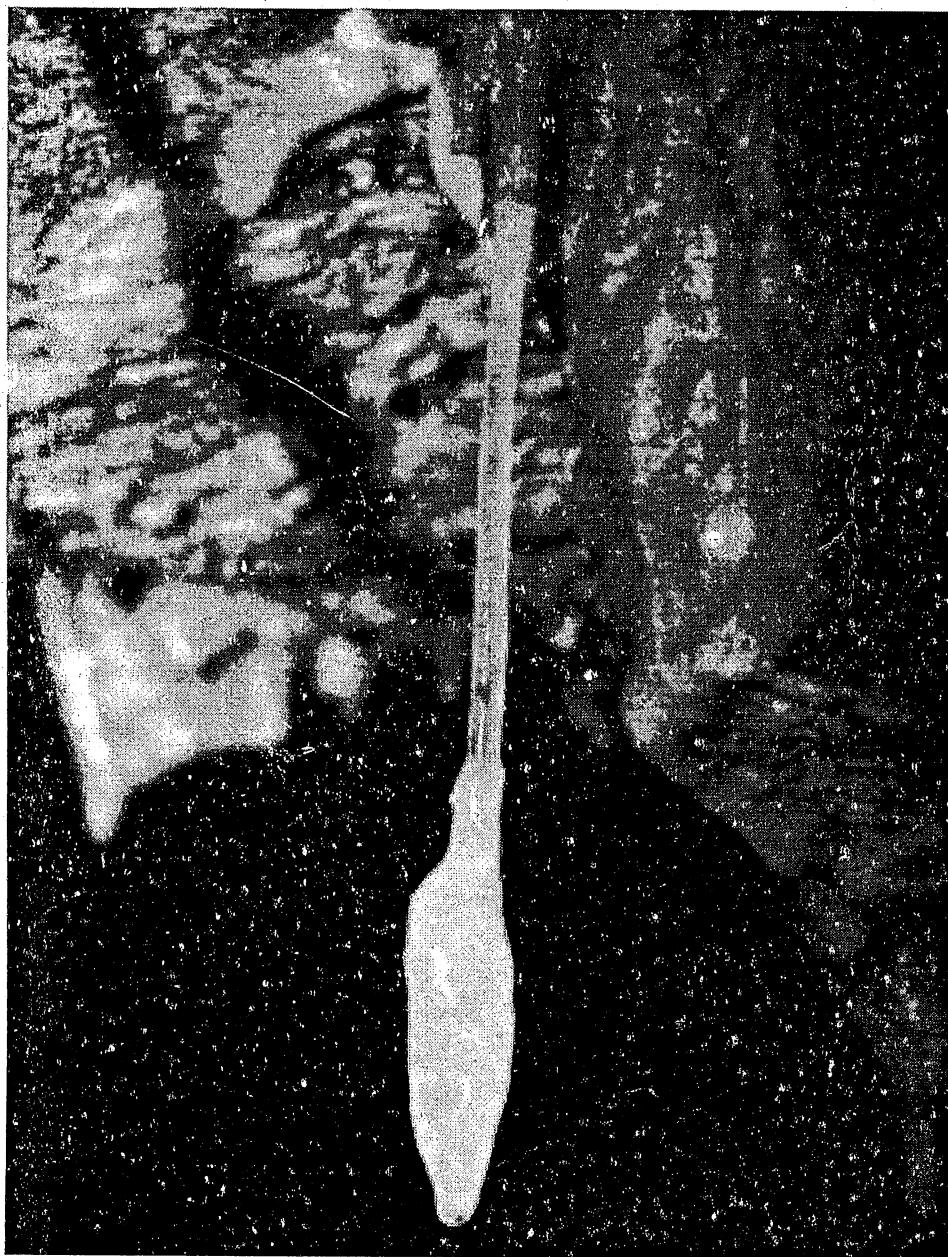


The Tech Troglodyte



Spring '99

The Tech Troglyte

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



Spring Semester, 1999 New Officers:

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Editor Eileen O'Malley
Cover Photo Taken by Ray Sira

Note on Last Trog: The back cover was drawn by Ray Sira. (Ha! You thought he was just good at photos.)

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About the Cover Photo: Ray took this in 1985 in J-4 Cave, State College, PA. Dissatisfied with the photo, he decided to reshoot the icicle. He returned several months later and the icicle had disappeared.

The Tech Troglyte is published each semester (yeah, right) 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.

Nine Months with the Willamete Valley Grotto, Part I

by Carl Bern

The meeting was going to start late. The NSS Member's Manual had said 7:30 PM and it was now fifteen minutes after that. I had to smile, thinking that I had already found something that the cavers in Portland, Oregon had in common with the VPI Grotto. As I waited, I chatted with the other cavers wandering into the meeting room at the Recreation Center. I was easily identified as a newcomer in this small group. People were asking me how much caving I had done and I was trying to figure out what kind of caving the Willamete Valley Grotto did.

The president, Tom Kline, finally called the meeting to order. There were no more than twenty people in the room, a far cry from the crowd of cavers and cave groupies that fill Smythe 146 on Friday evenings during the academic year. Early in the meeting I was asked to introduce myself and took the opportunity to mention that I was interested in getting on a trip. As soon as I stopped talking two guys across the table eagerly asked me if I wanted to go on a Dynamited dig trip. "You're digging with dynamite?" I had to ask. Actually Dynamited was the name of the cave, but they promised it would be plenty interesting anyway. They were going the following weekend and I agreed to join them. I tried to find a trip going out that weekend but had no luck. It seems that the roads going to the caves were still covered with snow even though it was May. That is pretty standard for high country in Oregon.

The grotto was planning activities for the coming summer and that was when I noticed something else the WVG has in common with VPI. When it comes time to assign responsibilities there is little eye contact and a lot of silence, except when people are trying to coerce the person next to them into volunteering. Being new, I was able to sit back with a clear conscience. As the meeting wrapped up I discovered what might be a key difference with the WVG. They go to the bar after the meeting. It was over pitchers at Godfather's Pizza that I learned that it was Edd Kuedell and Blair Petrie that were taking me digging in Dynamited Cave. They regaled me with stories of success that they had with digs in this cave already. The passage we would be digging in was an 800 foot section called Walker Road. They had dug it open only a few months previously. Altogether, Edd and Blair had dug into about 1600 feet of virgin passage in Dynamited. That got my attention and soon I was feeling optimistic about the trip.

All too soon I noticed that the other cavers were paying up and heading out. I found myself making sure that all the pitchers were empty before I left. It was only 10:30 on a Friday night and I was headed home for the evening. Three time zones east of me I was sure that someone in the VPI grotto was rummaging in the fridge

for another beer.

Edd, Blair, and a third guy named Mike picked me up at my new apartment the following weekend. As I loaded my gear into Blair's minivan I had to ask, "Why is the shovel wearing underwear?" There was a garden spade in the back of the van and it had a pair of long john bottoms slipped over the blade. They keep the van from getting dirty, explained Blair. We drove east from Portland through the famous Columbia River Gorge and then crossed the Columbia and went into Washington. After an hour and a half we reached the town of Trout Lake. From there headed into Gifford Pinchot National Forest. On subsequent trips I saw the incredible mass of Mount Adams from this route, but it was hidden that day. As we drove into the National Forest Edd and Blair marveled at how much the snow had melted since they were last there. Occasional patches still crept onto the road from the sides, but Blair steered around them. Finally we came to the point where the road was fully covered with snow. There were tire tracks in the snow continuing up the road. Naturally we pressured Blair to keep going, and after a short debate he did. We made forty feet of progress and the minivan came to a halt.

We all piled out to discover snow packed into the undercarriage. It was solid enough to keep the tires off the road. The shovel was stripped of its underwear and put to use. A couple of large crowbars were also used to loosen snow from the undercarriage and for some reason this seemed to make Blair nervous. After digging, shoving branches under the tires, and pushing we got the van back to bare pavement.

Soon we were changed and ready to go caving. As we walked away from the minivan, I noticed that no one was carrying the shovel. When I asked about this they told me that we would not need it. Instead each of them carried one of the big long crowbars. This was going to be an interesting dig.

The entrance to Dynamited is in the side of a big depression in the ground measuring maybe fifty feet across. They called this the sink, and indeed it looked a lot like a karst sinkhole. The major differences were the lack of dirt and the large dark blocks of volcanic rock that filled the sink. It was chilly outside so we did not waste any time heading into the cave. Inside the cave I found that the black lava swallowed up my electric light just as it had in Ape Cave, my first lava tube. The other three were electric cavers and being a guest I had decided to leave my carbide behind. As the saying goes, "When caving in Rome, do as the Roman cavers do." My eyes adjusted to the darkness and I found myself in a down-sloping room about 20 feet high. This led to a duck-under covered with old concrete and sprouting twisted rebar. It was the remains of an old cave gate that

had been blasted open with dynamite. Surprisingly, the cave gets its name from an earlier incident in which it was blasted shut.

The duck-under took us to a long passage. Here I was introduced to my favorite of all lava tube features: original floor. The passages of lava tubes are, for the most part, covered with breakdown. The ceilings of tubes are formed of brittle and usually unstable rock. Over time this rock falls to the floor. Unlike limestone where blocks car-sized and larger often fall, lava tube breakdown tends to be small. Small means rocks generally smaller than a motorcycle and mostly just bigger than a bowling ball. Lava tube breakdown also tends to be sharp and unstable. Limestone breakdown has much softer edges and is more stable in comparison. Maybe this is caused by redeposited calcite bonding the limestone blocks together. Maybe it is the mud, which is almost absent in lava tubes. Whatever the reason I was surprised at how every little block of breakdown in Dynamited wanted to turn my ankle. This is why I like original floor.

Original floor means that you can walk directly on the surface of the flow that cooled in the tube. There is no breakdown piled on top of it. It is flat like the surface of a liquid, which it used to be. Often you can find ripple marks in original floor. This drives home the fact that the rock you are standing on once flowed like a river. Original floor is always a welcome break from picking one's way through breakdown. Unfortunately it is also a short break. Easy walking just means you get to the next section of breakdown faster.

The other great aspect of original floor is that it has the tube's original ceiling overhead. Tube ceilings look awfully similar to tube floors in areas that have collapsed. The original ceiling is often quite attractive. Usually it is covered with remelt. Remelt occurs when previously cooled rock on the ceiling is heated to the melting point once again by the hot lava flowing beneath it. The rock is left with a very smooth and shiny surface. Sometimes the remelt sags and looks like a limestone soda straws trying to form a first half-inch. In some cases the rock forms dripstones, lava stalactites. Occasionally remelt holds formations that bear an uncanny resemblance to helectites.

The passage we followed soon brought us to a down-climb in a large room. From this room one can continue in the same direction to the rest of the cave, or double back beneath the passage that brought you in from the entrance. To reach our destination we doubled back. This took us into the Sandcastle Passage. Here the breakdown gave way to a floor of volcanic sand. Water dripping from the ceiling had created some beautiful and delicate formations in this sand, which they call sandcastles. As the water drips in the same spot over and over it drills down into the sand. The displaced sand is thrown up into towers, some twelve inches high, their shapes determined by the surrounding drips. Sandcas-

cles are another type of formation that you will never see in a limestone cave. In limestone every drop of water would contain dissolved calcite which would be deposited on the sand as the water was exposed to oxygen in the air. All of the sand would become bonded together and stalagmites would grow on top. Volcanic rock contains no calcite or gypsum to dissolve and be redeposited. Flagging tape had been laid down to mark a trail through the sandcastles and we followed it carefully.

The Sandcastle Passage ended at Blair and Edd's most recent success. Back in February they had succeeded in penetrating a breakdown choke there. Along with Bret Cook and Garry Petrie, Blair's brother, they had skied in to reach the cave and then camped in the Sandcastle Passage. From there they were able to work the dig to its conclusion. Bret was the lucky first person to wriggle into the new 800 foot section. The section was later named Walker Road after a friend who had passed away. We gingerly worked our way through the dig to Walker Road. There were still plenty of sizeable rocks in precarious positions that one had to crawl past.

After 800 feet of breakdown hopping we arrived at the new dig. It was located at the top of a breakdown pile that rose thirty feet to meet an unstable ceiling. I looked at that ceiling and then at the crowbars the others carried. Were these people crazy? We scrambled up to the top of the pile and I was shown the dig. It actually progressed horizontally from the top of the pile after a short vertical tube. Here the walls and ceiling were composed of small boulders suspended in sand. By gently poking at the sand with a crowbar you could drop the rocks into the crawl space. When enough material had been poked loose you just pushed it behind you and down the vertical tube. Another person at the bottom would then pull this material out onto the breakdown pile. Sometimes a large rock had to be removed from the ceiling of the dig. If it looked dangerous the digger would put a loop of webbing on it and retreat to the bottom of the vertical tube. A tug on the webbing would then bring the rock out of the ceiling. If you were lucky it also came down the tube. That way you knew it was not balanced on the edge above you as you came back up the tube.

We took turns in the dig and pulling debris out into the room. Mike fired up his stove to give us some hot chocolate. Blair and Edd started looking at other possibilities at the top of the breakdown pile. Soon they were prying large rocks out of the ceiling. I found that the loud crashes made me nervous while I was in the original dig working sand out from around a rock. Then I found another rock in the ceiling that would require the webbing. It was the biggest of these that I had seen. I carefully looped the webbing over an end and retreated. As I slid down the vertical tube I wondered if the big rock would make it through there. It was roughly egg shaped so I was certain it would roll into the vertical part. There was nothing I could do to control the roll, though. At the

bottom of the shaft I found that the webbing was a bit too short. For some reason, though, it was the only piece we had with us. I reached back into the tube and yanked hard, retreating as I heard the rock move. There was a rush of sand and then nothing. I crawled in and peered up the tube. The two ends of the rock were caught on the walls. I could see no easy way to free it.

Edd volunteered to have a look at the rock and soon he was in the small vertical tube. We saw only his legs below the knee as he wrestled with it. Suddenly Edd was seated in the crawlway with the rock in his lap. "Help! I can't breathe!" he gasped. There was genuine panic in his voice. Mike and Blair were closest and dove into the crawlway. Somehow they managed to lift the rock off of Edd in the tight quarters. The experience reminded us just how careful we had to be. We all moved rock for another hour or so, Edd included. Finally our enthusiasm ran out. The airflow in the dig was still tempting, but it was obvious that several more trips would be needed to follow it.

As we made our way back through Walker road I reflected on the volume of material we had shifted. I had never seen so much rock moved in a dig. Was it ethical to do such a thing in a cave? Such care was taken to preserve the sandcastles from careless feet, and yet we had just moved hundreds of pounds of rock and sand in another section of the same passage. The only difference was that we were pursuing airflow when we moved the rock. I finally decided that it was not all that different from digging in limestone. Cavers will move yard after

cubic yard of mud pursuing air in limestone. The nature of the cave was what determined the digging method in Dynamited. In either case one has to reconcile the desire for virgin passage with the fact that the cave is being altered.

Maybe I was considering such questions of ethics. Or maybe I was wondering if we would stop for beer on the drive home. Either way I should have been paying more attention as we made our way back through the first dig. I thought that the area below me was clear. Even so, I was being careful. I bumped one of the rocks near me though and it dropped onto Edd below me. It caught him square on the front of the helmet. As a result the rim of the helmet came down and hit the bridge of his nose. When I got out of the dig I found him tending to a good split in the skin of his nose. He was well prepared to deal with it, though. Edd carries the most extensive first aid kit I have seen underground, rescues excepted. We all made jokes about the cave being out to get him, but I had to wonder what kind of impression I was going to leave on these guys.

Back in the entrance room we scrambled up a climb to look at another little passage and then it was time to go. As we slogged back to the car we talked about plans for more caving. Edd and Blair said that I would have to see the rest of Dynamited. It is one of the few lava tubes in the region that has any drops that require ropes. All in all it was a good first trip with members of the WVG and I looked forward to more caving with them.

Oops....

by Eric Stanley

After reading through the membership requirements, it occurred to me that I had to submit something to the Trog myself. Well, I have had many interesting cave trips with the club, and I could tell you all about the witty comments made and how we had made fun of each other in the cave, but I have decided to tackle a much bigger project: Caving First Aid. Now before I jump right in to this, a little about myself. I am an EMT and have a fair amount of field experience above ground. I realize that not of all the techniques I mention can work in all situations, so use them more as a guideline. Also keep in mind that this is my opinion on how to handle medical emergencies in a cave. In most cases there are many ways to treat an injury; these are the way that I feel are most appropriate.

BUMPS BRUISES AND CUTS

Perhaps the most common injuries in caves. There is really little that can be done for these provided that they are minor. Your goal here is to keep a cut inside a cave as clean as possible. Assuming that most caves drain a farmers field in some form or another there is usually a high amount of biomass in a cave. This is not the sort of thing you want to expose an open wound to if possible. Be resourceful; use some drinking water to clean it and some duck tape as a makeshift bandage until you can get home and treat it.

SPRAINS AND STRAINS

This is the type of injury that you want to treat right away, and this also should bring the end to your cave trip. Treat a sprain or strain with RICE.

Rest. Get off you feet, sit down and take a break.

Immobilize. Try to stabilize you ankle. Ideally you don't want any movement in you foot at all. In a cave setting, you do not want to remove your boot if it can be avoided. Your boot will act as a cast of sorts. Again, think about what you have available to you to keep that foot from moving. Duck tape and a rack can make an excellent splint.

Compression/Cold. Don't remove your boot; it helps keep pressure on the injury which helps keep swelling down. Apply cold when possible. If there is a nearby stream soak a shirt or some cloth in it and apply it to the injury to keep the swelling down. **Caution! Do not get cold doing this; hypothermia is not your friend!!**

Elevation. Lift the injury, prop it up on a rock or under your pack. This will help with the swelling and pain.

When the pain eases or you feel ready to exit the cave take your time. Caving is hard on you body. Ask for help when you need it and take breaks on the way out. Remember that if it is causing you great pain when you

move, it could be broken. So if you can feel you can't make it out on your own, don't try.

HYPOTHERMIA

Be careful, this is a silent killer. Unfortunately the symptoms of hypothermia are also the byproducts of hard caving. Lethargy, drowsiness, disorientation (if you get lost a lot). Your friends are you best defense against hypothermia. Keep you eye on a person who stops shivering while they are still cold or have done little to get warmer. If you suspect that you have a cold exposure actively re-warm the patient. Make a heat tent with your trash bag that should be in you helmet and a carbide light or candle. Monitor the patient's skin. If the skin temperature does not improve, get moving! It is time to get that person out of the cave and to medical attention. Use your best judgement on a cave trip while you still have it. If you start to get really cold, get out of the cave!

OH SHIT TYPE INJURIES

This is the last thing any of us want to face underground, possibly hours away from help. These injuries range from serious to very, very serious. Let's start with a single broken bone. If it's a finger use duck tape, but be smart about it. Wrap something around you finger like cloth or wrap the first loop of tape with the stick side outward so it's not so hard to get off when the time comes. A broken arm without a protruding bone can be splinted with a rack and duck tape or whatever is available. Monitor the blood supply below the break. Make sure the skin below the break is not pale; push on the nail beds of the fingers and look to see how long it takes for color to return. It should take a maximum of 3 seconds for the nail bed to return to normal. If the skin and nail beds indicate there is little to no blood supply in the arm reposition the splint. Lack of blood to the area below the break can cause permanent cell death, which may cause loss of the area below the break. Use the same splinting procedures for broken lower legs being sure to monitor the blood supply.

Falls are another big problem you may encounter; they may even be the cause of the broken bones mentioned above. Any fall can cause permanent and serious injury, but for the sake of argument let's consider any fall over 10 feet a serious fall. The most serious fall is going to be one where the head, neck, or back impacts before the rest of the body. In my opinion a fall of this nature is a serious problem and for the safety of the patient will merit a rescue 100% of the time, no questions asked. Your number 1 priority as an able bodied person is to get to the patient and see what is going on. Decide who is going out to get help. The person who takes on this responsibility should be able to tell the rescue team what is going on with the patient. Is the patient breath-

ing on his/her own, is he/she conscious, are there any major bleeds, does he/she seem disoriented, what is the patient's major complaint? All of this is ever pertinent to the rescuers. As the person who stays on scene, you need to monitor the patient and be able to describe any changes to the rescuers. You also need to stabilize the patient's head with your hands. The patient should not be able to move it from side to side; this is to avoid any further head or neck injury. Control any major bleeds with either direct pressure or a compression wrap type bandage made of duck tape or what you have available. **Avoid a tourniquet at all costs. It should be a last resort only. 99.9% of the time it will cause the loss of everything below it!** Monitor the patient's A,B,C's: make sure they have an open Airway, a means to breath; make sure they are indeed Breathing; Circulation, make sure they have a pulse and it seems to be a normal speed and a normal rhythm. If they have no A,B,C's start CPR. If you don't know CPR it is a class I think all people should take. Another thing to watch for is shock. What to look for in shock: pale cool skin, weak

pulse in the wrist, disorientation, etc. If the signs are present, elevate the patient's feet and hope rescue is close!

In the case of a compound fracture, one where the bone protrudes from the skin, **Do not attempt to set the bone!** If there is bleeding, control it by direct pressure or by a compression wrap. Splint the bone as is and/or wait for a rescue. Monitor the blood supply and the patient's over all pain.

Well, I think I better stop this before it turns into a book. I realize that it is long and not tons of fun to read, but if you have an interest in Emergency Medicine I encourage you to take an EMT class: get involved. I love EMS with a passion, and I love to talk about it, so if there are questions about this article or if reading it brings up topics not covered, please ask. There are plenty of things not covered here and plenty more to know. Even though I know you most likely will not retain everything I covered here, if you retain any you're just that much more ahead of the game. Have fun and cave safe!

And the Mud Said "Glop"

by Andrew Oberhardt

Ever since I'd started caving with the club I'd heard of the cave called Pig Hole, and it always had allure to me. I could never place exactly why I always wanted to go there, but I think it had something to do with the 120-foot entrance pit that doesn't require climbing back out. There is also the human desire to do things that are forbidden. Because of a death a number of years ago the cave is closed to all but experienced vertical cavers. That phrase can be interpreted many ways, but in this grotto it usually means that you have to have gone on a vertical trip with the club before and climbed rope.

After a few vertical trips I was ready for Pig Hole, but there is one more regulation we had to follow — be out by sundown. In order to do that and still get a good day of caving we met at Smythe at 9AM, an ungodly hour in my opinion especially for a Saturday morning. Along on the trip were John Deighan, Chris Garguilo, and Beth Geiger. We surprisingly didn't waste too much time, and were at the cave shortly.

I rigged the entrance with John's supervision so I could get some good rigging practice. After everyone inspected the rig, John made the first descent. A few minutes later we heard "off rope!" and I threaded my figure-8, made my calls, and started my rappel. This was the biggest rappel I'd ever done and it was pretty exciting. I stopped halfway down to admire the view. The entrance of Pig Hole is beautiful except for the tires at the bottom.

When we all got to the bottom John decided to show us the Empire Ledge and then do the "glop" walk, then see if we had time to do the 90-foot pit by the Mud Bridge. We climbed up a few rocks and made a right turn, leaving the second rope there so we won't have to drag it through the glop walk. After a few small crawls and a straddle pit or two we emerged in a room with a ledge revealing nothing but darkness. John told us that this was the Empire Ledge. It's 180 feet down to the cave floor; the Mud Bridge is halfway down somewhere. I'll take his word for it. We didn't go near the edge, but we did get an appreciation of the vastness of the pit by listening to the echo of our voices in the room.

Next stop was the "glop" walk. On the way there I was wondering why it's called that but my curiosity was soon satisfied. The mud at the beginning of the walk has the illusion of being avoidable. As it turns out you may be able to stay above of it and chimney for awhile, but eventually you'll need to step in it... "Glop" says the mud. Accompanied with the sound is the sinking feeling and then the "I've got your boots" game. Once through the mud we emerged in the middle of what appeared to be a large breakdown pile. John informed us that this

area is very mazy and he always gets lost there; Chris didn't know this part of the cave at all. Chris and Beth sat down, still a little tired from the previous night's speleo seminar, while John and I tried to find the correct hole to crawl through. After awhile I gave up and joined Beth and Chris. Finally John found the correct path and we followed.

Through the crawl we heard John yell back "That sucked! Next person come on through." John is the kind of person who never complains about anything so I knew it was a bad sign. As I was next I pushed my pack ahead and crawled on through the mud. The crawl was short but sticky, and by the time I got to the other side I was covered in mud. I carefully emerged on the other side, aided by some helpful comments from John, at the top of a fairly large downclimb. It's a little disconcerting when you come out of a crawl and can't even stand up before being exposed on the side of a small cliff. I wasn't sure if the mud on my clothes made it harder or easier, but I managed my way down after a little bit of deliberation and some harsh words.

As Chris was doing the last leg of the downclimb he demonstrated to us trainees one of the things not to do in a cave. He tossed his pack the last few feet to the ground before finishing the descent. Instead of staying where it landed, his pack rolled a little... then a lot and ended up rolling down a slope out of view. Luckily there wasn't a pit there and the pack was located and retrieved fairly quickly.

The next place we went was the Queen's Bath, which is a majestic pool of crystal clear water surrounded by numerous formations ranging from rimstone dams to stalagmites and soda straws. After the Queen's Bath we went through the crawl back to the previous room and started to look for the passage towards the Mud Bridge. We looked for over an hour when finally Chris remembered that it was a turnoff from the crawl to the Queen's Bath and we'd gone too far. By the time we located the Mud Bridge we'd wasted so much time that it was after 4 o'clock and the sun would be setting in just over an hour.

Chris and I went to retrieve the rope we had left earlier, and then we all headed toward the culvert that is the cave's other entrance. That was an interesting experience too since the pipe is just the right width that makes it almost impossible to climb. Instead I had to stick my arms up above my head and stand on the rocks around the pipe until I could reach the ground above and pull myself out. After derigging the entrance pit and changing we were off the property just before sundown and on our way to El Rodeo for dinner.

Quotable Quotes

eavesdropped and submitted by various folks

SW to AS: "I'd better readjust the tampon that I shot out when I was coughing."

EOM to KH: "Romance is all well and good, but it's not gonna cut my bread."

SK to ML: "Is that civilization up ahead?"

ML to SK: "Yes. Let's hope it's edible."

JW to AS: "Only two? I can handle a lot more than two at a time."

BC to SW: "I've had women running to the bathroom dripping and begging me to stop."

AS to BC (in bed): "I showered last night just before bed and I woke up all covered with slime."

BC to AS: "Sorry."

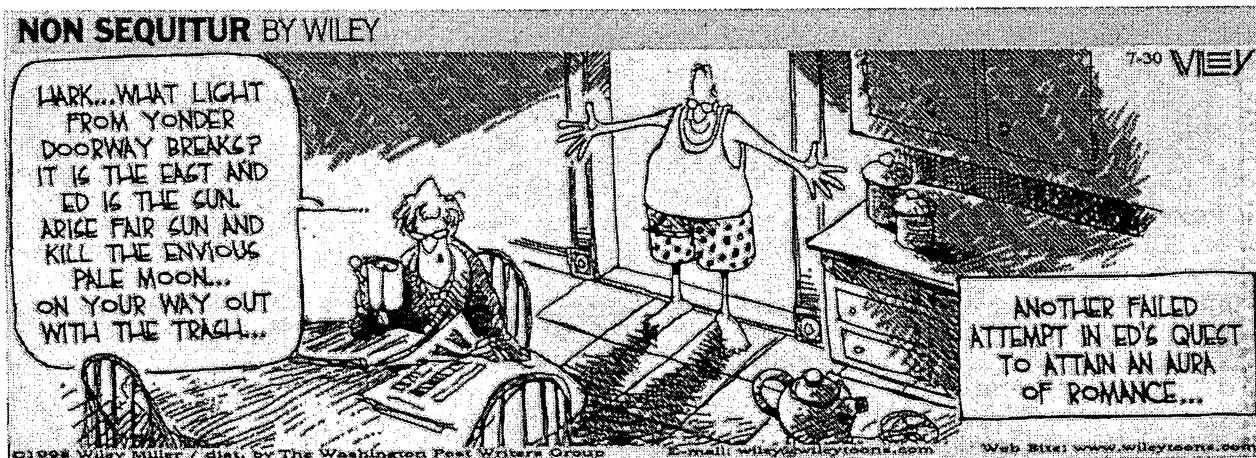
AB to BA: "I don't even like having that thing in my hand and you're putting it in your mouth!"

BA to AB: "That's all right, I'm a caver."

AS to SW: "If you find the opportunity to go 4-wheeling during a three minute recess, you might be a redneck."

EOM to SK: "I don't care whose dick it is — I want some."

AS over the CB: "Dos cosas en mis pantalones son huevos!"



Now What Do I Do?

by Raymond Sira, VPI 356, N88 22440L

I've been climbing ropes in one way or another for over 25 years, and I've learned no matter how well prepared and trained you are eventually something is going to go wrong. Learning what to do when it happens can help make the difference between a slight inconvenience and a major rescue or worse. I've had my share of close calls and have heard a lot of stories from my fellow cavers. Hopefully reading about our close calls and how we got out of them will help you get out of a jam someday.

One of the first times I ever rappelled was at an old cement railroad bridge in New Jersey. There was a 60' drop and a 120' drop. At the time it was still being used and every once in a while a train would come by and the whole bridge would shake. I was on the short drop about 15 feet off the ground when I became distracted by an oncoming train and my hair got sucked into the rack I was using. Being a training session, we had two ropes rigged and my dad was able to climb up and get me out.

This is probably the most common type of incident while doing vertical work that I know of, whether it's hair, gloves, shirts or whatever. But how could I have gotten myself out of this situation? To begin with we should look at how it could have been prevented in the first place. Part of the problem I had was the harness I was wearing. It allowed the rack to ride too high to the point where it was sitting in front of my face. A properly fitted harness would have kept the rack lower and away from my hair. Also if you have long hair keep it tied back and out of the way. A fast reacting bottom belay can be very helpful if you find yourself in this kind of situation.

What if I was the first person down the drop and this happened? The first thing you need to do is stop your decent. Having something jammed into your rack or figure 8 can do this very effectively and painfully. If you are not completely stopped you are going to want to do this by keeping tension on the rope below your rappel device. Wrapping the rope several times around your leg or around your foot and standing in it can do this and will leave both hands free. If you can, tie a loop in the rope and stand in that. Most likely you will need to remove your rappel device from the rope. To do this you will need to attach an ascender to the rope above your rappelling device and shift your weight onto it. You then remove your descender, unjam it and reattach it to the rope. If all you have are knots or your ascenders are in your pack you are going to have big problems. You should always rappel with a safety ascender attached to your seat harness and it should be able to be attached to the rope with one hand. Using a knife to cut yourself out should only be done as a last resort. A rope under tension can be severed with very little effort. If you are

going to be the first person down a rope consider wearing your full climbing system. I've seen a lot of people doing this in Mexico and other deep pits but then they seem to forget about it on the shorter drops back home.

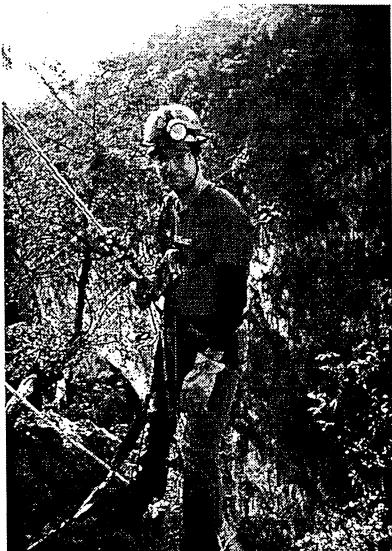
While at the TAG convention back in 1989 a group of us were going to drop two pits that were within walking distance of each other. One needed a slightly longer rope than the other. We split into two groups, each with a rope, and headed off to rig the pits. We would then switch pits when we were done. The pit I was helping to rig had about a 50' drop to a large ledge where a stream entered and flowed over the edge of the next part of the drop, about another 50'. The rope was redirected to a bolt at the top of this drop just to the side of the waterfall, however the water was hitting the wall halfway down and being deflected right into the path of the rope. The water flow wasn't excessive and the drop was short so we went ahead and rigged. Three of us looked at the drop and said "I think the rope reaches?" So we tied a knot in the bottom of the rope and I went down first. Not being sure if the rope reached, I put my full climbing system on before I rappelled. I rappelled down to where I would have to start getting wet and it looked like the rope was just touching the floor. So I jumped in and did a quick rappel to the bottom so as to stay as dry as possible. At about 10 to 15 feet off the floor I realized the rope was a little too short and there I was, left hanging in a waterfall. It would seem that we had rigged with the wrong rope. I managed to swing myself over to the side, where I caught hold of a very narrow ledge which I could balance on and stay out of the full force of the water. I was using a Gibbs ropewalker at the time, so there I was balancing on one foot in a waterfall trying to get the damn Gibbs pin in the hole. Did I mention I was using carbide and my electric lights were buried in my pack? I got myself back up the rope and even kept my carbide lamp lit during the whole process.

Most of us have practiced changeovers in trees and such. However in an emergency being able to do it quickly and effectively can mean the difference between life and death. Hypothermia can set in very fast when you're hanging in a waterfall and a number of cavers have died this way. Just recently a caver in TAG died while on rope when he could not perform a changeover and became hypothermic. Be familiar with your vertical system. Know how everything works and how it goes on. Practice your changeovers until it becomes second nature and next time you're practicing try doing it blindfolded. When you're in a wet pit be sure to have an electric light handy. Most carbide cavers I know also have a small helmet mounted electric light.

A few years ago on my second trip to Golondrinas in Mexico we had a fairly large group and decided to rig

two ropes at the pit, the first being a 1500' rope and the second being two 600' ropes tied together. We all rappelled the long rope to avoid passing the knot on the way down and the more experienced half of the group would climb the rope with the knot in the middle. I had switched my ropewalker from using Petzl ascenders to Gibbs thinking I might avoid the problems of my bungee cord being eaten by the knee ascender and the fact that they just seemed more secure. I've noticed the bigger the pit the more paranoid people seem to get. I was climbing tandem on top when I reached the knot and started to pass it. I had failed to consider the difficulties of getting my foot Gibbs past the knot with the weight of someone below me. After struggling for a few minutes to get the pin out it finally came loose along with the little string that held it to the shell and it proceeded to fall 500 some odd feet never to be seen again. ROCK!

When climbing I always recommend carrying one more ascender than your system requires, even if it is only a prussic knot. In this case climbing another 500' with one foot, although not dangerous, would have been very annoying. I ended up replacing the foot Gibbs with the Rock Exotica Micro ascender I was using as my safety to my seat harness and climbed the



Ray at the top of El Botano, Mexico.

rest of the way out with my Petzl handle jammer for my safety. I could just as easily have used the handle jammer on my foot and climbed with a prussic safety. Learn to improvise. Practice what you would do if any part of your system should fail. If an ascender were to fail on a frog system it would be difficult to climb with only one remaining ascender. You should also be certain that everything you are carrying is securely attached so it won't fall. I recall one incident where a caver at the top of a pit dropped a jacket he had taken off before starting his climb. From the bottom it looked like a caver in free fall.

A broken bungee cord on a double bungee rope walker is something that has happened to me a couple of times and can leave the system very difficult to use. Although I often carry a spare bungee cord in my cave gear it never seems to be around when you need it. What I did was to tie the broken bungee cord short and attach it only to the foot ascender. I then added a short cord or carabiner to the knee ascender and pulled it up as in a Mitchell system.

On a recent trip to Ellison's cave in Georgia it wasn't until I was getting ready to climb out of Fantastic Pit that I realized I was missing one of the foot stirrups for my ropewalker. I had the ascender but no way of attaching it to my foot. With a four foot length of webbing I was able to fashion one by looping around the foot, crossing at the top, looping around the ankle and tying it off with a water knot. The resulting stirrup is impossible to remove without untying it and may need to be cut off. For this reason I attached the ascender with a carabiner so it could be removed without untying the webbing. I found that even on a long climb it was no more uncomfortable than the sewn one I had on my other foot.

With the increased availability of off-the-shelf climbing systems, many new cavers aren't learning the fine art of how to put one together yourself out of a few simple items. It may not be the most efficient or comfortable but it will get you out of the cave in a pinch. A 25' length of webbing carried in your pack can be used in any number of ways from a handline to a seat or chest harness. Again practice how you would repair your climbing system if any part of it were to break or turn up missing.

A caver I know once told me about a trip where he was climbing rope and got to a point where the sheath of the rope had been abraded away and most of the core with it. It hadn't been padded properly by the climber before him. There was a belay below him which prevented him from tying the two ends together and another caver waiting to climb. A replacement rope was not readily available. So, how do you get the second caver up the drop safely? He took his safety ascender and attached it to the rope upside down and below the bad spot thus transferring the weight of the next climber to him. The caver at the bottom then climbed up to the first caver, passed him and continued to the top. The first caver then followed.

With more caving than ever before happening in remote places, self rescue is often the only option a caver has. There is a lot of work currently being done on self rescue techniques. I've seen demonstrations of modified climbing systems that allow a climber to more easily ascend a rope with a second person attached to him and rappel a rope while someone is hanging on it below you. There was a time when cavers felt the best way to get down a rope was with a body rappel and wouldn't be caught dead using this new fancy nylon stuff. There are a lot of new ideas out there and you shouldn't close your eyes to them because it's "not the way we used to do it."

Anyone who does vertical caving long enough is eventually going to either climb or rappel a rope only to find they left something at the bottom or top of the drop. I've seen people forget all kinds of things including packs, helmets and even other cavers. But what do you do when you get to the bottom of a drop only to find you don't have anything to climb out with? It seems impossible but check the NSS accident reports. It happens

more than you would think. I remember a fellow caver who rigged a 400' rope at a 500' cliff intending to do a change over at the bottom and climb back up only to discover he had left his ascending gear at the top. His friends at the top had no way to get the gear to him. In this case he had his safety ascender with him and the rope was mostly against the cliff. He was able to free climb some with the use of the safety and where the rope was away from the cliff face he used leg wraps to move himself up the rope.

Like the old caver joke says, "How do I get to Carnegie

Cave? Practice, Practice, Practice." This is the single most important thing you can do to avoid problems when doing vertical work. I know cavers who have caved for years and have never used a rack or climbed with a ropewalker. You should familiarize yourself with all of the commonly used vertical systems. Even if you don't plan on using them yourself your knowledge may help prevent someone else from getting into trouble.

There are lots more stories out there that I've heard and maybe someday I'll have the time to write them down for Part II. But in the meantime CAVE SAFELY.



"Oo! Grog run into a ... a ... Dang! Now which kind stick up and which kind hang down?"

Way Back: Spence's Cave

by Robert Loney

June 8, 1951

I. The expedition consisted of R.M. Bottoms, Jeanette Bottoms, R. M. Morgan, C. T. McDaniel, J. K. Clements, D. C. Counts, R. W. Loney, Adam Chow, Ed des Rochers. They were all in one party because there was only one place to go and one thing to do in the cave. Earl Thierry, Larry Sabatinos, and Jean Lowry were also on the expedition from the Wytheville Grotto.

II. The cave is located... about 150 feet up the side of a hill and the entrance is a hole about 2 feet in diameter.

III. The equipment needed includes about 400 feet of ladder and safety rope to go with it. If the party consists of good climbers, 200 feet of rope could be substituted for 200 feet of the ladder. Steel ladder is best because it is hard to get the ladder up after it has been used and steel ladder is the easiest to handle. The ladders can be secured to rocks at the top of the drops. About 200 feet is needed for the first drop. Telephones come in handy.

IV. The cave is comprised of a little room right below the entrance which is about five feet above the floor of the room. There is then about 50 feet of walking passage consisting of dry and wet rock. At the end of the 50 feet there is a hole that is the top of a 200 foot drop. Halfway down the drop or about 1/4 of the way is what it really is, there is a jumping off place that is a room which is very beautiful.

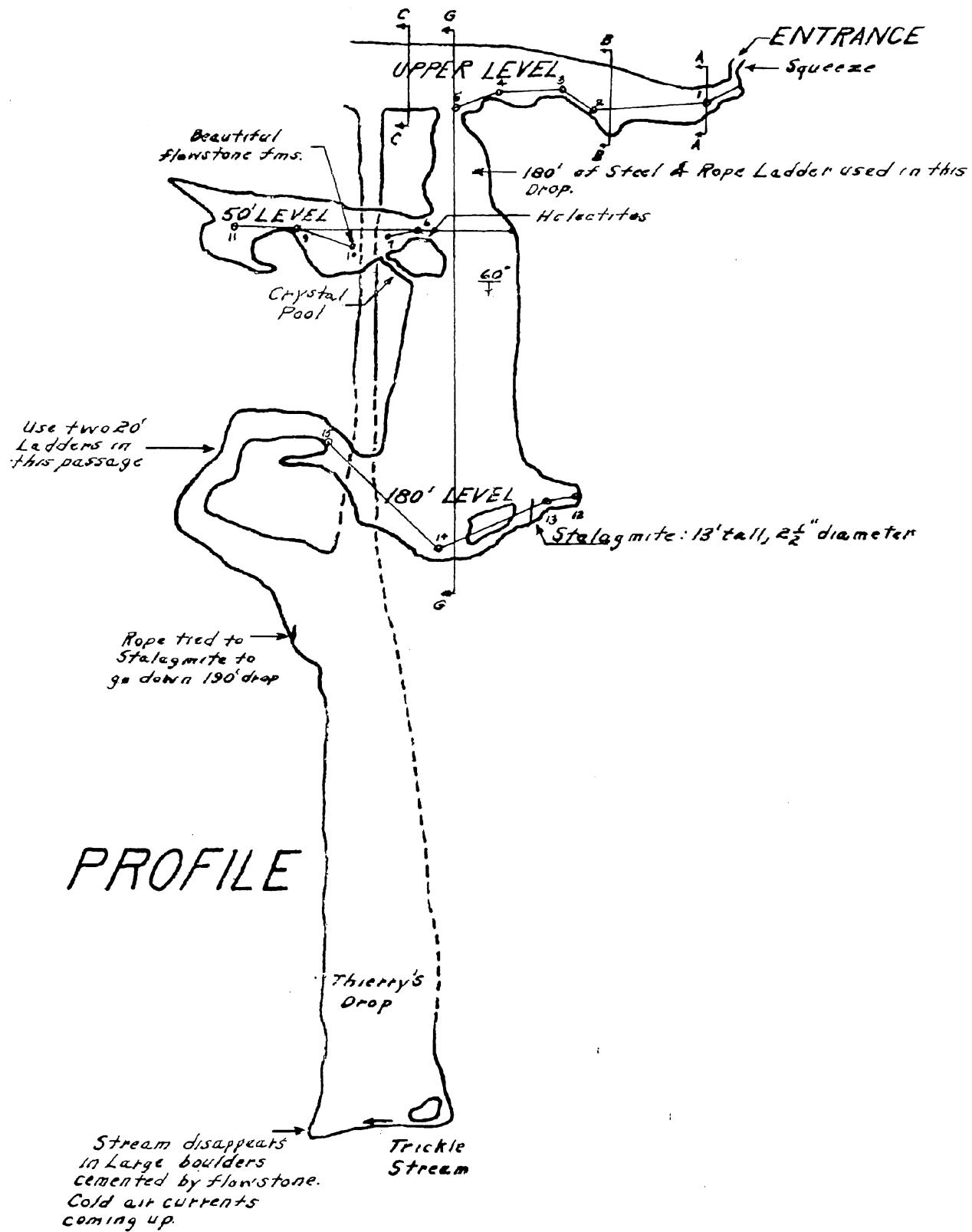
It consists of crystalline formations that are twisted into all sorts of shape and sizes. There are also many pure white stalagmites and flowstone. At the bottom of the drop it is very muddy and wet. There is a passage going two ways from the bottom of the ladder. One way goes into another beautiful room that consists of many crystalline structures and a stalagmite that is about 15 feet high and only about 4 inches in diameter throughout its whole length. The other way the passage goes about a very muddy 15 feet, goes up about five feet, makes a right turn, goes down about 8 feet, goes along about 15 feet, then down about 20 feet which can be climbed fairly easily, then the passage becomes rocky and starts a slanting down walking passage, this passage continues for about 40 feet and ends in another drop. This drop is

a series of small ledges an average of 20 feet apart. A good climber can go from ledge to ledge on a rope because the passage is only about three feet wide on the average. This drop is about 180 feet deep and ends in a stream that goes into the wall. It is not worth the trouble to climb down it. The cave is really just a slit in the ground about 400 feet from top to bottom and not over 15 feet wide.

V. The expedition left from the parking lot beside the M. C. Lab about 7:45 a.m. Sunday. We were supposed to meet the Wytheville Grotto in Wytheville at 8:00 a.m. and leave here about 6:00 a.m., but as usual we were late. We left Wytheville about 9:00 a.m. and got to the cave within two hours. We all got in the entrance and after we rigged the ladders, Earl Thieery went down, then Bob Loney went down with a telephone, the Jack Clements came down. Three or four more came down, but some stayed at the top the whole time. Earl and Bob went exploring the longest passage and came to the second drop. Earl went down on a rope and was saftied by Bob. This took quite a bit of time because it is hard to climb down and up 200 feet. Some others had been exploring the jumping off place and the room at the bottom of the cave and after Earl and Bob got back, it was time to start out. This took a very great length of time because about eight people had to climb up 200 feet of rope and a little trouble was had getting the people off the jumping off place because they had to climb with the aid of a safety on the face of an almost perpendicular wall about 15 feet to where the ladder was. Everybody's efficiency was lowered because it was cold sitting around waiting for people to climb here and there. Getting the ladders up took more time than anything because they kept getting stuck and were heavy with mud. By the time everybody was out is was about midnight. We stopped to eat a little food that was brought along, then left and got back to Blacksburg early Monday morning. Special mention should be made of Ray Rollston because we got him up at 6:00 a.m. Sunday morning to drive because we didn't have enough cars and he got back much later than he wanted to.

Way Back is a series of articles pulled from the club archives. The idea and this submission came from Lawrence Britt, keeper of the club files.

PROFILE OF SPENCE'S CAVE SCANNED FROM THE ORIGINAL MAP DATED 2/2/51



The Practice Rescue

by Jessica Dorr

On March 27, 1999, The VPI Cave Club sponsored a simulated horizontal cave rescue in Tawney's Cave. We brought together various rescue organizations from Southwest Virginia. We had talked in the past about sending out letters to get fellow cave rescuers out to our annual spring practice rescue. Unfortunately it always seemed that no one had the time to actually do the inviting. There was also talk of not knowing how beneficial it would be having others along for our practice rescue. It was supposed to be our time for learning and others may just get in the way. Then there was always the problem of past conflicts between rescue organizations.

We came to the realization at a safety committee meeting in the fall of 1998 that it was time to attempt a practice rescue with all the rescue organizations we didn't know too much about any more. The planning took some work, sending out letters, doing follow up calls, warning the Bat Ranch folks, etc. Luckily everyone was helpful and the day came with only a few minor flaws. Okay there was one real big one: "You mean Kirk's not in the cave?"

THE PEOPLE

Patient – Kirk Digby

Initial Response Team – Matt Burnett, Jud Strom, Brad Atkinson

Incident Commander and Team – Carol Zokaites, Jessica Dorr

Entrance – Mike Horne, Sandy Knapp

Underground Commander and Team – Jerry Redder, Eric Stanley, Dave Lambe

Medical Team – Don Anderson, Chris Rourke, Matt Cox, Carl Beaudette

Above Ground Communications – Walt Pirie, Wil Orndorff

Below Ground Communications – Tom Lovejoy, Valerie Bramer, Amanda Stiles

Route Flagging Team – Andy Yeagle, D.J. Douglas, Janice Matheson, Renee Blevins

Initial Stretcher Crew and Equipment Delivery – Dan Zokaites, Chris Gargilo, Ka Lee Farris, George "Buck" Marunich, Doug DalRymple

Rigging Team 1 (Formation Room and entrance to Zells Mill Road) – Dan McConnell, Harold Chrimes, Steve LePera, Andrew Oberhardt, Steve Wells

Rigging Team 2 (breakdown) – Joe Zokaites, John Fox, Mike Malsbury, Doug Cole, Sandy Ramsey, Rachele Clark

Cardiac Specialist – Marian McConnell

Stretcher Handlers – Eileen O'Malley, Allison Barth, Joey Fagan, John Coleman, Travis Coad, Edward Pilsbury, Jessica Jordan, Amanda Hartley, Lydia Weary, Nancy Kuebler, April Kuebler, Dave Colatosti, Danny Zokaites, James Whisenhunt, Molly Miller, Nathan Sharp, Dennis Gearhart, Zenah Orndorff

Total number of people – 59

There is some overlap in people's affiliations, so consider this a rough estimate.

VPI Cave Club – 36

Southwest Virginia Mountain Rescue Group – 5

Triangle Rescue – 3

Blue Ridge Grotto – 2

New River Valley Grotto – 8

Girl Scouts of America – 5

TIME LINE AND CONDENSED NOTES FROM INCIDENT COMMAND

8:30 AM – The Initial Response Team went to find the Patient before the Patient was actually in the cave. Sorry, Matt and others. After this minor setback, things went much smoother.

9:10 AM – Mike at entrance taking names and communicating back to Incident Command. Patient located near Saltpeter Room. Teams are being formed.

9:30 AM – Medical Team, Underground Command, and Communications in cave.

10:00 AM – Patient: P 80, BP 140/72, R 12, pupils equal and reactive

10:20 AM – From Underground Command to Incident Command: "Please send the stokes and gear to pack up the Patient. Find Communications Team, please get someone to Patient. Need Stokes team now, 6 people. Send in rig team and meet at Moon Room. Start to rig breakdown. 30 minutes after rig team is sent in, send in 20 people for stokes handling. Stokes sent to Saltpeter Room."

10:45 AM – Stretcher/Equipment Team in cave.

11:00 AM – Flagging Team and Rigging Teams in cave.

11:10 AM – Communications reports that patient needs cardiac care.

11:15 AM – Cardiac Specialist in cave.

11:20 AM – Rigging at Breakdown, need extra equipment. Stretcher Handlers in cave.

1:30 PM – Patient has no complaints, conscious, P 80, BP 170/90, R 18.

2:10 PM – Patient in Moon Room and heading out.
2:25 PM – In 20 minutes will be to first tyrolean in Formation Room.
3:10 PM – Patient out of cave.

COMMENTS

I was utterly amazed at how well we all worked together and how fast we got the patient to the surface. I would personally like to thank everyone who participated and encourage others to participate in the future. Thank you

Southwest Virginia Mountain Rescue Group, Triangle Rescue, Blue Ridge Grotto, New River Valley Grotto, Girl Scouts of America, and VPI Cave Club for participating and setting a precedent for future practice rescues.

Disclaimer: I'm sorry if I left anyone's name off or put you with the wrong team. Also, I'm not an expert on cave rescues, so some of the terms may have been used incorrectly.

Grotto Grapevine

by A.I. Cartwright

BANQUET

Banquet seems to bring out the best (and later, worst) in cavers. This year was no exception. Cheryl Jones gave an interesting talk about her caving days in exotic lands with Don Davison, complete with photos and audience hecklers. (Jean Cobb held back from telling the tree story, but ask her about it.)

The party continued into the wee hours, though it seems not as many people as usual took to the dance floor. Once again, rooms were set aside in the Newport Rec Center for those opting to stay the night.

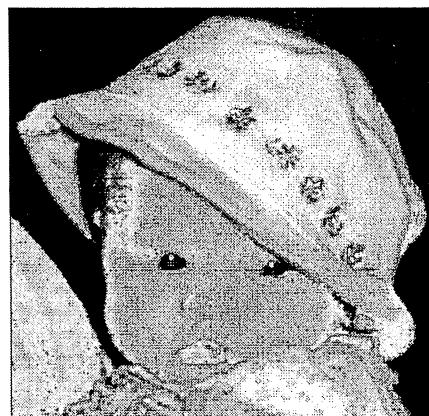
The awards ceremony, hosted by the club thespian Dave Colatosti, began by presenting certificates of appreciation to the landowners: the Sizer family, owners of Newcastle Murder Hole; Mike Newsome and the Bat Ranch, owner of Links cave; Doug Perkins and Lynn Richardson, owners of Buddy Penleys cave; the McConnell family, owners of Catawba Murder Hole. Then came the Guano Clusters, awards that are given to individuals who have contributed time and effort to the club over the year. Recipients of the Guano Clusters: Walt Pirie, for serving as one of the interfaces between the club and the university as the Faculty Advisor; Zenah Orndorff for her contributions for running our rescue callout; Ray Sira for his efforts in running and maintaining the club store; Kirk Digby for his efforts in maintaining and expanding the club gear; Lawrence Britt for keeping the club files and rescue gear; Mike Newsome and the Bat Ranchers for their continued openness and friendship to club; and Doug Perkins and Lynn Richardson for establishing Son of Picnic.

Once the niceties were over it was time to have some fun. Matt Burnett received a stylish tie as Best Dressed Caver. Steve LePera received the "Death and Taxes" award for his continued efforts as Treasurer. Jessica Dorr, Janice Matheson, Chris Hibshman, Katherine Shelor, Mike Malsbury, and Amanda Stiles received Certificates of Recognition for maintaining a 3.0 QCA or higher despite the distraction of the cave club. On the other end of the spectrum, Chris Garguilo, Joel Bergstein, Beth Geiger, and Chris Rourke received the "Real World Graduate Award" for opting to give the real world a try for awhile. Eileen O'Malley received the "Golden Keyboard" for continuation of The Trog. Ray Sira received a Blue Ribbon for being good natured over constant jokes about the size of his, uh, equipment. John Deighan received a Spider Man issue for being the club's "web crawler", and Philip Balister received a compass representing the guidance and direction that he provides while maintaining the cave club listserve. Craig Ferguson and Doug Perkins received Golden 8 Tracks for their musical contribution to club parties.

There was, of course, the standard awards. The Brain Bucket went to Kirk Digby and Judy Wasilweski for their "trip" in Mexico. Joe Thomson received the Good Driver's Award for his part in the fiasco. Flameout went to Beth Geiger. And after a year of bugging Dave, Eileen O'Malley finally received her "stolen" crowbar from last year's Banquet.

NEW TRAINEE?

Well, the club's having trouble getting trainees into the club nowadays, so Karen Little and Hugh Beard have devised their own scheme. Keely Beard was born on January 15th weighing in at 6 pounds, 10 ounces, with



Keely shows off her fashion flair.

a head full of red hair. Early reports gave her name as Elvis Ann Beard, but the source (unca Dave Shantz) was quickly discredited. Russ Peterson, quite taken with the little tyke, regularly updates his FTP site with photos. (Is this a hint, Sandy?)

WHERE'S THE WHITE PICKET FENCE?

After years of apartment-dwelling, Craig Ferguson finally bought a house in Blacksburg. He now resides on a street just off Glade Road. The house features a huge bathtub, a cool fake fireplace, and a phone jack in the master bathroom. (Craig, please – I'd rather just leave a message!) The unfinished basement has already hosted several bicycle races and the first ever Human Shuffleboard. Stay tuned for more crazy plans which may or may not include a roller derby.

ELECTION TIME, NEW MEMBERS, ETC.

Thank goodness the club treasurer is so good with numbers! After a failed attempt to elect members at a regular Friday night meeting, the president scheduled an official meeting to take place the Saturday of Picnic. Despite bouts of snow and sleet, the voting members stayed away from the fire long enough to vote for Allison Barth as President, Eric Stanley as Vice President, Andrew Oberhardt as Secretary, and Spot Rapier as Treasurer. (It took about five years, but we finally ousted LePera from the Treasurer's seat.) Both Eric and Andrew became members earlier this semester.



What? Eileen at El Bosono before getting membership?!

Before the club could close down for the summer, one more member was voted in. Eileen O'Malley finished her requirements the day of Picnic and joined the dark side at the meeting that night. It seems her membership was a shoo-in once word got out that she enjoyed naked caving. The overwhelming reaction at the fire? "It's about damn time!"

PICNIC

Well, you already read about the interesting weather conditions for Picnic this year. The food and beer were well received, especially the Woodchuck cider. Ray made a batch of his wonderful chili, and folks brought side salads and other goodies. Jerry and Joan Redder brought out a carrot cake Sunday morning in celebration of Joan's upcoming birthday. (Don't worry, the dog only squashed a few icing flowers.)

The biking crowd seems to grow every year. This year the Elvis Grotto rode out in force. They must be sloppy eaters, because each one arrived sporting a napkin around their necks.

Bad weather always makes for a good fire, and this year was no exception. The wind made for an interesting spark shower now and again, and the cold air added the usual element of "can't get too close, can't get too far."

PRACTICE RESCUE, THEN THE REAL THING

The club participated in its yearly practice rescue in late March at Tawney's. This time several other groups were invited to join in and share their knowledge. Check out Jessica Dorr's article (in this very issue!) which offers play-by-play coverage. Luckily Kirk Digby's injuries proved non-fatal and the group brought him safely to the Bat Ranch. (Have you ever seen a highline rigged in Tawney's?) After the rescue, while munching on snacks provided by Carol and Joe Zokaites, those with actual rescue experience critiqued the event. The final verdict? Not bad for a buncha amateurs. Talk continued that night at a birthday party for Steve LePera held in the abode of the Basement Boys (Steve Wells' lower half).

Just weeks later, members and trainees alike were awakened at 2:00 a.m. by Zenah Orndorff, slave driver of the rescue roster. The following summary comes largely from a post to the club listserv by a somewhat sleepy Alison Barth (who assisted at the entrance).

A group from Concord College went caving in New River Cave. They split into two groups at the China slide, but Charles got separated from the groups. Each group thought he was with the other group. The two groups met at the entrance at midnight and discovered

that Charles wasn't with them. They went back to the cave and searched for awhile, but were too tired to continue. One of them knew Mike Newsome, so he headed to the Bat Ranch for help.

The first crew of six VPI cavers went into the cave at 2:00 a.m. to search. Several other groups were sent into the cave throughout the night and field phones were strung from the entrance to the Lunchroom. Charles was found around 6:00 a.m. way downstream from the China Slide. He was cold and miserable but otherwise fine, and he caved out with a group of three VPI cavers.

Wil Orndorff took charge at the cave entrance. He used a cell phone initially to communicate with Zenah, but reception was spotty. The hams were called in and communication resumed with Philip Balister at the cave entrance, Phil Benchoff at the road at the base of the mountain, and Eileen O'Malley at the Orndorff house.

Overall about 20 to 25 VPI cavers showed up and six or seven people from Concord who were not on the original trip.

Shortly after 7:00 a.m. the lost soul from Concord was out of the cave and the last of the search crews appeared at the entrance. The field phones were retrieved and the weary rescuers headed home, some to work, some to class, some to bed.

YTR

Sixty-some cavers came to Young Timer's this year, again at the WVAC's field house in West Virginia. Student grotto cavers abandoned camp on Saturday to swarm into nearby caves. Saturday evening was spent at the fire discussing the day's trips and planning for next year. As hoped, the event is gaining popularity.

Trainee Doug Cole got more than he bargained for: instead of conning the cute chick from the fire into his tent, he ended up getting yanked on. (Stick with the club awhile, Doug. You'll get the hang of it.)

Before heading home on Sunday, a group of VPI cavers led by Conservation Chair Joey Fagan stopped at Island Ford Cave for a clean-up trip (thanks a lot, Sandy K.). Turns out a group had cleaned the cave the prior weekend, so there were only a few bags of trash to haul out. Sandy Knapp, Steve LePera, Steve Wells, Matt Burnett, Chris "Guido" Garguilo, and Ray Sira did manage to clean some graffiti from the walls. Kirk Digby opted to sit outside the cave in protest of the cleanup. Reports indicate that the highlight of the trip was watching Guido slosh through the quicksand in search of the deepest spot.

ROPE RUNNING

Once again the Orndorff clan opened their front yard as a site for rope training/racing practice. Bring your gear and your energy. Sessions start at 5:00ish on Wednesday evenings, but keep your ears open — the night may change. There's no excuse for not running rope at OTR this summer. Says Wil, "I bet T.J. and Naomi can beat all of you slackers on a frog system."

Nine Months with the Willamete Valley Grotto, Part II

by Carl Bern

It was over a month before I went caving with Edd and Blair again. I had been taking advantage of the good weather by climbing volcanoes. A trip to the caves of the Marble Mountains of California, however, sounded like something I did not want to miss. It was the Thursday before the July 4th weekend. Edd, Blair, and Blair's brother Garry picked me up in Edd's new van and we drove down to California.

The caves of the Marble Mountain Wilderness are reached by hiking four or five miles from a trailhead deep in the Klamath National Forest. The trail is steep in places and we were packing both camping gear and everything needed for vertical caving in alpine caves. The scenery alone made up for the walk, though. We were staying in a beautiful wooded alpine valley with marble karst looming above us. There is little soil or vegetation on the karst and so it looks like a mountain of bleached bone. Patches of snow still remained in areas shaded by trees despite the fact that it was July. Even for 5,000 feet this was unusual, indicating a heavy snowpack the previous winter.

There is a Forest Service shed in the valley that the cavers use to store gear between trips. When we arrived, Garry, Ed, and Blair were a bit anxious to discover that this shed was locked and no one had arrived with a key. They had not packed in tents because they each had a tent in the shed. Eventually a caver did show up with a key. The three of them had been suggesting that I might have company in my one-person tent so I was relieved as well.

The next day everyone dawdled in the sunshine, slowly assembling his or her gear. With the heat of the day almost upon us we ventured up onto the karst. As I sweated in my T-shirt it was interesting to hike past more snow. Many of the cave entrances and deeper depressions in the karst were packed with it. I discovered the reason why when I went into Stash Cave with Mike and Nikki McCormick. The temperatures inside the caves of the Marble Mountains are in the neighborhood of 39-40F. I was extremely glad to be wearing my plastic suit from B&C Wunderwear as the caves are also quite damp. Stash Cave even contained a gurgling stream of snowmelt on the day we visited. Mike explained the story behind the cave's name as we scrambled over breakdown. During early exploration of the area Stash was used as a place to store equipment between weekends.

As we caved I tried to pick out differences between the features of this marble cave and the limestone caves I have explored. The appearance of the marble differed from limestone in a way that was obvious even to me. It varied in color from the bone white I saw on the surface to gray inside the cave. The marble was rougher than most limestone I have seen. It had formed crystals

fairly uniform in size and visible to the naked eye. These were the result of heat and pressure that had metamorphosed the limestone into marble.

The main attraction of Stash Cave is that it contains moonmilk as do several other caves in the Marbles. Moonmilk, as I saw it in Stash, is a white substance that oozes out of a crack in the ceiling in a tight crawlway. It has a texture that is a mixture of clay and cottage cheese. As the three of us passed through the crawlway going in and coming out we were certain that this was what it must be like to be a Q-tip in a person's ear. Soon we were back in the blinding sun on the surface. The white moonmilk contrasted sharply with the darker mud on our coveralls.

Our next destination was Black Bee Cave, just a short distance away. This cave contained a dig that Garry wanted to pursue. Edd, Blair, and Garry were already in Black Bee when the McCormicks and I reached the entrance. We all spent the rest of the afternoon taking turns in the dig. It was a promising lead because we could see a narrow pit just beyond. The digging itself was grim though. The most effective way to work involved hanging upside down in the sloping passage and moving rocks and wet gravel past our faces. Frigid water oozing through the dig sucked the heat away as fast as we generated it. Every so often one of us would bolt to the surface to warm up in the sun. After much work we managed to open the constriction. As the sun vanished behind the mountain above we lowered a short rope into the dig. Edd made the rappel into the unknown. Much to our disappointment the pit ended fifteen feet down and he found no good leads at the bottom.

It was now Friday night and more people were in camp. Among them was Steve Knutson. I had heard his name before but could not remember where I had heard it. As the weekend went on, though, I did figure out why I had heard it. Steve has coordinated and led the exploration of the caves of the Marble Mountains since such efforts began. He also participates in international cave expeditions each year and is the cave expert on staff at Oregon Caves National Monument. Steve had brought with him a binder containing printouts of all of the cave maps he has drafted for the Marbles project. The maps were blown up to large scale making them easy to read, and a grid in the front of the binder helped relate each page to the others. Cavers poured over this binder by the light of headlamps and the campfire. One of the main objectives of this weekend was to eliminate some of the leads marked on the maps. Trips were planned and destinations discussed. Most of the caves in the Marble Valley are part of the Bigfoot system and I wanted to see part of that. I got on a trip with Garry and Blair to check some leads accessible by the Monkey River entrance. We went to bed at a reasonable hour with the ex-

pectation of a long trip the next day.

Steve Knutson led us to the Monkey River entrance the next day. Even with him leading the way we still spent some time locating the entrance. Sometimes just finding the way from one island of rock in the karst to another took a few minutes. Once at the cave we changed into our warm cave gear in the blazing sun. My black suit became an oven in no time. I rigged the rope and wasted no time rappelling into the cave.

Before long Blair, Garry, Edd and the McCormicks were in the cave as well. We negotiated the second drop and then split up. Edd and the McCormicks were checking leads closer to the entrance. Blair, Garry, and I were going further into the cave. We made our way passing landmarks that had been described to us that morning. Finally we reached a room that contained a squeeze that would take us to the leads we were to check. The problem was finding the squeeze in this room full of breakdown. We must have spent half an hour looking for it. Finally, I found a crevice between two huge blocks of breakdown. There was a hint of air moving through the crevice. I honestly hoped that this was not the way on, but I went in anyway. Once I had my whole body in the fissure I slid to the bottom of it. Here I found some space off to one side. I slowly rotated my body into it. This space was directly beneath one of the huge blocks. I was just glad it was large enough for me to get my face away from the rock. Once free of the squeeze I slid down a slope and found going stream passage. This was the way. I called out to Garry and Blair.

Blair took one look at the squeeze and stated that he would not fit. Garry and I talked him into making an attempt. Blair got into the squeeze. He made good progress at first and then not so good. I started encouraging him and giving him advice. Blair then indicated in no uncertain terms that it would be better if I was quiet. Garry took over the verbal work, but could not talk him through. Blair backed out and let his brother have a go at it. Garry made it through the squeeze with some effort. He then talked Blair into the fissure again, but with no more success than before. Garry and I made our way back through the squeeze. I had a lot more trouble coming out, but this was entirely my own fault. I had stuck my Mag-Lite in the breast pocket of my cave suit while waiting in the stream passage.

We ate our lunch in the breakdown room. This was to be our turn-around point. There was a palpable tension between the two brothers. I made a few attempts at conversation and gave up. We finished lunch in silence.

When we met up with Edd and the McCormicks they had mopped up all their leads. Everyone started to head for the surface, but I convinced Edd to check out some more of the cave with me. We went looking for another entrance we had been told about. The entrance eluded us, but we saw a lot more cave before we ascended to the surface.

Back up top we discovered that some rodents had made lunch of my T-shirt. Garry's GPS case apparently tasted good as well because it had also had nibble marks. We all hurried back to camp as light faded from the sky. Navigating the karst by headlamps alone would have been a challenge.

Not everyone was back at camp. Steve and some others were surveying and would not come back until dawn. The rest of us celebrated the Fourth of July as best we could. We had the campfire and some liquor. Then we began eyeing four old mattresses that had been dragged out of the Forest Service shed. They had definitely served as home for some small creatures in winters past. Now they were going to serve as our fireworks display. I was reminded of the furniture burned at Bat Ranch parties in Virginia. This was going to be a little touch of home. One by one the mattresses were dragged onto the fire. Unfortunately they were not made of synthetic materials but of cotton and on top of that they were damp. As a result our mattress fire never reached the roaring inferno stage. With some poking though, they burned well enough. We kicked back and talked and watched the glowing red springs emerge from the charred cotton. The stars were on full display up above. It was a good Fourth of July.

I spent most of the rest of the summer climbing, but I did make it out for a grotto camp-out in Gifford Pinchot National Forest. We spent two days digging and surveying in lava tubes and on Saturday night we ate most of a pig that had been boiled in oil. Amy arrived in Portland in October, about the same time as the winter rains. We were witness to an unbroken thirty day stretch of precipitation. The weather made caving an optimal activity and the two of us helped with the survey of several lava tubes. As a reward Edd and Blair took us on a long sport trip through Dynamited. We saw most of the cave and even got on rope a few times.

Edd and his wife Cindy invited Amy and I over for dinner on Thanksgiving. We were surprised since we had not known them very long but we accepted immediately. It just goes to show that one can find the caver family even outside the VPI Grotto. Dinner was wonderful and I even managed to do a good job making the pumpkin pies. After dinner we were channel surfing and found Bill Nye the Science Guy doing his episode on caves. Who could ask for more?

Amy and I hooked up with Edd and Cindy again for New Year's Eve. Amy's birthday is the same day and so we celebrated that first with a feast of crab legs at their house. Then we all went out for drinking and dancing at an old school that had been converted to a hotel and party house.

In December Amy got a job offer in Denver that she could not refuse. We made the decision to move immediately. We were both excited to see Colorado and we are both extremely happy to be here now. Still I miss the friends I made in my short time in Oregon. It is a good thing Convention is only a few months away.

Memories Hecho en Mexico

Drawing Journal by Suzie Warren

MEXICO 98

DEC 19
Saturday

DAY 1



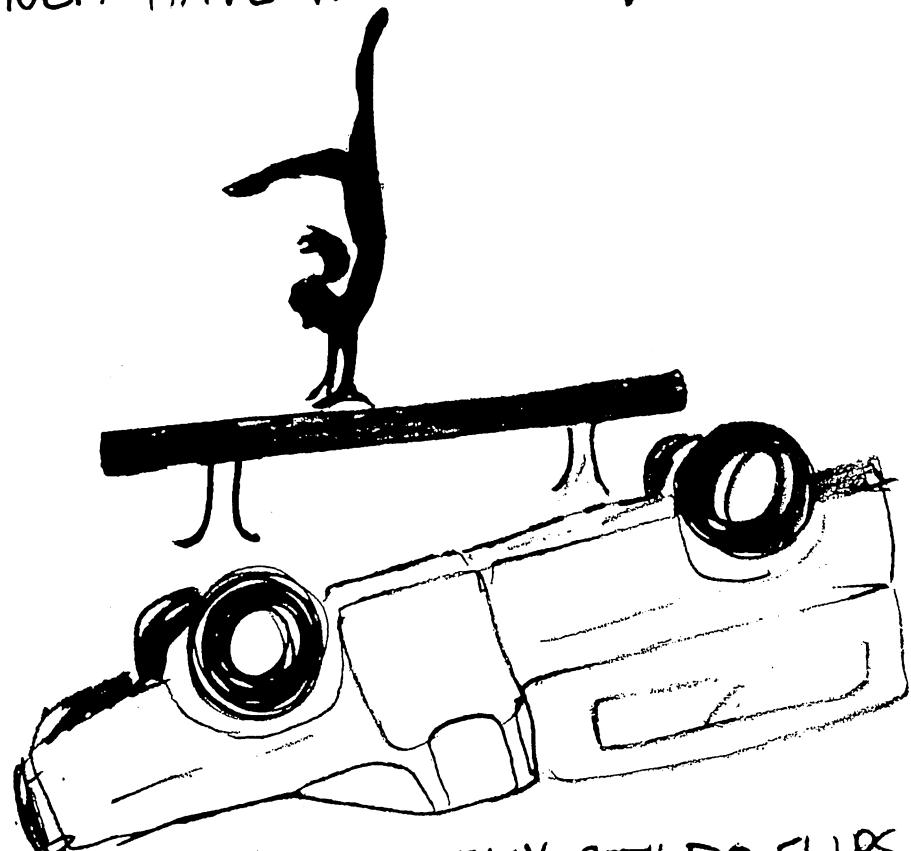
Molly STARTS
OUT THE
TRIP WITH
FINESSE...
MAKING US
VERY
PROUD.



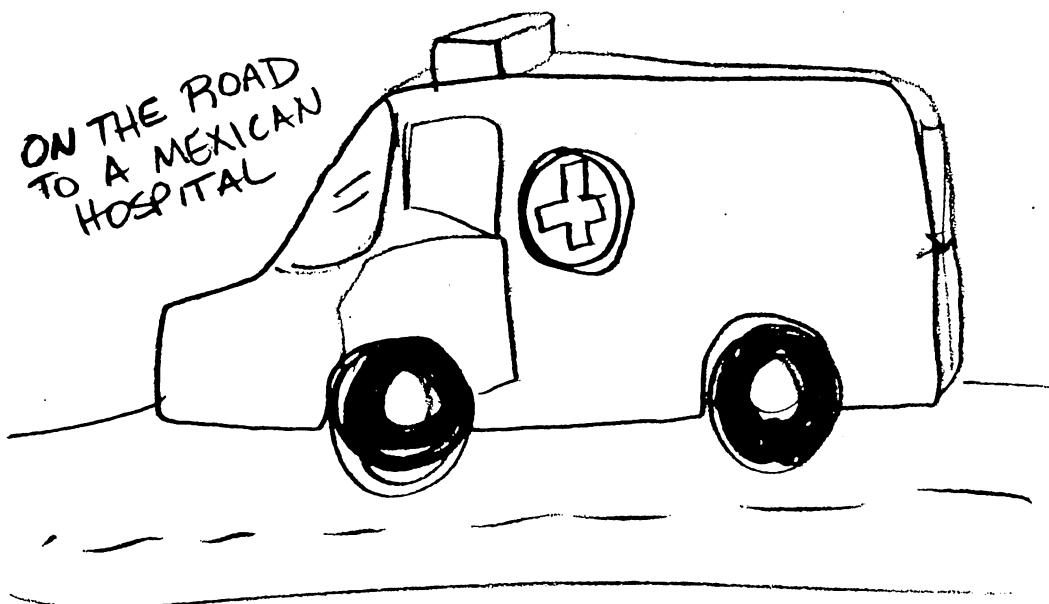
DAY 2 DEC 20 sunday



WHAT DOES A GYMNAST AND JOE'S TRUCK HAVE IN COMMON?



... THEY BOTH DO FLIPS



¡QUÉ SUERTE!



JOE: WORLD'S LARGEST SOURCE OF ADRENALIN. ABILITY TO BREAK THROUGH SAFETY GLASS WITH A SINGLE PUNCH WITH **MARY** A SCRATCH... AND STILL HAVE THE STRENGTH TO HELP HIS CRONIES.



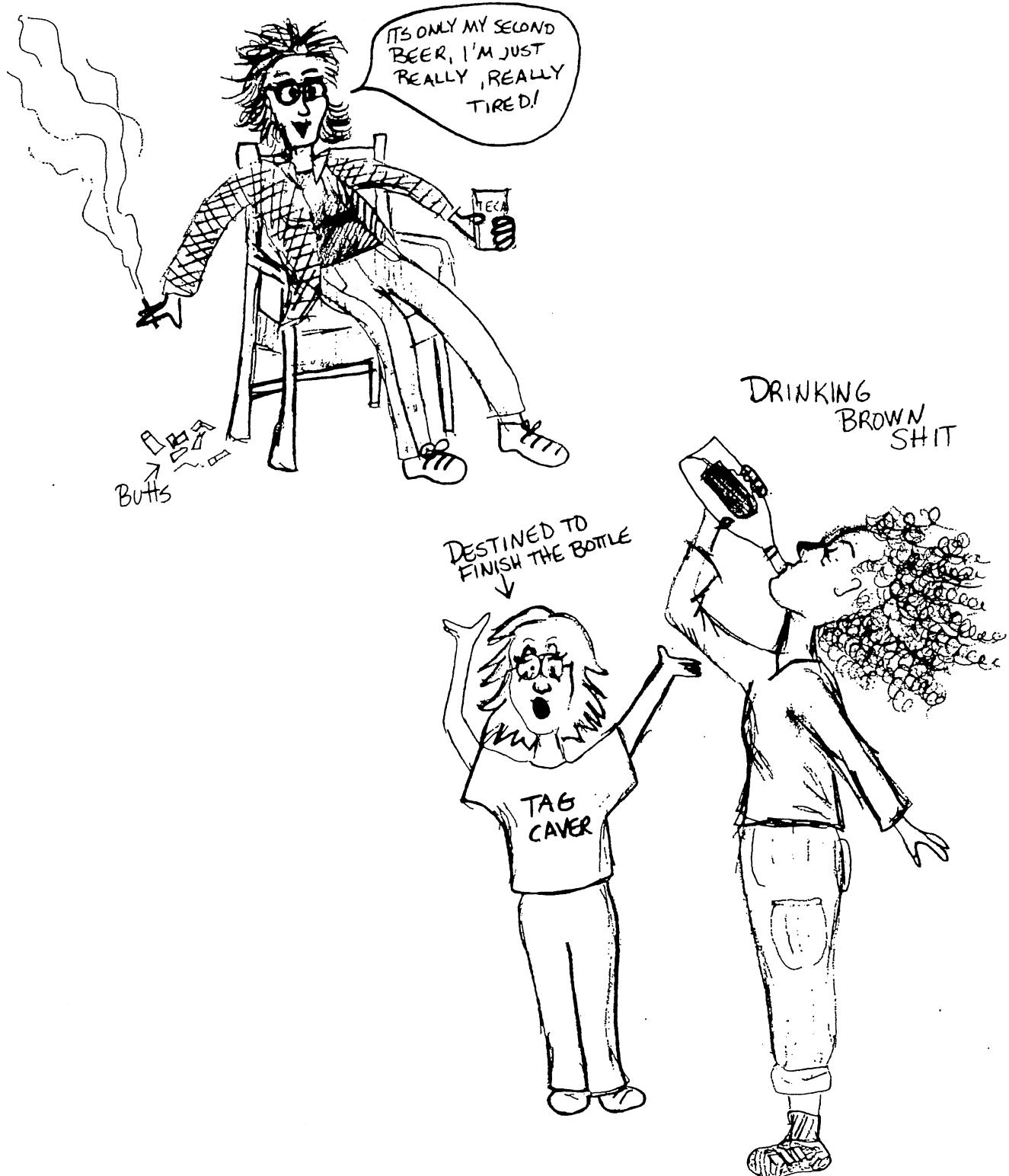
JUDI: DISCOVERED SECRET ABILITY TO FLY THROUGH THE AIR. MOST ONLY DREAM OF SELF PROPELLED FLIGHT. THE ONLY COST WAS A FULL BLADDER AND A CASE OF WHIPLASH.



KIRK: KNEW THAT THICK SKULL WOULD COME IN HANDY ONE DAY. DESPITE BEING STUCK FOR A BIT UPSIDE DOWN SMUSHED IN THE DIRT, WAS STILL ABLE TO TELL CONFUSING JOKES TO THE GANG.

DAY 3 & 4 DEC 21-22 Monday
Tuesday

DRUNK IN CIUDAD VICTORIA



A QUICK LESSON IN TERMS...

BOYFRIEND/GIRLFRIEND:



SURROGATE BOYFRIEND:



DAY 8 DEC 26 Saturday
Drive to Hustle

HERE BEGINS THE ADVENTURES OF FARTMAN

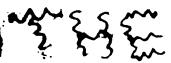


Day 9 Dec 27 Hike to Del Barro



WITH FART BOY OUT OF THE WAY, FART MAN HAD TO RELY ON HIS FLATULANCE SOLELY WITH WHICH TO WAGE HIS BATTLES.

HIS NEXT CHALLENGER



THE BEAST PASSED MORE GAS THAN FARTMAN HAD EVER BARED WITNESS TO...

THE POWERS OF FUMPI WERE CRUMBLING.

COULD THIS BE THE END OF FARTMAN?? FARTMAN HAD ONLY ONE CHOICE.



HE KNEW HE COULD NOT WIN THIS BATTLE, BUT HE HAD NO WAY TO GET AWAY FROM THE ANIMAL. WEAK AND GROGGY OUR HERO WAS FOUND AND RESCUED BY A FAIR MAIDEN NAMED EILEEN, WHO UP TO THE POOR WEARY SUPER HERO

LITTLE DID OUR HERO KNOW THAT HIS MOST DEADLY CHALLENGE WAS SOON TO COME...

THE AIR MATTRESS VIBRATING
GAS EXPLOSIONS OF...

FART LADY!



FART MAN HAD DESTROYED FARTBOY, THAT WAS EASY, BUT THE BURRO, WHO WAS LIKELY ONE OF FART LADY'S FLUNKIES, NEARLY DESTROYED HIM. COULD HE EVEN ATTEMPT A BATTLE WITH HER?

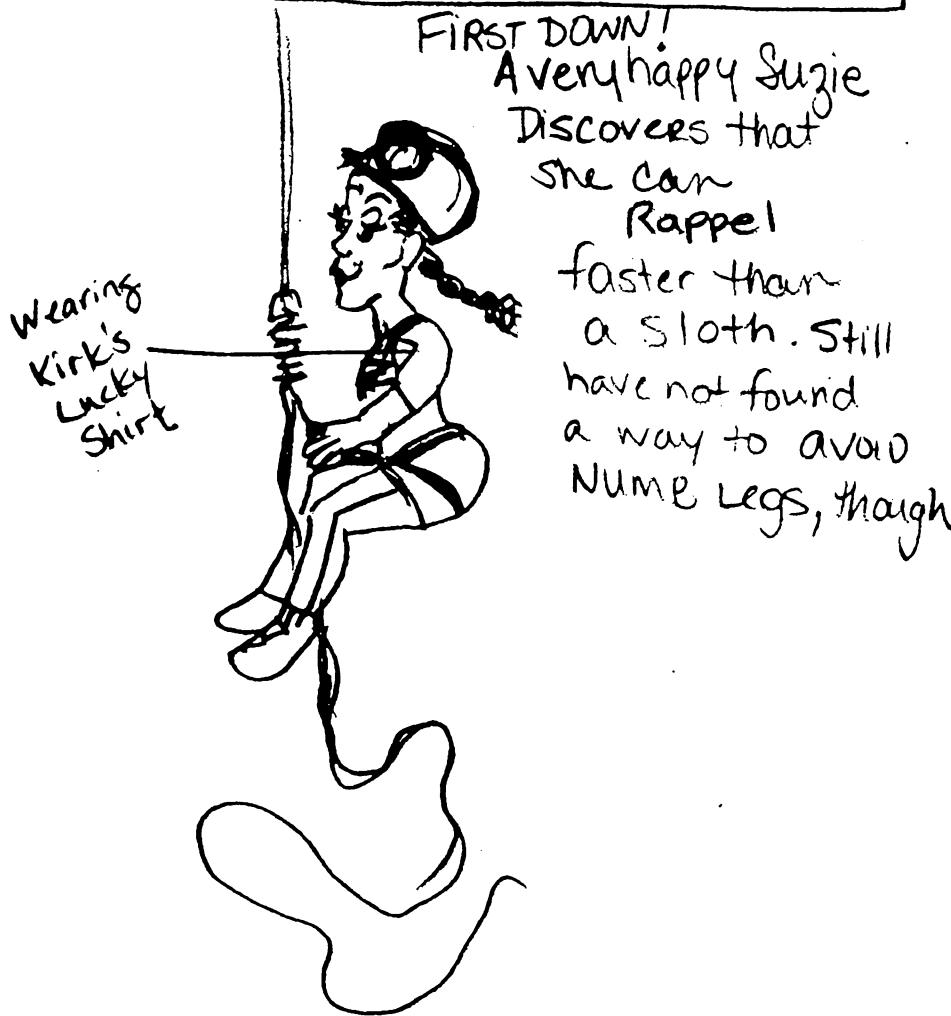
MAYBE, BUT SHE'S GOT MANY TRICKS. THE UNBRIDLED ESTROGEN AND POWERS OF FUMPI WOULD OBLITERATE AN UNTRAINED WARRIOR. FARTMAN KNEW HE COULD NOT WIN. THE ONLY CHOICE WAS TO SLEEP IN HER TENT AT THE PIT OF FUMPI AND HOPE SHE'D BECOME AN ALLIE.

IF YOU FIND A CHANCE TO
GO FOUR WHEELING IN A
THREE MINUTE RECESS ...
YOU MIGHT BE A
WHISENHUNT.

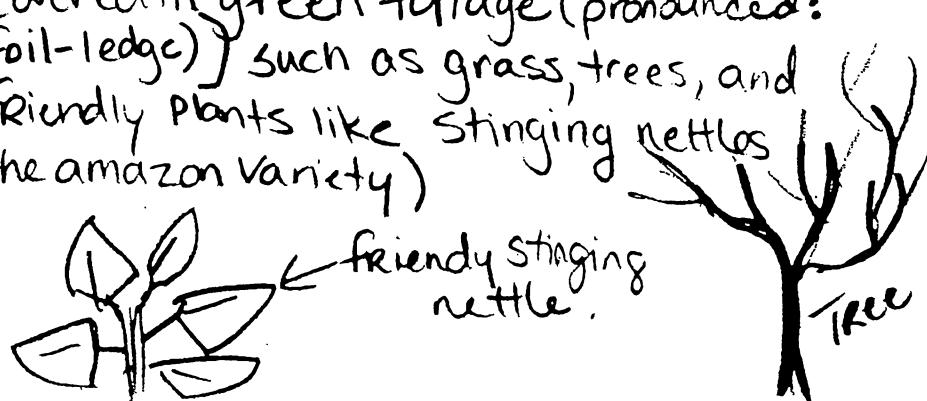


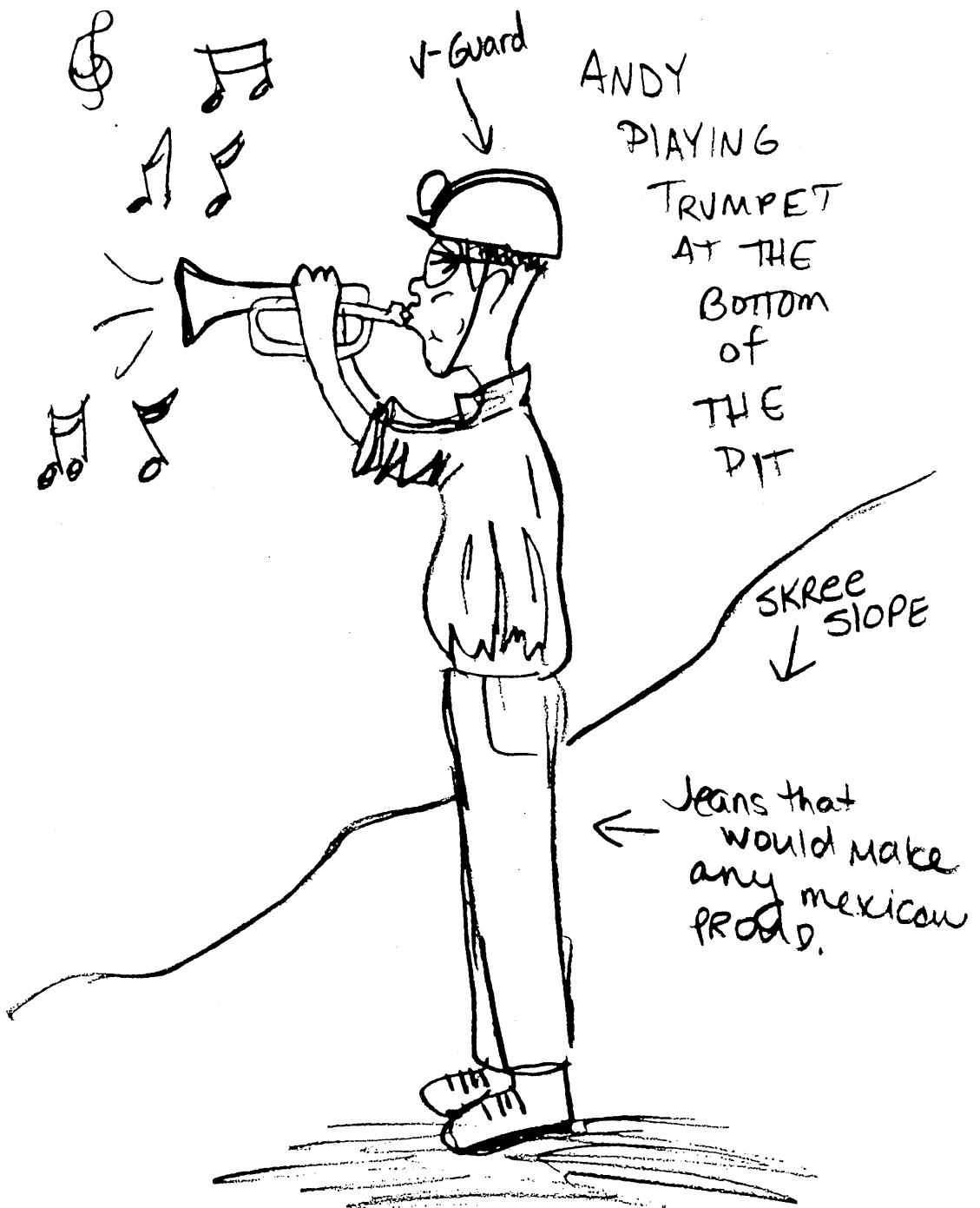
DAY 10 Monday Dec 28

Rappelling into Sotano del Barro



Bottom of Pit: A Lovely place
Covered in green foliage (pronounced:
(foil-edge)) such as grass, trees, and
friendly plants like stinging nettles
(the Amazon variety)





Note from your lovely editor: Suzie's saga certainly needs no help, but I thought I'd throw in some random photos just to take up space. Some photos taken by me (Eileen, you dumbass), some by Steve Wells. The good ones are probably all mine.



Gee, what can you say about this one?!



The Brothers Whisenhunt



A dumb-luck photo of a bat in the cave behind The Hotel Tanninul.



Me by some weird cool thing at The Birdhouse.



It's New Year's Eve. What else you gonna do but ride on top of an elevator?



Lots of route planning took place in Gigante parking lots.

Hanging Out with Four "Locals"





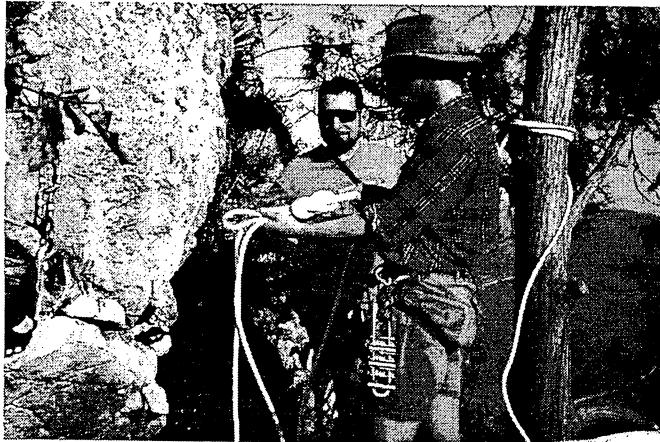
Checking the Rope for Damage



1500 feet
of rope

Well *someone* had to play while
Judy and Joe were in the hospital!





Checking It Twice



Sandy freaked out over a couple of little insects over her bed.



Molly About to Take the Plunge at El Sotono



The Whole Gang (minus Steve, the photographer)

From the Signout

compiled by Kirk Digby

VPI cavers and their guests logged in 1736.5 caver hours from 12/6/98 to 5/1/99.

12/19/98	Mexico	Joe Thompson, Judy Wasilewski, Eileen O'Malley, Sandy Knapp, Kirk Digby, Andy Sabolowski, Susie Warren, Molly Lucier, Bob Cohen, Steve Wells, Amanda Stiles, James & Philip Whisenhunt	Fuck him if he can't keep his wheels on the ground.
1/16/99	Clover Hollow	Wil Orndorff, Ben Townsend, Reggie Reid, Yvonne (R's babe), Sam Harvey	Best thing was – no LePera!
1/24/99	Pighole	Chris Rourke, Ed Pillsbury, Doug Cole, Bryce Bolton, Brad Atkinson, Andrew Oberhardt, Eric Stanley, Matt Burnett	I'd really like a set of cow nuts.
1/30/99	Starnes	Dave Colatosti, Eric Stanley, Kirk Digby	The webbing will catch you... in theory.
2/6/99	Newcastle Murder Hole	Ray Sira, Kirk Digby, Mark Engle, Mike Frommer, Errol Glidden, Yvonne Droms, Carl Heitmeyer	Ray is trying to become Carl through his lamp care habits.
2/7/99	Pighole	Eileen O'Malley, Suzie Warren, Sandy Knapp, Judi Wasilewski, Kirk Digby	Hmm.... I don't remember it pouring down rain when we left town.
2/13/99	Links	Andrew Oberhardt, Kevin Rock, Steve LePera, Alison Williams, Ed Pillsbury, Mike Malsbury, Mark MacKay	700 miles just for this?
2/21/99	Honaker	Zenah Ordronoff, Sue Setzler, Sandy Knapp, Karen Everhardt, Ray Sira	Huh! Huh! That looks scary.
2/22/99	Tawney's	Joel Bergstein and 10 from Venture Out	"We don't have to go back through that... do we?"
3/6/99	Scooter's Boneyard	Ray Sira, Steve Wells, Wil Orndorff	The hell with Ecrins. New River Supply has helmets & brackets under \$12 more comfy than Cavemaster!
3/13/99	Glade	Dave Colatosti, Matt Burnett, Eileen O'Malley	I kicked Matt's ass despite the long flowing hair down to my knees.
3/31/99	Pighole	John Deighan, Eric Stanley, Doug Cole	My rope was still there! (since 2/21/99)
4/3/99	Clover Hollow	Philip Balister, Eric Stanley, Steve LePera	Trip is much better when you leave the ropes in the cave.
4/18/99	Newberry's	John Deighan, Kevin Rock, Andrew Oberhardt	"John, did you leave your pack at the bottom of the pit?"
4/22/99	New River	VPI Cave Club Graveyard Shift	This is what happens when you divide a 15 person trip into two 7 person trips.
4/24/99	Scott Hollow	Steve LePera, Steve Wells, Amanda Stiles, Two JMU people, One NNJG guy	We saw the whole cave in about 3 hours. What's the big deal?

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