

# THE TECH TROGLODYTE



SPRING 1987

# THE TECH TROGLODYTE

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



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On the cover: Jim Washington, in Neversink Pit, Alabama, hears the word of God:"Lose weight!" Photo by Doug Abernathy.

#### Also Published By Troglyote Books:

Fatito's Book of the Dead  
Unfinished Leads in Stompbottom, Vol. 6  
No One Here Gets Out Alive : The Saga of  
the Hixon Residence  
Swokowski : Destroyer of Innocence  
Karst Madness

# The President's Column

The club has seen some fun caving in the last year. Although the student membership has not increased greatly, those members who are around are doing a lot of caving, and more importantly, they are doing it together. In the past year we have had two club trips to Mexico, one to the cockpits of Jamaica, not to mention Alabama and numerous West Virginia trips. In fact, there have been so many VPI cavers involved on these trips, that we actually had a quorum of voting members during our rendez-vous in Tamapatz! These trips are the exceptions, however, as we have had an abundance of trips each weekend.

This year I would like to continue the spirit of group involvement, and perhaps have a few planned club outings in the fall. For example, a club invasion of Lockridge-Aqua campground for a weekend would provide us with some excellent caving, as well as partying! Such a trip would certainly be fun for every caver, and it would hopefully spark some perspective member interest as well. A good work weekend at the OTR site or for a local land owner could be another possibility to get the whole club together and involved. Of course, our re-scheduled practice rescue in late October will also hopefully spark some good involvement.

These trips would also help out in our efforts to attract more students to the club. In case you haven't noticed, we are going to lose some good cavers this year to graduation/migration this summer. Thus, I would like to see as many people as possible help Paul and myself in taking trips next year. These weekend trips, combined with good parties will also serve to combine the perspective members with the active student members and the non-student members who are not highly active at present. I know that I learned a lot from the long standing members of the club when I was a trainee, but it was not always easy to get them to take me caving. Hopefully there will be more opportunities for new members next fall.

Finally, I would like to see more caving projects started this year. Whether it be surveying, ridge walking, or just talking to land owners, I find it is a lot more interesting when your caving party has a purpose. So for now, let's enjoy the summer with some excursions to Tinker Cliffs, Friar's Hole, Ellison's, and Fern; but keep thinking of some neat ideas for club trips/parties in the fall!

- Craig Roberts

# The Editor's Column

I must admit that as the end of the quarter approached, I looked forward to having to edit this Trog with the same sort of enthusiasm I normally reserve for impending root canal surgery. It takes a pretty low priority when you've got tests, research work, and 5 papers screaming for attention, but I think Beth and I are going to pull this thing off after all. Sincere thanks are in order for all those who composed articles, bared their souls, and in some cases, utterly butchered the English language. We picked up the pieces where we could and when it was needed.

The Trog is, after all, a journal of the activities of our grotto. This issue's content, I feel, reflects what our grotto really does: lots of caving, a respectable amount of partying, and minimal politics. If the absence of the Grotto Grapevine bothers you, volunteer to write it the next time I beg you. Other than that, response has been great and, academics allowing, I'll be editing the next one. See you next quarter. Until then I'll be in New Hampshire, expanding young minds.

- Michael Fiore

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# Scott Hollow Trip Report

At one of the Friday night Cave Club meetings before Christmas, I said to Walt Pirie, "If you want to go caving over Christmas, give us a ring." "Ring-ring," was Walt's reply. "How about going on Christmas day?" After a brief consultation with Bobbie, it was decided, and we made plans to go.

Bobbi, our daughter Shana, and I picked up Walt at about 7:00 a.m. and drove to Sink's Grove, WV, near Lewisburg. Sink's Grove, as most cavers know, is the home of Bob & Bob's (Cavers Serving Cavers), although you must know what you are looking for, because the place is cleverly designed to look like a broken-down, abandoned, old building with no sign outside. After some pictures in front of Bob & Bob's (not many people can claim that), we proceeded to the cave owner's farm.

The male owner (a caver) was at the barn, about 1/4 mile away, down a 4 inch deep mud lane. Cows need to be milked, even on Christmas! After cementing relations with the owners, and tracing part of the excellent map they have of the cave, we proceeded to the entrance.

First, a little about the cave's history. It has been known for years that there are caves somewhere in the area of Sink's Grove. Specifically, it has been strongly suspected for many years that this particular farm has a large cave. The hydrology of the area indicated such, but no cave on the farm has been found. A little over two years ago, the caver/farmer decided he would "take the bull by the horns." He brought in a backhoe and started digging at a likely low spot on the farm where water seemed to disappear quickly into the ground.

Within a few feet, he had opened a cave entrance! Because the area was low and much water passed through it, he had trouble keeping an entrance open. It kept caving in. So, he acquired a piece of 3 foot diameter culvert pipe, dug out the entrance more, and stuck it in the ground as far down as it would go. Because of the low level of the area around the entrance, he plans to eventually to fill the area in around the pipe. In the meantime, there is a pipe sticking out of the ground straight up about 15 feet. Steel reinforcing bars are stuck through holes punched in the pipe to supply rungs on the inside and difficult steps to climb on the outside. In rereading this passage, the entrance doesn't sound too difficult, but it is, believe me. From the top of the pipe to the floor of the cave is about 40 feet, through (at least on the day we went in) a modest waterfall.

Scott Hollow Cave has been opened a little over two years, and since then miles have been mapped. It is difficult to know how much larger the cave is, or whether it connects with another system, but it is clear that it is a world class cave of epic proportions. Much of the couple of miles which we traversed was perhaps 100 feet high and we encountered a great deal of breakdown. There are many active formations and water runs through all of the cave we saw. As you may remember, last year's Christmas season was a wet one, so it was natural for the cave to be wet. We suspect, however, that Scott Hollow is wet most of the time. After going through a part of the cave with particularly high ceilings, Walt mentioned that we hadn't yet seen the "big stuff."

The experience of being in a newly discovered cave is a difficult one to describe. The knowledge that a relatively few people have ever walked on the spot on which you are walking, and that in some remote side room you may be the first person to ever walk there, is a thrilling one. We saw only a small part of Scott Hollow Cave, but we hope to see more of it in times to come.

After about 6 1/2 hours in the cave, we came out at about 7 p.m. It is quite an experience to go down the outside of the culvert pipe in the dark when your carbide lamp has gone out in the strong wind. Anyway, we dressed quickly and took off for our next adventure.

We had reservations at 8:30 p.m. at one of the U.S.'s few five star restaurants, The Greenbriar, in nearby White Sulphur Springs, West Virginia. At least it looked on the map to be nearby. Unfortunately, West Virginia roads, as all of you know, are often not as good as the maps show. And we could hardly go to the Greenbriar dressed as we were in our "coming out of the cave clothes." As we entered the town of White Sulphur Springs we found a motel, as we had planned to do, and asked to rent a room so we could shower and change to our Greenbriar dinner clothes. The motel office was in a building nearby which also controlled gas pumps, so it was not exactly a Marriott, but it looked presentable enough. Besides, by that time, we had only half an hour to shower, change, and get to the Greenbriar nearby.

The person who was to check us in to the motel suggested that instead of renting a room for the night that we just rent the motel's shower room, a regular room used by truckers for showers. When we asked how much the shower room would cost, the answer was "\$4.00." "Each?" we asked. "No, for the four of you," was the reply. The irony of paying one dollar for a place to clean up to have a dinner costing many, many times that was not lost on any of us.

From a world class cave to a world class restaurant was almost too much for one day but we enjoyed both of them. We got to the restaurant just in time, ate more than we should have of some of the best food any of us had encountered to that time, and drove back to Blacksburg, arriving at about midnight. It will take a great deal to dislodge Christmas 1986 from our memories.

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--Jim Littlefield.



# From Inside the Landslide

Once upon a time there was a course called Landslide Analysis. Few people signed up for it and consequently it became an independent study. We spent the first few weeks listening to lectures and visiting landslides. Before long we had to choose a particular slide to study. Well there is always the Narrow's slide but it's been analyzed to death. Turns out that there's nothing that can be done but pray and wait for it to go away. There are several other mini-slides in the vicinity of Blacksburg, but none as big and interesting as the one we chose

In a little quarry outside of Blacksburg, Virginia there is a landslide. Because of the beautiful outdoor setting, complete with river and forest, and the fact that this slide is no ordinary slide, being extremely tall and acting strange, we selected it to be our victim. Several trips to the site accomplished very little due to several of us gazing off into the distance and kicking rocks (thinking behavior) while others chased wildflowers, rattlesnakes, birds, etc. (piddle behavior). We really had no idea why the mountain was coming down. Tension cracks along the back of the mountain crest proved it was a big slide but they didn't act correctly. Usually the ground on the moving side of the crack is lower but not here. Here we saw the ground slumped down 4-ft. in some areas on the "stable" side of the mountain. Well we finally came up with the idea of toppling failure. This would explain the odd cracks but why was the mountain-side toppling? There had to be some reason, some undermining going on to cause such a mess.

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We had heard there was a cave in the quarry but no one said much about it. Neither Douglas nor Holsinger mentioned any caves in the surrounding area. So we didn't give it much thought. Besides, there weren't any nearby streams or sinkholes to tickle our fancy. But, finally the cave entrances and quarry benches caught our gaze. The entrances didn't look that big actually but there were several little holes on the next bench up (maybe 65-ft.). We knew this couldn't be a big cave, possibly a mazy, dusty, nasty tubular SOB. Harboring these thoughts we didn't worry about getting in the sleazy rat-tunnel very soon. Days past....

Luckily there were three cavers in the group: Gary Rogers, Steve Dickenson, and myself. I finally convinced Gary that we should do the dirty deed and see what might be in the mountain. Being college gradual students we couldn't afford to do an elaborate analysis of the slide and going in the cave might reveal some clues as to why the mountain was coming down. Maybe we could see a slip surface or some mud or something to indicate movement. From the outside there wasn't much to see, just a pile of fallen rock. Bore-holes had been drilled years ago but access to the data was impossible (top-secret among quarries). Knowing that no quarry owner is crazy enough to go in his own cave (blasting being done all around, and highly fractured rock everywhere) we decided to do him a favor. Besides, if we did find

any clues then it would make our analysis look much better than that based on surface data and hypothetical BS. What the hell, we had permission to study the benches, so why not from the other side.

Friday, May 8, 1987, Gary and I checked in with the plant "geologist" as usual and stopped by to talk to the blasting manager. There being no blasting plans for the day we set out on our mission. Arriving at the benches we took our time gearing up, trying not to attract much attention and checking out the scene for nearby officials. We knew if we were to ask permission it would be denied and the cave might be blasted shut (there being drillers on the upper bench preparing for just that purpose). We also thought that if anyone knew then they would assume some responsibility for our welfare and we didn't want to blame anybody else for our craziness. (Later we read in the Virginia Cave Protection Act that anyone asking permission from an owner to enter his cave relieves all liability from the owner.) Of course my roommate, Jim Washington, knew where we were in case anything were to happen and we didn't show up at the cave club meeting that night. So all was set.

Casually working our way across the bench, pointing at this and that, stopping to act as if we were studying the rock, we approached the smaller entrance. Once out of site from the drillers I climbed up to the cave while Gary stayed behind to give them something to look at. I felt the cave's cool breeze blowing wildly and my nostrils soon perked up to that wonderful smell of speleoaroma. Lighting my lamp I looked around one last time for any visitors. Everything seeming perfect, drillers busy above, beautiful day outside, and a few hours ahead to kill this gnarly-hole; I peered inside.

To my surprise the little entrance wasn't that little, being about 8-ft. in diameter. Within a big mountain it seemed small from a distance. Looking inside I couldn't see anything at any distance. Checking my lamp proved that it was well lit and that booming passage was actually what I saw (or didn't see). "Gary get the Hell over here now!! This ain't no little cave!!" He grinned from ear-to-ear and bopped up to the entrance. Our hearts began to skip beats and adrenalin started pumping wildly. A few feet inside we saw beautiful white formations covering the walls. The passage was about 15-ft. in diameter and sloped down into the mountain. The floor was obviously breakdown and looking up we could see what used to be another level that had collapsed. The ceiling was incredible with white and rust colored stalactites floor sloped downward while the ceiling rose up guiding us into a very large cave. Awesome!

Further up ahead the floor took a dramatic 45-degree plunge while the ceiling seemed to do the same. In front of us the darkness looked like a pit as it sucked up all the lighting we could muster. The drilling sounds were too close for comfort to remain at the top for any length of time so we had to move on quickly. The steep slope covered with blocky mud made descending very uneasy. In front of us we could see that the entrance hall

didn't end in a pit but it was deep. Finally reaching the bottom we were 80-ft. below the entrance. Above our heads stood a massive archway covered with anthodites, helictites, soda-straws, and stalactites. They were everywhere, white and rust colored formations, even all over the floor. The passage ended abruptly at a massive wall but quick searching found the best possible lead to the right. Climbing over delicate formations, "crunch, crunch," we stood at the end of a beautiful hallway. The passage was about 20-ft. high, 15-ft. wide, covered with amazing formations, and there was no end in site.

Chimneying down to floor level I ran ahead as Gary picked his chin up off the floor. Bop, bop, bop and then I stood at the end of the big hall, about 250-ft. away. From there I could see two great leads. Turning around I went back to find Gary burning up film. The camera flash seemed like a strobe light illuminating pretties in every direction. The ceiling, the walls, and the floor were all covered with fantastic formations. Virgin passage never looked so sweet! The ceiling and floor were flat creating a big trapezoid passage, framing columns 20 to 30-ft. high.

Posing for a few shots I stopped to catch my breath and tried to pry Gary away from his camera. He finally stopped at the end of the roll and joined me to see the what other treasures we could find. After several oooohhhh's and aaaahhhh's we finally go to the two promising leads. Taking the easier one we ended up in a room almost filled with caved-in material: a pile of stiff clay, and one of dolomite. Obviously these came from some upper break-in. After taking a few more pictures and finding no big promising leads we decided to try the other passage we had raced by previously. The next portal was situated between a cascade of white columns. Climbing up to a window we could barely see the opposite wall in the room, being the largest room we had seen thus far, possibly 30-ft. in diameter and 50-ft. high. Looking around the room we saw no leads, and below our window there was a very steep 25-ft. drop. Having no rope and needing to meet the rest of our group outside we left the "cream dream" behind. It took us 2 hours to get this far and only 20 minutes to get back out.

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Outside the cave we felt like we had conquered the world. It's not often you see virgin passage this spectacular. We made it back to the bronco and lit cigars. Wallowing in our bliss we waited for the rest of the group to show up. Once they showed we couldn't stop talking; we had to return. So plans were made to bring ropes, plenty of light, food, water, film, and survey gear. Surveying the cave would add an impressive touch to the independent study and would shed some light on the causes for the landslide; remember the landslide?

The next day we returned with Jim, Steve, and I surveying while Gary and Peter Forrest photographed. This time we had lots of light illuminating twice as many pretties as before. Surveying allowed us to really take in the view and since it was Saturday we didn't have to worry about any drillers above or visitors

outside. Having lots of time to see all the formations gave us plenty of ooohhh's and aaahhh's. Peter, having never been caving before, really got a treat and ruined his underwear just as much as the rest of us. It really was a thrill!

After surveying to the clay and dolomite piles we took a break to eat lunch. Gary and Peter climbed up the dolomite pile and disappeared only to call out seconds later to report that the bigger entrance had been found. Now having our bearings straight on where we were on the benches we decided to bop into the nearby big room to see what we could find.

Climbing through the window of columns I found many stalagmites to climb down on and decided not to use the rope unless we had to. At the bottom of the 25-ft. drop there was a big formation about 10-ft. tall, all white, and cracked at the base. It must have fallen from the ceiling. Being very careful not to disturb it we climbed down around to the floor and quickly checked the room out for more possible leads. Off to the left there was a stream leading into more big passage about 10-ft. high and 15-ft. wide. Fresh dolomite breakdown was scattered on the floor so I carefully ran past to push the stream hallway. Quickly the hall broke into two passages. The stream led to another caved-in dolomite pile to the left and soon died into a gnarly crawl. To the right the hall went up and over a flowstone mound and continued. After climbing up and over I found another stream and pushed it to another sump. Above this there was another passage that seemed to get back into the multilevels that we had suspected all through the cave but seen broken on the floor.

Running back to the others we finished surveying the available big stuff and made lots of notes on what we had seen. In one spot there were beautiful white and rust curtains (bacon rinds) which Steve attempted to play as an experienced Rasta-Callipso musician would. Sounded pretty good; if only we had a tape recorder. Elsewhere there were still tons of formations which we had become accustomed to and actually jaded by. Caving doesn't get any better than this and a ny other cave would pale by comparison. This place truly was amazing.

After 6.5-hours of eyes popping out of our heads and shouting "OH MY GOD!!, LOOK AT THIS!!" we finally decided to finish up and go to the VPI picnic at Buddy's. Actually we had gotten pretty comfortable with running through big impressive hallways and simply hated to push any nasty leads. Climbing back to the first dolomite pile we continued surveying up and out to the second entrance. We kept surveying across the bench to the first entrance to tie up the loop and call it a day. What a day! Feeling as if we were on top of the world we unsleazed and regarbed for the ride home. Comfortably numb we wondered what would happen to the Big Boomin' Bertha.

Being a cave in a quarry and poked full of holes from above did not seem a pleasant fate. But the owner will do what ever he wants with the cave so there is no sense in trying to cause a fuss. We decided to let him know the danger he was in by drilling above such huge voids. We thought by telling him of these dangers he would let us return to survey as much of the cave as possible. This would at least satisfy our interests and be able to calm his nerves. If the right blast were to knock out the support for the whole mountain then all Hell would break loose. So bright and early Monday morning we had a meeting.

After explaining to the owner about how beautiful his cave was and what eternal profits could be made from commercialism we heard his story. It seems commercial caves can't employ a few hundred good men and plans for future mining were already well underway. Even reclamation of the area had been designed and there was nothing that could be done. Even if the cave could be saved there's still the landslide above and lots of old and new breakdown inside. Our survey only covered 1000-ft. and that certainly couldn't support a commercial operation. With all the cards against us we heard the final "BOOM"!! The Big Boomin' Bertha became a Little Squeazin' Jenny. Life and death of a cave. What a shame. At least we've got a good slide show and cave map to show for our efforts. Well, some of us lived happily ever after.

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—Doug Abernathy

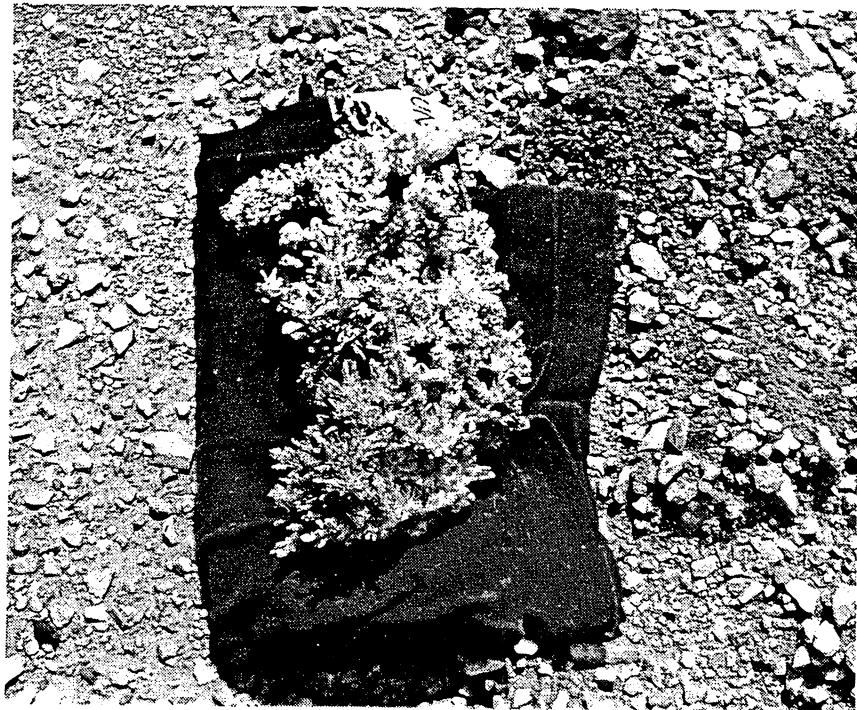
And, From Behind the Iron Curtain . . .

9419. Ruisel, Imrich & Kováč, Damián. (Slovak Academy of Sciences, Inst of Experimental Psychology, Bratislava, Czechoslovakia) Effect of short-term isolation on certain mental functions. *Studia Psychologica*, 1975, Vol 17(3), 239-243. —Six spelunkers (mean age, 23 yrs) remained in an underground cave\* for 6 days. 18 measurements of psychophysiological functions, mental processes, and personality traits were made to test the effect of load (harsh climatic conditions, changes in diurnal biorhythms, and lack of work activities) on anxiety, social fear, rigidity, and short-term memory. Tests were conducted on the 1st day of descent and immediately after ascent. Deterioration was seen only in short-term memory and eye-hand coordination.<sup>2</sup> Anxiety and rigidity decreased. —M. Ellison-Pounsel.

\* Good thing they weren't in an above-ground cave.

<sup>2</sup> They must have got to the Mills Bestski's before the researchers got to them.

# Photo Pages



No, we're not advocating vandalism. This was a typical pretty in the quarry cave, removed shortly before the cave was destroyed.

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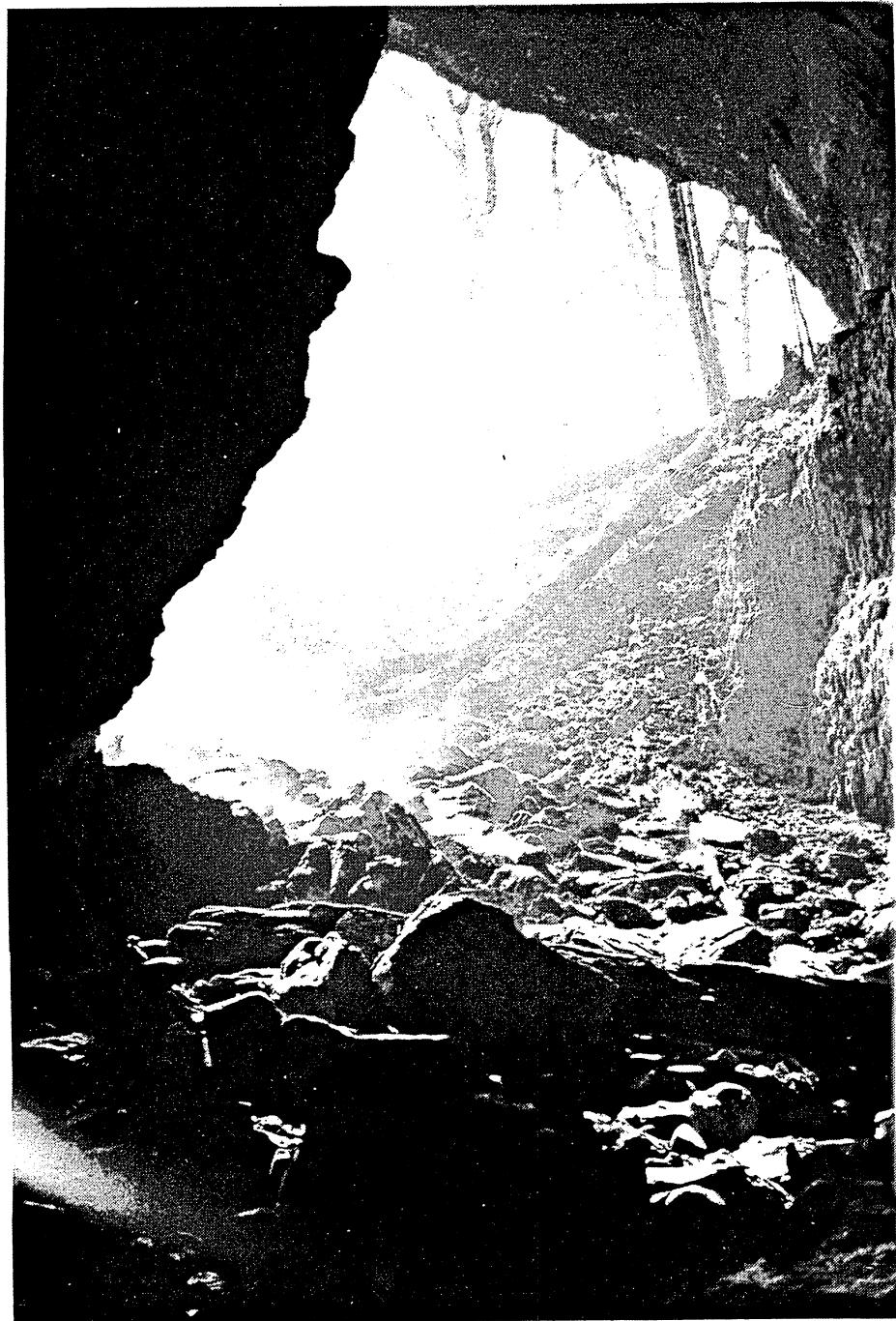


Familiar faces atop the observation tower,  
near Elkins, W. Va, before Fall VAR.



Scenes  
from  
Alabama  
trip,  
1987.

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# Pit Trip To Alabama

Many people decided to spend spring break in Alabama bouncing pits, and I was one of them. Jerry Redder told me to meet in back of Derring on Friday at five. When I got there, it was the usual chaos. Jim Washington and party went shopping at the grocery store; Ko Takamizawa and others went to the ABC store.

At 7:00 p.m., although everyone was still not ready, Cecile James and I left. At 3 a.m. the next morning we arrived at the rendezvous point: an unlit parking lot in front of Western Sizzler. An old timer named Bill Stringfellow was there to meet us. As Ko and I were getting ready to set up our sleeping bags in the parking lot, Jerry finally gave the word to go to the campground.

After an amazingly fast ride going 70 mph through unknown backroads we arrived at the garbage dump. We have pictures to prove this. When we tried to park next to Jerry's van, we discovered that there was a baby carriage in the way. I took my sleeping bag and walked over to a less debris strewn area. After stomping down some grass and helping Ko put down a tarp, I fell asleep to the sound of Craig Ferguson and Jenny Ford arguing over who's sleeping bag was better.

The next morning, after much ado, the impatient people, including me, walked up from the trash dump towards Steven's Gap. I got to a pit and waited for Doug Perkins. He looked at the pit and confirmed that the rigging point was where I was standing. Moments later, about 7 of us were down, and Doug Abernathy was about to abseil the pit. Surprise! The pit was only 60 feet deep and it wasn't even the right one. We yelled "don't come down" and got out of there. Mike Fiore scouted ahead for the REAL pit but came back to report he could not find it. Finally, all of us followed the stream up the watershed. It was a lot like hiking up to the Cascades.

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I think Steven's Gap is beautiful. There is a tremendous half-moon shaped entrance. The 150 foot pit has a good sized tubular waterfall. Sunlight makes the spray gleam and sparkle as water tumbles over the edge. No prussik is required; after rappelling you can walk out. At the bottom, a fallen tree is angled against the wall where a stream flows into the pit. The tree isn't too hard to get up, but negotiating the stream is. Cecile, Beth and Jim got completely soaked in their attempts. Beth was too modest to take off her shirt despite pleas from Reggie. Paul, Reggie and I bopped the pit twice. Mike did a weird spinning rappel. Paul said that Mike should smoke some herb. Gary was off in his own world studying plants.

At only 1:00 we were de-rigged and ready for the next pit. We went to Neversink. It was a long hike through some stream washes. Reggie made it only because he saw glimpses of Doug Perkins' red shirt. Someone said it looked like a miniature Guasguas. We double rigged the pit and designated one line for

abseiling and the other for ascending. Reggie and I bopped it twice. This pit made me abandon the Whillan's sit harness that Sue had loaned me. When I made frog motion, it did strange things to the groin area. Not advised. When I got to the top of the pit, I found that I had pinned Ferg to the ground. He had started to rig in while I had started to climb. Ooops. We were all ready to leave in the gloaming, when Reggie said he couldn't pull the rope out of the pit. It was stuck!!! It was decided that Ko would go back down and rectify the situation. He did so and reported that the rope had tied an overhand knot by itself around a log. Reggie and I ran down the mountain without lamps as the last rays disappeared. We almost killed ourselves.

Gary had spent the day at "the morgue," an entrance to a cave named Fern. When he arrived, the caravan journeyed to the campground. This was not a trash pile. Instead, we found Alabama rednecks playing bad music. The rednecks had a bonfire and we started one of our own. Reggie climbed a tree with Paul's machete and went crazy. There followed a pseudo party. Jim Beam and wine were passed around in quick succession. Everyone got drunk I think, I went to sleep early. (Ed. note: It's known as "passing out!")

Sunday was too nice a day for anyone to go inside a cave. Everyone opted for open-air pits. First we went to VAST. It was a small group: Doug Perkins, Cecile, Reggie and I. Cecile's Le Car made it thru some giant mud puddles. We parked in a power line right-of-way and started hiking down the side of a very steep mountain. It was total bushwack. We followed blue flags tied around trees. The pit entrance to VAST is a tiny hole. We rigged and rappelled into what was a very dark, very wet, and very deep pit. It was listed as 215 feet, but Doug said his rope made it look more like a 250 footer. Reggie had lost his Petzel and tried to ascend with a 2 gibbs frogger. It worked more like a knot system and it took him an hour to get out. The hike back was interesting. Cecile had gone on ahead. She left a trail of crackers and beer for us to follow. Doug picked up the beer. We sat around in the sun for awhile and drank soda pop. Cecile said she liked VAST a lot.

With time for another pit, our group of four headed for Vahalla. We met Jerry & crew leaving. They drove to the top. We decided to make the long hike and spare the vehicles any further damage. After 2 miles along an unsurfaced road we arrived. There was little light left. We quickly rigged. I bounced it and then went back down to do some exploring. Jim Washington and others came and double rigged the pit. Doug abernathy and Mike Fiore rappelled to join me, Cecile and Reggie. Vahalla is an incredible pit. It just looks powerful and impressive. Big humongous blocks of breakdown are lying all around. The pit made me a bit nervous. I could see dangerously loose rock hanging off the sides. Nevertheless, we all survived and made Gary coil the rope.

On the drive back to camp that night we were attacked by Stringfellow's truck. He stopped in front of us on a hill to pow-wow and his truck started rolling back at us. After a spastic series of events, no one died and we continued. At camp that night, Paul rigged a tyrollean that sort of worked. A party followed. I, of course, had sense and went to sleep. Others, including Doug Perkins, had no sense and got drunk. They realized I was not present and came over to sing "Amazing Grace" to me. I can think of more unpleasant things they could have done. After that, we took pictures of Paul. He was drunk and we piled up beer cans on his head.

Monday morning was slow. Reggie, Cecile and I decided to go to Fern cave and bop Surprize Pit. We got there, parked, and hiked up the mountain to the waterfall entrance. It was a little bit of a shock getting back into a muddy stream crawl after 2 nice days of fun in the sun. Our guide, Paul Smith, zoomed on ahead. We followed slowly, trying not to get our feet wet. We got to a precipice with a bolt but did not see any rope. This situation forced us to backtrack and check out some side leads. Eventually we said frick and came back out of the cave. Shortly thereafter, Paul Smith came out and informed us he had already bounced the pit. Apparently, we had gone too high and missed the hairy ledge that he had forgotten to tell us about. Cecile decided not to go back in. Getting better directions, I went back in and found the rig point. I waited awhile, nobody showed up, so I went ahead and started down. It was too dark to see anything. All I had was a Durabeam. The noise from a tremendous waterfall was overwhelming. Surprise Pit is 404 feet deep and it took about 15 minutes to rappel since I couldn't see the bottom until I got there. With my feet on cave floor, I changed over to my frog system while getting wet from the spray. I thought I would ascend in two stages because the 200 foot pits we had been doing did not require a rest. I was totally wrong. Without any reference point or gauge to measure progress I had to break the climb up into iterations of 20 with a couple breaths in between. At last, I was over the ledge and walking back up the stream to the outside. I found my pack, washed my hair in the waterfall, and started the hike back down the mountain. The Alabama trip was over.

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--Dave McClurg

Ed. Note: A collection will be taken up at the next few meetings to send Dave to a remedial English workshop.

# Whiteside Mtn. Trip

WHITESIDE MOUNTAIN - Approx. 4500 feet. Near Highlands, N.C.  
Highest shear cliffs in Eastern North America. Open April -  
December. Accessable via U.S. 64.

Whiteside is a 6-7 hour drive from Blacksburg. I met Paul Smith and Ray Siegery, who had just returned from a tremendous trip-push to survey to Ocatempsa in Mexico - Known to Belgians as Pasa Verde. Ray's brother Chris joined us for the rappel. We used a 750' rope borrowed from M. Smith of Knoxville on the condition "you fray, you pay."

The rope was rigged from a tree at top with a rebelay on a sloping ledge about 100' down - through a drop of about 600' or so. There was only about 10' left over on the bottom. Ray did the ledge rigging. We used radios when they worked because it was quite windy on the ledge, but the rope didn't flail a great deal.

After Ray went down, I rigged in and dropped down to the rebelay. Through some fluke or twist of rope, my rack ended turned sideways and I had a slow ride down. Ray was waiting at the bottom grining at my slow decent. He had the same thing happen in Fantastic. Paul followed me - whizzing down the rope - both he and Ray were in prime condition after clambering up and down many ropes in Ocatempsa. Ray then clipped in and climbed out, not in any hurry while we enjoyed the cool breeze and I dried off the sweat of pulling myself down 600'!

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The radios began working very poorly but we finally established that Ray was sending his brother down and that we were to keep a tight belay on him. Chris, however, didn't seem to need any extra concern. He derigged and began his long walk out since he didn't have vertical gear.

I began the climb up. The first couple of hundred feet or so were near the face enough to interfere with easy climbing. It was great to have such a good view of a magnificent rock face twisted and tortured by metamorphic forces, but it was sad to see the defacement of many bolts. It almost could be interpreted that this face is the practice field for all those learning to set bolts.

Finally I scrambled over a major bulge and reached the free area (about 300'), a glorious view hanging in space looking over the valley out to mountain range after mountain range. I was in no hurry since only Paul was behind me. I used my rest time to take in the panorama - observing rock climbers on the face to the north, and those on the observation deck a barely discernable distance away.

Before I knew it, though, I had risen above the trees I was using as a reference point and the rope pad over the ledge nudged my head. It was an easy lip, no problem pushing my Petzel jammer over the pad, and only a little push to get the chest roller past. Paul followed quickly and we derigged, stuffing the rope, hoping we hadn't frayed it too much. A great day -cool and breezy - and a great climb.

-Cecile James

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## Cow Tails

Although "cow tails" or "rabbit runners," as the climber types prefer to call them, are not a necessity to the typical Western Virginia cave trip, they can add some safety to your rigging. A cow tail is nothing more than a carabiner at the end of a 2 to 3 foot safety line attached to your seat. Some people tie two of these, one being 1 ft. long and the second about 3 ft. long. They are simply used as safety lines when a person is in any way exposed.

I often tie a loop with the free end of my rigged rope so that a person rigging onto the rope can clip in and do so safely. It is also helpful for people stuck at a lip. Often times a person can clip a cow tail into the loop at the top and simply de-rig the problem cam or knot. This method is much easier than attempting to attach a fourth climbing device above the lip when your full weight is on it. The cow tail also adds a sense of security when you are vertical caving in large groups. I often clip myself in when helping someone negotiate a lip, or when catching packs or gloves being tossed at me. Also, it is convenient to clip packs and other gear to my cow tails when on a rappel. This allows my hands to be free, and my center of gravity to be much closer to the rope, minimizing the risk of flipping due to being top heavy.

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The most extreme use of cow tails is during a bolt climb or traverse. This is when two different lengths of cow tail come in handy. This system allows you to move from bolt to bolt safely, with a self belay. I find it useful when rock-climbing, too. It's a great feeling to pull the last part of a pitch and be able to clip your cow tail into a friendly belay bolt and rest!

They work as a cable ladder self belay, and in certain situations, can be used for other things. Thus, there are many reasons why cow tails are useful. Best of all, they're cheap. To make a perfect set all you need is about 10 feet of webbing, 2 non-locking carabiners (they snap in quicker), a locking D biner, and some duct tape (to attach them to the line so that they don't slip around, and can be rigged in a hurry.) Also, don't make them any longer than you can reach! I'll be glad to discuss any questions at the next bridge session.

-Craig Roberts-

## *Shocking discovery from deep underground . . .*

Scientists investigating an unexplored cave in Turkey have unearthed a crystalline coffin dating back to the Ice Age — containing the mummified corpse of an alien being from another world!

The human-like creature, which stood only four feet tall in life, has pebbly, leaf-green skin and filmy, transparent wings like an insect.

Despite its bizarre appearance, Dr. Fatih Turnsunbay said the being had walked upright on two feet and has the hands and the sex organs of a male more human than animal.

"This could be the most significant scientific discovery in the history of mankind," proclaimed the

leader of the team that found the coffin.

"All the evidence we now have clearly establishes that the corpse is that of an alien being from another world far beyond the visible stars.

"And, we have definitely fixed the period of its burial as the Ice Age by the rock stratum in the depths of the cave where the coffin was found."

Turnsunbay said the coffin is made of a shimmering, crystalline material not found on earth and not unlike that found in rock samples brought back from the moon by American astronauts.

"The crystal coffin is incredibly strong," said Turnsunbay, a noted professor of archaeology in Istanbul.

"In fact, it is easily the strongest material I have ever heard of. We slammed it with a sledgehammer and didn't even scratch it."

But far more extraordinary are the results of tests on the insect-like alien. They reveal that the

# Cave explorers find alien mummy!

## *Ice Age coffin yields incredible evidence of other-world visitors*

creature is actually older than Earth.

"We have used every sophisticated age-dating process available anywhere in the world, and the numbers we get are identical with those obtained from core samples taken miles beneath the surface of Earth.

"Its age is beyond comprehension. Somewhere out there in deep space there is a planet undoubtedly very much like our own where human-like creatures live for millions upon millions of years. It's amazing!"

Turnsunbay reported the alien's

hands and feet — including fingernails and toenails — are distinctly human, as are its nose, lips and ears.

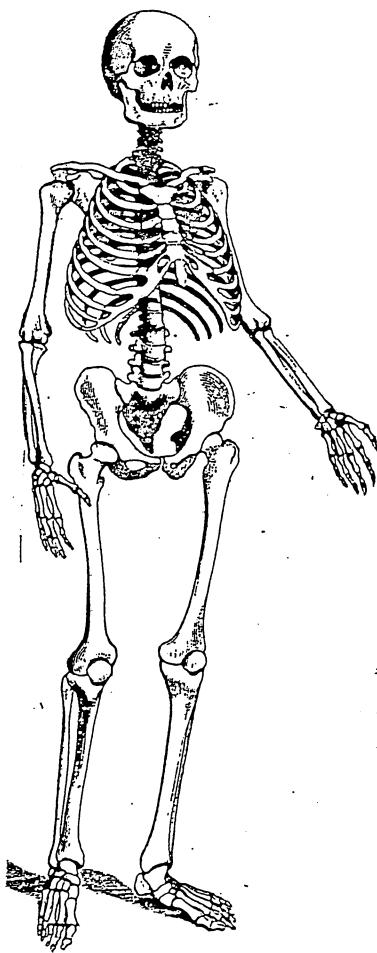
"Only its eyes are different from ours," he said.

"They are three times larger, are totally colorless and like those of a reptile."

"But there is one thing that definitely does bother me," Turnsunbay added in his report.

"With a creature such as this, I'm not at all certain it really is dead. And that is very frightening."

— MICKEY McGUIRE



# Are You an Old-timer ?

Banquet, picnic, float trip, and Halloween are times when people who you never see at any other time of the year show up and party. Many of these people fit into the category of "Old Timer." But what, exactly, is an old timer? "How can I be one, too?" Well, not being an old timer myself, I can't tell you how to become one, but I can give you a few identifying characteristics. If you fit more than half of the list below, then you are well on your way to becoming an old timer.

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## Old Timers :

- Can dance the time-warp without instructions.
- Can identify more than half of the people in the slide shows.
- Can identify more than half of the caves in the slide shows.
- Took more than half of the pictures in the slide shows.
- Have a waist size larger than their membership number.
- Know where Sinks Grove, W. Va. is.
- Know where and what Elkins means.
- Go caving once a year. At picnic, if then.
- Always bring rain gear to picnic.
- Remember when beer was consumed at meetings.
- Remember when trog articles were not extorted from trainees, but like it now that they are.
  
- Wonder what Keith Smith will wear to Halloween this year.
- Remember Philip Balister before he got pregnant.
- Remember when Dave Cinsavitch had a driver's licence.
- Remember when Mark Honosky was single.
- Remember when Mike Futrell didn't dress like a pimp.
- Remember when Garrie Rouse and Tazewell were unrelated things.
- Have seen Jim Hixon sober.

# Quotable Quotes:

You thought we didn't hear. But we did. You prayed we didn't remember. No such luck. It's time for Quotable Quotes.

"I could use a few bodies in various places."

-J.R.

"Can you get it up, Ko?"

-C.R.

"My idea is that after you die , you get to do anything you want."

-R.H.

"That's what I always say when on drugs."

-C.R.

"It took me years before I found out that noble didn't mean absence of bull."

-M.F.

"Let's be safe this time."

-D.McC. to R.R.

"Can I buy her from you?"

-R.R.

"You can slide up me any time."

-unknown trainee

"God, that guy's got a hairy ass."

-G.R. about H.B.

"D.C. isn't a state, it's a loophole."

-A.K.

"They're deep, at least on the surface."

-J.W.

"Do I have to carry my own pack?"

-T.W.

"I never let my schooling interfere with my education.

-Mark Twain

19

Cave Crawlers Crave

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REG. U. S. PAT. OFF



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\*The name LEVI'S is registered in the U. S. Patent Office and denotes overalls made only by Levi Strauss & Co.

# STOMPBOTTOM ACCIDENT REPORT

On Saturday, August 23, three people, Koichiro Takamizawa, Garrie Rouse, and Joan Johnson went on a survey trip to Stompbottom. They entered the cave in the early afternoon and were surveying beyond the Gnarly Hole. Around 5:00 P.M., Ko began to climb up a pile of breakdown to check a possible lead when a large rock slipped a few inches, trapping both his feet. Garrie and Joan worked to free one foot. A half hour later, they succeeded. At 7:00, they decided to get outside help to move the rock off Ko's left foot. Garrie left the cave to call for help while Joan remained with Ko.

Garrie tried to call VPI grotto from the caretaker's house, but was able to contact only Don Anderson and Doug Perkins as most of the other members were at an OTR work-weekend. He then contacted CRCN. They arrived at the entrance early Sunday morning. Meanwhile, the two people in the cave stayed warm with garbage bags and carbide lamps. Around 3:00 A.M., Ko began to feel better and decided to relieve the pressure on his ankle by digging into the ground around it. Because the rock had been shored up earlier, he was able to dig himself free at 3:30.

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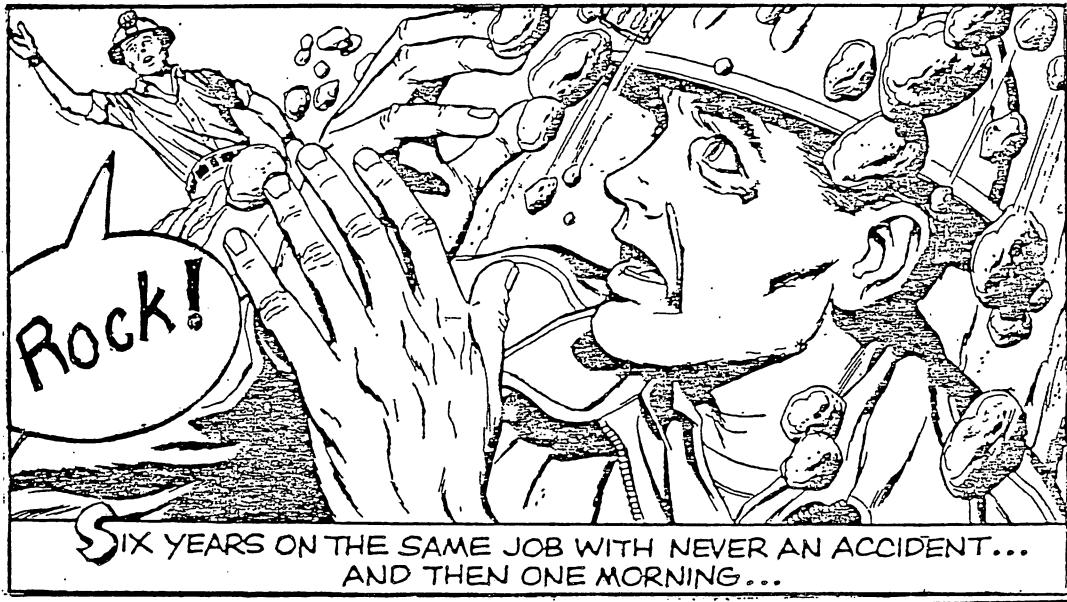
Joan and Ko ate a hot meal and proceeded to a spot 100 feet from the Gnarly Hole. They encountered Garrie there around 4:30. He said that rescuers were in the cave, but none of them had made it through the tight crawl. Joan went through the crawl to get a splint, and left the cave when two small EMTs decided to take the splint the 150 feet to Ko. One couldn't make it through the crawl. The other one made it through the squeeze but turned around 100 feet from Ko and Garrie because no one answered his calls.

CRCN had opened up many of the tight passages in the cave, but stopped when they were informed the victim could "walk" out. On the surface they provided hot food and drinks. At 5:45, they were asked to inform Ko's roommate of the rescue since the group had signed out with him. CRCN replied that VPI had already been notified. At 8:00 A.M. Ko's roommate called Jim Washington. Jim, who was unaware of the situation, started rescue proceedings. He soon contacted a relative of Don Anderson and learned that a rescue had been in progress for some time.

Around 6:30 A.M., Ko and Garrie got tired of waiting for the splint, and exited the crawl without a splint and pushing 5 packs. Ko was able to exit the cave under his own power, and everyone was out by around 9 A.M.

Joan Johnson  
Koichiro Takamizawa

# BURIED ALIVE!



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22

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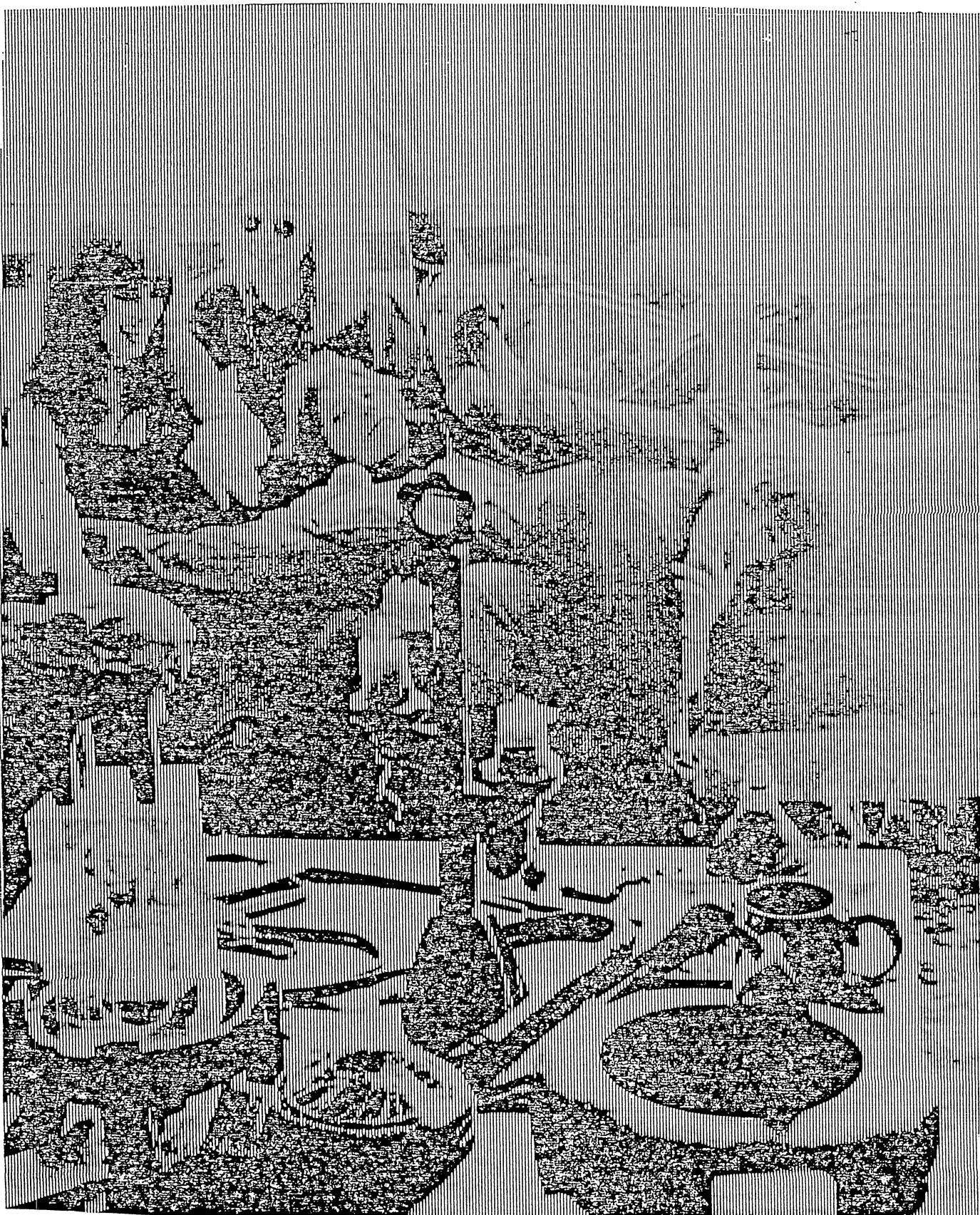
E  
S

RUSH

Perkini

This photo was recently taken at Bill and Dave's place, also known as Altered Estates. Your job: identify how many said "yes" and how many said "no".

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Answer: Everything's relative, man.

# From The Signout...

As usual, spring quarter was the slackest caving time, with only 42 trips going out, totaling a paltry 742.5 man-hours. But who can blame you with float-trip, picnic, VAR, and lots of great weather before the Blacksburg monsoon season set in. Here are some of the highlights:

<u>DATE</u>	<u>CAVE</u>	<u>PARTY</u>	<u>COMMENTS</u>
3/18/87	Wirehole	Marvin Fuqua, Reggie Reid and Dave McClurg	Got car stuck, hid from train on the wrong side, got wet and decided to quit. Pass the beer and women!
4/4/87	Greenville Saltpeter	John Fanning, Craig Ferguson, Craig Roberts, Jenny Ford, Ko Takamizawa, Paul Hess, Mark O'Connor, Marvin Fuqua, Mike Fiore.	Mike scores some booty. Water was cold and all over the place-the water wimps lost out.
4/5/87	New Castle Murder Hole	Paul-guy Hess, Craig-man Roberts, Mark-dude O'Connor	Rock climbers underground. Dude. The gorge next weekend for sure!!
4/18/87	Banes-Spring	Mike Fiore, Ko Takamizawa, Craig Roberts, Timothy Watson	"Is Tim lost?" "No, I can still hear him fumbling around somewhere."
4/18/87	Stompbottom	Garrie Rouse, Jack Kehoe, Frank Gibson (out of retirement)	2 Skoals, 1400' plus surveyed, major stream found, beaucoup leads everywhere, all virgin, of course!
4/20/87	Pig Hole. Rescue	Ed Fortney, Phillip Balsiter, Mike Fiore, John Lohner, Keith Smith, Mary Fauci, Craig Roberts, etc.	Found 'em quick. Great response time due to the Lohner/Roberts Twilight Zone Effect. Do we still need a practice rescue?
4/28/87	Newberry's	Joe and Carol Zokaites, Susan Frome	46 stations.
5/10/87	Pig Hole	Doug Bruce, Tim Watson, Rodney Smith	"Are you where you are yet?"

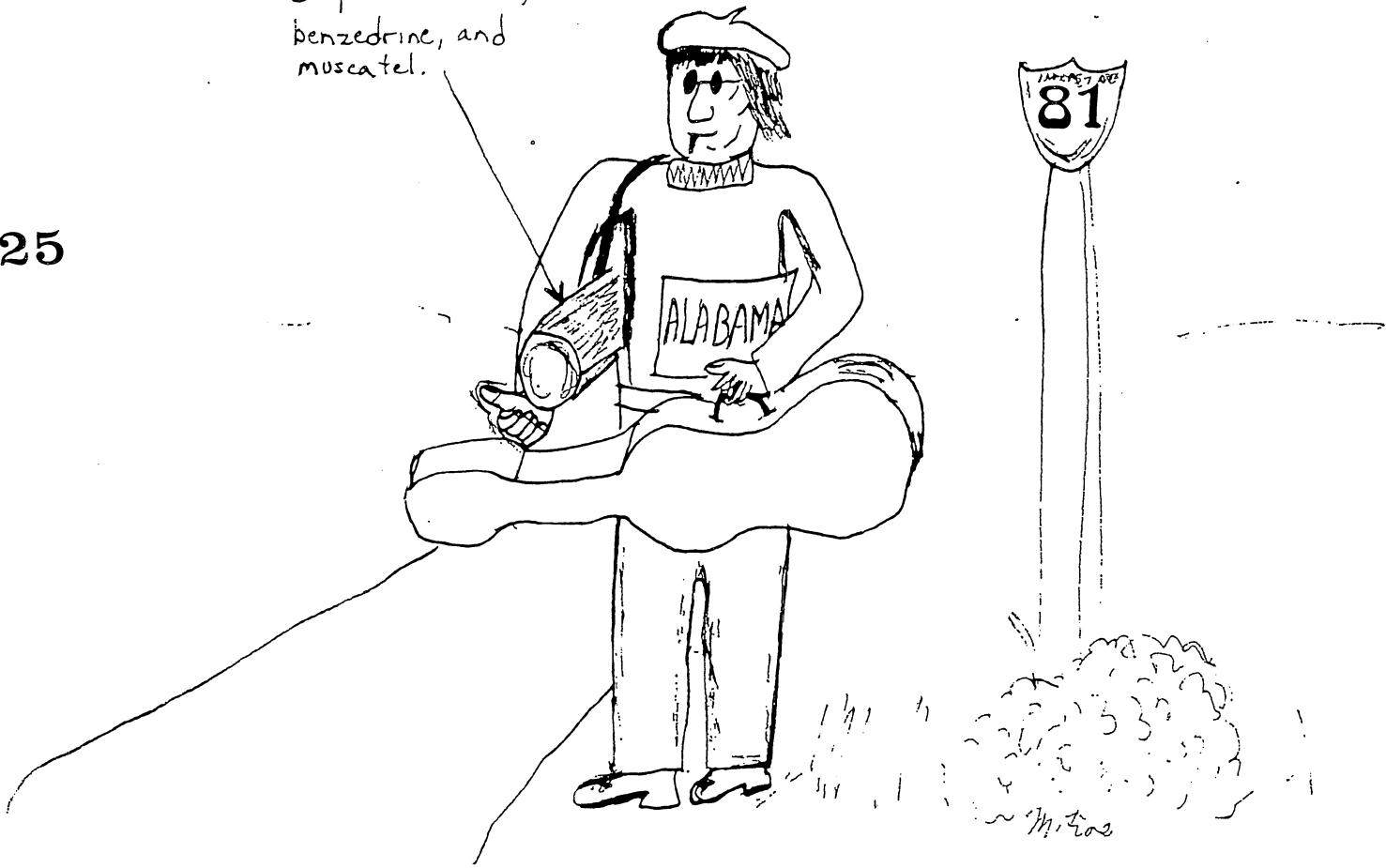
Born in the wasteland that also produced Young Republicans, able to groove on the Dead, R. E. M., or Peter Paul and Mary at will. He's hip, he's hot, and his blood test came out negative. It's

# Cavin' Cassidy

Although he had always known that religions enjoyed tax breaks and other liberties under the doctrine of separation of church and state, Cassidy only recently discovered that Secular Humanism is now considered a religion in Alabama. It was time to build a church.

Copies of 'Howl',  
benzedrine, and  
muscatel.

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VPI Cave Club  
P.O. Box 558  
Blacksburg, VA 24060

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