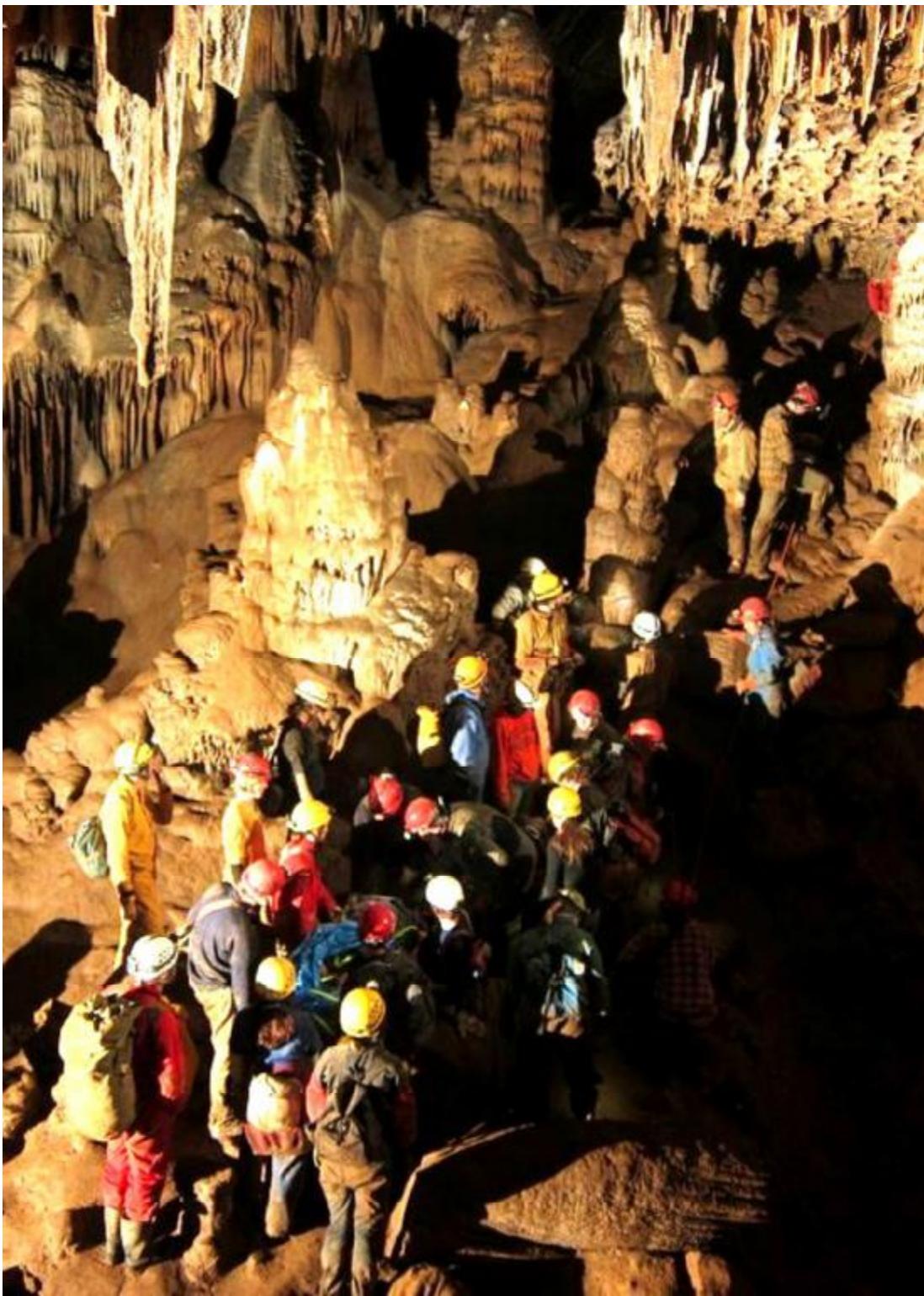


THE TECH TROGLODYTE



SPRING 2013

The *Tech Trodlyte* is published each semester (assuming that people bother to submit articles, which they often don't) by the VPI Cave Club, a student grotto of the NSS. All submissions, subscriptions, inquiries, donations, and comments should be sent to: Trog Editor, VPI Cave Club P.O. Box 558, Blacksburg, VA 24060-0558.



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THE TECH TROLODYTE

A Journal of the Virginia Tech Grotto of the National Speleological Society



Fall 2011—Spring 2012 Officers

President	John Mulheren
Vice President	Courtney Trost
Secretary	Nick "Peppy" Socky
Treasurer	Brian McCarter

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Thanks to everyone who sent me an article this year!! We've had a pretty eventful year with five new members and a lot of new trainees. Our events have of course been memorable with everything from lube wrestling at Halloween to finding out our relationships based on our

Mayan calendar birthdays at TAG to some seriously good BBQ and dancing

at Banquet. It's been a busy year for rescues with a full blown practice rescue and another real one at Bone Nor-

man (seriously is this going to be an annual thing?). I'm happy that this

Trog documents all of these events for us to look back on in years to come. I

was really happy to not have to badger people too much to get articles this year and I'm pleased that a lot came from aspiring members. I love having the perspective of a trainee on one of

their first trips because some of us have forgotten what that experience is like. This year's Trog is especially diverse with international perspectives from both Mexico and New Zealand. It's cool to see how far we can spread our VPI caving experience across the globe. Cave on and write more articles!

-Courtney



LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Quite a bit has happened to our club in the past year. We've gained five new members (congratulations guys and gals!) and we have a few dudes and dudettes who are almost there. We've



worked a lot to prepare ourselves for cave rescues, and even got the chance to help out at the real deal. Our members have led tons and tons of trips this year exposing literally millions of newbies to caving. Also, we've continued our tradition of intercontinental caving. Our members have gone underground in Mexico, China, New Zealand (and probably some others I forgot about). Hopefully our next president will be able to ensure we scoop some booty in Antarctica. I'd settle for Africa though. I would like to thank everyone who has helped make our club what

it is: a troupe of borderline insane nogoodniks who thirst for underground treasure. Finally I would like to conclude with a zip zop zupity doo. Hey Courtney, no one reads this part right? Right?

-John

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the Cave Club, a group of misfits. We'll take you, beard or no beard, weird or.... Well just weird. There aren't many groups out there that will welcome anyone with open arms to go underground, camp in a cow field with 5+ kegs, or build the world's sketchiest float. But that's what we do



and we sure have a hell of a time doing it. Thank you to everyone in the club for always welcoming newcomers by leading a cave trip or handing them a PBR. And thank you to all of the old farts who just won't stop coming back for helping to make this club what it is. A lot of our events wouldn't happen without the persistence and dedication of those who have a better attention span than the college students. To every person who helped out with training, hosted a spelio, or donated a piece of burniture, this club is awesome because of you. Let's keep the traditions going and the weirdness alive.

New Members



Nick "Peppy" Socky #429



John George #430



Matt Skowronski #431



Naomi Orndorff #432

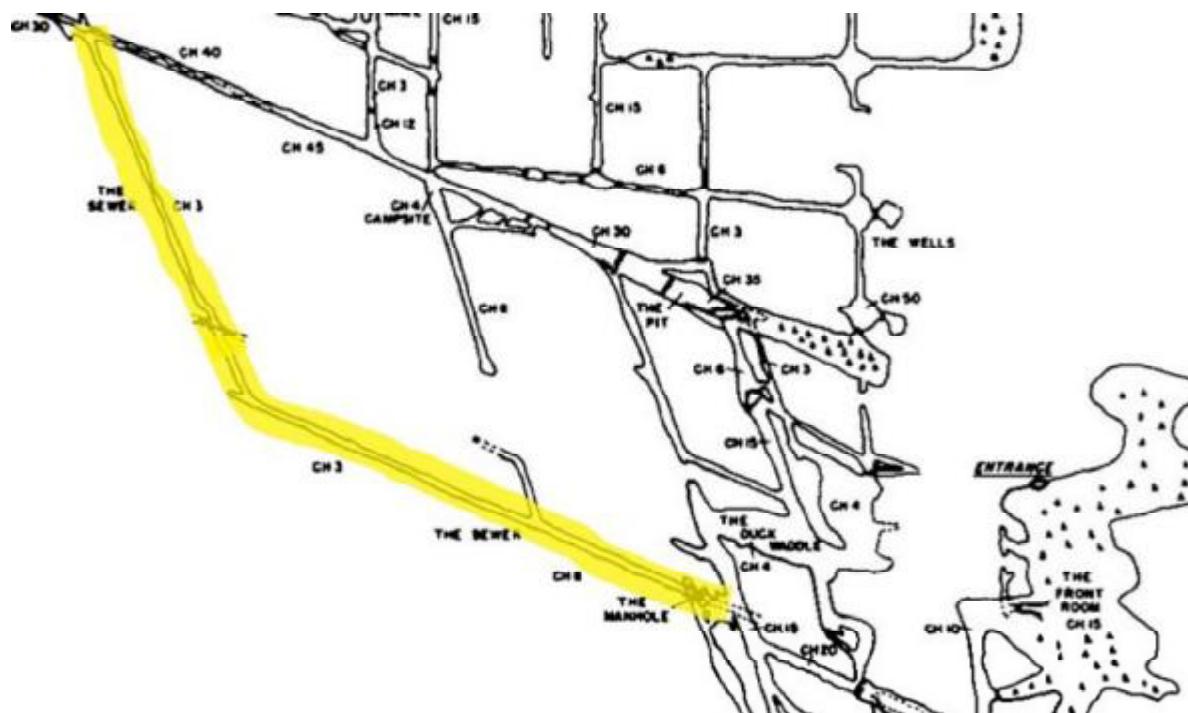


Sarah Crowder #433

The Sewer

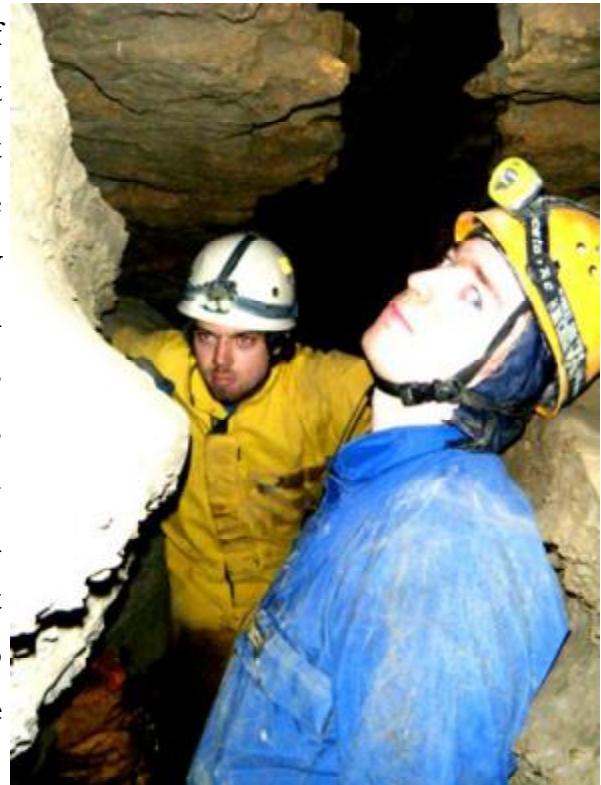
By Nick Socky

Sometimes a place is named for a reason, and the wise stay away! WE were not the wise. Well actually a few of us were, but the decision between getting lost in a maze for a long time, or traveling through a linear seemingly simple crawl, was taken to a vote. AND the decision to go in. It was a beautiful day outside. The birds perfect with the world. My friends and I outside hiking, throwing a Frisbee, or this, nobody knows, but it's just that County to enter the Maze of Crossroads. It was shining, it is January and it was pitch black; we made for the entrance, wall and entered the warm darkness.



We made our way from the entrance room into the entrance maze. We had a little bit of fun there, trying to figure out where we were. As we looked at the map, we saw a part of the cave called "The Sewer". It didn't look that bad on the map; very linear section of the cave, cannot really get lost in, and it lead us pretty deep in the cave too! We decided to check it out. As we descended down through the Manhole and entered this lower section of the cave, we saw why they called it the sewer. It was a small canyon like passage with a gravelly floor and a little bit of water, but manageable. We went further down this passage and then it took a slight right turn into a hand a knees crawl. With me leading I was hoping we did not have to back out due to water. I crawled on my hands and knees; I crawled for 5 whole minutes! And then I hit lots of water, so much water that I forced everyone behind me to back out. Then we looked at the map again and discovered that a small crack up to the left instead was the right direction.

It was an incredibly tight fit into this small upper canyon area which gave the sewer its real name. This canyon which went on for approximately 400 feet was a tight narrow key hole like canyon. The shape of it forced you to have to canyon and crawl at the same time. And to add to this, the walls and floor were both also sharp with frequent cave popcorn. After the first 20 minutes in this passage, we all started regretting our decision coming down to the sewer. Screaming comments were made, "its called the sewer for a reason!". Two members on the trip, John and Tommy started laughing hysterically when they came around a slight bend to see the rest of the passage: with the same crawlly like canyon, but with about a 10 foot section filled with water. That is when the scream and cursing truly started. The pool only seeming a few inches deep was actually about 3 feet deep with a soupy muddy mix. From the pool we crawled back up into the canyon. This made it slippery for the last few people, but it was still a sharp passage! So a lot of slipping and yelling come from Daniel, Sarah, and I. This continued for about another 50 to 100 feet and just when it seemed that it wouldn't end, we finally broke into the normal canyon passage. No more crawling! We rejoiced! Sort of...





We then went back into the canyon section of the cave and played around some more. Went into the main maze, and gawked at the wells. After exhausting our self in the sewer though, we decided to head back out. And then we did truly rejoice!

Moral of this cave trip though: If a passage on a

cave map is named something weird or disturbing like, it was probably named for a reason and it should be taken into great consideration.

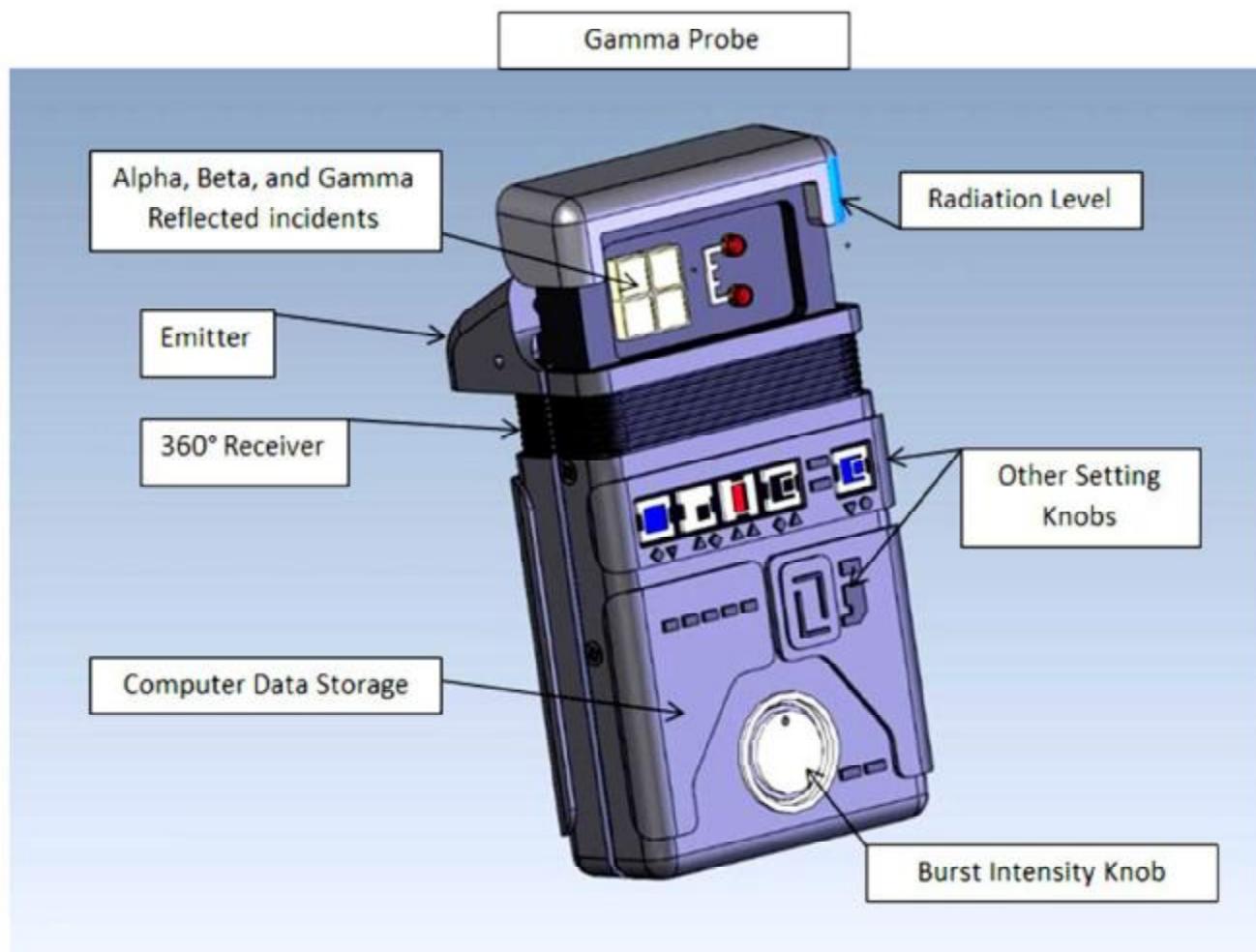


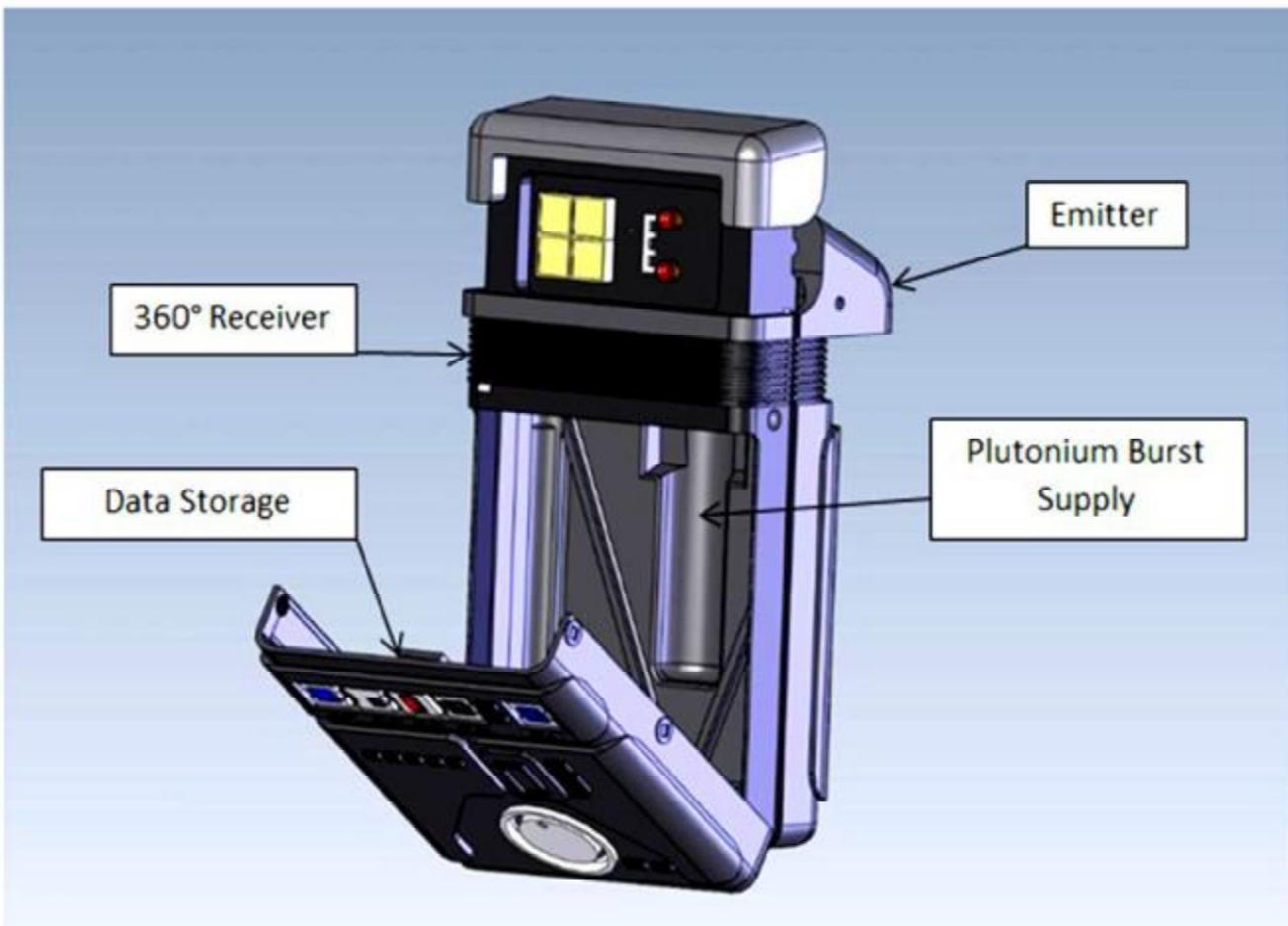
Technology Advances Cave Survey

By Nick "Peppy" Socky

Detailed cave surveying, involved with project caving, has been around for about 40 to 50 years now. Typical techniques still include using a measuring tape, compass, and clinometer. When readings are taken from each of these tools, the sketcher writes down the data and hand draws a line-plot and a rough sketch of cave cross-section at each specific station. Other techniques involve using high-tech sonar devices to create 3-D cross-sectional representation of the passage. Using this surveying device is a great improvement from the simple instruments and sketching, but such systems are also expensive. Most recently, extensive research and great advances in science have resulted in an even more sophisticated device to help with cave surveying and exploration.

The device, called a Gamma Probe, is the most advanced cave exploration instrument ever created. In early 2013, North Korea performed yet another underground nuclear weapons test. Measurements of the explosion again registered on local Richter scales on the Korean peninsula. Cave researchers had permission from South Korea to place new probe devices to see if radiation from the nuclear explosion could possibly plot and find new cave passage underground. The theory is similar to x-ray devices used in hospitals.





When a radiation burst is released, radioactive particles travel through some materials but reflect off others that are too dense. When picked up by the probe, the reflected particles create an image. When North Korea set off their nuclear device, the probes placed in South Korea were able to create and show x-ray images of the underground pockets and passages of the Korean Peninsula. From this amazing discovery, U.S. caver scientists began conducting tests to create a small nuclear emitter and probe to help survey caves and discover new passage in existing caves.

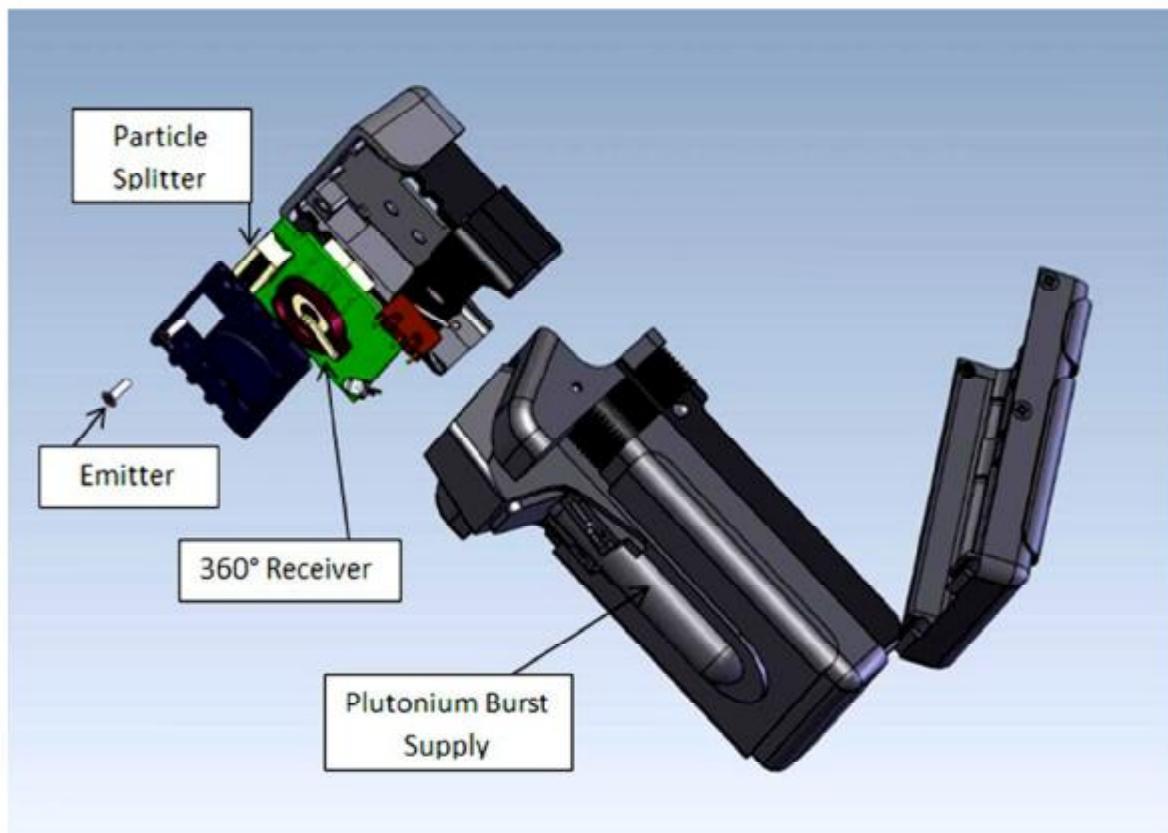
The Gamma Probe works with—and creates—alpha, beta, and gamma particles. The probe first creates a small nuclear microburst from a plutonium core. When fired, a filter acts as a “flow straightener,” and all the particles are evenly emitted through a palladium nozzle. These emitted particles travel through the air medium until they are reflected by a material they cannot pass through. Each set of particles reflects differently to each different strata and type of rock the cave is formed in. Alpha particles are used to map a majority of open passage because they will reflect off all mud and rock. Beta particles easily pass through mud and other organic debris but reflect off rock formations. These results would show the length of specific mud plugs and determine if they could produce potential digs. Gamma particles were the most interesting particles with the experiments performed. They responded most to the density of the rock, and if a rock face was porous or thin, reflected results would show a darker area. However, if they reflected entirely, the result would show white. These results were best used with finding thin walls to possible undiscovered cave passage as well as interesting research in using caves as bunkers in case of a nuclear attack.

Environmental concerns did of course surface with the discovery of this new technological surveying technique. FEMA, CDC, and WHO all said that such a device was too dangerous for people to use and would have horrible effects on the physical and biological environment. Fears of water source and ground water contamination were also a strong concern. Cave nuclear researchers claim the amounts of radiation created from the device were only slightly higher than the average exposure during a flight to Beijing from Los Angeles. Cave biologist Wil “Wolfgang” Orndorff also stated:

“The only creatures in the cave biome of any concern were the bats, but because of White Nose Syndrome, most of the bats are now dead. And on top of that, any radiation affects to the bats would most likely result in a new species resistant to white nose syndrome. Also, a salamander with two tails would just be too cool not to have.”

The most recent research from cave biologists shows that the small amounts of radiation created by the Gamma Probe could actually kill the *Geomyces destructans* fungus associated with the white nose syndrome in the localized location where it is used.

Currently, the device is in use and is being closely monitored for any negative effects, and more research is still being done. Its most recent use was at the VPI-Cave-Club-sponsored survey event called Filthy Young Women (Rebecca Sewered, Amy Scrotomnski, Samantha Huff-n-puff, Sarah Iler, Sara Fleetwood, Hillary Shitmeister). Because of the possible dangers of the device, when used in survey, cavers were required to wear lead-plated cups to protect reproductive organs.



CAD drawings from <http://www.therpf.com/f9/star-trek-iii-tricorder-3d-print-version-151120/> “Star Trek III Tricorder”

My First Vertical Cave: Clover Hollow

By Aasim Rawoot



The last caving trip I was a part of happened to be my first vertical caving trip. As a pretty new and prospective member of the club I was pretty eager to finally have the opportunity to make my first vertical descent and climb. The group was up bright and early. It was a cold morning but luckily it was dry, I've heard Clover Hollow could get pretty wet.

The setup went pretty smoothly, although I wish I could've helped out more. I felt pretty useless just standing around but I understand that the experience will come, it's only a matter of time until I'm leading one of these trips. In the meantime while some of the members were getting the rig point setup I tied up my harness with some webbing I borrowed, one of the few things I've got down so far. Needless to say it wasn't the most comfortable of harnesses, but hey it works.

Descending down the cave was no big deal, swift and easy. That descent wasn't the only one, there were a couple of small drops and another substantial one. We were finally as far down as we were going to go vertically. After getting through all the drops in Clover Hollow I was able to take off that insanely tight harness I tied and give my little guy some breathing room.

Clover Hollow is a beautiful cave, I really enjoyed everything about it *ESPECIALLY *** those damn gypsum flowers. What an awesome experience.* We go to a little room in the cave and there's an even smaller one person passage leading down giving a "shimmering" view of some gypsum flowers. One of the more experienced members immediately goes right through and comes back out likes it's nothing talking about how amazing the flowers look. Me and another trainee got a little giddy after hearing members talk about these flowers, and I take a go at it. I get down the little hole and *there they are!* I didn't *have to look around, because they were everywhere!* I saw the reflection of a granola bar wrapper in the dirt and *it saddened me that someone littered on the beauties.* After a brief minute of looking I turn around to go back up, only problem is it *looked like* a huge struggle getting up that wormhole of a tunnel. Grrrrr, a little tunnel that looked so easy to get through... *and*

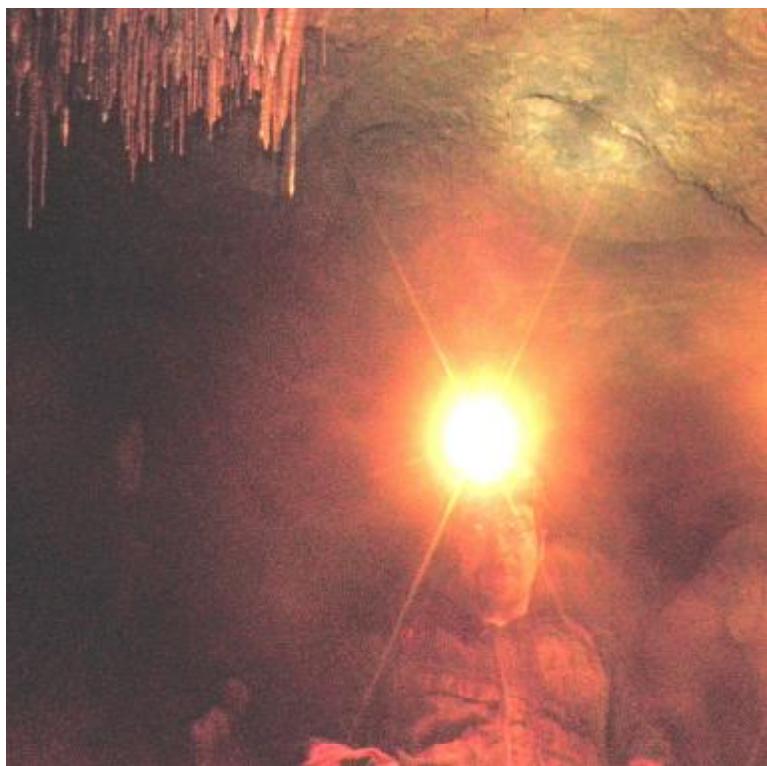
there it was! As I come out, *exhilarated about how beautiful the view was*, I realize what's going on and took caution in not telling the other trainee *about how beautiful it was*. *The best* part of the trip, just a little VPI cave club *secret*.

I thought the library past cavers set up down in the cave was pretty amusing. It almost look like a scene from "Between Two Ferns" cause there were a couple of potted plants around the drums of "literature." I couldn't help but wonder, how the hell did all this get down here? I couldn't imagine going through the trouble of taking down a couple of potted plants and caving with them. Well I still don't know but I guess it's just some of the shenanigans cavers around here partake in. What's not to like? Peace, quiet and some quality "literature." in a cave nonetheless.

The most memorable part of the trip for me was the climbs up. The first substantial climb, was my first time climbing on knots. I didn't mind the amount of energy that needed to be exerted to get up the drop. It was more about getting over the fact that, the only thing keeping me alive as I dangle 100 feet in the air are these three helical bowline knots. Inside I was sort of freaking out but I think I did pretty well keeping my cool on the outside. It was pretty assuring though that everyone I asked (which was all the members of the club that went on the trip) said that the worst that could happen is a heel hang. After making that first 100+ foot climb, my nerves were pretty settled. The next climb, I was a lot more relaxed. I thought about how many cavers before me had made it through climbing on knots without having something catastrophic happening.

In my very young caving career, this trip was definitely my favorite so far. I can't wait to get these requirements done and be a member and lead some of my own trips. A big thanks to John Mulheren, Courtney Trost, Brian (I don't know you're last name), and another alumni member whose name I've forgotten (my apologies, I'm pretty bad with names).

***Words in italics are changed by the editor.



How (Not) to Lead a Cave Trip

Courtney Trost

So you just got your membership, congratulations! You know everything there is to know in order to lead your first cave trip. Well sort of. So you announce at the meeting that you will be leading a trip on Saturday at 10am to “somewhere easy” and you welcome any newbies. Three eager freshman come up saying that they have never been caving before, although one brags about being a rock climber. A sophomore who’s been around a few times asks to join too. So you tell them what to bring and where to meet the next morning.

Saturday morning rolls around and you’re rushing to throw all of your cave gear in the trunk of your car, not sure if you’re still a little drunk or just hung-over. You don’t think you have everything, but who cares you’re just going to Tawneys anyway. So you show up behind Smyth and surprisingly all four of the trainees are waiting. You head over to sign out and struggle to find enough working lights since there is already a twelve person James trip out. You give the rock climber one that only works on the red setting and tell him it’s fine the trip will be short anyway. One of the freshman says she brought a flashlight and you tell her to use that. Regretting making this trip in the first place, you stare at the sign out sheet trying to figure out what your sign in time should be. You still feel pretty crappy from the night before and you know there’s a bat ranch party tonight that you obviously don’t want to miss. So you write 4pm thinking if you aren’t back by then you better have a rescue in order to get a nap in before the party. And this trip is only going to be two hours right?

Everyone gets back in the car eager to get into a cave. They start asking you about the cave and the sophomore complains that he’s already been to Tawneys and it’s pretty lame. Instead he suggests that you all go check out this cave he some of his frat brothers found while hiking around some woods by Mountain Lake. Your response should probably be something along the lines of, “You know what, you’re right that does sound like more fun.” So you drive past the Bat Ranch towards Mountain Lake, curious to see this mysterious cave.



Who wouldn't want to find a cave at Mountain Lake?

Sure enough the sophomore was right, after about 30 minutes of wandering around in the woods you find a small cave entrance. The down climb in looks pretty tricky and you can't really see the bottom. The rock climber looks at it and claims he's seen much worse, so of course you offer to let him go first. You'd like to give him a belay but of course in the rush of the morning you didn't pack your webbing. So he heads down with his red light and acts quickly and carelessly trying to prove how easy it is. He slips and screams and you hear a loud crash and crack as he hits the bottom. You ask if he's okay and he starts complaining about his wrist. You go in after him, acting much more cautiously and make the down climb safely. Once you get down you look at his wrist which is bent backwards with a bone poking through the side. Your response should probably be something like, "It's only a flesh wound. You'll be fine." So the other three trainees head down after you, acting just as cautiously and making it safely as well.



Once everyone is down you start to explore the cave. There are so many different passages you can't decide which way to go so you send one person in each direction figuring that way you'll surely find the best one. You hear another scream, this time from the freshman girl. You call out asking if she's okay but there's no response. Figuring it must have been a scream of joy and that she found an awesome passage, you head back to look for her. You're not really sure which way she went but you run into the sophomore frat boy



If the trainee wants to keep going, let them keep going!

and he tells you that his way goes on forever. So you go with him and let the other three explore on their own some more.

The passage does go on for quite a ways but it seems to get tighter and tighter. Soon you're both crawling through a squeeze that your helmets don't fit through. The sophomore asks if he can take his off and keep going. You say sure but that you'd like to go check on the others. So you head back and tell him to yell if he finds anything cool.

You get back to the first room where everyone split off and see the rock climber shivering and clutching his bent wrist. He tells you that he's freezing and would really like to get out of here. You call out down the other passages for the girl and other freshman guy. The guy comes back from his passage and you ask him to take off his sweatshirt to give to the rock climber. He says he's kind of cold too and would rather not give it up but you insist, saying that clearly the rock climber needs it more. Then he tells you that there is some cool stuff down his passage too. So you go with him and leave the rock climber, wondering what ever happened to the girl. Like the other passage this one is pretty tight, but it also has some tricky climbs. You get to a canyon section and show the guy how to go through. He struggles and starts slipping into the canyon, his shoes getting wedged further down where the canyon narrows.

You tell him to pull himself out but he starts to panic and loses hope. Without help you won't be able to pull him out so you go back to the entrance room to find the rock climber. When you get there you find it empty and figure the rock climber probably left. You call out for the girl or the frat boy but don't hear any responses. Frustrated with their inadequate caving abilities, you check your watch. It's 3:15. You're cursing and decide to head out, not wanting to owe a keg.

By the time you get back to the car it's 3:30 and you're not sure if you can't make it back by 4:00. You think to call sign out but you don't actually have anyone's phone number. So you speed down 460 praying that no cops are out. Somehow you make it back without a ticket and when you get to sign out it's 3:50. You sign back in and erase the trainees' names, because after all you knew to have them write in pencil. Relieved to be back you go home to shower and nap before the party. All in



all, not a bad day.

Just leave the trainee there, I'm sure he'll find his way out eventually.

How big are all of these drops?

Pighole:

- Entrance Pit- 120'
- Empire Ledge- 180'

Clover Hollow:

- Entrance Pit- 60'
- Canyon Drop- 90'
- Andrew's Drop- 140'
- Dopes Drop- 75'
- Bat Shit Pit- 83'

Newberry Banes:

- Bill's Rappel- 180'
- Triple Wells- 210'
- Bane's Drop- 90'

Murder Hole:

- Entrance Pit- 90'
- Double Wells- 100'

Wilburn Valley:

- The One Drop- 100'

Doe Mountain:

- The Weathermaker- 164'
- Knippling Pit- 150'
- The 172- 172'
- Megadome- 223'
- Awesome Falls- 105'

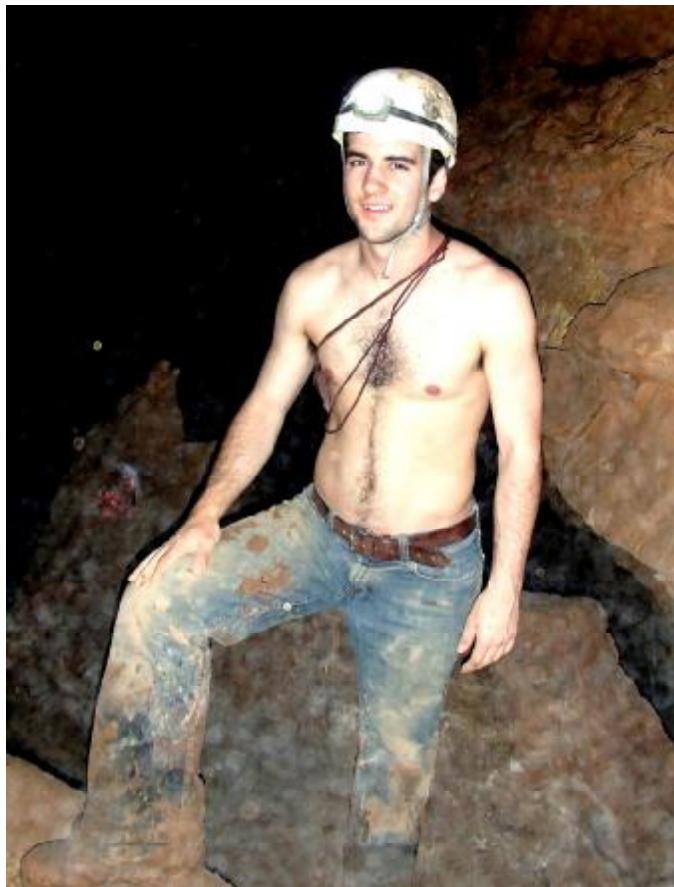
Two New Ways to Use a Fire Hose

By Andrew Van Horn

Upon entering "Golf Course 2" on the Monday of Filthy Young Women 2013, we plunged into a narrow cave passage mostly filled with cold water. Once the water reached our chests, the group of cavers that had planned to survey the cave instantly began to reconsider. As we looked back to the mouth of the cave, Phillip Balister was reprimanding us to toughen up and survey the watery passage. After a reply of "no, you f***king do it," the group seemed to have reached an impasse as I stood with water up to my waist, wondering if day one of Filthy Young Women was already over.

Then, Peppy scrambled down the rocks, seized the measuring tape, and said: "On station!" I waded to a stalactite a few meters away, and the surveying began. I ran lead tape, Peppy took care of the instruments job, and Sara Fleetwood followed along, mapping the cold and claustrophobic cave. Quickly, we discovered that several stations would require standing in cold water almost up to our necks, while some would necessitate kneeling in shallow water, when the cave's roof descended and forced us into a crouched position.

The wading was fun, though, as it was in a cave prone to flooding, which was littered with driftwood and other debris below the surface of the water, which was eager to tangle our boots and snag our cave suits. After getting a series of very long survey shots, we rounded a corner, only to hear behind us what sounded like the entirety of the VPI Cave Club sloshing down the passage towards us. As we would later discover, it was Matt Skowronski making two heroic tries to avoid developing a fear of the water. Once, he even brought Calvin with him; however, we never actually saw



them. The auditory effects were that good—we could hear them speaking at the mouth of the cave even hundreds of feet away even when we were far out of sight.

At last, after the water receded to being only a foot deep, I came to the end of the tunnel we were in. The tunnel went ninety degrees to the right with—something in the water. I knelt and quickly discovered that deep in the cave, among the debris, there was an old, partially disintegrated fire hose. Beyond that, the passage split into two directions, both ending in a high, wide, water-filled room.

"Is it deep?" Peppy said.

"I'm not sure. Let's measure it," I replied.

We then dislodged one end of the oddly serpentine fire hose and dragged it down the twisting and cramped mud-free passage. We leaned our heads out of the hole in the wall and peered down at the watery pit below.

"Don't fall in," admonished Peppy. This was useful advice to an unexperienced trainee such as myself.

I replied: "Right. Lowering in the hose." I pulled the heavy metal nozzle of the hose to over the water, and began to lower it. "One, two, three.." I counted out the feet as hose disappeared into the murky water. "Eleven, twelve, thirteen..." at last we ran out of the piece of hose that we had, still without having touched the bottom of the silt-laden, opaque, foul-smelling water below. We let it go and gave up on surveying much more.

"Alright, I'm gonna swim it," Peppy decided. In the meantime, we took some more station points and finished the survey of the cave, being as Sara the sketcher had caught up.

We dragged over the fire hose, and I wrapped it around my waist, as an adrenaline-fueled Peppy lowered himself down the steep embankment with it into the frigid water below. He began taking the clipped gasps one would expect such cold water to inspire. Once acclimated, he lurched forward into the dark water to find out what was at the other end of the room we had reached. More passage? More of this same room? Bore hole? The other end of the cave? Peppy's short strokes continued, as did Sara and my cheers for him to keep swimming. At last he rounded the corner, and his light landed on—

Nothing. The cave ended in a nasty, dirty sump. Peppy splashed back, and I resumed my braced position as he dragged himself out of the funky pit. He stood up, and instead of shivering or looking dazed from the shock, he smiled and commented on how warm his dragon suit—a quasi-wetsuit baselayer—had kept him. After taking the last few measurements, we left the unraveling fire hose turned climbing rope where it lay draped into the sump and left.

In hindsight, the cave was nothing tremendous. However, it was the second one I'd ever surveyed and it was a good time. To a trainee as green as I am, the experience was a good one. I enjoyed going first as lead tape, and am thankful that Peppy and Sara were so determined to go. It was a good first day.



A ross Section of Caving in New Zealand

Dan "Joker" Crowder

Edited for Content by Alice Shanks

Well since I'm here I figured I had better do a Trog article about it. Also, Courtney said I should, in the annual quest to fill out our newsletter.

Since coming to New Zealand I have noticed many similarities between our organizations. The NSS and NZSS (New Zealand Speleological Society). They have a national newsletter, for instance, called the Tomo Times. *Tomo* being a Maori word for a surface shaft/pit. They wear cave suits and helmets and have lights and tell off color jokes like us but from there they start to differ quite significantly.

One major difference in New Zealand is that their caves range from about 35 degrees Fahrenheit in the alpine caves to about 70 degrees Farenheit around Paturau. Those two places are within 70 linear miles of each other. That makes planning for a cave trip a bit trickier. When at Paturau I found myself doing nasty duck unders and stream crawls just to cool off a bit. Up on Mt. Owen in the Bulmer system staying dry can be a very important safety factor.

Another notable difference is the way they go about getting to caves. Where we will often go caving as a day trip, caving in the South Island of New Zealand almost always requires an overnight stay. Going to the alpine caves can require a grueling tramp up a large mountain with a bunch of camping gear along with caving gear. As a result, heli-caving is common when there is a lot of rope to be carried into a remote area. The helicopter will drop off the gear while the cavers walk in.

Three large alpine caves have in-cave camps when the commuting time to the limit of exploration is too long to allow any effective exploration. The only exception is the old camp left in Nettlebed that is now used for a sporty through-trip. These camps are equipped with communal sleeping bags so that cave pack can be filled up with food and rope instead; a sleeping bag liner is a good idea.





The rescue system in New Zealand is also much different. Search and Rescue is free and is run by the NZ Police using teams of specialist volunteer group under the umbrella of a volunteer Rescue Trust (LANDSAR). CaveSAR is one of the specialist groups but because of the limited number of cavers most cavers are automatically part of CaveSAR, if not as a caver then as surface support. The government and grants pay for training and rescue gear, including US\$10,000 to fly cavers in for a national 3-day

exercise once every three years. All the gear is kept in the local SAR store. Cavers will work from the Police Station in the area where the rescue is taking place. Most of the caving in the South Island happens in the Tasman Police District so the cavers have built up an excellent relationship with the Police SAR sergeant.

Every year the NZ cavers have a SAREX or Search and Rescue Exercise. I was fortunate to observe one earlier during my stay here. Having the SAR sergeant around is helpful in that people like Steve Wells don't have to throw people like Wil Orndorff under the bus the moment they come out of the cave. Since the police handle all the interaction with the press, there is no reason to try and avoid reporters. The downside of this strategy is that it would cause Wil less consternation, which I find hilarious.

Another side effect of the SAR sergeant is that the cops wouldn't try a cave rescue by themselves as has been known to happen in the states. The particular sergeant I had the pleasure to talk to said that after seeing what we were doing that he wouldn't even dream of going into a cave.

For the few large alpine rescues the Police can call in the Royal New Zealand Air Force (RNZAF) for transport. The RNZAF are just at the end of the era of using Huey Iroquois helicopters to carry the cavers and their gear to a forward base on the mountain. These are the same choppers you see in movies such as "Apocalypse Now." New Zealand is in the process of upgrading its helicopter fleet, but I digress.



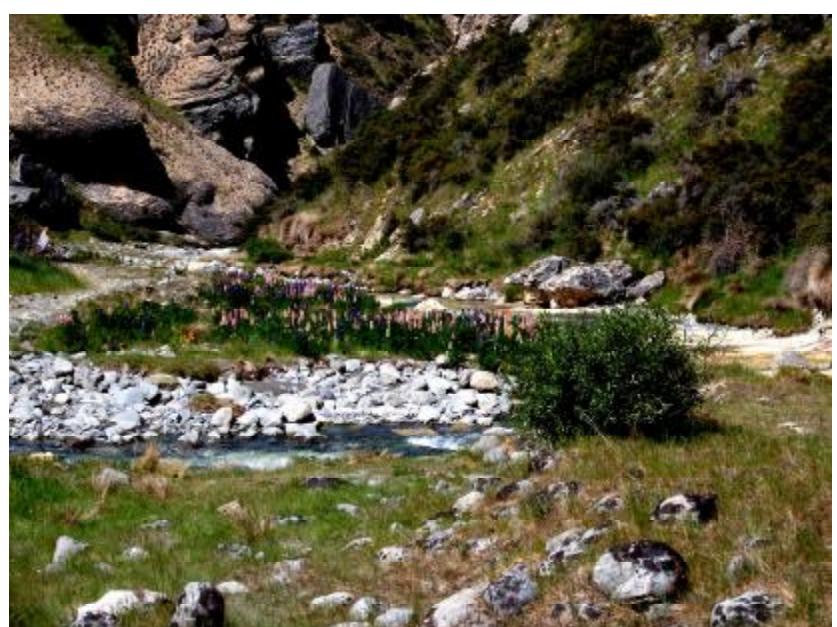
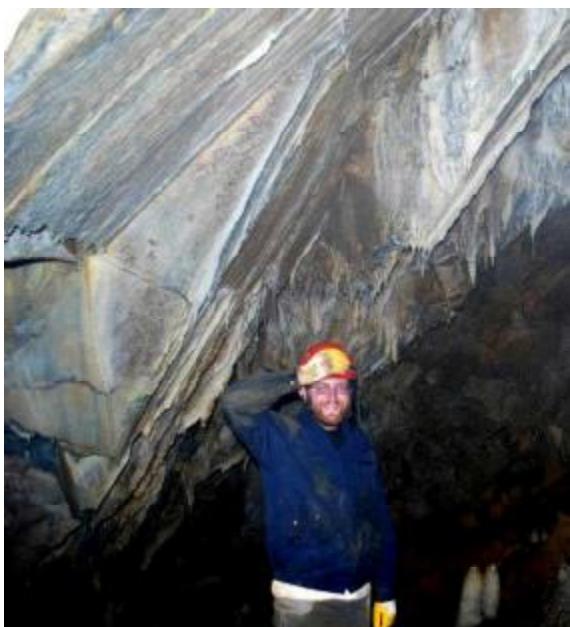


Cavers in New Zealand also tend to function more as a national body. Where we say we are VPI cavers; the Kiwis will often say they are NZSS (New Zealand Speleological Society) cavers associated with the various clubs (Canterbury Caving Group, Nelson Speleological Group, Auckland Speleological Group, etc.). Cave trip are often run as NZSS trips so that there can members of three different clubs or more. Active NZ cavers are thin on the ground with NZSS having about the same number of active

members as VPI.

The last difference I would like to note is the lack of university clubs in New Zealand. The reason for this is lack of caves in the areas where major universities are located. Every now and then a university club will pop up for about five years but they are not very sustainable. The lack of university clubs provides a more laid back environment in which raucous parties are rare.

I believe there is plenty to be learned from the Kiwis in the way of caving that would be applicable for VPI. Kiwis have based their cave Search and Rescue methods on US practices with early courses supplied by US Ropes That Rescue. I do not plan to close the gate I've opened (a sin punishable by death I'm aware) and I hope some Kiwis find their way to our little mountain enclave so that we can trade insults, anecdotes, and caving experiences.



3-27-2013

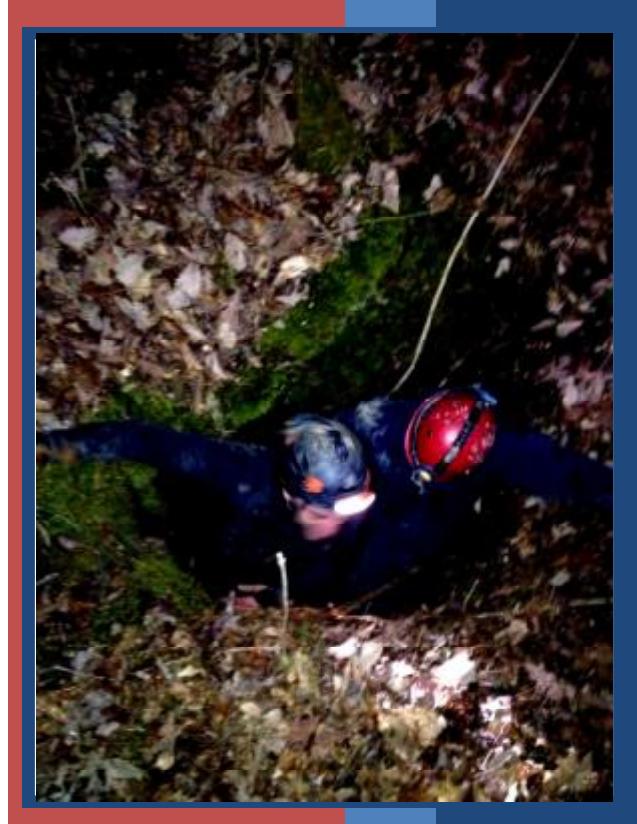


Hey Wil,
O guest & powerful
Blacksburg MAN -

Thank you for rescuing
our darkness kid from
that pit in lesson Learned
Cave, Lee Co. VA.

We hope you laughed at them
before lowering the rope &
vertical gear! :)

Once Again, THANKS!
Cave Softly, Don et Mangas
Wilson Socky



My Phones almost Dead. Peppy and Socrates got stuck. Frustration haiku. -DBishop

CAVE RESCUE PLANNING AND TRAINING UPDATE

By Blacksburg Man



As anyone who's been around the club for a while knows, cave rescues are a fact of life. In my twenty plus (gulp) years with the club, we've been involved in all sorts of operations that fall under the general heading of cave rescue - searching for lost spelunkers, freeing stuck cavers, extricating the sick or injured, and sometimes, unfortunately, body recoveries. Cave rescue events don't happen in any regular or predictable manner, making it all the more important that our grotto makes a concerted effort to maintain preparedness for when these events do occur.

Cave exploration is unique in many ways among outdoor activities. For one thing, it's the only outdoor recreation activity that I know of that takes place dominantly on private land, at least in our region. We rely on the goodwill of landowners in order to visit the majority of "our" caves. Another big difference between caving and most other adventure pursuits is that when things go wrong, you can't just dial 911 and have an ambulance or helicopter show up a half mile underground to haul the sick or injured to the hospital. No, finding lost cavers and getting sick or injured cavers out of caves falls squarely on the shoulders of cavers themselves, and in our area that means dominantly on cavers from VPI. We were reminded of this fact in 2012 and again this year when reports of spelunkers lost in Bone Norman Cave resulted in mobilization of VPI cavers two hours north to West Virginia's Greenbrier Valley to assist in search and rescue operations. In both cases, the majority of the manpower and strong cavers came from the VPI Cave Club. Largely, this is a demographic effect. As the caving population ages, VPI is one of the few grottoes with continuous recruitment and training of young cavers. Because of this fact, the club must emphasize cave rescue preparedness.

The VPI Cave Club took several steps in the fall of 2012 to be better prepared for the inevitable rescues that lurk over the horizon. The first was the consolidation and moving of the rescue gear cache, led by our only member with pseudoparamilitary ranking, Captain Ed Fortney. Ed was ably assisted by Spotty Dog Rapier, the eternally youthful Dr. Eric Stanley, John "Matt" Mulheren, Naomi Orndorff, and Blacksburg Man. Mike Newsome had generously allowed the Club to store the rescue gear in the barn at the Bat Ranch for years. Thanks, Mike! Despite use of the highest quality rubbermaid and canvas, however, numerous small mammals, invertebrates, and members of





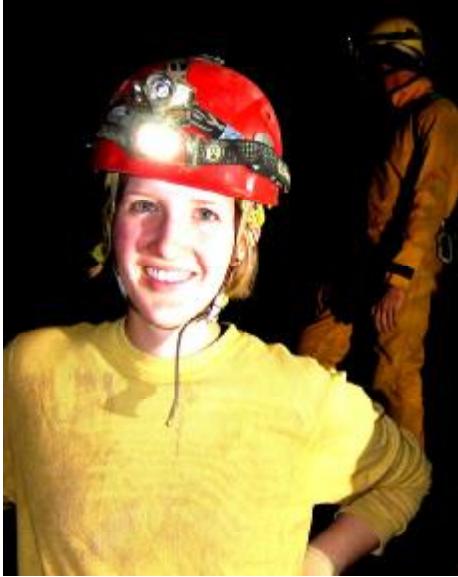
the Kingdom Fungi managed to infiltrate the gear, so the decision was made to look for a more secure indoor home. Sam Lambert, who also is the de facto cave rescue specialist with the Blacksburg Rescue Squad, stepped up to the plate and is now storing the rescue cache at her new house, located in Blacksburg at 400 Murphy Street. The gear is located in a room on the left side of the house if you are looking up from the road. A green door and bat Sticker mark the room. Most of the gear is hanging or stacked to the right side of the room. Sam can be contacted by phone @ 540-641-1306 or

email Sam.lambert03@gmail.com. Thanks, Sam!

Although the rescue gear has been cleaned, organized, and moved to its new home, there are still several updates in progress. Eric Stanley is leading the modernization of the initial response or “bash” kits to make them easier to carry and more efficient. Eric and Steve Wells are building a better spider, the rigging which secures the litter to a vertical haul system. And members are looking into a new patient helmet, patient harness, and radios. On the subject of communication, thanks go to Phil Benchoff and Ray Sira for testing and refurbishing the field phones, as well as putting together documentation on their use. This documentation resides with the phones in the gear cache so it will be available during an actual rescue. Captain Ed also organized and led an outdoor highline rigging practice session at Dave C’s place on November 10. About 25 folks spanning experience levels from old fart to trainee came out and worked together to rig a 100+ foot highline, successfully moving a weighted stokes litter from the bottom of a steep gully to the rig point. This gave the trainees in particular a chance to see why pulley systems are important, and how paper diagrams translate into real world rigs. Everyone learned something new. For example, many thought the self-minding prussik safety that Deighan integrated into the system was really cool.

The club held its annual (at least in concept) practice rescue the weekend of November 30—December 2. This year, the club opened the event to participants outside of the grotto, including three National Cave Rescue Commission (NCRC) trained cave rescuers - Doug Moore and Carroll Bassett from West Virginia and Alan Staton, a Blue Ridge Grotto Caver and EMS professional from Covington. These are the



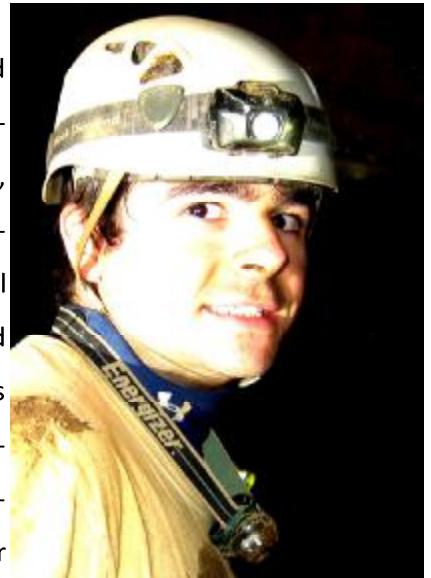


folks we encounter at rescues in the region that aren't being led by VPI, but on which we assist. They brought a valuable outside perspective to our exercise. We also had folks from the Blue Ridge and New River Valley grottoes participate, as well as Josh Quesenberry of the Southwest Virginia Mountain Rescue Group, part of the Blacksburg Rescue Squad.

Programs at Friday night meetings for the few weeks leading up to the practice rescue covered a variety of rescue topics, and Alan Staton gave a prep talk from his perspective on November 30. The scenario for the rescue was that on Saturday morning Zenah Orndorff received a call from the Bat Ranch saying that a spelunker named Bert from New Hampshire (played by Captain Ed) reported his companion Ernie (played by Blacksburg Man) had fallen and was

injured in Tawneys Cave, somewhere near "a pipe" that went from the ceiling through the floor. For purposes of the rescue simulation, the sinkhole entrance to Tawneys did not exist.

Frequently, VPI practice rescues are just litter handling exercises. However, based on recent experiences at Bone Norman and Stay High, the club decided to perform a more holistic rescue simulation incorporating search, incident command, and communications components. These were all things young VPI cavers encountered at the Bone Norman Search in 2012 and were not prepared to deal with. In an effort to develop redundant expertise in various incident command rolls, young members were cast in key rolls with folks experienced in those rolls paired with them as advisors. Courtney Trost served as incident commander, advised by Carol Zo. Ed Fortney was guru to Brian McCarter as underground coordinator. Several folks kept a watchful eye on Sarah Crowder, who ran the litter



crew. Joe Calderone led the rigging crew with Joe Zo making sure the results were safe and efficient. Nick Socky led the communications crew, which ran phone lines from the entrance into the cave, which was in radio contact with incident command at the barn. Many other people filled key functions as well - those listed here are to illustrate how our younger members were integrated into leadership rolls.



From Ernie's perspective, things went flawlessly. Rescuers were calm and attentive, and the ride was smooth. Orange juice squeezed by Marge Lewter into Ernie's mouth particularly delighted him. All unusual movements of the litter, including the haul system, were clearly explained to Ernie in advance. And no one tried to shove a thermometer up his bum, although we are not



sure he would have minded. In all seriousness, the rescuers took the simulation seriously and treated Ernie with care and respect.

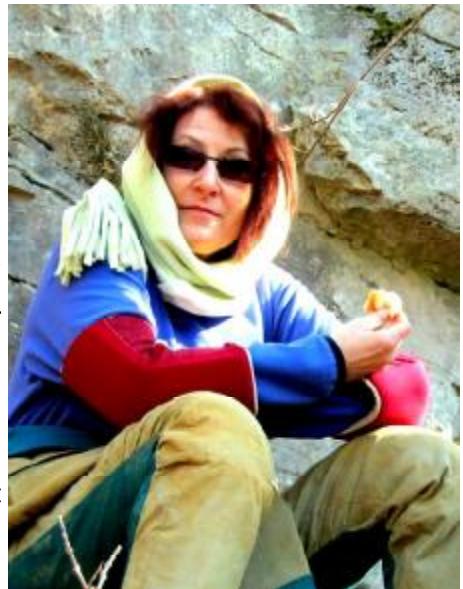
As is usually the case in actual rescues, there were some communication breakdowns. However, these were recognized and quickly fixed. Going over the paperwork after the simulation, it became clear that note-taking could have been done better. Everything was documented, but some key information was missing from various forms - e.g. who was filling out the form, where they were stationed, et cetera. There is a tendency to downplay the importance of documentation, but on long or complex incidents involving groups that don't normally work together, keeping accurate records is really important. This is a place where we could improve.

To be fair, part of the problem with documentation was due to the way the simulation was set up. The location and time of the simulation were announced Friday night, and on Saturday unfortunately much of the incident command crew actually showed up before the initial response team (aka "bash crew"), creating some temporary chaos. For example, incident command did not know that Alan Staton was in the cave with Ernie despite the fact that it was clearly documented on the entrance control log. The initial fustercluck was in some ways a great problem to have, since it reflected everyone's eagerness to participate. However, for future such simulations it would be wise to make sure the bash crew has been deployed before getting the masses to the site. Timing is everything.

On Sunday the club held a debriefing brunch at the Orndorff house, where everyone got a chance to offer comments and suggestions from modifying and improving the club's performance. Everyone agreed the most impressive things were the turnout, over 50 people including more than 40 from VPI, and the teamwork. Participants spanned the generations from Don Anderson to Naomi Orndorff, with Socky's spanning both grottos and generations. Folks from outside the VPI Cave Club probably got a better handle on our capacity, and our members got to meet other folks they are likely to work with during actual cave search and rescue incidents.

To further our cave rescue capacity, seven folks from the club attended the NCRC Orientation to Cave Rescue on March 8-10 in Lebanon, Virginia. While many of the topics had already been covered in the fall, we all got extra practice and learned some new techniques, including revisions in patient packaging. We also got a chance to meet numerous folks we'd be likely to encounter in real cave rescues in extreme Southwest Virginia and Eastern Tennessee.

The VPI Cave Club has made significant strides during the last year to upgrade our rescue preparedness and capability. Hopefully, we'll never need it. But history suggests we will.



How to rescue someone from Bone Norman: 2013 edition

By Daniel “Rápunzel” Bishop

The following ritual is guaranteed to work 100% of the time 25% of the time. This method was tried by Daniel “Rápunzel” Bishop, Tommy “Socrates” Polson, Alex “Drop Kick” Booker, and Amy “Driiiiiiiift” Skowronski on the 2/23/2013 Bone Norman Rescue.

7:00 pm – 8:30 pm

VPI meeting, belligerently yell “Dance Party” throughout. Being at least 3 beers in by this point is essential.



8:30 pm – 2 am

Dance party. Playing “Hanukah Matata”, “Flash”, and “Sweet Caroline” is highly recommended. A study on the necessity of crushed pork rinds in your carpet is pending. At least two party goers must make it to second base or greater.



2 am – 8 am

This region is theoretically spent by watching ponies and sleeping, but nobody *actually* knows what went on.

8 am – 11:30 am

Vacuum up any pork rinds in the carpet, clean all the sticky orange stuff in the bathroom, open all the doors and windows to “let the stank out.” Put the furniture back in position. Eating a 50/50 eggs to hot sauce ratio breakfast is recommended.

11:30 am – 12:00 pm

Receive email and volunteer. Feeling a little bit too excited about an excuse to not do school work is common.



12:00 pm – 2:30 pm

Do vertical work and watch cartoons: fucking around in this time period is essential.

2:30 pm – 3:30 pm

Gather gear, meet at sign out, be mildly bewildered, pretend to be worried about the lost cavers rather than happy about a cave trip.

3:30 pm – 4:00 pm

Gather supplies such as cliff bars, gas, sleeping bags... also a keg.

4:00 pm – 6:00 pm

Drive to the cave. Every turn made must be accompanied by shouting “Driiiiiiiift.” Seriously try to hide how happy you are to go rescue people from Bone Norman.... but having failed that start planning rescue pranks. Running around with Batman masks shouting “Where are they!?” probably wouldn’t go over well, but whatever.

6:00 pm – 7:00 pm

Arrive at rescue, get oriented. Unload car.

7:00 pm – 7:30 pm

Find out that they’re out. Reload car

7:30 pm – 8:00 pm

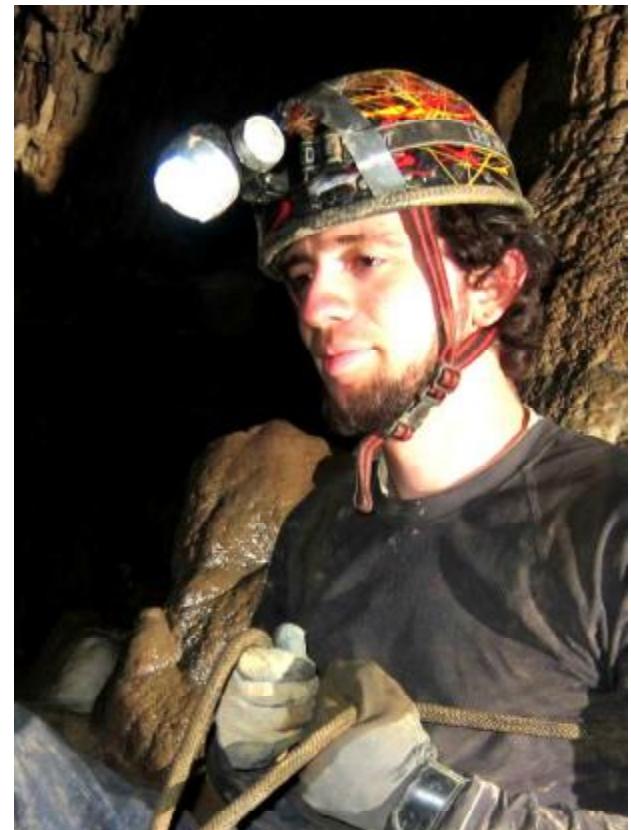
Decide to go in anyway. Unload car.

8:00 pm – 10:00 pm

Help break down- also find an excuse to go cave for an hour. Reload car.

10:00 pm – 2:00 am

Go to a bar, drive home, drink the keg.



PICNIC



Another year, another great picnic. We were fortunate to have good weather despite a crappy forecast; only really getting rain during our traditional trip to Dairy Queen, and at night after everyone was too drunk to care.

No blue punch this year, but plenty of kegs. From what I heard we actually finished (or at least almost finished) all of them this year. Kudos to the genius who moved



the keg next to the fire Saturday night. We would hate to have to walk the whole 20 yards to refill our beers. I think this move seriously contributed to the amount of beer drank.

Some caving, lots of drinking, but I think one of the most notable events of this picnic was John George up for membership. I think that we all enjoyed harassing JG with so



many questions in the form of screams that he couldn't actually hear any of them individually. But, for all his tolerance, he did get to be carried the furthest distance by

the largest group of women of anyone that I have seen voted in. Look at that lucky stud, I didn't even know we had that many girls in the Cave Club.



In order to pick the best Picnic date an online survey was issued. There were some other, less on topic questions also. Here are some select unaltered responses

What would you like to drink at picnic?

- Urine
- None
- Colt 45
- EVERYTHING also blue drank

Pick three VPI cavers you would marry/fuck/kill:

Wil Orndorff/Wil Orndorff/Wil Orndorff. I'm a praying mantis.

I would marry, kill, then fuck you, John Mulheren.

spot, spot, spot, but in reverse order

your mom

John/John/John

Joker/Joker/Joker

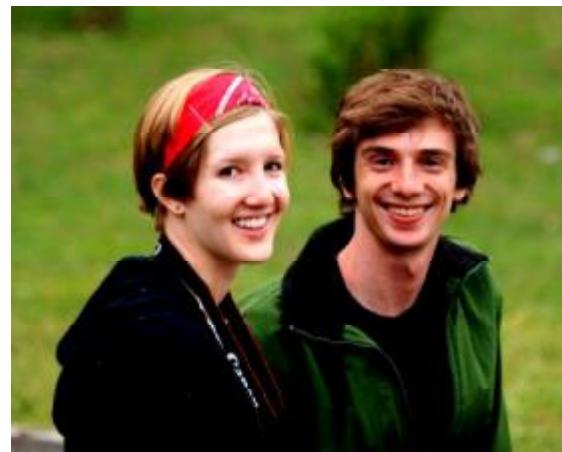
Lepara/Lepara/Lepara

me/me/me

amyS/ethanB/nobody

Other complaints:

- Wil Orndorff
- I smell bad
- My toe hurts
- No girls of the cave club calendar
- My third nipple is lactating
- Fresh cow pies in the field
- Need more wood!
- This isn't a Democracy. Don't try and run it like one.
- Stop leaving trash: Bring it? Take it home!
- I don't like the the foul language used in this survey
- Your a Jerk





After posting this survey I received a bunch of complaints about how bad the survey was and how stupid I am. So I posted a new survey with this question:

Why is everything Terrible?

You chose the wrong Picnic date

Obama

Everything is always terrible

John Mulheren

Because picnic isn't in Albuquerque

the negativity of this survey

No matter what you do , someone will hate it.

Never volunteer.

It's the Old Fart perspective
waa waa waaa I'm Old.

Because I'm so fucking old I should be
able to get my way...

Because people leave trash @ Picnic.
I'm sick and I'm out of mint schnapps.

Also, Obama.

I'm 200 miles away from you. </3

People who think that everyone is
ruled by a computer and immedi-
ately read all messages. I check
email about once a week, along
with my PO box.

Haha I love you you fucking dick. Re-
gards from NZ :)

Someone also found a way to post random
things like "Immanentize the eschaton,
brah." over 900 times. Thanks for your
responses!



Float Trip



Our president shows us how it's done with a few giant gulps of some sort of man juice— I think named so because it could put hair on anyone's chest.



Rapunzel sports the patriotic swim shorts while Rob looks longingly for some damsels in distress out at sea.

Sorry Rob, the only thing you're going to find is more men in kilts.



Aaron appears to be having way too much fun as he shoots Lauren with a water gun intended for small children.



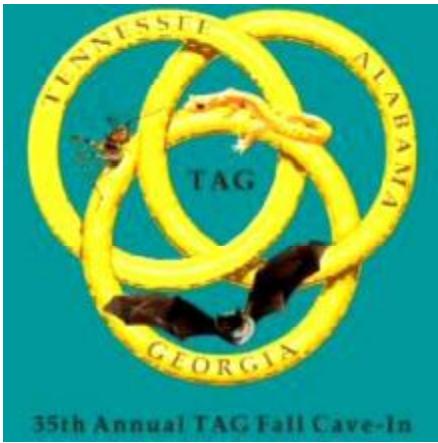
I always wonder what we must look like to anyone who sees us floating by. I think this picture sums it up.



Apparently Phil didn't want his picture taken.



Thank you Peppy for working so hard to deflate those tubes. Couldn't do it without you.



TAG

October 4th to 7th we celebrated the 35th annual TAG Fall Cave-In! On Friday a group spent the day rappelling a cliff side in Alabama while others drove down from Blacksburg, and some started the party mid afternoon. Friday night we lit the smaller fire, shaped as a train this year. Everyone gathered around the stage for karaoke after.

Saturday

started with the annual Monkey Butt Relief 5k at 8:00am. VPI continues to keep the award for the fastest female runner, thanks to Sarah Crowder this year. However as John said, "You aren't competing against the other runners, you're competing against the hangover. If you finish the race you won." Personally I was impressed with myself for dragging my butt out of bed to run. I think

others were impressed they got out of bed to watch. To each their own.



After the run a group of us headed out to do Valhalla. During TAG this cave is visited frequently



so groups sign up for time slots. We showed up well after our time slot had started and were pretty annoyed to find the group before us still at the pit with eight people down and none at the top. We ended up rigging our own rope on the other side of the pit, although it wasn't the ideal rigging position. Having never been to Valhalla, I was highly impressed with the view both from the top and bottom. It reminded me of Pighole on steroids. Despite the setback, we got everyone down and up who wanted to and headed back for the Saturday night fire. I hope that no matter how many times I go to TAG the fire will never stop amazing me. I wonder sometimes if people driving by think it's a forest fire. One of the best drunk games we can play is who can get the closest to the Saturday night fire.

This year's band fit the TAG mood perfectly— a bluegrass band, rather than one of those Creed tribute ones from previous years. We all drank and danced around the stage for hours. Once the music died down we headed back to the campsite to continue singing obviously, trying to keep awake anyone around us. I think this went on until about 4am with John on guitar and the rest of us drunkenly trying to come up with new songs. We were especially happy with our night when we heard the rumor about someone shitting in the hot tub. Seriously who does that? Overall a successful TAG.



FIRE		BLOOD	TRUTH	SKY
N/S	E/W			
After			SARAH	KYLZ Hillary
		KYLZ KATRINA	JOHN	ERIC
		Hillary KYLZ	JOHN M	ERIC
JOHN M Zoltar	RAY JO		KATRINA JOHN D JOHN M	ERIC
	Courtney ERIC		Zoltar	SARAH HILLARY
JO	Zoltar RAY	ERIC	RAY	Hillary
		JOHN D		JO
KATRINA JOHN M Alice Zoltar	RAY	Zoltar		SARAH C. Courtney RAY
KYLZ KATRINA JOHN D Hillary				Courtney KYLZ
				SARAH
			KATRINA Alice JOHN M	JO
			Hillary KYLZ RAY	
		JO		Courtney
	Alice Courtney		JO	JOHNM
Hillary ERIC	Alice	Courtney SARAH		
SARAH			KATRINA JOHN D	
			ZOLTAR Alice	

Thank you Merrill for showing us our group relationships based on our Mayan birthdays.

HALLOWEEN



The Bat Ranch is an
awful lot like
Wonderland isn't it?



No girls at Cave Club parties?
Myth Busted.



Alice "the Croll" Jaworski



HOLIDAY PARADE



Thank you Captain Ed for suggesting that the VPI Cave Club participate in the annual Blacksburg Holiday parade. While we had a small turnout of cavers, those of us who did attend had a great night. Somehow we ended up behind a group of equally odd people affiliated with Strange Coffee Company. The group had an amazing float with lights and a fog machine but no one to ride on it. Fortunately for them, we filled the float with cavers and tubas. They provided us with capes, wigs, and Luchador masks. We rode a round proudly with the tubas blasting Christmas medleys and the owner of the coffee company running along side in a chicken suit. I think we were the most popular float, let's do it again next year!



**Members:**

John Deighan

Alex Booker

Sarah Crowder

John George

Katrina Stoll

Rob Harris

Alice Jaworski

Andrew Fagan

David Bourdon



Mexico Blog

Sarah Crowder

Mexico Take Two (12/25/12)

It's that time of year again! In a few days, several Southwest Virginia cavers are loading up the cars and heading down to Mexico. Deighan is leading the trip again this year, and other participants include Alex, Rob, Rebecca, Alice, JG, Katrina, and Andrew. I think a couple of Deighan's friends are planning on meeting us at the border as well. While in Mexico, we are planning on repelling several pits including Rio Choy (~210ft), Cepillo (~400ft?), Huahuas (~700ft), Borbollon (~700ft), and Golandrinas (~1200ft), and we will also visit some places unrelated to caving such as the pyramids near Mexico City and the Cascadas de Tamul (a really big waterfall for those of you who don't speak Spanish). Stories to come once the action starts! Happy Holidays!



First Few Days (12/31/12)

It was a long drive, but it went fairly well all things considered. We did have a slight change of who actually came. Rebecca dropped and David joined, putting our number to 11 with Bob and Frank. We stopped in New Orleans for a late dinner, and Bourbon Street was a lot of fun. We had a bit of trouble at the border when the border patrol entered a wrong number on one of the vehicle permits, and the error wasn't noticed until the first police checkpoint. Some of the group was forced to turn back to fix the permit, while others went ahead to get hotel rooms in Ciudad Victoria. The group that turned back got to the hotel fairly late, so we took today to relax and slowly get to our next destination. This will alter our itinerary somewhat,

but I don't think we'll have to miss any of the pits. Other than that, nothing too eventful has happened so far. The real action should start tomorrow.

For those of you who have never been to Mexico, I'll give a couple of the differences I've noticed so far. The food good, and none of us have gotten sick so far, but the menu is often inaccurate and you never really know what you can actually order. The driving is pretty crazy. People rarely stay in the lanes. There are checkpoints along the roads, but they mostly just stand there and look intimidating.



More to come soon! We're relaxing in a hotel tonight and we're all looking forward to hot sulfur pools and good Mexican beer. Cheers!

P.S. Deighan wanted me to mention that it's really warm here. Have fun in Blacksburg :)

Rio Choy and New Year's Eve (1/1/13)

The first caving excursion we took was to Rio Choy, a 210 foot vertical cave near Cuidad Valles. We woke up fairly early on the morning of New Year's Eve, had breakfast, and made the short drive from Hotel Tainul to the parking area. The cave entrance is about a mile and a half from the road, though the hike is made easy by some train tracks. The cave itself is considered sacred because of a column that apparently looks like the Virgin Mary (I couldn't see it), but the cavernous entrance is littered with trash. Frank, Bob, and Deighan rigged the mainline to another rope to make the length more easily adjusted, and the group began the repel. Though the

drop is short in comparison to the other pits we'll bounce on the trip, it is made exciting by the pool of water at the bottom. This allowed us to short-rig the rope and repel off the end of it into the water beneath. This year, we only short-rigged by about 6 feet, which is much shorter than in years past. However, the amazing views of the bright blue water illuminated by a skylight and the opportunity to swim in warm cave water in December made the cave well worth the walk. Many of us used the large rock protruding from the water as a highdive, and the rapids at the exit added some excitement. Overall, nine of us did the drop and some did it multiple times.

After we hiked out of Rio Choy, we drove to Huichihuayan (Wi-chi-y-in) for the annual New Year's Eve celebration. We began the night with a trip to the usual taco stand and had wonderful beef, lamb, and pork tacos for five pesos apiece (\$1.00 = 12.5 pesos after exchange fees). After we went back to the hotel to shower, we went to the town square for the celebration. The New Year's Eve party in Huichihuayan comes complete with a dancing transvestite and a coffin filled with fireworks with the old year painted on it. Every hour up until midnight, the coffin and a live band are paraded around the town until all the townspeople are in the square. The transvestite dances with the village men, and many couples dance to the live music. Food is sold by vendors in the square, and it's generally just a good time. At midnight, the coffin is lit on fire, and the fireworks within eventually explode. The music and dancing continues through the night, but most of our group was exhausted from Rio Choy and went to bed soon after midnight.

So far, I've been posting these entries in internet cafes, and I don't want to bring in everyone's electronics to add pictures. I'll add pictures of everything you've read about next time we're in a hotel.



As a side note, if you have access to our itinerary, know that it is now very inaccurate. The confusion with the border crossing delayed us by a day, and we are considering changing the order of the drops in light of the recent restriction on Golandrinas. Whether or not we will be allowed to drop Golandrinas at all is still up in the air, but we will if we can. For those of you who are depending on internet access to keep in touch with someone on the trip, don't worry too much if you don't hear from us when you expected to. That's all for now. Happy New Year!!

Las Pozas and Zulema's (1/2/13)

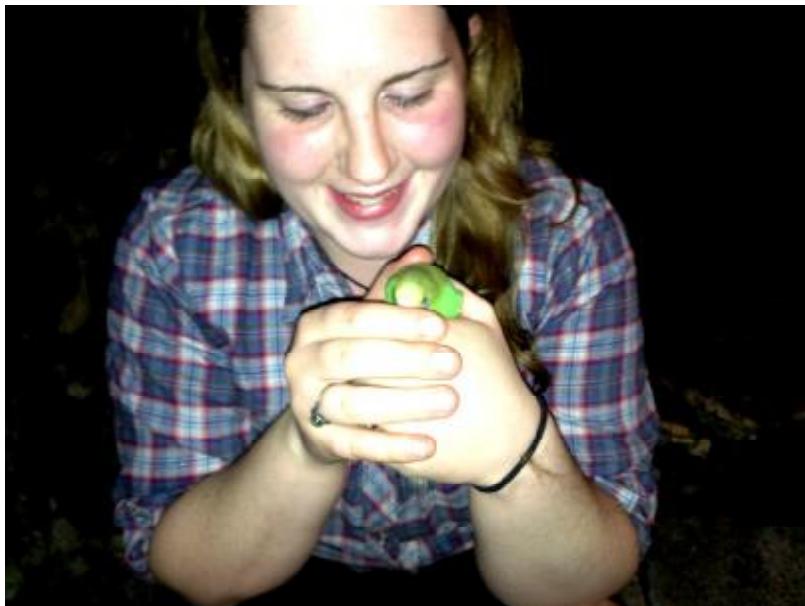
Deighan had some car trouble yesterday, so we took yesterday to just explore the area around Xilitla. The group went up to Las Pozas, a tourist attraction full of strange architecture built by Edward James sometime around the 1970s. The site is full of spiral staircases, some not leading anywhere, and buildings with open walls, columns, and arches. Apparently some of the buildings were designed for human habitation, while



others were built to house zoo animals. A stream runs through the site with several waterfalls, and the outdoor footpaths between the buildings are closely surrounded by the Mexican jungle. Some of the stairs and pathways are narrow and high off the ground, and of course there are no handrails. Something like Los Pozas would never be legal in the United States. After visiting Las Pozas, Alex and I split off from the group for a bit to get some food. We visited a restaurant we went to last year that has some really fantastic pina coladas and tostadas con pollo. Next time you make a pina colada, try putting some cinnamon in it.

Around dinner time, we met Zulema in Xilitla and drove up to her house in the mountains. She prepared a wonderful meal of chicken salad and guacamole, and she made homemade fruit punch which contained a mixture of sugar cane, grapes, pineapple, and other fruits that I could not identify. It started raining soon after we got there, and the power went on and off several times. We had

a good time swapping caving stories with Frank, Bob, and Jared, who we met in Huichihuayan, around a fire while Zulema's son roasted us marshmallows. Zulema was kind enough to offer us a room in her house so we wouldn't have to camp in the rain. When we woke up, she made a breakfast of huevos, jambon, chorizo, avocado, queso fresca, tortillas, freshly squeezed orange juice, and coffee. Needless to say, we were well taken care of.



Today it's still raining and Deighan's car is still in the shop. We're still a bit unsure of what we're going to do today. Adios!

The Past Several Days (1/8/13)

It's been a while since I last posted and quite a bit has happened, but I'll try to keep it fairly short. We dropped Cepillo, Huahuas, and Golondrinas. Most of the group did Cepillo and Huahuas, but only six of us did Golondrinas. The rest were either too inexperienced (myself included) or too tired to complete three big climbs in three days. It was either rainy or foggy from the 1st until the 7th, so being underground, or at least at the bottom of a pit, was a welcome change. We were also planning on dropping Borbollon, but several members of the group got sick and the rest of us didn't feel like dragging a 900ft rope through the tight pinches before the pit. We entertained ourselves at the ranch by exploring the horizontal caves in the area. For those of you who haven't seen the caves I've referenced, I'll give a brief description of each one:



Cepillo -- Cepillo is a 400ft drop with some really fantastic formations at the bottom. The entrance is fairly small, but the cave bells out and the floor of the pit is wide. The rig point is a tree close to the lip, so it was really just a matter of gently swinging over the edge to get vertical. The bottom consists of a pool, some really cool popcorn-like formations, and massive pieces of sparkly flowstone.



Huahuas -- Huahuas is a 700ft drop on one side of the pit, and about a 500ft drop on the other side. The high side has a difficult, undercut lip, but once you are vertical the view is fantastic. The bottom is covered in moss and plants, and erosion creates a marbled pattern in the soil when seen on rope. We rigged the drop on both sides so we were able to repel the high side and climb the short side. Before anyone comments, no, there weren't any injuries and yes, I repelled from the high side. Just quite a bit slower this time.

Golondrinas -- Golondrinas is a 1200ft pit. I didn't do it, but the pictures looked cool.

I'm still waiting on pictures. Rob and I are planning on doing that tomorrow.

The Pyramids and Real de Catorce (1/14/13)

The last few days were devoted to tourist destinations including the pyramids of Teotihuacan and Real de Catorce. It took us a bit longer to get to the pyramids than we had hoped, but the trip south was definitely worth it. The pyramids are enormous and very impressive. Several of the are decorated with intricate carvings representing the different gods. The largest pyramid is called the Pyramid of the Sun and is thought to have been a monument to the god of the Sun. However, recent findings suggest the pyramid may have been intended for the god of water. The Pyramid of the Moon is smaller, but still beautiful. Tourists are allowed to climb to the tops of the pyramids on steep stone steps, and the view is magnificent.



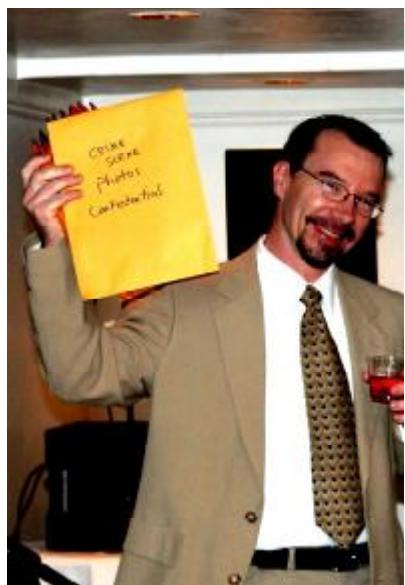
People try to sell you stuff the entire time you are there. Mostly it's the exact same stuff you can find in the shops around the site, just a bit more expensive. Rob, Alex, and I had lunch in a nearby restaurant that was really large a cave entrance with some tables and a stage. The cactus and mushroom soup was surprisingly good. Unfortunately, we didn't have time to push any leads to see if the cave actually goes or not. The picture below was taken by Alex on top of the Pyramid of the Moon.



Once we left the pyramids, we drove directly to Real de Catorce. It took us about 10 hours to get there, but it was also a destination worth the drive. Real de Catorce is considered a tourist destination, and some of the hotels and restaurants were run by Europeans. The somewhat Americanized food was a welcome change. There were street vendors and shops to explore, and the group took horses up the mountain to see the abandoned silver mining town. The ride was pleasant, but the narrow mountain trails were precarious at times. We were allowed to explore the old mines a bit, and I was surprised by how intact some of the buildings were.

We got home safely. The drive took 40 hours, including stops. Thanks for reading!





Banquet 2013 by A.I.Cartwright

Banquet weekend kicked off Friday February 15th with a Speleo-Seminar at Samantha Lambert's new house. A potluck dinner and outdoor fire made for a cheery evening. The young folks were wailing and crying when Samantha kicked them out at mid-nite. Based on neighbor complaints, it must have been a good party.

Saturday night Banquet was held at the University Club on Campus. Although the weather was cold and windy, the usual 8 inches of snow only fell as flurries. While attendance was somewhat lower than expected, we still had 98 people show up. Much appreciation to Zenah Orndorff for the Cocktail Party Soiree, Club Treasurer Brian McCarter for keeping the purse strings tight and Hillary Schmitthenner and Kyle Mills for chipping in. Laine Buckwalter was our liaison to the competent and efficient University Club. Ray Sira provided an excellent slide show of cavers past and present with slides provided by Richard Cobb and Brian McCarter. It was nice to see that the only thing that has changed in 70 years in the Cave Club is our waistlines. Naomi Orndorff kept the dancing music going to the wee hours. Alex Booker made sure no one went thirsty. He even hauled a keg on his back through the blowing snow. The piñata made another appearance, but wasn't as tough as last year.





During the Awards ceremony, President John Mulheren introduced The Cave Owners. Thanks go out to Mrs. Sizer of New Castle Murder Hole, Dan and Marian McConnell of Catawba Murder Hole, Doug Perkins of Buddy

Penley's Cave. And Mike Newsome of Links for attending and letting us go in their caves. Vice-President Courtney Trost was thanked for being Trog Editor.

Master of Ceremonies Dave Colatosti then handed out Guano Cluster service awards for folks who have contributed to the Club over the past year. Among the awardee's were Deborah Barnes for making the cool looking ceramic bats used for the award, Steve Wells for sign out and road clean up, Rebecca "Chewie" Stewart for her taking of many new people in the hunt for the Sasquatch like Ellett Valley Millipede, John Deighan for the pre convention field camp and his rappelling tower, Sandy Knapp for pre convention field camp and hosting the club files. Wil Orndorff was recognized for organizing the Practice Rescue and working on the Club rescue gear. Eric Stanley, Ray Sira, and Phil Benchoff were also given clusters for their work on the rescue gear. Samantha Lambert received hers for storing the gear and lowering her property values. Thanks so much to these folks for supporting the Club. Wil Orndorff presented The Look Out Behind You Award to Dave C., a rear view mirror for his bicycle to warn Dave of cars attempting to mate with him.

The night moved on with the more traditional awards; Club Secretary Nick Socky and Daniel Bishop were inducted into the hallowed realm of the Drinking Techniques Committee with their performances at last year's Filthy Young Women gathering.

Aaron Thomas was given the Flame Out Award for his antics after the More Wine Party at OTR. Crime scene photos were obtained that were not for the squeamish.

Safe Driver Awards were given to Tommy Polson for doing acrobatics in Mike Newsome's car and Naomi Orndorff for another attempt at taking the road less travelled. At this point she has to be doing it for the attention.

BrainBucket was given to Katherine Ferguson for her single handed accident in Bane's Spring. No, Katherine, we aren't making fun of you. And yes, you are Beautiful.

Courtney Trost awarded Trainee of the Year to Sarah Crowder. Unfortunately, Sarah couldn't make it.

Mike Newsome was given Honorary Membership in the Club for his many contributions to the Caving Community. Thank you, Mike.

The A.I. Cartwright Honorarium was bestowed upon Scott Rapier for his many years of service and support to the V.P.I. Cave Club. Thank you ,Scott.

The next morning Joan Redder fed us breakfast and let us recuperate at her house. Joan, thank you so much for hosting us for so many post Banquet get togethers. Let's do it all again next year.





Easter Beer



You might be an old fart if...

Anonymous

The Underground is as close to underground as you've been recently

Your friends' children are members

You have enough barely used vertical gear for 5 people

You are still referring to Kyle Mills as Ethan

You don't know who Ethan or Kyle Mills are

You spend more time thinking about gear than using it

You think PBR tastes bad

You read every single email that is posted on the listserve

You've stopped trying to learn trainees' names

You've stopped trying to learn members' names

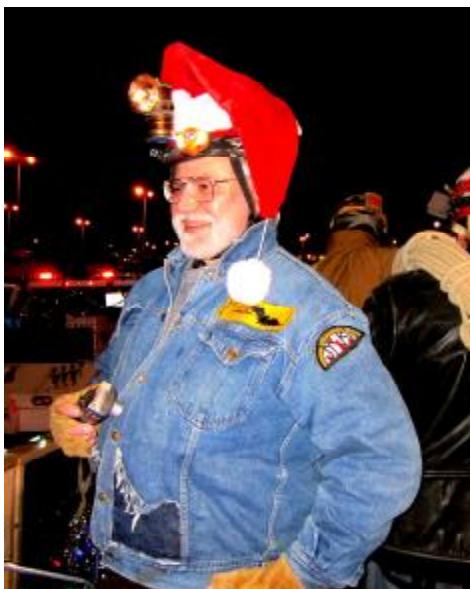
You have been to Picnic more years than I have been alive (23)

The top of your head is shinier than your unused gear

Reading this article makes you angry

Most things make you angry

Thanks to all of our old farts for passing on knowledge and tradition!



Questions that should be on the membership test

By John Mulheren

1. What should you do if you are contacted by a Boy Scout leader who wants to take his group caving?

- A. Say "No"
- B. Ignore the email
- C. Make another member lead the trip
- D. Lead the trip yourself

2. True or False: Caving is a good hangover cure.

3. In order to go on the Mexico trip you must first:

- A. Be vertically trained
- B. Learn to speak Spanish
- C. Get along with all others on the trip
- D. Prepare your anus for the apocalypse

4. When should you leave the hot tub or sauna?

- A. You are having trouble breathing
- B. You are having trouble seeing
- C. You think just had a conversation with Jesus about which Spice Girl was hottest
- D. There are no members of the opposite sex

5. A trainee on a trip you are leading is asking a lot of technical questions that you don't know the answer to. How should you respond?

- A. Admit you don't know
- B. Make stuff up
- C. Pretend you can't hear him
- D. Present him as an offering to the mole people

6. Match each member with their drink of choice:

- | | |
|-------------------|-------------------------------------|
| A. Joker | 1. Baijiu |
| B. John Mulheren | 2. I don't know, but it's orange |
| C. Brian McCarter | 3. Vodka. Russian Vodka |
| D. Courtney Trost | 4. Milwaukee's Best |
| E. Sara Fleetwood | 5. Silence |
| F. Peppy | 6. PBR |
| G. Steve Wells | 7. Fancy beer you've never heard of |
| H. Schuchardt | 8. Skol and Dr. Pepper |
| I. John George | 9. Anything. Especially cheap wine |
| J. Mike Newsome | 10. Ron Burgundy |



7. Describe three ways you can limit the size of your trip to ensure you are out in time for the party.

8. How did PBR get that blue ribbon?

- A. Exceptional taste
- B. Exceptional value
- C. Exceptional chugability
- D. Who cares, drink it



9. True or False: Leading cave trips for other universities will often pay off in interesting ways.

10. A trainee passes out drunk at a cave club party. Choose the correct order of these actions:

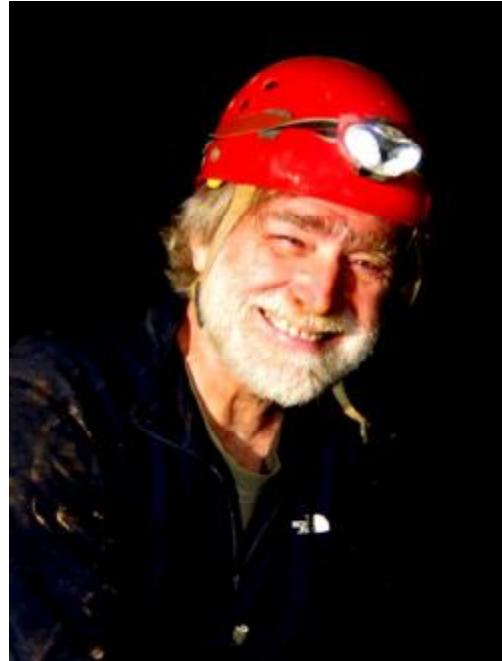
- A. Take pictures
- B. Nominate them for flame out
- C. Put them in the recovery position
- D. Draw things on their face
- E. High fives all around

11. True or False: Volunteering is always a good idea in the Cave Club.

12. Which of the following has not been found at a road clean up?

- A. Money
- B. Weapons
- C. Undergarments
- D. Gay porn
- E. None of the above

13. Give four examples of how cave gear can be used at a party.



14. Describe two differences between static rope and Deighan rope.

15. When is being drunk not appropriate?

- A. In a cave
- B. At meetings
- C. In class or at work
- D. In public
- E. At parties

Ode to the Cave Club Suite

Based on *The Raven* by Edgar Allan Poe

By John Mulheren

Once upon a midmorn dreary, I awoke all weak and weary,
 In the living room of the Cave Club Suite from a party the night before,
 Terrible pain within my head, my stench could have surely raised the dead,
 With myself I vainly plead, I shall not drink here anymore,
 For this lifestyle I was not bred, I shall not drink here anymore,
 Last night was it, now nevermore.

Friend, you should have seen the room, it could have passed for a tomb,
 I was surrounded by the bodies of my friends strewn across the floor,
 I suppose last night, it was a blast, "Turn it down!" the neighbors asked,
 And oh, how they then were harassed, then we danced til we were sore,
 I believe I may just need a cast, for I danced last night til I was sore,
 Man, I tore up that dance floor.

The night did have some casualties, you should have seen that balcony,
 Dead soldiers littered every surface, this truly was a horrid war,
 My bathroom floor is covered in vomit, how did some get in my closet?
 A dreadful place for your deposit, cleaning this place will be such a chore,
 You drank so much and then you lost it, this cleaning will be such a chore,
 Your lunch makes a quite poor décor!

Cave Club Suite, you served us well, but how could we ignore the smell,
 Your dirty carpet, spray-painted wall, the damages will take eons to restore,
 Despite this I still loved you so, I'm heartbroken to see you go,
 It gives me great pleasure to know, we used you like a dirty whore
 You have some scars that clearly show, we used you like a dirty whore
 And that is all we could ask for.



Some New Zealand inspired fun facts about glow worms – Ellen Koertge

They are not actually worms.

In the northern hemisphere they are beetles (lightening bugs)

They are a fungus gnat's larvae in New Zealand and Australia

The species in New Zealand is *Arachnocampa luminosa*

Can be found in caves, old tunnels, and the forest. (anywhere that is damp, humid, and with little to no wind)



They eat a variety of flying insects, some even eat spiders and millipedes

They light of the glow worm is to attract prey so they get caught in the sticky thread

The glow worm pulls up the thread with its mouth to get their catch

Adult glow worm flies are able to pull free of the threads if they accidentally touch one

The light is produced by an organ similar to our kidney. All insects have this organ, but only the glow worm can produce light with it.

This organ has its own air sac because so much oxygen is needed to produce the light

Fungus gnat eggs are the only stage that does not produce the light

If the worm gets startled it hides the light because it takes a few minutes to actually shut it off

A single glow worm makes 15-25 sticky lines a night

It takes about 15 minutes to make one line

Large glow worms can have up to 70 lines

As many as 40% of glow worms in caves are killed by a white fungus



Traveling around New Zealand Joker and I saw many advertisements for glow worm cave tours. These caves have become large tourist attractions. Instead of paying for one of these tours we did this really cool hike to an old tunnel that was used to bring water to the other side of the mountain for power. In that tunnel there were glow worms all over, and seeing the small green lights all over the wall was an awesome sight.

<http://www.wildwanderer.com/blog/?p=102>

The Cave Club Groupie Signoff Sheet
By Daniel Bishop

Remain a prospective groupie for at least 10 weeks during which time he/she/it must party for at least 40 hours at a minimum of 6 Spelio Seminars.

Demonstrate elementary partying skills

Be endorsed by an active Trainee in good standing

Refrain from caving for at least one month.

Be able to name all the pets at the Batranch

Get into a hot tub with at least three naked strangers

Describe why you think PBR deserved that blue ribbon.

Do three consecutive creek runs.

Participate in the wrestling pit at cave club Halloween

Drink for at least 10 consecutive hours during picnic.

Hide one six pack and find at least three drinks at Easter Beer

Help build the world's sketchiest float

To Be a Bat Ranch Dog

By Katrina Stoll

Strangers come and go every day.

I have to be good and stay,

Chasing cars or barking too much is bad

Even if it is a dogs fad.



We have lots of room to romp and play,

We like to act so cray.

There is also a creek great for swimming,

So our excitement and energy is always brimming.



When people come over,

We sometimes follow them through the fields of clovers.

They disappear into some strange holes.

Dirty and exhausted, eons later they come out like little moles.

Some nights, packs of people come.

They laugh and drink more than just a little rum.

Then they call our names,

And there's a lot of petting and rubbing for claims.



Nothing is better than wagging our tails and being happy

So don't ever get snappy.

Then we get to lie around and be like a hog.

This is the hardships of being a Bat Ranch Dog!

After Cave Rave

This treat is perfect after a good cave day. I made this at Filthy Young Woman for pie day and it was pretty delicious. Not to mention it's extremely easy to make, so those who are inebriated will be able to "follow" directions. It's chocolate so it looks like clay, and if you have motivation you can draw bats with the chocolate on top!

Ingredients:

- 1 package of pudding & pie filling chocolate (5.85 OZ)
- 1 ¾ cups of milk
- 1 tub of whipped topping (8 OZ)
- 2-4 candy bars (tried Heath and Kit Kat, both good)
- 1 cube of cooking chocolate (sweet)
- 1 chocolate piecrust

Directions:



Mix the pie filling with the milk and half of the tub of whipped topping. Also smash up the candy bars in someway (banging it with a beer bottle works) and then add half of the mashed candy bar to the pie filling mixture. Then pour the mixture into the piecrust and top with the remaining tub of whipped topping and the rest of the candy bar. Melt the cube of cooking chocolate in a microwave, or if the microwave suddenly stops working (I swear it wasn't my fault) use the stovetop. Then dribble the chocolate on top in designs or splotches. Then pop it in the freezer until you get the munchies.

Later you must order everyone to eat your pie. YOU MUST EAT THE PIE. You must be extremely annoying about it so that all the pie is eaten. Also you should enjoy it, because hey you made some after cave rave dude.

You know what we should do right now. We should eat some pie.

Recipe by Hillary Schmitthenner (also found on some pudding boxes)



Cavers Cheap Cocktail (apple wine)

Makes about 5 gal

This beverage is always a solid choice for cavers. This is a tasty apple wine recipe that makes a large amount for an affordable price (less than \$25 for 50 bottles depending where you buy the juice). This is also gluten free since there seem to be quite a few cavers this year that cannot drink gluten stuff. If you're going to host a spelio this is always a good thing to have around. On a side note, don't ask me what the alcohol content is of this stuff because my hydrometer broke.

Ingredients:

21 quarts 100 % apple juice (ascorbic acid can be the only additive)

7 1/4 tsp. citric acid

5 1/2 tsp. nutritional energizer

10 cups brown sugar

2 tsp. vanilla

1 packet of Red Star Champaign yeast

1 pound cranberries

Directions:

Sanitize everything. Use some bleach and water or some other sanitizing agent you find in a store. Things you will need to sanitize: your fermenter (bucket with a air tight lid and a hole that fits your air lock), your air lock, hydrometer if you feel like taking the starting gravity (later helps you figure out the alcohol content), thermometer (helps correct hydrometer reading), a funnel might be helpful while pouring, a spoon and bowl to prepare yeast if packet directions call for it, and anything else you might need.

Next pour all your juice, sugar, and cranberries into a huge ass pot (one that can hold 21 quarts with some room to boil). Then heat it (I wouldn't boil it) just to get all the sugar dissolved. Then put in the citric acid and vanilla. Wait until it cools and add the nutritional energizer as well. Then pour all that juice into your fermenter (using a funnel will help you not spill juice all over your floor, unless you want apple juice all over your floor?) Oh, and take your first gravity reading with your hydrometer if you want to. When it's at the temperature the yeast packet calls for pitch your yeast. Put on your air lock and fill that with a bit of water.

Put the fermenter in a dark spot in your house that is a good temperature for the yeast and wait. Hopefully you'll see bubbles in the air lock within a day or so. If not, do research online. I think I let mine ferment for about a month or so, but you have to be patient and wait at least a month (if you feel like it you can rack it during this time too).

Ok you've waited forever, now bottle. Oh and collect some bottles during your waiting time that are not twist off (go through peoples recycling bins and beg people for bottles if you need them last minute). Before you bottle, sanitize your bottles (dishwashers are great), your bottling equipment, your caps (buy those), hydrometer (find out that final gravity), bottling bucket, thermometer, and siphon. Take your final gravity reading if you took the starting one, and if you prefer dry wine leave it as is, if you want sweet wine add a little corn sugar or brown sugar. Siphon your now alcoholic beverage into your bucket then fill your bottles (bottle fillers are genius). Cap those bottles and yay you have alcohol. I'd wait 2-3 weeks to drink it though just because it will probably taste better. Good luck, and I know this is really long and confusing so be sure to use a lot of Internet for this endeavor. Feel free to play around with the sugar and such. Do not ever panic though, sit back, relax, have a homebrew!



QUOTABLE QUOTES

SKnapp: I have a strap on.

BMcCarter: Now we're all picturing you naked.

DBarnes: Do you know how many times I could put my hands all over your body?

CTrost: You were just in the position so it seemed appropriate.

KStoll: It's really hard to do the nasty if you're fat.

NOrndorff: How did that work? CTrost: I was on top and he was on bottom.

ABooker: You're still moist.

JMulheren: Midgets have all the fun.

HSchmitthenner: I don't want to do poop stuff with Ethan.

HSchmitthenner: We have two girls obsessed with boobs. ASkowronski: Three, but who's counting.

???: Deighan is the most bangable old fart.

HSchmitthenner: We have so far to climb, look how far away Courtney's light is. JDeighan: Hillary, that's a star.

ACummins: Why do they call you Rapeys? DBishop: Well, singular Rapey.

ABooker: I like my ramen like I like my women – undercooked and not very wet.

NSocky: Virgin caves yeahh. MSkowronski: He's gonna put his stalagmite in that calcite pool.

DBishop: ...I'm going to get some whiskey.

MSkowronski to WOrndorff: Are you opening a beer with another beer?

TCoad (in his sleep): Eat more pie.

ABooker: I'm slowly making my food spicier and spicier because eventually I'm going to get maced by the police and I want to be ready for it.

MSkowronski: Why are you helmeted? JEchols: Because I know how you guys party.

TCoad: What is one of the major characteristics of this knot?

ACummins: Um... Can I get a beer?

JDeighan to HSchmittner: It's OK if you fall and get a concussion, I've been watching Grey's Anatomy and I can fix you.

EFortney: I don't want to actually do anything, I just want to look like I'm doing something. CTrost: And that is why you are an old fart.

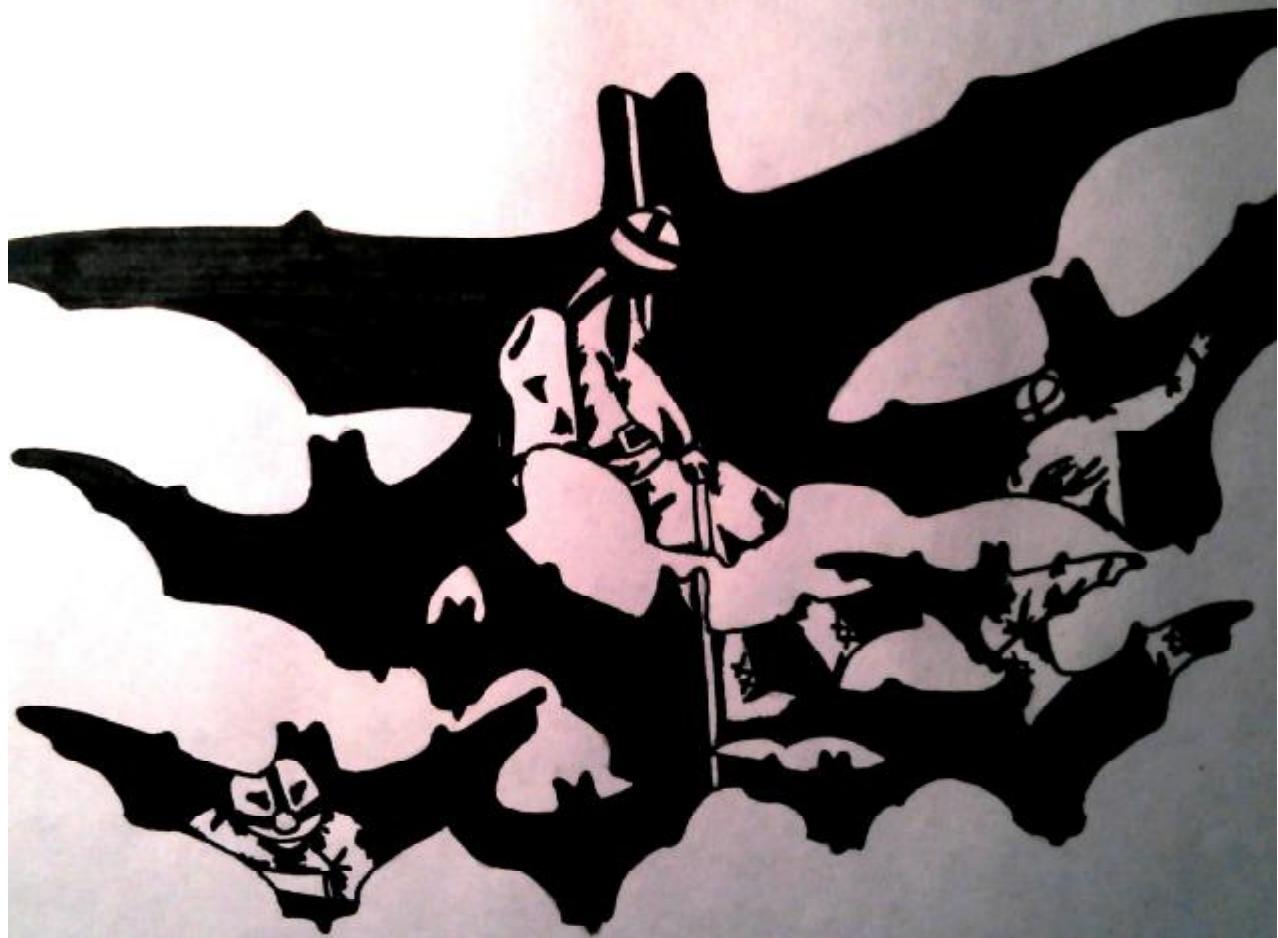
HSchmitthenner: Fuzzy dick? What is that? Let's listen to it. KStoll: Hillary that says fuzzy duck...

SCrowder: Well it's clear and sticky.

SIGNOUT QUOTES

6/14/12	Phillip Fansler, Samantha Fede	Tawney's	Goodbye everyone!
6/23/12	Brian Ekey, Sam Lambert, Scott Pritchard, Don Yogurt, Jessica Robbins, Heather Angelia, Jessica Deutsch, Kelsey Shirk, Andrew Broomell, Will Bollless	Tawney's	He's got good birthing hips
8/19/12	Elliot George, Jeff Witten, Tommy Polson, Ed Fortney, Nicholas Socky	Starnes	EF: Why do people go caving? EG: To watch the old guy suffer!
9/8/12	Joe Calderone, Brian McCarter, Ed Fortney, Scott Rapier	Smokehole	Age and treachery will always overcome youth and skill
2/2/13	Matt Skowronski, Patrick Ovellette, Naomi Orndorff, Bram Chakonis, Wil Orndorff	Starnes	I'm like a dog. I have to pee all the time, but only a little bit.
12/12/12	Courtney Trost, Hilary Schmitthehner, John Deighan, Tommy Polson	Clover Hollow	But "Bitch" has the word "Bitch" in it.
12/21/12	Dave C. Rebecca Stewart, Hillary Schmitthehner, Ellen Koertge, Philip Balister	Blankenship Blow-hole and Beer Can Chasm	"Well we have 3 females and 2 men... that's enough to populate the world." "I don't like that ratio."
1/14/13	Nick Socky, Jeff Witten, Tommy Polson	Links	The spiders don't bite your dick off. They bite it, watch it fall off, and then eat it!
1/19/13	John Muheren, Courtney Trost, 7 Oswego Cavers	Links	"You wanted to climb up there" "Well I'm an idiot!"

VPI Cave Club



2013

