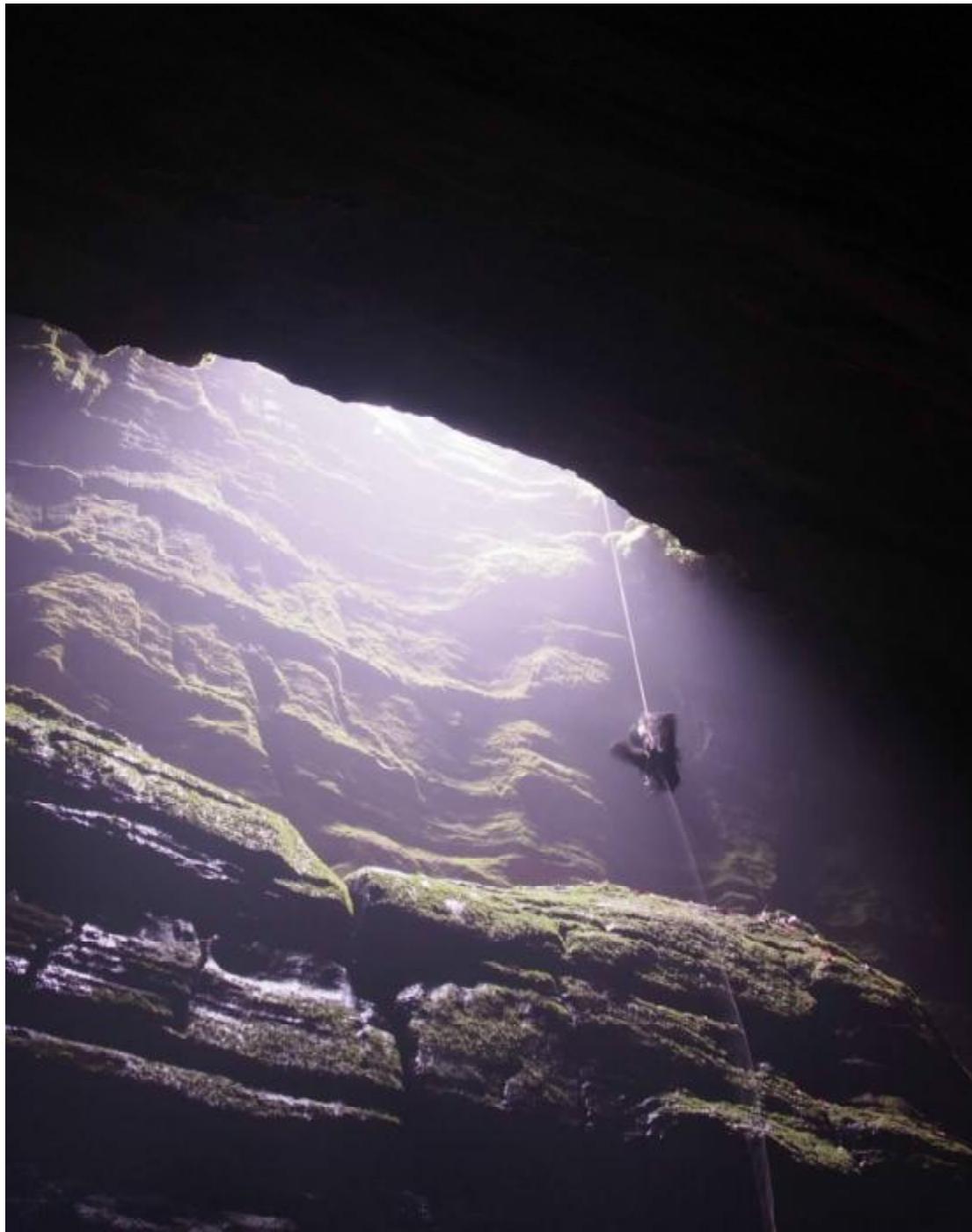


THE TECH TROGLODYTE



SPRING 2014

The *Tech Trododyte* is published each semester (assuming that people bother to submit articles, which they often don't) by the VPI Cave Club, a student grotto of the NSS. All submissions, subscriptions, inquiries, donations, and comments should be sent to: Trog Editor, VPI Cave Club P.O. Box 558, Blacksburg, VA 24060-0558.



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THE TECH TROLODYTE

A Journal of the Virginia Tech Grotto of the National Speleological Society



Fall 2013—Spring 2014 Officers

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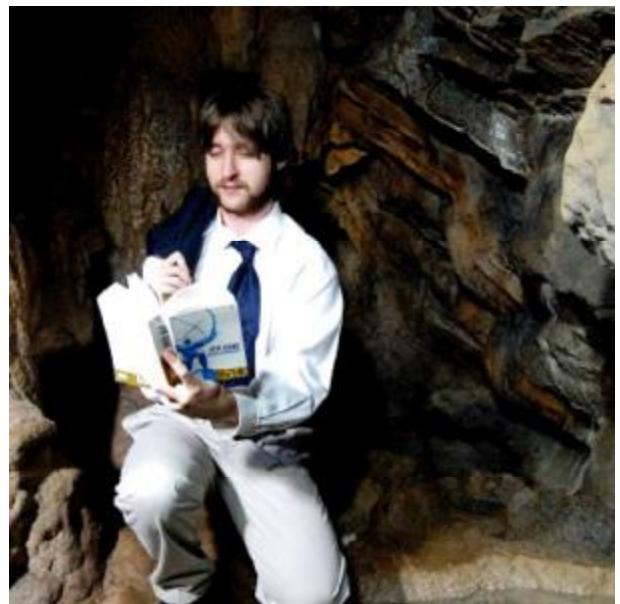
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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR



It's my last year as editor and I want to thank everyone for the insane number of articles submitted this year. It sure makes me feel better to be able to hand out a nice fat Trog. I think a lot of this is attributed to the number of new members we have! Although I like to think that people actually enjoy writing articles and it's not JUST to get it signed off. I have to say one of my absolute least favorite parts of doing the Trog is the letter from the editor. I really never know what I am supposed to say here. I am so thankful that there is not a letter from the vice president as well. In fact I really don't enjoy writing that much in general. I'm more of a math person. Why did I take this job again? Oh yea the pictures. I love taking and putting together all the pictures. So I hope that everyone enjoys all of the awesome pictures I've compiled to remember the year by! I sure put a lot more effort into that than I do writing the letter from the editor. But hey no one reads this stupid thing anyway right? I mean I wouldn't.

-Courtney Trost

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Hello and welcome to the VPI Cave Club's... Trog?! And what a year it has been! We have had many awesome events like Easter Beer, Picnic, Float Trip, Halloween, and Banquet. The Club has also brought back Young Timers Reunion as well as making an appearance at Fall VAR by hosting it. I would like to thank everyone for helping with such a successful event. We have had a few new members to the club who have been great assets with training new members. We also have currently 20



prospective members working really hard on their membership! The caving has been just awesome! We hold to our reputation of being one of the most active cave clubs around by going caving every weekend of the semesters. We have also been caving all over: Virginia, West Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee, Mexico, and probably some other locations I do not know of. Sorry John, but no Antarctica or Africa this year J. Thanks again to everyone who has made this year such a great one! Lastly, keep on scooping that booty, dropping those pits, and caving that borehole!

-Nick "Peppy" Socky

INTRODUCTION



Welcome to the VPI Cave Club!! We will show you a place where the internet can never hurt you. Or at least that's what our WUVT ad says this year. But really, we're a pretty awesome group of people. We welcome any and all who want to hang out with us (as long as they are appropriately weird). And of course we never haze anyone (membership tests don't count right? And those gypsum flowers are so damn pretty).

Here's to another year of awesome adventures from California to Thailand and places in between. We've gained some pretty great members and trainees and will bid goodbye to a few. But of course you never really leave the Cave Club. No other club welcomes back those who have left Blacksburg with such enthusiasm. Events like Picnic allow us to all gather together to listen to old stories and make some new ones. Let's continue to be the best club at Tech and the most awesome NSS grotto.

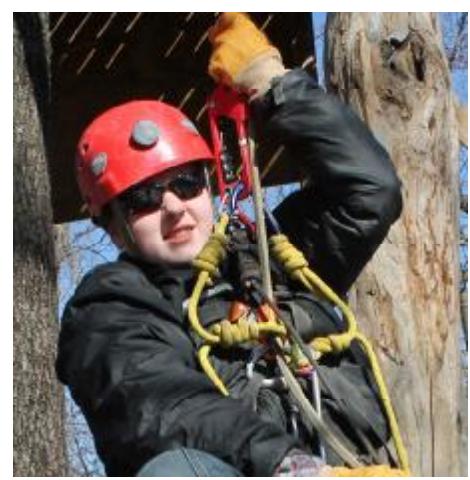
New Members



Mike Newsome #433



Sarah Crowder #434



Katrina Stoll #435



Ellen Koertge #436



Hillary Schmitthenner #437



Nikolaus Wittenstein #438



Tommy Cleckner #439



Jennifer Wagner #440



John Echols #441

PICNIC



We didn't let the absolutely awful freezing our asses off weather get us down! (OK maybe some of us did a little bit). Regardless of the blistering cold, we had a great picnic. And, yes I know, you old farts out there have plenty of stories from picnics with several inches of snow on the ground. This year's highlights included a go cart built by Steve Wells himself that carried many more little boys than originally intended. Some of the little boys may have been drunk.





John George and Katrina should win a disgusting couple award for both being voted in as members at Picnic in consecutive years. Unfortunately for Katrina, I think JG had a few more girls surrounding him than Katrina had guys. However, the men managed to get Katrina more than a few inches off the ground. Katrina was adequately harassed by the crowd, although she still could not tell us why her boyfriend is so damn pasty.



Float Trip 2013: The Best Float Trip Ever?

By Courtney Trost

Float Trip 2013 will be one that is talked about for quite some time. Pretty much what could go wrong did go wrong. A recap of the events for those of you who unfortunately missed out or else blocked the entire day from your memory (all times are approximate):

9:00am- Feeble attempts to start to build the float and to rally a crowd to help.

9:00-11:00am- Build float, many (mostly us females) bitch about the freezing cold water. Also much attention is given to the extremely cute Corgi.

11:12am- Set sail! Once again, against all odds, the float seems to be in one piece above the water. At least for the time being....

11:29am- Potential threat spotted as we drift towards a group of trees.

11:36am- Threat confirmed. Float wedges into the trees.

Rushing water forces the float against the branches and the barely drunk crowd shifts to the other side of the float.

11:42am- Many attempts to push the float out. Mike Newsome falls off and enjoys a swim down the river. Excitement and cursing pursues.



11:47am- A plan is formed to move the crowd off the float and free the float without the people weight.

11:58am- Strong swimmers rig a line from the float to the nearby island. One by one we exit the float, following the line so that the current doesn't take anyone. A group of select individuals (I'm not sure if they were selected for strength or stupidity) stay behind to push the float away from the trees once it is empty.

12:07pm- All useless persons hang out on the island. Attempts to free the empty float are deemed futile. A line of people forms to transfer the coolers and Corgi off of the float and onto the island.

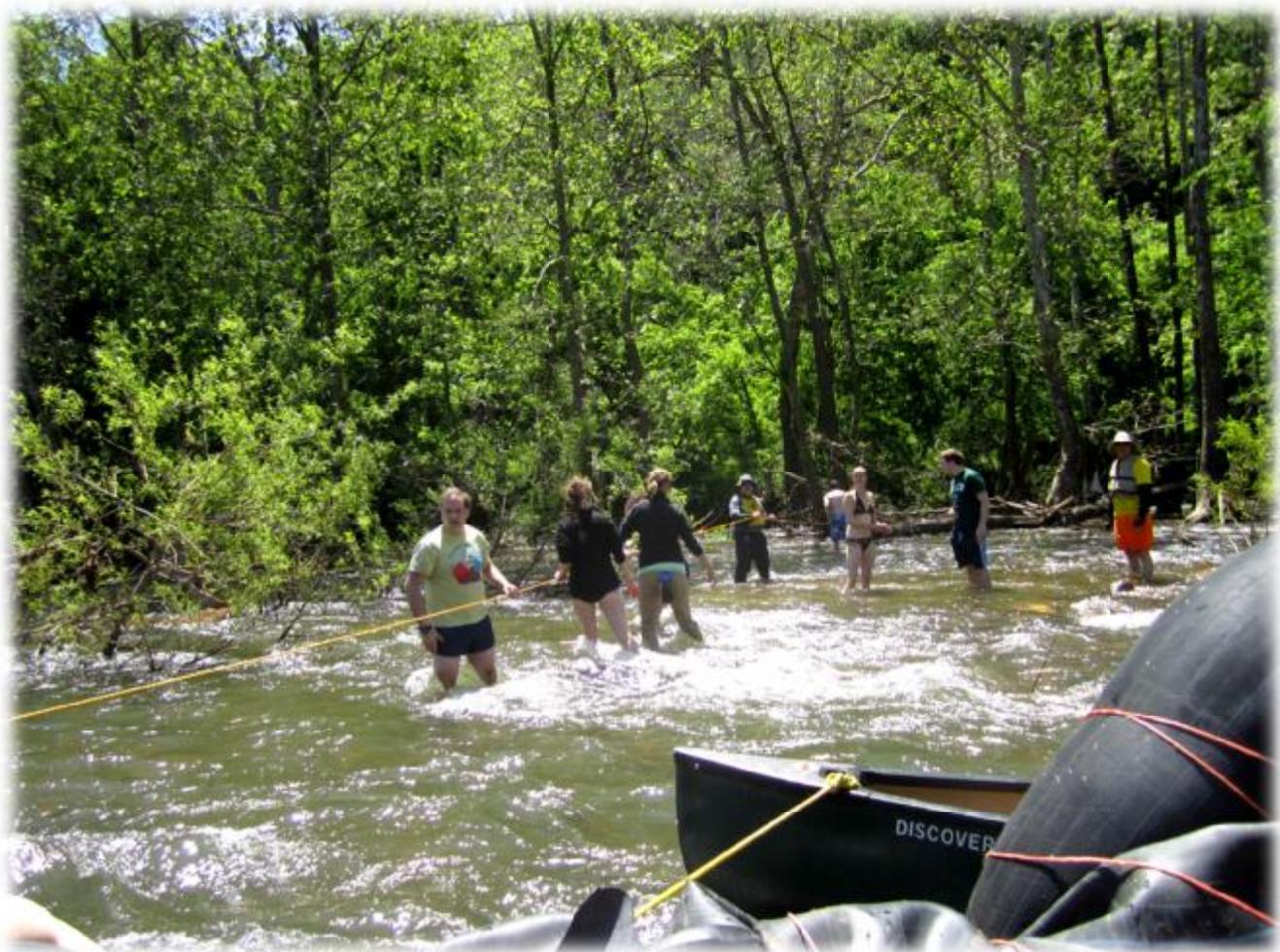
1:13pm- A group of us leaves to assess the parking situation. Although none of us had cars, we took Peppy's keys. We determine that the cars can be moved to the river bank near the island.

1:38pm- We arrive back to the group with Peppy's car. Other drivers volunteer to go retrieve their cars with us.

1:45pm- We attempt to drive back to the drop off point to bring more cars to the group. A chain fence has been locked between us and the other cars. There is much debate over breaking down the fence or driving onto the railroad tracks.

2:02pm- We return to the group and explain the situation. More drinking and grilling lightens the mood.

2:19pm- We head back to the fence and skillfully remove the bolts to get through. Ray retrieves his truck and leads the way to the group.





2:36pm- Ray parks on the bank. Peppy's car follows. Peppy's car, unhappy with life, decides it would like to take a swim. The passengers abandon ship and get out to assess the crisis.

3:12pm- Peppy's car remains on the bank for the time being, ready to take the plunge at any moment. The crowd on the island notices and begins gawking.

3:24pm- Various plans to move the car are discussed. The car is tied back to several trees for safety.

3:32pm- Mike Newsome bravely attempts to drive the car out of the situation. The car slides another foot closer to the river.

3:46pm- A group heads back to the Bat Ranch to recover the high jack. Others continue to disassemble the float in the water and transfer the tubes and plywood to shore.

4:21pm- Mike stands underneath the car to rig the high jack. We all hold our breaths.

4:30pm-7:50pm- The car moves one inch at a time sideways, away from its suicide attempt. Some people build a fire. Those of us who could not find any way to be useful huddle by the fire. Others work diligently deflating tubes.

8:00pm- We rejoice as Peppy's car is safely in an upright position with all four wheels on solid ground.

8:12pm-10:00pm- We load the cars with the remains of our beloved float.

11:00pm- Everyone is back at the Bat Ranch, starving and exhausted. We celebrate by crashing hard.



HALLOW



GRAIN





TAG



Those of us who went to TAG this year partied hard enough to make up for all of you slackers who didn't want to make the drive. With spectacular weather, three of us represented VPI in the 4th annual Monkey Butt Run with Sarah finishing as 2nd overall female. Respectable Sarah, but weren't you first last year?

Then we enjoyed the weather some more (did I mention how nice it was?) rappelling Weaver's Point, despite the park being closed due to the government shutdown. The older and wiser (Ray) just enjoyed the view and a few beers.

Thanks to an appearance by our good friends from California, we enjoyed rum spiced apple cider on Saturday night, heavy on the rum. Many of us enjoyed a whole lot of drunk shopping. The vendors went home happy.

Sunday morning came with the usual headache and tears as we had to return to reality and make that long drive back. Nothing that a good Qdoba hangover burrito couldn't solve.





Mexico Recap

By Johnny Goldhammer

Group: John Deighan, Laine Buckwalter, Rich Brooks, Hillary Shmitthenner, John Mulheren, Courtney Trost, Johnny Goldhammer, Kramer Grim

About Mexico

Though there may be plenty of laws, they are not as enforced as they are in the US, such as underage drinking, drunk in public, speed limits.

Most things are made of concrete, very few wood or drywall.

Most floors are either concrete or tile, I think this is because every road is so muddy and they can clean tile easier.

There are a lot of stray dogs that try to get food from people and stores. Zulema says that most have owners and are vaccinated; most are not neutered.

Lots of people walk a long ways to get to work or the store. Made me shameful how lazy Americans are.

Eggs and some milk are not refrigerated and produce is sold long after it is ripe.

Most buildings have rebar sticking out of the top.

Saw no Pepsi.

The gas stations are all owned by the government, called Pemex. The prices are not advertised on the board.

Death Count

Kramer: 1 Rabbit

John Deighan: 1 Bird





Mexico Quotes

[trying to find out how to pick up the chicas]

Courtney: You can wink better than Johnny

Kramer: That's like saying you can play basketball better than a retarded kid

Johnny: Are you saying I'm a retarded kid?

[After finding out you are not supposed to flush the toilet paper]

Johnny: [To Hillary] Are you saying you put the poopy-paper in the trash can?!

[Going to the campsite in Texas near the border]

John M. How far is the campsite?

Johnny: We hit a rabbit.

[In the pool at Hotel Tanunil]

Kramer: It's not that deep. Aughhaew.

[In the pool at Hotel Tanunil]

Kramer: Give it to 'em Johnny! [to John]

John M. Lo siento, no comprende [I'm sorry, you don't understand]

Johnny: [Pointing to some jar] Que hora es? [What time is it?]

Man: [Chuckling] Es azucar. [It is sugar]

Hillary: Hand me that Corolla.

[An old seemingly drunk man trying to tell us where to go to find the campsite]

Rich: Esta Bien? [Are you ok / Is everything good?]

Man: Si. Porque? [Yeah, why?]

[At Huahuas, John isn't feeling great and debating whether to go down the pit]

Kramer: I wouldn't go down there either, there will be a lot of activity and your cheeks will be spread for most of it.

[At hotel in SLP]

Kramer:

How do I say I need a plunger?

John M.

Mucho dodo en el bano.

[At Salitre]

John M.

It's hard to tell how far away a rock face is because rocks are fractal-like



Banquet 2014 A.I. Cartwright

The VPI Cave Club Awards Banquet was held on February 15th at the New Life Center. This is the old Red Cross building. Some remember it as Buddy's and Daddy's Money. The Old Farts knew it as Kens. While it wasn't snowing, the previous 18 inches and the cold made getting around sporting. The weekend kicked off with a Friday pre-Banquet party at Carol and Joe Zokaites. Early arrivals had to shovel snow to make room for new arrivals. The Zo's made sure that no one went hungry or thirsty and we are all very grateful. Mike Frame mushed all the way from Alaska.



Several cocktail parties around town loosened folks up for the main soiree at the New Life Center. Dan "Joker" Crowder and Ellen Koertge expertly arranged a wonderful Banquet with Treasurer Brian McCarter pinching the pennies. A large can of adult beverage was provided, and then we enjoyed a delicious catered dinner. For once, there was plenty of food.

After dinner, we listened to Guest Speaker Chris Nicola and his fascinating tale of Ukrainian Jews hiding in caves from the Nazi's. Chris later gave a detailed account at the Hillel Cen-

ter. Thanks go to Joey Fagan and his sponsorship of Chris.



President Nick Socky and Joker mc'd the awards portion of the night. The Guano Clusters for service over the last year were beautiful clay and glaze shot glasses made by expert potter, Deborah Barnes. Thank you, Deborah.



Guano clusters went to Richard Cobb for his digitizing Club files and Sivtac archives, Joan Redder and the Zo's for their pre and post Banquet parties, Bill and Robin Koershner for finally coming home, Daniel Bishop for organizing last year's picnic, Steve Wells for road clean up and the sign out sheet, Wil Orndorff for Res-

cue gear and practice rescue, Dan and Ellen, Trog editor and Vice President Courtney Trost, John Deighan for his rappelling tower and vertical sessions, Alex Booker for His "speleo-seminars", Mike Newsome for his parties and managing the Bat Ranch, the organizers of Young Timers: John Echols, Nick Socky. Secretary Sarah Crowder and Nick Wittenstien. Additional Clusters went to Samantha Lambert for keeping the rescue gear, Ray Sira for keeping the Club tarp, Philip Balister and Sandy Knapp for keeping the Club files. Joe Calderone was thanked for his managing the T-shirt sales.

Steve Wells received the Brain Bucket Award for having a tree "limb" him, Kirk Digby also gave Steve a can of Pussy Whip for being made to go home at 10pm from a party by Megan Ihlefeld.

Courtney Trost was given the Good Driver Award after almost taking Nick Socky's car for a swim,

The Drinking Techniques Committee honored Jim Washington for his Catch and Release Walkabout at OTR.



Ellen and Dan were the Caving Couple of the Year.

Naomi Orndorff and Tyrone Phillips were Cave Club Sweetheart and Hearthrob, Respectfully.

Ray Sira was given a mask award for his Halloween money costume.

Nick "Peppy" Socky and Tommy Polson were given the Vertical Techniques Award for having to be rescued out of "Lesson Learned Cave", As Tommy said, "I know how to arm rappel, but not how to Batman."

On a more somber note, Cecile James and Pam Mohr were remembered due to their journey to the huge trunk passage. They will be greatly missed. Many glasses were lifted to their memory. Carol Zo presented a photo collage of Pam, made by Courtney Trost to Kirk Digby.

Trainee of the year was handed out by Courtney to John Echols. It proves that being a trainee for 5 years, really pays off.

The A.I.Cartwright Honorarium was given to Jim Washington for his many years of service to the Club. Thank you, Jim.

Dancing then ensued until the wee hours to the music of a wonderful dj.





A.I. Cartwright

Jim Washington

Couple of the
Year
Joker & Ellen



Trainee of the

Year

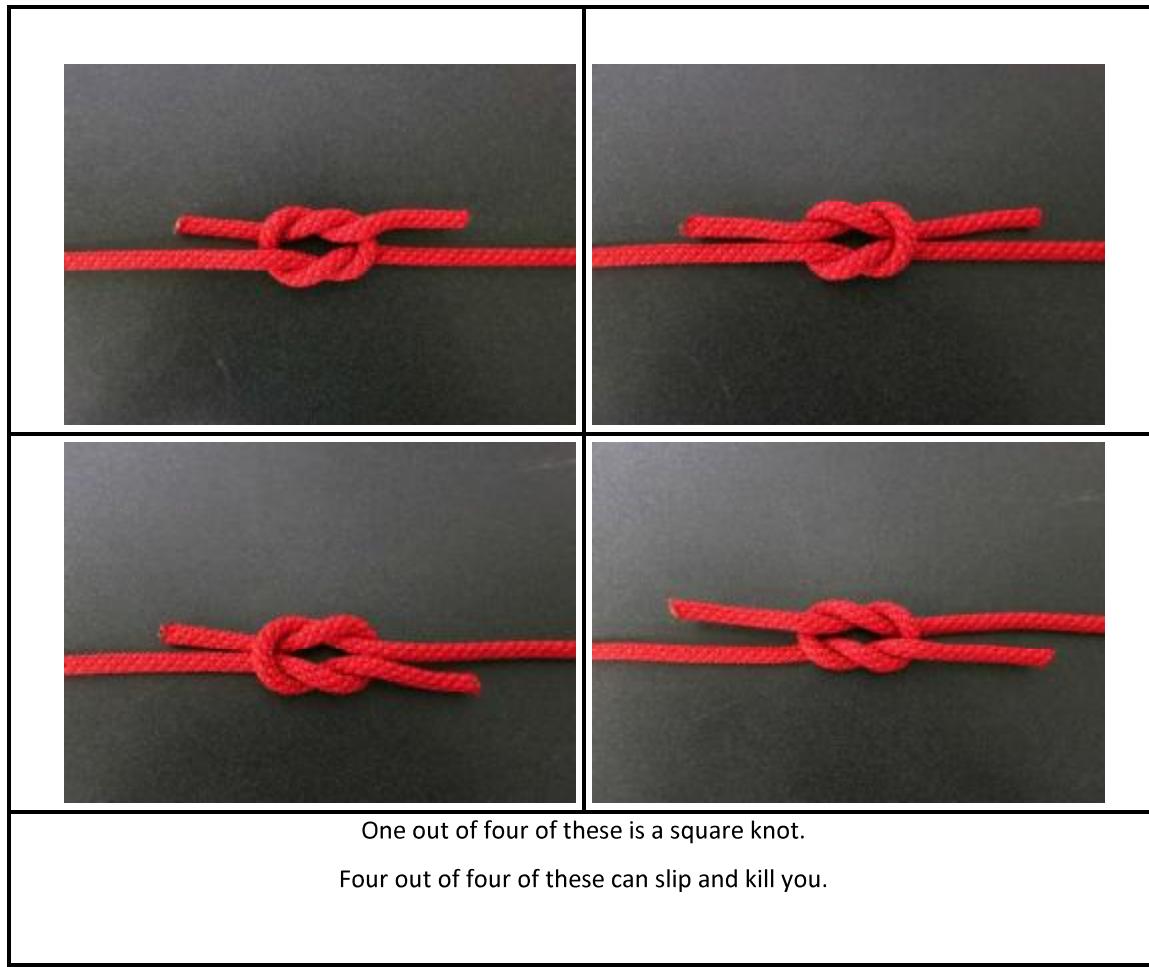
John Echols

THE CARRICK BEND IS AWESOME

Nikolaus Wittenstein

Give me your square-knot tyers, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free. Let them see the majesty that is the Carrick bend.

Let us begin with a discussion of everything that is wrong with the square knot, also known as the reef knot. When it's not capsizing into a deadly slip knot, it's jamming. It does hold when both tails are backed off—but a pair of overhand back-offs already make a perfectly good fisherman's knot without the square knot at all. Mistakes in tying the square knot are so common that its incorrect counterparts are even given names: the granny knot, the thief knot, the what knot. Mr. Ashley, writer of the eponymous knot book, writes that "There have probably been more lives lost as a result of using a Square Knot as a bend ... than from the failure of any other half dozen knots combined." (pg. 258, #1402). He goes on to say that "In fact, it is the ease with which the knot may be spilled that gives its value as a Reef Knot." In other words, people use the square knot specifically when they need something that turns into a slip knot at the slightest provocation.



So, can the Carrick bend perform better than an awkward knot that kills people? You bet it can!

The Carrick bend is beautiful, secure, and unjammable even when wet. When it capsizes, it doesn't turn into a slip knot, it just becomes stronger. It even maintains more of the rope strength than a square knot. Sound pretty good? Let's see what Ashley has to say: "The Carrick Bend [...] is perhaps the nearest thing we have to a perfect bend." (pg. 262, #1439).

Straight from the horse's mouth. But that's not all! Among its "array of excellencies" is that "It is symmetrical, it is easy to tie, ... it is amongst the strongest of knots, it cannot jam, and it is readily untied." The only bad thing he has to say about it: it's "somewhat bulky."

The Carrick bend can also be faster to tie. For instance, when you're tying a square knot in the middle of 30 feet of webbing, you have to pull 15 feet of webbing through the knot two times in a row. The Carrick bend requires only one pull-through. The Carrick bend is quantitatively better than the square knot in another way: it is more secure when subject to shock loads. A square knot slips after an average of 19.6 shocks, as compared to 70.8 for the Carrick bend. (Ashley pg. 273). And the Carrick bend is also more versatile. It is commonly used in net-making due to its ability to hold two ropes crossing each other at right angles. It can also be tied as a load-releasing knot, with a pull-cord to easily untie it even while under load.

As seen at <http://www.animatedknots.com/carrick/>.

See <http://legacy.earlham.edu/~peters/writing/explode.htm> for further info.

Excited yet? Let's learn how to tie it.

Step one: get some rope.



Next, make a loop.

Notice that the working end is on
the bottom again.



Put the bight through the loop.

Now pass the working end of the bight over the loop's standing end, and then under its working end.



Finally, pass it back up through the original bight.



And then tighten everything down!



Beautiful. Enjoy the non-slipping, non-jamming security of your Carrick bend!

SPRING HOLLOW

By Tommy Cleckner

Towards the end of January, I got the chance to cave someplace VPI rarely goes to: Spring Hollow. Bill Kershner led the trip; he wanted a chance to resurvey sections of the cave. It was a small trip. There were five of us: Bill, Peppy, Joe and Carol Zokaites, and then obviously yours truly. Bill had laid some groundwork with the land owner before the trip. He'd gone out, (re)introduced himself and just generally reminded them that the VPI Grotto was still around and very much interested in caving on their property in return for a little bit of labor. So we rolled out to the field Sunday morning and got to work.

After trekking up and down in the snow for a while looking for the hole (isn't that the worst?), we started to find and cut up enough wood to cover the entrance. The landowner wanted it covered so calves wouldn't fall in come spring; wood will work long enough to last until then, and when we put in something more permanent we'll have an excuse to cave again. As with any task involving engineers, the project quickly blossomed into a two-hour affair. Carol and Bill wanted to know if we were building the Taj Mahal; clearly they don't appreciate craftsmanship.

With foreplay over, we all enthusiastically climbed in. It wasn't just that we wanted to go caving; it was also really cold. It took a little while to get everyone in though; the ~10 foot down climb was both muddy and icy. Soon enough we moved away from the entrance and into the cave proper. It was a really fun cave to move through; there were climby bits every twenty or twenty-five feet. We stayed in what I believe was the upper level of the cave; we passed a ~45 foot nuisance drop through a waterfall into what I'm told is long passage filled with beautiful formations. Pretty soon we reached a long corridor, the entrance of which was composed of huge breakdown blocks. The stream joined it there; and there was plenty of mud and some easy crawling. We stopped at another short drop, and made our way back.





All through the trip I'd heard how beautiful Spring Hollow is; but I didn't see much to back it up going in. Sure, it was nice in a cave-y kind of way, but I'd seen similar. On the way back though, Bill lead us up on top of the break-down, rather than back through. And the corridor he led us into was amazing. There was a flowstone pool larger than a king-size bed across the floor; it was glowing white and practically untouched. Past it was a very tall, wide hallway with formations literally everywhere. Untouched stalagmites and stalactites covered the floor and ceiling; beautiful formations and shields composed the entirety of the walls. It continued on like that for a hundred feet before it curved out of sight; Bill said that when he had surveyed the cave before it continued just like that for several hundred more. It's likely that nobody had gone that far since the initial survey; everything looked so pristine. We didn't go into it very far ourselves; I was very scared I was going to slip and destroy something beautiful.

There's not much to say about the rest of the trip. We retraced our steps, and Bill made some drawings while Joe took measurements. The entrance wasn't significantly harder to climb on the way out than it was on the way in. We didn't even freeze to death getting to the car; Peppy didn't even have to take my pants off for me, unlike our last excursion. Overall, Spring Hollow is the single prettiest cave I've ever been to, and I'd love the opportunity to explore more of it again sometime.

We almost went into Clover Hollow

February 22, 2014

Jennifer Wagner

(pictures courtesy of Dave C)

Members: Dave Colatasti, Joe Zokaites, Calvin Long, Tommy Cleckner, Jordan Byrne, Josh Abelard, Andrew Fagan, Jennifer Wagner, Kiley Petenincin

Notes before I start: Two weeks ago, there was too much water going into the entrance of Clover Hollow. One week ago, we got 20 inches of snow.

The 9 of us divided into Dave C's and JoeZo's vehicles, then headed towards the batranch and on to Clover Hollow. We got to the cave and after playing with the horses for a little, we got geared up. This took a good while because we had four people on the trip who had only been vertically trained at the platform, had no gear, and were about to depart on their first vertical trip. Webbing harnesses had to be made, figure-8s given out, and knot sets tied. Tommy and Andrew proceeded to rig the pit. Because of the amount of people we had, they rigged two ropes. To our dismay, there was a heavy waterfall running into the pit, a bigger one than two weeks previous. The rigging took a while because they were trying to keep the rope out of the waterfall. By this time, I'd say it was around noon. Joe and Andrew volunteered to go down the ropes first to start rigging the next drop. Tommy and I were going to go second to provide belays to the newbies. Joe got to the bottom of his rope and was standing in the waterfall, Andrew was getting sprayed. They both came back up to tell us that they didn't think it was going to pan out. Having so many new people rappel and doing so in the water would probably lead to hypothermia later on. The trip was aborted.

Our original backup plan was to go to the quarry near the bat-ranch but Dave mentioned going to Barney's Wall and doing vertical work there (more adventurous).

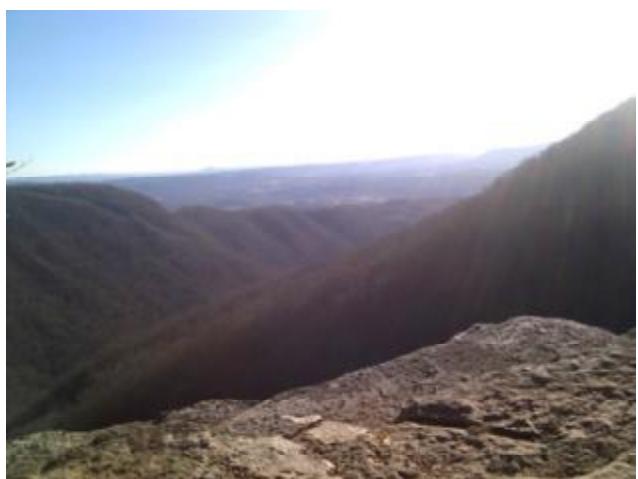
The majority agreed with him so we set off up towards Mountain Lake to get there. Joe was driving his Ford van and Dave was in his Toyota FJ Cruiser. Dave clearly wasn't going to have any trouble on the gravel, snowy, narrow, steep, muddy road. Joe did however, and I'm glad I was in his van for the exciting ride. We were slipping everywhere on the snowy road for most of the 2-3 miles we drove.





We got to one point and had to stop because Dave had stopped because the road was going uphill and was very snowy. Due the stop, Joe wasn't able to get his speed up to climb and got stuck. All of the trainees attempted to put chains on his van for him and they seemed to be correct until he started driving and they came apart and wrapped around his axel. He got to a good parking area and then we all walked the rest of the way to the parking area for Barney's Wall while Dave drove it.

It was around 3:30 when we got to the trailhead so we decided that we wouldn't have enough time to rig and send at least 7 people down the rope and possibly back up. Especially because they were on Knots. We walked the $\frac{3}{4}$ mile hike and arrived at the view. It was an incredible view and we had a perfect day to see it. We spent some time talking to the others at the view and just chit chatting. After we got back to the car, Dave wanted to go up the road a little more and see the fire tower. All 9 of us then preceded to do a little circus trick and pile into his car for a very sporting and exciting ride. While sitting in the back with Tommy and on top of gear, trying to not fall out the back window, lose gear, or hit my head, we made it to the tower. Some decided to climb the old tower while others of us exploring the various buildings ridden with graffiti and bullet holes. The top of Butt Mountain had an incredible view of Pembroke and Pearisburg. After exploring a room that had opened underneath some of the rocks we all headed back down the mountain to split in our vehicles. Joe was able to make it out perfectly with his impeccable driving skills. I was impressed. We stopped at the overlook on Mountain Lake Rd but were about 5 mins too late and missed the sunset. We proceeded to Sign-out (which we had cancelled about 5 hours earlier but we still had gear). We all decided to go get Thai food but the place was packed. This followed with our theme of the day: Plan A failing. Then we went for Mexican. Line was out the door. Again, theme of the day: Plan B failing. We tried once more for Lefty's and it was packed on Saturday night in Blacksburg. "Stupid University", to quote Dave C. We decided it was pointless to get food and just went home. Although we never got underground, it was a very adventurous day.



WHY CAVE?

by Eric Combs

From the time one is known as a caver people ask why do you cave? The inquirer expects a simple reply but the reasoning is anything but. Since the beginning of Quaternary Period mankind has been drawn to caves for shelter, survival, their mystic wonder and more.



Caves have long played the role of shelter for the early neanderthals to the present day FARC of Columbia. Throughout history caves provided not only shelter but a means to a way of life. The Aztec rituals in cenotes, Puebloan dwelling in the cliffs of New Mexico, refugees in caves of Vietnam, Holocaust survivors of the gypsum caves of the Ukraine, Himalayans in caves of Nepal and the list goes on. Cultures across the globe have relied on caves for their very survival and many still do so today. Beyond a means of historical significance in shelter, rituals, and survival caves may be more so known as a natural resource.

Many of the early mines were caves for resources such as limestone, gypsum, granite, guano, crystal mines like that of Niaca and so forth. Some of the darkest times in history led to scarcity of natural resources where gun powder was needed. Salt peter was one of the ingredients sought after to make gunpowder. Caves such as Mammoth, Kingston, Green Sulphur Salt Peter, Haynes, and even Tawynes show evidence of salt peter mining. Many a cave will present a interesting formation or gem for the vigilant eye.

Whether it be the gypsum clusters in Clover Hollow, the moon pools of rimstone in Starnes, anthracite of Cox Ridge, or hydromagnesite balloons of Lechuguilla every cave has its geologic wonders for the eager eye. Even the well traversed caves have their calcium carbonate spires of flowstone, stalagmites rising from the floor, stalactites piercing from the ceiling, columns from the joining of stalagmites and stalactites. Often forming a choke of challenging yet mesmerizing cave mazes. Nothing quite like hundreds of thousands of years in nature's lab to the delight of a geologist or chemist. Here the wonders of nature and the life giving element water come together to form a paradise.

It is in this paradise many a creature calls home. At the top of the food chain perhaps the first thought to pop into a novices mind is bats. Coming in many species bats are often thought of as a dangerous vector but this common misconception is far from deserved. While there are vampire bats not all bats are viscous blood sucking disease infested migrants that Hollywood would have us believe. No these gentle nocturnal prowlers are without a doubt the exterminators of the true vectors of many diseases, the mosquito. One bat can feed on thousands of insects each night from hunt utilizing echolocation. Some bats aren't even insectivorous but rather herbivores searching for fruit. Some still are nectar feeders and thus pollinators for flowers, chiropterophily, such as Agave. Most caves are also homes to crickets, spiders, salamanders, millipedes, Amblyopsidae (cave fish), copepods, macroinvertebrates, cave swallows, and in some cases even glow worms!

Not to worry if you are not a fan of the creepy crawlers not all caves are teaming with biota. Caves can be an art not just from the geologic crystalline structures but also from honing of underground streams. Many a cave will have varying degrees of texture and composition. So behold an artist's landscape below the surface where only a select few dare venture. Painter, potter, sculpture, or drawer there is something for everyone. Inspiration abound...away we go to explore!

For many a caver half the excitement is getting underground and exploring a new place. Often-times the search for that overlooked passageway that leads to a new discovery. If just to push a little further a discovery awaits at times running on pure adrenaline. Ah the prospects of being the first to find passage to link two caves, a better route, or even a undiscovered cave. Perhaps even the chance to have your name in the annals of history forever remembered as the one who discovered what was thought not to exist.

Recorded in the surveys used by the multitude of the caving community such adventures stand resolute. Compass, tape, clinometer, sketch book, ruler, marker...let's go and record a adventure. Not only will this guide be recorded but many a caver will be prevented from losing his/her way. A point is marked, compass and incline taken tape pulled to the next set station. Subsequent stations set and read from one another as the lead tape yells "on station" to the instrument reader while the sketcher etches a detailed schematic layout of what seems an endless void in the dark.

It is in these moments of silence one can come closest to inner peace. Sit down, turn off your lights, and listen. Other than the rush of a stream or the trickle of water what do you hear? Nothing! Few places on earth grant such luxury of total silence.

A place to get reacquainted with one's self and collect ones thoughts. Caves can factor into ones psyche quickly if allowed. Sometimes in not so positive a manner for those who are prone to phobic tendencies. Good news is it's just a matter of mind over matter in most cases. The will to push forward and achieve new goals is a powerful motivator as is survival.

Caving is an adventure that takes stamina, determination, skill, and the ability to overcome obstacles. Many a caver is on the trip for excitement of pushing the body to the next level. Later to find out they have toned muscles they normally wouldn't have given second thought to. Caving gives a excellent physical and even mental workout unlike any other. Whether horizontal or vertical anyone who does much caving will be quick to be the student. Skill sets are learned along the way many of which will make good use of physics to make the trip more enjoyable. Whether in search for facts or just sporting through, these abilities, which can be attained through practice, will serve one well.

Of course, caving is not something done alone and is perhaps one of the best things about it. Caving lends to the opportunity to meet new people and make new friends.



Whether these cavers be from grottos or individuals many great friendships can be forged participating in the joys of caving. Before you know it you are part of a second family and all the better for it! Plus caves seem to have all those wonderful sexual monikers, for both sexes and all those in between, for the added humorous entertainment.

So when someone asks why do you cave or why should I cave? I could say a number of things which are all true and valid. Instead I just say I cave to live! Nothing like the joy of a caver's life. except maybe a cavers wife ha ha.

Dry Cave: A WVACs Saga

By: Nick Socky

I vividly remember my first adventure into Dry Cave. First off, as most people know Dry Cave is not in any way shape or form "dry". I sometimes use the phrase like "Smokehole on Steroids" or "you're going to want a wet suit or a waffle suit" to describe Dry. This cave located in West Virginia, about 30 min drive from WVACs, and is by far one of the most fun, epic, exhausting, cold, wet, and beautiful caves I have ever been to. It was work weekend in February and the temperature outside was barely just above freezing. I luckily was wearing my membrane waffle suit or as my caving companions renamed "dragon suit" so I was prepared and not too worried about getting cold. Even then though, it proved to be a freezing trip. The trip consisted of Rebecca Stewart, Joe Calderone, Greg Springer, and me. If I recall correctly we entered the cave a little bit before noon after crossing (the frigid and chest deep in places) Anthony Creek twice. So we entered the cave and instantly began the crawl which includes going through the very comfortable "Williams Wiggle". From the 100 to 200 feet entrance crawl series, you open up into the downstream sump room. From here you enter the water immediately and depending on the weather over the past few weeks, the water can be either ankle deep or nearly waist deep.



This time it was only thigh deep. We started upstream trudge which includes 2 or 3 duckunders which involve getting your belly wet, and a few upper dry bypasses which were quite pleasant. Greg was leading us to a survey before the blow-hole gallery in some of the upper levels.

We got to the turn off and started heading up dip. We finally got to our survey and we finished a loop in some of the sketches breakdown and flakey rock ceiling that I have been in. We then headed back down stream and killed off at least 2 or 3 leads, found a potential dig with animal activity which we dug on for a bit, and then finally headed back out of the cave. On this trip we surveyed around 100 feet of passage on a 9 hour trip.



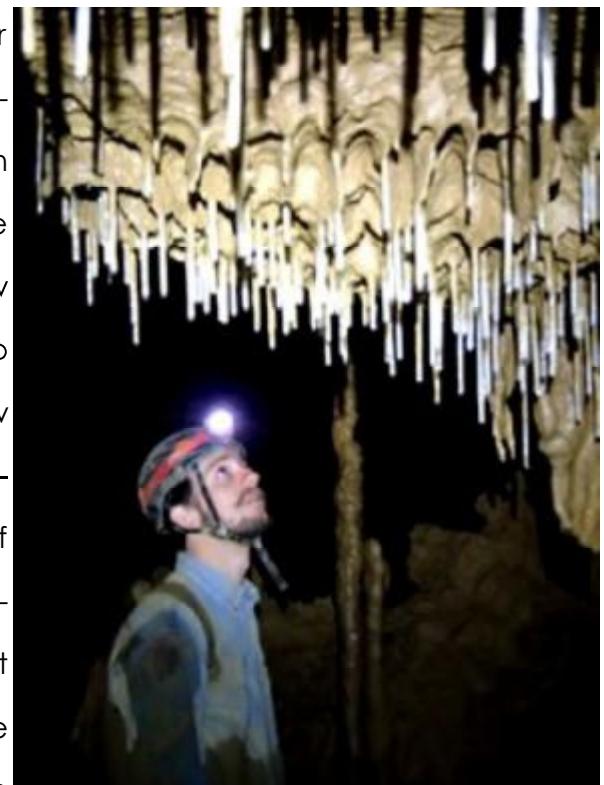
But the fun wasn't over. We had forgotten about Anthony Creek and the temperatures outside had dropped to an uncomfortable 24 degrees. Rebecca was not at all amused by this as Greg smirked and said, "Stop your whining. It was 12 degrees outside last month when I did this." Greg suffers from a caving condition called PTAD (Post-Trip Amnesia Disorder). So we all move through the hypothermic water as quickly as possible, run to the cars, and then start the hours long warming back up process. I remember that entire week I still got cold chills in class from being that cold for that amount of time. And worst of all, Rebecca, Joe and I all caught PTAD because this was not our last trip to Dry Cave.

I have thus far then returned to Dry Cave now for a total of 4 trips, 35.5 hours, and 1252.08 Ft of surveyed passage. My second trip to Dry Cave (2 months later in April) consisted of me, Vanessa Krabacher, and Joe Calderone. It was the same tedious entrance series crawl followed by the endless 1 mile march to dig we had left where we saw the animal tracks and



scat. We dug for several hours and broke into the upper potential lead only to be stumped by stone on stone and no way to keep digging. This was also a 6.5 hour trip, but luckily we had rigged the upper hill and belayed down to the cave instead of crossing Anthony Creek. It was still a little bit chilly outside.

My third Dry Cave Trip took place again later that year only two months later, in June 2013. It consisted of Mae Kile, Adam Byrd, Tommy Polson, Sarah Crowder, and me. On my previous two trips to the cave, we had killed all of the leads before the "Blow Hole" and it was time to venture even deeper into the cave. It is worth mentioning, just before the Blow Hole is the "Blow Hole Gallery" which is a highly decorated rim stone pool area. I have included pictures of course in this saga. So it being June, and with me remembering Anthony Creek, I decided the brilliant idea of bringing floats with us to the cave entrance and then floating back down to the cars on a late relaxing evening float trip after the cave. We stashed the floats near the entrance and began our way again up the 1 mile upstream march again. Every bend in the stream passage and even the air and water flow shaped formations were started to become recognizable. The thrill, yet apathetic feeling of returning this cave again was beginning to get to real. We got to the Blow hole in about 2 hours, and began our decent down it. It is a very tight narrow little hole which blows frigid air at you constantly.



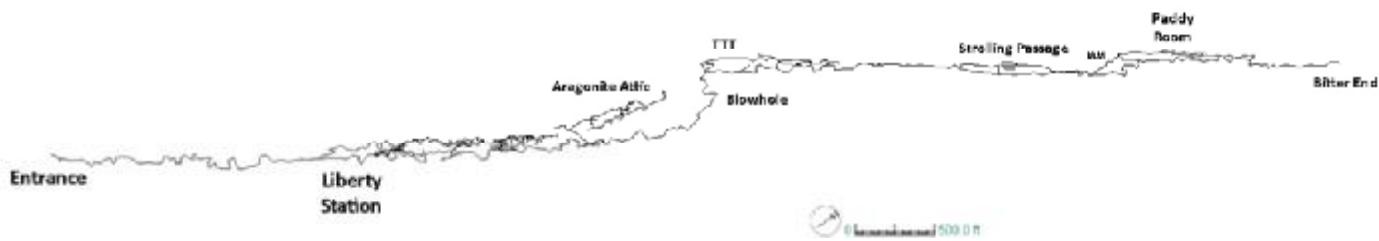
It was defiantly more of a bitch getting back up though. And so, we all climbed down and BOOM! There are just millions of formations everywhere, most sparkling white and pristine. We carefully make our way to several of our leads and kill them off quickly. Sarah and Mae then began to get cold, and so we decided to exit the cave yet again for about a 7 hour trip. The float trip was quite delightful back to the cars as well.

And thus comes my most recent, and most rewarding, trip into Dry yet! My 4th trip, in July of 2013 consisted of me, Greg Springer, and Rebecca Stewart. Matt Skowronski, Joe Calderone, and Tommy Polson were another crew, who was going to be pushing the "Bitter End" at the very back of the breakdown stream in the cave. So again, we cross Anthony Creek, climb, crawl, stoop walk for 1 mile, climb, duck under, climb, blow hole, and finally we are back to the beautiful upper end of Dry. Rebecca, Greg and I, get to our first upper level lead after about another hour or so of caving and again BOOM! We find literally 1152.2 feet of surveyed passage. Sadly one single set of foot prints from a lone scooper was already in the passage so it was not virgin cave. However it was giant booming borehole with a very high ceiling, and completely flat floors! Our longest shot as about 93 feet (Distos are fun). We finish up and then head out of the cave for a good 13 hour trip. We were very satisfied and happy with our selves. The other crew had also found some passage but it was nasty, high canyon, crumbly wall passage. They also still have not found a way around "The Bitter End".

And so that is where I leave my story of Dry Cave for now. The cave is at a current length of 4.69 miles long and a depth of 205 feet deep. I defiantly plan on returning to the cave in the near future and continue the hunt for more leads near the back of the cave. The air flow is good, and that water has to come from somewhere! Thank you Greg Springer for the line plot.

Dry Cave, WV

4.69 miles long
205 feet deep



Maze Cave Trip Recap

By Andrew Lycas

As somebody new to caving, I had been curious about if caves were mapped, then how they were mapped, and when they were mapped. A survey trip was brought up to be led by Nick Socky to Maze cave. Not knowing anything about maze cave or surveying, but having the day free, I, along with Nick, Amy Skowronski, Alice Jaworski, Peter Southworth, and Jennifer Wagner met up the next morning and headed off to maze cave.

After driving south on 81 for roughly a half hour into Pulaski county, and a two second drive off an exit, we parked on the side of the road and met Don Anderson who was waiting for us. He gave the group the rundown of some of the history of the cave, his trips to survey, and the current state of the cave entrance and land owners. Geared up and jobs assigned, we headed off to the entrance, which with Don's help was not difficult to find.

Due to most people either doing a new survey job, or being on their first survey trip, there was a quick lesson for the instrument people (Peter and myself), the lead tape (Amy and Alice), and the sketchers (Nick and Jennifer). It was decided to double up on surveying until the path split to give people the chance to confer with each other what they were doing. Ready to go we started surveying.

Not even past the first station, we hit our first road block, instruments not being read correctly. After learning the importance of the placement of the instruments when reading them, we got readings that were close enough for us to move on.

The cave starts with a rocky slope in for about 20 ft opening to a wider room where a tight path went to the right, and a much wider path went onward and to the left.

This room made a great place to sit and wait for the sketchers. Here the group came across two small brown bats on the ceiling.



Peter Southworth entering the cave



Jennifer Wagner Sketching

It was decided to continue as a group of six instead of splitting up and to take the larger path to the left. It was obvious this was not going to be the last time that we were going to be surveying this cave, so Amy was assured she'd get to explore the more interesting tight passage on the right.

The cave continued in a fairly easy path, with Amy tying the lead tape, myself providing the forward sights, Peter the back, Nick and Jennifer sketching, and Alice providing support to the sketchers. This section was full of small talk, getting comfortable sitting in caves, and at least on my end finding more and more comfortable ways to read the instruments. A hand held flashlight turned out to be the best tool I had in my bag for this trip.

Around station 9 or 10, Amy apologized for the placement of the station. All the instrument readers got their chance to be in this uncomfortable place. With about a foot between the floor and roof, it had the best visibility to

future and past stations, but was just a pain to get an accurate reading from. It was around here that Jennifer, being thoroughly done with sketching, passed the honor off to Alice, and took over the back sight instrument readings from Peter.

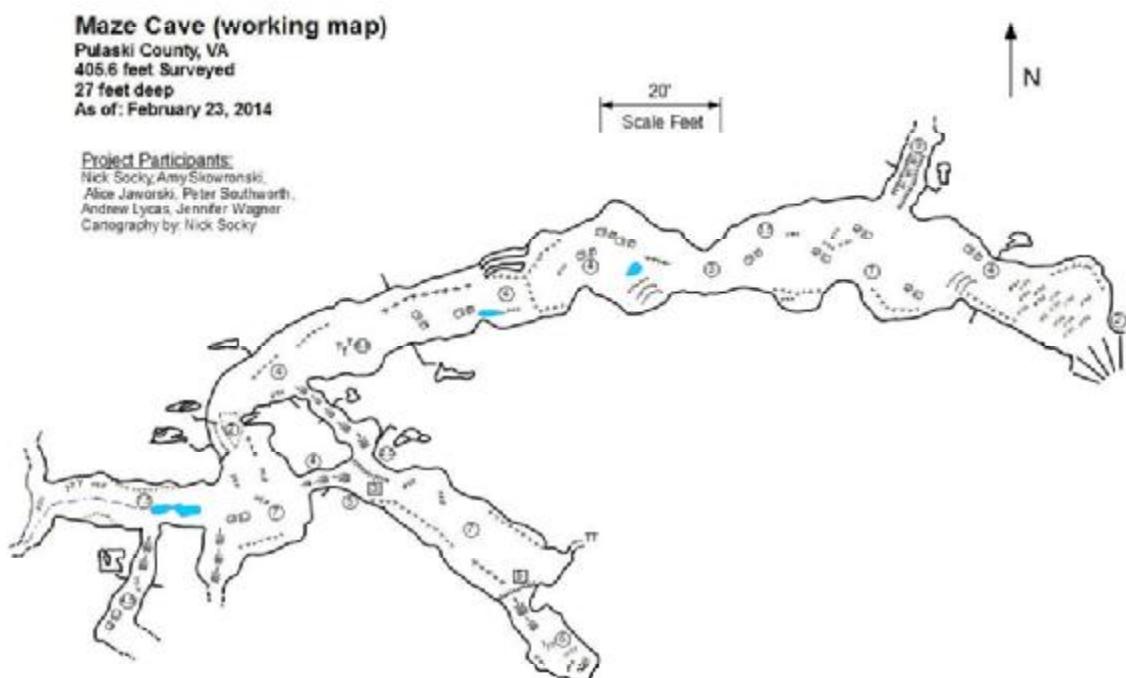
The next station was placed at the first tight crawly squeeze of the trip. Unknown to me there was another path to station 10, but we'd get to that later. Crawling up the small passage lead into a taller room, which provided many seats for us to sit, while the sketchers got the details of the curves of the squeeze and the shelves in the room.

Up at roughly head level there was another small room, which needed scurrying up a very steep muddy path. Up there the path ended, in a roughly 15 ft x 6 ft x 6 ft room. We must have been close to the surface, as short segments of tree roots that were visible on the roof.

With that room mapped, we moved on, down another tight section to a larger room (near the far left of the map). This opened up to multiple paths, forward, and another path that Amy and Peter had found lead back to previously explored section of the cave. With this mapped, it was time for a quick break. Here Amy left us, and the group decided to do a couple more stations before calling it quits.

Back in the room of many paths, and after some slight discussion we decided to go for the longest measurement of the day, more than 25 ft. Even after Peter and Jennifer had walked to the end of the path, it wasn't until Nick went down the path was it discovered that there was another offshoot off this main run. The long path was sketched in, but the station was not completely registered. We then shortened our measure to the entrance of this new path, and took this 2 ft wide passage up roughly 15 ft.

The stream of small talk continued while the sketchers did their work, and after 4+ hours underground, it was decided to call it quits for this first cave re survey. It was spectacular how quick the walk/crawl back was. Amy met us at the entrance, and we headed back to Blacksburg. After being logged into a computer by Nick, we had surveyed over 400 ft, and my first survey trip now has a map that I can point to and say I helped with that.



The Saga of Sergeants
By Amy Skowronski

It was raining when we pulled up to the barn where we were expected to park. So, not unlike Coco Chanel, we fashioned a very haute couture piece that we called the Trash Bag Burqa, which can be worn to stay dry when you need to hike twenty minutes in the rain to get to your cave. This is worn because being wet and cold and miserable when you enter the cave will make the cave jealous since its job will have already been done. Be extra careful when walking in the burqa – your arms are inside the bag holding your pack so if you trip and fall, you will seriously eat it since you are top-heavy. Also, be wary of diverging from the trail in an attempt to get to the cave faster. It's common knowledge that as soon as a caver ventures into the woods, friendly and thoughtful prickle bushes will sprout immediately to help catch them if they tumble downslope. If you choose to go off-trail whilst wearing the burqa, beware of the fate that may befall you.

A few feet into the entrance there were bones. No doubt they were there to serve as a warning for the passage that had yet to present itself. When the Fearless Leader Wil says that the lead he found has a little bit of a popcorn crawl that's really not so bad, be leery - he's being misleading. Despite this, go to his lead because it could be well worth the trouble. In this particular case, it was.

We found the survey station we were supposed to work from and the profanity began immediately. After we got through a couple of climb-downs with surprisingly little trouble, we patted ourselves on the back. It was quickly apparent that we had congratulated ourselves far too soon, because here began the dreaded crawl. The passage led us to a room with a small (tiny) canyon to the left that was composed entirely of popcorn on both sides with little ledges jutting out erratically at random angles. It seemed as though these protrusions of rock were very purposefully placed to prevent humans from ever entering this part of the cave, but we powered through and continued the survey. If you ever find yourself in this sort of situation, I offer you my sympathies. But as you press your face against a wall of popcorn and contort your body to fit a tight and awkward canyon while you try to



read instruments, remind yourself that you are doing this for fun. Swearing with reckless abandon at the previously unnoticed rocks that jab you in the ribs is highly and greatly encouraged.

We were very excited when it opened up big enough to sit up all the way. Upon explaining this to coworkers who still ask if it's "spelunking" and watching the look of horror on their faces I have come to the conclusion that feeling relief and joy at being able to sit upright is not normal.

After much discomfort and many creative combinations of obscenities, the crawl opened into a little room which slanted downward, the ceiling and floor progressively getting closer to each other until the only space left was a tiny hole that was blowing air. Unfortunately none of us were mutants, so we were unable to Hulk Smash our way through. All we had with us was a shovel, so shovel we did. You'll need a way to pass the time during the dig since only one person at a time can get close to the pinch and still be able to move. One way to do this is to rewrite lyrics of Disney songs to make them caving oriented [see page 48] although



there's really no need to rewrite Heigh Ho from Snow White. Allow the slightly crazed laughter that results from inhaling excessive amounts of dirt to run rampant. This is important because, as everyone knows, if you hold in The Sillies for too long, brain goo will drip out of your ears. A few hours later you'll find that the pinch is a little bigger, but still requires the prowess of hammers and crowbars, so turn yourself around and drag yourself back through the Canyon of Doom (which is now on an uphill slope), exit the cave, walk into the nighttime where it's snowing sideways, and trek back to the car.

Wake up the next morning and realize how battered you are and appreciate how artistically the passage tie-dyed your body with curious little bruises. Perhaps take a moment to imagine an alternate universe where you don't bruise ridiculously easily.

When you arrive back at the pinch the next day to continue the dig, be careful. Swinging hammers around in confined spaces is dangerous, and produces an uprising of silt that is impressive. You can close your eyes but you can't close your nose, so the combination of digging through fine, dry dirt and blowing wind (that only increased the more we dug) resulted in the most monumental cave boogers I've ever experienced. If you would like to have this same experience, I expect that setting up a line of dust and snorting it through a straw would produce a similar effect.

Eventually, the pinch broke open and led us to... a ton of passage! More than four hundred feet, it turned out. After digging and surveying and completely wiping ourselves out (perhaps you, dear reader, have done this as well) we heaved our weary bodies back to the entrance, completely exhausted. If you happen to do this to yourself, there is a possibility that you will be so tired after your trip that when you drop a glove you'll just stand there staring at it, thinking about how you could just leave it until you concede to yourself that you really ought to get it back. Take a minute to mentally prepare yourself for the effort it will take to reach down and pick it up. You are permitted to groan like someone with hip dysplasia trying to sit down.

Now go back to the cabin and regale everyone there with all of your exciting stories and pretend that you can, in fact, feel your legs and that your muscles are definitely not made of jelly.

Cave On
By Nick Socky

Parody of Frozen's: Let it Go, as performed by Idina Menzel.

My light glows dim in the dark today,
Not a foot print to be seen
A passage of isolation
And it's not even very clean

The waters moving from that in-feeder at the side
Couldn't cave it all, heaven knows I tried

Don't go down there, why can't you see
The only one who can fit is me
Front-sights, back-sights, don't scoop it all
Survey that wall

Cave on, Cave on
Can't dig it out any more
Cave on, Cave on
Tomorrow I will be sore

I don't care if I miss sign out
Let this cave go on
The dark never bothered me anyway

It's funny how a giant borehole,
Makes the surface world seem small
And the canyons that once alarmed me
Don't frighten me at all

It's time to see what I can do
To push my limits and break through
I push, I crawl, too tight for me?
Nope, I'm free

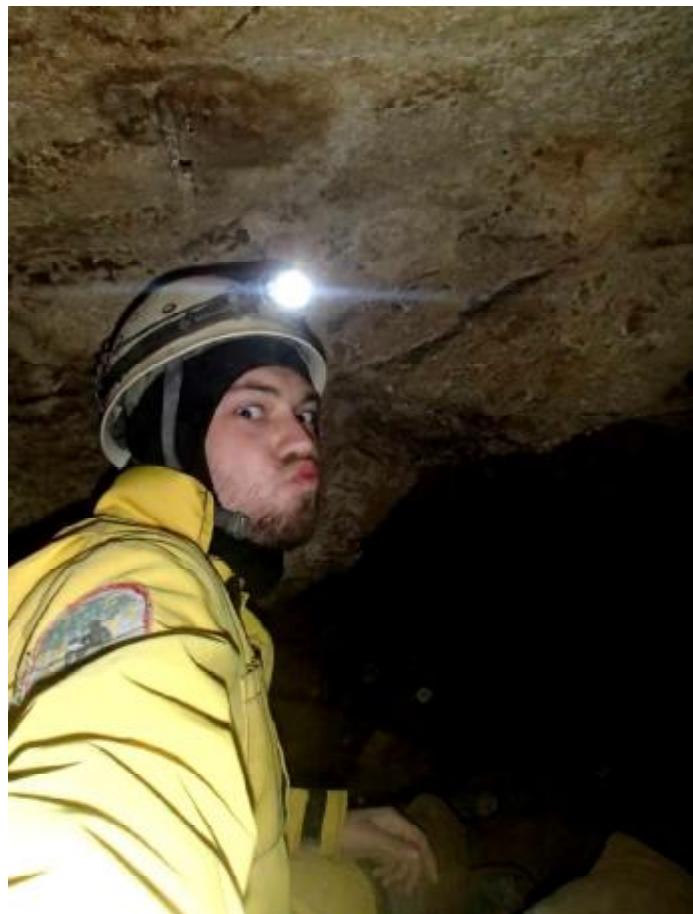
Cave on, Cave on
I am one with the mud and stone
Cave on, Cave on
But I will never cave alone

Here I crawl
And Here I'll stay
Let this cave go on

The calcite sparkles from the wall into the ground
The cave is spiraling into mazing passage all around
The giant water fall is like a chilly blast
I'm never climbing out,
I want this cave to last

Cave on, Cave on
I'll cave until the break of dawn
Cave on, Cave on
My sketch is nearly drawn

Here I crawl
Through the mud and clay
Let this cave go on
The dark never bothered me anyway.



Find That Cave by Eric Combs

I B D	O U B
V D S O X S	O R T D E E
Z R S S F W H S M	L G E C S A A H C
K O F E R N D Z K	E Y T O O B C T Q
S N A I L S H E L L	K P L C X N S O O R
F R Y C U I A M N X	V A M E R D L N M D
V J R K R E K A N O H	P Z H F L I O R Z M C
K M B U D D Y P E N L E Y C W M D O A N A N	O M E G A H S B R J W R S O H G N C B M
H M F I S K C I Y R R L K E G	
E A E L A I E E L	
R N E L B L A S B H O S Q	
P R L O U L G L R W S H W E X	
F I A O H R A Z O L S E U G M B M F Q	
V V T H S N H K P H I U N L N N O L A M F	
I S G R V L S L M E U P Q S I O O L P J E	
W E I A A A C S P U L G B Q P R R S E X L R G	
F P I L V X E X D O U U G P M J W S I N E	
E R L A X N D H G H H C I S A J D E N J J	
F E V R Y X E I E C K I N G L N K K G	
Y B E A K D Z K E E F E A A S G D	
N H Z D V O L Y L C B Y L	
B F F M A E D W A	
S R F	
D R Y	

BANES	LINKS	HAYNES	STARNES
BEACON	MAMMOTH	HONAKER	VALHALLA
BOWDEN	NEWBERRY	JAMES	WILBURNVALLEY
BUCKEYE	NORMAN	LECHUGUILA	YER
BUDDYPENLEY	OMEGA		
CALDWELL	PIGHOLE		
CARLSBAD	SLUSHERSCHAPEL		
COXRIDGE	SMOKEHOLE		
DRY	SNAILSHELL		
FERN	SONDOONG		
FRIARSHOLE	SPRINGHOLLOW		

Knots by Eric Combs

ALPINE BUTTERFLY

BIGHT

BOWLINE

COIL

FIGURE EIGHT

FIGURENINE

HELICAL

HITCH

MULTI

MUNTERHITCH

OVERHAND

PRUSIK

SQUARE

WATER

An Interview with Thailand Celebrity

Matt Skowronski

By Courtney Trost

Q: What is the best part of Thailand?

A: Everyone there is so interesting. Thai people are super cool and the travelers have been traveling.

Q: What is the worst part of Thailand?

A: For me, my job. In general, nothing is free. You have to pay for water.

Q: What is Thailand beer like?

A: There are 5 beers. For are the equivalent of PBR but at 6% alcohol. 1 is called Peerlau Dark which is almost a real beer.

Q: What is Thailand liquor like?

A: There is tons. Sangsong is the cheap liquor and you can also buy Johnny Walker blue label and black label at the 7-11. They have 7-11's everywhere.

Q: What are Thailand caves like?

A: They've got them. They're hot (62-65 degrees F). They're weirdly similar to Virginia caves except some are monk retreats and have platforms for meditating. Also they have spiders as big as your open hand.

Q: Are there grottos?

A: No, there aren't really organized caving groups. People just go sometimes.

Q: Anything else that is interesting?

A: All of Thailand geographical data is online as is all data for cave entrances. Also Thai people think white skin is really beautiful. They have a very traditional view of women's roles so if you are halfway decent to women they throw themselves at you.

Q: So you've gotten laid a lot?

A: No.

Q: What is your biggest take away from the experience?

A: If you get the opportunity to live abroad, not just travel abroad, you should do it because it will kick your ass but it's totally worth it.



Rope Friends Conquer El Cap

By Robert Harris

I have a bad fear of heights. I get a sickness in my stomach and I am overcome with the emotion of dread. That is what I felt on my first vertical cave trip with VPI members John Bowling and Alex Booker in 2010. While on rope climbing out, I promised myself that my curiosity was satisfied, and I'd had enough. If I ever got out alive, I would never get back on rope again. It only took me a few months to forget how bad it was and to join my local NSS grotto in NC, the Triangle Troglodytes. I wanted to learn what I'd done wrong, how to be better on rope, and how to conquer my fears.



Rob, Alex, and Deigan in Yosemite Valley

Preparation

This trip report isn't so much about caving as it is about cavers using caving skills – specifically, Single Rope Technique (SRT) extended to extreme height. This last summer VPI cavers John Deighan, Alex Booker, and I decided to join the VBATS™ rappel team organized by our friend TinY Make to rappel El Capitan Mountain in Yosemite National Park. It seemed like a natural evolution to rappel off of the highest (open) free rappel in the world. Mount Thor in Canada is closed due to rappeler death. The past three years I had spent gaining experience by rappelling and climbing increasingly higher drops: Guaguas (700 ft), White-sides (700 ft), Bridge Day (800 ft), and Golondrinas (1200 ft), but there was still quite a jump up to 2650 ft at El Cap. I have found that I can get used to heights, but the fear creeps back during my normal life on flatland. Pushing my fear to extremes seems to make lesser drops feel relatively less terrifying, at least to some extent. The fact is that El Cap is so high, the distance does not register. It's like looking out of an airplane.

Rappelling El Cap requires an extra-long 24" rack with eight bars to be able to deal with the over 70 lbs of rope weight tension at the top. Our own Steve Wells was nice enough to loan me his El Cap-proven rack to use, which he supplemented with all the El Cap tips and stories I needed to really put me on edge. When all was said and done, I liked the rack so much I bought my own. More bars and smaller bends in the rope prevent the longer rack from accumulating as much heat as a shorter rack. Every year for the VPI Mexico trip I trained by swimming and climbing rope. TinY informed us that whatever shape we were in, we needed to be in better, and that Yosemite would kick our butts. I trained until I was able to perform a paced climb over 700 ft without resting, and able to swim 1.2 km before a break. I would climb 2,600 ft in an evening with my training partner Peter Hertl, who holds the El Cap climbing record at 67:03.

Climbing into Space

Our VBATS team required one week to rig, support rappelers, and derig. Everyday tasks were assigned to each member, but luckily we still got plenty of time to see the park and hike many of the trails. Alex climbed first around sunset with our new friend Heleman. Deighan and I got our last meal in then started our tandem climb sometime around midnight. The climb out of the darkness of the valley up into the star-filled sky was beautiful. As the moon set, the moonlight swept across the valley helping to hide the height that I feared, but I knew it was still there, even when my eyes were closed. Stars filled the dome of our vision. Deighan and I never saw the same shooting star, but we each saw at least eight. It was like climbing up into space. Rock climbers were (insanely) camped out on a few portaledges midway up El Cap. Lights at the climber camps that started high above us sunk until they were far below as we climbed unimaginably higher. It was possible to communicate with other lights on the face of the wall and even people off in the valley by waving or flashing lights to say hello. We mainly climbed quietly with our lights off; if you have enough breath to speak, you have enough breath to keep climbing. The goal of the climb was the “diving board” where they put out red and green glow lights for us, so we could see the edge, like an airplane in the distance. These two lights never seemed to get closer as we climbed. Deighan worried that he might fall asleep while climbing because it was past his bedtime. I tried not to look up to see how far they were because it seemed like it would be disheartening to see how much of the impossible climb was left. “We’re at the lights, Deighan...” “It’s *about* time!” I radioed the top, and team member Brian Stoltz woke up to help us off rope and show us where the camp was. One interesting sensation on the climb was that I drank 2 L of Gatorade from my camelback, yet I had no need to go to the bathroom before bed. With the dry air and altitude, without even getting sweaty, somehow 2L evaporated from my body. I felt strange after that climb. I think it was the hardest thing I’ve ever done athletically. Having never seen the top of El Cap before, finding a tent to sleep in up there in the dark was interesting. It is the most “primo” camp site in the world, according to Peter.



Our 3,000 ft rope hangs off El Cap



Alex Booker begins his rappel

The Descent

In the morning, we prepared for our descent. Deighan served as edge attendant to put us on rope and send us over. It takes a small support team to get over comfortably. Two or three people must pull up on a haul line though a 3:1 pulley system which is attached to the main line by an upside down handled ascender. This enables the rappeller to get over the edge and rappel down to the ascender. The correct number of bars are applied while jamming the rest. Both hands can be safely removed from the rack at this point to remove the ascender and reattach it above the rack. The bars can then be spread all the way out to start moving down the rope for a 2630 ft rappel.

I feel better when I am going down, and I like going down fast. I like to feel the wind in my face from my downward descent. Rappelling in a cave like Golandrinis is interesting because the air is perfectly still. You can judge your speed by the wind on your face and the pressure popping your ears. Hanging off the side of El Cap, it's nice to stop to take in one of the best views in the world while participating in *almost* the only sport that allows it. A rock climber's view would be close to this, but not so quickly changing. Climbing the big wall seems insane, but it is rock climbers who think we are the crazy ones! At the bottom, on belay for hours, many rock climbers pass by to chat and try to figure out what we are doing. "Jugging all the way to the top? That's something else!"

On long rappels, the rope must go between one's legs, not over the side of the hip as is possible on shorter drops (under 400 ft). The weight of the rope makes it feel stiff and hard like a metal cable. It is just not possible over the hip, there is too much contact with the body and it is uncomfortable. Some people use only the break bars on the rack to control speed, whereas others split the friction between the bars and their gloved hand. At heights above 800 ft nudging the rope out with one's boot has a noticeable impact on speed. Not only because of the increased friction, but also because of the change of rope contact angle on the bottom bar. On a descent I will control speed mainly by the bars, but also by squeezing the rope, pulling down on the rope, and also pulling the rope up into a J over my rack to stop at the bottom. Pulling down on the rope increases tension applied to the bars the same way that added rope weight does. I recommend (new-ish) heavy reinforced Petzl or PMI rappel gloves for long rappels. The fingers always tend to get thin first. The heat transferred through the gloves can be intense, depending on speed, which requires slowly repositioning areas of contact. Or one could rely on the rack more, or slow things down. There are many variations to play with, which is one reason why rappelling is so much fun. Operating a rack in a sense can feel like driving a sports car.

After our first rap, and putting in our time to belay and act as bottom side support for our team, we hiked up the back side of El Cap for our second rappel. The hike from the Yosemite Creek camp to the summit and edge top camp of El Cap was one of the highlights of the trip. The hike includes twelve miles of fantastically changing climates and altitudes. We crossed landscapes as varied as barren tortured rocks, lush temperate forests of giant prehistoric ponderosas, sandy beaches along a river, grassy meadows, and finally wind whipped searing granite desert. Dizzying heights and hundreds of feet of waterfalls even the hike out. After another night at Top Camp, derigging, and packing up the entire camp into large duffle bags began. Everything that went up, had to come back down, attached to rappellers. We each made it down the 2650 ft one last time, with 50 – 100 lbs of gear attached to our D-rings. The added weigh required a bit more care, more bars depending on bottom belay, and slower times. After we were all on the bottom, minus a few who would hike out, the main line was lowered on paracord. We were able to use mules to haul all of the rope to the top previously. The mountains of rope were quickly paid out and stuffed into three large bags. With teamwork, the derig process was surprisingly quick, but also it made the derig of any other drop or cave look very easy.



Climbers on the famous Texas Flake

Unwinding

For a week after Yosemite, we were able to stay with VPI alumni John Bowling and Julie Booker. In addition to seeing all of Yosemite Valley and Hetch Hatchy, the five of us were able to squeeze even more national parks into the week: Kings Canyon, Sequoia, and Pinnacles National Parks. In Pinnacles, we visited Bear Gulch Talus Cave, which is a large bat hibernaculum. It's always fun to visit with cavers in different grottos, so we were able to make it to a grotto meeting and party with the San Joaquin Valley Grotto near Fresno, CA. The meeting was at a local caver's ranch which had defunct exploratory gold mines on the property, which we were able to explore. I thought of my El Cap adventure as a once in a lifetime kind of event, but now it seems like just the kind of trip I might like to make every three years – which is exactly what VBATS does. Get trained up if you are interested!



(Most of) the VBATS Team on El Cap



John, Julie, and friends at Sequoia Nat Park

Cave Documentation

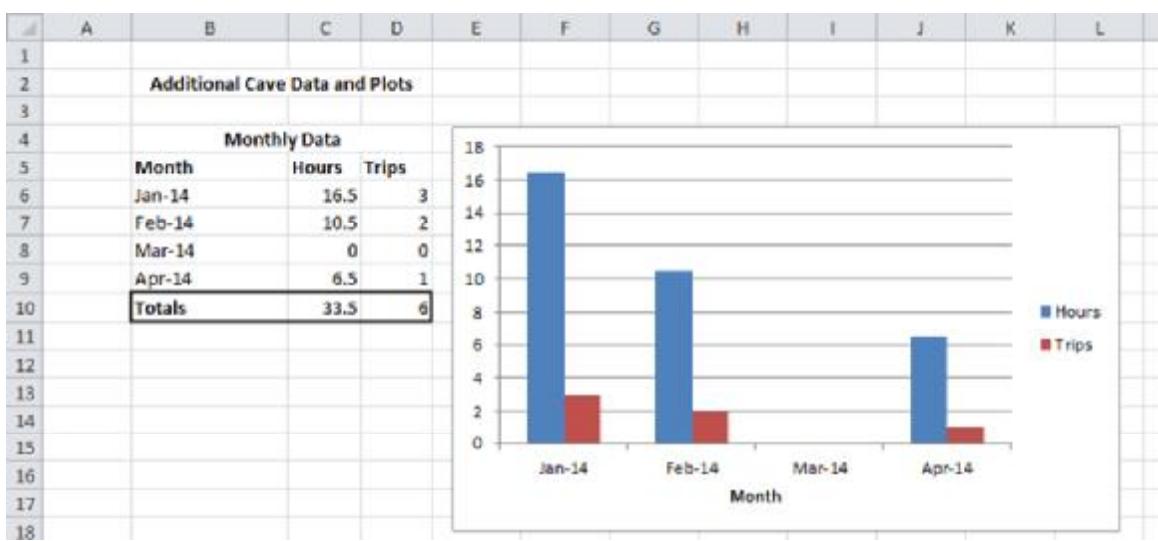
By Nick Socky

In order to get your membership with the VPI Cave Club, one of the requirements is to remain a prospective member for at least 10 weeks during which time/he/she/it must spend at least 40 hours underground on at least 6 club trips. It seems that most of the prospective members seeking membership (even me when I was!) do a poor job of initial documentation of which caves they went to, with who, and for how long. I recall right before I was voted in, I spent several hours going through all the sign out sheets at sign out to see which trips I had been on, who was the leader/member on the trip, and how long I was caving for, and then running around all of Blacksburg trying to get the signatures for those trips! The simplest way to prevent this from happening is to just carry the cave trip sign off sheet with you to every cave you go to, and have a member sign you off on the trip once you get out of the cave. But some people may want to document further, and continue documenting as well! So below I have created a tutorial, with included examples of how to make a Cave Trip Data Base in Microsoft Excel, just like mine!

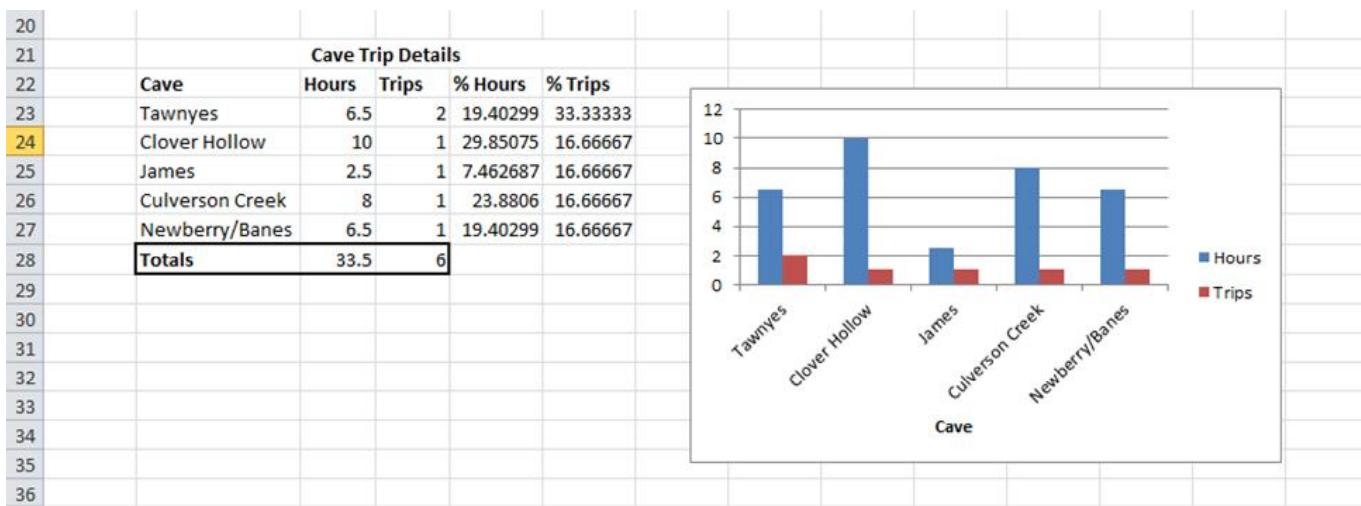
An image of the basic template is included below. This is the sheet 1 excel sheet. It includes the date you went caving, which cave you went to, who was on the trip, how long the trip was, which state and county the cave is in, number of bats you saw in the cave, and then lastly the trip quote and additional notes you wish to add about the cave. The only excel math needed here is simple. For the total hours, click cell D14, then up on the fx bar type in =SUM (D8:D13). This will calculate all the hours you have been underground. Then to set the same total in cell C4, click cell C4 and in the fx bar and enter =D14. This will link these two cells together to be equal. Now you can do the same exact process for the Bat Count: Click cell G14, and then type in the fx, =SUM (G8:G13), and then click C5 and enter into the fx, =G14. If you want to add a cave to the list and keep math, simply right click on row 14 and then click on insert. It should move all the totals down one row and allow you entire all the new data, keeping the math and adding to the summation. Lastly, you need to add the total trips. To do this, click on cell C4 and enter into the fx, =Sheet2! D28. This will call cell D28 from the second sheet. Next, I will show you how to do some more details cave documentation! To make it match up with cell C4 you need to follow exactly the same template below!

Below is the sample excel spread sheet from sheet 2 in the same excel document. Sheet 1 holds all of the other data discussed above. The first example image is a set of data for the monthly caving tracker. It tracks how long you were underground during that month, and how many trips you went on during that month too. Setting up the plots is the most complicat-

ed part so if you want to learn how, find a resource online or talk to someone who knows excel! Doing the Total hours and Trips is exactly the same way you do on



the first sheet. For calculating the hours and trips per month, I would recommend updating, or adding, the hours of a trip to that month directly after your cave trip as well as adding a trip to that month. The example is the detailed cave information. Generating the plot is very similar to generating the monthly caving plot as well. There is more math involved with this set though, but only if you wish to do it. For calculating the totals again, just do a summation of the preceding column of data above. To calculate the %hours, click cell E23 and in the fx bar type in: =C23/\$C\$28*100. This will then calculate the percentage of hours spent in Tawneys to the overall hours spent caving. The same thing can be done similarly for the trips



(F23=D23/\$D\$28*100). This can then be done for every single cave as well, by clicking on E23 (or F23) then moving the cursor to the bottom right corner of the cell until the cross arrow changes to a diagonal arrow, left click and drag down to row 27. The \$C\$28 uses the \$ symbol to keep that part of the equation exactly the same. So that's about it! You can of course add your data manipulation like trends, or if you are project caving, how many feet you survey along with bat and hour counts. My current spreadsheet as of March 31, 2014, and starting in September 2010, is 118 rows long, with 106 cave trips, 511 hours, 198 seen bats since December 19th, 2013, with a total of 41 different caves I have been to. I plan on to continue updating this after college and also find other various ways to play with my cave data. I hope this helps to inspire you in your caver nerd side! It's always just a good idea to document caving activities too.

How to organize a YTR of your very own! (You dumb bastard)

By John Echols



I sincerely hope each and every one of you had a blast at our joint Young Timers Reunion (YTR) and fall Virginia Regional event (VAR) this past September! Over 190 people showed up for the weekend event which was a caving and financial success. If you are interested in knowing how to organize a similar event in the future, curious about what goes on behind the scenes at caving events, or just want to laugh at my fuckups, then this article is for you!

Step 1: Inspiration or “We should do this all the time!”

Maybe you enjoyed the last VAR, TAG, or convention and you want to get involved in the next step. Maybe you had a by-chance gathering of cavers and want to recreate that atmosphere in a bigger setting.

Maybe you think you can make this year's YTR way better than that shit they put on last year. Regardless, you're ready to throw the best damn event in the history of caving. Awesome! Hold on to that enthusiasm and the rest of the process will go much smoother than if you don't.

Step 2: Planning or “Everything will come together pretty well on its own, right?”

It's pretty daunting when you realize everything that's actually required to successfully carry out even a small caving event. If you get to the planning phase and don't feel a little overwhelmed, you're probably doing it wrong. Here's a list of shit that needs to get done (in the best order I can figure) to actually put on these events.

Generate Interest

These events are not one-man operations. You're going to need help and lots of it. Advertise at the club meeting what you're doing and why it's going to be awesome. Enthusiasm is contagious.

Start having meetings every couple weeks so that those who are interested can input their ideas and suggestions. You'll probably end up with a small core of people who are just as excited as you are and want to be very involved. These ~~ids~~ people are the most important part of the planning process. Treat them like the heroes that they are.

Decide on a target attendance and pick a date.

Decide early on who you're catering to. The answer for this may simply be 'cavers!' but you need to know your audience so you can set a date that doesn't conflict with other major interests of that group. For example, you may be planning an event for students from different universities in the fall. It's useful to know that all football teams don't actually have the same bye week.

How many people are going to come to your event? Pick a target number that's low but have room for upward mobility. Here's a table which gives some useful stats from previous VARs:

	Attendees	Percent which preregistered
Max	341	78%
Min	57	42%
Average	219	56%
YTR/VAR	190	83%

Pick a location

Proximity to caves is the most important thing here. If you have to drive three hours to see some interesting caves, you're not throwing a caving event, you're throwing a campout. Pick a location which will fit the number of people you expect. Contact that location early to express interest. How do they feel about large numbers of muddy cavers? Are there showers? Do they have any relationships with food vendors? How do they feel about external (caving) vendors? Do they provide toilets or porta-johns? Do they provide event insurance? Do they have a stage area for events? Is having a bonfire a possibility? Is the location pet friendly? What's their relationship with the locals? This is not an exhaustive list, but you should think about these type of things.



Plan events

Do you plan to have led trips? If so, you should start making a list of caves and people you could ask to lead trips. When will registration open and close each day? Do you plan on providing meals? How about entertainment? Will non-cavers be in attendance? If so, make up a list of nearby attractions or activities. Geocaching is a great option which is available almost everywhere.

Budget and set a price

Repeat after me: "I am not trying to break even. This event is trying to make money." Financially, you need to be prepared for a worst case scenario. If things don't go as planned, you don't want to put the club, or worse, yourself, in the red. Make sure you know what costs easily scale by the number of people you have and which do not. Here's an approximate budget breakdown from this past YTR/VAR:

Porta-johns (6 @ \$75 each)	\$450
Camping Fee (200 @ \$10 each)	\$2,000
Dinner Fee (200 @ \$10 each)	\$2,000
Vegetarian Dinner	\$75
VAR Fee (120 @ \$5 each)	\$600
Band Cost	\$60
Nametags	\$75
Misc. Expenses	\$40
Total:	\$5,300

Set up registration

If you can find somebody web-savvy enough to set up an online registration system, you can greatly increase the number of preregistrations you get. Old farts tend to demand snail-mail registration options, so be prepared to send those out as well. Registration forms are a great way to advertise the event, so give a brief outline of the important and fun parts of your event.

Advertise

Did you think your event would be so awesome that word of mouth would be enough? Send out emails to every club listserv you know.

Advertise

Talk about your event at club meetings. See if you can get the registration form put in caving publications.

Advertise

I'm not fucking around here. Advertising is important. If nobody shows up, you're boned financially. Contact the NSS and ask them to advertise your event.

Revisit the budget

As if you hadn't been doing that every week for the past three months. Take a step back and ask for other opinions. Are you on track to make money (again, never be on track to break even)? Make sure you're not forgetting anything. Can you afford to buy that extra porta-john? If you think you'll have enough money to get beer or gas for volunteers or the band, don't promise it, just give it at/after the event when you have the money for sure. It's better to receive something you weren't expecting than to not get something you were promised.

The last two weeks or "Oh shit! The event is in two weeks!"

Make your last plea for volunteers and equipment. Go over the play-by-play to make sure things will go smoothly at your event. Advertise some more and try not to check the weather obsessively.

Step 4: Set Up or "That farmer probably won't notice his tractor's missing for an hour."

Arrive a day before the event if you can, and remember that setup is effectively the start of the event. It's a good idea to have reserve supplies on hand (first-aid kit, extra toilet paper, emergency bourbon). Maintain a good relationship with the land-owners and your volunteers. Communicate what you want clearly and err on the side of too much communication rather than too little. If at all possible, be the first one working and the last one to quit. Don't worry about those cows in the road, you totally weren't the ones that let them out.

Step 5: The Event or "Is everything working? That can't be right..."

Once the event is underway your job is basically crisis management. Be able to send yourself or a runner to get things you didn't think you needed, like hand sanitizer. When registration is closed, move your cashbox to a locked car. Don't ever leave money sitting around. Sadly, event funds have gone missing this way in the past. Set up a lost and found. By the way, if anybody is missing their GPS, send me a description!

Step 6: Aftercare or "Done! *drops mic*"

Make sure you pay all the people who need to be paid. Make damn sure you thank all the people you need to thank (this includes the people you just paid). Don't forget any other responsibilities like giving people address lists. Give those who helped the most a bottle of bourbon. Update this article so that you have something to go off when your dumb ass decides to do the same thing next year.



My Knot Collection By Kelly McCarthy

I was supposed to learn knots
To study for the test
So I figured why not
And perused them with zest

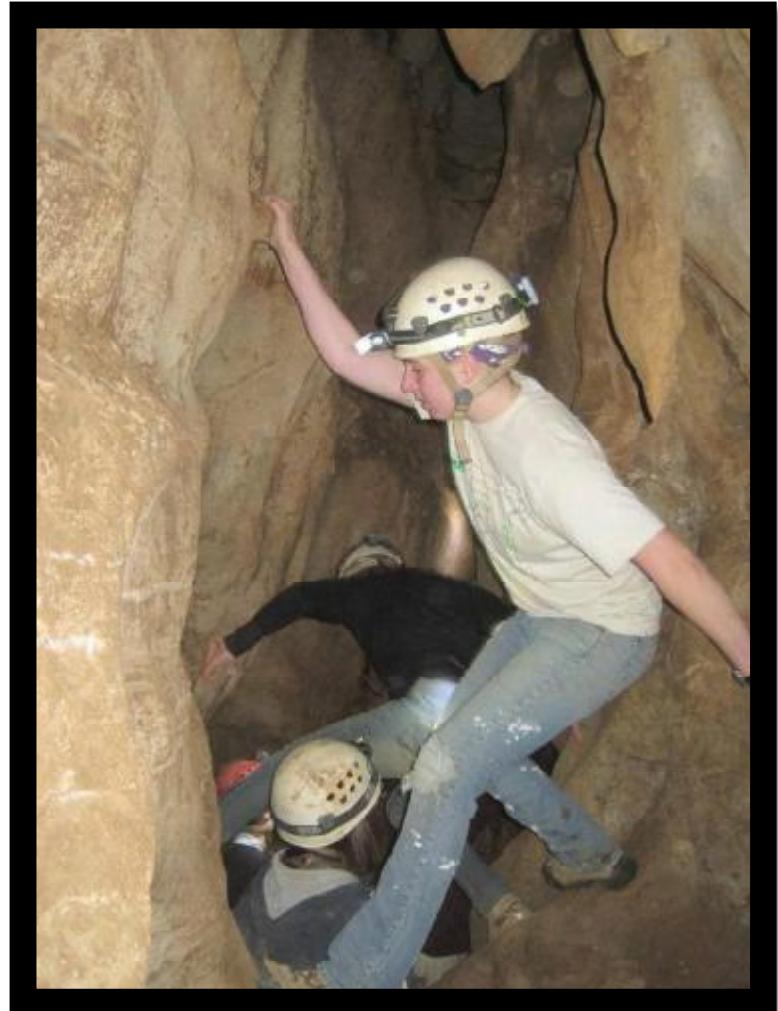
The first I figured
The most common-the tie
So I followed what's pictured
It's easy to do but, I'm not a guy

Now for the knot to tie up my shoes
Oh my! It seems I tie mine all wrong
My older brother, I'd have to accuse
He showed me how and I followed along

Next exploring macramé
I hear they make lovely bracelets
Or can be used to decorate a passageway
Unfortunately they're not so basic

Hmm...now what to learn next
I can't think of any off the top of my head
What's that now, I misread the text
Oh yep, your right, it says learn the "required knots"

Whoops

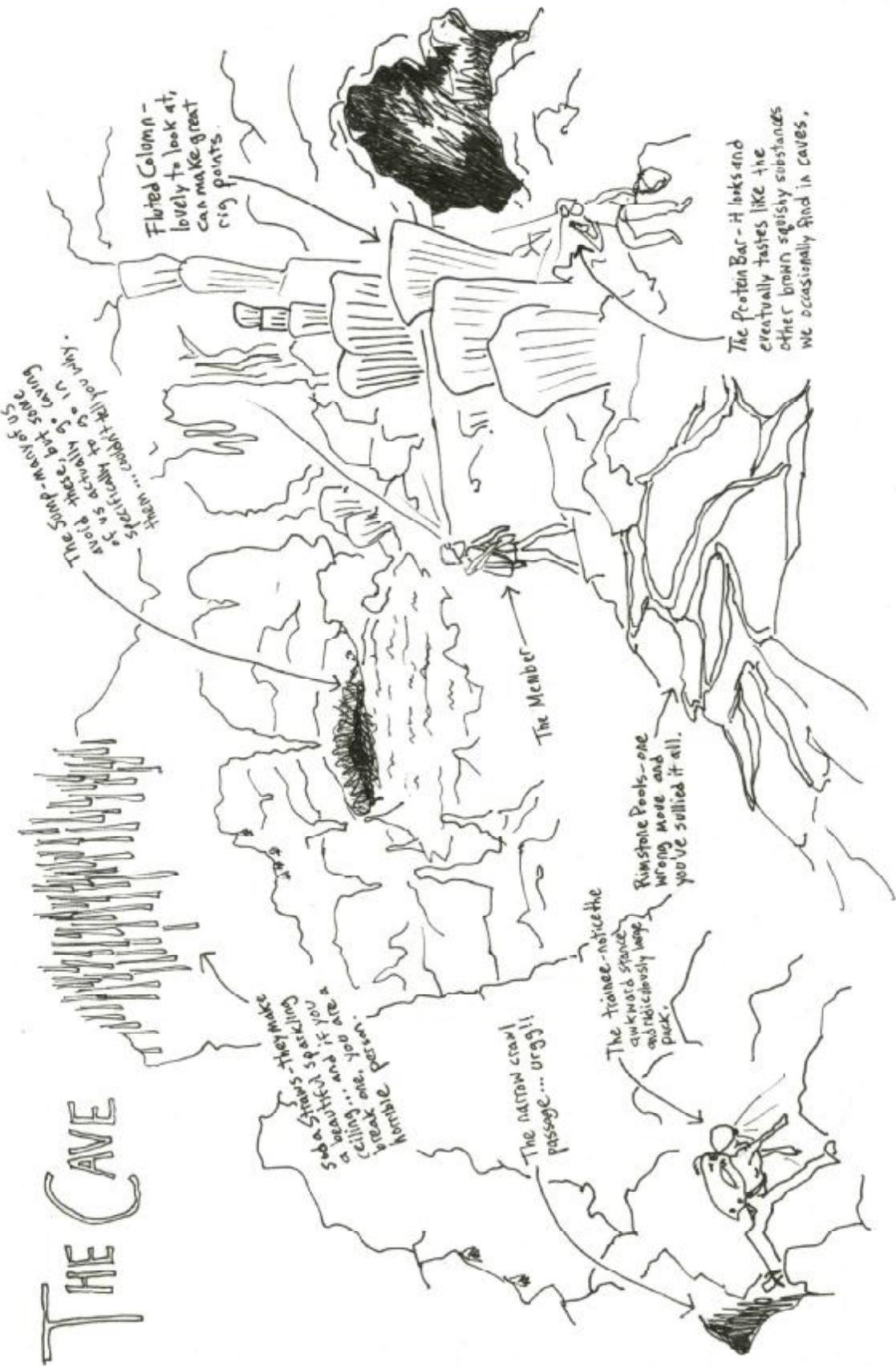


A Haiku on caving by Peter Southworth

Darkness all around

Ever growing underground

Full of simple grace



By Kelly McCarthy

Peter's Rules to Caving

By Peter Southworth

Once upon a time, there was a faraway land with exotic features and people, where everything was different. This land is West Virginia. A few weeks ago I took part in my first 8 or so hour cave trip plus hour long hike, and boy was it a doozy, and during this time I've come up with a series of rules per-say on caving that would serve any caver well, and would help them be a better caver by 420%.

First and foremost never buy kneepads. As you cave you'll learn there is no greater satisfaction than crawling on hard stones and at the same time slowly letting your knees get crushed to look like they just got out of a meat grinder. As well for all the men out there women love battle scars so this would give you the opportunity to flaunt your self over and show your love interest, your newly created ground meat that you would call knees.



Show off those bruises!

The second rule is that gloves are never necessary. As you cave you'll want to immerse yourself into being one with the cave and what a better way of doing that than getting in touch literally with the cave itself. As well by the end of the trip you will feel satisfaction as you look at your hands and realize they look like they just came out of a saw movie, and once again back to number 1 chicks dig battle scars (Yes caving is a battle).

The third rule is, boots are unnecessary and always cave in name-brand clothes. There is a time in every person's life where they will realize that caving is a luxury and like all luxuries must be done in style. So take out your 50\$ plus name-brand clothes and go be comfy in a cave. As well who needs boots when you can wear perfectly good sneakers. Not only are they easy to wear, but also give air to your feet, and depending on the cave makes you feel like you're at a water park as you slip and slide around. Also sneakers allow for the fun job of coming right off in the case of sticky mud completely alleviating the feeling of stickiness it is pure gold.

This next rule is very important as it helps both you and others, and that is to not bring a change of clothes. You see this one is pure gold because then it requires that you borrow someone else's clothes and thereby are bonding with them creating stronger friendships, and or you just drive home dirty sharing your cave mud with the person's car allowing an even stronger cave bond to form.



Andrew knows you don't need gloves. Peter disapproves

My final tip is to always get the dimmest light possible. This will in turn allow you to stay focused on going through the cave as you can't see anything than a small space in front of you. As well it allows you to adopt night vision, and even in some cases learn echo location like a bat.

Now with all these tips, you will be a 420% better caver and everyone will know it.

Warning: These tips will more than likely just cause you pain and misery and not work.

The Bat Ranch

By Caroline Shea

I was warned about these parties, many said that I would quickly learn the male anatomy in great detail. To be on the safe side I brought an entourage. I've already been on the road for 20 minutes. My group was already pretty weary of their decision to come with me, nothing a little alcohol can't fix, and on the ride we made a drinking game out of my horrible navigation skills. Every time I made a wrong turn they all got to drink. Another 20 minutes goes by and finally I see the oversized aluminum mail box becoming me.

I introduced myself as a trainee to the eclectic people outside and shuffled in. every inch of the house was covered in something atypical. I counted at least 20 animals and at least 100 tie dye things I met a few others around the kitchen table, I wasn't sure what all the fuss was about. Besides the eclectic art and the animals this seemed so far like a typical college hang out. WHERE WERE THE NAKED PEOPLE? Courtney advised that I walk out back to the bon fire. I huddled with my posy and led them around back. We walked through a second room filled with cage after cage of eclectic animals. A door at the end of this animal sanctuary directed us to the backyard. The smell of wood burning caught my nose. A light show was hitting the steam in the air that rose from an aluminum bowl perched next to a shed. The colors of light danced through the air and against the naked steamy backs of those enjoying the hot tub. The hot tub had a very convoluted shape. I found myself wondering what shape it was it and convinced myself it probably looks like a penis from an aerial view.

My entire group flocked to the fire, keeping our distance from the naked people. It is our understanding that a person should not talk to another person when their clothes are off. We quickly realized that this was not the case for these cavers. Nudity is a conversation starter, its normal, welcomed, encouraged. No amount of warning could have prepared me for the cultural shock. I carried a thirty pack of Busch beer and made friends with the various people around the fire. Roughly 20 minutes of chatting abounding the fire went by. It seemed like there were two realms in the backyard, the nudists at the hot tub, and the clothed people at the fire. I must have been staring at feet for a while, or maybe I was just zoned out, but when I looked up again there was a flaccid penis staring at me from across the fire. I don't who it was, but I'm pretty sure that image will be burned into my brain for the rest of eternity. Someone had their hands on their hips with their pelvis pushed out making their dick that much closer to the crimson flames between us. Welcome to cave club!

About 10 feet from the fire was an old piano. It was partially illuminated by a spot light overhead and from the soft orange glow of the fire. It was by far the creepiest piano I have ever seen. One of my friend's, Katy, boldly went to see if it worked. All I could think was that it was filled with little gremlins that were going to swallow her whole. Apparently that piano is going to go up in flames at the next Bat Ranch event in April. There is no way in hell I would miss watching that demonic piano going up in flames.

The fire warming me down to my bones. I felt toughly roasted and was hungry to see what else the Bat Ranch had to offer. I coerced my side kick to follow me to a field so we could go star gazing. He early followed me, but didn't pick up on the subtle innuendo that I wanted to get him alone. He invited the rest of our crew to join us. Oyo Vey, I guess no alone time after all. A few puppies followed us as we strolled to the flat field on the other side of the house. Their red lights illuminating the path as we walked. Once we were all the way into the middle of the field I weaved my arms around myself, arched my back, and stared straight into the abyss above me. There wasn't a cloud in the sky; every star was beautiful and distinct. I felt impossibly small compared to all the space in front of me. I wanted to lay on the ground to really soak in the nature, but my city friends couldn't fathom the idea. They were convinced I would get bugs on me... What a bunch of pansies.

It was almost one when the growls in my belly became too overwhelming to bear. I needed food, NOW. I bid adue to all the new friends I had made, and commanded my caravan to climb into the car. I knew I had food at home, but the people of the car had spoken, Taco bell was the next stop. I ordered a party pack for the crew, and got humped from behind while I spoke. I prayed that I could get these tacos soon, for two reasons, one: I was really hungry, two: I needed to get these crazed friends out of here; they were on a humping spree. I knew It was because they were enjoying how flustered I was getting by their ridiculousness. I knew the best way to get them to stop would be to pay no attention to them. BUT that was impossible. Put yourself in my shoes. You're the only sober person in taco bell. 4 drunken friends of yours are dry humping inanimate objects and one of them is pelvic thrusting into your hip. Now you can understand how badly I needed to get those tacos. The person behind the counter calls my order number and hands over the food, which is packaged in the shape of a boom box. One of the boys throws it over his shoulder and starts making a beat. The rest of the fools start singing and dancing. I would take this over the humping any day. I am the last in line as we shuffle out of taco bell to the parking lot. By the time I cross the threshold into the outside air, three of the boys are dancing to the imaginary music in front of a car full of girls at the window for the drive through. This dance recital doesn't last too long. Eventually the boys are satisfied with the applause and laughter from the girls in the car.

The bat ranch is a wild place, where cavers are free to be cavers. I highly recommend every trainee attend one of these spectacles. If anyone is hesitant about going, then do what I did, bring an entourage.





REJECTED HEADLINES & ABSTRACTS FROM THE FIRST EDITION OF THE CAVE CLUB NEWS

By Tommy Polson

Study on Relationship Between Purchases of Stenlights and La-Z-Boys "Inconclusive"

In this new study from the Institute of Cave and Karst Research Foundation Association, a strong correlation was detected in the purchase of these two seemingly unconnected items. Unfortunately, the study was deemed biased and inconclusive as no data points were obtained from any subjects below the age of 50. Presumably any younger potential subjects were too busy actually using their Stens to respond.

57 Geologic Terms Guaranteed to Make You Sound Like You Know What You're Talking About

Trainees and tourists asking you too many tough questions on your Tawney's trips? Look no further than the newest book from Greg Springer and soon you'll be "anticline"ing and "fault buckling"ing your way to glory. Got a few cute coeds on the trip? Liberal use of "thrust sheet" and "bedding-plane fault" and you just might get lucky!

Bats Discover Key to Immunity from WNS: Pabst Blue Ribbon

Speculation abounds on how they figured it out, but our source points out the plentiful supply of littered cans in many local entrances, many still with some dregs of brew remaining. The bats who woke up this winter with itchy noses must have decided to have a few sips on their way out the proverbial door. And when they got better they told their friends about that tasty elixir of life we all know and love. "That's all well and good," said Mr. Wells, "but they're not getting mine."

Keg on Reserve at Food Lion for This Year's Norman Rescue

Yes, the local cave rescue superstars are already gearing up for this years Norman rescue, expected to arrive any day now, really soon, you betcha. Used wetsuits are being scooped up left and right, machetes sharpened, and libations secreted away in caches leading right up 219. "We're just going to end up standing in the stream with a com box for 10 hours," says cave rescue superstar Mr. Booker, "and I'm not doing that without a wetsuit. Or sober." "I'm going to carry in a large bulky pack which everyone will think is full of serious rescue gear," said young cave rescue superstar Mr. Socky, "but really it's full of shoring tools, so I can recreate the Devil's Pinch while everyone's off searching."

Graffiti in New River Cave Beautifully Maintained

The myriad kaleidoscopic rainbow of directionally challenged arrows, nicknames, and lewd slogans and drawings which decorate New River Cave from the entrance to the waterfall are being meticulously flagged off for protection. And the ugly old carbide inscriptions of dates and names of the old explorers no one cares about anymore have finally been scrubbed off the wall of the Supper Room. Seriously though, that last bit is real.

Dexter Named High King Regent of the Bat Ranch

In his first decree, the King has commanded that subjects present tribute of treats and cuddles hourly. Planning of a celebration of the anticipated amendment of the DCM-5 to include Dexter Cuddling Syndrome is underway.

More Wood



In Memory of Pam Mohr

VPI #143

How the Cave Club Training Program Evolved

It Was Not All Walking Passage

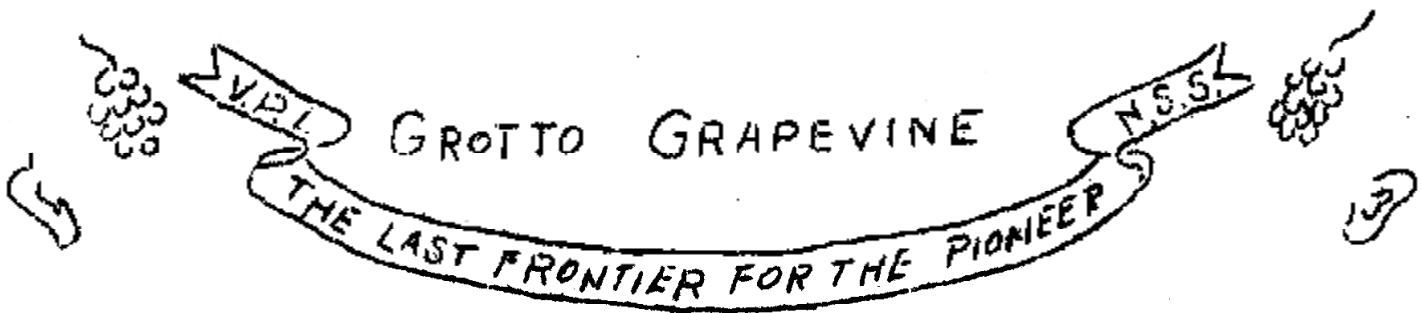
Richard Cobb – VPI 215, VP 1979-80

The Cave Club Training Program and membership requirements of today have been in place, with minor changes, for a long time – but they did not start out that way. The Club was born in 1942 with a handful of members. In January, 1944, the first newsletter issue (then named the Grotto Grapevine) proudly proclaimed that it had been “published since 1944”, with the letterhead stating it was “The Last Frontier for the Pioneer”. VPI was then predominantly military (ROTC), and the second world war was ongoing. Gas rationing was in effect, and personal vehicles were much less common.

In those early days the Club was very much a top-down hierarchical organization. Cave trips were planned for the entire academic quarter, with a single trip each weekend, in which the entire club participated. Transportation to the cave was often in trucks – a few early photos show as many as 15 to 20 members, many already wearing their hard hats and carbide lamps, loaded into the open bed of a single truck. Each trip was organized by an 'Expedition Commander' who planned all aspects of the trip ahead of time.

An early training document (1950-51) was titled *Suggestions for Expedition Commanders*, complete with organization diagrams. An 'expedition' was usually broken up into 'parties', such as a Survey Party, a Photography Party, etc. Each Party had an appointed Leader, and the Expedition might have other appointments, such as a Deputy Expedition Commander, a Rigging Officer, and perhaps a Camp Officer, among others. To give you an idea of just how seriously this was taken is a statement near the beginning of this document: “The VPI Grotto does not tolerate disobedience to the expedition commander or his appointed representatives. It is the duty of the expedition commander to report to the Grotto all cases of disobedience so that those guilty may be expelled from the Grotto.”

Given the military mind-set of the students of those days, the need for large scale organization for transportation, and the rudimentary techniques of the time, this probably all made a lot of sense. Almost any VPI student could become a member just by paying dues; there was no training program or requirements as we now know them. Vertical work was still in its infancy, and even simple entrance drops would require much rigging and a crew of people to lower and haul individuals in a bosun's chair. A trip that could be accomplished today in a couple of hours using Single Rope Techniques (SRT) may have taken a whole day, or even a weekend, and required many people to carry out.



With the end of the war and gas rationing, more personal vehicles available, and better techniques, there are reports in the newsletters of smaller trips (often only 3 or 4 people), which presumably also became more frequent. Bill Cuddington (for whom "Bill's Rappel" in Newberry Cave is named – likely on a 1953 trip) was an SRT pioneer. The VPI Cave Club was at the forefront of new caving techniques during the 1950s, although there is a period during the mid-50s where there is little written record. There are no minutes of the meetings nor newsletters during this time; only the Treasurer's records exist today. But those records confirm the club's continued activity during this period by the record of dues payments and expenditures for such things as carbide, hard hats and rope.

A written record appears again in 1955, with a revised constitution, and in 1958 with the fatality of a club member in Catawba Murder Hole. The 1955 constitution does not contain any bylaws, and no mention is made of membership requirements (other than being a VPI student), nor of any training program. From the details of a 1958 accident report (chemical degradation of a manila rope resulting in a complete failure during a rappel) we can infer that SRT had become common/standard practice by that time.

The decade of the 1960s was a period of huge changes and upheavals in nearly every aspect of life, with little being the same at the end of this decade as it was at the beginning; and most of those changes did not come easily or without turmoil. The Cave Club certainly mirrored what was going on everywhere else.

After the lack of information from much of the 1950s, the history of membership requirements and the training program come into clearer focus again with the revised constitution and bylaws adopted in 1961. For the first time there were competency requirements for membership, with a new category for Prospective/Trainee membership. But regular members were divided into Horizontal and Vertical 'Qualification Groups', with Horizontal Qualification necessary before becoming eligible for Vertical. The Vertical Qualification requirements of 1961 and the membership requirements of today have more similarities than differences.

But in other respects, the 1961 constitution and bylaws still reflected the top-down hierarchy of the early days of the club. Article VIII of that Constitution concerns "Organization of Expeditions", with the requirement that every trip be authorized by the President by appointing an Expedition Commander, who has complete authority over the trip. Amendments create a system of A and B Leaders, with only A Leaders having full discretion.



Official written records, such as minutes of the meetings, seldom portray the full depth and range of all issues of a time – indeed, many never even appear. So even brief mentions can infer a great deal of discussion and controversy that never makes it into the record. One example is the discussion, in the minutes of the 1961-62 term, of an “unauthorized” trip by Ed Day into Pig Hole (in October) – an incident that eventually is resolved by demoting Ed to “novice status” in lieu of the recommendation by the Safety Committee that he be suspended for the remainder of the quarter. By May of 1962 competing motions are brought before the club – one by Ed Day to completely repeal the Leader System (which was denied for consideration), and another by George Fairer to incorporate ‘improvements’ into the leader system. Little action was taken then, or for quite awhile after, but the ‘battle lines’ were being drawn.

Throughout 1963 it seems there was much discussion, but little action. In the minutes of March 1, 1963, is a simple statement about the resignation of the Club's Adviser, Dr Murray, with little other information. However, there is this revealing note on page 7 of Scrapbook #2: *“Dr Murray, Cave Club Adviser, resigned due to a change in club policy. Trips were to be allowed any time, to any cave, with any members, with any leader, and without the approval of club officers.”* Murray had been the Adviser to the Club since 1950, and been responsible for much of the safety code throughout those years. We can only guess that the club *policy* was far ahead of the written bylaws, as his actions, while dramatic, seem quite premature with respect to the documentation. A new version of the constitution was approved only in May of 1963, with the associated Bylaws not approved until the following Fall, and even so there is still an extensive section on Leader Qualifications. The policies for which Murray resigned in protest do not become codified until at least two years later, in 1965.

The 1963 Constitution and Bylaws established what is essentially the training program the club has today. There is a list of requirements – very similar to current requirements - to become a Full Member of the club, with no mention of horizontal or vertical classification. However, only “Qualified Leaders” were permitted to lead cave trips. Leaders were still classified by Horizontal or Vertical, which effectively resulted in a 5-level member structure: Trainee, Full Member, Horizontal Leader, Vertical Leader, and Lead Climb Leader (in order of increasing ‘rank’).

One episode that shows the disarray in policies and procedures during this period is a meeting of the Safety Committee on February 17, 1964, in which there were several violations being considered for action. One involved a trainee taking an “unauthorized trip with no leader”. This was eventually dismissed because copies of the constitution had not been available and there was “no training program oversight” - that is, there was no way for the trainee to have known he was in violation. The most serious violation at this meeting was charged against Gregg Marland, former President, for improper belaying procedure (belaying while not tied it – which would *not* be a violation of the current safety code). The Safety Committee recommendation was to ‘sentence’ Marland to practice belaying by catching the belay dummy for 5 falls, using approved procedures. The recommendations were brought before the Club on February 21 for a vote. An indicator of the passion behind the controversy is the fact that the minutes list the vote for or against by each member. The ‘sentence’ was upheld by a very close vote of 12 to 11.

Following the vote Gregg Marland made a statement. He expressed approval of the goals and actions of the Safety Committee, disapproval for the leadership system, and then refused to do the required 5 belays. He concluded by moving that, because of his refusal, he be expelled by the club – a motion which was tabled.

The minutes of the next meeting are terse: “...the motion tabled from the previous (meeting) was brought unto the floor; the motion was voted on by a secret ballot and was defeated. Gregg Marland moved that he be authorized to represent the VPI Grotto (in NSS convention matters)”. One can only guess at the political theater behind those few words. In two sentences they move from deciding not to expel Marland to considering appointing him to be an official club representative (no mention is made of whether his motion was approved).

Perhaps the best overviews of that period can be found in later Trog articles from those who were present to witness those turbulent times. In the 1966 Winter Quarter Trog, the Editor (Gary McCutchen) writes:

Unfortunately, this period was marred by a debate over policy that threatened to split or destroy the club. One group of members wanted rigid rules governing trips and a leadership code; the other members preferred fewer rules and more reliance on the judgment of the members. The spokesmen of these respective groups were George Fairer and Gregg Marland.

This “era of bad feelings” resulted in long, boring, debate-filled meetings, that disgusted potential members and climaxed by a vote on whether or not to remove Gregg Marland from the club for an infraction of the leadership code.

...

In the past 2 years, VPI has removed the leadership code from the constitution, devoted meetings more toward caving, ... and has grown at an exponential rate.

An excellent history of the club by Mike Frieders and Bob Barlow was published in the Winter 1968 (Anniversary Edition) Trog, which includes this summary:

Probably the most significant event in the grotto's history took place in 1965 when the constitution was again revised to do away with the leadership code. This was followed by an overall increase in the caving activities of the Grotto, due to the fact that “qualified” trip leaders had been few, and as a result, the trips had been limited. It was found that the added experience gained by the members in the course of increased caving more than outweighed the benefits of the leadership system in making all the members more safety conscious.

Today the Grotto is stronger than it has ever been in its twenty five year career. In 1965 the club became symbolized by a troglodyte framed in a carabiner and brake bar. The jaunty patch describes the attitude taken by the club members toward life above and below ground.

Twenty-six years after that was written none of the key points have changed. The training and membership requirements and procedures that evolved during the turbulent 60s have worked well. The VPI Cave Club continues to produce competent cavers with the knowledge and self-reliance to be responsible for their own safety decisions.

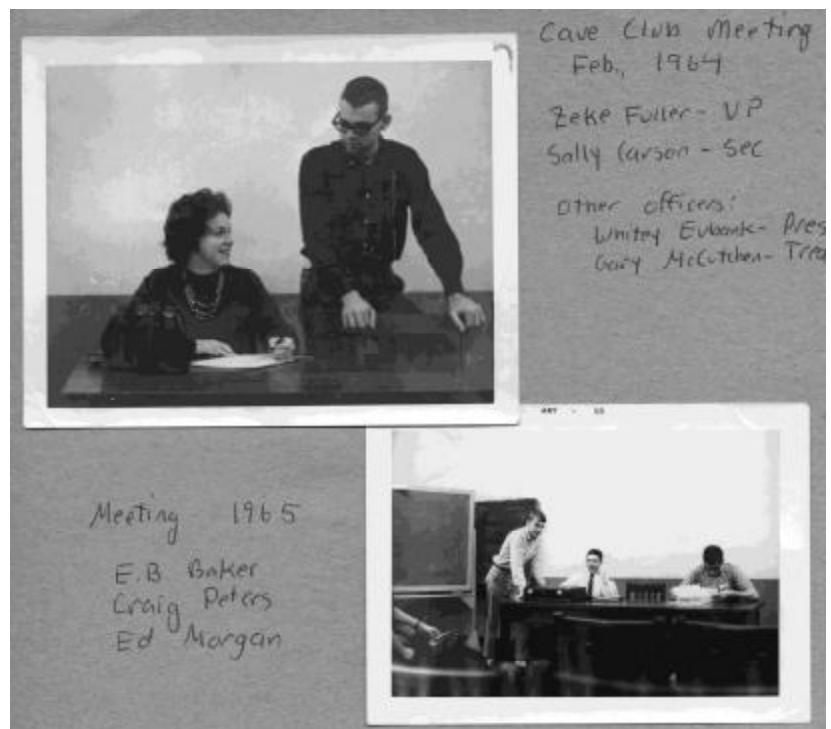
All of the material referenced in this article may be found in the archives at <http://sivtac.org/wiki>

Some recommended articles for further reading:

Editor's Column – Winter 1966 Trog.

“A True Historie of “Ye Worlde’s Most Active Undergronde Organization”, Mike Frieders and Bob Barlow; in the wiki as a separate article (history of the early club) under Early VPI Grotto History, and also as an article in the Winter 1968 Trog.

“Looking Backward”, Doug Perkins, Spring 1971 Trog.



QUOTABLE QUOTES

EFortney to DCrowder about the walkie-talkies: "Don't play with them; they're not toys."

DBishop and PBallister: "I could kick a kitten." "Don't do that. I like cats." "A puppy then." "Okay."

NSocky: "If you ever go on a cave trip where you need to carry your piss out, do *not* bring that kind of Gatorade."

JRoberts: "Do you have an affinity for luke-warm Pabst Blue Ribbon? Join the VPI Cave Club!"

NSocky: "We should climb down this way." *stomps on possible foothold, a humongous slab of rock breaks off and crashes to the ground* "We shouldn't climb down this way."

ASkowronski: "God bless you for bringing queso."

JRoberts: "Hang on, I'm just telling Squeak that Peppy only got us lost for two hours."

ABooker: "Put on this trash bag and look pretty."

HHutcheson: "Salmon's a good gateway seafood."

DCrowder: "I like how our listserv takes a small problem like night hiking illegality and makes it into an almost insurmountable challenge to one's manhood."

JEchols: "Don't ask for refuge from Russians, they'll just stare at you and....nyet."

NSocky, licking a screw: "Yup, that's a screw."

SRapier: "So me and my llama took these guys caving. He brought his 23-year-old daughter and his 8-year-old son and I couldn't figure out which one was the mistake."

PSouthworth: "IT'S TIME FOR A QUALITY SHIT." *slams door*

WOrndorff, NSocky about Lesson Learned Cave: "Why didn't you and Socrates just map it while you were down there?" "We didn't have a tape." "You could've used your dick and measured in four inch increments."

DCrowder: "I love watching Koerschner burn things." *Bill holds carbide lamp against desk grinning*

AFutrell, DCrowder about EStanley: "He has other redeeming factors besides telling medical stories." "Yeah, he's also mean."

DCrowder, BBalfour: "Aw, she's ignoring us." "BUT I'M NOT! WOOO!" *Bill runs across room and hugs Joker*

WOrndorff, PSouthworth: "Why are you taking your shirt off?" "It's fucking hot."

DCrowder, BBalfour: "What's happening?" "WE'RE BURNING THE PLACE DOWN!"

CZokaites: "This is the table you stole from the porch... Where's Balfour?"

WOrndorff to EKoertge about taking Calendar pictures: "You should be in it completely naked except for a gun held across covering the nipples. Hell, we could do a whole calendar with all the weapons the Cave Club owns."

SHuff: "I am in the unique position of not giving a fuck."

DBarnes: "That's the second time I've talked about the Kama Sutra today."

DBishop: "I like how alcoholism isn't the issue here, it's diabetes."

EKoertge, DCrowder: "These chicken nuggets make me uncomfortable." "You wouldn't want them to follow you home on a dark night."

TCleckner: "Power through. It's alcohol, it'll get better."

PSchuchardt: "You gotta send her a picture of a nipple, but you gotta make it look like a unicorn."

ABooker: "Meth will fuck with your Christmas."

TPhilips: "What's the name of that kid who has a welt from the cheese I threw at him?"

ABooker, ASkowronski: "Oh, that's why you guys keep me around; because I cook food for people." "Yeah. It's definitely not because you're funny or charismatic."

ABooker: "I hope I succeeded in making you as uncomfortable as I made myself."

SCrowder, ASkowronski: "OK I'll take whoever's convenient." "That sounds like my dating life."

TPhilips, SRapier,
ABooker: "That thing
that points north."

"You mean a com-
pass?" "Isn't he an
engineer?"

DColatosti, ABooker,
NWittenstein: "You
know you could do-
nate that to a wom-
en's shelter." "Fuck
em." "If you donate,
maybe you could."



SIGNOUT QUOTES

10/5/13	Katrina Stoll, Amy Skowronski, Courtney Trost, Tommy Cleckner, Calvin Long, Mike Sciortino	James	Jimi Hendrix was on the good drugs
12/7/13	John Mulheren, Courtney Trost, Calvin Long, Tommy Cleckner, Ryan Kneifel, Dianna Orndorff, Josh Abel Layd, Renee Pietsch	Links	I caught my nipple piercing on a rock
1/17/14	Nick Socky, Sara Fleetwood, Ally Higgins, Philip Schuchardt, Joe Calderone	Links	Ass-to-mouth-these
1/25/14	Nick Socky, Aasim Rawoot, Alex Cummings, Jennifer Wagner, Scott Rapier	Links	Have you guys ever heard of bitching resting face? -Smiles
2/1/14	John Mulheren, Courtney Trost, 11 W&M people	Tawneys	I got panned by a cave
2/9/14	Chase Whitt, Michell Thacker, Ellen Koertge, Alice Jaworski	Curve Salrpetic	I really think someone is trying to hide a body here.
2/22/14	Susan Seal, Aaron Thomas, John Deighan	Clover Hollow	How do you like a stiff rope between your legs?
2/23/14	Nick Socky, Amy Skowronski, Peter Southworth, Andrew Lycas, Alice Jaworski, Jennifer Wagner	Maze Cave	Are you taking a compass reading off my ass? -Jennifer
3/25/14	Courtney Trost, Katrina Stoll, John Echols, Caroline Shea, Tyrone Phillips	Pighole	I might have stolen a \$200 vibrator. It looks like a blender and sounds like a jackhammer.

VPI CAVE CLUB 2014



