

Best dressed car

What's the best dressed car wearing this fall? Forget the yellow and black "Baby on Board" signs. Ditto for the California Raisins and fuzzy dice. If you're into car "fashions" then remember PACO the Pit Bull, Mr. C. More Bunz and the Crushed Kitty the next time you go shopping. What are these strange characters? Find out on Page 6D.

The Observer & Eccentric Newspapers

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STREET SCENE

When you feel like climbing

By Loraine Mc Clish
staff writer

If you want to play on Sandy Graham's wall, you are going to have to play by Sandy Graham's rules.

"Anybody who wants to play on my wall can come in and stay for as long as they like and we'll work with them as long as they like," Graham said. "This is an open invitation to people who make lousy spectators and want to get excited about climbing — but without reckless abandon."

Graham is talking about the test-out-for-yourself rock climbing wall in The Benchmark in Farmington.

Now, don't go into the store expecting to see a scaled down version of Mt. Everest or the sheer face of Devil's Rock.

The wall is made up of sand and epoxy tiles. Each tile is indented with toe or finger holds in different degrees of difficulty. And all of the tiles are rotated from time to time to vary the patterns for the drop-in regulars.

"This is not a simulated wall you'd find on the side of a mountain," Graham will say. "This will help you with finger and toe, arm and leg strength."

"Climbing is not all vertical. There is push, pull, load to one side and then the other, and the wall will help you test and exercise those skills. It will help you learn how to climb in balance. It will help you practice your moves. It will help in discipline and training."

IT WILL ALSO give you an idea of what rock climbing is all about.

Novice rock climbers must bring a belayer with them, which is one of Graham's rules. A belayer is the buddy who acts as a spotter, a catcher, the controller of the ropes and the climber's number one safety factor.

Rock climbing or snow or ice climbing or any facet of mountaineering is not a very popular sport here, simply because Michigan doesn't have the terrain that is necessary for it, so the Benchmark wall might make a difference, Graham said.

"A lot of people walk right by it thinking we've hung an ugly piece of art they'd rather ignore," he said. "Those who stop to ask about it are generally intrigued enough to give it a try."

Graham is manager of the Benchmark store at 32715 Grand River in downtown Farmington, and, along with his staff, is knowledgeable, if not proficient, in all the aspects of

backpacking, ski touring, kayaking, canoeing and mountaineering.

And when it comes to rock climbing, it's the "excitement" that keeps Graham climbing.

"Of course, it's scary; if it wasn't scary it wouldn't be the fun and adventure that it is," he said. "It is the most fun when you overcome the fear — one of the first things taught in a good class is how not to look down."

"I AM NOT A maniac and I don't have a death wish. Rock climbing is a high risk sport and I like it best when I'm running on control." According to Graham, as the risk factor increases in any high risk sport, there's an increase in the thrill and adventure.

"But I like my thrills controlled," he said. "I like the thrill of relying on my own skills. If you haven't done your homework and screw up, it could be a major hazard to your health."

And how does the thrill and adventure of rock climbing or mountaineering feel to Graham?

"How does root beer taste?" he counters. "You've got to do it yourself to experience it. A very pleasant thing is finding a secure place to sit on a (mountain) wall, watch the birds, enjoy the sights and sounds around me."

"This puts stuff in perspective for me. So what if I'm a day late. So what if I'm tired. I'll get another job."

Graham emphasized that rock climbers are not necessarily super strong. And neither are belayers. But an 80-pound belayer who knows how to handle the ropes can do the job for a 250-pound man.

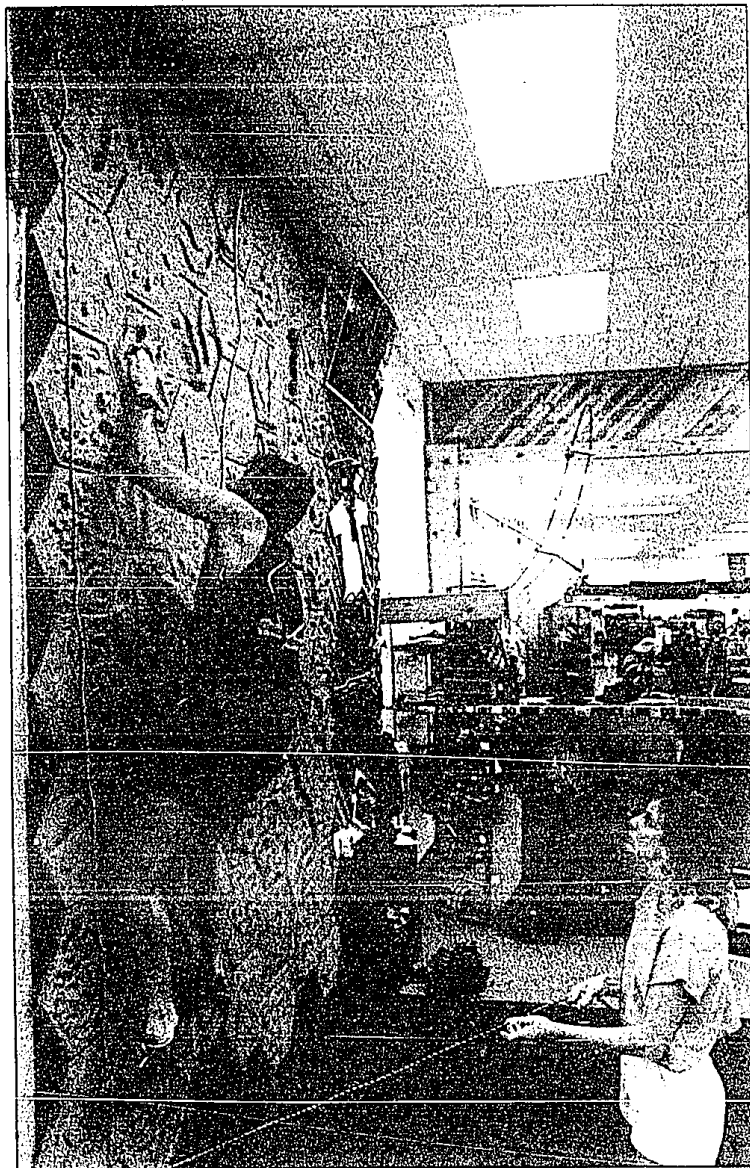
Climbers wear shoes with adhesive-type soles that can cost up to \$150 per pair and are not good for anything else. They also own a harness, ropes and a lot of hardware to place in crevices giving them grips as they climb the side of a mountain.

"YOU DON'T NEED a ton of gear, but you do need a positive and pioneering spirit," Graham said. "Start with the wall. Go as you will. Make your own goals. Progress as you will. Get excited about it."

Graham told a story about getting himself half way up a wall and being in serious trouble.

"I promised God I'd sell my gear, bail out and made all sorts of promises if he'd get me out of that," he said. "But instead of bailing out, I kept on going up. When I recovered from it, I knew I was really hooked."

"I pushed myself to the limit. It's the greatest thrill you can experience."



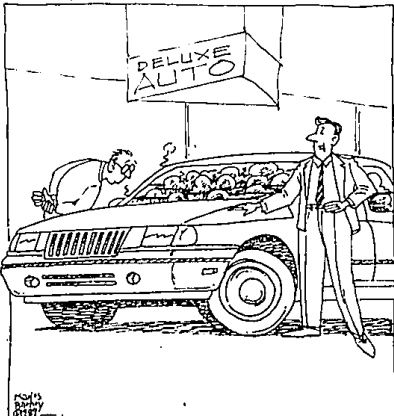
Sandy Graham, manager of the Benchmark in Farmington, uses hand and toe holds to scale the store's rock climbing wall. His belayer — a rock climber's first line of

defense — is Sandra French, a member of the Benchmark staff.

RANDY BORST/staff photographer

Warp Factor

Karlos Barney



"Yep, this baby's got factory air."

A taste of Gaylord's Heritage

By Iris Sanderson Jones
contributing travel editor

hunting lodge outside Gaylord one summer when she decided that she

preferred trees and small towns to concrete cities.

This is the kind of house you'd like to spend your life in, if only Jane Code came with it.

We've finished the homemade pecan muffins, the homemade cranberry muffins, the orange juice and the fresh fruit, and now we're waiting for the second course. Homemade ham and bacon patties, an oven omelet made with croustons, french toast with apple slices, and a steady supply of coffee.

Just like home, except home was never like the Heritage House Bed and Breakfast in Gaylord. And home doesn't have Code in the kitchen.

A photo on the dining room wall shows Code's grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. Carl Code of Birmingham, part of five generations of Codes who grew up in what is now an historic house on Civic Center Drive and Code Road in Southfield.

Code grew up in Royal Oak, attended Northern Michigan University and was living at her father's



MICKY JONES

Heritage House is a two-story clapboard bed and breakfast that features the touch of Jane Code, touches like flowers that spill out of a window box and the plants growing in an old pair of tennis shoes on the porch.

She tried all the local jobs — waitress, accountant at the Grand Hotel, marketing manager at Project Nature. Two years ago she decided to buy a house in Gaylord.

"I knew when I bought this house that it would someday be a bed and breakfast," she said. "But there was a lot of work to do first."

"I'D NEVER run, renovated or decorated a home. I have a friend who asked me 'When are you going to tell them that you can't cook, when they check in or at breakfast?'"

Heritage House is on Main Street, a few blocks east of the downtown and at the moment half a dozen cars must cram into the driveway and onto the lawn in front of the two-story clapboard home, but Jane plans to build a driveway, deck and parking lot next year.

It is always little touches that color a house like this — the flowers that spill out of a window box,

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