



## NEWS OF THE P.A.T.C. MOUNTAINEERING SECTION

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### The '92 New Review

by Tom Isaacson

1992 was a fairly quiet year at the New. For the first time in several years no major new area (such as Summersville, Kaymoor, Bubba, etc.) was opened. Quite a few serious sport climbers visited from distant places to liven things up a bit.

The Scene. The growing emphasis on sport climbing at the New probably parallels that trend throughout rock climbing. I suspect that on any given weekend less than half the climbers at the New carry a protection rack and even fewer have any plans to use one. A corollary to that trend is that the New remains relatively unpopular among beginners (for whom there are few routes) or trad climbers (who seem to prefer Seneca or the Gunks). In fact, the New has far better cracks than either Seneca or the Gunks but few people want to climb them.

Since about 1984 Rick Thompson had served as the New's de- facto ambassador to the climbing world. A very high percentage of what the rest of the climbing community (if there is such a thing) knew about the New was based on Rick's guidebook, articles and Basecamp reports. Lately the correspondents' scene has become something of a free-for-all, with articles appearing from many sources. While the diversification of perspectives is probably a good thing, some of the new material has been either a bit silly or rather misleading. Up Rope, of course, has maintained its usual high journalistic standards. Some climbers, especially Doug Reed and Eric Horst, have been equipping old trad or mixed routes with bolts and cold shuts. Many unpopular routes became "instant classics" when they were retrobolted. The arete/flake known as Strike a Scowl illustrates that phenomenon. Try it before it gets chopped; it was bolted without the first ascensionist's approval.

The hardest climbs of a few years ago are still, by and large, the hardest climbs at the New. This stagnation results from several factors: Some of the top

climbers at the New were injured, others spent a lot of time elsewhere, visiting climbers seem to focus on repeating (not establishing) routes and Harrison Dekker doesn't own a drill. Some of the climbers who live at the New also appeared to be spending time on "secret" cliffs, such as those located upstream of Kaymoor. Meanwhile, the next generation of climbers such as Jake (the snake) Slaney, John Logan, Rudy Ruann and others are already leading 5.13 and knocking on the incumbents' door, or so I'm told. Many of the better D.C. climbers were busy again at the New. Jim Woodruff was hard at work on a new route at Beauty Mountain which, if completed, could be the hardest route at the New, 5.13d. Young Doug Cosby put in an immense number of tries ("burns") to lead his new route (White Lightning) at Kaymoor. At last word, he had not yet made it. Jim Taylor spent the summer at the New doing a lot of hard routes, guiding for Hard Rock and kayaking. Gary Beil established quite a few new sport and traditional routes, mostly at Summersville. Other non-club members such as Ken McLain and Phil Olinick were active at the New, whatever that means.

The growing popularity of Kaymoor and Summersville (which are almost entirely sport climbing areas, Gary Beil's efforts notwithstanding) helped spread climbers around much better. The further development of Franklin, Safe Harbor and Red River Gorge also pulled sport climbers away from the New. As a result, places like Fern Point, Central Endless and Beauty Mountain were nearly empty on many weekends. The seriously deteriorated condition of the ladders at Central Endless may also become a deterrent if they aren't fixed soon.

Getting Around. The much anticipated second edition of Rick Thompson's guidebook has yet to arrive. Perhaps this Spring. In its absence, low budget mini-guides to most areas (except parts of the Endless Wall) have become available. Visit Hard Rock in Fayetteville if you need a copy. A comprehensive

inexpensive guide to the New is also rumored to be in the works. (*Editor's note: See the ad on page 137 of the Dec 92/Jan 93 issue of Climbing magazine for this new New guide!*)

**Club Stuff.** A significant number of club members visited the New, though probably no more than in past years. Most experienced club members view the New as the place to go to do hard routes. Whether they succeeded in those ambitions is a different matter. I could not possibly do justice to all of the efforts of club members at the New this year; in fact, I'm not always sure who is a club member. With those caveats, here are a few highlights from 1992 (in no particular order). Tom Halicki beta-flashed S'more Energy (11b) and Elizabeth Erskine top rope flashed it, Under the Milky Way (11d), and Aesthetica (11c). Dan Hague led Freaky Stylee (12a), and Tech Man (12b/c) and flashed quite a few 5.11s, including the first flash of Left of Legacy (11?) after a key hold (the potato chip) was broken off by Tom Clancy, or was it Robert Ludlum? Dan was on the verge of pinkpointing Bullet the New Sky (12a) when rain stopped him half way up.

James Eakin top rope flashed many 5.11s, including Ex-puddition and Sugar Pumpkins, and he teamed up with John Rayner and Jeanette Helfrich to establish a new crack/corner route at Kaymoor. John Rayner led (more or less) Magnificent Pucasso (12a) proving, once again, that he can climb very hard routes if he finds them appealing. He also led Mellifluous (11a) (How many other club members led a traditional 5.11 this year? Not many, I'll bet) and has his sights on a few 5.11d climbs. Jeanette led Muckraker (10c) and top-roped Under the Milky Way (11d). Jeanette seems poised to start leading carefully selected 5.11 sport climbs. John Yanson flashed New Tricks (10c), which has thwarted many good climbers, as well as the challenging unnamed 10b on the Excellent Buttress at Summersville.

Steve Jones flashed a lot of 5.11s and one 5.12a, mostly at Kaymoor. He is close to succeeding on Thunderstruck (12b/c), and is making steady progress on Apollo Reed (13a). Those of you who persistently whine about your height should watch Steve climb. Doug Dupuie led a number of hard 5.10s before moving to Denver. [Note to Doug: Someone (you can probably guess who) bolted the new route we were working on at the far downstream end of Endless Wall.] Rick Dotson established a solid record on many hard crack climbs and held his own on sport routes - including just missing a top rope flash of an unnamed 11c at Kaymoor. (Isn't that informative?) Rick is the only climber I've met who can return from a day at the New looking like he's been caving.

Beth Logan led or flashed a bunch of 5.10s and, at last word, was working on redpointing Moon Child Posse (11c) and Out of the Bag (11d). Ex-club member Rick Forbes was active this Fall and was consistently leading moderate 5.10 sport and trad

routes. Rick Forbes is about to take an extended climbing trip between work assignments. Stuart and Karen Pregnall visited the New less often than usual. Stuart was able to make the best of his trips with on-sight flashes of Pucasso (12a) and Aesthetica (11c), a top-rope flash of Grow Hole (12a) and redpoints of Dead Painters and Team Machine (both 12a). I didn't see much of Karen, but she reportedly put in some strong efforts in between parental obligations. At last sight Brian Rennex was fighting the good fight on Apollo Reed (13a), results still to come. Jana Gill, Dave Godwin, Paula Grant, Denise Cohen, Dusty Wissmath and others were seen at the New but I can't comment on their efforts. As for myself, I visited the New about twenty times (with 14 different people) which improved my climbing. I led more than forty 5.11s (about half of which were on the first try), and seven 5.12s (including pinkpointing Chunky Monkey, 5.12c?, after a key foothold broke off). Steve Jones (a recent Club addition) and I established Morning Dew (5.12a/b) at Fern Buttress, one of the hardest first ascents by a club member. Many club members assisted that project in various ways.

**Climate.** The weather was rainier and cooler than last year. Although frequent dampness was a problem, especially at Beauty Mountain which seeps a lot, this seems to have held back the snakes which was a welcome relief compared to 1991 when numerous climbers were bitten by copperheads. While the weather at the New is not great, the fact that the rock faces many different directions and is often capped by roofs allows climbing in nearly all weather. Remember, "it never rains on Apollo Reed." I went to the New every weekend for more than four months and never had less than two full days of climbing each time. Most of the rain falls in late afternoon and early morning, so as not to interfere with climbing. Ignore weather reports if you're planning a trip to the New - they are rarely accurate. The weekends that Hurricane Andrew and Tropical Storm Danielle were supposed to pass through the area were both excellent. I could tell many stories of people who cancelled trips at the last minute only to learn that the weather was thoroughly climbable. If you want to climb at the New, just go there; it probably won't rain, if it does, there are still plenty of climbs to do. Also, try saving some of the rainy day routes for a rainy day. Recent events compel me to add that my idea of acceptable climbing weather is somewhat broader than that of other climbers.

**Food and lodging.** I've stayed at nearly all the campgrounds, none is particularly good, yet everyone has a preference. Battle Run at Summersville Dam is the plushiest but doesn't take reservations. All of the campgrounds near the New suffer from noisy rafters and most are near the highway, too. Buy some ear-plugs. The Peking Restaurant in Oak Hill is a popular alternative to the Golden Corral. Mountain Mama's in

Fayetteville replaced the Pancake House as the climber's breakfast of choice this summer. It has since closed but is rumored to be re-opening under new owners.

**Getting started.** The New now has enough moderate 5.9 and 5.10 sport climbs to keep you happy for many weekends. There are 5.9 and 5.10 sport routes throughout the New although Summersville probably has the highest concentration of them. The two best moderate routes, Rico Suave and Flight of the Gumbie, are at Kaymoor. If you do all of the moderate sport routes, you should be ready for the 5.11s, of which there are hundreds.

**Access.** Getting to Summersville has become a problem due to the expansion of Route 19. One solution is take the first left after crossing the bridge over the Gauley and park at the boat ramp. This involves a lengthy walk in. You can park along Route 19, just past the construction lot, and hike back toward the bridge. Or, you can try your luck on the logging roads. These appear to be on private property and probably should be avoided. When the Lake rises in the Spring and precludes walking along the beach you will need to use the old trail which has been partially obliterated by logging. Alternatively, you can rent a boat at the Marina. A weak "powerboat" costs \$35/day and takes some 45 minutes to reach the main cliffs. Unless you're interested in aquatic sports, in touring the lake, or in hauling a cooler to the cliffs, you're probably better off on foot. If you haven't been to Summersville lately, you should check before going there.

Another area, the Meadows, is on private property and you probably should stay away. There are lots of great routes at the New and very few at the Meadows unless you can climb 5.12. Its availability for climbing is very tenuous and there is no reason to impose unnecessary burdens on this area.

Back at the New, a ranger has been seen patrolling the cliff base. Your good judgment may avoid creating an access problem in the future.

**Lies and Etiquette.** One unmistakable trend at the New, perhaps elsewhere as well, has been to inflate claims about climbs. Some of this is due to the competitiveness of sport climbing (it is a sport, after all) and some of it results from careless language. (I'm sorry, I'm a lawyer, I care about these things.) There are two prominent examples of this. First, a "flash" originally referred to a successful lead on the first try. Many people, some of whom should know better, use "flash" to describe any stylish ascent or a successful lead on the first try of the day. Second, a "redpoint" means placing the quickdraws on your lead while a "pinkpoint" means the quickdraws were already in place. Many climbers use "redpoint" to cover both situations. If you can't handle that distinction just use the new verb "send", it refers to any

legitimate lead. ("Did you send Exoduster?" "Yeah, I sent it".) While this expansion of the term "redpoint" might be o.k. in reference to routes which have permanent quickdraws and you're not expected to place them yourself, it is obviously misleading when used on a climb where you normally must place your own quickdraws. This is not purely semantics. On some pumpy routes placing quickdraws significantly affects the overall difficulty. On other routes pre-placing a quickdraw on the anchor can eliminate the last move altogether. One reason for this fusion of terminology is that many people do not top rope sport climbs, unless they are just working out the moves. Instead, the leader lowers off, pulls the rope and leaves the quickdraws in place for the second, etc. Thus, everyone else in the party who tries the route never even attempts to place the quickdraws themselves. You can claim whatever you want about your efforts but be careful in taking others' claims at face value.

[Before you trad climbers get holier-than-thou on this issue, I should point out that accuracy in reporting is far worse among trad climbers. I've witnessed many climbers claim to have "led" or "done" a trad route when, in reality, they hung all over the pro. That is a huge distortion on a one pitch route. Few sport climbers will claim a redpoint when they actually hang-dogged the route.]

**Sandbags.** Route grades at the New usually are those given by the first ascent party and do not represent a consensus. As a result the grading can be quite inconsistent. Without digressing into the bottomless pit of arguments over route grades, I will mention a few routes that seemed awfully hard for the reported grade: Totally Tammy (8), Brass Monkey (10a), Lewd Operator (10b), Left of Legacy (10d), Linear Encounters (10d), My Wife is a Dog (10d), Sceptre (11a), Sancho Belige (11b/c), Fattburger (11d), and nearly everything on the 10b wall at Summersville. John Rayner says that Flyin' Hawaiian is tough for 5.9 and many people feel that Prowesse is rather exciting for 5.8. Some of the routes on this list are excellent and come highly recommended. Just be forewarned, they are bad for the ego.

If I feel charitable, I may put together a list of overrated climbs (so-called "gimmees") for the New Year. These may help guide you to climbs that will give you the greatest bragging rights and sense of accomplishment. On the other hand, since some of those may strike close to the heart of some club members' proudest achievements, I may leave that list unpublished. Better yet, go to Safe Harbor (if it reopens), it's reputed to be full of vastly overrated routes.

**Inspirational drive!** If you want to get better fast, go to the New and start leading steep bolted climbs. You'll take a few leader falls and scare yourself silly. If you don't get too far over your head you shouldn't