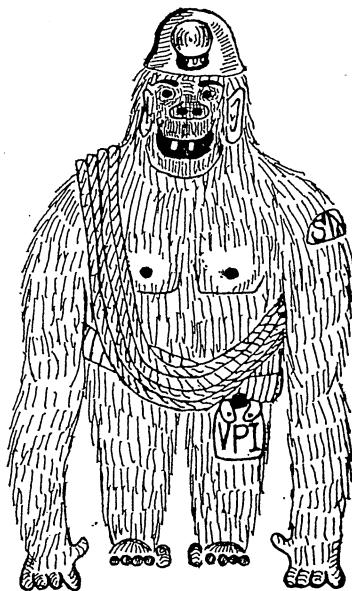


THE TECH TROGLODYTE

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

Vol. III, No. 1

Fall Quarter, 1964



Grotto Officers

President.....Rick Nolting
Vice-president..John Eads
Secretary.....Sally Carlson
Treasurer.....Gary McCutchen

Staff

Editor.....Gary McCutchen
Box B-5
Va Tech Station A
Blacksburg, Va.
Managing Editor..R. Whittemore

TABLE OF CONTENTS

0. COVER: A controversial photograph of Zeke Fuller.
1. TABLE OF CONTENTS: A humorous satire article.
2. EDITOR'S COLUMN: Or, the usual excuses for not publishing on time. (Gary McCutchen)
3. THE KARABINER PRUSIK: An analysis of the revolutionary Rbs knot, and how to tie it without a diagram. (Dan Meier)
7. LETTERS TO THE EDITOR: More humor.
8. THE NEW RIVER ENIGMA: A triology on Giles County's largest cave. (R. E. Whittemore, A. J. Murry, J. Grenoble)
7. A NEW WEST VIRGINIA CAVE: If you can find it! (Jim Charlton)
12. A MODEST PROPOSAL: In order to maintain our membership in the Feudin' Fraternity. (Gary McCutchen)
13. NEW (?) PASSAGE: Or, Misery is a Wet Crawlway. (Whittemore)
14. TRIP REPORTS: Semi-fiction articles by real cavers.
17. COLOR CODE IDENTIFICATION: ...since none of our members can read. (Gary McCutchen)
18. THE NEWBERRY INCIDENT: The first factual account of what really happened. (Gary McCutchen)
20. CAVING IN MEXICO: Rambling notes of a rambling trip. (Eubank)
22. A NEW MERCER COUNTY (WEST VIRGINIA) CAVE: Even though it has existed since prehistoric times. (Gary McCutchen)
24. BLUNDERS INTO BLAND: Just as the title implies. (R. M. Nolting, III)
26. V.P.I. GROTTO RESEARCH DEPARTMENT: Or, caving in Newport News, Virginia. (Sam Dunaway)
27. NEWCASTLE MURDER HOLE REOPENED — BUT! ...only to the V.P.I. Gratto. (R. E. Whittemore)
28. BACK COVER: Controversial photograph of Lew Bicking.

EDITOR'S COLUMN

The VPI Grotto has weathered its worse year since the Catawba Murder Hole accident.

A feud over leadership systems, which had threatened to split the club for two years, came to a head with a motion to expell a member. A near-fatal accident in Newberry's Cave united the club during the rescue, but brought unfair criticism upon the club as a whole by Bill Plummer, who also makes mistakes, especially when writing nasty articles about the VPI Grotto.

There have been a number of changes around here. Gregg Marland is caving in Missouri and going to school in his spare time, leaving the TROGLODYTE for me to nurse. "Vertical Whitt," a former vice-president, is back--again. Credit him for most of the typing, all of the drawings and maps, and several articles in this issue.

Rick Nolting, our new president, succeeds Whitey Eubank, VPI's Man in the West. Our vice-president, the "big little caver," is John Eads. He heads both the safety committee and the trainee program, two important jobs.

Our secretary is a cute co-ed caver called Sally Carlson. I'm the treasurer. While all the cavers are watching Sally, I steal the money.

As of this issue, the subscription rate changes. The TROGLODYTE now costs 1¢ per page. Old subscriptions will be allowed to run out before the new policy is put into effect for them. If you are a subscriber, you will be notified when your previous subscription expires. Then just send us some money (\$3 to \$5 is a good amount). The rate of 1¢/page will be deducted from the amount you send until the money is used up. You will then be notified of this fact. One dollar, for instance, will buy 100 pages of printed matter.

Winter quarter caving trips totaled 896 man-hours. The most popular caves were the Newberry-Banes system and Greenville Salt peter, with five trips apiece. The Newberry-Banes system also collected the most man-hours: 210. In all, 37 caving trips were reported for the quarter, with 20 different caves visited.

Spring quarter caving slacked off slightly for a total of 749 man-hours. The Newberry-Banes system racked up a high total of 281 man-hours, nearly half of the total. New River Cave came in second with 120. Only 11 different caves were visited for a total of 21 trips.

Since it has happened before, we would like to state that the opinions, beliefs, ideas, etc. mentioned in the articles are those of the author only, not of the entire Grotto or of other Grotto members.

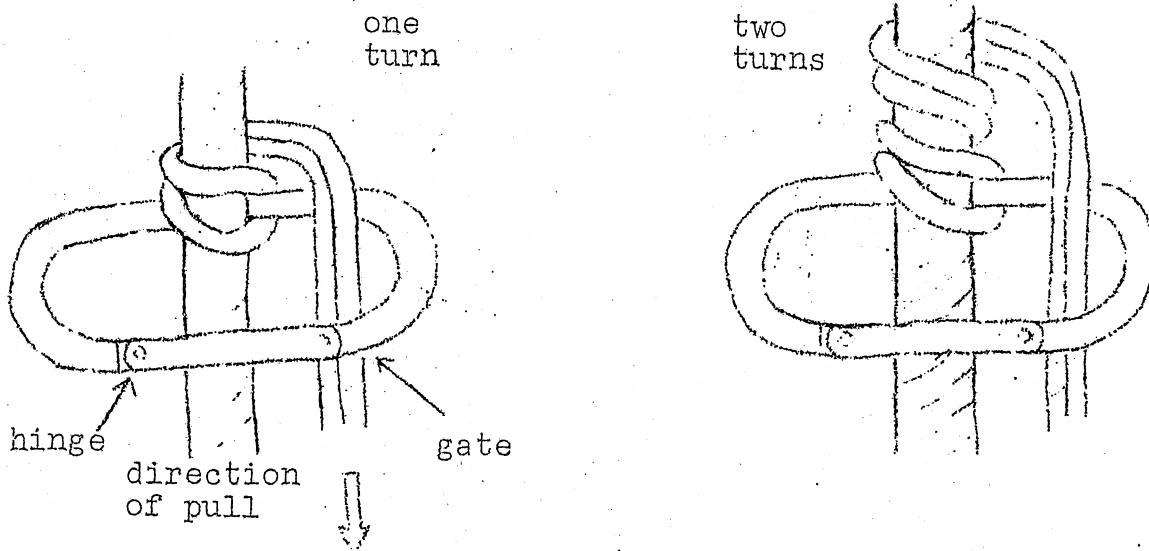
It looks like a good year for the VPI Grotto. In fact, we are thinking about a Baltimore Extension to revitalize the depleted Baltimore Grotto. They were fooling everyone with all those fictitious names. How about it, Baltimore?

THE KARABINER PRUSIK

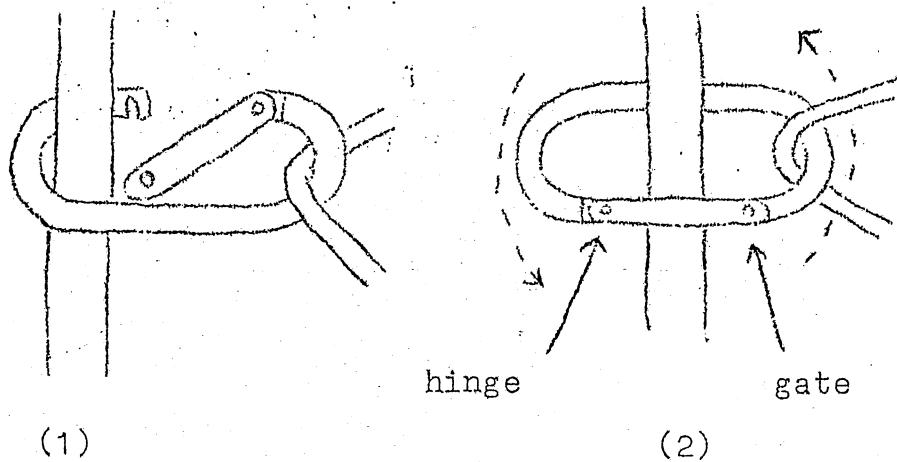
the karabiner prusik is a semi-mechanical prusik knot suitable for use in climbing a rope (but not as a safety prusik, such as a chest prusik when rappelling.)

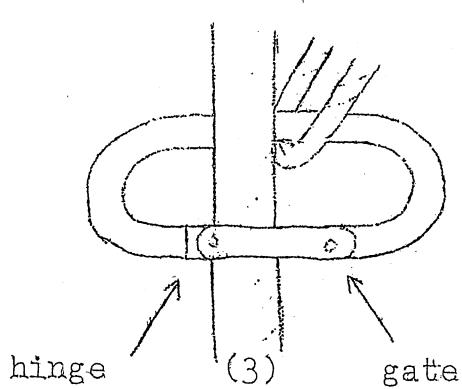
It is a very "fast" knot, loosening very easily. It is also the only known knot which will hold ($\frac{1}{4}$ prusik rope on half-inch or seven-sixteenths inch nylon) with only one turn. However; it will hold with one turn only under good conditions: with a muddy rope, it is necessary to use two turns.

The knot will be illustrated in the tied condition with one or two turns. (Three turns require too much work to get the slack into the bottom turn, and generally aren't needed anyway.) Also, step-by-step illustrations will be given for tying the knot.

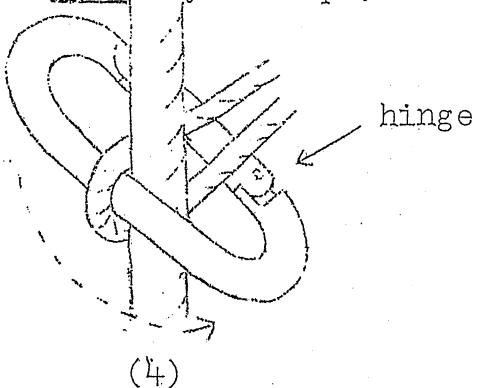


STEPS IN TYING THE KNOT:

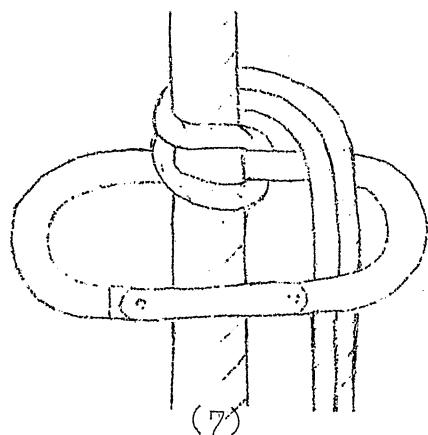
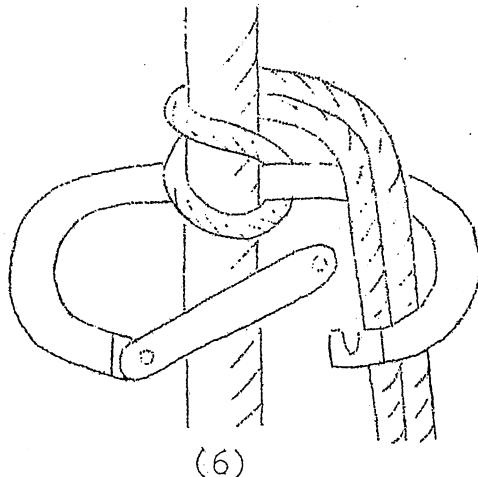
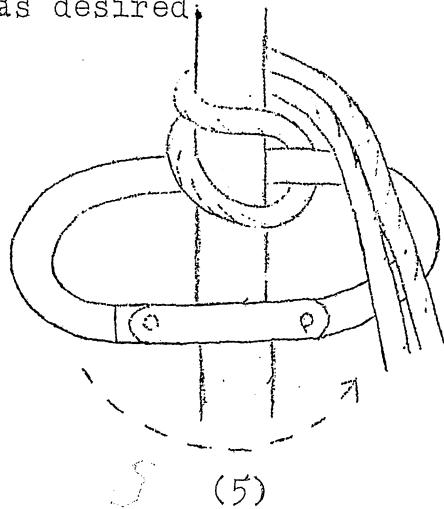




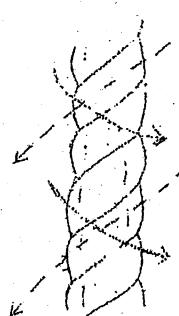
karabiner is rotated CCW
(with lay of rope)



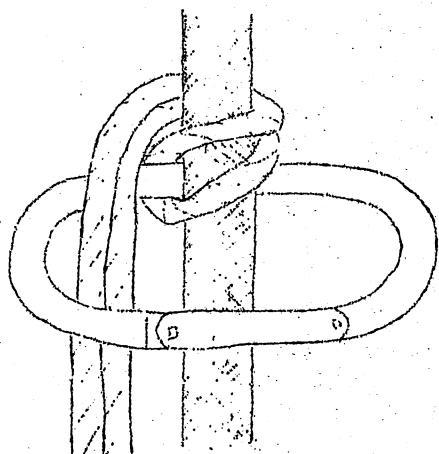
karabiner is rotated with lay of rope for 1 or 2 turns
as desired.



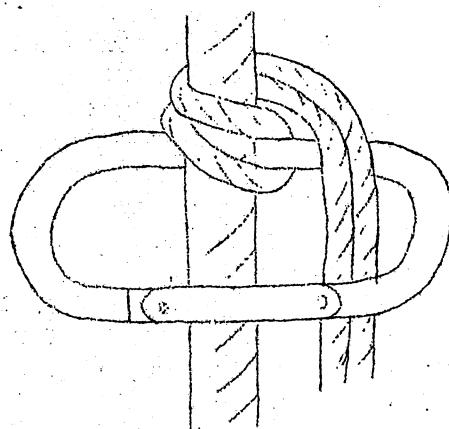
The knot is now complete.
It can be quickly and easily removed by unclipping the prusik rope from the karabiner (reverse of step 6), pulling on the prusik rope, which will unwind the prusik rope from the main rope, then rotating the karabiner (if necessary) and unclipping the karabiner from the main rope.



Note that the prusik ropes cross the strands rather than wrap around the rope parallel to the strands. This is important; the holding power of the knot is seriously reduced if the prusik ropes are wrapped around the rope parallel to the strands. Since the prusik ropes are held above the karabiner as it is rotated with the lay, the prusik ropes are rotated against the lay, which is the desired situation. On a braided rope, such as perlon, and using a laid prusik rope (assuming a standard right-hand lay in the prusik rope), a "mirror image" of the knot should be tied, such that the strands of the prusik rope are perpendicular to rather than parallel to the main rope.



"Mirror image" knot on a braided rope. Note strands of prusik rope are perpendicular to the main rope where they first cross behind it. A braided prusik rope on a braided main rope can be tied in either direction.



Normal knot, tied on a standard (right-hand) laid climbing rope. Note the cross-strand wrap of the prusik rope, which is more important on a laid rope than the perpendicular strands. The strands are parallel rather than perpendicular.

Certain precautions should be observed in using this knot. Do not, under any circumstances, allow the knot to bear on the gate side of the karabiner, for obvious reasons! In fact, the karabiner should remain in approximately a horizontal position and the knot approximately centered in the karabiner. There won't be too much tendency for the karabiner to rotate out of position, but it should not be allowed to take a vertical position, as the knot can then spill out of shape and lose practically all of its holding power.

In using the knot, it can most conveniently be loosened by grasping the prusik ropes about two inches below the knot with the little and ring fingers (and possibly the middle finger also) when sliding the hand up toward the knot, and lifting the prusik rope this short distance. If one turn is being used, this will almost always break the knot loose -- it may fall into your hand. With two turns, it may be necessary to use the thumb and index and middle fingers to rotate the slack thus produced down around the top turn in order to loosen the lower turn, particularly on a muddy rope. When ready to apply weight to the knot, a light pull directly outward may be needed to help "set" the knot, particularly when one turn is being used. After a few minutes practice, these motions can be executed without taking any extra time for them. Care should be exercised not to let go of a knot while it is loosened, since it will frequently fall to the end of its prusik rope, which must then be pulled up to retrieve the knot -- a "disadvantage" not enjoyed by any other prusik knot.

The "secret" of this knot lies in the fact that the prusik rope enters the knot not through a loop in itself, as in most knots, but through a wide-open, rigid metal aperture -- the karabiner. This eliminates the friction loss which absorbs part of the tension before it even gets into most knots. This allows the knot to grip tighter; and also to release more easily, since there is no internal friction within the knot structure to hinder tightening and loosening.

In general, the knot will work with only one turn under good conditions; litt or no mud (plain water doesn't affect its performance); a prusik rope no larger than three-eights inch nylon on half-inch rope, five-sixteenths inch nylon on seven-sixteenths inch rope, or quarter-inch nylon on three-eights rope. The prusik rope should be relatively soft and flexible for optimum performance. The prusik rope sizes given are the recommended maxima at present; adequate performance is sometimes obtained with size differences of only a sixteenth of an inch, although this makes the knot liable to spill. Two turns will work under most conditions, but frequently require a simple loosening operation. Also, two turns are somewhat less prone to spill with large prusik ropes. Three turns are impractical; too much is required to loosen them.

A one-turn karabiner prusik using a shroud line sling will grip on just about anything except greased icicles; and two turns with shroud line would probably hold even on those, although there would be a little trouble keeping loops of this thin stuff from crossing over each other when the knot is being raised. The loop of shroud line, having a breaking strength of 1100 lbs. (2X550 lbs.), would be quite safe under a person's weight, as the safe working load would be 220 lbs. This would give a

relatively easy-to-work prusik that would hold even on the most wretchedly glopped-up rope; and with normal-sized prusik ropes and cleaner ropes, will give a very fast and easily-worked prusik.

Dan Meier

(Editors note -- This is the first of a series of technical papers written by Mr. Meier for the TRCGLODYTE. Dan, in his four years as a member of the Tech Cave Club, has done considerable research and experimentation in vertical caving techniques, and has brought about several innovations within the club.)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

As an ex-V. P. I. Cave Club member (class of '59), I disagree with Jim Quinlan's objection to cover. Most of us looked like that after a long caving trip in those days.

/s/ Herb Klein

Congradulations on a fine annual. Your study of cave visits and man hours underground is very interesting, and I also believe that the V.P.I. Grotto is one of the (if not the) cavingist groups. Your study should go a little further, however, as I believe V.P.I. cavers hold one other record. Maybe a study should be made to determine how many students are forced to leave school as a direct or indirect result of their underground activities.

/s/ Ed Bauer

A NEW WEST VIRGINIA CAVE

Large virgin caves can still be found in West Virginia. More than 7000 feet of passage has been mapped in a virgin cave tentatively known as "Hunt Cave". The cave, located near Sinks Grove, West Virginia, was discovered by Earl Thierry, Roy Charlton, and myself.

The entrance of the cave is a ten-foot climb down in the bottom of a sink. At the bottom of the climb-down, two small, uninteresting crawls leave a small chamber. These crawls are filled to a depth of several inches with very fresh fox manure. The first crawl makes a right-angle turn abuot fifteen feet after its beginning and opens up into walking passage. The second crawl, which goes in an opposite direction to the first,

has yet to be explored. The first walking passage picks up a stream and, at a straddle pool, comes into the side of the cave from a larger passage. Upper levels of the cave are reached in this larger passage by several joining passageways.

The first stream continues down a passage which turns into a canyon. The stream descends rapidly through the canyon in a series of cascades and waterfalls. The passage may be followed by chimneying along ledges high above the stream. Several plunge pools are crossed by chimneying high above them. Lower levels of the stream pallageway show signs of flooding. Troglobitic organisms abound in the organic matter.

On November 23, 1963, 2700 feet of this stream passage was explored and mapped by Earl, my brother Roy, and me.

The upper level contains large passage developed along at least three small streams. There are no signs of flooding in the upper level. Formations are numerous. On November 2, 1963, we explored and mapped 4400 feet of this upper level. There are over two dozen unexplored leads on the present map of this cave.

Jim Charlton

THE NEW RIVER ENIGMA

It's just one cave, but you'd never know it. Ask any two cavers, and they'll give you different descriptions. Some love it, some hate it, but more V.P.I. cavers have become interested in this cave, surrounded by legend and folklore, than any other cave in the area.

Three different opinions are expressed in the following three articles. They demonstrate clearly the wide range of feeling characteristic of visitors to New River Cave. (Editor)

Part One:

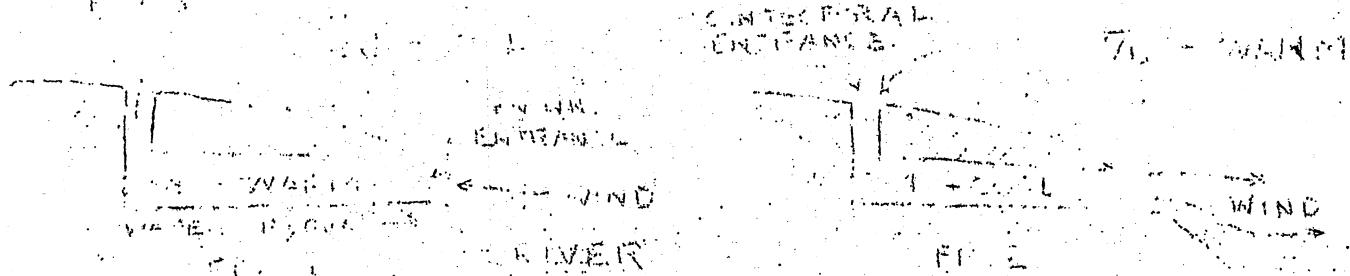
A SUNDAY STROLL

R. E. Whittemore

New River Cave has long been the source of many legends and misconceptions about not only itself but caves in general. There are a number of people who insist that the cave is 7 miles long, with an entrance at Goodwins Ferry and an exit at Newport. (Nobody ever goes in at Newport.) Others tell of how a friend (or even themselves) went into the cave and came out "at night...in a farmer's field somewhere...near Newport." One legend has it that a man dyed a duck purple, and a month later, seven baby colored ducks waddled into Newport. By far the wildest legend claims that there are church benches in the cave.

However, not all these legends are completely without basis. The popular belief that there is another entrance may stem from the fact that a strong draft blows into the cave in the

winter, (fig. 1) and out during the summer. (fig. 2) The two crude diagrams show why this may lead one to believe that the cave has another opening to the surface. If this is true, then the unknown entrance is higher than the known entrance. This follows logically, since the main stream in the cave flows down toward the known entrance.



These phenomena have sent cavers scrambling deep into the Saltville Fault, looking for the fabled exit. It seems a shame that many of their efforts have been wasted because certain factions, wishing to maintain "independence", have not taken advantage of previous knowledge and experience of the V.P.I. cave club.

Nonetheless, a few members of the V.P.I. Grotto have seen fit to push deep into the cave in search of the source of the shifting draft. But only a few present members have been to the back, because the others have been frightened away by even wilder tales about "tortuous crawlways", "great distances", "nothing to see back there", "no place to stand up", "wet and muddy", "I'll never go back", etc.

Several times in the recent history of the Cave Club, a number of movements have gotten under way to send a highly skilled exploring party deep into the cave, with various and sundry support parties to aid and abet them. One of these did materialize; a three-man party spent 20 hours going to the back, seeing next to nothing, then coming back out. But what the club wanted was new facts. Can the last siphon be pushed? Where does the draft go? etc. So finally, our glorious leader, Whitey Eubank, applied a little reverse psychology, and hinted that he would like to "sneak off" one Sunday morning real early and look into New River Cave. The first two people he asked agreed to go, and later a fourth member was added to the group. Whitey himself had been to the back before; Pete Stoller had been almost to the back; and Bill Grenoble had been to the back a number of times, had spent a total of 150 hours in the cave, and is a real expert on the system. Therefore my name was the only one added to the short and slowly-growing list of people who had been to that sanctum sanctorum. We had no support parties

or special supplies, and the very fact that I was along made the party anything but highly skilled. At this time, I wasn't even a horizontal leader. The only thing out of the ordinary we carried was 70 feet of shroud line for the "60 foot drop" near the back.

Leaving early Sunday morning, we arrived at the cave at about 8:00 a.m., only one hour later than we had expected! (Quite an achievement within itself.) Three hours latter we were standing at the top of the "60 foot drop". By now I was beginning to wonder where all those "torturous crawls" and "great distances" were. (We may have covered as much as 1 mile.) In fact, this seldom-seen part of the cave impressed me very much. One part was especially interesting: the passage was about 2-3 feet wide with sheer parallel walls rising at a slight angle from the sand floor to a ceiling which was out of my sight. These walls are, in all probability, the hanging and foot wall blocks of the saltville fault. In the back of the known cave, the ceiling drops down and the floor falls away. As we stood there, 2 things became evident to us. First, we had lost track of the draft, and second, our 70 feet of shroud line wasn't much to work with. We couldn't see much future in going down the drop, because we were at least the height of the ceiling below the surface, and there was no draft blowing up the drop. But we decided to make the descent anyway in hopes we could push the last siphon and possibly find another chamber beyond. Fortunately, we found 2 mud pitons left in the cave from a previous trip, so we forced them into the sand near the edge, and spent about an hour making a ladder out of the shroud line. Meanwhile we tried to trace the breeze. Using pipe smoke as a detector, we found that 100' down the passage, there was a slight breeze in a low spot, but at the drop all smoke rose up to what appeared to be a hole in the ceiling. Bill attempted to chimney up to this hole, but only succeeded in dislodging large quantities of mud from the walls. Meanwhile, the drop was rigged and we body rappelled our ladder. It reached 20' down to a ledge. From here it was possible to climb the rest of the way down to the stream level. Bill and I climbed down to the stream while Whitey and Pete looked into various holes on the middle level. Bill pushed the last siphon for another 30' until it became a total siphon. Progress thus stymied, we climbed out and headed home. Four hours later we were out of the cave, for a total of 9 hours.

Now that I've had time to analyze the cave, I tend to believe that a lot of nice cave is being neglected because of a few grimy crawls. Of course, I may be a little biased because the success of our trip was due largely to the expert guidance of Bill Grenoble. I did get a close look at quite a few shoe soles that day, however.

Part Two:

NEW RIVER EXPEDITION

Jay Murry

January 19, 1964

Personnel: Roger Amado, Ted Fix

We left V.P.I. at 10:30 a.m. for New River Cave located about five miles south-west of Newport, Virginia. Before entering the cave, we checked some rocks up the road from the cave for quartz crystals and fossils.

Our purpose of going to New River Cave was to see if it would be possible to make a new entrance to the cave where the creek comes out of the hill, below the mouth of the cave. We entered the cave at 12:45 p.m. and went back to the creek passage. Following the creek passage towards the entrance, we traveled for about forty minutes. Most of the time we were bent over or crawling along the creek as the passage was low. Farther along the passage, and past survey mark "Z-15", I believe, we could stand in the passageway. We continued until we came to what seemed to be an end. Our time was running out, so we had to leave without determining if we could make a new entrance. We did, however, decide that going along the creek would be more trouble than going up the hill to the natural entrance.

Part Three:

NEW RIVER CAVE

Janice Grenoble

Personnel: Pete Stoller, Rick Grenoble, and my husband, Bill.

My favorite of caves is undoubtedly New River. After sixty-five hours of trips I have come to love and hate the place all in one breath. The first 2400 feet back to the waterfall are scenic and fairly easy for an inexperienced caver, but I pride myself in being one of the very few women who have negotiated the far reaches of that huge hole in the ground. I have been on photographic trips, survey trips, and even a push trip in there. The formations are outstanding, and each trip shows a new and unique speleothem. The survey trip started at eight on a Saturday morning. Our minds were set on the back of the cave, but as strength would have it, we were unable to progress further than the last siphon before a tiring climb up through breakdown. We ate in the supper room, which is just beyond the "impassable passage," and started the long crawl out. The physical problem was not as hard as the mental effects I sustained after fourteen hours in the dark, so when I got stuck in a nine-inch crack at the beginning of the passage, I broke into nervous hysterics. My recommendations to any girl wishing to see the "back" of the cave would be to eat well before the trip; to get at least ten hours sleep the night before; and to put all thoughts of claustrophobia out of mind. The trip is tiring and should be done only after a sufficient amount of experience underground.

A MODEST PROPOSAL

We recently read of an offer extended by the Baltimore Grotto to exchange speakers, thus giving variety to Grotto programs. The article included a list of programs submitted by the Baltimore Grotto, but we of the V.P.I. Grotto feel that they failed to include many topics at which they must be considered expert. To remedy this situation, we propose that the following subjects be added to their list:

"Loveability As a Way of Life"--A startling new philosophy. Slides, specimen (Cooper), lecturer (Cooper).

"How to Rig Loveability Contests"--An exposé of a sordid racket. Photos, wire tapping tapes, Letters. (Plummer)

"1001 Myths, Superstitions, Fables, Tall Tales, Fictitious Stories, and Outright Lies"--The naked truth behind fictitious gods, humans, and cavers. "Specimens", "slides". ("Lew Bickering")

"Musiking Made Easy"--A dissertation on how to get up when you're down. Bring differential equations text, CRC tables, and slide rule. (Plummer)

"How to Start Feuds and Insult Grottos"--The fine art of making nasty remarks, insinuating statements, starting rumors, and hiding publication dates. Specimens of back issues of the BGN. (Plummer and Cooper)

Continuing in the same vein, we are proud to offer these delectable treats to other grottos:

"The Fine Points of Rolling a Corvair"--Vivid description, sample of accident report form, garage bill. (Peters)

"On the Writing of Limericks and Other Means of Retaliation" A scintillating, exciting, poetic masterpiece presented with passion, vitality, and sincerity by the author of this article. (McCutchen)

"The Mountains, the Caverns, and Me"--A sketchy 2½ year long discourse on the adventures of a V.P.I. caver, from the steam tunnels of V.P.I. to the peaks of the Rockies. Lecture includes chair (for putting foot on), wall (for leaning against), pipe (for fondling), drawl (for talking with), and lecturer (Fainer), also No-Dose (for the audience).

"The Challenge of Publishing More Than Once a Year"--Trials and tribulations of a "Tech Troglodyte" editor, vividly illustrated. (Marland)

"The Fine Points of Eating an Orange While the Driver is Rolling a Corvair"--A rather fruity account of the changes in eating habit necessitated by a sudden alteration of physical environment. Posture charts, Corvair, orange, practical demonstrations. (Nolting, usually in conjunction with Petters)

"A Cast Adrift in a Cave"--A poignant tale of a caver's determination to continue his underground explorations despite a broken leg. Slides, Autographed cast. (Eubank)

"Bill Grenoble - Or, How I Stopped Worrying and Learned to Love the Beard"--Before and after photos, discarded razor, etc. (Jan Grenoble)

"Gregg Maryland - Your Friend and Mine"--An inspiring, biased commentary on V.P.I. Grottos most controversial member. Copies of constitution, safety code, safety committee rulings. (Sterns)

Gary McCutchen

oooooooooooo0000000000oooooooooooo

NEW (?) PASSAGE

R. E. Whittemore

Just to show what associating with cavers can get you into, I will relate an incident of a few weeks ago. It was about 11:00 o'clock one night and I had just hit the hay when our most noble leader, Whitey Eubank, and our friend Bob Croft, burst into my room and said, "Let's get out of this hole and into a cave!" The pun fell flat, but the idea appealed to me, so about 30 minutes later, we were on the road to Tawney's cave. (Pronounced TOH-n'yz, or Tony's -- not to be confused with the feeble attempts of northerners to imitate that pleasant mountain drawl.) We arrived at the cave at about midnight, and went in via the back door. From there we proceeded immediately to a certain area of the cave that Whitey had in mind. It seems that he had received an archaic map in the mail with hitherto unknown passage sketched in. Sure enough, the passage was there, just through a hole we had looked at dozens of times, but never bothered to crawl into-- and I doubt if we ever will again. We found about 200 feet of crawling passage with a floor that alternated between dried-up rimstone and elbow-deep mud. There was only one room of any consequence, and the mud was of a semi-liquid consistency. In one spot, the ceiling dipped down so that it was impossible to pass without absolutely wallowing in the stuff. Thoroughly soaked, we backed out and went through the rest of the cave, which proved to be quite nice, as usual. We left the cave after 3 muddy hours and returned to campus for a few hours sleep before classes.

oooooooooooo0000000000oooooooooooo

TRIP REPORTS

GIANT CAVERNS

Nov. 16, 1963

by J. Craig Peters

Personnell: John Eads, R. E. Whittemore, Barry Whittemore,
Jack Burr, Doug Cochran.

We were heading for Beacon Cave, near Bluefield, Va., when just past Narrows, the car suffered a near-fatal accident from contact with a boulder and we were forced to pull into Pearisburg for repairs. At about 7:00 p.m. we parked the car near Giant Caverns, the cave to which we had decided to go after we were forced by the accident to change our plans. After a short search we found the entrance and rappelled into it. We went through the cave, taking notice of the recent vandalism and also of the remains of the wooden walkways left from the days when Giant was a commercial cavern. We reached the site of the former commercial entrance, taking note of the organ-like formations and the dry limestone pools; then we turned, heading back past the entrance and on to the greater part of the cave.

Here we found an abundance of beautiful formations: "waterfalls" (one of which was pure white and formed from calcite crystals) stalactites and stalagmites, and many others. We climbed a slippery but solid mud flow to a "window" overlooking a large and beautiful room, and then we went down to another room where we noticed a hole in the ceiling on one side that looked promising. John and I climbed up to it and found it to be very unpromising upon closer inspection. We also found a subsequent traverse to be virtually impossible, so we descended. All of us then went on to the back of the cave, filled with beautiful but narrow passageway. We decided that it was time to leave and were soon back at the entrance. John started up first and passed the breakover with little trouble, and I followed him. I had a good deal of trouble with the breakover at first, but with John's help, I quickly got passed it, and we were both soon at the top of the drop where we built a fire for warmth and settled down to wait for the others. Two and one-half hours later, at about 1:00 a.m., everyone was out and we headed back to Blacksburg, our stomachs empty and our eyes heavy.

COCHRAN'S CAVE

Dec. 18, 1963

by Doug Cochran

Personnel: Bill Francisco, Ted Webb

About 1:00 p.m., the three of us entered the cave. After a somewhat muddy climb of about three hundred yards, we reached the cleft-like entrance. Our slowly growing pupils were greeted by the sight of a sixty foot dust slide, several rats, a ground hog, and, oh, yes, a few formations. The first room was about forty feet tall and seems to have been formed in the remains of a much older, collapsed room, for there are some formations that are covered by hard earth and rock. At the far end of this room,

we entered a 150 foot long, yet comfortable, crawlway. The second room was about seventy feet in height and had a nice stream flowing through it. The main feature of this room illustrates its' closeness to the surface. A ground hog had made his home on a ledge at the very top of the room. After a somewhat inadequate mental preparation, we discarded all warmth and dove into the stream. With never more than a foot of air space, and usually a great deal less, we progressed about two hundred feet. The "back" room is really the center of a maze of about five tunnels that curved and twisted quite a lot: however, no matter how hard they try, they still end up nowhere, with one exception. One leads to a tall narrow room and a rather tricky drop. There seems to be more cave but our fate was decided by our lack of time or warmth. Sometime later we stumbled from the entrance with a determination to someday return. Several prospective virgin caves were also discovered.

BEACON CAVE
Dec. 7, 1963

by Edward Morgan

The weekend before exams we decided to take a break in our arduous studying(?) and go caving. Lead by Whitey Eubank, our group left Blacksburg about 1:30 P.M. for Beacon Cave just south of Bluefield, W. Va. We had heard that it was near the Beacon Drive-Inn; therefore, this was where we started asking for directions to the cave. About 30 minutes later we found the entrance in a small sink about 200 yards in back of the drive-inn.

After searching fruitlessly for 30 minutes for a small crawlway in the entrance room that lead to the rest of the cave, we met a group from a newly formed cave club from Concord College. They were coming out of the cave and showed us the crawlway. It is to the right just after you enter the cave.

When we came to the end of the crawlway, at the Bat Room, we headed to the left (up stream). In about one-third mile we came to a point where the passage narrowed to a crawlway with the stream running through it. Rather than getting wet and muddy, we decided to turn around and follow the downstream passage. Back at the Bat Room, we continued straight downstream through some fairly unstable breakdown. This continued on through mostly walking passage with two short, rather hard climbs. After about a mile we came to a pool some 20 ft. in diameter extending from wall to wall. Because it was getting late and because we did not want to get wet, we turned back. The trip back to the entrance was quite easy except for one place where we became momentarily confused. It was a large room filled with massive breakdown. After 15 minutes we found the correct passage and continued out.

THE WEST VIRGINIA UNDERWORLD

Feb. 1, 1964

Personnel: Jan Grenoble, Robert Whittemore, Barry Whittemore

by Joe Smyth

On the day before Ground Hog's Day, a small expeditionary force gathered on the campus of VPI. Promptly at 1:00 the party set off to explore the underworld of West Virginia. The first difficulty to beset this noble band was the problem of getting to West Virginia. Having found out the hard way that the Salt Sulphur Turnpike was blocked by two-foot snow drifts, they decided to go by way of Pearisburg. (ED. NOTE: As any fool knows, the Salt Sulphur Turnpike is a minor foottrail past Mt. Lake, virtually impassible.)

Through the efforts of the diligent navigator, R.E. Whittemore, the small party arrived at Fletcher's Cave in Monroe County about an hour and a half before sunset. The owner wanted us out by dark so the party had only about one and one-half hours to see nearly 3000 ft. of well-decorated horizontal cave. There was apparently very little vandalism, for the formations were some of the most beautiful to be seen anywhere. The main stream passage was large and easily walked, so the party could see most of the cave in the time allowed.

Since an hour and a half of caving could hardly justify a trip of 75 miles, we hunted around for another cave. Whit said he knew of a cave a few miles away in the fan of Peter's Mountain. The owner was very friendly and journeyed out on that snowy night to show us the cave entrance. We followed the stream into what we thought was the cave entrance. After slithering under a rock and getting rather damp we found that we were not yet in the cave. The true entrance was not far off so the small party grunted its way through several thousand feet of tight passage. It was obvious that the cave flooded from time to time from the vegetable matter left deep in the cave. Realizing the late hour and the uncertain weather, the party emerged from the cave having spent a little over two hours underground.

PIG HOLE

April 11, 1964

Personnel: Trip Leader; Mike Bohn, Four Explorer Scouts, Post 44, Blacksburg

by Wayne Schooley

The trip was taken to check out some leads in the tilted room. We used the back entrance and quickly reached the Queen's Bath area.

The tilted room ends in two wells. The left well is a 100 foot back rapped from the crawlway. The pit ends in a crawl in breakdown. I could not find a lead out of the well.

The right well ends in a sixty-foot pit. I did not go down the pit. A sign on the wall said, "Dead End Pit, 60 feet." Two pits beyond the turnoff to the Queen's Bath were explored. The first is nothing, the second is 15 feet deep. There is a highlead, which was not entered.

COLOR CODE IDENTIFICATION

For more than two years the V.P.I. Gratto has used a simple and effective method to quickly identify personal caving gear.

The only cost to members is for one or more rolls of colored tape. Each member chooses a color or combination of colors on a first-come, first-serve basis. A list is made of the color combinations chosen by the members to avoid duplication.

Each member then tapes his colors onto his karabiners, ropes, prusiks, flasks, and other gear. Even the muddiest equipment is easy to identify, and there is no question of ownership.

With a choice of at least eight colors (green, yellow, blue, orange, red, black, white, and brown), a club is hardly likely to run out of different combinations.

Following is a list of VPI Gratto members and their color codes. However, it is never quite up to date, due to our rapid turnover in membership. Look for frequent revisions in future issues of the Traglodyte.

Key:
 G-green
 Y-yellow
 B-blue
 O-orange
 R-red
 W-white
 BK-black
 BR-brown

Name	Color Code
Bauer, Ed	Y
Bell, Tom R.	R-B
Brownrigg, Phil	B-R-B
Carlson, Sally	Y-B-Y
Charlton, James P.	B
Day, Ed P.	R-G
Eads, John B.	B-Y
Eubank, Whitey	R-BK
Fuller, "Zeke"	BK-Y
McCutchen, Byron	B-Y-B
McCutchen, Gary	G-B
Nolting, R. M. III	BR-Y
O'Meara, Patrick	G-W-R
Schoechle, Tim	O
Smyth, Joe	BK-Gray
Whittemore, R. E.	W-BK-W

THE NEWBERRY INCIDENT

The Accident:

Ellen Witherite, a 21 year-old visitor from Annapolis, Maryland, was exploring Newberry's Cave with George Fairer and Pete Stoller. The date was May 21.

The party had descended the 60-foot entrance drop, followed a narrow, sinuous passage to the "Straddle Pit" (a traverse with about 60 feet of exposure), descended a free-space 12-foot drop, and rigged the 180-foot deep main drop. (See diagram)

George rappelled down first. Ellen began the descent, but jammed her chest safety about 20 feet down. In the process of unjamming the knot, she slipped out of rappel and began to fall. In panic, she gripped the loosened safety knot, preventing it from stopping her fall.

After falling over 100 feet, Ellen hit a ledge with her head, shattering her hard hat. The impact, occurring some 20 feet above the floor, loosened her grip on the safety knot. The knot caught her, but with the stretch of 180 feet of nylon rope, she hit bottom anyway.

George immediately rushed to the stunned girl and cut her loose, then yelled to Pete at the top to leave the cave and get help. After removing Ellen from any danger of falling rocks, George applied first aid.

The Rescue:

Pete reached the nearby Banes' home and contacted the Wytheville Rescue Squad and Sally Carlson, secretary of the Cave Club. Sally began phoning other cavers, and a rescue party grouped at the Student Activities Building.

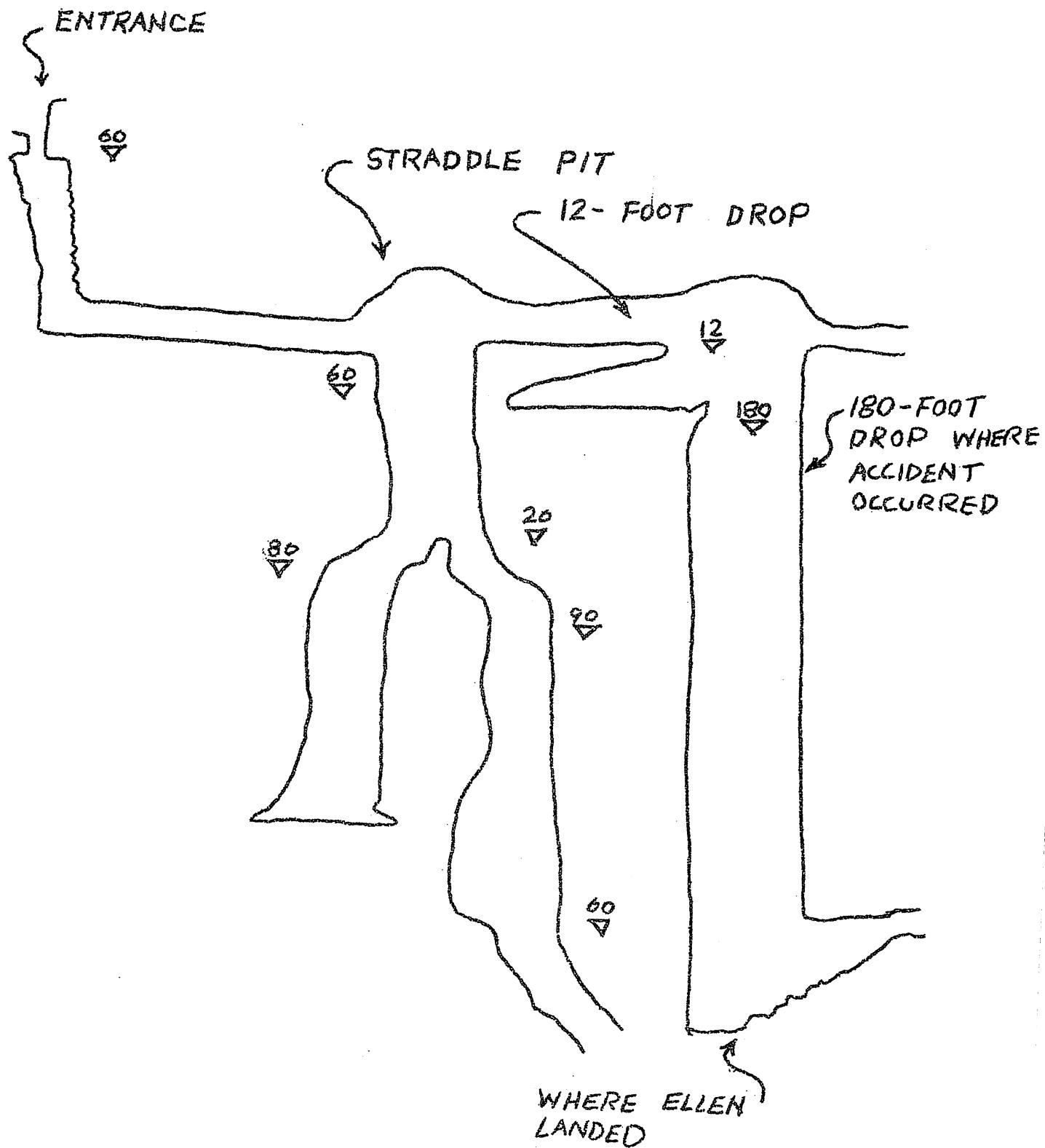
The first carload of VPI cavers arrived at the cave at 10:30 p.m. Pete led two of the cavers back to the drop. Tom Bell rappelled down and, with the help of George, determined the extent of the girl's injuries.

Ellen had a broken leg, a broken ankle, a gash on her head from striking the ledge, and numerous cuts and bruises. She was also suffering from shock. The broken leg was splinted, and drugs were administered to ease the pain and the sickness caused by the shock. Ellen was then strapped to a stretcher.

A block and tackle had in the meantime been rigged at the top of the 180 foot drop. John Eads rappelled down, then prusiked alongside the stretcher as it was pulled up.

After helping get the stretcher over the difficult 12 foot drop, Eads returned to the surface, completely exhausted. Reporters and spectators had been waiting nearly six hours for word from below, so John was asked a lot of questions.

Unlike some other incidents, however, the crowd did not interfere at all in the rescue operations. In fact, the Wytheville Rescue Squad provided essential equipment, left the underground phase of the rescue to experienced cavers, and were extremely helpful and friendly. They even provided coffee and sandwiches, which Tom Bell somehow transported through the cave to the weary rescuers.



CROSS - SECTION OF NEWBERRY'S CAVE SHOWING AREA IN WHICH RESCUE OPERATIONS TOOK PLACE.

The straddle pit had been crossed by forming a human bridge. The cavers braced backs and feet against opposite walls and passed the stretcher across.

More difficulties occurred in the narrow, winding, sometimes low passage leading to the entrance drop. Four people were needed to carry the load over the rough floor, but only two at a time could reach the stretcher. The pace quickened when Tom met them and mentioned the coffee and sandwiches waiting for them.

The Rescue Squad ambulance had been driven right up to the entrance, high on the side of Big Walker Mountain, near Pulaski. A winch was lowered down the 60 foot drop, and, after a brief rest, the cavers attached the injured girl to the end of the cable by means of a sitting-seat, because the narrow fissure and small opening to the surface would not permit use of a stretcher. They then positioned themselves along the drop to keep Ellen from hitting the walls during her ascent. She emerged from the cave at 9:30 Sunday morning.

Dr. James Kegly, who until this time had had to diagnose and treat Ellen by proxy, treated her as soon as she emerged. She was rushed then to the Radford Community Hospital.

Other members of the Cave Club who participated in the rescue were Joyce Slaughter, Jay Murry, Rick Nalting, Tim Schoechle, Bob Robbins, and several others.

The rescuers had reached the cave only three hours after the accident. The rescue operations lasted 12 hours.

The Aftermath

Ellen required two operations on her leg. The broken ankle was not discovered until she was at the hospital. She is in good condition and plans to continue caving.

The VPI Grotto plans to purchase a Stokes litter, modify it for cave use, and store it in the infirmary. Local police were given up-to-date lists of cavers to contact if accidents occur.

Most important is a study carried out by several members. Called a three-rope rig, the test gave surprising results. The three-rope rig determines reflexes. Two ropes were rigged on a nearby 60 foot drop. One of the ropes was 40 feet short of the ground. This rope was rappelled on. The second rope reached the ground. The chest prusik knot was tied to this rope. A third rope was used for belay. It was marked with tape at a point where the person on belay was 20 feet above the ground.

After rigging in, the caver begins the rappel. Suddenly, 40 feet above the ground, he runs out of rope and begins to fall. If the chest safety, tied to the long rope, does not catch him after 20 feet of fall (marked by tape on the belay rope), the belayer catches him.

Only ONE member allowed the chest prusik to catch him. All of the others involuntarily grabbed the long rope, pulling the knot down with them. They had to be caught by the belayer.

This test indicates a serious need for practice at releasing the rope when falling. The grabbing action is so strong that experienced cavers, knowing what to expect, fail to release their hold.

The VPI Grotto urges all other Grottos and cavers to include the three-rope rig in their training programs. The next accident of this sort may not end so happily.

Gary McCutchen

...ooo000ooo...

CAVING IN MEXICO

Editors Note: Whitey and Bob left VPI for a trip "out west" at the end of winter quarter. This letter and the accompanying cave maps and descriptions trace their journey to California.

Dear Cavers,

Bob Croft and I arrived here in southern California about a week ago. We're living off the fat of the land (Wayne Elliott) for the time being.

This is a great place, with beautiful weather, beautiful girls, plenty of good paying jobs, and the freeways. The freeways are more exciting than doing Newberry's 180 foot drop without a rope. The only problem is that the caves are mostly more than 100 miles away. However, the entire Los Angeles area is underlain by a complex of steam tunnels.

Enclosed you will find reports for the files and the Trogolyte from field trips made by the Mexican Extension of the VPI Grotto.

We regret to inform you that since we came to California the Mexican Extension has become inactive; however, the California Extension of the VPI Grotto is doing fine. In fact, it has recently merged with Dick Reardon's Southern California Grotto. The new name is still in litigation; however, it appears that it will be the Southern California Extension of the VPI Grotto.

The caves of Mexico were fabulous, as you can see from the reports and maps enclosed. A tremendous number of big virgin caves await anyone with vertical equipment. Most of the mountains are entirely limestone, reaching to 12,000 feet in elevation. You see huge openings high on river-cut canyon walls. They can only be reached by rappeling down from the top, sometimes several hundred feet, or by climbing an equal distance up the weathered and rotten vertical limestone walls.

We visited the cave in Buesta Monte that was the object of a post-convention field trip this spring. If you made it to Texas for the convention, we hope you took the field trip. The cave is unbelievably huge and beautiful.

By the way, Wayne and Sonya were married in June. Another old explorer bites the dust.

21-A

ARROYO CAVERNA

1" = 25'

PROFILE
ONLY

CAVERNA DEL MINA

27°55'N. x 102°11'W.

— MINER'S PATH

SURVEY BY BRUNTON COMPASS

1" = 60'

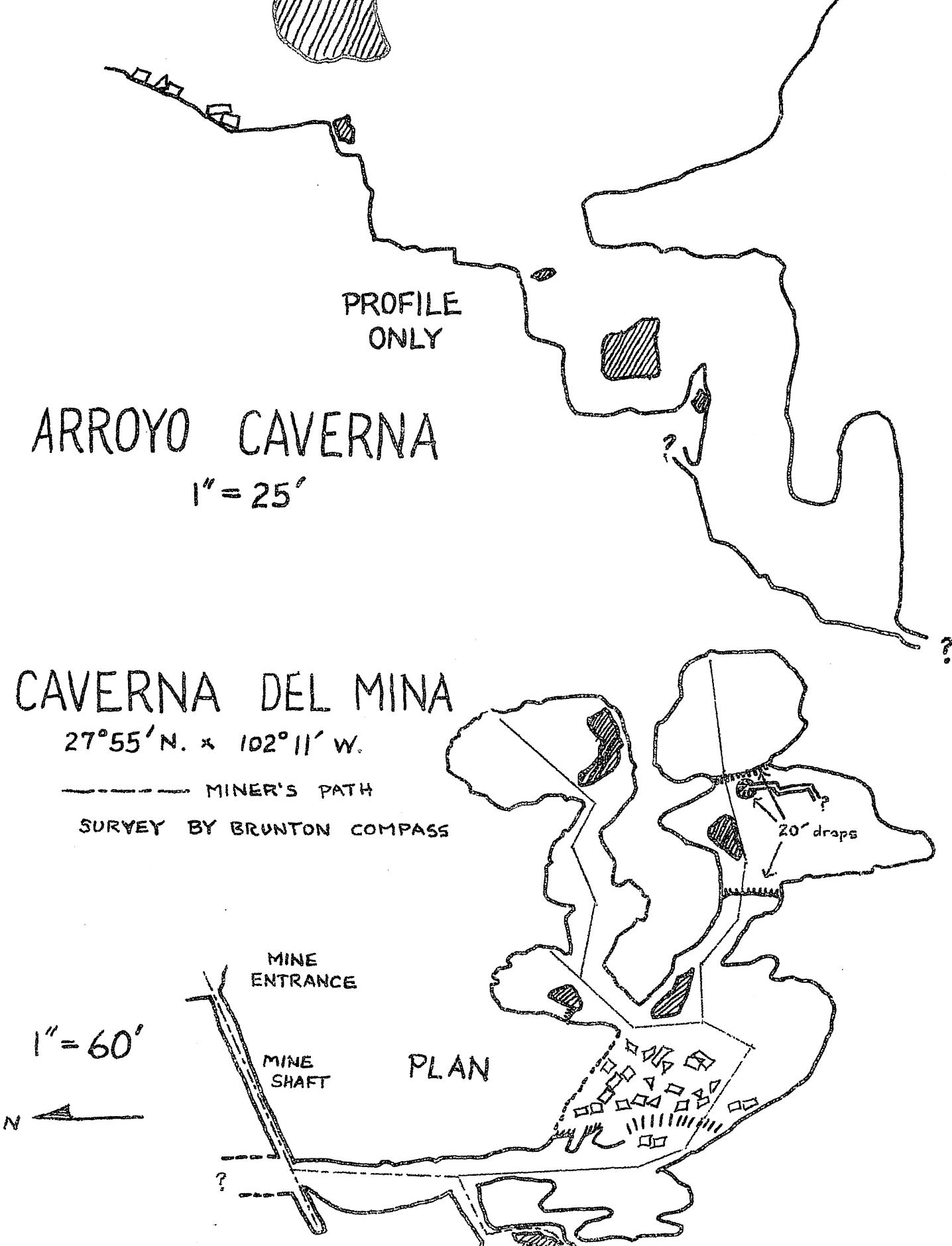
MINE
ENTRANCE

MINE
SHAFT

PLAN

N

20' drops



I'll see those of you who don't fail out next fall.

Keep rasin' hell,
Whitey

Caverna del Mina

4/8/64

Approx. Latitude $27^{\circ} 55'$

Approx. Longitude $102^{\circ} 11'$

Rancho Carrizalejo (Potrero de Santa Maria)

Coahuila, Mexico

This cave has no known natural entrances. About 60 days ago it was broken into by fluoride miners. The miners now use part of the cave as a mine shaft. (See Map 1, page 21-A)

The upper portions of this cave are dry and dusty. Flakes fall off the formations when they are touched. In the lower rooms however, live formations of great beauty are found. Long soda straws are prominent, and helectites up to eight inches long cover everything in profusion.

The floors of these lower rooms are covered with what appears to be a very rich soil, up to a foot in depth. It is not guano (in fact, no bats were observed in the cave), but appears to have washed into the rooms.

Going into the cave, we noticed a large increase in temperature as we left the cool upper portions. This may have been due, however, to humidity, as we did not have a thermometer with us.

The cave is rapidly being vandalized by the miners and local ranch hands.

Arroyo Caverna

4/6/64

Rancho Carrizalejo

Coahuila, Mexico

This cave (see Map 2, page 21-A) is located along the NE base of the Sierra de Carrizalejo, about 75 miles west of Muzquiz, Coahuila, Mexico. A small creek runs into the entrance; it is dry except during rains.

The cave is essentially a vertical crack. It consists of three separate drops, totaling more than 100 feet in depth. The entire cave was virgin before we descended into it. At the bottom of the last drop, there is a hole about eight inches square. The cave appears to continue beyond it.

The cave abounds in insect life, but has no formations.

Bob's Drop Cave

4/2/64

Rancho Carrizalejo
Coahuila, Mexico

Along the NE base of the Sierra de Carrizalejo, 75 miles west of Muzquiz, Coahuila, Mexico, there lie three sinkholes in a line. They are about 50 feet apart. This cave is found in the center sinkhole.

The cave (see Map 3, page 22-A) has developed within 250 horizontal feet; it drops nearly 200 feet in this distance. It was entirely virgin before we entered it. The cave is completely dry, and contains very few water-formed formations. However, in some of the lower rooms, walls are covered with sparkling white calcite crystals an inch in diameter and up to three inches long. Where the limestone is bare, it is often beautifully patterned in reds, browns, white, and grays.

Two large brown bats were observed, as was a spider. The spider was three inches long, and had white spots running down the length of its brown body.

Because of lack of time we had to leave several leads unchecked.

Whitey Eubank, expedition commander
Bob Croft, ass. expedition commander;

Mexican Extension,
VPI Grotto, N.S.S.

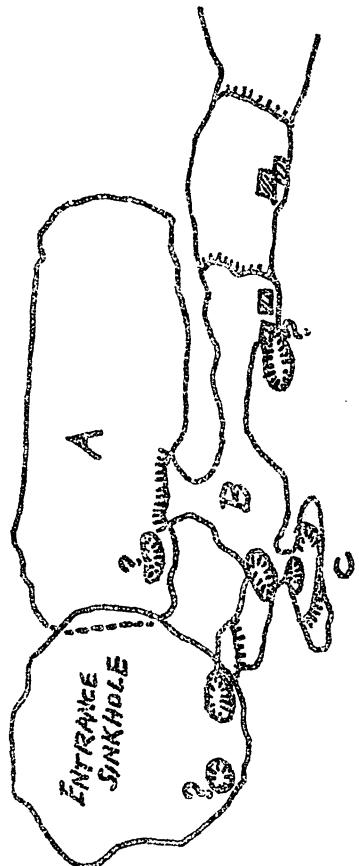
A NEW MERCER COUNTY (WEST VIRGINIA) CAVE

Both the 1960 Speleo Digest (page 1-78) and Caverns of West Virginia mention Honacker Cave. John Cooper, author of the Digest article, either discovered another cave that he thought was Honacker, or else Davies has his directions wrong. The latitude given by Davies ($37^{\circ}18'48''$) is correct, but the longitude ($80^{\circ}55'42''$) should be $80^{\circ}55'35''$.

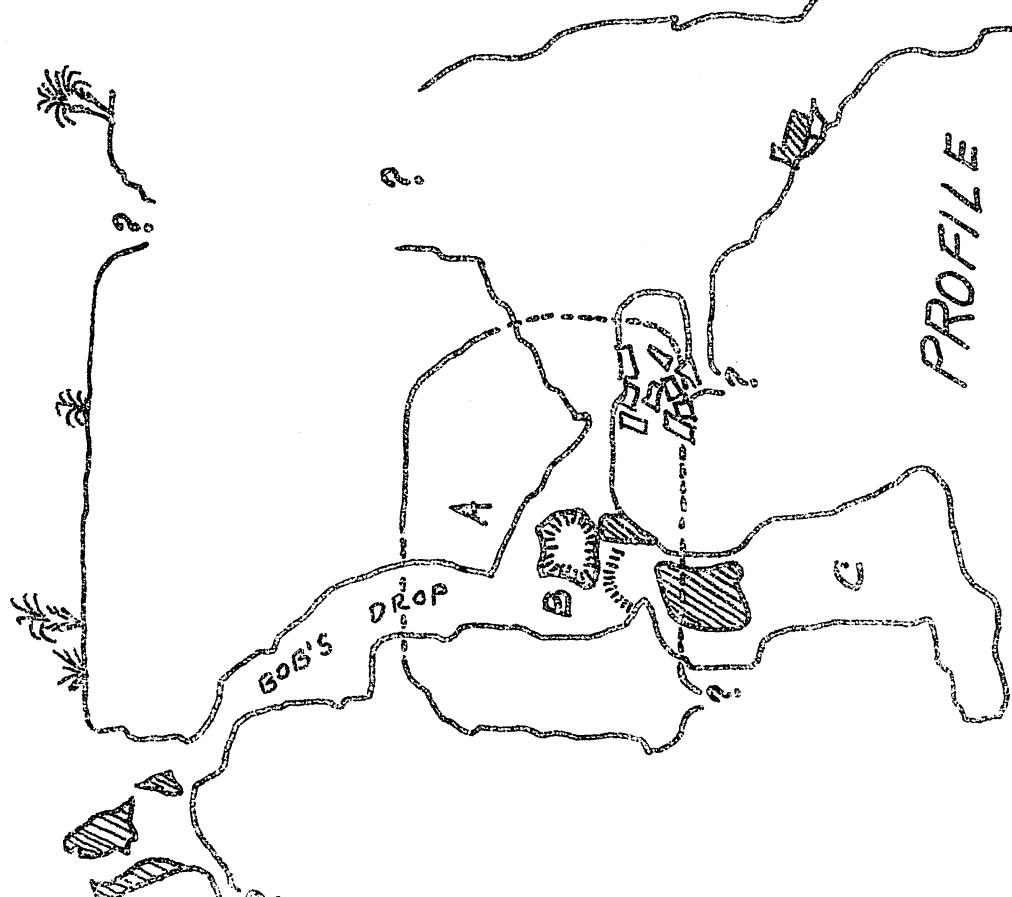
Cooper's directions are essentially correct. About $\frac{1}{4}$ mile east of the junction of Routes 219 and 12 (Narrows quad) is a large sign marking a road leading to a fish hatchery. Turn onto this road, crossing the East River almost immediately over a wood bridge, drive past the hatchery, bear left at the next two forks, cross a wooden bridge over a creek and then make a sharp right turn just across the bridge. Follow this road up a steep slope. After the road begins going downhill, look for a white frame house and a collapsed barn (house is located on topo map) in the valley to your right. Honaker Cave is directly behind the barn. A group of local boys recently broke the formations blocking further passage (see Cooper's description), but found only more crawlway.

22-A

PLAN



PROFILE



Bob's Drop CAVE

RANCHO CARRIZALEJO
COAHUILA, MEXICO

1" = 25'

Cooper's article mentions two other caves on the Honaker property. One, with a 100 foot entrance drop, was not found. Residents say it is in the field northeast of, but fairly close to, the farmhouse. They also warn that the entrance is so small that it could be stepped into without being seen. High weeds make the entrance difficult to spot. A large body of water is reported to exist in this cave.

The third cave (named Cave Rat Cave by the author) is at $80^{\circ}55'25''$ W, $37^{\circ}18'50''$ N. It is almost directly east of Honacker Cave. To find it, bear SE, up the mountain at a slight angle until you reach a stream, then follow the stream down. It flows into the cave. The two caves are only about 200-300 yards apart.

About 30 feet inside the entrance, the stream flows into a low side passage, not explored. A few feet further on, a small passage to the left drops rapidly about six feet into a low-ceiling but good-sized room. Several crawlways lead off, one of which had a good current of air. This crawl was followed for 15 feet until blocked by a stalagmite. It continued a bit larger beyond this barrier.

The main passage became a crawlway, then opened up again. Further into the cave, to one side of a large formation, is a ten foot climbable drop to a lower level. An opening on this level, too small to get through, led to a pit.

Further down the main passage is an intersection with two other passages. The intersection has quite a bit of large breakdown, through which one can climb down to the floor, ten feet below. Any passages leading off from the bottom are effectively filled with logs, rocks, and other debris. A cave rat with two young has a nest here. Empty Pepsi bottles were found, indicating local cavers had been here.

The passage to the left forked. The left fork rose sharply, becoming a tight crawlway. It was not explored. A small hole in this passage leads to an "echo chamber" room. An arrow on one of the walls in the room points toward a possible lead 20 feet above. The right fork ended in a rimstone pool-floored crawl, with rat tracks visible in muddy areas. It's tight, but may go.

The passage to the right had a high ceiling (about 40 feet) with a possible lead going off near the top. A small crack, too narrow for chimneying, led down and to the left. The floor of the crack was unstable and had a sheer drop of about 15 feet. It looked promising, but almost impossible to get back up. The only other lead was through a small hole about waist high and a foot wide. Peering through the hole, a small room, then another hole, then what could have been either another room, a pit, or more passage could be seen. Air was blowing through the hole, and the cave was more "alive" than any other section.

The explored part of the cave was once stream passage. Evidence of wood and grass carried in by the water was almost everywhere. The stream, however, now flows elsewhere. It was not seen or even heard after it left the main passage 20 feet from the entrance.

The caves lie in a valley between East River Mt. and an unnamed ridge, and there may be a large underground system. Several sinks occur along the valley floor. The three caves are all very close to each other, and may connect. Perhaps the disappearing stream in Cave Rat Cave forms the lake in the cave with the 100 foot drop.

Gary McCutchen

ooo000000ooo

BLUNDERS INTO BLAND

Editor's Note: President of the VPI Grotto for the coming year, Rick Nolting has put a great deal of time into an effort to check known caves and discover new caves on Big Walker Mt., Bland county. The Newberry-Banes system (see elsewhere in this issue) and many other caves were discovered and explored in the forties and fifties, but little work has been attempted in the sixties until now.

Visions of great cavern systems drew several expeditions of cavers to the Big Walker Mountain area of Bland county during November and December of the past year and the first part of this year. Having already yielded such caves as the Newberry-Banes complex and the muddy shafts of Miller's, the trips seemed promising enough. After several reconnaissance runs, involving interviews with farmers and with farmers' daughters (these latter talks were ably handled by that worldly caver, Gary McCutchen) and several visits to known caves, a series of exploration trips set out.

Mr. Munsey, who owns some thousand acres of land stretching across Big Walker Mt., bounced Gary, Joe Smith, and me up the lower slopes of the ridge for about one and a half miles in his jeep. At an altitude of 2720 feet we found our first virgin cave. It was entered by digging through some assorted gravel and boulders at the bottom of a ten foot chimney. Then, after Gary had been removed, we explored what was essentially a stream passage with intermittent rooms for about 300 feet. We were stopped by a horizontal slot about a foot high filled with rocks and the major part of the stream. It was named the "Grunt Slot" for obvious reasons, and Joe and I squirmed through, leaving Gary grunting on the opposite side. We were able to explore another 300 feet or more of passage, which left us in a steep mud covered room about 60 feet high and 30 feet wide, having several small leads in the bottom. Time was running short so we returned to the surface, discovering that Gary had located another cave for us about 200 yards away through the woods at the bottom of a deep hollow.

A few weeks later, a party of several trainees, Jim Charlton, Jeanette Skeleton, and I visited the cave Gary had located previously. We followed a tall narrow fissure for about 200 feet downward at an angle of 30° until we were stopped by flooded passageway. What lies beyond this, I can only surmise, but it is still there if anyone wants to find out.

(Editor's Note: When dry, the large passage funnels down into a small hole in the floor. Near this hole, the debris covering the floor becomes unstable, sliding toward the hole. A rope would be helpful as a safeguard since a drop could exist.) These two caves we dubbed Munsey's numbers 1 and 2, respectively.

The crowning blow, error, touch to our Bland county ramblings occurred not long after when a "hardy" (har, har) crew of Joe Smith, Sally Carlson, Pat Couple, Gary McCutchen, R. E. Whittemore, and me headed once again into the wilds. John Meadow, a 16 year old resident of the valley, volunteered his services and led us on a mile or so jaunt across the hills to several caves. The weather was clear and cold, but the snow had drifted to several feet in places making cross-country hiking very interesting. In a short while our original party of seven was now three separate units--John, Whitt, and Joe had formed the lead; Gary was keeping the two girls company about a half mile behind (Ed. Note: All right, so I was out of shape); and I was somewhere in the middle.

Eventually we all stumbled into the cave, and since we had managed to waste sufficient time roaming around, it was growing darker. Of course, we had not carried any gear with us, so Gary and I trudged back to the car and managed to drive it within half a mile of the cave. Informing me that his car gets lonesome at night away from the VPI parking lot, Gary "volunteered" to remain in situ, while I luggered some miscellaneous gear back to the frigid caverns on the mountain. The cave proved un-virgin, but interesting enough. We explored about 700 feet of tube-like passages and various elongated low-ceilinged rooms before finding a long flat-on-the-stomach-type crawlway. We managed to yank and push ourselves at least 150 feet into where it opened up slightly. We were unable to penetrate any further because the passage got even smaller. It seemed to me that I heard a familiar grunt echoing down the passage, so I knew it must be time to head back.

(Managing Editor's Note: This article was written prior to the release of H. H. Douglas' book, Caves of Virginia. At that time, the inadequacies of this report were not realized. There seems to be quite a deviation between Caves of Virginia and actual fact. It is our hope that we will be able to bring some order out of the existing chaos. The blame for the inaccuracies found in Caves of Virginia cannot be placed entirely upon Mr. Douglas, but upon the failure of the people who originally checked this area, and upon not finding another Newberry's, neglected to keep accurate and careful records of their findings. So, look for future issues of the Troglodyte to contain valuable additions and corrections to Mr. Douglas' anthology.)

MUNSEY'S #1: Elevation-2700' Bland Quadrangle, Virginia
1.3 miles S of Munsey house at BM 2260, near
Walker Creek -- this house is 1.9 miles W of
Central Church.

MUNSEY'S #2: 300 yards E of above.

SPRINGHOUSE: Next to tenant house .5 mile S of Munsey's House.

(Name Unknown): Elevation-2600' Bland Quadrangle, Virginia
1.0 mile SW of Meadow's house which is near
stone quarry below Central Church.

V.P.I. GROTTO RESEARCH DEPARTMENT

A sample of black earth was recently collected from a ceiling deposit in Aqua Cave, Highland county, Va. It is apparently a stream deposit left during high water stages and is also found in some lower areas of the passage.

Analysis was conducted by Sam Dunaway in the testing laboratory of the Newport News Shipbuilding and Dry Dock Co.

He reports:

"The sample was ground to 100+ mesh and dried at 110°C for 24 hours. All determinations were made colorimetrically on a Beckman Model DU Spectrophotometer except calcium and silica, which were done gravimetrically.

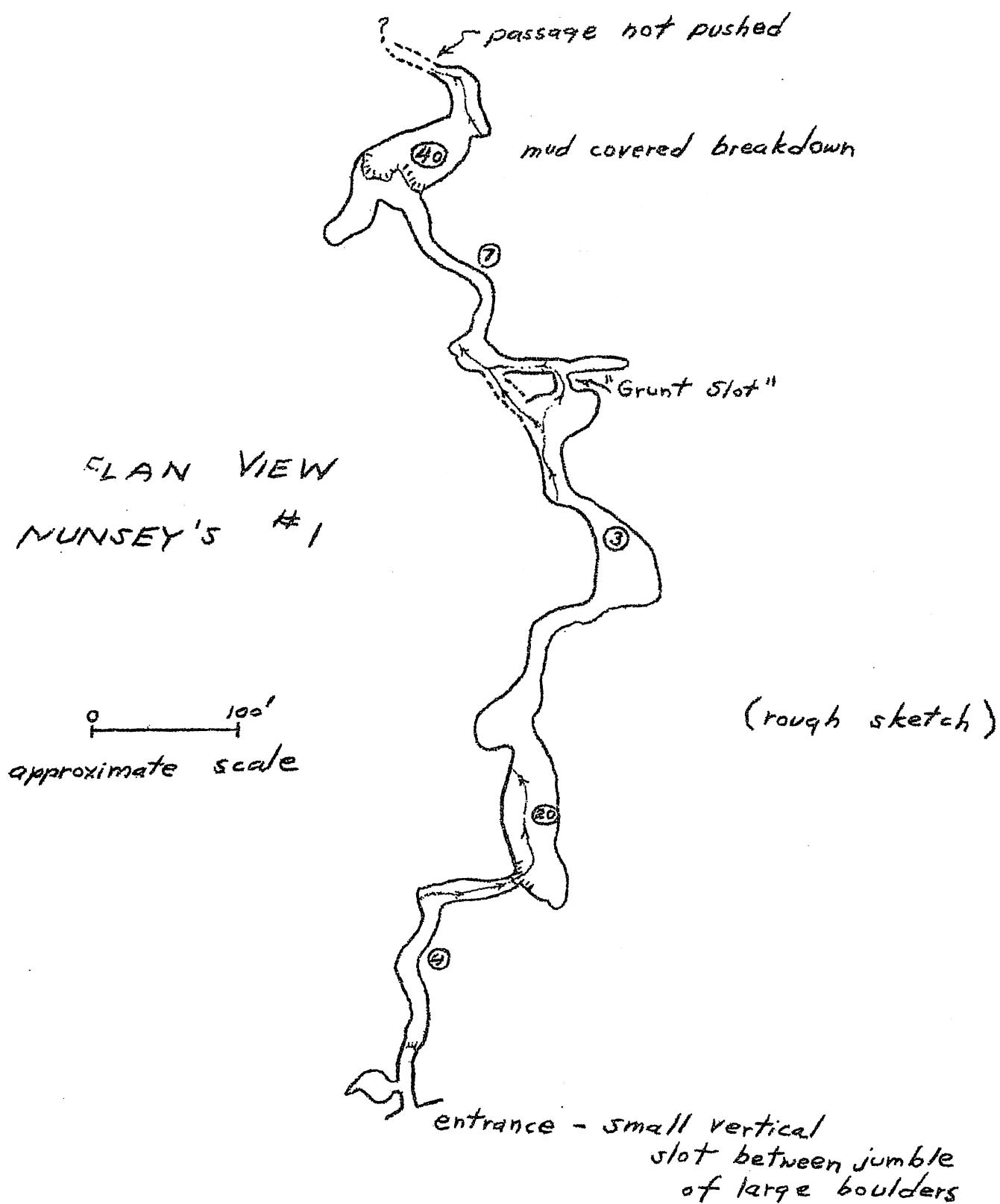
"A microscopic examination showed that the manganese and other heavy metals were deposited as a black film on sand grains and sandstone flakes. A considerable amount of clay was present.

"The analysis ran as follows:

Manganese	11.4%
Aluminum	7.72%
Cobalt	0.09%
Nickel	0.11%
Copper	0.025%
Titanium	0.27%
Iron	5.29%
Calcium	1.4%
Silicon dioxide	33.3%

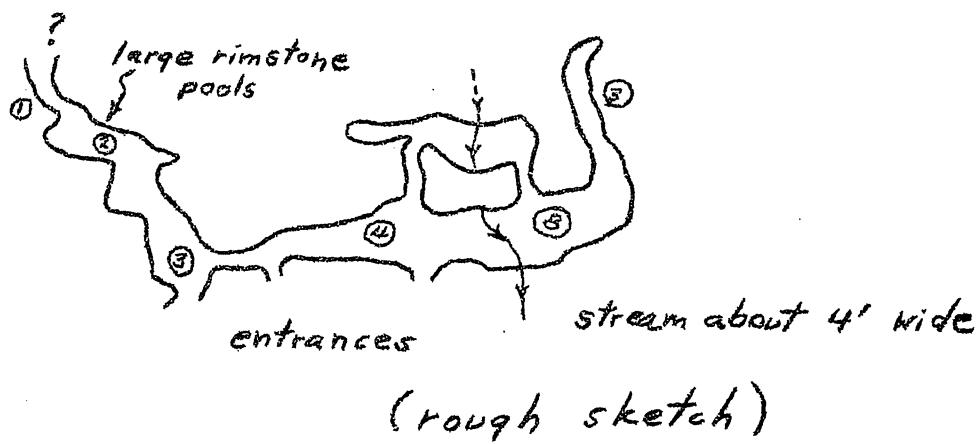
"Magnesium, lead, and zirconium reacted positively to qualitative determinations, but no barium was found. An ion exchange technique is being applied for its separation in trace quantities with subsequent analysis done on the flame photometer."

|||||



SPRINGHOUSE CAVE
PLAN VIEW

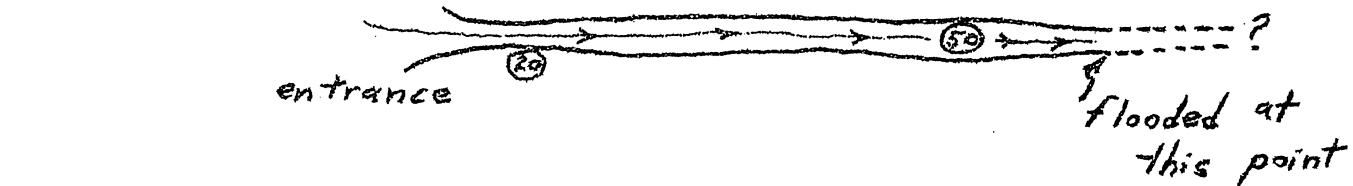
0 100'
approximate scale



MUNSEY'S #2

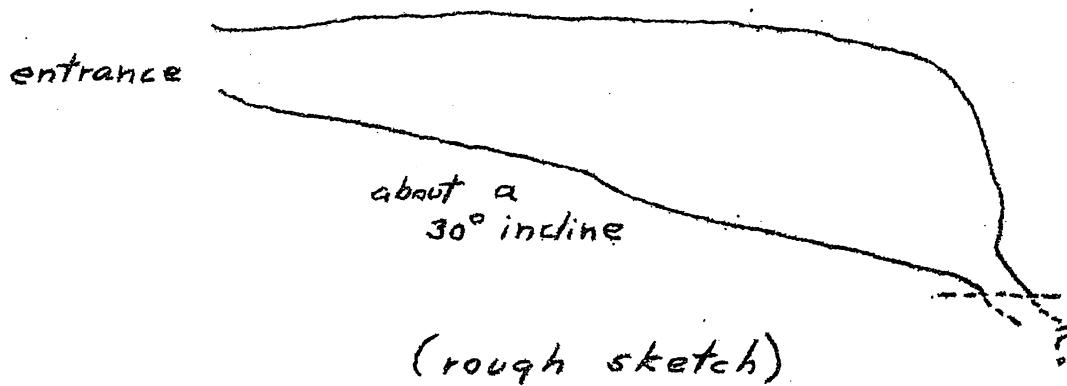
0 100'
approximate scale

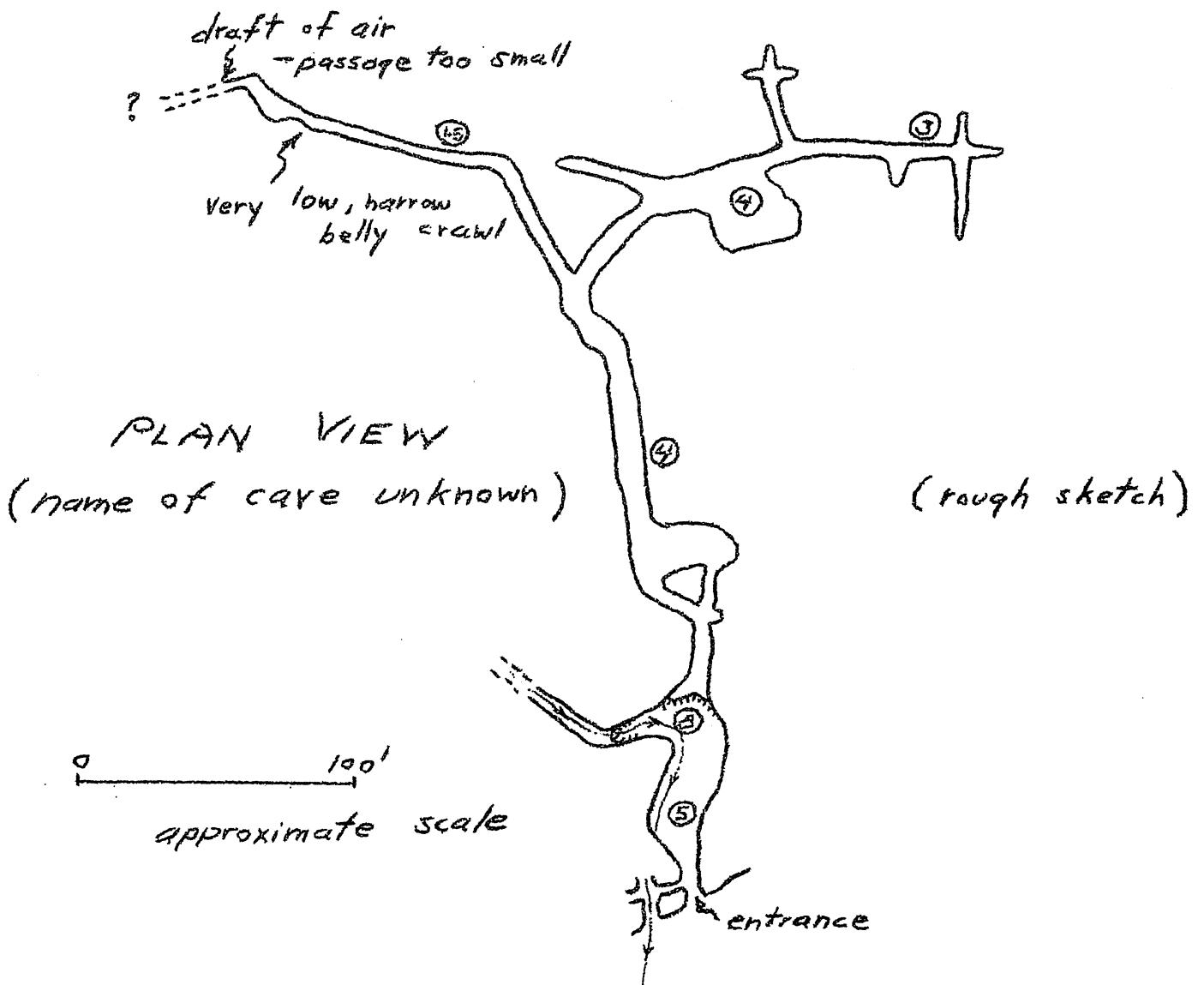
PLAN VIEW



large sinkhole
entrance

PROFILE VIEW





NEWCASTLE MURDER HOLE REOPENED--BUT!

The famous Murder Hole near Newcastle, Virginia, has been reopened after being closed for nearly three years. The cave, owned by the Sizer family, was closed due to the careless acts of inconsiderate cavers. They were plagued with gates being left open, fences being ridden down, disturbances created while leaving the cave late at night, carbide dumped in the fields, cows turned loose, and cars being driven across the fields, tearing up the turf. In light of this, it is a wonder the cave was ever reopened, even under the strict conditions which now exist.

The VPI Grotto has negotiated the opening of this cave, making several trips to Newcastle for that purpose. The conditions of the reopening, then, tend to favor VPI, due to our efforts in that direction. Here they are:

Only members of the VPI Grotto are allowed in the cave. Anyone else must be accompanied by a member of the VPI Grotto. This condition is a result of the considerate, responsible attitude shown by the Tech cavers.

A printed release form must be presented to Mr. or Mrs. Sizer, signed by all persons in the party, before entering the cave.

A cave register, prepared by the VPI Grotto and given to the Sizer family, must be signed upon entering and leaving the cave.

The NSS conservation policy and the VPI Grotto safety code will be observed. Violation of any of these conditions will undoubtedly result in permanent closing of this impressive cavern.

The VPI Grotto urges all cavers to exercise consideration toward cave owners. It is a sorry situation when the carelessness of a few can spoil it for so many. A little effort in the right direction will prevent many incidents such as the sad ones at Roger's Belmont and Mystic caves.

R. E. Whittemore

