

# The Tech Troglodyte



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A Journal of the Cave Club of YPI Grotto  
of  
The National Speleological Society

## Spring Semester 1991

President...Dave Colatosti  
Vice President...Mike Horne  
Treasurer...Rich Simpson  
Secretary...Maurya Fisher

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Joe Uknalis, Editor

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## The President's Column

Well, I guess it would be prudent at this juncture to mention stuff in the club and other things in the new world order. Elections were held and there were some changes, if there weren't I would be sleeping now, instead of writing this for the trog. The new officers: Mike Horne-Vice President, Rich Simpson-Treasurer, Maurya Fisher-Secretary, and some guy named Dave as President.

To recap the semester- Banquet was a blast in Owens, 25th anniversary celebration, good food and we even made money. Picnic-cool deal. Though Saturday morning ther wee a few people who wnated to moved the party to town and indoors, but yea the gods were pleased and the sun did shine upon the cavers by 5pm that day.

People caved, except in Clover Hollow which is closed as you read this very word. It is late, I am confused and there is yet another article to write.

Dave Colatosti  
President  
Rappels w/out climbing

ps. Oh yea did I mention the fact that some people got sort of trapped in a cave called Fern and some got stuck in Giant Caverns

### *Letter from the Editor*

Good evening, and what can I tell you? Well, here it is. It's a big one. Lots of new and interesting features for the Trog. Science, humor, and a crossword puzzle. Thanks to Kay for her work on previous Trots, and good luck to Scott Rapier as the new Editor (unless there is unanimous call for an editor-in-absentia). Relax, don't worry, have a homebrew!

*Joe*

## Grotto Grapevine

During semester break in December several groups braved icy conditions in the States to go caving in New Mexico and Mexico. Clover Hollow cave was closed around banquet. Jim is working on getting an access policy established. a Stompbottom cave trip went out without Garrie. Some surveying occurred, including Ground Hog Hole, Banes and secret caves. Bob Handley found a mile of new passage in Organ cave. New members duly inducted include Maurya Fisher, Rich Simpson, Bryce Bolton and John Williams.

Banquet was the largest ever, 185 people (25th Anniversary). Buddy had pneumonia and was unable to attend the banquet. We're sending him a photo of the attendees. He's doing better now. Carol Zo won A.I. Cartwright award for meritorious service and being club mom. John Williams was awarded trainee of the year. Chip Clark showed slides of old farts when they were young and took the group picture. Dave Cincavich was also unable to attend banquet.

Easter beer hunt had clear cool weather, just right for keeping beers cool. Who knows if they were all found. Jim's sauna was reconditioned and had it's maiden voyage that day also.

Stunt biking was outlawed at picnic this year, but stunt walking was not. Walt apparently broke his leg early Sunday morning. The cast comes off in 3 weeks. 7 kegs & mucho hot dogs were consumed in a weekend that turned out to not be so rainy. Hoss punctured the gas tank of his car getting out of Pendly's field. The DISCO TENT made it's first appearance.

On the relationship & baby front... Scott & Kristen, Adam & Tracy & Joe & Heather are not engaged, Doug Bruce and Sue are. Mike Futrell is engaged to Andrea and living in Ohio. Sandy has left the Ellet Hotel and moved in with Philip. Fifi now makes the bed every morning. Don Anderson is a grandpa again (Sara Nicole, April 18th). Barbara (nee Goodreau) is pregnant. Nancy Parks is pregnant again (not twins). Kathryn Stoutenburg was born to Linda and Randy. Doug Perkins has been finding strange folks sleeping in his van (Slukarski & Boo) since Carolyn is gone. Sara Vieweg and Scott Broadwell have been seen in close proximity as have Prez Dave and Stephanie.

Movings- Brian Cruickshank and Rob French are new residents at the Farm. Laine and Scott Rapier moved to Signout. Joe moved in with Heather. Dave Washington bought a house in Fredericksburg. Stymie and Ann Marie also bought a house. Mike and Suzanne Frame moved back to Christiansburg. Stine moved to a new apartment with Jolinda.

Ed is working for Newport engineering & has a car again (Sue Setzler's old corolla). Sandy is now shop manager at Universal Controls. Nancy Shantz is now working at Tech. Mike Fiore will be going to UNC Chapel Hill in child psych in the fall. Jake may be cruising timber somewhere. Laine will be going to grad school at Radford in the fall. Sara Vieweg will be working in California during the summer and fall (ski patrol bum) and will be coming back to Radford's nursing program. Lesley will be working with eagles on the Chesapeake over the summer. Ben passed all his pre-lims the first time. Ko didn't take them so it's another year more. Jean Hartman is still in Turkey and is setting up an import business for Turkish crafts.

Nat is float trip Admiral, the party will be at the Farm. June 22 Ed Richardson and Lynn Wright are having a summer party. August 3 & 4 Russ and Sandy Peterson are having a party too

## Incident in Fern Cave in Alabama on March 11, 1991

On March 11, 1991 Bryce Bolton, Dave Colatosti, Mike Horne, Cecile James, Sandy Knapp, Mac McElroy, and John Williams, a group of trained and vertically competent cavers, decided to go to Suprize pit in Fern. The group had been pit bouncing on previous days and felt prepared to do something bigger that day. It had not rained for at least 5 days but the ground was still wet and water levels were still high. After talking to a caver who had done the cave before they received information about the rigging. They also were told that it would be somewhat misty and it might be difficult to understand rope commands in the pit. In preparation they acquired some whistles to aid in pit communications. The group had gotten a late start and the pace was quick on the hike up to the cave. Dave had received the information about the rigging and was leading. After following the stream they came to a point where the stream dropped off into the pit. The group also spotted a good natural backoff for rigging. Dave, Mike and Sandy went off to do the rigging. After crawling out on the ledge they came to three man made anchors: two large eye bolts and a piton. This seemed to be the right place although some of the information did not quite fit. Dave had been told that he might need one or two Stubai carabiners to rig off the oversized bolts, but this was not so. The rigging crew also noted that the anchors, while quite stable, were somewhat rusty. However there were 1/4" to 1/2" grooves in the rock from rope wear, so this seemed to be the right place. After rigging a self equalizing anchor on the three anchor points and backing it off down the passage to the natural point and padding, the group was ready to go down. The plan was to send four down, then two up and two down until all had bounced the pit and one person did it twice. The first group came out on the ledge using the safety line. Cecile who had done the pit before, said she didn't remember the rigging looking like this. She also noted there had been more room in the waiting area and recalled waiting further on ahead. After pointing out the tricky ledge to negotiate if they did go further ahead to wait, the deep rope grooves in the rock the group believed that they were in the right place. Dave suggested that either Sandy or Cecile be the first ones down since they had both done long drops before. Sandy agreed to go down first. Noting that the waterfall was nearby and may cause communication problems, the whistle commands were worked out. Once Sandy was down she would either climb back up if the situation was a no go or blow the whistle twice to signify "off rope, next person down".

Sandy went down with full up gear on in the event of an emergency. As she dropped she could see the waterfall in the distance, but the haze grew heavier and she didn't know that she was rappelling into the full force of the waterfall until she was in it. At that point she had no choice but to continue down where she might be able to get out of the waterfall to rig to climb. After she got to the bottom and rigged to climb, she was about to start when she realized that she might not be able to make it up the climb in the water. It appeared that she would have to climb about 80 feet in the full force of the waterfall before she would be clear. At that point she blew the whistle once, and weighted the rope so no one would come down. Then she went to Grahams Grotto and took off her wettest clothes and went back and blew the whistle repeatedly.

When the top heard the repeated whistles, we at first responded with multiple blasts to let her know we heard. She could not hear our response due to the waterfall. After blowing her whistle she went back in and took shelter under her trash bag and got out of the water and wind. At the top, John was ready and it seemed that he would be a good person to send down next. At that

point in time the top had no idea of Sandy's status. The top wasn't sure what exactly the situation was, and at that point we didn't suspect any major problems and thought it was a simple communication problem. So John went down in his full vertical rig. His instructions were that if there were no signal from the bottom they were coming up, two blasts meant everything was ok and the next person should come down and three blasts meant go get help. As John descended he could see the waterfall. Further down he could see the water bouncing off a ledge and engulfing the rope. John stopped and tried to yell down to Sandy but she could not hear him through the waterfall. John then continued downward to see if Sandy was alright. When he got down he found Sandy cold and shivering in her bag, he was also cold and shivering. Sandy was caving electric and had no heat sources on her, so the two huddled in their bags and passed John's lamp. After John warmed up a little he went out and blew the whistle three times. When the top heard the whistles there was a problem. Dave said he would go down to verify the help call and possibly administer first aid since he was an EMT and Sandy's condition was unknown. Dave got all the extra food and plastic bags from the group and a wool cap and neck gator. It was planned that if no whistles were heard the three at the bottom would be climbing back up. However, if Dave whistled three times that meant go call a rescue. Cecile and Bryce were going to call for help while Mac and Mike would wait at the top of the drop until help arrived. Dave put on his ascending gear and a trashbag in case of water. Dave descended also noting the water engulfing the rope. Since he had not heard about the waterfall in the rappell he figured he might be close to the bottom. When he finally reached the bottom he called out and found John and Sandy shivering badly. He gave them his carbide lamp and told them the scoop. The three discussed the possibility of someone climbing up to get word that they were ok but could not climb out. Dave went to see if the rope could be pulled out of the waterfall. The spray was so great that he could not see and he hurried back to the sheltered area before getting too wet. They discussed their options again and decided that the safest option was to call for help. Dave then whistled three times from the bottom of the drop and the three made preparations for a long wait. When the top heard the three whistles Cecile and Bryce dumped all their extra gear with Mike and Mac. They headed out and a half an hour later they reached a phone. Since they had no numbers of local cavers they called 911. About 7 hours after Dave made the whistle for help, a caver in a wetsuit came upon Sandy, Dave and John. Although chilled, the three were in good spirits and were able to climb out on their own on a rope rigged in the right place. The three were out of the cave by dawn.

#### Self Analysis:

- 1) The group was not well informed. There was too much reliance on Cecile, who had been to the cave before, and on Dave, who received brief instructions on rigging. The whole situation could have been avoided if the group had read the guidebook.
- 2) Since the group was rushed, they were not thinking enough. There should have been more discussion when Cecile was unsure of the rig and the place where she recalled waiting should have been.

Also when the crisis occurred, the group should have stopped and problem solved a little more. John was sent down the rope in unprepared fashion. He should have been given more food and plastic bags. He should also have worn one down the drop.

- 3) On the rappel Sandy should have been more attentive and watched out for the falls. A changeover could have avoided this rescue situation. Dave and John should have done a changeover

before they hit the water. That may have changed some things and some additional problem solving could have been done.

- 4) Communications were very poor. Walkie talkies would have changed the situation greatly and word could have gotten out that only an assist was needed. The group at the top could make no assumptions about the condition of the people at the bottom. Whistle commands were inadequate and not well thought out. Information on Sandy's and the group's condition could have been relayed through whistle calls if the crew had thought about it for a while.
- 5) Questions on rigging should have not been taken lightly. Any doubts about the location or rature of the rig shoul have been discussed fully and checked out. The group would have discovered the proper rig point had this happened.
- 6) Much of the group did not prepare well for caving. There was an open air pit mentality going through the group. This is not to say they had not taken the proper gear, but rather that much of the group thought it would be like a bop trip and did not prepare for a tough trip. A few cavers wore only cotton and carried no clothing that would insulate when wet. When going underground, one shold be prepared to stay there for a while.

Note: This report was not fully completed at the time of publication in this newsletter. I thought it would be good to have something in the Trog related to this incident. The self analysis may not be complete as I have not had a chance to go over it with others in the group.

Compiled by Dave Colatosti with  
much input provided by the  
members of the trip.

## Fern!

It is true that the whole thing was a group screw up caused by not thinking things through enough and arguing with each other enough. This is my side of the story. On my first day at TAG I was excited and nervous. I tried really hard to be safe and not make any mistakes. I felt like it was inevitable that I, a voting trainee, did miss something no matter how many times I tried to check myself out, I made an error of some sort during each one of the pits we did during that first day. The mistakes I made, however, were all minor and inconsequential to the issue of safety.

My second day went well and I was getting into bopping these outdoor pits. We decided to do Fern on the third day. I don't think any of us had switched our mindsets from the vacation we were all on, to the serious cave that lay before us. We got a late start that morning. I was eager to see what hiking up a steep hill with a fully loaded (650' rope & other supplies) internal frame pack would be like. I found myself over eager to set a quick pace up the hill and was taking brakes so as not to lose the rest of our group. This was a hurried feeling that we all shared.

At the entrance, I gladly gave Bryce the pack to deal with in the cave. I dressed for a cave but not for a really cold wet trip. After bopping pits in shorts and a tee shirt this seemed like a lot. I had no part in the rigging. When I got to the rigging it looked good to me. Cecile mentioned that she didn't think this was where they had rigged two years ago. After thinking about Ko's description and the rope grooves in the stone we went with it because it looked like an obvious place to rig. Sandy was the first to go down; she had her ascending gear on.

I was going to check out the art gallery Cecile had mentioned but didn't when confused signals came up from Sandy. We started to worry about what might be going wrong but instead of making it a good long discussion we decided to send down the most ready person. That happened to be me. Cecile would have been the second person down before any of the confused signals came up. I told Dave that one whistle meant nothing; two meant send someone down and three meant send no one down and call in a rescue. He agreed to repeat my calls to confirm they had been heard. This sounded like it was clear and simple. Cecile took a picture of one very nervous caver, as I started to rappel. After about 15 feet I couldn't see anything but a few feet of rope. After slowly and cautiously descending about 300' of rope I realized that the rope was going into the waterfall. About when I realized this I was already being hit with spray and wind. The (virgin) rope became very slick. I tried to call to Sandy but there was no response. Since I could not establish any communication I went into the waterfall. A second later I was having trouble breathing slowly and was hyperventilating. I was worried about going too fast and hitting the bottom as Sandy might have done. When I felt rock below my feet I was shaking so badly that I could barely get my rack off the rope.

Sandy and I decided that neither of us would be able to climb through the waterfall and that assistance would be needed. We gave the three signals and started to prepare for hours of waiting. Dave was down a few minutes later. He had brought more supplies which were ample for a 20 hour wait. We talked a lot and with a high morale among us the time flew by. We all were able to climb out on the rescuer's rope and get out by dawn.

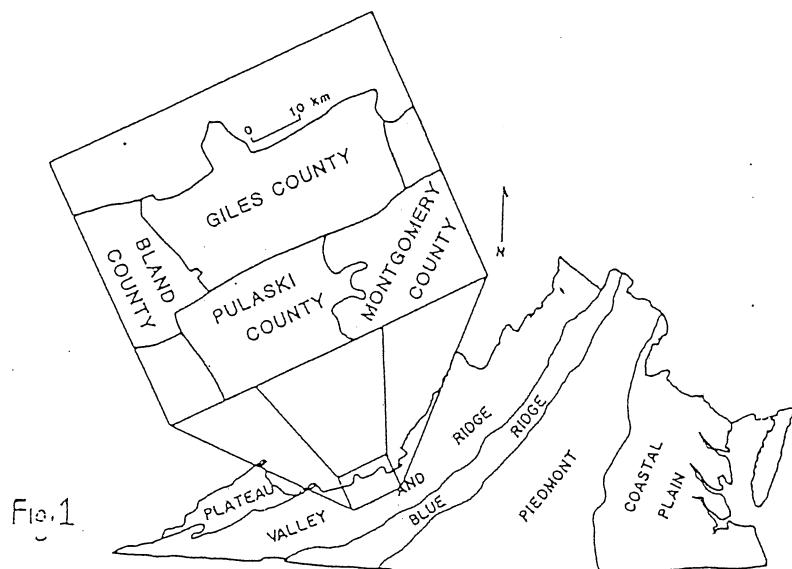
John Williams

## A Whole Lot of Shakin' Goin' On

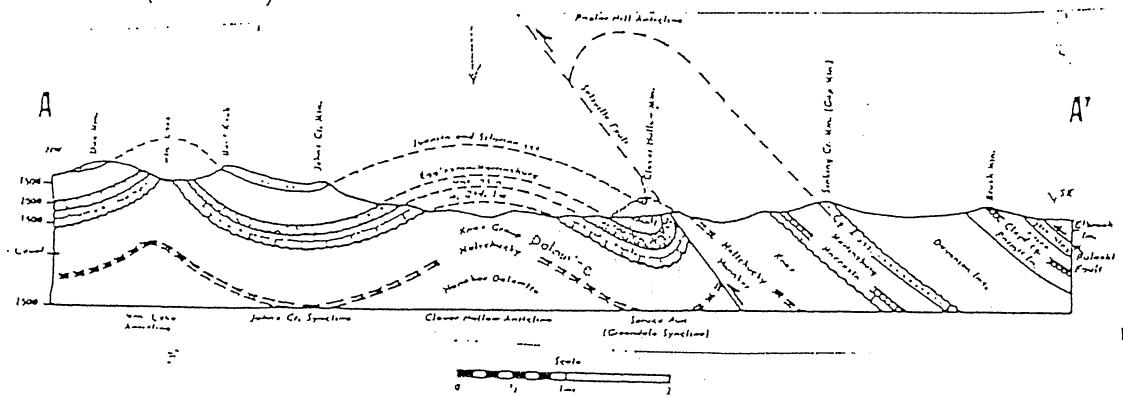
by  
Ed Fortney

Next time you're in some deep, dark and muddy hole in the ground, somewhere in Giles County, you might want to stop and reflect on the fact that this area is one of the most seismically active in the state. Fortunately, while California is waiting for the big one, Virginia settles for a lot of little ones.

Before we start talking about actual earthquakes let's discuss the local geology. Giles County is situated in the folded and faulted Valley & Ridge province of the Appalachians. It is bordered on the east by the volcanic rocks of the Blue Ridge and Piedmont (no caves), and on the west by the flat lying sedimentary rocks of West Virginia (lots of caves).

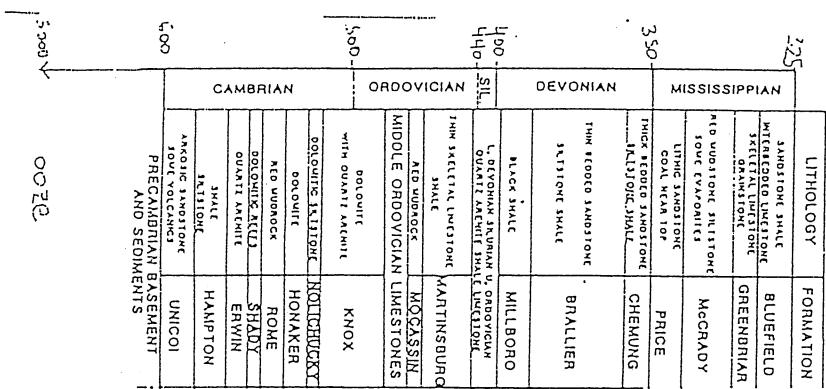


The Valley and Ridge province is so named because of the folds and faults that geographically present themselves as our familiar mountains and valleys. In an erosional phenomenon known as inversion of topography the mountains are typically synclines (troughs) and the valleys are anteclines (arches).



**IDEALIZED STRUCTURE SECTION A - A' FROM THE PULASKI FAULT TO MOUNTAIN LAKE**

The limestones in the area are middle Ordovician in age. They lie below the shales and sandstones and above the dolomite.



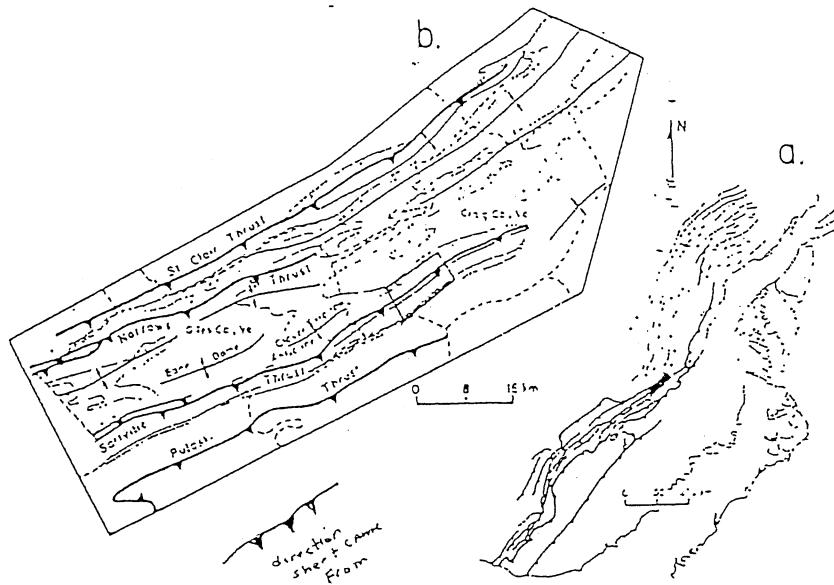


Figure 4A Geologic location map. (a) Fault and fold trends in the Valley and Ridge Province. (b) Regional map.

(From House and Gray, 1982, p. 831.)

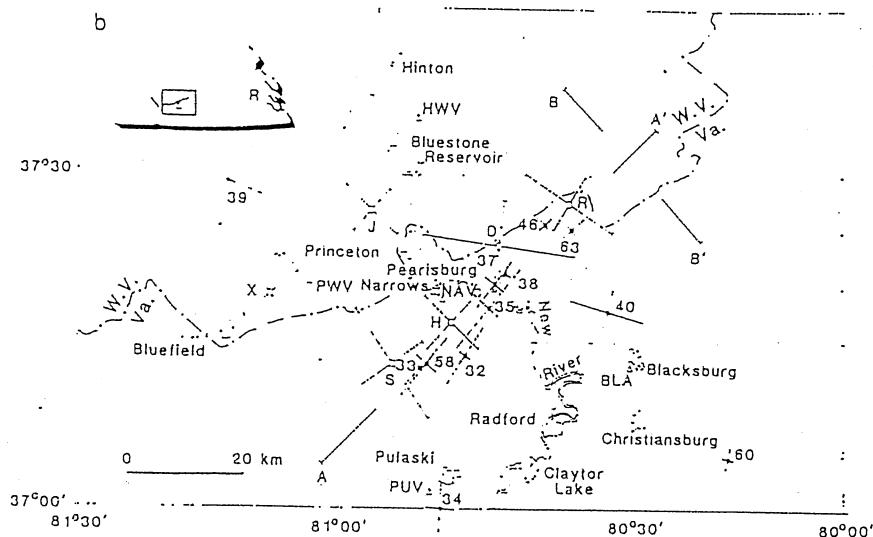


Fig. 1 (a) Virginia Tech seismic network. Stations are identified by closed circles and a three- or four-character code. Dashed line shows division of Plateau and Valley and Ridge provinces. Giles County is shown by the shaded area. (b) Epicenter (closed circles with event numbers and 68 percent confidence-ellipsoid axes) map for microearthquakes located by data from the Giles County subnetwork. JHD relocated epicenters (7) are shown by open circles with event letter designators and 90 percent confidence-ellipsoid axes. Network seismic stations are shown by open triangles with three-letter codes. The locations of vertical profiles A-A' and B-B' are also indicated. Inset map shows area of this figure (shaded portion) and locations of the Narrows seismic station (NAV, open triangle symbol) and Richmond (R).

Accounts of earthquakes have been reported in Giles since the earliest settlers arrived. Shocks that can be felt are seldom, but when they happen they are that much more noticeable. From the reports of Giles area quakes most people describe them as "someone driving by in a heavy truck or the furnace blowing up". The big momma of them all happened on May 31, 1897. This quake, probably centered on Pearisburg, was measured as a modified Mercalli VIII (a scale of earthquake intensity based on observed effects. The San Francisco quake of 89 was a IX or X. The Richter scale is determined mathematically from actual seismograph traces).

The quake was felt over 300,000 square miles, ranging from TAG to Pennsylvania. Houses were shaken, chimneys thrown down and people ran into the streets. There were even rumors, (unfounded for the most part) of Angels Rest being "rocked". This quake was the biggest in the area and the second biggest in the southeast. It was followed for several months by aftershocks.

The next rumbles were on April 23, 1959, March 8, 1968, and November 19, 1969. It's interesting to note that the people in 1897 describe the sound of the quake as "a train going by" while from 1959 on it's "a plane breaking the sound barrier". These quakes were rated as MMIV-VI and all were centered more or less on Pearisburg. The old story we all hear is about Tawney's Cave being modified by the '59 quake. Whether true or not these quakes are strong enough to do that type of damage. According to Virginia Tech geophysicists the fault under Giles most likely responsible is a 5-25Km deep Pre Cambrian fault formed in an ocean before the Atlantic existed. It has now been stressed by subsequent continent bashing.

While Giles does have a respectable earthquake history these quakes are not the Jacuzzi busters of California fame. Ours are felt over a much larger area due to the east coast geology. It is somewhat disconcerting to realize a cave is a temporary feature which by its nature wants to fall down and in Giles County caves what's underneath our feet wants to bring down what's over our heads.

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## The Impossible Adventures of Juan Pirate

When we last left Juan Pirate, he was in dire straits. In fact, the situation looked as if there was no escape. It seems that Juan was stuck at the bottom of a 800 Ft. drop with no way out! The rope used to rig the drop had not one, but two trainees on it, and they were both in serious need of assistance.

"Hmmm," Juan thought to himself, "the situation looks drastic. Those trainees have been on rope close to ten or eleven minutes now and they still are not up! Looks like there is only one thing to do. I must free climb out of this pit and help those trainees. Everyone says that it is impossible, but it must be done!"

So Juan set to his impossible task. First, he stripped down to just a pair of shorts. "This will keep me from over heating in the pit while I climb, allow free movement of my buttocks, and prevent me from pulling my groin again," he decided. "And no shoes, while cutting up my feet, will provide better purchase." Next, he put a large knife between his teeth, just in case he needed it. Then he instantly began his ascent.

"Damnl!" he mumbled around the knife. "If only I had not brought these trainees. I knew they would not be able to keep up with me! Now they are stuck on rope and I can hear them wimpering all the way down here."

All of a sudden, with impossible swiftness and fury, a tremendous cascade of frigid snow melt pelted Juan in the face and ran down his manly bare chest. However, knowing that the trainees were watching his every move, and realizing that he must be impressing the hell out of them, Juan clung to the icy, slick limestone.

"When I get up there, I have got to remember to rescue the trainees," he said to no one in particular. "As fun as this climb may be, there are lives at stake."

Because of his sheer speed and incredible climbing prowess, he quickly drew level with the first trainee, about 100 feet from the top. Looking at her closely he seemed to recall that her name began with an S. Susan, he thought. Yes, now he remembered her. She had been very impressed with him at the meeting and the party. But she was a lively one, with plenty of self control. She had to have tons of self discipline, the way she resisted his charm. No matter, he was too busy talking to Dan, gaining his trust and respect, to bother with her. In fact, he might not even have noticed her if she hadn't come to the party and meeting with Dan. Come to think of it, weren't they going out or something? That would explain why Dan had been too busy for Juan lately.

Anyway, on closer inspection, she was not stuck, merely climbing slowly. And peering up the rope, Juan noticed that the other trainee, was it Billy?, was also just climbing slowly. God, they climbed so slowly. Juan would have been out of this pit in no time flat on rope. So he passed them and proceeded to the top of the pit. Scrambling over the lip, he met the astonished gaze of the rest of the party. "God, Pirate free climbed out of the pit. Jesus, I would have thought that impossible had I not seen it with my own eyes!" they all said. "Juan, you are certainly the best caver to have joined this club in years, maybe even since it was formed! This is simply amazing for someone who was a trainee himself just last fall. Where do you plan to go from here? Club President? Club Vice-President? Oh, please do tell."

"Well," exclaimed Juan. "I am sorry, but I just could not be Vice President. You see, I would run through a cave, and the trainees would just slow me up. Gosh, I might even forget about them, they would be so far behind. Besides, I am unfulfilled here at VPI. Soon I will be leaving you to seek my fortune out West. Maybe there I can find what I need to make my life complete."

And with that, he strode out of the cave and into caver folklore forever. Today, you can still hear the tales and adventures of Juan Pirate being passed on from caver to caver over dinner in Dietrick. While nobody knows what really happened to him after that day, his legend lives on.

## OBSCENE EXCITEMENT II: the sequel

He was breathing heavy when I reached down his hot, wet front and groped for the belt that was tied in a square knot. Try as I might, I couldn't get the knot out soon enough. It was too tight for me to get a good grip. There wasn't enough room. He had to help me get the belt off. I couln't help myself and I took over undressing him again.

I tried being aggressive by ripping off his field pants button, but it slid through with a gentler touch. After his button was freed, he exploded forth through the zipper. He came at me and placed his strong hand on my thigh. He pushed... right past me in the tight passage. I know what you all are thinking, and you are disgusting! Hoss, as usual, got stuck in a crawl in Old Mill cave.

The 300 feet that we did see was very nice, but our journey was cut short by the fact that it rained the entire month of February (What's new in Blacksburg?). The six members of this motley crew were in waist deep water discussing how the other room should be only five feet ahead. Sara's Anthropology Professor said that he wouldn't be joining us through the submerged tunnel. I am glad I wasn't the only wuss who wasn't up for underwater caving without a wetsuit and oxygen tank!

There were lots of pretties, but we took a wrong turn that led to Hoss' situation. Honestly I tried to help, I told him which direction he should move. Being a typical male, He said taht it wouldn't work until it seemed like his idea. A woman's work is never done when they have to straighten out the men.

Hoss hauled his naked butt through the last twenty feet of the cave so fast I didn't even see his combat boots when I looked up. COLD, WET, satisfied and hoping I never see Hoss' naked backside again!

Stephanie Karen Meridith

## New Mexico or Bust

This all began simply enough, Sandy told me of this wild idea about caving over Christmas break with Ko and Joan. It was easy to hook me, I had nothing better to do. Finally Barbara and Beth were added to finish the cast of characters in this epic saga. A tale of adventure rivaling those of the Vikings or Conquistadors.

### STEP I: Planning.

Easy enough- we chose the spontaneous approach to our journey. The idea was to deal with it as it happened.

### STEP II: Assembly.

After my arrival at signout on the evening of December 20th, Ko, Barbara and I set out to do the food shopping. Next we were supposed to have had my 4-Runner packed and ready to go when Joan and Beth arrived from NOVA at approximately midnite. Well you know how things go... there were several interruptions...AKA the Simpsons etc. When Joan arrived a full hour early nothing was ready to go. Finally at 2am with my truck filled beyond reason we departed.

### STEP III: Go west young man.

Someone once said getting there id half the fun. He's obviously never been on one of our little expeditions. Driving Joan's Mazda 323 ko take the lead. He claims to know the shortcut through C'burg. Well, an hour later somewhere on Mud Pike southwest of C'burg the call comes over the CB. "Uuuuh, Rich....I think we missed a turn back there..." That's right folks, we got lost in our own backyard- Montgomery County!!!

We fumbled and stumbled until we found our way onto I-81. At last something was happening. Into the night (early morning) we drove until daybreak, somewhere in eastern Tennessee. I want to know why the surveyors made that state so damn long. I-40/I-81 stretches a full 500 miles from Bristol to Memphis and it takes forever. Anyway it rained hard and nasty from Nashville until we crossed the mighty Mississippi River. Then suddenly clear skies. So we stopped for lunch at the Arkansas welcome Center. Then just as quickly as the oasis appeared it vanished. We drove back into the rain. Rain's fine, but as the sun left for the dayand the mercury began to fall, the rain was replaced by ice. I never thought I'd see the day when I would have to scrape the ice from the inside of my windows. We slip-slidded our way to Ft. Smith, Arkansas where we called it quits forthe night and drowned our sorrows at the Super-8 Motel (if you know what I mean).

That night's rest turned out to be a good thing for it gave the road crews a chance to scrape and salt the road. Clear sailing the rest of the way. Next stop, Oklahoma City where we stopped at my uncles's house for a free lunch and rest break. The chili tasted great. We were reminded of that every once in a while all the way to Carlsbad. That's right, farts abounded.

We finally reached our destination at 11pm, December 22. That's when we arrived at the door of Jim and Andrea Goodbar. He had some maps and permints for us to pick up. But mostly I thank them for allowing us to use their camper-trailer that night. After 48 hours we were there.

### STEP IV. I cave therefore I am.

After thanking the Goodbars, we left the next morning for Lincoln National Forest. We set camp 7400 feet up in the Guadalupe mountains. Joan was amazingly brave with her Mazda taking on rough gravel roads, steep hills, dry stream beds and various other obstacles. That afternoon we visited Cottonwood Cave. It was a nice warm up for things to follow. We needed to adjust to 7400 feet! But still it was a huge cave, large entrance, formations, etc, etc, etc. That

night was the worst of the trip. Cold temperatures and high winds make for more than frozen water jugs in the morning.

Christmas Eve: we had two caves planned for that day. After hiking 1.5 hours we arrived at Black Cave only to discover that the key wouldn't open the locked gate. After a few choice words we hiked another hour to Hidden Cave. The name is well earned since the cave is at the bottom of a 60 foot narrow crevasse. Large passages and rooms, and all of it highly decorated. A day of sensory excitation, but just the beginning.

Christmas Day: the best day of the whole trip. After an early start we collapsed camp to leave that night. After a panoramic drive down the rim road we departed for Deep Cave. In front of me was 2-3 miles of 'high clearance' road. It seemed forever to get there. 2 hours of western-styled boulder hopping white knuckle driving was well worth it. From here we hiked another 2 hours to the cave. The payoff was immensely rewarding. The remoteness of the location explains the nearly perfectly undisturbed condition of the cave. The entrance was confusing to negotiate and we all weren't at the bottom until 5pm. Put simply, this cave is a two stage 500 foot sloping entrance which requires tow ropes to navigate. At the bottom lies a room of monstrous proportions filled with every imaginable variety of undisturbed formations and decorations. Sensory overload only begins to describe the feelings I'm sure we all felt. This was the pinnacle of the whole trip. We didn't get back to our camp until 3am. From there it took till 5am to leave the mountain. WHAT A DAY!!!

December 26: After that we all needed a day off. I woke up in my truck to find some bird pecking the window, scratching the roof and playing with the antenna all in an attempt to drive me off. Rather annoying but unsuccessful. Park Ranch Caves is a collection of about 15 gypsum tubes. The perfect place for an afternoon of playing around. That night we chose to spend in the local youth hostel. We all wanted a night in a bed and a hot shower. But of course the water heater was only good for one or two uses. TRUST ME!!

December 27: Endless Cave and McKittrick Cave were different but still quite fun. These were more like Virginia caves, crawling and stooping through mazes of passages. But still there were plenty of pretties to look at. That night we dined at Lucy's Mexican restaurant. Great food and drink at reasonable prices, there's nothing wrong with that.

December 28: Carlsbad Caverns. We were there, it was there, need I say more. Yes, it's a commercial cave, but well worth the \$4. Besides, there's nothing wrong with being tourists.

#### STEP V: Homeward bound.

After trekking through Carlsbad for 4 hours we had to leave. It was a far more pleasant trip home. First stop, Amarillo, Texas. We ate a true Texas dinner at The Big Texan Steak Ranch. I'm proud to announce that everyone tried and apparently liked the RATTLESNAKE. They also offer a free 72 oz. steak dinner provided you eat it all in an hour. Next stop, Nashville. That's where Ko and Joan left to do the family thing. Beth came over to my truck for the remainder of the trip. All she could comment on for the first hour was how much more leg room I had. Finally, we made it back to sign out. We arrived there about midnite on the 29th.

#### STEP VI: Conclusion.

Since we were the first real VPI trip to New Mexico that make us the guinea pigs. So here's some fact that will be of interest. 3646 miles accumulated on my truck. Camping was simple and free, plenty of public access land. The caves were dry, dusty and warm. Deep Cave is highly recommended along with Hidden Cave. Always take more rope than suggested. It's not only a safe practice, it's the only way to get down. The trails to the caves are sporadically marked but not too difficult to follow. Finally, I personally spent \$150. That include everything for the 10 days of adventure from food and gas to souvenirs and unexpected expenses. Overall, New Mexico is a fine alternative to venturing south of the border.

Rich Geisler

## Exploring Virgin Caves

On Saturday, 2-1-91, Lesley Colby, Hoss Leiffer, and I traveled about an hour from blacksburg to investigate a "hole" in someone's back yard. All of us were excited to find out exactly what the hole looked like, and if it was a cave to explore it's virginity.

The landowner took us to a woody section of her land at the edge of a field. There, stood a 20 by 20 foot sinkhole containing fallen trees, dead leaves, construction debris and a small hole between two mossy rocks. Peering inside, we realized that the cave entrance dropped at a steep slope and that we should rappel in to penetrate.

Hoss entered the tight leaf-filled entrance first. Next, I rappelled down the 15 foot entrance and filled my shirt with leaves and dirt. When Lesley was in the entrance room, we checked several dead end side passages. We then dispersed forward through a downward-sloping passage lined with seveal formations. After about 35 feet the passage narrowed and apparently continued past a point where a football sized rock was wedged between the ceiling and the muddy floor. Hoss grabbed the rock, set it to his side and stated scooping sexual chocolate out of the passage with an old pan he found.

The mud-choked passage, throuhg which Hoss and I could not fit, slid downward to a muddy foot wide stream. Lesley became useful at this time for digging. Hoss and I lowered her upside down by the feet into the tight passage. She widened the hole slowly, bringing up rocks and mud, but after five or six hauls, she got a headrush and our episode stopped. We dicided to come back to this part of the cave later, when better tools were available.

We returned to the entrance cavern. I set my pack down and crawled down a small passage while Hoss and Lesley investigated the upper half of the room. "Rock!" Hoss yelled. The massive rumble of a sliding boulder in the main room made my heart leap. There was a silence, then everyone called out that they were ok. a seemingly stable piece of ledge had given way under under Hoss's weight. I backed slowly out of my position into the entrance room to see Hoss hoisting a massive slab of rock off my pack. Inspecting my supplies, there appeared to be no damage, but Lesley suggested that I thoroughly test the vertical gear at the bridge before relying on it.

Finding no further leads, we climbed out of the cave and investigated another sinkhole in the nearby area. Lesley and Hoss enterd a small cave passage and started moving rocks while I wandered in the woods to look for other entrances. I found a series of five sinkholes, none of which had entrances large enough for me tofint through. "With all of these sinkholes, there has to be an entrance somewhere near!" I thought. In excitement, I circled back toward the others only to discover a modest limestone

entrance, pushed my head into the hole and peered into darkness. It looked vertical. I tossed a rock into the chasm and briefly hear it hit the ground. Damn!

Lesley and Hoss was soon on the scene, and Lesley and I entered the cave. From the small, but seeming stable entrance room there was one narrow passage leading downward on the left which I pierced. Remembering the rock that crushed my pack, I moved slowly. The tight climbdown ended in a muddy stream room which was big enough for me to stand up in. From here I could see the stream snaked between two rock faces off to the right. Lesley decided to wait to travel further because she didn't want to disturb the stream which may have supplied drinking water.

After thanking the landowner, we drove away that day with experience exploring virgin caves. The entrances we discovered may lead somewhere interesting, but we will never know the secrets of virgin holes until we dare to go where no man has been.

Bryce D. Bolton

## Cave Winery

From the TARARA Winery brochure: We have built the winery in a 3000 square foot cave to provide a perfect temperature and humidity controlled environment for barrell aging our premium wines. the cave has a 7,000 gallon capacity and also houses the winery's laboratory. Our spacious tasting room adjoins the cave, and there are private reception and meeting facilities available. (Anybody for a mapping trip or want to plan a VAR in the area?). TARARA winery is just north of Leesburg near Lucketts, VA. The address is Tarara winery, Rt. 4 box 229, Leesburg, VA 22075 phone 703-771-7100.

## The Best Caving Trip I Ever Almost Went On

by Bill Hohenboken

On Saturday, the 20th of May of 1989, the Cave Exploration Group of East Africa celebrated the 25th anniversary of the group's founding with a Silver Jubilee Dinner. I was in Kenya that summer on Virginia Tech business and attempted to join them for the big event.

My introduction to Kenya's subterranean resources was from "The Underground Atlas: A Gazetteer of the World's Cave Regions" by John Middleton and Tony Waltham. The atlas identified two karst regions in the country and drew attention to the existence of numerous lava tubes, many of them unexplored. It also described the famous caves of Mount Elgon, on the Kenya/Uganda border, which are frequented by elephants and other mammals in search of salt and other minerals.

Middleton and Waltham's book also contains a roster of national caving organizations, of which the Cave Exploration Group of East Africa was one. I wrote Jim Simons, a founding member of the group and their honorary chairman, fully expecting no reply. Mr. Simons surprised me, however, with a cordial reply inviting me to join them for a caving trip during my visit. He also asked that I bring as many 4.5v flat batteries to him as my luggage would hold. They are hard to come by and expensive in Kenya.

As luck would have it, my visit coincided with the aforementioned anniversary bash. What better place to celebrate such an auspicious occasion than in a cave? To be specific, the party was held in cave #14 on Mount Suswa, not too far from Nairobi in the Great Rift Valley. To be even more specific, it was in the "ballroom."

Revellers converged on Mount Suswa in a collection of four-wheel-drive safari vehicles over less than perfectly maintained Kenyan roads. All the banquet gear, and it was considerable, had to be roped down into the cave (and later, back out again). Post-lunch preparations included pitching toilet tents, erecting banquet tables, laying out a dance floor and sleeping quarters and cooking or warming the feast.

From 6:30 to 8:00, the program called for "preprandial imbibing," the colonial British equivalent to Happy Hour. The banquet followed, featuring among other things, potage de tomate, curry ya samaki, legumbre picante, oryza fervens, papadams, sambals and chutney. Libations were generous in variety and quantity.

Singing, dancing to a boombox and generalized debauchery followed, until the wee small hours of the morning. The party was recorded on video. A highlight had to be the damsel in the skin-tight tiger-patterned pajamas who danced nonstop for at least as long as the camera was in operation. For the minority that were up to it, the evening's last event was a hike through the cave on a loop trail that brought participants back to the ballroom, not too long before the sun began to rise.

It clearly was the best caving trip that I ever almost attended. Fate, however, or perhaps it was carelessness, intervened. I had come into Nairobi on Friday, to meet some of the cavers for the Saturday morning ride to Mount Suswa. That evening, I saw a bit of the city and ended up at an excellent Italian restaurant. En route back to my hotel, I met three burly muggers, for whom I became the muggee. They relieved me of everything of value on my person and gave me a sound thrashing as well.

Saturday, when I should have been furthering international peace and goodwill deep in the bowels of Mount Suswa, I was in Nairobi licking my wounds, replacing stolen eyeglasses, stopping payment on credit cards and feeling sorry for myself. Such is life.

I can, however, report that the Cave Exploration Group of East Africa is alive and well, that it is a fun-loving, hard-charging crew that probably would feel right at home with the Cave Club of VPI. Although it does lose something in the translation, one of their songs will give you an idea of the seriousness with which they approach life. It is to be sung to the tune of My Darling Clementine.

Chorus:

Oh me cavers, oh me cavers  
Oh me cavers so sublime,  
Out of caverns into taverns,  
There to booze till closing time

Verses:

Up we went to Mount Suswa,  
Down we went inot the pit,  
What did we find when we got there,  
Fifty feet of bat shit.

So we ventured to Mount Elgon,  
Caving elephants there to see,  
So we drew one on the bulletin,  
Spele-elephant of CEG.

Into lavas at Kiboko,  
Ithundu guano for to mine,  
Mathaioi's now for tourists,  
But both paid for chairman's time.

Ndarugu, out at Thika,  
Crawling there can be a swine,  
With your arse stuck out a passage,  
Just watch out for porcupine.

Down to Tivia and Pagani,  
Limestone labyrynths to explore,  
CO<sub>2</sub> at the bloody bottom,  
But we know ther's routes galore.

At Kibwezi, in the Chyulu,  
Leviathan is taking time,  
Twelve kilometers of passages,  
Not to finish will be a crime.

Twentyfive years of Kenya caving,  
CEG had done much to pot,  
But tonight in the ballroom,  
All we'll do is drink a lot.

I hope I'll be there in the year 2016 to help them celebrate the 50th.

Warning- If the purpose of your reading this is to further your knowledge on caving, rappelling and state-of-the -art equipment or techniques thereof, you best pass this attempt at writing by and move on to the articles of those better qualified!

### A HIKER GOES CAVING

"Three points of contact!" JEEZ-LOU-WEEZ! I thought to myself, if she says that one more time...

A while back, I finally convinced my spouse to be tht it was high time for me, a dyed-in-the-wool backpacker who loves the flora, fauna fresh air and wide open spaces associated with that means of recreation, to personally experience this thing called spelunking, better known as "caving". After all, I reasoned, if I was going to be socially involved with these people I may as well experience for myself what all the hub-bub is about. Never really understood what in the world could be exciting about crawling around way below the surface of the earth, through mud and slime encountering only God/Allah knows what, come out tired, thirsty, hungry, dirty and sore, only to plan to do it again and the sooner the better. So I got Cecile to agree to take me on one of her trainee trips to find out first-hand.

Our group was small, numbering six: three trainees, Cecile, glen, and me. I wasn't really a "trainee" per se. I was just along for the ride, you see, for the aforementioned reasons. we met at Jim Washington's place and set off for Links≥ As we walked through the field, I kept trying to spot the entrance. Never did see it. glen had to pint it out while I was pretty much standing on it. I was amazed at the size; it looked like a rabbit's hole at first glance. We slithered in, it was easier than I thought.. Nothing difficult about sliding down a slope on one's butt. It was pretty neat being underground and the temperature felt good, too. Remember, said our faithful leader, three pints of contact is needed to be safe. OK, that's easy to remember. Two feet and a...KLUNK!...no, she says, your head is NOT considered a point of contact. Several times she would catch us with only two points connecting...our feet, and we would be called on it. The safest way is three points! OK, OK, OK! I've got enough to think about without worrying about how many parts of me are actually touching the darn cave. How important can it be, the backcountry walker thought. I was soon to find out. While trying to negotiate a rather steep slope, I decided it was high time to just stand up, assess the situation, and use some leg muscle. I slipped, of course, adn found myself at the bottom, sitting with a stalgmite between my legs. Cecile was at the bottom and glen and the treinees at the top, all were quiet to see if I was alright. Glen, ever the gentleman and trying not to laugh his head off, was telling me to wipe the smile off my face and Cecile was telling me that that particular part of my anatomy was not considered something that could hold onto something else. (Wanna bet, Cecile?) Oh well, the trinees got a good laugh out of it too.

We made our way through passages and tunnels, sometimes standing, sometimes stooping and sometimes crawling along on our bellies. At one point, after executing the latter positon for a while (this position being my favorite actually- lots of points of contact!) we found ourselves in a small room where we could stand. A difficult climb is there and if you are physically able to treach the top, they say, there is

something hidden there that is beautiful to see. We all tried to get up there and all I can say is that since suction cups are not a part of my integumentary system, there was no way I could get up there to view the said marvelous sight. Only one of our group managed actually (the now famous Mark Eisenbies) and he wasn't saying what he saw. Keeping this mystic place a secret from those who are not able to get to it is, I was told later, a caving tradition, of which there are many.

That behind us, we started out, via another route, and learned how to chimney and grasp on to holds that weren't there. I wondered aloud as to what would happen if one of us should slip and fall and maybe get wedged below, or break something, or just go SPLAT down there in the depths. Don't worry, the proficient ones assured us, we would just go out and get a RESCUE going for you! did I hear a lilt in their voices at the prospect? I guess I really started to worry when I observed "Mr. Safety" Davis making some singular leaps and bounds over these chasms that looked to me like they would guide you to the proverbial center of the earth.

Along the way, we were introduced to sleeping bats (don't touch), some rather large arachnids and beautiful formations. I wondered how our leaders remembered the way out...all the passages look the same to me and there are no blazes down there!

Once out, we were standing around the entrance/exit, quickly removing gear against the heat. I removed my helmet and tucked it under my arm. While rubbing sweat and mud off my face, my mind wandered as I wondered where the beer was kept. Suddenly the acrid smell of smoke was all around and I looked to see I had forgotten to extinguish my lamp and had managed to set the jacket on fire. It was batted out without incident, but I was dismayed to see the hole left there. Oh well, another caving memory, I thought. (It was Glen's jacket anyway!)

All in all, it wasn't a bad trip and to be fair, there was a bounty of beauty that one can only view way down there where the sun doesn't shine. Mother Nature has quite a cache of items on display for those who want to go and behold. Well, that is the end of this yarn. (I told you it wasn't educational!) Have I been caving since? No. Why not? To be honest, I really prefer the fauna, flora, wide open spaces and fresh air, dirt and sweat associated with backpacking. That is not to say that one is better than the other...they are just different.

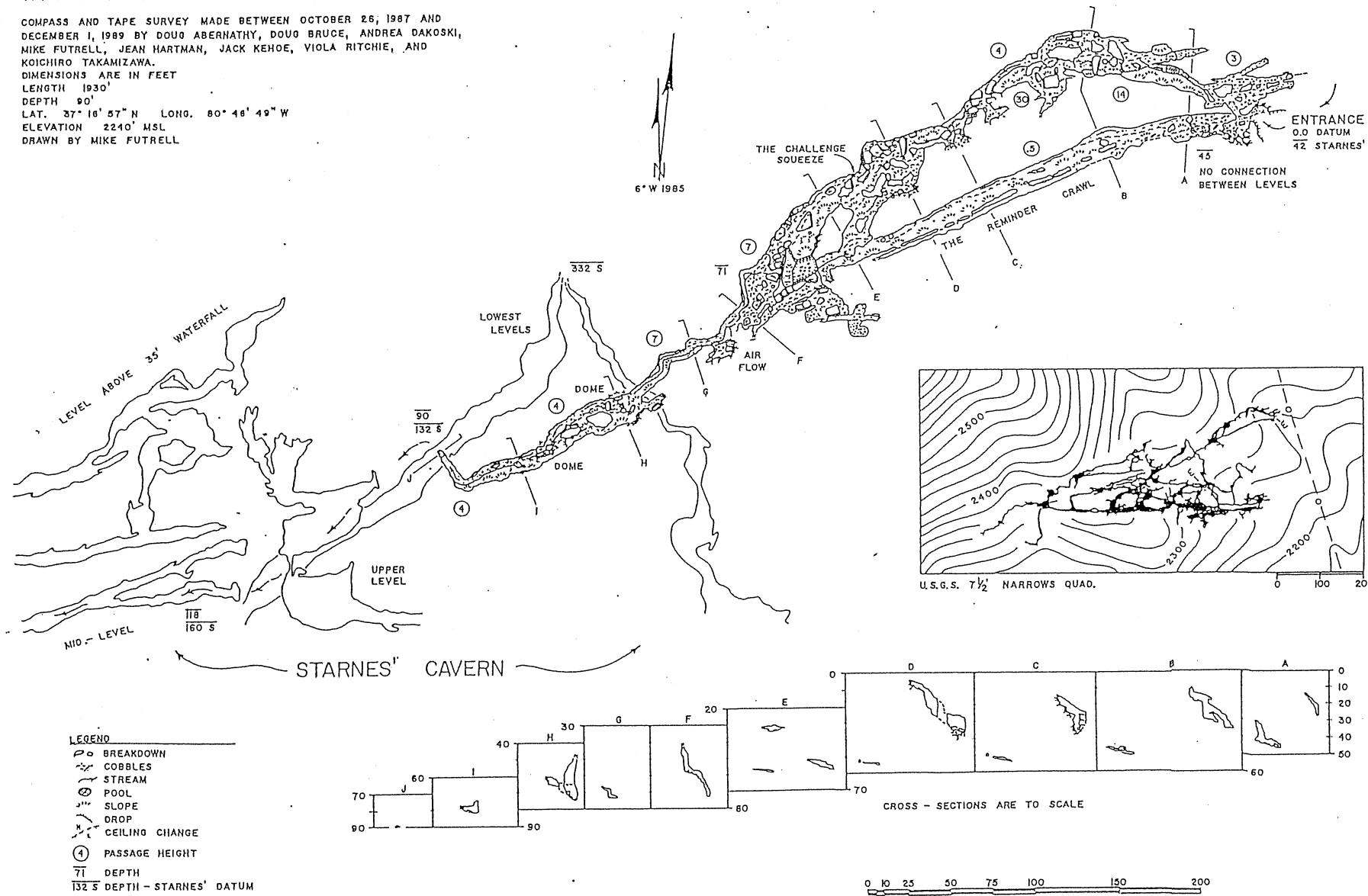
So...Happy Caving...and maybe we'll meet on the trail sometime...

Alice Lane Davis

# SURVEY OF PRICE'S STRIKE CAVE SHOWING RELATIONSHIP WITH STARNES' CAVERN

WILBURN VALLEY GILES COUNTY VIRGINIA

COMPASS AND TAPE SURVEY MADE BETWEEN OCTOBER 26, 1987 AND  
DECEMBER 1, 1989 BY DOUG ABERNATHY, DOUG BRUCE, ANDREA DAKOSKI,  
MIKE FUTRELL, JEAN HARTMAN, JACK KEHOE, VIOLA RITCHIE, AND  
KOICHIRO TAKAMIZAWA.  
DIMENSIONS ARE IN FEET  
LENGTH 1930'  
DEPTH 90'  
LAT.  $37^{\circ} 16' 57''$  N LONG.  $80^{\circ} 48' 49''$  W  
ELEVATION 2240' MSL  
DRAWN BY MIKE FUTRELL



## Price's Strike Cave

It was one of those lazy Sunday afternoons when we really didn't feel like doing anything. The weather was nice, we could have hung around Jim's house, sipped beer, and continued to just talk about caves. As you might suspect, when a couple of hard core explorers (read wimps) are sitting around what they've done and what they are going to do, it's not long before egos are inflated and the realization comes that word may get out about them wasting the day. After all, old men from Tidewater were surely surveying virgin passage at the very moment.

So it was the Jack Kehoe and I headed out to Wilburn (Oh No) valley to find one of those things. As you know we've been systematically walking every inch of limestone in the Wilburn-Sugar Run area. I still hadn't thoroughly checked Barry Price's farm which contains the well known Starnes Cavern.

Now like I said we weren't feeling very energetic. After knocking on Mr. Price's door and exchanging the usual greeting I jokingly asked, "So, you got any more caves?". Mr. Price rubbed his chin for a moment, "Now that you mention it, right over there about 500 feet past Starnes' is a big sinkhole. I believe you'll find one down in there." Jack's and my mouths dropped open. Could this be?

Sure enough, standing on the upside of a 30' deep sink we watched a small stream flowing into a black hole three feet in diameter at the bottom. To further ensure that we would find a real cave we had brought only one mini mag light between us. So, off we went crawling past enormous black fuzzy spiders, spilling pocket change and getting our street clothes dirty. We belly crawled and squeezed through tortuous canyon arriving at the first room in the cave. Further progress would require belly crawling in the stream. Noting significant airflow and insufficient lighting we headed out.

This cave finding business is hard work. Keep in mind that in the past 50 years 342,501 people have visited Starnes'. Many of them more than once. Had any one of them walked just a little further they would have practically fallen into a totally virgin cave.

Unfortunately the survey wasn't nearly as easy. It was horror, horror, and more horror, wet, muddy and disgusting. This was, after all, Wilburn Valley. The cave is formed along the strike, is very fractured and contains a lot of breakdown. We mapped the cave in 5 short trips. The "Reminder Crawl" is a crawl about 10 inches high at the passable path and unusually wider. While lying in a cold stream feeling like a sponge, Ko remarked "This reminds me of real caving".

Though the cave was quite unenjoyable it held the possibility of connecting with Starnes'. The air goes through, however, all leads end with loose, fractured, dangerous breakdown that one would have to dig through. The stream sumps and reappears in Starnes' about 150 feet away at a place called Avalanche alley. Though connection appears unlikely, another path from the Starnes' side should be attempted.

The finished map received a Merit Award at the 1990 NSS Convention. I would like to thank Barry Price for graciously allowing us to explore caves on his property.

Mike Futrell

## Caving

We have come from every background, every situation, we work or play at diverse occupations. We are very young and very old. Yet, there is a common bond and every one knows why they are leaving this hillside under the wet green of spring to clamber into a dark moss bedecked crevice. Virtually all thoughts of the world above are abandoned as lamps are checked and loaded and packs are donned in quiet preparation. As you descend into this "other" world, it is difficult to remain unmoved as you observe the result of untold years in the splendor of the formations surrounding you. The frozen liquid avalanches of flowstone, the delicate beauty of soda straws and crystals. On many stalactites the mechanism of their creation is still evident as the droplets dangle from their tips and glow eerily in the carbide light. Even the strangely twisted sometimes grotesque passages echo the anguish of their birth. Peaceful waterfalls and clear streams forming rimrock pools meander out and back into the path unexpectedly under translucent curtains of stone. The abundance of breakdown and the immensity of God rocks inspire awe and a clear awareness of the tenuous nature of our existence. And then the work begins, rigging and padding ropes, checking knots and gear, finalizing plans, and the first caver is down and off rope. Each waits his turn in order dictated by caving skill and experience rather than the convention of age, sex, or status to achieve maximum safety should problems arise. As you hook onto the rope and leave the safety of the ledge, you must compromise the urge to fly down the rope in order to get a good look at the scenery. Suddenly a stream opens out from the wall to rain on you further down the drop and though soaked you are almost disappointed to see the ground approaching. Steam rises from your clothing as you rest and wait for the last of the caves to descend to continue the trek over, under and through. Wait a minute, nobody could get through that hole but one by one you do, climbing, crawling and squeezing through a natural jungle gym.

On the way back out, you wait in your carbide tent for your turn to climb. Each step takes you further from the safety of the cave floor and you concentrate on the illuminated wall close by you as you labor up the rope. The muted voices of the cavers above and below echo and become indistinct as you climb and it seems appropriate, that we take care not to disturb the cave gods. The bats are skimming past now up the through the opening above which is your goal- it must be close now. Tired but warm from climbing, you coil the ropes and repack equipment- it's time to go. As you see daylight oozing around the last bend and smell the sweet warmth of the aging day, you feel elated. For those who have made the journey emerge transformed and view a world made less predictable, less complacent because of the knowledge of the world below- another dimension where bats glide through darkness as they have through the millennia and watch their strange pale relatives grope through the muddy maze that is their home.

Kathi Ireland Wagner

## The Pythagorean Pinch

Fear is not a bad thing. It can alert you to danger or your own limitations. Without it, I probably would have carelessly injured myself many times.

One day near the end of the fall semester, Dave Colatosti invited me to help him with a dig on their project cave, Crabtree's Groundhog Hole. Dave, Mike Horne, Todd Henderson and myself attempted to clear mud out of the passage. We were hopeful that it would open up to larger passage because it was sucking lots of air. On a previous trip John Morada had gotten about five feet into it. We managed to dig as far back as twenty-four feet during this trip. Up to this point in the trip I had not gotten a chance to work on it. I had been trying (with no success) to reclaim an Autolite that the Cave Gods had snatched from Mike.

When I first looked at the long crawlway it was a little intimidating. I have a little fear of squeezing through a short pinch. A short tight spot is not too difficult to get helped out of if I get stuck. This was a long 30-60-90 triangle; hypotenuse pressing against my back and too thin at the 30 degree corner to comfortably put anything but my hand in. Dave told me that it was possible to get to the end with my helmet on. I had never gone through a long crawl where I could not turn my head for twenty feet. I was pretty nervous when I realized the length of the crawl.

I started like I usually do by not paying much attention to the information my eyes gave me but rather by feeling my way through. I put my right arm ahead and pushed with my toes. The cave had already loaded me down with mud, causing my clothes to stick to the sides of the passage. Five feet in and I had come to the first pinch. The thought of having to feel my way through this point in reverse was unnerving. I took a breath and paused. Then after shutting out a few unwanted thoughts, I pushed on. The second squeeze didn't bother me as much as the first one. After pausing, taking a deep breath and shutting out more nasty thoughts I made it to the end. There was a slightly larger space here where I could move around. We referred to it as a room, which sounded more comforting to me even though I could not turn around. This is where the real pinch was. The only way past this point was through a space in some rock fall. The rushing air nearly blew out my carbide lamp. I tried to reassure myself that all of the rocks around and above me were completely stable. I really didn't believe myself though. After calming myself down again, I dug enough dirt to fill an empty pack that lay next to me. After filling the pack with mud I noticed that my light was about to go out. I knew I couldn't light it with my muddy hands. This made me anxious about waiting in the dark, in a place that I wasn't comfortable with yet. I tried to rationalize with myself. I told myself that I couldn't see where I was going on the way out anyway, so it shouldn't matter if I had no light.

Mike was outside of the crawl, ready to pull the webbing that was tied to the pack of mud. I worried that the pack getting caught in a pinch. Having something blocking my exit, even for a short time, made me nervous. I wanted to know I could get out when I wanted.

I waited in the dark while the pack was pulled through. Once it was free I didn't hesitate a second. Rapidly squirming in reverse my clothes were pulled up and my stomach slid against the cold, abrasive mud. Ramming myself through the tight spots I was relieved to be out. The crawl seemed very short on the way out. I made it out in about a fifth of the time it took to go in.

I wasn't bothered by this crawl after this because it continued to enlarge each time we went back to dig more. I called the crawl "Remedial Geometry" because it looked like a right triangle and we had all crawled it many times that day. Mike named the pinch at the end the Pythagorean Pinch because after passing Remedial Geometry we could not get through the puzzle at the end.

John Williams

## A Day at the Zokaites'

### *or, the Story of Two Very Naive Cavers*

It all started off very innocently. Word had gotten around that Jake and I were thinking about going to TAG, and wanted a couple of chest rollers. Joe Zo, nice guy that he is, mentioned that he had figured out a good way to set up the Simmons roller on a chest harness. He offered to sell the parts to us and even help us set them up. Being rather inexperienced with ropewalkers we jumped at the chance for help.

To make a long story somewhat less long, we went over to the Zo's, Carol cooked a great dinner, and Joe made the roller setups for us. We did eventually use them in TAG, and they worked great. Anyhow, wanting to return the favor, we offered to babysit sometime.

#### BIG MISTAKE!!!

As it turned out, Carol took us up on the offer a few weeks later. "Great, I think to myself. A chance to get caught up on my homework, and maybe do a little sewing too. This should be a nice relaxing day.

#### WRONG!!!

We arrived at the Zo's at around eightish the following morning. The kids were pretending to be good as Carol served breakfast. When she, Joe, and Jerry Redder left to go caving at Newberry's I was smug, thinking of myself spending a leisurely day in a warm house instead of some wet crawlway.

Then the kids realized that they were in control. The first order of business was to go downstairs and scatter their Lincoln Logs all over the basement. When one of the twins finished his log cabin the other decided to knock it over, promptly causing the builder to cry.

"Rusty, what happened?" I asked, concerned.

"I'm NOT Rusty!" was the hateful reply. I could see I was endearing myself to these kids. I decided to open up my biology book and do a little reading.

I was interrupted by screams from upstairs. I entered, to stumble upon a scene straight out of "Gulliver's Travels". Jake was tied up with some cheap prusik cord and was getting beat up by three hellians. He begged for my help, but I decided to leave him there until lunchtime. Lunch was a fruitful event wherein each child decided that he no longer liked the lunchmeat that Mom had been feeding him for the past several years. However, the next couple of hours were relatively blissful, as we popped in a tape of *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*. This was the favorite of the kids, who had probably only seen it about 1,236 times before. But hey- whatever works. The nerve wracking part came when the kids decided to do some acrobatics reminiscent of the movie. I had visions of a broken leg, or worse, a cracked skull. "Uh, Carol, there's been a slight accident..." Fortunately none of the above happened, but Bobby did manage to play us some very pleasant melodies on a machine bearing a striking resemblance to Jim's Annoyatron. Whatever possessed the Zo's to throw their hard earned cash in that direction, I'll never know.

After dinner, we proposed to the kids that they get ready for bed. Danny announced that Mommy always lets him have a bubble bath before bed. Skeptical, I promised that if he went to bed now, Mommy would give him two bubble baths tomorrow. *What the hell, I thought. Let Carol deal with it.* One long bedtime story later, we had them in bed and semi quiet. I looked at Jake. "Tomorrow should be a nice, relaxing day, Honey". We were going to Murder Hole. All of a sudden, wet passage was looking pretty good.

### Cave Gear Checklist

"So, you went to the Cave Club party last night, eh? And you got a little Bryced. Well, this checklist might help you prepare for that 6:00 AM trainee trip on Saturday morning." -Admiral Kirk Digby

#### Cave Bag

Carbide bottle w/masking tape  
Dump Bottle  
Canteen  
Water  
Second light source (helmet strap light)  
Third light source  
Webbing & Bieners  
Dry Clothes  
  
Extra Batteries ( )  
Tip cleaner  
Food  
Spare parts (felt, tip, gasket, felt spring, flints, bulbs)  
Pliers & Toothbrush  
Whistle  
Electric lighter

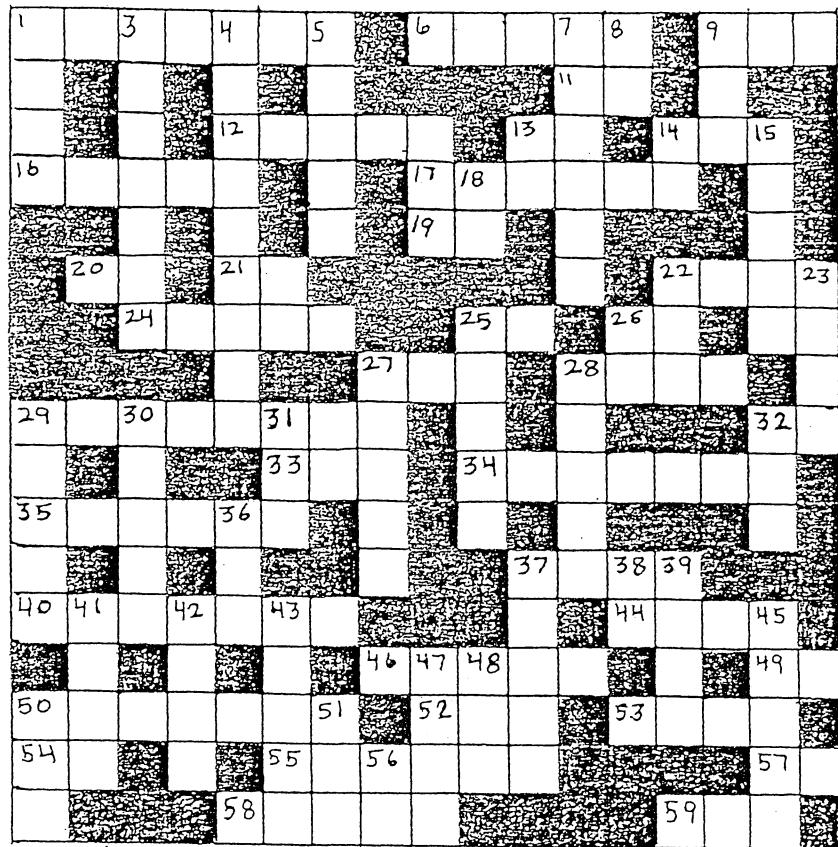
#### Vertical gear

Knot rope  
Bieners ( )  
Figure 8/Rack  
Mechanical Ascenders  
Webbing  
Seat  
Rope  
Rope Pads  
Ice cube trays (possible rappel device)

#### Duffle Bag Gear

Gloves  
Polypros  
Helmet w/garbage bag(s)  
Kneepads  
Cave clothes  
Clean clothes  
Wool socks  
Boots  
Dirty gear garbage bag  
Carbide Lamp  
\*If you wear glasses underground, using defog solution helps avoid falling into innocent-looking siphons.

#### Other Gear (fill in your own):



ACROSS

1. Editor of Nylon Highway
6. Consumes only turkey & tuna products
9. Bart Simpson's biggest fan
11. Float trip admiral '90
12. I made this darn thing
13. Famous cave clothing co.
14. Pennsylvanian trainee
16. The red headed menace
17. Woman who doesn't eat eggs
19. Stupendous Man
20. Our friend in Cover Hollow
21. Philip's mating call
22. Blow up a toilet?
24. Made cover of National Geographic
25. Bike safe (picnic '90)
26. Misanthropic Enuresis (init)
27. Stands without falling
28. Fire! Fire!
29. Runs with sheep
32. Nescience Enuresis (init)
33. Long, long time \_\_\_\_.
34. Performed enuresis at Peterson's
35. Big foot, muffin, goo
37. Most people become nescient after  
after drinking too much of this
40. Ed's true identity (halloween)
44. Newest old trainee
46. Get fried (see 37 down)
49. Air rappel (init)
50. Eat more
52. Just a bit
53. Eat \_\_\_\_ and die
54. Opposite of 20 across
55. Feels like this after caving
57. Initial's of 14 down
58. Where the ceiling meets the floor
59. The best cave club in the world

DOWN

1. Works in Georgia timber
3. Man who goes out with  
a shrub
4. Most obnoxious trainee, '89?
5. Maybe some more twins?
6. Man who walks into deep H2O
7. She's been in the Dairy Prin-  
cess in her underwear
8. Never drinks to excess (haha)
9. Maps in Newberry's
13. Before caving began
14. Owner of "the dragon wagon"
15. Devil's \_\_\_\_\_ case
18. Fall's without standing
23. Attended Rutger's
25. Isn't it about time she  
became a member?
26. \_\_\_\_ Cave
27. Gerbil cheeks
28. Caves in Scott Hollow
29. Can climb the pants off of  
any man
30. \_\_\_\_ to Organ thru trip
31. \_\_\_\_ and feather
32. National organization
36. Stupendous Man has a big one
37. Owns the "Club"
38. Fi fi's ex
39. Is that my underwear around  
your neck?
41. Ski patrol bum
42. Likes country music
43. Misspelling of NJ cave
45. Won 1st prize at halloween
47. Progressive magazine
48. Old, worn out horse
50. Waitress at the Ton who likes jailbirds
51. Northeast Regional Org. (init)
56. Flipsy's heritage

## QUOTABLE QUOTES

RG to BG- You still have my underwear around your neck, don't you?

BW- I don't think this fire's hot enough to burn.

SK- Everyone needs a slave.

BG to SK- Sounds like you guys are ready for marriage.

SK- He's got the money.

BMW- There's something crawling down my leg, AAAARGH.

ME- Remember the "eat me" before you go in.

definition- PHILIPIC- rude and abusive language

TC to redhead- I just whipped it out, I think I did a good job.

H to SR- If this were a weenie roast I'd go hungry.

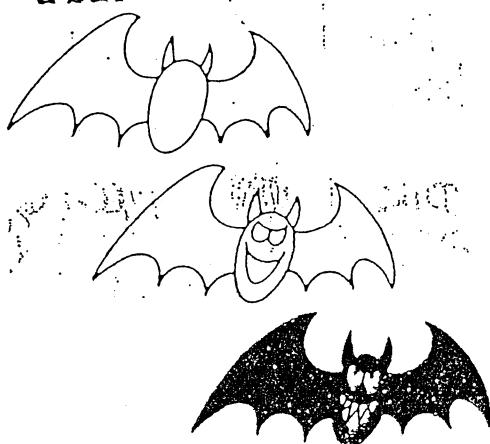
BC to HG- If you can do him you can do me.

BB- I'll just stick it in and see if it works...

It's out of service and it charged me \$3 just to stick it in.

### HOW TO DRAW

a bat



## From the Signout Sheet

The Cave Club of VPI logged 1665 person hours between January 12 and April 7, 1991

Organ Cave	S.Knapp, O.McKagen, B.Emory	Local resturant terrorized by gang of cavers.
Scott Hollow	W.Pirie, S.Leiffer, B. Pond, J. Sullivan	The entrance tube was like a rope washer. Mystic River was 5' deep and wall to wall. SPORTING
Stomp Bottom	D. Bruce, J. Johnson, K.Takamizawa	560', 38 stations
New River	B. Alderson, P. Sauvingne, J. Simonds B. Stickney	Mostly Metaphysical (at the back)
New Castle Murderhole	L. Mystewicz, J. Williams, M. McElroy	Pass the rope, pass the pack, pass Len, pass Mac



ALAN KIM/Staff

### Sadie's rescue

Here's Sadie, the 3-year-old coon dog that was trapped on a Giles County cliff, at the moment of her rescue over the weekend by Brian Cruikshank. Cruikshank is a member of the Virginia Tech Caving Club. Sadie had been trapped on a ledge 200 feet high for eight days. The dog's owner, Billy Joe Farley, thought Sadie was lost on a raccoon hunt Dec. 7, but a few days later he heard her howl. It took three days for rescuers to reach her.

VPI Cave Club  
P.O. Box 558  
Blacksburg, VA 24060



## Softwear for the Descent of Wo Man

**F**ace it, when you're on your way down some things just aren't good enough. For one thing, cotton just doesn't do the trick. And then there's wool, which can absorb 6 to 8% of its weight in water. And what about those caving clothes made for paper dolls!

**R**etire the old die-hards and use Wunderwear. B&C's got everything from a cordura version of your old "jean" jacket to fleece hoods, coveralls to fleece sweaters, long johns and wooly suits to bib-overalls. Whatever you need we probably make it, and if we don't make it we will.

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