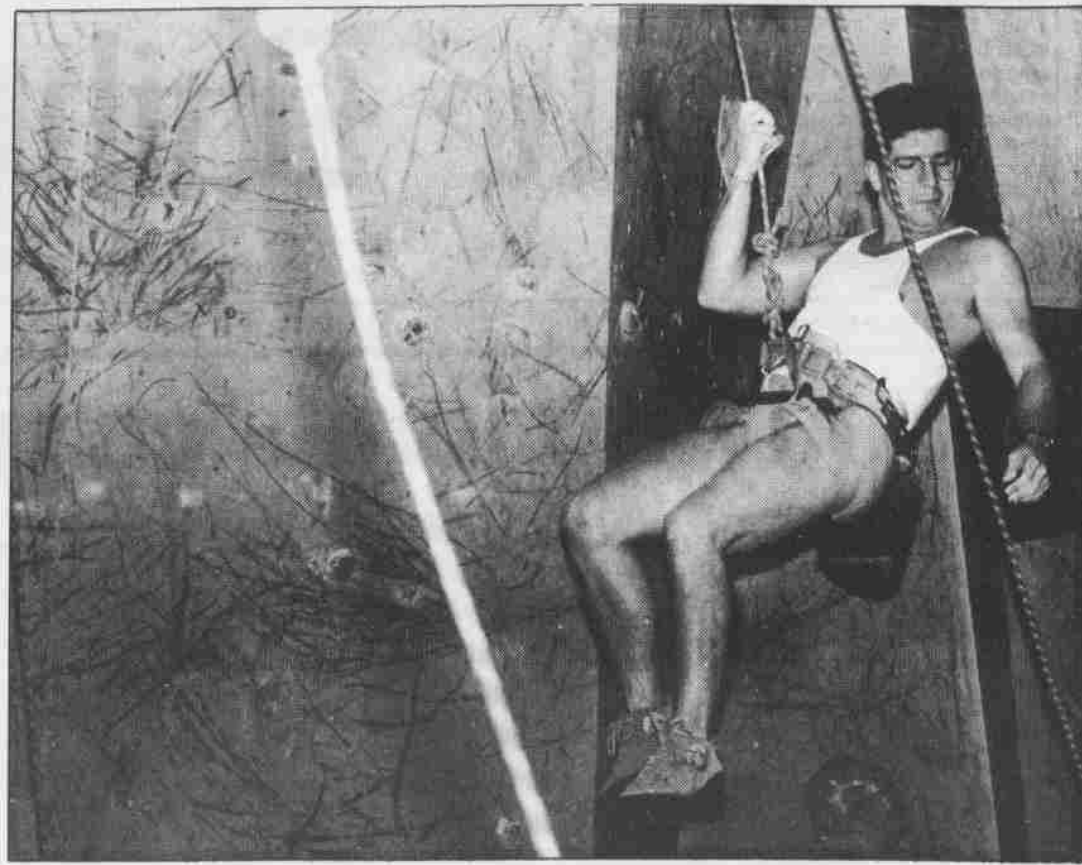
Even with these hours, 30 to 50 people show up when the wall is available, Webster said. Climbers pay \$2 every time they use the wall.

Patenaude, who has been a rock climber for 16 years, said she used the wall to stay in shape, although she preferred outdoor rock climbing. "With the indoor wall, you need less technique and more upper body strength," she said. "Outdoors, you need better foot work, more technique. It's a completely different world."

Patenaude and other serious rock climbers face a problem because the closest natural rock face for climbing is 2-1/2 hours away by car. Patenaude sometimes travels to Rural Hall to climb Moore's Wall. Four hours away is another favorite area at New River Gorge in West Virginia.

"It's one of the best climbing areas in the country," she said.

Ryutarou Ohbuchi, a graduate student from Japan, said he was happy to have the wall because it was difficult for him and other climbers to travel 2-1/2 hours to practice the sport they enjoyed. Ohbuchi, a rock climber of 12 years,



Mike Stewart tackles the wall at Chapel Hill Community Center, the first indoor community rock-climbing wall in the United States. DTH/Todd Barr

said he helped build the first phase of the wall in the summer of 1986. Since then three expansions have been added, he said.

Ohbuchi has the look of an experienced climber. Besides his broad shoul-

ders and muscular arms, he has his own equipment: a harness, a chalk bag he straps to his back (the chalk is for his hands) and shoes for rock climbing. The shoes with their special rubber bottoms help grip the holds in the wall.

For the amateur, the center provides harnesses, and tennis shoes are allowed for climbing.

Besides training, Ohbuchi said he came to the community center to socialize.

Harrison Dekker, a part-time worker for the Parks and Recreation Department, said: "It's a good way to meet people. You need a partner. It always involves two people: one climbing and one holding the rope."

"We've had a few relationships start here," Dekker said. "Now they come to climb as a couple."

For information on classes in rock climbing, call the Chapel Hill Parks and Recreation Department.

Campus Calendar

MONDAY
10 a.m. CAA will be having registrations for the Tar Heel 10,000 Road Race until 2 p.m. in the Pit. The Tar Heel 10,000 is a 2 mile, 5K and 10K road race.
5 p.m. BSM Umujo Awards nominations are due in the BSM office.
6 p.m. Rape Action Project will hold a business meeting in 208 Union.
7 p.m. Alpha Kappa Alpha presents "AIDS Contraception and You" in 226 Union.
Strike One — You're Out! Battered Women's Workshop will be held in 104 Fetzer. Open to men and women.
Rape Action Project will hold a training session to discuss the psychological effects of rape.
7:30 p.m. CGLA will host a presentation by par-

ents and friends of lesbians and gays in the Union Film Auditorium.
Carolina Griffe will meet in Suite C of the Union and is recruiting business managers, ad representatives and new writers.

ITEMS OF INTEREST
German Honorary Society, Delta Phi Alpha, is recruiting new members who have completed at least German 4 and have a German GPA of 3.0 or better. For more information call 933-3443 or stop by 415 Dey.

CAA is forming committees for Rampage '92: UNC's Homecoming. Applications are available at the office.

Juniors: Senior class marshal applications for the Class of 1993 will be available at the Union Desk and are due by Monday.

Sophomores and Juniors: Deadline for applying for academic credit for summer and fall 1992 internships is March 31. Information available in 211 Hanes. Yackety Yack is taking yearbook portraits in 213 Union from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. until April 16. Come to 213 Union to schedule an appointment.

ARTS
UNC Dance Theater — Modern/Extension presents an evening of dance choreographed by faculty and students at 8 p.m. Thursday and Friday in Memorial Hall. Tickets can be purchased at the door for \$5.

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