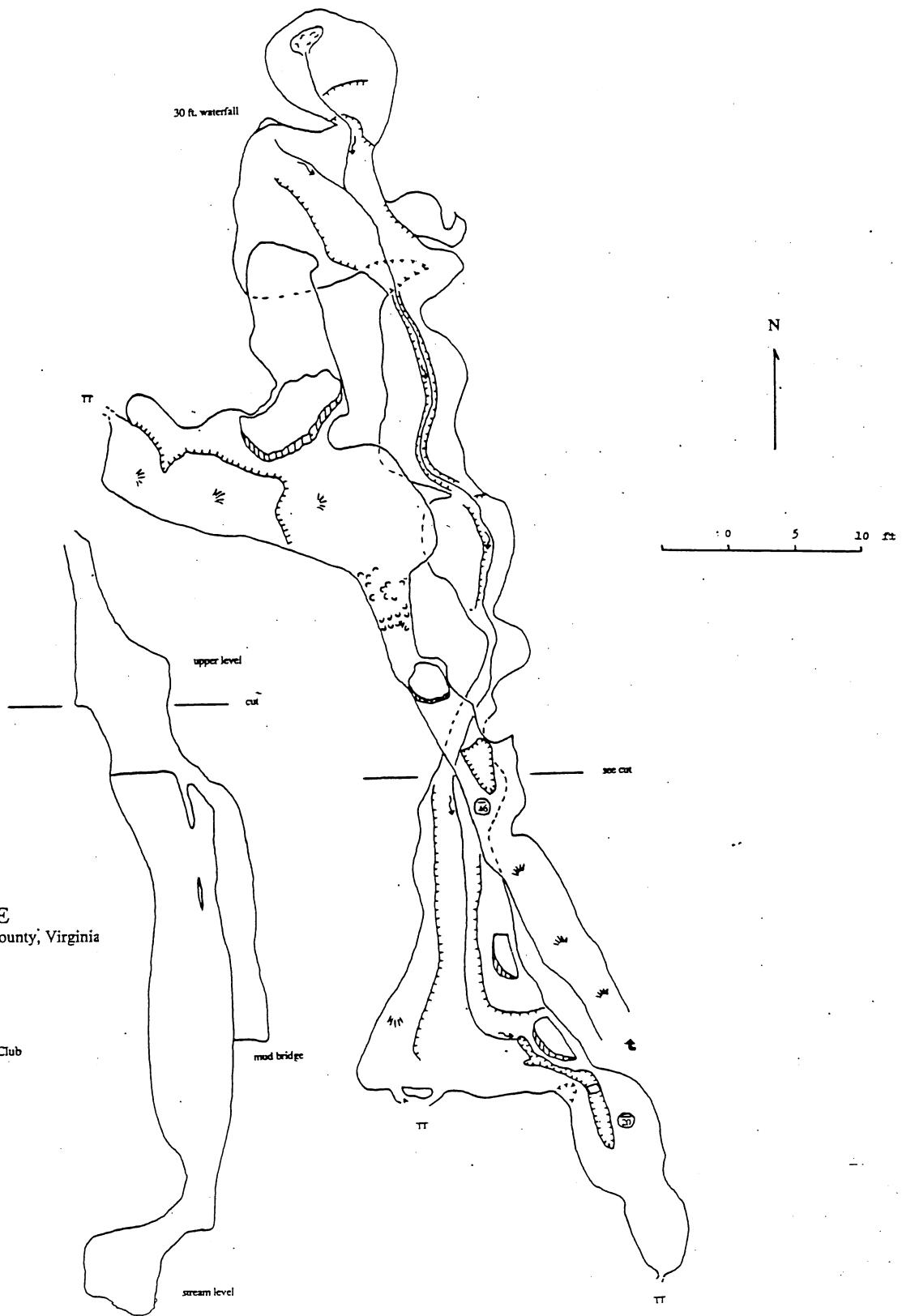


THE TECH TROGLODYTE

MAP BY
1988



WIRE HOLE

Eggleson Quadrangle; Giles County, Virginia

Elevation 1700 ft.

UTM
N 4123492.8
E 534829.56

Brunton & Tape Survey by the VPI Cave Club

Cartography — Craig T. Roberts

Thanks to: Kochiro Takamizawa
Reggie Reid
Tom Foster

Special Garrie Rouse Secret Wedding Issue

THE TECH TROGLODYTE

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

Spring Quarter, 1988

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



Volume XXVII, No.2

Editor.....Michael Fiore
Typist.....Kay Johnson

President's Column	Craig Roberts	1
Editor's Column	Michael Fiore	2
Letters to the Editor		3
Announcements		4
Grotto Grapevine		5
Caving in Southwestern Pennsylvania	Thomas Bank	8
GCCS Update	Jim Washington	11
Mexico '87	Bob Simonds	13
Obscene Excitement	Jim Gamble	17
A Beefy Rescue.	Douglas Dodd	19
Quotable Quotes.		21
The Official GCCS Trivia Quiz	Craig Roberts	22
Climbing Rope is Knot Easy	Dave Colatosti	23
From the Signout	Compiled by Ko Takamizawa	25

The Tech Troglyote is published biannually, pending the availability of material. All submissions, subscriptions, and inquiries should be sent to: Trog Editor, Box 558, Blacksburg, VA 24060.

HAVE YOU DONE YOUR GCCSING RECENTLY ?

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

This has certainly been the worst quarter of my graduate career. I broke up with my girlfriend the first week of classes, started working on my thesis, took two classes for "fun," and became the president of the VPI Cave Club. So far the task hasn't caused me much pain; aside from having to take care of scouting types who want their boys to go caving, I have had little to do. Of course we had the joy of deciding the fate of our CD funds, but now the fun is over and I'll have to settle for more mundane activities.

GCCSing is one of these activities (even though it is usually preempted by either boy scouts or school work), and although some alumni come back and laugh at the concept of GCCS, there are new caves to be found and old caves to be extended. Philip and I have been working in the area opposite Starnes, which is a very exciting but so far unyielding karst zone. Of course, Newberry-Bane's is still being mapped by the Zo's who are still looking for suckers. I might even do some surveying in Newberry's this summer, if GCCS doesn't get in the way, that is.

One of the more unpleasant aspects of my being new to this position is that I feel obligated to listen to drunk cavers who have good political observations. This will pass. ...I had something preachy here, but there is enough of that in the next paragraph. This way nobody will have to rescue me from drunk cavers with any sort of political observations.

Oh, yeah! Rescues... We have had a problem with people signing out. In particular, the people who sign out so they have just enough time to squeak in before we send someone to look for them. The problem is that people are not giving themselves any pad time, not realizing that we start a rescue procedure AT the given return time. Each trip needs to have enough time for travel, doing the planned cave trip, and for any minor problems (car and caving) or deviations from plans which might come up.

So, suppose you are leading a crossover trip to Newberry-Banes. Your party is made up of people you don't cave with enough to know what may make them freak; you should immediately give yourself an extra hour or two over your estimate. Then you need to consider travel time, time spent with Buddy, and the possibility of a flat tire or something. Then add it all up and think about it to make sure you didn't screw up (i.e. no pizza time included). Then consider when your return time will be. We don't want to have to get up at 3 a.m. to check if you are back. So, if having a rescue start at eight a.m. isn't good enough for you, sign out for eight and make arrangements with someone else (either for them to check the signout, or for you to call them at your real return time).

I think it is unfortunate that we are having the problems that we are. They are not coming from just new members or trainees, but are coming from older members in the club as well. I have discussed this problem with some people, and most seem to agree that it is more than simply obnoxious. I will be creating a statement of our signout policy to address the problem. I would like to have the opportunity to get some feedback before making any decisions, so I will wait until Fall Semester to make the policy available.

For the time being, anyone who causes a false rescue (without reasonable cause in the eyes of his/her peers) will be subject to severe public chastisement and forced to purchase a full keg of beer to supply the club's habit.

I'm through with bitching, so in the immortal words of my predecessor:

Yo!

Ben

Er, Ben? That's supposed to be "Oi!" -- Ed. note.



LETTER OF THE QUARTER

Dear A. I. Cartwright,

Your caving expertise is world renowned. That is why I am writing to you for advice. Let me begin by saying that I am a female student who has been very active in the student grotto. I have also done a lot of caving. I am an insatiable gear junkie which can be attested to by the pack I wear slung across my chest. Many comment that it is quite large.

Though I have a lot of gear, I am not comfortable with all of it. Let me relate an incident that happened to me recently.

My companions and I were exiting a cave when we came to a drop. We all free climbed it on the way in. It was rated as a 5-9 up climb, but as a down climb it would be rated as much harder -- at least a 6-9.

The others on the trip rigged a rope and rappelled it, but I was intent on down climbing. Many have told me that I am an expert on going down. The climb involved first traversing a series of naturally formed pools and then descending using a groove, created by a fracture in the rock, for handholds. I began going down by first rimming the dams, and then jamming both hands into the crack -- then making them into fists. My legs flailed wildly searching for the holds I used on the way up. Then, I remember looking at the rock. I noticed its color in the glare of my carbide lamp. Did I want it or already own it -- the rock or the color of the rock? The darkness above me called as soundly as the void below. And time, time was forever at one with the color, also with the darkness which was its absence. Knuckles scraping, open skin tasting the grit and trying to hold, hold onto everything -- rock, color, darkness, and time. It was everywhere -- everything was everywhere, especially time. And it was calling -- time, time and darkness and it promised. Promised to carry me up, upward and into time, the time of forever. Then it moved, the cave moved away and left me hanging in darkness and time. Time betrayed me and I went down, down into the sea of stars.

The stars cleared when one of my companions poured water onto my face and we exited the cave. This brings me to the point of my letter. The reason I attempted the down climb was because I don't feel comfortable on a standard rack. I don't like hanging on a rope with six bars as my only points of contact. Not until there are eight bars would I consider it being well hung.

What do you think?

(6-9 Climber)

6-9 Climber

Dear 6-9er,

Experts agree that it's not the number of bars but the diameter that determines safety.

A. I.



— Announcements —

NEW NUMBER!! New Eastern Region NCRC phone number is **804-674-2400**.

PLEASE RUN THIS NOTICE IN YOUR NEWSLETTER.

"Oh, really? What's in it for me?" --Ed.

Don't push us, Mike. We know about that incident at Lake Tahoe with stewardess and the gram of . . . "Okay! Okay!" - Ed. A 1 day course entitled "Speleology For Cavers" will be offered on Friday, July 1, 1988 at Convention. Experts will lecture on each of the following topics: Geology, Hydrology, Formations & Sediments, Meteorology, Biology, and Archaeology. Participants will receive printed course material. Lunch will be provided. The course will cost \$25. Registration will be limited to 40 people. To register, send a check or money order to: NSS Educational Opportunities in Speleology Committee (NSS EOSC), c/o J. C. Evans, Treasurer, 9 Pine Street, Maynard, Mass. 01754.

GROTTO GRAPEVINE

The one all-pervading event in the VPI Cave Club during the past quarter is GCCS (pronounced "gaawwks"). GCCS is actually an acronym for Giles County Cave Survey, a small part of the Virginia Cave Survey which is currently underway. VPI's contribution to the state-wide cave survey is concentrated in Giles County under the chairmanship of Jim Washington. Much of the cave survey work is true drudgery: surveying and ridgewalking, but the work gets done -- and club support has been high in more ways than one. Rumor has it that there may even be an official GCCS T-shirt appearing soon.

"GCCS" has even found its way into the club vocabulary. For the sake of all cavers, here are the official definitions of "GCCS":

(1) Shit. (as an exclamation). (2) Down. (a rope-call). (3) (when repeated: "GCCS, GCCS") Off rope. (another rope-call). (4) The name of the cave gods. ("GCCS be praised!") (5) Shut-up and sit down. (when chanted by more than one person at an obnoxious speaker: "GCCS! GCCS! GCCS!") Note that "GCCS" as a rope-call is discouraged since it sounds similar to "Rock!"

In addition to GCCSing, our international cavers have been at it again. Jerry Redder, Cecile James, Bob & Jean Simonds, Bob Alderson, Chris Amundson, Paul Hess, Paul & Berta Kirchman, Gary Moss, Don Anderson and Jean Hartman went to Mexico over Christmas with their native interpreter, Alejandro Villagomez. No one could figure out who was leading the trips to Golandrinias and the other classic caves. Despite illness, gear failure, and the Bob & Chris and Jean & Alec lovebirds, everyone enjoyed themselves.

Mike Futrell is our other Mexican caver -- he represented VPI on the Huatla expedition. While many cavers have been going to really deep caves, John Lohner is climbing Mt. McKinley. It takes all kinds!

There have been many surprises in the romance department this quarter. One of the biggest news items is Jenny Ford's engagement to Will Allender. The story broke on the night of the club's annual banquet, and it seems that we are all invited to the wedding in Morgantown sometime in July or August of 1989. Being the crass group of people that we are, we'll probably skip the wedding and crash the honeymoon -- everybody bring three sources of light! Wedding bells are also in the future for Garrie Rouse. He will be marrying Doug Abernathy's sister, Cheryl. Linda Oxenreider and Randy Stoutenburgh are getting married on October 22, and are planning an terrific party/reception. Jackie Redder and Bob Hoell are tying the knot on the same day with a small wedding. A wedding shower will be held for both couples on Saturday at OTR. Best wishes to our future couples!

ED Fortney has apparently succeeded in luring an unsuspecting female, named Kim, back to his apartment. We have seen Ed so rarely since then (except for fleeting glimpses as a mercenary caver), that he is the odds-on favorite for next year's PW award. Viola Richie and Mike Futrell are cohabitating in Luray, and Ed Devine and Linda Baker are living together somewhere in the D.C. megalopolis area. Beth Wichterman and Craig Roberts have gone separate ways once again, and "this time it's permanent". Or is it? Beth and Philip have dated a bit, now that Beth is a free woman, but don't expect much to happen there -- Beth plans on moving on to better things such as graduate school, exotic men, and/or higher adventure.

Joan Johnson moved in with Jim Gamble for three weeks while waiting to start her new job in Birmingham, Alabama. Jim tells us that Joan was eager to please, cooking meals, retrieving beers and slippers, cleaning, and doing laundry. We're a bit sceptical because Joan bought a new car quickly, and we suspect it was to avoid Jim's place. Keith Smith was on the trail in Alabama, but his crew deserted him. Kay Johnson also has a new job, working at Newman Library. Arby's loss is VA Tech's gain. People associated with the Cave Club are taking over the library with the likes of Joe Uknalis, Carol Zo., Kay, Suzanne Danielson, Bob Hoell, and Paul Hess working there. Meanwhile, Olver is dropping cavers like hot potatoes. Mike Frame quit at Olver. He's leaving his wife and going back to Alaska. Doug Bruce is now "unemployed over 95% of his body", and is in danger of becoming another Donahue addict. Jean Hartman finished student teaching, and is looking for a job in English as a Second language. She's working with upward bound students this summer at VPI. Don Anderson

missed picnic because he was studying for his Instrument Flight Rules license test. Ko has finally got his project under control, and may soon have his Master's degree. Richard Cobb is finishing up his Ph.D. What will he do with himself after that? Pat Nickinson won the Graduate Teaching Assistant of the Year award and got her picture and bio in the VPI newspapers. Congratulations! Dougo Bohn had an interview with a high-tech, defense-contractor type of company, but to get the job, he will have to pass the "whiz quiz". Just say no, Dougo. Mike Fiore, at odds with the current "Just say No" program, has been instructing a classroom of children in Pearisburg to "Just say No, Thank You." Finally, congratulations are in order for Craig Roberts who was accepted into veterinary school in Georgia (see photo).



THIS WILL BE THE FIRST VIEW OF THE NEW WORLD FOR SEVERAL YET-TO-BE-BORN CALVES

The annual banquet this year was held at the Blacksburg Country Club, way the hell out in the country. There were more than one hundred current and former cavers present, dressed in their best. Dougo Bohn was seen wearing a tie (probably borrowed). Joan Hedrick wore the favorite outfit of the evening, a very short, black leather dress with a low-cut mesh front that prompted hoots and whistles every time she inhaled. Philip Ballister volunteered to attend church with her the next day on the condition that she wear that dress.

Awards were presented at banquet. Beth Wichterman got the space cadet award. Ed Fortney was given "the tongue" award in absentia. Kat Teten received a free NSS membership as trainee of the year. Barry Fizer got the anti-PW award, while Kay Johnson got a special award for the most offspring. Several present were disappointed that the brain-bucket award was not given this year, especially with a worthy candidate, Cecile James, who flipped her truck this past year. Come on! She could have at least gotten the "safe-driver" award!

Jackie Redder got the A.I. Cartwright award for service above and beyond the call. Chuck Shorten was recognized for his spectacular feat at OTR with the flame-out award. The traditional "favorite landowner" award went to our traditional favorite landowner, Buddy Pendley. Jim Washington received an honorary landowner award in the form of a sign "Truspassers wil git gutt shot ded". Finally, Ko Takamizawa received recognition for his ability to get lost in a cave with a special "Exit" sign.

Craig Roberts, Ko Takamizawa, Beth Wichterman, Cecile James, and Philip Ballister went south over spring break to bounce pits in Georgia. Among their stops were Ruby Falls, and a fireworks stand. Philip bought a large quantity of fireworks, several of which came with him to Jim G.'s full-membership party. When things got dull, Philip launched a bottle rocket down the toilet, shattering the back and tank into tiny porcelain pieces. The toilet was post-humously

designated an ELMT and the bowl was presented to Dave Shantz at his 30th birthday party.

Another event of note at that same party was the Mike Fiore purity test. Mike administered a series of 400 questions about sex, drugs, trouble with the law, perversions, etc. to a group of people who aren't used to taking tests when they know the answers to the questions. Here are a few scores which were reported (0 being slime, 100 being virgin):

Jim Gamble -- 100; Paul Hess -- 42; Dougo Bohn -- 27; Mike Fiore -- 50; Sallie Pearson -- 51. Draw your own conclusions about Mike and Sallie's scores being so close together.

Dave Shantz's 30th birthday coincided with another one of Jackie Redder's "girls only" parties. Those celebrating Dave's birthday had about a five-hour head-start, and decided to crash the other party with the help of Berta Kirchman. Berta played decoy, getting the door open for Philip Ballister, Dave Cinsavich, Dave Shantz, Mike Futrell, and Paul Kirchman, who streaked through the living room for the amusement of the assembled ladies. Beth Wichterman claims to have had the best view, but is kicking herself because she wasn't wearing her glasses at the time. Dave Cinsavich is sure to be recognized in next year's awards ceremony for tripping and falling at a moment when speed was crucial.

Certain female members of the club have gone to great lengths in the cause of feminism this past quarter. Of special note is Cecile James' trip to New River cave with 16 boy scouts. This is the current club record. Sallie Pearson comes in second for being the lone female on a trip to Pig Hole with 5 men, and Beth Wichterman is third as the lone female on a caving trip with 3 men.

Craig Roberts, Mike Fiore, and Jim Washington made the front page of the Current Section in the Roanoke Times as daring VPI cavers. They took two women reporters to Starnes' Caverns and told them that a VPI caver can "disassemble, re-fuel, and re-assemble a carbide lamp in seconds."

A number of VPI cavers made themselves unwelcome in Harrisonburg this spring at JMU's spring fling, held at Aqua Campgrounds. Not everybody has a sense of humor.

The Cave Club elected new officers in March. The newly elected are: Ben Keller, president; Paul Hess, vice-president; Jim Gamble, treasurer; and Dougo Bohn, secretary.

Speaking of Dougo, this is one person to watch out for. Since becoming a full member, Dougo has some impressive achievements to his credit. He has been picked up for drunk-in-public (he fell asleep outside of South Main St. Cafe). He has been nominated for the club's homecoming queen candidate. He has joined Paul Hess as a co-club-gigolo. Expect big things from this man by the time he becomes a senior (assuming he still prefers the company of the Cave Club to that of his old cell-mates. Squeaa!) Dougo's hair grease is rapidly becoming legendary.

The annual picnic took place in the traditional field at Buddy Pendley's. Six die-hards biked the approximately forty-five miles from Blacksburg to Skydusky Hollow. They were : Philip Ballister, Beth Wichterman, Jean and Bob Simonds, Ko Takamizawa, and Barbara Goodreau. Barb is living in Bedford now, and has become a mother recently. The only mishap of the picnic was when Theresa Croft stepped in a hole and broke/sprained her ankle. Mike Fiore suggested that much fun could be had by shooting drunks with a dart-gun filled with heroin and thorazine mixture. The one notable caving incident to be reported was that at some point climbing up the Devil's staircase, Cecile James couldn't get her derriere over a climb, and required some gentlemanly assistance from Tom Banks. As for the rest of the picnic, the assembled cavers enjoyed a weekend of caving, volleyball, beer-drinking, eating, bonfire-ing, singing, and the traditional Sunday drink-marathon to finish the kegs. Much credit goes to Jim Gamble, picnic chairperson; Joe Uknalis, food subcommittee; and the warmed up, pre-cooked pig.

Upcoming events: Craig Roberts is float trip admiral this year. Float trip will be a week after finals. Don't forget OTR on labor day weekend. Glen Davis and Jerry Redder will be coordinating OTR work weekends on July 16th and August 20th at the OTR site in Daley W.VA. Glen and Jerry tried to get fired by drinking, getting rowdy, and insisting on answers at the OTR meeting they attended, but Bob Amundson maintained order, and they got a budget increase instead.

GCCS!

(Ed note -- I won't tell you who wrote most of this, but I will tell you who didn't: everybody in the club except Jim Gamble.)

Caving in Southeastern Pennsylvania

or

"You call this a f---ing cave?"
(You get the idea)

by
Thomas Bank

PART I (Late Summer, 1987)

After getting some minor caving experience in the State College area of Pennsylvania, my friend, Mark, and I decided to find out what sort of caves our local area had to offer. We had heard of a few caves and their general locations from several people and picked a nice afternoon so that we really would not mind tramping around all afternoon looking for holes in the ground. Packing our helmets and carbide lamps, change of clothes, and everything else into the back of my '74 Peugeot station wagon we drove to the first site.

"Lisburn Cave" was on private property so we went up to the landowner's house to see if we could get permission to go into the cave. Not having any club membership behind us, our appearance worked against us and we did not get anywhere. A second cave, known locally as "Yellow Breeches Cave," was supposedly about 1000 feet downstream from a steel truss bridge over the Yellow Breeches Stream. We drove past the bridge every day to get to high school so locating that was no problem. This was nearby to Lisburn and was not on private property so we decided to check it out. We arrived at the scene, readied our gear, and set off down the west side of the creek after figuring that the east side was a lot harder to negotiate. After a bit of hiking and one run-in with an enraged raccoon (shit scale rating rather low) we spotted the outcrop of rock and the entrance. Of course it was on the other side (medium shit scale rating). Rather than going back and coming down the other side, we waded across the stream to the entrance which was located in a waist-deep pool of water.

Climbing up into the cave we got out of the water. The floor was loose dirt for the most part and stuck very nicely to our wet clothes. The "cave" turned out to be a fissure through the limestone that opened up at the bottom nearly enough for one person to crawl through. After fifty feet and the spotting of one "pale red salamander" the fissure opened up into a "room" three times as wide as the passage and high enough to nearly sit up.

After crawling out looking like creatures from the brown mud lagoon, we decided that this would be a nice place to go to drink beer or take girls to go skinny-dipping without being bothered, but as a cave it rated rather high on the shit scale. The rest of the summer was spent canoeing and making home-made bombs to blow things up (generally anything clearing an 8.5 on the shit scale). We figured that until we had more experience with landowners, possible club backing, and some better caves, we had better leave caving alone for a while.

PART II (Thanksgiving Break, 1987)

After returning to Virginia Tech and meeting up with the cave club my interest was once again turned toward finding caves around home that could be explored during breaks and summer vacations. Once again Mark and I got together and went in search of suitable caving material.

Our biggest discovery was the state book store in Harrisburg (the capitol of Pennsylvania and roughly fifteen minutes from home). Mark was doing a research paper for his geology class in college and needed mineralogical maps of the area. He had heard from his professor that he could get them at the book store and I ended up tagging along.

While he looked around for the maps that he needed I wandered around looking at what they had to offer. It was mainly pamphlets and short books published by the department of environmental resources as well as every other department in the Pennsylvania government adding their fair share. After flipping through a study of "Provenance, dispersal, and depositional environments of Triassic sediments in the Newark-Gettysburg Basins" I came across a book called "Geology and Biology of Pennsylvania Caves." Looking further, I also found folders bearing the names "Caves of Western Pennsylvania" and "Caves of Southeastern Pennsylvania." Mark purchased the maps that he needed and I bought the book and two folders that caught my attention.

Returning home and opening the packages, we found that the folders contained books filled with descriptions and small maps of quite a number of caves along with a number of separate maps of more interesting caves, some that were actually in our area. The book had rather interesting studies of how caves are formed, hydrologic models, various animals that inhabit them, and all sorts of interesting tidbits of information.

The folders added other information. The cave we had explored that summer was officially "Yellow Breeches Cave #1." "Yellow Breeches Cave #2" was a bit further downstream and was a bit (but not much) larger. We also discovered a few more local caves and noticed that the large caves in the area (still much smaller than the caves I knew from Tech) were located further south, toward York. The end of break put things off until Christmas.

PART III (Christmas Break, 1987)

After only one caving trip during the last three weeks of the quarter (with Don Anderson to Pig Hole) I was once again ready to search out local caves back home.

The books and maps from the state book store told of several caves that would not require too much hiking to check out. The first two on our agenda were located on the bank of the Susquehanna River (which flows past Harrisburg). The first cave turned out to open out onto a rather major road. After determining that we probably could get into it, but that it would have

to be at about three in the morning to avoid notice, we set off in search of the other cave. This one was more remote, being in the side of a cut made for a railroad track. Unfortunately, upon further investigation it proved to be filled with track ballast after several feet so that small children would not get lost in it. We decided that gated or otherwise closed caves had a value on the shit scale to be determined later and left it at that.

Another pair of caves was sighted. Our trusty books denoted them "Williams Grove Caves #1 and #2." Once again they were on the opposite side of the Yellow Breeches Stream (which curves through half of the county). This time the stream was wider and December temperatures proved to be a bit cold for wading across. The combination rated high enough on the shit scale to deter any attempts at further exploration. The caves were filed away for summer exploration and a note was made that we should check out the hypothesis that Pennsylvania caves usually came in pairs.

The rest of the break was filled out with minor crimes (seven in all) and the usual holiday festivities.

PART IV (Spring Break, 1988)

Given one week and four interviews in two states, there was not much time left for caving. The final Saturday was set aside for some activity. The choice came down to drunk canoeing, searching for caves, or blowing something up.

When Saturday came, the weather rated rather high on the shit scale which ruled out the first two ideas. Explosions always look best at night so we spent the day playing computer games and committed the usual crimes (only four) and did some interesting pyrotechnical displays (including a rather impressive four foot diameter fireball) before I returned to Tech Sunday morning.

CONCLUSION (Summer Vacation, 1988)

Plans are being made to connect up with York Grotto in Pennsylvania so as to not be totally bored this summer. Also, possible trips to State College and Blacksburg to do some caving with Nittany Grotto and VPI are being considered. Further drunk canoeing, explosive manufacturing, skinny-dipping with fair maidens, minor crimes, and a standardization of the shit scale are being tossed around. As always, most plans will be thrown out the window and natural chaos and spontaneous activity will replace them.

G.C.C.S Update

The Giles County Cave Survey is going slowly but surely, as expected. There are still well over one hundred caves to locate and map, but some progress has been made and continues to be made. The following mini-reports are in no particular order, they are just going on the page as I think of them:

Just a few months ago, Chicken Hole was a promising lead in the Sugar Run drainage. After several rock-pounding trips, it now stands as a promising lead 2 1/2 KBL (Ko Takamizawa Body-Lengths) long. Apparently more spectacular is the view of Philip Balister's car silhouetted against the skyline, particularly after you have had a few sips of peach-flavored brandy (the official Winter drink of GCCS.) When asked why Chicken Hole deserves so much attention, Balister will reply with the famous excuse, "lots of air..."

A whole horde of people have now seen Beanie Hole, such as it is. First recognized as a good, easy dig by Jim and Dave Washington, its location above the major resurgence of Sinking Creek has made several digging trips seem worthwhile. Jim, Dave, Maureen, Mike Palethorp, Doug Dodd, and Kent Carlson have all taken their turns so far. With 37 feet so far excavated, it now appears that Ed Devine's Improved Digging System will be needed, along with the proven-to-be-good fireplace implements. The plentiful bones in the dig have been identified by Fred Grady as coming from deer, woodchuck, woodrat, striped skunk, a medium-sized bird, a turtle, and a large catfish, none of which seemed particularly old.

Actual surveying is progressing in Wire Hole and Straleys Cave #2. Both caves will require "one more trip," but we've heard that before.

Mike Futrell and the Wilburn Valley Project continue to find more things that go down in Yer Cave (18 roped drops at last count). Price's Strike Cave is also a going enterprise. "Map as you find it" has turned several Wilburn trips into grueling expeditions. Blobs of mud emerging from these caves are often later identified as Doug Bruce, John Dowell, and Jack Kehoe.

Keith Goggin, Bob Amundsen, and "that crowd" haven't worked their turf in a while, but initial reports of tight drops with tight crawls at the bottom indicate that "this crowd" isn't missing much.

Completed surveys for this report include only Pembroke Railroad Cave #1 (45 ft.), Pembroke Railroad Cave #2 (268 ft.), and Sibolds Cave (73 ft.), all of which appeared in Douglas in some form or another.

Ridgewalking was the prime focus of GCCS this past season, with scores of beers logged in the process. Clover Hollow was walked again several times. Jim, Mike Fiore, and Sallie Pearson relocated Jim Millers Cave after braving vicious (though friendly) herds of sheep and finding that the most promising sinkhole in the hollow has a new pond in the bottom. Jim, Mike,

and Craig Roberts relocated Small Room Cave and found a dig under a Pontiac hood. The BIG HOLE two-thirds of the way up John's Creek Mountain is just an illusion (just ask Mr. Price, the owner), but it really should be checked. Anyone for a vertical hike? Jim and Dave Colatosti also found a new cave near Clover Hollow Cave that needs to be dug open, but haven't been able to obtain permission to do so.

Jim, Tom Bank, and Cecile James found a few almost-diggable things with obvious air-flow near Pig Hole. Hail, rain, and lightning bolts hindered the excursion, which was really only trying to find Echols Cave to survey it. Mission not accomplished, although the natives were quite hospitable.

Jackie Redder is working on a lead or two inside the Pembroke town limits.

Cecile did some cave-hunting near Staffordsville and found some of the Big Walker Creek Caves.

Cecile and Craig also plumbed Three Second Pit. The pit is a total of 140 ft. deep, with three off-set drops.

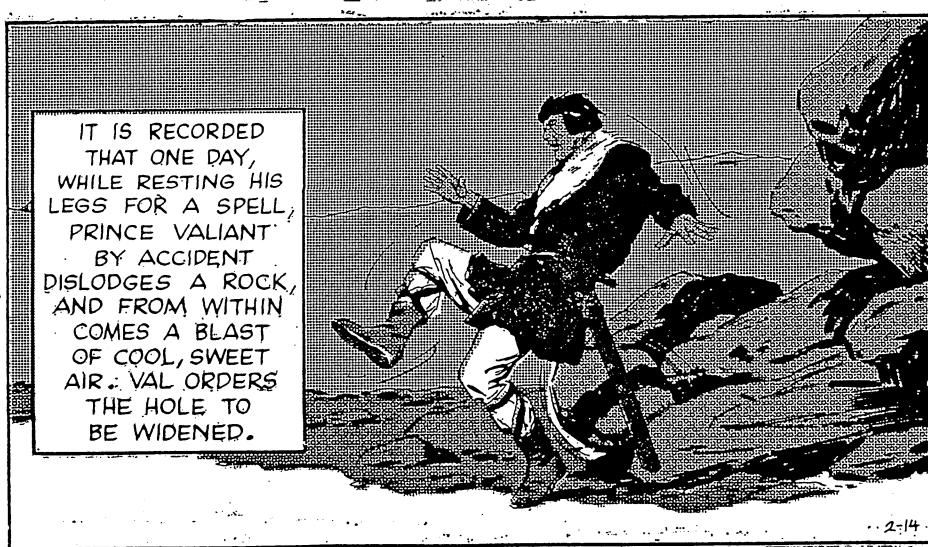
Dave C. and Sallie found that locating Saltpeter Cave Branch Cave is difficult if you can't figure out which creek is Saltpeter Branch. The cave continues to elude and confound.

Work continues on locating existing maps of some of the major caves in the county. VSS still does not have the most recent maps of New River, Pig Hole, Kimballton Mine, Wilburn Valley, Starnes, and probably several others.

Total footage for Giles stands at 111,907 ft. in 33 caves for which the surveys are complete, and 11,060 ft. estimated in 110 caves for which we have estimates. Fifty-odd caves in the VSS locator remain that we have very little information on, and more new ones keep appearing at our feet. A few of the mapped caves probably deserve to be redone.

There is still a lot of work to do.

--Jim Washington



Mexico '87

or
THE MEXICO 13
by Bob Simonds

The VPI Christmas '87 Mexico trip consisted of Cecile James, Don "Grand-Don" Anderson, Gary Moss, Jean "Juanita" Hartman, Alejandro Villagomez, Jerry "Fat Boy" Redder, Paul "Pablo" Hess, Paul and Berta Kirchman, Chris Amundson, Bob Alderson, and Jean and Bob Simonds; the "Mexico 13." Twelve of us shoved off out of B'burg as soon as we got the cars packed which was about midnight, Friday, Dec. 18. That put us in Houston 24 hours later where we met up with Alex and crashed for about six hours at Kirsten Pirie's house. The cat ran immediately to Bob Alderson, who, of course, hates cats.

We crossed into Mexico late Sunday, Dec. 20, and then drove on to Ciudad Victoria that night, thereby breaking one of the basic rules of Mexican travel: don't drive at night. Monday morning we hit the market for last grocery items as we planned on camping for the next several nights. Then it took us several hours to find and buy automobile insurance so we didn't get out of town as quickly as we wanted. The place we dealt with wasn't really set to sell turista insurance. Lesson: get insurance ahead of time or at least at the border where they are set up to sell turista insurance. We finally left Victoria in the early afternoon still planning to do a pit that day.

Later that day, Monday, we did Cueva del Abra, a good warm up with a 385' rappel and a 100' (although it seemed like less) climb out. Some of the more gung-ho types (Pablo, Juanita, Paul, Berta, and Alex) did it backwards. Not me. I knew that I had enough climbing ahead. We got on the road again well after dark, heading for the mountains south of Ciudad Valles. It had started to rain before we turned off the highway onto the rough dirt road that leads eventually to Tamapatz. We got to San Isidro at about midnight where we crashed in front of a small store on a concrete slab used to dry coffee beans. It had been a long day and even though we had only been in Mexico for about 30 hours, it seemed much much longer.

We woke up Tuesday to fog and rain and readied ourselves to do Hoya de Huahuas, about a 45 minute hike up through the jungle above San Isidro. The pit had a mysterious air to it as the fog came and went all day and often we couldn't see across the 300' or so diameter of the entrance. Both sides were rigged: the 700' side was double rigged for rappelling, although some people climbed it also; and a 470' side for climbing. The bottom was awesome at six acres or so and with a large hole leading lower off to one side. And there was the sound of hundreds of parrots squabbling in their nests invisible somewhere up above. The entrance was fairly large, and the pit was "relatively" shallow so there was quite a bit of light at the bottom which meant green plants and the ability to take pictures. The 470' climb out was interesting as it was the second longest I had ever done and the first of any length in anything approaching daylight. It was

strange to be able to see the entire bottom and the walls during the climb. Progress seemed slow, though, as the walls were far away. I'm not sure which bothers me more: being in daylight and able to see the walls and bottom and therefore feeling insignificant; or being in darkness and unable to see the walls and bottom and therefore feeling insignificant.

We got back to camp in the rain and dark and considered going to Tamapatz that night to do Golandrinas the next day. Eventually, better sense prevailed and we decided to slow down the pace that had been flogging us since we left Blacksburg four nights before. We'd camp at San Isidro again that night and go up to Tamapatz the next day and do Golandrinas the day after that, Christmas Eve. Also, there was something said about calling bad luck by doing Huahuas one day and Golandrinas the next.

By the time we got under way again on Wednesday, Dec. 23, the sun was coming out which was really nice as we had been in clouds and rain almost constantly since leaving Blacksburg. We drove the rest of the way to Tamapatz in an hour or two, first gear all the way, and secured a "hotel": several rooms without electricity or furniture for less than \$2/night on the roof of a coffee warehouse. The sanitary facilities were promptly dubbed the "Black Hole of Tamapatz." This would be home for the next five nights. We spread out and rechecked out gear as the next day was going to be the BIG one, the one we'd all heard about since the beginning of our vertical caving careers.

Christmas Eve morning dawned bright and sunny. We ate and loaded up in the cars for the additional mile or two drive to the area of the cave. The short hike from the road to the pit turned into quite a procession: twelve gringos, one Mexican gringo, and about fifty Mexican porters, guides and followers. Naturally, every little kid wanted a piece of the action so you end up paying each of them something like 100 pesos (about 5 cents) to carry daypacks and things like that. A short hike down through bananas and coffee, you come to THE PIT: El Sotano de las Golandrinas.

It was quite a circus at the top of the pit: riggers trying to rig two 1500' ropes amidst jabbering Mexicans and the rest of us just trying to get our nerves in order. The first two rappelers nervously went over the edge then the next two, all with almost a carnival atmosphere at the edge with all the Mexicans. Chris Amundson and Gary Moss were not going to do the pit: Chris felt that she didn't have the vertical experience and Gary's climb out of Huahuas left him feeling that he wasn't prepared to climb 1100'. At about this time I decided that I wasn't going to do it either: too fuckin' scared. I wished Jean well and told her to take lots of pictures. I'd content myself with the beautiful day at the top of the drop. After the last rappelers were gone most of the Mexicans left and it got very quiet. Shit. I'd come all this way and then I didn't DO it. Don Anderson's voice came up from the depths over the radio: "This is beautiful. That's the most fantastic rappel I've ever had." Shit. Pause. Well hell, I'll do it anyway. I better go now though, before I change my mind. I threw my vertical stuff into my pack, having to swap some

of it out of the rigging with Gary. I sure hope I have everything. Over the edge and past the pull-up Jumar. It's only been about three minutes since I decided to go and I guess I'm committed now. Should I look down yet? . . .

The bottom was about ten acres, I think, although it was difficult to judge. It's fairly dark with but a few struggling green plants. And above, 1100' straight up, is that patch of daylight called the entrance. Definately awesome. Not too long after I got down Jerry Redder and Don Anderson started out on one rope while Bob Alderson and Cecile started out on the other rope.

After Bob and Cecile cleared their rope, Jean and I started out, a climb that I will always remember. We left the bottom quickly, but it took us forever to get to the top. I think some sort of a time/space warp must have gone into effect once we got about 200' up. It was like we were in the twilight zone. As we climbed, nothing moved except the piece of rope immediately in front of us. The walls, the floor, and, most importantly, the top all remained stationary. Even when we were on the bottom looking up at someone else climb, the impression was the same. We could see their feet taking steps yet they don't move. The only gauge of progress we had was time. Alderson and Cecile had taken slightly over an hour to get out so after climbing for half an hour we figured we were about half way out.

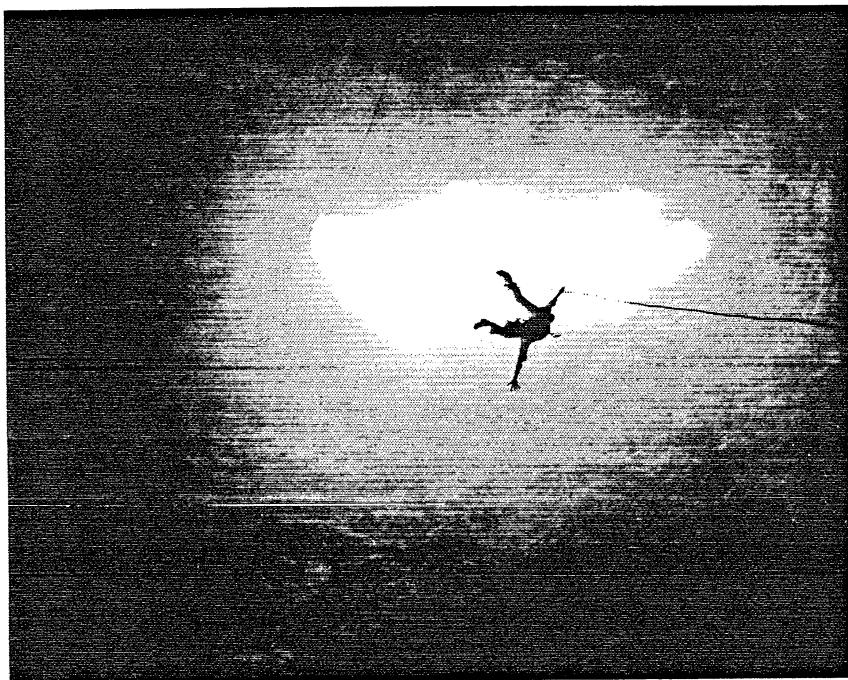
As we climbed dusk settled in and we were treated to the spectacle of the resident parrots returning to the cave while we were on rope. I should say we heard rather than saw, as we listened to the bizarre whistling of hundreds of birds diving into the pit. Very spooky. Then one of them hit the rope causing it to thwang like a giant guitar string. Even spookier. And as we neared the top, a ghost-like apparition appeared in the deepening gloom below us on the other rope. As the apparition got closer, we gradually realized that it was Berta in the process of blasting her way to the top in something like 32 minutes. She reached the lip at the same time we did after leaving the bottom over a half an hour behind us. As we recovered from the climb and waited for those behind us to come out, we were overcome by a combination of relief and accomplishment. We'd done it. Golandrinas was behind us.

On Christmas, Cecile, Gary, Bob and Chris did a horizontal cave within walking distance of Tamapatz. Most of the rest of us did day hikes around the local area; it was too beautiful a day to go underground. Then on Sunday (I think) most of the group did 414' Sotano de Cepilla. I opted out as I'd done what I came to Mexico to do.

Monday we left Tamapatz for Ciudad Valles where we spent two days at a fairly luxurious hotel at a hot spring. Behind the hotel was a small hole which we nerd caved. Also, Pablo, Jerry, Paul and Berta went to a real cave nearby called Rio Choi (I think) while the rest of us just sat around and drank Coronas. Wednesday we drove back up through Cuidad Victoria and on to Monterrey. Then we left Monterrey early New Year's morning and

drove straight through to Blacksburg, arriving 33 hours later.

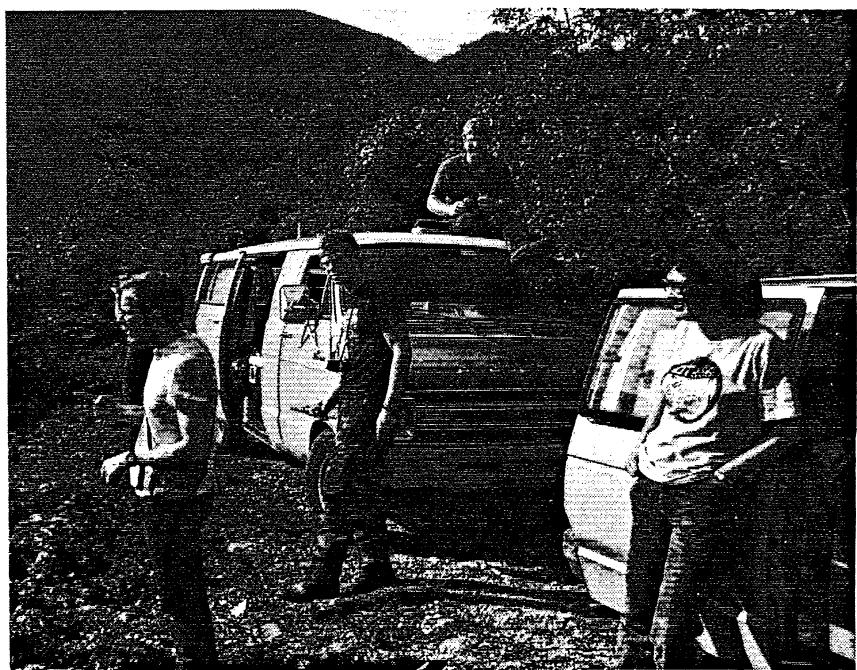
On the way back through Texas, we stopped off briefly at Gill Ediger's to get rid of our Mexican gringo, Alex. Someone mentioned in passing to Gill that in leaving Mexico we had returned to the real world. He replied, "No, you just left the real world." In the months since we've been back, most, if not all, of those on the trip have started planning their next trip to Mexico.



BOB ANDERSON SPREAD EAGLES
ON HIS WAY OUT OF HUAHUAS

TAKING IN THE VIEW
ON THE ROAD TO TAMAPATZ

MEXICO
'87



Obscene Excitement

As I stood facing the entrance to the first cave I had ever seen -- the first cave I would ever enter -- I felt the very pleasant gust of adrenaline in my spine. There was no seeing beyond the reach of the sunlight, and the dark unknown was waiting... It has been some years since that first caving trip, and it would be many years until my next. The excitement I felt when first staring at the dark entrance would return as often as I approached a cave entrance. It is a feeling that I have wondered about; it is a feeling I have seen in other cavers. I wonder where it comes from.

I found the hint of an answer in the book, The Tunnels of Cu Chi, which describes the part of the Vietnam War that took place underground in tunnels dug by the Vietnamese inhabitants. The authors spill a lot of ink talking about the American tunnel rats, and I was impressed by their gung-ho, macho attitudes to the point that I tried to put into writing how much cavers are like the tunnel rats. I abandoned that idea after reading a psychological profile of the tunnel rats:

"They abhorred drugs, were not obsessed with sex, and did not gamble. Most spoke a foreign language, read copiously, and sought solitude rather than the entertainments of the NCOs' or enlisted men's clubs." ¹

However, there remains one similarity between the two groups, which is the fact that we go underground, and do so willingly, if not eagerly.

The Vietnamese were also underground, and The Tunnels of Cu Chi takes the time to examine their lives in, and use of the tunnel-fortresses. The communist Vietnamese were short on troops, weapons, and technology. In the tunnels, however, they could be found only with difficulty, and once found, they could not be out-numbered, nor could the Americans use their wieldy, sophisticated weapons in a tunnel. The Vietnamese went into the tunnels to take the advantage from the invaders. Their motive was survival, and they don't interest me.

Tunnel rat soldiers, however, went underground (mostly) voluntarily. They left the safety of numbers, buddies, superior weapons, and sought an elusive enemy in the constricted underground tunnel-mazes of Vietnam. They thrived on underground confrontations, and officers were amazed by their enthusiasm:

"...Short (the tunnel rat) went down to check it out. He went in about thirty of forty feet and there's a trapdoor that led down to another level. He raised it and a booby trap went off and the tunnel caved in on him. He was buried, face down. We crawled down and tied ropes to his feet; we tried to drag him out, but couldn't. So we had to dig down from the top. He was about twelve feet down. It took us thirty minutes and was kinda frantic. When we could see his feet, they were still wiggling. He was getting air because his hands were below his face. He was semiconscious when we got him out. He went to the hospital, but discharged himself. The hospital thought he's gone AWOL, they sent military police looking for him; in fact he came straight back to his unit. His idea of R & R was to join me on patrol. You just couldn't keep that man out of the tunnels." ²

Something extraordinary motivated a tunnel rat, which is obvious from the way one talked about his work:

"I loved it. The enemy hit us, and then they went down the holes, and I knew we were going to get them down there -- what other place were they going to go -- deeper? I would have gone deeper, too. I enjoyed it very much. I like it a lot. In fact, when they told me they had a VC down there, I came unglued. I got over there about a hundred miles and hour . . . I wanted to be the first

down there. I wanted to get down there right away. I didn't want to mess around no more, I wanted to go after him." ³

The tunnel rats were soldiers with a need to live life on the ragged edge. If the VC and booby-traps weren't around when needed, a tunnel rat could very well improvise a life-threatening situation. One rat who did so was a demolitions expert named Swofford:

"Swofford just went down there with Ellis and twenty-five cases of C-4 explosive, making some 300 pounds in all. They had to haul the stuff, crate by crate, through the long tunnel complex and set them scientifically at the same time. Each case was a foot and a half square, and they were soon physically exhausted. They discovered they had not brought enough fuse wire, only a foot and a half, which would be extremely dangerous to use on that amount of explosive. Ellis asked him, 'Swofford, is that enough fuse?' and Swofford, who had seen too many Westerns, lit the fuse with a cigarette, and answered, 'No, you'd better start running now, Elly.' One could not, of course, run down a tunnel, but professionals did perfect an astonishingly fast if undignified crawl, which stripped the skin from the elbows and knees. As the two men shot out of the shaft like a couple of corks, the 300 pounds blew Swofford loved every minute of it." ⁴

These people fascinated me, and whatever motivated them in their work seems familiar (though not as radical). What motivates me to enter tight crawls when I'm scared of becoming stuck? What prompts me to climb walls and traverse pits when I'm terrified by heights? Simply going from point A to point B is not enough -- I seek out challenges along the way, be it a ledge to climb up, or break-down to crawl through, avoiding the path of the person in front of me because there's no excitement in following a path that has been proven "safe".

There is a caver who once planned to chimney up the outside of Slusher -- all twelve floors. The idea roused my interest, so I asked how he planned to rig his safety line. He wouldn't use a safety line, he said: the idea was to test himself. When this conversation had time to sink in, I understood that the quest for thrills was not an aberration in my psyche -- or a latent death wish. Instead, it is a need shared by a number of so-called "normal" people.

Admittedly, not everyone feels the need for excitement as intensely as a tunnel rat does. The army set out to train more tunnel rats using a small, secured tunnel complex with simulated booby-traps and instructors disguised as VC. The training only produced five rats from fifty students. The officer in charge of training said, "Most crawled out of the tunnel as soon as they went in." ⁵ Those who washed out of the training could not enjoy the challenge enough to suppress their panic.

The authors of The Tunnels of Chu Chi acknowledge that some unusual motivation not shared by all men drove the tunnel rats. "There was more than just an element of perverse satisfaction, even excitement, at meeting a challenge with such grim rules and such awful codes." ⁶ Of one particularly successful tunnel rat, the authors say, "What kept him there, and in the tunnels, was that sense of obscene excitement that all men can find in the pit of their souls, but few care to examine." ⁷ Simply put, the rats, like the caver mentioned earlier, were looking for the ultimate "test".

A "test" is a confrontation with fear. The tunnels represented a source of fear for tunnel rats -- a fear that got adrenaline flowing, a flow which they needed almost like a drug addict. "The successful rat had to ... take risks unmatched by anything he would ever meet above ground." ⁸ I think, as cavers, we too, go underground, to find fear. The Tunnels of Cu Chi claims "the most ancient and primeval fear (is) following the quarry into the tiny, enclosed spaces, the dark, the bizarre creatures, the pits and drop-offs where a mis-step can easily be fatal. And the underground is home to all of these."

When a person beats a fear, he feels a rush that goes beyond adrenaline. Perhaps the feeling is an exultation over the conquered barrier. The person has now overcome a limitation and

established control over some small part of his life. He is a winner. Or perhaps the "tests" we find in a cave are tests in the more literal sense. That is, by facing the odds, we test how much we deserve to survive. Beating the odds reaffirms our right to be alive. That's all conjecture. What I do know is that I have never felt as ALIVE as I feel when I take that risk, and feel the fear deep in my guts.

Jim Gamble (The Babe Magnet)

All references are to The Tunnels of Cu Chi by Tom Mangold and John Penycate, Random House, New York, 1985. It is good reading.

¹ p. 241 ; ² p. 105 ; ³ p. 245 ; ⁴ p. 248 ; ⁵ p. 139 ; ⁶ p. 113 ; ⁷ p. 245 ; ⁸ p. 114 ; ⁹ p. 267

* * * * *

A BEEFY RESCUE

It was Friday April 22, 1988 and the VPI Cave Club's meeting was almost over. Only the announcements of who wanted to go caving in the next few days were left as the last point of business (except for where to hold the party, of course). Pete Sauvigne spoke up and said that he was in town and going to New Castle Murder Hole. He also stressed that if the club didn't want to run a rescue out of the hole, then someone else may want to volunteer to accompany him. Fortunately, after the meeting a group of concerned souls gathered around Pete and discussed plans for the next day's trip.

Seven thirty came awful early for most of us, and everyone finally met at the signout by eight o'clock. Doug Bruce, Dave Colatosti, John Dowell, and I, Doug Dodd, piled into Pete's van and set off on our quest for Murder Hole. The hour drive to the cave was filled with talk of how much alcohol was consumed the night before, and what we were going to expect in the dark today. The day was progressing slowly.

We arrived at the farm at approximately 9:00 am, talked to the land owner, Frank Sizer, for a while, signed the register, changed, and made haste for the pit entrance. To make a long story short, (too late -- Ed. note) the adventure inside the cave was great and went off without a hitch. The real story begins after the entire extravaganza was just about over. Pete had ascended rapidly with his rope walker system and had a beer ready for each of us as we reached the top. As we turned around, Mr. Sizer was driving up the hill where we were located. He hopped out of his truck and informed Pete and I that there was a need for a cave rescue. The day was turning out to be interesting!!!

Mr. Sizer had told us that one of his neighbors cows had fallen into a pit. What he neglected to tell us was that this animal was not only a cow, but a very large, ticked off bull named George. I figured that if we couldn't get him out we would at least be eating well for a while. By the time we arrived on the scene, a group of locals had already shown up. Many of them, in an effort to impress their girl friends, had offered to wrestle the beast down and tie harnesses around him. I placed my money on the bull.

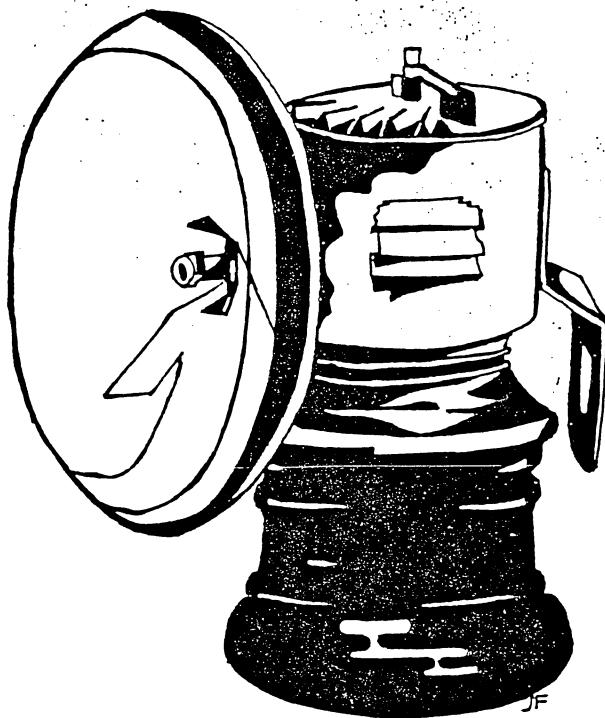
The only conceivable way to get George out of the pit without harming him was to rig a heavy duty hi-line and hoist him out. Scrounging around in Pete's van we were able to find and utilize several hundred feet of steel cable, a bunch of industrial strength pulleys, and two come alongs to rig the pit. Two of the local men were then sent down to convince George that it would be a good idea to put the harnesses on. My money was still on the animal.

Miraculously, the two were charming enough. The bull was rather cute in its new attire of hot pink webbing. A loop was fastened around his hind quarters and another fastened around his shoulders. (Obviously, I lost my money.) As soon as the webbing was connected to the rig, Pete revved up the engine of the van, and the bull was suspended in mid-air. After a few minutes

of struggle, the bull was guided to safe ground and the webbing cut. George simply strutted away as if nothing had ever happened, apparently just as concerned about his image with his women as the locals were.

The rescue was successfully accomplished and many asked how they could repay us. Being the good community minded cavers that we were, no compensation was accepted. We de-rigged and left to rejoin the other three of our group who were waiting at the original cave with cold beers in hand. Stories were told, beverages consumed, and gear packed for the ride home. Pete was right, a rescue did go down at New Castle Murder Hole, and thank God it wasn't us!

Douglas Dodd



In addendum to the story on the "Beefy Rescue", most of what was reported was true except for the following:

- The bull was actually a 300 pound calf.
 - Her name was not George.
 - She actually fell through the earth only about eight to ten feet.
 - No money was bet.
 - A Z-rig with conventional static rope and pulleys was used, not a steel cable hi-line.
 - The cow was actually fairly docile.
 - The locals were not really charming, but did wrestle her down and put the loops around her.
 - Pete was able to hoist her out single handedly.
 - And finally, the webbing was an ugly green, not hot pink.
- Overall the trip was fun and the rescue was interesting, but it's not the kind of stuff that without some help would make good reading.

Quotable Quotes

W.W. (After a fly lands on his finger) -- I'll bet you don't have a pet fly.
C.R. -- Gee, Win. At least you picked up something this weekend.

V.R. to K.J. -- I don't *really* want M.F. If you think about his number of inches per thrust, the number of thrusts per sex act, and the number of sex acts, it's more than 12,000 miles. He's no longer under warranty.

M.F. to V.R. -- You're a nut, you really are. To be specific, you're a left testicle.

P.H. ...I was drunk....

Heard in E.F.'s apartment -- I'd like you to ... if it doesn't disgust you.

B.W. -- It's cool because it's hot.

B.W. -- Can I have a bite of your sausage?

The barn'o freaks gang -- "Never Mind."

P.B. (at J.G.'s party) -- I'm too fucking old to worry about my dignity. At least I'm doing this shit now instead of later.

P.B. -- I'm going to suck my lime dry.

J.G. to P.B. (after moving the porcelain breakdown) -- I think it goes.

Dean Wormer (Animal House) -- Every fall the trees are filled with underwear. Every spring, the toilets explode.

B.F. -- I want to take a trip to Newberry Banes.

J.G. -- He needs people that go both ways.

While watching Males in Motion:

K.J. -- You could tie an overhand in that.

C.J. -- If you had two, you could tie a square knot.

V.R. -- Hell! You could rappel off of that!

B.W. -- He's enormous!

V.R. -- That's not chicken pox. You can't fuck 600 women and not catch something.
M.F. -- If I'd known that I'd have stopped at 599.

B.W. -- I've learned to navigate according to which side of the road I'm on.

D.B. -- I'm unemployed over 95% of my body.

B.W. -- What do you do with the other 5%?

P.B. -- Being fast on knots is all well and good, but as far as walking in Bane Spring, Mr. Gamble was so slow I think it would have been quicker to carry him and let the rope walk.

THE OFFICIAL G.C.C.S. TRIVIA QUIZ

1. GCCS is the sound a caver makes when he/she has:
 - a) found a cave
 - b) frozen in Jim's sauna
 - c) run out of beer
 - d) lost a sock

2. Giles county has:
 - a) big caves
 - b) lots of caves
 - c) one long cave
 - d) no caves, which is another good reason to say GCCS.

3. GCCS cavers typically carry:
 - a) pith helmets and flashlights
 - b) helmets, lamps, horizontal packs
 - c) helmets, lamps, vertical packs, rope
 - d) matches and dynamite

4. GCCS cavers usually:
 - a) read books about people who have found caves
 - b) buy gear in hopes of finding caves
 - c) work out all week to get ready to cave
 - d) drink at Ton-80

5. GCCS cavers celebrate the weekend by:
 - a) getting lots of rest so that they can survey lots of cave on saturday.
 - b) planning the big trip to the cave
 - c) showing up at club meetings on time
 - d) shooting bottle rockets into toilets

6. The proper ratio of gear to beer for a GCCS caver is:
 - a) 100 lbs. gear : 1 beer
 - b) 10 lbs. gear : 1 beer
 - c) 1 lb. gear : 1 beer
 - d) 1 pack matches : case of the beast or peach flavored brandy equivalent

7. GCCS cavers are typically people like:
 - a) Chuck Hempel
 - b) Ferdinand Petzl
 - c) Timothy Watson
 - d) Philip Ballister and Bill the Cat

8. If you desire to become a GCCS caver, you must:
 - a) take Timothy caving
 - b) like Andy Gibb
 - c) help pay for Jim Gamble's toilet
 - d) be able to say GCCS

Climbing Rope is Knot Easy

or

Pighole in Excruciating Detail

My original intention was for this article to be on my entire trip to Pighole with Craig Roberts and Doug Bruce. However, since the trip was long and my writing is far from brief, I decided to write this piece on the most memorable incident from the trip. Although the twenty foot arm rappel (where my arm got pinned to the wall right after I climbed over the edge) was interesting, the 100 foot prussik I did with knots was a heck of a lot more fun.

The three of us had been in the cave about 5 to 6 hours when we reached the bottom of Dope's Drop. We all were very wet, quite cold, and (at least I was) rather tired. Craig was the first one on the rope with his frog system. Within minutes he was up to the top of the drop. Since I wanted to get my rope climbing signed off on this trip, I went up to the rope next.

The bottom of Dope's Drop is certainly a fun place to tie knots for climbing rope. In order to get to the rope, I had to climb up a 45 degree angle slope that eventually narrowed off to a parabolic end. That was where the end of the rope was. No problem, right? Well, not necessarily. You see, the slope is covered with about six inches of mud that has the consistency of very thick brownie batter. Had it smelled really bad down there, one might have thought that municipal sewers fed into the bottom of Pighole.

After struggling up the slope, I finally reached the rope. Then I began tying my foot knots. First I put the chicken loops on my boot. After my prussik rope was sufficiently covered with mud, I began to tie my helical knots on the rope. Doug suggested that the rope might be slicker than normal due to the mud, and that it might be wise if I put some extra wraps in my helical knots. When he said that, I thought of what could happen when I got about 75 feet off the ground. I pictured myself hanging there when all of a sudden my knots would start slipping. They would start off slow, but then they would accelerate faster and faster until I was free falling and then, SPLAT! I would hit the bottom and become a permanent addition to the cave. Well I didn't want that to happen, so to be extra safe, or so I thought, I decided to tie 5 wraps on both of my foot knots and my seat knot. After all of my muddy knots were tied, Doug checked them out and said they were cool, and so I started that laborious process of climbing on knots.

I slid my seat knot as high as possible, and then I sat on it. (Ed. note -- and the Earth turns...) Fortunately, the rope stretched only a little bit, and I ended up hanging inches above the mud. I sighed with relief because I had no desire to sit in cold, wet mud since I was already cold and wet enough. Then I looked up to see the mighty task that lay before me. The rope seemed to disappear and become engulfed in the darkness. "Well," I thought, "it's only 100 feet... But 100 feet is a tenth of 1000 feet... and 1000 feet...well that's pretty close to a mile." Thinking this, I began the repetitive process of climbing on knots. I slid my foot knots as high as I could, stood up, I slid my seat knot as high as that would go, sat down, and repeated the whole procedure again and again and again... (Ed. note -- I am trying to refrain from commenting. I really am!)

When I was 30 feet off the ground, which was about high enough so that I couldn't see the bottom, I really began to grow tired. I grunted as I struggled to pull each foot knot up the rope, one at a time. "How are you doing?" yelled Doug from somewhere down at the bottom. "Oh just peachy," I replied with a huff as I stood up on my foot knots. It was at this time I figured out that maybe 5 wraps was overdoing it for being safe...

At 40 feet I was really wishing that I had tied a better seat. But I was so cold and tired at the bottom I just wanted to put the seat on and get on the rope. The seat would have

been fine if I was auditioning to sing soprano in a Handel's Messiah, but I wasn't. Pain and I didn't get along very well, so I adjusted my seat the best I could while I was hanging there (Ed. note??!!??!!) and continued onward and upwards...

I was approximately 50 feet off of the bottom, and I was discovering that this climbing thing was getting real old, real fast. I was pausing almost every time I sat down and my progress was very slow. To make matters worse, I was watching out for bats that were hanging on the wall. Although there were only a few, I had completely forgotten where they were hanging. I certainly did not want to hit a bat off the wall, and I'm sure the bats didn't want me to either. I slowly continued to make my way up the rope, inch by inch...

There I was at 75 feet off the bottom. Finally the top was within sight, barely. I was now almost utterly beat. I wondered whose idea this was and wished I could kill him. "Why couldn't they put a back entrance into this place?" I thought, "I know there is an elevator in this place; it's just that Craig and Doug like to do things the hard way." I knew I was just kidding myself. I needed to keep my spirits up. I couldn't quit now -- if I did, I would never get out, and would be doomed to spend the rest of my life hanging on a rope in Pighole. Not only that, but I didn't think Doug would be too happy about spending the rest of his life in the mud at the bottom of Dope's Drop...

90 feet was where I was hanging around. I was more bushed than before, and wondering what the hell I was doing here. The overhang I had to maneuver to get to the top of was about ten feet away, and the bottom -- a very long 90 feet away. All I could see was a small dot of light from Doug's lamp. It was about that time when I began to doubt the strength of my prussik rope. "What am I, nuts?" I wondered. "I am here, 90 feet above the floor hanging on some little piece of rope that is maybe a third of an inch thick!" I knew the stuff could hold thousands of pounds, or at least that's what I was told, but there was that little voice in the back of my head saying, "Look pal, that rope is only a third of an inch thick, it could break at any time." I tried to fight the voice and convince myself that I was completely safe. And so I continued...

I was only a few feet from the ledge, and could hear Craig. He was mumbling or singing, I couldn't quite tell, something about pigs, and holes, and entering the rear. Sounded like he was beginning to lose his mind. "Oh, no!" I thought, "Hypothermia is beginning to set in. His mind is going. I must be taking too long." I moved as fast as a dead person could, and I finally reached the ledge.

I peered over the lip and saw Craig and he said, "Ok, all you have to do now is push away from the ledge with your feet and slide your seat knot up past it." I thought that was easier said than done. He wanted me to push myself out over this 100 foot drop relying on this little piece of prussik rope. Yeah right! So for a short while I tried to do it my way. I eventually got the seat knot just over the lip. It was rubbing against the rock. When I glanced at the knot, it looked as though the rope in the knot was nearly sheared. I panicked for a moment, and then after closer inspection realized that it was just the mud caked on the rope that gave it that appearance. Whew! After a brief pause, I assembled all the strength I could and with a heave and a ho I climbed over the lip and to the top of the drop. I pulled myself over to where it was safe and collapsed. With what seemed to be my last breath I said, "People do this for fun?"

David (the detailist) Colatosti

From the Signout

VPI Grotto logged 1470.9 hours from 11-14-87 to 4-30-88 on 90 trips. Doug Bruce logged 83.45 hours and Ko Takamizawa, at the close second, logged 81.95 hours.

Tawneys	J. Johnson, D. Bruce, K. Takamizawa	Gear intensive hard core vertical trip to Pogo paradise.
Bone-Norman	K. Takamizawa, J. Johnson, B. Wichterman, J. Hopson, E. Schuler, K. Gibbs, W. Pirie, B. Pirie, R. Smith, K. Thompson, W. Hendricks	GDSP (God Damn Short People) Famous last words - I can't figure out why those Canadians couldn't find the entrance.
Clover Hollow	P. Hess, M. Fiore, D. Bohn, D. Smith	Mike Thinks he's suffering from POFS (Premature Old Farts Syndrome).
Stomp Bottom	G. Rouse, J. Johnson, J. Washington, J. Kehoe, E. Devine	It doesn't go - It just @#! Now 1/2 mile longer.
New River	C. Roberts, M. Fiore, J. Jablonski, Smega Deposit	It takes exactly 133 paper matches to get from the waterfall to the entrance.
Pig Hole	P. Hess, J. Gamble, K. Sokolowski, J. Knapp, D. Colatosti, S. Pearson.	I took 5 men and they survived!
Chicken Hole	P. Balister, D. Bruce, B. Keller, K. Takamizawa	Penetration achieved.
Yer Cave	D. Bruce, J. Dowell	I knocked so many hand holds off - I thought I was swimming.
Links	J. Gamble, J. Tate	I love climbing in this gluck!

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



JERRY GETS READY TO CLIMB OUT OF GOLANDRINAS