

# TECH TROG



FALL '85

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

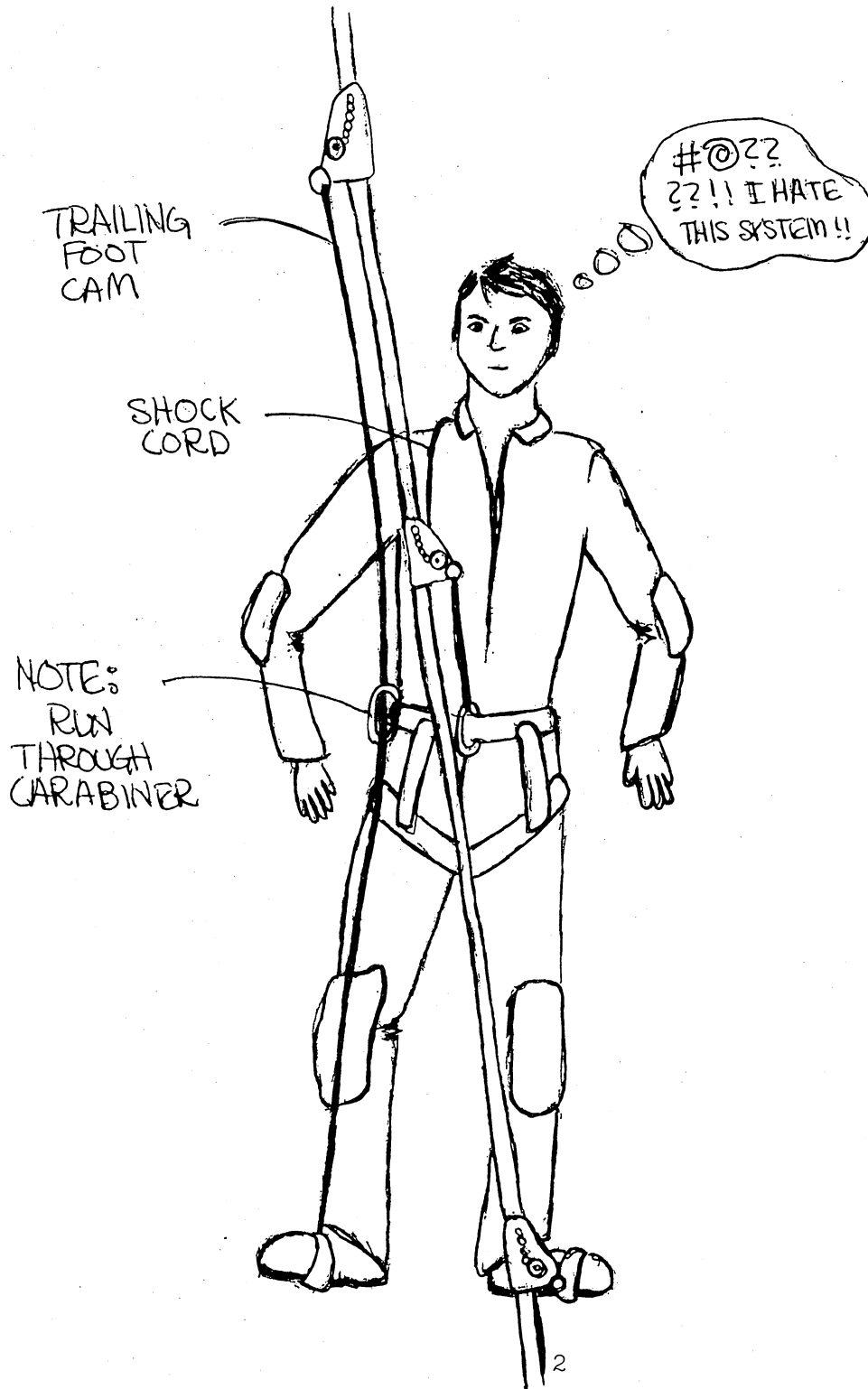
The Hill's System of Climbing Rope.....	3
Changeovers.....	4
It's Dark.....	6
The Thistle Tube.....	7
Ridgewalking.....	9
A Recent Cave Trip.....	10
Helmet Mounted Durabeam.....	11
Why Cave?.....	12
From the signout sheet.....	13

NOTE: If these articles weren't funny enough, and my God  
they should be, turn the Trog over for even more fun!

The Tech Troglodyte is published on a quarterly basis pending  
availability of material. Subscriptions and exchanges should  
be sent to: P.O. Box 558, Blacksburg, VA 24060.

Ed. Note: This Trog happened late one Friday night in the heat  
of a typical grotto party. All opinions expressed herein  
are entirely those of the authors and in no way, shape or  
form represent the feelings of the Grotto as a whole. If  
for some reason you wish to reprint any of this--you're  
welcome to it, just give credit where credit is due.

# "THE HILLS SYSTEM"



## The Hill's System of Climbing Rope

Recently, I was faced with going on a vertical cave trip without a vertical rig except knots (I got those signed off a long time ago and didn't want to use them again). What was I going to do? Well I'll tell you - build a rig with three Gibbs, some sling and a couple of diagrams. I had to come up with something quick! Thus the Hill's Climbing System came into being. The reasons: I was afraid of my stitching ability for a rope walker system, plus a rope walker takes too much time and costs some bucks!

The system consists of a foot cam tied to the foot (if you have a little more time and find that you actually like the Hill's System, you may eventually find that sewing on a foot cam is better). Another cam is attached to the seat by means of sling and a carabiner. The cam is held up against the chest by shock cord attached to the back of the seat. The third cam is hooked to a long piece of sling so it reaches over your head. This sling is attached to the other foot. The system works like a rope walker except that the trailing foot cam is pushed up the rope with each step you take. The chest cam rides along at about shoulder height (depending on how long you make the sling).

One thing you must know about this system - it's not for everybody and in fact you may hate it like I do on long climbs. The system requires a lot of upper arm strength since you are continually pushing the trailing cam up and pulling yourself up the rope behind it. Fact is that this system requires many magic words to get it going, if you know what I mean.

There are many improvements that can be made on the system. First, a Jumar should be used instead of a Gibbs on the trailing foot cam. Second, a chest harness hooked to the rope is recommended - this reduces arm fatigue from holding yourself on each step.

If you ask around the Club, you will hear a horrible lie - that I hate my climbing system - such gross rumors! The fact is I love it, it's great and most importantly it's mine and I designed it - eat your hearts out all of you who have compared my rig to cow dung; you know who you are! To name a few:

Craig Roberts	-	"It sucks, but it shows good design potential."
Mark Honosky	-	"What a death rig!"
Craig Ferguson	-	"That's not a trailing foot cam, it's on the top not the bottom!"
Trainees	-	"Wow, you made that, you're my idol!"

NOTE ILLUSTRATION

By Rob Hills

## CHANGE OVERS

Emergencies, such as hitting a tangle of rope (figure 1) or doing a long drop on a short rope, require being able to do change overs. Change overs are also useful in non-emergency situations, like speleolympic competitions. Change overs are the transitions from climbing to rappelling or rappelling to climbing or changing from one rope to another rope. Only the first two are discussed here.

### Rappelling to Climbing

Always look down at the rope so you are not suprised when you hit the end of the rope. Non-variable friction devices such as doubles or figure eights require 5 to 10 feet of rope in order to lock off. Locking off a rack is simple as shown in figure 2. Locking off brake bars or a figure eight requires wrapping the tail end of the rope around your upper thigh until there is enough friction to hold your weight. Hold the dangling end between your feet as a precaution against unwrapping (figure 3).

When you have locked off, attach a knot or ascending device to your seat and fix it to the rope above the rappel device. Whenever rappelling, an ascender or knot should always be handy and attached to your seat (not at home or in the bottom of your pack). Now slide the knot or ascending device as high as possible. When you are satisfied that the knot will hold you, unlock your rappel device or unwind the tail from around your leg. Rappel down the few inches necessary for your weight to be supported from the knot or ascender. The rest of your ascending rig can now be fixed onto the rope (and yourself don't forget).

When you are satisfied that your ascending rig is properly fixed, detach the decending device. Now climb!

### Climbing to Rappelling

Slide foot knots down so that all weight is on the top seat knot. Fix rappel device to your seat and to the rope below the seat knot and above the foot knots. Remove the foot knots.

The top knot must now be unloaded. This is done by either tying a girth hitch (figure 4) around one foot or wrapping the rope around one foot several times and holding on to the tail end (figure 5). Your leg should be bent when fixing the girth hitch or wrapping the rope around your foot. This enables you to unload the top ascender when you stand up. When the knot or ascender is unloaded, slide it down to the rappel device. Now lock off as mentioned previously. Remove the seat ascender, unlock the rappel device and rappel with control.

These techniques work for me. There are probably other methods. They will probably be hard to understand from just reading this article but that's OK. They should be practiced outside before being forced to learn underground. Talk to me.

Mark Honosky

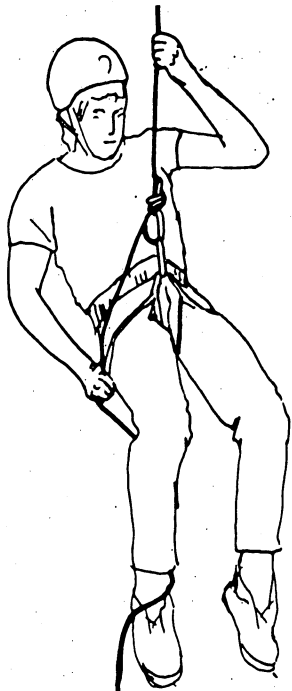


Figure 1.  
Hitting a  
mass of spaghetti

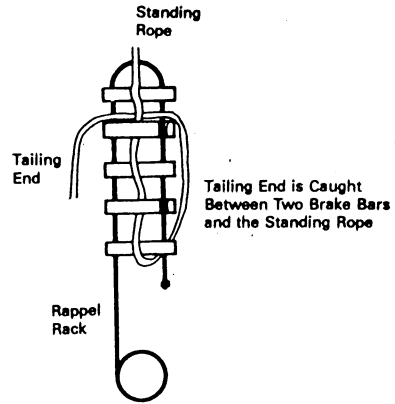


Figure 2.  
Locking off a Rappel Rack

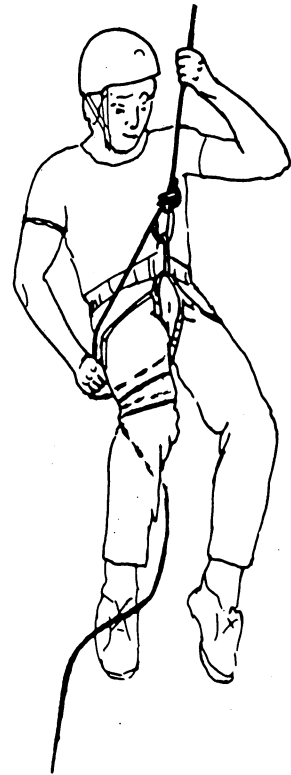
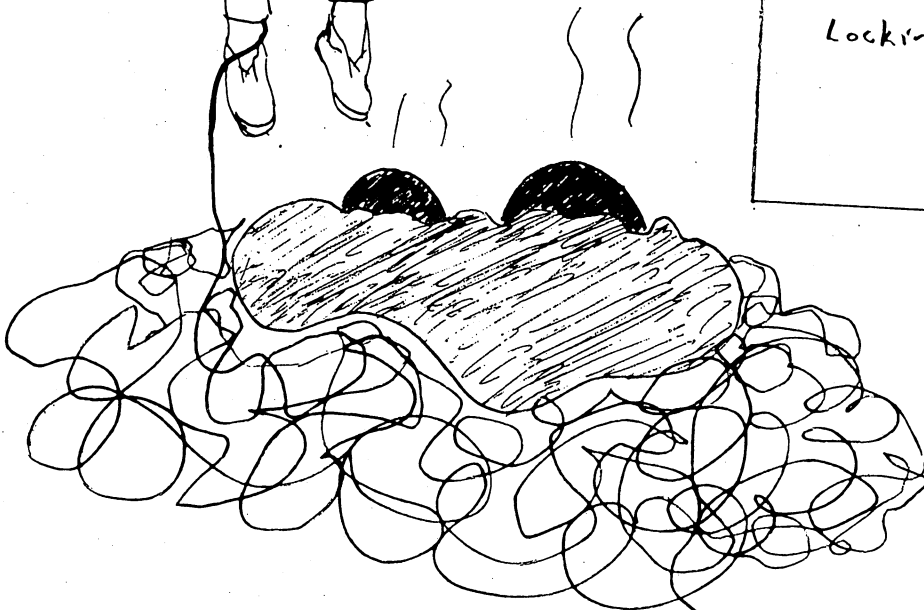


Figure 3.  
Locking off Brake bars  
or Figure 8

Figure 5.  
Unloading  
an  
ascender

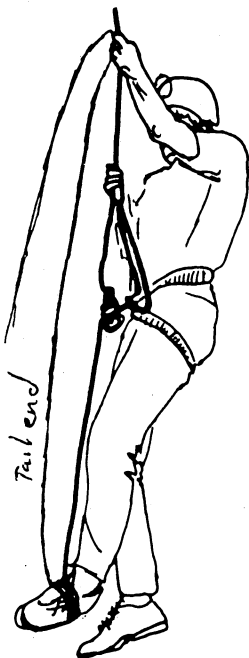


Figure 4.

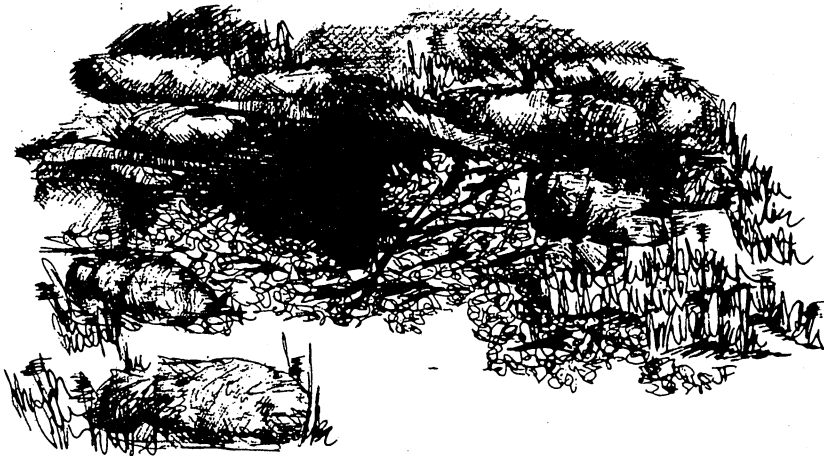
5 Unloading an ascender

Illustrations  
stolen from  
Single Rope  
Techniques  
and  
NSS NEWS

## IT'S DARK

It's dark. It must be night. BUT NO- I'm in a cave! And what's more there are bugs crawling on me and bats are weaving complex geometric patterns with my imagination- around my head! The mud is getting progressively more disgusting, gritty water permeates my clothes, my hair, and my skin; obscene comments vibrate down the thick walls, my muscles ache from the unaccustomed stress, I'm permanently damaged from all the abuse I've absorbed; and worst of all my M-n-M's are spilling! DAMN IT ALL! This is how it was in the beginning.

The bugs and bats are no longer relevant, the comments go unheeded, I've learned to store my M-n-M's safely, and the wetness is to be avoided. What's left? The pain, the challenge, and the mental conquest are probably accurately descriptive! And the dark, of course. For me it's a way to be alone and do my own thing; but still be with other people. It's also an excellent way to express one's aggressions in an acceptably violent fashion. And in the end, when we've changed; are get old, or for some reason no longer cave, what will we remember?



### The "Thisle Tube"

Recently, a new record has been achieved at Clover Hollow Cave. Not only was there one gullible individual who was eager enough to survey the beautiful 5" long gypsum flowers in the terminus of the "thisle tube". But in fact, there were three! The first caving neophyte, a member of the Va Tech Scuba Club, slid down the tube and upon reaching the terminus, remarked on the origin of birth of those Cave Club members who coerced said Scuba Club member down said "tube". It was explained that other neophyte members could be coerced down only if he remained cool. So...upon exiting the "thisle tube" another member of the caving crew, a Va Tech Cave Club "trainee scum", jumped down the tube. There was a prolonged ominous silence issuing from the tube. Finally the "trainee scum" ( note the quote marks!) began elicudating on the beauty and rarity of the gypsum flowers at the bottom of the tube. Said Cave Club scum removed himself from the tube, where upon the third neophyte jumped into the thisle tube. After another long ominous pause, the third neophyte remarked that he had been had by a bunch of heinous swein. the third victim also removed himself from the tube (with a little help from above). Well...new "trainee scum" should beware of this article and be advised...watch out for seamingly irresistable views of 5" gypsum crystals down at the bottom of body-sized, vertical tubes.

John Lohner, VPI 227



# RECENTLY!



## RIDGEWALKING

"Ridgewalking" is one of those caver words like "fuktup" that does not appear in the dictionary. Obviously, since lexicographers do not spelunk, we are in a fortunate position to do what we want and call it what we like. I personally think "hillcombing" or "holehunting" would be more apt terms for the activity. "Ridgewalking", this word we seem to be stuck with, is defined anomalously as "looking for cave entrances", even though ridgetops are generally bad places to look for caves and you can do it without leaving your vehicle.

There are three kinds of ridgewalkers. The first carefully searches through topo maps, notes the existing caves and limestone contacts and develops a plan to systematically search the most promising areas to find a predicted cave. The second drives around and asks locals and landowners where the caves are and finds and explores them. The third drives around and checks out holes you can see from the road.

Ridgewalkers one and two are generally successful, while most cavers fall in category three, not that category three has no merits (e.g. Trout).

Whichever type you may fancy yourself, there are a few rules to ridgewalking.

1. Talk to people; ask permission to cross land.
2. Don't walk in full caving gear (Murphy's law applies).
3. Carry a big stick - useful for clearing spiderwebs, moving small rocks, and probing possible animal dens (Maybe for convincing reluctant landowners but not recommended).
4. Winter ridgewalking is generally more successful - fewer spiders, less obscuring foliage, and steam plumes at upper entrances.
5. Be thorough - there are lots of big caves with small entrances.

So, go for it! One good way to get out of the rut of going to the same old caves is to find new ones! Don't think of it as hiking; there, all you have to look forward to is the end of the trail. In ridgewalking, however, you see the world off the trail, and every groundhog hole is a new adventure!

By Jim Washington

## A RECENT CAVE TRIP

Recently, over Christmas break last year, I went home to Kentucky and called around to see who in my high school cave club was going caving. A trip was on for Jaguar Cave in Tennessee. It sounded like a neat cave - jaguar bones thousands of years old and aborigine footprints had been found in the cave. I decided I couldn't pass this one up, and called my friend Sharon to see if she wanted to come along. Bad news! One former caver with great potential had become traitor to all the caver values, had committed the worst possible crime (aside from caving in orange coveralls), had shocked all those who knew her in high school. Yes, as hard as it is for me to relate, I must say that she couldn't go caving because she had to look for a dress for her sorority induction (no typo). (Honest-I couldn't make up something that bad.)

The other members of my graduating class who were not corrupted by college life arranged to leave for the cave. Devasted by the loss of our former friend, we barely managed to drag ourselves out of bed and leave Lexington by eight that morning. ( I said we had not been corrupted by college life.) The drive to Tennessee was not too long and we arrived at the cave and were underground by noon. The entrance was impressive- a huge overhang with a large flowing stream. We bopped down the huge passage and made good progress through the cave. Finding the passage with the Indian footprints took some time, but we had help from some "expert" cavers from a Virginia grotto who all wore bright orange coveralls . After a short conflict about the ethics of looking at a roped off section of mud, we watched them proceed on their way, and set off in the direction of the prints.

The clarity of the footprints varied greatly. Of the nine Indians who had entered, only one wore moccasins. Since the prints are about two miles into the cave, it was assumed that another entrance had been closed off in the thousands of years since the Indians had visited. We gazed at the prints for a while then decided to cruise out of the cave. Our "friendly fellow cavers" were standing around in the large trunk passage, looking for the way out. We bopped down

the right turn and heard them follow about five minutes later.

The rest of the trip was uneventful and I returned home convinced that Tennessee caves are much better than certain Virginia grottos. And that says a lot coming from a Kentuckian!

Joan Johnson

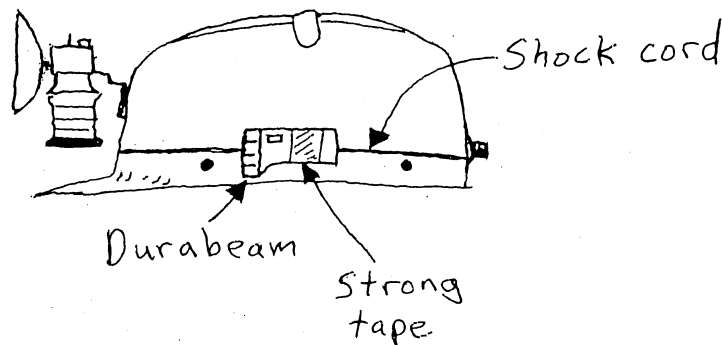
Typed By: Joan Johnson

---

#### HELMET MOUNTED DURABEAM.....

Obtain Durabeam and a few feet of shock cord. Tie cord in circle smaller than your helmet viewed from the top. Tape Durabeam to cord and slip on helmet as shown. The light can be slid under the carbide lamp when not in use. A spare cartridge (bulb, lense, batteries) can be kept in your pack and instantly exchanged with the one on your helmet if failure should occur.

C. Ferguson



## WHY CAVE?

Recently, life forms of the lower phyla (trainees) have been asking members "Oh wise and holy one, caving is indeed entertaining, but pray tell, why do people cave?"

"But, my little one, you have just answered your own question: Caving is its own excuse," replies the grizzled and sneering member.

"No, sir, what makes people push nasty stream crawls and subject themselves to waterfall climbs and survey trips that have no hope of ever producing a map. What makes people abuse themselves like this over and over and over?"

"You will have progressed far on the path of wisdom, oh young one when you learn not to ask such questions and drink beer instead. Those who are less wise ponder this endlessly and have accomplished naught save to arrive at these three theories:"

1."To go where man has gone before" theory- Many people eternally quest for virgin passage, speleo and otherwise. The fantasy of breaking into a monster underground trunk passage and connecting anything within 500 miles of Kentucky with the Mammoth System lurks within the heart of many cavers. Others seek gold, underground nudist colonies, or albino pot plants. But most, I believe, are attempting to still the instinctive human drive to explore and check out new and different places.

2.The Zen theory- The society we live in can be quite hectic and damaging to one's karma. Many people need to get away from it all, whether it be a crochity boss, the Immigration Authorities, or Punky Brewster. The absolute darkness and quiet atmosphere of a cave serves to still a troubled mind. The entire trip serves as a release for tension and allows one to get in touch with oneself and, like, just be.

3.The Freudian theory-It is said that a man spends the first 10 minutes of his life trying to leave the womb and rest of his life trying to get back in. Some had nasty childhoods, and caving is a subconscious attempt to return to the womb and start over. Ponder long the term "Mother Earth."

"Whether you (chuckle,snort) actually choose to believe what I have taught is up to you, small one, but whatever your reasons are, enjoy,and keep caving."

—Michael Fiore—

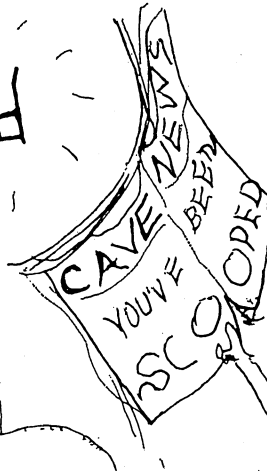
FROM THE SIGNOUT SHEET.....

VPI Grotto logged 1,379.4 hours from 9-28-85 to 12-15-85  
on 58 trips.

CAVE

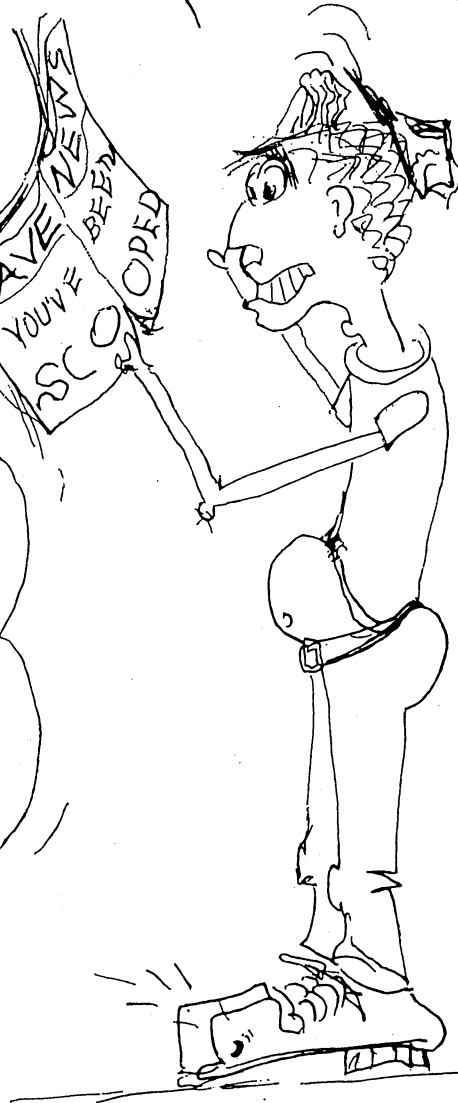
Warm River	J. Washington, J. Joan Johnson S. Setzler, K. Takamizawa	4 Boobs go caving! Wild, Wet, Wonderful!
Ellison's, WVA	M. Futrell, S. Setzler, K. Takamizawa and 'the Bitch'	5 Bolts, 3 Pins, 4 Natural tie-offs, and 1 SCOOP.
Link's	C. Roberts, B. Wichterman, M. Northrop, F. Cholewicki, J. Ford, K. Takamizawa	Have you ever dug footholds with a spoon? Pendulumed across a canyon? Climbed a 5.9 for no reason? Fun times B'sh-tting in a cave.
Clover Hollow	J. Lohner, R. Cobb, K. Worde K. Elliot, T. Foster, B. Riddle	Got 3 Thistle Tube Virgins! One did it twice!
Stompbottom	G. Rouse, M. Fiore, K. Takamizawa	One more trip and it's finished!
Clover Hollow	C. Roberts, B. Wichterman, P. Hess, M. Fiore, R. Hills	Who needs aerobics when you got the Thistle Tube? The gypsum flowers weren't in bloom, though.
Wilburn Valley	M. Fiore, C. Ferguson, R. Hills	SH-T!! ARRRRR.....
Wilburn Valley	M. Futrell, L. Vest	"If your're surveying big passage, you ain't no better than sport trippin'."
Paul Penley's	R. Hills, C. Ferguson, C. Roberts P. Balister, D. Copeland	Oh my God!!!!!!! Oh my God!!!!!!! Thank you God!!!!!!!!!!!!!!
Stompbottom	M. Futrell, T. Heazlit, G. Rouse J. Kehoe, M. Fiore, K. Takamizawa S. Setzler, J. Johnson, J. Wash- ington	Cave is now $\frac{1}{2}$ mile longer. "Ever do it without lips?"- M. Fiore.

A cartoon illustration of a man in a hard hat and safety vest, holding a long pole, standing on a rocky ledge. He is looking down with a wide, toothy grin. In the background, there are jagged rock formations and a sign that reads "CAVE YOURS".



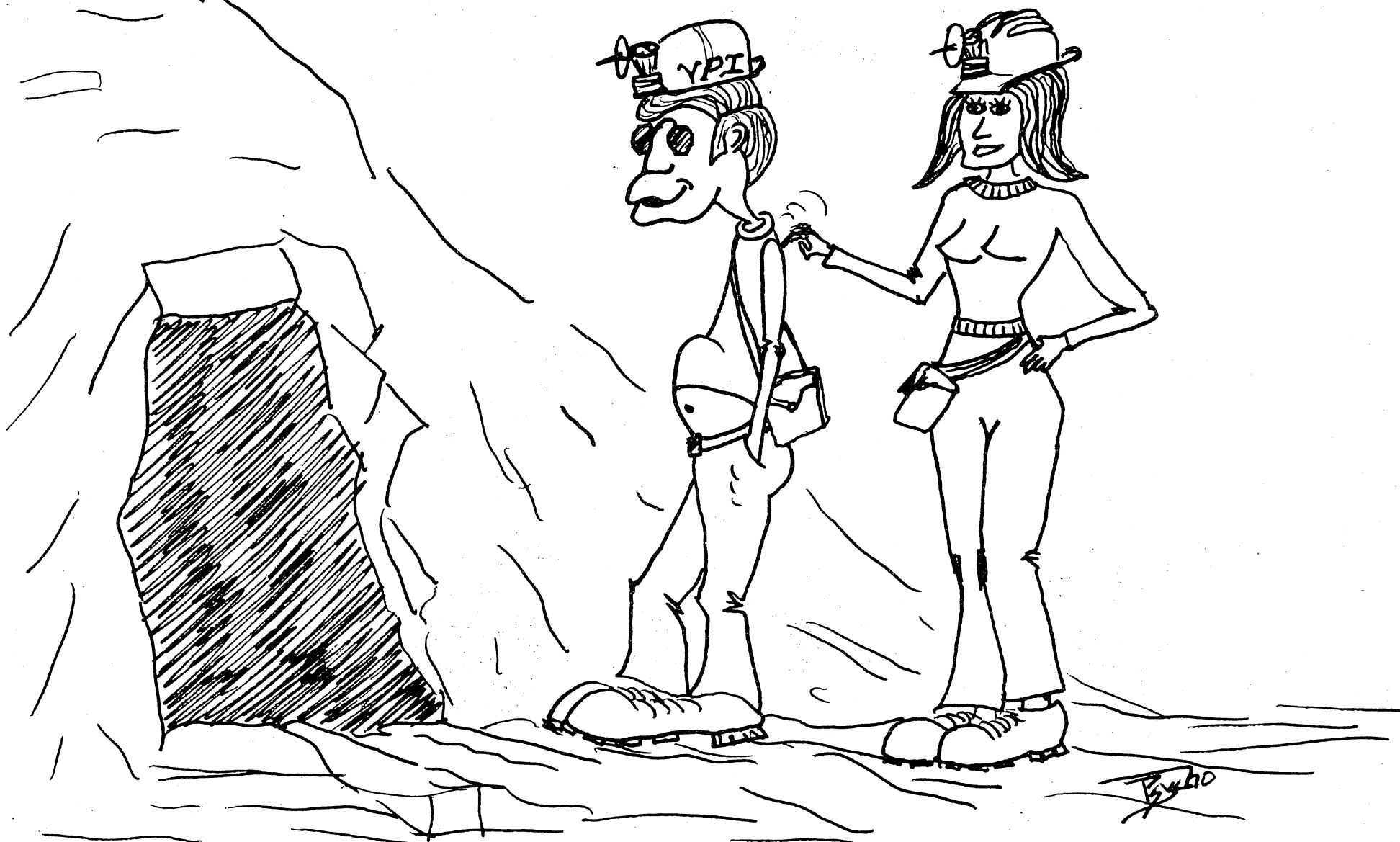
AHHHHH.....

( )



1940

Yes... I'm sure you  
can't conceive in a cave.



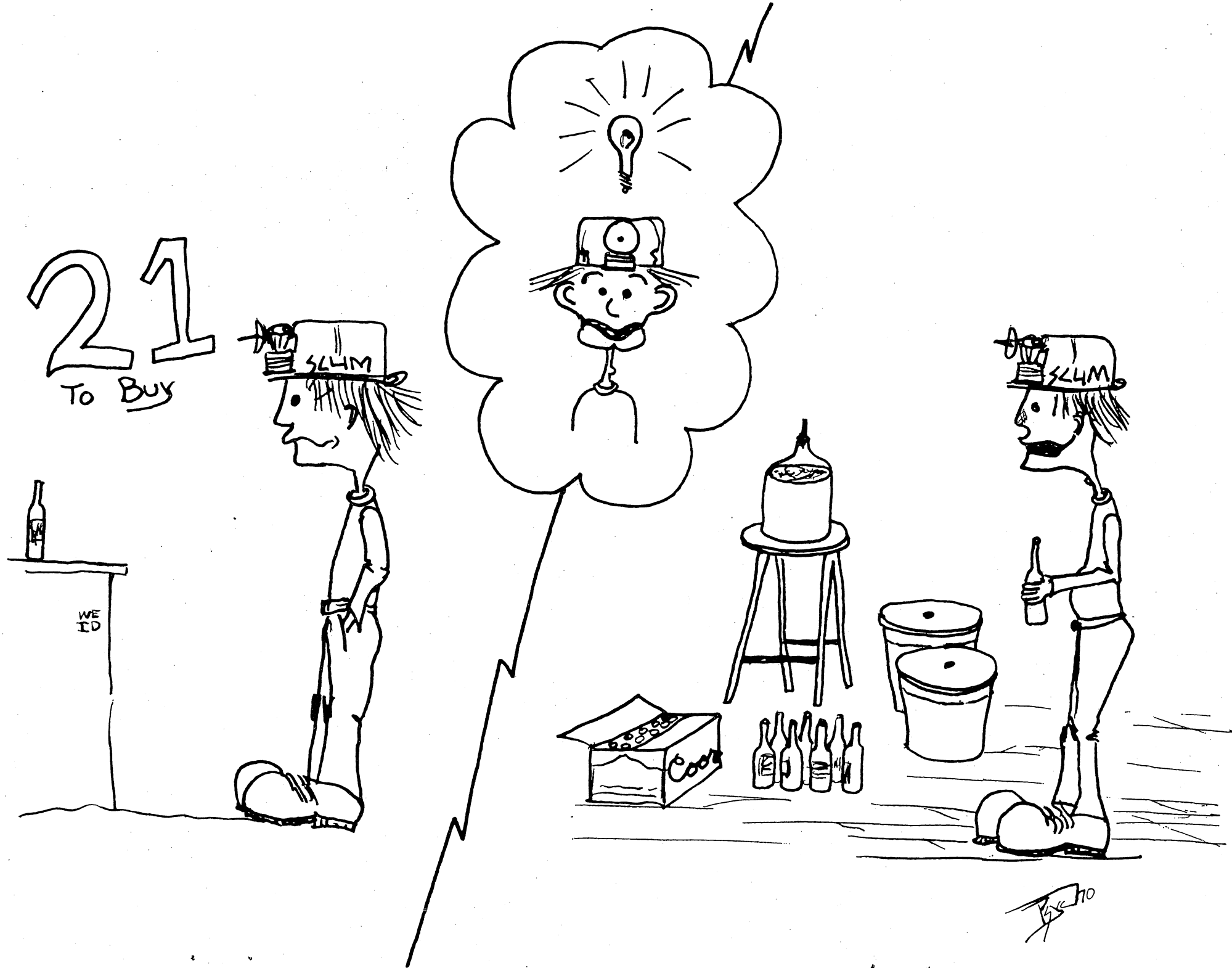


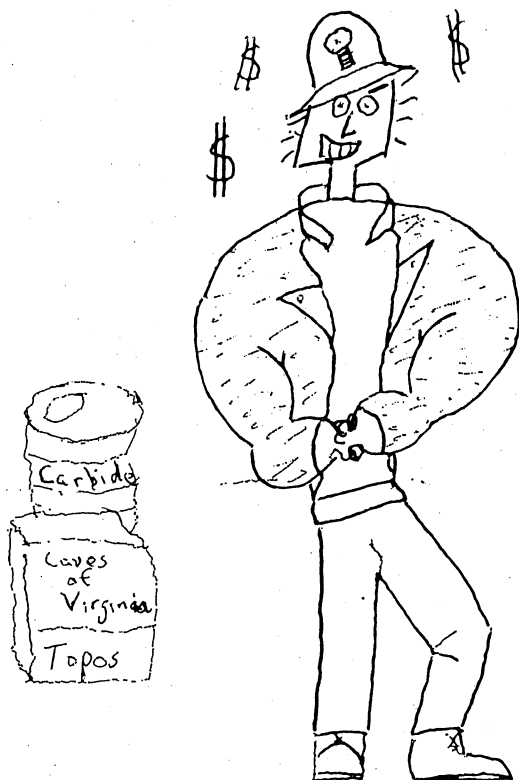
IN CASE OF FIRE  
REMEMBER YOUR  
PRIORITIES



CAVE  
MAPS





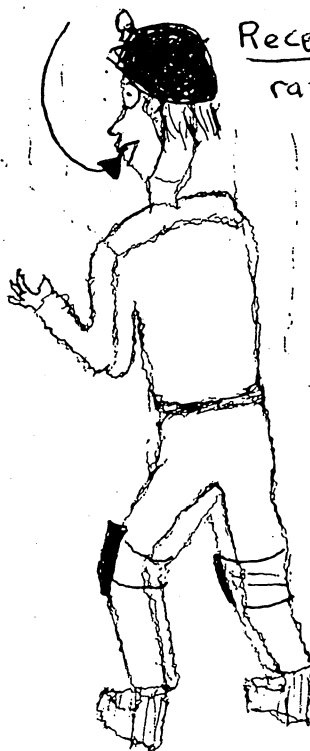


YEAR 2036

NEWS  
RECENTLY,  
CARBIDE  
SHORTAGE  
CONTINUES

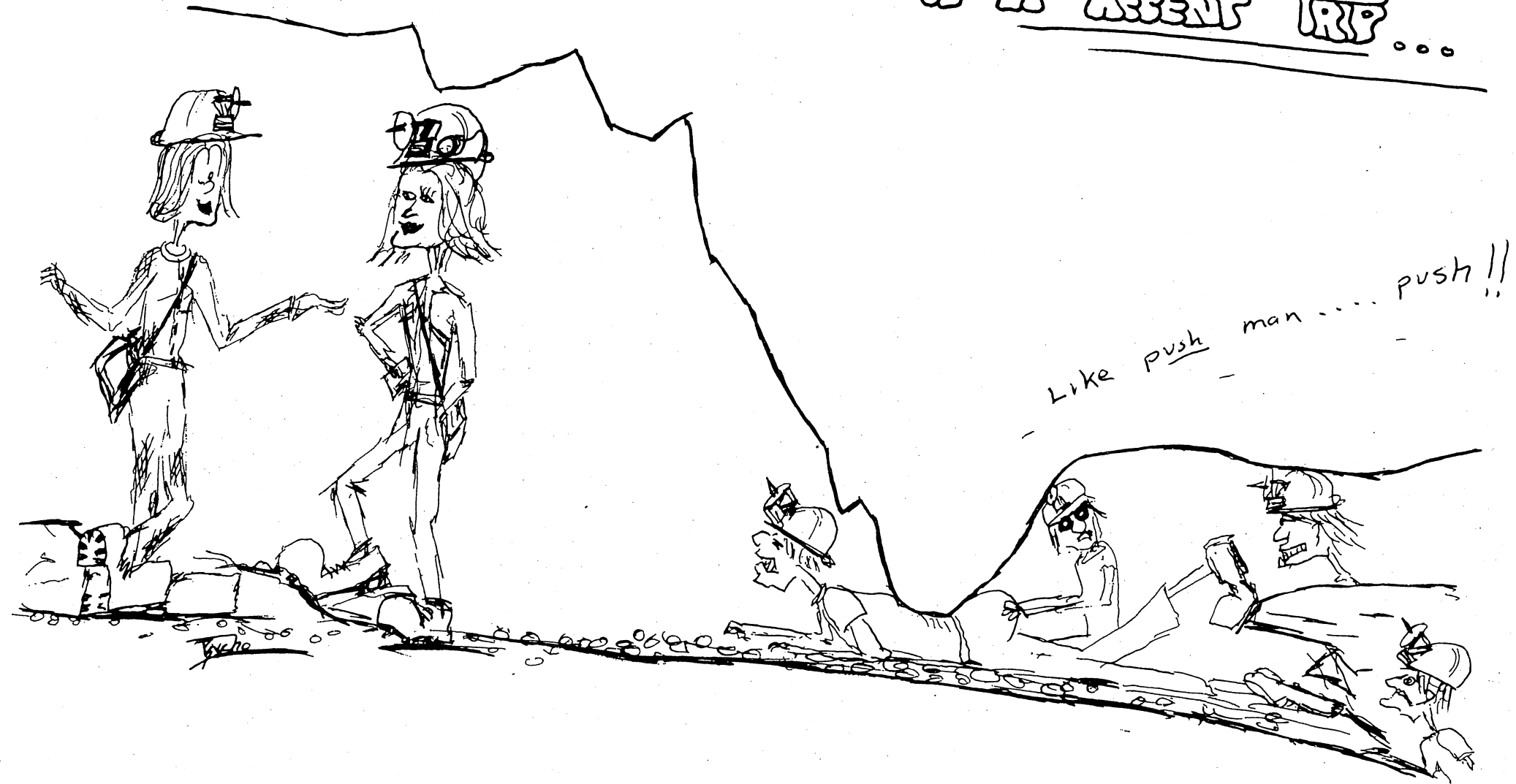
So, huh, how  
much for an  
ounce of carbide?

Recently, I  
ran out!



so what do you say... Eileen .....  
shall we SLOOP it??

## ON A RECENT TRIP...

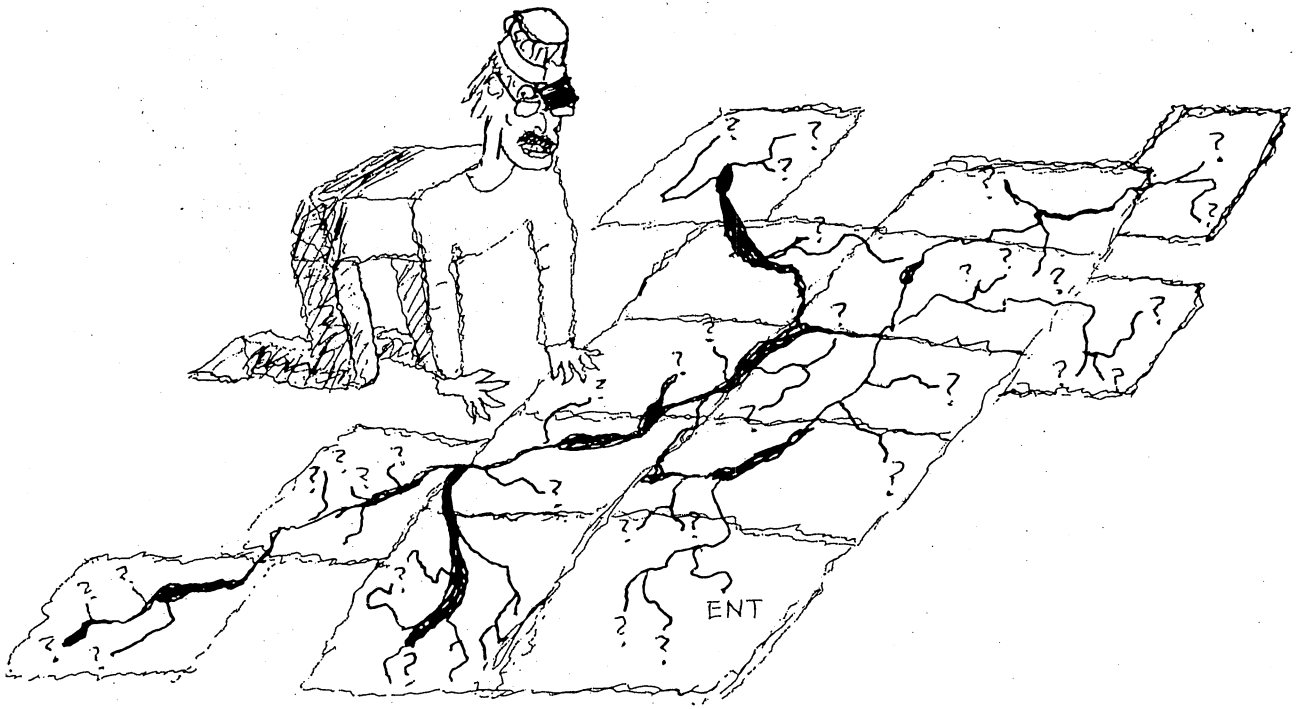


Caving in the year 2172...



Recently, my nuclear-powered light went out, Wait a minute while I change uranium.

jmf



I Lost the notes. Anybody for a game of twister?



2006  
BEST CHILI IN TOWN!!  
1900





It Dont Go...

Booming  
Trunk  
this way!

# BOZO LEAD TAPE

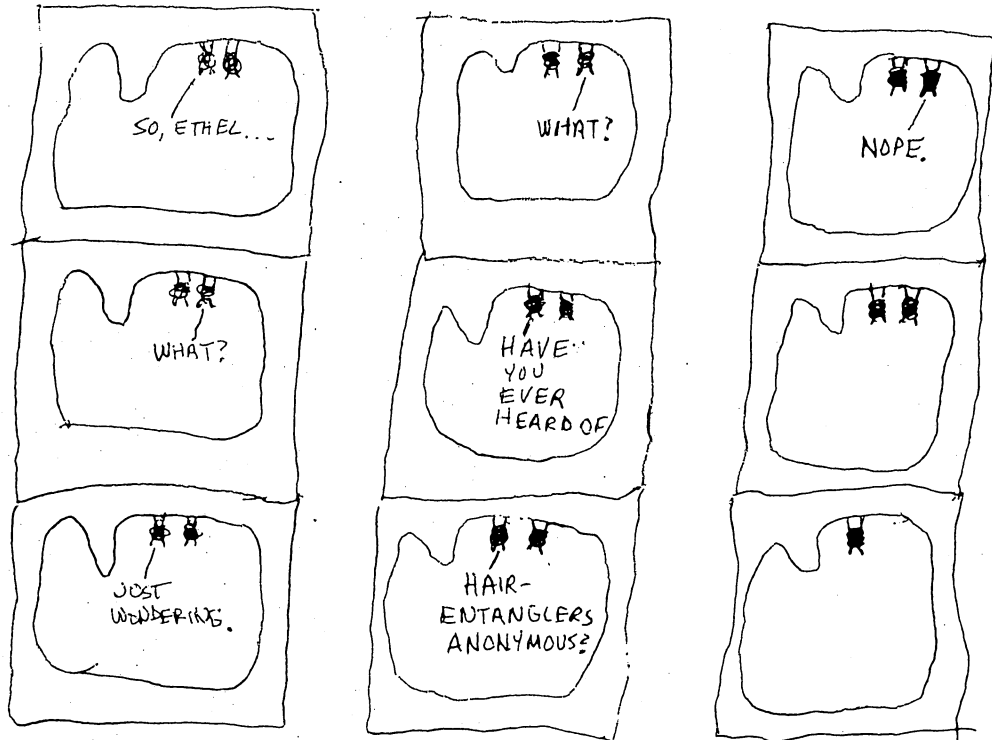




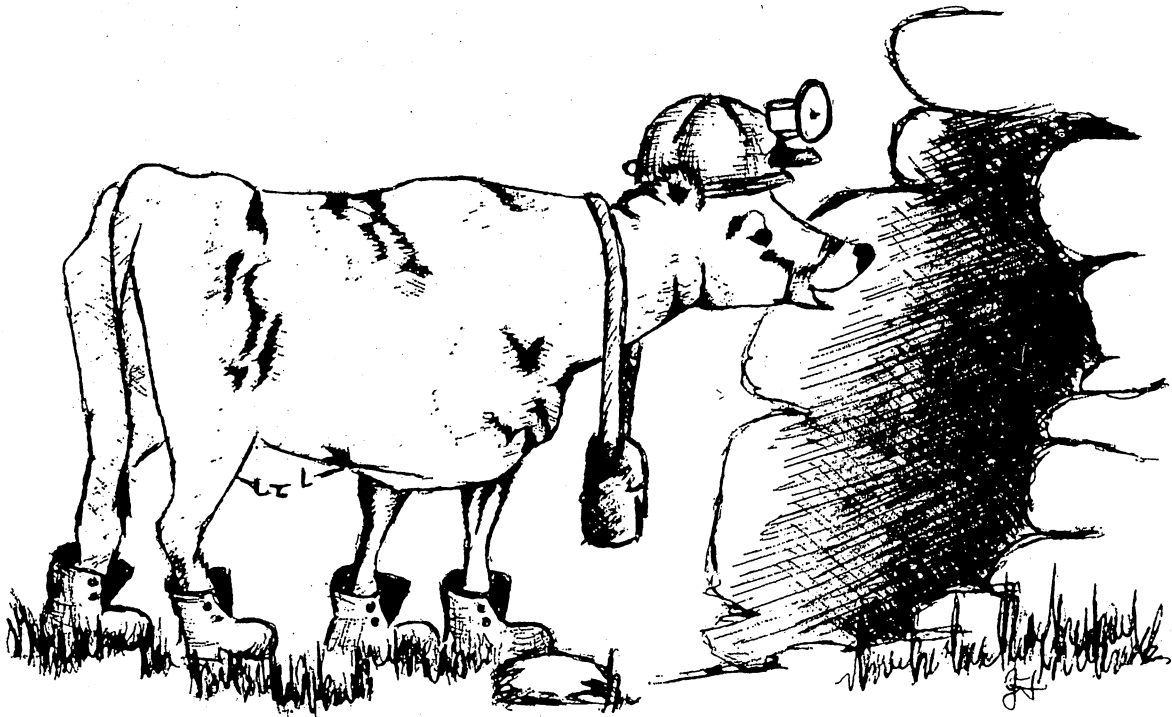


This is the  
Last time I let  
a woman read  
Brunton !!!

# BATS



... recently drawn by Jim Washington



# Recent - CAVE

Tech  
Trog  
Fall 1985

