



its funny, it was only 12 years ago - but i have no pictures from this part of my life.

i had just moved to bozeman, montana, to be part of the first residency program run by the [past skills](#) wilderness school. i don't think i would have considered bill McConnell a friend at that point, but it is safe to say the months that followed changed my life.

this was before the gym, in fact - bill was the first person to get me into a gym. the first person who framed it as a personal resource, an account which can be drawn upon to solve problems. bill created something, got a dozen or so individuals to move across the country for 6 months, to see what they could create given the right environment.

bill was one of those teachers who never stopped, the lesson wove through the physical skill into jokes over lunch and teasing in the gym. there was an example set: always be a beginner at something, nothing is off limits, and never stop trying. he went from heartfelt, philosophical discussions to dick jokes and back without missing a beat.

bill showed me how to teach, how to invest in people. rewarded me for taking a chance and encouraged me to do things that scared me. my time at past skills taught me a lot about environment, and how i learn. i was exposed to the effectiveness of weaving a lesson through discussion and actions - *the allegory of practice* - and using physical actions to cement deeper lessons.

bill is actually the person that helped me build the audacity to try. to find my way to gym jones, to dare to teach, and to build something of my own.

the residency program is a hell of a commitment, but if you are at all curious about primitive skills and philosophy, i cannot recommend bill or his program enough.

[www.pastskills.org](http://www.pastskills.org)

in addition to everything bill introduced me to ryan mclimment (who gave me my first sufi text and

who's questions and comments have shaped who i am today) and josh harth. it is hard to explain the effect josh has had on me, i would say that he changed my definition of what was possible. the sensitivity of that man and his uncanny ability to bring calm to a situation was truly unbelievable, and something i will strive for until the day i die.