

'Stone Monkey' Kay's passion for rock climbing tamed by family

By Amy Alonzo Rozak, Union Democrat

Tucked away in Yosemite Valley is a granite pocket known as the "Coiler cave." Hidden by a jumble of large boulders, it remains dry throughout the year. Despite Yosemite's 30-day per year camping limit, for eight years Bryan Kay called it home.

"I was a criminal for living in the cave," laughs Kay, who, as a member of an elite group of Yosemite climbers known as the "Stone Monkeys," goes by the nickname "Coiler."

Nowadays it would be hard to find anything illegal about Kay. Married, with two daughters, an arsenal of pets and a house in Chinese Camp, Kay's life has done an 180-degree turn since his life as a member of Yosemite's elite Search and Rescue (YOSAR) team and climbing bum living in the Coiler cave.

Kay first began climbing at age 13 while living in Irvine, introduced to the sport by the brother of a friend.

"It was game on from there," he says.

He escaped the city as soon as he graduated high school in 1989.

"They handed me my diploma and I packed everything into my Volkswagen bus and headed to Yosemite," Kay recalls.

Living the life of which most rock climbers only dream, he spent the summer in Yosemite, the winter in Joshua Tree, and had plans to spend the next summer back in Yosemite.

A head-on collision during the drive north altered Kay's

plans.

With injuries ranging from a broken arm to a leg crushed in around 75 places, Kay's plans went from a summer of climbing to relearning to walk.

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