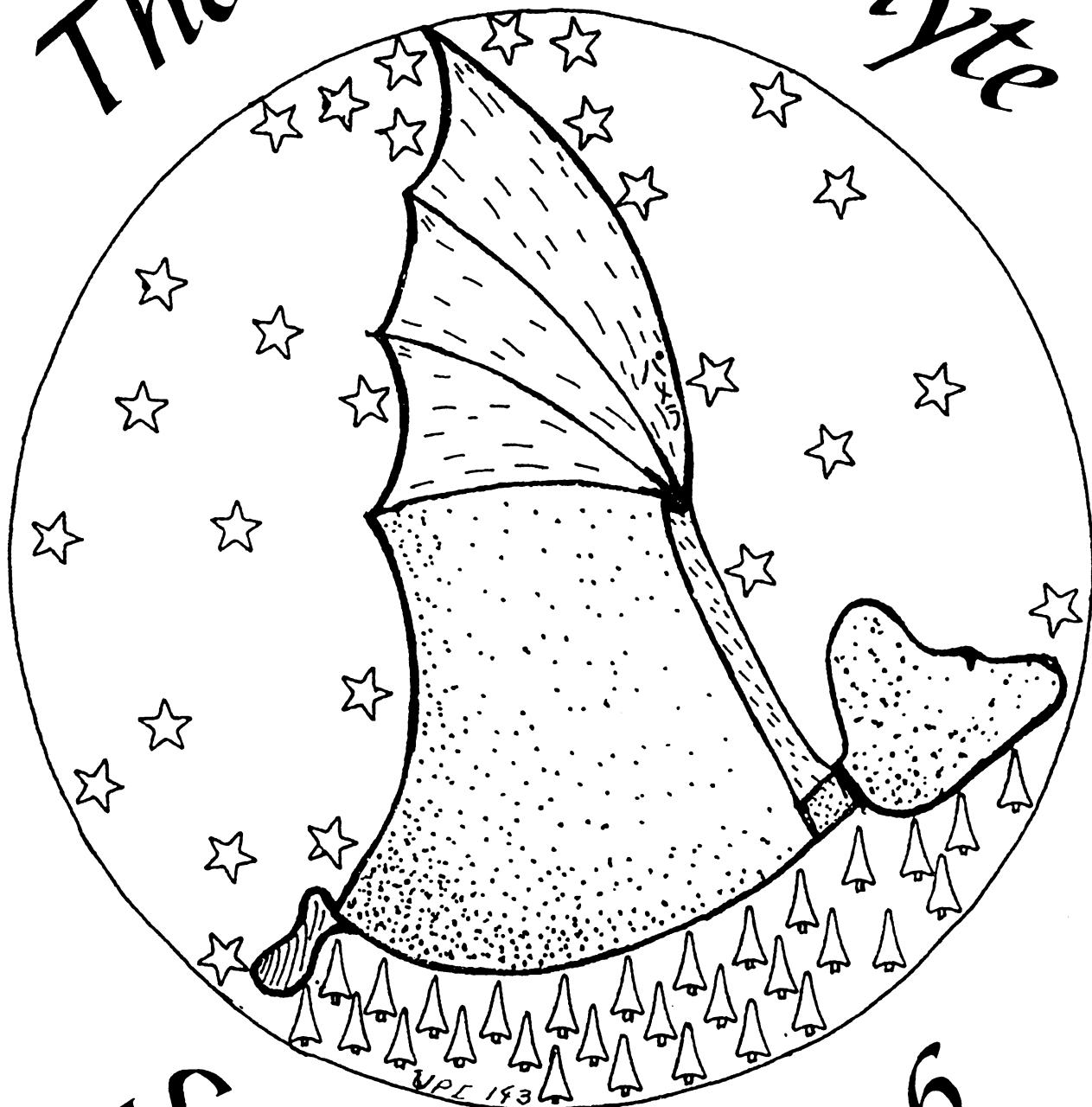


The Tech Troglodyte



Spring & Fall 1996

NPL 193

THE TECH TROGLODYTE

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

Spring/Fall Semesters 1996

President Suzie Warren
Vice President Nathan Sharp
Secretary Todd Pinsonneault
Treasurer Steve LePera

Volume XXXV, No. 1

Editor Eileen O'Malley
with the help of many
Cover Design Pam Mohr
(who else?)



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The Tech Troglodyte is published almost bi-annually by the VPI Cave Club, a student grotto of the NSS. All submissions, subscriptions, inquiries, and comments should be sent to: Trog Editor, VPI Cave Club, P.O. Box 558, Blacksburg, VA 24060-0558.

EDITOR'S NOTE

by the Editor
(who did you expect?)

Welcome to the Trog's first double issue!

You'll find that this issue is no different from any other. The reason is this: though I have produced late issues of the Trog, I have yet to skip a semester completely. As there was very little material to fill the Spring '96 issue, I have combined it with the Fall '96 issue in order to assuage my guilty conscience and keep my record as Editor free of missed issues. Thank you for humoring me.

As usual, the Trog is looking for articles, trip reports, and anything else vaguely cave-related to take up some space. If you know someone who has an aunt whose best friend's husband's elderly dog wants to submit an article, please let me know.

Especially helpful is any drawings that you may have. I can fill this thing will cartoons if need be, but I'd like to see some of you artistically inclined folks submit some drawings of cave stuff.

The Trog Editor will from this issue forward accept only those articles typed into a word processor and saved onto a disk or typed hard copies. In this day and age, in this college town, I'm certain that everyone has access to a computer. I will *lend* a 3½" floppy disk to anyone who asks nicely.

Enough grousing. Hope you enjoy this special double issue.

Picture Your
Artwork Here

JUST ANOTHER SURVEY

by Carl Bern

I want to start this trip report by saying that I enjoy surveying. Much of what is to follow might indicate feelings to the contrary. Surveying is the process of taking measurements which will be used to create a map of the cave. Mapping a cave is a challenge because you are representing a complex three dimensional space on a two dimensional page. Surveying is a challenge because you are trying to achieve scientific accuracy in an environment that is cold, wet, and muddy. The key to surveying is mastery of the art of laughing in situations when you would normally panic, cry, or push another team member into a hole in the floor. Keep this in mind as you read about a recent survey trip to Newcastle Murder Hole I took with Steve & Steve.

The morning of (date) was cold but not yet below freezing when we finished chatting with Mr. Seizer, the landowner for Newcastle Murder Hole. We try to talk to him every time we visit the cave. That is the best way to maintain good landowner relations, and conversations with Mr. Seizer or his son never fail to be interesting. We had to park at the bottom of the hill near the gate. This was because a light rain was falling and that made the steep hill more vulnerable to tire ruts. As a result we absorbed plenty of rain between the time we got out of my truck and when we were safely at the bottom of the entrance pit. Morale improved as we got out of the rain and made our way over the gaping spaces known as the Straddle Pits. On the way to the survey area we took the time to poke around in areas that had already been surveyed. Steve and Steve showed me a part of Murder Hole that is close enough to the surface to have tree roots penetrating down into the passage.

Having done a bit of sight seeing, we made our way to the top of Seven Second Pit, the area we were to survey. Now those of you who have rigged ropes know that often the most appropriate anchor is a BFR (Big F_cking Rock). Well, after much searching for a suitable rig point we had to settle for just a FR. It could have been worse, but it also could have been much better. After tying off to it, the FR did not give us any further trouble which is strange considering how the rest of the trip went. We picked up where the last shot of a previous survey

trip left off and continued down the sometimes narrow, always twisting pit. I remember one point in particular about halfway down the drop where all three of us were standing on a ledge barely large enough for two. Some time while we were on this ledge Lepera had to work on his Maglite.

While he was working on that he dropped one of the pieces and we spent many fun filled minutes looking for it.

When we arrived at the bottom of Seven Second we found a tight lead at floor level with a trickle of water draining from it. I inspected it and noted that it open up some on the other side of a pinch. The bottom of the lead was gravel and having brought a trowel with me I decided I wanted to dig it open more. After checking out the sumps in the next room and seeing where the survey was going to take them next, Steve and Steve agreed to let me dig. Being experienced cave surveyors they both managed to hide the amusement which must have been trying to creep on their faces.

Shovel in hand I wriggled into the crack, the left side of my body sopping up the water mixed in with the gravel. After a minute I wriggled out and had to remove my helmet which had been impeding my progress. Back in the lead again I began scraping gravel out of the tight spot and towards my face. Laying there with wet gravel pressed against my cheek and a small puddle oozing into my clothing I understood why so few digs are undertaken in caves. Before long, I decided that I no longer cared what was on the other side of this lead. I kept digging, however, and saved myself some misery in the short run by never laying the right side of my body down in the water. After clearing enough gravel to slide my shoulders a couple feet further into the crack I was able to see into the room I was trying to access. It was not much bigger than me. I consoled myself by thinking that at least no one else would be obligated to check that lead.

I caught up with Steve and Steve who had made considerable progress on the survey while I had been playing in the slime. They listened with obvious delight as I described my efforts on the dig. The passage we were surveying quickly dead-ended except for one of those climbs that are so rare in other caves but common in Murder Hole. The near vertical slope was covered with sharp projections and yet lacking a good line of hand and footholds. It was coated with that drippy mud that contains equal parts of clay and water. With a bit of effort, Wells made his way up to a ledge-type area just less than twenty feet up. Then he continued up another climb about ten feet further up. Wells then got out his seat webbing to belay Lepera and I up the climb. We could see that a standard thirty foot sling was not going to be long enough. Wells lowered one end of his seat webbing to the bottom for us to tie a second piece onto. He later told us that he was

cautioning himself to be careful and not drop the webbing. This was ironic because that is exactly what he did. Just as one end of the webbing was in our reach, the other end came tumbling down. As a result, Wells had to down-climb the second pitch and we still had a tough time lobbing his webbing back up to him. We did get it up to him though and he belayed us up to the first ledge. Once we were both safely off belay, Lepera and I gave Wells a good-natured ribbing for such a butter-fingered maneuver.

"The primary cause of spinal problems in American males is that they spent their formative years sleeping on piles of Playboys."

- Dave Barry

From there we chimneied straight up into an area where more and more chert projected from the walls. We surveyed as we progressed upward alternating plum bob measurements and ugly high angle shots. We reached the termination of this climbing passage and took the last shots. As we were doing this I heard a noise that I had not heard before, the sound of running water. Being junior member on the survey team and not wanting to seem foolish for not noticing it before, I kept my mouth shut. Then Steve Lepera asked, "Have we been hearing that water the whole time?" We decided that we had not and that made us a bit nervous because it meant that the sumps might be rising and we had to pass the sumps to get back to the bottom of Seven Second Pit. First, however, we had to get back down. The descent went relatively smoothly until the bottom twenty foot climb. Lepera and I made it down with a belay from Wells. Wells then descended using doubled webbing as a handline. The problem arose when the pull-down rig did not pull down. After all three of us had weighted one end of the webbing and then the other we decided that the water knot attaching one sling to the other was stuck pretty good. Wells climbed back up to rig the pull-down in a different place. Unfortunately when he got up to the top he did not find any suitable spot other than the sticky one we had used before. After some deliberation Wells pasted the loop of webbing behind a tiny nubbin of rock that slightly projected upward. If you really want to know how tiny it was you can ask him yourself. All I know is that he descended the climb trying to not "really" put his weight on the handline. Needless to say, we had no trouble pulling the webbing down this time.

Now we were free to confront the problem of the running water noise. We returned to Seven Second Pit to find a small waterfall occupying the same space as our rope. This meant a thorough drenching for anyone who ascended the rope. On the bright side the sumps did not seem to be rising in any sort of threatening manner. Before we could ascend though, we had to check a lead that involved climbing over a deep spot in the nearby sumps. Lepera volunteered. The lead did not go, but by continuing upward he made it to a level in the pit above the waterfall. Wells and I would have followed him to avoid the water, but we saw that the peanut butter consistency mud he climbed through left him in a fairly gross condition. Instead we each took our turns getting soaked on rope. Once we had ascended up to the level Lepera was at only one lead remained to be checked. It was a chimney also covered with the same gross mud, and it had a rock the size of a spare tire wedged in it. I tried climbing it first, but the thick mud combined with end of the trip apathy kept me out. Wells forced his way up into the chimney and dislodged the rock. It landed only a couple feet away from Lepera and I because we really did not have a place to get out of rockfall. The lead did not go. Having accomplished our goal of wrapping up Seven Second Pit we headed for the entrance. Just as we approached the Straddle Pits we felt a cold wind gusting into the cave. It was also possible to hear it moaning up at the top of the entrance pit, letting us know that the weather had turned pretty nasty. It was then that Steve and Steve came up with a wonderful plan. I would exit the cave first and warm up the truck, they would follow a short time later and de-rig the rope from the entrance. I agreed and headed out. When I got to the bottom of the entrance pit I discovered a sub-freezing wind gusting straight down and carrying flakes of snow. For once I was glad that the pit is ninety feet deep because after climbing that distance I had just barely warmed up. I paused to take a breather at the top of the pit when suddenly I realized that my climbing knots were freezing to the main line. As soon as I had them off the rope they stiffened with ice. I made my way out of the trees that protect the top of the sinkhole and was momentarily shocked by what I saw. The whole landscape was white, and the high winds were carrying snowflakes horizontally across it. Somewhere in that whit blur, was my white truck.

I plunged into the storm with high hopes. After a minute I spotted the lights from the Seizer's house and navigated by those. After many more minutes my cave suit was frozen stiff and my extremities were going numb. I told myself that if I did not find the truck soon I would have to head for

the house. Just as I was about to pursue that option I practically crashed into my truck. Wonderful. My fingers were so numb with cold that I had to operate the car key with my palms. Then, as I was about to strip off my muddy suit and hop in the truck I realized that I had a problem. I had a frozen seat harness on outside my suit. After about two seconds of mental debate climbed into the truck, frozen mud and all. I got the engine going and flipped on the headlights so the Steves could find me and then waited to warm up.

The heat in the truck did not seem to be working very well, and I had just warmed up enough to start getting out of my frozen gear when the other two showed up. Before long, we were changed and packed up and the trip was safely over with, or so we thought. As we started the drive home Lepera complained that the heater seemed to be blowing nothing but cold air. Then, as the truck forged along at 35 m.p.h. in temperatures in

the teens, the engine overheated and stalled. Unfortunately this happened while a county sheriff happened to be behind us. I managed to get the truck off the road and he pulled up alongside of us. I don't know what he thought of us. From his point of view we were three muddy faced young men all wearing black leather jackets in a truck with New York tags that had stalled in the middle of nowhere in Craig County. I had a twenty minute conversation with him that he conducted from inside his cruiser while I stood outside in the elements. At the end of it we had a tow truck coming for us and he drove off. With the sheriff gone and the engine cool we dumped our remaining drinking water from the trip into my leaky radiator. Heat was restored to the cab of the truck and we judged the problem temporarily solved. With our fingers crossed we proceeded straight to the closest source of beer and companionship, the Bat Ranch.

NON SEQUITUR BY WILEY



VPI CAVE CLUB
TARP RENTAL RULES
written by Lawrence Britt

The following are the rules that have been adopted for rental of the club tarp.

- * Any full or associate member of the club may petition the club for rental. These requests must be made in person at an official club meeting. A quorum must be present and the request must be approved by a simple majority of the voting members. There is no other way to obtain the tarp except during Christmas and summer breaks when the holder of the tarp can give permission.
- * The rental fee of \$20.00 is payable to the treasurer before the tarp may be picked up. This fee is good for up to three days of use. A fourth day would require another \$20.00 fee.
- * The tarp must be returned within three days of event conclusion.
- * Any loss of, or damage to, the tarp, poles, connectors, stakes, lines, or bags is the immediate responsibility of the renter, even if they rented the tarp for someone else. The renter must pay the full replacement cost of the lost or damaged parts as soon as the bill is available.
- * A signed rental form is required.
- * These rules and fees have been voted on and passed by a simple majority vote. No individual may bend these rules or be granted special favor.

Rental Form

I, the undersigned, am a full or associate member of the VPI Cave Club. I agree to the above terms and conditions for rental of the tarp and agree to be totally responsible for it.

Signature

Date

MISSION: MORGANTOWN

SPECIAL REPORT TO THE DRINKING TECHNIQUES COMMITTEE

reported by Kim Hansen

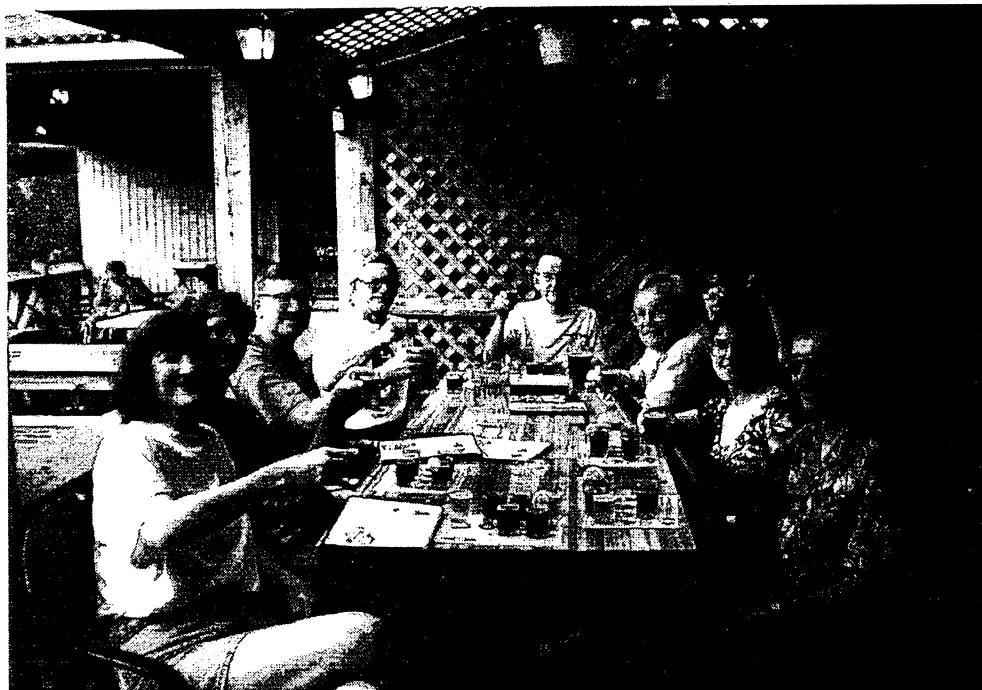


Photo by Woody, the extremely cute server. Courtesy of Kim Hansen.

How far would you go for a beer? Not just any beer, a freshly brewed, hand-crafted beer with a unique flavor, a rich color — a microbrew, the specialty of the house. Sure many microbrews are being bottled these days for regional distribution, but a microbrew sipped at the place of its birth has a special freshness that sets it apart from ordinary beers. No distance is too great to sample quality.

With this tried and true philosophy, a special sub-group of the Drinking Technique's Committee (DTC) expanded what it means to, "go out for a beer." The Naggon, commanded by Doug Perkins, departed Blacksburg VA on Saturday, June 8, 1996 at 10:15 a.m. The crew included Sweetie Pig Davis as nagivator [sic], Glen and Alice Davis, Eileen O'Malley, David Shantz, David Cinsavich and the reporter. How far would we go for a beer? Morgantown, West Virginia to visit the West Virginia Brewing Company Pub and Restaurant (henceforth known as the WVBC).

Plenty of strategic reserves had been laid in for the six hour trip, and most of the crew still tingled from the explosive Bloody Marys that Dave C. provided as pre-launch refreshment. The ship made good time in spite of the 586 potty stops required by Thimble Bladder O'Malley. In the spirit of

tourism that we caught at Tamarack, the greatest town in West Virginia (according to the road sign; it looked like a big ugly tourist trap to us—nice bathrooms though), the Naggon pulled off at Canyon Rim Visitors Center to view the New River Bridge Gorge which this reporter had never seen in person. After a quick run through the exhibit and down the thousand-step stairs to see the bridge (and, of course, a stop at the very clean facilities), we set out once again.



The "Before" Shot, although not entirely sober.
Photo by Doug Perkins.

THE ARRIVAL

We arrived in Morgantown around 4:30 p.m. Doug as mission specialist had secured reservations in advance at the Hotel Morgan, selected for its two-block location from the WVBC. After checking in, we docked the Naggon, leaving Sweetie Pig on board to guard the ship. We expected to take on two additional crew members, Ed Loud and Mark Slusarski, once we reached the pub.

As we entered the WVBC, two wait staff greeted us. The reporter inquired, "Is there anyone waiting for a group to show up?" The wait staff looked confused.

"There is one guy at the bar drinking coffee," one of them offered.

"Not them," we replied.

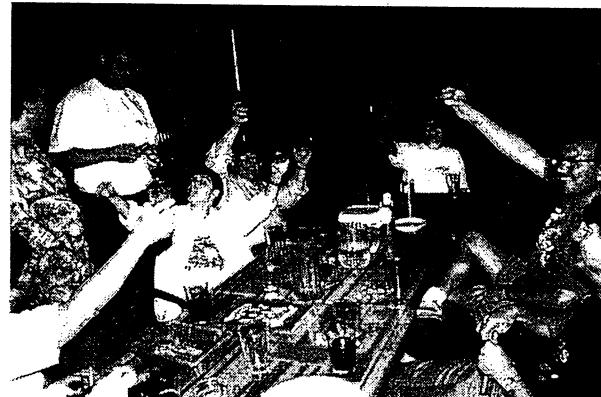
They furrowed their brows. "What about the two guys out back pounding beers?" the other offered. That seemed highly likely, and in fact, Loud and Slusarski had started without us. We arranged a few tables on the deck and met Woody, our extremely cute server.

THE BEER

A key mission objective was, of course, beer. We ordered the sampler, a bargain at \$2.25 for seven 3 oz. glasses, one for each fresh-made beer. WVBC currently maintains four staples on tap: the Cheat Mountain Gold, the Appalachian Ale, the Blackwater Stout, and the Grist Mill Wheat. Three seasonals, a Kolsch, and a Rye Brown Ale in the filtered and unfiltered varieties, rounded out the offerings. Woody presented each sampler individually, describing each beer and lining them up over their logos which were printed on a laminated place-mat that had been set before each of us. Obviously, this place has much pride in their product, and one taste justifies it.

People with a wide and knowledgeable palette for beer would have enjoyed any of the seven offerings. Everyone had a favorite though. Alice particularly enjoyed the Grist Mill Wheat (served with a fresh lemon slice for those who fruit their beer). In this reporter's opinion, the unfiltered Rye Brown Ale surpassed the filtered in every way. Ed and Mark had already killed one pitcher of the Kolsch, a clear, golden brew with a clean taste. They (with others) went back for more (and more) of that. Our host, Doug Shelton, the Manager, even brought us a pitcher of the Pale Ale that was to replace the unfiltered Rye Brown Ale when it ran out.

Wonderful brew. [Some of you may remember Doug as the tall, blond-haired man with glasses and a crooked smile, that runs the booth at OTR. He enjoys late night hot-tubbing and thinks that we are a bunch of raging alcoholics which he means as a compliment.] Well-acquainted with the staples through our exposure at OTR, many of us stuck with the seasonals for the most part and abandoned 3 oz. glasses in favor of pitchers.

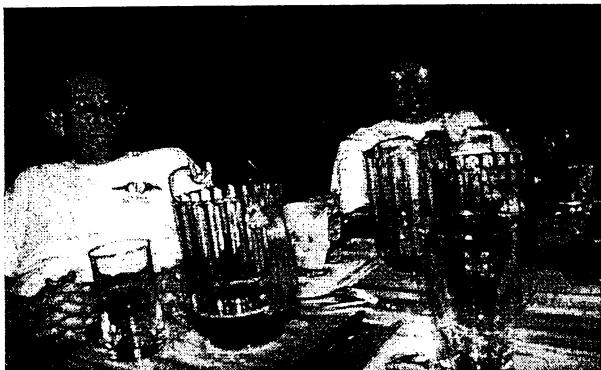


The crew salutes Doug Shelton, Manager of the WVBC.
Photo by Doug Perkins.

THE FUNDAMENTAL OBJECTIVE

Veterans of the past three Old Timer's Reunions may also be acquainted with the fine product made and sold by the WVBC. Earlier in the spring, rumors began to circulate that the WVBC would not be attending the 1996 OTR. Deeply concerned (and slightly demented) the sub-group intended to convince the WVBC to come back. Let's face it; many of us have gotten spoiled by not having to haul ridiculous numbers of cases of beer to Dailey.

Doug the Manager expressed his concern about the \$700 he lost in 1995 (down from a \$1200 loss in 1994). Fees and permits to sell his product at OTR total around \$700 alone. In addition, he can't just haul his own kegs from Morgantown to Dailey; he has to sell his beer to his distributor in Dailey and then buy it all back at the distributor's markup for the weekend. We asked him to tell us what he thought he would need to charge to break even. (The WVBC enjoy themselves so much at OTR that profit is not their goal, although they concede it wouldn't be a bad thing.) He thought that \$10 for a two day mug, or \$5 a day would do it. We assured him we thought that was a more than fair price.

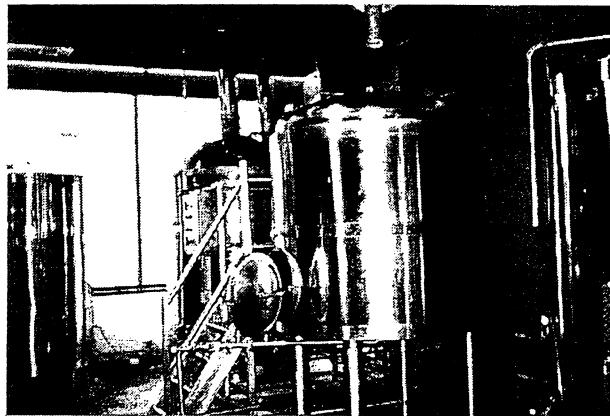


"Hmmm. Which flavor next?". Photo by Doug Perkins.

THE FOOD (YES, FOOD)

OTR and pitchers of beer secured, the crew advanced to the next goal of the evening. While many in the VPI grotto espouse the notion that, "food is death," in fact, this is not always so. With plans to close the WVBC that evening, nourishment seemed like a good idea. In addition to its incredible brewery, the WVBC also has a top notch kitchen. The meal began with several loaves of Beer Bread, made from the left over grains used in the beer brewing process, and served with a honey-butter. Menu items included Cajun Alligator Tail, Shrimp and Chicken Gumbo, Trout Almandine, Pasta Al Fresco, an Ale Marinated Flank Steak that melted in one's mouth, Ratatouille Lasagna, a variety of sandwiches and salads, and beer battered "Brew Fries." Truly delicious.

THE BREWERY TOUR



The Mashers. Photo by Kim Hansen.

For dessert we decided to take the brewery tour, with Doug as our guide. "Fill your beers, and let's go," he told us. We began inside at the mash kettles and boilers where the technical end of things was explained. From there we went back to

the deck for a refill before we continued to the basement where they keep the huge 600 gallon storage tanks and kegged beers.

Rather than kegging, hauling upstairs, and tapping at the bar, the WVBC's bar taps pull from storage tanks via neatly bundled clear rubber tubing that snakes along one wall and up into the basement ceiling. This reporter guesses that a keg rarely blows at the place (and is probably something to see — a goal for the next trip).



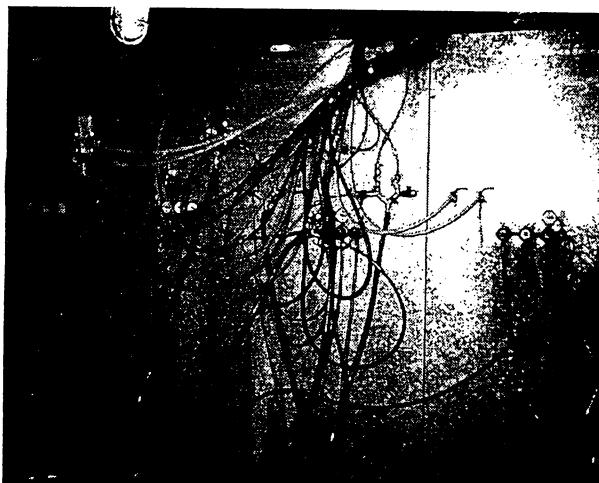
Doug explains the kegging process. In the background is a 600 gal. storage tank of the delightful Unfiltered Rye Brown Ale.
Photo by Kim Hansen.

Some beer gets kegged for distribution throughout West Virginia and into Ohio and Pennsylvania. (Doug said they are aiming for Pittsburgh.) As the tour concluded we agreed: Doug knows a lot about beer, and made an excellent tour guide.

Chilled from the beer coolers, we left the basement. Outside we viewed the new WVBC Ford van, complete with full color logos of their staple brews (a highlight attraction at OTR).



Happy among the kegs. The bundle of tubes overhead connect the storage tanks to the taps upstairs.
Photo by Kim Hansen.



The bloodlines from boilers to storage tanks to bar taps.
Photo by Kim Hansen.

After the brewery tour there was but one remaining objective — inebriation. We drank beer, beer, and more beer. No one knows exactly how many pitchers we drank. Rough estimates suggest that at least one-third of the pitchers we drank never made it onto our tab. Our tab also had several pints on it that we believe to be discount pitchers as no one was silly enough to order only one pint at a time.

Doug the Manager gave up being the sober type (he had a hangover from the night before), and began to pound pitchers with us. He's a fun guy with a dry sense of humor, and before the evening was over he had Dave C. and the reporter half talked into going to the Feline Club, a strip joint he knew of. Eileen got the late night munchies, so Doug the Manager escorted into the closed kitchen where she selected a dessert. (A yummy moist banana cake with cream cheese frosting that the reporter begged a bite of.) Before leaving we bought several half-gallon "growler" jugs for friends in Blacksburg, mostly unfiltered Rye Brown Ale, of course. (The crew agreed in hindsight that we bought too few, and there were several critical moments on the trip home where we nearly deserted our generous intentions and drank the beer ourselves. Bribes are being accepted now for those wishing to have growlers brought to them after the upcoming June '97 trip.)

After midnight, one by one, the crew began to slip out and up the street to the hotel which, fortunately, had huge red neon letters spelling out most of the name on the roof. (By night it is the Hotel Mo gan.) The reporter, Dave C., Dave S., and



Thimble Bladder O'Malley in a contemplative stupor.
Photo by Doug Perkins.

Eileen stayed longest, leaving around 12:40 a.m. (The bar closes at 1:00 a.m.)

THE NEXT DAY

We felt amazingly good on Sunday. As one of the Davis's put it, "I feel like I've gotten away with something." Before we checked out of the hotel, which had coffee and doughnuts in the lobby, Glen attempted to figure out everyone's portion of the total WVBC bill which he had settled for the group the night before with a credit card. The numbers didn't come out right, so feeling hungry, we went for breakfast.

Ed Loud, who met us for a cholesterol buffet at the Ponderosa, said the good feeling wouldn't last through breakfast. He didn't lie, although the general consensus remains that we all should have felt much much worse. Once again, Glen attempted to portion the tab, and this time he had better success. (A calculator has been put on the equipment list for next year's trip.) Overall, our tee-shirt and food total for the group (\$180) outweighed our beer total (\$145). Had we been charged for all of the pitchers we actually drank, our alcohol bill would have far exceeded food and clothes. We made a brief stop at Ed's to meet Rhubarb, his polite and pretty calico cat. He bribed us to stay for a beer (a tough sell with this crowd), but after one round, we hit the road.

Ed had started something though. Strategic reserves running dangerously low, we sought beer at every potty stop. West Virginia has weird laws. Some counties locked the beer coolers outright. Others opened only at 1:00 p.m. We scored at a Kroger where we bought lunch junk, and we ate and partied all the way home.

The End

Denouement: When Dave Cinsavich and the reporter arrived at OTR '96, Friday afternoon, word quickly reached them that Doug Shelton was telling everyone who asked that he came back to OTR with his excellent beer only because VPI had made the June trip to Morgantown. It was good to see Doug again and even better to taste the wonderful beers his business makes. We had sent him and his staff a thank you note in July, with a photo and a message, "We'll be back." Doug told us at OTR that several wait staff quit after seeing the note. (We think he was joking.) Apparently many of them were concerned about us that night. The bartender asked Doug if she could cut us off. Doug told her we were walking to a hotel and to keep the beer coming.

He even had a story of his own about that night. Turns out he was already in the dog house with his wife and mother of his son and daughter, because of a late night party he attended the night before. He had promised to be home early to make up for it, but our company proved too much temptation, and he was still at the WVBC when we left. Having forgotten his front door key, and unwilling to ring the bell and wake his wife to let him in, he walked around back and was trying to quietly sneak in the back sliding door. Quietly is to drunks what honestly is to politicians. Suddenly, the glass door that partially supported Doug as he tried to slip in

was thrown wide open, and he landed face first into the bedroom slippers of his very mad wife. We put him in the dog house for days. He promised at this year's OTR to not get in trouble the first Friday in June so that he could play with us again in '97 on the first Saturday in June, the next scheduled Morgantown trip.)



The last of the crew heads for the hotel with bundles of tee-shirts and I
Photo by Kim Hansen.

ANNOUNCING THE CAVE CLUB WEB PAGE!

submitted by John Deighan (Webmaster)

Yes, the VPI Cave Club now has a home page on the World Wide Web! The URL is <http://198.82.204.78/CaveClub/CaveClub.html>. This is just a temporary URL. We'll let you know when it's finalized!

The screenshot shows a vintage web browser window titled "Netscape: The VPI Cave Club Home Page". The URL in the address bar is <http://198.82.204.78/CaveClub/CaveClub.html>. The main content area displays the following text:

Welcome to The VPI Cave Club
A Student Grotto of the National Speleological Society

The VPI Caving Club

Our club's purpose is to promote interest in, and to advance the science of speleology, to promote conservation of caves and safety in their exploration, and to encourage fellowship among those interested in caving. We meet every Friday night in Smyth 146 at 7:30 pm - or officially 7:00, but we run on caver time. The parts of the meeting that you will be most interested in are the trip plans, and the announcement of the "speleo-seminar" or post meeting party we hold. You will find lots of friendly people willing to lead trips at both the meeting and the party. Many of the people are affectionately called "old farts", or people who were in the club in their school years and still actively work with our club. So ask around! You will find lots of interesting people and fun stories.

Membership

There are three types of members: prospective members, full members, and associate members. When you first start caving with us, you are considered a prospective member. In order to become a full member, you must be a student, faculty, or staff member at Virginia Tech, and meet certain Requirements for Membership. An associate member is someone who was previously a full member who is no longer a student, staff, or faculty member at Virginia Tech. Full membership means we feel you are safe to lead trips and gives you the right to loan-out club gear for your trips. We will also give you a "Tech" Bi-monthly New Member Issue" when you pay dues (\$7.50/semester or \$15/year), which contains a wealth of useful information. Ask anyone in the club about full membership.

Caving Trips

Just a few helpful hints for caving with us. The club will provide you with a helmet and lamp, but be sure to let the trip leader know if you need to borrow this gear. You will need to bring a small quantity of water and food for underground (caving can be hard work!) and something to carry this in. Two sets of clothing are a must, one for the cave and one for the trip back to Blacksburg. No one likes a muddy car seat. Caves are 54°F year round, but can seem very cold if you end up wet and sitting around, so dress warm and in layers. Otherwise, you might experience hypothermia. Don't bring anything into the cave that you would mind getting destroyed, this includes jewelry. A large plastic bag is also recommended, any member will explain to you why.

There are certain rules and techniques you should be aware of when caving. These are for your safety, and those caving with you. Also, every cave trip should be signed out. A sign-out sheet is posted at a local caver's house.

KARST PROPERTIES, INC.

by Sarah Husband

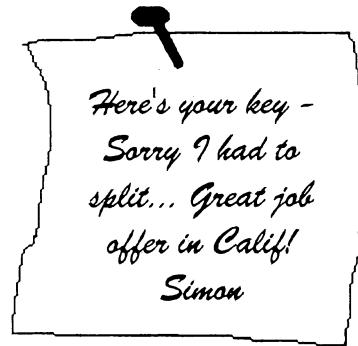
I could barely wait through the two hour car drive from the airport to see my new place. I always have less patience when I'm driving...especially with those ridiculous American speed limits I can barely translate to kilometers. I drove feverishly to my Realtor as I remembered first seeing the ad in the paper for my lovely new place:

"Secluded English-Style home
Nestled
in cozy remote valley. Excellent
Deal!"

Call Karst Properties, Inc."

Exactly what I needed. Complete isolation from the rest of the world so I could finish my dissertation on the acclimation of cats to exotic foods in ancient Egypt. Karst...what a strange word...it must be some American idiom, and I sure hope it means peaceful! Now arriving at the Realtor, I pry myself stiffly out of my trusty little Volvo station wagon....only to find that MY REALTOR HAS RUN OFF TO CALIFORNIA!!?

So this is it? Anyone could have taken my key! What an awful Realtor....



I climbed back into the car, and let my beautiful orange cat Hector comfort me.

"Oh Well Hector, it's time we take a look at our new place!"

The house looked just like it did in the picture, L shaped, two magnificent brick stories...but not a blade of grass on the whole front lawn...how odd! I'll definitely have to plant a classic English garden. Hector followed me about as I unload the car. It's a nice place...hardwood floors, brass fixtures, and a real porcelain sink and bathtub...strange that it went for so little...must be some local ghost stories scaring customers off-but luckily I don't believe in ghosts.

After I'd done a sufficient amount of unpacking, it was time for dinner. Hmm....Ma & Ed's diner sounds indigestible...Country Cookin'; wow, sounds like authentic American-style food! They really gave me the royal treatment at Country Cookin': interesting meat called chitlins, 'greens', and cornbread...all very tasty! The waitress Jo-leen was very kind and explained the name of the diner across the way:

"Why is it not Ma and Pa's diner, as one would expect?"

"Well, used to be, till Ma took up with one uh thuh young cooks Ed, now it's Ma n' Ed's."

"Hmm...how interesting." She seemed well informed about the town, so I tried another question.

"Do you happen to know Jo-leen, why I have no grass or plants of any sort on my lawn?"

"Well it's...well I certainly wouldn't know Mr. Berkshire!"

Hm...no luck there..But I plan on buying some grass seed at the plant shop soon.

"Hello Hector..did you miss me?" Hector eyed me reproachfully.

"Aw..you'll become accustomed to the place in a few days...I promise"

And he did. I had been reluctant to let him outdoors though, especially with that hole in the front yard which I've been meaning to fill with dirt. Well, I'll just cover it with a board for now.

"Now you can go outside all you want Hector. I've boarded up the awful little hole and I'm off to the plant store right now to get some dirt to fill it!"

The plant store proved to be moist and moldy smelling...as all plant stores are. I buy some grass seed and two ten-pound bags of topsoil. I also select various bulbs for the garden.

"I bought you some kitty food Hector. They didn't have your favorite kind at the grocery mart, but I think you'll find this pate interesting!"

What a quaint little grocery mart they have. Velvet paintings of Elvis, whole ham hocks on display, and pictures of hunting men and their game on the wall next to the prize deer head.

"Hector, where are you?" I was becoming exasperated with Hector because he usually comes so quickly for dinner.

"You must still be outside, you curious little devil." I probe around the front yard, but Hector is nowhere to be found! And worse yet, the board which covered the hole in the yard was misplaced! I reached my arm down the hole, trying desperately to grab Hector, but I couldn't touch the bottom. I went back inside to try and find a flashlight in my bunch of boxes.

I took the tiny flashlight to the hole and shone it into the hole. For some reason I could not see the bottom. Reaching my hand down farther, I accidentally dropped the flashlight did not hear a clunk or thud. Worried, I decided to call the fire department...this was no one man job. Lacking a phone book I decided to drive quickly to the small fire department.

"Howdy, what can I do fer ya tonight?" the man said lazily

"My cat! My Hector fell down a hole in the front yard and he, I can't hear him and my flashlight, dropped and my poor Hector!"

"Um, calm down Sir-you say your cat fell down a hole in your front yard?"

"YES!"

"Well, where do you live?"

"The old brick house on Cow Kamp Corner Lane"

"Uh...Oh!"

"What?"

"Well, see, I prolly shudn't say nuthin'; but uh, yer livin on toppa thuh deepest hole this side uh Bear Mountain!"

"WHAT?!"

"Yap, uh, you sittin' right on toppa a cave..."

"And WHY did no one mention this before?"

"Well, uh, truthfully Sir, there ain't much money in this here town, and the Realtor guy, Simon, he said if we kept our mouths shut, he'd make sure we didn't go hungry, if ya know what I mean."

"I was sold inferior property and everyone just stood by! My Hector, my Hector has fallen down this...hole, this cave of sorts."

"Yup, sounds to me like we're just gonna have to call VPI."

"VPI? Who, what is that?"

"They're the cavin people from the College of Virginia Tech...they'll get yer can fer ya, if'n he's not dead"

"DEAD!! Oh, no!"

"Oh, thank the lord you're finally here!" I shouted with exasperation as they drove up.

They all piled out of their cars with muddy clothes and funny jumpsuits. They carried lots of metal equipment and ropes.

"It looks like you don't have any trees to tie in to...we were wondering if we could look in your house for a sturdy rig point," one of them, she seemed like the leader, mumbled to me.

"Rig point? Um...sure, come right in" I said with reluctance, noting how awfully muddy they were. Good thing I don't have carpets.

"Now, we've taken a look at your hole, and even though it's small we're going to run a rope down it, because it might widen out down further, and it looks pretty vertical," she said

"Well, whatever you must do...but you aren't going in there without me."

"What? I mean, that would be very unsafe for you" one of the boys said nervously.

I didn't know why they didn't want me to go in my own cave...it could be they want to hide some secret from me. I can't let them go down there and wait like some dunce while my poor Hector stumbles about in the dark. They started to feed the rope down the hole.

"Now we believe there's another entrance to this cave...but the landowner is known to shoot at anyone who tries to go near it. We wanted to know if you knew this guy, and if you could talk to him"

"Heavens no! I'm not going anywhere where someone tries to shoot at me!" What were they thinking, I just moved in here! "And don't think of letting anyone down there until you've suited me up to go as well!"

"I think that's what you'd best do if you want to cave in this county again. This is this man's property, and this man's cave." The fire chief agreed with me.

"Well...we'll give you a quick lesson and you might be able to go, if the people who go down first determine that it's safe."

"You'd best do so!" Hmpf! Them not letting me into my own cave to see my own Hector.

"Hector!" I yelled into the hole "Daddy's coming to get you! And I've got your favorite sweater and some pâté, mmmmm mmm!"

They ended up tying a rope to the banister at the top of my staircase, and then proceeded to tie a bunch of this rope stuff around my waist, clipping some metal contraptions onto me. This would be my practice rappel. Two of them who were already ready helped me, while the others busily carried rope and tied various knots.

"Whoa...ha ha!" I laughed as I rappelled down to the first floor. It took my mind off of Hector momentarily...unfortunately not long enough. I rappelled 3 or 4 times, and got to be quite good at it. I could go fast, slow, or stop completely. They told me to go as slow as I could in this cave. I nodded.

Finally everyone was ready to go. People started to disappear into the hole. Then it came to be my turn. They told me to yell "falling" if I was going so fast I could stop myself. They checked and rechecked my equipment and watched me put the rope through the rack. They made sure I had "ascenders", a "ropewalker", and "knots", lots of equipment! They also put an ascender on my "seat" and showed me how to clip it on the rope just in case I got in trouble. I felt quite secure with all of these safety measures they were taking for me. I looked quite silly actually...my big gardening boots, overalls and some wool shirts...quite like a lumberjack I'm sure!

I have to admit the seat was not particularly comfortable, and occasionally I pushed my feet against the sides of the close walls to relieve some of the pressure. The walls of this hole bellied out and then would get narrow again. Some parts I had to scoot on my bottom, because it was more horizontal. I made sure not to sit on the rope, as they had told me not to.

"What a lot of work!" I shouted at the end of my rappel. There was a pile of rope at the end which I attempted to avoid.

They told me to do what I could to keep warm, because it was a little chilly in there. I ended up doing some of my moves from my Richard Simmons video...they all looked at me strangely...but they looked even stranger, wearing garbage bags!

I never needed a garbage bag...the aerobics did me well. They'll just have to learn.

"Could my Hector have survived that long drop?" I asked nervously

"Well, he might have taken a fall or two, but not for a great distance. Some of those places a cat could walk down that we couldn't, because of their

tiny feet and their balance. Since he's not right around the pit he must have survived the fall...or lived long enough to crawl elsewhere," one of the girls conjectured.

I hoped it was the first explanation. I brought out my pâté and opened the package.

"Hector....Daddy's here! I've come with your dinner!" I called into the darkness. I heard no sign of Hector. When we all finished rappelling we started toward one of the exits of the room...it seemed likely enough that Hector would go that way. We all looked for paw prints in the mud. I was glad I they gave me an electric light, because these people with carbide seemed to continually cajole, praise, or curse their lights to get them to work.

"Paw prints!" someone yelled after we'd searched for a while.

"Oh Hector!"

They followed a small path by a stream to narrow for us to walk, so we had to walk through the stream. This was quite unpleasant. My feet got so wet and cold! After a while we saw a bluish light...there was the strange smell of rotting plants. This was quite strange...we came upon an old man...surrounded by a table and some bluish lights...he looked quite startled when we arrived.

"Didn't I tell you youngin's not to come near my cave?"

"We've come for my cat, have you seen him?"

"Shore...he's at my house this very moment. Found the poor thing wandrin' around all wet and cold."

"What is it that you're doing here?" I asked

"Experiments! I'm a famous scientist!" he yelled accusingly, as if we should have known.

He had various hangers covered in tinfoil and just a bunch of junk made into pretend machines he also had piles of decomposing leaves and grass (my grass?)...he seemed crazy...like a schizophrenic you see on the street.

"Leave me alone...hafta finish these projects...these projects need to get done...no one else is going to do em for me ya know!"

"Certainly sir. But could you show us where to find the cat?"

"Cat, what cat! Git, ya hear! Git!"

He proceeded to shoo us out this hole which led to a yard.

"But sir...why do...where are you getting this grass...why?"

"It's poison! It'd kill the whole town if I let it grow. Do you know that? The whole town would just die! Bad luck grass...saved the whole town I did!"

We walked toward a the light of his house...through crumbly, grassless dirt again.

There I found my beautiful Hector meowing plaintively beside a rusty wheelbarrow...dressed in some newspapers taped together and with tinfoil covering his ears. Poor Hector! I immediately took it all off, and gently held him in my arms. He looked like he had a hurt paw.

"Poor baby! You know Hector, we're going to cover that hole for good...a big metal gate...and we'll build a fence too...a big iron fence that nobody could climb over."

The fire Marshall decided that the old man should go to a mental hospital...for his bad effects on the "environment"...which relieved me to no end. The VPI cavers offered to study the cave to determine whether my house was in any danger of falling into a sinkhole, in return for the only other key to the gate over the cave. I wasn't particularly concerned about my house falling down into the ground...it had been there for 87 years, and I hoped it would be there for another 87.

THANKS!

The VPI Cave Club would like to thank Glen Davis and Jackie Hoell for their tremendous contribution to the club over the years.

Glen donated his time and his bright orange van to run the Club Store for over ten years. He attended more Friday night meetings with van in tow (not literally!) than we can count.

Jackie handled the massive paperwork of the club files, which over time took over a big chunk of her home. The files lived with her for over ten years.

MODIFICATIONS TO THE GIBBS ASCENDER

by Lester V. Good

When the Gibbs ascender was introduced, it was a major advance in climbing technology. Over the years, a number of improvements including a quick release pin and a spring attachment made the Gibbs more versatile and easier to operate. Eventually the Gibbs became an outstanding ascending device. Unfortunately, the manufacturer continued to make changes to the Gibbs until it was cumbersome to attach and limited in its scope. With a few modifications the Gibbs can be restored to a superior climbing attachment.

SPRING LOADED GIBBS

The new spring loaded Gibbs requires that the quick release pin be inserted through the spring. This has several drawbacks: the spring can become packed with mud; the spring bends making it difficult to insert a pin; the user loses the option of disengaging the spring; and an oversized pin is required. Rather than even purchase this type of spring loaded Gibbs, it is better to buy a regular Gibbs to modify.

With a few tools, a spring loaded Gibbs can be created. (See Figure 1.) First, drill and tap a hole in the side of the cam and attach a $3/16"$ spring. Next drill and tap a hole in the shell $3/8"$ from the bottom edge, insert a $1/8"$ machine thread screw with a $3/8"$ head. The screw should be flush with the inside of the shell and filed until smooth. There should be no sharp edges which can come in contact with the rope. The screw head should be $3/16"$ away from the shell to allow the split ring to fit behind it. This arrangement allows the user to apply the spring only when necessary and remove it when the additional drag is undesirable.

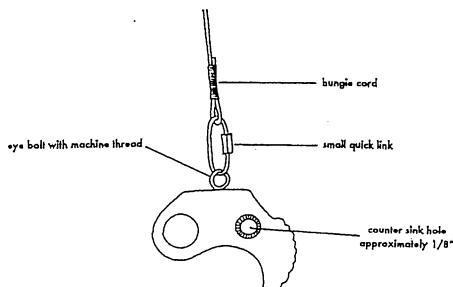


Figure 1

ASSEMBLY

Even on the simplest Gibbs, it is difficult to remove the pin and get the cam out of the way for attachment to the rope or field cleaning. In addition, the cable can become twisted over time and

take an obstinate set to it. If the Gibbs is part of a sewn climbing system, this type of attachment forces the pin to be inserted on one side which may cause it to rub a shin or other vulnerable body part.

Remove the cord and cable by drilling out the rivets as necessary. By attaching a piece of $1/8"$ cord from the cam to the pin and then to the shell, it is possible to get the cam $4"$ to $5"$ away from the shell. (See Figure 1.) This makes it far easier to open the Gibbs for scraping out mud and debris. If the Gibbs is part of a climbing system rather than a safety, the pin should be reattached so that it is oriented away from the body. Be certain that all of the cord attachments are on one side of the Gibbs with no crossover which could entangle the rope. This has the added benefit of making it easy to see which side the pin should be inserted.

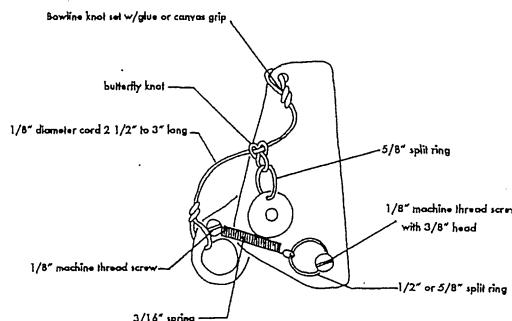


Figure 2

FINER TOUCHES

Even on a newly improved Gibbs, aligning the pin with the shell and cam can be frustrating in poor light or when hanging in an awkward position. A substantial improvement can be made by using a standard counter sink tool to counter sink the cam pin hole by approximately $1/8"$. This will act as a guide for the quick release pin and makes pin placement much easier.

There are many acceptable ways to attach a bungee to a cam for a rope walker climbing system. To minimize the amount of bottom tension needed to self-start, attach the bungee cord to the cam as shown in Figure 2. Drill a hole in the top of the cam, tap the hole and screw in an eye bolt. Attach the bungee with a small quick link.

For more information on attaching your Gibbs to webbing for a rope walker system, see "Notes on a Really Fast SRT System..." by Paul Kirchman (in a previous *Trop* which the editor failed to locate).

QUOTABLE QUOTES

by Various Folks

PK to PS: "All I could taste was the alcohol and the ginseng. I couldn't taste any of the dead things."

EOM to AD: "Bob is just too damn big for his underwear."

SK to group: "Wanna hear something funny? I'm five months pregnant, only it's not a baby, it's a tumor."

at Mexpeleo:

GE to S&S: "Why don't you bring a virgin next year to appease the Rain Gods?"

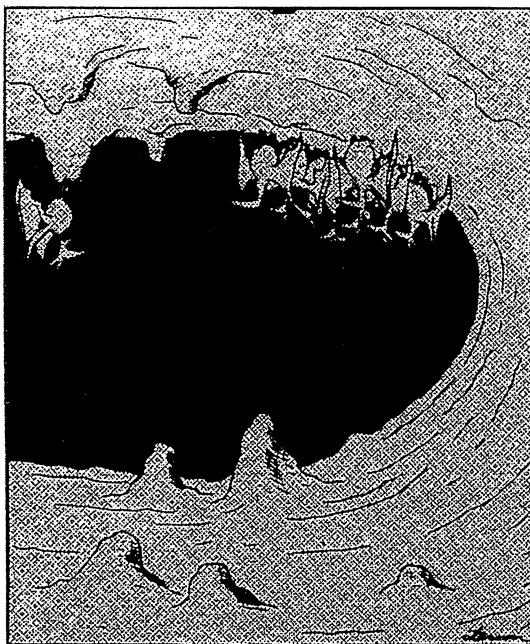
S&S in unison: "Virgins don't keep long with us."

SK to EOM: "Bring him along; he can go vertical with us."

EOM to SK: "Actually, I'm hoping to go horizontal."

AD to GD: "This hand will never be the same after all that screwing."

LB to SK: "I've been burned by underwear before."



"And, during my term, I'm looking forward to a kinder, gentler cave, with a thousand points of darkness showing us the way."

TECH TROGLODYTE ARTICLE

by Chris Rourke

It was 7:30 am when the sound of my alarm jerked me into consciousness. My first thought about the upcoming day: my membership test. My second though: uh-oh, gotta go to class first, better get up. My third thought: hmm, September 18. Isn't that more than just test day? Oh yeah, I nearly forgot.... it's also my birthday. Well, I've had plenty of birthdays, so there's not much mystery left in them. On the other hand, few trainees have seen first-hand the secret rites of the membership test. The night before, I put some effort into studying for it, relearning a few knots and repairing the broken striker on my lamp. I think I've learned most of the important stuff in the Trainee Trog. Nothing left to do now but get through the easy part of the day.

After I got back from class, I dug up my sign-off sheets. For a few panicked minutes I thought I'd lost them both. This would be bad. Very bad. But, with enough searching, you can find almost anything in my room. (How 'bout some common sense? -Ed.) The sheets finally show up. Hmm, only 33 hours of caving signed off. The last trip I got recorded was way back in October. So I probably had my 40 hours underground after two months of caving. It's the other requirements that have kept me a trainee since then. If I'd know better last fall, I would have jumped at any chance to get cable ladder belay or changeover signed off.

John Deighan took the test along with me. I had thought he planned to remain the ultimate trainee for all eternity (So far the record is 14 years. -Ed.), but it seems he finally stopped losing his sign off sheets and is ready to join the elite ranks of membership. He picked me up at 5:00, and we set off to complete the most important requirement of the membership test: we buy beer. Traditionally, beer is used to simulate the disorientation and confusion of hypothermia. If a prospective member doesn't drink, they shouldn't worry; they can stay sober. It's far more important that the members attending the test get to simulate hypothermia.

James was kind enough to let us hold the test at his house. Since he lives at the Sign-Out apartments, there was a ready supply of members to drop by and hassle us. We arrived at 5:30. That's a bit early, but no one wants to stay up to 4:00 am on a Wednesday night. We both began the written test right away. I had expected a few pages of multiple choice questions. I was wrong. Many long pages, mostly with free answer or fill in the blank. It takes me about 3 hours to finish; longer times are not uncommon. The answers were not all obvious.

A lot of the required information I had known once and forgotten. Some of it I had never heard of. If I shared specifics it would ruin the fun of it all for future testees, but I will give a couple of hints. First, make sure you drain the Trog of every usable drop of info. It's not just filler; all of it is useful. Second, go to Banquet. It's a good way to learn the legends and lore of the club. I missed it last year and it probably cost me 15 points or so. Also, value any gift of knowledge a member should see fit to bestow upon you. If someone happens to mention that the rated strength of PMI is 6800 lbs, they're probably not just saying it to show off their powers of memorization. They're giving you a useful bit of information, which will be handy to know sometime down the road.

Taking the written test was just the beginning. The real fun is when it gets graded. I turned the test over to Nathan, and the carnage began. I had expected Nathan, as VP, to be hard on me. But I thought I could count on sympathy and support from the other members, especially those who were in my shoes a short time ago. Ha ha ha! It seems that they still have the trauma of their test still fresh in their minds, and want to ensure that you won't get off any easier than they did. "I got that one wrong, so you should too." Actually, the grading process gives you a chance to explain and elaborate on your answers. When it's all over, I've learned a great deal. For example, now I know that it is not considered an acceptable caving practice to lob carbide bombs into pits to wake members who have fallen asleep. Not even little carbide bombs. Also, having a trainee go first through a long wet crawl to sop up all the water so that you stay dry is not the proper method of staying warm. (Says who? -Ed.) Oh well, live and learn. The minuses added up, and for a moment, I thought I might fail the written. Then I realized there was a total of nearly 200 points.... not 100 as I had thought. Phew.

Next, the lamp test. I've always wondered why the lamp test took others so long. 11 minutes to reassemble and light a carbide lamp seems unreasonable. Even hypothermic I figured I could manage it in 6. Ha. Wrong again. I won't reveal many of the great joys of the test, except that they are out to get you. Or at least they were out to get me. Which helps explain why it took me over 20 minutes to get my lamp going. I plan to make myself feel better for this poor performance by taking revenge against the poor trainee I see taking the lamp test. Only if they take over half an hour will I be satisfied. While I was filling my base, I spilled a few carbide rocks into a plastic bowl. Then, after I

test was complete, I spilled some water into the same bowl. I think. "Uh-oh. Glad there isn't any open flame around." Within a few seconds lighters shoot forward, and the bowl is ablaze. Silly me, I had worried about the heat of the water-carbide reaction melting the plastic. I should have foreseen that in a room full of cavers, someone would have to throw fire into the equation. Luckily the flames are put out before someone can think to throw in some of the firecrackers lying around.

The only thing left for me is tying the seat to the Vice President's satisfaction. I remember how the intricacies of the square knot had once given me no end of trouble, but no longer. But I still triple checked everything. Normally I'd also have to

demonstrate the 14 or so require knots, but I'd gotten that signed off next semester. (Shot through time, did you? -Ed.) So really, there's nothing left for me to do except relax. I sit back and watch stupid carbide tricks. Well, actually they were quite cool. If you have never thought to put carbide in a half empty beer can and the light the foam that rises up, you are really missing something. Personally, I found this just as entertaining as a lava lamp. But then again, I was feeling a bit hypothermic.

The party ends, the test is over, I've passed. Returning home, I'm glad it's finally behind me. Tomorrow I'll do my belay test, and then the only thing between me and endorsement for membership will be that pesky Trog article.



*"Presto! If Bobby Zokaites doesn't heal
soon I'll turn him into a frog!"*

GROTTO GRAPEVINE

by A.I. Cartwright and Associates

This grapevine opens with a bit of sad news. This summer Pam Mohr's mother passed away after many months spent in the hospital. Family and friends are saddened but relieved that the suffering has ended. Dick Burns, a long-time caver known to VPI for many years, also passed away this summer in a retirement home.

Don Davison, mentioned in a previous *Trog* as being missing, is now officially listed as deceased when he failed to return from his climbing expedition and rescue efforts were halted.

Now let's look to beginnings. The Saturday after Old Timer's, Erica Frieburger and Matt Seigler got hitched in a lovely ceremony at Virginia Tech's Chapel. The bride and groom hosted the reception at the Red Lion Inn, complete with caricature frisbees and a declaration from the bride's father that, "Cavers rescue Spelunkers." Matt and Erica had the foresight to host their reception at a motel so "tired" guests had only to maneuver themselves to their rooms before passing out.

Paul Kirchman and Dabney Hammer married in March in the Charlottesville home where Dabney grew up. The bride was momentarily held hostage by the groom with the aide of the cake-cutting knife, but he soon realized that the advancing crowd *really* wanted a taste of the ice cream. The afternoon was followed up with bubble-blowing in the hall while the kids (read: Paul) tried to catch them on their tongues.



The happy couple (of what?).

1996 Float Trip introduced "The Pearisburg Three" as Mike Newsome and two fellow New Jersey cavers were escorted to the Pearisburg Police Station. Apparently the three were less than enthusiastic at officer requests that they remain clothed.

Float Trip regular Father Nature, a.k.a. Ed Day, was recently busted for marijuana possession. No reports on his fate as yet.

This year's Picnic was, not surprisingly, wet for a day. The rain did clear up for Saturday evening so people could come out from under their tarps.

Pete Sauvigne delighted some and repelled others with his Chinese lizard wine. The nasty taste was only made up for by the sight of dead lizards and snakes floating towards you as you tipped the jug to your lips. (The remains of this concoction made its way to OTR where it circulated, leaving hands tainted for hours by the stench.)

What to do with those pesky left-over 2 liter bottles of soda at Picnic? Well, wonder no more. Some clever folks discovered that plastic bottles full of carbonation, if kicked and tossed against the rocks long enough, would explode in a spray of stickiness onto unfortunate viewers. The soda wars were an interesting sight.

Speaking of interesting sights, those who attended OTR may remember Erica Frieburger, bride-to-be, being whisked off into the jungle by a band of animal-print loin-clothed natives. She was eventually deposited next to Matt S. by the bonfire where Matt addressed his worshipers with this proclamation: "Fire is good."



There goes the bride!

Old Timer's also brought the return of the West Virginia Brewing Company van, thanks to a select group of VPI cavers. (See DTC report in this issue.) Doug, the WVBC manager, claims that he can't get any of his employees to return to OTR,

thus he is forced (deep sigh of resignation) to attend himself. You'll find him most evenings "mopping" in the sauna.

As if the beer wasn't enough, this OTR brought about the first "Bobbing for Booze". Many VPI folks braved a bucket of icy water to get their teeth around a bottle of rum or tequila. Blindfolds were provided, though seeing didn't make the task much easier. Rumors abound that this may become an annual event. Nothing is certain, however, because none of the participants can remember that night very clearly.

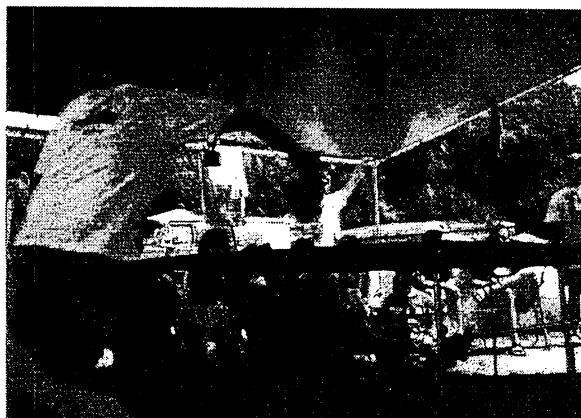


Can you identify this club member?

It wouldn't be OTR if Ranger Dave (Cinsavich) didn't execute another 10.0 face plant into the ground. This time he even scratched up his nose and ruined the lenses in his glasses. The nose was rather fat the next day, so he kept it well hidden in a WVBC mug.

This year marked the first Elvis Grotto Ping Pong tournament. Despite rumors of an Olympic medalist who fell shy of the gold medal due to his broken leg, the tournament wound down to our own Ko Takimazawa and some guy from another grotto. Ko played bravely and well, but was ultimately beaten (that is, once the game resumed after the ping pong ball that Dave Warren stepped on was replaced). The Elvis Grotto is said to be work-

ing on plans for next year's entertainment, but members are keeping their lips sealed. Keep your fingers crossed and your attention turned to the OTR rule-making committee.



Check out that backhand!

Speaking of rules, the "no bonfires" rule at Banquet was just about the only one not broken. Cavers managed to heed the cry, "It goes!" in many inventive ways at the Newport Rec Center. Banquet '96 was the biggest attended in many years, passing the 100 mark with ease.

One big draw was the speaker, Phil Lucas, who demonstrated fancy new toys for setting bolts. His presentation was lively, amusing, and best of all, brief. Another boon was the superb catering done by VIPs own Steve "Tink" Williams. The Rec Center allowed cavers to spend the night on classroom floors, thus permitting cavers to party to the fullest and remain (relatively) safe. Unfortunately for one trainee, Ray Sira rendered the trainee's sleeping bag useless when he decided not to retain the large meal he'd eaten earlier. (Perhaps the next Flame-Out on the very night that the slate was wiped clean?)

Ah, yes, awards. This was the year of the guano clusters, as many people were thanked for their contributions to the NSS Convention and other efforts. Though recipients were urged to "cooler dance" onstage, Glen Davis was the first to figure out what coolers are really for: they contain beer. Once that secret came out it was all over for Kim Hansen's stash.

This banquet's recipient of the A.I. Cartwright award went to Joe Zokaites for his many years of surveying, trip leading, and involvement with the club. This award is the most meaningful one bestowed by VPI. Joe has been loyal to the club for many years and has been peeking down dresses at banquets for just as long.

A group of EMT students decided to award their own honors. Jackie Hoell was given an inscribed mug for her ceaseless efforts to medically train members of our club. Cavers aren't the only ones who recognize her value. See "Special Announcements" in this issue.

Doug Perkins and Craig Ferguson kept the music playing until the wee hours and the dancing helped to drive the cold away.

Banquet '97 will take place once again at the Rec Center, and Steve Williams has been secured as Chef Extraordinaire. Keep your ears open for particulars.

The Halloween party was once again held at the Bat Ranch. Attendance was a bit lower than in previous years, but there was no lack of fun. Many hit the dance barn or milled about by the food tables inside. The Village People performed a number for the cheering audience, and in most cases managed to make the "C" in YMCA the right way. It wasn't until later that we discovered it was not the original group but actually imposters from the Elvis Grotto.

Darth Vader ran around zapping people with his television remote, and Thing One and Thing Two ambled through the house but didn't seem to be cleaning anything. There were ghouls, fortune tellers, wizards, and a large band of insects flitting about. Good thing there were no giant fly swatters in attendance.

Most everyone has heard about Bobby Zokaites' skiing accident which broke his neck. Good thing Momma Zo was fast on the scene to make sure he was handled properly. Doctors expect he'll be running around like his usual energetic self in just a few months. The club sends him best wishes for a speedy recovery.

As for business, next semester the club files will be turned over to Lawrence Britt and housed in his new abode on Penn Street.

Suzie Warren, club Prez, is planning to renew the club's recycling efforts to raise a bit of money. Given the amount of aluminum that cavers generate, this should add nicely to the club funds. What a great way to profit from our "hobby"!

The club voted to adopt a rental system for the club tarp. See the rental form in this issue. The tarp will live on Penn Street with Lawrence.

That's it for the local news. Thank you and good night.

SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT:

Jackie Hoell has been awarded the 1996 Governor's Award for Outstanding Pre-Hospital Instructor. She has been an EMT trainer for 18 years, has served on the Giles County Livesaving Crew and the Blacksburg Volunteer Rescue Squad. VPI members have benefitted from her EMT classes for years. Remember to congratulate and thank her next time you see her!

THOUGHS ON CAVING

by Judi Wolinski

Caving for the first time, I ran back to record the moment in my journal. Yet now when I go thumbing through the entries I discover how I have matured and grown as a caver. Deeper discoveries still lie unknown within the passages of my own caverns.

SUNDAY SEPTEMBER 17, 1995

Links The expansion of grey blended into one at the edges of the sky. We made our way up and over being suddenly sucked almost vacuumed into small brown, grey intestines of rocks. I breathed in spiny, drippy, dewy formations. I breathed out blankets of black fog that engulfed cavers one by one as each light went out. My heart pumped fake blood- weak in strength. I chimney into a 5-9 room (Good Luck), there was no where left to go. The body contorts in many different ways. Shifting, snapping into the mud I slide along on my stomach crawling in an S formation. Going deeper and deeper into the darkness there is no escape. Our bodies were trapped in a world of make believe no color- no sight - just our voices carried on invisible air molecules that bump and part and squish to make way for our foreign bodies in this unfamiliar space. My light failed me once as I exited from the forked tongue of the snaky S There is no going back -I wanted to see, but there was no sight. Mud caked and weary from the travel the world pops back at you like a pop up book. I've woken up been born again into a crystal world full of earthly things.

OCTOBER 12, 1995

Newberry Baines We are all creating our time lines of extinctions that have a miniscule effect on the time line of the world. But when I drop under the ground that time line has disappeared. I exist for an infinite amount of time. There is no fear in me just the awe inspiring experience of life. I learn to trust myself and the cavers around me. Yet I become tired as I reach my infinity and we close in on the extinction of our cave existence. I don't necessarily feel invincible, I don't feel as though I am conquering the world- nothing like that. I discover my quiet introverted side. The side that doesn't need to force thoughts or opinions. That lets the cave run free with in me. I can block out the earthly world - the world that doesn't quite exist as I do in this cave right here and now. The human mind is the only thing that limits our possibilities because we double check ourselves- scare ourselves and question the one life that we live. The cave opens up her virgin passages to explore new possibilities new paths in life. We all explore in the darkness sometimes, Why not feel comfortable within it?

After caving many more times I have become more aware of the question of why pursue this adventure, Is there always something to be found or gained. The tangible reasons that exist slip away between my fingers like mud. I look within myself and fellow cavers to discover my own love of caving.



OTR '95

by James Whisenhunt

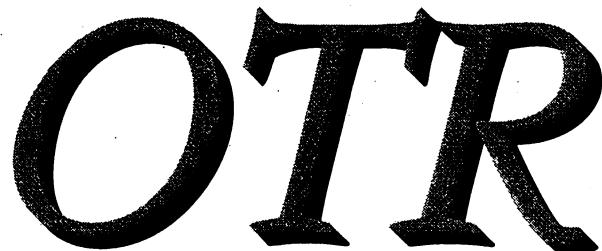
Daily, West Virginia is just a small town that most people would think of as having a population of about 100 people. No matter how small this town is, on Labor day weekend it draws more people than any other town for its size. Every Labor day 2000-2500 cavers forget the real world and venture into the land of OTR to forget their troubles for the weekend; believe me OTR is the place to forget anything. For those who do not know what OTR stands for it is Old Timer's Reunion and for those who have been there nothing more needs to be said. It will be impossible for me to do OTR any justice in describing the activities that occur during that weekend. Mainly because of the temporary amnesia that strikes 90% of the people, and to most the disease is caught within the first few hours. I was one of those who got struck early so my memory is not as good as it should be. It is OTR's fault I cannot remember.

I was number 781 to enter the campground only after the gates have been open for nine hours. That's not even half of the total number to arrive in Daily during the weekend. If I am not mistaken the total number for this OTR was about 2100 people; that's a lot of cavers having a good time.

After arriving there the first thing I did was sit my tent up. Then it was time to have fun and venture to the main crowd in Venders Row. Here is where I met Claton [sic] for the first time who had already developed an extremely bad case of amnesia. I told him my name more times than I tell anyone in a week.

Venders Row is a paradise for cavers. If you ever need anything that is cave related, vender row is the place to get it. There was a wide variety of venders: B&C Wunderwear, Bob and Bob, and even a stand to offer psychiatric help. After things settled down on Venders Row we settled down at the club tent. Here is where Philip taught many of us the expression, "When I was a trainee...." Philip's shock treatment was another unforgettable experience. Since most of us were not thinking clearly we were talked into standing in a circle with our fingertips to the temples of the persons standing on each side of us; meanwhile Philip started the torture machine. It really didn't hurt, at least I don't think it did, but there were lights flashing in front of my eyes. The scary part was that we kept coming back for more. Clation [real sic] was the worst, either he had no feelings in his hands or he was forgetting that it hurt from the amnesia. Claton [sic again] would sit there and yell, "I want more juice! Is that all you have to offer? More juice!"

The only place to have OTR is in a karst region so many people went caving on Friday. Myself, I didn't want to use that much energy on a cave trip; anyway my state of mind was not up for a cave trip. I found some of the people I caved with before I joined VPI and we went to Blackwater Falls which is the largest above ground falls in West Virginia. On the way back we rode a ski lift. The top had a very good view but it was tricky getting off and hitting those little white dots. The operators of the ski lift probably thought we were drunk.



There was a get-together at the pavilion on Friday night where many round tin aluminum cans of liquid refreshments were tapped. Everyone there seemed to be felling really good. There was a huge fire that everyone gathered around talking and having a great time.

On Saturday Carl, Steve, Barry and myself decided to rappel down Seneca Rock to try out our new gear that we got the day before. Seneca Rock was nice but it would have been better if Carl and I hadn't gotten separated from the others. We took a wrong turn as we were walking up the path. We finally gave up and went back to OTR to try our gear in the vertical contests. I tried my system first and climbed 100 meters in one minute forty seconds, and Carl climbed the rope in one minute twenty seconds. There were many other activities there beside the vertical contests. There was an obstacle course that was fun to watch, especially the children. It was a great course; it simulated a cave very good, it just needed to be dark. There was crawling in knee deep mud, climbing, crawling through a stream, and a crawl through a small pipe to the finish line.

That night at the fire there was something unusual, well nothing is unusual for OTR. Leroy had dressed in his fire fighting suit and popped a pan of popcorn on the fire. That does not sound unusual unless you see the fire. There were a lot of contests and activities that I did not get to see on Saturday. A few are the sleeping bag contest, lamp assembly, and the mud wrestling that I hear Mike Mike had an excellent time at.

The next day I spent the morning saying bye to the new people I met and to those that I had not seen in a long time. I left about 12:00 pm and returned to school to do homework. When I got back I did catch up on a lot of sleep. I hear that the...

(At this point James is missing a page, so I'll take over from here. -Ed.)

...NSS declared, "The Tech Troglodyte is the best darned grotto newsletter we've ever seen, and that Eileen is one helluva Editor! We ought to be paying her big bucks for her contributions."

(Your welcome, James, for the help.)

Wizard of Id by Brant Parker and Johnny Hart



VPI CAVE CLUB MEMBER ROLL BOOK

submitted by Lawrence Britt

The numbering system started in Fall 1964. Members before Fall 1963 are not included unless they returned as dues paying members after that date. Many early numbers were not given in chronological order.

This roll book is the second of it's kind, with the first 340 members carried over from the original book. The original book covered from Fall 1963 until Fall 1992. This book replaced the old one in the Spring of 1993.

1	Ed Bauer
2	Bob Mallis
3	Pat O'Meara
4	Sam Dunaway
5	Gary McCutchen
6	Tom Bell
7	John Eads
8	Tom Lamons
9	Betty Lamons
10	Joyce Slaughter
11	Rick Nolting
12	R.E. Whittemore
13	Art Wadsworth
14	Craig Peters
15	Joe Smyth
16	Sally Carlson
17	Mike Bohn
18	Doug Cochran
19	Ed Morgan
20	James Waid
21	Mike Youso
22	Paul Helbert
23	Dixon Hoyle

24	Byron McCutchen
25	Mike Hamilton
26	J.F. Cooper
27	Jack Keat
28	John Peduzzi
29	E.B. Baker
30	Tom Vigour
31	Ed Brown
32	Dave Strope
33	Jay Murray
34	Henry Stearns
35	Mallory Hightower
36	Wayland Moore
37	Alan Armstrong
38	Tony Graham
39	Addison Wilkins
40	Whitey Eubank
41	Carole Noble
42	Richard Gerling
43	Annie (Braithwaite) Whittemore
44	Tom Roehr
45	Larry Wuensch
46	Bob Swensson
47	Hank Harjes
48	Richard Beck
49	Lane Goodall
50	John O'Meara
51	Bob Simonds
52	Rick Keener
53	Glen Davis

54	Bob Williams
55	Steve Evans
56	Cletus Lee
57	Barry Whittemore
58	Henry Stevens
59	Doug Yeatts
60	Rick Johnson
61	Wes Thorne
62	Gene Harrison
63	Gary Skaggs
64	George Stonikinis
65	Henry Marshall
66	Ray Womack
67	Phillip Young
68	Tom Harris
69	Tina Noble
70	Gary Moss
71	Bob Amundson
72	Don Laffoon
73	Mike Frieders
74	Danny Wright
75	David Yolton
76	Mike Keenan
77	Dave McCloy
78	John Atthowe
79	Bruce Patterson
80	Terry Pick
81	Jim Dawson
82	Carl Eddy
83	Ed Day
84	Russell Peterson
85	Mike Kayes

86	Steve Hall
87	Chris White
88	Linda Heitz
89	Bob Barlow
90	Dale Parrott
91	Eileen Aldridge
92	Steve Kark
93	Bruce Byrd
94	Arabia Benitez
95	Bill Park
96	Sharon Priest
97	Roy Clark
98	Doug Perkins
99	Phil Moritz
100	Dick Washington
101	Winston Harmon
102	Diana Weber
103	Bruce Mills
104	Steve Williams
105	Sarah Critzer
106	Mike Clifford
107	Dee Snell
108	Theresa Huttlinger
109	Jan Nelson
110	Lynn Vinzant
111	Ed Loud
112	Pete Schnaars
113	Karen (Good) Yeatts
114	Guy Turenne
115	Bill Douty
116	Karl Berge
117	Jim Hurd

118	Craig Ellenfield
119	Paul Broughton
120	Frank Garrett
121	Janet Queisser
122	Libby Hecker
123	Dennis McClevey
124	Jim Hixson
125	Doug Draves
126	Tom Speers
127	Jim Talmadge
128	Mike Conefrey
129	Neal Nelson
130	Steve Riordan
131	Mike Frame
132	Nancy (Wick) Hamm
133	Howard Dame
134	Larry Cooke
135	Liz (Leach) Morgan
136	Dennis Webb
137	Rick Weber
138	Robyn (Lefon) Koerschner
139	Larry Johnson
140	Don Davison R.I.P.
141	Ned Coleman
142	Mike Hogan
143	Pam (Douty) Mohr
144	Karl Hamm
145	Bob Page
146	Randy Stoutenburgh
147	Twila (Youngman) Frieders
148	Ed Richardson
149	Cheryl Jones

150	Robyn Wick
151	Kevin T. Gross
152	Bob Lewis
153	Sandy (Parham) Peterson
154	Bill Stringfellow
155	Rolf McQueary
156	Richard Lutz
157	Jim Altman
158	Mark Slusarski
159	Ann Davis
160	Thoralf Brecht
161	S. Michael Richardson
162	Robert Alderson
163	Thomas Calhoun
164	Buddy Bundy
165	Jim Denton
166	Jerry Redder
167	Cathy (Dancy) Parrott
168	Nancy Moore
169	Randy Wood
170	Keith Ortiz
171	Kathy Cronau
172	Rick Whitt
173	Herb Safford
174	Mike Wolf
175	Don Anderson
176	Joe Saunders
177	Lor Windle
178	Carol (Godla) Zokaites
179	Doug Olson
180	Jim Bearden
181	Dave Coombs

182	Bob Mead-Donaldson	214	Bill Olver
183	Jeanne Griffin	215	Richard Cobb
184	Marjie Lewter	216	John Updike
185	Don Carter	217	Jay Kennedy
186	Ed Devine	218	Lawrence Britt
187	Doug Thompson	219	Walt Pirie
188	Chuck Shorten	220	Andy Wnuk
189	Dennis Vaders	221	DeForrest Hipps
190	Carolyn Lewis	222	Bill Shipman
191	Susanne Sutherland	223	Carol Trexler
192	Pam Wolf	224	Joey Fagan
193	Pete Sauvigne	225	Philip Balister
194	Rick Cooper	226	Susan (Heazel) LaCourse
195	Dave Bell	227	John Lohner
196	Phil Sica	228	Ken Bonnenberger
197	Paul Kirchman	229	Fran Wisthoff
198	Bill Koerschner	230	Rich Neiser
199	Joe Zokaites	231	Ed Fortney
200	Dennis Murray	232	Frank Gibson R.I.P.
201	Richard Croft	233	Binny (Ballou) Neiser
202	Ben Johnson	234	Steve Lancaster
203	Jeanne Nye	235	Eric Anderson
204	William Stephens	236	Steve Connor
205	Winfield Wright	237	Roberta (Desrochers) Kirchman
206	Eric Harper	238	John Mummery
207	John Dec	239	Keith Smith
208	Dave Shantz	240	Pete Bosch
209	Pat (Louden) Shorten	241	Trish Butler
210	Bill Sydor	242	David Mangus
211	Mark Emerson	243	Saad Abouzahr
212	Mark Neas	244	Jim Morrissett
213	Hugh Beard	245	Peter Fahmy

246	Ben Keller
247	Jim Washington
248	Maureen Handler
249	Beverly Wilson
250	David Coakley
251	Hillary Minich
252	Pam Neiser
253	Bill Kelly
254	Mike Gaydosh
255	Lee Little
256	Mark Honosky
257	Susan Mead
258	Kent Thompson
259	Al Ostrowski
260	John MacDowell
261	Karen Michelson
262	Mark Whitis
263	Mike Futrell
264	John Kline
265	Garrie Rouse
266	Wayne Burstein
267	Jack Kehoe
268	Suzanne Danielson
269	Kay (Jacobson) Johnson
270	Becky Himmelman
271	Ann Marie Little
272	Ray Hogwood
273	Craig Ferguson
274	Jeff Jablonski
275	Koji Hirota
276	James Smith
277	Robbie Hickerson

278	Greg Lewis
279	Barry Fizer
280	Craig Roberts
281	Hank Heidt
282	Paul Soboleski
283	Robb Hills
284	Dave Cinsavich
285	Joan Johnson
286	Jean Simonds
287	Dave Bennett
288	Paul Hess
289	Mike Fiore
290	Ernst Kastning
291	Karen Kastning
292	J. Ford
293	Ko Takamizawa
294	Susan Setzler
295	Beth Wichterman
296	Reggie Reid
297	Tom Foster
298	Marvin Fuqua
299	David McClurg
300	Cecile (Pirie) James
301	Doug Abernathy
302	Doug Bruce
303	Dougo Bohn
304	Jim Gamble
305	David Colatosti
306	Douglas Dodd
307	Tom Bank
308	Brian Cruikshank
309	David Warren

310	Mike Sziede	336	Steve Wells
311	Kat Teten	337	Chris Brown
312	Lesley Colby	338	Kevin McElroy
313	Mark Eisenbies	339	Bob Cosby
314	David McElroy	340	Leroy Burch IV
315	Adam Hungerford	341	Bill Steier
316	Mike Horne	342	Amy Sturgwolt
317	Scott Rapier	343	Alison Williams
318	Joe Uknalis	344	Susan Vermeulen
319	Chris Brown	345	Jennifer Savage
320	Scott Leiffer	346	Mike Mirro
321	Kristen Posson	347	Bill Penhallegon
322	Sara Vieweg	348	Jerry Shapiro
323	Rich Geisler	349	Sarah (Ludeke)Cosby
324	Maurya Fisher	350	Carl Bern
325	John Williams	351	Steve LePera
326	Rich Simpson	352	Allison Dineen
327	Bryce Bolton	353	Nathan Sharp
328	Kirk Digby	354	James Whisenhunt
329	Sandy Knapp	355	Will Orndorff
330	Rob French	356	Ray Sira
331	Scott Broadwell	357	Suzie Warren
332	Natalie Serbu	358	Todd Pinsonneault
333	Jared Leland	359	Amy Johnson
334	Patty Kitchin	360	Chris Rourke
335	Jim Pugh	361	John Deighan
		362	Les Good

FROM THE SIGNOUT
compiled by our lovely editor

VPI Cavers logged in 1,116 caver hours from 1/20/96 to 11/8/96.

2/10/96	James Cave	Carl Bern, Amy Johnson, Paige Baldassaro, *** McLellan	The elusive way out of James Cave has spooked some trainees again.
2/24/96	Wilburn Valley	Steve Wells, Viktor Simkovic, John Deighan, Michael Wright, Greg Frohn, James Whisenhunt	James forgot 1) helmet, 2) lamp, 3) helmet, 4) carbide, 5) how to tie a square knot, 6) knot at end of rope, 7) gloves – but not Greg.
2/24/96	Tawney's	Bobby Johnson, Debra Dout, Alison Williams, Corwin Carson, Katherine ? and Stephanie ? plus 12 Boy Scouts	Caving with Boy Scouts is like doing time.
3/2/96	Newberry's	Chris Brown, Wayne Biever, John Deighan, Scott Gardner, Mike Cafferata, Chris Rourke, Bob Cosby, Bill Steier	Chris sayeth, "Take this handhold and put it somewhere."
3/2/96	Pig Hole	Susan Vermeulen, Bryce Bolton, Jessica Dorr, Amy Johnson, Paige Baldassaro, Dave Colatosti	Guess what Wild Dog we saved today? Bet he'll check the bottom entrance before doing a pull-down again!
3/9/96 - 3/13/96	TAG	Steve Wells, Chris Brown, Todd Pinsonneault, Chris (Jake) Brown, Jon Kamler, Suzie (leaf-blower) Warren, Dave (Chummer) Warren, Jessica (Freak) Dorr, Janice (Freak) Matheson	Freak vegetarians hunt well with a Volvo.
3/24/96	Newcastle Murder Hole	Steve LePera, Steve Wells, Chris Rourke	First nice day for weeks – we went caving.
4/9/96	New River	Steve Wells, Robert Mills, Jan Mills, Rob Mills	Caving with lawyers isn't all bad.
6/8/96	Clover Hollow	Mike3 Horne, Ray Sira, Corwin Carson, Judi Wasilenski, Amy Johnson	Corwin: "Hey, where's my pack?"
8/22/96	Tawney's	Ed Fortney, Pam Mohr, A.I. Cartwright	10,000' virgin passage, we connected to Smokehole; we saw Elvis.
9/7/96	Links	Nathan Sharp, Michael Eng, Andy Usery, Russell Carlson	Now I know how a kidney stone feels.
9/28/96	New River	Nathan Sharp, John Deighan, Chris Hibshman, Andy Usery, Scott Gardner, Joe Thompson	We didn't want the cave to end, but it was either turn back or drown.
11/2/96	Pighole	Ed Fortney, Ray Sira, Eileen O'Malley, Sarah Husband, Joe Thompson	We got Obykrackied!