

Expert calls climbing a 'never-ending sport'

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neck and warmed up my fingers. I stretched out my left hand to grab a grip and planted my right foot firmly on another while Wilkinson gave me some last-minute advice.

"Now if you start to panic, the most important thing to remember is that you can't fall," he said to reassure me.

"I'm holding on to the rope so I won't let you fall," he added, stressing the other end of the rope was tied to an anchor on the ceiling.

Slowly but surely, I propelled myself forward, grabbing one grip after another.

Perspiring, my heart palpitating as if it would jump out of my chest, I looked down and was amazed to see how far I had climbed, including one of the outward edges.

It was when I stopped to contemplate my next move I started to

experience the first tingle of pain. The muscles in my forearms and fingers ached but, determined to make it to the top, I surged onward.

STARTING TO PANIC

Perhaps sensing I was starting to panic as I realized there were fewer hand grips near the top, Wilkinson told me to nudge my feet into open crevices and grab the sides of the wall.

"Your mind is playing tricks on you," he said. "You should think of where you're going, not how you're going to get there."

Like a dutiful soldier, I followed his command.

That worked for a while until I felt really tired, lost my grip and swung away from the wall.

After I was brought down and paused for a few minutes, I suited up again.

This time, however, I wasn't climbing alone.

Aaron Eden, an experienced climber who has scaled rock faces in California, Colorado and Kentucky, would accompany me on my second attempt.

"The key is using your legs to do most of the work. It's your legs that push you up. You were mainly using your arms and hands, which is why they hurt. With a little more practice, you'd make a good climber."

Making small talk on our upward climb, the 25-year-old described rock climbing as a never-ending sport.

"In rock climbing, you can always make it difficult for yourself," he said, scaling the wall with as much ease as Spiderman.

"There's no top to reach because you can always find new ways to push yourself and always improve."

RIGHT FRAME OF MIND

Luckily for me, there was a summit to reach and although I was three handgrips away from reaching it, with arms and fingers burning and screaming for me to stop, I quit.

Safely on the ground, Wilkinson told me I did better than most first-time climbers.

"You did fine for your first time up there," said Wilkinson, who opened the centre six years ago after climbing locally for a year.

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arms and hands, which is why they hurt. With a little more practice, you'd make a good climber."

Bruce said rock climbing is an activity for all ages of any athletic ability.

The only requirement is the right frame of mind.

"To go out and be able to play a sport like golf or hockey, you have to develop a certain amount of skill before you can do it and enjoy it," he said.

"With rock climbing, it's whatever goes. There are no rules. You just do it."

Awesome, I thought.

Can't wait until I'm told to try bungee jumping.

For more information about Of Rock and Chalk, visit www.rockandchalk.com

Been There, Done That is a regular column where staff try to keep up with experts in a wide variety of recreational activities.

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HIGHWAY 7 CORRIDOR TRANSITWAY STUDY

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As one of the fastest growing municipalities in Canada, York Region is facing a number of transportation challenges. A top priority of the Region is to ensure swift and effective action to improve the movement of people and goods. With the anticipation of the Region's population doubling in the next 30 years, the Region must ensure that its roads, transit services and rail facilities keep pace with the growing needs.

In response, the Region has initiated the Highway 7 Corridor Transitway Study to address the long-term transportation needs in this corridor. Highway 7 is one of the busiest transportation routes in York Region. Past studies have identified that a high-level transit service is essential in improving the traffic movement in this corridor. The first step in the transitway study is to develop the Terms of Reference, as required under the Individual Environmental Assessment process.

The scope and success of this study depends greatly on public input and participation. You are invited and encouraged to attend our Public Consultation Centres to express your views on problems, issues and potential solutions. The first round of Public Consultation Centres will be held on the following dates between the hours of 10 a.m. and 9 p.m.:

- Wednesday, October 3, 2001**
 Markville Mall, Markham
 5000 Highway 7 East (Hwy. 7 & McCowan Rd.)
- Wednesday, October 10, 2001**
 Hillcrest Mall, Richmond Hill
 9350 Yonge St. (at Carrville Rd.)
- Thursday, October 11, 2001**
 Bathurst Clark Resource Library
 900 Clark Ave. West, Vaughan
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To receive further information on this study, please visit the project web site by clicking on "Sustainable Transportation Initiatives" on the York Region home page: www.region.york.on.ca. If you wish to have your name placed on our mailing list, or to direct questions and comments please contact:

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