

Austin, part one

Bastrop, Texas, U.S.

—

May 30, 2017 by [Scott Gilbertson](#)

I grew up spending a lot of time outdoors. Camping, hiking, and later, backpacking, rock climbing, and mountaineering. The latter two activities ended up consuming more and more of my time as I got older. I chose the first college I went to chiefly because it got me closer to some of the best rock climbing and mountaineering around in Joshua Tree National Park, the San Jacinto mountains and, a bit further but still accessible, the high sierra.

All I wanted to do was be in the mountains and, ideally, climb them. Since that wasn't financially viable for me I did what I considered the next best thing, I worked at the North Face and mostly sat around reading books on Reinhold Messner, Conrad Anker, Edmund Hillary, Alex Lowe, Galen Rowell and others. I even got to hang out with Ron Kauk when he gave a talk at our store. And of course I went climbing whenever I could. There was no "van life" crap back then, just dirt bag climbers sleeping in their cars out in Joshua Tree, the Buttermilks, Horseshoe Slabs, and Deadman's.

Which is all just a little background on why, rather than writing about what we did for two weeks in the Austin Texas area, I'm writing about how absolutely mind blowing it is that Alex Honnold free soloed El Capitan.

Just in case you're not familiar with what that means, it means that he climbed a 3000 foot rock face, alone with no ropes, no protection, no margin for error. He climbed it perfectly. You know that he did because if he hadn't he'd be a bloody smear somewhere up the face of El Capitan.

While the sheer physicality of climbing for three hours and fifty-six minutes with no break is impressive, to me it's nothing next to the mental strength and absolute confidence it takes to even consider doing something like that, let alone doing it. If that doesn't blow your fucking mind then I have to say, I think you're probably not wired up quite right.

Anyway, we drove across more of Texas.





The plan was to spend a while hanging around the Austin area, but we're not very good planners. We forgot about Memorial day and couldn't get a place to camp in Austin. We ended up just east of Austin, near Bastrop which had a space and was close enough to drive into town. We tried to take the kids to a children's museum, but it was so crowded it was no fun for anyone.



"Me ready to go."

We bailed out of that and headed out to Pioneer Farm, an all-volunteer effort to preserve a little slice of Texas (and more broadly, American) history with historic buildings, re-enactments and a working farm and blacksmith shop. Much more to the kids' liking.



Given space kids can make a game out of anything, even an open window.



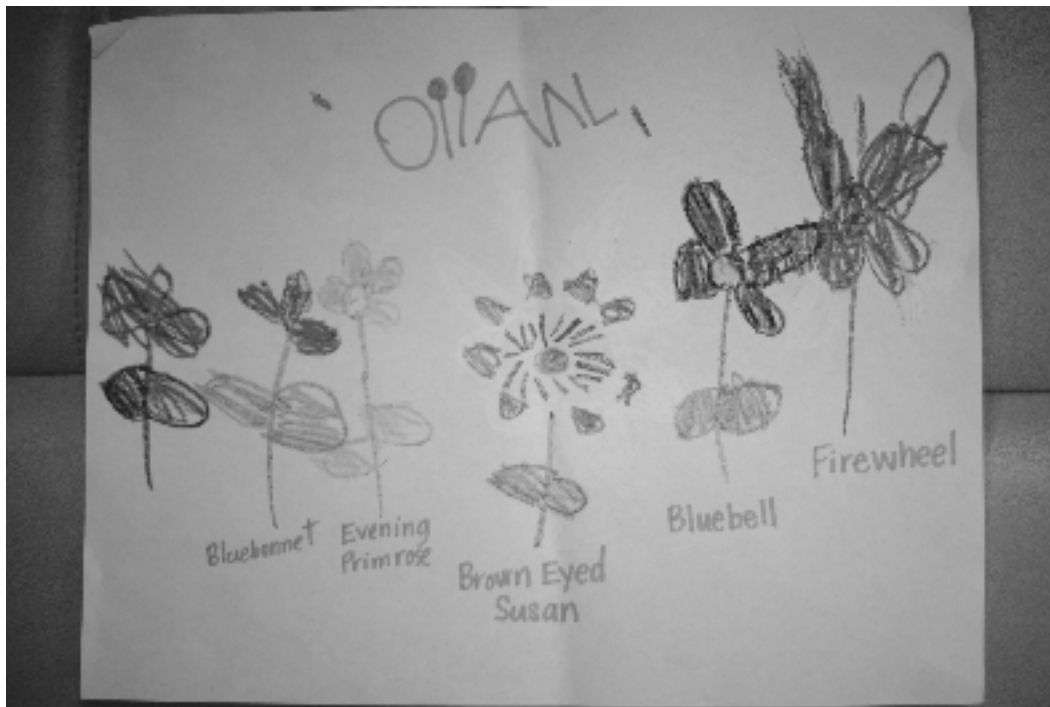
They don't build them like they used to.



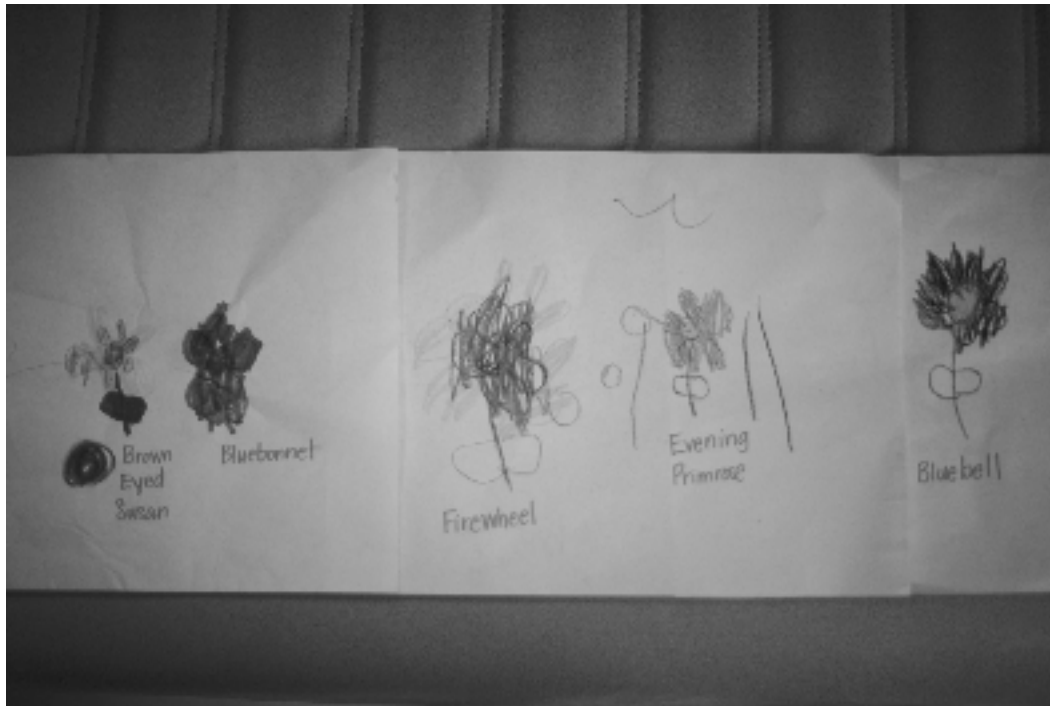


The rest of the time we hung around camp and sweated.





This time of year Texas roads are flanked by huge fields of wildflowers, which get translated to crayon.



It finally got hot while we were in Bastrop. Really hot. One day the weather said it was 97 degrees and the “feels like” was at 116. What better day to go to a dinosaur park and walk around in the hot sun for a few hours? Made me miss Matt and Debi who would definitely have been up for some heat. Surprisingly though it wasn’t empty, there were more than a few Texans just as crazy as us, which was impressive.













4 Comments



Drew Eldridge June 08, 2017 at 3:21 p.m.

I knew you were into climbing but not to the extent. You'll have to talk to Sam about it sometime. As I'm typing he is out climbing with his coach at Foster Falls which is one of the best areas in the southeast. His coach is Wills Young who literally wrote the book on bouldering in Bishop, CA.

<https://www.amazon.com/Bishop-Bouldering-Wills-Young/dp/0982615418>

His other coach is Wills' wife Lisa Rands who was the number one female boulderer in the world

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fc5JuQIcJOE>

This is insane. part 1 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BUQGSFN1rC4> part 2

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XjoGRYFM6ZA>

The confidence elite climbers have is second to none. And these climbers' confidence is nothing compared to Alex Honnold.

Safe travels.



[Scott](#) June 08, 2017 at 6:06 p.m.

@Drew-

Wow, those are some impressive coaches. I was never anywhere near those skill levels. Sam is probably already much better than I ever was.

I was really more into climbing the high peaks and big walls. I liked to be at the top of things when I was done. That was back in the mid to late '90s when a lot of first ascents were being done in Torres del Paine and other exotic places, which sort of started the world travel desire. I trained twice to do half dome, but both times it didn't work out. Then my main partners moved away (both because guides, one still is) and I just sorta stopped climbing.

But I'm going to see if my parents can bring my old climbing shoes out in a couple months when we meet up. I thought I'd see if they still fit 20 years later...



Drew Eldridge June 09, 2017 at 9:31 a.m.

It they fit (and you make it back out east) we will get out sometime. Im not much of a climber, but im a hell of a belayer.

Id love to go to Whiteside in NC sometime. Ive never done anything over 1 pitch. We were supposed to climb Castleton tower in Moab this Spring, but Sam had a 102 temp.

Whiteside has some 6-10 pitch stuff. and one line that supposed to be an insanely perfect 500 foot 5.8

<https://www.mountainproject.com/v/whiteside-mountain/105965576>



[Scott](#) June 09, 2017 at 7:40 p.m.

Definitely. Multi-pitch 5.8s are pretty much what I chased all over the place. A nice crack with couple traverses, maybe a bit of 5.9 here and there... that was my happy stuff.