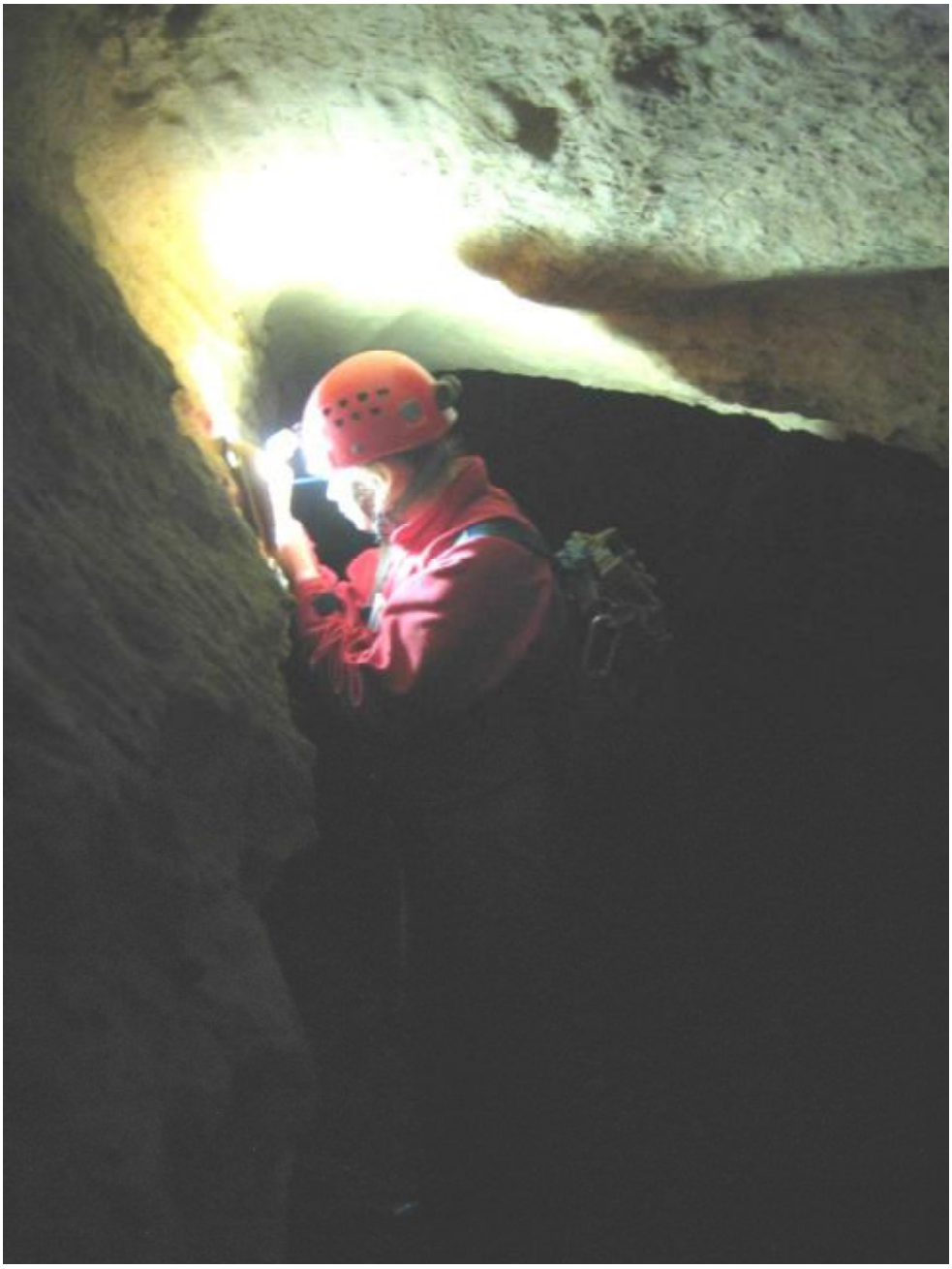
THE TECH TROGLODYTE



SPRING 2012

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Pictures courtesy of:

Courtney Trost

Samantha Huff

Samantha Fede

Nick "Peppy" Socky

Jessie Sakach

Robert Harris

Rebecca Stewart

Sara Fleetwood

SIVTAC

Hazel Barton

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	Dan “Joker” Crowder
Secretary	Sara Fleetwood
Treasurer	Brian McCarter

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LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

As always, we've had an extremely eventful year. Our club has gained six new members, and we have a handful of folks who are on the brink of membership. Because of their enthusiasm, there have been a metric shit ton of cave trips this year. Tons of fresh virgin booty has been scooped, and hundreds of students have been exposed to caving. We've had a large presence at a cave rescue or two, and had a few accidents of our own. Also, Club social events have been characteristically action-packed.

I think that these achievements show how unique our organization is. A lot goes in to making this club tick, and I would like to thank all the people that help make the VPI Cave Club the best thing about Virginia Tech and Blacksburg. To all that have lead cave trips, trained new members, joined us for caving, helped at club events, helped at a rescue, held a speleoseminar, and continued to support this club, I would like to extend a huge and heartfelt THANK YOU. Without you, the VPI Cave Club would just be another outdoor organization. I hope that next year is just as fun, hectic, and adventure filled as this year.

In conclusion: ashes to ashes, beer to piss.

- John

Letter from the Editor

So, it's been a pretty awesome year. Since it's my first year as editor I'm not really sure what I'm supposed to say here, probably something about how awesome all the submitted articles were, which hey they were! So thanks to all who sent me something. There couldn't be a Trog without your submissions. I'm glad to see that we have a good amount of variety with serious and super silly articles. It's cool to see how varied our club is and how much we've done over the year.

It's cool to read about the numerous cave trips our club has led, through well traveled and virgin passage. Each event we hold creates some great memories, or lack of memories for some. It's awesome to have somewhere to record all of this through stories and pictures. Personally, I think the pictures are the best part of the Trog, so I felt the need to include a lot. Thanks to everyone who let me steal pictures off of their facebook (not as if I asked). Considering I probably have spent more time working on this than on school work over the past month, I hope you enjoy it!

I encourage everyone to keep submitting articles so that we can have just as awesome of a Trog next year!

-Courtney

INTRODUCTION

The Cave Club is more than an organization, more than a group of people who like to hang out underground. It's a lifestyle. I think many of you can relate when I say that I don't hang out with other people anymore. Somehow everyone else doesn't seem nearly as interesting as the quirky people we have in our club. I don't think any Trog could really show what our club is like, but I sure tried to capture our way of life in these pages. Whether you're going on a trip, to a spelioseminar, or to one of our numerous events, something crazy is bound to happen.

I am really impressed with how many people in the club really do want to help out new people. I was able to get my membership as a freshman because, as soon as I showed interest, I had help learning everything. Whether you're caving with a student or an old fart you're bound to learn something. For those of you who do want to get some more experience, just ask and you will receive.

Thanks to everyone in the club for all that you've done to make it how it is.

New Members

Jessie Sakach#423

Courtney Trost #424

Sara Fleetwood #425

Dan “Joker” Crowder #426

Joe Calderone #427

Rebecca Stewart #428

Cave Rescue

By Dan "Joker" Crowder

My favorite image of caving will always be Guido sneaking up on the guy standing outside the cave with the machete and a hand crank FM radio.

A brief overview of what happened from the eyes of a young vice president is this:

We (Alex Booker, Sara Fleetwood, Carol Zo, Nick "Peppy" Socky, and myself) got there around noon. Carol took over topside then Wells, Wil Orndorff, Dave C. and Josh showed up. The people in my car went into Norman and the St. Wells group went into bone to try and pincer maneuver them out. A badass individual from WV named Greg Springer led from our side.

When we got in we discovered Dave Socky was having issues with his phone. Alex (who has a degree in audio production) stayed to fix it with Peppy and Sara Greg and I sallied fourth into the abyss. We stopped for about 30 minutes to investigate cigarette smoke smells but they were made by some dumb asses from two crews before us.

The crew before us gave us a sitrep and told us to go under a godforsaken breakdown pile which we spent AT LEAST A FUCKING HOUR trying to figure out. We then walked easily over said breakdown pile and met up with Dave C. and some Blacksburg Man.

Wells had just recently gone out with Josh to give an update. Oh yeah, the intrepid Blacksburg Man and his faithful companion (and decided carbide fanatic) Dave C., had at this point, found the spelunkers. They did have a helmet between the three of them and a machete for the CHUDs.

Dave and Sara took our unfortunate adventurers out the Bone entrance while team sherpa (Wil, Greg, and myself) took their shit out the Norman way. Whilst crossing the breakdown we ran into team kickass (Guido, Joe Zo, Travis Coad, and the sauce monster) who

I had a sugar crash from not eating all day (I had an unfortunate run in with the Cleveland Browns in the cave and as a result wasn't eating much).

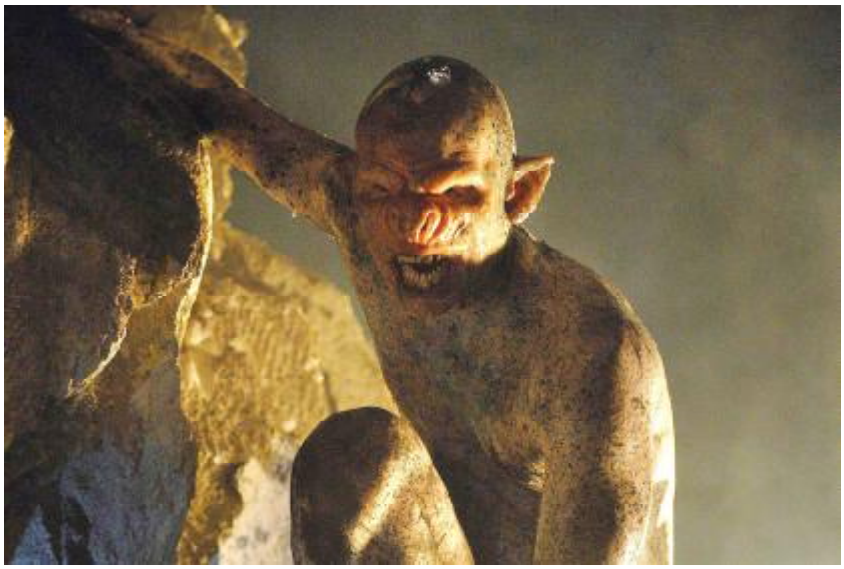
We went through the crawly bits and the wet bits and subsequently ran into yet another crew (BRG mania Crew) who helped us roll up our 5000 feet of phone line. After that the VPI dam broke.

We found Ray, Scotty, Deighan, Brian, and many others including team honey badger (who wish it to be known that, and I quote, "they didn't give a shit!").

Through this whole ordeal Guido had been brandishing his FM radio, which was providing valuable insight to those of us who speak white noise, and his trusty cave machete for beating back... well everything. He victoriously crawled out of the cave waving it around and terrifying the guy standing at the entrance to the cave.

I hope I have provided some insight and background to this story. If there is anything to add DO IT. I was just happy to see so many of my trainees gaining so much valuable experience and providing so much help to the lost individuals. Also a shout out to Greg Springer for general badassery and go getter mind frame.

The Ten Rules Of Anti-Mole People Tactics
By Daniel "Rapunzel" Bishop



Certain items are necessary while caving. Your helmet and light are the most important, and a good cave suit doesn't go amiss. But what about your own protection? But you must not forget to pack in order protect yourself against god's most humble of creatures: The mole person.

If there's anything I learned from the movie The Descent, it's that the Appalachia and mole people go hand in hand. But even with these pale, blind threats cavers still go caving! Just with a level head and adequate equipment.

Defense:
Your helmet can only go so far, and a cave suit is about as much protection as a burlap sack. A suit of armor won't do you any good in a cave, and a Kevlar would only do you good if the mole people were packing heat. Rather – it is most important to stay out of the mole people's sight. Luckily, they don't have any, only a sense of hearing.

Rule #1 – Avoid engagement
Cave softly isn't just a nice phrase to spout at trainees- it's an essential part of anti-mole people tactics. It's a simple manner to avoid having a mole person notice you- watch the walls and holes, when there's a risk of a mole person outbreak, silence is key. Keep on muddy surfaces when possible, it'll soften the noise of your boots. Pools of water are not your friend as a mere splash could draw the enemy.

Rule #2- Use your eyes.
One of the biggest mistakes those who encounter mole people make is to not pay attention to their surroundings. Even when there has been no known sighting of mole people in your cave, there's a first time for everything. Check nearby holes and crevices, you never known what might pop out.

Rule #3 – Don't get grabbed
Loose clothing, long hair, untied shoes, you never know what a mole person might grab onto. If the mole person's gotten that close you have already failed Rule #1, but there's no need to give the mole person any extra advantages.

Rule #4 – Don't open carry
As tempting as a gun is, the risk of it falling into a pool of water at an inopportune moment or causing a cave in is too great. More often than not a twitchy finger only serves to attract the mole people, and while break down can be a useful tool to crush the bloodthirsty beasts, it is far more likely to separate the group- never a good idea.

Rule #5- Stick together
A large group means more hands, more eyes, and a better chance of survival. This means that pinch passages must be used with extreme caution, and long tube crawls are not friends. When the groups spread out mole people feast.

Rule #6 – Don't sacrifice yourself
A valiant effort may seem like a good idea. Occasionally tackling a mole person off a cliff might be the best way to go, but this is not so. One of the first laws of these horror scenarios is that any sacrifice will almost immediately be in vain as it greatly increases the other party's chances of attack. The same rule applies to sacrificing an ally- karma is indeed a bitch.

Rule #7 – Never bring a 2 way radio
Not only are you in a cave, where a radio is as about as useful as a brick- but their ability to make noise at the worst time is only matched by first time caves. They are a dangerous luxury you can't afford to use.

Rule #8 – Choose Your weapon.
Range is what you need, but sadly in a cave your line of site might only be as far as 10 or so feet. You need a blade that's versatile and compact. This is why a machete is the perfect tool for your cave trip. Its blade, when kept sharp, can render a mole person harmless with one swift blow! For those of us who are lacking in machetes car keys are NOT an appropriate alternative. When you're out of the cave you have to escape before some farmer hits you with a shovel and throws you back in.

Rule #9 – Report your findings
The NSS has a record of all caves with Mole people, but as the infection spreads it is important for their records to be up to date. While some are brave enough to tackle a cave with these fiends, most cavers don't want to come up to bat with these strange creatures. Knowledge is power.

Rule #10- Don't panic
Even with blood thirsty monsters all around there is always hope! Keep put and allow sign-out to take its course. If all goes well dozens of cavers will arrive, machetes and flamethrowers in hand!

Remember kids- Cave softly, and carry a big blade.

Clover Hollow-January 2012

By Samantha Huff

My first vertical trip was in January of this year with Deighan, Brian, Joker, Peppy, and Rapunzel to Clover Hollow. Ropes were wrapped around large, sturdy trees on the edge of a wide hole that dropped down into the cavern. Old jeans served as padding for where the ropes pressed against the trees, the sight of which always amuses me because it seems like there should be a more official-looking piece of equipment for this kind of thing. Brian and Joker descended one at a time, attaching to the ropes and descending with ease into a 60 foot pit into darkness.

Once we were ready and wearing all our vertical gear, Peppy and I wove the rope through our racks and made our calls. Listening to Deighan's advice, I leaned back into space, heart pounding as I tried to trust the rope to hold me. Peppy and I stepped down the rock face into the hole and I began to panic. As Peppy continued down, I stopped to close my eyes and meditate, something Mike had recommended I do if my fear of heights ever got the better of me. I thought back to what he'd said when we picked up parking tags for the cave from the Bat Ranch.

"Caving's very dangerous, we all know that, but we decide to do it anyway," he said, standing on his front porch in a tie-dyed bathrobe. "It's just like driving really. You think to yourself, if I wanted to, I could do something stupid and in one second I'd be gone. One thing could go wrong and then I'd be dead. We aren't afraid to drive because we do it every day and we get used to it. We know that although we could do something to kill ourselves and others, we're not going to do that."

As if unaware that his actions illustrated his point, he took out a cigarette and, with a startling popping sound, lit it with a metal canister that spat out a stream of blue flame when he pulled the trigger. Joker and I laughed and Mike continued. "See, if I wasn't careful I could light myself on fire doing this every day. It's dangerous, but I know what to do and to not be afraid of it." He went on to say how meditation had helped him get through some tough spots in caves where fear had paralyzed him before he stopped to calm down and visualize himself completing the task. He said to focus on each moment and what you are supposed to be doing and what you need to do next.

Sure enough, dangling above the pit with my hands desperately gripping the rope and feet planted against the vertical slab of rock in front of me, I relaxed as I saw in my mind how I was going to rappel down into the cave and arrive safely at the bottom. The ropes would hold, the gear would support me, I knew what to do, and I would be fine. With a renewed sense of courage, I loosened my rack and slid slowly down into the pit. Taking a moment to look around me as I descended, I noticed the beauty of the moss growing bright and green against the brown-grey of the rocks. I walked down the rock face leading into the cave until it ended and I had to summon up my newfound assurance to relax my feet and free rappel the rest of the way into the cave. Moving down through the air not touching anything but the rope was oddly pleasant and I wasn't as afraid as I thought I'd be. Smiling, I touched down inside the cave and unclipped myself from the rope. After making my way to Peppy, Joker, and Brian outside of rock fall, we yelled up "off rope" and waited for Rapey and Deighan to come down.

Clover Hollow may not have many pretty formations, but its size and shapes are gorgeous in themselves. Our group marveled and joked as we went deeper into the cave, rappelling down a 60-some foot drop, arm rappelling a 20-ish foot drop, and continuing down a final 90 foot drop which was largely a free rappel.

Once I reached the bottom of the last rappel, I walked down the canyon over wet rocks that crunched and squelched beneath my boots, following the echoes of an unseen waterfall. The noise was amazing, filling the rounded out space at the end of the canyon with the sound of rain. It felt like rain too. I tilted my face up and spread out my arms, enjoying a rain shower a few hundred feet underground.

Once I was back with the group, we detached our vertical gear and left them along an incline leading to the rest of the cave. Climbing, crouching, and walking through the cave, we eventually came to a bedroom-sized pocket that led to the infamous gypsum flower room. I'd been warned about this room, but even so, Deighan and the others were so convincing I had to struggle hard to remind myself that it was a trap.

Although he knew what to expect, Peppy volunteered to go down anyway, headfirst, at Deighan's suggestion. We were all amused by his gung-ho attitude and his humor at finding the "gypsum flowers." Climbing back out of the tube is the hard part. It's not very far, but the tube is so narrow that it is nearly impossible to get any kind of leverage to wiggle your way out. Peppy tried for a long time but eventually had to be pulled out by both arms.

Joker felt his pride would be hurt if he didn't go down too. He's a bit claustrophobic and was very hesitant to go into the hole, but he said he couldn't back out now, "not with Deighan sitting out here judging me." To which Deighan agreed that he was indeed judging him.

As we waited, we discovered that we could hear a regular pounding noise throughout the little room. Joker stopped and said, "Guys, do you hear that? You can hear my heartbeat." All of us were quiet and listened to the rhythmic pulse that was so loud and so close that it was like hearing it through a stethoscope. Despite his best efforts, he also had to be pulled out.

Continuing on, we finally reached The Library at the end of the cave. It's a sizeable room with large boulders to sit on, fake potted plants some cavers had managed to bring all the way down there, and a sealed barrel full of outdated porn magazines. Deighan passed out old issues of Hustler and some magazines without covers for the men to read.

"Sorry, there's only one guy one," he said as he passed a magazine over to me. It featured ridiculous hairstyles, hairy chests, and thick bushy porn mustaches, some examples of which I showed to the others. In turn, they showed the group pornographic comics and a few centerfolds of incredibly obese women. The group's favorite by far was a close-up of an asshole that had a penciled in speech bubble next to it saying "Get me out of here!" and another below it that said,

This is probably what Peppy and Rapunzel did after that trip

"There are no gypsum flowers in here!" Additionally, to account for the sophisticated tastes of the VPI Cave Club, the pile of porn was supplemented with two History and Air & Space magazines.

After we were done eating food we'd brought down in our packs, we started the journey out of the cave. Reaching the waterfall canyon room again, Rapey and I had to ascend on knots. Deighan guided me through tying my foot bindings to the ascending rope with a helical knot. Going so slowly made the climb scary, especially when the main rope got behind a carabiner at my waist and came loose with a loud snap as I shifted my weight. The first time it happened, my heart slammed against my chest and I thought I was going to fall and die. I looked around frantically for what life-saving piece of equipment had popped out. I soon realized that everything was as it should be and there was nothing that could come loose at my waist that was part of my essential gear. Apparently Rapey experienced it too and I felt better sharing with him the mutual panic the noise brought on.

By the time we reached the entrance pit of the cave again, we had been underground for about 10.5 hours, a record for me, Peppy, and Rapey. Oddly enough, I had barely eaten or drank and yet felt fine besides physical exhaustion and bruises. Time underground moves differently,

A Story of Sauce….
By Sauce Master 3000 and Sara Fleetwood
(As recorded in the Link's registrar)

Once upon a time, there was a jar of sauce that began to ooze stuff. It wasn't just any stuff, it was crazy stuff! The crazy stuff began to chase the cavers. The stuff's name was Larry the Sauce

Monster. They were best friends, but wanted the cavers to be their friends also. So the chase was on to catch one of them and whip them into friendship. They began by canyoning through the whole cave because the floor was lava. HOT FUCKING LAVA! With the lava and the whip, Larry the Sauce Monster, and his second personality, Chono Dip, slimed the unsuspecting caver, Kirkalls. Kirkalls then began to Kirk through the 5'9 in order to escape being slimed even further. Unfortunately, Kirkall's slime made him so lubricated that he could only flail so deliciously. That the crack ate him and he fell into caver world of awesomeness! Virgin leads everywhere! He began to feel a strange urge. He went booty-lust crazy and started surveying any and everything he saw. Even his mom. The moral of the story is to climb the 5'9, scoop-bore, and have tons of fun no matter what state you are in because you will always come out happy. Good thing Kirkall's name was written in pencil at sign out.

The Virginia Cave Board Revival

By Dan "Joker" Crowder

Back during the fall semester it came to the attention of the Cave Club that the Virginia Cave Board was going to be consolidated in with other boards in the Commonwealth Government. The Virginia Cave Board, for those of you who don't know, the Cave Board is the agency that helps protect the caves in Virginia. They pursue prosecution of people who deface caves as well as issue the signs we all know in the entrances of caves. You know, the ones about not eating the cave critters.

Needless to say it would have been a huge blow to cave conservation if it were consolidated. This was brought to the attention of the VPI Cave Club at which point a huge reaction took place. Along with the signing of a petition to be taken by delegation to Richmond, the VPI Cave Club also enlisted the VAR (Virginia Region) cavers. The VAR sent in a large number of letters and emails to the board of consolidation protesting the consolidation of the Cave Board.

A letter writing campaign was not enough for the VPI Club. There was a letter drafted which was signed by a large number of Blacksburg area cavers and most of the College of Natural Resources at Virginia Tech. The Blue Ridge Grotto also had a major hand in the drafting of the letter that was to be taken by the cavers to Richmond. A delegation of cavers consisting of Rebecca Stewart, Ellen Koertge, Joey Fagan, Rich Geisler and Dan Crowder went to the meeting of the Virginia Cave Board. They were joined by members of the Richmond Area Speleological Society.

In the end it was the efforts of the letter writing campaign that won the day. The combined effort of cavers from all across Virginia and the surrounding region kept the Virginia Cave Board alive. That being said the initiative was spear headed by the VPI Cave Club.

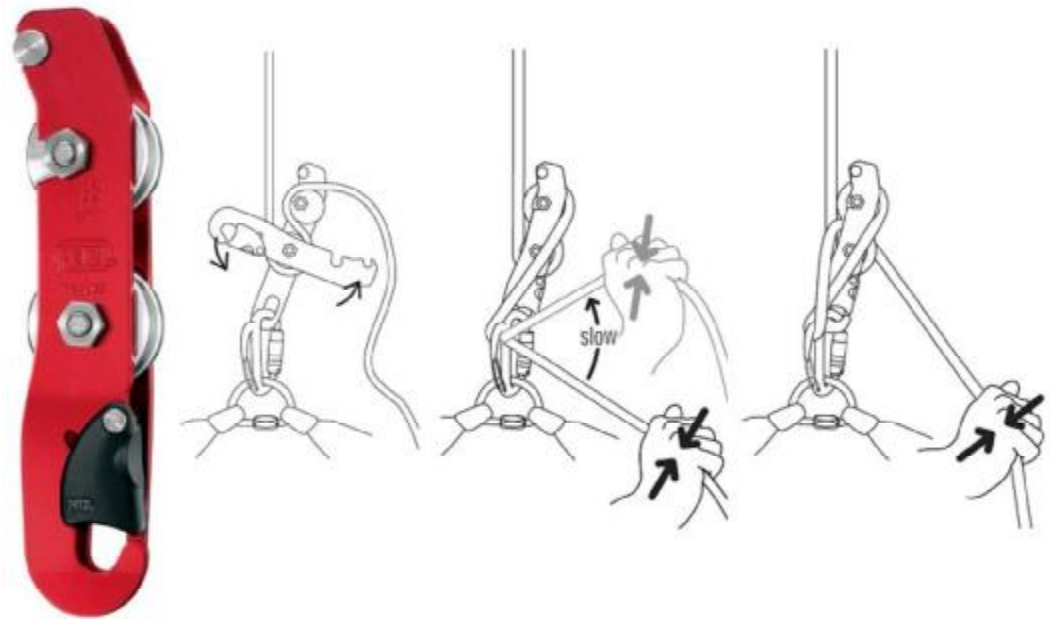
In the future the VPI Cave Club needs to remain vigilant. This is not the end of the Virginia Government trying to do away with the cave board. Next time they try the same thing should be done. The combined cavers of Virginia should be called upon to help the effort of protecting this valuable asset. That being said, next time you go into a cave and you see that sign saying, "This Cave is Protected by Virginia State Law", give yourself a little pat on the back for spearheading this endeavor. Remember; a bunch of college kids still have a voice and can influence the decisions of their government.

A summary of different rappelling devices

By Naomi Orndorff

During vertical caving, a more serious approach to exploring the unknown, knowing and understanding your descending devices can be the difference between life and death. Three common rappelling devices for the experienced caver are the bobbin, rack, and micro-rack.

One popular rappelling device is the bobbin. It is very popular among European cavers, yet is also commonly used internationally. As said by Gary Storrick, bobbins are "Mechanical decenders where the rope path follows an S-shaped path". A bobbin is made of two metal spools, usually made of steel or aluminum, fixed to a metal plate with a pivoting metal plate on the other side to prevent the rope from popping off of the device. For the common right handed rappeller the rope runs in through the bottom, around the two spools in an S-shaped pattern and out the top. The rope also travels through a brake carabiner attached to the rappeller's harness. To control the speed of descent the rappeller simply lifts or lowers the rope to increase or decrease its bend through the carabiner. When using a bobbin it is important to use a twelve millimeter locking carabiner to attach your bobbin to your harness. The thickness of this carabiner helps avoid the possibility of unclipping the top metal plate by running the carabiner against the safety gate. Thinner carabiners have room to rattle around in the attachment opening, which can permit them to open the bobbin's safety gate, or even their own gate. A fat, thick carabiner doesn't have this "rattle room".



Another common rappelling device is the rack. Although there are different shapes of racks they all work on the same idea. A rack is made of a U-shaped metal frame with steel or aluminum bars running across. The rope is threaded through this series of bars. To vary the speed on a rack the rappeller can vary the number of bars the rope runs through and slide the bars up and down on the rack. By sliding the bars together more friction is created making the rappeller move slower, when the bars are moved apart friction is removed and the rappeller moves faster. Some racks have a hyper -bar as the first bar which is an extra long bar with the excess hanging off to the side and an upward facing pin toward the outer end. The hyper-bar is used to create more friction and lock off the rack. When using a rack the rappeller should never descend on fewer than four bars. It is also important to rig your rack correctly so that the rope is holding the bars closed opposed to pushing them open which detaches the rack from the rope which can end in fatality. Another problem with the rack is that feeding rope through the rack can cause bars to fall off and a sudden loss of friction occurs, this can be avoided by holding the rack with your non-braking hand.

Finally, there is the micro-rack which is a smaller version of the rack. Although Scott McCrea says "The micro-rack is unique among racks in that very little variation in friction is available". However, you can vary the friction by using the hyper-bar and with a long micro-rack the bars can be moved; this is not the case with a regular micro-rack. A micro-rack works with the same concept as a regular rack in that the rope weaves through a series of bars crossing a frame. Since the micro-rack only contains four bars no bars can be removed, and most micro-racks have a hyper-bar as the first bar so there is an option to add more friction. The micro-rack is especially useful because it is compact which makes it somewhat easier to maneuver over a lip, it is easily locked off, can be used for most drops and can be used with most systems.

Bobbins, racks, and micro-racks are all commonly used rappelling devices around the world. They all have their own way of using friction to control the speed of a rappel, therefore they all have specific types of drops they are good for.

A Trainee's Guide On How To Not Die While Repelling

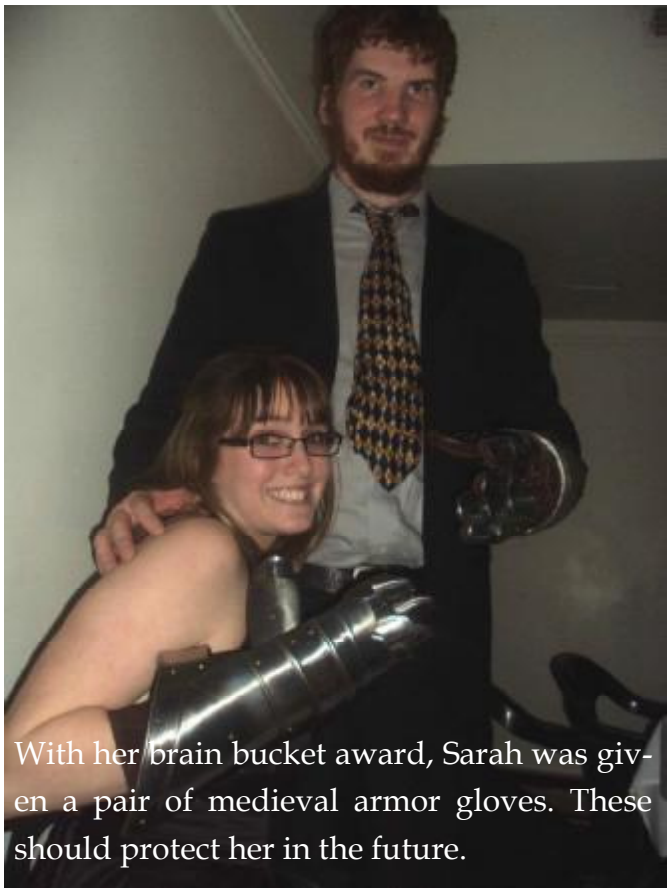
By Sarah Crowder

As many of you already know, I got my ass kicked by an open air pit in Mexico called Huahuas. Upon arriving back to Blacksburg, a discussion ensued about how to prevent such accidents in the future. However, we never really mentioned the basics so that new trainees would understand what on Earth actually happened, and we failed altogether to mention the things that went right. In order to combat these holes in our conversation, I took it upon myself to write an article aimed at new trainees giving repelling tips members might forget to mention:

1. Always use four or more bars!! We'll start by going over the mistake that actually caused me to fall down the pit. If you have only three bars in contact with the rope when using a rack, there simply isn't enough friction to keep you in control. You will go into what some like to call a death repel, which is something I would not recommend experiencing. In my case, I already knew this critical piece of information. I was on four bars going over the lip but due to the rope angle, I dropped a bar by accident. If you want a better explanation of how this happened, please feel free to ask me about it; it's much easier for me to show you than to tell you.

2. Be patient at the lip. When you're standing at the edge of a 700 foot drop (or really any drop) and you're having trouble moving, it's easy to psyche yourself out. Be patient! If I had remained on five bars instead of four and just accepted the fact that getting over the lip was going to take forever, my accident never would have happened. Stay calm, keep a clear head, and have confidence.

3. Always have a Deighan at the end of your rope. I know we had a very long-winded debate about the importance of bottom belays over the dreaded listserv, but as this article is primarily aimed towards trainees, I think we will all be in agreement that a bottom belay is a good idea. Once you're completely out of control, it is the job of the person belaying you to try to bring you to a stop. In my case, John Deighan put as much tension on the rope as possible to try to slow me down. I dropped the full 700 feet and didn't even break my glasses, so obviously he did a pretty good job. And this is just as important in the caves in Virginia; a 200 foot drop will kill you just as well as a deeper pit will. I've also heard of different techniques being used to stop the repeller, such as running uphill to change the rope angle. It's a good idea to ask the members on your vertical trips to instruct you on the best way to belay someone at each individual pit so you are more prepared to belay in the future. Each cave is different! Also, to those of you who refuse bottom belays, consider this; your friends will feel really shitty if they have to stand there and watch you die when they could be doing something about it.



With her brain bucket award, Sarah was given a pair of medieval armor gloves. These should protect her in the future.

4. **Wear good gloves and sturdy clothes.** This is one aspect of my accident we never really discussed that went very right. Of course I was wearing a pair of gloves when Alex Booker did my safety check, but he recommended I replace my synthetic gloves with a pair of Deighan's leather gloves as an extra precaution. I changed gloves, and the leather and insolation ended up saving me from losing all of the fingers on my left hand and possibly from doing more damage to the rest of my body once my fingers were gone and unable to provide extra friction. I was also wearing a sturdy pair of jeans, protecting my legs from serious rope burns as I used them to grasp the rope for friction. I have a nasty scar on my left thigh as it was, so I am very thankful I had those jeans on.

5. Check your ascending gear for damage before you climb out after a death repel. This is another obvious one, but it saved me from some major inconvenience on the climb back out, so I have to mention it. When I was getting on rope to climb out, I noticed some minor fraying on the bungee on the rope walker I was using, probably a result of rope burn. Everything else looked ok, but Alex traded rope walkers with me so I wouldn't have to deal with anything else going wrong. As it turned out, he had to tie an alpine butterfly or two while on rope to unweight the damaged bits of the bungee. It was an easy fix, but tying knots with one hand is a bitch, so I was glad we switched.

6. Gain experience and train with as many people as you can. As we heard many times in the discussions after the incident, experience is the best way to prevent accidents. Go on as many vertical trips as you can before you move on to big pits, and bug as many members as you can to take you. None of the cavers on the Mexico trip knew about the possibility of dropping the fourth bar at the lip, but the knowledge was in the club. It is important to cave with a variety of members so you can take advantage of their experience and learn from their mistakes rather than making the mistakes yourself.

Experience and the proper precautions can usually keep you from having to go through an out of control repel. However, once you are in one, there are ways to stop it from killing you. As I mentioned above, a bottom belay is always a good idea. There are also techniques such as leg wraps you can use to slow yourself down, and I recommend having a member demonstrate these techniques to you at a vertical session. If you have any questions or would like a more complete account of what happened in Mexico, please come talk to me. Happy caving!

John Deighan **Alex Booker** **Sara Crowder** **Beth Mutchler** **Robert Harris**

CAVES:

Rio Choy

Naciamento

Huahuas

Notable events:

Huichihuayan has a new tranny for New Year's

Sarah used her hand as a fourth bar

PICNIC

Thanks to a deadly concoction of Everclear and something blue, Picnic was enjoyed by all, some maybe a little too much.

Three trips through Newberry Banes caused a little confusion with notes left at every rope to indicate who had and who hadn't already passed through. Towards the late evening concern arose since only one of the three trips had returned before dark. Many stopped drinking and began to gear up. Luckily the trips returned before the rescue became serious. A rainy weekend caused the cave to be much wetter than usual, making it difficult to climb out of the Newberry's side. The returning cavers were greeted with food, beer, and a warm fire.

THE BEATLES

An open Question on Picnic

By Alex Booker (and many who are anonymous)

This year, as in years past, I sent out a survey on the list-serv asking about picnic food and beer. I also included an open comments section in this survey, which is as follows in an unedited format:

"Comments? Questions? Insults? Gripes? Derp? (Note: may appear later in print)

Complete list of all responses given to this question:

- keep the keg beer cheap and plentiful. we can bring the really good stuff catering to our discerning and spoiled tastebuds in our coolers along with wine spritzers, fine cheeses and olives.

- Note that European 50 liter kegs short you almost 3 gallons of beer compared to a standard 15.5 gallon U.S. keg. This makes them even more expensive.

Pilsner style lager (typical American-Mexican beer)all tastes pretty much alike, so buy it by price.

- I recall picking up a roasted pig once at Custom Meats in Blacksburg (Merrimack Rd). We put it in a stokes litter in the back of a pickup for transport to picnic.

- I am EXTREMELY annoyed at the lack of DICKS on this survey... FIX IT.

- Can we get root bear, tea, lemonade, or something as well.

- Really - those of us who like good beer will bring our own anyways....

- The blue drink did not have enough everclear.

- Wait a minute... this isn't porn! Why is there no porn on this? You should have porn on this. I can't masturbate to this at all!... Oh wait nvm

- More grain! I want to puke the rainbow.

- Responding for two people

- Thanks for the survey! Great job!

- Pig, Pig, Pig, Pig, Pig, Pig, Pig, Pig - Bring plenty of ice. Use kegs that have the same tapper. The drinking lantern is broke and i'm in AUZ so i may not get it fixed.

- thanks man

- Please place 'maybe' options on the above menus. Aside from that, having run Picnic in the past, too many options are VERY unhelpful. Get one or two decent kegs. Give the tap to said kegs to the cyclists on Saturday. Everyone else will, I assure you, drink WHATEVER is out there, regardless of 'quality'."

Ah and there you have it, ending with a little armchair love for the party planner.

Directions to Picnic

We here at Elvisgrotto(tm) are constantly looking for ways to serve the caving community. Therefore we are here to provide you with directions to picnic.

Picnic is pretty easy. You show up Friday night either by bicycle or car. It's usually a good idea to carry a few quarts of water for any bikers you may pass on the drive out. An early arrival also ensures a relatively easy drive to the top of the hill before it gets slicked up by FWD cars and crappy tires. It's also better than being the brunt of everyone's' jokes.

Once you arrive, it's usually a good idea to set your tent up right away. Especially before it starts to rain... and believe me, whenever that many cavers get together, it's going to rain. Anyway, look out for cow pies... they may be warm and soft initially, but over the course of the weekend the downsides may outweigh the upsides.

If you're of age, you probably want to bring some beers for the start of picnic. If the picnic chairman has their shit together, you won't find the taps... although if you have your shit together you own your own taps.

Beered up, with your camp set up. It's time to enjoy the wonders of Picnic. You can sit around the fire, cut and collect firewood, pull rosebushes, ride around with Spot, go look at caves, go caving, roll kegs down the hill, laugh at latecomers coming up the hill, get rained on, sit around, walk to the burnt house springs.

At night you can sit with everyone around the campfire and sing or play songs with Kirk, hit on women, get wasted, puke.

Speaking of puke... there are good places and bad places to puke. Make sure you stop by the Elvisgrotto(tm) information booth and we'll be happy to give you a tour.

Maybe at some point you'll want to sleep. Sleeping arrangements range from the tent you set up and can't find, to cardboard boxes near the fire. If it's raining you want to be just close enough that the fire dries you out as fast as the water gets you wet.

Don't let Reggie near your furniture.

If someone yells "Fire in the hole", look away.

Bring your warm clothes _and_ sunscreen.

Plan to stay late Sunday.

We hope you have a great time. Feel free to stop by if you have any questions.

Dr. Mark Eisenbies

Elvisgrotto.(tm) senior technical staff.

Picnic over the years (pictures from SIVTAC gallery)

1981

People gather around a fire with drinks in hand.

2004

People still gather around a fire with drinks...

2008

I'm sensing a pattern here.

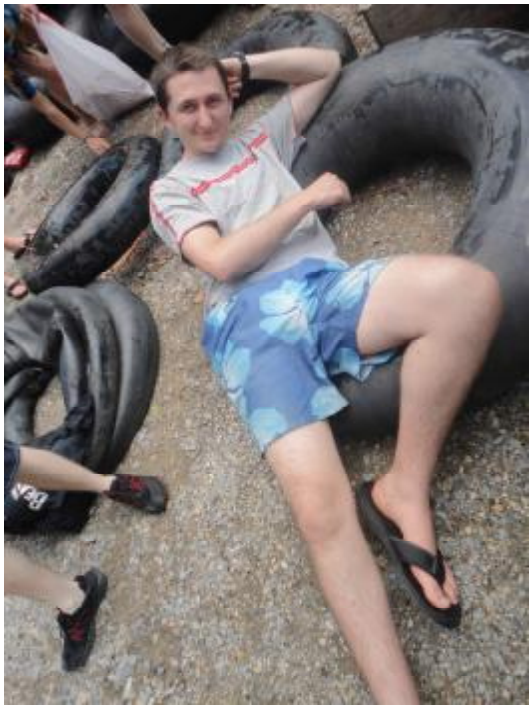
Float Trip
By Courtney Trost

You sway back and forth uneasily on the raft, unsure if it's a set of rapids or if that "Diet Coke" has finally hit you. Looking around you see an assortment of drinking containers and men wearing far too little clothing. Yep, you guessed it, this is float trip.

Summer 2011 was the first float trip I had the pleasure to be a part of, and I was far from disappointed by the pure madness of a floating party. Thinking back on it, I have some images engraved in my memory, many of which I'd rather forget.

"tubes + twine + plywood + cavers = a maritime shit show"

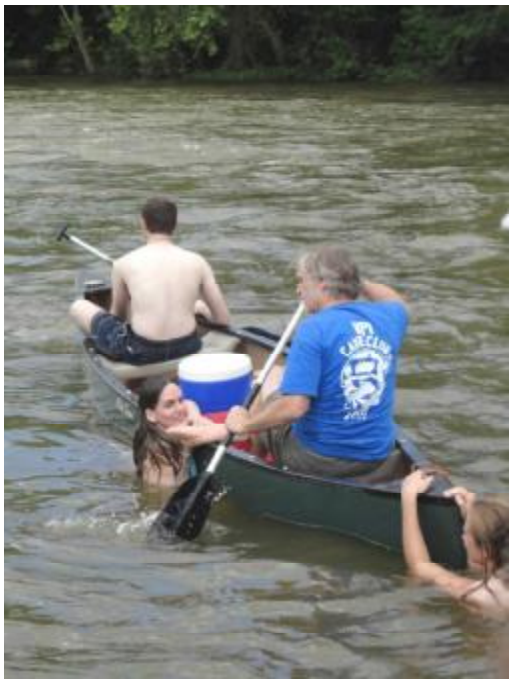
-John Mulheren



An assortment of inner tubes, plywood, and bailing twine is put together and assumed to be strong enough to hold a large party. Without any question as to the safety or sanity of it, I join the other crazies on the raft and sing us off to the sea (or river if you want to be technical). In an attempt to be "discreet" about our suspicious activity, we pour drinks into coke bottles, solo cups, and, for the well prepared, Big Gulp cups. Despite our best efforts, I think it's pretty obvious what we're doing.

About halfway through the trip Deighan was nice enough to lend out his canoe with the promise of a romantic canoe ride, which I never got. Seeing the raft from a little distance only affirmed my idea of how insane we must look. One of my greatest memories is seeing the raft float under a low tree while everyone screamed "Duck!" and scattered to one side of the raft. It was also great to see how our party extended past the raft as a few canoes and kayaks follow along and a couple of determined swimmers kept up behind.

Since the river was so fast this trip, we actually had to tie up on the side just to get our expected party time in. After being parked for half an hour or so we proceeded our way to our drop off spot, hoping that someone could control the raft enough for us not to miss it. Somehow we made it safely back to land. Those of us still feeling motivated tore the raft apart while others sat on tubes to deflate them faster.



A caravan of a few cars took more people than is recommended or legal back to Blacksburg to unload the remains of the raft and drop off those who wanted to continue the party at the Bat Ranch. I will always remember float trip by the absolute insanity of a floating party, and by the insane sunburn I took home as a reward.

TAG

The 34th annual TAG fall cave in held in Lookout Mountain, Georgia had a huge turn out this year. Many VPI cavers dropped Valhalla while others repelled one of the cliffs in Alabama with an amazing view. The Friday night party started off with the lighting of a wooden boat and shortly after turned into a karaoke fest with appearances from Tommy, Kirk, and John Bowling. Saturday night started with the fire lit by a flaming arrow and progressed from there. Personally I do not remember a whole lot from that night but I was told it was a great time. Sorry to Phil and Sam for taking their bed, aka their car since someone forgot the tent poles. I guess it seemed like the best place to pass out at the time.

Thanks to Alex Booker for planning and to the JMU crowd for supplying the mud.

Halloween

BANQUET

Trainee of the Year:

Joe Calderone

Brain Bucket:

Sarah Crowder

Flameout:

Dan “Joker” Crowder

Caving Couple of the Year:

Phillip Schuchardt and

Sara Fleetwood

The Drinking Techniques

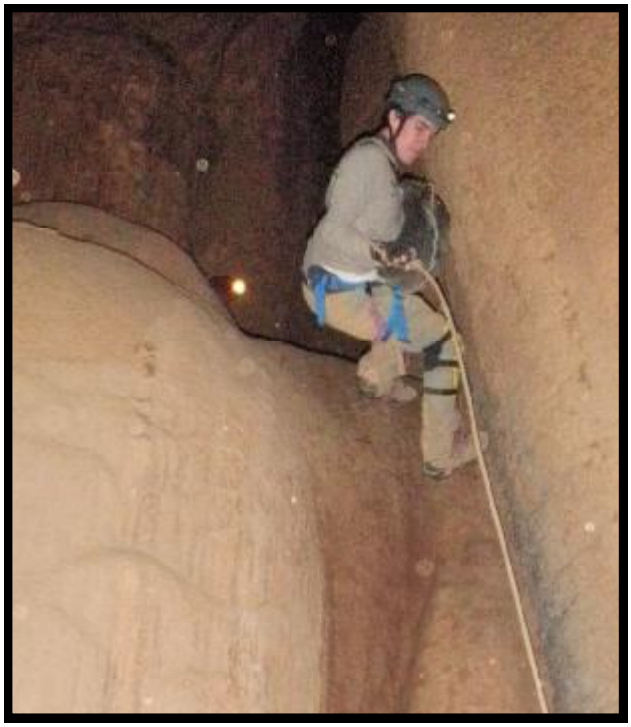
Committee Award:

Alex Booker and

Dan "Joker" Crowder

This year Banquet was held at the University Club, where we feasted on pork barbeque. It seemed to be a huge success with two kegs finished and all of the food devoured. Kudos to Joker and Zeena for organizing and to Sam Lambert and Dave C for giving out awards.

Filthy Young Women



NASA

Trip Report Filthy Young Women 2012: Sparks Cave

By Matthew Skowronski

On Monday, Wil Orndorff assigned myself, Joker, Sam, and John to Sparks cave, which was an un-connectable stream cave that goes through a hill but sumps out at some point, to survey. When we walked into the southern entrance around eleven, we realized immediately that it was going to be a grim, wet, stream crawl, mess. So, we did the first shot from a rock to the beginning of the low ceiling. John forged ahead in about a foot and a half of water and about that much air space. Sam read the instrument data to me for the second shot as they both squatted in water. Then we all went and in about twenty feet it opened up again into a beach room where we could all stand up. We took a few shots and I broke out my candle so we could all warm up a little. Then we did another, even grimmer stream shot and crawled through again. Again, it opened into a beachy room where lo, the way ahead was an even grimmer stream crawl that I could not even see the other side. Some garbage and a basketball had accumulated in the right side of the crack. We were really cold and we decided it was time to head home.

After showers, cave gear through the dryer, some coffee, and a kitchen dance party, we were ready to try the other entrance. Southern Joker got us landowner permission, and we headed in.

The passage was big enough to drive a car in. We took a bunch of fifty foot shots standing in the, now beautiful, ankle-deep stream. The massive passage just kept going and going, and we decided we had to know where this borehole went. So down the passage we charged and the farther we went, the louder the sound of gushing water got. We came to some pretty serious, deep looking rapids and climbed over them on flowstone, car tires, and tree trunks. Then we scrambled over breakdown as the water seethed beneath us. As we continued, the noise of the water receded. After avoiding the water for so long we came to a passage where murky water preceded before us into the dark in total silence. The walls rose about fifteen feet around us offering no assistance in avoiding our wet fate. Our feet disappeared into the murky water. The ground inched deeper as we went and finally, just when it had

gushed into my Wellies, it leveled out. We walked in the holy silence of the cave until we came to a small beach where the hill finally swallowed the stream. We bent over and shined our lights into twenty foot wide horizontal crack. On the far left there was a little garbage and a basketball. The basketball. We had connected Sparks! We jumped up and down, yelled, and hugged each other. Then we took another look. Could we push through that? Joker decided he would give it a try. His whole body sunk into the water and I followed him with my light until I heard the sloshing as he stood up on the other side. He yelled back, “You have to take off your helmet.” So I took off my helmet and slid down into the cold water. I crawled with everything but four inches of my horizontally tilted head under water, pushing my helmet ahead of me. The airspace got smaller and I started to feel panicky and then I was through. Sam and John came up behind me. We plowed through the next two crawls which now seemed easy and we were out into the night, up the road, and back to the car.

Epilogue

Later in the week we finished mapping the main passage and about half the side passages. Rebecca Stewart also ended up doing the plunge for the full Sparks experience.

EASTER BEER

Dexter started out his Easter Beer with no less than 4 PBRs before 1pm. This dog has the right idea.

John pulls the party lever.

Wrapping beers to be hidden.

Lauren: "It's just umm up there a little ways."

Ellen: "You mean WAY up there?!"

Ellen climbs….

...and climbs….

SUCCESS!!!

(These pictures do a poor job of showing how high up she was but, trust me, it was really far.)

The Twelve Hours of Easter Beer
By Nick "Peppy" Socky

On the first hour of Easter Beer the cave club brought to me!
A Keg in a bat ranch tree

On the second hour of Easter Beer the cave club brought to me!
Two jello shots
And a Keg in a bat-ranch tree

On the third hour of Easter Beer the cave club brought to me!
Three carbide lamps
Two jello shots, And a Keg in a bat-ranch tree

On the fourth hour of Easter Beer the cave club brought to me!
Four creek runs
Three carbide lamps, Two jello shots, And a Keg in a bat-ranch tree

On the fifth hour of Easter Beer the cave club brought to me!
Five PBR's!!!!!
Four creek runs, Three carbide lamps, Two jello shots, And a Keg in a bat-ranch tree

On the sixth hour of Easter Beer the cave club brought to me!
Six cavers caving
Five PBR's!!!!, Four creek runs, Three carbide lamps, Two jello shots, And a Keg in a bat-ranch tree

On the seventh hour of Easter Beer the cave club brought to me!
Seven people tubing
Six cavers caving, Five PBR's!!!!, Four creek runs, Three carbide lamps, Two jello shots, And a Keg in a bat-ranch tree

On the eighth hour of Easter Beer the cave club brought to me!
Eight more logs a burning
Seven people tubing, Six cavers caving, Five PBR's!!!!, Four creek runs, Three carbide lamps, Two jello shots, And a Keg in a bat-ranch tree

On the ninth hour of Easter Beer the cave club brought to me!
Nine cavers dancing
Eight more logs a burning, Seven people tubing, Six cavers caving, Five PBR's!!!!, Four creek runs, Three carbide lamps, Two jello shots, And a Keg in a bat-ranch tree

On the tenth hour of Easter Beer the cave club brought to me!
Ten girls hot-tubbing
Nine cavers dancing, Eight more logs a burning, Seven people tubing, Six cavers caving, Five PBR's!!!!, Four creek runs, Three carbide lamps, Two jello shots, And a Keg in a bat-ranch tree

On the eleventh hour of Easter Beer the cave club brought to me!
Eleven still beer hunting
Ten girls hot-tubbing, Nine cavers dancing, Eight more logs a burning, Seven people tubing, Six cavers caving, Five PBR's!!!!, Four creek runs, Three carbide lamps, Two jello shots, And a Keg in a bat-ranch tree

On the twelfth hour of Easter Beer the cave club brought to me!
Twelve drunks a singing
Eleven still beer hunting, Ten girls hot-tubbing, Nine cavers dancing, Eight more logs a burning, Seven people tubing, Six cavers caving, Five PBR's!!!!, Four creek runs, Three carbide lamps, Two jello shots, And a Keg in a bat-ranch tree

Peppy thinks it's a good idea to hide beer on the roof. I have a feeling that beer will be there for a very long time.

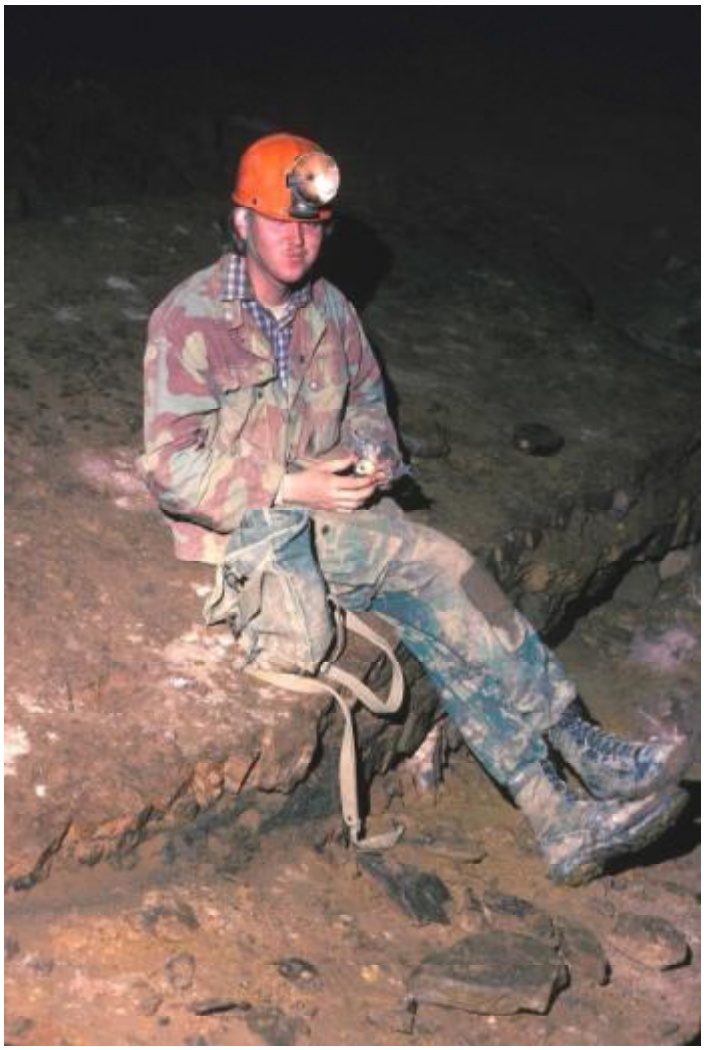
When Was the First Easter Beer Hunt?
By SIVTAC (Some Independent Affiliated Virginia Tech Cavers)
Submitted by Jim Washington

At 01:48 PM 4/6/2012 -0400, Jim Washington wrote:

Does anyone know when the first Easter Beer Hunt happened? I know it predated the Bat Ranch at VPI by several years. I recall going to one or two on Main St. and/or maybe at Glen's on Progress St. before the Bat Ranch existed as such.

Did the idea originate at VPI Cave Club?

have word that there will be an Easter Beer Hunt in Austin TX this weekend, too!



Jim Washington 1982

Photo from Chip Clark, SIVTAC gallery

Cheryl Jones
I recall the first one was at Janet Queisser's log cabin on the river in Roanoke. Must have been about 1973 or 74. She (and others?) hid those little (6oz?) clear bottles of beer with the wide mouths around her yard, I think wrapped in Al foil. Can't remember what they were called, but I bet it was Miller inside. The rules were that you had to drink the beer when you found it before going on to find the next.

Seems some plastic eggs were also hidden with a ticket inside for a prize.

Don't remember much else besides roaming around finding beer and drinking it, sometimes in a group, sitting on the grass. So it must have been a good party.

Cheryl Jones
Pony bottles!

Rich Geisler
At some point I remember we started using a marker to write the year on the lids. Not every Easter beer is found the year it's hidden.....

Jim Bearden
Cheryl is right the 1st Easter Beer hunt was indeed at JQ's in Roanoke.

As far as when it was not '73 or '74. It occurred when Miller was running their campaign to have Miller drank and the club participated. If I remember the rules correctly we got points for Pony bottles or Miller bottles in general. Separate points were given for aluminum cans. We were so far out in the lead we started selling the cans instead of just getting points.... Yes we over did things even back then.... I am guessing that the 1st Hunt was '76 or '77 or even as late as '78 - that year 6 of us lived in Christiansburg so we were close to JQ's place.

A bunch of us were sitting around drinking on a sunny afternoon watching the river and someone realized it was Easter Sunday and one thing led to another. One additional "rule" was that the women hid the beers for the guys to find and drink. It worked really well to wrap the bottles in aluminum foil - the foil helped keep the beer colder.

I remember that we actually held an Easter Beer hunt the day after Hugh and Karen Beard's wedding. Nothing was sacred....we paid people's kids to go find beers for us to drink...

Hugh Beard
Some of the more enterprising children charged double for a beer guaranteed to be unshaken. An great example of the concept of "added value".

Ed Loud
I believe Cheryl is correct about Janet's cabin. The reason to do Miller pony bottles was the Miller contest we did for a few years back then making money for the club. You could turn in Miller bottles and aluminum cans for points.

There were also Easter beer hunts done at the Picnic site one year it hit on Picnic weekend. One was at a house of Redders... one or 2 were at the house in C'burg Jocko and the group rented.

The tradition obviously continued long after the collecting of bottles for the contest ended (I think it only went on 3 or 4 years at most). Many of the early bottles were decorated in foil, some with rabbit ears :) In later years we added a plastic egg hunt for children coinciding with the Easter beer hunt.

We may have read or heard of an Easter Beer hunt somewhere but as far as I know it was mainly our idea to do it.

Jean Cobb
Yep, that's what I remember too. The first Easter Beer Hunt was at J.Q.'s Cold Comfort Farm along the Roanoke River at Dixie Caverns. She and I, and others?, hid Miller pony bottles and plastic Easter eggs. The paper scraps inside each egg were probably from Chinese fortune cookies. Everyone had a great time, we might have eaten grilled chicken, and no telling how or when we got back to Blacksburg.

Ed Loud OTR 1977

Photo from Chip Clark, SIVTAC gallery

Nancy Knewstep
I remember planning the first Easter Beer hunt with Robyn Koerschner. We decided we wanted to do something Easter-like and coloring eggs became decorating beers. The rules were modified once the hunt was started at Janet's. Somehow it didn't occur to the women who planned it, that the guys would collect the beers before they drank any. (What were we thinking??) The rule to return to base to drink the beer before getting another was made on the spot and, of course, ensured that the winner was also going to be very drunk. Wasn't this planned at the Saturday night poker party at Loud's?

Bill (String) Stringfellow
While I was not at the first EBH I attended a couple others. The ladies were nice enough to hide a few cokes for me as I did not drink beer. :)

Jim Bearden
This certainly implies that any male who can remember an Easter Beer Hunt wasn't there or must have been blind.

Carol Zokaites
1974, I was there. Miller pony bottles

Lynn Richardson
The first Easter beer hunt was indeed at JQ's, probably in '75 or '76 since I lived in Roanoke the time. Perkins was in particularly fine form after sampling the goods. We went to the Bonanza/ Ponderosa steak house late Sunday afternoon after the party. There was a sign out front that said they were giving away free bibles. Unfortunately, when we were going through the line we found out that they were out of baked potatoes. Perkins asked in his outside voice if they thought he was a f**king termite, that he couldn't eat a f**king bible. We hustled him out of the restaurant before anyone in their Easter Sunday finest decided we shouldn't be there.

Ed Loud
Well there is the answer. The Easter Beer Hunt was probably an original idea by the ladies of the VPI Cave Club. I knew the year had to be after I returned to VPI and 1974 was the first Spring at C-3 so makes sense. It was also probably the first year of the Miller Contest (tho it went by quarters). In any event it predates the bat ranch by 15-20 years? The year we had it at Picnic was in the late 80s probably by the ages of the kids there.

I also remembered Perkin's quote from Lynn Richardson but had forgotten that it was after the beer hunt. The f**king termite story was re-told for many years.

Carol Zo way 1982
Photo from Chip Clark,
SIVTAC gallery

Skip Whitehurst
The first Easter Beer Hunt was before I got there in Fall '74, so 1974 would fit.

The first Miller contest started after I got there. It was probably Fall of 1975. I still remember going to the kickoff meeting where one of the reps said "VA liquor laws are really weird. Everywhere else we provide free beer at these, but in VA you can't have free beer. You can sell it for 10 cents a glass, though, and there's no law against giving away dimes." And "There are two categories in the contest: fraternities, and everyone else. Otherwise, since the frats will dominate, no one else would have a chance." Little did they know...

Kirk and Ray, probably discussing the history of Easter Beer.

Ray shows us what Easter Beer is all about.

WORK WEEKEND

Throwing rocks at a larger pile of rocks. We are so productive.

Who let Naomi drive??

Lunch time! The work to eating ratio must be prefect.

John and Ethan balance rocks on their heads while staring at each other intently.

Cave Club presents: Real Men of Genius.

By Ethan Bramble

(Real Men of Geniuuuuus!)
Today we salute you, Mr. Guy's Night Organizer.
(Mr. Guy's Night Organiiizer!)
While other partyers are worried about the guy/girl ratio, your only concern is the coke to rum ratio.
(Needs a little more rum now!)
Cigars, booze, and such a high concentration of men that Hulk Hogan would die of testosterone poisoning...you've got it all.
(Caaan you feel the bromance?)
At the end of it all, you know this is night you'll never forget...or remember.
(WHAAAT THE HELL HAPPENED?)
So crack open an ice cold Bud Light, O' Sultan of the Sausage Fest, because you're putting the 'semen' back in 'amusement.'
(Mr. Guy's Night Organiiiiiizerrr!)

Ethan Bramble–

defining bromance since 1989

The Goat Song
By John Mulheren and Brian Burke

Me and my baby got a love so pure, I ain't never gonna ask for more
When I'm 'round her I ain't got nuthin to fear, she likes it when I stroke her beard
Well my baby she does all the chores, but she's too short to open doors
She knows how to treat me right, except for when she tries to bite

Cuz she's a goat, she's a goat and a love her dear
But I gotta get her drunk before she lets me near
I put a funnel in her mouth and pour the whiskey down
She looks real pretty when I put her in her gown

Well she's a goat, she's a goat and I ride her like a bike
When I mount her I know what heaven's like
I make her say baaa and I make her squeal
Our goat-human love is the real deal

I made her my goaty bride, when the preacher saw us walkin' he 'bout up and died
He said our love was an abomination, but he ain't ever seen our copulation
My baby had a kid and it's easy to see, looks kinda like her, and looks kinda like me
Well I'll never forget the first thing he said, he said "I wish, I wish, I wish I was dead!"

Well she's a goat, she's a goat and a love her dear
But I gotta get her drun before she lets me near
I put a funnel in her mouth and pour the whiskey down
She looks real pretty when I put her in her gown

Well she's a goat, she's a goat and I ride her like a bike
When I mount her I know what heaven's like
I make her say baaa and I make her squeal
Our goat-human love is the real deal

Interview with the President:

By Courtney Trost

Q: What do you like most about caving?

A: Unfortunately it is no longer socially acceptable for me to play in McDonalds play houses. Caving is the next best thing.

Q: What is your best memory from this year?

A: Leading trainees through a partially flooded Smokehole.

Q: What is your favorite Cave Club event?

A: Easter Beer. I love wrapping up Kool Aid bottles and placing them so the kids go ape shit on sugar highs.

Q: What do you like most about being president?

A: When people hum the president song as I walk by.

Q: If you lived in a cave which one would it be and why?

A: Links is the perfect temperature. Plus it's within running distance of the hot tub.

Q: What is your drink of choice?

A: Ron Burgundy. Or a Steely.

Q: What are you planning on doing next year?

A: Failing out of grad school so I can lead more boy scouts on terrifying trips.

Q: What is your ideal date?

A: Take a girl to a cave. Bring some candles. Maybe some chocolate strawberries. Maybe some sexy music. And then survey lots of virgin passage!

Q: Describe your ideal woman

A: Beautiful, blonde, smart, sexy, sitting right next to me.

Lady

By John Mulheren and Courtney Trost

Lady, the Bat Ranch dog,
Known as the attention hog,
Lacking in wit,
She rolls in her shit,
But I'll pet her after enough grog.

From the hilltops I want to shout,
She's a faithful pup, no doubt,
By the entrance she lay,
All through the day,
Till all of the cavers come out.

Her dingleberries hang from the rear,
Even after a bath I don't want to go near,
I've heard locals say,
From ten miles away,
Her stench killed a whole herd of deer.

Friendly and loving you'll always be,
The doggy face we're so happy to see,
You reek of poo,
But we still love you.
You're the only Lady for me.

Florida Caverns

By Courtney Trost

One of the tiny bats hidden in a crevice

Near Tallahassee, Florida Caverns is the only commercial cave in Florida. As part of our winter break road trip, a group of us toured the cave. At a comfortable 65 degrees, a metal door to the cave keeps the heat in and the intruders out. The cave was mostly dug out by the Civilian Conservation Corps during the Great Depression as part of Roosevelt's New Deal to provide men with jobs. Originally the cave was barely tall enough for the men to crawl through, but today tours comfortably walk around the cavern. With only guided tours allowed inside, the cave is in pristine condition.

I was in awe at the incredible formations. The cave was very dry with almost no mud. It almost didn't seem real, like something created for a movie set. Stalagmites and tites remained perfectly in tact; no puppies died in the mapping of this small passage. In one area the ceiling was covered in soda straws and they lit it up with a rainbow of lights. Another difference between this cavern and the Virginia caves I have explored was the presence of bats. Florida has not been hit by white nose, so we were able to see several bats which were much smaller than those that I have seen here.

Our tour guide permitted us to touch only one column in the cave known as the "touching post" because it was at the beginning of a small incline where an elderly person probably needed to grab onto it for support. The contrast between this column and those around it was incredible. This oily black "touching post" did not look as though it belonged in the cave. I am now much more careful when I see formations in other caves, knowing that human contact alone can kill their beauty.

SIGNOUT QUOTES

9/4/11	Ballards	Sam Vraa, Jonathan Davis, Samantha Huff, Joe Calderone, Nick Socky, Dan Crowder, Rebecca Stewart, Naomi Orndorff, Wil Orndorff, Matt Skowronski	"Don't climb with your penis.. Or do." -Dan Crowder
10/29/11	Links	Matt Switick, David Bourdon, Shelly Pruitt, Joe Calderone, Meg Switick, Nickie Doster, Cara McLayghlyh	"Matt, you missed it. I got to straddle David."
9/10/11	Links	Courtney Trost, Beth Mutchler, Nick Socky, Rebecca Stewart, +14 new people	"I got raped in the nasty! And the cave wanted to keep me!" -Beth
9/11/11	James	Joe Zo, Carol Zo, Tommy Duffy Hillary Shmitthenner, Dan Crowder, Nick Socky	"Hey look a condom! (then Joe picked it up)"
9/14/11	Tawneys	Dan Crowder, Sarah Crowder, Alex Booker, Hope Wentzel	"Look at the date you dick." KEG
11/20/11	Smokehole	Matthew Burnett, Christin Kastl, Ania Kastl	"So this means you won't get naked with me?"
10/2/11	Links	Dan Crowder, David Owens, David Suvratt	"I found another vibrator!!!"
10/11/11	Beer Can Chasm	Philip Schuchardt, Sara Fleetwood, John Mulheren, Courtney Trost, Joe Calderone	"Wet, tight, and virgin… and horrible"
10/16/11	Pighole	John Deighan, Brian McCarter, Deborah Barnes, Alex Booker, Sarah Crowder, Rebecca Stewart	"Joey Fagan: I need to get my son laid– Doesn't matter what time or gender."
12/3/11	Pighole	Courtney Trost, John Mulheren, Eric Combs, Matt Skowronski, John George, Austin Hayes, Beth Mutchler, Rob Harris	"That's a huge bat…. Oh wait that's two… Oh they're fucking."

1/22/12	Murderhole	Courtney Trost, Wil Orndorff, Naomi Orndorff, Steve Wells, Andrew Fagan	Brrrr.. Lost in the fog till the skunk got us… coyote zombies"
1/29/12	Smokehole	John Mulheren, Naomi Orndorff, +11 Roanoke people	"My butt has never had this much action before"
2/4/12	James	Alex Booker, Brennan Dolson, Steph Wilson, Liz Saccoccia, Alexa McDorman, Rasile Wingfield, Brooks Riddlepuger, Kyle Mills	"It's not bonding unless you touch my butt"

QUOTABLE QUOTES

BMcCarter: “Ray, I love you, but I'm gonna rape you silly.”

JDeighan: “Sara, where’s the other glove?”

PFansler: “I’m cuddling in a puke blanket”
EBramble: “I’d rather be in an anal sex blanket”
PFansler: “Too late”

JGoldhammer: “I need to burp … BAAAARF!”

PFansler: “Get over yourself asshole.”
JMulheren: “Get over your asshole self.”

EBramble: “I would rather have a blowjob from my sister Laura.”

EBramble: “When it gets wet it just smells even worse.”
JMulheren: “We’re averaging a stain a minute.”

JMulheren: “There’s grated shit in the tub.”

JMulheren: “Think of it as your worst enemy’s penis. You’re massaging it when you should be breaking it!”

JGoldhammer: “How many rocks are in this cave?”

EBramble: “Mobile Alabama, the city that always moves.”

JGoldhammer: “What if we’re at the wrong hotel? “

JMulheren: “Naomi is robo tripping.”

KStoll: “I dazed out while texting…. And then I forgot what Easter was.”

CTrost: “I think we should go on an adventure.”
KStoll: “Dude, as long as I’m in the middle.”

CTrost: “Stop hugging my chicken.”
KStoll: “But it’s rusty!”

KStoll: “It’s like I’m on the moon.. Nope Mars nevermind.”

DBarnes: “I will…. do Katrina.”

JBowling: “ So you were 2 horny.”

CTrost: “Ready to rappel.”
SFleetwood: “Ok, rappelling.”
CTrost: “What??”

JMulheren, EBramble, JGoldhammer, KGrim, MSkowronski: “Reet, reet, reet.”
PFansler: “Come along now children.”

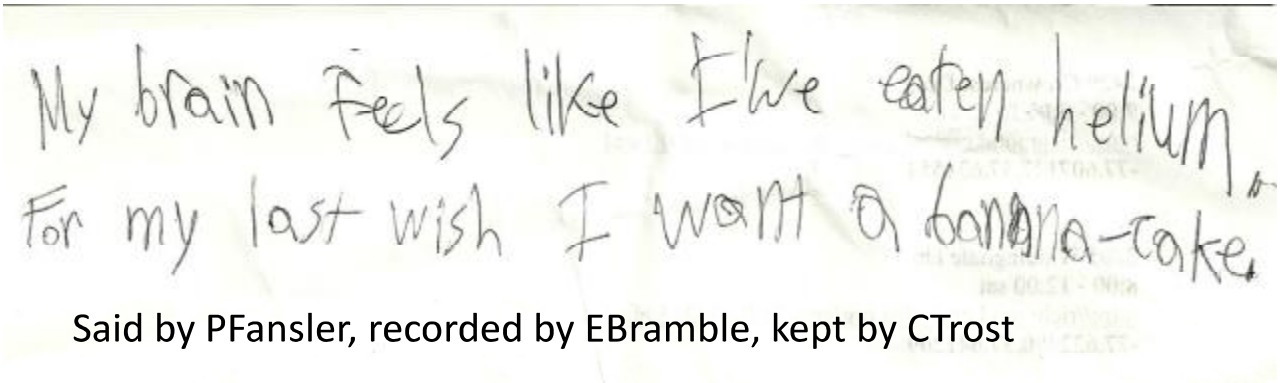
JMulheren: “Wasspssssss”

ABooker: ”The story of Easter Beer: Once upon a time Jesus laid an egg. From that egg hatched a bunny. Then the bunny laid another egg. From that egg hatched a beer, and thus Easter Beer was born.”

ABooker: “I can do you because I do your sister.”

Joker: “Right hand or left hand?”
Peppy: “I’m bilingual.”

EBramble and Joker:
"WINOS!!!!!!!!!!"


My brain feels like I've eaten helium.
For my last wish I want a banana-cake.

Said by PFansler, recorded by EBramble, kept by CTrost

Possible Cave Club Dissertations
By John Mulheren

Over the past four years, I've probably spent more time on caving and tomfoolery than studying for my classes. Because of this I think that the Cave Club should offer degrees. Of course you can't just give a Cave Club diploma to any old loser. My solution is to make every Cave Club diploma seeker write a dissertation on a subject that contributes to Cave Club culture! These are example dissertations I could easily write. Feel free to submit your own!

Does a glowstick count as a source of light? *No*.

Dance moves that can be used to keep warm while others are climbing

How to use the recovery position to make sure people don't Jimi Hendrix.

40's or flasks: How to efficiently destroy your brain

Techniques used to scare away girls from cave club parties

In rage, I threw a boy scout down a pit. Now what?

Hypothermia and flatulence: silent killers of cavers

Ethan's Drink of Choice

Meetings: Whiskey Sour

TAG: Volt 19 White Rum

Halloween: Everclear punch

Birthday: GIN AND JUICE

Suite Party: Southpaw Light

Float Trip: The Kraken

Easter Beer: Not Busch

Picnic: Blue Grain

Matt's Rigging test in Haiku form

By Joker

Matt was rigging pit
He threw rope down pit poorly
Matt failed rigging test

Bro Calls

By John Mulheren

No, this is not an article about the mating calls of bros. If you have had contact with bro-kind (aka frat boys), you may have noticed that they speak an entirely different dialect of English. This guide is designed to aid in bro to caver communication.

Caver Call	**Bro Call**
Ready to rappel	Imma go down on dis bra
Belay is on	I gotcha back brobot
Rappelling	I'm down if you are bro
Rappel away	Let's start this brodeo!
Off rope	Yeeeeah that's how I roll
Rock!	Dis gonna smash yo head like a brotato chip
Slack	This is tight Brobi Wan Kenobi
Tension	Yo loosen up Broseph Stalin
Stop	Woah bro woah!

2012 VPI Cave Club Financial Report

by Brian McCarter

It's been a busy year in caving finance. European guano futures have expanded more than anticipated, resulting in a gross income of 30 million (Kazahk pesos). However, a failed venture into using old cable ladders for harpsichord strings consumed nearly all of the profits.

The 'Cans for Steve' television fundraiser was a major success, being carried by the TCA network (Troglodyte-Caver Alliance) in all major markets. Those markets include caves all over Giles county, none of which have reliable electricity, so reception was understandably spotty for the troglodyte component of the TCA. Cavers picked up the slack, with calls coming in from as far away as China. Three beef candy wrappers were donated, with approximately 75 micrograms of aluminum content each. There was actually more aluminum in the candy.

The ACA (Armchair Caver Association) has suffered severe financial losses this year after the dismissal of its two most prominent members: Steve Lepera and Scott Rapier. They were convicted for embezzling enough cash and PBR to buy off Steve's PhD committee. Punishment included 8 hours hard labor in Clover Hollow and a fine of one dozen cupcakes (made with excess koala chocolate).

Banquet was a wash. Ticket sales included 120 cavers, 2 land-owners, and 3 koala bears (with marsupial discount). However, the koalas were caught pocketing money they stole from the coat closet. They were summarily wrapped in duct tape and beaten until candy and condoms fell out. So-called 'piñata' torture has been banned in 37 states, but it still legal in Blacksburg and surrounding localities. The VPI cave club has since secured a production contract with the Trojan condom corporation for a new line of 'K' contraceptives. You may have heard the radio commercials with the slogan, "Sex? K."

Several candy companies have been contacted regarding the recent chocolate windfall. Hershey has not returned our phone calls. Negotiations continue with the Cadbury chocolate company, but they have so far rejected the proposed idea of 'Koala Kreme Eggs'. The corporate office replied with the following statement:

"The Cadbury Corporation welcomes your suggestion for a new and innovative product. However, market tests have found consumers unlikely to choose a confectionary filled with koala spunk when more established sweeteners are available at a fraction of the cost. In addition, the eucalyptus after-taste and side-effects including inclination to climb trees, telephone poles, and other people while screaming 'narrgh-narrgh-narrgh' are not consistent with our brand."

Alternative uses for the candy by-product are under consideration. Please jump on Dan Crowder and shout your suggestions in his ear.

Ed Day 2/22/2012

VPI 83 - NSS 6500

How Ed Day became the original recipient of the Brain Bucket award in 1963: (Taken from the VAR website)

The following is a true-life adventure written by ***Ed Day*** for the POTOMAC CAVER. Only excerpts have been included in order to reduce eye fatigue:

"A group of thirteen cavers decided to start off VPI's fall quarter with a bang by going to W**arm River Cave**on September 21, 1963. Arriving at the cave late in the afternoon, we rigged our one rope double in the 30-foot entrance pit. Since this drop is considered climbable without a handline, we then pulled the rope down and used it to assist us on another short drop just inside the cave."

Ed continues to discuss the exploration inside the cave, and notes that for the climb out of the cave that the rope was still rigged-in for the inner drop. Ed ascended near the middle of the group and waited to unrig and coil the rope after everyone was on the surface.

"In the meantime the rest of the party had climbed out of the entrance pit without a line, correct, I would say, in their judgment that it was not necessary. I started up last with the coiled rope on one shoulder and my pack on the other.

"I had climbed to about ten feet off the floor when I lost my footing, toppled over, and fell headfirst to the floor. My helmet (I had no chin strap) came off in mid-flight and the side of my head struck a rock on the floor. At this point I blacked out.

"Apparently I rolled, unconscious down the sloping floor and came to rest. The one person at the top of the drop summoned the others. Then he climbed back down into the pit. I am told that I regained consciousness about a minute after the fall, but my memory does not go back to this point for, at my earliest recollection, the entire party was back at the pit. They had rigged a belay on me and were preparing me to climb out. At this point, I did not know where I was or how I had gotten there, and I did not know the people who were with me. I was also in a state of pain and was bleeding from a cut over my right ear. It was in this state that I climbed out of the pit. During the following half hour my memory returned, and I actually drove the 'yellow bomb' part of the way back to school.

“Float trip won't be the same without him.” -Ray Sira

“I remember many a great picnic with him there. It is always sad to hear of a caver going to big cave system in the sky. We'll all miss him.” -Travis Coad

“RIP, Father Nature.” -Wil Orndorff

Thomas Shifflett, Erin Lynch, Matt Covington, Elizabeth Dunn Covington, Philip Schuchardt, Phil Cunningham, Mike Futrell, Andrea Futrell, Stephen Smith, Hazel Barton and Mike Ficco

The Story of Lady

By Lauren Waddell

For years, Lady has been the beloved whore dog of the bat ranch, always ready to go up and paw you like she's expecting a ring on it or fling aside a wave of cats to lay on top of your feet. It doesn't matter where you are, she'll find you like a drunken caver finds an Easter beer (unless it's Phil). Like a true caver she will venture to the depths of the earth. Or at least stick her head out of a hole close by the cave entrance. Yeah, that's not a hell demon. Eyes kind of glow when you shine bright lights at them. Also she might be stuck. You might want to lift her out of the cave. Or get a trainee to do it. Of course, though this may not seem much, if you compare it to the 99 percentage of dogs who have NOT been in caves (statistic complete bullshit) you will see Lady for the true trainee she is (it's a bitch passing your knots test with paws). She is the mascot to the bat ranch like A.I. Cartwright is the mascot to the VPI Cave Club or Leppy is the mascot to the cave club suite.

In fact, crutches make excellent weapons.

Of course you may have noticed that Lady's leg seems a little off. You may think that's damned inconvenient considering all the useful things you can do with paws/legs like using them for leverage to remove banisters from walls or find/create secret passageways from walls (or maybe just holes). But really do you need appendages to be a badass? You can do plenty of things with a maimed paw/foot. Like swordfight Peppy. And climb three story balconies. And drink. And do it all before realizing anything's broken. Why should crutches prevent you from running around drunk? And even if it's your

hand paw that's injured, doesn't mean you can't cave. Sarah didn't stop dropping that 700 foot pit just because it was injuring her hand to do so (gravity may have also had a say in this decision). In fact she was rewarded at banquet with iron (not iron) gauntlets to punch candy and condoms out of her hand effigy. Suffering is rewarded in the cave club. (With condoms that will probably give you babies)

So, what has Lady done on a broken leg? You mean besides showering YOU with her unconditional love. Well, you have to remember that Lady doesn't actually come from the bat ranch and that she has a long history. Long history like….

But does the Pomeranian love you?
Would it catch a firework for you?

CHINA you say! You see, Lady has always loved fireworks. Ever since she was a wee pup her eyes would sparkle like a thousand firecrackers at the thought of rushing into danger and catching a firework in her mouth. Back in those days her coat shone like snow in the sun with an intensity that would have burned a thousand gingers. It was a coat to be proud of for sure, but it mattered naught to Lady. She thought nothing of beauty rushing to the rescue of a small child (probably male because this is China) about to pick up a firework ready to explode. Punting lesser dogs, mostly Pomeranians, out of the way, she clutched the firework in her mouth and ran off with it catching the brunt of explosion herself. Miraculously she remained relatively unharmed but her coat was forever besmirched and only her muzzle showed what remained of her swan like coat.

Sad though it is, heroic deeds aren't always recognized and Lady found herself accused of planting the exploding firework. With no other choice she left home and headed for Russia hoping to find a place for herself. For days she traveled fending off bears and more bears, and some lions and tigers cause they're like best friends and friends visit each other. Eventually Lady ran into a man armed only with his bear hands (they're like bear gloves cause he ripped them of a bear) fighting off one hundred bears. He seemed like he was doing fine until…

BAM! Out came a bear with wings from the sky knocking him down. As the man lay nearly unconscious the bear loomed over him like he was ready to give that man a bad case of bear AIDS, but no! Lady jumped at the bear's throat, biting down and clinging as hard as she could while the bear tried

flying away. But the bear was no match. They both plummeted to the ground as the bear growled it's last soulless growl, a growl so soulless you would think that the bear must have had a tawny hide, maybe have been a little bit of a daywalker.

By the time Lady landed the man had risen to fight of the remaining bears and rushed to Lady's side. That man was Putin.

Lady had injured her paw in the fight but Putin rewarded her greatly by exporting her to a land where some of the best Russian babies (also small children) had been sent (like Sara). However, on Lady's way to the US her ship was attacked by pirates and the ship veered of course landing in Mexico. Many flippie-floppies were lost in the attack.

Even though Lady no longer had her flippie-floppies, she traveled all the way across Mexico to the US. Here she encountered her first caves and spent endless hours exploring their depths. To the locals she was "BatDog" living in caves during the day and fighting crime (and Chupcapras) at night. Many goats swooned over her.

Eventually she made her way over to Virginia. Lady had lived her life heroically until then. But it always seemed like something was missing. Like there was something she needed as a dog to make her feel complete. One day she heard drunken singing and following that noise she found…

OMG PEOPLE! And thus Lady found a place she could call home. A place she could chase fireworks, cave, and be loved.