

Tech Troglodyte



The Tech Troglodyte

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

Spring Semester 1990

President..Lesley Colby
Vice President..Dave Colatosti
Treasurer..Adam Hungerford
Secretary..Mike Horne

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Editors..Kay Johnson,
Joe Uknalis
Technical Support
Neil Johnson & the
Apple Company

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The **Tech Troglodyte** is published semiannually in the fall and spring upon availability of material. Send articles and inquiries to the VPI Cave Club, P.O. Box 558, Blacksburg, VA 24060.

Our Glorious President's Column

Well the semester is finally coming to a close, and Joe and Kay tell me that I must uphold the tradition of the President's column.

Elections were held in March, & the new officers are:

President: Me.

Vice President: Dave Colatosti

Treasurer: Adam Hungerford

Secretary: Mike³ Horne

during spring break, 28 people went to TAG and did a lot of vertical work. Our membership is up to 322 people and although it is the end of the year we have had a large turnout of new people at our meetings. Also being springtime, the club has been taking a lot of scouts and community groups on Novice trips.

Picnic is in the planning. It will be at Buddy Penley's as usual, but due to the success of 3 kegs for Killians at last year's picnic we've opted for all 6 kegs to be Killians. A lot of interest has been expressed by new members concerning possible Mexico trips this Christmas. Unfortunately, the number interested far surpasses the number of available positions so far. So if any of you are planning a Mexico trip for Christmas and have some open spaces, I know of numerous people who would really appreciate the trip.

As far as official business goes...the club has purchased some new file cabinets to accommodate our growing piles of mail. Also, in an effort to pay some of our expenses, we've been considering auctioning our extra older trogs at OTR.

O well, enough of my ramblings.

Enjoy.

Lesley Colby

President of Vice Column

Well, the deadline for this was about two hours ago, so I guess now is about the best time to write it. Yup, I'm the new President of Vice. And actually, the job seems cool so far. I guess I have secretly wanted to be vice presidentsince I became a member. I have a lot of respect for the training programand I enjoy teaching people something that I really have fun doing. I suppose that is my reasoning for wanting the job.

Kudos to Scott "Hoss" Leiffer (#320), Kristen Posson (#321) and Sara Vieweg (#322) for earning their membership. the testing went OK, thanks to the help of our former VP Brian Cruickshank.

So what does this up coming year have instore in the way of VP stuff?? Well lots 'o trainee trips. If trainees want to cave, I'll cave. Hopefully I will have some sort of agenda to follow for bridge sessions next year, so people that already know the ups and downs canexperiment and learn other neat and important vertical things. Bridge sessions? Lets just say the worse the weather the more fun you can have at the bridge. (IE. I will be there every Friday and more if need be, no matter what the weather is!!

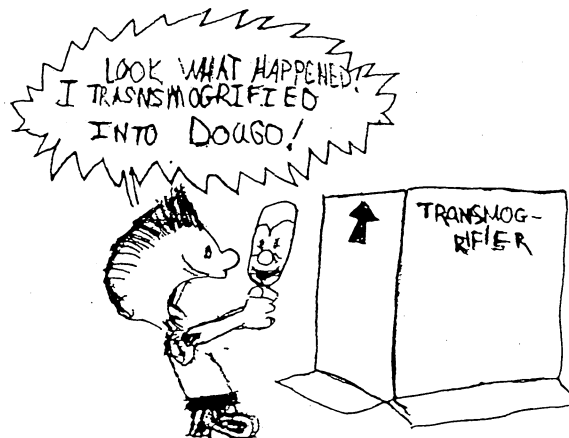
In closing (since my buzz is wearing off) I want to encourage trainees to learn a lot, cave hard, and party hard (remember it takes practice to earn the flame out award). And hey, I hope to learn as much as I can over the next year too.

David Colatosti
President of Vice

Editor's Column

Well, another year draws to a close. And the officers are late in getting their articles in as usual. It's an unusual situation being an editor, we really can't take the credit for the quality, except in cases where people hand you 3 pages of chickenscratch and say "it's rough, edit it". Thanks to everyone who kept an ear out for qoutable quotes. Hope everyone has a fun summer. chow! UKE

Once again the Trog has been hurriedly typed in time to get it to the printer so it will be out next Friday. It's all part of the process of putting out a newsletter for a student grotto. We use borrowed equipment, low funds, and switch editors at least every couple years. Our purpose is to inform and entertain anyone who's interested about the VPI Grotto. The Trog has always tried to reflect the personality of its authors, so we accept some pretty tasteless material. I feel the editor is more of a proof-reader than an actual editor, but we do chop material sometimes. Many thanks to those who've contributed anything to the Trog! I hope the summer will generate some good articles for next fall's Trog. Kay



Grotto Grapevine

Here's the news from Lake Blacksburg: The year started off with billyuns and billyuns of people going to Mexico on three trips with many of the usual people (Cecile, Jerry etc.) and many first-timers. 'Nuff said here. Lots of heavy caving going on, notably Paul (Berta's husband) Kirchman's Bone sheep-dip trip. Other frequented spots are Newberry's, Bane Spring etc. Bill's Rappel is officially 160.7 ft. deep, but the depth of Triple Wells is still being debated. 29 folks went to TAG this spring break, but it wasn't good enough to write an article about. GCCS is still going on, but there hasn't been much progress. Bob & Jean Simonds, and Walt Pirie went to Costa Rica again over spring break. You can read up on these trips in the rest of the Trog.

About banquet: 144 people showed up for banquet in February at the Blacksburg Rec. Center. Dr. Leffler talked on bats, and Dr. Mengak talked on rats. Both profess at Ferrum College. Ed Fortney won the A.I. Cartwright award for his years of doing bridge sessions, leading trainee trips, and other club activities. Krisen Posson was trainee-of-the-year. There were many competitors for the "safe driver" award, but Joe Uknalis' and Mike Fiore's West Virginia incident won them top honors and an LTD wheel. Is it just coincidence that they're both from New Jersey? Dave "Chummer" Warren won the traditional flame out award, but there were so many challengers that Maurya Fisher, Nat Serbu, Kristen Posson, Sara Vieweg & Joe Uknalis won the group flames, flameout bucket. Mike Sziede won the PW award, a pink collar so Sally can lead him around. The 1st annual Glen & Alice and Paul & Berta award went to Maurya Fisher & Chris "Jake" Brown, who earned a crowbar for the impressive face locking that they demonstrated for the crowd. Cecile won a guano cluster for putting up with many caver parties. Our favorite landowner, Buddy Penley, received a photo album covering years of Skydusky Hollow events, and caver events he's attended, plus a Cave Board poster. Some of the guests that attended from out of town included Lawrence Britt (who's getting out of the Navy in about a 1.5 years), Tim Kilby (who owns New River cave), and Chip Clark (who's recovering from his back surgery just fine). John Holsinger showed up at the after-banquet party. Nancy & Alan Knewstep received a shower gift at the party--their baby girl, Lindsay, was born in February. The Devines brought their new baby, Amanda, to the banquet.

Now for the gossip, and hearsay: Philip Balister became unemployed, moved in with Ed Fortney, and is now employed by GE, Schenectady. He'll be world traveling. Doug Bruce moved to Fredericksburg, VA for several months as part of his job with the Frames. Dave Cinsavich is employed at Draper Aden here in Blacksburg after receiving DWI number 3. I don't think those events are related. Mike Futrell is in Harrisonburg, and Viola Ritchie is in Warm Springs. Hmmm. Dougo just turned 21 and threw up on himself. Glad it wasn't someone else. Will and Jenny Allender nee Ford are moving to Winchester, VA. Craig Ferguson got his pilot's license. Kay Johnson got a promotion at the library. Jim Gamble is job hunting. Barbara Graham is back in Lexington, KY doing caving stuff. Jean Hartman should be returning from Turkey sometime. Bill Hohenboken went to New Zealand and went caving. Pete Sauvigne was in China during the fall and did some caving. Gabi moved to a new location in NOVA. Al Ostrowski (Al Who) joined the army; yes it's true! Chris Swine went to Lechiguilla (the L-word) to be a photo sherpa, despite undisclosed injuries. Mike Sziede will be going to NOVA to work on a career one can build on. Chuck & Pat Shorten bought a new house, but we don't know where. Howard, Polly, & kids Dame survived the big earthquake in October just fine. Ed, Liz & kids Morgan survived Hurricane Hugo ok. Glen and Alice's wedding is scheduled for October 20th. Don Davison called up the Zokaite's recently--he and Cheryl are alive and well. Hillary Minich has turned into a lean mean caving machine, and has done a lot of caving in the L-word. Doug Dodd has

gotten married. Frank Gibson has a son, Kyle, born sometime in January. Sue LaCourse is pregnant and due soon. Randy and Ruth Wood had a baby girl in January. Joe Zokaite pulled a tendon at the dangerous Party-on-the-Mountain, and Alice Lane pulled a tendon while backpacking. Dave Bennett (Formerly, "Fatito", now, "Skinito") is selling jewelry, crystals and such in Blacksburg. Cecile bought a van. Jenny Allender bought a turquoise colored truck. Nancy Parks got a new old VW. Doug Perkins got a new VW too, and now has four vehicles. Jerry Redder's trying to sell his old van that's made it to Valhalla. Jerry and the Zos had to buy a penalty keg for missing signout. The Zos are figuring out how much extra time per child they need to add to their regular caving time estimate. Jim (Moose) and Karen Dawson have adopted a new son -- Larry Carlos Luis Dawson. Bill & Robyn Koerschner are being transferred from Borger, TX to Calgary, Canada this spring/summer. Gary Moss and Boo Croft are looking lean and trim. Mark Slusarski started working for a large environmental firm in Charleston, WV this past January.

Summer plans: Sara Vieweg will be working in Yosemite. Dave Colatosti will be doing coop work. Mark Eisenbies will be working for ITT in Florida. Lesley Colby will be in Blacksburg. Mike Fiore is living at the farm for now, but he's thinking of going to New Hampshire to work with disturbed children. Sounds right up his alley. Jerry Redder's running OTR again this year.

Upcoming events:

Picnic: May 5th, Buddy's field. Beer (6 kegs of Killians) is \$4. Food (hot dogs etc.) is \$2.

Pay Adam Hungerford, picnic chairman.

Float Trip: May 26th. Chairperson hasn't been decided.

That's all the news from Lake Blacksburg.
Where all the cavers smell strong,
All the parties are great,
and all the caver students are below average.



Mexico -- From a Voting Trainee's Point of View

Ch. 1: Getting there:

The most exciting, cave club related thing I have done so far (besides throwing my guts up at the more wine party at OTR) has to have been the trip to Mexico I went on this past Christmas.

Mexico, land of sunshine, beautiful mountains, and cheap beer. It is also the land of interstate highways that are about as wide as the average person's driveway, water which you can't drink, toilets that don't flush, and the Peso (the Mexican unit of currency) which exchanges at about 2.74×10^{26} Pesos to one U.S. dollar. Put these things aside, however, and Mexico is a really neat place.

From the very start, the trip to Mexico was a completely new experience for me. For example, as soon as the three of us, Cecile, her boyfriend Bob, and me, pulled out of the Sign-Out driveway, Cecile's "Batrnrr" had a transmission problem (I had never been in a vehicle with a transmission problem before! What fun!). This did not phase us, and we continued on our journey.

We stopped in Chatanooga, TN with our two Toyota Four-Runners to pick up three more people; Maureen--our trip leader, Bill and Dave--a jerk, and about 13 tons more gear than either truck was rated to handle. We then continued down to Louisiana, where we traveled on a 30-mile bridge over the wettest part of the Mississippi delta swamp.

We then went on to the city of Lake Charles, LA, affectionately nicknamed "The Armpit of America". This city exudes an odor similar to what would occur if 126 male elephants, in heat, from a distance of six inches, waved their genitals in you face all at once.

To add to this, as is always the case in every VPI expedition, it was unseasonably cold. Likewise, it rained--freezing rain.. This left us in a four hour traffic jam heading into Texas, with a bunch of southern drivers who had never heard the words "32° F" before. UUGH!

The ice let up at Houston, and we continued on to San Antonio, the southernmost point in Texas where non-Hispanics live. Unfortunately, now the Batrnrr's transmission sounded like my grandfather gurgling mouthwash. So we stopped in Laredo, at the Tex-Mex border, to have the Batrnrr looked at, and found out that we had been driving all the way from Blacksburg with essentially no grease in the transmission! What a trip!

We got the problem reduced (the tranny now sounded only like my grandmother gurgling mouthwash), and continued on across the Mexican border, each of us collecting enough pesos on the way to pay off our national debt several hundred times over if they were dollars. We then proceeded about two hundred yards to a line of about 4.52×10^{14} people, which we had to wait in to get our visas for Mexico. Several fortnights later, we emerged with our visas, and continued on to San Luis Potosi.

One of the first things I noticed about Mexico was that the food was great! Sometimes I had no idea what I was ordering (basically because I knew about three Mexican words--denero, cervesa, and tequila), but I did not care, because I knew almost whatever I ordered would be good. As well as the food, the sodas were a neat experience. In Mexico, aside from Coke, they have apple, apricot and pineapple flavored sodas, to name a few. I only drank Coke once while in Mexico, and it was a real let down.

We spent Christmas eve in the city of San Luis Potosi. It was spectacular. In the market district, the streets were covered with vendors selling everything from cheap American junk, to authentic Mexican treasures, to cheap Mexican junk. It seemed that almost all the town was out combing the streets, doing last-minute Christmas shopping.

Also out, as always, were many poor, homeless beggars. Cecile gave some logs of gum (huge, round sticks) to some children who were going around begging for money. Word quickly spread throughout the entire younger population of Mexico, from Cancun to Baja, that Cecile was giving out freebies, and pretty soon Cecile found herself surrounded by every child in Mexico who could walk. Surprisingly, she had brought enough gum to give every child a log.

The night was not over yet. A Mexican caver, Carlos, took us to a party that another Mexican caver, Sylvia, was throwing. The Mexican definition of 'party' is a bunch of people sitting around, having a good time, introducing newcomers (us) to their nineteen children, and eating the equivalent of 23 meals in one sitting. This was my first taste of Mexican hospitality, and I loved it! I was feeling great, except for the fact that I had eaten more that night than the city of Los Angeles normally consumes in a week.

Ch. 2--Cueva de Borboillon:

We met up with the last three people of our group (Bob, Mike, and April--three really cool people from N.Y.C), and did our first cave, Cueva de Bourboillon, on Christmas day. What we did of it took us through a little amount of sporting passage, and down a 718' drop at the end of it. This more than tripled the size of the largest drop I had

done to date.

The moment I started clipping in my rack to go down this drop, a sudden paranoia overtook me (affectionately called Altitude Sickness and Stupidity--ASS). I started thinking, "Holy shit! It's a long way down there! If you rappel too fast, you'll melt the rope and die! If you fall, You'll die! If you die, you'll be dead! (o.k...so I'm not the smartest person) Why can't I be doing something safe now--like getting laid!

As I descended into the black abyss, my seat felt like a wire saw trying to cut through my legs. I could see people below me--actually tiny pinpoints of light that appeared to be several light years away. So I continued to rappel. After what felt like several minutes, I looked down again, only to see that the pinpoints of light at the bottom did not look like they were getting any closer. By this time my legs were getting numb from my seat, and every muscle in my arms was getting strained from trying to rappel slowly so my rack would not get too hot and melt the rope.

After what seemed an hour, I reached the bottom of the drop, with absolutely no feeling left in my arms and legs. I got off rope, and stumbled around like a quadraplegic having muscle spasms. When I got some blood flow back through my body and brain, I noticed I was in a large room. LARGE! Like what seemed to be about the size of a small country, with a ceiling as high as the sky. I was impressed.

After several hours, I got to climb out of the drop. On long drops such as this, you usually climb tandem. This beats solo climbing, because you always have someone to talk to, and exchange questions like, "You do this often?", "How much more do you think we have to go?", "Are you going to throw up?", and "Are we dead yet?"

We finally reached the top of the drop, exhausted, with our clothes completely soaked from sweat (you generate a lot of sweat going up 700'). However, we still had to wait for two more people to come up, because then we were going to be joined by the rest of our party (who had climbed up earlier and were now at camp) and haul out our 800' rope.

My climbing partner, Maureen, decided to use this time wisely, and fell asleep as soon as she got off rope. I tried this too, but found out that the firmness and support provided by a rock "mattress" is much too hard for me. I was glad that I could not fall asleep when Maureen woke up about a half hour later, with a body temp. of about 54° from the now cold--sweat soaked clothes she was wearing.

Unfortunately, the last two climbers were not even close to the top, and the fascists of our party, who were already above ground (and dry and warm!), had not come back, as they should have done an hour ago. So, since Maureen felt like she was going to die if she stayed underground another minute, she decided we should immediately get out, and haul the rope up tomorrow. This greatly relieved me, for I did not feel much better than Maureen (my body temp. was only about 55°).

As we left the cave, I looked back at its entrance, which now looked about as enticing to walk into as the mouth of one of the creatures in the movie "Aliens". I then looked up, saw a sky full of stars, and smiled to see that there was no ceiling above me. "When it feels so good to get out of a cave, why the hell do I go into them in the first place?", I thought. The reason was obvious: stupidity--a certain studity which I'm proud of.

Ch. 3 -- Mexpelio and Mecos:

The next day, after Cecile clothed the entire village next to Bourboillon (she should get the cave club philanthropic award), we headed on to Mexpelio, an international caving convention going on near the town of Valles. Mexpelio was staged in an old "resort" that was probably in slightly worse condition than Alcatraz. However, it had all the modern conveniences--unpotable running water, showers with no hot water, and toilets that did not flush (whose contents actually moaned back to you in anger when you tried to relieve yourself.) What more could you ask for!

After we were all settled in at Mexpelio, we headed off for a leisurely day at Mecos, a state park with "dozens" of beautiful waterfalls. Unfortunately, Mecos also contains a couple of electric power stations, aqueducts, and, I can only assume, a dam. I figured this out as soon as I noticed I was walking on a large, recently dry stream bed. This because especially evident when Maureen pointed to a semi-cliff face and told us, "See that? That was a huge waterfall the last time I was here!!" Somehow, I found it hard to appreciate her description of swimming in a place that was now nothing but mud-covered rocks. Even though at least three of the largest waterfalls were "turned off", the still immense pools of crystal clear, turquoise water, along with the several smaller waterfalls downstream (and the cervesa stand) was still enough to make Mecos an impressive sight. It was even more impressive to me when I dove into the water, and found it to be about 1/8° above freezing, sending me into near hypothermic shock, and almost claiming my balls.

Ch. 4 -- Guaguas:

The day after Mecos, we went to Guaguas, a pit up near Golandrinas. Guaguas has two sides to rig from--490' on the low side, and 700' on the high side. We rigged the high side, of course, since we were manly! It was quite interesting to do this after doing the in-cave 700' drop in Bourboillon two days earlier. Now I got to see exactly

how large a 700' drop was, and in the process realized just how much of a complete idiot I was for doing this.

Many people compare Guaguas with Neversink. They say, "It's like Neversink, only bigger." What they leave out is the fact that it is about 328,765,983 times bigger than Neversink. Neversink freaked me out when I bounced it, Guaguas freaked me out about 328,765,983 times worse. This happened as soon as I started rappelling. You go over a lip, and then suddenly the wall your feet were on turns into a ceiling. This "ceiling" runs almost perfectly horizontal, away from you, and meets a wall somewhere over the horizon. So within the course of one vertical foot, you have gone from being on a wall, to being well over a hundred feet from any wall, and you still have 700' left to do down. I instantly felt a tremendous surge of agoraphobia overcome me, as well as the acrophobia I was already experiencing.

Luckily, since we rigged two ropes, I rappelled down with somebody--Bob. Bob had decided before he even got on rope that he was going to be scared going down this thing--I wished I was as wise. I started talking to him, once I semi-regained my wits, and eventually he told me, "Thanks. You're really making this easier for me." I didn't have the nerve to tell him that the only reason I was talking to him was to keep myself from going completely schizo on rappel. We both made our way slowly to the bottom, so as not to damage the rope. Just as in Bourboillon, my legs were numb from my seat, which seemed more like a Nazi torture device to me, and my arms were numb from straining as hard as I could to keep myself rappelling slow.

I finally reached the bottom of the drop, wondering if my legs and arms were still attached to me, to promptly learn from Maureen that one can rappel quite fast down these things with no more damage to the rope than by rappelling slowly. I wanted to shoot myself for not knowing this earlier, and for getting the idea that you have to rappel extremely slowly down long drops in the first place, but could not since I could not find either of my arms anymore.

The bottom of Guaguas is beautiful. It is covered with all sorts of lovely plant life and bird guano. There is a huge steep slope here which leads into a pseudo-cave, through an entrance equivalent in size to Venezuela. This slope is COVERED with loose rocks, only held in place by their weight and the bird guano which they are sitting in. People going down the slope could not help but each knock down about 726,500 of these rocks. What made this interesting was that the acoustics of the pseudo-cave make each little pebble fall sound like an earthquake of magnitude 8 on the Richter scale. After two people went down there, I was starting to wonder if thermonuclear war had finally occurred. ("Hello bottom? This is top. Did the weather forecast call for any mushroom clouds today?")

I didn't go schizo on rappel. I made up for this by going schizo on the way back up. I climbed on a ropewalker, and Dave whom I was climbing with used a sit-stand rig. What I did not realize is that those things create a LARGE up and down bounce (no, not the fabric softener) in the rope.

This "bounce" feels like what would happen if Godzilla reached over the top of the drop and started shaking your rope in an effort to get you off it, so he would not have to eat nylon when he consumed you.

I had a good view of the low side, which several Europeans had rigged with 8 mm rope. They were "frogging" their way up the drop and were bounding comparatively more than I was, but this didn't make me feel any better. "So what if they're on thinner rope, they're bouncing more, and it's not breaking!", I thought, "They're not me!"

I looked down with every few steps I took, and realized that I had an incredibly long way to fall. I started praying for the first time in my life as I thought, "Heck, if I fall, I'll die of starvation before I hit bottom! I don't wanna die like that! Waaaaaah!" As I almost started into a temper-tantrum reminiscent of a 4-year old, I made a resolution to bring a gun with me on the next long drop I do. That way, if I fall, I can shoot myself quickly, and won't have to wait to hit bottom. (Sound like a good idea?)

The biggest relief of my life came when I reached the lip. I got a firm grip on it with both hands, ready to hold myself up in case the rope finally decided to break when I was so close to safety. (Never mind the fact that if it did, I would also have to support the weight of the rope and the "human jumping bean" climbing below me, which I was not humanly capable of!) At last I was safe!

As soon as I could, I made my way further upward, passing the first of two lips, and promptly getting stuck in the second. After a few minutes of struggling to no avail, Cecile noticed me there, and said, "Do you want a cowtail?"

DUH!! I FELT STUPID! This was my first time climbing top-tandem, and I had forgot completely that there was a cowtail. This infuriated me! I was only two feet from where I could derig, but I could not get there because I had forgot about the cowtail! After a few more minutes, and a lovely fiasco, I finally got over the lip. I seriously pondered becoming deeply religious, as I thanked God when I put my feet down on solid ground.

Ch. 5 -- Rio Choy:

The last cave we did was Rio Choy. It was a nice, leisurely way to end out a great trip. The sky was clear, the weather was beautiful, and I had Rush plying away in my walkman as we set off for a "little hike" down some railroad tracks to the cave. And we continued to hike. And we continued to hike, with still no sign of the cave in

sight! And then I saw something off in the distance that resembled St. Louis. And we continued to hike. And then I noticed a sign that said "Welcome to Deluth". And then we had to cross a railroad bridge. A high bridge. A very high Bridge! Which provided us with a very good view of the river that seemed to be several miles below it, due to the fact that there was enough space between the railroad ties we were stepping over for a train to fall through! Crossing this bridge was "interesting", just about as "interesting" as having gall stones and diarrhea at the same time. And there, alas, was the cave. Actually we only hiked a few km down the track, and I enjoyed it, but the Jewish blood in me makes me able to complain about everything.

The cave had a fairly well-blazed path to it--a concrete staircase. My superb deductive reasoning told me someone might have been here before! My suspicions were further confirmed when we reached the cave mouth, and found a religious shrine inside it. But the shrine did contain a little statue of what I believe was the virgin Mary holding baby Jesus. Could that be considered "virgin" passage???

Rio Choy is similar to Steven's Gap. Add a little cave on top of Steven's Gap, take away the waterfall, and add a river at the bottom and you have Rio Choy. Basically what this means is that you rappel into a river. We were not sure of this fact, because you cannot see the bottom of the drop from the top, so we tossed a rock down it to make sure we knew what were rappelling into. We heard "thump-thump-thump" as it rolled down a hill. And then nothing.

Wait a second! If there was water down there, we would have heard a "Splash!", right? What was going on here?

We tossed a few more rocks down, producing the same effect as the first. By this time I was getting worried. I prayed that there would be a river down the drop. I also decided that if the bottom was dry, the only logical thing to do would be to KILL whoever told us about this cave, making us hike out here.

This cave, like the others we had done, was full of "firsts" for me. To start, preparing for the drop, I undressed in a religious shrine for my first time (is that a sin?). Then I caved barefoot for the first time, as I proceeded down to the drop. I must have been a sight to see, wearing nothing but a pair of shorts, my seat, my helmet, and holding a mini-mag in my mouth to see with as I clipped in my rack. A picture of me at this time, set next to the picture of Paul Hess wielding a machete on-rope at last semester's Pembroke tyrolean, with a big red "X" through both would probably make a poster that would win an award from any grotto's safety committee! Well, if I was safe all the time, someone might actually accuse me of being smart! I couldn't risk that!

The first thing I noticed about barefoot rappelling was that it hurts! The rough rock face my feet were on felt like it was covered with broken glass. The pain was worsened by the fact that I still was not sure what lay below me. However, I was definitely anxious to get down there to give my feet a rest.

I came down to a ledge, and went over its lip. Then, all of a sudden, I found myself in an immense room, with a huge pool of crystal-clear turquoise water at the bottom and light shining in from all directions. It seemed like entering heaven. I was waiting to see Noah, sailing an ark into the pool. I had to stop a second and think, "Did I die?". Then I remembered that if I had, I would have going in the other direction.

Having realized that I was alive, I promptly continued to descend, landing in a floating inner-tube, where I got off-rope. This was the life! There I was, relaxing in an inner-tube, floating in the middle of an area that looked exactly like paradise to me. I felt like I was in a summer time Bud-Lite commercial. All I needed now were the lovely women that usually accompany Spuds MacKenzie, and some ice-cold brewskies!

I got out of the tube and went for a swim. The only problem was I had one more phallic device attached to me than I normally have. Something much bigger and harder--my rack. This thing made swimming quite difficult, and drowning quite easy. I now know how John Holmes must have felt every time he went for a dip--and I pity him!

Aside from that, the water was great. It was thermally heated, and was a hell of a lot warmer than the air outside. Leaving it took all of the little strength I could muster. I felt like jumping back into the water, when I found myself going through "the walk of living hell", going back up a hill, back across the railroad tracks (which included crossing an even longer, higher bridge than the first one we had done), and finally back up the concrete staircase to the cave entrance. I was barefoot, and because of this, someone had taken great care to make sure that the entire path I followed was littered with small, sharp rocks, and even broken glass in a few places. The walk felt like an unlucky experience crossing a minefield. Next time I go there, I'm bringing sandals!

With the conclusion of that day, and another spent at Mexpelio, we headed home. Before we left, I gave Raul, a Mexican caver, the latest copy of the Trog, in an effort to be "diplomatic" and "spread the word" of VPI. I have my mind set to return there someday, and leave him with another.

Dave Warren

Another Mexico Story

If you want to go to Mexico in 1990 with Ko and Brian this article is for you. If you have been this will not be of much interest. (ed. note- not much fun to type either- Jerry writes in a version of cuneiform)

There is more to a Mexican cave trip than the rope work. It takes planning for both the individuals and the rope. The individual should make real sure their vertical gear is in top shape. I recommend that if the deepest drop you've climbed is in Virginia you go to TAG fall cave in. This will test your rig and endurance. A frog works great for 100-200 feet, but remember that Golondrinas is over 1000 feet. Practice getting off rope with someone below you-getting off rope after a tandem climb is tricky. Check your vertical rig. A gibbs ascender with a worn cam or jaw should be replaced. Frayed webbing replaced. Add a fourth ascender, preferably a petzl or jumar. This is for getting off rope and for spatfey at the top of a drop. A gibbs will work but is not as flexible. A cow tail is nice for safety, especially at Golondrinas. A battery powered light is best for this type of caving. A jug of water wouldnt hurt either.

In the clothing department pack lightly. There are many people going and you won't be able to change clothes twice a day. If you go to Tananul take a bathing suit. The area of Mexico you are visiting is very conservative. Skimpy clothing is nice but out of place in Tamapatz. The temperature in Mexico will be 70° or better. It will rain. Take lightweight boots that can double as hiking and vertical boots. Some hikes to caves are long and almost always uphill.

Money- Paul Kirchman and I drove our vans 4120 miles each. Fuel cost \$335/van. It's 15 hours to the border, folks drive in 3-4 hour shifts. You can survive on \$150 -this will buy misc food, trinkets and booze. Our trip combined cost about \$200/ea for gas, camping, hotels, group food and hidden expenses.

Planning and flexibility are essential to having a good trip. Several SOBER meetings should be called. At these you will discuss destinations, activities, shopping, eating etc. Costs can vary greatly- Hotel Victoria 170,000 pesos (\$60) for all eight persons. Hotel Valles camping -2 vans 23,000 pesos (\$8), Tamapatz (\$6 per room), Hotel Taminul \$20 for 2 person-room. You could slip extra people in but don't overdo it. Food there is expensive and bad. Advantages are hot spring pool, real toilets and hot water.

When camping simple meals are the easiest to make and clean up. We ate in groups of 4, which was our van size. Bring snack food, if you are a coffee addict bring a separate stove to make your brew. Eating out is fun but can be expensive. We had our most fun at El Ganolero east of Taninul. Worth the trip. The little one room restruant in Tamapatz is also worth eating at, it takes 23 hours to process (sic).

Mexican shopping is challanging. Buy in pesos and be prepared to bargain & shop around. Decide as a group when and how long to shop. Buying booze is cheap. Remember about the duty for bringing alcohol back across the border. The Blanco is a big discount store woth a try.

Many articles have been written for caving in Mexico so I won't add anything to this. Golandrinas is 3 miles from Tamapatz and you need a 3/8" bolt. Tamapats is 30 miles from Hotel Valles. It's 11.5 miles up the dirt road to Tamapatz.

Get the car insurance before you cross the border. It costs the same and they give you trip ideas. Carry your title, or some form of permission to posses the car. Passports cost \$35 and is easier at times at the border. If you are a US citizen all you need is a birth certificate. For crossing back into the US have all of your r Mexican purchaces accessable. Be polite and act cool. If you act nervous they suspect something. Answer questions directly and do not elaborate. If they want to know something they will ask.

The last suggestion is to learn some Spanish. Even a small amount helps. You are in their country so be cool. I hope this helps in preparing for a trip to Mexico.

Jerry Redder

NOTES ON THE GENERAL DISASSOCIATION OF HARD HATS, CHIN STRAPS, AND QUICK DEATH

by
Paul Kirchman

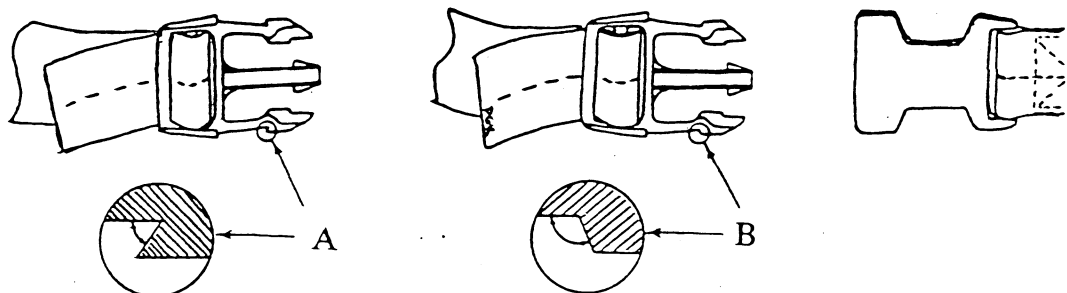
Yes, I can see you all asking yourselves what hard hats and chin straps have to do with quick death. But then what does toe cheese have to do with cheetos? It's just another example of the fundamental interconnectedness of things.

Anyway, this article is aimed at you cavers in the transition zone between "punk" and "old fart". You've been caving for a while, you've got money and you're upgrading your gear. Maybe you get a new helmet. You're tired of your old miners helmet with its limp, elastic chin strap. Besides, the damn thing falls off when you look up; it falls off when you look down; it flies off when you sneeze. So you buy yourself a more advanced (expensive) helmet with a four point suspension made of solid webbing. "This sucker", you think to yourself, "ain't never coming off". What you have probably forgotten here, is that there are times when you **need** to have your helmet fall off.

The scenario goes like this: chimney along in something tall and narrow, slip down an inch or so leaving your helmet stuck above you. There's no problem with an elastic chin strap; it has happened to many of us. However, this type of incident with a solid helmet suspension has claimed at least one life. A lesson with this high a price tag should never be forgotten.

I never really worried about this much until I found myself the proud owner of one of these fine helmets. The problem has been addressed. Some people use a breakaway stitched section; others follow the example of the palace guards and don't put the strap under the chin; others still, don't think about it. **THINK ABOUT IT!!!**

Being on the whole, rather lazy, I naturally stumbled on an easy to implement solution. The male component of a fastex buckle has two prongs which hook the sides of the female (God I love it when I talk like that). If these hooks are filed so that they slope in the opposite direction, the buckle itself becomes a reusable breakaway point. The amount of slope determines the force required to pull the connection apart. Experiment, change the slope until you can pull the helmet off with some difficulty, but without breaking your neck. If you overdo it, a new buckle is cheap enough so file away with impunity.



A. Original configuration - angle less than 90 degrees, locks
B. Modified buckle - angle more than 90 degrees, slides out

VPI CAVERS PARTICIPATE IN CRE '90

by Bob Simonds

During the evening hours of March 17th, I was laying in a hammock reading a well thumbed issue of Analog by the light of my REI headlamp when an object glanced off the page in front of me and fell to the ground. I leaned over to take a look at four-inch flying cockroach sitting there admonishing me with his antennae before he turned and clattered off over the dried bamboo leaves. It was our fourth night at Remote Camp outside Ciudad Neily, Costa Rica. It was very dark and very quiet and a chill ran up my spine. I decided it was time to quit reading and head for the safety of the mosquito netting of the tent. On the way, my light caught the reflections of a pair of eyes about fifty feet beyond the tent. Was it the pig that had inspected our garbage pit an hour or so before, or was it something else? I'll never know.

Only a week previously, Walt Pirie, Jean and myself had left the comforts of Blacksburg to take part in the second NSS Costa Rica Expedition, CRE '90. Three days and three airline flights later, we were standing alone at the end of a gravel landing strip in the jungle in southeastern Costa Rica. Our only connection to civilization was a promise from from a taxi driver named Carlos that he would come back for us in a half-hour. Twenty minutes later we were bouncing along in his diesel Land Cruiser on the way to Base Camp where we met up with about thirty other cavers who had already been there for a week. Some we had known from the first Costa Rica trip last year, CRE '89, but most were new to us.

Unlike last year's project which had only one camp, CRE '90 had two camps: a Base Camp on the outskirts of Ciudad Neily near where CRE '89 had been located, and a Remote Camp located about 3 kilometers up steep jungle trails. Base Camp was quite civilized and took care of the bulk of the scientific work. It was equipped with a hydro lab, a biological lab, an advanced first aid station, and even a computer for reducing survey data. Remote Camp was quite a bit more primitive but it was close to many of the caves that needed to be surveyed. The

idea was to eliminate many of the long and hot hikes to and from caves that had been such a part of CRE '89.

After a day in Base Camp to get oriented and to acclimate ourselves to the heat, Walt and Jean and I headed up to Remote Camp. The hike up was grueling. What weight we saved in our packs by eliminating winter backpacking gear was more than made up for by the extra caving gear we carried. Back-ups for everything from boots to lights were brought along; it was a long way back to the club store. As we climbed, we noticed limestone rocks which gave evidence to the karst nature of the terrain that was hidden by the jungle. We trod on plants that would cost in a greenhouse back home while stately mahogany trees dominated overhead. The trail opened to a view across a wide valley to mountains off in the distance. The Rio Corredor could be heard rumbling in a canyon below. As we watched, a raptor climbed out of the canyon, soared up past us, and disappeared into the blue without so much as flapping a wing. We continued along an easier path through a banana plantation, past a small farm and finally to Remote Camp.

Remote Camp consisted of a small house that the expedition rented for the project and usually hosted 8 to 10 cavers at a time. We stored our gear on the dirt floor inside, cooked and ate on what passed for a front porch, and slept in our tents around the outside. Water ran continuously from a plastic pipe coming from a spring about a quarter mile away. From a basin in the kitchen, the water continued on out of the house into a shower stall made caver-style from black plastic and duct tape. It was not considered polite to wash dishes while someone was in the shower. Remote Camp cuisine consisted of canned and dried food from back home together with fresh fruit and vegetables from the local area.

The next day, Walt and Jean and I started on a project that would dominate our participation in CRE '90: the mapping of Caverna La Bruja. "La bruja" translates to "the witch." Walt played the role of sketch while Jean was lead tape and I did my best to read instruments. For instruments, I preferred to use a tripod mounted Brunton for azimuth and a Sisteko for clino. The cave

had a 95-foot pit entrance and a walk-in entrance at the end of a large sink. The several hundred foot connecting passage was rather nasty, particularly near the pit. Costa Rican bats are rather robust critters, especially when compared to their gringo cousins. Add to that the fact that they feed 12 months a year, and the result is that the guano is always fresh and slimy. Fortunately, that bats seemed to prefer the area near the pit entrance leaving the rest of the cave relatively clean. From the walk-in entrance, the cave descended along about a 40 to 45-degree fault to the top of a drop.

The drop was typically rigged with a rope and rappelled down to a stream. Then to climb out, the rope was used as a safety. Although the climb gave the illusion of being much steeper, The survey revealed that it followed the same 40 to 45-degree slope as the rest of the cave. The illusion could have been caused by the fact that it "stairstepped" between levels and pitches of about 15 or 20 feet.

At the bottom of the drop a rather large river flowed over some nice rapids. Upstream and downstream it sumped in large pools so that stream passage only extended about 50 feet in either direction. The pools supported large populations of catfish measuring up to about 8 inches in length and pigmented. They didn't seem to be too bothered by our presence and we could even reach down and pet them without difficulty. There were also quite a few little animals that looked like crayfish to me although the English translation of their local name was "shrimp."

It took us five trips to survey La Bruja including one day to tie the two entrances to each other and to an overland survey. Meanwhile, other cavers surveyed neighboring caves to see how everything lined up. We believe that La Bruja is in the same fault as several other caves and that all the caves share a common underground river. As we got ready to leave Costa Rica, the hydrologists set traps and released die. So far, I have not heard the results.

Five days at Remote Camp was enough, however. We were ready to head down to Base Camp and COLD BEER. And the camp cook obliged us by meeting at us to the

entrance to Base Camp with ice-cold Imperiales.

We were going to take it easy the following day but then Bananal disease hit. Bananal was a going virgin cave on the other side of the Rio Corredor from La Bruja that promised the be "the" cave of CRE '90. Naturally, Walt and Jean and I didn't want to miss out. The next morning, we and five other survey teams headed in. We should have known what we were in for when the last thing Jeff Uhl, the survey coordinator, said as he ducked into the entrance was, "Just remember, I didn't force you to come into this cave." Well, he sure didn't have to force us to leave, either. Four nasty hours and several wrong turns later we finally figured out where we were supposed to start mapping. We then proceeded to map six stations in two hours before we decided to quit. We decided that we didn't go to Costa Rica to suffer so we headed out of the cave. Upon exiting the cave, the first stop was the Rio Corredor where we jumped in, clothes, cave packs and all, in an attempt to get rid of all the mud we had collected. A more thorough cleaning would have to wait until the next day.

By this time, CRE '90 was winding down. Jean and Walt went to a well decorated, although dead, cave called La Grand Galeria, while I lazed around camp practicing my Spanish with the Ticos. The next day we packed up and rode a government bus back to San José.

And two days after that we were once again in the comforts of Blacksburg: 40 degrees and raining.

How to be Considerate to your Fellow Cavers

1. Do not eat chili or refried beans for breakfast the morning of a caving trip. Enough said?
2. If caving with spouse/better half/someone you picked up at the Ton and are trying to scare off, please consider other caver's hormonal needs. If you can't control the urge to smooch or cop a feel, it is polite to at least offer to share with those not involved in the relationship.
3. It is physically dangerous as well as psychologically damaging to taunt and tease those members who spent the evening worshipping the porcelean god. If you still feel the need to engage in such cruel behavior, it is advisable to always go down rope after the tauntee in case they decide to show you exactly how much you are tormenting them.
4. Try to refrain from such graphic commentary as "be careful here, this is where what's his name fell and splatted like a rotten watermelon off a skyscraper. Boy, was he a mess, his brains were oozing and, hey! there's the stalagmite where he speared his balls!". Seriously folks, this is especially discouraging for trainees who spent the night like the poor soul in guideline #3.
5. Leave your load behind. In other words, the cave is not the place to dwell aloud on your daily trials and tribulations. Most people find it difficult to enjoy the trip if somebody else insists on moaning about their boss, hemmoroids, dovrice, childhood traumas, etc. Also in poor taste is transferrance of your anger onto other cavers. The following is a dramatic example of the potential consequences of such behavior.
Caver#1 tension!
Caver#2 What the hell do you mean by that? I suppose you've been talking to Betty Sue about my little problem. Well let me tell you buster, if you think I'm gonna belay a busybody like you you're dead wrong. Besides, you still owe me five bucks.
Caver#1 AAAAAAAH!! Splat.
6. When exiting in sub-zero weather, it is extremely uncool to keep announcing exactly how cold out it is. Such insightful observations as "Damn, I bet it's below zero out here! Boy, are we gonna freeze tonight!" are rather redundant when a snow drift covers the entrance and your cave pants are standing on their own.

Learning proper cave ettiquite is like learning to rappel, climb, or tie knots. Indeed, it is a skill that takes lots of thought and practice to master. While most of the time none of us really gives a flying *!\$# who does what, you never know when a little conscientious behaviour modification (or behavior repression as the case may be) might save your life.

Nat Serbu

Fresh, Young and Tight

In those wonderful days before I joined the cave club, I heard the phrase "fresh, young and tight". You all know exactly the context in which it was used. Well, after an interesting experience in Starnes cave I realized that this phrase is often used incorrectly. The phrase that is all too often used in reference to a youthful, virgin female is much more true underground than above.

You see, I had this interesting little experience in Starnes that began at a stream crawl in the lower section. We were following our fearless leader, Dave Colatosti, through the very meaning of cold. It was a small stream running down the middle of a fairly nice crawlway. Just before we headed into the crawl Dave made the statement that I would go last so that I could help from behind if necessary. I had no problem with this, I mean, what man in his right mind would not want to crawl behind Loretta, Natalie and 'Rapunzel'? What I failed to realize was that Dave had other things in mind.

We slipped down through the crawl with no problems to the end where a very cruel rock jutted down from the ceiling. The ceiling was only 18 or 20 inches high with a 2 inch deep stream. This mean little rock decided to take up residence right over a rise in the floor where the stream formed a small fall. The hole that was left between rock and floor was about 8 or 10 inches high. No problem. Plenty of room. Wrong!! When it came to be my turn to slide through this hole I found that there was no place to put my legs. They were off at a funny angle to the rest of my body. I decided to live with it and slithered through the hole into the room on the other side. At least most of me did. Of course it had to happen. Yeah, that's right. I got my ass stuck under the rock. So here I was with my ass stuck under a rock and a lake building up in front of my chest from the stream that couldn't get past me. After struggling for about 10 minutes, I looked up the passage to see our fearless leader coming back to rescue me. Or so I thought. He had to make a few rude, crude, and obnoxious comments concerning the part of my anatomy that was stuck. Finally he decided to give me a hand. A simple push into a different angle did the trick.

I will never forget the promise I made after I heaved my bulk into that room. Dave, you better not either. If you ever get stuck or something even remotely similar, I will act on it. I'll admit one thing though, the stream was fresh, I was young, and the passage was tight.

Hoss

The First Time is Always the Sweetest?

My first caving trip as a prospective member came the morning after my first Bargerfest experience. I was a bit uncomfortable caving when I could barely remember my name, but Paul assured me it would be a fun, relatively easy trip. Hell, why shouldn't I trust my life to this leather clad cave sprinter with the snake dangling from his ear? Besides, having been a JMU caver until this semester, the name "Spring Hollow" conjured up images of spacious, well lit passages, perhaps some hand rails, New Age music and a shop hawking cheese doodles and "I survived Spring Hollow" tee shirts. To clue you in to exactly how wrong I was, the trip consisted of myself, Bill, Paul Kirchman and the Zoes.

One of the first indications that maybe I should have stayed at Bargerfest was an exciting tummy crawl...no, a tummy slither, through a low stream passage. In my infinite wimpiness, I had been praying for a dry cave. The cave gods must have been pissed at me for neglecting to sacrifice a virgin at the party (I swear, I tried! Do you know how hard it is to find a virgin at a keg party?), because doing that particular passage was akin to dancing the jitter bug in a trash compactor full of dirty diapers. "How much longer, Papa Smurf?" "A lot longer than you think. Stop whimpering and crawl, you little blue vermin". Thus inspired, I managed to escape with both breasts still intact, only to come face to face with the BEAST.

Yes, it was everybody's good friend, Mr. Cable Ladder! Actually, going down was pretty cool. Things began to look pretty UNcool as I contemplated how I was supposed to get back up the damn thing. I'm convinced that the only thing worse than your first time up a cable ladder is your first time up a cable ladder in a waterfall. "Use your legs!" Simple enough. "Don't look up!" Oh, okay. "Don't look at the rope!" Got it. "Don't look down!" Aaah! No kidding. At this point, I began to panic. quite frankly, if I'd been the other cavers on the trip, I would have shot me down and ended my misery. Luckily, nobody there had a gun. In fact, they were so nice and patient about the whole thing I began to think they passed out Valiums while I was rigging in.

Spring Hollow was not only a very challenging cave, (to me at least!) it was also very beautiful. One of the most impressive things about the pretties was the great care that people had taken to preserve their beauty. The respect shown for the delicacy of the formations really made them a thousand times more special to me. I kept waiting for Queen Mab or Pan or one of those fairy dudes to show up and dance around. Maybe toss a few rose petals, drink some nectar from the crystal clear soda straws.

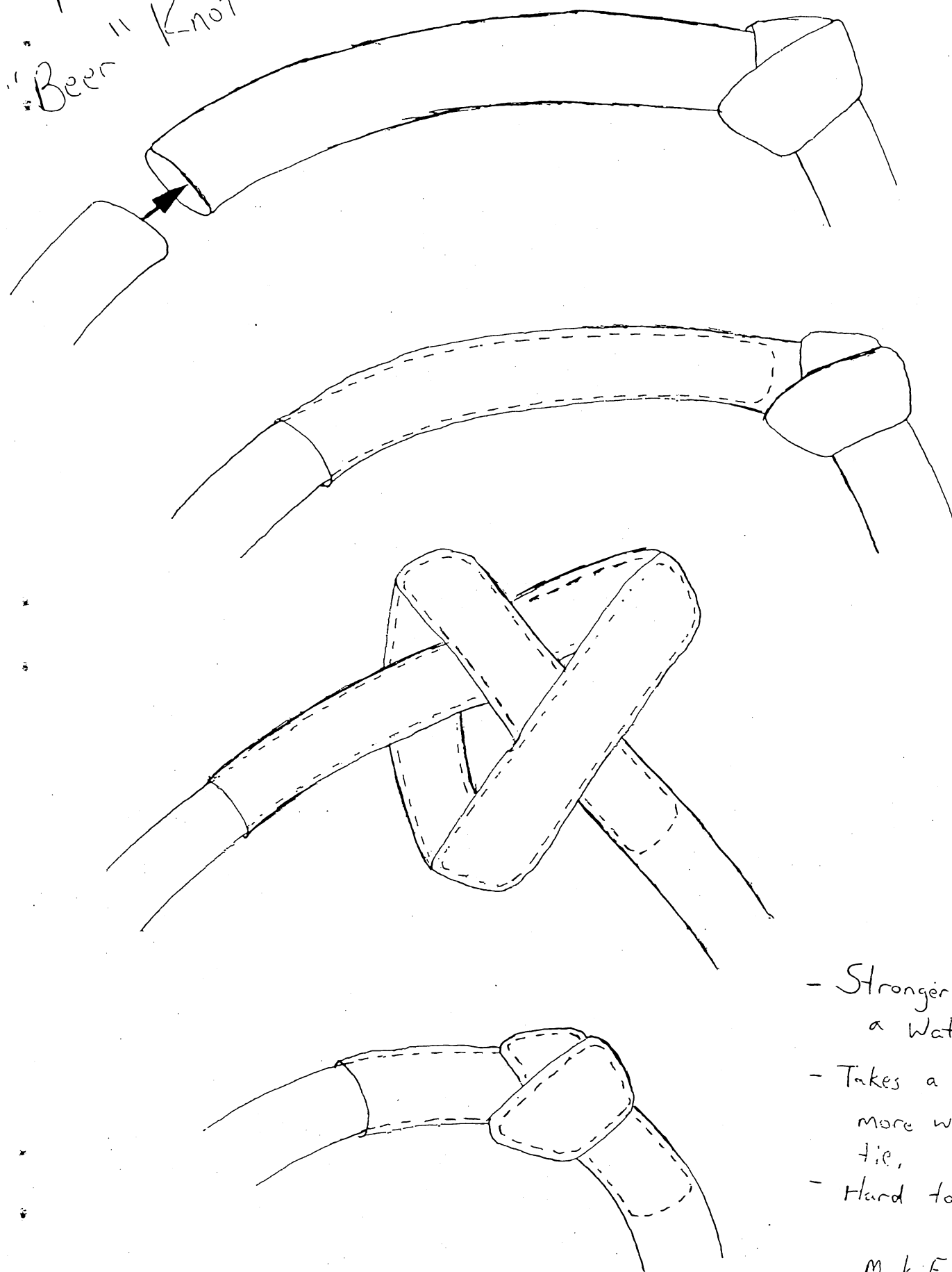
When we got out of the cave, I discovered that being exhausted and cold and wet has certain advantages. One, the beer that awaits you becomes a golden elixir the washes down the fine particles of dirt and mud clinging to your tongue. Two, it saves the lives of people who look at their watch and exclaim, "Gee, we were only in there for six and a half hours. I was hoping to get in at least eight." Paul was lucky I couldn't move my arm to swat him.

Finally, some advice to those first time trainees who want to go to Spring Hollow:

1. Make sure you stop by to meet the landowner, Buddy Penley. This man is a real man. Not only is he personable and funny but he's pretty cute for an older guy.
2. GO CAVING WITH CAROL ZO!!! She brought more food than I eat in a week. Awesome food too. Cookies and sandwiches and cold beer and even smoked oysters. Good stuff!
3. Never, never, never go to Bargerfest if you want to be alert and awake for caving the next day. Never go to Bargerfest if you value your neurons. You may wake up a few IQ points lower

Nat Serbu

The "Beer" Knot



- Stronger than a Water Knot,
- Takes a little more webbing to tie,
- Hard to tie.

Mark Eisenbies

The Force

I was working late in the lab. I was having problems debugging the system on my home made Cray super computer. Perhaps it was a foolish thought but I thought that it might be a problem with a funky looking electrical do-hicky in the back. Well as I sat there contemplating the possibility of fiddling with that electrical thing-a-ma-bob, I heard a low pitched rumbling sound coming from beneath me. As the rumbling grew louder, I began to realize that something was amiss and proceeded to move away from the area at a rather high velocity. No sooner had I leapt from my chair to the door, when my chair and the whole computer began sinking into the floor. Five years of research were being swallowed up by the earth.

I turned away from the scene in horror. It seemed as though the gods were against me. Would I ever leave Tech? But then I thought of how much money I had sunk into this computer. I turned back to the disastrous scene and what to my surprise did I see, but a huge hole in the middle of my lab where my supercomputer and chair once stood. The meaning of this all seemed clear, I wasn't meant to build a super computer and revolutionize the world. I was a caver, the hardy type. When I wasn't working I was caving. The gods were telling me something important, and I wasn't about to ignore them.

I went over and peered in the hole. down in the bottom of this 60 some odd foot pit was the sparkling mass that was once my supercomputer. The airflow was amazingly strong. I had never felt a breeze that strong before. Gathering some wires, diodes, dixie cups and ice cube trays from the far corners of the lab, I jerry rigged a simple airflow meter.

Hmmm? 50 mph winds! Incredible. I dug up the only computer I could find in the lab to do some complex calculations estimating length of passage and such. Unfortunately it was a Timex Sinclair. After five minutes of programming and two hours of run time the display indicated that there could be over a thousand miles of passage. Well, I needed to check this out. I mean, could the world's largest cave be right under my lab?

I was able to find several hundred feet of industrial strength extension cord, and a portable spot light. Perfect, a rope that could double as a light source. I quickly plugged in the extension cord and then proceeded to arm rappel down it.

The spot light worked amazingly well in lighting up the pit, but there was one small problem, I couldn't see any walls to the pit. Is this possible? I thought. I reached the bottom, wishing there had been more of a drop, my arms still had plenty of flesh on them.

It seemed as though there were no walls in this place. All I could see was a shaft of light from my lab. My spot light showed nothing but a floor that was dusty and dirty. The floor went in all directions. It seemed as though I had infinite choices of which way to go, but one direction seemed to call to me. It was a gut feeling. The kind you get when something is wrong. But this feeling was a good feeling, and I was in a state of mind to trust this feeling.

I had plenty of extension cord and a light as bright as the sun, so I figured, "what the heck, let's try and find a wall". So in accordance with my gut feeling I headed that way. I had no idea where I was going but it just felt right. I suddenly felt an urge to move quicker. Something was pulling me. It was an indescribable force. I had to go.

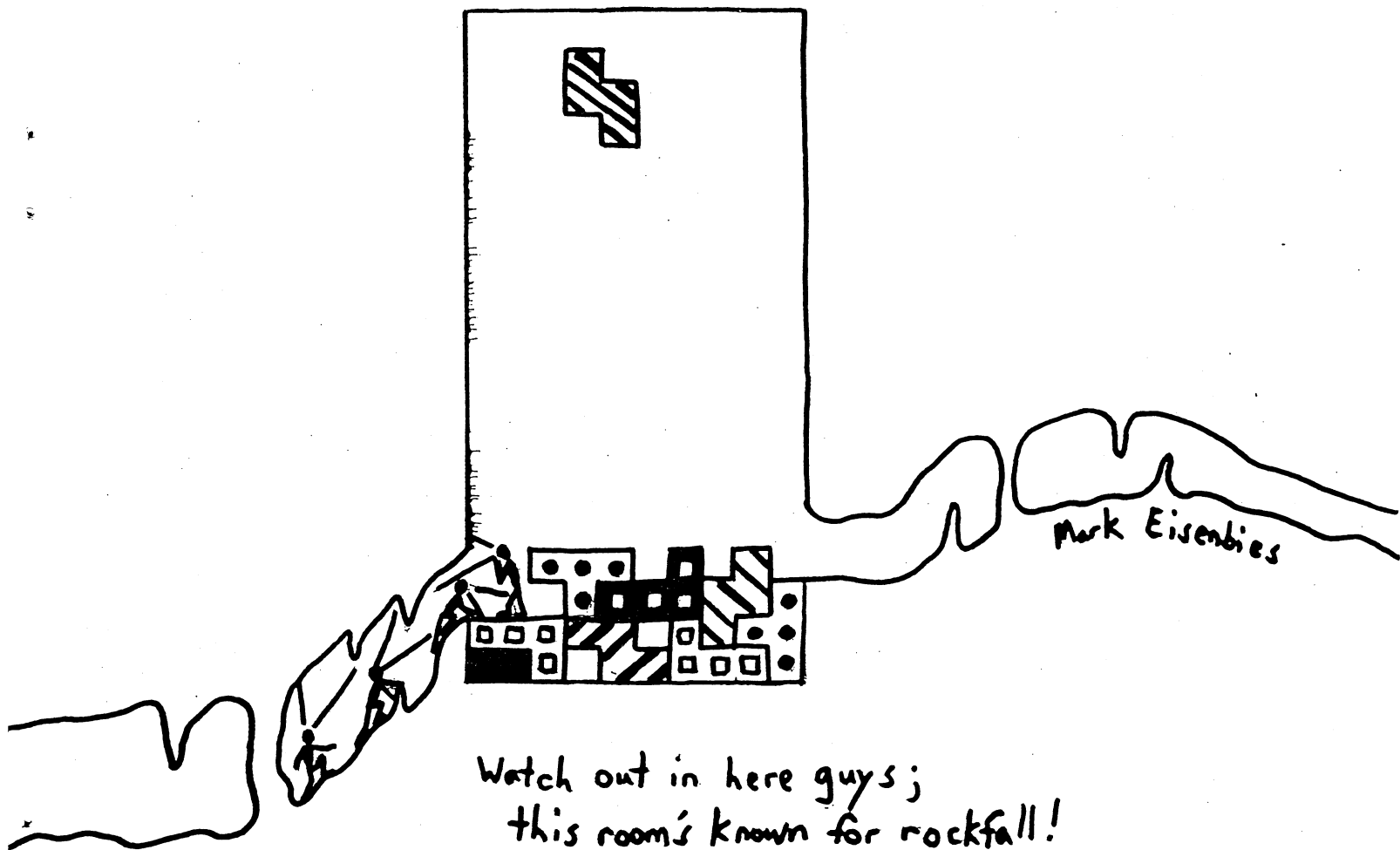
I felt my pace ever increasing. Soon I found myself running. Still I saw no wall. I was no longer in sight of my lab, but it didn't matter. The passage was going, I was going. It all seemed to be working.

I had reached the end of the extension cord without even knowing it. The light went out but it didn't matter. I could see what needed to be seen. It all began to make sense to me, I smiled and began to lift from the ground. I was now flying through the passage at fantastic speeds. The wind blew in my face. I closed my eyes, I was approaching Nirvana.

Suddenly there was an annoying beeping. I opened my eyes to find my face pressed against the aging keyboard of my outdated dinosaur-of-a-computer. The keyboard buffer was full and the computer was telling me this in a most annoying fashion. I raised my head and looked around. No hole, no supercomputer, no nothing. Just my room and a large pile of dirty cave gear in the corner. I was in another corner with my loft above me and the assorted things of my schoolwork around me. I understood that what I had experienced was my brain's reaction to sleep deprivation. I shook my head and began to concentrate on my computer screen and the project which was due in a few hours.

Suddenly I heard a low pitched rumbling...

David Colatosti



Sheep Dip, Sheep Shit, Dip Shit

I should have known better than to go caving with a man who actually leaves signout by 8 AM, but I didn't. Paul Kirchman, Tom Bank, Dave Colatosti, Natalie, Chummer & I took a joyous trip into the Sheep's Dip section of Bone Cave a couple of weeks ago.

As for leaving at 8 AM and entering the cave by 11:30 the piddle factor was low so we were forced to sacrifice Hoss to appease the cave Gods (an entire bottle of Mescal- the worm and all- will keep Hoss from caving the next day). The entrance to Bone was amazing, so much booming passage but suddenly I had the same feeling that Alice must have had in Wonderland-- either I'm growing or this cave is shrinking. The passage seemed to be getting smaller and smaller and then we entered S.O.B. alley. Awaiting us at the other end was the Devil's Pinch which we had been hearing horrid stories about. Nat and I damaged our female appendages (Ed. note- they seemed OK at the last sauna party) but were lucky to escape with them still attached. We weren't too far from this long awaited siphon, Sheep's Dip and the anticipation was killing us- ya right.

Paul was the first to go through. I thought his splashing sounds were pretty amusing and we all assumed ourselves that he must be kidding. Dave C. went next and informed us that Paul was not joking. As Nat splashed through, she cursed Paul's first born girl to be a sorority bimbo and the men seemed to be complaining of four tonsils (what do you suppose that means?).

With the exception of our heads and one dry strip down the middle of our backs we were soaked and decided to take a break. So, what's that quote from Speleorata? "Cave food on the bottom of your pack is edible if you scrap it first."- I think describes the condition our bagels were in but there's a difference between being edible and actually palatable. We held off on the bagels in the hopes that they would dry out and shrink to their original size. We continued on to do a loop with lots of pretties including some fossilized coral that will forever be imprinted on my hands. So, it was back through the Sheep's Dip, the pinch, and S.O.B. alley where we took another break and for the second time Paul offered us his cheese bread that Suki the dog had denied before the trip. This time the candy bars were gone and only the bagel's were left, so we devoured the cheese bread. Finally, when we got back to the booming passage we practically ran out to the star filled night in hopes to find Hoss with beer & pizza- no such luck.

The satisfaction of the whole trip came the next morning when Paul Kirchman admitted to actually being sore- what an accomplishment.

Sara Vieweg



How about that
Sheep's Dip?

January 13, a very unlucky day

Well, I guess I have put it off long enough. Now it is time to write my article. fortunately for me (unfortunately for those involved) Mike and Joe have provided me with an exciting story to relate. It all started at the party the night before (dosen't everything?) at Fergie's place. Good thing parties are there once a year, evil omen that it was. Rumor floated around that there was going to be a Norman trip the next day. I figured "Wow, great way to jump back into caving after break". After I had made the proper arrangements to meet the group out at the Farm, I inquired as to just how large our group had grown to. When I heard the number ten, I thought "Tomorrow is going to be long". Ha, a lot I knew!

Well, we arrived at the Farm at 10 AM and suprisingly enough, found activity! The rest of the group (those who did not live there) arrived promptly at noon. Seeing as no one had the foresight to purchase a large bus the previous evening, we were forced to take numerous smaller vehicles. So off set Mike, Maurya and myself in Mike's ailing green whisp of iron oxide. Now I will take this minute to point out that Mike did admit that he was reluctant to take his car, but did anyway, against his better judgement. We were closely followed by Joe's Subaru and Mac's Pac Rat. The ride to the cave was uneventful, at first. At an early stop along 460, Mac blissfully sailed past our vehicles, only to be informed by his passengers that the others had stopped. This first time was just practice, because he did turn around. Later, on 219, he breezed right by, unmindful of our passionate attempts to flag him down. This particular turn of events left Mac & Co. clueless to the tragic happenings we later experienced. This occured approximately ten minutes from the Norman entrance.

Being in West Virginia, of course Norman is located on a twisty back road. While travel on this sort of thorofare is tricky at best under ideal conditions, when there is snow pack on the road it becomes a nightmarish test of both the driver and vechicle. Since we were in Mike's car, still blazing tyhe trail up front, we noticed the problem first. This problem, the first of many, was a large car stuck on the snow trying to go up hill. A large local car. If the people who lived here could'nt make it we did'nt stand a chance. This was a bad sign. Luck prevailed however, and not only did the local car finally make it, but some foreign cars too (namely us). Not minutes later, a tremendous brown Cadillac zoomed by, heading the other way. We made it past this behemoth, but Joe was not as fortuitous as we later found out.

A couple of miles and a few tricky hills later, we realized that Joe was no longer following us on our quest for Norman and/or Mac. The milk of human kindness flowed forth from our hearts and overcame our primal urge to cave, so we turned back to seek Joe. On our way back yet another large car (maybe a Chevy, don't they drive anything small in WV, or are those Chevettes just waiting to grow up?) stopped to warn us about an accident up ahead. Well, at least now we knew what hapened to Uke. It was Mike's theory that Joe had backed into Mac but that wasn't the case.

What we discovered was the Joe had clipped the enormous Caddy that we had spotted earlier barreling down te road. Joe & crew did not look particularly happy, and the locals he hit looked downright dour. Having solved half of our puzzlement, we took off again toward the cave to find the other missing part of our party. Much to our chagrin, whilst going around a corner, we ahem, shall I say, encountered a pickup truck. the damage to Mike's Corolla looked remarkably similar to that of Joe's Subaru. There was consolation in the fact that we weren't troubling the Sheriff too much, seeing as he was already coming out to investigate Joe's mishap.

Well, to make a long story short, Mac & friends eventually showed up, as did the police who measured, inspected, doublechecked, investigated, wrote down names, and did everything short of taking 27 8x10 color glossy photos with circles and arrows and a paragraph on the back of each one... any way, and finally declared that the cavers were at fault. Thus persecuted adn denied our inalienable rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of booming passage we headed home with our tails between our legs, or rather our fenders tucked up into our wheel wells. We made it with the help of acidic BK coffee (we replaced the fine coffee at this fast food restaruant with oil sludge and rusting lug nuts), Neil Young, and lively discourse on any and every topic known to man. I think that next time someone announces a Norman trip, I will propose that we fly there.

Chris 'Jake' Brown

Ed. note- Mike and Joe were later convicted of driving with out of state plates.

What Makes Gorp Good
and
What Makes Good Gorp

Caving in it's own right is completely illogical. A group of people travelling through a dark, damp and dangerous domain sounds downright discouraging. If you're not on your toes you'll find yourself on your end. One thing you don't need is a complaining stomach.

Cave trips can easily last 10 hours. Since McDonalds has yet to laocate inside a cave (imagine that), the food must come along for the ride. Don't worry, due to the fact that a good large and strong breakfast is strongly recommended/required, a charcoal grill IS NOT NEEDED on the average cave trip. All you need is gorp.

But just what is gorp? Does it increase the shelf life of a twinkie? No. Does it cause cancer in laboratory animals? No. Does it make slimy, hungry cavers happy? Yes, yes, YES!!

Gorp is an art. It evolved from California granola, to trail mix, to what it is now. It's durable, inexpensive and easy to make. Everyone has their own personal formula for their favorite snack food. While formulating your own recipe, remember that the final product will spend it's life in a plastic bottle. It had better not spoil when taken in the caving under world. Gorp is also the fuel your body needs for that 'kick in the pants' to get you up that last climb. Sugars and carbohydrates work best. Pretzels and potato chips are good for a couple of days, then they turn to stale crumbs. Hard candy works well also, but a couple of trips to a damp cave will turn the gumdrops and butterscotches into a brick of sugar. Other varieties of mixed nuts, chocolates or dried fruits work well. My personal suggestion is to constantly mix and rotate the food to constantly refine your own unique brand of gorp. Not having a nagging stomach enhances the enjoyment of a cave trip.

Rich Geisler

Freud Meets Dr. Seuss in a Cave

As the date for my official membership draws near
and I find myself looking back on the year
I ponder caves and bridges gone by
I drink a beer and ask myself "why?"
Why do I climb and crawl underground
When I could be snuggled in bed safe and sound?
I could be home sleeping off the ache in my head
But I'm here in this cave dodging batshit instead
It must be the clothing-army is in!
I also get off on black and blue shins
And I groove on mud & guano & pain
And I live for changing my clothes in the rain
I cave for stalagmites, symbolic and sleek
The sight of the gypsum flowers just makes me weep
I thrive on cold & fear & sweat
The equipment I need has put me in debt
It's masochistic! It's twisted! Yet I know in my heart
I'll cave for these reasons till I'm an old fart

Nat Serbu

Quotable Quotes-

"Not all quotes mean what they say, they just sound that way."

DWC- Face it -you're a caver, you lack serious motivation.

KT- I don't like getting my tongue sticky.

NBS- I'd rather lick Joe than Buffalo Bill Cody.

JU- Once a month, that's all I ask.

NBS- I'll make him come.

MF- That looks like mechanically induced head.

JW to DB- Don't put that sandwich on that fossil.

CBS- Home is where you hang your head over.

MF- As club counselor I advise you to stay away from that woman.

PK- Jerry, there's a pig passing you on the right. Don't worry he took the first exit.

DWC- I'm going down to the Ton 80, where I don't have to deal with women.

KP- Maurya, it's not going to work; the hole's too small.

MH- Cavers can't be choosers.

ME- Rain, rain, fuck off.

JU- I just had my head sucked for three hours, I don't feel so good.

TB- It's her version of safe sex, by the time you get her shoes off she's no longer in the mood.

KP- If I wanted dick that bad I'd get it from anyone.

TB- I can't get it straight up, I've never been able to do that.

BC to SV- I'm not too sure until I stick it in and think about it.

JL- It feels pretty good once I get it in.

KP- I'm dented but not broken.

PK- I spent the afternoon surrounded by youthful enthusiasm, and I am about ready to puke.

LC- Can I try out your new clutch?

PK- (Calling trainee early in the morning) Hello maggot... Is this Keith?

KP- Look, I'd probably give someone a blowjob, ok?

AL- The only thing worse than wearing a cast is no sex with Glen.

BK- This beer has expired.

CZ- Drink fast.

NS- What is it about oysters? I don't understand.

TB- A man is willing to eat anything after an oyster; it cannot get much worse.

BC to DB- I'd rather sleep with a woman than a man.

DB- There's not much difference.

PB- Why is everyone laughing at me?

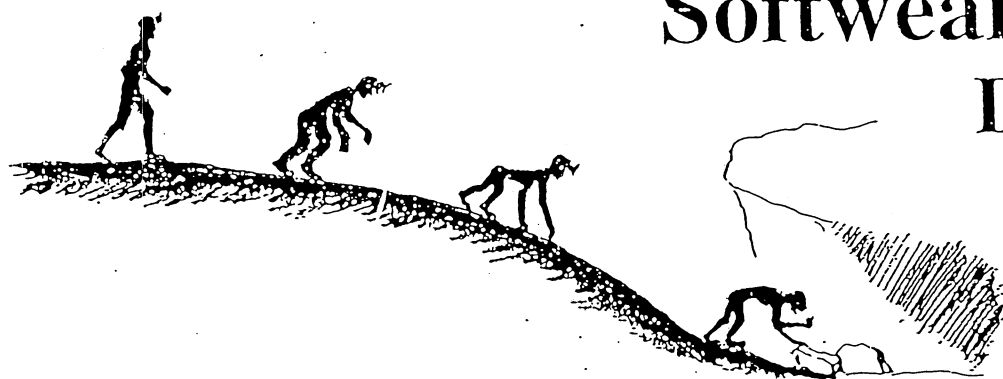
ME- Why does anyone laugh at you?

From the Signout

From 1/26/90 to 4/21/90 in 50 trips 1310 person hours were logged.

Clover Hollow	P. Balister, K. Posson E. Eisenbies, O. Morant	In 'and out with Kristen That's pretty much what we did the whole time.
Newberry-Banes	A. Hungerford, C. Brown M. Eisenbies, D. Colatosti S. Leiffer, R. Hlckerson J. Uknalis, K. Posson S. Vieweg	Rain, rain, fuck off
Sam Hancocks	S. Connor, R. Hogwood E. Fortney	Looked like shit, smelled like OTR
Banes Spring	P. Kirchman, B. Kirchman T. Bank, A. Baueom, G. Clotselter, B. Kraje	I have to go back once in a while so I remember why we don't go there
Starnes	D. Colatosti, S. Leiffer A. Hungerford	Things needed for the belly flop: 1. wool 2. electric lights 3. a reason
Stay High	S. Knapp, D. Bruce C. Stine	Heroic bolt climb to ceiling of Walnut room

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



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