

# THE TECH TROGLODYTE

A JOURNAL OF THE VIRGINIA TECH GROTTO OF THE  
NATIONAL SPELEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

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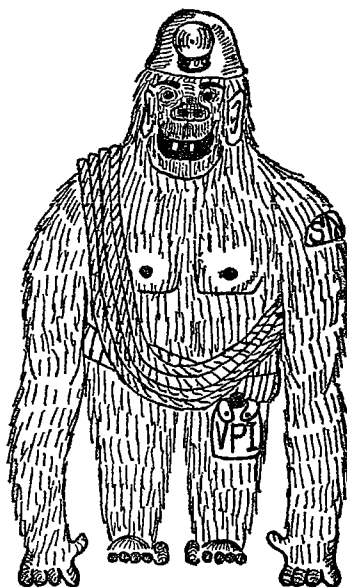
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WINTER QUARTER, 1973

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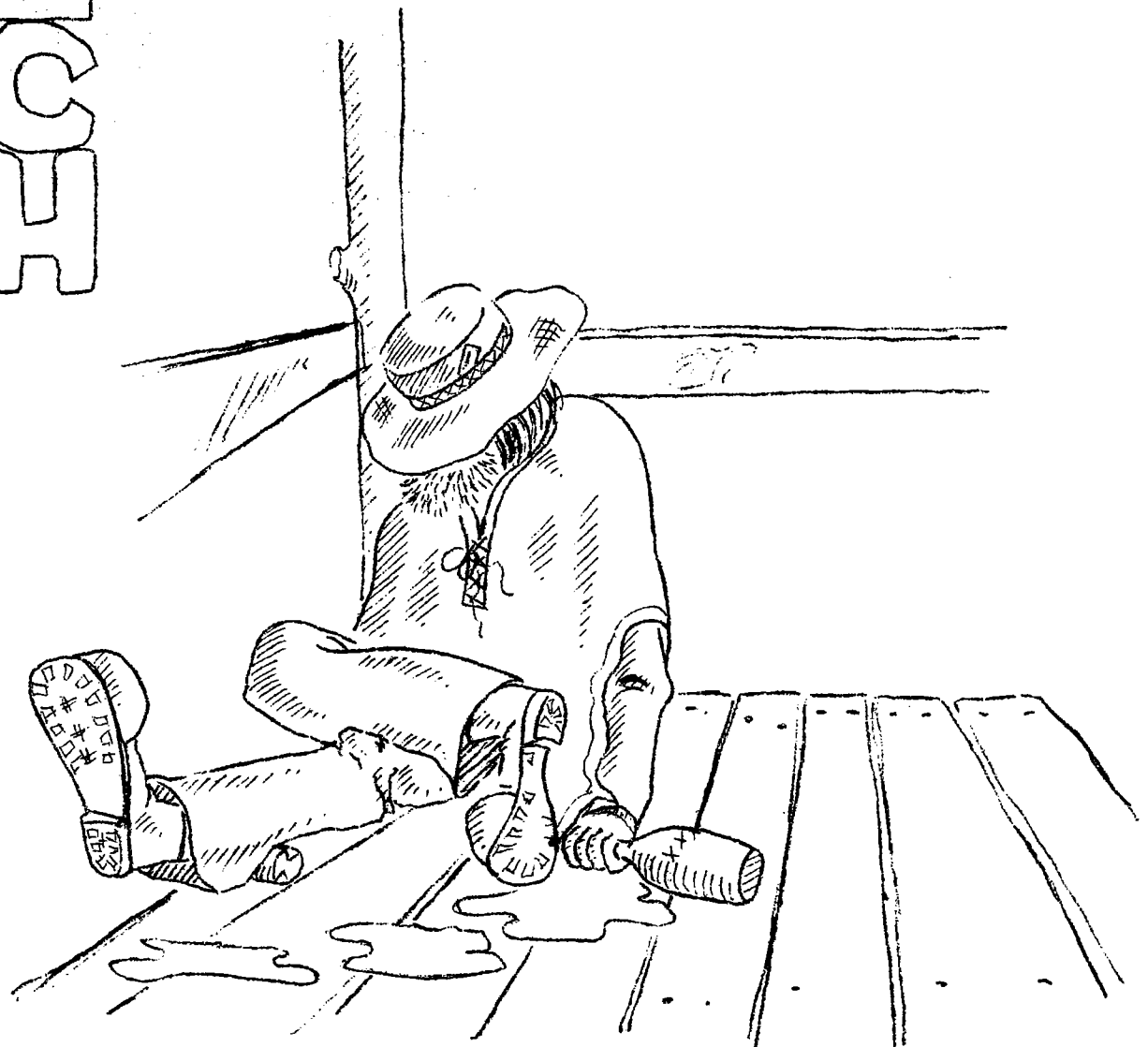
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THE  
**TROGLODYTE**  
**ECH**



**ANNIVERSARY ISSUE**

**30<sup>TH</sup>**

We wish to thank the following people without whose help this issue of the TROG would not have been possible:

\_\_our associate editors Dennis Webb & Rolf McQueary

\_\_typing: Boots Yeatts, Janet Queisser, Doris Jones,  
Bruce Byrd, Nancy Moore, Kathy Dancy, &  
Bob Simonds

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# PRESIDENTS

# COLUMN

Well, it's that time of year again, when the club takes part in what is usually the most competitive event of the year--the election. With the election so close, this is my last president's column, so I thought I would say a few things about recent events in the club.

As you can see from the front cover of this issue, we have a new Trog staff this time, co-editors Steve Kark and Tom Calhoun. It looks like they have some fresh ideas and the ability to construct a good publication.

Recently, one of our trainees had somewhat of a rough time being voted into the club. In fact, I'm sure you're all aware that less than 2/3 of the voting members voted for him the first time but he was voted in the following week. I'm glad he didn't become discouraged and quit after the first try. I have seen this happen a few times, and each time it raises the question in my mind, "Just under what circumstances should a trainee not be voted into the club?" As far as I have seen, each of these people should have been voted into the club the first time. They showed interest in the club and in caving and had completed the trainee program. However, questions are always raised about the person's ability as a caver, how he would react in a rescue, and personality conflicts. The latter, of course, is irrelevant, unless the person is so obnoxious that he can't exist with anyone in the club in which case he would most likely be weeded out before he completed the trainee program. Not only that, but our organization has always been a conglomeration of weird personalities. As far as the person's abilities underground, especially in a rescue, I see very few people in the club who could lead a rescue, and moreover, a person does not stop learning by any means, just because he becomes a member. Let's try to get interested cavers into the club and not encourage caving outside of the club by not voting them in.

It's been a rewarding experience being the president for the past year but now it's time for me to step down and once again take my chair in the group so I can harass the new president from the floor.

Steve Hall

# EDITOR'S COLUMN

A man walking along a jungle path leading to a village came upon a man badly mauled struggling to crawl. Trying to help, the man asked him what had happened. The mutilated man looked up at him but immediately turned his head away without saying a word; for he recognized the man as a worshiper of a religion not his own. The kind man said he would go for help and ran down the path to the nearby village. As soon as he stepped into the village clearing several arrows from the archers of an invading army pierced him. The mangled man, not far from death, cursed himself for not telling the man about the army in the village from which he had just escaped. Now he had no chance of being saved and worse, there was no way to warn neighboring villages. All because of an obsolete rule he followed made by his forefathers for some unknown reason.

This story sheds a little light on the purpose of this article. Making rules requires a great deal of thought. The club should think a little about the purpose of motions, amendments and the constitution. They should not be thought of as entertainment for the meetings. Constitutional amendments are hard to change once made. Motions made by members reflect the current club policy. A majority voting for a motion represents the club policy and should the majority switch sides in time they can simply change policies by another motion. No future generation holds an obligation to the out-of-date policies of the past. This idea must be kept in mind when considering constitutional amendments.

A constitution merely sets a basis for governmental function of an organization. Its intended vagueness allows each generation to adapt to the time and situation offered. They interpret the constitution in a manner that best suits them. Precise definitions placed in a constitution reflect only the attitude of one time period. A future generation stuck with ideas far out-dated (such as the required use of manila prussiks) makes little headway. Placing precise definitions is one of the cave club obsessions. The force we put into adding these useless phrases may hurt the club in the future.

We are trying to make a constitution that will cover every issue and solve every problem. Impossible?... When we try to make an accurate constitution, we continually add more and more trivia to get there. We must not place our interpretation in the constitution, for each generation must be allowed to interpret for themselves the meanings.

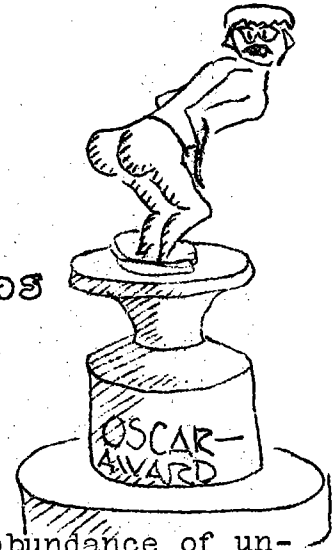
Last of all, we place too much emphasis on rules, policies, orders, ordinances and what not. We are a group of people with one strong common interest--caving. Since we have an interest in one area we should be striving for achievements in that area, not in how the club can be politically handled. We are all friends who should need no rules to get along.

Tom Calhoun

# BANQUET 73

## THE BEST OF THE WORST AWARDS

By STEVE KARK



The VPI Cave Club is well known for it's abundance of unusual characters. At any Virginia Region function they're usually the most active, at any party they're usually the drunkest, and on any morning-after they're usually the sickest. They fight over women, steal each other's booze, squabble over politics, wreck each other's cars, and sing louder an' worse than a herd of cattle. But, through all the ups and downs, the hangovers, the long cave trips and the highway blues; they cling to each other like fleas in molasses.

And each year towards the end of February they have a banquet. They set aside their dusty jeans and muddy boots for neckties and sportjackets, and they store away politics for old reminiscences. Awards are given to those who in the past year have shown themselves to be weirdest of the weird and foulest of the foul.

Starting things off, Bill Stringfellow was presented a large bottle of heavy-duty oil hair tonic and a blotter paper sleeping pad for the Grease Spot of the Year Award. Anywhere cavers are gathered drowning themselves in beer, Bill can usually be found gorging himself on rootbeer and candy bars.

Fresh from his bout with the local authorities, our own B.O.G. member, Jim Hixon recieved the Senile Caver Award. Several months ago Hixon fixed up his own batch of home made wine and for weeks afterward his corpse-like figure could be seen slumped into corners at our after-the-meeting parties. For his humble attempt at self-embalming, Jim was given a collapsible cane and a giant 'Get Out Of Jail FREE' card.

The Armchair Caver Award was bestowed upon Ned Coleman for his lack of effort. Ned fell victim to the most common malady of dedicated cavers- he discovered SEX! His answer- he was married just recently.... another bites the dust.

Don Davison , our resident Super Jock, stepped up to accept the Floyd Collins' Pressing Your Luck Award. For his attempt at solo caving, Don was presented a portable tombstone with the inscription: "He caved with the best- He caved alone".

For his keen ability at positioning his car always in the deepest ditches and muddiest trenches, Ed Richardson recieved the Safe Driver Award. He was also given the Brain Bucket Award for his uncanny habit of falling from high places. He hobbled up to accept the award on crutches: a result of a recent fall in Colorado. Both Ed and his younger brother Mike would make fine hard hat testers for their repeated attempts at smashing themselves against rocks.

'Tuna' Johnson accepted the Dedicated Caver Award for his work at Cave Springs Cave. After a mapping trip there, Tuna lost his survey book and seemed to avoid all attempts at retrieving it. His award...? He was presented the long lost survey book.

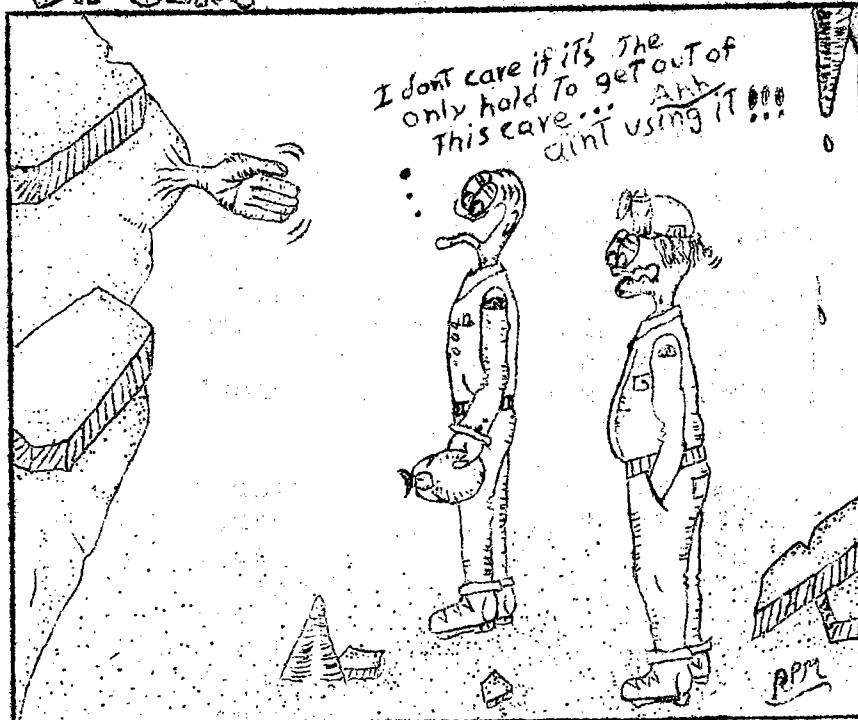


Several weeks ago, VPI's basketball team played a very important home game against the University of Virginia and the block long ticket line started forming the evening before ticket sales. Mark Slusarski, continually at battle with the jocks across the hall from him, managed to obtain two of the much sought after tickets. He then burned them and taped the blackened stubs on his 'friends' door across the hall. For his disregard of letter sweaters and school spirit, Mark was awarded an athletic supporter 'slingshot' to use against his spirited foes.

Then, last but not least, our club president Steve Hall was awarded the Heart Throb of the Year. A few years ago, Steve heard somewhere that sex organs are the only muscles in the body that don't grow with extended use and he has tried to disprove that ever since. For his attempts at becoming the Sex King Of America, he was presented a Young Lust comic book, a tube of Thera-Blem, a box of candy cigarettes for his girlfriend, a copy of What Every Teenager Should Know About Sex, a giant balloon-type reusable condom, and finally a certificate of puberty signed by R.E. Whittemore himself.

On the more serious side, Bob Barlow and Gene Harrison were honored for their repeated efforts at educating members in safety and first aid procedures.





GROTTO

GRAPEVINE



CLUB FILES.....Bill Stringfellow (VPI 154) has been at work putting our club files in useable order. Many members have taken advantage of the storehouse of valuable information housed in the files which is also our club library. Among it's contents are the following: reports and maps of caves in Virginia and elsewhere in the country, topographic maps, numerous publications put out by caving organizations (such as grotto journals, Speleo Digest, NSS News, NSS Bulletin, Caves and Karst, Bat Research News, and even some foreign publications); club history as recorded in the minutes of our meetings, important correspondence, reports, etc. ( Here you will also find a complete report of: the Catawba Murder Hole accident, our discovery of ancient indian bones which were given to the Smithsonian Institution, and many other items); club photographs, old cave registers, several books ( such as Caves of Virginia, Caverns of West Virginia, Speleology-the Study of Caves, Cave Surveying and Mapping, etc.) This is only a small sampling, so let's treat our files with pride.

Incidentally, Bill is still looking for issues of our old club publication the Grotto Grapevine, plus old NSS publications, and other cave related matter to acquire for the ever expanding. We would welcome all contributions or sales offers.

CAVE SAFETY....The club has indicated plans to keep local and other state rescue squads posted on cavers available for cave rescues.

With regard to club trips, a resolution was passed at a recent meeting to start rescue operations at the time listed "expected time arrival"(ETA) on our sign-out sheet for any cave trip that has not reported in by that time, rather than allowing a lengthy grace period as has been done in the past.

Gene Harrison (VPI 62) has been largely responsible for an introductory cave-oriented first-aid session, in which he was assisted by Bob Barlow (VPI 89), and a self-rescue vertical work-out in which members tried various techniques such as rappelling part way and changing over to ascending gear, as might be necessary in an emergency situation.

Practice rescues were led by Don Davison (VPI 140) in New-castle Murder Hole and in the entrance of Clover Hollow.

The duties of Safty Committee Chairman have been separated from those of the Vice-President who remains in charge of the Trainee Program.

BRIEFS.... Bill Park (VPI 95), Supply Committee Chairman, always thinking of our caver's needs, has added rum-flavored butter candy, made in England, to his list wares. Ingredients listed are: sugar, glucose, salt, and flavoring; it does not break or melt too easily and is a fast energy food, good for long caving trips.

The Conservation Committee, under the leadership of Mike Conefrey (VPI 128), plans to regate Spruce Run Mountain Cave, Giles County, and James Cave, Pulaski County, and to put a new cover over the back entrance to Pig Hole in Giles County. Among other things, a conservation slide show is in the making.

Guy Turenne (VPI 114), who is Vice President of the Virginia Region, is also the Programs Chairman of the club. Guy plans to have several programs next quarter after the meetings, including various slide shows and a movie.

Welcome to the club: Jim Denton, Jerry Redder, Cathy Dancy, Nancy Moore, Randy Wood, Keith Ortiz, Kathy Cronau, and Rick Whitt, our newest members. Rick, our very newest member, is number 172 in our continuous numbering scheme since 1963.

During the last Baltimore Grotto Banquet, John Cooper presented the VPI Grotto with a Super Caver Award: a caricature of a hairy anthropoid male streaking. The inscription read, "VPI BUILDS MEN". We are deeply honored. (...you'll get your's Cooper \_\_\_\_\_ ED.)

At our own banquet this year, Ralph Hess, Pinkie Griffith, and Tommy Watts saved the day when our scheduled speaker could not appear because of auto problems. Thier impromptu talk was highlighted by Hess's description of the first exploration of Pig Hole.

The tentative date for future Cave Club Banquets was scheduled for the third weekend in February.

Janet Queisser (VPI 121) has resigned as editor-in-chief of the Tech Troglodyte. An assisting editor since early 1970 and a managing editor since Fall 1971, Janet has done a great deal of hard work seeing that our publication came out three times each year. Our thanks to you, Janet, for your tireless dedication and service to the club.

TRAVEL... Tom Calhoun, ED Richardson, Pete Schnaars, and Mike Frame went mountain climbing in Mexico. The highest point reached by them was the top of the still bubbling volcano Popocatepetal, 17,887 feet. They also sunned and scuba dived in the crystal waters off Acapulco.

Dennis Webb, Buddy Bundy, and Victor Lutz joined an experienced group of cavers lead by Steve Hudson of Dogwood City Grotto on an extensive visit of Ellison's Cave including 510 foot Fantastic Pit in Georgia.

Gene Harrison, Ken Sanford, Bill Park, and Steve Snelling visited several pits in the northern Alabama area, including Surprise Pit in Fern Cave.

Ed Richardson fell about 60 feet while trying to reach the top of a hundred plus foot cliff in Denver, Colorado. Well used to falls, Ed was not too badly injured, but he did manage to get on the local TV News.

A good representation of the Virginia Region turned out at the B.O.G. meeting in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Among familiar faces to VPI were Annie and R.E. Whittemore, Bill Royster, Jim Dawson, Dennis Webb, Steve Kark, Bill Stringfellow, and of course our own Board Director, Jim Hixson.

CAVING SPOTLIGHT... As a result of Herb Safford's curiosity, a new section has been discovered in Clover Hollow Cave. (See Herb's report in this issue.)

Tawney's Cave was the recent scene of excitement when an extensive system of saltpetre works were discovered beneath dirt mounds. The club is in the process of digging them out and photographing them. Efforts are being made to preserve the works, with assistance from members of the Virginia Archaeological Society and expectantly, the Virginia Historical Society. About \$50 has already been offered by the Society for Spelean Sciences, and Bill Royster has indicated that the Virginia Region may contribute to the cause. (For more details, see Guy Turenne's article, this issue.) Donations may be sent to the club address on our cover.



In Beacon Cave, still being mapped by Guy Turenne (over 13,000 feet so far), a 40 foot waterfall was found which reportedly can easily rival the one in New River Cave in volume of water flow and beauty.

Dale Parrott (VPI 90) has already mapped nearly 3 miles in New River Cave and he is only a little beyond the half-way point on the old map which had only 1.99 total miles surveyed.

Jim Hixson (VPI 124) is still mapping Windy Mouth.

Craig County is expected to yield scads of new caves, according to Mark Slusarski (VPI 158) and Bill Douty (VPI 115) who have been ridge walking out there.

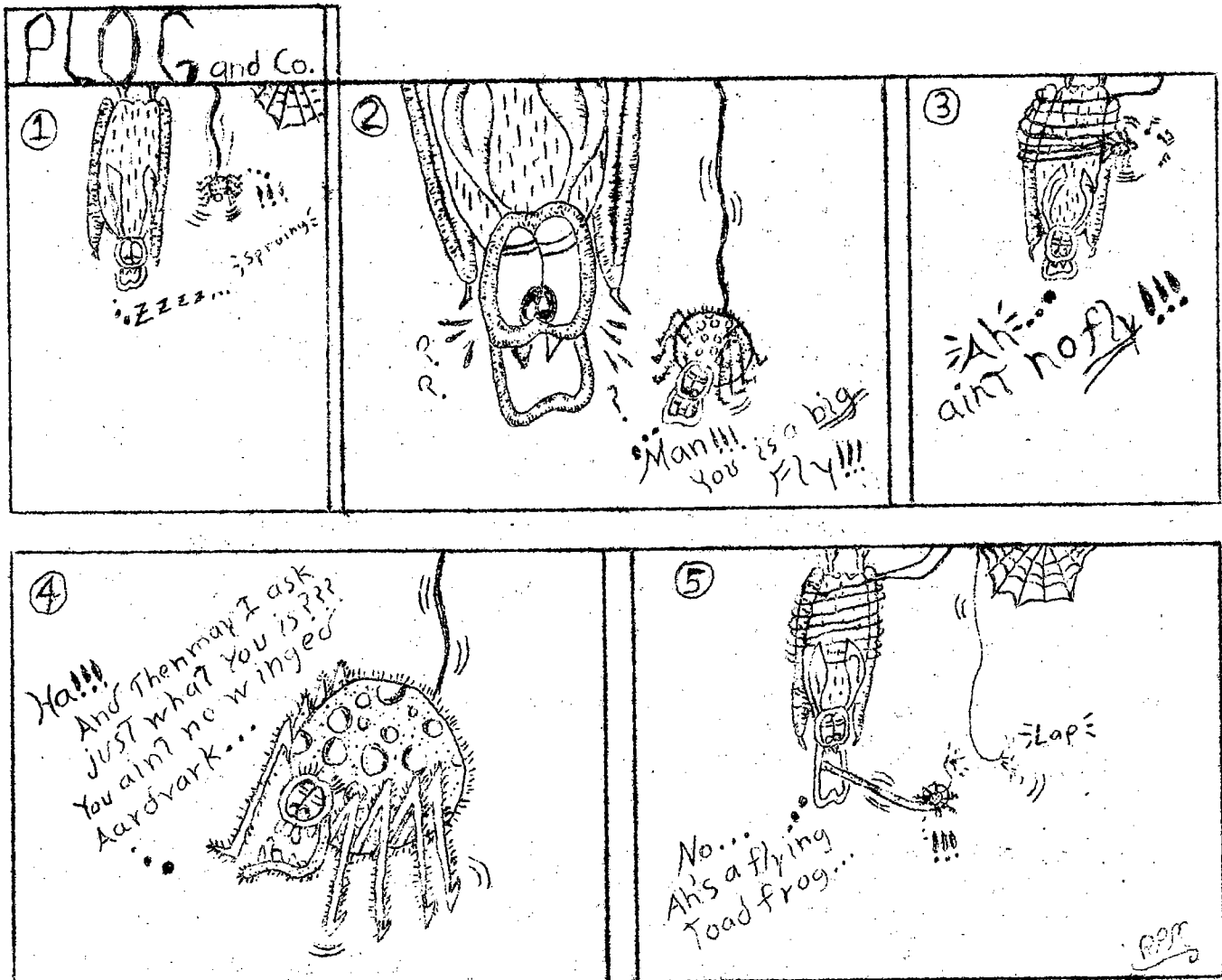
Several club members took groups of Wake Forest students to local caves as part of a 3 credit college program involving such outdoor activities as caving, rock climbing, and white water canoeing.

A strange cave is being investigated in Big Walker Mountain, Bland County. It reportedly has metal stairs leading to different levels and is rumored to be very large.

The club clocked about 1450 man hours underground this quarter visiting 33 different caves on 67 trips. Let's do better next quarter.

LIFE MEMBERSHIP... Although life membership was made available Winter Quarter of last year, it has not been publicized in the Trog until now. According to the constitutional change; Life membership in the VPI Grotto shall be granted to any member upon receipt of life membership dues of \$100 which may be paid in installments agreeable to the Treasurer. Life members shall have all active membership privileges if they are students or staff of VPI; otherwise, life members shall have all associate member privileges. Life members are exempt from yearly membership dues. Anyone interested, contact the Treasurer, VPI Grotto, Box 471, Blacksburg, Virginia 24060.

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# OPINION: CAVE RESCUE

A REALISTIC APPROACH BY DOUG PERKINS

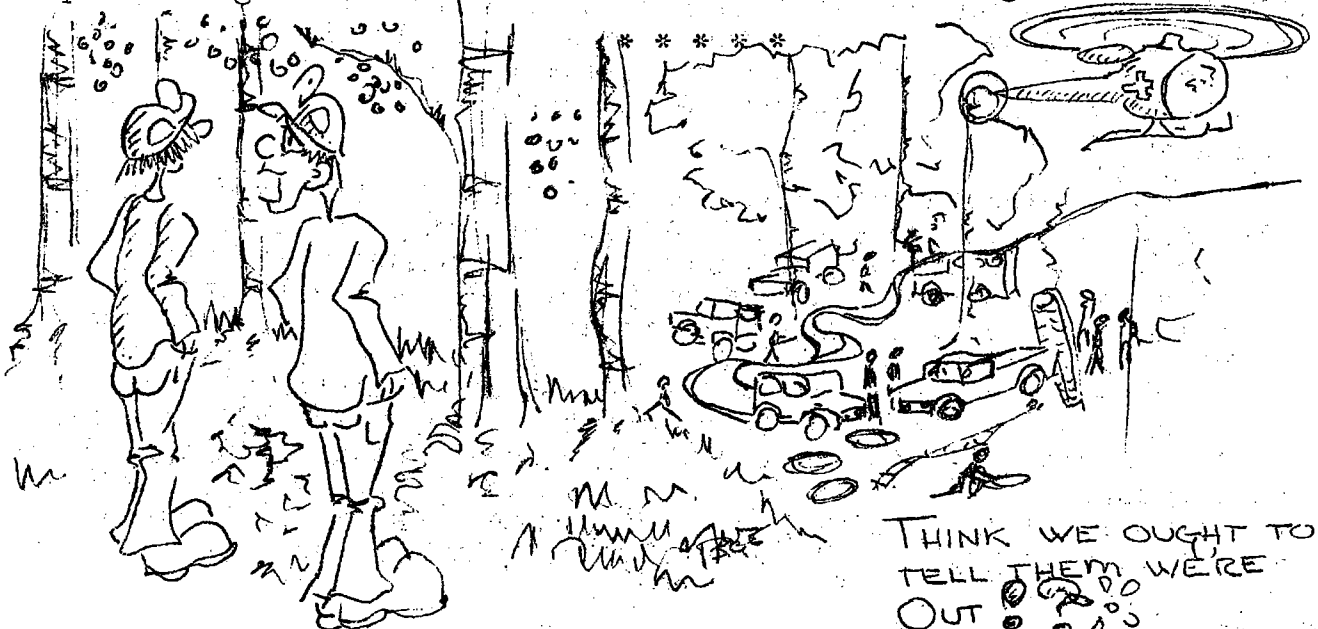
We look around and see that we suddenly have with us again the old subject of cave rescue. This is a subject that I personally do not like to discuss, but since it has cost me some valuable partying time in talking about it recently, I think that it is time to put some thoughts down on paper. To start with, we never talk about this subject in a realistic manner. Sure, we begin by planning help sessions concerning the use of caving equipment, vertical equipment, and so forth, but the discussion always gets back to the formation of rescue teams, first aid training and other such male bovine excrement. Why not take a look at the practical considerations concerning such programs?

**A CAVE RESCUE TEAM:** This is probably the most over-rated of all grotto safety projects. To begin with, there isn't enough interest in the idea to get the team started. Even if the instructors are available, they must have people to work with. Here they do not. Our people are simply too busy caving, partying, and trying to stay in school to have the free time to put in on such programs. Nor is there reason to believe that the situation will be any better in the future, for it certainly hasn't aroused much enthusiasm in the past. One would think that a knowledge of basic firstaid would be a prerequisite for forming such a team. Well, a firstaid course is given on campus at least once each academic year and often it is given each quarter. How many people do you know that have taken these courses? Not many, I bet. And of those who have, how many of them want to spend the time necessary to learn technical cave rescue techniques? How many want to spend one weekend per month in their dorm or apartment, WITHOUT GETTING DRUNK, waiting on a rescue call that will probably never happen? Now you are beginning to see why these teams don't work out. Let's not even mention Bill Karras and the other organizations that went off the deep end with rescue work. Thinking about rescues all the time brings on a mentality which is decidedly not healthy. Let's think about something that is healthy-like preventing rescues.

Most accidents in a cave are caused by the individual caver who overestimates his physical ability or fails to understand the proper operation of his equipment. Few accidents are caused by falling rocks, cave-ins and other problems that people often associate with caves. Thus, it appears that the easiest method of cutting down on the chances of a cave rescue is to teach people to make intelligent judgments as to their own ability in caving and to teach them how to make the most out of the equipment that they will have with them in the cave. This has to be done on an individual basis. No program will ever give all the cavers in this club the same level of ability, just as out trainees and members now vary widely in ability. Joe Caver, who only does horizontal caves

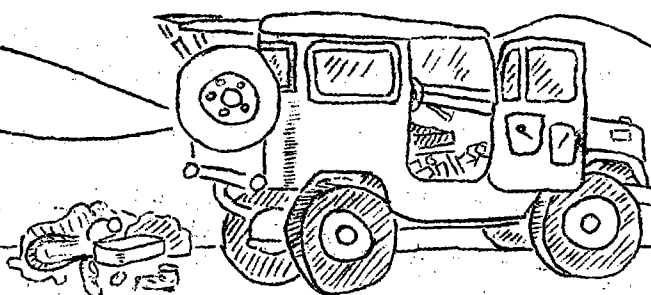
will never be convinced of the need for him to learn a lot of vertical techniques, nor should he be. He has learned the basic requirements for membership and for him, that is all. He has no need to know something that he will never use in his type of caving. When he sees a pit, he leaves it to a "vertical caver", who should know how to do it. The problem is that the vertical caver often doesn't know how. This problem is indicated by the fact that most of our rescues involve people who, for one reason or another, have been unable to ascend a drop. Injury is seldom involved. It would seem obvious that the place where effort is needed is in the training of people who cave vertically, rather than expending all the effort on practice rescues and such which, I believe, serve very limited purposes. The person who really understands his equipment and can use it to the utmost advantage will most likely not even need a rescue and, if any problem does develop, may be able to solve it all by his lonesome- or at least within the confines of his trip. Now, what if help is needed from back home and those people have never practiced for the real thing?

Well, for one thing, there should be cavers available who understand their equipment and how to use it (I am assuming that they have done this instead of the regular rescue routine). They are good cavers and understand caving. They should be able to get these people out without any problems. The only training not directly connected with caving that we need teach people is the prevention of hypothermia (exposure) while the stuck party is waiting to be extracted. If we run into an injury where common knowledge firstaid will not suffice, we will have called someone else into the case anyway. But injuries of this type rarely happen; the last that we had in this grotto was in 1964 and that happened because the caver prevented her chest prussik safety type belay from catching her by holding on to it while falling on rappel. (THE TECH TROGLODYTE, Vol. III, no. 2, page 31). This, again, was a failure to understand equipment. Now, I might need a rescue next weekend, but I think there are some people here who can do the job. What I would like to see is more work done in preventing these situations rather than in solving them.



THINK WE OUGHT TO  
TELL THEM WE'RE  
OUT

# TRIP REPORTS



\_\_\_\_\_ writing a trip report is an old tradition of our cave club and each prospective member must submit one for final membership. The Troglodyte usually publishes a few of these reports. Although you may or may not find grammatical perfection or scientific exactness in them, you will find the words of people excited and interested enough with caving to write down their thoughts about it.

## ROBBINS RIFT CAVE.....KEITH ORTIZ

Being the fine upright sprig of a lad that I am, I thought twice about my invitation to Gene Montgomery's PSC Christmas party. It seemed that they were going to serve "alcoholic beverages". I finally decided to go and make sure that they didn't have too much to drink. As more and more eggnog began to flow, I finally suckered myself into investigating a new lead in Bob Robbin's new find, "Robbins Rift Cave". I heard wonderful stories about how a dye test showed up 7 miles south in Starr Chapel Cave, how Robbins Rift could have a water connection with Butler-Sinking Creek, how all the large caves in Bath County (Breathing, Butler, Aqua...) had to be blasted open just like Robbins Rift had been. I had just enough eggnog to convince me to go.

Located under the beautiful Bath-Highland County hillside in a large size sink, is a small mineshaft, put there by the PSC and some other hardy souls. On December 28, a plebe from the Naval Academy, Art Nalls, and I submerged into the darkness of Robbins Rift Cave and went down an unassuming hole on the right side of the entrance room, which immediately came to a 15 foot drop.

Plebe: "How do we get down this here hole?"

S.C.: "Don't worry, Super Caver will show you!"

(LOUD INTIMIDATING NOISE...)

S.C.: "That's how you DON'T do it!"



We continued down the drop, then following a stream passage we came to a 30-40 foot waterfall.

S.C.: Listen to this rock when I drop it."

Plebe: "Don't pick up that ro..."

(LOUD INTIMIDATING NOISE...)

We decided not to climb down and we continued to the left. We came into a large dry room ("Wow, look at the size of this virgin room") which turned out to be the main passage of the traditional route. We found another stream in this room (probably the same stream as before) and followed it to a siphon before we left.

The cave is very generous and affectionate, any rock you touch is yours (plus a dozen others), and it loves you so much, it won't let you leave. It consists of loose rocks in mud and shale fragments. The least movement drastically alters the direction of the passage. On the way out, we started thinking of more appropriate names for the cave. We started with "B" for Bob ("Bob's Bummer, Bob's Bastard..."), went to "P" (PSC Pisser, PSC Pitfall...), and on to "R" ("Robbins Raunch, Robbins Ravage...")

After alot of cussing...

Plebe: "Are you having fun? Har, har!"

S.C.: "Hey Art!"

Plebe: "Yeah?"

S.C.: "Eat shit!"

...and some really difficult climbs...

Plebe: "Where's the handhold?"

S.C.: "Down at the bottom of the pit..."

...we finally struggled back into the world and into the comfort of our sleeping bags. We didn't even eat the beef stew Art brought along.

When I told Gene Montgomery about our exploits, he said he was going to nominate me for the Brainbucket Award. (Does anyone know what that is?)

Knowing that Dennis Webb would enjoy this kind of cave, I invited him to come see it's wonders and to explore the waterfall drop. On January 6, 1973, Dennis Webb and I slid down the shaft to Robbins Rift and worked our way back to the waterfall. After an hour of dropping boulders and rocks over the edge, we

finally were able to brace one boulder against another and tie in. We descended into a large passage connecting two rooms with 80 foot ceilings. Another stream entered from the right, it came from a muddy tight chimney passage through a virgin helictite birthground (if you can imagine) and became too tight to follow. Downstream siphoned and all other leads deadended except for some ceiling holes we couldn't check. We found that we could climb in and out of the rooms without rope which would have saved us 2 hours if we had found it earlier. Dennis loved the rooms so much that he decided to name them after me (Keith's Folly), but being the modest lad that I am, I had to decline.

We went down to the large dry room and soon came to a muddy pre-rigged rope on a 30 foot canyon drop. Here, after Dennis went down and belayed, I showed him how to execute a one hand rappel. His leg healed just fine! We proceeded up the same rope rigged on the opposite side of the canyon and went to the formation room. The room has calcite formations and waterfalls, but it's main attraction is it's calcite crystal filled pool. Dennis claimed it was the prettiest pool of it's type. It's a small pool in a room about 2 feet high and it's surrounded by calcite waterfalls. Above the inch long crystals is a stalactite with a 12 to 14 pointed calcite star on it's tip. I was impressed.

We then went back into the grung and raunch of the cave and exited by the traditional route and up the icefalls in the shaft. The brisk 25° weather showed a very beautiful starfield and I pointed out various interesting constellations as we chipped our coveralls off.

Back at Aqua campground we enjoyed Art's beef stew and drifted to sleep pondering the excitement of the day and dreaming of a return trip.

\* \* \* \* \*

HOW TO HAVE A 6.5 HOUR TAWNEY'S TRIP.....KATHY CRONAU

On February 10, 1973 I went on one of the more unusual trips that I have been on to date. The party consisted of Bill Park, Nancy Moore, Rick Whitt, Mike Woolf, Randy Wood, and myself. We were on a work trip to, of all caves, Tawney's. Although it is well known as one of the simpler beginner's caves, I'd somehow missed out on seeing it, so I was glad to have the opportunity to finally go in the cave "everyone" has been to. The reason for the trip was to work on a discovery made by Guy Turenne and Mike Conefrey the previous week. It seemed that only a few inches under the floor a complete saltpetre works had lain hidden for a hundred years. Considering that this was a well-traveled part of the cave, it seemed remarkable that the brittle wooden vats could have survived.

We left around 9:00 on a very cold Saturday morning, and after getting permission were able to drive over the field right up to the sinkhole entrance. It took us no time at all to get to the room where the saltpetre vats were located. The room is so close to the entrance that it does not lie within the thermocline of the cave. Since the cave is so well known, no one happened to mention that little fact. It was cold!

After looking over the area, everyone pulled out their trusty Owen's Dining Hall spoons, picked a likely spot, and began to dig. Meanwhile, Bill and Rick surveyed the area, marking the piles of dirt and the previously discovered vat. I picked a good spot to the side of a large pile and started in. Almost immediately I came upon small chips of wood. I worked my way carefully around them as they were very spongy and crumbled quite easily. I kept finding the tops of boards and would start to dig, thinking I'd made a discovery, when it would end after an inch or two. After doing this many times, I realized what my discovery probably was, the operation's trash dump! By this time I'd gotten pretty chilly, so I decided to get up and see what everyone else was doing. Randy had come across a series of boards around the corner from me that actually resembled a vat, so I decided to help him.

The vat turned out to be made of about six inch wide boards in a V-shaped pattern with a back at one end that made it resemble an old-fashioned cradle. One side was intact, and although the other had cracked under the weight of the dirt, the broken pieces hadn't gone anywhere so it was possible to reconstruct it by shoring it up. Within the vat we found the remnants of straw and sticks that were used during the operations to help remove the saltpetre from the dirt. Digging deeper we finally reached the bottom of the V where there was an abundance of very fine straw. The vat was about a foot deep, so it took a long time to painstakingly excavate it with spoon and brush around the fragile boards. After reaching the bottom, we continued to dig lengthwise. The vat narrowed, and we finally reached a perfectly formed trough. It was a half-cylinder of wood that water once ran out of, beautifully formed and preserved.

It was getting near dinner, so it was decided to wrap up the operations. We carefully replaced the sticks and straw, sifting the dirt away, and reinforced the sides in an attempt to leave it as it might have looked in operation many years ago. After finishing we were quite impressed and I couldn't help but marvel at how it had survived. Before we left Rick took pictures of our work and the others. Finally, six and one-half cold hours later, we returned to the cars.

The peons were anxious to see other trips return and continue the diggings as quickly as possible, photograph everything, and then recover it as it was when found. Tawney's is a popular cave, six sight-seeing trips went through while we were there, and it was decided that this was the best way to keep the saltpetre works from destruction, as it would be impossible to remove them. By 5:30 we were back at campus sitting down to another "hearty, nutritious" dining hall meal. Nevertheless, I think I learned a lot and had the privilege seeing something few would ever get to see.

\* \* \* \* \*



NEW PASSAGE IN CLOVER HOLLOW.....HERB SAFFORD

Members of party-Gene Harrison, Steve Snelling, Nancy Moore,  
Randy Stoutenburgh, Herb Safford

Length of trip- 9 hours

Date of trip- 1/21/73

Although a short trip, as Clover Hollow trips go, this 9 hours was the most rewarding period I have spent caving to date. The original intention of the group was to take a quick trip through the "tourist route"; we did not even intend to do the Andrews Room drop. The result, however, was the discovery of a significant new passage and a major room in an entirely new section of this relatively well travelled cave.

Our entrance drop was uneventful. We passed through the crawlway under the Haystack, over the short climb, back-rappelled the flowstone, climbed the 12 foot climb, and rigged and rappelled the Canyon Room drop. Steve led us to the top of the Andrews Room, then to the Gypsum Room and the Thistle Tube. I was the only member of the party who had already ventured into the Thistle Tube, so I was excused while the others tried their luck, each being timed from the bottom until his feet were all the way out of the Tube. Randy had excellent time, something like a minute and one half. Nancy was only a little slower. Gene Harrison placed a long third and we gave up timing Steve who did eventually make it out under his own power. Thereafter we rested in the library, distributing and commenting on the literature, which was admirable from my professional view.

The first part of the cave which I had not seen before and which we visited this trip was the passage to the half-way point in the Andrews Room. After this we crawled the mud river, and eventually ended up in Clover Hollow's major stream passage. Travelling up stream, we arrived at the turn off to the Fourth of July Room and the Formation Room.

The passage through these rooms is short, ending in the Formation Room, principally noteable for a bat which hangs from a stalactite's tip. We rested here, and I noticed a small ledge with some debris in the channel leading under it; I asked Steve where this went, and he replied, typically, "Crawl down and look." Since the debris looked as though it must have floated to its resting place at one time, I thought there might be an old stream passage leading back to the main stream, so I did crawl about 8 to 10 feet under the ledge, where I confronted another, much lower ledge, about 6 inches high off the ground. By tilting my head under the ledge, I could see that there was at least open space on the other side, and that seemed to warrant further investigation. I called Steve to look. No reply. I called again. This time he replied "No." Each request that he take a look was met with further and more adamant resistance, until finally he just broke down and crawled in to relieve my

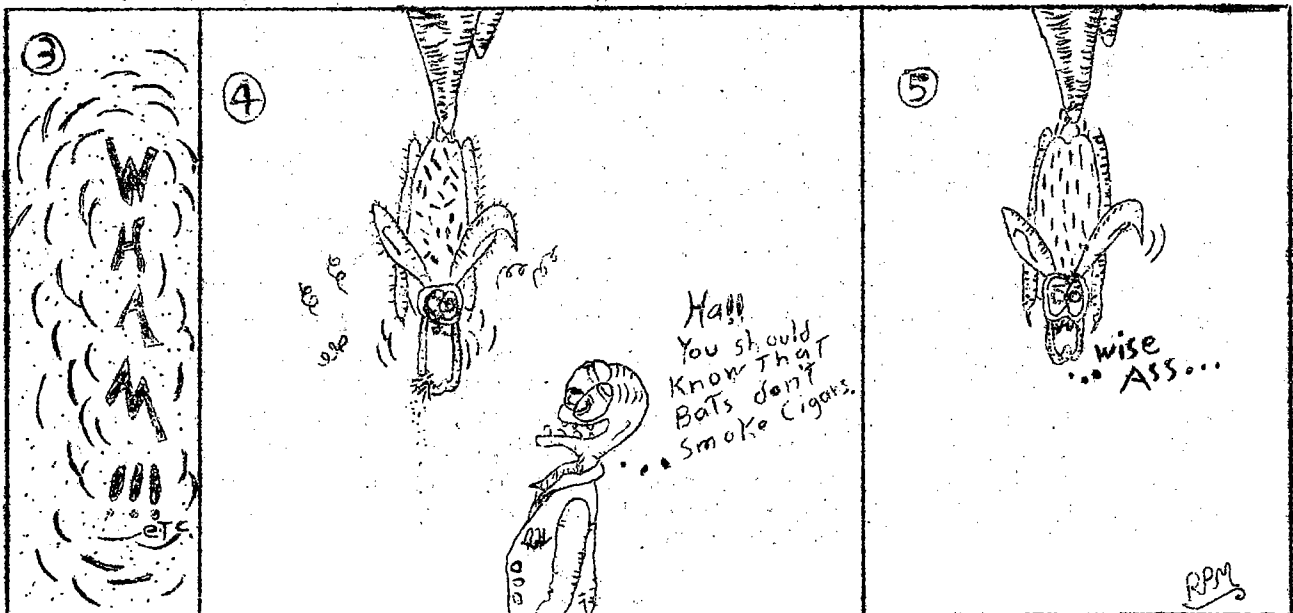
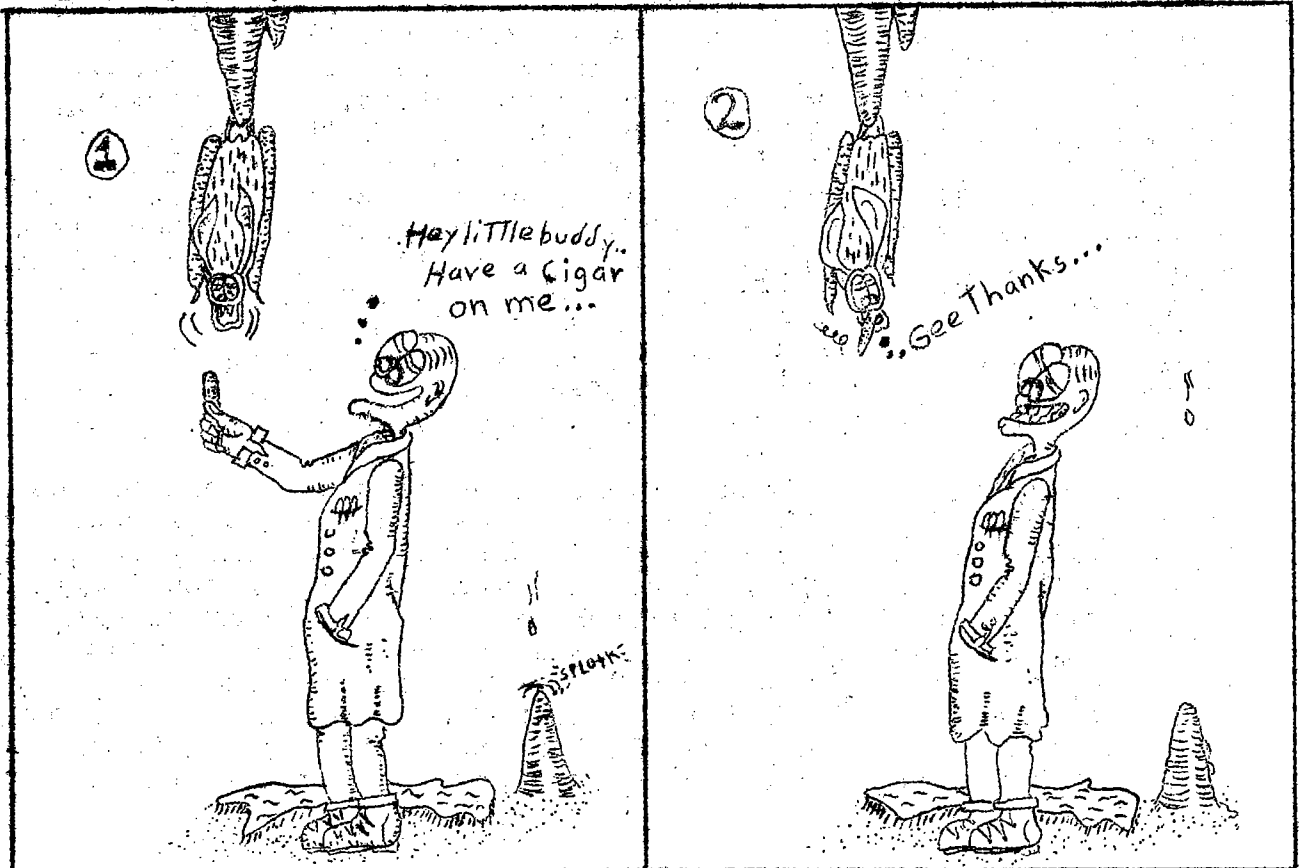
nagging. Once in the crawlway, he did realize that the lead had possibilities, and we commented that we would have to return another day to dig the ledge out. Before leaving, just on a chance, we began to dig at the large blocks of mud, cracked and quite dry, forming the floor under the ledge. To our surprise, these came out in large chunks. Soon Steve was pulling these blocks of mud out just as fast as I could take them and put them to one side. Steve tried going in on his back. No way. His knees wouldn't bend in the right direction. More digging. Now Nancy joined us, and she was able to crawl through to report that in about 20 feet the crawlway opened up to walking passage. Now Steve went through. They disappeared. Then Gene came along and also went out of sight. By this time I had tired of waiting and went through myself, a little later to be followed by Randy. The crawlway opened up, and in a little while we were joined at the end of a large breakdown room by everyone in the party. We knew the discovery was significant; apparently it hadn't been mapped by Bill Douty, and probably it was absolutely virgin. Not a footmark, much less a surveying station.

On our return, we took a higher side passage. This put us in what has since been named "Echo Hollow", a very large room filled with tremendous chunks of breakdown, one of the largest rooms in Clover Hollow. We spent as much time as we could afford on the small supplies we had brought through the tight crawlway, poking through the breakdown, probably about 30 feet to what we then thought was the bottom of the room. Deciding we were running out of carbide and water, we returned to the formation room, and headed on out of the cave, leaving notes in the log to the effect that we were pretty certain we had found virgin passage in Clover Hollow.

Since this trip I have returned to the new section of Clover Hollow several times, mapping and exploring. We have found some of the prettiest formations in the entire cave, a possible side lead that must be dug out, and what appears to be a water table, about 40 to 50 feet further down in the breakdown than we had gone on our original trip. Rolf McQueary, Bill Park, Bill Douty, Mark Slusarski as well as original trip members have helped in mapping and exploring this new section. According to Douty's plots put on his old map, this section leads entirely away from the old cave system, although the bedding planes in the big room run in the same direction as the planes he had previously surveyed. Even without penetrating to the water level, we have found the deepest spot yet reported in the cave. All in all, the trip provided excitement in itself, and an opportunity to spend a lot more time on a particular caving project. I was fortunate to be with a good and willing crew of cavers, and to help in finding what seems to me to be an important section of what was already our area's most enjoyable cave.

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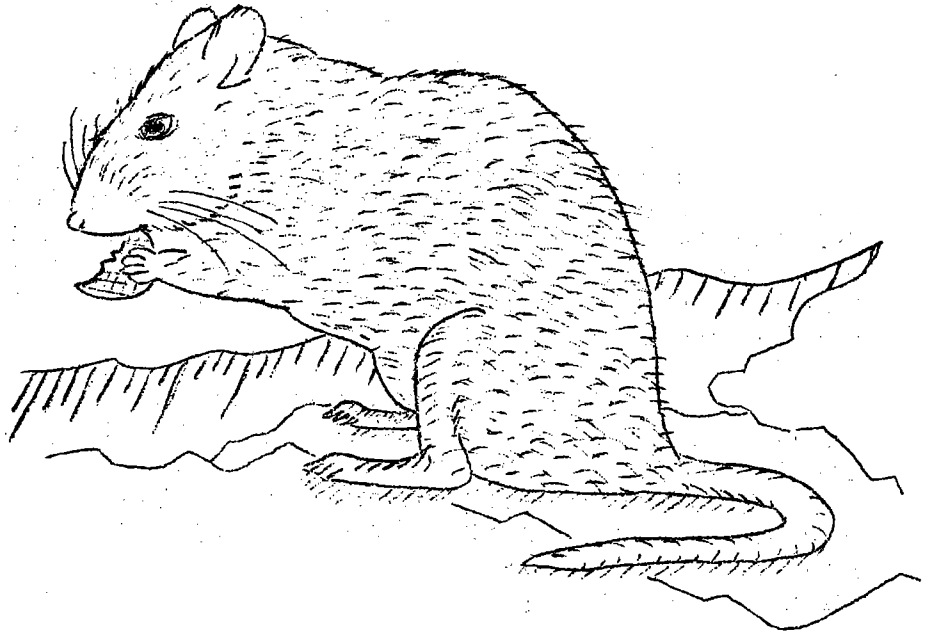
## Dr. DLKO



THE

ALLEGHENY

PACKRAT

By  
ROBYN  
LEFON

I began caving in the fall of 1969. On many caving trips I have observed the interesting habits of the Allegheny packrat, also known as the woodrat, the trade rat, and the cave rat. The scientific name is Neotoma magister Baird which equals Neotoma pennsylvanica Stone. I have studied research done on the packrat and have observed the animal in more detail. The results of my study and observations have led me to a better understanding of the life history of the packrat.

Unfortunately, I have only had a quick look at a packrat as it was chasing me out the entrance passage of Link's Cave in Giles County, Virginia. My attempts to photograph the animal in New River Cave in Giles County on May 11, 1972 were unsuccessful. I put bread, bacon, and various shiny or soft items in the entrance room, but no rats appeared. I was able to investigate and photograph a few nests.

#### Distribution

Several species live in the eastern United States. The general range is the Appalachian Mountain system from western Connecticut to Northern Alabama. In Virginia, packrats are found from the Blue Ridge Mountains westward, but they have been seen as far east as Arlington County. The habitats include cliffs, rock slides, and cave entrances at high elevations. Rarely do they go further back than 300



feet into a cave, but I have seen traces far inside Bane's Spring Cave in Bland County, Virginia. Due to human settlement, the packrat is less commonly found than in the past.

### Characteristics

The packrat is a large ratlike animal with big ears and eyes and weighs about 6-18 ounces. It has a buffy gray back, buffy or reddish brown sides, a white belly, white feet, and gray ears. The fur is long and soft and is grayer than the hair of the Norway rat. The winter fur is darker and grayer than the summer coat. Color is the same in both sexes, but with age it becomes duller and browner.

Unlike the house rat, the packrat has well-haired ears and tail. The tail of the Allegheny packrat is bicolored being blackish dorsally and white ventrally. The tail is used for balance and is normally extended and horizontal. When excited, the animal carries the tail high. The tail acts as a brace in fighting and feeding. It is also lashed from side to side as a warning signal. When asleep, the packrat curls up and wraps its tail around its body.

On the ventral surface of the packrat is a narrow strip with little hair. The area is worn and discolored (especially in males) during the breeding season. A dermal gland secretes a strong smelling substance which the animal rubs over the ground, probably to communicate his location. (Poole, 1940, p.263).

### Behavior

Nests are found on the ground, in trees, in ditches, and especially in caves. The nests are well made of shredded wood, sticks, leaves, and any objects that the animal can carry. One nest, that I found on a ledge in New River Cave, contained a wire screen, several flashcubes, leaves, sticks, bits of rope and clothing, a firecracker, wire, a tin can, a cigarette pack, gnawed acorns, broken glass, loose dirt, and a theater ticket. Packrats leave the coarser materials on the outside and line the nest with soft items. A nest has several "doorways" which are often barricaded with sticks, leaves, and other objects. Cave rats are clean animals and make refuse piles away from their nests. They store food and desirable objects in piles close to their nests. The nests are often divided into a nursery, a living room, and a storage area. Nests seem to be passed down generation to generation with additions constantly being made until large nests are formed in isolated places. In populous areas there is an increase in new, smaller nests. Unless completely destroyed, damaged nests will be rebuilt. Also, nesting materials will be added or taken away according to weather and temperature conditions.

The cave rat is a troglodyte, a "'Cave visitor,' an animal that habitually enters caves but must return periodically to the surface for certain of its living requirements, usually food" (Mohr and Poulson, 1966, p.226). Being a nocturnal animal and a

cave dweller, the packrat is well adapted to the dark. The ears are large, and the eyes are bright and prominent (although sight is secondary). The long whiskers vibrate continuously, and the nose twitches. The animal finds food by smell and touch. It is guided by its own scent and urine trails. The cave rat follows established routes which it learns by cautious and gradual exploration. On a known route, it apparently disregards its senses. Packrats are skilled climbers and have little trouble with rock faces or trees. Only rarely do packrats leave home territory, and during cold weather they are less active.

The packrat got its name because it will pack home any object that it can carry. According to Charles Mohr, "Few objects that can be carried or dragged into its 'museum' are overlooked" (Mohr and Poulson, 1966, p.114). The animal is also known as the trade rat because it will often exchange one object for another such as a new gold watch for a stick. The animal shows a definite preference for shiny items. Objects are carried in the mouth and forepaws. In New River Cave I left several items including bacon, bread, flashcubes, aluminum foil, and some napkins. Only the bacon, bread, and napkins were taken. Apparently the New River rats already have a wealth of objects left by humans.

Packrats are not hardy eaters as compared with other rodents. Five percent of their body weight in food is sufficient daily. (Cahalane, 1947, p.497). They also require little or no water, apparently getting enough from green vegetation. Packrats are herbivores. Excess food, including fungi, is stored. Packrats also gnaw bones to sharpen their teeth. Captive rats fail to have as sharp incisors as wild rats. (Poole, 1940, p.257).

Packrats are solitary except when breeding. They often visit neighboring nests in search of food, but they have little contact with their fellows. As early as January the male's ventral dermal gland becomes active, and he looks for a female. When he finds one, she is hostile and there is much boxing with the forepaws. After mating, the fighting is lessened for two to three weeks until the female again becomes so hostile that the male leaves. Despite hostilities, packrats generally mate with only one female. Gestation is from 23-38 days. The female has four mammae and averages two to three young per litter. The female has two to three litters per year with the young being born from mid-March to early September. The newborn are blind and deaf, but they can crawl to find the mother's nipples almost at once. The young weigh about one third to one half an ounce at birth. In a few days the middle incisors develop as milk teeth. The young cling to the nipples until weaning at about 30 days and can only be removed by a maternal pinch on the jaw or neck. On the fifth day the coat is silky and pale gray. The animal weighs about one ounce. On the 15th to 21st days the eyes open, the tail begins to grow hair, and the young packrat is able to eat solid food. On the 24th day the animal is able to care for himself. After weaning, the male usually disperses the young and himself. At three months the animal weighs five ounces and has a buffy coat. At one year a packrat is sexually mature. The life span has not been determined, but packrats have lived three to four years in captivity.

The packrat shares its home with insects, spiders, lizards, snakes, salamanders, tree frogs, mice, shrews, and rabbits (Cahalane, 1947, p.491). Mites, ticks, fleas, assassin bugs, and bot fly larvae invade the body. Natural enemies include skunks, snakes, hawks, owls, foxes, weasels, wild cats, and man. When alarmed the animal will thump one or both hind feet and his tail on the ground. The packrat seldom uses its voice. The young squeal, and a terrorized adult may squeal. Usually, the teeth are clicked in alarm when isolated with animals of similar size.

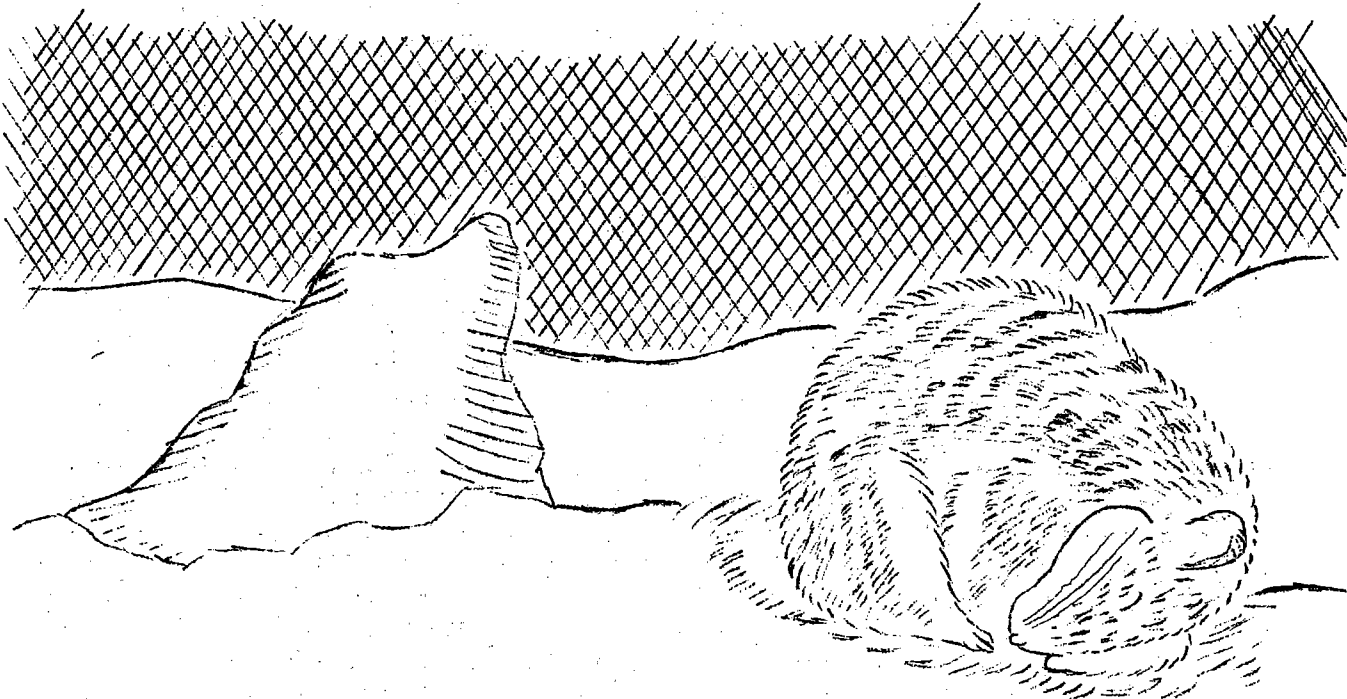
Packrats are of little economic significance to man because they rarely cause damage. They are timid and difficult to tame. Naturalists are impressed with their individuality, persistence, and energy. Country people consider some areas where packrats are very active in good weather to be "haunted", (Poole, 1940, .268), as humans rarely see the packrats.

#### Conclusion

As a conclusion I want to give some suggestions for the study of packrats. They are almost always found in cave entrances. Ledges and rock piles are favorite nesting spots. Moderate light will not prevent them from being active. The best time for observation is from dusk till dawn, but nests can be examined during the day. Patience is one of the most important virtues in a naturalist. A lure of sardines in oil will almost assuredly attract a cave rat if the observer has the time and patience to wait.

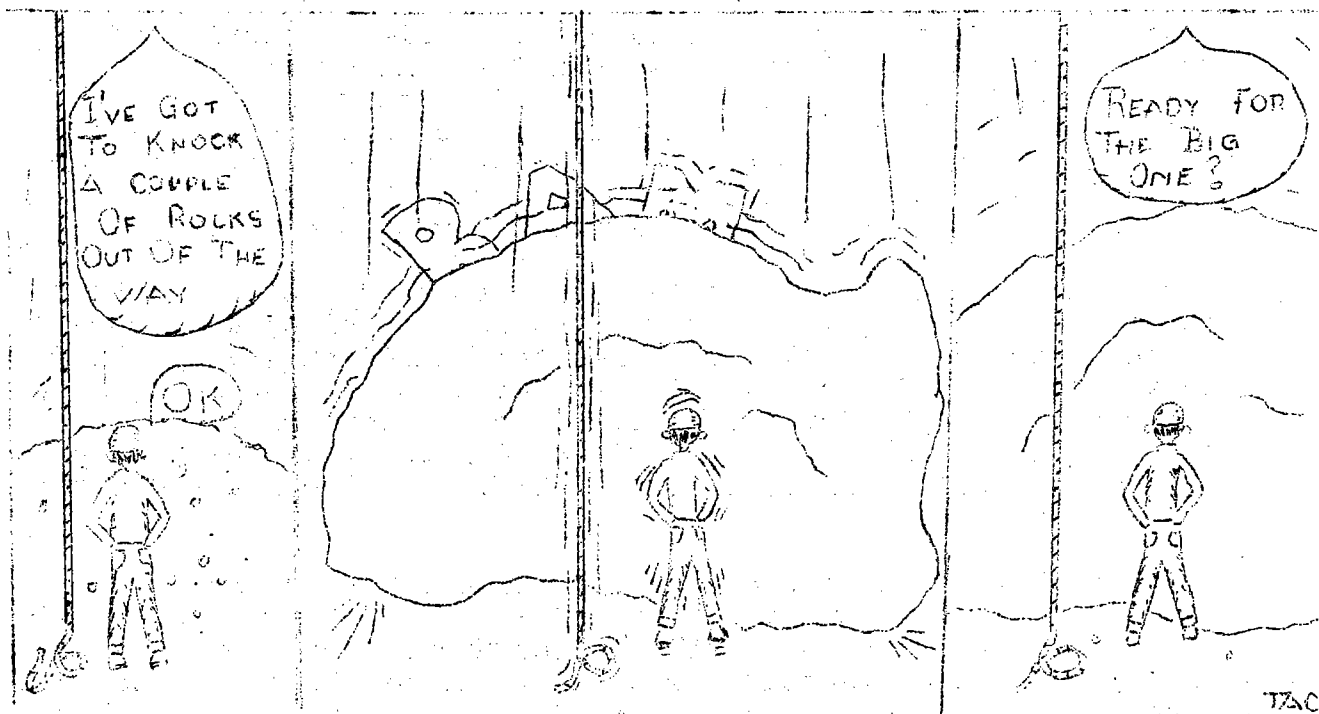
#### Acknowledgements

I want to thank Anne L. Davis and Jim Denton, two fellow cavers, who helped me with my observations in New River Cave.



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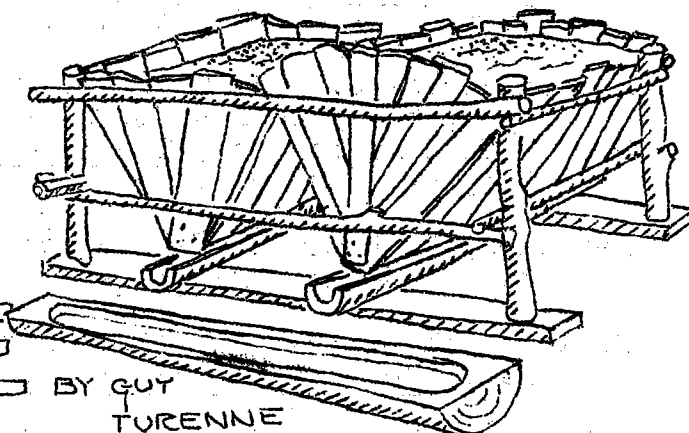
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# NEW DISCOVERY



## SALTPETER VATS IN TAWNEY'S CAVE



BY GUY  
TORENNE

What began as a simple one afternoon project to dig out a saltpeter leaching vat has turned into a month long project.

Tawney's cave is listed in Douglas' CAVES OF VIRGINIA; in the description there is a line or two about the former saltpeter works. The 1970 map of Tawney's prepared by myself locates the general area of the works. But, until this month almost nothing was known about the operation or its history.

During the first weekend of digging, a trip consisting of Bob Alderson, Murali Chockraborty, Mike Conefrey and myself uncovered a single vat and the remains of a group of three vats and the collecting trough that they emptied into. We also located several areas of mattock marks, two overturned vats and an entire wall of names and dates. The oldest date found was 1857, with several being during the civil war period abruptly ending with the year 1864.

The following week brought two trips to the cave. On Saturday a trip headed by Bill Park uncovered another vat along with some of its lining materials. Bill also conducted a grid survey locating the known remains. On Sunday, Mike Frieders, Mike Conefrey and myself uncovered the perfectly preserved trough that collected the leaching liquid of the vat uncovered the day before. This trough exhibited extraordinarily fine workmanship. We also located a third area for excavating.

On the third weekend Boots Yeatts, Mike Conefrey and myself excavated a five foot long vat that had the bottom burned out. Also, from remnants of wood found during the excavation of another vat; a fourth vat was reconstructed near the largest of the overturned vats. Two circular depressions in a wall of dirt led us to believe that barrels had been standing there. There is only one more area worth digging out but there will probably be little uncovered.

Unless some means of protecting the remains from vandalism is found, we will be forced to rebury our finds in hopes that sometime

in the future they will be excavated again.

This cave is heavily traveled by locals and students. On a given weekend there are no less than five trips into the cave. During the periods of our excavating, we encountered five non-grotto trips. Most were conscientious cavers but some were not. Reburying the remains may seem selfish but, if left uncovered the remains, being quite fragile from decay may not last two months. Already, in the time the works have been uncovered, some have been destroyed. Either way very few people will see the saltpeter works. Perhaps sometime in the future when vandalism is no longer a problem, it can be uncovered once again. In the meantime almost 100 slides have been taken and a slide show is in the making.

From the remaining physical evidence, the history of the operation can be put together.

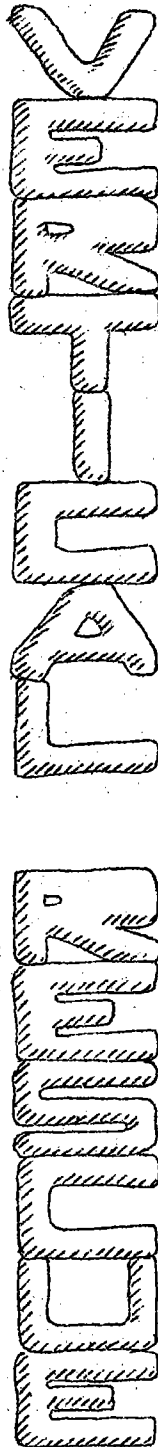
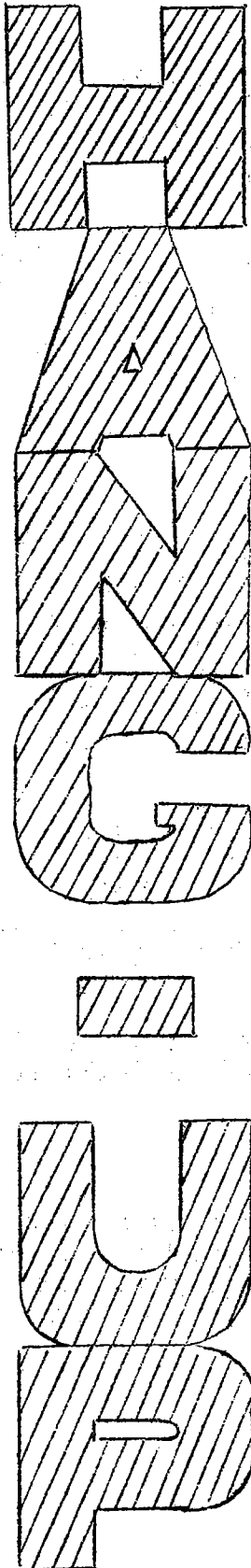
The mine was in operation during the civil war. This is indicated by the large number of names and dates from that period. The operation itself was of a moderate size; all told there are remains from 10 vats and several piles of used dirt. Water for the leaching process was hauled from the stream located about 100 feet further into the cave. Various troughs collected the leached material. This saturated liquid was then scooped out into large barrels. These barrels were then taken out the sinkhole entrance for further processing.

In 1864 the Confederate Army retreated up the Salt Sulfer Turnpike located about 200 yards from one of the entrances. Apparently the miners attempted to destroy or cover up their operation before the Union troops arrived. This is attested to by the burned vats and the fact that the remains appear to have been purposely covered over.

For years these remains were unknown. But, this just goes to show that even in a well known cave new discoveries can still be found.

\* \* \* \* \*

(The VPI Cave Club would appreciate any suggestions or alternatives to recovering the vats. We have considered gating the cave, which would probably involve no minor expense. Any contributions or suggestions may be mailed to us at our mailing address on the cover. \_\_\_\_\_ ED. )



BY  
MIKE  
FRIEDERS

o o o o o o

On August 3, 1968, three vertically experienced VPI Grotto Members visited a vertical cave in Tennessee. Original plans for the trip into the cave were to descend two drops to a large room, take photographs, and return to the surface. It was intended to make the trip short since the group was on a long distance weekend trip reaching as far as Chattanooga. Preparations were made to enter the cave, and the crew was in the cave by 8 PM Saturday evening. Besides a host of ropes, vertical gear, and personal equipment the group carried about 30 pounds of camera gear and one or two cable ladders.

Cable ladders were used to rig small drops near the caves entrance. From the entrance the passage goes down continually until the top of a 50' drop is reached. At that point a rope was rigged using a hanger bolted to the wall. Descending the fifty foot drop put the group at the top of the last drop they intended to do, which was about 160'. A great deal of time was expended at the top of this drop in setting up tripods and cameras for photographing the descent. The drop was particularly well suited to photography.

The descent of this drop was very smooth and all three were soon at the bottom of the big room. However, unexpected discovery of a cold waterfall about one-third of the way down the drop made the descent a very wet one. About one hour was spent in photographing areas of the large room we were in. At this point the group was about 2½ hours into the cave and wet.

For expedience in relating the rest of the events the three cavers will be referred to as Cavers one, two, and three. Caver 1 was the first up the rope using a standard prussiking made of ten-stron. The ascent had to be made

directly through the waterfall and caver 1 was soon soaked, but safe at the top of the drop. Both cavers 2 and 3 had jumars rigs. Caver no. 3 had a small flashlight. Caver no. 2 had a set of climbing cams and prussiks as spare ascending rigs.

Once caver no. 1 was off-rope, cavers 2 and 3 attached all the camera gear to the end of the rope to aid in climbing with the jumars. With everything still going smoothly, caver no. 2 rigged into the rope and began the climb to the top of the drop. It wasn't long thereafter that caver no. 2's carbide light was extinguished by the waterfall and he was forced to climb in almost total darkness. It will be interesting to note at this point that caver no. 1 was also without light and was out of earshot due to the noise of the waterfall.

About 20 feet up the drop something happened that caused caver no. 2's jumars to jam. Repeated attempts to move the jumars while holding into the rope led only to very tired arms and hands.

Fortunately a ledge was nearby and caver no. 2 was able to get off the rope and onto the ledge in total darkness. A quick untangling of slings and a few moments later saw the jumar rig back on the rope, hopefully for good. Throughout this first hangup caver no. 1 was in complete ignorance of what was happening, and caver no. 3 was in constant contact with caver no. 2. The ascent continued smoothly for another 30 feet until the jumars jammed again. There was no opportunity to get off the rope at this location as there had been at the first. Arms and hands were even more tired now than before, having had about 20 minutes in the cold water as well as the first bout with the jammed jumars. Caver no. 2 held himself in close to the rope trying to let the blood rush back into his arms. Time was important now. The jammed rig must be freed before his hands became too numb.

The carbide lamp was still out at this point ( the flint was wet ) and all attempts at finding out what was wrong with the rig had to be done by touch only. Caver no. 2 could not readjust the rig since his hands were numb and strength in his arms was failing. He shivered at the bottom of the rig, he had been in the waterfall almost 30 minutes. His hands were so numb he couldn't feel the difference between the rope and the swiss seat sling of his rig.

Caver no. 1 was still ignorant of anything being wrong except to note that someone else should be up the rope by now. Caver no. 3 realized that swift action was necessary since exposure of all three cavers would soon be a critical problem. It would be necessary for caver no. 3 to jumar over caver no. 2 on the rope. Caver no. 3 ascended the rope as far as caver no. 2. His light had also been extinguished in the waterfall, and most of his climb was in the dark. Due to the darkness, caver no. 3 imagined that he was spinning very fast on the rope, even though he wasn't (caver no. 2 confirmed this when no. 3 insisted he was spinning while caver no. 2 was holding him still). Therefore, caver no. 3 was rather sick to his stomach by the time he reached caver no. 2 (about 50').



It was approximately one and a half hours before caver no. 3 successfully crossed over no. 2. This long time will be understood in light of the fact that both cavers had very numb hands, were shivering at an unbelievable rate, and working by the light of a small flashlight. Great care was necessary in moving rigs, since both sets were identical. Caver no. 3 proceeded to the top of the drop after a short rest. Once there, he informed no. 1 of the problem, and together they worked out a solution.

In addition to the other miracles of the trip (such as caver no. 3 having jumars) there were many bolts in both sides of the passage at the top of the drop. Also, caver no. 3 had a pack generously filled with sling and carabiners. Using the bolts, jumars, sling, and 'biners no. 1 and no. 3 rigged a 3 to 1 mechanical advantage to pull no. 2 up the drop.

At this point it is important to note that this cave is far from any available rescue team and that caver no. 2 had already spent 3 hours under the waterfall. Blood circulation in no. 2's feet was being restricted by the tightening rig. His legs and feet were becoming dangerously numb. The slumped position he was in put the falling water directly on his chest. In view of these circumstances no. 1 and 3 had three choices once no. 2 had gotten to the top. They could go for help, they could go to the car for more rope and let no. 2 back down the drop where he could re-rig with prussiks, or they could pull no. 2 up with a mechanical advantage. The first choice was definitely out, considering the time involved. The second could not be sure that caver no. 2 could climb the drop with prussiks, therefore, the greatest expedience was found in choice no. 3.

This plan of action required about  $3\frac{1}{2}$  hours of steady work by the two cavers on top. Even though they had rigged the mechanical advantage, they were pulling a 175 lb. caver, 30 lbs. of camera gear, the friction in their rig, and the friction of the rope along about 30 feet of the drop. The effort was monumental, to say the least. A jumar was used to hold the rope in place between "heaves". Only a few inches could be pulled at a time. As caver no. 2 came closer and could talk to no. 1 and 3 the effort became less grim as success was in sight.

At the end of the  $3\frac{1}{2}$  hours of hauling, no. 2 was in a position where he could sit on a protrusion from the wall. Here he loosened the constriction rig on his feet and attempted to stand. The first attempt failed, but as blood rushed back into the legs and feet, he was able to stand. At this point it was possible for him to climb the remaining 30 feet of the drop. Before doing that he had to pull up the remaining rope and camera gear, so it would clear the overhang. Once this was done completed the climb, with a belay, and joined the others at the top of the drop.

After much rejoicing, it became clear the time was of the essence in getting out of the cave. Cavers 2 and 3 were falling

asleep standing up (a bad exposure symptom). Caver no.2 coiled the rope to keep warm as no.1 headed up the 50 foot drop just ahead. Caver no. 2 did a one-legged prussik up the drop in about 10 minutes with no problems. Caver no.3 was last up the 50 foot drop. One ladder climb later the three cavers emerged from the cave around 8 in the morning.

All three slept for a couple of hours and then started the drive back to Blacksburg.

What were the results of the ordeal? Caver no.2 undoubtedly suffered the most. He had large sores on his arms from the attempts to keep onto the rope and fix the rig. He also had bitten a large hole in the inside of his mouth because of the extreme cold under the waterfall. For a period of about a year after the trip he experienced some numbness in one of his legs. Both cavers 2 and 3 experienced great pain with every move for about four days after the trip. Water had tightened their muscles.

However, both cavers no. 2 and 3 were back in a vertical cave in West Virginia one week later, taking part in one of the last "caver" trips to Grapevine Cave (one with heavily bandaged arms.)

Now it's time to examine the causes of this incident:

(1) Since the cave was not originally in the itinerary of the cavers, they were not aware of the waterfall and were not prepared for it.

(2) This was the first time that caver no. 2 had used his jummar rig in a cave, and no doubt that was a major part of the problem.

(3) When caver no.2 first experienced problems with the jummar rig, he should have switched over to one of the other two systems he had on him (cams or knots), particularly since his light was hopelessly out.

(4) Caver no. 2 should have had a second light source. This may have been all that was necessary to get him out of the second predicament.

(5) The probable cause of no.2's problem was that the sling from the top jummar was becoming stuck in the cam of the bottom jummar allowing neither of them to move.

#### Conclusions:

(1) Cavers 1 and 3 were right in deciding to pull up no. 2 immediately upon no. 3 reaching the top.

(2) All three cavers were dangerously close to collapse from exposure and exhaustion even before doing the 50 foot ascent.

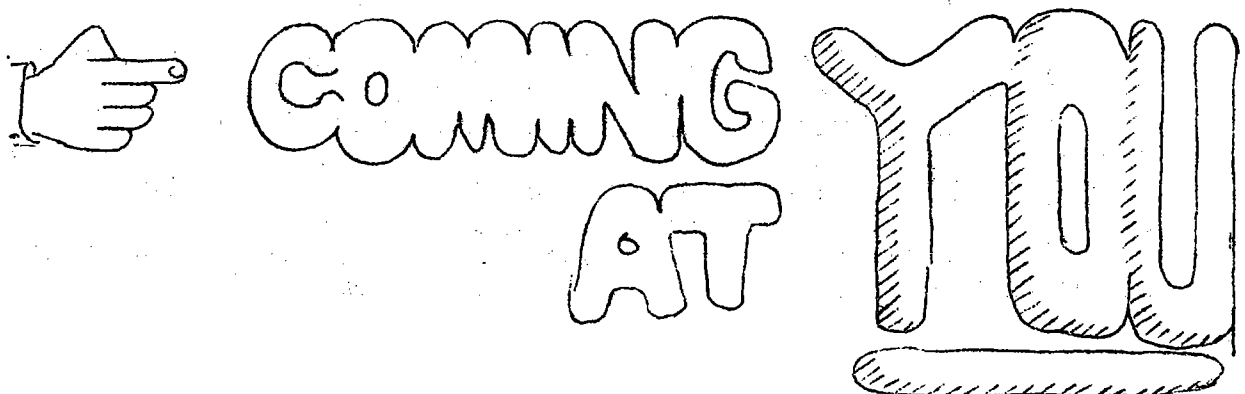
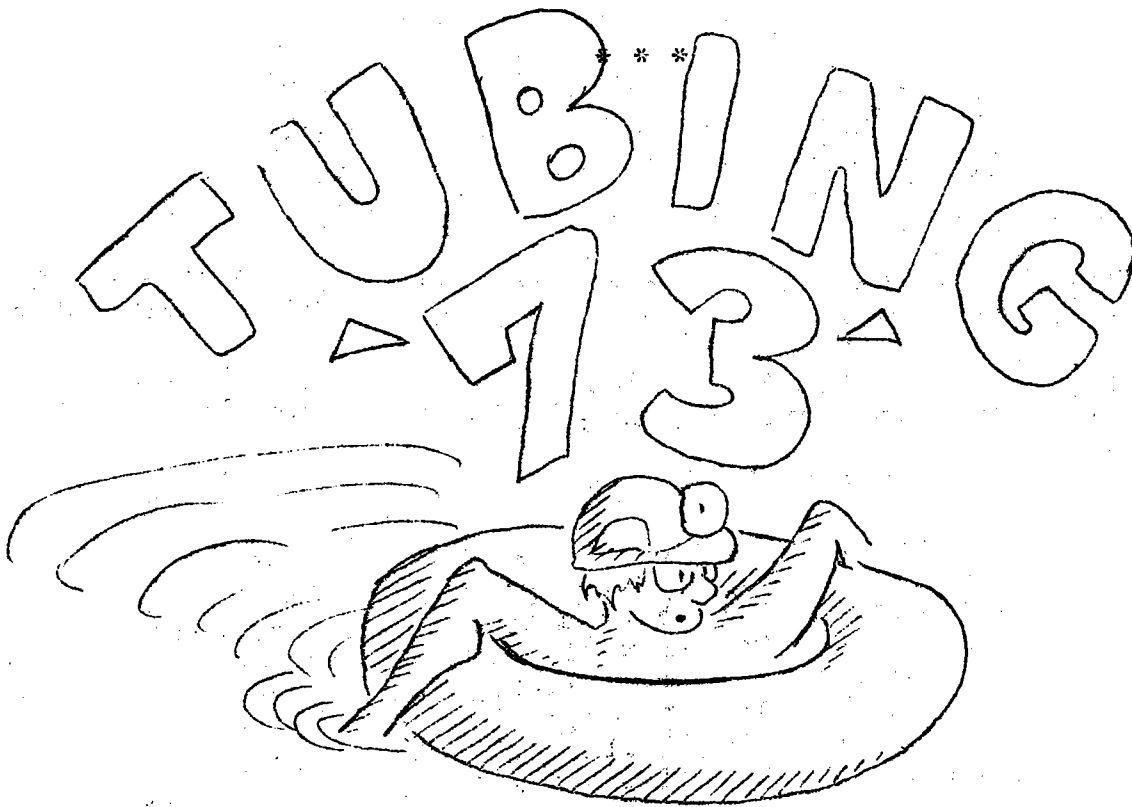
(3) The skill and experience (not to mention the cool) of caver no. 3 saved the day, also no. 2's life.

(4) Caver no. 2 did not panic, mainly due to the confidence he had in himself and his fellow grotto members.

(5) The particular stocky build of no. 2 no doubt kept him alive during the 7 hour ordeal under the waterfall.

In summing up, this is a classic example of where grotto pride in the ability of its members has paid off. This pride in caving ability is passed on through the training program each year as present members pass their skills on to prospective members. The resulting caving competence of the members is probably the best thing any caver in trouble has going for him. This trip proved it.

Editor's Note: This account has been written and published 4 and a half years after the incident due to the nature of the trip and the cave visited. The names of the cave and cavers have been deleted as they are not necessary to the story. It is hoped that a small education can be gained by those who read it.

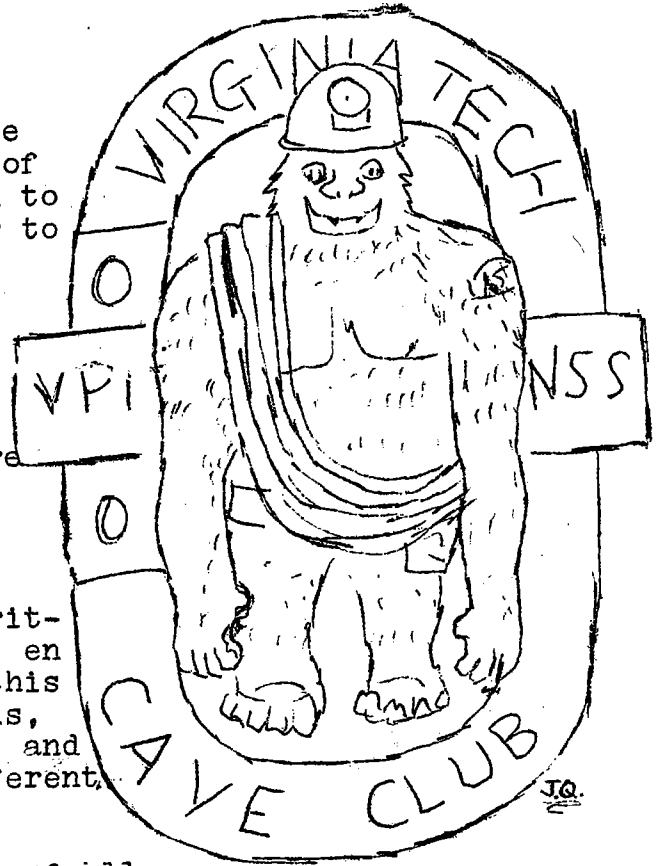




## SOME CRITERIA FOR MEMBERSHIP

Grotto membership is an issue that is as various as the number of Grottos. Some caving groups need to attract and hold members in order to survive as an organization, while others set up requirements that make membership more selective. The intention here is not to explore the different systems to make Grotto members, but to look into the particular situation here at VPI.

After a caver has done the trainee thing, taken tests, had tasks signed off, he\* faces the ritual of coming up before the Club, en masse, to be voted in. Usually this is a matter of routine, no hassels, even with a measure of merriment, and other times, well uhhh, it's different. What happens, why is this so?



It should be mentioned first of all, that the basis of any argument is a difference of definitions. Once all the terms are defined, an argument ceases and it becomes a discussion. Something that also deserves mention is that once a person becomes a member of the VPI Grotto, he has the right to use his vote anyway he chooses, not the way others think he should. Most cavers make a serious effort to use integrity in club matters, but even though someone simply flips a coin to determine the fate of a potential member, then he is perfectly within his right to vote as he sees fit. After all, the club once upon a time gave him the priveledge to make decisions. Instead of voicing rounds of intimidating verbage at the person who doesn't vote someone into the club, maybe we can take a look at some of the reasoning used in admitting or not admitting people into the Grotto.

Some cavers believe that anyone who takes the time and goes through the routine of traineehood, he should become a member, no matter no matter what. Even if the guy is a bungling idiot who trips over his own boot laces, he'd be better off caving with the Grotto where at least where we can keep an eye on him. After all, the club is supposedly dedicated to teaching and maintaining safety practices. Besides, it's not too good an idea to turn someone on to caving and there turn him off; he'd probably go right on caving with someone else, or worse yet, by himself. On

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\* the use in this article of the masculine form of pronouns does not by any means intend to exclude the feminine forms, but the english language being what it is, "he" will have to do.

the other hand, if everybody who passed the trainee tests automatically came into the club, why did the founders of the system make it necessary to get a two-third's vote? Shouldn't those who know caving have some say over who passes on the know-how to future novices?

Then there's the old question of "personality differences". It's not really fair to keep someone out of the club because of a moldy grudge, social prejudices or just because you don't like their looks. But then, what if for some reason you just can't get along with someone, how can you trust yourself with him if he doesn't offer you respect of integrity, person and property? It's no secret that people behave underground much the same way they do above ground. Besides, if two-thirds of the people can't voice confidence in a person, what is he doing there anyway?

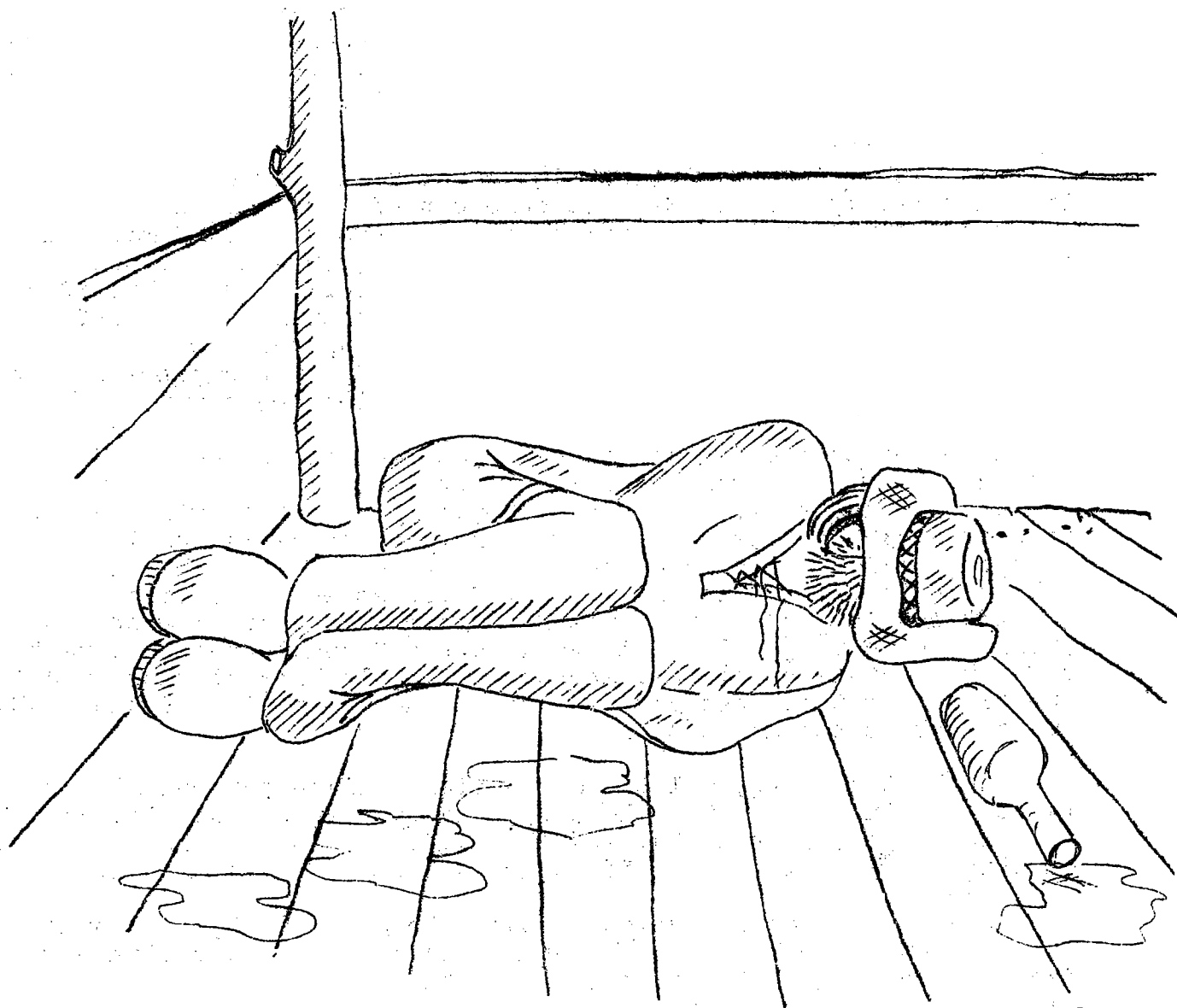
A lot of people do want to be objective and open-minded, but find it hard to make anything but vague notions out of what's going on around them. Give some thought to the following questions as criteria: Is this person competent to make decisions in a crisis? Will he encourage people to safe caving? Is he capable of leading a trip of neophyte cavers? If someone inquires about the patch he's wearing with the funny gorilla, what kind of impression of caving will he leave with them? What does he have to offer the future of caving? Another way of looking at these tough questions, is that most cavers have learned most of what they know after they've become members.

Without a doubt, all the definitions will never be the same (what a boring club that would be!), and the arguments will continue. But maybe, just maybe, if all the different approaches to the question are considered, a better perspective can be found.

One final question which is basic to some and ignored by many, is "Why bother to become a member anyway?" The answer lies in the fact that coming up for membership in the Grotto is not like pledging a frat, (though it may seem so at times) but becoming an active part of what's really happening. If someone goes to the efforts of learning about caving to qualify, then he has acquired enough knowledge to have his own opinions and possibly ideas on how to improve things. It's kind of hard to make constructive changes if you insist on abstaining on membership. There are lots of things going on in the Grotto, also the Region and the NSS, that need constructive attention and the only way to see to that is to be part of it.

Janet Queisser

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That's All Folks!

