

# THE TECH TROGLODYTE

A PUBLICATION OF THE VIRGINIA TECH GROTTTO OF THE  
NATIONAL SPELEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

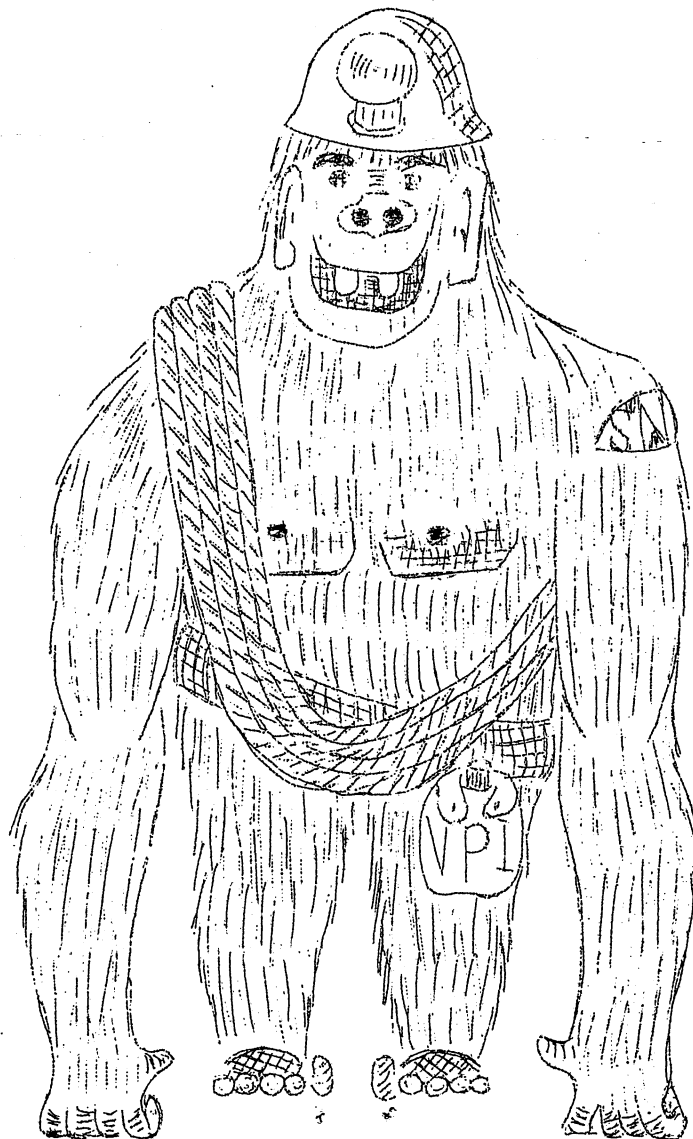
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*National Convention to be here at Mountain Lake, Next Summer*

It was decided at a Feb. 10 meeting of the Board of Governors to hold the 1963 national convention of the NSS at Mountain Lake, near here. John R. Holsinger from Falls Church, Va. will act as convention chairman. Details will be announced when available. VPI will be the host grotto.



## EDITORIAL

We are proud to announce that the Virginia Tech Cave Club is once again publishing a Newsletter, one that we hope will be a long lived and successful publication. With the large, active membership now on hand, and the growth that has been witnessed in the last two years we feel that some of our activities and their results will be worth sharing or preserving, and THE TECH TROGLODYTE will be the medium through which this will be accomplished.

By way of introduction, perhaps an explanation of the title of this publication is in order. Webster defines troglodyte as "one who creeps into holes, a hole, cavern; one of any savage race that dwells in caves; a cave dweller; hence, any person or thing of primitive or degraded ways of living; an anthropoid ape as the chimpanzee." Surely all of these definitions are applicable to a certain degree and, even though we may prefer the first, I am quite sure that those who see us return to campus after a weekend or walk into the mess hall after an afternoon trip would be more inclined to favor one of the latter two.

THE TECH TROGLODYTE is scheduled to be published whenever enough material accumulates to make publication practical, with a guaranteed minimum of once during each quarter of the school year (thrice annually). It is hoped that it will be possible to put out a copy twice quarterly. The present subscription rate is purely experimental and will be maintained only until it can be determined definitely what the cost and frequency of publication will be. If a change becomes necessary those subscriptions already in effect will not be affected. Reciprocal agreements with other grottes will be welcomed.

Material will be accepted from any source, provided that the author is identified. Anonymous articles will not be printed. Material should be sent to the editor.

Any material which is even remotely associated with caving or that would be of interest to cavers will be solicited, as will applicable cartoons. Maps or other sketches should be presented on a scale such that they will fit on a single sheet of paper, or appropriately subdivided on separate sheets so that they can be reproduced at the same size, etc. as the material that is sent in.

The editor reserves the right to change the format of articles which are submitted, typed, double-spaced, on one side of the paper only--but this is not absolutely necessary.

It is hoped that both spelunkers and speleologists will see fit to take advantage of this medium to share their findings, accomplishments, and knowledge.

## VIRGINIA REGION PROJECT ANNOUNCED

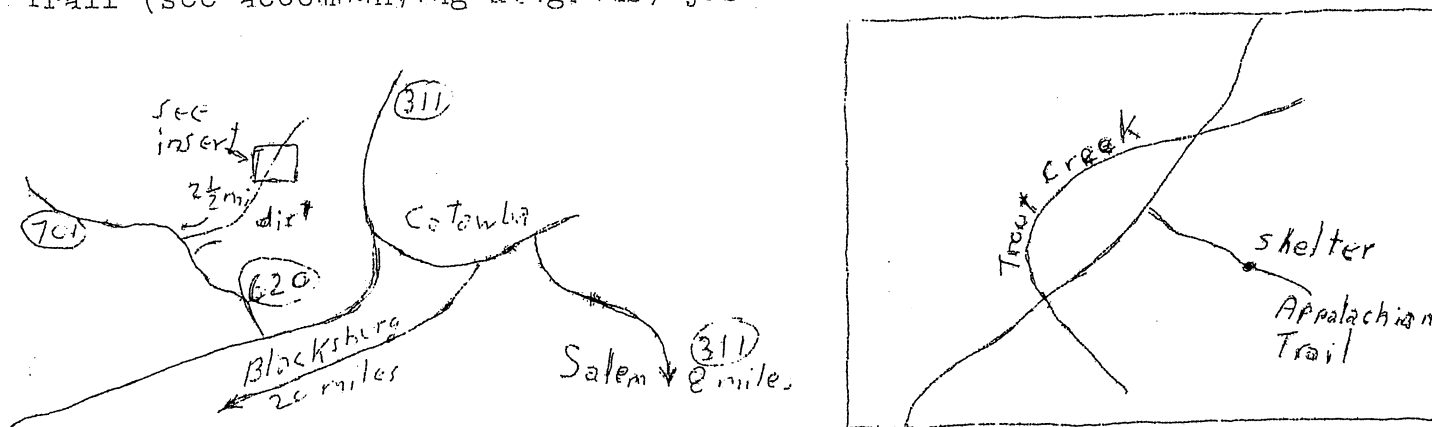
It has been announced by the chairman of the Virginia Region, John R. Holsinger, that the Virginia Region Spring Project will be held over the weekend of May 5-6. The project will be in McClung Cave, West Virginia, a cave that until recently has not been noted for its size. During the last year the cave has yielded virgin passage after virgin passage and now has been estimated to contain at least six miles of cave.

## FIRST ANNUAL BROCA TRIP TO THE DRAGON'S TOOTH

Announcing one new tradition, the annual BROCA (Blue Ridge Outing Club Association) Trip to the Dragon's Tooth, the first of which will be held April 6, 7, 8. The Dragon's Tooth is a spire of

good climbing rock which rises out of the top of Cove Mountain, near Catawba, Va., on the Appalachian Trail, and right in the middle of good cave country. With the beautiful view, climbing, caving, hiking, and wonderful opportunities for just plain hiking, this should be quite a tradition.

Rendezvous point is the Trout Creek shelter on the Appalachian Trail (see accompanying diagrams) just off Va. secondary Route 620.



# NEWCASTLE MURDER HOLE CLOSED

BY GREGG MARLAND

The importance of caver-cave owner relationships has been strongly illustrated in the closing of Newcastle Murder Hole in Craig County. Because of discourtesies on the part of cavers, the owner, Mr. J. S. Sizer has announced that the cave will no longer be open to visitors. In trying to discuss the matter with Mr. Sizer, he became quite irritated and refused to talk with us.

In talking briefly with he and his daughter-in-law the following is what we could gather about the final incident, which occurred within the last two months. A group of cavers from West Virginia (one adult and several younger people) approached the family for permission to enter the cave, but when advised to talk to Mr. Sizer himself, who was out in the fields at the time, they decided not to bother to walk out into the field to see him. They left the house and drove up to the cave, driving across the field. After visiting the cave they arrived at the surface during the early morning hours making considerable commotion and disturbing both the Sizer's and others nearby. Having further mutilated the fence around the drop-in entrance, of which other cavers have likewise been very inconsiderate, they drove back across the field and left without closing the gate. The following morning Mr. Sizer spent several hours getting his livestock back into the pasture.

Mr. Sizer can in no way be blamed for being very irate with cavers in general and this lone incident will take some time and doing to reconcile. It now appears doubtful whether or not the cave will ever be reopened at all.

Unfortunately this is not an isolated incident for too many cavers do not pay proper respect to the property of cave owners--fences in particular. The loss of accessibility of this cave should encourage an improvement in relationships with cave owners and definitely shows the importance of communicating with non-N.S.S. members.

The identity of the cavers involved in this incident could not be ascertained, but it is believed that they were not N.S.S. members.

Mr. Sizer also brought up the topic of a cave owners liability in case of accident and indicated that this too influenced his decision to permanently close the cave to cavers.

## CLUB WILL PREPARE SLIDE SERIES

After corresponding and receiving the encouragement of both the National Conservation Committee and the Visual Aids Committee, the Va. Tech Cave Club has voted to take on as a club project the production of a slide series on cave conservation.

The program will include from 40-60 slides and a script to accompany them. Slides should be submitted to the chairman of the project committee, Gregg Marland, Box 4707. The Cave Club will cover the cost of the slide, where the picture was taken especially for the program, or will pay for the cost of reproduction when the photographer takes the picture for his personal use but is willing to allow it to be used. This applies only to slides that are actually accepted for use in the program; others will be returned as soon as possible.

Any before and after shots of a vandalized area would be very useful if anyone has a slide of an area that has since been vandalized. Other slides of excessively vandalized areas, especially beautiful areas to be used in comparison, slides on carbide disposal, caves which have been gated because of vandals, the effect of cave registers, the protection of beautiful floor formations by always walking on the same path, possibilities of accidental breakage of speleothems that could be avoided, measures for protecting cave life, or other applicable subjects are needed.

## LADDERS REPAIRED IN CLOVER HOLLOW

by Gregg Marland

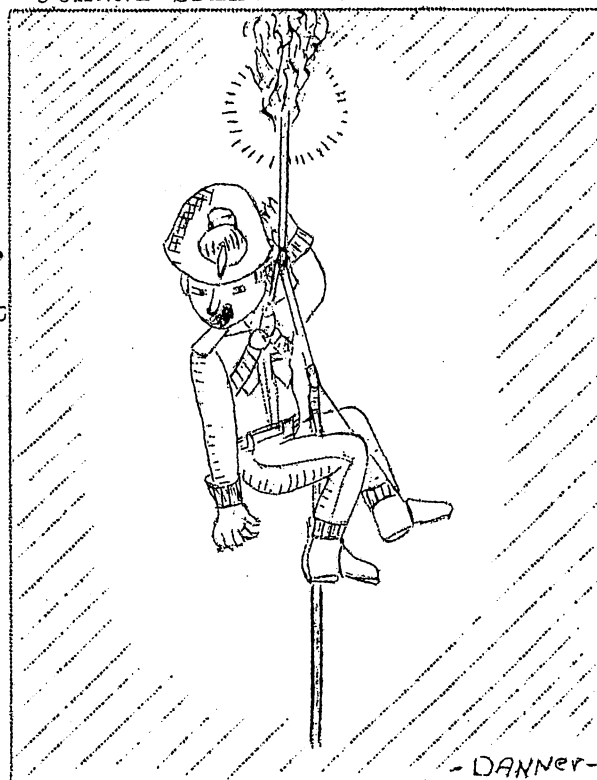
After learning of the unsafe conditions of two ladders in the early section of Clover Hollow Cave, Steve Barber, Tom Lamons, Betty Nuckols, Bonnie Stephenson, and myself decided to turn speleo-carpenters for a day and make the necessary repairs. Armed with 2 by 4's, saw, nails, etc. we descended to the spot where two ancient log ladders and a log wedged in a crack make passage through a narrow slit about ten feet off of the floor possible. Using the least rotten portions of the old ladders to help anchor the new ones, we replaced them with good, sturdy, but a little hard-on-people-with-short-legs ladders. It is recommended that someone visiting the cave in the not too far distant future take along a can of creosote.

ON CLOVER HOLLOW AND ELECTRIC LAMPS  
by Gregg Marland

On January 27, Ackie Lloyd from Waynesboro, John Holsinger from Washington, and John Cooper, John Gillespie, and Wally ???, all from Baltimore came down to Clover Hollow Cave where they were joined by Jim Saunders, John Danner, and myself.

The visiting group was well impressed with the cave, and of particular

## JOHNNY SPELUNK RIDES AGAIN!



- DANNER -

"My WHAT's on fire?"

significance, were very pleased with and receptive toward our safety code.

One of the purposes of the trip being to collect specimens for Holsinger's "Biological Survey of Virginia Caves" we noted salamanders at the base of the entrance drop, millipedes and beetles in the lower stream passage, and several other little "critters" near the top of the drop into the Andrews Room.

The trip was the first on which I had seen an electric lamp used for caving. John Cooper demonstrated to us the proficiency of the electric lamps. Run by a battery worn on the hip, a cord runs inside the clothing up to the lamp. The battery is rechargeable and will operate up to forty hours on a charging. It is neither larger nor heavier than the two flasks which are required for a carbide lamp. The lamp itself is about the same size, but lighter than a carbide lamp, and gives far more light than a carbide flame. Standing at the bottom of the Grand Canyon, he was able to clearly illuminate the ceiling over 100 feet away.

Two other definite advantages are the lack of needing to refuel and dispose of carbide. Dependability, ruggedness, and effects of water on both the battery and the lamp are questionables, however. Also, repairs are more complicated.

Starting into the cave with the boast "I'd rather crawl around in the dark than use a carbide lamp," it was quite a sight to see Cooper traveling through the cave, electric lamp in pocket, borrowed carbide lamp attached to helmet with electrical tape and string, and foot in mouth; after his electric lamp failed.

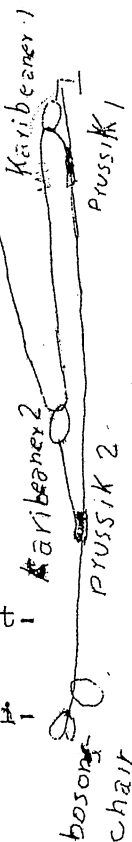
## PIT RESCUE TECHNIQUE

by George Fairer

As a participant in the should always anticipate the involving the hoisting of an in-hand-over-hand hoisting is and to the rescuer. In using made for the safety of either rescuer becomes tired and cannot

There is a very simple ment essential to pit caving, rescue safely and with a minimum ved should always be on the per-no extraneous equipment has to is needed is two karibeaners, line. The principle involved anical advantage of a block and used as pulleys and the prussiks resting or rearranging the

To use this method, a at the top of the pit. The hoist-victim who sits in a bosons chair prussik holds the hoisting line thus dropping the victim. A kari-first prussik to be used as a tied on the hoisting line below beaner is tied to its free end. the first karibeaner, down and up to the rescuer. This essentially is a block and tackle with a



field of pit caving, a caver need to effect a pit rescue injured or exhausted person. Simple dangerous both to the victim this method no provisions are person in the event that the hold on to the hoisting line. method, using only the equip-which can be used to effect the of effort. The equipment invol-sonof any pit caver anyway, so be carried by anyone. All that two prussiks, and the climbing is the age old one of the mech-tackle. The karibeaners are are used to hold the rope for tackle.

prussik is attached somewhere ing line is then lowered to the tied in the end. The first and keeps it from running free, beaner is attached above the pulley. A second prussik is the first prussik and a kari-The line then goes up through through the second and then bac

mechanical advantage of two. The second prussik allows the the second karibeaner to be moved down the rope while the first prussik holds it,, thus getting another "bite".

By using this method, one person, if the need arises, could conceivably haul another person up a drop safely. Three people is the recommended minimum. One to hoist, one to guide the rope, and one to work the prussiks. The height that a person can be raised is limited only by the strength of the victim.

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4837-5800 ARE WED

On Saturday, February 3, Sam Dunaway and Schell Fraser wer married in Newport News, Va. Sams plans to finish the quarter here and then find a job near Newport News where Schell is a nursing student at Riverside Hospital. The entire Cave Club wishes them the best of every thing.

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POETRY?

by Gregg Marland

While not one of the literary masterpieces of modern times, the following does have a theme worth remembering.

An unknown beauty lies within the earth  
With only darkness for companionship.  
It has been forming since the world's birth,  
Developing its beauties drip by drip.

Its forests of formations large and small  
Each one so delicate and so unique.  
The columns, curtains, stalactites, sparkling all;  
With majesty one nowhere else can seek.

This world of silent beauty was attacked  
By man with destructive, negligent ways.  
So many of its beauties have been sacked  
The more considerate person to amaze.

Unless something be done to stem the cost,  
Our last, most gorgeous frontier will be lost.

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A DREAM COME TRUE

by Larry Griffin

Lyman Cutliff, owner of James Cave, Kentucky and as congenial an old gentleman as you will ever want to meet, is about to see his life-long dream come true--the opening of his caves to the public. I am honored to have had some small part in helping him realize his ambition. A Mammoth Cave guide for more than twenty years and a man who knew Floy Collins well, Lyman knows caves far better than most of us.

With James and Coach Caves on his property, he plans to open them both commercially, in the near future. There will be a motel, picnic and camping area, bridle paths, and concessions in a lovely park-like woodland under which lie extensive cavern systems. These underground

networks are less than a mile from Mammoth Cave National Park and less than two miles from the nearest section of the 150-mile Flint Ridge System--the largest in the world as we all know.

Roy Davis, past editor of the NSS NEWS and owner of Cumberland Caverns, Tennessee, has done a magnificent job of lighting the caves, especially the dome-pits for which Coach Cave is noted. Coach Cave now has a concession directly over the Moonshiner's Murder Hole entrance with a staircase leading to a balcony which overlooks this 185 foot vertical pit. Its main entrance is a quarter of a mile away and at the bottom of the hill--much like our own Pig Hole. Moonshiners were active in the cave in the not too far distant past. They would throw logs for fuel and other goods down the pit, then walk through the cave via its lower entrance, and set up operations deep in the cave under the pit. They certainly found privacy here. One must admire their ingenuity.

James Cave was considerably more difficult to commercialize than Coach. When we first began exploration in James we all said it was impossible--a venture too expensive to merit undertaking, but we didn't reckon with Lyman's perseverance, plus the cheap manual labor in Kentucky. The infamous hundred-yard belly-crawl has now been enlarged to a walkway.

After we gained access to the "far side" of the Impossible Pit (Forty Fathom Pit--240 feet--for a long time the deepest single pit in Kentucky) by putting in a steel cable trolley line, exploration gained momentum. We knew of the vastly complicated section known as the Eden Extension, accessible through another lengthy belly-crawl just off the Slab Room, and pioneered the impressive and promising Gledila Route, but we didn't understand how passages on the far side of the Impossible Pit tied in with this portion. Beyond the Impossible Pit were innumerable pits and deep canyons. One was named Ten-second Canyon because a rock would bounce that long before reaching the bottom. The cave in this area is unbelievably complex. Consider five or six separate levels all within only 250 feet of limestone, and connected by independent dome-pits and chasms just as Floyd Collins Crystal Cave, a few miles away, is formed. A map simply cannot display it accurately or fully unless considered in small sections.

The inevitable finally happened; we made connections with the Eden Extension at two different points--the Pizza Room and the Watermelon Dome--and were at last able to reach the far side of the Impossible Pit without crossing it. At last we had reaped the harvest of our efforts and tasted the success explorers rarely gain without maximum effort.

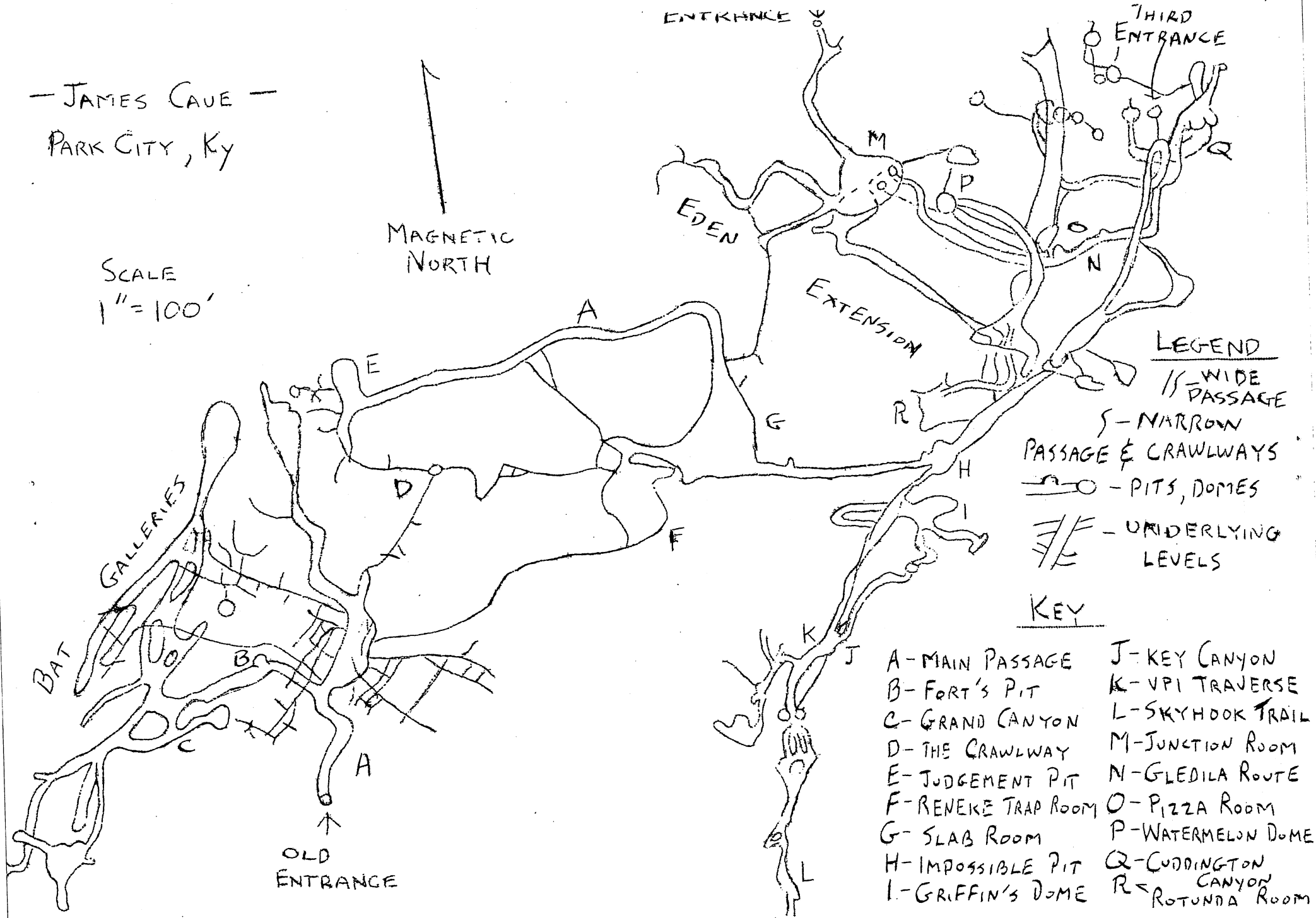
A short distance from the Impossible Pit and on its "far side" I discovered roots coming through the ceiling at one . . . . After considerable surface and subterranean surveying, plus a total of 36 sticks of dynamite, we had a new entrance--James third. Now this has been enlarged and built into a second commercial entrance. The Impossible Pit itself will soon have a sturdy wooden bridge spanning its depths.

Surveying continued in our new areas and exploration opened up more cave in the two remaining, still-promising areas--the Gledila Route and Key Canyon. Bill Cuddington helped us with a particularly difficult virgin canyon accessible through a very tight opening that we nicknamed Hope Hole. Jim Quinlan, John Harshbarger, and Dave Sherada made the long trip to Kentucky after spring exams, spending five days caving with us in a major attempt to rush back the unknown in Key Canyon. Although we had a well stocked base camp set up in the canyon, I felt a fast, efficient assault using the highly perfected rope techniques we of VPI know would be better than an overnight trip requiring us to drag sleeping bags and other pertinent gear through crawlways and up and down pits. We did accomplish a number of exciting

— JAMES CAVE —  
PARK CITY, Ky

SCALE  
1" = 100'

MAGNETIC  
NORTH





things. Among them, the VPI traverse across the top of Key Canyon via a ridiculously narrow ledge--which involved balance climbing on a muddy, slippery, sloping ledge with no hand-holds.

Jama has a fascinating past, present, and future. Its Bat Galleries boast 700,000 bats during much of the year. The Eden Extension displays columns and masses of helectites in astonishing profusion. Unlike many of the nearby caves, we found little gypsum and no oulopholites.

After rapelling 90 feet into the Impossible Pit and negotiating another hundred yards of small passage one comes upon Key Canyon. It is not hard to imagine how John Key felt coming upon this portion of the cave for the first time, as recently as 1955. As one of the largest rooms in the cave, you find yourself 90 feet from the bottom and 150 feet down from the ceiling. Leads arise from all levels and after the 90 foot rapell you head south toward still more pits and domes. To date only 17 or 18 explorers have been into Key Canyon. It is not to be considered lightly. Harshbarger was nearly killed here by a rock dislodged during his rapell. Loose rocks and mud hinder climbing and bolts are often a necessity.

And so the story goes; when will it end? We have pushed back many barriers and answered many questions in this hard-earned cave; but, it may never be considered "fully explored".

Literature: Brucker, Roger W., "The Impossible Pit", Celebrated American Caves, Mohr & Sloane, editors; New Brunswick, N.J.; Rutgers University Press, 1955, pages 78-89.

Griffin, Larry, "A Second Crossing of the Impossible Pit", NSS News, Vol 17 (Sept. 1959), pages 136-137.

#### MEMBERSHIP LIST, VA. TECH GROTTO OF THE NSS

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President: George Fairer, Box 3654  
Vice-President: Bob Ralph, Box 5323  
Treasurer: Bill Haile, Box 3937  
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Box 2840	Fulmer, John	NSS 6086
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