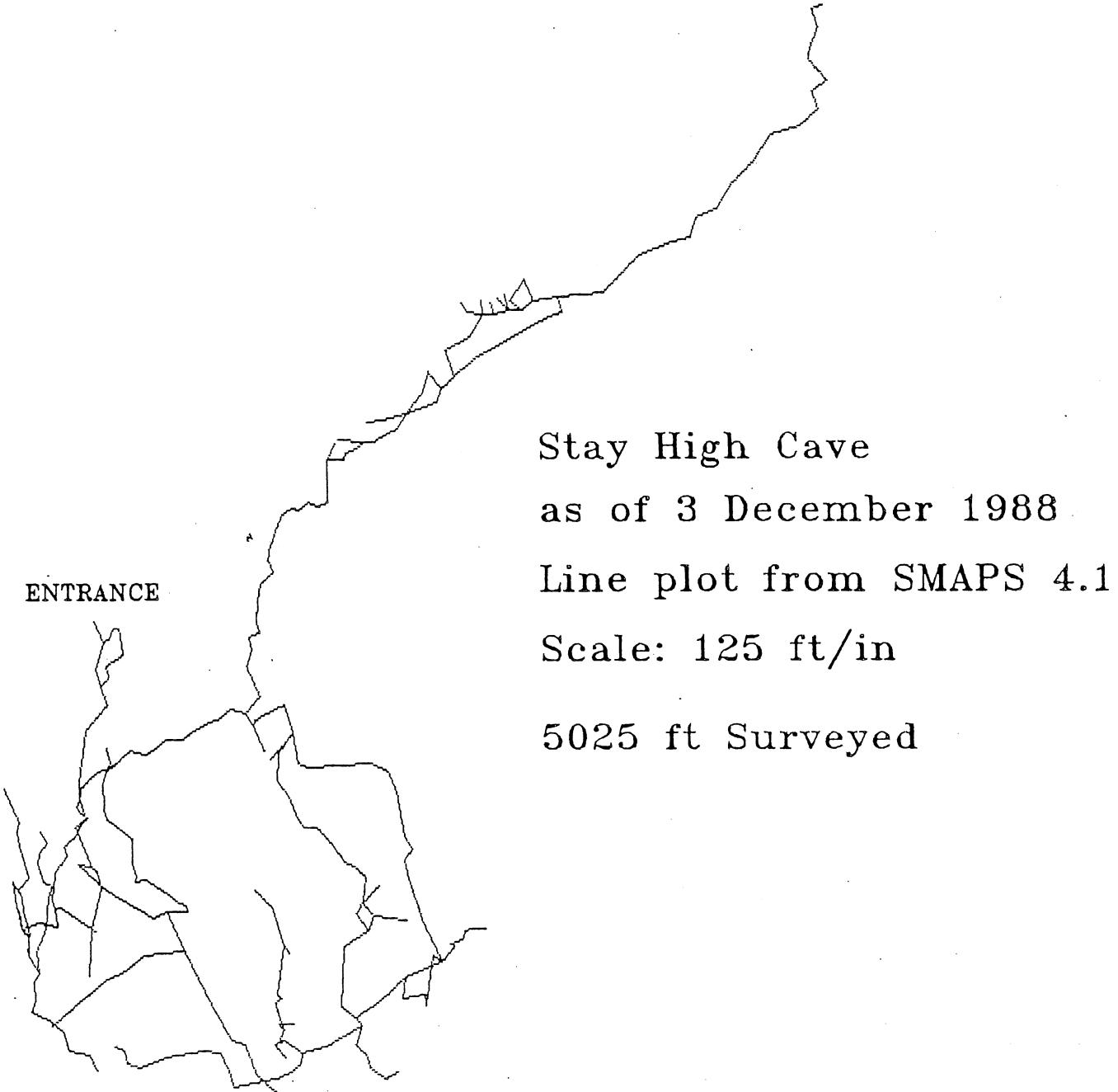
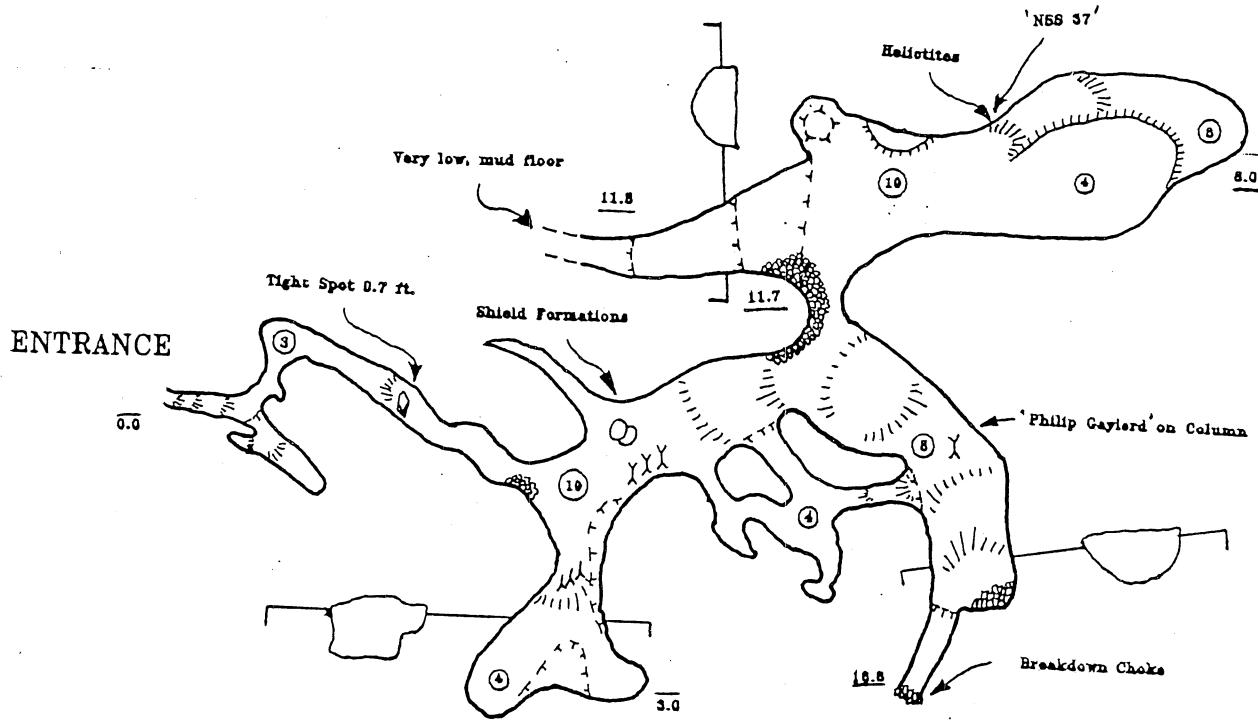


THE TECH TROGLODYTE



“FALL '88”
“FALL '88”



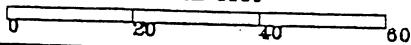
ECHOES CAVE

GILES COUNTY, VIRGINIA
 BRUNTON AND TAPE SURVEY BY:
 Jim Washington (Cartography)
 Andy Randall (Instruments)
 Scott Rapier (Lead Tape)

Nm

For The Virginia Speleological Survey
 GCCS 8 October, 1988

All dimensions in feet



THE TECH TROGLODYTE

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



Fall Semester, 1988

President.....Ben Keller
Vice President..Paul Hess
Treasurer.....Jim Gamble
Secretary.....Dougo Bohn

Volume XXVIII, No. 1

Editor.....Michael Fiore
Technical Support.....Jim Washington, Doug Bruce, Ko Takamizawa, and Jim Gamble

President's Column.....	Ben Keller	1
Editor's Column.....	Michael Fiore	2
Grotto Grapevine.....	?????????????	3
Tragedy in Pighole.....	Jackie Redder	7
The Discovery, Naming, and Exploration of Stay High Cave.....	Jim Washington and Michael Fiore	13
The Hell of Echols Cave.....	Scott Rapier	16
GCCS Update (The Wizard's Column).....	Jim Washington	17
The Discovery of Yer Cave.....	Mike Futrell	19
From the <u>Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy</u>	Mark Eisenbies	21
Hot Lead in Hick's Cave	Barbara Graham	22
Surveying From A New Perspective.....	Brian Cruickshank	25
How to Feel Stupid When Climbing Up Rope.....	Mac McElroy	26
Read My Lips.....	Joe Uknalis	27
Ben's Famous Quote.....	Brian Cruickshank	28
Quotable Quotes.....	Various Artists	29
From the Signout.....	compiled by Ko Takamizawa	30
Speleorata.....	Jim Washington	31

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HAVE YOU DONE YOUR GCCSING RECENTLY?

President's Column

This has been one of those semesters that defies description. We seem to have a wonderful group of prospective members who will probably be able to bring the club out of its "old fart rut." This is surprising considering that after our first monster meeting (which we totally screwed up), we skipped a week for Old Timers. Another surprise is that more didn't leave after the death of Jeff Snyder in Pig Hole. I think this is a good indication that we have a pretty hard-core group who will be around for some time.

The death of Jeff Snyder was certainly one of the events which has had the greatest effect on the club in quite a while. Jeff had been to at least one meeting, but had never been caving with the club. I don't think there was any question that his death was caused by anything other than bad judgement, but it made me stop and think about some issues which have been discussed before. The major one relates to those people who less than half-way through the "training" we provide, decide that they are experts and can go off on their own. The question that concerns me is: "Do these people have the common sense required to stay alive?" The common sense aspect of caving is not something that we explicitly teach, instead people either already have it or they pick it up by observing the more experienced members freak out in certain places. It is very aggravating to see people abandon the trainee program in midstream but continue caving, it would be even more aggravating to see them get hurt or die in a cave.

Because of Jeff's death Jackie discovered that she had not been covered by the University's liability insurance as Faculty Advisor. This prompted Jackie to resign. She also discovered that the club had no University coverage and is no longer a University sponsored student organization (they just let us and other groups register with them so people can find us). This was a shock (although it has been this way for some time), some concern was raised about liability and our status as a student grotto. Eventually, I asked for volunteers for committees to study liability issues and changes to be made to our constitution. Jean Simonds volunteered for the Liability committee and Jim Washington for the Constitution committee.

At this point it appears the best step toward reducing liability is for the club to incorporate, and such a motion was made at our last official meeting before Thanksgiving. The constitutional issue may be a little stickier. Because the school has set us "free," we may now have non-techiees as voting members. This means that the old farts could do more than heckle from the back of the room, and even could become officers. So the question we will be voting on soon is whether we should retain the classes of membership we currently have, or just have prospective members and members.

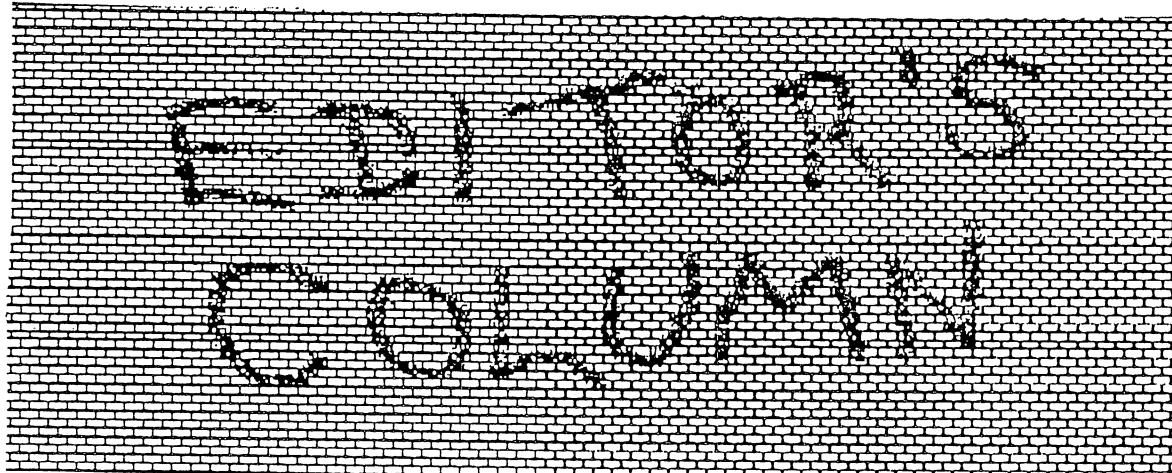
One thing that I've learned about this semester is the press. Between saying undecipherable things during a TV interview about why people go caving, saying wimpy things to Collegiate Times reporters about why Jeff Snyder is dead, and sounding arrogant in interviews with Campus Voice, I seem to have been doing a fairly good job of screwing up with the press. The printing of a map showing the general region of Pig Hole by the Roanoke Times and World News caused me to write a letter to the publisher (the letter and its rather unsurprising, but still nauseating response is printed later). The lesson for readers of the "news," take it with a grain of salt. The lesson for "makers" of the news, DONT. Actually, we hope to make news releases in the future, instead of letting things go wild.

Despite the fact that I am ready for my term to end soon, I am very happy with the soon to be new members that have put up with us this long. I would like to thank those people that helped some of these people like caving by going on trainee trips. (If I leave anyone out please don't shoot me, just think of it as one of my infinite number of screw-ups this year.) Jerry Redder, Cecile James, Walt Pirie, Jim Gamble, Ko Takamazawa, Jim Washington, Philip Balister, Mike Fiore, and Doug Bruce. I'd especially like to thank Ed Fortney who put up posters, and went on more than his share of trips. At the practice rescue Ed did a bang-up job at organizing, and Carol Zokaites, Craig "the Stink" Roberts, and the every gracious patient Kay Johnson helped a great deal. Paul Hess should be thanked for not getting the second year VP blues too soon, and for doing a great job. My

last thanks goes to a very special person who was a great help in the cleaning effort following the Halloween party, Mike Fiore. Feel free to bow, Mike.

Cave safe, but hard. But above all, don't believe me when I tell you the CRF Thanksgiving Expedition is a week long.

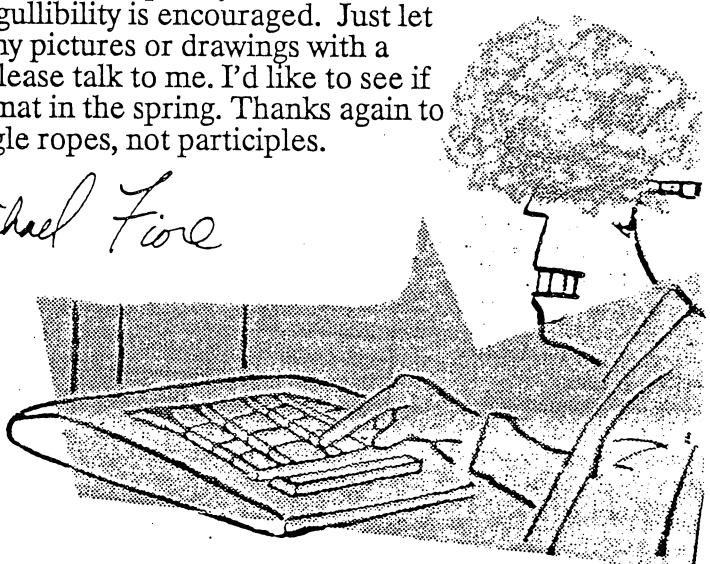
Ben.



Well, once again I am saddled with the dubious pleasure of editing a Trog during the last-week-of-the-semester crunch. Pardon me if I seem like Mr. Negative, I'm still worn out from cleaning up Cecile's place after the Halloween party. Actually, I feel fairly well about this issue, the fourth of my sentence, er, tenure as editor of this fine publication. I would like to thank everyone who contributed material (whether fluent or wretched), or helped out on the technical end (especially Jim W., Doug B., and Ko T.). In fact, the old fashioned stressful type-cut-Zip-A-Tone-bitch-n-paste method of editing has given way to the high tech type-save-lose data-retype-n-crash method of editing, equally stressful. If at all possible, please submit future material on Volkswriter-compatible disks. It will save us at least some of the typing hassle. Also, drinking while writing for the Trog is fine if it fuels your creative juices, but, please, please, please, proofread your copy before you submit it. "andd we rappellesd away from ont tor and next to the ///w33/casserole is friendship" will NOT DO...

I'm looking for an assistant editor for the spring Trog, since I may (gasp) actually graduate soon, and will have to pass on the Editorship. Anyone with a shred of verbal or graphic creativity, ambition, or gullibility is encouraged. Just let me know if you are interested. Also, if you have any pictures or drawings with a caving theme that you would like to see in print, please talk to me. I'd like to see if the Trog can take on more of a magazine-like format in the spring. Thanks again to all who submitted an article. And remember, dangle ropes, not particles.

Michael Fiore



GROTTO GRAPEVINE

(The article that's not afraid to name names,
except those of its writers!)

Yo, dudes. It is once again that time of the year in which we try to collect all the dirt on our various group members so that it will never be forgotten. As it has been 7-8 months since the last "grapevine", you can expect lots in the following paragraphs.

Proving that birds of a feather really do flock together, the households of Cecile James and Jim Washington are collecting more cavers as the non-caving residents move out. Cecile gained Jim Gamble downstairs, and Joe Uknalis upstairs making a residence of 5 cavers. We also wonder about this since she is now the only female to 5 males (although 2 are related so they don't really count.) If you remember from the last "grapevine", Cecile was recognized for achieving the highest male-female ratio on a cave trip. Is a pattern emerging? Cecile's house is also home to 2 dogs (hers) and 2 cats (Jim and Joe's). Jim Washington was joined in Newport by cavers Doug Dodd, Doug Bruce, and Mike Fiore. The Washington household is now 100% cavers, although everyone there is very proficient at playing "Leisure-suit Larry" and "Astro-tit"--we know that caving isn't their only activity.

Float trip was commanded by Admiral Craig Roberts, recently retired from office. Unfortunately for river traffic, the water was low, and launch was late, so the would-be Tom Sawyer's spent a long day in the water. The last raft came out of the water at 10:30 pm, which is nothing to be ashamed of, since the rafts of Jerry Redder and Craig Roberts disintegrated en route. The Jim Washington couch-raft ran aground at one point. There was the usual exchange of bottle-rocket fire, with everyone equally at risk from Beth Wichterman's unpredictable aim.

Float trip was not Jim Washington's only trouble with obstacles. A year ago, Jim got stuck in Devil's pinch. This year, besides float trip, he has run into trouble while surveying Stay High, and gotten stuck while taking trainees into Echoll's cave. Application of trainee-power to both ends of Mr. Washington got him out. Although not caving much this year, Ko Tak showed that his unique talent has not suffered from inactivity by losing his way in Bane's Spring. Did he ever find Whistling Wells? or the ball-crusher? Jim Gamble, Ben Keller, Cecile James, Paul Hess, and Sally Pearson took a crew from WSLS TV-10 caving in Tawney's cave for the viewing pleasure of arm-chair cavers (reportedly aired also in Richmond and Va. Beach.) Cecile's ass got some special attention from the camera man, and Paul and Ben were interviewed. Ben made an especially memorable speech that will have scholars debating for years to come over exactly what he meant. Earlier in the year, Tom Foster made a trainee trip especially miserable by bringing Cindy, "the fucking cave dog", along.

Generally, the club has been a bit slack in organizing caving trips, but that will hopefully change next semester as we get new blood in our membership. Our

trainees showed lots of promise on the recent Ed Fortney practice rescue in which the club retrieved a "pregnant" Kay Johnson from New River cave. Craig Roberts joined us that weekend wearing cave clothes that hadn't been washed since he last rolled in a cow pasture. Although tied in a position which prevented seeing anything but the ceiling, the victim was able to tell whenever Craig was near by the "significant odor". No, it wasn't English Leather.

Convention was in South Dakota this year, and a number of VPI cavers attended. Maureen Handler took part in the rodeo. Also at convention, the Jerry Redder/Joan Hederick relationship took an interesting turn with Joan promising to go caving if Jerry would ride a horse, and Jerry promising to ride a horse if Joan would go caving. Cecile claims that love was the motivation. Ain't it great? Craig Ferguson and Jeff Jablonski drove to convention on a shoe-string budget (rumor now has the budget as low as \$5). The cavers present consumed many bat-suckers and cakes which were donated by the local church ladies.

OTR this year was a small series of very memorable events. Our club celebrated two imminent weddings with showers for Jackie Redder and Linda Oxenreider. Entertainment was provided by Dougo, Paul Kirchman, and Richard "Dick" Cobb as they ventured into the amateur world of stripping. Richard Cobb came dressed as his wife, wearing nothing underneath. (Does this mean his wife doesn't wear underwear?) Richard Cobb's act included audience participation--provided by Pat Shorten as she tied a ribbon around his pecker. (You never know where those knots you learn as a trainee will come in useful!) Paul Kirchman gave a "professional performance and Dougo showed promise, although it was agreed that he won't reach full potential until after puberty. The ladies then enjoyed a game of "Pin the pecker on Peter" which Cecile won. (Deduct 5 points from Cecile's purity score!) Finally, what was Doug Perkins doing while the group waited for the full-volume blast of "Deutchland über alles" to wake them up? Was perhaps the distracting presence of Carolann Curry a factor?

Since the last printing of a "grapevine" our club has seen an unusual number of tragedies. During exam week of spring quarter last year, the club was called out for a rescue in Roanoke. During the rescue, Jerry Redder slipped and fell, toppling a rescue squad member who broke his arm when he fell. For this and other reasons, our relations with the Roanoke rescue squad are rather bad at the moment. Only recently, our area had the first death in almost 30 years. The club was called out to rescue a non-member who fell from the mud bridge in Pig Hole. Knox Worde and Ben Keller commented on the practices of reporters with letters to the Roanoke Times as a result of articles printed about the incident. A lesser tragedy occurred this fall when Cecile slipped and broke her leg. One operation and 8 weeks in a cast later, she is as good as new. One final sad note is the death of Jackie's dog Kaiser.

Being in a cast did not prevent Cecile from caving. With some clever jury-rigging, she designed some special boots to protect the cast and went into Links and Mammoth Cave. Some kind of die-hard caver award is in store for her at banquet time. Cecile is also starting a business in the fabrication of caving clothes (Cecile's Wunderwear.) Models are needed!

In the jobs/accomplishments department, lots of activity as always: Jo Zo got his MBA. Ko Tak also got his master's earlier this semester. Richard Cobb got a real job, since there is little demand for female impersonations around here. David Cinsavich quit "the O-team" at Olver, and Kay Johnson is now working full time at the library. If you happen to be in a state park near Petersburg, resist the temptation to molest any bunnies or squirrels unless you dare face the new Park naturalist, Hugh Beard. Ben Keller and Jackie Hoell have both been interviewed by Campus Voice and should appear in print sometime in March. Steve Lancaster is reportedly yachting in California, to the amazement of all who knew him. Dave Shantz will be promoting VPI with his outstanding performance as a lineman in a video that Tech is distributing world-wide. Tom Bank is co-oping in Pennsylvania with an architecture firm, and appearing at special yearly events. And where is Doug Abernathy these days? Garrie Rouse has disappeared since his marriage, to the relief of those who were usually corralled into his infamous Stomp Bottom survey trips.

Doug Bruce is now unemployed over 100% of his body, and is considering student life once again. Dougo is now tattooed over 5% of his body, which equates to \$80 of self-improvement. It is notable that Philip Balister has done nothing of note since the last "grapevine" publication. Perhaps he is wondering how to surpass the notoriety the one achieves from destroying a toilet with a single bottle-rocket. The word is that he has a new job of some sort, but we have no details. Jeff Jablonski now has a job doing work with/for the Marines. John Lohner is still looking for work in Colorado. We still hear from Wyoming occasionally via Jenny Ford who is in Laramie. Jean Hartman has moved to Bridgewater, Va. and now works for the college there. The college is run by the Church of the Brethren, and must be quite a culture-shock. Our resident child psychologist, Mike Fiore, will be in print in one of those fancy research magazines before too long. He recently had an article accepted. The Dawson's have moved to Wisconsin, leaving most of their pets behind. Jim G. now owns Spud, their somewhat rotund cat. Jim G. has also arranged his schedule so that he will won't graduate before December of next year. (This is in keeping with the Philip B. take-your-time philosophy.) One final dubious achievement belongs to Doug Perkins, for receiving a missive from the infamous Rev. Ewing.

The annual Halloween party was well attended by current and alumni cavers. Mike Fiore did a great job organizing and decorating, although he was conspicuously absent the following morning when it was time to clean-up. There was no excuse for this since he had only two dates this time. Those not involved in party preparations must have spent alot of time in costume preparation, as there were some really outstanding costumes there. Ed F. came as a slice of pizza and was recognized for the most edible costume. Jim W. as the wizard of GCCS won a prize for the best last-minute costume (amazing what you can do with curtains and canvas-grip.) Robbie French, a trainee, won the safest costume award, as a condomaximum. A guest of Joan Hederick came undressed as a Playboy "woman of the major leagues" and was very popular with the men. Gabi came as a nymph complemented by Kat as a satyr. The best impersonation award went to Jerry Redder for his "Dougo" costume. The most realistic costume prize went to Suki, for coming as a dog.

And what naughtiness occurred that Halloween? There was a massage-a-thon upstairs involving Berta Kirchman, Hugh Beard, Dave Cinsavich, and Loretta Bush. Barry Fizer entertained all night on the piano. Craig Ferguson, dressed as King Tut, recovered from a state of near catatonia in time to leave with two nubile maidens. Much interest was shown in Jim Gamble's purity. Proudly claimed as 99.75% pure by a tag on his chest, Jim found the many watchdogs of purity just waiting for a chance to cross out the existing score, and write a lower score in its place. Especially costly was coming too near the Playboy "woman of the major leagues". In the end, those arbitrary deductions, are probably inaccurate and his purity will require another measurement with the official Mike Fiore test.

In the romance department, we have quite a few observations. Too many of our members are got married this year. We lost Jackie Redder to Bob Hoell, in an October 22 ceremony which Dougo attended in drag. That same day, Linda Oxenreider was married to Randy Stoutenburg. Bob Alderson and Chris Amundson are now married. Ed Devine married Linda Baker on December 3, and the conspiring cavers arranged for seven of their wedding gifts to be toasters. Becky Himmelmann is finally getting married to Jeff Harding after being engaged for half her life.

Ed Fortney reportedly still has a girlfriend, although we never see her. Beth Wichterman and Craig Roberts are back together in a long-distance relationship (Georgia to Pennsylvania). Glen Davis has a main squeeze in Alice Lane, and we rarely see him at meetings anymore. Paul Hess is still the club gigolo but business appears to be slow--Paul had to scrimp to get his bike and car running again. Babe magnet Jim Gamble occasionally has visitors. It has been noted that he has broken his usual "babe" pattern and one (babe) has been spotted as many as three times. Doug Bruce spends lots of time commuting to the "far east" to visit Laine Buckwalter. At least he's not watching Donahue. Viola still spends her time wondering who Mike Fiore has seduced lately. Leslie Colby broke up with her yuppie boyfriend of 5 years, and immediately started seeing somebody named Kevin. This is a definite step up, since unlike K-K-Ken, Kevin will go caving. And Kay Johnson still won't admit that she's pregnant.

The club as a whole has changed little. Progress is underway to incorporate ourselves to avoid liability problems. We will soon have to decide on a new name for our club, since "VPI" is a Virginia Tech trade-mark. Jim Gamble has been trying to organize a "decorate a tree with underwear" event to complete the Animal House experience ("Every fall the trees are filled with underwear, every spring the toilets explode.") It seems, however, that no one is willing to donate underwear to the cause. Is this because cavers don't wear underwear (rather likely), or because cavers don't spend money on new underwear, and the old stuff is all stained or torn? (also rather likely). Nittany Grotto is trying to get a trainee program started and will apparently use our own program as a model. Beth Wichterman gets alot of credit for convincing these people of the need for such programs.

Our international cavers are still active. Bob and Jean Simonds, and Walt Pirie are going to Costa Rica over Christmas for a package caving trip. Jim Gamble returned from an extensive ridge-walking trip in Europe this summer and reported so many entrances in Belgium that the locals cover these annoyances with chicken wire and boards. As usual, there is a trip planned to Mexico this Christmas.

And what about the trainee scum? There is little mention of them because they have been keeping their private lives to themselves. This has to stop! Is life that dull? What we do know is that Wendy Wickham has become the little sister at a (yuck) frat. Brian Cruikshank shows promise of replacing Beth Wichterman as a quotable quotes source (although no one could ever do as well as Beth.) Trainees, remember: you aren't really a member of the club until you've been abused in the "grapevine"!

Tragedy in Pig Hole

Saturday, Sept. 24, 1988, two Va. Tech students decided to go caving. Both Jeff Snyder and Rex Linville had attended a few cave club meetings, but neither were club members. Each had been caving with friends numerous times.

Jeff and Rex signed in at the cave owner's register before entering. This was the first time either of them had been in Pig Hole. They went in the back entrance around 10:30 am. Each wore appropriate clothing, had MSA helmets with chin straps and carbide lamps, and carried fanny-packs with extra sources of light. Jeff wore tennis shoes, while Rex had on lug sole boots.

Jeff and Rex started at the back entrance of Pig Hole and began exploring. By noon, the two had made their way to the Mud Bridge. Since the two were unfamiliar with the cave, they were unaware of the drops around the Mud Bridge. Continuing to explore, Jeff wanted to see where a ledge below where he was standing went. Without a belay, Jeff slowly began climbing down to the ledge. At eye level to the floor, and without any indication, Jeff slipped.

As he fell to the bottom of Hess's Hollow, Jeff may have hit the ledge he was trying to climb to. (Best guess as to the distance fallen is 60'.) Rex yelled to Jeff several times, trying to get a response, but only heard moaning.

At this point, Rex decided to exit the cave by the back entrance to call for a rescue. At approximately 12:30pm, Rex made it out of the cave and to the landowners. The landowner called Giles County dispatch, which alerted Giles Co. Rescue Squad and their cave rescue team. The next phone call was placed to the Va Tech police by Rex, requesting help from the VPI Cave Club.

At 12:35pm, I received a call from the Va Tech police indicating a cave rescue was needed and was given a call back number. I talked with Rex to determine where they were and what had happened. Since Rex could not describe exactly where in the cave Jeff had fallen, I instructed Rex to reenter the cave and to stay at the location where Jeff had fallen.

I called Glen Davis, the club's cave rescue callout person. He was not home so I initiated the call out. I called Carol and Joe Zokaites, Ben Keller, Jim Gamble, Ed Fortney, Dave and Nancy Shantz, Muke Futrell, Mike Fiore, Bob Alderson, Suzanne Sutherland, Jim Littlefield, Knox Worde, Craig Ferguson, Doug Perkins, and Jean Hartman. A large majority of the other club members were out on cave trips. Kay Johnson agreed to take over telephone communications from my home.

When the first cavers arrived on the scene, Giles Co. Rescue Squad and Newport Fire Department were already at both entrances. The cavers were informed that the squads' rescue team (2 members without ropes) had entered the cave moments before. (We were led to believe there were more than 2 squad members in the cave.) Mike Fiore and Mike Futrell rappelled in the top entrance and proceeded to the Mud Bridge at approximately 1:45pm. Within 5 minutes Joe and Carol Zokaites followed by Dave Shantz went in the back entrance. Nancy Shantz stayed outside to maintain the rescue log.

Joe, Carol, Dave, Mike and Mike reached the Mud Bridge at approximately 2:00pm. Rex was there still trying to get a response from Jeff. (Note that Mike and Mike passed the 2 squad members heading toward the pit entrance.) A rope was

rigged into Hess's Hollow. Joe and Mike Futrell rappelled down to Jeff. Being a trained EMT, Joe took vital signs. There was no pulse and no respirations, and the pupils were fixed and dilated. Jeff's body was cool to the touch but warmer than the cave temperature. It was now a body retrieval instead of a cave rescue. Unaware of where the outside command post was going to be set up, Carol sent Mike Fiore out the pit entrance and Dave out the back entrance with the information about Jeff. Rex followed Dave out.

The question of moving the body, with the local medical examiner's permission, came up. While waiting for the medical examiner's response, two teams were sent inside the cave. One team went down the pit to start the stokes in and to rig the drop above the Mud Bridge. Another team went in the back entrance with a stethoscope and blanket. A third team stayed on the outside to rig the entrance with a high line.

Joe and Mike Futrell verified by stethoscope that Jeff had no heart beat. The information was relayed outside about the time the medical examiner made contact with the rescue (3:15pm). Permission to move the body was given.

At this point it became evident that the people of Giles Co. Rescue who were in charge were not sure of how to run things. Working with the squad, I set up a command post at the pit entrance. At approximately 4:00pm, I contacted Kay and asked her to send more people including those at the Cave Board meeting. (Sent were Phillip Ballister, Ko Takamizawa, Don Anderson, Jean Simonds, Sally Pearson, Ernst Kastning, Dave Cinsavitch, and Buddy Bundy.

By 5:00pm the high line had been rigged and tested. The underground coordinator (Carol) asked for the stretcher team, since Hess's Hollow and the climb above the Mud Bridge had been rigged. A team was assembled and sent in.

The weather had been miserable that day. Almost all of the cavers had gone in soaked from rain. Although it wasn't a long distance to the pit, there were only 14 people available to carry the stokes. Word was sent from the command post to Kay to call out Blue Ridge Grotto (at approximately 5:30pm).

Knox had rappelled down to Joe and Mike Futrell to help Joe load and package Jeff into the stokes. Mike Futrell climbed out of Hess's Hollow to help rig the drop to bring the stokes out.

Between 6:00 and 6:30pm the stokes was moved from the bottom of Hess's Hollow to the top of the climb above the Mud Bridge. The stretcher crew (which included the 2 rescue squad members who suddenly rematerialized) started the stokes's journey to the pit entrance. The initial response team and the rigging team exited the cave by the back entrance at this time. At 7:35pm the stokes was at the bottom of the pit entrance. There was a short delay while the cavers who rigged the high line and were on the stretcher crew climbed out.

With the help of Blue Ridge Grotto, the landowner, and the few cavers at the top, the stokes began to be hauled up the 130 foot drop at 8:15pm. The stokes was on the surface at 8:30pm. Jeff's body arrived at Giles Memorial Hospital about 9:15pm. Positive ID was made by a roommate around 10:00pm. His mother and girlfriend were notified around 10:45pm. Rescue operations at the cave were cleaned up by 10:30pm.

OBSERVED INJURIES: Jeff was found on his back. His left leg was folded up behind him. Jeff was facing left; his head appeared to be resting on a rock (his helmet was 8-10 feet away). Cause of death was listed as a major depressed skull fracture in the left posterior area (approximately 2 fingers wide, 4-6 inches long). His left pupil was blown. Jeff's left femur was partially torn away from his hip. His left lower leg had a major open fracture. His left ear was severely torn.

POSSIBLE CAUSES OF THE ACCIDENT: Jeff wore tennis shoes which may have made it difficult to keep 3 points of contact as he began to climb down to the ledge. Jeff was doing a climb without a belay in a cave he had never been in before. Apparently Jeff's helmet came off before he hit the bottom as it and the lamp were found several feet away from Jeff. The chin strap on the MSA helmet had come "unhooked" on the right side. The lamp bracket was also found to be broken.

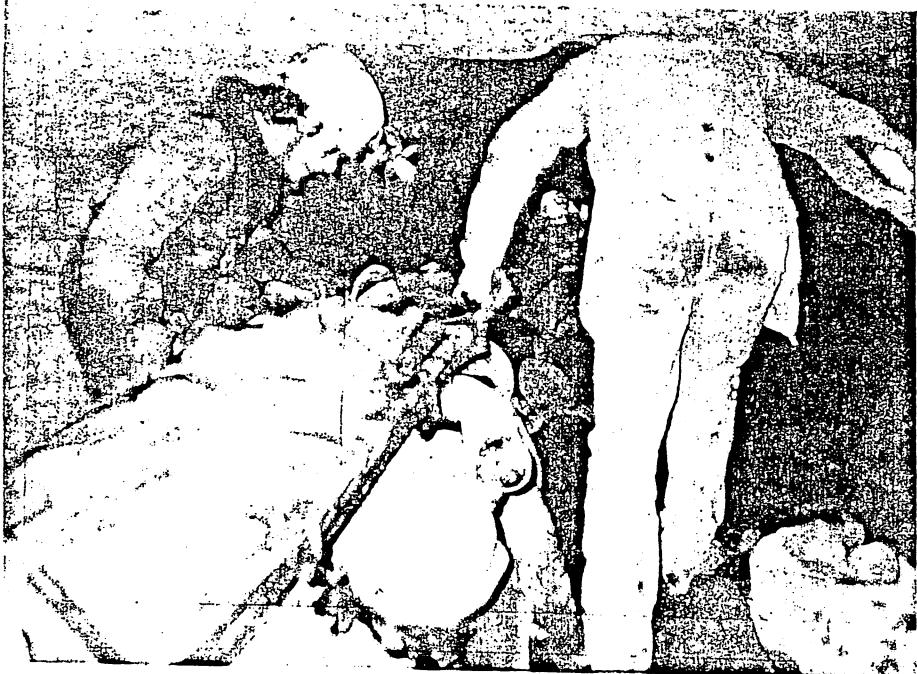
FINAL COMMENTS: The club did critique the rescue and noted several things that could have been done better. It was the club's first body recovery in their immediate caving area in over 20 years. I think we all learned a lot. There are also some things that were noted that need to be worked out with the Giles Co. Rescue Squad and their caving team. (A special thanks to Bundy for the numerous pitchers of liquid refreshments provided after the rescue.)

THE VPI CAVE CLUB WISHES TO EXTEND OUR DEEPEST SYMPATHY TO JEFF SNYDER'S FAMILY AND FRIENDS.

Doug Perkins examines the stop-cam set up. Two lengths of sling held the cam aloft, while a firmly anchored length of PMI provided the main back-up strength. The haul-line went over two changes of direction over the pit (behind Doug) before going down to the Stokes.

Article: Jackie Redder
Photos: Mike Futrell
Captions: Mike Fiore





The stretcher crew had an exhausting task getting the body up a long, slippery incline between Hess's Hollow and the 130' pit.

Caver's fatal slip called tragic accident

By KEN GELLMAN
NEW RIVER VALLEY BUREAU

NEWPORT — Bad luck more than inexperience caused a Virginia Tech student to fall to his death Saturday in a Giles County cave, according to an official of Tech's cave exploration club.

Tech junior Jeff Snyder, 20, of St. Johnsville, N.Y., lost his balance while climbing down a boulder and plunged more than 60 feet into a pit, said Jackie Redder, a professor of management science and faculty adviser to Tech's cave club.

The accident happened at Pig's Hole, a vertical cave off Virginia 607, a dead-end road about two miles west of Newport.

Snyder, a mechanical engineering major, and his companion, Rex Linville, a Tech junior from Virginia Beach, were not first-time cavers, said Redder, who directed the effort to recover Snyder's body. The two never had been in Pig's Hole, but had explored other caves, she said.

"They weren't what we call 'nerd cavers,'" she said. "They were people who knew what they were doing . . ."

Redder said Linville told her the two had been walking side-by-side through the cave, descending boulder-by-boulder, when they came to a place where only one could pass at a time, so Snyder went ahead.

"He was there and all of a sudden, he lost his grip and fell," Redder said.

The Roanoke Times and World News Article that generated the controversy. A map giving nearly exact directions to the cave has been omitted.

Linville was unavailable for comment Monday. Redder said Linville left early Monday for Snyder's hometown, to take Snyder's belongings to his parents' home and to attend the funeral.

Redder said Pig's Hole is not a particularly treacherous cave, but any unfamiliar cave can be dangerous.

"Because they didn't know the cave, they didn't know there was a pit [where Snyder fell]," she said. "I would call this a pure and simple accident. They did everything by the book, everything they were supposed to do. It was just one of those tragic things."

A memorial service for Snyder will be held at 6 p.m. Thursday at the Tech chapel.

VIRGINIA TECH CAVE CLUB

P.O. BOX 558, BLACKSBURG, VIRGINIA 24060

Walter Rugaber
Publisher
Roanoke Times & World News
P.O. Box 2491
Roanoke, Va. 24010

September 29, 1988

Mr. Rugaber:

I would like to bring to your attention what we consider to be a very serious breach of responsible journalism. On Tuesday, September 27, 1988, your paper published an article about the death of a Virginia Tech student in a Giles County cave.

The reporter interviewed our Faculty Advisor, Jackie Redder, who requested that an exact location of the cave not be printed. When the story was printed not only did it contain nearly explicit directions to the locality of the cave, but had a map showing the area.

It is our policy to not give out the locations of caves, regardless of their popularity, for two reasons. First, inexperienced, ill-prepared people will attempt to explore them, and hauling the injured or dead bodies of these people out of a cave can be traumatic to all involved. Second, a cave is a fragile environment which needs to be conserved (the reason that there is a state law protecting caves). Had we been the original source of your information you would not have had the location information at all.

The blatant refusal of the reporter and his editor to follow our request has angered us a great deal. We feel that your paper could become indirectly responsible for further deaths or violations of the cave law because of the publication of the cave location. We would like to be able to continue our cooperation with your newspaper; however, the apparent irresponsibility of the representatives of the Roanoke Times & World News makes this difficult.

Signed,

Ben Keller,
President
VPI Student Grotto of the N.S.S.

cc: Editor, Roanoke Times & World News
Editor, New River Valley Bureau

Roanoke Times & World-News

201 West Campbell Avenue, P.O. Box 2491, Roanoke, Virginia 24010-2491

October 17, 1988

Forrest M. Landon
Vice President and Executive Editor
(703) 981-3227

Mr. Ben Keller
President
VPI Student Grotto of the N.S.S.
P.O. Box 558
Blacksburg, Va. 24060

Dear Mr. Keller:

Walter Rugaber has asked me to respond to your letter of Sept. 30, 1988 in which you criticize the newspaper for stories written after the death of a Virginia Tech student in a Giles County cave.

We appreciate your policy of not giving out the locations of caves in an effort to keep ill-prepared people from exploring them. In printing a map of the approximate location of the cave and giving a general location of the cave in our story, we did not intend to give directions to ill-prepared explorers. We intended to inform our readers about the location of a news event.

You have a duty to promote the safe exploration of caves while we have a duty to inform the public about newsworthy events in Southwest Virginia. Our general description of the location of the cave was an effort to do that, nothing more.

The "where" of a story is an important element, and could even serve to show the danger of this particular cave to ill-equipped people who might decide to go exploring.

Nonetheless, we understand your position and are sensitive to your concerns. I think our decision to use a general location is an example of that.

Thank you for writing to express your concern.

Sincerely,



The Discovery, Naming, and Exploration of Stay High Cave: The First Three Trips

Jim Washington: It all started out on March of this year. Dave Colatosti and I were working on GCCS, hoping to finish up the Newport Quad as far as cave locations were concerned. We had recently done the survey of Sibolds (Sipolls) Cave. The remaining caves on the quad, Clover Hollow Cave, Collins Cave, Jim Millers Cave, Farriers Cave, Hutch's Horror, Huffman Cave, Newport Cave and Canoe Cave were all either previously surveyed, closed, or too horrible to survey. All except Lucas Cave, which we hoped to find and survey on that day. Nobody was home there, so we continued down the Clover Hollow road to do, well, we didn't know what.

Now, there was one road I hadn't been on in the Hollow, and since we had nothing better to do, we drove up it. Maybe some ridge-driving would lift our spirits. I began relating the story about how this area had been tromped on for years by VPI Cave Club, notably by Thierry, Saunders, Ortiz, Douty, and Koerschner. I was just getting to the part about computer punches and green wells when Dave asked me about the little hole in the small bluff across the tiny creek from the road. I said that it probably had already been checked and continued rambling about Janet Queisser's shit list. The road ended, so we turned around. On the way back, Dave insisted that we check out that obvious little cave entrance. So, we stopped.

A few minutes later, we were talking to Mrs. Sibold, asking if we could dig that hole open. She said no, but that she would ask her son and "the man on the farm" if we could sometime in the future.

Two months later, Mike Fiore, Joe Uknalis, and I arrived at the cave, having finally obtained permission to dig. Carrying the requisite fireplace implements, shovel, Art-Deco boom box, and crow-bar to the entrance, Mike and I began to dig to the lilting melody of "This Corrosion" by the Sisters of Mercy. Mike took a break, examined the upper part of the rock crevice, turned visibly pale, and returned to digging the lower part of the entrance. Joe then investigated the upper part of the rock crevice, moved a rock, and slid into the cave. Five minutes later, he came back with reports of formations, a stream, and walking passage. Mike and I looked at the upper crevice again and continued to dig at the lower and wider dirt-filled part of the entrance, this time with a sense of urgency. At one point, Mike got tired, checked out the upper crevice yet again, and slid into the cave, all the while cursing the "New-York crevice-crawling weenie" who had preceded him. I attempted the crevice, backed out, and continued to dig while Mike and Joe dug from the inside and incessantly gave reports of nice cave passage beyond. Finally, I could take no more. I requested that Joe come back out while I tried the upper crevice again. This time, I succeeded. The crevice is a tight, horizontal, hour-glass shaped slot with ledges protruding from the sides, and extends about eight feet to where another passage comes in and it gets wider. You have to stay high to keep from wedging down and dying. Joe set the zero datum on the rock at the entrance. Mike read Brunton. I started to sketch. "Stay High" was the first comment on the sketch.

Mike Fiore: Jim neglects to mention the half-dozen or so poison-ivy vines we cleared away from the crevice prior to digging, and the fact that, although Joe and Jim are immune to the effects of poison-ivy, most of my right arm looked

gangrenous for a week afterwards.

Once in the cave, we immediately noticed two small passages going off to the left, with a trickle stream coming out of the lower one. Sure enough, the passages looped together for a total length of about 60'. We surveyed as quickly as accuracy allowed, following the stream for a snug but comfortable 160' or so. We came out above a 10' waterfall, looking out over a very impressive room that boomed steeply downward, out of the range of our lamps. From our vantage point, two waterfalls and what seemed to be a pit could be seen down through the mist. I fought an urge to dash right off into the void long enough to rig the survey party's only piece of sling to a large chunk of breakdown, and "batman" down the first waterfall while Jim finished sketching. After a few weird moves of questionable safety in order to keep dry, I got to the bottom, only to see another waterfall 12' further on. It became obvious we were going to need real vertical gear when I saw the end of the sling dangling about 1' over the edge of the second waterfall. The room still stretched out as far as I could see. I "batmanned" back up to Jim and Joe, and got refreshingly soaked on the way up. We were all pretty ragged out from the entrance ordeal, and with tears in our eyes, left for the entrance without ever seeing the far end of the room. Solemn indeed were our oaths to return, soon, and with proper equipment.

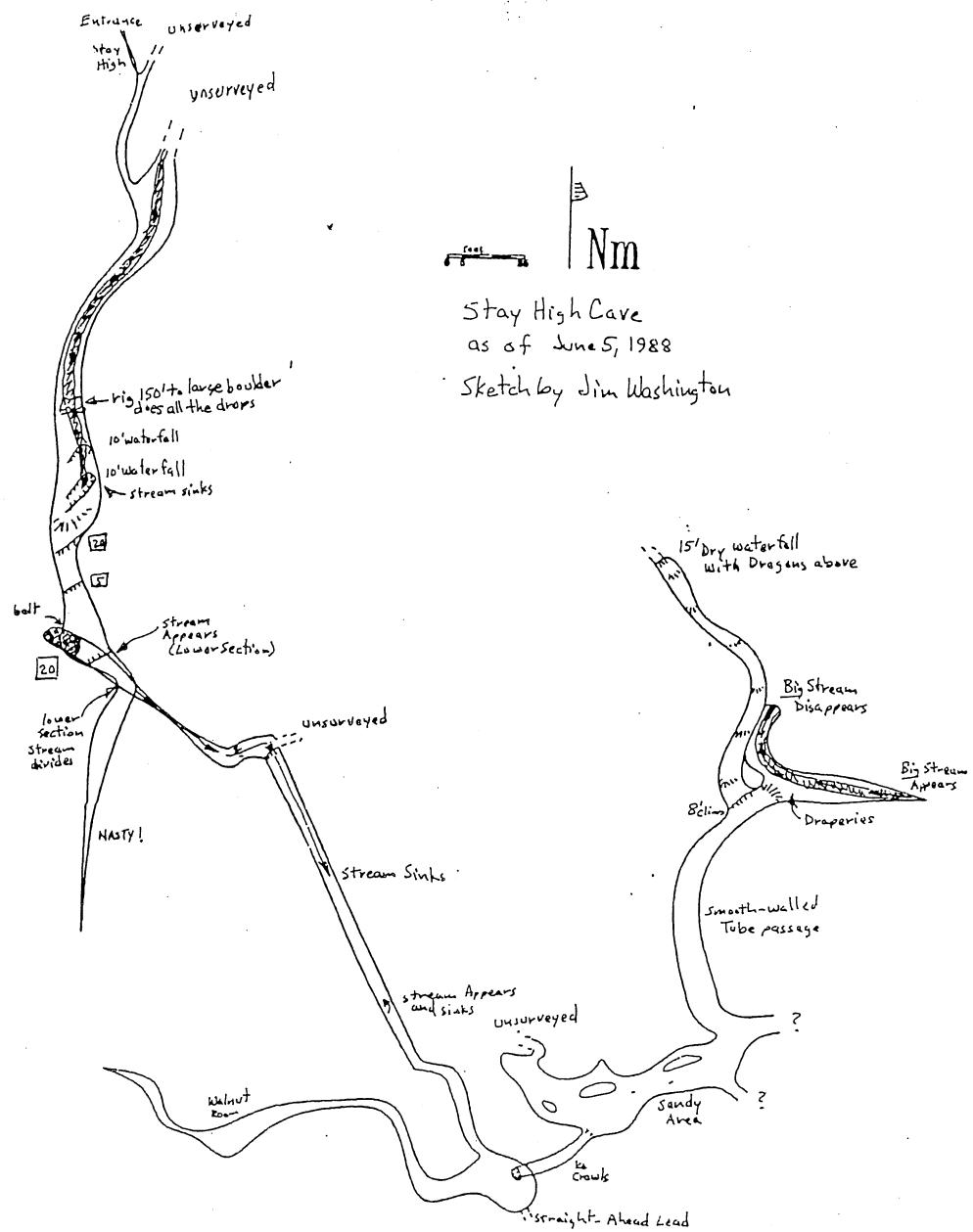
The very next week, the three of us were again staring at that miserable slot that passed for an entrance. We had brought enough gear to tackle Lechuguilla, and had left the boom-box at home. Starting from the top of the first waterfall at the north end, we rigged a 150', and rappelled/staggered/surveyed our way down through the room. From north to south, the room had a 10' waterfall, 12' of stream, a 15' waterfall, a small, really abrasive crevice with loads of loose rock going down low and taking the stream, a 10' shelf, and an 18' rappel. The dip of the room was about 30 degrees. By the time we reached the south end of the room, we had each been on and off rope at least three times, and decided to ignore the alcove and 20' pit at the southwest corner of the room in favor of horizontal passage going south. In a few shots it turned into a disgusting crawlway decorated with piles of "extruded organic matter" and some of the most lethal-looking fungus I have ever seen. Going back into the main room, we set a much-needed change of direction bolt above the last 20' pit and rappelled down on the tail-end of the 150' that had taken us this far.

Jim Washington: Needless to say, the cave opened up from there, and we found ourselves with an eight-hundred-foot virgin cave that had several going leads after that second trip on May 15. Virginia Tech's exam schedule prevented surveying trips for another two weeks, then summer break sorely reduced the size of the Club. Cecile James, Ko Takamizawa, and I were the next crew in, on June 5.

From the bottom of the last pit, the cave descends steeply southward in a high, narrow canyon stream passage. It turns left, then right down a slimy eight-foot waterfall, then south again in a high, wide canyon. The stream that had reappeared at the bottom of the last pit sinks here. A hundred feet further, a second stream appears from the south and sinks in ten feet. After another jog, the passage terminates in a low, wide room with several leads. Joe, Mike, and I had surveyed the right-hand lead in Links Cave-like mazy canyons through the Walnut Room (named for the walnut hulls strewn about the floor) to a crevice that screams, "Don't dig here. I will drop tons of boulders on you and you will not like it!" Cecile, Ko, and I were going to look at the straight-ahead lead and the

left-hand lead.

Ko squirmed through the straight-ahead lead and was not impressed. I did not fit at all, so we began to examine the left-hand lead. At floor level was a crawlway that looked too small for Ko to fit through. But nearby was a hole in the floor, and down through that small hole in the floor was a larger crawlway. A few minutes of hammering turned the small hole into a hole big enough for Ko. Ko went through, and for the second time in a month, I was left on the wrong side of a small hole with reports of big passage on the other side. (Hint: If you want to taunt Jim from virgin passage, both you and the way to the passage must be smaller than Jim.) Meanwhile, Ko had left his pack with Cecile and me, and, as usually happens in such inopportune circumstances, his lamp got dim and nearly went out. Not being able to see the direction he came from, Ko returned to us through the floor-level crawl that we had dismissed earlier as too small. Hence the name "Ko Crawls" for the passage, even though only one of the crawls is ordinarily used. With Ko back with us, Cecile and I handily hammered the rock until even I would fit. On the other side, we saw wonderful things: Wide, sandy-floored passages, a really big stream, a few formations, a fifteen-foot dry waterfall with dragons roaring above the top. Cecile, Ko, and I surveyed what we could and found more wonders: more leads!



The Hell Of Echols Cave

Several reasons why not to go into Echol's Cave:

1. Your name happens to be Jim Washington.
2. You plan on going out after coming in.
3. You are Andy Randall and have an electric light.
4. You are Scott Rapier and carry Durabeam flashlights.

To explain further...

Here begins the saga of the October 8 survey trip into Echol's Cave. It began innocuously with a trio of happy-go-lucky cavers, and quickly became so much else. Echol's Cave had just been rediscovered, and we had been sent out to check the real cave against what had been reported in the past. Seeing the entrance to this cave was slightly less exciting than seeing the entrance to a groundhog lair. In fact, I believe the entrance is somewhat smaller than that. Andy quickly showed us that he could get in and out. This left me, the lead tape, looking at the little hole in despair. My computer monitor was bigger than that entrance. Yet, gamely we ventured forth; I went ahead and skewed my torso down. If you ever look at Andy, you will notice that he is a thin person. Jim and I, well, aren't quite so thin, but believe it or not, managed to negotiate the entrance. Onward to survey land! The first side passage I went into yielded a pleasant surprise -- remains from some unlucky creature. I ended finding bones littered throughout, which is not the most comforting thing to find. A popular joke to the two behind me was, "If it's a bear, at least we can get out while it devours you!" Needless to say, it wasn't a popular joke with me.

About five or six stations into the cave, we came across another area that was to prove bothersome. An immobile rock was stationed in the center of the passage. Andy (yeah, the thin one) quickly demonstrated to me how to negotiate this space. I didn't enjoy it, but with some effort I managed to squeeze through, too. I moved up the passage and kept marking stations while Andy read compass. It got to a point where I was scrunched up with my feet in the air while Andy read the shot under my legs to a point behind me, as Jim tried to get through the tight spot. Due to my position and the fact that I couldn't move, all I could hear was a muffled "whumph". It soon became clear to me that Jim had gotten stuck. Andy did the best he could to help, and after a long period, Jim managed to make it through. Getting back out --we didn't even want to think about that.

Immediately thereafter, my light died. Even though the passage was only 18 inches high, I managed to change batteries and go on. We entered a large room and went on surveying, then... Andy's light died. He ignored this and used a small flashlight to read the Brunton. Later, while surveying the main room, my flashlight died again and refused to work anymore. Andy eventually hauled out a carbide lamp and replaced his electric lamp. We discovered a NSS number (37), then found several 1955 dates, other names, and a pretty little red salamander. Overall, the cave was extremely pretty and, much to our surprise, had a large amount of formations.

Anyway, we completed surveying the entire cave and got ready to move on out. The tight spot was the only real worry we had, after all, what else could go wrong? I went first, and Jim got himself as far as he could. Between my pulling and Andy's pushing, we had Jim safely extricated and through in a remarkably short time, and we all went right on out. On the way back to the car, thoughts of whether the car would still be there, or if we would meet some "Deliverance"-styled rednecks ran through our heads. Well, the car was there, and nothing else befell us. All in all, Jim summed it up with, "That's the last time I go into that cave!"

GCCS Update: All the GCCS That's Fit to Print [The Wizard's Column]

Since the last Trog, GCCS has continued progress toward its ultimate goal of re-cataloging the caves of Giles County.

Just say yes:

The summer began with the opening of Stay High Cave (see article elsewhere in this issue), which kept the local folks busy all summer while the students were away. So far, the survey has over 5000 ft. of length and 240 ft. of depth.

Wilburrrn valley:

Surveys also continued in Mike Futrell's [grim] Wilburn Valley Project--Yer Cave now has about 9000 ft. of [grim] passage, and Price's Strike Cave (1800 ft.) is said to be done (OK, maybe one more [grim] trip).

Good news about New River Cave:

The New River Cave map reportedly is back in production. Jean Simonds showed Dale Parrot the Virginia Cellars article that hinted that the map would be of poor quality should it ever be drawn. That and the "verbizing" of his name (if someone surveys a cave and absconds with the notes without drawing the map, local usage has it that he has "parrotted" the map) may have shamed Dale into reviving the project.

GCCS wishes Dale the best of luck--we will probably owe him a party or two. Should all of this not work, however, Lawrence Britt has volunteered to head-up a new survey.

More news on New River Cave:

For Sale. With about 40 acres and some river-front property. Will not be listed in Better Caves and Sinkholes. See local realtors in Blacksburg and Radford for a tour.

Holes, more or less:

Now and again we are reminded that karst changes. Andrews Cave is no longer with us--a victim of being filled in, either by storms or the Highway Department. Ridgewalking has turned up another eight or so to replace it--six on "Walkers Creek" and two near Pig Hole. We're not sure whether any of the Walker Creek six were previously recorded--the Thierry data on this area is pretty nebulous. (I almost said "sketchy", but that much better describes the notes we took.) That afternoon, Mike Fiore and Frank Kadel surveyed two recorded caves: Meadie Tabor's Water Cave and Dewey Reynolds Cave, while Brian, John, Wendy, Scott, someone else (sorry), and Jim found six and sketched two on a Fortney-style Death March.

The two caves near Pig Hole were found by Brian, Scott, and Jim before mapping Echols Cave (see Scott's article elsewhere in this issue.) One of them is a promising dig. The other one isn't. Special safety tip for larger cavers: make sure someone smaller than you is both ahead of you and behind you when negotiating squeezes. The long wait for a rescue you save may be your own.

Third party contracts:

Straley's Cave #2 has reportedly been surveyed as part of Dave Hubbard's Saltpeter Cave Project. I have suggested that the same people re-survey #1 and put them both on the same map for an aesthetically pleasing Salon entry.

Keith Goggin continues to produce beautiful maps of caves in the area code-named "Gogginland." If he finds more, we may have to rename it "Space Mountain."

Equipment:

The new version of SMAPS has finally arrived to Giles County and has been installed on Jim's 386 computer. Special sanity tip for cave mappers: don't hand-crunch that survey data. 4.5 miles of Newberry-Banes Cave took only 10 minutes to calculate coordinates and adjust loops. Isn't technology wonderful?

Old news and statistics:

Chuck Shorten's survey of Pig Hole put that cave over the 6000 ft. mark, though we don't have the map or the official numbers.

Since the last Trog, GCCS has added (we'll call it) another mile and a fraction to the Survey. My crystal ball sees much more in the near future.



*CAYER SHOWER: the quick swish in the underarm made by a cheap deoderant.

ENTRANCE

PLEASURE GREED
PITS

0-

50-

100-

150-

200-

250-

CESSPOOL GROTTO

YER
CAVE

NYMPHLESS LAKE

M. FUTRELL 1988

The Discovery of Yer Cave

On June 20, 1987, Doug Bruce and I were continuing my systematic ridgewalk of Giles Co. limestone. We spent the better part of the day running up and down hollows, over hills, through woods and pasture, talking to various landowners, and sweating. By late afternoon we were burning out from miles of caveless terrain. I knew of a few more unchecked sinkholes, so we decided to search just a little longer.

I stopped the truck and we walked into one of these sinks and noticed a very dramatic temperature drop. With a sudden burst of energy, we frantically started looking under rocks and into little fissures for the source of the cave air. On the north end of the sink Doug pushed a small fissure for about 30' before it became too tight. Momentarily thwarted, we looked nearby and found a large boulder, under which was a small crevice issuing blasts of cold air. We enlarged it by pushing rocks and dirt into a small nearby pit. When the hole reached its maximum of 1' X 2', we realized the need for a rope -- back to the truck for gear.

The entrance belled into a 14' pit with a 10' X 15' passage trending downward. We were off and running with more enthusiasm than we had ever allotted to the chase of a woman. The passage tended to go steadily down in a northwest direction until it ended in a tight gravel choked crawl with no air flow. We had reached a depth of -139' in 450'. We had seen no side passages, but had completely lost the air flow. The cave wanted to play games.

Back at the bottom of the entrance pit we wondered where the air could be coming from; the only possibility was the breakdown on the right wall. A moment's poking around revealed air flow at floor level coming from under the rock. As we removed rocks, we were able to follow a contorting crawl into breakdown and pseudo-passage. Air was coming from everywhere, so we decided to split up to force the way on.

I dropped over a ledge into a small room which had a hole in the corner blowing a strong breeze. I enlarged a small hole, and was able to climb down into a tight fissure, then a vertical slot, then through a barely-larger-than-body size S-bend crawl into a downward-sloping passage, belly-crawl style. I hit an intersection which had a canyon going up left and down right. Following the air in a downstream direction, I fissured and canyoned into ever increasing passage dimensions -- to another intersection. Folks, it was Booty Time! Vrooomm!

But what about Doug? I retraced my steps and found him by shout location. All the while he had been creating cave by the rock removal method and was now throwing these rocks down a pit well in excess of 100' which emitted a mind-blowing echo!!

There was one more rope in the truck, a 150'. Exiting, we excitedly discussed what we had found and said all those false statements like, "This is better than sex." It wasn't long before we were back at the pit with rope. We spent some time stabilizing the area around the top of the pit, since there are no real walls, ceiling, or floor, just breakdown. We rigged the rope and descended a beautiful pit that went free for 101' to a set of ledges that could be rappelled or climbed for another 27'

The end of our rope was lying in a pool of water on a balcony overlooking an enormous trunk disappearing into blackness left and right! The barely visible floor looked to be about 50' down -- and we were out of rope. This was the first of many times in which cavers would run out of rope in this cave. We whooped and hollered, threw rocks, and jumped up and down. We had found a big cave. The

sustained orgasm of discovery was upon us, and I experienced the answer to the question, "Why do I cave?"

Bright and early the following morning, we returned to the cave with more rope and booty scoop lust. The drop from the balcony was 52' free. On the opposite side of this lower trunk, we rappelled a very steep slope of 40' into a tall canyon 8 to 12' wide where we were soon met by a deep pool of water. Doug stripped and swam across to confirm that the passage indeed continued. We spent the rest of the day doing a quantitative evaluation of the significance of our find.

On that weekend, Doug and I had reached a point 266' below the entrance and had seen nearly a mile of virgin cave with many leads. Three weeks later, VPI Grotto and associates had the first mile of cave on paper. I led survey trips into the cave for 9 of 11 weekends since discovery, and have led others on a more sporadic basis since. The cave is currently 1.7 miles long 300 feet deep. The extremely vertical nature of the cave has led to 775' of roped drops, but alas, it is slowing down as I only have 48 little question marks left on the map.

-- Mike Futrell --



From the Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy

The Encyclopedia Galactica says that caves are large orifices in the sides of geographic features on a planet's surface, and also notes that some life forms have a tendency to spend large amounts of time mucking about in them. The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy also mentions caves, saying that caves are fun to muck about in and that the activity is a great excuse to get drunk.

The Guide also says that there are only three planets in the entire galaxy that recognize caving as an activity.

On Aranies IV, the inhabitants spend most of their adult life throwing parties and getting extremely drunk. Caving is the chosen form of execution for those who refuse to participate. The condemned individual is sent down into a cave that has two entrances and is told to find the other way out. As soon as the person enters the cave, the entrance is sealed off. Usually, the person dies a horrible death by falling, being crushed, freezing to death, or a combination of the above. Occasionally however, one of them manages to find their way out to the other side. Most, after their wizening experience, decide that they really need a drink after all and are successfully reintegrated back into society.

On Blarnox IX and Earth, two wholly unremarkable planets on opposite sides of the galaxy, caving is recognized as a wholly remarkable sport. Caving is one of two sports in the whole galaxy where the sport itself is not the reason for participating. In actuality, a person participates for the excuse to consume large amounts of alcohol afterwards -- a truly wondrous concept.

The other sport in which this concept is applied is native to the planet Traal, and involves the wrestling down and capturing of the Ravenous Bugblatter Beast of Traal. However, since the Beast is never very cooperative and since the alcohol is consumed prior to competing, no one ever really completes the event and it has not become a very popular alternative to caving.

-- Mark Eisenbies --

Hot Lead in Hick's Cave

Hicks Cave is a flood overflow route for the Hidden River Complex in Hart County, Kentucky. Hidden River itself is a large underground river which was once a well-known tourist attraction but is now too polluted to enter. It is only a few miles from Horse Cave, and runs from Rowlette and I-65 to four spring entrances on the Green River. It is a sinkhole-plain cave, framed on two sides by Fischer Ridge and Roppel. The Bluegrass Grotto's Sept. 10 survey trip added more than a thousand feet, nudging the cave's surveyed length over 20 miles. (Joan Johnson was along on that 12 hour trip.)

The natural spring entrances to Hicks are all at the river's edge, and too near the water level for comfort. After several near flood-ins since exploration began in 1975, Bluegrass Grotto and friends began a final push to find a high, dry natural entrance, and failed. With the help of Frank Reid (Bloomington, IN) and his radio, they located a suitable dome-pit into which they could blast an all-weather entrance. The hole was completed in 1978-79 and a luxuriously equipped 40-foot piece of culvert was installed in 1985. (see The Kentucky Caver, Feb. 1988)

So on Oct. 8, 1988, our party could simply rappel 80 feet into dome J-336 rather than donning wetsuits and spending six or seven hours getting to our survey-of-the-day. There were four people in our crew: Tom Ahlers (from Lafayette, IN), Duke Hopper, Larry Peterson, and myself (all Bluegrass). We were all psyched for a long trip, and planned on getting some mud, slime and water samples in the ongoing battle to trace the myriad sources of pollution in the area. If that wasn't enough, there was plenty of unsurveyed upper level passage in Hicks!

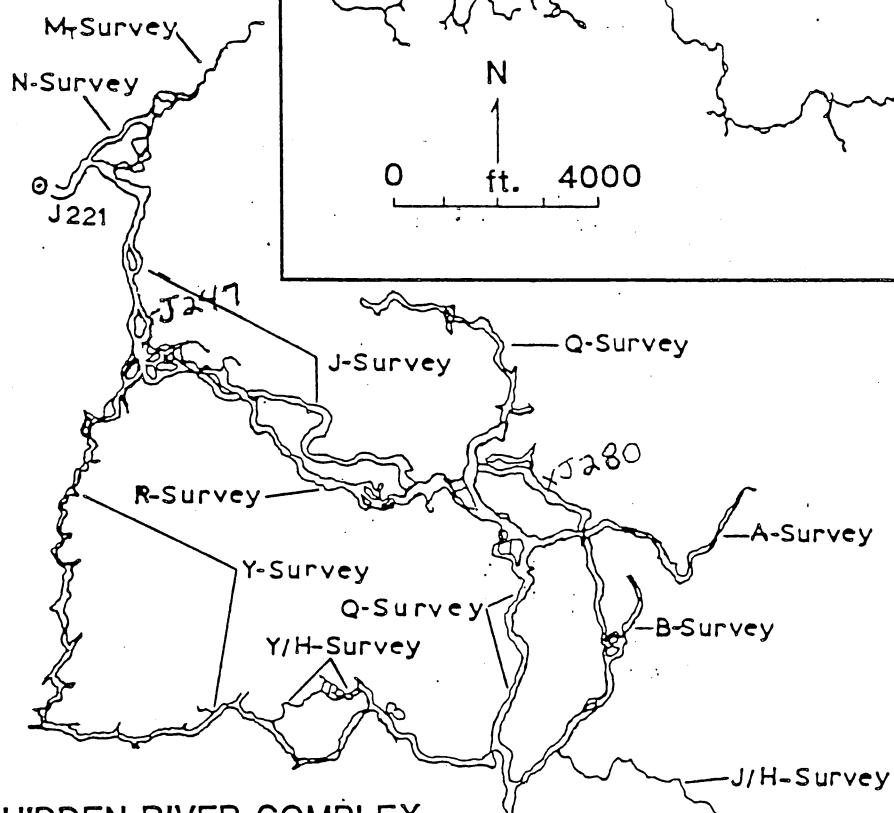
Our first mission of science was up in the Q-Survey. About halfway between its junctions with the J- and R-Surveys, there is a small (20 foot tops) vertical shaft which has black slime oozing in from above. What is truly disgusting is that only ten feet from the slime pit are some very pretty translucent orange soda straws. The formations and the whole ceiling are covered with a fine, hairy layer of clear crystals. Another 100 feet from the slime are dozens of cave pearls. I took my time sampling the red background mud, and muttered a suitable number of ooohs and aaahs.

We took the R-Survey shortcut, a 500 foot crawlway/stoopway, and popped out near the bottom of J-280, a 40-foot dome. We changed carbide and filled our water tanks from the flowing drips. The next mission was to collect water from the bottom of a slump pit in the J-Survey near J-247. This particular lead was noticed this past Memorial Day, having been filled with water until this summer's drought. It is one of the few unchecked low leads in the cave and is one of the last hopes for a connection with Hidden River. It certainly smells like the malodorous Horse Cave end of the river. The pit is basically a 4- to 5-foot drain hole punched through the mud floor of the J-Survey. A narrow hands-and-knees crawlway branches off from the bottom of the hole. Two or three times this summer, people had hopped into the hole and started into the crawlway, only to find breathing difficult and to see their lamps flaring and dying. We weren't planning on testing our ability to breathe CO₂--we just wanted to grab a little water from the bottom of the pit itself.

Our group arrived in the slump pit room (about 3'H by 10'W) and settled down to eat while Duke took samples. Tom handed him the jars and went to sit down. Duke made a few wisecracks and turned toward the edge of the hole. A dancing blue genie of flame the size of a beach ball appeared in front of his head, and I yelled, "Shit, let's get out!" as I started running. Larry saw me take off and followed. I had a moment of doubt, embarrassed that I might be running only because Duke's lamp base had cracked, when I heard a rumble like a train going by on the surface. Oh God, there's someone burning back there!

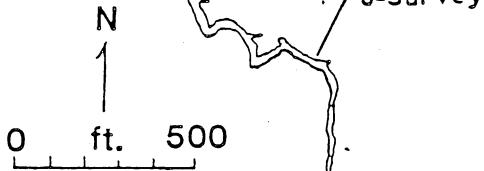
HIDDEN RIVER COMPLEX
Hart Co. Kentucky
(August 1986)

Fig. 1



HIDDEN RIVER COMPLEX
J221-J379 (November 1987)

W. A. R. ENT.



Drafted By Wm. Duke Hopper (12/9/87)
From Base Maps Prepared By Tom Ahlers

© J 379

Figure 1. Map showing surveyed passage located between J-221 and J-379

Larry got me to hold up in time for him to catch up. He had left his pack, helmet and all of his lights in the fire. Duke and Tom came running, and we put my Autolite on Duke's helmet, while I turned on my Durabeam. We asked Duke if he was burned, and he said, "I don't know, my face burns, but let's get outta here." We took off together, trying to suppress the pace for fear of oxygen depletion from the flames.

Only Tom had his pack. Though his Premier went out initially, he still had it and a reflectorless spare in his pack. Duke's lamp was blown off the bracket, and he had been blown back ten feet from the hole before he "stopped, dropped and rolled." Landing near Tom, he asked if he was on fire, to which Tom replied, "No, but keep your head down and let's get out of here." They crawled the first 40 feet with their noses to the floor, under a ceiling of fire and heat. While running after me, Larry looked back and saw two silhouettes crawling in a wall of flame! (We later joked, "Where are the Australian video cavers when you need them?") He felt a blast of heat. Tom and Duke looked back and saw a room full of blue flame, 10 feet wide and 3 feet high.

We made the trip back to the W.A.R. entrance (Dave Weller, ANFO, & Frank Reid) in about 45 minutes. (It usually takes an hour and a half at a steady pace.) Duke seemed OK, but we sent him up rope first. As Tom said, Duke wanted out the most. Nobody said much as we fiddled with our vertical gear. (Thank God there's just an entrance drop.) I had visions of flame rushing into the room, or rumbling noises as the floor blew out from under our feet. I went up next, and a very shaky voice floated down the culvert, "How you doin', Barbara?" When I got up, Duke was sitting right where he had unrigged, white as a ghost for all the "sunburn" under his eyes. "I was IN the fucking fire!"

Everyone exited without further incident. We took a picture of the "Survivors of the Hicks Fire" gathered around the culvert, and discussed the possibility of posing for a wienie/marshmallow roast over the hole. Tom told the neighboring landowner all about the grey slime pit, while we all battled to keep our mouths shut about day's most, uuh, well, exciting event. We hurried to the "Just Anywhere" truck stop restaurant and called Jim Quinlan's answering machine. Tom tried a few other numbers, and since Horse Cave wasn't burning on the horizon, we sat down to eat, wonder at our incredibly bad/good luck and mourn the loss of survey gear, cameras and packs.

The following day, Duke and Larry notified several appropriate individuals and organizations: The Kentucky Division of Water, Dr. James Quinlan, Dr. James Branstetter of Horse Cave, Bill Austin--also of Horse Cave and the owner of the downtown entrance to Hidden River Cave, the Bowling Green Area representative of the state Division of Environmental Management, the ACCA in Horse Cave, and all cavers with keys to the culvert entrance. Duke's face was red Sunday morning and later blistered, and he noticed Monday that he had lost a chunk off the tip of one thumb.

The president of Bluegrass Grotto, a geologist with the state, visited the Horse Cave area later that week. After talking with several farmers who had left tobacco fields above the cave complaining of fumes, he concluded that the explosion may have been liquid propane. Propane storage tanks are located next to a railroad directly above the slump pit. The EPA in Atlanta has been notified, and someone there has expressed interest in a gear-intensive return to the scene of the explosion. As of this time, all that is certain is that something in Hicks Cave went boom.

Surveying From A New Perspective

Surveying is an important part of caving. That is what I learned on my last caving trip. I know that many of you have done it before, but it was my first time, so it was new. For you, this can be a reminder of your first trip. For those of you haven't done it before, especially trainees, this can be an idea of the experience you will have someday when you survey.

As a first time person, I was the lead tape of the survey crew. At first, I was not sure how exciting it was going to be. Why should they give a fun job to a first time surveyor? Reading an instrument, horizontal and vertical direction, sounded interesting. I always got a kick out of it before, but this time I would not be doing it. Sketching out the places we were going, showing everybody else what we were seeing sounded like fun, but what I was doing was pulling a piece of tape along and holding a light up to show the instrument reader where the next survey spot was. Oh boy....

Actually, what I found it meant was that I was the first person in the virgin passage. I was the person that had to be the most careful not to screw up the path, see interesting formations and where to go next, and to make sure I didn't go to a place where I was going to get myself in trouble (ie. fall down a pit or get myself stuck.) The lead tape had both an easy job and a job with a lot of potential.

Also, the fact that I was part of a survey crew was important. There were only three of us. All the other trips were basically sight seeing trips with many people. Three is a minimum number as far as I could tell for safety. We had to watch each other, but could not rely on somebody else watching you.

I quickly found out how important it was to keep your pack with you. I figured...I am only going to the top of this drop; my pack will be close enough at the bottom of this drop. Well, somebody in the end had to bring it up to me because my light went out when my water spilled out after crawling through a hole.

You really realize how dark, silent, etc. it is when you are waiting without any light. You just haven't turned it off, you don't have any light. Silence is peaceful, thoughtful, and scary. I was glad I had just gone through a crawl that I could barely fit through before my light dimmed out.

Then it was back on to more surveying. It keeps you very busy, but you don't move fast, which is really nice. Normally, I have gone sight seeing -- zipping past most of the cave to specific sights. Surveying let me see every inch of the cave, and gave me time to examine the rock structure, flow stone, straws, animals, etc.

And to make it more exciting is that nobody knows this passage. Not only are all the sights virgin but the methods to get through the passage are virgin. Everybody's a beginner again. It's chance to think and apply what you know, not just follow the lead of others. You can give names to things, a tight crawl, formation, or whatever even though I had no names in mind and didn't see anything too name-worthy. Well, we did go through some tight crawls but they didn't go to any neat formation or sight, but they did keep going, bigger and smaller. There was no way of knowing where the crawl went until the crawl was done. Half of the times we saw it dead end quickly, and the other half of the time it opened up into a wider passage.

Well, if you hadn't gathered, we did a lot of crawling on my first survey trip. Every foot was well earned. At last, at one of the squeezes that had a drop afterwards, I determined I was tired. The squeeze could be left for another day. We only surveyed 200 feet -- seemed both like a lot and not much. We had never really stopped to take a breather or talk. When we got out, it was dark and Doug asked me, "Check the time." I did, and was I surprised -- a quarter till ten. Nine hours. Nine hours and 200 feet. We wondered if we had broken a record for lowest passage per hour. Time to go back and let Jim tally up our results.

That was fun. Instantly seeing where we had mapped in relation to the rest of the cave. We had come thirteen feet below the entrance and 120 feet away. Jim predicts pretty close to the surface. The passage kept going after our last station, and was probably squeezable. We even saw animal droppings. I was too tired at the time to press for more passage but maybe it ended at animal hole, was diggable, or was another entrance? Oh well, maybe next time I will get to go further down into the earth, and do something that leads somewhere even more interesting...

-- Brian Cruickshank --



How to Feel Stupid When Climbing Up Rope

Take it from someone with experience, it is no problem. All you have to do is screw up everything you were taught to do when climbing -- you know, forget your calls, tie the wrong knots, tie the right knots backwards, and last but not least, forget to put your gloves on. If that does not work, try climbing so slowly and awkwardly that everyone below you beats you to the top by using the other rope.

On a trainee trip to Clover Hollow I had a good old time learning what a big difference climbing out of the Canyon room was from climbing up the Ag.E bridge. First, I tied all three of my helical knots so badly that "Captain" Ed, our trip leader, could not figure out what the hell I had done wrong. I spent the next fifteen minutes untieing and retieing the knots only to discover that I had tied them wrong again. I was getting pissed. Ed, of course, had to reteach me how to get them right. Boy, I felt stupid, but I did get tied to the rope after a half hour of instruction.

Just before I started climbing, I looked up the rock face and thought, "That's not too far -- I'll make it up in no time." Dead wrong. I was looking at only the first lip of the ledge and the distance looked a lot shorter than it really was. Anyway, I started climbing up the rope the hard way; pushing one knot up at a time... right foot, left foot... standing up, pushing up the seat knot. This included rest stops every ten feet. Once I reached the lip of the ledge, I realized that it did not end here, but some fifty feet higher up. The next problem was that the rest of the climb was against the rock face.

At about this time, Leslie, the blond spider, was starting to climb up the other rope faster than me. I began to hurry a little, only to bang my carbide lamp against another jutting ledge. Leslie had almost caught up to me at about the same time I was getting tired of banging into the small ledges the rock wall abounds with. Then an idea hit me -- why not walk up the wall? I mentally kicked myself for not thinking of this before. I tried to make the climb up a little easier by stepping on the small ledges and protruding rocks (Ed. note -- I'm getting Dave Colatosti flashbacks...) but to no use. I kept forgetting to put my weight on the knots instead of the wall. With only twenty feet to the top, Leslie passed me and reached the top just before I did.

Only one obstacle left -- a smooth, slippery incline that I kept sliding down on my stomach each time I tried to cross. After five minutes of futile struggling, I managed to wedge a knee hold and slowly climb up the incline one knee after another. When I finally managed to get off of the rope, I started to remember everything I was supposed to do -- the proper ways to tie knots, climb, and get over ledges. At that moment, I had a great urge to repeatedly knock my head against a wall. At least it is over with for now, I hope.

P.S. If you would like lessons on doing things the hard way, do not hesitate to get in touch with me.

-- Mac McElroy --

Read My Lips

"...by going into a cave and examining the animals, there, itsa, people get a better understanding of what's going on with, ya know, pollution..."

The previous statement, given by our VPI Cave Club president Ben Keller, exemplifies why he was elected to his lofty position. Here, he demonstrates that in a high-pressure situation before a TV camera he can indeed think on his feet. As with any politician's statement, one needs to stop and think a while on what has been uttered. The cryptic association of animals and people with the special conjunctions "itsa" and "ya know" shows that Ben was communicating on several different levels. Let me explore the various shades of meaning within this statement so we can all appreciate how Ben's mind works.

First, being a politician, what Ben does not say is as important as what he does say. Fortunately, he gave no clue to the location of the cave, thus preserving its beauty for those in the know. However he did not mention anything about increasing club dues, so we can be expecting a price hike in the spring to cover the Club's "deficit spending."

Anyway, the issues in the statement seem garbled. How can we determine the true meaning only from what he said? Tough job. Examine the following logic progression:

people examine animals (therefore) people understand pollution

Wha? Let me have a beer and maybe this will seem clearer to me...

Now, something about looking at animals makes people understand pollution, right? Well, I look at my fish and I don't even think about garbage. Maybe dinner. Looking at garbage in a cave might make feel sorry for the animals who live there, but then, it would not be hard to feel sorry that lives in a cold, dark, wet puddle. (Ed. note -- Hey, I resemble that remark. Except, I live in a dry puddle.) Heck, they might even enjoy a dose of stale beer to give their lives a lift.

Another beer, aaaaah. Back to Ben. Ben is an intellegent guy, he doesn't go around making random statements. Obviously, the meaning is hidden, and we aren't supposed to know. I guess it's the job of a leader to know and the masses to follow. I think that's why he has a young republican for a VP.

-- Joe Uknalis --

Ed. Note:

After long and strenuous deliberation, Ben declared Mr. Uknalis the contest winner for his outstanding logical analysis. Mr. Cruickshank was declared runner-up with honorable mention for his excellent use of logicaver analysis, that is, logical reasoning involving intensive and extended alcohol consumption. Mr. Uknalis will receive a single can of The Beast, and Mr. Cruickshank will receive the remainder of the 12-pack.

Ben's Famous Quote

"...and by going into the cave and examining the...the animals there...its...people get a better understanding of what's going on with...[you know] with pollution."

[]- questionable.

That is what I heard one Friday night. I had started the night at Ton 80. Had a good time. Went to the meeting. Heard this, and determined that it had to be the beer that made it sound so bizarre. People did point it out as being bizarre, so maybe it was. Well, at a later meeting it was written on the board and still sounded bizarre, so I wrote it down later at Pedro's while eating and drinking. I thought I would leave interpreting it to a time later when I could really grasp it. Well since drinking seems to have to do with when I have heard it, and it almost seems that Ben had been drinking when he said it (But it couldn't be because he had just been caving with WSLS-TV) I will take a drink right now to help me understand it. Ha Ha! Gulp! Ah! Bass Pale Ale!

On with it. Well since I am an engineering major (terribel at righting but analytical) maybe I will try looking at it technically first like they tell us in technical writing. Hmm. We got a beginning thing, adjective of some sort I think, confusing though because of "and" and "...its..." Ah, subject-People. Verb- get. Hmm, well better go on a little, ah... Verb-understand. Ah..you know... People understand pollution. Perfect sense. Well maybe the first part is important for confusion. Examining animals in a cave... people understand pollution.. Complete confusion.

Gulp!

Animals in a cave.. people understand pollution. Well that makes it sound like animals are causing the pollution. Terribel animals. Wait a second, I was in New River Cave, the worst polluted of them all. That cave had beer and soda cans. I didn't think animals drank beer. Nah... I don't think they could even hold a beer can in their hand, especially those critters (cave snails) that Jim and I got in Tawney's. Gulp!

Hmm. Well I don't understand one thing right off. "People understand caves", I interpreted. A lot of people don't understand caves. Matter of fact I remember seeing somebody, actually two, in a cave that didn't understand the cave well. They left behind beer cans and a mess which I don't want to talk about. Wait a second that's pollution. I am on the right track. Ben is sensible. Gulp! Examining animals. People cause pollution. People understand caves. Hmm. Doesn't make sense at all. First of all, I don't understand what animals has to do with beer cans and pollution; they must hate it. Ah!!! I think we hit a key point here. Gulp!

Hmmm lets find the connection. Ok. Think seriously. By examining the animals.... who hate pollution.... [you know] people understand the cave better. Wait a second that doesn't make any sense at all. Umm..by examining the animals who hate pollution, people get a better understanding of why pollution is..[you know]..bad and why you shouldn't do it. Wait a second, his quote makes perfect sense now to me; doesn't it to you. Gulp! Time to go to Ton 80!

-- Brian Cruickshank --

Quoteable Quotes

"Well, it all depends on how fast you go up and down." --B.C.

"Well, Ed, mine's not as big as yours, but I do O.K." --P.H.

"Me? I'm just limp." --C.R.

"You're always limp!" --B.W.

"Phillip, would you like your pants back?" --unknown blonde

"I might want to go horizontal, talk to me, I'm easy." --J.G.

"I don't remember this being this big." --K.T.

"Actually, Wizardry isn't really magic; it's timing."

--Wizard of GCCS

"There are a lot of people mad at you. In fact, it's become a word. If someone never publishes the map, they say it's been Parrotted." --J.S.

"Dougo's the kind of guy who would poke his eye out just so he could wear a patch." --J.W.

"Don Anderson wants to do something easy... but not my sister... although she's pretty easy... and I should know." --D.B. (reading minutes)

"Ed, you could jump over that fire." --H.B.

"Yes, I could, but that would reveal my true identity." --E.F.

"I move that we make it club policy never to buy Milwaukee's Best for club-sponsored events." --D.S.

"But Phillip assured me his tastes represented the tastes of the whole club." --J.G.

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Improbable Cave Attire, #17

MICHELLE,

Next time don't moan so much. Mark is not that good and I need my sleep! --BISH

From the Signout

AS usual, the VPI Grotto caved hard this semester. We have logged 1247 man-hours in 46 trips between 8/20/88 and 11/26/88. Joe Uknalis logged most hours (41.5 hours).

Cave	Names	Comments
Smoke Hole	J. Redder, B. Keller, L. Bush, W. Pirie, 9 others	Lost one lamp, no trainees.
Tawneys	C. James, B. Keller, J. Gamble, P. Hess, S. Pearson, S. Shetzlar, I. Quilen.	Yo Dude, we're on TV 10 News. Fame, fortune, \$ and chicks await!
Scott Hollow	W. Pirie, P. Hess, J. Uknalis, L. Britt	730' mapped. A steamy trip.
Stay High	D. Colatosti, S. Pearson, L. Colby, J. Gamble	I like my cave.
Clover Hollow	E. Fortney, R. Haywood, L. Colby, B. Cruikshank, B. Hohenboken, D. Colatosti, M. Suede	When you die, you go to hell and take vertical trainee trips!
Pig Hole	J. Gamble, R. Gillette, L. Colby, J. Jensen, G. Dotson, B. Graham, <i>pirho</i>	Wet outside, dry inside. Cool trip, 3 1st timers.
Tawneys	J., C., D., R., B. Zokaites, R. Gillette	Kids had fun.
Stay High	D. Bruce, B. Cruikshank, J. Uknalis	No one will ever have to go back there again to that passage.
Yer cave	M. Futrell, P. and R. Kirchman	8 bolts 3 pins to aid 35' high lead. It goes .. to pitch 2.

VPI CAVE CLUB - RESCUE ROSTER September, 1988 - September, 1989

Glen Davis Blacksburg	(w) 639-8659.....	552-7377
Don Anderson Dublin	(w) 639-7321.....	674-5460
Cecile James Blacksburg	552-5305
Ben Keller Blacksburg	951-7437
Jim Washington Newport	626-3386
Ken Bonnenberger Blacksburg	(w) 552-3011	951-3449
Giles County Sheriff's Dept	(703) 921-3842	
Cave Rescue Communications Network	(804) 674-2400	
If a person named here is not in, ask for another caver. Your message will be handled appropriately. Avoid publicity of any kind.		

SPELEORATA

Cave softly amid the pretties and nasties, and remember what true peace there may be in rappelling. Circumvent ugly, sharp stream crawls unless you are truly masochistic. Carry first-aid. Encourage membership in the NSS, and write for the publications even though cave politics be for turkeys.

If a person appears in doubt of who he is, he may be a speleopolitician. Beware. Consider that if two rights and a wrong go to a dead end, a right and two lefts may not get you back to where you remember. Whenever possible, use Suuntos Instruments. Be comforted in the face of rising streams and sudden rockfalls, that despite the fact that your wallet is all wet, someone will come to get you out in four to six hours. Strive not to eat cave creatures, dead or alive. Remember Roppel, and keep it holy.

Exercise reasonable caution, especially in virgin territory. Know not no knot, and know what knot to use when. Be assured that pushing wet sumps by carbide light often will leave you in the dark. Therefore, attempt not naked

"The Grim Crawl of Death."

Surrender gracefully the things of youth: solvency, sobriety, Moral Majority, and keep not your gorp in plastic bags. For a good time, remember to remove your carbide lights before engaging in oral sex. Be heartened amid impending starvation that the stuff at the bottom of your pack is possibly edible, if you scrape it first, and reflect that, however miserable you may feel, it only would be worse on a photo trip.

You, caver, frequently push the limits of your endurance, but do say "guano" when it sticks to your coveralls. You are privileged to go to Hell, provided you embrace agreeable politics and have landowner permission. Therefore, learn to abide grotto functions, pay your dues, party, but not to excess, leave gates as you found them, and remember to carry three sources of light. Keep always in mind, nevertheless, that caving is an activity peculiar to the living. Be safety conscious, and enjoy.

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

DO NOT BAKE. THAW AND SERVE.

THAW AND SERVE DIRECTIONS:

THAW AT ROOM TEMPERATURE:

Remove from carton. Let stand 20 minutes.
(Less time needed in warm weather). Cut
and Serve.

THAWING IN REFRIGERATOR:

Leave in carton. Let stand 1 to 1½ hours.
Cut and Serve.

NOTE: Store any leftover pie, covered,
in refrigerator.

OR: If you desire to serve cream pie frozen,
remove pie from freezer.

Do Not Thaw. Cut and Serve.

If you have any questions about this product, send
end panels and your comments to:



GCCS