

THE TECH TROGLODYTE

Vol 20 No 1



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THE TECH TROGLODYTE

A Journal of the VPI Grotto of the National
Speleological Society

President.....Win Wright
Vice-President...Chuck Shorten
Secretary.....Carol Trexler
Treasurer.....Sue Heazel

Editor.....Hugh Beard
Exchange Editors...Pete and Linda
Sauvigne

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Greetings From The Podium....

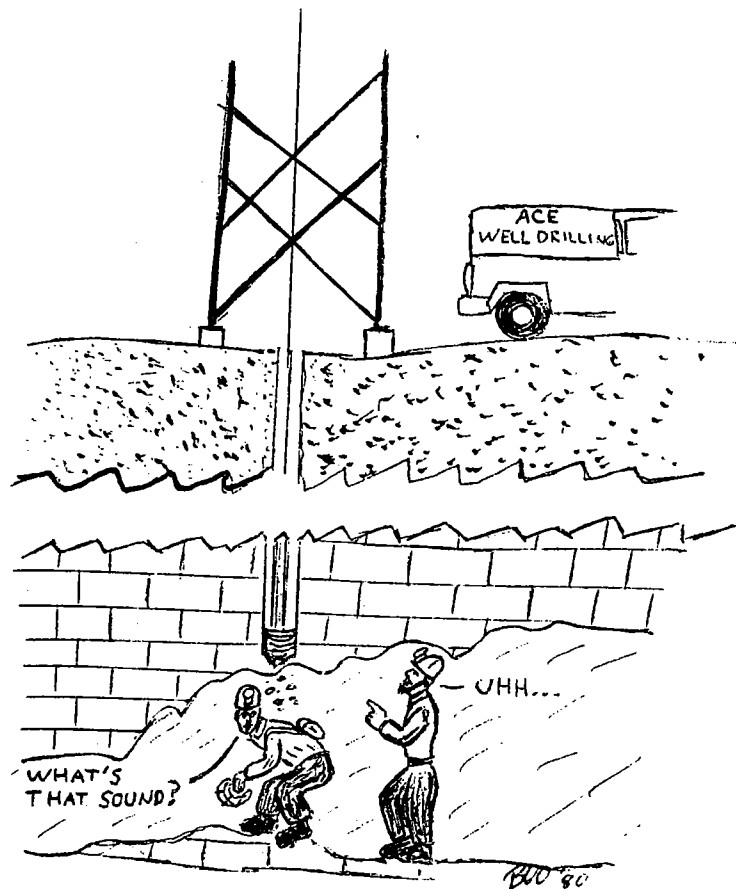
First on the agenda for this column is to remind everybody about caving in the winter where bats hibernate. So little as a change in temperature from your lamp and body heat can awaken a hibernating bat. Depending on the severity of the winter and other conditions, the bat might not have enough food stored to live through the winter. Just about every cave is going to have bats, but the ones that we should particularly avoid visiting are the North Subway in Newberry's and, of course, Greenville Saltpeter. If you have a question about a certain cave, ask Janet Queisser.

Another item of importance is that with winter comes wet conditions; the walk up to the cave may require more work than driving, but it's worth the effort to avoid starting erosion ditches in the landowner's field.

Now for some general information. The project to build a fence around New Castle Murderhole was postponed due to the ground^{BEING} too hard and dry to sink a fence post. The project will be rescheduled as soon as conditions are favorable.**There will be a New Years party at Buckwheat and Nancy's again this year in Rapidan, Va. Give them a call for directions at (703) 672-3537. **The annual banquet will be held on February 14; dinner is at 5:30 at Squires Student Center and the party is at the VFW Hall in Radford. If you have any questions, or know of someone who deserves an award, call Boo Croft at 552-8087.**VPI Grotto is hosting the spring VAR the third weekend of April and any help would be welcomed. Information on the event will be sent out first thing winter quarter.**We've had a little trouble in the past few years getting our publication to associate members, but we now have our guano together. So tell the SIVTACers to pay their dues so they can get a Trog, please.** The Cave Club almost became a can collecting club this fall, but we are richer thanks to the Miller contest and everyone's efforts.

We are planning a club project to map Banes Spring, which will not only instill enthusiasm for surveying, but will produce a good map in a short period of time. Tentatively scheduled for winter quarter is a practice rescue the third week of the quarter and a ridge walk when the weather permits.

Cave Safely,
Win Wright



GROTTO GRAPEVINE

It's been a long time since the Grapevine bore any fruit, but now it's grape stoming time at VPI.

First, congratulations need be extended to the club's newest members: Binny Ballou (#233), Steve Lancaster (#234), and Eric Anderson (#235). Several more are on the way.

Romance is still alive in the VPI Grotto. Both Mike Richardson and Mark Neas have gotten married (not to each other!). Bill Stephens and Pam Buzas are now engaged as are Dave Bell and Jeanne Nye.

Bill Koerschner again claims to have finished Spring Hollow. He has also finished Brickyard Ridge Cave and has published a map. Pighole is being remapped by Chuck Shorten. Ed Devine and Joe Zokaites are still mapping Paul Penley's Cave. Ed summed it up best on the sign out sheet when he wrote, "Welcome back my friends, to the cave that never ends." Along with caving, people have been spending time 4-wheeling and a group rappelled a large drop in a neighboring state.

Fall vertical session was a big success and prospective members nearly outnumbered members. Thanks go to Chuck and everyone who helped make it an excellent learning experience.

There have been many rescue alerts in the past few months and these have kept the club on its toes. While on the subject of cave rescues, congratulations to the Giles County Rescue Squad for the trophy they received for their participation in the New River Cave rescue this past January.

Richard Cobb did some traveling this past summer. In traveling between Virginia and Florida, he found the best and the most economical accommodations to be the private accommodations offered by many of the rail companies. The furnishings are sparse but the ride was free.

The Sauvignes had an infectious Fourth of July party that was well attended for that time of year. Old Timers Reunion was fantastic, to say the least, and congratulations are extended to all the prize winners.

Well, fall rolled around and we faced another Miller Competition. After easily winning in the open division last spring, we were moved to the fraternity division. Although we faced stiff competition there, we won the competition. Fran Wistoff and Paul Kirchman were instrumental in our success.

Speaking of Paul, he has announced his retirement from caving, again. If Koerschner holds true to form, Paul's so-called retirement won't last very long.

If any good gossip or significant news has been left out of the Grapevine this time around, just write it down on the bathroom walls of the Hokie House. Our competent staff will take care of it from there. And if you don't know any, go out and make some news; discover a cave, flameout at a party, or get married. So until next time, cave your brains out.

ELLISON'S

As the time for the Ellison's trip grew closer (Early May), I found it ever more on my mind. I was excited by what promised to be a spectacular cave. Not only did it have the deepest drop north of Mexico (Fantastic Pit, 586 ft), but once on the lower levels there were promises of spectacular gypsum crystal formations as icing on the cake. I was also "psyching" myself for what lay ahead in the way of vertical work.

Talked to Pete Thursday night. He'd talked to "Smoky" Cauldwell in Georgia, the weather was good (not too much water over the drop), and Ellison's was GO! Pete Sauvigne, Bill Stephens, Chuck Shorten, Joey Fagan and myself met in the parking lot outside of Smyth shortly before noon on Friday, and were on the road around one o'clock.

We partied heartily all the way to Georgia. Joey and I took our cars, and we traded passengers and drivers all down the road, getting more and more excited about the trip. We arrived in LaFayette, Ga. as it was getting dark, picked up the key to the campground, bought some more beer, and set up camp at the base of Pigeon Mountain. (If you go to Tennessee or Georgia, bring your own beer - the cheapest we could find there was \$3.25 a six pack!)

Our camping spot was right next to Bluebird Spring, a "blue hole" about 6 feet deep with two underwater cave passages emptying into the side of it. These passages are the lower end of Ellison's, where the water drains out of it (a resurgence). Pete took off his clothes and jumped in while we held flashlights. Although Georgia caves and cave water are several degrees higher than Virginia, the water was still at or below 60°, and nobody followed Pete. He dove into the passage entrances with a waterproof flashlight and gave us a good show.

We were all asleep by midnight, well aware we were going to need lots of rest and energy for the upcoming trip. We awoke about 8 AM, but by the time we'd eaten, arranged the gear and hiked 3/4 of a mile up Pigeon Mountain to the entrance, it was 11:15. We stashed some beer in the entrance stream for when we returned, and then we were in Ellison's!

The "Ecstasy", a walking stream passage, was just inside the entrance. We followed it for 20 or 30 minutes till we got to the top of the 125 foot "Warm Up Pit". Pete rigged a piece of PMI to 3 ceiling bolts and down we went.

The passage from the bottom of the Warm Up Pit to the "Attic Room" (top of Fantastic) was more difficult. There were a number of straddles and a few ledges to negotiate, with exposure of anywhere from 30 to 70 feet. One place was difficult enough that we used a hauling line to get our packs across, and then belayed each other.

Finally, we were at the Attic Room. That 25' diameter hole in the floor was "Fantastic Pit"! The last obstacle was a crawl around the edge of the pit. The crawl wasn't tight, and wide enough that there was no real fear of falling, but just knowing that that blackness at your right elbow didn't end for almost 600 feet...

Once through the crawl we came upon a large pile of PMI rope with one end rigged to a boulder (Smoky leaves a rope permanently rigged at the drop). We stood around for a while, freaking out on the fact that we were standing at the top of Fantastic Pit! We dropped the inevitable rocks into the darkness, it took them an average of 7 seconds to hit the bottom! But after three or four seconds you could hear a sound like a distant train - the sound of air rushing around the rock! (Really Impressive!) Nobody was feeling any too cocky right then! We stood around talking about what a neat idea it would be to go back down the mountain and drink beer in the sun all day; the Hell with this!

We lowered the end of the rope down the drop, carefully inspecting every inch of it as it went. Chuck was first to go, since he had an electric lamp. We didn't know how heavy the water flow was, and too much water would drown a carbide lamp. He also put on a plastic (Miller) bag to stay dry, just in case. As he got closer and closer to the moment, you could just see "Oh Shit!" written all over him. After a few moments negotiating the edge (with everyone telling him it was nice knowing him), he was on his way.

About 10 minutes later we heard "OFF.....ROPE..
.....DRY.....D.....R.....Y".
Communication is difficult on that long of a drop, especially with running water. Each syllable had to be spoken separately, with time for the echoes to die down before the next one. He was telling us that we wouldn't get wet. Actually, even if the waterflow had been somewhat heavier, Chuck would have been the only person to get wet, since he would have been able to hold the end of the rope so that all who followed him could stay dry. As it was, even Chuck stayed dry.

I was second on the rope. I mentioned something about going home as I was backing down the hole. Stephens just clapped me on the shoulder and said "Oh, Wow." Then I was off! The rope

was so heavy below me that at first I had difficulty moving, but I finally got my rack properly adjusted and was on my way. The whole shaft was filled with a haze from the waterfall. Chuck's Wheat Lamp cut a fine beam through the fog below me. I could tell he was a long ways down, but not really how far. Then I looked up and saw a carbide lamp high above me. Stephens told me later that they'd been watching me shilouetted in the fog by Chuck's lamp, and it had looked really neat.

The deeper I went the farther away the walls were. At the top the pit is only 20 or so feet across. At the bottom it is a huge, impressive room, about 100 feet across with waterfalls landing near the middle of it. Finally, Chuck and the bottom came into view. I let out a yell as my feet touched the floor - I was down! I was followed by Bill, Joey, and Pete. "T.A.G Hall", as the room at the bottom is named, is gigantic, with an opening in one end to the rest of the cave. We left our vertical gear at the bottom of the drop, since we wouldn't need it again till it was time to climb out.

We had a couple of maps, but they were not very detailed. We spent several hours trying to find our first objective, the "Gypsum Room". We finally found it, and in the process saw some beautiful crystalline formations all over the ceiling. In one place long clear gypsum needles covered the floor; they looked like glass needles, but were flexible, almost like plastic. We stopped for a lunch break in the Gypsum Room (about 5 or 6 hours into the cave) and then tried to find the way to "Angel's Paradise".

The problem is that there are about 3 parallel passages at slightly different levels, and they cross and intermingle enough that it is very easy to get confused. And confused we got! But we saw a lot of neat things in the midst of our confusion. In many places the walls, ceilings and rocks glittered with millions of diamond like reflections - absolutely beautiful. One room, the "Snowball Dome", had a pure white 3 foot round formation that looked just like a huge snowball. I've seen a couple of Gysum flowers in Clover Hollow before, and thought they were really neat. This cave had them growing like weeds!

We finally came to some booming trunk passage that we literally ran through - you could have driven a motorcycle through it. We followed this for a ways, did a couple of climbs, crawls and chimneys, and arrived at the "North Pole". The North Pole is an incredible icicle-like formation, a foot or so long, growing out of the ceiling. It was crystal clear and made of epsomite, a form of epsom salt. Everyone waited while I dug out my camera gear and took some pictures.

A little ways past the North Pole we came to the "Gnome Creamery". "Moon Milk", a whitish gypsum powder, was all over

the floor in mounds. In one place it was piled into a sizeable formation called the "Cottage Cheese", which is exactly what it looked like.

But the most incredible part of the cave was "Angel's Paradise", located just below the Creamery. It is a small room full of tufts of "Angel Hair", which were clusters or bundles of hair like white gypsum crystals. The crystals were 3 or more inches long, and so fine they'd wave in the slightest breeze. The floor and walls were so thick in Angel Hair that it looked like someone's lawn that needed mowing.

By this time it was about 8 or 9 PM, and we knew that we had to start heading back. We didn't know how long it would take, since we weren't too sure of the route back, though we knew we would find it eventually. We actually made it back to the bottom of the drop in fairly good time, though we did make a bunch of wrong turns. But it would have been a lot longer if it hadn't been for Stephens - his sense of direction in a cave is incredible. Long after the rest of us were totally confused, Stephens still seemed to know what general part of the cave we were in and which direction to go. At any rate, it was about midnight before we had arrived at the bottom of the drop and anyone was ready to climb.

Chuck and Joey climbed in tandem, taking about 45 minutes to reach the top. Bill went up next by himself (we put the solo climber in between a group above and a group below, in case any problems arose). Bill made the climb in just over 30 minutes.

I was really getting ragged out and wanted some rest before the climb, and I also knew how easy it would be to get hypothermic in the spray and mist from the waterfall. I laid behind a boulder, tucked up inside of a garbage bag with a carbide lamp, and actually got a short nap. I awoke to find several holes burned in the garbage bag, and was glad I hadn't awakened in flames!

Finally, it was time for Pete and I to climb. I took bottom man so I could hang my pack about 10 feet below me and out of my way. I was also trying out a new design for my climbing rig, with my shoulder weight carried by a S.A.R.A. pulley instead of a Gibbs (but with a third Gibbs as a backup). Ideally, this was to have reduced the shoulder drag, and as a result, the climbing effort. The trouble was, I was so tired climbing the rope that I couldn't tell if it did any good or not. Both Pete and I were feeling really ragged on the rope. I was glad for the fact that we were surrounded by fog, and no one had a light on the bottom. Visually, we could have been on a 50 or 100 foot drop, (you couldn't see any farther), and it took a lot of the psychological pressure off (which is much worse when you're tired). Our rest stops became more and more frequent as we neared the top. Finally we came

even with the top of the waterfall, which was the 510 foot level. 76' to go! The fog and haze cleared away as we climbed above the stream, and the top came into view. While Pete and I were pausing to rest, the rope "popped" and dropped us an inch or so! It was probably slipping off of a little nodule on the lip, but Pete and I were up that rope like shots! Who the hell's tired? Let's Go!! (A subsequent check of the rigging showed that all was safe).

We packed our vertical gear, crawled around the top of the pit, and headed for the beer. When we got to the canyon passage crossing where we'd used a belay before, Stephens and I went across first and then hauled everyone's packs across. Then Bill and I headed for the "Warmup Pit" while the others were crossing, so we wouldn't have all of us reaching the bottom of the climb at the same time. Some of the ledges looked hairier than they had on the way in (because we were tired), but we made it safely back to the bottom of the Warmup. I was first up the 125 footer. This was our last real obstacle to the outside, and I about ran up it! Back in Virginia this would have been a fairly major drop - but here it was just a piddly nuisance drop. When I'd run out of breath I'd pause for a second and take off again. I just wanted it to be over! Bill followed me up, and shortly afterwards Pete, Chuck and Joey arrived and joined us at the top.

After coiling our rope and repacking our vertical gear we headed back up the Ecstasy to the entrance - only this time we didn't try to keep our feet dry - we almost ran up the middle of the stream, being careful only to avoid "plunge pools". We retrieved the beer from the stream and exited the cave at 3:45 AM, a 16½ hour trip of ass kicking caving!

We felt terrific coming down the mountain - we were bruised, battered, wobbly legged and exhausted, but we had made it! Back at camp we opened many beers, too wound up to go to sleep, no matter how exhausted we were. We must have been a sight to see, the five of us in a circle around a beer can "fire" with a blanket draped over all of us to keep the heat from a Coleman lantern in.

We finally went to sleep after the sun came up, and got about 4 hours of sleep. It became very hot after awhile, with the sun beating on my tent. I took off the rest of my clothes and slept as long as I could till it got too hot. At that point I jumped naked out of the tent, ran with a yell across the camping area and plunged into Bluebird Spring. That cold water woke me up in a hurry, and felt really good - once I was out of it! Before we left we'd all jumped in a bunch of times - the camp spot was so neat we didn't want to leave.

But all good things must end, and so did this - in a very slow and painfull manner: an eight hour drive through bleary eyes back to the "real world".

Richard Cobb

Reflections of a Resurrected Caver

Well, here I am. In the next room, some of the same old folks are playing strip poker. Some are unwinding after a long mapping trip into Pighole. Others are unwinding from a long day of frantically working on the Trog. Others have been unwound for years.

The question remains: Why am I not also in the next room, playing strip poker? The answer is that I suddenly felt compelled to come in here and write some pseudo-philosophical bullshit. You know, empty the semigelatinous contents of my brain onto the paper, and see what comes out.

I left town, rather suddenly, a couple of years ago. When I returned earlier this quarter, I was not sure what I would find. What I found is that the grotto is still the same; even though so much has changed! The same old faces aren't all the same, and yet I feel like I never left.

Why are these cavers all so close? Why is the Cave Club so much more closely knitted than other organizations? I think that it is because, that while Frats are strictly social, and activity clubs gather just for their activities, the VPI Cave Club is both of these things. We are all interested in caving, but we are also the main social contact of most members.

And so it goes on, year after year. New caves being discovered, old ones being rediscovered by new people, some folks mapping, some being vertical nuts, the hard-core partyers, parties on the mountain, singing, four-wheeling, and all the rest. Doug and Wolf and others that seem always to be there to give advice to other, less-experienced cavers, are still there. Perhaps this all seems dull to you, but to me it seems remarkable that, with people graduating and moving away all the time, the traditions and atmosphere remains so much the same. My hat's off to you, VPI Grotto.

Richard (boo) Croft



Two Experimental Designs for Competition Rappelling Devices

Every summer, around the middle of July, the creative minds of VPI cavers turn towards the competitions at Old Timer's. The competitions are not only fun, but educational and profitable as well. (Just ask Richard Cobb and Bill Stephens.) Having been a competitor in the speleoypics before, this year I sought to win the prussick-rappel-prussick contest with my own specially-made rappel device.

The prussik-rappel-prussik contest consists of a 20-30 foot fixed rope which a caver must prussik up, change to rappel device and rappel down, then prussik back up to the top. All this is done while a judge times the caver. Winning times last year were around 1½ minutes.

Obviously, some special gear and techniques are necessary to win this event. A knot must be quick to tie and untie as well as easy to slide on the rope and tight-gripping. Sounds contradictory, doesn't it? The rappel device must be quick to rig in and out, but must be safe for a controlled rappel. That's where my experimental designs come in.

The first design (fig. 1) that I tried was called the "Horseshoe Crab." The main idea here was to make a device that could be useful for the competition and actual caving situations. Being tired of carrying a 14-inch rack through most caves to do a rappel of 100 feet or less, I wanted a more compact piece of equipment. However, I didn't wish to give up the adjustability of a rack. Thus the plan: Use the lower portion of the device as a figure-eight and use the "horns" to give an additional wrap if needed. This didn't work for reasons that I'll explain, but the real disaster is that it worked just as poorly in the other configuration, the one needed for competition. Here, the rope was to be fed in a bight through the large hole and wrapped around the "horns" as in the longhorn rappel device. The problem was that the rope actually bent around and back over itself, causing a nylon-on-nylon rubbing action. The only way it seems I can make this device useful is to cut the "horns" off and use it as an ordinary figure-of-eight device.

The second device (fig. 2) made no pretense at trying to be a useful caving device; its sole design purpose was to be fast getting on and off the rope. It suffered a single drawback: it threatened on an experimental 20 ft. rappel to come off the rope a little too easily, about 20 ft. off the ground! It was a modification of the longhorn which I thought would be slightly quicker to rig, but the placement of the "horns" on the side proved to be altogether wrong. When feeding rope up through the device the rope would come around the lower horn and ****POOF**** you're gone!

There were three main problems common to each device. First, the devices were cut from bar stock 3/8 inch steel. This gave square edges for the rope to pass over, giving in-

creased friction from the additional sharp bends. Secondly, the construction material has a very low rate of heat dissipation and could cause heat damage to a nylon rope. Third, and finally, the cross piece between the "horns" of both devices was too narrow, making the rope bend much too tightly. All of these problems, plus the ones mentioned involving the rigging of them combined to make a miserable design failure.

Don't let this discourage anyone from trying to improve upon the designs currently used in caving equipment. Everything we have today was developed by someone trying something new, and it's usually been a caver's design which gained the widest acceptance. The main thing to keep in mind is to always thoroughly test any new design or equipment before putting it to the ultimate test underground.

Thanks to Pat Shorten for drawing these illustrations and getting the experimental pieces made.

Chuck Shorten

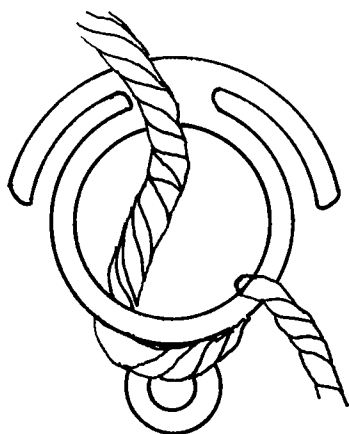
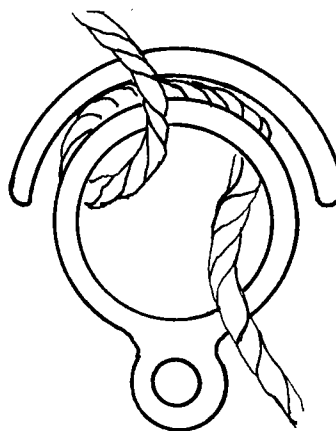


FIGURE - OF - EIGHT USE



LONGHORN USE

FIG. 1

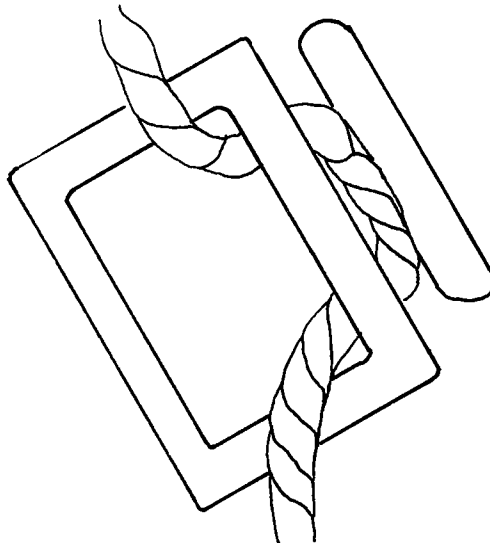


FIG. 2

FOUR-WAY STOP DILEMMA

"I think we just found a bunker, Dave. I can see a lot of them from here."

"Oh, yeah? Well, let me grab a bag and we'll see how many we can capture. It does look pretty good!"

Paul and I jumped eagerly into the twin dumpsters, having taken only a small number of enemy personnel in the two previous sorties earlier in the day. We'd managed to apprehend 10 regular-army infantry, 25 Hessians, and no armoured pfc's, so we were glad for what turned out to be a large division comprised of all three.

We found them to be a determined and devious lot, with several nasty tricks up their sleeves. We attacked them with cries of "You'll not escape! I see you under that rotten head

of lettuce!", and "We'll get you! No use mingling with the Browns!" (The Browns are a cowardly bunch, lending help only when they think they won't be discovered, but they can be a real nuisance. However, we passed them by for the real fighters.) Some of the Hessians, in their desperation to escape, committed suicide rather than face the humiliation of a trip to the reclamation center. Others burrowed into a half-baked pizza (with topping!), getting themselves so entangled that we decided they were worse off where they were, and offered no release.

Paul soon secured his dumpster and retired to the pick-up bed to sort and classify the prisoners according to concentration camp destination. I was still encountering pockets of resistance, and was twice forced to call for reinforcements from Paul. On the whole, things were going well, and I was whistling as I went from one defense pod to another, ripping them open and plucking forth the cowering, terror-stricken occupants.

I had nearly decided the area clear of defenders, when I spied one last pod, well hidden beneath some discarded supply containers. I advanced with a shout of triumph, tore at the fragile pod walls with malicious glee...and nearly fainted! I reeled backwards, retching uncontrolledly as the despairing troops inside released wave after noxious wave of

garbage gas and methane in my face! Retreating momentarily, I managed to gasp some fresh air. Spurred by their resistance, I buried my nose in the shoulder of my jacket and attacked the flank. A fierce battle ensued; bits of old sub-buns, bad tomato, and sacrificed Browns flew in various directions. It was tough going for a while, but I somehow incarcerated the entire group. I lurched weakly to the opening of the dumpster and draped myself across the paling surrounding the quieting battle zone, gulping in the sweet fresh air of victory and freedom, thankful beyond words for my miraculous escape.

We finished sorting, and having literally flattened the unruly pfc's, turned our backs on the gore-littered scene, leaving some early-morning employees of Daddy's Money gaping in disbelief.

Paul was driving (we wanted live POW's, not shattered remains) and decided to reconnoiter Macado's. We had stopped at the four-way on Draper Road, yielded around once, when Paul gave voice to a sound reminiscent of a climaxing bordello client. I wondered what was up, and with a trembling hand he directed my attention-

"Over (sigh) there (pant)! The (drool) blonde (slaver) in the (unbelievably) JADE GREEN FORD PICKUP!! (collapse)"

She seemed to be going our direction (or we, hers), so we naturally followed her, Paul continuing his bliss-tinged commentary.

"I don't (Gasp!) believe it! (Stare, stare!) It's an F100, same year as (throb, throb) mine! Just a few months later (Pant, pant)!"

"How do you know?" I asked reverently.

"Square headlights (slobber)!"

I wasn't sure that he was referring to the truck with this last- I hadn't gotten a good look at the girl.

"She's got an optional (PANT) step bumper!"

That really threw me, until he added, in angelic tones, "And a 'Bluegrass is Finger Pickin' Good" bumper sticker on it!" (The sticker was in plain sight and confirmed my feelings that he referred to the truck, and not the girl, with his cryptic remarks.)

With the passing of the initial shock, Paul had calmed down considerably. His knuckles, however, were still white on the steering wheel, and he kept looking at the truck in front of us, and then at me, and then back again. There was a gleam in his eye that concerned me somewhat for the unknown nymph that was so obviously the cause of all this. Well, she and her truck. Now, I've long had a high opinion of Paul, and considered him a reasonably rational human being, but I'd never seen him under this much pressure, and wasn't sure what he was capable of.

We'd been driving the whole time, and both vehicles appeared to be headed for the University Mall. This likelihood had just presented itself to me when Paul, with oath-taking solemnity, said,

"If she climbs out of that truck and jumps into a dumpster, I'll marry her!" Then, with a dreamy look into the distance and a tender voice, "We could drive off into the sunset in our F100's and haul stuff happily ever after!"

But, it was not to be. Fate being what fate is, she turned off into the drillfield. "There's mud on the sides!" cried Paul longingly. "My dream girl! You can't leave me! Wait! I'll show you how to scavenge! (sob) For Miller bottles!"

Even this undoubtable expression of devotion was ignored as the heartless girl continued on her way, without so much as a backward glance. Silence prevailed as we drove despondently on to Macado's, each keeping our thoughts to ourselves and hurt trying to hide in Paul's saddened eyes.

Moments later she was seemingly forgotten as we tore into the dumpsters, spirits high with anticipation. These were soon dampened as our frenzied search revealed nothing, not even the hand hugh had wanted as a souvenir. He had severed it from the arm of some dummy stupid enough to stick it down his pants, and then lost it in the heat of the moment. Paul had hoped to find it and give it to Hugh as a Halloween surprise.

As we drove back past the drillfield I mentioned something to Paul about following his dream girl, but he just replied that she had left him, and he wouldn't give her another

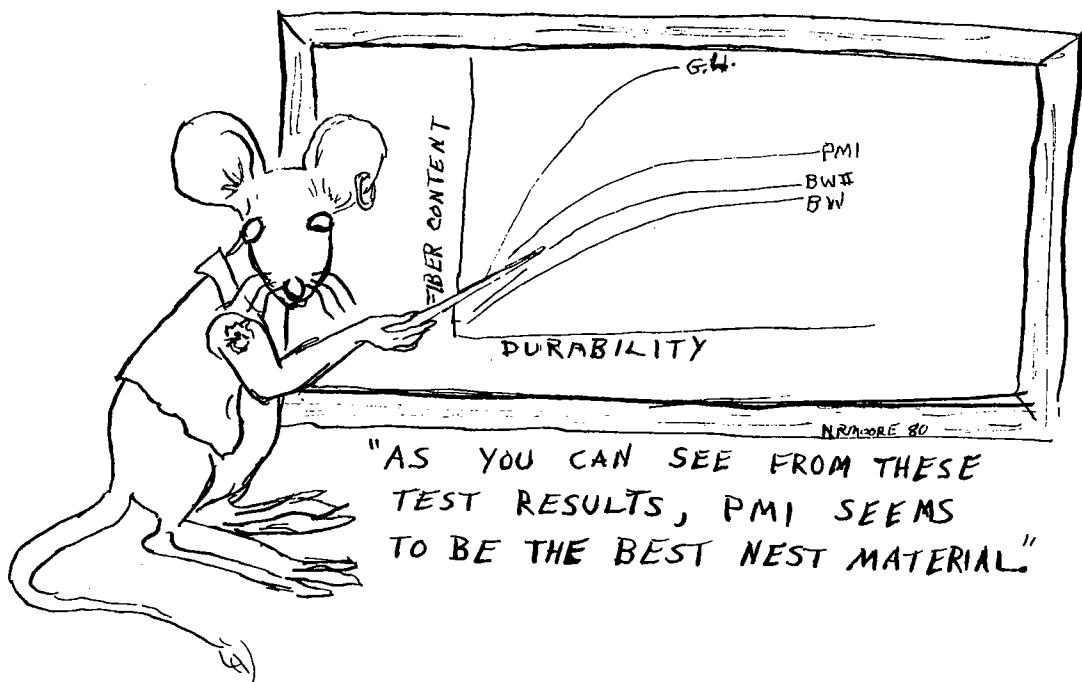
thought. They were through, finished. Kaput. Period. The end. All of these thoughts were expressed as Paul cut off a VW to take the same route as the blonde. I chuckled quietly to myself as we passed the bug.

We spotted the pickup parked outside Cambell hall, deserted.

"Probably had an automatic." grumbled Paul as he hit the gas and roared by. Rather unfair, thought I. But then, all's fair in love and war- even garbage gas.

David Shantz

*Editor's note: For those of you who may have nearly blown mental circuits reading this, the bizarre jargon has to do with the Miller pick-em-up, and the resultant bottle and can collecting.



A CLIMB UP MT. KENYA

Mt. Kenya is a crazy place. It rises out of the flat, arid equatorial plains of East Africa to an altitude of 17,058 feet, producing its own weather in the process. Its lower flanks are covered by lush jungles while alpine type meadows occur further upslope and finally the summit is rock and glacier.

Jean and I began our hike up Mt. Kenya on Christmas Eve last year from the Naru Maru Youth Hostel near the mountain's base. Together with Phoebe Allen, a Canadian girl we'd met earlier in our travels, we hitched a ride up to the entrance of the Mt. Kenya National Park. After dispensing with the entrance formalities, we started walking up the road to what they called the "met station", six miles into the park and at an altitude of about 10,000 feet. The road wound its way steadily upward through the jungle-- quite a contrast from the open plains further down. The clouds hover constantly around the mountain and produce an abundance of rainfall in this area. We hoped to see some animal life along this stretch, but as it turned out, about all we saw were brief glimpses of colobus monkeys as they cavorted and chattered in the trees close to the road. We hoped to see an elephant as there were numerous elephant-size droppings in the road, but none appeared. During a rest break, Phoebe disappeared into the brush next to the road to relieve herself only to come scrambling back seconds later, yanking up her pants with a look of sheer terror on her face. "Something growled at me!" We very gingerly poked back into the brush, but the growler had either left or he was keeping a low profile. Perhaps it was just as well.

None too soon we got to the met station as it was beginning to rain. Actually, the met station is more than a meteorological station. There are huts with bunks and cooking facilities as well as picnic areas. It is where the road ends and the trail begins. Many of the touristy types with cars come here to spend a night while others drive this far and then hike further with porters carrying their belongings. At about three dollars a day, porters are not a bad deal, but we didn't feel like playing the role of the "great white hunter" with a string of bearers, so we shouldered our own loads.

Early Christmas morning, we parted company with Phoebe at the met station and started climbing towards Teleki Hut. We soon left the jungle and entered an area called the Mt. Kenya vertical bog. We had heard horror stories of people falling in muck up to their waists. We were quite apprehensive! As it turned out however, if you really work at it, you could get wet up to your knees. But with a little care, only your boots need get wet. It was a lot of work though, and progress was slow. The climb was steep and we were beginning to get out of breath with the altitude. Soon the clouds rolled in around us and it was impossible to rest without becoming cold. After lunch the trail leveled and footing was better, the ground becoming rockier and the vegetation changing. All around were strange plants 6 or 8 feet tall called groundsels. In a way their shape was reminiscent of that of organ pipe cacti of the

Southwest. Another hiker described them as "long stalks with a cabbage on top". Groundsels and bromeliads were about the only vegetation around.

Very late in the day, we got to the 13,500 foot elevation Teliki Hut. Already we were higher than either of us had ever been before without the aid of a 707, and we were really beginning to feel the effects of the altitude. Teleki Hut was a far cry from the huts at the met station. It was a small, drafty tin building with very rudimentary bunks and quite a bit of evidence of rats. It was crowded with hikers--many of them miserable with altitude sickness. The conversation was lively with quite a cross section of people from many corners of the world.

The following day we left Teleki Hut for Top Hut at 15,700 feet. Soon after leaving Teleki Hut we came to a large community of hiraxes. A hirax is a very interesting little critter that looks much like a groundhog, but really isn't even a rodent at all, having its own evolutionary branch. Someone told us that it has been determined, based on toe structure of some such, that the little fellow is the oldest living relative of the elephant. They're quite gregarious, and I couldn't help but wonder what sort of a pet they would make.

Soon the trail began to climb very steeply and we left all vegetation behind. The footing was mostly scree, and the order of business became step, slide... step, slide... pant, pant, pant; then start over again. It was a beautiful day though, and we were above most of the clouds. The sun was nice and warm in the cool air, and the view was tremendous. We got to the Top Hut early in the afternoon and rested for the rest of the afternoon. The altitude and the climb were a bit much for our out of shape bods.

Before breakfast the next morning, we headed for the top. Actually we had to settle for climbing the third highest of Mt. Kenya's peaks, 16,355 foot Point Lenana. The two higher peaks were considerably more technical and beyond the capabilities of either ourselves or our gear. Even so, the climb was quite exhilarating. What a sight, although we were disappointed at not being able to see Mt. Kilimanjaro. It seemed really bizarre to be walking on a glacier a scant six miles from the equator. Climbing Mt. Kenya was an experience that neither of us expects to be able to repeat any time soon. If you ever happen to find yourself in that far off corner of the world, I would recommend that you give it a go.

BOB SIMONDS

GO FOR IT!

Another "Old Timer's" has come and gone, and once again, VPI has walked away with all the prizes in the Speleo-Olympics - a fact of which we can deservedly be proud. But possibly not without a hidden cost. For there were no "new" VPI faces among the contestants.

While I wish I could say that the following observations are original with me, they were first brought to my attention by Don Davison (D²) at OTR. For the newer people who don't know Don, he is a former VPI member who has, among other things, developed many of the techniques used in the Club (and NSS) today. He was also chairman of the NSS Safety and Techniques Committee for several years. What follows then are partly Don's observations and partly my reflections on same.

The "Speleo-Olympics" were originally conceived in the spirit of having a good time (as is all of OTR!). It was a chance for cavers to try out their techniques and good naturedly compete with each other - primarily for fun. It didn't matter whether you won, hearing the yells of encouragement from your friends as they convinced you that you could climb that last 30 feet (even when you were ready to quit), and then their cheers as you made it - that was enough. Then, as it should always be, you were not competing primarily against others but against yourself. If you did better this year than last, then you had bettered yourself - never a cause for anything but pride!

Of course, when you get a large active group of cavers such as VPI is, it's only natural that a number of them will end up winning a lot of the prizes. I certainly am not against that! A certain amount of competition is healthy and causes you to push yourself farther than you would on your own. So by all means, compete! Let's keep showing that VPI is on the ball!

But the point that needs to be made is, you don't need to feel you have a possibility of winning a prize in order to enter. If you're giving it your all, people will encourage you whether you're in first place or last. And if you can be better than you have been before, then you've won a bigger prize than any that can be handed out Sunday night!

A group like VPI has never survived nor grown by having a few people do things while everyone else sat back. We grow strong only by involvement of everyone. By letting only those "stars" who will win represent VPI, we are in danger of doing to the Speleo-Olympics what Little League has done to sand lot baseball. Think about it, and next time OTR comes around, get your gear together and GO FOR IT!

Richard Cobb

THE FIND

Cold, damp, odious, evil, it waited. It was ancient, so very old it had forgotten its origins. It had seen civilizations rise and fall, and had known a time before the ascent of man. It had hunted the great lizards that once inhabited the globe, and the creatures that predated even them.

Cowardly, it hid from the light of day and skulked in the shadows from which it emerged very rarely, and only at night, to prowl and to feed. It feared everything, but hated much, much more. Despising all life as a threat, malefic, sinister, dark, and forboding, it had encountered man's progenitors time and time again. Occasionally some fluke of ancestral memory would bring its image to the forefront of the mind of a dreamer, and bring him screaming, clawing, out of deepest sleep, remembering with abject terror only the vaguest details of a hideous nightmare.

It feared man and his technology more than any creature it had encountered; it hated him with a deep and abiding passion that, by contrast, paled all of the strongest of human emotions to frail shadows. It seethed and basked in its abhorrence of humanity, planning in its twisted mind, hating.

It was Johnny who first found the cave, though Mike later insisted he had known it was there all along. They were taking a shortcut through Flander's woods on the way home from school (though both sets of parents had sternly warned them against it).

The day before, Mike received in the mail a special curve-pitch baseball for which he had sent away three Frosted Flakes bo tops. He had thrown an especially twisty curve with the oddly weighted ball, which had gone past Johnny's outstretched fingers and into the bushes by the hill. Johnny, of course, had gone right after it, unmindful of the damage that the brush was doing to his new school clothes. His exclamation of delighted surprise brought Mike scurrying in after him with the dexterity that only an eleven year old can possess.

"A pirate's cave!" Mike exclaimed, on seeing his friend's discovery. "I bet there's a million billion dollars worth of treasure in there." The fact that they were at least one hundred miles from the nearest coast didn't bother him at all.

"And skulls, and bones, and swords, and ghosts!" Johnny added, his tastes leaning slightly more towards the macabre.

The ball had stopped before a three-foot square opening at the hill's rocky, brush covered base. It was obvious, even to the youngsters, that a grownup would probably never had made their discovery. The surrounding area was so choked by brambles and small boulders that passage for anything larger than a small boy was next to impossible. Besides, had anyone else known of so interesting a phenomenon, then the boys would certainly have heard about it, most likely in the form of an order to stay away from it, issued by cautious parents.

A brief exploration of the opening reassured them that it was indeed a cave, not just a small hollow in the rock. In fact, just a few feet in it widened out enough that they could stand without hitting their heads. Mike, who was not overly fond of the dark, was reluctant to proceed any further without some sort of light. Since the next day was Saturday, they made a 007, supersecret agent pact not to tell anybody of their find and to meet back there right before breakfast.

It awoke, angry. Something had moved nearby, disturbing it. It had slept for a long time, but for a creature with a life that spanned millenia, exactly how long was immaterial. It shifted its nauseating bulk with an obscene sucking sound and sifted the still air for scents. Faint traces of the human smell came to it and it recalled the creature that went along with the odor. Its anger swelled and it was almost prompted to seek the source of the scent, but caution and fear held it in place. It was very clever. It had an intelligence at least equal to that of man's, but unlike man's mayfly-like existence, it had had countless centuries to store knowledge and to brood on it. It remembered the monkey-like curiosity of the humans and reasoned they would return. It would wait; it was good at that.

The trick of getting away from parents for the day was easily performed. Mike simply told his parents that he was going over to Johnny's house, while Johnny told his that he was going over to Mike's. The intervening night had seemed to drag out forever to the boys, so bright and early the next morning they set out with anticipation, equipped with their fathers' flashlights and their own imaginations.

Both had kept their pact, despite great temptation to the contrary. Mike's little sister, Mary, had guessed that something was up from Mike's I-know-something-you-don't-know attitude, but had no way of prying the information out of him. She whined, cajoled, begged, threatened to tell their parents (exactly what, she wouldn't say), but to little avail. All she could get out of him were some obscure comments about Flander's woods. Being too young to make forays on her own, she was forced to resign herself to watching the departing back of her brother as he headed off on his exiting adventure, carrying the mysteriously necessary flashlight.

The boys quickly made their way through the brush to the cave entrance. At the opening, they made an equipment check of their lights and renewed their pledge to each other; they were going to split anything they might find fifty-fifty. Johnny, being the bolder of the two, entered the cave first. Mike was quick to follow though, as nothing in the world can keep a young boy away from a prospective adventure, not even a gloomy cave.

The interior of the cave did indeed open up, as they had discovered the day before. It was approximately five feet high and twice that in width. The walls glistened with a faintly luminescent slime that appeared in patches and trails all down its length. The cave extended at a downward incline for as far ahead as their lights would allow them to see. The air was cool and damp, musty and still, as if it hadn't been stirred for a long time.

After the initial excitement and suspense, they found themselves a little disappointed that there were no heaps of treasure lying about in plain view. A conference was held in hushed whispers, which seemed appropriate in this place. They reassured each other that the pirate's gold must be further on in; it made good sense that the pirates would have wanted to hide their booty as well as possible. Urging each other on, with Johnny slightly in the lead, they moved deeper into the cave, the beams of their flashlights weakly illuminating the darkness.

They hadn't gone more than ten paces when they noticed the smell. Once, a rat had swallowed some poison and had crawled behind the waterheater in Mike's basement and died. This smell reminded him vaguely of that, but it was not quite the same; it was somewhere worse. He felt goosebumps begin to form on his skin and he started to shiver.

The further in they went, the more the odor thickened. Mike could have

sworn he heard a slithering sound, but the noise they were making made it impossible for him to be sure. When they stopped at his insistence to listen for it, nothing could be heard but their own excited breathing.

"Johnny," Mike whispered, "I'm scared. Let's go home."

"Don't be silly," Johnny scolded. "Don't you want the pirate's treasure?"

"Not any more," Mike answered. "Let's go get my dad first; this place gives me the creeps."

"Then we'll have to split it three ways instead of two. Come on, let's just look a little further," Johnny urged. With that he headed onward, holding his light at arms length with one hand and his other hand over his mouth and nose.

"Sure smells bad in here," he called back to Mike, who followed very reluctantly.

After about fifty more paces of steady descent, the cave came to an abrupt end. Mike looked relieved and Johnny disappointed, as they searched the back wall of the cave for any further openings. They were very careful not to touch anything, as the cave walls were thoroughly covered with the slime this far back.

"Damn," Johnny said, "no treasure!"

Mike nodded and choked out a request that they go get some fresh air. Johnny signalled agreement and kicked out at the ooze coated wall with his tennis shoe as he turned...

It was very, very clever. It had played this game many times in the past. Few had seen it and lived to remember. It knew that if it stretched itself out and carefully hugged the wall...

"Cave-in!" Johnny yelled. Mike wasn't so sure. On television cave-ins always had rocks falling from the roof accompanied with lots of noise. Here, just the wall seemed to be collapsing and it was doing it without making any noise at all.

It heaved itself up, twisting its grotesquely misshapen form. A vision of unclean wriggling death, it turned towards the boys. Snapping fangs, gnashing incisors, scratching pincers and claws, it was a horrible, festering picture of insanity.

The boys' lights caught it and illuminated it fully as it moved. Mike screamed and covered his eyes. He felt his bowels move and the front of his pants grow damp. Johnny turned, ran face first into the rear wall of the cave, and was mercifully knocked unconscious.

It loved to play with its food. It reveled in the blood of the kill. It gloated, and still how it hated! It had almost forgotten the taste of meat, so long had it slept. It fed, digested, and waited.

Mary told the searchers that she had heard her brother mention Flander's woods and that he had taken a flashlight with him. Johnny's father also reported a flashlight missing. The search party was the largest ever organized in the area. Given the evidence, the state police reasoned that they should be on the lookout for a cave.

If they were very, very lucky, they wouldn't find it.

RICARD C. LEWCZYK

Gaping Hole Cave System

On the Friday before Labor Day of this year, I met with Kerry Latimore and Mark Conover in Kerry's San Jose apartment. From there, we drove north through McCloud, and then followed some logging roads to an area where trip organizer Dave McClurg said to make camp, in the vicinity of Mount Shasta.

The ground was covered by palm-sized chips of lava, and finding an unbroken flat slab to sleep on wasn't easy. The McClurgs avoided this problem by sleeping in their van, in which they arrived at around midnight. In my opinion, the night air was too chilly for 'sleeping under the stars', 'cause I froze mys off.

The next morning, Kerry and I poked around the site and located a couple of windows into the lava tubes, as well as short collapsed sections of tubes.

By 10:00, Bruce Rogers, Charmaine Legge, Ed Strauch, and Pete Bosted had arrived, completing the exploring party. McClurg and Rogers held a powwow to tell us about the Gaping Hole system, and lava tubes in general.

Lava tubes form when molten lava flows through valleys in the pre-flow terrain and solidifies on top, forming a hard crust over a still-molten center. When the lava stops flowing, the liquid center runs out, leaving a hollow cavity which may be several miles long. With time, the ceiling may collapse in those areas where it is too wide to support its own weight. When this occurs, an open, rubble-choked trench forms. Gaping Hole is one segment of a tube which originates at Giant Crater and which one may follow continuously for about 15 miles. Near the crater, much of the ceiling has collapsed, leaving miles of open trench. Farther 'downstream' sections have maintained their ceilings, and it is these sections that constitute the caves we were to visit.

At about noon, everyone was ready and we headed to the walk-in entrance. The lava, which when liquid was full of gas bubbles, is pockmarked and very abrasive, which is hard on skin and clothing, but easy to climb on. The ceilings of the caves range in thickness from a few inches to 70 feet. In several places, two levels of parallel tubes exist- each caused by a different flow. We walked the length of Gaping Hole Cave to the foot-thick moss floor of Double Arches Window, near the northern end of the cave. The going was easy, and we had no trouble deciding which way to go, for lava tubes rarely have any side passages. Pete and I went beyond Double Arches to the end of the cave, and then had a quick look into Shovel Cave. By then, Saturday was over.

Sunday morning, we went to Jot Dean Cave to meet Paul and Suzanne Lushkin and Dave and Louise Squire of the Stanislaus Grotto. From Jot Dean we drove to a point near Giant Crater, where we intended to follow the main trench to find new caves in its 'unexplored' regions.

Our practice of not bringing any caving gear along, so as to enhance our chances of finding a cave, paid off when Ed Strauch poked his head into a window, and found that it went! Everyone piled in to look around, using only flashlights for illumination. Pete, Mark, and Paul surveyed, and the rest of us tried to figure out from which crater the lava had flowed in forming the cave.

After finding some 300 feet of cave, we assumed that the cave had ended and exited. Pete, Mark, and Paul were nowhere to be found. After

ten minutes or so, we heard yells from some distance. When we ran to the source, it was a window with the missing cavers at the bottom of it.

Mark and I climbed down and explored as Paul and Pete surveyed behind us. The lava cut my hands and knees badly, but I didn't particularly mind--after all, I was in virgin cave! We found many big tree roots growing through the thin, porous ceiling, and down to the floor. After a tight crawlway and 700 more feet of stooping and duckwalking, the tube finally came to an end. In toto, the cave is about 2000 feet long, which is pretty good for a lava tube!

After the excitement of Root Loop Cave, as we named it, we trucked on over to Giant Crater. The crater is huge, between 1/4 and 1/3 mile in diameter, and 200-300 feet deep, and choked with rubble that has fallen in from the sides. From there we headed down the trench, Pete and I ranging ahead with a walkie-talkie, trying to reach the unexplored part of the trench before it got too late. We turned back at 6:30, unaware that we were only 1 section from the unexplored region.

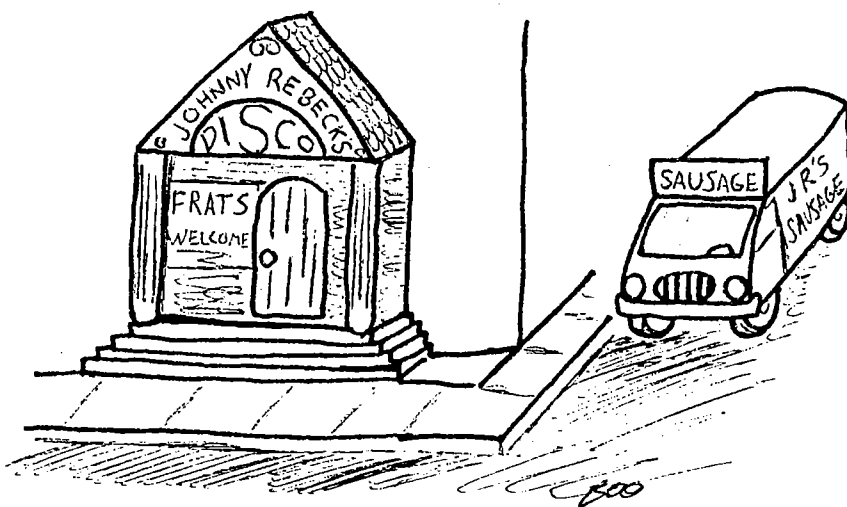
On Monday we decided to visit some ice caves, so we headed to Iceplug Cave and 3 Level Ice Cave. While the others rigged the entrance to Iceplug, the McClurgs took me to 3 Level and introduced me to 32-degree caving.

The floor was one foot deep in ice, and there were several crystal-clear ice formations, as well as sheets of ice with a pebbled surface. We placed a register on the third level and then left.

That afternoon Dave and Molly McClurg and I went into Ice Plug. The cave is only open on years when the precipitation has not been sufficient to plug it. We were lucky to be able to just barely squeez in. The entrance was about two by two feet, and a 'waterfall' of ice fills the bottom of the entrance. Due to the steepness of the entrance, about 65 degrees, it was necessary to rappel in. After rappelling in and snapping a few pictures, we hurried to the back of the cave and found Pete and Paul finishing a survey of the cave. They needed a third, so I volunteered while the McClurgs started up the drop. Then, having finished our survey, we mappers followed. The climb, though not more than 20 feet, is not for beginners. Although I used a chest cam/floating Jumar rig, it took me several minutes to prussik out.

Our time was up, so we headed back to San Jose. On the long ride, I contemplated the experiences of the weekend, and realized what a great variety of caves there are beyond the karst with which I was familiar.

Rich Neisser



CALCULUS, BATSHIT, and BEER

The sun chased cloud-shadows across the red and gold slopes of Prices Mountain as I gazed out the balcony at the dominating microwave tower, remembering the drunken foray some of us had made several nights previous. Paul, Fran, Win, and Chuck had kept warm in the cab of the pick-up, while John, Phillip, and I tried to avoid Hugh, who was in a lawn chair making random attempts to hurl himself out of the bed as we rounded the curves on the way up to the tower.

I was tempted, leaning there against the railing, to take a ride up in the daylight, but the thought of work to be done and a dead inspection stick-er deterred me. "Damn Calculus!" I thought as I went in. "Why couldn't Newton have spent his spare time under coconut trees instead of in apple orchards?!"

Being more enamored with nature's beauty than derivatives and formulas, my mind wandered back to another day when I had watched the sun play across the mountains, this time on the green leaves of summer....

Joe Zokaites, Bill Koerschner, and I were headed west on 460, on our way to pick up Chuck and do some mapping in Pighole. With CCR drowning out Joe and Bill's conversation in the front, I was taking in all that Mother Nature had spread out for us to admire. It was the first I'd been in Blacksburg for some time, and I was looking forward to returning semi-permanently in a month. The environment itself was a physical rest from the pettiness and problems of Winchester, where I was working. The prospect of the underground and of caving with experts again really cheered me.

We picked up Chuck (after exchanging insults with Pat), signed the Porterfield's register, and were soon at the yawning mouth of the cave. Checking for cuts or heavily abraded spots, Joe and Chuck lowered the rope while Bill and I got our rappelling rigs on. (Harnesses like that are sooo much fun!)

Being eager to get into the cave, I was the first one down the rope, exercising more caution than usual since I didn't have a belay. Pighole is where I had learned to rappel and it still had the power to overwhelm me. I took my time going down, enjoying the breathtaking ride. Bill was next, then Chuck, and finally Joe.

This was the third mapping trip Chuck had led into Pighole and he had some closure points to recheck just on the other side of what is now known as Skunk Crawl. He and Joe reshot some Brunton readings, then we climbed up to the lefthand balcony overlooking the floor of the entrance pit. Bill stopped to answer some of Chuck's technical questions on the cave structure. Following a passage that goes behind the pit, we came out on the righthand balcony, which is higher and more spacious than the other.

Joe located the last survey station from the previous trip, and with Bill exploring, Joe reading Brunton, and me setting stations, Chuck finished the sketch. Bill was shouting to us from some lead, so I followed Chuck until I

came to a three foot step across a 40 foot void. I lost my nerve and backed up to let Joe past. He mumbled something about short people while crawling across into the lead. I went up to look at it again, the other three having mapped the lead to a quick end. Chuck said it wasn't even a fat chance, Shantz, and they all came back across with exaggerated nonchalance, just to make me feel good.

We poked back through the passage connecting the balconies, futilely looking for any unexplored leads, and resumed mapping in some small, slightly muddy stuff. This came out in a room that connects the left balcony and the passage leading to the Empire Ledge, which overlooks Hess' Hollow and the Mud Bridge. Opting for a rest, we sat down to a snack of pressed ham, sardines, Vienna sausages (yum, yum), and Joe's ever-present Tootsie Rolls.

Soon we were back to the Brunton and the muddy tape, outlining the room and mapping out some of the possible leads. One turned out to be a real nice walking passage that went fifty feet before turning a corner and mudding up. We decided to quit before the Empire Ledge, stopping part-way down a slope that led to a black abyss that looked to require at least a belay, more likely a cable ladder. Joe tossed some clumps of mud down to estimate the depth while Bill perched on a boulder, peering over the edge, looking for all the world like a hungry vulture surveying the landscape.

Joe and Bill ambled towards the Wild Cat Run, giving Chuck and me time to put away the notes and tape. Joe led us to the far side of the Mud Bridge, where we made sure the Queen had enough bath water, and poked around some of the passages there. We went on through the large breakdown blocks into the guano room, which looked as if some giant moles had been digging the shit up for fertilizer.

At the small end of the room, I slithered up the chimney tiles that line the back entrance. I was concerned about the widening crack in the lower one; it looked none too stable. Hooking my pack onto my foot, I pushed the door up with my helmet. Joe handed up the others' packs, and I stood making helpful comments about tall people as he struggled with his oversized legs. Bill and Chuck got out easily enough and discussed the possibility of improving the log retaining walls. After de-reigging the rope, we went back to Chuck and Pat's for beer and spaghetti.

....I came to my senses with an empty beer in my hand and the calculus book open in front of me, like a death warrant. Sensing the shock to my system, I got another beer to compensate and sat down to work. Even with calculus, I decided, it's good to be back in Blacksburg.

DAVE SHANTZ

The Fallopian Tubes and Beyond

It was October 1979, and Bill Koerschner and myself were out at Skydusky Hollow. This was to be a routine crossover trip through Newberry-Banes with Pete Sauvigne leading five people through from the Banes end, and Bill and I leading three others from the Newberry's side. If anything seemed different about this crossover trip it was that Koerschner, for all his devious thoughts on the Skydusky Cave System, had never been in Newberry-Banes, the center, and perhaps the key, to the entire system..

As we made our way into Newberry's and down Bill's rappel we figured to do a fair amount of exploring. This promised to make our half of the trip a bit longer than Pete's half. The result was the mutiny of one of our crew members when we finally met Pete's group.

With our number now reduced to four, we headed for the North Subway which none of us had been to before. We checked out numerous leads before finally finding the passage which led up to the extension area. As we forged onward we crossed what appeared to be a significant drainage divide. The passage was quite large, and something draining away from the heart of Newberry's had formed this. We continued ahead, always following the downstream passages, until we were at last stopped by a tricky 15 foot climb. While the others waited, I made the climb and continued on from the other side. Shortly, I heard someone coming up from behind. Sure enough, it was Philippe Balister who had also found the climb challenging, but not impossible.

We reached a muddy room, later to be called the Meander Room, and noticed a single pair of footprints going across the floor. The passage ended here with the trickle stream sinking into the floor. One glance around the room showed only one six inch diameter hole up and to the left of where the stream sank. Putting my lamp up to this hole, I saw the lamp flame being pulled in. By turning my ear to the hole it seemed I could hear a slight movement of running water or maybe it was the sound of the trickle stream back behind me. Placing this in my mind as a possible dig, we returned to the others.

After some more site seeing, we did the connection to Banes, climbed the pit, and exited the cave, making it a ten hour trip.

Two weeks later, on Friday, November 9th, Jeff Hedges, Joey Fagan and myself returned. We went in the Banes entrance and through the connection to the North Subway. We arrived at the dig and took turns digging for a couple of hours. Being the smallest, I finally decided to go for it and dug and squeezed my way forward in the gross oozing mud for about 50 feet. After my second lamp failure I couldn't get my lamp lit and, with my pack back in the meander room I was forced to back out. I was within two feet of digging to reach walking passage. Beyond I could hear a big echo and the low roar of a large stream. Meanwhile, Joey had labeled the dig the Fallopian Tubes in honor of its sleaziness.

We gave up for the day and headed out after an 8.5 hour trip. We'd missed the Cave Club meeting and a day of school as well.

On December 15th Jeff Hedges, Win Wright and I decided to return to the Fallopiian Tubes. With much screwing around, we finally entered Newberry's at 4:15 in the afternoon. Not knowing exactly where it was or how to do it, we looked around for the Devil's Staircase, the free climb bypass of the 160 foot Bill's rappel. Once down, we headed up the North Subway armed with an army shovel and 125 feet of bluewater for a towline.

After some initial widening of the dig, I pushed through with the towline tied to my ankle. I dug through the last few feet and found myself in a small alcove with a small hole leading to a roaring stream. I pulled my pack through on the towline and sent the shovel back for the next person. Unable to wait any longer, I popped through the remaining hole and rolled down the mud bank of a large room. Wow! Before me lay the largest stream in the entire system. Was this the master trunk?

Returning to the dig, I heard Win squirming along. However, I had only dug things large enough for myself, and towards the end I had basically forced my way through with minimal digging. Win, naturally, was seen quite stuck, and though he had the shovel he couldn't begin to dig anymore. Oh well, one choice remained. I crawled in and took the shovel from him, digging things out a bit larger. Then I backed out and we both grabbed hold of the towline. We pulled like hell and at last Win popped through like a cork. Jeff, being considerably larger than either of us, opted to remain on the other side.

Downstream at the far end of the large room was a big terminal siphon lake. Upstream we went about 700 feet before being forced to get in the water. I waded upstream in thigh deep water until a six inch air space was encountered. A definite lack of air flow failed to suck me through this without a wetsuit. We turned around and headed up a rubble slope into the only significant side lead.

Climbing up high, we crawled around some loose looking breakdown before finally backing off, but something was certainly up there. We returned to the dig. Win seemed to lack a whole lot of enthusiasm and I wasn't about to let him go back through first, just in case he couldn't fit. As it ended up we had little problem getting out and we exited the cave into the cold morning darkness at 5:45 AM after a 13.5 hour trip.

The stream we had found appeared to be coming from the east side of the system, and was certainly large enough to be carrying the combined water of both Spring Hollow and Bane's Spring.

After a few hours of speleo-seminar, we watched the sun rise and hiked down the ridge to Paul Penley's to compare finds with Ed Devine's two day mapping crew.

The old Glen Davis survey showed Newberry-Banes to be 4.02 miles. Sure, there were a number of small finds that could add to this length, but we wanted to map the more significant stuff. Bill Koerschner decided we should survey and push the pit in the lower portion of Banes.

January 26th saw Bill, Paul Kirchman, Carol Trexler, and myself entering the Banes entrance. We did the drop into the main level and headed upstream to the interior drop. After tying into the old survey, we surveyed down the 71.5 foot drop. We were now headed downstream and mapped into the right side lead. The passage soon boomed open with a large waterfall coming in from 100 feet up. Bill's conjecture that this might be the water from Bane's Spring leads to another story of a dig which disproved this hypothesis. Down a few ladder drops, we pushed to a siphon and returned to finish the main passage. Our total for the day was 947 feet and a 13 hour trip.

During the next few months a few trips returned to the Fallopian Tubes to set dye traps, but further exploration waited for dryer weather.

On July 19th, after a long dry spell, Bob Alderson, Bill, and I returned to the Fallopian Tubes. We surveyed the dig for 52 feet, then upstream to the side lead. Once up the side lead, we came to the breakdown where Win and I had stopped before. Bob looked around and, figuring it was safe enough, climbed up. I followed and off we went, ditching the survey.

After a few hundred feet of crawlway we came to some pool crawls. The air blasting through was very tempting. Once on the other side we were in a trunk passage about 8x15 feet with a stream. We followed this upstream for about 1500 feet before it split, ending in a mud fill and a blowing rock pile. A few compass bearings on the passage set a beeline for downstream Spring Hollow.

Back at the pool crawls we met Bill. We were wet and cold, but decided to leave the new find for now and finish the main stream trunk. We froze our buns off in the water, mapping through two near sumps to an upstream siphon. We turned around with just over 1100 feet surveyed. The trip out, half hypothermic after 14 hours, made this one of the worst trips any of us could remember.

Once again, on August 23rd, Alderson, Bill, Ben Keller, and I returned, with a crowbar. Bill and Ben went through the Fallopian Tubes to continue the survey while Alderson and I checked out a few high leads in the North Subway extension area. After much disappointment, we went and joined the survey.

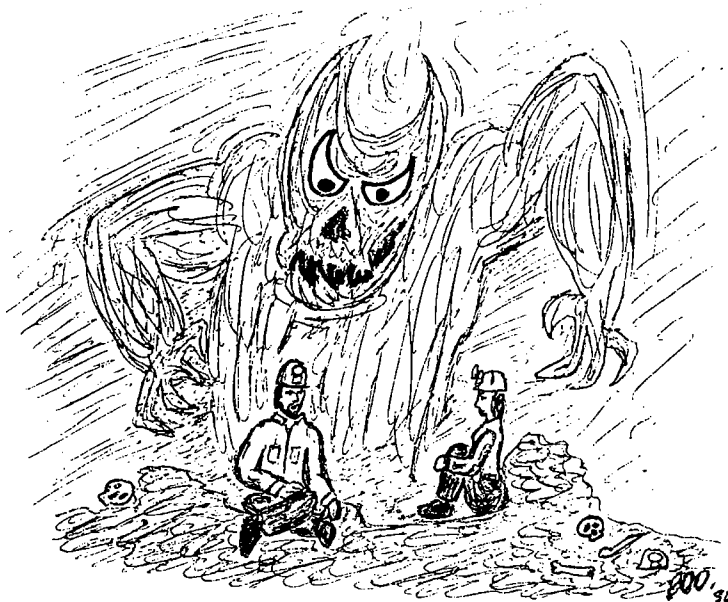
Mapping into the crawlways, Ben and Bill found a side lead which proved to be rather significant. We joined up with them and finally quit surveying at the pool crawls. Even though we had the crowbar we couldn't bring ourselves to sliding through the pools. We left the cave with 1024 feet surveyed and 13.5 hours of caving.

Finally, on September 20th, Bill, Ben, Bill Shipman and I returned to Newberry's. Again we took a crowbar and headed through the Fallopian Tubes. We started mapping at the pool crawls and continued up the trunk on the other side. While the others mapped a side lead, I went up to the windy rock pile and began moving rock. Finally there was enough space to move into a small alcove. There was room for air and a few bats, but the breakdown was sandstone and looked hopeless.

As darkness was falling on the surface the survey finally reached the rock pile. Numerous bats began to fly in and out of the pile, making the last few survey shots a drag. If we were getting air flow from Spring Hollow why were there so many bats? The bat population of Spring Hollow is rather limited. It seemed that there had to be a surface entrance somewhere way above the rock pile.

We left the cave with 1500 feet; the survey was finished along with 13 hours of caving. Newberry's now stands at 4.9 miles. Could this upper passage be the old Paleo-downstream of Spring Hollow? One thing for sure is that the large stream and trunk is the present downstream of Spring Hollow. This has been confirmed by recent dye tracing. Yes, Newberry's does hold the key to at least part of the system, and the east side is hydrologically connected.

Bill Stephens



"I WONDER WHERE ED AND
BILL ARE... THEY WERE SUPPOSED
TO MEET US HERE AN HOUR AGO!"

EDITOR'S COLUMN

As I sit here writing this column, I still find myself marveling at what I have gotten into this time. It all started at the end of spring quarter, at which time I was approached by the former Trog editor, Pat Shorten, about being the Trog editor the following school year. The fact that I was in a drunken stupor probably had no effect on my decision, I feel relatively sure. Well, summer has a way of making students forget things, and I soon forgot my promise to Pat. Old Timers soon rolled around, and again I was asked if I would be editor for the Trog. Again, I feel that my drunken state on this occasion did not alter my decision. I have to admit, though, that I was a bit surprised when I was reminded that I was the new Trog editor, when I was in a more functional state.

So everyone is probably thinking, by this time, that I have regrets about taking this post. At first I did, but when it really got down to putting out the Trog, I got excited...I found it stimulating...I...I... Well let it suffice to say that I got into it. From talking to people in the club, I realized that the Trog is a very important function to them. It is an important way for members to communicate ideas and news.

Anyway, enough of this bat guano. I would like to present the Fall '80 Tech Troglodyte. I hope everyone finds it an enjoyable issue. At this time I would like to thank the following people for their help on this issue: Pat Shorten, Boo Croft, Dave Shantz, Pam Buzas, and Sue Heazel. Without their help, this Trog would be next year coming out. I would also like to thank those who gave me material for the Trog; keep it coming.

I would like to conclude by encouraging participation by everyone. If you can write, please submit an article. If you feel that you can't write but you have some ideas concerning articles or the Trog in general, bend my ear. Well, I've rambled on enough for now. I've got to save some up for the next issue.

Hugh Beard