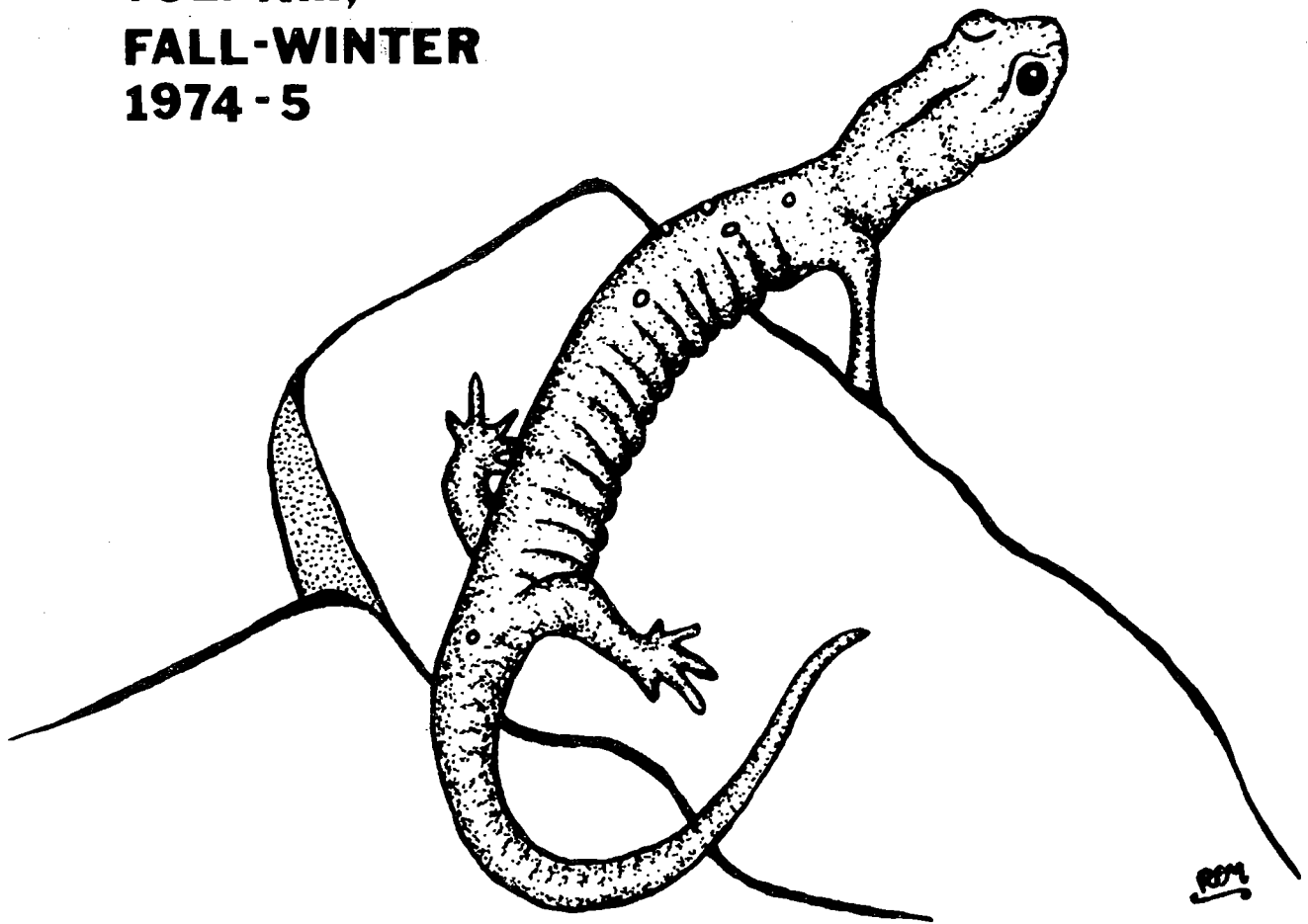


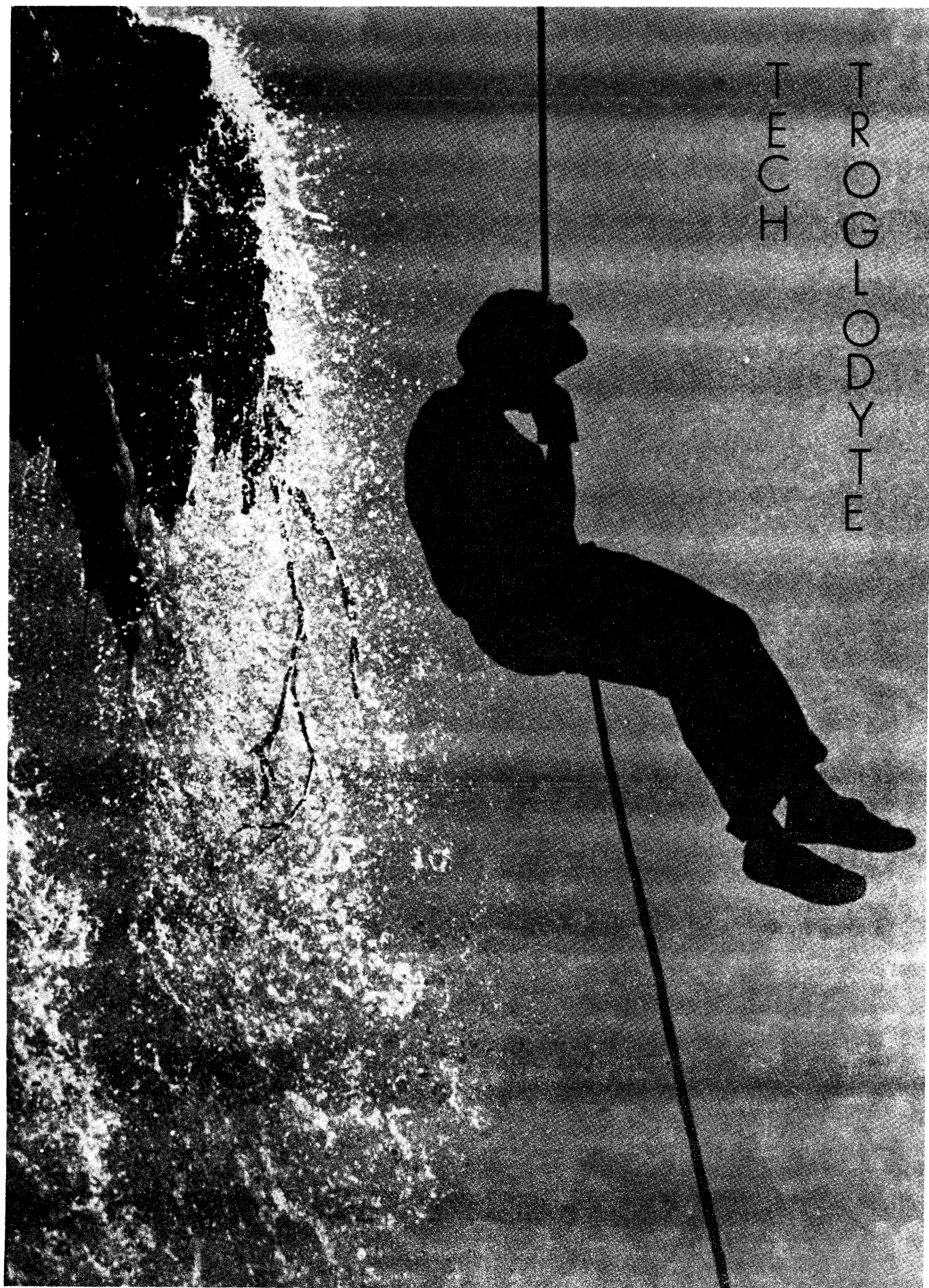
THE TECH TROGLODYTE

**VOL. XIII, NO.1&2
FALL-WINTER
1974 - 5**



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NATIONAL SPELEOLOGICAL SOCIETY**

TROGLODYTE
TECH



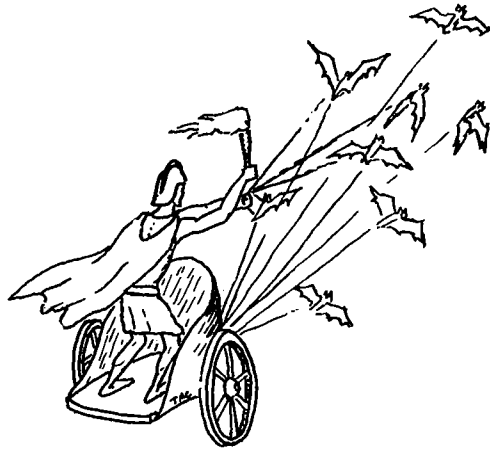
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Hot Dates!

| | | |
|-------|----|------------------------|
| April | 12 | VAR |
| | 26 | Crawl for the Crippled |
| May | 10 | Picnic |
| | 17 | Precipitation Date |
| | 24 | Float Trip |

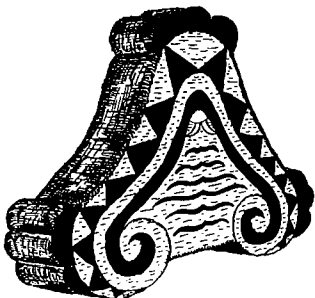
FROM

A.I. CARTWRIGHT'S CLASSICAL HISTORY OF SPELUNKING



A REVOLUTION IN VERTICAL CAVING

FIGURE - 92 THE RESOURCEFUL ROMAN CAVE EXPLORER, FALLINUS DEEPUS, DEVISED THIS INCREDIBLE ASCENDING RIG, A MAJOR BREAK THROUGH IN VERTICAL CAVING.



Grotto Officers:

PRESIDENT: Doug Yeatts
VICE PRESIDENT: Tom Calhoun
SECRETARY: Carol Godla
TREASURER: Mike Wolf

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LEFT ARM, ETC.: Lor Windle
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Tom Calhoun
Mike Wolf
Bob Page

PHOTOS:
Inside cover: Rolf
pp. 1,7,11,23: Cheryl
pp. 16,18,19: Rolf
pp. 24 Skip

~ Gover Graphics--Plethodon jacksoni: A new species of Salamander as described by Walter B. Newman in 1954 from collections taken from Old Mill Cave (Montgomery Co.) and surrounding areas... Later classified as a subspecies of Wehrle's Salamander (i.e.) Plethodon Wehrlei jacksoni. Illustration by Rolf P. McQueary. Dots exclusively arranged for Tom Calhoun. ~

T. OF G.

| | |
|--|----|
| THE PRESIDENT'S COLUMN--Doug Yeatts..... | 1 |
| GROTTO GRAPEVINE--Lor Windle..... | 2 |
| STRING'S THING--Bill Stringfellow..... | 3 |
| NEW TOPO DOTS?--Tom Calhoun..... | 4 |
| THE ASR SEAT--Gene Harrison..... | 6 |
| PETE'S LOG..... | 7 |
| CARE AND FEEDING OF NYLON ROPE--Kyle Isenhart..... | 8 |
| SIPHON NO-GO--Joe Saunders..... | 10 |
| LADDER BOUNCE--Jerry Redder..... | 12 |
| 404%--Barry Whittemore..... | 14 |
| THE RETURN OF BIG WALKER--Rolf McQueary..... | 15 |
| BANQUET--Lor Windle..... | 19 |
| EXPEDITION: CRUMPS STYLE--Joe Saunders..... | 20 |
| FANTASY 55--Bob Alderson..... | 22 |
| GARBAGE BAGS--Don Davison..... | 23 |
| SOUTHERN COMFORT--Bob Mead-Donaldson..... | 24 |



The President hic Grunts

You remember the old poem written on the bathroom that started something like this: "Here I sit broken hearted..."? A new ending that applies as I sit here is: "Came to write but couldn't get started." So I'll just grunt and give it a try anyway.

During the last few days I've had several topics on my mind for this column. The first few were immediately tossed out as I was still under the influence of what many people have termed a great weekend -- the tenth annual VPI Cave Club banquet and happening. Perhaps now is a good time to extend thanks for the success to Mike Wolf (no e) for banquet itself and the awards, and to Sam Osborne for the party. And a special thanks to Bill Stringfellow, who is perhaps the only VPI caver that can handle 100 liquor bottles and stay sober.

After wiping my thoughts, the one subject that stinks in my head is the fact that my phone keeps ringing. Many of these calls I don't mind -- invites to parties, a little club business, a few calls about school business, a rescue now and then and a few personal calls. The calls that do bother me, not so much by being annoyed as by being con-

cerned, are the calls that come from area residents, college students, and from people outside this area. All these calls concern caving. The type of information these people are seeking can be broken down into two categories: those people who just want cave locations so that they can go caving with their own little group.

The first category of people are fine, for that is the purpose of this club - to bring together people that have the common interest of speleology. Those people are welcome to cave with this club at any time.

The second category of people are the point of my concern. They are in a much greater number than many of you realize. There are 17,000 students on this campus and if just one tenth of them have, still do, or will cave, would mean an increase of 1700 cavers to this area. Since we just have twenty three regular members in our club, we are a minority caving group in this area. And that 1700 figure does not even include the local area people or people that come from other areas!!

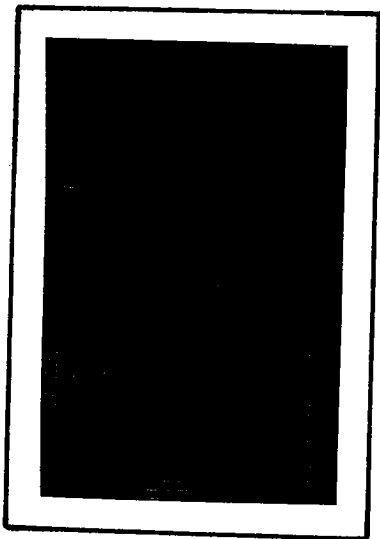
Since we are the only known and publicized caving group in this area, we get blamed for everything that goes wrong and credited with very little that goes right. Since becoming President of this club, whenever I have overheard strangers and even friends talk about caving, I try to make it a point to enter their conversation, not to try and get them to become club members, but rather to try and get them to be thoughtful to landowners and be conscious of certain safety precautions. I do mention that there is an organized caving group on campus and say when and where we meet.

On the calls I receive, I do bring up landowners, safety, and the club but I do not give the information they are seeking - cave locations. The only location I have ever given out is New River Cave because I think many of you agree if we are going to have non cave club caving activities in this area we had just as soon let them happen in New River.

I think it's up to each one of you to make up your own mind as to how and what you should say to these people. But remember, their action will be reflected on this club.

Flush!!!

Doug Gitter
Doug



The gods have once again smiled upon the VPI Grotto this past year. So wondrous have our adventures been that we can do naught but attempt to gloss over the ordinary excitement and thrill of grotto living and highlight the extravagances and extemporaneous activities of our more illustrious personnel. It is for precisely such a reason that we bring you (a fanfare of trumpets, please):

Grotto Grapevine

*Lor Windle

Perhaps the most impressively active of the Gods this past quarter has been Eros. I am sure you are all familiar with the God of Love. Well, so are the members of VPI. Since the last time the Trog reared its literary head, four couples have engaged in matrimonial bliss and at least one additional couple has made plans for the same. This romantically inclined group consists of the following people: Bruce Byrd and Polly Wick; Jim Altman and Lynn Richardson; Bob Page and Ellen (the girl you all saw him with at UTR--we don't think anyone knows her former last name); and Bill Park and Carol Noble. Also on the potentially hooked list are Randy Wood and Kathy Cronau who have become engaged recently. Others, not yet engaged, but decidedly involved in the grasp of Eros are Jim "Jock" Bearden and Carol "Hobbit" Godla, who are having plenty of fun fooling around with the ancient art of Fooney-Ha-Ha; and Cheryl Jones and Don Davison, who are more of a brouhaha (?) type of couple.

In the world of expanding our education, we have thrown wide our doors to the thrill of active travel and the extension of E.L.M.T.s throughout the known world. Over Christmas break, Jim Tabor Denton, Mike Wolf and Keith Ortiz flew across the continental United States and toured through Mexico. Keith was dropped off rather soon after the trio arrived in Mexico and the duo rambled onward to climb mountains, drink, sightsee, drink, take pictures, drink, etc. It seems that the highlight of the trip was getting drunk with an American camerade on Christmas Eve. Other trins of note include the annual Thanksgiving-Alabama caving trip. This year it was accomplished by Tom Calhoun, Bob Mead, and Bob Alderson. While in Alabama they met up with Skip Whitehurst and ran around busting their tails and having a good-ole time. Also of possible interest are those frequent trips in which Cheryl and Don "just happen" to be on--Ellison's, Mammoth, etc.

Our Own God, the great and omnipotent God of Caving, the one, the only, CHERNOBOG! Excuse me, I got carried away by the glory and grandeur that is the power of Chernobog. It shan't happen again. Anyway, The god, Chernobog, has granted us another harvest of susceptible (oops) talented new members to enrich our crop. So at this time you should all be introduced to our new brood: Bob Mead-Donaldson VPI #182, Jeannie Griffin VPI #183, Margie Lewter VPI #184, and Donnie Carter VPI #185. The Trog staff sends out its congratulations and condolences to any whom deserve it.

Convention last summer proved to be another occassion to remember with VPI grotto again taking its share of glory. In artistic capability we proved our merit with Janet Queissar getting an award for one of her paintings and Phantom

(Chip Clark) mopped up with his fantastic black and white shots. Bob Alderson and Doug Perkins won second place for song with original lyrics and Don Davison won second place for both best performer and for original lyrics, original tune in the NSS Cave Ballad Contest. In terms of the physical prowess of cavers, we also contributed. In the tug-of-war contests the VAR females drugged the Texas females all over. The VAR gentlemen did the same to their honorable opponents. Cheryl Jones took first place in the 100 ft. rope climb with mechanicals in her class. Don Davison also won first in his class for 100 ft climb and managed a highly respectable second place for the 400 footer. All in all, it would appear that it was a rather decent showing.

Now we have arrived at the portion of this article that you have all been craving for. No, I do not mean the end. Rather, I mean the general who's who and what's what and why of our Grotto. First off, we have them folks what are returning to the fold after straying from the way. Bruce and Polly Byrd are returning from their fling in the great state of Texas and shall be near enough to party with; they will be in Charleston, W.Va. Doug Perkins has given up the fight in the east trying to hold off the wild barbarians in Richmond and shall stake his claim in the fertile Roanoke-Salem area. It shall be very heartening to hear his heels ring loud and clear over these mountain-tops once more. And don't forget the stirring magnificence of Amazing Grace screamed forth by those near-aryan lips. Those of you who remember Bill Stringfellow will be pleased (or perhaps saddened) to hear that he has graced us with his presence, for the most part. His story is as follows: After graduating from VPI with a B.A. in Computer Science, with a job at Singer Simulation in Maryland, he quit. He didn't like the work so he went off to work for a dinner-theater. After having his body there for a time, he quit. The help was stupid and he couldn't stand wearing the (ugh) clean clothes every day. So one day he was down here, in a shiny new yellow van, out of work. He now has a job working construction at \$3.00 an hour. Oh well. Also returning to us are Danny and Lynn Wright, who have moved into the Roanoke area and show their faces regularly. On a more mundane subject, we have those people who have yet to learn the power of the troglodytic grasp and are still trying to leave. First and foremost are Mike and Twila Frieders, long an established rock at any meeting, now to be present no longer. It seems that Mike has a better job offer up in the Washington area and he is leaping at this chance to advance his status. Steve Hall is also relinquishing his position here. He is graduating this quarter with a M.S. in Geology. That's one way to take care of your rocks. The illustrious editor of the Trog, Cheryl Jones is going to graduate after 4 and two-thirds years with a degree (B.S.) in forestry.

Other people of interest include the mighty Rolf McQuery, who is working with animals in the Dublin area. In this manner he shall be capable of further carrying on with his Big Walker mountain project, Salamander project, and money project. Tuna (less well known as Lawrence P. the third) has graduated up from working under Mike Frieders in Aerospace to finally working in the field that he majored in. Yes, Tuna is now able to play with his rocks. Last but not least (tho' he might be) Keith Ortiz has managed to roll the great Beastie after over 400,000 miles of rugged riding. He did it on 460, no less.

But what about those mighty VPI parties? We partied. We partied at Russ Peterson's in Newport News before the Altman's wedding. We partied so hard that the police came and took Ed Loud, Ed Richardson, and Jerry Redder away to the jail. Imagine the police's surprise when eight more drunks show up the next morning to bail out three people arrested for being drunk in public. We partied Halloween and nothing more need be said except for the slight interference by the mad ladder climbers (see elsewhere). At New Year's at the Ediger's we partied, too. The highlights of the party were the facilities: a sauna and a meter-deep pool. Fantastic. We also partied at the VPI Banquet. Read about that elsewhere.

1. BEAR WALLOW
2. BILLS RAPPEL
3. BUTTERFLY
4. BUTTERMILK FALLS
5. CHINA SLIDE
6. CROSSOVER
7. DEVIL'S STAIRCASE
8. DRAGON'S TAIL
9. ELEVATOR
10. FINGER of GOD
11. FOREST ROOM
12. GRAND CANYON
13. GYPSUM ROOM
14. HALF MILE
15. HAPPY HOLLOW
16. HAYSTACK
17. IDIOT'S DELIGHT
18. LIBRARY
19. MAYONNAISE JUNCTION
20. MOON ROOM
21. MUDBRIDGE
22. MUD DUMMY
23. MUD RIVER
24. NICK of TIME
25. NORTH SUBWAY
26. PILE of ROCKS
27. QUEEN'S BATH
28. ROCK ORGAN
29. STRADDLE PIT
30. STRAIGHTJACKET
31. SUBWAY
32. TEXAS SURVEY
33. THISTLE TUBE
34. TOILET SEAT
35. TRIPLE WELLS
36. TUXEDO JUNCTION
37. VAULT ROOM

All the words in the list are repeated in the diagram. They may run in all directions; up, down, forward, backward, and diagonally.

The solution will appear in the next issue. GOOD LUCK!

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| C | X | L | A | H | R | R | I | L | D | A | U | J | O | Q | W | E | Y | F | O |
| D | A | F | P | T | I | A | A | M | Q | I | B | I | F | X | A | O | E | I | R |
| E | S | M | P | A | P | N | T | D | T | U | L | C | K | R | N | T | V | N | T |
| F | S | I | Y | B | L | D | S | U | D | N | E | S | W | N | D | H | O | G | S |
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| M | W | F | I | O | Z | D | N | W | I | T | N | V | L | S | B | T | T | D | L |
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String Things

Bill
Stringfellow

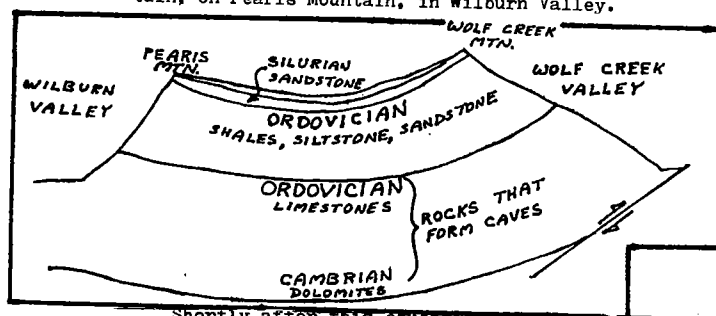
New Topo Dots ?

...tom calhoun

Hopefully, this preliminary report will be followed up in the future by articles by some energetic cavers who will continue to explore the Wolf Creek Valley area. It could easily prove to be another Sandusky Hollow.

Cavers have passed through the area before, usually on their way to Tazewell County, but the valley was ignored, particularly after one caver said he had checked the area and had found nothing. So only two caves exist on record, Straley's Cave and Giant Caverns. (Neither are very extensive, although impressive.) This number, however, will undoubtedly change.

My interest in the area originated while taking a structural geology course. One field trip required a structure section that passed through Wolf Creek Valley. This revealed that the Middle Ordovician limestones and dolomites, the rocks in which most of the caves of our area occur, crop out on the southern slope of Wolf Creek, that is, Wolf Creek Mountain. Because the structure in the area is a syncline, these same rocks appear on the other side of Wolf Creek Mountain, on Pearis Mountain, in Wilburn Valley.



Shortly after this educational gain, I began caving in Wilburn Valley, grew interested, and did a bit of looking through the club files. Numerous caves were reported there, ranging from PRO's to Starne's. Also, Wilburn Valley Cave had just been found, and it contained an impressive 105 foot pit. Remembering the geology of the area, I checked Wolf Creek Mountain and was astounded that only two small caves had been reported.

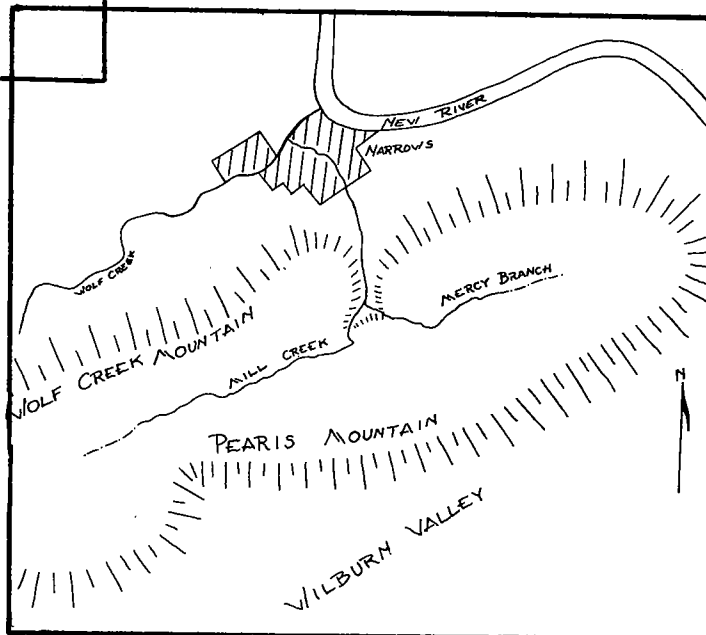
Since our last project to Smyth County uncovered little, Wolf Creek could not be any worse. The club attempted to have project there in the spring of 74, but when the day arrived, the weather forecast called for rain, and the skies threatened, so I called it all off. Lo and behold, one hour later, the skies cleared, totally destroying any trust I had in modern weather prediction. Joe Saunders and Keith Ortiz began to look in the valley, after catching wind of the possibilities there. They reported some finds which further strengthened my desire for a project.

A good turnout of twenty-five hardy members and trainees met in the parking lot on November 9. As it turned out, twenty-three made it to the mountain. Our president and his wife had to leave for the vet when their dog executed a nose dive off one

of the buildings around the parking lot. Before leaving, we split into five groups; four of which went to Wolf Creek Valley, the other to the back end of Wilburn Valley.

The day turned out to be magnificent, both in weather and in success. All five groups managed to find something. The Wilburn Valley group turned up new leads on locals' information, one which they checked. A hole in pasture too small to get into took 3 seconds for rocks pitched in to finally hit bottom. A later trip opened up Dixon Caverns and a series of drops totalling about 165 feet. The Wolf Creek Valley groups got several leads from locals, many of which still have to be checked out. Some of the leads were checked, some new virgin caves were found. All in all, project was a success, even just from the fact that Wolf Creek has shown a great potential.

In conclusion, I wish to reflect some of my insights about the area. I was amazed as to how high the limestone cropped out on the mountain, at an elevation of about 2700 feet. With this in mind, I am hoping for some some really deep pits in the area. Also the areas that I divided up were much too large for the groups to cover in one day, so that part of the valley is by no means thoroughly checked out, particularly since very few people made it to the upper contact of the Middle Ordovician limestones. By no means is this report detailed. More specific reports will hopefully be submitted by cavers who like to search for new adventures in Wolf Creek Valley.



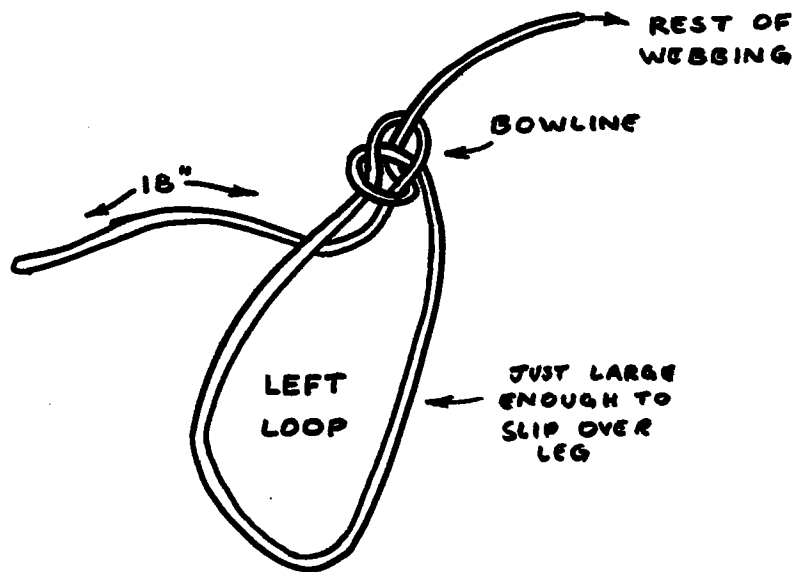


FIG 1

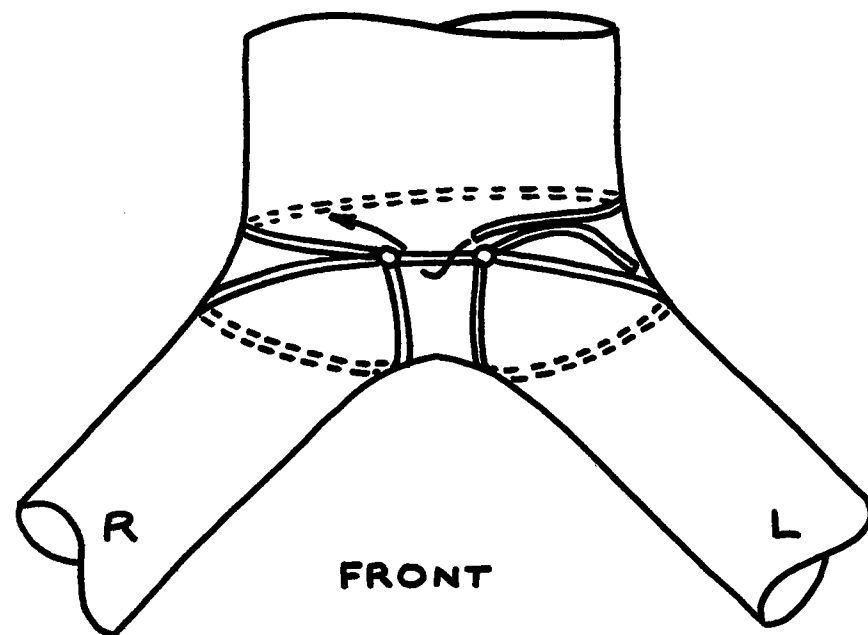


FIG 3

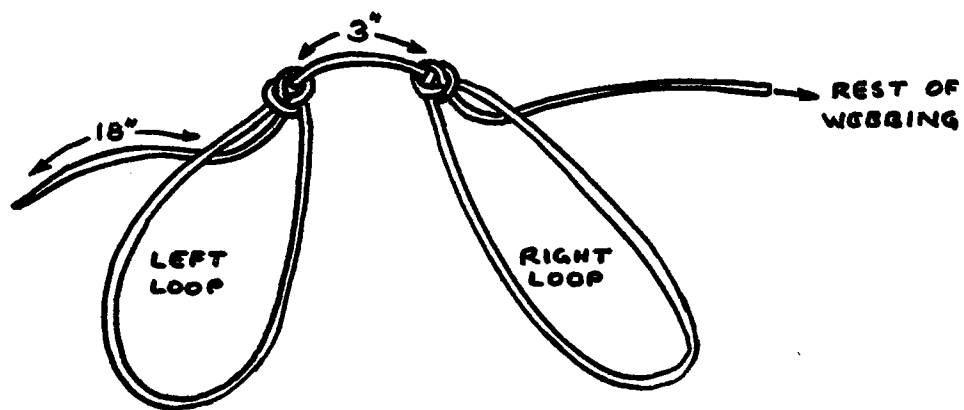


FIG 2

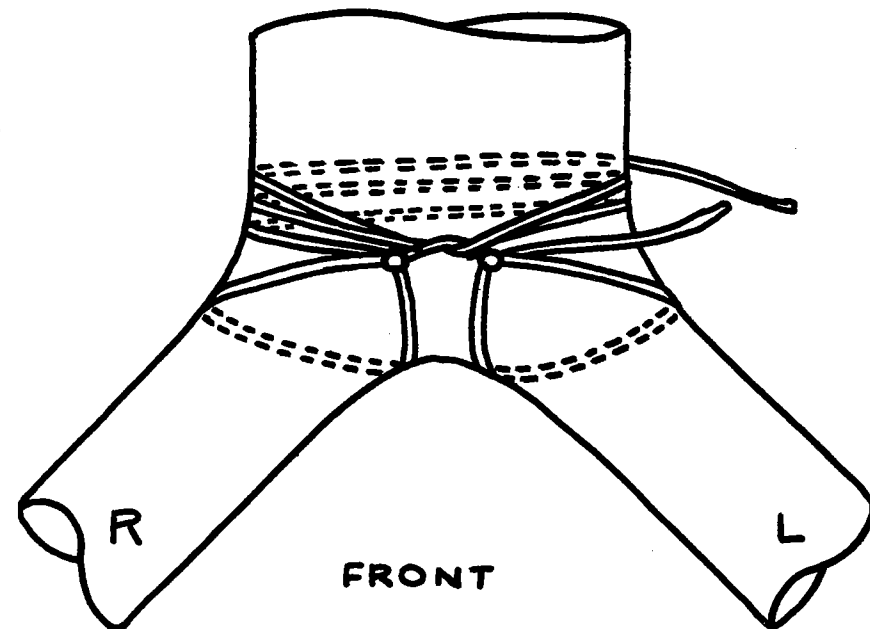


FIG 4

17FEB75GLH

The ASR Seat: an alternative...

» gene harrison

A reliable, semi-permanent, webbing seat harness is valuable in vertical ropework and climbing. When the Appalachian Search and Rescue Conference was analyzing existing designs for both training and search and rescue operations, none were found to be acceptable. For example, the 'single-loop' seat is connected in front by a carabiner after one inserts one's posterior into the loop. The carabiner snaps onto a bight of loop from between the legs and a bight from each side. The three resulting sections, about the waist and each leg, easily shift and can constrict in one section while being too loose in another. It is easy to fall out of when inverted. Also, if the webbing fails, by cutting or abrading, at only a single point, the entire system disintegrates immediately, and the wearer falls.

The typical 'swiss-seat' is a webbing waist loop with an overhand knot in front. The ends drop between the legs, separately pass around opposite legs and return to the front. One end crosses the front, taking a turn around the overhand knot, and ties, on the opposite hip, to the other end. This design also permits shifting of position, constriction and loosening of sections, and failure if cut at any one point. However, these problems do not occur with the speed encountered in the 'single-loop'. The 'swami-belt' consists of two non-fixed leg loops connected to several waist wraps. Again, the movable leg loops can constrict, and the system can fail if cut at a single point.

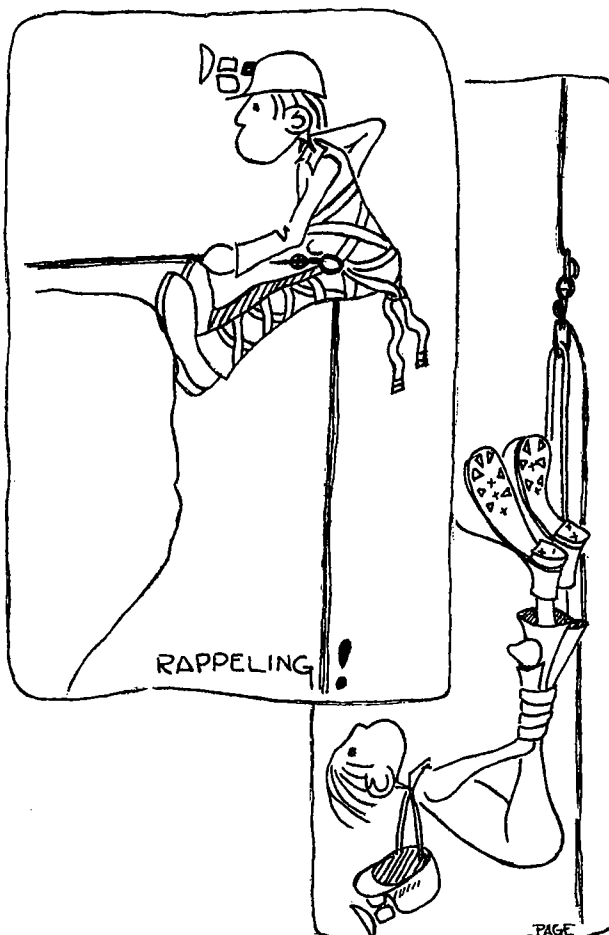
There is considerable value in a semi-permanent seat harness. It can remain partially tied and be quickly donned, often by different people. The permanent sewn rig is put on faster and is more reliable, but is a single use item, often fits only one individual, and requires skill and special materials to produce. The semi-permanent rig can be converted to countless other uses, including a simple handline by just untieing it, and is preferable in the majority of light-duty vertical endeavors.

Since the ASRC did not find any of the existing designs acceptable, a design was created to meet what were considered to be reasonable safety and performance criteria for light and medium duty vertical situations.

Start with approximately 20 feet of 1 inch wide tubular nylon webbing. Tie a bowline in one end. It should have an 18 inch free end and be just large enough to slide over the left thigh (see Fig. 1).

After adjusting the first bowline as specified, tie another bowline about 3 inches away. In each bowline, the standing part of the webbing is the crosspiece between the knots (see Fig. 2). The second bowline should be the same size as the first. Next, with the remaining webbing to the right, place the first bowline on the left leg, and the second on the right. Slide the loops high on the thighs (see Fig. 3). Wrap the web-

bing to the right across the upper part of the hipbone (below the belt), and around to the front. Cross under the crosspiece, and wrap again, then a third time if possible (see Fig. 4). Tighten



and tie the webbing ends on the left hip with a square knot backed up by two overhand knots on each side. Connect the locking carabiner as usual around the crosspiece and wraps.

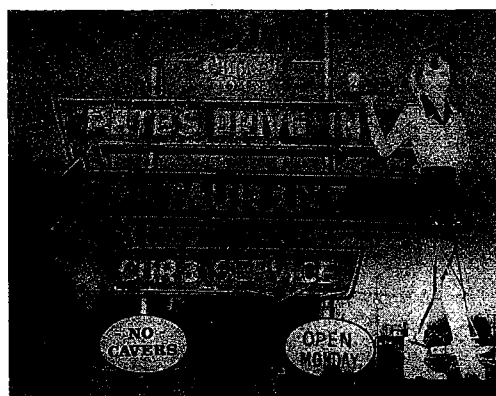
When removing the seat, leave the bowlines tied to simplify future use. However, the semi-permanent nature of the seat allows use as a handline by untieing.

Unlike most other seats, the ASRC seat must be cut or broken in at least two places to release the wearer. If tied correctly, the crosspiece is protected from wear by the turns of the wraps. Also, the leg loops will not tighten on the legs, cutting off circulation, nor will it fall down while walking. If properly applied, it is not possible for one to fall out of the seat when inverted.

If there are any questions or suggestions, please contact me at (703)361-3030 (H).

Pete's Log

Pete's Drive-In closed this fall. No more will cavers enter to eat and enjoy. But do not wish for times that won't be--remember times that were...



4-24-71 Breakfast (?at 11:00 am) on way to Acme #5. Too tired to get up for Windy Mouth.

Jim Hixon

5-21-71 Well, I've finally fished that M.S. out of the deep, dark cave waters. My 3 yr. thesis is finally written--all 140 pages of it, with 80 dollars worth of typing. Ed Loud, just think of how many beers that would buy! Now that its over, its about time I started caving again..... Here I am, on the way back from my typist after discovering that a page number had been skipped. Only 35 pages to retype!!

Paul L. Broughton
NSS 8496

6-12-71 VPI has really gone down the tubes--- This place is really bad.

Jack Stellmack

10-4-71 Went 4 wheeling today--in a VW??..... Looks like we've been through WWII and my poor car looks worse.

Ed Richardson
VPI 148

10-16-71 Today was the longest mapping trip yet into New River! 7 hrs. Also we mapped the least amount of passage yet--300'

Dale Parrott
VPI 90

10-21-71E.S.D.M.F. M.R. does not stand for Mike Frieders!

Ned Coleman

9-23-72 Five parties and VPI cavers still went caving today. Party on the mountain tonight. Steve Kark and Bruce Byrd are back to liven up things.

Bill Park

10-28-72 Virgin Caves, Virgin Women. What's the difference? They all look alike after dark.

R.E. Whittemore

12-8-72 It was a dreary day as we partook to climb the misty mountain in search of long lost CAT-TRAP. Through thick fog we ascended the lowly mountain to ask of the crawly eye wherefor this chasm might dwell. It told us to go to Hell. We left broken hearted.

Rolf
VPI 155
NSS13036

MOUNTAIN SMASHING IN MEXICO!

CHRISTMAS 1972

Ed Richardson
Michael P. Fname
Jon Calloun
Pete 'Pit' Schnaars

THINK NATED!

12-29-72 With so much to drink, who has time for sex?

Doug Perkins

1-6-73 My first cave trip as a regular member in 3 years! But--is it worth it to be in school just to be a regular member again?

Ed Loud

9-23-73 Back to Slusser's Chapel through the 2 near siphons and Keith (Ortiz) and I tried to push the 3rd siphon....I'd like to try it again with someone who is willing to go with me....

Dennis E. Webb
VPI 136

10-20-73 Went to test drive cars today--but never got past the price stickers. Maybe the Titanic isn't in that bad a shape after all.

E. Loud

6-18-74 Well, I may not have graduated, but at least I'm out of Tech after the "Proper" four years.

Jan Davis

Care and Feeding of Nylon Rope

With the tremendous number of cavers doing vertical pitches these days, it is very important safety-wise to understand some things about the ropes to which we all entrust our lives.

Nylon is a generic term for a family of polyamides and is defined as: "Any long chain polymeric amide which has recurring amide groups as an integral part of the main polymer chain." Commercial nylon polymers vary not only in molecular structure, but also by molecular weight within each particular structure. Some of the common nylons are types 6/6, 6/10, and 12. Within each of these types are high and low molecular weight grades. While the physical properties of these different nylon polymers vary widely, their chemical properties are very similar.

The name applied to nylon polymers in Europe is "Perlon". It is from the misunderstanding of the meaning of this term that people often refer to the dynamic ropes manufactured in Europe as perlon ropes. While they are made from perlon polymer, they are of kernmantle construction. Different rope manufacturers use identical nylon filaments and produce ropes with different elasticity and strength. The selection of a proper type rope depends upon its intended use, but for most caving activities ropes such as Blue Water are best.

After purchasing a new rope and before its first field use, it should be washed. This should be done for two reasons: to remove the oil and other lubricants that inadvertently remain on the rope filaments from manufacture, and, more importantly, to "set" the rope. This pre-use treatment of the rope is very important as it can increase the usable life of the rope many times.

The first time a rope is washed, it will shrink a considerable amount. This shrinkage is very important for several reasons: (1) it stabilizes the elasticity of the rope, (2) in laid ropes (e.g. Goldline), it tightens the strands, (3) on braid over braid ropes (e.g. Sampson, West 707), it closes the openings in the inner braid and tightens the outer braid somewhat, and (4) on ropes of kernmantle construction (e.g. Blue Water, Dynamic Climbing ropes), it tightens the sheath over the inner core and closes the openings in the braided sheath enough to prevent almost all penetration by mud and dirt to the inner supporting filaments.

While the problem of abrasive particles penetrating the sheath and cutting the inner strands is not completely solved by pre-treatment and frequent laundering, it can be slowed sufficiently to make kernmantle rope usable for the life of the outer sheath. Allowing nylon ropes to become extremely dirty and using them in that condition not only destroys the rope, but causes severe damage to expensive descending and ascending equipment. A dirty rope is NOT a status symbol. It generally denotes improper care. While all ropes eventually become dull colored and fuzzy from use, there is no excuse for a 5/8" diameter mud rod with a 7/16" nylon core. Due to the fact that internal damage cannot be inspected in braided ropes, it is extremely important to protect this type of rope from unnecessary exposure to dirt.

I have heard many types of rope cleaning procedures recommended and most had some merit. I have seen ropes pulled up rivers behind power boats, and I once met a young couple washing their most prized possession, a new 350' Blue Water, in a creek with toothbrushes! It worked well, but was a little slow. The most practical way to wash a nylon rope is in one of the big round front-opening commercial washers at a laundromat. They have a large round sight glass in the door. Make sure it is glass instead of plastic as it is possible with a plastic window enough to generate sufficient heat to fuse a portion of the outer surface. It is best to put the rope in the washer in a loose bundle instead of a tight coil, because it cleans more efficiently. Another important point is to make sure all the rope is inside the drum of the washer and not hanging out around the edges. Lengths up to 600 feet can be easily washed in this manner. Upon removal from the washer, the rope will be tangled, but patience and a little help from your friends will usually prove superior to the snarls. Washers with central rotating agitators should be avoided as the rope tends to become very tightly entangled about the agitator.

The proper water temperature and cleaning agent for nylon rope always brings up great contro-

versy, especially among those who know very little about cleaning agents and nylon chemical structure. Nylon polymers can withstand 180°F immersion indefinitely with no degradation of the polymer. Immersion in liquids above 300°F for more than a few minutes should be avoided. Water boils considerably below this temperature, so this means it is best to wash your rope in HOT water. At most commercial laundries hot water is about 140°F, which is sufficient to do an excellent cleaning job.

The next question is what kind of cleaning agent to use. Our research department (Marbon Chemical Division of Borg-Warner) decided not long ago that the company should enter the soap business, so we did extensive investigations on commercially available cleaning agents. I am not pushing any products, just sharing some results of our research work.

Some purists recommend natural soaps like Ivory. Their fault is that the natural soaps lack the necessary additives to keep the removed dirt suspended in the water so it settles back on the surface of the article being cleaned. The result is that, while they don't hurt anything, they don't clean very well either. All detergents when dissolved in water are alkaline, and clean by the action of either phosphates or carbonates. Nylon is not affected by such alkaline conditions. All soaps and detergents available at the grocery store for laundry use can be safely used on nylon. The best liquid cleaning agents for nylon are the detergents such as Wisk, and Liquid All, and the best powder detergent seems to be Tide. The use of special pre-soaks such as Axion and Biz before washing is of little value. If you have a white nylon rope and want to bleach it, that is alright also. Do NOT use chlorine bleach, but try one of the others available at a grocery store for nylon. There has been some questions raised about Borax. Borax will NOT harm nylon. You can even use a little Bo-Peep ammonia if it turns you on.

Since some ropes tend to become very stiff after extended use, everyone sooner or later ponders whether to use fabric softener on their rope. Soften-

ers work by the action of Quaternary Ammonium Salts. These salts adhere to the surface coating. This coating is very slick, and allows the fibers to slip past each other with very little friction. This lubricating effect increases the flexibility of the material which people interpret as being softer when in reality it is only more flexible. The ammonium salts have no harmful effect on nylon, and the use of fabric softeners on ropes is quite advantageous.

The softener's coating on the surface of the rope causes it to feel waxy, but it wears off very quickly. The first person to rappel on a rope treated with fabric softener will notice it is quite slick, but by the third rappel, it will not be noticeable. Besides making the rope more flexible, softeners have other advantages. That portion which penetrates to the core of kernmantle ropes lubricates the minute filaments and helps keep them from abrading on each other while the rope is flexing. The softener also forms a barrier between the rope's nylon fibers and dirt particles. All the good quality softeners (e.g. Downy) are effective on nylon. If you are afraid you will miss the final rinse cycle, use a softener such as Johnson's Rain Barrel which can be added initially with the soap. After washing, the rope should be dried before storage. While drying the rope in a dryer would be acceptable (if the drum doesn't get too hot), it is much better to hang the rope in the air to drip dry.

Nylon is an extremely inert polymer. It is resistant to most solvents, alkalies and even weak acids. Nylon is attacked by strong mineral acids such as sulfuric (battery acid) and other strong oxidizing agents. It is also degraded by sunlight over an extended period. The type nylon used in rope will slowly degrade at temperatures above 180°F, and will degrade very fast at temperatures above 240°F if exposed to air. Do NOT store nylon rope on the back window shelf of your car. While nylon melts only at high temperatures, its tensile strength decreases rapidly as its temperature increases (see accompanying graph). Nylon is dissolved by liquid phenol and formic acid, neither of which I have ever seen in a cave. Formic acid is in most insect stings and ant bites. Phenol (carbolic acid) is present in many wood preservatives. The nylon used for rope is not attacked

by gasoline, anti-freeze, beer, bat guano, urine, whiskey, brake fluid or oil. It is inert to all foods that are edible by humans. It is difficult to find a substance that will attack a nylon rope around your home or while out caving. Specific chemical resistance data on many substances is available from the author if you have any further questions.

A most appealing feature of nylon ropes to cavers is the fact that they do not rot or deteriorate from exposure to water; however this is a very misunderstood phenomenon! There is an interaction between nylon and water, and your rope's physical properties are highly dependent upon the amount of water entrapped within the polymer structure. This may seem confusing, but the nylon filaments have small spaces between the molecular chains that form them. The amide structure has an affinity for water, and small numbers of water molecules penetrate the nylon filaments to fill these open spaces. While many physical properties such as modulus of elasticity, abrasion resistance, melt softening temperature, and flexural fatigue are also affected by the percent of absorbed water, we will dwell mainly on its effect of tensile strength. Nylon has such a high affinity for water that after manufacture, it is never dry. The types of nylon used to manufacture rope come to equilibrium in a 50% relative humidity atmosphere when they contain about 2.5% absorbed moisture. This water is absorbed directly from the air and there is no way to prevent it. Most manufacturers' specifications for nylon ropes are based on ropes in which the nylon polymer has 2.5% absorbed moisture. This is about what your rope has if you store it around the house. The problem is that as the moisture content of nylon polymers increases, its tensile strength decreases rapidly. I had not given this much thought until I heard some people advocating soaking ropes in water before doing long rappels to help prevent the rappel devices from overheating. I have discussed this with technical representatives from several major nylon manufacturing firms, and they all felt it was a bad idea. The water saturation point of nylon filaments the size used for rope manufacture is reached in a matter of minutes, and the tensile strength of the polymer is drastically reduced. (See graph) Because of this fact, the use of standing ropes

in wet drops should be discouraged, as well as the practice of saturating ropes before use. It could be that cavers have been very lucky thus far that a water soaked rope hasn't broken. I hope our rope suppliers will test some saturated ropes in the near future and shed some more light on this subject.

Heat too is a potential enemy on nylon ropes. People are very concerned about overheating rappel devices on long pitches. The problem is that nylon, like most polymers, does not have a sharply defined range of temperature at which it is usable. Nylon filaments used for rope manufacture can withstand 180°F air exposure indefinitely without degradation. At 240°F, they degrade in a matter of minutes. The real question though, is just how hot can a rappel device become while in contact with the rope. This depends upon the pressure and time at the point of contact. A 180 pound caver applies almost 70 psi load on the rope in the areas contacted by the brake bars during rappel. At this loading, nylon can withstand just over 300°F before softening to break under the load. The thermal conductivity of nylon rope is so low that if the sheath were in contact with a 300°F brake bar long enough and enough pressure were applied to melt the surface, the rope 1/8" away would still be near ambient temperature. While this in no way solves the heat problem, it does show that if the rappel device overheats and fuses a section of the sheath while moving on Blue Water, it still retains nearly 92% of its initial strength. This is considerably more than a water-soaked rope with the same initial temperature. Further field testing will be required before specific recommendations concerning safe rappel device temperatures can be made.

References:

Guide to Plastics, by the editors of Modern Plastics Encyclopedia
Engineering Properties of Zytel Nylon, from DuPont de Nemours & Co., Inc.
Typic Properties of Nylon Resins, from Celanese and DuPont
Other literature and reports from the files of Marbon Chemical Division of Borg-Warner Corp.

Reprint from Nylon Highway, who reprinted it from Georgia Underground.

-Kyle Isenhardt

Siphon No-Go

Joe Saunders

Cave hunting is done in many different ways, depending upon the people involved. At VPI, vertical caving is rather popular, and thus many cavers comb steep mountain-sides in search of vertical caves. My own tastes run to mud and water so I stay low in the valleys when looking for new caves. My experience in the midwest tells me that springs and overflow openings are good places to find extensive cave passages. The following trip reports should indicate the luck I am having in Virginia.

Walker Creek loops out of the generally unspeleogenic Knox dolomite and into the Chatham Hill limestone at the foot of Big Walker Mountain just before joining Little Walker Creek. I predicted a spring where the creek and the limestone met. In mid June, Bob mead, Rolf McQueary and I went looking for it. On the way there Bob remembered seeing a spring in the vicinity while on an earlier canoe trip. We did find a sizeable spring there, about $\frac{3}{4}$ -1 cubic feet per second. When Rolf tried to follow the water underground, he was confronted with only a few inches of air. Thirty minutes of removing rocks from the spring lowered the water level eight inches. We entered to find walking passage seven feet high and eight feet wide, ending in breakdown. The water welled up from one wall—a siphon. Total passage length was about a hundred feet.

In mid October, I was working in the area a mile north of New Castle Murder Hole. Meadow Creek drains 3-4 square miles, then sinks and reappears 6500 feet away at Dudding Spring, as verified by die tracing. A loc-

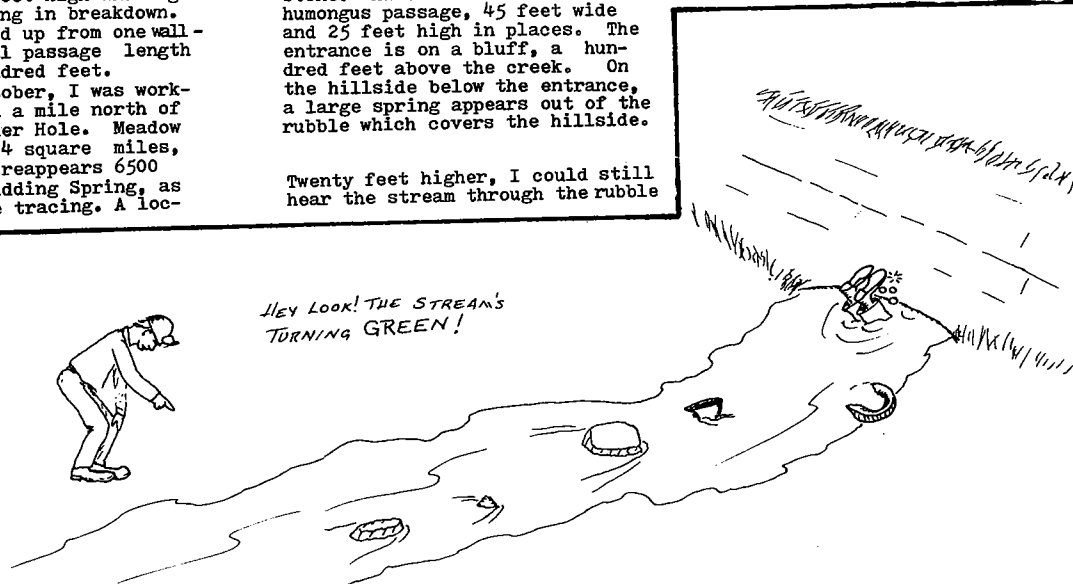
al reported a cave about a thousand feet from the spring, in the direction of the sinking spot or Meadow Creek. This area appears to have been well covered by VPI cave hunters—up on the hill, that is. The cave I had been directed to wasn't known, though. I walked into the quarry according to directions, and found an overflow entrance. Ten feet inside was a major stream, $\frac{1}{2}$ -1 cubic feet per second, undoubtedly the underground portion of Meadow Creek. Twenty feet downstream was a break-down choke, caused no doubt by quarry blasting, which I couldn't get through. I pulled rocks loose to lower the water level upstream. Then I turned around and headed upstream, ready for the mile of passage between me and the sinks of Meadow Creek. I walked through sand and mud two feet deep, filling my boots. In passage seven feet high and ten wide. One hundred and thirty feet upstream from the entrance, the ceiling dropped and the water got real deep—it siphoned!

In mid November, still dry weather, I traveled to Hamilton Cave, where Walker Creek again loops into the foot of Big Walker Mountain, and just misses intersecting the Chatham Hill limestone. Hamilton Cave has some humongus passage, 45 feet wide and 25 feet high in places. The entrance is on a bluff, a hundred feet above the creek. On the hillside below the entrance, a large spring appears out of the rubble which covers the hillside.

Twenty feet higher, I could still hear the stream through the rubble

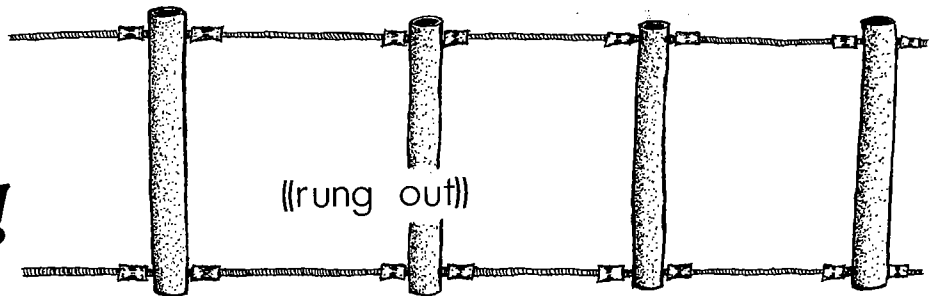
piled next to a ledge. I spent over two hours throwing rocks out from under the ledge, lured on by the inflowing breeze and visions of more giant passage. Finally I squeezed into the blackness to reach the stream which feeds the spring, flowing about $\frac{1}{2}$ cubic feet per second. I looked upstream to see in the distance a wide pool and hear rapids. But the rapids that were making noise were downstream, and the twenty foot wide pool was—a siphon! A low crawl to the right led to a cobble fill almost to the ceiling. The total length was 60 feet. The breeze must have been drawn to the higher Hamilton Cave through impassable openings. Vertical measurements indicated that the floor of the entrance passage in Hamilton Cave is only 20 feet above the low pool level in the spring cave, apparently in the same beds. In high water, backup from the spring probably creates the seasonal pools that are known in Hamilton Cave.

So I'm 0 and 3 in pushing springs and overflows in Virginia. I know of another overflow near Wolf Creek that needs to be dug out, and I'll bet it will siphon. I'm still waiting to break the big one here in Virginia. Take me back to old Kentucky!





Ladder Bounce!



» Jerry Redder

"You people are crazy!", "What the hell--a cable ladder?". These were some of the impressions we received from members of the Holston Valley Grotto when we met them between the Vault Room and the bottom of Triple Wells. What else could they say when they learned our plans? But I must start this story with its proper chronological sequence.

Don Davison had come up to Blacksburg to attend our Halloween celebration. He had heard that ladders are used almost exclusively in Europe and he wanted to give them a try. He was able to convince Cheryl Jones, Lor Windle and myself to go along with him. Two free loaders, Bob Alderson and Rolf McQuerry, followed us to make use of our rope. At the cave, we came upon the tail of the HVG

troop descending the entrance. We exchanged greetings and went our separate ways. Since each member of our group knew the way, we travelled at our own speed. Hauling 7 cable ladders and 240 feet of rope through the stoopwalks and crawlways to Triple Wells was quite a task. By the time I showed up, Don and Cheryl were already rigging the drop, so Lor and I began to connect the ladders together.

Don descended first, taking about 14 minutes to do so. Cheryl followed him down in about 13 minutes. Bob, Rolf, Lor and myself used the more conventional technique, rappelling, to descend the pit. Don and Cheryl both complained about soreness in their forearms. While resting up before climbing out, we signed the register and B.S.ed with the people from HVG. Rolf and Bob left us at this time to exit by way of Bill's Kappel. We returned to Triple Wells.

The climb was belayed by a Gibbs ascender on a parallel rope. The Gibbs was attached by a sling, through a chest safety, then attached to the seat. For resting, we had a piece of sling with a biner on the end attached to the seat. The idea was to loop the sling over a ladder rung and then back to the seat. I personally found this too cumbersome an arrangement, so I just clipped the biner to a rung to rest. This does put more stress on the rungs than the sling arrangement would have, but not enough to harm a well constructed ladder.

Don was the first to climb out. Stopping often as the subject of many photographs, his time on the ladder was 45 minutes. Lor started the climb next. Soon, feeling quite tired, he began complaining about the distance. Don yelled down that he was already one-third of the way up. To this Lor replied, "I may be one-third up, but I'm two-thirds tired." Lor's elapsed time was close to an hour.

As I prepared to go up, I thought how foolish I had been to party until 5:00 o'clock that morning. It took me close to two hours to climb the 203 feet. During that time, I fell asleep twice and tested my

self-belay once. By the time I reached the top, Don had sent Lor out to try to contact our Grotto and tell them that we would not return by our sign out time. Lor had left the cave approximately 90 minutes before our ETA. My forearms were very sore when I reached the top and Don said he had experienced the same thing. We had both used our legs climbing, but had used our arms to cling close to the ladder. When Cheryl reached the top after 32 minutes, she did not complain about her arms. Instead, her complaint was that it took her more time to climb out of Triple Wells than to come out of Fantastic Pit.

With Lor gone, the three of us were faced with the task of coiling 240 feet of rope and 203 feet of cable ladder. This took some time. Going out, one man carried the rope, another had 3 of

the ladders, and the other had 4 ladders. Realizing that we were now late, and if Lor did not get in touch with the Grotto, which was having its celebration on top of Brush Mountain, we would have a rescue coming after us.

When we reached the bottom of the entrance drop we noticed that the rope was gone. It appeared that when HVG left the cave they had hauled our rope out because it was in the way, then they had thrown it back down the drop without checking to see if it had fallen free to the bottom. It hadn't. The rope not being there was just a nuisance as we climbed up the drop to the rope. Don used the rope with a self-belaying cam. I rigged in with two Gibbs and cammed out. Cheryl just climbed all of the way.

By this time we were one hour past ETA. Lor told us that he had asked R.E. Whittemore to try to call the grotto to change our ETA. We figured that if Whitt got in touch, we had no problem and if he didn't, then being so late, somebody should be looking for us. As it occurred, a rescue had been formed and we intercepted it on our way back.

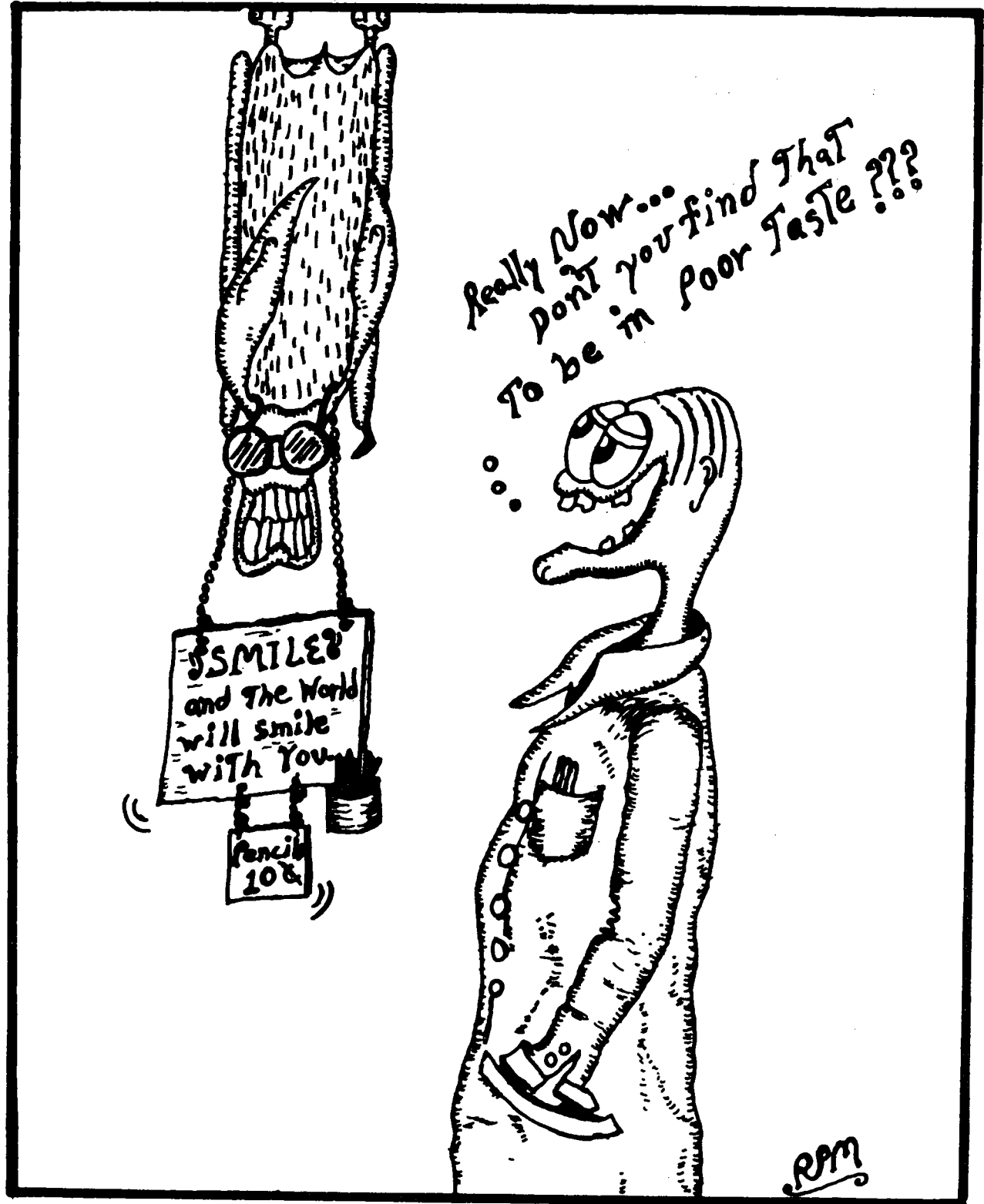
The experiences of climbing the Triple Wells on a cable ladder was interesting, but I don't think I'll do it again. It seems to take more physical endurance to climb a ladder that distance than to climb a rope. I would just as soon use the rope.

editor's note:

But J.J. didn't have to be rescued on the ladder. We'd just as soon have him stick to a good thing.

COMMENT FROM R.E. (Paraphrased): "Yeah, I saw that the rope hadn't gone all the way back down, and I should have gone down to knock it free....but I was tired and thought 'if it was anyone in there besides Cheryl and Don I would, but they can manage...'"

ROD :



404% ?

Barry Whittemore

vs.

GATHRIGHT!

This Fall, the VPI Cave Club, like many other caving and conservation organizations, became incensed about the Gathright Dam Project in Bath and Highland Counties, Virginia. Right after the Fall VAR meeting the situation was discussed by the club. We voted to send a petition to Rep. Joe Swins, Chairman, House Appropriations Committee, Sub-Committee on Public Works, Rayburn Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515--head of the investigation of this project. Copies were also forwarded to Rep. W.C. Wampler, 9th District of Virginia; Sen. H.P. Byrd Jr. of Virginia; and to Gerald Ford, President of the United States. As might have been expected, we have received no response as of yet.

We are still hoping for the remote best, and all concerned groups and individuals are urged to join in this significant campaign. Thank You.

A copy of our letter follows:

Sir:

We, the undersigned members and friends of the Virginia Polytechnic Institute Grotto of the National Speleological Society, feel that it is incumbent upon us as interested citizens to voice our collective opinions on the Gathright Dam Project now being investigated by Congress.

In these times of economic troubles we are dismayed to learn that this less than half completed project already has a cost overrun of over 404%.

Our dismay is multiplied when we learn that all this money is being spent on a dam that will be obsolete before it is completed. Consider that the pollution-dilution effect claimed as 40% of the so-called benefit is now illegal.

To switch the outlawed environmental benefits to recreational benefits is at best absurd. In the region of the project there are more than ample flat water recreation areas. On the other hand, it will obliterate the Kincaid Gorge and flood miles of the Jackson River Valley flowing through the heart of the beautiful and rustic Gathright Wildlife Management area, an ideal recreational area for outdoor enthusiasts and naturalists.

This brings us to a third point. The over 5,000 acres of the 18,000 acre wildlife management area to be flooded are the absolutely essential food producing bottom lands. Loss of these would make the wildlife area ecologically unfeasible.

Finally, the very idea of attempting to build a dam over an extensive network of caverns in extremely porous limestone is absolutely ludicrous. We are shocked beyond belief that the Army Corps of Engineers could create such a miscarriage of basic engineering and elementary geology.

Hence, the entire Gathright Dam Project, whether considered from an economic, ecologic, environmental, engineering, esthetic, or recreational aspect, is a shameful piece of planning and a disgrace to our government. We Virginians are indignant. We Americans are outraged. Please do not let such a travesty continue.

"What you have made can be found in many places, but what you have destroyed is found nowhere else in the world."

J. Q.'s Jerky®

1 flank steak, about 1.5 lbs.
1 tsp. each: season salt, Accent, onion powder
Liquid Smoke and/or BBQ salt
1/3 tsp each: garlic powder, Black pepper
1/4 cup each: Worcestershire Sauce
Soy sauce

Trim off all possible fat. Semi-freeze meat and slice with the grain into 1/8" slices.
MARINATE overnight in the sauce (all of the above ingredients) in a shallow pan.
LAY STRIPS of meat in single layers on oven racks (be sure to place foil underneath to keep your oven clean).
BAKE with the oven door open a crack, at 140°F for 8-10 hours. BUT,
Be sure to TASTE occasionally, and remove when the chewyness appeals to you the most.
Janet usually can't wait the 8 hrs, and has found 3-4 hours to be plenty.

The Return Of Big Walker

—» rolf
mcqueary

The following is a sequel to the article "Notes on Big Walker" which appeared in the last issue of The Tech Troglodyte. (Spring '74) Due to unforeseen circumstances which warranted a separate complete article I shall, here, simply summarize briefly our finds during follow up trips to new caves previously mentioned. Read this quickly and take ten giant steps to "Mattachock."

FRANCIS ROARING SPRING:

The name France's has been added to Roaring Spring since we found a Roaring Spring Cave already existing in Virginia... Two trips followed the initial exploration trip of April '74. The goal of each trip was to pull out small breakdown blocks which prevented further penetration into the cave. The third trip finally broke through, unfortunately just to find a small room with large breakdown further blocking the way... Any future progress seems impossible unless one can drop down through a-

nother entrance some where higher on the ridge. We have walked the ridge but as yet to no avail. Only one small sinking stream was found which may be one of many sources for the spring... Water still flows heavily from the spring, even during the dry month of August and air current continues to be tremendous...

YAHOO:

Herb Safford, Doug Olson and myself, rope in hand, returned during exam week of Spring Quarter. After first rescuing a calf which had fallen and pinned itself in the entrance we commenced to ladder down the waterfall and rig the 50-60 foot drop which had blocked our way previously. This was the cave we were so excited about opening into another Newberry's. Our hope, however, soon vanished as we reached the bottom of the pit. The cave was found to continue and branch but all leads became too tight to continue. Again, air could be felt flowing and

there was a slight possibility we may have missed something. In any case, I'd just as soon chuck it. Passage consists of tight fissure and wet stream crawls running along strike toward Francis Roaring Spring. This, again, could be another source for the spring which lies about a mile away...

FRANCIS #1:

There is still hope here. We have not returned as yet...

MORE RIDGE:

There is a hell of a lot more out there that is still waiting to be walked...

MATTACHOCK:

Oh, yes... almost forgot... This one is a bit new...

Mattachock!

The morning of June 29th fell head first into the pattern that Walker Mountain trips seemed to have spelled out... a fiasco. Several ridge walking trips before had yielded three totally virgin caves. In fact, there hadn't been one trip to date that did not yield something new. The fact that none of these finds really amounted to all that much didn't really seem to deter the thousand people who, with the smell of success about, wished to try their luck. Then again, perhaps it was just a good day for a walk and indeed it was.

The members of the party were Janet Queissar, Jan Davis, Rick Whitt, Bob Alderson, Bob Mead-Donaldson, Lor Windle and myself.

However, Janet and Jan were going to map with Glen Davis and Bill Douty further down the ridge at Bane's. The five of us, then, set out to comb the slopes of Walker and, by the end of the day, thought that our good luck trend in cave hunting had, at last, diminished. Were we ever wrong.

It had rained for a few days before but today it was clear and warm. As we sat on an old one lane bridge over Walker Creek deciding where to begin we thought it not a bad idea to scratch the original plan and go tubing instead, on down to Poplar Hill. Being too lazy, however, to retrieve our tubes from Blacksburg we began up the ravine to the west of Salamander

Cave. The remainder of the day was uneventful and unproductive except for one "insignificant" find. Traveling along the shale-limestone contact, I was becoming increasingly tired and frustrated as our efforts seemed to be failing more and more to futility. Coming up the side of a shallow swell I caught sight of a small outcrop about fifty feet from the edge of a field. Nothing really exciting about it. Its only feature was a small hole about the size of my fist. As one looked closer, however, it was seen that this was no common, drab, every day hole. A small leaf quivered just inside. I poked it and watched as it disappeared into darkness. Lor looked up, his left eye twitching... "It sucks" he said. "That hole sucks." "Ah, yes" I replied as I dropped another leaf to watch it pop through the slit and be drawn out of sight. By this time the remainder of the group had arrived and began crouching aside the hole, feeding it more leaves. Finally, through laughter and tears we came to the realization that Walker Mountain had central vacuum cleaning and moved on along the ridge. Nothing more was found and, at sunset, we left with tired feet and nothing promising to look forward to.

On the fourth of July, for lack of anything better to do and

"You say it's
Indian for Suck-Hole...
Astounding, yes
indeed, astounding..."

for reasons which still puzzle me, four of us returned; our intentions being to dig and pry that literal rat hole apart and find out just what was behind its peculiar behavior. Bob Alderson, Rabbit Dixon, Jan Davis and myself thus arrived at Capp Whittaker's place early that afternoon and obtained permission to continue our endeavor.

Pick and pry-bar in hand, we set out, gorging ourselves with perfectly ripe blackberries along the way. Surprisingly, we had little trouble respotting the slit. It certainly didn't appear any larger the second time around, but thrusting a leaf toward it again sparked hope as it was immediately swallowed. We worked for about two hours prying and placing chock stones. Progress was indeed slow and we weren't rewarded in the least by any peek at possible passage ahead. One couldn't help but think that we were simply running into a pinch between two slabs of solid rock. We must have really had nothing better to do, however, for we continued. Most of

what we were pulling was indeed solid slabs of rock cemented together by clay and calcite veins. We had enlarged the opening to about eight inches in diameter. One large stone, slightly loose, but stubborn, kept us from our goal. Finally, after five hours it gave way and we slowly slid it away revealing a hole just large enough for Jan to barely squeeze through. The passage sloped down at a very steep angle and we had a hand line tied in case anything really rude was encountered. As Jan wedged herself in, exhaled, and slipped slowly forward, we waited impatiently. Now only the heels of her boots could be seen and suddenly they were gone too. "What the hell's going on down there" I shouted. Back came the reply "It opens up!" I turned, grinning, to Bob, but he was gone with a cloud of dust funneling down into the slit. This left Rabbit and myself pouting outside as we were yet too large to fit.

The first obstacle encountered was a short drop of about fifteen feet for which Bob said he would construct a rope ladder out of the hand line. After explaining his intent he, once again, disappeared into the darkness and that was the last we heard of him or Jan until their return. Rabbit once again tried to fit through but I, again, ended up pulling him out by his heels. Again we sat with that same empty restless feeling as if waiting for the return of an exam. Finally, after an hour stretched into hundreds, we heard a rustle, some groans and scrapes. Jan slowly emerged followed by Bob. Both had grins running twice around their heads. Bob reached out his hand. Nothing needed to be said. Mattachock Cave had seen it's first light in almost half a billion years.

Bob, Jan and myself returned to the cave along with Rick Whitt the following weekend. After digging a bit more we could all make the tight squeeze through. The passage was very steep and opened immediately into a small room about three feet high which was handy for storing gear before the rest of the party arrived. The ladder climb lay just beyond. After descending the climb we followed the passage down and around a bend. It suddenly opened into a room no less than seventy five feet in diameter with a thirty foot ceiling. I couldn't believe my eyes. This, it was decided should be dubbed the Fourth of July Room for this what Bob had first set eyes on during that day Mattachock was opened. We entered the room on a false floor composed of large breakdown plugs. It was similar to the Mud Bridge in Pig Hole. Off to the sides lay several passage leads as well as three pits. The largest and deepest of these we called Prophecy and it was to this that we first rigged our rope. It was my pleasure to be the first to descend. As I leaned back and cast away I overlooked a total drop of about a hundred feet. A large balcony lay about fifteen feet below and, from this, came



"...after 5 hours, the rock gave. We slowly slid it away revealing a hole just large enough for Jan to slip through...."

free fall for about seventy feet to another ledge. Across the drop, about fifty feet away, lay two other passages, both of which looked as to hold still more secrets. We attempted to pendulum to these but our rope could never reach so far. The second ledge, as we were later to find, connects through steep fissure passage to the otherwise blind Patriots Pit. This is the first of the three drops just after the ladder climb. It is a sixty to seventy foot free fall dome pit which has the habit of sucking in caving gear which you, unknowingly let your eyes off in the entrance shoot. It would also accept your body quite willingly if you should give it a chance.

The base of Prophecy Pit is a mud-gravel depression about fifteen feet in diameter. At the lower end a muddy jagged passage leads off, again downward. We traveled only forty feet before being confronted by another obstacle. We found ourselves at the base of a small dome pit with no readily apparent way to go, but straight up. High passage was within sight and, as usual, it took Bob Alderson to finally find the way up. It was a narrow fissure to one side of the pit. Capping the top was a gut gouging pinch which really should have been named. The hole, however, has been enlarged

since this trip. Once recovering our vision we found ourselves standing in a large room about 150 feet long and twenty feet wide. Shear walls towered above and breakdown covered the floor. This marked an end to our exploration for any continuing passage appeared to be totally blocked by collapse. As we peered up a dome pit at one end of the room a large black hole loomed sixty feet above. The walls were like glass and even Alderson couldn't fly.

We returned to the top of Prophecy, checked out a few other leads and then had the misfortune to descend the last of the three pits. Proctoscopic pit, if you really want to call it a pit, is a three stage drop of forty, thirty and twenty feet. The first forty is fine. Bob descended first. He was gone for a half hour then called for Rick. He left and Jan and myself waited another half hour before hearing a faint call to continue. As I edged over the drop which constituted the second stage things began to look a little grim. I was no longer rappelling down the wall, but rather, inside what appeared to be a wall. My boots merged, then my legs. I couldn't find my breakbars or the rope I was attached to. I looked down just to see that the worst was yet to come. The third stage, The

Sphincter, stood before me. I felt like a human suppository. Jan followed. Looking over at the hole through which the rope passed she shook her head, "I hope they don't give this place an enema while we're in here." We held our breath, closed our eyes and oozed through, literally swallowed by a mud flow. What continued on the other side, however, was totally out of character... Big Booming Canyon... which also, unfortunately soon ended in a popcorn pinch. Insult was, naturally, added by a hint of air flow. By this time Rick and Bob showed up laughing, either out of hysteria, or at our gullibility. We had all had enough of this Mattachock by then and so four mud coated bodies emerged swearing never to return.

I had to return, however, for I had promised Capp Whittaker photographs of his newly discovered cave. So on July 28th I succeeded in suckering Don Anderson and Janet Queisser to partake of wondrous Mattachock. I should have known better than to anger the spirits for, on this trip they materialized and attempted to drop a 200lb slab on my head, almost ruining my camera.

Having only photographs in mind we took a rather direct route down Prophecy and back to what we thought was the terminating room. After a bit of poking about Don noted a small hole in the breakdown floor through which air current flowed. It was a rather slimy crawl but we continued into what appeared to be real passage and shortly to a small room. Again we were at the bottom of a dome pit. Again we could see a hole up top and again there was no way to get up there.

Two very tight leads branched off the base of this room. I examined one side which led to wet branching canyons, all of which seemed to become too tight for further exploration. Not feeling in the mood for such miserable material, I returned and, upon meeting Don and Janet, took a few more pictures and exited what was rapidly becoming a true suck hole.

Pondering the situation, I decided to give Mattachock one last try. So on August 18th, Bob Alderson, Bob Mead-Donaldson, Don Anderson, Paris-Troy Anderson and myself once again returned. Since all low passage seemed to be leading us into wet rotten pinches I wondered if, perhaps, the characteristics of the cave were not similar to Schoolhouse where one must remain high in order to continue to the back of the cave. Our goal then was to traverse across Prophecy Pit, to the high passage on the other side. Perhaps we could also reach the top of those pits in the rear of the cave. We figured that we would have to bolt or at least use direct climbing aids so we brought in enough gear to climb El Cap.

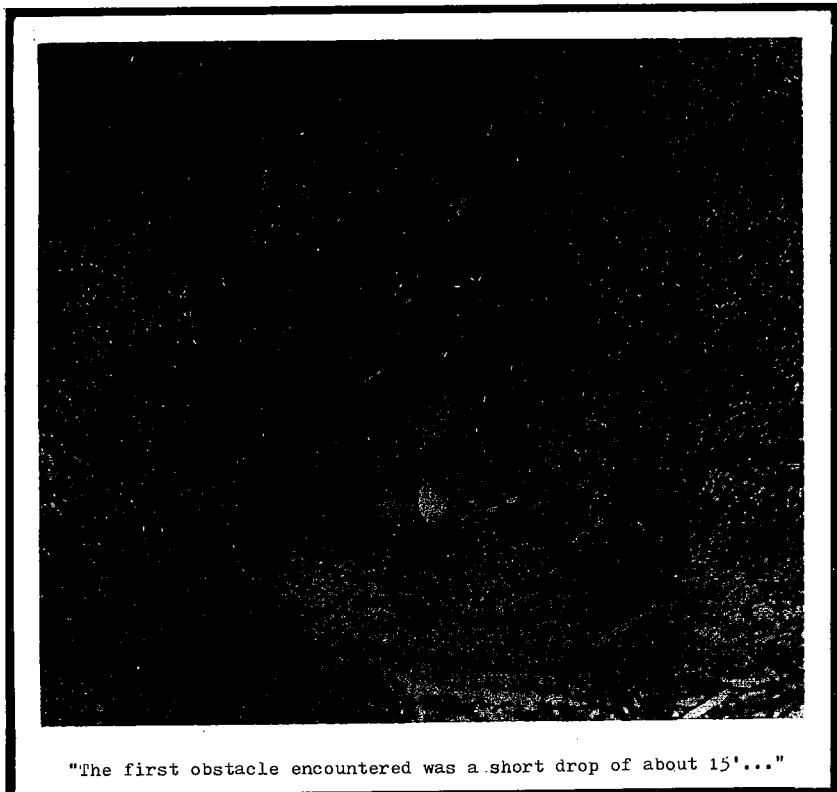
When we reached the pit things

looked bad. The only possible access to the other side was along the left wall on a slick flowstone and mud crusted bulge which appeared to deflate the longer one looked at it. Luckily, however, an alternate route was seen. If one was to descend first to the balcony below there seemed to be a series of stalagmites and bumps across which one may be able to climb. We wouldn't even need to bolt!

Mind you I'm not a rock climber nor do I profess to know one damn thing about rock climbing, but some how I was chosen to do the lead climb. Once reaching the other side, assuming my mind would still be stable and sound, I would tie my end of the belay line off. The others would then come across along a true tyrollean.

I finally set foot on the other side I breathed a sigh of relief. My end of the line was tied off and the most fantastic trolly in south western Virginia came to be. Bob Mead came across first as only Bob could... "Why did you rig in facing away from the wall Bob?" I asked as he sat pinned between the taught line and the wall... "Well... in California..." He grinned under his flashing glasses. Better view no doubt. After contorting himself out of his predicament Bob Alderson followed leaving Don and Paris to wait in the Fourth of July Room.

We headed off the balcony through a small hole in some breakdown and emerged into another small room. Crawling cautiously to the top of a tilting slab which



"The first obstacle encountered was a short drop of about 15'..."

How I started across the pit I'll never know. My knees were knocking so bad I thought the noise would start a rock slide. With a sling of carabiners, pitons and chocks across my shoulder, I proceeded. All I needed was a pair of knickers and an old briar pipe. When my first hand hold disintegrated I just about died. I was being belayed from the top of the pit so, at worst, I would only pendulum back to my starting point but I still couldn't put that ominous dark mass out of my mind.

Luckily the climb was not nearly as difficult as it first appeared. My major concern was whether my holds would stay in place. Most of them didn't. As

made up the floor of the room we realized that we were simply sitting atop another pit. Finding the slab to be only about six inches thick and composed of rotten flakes and mud gave us a rather uneasy feeling. Passage again could be seen across the pit. Not having enough rope to descend the full length of the drop I decided to go ahead and attempt to pendulum over to it. After hanging on the rope for thirty minutes trying every conceivable procedure for reaching my destination I finally tied a large knot in the remainder of the rope which hung below. With this makeshift grappling device I threw it across, into the passage, hoping to snag on some rocks. At last

it seemed to catch and I slowly pulled my way over using a Jumar for hauling. Just as I reached the other side, however, the rocks broke loose. It would have been nice if there was passage on the opposite side for I would have had plenty of momentum to reach it. Unfortunately there was only a mud covered wall which I came to be a close acquaintance of. Another try did work, however, and I wedged myself into the passage.

I wish I could say that it opened into booming trunk channel but this was not the case. Oh, it goes all right but, again, it is none the less than tight, sharp, wet crawls, intersected by more pits. I was in no shape or mood to fully explore them all, returning to the pendulum drop I clipped in to my break bars, asked Bob Alderson to belay me from a ledge below and bailed out of that God forsaken passage with the samurai cry of "Falling!!!" Slamming against the opposite wall and leaving a cartoon impression of myself in the mud, I totally lost control and relied on Bob to bring me to a safe landing. He did...

We were all ready to leave so, as a last minute thought, Bob dropped his handkerchief on down the drop thinking that perhaps it connected in below Prophecy Pit. We would have to search for it in a later trip. That later trip would not come until January of 1975.

We had completed an overland survey between Mattachock and Salamander in September but the cave itself was not entered. As it turned out, the only useful data we gained from this excursion was the knowledge that Big Walker, at times, becomes infested with Timber Rattlers. As Bob Alderson looked through the transit bull's eye just to see the smiling face of one of our reptilian friends, it is understandable that his mind may have wandered a bit. After seeing three within an hour we were all rather cautious.

Finally, on January 19th Tom Calhoun, Mat Scott, Ed Devine and myself returned. We hoped to explore a bit more across the Prophecy Traverse and also try and find Bobs Handkerchief. Having only a limited amount of time, however, we forfeited the traverse idea and, instead, rappelled directly to the lower sections via Prophecy Pit. We spent some time hunting the apparent ghost handkerchief and then continued

to the termination room and side room which Don Anderson had discovered.

Things looked just as grim. The leads were extremely tight and the dome pit lead remained inaccessible without bolts. "Where in hell is all this air going???" If I found out anything at all from this excuse for a cave, that would be the question.

I, half heartedly, crammed my body in the left hand crawl. It sloped down and came to a narrow mud filled bend which I could not see around. I pushed further, pulling out a few blocks but, none the less, getting myself gloriously wedged. I called Mat to help pull my legs and so, after thrashing about, slowly withdrew, disgusted.

As I left to explore the lead in the other direction Tom eyed the squeeze and threw himself in. After a bit of moaning and swearing his feet disappeared.

The tight, wet, muddy fissures which constituted the right hand lead offered only grief. They split off in unending branches but seemed too tight to continue. After crashing through a rotten false ledge and pinning my neck in a mud-rock slot I decided I had seen enough and returned to the dome pit. When I surfaced I found Ed sitting alone by the left hand lead. He said he had followed Tom and Mat through the

pinch but had returned shortly to wait for me. Tom and Mat had been gone for a half hour and we waited another half hour before hearing from them again. I was beginning to wonder if it was possible they were into something. Finally, a call from Tom. As it was, he said they were waiting for us to come through. He returned to invite us once more. Being totally drenched, tired and obviously not too enthusiastic about this particular section, I declined. He said Mat and himself would then continue and return in about twenty minutes. Ed and myself sat back to, once again, wait.

"Could such miserable passage ever give birth to anything?... No way... but where is that air going??" I was baffled and disgusted with the whole mess. At this point I wasn't even anxious knowing Tom and Mat had been gone so long. "Next time I come to this mountain it will be Summer and this time I'll bring my tubes..." My thought was interrupted by a shuffle and groan. Ever so slowly Tom and Mat emerged from that same hole which had laughed at me. A smile... that same encrustedly contagious grin which had donned Bob and Jan on July fourth was plastered all over their faces. "It goes... Booming passage... large stream..."

Mattachock has become a major cave. I guess I'll have to return.



"As I leaned back and cast away, I over-looked a total drop of about 100'..."

Banquet !!

It happened on a certain February night when the legions that hold allegiance to the VPI Grotto met down in Blacksburg to become reunited in the wild festivities that have become known as the VPI Banquet. This extravaganza occurred on February first, in the year of our Lord (no, I do not mean the great Ed Loud) nineteen hundred and seventy-five. It was the tenth annual Banquet celebration (or should that be "conflagration"?) and it was held in the Red Lion Inn off 460 at 7:00 o'clock (if you weren't there, then HUUUPH!). The food was not spectacularly incredible, but it was all you could eat and it was very edible. Personally, I rather enjoyed it (and made a hog-body of myself). Quite delicious.

After making absolute piglets of ourselves at this feast, we were enchanted by slides and stories as presented to us by Sara Corrie. She gave us a pictorially descriptive account of her adventures in the underground. Everyone found these tales to be interesting and Sara was resoundingly awarded with a hearty cheer and clap when her exploits had been recounted. That which followed attempted to hold up the high esteem and reputation that these renowned post-Banquets have created. I speak now of the awards ceremony, the time when all good people look to their just rewards and all enemies of the people cringe in fear and terror of the awesome retribution that they know will await them. Thus it was at this last Banquet. The awards committee had worked and connived with devious craft to ferret out those which deserved to be recognized for their good deeds and those which would be recognized in ignominious retribution.

So the awards ceremony proceeded as follows; giving a short account of the award, its purpose, its recipient, and the reason for the recipient's reception of the award.

We started out with our more glamorous awards--the ones in which everyone had some knowledge, either directly or else indirectly, just by getting around. So! The first award was the Lynn Richardson heat award; given our to the hottest (though more accurately, horniest) person in the club. This year the award went to Jim "jock" or "jocko" Searden. As a token of our esteem, he received a fitted jock strap designed just for his measurements. In other words, the people in the third seat back couldn't see the cup. The next award was given to a man who had done his best to color his world. The award was the Dye-Hard caver award and it was given to Joe Saunders for all of his _____ (fill in the blank depending on your attitude) use of dye in his studies. Not only did

he use it thoroughly and constantly, but he got it all over himself when he was involved in a rear-end collision (green hair, too). For these illustrious feats, he was given a dyed tee-shirt which proclaimed his fame as a "Dye-Hard Caver". The third award was the Steve Hall Hearthrob of the year award. This is given out to the person who best displays their emotional tendency to fall infatuated in love. This year the award was given to Carol Godla for her numerous escapades with l'amour. As a condolence, she was given a purple candle shaped as a penis. We all hope she enjoys it. Following that, came the Paul Broughton Flame-out of the year award. This is given to the best flamer for the past year. Instead of picking someone who was spectacular, or someone who was consistent, the award went to someone who is consistently spectacular--Steve Hall. Although not an ever-present image like some of the cavers are, when Steve Hall does make an appearance, which is still fairly often, he is so plastered and rowdy that all cringe before his belch. For these memorable occasions he has given us, we gave him a tequila bottle and some hangover remedy. Good luck. Robyn Loud was given the Good Housekeeping Award as a token of our esteem and affection for the services that she renders on so many Saturday nights when so many drunks stagger over to the Loud's for a glorious evening of sci-fi movies, drunken revelations and poker playing. The fact that the apartment endures so much of our disgusting behavior is, in itself, a mute testimony to her efforts. Thus, she was awarded with a framed copy of Good-Housekeeping magazine; an issue with such articles as "How to decoratively arrange passed-out drunks", etc. The Jim Hixon jailbird of the year award was given to three splendid gentlemen who were arrested and convicted for being drunk in public in Newport News at Russ Peterson's party in September. These men; Ed Loud, Jerry Redder, and Ed Richardson were granted a "Get-out-of-jail-free" card and a verbal promise of bail from someone in the audience.

The Brainbucket is annually awarded to the person who tears the hell out of themselves the most in the line of duty. Finding none so qualified, the awards committee decided to make a precedence of giving the award to the Yeattes' dog, Sadie, for breaking her leg just as we prepared to go out on our fall project. Rin-tin-tin, eat your heart out. Bob and Ellen Page were given the Instant Marriage Award for their haste in joining into the matrimonial bondage of love. They received a box of instant wedding cake and a returned check. Rick Cooper was given a pair of pretty black pantyhose in honor of his activities at dance parties. The activity and the award's name:

lor windle

Get Nearly Naked (down to his tights, at least). Don Davison was once again honored by VPI. This time the award was the Jacob's Ladder award given to him to commemorate the time when he climbed Triple Wells on cable ladders and wound up disrupting the halloween party on Brush Mountain. He was given a record of "We are climbing Jacob's Ladder" to play when he gets tired (or bored) climbing. The Jerry Redder Safe Driver of the Year award was given to two people this year. The award is given for excellence in reckless driving and two people shared equal luck. Alan Armstrong flipped his renault and totalled it, barely saving himself, Keith Ortiz somehow managed to roll Beattie out on the by-pass and severely destroy it. Both of these men were recognized with a plaque consisting of pistons. The Bob Page Armchair Caver of the Year went to a man who went caving to two caves, but couldn't fit into the connection. The cave he went to was Bone cave, the caver was Gary Moss. He was awarded an armchair formed out of bone. The Virginia Tech Cave Club-Athletic Association Award was given to five men who have done their best to disrupt the normal "jock" attitude of VPI. The men were Jim Denton, Doug Perkins, Mark Slusarski, Bill Stringfellow, and Lor Windle. They received a record on the Va-Tech N.I.T. championship two years ago. Due to some quirk, these people couldn't decide who should possess the record and they divided it up then and there.

The Dedicated Caver of the Year went to Dale Parrott for his continued, remorseless work on the New River System. He was given a plastic Brunton Cadet to spur him on. Guano clusters were magnanimously given out. Landowners Penley and Sizer received some. Thor Brecht got one for his work on supplies committee. Cheryl got one for her Trog. Frieders and Yeattes each got $\frac{1}{4}$ of a cluster for their unfinished work on our cable ladders. Danny and Lynn Wright got one for their comeback to the VPI area. Gill and Jill Ediger got one for hosting a magnificent New Year's party. And Mike Wolf also got one for his undying effort to make the Banquet all that it was. An A.I. Cartwright Honorarium was given to Joe Saunders for his extensive work underground. The Trainee of the Year went to Doug Thompson. He got a membership in the N.S.S. Last off, the door prize, a giant tip cleaner, went to Bob Alderson. The L.A.'s raffle gave liquor and gifts away to many people. The formal banquet ended and was transformed into the typical wild, drunken orgy at the Hidden Hills Clubhouse. A band was present part of the time and we all revelled in its music. Perkins followed the band and we continued past dawn. What more need one say?

Ex pedit ior: Cr umps style!?

For the fourth consecutive New Years holidays, I was to cave in Crumps in Kentucky, but for the first time since expedition-style caving had been started last April by cavers from the Cleveland Grotto and the Mid-Illinois Grotto. Keith Ortiz had flown up from Mexico City for the occasion. I had brand new coveralls for the trip, and we each carried two full packs into the cave crammed with food and gear. Our ultimate destination was two hot ends of the survey east of North Crump Avenue, one of these leads reported to be walking passage.

After determining that no one else would be in the cave while we were, we entered and descended the waterfall pitch near the entrance, getting rather wet in the process. We had managed to delay the start of the trip until 3:30 PM. With a day or two of rough cave ahead, I was in no hurry to enter. Crumps has developed the habit of deterring people from entering. After the 200 foot belly crawl in the rain swollen stream, we signed in at the first register, then proceeded onto the toll (25¢) ladder rigged for the 10 foot drop at Fishhook Falls, only to discover that the climb was in a waterfall. We decided to take a drier alternate route which added about 25 minutes to the trip, and soon were back on the planned route, now in the 800 foot long C Crawl. Through this and beyond, we maintained a moderate but steady pace, slower than that last May, when I had almost sweated myself into desalination, even with a minimum of clothing on. I chuckled as I remembered reading in *The Caves Beyond* of the East Coast cavers in the Flint Ridge crawlways, very overdressed and cursing their sweating. The dusty crawls in Crumps are like those in Flint Ridge five miles away.

After three carbide changes, or about eight hours, we reached

the Base Camp in Happy Crawl, about 1000 feet of crawling short of Crump Avenue. Along the way, we had passed film cans and "water-tight" bottles of carbide that was left as caches two years ago, and now largely turned to white powder. At Base Camp, with its 4-5 foot high ceilings and dry sand floor, we unrolled the camp's two dacron sleeping bags to air, then crawled off about 500 feet to mop up 8 stations for 110 feet of crawlway.

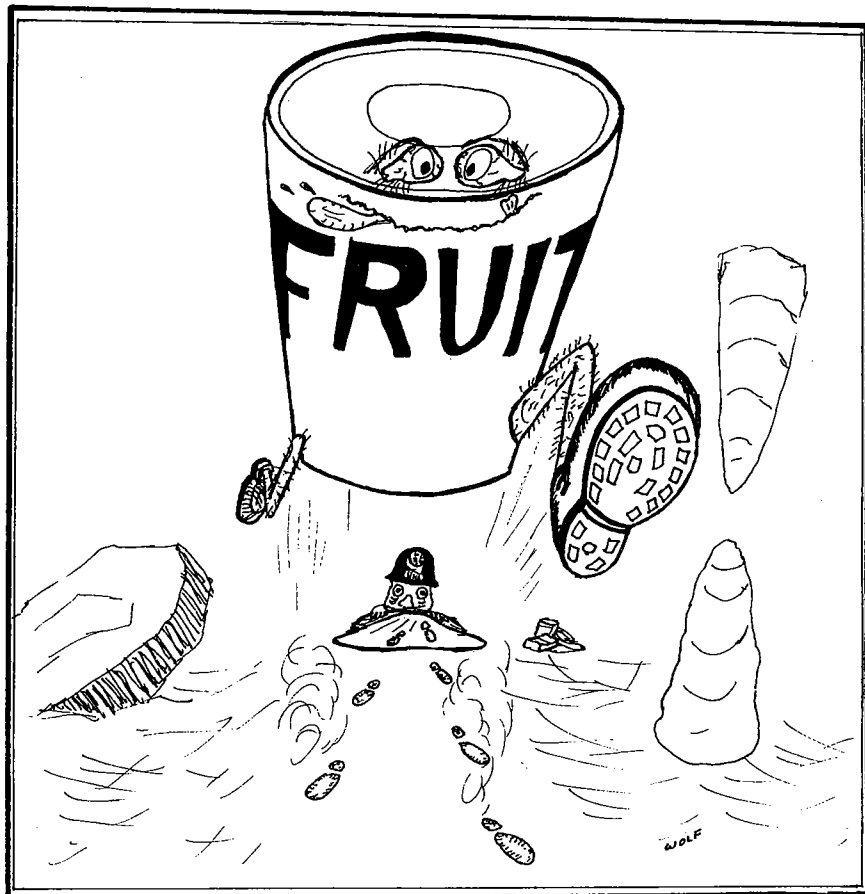
Returning to Base Camp, we ate a brief snack at the Happy Crawl Restaurant, where a menu offered beef stroganoff for \$20.00. Stripping down, we pulled the sleeping bags onto plastic sheets in the middle of the crawlway and slid in. No matter if my bag came up only to my armpits, it was warm.

After a "night" of uneasy sleep (we had no watch with us), we awoke to a quick can of fruit. Keith mentioned how my snoring had sounded like a freight train in a tunnel. We each crammed what we'd need this day into one pack, then set off for Crump Avenue, bound for the survey area. After a tight, low section, we popped out into Crumps Avenue, six feet wide and fifteen feet high. Shortly, Keith found a nice hole to move his bowels into. Too late I protested that in wet years it drained into the heavily trav-

eled, one foot high Whimper Route. Presently we turned off Crumps Avenue into a 2'x3' crawl, with a deep body-thick slot in the floor. After several hundred feet of this garbage, we could even crawl on on

After several hundred feet of this garbage, we could even crawl on one side of the slot, not over it, and finally we could put our packs back on! From a nearby junction we started mapping, eventually into a maze of small blowing crawlways. We eventually found one which was the biggest. (Keith had overlooked it the first time past it.) After about four hundred feet of crawl here, we came to the brink of a sheer six foot drop in the floor of the passage, with no walls near below and a waterfall audible in the background. Sticking my head down into the hole, I saw a room about twenty feet wide and forty feet long, with the waterfall out of sight. Keith was itching to climb down into this room, which was humongous compared to anything we'd seen all day. The drop was through a 12 inch wide slot, and I finally convinced Keith that a climb out under present circumstances would be nearly impossible.

So we stopped there after 40 stations for 640 feet, and moved back to the walking lead to continue the survey there. Sure enough, it was walking passage, the preverse "walking" passage typical



of Crumps: a narrow canyon. One could either slink by sideways at the bottom in the stream or chimney about on narrow ledges at the top. Even worse, this was one of the few muddy canyons in the cave. The dripping and the frequent formations indicated we were out from under the sandstone caprock. After 17 stations, it looked like the passage was flowstoned shut. But no, a squeezeway led back into the canyon! Drat! I was getting sleepy and was perfectly willing to let another group of Crumpers follow this piece of crap to its end. However, Keith had sworn that he'd map until he fell asleep or mapped 80 stations, whichever came first. I gave in, and after 21 more stations, the passage ended in mud fill, the stream leaving through an impassable crevice. Near the end, the notebook fell out of my chest pocket as I was chimneying, and onto a ledge only a foot away from the impassable crevice containing the stream.

Before turning back at the mud fill, we split a can of goosh, the boiled sweetened condensed milk. We were at the farthest point from the entrance, over two miles away, a mile of that crawling. We then headed back down the "mud canyon", throwing two shots into a side canyon to get our 80 stations for the day, a new one day record for Crumps. Our total footage was about 1430 feet. Two hours later we were back at Base Camp, delayed

only by Keith's running ahead and missing the turnoff. A quick snack, then into the sack for another "night's" sleep.

Upon awakening, we spent considerable time eating, dressing and packing for the way out. In fact, a considerable portion of the time we were in the cave was spent in eating, dressing, recarbing, short rests, packing, etc.; generally unproductive activities, to be sure, but certainly more pleasant than crawling or mapping, both of which require moving about. One tends to try to put off "getting going" for as long as possible in Crumps. You always feel like just sitting there and resting.

After spraying our rental sleeping bags (\$1 a night) with Lysol and rolling them up into plastic bags with desiccant, we bid adieu to the Happy Crawl Base Camp. We made good time on the way out of the cave, continuing with out kneepads for the sandy crawls, and putting them back on for the chert or bedrock crawls. Actually, our knees and elbows were in good condition considering the use they were getting. And my body was not nearly as sore as it had been on earlier trips, thanks no doubt to the rest we'd gotten in the sleeping bags. We finally exited into a driving rain at 3:30 AM, after 60 hours underground.

It is this type of caving which has brought Crumps to 9.1 miles mapped, or number 2 in the

area, behind the Mammoth-Flint Ridge System. Most trips to Crumps Avenue involve some sleeping or napping, if only before starting out. And these are not expeditions in the C-3 or SLIMMER fashion, with coolies bringing in supplies for explorers. Except for the sleeping bags themselves, everything to be used must be brought in by those to use it. Between us, Keith and I brought in a can each of goosh, crushed pineapple, grapes, fruit cocktail, chili, a box of granola, and three bags of hard candy. This for 60 hours. Needless to say, we were hungry when we got out. The casualties of the trip were one pack and my pair of coveralls.

It is apparent that another sleeping bag is needed at Base Camp, because with drops being encountered 8-10 hours from the entrance, it would be nice to have three man teams back there.

Joe
Saunders

After descending the first pit I sat in the darkness putting away my gear. As I glanced down to unstrap a sling I noticed, to the side, a mound of mud about four feet high and leading nowhere but to an island in space. Yet here were claw marks, as if desperately trying to climb this hump as if it was a last chance for escape. At the base of the mound lay a skeleton, on its side and the same color as the earth in which it lay. It was obvious what had happened...

HE FOUND IT RATHER STRANGE HOW HE
ACCEPTED IT ON SUCH A MOMENTS NOTICE...
SURE, HE HAD FLASHING THOUGHTS OF WHAT
IT WAS ALL ABOUT, BUT AS HE LAY THERE
ALL BUSTED INSIDE, THE ANSWER LAY BEFORE
HIM... WITHIN REACH...

WONDER WHAT THE ROCKS THOUGHT... 450
MILLION YEARS SINCE THEY HAD SEEN THE
SUN AND HERE, HARDLY A FLASH... COME
AND NOW TO DECAY AND ONCE AGAIN BECOME
ONE WITH IT... ANOTHER NEW SPECIES...
BUT THAT MUST BE IT...

LOST IN A PLACE WHERE LIFE IS NOT REAL...

THE FALL THROUGH THE SLIT WAS SO FAST
THAT HE HAD NO TIME TO CONTEMPLATE...
SO FAST AND YET THE WATER SOOTHED...
THROUGH THE FOG OF HIS SHALLOW BREATHS
HE COULD FAINTLY SEE THE GLOW OF THE
ENTRANCE UPON THE WET GRAVEL... IT WOULD
SURVIVE HIM... AND SO, DEEP WITHIN A
DISCOVERY UNKNOWN, NEVER TO BE SEEN OR
HEARD AGAIN, HE SMILED CONTENTLY AND
JOINED TIME...

~Rolf

Fantasy 55

Bob
♂ Alderson

A Fantasy on a late Fall Cave Club meeting in the Smyth Hall Auditorium. A meeting notable only for the number of flies in the room, sick dogs and snoring cavers. The president was at the front of the room suppressing drunken cat calls and swatting flies away from the mouth of his beer bottle.

The scene was set for the entrance of two members who came through the back doors, distracting everybody's attention from the dog that had just claimed territorial rights to the base of the podium.

The pair eased themselves into seats in the back. One was tall and gaunt, with a palid complexion and eyes that protruded from his head like the eyes of a frog. The other was short and hunched over. His hair was black and his arms suggested that he was more accustomed to climbing walls than he was to walking.

Still, nobody paid much attention when Frog Eyes stood up and announced, "There is a cave right there". He indicated the spot on a topographical map he held by covering an area of three square miles with his bony hand.

"We're going to find it this weekend," he croaked, "Igor and I." Nobody thought about Frog Eyes and Igor and uncaringly went to the mountain after the meeting. The party there went on for hours into the night; into the rain and fog that came up the mountainside. Cavers in various states of awareness were grouped about the fire, moving to and fro, dodging the smoke and the smudge created by a streaker who failed to clear a jump over the fire. Three or four cavers were wandering through the crowd, unsuccessfully trying to catch up with a young lady. She was finally caught when she stumbled over a caver wearing a stoven guitar over his head.

Frog Eyes and Igor had been observing the entire party and remained detached from the crowd. At about four in the morning they lured the banjo player and the young lady out of the crowd.

"Hey, you wanna get high?" Igor called out. The banjo player followed him away from the group. Frog Eyes approached the young lady: "We're driving off the mountain if you need a ride away from these bohemians."

The four piled into a clapped-out Volkswagen bug and rode off the mountain. However, they did not head towards campus; Igor drove them to the northwestern side of Big Walker Mountain in Bland County. They pulled up in a field next to a pond and parked.

"Wait a minute; what're we doing here?" The banjo player and the young lady began complaining simultaneously.

Frog Eyes turned to the banjo player; "Well," he said, "We're going caving now, we'll get you high afterwards."

And to the young lady; "You have been trying to get someone to take you caving all fall--now's your chance. Igor, distribute the gear."

When everyone had gear, they followed Frog Eyes up the side of the mountain. Igor stayed behind long enough to push the bug into the pond and watched it sink into its own whirlpool of bubbles.

Just past the tree line on the side of a shallow gully, they found a small hole; just large enough to put a fist through, drawing air in from the forest. After two hours work with a crow bar, they were able to squeeze through.

Inside, they saw sights no one had ever seen before. The cave followed the dip of the rock down into the mountain. Around the first bend, the cave opened up beautifully, becoming a large room with a vaulted ceiling and break-down floor complete with black rocks that led downward into the void.

Igor rigged the first drop. The banjo player rigged in and descended.

"Hey," he shouted, "This is a dead end pit; nothing's here."

"Okay," came the reply, "We'll send you some knots." A pause while Igor attached the prussiks to the rope. "Equipment!"

The three sat and waited while the banjo player rigged in and began climbing out. About half way up, he exclaimed, "Damn it! My seat safety is slipping."

"Try to retie it," Frog Eyes replied.

"But I'll flip over," the banjo player cried.

"But you'll never get out if you don't," Frog Eyes remarked. They waited five more minutes until they heard a scream from below.

"God Damn it, help me!" came the wail. "I'm hanging from my ankle!"

Frog Eyes glanced over the edge of the drop and moved up the passage. They kept going until the complaints of the banjo player were absorbed by the enclosing rocks.

The young lady was a bit dazed by the circumstances surrounding the loss of their other member, but she didn't complain when Igor asked her to push the tight and muddy crawlway that headed down off of the main passage. She slid in head first, stopping at the tight spot, wedging herself in, her arms pinned to her side. A weak flutter kick with her feet served only to wedge her in tighter.

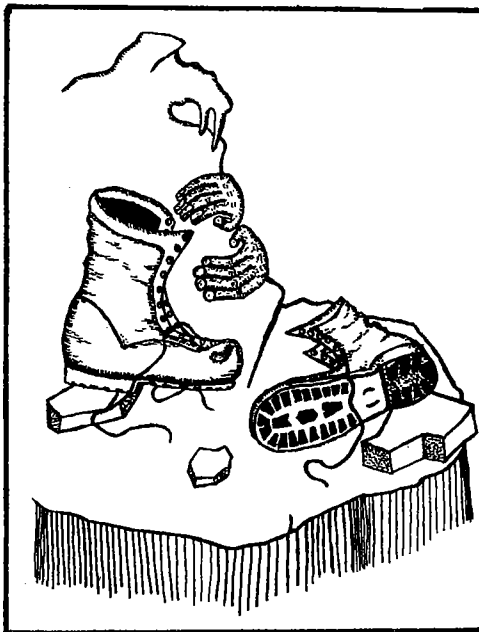
Frog Eyes and Igor listened to the muffled cries coming from the crawl for a minute or so, then headed on up the passage. Eventually they reached a point that was wide enough for them to walk side by side, and long enough to suck up all the light that their lamps put out. They walked on, leaving foot prints behind them in the soft mud.

Igor finally spotted a large grotto off to the side. They entered.

"Yes, Igor," Frog Eyes said, "This should do." Igor was seated and unlacing his boots while Frog Eyes studied the ceiling, appreciating every crack and joint. Igor had begun climbing the wall as Frog Eyes removed his boots.

"This will do very well, indeed." He started climbing up to where Igor was already hanging upside down, his toes jammed into the joint system.

"Yes, Igor. Yes, indeed, this will do very well."



Garbage Bags:

For Comfort
and
Survival

*Don Davison

Have you ever been forced into inactivity within a cave, and felt helpless as you chill (e.g. at the bottom or top of a deep or wet drop, while belaying a technical aid climb, or in a rescue situation)? Have you been in this condition because the change of clothes or extra chest clothing was left behind as too bulky and inconvenient? Or was it because you had worn too many layers of garments, and noticed too late they had become damp with the perspiration of active caving and lost much of their insulating power? An inexpensive, compact, disposable, multi-use solution to the problem may be found in the plastic garbage bag.

Each "Glad" brand plastic garbage bag¹ weighs only 2 ounces, costs about 12¢, and may be carried flat, or rolled into a cylinder, 4" long and 1.25" in diameter, with a volume of only 5 cubic inches (22% of the volume occupied by an 8 ounce baby bottle). The bag is strong, and, although some care is desirable if moving through tight places, the tears from snagging usually result in relatively minor holes.

Many a caver has waited for those before him to finish ascending a deep pit, while the inactivity, waterfall spray, and breeze contributed to his overall chilling. Several of these factors may be reduced through the use of the garbage bag, in one several configurations. The caver could:

1. Cut a tight neck hole and wear the bag over his upper torso, with no arm holes;
2. Place the bag over his head and upper body in a tent like fashion (with a small hole in the top of the bag to allow slow air circulation through chimneying);
3. If some activity is required, cut arm and neck holes and wear the bag like a sweater or shirt. Holes should be made carefully and as small as possible. If situations are anticipated, the modifications may be made before entering the cave, and the edges of the holes reinforced with ducting tape. Using these arrangements, mist and spray is kept off the caver's clothing, the chill factor associated with a breeze is all but eliminated from the covered areas, and an insulating layer of, in essence, non-moving air is formed, reducing heat lost through convection and evaporation.

A carbide caver, when producing his own tent, as in method, 2, might: 2a. Place a second garbage bag on a rock; and sitting on it, face his carbide lamp towards himself and place it on the ground between his thighs. Thus he has produced a space heater for his tent. The amount of heat may be controlled by adjusting the flame and the size of the chimney hole. The chimneying of the hot air up the front of the caver's body, will dry clothing on the chest, thighs, and arms with the heat of evaporation supplied by the carbide lamp, not the caver's body. By opening the shirt and trousers front, the drying of undergarments may be enhanced and some of their insulating power regained.

Garbage bags may also be used in a more preventative mode. Several more cavers might be alive today, if they had worn garbage bags while in wet drops--instead, they are hypothermia statistics.² When moving through or near waterfalls,



or in the area of heavy drip: 4. The bag is placed over the head and upper torso, and then the helmet is positioned on top. The chin strap is positioned and a breathing hole is immediately pinched open. A mouth hole and two eye holes may be formed, or a single full face opening. Arm holes are then added. In this manner, the neck and back are protected from water running off the rear of the helmet and from heavy spray or splatter, which would chill the sensitive rear neck area and run into the chest garments. This arrangement has worked very satisfactorily, with "Glad" brand garbage bags in Ellison's Cave, Ga., while entering through waterfalls, and descending in and near them, when the cave was in full flood.

Although the aspects of comfort are dealt with almost exclusively in the preceding information, it should be clear that the wise use of plastic garbage bags can enhance the probability of survival in exposure cases by stabilizing a victim's condition while awaiting rescue. The early signs of exposure can be treated and possibly reversed while the victim conserves his energy and waits for assistance. This, as opposed to a panic headlong effort to reach the entrance and leave the cave--often compounding the problem. But of greatest importance is the prevention of even the initial phases of hypothermia--a task made easier by the plastic bag.

¹ "Glad" brand "Disposer Trash Bags", 2'6"x3'1".

² Keider, Marlin B. (1967), Physical and Physiological factors in Fatal Exposures to Cold, NSS Bullitin, Vol. 29, No. 1, pp. 1-10.

Southern

Comfort



Bob
Mead-Donaldson

On Thanksgiving, a day when most people are sitting down to a gluttonous feast, a small but determined band of cavers were struggling up a hillside somewhere in Alabama towards Green's Well.

It all started Tuesday afternoon; Tom Calhoun, Bob Alderson and I had departed Blacksburg at about 3 p.m., arriving in a wooded, but not secluded spot on the road toward Pigeon Mountain. We warmed up the first of many gourmet meals to come. Wednesday was the day for Mystery Hole, or Falls, whichever it really is; I never can remember. Situated near Ruby Falls Tourist Trap on Lookout Mt, it is an impressive pit, known for its famous dam. Having closed the round metal stopper on the 12 inch drain pipe in the base of the dam, one has varying amounts of time, according to the rate of flow of the stream, in which one rappels the 270-odd foot pit. Of course, the fun begins when one ascends the rope. During the Spring, there would tend to be more water and the reservoir may fill to capacity in a matter of minutes. This piques one's competitive spirit, to get up the rope before the water can

overflow the dam and drench the climber. The aspect of being pounded by the plunging stream must be a great incentive to those who take delight in tempting the Fates. Aside from such considerations, the highlight of the trip is watching the dam being flushed while below. At first nothing is heard, then a whooshing sound and a gigantic white column descends, crashing into the floor, creating wind, mist, and deafening noise.

So much for Mystery Falls and on to the Guess Creek House, or the Whitehurst Arms, as it is sometimes called; situated close to Guess Creek Cave, Alabama's only horizontal cave in the deep pit region East of Huntsville. The house has all the conveniences, open air, running water (whenever it rains), and sunken floors (ask Bob Alderson). Anyway, the place provides cavers and wins a home away from home. Back to Green's Well--an impressive 274' or less, judging from the spaghetti on the floor. The bottom is wet, but the caver wishing to keep his feet dry can trip lightly over large stones cluttering the shallow pool, or pendulum into the waterfall. Back to Guess Creek, fine cuisine, and the camaraderie, etc. of a Thanksgiving on the road.

Friday was the day for Valhalla a brisk two mile hike up a jeep trail, and then a mind boggling chasm. Dusk was upon us before the last man was down the 220 foot drop. Ravaged by hunger, we ascended the rope and trudged down the hill toward our well-provisioned vehicle. Back at the home, we relaxed over a can of beer and thought about the big one tomorrow: Fern. Then the rain came. It began in the night, by morning pools were forming in the center of the floor, although I doubt it would ever lead to calcite formations. Reaching from the sleeping bag, my knife punched a few strategic holes in the floor to stave off inundation.

Through rain and worse we went up the mountain towards Fern's entrance waterfalls, discomfited more by the presence of hunters than by the inclement weather. Once in the cave, one follows a stream at varying levels depending upon the skill of the individual caver, and his attitude toward wet feet. Suddenly, the floor gives way and one finds himself on a downward sloping ledge four hundred and twenty feet above the bottom of Surprise Pit. Until the recent discoveries in Ellison's,

the deepest free fall pit in the continental United States, Surprise was first descended by Bill Cuddington, in the early 60's. We rigged up on the break-down bridge as best we could, since another group had rigged the bolts on the wall.

Fifty feet below the breakdown, the walls fall out of sight. Nothing is visible except the rope disappearing out of sight. Occasionally a slick spot in the rope speeds the rappeller up, but control is never lost. Skip Whitehurst, the consummate Alabama Pit Caver, was in his element. All four of us were down and having seen the sights, started back up, two at a time. At the top we hauled up the rope, took one last look at the pit, and the clay figures on the wall near the bolts and started out, (the hell with dry feet), trudging through the stream. The rain was steadier and followed us back to the car, turning to snow that night. Sunday was driving day, and the closer to Blacksburg, the worse the conditions and the slower we moved; but all destinations are eventually reached. Next Spring it's Anvil Cave.

