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### Spring Update from Old Rag Mountain by Alex Tait

Despite the wet spring this year, climbing activity has been relatively busy on Old Rag Mountain in the Shenandoah National Park. This means that there have been weekends where climbing parties have actually seen each other!

Several new routes have been put up on the east side of the Mountain, adding to the substantial supply of excellent routes on the beautiful granite slabs and faces. Those Washington area climbers who haven't made it to Old Rag are truly missing out on superb climbing in a mountainous setting!

Of course, there is the longish hike up and the vegetation on the mountain seems more suitable to Costa Rican rainforest than the mid-Atlantic, but to persevering souls there are bountiful rewards.

Club members Dave Godwin and Bill Farrand made the trek up the mountain this spring and enjoyed Old Rag classics such as the Doby Gillis Route on the PATC wall (5.8 hand crack) and the thin face climb "Pincer Perfect" at the Whale's Lip area (5.9+ friction). Rick Dotson was also up on the Rag that day and finished off the ultra-classic "Strawberry Fields" crack (5.9) and upper face (5.11a) at the Reflector Oven. All are highly recommended climbs.

For those of you interested in climbing on Old Rag, there was a guide published in *Rock & Ice* about two years ago. (One warning though, the topo of the routes along the Bushwhack Trail is completely misnumbered and confusing.) Basic directions are: drive to the Weakly Hollow parking area (back side of the mountain) and take the ridge trail over the summit and down the north-east ridge a ways. The PATC wall drops off the ridgecrest's northwest side and scattered on the southeast side are many excellent slabs and crags.

To aid in finding some of the mentioned routes, I have included a rough guide here to several sections of cliff on the east side of the mountain to use with the *Rock & Ice* guide. Also, I have included the location and description of three new routes put up last fall and this spring on the east side.

The bushwhack trails depicted in the map here are very overgrown and on very steep slopes, be forewarned. The PATC Wall, Whale's Lip, and Gutterballs Crag are probably the easiest to find.

Sandy Fleming, longtime Old Rag climber and creator of many of the classic routes on the east side of the mountain, has been active last fall and this spring. He has developed a new section of cliff called Gutterballs Crag after the first climb put in there (see topo). The route Gutterballs, which Sandy put up last fall, climbs a shallow unjammable crack (the gutter) and then climbs through a thrilling overhang and dihedral with fingercrack (5.9).

Next to this is Simple Man in a Complex World, a route that Sandy put in with the help of Bruce Hayward, Bill (I don't know his last name), and, to a very limited extent, myself (I climbed it right after it was in). This is a face climb through two overlaps (5.8?). There is a nice rappel/belay station at the top of the Gutterballs Crag for accessing the base of the climbs, a very easy spot to reach from the ridge trail any time of year.

The weekend after Simple Man I rejoined Sandy to try a new line in the Bushwhack Corridor area of the God Butte. There are several fine, hard routes here (mostly 5.11s) and we hoped to add another one. We diligently brushed lichen and moss on rappel perusing the route as we went, it looked hard but there were good stances to drill from and a few holds amid the little crystals. Looked reasonable, maybe

5.10ish. Hah. Old Rag is always harder than it looks!

From the base Sandy started up the route and the first three bolts went in relatively quickly. The climbing got very hard at a bulge past the third bolt. Sandy came back down and I went up to try a few moves. Indeed, very hard. Straight up was a no go and up and left had potential but after breaking a few good crystal foot holds I came back down. Sandy continued the ground-up assault and after several short penduluming falls managed to gain the top of the bulge. For those that try this route be sure to move four feet or so to the left to find some edges to pull on at the crux. They aren't big edges but they work.

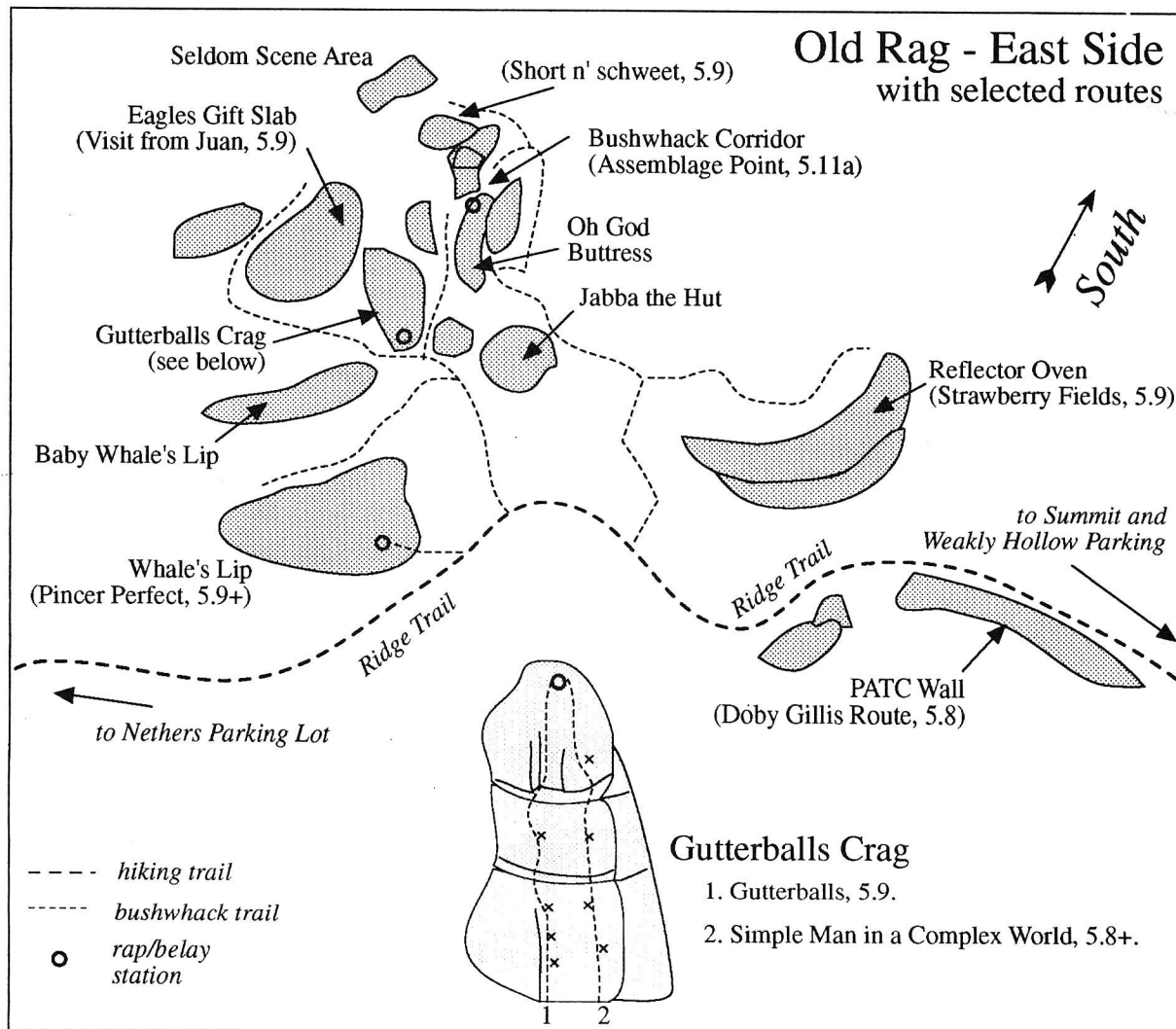
Watching Sandy try to drill the final bolt was somewhat frightening. He was only 6 or 7 feet from the last bolt but I could imagine Sandy and his drill all coming tumbling down and me catching them. No such excitement. The bolt was good and so was the route which we figured went at easy 5.11. Named Assemblage Point, it adds another fine route to the Bushwhack Corridor.

At the top of the route we put in a rap/belay station that will help people access the Bushwhack corridor from above when scrambling down the gully along the east side of the Oh God Buttress.

I managed to lead a couple other moderate climbs on the east side so that people climbing in the 5.8 to 5.9 range have a full day a good climbing there. Visit from Juan (5.9 friction) is a fine route on the Eagle's Gift Slab and Short 'n Schweet (5.9 friction and hand crack) along the Bushwhack Trail are both well worth climbing.

A final note. Sandy and I put in a rappel station at the top of the Whale's Lip Slab to make access easier, look about 40 feet down from the top of the slab, about 20 from where it gets really steep and you will find two rappel bolts.

So, grab a partner, bring your long pants for the bushwhacking and lots of water and head up to Old Rag. Its only a two hour drive from DC and it'll remind you of Joshua Tree! (Especially if you imagine briars and nettles in the spaces between all the rocks in the Wonderland area!)



**1993 Cathedral Crank**

by Beth Logan

April 3 was a nice, sunny day, but too cold to climb outdoors, a perfect day for the Fourth Annual Cathedral Crank indoor climbing competition. Spring could be felt moving into the area and fingers around the city were preparing for torture. The torture began at 10 am. But it wasn't all torture. After months of hibernation, I (and presumably others) was glad to see many climbers that I hadn't seen in months.

This year St Albans School Activity Gym had more climbs than any other year. Competitors had to choose four climbs from the eight top-rope climbs and three traverse problems. The 5.9 and 5.11 traverses went through the double doors, but were shorter than previous years. The 5.11 traverse had an extremely long leg reach even for people with my flexibility. Steve Jones wins the "most interesting move" award for this climb. He became a true monkey by hanging from his arms and moving across the doorway while doing a 360 degree turn - quite impressive. Becky Diamond was the only woman who attempted this route in the competition. The second half of the 5.10 traverse was slightly overhanging causing some arms to become very pumped. This was a beautiful traverse.

Another overhanging/roof climbing area was added to the Activities Gym providing two top-rope climbs to the competition. One was a grueling 5.12. (Okay, the "grueling" was subjective, but undoubtedly, most would agree.) The 5.11, which was supposedly the third hardest route, was avoided by almost everyone, for good reason. The elite men had no choice but to climb it, since they were required to climb the four hardest routes. Jana Gill was the only other person brave (or foolish) enough to climb it (that I know of). (Next year we'll tell Becky and Jana to do the easier routes and then they'll win the elite category.) General concensus was that the last move on this climb was harder than the 5.12 climb. Having heard several of these comments, I avoided it, even after the competition was over.

Bosco, the Route Setting Team Leader, created a unique 5.10 climb. It tested a climber's "wimp" skills, that is a climber's ability to back off a climb without taking a whipper. The climb went up a corner, than down a face. At the bottom, the competitors had to unclip a bell and reclip it to a different bolt hanger. The finish was to climb back up the face along a new

path. Personally, on real rock, I would have backed off the second ascent phase and moved to the easier corner.

After the competition was over, many climbers continued climbing, figuring out routes they had missed and trying ones they avoided in competition. This was the more enjoyable climbing, especially when I got those "Eakin belays," i.e., enough tension in the rope to create a thirty pound weight loss. (Named for James Eakin. He's very good at belaying this way when I ask.)

There were 90 climbers in all. Below is the list of the top ten climbers and their scores in each category. (This covers all the women who participated, and all the elite men.) Some of the rules and restrictions were discussed above. When looking at the scores below, remember the elite men were restricted to the four hardest climbs. The elite women chose between the climbs rated 5.10 or higher. In no category except men's elite did all the climbers attempt the same four climbs.

Name	Score
<b>Women's Junior</b>	
Elizabeth Carroll	224
Lindsay Davidson	205
<b>Women's Recreation</b>	
Jeanette Helfrich	1036
Katherine Hitch	982
Yael Hoogland	867
Paige Timmerman	861
Karin Vantine	837
Dede Hague	790
Leslie	655
Cathy Shubkin	502
Suzanne Laifsky	313
Patricia Horning	188
<b>Women's Elite</b>	
Steph Davis	1313
Elizabeth Lee	1240
Beth Logan	1182
Becky Diamond	1015
Jana Gill	788
<b>Men's Junior</b>	
Colin Krause	1425
Matthew Goodall	1240
Trevor Hill	1231
Adrian Kugajevsky	1182
Matt Farmer	1084

Matt Kronman	1065
Doug Hankins	1061
Andrew Hessick	1029
Craig Hirsch	884
Jon Wilson	805

#### Men's Recreational

Steve Amter	1425
David Godwin	1313
Robert Clark	1310
Adam Merce	1240
Toby Beard	1233
Alex Tait	1225
Eric Angel	1213
Bill Farrand	1200
Colin MacLeod	1195
Douglas Meyer	1195

#### Men's Elite

Doug Cosby	1584
Van Eitel II	1237
Chris Schenking	1235
Marshall Plymale	1229
Philip Olinick	1215
Steve Jones	1077
Dan Hague	998
Michael Link	932
Troy Dezwart	893

#### Hot Flashes

Hot Flashes will report notable lead ascents by PATC/MS members. Send info to either Tom Isaacson or Dan Hague.

Things seem to be heating up early at the New River this year and a number of significant achievements have already been reported.

John Raynor redpointed The Bonemaster Gearfling (11b) at Central Endless.

Tom Isaacson, in a moment of sheer brilliance, flashed Pockets of Resistance (12a) at Kaymoor.

Elizabeth Erskine flashed Wild Seed (11b) at downstream Endless Wall.

Stuart Peggall redpointed Fly Girls (12a) also at downstream Endless and wife Karen, not to be outdone, flashed Fragile Ecosystem (10a) four climbs away.

Rick Dotson is noted to have flashed several 11b (names unknown) routes at Bubba City.

Dan Hague flashed Out of the Bag (11d) at Kaymoor and in a maniacal push at Franklin redpointed Dynosaurus (12a), Brand New Dance (12a), and Sanitary Fishmarket (graded 12b/c, but probably 11d/12a).

#### Courage vs. Skill

A recent Washington Post article (3/16/93) by Angus Phillips, the Post's outdoor columnist, outlined the difference between taking calculated risks based on ability and experience and stepping over the line into dangerous situations. Our own Dusty Wissmath was quoted saying "The motivation is different (today). Most people who got into adventure sports 10 or 20 years ago did it gradually, as a way of getting deeper into the wilderness experience. You might start out backpacking, see a ridge and think how nice the view would be from there, so you'd learn a little about mountaineering."

Dusty informed Angus that people today want "instant high-risk adventures". The quote continued "People want to perform right away at a level that requires experience and judgement in addition to physical prowess. A big, strapping guy sees a little scrawny guy out rock climbing and thinks 'I can do that'. The trouble is, he doesn't know his knots". Hey! Let's hear it for all us little scrawny guys!

John Berry, Post financial reporter and climber, is also quoted. He recalls watching an inexperienced climber fall 100 feet when an improperly anchored top rope failed.

The conclusion of the article? As Dusty puts it "The notion of an accelerated learning curve just doesn't work in the outdoors". Take the time necessary to acquire skills and experience before pushing too quickly into the next level.

#### Climbing in North Carolina Continued

By Rick Dotson

#### Whitesides & Sauratown

Regina Pieper and myself took another trip to North Carolina a couple of months ago and two of the places we climbed were Whitesides and Sauratown.

The cliffs at Whitesides are impressive. The wall is 700 feet high and a couple thousand feet long. Right below Whitesides is another cliff just as big called Wildcat Cliff. The rock at Whitesides is steep to overhanging knobby granite, without too many cracks to worry about protecting.

We wanted to do the Original Route III 5.11a or 5.9 AO. This route is ten pitches long with mostly 5.7 - 5.8 climbing. Most of the easier pitches are run out with the first pitch (5.7) having no protection, although we did a variation to the first pitch