

# *The Tech Troglodyte*



Photo By: Steve Wells  
Entrance to ABC

Fall '04

# The Tech Troglodyte

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



### Fall Semester 2004 Officers:

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**Volume XXXVIII**

**Editor** Samantha Lambert

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## Getting To Know You



I am **Eric Steinberg**, a sophomore Mining Eng, from NJ. I am looking for a girl who gives good massages, loves cuddling, can have thought provoking conversations and is a virgin. My first caving experience was at Tawney's with Venture Out.



I am **Rutger Thomschutz** from the New River Valley. My first caving experience was at Newberrys. I had a great experience, which sparked my interest in becoming a member.



I am **Philip Schuchardt**, a freshman majoring in Computer Science. My first caving experience was somewhere in West Virginia. If I could be any animal it would be a wolf.



I am **Lisa Droubi**, a Junior majoring in Natural Resource Recreation, from MD. I am looking for a guy who is funny, nice, and has nice eyes. I am not that picky! First caving experience was Smoke-hole. If I could be an animal I would be a bear because they sleep all the time.



I am **Chris Glomb**, a sophomore CS/GE major, from PA. My first caving experience was at OTR 2004. I am looking for a girl who is an outdoor and music lover, who is also smart and nice.



I am **Ruth Williams**, a Junior majoring in Urban forestry, from Yorktown VA. If I could be an animal I would be an elephant so I can play in the mud and eat a lot.



## Getting To Know You

Not Pictured



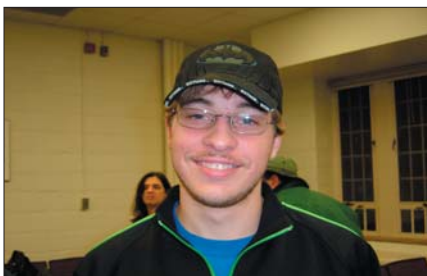
I am **Kai Meiun**, a freshmen majoring in engineering and music, from Japan. My first caving experience was in James. If I could be any animal it would be a Dragon.



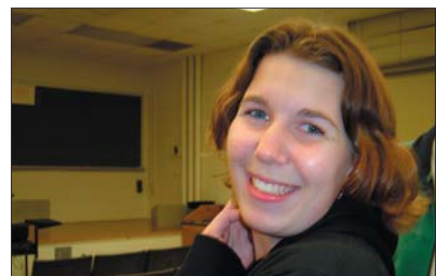
I am **Caitlin Coove**, a freshman in university studies. My first cave trip experience was horrible. If I could be any animal it would be a T-Rex, because then I'd be on TV, and I would have wings. I am looking for a guy who is sweet, intelligent, must play video games, should love music, and buys me chocolate.



I am **Blue Clements**, a freshman majoring in a lot of different stuff, from Herndon VA. My first caving experience was amazing. I want to be a bird so I can fly if I could be any animal.



I am **Dustin Schleifer**, a freshman in engineering, from Sterling VA. I am looking for a girl with a nice smile, kid at heart, likes to play video games generally compassionate and caring. My first caving experience was an awesome time at Links.



I am **Courtney Kimball**, a freshman in U. Studies, from VA. I am looking for a guys who has a sense of humor, nice body, umm.. long walk on the beach. My first caving experience I fell twice in the underground stream.

Sorry to any new people that might have gotten left out!





## **Destruction With the Hydrominer**

By: Philip Schuchardt

### **About**

Making a new cave is a hell of a lot of work. Pulling out loose dirt and rock from a want to be cave can be a tedious job. Hydromining can make digging on a site much easier. It is a process that uses water to blast loose mud and dirt into the cave. It leaves only the larger rocks and saving countless hours of tiresome shoveling. Not only can the hydrominer easily clean rocks it can clean people, if they choose to get it the way.

### **Implementation**

The most important item in hydromining is the sufficient water source. Mountain streams are excellent for water and can be easily dammed. Building a strong dam is key. Build it far enough up stream so that the hose from the damn can have enough pressure. The more pressure in the hose the quicker it is to blast things into the cave. A good size hose is also important. Black four inch drainage hose works well. It is cheap and readily available from most hardware stores. Another excellent way to increasing pressure is by adding a reducer on the end of the hose. This can be accomplished with a four inch to two inch PVC reduction piece. Attaching the PVC can be tricky but parachute core and duck tape seems to work well.

### **Pitfalls**

When the hole starts collapsing get yourself and the hydrominer out of there. Obviously, your life is important but the hydrominer can become easily damaged if a large rock decides to fall on it. Hydrominers that use four inch drainage hose can easily become snagged. Do not forcefully drag or pull, it will brake. Abuse on the hydrominer will cause holes and cracks in the hose. It can easily take revenge by spraying you with water. Also, the holes will cause a drop in water pressure. It's life expectancy is about one dig. The bottom line is be nice to the hydrominer and it will be nice to you.



Photo By: Philip Balister

**Destruction With the Hydrominer Continues**

By: Philip Schuchardt



Photo By: Philip Schuchardt

Steve Wells Hydromining at EG5.

**EG5**

VPI's newest dig is EG5. It is located in a sink hole about 2 miles up the valley from Alva Blankenship Cave. A small stream runs in to the sink and disappears into the earth. The dig has the same symptoms as Alva. Hydromining is used extensively on the site. The soon to be cave takes as much water as you can put into it. Mr. Wheeler, the land owner of EG5, wanted to make a pond out of the sink hole. He tried blasting the hole and poured concrete down into it. None of which seemed to stop the water. Digging has stop on EG5 until the spring due to the weather. If you want to go play at EG5 talk to Steve Wells and he will put you to work.

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**What Each Anniversary Reflects**

By Doug Moore

- At 5 years: a caving organization is discovering they aren't afraid of the dark
- At 10 years: they start playing in the mud
- At 15 years: they start trying dangerous things like vertical
- At 20 years: they find out that virgin passages are fun to discover
- At 30 years: they find they didn't fully explore and map what they found in their 20's
- At 40 years: is when they start collecting books
- At 50 years: is when they want to run for office and have power
- At 60 years: is when they decide it was fun being 20 and go looking for more virgin passage





## **How to write a Trog article: The 9 Step process to success!**

by Rob Story

### **Step 1: Remember that we have a publication.**

No good Trog article can be written without remembering that we actually have a Trog. This first step is a very important one, and often easy to skip, given the beer induced stupor that seems to be common among the club.

### **Step 2: Tell the editor you will get her an article “soon”, knowing you will forget.**

This next step is very important to the article writing process. A vague promise to the Trog editor buys you time, letting you have the free time to cave, drink, and \*gasp\* study (This last one seems to be low on the priority list of many cave club students). This verbal commitment to write an article will buy you at least a couple weeks of being lazy.

### **Step 3: Forget**

This step is crucial! You must not remember to write your Trog article until the very last minute. This author happens to believe that last minute panic is the most inspirational way to write. Therefore you need to kick back, relax, go caving, and completely fail to remember about your promise to write an article.

### **Step 4: Un-forget, with some helpful encouragement from the Trog editor**

You need some help on this next step of remembrance. Often the Trog editor will remind the cave club of the upcoming publication during the Friday meetings. Death threats for those who don't write anything are not uncommon. You will remember that you need to get around to writing the article, promising yourself that you will write it soon.

### **Step 5: Re-forget**

See Step 3.

### **Step 6: Try and Compromise with the Trog editor**

It's a couple of weeks until the Trog articles are due, and you don't have anything. Here's the plan: Stall. Tell the editor that you have something really good in store, it's just not finished yet. Tell them that your article is going to be Pulitzer worthy, but real genius takes time.

### **Step 7: Give in to the Demands of the Editor and write the Article**

This step can often be difficult, but it is an inevitable one on the path to a successful Trog article. The editor of the Trog has been emailing the listserv and asking you every chance they get that you need to turn in your article. At some point(usually the day that the article is due), you have to give in and actually write something. A way around this step is to draw a cartoon or make a puzzle, whether it makes sense or not.



## How to write a Trog article: The 9 Step process to success! Continues

by Rob Story

### Step 8: Bask in the glory of being published

The day has arrived. The Troggs are hot off the press and being thrust into the hands of eager cave club members. You open up your copy, anticipating the glory that comes with a successful article. Seven pages later...you find yours. Unfortunately, all of your hard work has been moved behind seemingly more important articles, such as the discovery of a new cave or the presentation of an award to a land owner. However, you don't have the distinction of being the last article in the Trog, which goes to the obligatory Tawney's trip report. Bask in your glory....you are now a published author.

### Step 9: Go back to forgetting we have a Trog

Eat, drink, sleep, cave, and be merry. The next Trog is months away from being published, and you don't have to worry about writing another article until then. Enjoy your freedom from writing until next time, when this 9 Step guide to success will once again lead you to Trog article glory.

**Note:** This informative guide can also be applied to how not to write a Trog article. The simplest way to achieve this goal is to never leave Step 3. However, a word of warning: Often this leads to a new Step 4: Fight off the editor as they chase you with implement of death.

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## What a Grand Cave!

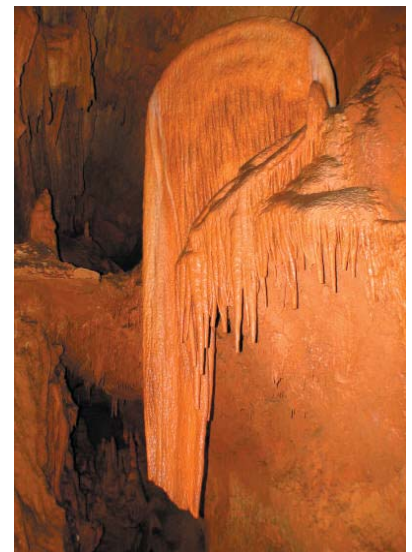
By: Samantha Lambert

Once I joined the VPI Cave Club I found myself disliking show caves and what they were all about. I would make fun of the tour guides leading the trips and the stalagmites that were attached to the ceiling and not the floor. I thought it was ridiculous to pay money to get lead through the cave on a path that was made out of concrete. That whole view of mine changed after Spring VAR.

VAR was located in Grottoes Virginia, home to Grand Caverns. This cave was my first caving experiences at the age of 9. Back then I found myself wondering off from the group to poke my head into holes that were pitch black. After going back into Grand Caverns at VAR I remember how it left me with curiosity that brought me back to caving in college.

This cave along with other show caves have so much potential to get new people caving.

The beauty that these caves hold is a learning experience for everyone. The flow stone, columns, draperies and shield formations are a spectacular site to see even if most of them are glued in place. I now look at show caves as the introduction to caving. If you find yourself in one of these caves asking all the questions, poking your head into holes, and wanting to go off the concrete path then you know you should try caving.



Formation in Grand Caverns  
Photo by Doug Moore



## The Haunted Cave

By Mike Prentice

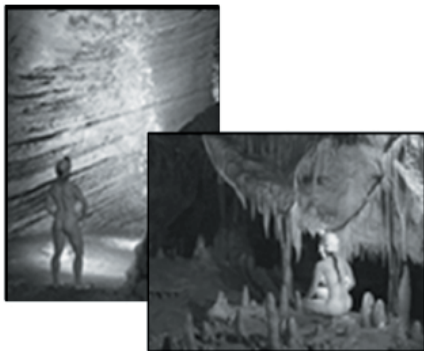
Every year Dixie Caverns hosts a haunted cave during the week of Halloween. The VPI cave club volunteers every year to help out and look after the cave. This year I was fortunate to participate in two nights. It was fun to have a job to scare the crap out of people, and yes I did hear a girl say that she was going to pee and vomit on herself.

When you show up to haunt, it is only required that you wear all black or dark clothing. Hard candies and water is also a good idea since you will be doing a lot of yelling. You will be in the cave for three or four hours. Costumes and make up were provided by them and they did a good job to make you look scary. Depending on the section of cave that you are assigned to, you are given a costume to fit your spot. I was in the graveyard and my make up consisted of a white base and a lot of blood, which seemed to be very effective. Other characters got masks, clown suits, chainsaws, and etc.

Inside the cave was very dark and foggy. It was so dark that I was able to stand five feet in front of someone and not be seen. There were plenty

of props to play with and places to hide. If you were in a crack in a rock, someone could be inches away looking right at you and not see you. Jumping out from these cracks seemed to be the most effective way to do my job, but I also hid in coffins to get people screaming too. There was plenty of screaming from girls and kids in the cave to add to the scary atmosphere. Dave, the boss man, told us to "always do your job. These people paid to be scared, so scare them even if there are little kids crying." So I guess I just made them cry even more and have nightmares for the rest of their lives. The best scares were when you saw some guy acting like he isn't scared, and then you scare the crap out of him and creepily laugh your ass off as he walks away.

Although you volunteer to haunt and the cave, the VPI cave club will receive a check based on the amount of people and time that they haunted. It was so much fun that I would almost consider paying to go in the cave and scare people instead of paying to get scared. So, if you like to scare people and enjoy being in a cave, then you should come out next Halloween and haunt at Dixie Caverns.



## Wild Caving in Virginia 2005

**A full color 12-month calendar featuring some of  
Virginia's loveliest cave attractions!**

Calendars will be available before the end of the semester.  
Please contact [troged@yahoo.com](mailto:troged@yahoo.com) to reserve your copy in advance.



**Club Quotable Photos**



Photo By: Mike Cole

Julie Booker- Float trip



Photo By: Mike Cole

Chris Garguilo- Float trip



Photo By: Ray Sira

Bobby Zokaite- Son of Picnic



Photo By: Steve Wells

Steve Wells, David Klorig, Dave Colatosti, Keg  
At ABC





## Getting to Know You (Club Officers)

### **Christina K. Lee, President**

Materials Science and Engineering, Junior. VPI No. 399, NSS No. 53411

I've been caving since freshman year--> 3 yrs. I got started after I saw a table card in Detrick.

**Hobbies:** Reading, doing homework, being a nerd. I suppose watching foreign movies in spanish counts as being a nerd too. Cave club--> nerd. Once I graduate I intend to NOT get an engineering job. Maybe one dealing with urban planning or something. I saw an interesting job opp. at Marsbars dealing with peanut research--peanuts are materials! I swear they are!

**Favorite cave:** Links & Pighole. Yes, I can count...that's two. But one's vertical and one's horizontal...they're two different animals. Anything the cave club doesn't know about you but should? -I think the club already knows too much (or at least thinks it does.) I'm a very silly person when I'm not in school or leading meetings or thinking about school or thinking about meetings...OR...

### **John Booker, Vice President**

Computer Science (Masters) VPI 397 NSS 53511

**How long have you caved and what got you started?** I went on an extremely stupid nerd caver trip lead by my RA in the dorms. No helmets, flashlight in teeth, the whole (lack of) nine yards. At some point I decided this was fun, but probably not the safe way to be doing it. The next year I finally got around to joining the club, at which point Mike^3 showed me a safer variant of caving technique that included a helmet.

**Hobbies:** Music (Listening and playing guitar/piano), Video games, backpacking, biking, zombie movies.

**What will you do once you graduate?** You're looking at it. I graduated and decided to do more school. Eventually I want to do something with the interaction between humans and computers (or any other machine), possibly something in the assistive technology area.

**Anything the cave club doesn't know about you but should?** I'm colorblind. If you wear red or green pants, I can see your underwear.

### **Rob Story, Treasurer**

Sophomore in Aerospace/Ocean Engineering, VPI 400, NSS 54816

Ive been caving since I was about 7 years old...my dad had been caving since he was in college, and got me into it as soon as I was old enough to do it. I grew up going to Beacon, Honaker, and New River cave.

#### **Hobbies**

I like doing pretty much anything that involves the outdoors...hiking, biking, backpacking, etc. I also enjoy reading and playing the occasional video game.

#### **What will you do once you graduate?**

Anything that involves someone giving me a job. I've thought about Grad school, and will make that decision when the time comes around.

#### **Favorite cave**

Favorite cave, eh? Tough one...I think that Beacon cave, in East River Mountain with the entrances behind St. Lukes hospital, has to be my favorite cave. I grew up going to that cave, and even though there is no vertical, there is lots of cool steam passage as well as a slow moving whirlpool sump in the back of the cave.

### **Geoff Lewis, Secretary**

Chemistry

VPI 398, NSS 54335

I started caving at the beginning of last year so about a year and a half. I had gone caving a few times with the Boy Scouts when I was younger and decided I liked dark holes.

**Hobbies** - Long walks in dark damp passages, candle lit dinners for two, and a nice relaxing movie for 2 following that dinner

**Favorite Cave** - Clover Hollow until it kicked my ass the other week





## The Woes of Wine

By: Chris Michie

The story always starts with a beautiful Labor Day weekend, where 2000 of your best friends gather for a few days of R & R. The story generally continues by depicting a peaceful, lazy weekend where random scenes are mysteriously deleted. But the good memories remain: a sunny Sunday under the VPI Cave Club tarp, friends drinking wine and sharing stories...



The friendly photographer is always on hand to help restore those mysteriously deleted scenes.



Good friends always seem to show up, despite the bad sparkling wines. Amy Bern was kind enough to travel from Colorado to join the party and attempt to not cringe as she gives her toast.



As the wine is passed around, good friends become better friends:



And just some friends like Tigger, close:





## The Woes of Wine Continues

By: Chris Michie

But as will all good things, it must come to an end. This is the woe of wine. There is always an onset of downward spiraling cataclysmic events that are caused by the nectar of the gods. So here continues our story. There are, however, several early warning signs that Armageddon is near. First of all, there is the warning from those who have previous experience:



Soon following, there is the loss of all coordination, and gracefulness:



But it never fails. No one heeds the warnings. In fact most inexperienced wine drinkers are hostile towards these warning signs:



Some go to great lengths to display their disapproval of the warnings:



Even in times of great torment from the effects of the substance, stubbornness prevails:







## The Woes of Wine Continues

By: Chris Michie

Finally, after repeated warnings, the hellfire and brimstone rains down from the heavens and strikes down all the old Coleman stoves in a fireball of glory!



After the earthquakes, plagues, and coming of the anti-Christ, all those who got into the bottle (in this case, quite literally) were struck down and left in very compromised positions.



And some of the positions were more compromising than others...yiffing? BAD TIGGER!



So let this be a lesson to all you trainees, young and old.... Beware the woes of wine, and don't fall in the ditch at OTR!





## How to: Use Caving to Pick Up Women\*

By David Klorig\*\*

So you are slugging down cheap beer at happy hour before the meeting when you happen to notice a young vixen sitting at the bar. You think to yourself, how can I make this beautiful specimen take notice of me, a lowly shell of a man sporting a beer gut and too much facial hair (reader appearance may vary). Relax friend for you are one of the few, the proud, the intensely desirable, a caver. But how to go from a longing stair from across the room to a sleeping bag warmer?

### First:

Be realistic. Not all women want a fiery romp with a mud frolicking subterranean. Before wasting precious time and energy check the area for tote bags with Greek letters or penciled-in eyebrows. It goes without saying that people with fake nails won't want to get mud under them. If the coast is clear then you can proceed. The easiest way to talk to a girl is if you don't care if she likes you. This requires a certain amount of mental fortitude (use the force Luke). If she thinks you are nervous or otherwise not at peace in the head she will take off, or possibly milk you for free alcohol and then take off. After even a short conversation you should be able to figure out which tactical caving pickup approach to take.

### There are three:

#1 If you detect even a hint of adventurousness in her personality then play up the exploration, discovery, braving the odds to go where no man has been before aspect of caving. Make it seem like you are climbing Mount Everest underground. You might want to bring up cave

diving if she needs more convincing. If she is into adventurous men then you will know that you have taken the right tactic when she hangs on every word of your exciting caving story.

Be careful though, nobody likes a bragger. You've got to be slick about it. Make her ask for the exciting story. Lead up to it and then be like well you probably wouldn't be interested. If she agrees with you then switch tactics.

#2 If she is a tree hugger, then play up the cave conservation angle. Tell her you are in a desperate race to map and photograph these precious natural resources before the evil quarriers, well diggers, and leaky septic systems destroy them *forever*. You can usually coax some concern out of most people with this approach, even if its fake concern. Make sure you emphasize your selfless quest to do what you believe is right. Chicks dig that.

#3 If she is a biology major and doesn't hate biology (there are but a few) then you can play up the scientific quest for knowledge about rare and strange cave creatures. Be sure and tell her that if you're lucky you might be able to find some translucent cave cricket that holds the key to the cure for cancer or AIDS or something. Although it might not be the stereotype, women really do like smart guys, I swear (at least the good ones anyway).



## How to: Use Caving to Pick Up Women\* Continues

By David Klorig\*\*

### Second:

Take her caving if she is willing. Tell her it's a really easy trip and you will be there to help her the whole way. Then take her to Starnes and make sure to help her up the entrance drop. Offer your knee as a foothold and don't hesitate to give her butt a little push if she needs it. A cave is a great place to show how dependable and secure you are because down there she really will be depending on you. Be sure not to let her get hurt and it's probably a good idea to stay away from any nasty crawls on the first trip.

### Third:

Just when she is starting to doubt your sanity for actually enjoying crawling around in the mud, show her that you are still cool by taking her to a caver party. Be a gentleman and always keep her cup full

of apple cider. Serenade her with your musical talents (reader musical talents may vary). If she doesn't have any hang-ups then try and get her into the hot tub.

If all goes well you will know by now if you have found someone to heat up your tent or if you have just found a new recruit for the club who will probably end up with the vice-president.

If all else fails then there is always Mexico.

\*Note: I tried to make this a co-ed guide but I figure it's probably impossible. Sorry.

\*\*Note: Method has not been tested in a real world situation as the author found his current sleeping bag warmer in a chemistry lab before becoming a caver.

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## Quotable Quotes

Submitted by Your Friends

**PP to ME & PB:** "Size matters... when you are talking about laptops"

**MC to GPS:** "Tell me where you are now bitch"

**JB to AT:** "Did you lose your peanut?"

**CG to KR:** "What's up with that girl?"

**KR to Group:** "I don't know but if I could I would touch her."

**JM to JB:** "What's up?"

**JB:** "My BAC"

**CL to MP:** "Your hand is sticky"

**MP to CL:** "Yeah, so is the other one"

**PB to GL:** "A golden shower, when your faced down in your own vomit, I'll pee on you"



## Grotto Grapevine

By: AI Cartwright

### What A Day for a Picnic

The cave gods gave us great weather at picnic for a change last spring. No pig was sacrificed this year; however Aaron Thomas provided fresh bambi meat.



Photo By Mike Cole

Aaron sacrificed the front grill and radiator of his parents' suburban to take out the deer just before arriving at the picnicsite.



Photo By Mike Cole

Speaking of running down,

Brad Adkins almost took out biker Chris Lee on her way to picnic with his truck by running over her front tire after causing her to fall off the bike.

Some good was done at picnic, as club members replace rotting fence posts along the fence closest to Newberrys.

The traditional rose bush pulling and wood hauling took place on Saturday. But leave it up to cavers to come up with different ways of pulling those rose bushes, and finding foolish WVU cavers to carry them out.



Photo By Justin Matous

### VAR

A small group from VPI made it up to Grottos, VA for Spring VAR on April 23-25th. Highlights from the weekend were the very poor selection of beer and Samantha Lambert beating an 8 year old in the squeeze box competition. The Monongahela Grotto won the vote over VPI to host Fall VAR. They celebrated their 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary during the event which was held September 24-26<sup>th</sup> in Parsons, WV. Sandy Knapp is in the works of planning another VAR in Blacksburg in the near future.

### Housing Shuffle

Eileen O'Malley bought a house on Orchard View Lane. After several weekends of making Lepera and Wells fix it up, she was able to move in. Alison Williams has purchased a house on Palmer Drive.



## Grotto Grapevine Continues

By: Al Cartwright

John Deighan and Paige Baldassaro just recently bought a house off of Nellies Cave Road. Their house is just outside town limits, which allows them to have open fires. John and Paige hosted a recent Friday night party to give cavers a chance to burn down the house; however a rainy night saved the property. Steve and Steve have purchased another house, to add to their growing rental properties around town. Mike Cole has joined the ranks at the party pad with John Booker and Brian McCarter.

was still in the air among club members.



Photo By Chris Michie

### OTR

The VPI Overall Grotto Participation award was canceled this year in favor of a new Grotto Team Challenge competition. No one from VPI was motivated enough to form a team, so more time was spent drinking at the campsite.

A few VPI members competed individually in contests. Philip Balister won 1<sup>st</sup> place in surveying. Dave Colotasti won 1<sup>st</sup> place in cable ladder, Bob Cosby came in third. Mike Cole won 1<sup>st</sup> place in lamp assembly. Sandy Knapp came in 2<sup>nd</sup> in female 30 meter mechanical. Steve Wells won 1<sup>st</sup> place in male 30 meter knots, and Steve Lepera won 1<sup>st</sup> place in 30 meter sit-stand. Julie Booker came in 3<sup>rd</sup> in female 32 ounce beer chug. And in unofficial contests, Sandy Ramsey and Julie Booker duked it out in the ramen noodle wrestling pool Saturday night which entertained many OTR attendees. A quick Google might reveal more graphical details.

No thorny-ditch rescue relations were made this year at OTR, however love

### Relationships

Steve Wells has a new "Hope" in his life. Brian McCarter really knows how to show the new trainees a good time at his apartment parties, just ask Elizabeth Spencer. Kristen Matak and Tim Bleech tied the knot and soon will be moving to Morgantown WV.

Sue Setzler got married, this time to BT, otherwise known as Adam Fiscor, after saying she would never get married again. Wonder if she is knocked up? Rumor has is that David Klorig and Erika Bechtold are engaged. A June wedding is planned for Chris Garguilo and Samantha Lambert.

Jen Albanes has plans to move into town with fiancée Chris Michie until March, when she plans to begin hiking the AT. Still no word on when these two will finally tie the knot.

Aaron Thomas married his long time Mexican love Zulema over the summer. They are living in Richmond with Aaron's parents, where Aaron continues to study computer science and Zulema works at a local Mexican restaurant.

## Grotto Grapevine Continues

By: Al Cartwright

### Washington Bridge has Fallen Down

After years of questioning how much longer the bridge to the Washington trailer and estate would survive flood events from Sinking Creek, it finally fell on September 28<sup>th</sup>, 2004.

The water also rose several inches above the expanded foundation of the Bat Ranch

Sauna. With the bridge out of order, collecting wood from the estate is no longer possible. Wood for Mike Newsome's 50<sup>th</sup> birthday party and the Halloween party had to be obtained elsewhere.

### Halloween

Halloween was a hit this year with the special punch made by Mike Cole, and the Jell-O wrestling. Club champion for ramen noodle wrestling, Sandy Ramsey, was challenged by Carrie Blankenship in the Jell-O pool, and still retains her title. The following morning included traditional questioning "where are my keys?" and "who was 'rocking' in the explorer last night?" And Sandy Ramsey was carted to the hospital by Mike Cole Sunday after she cut herself over the knuckle, cutting down to the bone and severing one of the finger tendons. A hand surgeon was called away from his Sunday Football to come sew Sandy back together.

### Haunted Cave

12 volunteers from VPI helped scare small kids and adults at the Dixie Cavern's Haunted Cave this year. Money earned by the club from the haunting is intended to go towards cave conservation.

### Inquire Within Wins Blue

Sue Setzler's design for the 2004 club t-shirt, "Inquire Within," won a Blue Ribbon at the 2004 NSS Convention.

### More Geeks Around

The list of HAM geeks grows with John Booker, KI4GIO, and trainee David Calder, KI4GHZ.

### Calling all Doctors

Philip Balister has been hobbling around on crutches after having surgery on his ankle to attempt to heal his never ending pain. I'm sure he'll still have something to scream about while caving. Wil Orndorff also was under the knife recently to fix something wrong with his knee.

Seeing a future in fixing broken cavers, Eric Stanley has moved to Kentucky to study at Pikeville College School of Osteopathic Medicine. Future doc Brian Ekey continues to study in Blacksburg at the Virginia College of Osteopathic Medicine.

### Babies

Mike and Molly welcomed Linden Ambrose on Friday, October 8, 2004! It was a quick caving trip out and the usual rough transition to the air breathing world, but the whole family is doing fine. He weighed in at 7 pounds, 2 ounces and was born just after 7pm.



Photo By Nathan Sharp







## **Elvis Grotto Lifts Ban on Caving, New Discoveries in Giles County**

By: Philip Balister

During the spring semester of 2001, the club ridge walked an area of Wolf Creek Mountain outside of Narrows, VA. Up to this time only a few small caves were known in the area. The more notable caves are Scooter's Boneyard and Grim Rock, both caves with primarily vertical development. Between these two caves is several miles of exposed limestone with no known caves.

During the spring ridgewalk several interesting sinking streams and potential digs were located. One cave entrance was located by Philip Balister and Scot Rapier. A brief reconnaissance by Chris Gargulio, Samantha Lambert, Steve Wells and Philip Balister quickly led to a twenty foot drop guarded by a racoon. This cave was called Elvis Grotto number one, largely due to Philip's dislike of wasting time figuring out cool names for stuff.

Over the next several years survey trips into Elvis Grotto #1 surveyed 1500 feet of passage. Total depth of the cave is 313 feet. The deepest point is almost directly beneath the entrance. The cave contains two major drops of 65 feet and 112 feet. At the bottom of the 65 foot drop is some horizontal development. The 112 foot drop is a long canyon containing a bridge to a parallel shaft of similar height with water falling from the top. The stream drops down a 30 foot pit and disappears into a tight crack in the floor. Dye tracing shows this water resurges in a spring along Wolf Creek about two miles to the south west.

A typical survey trip into Elvis Grotto #1 would end after a few shots at some interesting obstacle, usually involving some form of vertical caving technique. Besides the typical descending skills, scaling poles, bolt climbs, and grappling hooks have been used to explore leads.

In March 2004, after some "breakthroughs" in Elvis Grotto #1 found even more annoying vertical challenges to overcome, Philip Balister, Carrie Blankenship and Rob Story decided to revisit the "Tire swing dig" found several years earlier during the ridgewalk. In Philip's mind it had developed into a relatively easy dig. However the reality is that it is still a back hoe dig.

After the "tire swing dig" let down, the

group examined a high water sink that had been dug at by groups led by Andy Yeagle and Eric Stanley a few years before. This dig looked pretty much the same, except one section had collapsed some. After a couple dry years, water was sinking at the dig area again. After some poking around a roaring sound was heard beneath the collapsed area. Much discussion on the origin of the roaring sound ensued, did the roar come from below the ground, or from surface stream nearby? Philip diverted the water past the main sink to try to resolve the discussion.

The water diversion test revealed the roar originated beneath the ground and also that the entire stream could sink into a small hole under a large rock. These two pieces of information created new enthusiasm for this dig site.

The following day a larger group, properly equipped for digging, arrived. While one group worked on the roaring collapse area, others excavated a hole at newly discovered sink. After several hours of digging Rob Story climbed down through a wet slot and found a small wet room. Shamed into action Philip followed and confirmed the room wasn't pretty.

During April and May several other dig trips scratched around the area, but made no real progress toward finding a cave entrance. The collapsed area would need extensive shoring to make it safe for digging and the original slot found in March had a large sandstone boulder preventing easy access to the dig face.

By June the weather was nice, classes had scaled back to manageable levels so a serious digging effort began. Digging commenced on the side of the large sandstone block opposite the existing hole. David Colatosti located a piece of roofing tin that was used to channel water into the developing hole. The water would push the dirt into the hole, which was judged to be a much easier way to get rid of the dirt than hauling it out in a bucket. After running water into the hole, diggers could climb into the hole and remove rocks. Large amounts of fill dirt were successfully washed into the cave using this method.



## **Elvis Grotto Lifts Ban on Caving, New Discoveries in Giles County**

### **Continues** By: Philip Balister

Upgrading the roofing tin to 4 inch flexible drain pipe increased the rate of digging. By late July the regular digging crew grew extensively. Regulars were Mike Cole, Steve Wells, Philip Balister, Scott Rapier, John Booker, and David Klorig. By the end of June there was a large hole in the ground with a small slot in the bottom that blew cool air. Enthusiasm was high.

The fourth of July weekend saw many of the regular diggers out of town, leaving Steve Wells, Dave Colatosti, and Dave Klorig to dig. They made short work of the slot and found the top of a tight 20 ft canyon. Descending the canyon led to a small room with going passage. On Monday Steve returned with Dave and Chris Sharkey to survey 200 feet of small passage. The survey crew was stopped by a twenty foot drop.

The following weekend two survey crews descended on the cave, by now referred to as Elvis Grotto #3. The first team of Ko Takamizawa, Joan Johnson, and Steve Lepera surveyed passages above the previous weeks discoveries. The second team, Philip Balister, Steve Wells, and Dave Colatosti started down the twenty foot pit. Below the 20 foot pit, there are three more pits in quick succession. These pits have depths of 10 feet, 40 feet and 30 feet. During the rigging and survey of these pits Steve Lepera arrived after the first crew finished their survey.

Past the final pit, the passage continued as a narrow canyon, that soon intersected another infedding stream. The survey continued downstream as alternating canyons or hands and knees crawls. After a right turn and a climb down, the team stopped in a small room. Several possible ways on existed, a high, wide, but too low passage; a Dave C. sized tube 8 feet off the floor; and a 1 foot high hole at floor level. The good thing about the floor level passage was the airflow present, the bad thing was that it was half full of water.

After some discussion, Steve Lepera decided to make up for his absence during much of the digging and made the supreme sacrifice. After removing his polypro top he crawled through the pool and quickly popped out into a much nicer room. He then removed the dam creating the pool allowing the rest of the survey crew to pass though unscathed. Now Steve

Lepera is no longer Steve Wells side kick during interesting vertical extravaganzas, now he has a new role; pusher of low wet leads!

This new room proved to be a junction room with several good leads. Up to this point the survey followed a small stream; this stream intersected a larger stream in this room. After surveying a short distance into the upstream and downstream leads to help define the room so Philip did not go to insane drawing the room, the crew continued surveying down a low, popcorn floored crawl. Fortunately this passage soon intersected a small dome and the cave continued as a sand floored passage. This promptly intersected another new stream. By now the survey crew was soiling themselves inside their cave suits. The new stream lead upstream to a very tall dome with a waterfall, height estimated at over 100 feet. Downstream lead to a T junction. At this point, Philip's sketching abilities diminished and he was mumbling incoherently about too much cave to draw. This failure of the critical member of the survey crew lead to the trips end.

After this trip the cave was over 1500 feet long with numerous high quality leads. Survey trips during the remainder of the summer increased the length to 1.5 miles of passage. Since OTR, survey trips ceased due to the increased water flow down the pits. In the mean time several other possible entrances have been dug at without any luck. When people can get back in to survey, the cave should reveal many more secrets and provide excitement for years to come. The water in the cave resurges at a spring on Wolf Creek two miles south west of the entrance. There are several good dig sites that could provide easier access to the downstream areas of the cave.

After the cave passed a mile, Carrie Blankenship and her grandmother decided the cave should be called Alva Blankenship Cave, after Carrie's grandfather.

Many people contributed to the success of this project, this article only touches on the highlights of the discovery and exploration of a new cave. Without the work of many people, none of this would have happened.

## Elvis Grotto Lifts Ban on Caving, New Discoveries in Giles County Continues By: Philip Balister

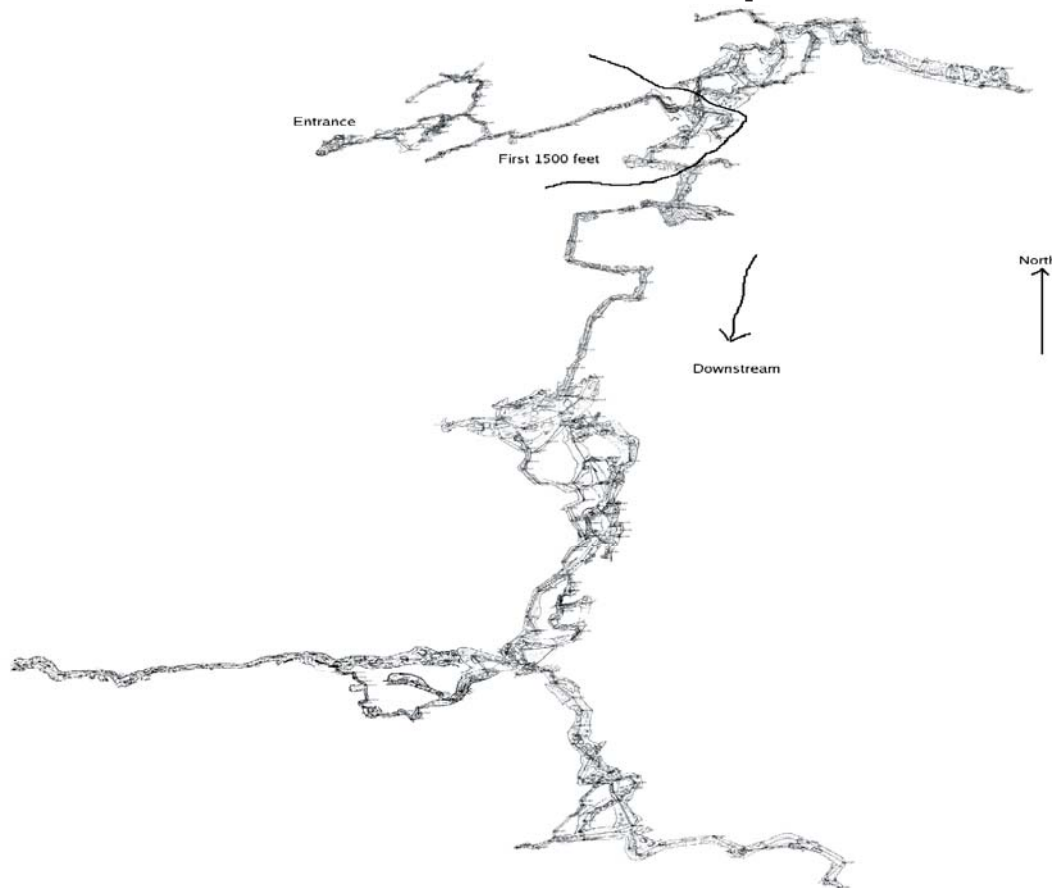
Credits:

Diggin:

Carrie Blankenship, Rob Story, Mike Cole, Steve Wells, Scott Rapier, Craig Ferguson, Dave Colatosti, Dave Klorig, John Booker, Sandy Knapp, Eileen O'Malley, Steve Lepera, Chris Sharkey, Matt Burnett, Philip Balister.

Surveying:

Steve Wells, Chris Sharkey, Dave Klorig, Ko Takamizawa, Joan Johnson, Steve Lepera, Philip Balister, Dave Colatosti, Mike Cole, Sandy Knapp, Mark Eisenbies, Brian McCarter, Rob Story, Craig Ferguson, Scott Rapier, Ray Sira, Matt Burnett, Diana Gietl, John Deighan, Tim Bleech, Otis Farmer, Kevin Rock, Eileen O'Malley, Carrie Blankenship, Tom Malabad, Mike Futrell



Alva Blankenship Cave, Plan View



Profile, looking to the east

1200 feet (Approx)





## **Purchase of Stay High Cave shows Virginia's commitment to protection of caves and rare cave fauna** By Wil Orndorff

The Commonwealth of Virginia is purchasing Stay High Cave and approximately 24 overlying and adjacent acres to form the Clover Hollow Natural Area Preserve. This will be the state preserve system's second Natural Area Preserve centered on a cave and its associated fauna, and the first such property purchased with state dollars. Unthanks Cave Preserve, in Lee County, was donated to the state preserve system by the Nature Conservancy in 2004. The Department of Conservation and Recreation Natural Heritage Program manages the state Natural Area Preserve system.

Stay High Cave is located in Giles County, between Clover Hollow and Smokehole caves on the southeast side of Clover Hollow, a short drive from the Bat Ranch. Stay High was selected for incorporation into the Natural Area Preserve system because of both the outstanding assemblage of rare, cave obligate invertebrates in the cave, and the high quality of the habitat for these species. Stay High Cave includes outstanding examples of cave stream, drip pool, transient organic matter, and riparian communities. The cave is designated as significant under the Virginia Cave Protection Act in terms of biology, hydrology, esthetics, geology, and length.

The Virginia Natural Heritage Program uses a conservation site based approach for protecting documented occurrences of rare animals, plants, and natural communities, which include caves designated as significant under the Virginia Cave Protection Act. A "conservation site" is defined as the landscape area in which land use activities could reasonably be expected to potentially impact such an occurrence or associated group of occurrences. The Clover Hollow Conservation Site includes four caves designated as significant under the Cave Protection Act – Clover Hollow Cave, Tawney's, Smokehole, and Stay High. The site is defined as the recharge area for the Smokehole and Tawney's cave streams, as determined by dye trace studies performed in the late 1970's by Joe Saunders and Keith Ortiz, and refined by traces of Benjamin Schwartz, Zenah Orndorff, and Wil Orndorff (see Figure). Eight globally rare invertebrate species are known from

the Clover Hollow conservation site, four of which are near endemics having but a single known occurrence outside of the site. In addition, two rare bat species, the Eastern Small-footed Bat (*Myotis liebii*) and the Endangered Indiana Bat (*Myotis sodalis*) have been documented in Tawney's Cave, although the Indiana Bat has not been seen there for decades. To help prioritize conservation efforts, conservation sites are assigned biodiversity rankings (B-ranks) based on the number and quality of occurrences of rare plants, animals, or natural communities within a site. The Clover Hollow Conservation Site has a rank of B1, the highest possible.

Stay High Cave was a relatively recent discovery, found by Dave Colatosti and Jim Washington on a 1988 ridge-driving expedition. Cavers had for years driven by the narrow, downward tapering crack that gave the cave its name, probably because of the perennial surface stream that flows right past the entrance, seemingly oblivious to the underlying voids. The owner, Mrs. Nancy Sibold, was a retired Giles County schoolteacher who graciously allowed the club access to the cave for exploration and recreational trips. Many of us remember sitting in her parlor, shooting the breeze and looking at pictures of the cave prior to a trip. I believe she even managed to drag the odd caver to a church service over the years.

Many club members participated in the survey, led by Doug Bruce, Mark Honosky, and Jim Washington. The list includes Cecile James, Chris Stine, Joe Uknalis, Ko Takamizawa, Mike Horne, Mike Futrell, Craig Ferguson, Mike Fiore, Dave Colatosti, Walt Pirie, Steve Wells, and many others. The cave survey yielded over a mile of passage and a depth of 245 feet below the entrance. Jim Washington drafted the map that appears in the 1995 NSS Convention Guidebook. A more detailed map with cross-sections has yet to be drafted.

Dye tracing performed by Zenah Orndorff and Benjamin Schwartz in 2002 showed that the stream in Stay High Cave resurges at the Smokehole and Tawney's springs along Sinking Creek (See Figure).

## **Purchase of Stay High Cave shows Virginia's commitment to protection of caves and rare cave fauna (Continues)** By Wil Orndorff

Documentation of the fauna of Stay High Cave is incomplete, the result of a single inventory trip in August of 1994, performed by Virginia Speleological Survey Director Dave Hubbard and Natural Heritage Program Zoologist Chris Hobson with assistance from Steve Wells and Wil Orndorff. The resulting collections included two rare, troglobitic\* cave beetle species; two rare stygobitic\*\* crustaceans - one amphipod and one isopod; and a species of springtail (an insect) new to science. Of the caves in the Clover Hollow conservation site, only Tawney's has a higher number of documented occurrences of rare invertebrate species (six versus the five of Stay High). Further collections from the cave will undoubtedly increase the number of rare species documented, certainly in terms of rare millipedes if nothing else. At present, two rare species of millipede are known from Clover Hollow, but were not documented on the 1994 trip into Stay High. In addition, numerous common cave animals live in Stay High, including cave salamanders (*Eurycea lucifuga*), cave crickets, harvestmen, bats (mostly pipestrelles), common cave amphipods (*Stygobromus mackini*), and surface crayfish species, all of which add to the cave's significance.

An interesting footnote to this story is the origin of the biological inventory trip. One of the early routes proposed by American Electric Power for the 765kV Transmission Line would have crossed Clover Hollow very near the cave, and local citizens contacted Hubbard to perform the inventory as part of their attempts, ultimately successful, to have that route rejected by regulatory agencies. The role of the cave in the rejection of the route was probably minimal. This is the same power line that is now under construction, passing near the Skydusky Hollow area of Bland County on its way from West Virginia to a substation at Jacksons Ferry near Wytheville. Efforts by the club in 1999 and 2000 to assist Bland County landowners in their battle with AEP led to the discovery and survey of several new caves, better documentation of the bat population of Skydusky Hollow, and agreements by AEP to modify right-of-way clearing and maintenance practices to protect caves and karst. The VPI Cave Club was awarded a Certificate of Merit

at the 2001 convention for these efforts, and both Carol Zokaite and Wil Orndorff owe their current employment status in no small part to their respective roles in this battle. But I digress.

During the late 1990's, the VPI Cave Club continued to be the primary user of Stay High Cave, mostly for sporting, vertical trainee trips. According to signout logs, the cave was typically visited once a month or less, usually by groups of six or fewer individuals, as often as not with John Deighan at the helm.

Nancy Sibold passed away in August of 2000, ushering in a phase of uncertainty over the cave's future. Over the next year, a group of Clover Hollow residents attempted to form a coalition to purchase a large portion of the estate from the heirs, and the Cave Conservancy of the Virginias explored the possibility of acquiring Stay High Cave during this time. However, the heirs ultimately chose to sell to a Blacksburg-based developer planning to develop the 200+ acres as a low density (5+ acre lots), rural residential subdivision called Clover Springs. In response, the citizens formed an organization called the Friends of Nancy Sibold (FoNS) in an effort to stop the proposed development. This organization included individuals who had arranged for the 1994 inventory trip while fighting the power line. However, they were not successful in stopping the subdivision.

In November of 2002, voters approved the *Commonwealth of Virginia Parks and Natural Areas Bond Act*, liberating millions of dollars statewide for acquisition of properties of outstanding biodiversity significance for incorporation into the Natural Area Preserve System. Shortly thereafter, in my capacity as Karst Protection Coordinator in the Natural Heritage Program, I proposed that the state purchase Stay High Cave and some surrounding acreage as a Natural Area Preserve.

The state entered negotiations with the developer to purchase 4 lots totaling about 30 acres. A myriad of bureaucratic hurdles had to be crossed, and in the interim one of the lots was sold. Fortunately, Clover Springs remained patient with the state.



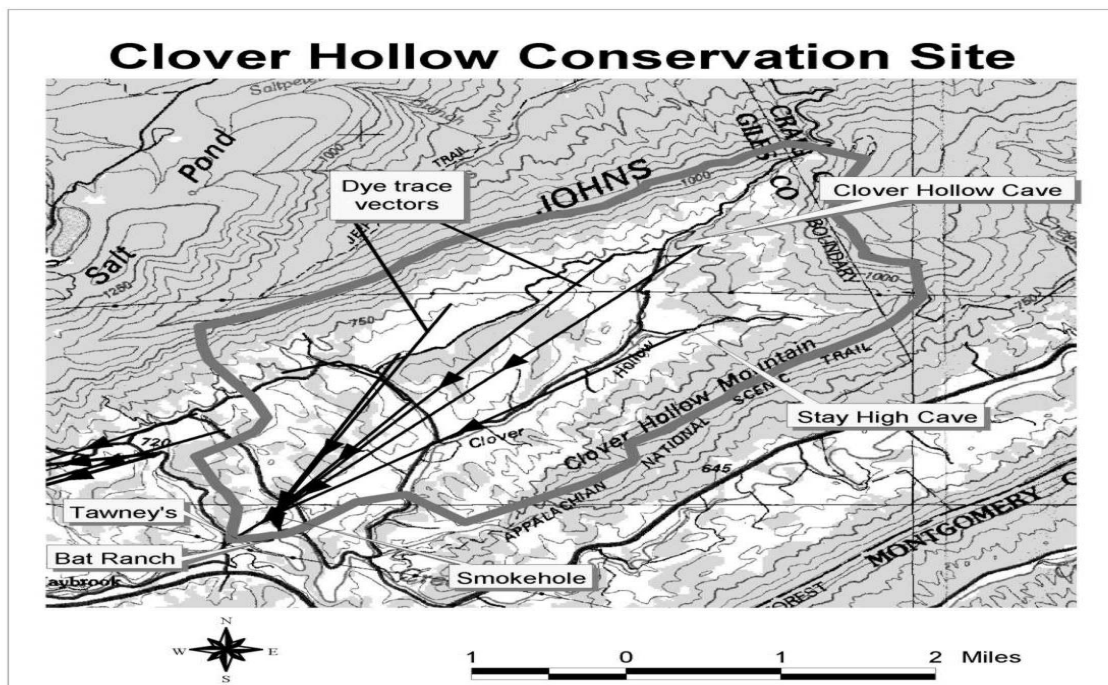
## Purchase of Stay High Cave shows Virginia's commitment to protection of caves and rare cave fauna (Continues) By Wil Orndorff

An agreement was finally reached for the state to purchase 3 lots, a nine-acre lot overlying all but the extreme upstream portions of the cave and two adjacent parcels, totaling about 24 acres. The deal is scheduled to close in early 2005.

Once under state control, use of the cave will be governed by a management plan currently under development. The plan calls for restricting access to the cave via installation of a gate. However, the state plans to partner with the VPI Cave Club for management of the cave, allowing access to continue at existing use levels – one trip a month of six or fewer individuals. Certain, small portions of the cave, off the usual sport trip route, will be flagged off, and each trip will be encouraged to perform a small set of observations centered on cave life and environmental variables. These observations will not only provide data to the Natural Heritage Program, but also will help cavers develop and awareness of biological aspects of the cave that are usually overlooked. The goal of this partnership is to preserve both habitat for cave fauna and access for cavers.

In closing, it should be noted that the knowledge of cave life in Virginia is rather incomplete, despite the substantial efforts over the years of folks like John Holsinger of Old Dominion University, Dave Culver of American University, and VSS Director Dave Hubbard. This is particularly true in the VPI playground of Giles, Bland, and Craig counties, which have received very little attention outside of the Clover Hollow and Skydusky Hollow areas. Over the next few years I'll be working, mostly in my spare time, to coordinate and perform a systematic survey of the biota of this area while continuing to investigate the region's hydrology by dye tracing and spring gauging. Preliminary work suggests a rich and diverse cave fauna and interesting hydrology. Anyone in the club who wants to help in these endeavors is welcome, and should contact me at [dirtyrocks@earthlink.net](mailto:dirtyrocks@earthlink.net) or call me at home (951-8403). Meanwhile, keep your fingers crossed about Stay High. We're almost there.

\* troglobitic – terrestrial, cave obligate  
 \*\* stygobitic – aquatic, cave obligate





## Fron Sign Out

Complied By Samantha Lambert

VPI Cavers and their guest logged in 1976.2 hours from 4/03/04 to 11/14/04

4/11/04	Pighole	Steve Lepera, Steve Wells, Amanda Stiles, Eileen O'Malley	Alway the right kind of trip to take
5/31/04	Tawneys	Sandy Ramsey, David Klorig, Erica Bechtold, Julie Booker, John Coleman, Chris Sharkey	Mudslide Weeeeeee!
6/2/04	Elvis Grotto #3	Philip Balister, John Booker, Mike Cole, Steve Wells	John found he likes to run from car size rocks
7/3/04	Pighole	Paige Baddassrro, John Deghan, Aaron Thomas, Brian Namsley, Jill Pile, Rich Finley	If you need a good hold, just stick your foot in the rock.
7/18/04	IG1	Mike Futrell, Andrea Futrell	Surveyed 109'
7/23/04	Omega	Steve Wells, Sue Setzler, Mike Ficco	Major loose cave
8/7/04	EG3	Philip Balister, Dave Colatoati, Tim Bleech, Otis Farmer	Dave, do not cave in cat piss soaked clothes!
8/16/04	Stayhigh	Wil Orndorff, Zenah Orndorff, Eileen O'Malley, Steve Wells, Steve Lepera	Cave cleaned and conserved
9/11/04	NewCastle Murder Hole	Kevin Rock, John Diegan, Dave Colotosti, Rutger Thomschutz, Peggy Sloss, Chris Greemry, Otis Farmer	Lesson learned: Don't follow John
9/25/04	Buddy Penley's	Geoff Lewis, Kirk Digby, David Klorig, Erica Bechtold, Charles Evangelisti, Chris Lee	I like Newberrys better!
10/4/04	ABC	Steve Lepera, Carrie Blankenship, Eileen O'Malley, Steve Wells	Entrance has collapsed
10/27/04	Links	Kevin Rock, Samantha Lambert, Amanda Duty, Chris Garguilo	Chris grab my butt, now my feet
11/6/04	Starnes	Justin Matons, Brian McCartes, David Calder, Philp Schuchardt, Betsy Kain, Elizabeth Spence, Lisa Droubi	I bet people pay for mud en emas in California

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