

# **THE TECH TROGLODYTE**



**SPRING 2015**

The *Tech Trogodyte* 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 TROGLODYTE

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



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# LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

So, I've never written one of these before nor do I know what really goes in them but I'll just go along with what those before me have said. This is my first time being Trog Editor and I have to say it has been time-consuming but fun! Thanks to everyone for sending me articles and pictures. I wish more people would have contributed this semester, especially because there is a pile of trainees who will be reading this and have not sent me anything. I hope future editors and trainees will look through old trogs and use them as references and see how much our club has evolved over the years. I have been enjoying getting to read through everyone's stories and relive their caving adventures. It is awesome how much caving VPI is able to do throughout the course of a year. This year has been so busy with 10 new members, all of our annual events, and lots of speleopolitics! Our members are now all over the world. I am excited about what has been happening in the VPI community and I hope to showcase all these events through this Trog. I hope you enjoy!

Jennifer Wagner, AKA jwag



# LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

My dearest Cave Club,

My last action as leaving president is to write this letter to you—you who have made my past year what it was. It is a bittersweet time.

We did a lot together as a club this year.

We put tons work into our training program. We amended some bylaws that were getting a bit long in the tooth. We worked on overhauling the Trainee Trog. We even redid the membership test. It's gratifying to see the results of all of our work, and to not hear trainees whine about the Trainee Trog anymore. (They all become suddenly satisfied with it when you send them a link to the Google Doc and tell them to fix it themselves.) Now if only we could get those trainees to finally get their memberships.

We got access through the NSS to New River Cave, and it's quickly become our most popular caving destination. Most recently, we just did an amazing job roughing out a trail to it. And I just found out we got the grant for a kiosk and parking area! Under the stewardship of VPI and neighboring grottos, New River Cave can only get better.

I was also excited to see the new Blacksburg Cave Rescue Group coalesce, and look forward to club members being able to help with cave rescues in an official capacity. Likewise I was blown away by the amount of work that was poured into SIVTAC's archive of club history. Looking through the old meeting minutes gives perspective and shows that the more things change, the more they stay the same.

Through all of the caving that we did, the work we put in, and the speleo seminars we attended, I was most impressed to see club members consistently volunteering and supporting each other. Everyone who planned an event, led a trainee trip, or otherwise lent a hand is a fantastic person for doing so.

Altogether it's been an action-packed amazing year. Thank you for trusting me with presidency of the club, and thank you for making the club what it is.

Best,  
-Nikolaus  
VPI Cave Club President,  
School Year 2014-2015



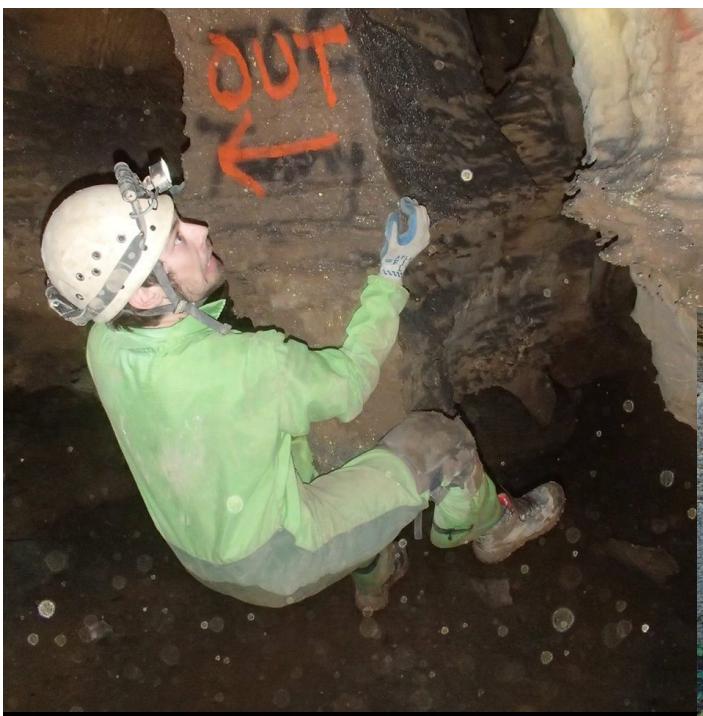
P.S. Please direct all complaints to current President Tommy Cleckner.

# INTRODUCTION

## **HELLO AND WELCOME TO THE VPI CAVE CLUB!**

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 furniture, this club is awesome because of you. Let's keep the traditions going and the weirdness alive.





# NEW MEMBERS



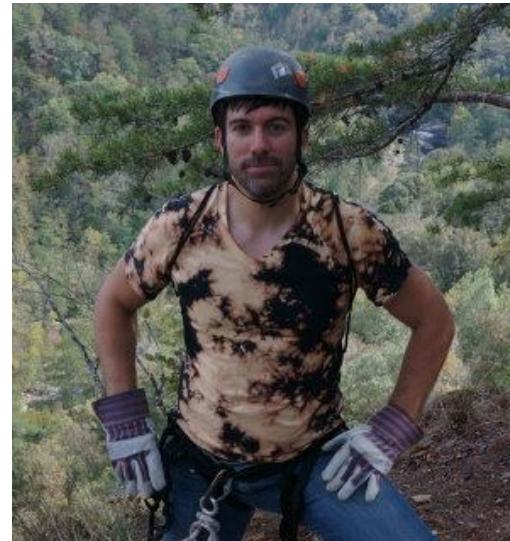
Kelly McCarthy #442



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Robert Harris #444



Tyrone Phillips #445

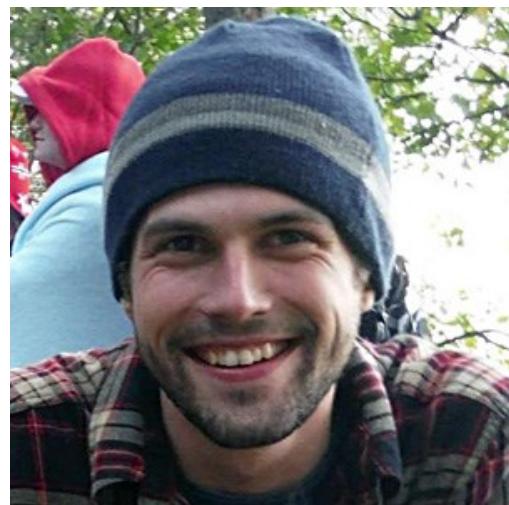


Amy Skowronski #446

## NEW MEMBERS



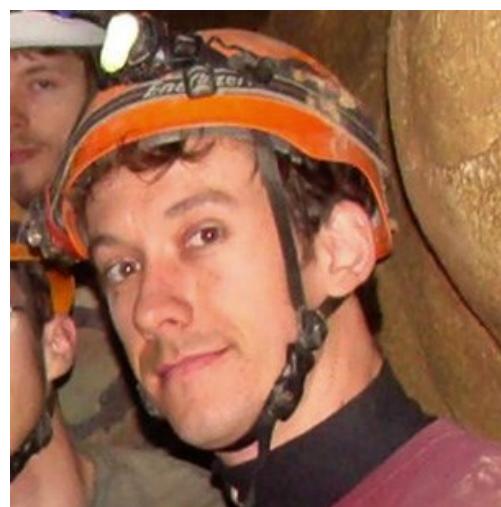
David Henry #447



Andrew Lycas #448



Eliot Edling #449



Jeramie Clifford #450



Phillip Moneyhun #451

# SELFIES



## **My First Trip to WVACS by Jeramie Clifford**

A small group from VPI went to WVACS with our trusted Cave Pope Nick “Peppy” Socky for a sport trip/rigging test for Andrew Lycas at Benedict’s Cave. The VPI contingent consisted of Nick Socky, Joe Calderon, Andrew Lycas, Tommy Cleckner, Gretchen Goeke Dee, Kellen Levinson, Connor Asbill, Jonathan Roberts, Kristy “Squeak” McCord, and Jeramie Clifford. We left from Blacksburg early in the morning on a Saturday and drove to Benedict’s without incident, as it seems many cave club trips are wont to do. Upon our arrival at the parking area for Benedict’s, we had to trample down the four-foot-high grass in the changing area to maintain the appearance of modesty should any of the locals turn their gaze upon this coed group getting naked in the middle of a field. Once everyone had donned their gear, checked their batteries, and compared their Wellies, we were off to the entrance.

Benedict’s has several entrances. We entered through a small hole at the bottom of a depression that drains into the main bore of Benedict’s. This entrance is tight and full of washed-in debris and crickets. I’m not a fan of the tight squeezes, and Squeak doesn’t like crickets, so this entrance was not well received, though it was mercifully short. The tight bit opened quickly into the main bore and a meandering stream. From there, the goal was to find a drop in the cave with bolts that Andrew could use for his rigging test.

Our intrepid leaders, Peppy and Joe, pulled out their maps and led the way. We followed diligently down the bore, all thoroughly impressed by its size. Peppy insisted that if we thought this was impressive, we should wait, because tomorrow at Bore Hole we would really be amazed.

Eventually, Peppy and Joe once again consulted the maps and decided that the passage we needed was just up ahead and to the right. We took a passage to the right, up and over a large breakdown pile, and on through the passage as it got wetter and muddier (like a night with Ballister’s mother). The farther we went, the deeper and thicker the mud got. After scrambling and trying to stay as dry as possible, I began to regret making fun of the Wellie wearers. All the while contemplating if what looked like a high, small lead might have been an alternate, dry route to our current glop walk.

The path diverged, and the stream choked into a narrow canyon. The only choice for us was up and over a not-so-fun looking, slimy mud chute with a few crude steps tramped into it. Joe and I scrambled up first and mustered on while the others had successively harder times as each person ahead of them slimed the route up more and more.

Eventually, Joe and I came to what appeared to be an impasse of an amalgam of features and flow stone, but we managed to squeeze through. Joe was sure the drop must be just around the next bend. As we rounded the bend, the tunnel narrowed, and alas, there it was, a lovely flow choke and the end of the lead.

I asked Joe if I should head back and stop the rest of the group before they had to negotiate the last tight bits, but he said no, let everybody else enjoy the cave. So we pulled out our lunches and began to eat while everyone else caught up. Andrew was the last to make it through the pinch because he was hauling the rope for his rigging test.

By then, everyone had a chance to see the choke and know that it was not the right place except Andrew, who Joe and Peppy directed to get to rigging. Andrew grabbed the gear and headed down the tunnel toward the choke. As he rounded the bend and out of sight, we all snickered a little. Then we heard a few choice expletives as Andrew realized he just slogged all this way for naught and was going to have to backtrack through all the muck just to find the right lead to get to the real rigging point.

Since we were thoroughly underground and trapped together, Tommy seized the opportunity to reach a captive audience and began to ask us if we had taken the Lord into our hearts and seen the error of our hethenistic ways. I promptly responded, "Why yes, Jesus is my belay." As Tommy tried to convert the unworthy cavers, we tracked back toward the main bore. On the return, I explored the high lead I speculated about earlier. To my delight, it was dry, passable, and dropped me out just at the end of the glop walk. Once back into the bore, our unflappable leaders pulled out their maps and proclaimed that this was just a "teaching exercise" in finding our way.

Determining that we had overshot the correct lead, We went back up the bore and reached what Peppy and Joe thought was the right lead. They decided to scout ahead to be certain this time, and the rest of the group took a break. The group settled in and began to rehydrate and find a comfortable place to stand in the large passage. Someone decided this would be a great time for total darkness. We continued to talk amongst ourselves as the lights went out. After a few moments, I decided that this opportunity was too good to pass up. I slowly walked toward Kellen in the dark as she talked, creeping along until I sensed that she was only a step away. Then I gave her a jolt in the sides, and she almost jumped out of her boots! I was thoroughly pleased with myself and moved on to my next victim. Eventually, our dynamic duo returned and proclaimed that they had found the correct lead. With a huge, shit-eating grin, Peppy said we weren't going to like it! We followed them back to the new passage and quickly saw the reason for their grins: a low, flat, wide, twisty passage of popcorn and sharp bits.

On the crawl through, Peppy and I discovered a grouping of small features very much resembling a nativity. Tommy decided it was a positive sign and a blessing upon our trip. Peppy handed his miter over to Tommy and proclaimed him the new Cave Pope, *habeamus papam!*

The low, tight bit opened up to a nice valley down to a 40-foot-deep canyon and back up to the next passage. Peppy and I bonded as we created a human barrier for our fellow cavers. The passage emptied into a large, canyon bit in a bend in the stream passage, which we had to climb down 15 feet and then decide upstream or down. Laurel and Hardy decided down was the right way. Can you guess which way was the right way?

So, after arriving at yet another choke a few hundred yards downstream, we backtracked upstream and climbed up into a nice, smooth bore just above the turn in the bend. We took the slowly narrowing bore at a fast pace, enjoying the rush of moving quickly in a fun space, and came to a 90 degree bend. Lo and behold, there were the bolts and drop, just where Ferdinand and Magellan thought they would be!

Andrew rigged up a very nice, self-equalizing knot, and Joe rappelled down first. No one died, Jonathan thoroughly enjoyed himself, and we all took some time to explore the room we had dropped into. It was a massive room with breakdown the size of yachts and small houses. It was pretty spectacular and eerie thinking of their transition from the ceiling to the floor!

It was getting late, and we decided that we were losing drinking time. Knowing the correct route, we made it back out in short order and hiked to the cars and then WVACs.

The real fun began once we got back to the WVACs station. We met up with Tommy Polson and Diana, who were already there on separate trips. Once the group was washed and fed, we stoked the wood stove and also put a little fire in our own bellies, courtesy of PBR, Fireball, tequila, and maybe just a little moonshine. After perusing the maps on the walls, we decided it was time for some table traverses. We were fairly successfully at the traverses and entertained those watching from the deck. Next came a few body traverses, which had significantly lower success rates but were equally entertaining.

From here on out, I have to admit my recollection may not be entirely accurate or real...

Peppy decided it was a good time to rig the bolt in the common room and do a little vertical practice. Horz need all the practice they can get! I found the best way to get a horizontal caver to go vertical is by duct tapping a PBR to the top of the rope. I lent him a hand (well, shoulders is a more accurate).



I wandered around for some time, enjoyed the fire ring on the deck, listened to others recap their day of caving (BTW, our glop was child's play according to a one woman ended up stuck waist deep until she was helped out by friends), and helped Jonathan off to bed after thoroughly hydrating. I went back to the remainder of our group and realized that it had gotten smaller. I had to remedy that. I went to the bunks and tried to wake some of our compatriots who had foolishly tried to sleep.

At this point, all information is third party; I don't remember shit! I apparently tried to wake Kellen by climbing into her top bunk and whispering sweet nothings into her ear. I then declared that I must be a good boy, promptly biting her shoulder and falling out of the bunk before retreating to the common room. I returned to reality in the common room with Andrew, Tommy Polson, and a mason jar of moonshine. Tommy insisted that it would be bad form to head to bed before it was finished. Not wanting to be in bad form, we oblige him. I somehow found my bunk and turned in for the night. We had to be up soon to go to Bore Hole.

The next day was not good! I would rather have bed a cactus than open my eyes and face that day! I was not a happy camper. I eventually decided that I needed to wake up and purge myself of the evils of the night before. On the way to the bathroom, I heard Tommy Cleckner ask "who was that?" Apparently, I really looked like shit.

On my way back to my bunk, I begged off the Bore Hole trip and decided to go back to Blacksburg early with Kellen, Collen, and Gretchen. After a short cat nap, a handful of advil, and lots of water, I packed up left. As I alluded to earlier, the drive on cave trips are often eventful, and the return trip was no exception.

I was already hating the world, Gretchen was not far behind, and Kellen's GPS decided to bend us over. It decided the best route would be over the curviest bits of Greenbrier County and over the ass end of Mountain Lake. This route did not agree very well with Gretchen's constitution, and we had to stop several times to release some excess ballast.

We later found out that we were not alone in our hatred of the world. Diana had to make several stops on the way to the cave, Tommy Cleckner baptized the parking lot at Biscuit World, and Jonathan had to turn over a rock or two in the cave.

So all and all a great trip was had by everyone! I can't wait to do it again!



## Maxwelton - A Trip to the Other 'Bitter End'

By *Nick Socky* Photos by *Nick Socky*

**Maxwelton Sink Cave, WV**, was dug open in 2003 and the resurvey of the cave has been going on for the past 11 years. Back in 2008, my Dad (Dave Socky), Ed Saugstad, and Errol Glidden along with Larry Fisher, Gordon Cole, and Ken Hayes, went down stream in Cove Creek to survey passage past Cascade Causeway and through Gasoline Alley. The survey was called the DEET survey because of the chemical smell (probably very similar to why it was named Gasoline Alley). The survey was cut short at DEET 17 near the beginning of Gasoline Alley because water levels were chest deep with some swimming involved, and everyone on the survey was getting cold.

To note, the sump at the very end of Gasoline Alley is the lowest and furthest point in the cave and very few people have been there. It is more or less Maxwelton's "Bitter End".

Fast forward to 2014: my Dad was putting together a survey for a trip into Maxwelton! Wanting an actual dry caving experience (as opposed to Dry Cave), I decided to join him. I was able to convince Tyrone Philips, a VPI caver, into joining us by enticing him with the fact that the trip would also be vertical. He later found out that my definition of vertical is still technically horizontal with annoying 12 foot drops that require gear.

Anyway, we found out at WVACs hours before the trip that we would be going to downstream Cove Creek. I recall Errol Glidden making swimming motions and holding his breath as we drove away to the cave. I was, however, banking on the fact that little rain this summer was going to give us a pleasant, only knee deep survey.

After a short trip to Walmart because Tyrone forgot his boots (it has happened to all of us at least once), we finally got to the cave. We had left my Dad at the cave to get suited up because it wouldn't take us that long at Wally-World. So we hurried back, suited up, and as Tyrone and I got down to the culvert, we saw my Dad's gear but he is nowhere to be seen. I slowly opened the culvert and yelled down to see if he had fallen in. Luckily he had not. We had somehow snuck by him in my car. Reunited, we all headed down into the cave.

The rest of the cave trip was pretty standard from here. This was Tyrone's first West Virginia cave, so he was gawking at all the pretty formations in Heaven, and amazed by how big the passage was (especially when we reached Cove Creek). As we travelled through the entrance series on our way to Cove Creek, I suddenly realized that I had forgotten my micro rack! My Dad then remembered that he had accidentally left his eight down at the first drop and it should still be there, via a report by Niki Fox. If it was not there, we would simply share gear. So we get to the drop and luckily, there is the eight sitting off to one side! This definitely beats forgetting the instruments or the tape and having to cave all the way back out and back in to continue the survey.

So we continued caving on. We got to the next drop in Cascade Causeway, found our way down to Cove Creek again, scaled a few more small, but very pretty waterfalls, and we eventually got to our first lead, at DEET-1.

Note: there were a few spots on the way to this lead where the water got dangerously close to yodeling depth, so I was beginning to get a little nervous about how dry our trip would really be.

To our dismay, the lead required additional climbing gear to get up. A bolt climb would be easy and I heard recommendations of a grappling hook, but I personally think next time we come back I should have my cave-quad copter operational so we could simply fly a rope up over a rig point. It is just the logical thing to do!

With this lead unreachable, we put on some more layers, grabbed a snack, and then proceeded toward Gasoline Alley. Ironically, to my earlier comment about forgetting survey gear, we in fact did forget our second set of instruments. So, we just modified our survey team to the situation. I did front and back sights, while Tyrone did lead tape with Disto, and my Dad sketched. From DEET-17 to the sump was estimated to be around 1000 feet so we were looking at a long survey.

Immediately the water got deeper and right at our first station too! Luckily and surprisingly this waist deep water was the deepest spot and wettest survey station. However, all of the following stations involved lying on a mud bank with your feet in the water. There were no good places for stations, so Tyrone proceeded to make slumping mud mounds on the ground to shoot off of. It worked, but I have never gotten so much mud in my face and beard before. What really helped, though, was the Disto. Our average shot length was right around 50 feet, with our longest shot of around 70 feet. So we just continued to slither through the low ceiling mud and water, and eventually we got to the sump, or the “Bitter End”. We did a few more shots, and my Dad nearly fell into the sump trying to see if the water is low enough to keep going. The sump was deep, over your head in the middle of the pool. However, it was determined that the water did go right up to the ceiling.

So we packed up and slimed our way back out of Gasoline Alley. Once out, we put on some drier clothes, grabbed a snack, and headed out.

Nothing particularly eventful happened on the way out. Tyrone, being a VPI cave and poor college student who couldn’t afford a mechanical climbing rig, climbed the two drops on prusiks.

The slog back up through the entrance series, of course, felt much longer than on the way into the cave.

We finally exited the cave around midnight for a 13 hour trip. This was a very productive trip: we finished off Gasoline Alley with 1101.47 feet of survey!

I do not know if I will be going back to this “Bitter End” but if anyone ever gets a chance to explore the lowest point of Maxwelton, I would highly recommend it. This part of the cave definitely does not get a lot of visitation, and I consider it quite an accomplishment to make it to the end.

There is still the high lead that needs to be climbed at DEET-1. When that gets finished, the resurvey will be nearly complete (except for the huge lead list). It will still take a few years to complete the re-survey of Maxwelton, but I hope to be part of the team that completes the potential 12 yearlong project and see it through to the “Bitter End”



# Safety Hazards of the Bowline with the Yosemite Back-off

Tyrone S. Phillips



**Figure 1. Helical knot with a bowline and Yosemite back-off**

The VPI grotto teaches the helical knot with a bowline using the Yosemite back-off to climb rope for vertical caving shown in Figure 1. Typically two knots are used for feet and a top ascender. Alternatively, a top helical knot can be used in place of a top ascender. I was climbing out of Pighole in the early spring of 2014 using knots, both for my feet and a top knot. I was climbing tandem with another caver with me above to expedite the climb out and we were making good time. About 20 feet from the top, just before we got to the lip, the top bowline had cinched very tightly to the helical making it really difficult to loosen and hindered my progress. The knot didn't look like it should; rather, it looked like what is shown in Figure 2. The knot had collapsed and turned into a noose. The last bit of climbing was a struggle, but once the lip of the pit was cleared I was able to climb the rest of the way out fairly easily. So what happened to my top knot?

There are two different ways to tie the bowline with a Yosemite back-off. The difference depends on the direction the working end goes around the main line. Figure 3 shows the incorrect way which allows the back-off to slide around the working end. It looks very much like the correct way shown in Figure 4 with only slight differences that can be missed in a dark cave. When I was climbing, I tied the knot the incorrect way and it resulted in the knot capsizing and turning into a noose. After some research, it turns out even when tied correctly the back-off can rotate around the standing line and capsize resulting in a noose. An example of the capsized knot is shown in the Youtube video in Reference [2].



**Figure 2. Collapsed Yosemite bowline**

The same user who shows the capsizing of the Yosemite back-off offers an alternative back-off method shown in the video [3]. This back-off method has not been tested as stated in the video. The other alternative that I have been aware of in the VPI grotto is to back-off the bowline with an overhand knot. Another alternative published in 1988 presents a knot called the double bight bowline. This knot is shown in Figure 5. The strength of this knot along with three others was compared for 4mm, 6mm, and 8mm rope given in Table 1. The strength of the double bight bowline supersedes all other bowlines tested. The bowline with the Yosemite back-off actually shows decreased strength (although by a very minor margin) for the 6mm and 8mm rope.



Figure 3. Incorrect Yosemite bowline [1]



Figure 5. Double Bight bowline



Figure 4. Correct Yosemite bowline [1]

Table 1. Knot strength (Kg) [1]

	4mm	6mm	8mm
<b>Regular bowline</b>	<b>259</b>	<b>765</b>	<b>1089</b>
<b>Yosemite back-off</b>	<b>279</b>	<b>754</b>	<b>1003</b>
<b>Mountaineering bowline</b>	<b>276</b>	<b>712</b>	<b>1170</b>
<b>Double bight bowline</b>	<b>284</b>	<b>779</b>	<b>1244</b>

The double bight bowline knot length is also compared to the other knots in Table 2. The double bight bowline uses about ten percent less rope than the bowline with the overhand back-off.

Prohaska [1] describes the double bight bowline as simple, clear, easily inspected, and shows no perceptible tendency to capsize or work loose. In addition to suggesting the use of the double loop bowline in place of the Yosemite bowline, I propose an additional modification as a double back off. The double bight bowline working end extends out of the knot 90 degrees to the working line. The modification to this knot resembles the Yosemite back-off. The working end is wrapped around the closest loop and follows into the bowline loop retracing the standing line. The knot with this proposed back-off is shown in Figure 6, and the length of the knot is given in Table 2.

Table 2. Relative rope requirement (L/D)

	From [3]
<b>Regular bowline + overhand knot</b>	<b>43</b> <b>46</b>
<b>Yosemite back-off</b>	<b>39</b> <b>39</b>
<b>Mountaineering bowline + overhand</b>	<b>53</b> <b>57</b>
<b>Double bight bowline</b>	<b>40</b> <b>41</b>
<b>Double bight bowline + back-off</b>	<b>51</b> -



Figure 6. Double Bight bowline with back-off

## References

- [1] Yosemite Bowline. “Yo-knot, the Yosemite bowline alternative,” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4bdQB4xsxtg>, 2012.
- [2] Yosemite Bowline. “Yosemite bowline not safe for climbing,” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1dj5Y3h1AEI>, 2012.
- [3] Heinz Prohaska. “A Safer Bowline for Climbers and Cavers,” *Nylon Highway*, Vol. 26, pp 4-6, 1988.

# Looking for Goats in Caves

## by Eliot Edling

So I need to write an article for the Tech Troglodyte. I don't really do much writing these days besides what is required for my work, and my last creative writing course was almost a decade ago.

While I have been on many enjoyable caving trips, I am not the kind of storyteller who can readily turn an almost mundane trip into an exciting or humorous anecdote. On multiple occasions, I have witnessed a caver recount an event that, at the time, wasn't terribly interesting but, under the influence of their well-practiced lips, would become an epic tale of overcoming adversity, misfortune, or stupidity.

This talent almost seems to go hand-in-hand with becoming an experienced caver, and I seem to be making steady progress in the latter area. I considered a number of different article ideas that wouldn't require too much writing, but most of them were discarded before they were even born.

I reviewed several past Togs for ideas that fit within my creative range, and saw many stories that went along the lines of "my first cave trip" or "how a trip to such-and-such cave didn't go as planned." While I have nothing against people writing trip reports, I decided to write something a bit different.

I had one interesting idea in which I planned to gather any songs written by VPI Cave Club members, hopefully all in very poor taste, and publish them in the Trog for posterity. Brilliant! It would require relatively no creative writing on my part and could give cavers something fun to sing while trying to keep warm waiting at the bottom of a 90 foot pit. Unfortunately, when I queried the cavers sitting nearest to me (John Echols and Sam Huff), they could only think of two songs: She's a Goat and Cave On (which was already published by Nick Socky). Therefore, I gave up on that idea for this article. However, if any reader finds John and Sam's knowledge of cave club lore lacking, I would still love to publish a written record of VPI Cave Club folk songs.

I considered making a game (like count the penis-shaped objects in this drawing of a cave) or publishing a few of my favorite recipes. At one point, I had firmly decided to write a short story about misunderstood CHUDs (this would involve much more writing than I wanted, but would hopefully be entertaining).

So what did I decide to do? So far it may seem like I'm merely rambling, but I assure you that I'm also being self-indulgent and long-winded. If you haven't figured it out yet, I am writing about trying to find something to write about, and I hope this article is sufficiently meta-VPI to be amusing to at least a few people.

At the end of the day, I am writing this article because I enjoy caving, and most of the things that go with it. Every caver has different reasons he or she enjoys caving, and while trying to understand these reason may make for lively academic debate, I will not air my thoughts here. You should go out and ask all the other cavers why they enjoy what we do. Who knows, you just might hear a new, epic tale of overcoming adversity with insurmountable stupidity.

As a bonus, here are the lyrics to She's A Goat by John Mulheren  
 (preferably accompanied by a ukulele):

Well me and my baby got a love so pure

I ain't never gonna ask for more

When I'm around her I ain't got nothin to fear

She likes it when I stroke her beard

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

Chorus:

[Well she's a goat she's a goat and I 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 so pretty when I put her in her gown

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 baaaaa and I make her squeal

Our goat human love is the real deal]

Well 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 never seen our copulation

My baby had a kid and it's easy to see

Looks kinda like her and looks kinda like me

I'll never forget the first thing he said

He said "I wish I wish I wish I was dead"

Chorus

## **“At the Bottom of the Dome”**

**David Henry**

Didley’s Dome is now its home

And it’s color may have once been green

The time was last November, If I can remember

That It was last seen

For it took a good tumble and made a loud rumble

As it fell, and it fell, and it fell

From Joe’s steady hand, it obeyed gravities demand

And now rests where it will now dwell

It likely plopped on a pile of mud and except for the Chuds

There’s nothing down there to take it away

For the trip’s nothing piddly, traveling to the bottom of Didley

So there it will likely stay

It has a sad lonely fate unless a few can create

A mission, a quest, or a search

To travel down, down to Didley’s before getting too tiddly

And rescue it from it’s poor solitary perch

The trip will be long but it simply doesn’t belong

There at the bottom of the Dome

So who among you care to join the rescue,

To bring it back to it’s above ground home?

## The Legend of Peppy

Nick Socky, the son of two former members,  
would be the president we'll all remember  
as cartographer, raver, and life-member caver  
whose love of caves is like an un-dying ember.

Nick Socky's father, a caver called 'Dave',  
should be proud of his son who consistently gave  
hours upon hours of his free-time to slave  
over the mapping and exploring of the famed Maze Cave.

Nick Socky however was more than just a spelunker.  
He was a tuba-player to often be found in the bunker.  
Then, VTubas behaved as much as they their livers saved  
while they continued to grow drunker and drunker.

Nick Socky's mother, a caver called 'Mary Sue',  
should be as proud as Dave of her son too.  
He studied A.O.E., got his hard-earned degree,  
and works in the field he prepared to.

Nick Socky's love, devotion, and concern  
for Sarah surpasses his love of any cavern.  
Tried and true, in high school and college through,  
he remained a faithful boyfriend to her.

Nick Socky's legacy will always and forever be  
a terrific story and model for a trainee.  
His level of enthusiasm is greater than the largest chasm  
thus he will always be remembered as President Peppy.

## Batty Arts on Display

**Sam Huff**



John Echols carved and sanded the wood for the new BAT award, and Eliot Edling burned and illustrated the NSS logo on the front.



Tyrone Phillips shows off his first tattoo.



Diana Orndorff is also proud of her new ink.



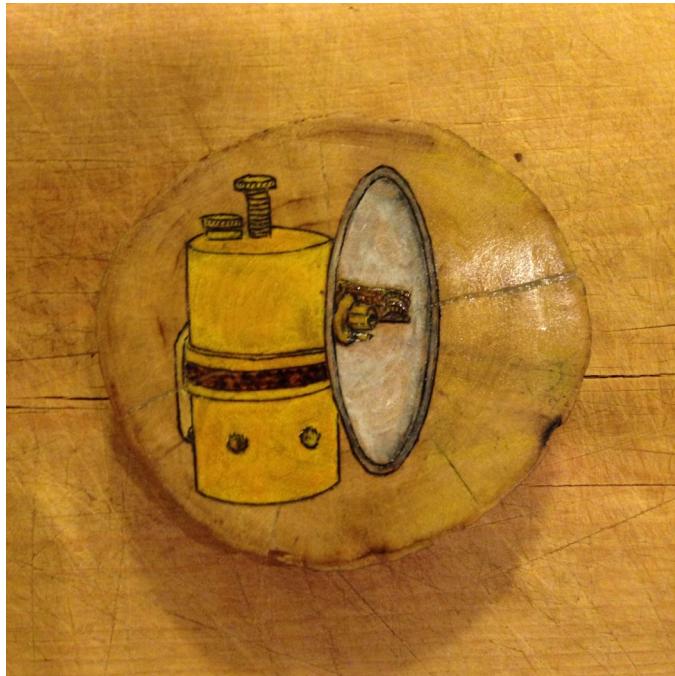
Zenah Orndorff created these beautiful Guano Clusters.



Julie Fortney created this lounging lady with dye and wax.



Sam Huff and Nick Socky displayed their caver pride during commencement.



Eliot Edling burned and illustrated this wooden medallion.



Sam Huff created this painting for the “Richard Cobb Memorial Award Until We Think of a Better Name” Award.



Diana Orndorff repurposed earrings from Goodwill as a present.



Daniel Bishop, "River" DeGrace, and Sam Huff decorated the new pong table at Clay.

## Fellow Caver

Richard T. Brooks

Fellow Caver's and Prospective Caver's,

It has been a long and enjoyable process acquiring the elements to be considered for membership in to the VPI Cave Club. Having experienced some of the caves in this area plus Tennessee and Mexico, I realize that there is an underground world that is not only astonishing, but that has only been partially discovered. I am looking forward to my newest adventure in the cave world hopefully as a VPI Cave Club Member. I have to credit Walt Pirie for introducing me to the cave club. The places he has been and things he's done are incredible. Like doing some of the longest pits in Mexico and rappelling the bridge before it was finished. Steve Wells deserves credit for his technical assistance and knowledge (not that he's that smart) of being on rope. John Deighan and Sarah Crowder also deserve mentioning for they have been the ones that I have taken the most trips with. These people as a whole, with their experience, knowledge, caving background and being on rope is immeasurable. Thank you all for sharing your expertise with me and helping me in my learning experience. As for the caving experience, I have learned to be on rope, use friction in ways that I have never thought of, put my body into positions that I did not think possible and have literally lived on the edge. One of my most memorable experiences was hearing the acoustics of "Amazing Grace" resonating throughout the cave while in Triple Wells. Triple Wells is a 200' drop in a cave called Newberry/Banes. To get to the drop you follow a narrow passage for a couple of hundred feet off the main passage. Nearing the end of the passage the floor opens up enough to see the 200' drop below. A pigtail is rigged for a safety line so you don't fall through the crack in the floor. The opening is not big enough to rappel through comfortably, so while still moving forward you have to straddle the canyon for another 20 to 30'. At the very end of the passage it opens up into what they call Triple Wells. While still straddling the canyon below your feet, and tied to the safety line, you will find 2 bolts used for rigging the main drop. Using a double figure 8 for the anchor knot, this will allow you to rig onto the rope and do the drop with no interference. Sarah went first, and while rappelling 200', started singing "Amazing Grace". The guys on the trip joined in and harmonized quite well. I personally cannot sing, so I just kinda mouthed the words and sat back and listened. I thought it sounded good. Good harmony with a damn good drop in a damn good cave. Hard to beat. The club should consider having a committee for the "Cave Club Choir"! When I originally thought of a "Caver", I thought, "Ahh, what the hell, that aint nothing, you're just crawling around a hole in the ground". Now, after seeing and experiencing the real thing, I have come to realize why people have a desire to explore the hidden cavernous world that is right beneath our feet. It is truly a breathtaking experience and I have learned that it takes experience, knowledge, and physical fitness to be a caver. Only a few people are cut out to be a caver. A "Caver" is truly a well- earned title.

# Don't know what you have until It's Gone

## By Nick Socky

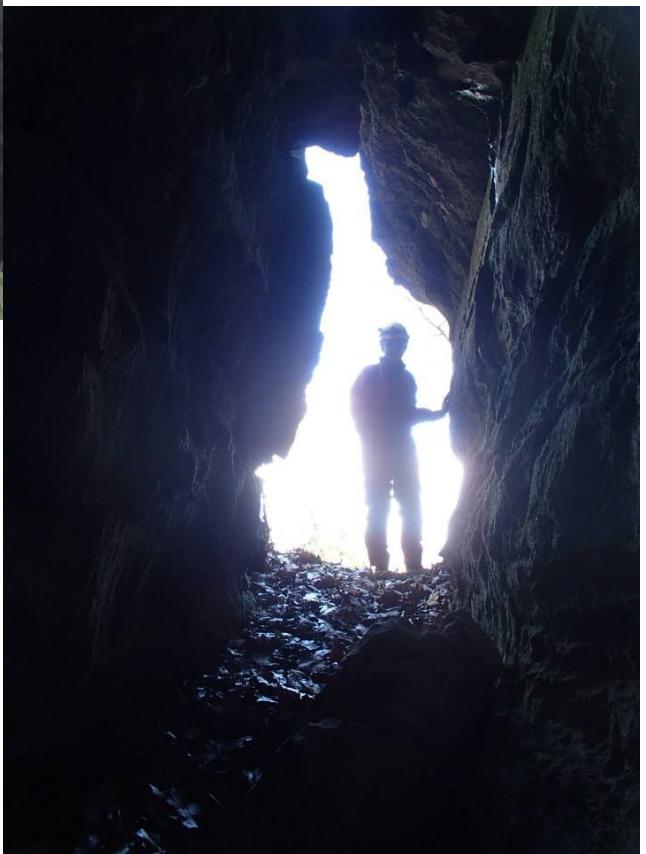
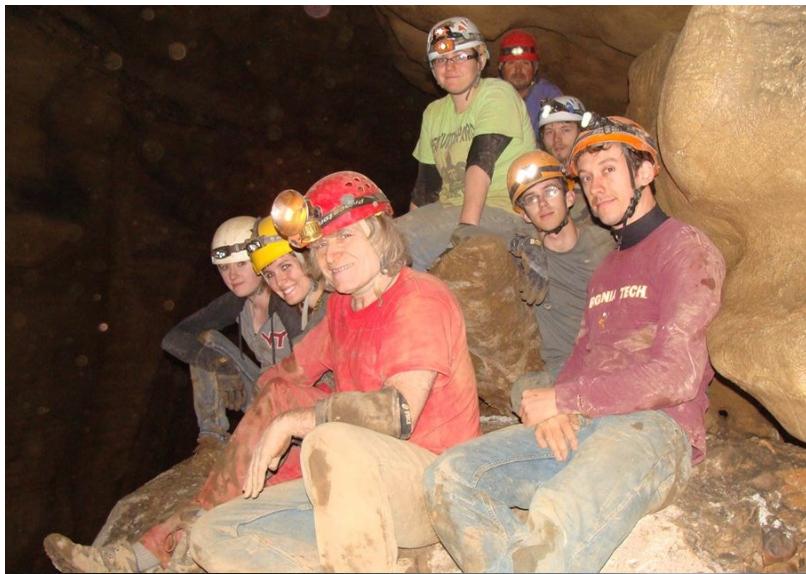
Attending Virginia Tech as a caver is one of the greatest things that every single student should appreciate with the short amount of time there. In some cases, especially seen by the large contingent of the older members of the club, many return or just outright never leave. I have however fallen in the category of those who have to eventually leave. But that of course does not mean you have to stop caving! It just becomes more difficult.

After having moved up to the metropolis of Northern Virginia, I am at a location where it is a minimum drive of 3 hours to go caving. Blacksburg is four hours away from me, WVACs if four hours, Germany Valley is three, and Butler Mountain is three hours as well. And it sucks. But for me, I am lucky! Some people have to drive much further, five to six hours, in some cases eight. And you know what, they still do it! I know a caver who drives down from Massachusetts once a month to go to WVACS. That's an eleven hour drive one way for him! I am impressed and shocked by his commitment, and learned not to whine about my inconvenience now. However that still doesn't mean that after living in Blacksburg for four year, that it is easy adjusting.

To cope with living further away, one of the steadfast rules I always try to follow is that "*You must be underground for at least as long as you are on the road to get to said cave*". So If I am typically driving 3 or 4 hours to a cave, I have to spend at least 6 or 8 hours underground for me to justify the trip. And this is exactly what I do now! I do make exception to this rule if there is a party or "side event going on", but I still try my hardest to at least get my head underground. Another thing I realized is that if I skip a weekend of caving, then I am just grumpy and the following week drags on. I guess you could call this hobby a drug in a way. So right now I have every single weekend for several months planned out with different caving activities. This of course is slightly different than being at VPI, because there you can just at the flip of a dime, head to a cave only 20 minutes away! But I guess this is just me rambling on about living away from cave country, so let me get to the point. All of this was me attempting to give some backstory to why I am sharing this article with you.

Do not take your current living location for granted (or granite, if you like puns). I have realized how spoiled I was with living so close to some of the best caving in the east coast! And sadly wish I had taken advantage of it more while I was there. I am not only referring to just caving around Blacksburg, but also to all of those other neighboring counties. I wish I could have explored more of Bland County, ventured into some of the Tazewell caves, or even travelled up to WVACS more often. And nothing is stopping me from doing this now. It is so much more of a drive for me to do them. Blacksburg is such a great central location to so many caves, and it is such a waste of your preciously small amount of time at Blacksburg, to keep going to the same caves over and over again. Do not waste the gift that has been given to you.

On a final note, if and when you do leave Blacksburg, remember what the purpose of the VPI Cave Club is there for. Think of all the amazing people you meet, all the cool places and adventures you have been on. It doesn't stop there! Becoming a part of VPI Cave Club also means you become part of the bigger picture of the caving world. There are grottos and caving organization throughout the USA and even the World! You should use those technical and social skills that you get from VPI to meet new cavers, explore new places, and have new adventures. While always remembering the great ones you had every weekend while at VT. VPI Cave Club sets you on a path to become a great caver and individual within the caving community, with the ability to continue learning and further your knowledge and skills. It also gives you some of the greatest friends anyone could ask for. The only thing worse than moving away from Blacksburg is if you let those potential connections and abilities go to waste. So do yourself a favor. Learn to appreciate Blacksburg and all of the caves while you're there. Get all of your work done during the week so you can hit up the inner earth both Saturday and Sunday. Don't use being hung-over as an excuse to not explore some place new or old. And if and when you move away, find the local caving grotto and continue to grow as a caver. *Continue to cave on.*



**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'**

**-Knipling Pit- 150'**

**-The 172- 172'**

# PICNIC



Picnic 2014 was another fun Picnic in the books. We had beautiful sunny weather that made it all the more better. We also had a great turnout. Thanks for all who came and made it fun!

There was no threat of running out of beer at any point. In fact, I think we ended up with 1 keg untapped and two half -empty! Some say there were too many lightweights but we know that isn't true.



We also gained a new member at Picnic. It was decided late into the night, to vote Kelly McCarthy in as VPI #442!

Some caving, lots of drinking, but I think one of the most notable events of this picnic was the memorial service held for Pam Mohr around the bonfire Saturday evening.



It was a touching event as everyone lit candles and carbide lamps at twilight as they sang Amazing Grace.

All in all, it was another great picnic for the books!



# Float Trip





# TAG 2014

October 8th to 12th we celebrated the 37th annual TAG Fall Cave-In! A good portion of folks headed down Thursday and got in late Thursday night to our usual spot on Blueberry Lane.

On Friday, a large group of VPI spent the day rappelling Little River Canyon in Alabama while others drove down from Blacksburg, and some started the party mid afternoon. Some others ventured off into different caves in the area. Friday night is always Karaoke night so naturally we danced and sang into the night while other partook the other facilities available.

Saturday started with the annual Monkey

Butt Relief 5k at 8:00am. This year Sarah, John, and Nick participated in the run in the rain and if I remember correctly, someone ran it in his Chacos. That's dedication. VPI split into multiple little groups to go in

different caves. A popular cave was Tumbling Rock cave in Alabama. A popular site to see while you're in the area is Unclaimed Baggage Center. Can't miss it! A group also headed to Stephens Gap cave.



All made sure to make it back in time for the fire. This is the hugest fire you will ever see and the sheer height of it is amazing. This year they had guys rappel down from the top and douse it with gasoline before lighting. During the lighting of it, fireworks spewed from the top for an amazing show!



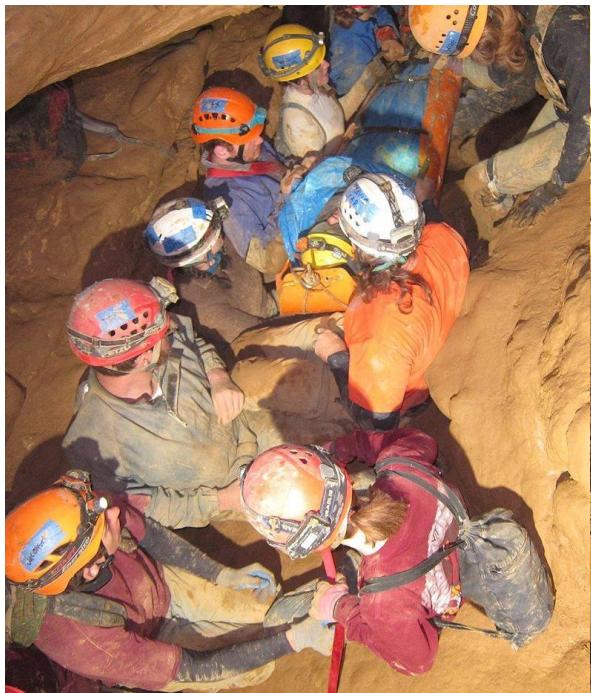
Lots of shenanigans happened between the two nights. From a photoshoot with Highline, losing Peppy for a few hours, trying to find Auburn, discovering the age of consent in Alabama, stealing the crossing guard figure then having to give it back then waking up Sunday morning with it in camp. I'd say everyone had another great year at TAG and can't wait until the next one!



# HALLOWEEN



# Practice Rescue



# BANQUET 2015

The 50<sup>th</sup> annual banquet was a huge success! In case you missed it due to financial impotency, moral turpitude, laziness, being in Australia, or any other poor life choices, here's a summary of what happened.

The weekend kicked off with a pre-banquet party hosted by Phillip Balister and Sandy Knapp. Several members (eg: John Echols, Tommy Cleckner, and Balister himself) took this party as their opportunity to pay the price for missing their signouts. Balister and Sandy were excellent hosts and nobody went hungry or thirsty. Much fun was had at the expense of Balister's door.

Banquet proper began the next day at six-o'clock at the Custom Catering Center off of Main and Patrick Henry. Sarah Crowder, John Echols, Madeline Williams, Phillip Moneyhun, and Sedrek Kovar are proud to have expertly organized a fantastic banquet (by which the author means nobody died).

Following dinner, President Nikolaus Wittenstein led the club in the ceremonial thanking of the landowners. As he noted, "Without [the landowners], this club would cease to exist." Sarah Crowder and John Echols then took over to present awards.

Since it was Valentine's Day, the sweetheart and heartthrob honors were awarded first to Kellen Levinson and Jeramie Clifford. Wil Orndorf, Steve Wells, and Jonathan Roberts were honored for rescuing a dog off the face of a cliff. Bill Stringfellow won a magnificent 2015 caving calendar as a door prize.

Zenah Orndorff claimed a much-deserved A.I.Cartwright for her long-standing dedication to the club as VPI rescue's primary callout for the past 15 years, organizing six banquets, being a prime mover in founding



The Trainee of the Year award went to Sedrek Kovar for his dedication and perseverance in practice rescue, stalwartness in a 13-hour Starnes trip, commitment to banquet planning despite debilitating illness, and general badassery. This award also came with an auto-locking carabineer as well as a brand new trainee-of-the-year paddle (the old paddle having been destroyed by the idiot who received it the previous year.) In addition, Sarah Crowder received her long-overdue ‘honors’ for being a recipient of this award.

The Flameout award went to Sam Huff for convincing Jonathon Roberts it was raining when it was not, in fact, raining. She was given a Nalgene bottle and B-12 gummies to prevent future downpours. The latter was promptly shared with Balister who was experiencing the aftereffects of a proper pre-banquet party.



Several new awards were also presented. Tommy Cleckner was given the title of Mini-Kerschner. Richard Cobb, was honored with the Richard Cobb Memorial Award Until We Think of a Better Name award. This honor came with a cave-themed painting by Sam Huff. Nikolaus Wittenstein was the recipient of a title reserved for a “numbered trainee.” For his incredible hard work in revamping the Trainee Trog, reorganizing and managing club gear at signout, and spearheading a grant proposal for New River, Nik was bestowed the title of Adequate.



Guano Clusters were made by the talented Zenah Orndorf this year and were absolutely beautiful. Awardees included Alex Booker for hosting numerous events at his abode; Tommy Cleckner for hosting innumerable vertical sessions; Sarah Crowder for insane amounts of training and planning Banquet; John Echols for organizing Halloween/road cleanup and helping plan Banquet; John Deighan for providing a tower and club store while being an all-around badass; Ed Fortney for his continued involvement in practice rescue and training activities; Ray Sira for the Club Tarp (without it, we would all be wet and cranky); Kelly McCarthy for doing T-shirt committee (without her, we would all be naked); Madeline Williams, Phillip Moneyhun, and Sedrek Kovar for significant help in organizing banquet; Nick Socky for serving faithfully as the secret fifth club officer; Robin Koerschner for providing much-needed food and drink at the practice rescue out of pocket; Steve Wells for keeping up with Signout and drinking impressive amounts of PBR; Mike Newsome for allowing us continued use of the Bat Ranch for large parties; Sandy Knapp and Philip Balister for allowing us to commandeer their basement for club file storage and house for the pre-banquet party; Samantha Lambert for storing rescue gear; and Wil Orndorf for conservation efforts, his undercover work as Blacksburg Man, and continued support organizing practice rescue and Filthy Young Women.

After awards, dancing commenced, with occasional interruption for piñata-related activities. Despite some uninvited snow and ice, everybody had fun and made it home safely. We look forward to seeing you all at next year's



## Gone to Valhalla

Cecil Earl Porterfield - 10/26/2014  
Pighole Landowner



Porterfield, Cecil Earl

In honor of Cecil, the club made a \$250 donation to the Newport Rescue Squad, where his family requested. He was a good friend to the club over the years and will truly be missed.

## CONGRATULATIONS

....to Ellen and Daniel Crowder on their marriage!



...to Katrina and John George on the birth of their baby girl, Juniper!



# QUOTABLE QUOTES

EEdling, NSocky, EEdling: "Eliot's holding half a bottle of wine\* "What should I do with this?" "Shh, put a cork in it." "Oh, BOO."

EEdling: "You'll have to give me something other than alcohol to do that."

NSocky: "This is the climb where Tommy Polson got halfway up and said "Oh shit, my D-link is open."

EStanley: "Now whatcha gonna wanna do is go to the pee church, pull off, reverse six inches, and keep going in the same direction you were headed. There's a sensor in the road there that will reveal the location of the cave."

JCalderone: "It's like a low-speed chase."

JCalderone: "I didn't turn the alarm on your phone on! Frankly, I find it alarming that you're blaming me."

SLapera to WOrndorff: "You didn't tell me the cave was the size of your thigh."

WOrndorff: "If there's one thing you gotta say about my sphincter is that it's resilient."

KMcCarthy: "Technically we left bodily fluids at *both* locations."

TCleckner, TRatte: "That's an enormous piece of chicken." "I like big breasts."

JWagner: "Dude! I peed right next to you."

ALycas, ASkowronski: "One of the best parts is being able to pee your name on the ground." "Man, I'd have to pee down my leg and stream off my big toe if I wanted to do that."

NSocky: "Not quite those words, but the message was basically, 'Do not do this'."

ALycas, ASkowronski, ALycas, JMcGuire: "The company holiday party was just a dinner and there was a casino theme." "Did you guys have hookers and blow?" "No, unfortunately not." "What's a holiday party without snow?!"

ASkowronski, ALycas: "Were you trying to turn off your high beams but sprayed your windshield washer fluid instead?" "...I don't want to talk about it."

MJunod: "How the hell am I stuck?!"

SHuff: "So Artemis was lying on the floor earlier, going to town on her asshole and John walked by and I said, "Snack time!" And he said, "Ugh, ew." And now he's started saying it, too, and it just seems weird – as if she pursues her asshole for the taste."

TCleckner: "I hope he's skeet shooting or doing target practice cuz if that damn animal isn't dead yet..."

CGarguilo: "And when the government comes after you for doing these illegal things, you can blow them up!"

MSkowronski, holding up plastic triceratops: "Alex is going to have to put it back in the water if you keep putting it in the icing, Philip."

PBallister, DBishop: "Oh my god this came out when I was in high school!" "You're old."

NSocky: "Amy's probably still doing homework. Or sleeping for 5 hours somewhere out in the woods."

JCalderone: "I feel like I'm at a techno rave party in Romania with mobsters and beautiful mail order brides everywhere."

KDigby: "Fucking Colorado people; they're all fit hippies."

TPhilips, drinking Goldschlager: "I am going to poop a necklace tomorrow."

# QUOTABLE QUOTES

TPolson: "I hope no one wants to sit here later because I'm just clenching this cushion with my buttcheeks."

ABooker: "I hope I succeeded in making you as uncomfortable as I made myself."

ABooker: "I'm doing this experiment where I drink a lot... we'll see what happens."

JRoberts: "MOVE THE MOOSE."

ABooker: "I turned a sausage fest into a clam bake."

NSocky: "FROLICK HARDER, BITCHES!"

NSocky: "It's like they've never seen snow before. Like kittens."

DOrndorff, ASkowronski Do you have a light? No, but I believe in myself.  
(Light as in headlamp, going to head off to go pee in Clarks Cave)

EEdling I think the word you're looking for is tra la la.

Anonymous: Jesus is my belay.

NSocky, TCleckner Do you trust me? I've been caving with you, of course not.

NSocky, ASkowronski Don't vomit in my new car. I will hit the eject button. ...I'll eject the contents of my stomach...

NSocky: I can't read. illiterate-ly.

ASkowronski, ALycas: Do you think I'm fat? Your words.

DCrowder: open the gates of hell and let pass the poopy scourge

JClifford: Peppy shits bats

MJunod: It's the first cave I've ever peed in

ABooker: I cant... im not by law allowed within 1000 feet of that place

SCrowder: Shut the hell up you gaping asshole

SRapier: Everybody likes a loose sheath

ASkowronski: The wings went swoosh swoosh and the leaves went kapoof

EEdling: You can use my wood for your fire

NWittenstein, TCleckner: Does anyone have any questions for Philip? Yeah, what's the age of consent in Georgia?

NWittenstein: Finish this sentence: Cave with the best... PMoneyhun: Cave alone.

# SIGNOUT QUOTES

9/7/14	New River Cave	John George, Tommy Cleckner, Josh Taylor, Kellen Levinson, Megan Junod, Cole McManus, & more	My butt is getting so exfoliated it is going to be baby-soft
9/17/14	Tawneys	Joker, Nik W., Josh V., Peppy, Sian Gooding, Caroline Shea, Madeline Burnham	My pants won't stay up! I have that effect on girls
9/27/14	Bone Norman	Dan Crowder, Ellen Crowder, David Colatosti, Sedrek Kovar, Eliot Edling, & more	Dave C. is an action hero
12/17/14	Starnes	Dan Crowder, Madeline Williams	Fuck Steve!
12/6/14	James	Amy Skowronski, Patrick Moore, Aaron Stanley	Well hello, Mr. Well-Endowed Stratification
12/2/14	Links	Sarah Crowder, Phillip Moneyhun	We deserve it!
12/14/14	Handcock Blowhole	Eric Stanley, Dan Crowder, Ellen Crowder, Alice Jaworski	I can help, or I can continue laying here like a slug
10/19/14	New River	Alex Booker, Megan Junod, John L, Alex O'Brien, Jennifer McGuire, Tommy Cleckner, Calvin Long,	Where did the bad rock touch you?
9/7/14	New River Cave	Daniel Crowder, Ellen Crowder, Tyrone P, Natalie Yates, Dylan H, Tony Ratte, Heather Thompson	Testes are the best hand warmers, I learned this in middle school while waiting for the bus

# t shirt design

