THE TECH TROGLODYTE

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

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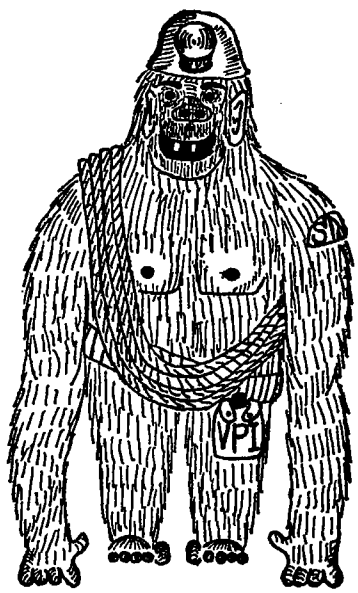

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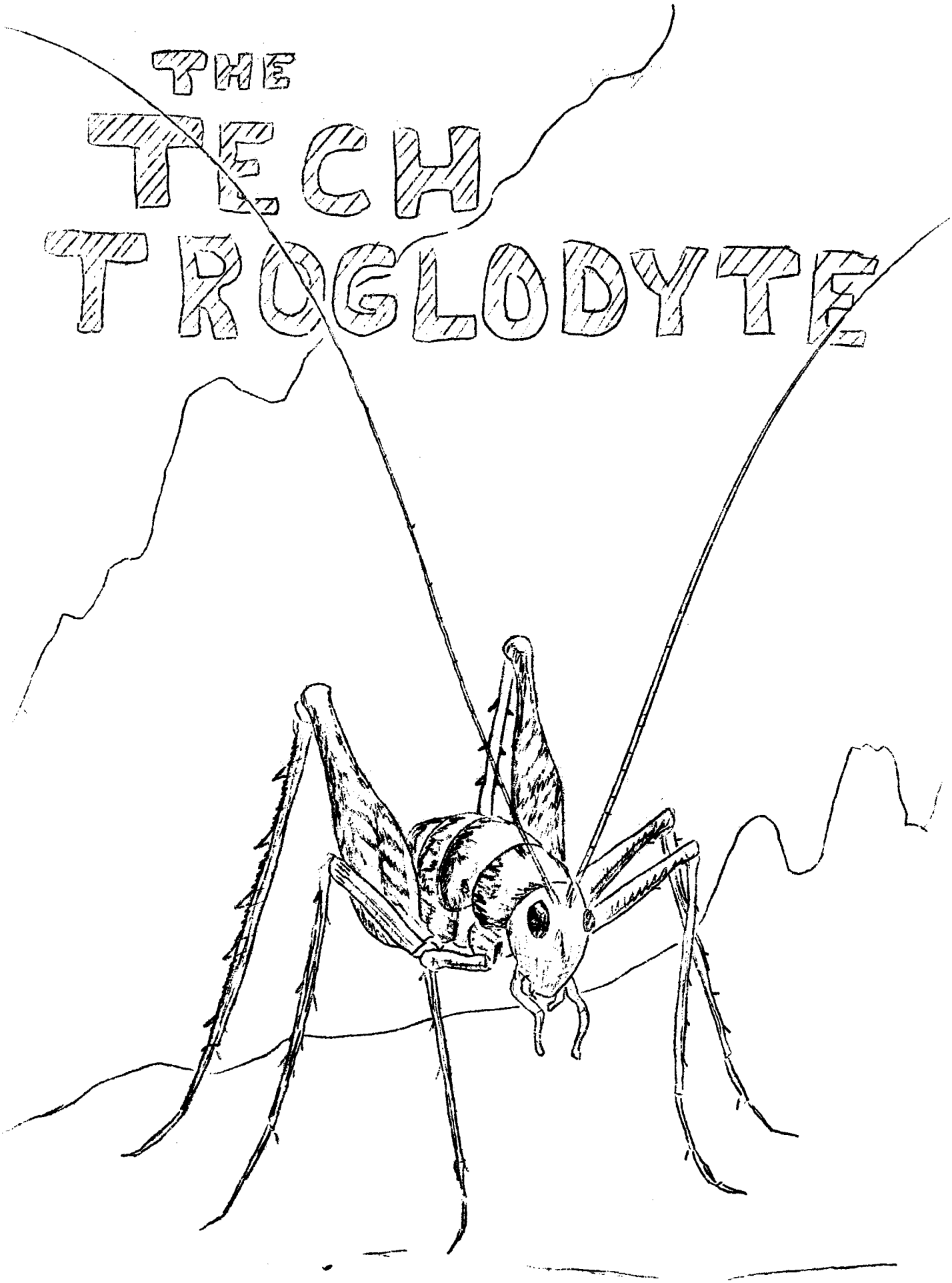

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THE TECH TROGLODYTE is published by the VPI Grotto on a quarterly basis pending the availability of material. All submitting of material and subscriptions should be sent to Box 471, Blacksburg, Virginia 24060. Subscription rate is presently one cent per page or by exchange. Individual copy price is $.50.

DRAWINGS & CARTOONS by Rolf McQueary
Nancy Moore
Bob Page
Janet Queisser

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

One of my Geology Lab students asked me the other day if I had any cave formations at home that I had collected. Somewhat amazed, I replied, "But of course not. That's totally contrary to our club's conservation policies."

"But I wouldn't think that it would hurt just to break a few off the walls."

"Listen fella, you don't even take a broken one from the floor unless it's of some scientific interest and can be utilized for those purposes."

Still puzzled at his naive attitude, I explained to him about cave conservation, even going so far as to repeat the old adage that - if everyone took a stalactite there would be none left for anyone to see. Now the guy wasn't being arrogant and he wasn't dense. He just simply hadn't thought about it.

The trouble is that a lot of people like this guy go caving, and when those that just don't care are added to them, the result is the pathetic destruction of caves, like New River, that bear grim witness to their negligence. And what bothers me just as much is the tremendous number of people outside our club that do go caving now, many of whom do not subscribe to good caving practices. We, as a grotto, adhere to the caving principles constituted by the N.S.S. but we have no direct control over these outside cavers. They can ruin the beauty of a cave with their vandalism, cause a cave to be closed by disrespect for an owner's property, or create bad publicity and endanger themselves and others through reckless safety techniques. As you may have already heard, we are essentially suffering from an over-population problem in caving, and the practices of these "outsiders" should be of a major concern to our grotto.

At this point you probably wonder what the heck we can do, since it seems like we're doomed to a position of helpless frustration. However, there are some measures that we can take to help correct this detriment to caving.

We can start right here, within the club itself. Last fall was a prime example of the exact thing that we do not want to happen. Judging from the number of trainees who paid dues, we turned on a lot of people to caving but they were turned off to the Cave Club. These grotto drop-outs that still go caving are no longer under the influence of the conservation-minded or technically experienced members of our group. Due to the high percentage of students on this campus that go caving, we don't need to interest people in caving, but let's turn the cavers on to the grotto. We can make the club more attractive by stressing the

expertise of caving and the fact that we are a serious-minded caving organization.

Land-owners can help too, especially if we maintain good relations with them and explain the differences between the attitudes of our club and the practices of many rebel cavers. Many understanding cave-owners that have had problems can be convinced to allow admittance to grotto of N.S.S. members only.

We've got a good group with much potential and I'm convinced that next year will be a great one, so let's get out there and give it hell.

Steve Hall

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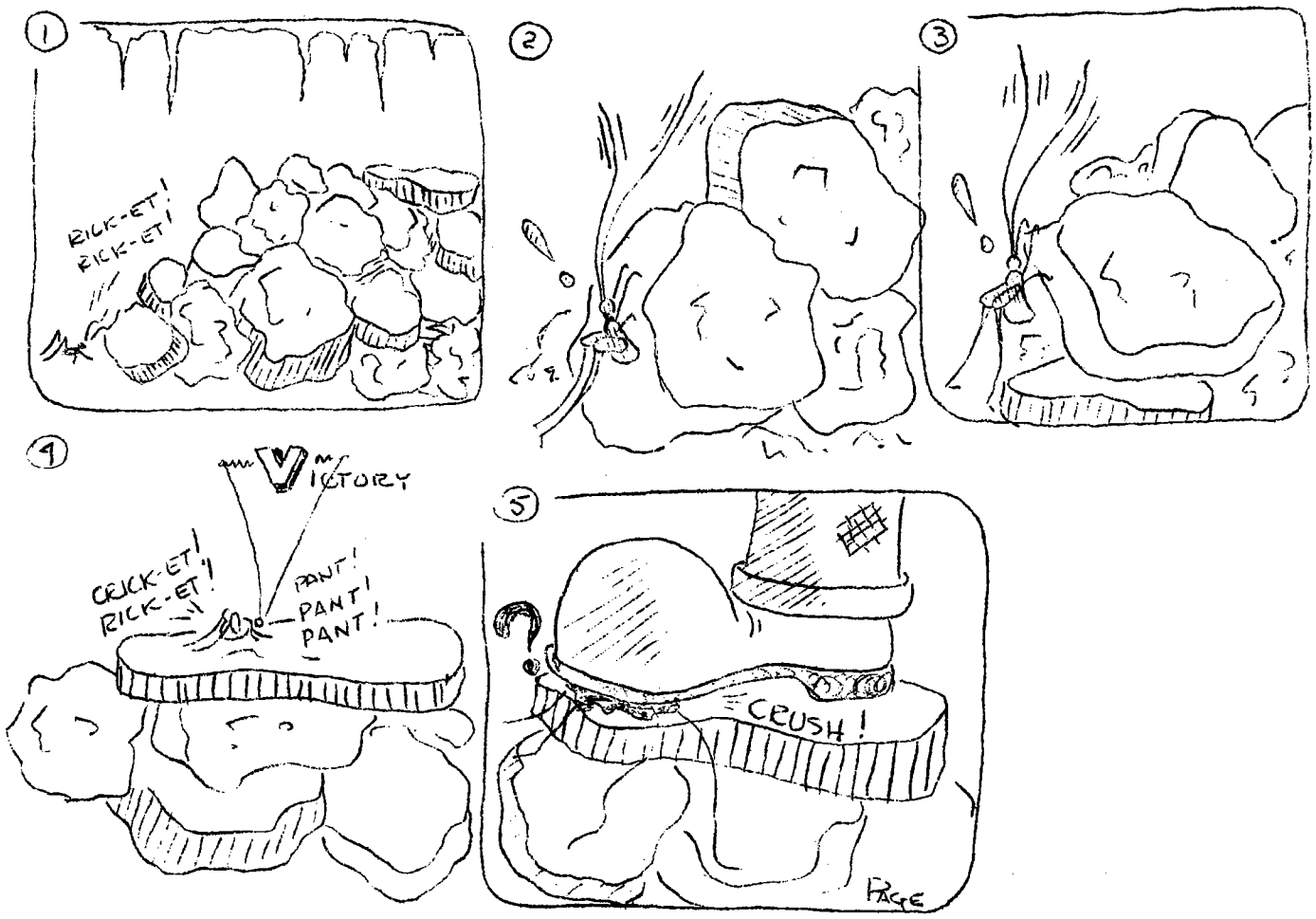
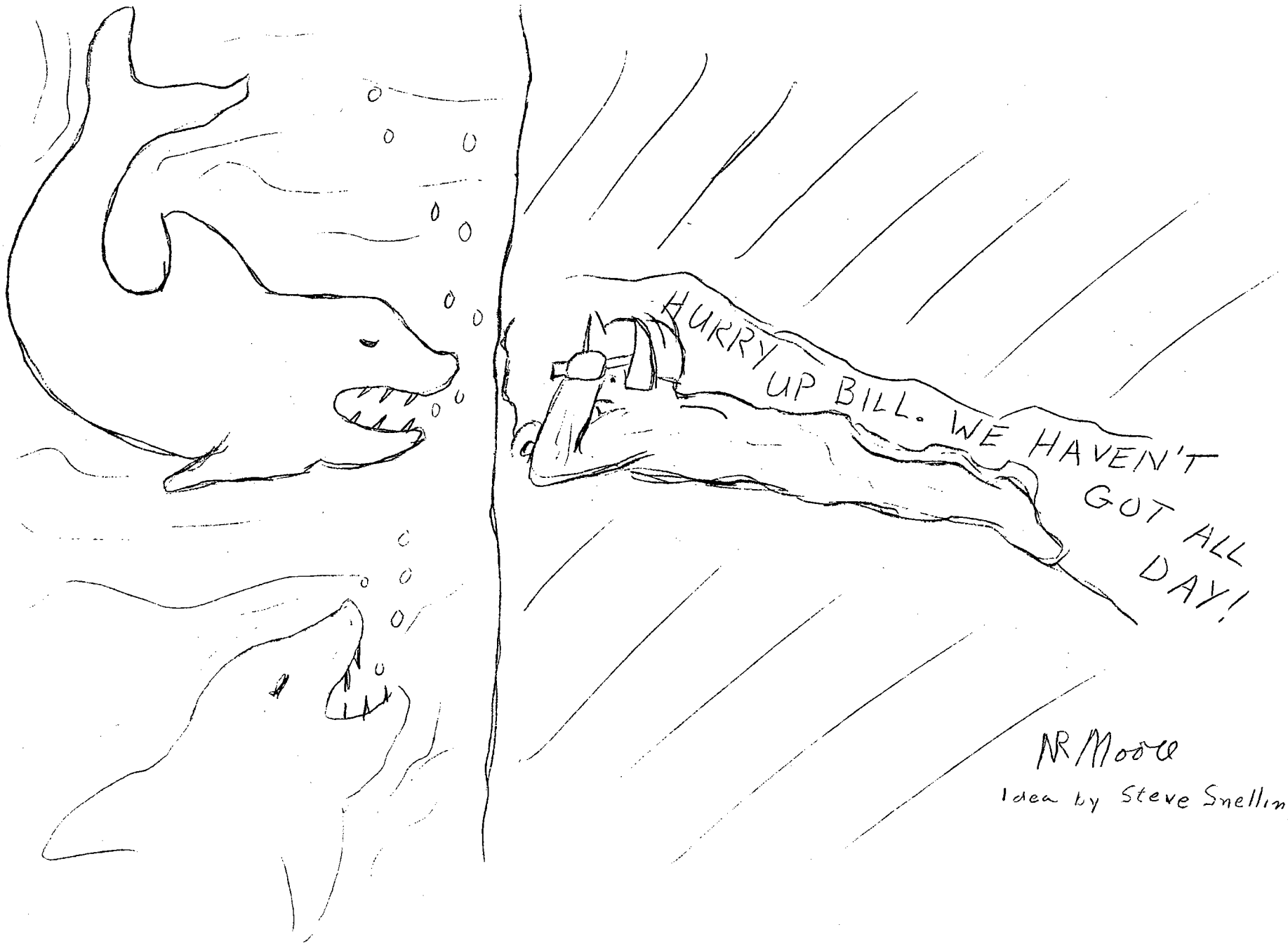




NR Moore

Idea by Steve Snelling

CAVE HUNT

Recently a new section of Interstate 81 has been opened from Christiansburg north towards Roanoke, providing easy access to an area with good cave possibilities, Besides the road cuts, there are many outcrops nearby. At the instigation of Bobby Lewis, Rick Whitt and I proceeded to check this area, particularly in the vicinity of the Elliston - Ironto exit of I-81.

Our search began on Tuesday, January 4, 1972, when Rick and I were riding with Bobby to Roanoke. We stopped 0.2 miles north of the Elliston - Ironto exit. With two binoculars, we located what appeared to be four holes in the outcrops on the west side of the highway. Since it was late, we would check these out later.

The following Friday, Steve Hall told us about some holes that he had checked on the east side of I-81. We widened our search area. He mentioned one place he was unable to reach due to its location in a cliff face. We marked these down on a topo which we had previously obtained from the Grotto files.

Sunday, January 9, our search began in earnest. Armed with lights, hats, rope and other assorted gear, Rick and I set out to see what we could find. We took the Elliston - Ironto exit, route 603, and then turned onto a gravel road which parallels the highway. We stopped at a field. Our first objective was a hole in the middle of a cliff, two-thirds of the way up Pedlar Hill, at approximately 37 degrees 14 minutes north and 80 degrees 14 minutes west on the 7.5 Elliston quadrangle. Not being able to climb directly to the hole, we climbed above and rappelled down. It was necessary to go half way down and then swing into the cliff. In front of us was what looked like a large cave entrance. After we lit our lamps, we saw that it was just a very nice shelter cave extending about 20 ' and consisting of one room with no leads, containing several nests which were probably squirrel. This would be a nice place for a camp. In order for the second person to rappel down, it was necessary to tie a line to the main rope so that he could pull it in after the first was down.

Our next objective after returning to the car was lunch and then the west side of I-81. As we proceeded to check the holes that we located the previous Tuesday, it began to drizzle, making the leaf covered slope slippery. After several hours of checking, we found nothing.

This general area seems to hold promise. There are more outcrops about a mile north. Also several sinkholes are indicated on topos of these quads. Dennis Webb and I have checked some of these sinkholes and will have to return someday with a shovel. Time and conditions permitting, I shall return.

Thoralf Brecht

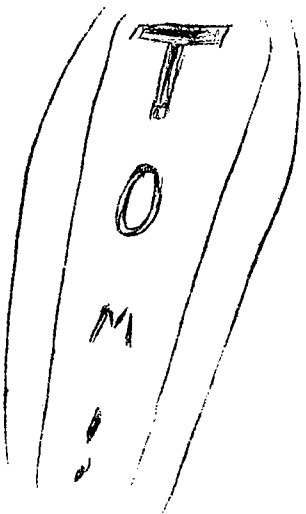
In The Dark

NR Moore

I thought you brought the extra carbide!

Wow! Caves really <u>are</u> dark!

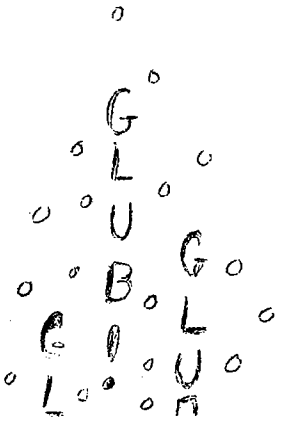
Tom, I don't know about you, but caving in the dark gives me a falling sensation...



Gee Tom, carbide lamps really don't work under water.

Tom, did you notice how clear that lake was?

— Tom?



HIGGENBOTHAM'S #3

The Group, which consisted of Janet Queisser, Rolf McQueary, Steve Hall and Bob Amundson, left Blacksburg, the armpit of Southwest Virginia, early on a typical Wednesday morning in March. Good weather smiled down upon them: rain, cold and a forecast of sleet. The destination was Higgenbotham's #2, Virginia's finest and most perfect cave.

The drive down was uneventful, stopping twice for repairs and only six times to let Janet relieve herself in her excitement of finally fielding a trip to Hig. Following dark and ominous clouds, they found their way to the most haunted part of Thompson Valley. While talking to the Pucketts, they learned of the many local legends concerning the cave. A lost collie and a blue-striped hat which had been thrown down the drop, were washed out of Maiden Springs, a resurgence down the valley. After Bob cleaned his breakfast off of their new color TV, they tiptoed through the cowpies to the awesome, yawning chasm. But alas, water was boiling into the entrance at a voluptuous rate!

They started to skip back to the car, when Janet raised her dejected head and exclaimed, "Ah HAH! We can check out that obscure local spring on yonder slight rise." Which turned out to be a 60° slope. So they fanned out in a search and destroy pattern and promptly located three ground hog holes, four snake pits and a garbage dump. As they turned exhaustingly to leave, Janet cried out, "This hole looks as if it has loose boulders around it!"

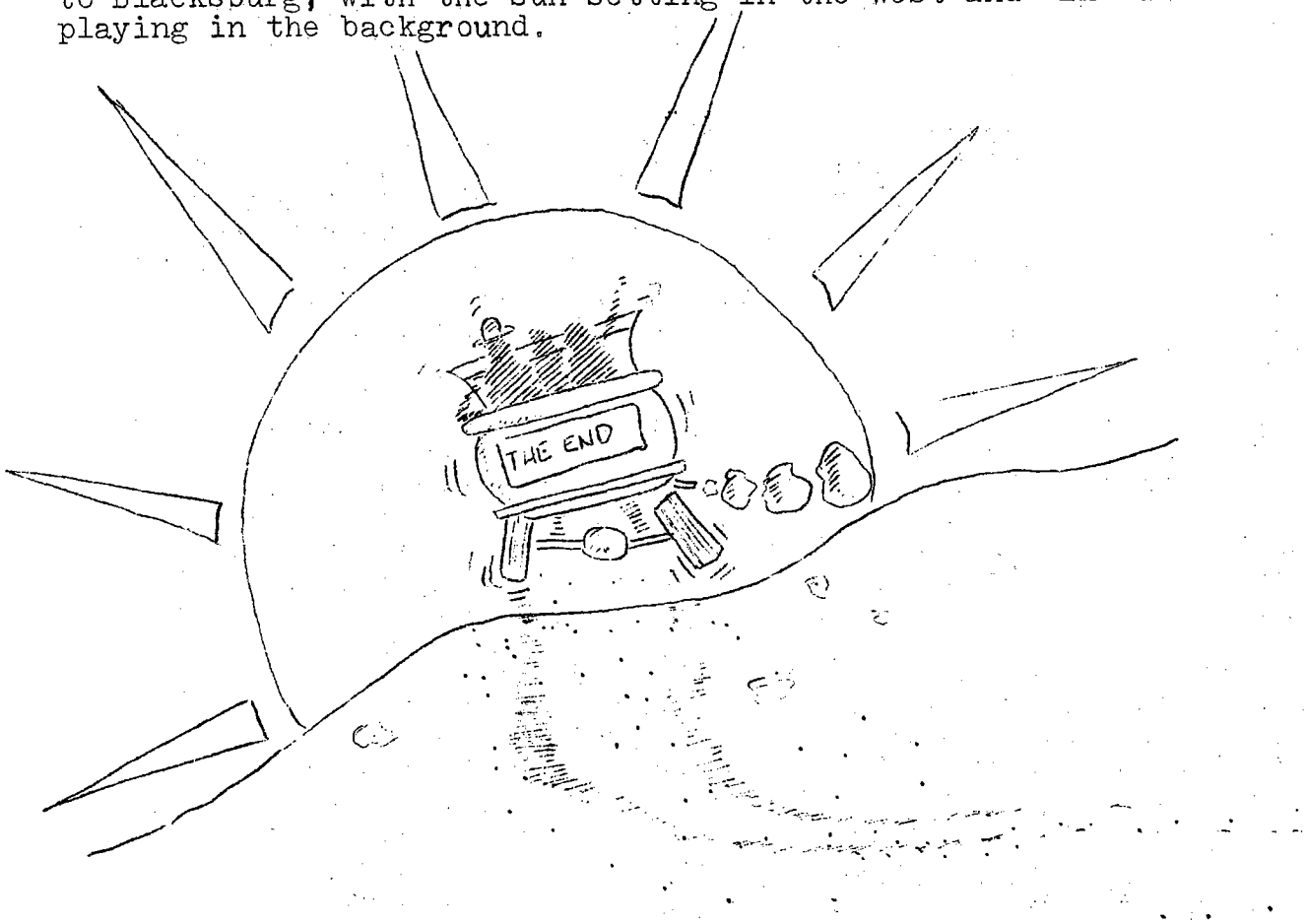
After moving six tons of number nine dolomite, access was gained to a crawlway leading into the nethermost parts of the hill. After ten feet, it opened up into huge passage , typical of the Great Savannah. Steve Hall, geologist emeritus, exclaimed over the brightly colored trichnic speleothems. The passage wound sinuously ever downward requiring expert climbing and skillful chimneying to negotiate it. They were astounded by the amount and type of debris: old truck tires, old trucks, boards, rusty nails and even a small sledge hammer. Finally, Steve could restrain himself no longer. "I must take a sample of these unusual crystals solely for scientific study and to display in my kitchen." As he nonchalontly knocked off a piece and proceededwith preliminary examination, Janet and Rolf were carefully inspecting some curious fungi covering the cavernous walls. "What a find! Psilocybe cubensis! Here, try some, a most delectable edible." All partook and enjoyed.

Meanwhile, a small riverlet of water trickled from the space where Steve had extracted the crystal. As they watched in horror, it started to increase exponentially in volume. The only escape was to assemble a raft from the cave debris. As the

water reached their waists they clambered on board and were washed downstream. Like true speleoscientists, Janet and Rolf were taking note of the various flora and fauna as they flashed by. All of a sudden Janet shouted triumphantly, "There's no doubt it, now, we're being swept by the bottom of Hig's inner drops, what an interesting way in!"

Up ahead they could hear a roar getting louder and louder and they were helpless to change their course. Sucked into the terrifying maelstrom they knew they were done for. Suddenly, all was light up ahead. The torrential outwash vomited out gobblins, ghoulies, Santa Claus, nyads and the trembling expedition. After the fog and the smog and the gore finally cleared , they were lying stupified on the resurrgent banks of Maiden Springs in the bright sunlight - with Bobaloo wearing a blue-striped hat and a somewhat worse for the wear collie licking Rolf's bedraggled face.

They had made the impossible journey. After Mr. Puckett thanked them for irrigating his pastures, they headed back to Blacksburg, with the sun setting in the west and "Exodus" playing in the background.



A PRODUCTIVE NEW RIVER TRIP

Having registered on the first day of Winter Quarter, I was faced with the problem of what to do on the second day of registration. I found out that Dale Parrott was going to New River that day so I asked for and was granted permission to join the trip. The rest of the party was Rolf McQueary, Steve Snelling, Cathy Dancy, and Jerry Redder. Whe main purpose of this trip was to map some virgin passage which had been found downstream during the four day Thanksgiving trip.

On the mapping portion of the trip Dale took notes, Rolf read brunton, and Steve and Cathy were on lead tape while Jerry and I were assigned to checking leads. We were only able to map approximately 250 feet, but much of our time was spent checking out a couple of interesting things we found.

While pushing the main passage we were mapping, I ran into an unusual floor. The floor of this passage was a white flaky substance. None of the people on the trip had seen anything like it, so Dale decided to take a sample and have it analyzed. Immediately after this, another, and perhaps more important, discovery was made.

After all the excitement had died down, Dale pushed through an upper lead which quickly opened up into a large room. The rest of the party quickly followed Dale when we heard his cry of victory. While in this room we heard the rumbling of a train and agreed that we must be close to the surface. It's possible that there once was an entrance to the cave close by. Also in the room Dale discovered a small grotto which had many pretty formations and a small reflection pool which deserves photographing.

While I was wandering around the room, I noticed some bones, which I passed off as formation. When Rolf looked at them he saw that they were actually bones which had been encrusted in calcite. On further inspection of the area, more bones were found. Numerous leg bones were found, ranging from 5 to 7 inches in length, as well as a jaw. Rolf guessed that the animal might have been a skunk or a large racoon. On a later trip, the bones were brought out for examination by Dr. Ross (from VPI's Biology department), who identified the animal as a black bear. A bear's presence so far back in the cave seems to verify our theory that there was an entrance here at one time.

Mike Richardson

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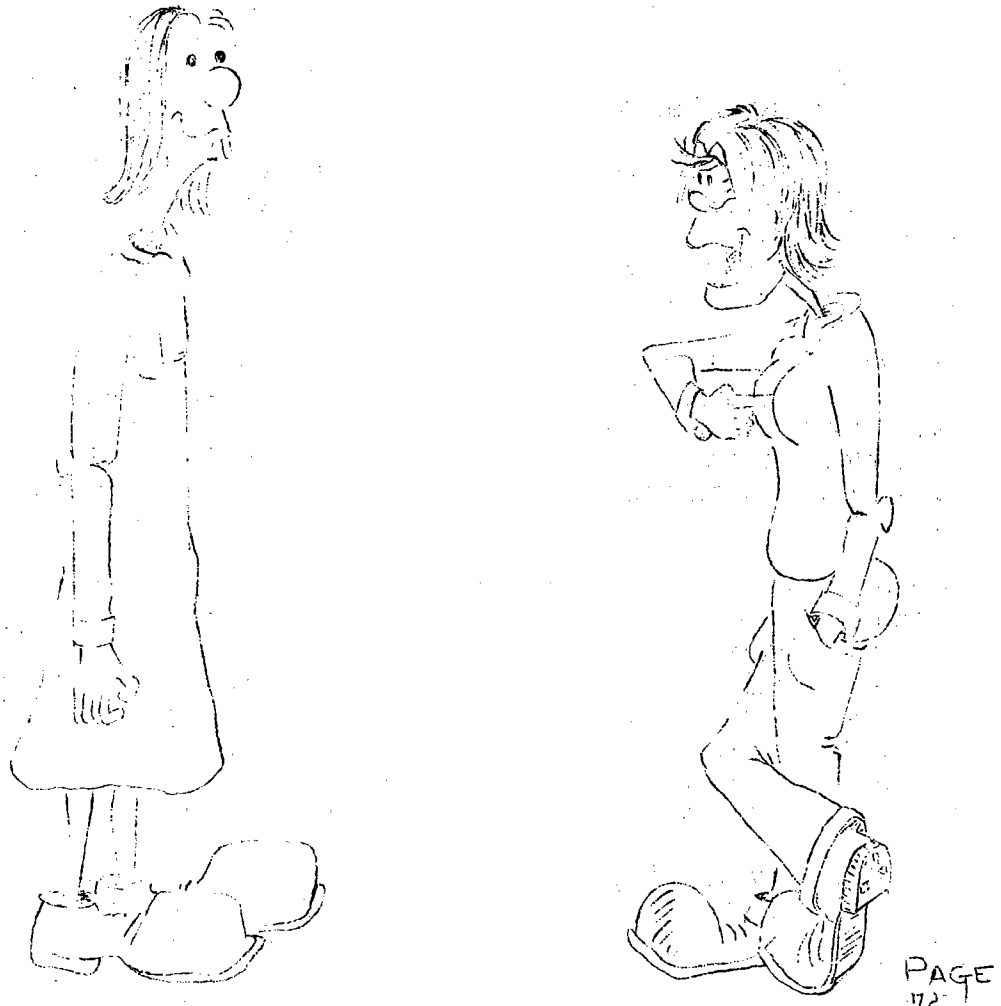

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THE EVERGROWING DISCOVERIES OF HELLHOLE

Hellhole is located in Pendleton County, West Virginia just a few miles from Seneca Rocks. It is a vertical cave that had been explored for the last 30 years and attempts have been made to connect it with Schoolhouse Cave for years. No one has succeeded in finding any passage until recently when a very large section was discovered.

In the winter of 1969 Harry Dickerson and Ron Byourkland from the Falls Church High School Speleological Club were crawling around the breakdown in the entrance room. They squeezed through a crack and it opened up into a large passage. They followed the breakdown and maze type passage until they were stopped by a 30' pit. Excited about this fantastic find, they came back and joined the rest of the group and we left the cave.

A few weeks later John Bakanas, Dave Jacobs, Vic Lutz and I went back and put up a path with rope and arrows to follow so as to avoid the beautiful formations. Some very inconsiderate cavers have now destroyed most of the beauty. One of the most unusual things about the new section was the bat graveyard. The graveyard was about 2 inches thick with bones. Not many bones are left now because everybody wants a souvineer. So now because of them, future cavers will not be able to see this unusual place. After placing a path we descended the pit. I was first down, when I reached bottom I couldn't say a word, it was too unbelievable to be true. Everyone else came down and we all stood in disbelief. Before us extended a room estimated about 500'. We explored this and found many side leads. We left a register and then started back out.

During Old Timer's Reunion in 1970, we decided to start a survey of Hellhole and the New Section. There have been two previous surveys of Hellhole, one in 1938 and the other in 1946. Both are just a map of main passages leaving out side passages and detail.

Bob Thrun and I are working together in mapping this cave. We have had a great deal of help from members of the Potomac Speleological Club (PSC), the District of Columbia Grotto, the Falls Curch High School Speleological Club, and various other High School clubs in Northern Va. Many thanks go to the people who have worked hard with the survey. Our survey of the old section is almost complete now, and all passages in the cave are on the map. The entrance to the cave is a 154' drop into a bell-shaped room. The old map shows the entrance as 187', but that was measured to the bottom of the breakdown. In a sketch of the big room it appears to be right under the entrance room. What is so fantastic is that all these years nobody could find virgin passage, and it was right off the entrance room. Jan Reese is doing a pro-

file of the cave along with the survey.

Within the last year Bruce Smith found a stream passage and reported a high lead off the second waterfall. This stream passage is off the 500' Big Room located in New Hellhole. It has seven waterfalls with the highest one about 10' down to about 4'. The exposure is very bad in this part of the cave, especially since you will be getting tired from climbing and crawling in water. The air temperature is 43 degrees and the water 41 degrees. The stream disappears into a tight hole which has not been pushed yet because of the cold water and the limited space. Beyond this hole can be heard another waterfall. In this part of the cave we are approximately 500' below surface so this could pour into a trunk channel at the water table. The only water source in Germany Valley is Judy Springs, but the volume of measured rainfall and what actually comes out of the Springs indicates that there is much underground flow. So maybe this stream flows out in into a big trunk channel which could go just about anywhere.

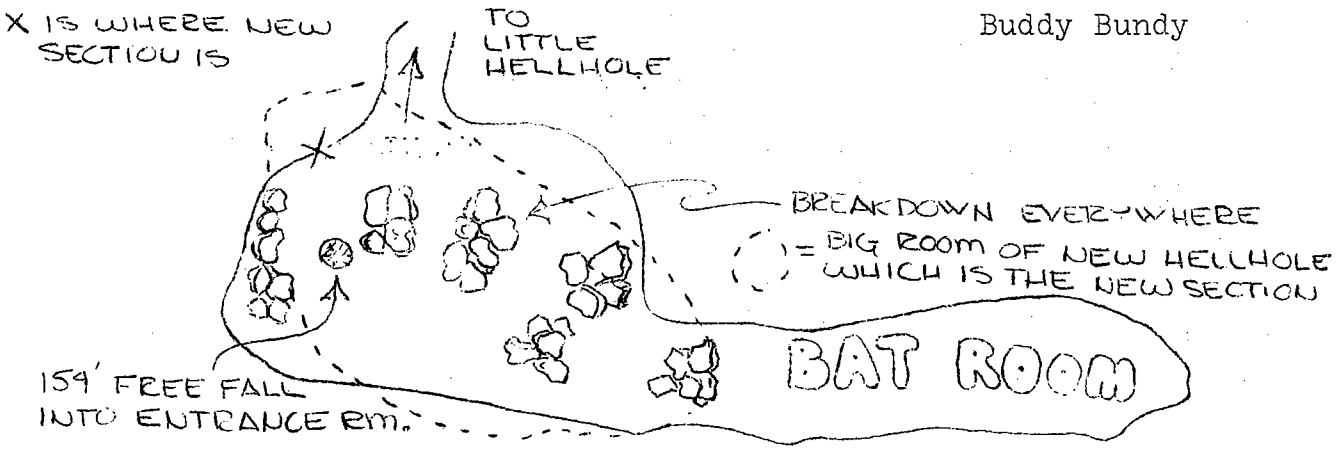
The last time I was in the cave was last fall with Ed Richardson and three other people from VPI Grotto. We found the reported high lead above the second water fall and it opened up into a maze section with some very high chimneys. Due to lack of time we had to leave, but left is the ever increasing reality of connecting Hellhole with Schoolhouse Cave. These chimneys and the still unexplored passage brings the depth level back up to the level of Schoolhouse.

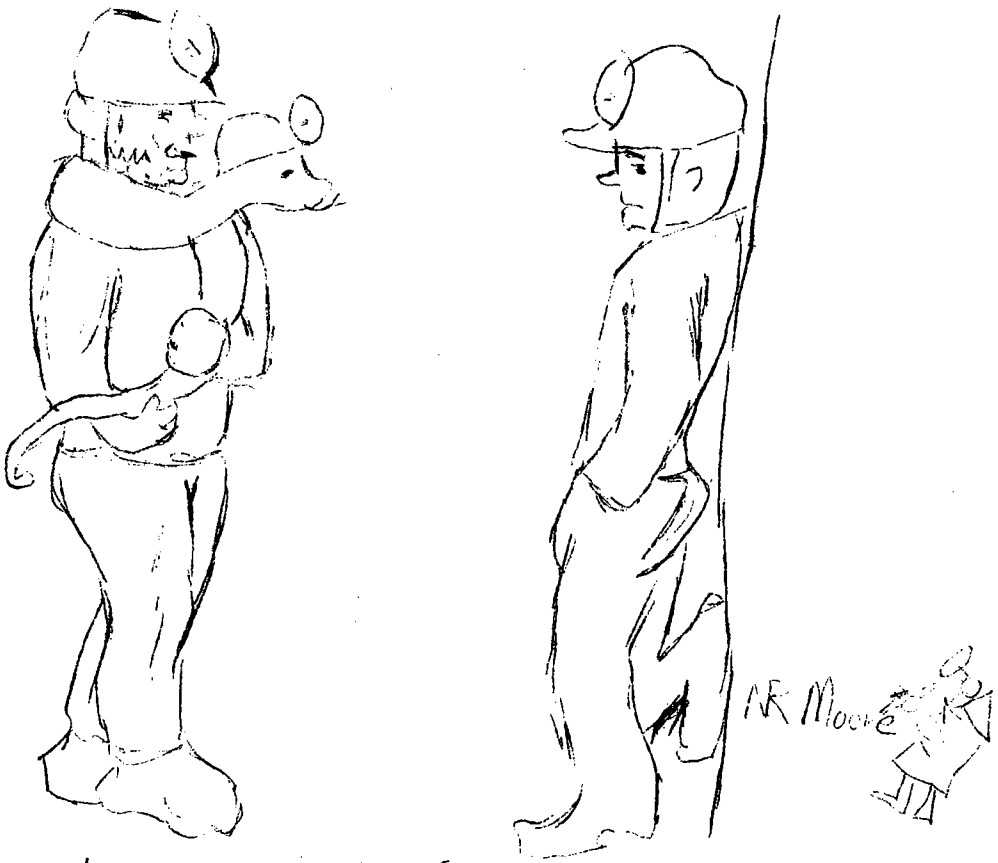
This summer work will be done in three areas: First, pushing the siphon, second, checking the virgin leads for possible connections with other caves and third, completing the survey work. If anyone is interested in the project contact me at:

6842 Westmoreland Road
Falls Church, Virginia 22042

Please remember if you go to the new section of the cave be considerate of those that follow because they would like to see the cave in the same state you first saw it. So use common sense and good conservation practices.

Buddy Bundy





We find him useful For pushing tight crawls, however communications is a problem

ON CLOSING OF A CAVE

This is a report on why a cave was closed and how this closing may have been prevented.

Beacon Cave is located in Bluefield, West Virginia, (Mercer County). For many years it was known as a small cave, a measly 150 feet. In 1959 members of the VPI Grotto undertook the project of mapping it. A small hole through the breakdown was pushed and it opened up to the trunk channel. Two weekends of extensive mapping revealed 12,500 feet of passage and a second entrance. For reasons unknown, exploration and surveying ceased with five major leads unchecked.

Interest in Beacon Cave was revived in 1970, as the unchecked leads had been pushed by local cavers and several thousand feet more discovered and no end was in sight. The project of remapping the cave has produced 2000 additional feet, none of which was on the old map.

Beacon Cave is unique for several reasons. Of the thousands of caves in Virginia and West Virginia, Beacon is the only one known to cross under the state line. John Holsinger has requested specimens of the cave's isopods and amphipods to determine if they are unique species. A bat colony numbering in the hundreds is also in the cave, which is unusual to this particular area. In a county which contains caves 1000 feet or less, Beacon Cave may extend to over 20,000 feet.

In the years between 1959 and 1970, Beacon Cave saw an increased amount of traffic. Due to local political moves, the cave is now located within the city limits of Bluefield. Readily accessible, it became a favorite with the local "cavers", and several times rescues were needed to remove the lost explorers. The heavy traffic began in 1967 as the downstream pool was crossed for the first time revealing the cave's only formation room. Within three years it was destroyed.

The events that directly and finally led to Beacon Cave's closing occured during the summer of 1971. These incidents went on without any knowledge to the Grotto or the rest of the Caving world. It was learned on the first mapping trip of Fall Quarter that the cave was to be bulldozed shut in one week.

Earlier that summer two young teen-age heros armed with candles and a gallon of wine entered the cave. Five hundred feet later and after finishing the wine, they lost their light and waited for a rescue, which arrived the next day.

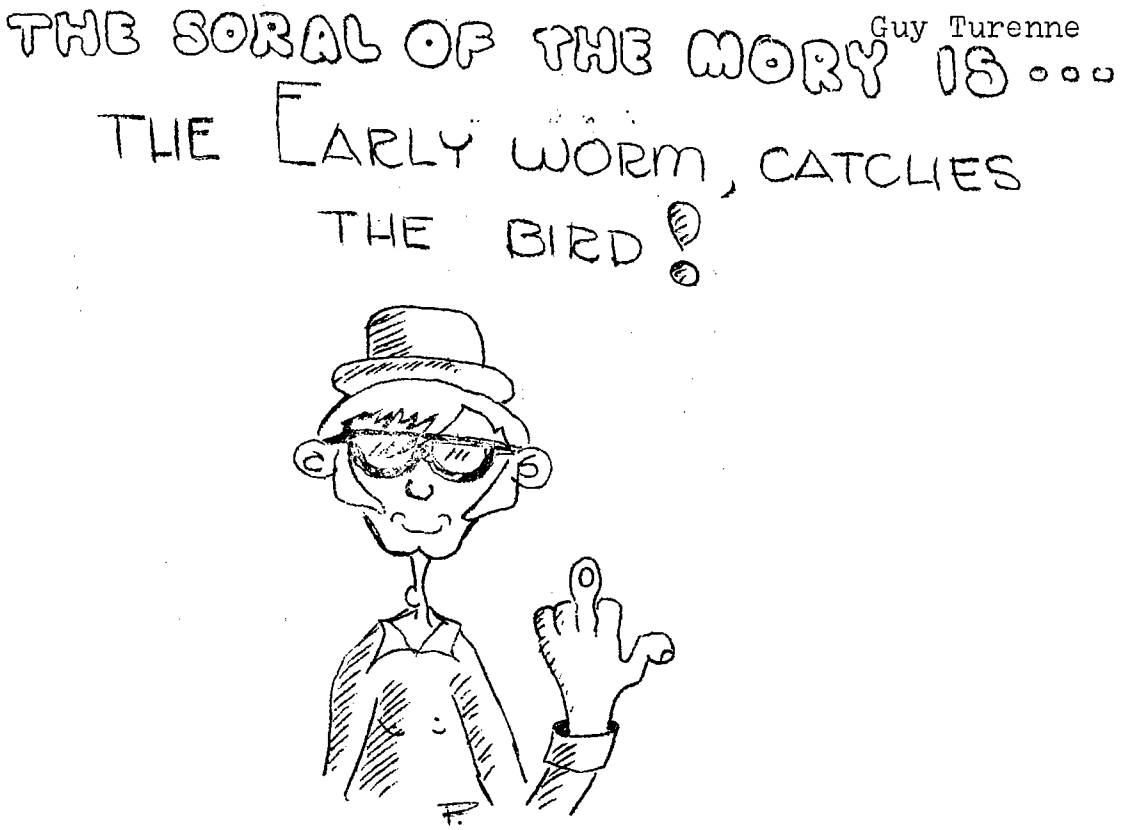
Late in August another youngster with some adventurous companions went in. The boy dislodged some loose breakdown which fell on his chest, knocking him unconsious.. Again the town rescue squad was called in.

The rescue squad, backed by the town newspapers and television, prevailed upon the owner, Mr Thomas Early, to close the cave. All efforts of the Virginia Region and the VPI Grotto to work out a compromise concerning cave conservation and safety, failed. In two weeks a bulldozer began the filling operations, at a cost of nearly $1500, paid by Mr. Early.

What could have been done?

First of all, as the traffic in the cave was noticibly increasing, a gate should have been installed to limit access to qualified and knowledgable cavers. Secondly, it should have been realized that with the close proximity of Beacon Cave to housing developments and shopping centers could only lead to trouble. The town rescue squad should have been given a map the cave and the Rescue Roster of the VPI Grotto, so that experienced cavers could be called in to assist with rescues. Thirdly, and most importantly, the Grotto should have taken greater pains to establish firm diplomatic relations with the landowner.

After a cave has been closed,it is too late to sit back and discuss why it was done. A responsibility of a Grotto should be to help educate local residents about the delights and especially the dangers of caving. Tell local rescue squads of your experience in cave rescue work and of your willingness to assist in emergencies. When caves are closed, especially ones popular with local residents, those same "cavers" will find their way to previously unspoiled and more important, open caves.




Have you seen eight tiny reindeer?
NK Moore

TRAINEE TALK

Many trainees, when they frist come into the Club, have a hard time adjusting to both the Club and its ways and college at the same time. Adjusting to college life is your own personal problem. Adjusting to the Club, or trying to, is observed by members and other trainees alike. Have you ever wondered just what the impressions you are or are not making? Here are some quotes recorded earlier this year, most of which were made by members, a few were made by other trainees. But, all of them are either about or directed to those foul underlings, TRAINEES. Read through and see where you fit in.

"I sure don't know what's the matter with trainees this year, but they just don't have the respect for the members like they used to."

"You keep that up and you won't get my vote."

"The loudest one in the Club isn't always the one to imitate."

"To those trainees that don't know, the Club is NOT composed of members and girls, but only members."

"Boy, trainees sure are dense."

"Hi ya, Sweet Boy!"

"Remember, you're just a trainee."

"Cavers, hell! All I can see at this table are friends of friends of friends of friends..."

"What's belay?"

"Well, of course since he's been in a cave before he knows all about it."

"Danger! Caution! Proceed with care! Beware of giving advice to members!"

"Trainees should be seen and not heard."

"You'd think they could learn a few simple songs."

"You'd think they could just plain learn!"

"I just hate to see ignorant people around."

"This group of trainees are awful!"

"That's what's the matter with you...no respect!"

"How dumb can a trainee be?"

"Don't blame me, I'm just a trainee."

"No, I'm not a caver, I'm just a trainee."

Q: When in a cave, what rocks should you walk on, gray ones or black ones?
A: Gray ones, because the black ones aren't there.

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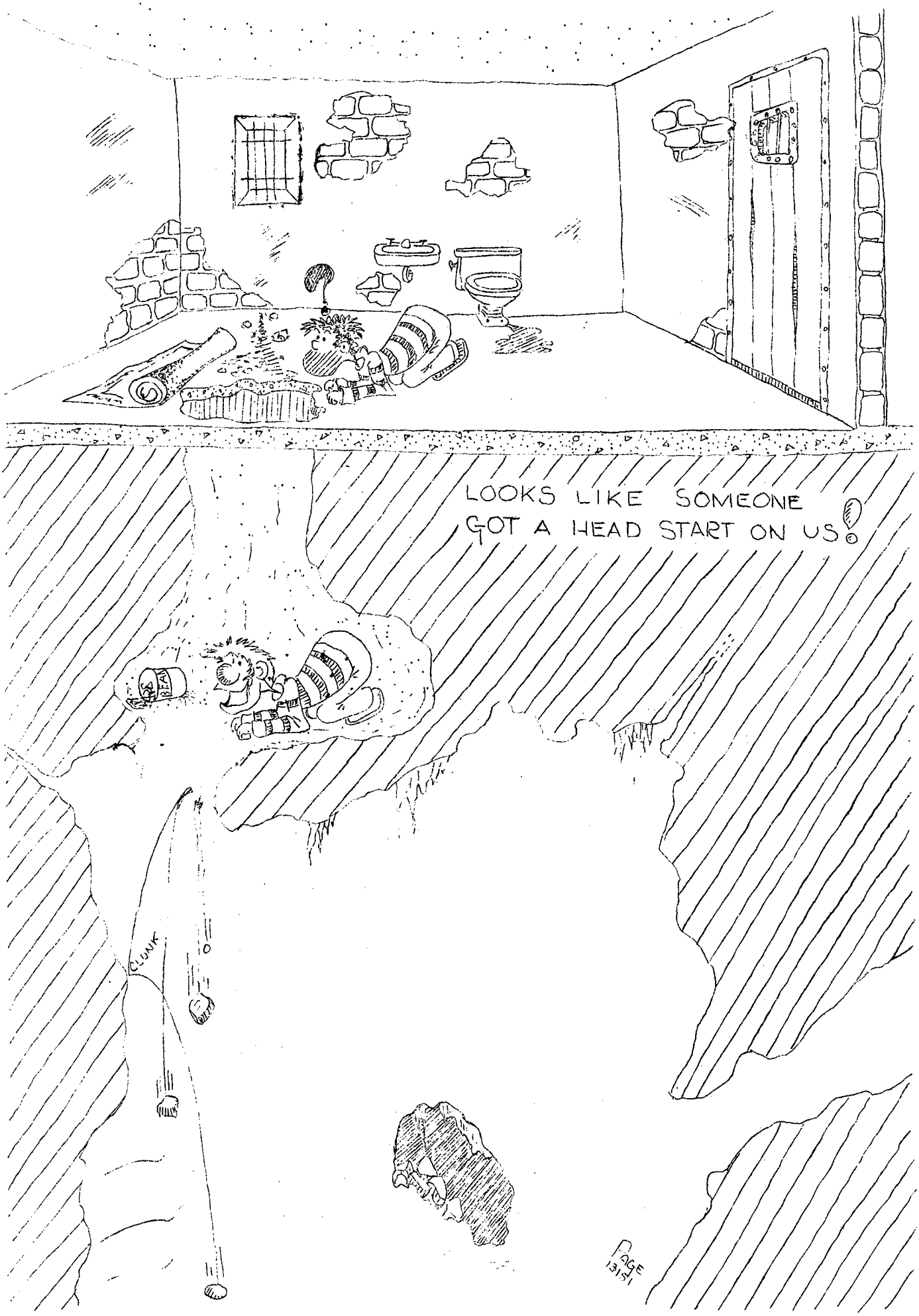

LOOKS LIKE SOMEONE GOT A HEAD START ON US!
CLUNK

BETTER ILLUMINATION FROM YOUR CARBIDE LAMP

The most important piece of equipment to a caver is his source of light. One source is the acetylene lamp. Most cavers are aware of the versatility of the carbide lamp. Its intense white flame is projected by the reflector into the void ahead. Let's look at the nature and use of this lamp and see how one might be able to see more of the world that lays before him.

First, assume that the flame length and quality are such to give the optimum illumination. Also assume that these parameters do not vary with the particular configuration of the lamp. Two variables now exist for the lamp - the nature of the reflector and the position of the lamp with respect to the object(s) (or void) to which one is looking. Again we assume that the flame lies on the symmetric axis through the reflector.

Most reflectors obtained today are of a parabolic nature with a highly polished, chrome-plated surface. They range in size from a 2 inch to a 7 inch diameter. The 2 inch one throws a broad, diffused light while the 7 inch reflector projects a powerful beam of light. Most cavers I've met use the intermediate size. This 4 inch size combines advantages of both. Reflectors used today are almost entirely chrome-plated. The brass and tin reflectors phased out long ago with the passing of Guy's Dropper, Auto lite, etc. So it seems the standard of today is the 4 inch chrome-plated reflector available from Justrite.

Next consider the placement of the lamp. Again the standard seems to be sporting a flat clip model attached to some sort of protective head gear. This arrangement leaves the hands free but the attachment to the hard hat definitely leaves much to be desired. At best the lamp is aligned along an axis parallel to the hard hat. This is fine when looking at objects directly in front but does little to illuminate the 100 feet of open passage that may exist or the pitfalls that lie directly at your feet. Lamp clips have been bent by the constant removal and replacement of the lamp on the helmet to such a degree as to be also lighting the ceiling while the caver picks his way across unstable breakdown. If one tilts his helmet (and thus his lamp) downward, he often finds his vision completely blocked by the brim of his helmet. So, we have posed some problems. Let's look at some solutions.

The most obvious foresight is to assure that you have a clean and polished reflector. A dirty or tarnished reflector is no good whatever the size, shape or material. Many cleaning agents are readily available. I've used Brasso, silver cleaner, and toothpaste - all with success. In general, you want to avoid cleansers that depend on heavy scouring action and especially steel wool.

Even fine steel wool will eventually scratch the chrome plating through to the base metal. It's best to use a milder substance and generous amounts of elbow grease. Even though the 4 inch reflector seems to be the most versatile size, Justrite makes a 4 inch model for their 8-hour hand lamps which has come to be known here as the "parabolic" reflector. It is the same size as the regular 4 inch model but has a more pronounced curvature. The net effect is a more concentrated beam. The diffused nature of the light is still retained, however.

I've found the most efficient method of illuminating my way is by holding the lamp in my hand. Only when both hands are necessary for a difficult climb, vertical work, mapping, etc., does my lamp find its way back onto my helmet. The advantages are obvious. The result is much increased visibility, The absence of the lamp from the helmet necessarily means a decrease in weight on the head. No longer is there need for extravagant counter-weights. But we must consider the times when the lamp must be worn on the helmet.

Instead of using a flat clip lamp, I find that a round hook model can be modified into a spade which tilts the lamp downward while the helmet remains in its "normal" position. I modified a late model Autolite, but the procedure will work as well on a Justrite. First, remove the spider clip, if the lamp has one. Next,, flatten the round hook with hammer and anvil. Cut a strip of metal - I used galvanized tin - twice the length of the hook. Fold it to secure the round hook as a sandwich. (Figure 1) Flux and solder. Excess solder may have to be filed or ground away. The result is being able to bend the lamp at an angle to the clip. (Figure 2) Finally, the universal hat bracket will have to be filed out slightly to accept the larger clip.

For almost two years my clip has held strongly under severest caving activities. With the advent of the new polypropylene Justrite lamp, this modification may be unfeasible or undesirable. But for brass lamps, I've found this procedure to produce an amazing improvement in usable illumination.

Dale Parrott

* * * * *

"Go placidly amid the noise and the haste and remember what peace there may be in silence."

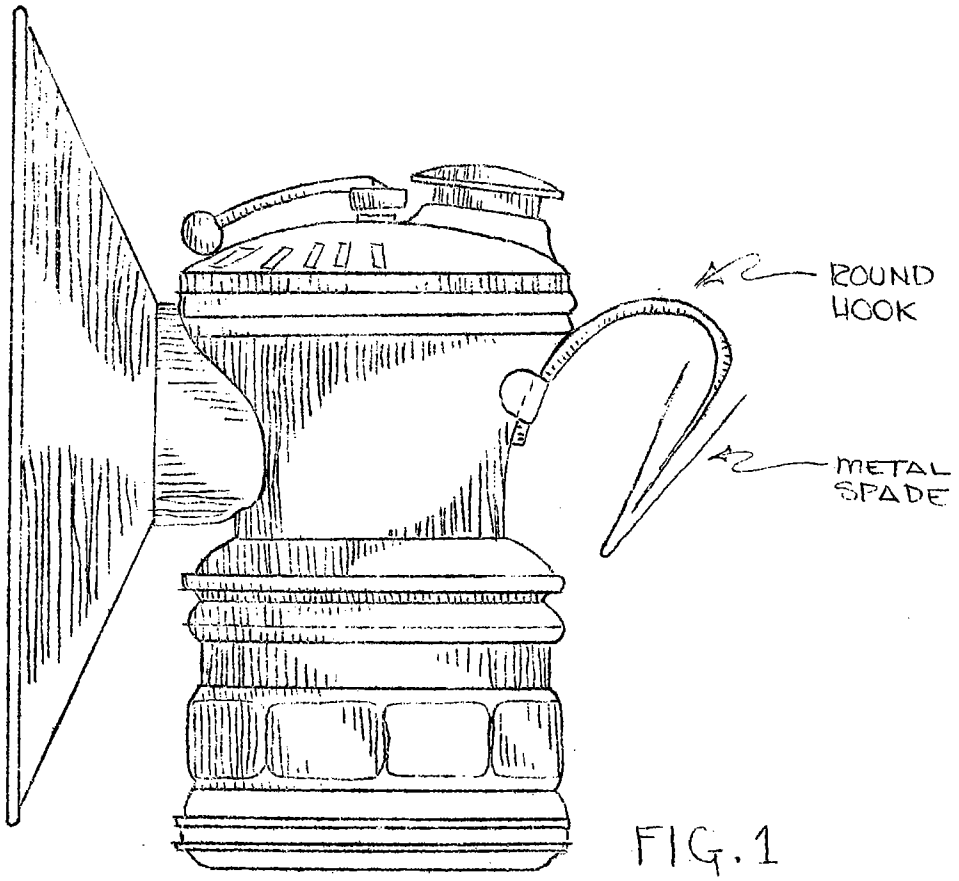


FIG. 1

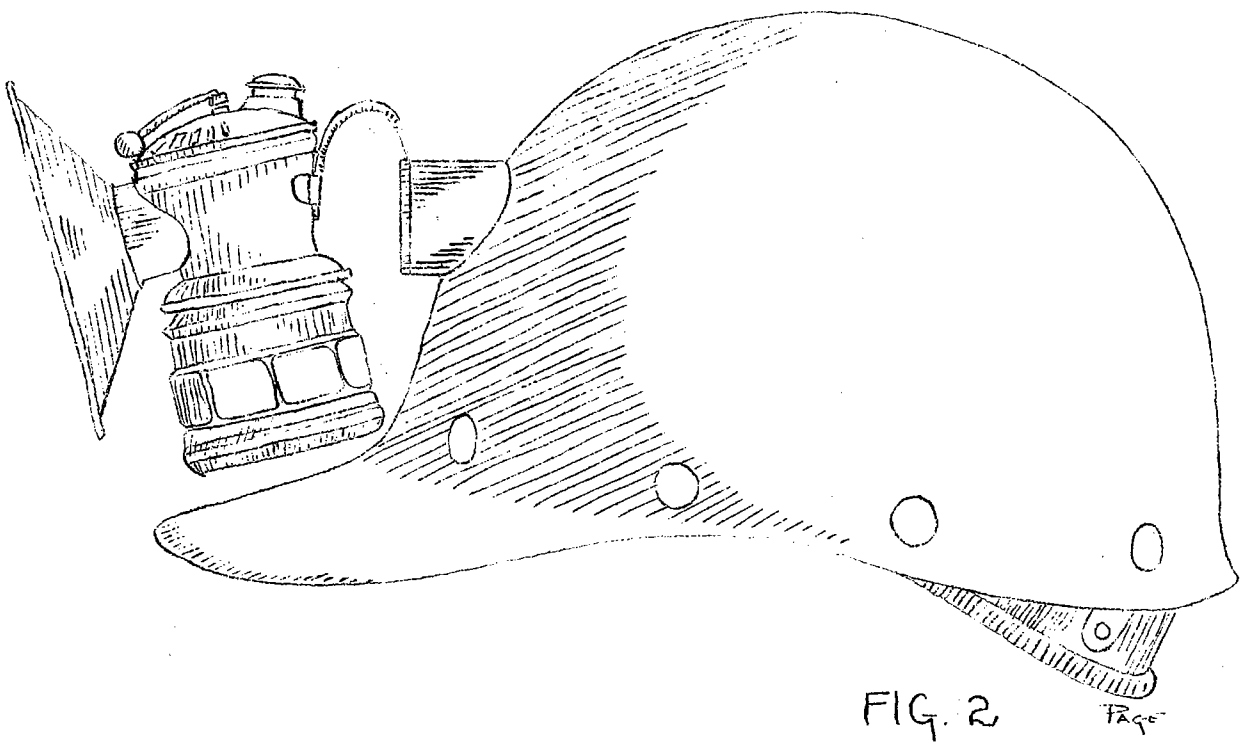
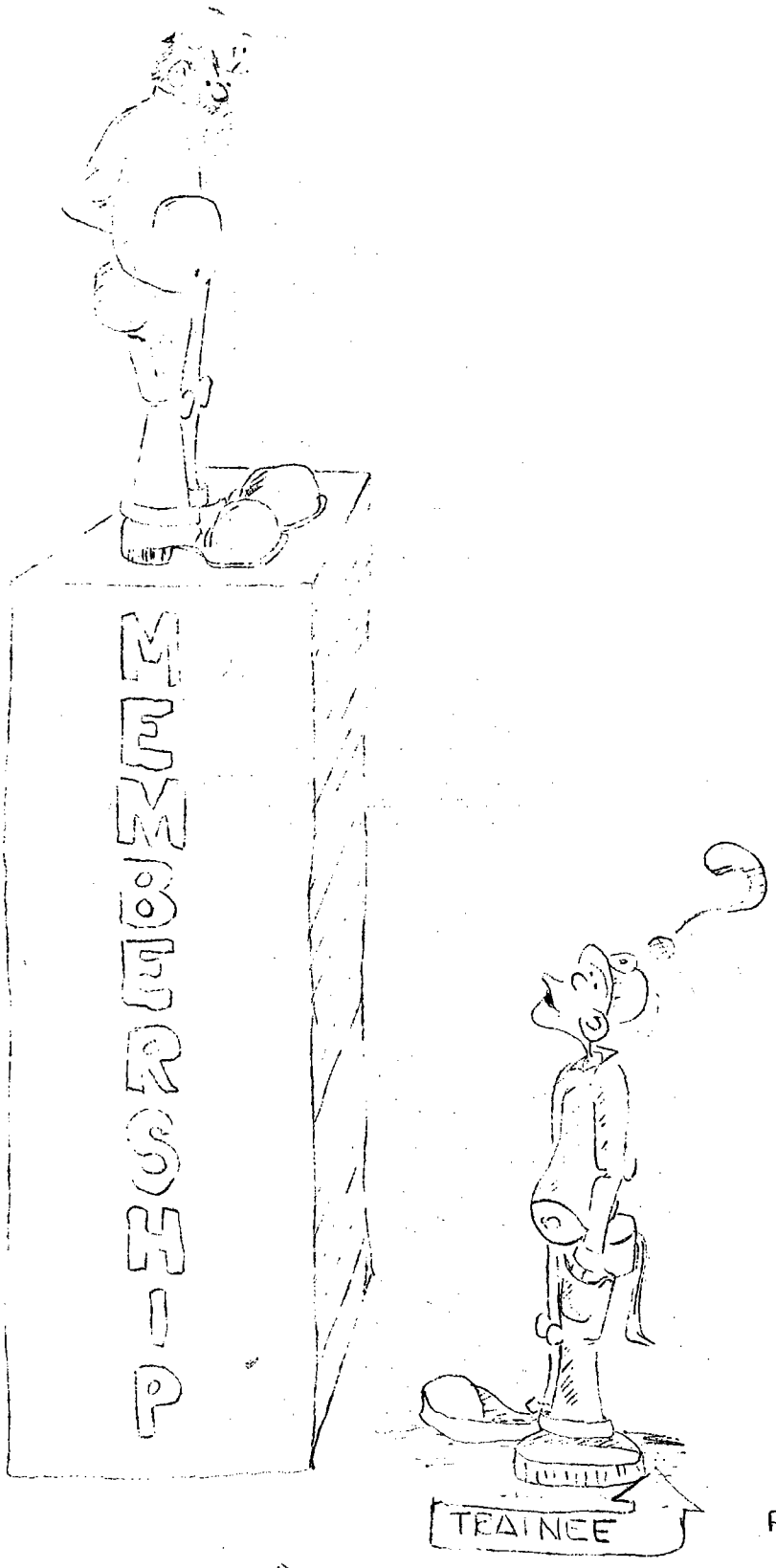


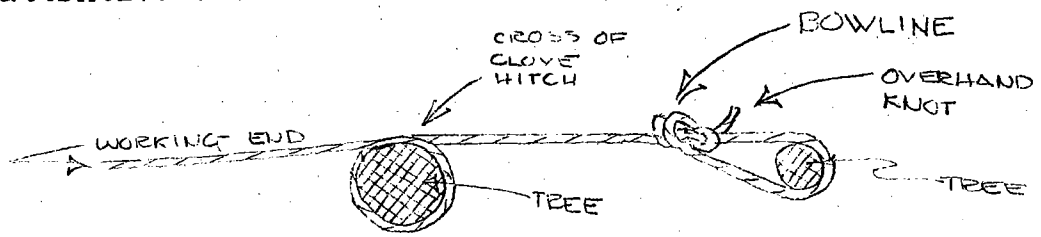
FIG. 2



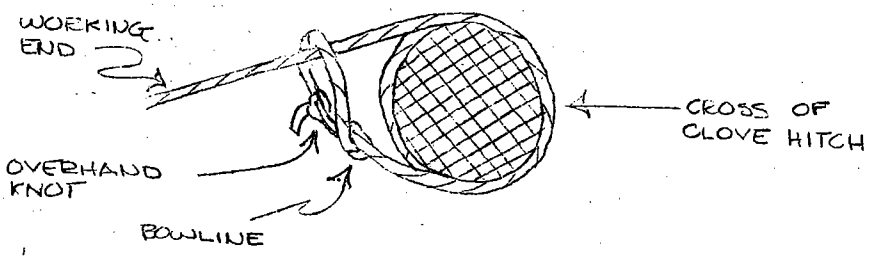
WHAT'S VERTICAL WORK?

SOME NOTES ON TIE-IN

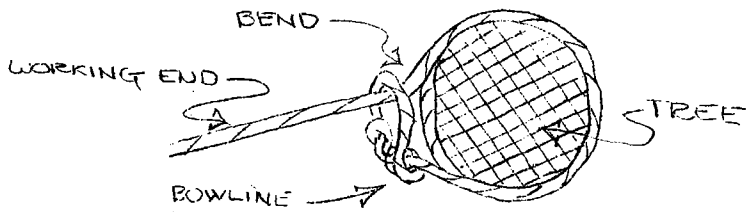
The clove hitch is often used for tying-in to trees because of its high efficiency when compared with the bowline. Normally, the hitch is backed up with a bowline tied to another tree as in Method 1. Unfortunately, this usuallly creates a low trip cord, near the edge of a drop, waiting for some inattentive caver to stumble over.



Method 2 requires less rope than Method 1 and also eliminates the hazard mention above. The bowline should hang just loose enough so that no bend is produced in the working portion of the rope.



In Method 3, which is commonly used, efficiency is lost since the clove hitch is eliminated, using only the bowline.



(IF YOU DON'T KNOW HOW TO TIE THIS KNOT, THIS DIAGRAM CANNOT HELP YOU LEARN)

Lon Davison, Jr.

THE CHAINED COIL

INTRODUCTION

A chained coil consists of a coil of rope with the last twenty to thirty feet being chained around the coiled portion. The chain coil has the following advantages:

1. Loose loops which are prone to snagging in close quarters are not present and cannot develop.
2. The coil is compact and its form is not destroyed by extreme abuse from activities such as packing, dropping or throwing.
3. The twenty to thirty feet of rope for tying can be rapidly produced from the chained part; leaving the coiled protion undisturbed.

METHOD

The rope is coiled except for the last twenty to thirty feet, depending on the total length of the rope (experience being the best teacher). Two coiling methods are used, the most desirable requiring two people. In the method portrayed in Figure 1, the rope is coiled on the dummy between the "v" formed by the index finger and extended thumb of the opposite hand. The degree of arm extension determines the size of the coil. Since the coil is constructed where it will be worn, custom sized coils can be readily made. It can be easily seen that full extension of the arm produces a coil too large to be worn bandolier style. The advantage of the coiling method lies in the "v's", which keep the innermost coils on the inside, by not allowing outer coils slip between them.

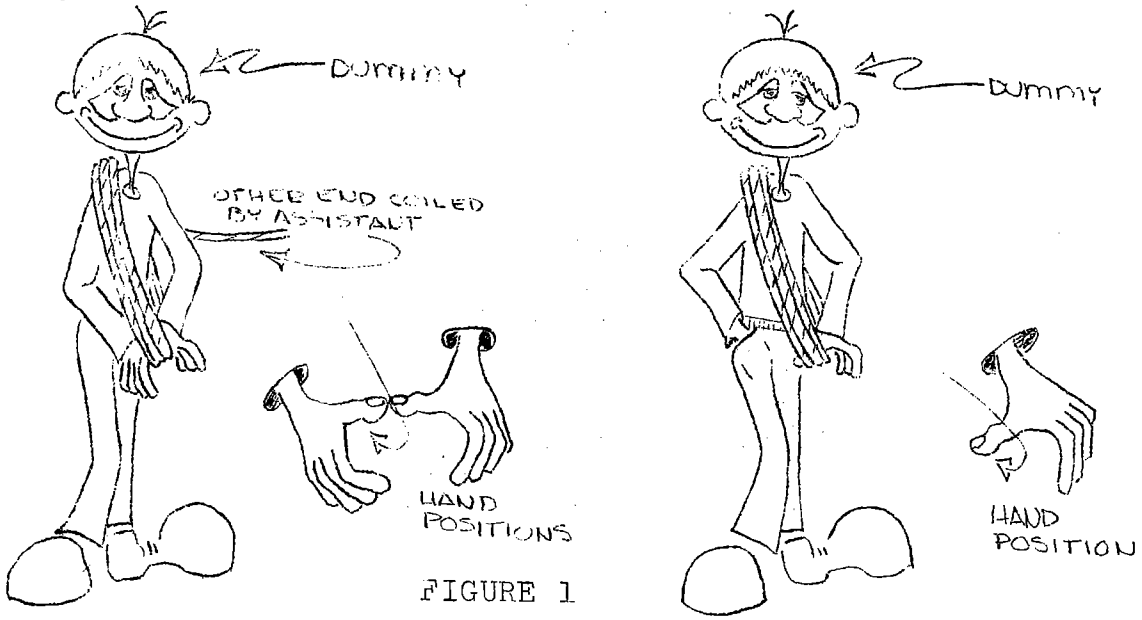


FIGURE 1

For one man coiling, one crosses his legs at the calf as in Figure 2, and coils the rope around his legs, thus producing a horizontal coil. The "v" formed by the lower legs functions as the "v's" mentioned above, although less effectively.

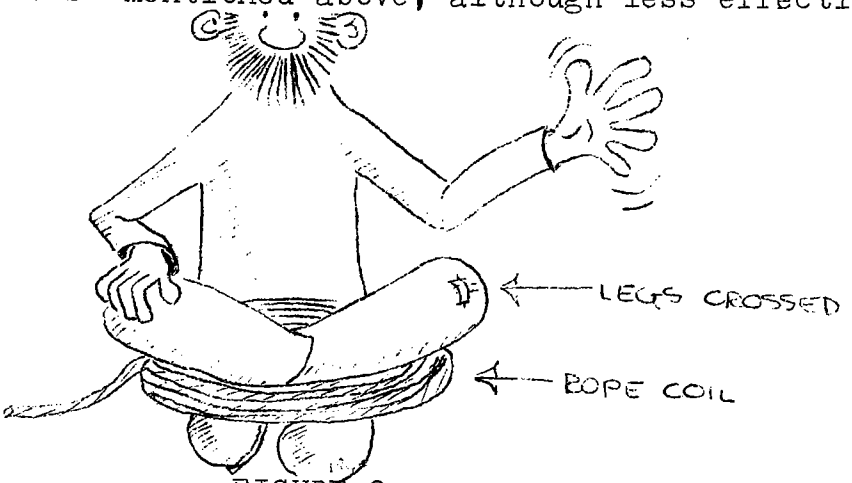


FIGURE 2

The chaining is done while the coil is on the dummy or the legs and is not removed until the chained coil is finished. Chaining is done in the direction of coiling. The rope is chained as any single rope would be, only the coil is between you and the back of the chain, so the chain surrounds the coil. The chained portion is begun as step 1 in Figure 3.

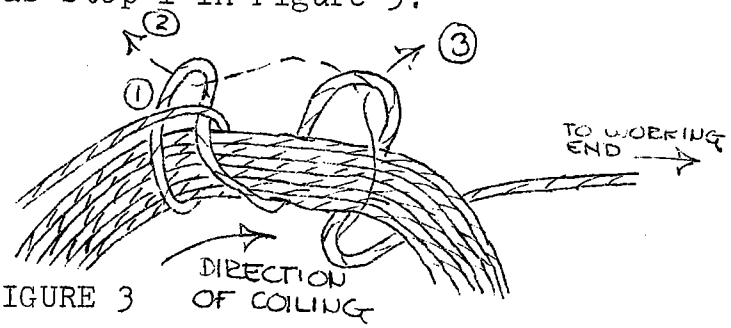


FIGURE 3

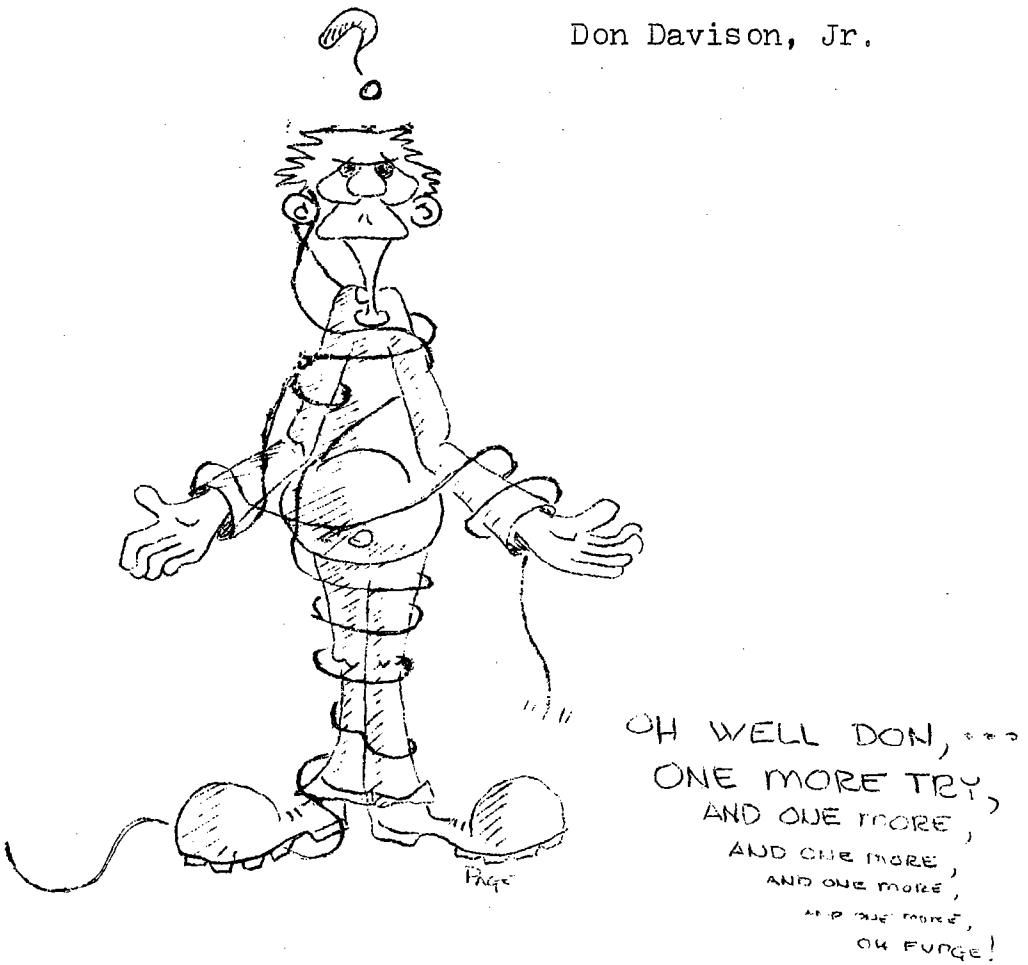
Each successive loop is passed around the coil in the direction opposite that of the previous loop as in step 3, Figure 3. As each link is completed it is pulled tight and slid in the dierction of the large arrow until taut. Short loops produce a more solid coil.

As chaining continues, it becomes clear what the ideal length for chaining your particular rope is and if it has been over or undershot for hhe size loop being used. Shorter loops require more loops to finish the job and thus use more rope, whereas larger loops will use less rope. Adjustments in the loop size are made so one to two feet of rope remain when the initial link is encountered. The end of the rope is passed through the final loop and pulled tightly as chains are normally ended. The end is then passed under the

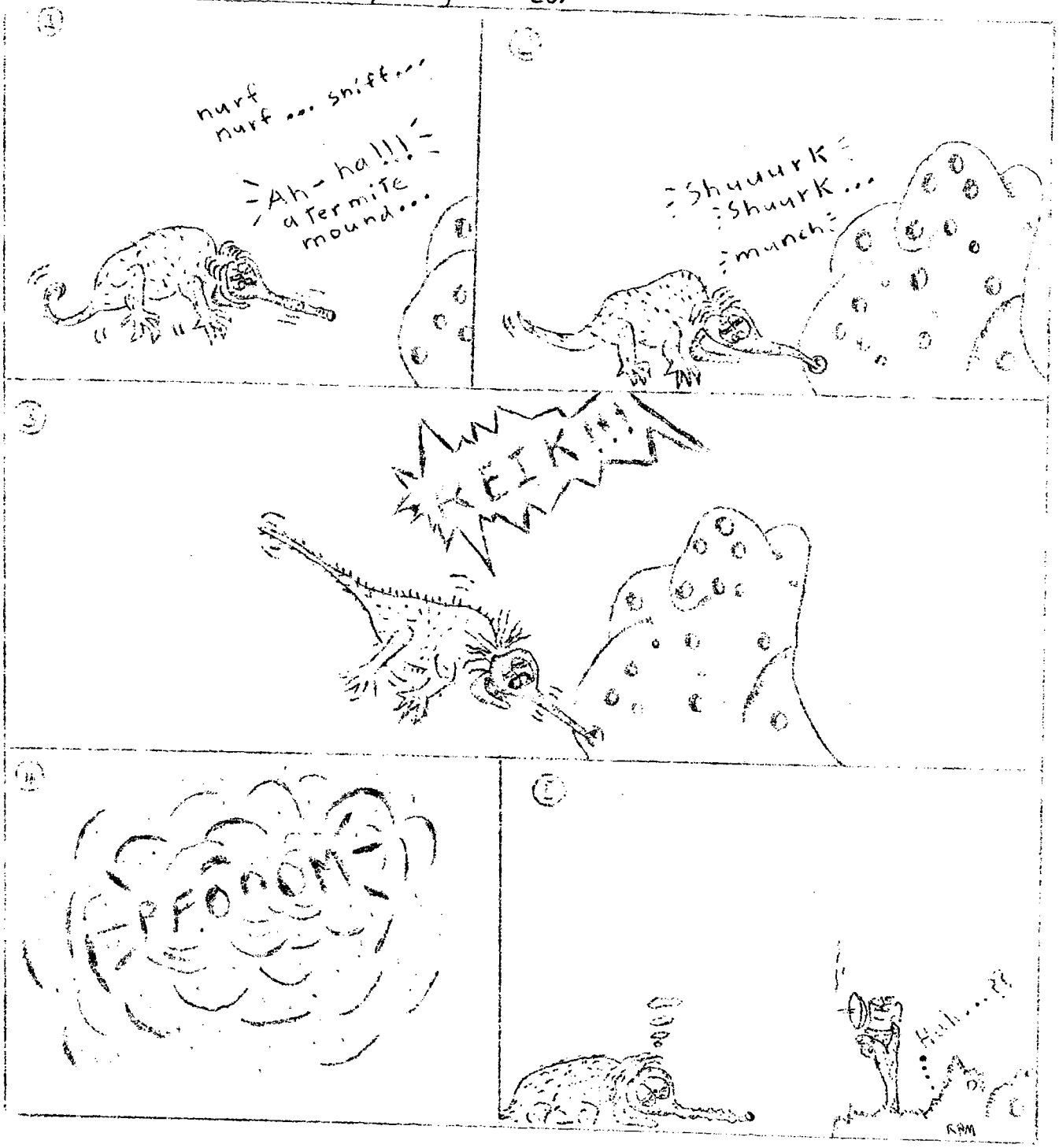
initial links against the coil and tied to one or more links with overhand knots. The remaining length is passed along the rope, as before the knot was tied, until its length is exhausted. The chained coil is now removed from the dummy.

Ropes of 300 feet have been easily prepared with this method and only factors of weight seem to limit its use for even greater lengths of rope.

Don Davison, Jr.



The Ant Eater by Plog and Co.



EVERYTHING YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT PLASTIC CARBIDE LAMPS (BUT WERE AFRAID YOU'D FIND OUT!!)*

You are chimneying near the top of a very deep pit. Just as you make that critical move, your lamp blacks out, and several pieces of it plunge to dark destruction below...possibly followed by your body!

The above situation is a realistically possible incident which could be caused by "meltout" with the new plastic carbide lamp, and it is one of the more hazardous problems associated with the device. The condition is occurring in increasing numbers of lamps which have been described to the author. The author's lamp has also suffered from the malady: during the second usage, the reflector assembly detached itself and narrowly missed landing in a batch of freeze-dried pancakes (which were already bad enough!) Apparently, another hazard is possible lamp explosion (BANG!)

First, a bit of background information: early this year Justrite Manufacturing Company, Chicago, terminated the production of their traditional brass carbide lamp and commenced to supply a new molded plastic model. From the Caving Clan arose many questions concerning its suitability for underground use (abuse). It can be generally agreed that a caving primary light source must be rugged, reliable and effective. It should also be reasonably efficient, trouble- free and repairable without special tools. In an attempt to resolve the doubts about the plastic lamp, the author consulted many other cavers who have used it, and a sample lamp was purchased for examination. Specifically, it was a Justrite Model 3-314 with the 4" reflector and the flat hook. The major composition is molded polyethylene or polypropylene with occasional brass parts. The gentlemen (?) of VPI Grotto invited a plastic lamp to a ceremonial five-story drop - it took a bit of time to recover the pieces. A lamp plunging down a pit is not unusual, and it should be noted that most brass lamps can survive this interesting shock test in functioning order. In the evaluation results which follow, several unfortunate defects are described, and most of these have been encountered in actual usage. Possible (hopeful) solutions to the problems are also offered.

ITEM A: The water control stem is removable for cleaning, an improvement over the old permanent dropper design. However, the old dropper was easily controlled by it's handy lever,

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*Printed also in the POTOMAC CAVER

and the setting was maintained by the small stamped detents on the lamp top. With the old lever, determination of the setting by touch was easier than with the new ambiguous stem. The rounded-hexagon stem knob is also relatively slippery, even when dry. Furthermore, if the stem is loose, it can easily lose it's setting when bumped.

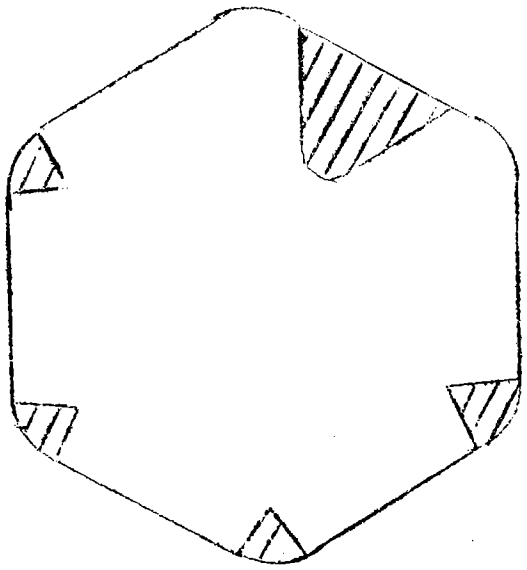
FIX A: Cut or file a large notch on one side of the stem knob and several grooves on the other points. (See Figure 1) These will provide improved friction, and the notch aids setting by touch. If the stem turns too easily, chew the threads a bit with pliers.

ITEM B: The water fill plug, although easier to grip than the stem, is easily lost. The old water door was secured from loss and was simpler to open. It also captured and returned most water expelled from the water tank. The new plug tends to spill water which collects in it's open-topped recess. Note that in many new lamps, the plug must be screwed in fully to allow necessary ventilation through the two small holes in the plug sides. Otherwise, the lamp may chug, die or overpressurize (BANG!)

FIX B: Punch a hole in the top edge of the plug, and tie it to the stem, with a short string, to prevent loss. Punch two small holes in the bottom surface of the plug to insure ventilation.

ITEM C: The new neoprene O-ring gasket is an improvement over the old flat gasket, The O-ring should provide a more resilient seal, unless the sealing surfaces are badly mangled. Although this O-ring does not fit the old brass lamp, a smaller one should be a desirable modification.

ITEM D: The new structural design of the filter and the gas path through the front brass bushing appears inherently inferior to the brass lamp design. The old design maintained continual protection of the gas path behind the tip by the felt filter, which removed particles and droplets from the acetylene. The gas tube was also water-cooled, and any condensation in the tube normally descended into the felt, minimising buildup which could block the tip hole and kill the flame. The new design has a simple horizontal gas path and a nonabsorbent plastic "filter" which has an overly large cellular structure. These factors permit contamination of the gas path, and subsequent tip blockage, by both particles and condensed fluids. To compound this problem, the path is exposed, accumalating more material, each time the top is removed for carbide reloading. As another significant hazard, the combination of faulty plug ventilation and frequent tip blockage can lead to excessive pressures within the lamp, as the carbide will continue to produce acetylene with any water remaining in the bottom. This may explain several reports



SECTIONS TO BE REMOVED

FIGURE 1

WATER STEM MODIFICATION

of lamp explosions with the new plastic model. Under these conditions, the acetylene can quickly attain the two atmospheres of pressure needed for explosion.

FIX D: Unfortunately, the poor design limits modification. Try protecting the gas path by covering or plugging the bushing hole with felt or fabric. Make a new filter from felt or a porous sponge with smaller cells. Trim it slightly oversize to about 2" outer diameter, 1 1/4" inner diameter and 5/8" thick.. Check that the filter covers the gas hole. Before each reassembly, wipe the inside of the lamp and the hole, and try to claan the filter. Good luck!

ITEM E: The filter is held in place by a fragile wire clip which exerts an inadequate holding tension. Consequently, it often deserts it's groove at the first opportunity. The brass design accomplished both filter retention and protection with a simple brass stamping that physically did not interfere and was rarely lost.

FIX E: Replace the clip with a stronger retainer made from coathanger wire. Bend it into a small square with 1 3/16" between opposite inner edges. Before attachment, bend the corners slightly sharper than right-angles to increase it's holding tension.

ITEM F: T[illegible] the extraction of reluctant spent carbide somewhat awkward. As the lamp cavity is beyond the reach of most Caver's claws, the ready alternative is to beat the Hell out of it on the nearest rock (or skull), with possible damage to the lamp and the gasket sealing surfaces.

FIX F: Bang softly, and carry a big stick.

ITEM G: Fortunately, the reflector and striker assembly remain the same proven design. As they still fit the old brass lamp, they can be salvaged as relatively expensive reminder of the phrase, caveat emptor. Unfortunately, some time ago Justrite replaced the handy wingnut with a grooved hexnut, requiring the caver to bear some form of wrench for tightening. The capability of maintenance without special tools is a valuable asset in any device which endures a life as glorious (?) as that of a Caver's lamp.

ITEM H: The first failure endured by the proud(?) new owner of a plastic lamp is usually the unexpected, abject loss of the entire device (Plop!). When the lamp is brushed against the ceiling or an obstruction, even gently, the bracket can snap. With reference to it's structure, the bracket is evidently designed to break, although this may not have been the intention of the manufacturer. Note the sharp angles and minimal material

crossectional area at the junction of the flat hook blade and the horizontal beam. Such strain multiplying factors directly contribute to material failure when the lamp encounters caving obstacles. Similar poor design exists at the junction of the beam and the bolting plate. The bracket also holds the lamp much higher up and farther out than the brass model, increasing both it's collision vulnerability and the bearer's neck strain. The brass lamp bracket could absorb tremendous blows and required simple rebending for repair. The lamp was also held much closer and lower than the plastic model. The above mentioned problems are fundamental design defects and should not have been permitted.

FIX H: The old stamping machine could easily have been used to produce a brass bracket which could be superior to the plastic one and only slightly different from the old design. If you want to make your own, try these two designs, the choice depending of the materials available to you:

Design #1: For bendable materials such as brass. (Figure 2) Obtain a piece about 1 5/8" wide, 2 3/4" long and no more than 1/16" thick. Scratch the pattern of Figure 2 on the surface, and chew out the design with a hacksaw or nibbler. Drill the bolt holes, and cut the two slots to allow the bending of tension curves. Round the corners, and smooth the edges. Bend the bracket around a 1/4" drill or rod, using the wide area for greater strength, to slightly more than 180 degrees to tilt the lamp downwards. The "acorn" nuts may be replaced with regular hexnuts to increase the bracket clearance.

Design #2: For brittle materials such as heavy aluminum. (Figure 3) Obtain a piece about 1 5/8" wide, 2" long and no more than 1/16" thick. Scratch the pattern of Figure 3 on the surface, and hacksaw the shape. Drill the two bolt holes, round the corners, and smooth the edges. A slight bend will point the lamp slightly downwards.

ITEM I: There is another hazard with the new lamp: the unexpected disingtegration of the lamp when the front brass bushing melts out. This "meltout" results in the loss of the entire tip and reflector assembly. Also, the freed acetylene gas represents both explosive and physiological dangers. "Meltout" most frequently occurs when the wind protector is attached to shield the base of the flame. The flame passes through the 1/4" diameter hole, and, by proximity and contact with the protector, it supplies heat to the entire reflector assembly. Heat losses by convection and radiation from the shiny reflector are inadequate, Consequently, most of the heat is conducted into the plastic, melting it in as short as a matter of seconds. Unfortunately, Justrite encourages the use of the wind protector supplying them with each lamp, and they fail to warn of the possibility of "meltout". It should also be noted that "meltout" can occur under certain conditions without the protector, such as being relatively motionless and pointed downward to capture

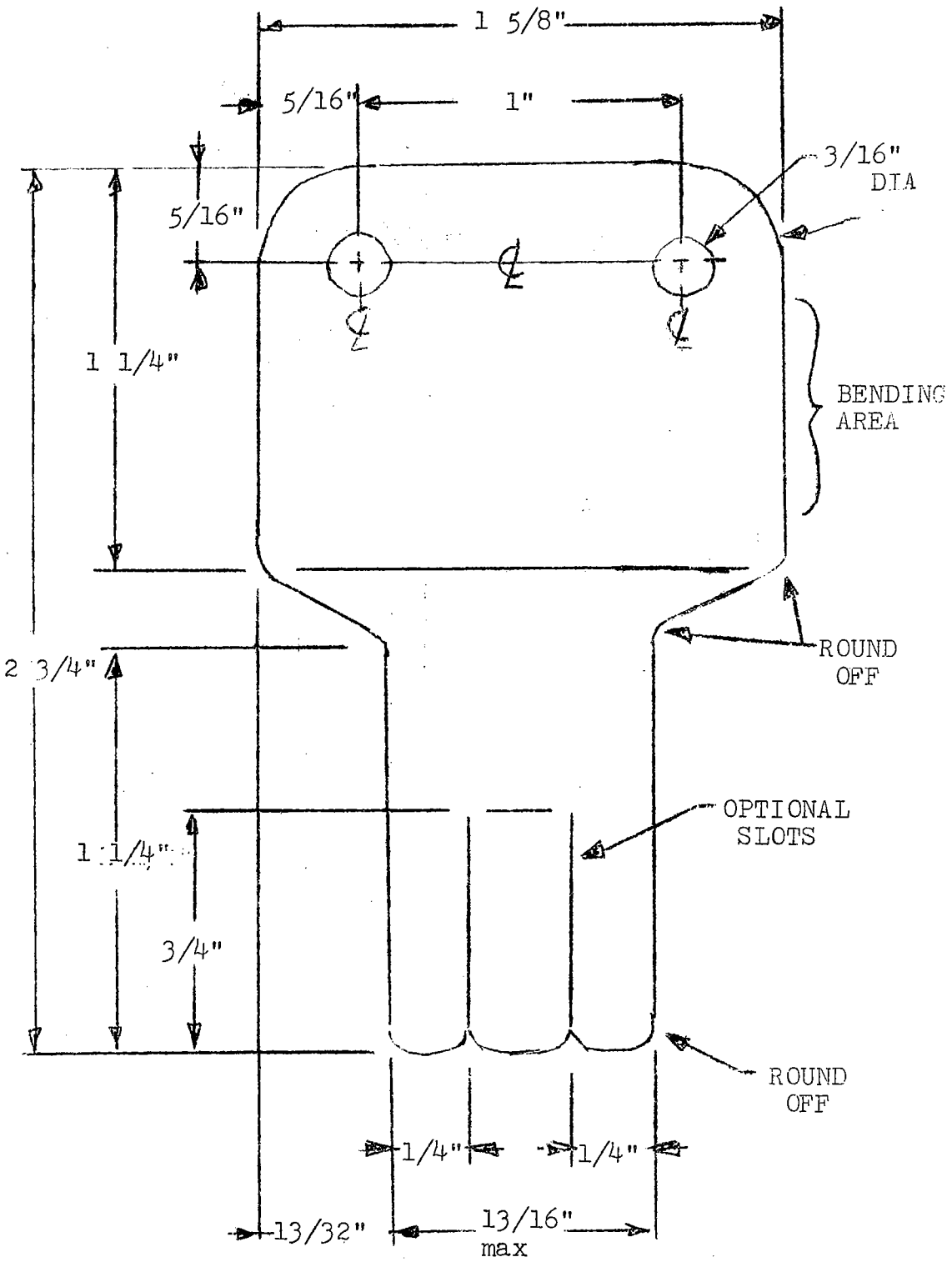


FIGURE 2

BRACKET DESIGN 1

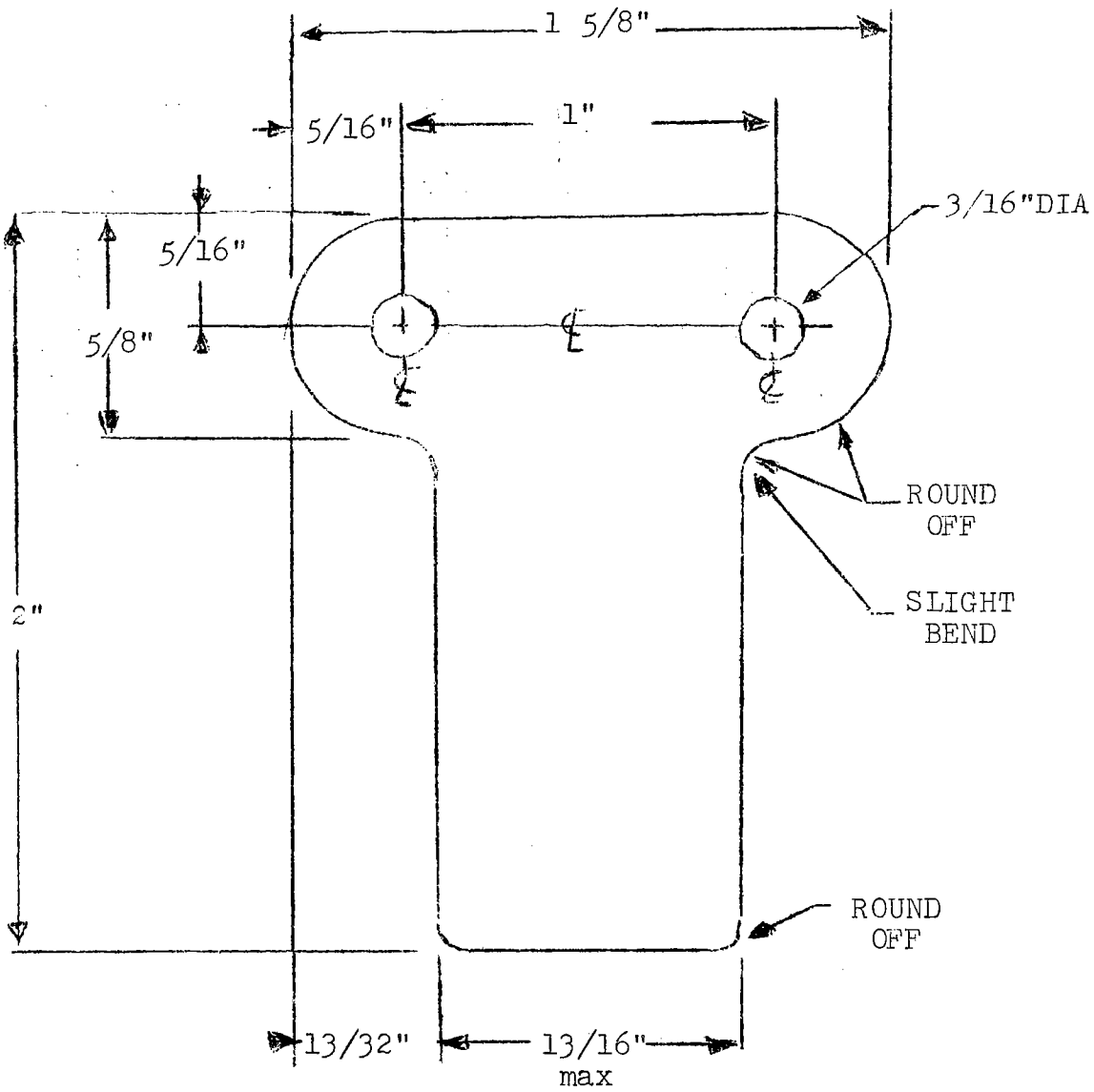


FIGURE 3

BRACKET DESIGN 2

hot convection currents with the reflector - "meltout" can occur within minutes. There are times, however, when the protector can be valuable, such as in stiff breezes or when it captures a tip dislodged by shock.

FIX I: Do not use the wind protector with the plastic lamp unless it is absolutely necessary, for it risks destruction of the lamp. If it is used, the reflector should be touched frequently to detect overheating. Paint the reflector rear surface a flat black to increase it's heat radiation capabilities. Enlarge the protector hole to reduce the probability of flame contact - an increase to 5/16" diameter will provide 50% more aperature area and will still catch loose tips. Should "meltout" occur, shut off the lamp water supply and attempt to avoid acetylene concentrations. Incidently, it should be possible to restore a melted out bushing, with dubious value and some difficulty, by reheating or glueing.

In review, it is apparent that the new plastic carbide lamp is somewhat less than optimum, or even desirable. The device suffers from engineering myopia and mismanaged technology. Hazards such as "meltout", ease of breakage and possible explosion constitute deterrents to underground use which Cavers cannot ignore.

How is Justrite presenting their product? The following paragraphs are quoted from a Justrite form letter, dated Jan. 72, which was apparently intended for dealers:

> For the past two years we have been engaged in the development, preliminary production and testing of Carbide Lamps molded in polyethylene and polypropylene. These lamps now replace the brass and steel lamps we have made in the past.
>
> We know that you will find thse new lamps to be substantial improvements over Carbide Lamps made in the past, and that you can look forward to a much larger market for Carbide Lamps as a result of thse changes.

It is suspected that Cavers and dealers will remain unconvinced.

Cavers have probably been Justrite's most faithful group of customers. Why has Justrite made this change and risk the alienation of the Caving Clan? First, consider that the carbide lamp has remained essentially unchanged for decades. It can be shown that a company without significant domestic competion, and with a readily marketable product, is unlikely to change either its designs or methods. This conservative attitude may be forcibly changed by the pressure of rising production costs and other factors. The costs of both labor and brass have climbed greatly in recent years. However, before significant changes are implemented, it is wise to conduct

a market survey to determine product desirability. Furthermore, a strict evaluation must be performed to appraise product suitability. Evidently, neither have been properly executed, and the product failure may cost Justrite a major portion of it's market.

What could Justrite do now, assuming that they would be sincerely interested in improving their product and re-establishing themselves before Cavers? An interview of the Caving Fraternity, perhaps by means of questionnaires circulated among members of existing groups, could lead to the development of a winner - the first lamp for Cavers and designed by Cavers. Meanwhile, back at the plant, the company would do well to supply on request, free replacement metal brackets such as Design #1. They should also be willing to redeem their defective plastic lamps for the original purchase price.

More importantly, what can Cavers do in this situation? Pass the word, and don't buy plastic lamps. If one has failed, take it back to the dealer with a polite demand for full refund of the price. Warn him of the hazards involved, and encourage him to return the lamps, demanding full refund, with an explanation of refusal. If enough reaction is generated, and lamps returned, the manufacturer may be persuaded to correct himself. Also, check out all your local sports and hardware stores for residual stocks of brass lamps. If you locate some, spread the word and help your grubby buddies. Assemble quantity orders for discounts (some dealers may sell discontinued products at reduced prices), and spread the supply.

Where can one find brass lamps? There are two types worth seeking, one of which is the rapidly vanishing Justrite model, The other is the Premier, made in England and imported in increasing numbers. It should be noted that many owners of the Premier lamp believe that it equals or surpasses the domestic product. Although there are undoubtably other sources, the following entries have been personally checked as indicated in parentheses:

1. Donald G. Davis, P. O. Box 25, Fairplay, Colorado 80440. Importer of Premier lamps and parts. Lamp, $6.25 plus 40¢ postage (the $6.85 price in the News is incorrect). Spare bottom and bumpergrip, $1.65 postpaid. Other parts available. Write for information price lists and quantity discounts. (Phone call, 2APR72)

2. Recreational Equipment, Incorporated, 1525 11th Ave, Seattle, Washington 98122. Plastic Justrite only. Quantities: [illegible], Mr E.T. Wolfrum, Commercial Department. REI (CO-OP) is a cooperative with a one-time, $1.00 membership fee, and all members are eligible to receive

an annual dividend proportional to their annual purchases. Write for catalog and membership details. (Phone call, letter, 22MAR72)

3. Appalachian Outfitters, Box 248, 2930 Chain Bridge Road, Oakton, Virginia 22124. Plastic Justrite only, They are not equipped at this moment, for routine mailorders. Note: they have the capability, and may be persuaded, to produce metal brackets equivalent to Design #2 if sufficient demand is shown. Cost would be about $1.65 each, plus mailing, and probably less if large volumes were made. Group orders of at least 25 each would be preferred, but write for information, qupting your requirements, to advise them of the potential market. Quantity brackets: ATTN, Mr. M. Lee. (Personal contacts and calls, 21MAR72, 2APR72)

4. Camp and Trail Outfitters. 21 Park Place, N.Y.City, New York 10007. Several brass Justrite lamps remaining, each with 4" reflector and 3-wire (not flat) hook mounting; $6.75 each plus shipping. Also plastic Justrite available. They anticipate a supply of Premier lamps by the end of April, estimated cost $8.00 each, probably less. Write for free catalog and information. Quantity discounts available: ATTN, Mr. H. Hunt. (Phone call, 25MAR72)

Although Recreational Equipment and Applachian Outfitters do not at this time carry Premier brass lamps, they are usually quite responsive to their friends and customers and would probably stock them if urged to do so by the multitudes. Clue them in with a call or a card.

Where do we go from here? It is hoped that the Premier lamps will become more available in this country. It is also hoped that Justrite will accept the challenge , perhaps developing a super-lamp surpassing their former brass model.

G. L. Harrison

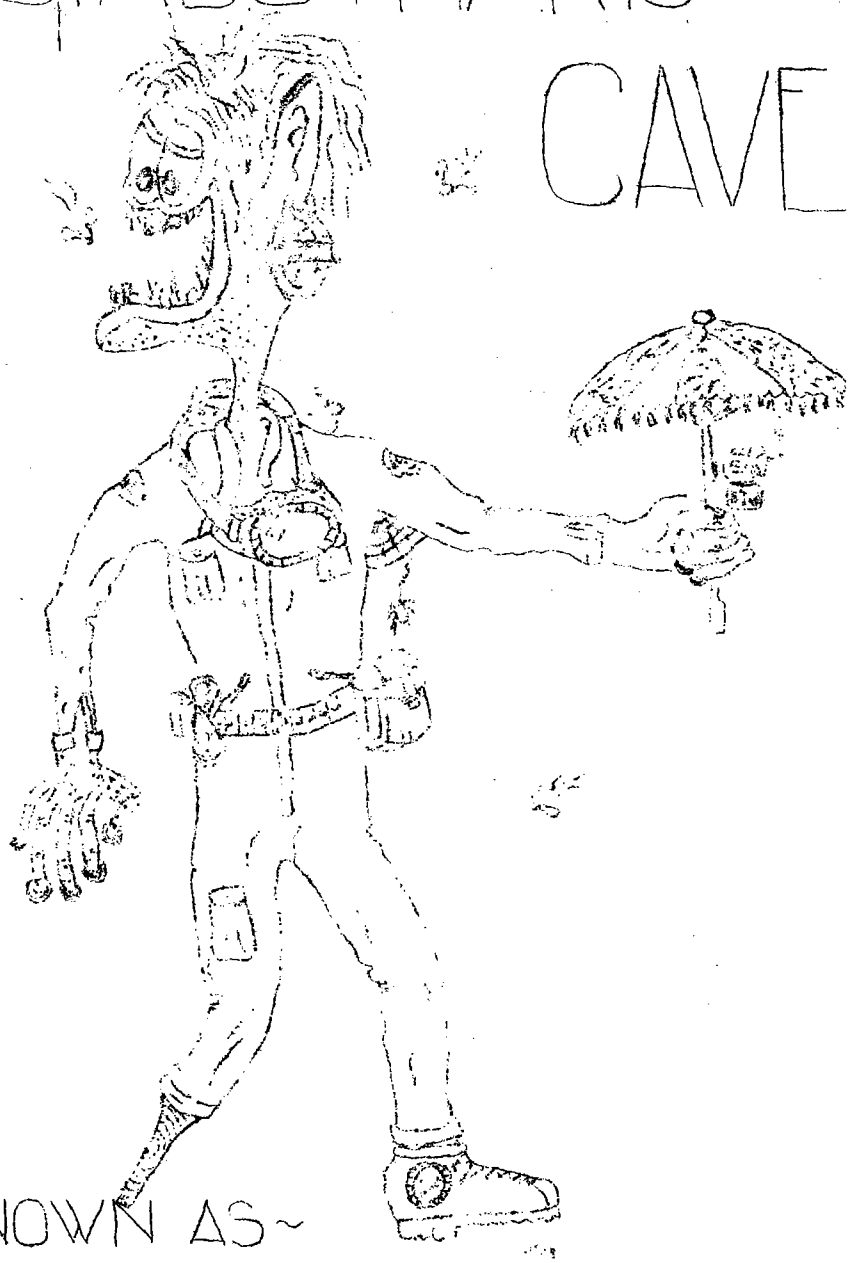
* * * * *

ADAPTIVE EVOLUTION PRESENTS:

THE

HIGGINBOTHAMS

CAVER...



BETTER KNOWN AS~

"HIGGY POPPINS"

"EXPLORING THE CAVE Of THE INNER SELF"

Excitement is felt as one approaches
The entrance to the unknown.
A dark hole that awaits the curious mind,
Inviting yet forboding in its mysterious cloak of black.
Brave person or perhaps fool to search this unknown realm.
The mind soars with fleeting fantasies of dangers that never could occur.
The flesh is fearful to cross the mark and journey through the inner self.
This cavern dark and unknown can surely hold truth of mind
Just as one can find a light in discovering the inner self.
The rope is rigged, the life line secured
To journey forth in search.
The depth unknown the peril unclear
The brave will now begin.

Yet one is not alone in this trip into the mind,
For there are friends of similar plight
Who will journey with you there.
But they don't see what your eyes see
And they won't see your inner self
For their journey is another cave
Into another self.
The brake bars hold the precious cord
And slow the life force's path
Till carefully the caver glides
Maintaining steady control
As the harshness of nature's beauty is illuminated by his path.
A fragile light is all the force that separates known from unknown
A single desire to search for truth is what forces one to continue.
A point is reached where contact is made
But there will be no stopping here
For deeper adventure awaits this soul,

As the light sinks ever lower
Till finally a target is sighted below.
A point from which one may begin
To understand one's self.

A quick glance around is all allowed
For a second member, a distinct individual,
Begins his journey down the same life path
Yet his end will not be the same, though his destination fixed.
And once together yet still apart
Two explorers begin their path
Of searching what appears as one
Yet finding both to each.
How simple seems the searching process
Of understanding self
Yet the act consists of difficult climbs
Whose brittle untested form entice and lure one onward.
Dangerous and difficult and awkward even to see
Yet herein lies the hidden beauty
The untouched self that begs to be revealed.
White crystal formations hang like angel's hair
Mighty earthen fingers grasping forth to hold.
Yet careful now, for the mind is fragile here
These forms are easily broken by the careless intruder.
To explore the self is a worthwhile journey
But to destroy what is beautiful
Is a crime no punishment can pay.

More difficult paths are then begun
To crawl and labor for a goal
That leads one closer to the self
Yet perhaps further into danger.
The danger of losing light or meeting climbs too great
Or perhaps the self will claim its own
And there may be no return.

What treacherous squeeze may lie ahead?
What slippery climb may be encountered?
What danger awaits this explorer of the mind
As realization becomes a horrible nightmare?
The real becomes a fantasy as horror and truth are one.
False images are shattered as rocks are chipped away
To reveal virgin passage that otherwise would be lost.
The beauty of unknown is soon enjoyed as light gives form to chaos
But once experienced the unknown vanishes and with it a lessened
beauty.
A virgin lead, a virgin thought
Both will never be the same
So there is a loss that must be considered
Before determining what is gained.
The passage goes, understanding continues
As exploration begins.
Excitement builds as one proceeds
Alone to discover truth.
Deeper into the depths of self
Till the only light is one's own
The only sound is the caver's steps
As he continues to climb and crawl.
Moving still deeper into himself
And farther from the known.
Yet this mysterious realm
Will soon yield to search
And unknown made known
As mystery is solved.
The lamp grows dim as the journey is continued
And plans must be made to renew the sight.
A spot is found in this unknown region
And the necessary preparations made.
The lamp goes out as the waste is dumped
And new components are added.
Carefully the operations are performed

For one is alone in this newly known
And the cloak of black returns.
Fear and doubt come with the dark
And the security of self is questioned.
Perhaps forms creep in on one
As the imagination builds demons,
Or perhaps the stillness and quiet of dark
Allow a peaceful interlude.

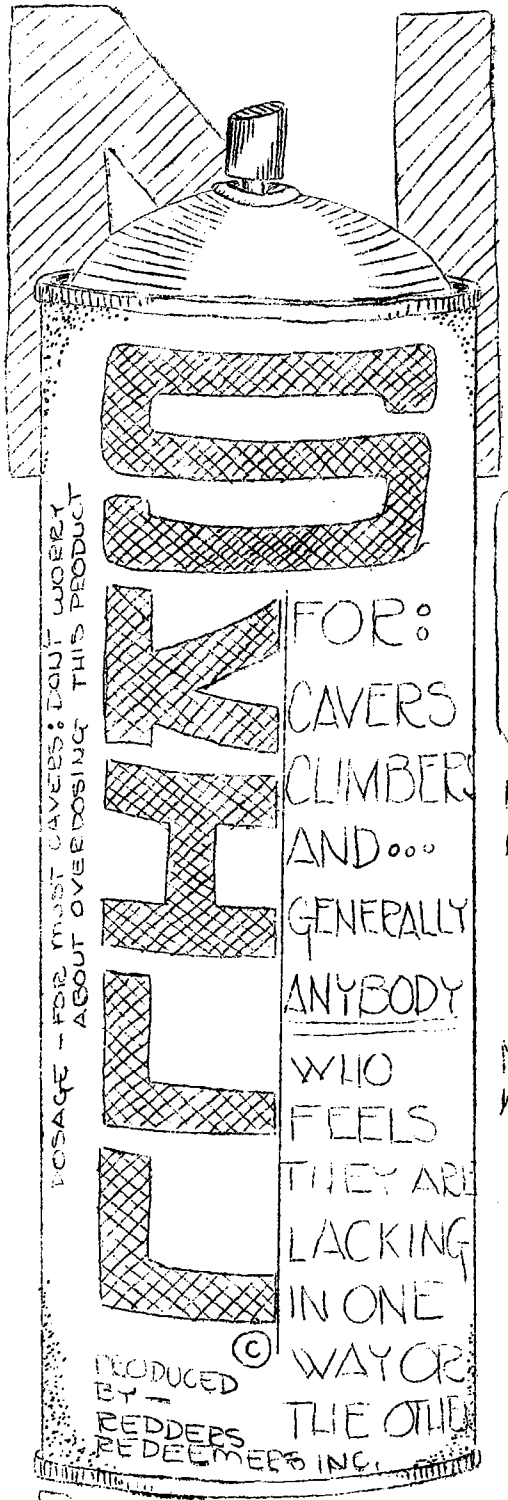
The lamp is ready, the spark ignites
And truth of light appears.
Mystery is quickly dispelled
As the light gives form to darkness.
The passage continues but for future adventure
As the decision to return is made.
There will be other journeys into the self
For soon this path will be known to all
As this journey through the mind is mapped.
But for now the search will end
And the return to known begin.
The route seems strange as paths lead off
Luring one far from truth.
Indecision and fear emerge
As a maze of paths unfurl.
To be alone is no longer desired
And the beauty of self not seen,
For now the passage is merely a route
That enables one to escape.

The main route is encountered
And fellow caver met.
Two distinct individuals, different in many ways
Yet strengthened together in the mutual bond
Of exploring the cave of the inner self.
The steps are retraced and the rope encountered.

The life line to freedom
Yet the exit from paradise.
The heart wishes to return to the outside world
But the mind desires the solitude of the self.
With mixed emotions the rope is climbed
And the journey through the inner self is ended.
As the entrance of the cave is left
The mind recalls the experience of the inner self
And the exploration is continued,
Striving always to discover truth.

Steve Snelling

* * * * *



NEW

NOT
- JUST ANOTHER DEODERANT
- JUST ANOTHER FEMININE HYGENE SPRAY
- JUST ANOTHER FOOT POUDER
- JUST ANOTHER HAIR GROOMER

- DONT BE STUCK ON A ROPE WHEN THE WHOLE GANG IS WATCHING
- DONT RISK BEING "RESCUED" BY THE GUY WHO LEARNED ALL HE KNOWS BY THE LAST FEW TIMES HE WAS RESCUED!

ANOTHER HOP-ET-WRKS PAID MEDICAL ADVERTISEMENT

NOT ADVERTISED IN LIFE MAGAZINE

PREVENT EMBARRASSMENT .... USE SKILL

JUST - SPRAY SKILL ON THAT PART OF YOUR BODY YOU WILL BE USING MOST IN YOUR ENCOUNTER. IN JUST MINUTES, SKILL IS AT WORK RELIEVING THE SPASTIC MOVES THAT MAY NORMALLY POSSESS YOUR BODY. WAKE UP LIMP AND LIFELESS EXTERIOR EXTRUSIONARY FACULTIES. THINGS THAT WERE ONCE IMPOSSIBLE BECOME AS EASY AS ONE SQUIRT OF

REDDERS REDEEMERS INC.

NOTE: FOR THOSE WHO CANNOT FIGURE OUT HOW TO WORK THE SPRAY ON WITHIN 3 DAYS - CONSULT YOUR PHYSICIAN

CLOSED CAVE LIST

Cave - Person or group working to reopen - reason for closing

Virginia

Allens - Needed - Owned by commercial cave, does not want liability
Andersons - Needed - Information needed
Beetle - Needed - Liability
Blue Hole -Has become municipal water supply, permanently closed
Butler - Open for working trips only; contact Butler Cave Conservation Society
Beacon - VPI - Entrance bulldozed shut, liability
Carper's - Needed - Water supply
Catawba Murder Hole - VPI - Rescue
Front Royal Cavern - Needed - Information needed
Jones Saltpeter - John Holsinger - Vandalism
Gilley - John Holsinger - New ownership
Madison - Phil Lucas - Accident
Lynn - Phil Lucas - Accident
Pig Hole - VPI - Open to VPI members only, liability
Reasor - Needed - Water supply
Roger's Belmont - Needed - Sealed
Ruffners - Needed - Owned by commercial cave
Shenandoah Wild - Needed - Owned by commercial cave
Will Mauck - Needed - Vandalism and liability

West Virginia

Cricket - WVACS - Surface vandalism
Hellems - WVACS - Surface vandalism
Hourglass - Needed - Livestock threatened
Mystic - Needed - Vandalism
Pattons - Phil Lucas - Owners elderly, don't want to be disturbed
Piercey's and Piercey's Mill - WVACS - Open for organized scientific work only, prior approval and liability waiver needed.
Rapps - WVACS - Vandalism
Stratosphere Balloon - Needed - Owned by commercial cave

If you have any information on closed caves, please contact me.

Lynn V. Amundson
315 Landsdowne Street
Blacksburg, Virginia 24060

* * * * *

An you ain't
nevah goin' back

MARK...

NRMoore

THE STORY OF WILBURN VALLEY CAVE

In the shade of the lofty Pearisburg Mountain there are caves which go by such names as Raspberry Hollow, Hodges and Starnes and one little cave called Wilburn Valley Cave. Once a party of adventure-seeking cavers entered this dark and then unknown cavern only to be stopped by a deep,evil lurking pit. Being prepared for such an outcome, they pulled out their magnificent 120 foot cable ladder and and attempted to conquer the drop. But, alas, even their miraculous ladder fell short of the bottom by at least 60 feet. The overpowering Pit forced them to turn back full of amazement and wonder and new thoughts to tell the world

Well, so goes the legend of Wilburn Valley Cave. Driven by this tale, a party, consisting of Bill Donkin, Scott McDonald and Ed Brenner of Pearisburg and VPI cavers MikeFFriedders, old-timer Bob Simons and myself decided to took into this cave. The cave itself is located in Wilburn Valley in a gully-sinkhole system east of Raspberry Hollow Cave and about a quarter of a mile from the road. On speaking with the owner's son, Carson Hodge, we got very accurate directions to the cave and back to the pit. He also mentioned that a man from Radford once entered the cave, and declared it too dangerous because of its unstable state. What, us worry?

As we worked our way back the pit, we encountered an abundance of cave resoures such as dripping and running water, mud, crickets and spiders. The Rain Room accurately describes the major feature in one particular section of the entrance passage, adding to the discomfort of the tight crawls. It should be pointed out that supports a great abundance of spiders, crickets and some salemanders. Parts of the passage are well decorated with flowstone, draperies and other formations.

After 300 feet of tortuous passage we and all our gear reached the top of the pit. The stream we had been following veered to the left and down and entered the pit a little lower down the side. Loose and potentially dangerous breakdown lies at the pit's rim at the point we had to rappel. The only place else would be directly in the waterfall. Scott was the first to go down the virgin drop which was later named Great Scott Pit. The drop itself is 105 feet deep and the well, 20 by 30, bells slightly, making it a rather nice free-fall, excellant for rappeling and prussiking. The only troublesome part is the layer of very loose and wet mud clinging about ten feet down from the rim. It makes a terrific SPLAT when it hits bottom, but makes it hazardous for those below.

At the bottom of the pit, in all its muddy glory, there were virgin leads going in two different directions. We chose the passage into which the stream flowed, and soon split into two groups. One group went to a higher level, but the group I was with continued to follow the stream. The entire stream passage was overlain by moist thick mud and wood debris, suggesting occasional flooding. The passage twisted at sharp angles, probably following the joint system of the rock. We pursued the stream until it sank under a wall. The other group discovered a few large rooms and found many more leads.

A second trip gathered the following weekend to push the leads and start mapping. The exploration party, which was led by Bill Donkin and included Janet Queisser, Scot McDonald and Ed Brenner, went to the upper level to push the leads. A mapping crew consisting of Steve Hall taking notes, Bill Park reading brunton and myself on lead tape, mapped the stream passage. We found a couple of leads, but didn't check them. We did, however, manage to push the crawlway at the end and found more passage on the other side. It opened to a room containing breakdown which was completely covered by moist dirt. At the end of the room lay a lot of small breakdown covered with wet mud, possibly indicative of a sinkhole above. We mapped 450' from the pit to the end of the stream passage. All the leads pushed by the exploration crew ended in mud sumps. With time as a major factor, we left.

The cave is by no means finished. There are many leads still unchecked, and there will be more tales to tell as the adventurous seek to conquor Wilburn Valley Cave, mysteriously hidden until now.

Thomas A. Calhoun

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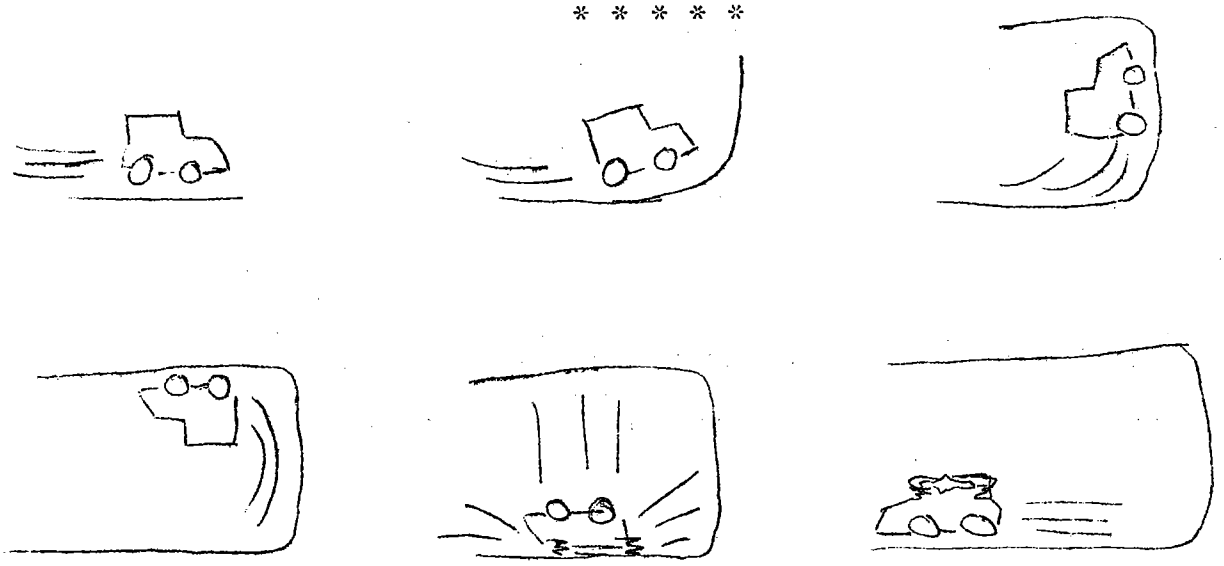

THE GRAPEVINE

.....Pages 37, 62, and 77 of the Songbook came out really bad the first time around in all of them. The stencils have been recut and if you'd like improved pages, just ask for them. Alot of people have pulled the staples and 3-hole punched the books so they lie flat in a notebook, so you can have your hands free for strumming, drinking, or messing around with your neighbor. Just watch out for your comrads who get their grins from rearranging the pages upside down and backwards and think it's really cute!

.....Still on the subject of songbooks - we've had orders for them from all sorts of places and we've also sending as many as we can out to White Salmon Convention (Go West in '72!).

.....If you muscians have found some of our chords not quite right you can either blame it on typing errors or the fact that when we sing, it usually is so off key thet it doesn't matter anyway!

.....This quarter for the first time at VPI Cartography was taught in the Fundamentals of Engineering Dept. Quite a large number of cavers enrolled, but were somewhat disappointed in the content. Everyone sort of expected to be doing actual map drafting, but the course turned out to be learning how to read maps. It was nonetheless rather interesting and even time was taken to describe cave maps and Bill Park made a good pitch for caving. Hopefully some outside interest can be sparked in what we're trying to do.

.....Down in Cumberland Gap National Park where we stayed for the Spring Project, turned out to be nothing more than a big morel patch! If you're not up on your edible wild mushrooms, morels are considered the most delicious of the ones to be found in this part of the world. So if you're out ridge walking between April 20 and May 10, keep your eyes open.

.....Did you know that to go into the mushroom business all you need is some luck, a cave and lots of high-grade horse manure? I don't know about the first two, but we sure have alot of the latter flying around!

.....For the closed cave list - Five Meters Down Cave (Blacksburg Quad) has been closed again. The cave is located on Campus across the street form the Wesley Foundation. The cave mapped last fall with total passage length of 8 ft. with cave life consisting of rats (Rattus rattus). The map rest in the private files of W.C. Douty for scientific purposes only (No sport cavers, please!) The Caving World surely loses big with its closing. The name will aid in finding the entrance, five parking meters down from the corner of Roanoke Street.

.....New ELMT's have been sighted all over the country, One has been seen in Oklahoma, another at Mammoth Cave, Kentucky, and there is even a road side one in Campbell County, Tennessee.

.....Subscribe to the Region Record! It's coming out on schedule and this is the time to get in on all the goodies and scandalous goings on in the Virginia Region. $3.00 will do it for a while so get those orders in to: The Region Record, Box 3585 C.R.S. Johnson City, Tennessee 37061.

.....It has been going around the Region that Paxton's Cave is in grave danger of flagrant vandalism and should be gated. Well, since no one from VPI had been in there since the Convention last June, a trip went out to see exactly what the situation is. Supposedly the dog tooth spar was excavated by mineral collectors, gypsum needles trampled by hordes of tourists travelling through, and all sorts of other atrocities. As it turned out, the spar is still there and OK, the needles are about the way they've always been. Also, according to the register in the Christmas Room, 124 people have traveled there since the Convention, which isn't really that many for such a well known sight-seeing cave. It doesn't seem that any significant damage has occured there, as a matter of fact, it seems that most people have been very careful. The trip last month took pictures, emptied the carbide dumps, brushed carbide off of floors, and purposefully rubbed out conspicuous directions back towards the formation sections. As far as a gating project is concerned, special thought must be taken when considering the nature of the cave. First of all, the entrance would be impossible to gate (3 large holes and a surface stream). Secondly, farther back where the passage could be fitted with a gate the walls are the consistancy of cinnamon crackers and would not hold a gate too well. Finally, the maze is so complex, at least half a dozen gates would have to be installed to suit the purpose.

.....Mr. and Mrs Puckett, owners of Higgenbotham's and Devil's Slide, have sold their land. Hope we can keep in contact with them because they are some of the best friends this Grotto has. When asked about the new landowners, Mr. Puckett said, "Coal miners, right fine people." That's good enough for us.

.....Seems like we've been going through a wet period since the Convention, because Hig. #2 has been flooding continuously since last November. This makes a rather hairy wet-suit cave; hope it will dry up this summer. Also, no one has been to Devil's Slide, a nasty place in its own right, in four and a half years. The last trip saw a blizzard, frostbite and a car wreck. Maybe that valley is haunted.

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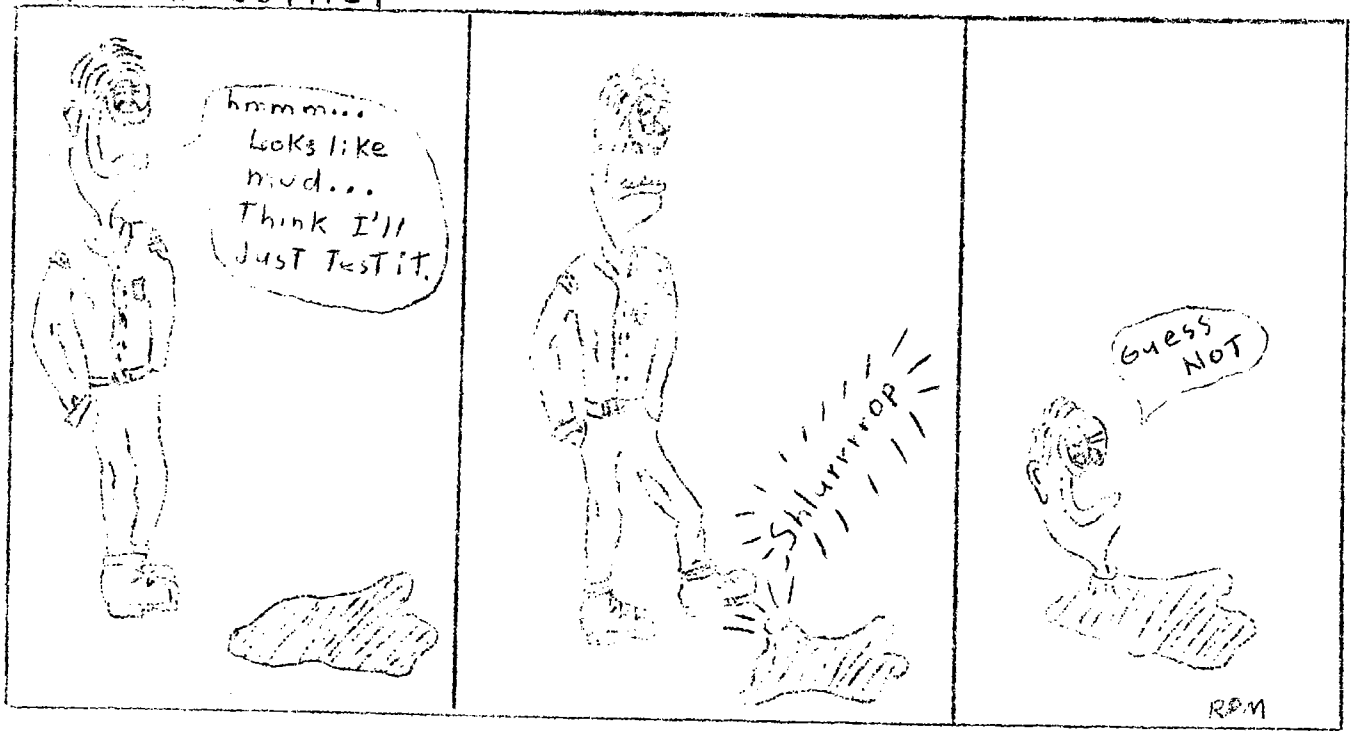
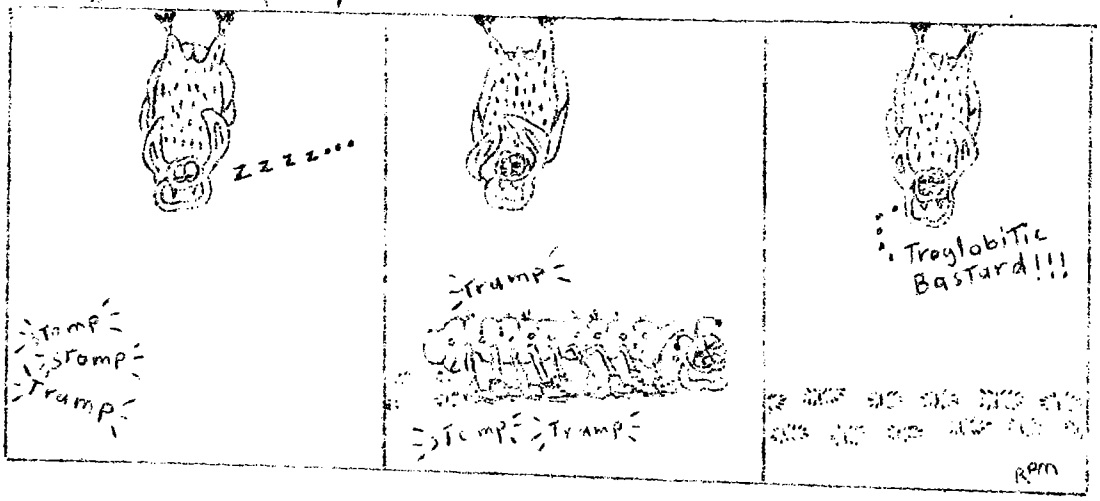
Kiddie Corner



Plug + Company



THE END...