

THE TECH TROGLODYTE

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

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Vol. I No. 3
July, 1962
75¢ per year
20¢ per copy

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THE PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

by Gregg Marland

With the completion of another year of school and hence another year of Cave Club activity, I feel that we can look back with satisfaction at the forward steps taken during the year. The growth in the size of the club, the consciousness and enthusiasm for cave conservation, a greater interest in speleology, an increase in safety measures and training programs, tremendous jumps in the club's prestige--both on campus and in the national organization, the introduction and subsequent growth of this publication, and many other advances too numerous to mention have taken place in the last year. This, however, is no time to sit back and pat ourselves on the back for what we have done, for starting in September is what will undoubtedly be the biggest year ever for the VPI Cave Club.

The number of new members joining us in September can be expected to exceed that from last year and the job of properly training these people to be competent, safe, conservation-conscious, and curious cavers will be our first task. Serving as host to the Virginia Region meeting in November and preparation for the N.S.S. National Convention to be held at Mountain Lake in June will require the time and effort of many people, while offering rewarding, educational, and enjoyable experiences. The National Convention, for which we are to serve as host and administer pre-convention caving, in particular will require many hours of preparation and the cooperation of every member.

Continued work on conservation projects, such as the proposed slide series and the renovation of exceptionally vandalized caves, should occupy a considerable part of the ensuing year. Also the growth and maintenance of this publication depends on the participation of our

members, their willingness to support it financially and to submit their trips, discoveries, observations, ideas for comedy, or just plain cave gossip. Contributors, typists, mimeographers, and people with a few minutes a week to contribute are needed to make this a worthwhile and interesting newsletter.

Always important, should be the quest for the unknown and the study of the partially known. In our area, are unmapped caves to be surveyed, unusual geologic features to be noted, unknown passages to be explored, cave fauna to be studied, and caves yet to be seen at all. Continued growth in enthusiasm, curiosity, and willingness to do a little hard work should account for major advances in all of these fields during the coming year.

Looking back again, it seems appropriate to mention the names of five individuals who made major contributions to our club during their sojourn here, but are leaving shoes to be filled in the coming year: Ed Bauer, Larry Griffin, Sam Dunaway, Bob Ralph and Bill Haile. Bauer should be back in September, 1963, and in the meantime, our loss is a real gain for the Northern Jew Jersey Grotto.

ENTHUSIASM! CURIOSITY! HARD WORK! These we will need.

PROGRESS REPORT: HIGGENBOTHAM CAVES PROJECT by Ed Bauer

For many of those who are not familiar with this club project, first let me explain the purpose and nature of the project, second a brief description of the cave, and third let me explain what we have done there and plan to do in the future.

With the formation of the Project Committee last year, I was made committee chairman and sought a worthwhile project for our club. It would seem that some of our members were tired of just going "cavin'" every weekend and actually wished to do something constructive. A project we (the committee) felt would give individuals the opportunity to learn different aspects of caving; mapping; rigging; and biological, geological and hydrological studies. It is our intention to first map completely both caves and at the same time study their hydrology, geology and biology. Since the two caves are located so close together, we would like to find out if they are or could be connected and if not, why not.

Higgenbotham #1 (often called Devil's Slide) and Higgenbotham #2 are located on the eastern side of Knob Mountain in Thompson Valley, a few miles south of Tazwell, Virginia. Their entrances are both found in the bottom of sinkholes less than 1000 feet apart in an area being prolific with caves and karst features. Both are considered to be pit caves and little work has been done in either until recent years. A "more often than not" stream makes the entrance and exploration of #2 very miserable, while a 140 ft. drop close to the entrances of #1 makes its exit quite tiring and often times dangerous. Although neither cave has produced much in the way of beautiful formations, the large rooms and passageways, the wells and pits, and the bat populations make them worth seeing.

To date I have been a member of six trips to the two caves, the purposes and contributions of which are listed below.

Higgenbotham #1 - Exploration - saw good portion of cave.

Higgenbotham #1 - Exploration - stopped at drop due to dangerous rock and breakdown.

Higgenbotham #1 - Blasting trip - to remove breakdown hazzard - unsuccessful.

Higgenbotham #2 - Exploration, on which we were able to reach the stream passage and probably lowest level of cave; over 300 feet below the entrance. Many pits and leads left unexplored.

Higgenbotham #1 - Surveying trip. Mapped from the bottom of the 140 into the cave; 1500 feet.

Higgenbotham #1 - Survey trip. Picked up where we left off last time and mapped an additional 1800 feet, with plenty of big leads and all small leads still left unsurveyed.

Since the 140 foot drop and also 3300 feet of sometimes difficult passage must be traversed to reach the beginning of the unmapped section, it would seem that the most desirable surveying party would now be one which would have a base camp deep within the cave and would live in the cave for a few days. (Anyone interested, say over next Thanksgiving.)

When a survey of #1 is completed we will run a line between the entrances of the two caves, noting the locations

and depths of the sinkholes between the two. It is easy to see that the complete survey of #2 will also take many trips, but I don't relish the idea of a base camp in this very dangerous (due to flooding) cave.

While much work is still to be done, we have already learned much from our trips and experiences and are able to follow our progress while drawing in the map and writing up notes. These caves promise to be two of Virginia's deepest and if linked together, one of its longest.

(EDITOR'S NOTE: Since this article was written it has been learned that Ed will not be with us during the coming year, due to accademic difficulties. It is hoped that the work he has initiated as first chairman of the club's Project & Program Committee will be continued.)

TRIP REPORT: HIGGENBOTHAM #1

by Gregg Marland

The most recent trip to Higgenbotham #1 in Tazewell County, Virginia for the purpose of doing additional surveying, turned out to be one of the most eventful trips in which I have ever participated. Leaving school on a Saturday afternoon, Ed Bauer, Ed Day and myself were looking forward to a hard trip into the cave, a short rest, a quick trip to Cauliflower Cave to collect a specimen of the long eared bat which was noted there last fall (this considerably extends its geographic distribution), and an uneventful ride home, but little did we know of what lay ahead.

If you have ever ridden with the two Eds while they are taking turns driving to see who can drift through the turns on the mountainous roads the best, you might be able to imagine the torture I went through. That is until Ed Day over-drifted. It seems the corner was too steep and some fool had put some loose gravel in the street and some other fool (bless his soul) had put up some guard rails along the edge of the road, at the top of the cliff leading down to the creek below. In any event, we packed the chrome neatly into the back seat and drove screeching down the street with both front wheels pointing out, and about 20 degrees off of parallel. Luckily after only a few miles we arrived in the thriving metropolis of Tazewell, Virginia, and were able to locate an open garage. Unwilling to take a personal check, the attendant was given 12 of our combined total of 13-3/4 dollars. Hungarly we headed for a nearby restaurant, ate

our fill, and then attacked the bill. Confronted with a choice of a personal check or three new dishwashers, the owner finally accepted the check - the only one amongst us.

We arrived at the cave a short time later, and after ascending the steep climb to the entrance rigged the 140 foot drop. It is interesting to note that because the drop is about 150 feet inside of the cave, and there is no place to rig the rope inside of the cave, we generally tie in to a large rock formation at the entrance. The rope then runs 130 feet down a 25 degree slope, drops vertically for 15 feet, runs horizontally for 20 feet, and then plunges 140 feet to the main level of the cave. We tied a nylon rope at the entrance, ran it down over the short drop which we descended via a French Rappel, and planned to ascend hand-over-hand (remember this idle boast later on), and ran it through an expansion bolt placed in the wall to eliminate rubbing of the rope and make the break-over easier. Just below the bolt we tied it to the manilla rope on which we would descend. The drop is free space all of the way except for one sloping ledge, too small to stand on, which juts out slightly. For the last half of the descent you are close enough to the wall that it can be used to prevent spinning, and also close enough to place you in the waterfall that is likewise descending. This is no problem when both are descending, but when you start up, the wet rope and icy water are not generally spoken of in kind terms.

Below the drop the cave continues as a very narrow, winding fissure type passage with one moderate sized room containing a waterfall, two short rappels, and two very interesting little climbs. After nearly 400 feet a big "T" intersection is reached, and so much cave has been found to the left, I have yet to even enter the right hand passage beyond the first room. This room contained many dead bats, the three freshest of which we collected. Their ultimate fate since being removed from the cave for an autopsy I do not know,

Heading to the left into big passage we took time off at several points to climb up on ledges and jump into the soft knee-deep bat guano. One of the amazing features of this cave is the vast amount of guano, much of it still in a damp, fresh condition, and the small number of bats that have been actually noted to date.

After passing through length of subway tunnels, a single dome-pit, under the natural bridge, and up through the tremendous accumulations of damp, still odiferous guano which covers a steep slope up to knee deep and makes the ascent most interesting, we began checking the several small holes which marked the termination of our original survey. In one ridiculously small and tortuous squirm-way I lost most of my shirt but fell through into a passage even larger than that we had just left. Running in both directions we surveyed through 40 foot wide, 40 foot high passage into a meandering stream passage and eventually back into our original survey at an obscure hole near the natural bridge. Returning in the opposite direction down passages of similar dimensions, with three survey shots in access of 100 feet, and several very promising side passages, we finally abandoned the project for the time being, while still in passage 10' by 30' . . . , with 1800 feet of survey notes and a long and arduous trip out awaiting.

Arriving at the bottom of the drop, after considerable grunting and groaning (especially by Ed Day), and approximately eleven hours after descending, I proceeded to prussik out in a fairly respectable 13 or so minutes. I then rigged a ladder for the others, but the ladder turned out to be twenty feet too short. Laboring under the now-admitted misconception that a ladder climb is easier, they prussiked to the bottom of the ladder and then climbed up , to crawl exhausted over the lip some minutes later. Packing our gear, we now turned to the easy little 15 foot drop and the daylight somewhere above.

It was now nearly 7 A.M. and we had been on the go since that time the previous day, including four hours of classes, and three of travel before entering the cave, and it was just too much for us. If you've ever tried to climb hand over hand on a vertical flowstone wall on a rubberband (120' of nylon stretched out above) you can understand our problem. After two trials apiece and considerable banging around with the stretch and pull of the rope, we became determined not to give in to the obviously simple solution and prussik up that rotten little wall. Instead we set our inventive genius to work for a way to conquer the wall without submitting to prussiks. Reaching as high as possible, we tied a butterfly knot in the rope and Bauer pulled himself up until he was standing in the butterfly and now stretched nearly half way to the floor. I then added my weight and stretched the rope until we were both on the floor. By now we had taken in nearly ten feet of stretch, so I tied a single prussik as high as I could get into and stood up in it. When Bauer let go of the end

of the rope, I sprung up over the edge and then helped the others up from above. We call it the "slingshot" rappel, but admit that its application is limited.

We were sitting beside the car devouring some nourishment when the rains came. I was half asleep by then anyhow, so they rolled me under the car and they both climbed inside and in this fashion we slept for several hours.

With a little gasoline and a couple of cokes, we pocketed our remaining 11 cents, voted to forget Cauliflower cave, and headed home. To make the weekend really complete, we ran over a dog on the way home.

LOST AND FOUND

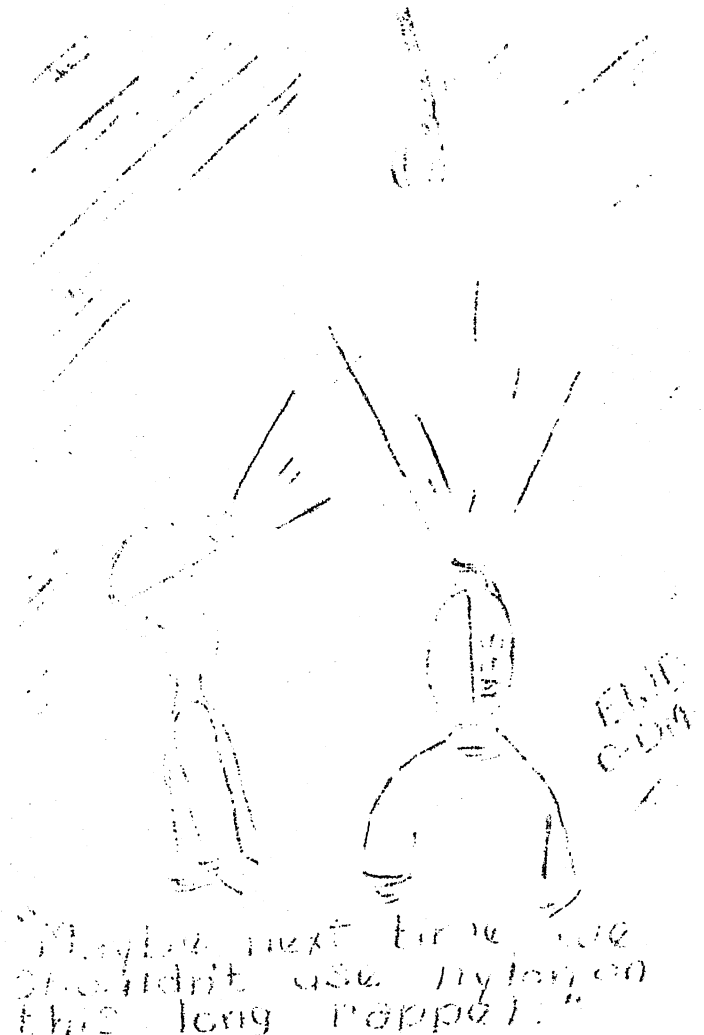
Anyone who might come across a pair of eye glasses in Laurel Creek Cave, Monroe County, West Virginia, is asked to get in contact with Bill Lipscomb, 534 Walnut Ave., S. W., Roanoke, Virginia. We understand that the dog he is working with now doesn't like long rappels nor tight crawlways.

PROJECT WORK TRIP - GIANT CAVE

by Ed Bauer

The purpose of this Sunday afternoon trip was two fold; first to take pictures for the Conservation slide-lecture program which the V.P.I. Grotto is preparing, and secondly to clean up the cave,

This ex-commercial cavern, also called Hopkins Cave, is located about 35 miles from Blacksburg just outside the town of Narrows, Virginia. The entrance is at the bottom of a crevice type of sink and a belay and cable ladder should be used



for the last 15 feet of the 100 ft. climb. The cave itself is primarily one large room several hundred feet long, and in excess of 100 feet wide and 50 feet high in places. Several walkways and crawl passages lead off from the main chamber, and a small stream is found at the lowest level. The massiveness of many of the columns, draperies and speleothems is overwhelming and many large rimstone pools, filled and empty, were probably one of the main commercial attractions. Several large chunks of breakdown "as large as a house" which lie near the center of the room make one wonder just how stable the ceiling is.

Armed with buckets, brushes, a shovel, and plenty of elbow grease, Dave Rice, Dave Culler, Jim Charlton, Phil Lucas, Ed Day and myself entered the cave with the primary hope of leaving the cave in better condition than we found it. Our first objective was to clean the writing and signatures off of the many walls and formations which over the past years have been adorned with such acts of vandalism. With buckets of water and stiff brushes we scraped and scrubbed until the walls were clean. At the same time some of us collected trash such as paper, flash-bulbs, glass insulators, reflectors and tin cans and buried them in holes throughout the cave. Carbide deposits were quite a problem, but a mixture of mud and water made most of them unrecognizable. We left with the feeling that we had actually accomplished something and anyone who has been to Giant before will have to agree that the cave is closer to its natural state and more beautiful than it has been for the past few decades. I feel that one more short trip of perhaps four to five hours underground will complete the conservation work necessary in this cave. I am sure that anyone who is caught defacing a cave by any one of the members of this hard working party will be risking his life and limb and would do better to protect himself with the flame of his carbide lamp than to use it for writing his name on the walls. (How do cavers with electric lights put their names on cave walls?) (How do they protect themselves?) Before leaving the cave we placed a cave register and pencil, enclosed in a large plastic bottle, near the entrance.

During the trip four forms of life were observed (not including the cows by the entrance). A bat and a frog, both unidentifiable, managed to elude us, while a seven inch Eurycea lucifuga gave us the opportunity of taking his picture. As we were preparing to climb the ladder, a 5' Elaphe obsoleta obsoleta (look it up) greeted us with its black coils. None of us knowing too much about snakes, nor

wanting to learn from experience, we beat a hasty retreat to the surface. Tired but never too tired to restrain comment on Ed's driving, we arrived back at Tech at about 11:00 P.M.

GIANT CAVE

by Ed Day

A group of six of us went to Giant Cave on Saturday afternoon, April 21st. The party consisted of Tom Lamons, Zeke Fuller, Gary McCutchen, Byron McCutchen, a friend of Zeke's by the name of Kermit, and myself. The cave is just outside of Narrows, Virginia.

The entrance is in a small, but deep sink, dropping a total of 100 feet. The first 60' is a rather easy climb, but most people prefer to rappel. The rest of the drop is steeper, ending in about 15' of free space. We rigged a cable ladder on this last part. The free section was cluttered with logs in an improvised ladder, which we judged unsafe and removed.

Once inside, exploration of the cave is simple. It consists mostly of two large rooms. The cave abounds in speleothems of every type and is quite impressive, though sections are badly vandalized. As a project, this club intends to clean it up somewhat. Giant was commercial back in the '30's and must have been quite a sight. Now the old commercial entrance is filled in and most of the wooden walkways are disintegrated into humus.

We left the cave at dark and returned to find my car surrounded by cows. We managed to chase them and got ourselves out of there. We subsequently learned that the farmer had had to pen his bull to keep him from attacking the bright yellow convertible.

LINK'S CAVE

by Ed Day

Link's, a very small cave near Newport is one of the most photogenic caves in this area. Its passage is measured in hundreds of feet and it can be thoroughly examined without refueling your lamp, but the cave is literally packed with formations and it is a favorite subject of Techmen's cameras.

On Thursday afternoon, May 5, Pete Stoller and Pat O'Meara asked me to go to Link's with them and to bring my rope. I thought they were crazy for this cave is about as

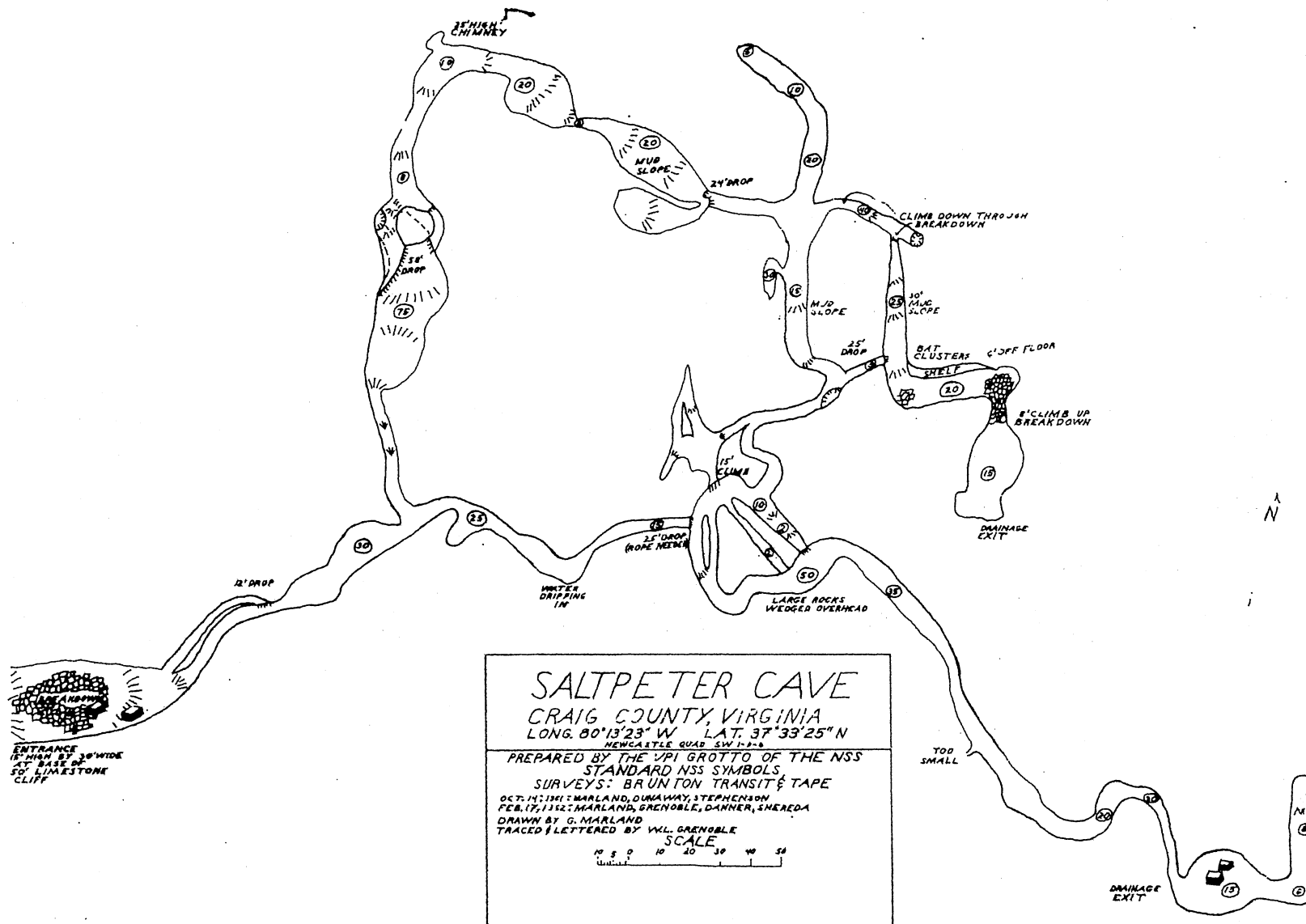
horizontal as you can get. I was even more skeptical when they said they were going to check a virgin lead. We went about halfway to the back of the cave, and started up a chimney. From the top of the chimney we continued up in a passage that was obviously quite well traveled. It ended in a small room with two high leads and a low one. One of the high leads was above a flowstone wall and we saw it wouldn't be easy to reach. On a hunch, Pete took a shovel to the wall and the thin flowstone broke, exposing a hard mud underneath. He proceeded to cut footholds and handholds. After a few minutes he turned it over to me. When I reached the top of the wall the lead was virgin sure enough, but went only six feet. I crawled in as far as I could and started digging out the floor. Before long, I was able to squeeze through into a tiny room full of soda straws. That is the last time I'll have doubts about virgin passage even in a well explored cave like Link's.

EDITORIAL:

A suggestion has been received from Jim Hixson of the Nittany Grotto concerning the subscription rates of this publication, which seems worthy of consideration, and is therefore offered here for the consideration and comment of Grotto members and subscribers. The problem arises from the fact that we can never be sure how many issues will appear during a year or how thick those issues will be. At present it appears that we will be able to maintain our originally planned quarterly publication rate, but it is still uncertain as to the thicknesses, which have already exceeded expectations, and it seems certain that we will suffer a loss this year and find it necessary to increase the subscription rates next January.

Mr. Hixson writes, "Here at Nittany we have much the same problem as you. We don't really know how many issues will come out each year or how thick they will be. It all depends on the editors, members, etc. What we do is to collect any amount from subscribers that they want to send in and then charge them 1-1/4¢ per page of newsletter they get." He continues to explain that the cost of each issue is subtracted from the ballance until such time that the ballance falls below 25¢. At this time a notice is sent with the current issue that the ballance has fallen below the minimum amount.

This seems like a very practical suggestion and is presented here for the comments of our readers.



SALTPETER CAVE
 CRAIG COUNTY, VIRGINIA
 LONG. 80°13'23" W LAT. 37°33'25" N
 NEWCASTLE QUAD SW 1-2-S

PREPARED BY THE VPI GROTTO OF THE NSS
 STANDARD NSS SYMBOLS
 SURVEYS: BRUNTON TRANSIT & TAPE
 OCT. 14, 1961: MARLAND, DUNAWAY, STEPHENSON
 FEB. 17, 1962: MARLAND, GRENABLE, DANNER, SHEREDA
 DRAWN BY G. MARLAND
 TRACED & LETTERED BY VKL. GRENABLE

SCALE
 0 10 20 30 40 50
 Feet

MORE WORK IN SOUTHWEST VIRGINIA

by Gregg Marland

Over Easter weekend, that sure seems like a long time ago, but this is the first occasion I have had to report the findings of this amazing venture into the unknown; John "Karst" Holsinger, Kitty Flick, Bonnie Stephenson, and myself headed down into the wilds of Scott county to search for new caves, collect biological specimens, and to check out two very promising Karst areas.

Rock House Cave at Banners Corner, Russell County, was the first stop for the weekend. This cave lies directly under the county high school and a few nearby homes, all of which have septic tanks. There is a stream in the cave, the level of which fluctuates as the people above wash the dishes or flush the toilet. The walls are stained with waste and an analysis of a water sample taken at Thanksgiving shows an alarming degree of pollution. The cave really shoots the theory of how sewage, etc. are harmful to cave fauna for the walls of the cave are literally crawling with isopods and planarians and in the stream we found several of the purple salamander Gyrinophilus porphyriticus porphyriticus which are nearly 8 inches long, and as fat as I have ever seen. John spent considerable time and effort photographing the specimens and their habitat, and then went to change the film in his camera. The look on his face when he opened the camera and realized, as the roll of film uncoiled in the light of our carbide lamps, that he had forgotten to reroll it into the can would be impossible to describe. Having heard that planarians devour isopods, we collected four of each in a small container of their familiarly polluted water and set them aside for several hours. We were quite surprised to find, only a short time later, that the vial contained only the four isopods, the planarians having furnished the meal.

We then continued south to a high upland plateau, primarily of carbonate rocks, and with two major springs at its base. Four caves were located but the water table was so high that we were unable to penetrate for any distance in the only two that showed promise. A crayfish was noted in one, and it got a good pinch hold on Holsinger before escaping into the darkness.

Looking for a place to spend the night, we got our first taste of the local dialect. "Hits okay to sleep cheer hif you make shet of the gat after you're hin." We finally translated that to mean that we could sleep in his field if we closed the gate behind us.

The next day we went to check Carter Cave on the East Stone Gap quadrangle. The owner was not at home, but we found the cave easily and descended the pit-like entrance, from where the cave descended rapidly into a large lake. A big spring emerges just a short distance away. Leaving the cave we started back across the one-man, log, foot bridge which separates the house from the highway. I went first and while right at midstream, the bridge neatly parted and I plunged into the water about five feet below. The others were able to cross okay by climbing on the debris, and we left the farmer a very apologetic note and my address, should he want some remuneration. (He apparently hasn't.)

Heading for Field's Cave, likewise on the East Stone Gap quad, we started the two mile hike up what seemed to be a 50% grade. A little over halfway, Kitty decided it couldn't be worth it and sat down in the grass to soak up a little sun. The cave has a large entrance but dips steeply along the bedding plane, until it rapidly becomes filled with clay. The single passage contains two concrete water basins along its 400 foot length, from which the local people draw their water during the dry seasons. The cave drains a large area, and in spite of its volume, probably is subjected to periodic flooding.

On our final day we went to check an area known as "The Sinks". A local resident told us "Hits just like the surface hof the moon." We found quite a few respectable sized sinkholes but the only cave was Blowing Cave, Stickleyville Quadrangle SE 3/8/7. The known length of the cave was very small in spite of the fact that Zeke somebody-or-other had gone into it and come out way over yonder. We did, however, find approximately 650 feet of virgin cave. It is one of those places that you can understand why it was virgin, and are tempted to wish it still was. It is reached by a small 20 foot pit, which is lined on all sides by cave coral (affectionately known out west as popcorn) and then a tight squeeze through the same stuff. I sacrificed a shirt for this one. Beyond this however it was an obviously virgin dirt bottomed, fairly well adorned passage which contained among other things, a salamander larvae. We took time to map this one, as it will probably be one of the biggest caves in Scott County (1,000 feet.)

We went down to enjoy the wild night life of "Gat City" before spending a good night at a girl scout camp (the girls weren't there) and heading home. Stopping one time for directions, we inquired as to the distance and were told by our informer "Hit hain't fur hif you folla the road."

An additional discussion of the karst areas visited, the caves visited (including brief descriptions and complete locations) and the findings of note can be found in the May issue of the D. C. Speleograph.

The 1960 edition of the Speleo Digest, published annually by the Pittsburgh Grotto of the NSS is now on sale, and may be purchased by mailing \$3.69 to Speleo Digest, 1251 N. Negley Ave., Pittsburgh, Pa. For those not familiar with this publication, it is "a collection of speleological writings taken from the publications of the Chapters of the National Speleological Society". It is a must for every caver's library as it contains the best articles from each of the grotto publications for the year. Cave reports and jokes are included along with both technical and practical articles.

BUTLER'S AND WARM RIVER CAVES

by Ed Bauer

On a chilly April 14, Ed Day, Gary McCutchen, Bill Lipscomb, Jim Charlton, and I piled into Jimmie's car and headed north for two of Virginia's best caves. Chris Schiek, Tom Bell, John Eads and Dave Culler were going to meet us in Williamsville, as was Gregg Marland who had to make an important purchase in Staunton. (Congratulations to Gregg and Bonnie who are now engaged.)

After several stops for picture taking along the route, we arrived in the area of Warm River Cave. This cave is located high on the mountain between Covington and Hot Springs on Route 220 in Alleghany County. We parked the car at an abandoned farm, got our gear together, and headed for the cave. At the base of a hill is a large resurgence of fairly warm water which is also the sight of what was once the world's largest watercress farm. Not having any vinegar with us, we decided to pass up this treat and headed for the cave, which is located still another 180 feet in elevation up the side of the hill.

The entrance is at the bottom of a small sinkhole and about 30 feet of rope is needed to negotiate the almost vertical walls. After safely reaching the bottom of the sink, our party hunted around for a while and finally managed to find its way through much breakdown until we reached the top of a short drop. Here we rigged a rope and descended. From here we crawled and slid through breakdown until we quite evidently were immediately above a good bit of water. At first we had quite a problem reaching the water level and could find no way down short of jumping, so, just as we ran out of possible ways to go, I solved the problem by falling backwards into the wet abyss. Not being hurt, I directed the others down by a now obvious route and we proceeded upstream waist deep in the chilly water.

This cave is entirely filled with breakdown and following a stream passage becomes quite a chore. Searching for the much publicized "warm river" we eventually found a small crack from which warm water was flowing. The crack was too small to permit entrance, so we searched around for awhile and finally found a way past the wall and into the warmer river passage. I would like to say here that I don't think that the passage we were about to enter is the warm river from which the cave gets its name. It was never so warm that we didn't feel like moving on and breathing never became difficult as many stories indicate should have happened in this passage. The water temperature was definitely not 89 degrees F. as is also often publicized.

After locating this warmer river, we swam, crawled, and floated upstream for probably close to 900 to 1000 feet. Several times it was necessary to duck under low ledges and once complete submersion was necessary to proceed. After reaching a room filled with pretty rimstone dykes we re-carbided, and swam on. Finally we agreed that it was getting late and our carbide supply was getting low, so we reluctantly turned around. (The passage continued on in tunnel like fashion with perhaps 9 inches of clearance between the water level and ceiling.) As we re-traced our steps we noticed quite often tube like passages which seemed to lead almost straight up from the water passage and were definitely worth checking the next time.

Emerging from the cave completely soaked, we quickly donned dry clothes and struck out for Williamsville. After making a short milk stop at a small grocery store and learning from the proprietor that the "whole mountain is hollow" we eventually reached Bob Roller's house on the Bull pasture River in Williamsville and met the rest of our party.

The next morning we rose bright and early (about 9:00 A.M.) and after a large breakfast we decided to go back to sleep. Oscar Estes had other ideas, however, and before long we were at the entrance of nearby Butler's Cave.

After unlocking the single chain which effectively keeps cavers from entering the 9"x18" entrance to Virginia's largest cave, we rappelled down some 30 feet, slithered through mud and the infamous "Glop Slot" and eventually worked our way to large size passage. Here we broke up into two groups; an exploration group and a photography group.

Our exploration group continued on back into the cave until we were far into what is known as crystal passage. Here gypsum crystals cover the walls, floor and ceiling and tiny needles can be found on close inspection. Aside from the speleothems and size of the rooms, one of Butler's greatest beauties lies in the fact that very little spent carbide and no

carbide markings on walls are in evidence.

Retracing our steps, the next stop was the Moon Room, which has been carefully preserved by cavers walking along well worn trails and not over untouched areas. After gaping and gasping at its beauty we again retreated, this time into Helectite Passage, which abounds in a profusion of large Helectites.

From here it was just a short dash to the entrance and then to our cars. While undressing in a subfreezing gale, we were approached by the owner of the land on which we had parked. Due to the fact that a couple of people (cavers?) had tried to formulate a hill climb on one of his hills with their sportscars last summer, he asked that we spread the word to park on the roadside from now on. He does not mind, however, if we want to walk (crawl on the way back) across his land to gain access to the cave.

Hurrying back to Bob's cabin, we hastily ate a wonderful spaghetti dinner which this grand old man of the mountains had prepared for us, said our fond farewells to all and headed back to Tech.

VIRGINIA REGION PROJECT - McCLUNG'S CAVE

Some fifty seven cavers turned out for the spring Virginia Region Project, which was held at McClung's Cave, Greenbriar County, West Virginia on May 12th and 13th. Both John Holsinger and Walter Lipton did an excellent job in coordinating the mapping and exploration of McClung's and Luddington caves.

Over thirty people entered McClung's on Saturday and during the course of the day and night over one mile of this extensive cave was mapped. Almost all of Luddington was completely mapped. More information on this project, along with a complete list of participants, can be found in the May issue of the D. C. Speleograph.

THE TROGLODYTE GOES INTERNATIONAL

We were very pleased to receive the other day the following letter from Austria. With the receipt of this letter, and our more than happy compliance, we add another publication to our files and another subscriber to our list. Also, we can now claim to be an international publication. Since I will be taking German in the fall, this should be a more than

welcome addition to my reading list, and I hope soon to be able to offer some kind of translation for those who may be desirous of widening their knowledge of caves to include an acquaintance with our Austrian counterparts.

"We learned from the DC Speleograph Vol.18, No. 5 about the paper "The Tech Troglodyte" issued by you. As we would be very much interested in receiving this publication regularly we would like to establish with you an exchange of speleological literature offering you for equivalent our "Die Hohle" appearing quarterly and enjoying great popularity in the German speaking countries.

"Looking forward to taking up a brisk exchange of literature with you we remain

Yours very truly

VERBAND OSTERREICHISCHER HOHLENFORSCHER

/s/ Dr. Hubert Trimmel "

SLIDE SHOW SUCCESSFUL

by Gregg Marland

Among the talks presented at the recent N.S.S. Convention in Custer, S. Dakota, was a slide series presented by myself as a preview of the Convention to be held at Mountain Lake in Giles County during June of next year. The slides were taken by various members of the Grotto; Larry Griffin, Jim Saunders, Bob Ralph, Bonnie Stephenson, and Ed Bauer and merely collected by myself for presentation at that time. The forty-some slides blended together for a very interesting and representative picture of what can be expected by those planning to attend the convention here.

Since the convention the slides have been shown by the Central Indiana Grotto and the possibility of copying them to donate for a year's use of the N.S.S. visual aids committee has been considered. In this case a descriptive dialogue would have to be assembled. It is believed that it would make an enjoyable program for the various grottoes during the next year, and would probably encourage participation in the 1963 convention. This is a matter to be considered by the club when it reorganizes in September.

The purpose of this article is to recognize and thank those individuals for the free and unselfish loan of their photographic bests. They have been seen and enjoyed by many; also it is hoped that the success of this program will encourage the club toward the completion of a slide series on conservation which it has voted to undertake.

LETTERS:

Dear Editor: On behalf of those who have the greatest interest in James Cave, I want to thank you for your kindness in publishing my protest to the recent article by Mr. Griffin. As you seem to agree, it would indeed be unfortunate for incorrect impressions of the matter to be created in the minds of "individuals not acquainted with the entire situation".

At the risk of becoming tiresome however, I will comment on a few points in the follow-up article, Sara Corrie, who is quite well acquainted with the entire situation, acted in good faith. She was, as we all were, shocked and dismayed by the tone and content of the article. Her reply was not as carefully prepared as my letter and perhaps was too hastily written; but since it was not addressed to the editor, nor intended for publication, is certainly not open to the same criticisms as the article to which it refers.

Larry's contention that his article was not a scientific work and merely intended for the people at VPI is certainly invalid. As the official organ for a segment of the NSS, your publication is no less responsible for its content than would be the News or Bulletin. Nor is it restricted to VPI, having virtually nationwide distribution through inter-grotto exchange. The statement that Larry did not claim credit for the map is weak; the uninformed reader assumes that the entire content of any article is the work of its author unless he gives credits to the contrary, whether the article appears in the Scientific American or the Hobo News. Responsibility is the key word here, whether scientific or "popular", and is pertinent at all levels.

As to future publications on the cave, at least two are currently in preparation. It is hoped therefore that your readers may not have to wait too long before seeing these in print within the society's publications. It is very doubtful, however, if there is any one who can give an accurate picture, completely without bias. Larry has managed to alienate nearly everyone who might otherwise qualify - long before his recent article.

/s/ GLEN K. MERRILL

ADDITIONS TO THE "BLACKLIST"

In keeping with The Tech Troglodyte's policy of publishing the names of present or recent members of the VPI Cave Club whose names are found written in caves, the following

additions to our "Black List" are to be noted. It is hoped that the policy of calling to public attention the incidents of vandalism that can be directly attributed to individuals will increase an awareness of the need for the elimination of these practices, and will encourage people to remove their own and other names where possible. The ultimate goal would be, of course, the restoration of all caves to as near as possible their natural state and the elimination of future acts of vandalism.

In the party room of Breathing Cave, Bath County, Virginia:
"George Fairer".

On the Guillotine Stone in Schoolhouse Cave, Pendleton
County, W. Va. - "Fairer 4902" "John Jacob Danner Jr.
VPI 4/17/60"

ATTEND YOUR LOCAL GROTTO MEETINGS

This may seem like a late date to offer this suggestion, but it is hoped that our members who are at home for the summer months will take advantage of the opportunity to attend, where possible, meetings of local grottoes. It is not difficult to obtain the address of the nearest grotto and hence the meeting time and place. Two months still remain and offer opportunities to get in on interesting programs or just get an interesting view of what the rest of the world is doing and how we stack up.

Since many of our members live in the Washington area, I shall add that the D.C. Grotto meets the first Tuesday of each month, 8:00 P.M., in the Georgetown Library.

Last month I took the time to attend the D.C. Grotto meeting and heard an excellent talk on the "Mohole Project", given by one of its officials and accompanied by a movie and a basalt drill core brought up from over 550 feet beneath the ocean bottom. The object of the project is to drill through the earth's crust at one of its thinnest spots (it is as thin as 3 to 4 miles at some points on the ocean's floor). The problems of keeping the drilling rig steady in the open ocean, and drilling many thousands of feet beneath ocean floor were discussed.

While attending this meeting and the July meeting of the Baltimore Grott, I was impressed with the organization, order, and group participation which are found at our meetings. I was very pleased to find that our meetings compared so favorably with those of other groups. With an increase in the number of programs, our meetings would be second to none I have witnessed.

Before attending the Baltimore Grotto meeting, I called and offered to present our slide show on Mountain Lake, but when I got there I found that no one had thought to bring a slide projector. At the meeting I sat between a baby whale and a tarantula. Laugh if you want, but the meeting was held in the Baltimore Zoo, sitting three abreast in the aisle between the skeleton of a baby blue whale and a showcase of mounted wildlife. (I thought I ought to give a full explanation as my sister might not like being called a baby whale, and I'm sure Bonnie wouldn't think much of being referred to as a tarantula.

LOOKING FOR CAVING TRIPS?

Since most of our cave trips are spur-of-the-moment affairs, it is impossible to suggest a schedule of trips for those interested. However, we might remind members of the Old Timer's Reunion in Franklin, West Virginia over Labor Day weekend. We also understand that Ed Bauer will be in the Williamsville area, probably camping out at the Gravel Pile, over that same weekend. For trips originating in the Northern Virginia area, contact Bonnie Stephenson or Ed Day. Bill Grenoble is supposed to be at Blacksburg for the second semester of summer school for trips in that area. During registration time, or the first week of school, watch the bulletin board in the S.A.B. or come by room 108 Barringer. Good caving.

ASSORTED NOTES ON TWC ~~SHORT~~ TRIPS TO MARYLAND AND NEARBY WEST VIRGINIA CAVES

by Gregg Marland

1. In Whittings Neck Cave, Berkeley County, West Virginia, a wooden ladder a short distance from the southern entrance at a 15 foot climb, is no longer there. The ladder was completely rotten, the main support was split, and when one rung gave way beneath my weight, the entire ladder was declared unsafe and totally destroyed to discourage those who might be tempted to "risk it". The climb is very difficult without the ladder and we spent 45 minutes, finally resorting to a butterfly knot ladder, making the ascent. It is suggested that cavers visiting the cave enter by the other entrance, which is 220 feet to the northwest.

2. Twigg's Cave, the largest cave in Maryland, is at least temporarily closed. The owner has been informed by his lawyer that he is responsible for accidents which might occur in his cave, and we were unable to convince him to

the contrary. He was also provoked because many people who were denied permission were sneaking in anyhow.

3. At least two Maryland caves have yielded troglobitic organisms. Both Boonesboro Crystal Grottoes and John Friend's Cave yielded troglobitic specimens, as did Moler's Cave, Jefferson County, W. Va. Those collected in Crystal Grottoes are believed to be the first found in a Maryland Cave. Millipedes, isopods, and an amphipod were located in Molers; millipedes and a spider in Crystal Grottoes; and isopods and springtails in John Friend's. Watch forthcoming issues of the D. C. Speleograph for an identification of these organisms.

4. Since banging his head on a stalactite in Crystal Grottoes, Maryland's only commercial cave, John Holsinger could bear a little watching. After setting the entire cave reverbrating with the blow, John emerged from the cave and walked directly into the ladies rest room (luckily for him it was uninhabited.)

COMMERCIAL CAVE OWNERS HAVE VANDALISM PROBLEMS

by Gregg Marland

While pouring over the evening paper the other night I came across an article entitled "Found Fortune in Caves". Hal Boyle's syndicated column discussed the problems encountered by Harry Myers and Bill Vananda in commercializing Tuckaleechee Caverns, Tennessee, and the subsequent successes they have had. The article quoted Mr Myers answer to the question, "what is the biggest headache of a commercial cave proprietor?" and I felt that it was worth repeating.

"It's that one out of every 150 visitors - and usually it's an adult, not a teenager - who wants to break off one of the rock formations for a souvenir.

"Water has to drip 100 years to make a single inch of stalagmite. It may take nature 10,000 years to form just one small crystal spire - and then some joker comes along and breaks it in a second.

"And when he gets it above the ground, what does he have? Just a piece of worthless stone. It has no meaning except in the cave where it grew."

That reminds me, also, of the comment of our guide on a recent trip to Boonesboro Crystal Grottoes, Maryland, who stated, "If they can't break it off, they write on it."

ASSORTED NOTES ON A FOUR DAY CAVE TRIP IN THE HIGHLAND
COUNTY AREA OF VIRGINIA

by Gregg Marland

1.) My sister loves caving. On her first trip, to Marshall Cave in Highland County, the comment heard most often was, "Take me out, I'm going to be sick. I think I'm going to throw up." Later comments, after she had escaped alive and without being sick, indicate that she might be talked into it again.

2.) Avoid Ware's Cave in Alleghany County, just north of Covington, unless you have a strong stomach. The place is full of dead sheep. Before my eyes were fully adjusted to the dark I stepped on one. The second was all bloated; the third was head first between two boulders, one of which was covered with blood. All three are highly odiferous and have to be climbed over to get into the main portion of the cave.

3.) The Wagon Wheel Restaurant in Crows is an excellent place to eat....if you have lots of time and patience. I do not exaggerate when I say that we spent fully 90 minutes waiting for our orders of cheeseburgers, french fries, and salads. Half of the order was missing, one hard-working caver passed out from hunger while waiting, and it took "Mrs. Einstein" 30 minutes to figure out the bill. Another caver was lost when the outhouse rolled off the 40 foot precipice behind the restaurant.

4.) I would like to suggest the addition of a third word to the name of a well-known Highland County cave. The word is "amen", the cave is Better Forgotten (amen).

5.) Aqua Cave, Highland County, is now entered easily without getting wet. The new owner, Mr. Ellis, is hospitable to cavers, quite unlike to ex-owner, Mr. Emmett Lockridge, who is known to have driven off several cavers at gun point. The water level in the spring has been lowered by a bulldozer and the swim-in entrance can now be negotiated by crawling on boards which span the lake. The natural entrance, a deep siphon through which explorers passed before the small entrance was opened, seems to have been blocked during the moving of the rocks. The cave contains the best examples of pot holes that I have ever seen. It is also interesting for the fact that the inside is almost totally black, being coated with a layer, almost as if everything had had a layer of tar poured over it, which I understand to be a manganese compound. A sample was analyzed by Sam Dunaway, and a hasty study revealed a considerable amount of iron. The cave terminates in a series of siphons, several of which have been penetrated by divers. Several thousand feet of cave can now be seen without getting wet.
