The Tech Troglodyte



Fall 1995

The Tech Troglodyte

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Words from the Prez

by Alison Williams

I can't believe that this semester is almost over! I think that it has been a great semester for the cave club and I have had a great time getting to know all of the new faces. We have a wonderful group of new trainees and I look forward to seeing them remain active with the club and get their membership in the future.

I would like to thank all of the members that have helped make this semester so successful. I think that we have had a lot of good trips this semester and hopefully we will have even more in the upcoming spring. Special thanks to those people that have returned to Blacksburg on

numerous occasions to lead trips; it has been nice to see all of you more often.

And of course, all of those crazy cavers that cave hard have done a terrific job of partying hard. There have been a plethora of parties this semester and hopefully everyone has been having a great time.

So, study hard for those finals and head off to cave and relax afterwards. I hope that you all have a very merry Christmas and happy new year. I look forward to seeing everyone back next semester, so be safe over the holidays. Take care and get excited about Banquet for when we return!

Banquet will be on February 17, 1996!

It ALL happens at the Newport Rec Center:

- pre-banquet Cocktail Party starting at 4:00 p.m.
- Banquet meal and speaker starting at 6:00 p.m.
- post-banquet party starting when everything else ends

Our speaker is Phil Lucas of the Virginia Cave Conservancy. Music for the party will be provided by the fantastic duo Doug Perkins and Craig Ferguson.

You may:

- sleep in a tent behind the rec center
- sleep in your car
- sleep on the dance floor

\$17.00 per person if you pay by February 9 \$20.00 if you pay at the door \$ 4.00 if you don't want the meal

Please make checks payable to the VPI Cave Club. Payment should be made to one of the Banquet Committee members: Ed Fortney, Eileen O'Malley, and Dave Shantz.

In Search of Caldwell Cave

by Suzie Warren

It was Sunday morning and I was still recovering from the party the night before. Somehow I managed to drag my body out of bed and head over to Mike's house. Five minutes after I arrived, James showed up and we *left on time*.

Our destination was Caldwell Cave. Mike said he had an idea where it was - because he had talked to some people a couple years ago who had been there. This did not make me too faithful in finding the cave, and I figured that I should really be spending this time doing school work. "Oh-well," I thought, "If we do find it, it would be really groovy." So, I justified the trip.

We arrived at the knoll where Mike said the cave would be. "Somewhere on the left there should be a heavily traveled trail and a place to park on the right." Mike and I headed up what later turned out to be deer trails to poke around in the woods. We split up and I headed toward a dark spot. As I walked I noticed a thing about 12 feet ahead of me. It was a fourpoint buck sitting casually on the ground staring at me as if I were interrupting it's bath time. He got up and I then noticed how large he was. He started walking off in the direction of Mike. I shouted over to Mike to tell him that a groggy buck was wandering over his way. Mike got excited when I started yelling over, thinking that I found the cave. He, no doubt, was disappointed when it turned out to be a buck. Nonetheless the buck was pretty cool. He stood a few yards away from Mike and I, very confident that we were not going to harm him.

Meanwhile, we had left James at the road. He managed to snoop around an old road and found a Polaroid of a very gross-looking naked woman in a very dirty

house. We searched that road a bit more and turned around after I stepped on rusty barbed wire.

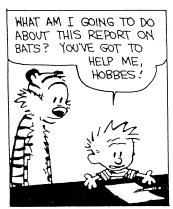
We drove up the road some more and stopped at the top of a ridge. Mike and I searched the left side, heading up an old trail. Our effort was not too successful; we turned around after we hit several pickers and caught no sign of limestone. When we returned to the car we walked up the trail on the right where James had gone. We found him after five or ten minutes and he said he found a cave, but he did not know if it was the right one. We followed the trail and there it was . . . a really groovy entrance. Whether or not this was Caldwell, we were going in. Back to the car we went, got our gear, and hiked the half mile back to the entrance.

The first thing that caught my attention about the cave was the large numbers of spiders and crickets that covered every surface. It was like that scene from "Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom."

After we poked our noses around in the entrance, our next job was to find the rest of the cave. Mike climbed up a wall that looked as though other people had traversed it. "I don't see what the-point is in coming up here," he said. There was no promising passage. James and I sat at the bottom. "Maybe this isn't Caldwell," I said. Just then Mike shouted to us that he found the first drop. Alright, success!! We scrambled up the wall and into this really interesting, yet pain in the butt, crawl. There it was, the pit. But there was a slight problem. We had nowhere to rig. After ten minutes we figured out the rigging and dropped the pit. This nasty crawl had opened itself out to a beautiful 40-50 foot drop.

About twenty feet from where we landed was the next drop of 25 feet. It was not as spectacular, but I got to land in a mud puddle which made me quite happy. We wandered around in the rest of the cave looking for the final 60 foot drop. When we did find it we were running out of time. I had a paper to finish writing — and the Simpsons were on!!! Along the way we saw many spectacular formations, including a gigantic white column and a flow stone room that had many pretty pools.

Though we had dropped about three times in the cave we had not traveled a horizontal distance of more that 1000 feet. When we arrived at the surface it was still light outside, though the sun was setting. We were successful!! Between the three of us, we found Caldwell, found pornography, and got muddy!









Vice-Presidential Propaganda

by Carl Bern

Once again the semester has slipped by fast enough to make a person wonder where it all went. I do know what happened to my weekends in the past months. Most of them were spent underground with the dozens of people who checked the club out this semester. Out of that enormous group we have gotten a solid core of promising trainees and I have had a blast caving with them. The enthusiasm for caving they possess is infectious.

I truly appreciate all of the help I received with training this semester. Thank you everyone who led trips, helped me lead trips, assisted with the vertical training at the quarry, or lent me their gear for those 'cast of thousands' trips; you all know who you are. Next semester promises to be just as exciting. It will be difficult for the supply of trips to meet the demand until the active member to trainee ratio begins to balance out. I regret that I won't be able to help out as much next semester, but I will be hiking the Appalachian Trail starting in March. I should be back in the fall to help out with next year's trainees, but after Bryce's many months on the Trail I don't think I should guarantee that. So it's up to the members to keep training trips plentiful and the trainees should cajole and connive the members if they cannot find a trip.

With regards to the club gear, what we have right now is in good shape. I do know however that there are lamps, etc., floating around out there that need repair. If you have club gear in good condition or bad please return it so that we can figure out what we have

and tinker with the stuff that is broken

Congratulations to James Whisenhunt, Wil Orndorff, and Ray Sira, our new members for this semester. I am certain that we will have several more trainees coming up for membership in the spring. Thank you to everyone who took on the organization of major events this semester: Lawrence Britt for Octoberfest, Suzie Warren and the Bat Ranch residents for the Halloween party, Captain Ed Fortney and Eileen O'Malley as coordinator and victim respectively in the practice rescue. A big thank you should also go to all of the people who for one reason or another opened their residences to us for the Friday night parties. Maybe we can find some new locations for these in the spring so that the same people don't get stuck with it all the time. Let's try to make next semester even better than this past one.

Party hard, cave hard.



Fortunately, even the Boy Scouts who fail knot-tying get to go camping.

Newberries: A first underground vertical experience

by Amy M. Johnson

Ready to Rappel Belay On Rappeling Rappel Away

> And I begin the descension towards the center to a point beneath the outer crustal shell of earth and soil. A narrow crack and sixty feet of darkness between me and the horizontal rock on which others are now standing. One hand steady, strong, controllingthe other shaking, unsure. The rock encloses me, engulfs me Traveling through slick fractures widened by water and geologic time to the base that holds the mountain above me.

> > Slow, uncertain,
> > Feeding the rope through
> > the rappel device in
> > areas of near horizontal
> > only to approach a
> > steeper face.
> > Slight apprehension
> > followed by action
> > as it encourages me to continue.
> > The rock opens
> > before one last descent
> > and I land on horizontal.

Down Belay Off Off Rope

Let's Cave

The first few steps are unsure. Acquiring cave legs is difficult after sixty feet of adrenaline flow. But sureness builds as we crawl on horizontal rock. More difficulties and new steps occur. Unstable rungs and cables to climb. Twisting and turning with every step as I find the balance between ripping hands to shreds and swaying that little bit to find the next rung. As feet touch ground they settle into familiar skills. We find holes and small caverns to maneuver through while our leaders prepare for Bill's Rappel. Crawling through tight places is comforting, A respite from the unknown drop. However, to experience what the cave offers those who explore it, one must face this challenge.

Standing at the top, grasping for confidence and security, the calls are relayed again. And I begin again. Trembling, Leaning back into the rope, seemingly defying gravity for that instant. as I pass over the lip. A longer, straighter descent. Bats line the wall-Eyes on the staring rock face. From below- the glimmer of a carbide lamp. So distant. Nothing but the rock ahead and the light One hundred sixty feet below. Relying only on untamed skill and the friction between me and the rope twisting around a figure eight. I reach bottom and roles are reversed. Looking up, the rock smiles with the reflection of the carbide-

one from above and now mine from below.

I watch the descent of others in disbelief.
So slowly it seemsBarely moving.
Gravity is the guide.
I did that.

The cave now presents itself. Tubes of rock rise Hundreds of feet high, meters in diameter. Large wells dug by water unseen by man. Again, cautious comfort as we travel the unfamiliar passages. Natural subway tunnels. Mud slicks challenge small ascents As rock presses against thigh. Accomplishment in joining those whose ascent was less cumbersome. Then sliding down quickly- covered with mud and landing in a small meander. A slick, complicated retreat Requires caution. But spirits rise with new energy as we turn to face the Ascension from the depths.

From the bottom of the rappel
We joke of prussikinga slow and tedious undertaking,
but instead begin the twists,
turns, and
climbs of the
Devil's Staircase.
Pulling with all upper body
is not enough
And only true teamwork supports
one whose hands
barely reach the holds.

All muscles contract, pulling to the top.
Sweet adrenaline-tiring.
The final challenge awaits.

Reaching the final ascension, true fear takes hold and I look for comfort and reassurance from those who climbed before.

With ascender in place I begin the horrifying climb-The last before breaking the boundary of soil and rock. Hand and footholds are many. Tired muscles reach for these and push and pull to the next. Beneath me is only darkness.

Hand- hand- Pull
Foot- foot- Push
Adjust ascender to prevent
Falling too far.
Slowly, wearily, painfully,
I reach air, plants.
Above soil.
And I collapse
above the rock that
enveloped me.
Unable to move.
Unable to speak.
Overwhelmed by the experience.

Time and reflection reveals Overcoming of fears, Facing of new challenges. A weary exploration, but it encompasses every part of me. And it will engulf me Again.



Useless Review

by Pam Mohr VPI 143, NSS 12034

I feel like I'm living in a flashback!! It all began in 1991. There I was, all alone in Jacksonville, NC, and felt the need to be near cavers — my friends, my family. So I moved back to Blacksburg, where else? I attended VPI and was a Cave Club member in '68-'72. Here it's the 90's and I felt like a student/caver again. Young and old cavers made my transition easy — Thanks Everyone!

Then that old déjà vu started. Someone was planning an NSS Convention for 1995 in Blacksburg. I was living in the dorm for the '71 Convention, now I live just 2 miles from campus. Then and now I helped on the Guidebook. Then and now

the person with the publishing knowledge was KIM, Kim Smith in '71 and Kim Hansen in '95. A local caver was in charge; this year's co-chairman was Jim Washington, and 24 years ago Jim Dawson was the caver with the headaches. I can't help but feel that the cycle of life is operating in excess mode. More duality then and now: I helped with Campground Security (really more like an excuse to talk to everyone).

I could continue with more examples, but I'll just end with these two words: TEXAS SHOWERS.

Beware and enjoy: Caving is Addictive!

Grotto Grapevine

by A.I. Cartwright

Whew! Blacksburg survived Convention this summer. There were no rescues from either area caves or the Christiansburg drunk tank. Many local shop owners expressed gratitude for the added business during their slow season.

Ed Fortney, Security Chief, had his deputies on the prowl to scare off any troublemakers, but most of their time was spent trying to keep the alcohol hidden. Ed may have some interesting stories to tell: ask him about our visit from the Highlander.

As usual, the Photo Salon was a popular event, though the winning slide was a bit controversial. Perhaps the highlight of the evening festivities was the Ramen® wrestling done by Bill Bussey and whoever else dove it. (But these are professionals, kids; do not try this at home.) The event amused both cavers and local police officers alike.

In addition to Jim Washington, head leader-guy, there were many who put in time and effort to make Convention a success. Philip Balister and Ed organized the campground, Sandy Knapp did events planning, and Walt Pirie led several caving trips. And,

of course, Pam Mohr did her job as welcome wagon committee/social butterfly at the campground.

Wil Orndorff led one of the two Geology Field Trips, both of which had a large turnout. Several VPI cavers lent him a hand.

This is only a mention of the many people involved. Thanks to all who performed jobs both large and small.

OTR was pleasant and relatively small this year. Cooler dancing was all the rage, and Matt Siegler even managed to make some money from his performance. Philip B. gave his impersonation of the dancers at *Girls*, *Girls*, *Girls*, Roanoke's only topless gogo bar. Some think his performance put them to shame.

True to his entrepreneurial spirit, Craig Ferguson and some friends tied Bob Simonds' camcorder to a weather balloon to catch the action from above. They tried to make it to the hot tub area, but the telephone lines got in the way of the balloon's leash. I recommend viewing the video before eating since they recorded on a very windy day.

Ed Fortney, Assistant Cartoonist



One of our more adventurous (and psychotic) club members wasn't satisfied popping his Jiffy-Pop® the old fashioned way. He donned his firefighter gear and marched into the flames! He survived the experience but there is no report on whether or not the popcorn tasted better.

The Halloween party, hosted by the at Ranch, brought out some interesting faces. There were dead men, talking vegetables, and a Black Knight. Ko Takamizawa and Joan Johnson came as your worst nightmare: your parents! The Mask (Dave Colatosti) circulated the party until his green chin began to fall off.

The party even supplied a cave which was only difficult to manage by those in long skirts or giant masks. The Zo kids were overheard urging Mom to "go through it before you get too drunk!"

Lawrence Britt hosted his annual Ocktoberfest with pub-style mugs and tape for color-coding. Next time you visit you can grab your mug from the shelf to use. The sauerkraut and sausage made those of German descent feel right at home.

Das Boot started the evening off, but it was the squeeze-box that livened the party up.

Rumor has it that Lawrence has bought a house on the corner of Penn Street. Some of you may remember it from parties in days gone by. Now all he needs is a wife, a dog, and a white picket fence to complete this cozy picture.

Dave Cinsavich and Kim Hansen hosted their annual *Trim the Tree/Kill the Cat* Christmas party. Kim's cranberry jello vodka shooters and Dave's hot buttered rum made it difficult to leave the kitchen. Fortunately much/

of the party was there, as any good caver knows. One unfortunate soul thought he could out-shot Dave and Doug Perkins with rum and Wild Turkey. I'm told he wasn't feeling very well the next day.

Susan Vermeulen hosted an alternate party that same night. Lots of cavers showed up to help her celebrate her birthday.

Several folks attended the "old fart" New Year's party at Ed and Lynn Richardson's beautiful home in Flint Hill. Avid fans tried to hear the Sugar Bowl over the sound of Joan Redder shouting to Tech players, "Get the son-of-a-bitch!" Sandy K. took over as party bully by beating up on some of the menfolk. Could the Whisky Sour Punch have anything to do with it?

Fireworks and bottle rockets marked the big moment and the champagne was definitely flowing. It was hard to make it through the room without being hugged by all the well-wishers.

After several years as a student, Glen Davis has accepted a job with Electro-Tec. It's unclear who is more excited, Glen or Alice, who has been planning to quit her job and begin hiking the Appalachian Trail in March.

Speaking of the Trail, word has it that Bryce Bolton has ceased his efforts and has returned to work in the D.C. area. He feared that the job wouldn't wait for him any longer.

Caver weddings are on the rise this year. For a complete lowdown, see the list following the Grapevine.

Marriage seems to have settled in for Sandy K. and Philip B. The newlyweds hadn't been seen together for several months after the wedding (including at the reception!), but are finally showing up in public as a couple. (A couple of whats, we don't know.)

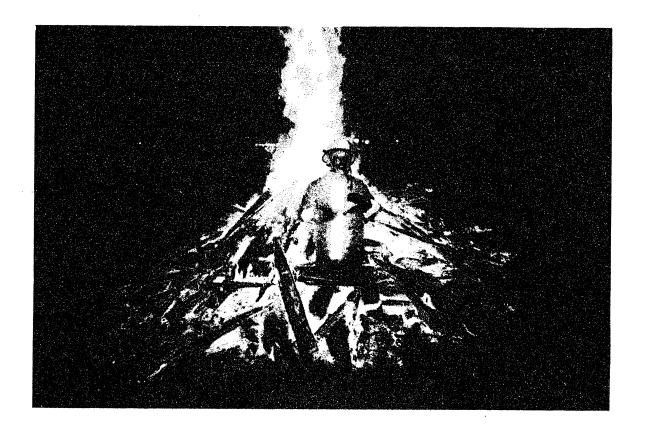
Where there is marriage there are children (but thank heavens not always). Wil and Zenah Orndorff are expecting another baby soon. Sue Setzler and Doug Bruce are expecting their first in April. Have they picked out names? Speculation is that if it's a boy he'll be named Bam-Bam.

Some said it would never happen, but after five years Laine Buckwalter is finally moving out from Old Signout on Eakin. She'll be renting a room in a boarding house on Roanoke Street. Alas, the Spotted Wonder will not accompany her on this venture. The move comes just in time to escape some alleged employee disagreements at B&C.

Cecile still intends to move to Tennessee; the latest word is that she'll be moving and taking B&C with her around August '96.

Natalie Serbu joins the VPI faction in Colorado for a several month internship. She and Jeff Jablonski snuck in a quick late-night visit to Blacksburg on the way out west.

I hope everyone will attend this year's Banquet on February 17. (May Mother Nature grace us with a snow-free weekend.) The catering will be done by Steve "Tink" Williams, a caver from years ago who's been caving with a few of the old farts. Phil Lucas, the speaker, has lots of interesting things to present and the music afterwards will be hot!





Another exciting caver party. Somebody hold these people back! Submitted by Susan Vermeulen. Photo by ????



Would you trust a convention run by these people?

Photo by someone holding Ed Fortney's camera.

How the Club gets its New Members?

Wedding bells chimed for many club members within the past several months. The club would like to congratulate the following couples and wish them the best in their marital (martial?) bliss.



Could You Please Scratch my Nose? My Experience as a Practice Rescue Patient

by Eileen C. O'Malley

Friday night a week prior to the club's annual practice rescue, I overheard Ed Fortney grumbling about not having a volunteer for the rescue patient. "If no one else volunteers then I'll do it," I chimed in foolishly. Someone laughed and said I would be too easy, so I offered to put rocks in my pockets. When I spoke to Ed later that week, Surprise! No one else had claimed the position. Unfortunately I forgot the rocks.

Now that my insides have settled and I can reflect on the experience, I'd like to offer some constructive comments.

The practice at the meeting the night before helped greatly. It familiarized me with the sensation of being passed and lifted, and it gave the new folks a chance to try it out on level, unthreatening ground. For some just walking in a cave was new.

Oddly enough, we had a large member turnout. Not as many trainees showed up for the actual practice as we had hoped, but we did have some. I'm glad that this group recognizes the importance of our practice rescues and of participating in club events.

Once in the cave the same basic mistakes appeared. Dusty webbing passed over my face and sling hit me in the chin four times while trainees strapped me into the Stokes litter. I was not dripped on by a carbide lamp, but the flame came too close for comfort a time or two. These things will always happen on a practice rescue because the rescuers will (hopefully) always be trainees who don't yet know the proper techniques. Isn't that why we practice?

One thing to keep in mind: Just because I had no physical injuries does not mean that I didn't feel uneasy. Consider that I was strapped into the Stokes unable to move or protect myself. I couldn't see

my surroundings and I had no idea what was coming up. Imagine the feeling of helplessness if the Stokes had slipped just four feet before the belay caught.

Under these circumstances, the jokes about my impending doom got real old, real fast. "Oh, you'll just drop about 10 feet, no big deal." As the group began to pass me around a ledge, someone thought it funny to hum a gloomy tune. Let me tell you, it was not funny to me. Perhaps the jokers meant to help me relax. If that's the case, stick to something like, "A guy walked into a bar with a frog on his shoulder"

The most important thing you can give the patient is information. I had to ask several times for people to tell me what was happening. I'd hear Joan Johnson, our traffic cop, say, "Okay, do we all know what to do?" and "Is everybody ready?" The worst I overheard: "Do you people over there feel comfortable? We can have some of the members take your place." By these questions I knew something slightly tricky was about to happen, but I had no idea what. This makes a person slightly uneasy.

Lawrence Britt was good about telling me when something particularly weird came up. "Okay, we're gonna pass you through this little duck-under, and it will come close to your face, but there's plenty of room." And later, "We're passing you down a slope, so you may get fairly vertical for a minute or two." These bits of information allowed me to anticipate the movement and not freak out.

Talk to the patient. Sounds simple, but you'd be surprised at how infrequently people spoke directly to me. Constant chatter is not necessary, but frequent questions about my condition and information regarding the status of the trip

would help. Am I cold? Am I hungry? How's that sprained ankle doing? Enquiring minds *should* want to know.

Listening to the patient is also important. Perhaps the noise played a role, but I remember that I had to holler "Head up" several times and still got no response until someone else handling the Stokes shouted the same thing.

Knowing where you are is nice. Since I could only see the faces of the rescuers and a brown darkness I assumed to be the ceiling, I had no idea where in the cave we were. An occasional comment about the room we entered would help to mentally place myself in the cave.

If the patient wants to be humored a little, I don't see the harm in that. When I asked Mike³ (Horne) what was going on, he told me they planned to pass me around a butt ledge. Based on a previous experience with the Newcastle Murder Hole butt ledge, that phrase made me nervous. After I mentioned this he called it a "fanny walk." Okay, this sounds silly, but it gave me a mental reign on the nervousness. When you are physically helpless, your mind is all you have to work with.

Don't forget to include the patient as part of the group. When we arrived at a level place the crew stopped to work on carbide lamps and have a snack. After placing me gently on the floor everyone scattered to form small groups. I felt rather abandoned in the middle of the floor. Thankfully Steve LePera noticed my predicament and came to sit with me. He dug food out of my pack and even helped me take a drink of water.

Joan did a great job as traffic cop. She made certain that everyone stood ready in place before sending me across the bodies. I felt more secure knowing that no moves would be made hastily.

Joan and Ed's ability to accept comments from others impressed me.

Neither of them acted with a macho "I'm

in charge" attitude. They asked for advice and listened to suggestions. More than once I heard Joan say, "You're right; that may work better." When you're at the mercy of others it's nice to know that the folks in charge don't lose sight of your best interest in a battle of egos.

What did I gain from the experience? It made me aware of my own behavior around a practice rescue patient. I remember some things I did that were meant as amusement which in retrospect were probably tiresome. I will keep that Saturday in mind when I'm once again a rescuer.

If in future years the club is without a patient volunteer for a practice rescue, I would do it again. However, I strongly recommend that others give it a try once they have been on the rescuer side a time or two. Perspective is a wonderful thing.

Thanks to everyone who helped out. More important than any of the comments above, trainees did participate and learn. I wasn't dropped, burned, beaten, drenched, or frightened into shock, which is more than you can say about some of the parties we attend!

Pain and Pleasure in Windy - Cassells

by Wil Orndorff

Plans for a Simmons-Mingo thrutrip began to take shape about a month before the 1995 Old Timers' Reunion. Ray Sira had done the trip before, a couple of times a few years earlier. Due to the complexity of the cave, he figured we had better hook up with someone who definitely new the route. A few weeks and a dozen or so phone calls later, everything was set, or so we thought. Ray, Steve Wells, and I would hook up with two or three cavers from the Northern New Jersey Grotto, one of whom knew the route. Early Friday morning, the group would enter the Stan's Blowing Hole entrance just west of US219 near Snowshoe, WV. After at least twelve hours of climbing, crawling, traversing, and losing and refinding the way, we'd emerge at the Mingo entrance, over 10,000 horizontal and plus 640 vertical feet away. During a portion of the trip, we'd be caving with over 1500 feet of rock over our head. Simmons-Mingo lies directly beneath Mingo Knob, one of the highest peaks in West Virginia. These were our plans. Ah, but the best laid plans of mice and men (bats and cavers?, Ray, Steve, and Wil?) . . .

Our VPI contingent arrived at OTR early Thursday, so we could set up camp and get a good night's sleep before our great adventure. Searching the campground, we found that the New Jersey group was already underground in another cave. Ordinarily so far from any respectable cave, they were getting in as much caving as possible while in central West Virginia. When they returned, we would verify an early departure time for Simmons-Mingo on Friday.

By 10 p.m., our compatriots from the toxic north were still in absentia, and our committee of three decided that they would probably be too worn out for the rigors of a Simmons-Mingo thru trip, especially if we wanted to get back to OTR by Saturday night. Instead, we would plan something less rigorous (more in the spirit of Old Timers', anyway).

During our evening of only moderate partying, Ray had mentioned the planned SM trip to a friend, whose reply was, more or less - "Oh, you're on that trip. Whew! I guess there's at least a chance of finding the route." Because such statements engender little confidence, we felt even better about our decision to wimp out and go on a shorter trip.

The New Jersey crew returned to the campground after eleven, and quickly concurred that Simmons-Mingo was now a bad idea. Instead, we chose a scaled down version of our earlier plan. We'd still do a thru-trip, but in Windy-Cassells, a much shorter and less impressive cave, at least in a statistical sense. By doing a cross-over trip instead of just a one way, we could bring along a few more VPI cavers and thereby exhibit greater honor. We would leave no later than 10 a.m. the next morning, so we could return in time for a full Friday evening of partying.

Friday morning came, and we finally rolled out of the campground just before noon and cruised the 45 minute drive to the cave in a three car caravan. After checking in with the landowner, we prepared to enter Windy-Cassells. Reggie Reid, Steve

Wells, Ray Sira, Carl Bern, and myself would enter the horizontal Windy entrance, and flag the route as we found our way to the Cassells connection. Mike Miro, Alison Dineen, and Andy ???? joined the four NNJG cavers to rig and then enter the Cassell's Pit Entrance. The two groups would meet near the connection. Our group was smaller since we would have to climb rope.

Ray led us into the cave just after 1 p.m. No one else in our group had even heard of this cave before Thursday night, much less knew the connection route. I pulled my new sport glasses over my eyes just before I ducked into the low entrance, eager to see if the ugly shades were worth the investment. My trusty wire-rimmed glasses, caving companions for years, would have to sit out this trip in the glove box of Reggie's car. Subsequent events made their retirement a brief one.

The passage in the lower portion of the cave typified that of the Elkins area. Nothing too big, nothing too small, nothing too pretty, nothing too ugly, with enough tricky climbs and hairy traverses too keep things interesting. We caved quickly, and I began to heat up. In response, my glasses fogged over. No big deal, I thought, they'll clear up once they equilibrate to cave conditions.

About twenty minutes later, the proverbial down-climb versus hairy traverse choice presented itself. My cave legs still in Blacksburg, I chose the former. Near the bottom of the climb, the quantity and quality of footholds rapidly diminished. I was only a couple of feet from the floor, so I decided just to drop. Unfortunately, two feet turned out to be five, and I

landed awkwardly, twisting my ankle. This brought to mind an important point one should keep in mind when wearing new glasses. The perceived focal point is different for every pair, resulting in screwy depth perception. Better be extra cautious until my equilibrium adjusts, I thought, staring through a fresh layer of fog on my glasses.

As a listened to Reggie coming down the climb behind me, my belief that he is a space alien was reaffirmed. Savagely impaled by his own carelessness only three weeks earlier, his inhuman regenerative powers had quickly thwarted fate's attempt to make him a hermaphrodite. All that remained was a small pink scar on his tush, which I had the dubious honor of viewing later that weekend. His caving was as effortless and annoying as ever.

On we caved, following Ray blindly (one of us literally so), up chimneys, down crawlways, and across ledges. My glasses continued to fog no matter what I did. At one point, remembering a trick I frequently used on my old spectacles, I spit on and licked the lenses and then dried them with a bandanna. They stayed clear for a whopping thirty seconds. I decided, then, to cave without glasses. Alas, this did not work, as I found my echolocation skills rather rusty, having not used them since a former life. So I resorted to other bodily fluids. No matter which (or whose) orifice I chose to extract it from, mucous worked no better than saliva. Armpit sweat performed only slightly better, and the sole effect of crotch sweat was to give the fog a bit of a greenish tint. At least I confirmed that my body was not capable of naturally producing a miracle defogging agent. I did my best to make sure that the rest of the group had a great time, by continuously bitching about how much things were sucking, the logic being that relative to me, everyone was having a great trip!

After a particularly foggy series of up climbs, Ray let out a whoop of joy. (Yes, that's right, a whoop. If you don't believe it, you weren't there.) We'd found the connection, a thirty-five foot climb on which a rope would have been nice. Windy-Cassell's is a fairly complicated cave, and Ray was a bit concerned that we might not find the connection. But we did, and without any significant backtracking.

The connection climb had two parts. The lower climb was an off width chimney opening down the passage, and was easily negotiated. The upper portion was more of an overhung wall climb, with an old etrier in place for assistance in negotiating the keyhole at the top. As I negotiated the upper climb, I turned to hear Ray say "Smile" as he snapped my picture, milliseconds before a cry of help escaped my lips as my hand began to slip from the etrier. With a little help from Steve, Carl, and Reggie, I quickly recovered and completed the climb. Ray followed.

After a brief lunch break, we lit a candle and placed it at the top of the climb, and then headed toward the Cassell's Entrance, wondering just where the hell the other group was. For the rest of the trip, route-finding was not an issue, but we continued to flag just in case.

By this point in the trip, I had mostly acclimated to the role of blind caver. My head was thumping, the result of an encroaching migraine headache induced by the fuzzy, altered depth perception vision. This was definitely not the time to break out the Old Milwaukee. Yet, in a perverse way, I realized that this trip was wonderful. I was in a cave new to me, accompanied by good friends, and we'd soon be out of this hell hole and back to OTR with a great excuse to party.

Not far from the top of the climb, we entered a winding stream passage with some waist deep potholes. After a few minutes caving up this passage, we finally met the other group. They looked like they were having fun, and, after assuring them that the route out Windy was adequately flagged, we parted company.



"DUSK! WITH A CREEPY, TIM-GLING SENSATION, YOU HEAR THE FLUTTERING OF LEATHERY WINSS! BATS.' WITH GLOWING RED EYES AND GLISTENING FANGS, THESE UNSPEAKABLE GIANT BUGS DROP ONTO ..."







Consisting mostly of stream canyon and easy walkways, duckwalks, and crawlways, the Cassell's portion of the system was much more quickly than Windy, despite my aching head. We soon reached what Ray described as the infamous PSC crawl, a dig which had resulted in discovering the portion of Cassell's through which we had just passed, including the Windy connection. The easily negotiated "squeezes" in the dig confirmed the suspicion that cavers from other grottos tend to be a bit more stout that those of VPI, including, believe it or not, myself. Five minutes past the crawl found us at the bottom of the 90 foot Cassell's pit entrance. We gathered up the vertical gear left behind by the other group, and prepared to ascend. I opened my pack to find, to my dismay, that the three knots I'd quickly grabbed from my gearbox consisted of two top knots and the short leg knot. Ray, Steve, and Reggie ascended, not necessarily in that order. Then came my turn. Steve had offered me his rope walker for the climb, but I decided greater honor would be achieved by climbing knots. I realized neither how tired I was nor how inefficient my inappropriately chosen knots would be.

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About eight feet off the floor, I realized I'd made a stupid decision. Not unsafe, just stupid. So I decided to stick with it. I climbed slowly, with pounding head and zero visibility, through the waterfall trickle near the bottom of the pit. About twenty feet up, my leather gloves both disintegrated, resulting in the generation of lovely blisters on my fingers during the remaining 70 feet.

After over half an hour on rope, I emerged into the cool West Virginia air

as a truly whipped individual. Nearly hypothermic from having had to wait so long for me, Carl popped over the lip a few minutes later, a little over four hours after having entered the cave. We quickly derigged the pit. Because I had taken so long, we were concerned that the other group had been waiting.

No such luck. After the short hike back to our cars, we found only three empty vehicles awaiting us. Initially, we perceived this as a good thing. We had more honor! Despite having to climb the rope and flag the Windy route, we had exited the cave first. Two hours later, however, honor seemed less important than getting back to OTR, from which we could faintly hear many eagerly anticipated libations and vices calling our names. Ordinarily, waiting for the second group on a cross-over trip to exit isn't that bad. But when your returning to Old Timers' instead of a pile of textbooks or a dead end job, patience no longer seems much of a virtue. Nevertheless, we conducted the customary while you wait rituals. An excellent game of "fill up Mike Miro's trunk with very small rocks under the dubious auspices of target practice" was played with gusto by all. Reggie and I performed our soon to be infamous Jun Ree martial arts exhibition. And, all the while, we held a round table discussion regarding how lame the other group was and how it sucked that we couldn't just return to OTR.

Finally, around seven o'clock, the other group came limping out of the cave. They had followed the flagging religiously. Unfortunately, this involved missing a certain piece of tape by traversing past it below, then

climbing up a chimney and looking around for the next flag. Instead, they saw the piece which they had inadvertently bypassed, and the whole group turned around and went the wrong way. Eventually, they realized the error of their chosen way, and got back on the proper route. At the connection climb, one of the New Jersey cavers fell on the top portion, and nearly bounced and fell down the bottom portion as well. Luckily, there was no serious injury. Complicating things further, what were trivial downclimbs in Windy proved a bit more challenging as up climbs, slowing the group even more.

After hearing of these trials, all of us (except maybe Steve, who was suffering severe OTR withdrawal) quickly forgave them for being late. We packed up the cars, checked out with the landowner, and sped back routes 92 and 219. Straightnin' them curves, flattenin' them hills, someday the highway might get 'em but the caves never will.

Head pounding and gut churning in the back of Reggie's smooth handling Subaru, I took the opportunity to reflect on the day's experience. I learned the following things on this trip:

- 1) Sport glasses should not be used caving. They should be sacrificed to M³'s fire god, Ogma.
- 2) If Ray thinks it's the right way, then it is. He should be called White Ray, which is dyslexish for "right way".
- 3) Random selection of three pieces of accessory cord from one's shed does not constitute adequate preparation of an ascension system.
- 4) Reggie Reid is a space alien.
- Ray Sira is more VPI than New Jersey.
- 6) Steve Wells doesn't always smile.
- 7) Carl Bern is stoic.
- 8) The VPI Cave Club has the most honor.

Needless to say, it was an unforgettable trip. The only way to make it better would have been to stuff my polypropylene with broken glass.

Quotable Quotes

by various folks

DS to DB:

"Is this yours or mine?"

DB to DS:

"It must be yours because mine is in my hand."

EF to EOM: "You give good squelch."

AD to JM:

"He's always trying to do weird things in the kitchen."

DC to KH:

"Do you want a Busch?"

KH to DC:

"I've got a Busch; I want a Bud!"

DS:

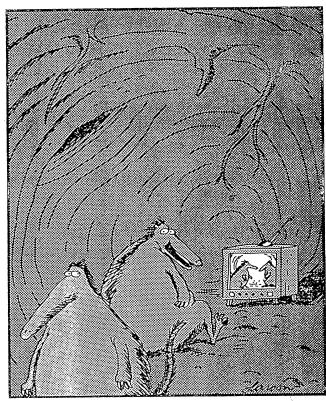
"You squeeze it, it's tubular, and it's not underarm deodorant."

GD:

"Just be careful how you twist it!"

SP to JS:

"Dad said, Whatever you do, don't give it away for free."



"Vera! Come quick! Some nature show has a hidden camera in the Ericksons' burrow! ... We're going to see their entire courtship behavior!"

Made in the Shade with Rubbermaid

by Chris Lattin

I've been caving since I was a junior in high school and I've found many useful inventions that make my life much nicer: cordura, fleece, wool, the fire of a carbide lamp, water (I've gotta cover the essentials even though I discovered water a couple of years before I started caving), and of course anything that mentioned "mechanical." However, nothing has been more useful than my Rubbermaid ROUGHNECK. It's a small rubber/polymer-based container which can haul about 20 gallons of whatever you wish to put in it. Mine is the beautiful green and tan two-toner. (Well, the store didn't have green tops; I had to compromise) These are only minor details for size, looks, and the slender lines are only just a few of the features of this fantastic magic box.

I have found the tub useful for:

- 1. hauling dirty cave gear,
- 2. hauling clean after-cave clothes (sometimes 1&2 simultaneously),
- 3. a laundry basket,
- 4 upside down it makes a great umbrella/hat for rainy days,
- 5. When money is tight it can be used as cozy living quarters,
- 6. Food storage, junk storage, mutilated body parts storage (your imagination is your only limit here),
- 7. A bucket for washing the car,
- 8. A very dark fish tank,
- 9. A planter,
- 10. Strap roller skates on the bottom for an indestructible go-kart,
- 11. A true port-a-pot (I recommend against using it for anything else after that; at that point it's time to get a new one).

Truly, the possibilities are endless and creativity means versatility. It even comes with a top that snaps on for a locked tightness that cannot be beaten. And yes, I've even come up with some great ways to use the top. I've found the top to be:

- 1. A great place to stand when changing for caving,
- 2. A fantastic snow sled (wax is advised),
- 3. A romantic breakfast-in-bed tray,
- 4. A plate (I was desperate and hungry),
- 5. Amazing with a pillow underneath, it's like that great little "lap desk" I had as a kid,
- 6. Floor mats for your car (especially if your floorboards are rusted out like mind);
- 7. With skates makes a jammin' skateboard,
- 8. Something to catch those nasty grease splooges that fall only when you're under your car but which will ruin your driveway.

And yes, it even makes a great projectile. It's much like a Frisbee but not as aerodynamic or graceful. It can do a whole lot of damage so BE CAREFUL! (Some of us need to be reminded)

Together the top and bottom can be assembled to form a comfortable form-fitting chair or the tub can be inverted, the lid placed on top, to form a picnic table.

All this and more for the amazing price of only \$6.95 (at least that's what I paid; they may cost more these days but maybe you can get a matching top and bottom).

"-And that's all I have to say about that!" -Forrest Gump

From the Signout:

VPI logged in 3744.5 caver hours from 12/5/94 to 1/04/96.

2/04/95 Tuff Calf	R. Sira, B. Steier, D. Colatosti	It keeps going and going
4/09/95 Smoke Hole	N. Sharp, M. Barnett, M. Mirro, A. Dineen, A. Sabalowsky	Just take a left at the junction - you can't miss it.
6/04/95 Yer Cave	S. Wells, S. LePera, C. Bern, G. Frohn, M. Ruocco	The curse of Carl is upon us all. (Almost.)
9/09/95 Murder Hole	C. Bern, S. Wells, S. LePera	Carl: It feels like I'm climbing on corn flakes.
9/24/95 Stay High	S. Wells, B. Cosby, J. Pugh, M. Morton, J. Deigham, D. Brown, C. Rourke	If I were a cave I would be Stay High.
9/30/95 Newberries	B. Cosby, J. Hoell, J. McCarthey, L. Good, B. Kirchman, S. Knapp	Ever see these people underground?
9/30/95 Clover Hollow	S. Husband, K. Digby, T. Pinnsionneault, S. LePera	Kirk: My neck is not a very good foothold.
10/11/95 Nellies Cave	S. Warren, M. Mirro	I had fun with Nellie's lips.
10/21/95 Murder Hole	T. Pinsonneault, S. Gardner, C. Lattin, S. Wells, K. Takawizawa	They sure don't make frainees like they used to.
10/21/95 James Cave	N. Sharp, J. Deigham, A. Grover, K. Rio, J. Hellman	Would you rather cave or make a porno? BOTH!
11/18/95 Links	S. LePera, J. Fagan, A. Williams, C. Carson, S. Rapier, 7 Boy Scouts	Boy Scouts whine more than Girl Scouts.
12/06/95 New River	S. Wells, J. Dorr, V. Simkovic, S. Husband, J. Matheson	Who ordered the fucking SNOW!!