

# *The Tech Troglodyte*



**Your President and Vice President  
For The 2005-6 School Year**



**Spring '05**

# The Tech Troglodyte

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



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**Editor** Samantha Lambert

**Front Cover** VPI Officers For 05-06,  
Geoff Lewis and Philip Schuchardt  
Photo By Mike Cole

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## A Reason to Spend a Week (Caving) in TAG

By: Tim White, SE-NCRC Region Coordinator  
(with Jane Morgan)

June 25 - July 2, 2005 (the week before the NSS Convention in Huntsville) will see a large number of cavers converging on the North Alabama community of Union Hill. Participants from all over the U.S. and a several other countries will gather a few miles south of Huntsville for more than 100 hard hours of caving activities in the famous Newsome Sinks caving area. These cavers will be students at the National Cave Rescue Commission - 2005 Cave Rescue Operations and Management Seminar.

"This seminar consists of extensive classroom and field work in all phases of cave rescue including underground environment, vertical rescue, hauling systems, extrication techniques, medical management, communication systems, and the organization and management of cave rescue operations. Basic and advanced course material is presented for students who typically include cavers, emergency service personnel, and emergency managers." ....that's the standard line, but you ask why should I, the recreational caver, the hard-core caver, the expedition caver, the cave mapper, the ridgewalker, the pit bouncer, the new caver or Joe Grotto caver be interested in or take part in NCRC training?

As the NCRC Southeastern Region Coordinator, I could go for paragraph after paragraph telling you why I feel you, as a caver, should experience a NCRC training. I also would bore you to tears with those paragraphs after paragraphs, so that is why I chose to include a reprint of an article by Jane Morgan that appeared in the Dogwood City Grotto's publication, *The Georgia Underground* (Vol. 39, No.1) titled "Why NCRC?". Here is what Jane had to say about the Level 1 class that she was a part of in 2003.

"Safety is a reoccurring theme when it comes

to caving and yet we all seem to find ourselves in situations that remind us just how fragile we really are. NCRC offers training to equip our selves when those situations occur and the ability to recognize when it is time to call for help. Sprained ankles can happen by just stepping off a curb or over a root. Not many people stop to think how much work would be involved in exiting a cave with an injury, or that much of that work would have to come from their caving partners or strangers. I am amazed when I think about how many people my husband and I have introduced to caving in the last decade, and have not had an accident. As much as I would like to believe that it is a result of how safe we are, accidents do happen. We can do everything in our power to prevent them, but it is not always a guarantee. We have had small things like dehydration to deal with and our group worked as a team to remedy the situation, which was only more reason for us to further our education and skills.

When I first heard about cave rescue training several years ago I was equally intrigued and intimidated. I was not yet vertically adept and although I had been climbing for several years, was not comfortable rigging on my own. On the other hand, I'm the kind of person who likes to solve problems. When it was announced at our grotto meeting that a modular NCRC course might be offered in the coming months, the anticipation was incredible. There were no longer any excuses; the course would be offered within my state, on two weekends rather than a week long session, and at a price I could afford.

What I discovered, during this course, is that there is so much more to gain besides learning basic rescue techniques like diagnosing dehydration, hypothermia, or low blood sugar in fellow cavers and good teamwork/rope working skills.



## A Reason to Spend a Week (Caving) in TAG Cont.

By: Tim White, SE-NCRC Region Coordinator  
(with Jane Morgan)

This can also be a place to find a higher level of self-confidence that some desire. I never expected the self-esteem boost that came with picking a fellow caver off a rope, packaging a patient, rigging a pulley system or simply becoming one link in a complicated plan to find, treat, and bring lost and/or injured people from a cave. Many students may never be involved in an official rescue, but will find themselves with the ability to solve small problems on their own trips before they become big problems that require outside help.

For those of us who have never served in the military or worked in rescue/law enforcement jobs, we may try to imagine the kind of bond that exists, but without success. In fact, the term "co-worker" must have such a different, inconceivable meaning when your very life may depend on them on any given work day. I can only attempt to describe the intense emotion that I experienced

for my peers and instructors. I don't know if these courses become routine for the instructors or if they wonder why a student would feel this way from a training program. A bond now exists for me with my peer group that is more than just fellow "grotto member" or "caver". Even those terms shouldn't be taken lightly. Every time you set foot in a cave, especially in a vertical environment, you become interdependent with your fellow cavers. NCRC training is a powerful reminder of this and is valuable to all cavers."

What more can I say?

For more information see the web site at:  
<http://caves.org/io/ncrc/2005Seminar/seminar2005.htm>

or e-mail the seminar registrar, Berta Kirchman at:  
[2005registrar@ncrc.info](mailto:2005registrar@ncrc.info)



By: Sandy Ramsey



## Where Are They Now? Friends That Came and Went.

Are you tired of being asked where so and so is, how are they doing? Then send the editor their information and all the question will be answered for you.

### Judy Wasilewski

What happen to Judy Wasilewski?

I Came to the club in the Fall of 1995. Got membership in 1998. (I think?) Left the club when I graduated in 1999 with my Chemical Engineering Degree.



Moved to El Centro, California and became involved with the San Diego Cave Club and was the club secretary. I worked as an engineer for United States Gypsum company making Sheetrock for about a year and 1/2. I also learned how to fly Cessna's and got my private pilots license.

After that I moved to Chicago and have been here about 4 1/2 years. I got my Masters in Environmental Management and I have been managing USG's environmental exposure by traveling all around the country doing audits and meeting with state EPA agencies. I worked on one project where we closed some mine openings and left bat gates for the colonies that we found living in the mines.

I am still caving in the midwest, but it is pretty tough and involves some long drives. I am a member of the Windy City Grotto and the Chicago Suburban Cave Club (There are two cave clubs in this city it is so big) I have also gotten into Mountaineering and Ice Climbing and I have been up Mt. Rainier twice in the past couple years and go ice climbing up in New Hampshire.



My contact information is [judiworm@yahoo.com](mailto:judiworm@yahoo.com).

And you are welcome to contact me and come cave in the Midwest (although we might just get in the car and drive south or east :).

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### Andy Yeagle

What happen to Andy Yeagle?

I came to the club Fall 1997 - Sandy Knapp was President, Chris Rourke VP, Carl Bern was Secretary

Not sure when I got membership vpi#373 I graduated in Civil Engineering and working and living in Northern VA email address [ayeagle@vt.edu](mailto:ayeagle@vt.edu)

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### Doug Cole

What happen to Doug Cole?

I was around the club from 98 until the fall of 2002. I never actually became a full member, but was a prominent member of many a speleo seminars, that perhaps being the reason membership was never acquired. In fact many of you may remember the apartment on Wharton Street he shared with Eric Stanley, aka "Boot Camp."

I left Blacksburg rather abruptly due to an accident in October of 02. I was camping in my hometown of Waynesboro, VA. While I was asleep, someone leaving the area backed their truck over Me. My back was broken at the T-12 level and was left with permanent paralysis...or so they say. I am now living in San Diego, CA undergoing therapy at a place called Project Walk. This place is making waves in the medical community with their success in helping paralysis victims recover. If you'd like to find out more about me or get in touch with me, visit my webpage at [www.whartonstreet.com](http://www.whartonstreet.com)



## English 1105: New Versions of Common Cave-Related Words

By: Chris Lee

The English language is constantly changing. Robert Burchfield, editor of the *Oxford English Dictionary*, believes that American English and English English are changing so rapidly that within 200 years the two dialects will not be understandable to each other<sup>1</sup>.

Caver English is also evolving. The VPI Cave Club continues to be on the forefront of new and exciting changes within the caving community. A few examples of revised spellings of common cave-related words, as well as their previous, or old-fashioned spellings, have been listed below. These examples come from various Cave Club documents from this past year. A special thanks to Philip Schuchardt for his generous contributions to this article.

Alabama	Albama
Hypothermia	Hydrotima*
Keg	Kage*
Dolomite	Dulamit
Calcite	Calsite
Ascender	Asender
Bleach	Bleech
Safety	Safty
Experience	Expirence
Halloween	Hallowoen
Aperture	Apeture
Beautiful	Buetyful
Condition	Condition
Accident	Accendant*

Previous Spelling	Revised Spelling
Grotto	Gretto
Associate	Assosite
Troglodyte	Trogurogy
Rescue	Resuce
Commission	Commition*
Reunion	Reunun
Tennessee	Tenesse

\*Previous version does not appear in Microsoft Word's Spellcheck suggested spellings when the Revised version is typed in. Revised spellings may be too different or uncommon from Previous spellings for Spellcheck suggestions to apply.

### (Footnotes)

<sup>1</sup> Bryson, Bill. 1990. *The Mother Tongue*. NYC, NY: HarperCollins.

## Quotable Quotes

Submitted by Your Friends

**SR to TC:** "It's not that your that strong is that your things is so hard."

**PS to SL:** "Do you like tight stuff?"

**SL to PS:** "That's the only think I good at"

**RS to CE:** "Don't get excited right now or you will never get if off."

**RS to Group:** "You can all do the stupid things you want. I still have the biggest penis."

**JB to Group:** "You can find any old stick to shove up there"

**BA to Group:** " So that's the reason I feel smarter, I have a book up my ass"

**JB to Group:** "You don't have to lick it or anything, just put it in your hand"

## Club Quotable Photos



Photo By: Jen Albanes



Photo By: Kevin Rock



Photo By: Julie Booker



Photo By: Jen Albanes



## Float On at Float Trip

By: Mike Cole

### *Brief History*

Float trip is an annual event that occurs over Memorial Day weekend where folks gather for a day of relaxation on the New River. Some bring canoes or kayaks, however the most popular mode of transportation down the river are rafts constructed of large inner tubes and plywood. For a number of years, rafts were built with a theme in mind. Some of the more famous were the Starship Enterprise and the Deliverance rafts.



great stories were made that day, and now only float trip only proceeds if the river is at a safe level

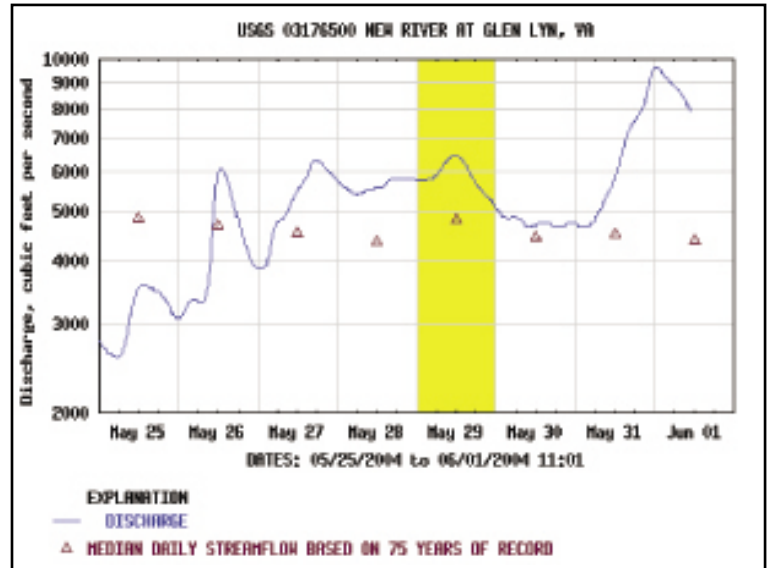


Figure 1: Discharge on New River, Float Trip 2004 (<http://water.usgs.gov/>)

Float trip starts at the Ripplemead put-in, where the rafts are constructed for their 7.5 mile journey down the New River to the take out in Pearisburg. River level determines how long the trip will take. On average, it takes five hours to float this section of the river.

The river level varies from year to year. In 2004, the river was at an average and optimal level. Figure 1 below shows the discharge of the river at Glen Lyn, which is about 10.5 miles down river from the take out. Some years the river is lower, and so the ride takes longer. Some years the river is much higher. On May 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2001, the discharge at Glen Lyn reached a 76 year record high of 32,000 cubic feet of water per second, illustrated by the asterisks in Figure 2. That year float trip was two days later on May 26<sup>th</sup>. Despite better judgment, float trip continued. Lessons were learned and

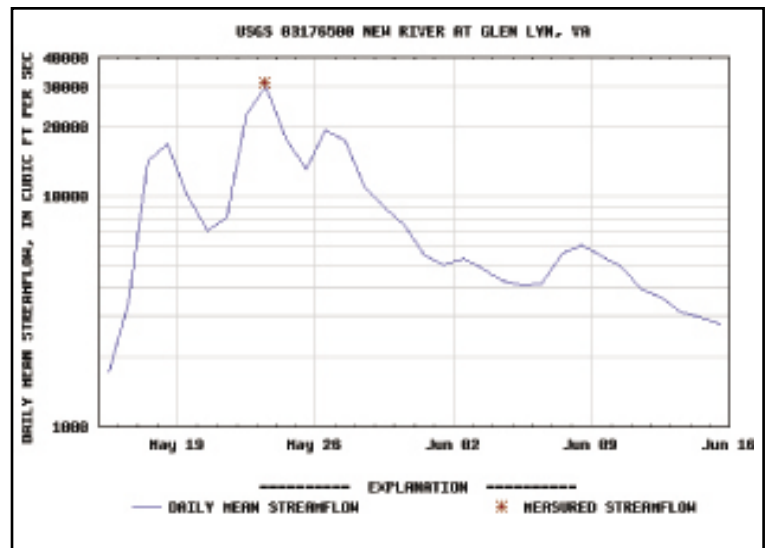


Figure 2: Discharge on New River, Float Trip 2001 (<http://water.usgs.gov/>)



## Float On at Float Trip Cont.

By: Mike Cole

### *The Mothership*

Most of the folks involved in float trip are friends of Mike Newsome's from New Jersey. They've been coming down for years for this annual tradition. Together the group constructs a monsterraft



that can easily hold twenty or more people. The raft varies in size, depending on the number of tubes and plywood available. The raft's size last year was about 28 by 24 feet. Mike uses two layers of inner tubes tied together with high strength bailing twine, and then ties down sheets of plywood on top of them to construct the raft. The construction provides a very fluid-like ride. A charcoal grill is the standard center piece for grilling on the river.

### *A New Raft is Born*

Last year myself and several other VPI members



decided we wanted to build our own raft. We had dreams of building another monster-size raft, but soon realized that wasn't

feasible. The standard truck-tire inner tubes used aren't an easy commodity to acquire anymore. You can buy tubes in town from Doc Roberts at a price of \$15 per tube. I found a place in Northern Virginia where we got our tubes from for \$8 a tube. Our group gathered

resources to buy the tubes and plywood needed. Our new raft ended up being three sheets of plywood, and was 8 by 12 feet. We reinforced our deck so our ride wouldn't be as bumpy like on Mike's raft. This made the ride very comfortable. We had ten people on our raft year. Space was limited, so plans are in the works to increase the size for this year's float trip.

### *More is Better*

Last year, along with our raft and the mothership, Ed Day had a small crew that put together another small

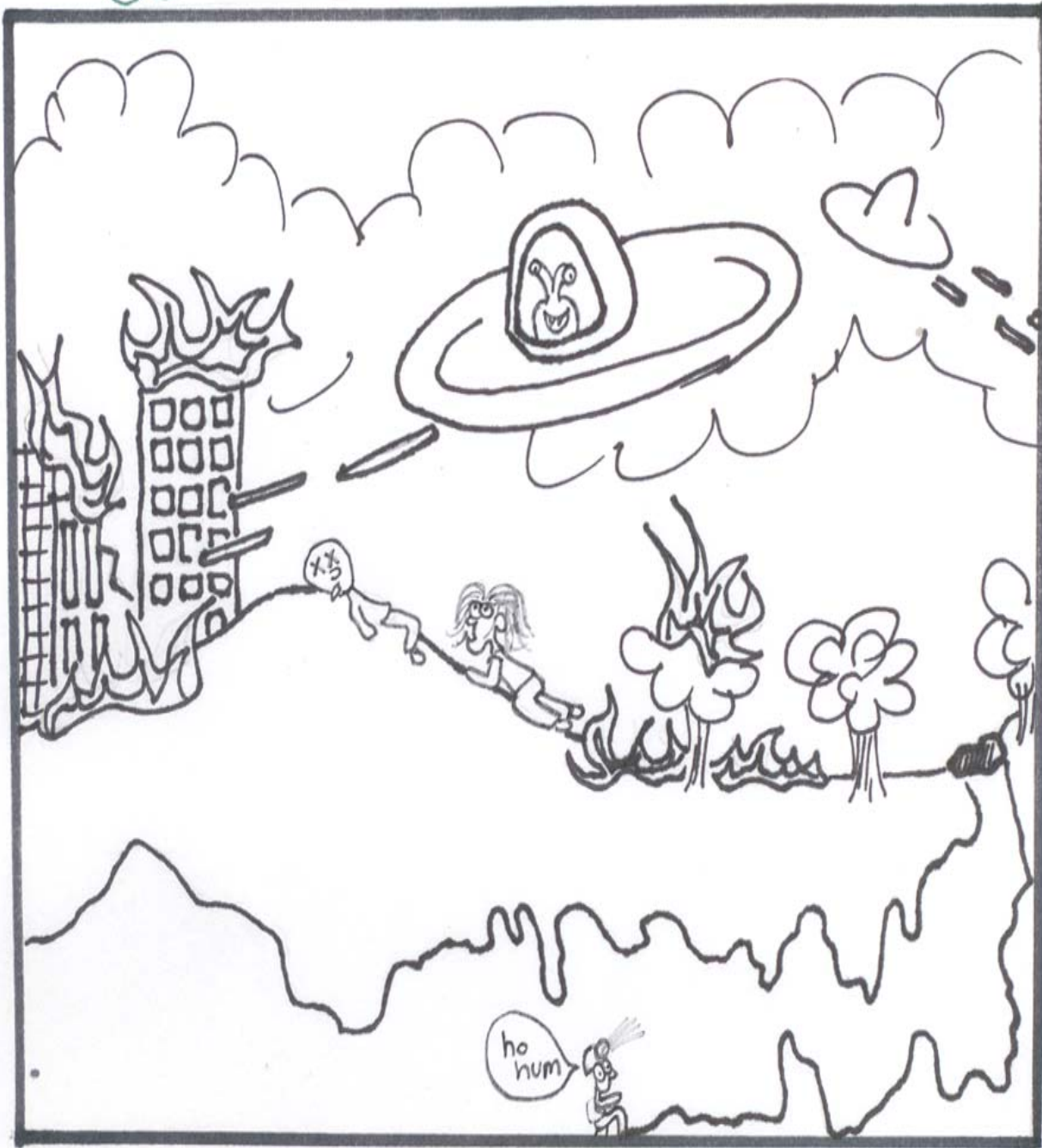
raft about the same size as our raft. Others join in the fun, however do so



in their own canoes or kayaks. The number of VPI members who attend is not as many as it was in years past. Our groups' new raft is an attempt to bring more members back to float trip. If you like canoeing, white water rafting, or kayaking, then you'll love float trip. The section of the New River we float on is very beautiful and float trip is always a lot of fun.

For more pictures, see my filebox at <http://filebox.vt.edu/users/micole/>.

# Good Call



By: Erika Bechtold



## A Friendly Reminder from the Safety Committee

There are several guidelines that all cavers should remember when caving no matter if they have been caving for several years or just started caving with the club. These rules are split into three categories: General Safety, Equipment, and Procedure. These are in the Perspective Member training guide and should be given to all new trainees. I have included a few and discussed the importance of them.

General Safety is general rules that all cavers should follow to make their trips safe and fun. A few of these guidelines follow.

The club recommends that all cave trips consist of at least three people. On a horizontal trip at least one of those people should be a member. For a vertical trip there should at least be two members. This is especially important for vertical trips because there always needs to be one member at the top of a drop and one member at the bottom to help the others on the trip with getting on and off rope.

Before a cave trip even begins the leader of the trip should assess the cavers that will be going along. Everyone on the trip should be physically and mentally capable of caving. This assessment should be done on a trip by trip basis. Obviously, someone who is capable of caving in Tawney's for four hours may not be capable on going on a Steve and Steve survey trip into ABC for 20 hours. This is also the job of the people on the trip. Take a look at your own capabilities. If you don't feel comfortable doing something ask for help, go a different route, or even turn the trip around. Caving is something that everyone should enjoy. It's not a sport to prove how strong or how great a caver you are. Cave trips are supposed to be fun and make people want to come back to become better and safer cavers.

There are a few guidelines that cover your caving gear. These should always be followed since your gear is what is protecting you underground.

Hard hats should include chin-straps and

a mounted light source. The chin-straps keep your helmet on your head when looking around. How many people have looked down a drop and carled their light? (If you don't know what carl means ask an old fart or look at some of the older cave club shirts) I know I have. The same thing would happen without the chin-strap. Your helmet is your first line of protection. Anyone who has done a helmet check while underground would agree. The reason for the mounted light source is simple; you need to keep both hands free as you make your way through a cave.

Each caver should always carry three sources of light on a trip. This is because things break. When your light breaks or gets lost when you are six hours into a cave trip you will be very thankful for the other two sources of light. But because you have three different sources of light you need to have the appropriate supplies for each light source. This could be batteries, extra light bulbs, or spare carbide and a dumb bottle.

There are four pieces of equipment every caver should have. The first two are a heat source and a trash bag / space blanket. Caves in this area are generally 55 degrees, wet, and muddy. When a caver isn't moving they lose heat quickly. Hypothermia is a very real danger to cavers. A heat source and a trash bag may save your life sometime and that one time you don't have it is the time you will need it. The third is food. A small quantity of food stored away in your pack is always a good idea and can sometimes be used to bribe trip leaders to not torment you. Finally, the appropriate clothes should always be used. Gloves, heavy boots, and heavy clothing or cave specific clothing should be worn. It is advisable to stay away from having all cotton cave clothes. When cotton gets wet it wicks away heat very quickly making one cold caver.

Finally, there are a few procedural guidelines that one should follow while caving. The most



## A Friendly Reminder from the Safety Committee Cont.

you are going, who is going on the trip, and at what time do you expect to be back. The best way to do this is to use the club sign out. This is watched and the owners of sign out know who to contact incase of an emergency. If the club sign out is not used then not only should you provide all the above information to who is going to be your sign out but also who to contact incase of an emergency. This can be done by giving your sign out the clubs rescue card.

Cavers should always respect the landowners' property and if possible have someone who is familiar with the cave on the trip. Remember, landowners' are letting us on their property to use their cave. If we do not treat their property and themselves with respect then we will lose the ability to go in that cave for a long time.

Finally, all vertical work should be done properly and with great care. This includes, using the appropriate knots, having the rigging checked by another member, ropes should be protected, proper belaying techniques should be used (cable ladder belay, bottom belay), a knot should be placed in the

bottom of the rope no matter what, and the rigging should always be checked by everyone on the trip. Vertical caving can be very dangerous but it can also be very exciting. The utmost care needs to be taken when vertical caving techniques are used.

The above guidelines are just a few things all cavers should remember. If you see any violations in these guidelines or if you have any questions about a cave trip or something you saw someone else doing please let me know. It is my job to bring up any safety violations in the club, any safety issues, or any other problems members or perspective members may see. It is important to bring caving problems up and discuss them with the rest of the club so that first it won't happen again and second so that everyone else in the club can learn from these mistakes. Caving can be a fun and safe sport as long as everyone participating knows and understands the risks, and take all the opportunities to prevent injury.

Kevin Rock  
Safety Committee Chairman

### What is Wrong With This Sign Out Sheet?

Cave Name	Name of People on Trip	Enter time	Out Time	Check when back	Comments
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

Answer: Box is not checked when they returned





## It Just Might Be An Expedition If:

Submitted by Mike Futrell

*This is but one collection of an ongoing expedition story chronicling the events that make cave expeditions the great fun that they are. This list was compiled through the inspirations and recollections of one expedition's collective membership, whilst thoroughly enjoying the finest rum in the world, in a fine little karst area, on a large island just south of Florida.*

It just might be an expedition if:

1. It's longer than two weeks and the amount of duct tape you brought.
2. All of the men (and some of the women) have had time to grow beards.
3. Near death is narrowly averted by a competent caver.
4. At least half of the near death experiences are result of negotiations with irate locals or the police.
5. Half of the members vomit due to alcohol.
6. Half of the members vomit due to something other than alcohol.
7. Damage to at least one vehicle exceeds half of it's worth.
8. There is no CRF relationship or involvement.
9. The first three main objectives don't pan out, yet on the last day screaming borehole is found.
10. Most team members have open festering wounds and are proud to show them to you.
11. You run out of alcohol and it's a REAL crisis to be remedied at any cost.
12. Each person spent a minimum of three days screwing with gear before the trip.
13. The cave biota is bigger than your survey book and bites.
14. You've had intimate contact with that biota, but the second time it was only to get a better photo.
15. At least one member of the trip contracts a disease that makes one other member think they will die, and another, of course, takes photos.
16. Most of the members are pissed at National Geographic for their poor writing, poor photos and poor funding decisions.
17. The primary source of your late night entertainment involves small rodents, occasional screams and a Rube Goldberg engineering project.
18. You're expelling from both ends and you still go caving.
19. A hangover is not an excuse to not go caving, but indeed is sometimes a requirement.
20. Significant others have been rearranged.
21. Everyone knows about everyone else's bowel movements in great detail.
22. New fungus species are evolving in the cleanest of your underwear.
23. You resolve to enjoy pulling on cold wet smelly crusty underwear each morning, but on the first day realize they're not your own.
24. You're scared of ALL the water - drinking, cooking, bathing, swimming - but for caving, it's ok.
25. The locals are starting to feel sorry for you.
26. The bathroom at your hostel is beginning to look like one on an old AMCS postcard.
27. More insects are landing on you than on your food.
28. You want to sleep with someone other than yourself - to avoid the smell.
29. You're not at the top of the food chain, and the creatures that are, are either too small to be seen or too stealthy to show themselves by day.
30. You're absolutely convinced that cave expeditions are the best thing life has to offer.



## Wilderness First Aid

By John Booker

Earlier this semester on Friday, February 4<sup>th</sup>, VPI Cave Club funded 5 of its members to participate in a Wilderness First Aid course. A standard first aid course will consist of "call 911." The WFA course deals with situations where advanced care is more than an hour away and 911 isn't an option. If you can't reach a hospital within that "Golden Hour," simple injuries may become life threatening and the recommended actions change. If you are in a cave where you can get to a hospital within an hour, you probably passed a gift shop on your way in. For most club trips, the only help available in that first hour is the help that is available from the trip members themselves. Therefore, it was and still is important that as many of our members be trained to as high a level as resources permit.

Over the course of two 8-hour days, we covered the following:

- Patient Assessment System
- Shock
- Long-Term Patient Care
- Soft Tissue Injuries
- Environmental Emergencies
- Fractures/Dislocations
- Splint Improvisation
- Preparedness

We were encouraged to bring equipment to the course that we would normally carry on trips to improvise splints, c-collars, and other formal rescue equipment. The VPI members in attendance dazzled our peers when we created a makeshift splint from a rappel rack and webbing. The other highlight was when we all learned a new technique to deal with hypothermia, which I'll call the "community trash bag" (although it's really called a "heat tent"). Instead of individual trash bags, why not bring a large 8'x8' lightweight plastic tarp? Around 6 cavers can huddle underneath and trap more heat than they would in their separate trash bag outfits. Besides, when you're on a long cold

trip and already annoyed with everyone there, all you need is a little cuddle time to restore spirits!

I hope that going to these courses continues to be a trend among VPI members, and that funding them continues to be a trend of the club. While many of our members have technical training from National Cave Rescue Commission courses and medical training even to the level of an EMT, even more have no formal first aid training. Our own training program covers the basics, but if something went wrong it would likely not be enough. Each trip should have an individual who has more than just Trainee Trog rescue skills and hand-me-down first aid knowledge.

If you are interested in more information, the course was hosted by Venture Out, the outdoor company of VT, and taught by individuals from Landmark Learning, which is affiliated with Stone-hearth Open Learning Opportunities (SOLO). Landmark Learning teaches a variety of leadership courses from their own curriculum (including a cave leadership course), but teaches a SOLO approved curriculum for all medical courses.

Landmark Learning

<http://www.landmarklearning.org>

SOLO Schools

<http://www.soloschools.com>

Venture Out

<http://www.uusa.vt.edu/recreation/>

[Ventout/vohome.htm](http://Ventout/vohome.htm)

## South of the Border

By David Klorig

As some of you know and many of you have heard, every year just around the time when Blacksburg freezes over for the winter, a dedicated group of VPI cavers migrate south in search of warmer weather and really deep pits. For the last few years John Deighan has been at the helm of this band of scrappy conquistadors, equipped with a passable understanding of the Spanish language and the ability to find places to sleep and eat in rural Mexico. This year the intrepid crew consisted of: Mike Cole, on his way to becoming a venerable sage as this was his second trip south of the border, Geoff Lewis, who got hurt a lot, Julie Booker and Nikky LeBranche, our shopping liaisons, Brad Atkinson, rig checker extraordinaire and tequila scout, and myself, hardcore badass.

We departed from Blacksburg on December 26<sup>th</sup>, 2004. Despite the laws of physics and common sense we managed to fit the seven of us and our plethora of gear into Deighan's Pathfinder and Geoff's Jeep. To maintain our strength and sanity during the 30 hour drive we stopped halfway in New Orleans to eat raw oysters and drink too much. Paige Baldassaro was nice enough to let us stay the night at her parent's house.

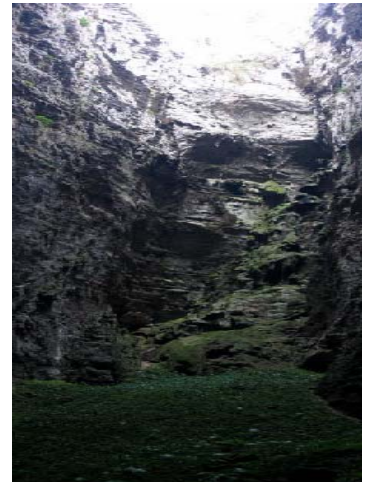


After crossing the border we headed toward the city of Victoria. After a scrumptious breakfast and our first Corona purchase we headed into the region of San Luis Potosí. We stopped at the tropic of cancer (photo right) and then visited our first cave, El Abra. We did a touristy walk through but didn't bother rigging and repelling the



pit. We arrived at the hotel Taninul tired and ready for a soak in their world famous hot springs only to find that every room was booked. Slightly dismayed but always flexible we decided to proceed to Xilitla for the night. The next day we visited Las Pozas y al mundo surrealista de Edward James, which is a huge concrete garden hidden in the jungle.

Several cases of Corona later (and a few days) we set out for our first really huge gigantic pit, Hoya de las Guaguas. The Mexicans were in the process of paving the road to the town closest to Guaguas and part of the way we had to follow a road grader up the mountain. After hiring a guide to carry our rope and paying protection money to some kids to "watch" our cars we set out on foot.



Guaguas has a gigantic opening, much wider than Golondrinas but only about a third as deep. Since we had gotten a late start we chose to rig the shorter but more accessible side, which made for a rappel of about 400 ft. Mike went down first followed by me, then Geoff. Brad was planning to follow but noticed a potential stress fracture in our rig point and decided to stay behind to keep an eye on it. Deighan came down instead. We explored the expansive cave floor for a while before turning our attention to the echo potential of the massive void. Geoff and I rolled a large boulder down a long slope into the rest of the cave in order to produce the loudest series of echoes I have ever heard. Geoff and I climbed out first followed by Deighan and Mike. The swifts that inhabit the cave began to fly in as Deighan and Mike were nearing the top. A first only a few at a time would make their high speed re-entry into the cave, but as we started to de-rig they started coming in by the hundreds. The noise was deafening as a huge mass of little black bodies emerged over the trees and dive bombed straight down at 200 mph. We hiked back down to our cars in the dark.

## South of the Border Cont.

By David Klorig

After loading up our stuff we set off some fireworks for a few of the local kids and then headed back to Aquismón.

We made our way to Huichihuayan for the new years celebration. After stocking up on a few more cases of Coronas we joined the rest of the crowd. They townspeople were parading around a black coffin with 2004 painted on the sides. At midnight they set the coffin down in the middle of the square



and lit it on fire. The gigantic mass of fireworks within went off in stages shooting flaming debris into the air. We ran into some drunken Missouri cavers from the Merrimac Grotto. One of them volunteered to be the burro of fire. The festival organizer gave him a paper mâché donkey head attached to an elaborate bamboo framework supporting strings of fireworks. He ran around spewing sparks and rockets into the crowd. The Mexicans loved the drunken gringos.

Geoff decided to join in the festivities by setting off one of the mortars he had purchased from a street vendor. He tried to light the paper fuse but became frustrated that it wasn't burning like it should. He could feel something solid further down in the fuse so he tore off the paper to this point and lit it. The solid feeling material was in fact gunpowder wrapped in paper and the mortar went off instantaneously. Mike and I were huddled around the mortar tube at the time and barely missed the mortar shooting past our faces. We watched it soar into the air and explode in a beautiful shower of red sparks, unfortunately Geoff was too busy inspecting the 2<sup>nd</sup> degree burn on the palm of his hand.

After a leisurely breakfast we headed back to Hotel Taninul. This time they had some rooms available. After a big dinner and a couple hours relaxing in the hot sulfur springs we decided to do some nerd caving in the cave behind the springs. Equipped with our bathing suits, headlamps, and beers in hand we ventured past the concrete tourist section into the

dark unknown. The heat from the springs permeated the rock and turned the cave into a sauna. There were these extremely beautiful formations covering the walls. They were like shiny little red oblong disks and if you look at them right they almost seem to move. If anyone happens to visit Taninul in the future, I highly recommend visiting this little cave. More beautiful even than the gypsum flowers in Cloverhollow.



After a good nights rest we woke up early and headed to the Sotano del Rio Choy. Deep within the mountain there is an upwelling that formed the cave and feeds the river. You rig at the upper entrance and then rappel about 200 ft into the water. Deighan likes to rig the rope short to make the last few feet more exciting. Here is a little description of what its like:

Finding its way through voids in the mountaintop, the sun fell upon the shimmering blue-green lagoon hidden deep within the chiseled limestone from which it was formed. The beauty of the scene was interrupted only by the high speed chattering of the rope through my microrack. Zzzzzzzzip, crack, the rope whipped free from my rack and then silence. Suddenly gravity took hold and my stomach lurched. My yelp of surprise was silenced by the crystal clear waters of the upwelling. Emerging from the water I yelled, "Goddamn it, I just got a cave water enema". – Me



Everybody got to try it a couple times. The water was warm and it was very relaxing to float on your back out of the cave. Geoff managed to get some wicked rope burn on his back. As he was rappelling the rope whipped up



## South of the Border Cont.

By David Klorig

over his shoulder and then snapped across his back as he rappelled off the end.

Several cases of beer later we found ourselves in Xilitla again but this time at a different hotel. We drank ourselves silly while tailgating and listening to Tech lose the Sugar Bowl on Mike's satellite radio. The federalies (police) stopped by and politely told us there was no drinking on the street so we all headed inside. Meanwhile Deighan discovered that the owner of the hotel was an old caver and he told us the location of a huge horizontal cave just outside of town. We checked it out the next day. There is a huge overhanging entrance and then a large room that goes back into the mountain. Deighan and I went exploring while everyone else sat at the entrance. The large room slopes down to a choke point full of small breakdown. There were a couple side passages we poked around in but we didn't go to far since everyone else was waiting.

The next day we headed to Aquismon to stock up for the really big huge gigantic pit, Sotano de las Golondrinas. We headed up the mountain that afternoon and arrived at the campground near the lip around dusk. While we were negotiating the fee for camping and for someone

to carry the 1200 ft rope to the top, an expedition from the Battlefield Area Troglodytes (BATs) led by Mike "T i n Y" M a n k e showed up. They had planned on staying the



night as well but the owner of the campground turned them away because a few of them had too much tequila and he was afraid that they would fall into the pit. The campground had several grass huts to sleep under. We were thinking of sleeping in them until

we noticed a tarantula crawling around in the roof. The decision was quickly made to set up the tents. The next morning we awoke at dawn to catch the bird flight out of the cave. There are over 10,000 swifts living in the walls of Golondrinas and each morning they all exit the cave. They don't fly straight out however, they spiral around the pit slowly gaining altitude until they reach the entrance and fly out. The birds move in these huge perfectly coordinated groups and it is an awesome sight to see the huge black spiral coming up at you from the depths of the cave.

The BATs returned early in the morning after sobering

up. They brought a longer rope so we let them rig on the high side (1400 ft rappel) and we rigged lower side (1200 ft rappel). We started rigging at around 9am but somehow made a huge pile of spaghetti with one of the two 600ft coils. We had to make smaller coils and pass all 600 ft through a knot that somehow



formed in the middle of the 1200 ft rope. Even with this minor set back we were ready to rappel by noon. Deighan went down first. He set up a nice bottom belay with a pulley and some webbing around a large bolder. I went down second. I started down at good speed but about halfway down I noticed my rack was spewing some blue smoke as it burned off the fuzzy nylon sticking out of the rope. I thought about slowing down but I figured that would only increase friction and increase my chances of doing harm to the rope so instead I sped up. I rocketed to the bottom at an exhilarating clip but was able to easily slow down for a nice soft landing and then a rapid de-rig from the rope.

## South of the Border Cont.

By David Klorig

I inspected the rope on the way up but found no signs of a melted or “crunchy” sheath. I guess I only singed the nylon fuzzies produced by the ascenders of previous climbers. Brad was readying to rappel, but discovered yet another stress fracture in the rig point and decided to keep an eye on it. Mike the experienced sage decided to stay at the top where he might better assist Brad with checking for stress fractures. Geoff came down next and then he and I climbed up together. We made it up in an hour



and 20 minutes which I thought was pretty good for being fat and out of shape. About 6 BATs rappelled down and climbed out. Two Canadians on their expedition made it out in an hour and TinY bragged that his record was 45 minutes but this year he took his time. After de-rigging and coiling the rope we hung out with the BATs and watched the swifts make their dive bomb into the cave for the night.

The last couple days of the trip were spent at



Tomasopo, a beautiful campground with many large waterfalls. The water was warm and the swimming was great. They had a large rope swing and a few concrete diving boards. Geoff, Deighan, and I took a 25 foot plunge off one of the waterfalls into a deep pool. We tried to set off a few of our remaining fireworks but the camp administrator walked over and threatened

to call the federalies. I expected Deighan to explain our way out of it but instead he just said “No habla espanol” which turned out to be much more effective because the guy just turned around and left. The next day we headed for Valles to eat and then home. On the way to Valles, Deighan’s pathfinder started to make a loud squealing sound at high rpms. Luckily we managed to find a Nissan dealer in Valles that happened to be open late on a Friday afternoon. They replaced the belt tensioner pulley but didn’t have the proper tool to readjust the tension on the belt. We decided to make a run for the states in hope of better luck. We had to keep our speed under 55 the whole way so it took a little bit longer. We stopped in Victoria for the night and to stock up on liquor and souvenirs before heading to the border. We crossed the border late Saturday night. We ended up driving all the way to Alabama before finding a garage that was open on a Sunday morning. The mechanic discovered that the fan clutch was stuck but that it was factory part so he couldn’t do anything. He did replace the belts which allowed us to make it home at a decent speed. We arrived in Blacksburg Sunday night, tired and cold but glad to be home.



There are so many more great memories that won’t fit in this already too long article. If you are curious and fill one of us with beer you might get to hear a few. I had a great time in Mexico and will definitely be going back again next year. Hopefully some

of you reading this will come as well.



# The Breaking Point



40 hours into a trip to New Starnes, when Matt told others that he had been harrassed by the easter bunney in a dark passage, they realized that he had reached his limits.

By: Erika Bechtold

## Practice Rescues, Past, Present, and Future

By Jessica L. Dorr

The VPI Cave Club hosted a simulated cave rescue on Saturday, April 9, 2005. This practice took place at Tawney's Cave, near the Bat Ranch, Newport, Virginia. The ultimate goal of this simulated cave rescue was to bring together several different organizations, communicate, and work together effectively. A secondary goal was to educate the newest Prospective Members of the VPI Cave-Club. We attempted to fulfill these goals by inviting other organizations and matching older more experienced members with the newest Prospective Members.

Blacksburg Rescue Squad, Blue Ridge Grotto (BRG), New River Grotto (NRG), Southwest Virginia Mountain Rescue Group (SWVMRG,



now a section of Blacksburg Rescue Squad), and VPI Cave Club were in attendance. All told, 36 people took part in the simulation. As a side note, 6 years ago (has it been that long) when I planned a similar practice in late March, 56 people attended. The 1999 simulation was one of the first interagency events around Blacksburg in a

while. Perhaps more people showed up because it was something different, there was more advertising earlier, and/or the date was better. In recent years April has been crammed full of events. A fall practice or an earlier date should be considered for the future. During the debriefing, it was commented by Don Anderson that despite the small group, everyone did really well.

Folks started arriving at 9 AM, but the day officially began at 10 AM with sunshine, Carol Lee donuts, Mill Mountain coffee, apples, and snack crackers. You may laugh, but nice weather and a well fed group is a happy group. Surprisingly we stayed on the tentative schedule pretty well. We were welcomed by Chris Lee, our former president; John Booker, our former VP, gave a talk on sign-out procedures; Tom Lovejoy (SWVMRG, Blacksburg Rescue) talked on the importance of a state sanctioned rescue and the possible roll of SWVMRG; Kevin Rock, our Safety Chair, discussed call-out procedures; I introduced crew leaders and our goals for the day; Eric Stanley, Chris Rourke, and Brian Ekey (former cavers, I mean Blacksburg Rescue Squad, I mean VPI Members) educated us on basic first aid and stokes handling. We followed this out-of-cave experience with an in-cave simulation and debriefing.

The patient was Chris Michie (Jack Daniels) and buddy Travis Coad (Billy Bo Bob Jr.). Incident Command (IC) was head up by Carol Zokaite and Caitlin Cooke\* with help from Penelope Pooler and myself on communications. Philip Schuchardt\* and Mark Eisenbies lead Underground Command. Don Anderson (NRVG), Susan Burr (BRG), Sandy Ramsey, and Mike Prentice\* entered the cave first as the initial response team. Philip Balister, Mike Cole, and David Klorig\* worked communications from the scene of the accident inside the cave to cave entrance, relaying messages from cave radios to ham radios to IC. The medical team was



## Practice Rescues, Past, Present, and Future Cont.

By Jessica L. Dorr

with help from Brian Ekey and Chris Rourke. Ray Sira was good enough to pick up the gear at Lawrence's and head up a belay/rigging team with

approximately 300 meters from the entrance. At the debriefing, it was commented that the patient



help from Dustin Schleifer\*. This is an incomplete list of folks who helped out. Thank you all! Even



the most seemingly insignificant job is important in a caver rescue.

The simulation began at 1100 hours, when the initial response team entered the cave. The scene of the accident was the Moon Room,

packing was the limiting factor. The medical crew reached the patient at 1215. Stokes movement began at 1305. We had the patient out of the cave at 1415. The cave was muddier than normal from recent rain events, which may have slowed movement. Once the patient started moving, communications did not have time to relocate in-cave radios, but instead used runners to report to surface.

All-in-all a good practice, but remember there is always more to learn or even relearn what you may have forgotten. As a group, one of the worst things we could do is think we know everything, and not continue to communicate with others. It often pays to be humble, but when the shit hits the fan, take a moment to assess the situation then stand up, take charge, and do not be afraid to use what you have learned.

\* Newest Prospective/Full Members



## YTR

By Adam Carpenetti

Cavers go through a vast majority of experiences, from meeting new people to learning new techniques. The people and knowledge I gained from YTR is one experience that will be with me on every caving trip.

Young Timers Reunion, YTR, kicked off on Thursday night. Thursday was a night to relax. Most of the night consisted of everyone hanging around a campfire meeting other cavers, the practicing of tying knots, and Chris Michie getting things situated for the upcoming vertical session.

Friday is when most of the events commenced. After breakfast, we headed out to a local cave to practice rappelling and learning commands. After suiting up and setting up two different rappelling stations we were given instructions to tackle our obstacles. Unfortunately the rain came and it ended our day earlier than what we were hoping for. Nightfall arrived and with that came the social events and all the good fun that comes with getting a bunch on cavers around a fire.

On Saturday, we started to learn more about

vertical caving. We went to a pavilion where a changeover course was set up. This allowed us the training to switch over from ascending to rappelling and vice versa on a rope. After the training, we headed out to a local, commercial cave where we rappelled down into the main room about 130 feet. After everyone rappelled down, we decided to climb back up the rope on knots. This took most people a grueling 30 minutes.

Saturday night was filled with food and door prizes. After everyone stuffed their faces with burgers, dogs, and beans. They also had a bunch of door prizes to give away. Prizes ranged from Nalgene bottles, to lights, to caving packs. I was lucky to walk away with a few Nalgene bottles and a Croll ascender from Petzl.

YTR was a great experience where I got to learn many new skills and meets lots of new cavers. The experiences I've had I will take with me wherever I go. Caving showed me a whole other variety of experiences.

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## Grotto Grapevine

By AI Cartwright

### Banquet

Julie Booker organized a successful banquet this year, which was held within the tight quarters of the Blacksburg Country Club. James Whisenhunt was awarded the Brain Bucket award for his incident while caving with Wil the Bastard. Brad Atkinson won two awards this year; Cave Conservationist, for his continued dedication to avoid caving both near and afar to conserve the natural cave environment. Brad shared his second award with Nikki LaBranch, which the two were awarded the "Most Talked About Couple." Other awards were "Soap on a Prusik," award to Mike Cole for his waterfall incident in Alva Blankenship Cave. Carrie Blankenship received "Club Spirit Award" (aka Flame Out) in the presence of her grandmother, aunt and uncle. John Deighan and Travis Coad received an award for their ability to rig a rope to a rope pad and live to tell about it.

The after part was conveniently located nearby at Dave and Patricia Colatosti's house and garage. Dave pulled up the carpet in the spare bedrooms to avoid any repeats from last year.

### Tsunami Benefit Concert

Septapus played at Champs the Sunday of Banquet weekend to help raise money for victims of December's Tsunami. Kirk Digby, Dave Colatosti and Chris Michie opened for the band. \$183 was raised by the show.

### Relationships

Rumor has it that Mike Newsome and Molly Lucifer might be getting hitched sometime soon for finical reasons. Mark Eisenbies and Penelope Pooler have joined the list of couples engaged to be married. John Booker and Jess Dorr aren't engaged yet



## Grotto Grapevine Cont.

By AI Cartwright

but John will move in with Jess in August. Hopes dwindle of seeing long-term couple Eileen O'Malley and Steve LePera on the list, as the two have decided to give it a rest after their 7 year relationship. Kevin Rock has finally settled on one girlfriend, after giving up on waiting for Eileen to accept his proposal. Sandy Ramsey has begun to experiment to determine her true sexual orientation. Right now rumor has it she is leaning towards the taco.

### Danger behind the wheel

Chip Mullins started the trend this semester after Nikky's St. Patty's Day Party, when he tried to drive himself home in a very inebriated state. He didn't make it home that night; instead he spent the night in downtown Christiansburg. He has been charged with a DUI and awaiting his court date for a final ruling. Luckily Chip is okay and no one was hurt, except for a few mailboxes.

A few weeks later, Sam Lambert found herself the

victim of side-swipe accident while on her way home from dinner at Nikky's house. (hmm, anyone see a trend here?) She was not found at

fault for the accident, instead the teenage driver with a learners permit was charged and his insurance paid for the approximate \$3,000 in damage to Sam's car.

Kevin Rock, in an incident not related to leaving Nikky's house, laid his bike down on Price's Fork Road to avoid hitting a car that cut him off trying to make a turn. Kevin is alright, only sustaining

cuts and bruises to one of his legs. Since Kevin avoided hitting the car with his bike, he now may have to pay for repairs to his bike on his own.

In an effort to make the roads safer, Chris Garguilo killed his old pickup, ensuring it will never again drive down the road under its own power.

### Injured List

After trying to be young and foolish at Snowshoe, Sandy Knapp was rescued off the mountain by Ski Patrol after failing to complete a ski jump in the terrain park. She had surgery

to repair (replace) one of her ACL which was donated by some dead guy. The following weekend a younger group from the club traveled up to Snowshoe, and again managed to

injure someone. Club friend Tiffany fell backwards while on her snowboard, and hit her hand hard enough on the snow to puncture a blood vein to cause internal bleeding. Her arm puffed up, and was all sorts of pretty colors for the next week.

Over stressed about her upcoming June wedding, Sam Lambert must have put on a few extra pounds causing Fiancé Chris Garguilo to suffer a hernia. Or perhaps this is another shotgun wedding.

### TAG Spring Break

Kirk Digby lead a group of club members to Scotsborro, AL over Tech's Spring break for a week full of camping and caving. Attendees included Travis Coad, Philip Schuchardt, Mike Cole, David Klorig, Geoff Lewis and Erika Bechtold. Despite unaccepted but unavoidable laziness, the group was able to bounce several pits including Stephen's Gap, South Pittsburg, Cagle's Chasm, Neversink, Valhalla and Moses' Tomb.

### Road Clean Up

Road Clean up took place the morning before Easter Beer. Dave Colatosti had the best find this year.

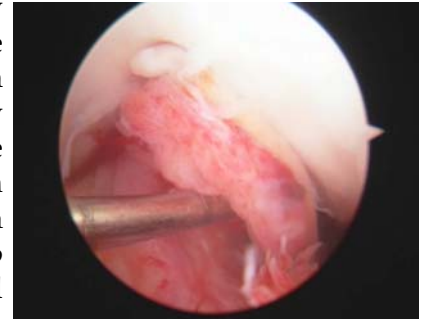


Photo by Mike Cole

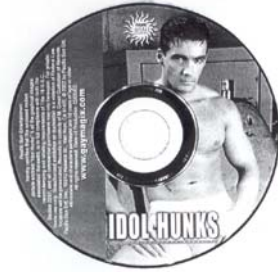


Photo by Kevin Rock

## Grotto Grapevine Cont.

By AI Cartwright

He found a CD, no wait a DVD, no wait a Gay Porno DVD. And leave it to Sandy Ramsey and Samantha Lambert to watch the video in the same room where Travis Coad was trying to sleep.



thanked them for allowing us to continue to use Tawney's Cave. We also told Mrs. Link to call on the club for any work she may need around the house or yard, so be prepared in the fall to rake some leaves.

### Easter Beer

Despite the less-than-desirable weather and lack of a band to play endless music all day, fun was had by all who attended Easter Beer this year. Geoff Lewis and Mike Cole played "catch the floating beer," after their attempt to hide beer in the middle of the creek on a float was unsuccessful, twice. Upon night fall, many pieces of furniture were sacrificed to the fire, and fireworks were set off in abundance to celebrate.



Photo by David Klorig

### YTR

The 8<sup>th</sup> annual YTR was held again at the Blue Bend National Recreation Area outside of White Sulfur Springs, WV. Attendance was lower this year due to a sudden return of old-man winter, who brought cold temperatures accompanied by heavy rain, wind and of course, some snow. Chris Michie organized a vertical orientation for YTR participants, which included a caving trip to Lost Caverns where the group was allowed to repel in and land in the tourist section of the cave.

### VAR Landowner Award

The club nominated Betsy and JC Link for the VAR Landowner Award last year. They were selected in Fall 2004. After the practice rescue in April, a group of club members presented the award to the Links and

### New Officers

Officer elections were held in late March. The officer reshuffle ended as follows: President: Philip Schuchardt, VP: Geoff Lewis, Treasurer: Rob Story, Secretary: John Booker.

### Maine or Bust

Jen Albanes is well underway on her adventure to hike the Appalachian Trail. Her partner has already quit, but Jen continues on strong. She has been given the nickname "coldfeet" because she told fellow hikers she is waiting to get married until after she completes the hike. Fiancé Chris has been keeping members informed, and reports she should be passing Blacksburg in early June.

### Rescue Geek Wanna-bes

Club members John Booker, Scott Rapier and Steve Lepera are on their way to becoming rescue geeks. The three-some is currently enrolled in the local EMT class.

### Moving On

All bets are off. Despite popular belief, professional undergraduate student Mike Cole will finally graduate from Tech and move into the real world. Mike has accepted a job offer with a mining company in Denver, Colorado. Joining Mike in graduating this May includes Nikky LaBranche, David Klorig, Chris Michie and Brian McCarter.

Brad Atkinson moved to Morenci, Arizona in late March to start work for mining company Phelps Dodge. Brad expected Nikky to accompany him in Arizona after her graduation, however to his surprise she is looking for work elsewhere.



Photo by Mike Cole



## Grotto Grapevine Cont.

By AI Cartwright

Carrie Blankenship has moved on from bank teller to a real geology job. She is now a geologist for Draper Aden Associates in Blacksburg.

new ones were put up, lots of rosebushes were pulled and a large fallen tree was chopped up and hauled to the fire circle.

After a full day of work, those with 4wheelers found some fun in a big mud hole in part of the Thompson's field.



Photo by Mike Cole

### Work Weekend

A large group of club members headed down to the picnic site a week early this year to help the Thompson's with some work around the farm. Old fences were torn down,



Photo by Mike Cole

## Trip Reports

From Sign Out

VPI Cavers and their guest logged in 717.5 hours underground from 12/04/04 to 4/07/05

12/04/05	Pig Hole	Kirk Digby, Travis Coad, Philip Schuchardt, Dustin Schleifer, David Klorig, Eric Steinburg	"Where is the rope.."
12/11/04	EG #1	Chris Michie, Philip Schuchardt, Dave Coltasti	"Still Going..."
01/16/05	James	Rich McLawhorn, Sarah Cole, Travis Coad, Rober leatherland, Adam Carpenetti, Jenny Orrock, Philip Shuchardt	"I like Rusty Spoons"
01/29/05	Tawneys	Hope Giwszewski, Allison Byrd, Sam Lambert, Sandy Knapp, Joshua Kneas, Eillen O'Malley	"Caving with a bunch of big headed women"
02/12/05	Starnes	Geoff Lewis, David Klorig, John Kilrov, Brad Baskette, Eric Hanse, Sarah Knight, Steve B, Thomas Sheffer, Ted Martello	"Face first mud slide is where it is at"
02/19/05	Tawneys	Matthew Burnett, 8 venture out	"Sure you can go that way. The mortality rate can't be 100%."
03/19/05	New Castle	John Deighan, Mike Prentice, Philip Schuchardt, Dustin Schleifer	"So much karst so little time"
04/03/05	Tawneys	Samantha Lambert, Ray Sira, Otis Farmer, Rutger Thomschuetz	"Practice Rescue is going to suck in here next week"

**VPI CAVE CLUB**

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