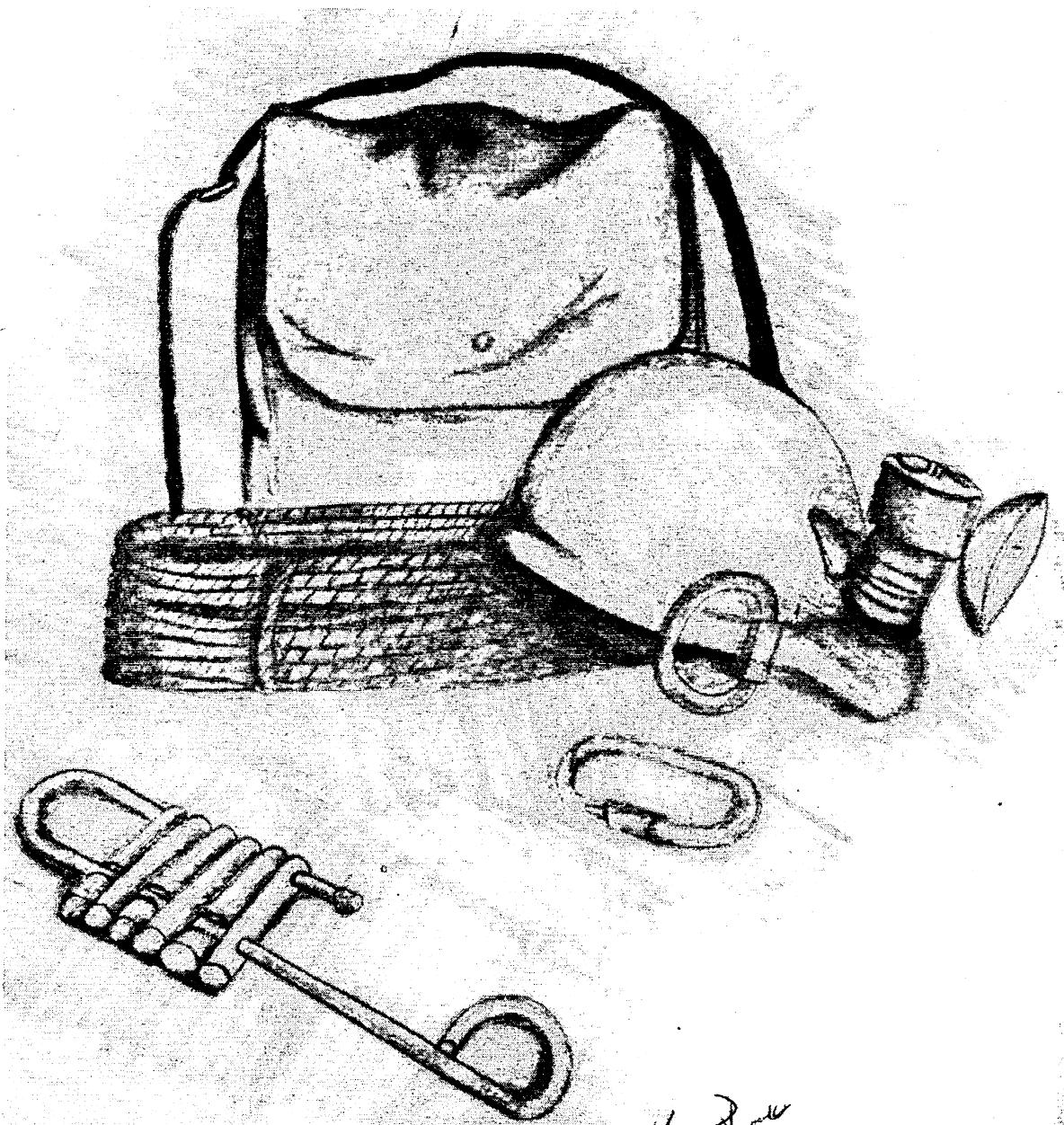


# The Tech Troglodyte



Kir Tolle

Fall '02

# The Tech Troglodyte

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

### Fall Semester 2002 Officers:

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## **And Now a Word from our Editor**

**by Eileen O'Malley**

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Well it's been a fun few years, but my retirement is probably long overdue. So here it is! I hereby retire as *Trog* Editor.

I've had a great time editing the *Trog*, and I hope the next editor loves this job as much as I have. I hope I wasn't too much of a pain - no, wait, that's not true. I enjoyed being a pain as much as the rest of it.

Anyway, I'd like to leave you all with one last thought:



## Nikky's Bridge Day Adventure

by Nikky LaBranche

Bridge Day is an event to celebrate the New River Gorge Bridge, which at three thousand and thirty feet is the longest span arch bridge. On the third Saturday in October, the bridge is closed to traffic to host West Virginia's largest one day festival. The public is welcomed to walk the bridge and watch the BASE jumpers and rappellers. The BASE jumpers have a platform set up on top of the bridge from which they jump. The rappellers use the catwalk underneath the bridge to rig into for the eight hundred and seventy six foot drop.

Brad and I were with the Flittermouse team lead by Scott McCrea. The team consisted of Scott, Frank Abbato, Brad Atkinson, Al Hughes, Dave Lambe, Mark Stover, Patrick O'Diam, Don Going, and Robert and Kevin Quick. I served as rope tender, belay, and picture taker.

Bridge Day started very early. It was the five A.M. type of early (four A.M. if you count the car alarm from somewhere in the campsite). We quickly got dressed and packed our gear for the day, then we all piled into the car. We left the airport where we were camped to head over to the campground where the ATF was headquartered, and all the Bridge Day activity was taking place.

I had been told when I got there at around 1:00 that morning that they were making me the belay team and sending me to the bottom. So while the guys ate breakfast, Brad and I tried to find me a ride down to the bottom of the drop. We talked to Tiny from BATS Grotto and he assured me, "We always have room for a pretty girl." So I climbed into the back of the truck with the other nine people from BATS and various other places. We were quite cozy. As I left I saw the rappellers all lined up getting inspected by the bomb-sniffing canines. We drove down the small one lane windy road with several switchbacks to get to the bottom. As usual, my stomach didn't agree with the West Virginia roads and I was very queasy by the time I got out of the truck.

When we got to the belay site we still had an hour until they started dropping the ropes, so we sat around and talked for a while. It was a rather chilly day with a good bit of wind. Then I got the call, "Top 4 to Bottom 4, we're starting to lower the rope," and with that I was off to try and guess where our rope would land.

That turned out to be ten feet down the steep hill from where I wanted it to land. So I got to walk around to the bottom of the hill and find it again and then climb back up the hill with it, trying to use the rope to help me up the steep hill. With some effort I got the rope back up to level ground and out of both trees. The next challenge was to find a second person with gear to help me do the pull test. The amount of wind that day made it hard to pull the rope straight down and most of them bowed noticeably with the wind. After that was taken care of, it was time to sit and wait for the first rappeller.

A little while later I got the call, "Top 4 to Bottom 4, rappeller on rope." And after about seven minutes there was Kevin, with his feet on the ground again, still on the adrenaline rush. Brad was the third one on rope and loved every minute of it. It took him about eight to nine minutes to complete the first drop. He came off the rope with a big smile on his face. It was really neat to see the twenty-two ropes in a line with people in different positions on every one. Several people also decided to climb ropes during the day as well. I even saw a mother and daughter team. The guys took over the belay duties from me and I was free to go relax and socialize. Brad and the other first few rappellers headed back up to the top to rappel again.

I also watched the BASE jumpers for a while. One of them got under the bridge and brushed against two of the ropes. They were neat to watch from the ground. There were even a couple who got off course and landed close to the belay site. We had a few instances of people dropping things from the bridge. There were two water bottles and a piece of wood. Objects falling from the bridge can reach terminal

velocity and their impacts can be very dangerous or even deadly if they hit you right. Most of us were wearing helmets but we all tried to get out the way when these objects hit.

I had wandered over towards the railroad tracks socializing when I looked up above the tree line to see an out of control rappeller hit the ground on the other side of the tracks with a thud. There were EMT's close by as well one who was on the BATS belay team. Within fifteen minutes they had him out of there and on his way to the trauma center in Charleston. It made me stop and think about the dangers involved in an eight hundred and seventy six foot rappel. At that point we thought he had probably broken his tail bone and possibly punctured or bruised a few internal organs. The belayer did manage to get him off center enough so he missed the big rock. And just a few minutes after the fall, our next rappeller, Brad, got on rope for his second rappel.

Brad took between four and five minutes to get down the rope this time, going much faster than he had before. This did worry me some after what I had just witnessed. After Brad got down safely we waited around for two more to come down the rope to take over belay duties. Then Brad, Al Hughes, and I got on the bus to head up to the top of the bridge. The bus was packed with mostly BASE jumpers and a few rappellers. There was an armed female guard at the door of the bus for safety reasons. Brad and I stopped on the bridge to look at the view of the BASE jumpers. They are the real crazy

people who jump the eight hundred and seventy six feet and trust that their parachute will open. I noticed it was much colder and windier on the bridge than it was down below at the belay site. There was a good size crowd of people gathered on the bridge watching. There was one who looked at our gear and asked us if we were jumping or climbing. We took the none of the above option and explained to him about the rappelling gear we had on.

After about ten minutes on the bridge, I got bored and went back to find the car and meet up with Al who was making coffee. Al told me stories about his younger days when he was in the Army while we waited for the others to get back to camp. When everyone got back it was time to break into the adult beverages. The rappellers had to be cleared out by three o'clock, but no one could go anywhere because the bridge was closed to traffic until five P.M. So it was social hour at the ATF campsite.

The team decided to go to Dirty Ernie's Rib Pit for dinner. Apparently we weren't the only ones with that idea and we had to wait for a table. We went through almost two buckets of peanuts between the nine of us while we waited. The food was great, and I was very thankful for something besides the Rice Krispies Treats I had for breakfast and lunch. Then we took a trip to the grocery store and headed back to camp at the airport for a night of celebrating.

## The Piddle Factor: a Mathematical Definition

by Christina K. Lee

The following is an explanation or equation for the time expected to pass between the predetermined sign-out and before arriving at the cave, where T is the expected time of arrival at the cave. The other variables involved are: S, Start Time; C, Number of Cavers on trip; F(S), Food time as a function of Start Time; and W, the number of Wheeled Vehicles to be negotiated towards the cave. An example is threaded throughout this explanation of T to hasten understanding.

With the intended Start Time, S, and the Number of Cavers, C, you can begin setting up an equation for time, T, in hours, where C is multiplied by 8/60 for the average of eight minutes each caver will delay the trip either at sign-out or getting to sign-out and T is the sum of all the factors.

$$T = S + C * (8/60)$$

If the Start Time, S, was set for 8 A.M. and the Number of Cavers, C, was 4, the initial delayed Time is:

$$T = 8 + 4(8/60) \text{ or } T = 8.5333 \text{ A.M.}$$

Into this equation, one needs to account for time of day, in relation to the natural feeding times of cavers, F(S). Starting a trip near a peak feeding hour will delay a trip up to an hour because cavers will not move unless fed. Peak feeding hours are usually midnight, 7 A.M., noon, and 7 P.M. (Cavers will eat if given an opportunity. Do not let that happen!) F(S) can be modeled by a cosine function, where times are transformed into radians (the origin is valued as 21.00 or 9 P.M. and an hour has the value of pi/12). To change the Start Time into radians, one must take the find the number of hours passed since 9 P.M. and multiply it by pi/12.

$$F(S) = \text{abs}(\cos(1.5 * S))$$

For our example:

$$\text{F}(\text{abs}(21-8)) = \text{abs}(\cos(1.5 * 2.8798))$$

$$\text{or } F(11) = 0.38268$$

Introducing F(S) into the equation of T, gives:

$$T = S + C * (8/60) + F(S)$$

For our example:

$$T = 8.533 + 0.38268 \text{ or } T = 8.91568$$

Transportation is another huge factor in the equation for T. The number of cars carrying cavers may either speed or delay the trip, as shown with the equation for time, t, with respect to the number of wheels, W, where 3 is the optimal maximum number of cars and 0.3 is the amount of time per car in a caravan.

$$t = 0.3 * (W - 3) \quad \text{if } W < 3, t = 0 \\ \text{if } W = 3, t = 0$$

For our example, we will only have two cars in the caravan. Thus, t = 0.

The final complete equation for the time, T, spent from sign-out to cave entrance is:

$$T = S + C * (8/60) + F(S) + t$$

For our example in which there are 4 cavers in 2 cars, starting out at 8 A.M., the time, T, is:

$$T = 8.91568 \text{ A.M.}$$

The total amount of time lost for our example is less than one hour (0.91568 hours).

### NOTE

The above equation is based on what little data is known about the 'average' caver and by no means attempts to take into account a caver known as Kirk. This caver equation will NOT apply to any trips with KIRK and should NOT be used as an explanation of tardiness! Also, not suitable for underground use or consumption.

## Use of the 2001 Cave Survey Protractor

by Joe Zokaites

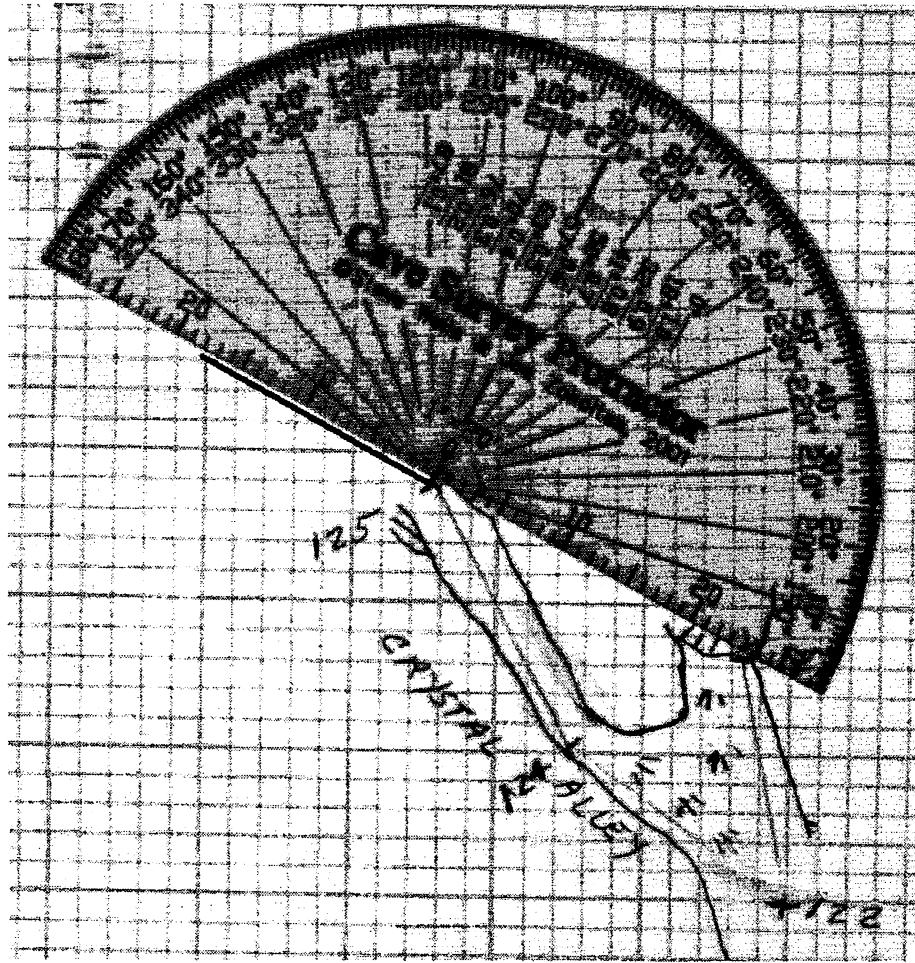
Before you go underground, cut off the excess material around the round part of the protractor.

Set the center of the protractor at the first station and rotate it until a line from the center to the compass bearing is pointed straight up. Note whether the compass bearing is red or black. Using the protractor's straight side, draw the survey shot in the red or black direction, stopping when you reach the tape distance.

As an example, starting at station 125, the tape distance is 17.8 feet, the compass direction is  $298^\circ$ , and the slope is  $2^\circ$ . Set the protractor center at station 125 and rotate it until  $298^\circ$  is straight up. I use the colored lines to help orient the compass. Starting at station 125,

draw the shot in the red direction ( $298^\circ$  was on the red scale) stopping at 17.8 feet. If you have a steep shot, you may want to draw the actual horizontal length.

To calculate the horizontal length of the shot, find the slope angle in the left side of the cosine table and multiply the taped distance by the number in the right side of the table. For example, with a slope between  $18^\circ$  and  $32^\circ$ , I multiply the tape distance by 0.9. An easy way to calculate 90% is to subtract 10% of the distance. For example, with a 23.4 foot shot, I subtract 2.3 feet to get 21.1 feet. To multiply by 0.8, I use the same trick, but subtract 20%. Using the same distance, but a slope of  $35^\circ$ , I would subtract 4.6 feet (double the 2.3 feet) to get 18.8 feet.



Cave Survey Protractor Example

On the actual protractor, the lower degrees ( $350^\circ$  to  $190^\circ$ ) are in red and the feet to the left of zero are in red.

## A.I. Cartwright Winners Through the Years: Some of VPI Cave Club's Finest

by Sandy "the Newer" Warner

Over the years, many people have contributed to the cave club "above and beyond" their call of duty. This article mentions a few of the A.I. Cartwright award winners through the years. I have enjoyed learning about different contributions to the club and hope that y'all will enjoy reminiscing about some of the people who have given to the VPI Cave Club to make it what it is today.



AROUND 1972: ROBERT E. WHITTEMORE

He received the award for his "...continued interest in, cooperation with, and support of the VPI Grotto." He involved VPI Cave Club friends in some big mapping projects, and participated at various parties (sometimes by getting drunk and obnoxious). Thanks "Whitt" for your contributions!



1979: DOUG PERKINS

Doug had been caving with the club for at least 10 years and had done the music for several banquets and at least two OTR's by that date. He took some wonderful slide pictures of his adventures, contributing to numerous programs.

### 1980: (THE LATE) DON DAVISON

Don was an innovator of caving equipment and technique. The present day rope walker with the over the shoulder cam was developed by Don. He tested equipment for the NSS Safety Techniques Committee and was not afraid to question the safety or integrity of new equipment. In Ellison's Don Davison and Cheryl Jones did the bolt climb from the 510 ledge, making the 586 possible. He also wrote and sang cave ballads.

Don always credited VPI for their support of him during his caving adventures and we want to honor him for what he did for the caving community.

### EARLY 80's: PETE SAUVIGNE



Pete had contributed to the cave club as storekeeper, safety chair, and OTR contestants. He was active with trainees and organized and instructed a practice rescue.



### 1982 OR 1983: GLEN DAVIS

Glen received the A.I. Cartwright award for maintenance and storage of the rescue gear. He also coordinated rescues from his home when there was a need for a cave rescue. In addition, Glen kept the grotto store stocked and running.

### 1982 OR 1983: JEROME REDDER

Jerome worked with the club on establishing relations with the Giles Rescue Squad and the State Rescue Squad Association. He also was

the VAR Chairman from 1978 through 1981. One of his other valuable contributions was to recruiting new trainees for the club. He assisted Richard Cobb, Chuck Shorten, and Bill Stevens by taking many trainee trips, and at one point, had signed at least 50% of member's trainee sheets. Jerome also helped the club by running at least two banquets, several picnics, and a float trip. Most of all, he helped the new trainees he recruited become a part of the group by showing them you don't need to be a "super caver" to be a member.

#### **1986: BOB SIMONDS**

Bob helped out the club by being the TROG editor and helping with the Miller Can Fund Raising Drive. He is one to thank for the club's current resources.



#### **1987: JACKIE (REDDER) HOELL**

Jackie contributed to club as the faculty advisor as well as being in charge of the club files. She was an EMT instructor for many in the club and helped with several practice and real rescues.

Thanks Jackie for your help over the years!

#### **1990: ED FORTNEY**

Ed contributed to the grotto in many ways to earn the A.I. Cartwright award. He chipped in and helped out in many ways, but most memorable was his contribution to the training program. He led numerous trainee trips and helped teach new trainees. Many current

members can thank Ed for their caving know how.

#### **2001: WILLIAM ORNDORFF**

Together with his wife Zenah, Wil has helped the grotto by running the banquet for 5 years, hosting rope running and running the rescue call out for about 4 years.

Wil also has shared his technical expertise by writing the Geo guidebook and field trip for the 95 NSS convention and the Var 2000 geo field trip. He lead the Bland Powerline ridewalk, bat study, and cave survey effort (with lots of help) to help inventory and conserve karst resources in the area. His most famous contribution to the grotto (besides his "Bastardly" deeds) is establishing and maintaining the Lepera Sucks Anti-anti Fan Club.

#### **2002: KIRK DIGBY**

As the most recent recipient, Kirk has helped the grotto by taking vertical training trips, survey trips, and grotto trips to other caving areas in the U.S. and in Mexico. He has helped organize events as well as helped with the day to day running of the grotto. He has been involved with landowner relations, rescues, and teaching vertical techniques above ground for about the last eleven years.

#### **NOTE**

I know that there are award winners missing and holes in this timeline. Send me information so this can be updated!



## Limerick Contest Results and Submissions

submitted by a bunch of no-talent ass clowns

### FIRST PLACE BY CHRIS MICHEL:

A long Clover Hollow trip I foresee,  
Kirk's rigging test, Oh woe is me.  
Won't heed Mike's advice,  
And failed his knots thrice,  
And is still called a voting trainee!

### SECOND PLACE BY KATHERINE FERGUSON:

Down in a cave dark and deep,  
Where good ol' A.I. goes to sleep  
There's crickets and spiders  
And cavers and hidars  
Yes, down underground they creep.

### RUNNER UP BY SANDY KNAPP

Everyone must sign OUT.  
If you're late and we find you're about,  
It would please us to tease,  
And string you up by your knees,  
And then you must buy us some stout.

### THE REST

When you find a pit just throw down a pad  
The fancy gear is merely a fad  
To go the trouble of re-belay  
Causes much delay  
When there is so much more cave to be had!  
- Craig Ferguson

If in water you have no fear,  
And being naked is not a care,  
Then Smokehole is the name,  
And if you'd like to play her game,  
Then come one, come all... if you dare.  
- Sandy Knapp

There once was an editor Eileen  
whose Trog pleas got annoying and mean.  
She'd bug old and new member  
a simple article to send 'er  
we'll be glad when she's no longer seen.  
- Eileen O'Malley

Someone suggested that a Frog is the way to go  
They said my ropewalker was starting to blow  
But to be associated with the French  
I wouldn't, even in a pinch  
You won't find me in one of those silly  
contraptions below!  
- Craig Ferguson

A usenet abuser named Hoyt  
Would troll 'til he got in a fight  
He'd lose, then lose patience  
And post cave locations  
To prove to the world he was right.  
- Name Withheld by Request

There once was a girl named Eileen  
Who had a great cave in between  
Her legs. They were white  
'Cause they hadn't seen light  
But still, they were the best that I've seen!  
- Katherine Ferguson

There once were two men named Steve,  
So close, who could believe,  
They'd play all night,  
With nary a fight,  
Who could believe they didn't conceive.  
- Sandy Knapp

Did you see that cutie named Jen?  
Coolest trainee that's ever been,  
Hardly been horizontal,  
With the club, consonantal,  
And chugs beer with the best of the men!  
- Chris Michie

There once was a caver named Ray  
Who had a big pole so the say  
When you find your new goal  
is to reach a high hole  
He will use it to save the day  
- Ray Sira

One Picnic there was Kochiro,  
Who liked to fly in the airo,  
So he hopped on his bike,  
And took to flight,  
And since then he's been our hero.  
- Sandy Knapp

Let's not forget Stay High, a cave  
discovered by Jim and by Dave.  
If you're small you can sneak  
thru the lower route's peek  
but if not, just stay high and be brave.  
(Or it's your stuck butt we must save!)  
- Eileen O'Malley

Steve was a man with a truck,  
a Bronco dead like a duck.  
He's worked like hell  
and now it looks swell,  
so soon the thing will be stuck.  
- Steve LePera

Our beloved guitarist named Kirk,  
Drinking beer by the fire with a smirk,  
Some call him a troll  
Burping over the knoll  
But Pam is just thrilled he has work!  
- Chris Michie

Wil thinks himself a bard,  
but his words we disregard.  
He's dumb as a brick  
and has a short dick,  
So that's why he's called "The Bastard."  
- Steve LePera

There once was a girl name Eileenie,  
Whose boyfriend sure was a meanie,  
She liked her port,  
And while SHE may be short,  
Her boyfriend's weenie is tiny.  
- Sandy Knapp

In our club was a caver named Sandy  
whose brain was pure cotton candy.  
Every sentence she used  
make her friends stare, confused,  
but to mock her's so easy it's handy!  
- Eileen O'Malley

And then there's our club email list  
which caused lots of missing the gist.  
People tried to bring order  
make the fighting posts shorter  
to prevent it from coming to fists.  
- Eileen O'Malley

There once was a zealous trainee,  
Who drank nearly a liter of Chablis.  
As the group lazily napped,  
Watching the miners, entrapped,  
They all heard him puke on the tree!  
- Chris Michie

## Triple Wells Ladder Climb, November 2, 1974

by Cheryl Jones

*Don Davison wrote an article about this trip which was published in the Tech Trogolodyte in 1974 or 1975. Cheryl recently wrote this recap from her caving log book notes for submission to the Region Record for VAR history.*

In the '60s and '70s, America led the way in single rope techniques, developing efficient climbing systems and mechanisms, and then static caving rope. However, the Europeans were not embracing this new, rather precarious and suspect Yankee technology and continued to negotiate long drops on steel cable ladders.

Of course a climb of 30 feet or less on a cable ladder was common in Virginia, and sometimes we would rig the entrance pits of Clover Hollow and Newcastle Murder Hole with a couple of ladders. However, we found it difficult to imagine our European cousins not only climbing pits sometimes hundreds of feet deep on ladders, but also carrying the weight and bulk of all these ladders through a cave.

Then was born what we figured was a brilliant and adventurous idea. We would empathize. We would show ourselves that anything they could do we could do, if only we were so inclined. We would try to understand why ladders would be preferred over ropes. We would climb Virginia's deepest free-fall pit, Newberry Cave's 202-foot Triple Wells, on ladders.

On November 2, 1974, Jerry Redder, Lor Windle, and I, with Don Davison as our fearless leader, met Rolf McQueary and Bob Alderson in Penley's field with 203 feet of borrowed cable ladders and 245 feet of (laid) Goldline rope. As I recall, we rigged each ladder to a tree and Rolf and Bob helped us pull-test them all, checking for loose crimps, frayed cables, and slipping rungs. In those days, many ladders were homemade, and not all ladders were made of expensive stainless steel, and thus were prone to rust and corrosion. Most ladders were 30 feet long, others 45 feet long, while others were a bit more or less, or shortened at the point they had weakened. A

number was placed on each one to indicate where it would hang in the sequence. We fitted each with matching carabiners on each end's leads. Then we numbered each ladder, placing the ones in which we had less confidence at the bottom. No doubt we also put the Goldline to a pull test, as was the practice in those days.

We threw the rope and ladders down the entrance canyon and loaded them on our backs for the trip through the upper cave. However, moving the rope and all those ladders through the crawlway leading to Triple Wells was rather a challenge, as anyone who has been there can imagine. Don perched at the edge of the pit to help feed the ladders over the lip. Each successive ladder was laid out along the small passage and clipped on to the top of the growing chain of ladders, then lowered. Before the top reached the lip, the next ladder was clipped on to it.

Once the full ladder chain was connected and over the lip (and on belay!), it was clipped into the hanger on the third bolt out into the drop. We rigged the rope with a "precarious clove hitch on a rock," as I wrote in my journal, then with a loop onto the first two bolt hangers to maintain tension on the knot. The rope was lowered into the pit, carefully, to keep the end from feeding through the rungs, or otherwise becoming entangled in the free-hanging ladder.

A carabiner was clipped into the one that held the ladder to the bolt hanger, and the rope placed in the carabiner. Thus, the rope now hung in the pit within inches of the cable ladders.

Rolf and Bob arrived as we prepared to descend, as witnesses to the act. Don and I climbed down the 203 feet of free-swinging ladders, self belayed by a Gibbs ascender attached to the loosened shoulder strap of our ascending harness. To rest, we would place a loop of webbing attached to our seat harness over a rung and clip it back into the seat. (We were concerned about simply clipping on the rung with a 'biner – transferring our weight to

the rung through the small, single point of contact the carabiner provided. So we used the webbing to disperse the weight across a wider area.) Resting using the Gibbs on the very stretchy Goldline of course was not a good idea. The trip down took about 14 minutes, I noted in my log. I also noted that my arms were "pretty tired." Jerry and Lor, wise men that they are, rappelled down.

On the bottom we met Annie and R.E. Whittemore and Wes Thorn, ex-VPI Grotto cavers, then of Holston Valley Grotto. Wes, a man of significant size, was nursing major blisters on his hands and wrist from a wild ride on a single brake bar (on a carabiner) rappel down the 180-foot Bill's Rappel - a rig used for cavers half his weight. We weren't alone in unusual descents that day.

After a quick run to the Vault Room, we returned to the base of Triple Wells for the trip out. I noted that Don climbed first in 44 minutes, including stops for photos, followed by Lor and Jerry. I climbed last, in 32 minutes. Since we were approaching our return time, Lor left the cave to call the keeper of the sign-out sheet to prevent a rescue call-out. Don, Jerry and I pulled up the heavy string of ladders, breaking apart and coiling each one as it arrived in the passage. Then we moved all the equipment back out of the cave.

It was after midnight when we exited, and past the time we should have been back in Blacksburg, an hour away, at the club's Halloween party. Lor met us in the field and reported that Buddy Penley was not home, so he had been unable to make the all-important telephone call. We knew we were in trouble.

The Cave Club watched the sign-out sheet conscientiously and took this safety procedure

seriously. When a caving trip didn't sign in, a rescue team left for the cave very soon after the trip's ETA. We stalled in the field for a while, figuring that our rescuers were on the way. We reasoned that we would give them time to arrive rather than passing them unknowingly on the dark roads on our drive home. Then, when we thought we had left ample time, we left notes on the fence gate and headed home. Perhaps Whit Whittemore had been able to call in time on our behalf and change our ETA.



Don Davison makes the big climb. Photo by Cheryl Jones

which I noted was dull anyway. Of course, its tempo had been interrupted when the life of the party had been called out for a possible rescue!

We were all bruised and battered from the climb. Climbing "toe in" on a free hanging ladder pushes the ladder away from the centerline, placing the body in a more horizontal position. This means the climber must use his arms to pull his torso up to keep it from falling backward, away from the ladder. So to preserve arm strength, we climbed most of the way with one or both legs wrapped around the ladder, placing our heels on the rungs.

As a result of this technique, we had frightful bruising down the inside of our thighs and our

lower calves, which took weeks to heal. I noted that the muscles on the inside of my elbows were very sore from the climb – probably an understatement.

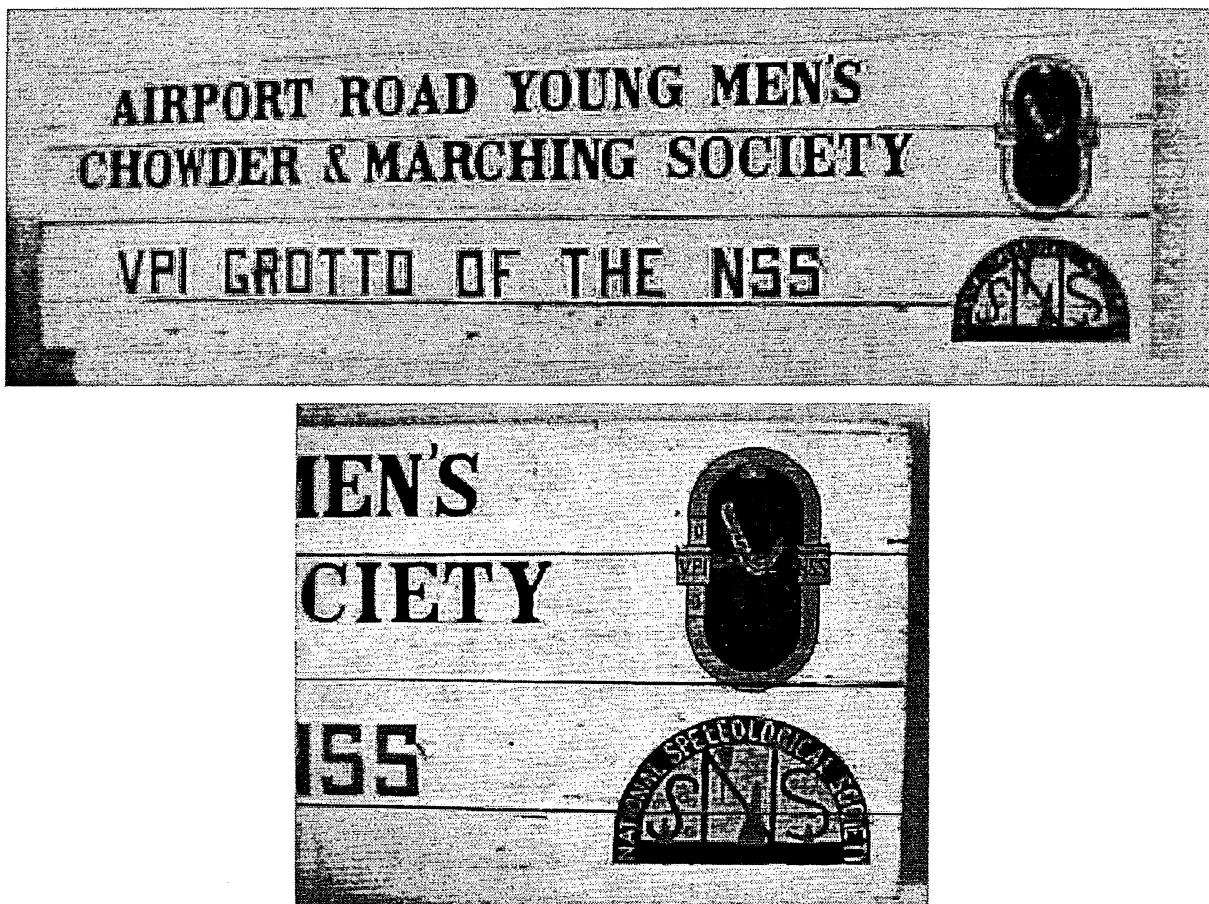
One would think the experience and the bruising would have been enough for any sane

group of people. However, Spring of '75 saw Don, Jerry, Keith Darnell, and me carrying close to 600 feet of ladders into Ellison's Cave, Georgia, to rig 586-foot Fantastic Pit. However, that is another story....

#### MORE CLUB HISTORY

Pam Mohr did some research to find an explanation of the "Airport Road Young Men's Chowder & Marching Society, VPI Grotto of the NSS" slogan. Tom Vigour writes: The YMC&MS came from an old cartoon called "Barnaby" drawn by, I think, a guy named

Crockett Johnson. My grandfather had a hardback collection of many of the strips which I re-read many times as a kid visiting them in NH. Barnaby was the kid and he had a fairy-godfather (complete with wings) named Mr. O'Mally whose social group was the YMC&MS. We added Airport Road just for class.



The YMC&MS Sign. Photos by Lawrence Britt.

## Caving, Shmaving!

reprinted from the listserv posting of Mike Newsome

Hi -

I am Cypress Marie Ambrose, and I'm the new daughter of Mike Newsome and Molly Lucier. I am writing to tell you about my "caving" experience.

Well, it's like this... I'm just hanging out in a nice, comfortable, dark chamber. I'm having a good time, just relaxing and listening to the sounds. All of a sudden, people start telling me that I'm soon going to have to go out through a LITTLE passage. Well, I took one look at the hole they wanted me to go through, and I said "no way!"

People started insisting that I put my face down there so that I can go through head first. Well. Maybe my brother Birch was willing to do that, but I wasn't going to stick MY face down there!

So, I turned around and stuck my feet in the "passage." This got everyone upset. "It's too tight to go through feet first!" So, they got some guy to try and force me to turn around. Fortunately, I was able to jam my head under a ledge (they called it "Molly's rib cage") and I

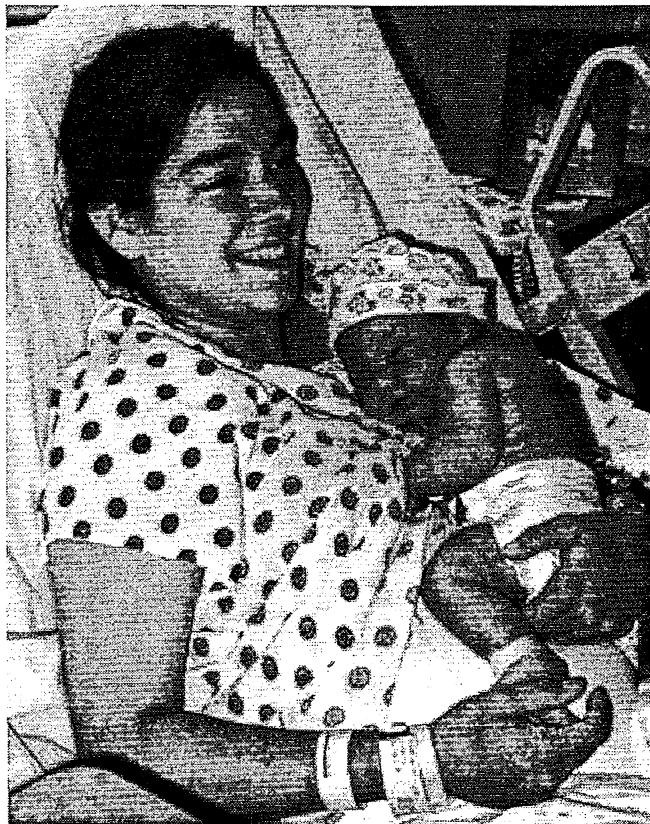
stiffened up as much as I could to jam myself into place. It worked! They tried and tried to make me turn around, but I held out! I told them, "If I can't go through feet first, I'm not going!" This got everyone even more upset... "She has to come out!"... "She can't do it feet first!"... "What are we going to do?" I told them "You can do anything you want, but I'm NOT putting my head through that little opening!"

So, they called in some experts, and made an artificial entrance. They pulled me out with no problem. Feet first, just like I planned. I knew that if I held out long enough, they'd have to do it my way!

All this happened on Friday, June 21, 2002. After they got me out, they took some measurements, and I weighed 8 pounds, 15 ounces, and I was 20.5 inches long.

It's kind of bright and cold out here, but I think it's going to be fun.

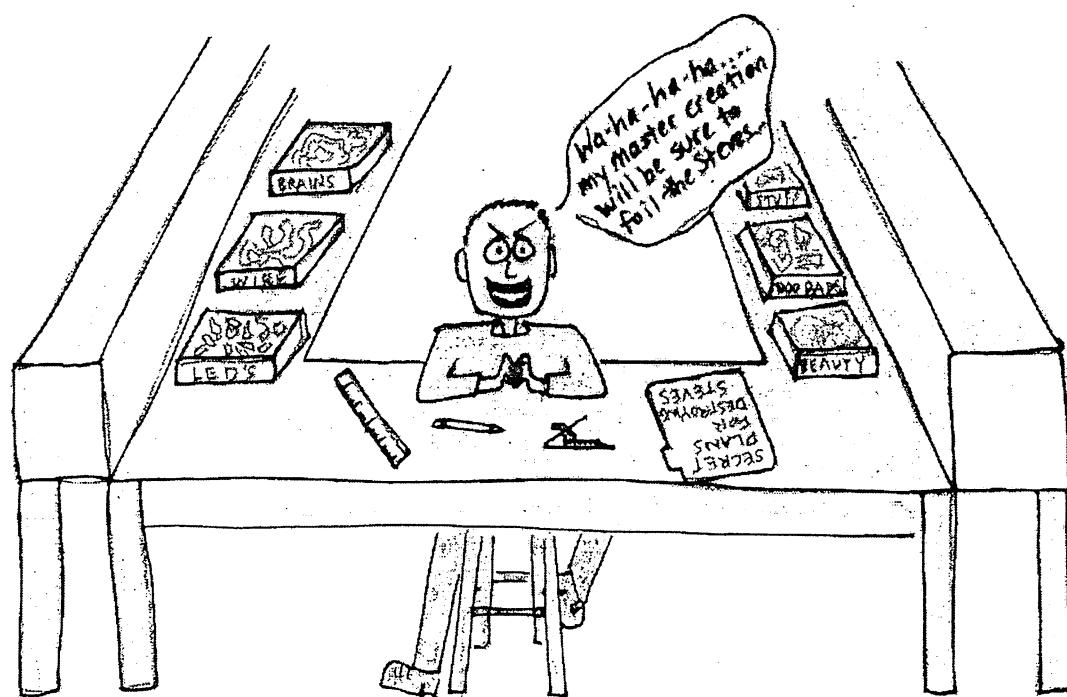
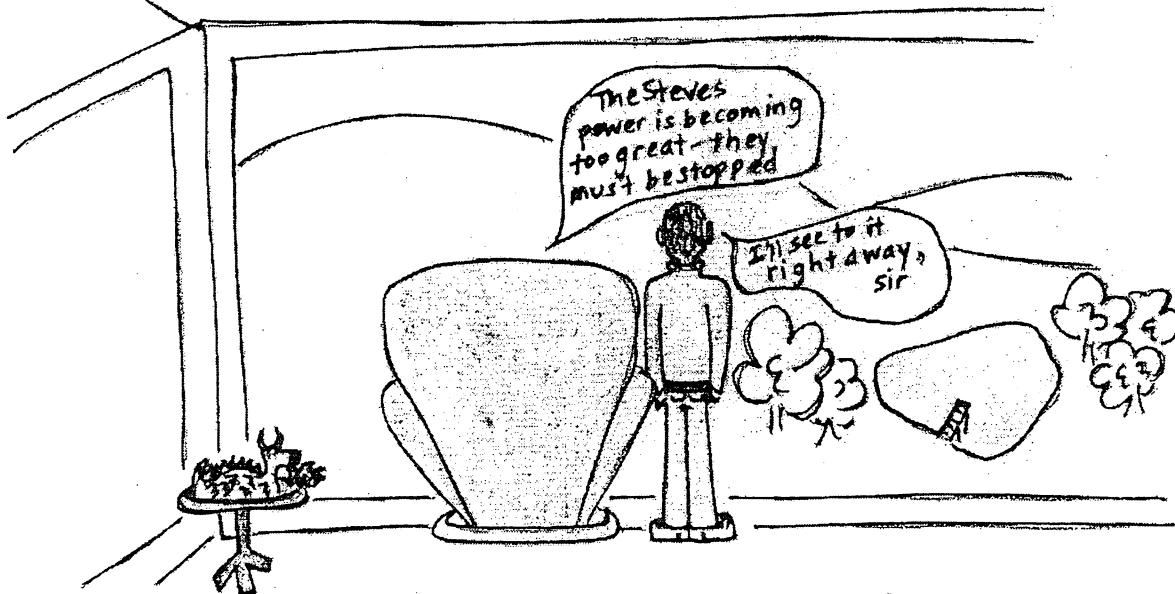
If you want to see some pictures of me and Molly, go to [www.hippiekitties.org](http://www.hippiekitties.org), then click on "On to the Photos!", scroll down to the bottom the left panel then do a quick search for "cypress." I hope to see you all soon!

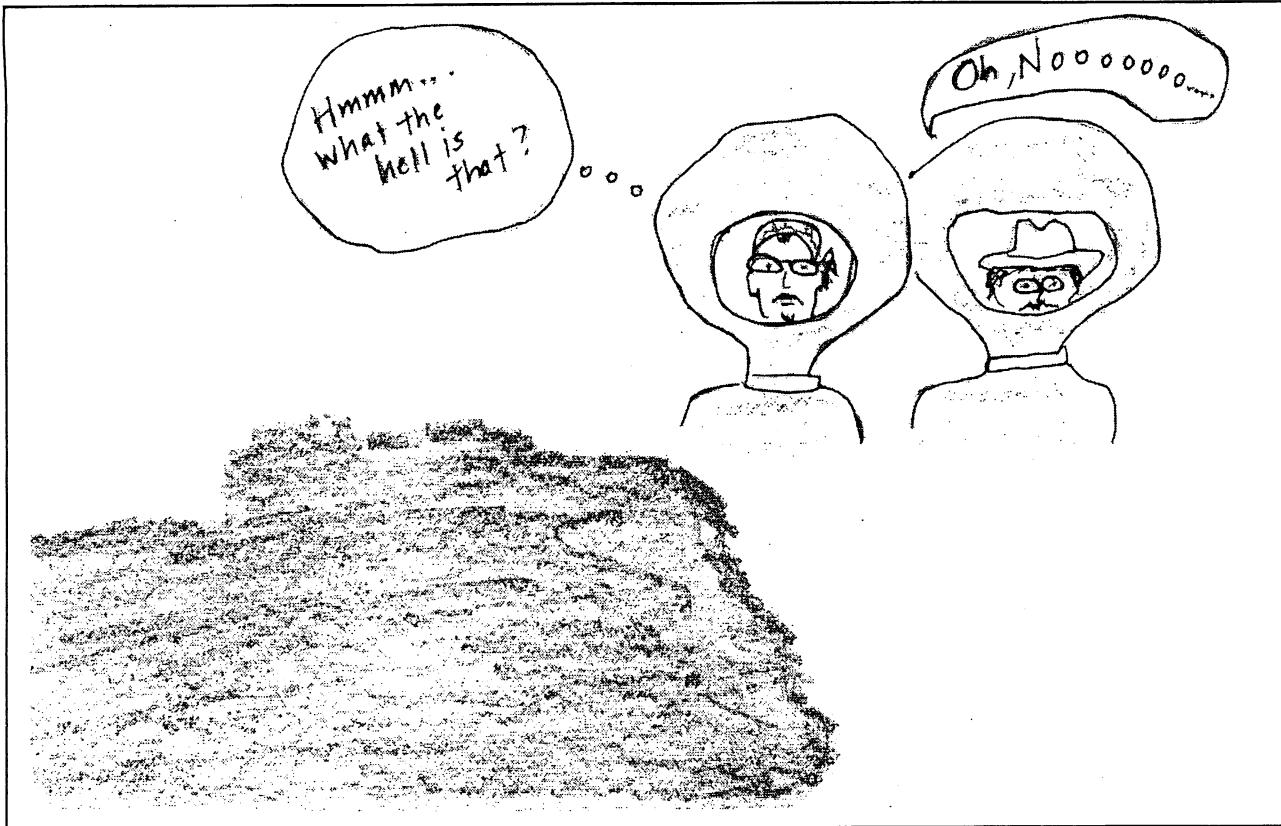


Molly and Cypress on the big day. Photo by Eileen O'Malley.

# STEVES in SPACE

no. 3





## Practice Rescue

by Kathy Despain

The practice rescue for this Fall 2002 semester was held on Saturday, November 9, at 10 A.M. Only having been with the club since Picnic in the spring of 2002, I had no idea what to expect in the practice rescue. I figured that since caving can be a dangerous activity I might as well learn how a rescue is handled. On the morning of November 9, I arrived a few minutes after 10 A.M. at the Bat Ranch, and the program and activities for the day had not yet started. Matt Burnett, the man in charge of the practice rescue, was waiting for any stragglers such as myself to arrive before beginning. The program actually began around 10:30 A.M.

The basic outline of the day was as follows:

### 10AM-LUNCH:

Information Sections:

Matt Burnett – Callout

Ed Fortney – Rescue Gear

Ray Sira – Initial Response Team

Philip Balister – Communications

Karen Everhart – Basic Medical

Steve Wells & Steve LePera – Rigging

### AFTER LUNCH:

Underground practice with Mike Cole teaching patient packaging, and patient transport

### THE PRACTICE RESCUE

Matt Burnett talked about callout, which is the method in which people are called to a rescue situation. The VPI Cave Club provides a Rescue Roster card, with names and phone numbers of the people who should be called in the case of a rescue. This card should be carried to any cave trip and placed somewhere visible on the surface while in you are in the cave. The names on the card are in the order that they should be called. If the first person, Zenah Orndorff is not there, then the next person, Jerry Redder, should be called, and this should be followed until someone is reached. (This order that I am going off of is from the latest issued card, 2001.) Once you have gotten in

touch with someone on the card, the callout begins. Active cavers, member or not, can be called. If called, you will be either put on standby or asked to go to the rescue.

Ed Fortney went over the rescue gear that the VPI Cave Club owns. He explained the use of the stokes (the item that the patient is carried out of the cave during a rescue) and the bag of gear that should always accompany the stokes. In that bag there are many wool blankets to keep the patient warm. There is also a lot of webbing in various lengths to attach the patient to the stokes. Ed also went over the first aid kits, and the other various gear that could be important and useful during a rescue. In the process of going over the gear, a couple of items were seen that needed to be replaced for the club gear. These items were noted.

Ray Sira spoke on the Initial Response Team, also known as the Bash Team. This team in a cave rescue is the first group of people in a cave. If possible it consists of some of the most experienced people in cave rescue. Because they are in charge of making the initial patient diagnosis, this team carries the initial response kit. This kit contains items that can be useful in an emergency. It is essential that this group have good communication with the subsequent cavers that arrive to the rescue site.

Philip Balister spoke on the importance of communication and the ways of communication during a cave rescue. Communication is very important in a cave rescue. The status of the patient, the progress of the rigging, whether more help is needed, and many more topics are important in the rescue. Without appropriate communication, mistakes can and probably will be made that could be detrimental to the patient as well as everyone involved in the rescue.

There are many forms of communication in a cave rescue. Outside of the cave, cell phones and walkie-talkies can be valuable, although at many of the cave locations around the area cell phone reception is not necessarily reliable. In

the cave, the methods of communication vary. One of the most important things is to write every message down; the meaning of the message has a tendency to change as it goes through more people, but if the message is written down it is less likely that the message will be changed. The cave environment that the rescue is taking place in will determine the type of communication utilized while in the cave. Runners are a good way to pass information if there is truly no other way of communicating with the rescue.

The club also owns some old WWII field phones with a lot of wire. These can be set up in the cave, one closer to the entrance, and one as close to the rescue as possible. A disadvantage of this is that if anything

happens to the wire that is running between

the two phones, communication is lost. For that reason there is usually a completely separate team that minds the phones and the wire in the passages. One thing to note, the wire is usually run in the most direct path, which is not necessarily the easiest path for the rescue. Because of this, the rescuers should not use this line as a bread crumbs trail out of the cave. There are also underground radios that can work with antennas. In general the method of communication best for the situation must be determined at the site.

Karen Everhart talked about the basic medical items that should be performed while underground. She stated the importance of having a patient advocate, someone who has a one-on-one relationship with the patient, always asking if he/she is doing all right and is comfortable. It is very important that this advocate find out the patient's name, and

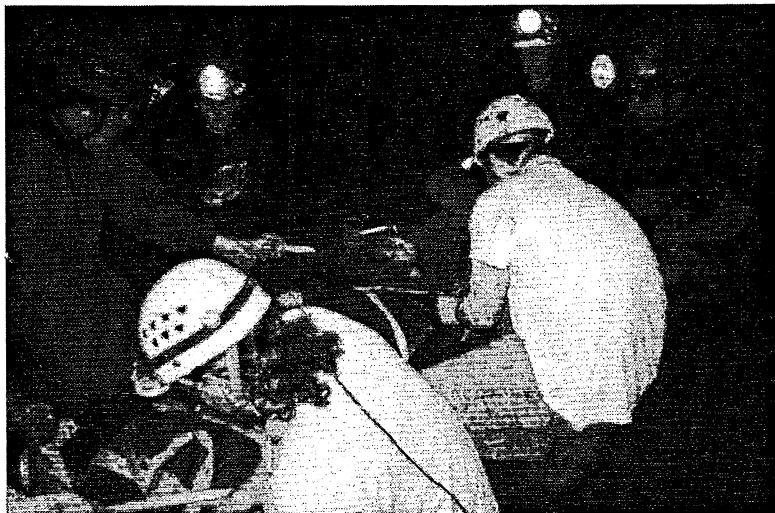
inform everyone of the name. Once the packaging begins the patient should be referred to by their name. When anything is done medically to the patient it should be written down and recorded. This is done so that progress can be tracked as well as once the patient is out of the cave the information can be handed over to the medical units so that they know what has been done to the patient.

While performing the rescue, make sure everyone is aware of the injuries that the patient has so that no one will do anything that will aggravate the situation. While around the patient, people should be positive and should leave negative news and speculation for times when the patient cannot hear the conversations.

Steve Wells and Steve LePera

started early that morning rigging some of the common rescue rigs. They did this behind the Bat Ranch over the fire pit. They had rigged a pulley system, as well as showing how a high line can be rigged over a pit. Dave Colatosti was the guinea pig, and people pulling on the pulley system lifted him off of the ground. During this exercise, there were some other items identified that would be very useful for the club to have in their emergency gear; these items were also noted. Steve and Steve went over some of the basics of the rigging in a rescue. They also stated the importance of having someone climb with the stokes and the patient to make sure everything goes all right in the process.

Matt Burnett provided a lot of food for lunch, which was very good. During lunch the rigging systems were changed, and a true high line was rigged, and once again Dave was lifted off of the ground.



Packaging the Patient. Photo by Kevin Rock.

After lunch we got ready to go underground. The practice rescue was going to take place in Tawney's. Dave Colatosti was the patient, and he was pretending to be hurt in the Moon Room. Once everyone went underground, making sure to sign the entry log to the cave, we brought the stokes into the cave. Mike Cole was in charge of explaining patient packaging and patient transport. It took a long time to package Dave appropriately into the stokes. Once he was packaged, we began to transport him out of the cave.

Some of the important things in the transportation process are that the patient's head always be higher than his feet. Someone should also make sure that the patient is comfortable. I did not think that it would be as hard as it actually was to get Dave out of the cave. It took a lot of people and a lot of patience. We ended up having to go straight

through a stream. But after much effort and teamwork we successfully and safely got Dave out of Tawney's.

I am very glad that I participated in this practice rescue. I learned a lot of information that I would have otherwise not known. I think that everyone that participated had a lot of fun, refreshed their memory, and learned something new. The people that participated (based on the entering cave log) were: Philip Balister, Ray Sira, Ed Fortney, Dave Colatosti, Karen Everhart, Kevin Rock, Aaron Thomas, Cara Smith, Chris Grosh, Pete Sauvigne, Matt Burnett, Chris Lee, John Booker, Kathy Despain, Michael Hofmann, Eileen O'Malley, Brad Atkinson, Mike Cole, Mark Eisenbies, Steve LePera, Steve Wells, Katherine Ferguson, and Elizabeth Ferguson. Thanks to all who participated and made this rescue happen.



The participants of the successful rescue. Photo by Michael Hofmann.

## Grotto Grapevine

by A.I. Cartwright

### LET'S GET THE BAD NEWS OUT OF THE WAY

This summer and fall have brought some sad news to caver families. Both Jim Bearden and Joe Zokaites lost their fathers unexpectedly. Then Steve LePera lost his mom to cancer. While not a caver, Mrs. LePera took an active interest in her son's hobby. On a number of visits to Blacksburg, she and Steve's dad cheerfully accompanied Steve to surface digs to see what all the fuss was about.

In October, Doug Cole got himself squashed when he fell asleep in a field after a long day on a Search & Rescue crew and a friend drove over him. He was taken to the UVA Spine Center and underwent surgery to repair some damaged vertebrae. Recent word is that while he's still paralyzed from the waist down, his spirits are good and he's stubborn enough to keep working at it.

Lastly, Les Good took his own life in July after a long bout of depression. He was a caver and friend of VPI for many years before getting his VPI membership. At that time he had more years of caving experience than all of the officers put together! He also helped keep our club carbide lamps in order; he successfully repaired the lamps which seemed too far gone for us to fix. Les will be remembered fondly.

### ONTO BRIGHTER NEWS

Molly Lucier and Mike Newsome brought another caver into the world. Cypress Marie was born on June 21. See Cypress' introductory tale in this issue.

And to keep the trend going, Katherine Ferguson is pregnant. According to Craig, she's been just a joy to deal with during these weeks of pregnancy combined with end-of-semester stress.

### AT LAST!

In May, Paul Hess finally completed his Ph.D. Since then he's used this line to strike fear in the hearts of women: "Let me help you with that. It's okay, I'm a doctor."

Rumor has it that Ko Takamizawa will be graduating soon, but some of us aren't buying it until we see the diploma in hand.

### THIS'LL MAKE YOU FEEL OLDER

It seems that some cavers do grow up (or at least graduate from high school). Daniel Zokaites and Douglas Peterson are now students at Virginia Tech, and Andy Loud is at West Virginia University.

### CAVERS MOVING ON

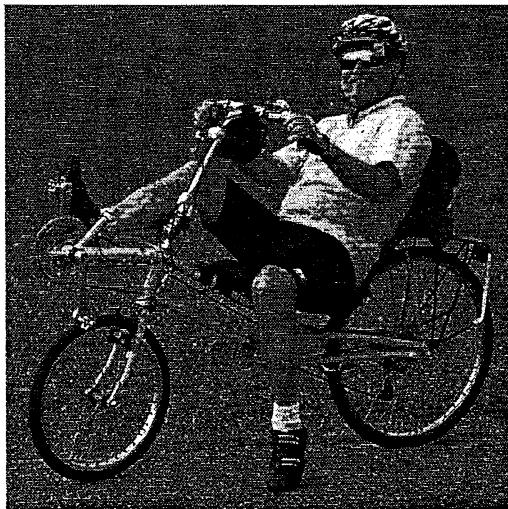
After a somewhat tumultuous presidency, Katherine Ferguson will be stepping down since she graduates this December. Club politics won't be quite as entertaining without Katherine at the helm. Now if only we can keep her and the family from moving....

Andy Yeagle recently accepted a job in NOVA and is now practicing to be a yuppie. Matt and Stacy Stec headed out west to Idaho over the summer. You can catch exciting pictures of Matt golfing at [www.stecfamily.com](http://www.stecfamily.com). Don't miss out!

Speaking of moving, is it true that Steve Wells' bronco is almost road-worthy? It failed inspection (as expected), but Wells thinks just a bit more work and it'll be legal by Christmas.

### HOUSE SHUFFLING

The Yellow House is no longer. Wil and Zenah Ordnorff have bought a house with Andrea and Mike Futrell. The house will be full of cats,



What's this flatlander doing in our mountains?

dogs, kids, and other assorted critters. But when's the first caver party? Brad Atkinson and Nikky LaBranche take over the house still known as "Balfour's place."

In other news, Philip Balister and Sandy Knapp are now both living in the house in Christiansburg... for now.

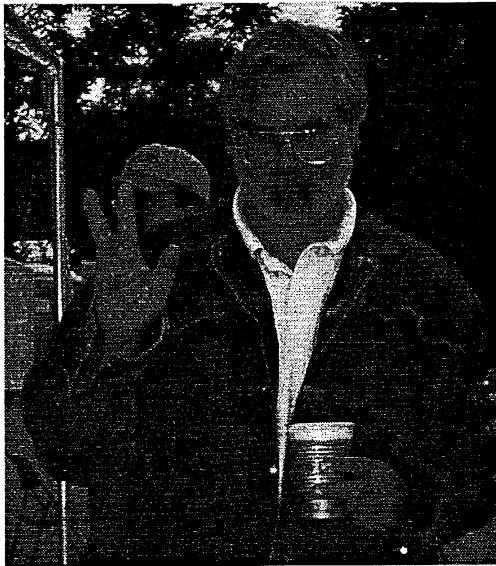
#### ON THE ROAD AGAIN

This summer more cavers took to the streets on their two wheeled vehicles. Only four were brave enough to take on the Mountains of Misery bicycle century: Wil Orndorff, Steve LePera, Bob Simonds, and Cletus Lee. The rest of us settled for cheering at the finish line.

#### LOST TWO MORE

The club has lost another two cavers to the rescue squad. Karen Everhardt and Amanda Stiles are the two new "defectors." Will we ever see them again?

On a related note, Brian Ekey is whipped... he just is.



The coot himself. Photo by Eileen O'Malley.

#### CONVENTION NEWS

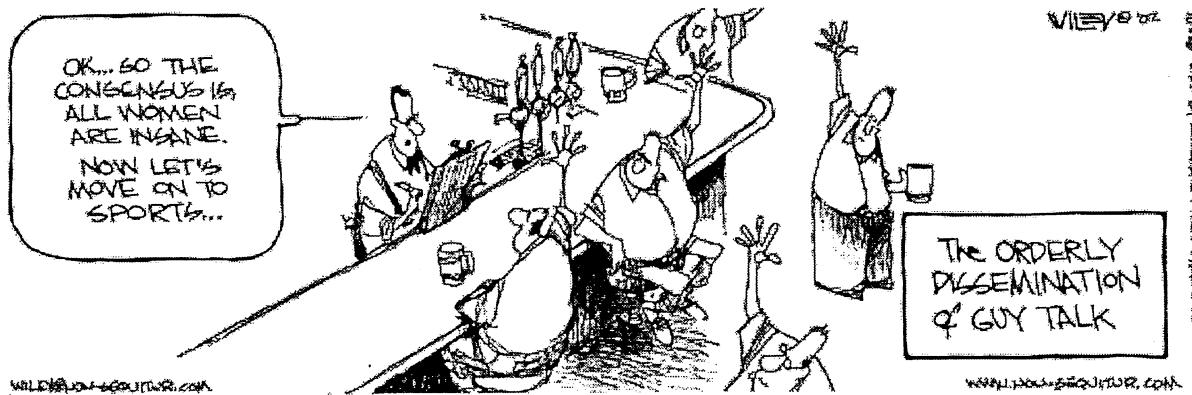
Fewer VPI cavers than usual made it out to Convention, this year hosted in Maine. But that didn't stop those who were there from cleaning up in the vertical contests including the medley. In addition, Ray Sira had four slides chosen for the slide salon and won a Merit award (blue ribbon) for another. As if all that wasn't enough, Doug Perkins was named a 2002 NSS Fellow.

#### OTR

This year Ed Fortney gained official COOT status, resulting in a VPI party at the Cooters beer tent (at Ed's expense). We were all very grateful while we were able to stand.

Despite the good party, VPI still managed to win the overall grotto award and many individual competitions. Victories ranged from rope running on a mechanical system to chugging large quantities of beer.

And then there was the more wine party, which resulted in toasting, puking, falling, fighting, licking, and the usual amount of frivolity. Too bad LePera doesn't remember any of it!



#### A BIT OF HISTORY

According to VAR records, in January of 1944, the grotto began publication of a newsletter called the *Grotto Grapevine*. This contained articles on speleoscience, trip reports, personality sketches of various members, and good-natured mudslinging. The more things change....

#### THE CLUB BRINGS ITS HEAD OUT OF THE SAND (BRIEFLY)

This year, the club entered the Homecoming Banner Competition, led by the Publicity Committee's tireless Nikky LaBranche. Even more strange, the club won a \$75.00 cash prize. Thanks to all who participated.

#### CAVERS GO NATIONAL

In a bizarre flurry of television fame, VPI cavers have been featured in two separate blurbs on national channels. Carol Zokaites and five women from Blue Ridge Grotto took Diane Sawyer on a caving trip which was shown on *Good Morning America*. In addition, Matt Burnett joined Doug Perkins and Joey Fagan on a Girl Scouts trip which was filmed and aired on the National Geographic channel. That show focused on the scouts and heavily featured Joey's daughter Jessica.

#### LADIES KEEPING SECRETS

There have been rumors of a secret project involving some luscious ladies of the club. What is the project? Will we find out soon?

And speaking of ladies, Kevin Rock easily won the impromptu Sexiest Secretary Poll. The ladies of this club are no fools, especially trainee Kara Smith who jumped right in to claim him.

#### NEWSFLASH FROM ERIC STANLEY

Karen Everhardt and Spot Rapier are total wimps for abandoning this year's Mexico trip.

On the upside, the Tres Burachos have become the Quattro Burachos as Alison Williams has proven her worthiness (something about drinking beer and playing darts as well as the men). And she *hasn't* bailed on Mexico yet.

#### LANDOWNER NEWS

There's been some recent concern over the land around Stay High Cave. Apparently the cave landowner wants to develop his property, and a group of neighbors are fighting to keep the development in check. Chris Michie attended some meetings to get the scoop, but the club's position is officially hands-off. We don't want to annoy the wrong people!

#### CAT FIGHT

If you've been on the listserv, that's all that needs to be said.

#### PARTY ON!

This year Walt and Lynn Pirie will host the old farts' New Years party. You'll have to figure out the date of the party yourself.

**Club Quotables**  
submitted by your "friends"

- KF to CF: "The dark place between her legs is Steve."
- ME to EF: "PBJ is always the same."
- EF to ME: "Yeah, like dating."
- SK to both: "You always know what they're going to taste like."
- ME to KE: "When I went home and did it with that thing, I felt *great* the next day."
- EOM to KE: "Turns out LePera's butt was in the wrong place."
- KM to group: "Does Philip realize that he's a big dork?"
- DC looking at poker hand: "I really hate these queens."
- RR to AS: "Now if you were willing to reach your legs back around my neck..."
- SW to group: "All you need to do is suck up to LePera's ass."
- AF to crowd: "I'd sleep with Digby before I'd sleep with Kirk."
- Spirit of Kirk: "Cool! She's gonna sleep with the dog and then she's gonna sleep with me."
- EOM to group: "Given half a chance I can make sxx really boring."
- Travis camp kid to group: "Now I know you're cavers because you have that obsession with fire."
- ME to EF: "Once I get my arms around her and she's down on the ground, she's screwed."
- KD to waiter: "Don't call me sir; I feel like I'm getting arrested."
- JF to KD: "The night is still young."
- EOM to SW: "Just because *you* get cozy with LePera doesn't mean I want to."

SW to MB: "Yeah, well I'm not taking a power sander to *my* dad's ass."

MF on listserv: "It's called a *Nylon Highway*. Not a *Nylon School Zone*."

EOM to SL: "All these little balls are getting in my way."

ES to KE: "I kill people all the time. Don't worry about it."

SL inspecting  
RC's beehives: "More evidence that all of our friends are fucking idiots."

PB during Harry  
Potter movie: "I would be such a shallow wizard."

SK to EOM: "You mean you have something in the toaster?"  
(Translation: You mean you have a bun in the oven?)

SW to PP: "If it has wheels or testicles, it's bound to give you trouble."

**From the Signout**  
compiled by Steve LePera

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VPI cavers and their guests logged in 1990.5 caver hours from 4/16/02 to 11/26/02.

4/20/02	James	Sandy Ramsey, Ed Buxter, Will Shen, Mary Richards	We had so much fun we have 2 trip comments. 1) Ouch I lost my anal virginity - again. 2) Don't pull that or I'll lose my vagina.
4/21/02	Links	John Deighan, David Ruppert, Pieter Wolmarans	Caving is definitely a sport for girls.
5/04/02	Pig Hole	Kirk Digby, John Deighan, Jonathan Altman, David Ruppert, Jeff Leach	Nothin' like an outdoor party during a monsoon. <i>Great idea</i> , Yeagle, Cole, Rance, & Colatosti.
6/16/02	Terrible Tortoise	Steve LePera, Matt Burnett, Steve Wells, Eileen O'Malley	Ok, this cave totally sucks.
6/29/02	Caldwell Cave	Matt Burnett, Kevin Rock, Kathy Despain	Found my lamp! Caving after a 5K is dumb!
7/27/02	Starnes	Dave Colatosti, Matt Burnett, Patricia Colatosti, and 4 folks from NC	The last time I was this tired I'd had a baby.
8/03/02	Ballards	Matt Burnett, Rob Payn, Kevin Rock, Kathy Despain	Kevin never got his suntan. (Bowline 5, Kathy 0)
8/04/02	DMC	Steve LePera, Philip Balister, Eileen O'Malley, Mike Cole	Smells like little dead things.
8/11/02	Clover Hollow	Kevin Rock, Chris Michie, Jeremy Eng, Tracy Misiewicz, Ilana Grossman	What's a friendly hooker doing in a cave like this.
8/23/02	Turkey Hole	Brian Ekey, Eric Stanley, Scott Rapier	FIRE IN THE HOLE!
8/24/02	Elvis Grotto # 1	Philip Balister, Dave Ruppert, Kevin Rock	The pool room is dead, long live the pool room.
9/12/02	Murder Hole	Amanda Stiles, Steve Wells, Matthias Wolter, Pete Sauvigne	We couldn't find the skunk.
9/14/02	Clover Hollow	Steve Wells, Steve LePera, Bill Steier, Matthias Wolter	Too many frogs! Bill's first trip in too many years.
9/14/02	Elvis Grotto # 2	Philip Balister, Ray Sira, Scott Rapier, Craig Ferguson	We came, we saw, we drilled (but Scott didn't)
10/12/02	Giant Caverns	Craig Ferguson, Jeff Jablonski, Eileen O'Malley, Karen Everhardt, Scott Rapier	BIG fun
10/19/02	Tawneys	Kevin Rock, Kara Smith, Cameron Keyes	It's sunny inside the cave. No wait, it's just boy scouts.
11/17/02	Honaker	Philip Balister, Scott Rapier, Chris Grosh, Michael Hofmann, Cameron Keyes	This had to be the most stressful trip ever, both emotionally & physically.
11/23/02	Starnes	Matt Burnett, Kathy Despain	There isn't supposed to be a waterfall here. Or here. Or here.

**VPI Cave Club**  
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