

# THE TECH TROGLODYTE

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

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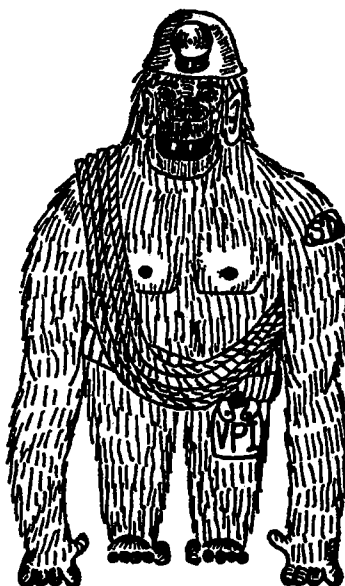
VOL. VI, No. 3

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FALL QUARTER 1968

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THE TECH TROGLODYTE, journal of the VPI Grotto of the National Speleological Society, is published quarterly pending availability of material. Subscriptions may be obtained at the rate of one cent per page for long term or fifty cents per individual copy plus postage. Address all correspondence to Box 71, Blacksburg, Virginia, 24060.

This issue is the first to be printed on the newly acquired Model (90) A.B.Dick mimeograph. Please bear with us until a major re-modeling as we are not used to working with antiques as yet. MCMLXVIII

Yes, Virginia, there is a Cave Club. You must know that by now. In the period from September 15 through December 15 alone our members spent over 2,800 hours squirming beneath your skin to discover your innermost secrets. Your sister, West Virginia, has also suffered from the itch of our spiked soles on her virgin mud. Surely, the flames of our illuminating torches could be felt as they seared through the intense black rivers which surge through your arteries. Our imaginations being caught up in its swift current, we have been swept into the depths of caverns previously unseen by man. In vain we tried to chart these rivers, but new streams keep appearing.

May your pores always be open yet free from the infection of thoughtless speleosites who would scorch, scrape, and shatter your delicate capillary walls. Yes, Virginia, there is a Cave Club. Sleep easy, your NATIONAL SPELEOLOGICAL SOCIETY is on the watch.

THE EDITOR

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#### PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

At a recent Cave Club meeting a newcomer said to me "Y'all are so organized", and a WVACS caver has accused us of being a bureaucracy. I think that our organization falls somewhere between the two. Yes, we are organized, but not to the extent of being a bureaucracy. The chain of command in the Cave Club is informal, if indeed it exists.

We have several standing committees that cover most activities of the club. The two most active are the Equipment, and the Project and Program Committees. The equipment chairman, who for the most part is the committee, has the thankless and time consuming job of keeping up with the club's belongings as they are scattered from one end of Blacksburg to the other. The Project and Program Committee is the most appreciated but least thought about committee in the club. Responsible for the weekly programs, the chairman must be aware of the many aspects of cave exploration and know people who will give talks on their speciality. The Conservation Committee, again usually only the chairman, is responsible for checking trainees on their conservation requirements for membership and on planning conservation trips. The Publicity Committee handles those little incidentals that are essential for getting the word out on the Cave Club. Our Supplies Committee protects the members from the unreasonable prices that the Blacksburg merchants charge for caving equipment. The Safety Committee, functioning under the leadership of the Vice President, is usually quiet, but if a case arises, investigates accidents and complaints of safety violations.

Although the club may sound super-organized, we're not. The Committees merely carry out the administrative details required to keep the organization functioning. Since the club is large, these details sometimes become of great importance and must be handled by committees to avoid wasting time at the meetings. An example of this may be found in the newly formed Supplies Committee.

If a proposal is presented during a meeting and becomes a hotly debated issue, a special committee is established to study the proposal and present its recommendations. The number of people in the club necessarily limits the length of debate during a meeting and committees are used to keep the meetings functioning smoothly. The Committees are chosen so as to represent both sides of the argument. We have been lucky with our special committees in that the committee's recommendations have been generally accepted without much additional debate. Let's hope that we continue with good committees.

The Cave Club is organized to the extent that we are able to handle most problems by committee, but we are not bogged down by too much organization. Our special committees enable us to get over the rough spots that occur and allow the meetings to run smoothly. We are definitely organized, but not bureaucrasized.

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### THE THEORY OF LEADERSHIP

Webster's defines a "leader" as "a person or thing that leads; directing, commanding, or guiding head, as of a group or activity." The mention of "person or thing" surely includes cavers, so let us proceed. It can hardly be argued that the highly technical nature of many caving situations, and the skills necessary to negotiate cave passages, require a degree of leadership skill and ability on the part of each individual.

The individual must acquire these special skills and learn many sophisticated techniques in order to cave safely and well. It falls to a group of people to learn these techniques and skills well enough to teach them to new cavers. Thus they become leaders in the process of this training. In turn, the persons taught are responsible, eventually, for the training of more new persons, becoming leaders in their own right. It is acceptance of responsibility that creates leaders in the course of caving.

Leadership comes in many colors, shapes and sizes. "Binker" Glock has been in discussion with me on the subject of training and leadership programs for some time. In a recent letter, she suggested two leadership situations that are encountered,

- A. Shared responsibility for the party, (e.g., when a group of friends who often cave together are at work) -- when two or more share the responsibility for the well-being of the party, each taking charge in the areas, (skill-wise as well as location-wise), in which he is most capable, and handling situations of stress as a team, (so to speak) who know each other and can apply themselves (more or less without direct leadership) to the needs of the moment.
- B. Total individual responsibility for the party, (e.g., when there is one experienced caver training 2 - 4 complete neophytes) -- when all decisions and judgements lie in the hands of a single individual, who, in times of stress, must be able to give orders as needed, and have them taken unquestioningly, (until later), in order to maintain the safety and general welfare of the party.

Clear-cut cases of either situation described here are to be seen in many caving trips in many parts of the country and in many Grottos. However, the cases remain neither black nor white, and the shades that lie between the extremes have given and continue to give many Grottos trouble. In our own Grotto, complicated rules and regulations have been established, tried, and discarded. In all cases, the rules that were propounded eventually entailed character judgements of a personal nature, and hostilities and dissent ensued. Seven years ago, on 17 November 1961, the following amendment was made a part of the VPI Grotto's Constitution:

Persons capable of leading caving trips will be divided, by an executive committee composed of the President and Vice President, into "A" leaders and "B" leaders. An "A" leader will be defined as



Phew!  
I thought you said...



any person who can lead a trip to any cave that he desires, and can be trusted not to attempt to exceed his capabilities. A "B" leader is anyone who can lead a trip to any cave with the approval of and without the disapproval of any "A" leader. It will be up to the discretion of the leader to decide which persons are capable of participation on their trips.

Much agony and anger resulted from the system of hierarchies set up by this amendment. Leadership from above was tried, tested, and found to be wanting. The system has been since discarded, and may be found only in old scars and the club files. Argument as to whether leadership is necessary, however, must concede the fact that most, if not all caving situations require a leader in some form. It may be shared, delegated, or simply assumed in the course of a trip, but it remains a consideration of the trip. If leadership from above is disallowed, however, what form should leadership assume?

Two cases of needed leadership have been shown earlier, with a group of friends who know their own abilities and those of their fellow cavers, and then with a group with one, or perhaps more experienced people assuming responsibility for a group of novices. There remain the shades of groups that lie between these extremes, from experienced cavers from other caving organizations who may or may not have been fully trained in proper technique, and who may or may not have the physical ability to meet the conditions of a particular cave, to the overconfident novice who can meet the physical challenges and technical demands of the cave, who may have caved for some time, but who remains a novice in matters of good judgement and proper exercise of caution.

Elsewhere in the publication are comments by the officer in charge of the Grotto's training program for new cavers. I do not intend to overlap his comments and discussion of a training program. However, as one who at first was an outsider, meeting the trainee program as an experienced and competent caver from another organization, I personally was shocked and angered at the imposition of a period of trial prior to full membership in the Grotto here at VPI. This state of shock may have forced me to take stock of the trainee program as a exponent of a system of training of leaders. Therefore, I feel the trainee program now used has a function somewhat removed from that of training novice cavers in basic skills.

It is a requirement of a leader that he have the confidence of the group of which he is the head. The first requirement of the VPI trainee program is a three-month period of "trainee" status. During this time, I found myself forced to adjust to the Grotto: its ideals were my own in matters of interest in caving, in attitudes toward safety, and conservation. To cave with this group, I had to adjust to its customs and intentions.

I soon found myself studying techniques used by the Grotto members. I watched the various members cave, and studied attitudes and personal traits. I am sure that the converse was true, as well. At the end of this period as a trainee, I felt that I was confident of the ability of

the cavers of the Grotto. I had been influenced, and had gained more fully a knowledge of myself and my abilities as well as of those around me. I found that I had earned the confidence of those with whom I caved, and found a place in the business of the Grotto as well as in the training of new members and the conduct of trips.

In later research, I found that the present trainee program embodies a large part of the old leadership program, as found in the Constitution of 1963, now discarded. As the program stands now in regard to training, prospective members cave for a time under the supervision of the Grotto members, learning of the Grotto as the Grotto learns of them. In the course of the probationary period, the trainee demonstrates his competence with his equipment, including lamp, rappel device, and ascending devices. He also proves the knowledge of belaying, conservation, proper tying and use of various knots and bends, and other vital caving skills. These are not learned in a class or series of lectures, but in a cave, or rather, a series of caves of varying conditions.

In the course of this probationary period, the caver gains skills in leadership, and in cooperation with leaders. Ideally, the individual should become a fully qualified leader in his own right. This stage is not reached, however, at the end of a set period of time. The maturity and judgement of the novice leader must solidify into full confidence in himself and in his ability.

In the final determination, a leader is made by both taught skills, and by his own interest and perseverance in caving. It is a highly individualistic thing, this ability to lead. Many persons are not capable of proclaiming themselves "LEADERS," but they do not need to do so. A leader in the final analysis is one who can step into a situation in which his skills are needed, whether rigging, meeting an emergency, or taking a group of Scouts into a cave. He is trained and ready for any need, and is aware of his skills and the continuing need to improve them. It is the function of the VPI Grotto's trainee program to make this progress from novice to leader possible.

Bob Barlow, NSS 9401, VPI 89

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#### COMMON TROGLOXENIC SALAMANDERS OF VIRGINIA

Although Virginia apparently lacks true troglobitic salamanders (species which spend their whole life cycle in caves), we do have a fair abundance of part time cave dwelling species (trogloxenes). These are found most commonly in twilight zone although they sometimes wander much deeper underground. Very little is known about even these more common salamanders, and especially of their adaptation to cave life.



Probably the salamander most familiar to cavers is Eurycea lucifuga, the cave or spotted tail salamander. It generally has orange-red ground color with scattered black spots on the dorsal surfaces. Belly color is usually yellow. Cave salamanders are excellent climbers. Often they are found climbing about on the walls and ledges occasionally holding onto formations merely by their prehensile tail. These salamanders sometimes attain the length of seven and one eighth inches but average adults range from four to six inches.

The Long-tailed Salamander, Eurycea longicordata, is another common cave species. It looks quite a bit like the Cave Salamander but is yellower, has a more elongated form, and its tail spots are usually merged into a dumbbell shape. Long-tailed Salamanders prefer dryer habitats than the moisture loving Cave Salamander. One specimen was found crawling around in the relatively dry leaves at the bottom of the entrance to Clover Hollow Cave. The abundance of insects in such situations provides food for salamanders and other small predators which may drop in.

The Spring Salamander, Gyrinophilus porphyriticus, is one of the larger salamanders found in Virginia caves. It is much thicker than the Eurycea species and grows to a length of over eight inches. The color varies from molted brownish-pink to red and becomes darker with age. Spring salamanders may be found in streams and dryer situations in caves but it rarely climbs. There is some evidence that Spring Salamanders can exist as troglodiles (species which can complete its life cycle either in a cave or out).

Pseudotriton ruber, the Red Salamander, is a medium length (four to six inch) thick backed salamander found in cave streams. It is red or reddish orange with rounded spots of black on the upper surfaces. Old adults eventually turn dull purplish brown with many of the spots running together. Red Salamanders usually lay clustered eggs in the fall. The eggs hatch into larva which may grow up to four and a half inches before changing into adult form.

One of the most unusual salamanders found in Virginia caves is Aneides aeneus, the Green Salamander. It is a lichen-colored species noted for its tree climbing ability (outside caves). It occasionally even lays its eggs in trees. In caves also these salamanders are versatile climbers, using expanded toe tips to cling with. When not climbing these amphibians have the ability to jump several times their length using their powerful hind legs.

These are some of the more common troglodilic salamanders of Virginia. Recognition of the species and knowledge of the habits of salamanders and other cave life adds to the interest and fun of caving. The following references provide additional information about these salamanders and others found in Virginia: FIELD GUIDE TO REPTILES, Roger Conant; HANDBOOK OF SALAMANDERS, Sherman C. Bishop; SPELEOLOGY, THE STUDY OF CAVES, Moore and Nicholas; CAVES OF VIRGINIA, Henry Douglas.

Mike Clifford

## CAVE CRAYFISH

"Do cave crayfish bite?" asked a neophyte caver on a recent trip into a Southwestern Virginia cave. The question was directed at a world-renown cave biologist who is also a member of the NSS Board of Governors and Director of the Virginia Cave Survey.

"Perhaps in rare instances," replied the professor, "but never hard enough to cause pain." To qualify his answer, he proffered his right index finger to the large cave crayfish he was holding in his left hand. Without hesitation, the pale subterranean denizen accepted the finger.

Grimacing but undaunted, the biologist continued to point out various aspects of the creature, employing imaginative four-letter adjectives delivered in a stentorian classroom voice. His impressed audience knew that such eloquence could only be acquired through long years of doctoral research.

Returning the beast to the cave stream, the professor inspected his digit and remarked, "The bitch nearly drew blood!" So great was the professor's prowess that, not only could he correctly identify the animal, but could discern from the claw marks that it was a female of questionable ancestry.

(Not only are crayfish bigger and better this year; so are the caves. See "Fallen Rock Cave," by Sarah Critzer, elsewhere in this issue.)

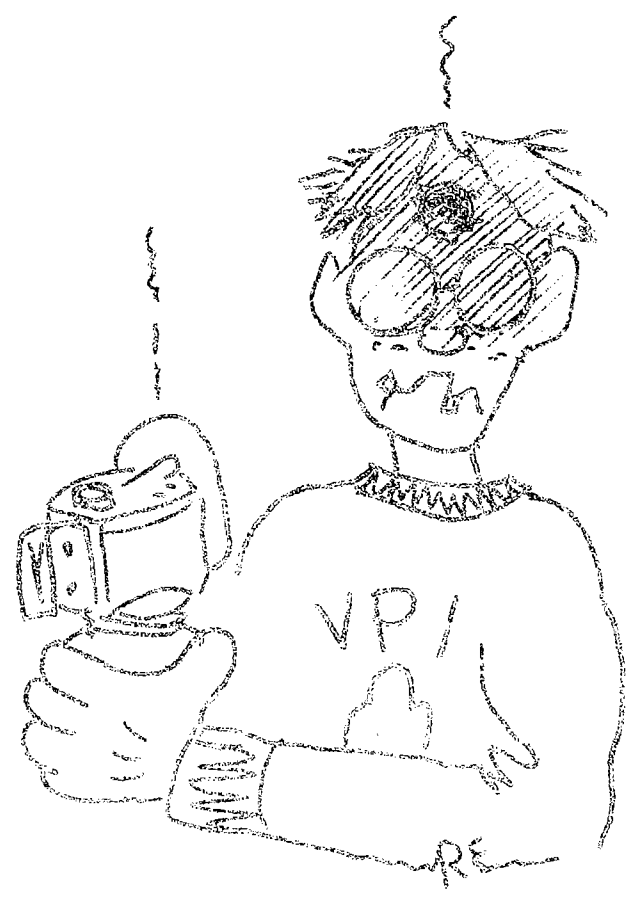
R. E. Whittemore

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## INTERSTATE 81 CAVE

Everyone has seen holes in road cuts. Voids are often encountered during highway construction, but they seldom amount to anything. Several may be seen along Route 11W just south of Bristol. Two were opened along 608 west of Tazewell several years ago. Another was opened along 460 north of Claypool Hill. Members of the VPI Grotto have explored these and many others, nearly all of which were nothing more than short muddy cracks. Perhaps this is why so little excitement was created when a deep fissure was intersected near Marion, Virginia, during the construction of Interstate 81. The void was filled by the highway crew, leaving only the upper portion open, protruding above the level of the highway.

A member of the VPI Grotto residing in Saltville during the summer of 1965 heard rumors of the cave and checked it out in late August of that year. He reported 500 feet of dry passage ending in a large room filled with massive formations. He added, however, that according to local people, the passage continues beyond the big room.



Now, 500 feet is quite a bit for a cave in a road cut, but the overall prospects did not seem to warrant a mapping trip until the fall of 1966; over a year later, On October 15, a crew of six which included Glen Davis, Ed Morgan, Dave McCloy, Tom Harris, Chip Clark, and myself, set out to map the cave. We arrived after a brief stop in Wytheville to explain to an incredulous officer what six grubby guys in a beat-up sedan were doing invading their peaceful backwoods community. For once the Virginia Cave Survey cards paid off.

We began the survey at the entrance and proceeded toward the Big Room. The party progressed smoothly, even though the lamp which McCloy had borrowed from Cletus had no bottom. Harris and Clark left the crew to explore leads near the entrance.

The passage beyond the Big Room was a narrow, muddy fissure which finally ended in a clay fill 1050 feet from the entrance. Congratulating ourselves on having done a good afternoon's work, we headed for the surface. We were soon met, however, by Clark and Harris. They were completely soaked.

"What are you doing mapping a side passage?" they asked. "The real cave is down below."

"Show me," was the general reaction, so we returned to a room near the entrance. Tom Harris led us down a narrow slot and through a low crawl onto a ledge ten feet above a large stream. We made our way down over mounds of flowstone to the stream level.

"The downstream end only goes about a thousand feet," Tom said, "it ends in a low siphon; we went about the same distance upstream before we came after you guys. It still goes--all virgin."

At that, we all headed upstream. The passage averaged ten to fifteen feet high and wide, with the stream flowing throughout. Three thousand feet later the passage ended where water filtered in through breakdown. We made our way back to the surface, noting one side passage along the way. Emerging in a light drizzle, we returned to Blacksburg by way of the Ranch House Restaurant in Dublin.

Two weeks later, a crew which included Glen Davis, Pat Ames, Anne Whittemore, Mallory Hightower, and I returned to finish the survey. Mapping was easy along the upstream passage and the breakdown choke was reached in about six hours. The side passage gave us some difficulty, being low, but fortunately it was not too extensive. After retracing our steps to the entrance, the two girls departed for the surface while Glen, Mallory, and I began the downstream survey.

We came to the siphon in a little over an hour and closed out the survey with over 150 stations and slightly over a mile mapped. We made tracks for the Ranch House Restaurant. The food and service were abominable, as usual, but it's the only place open after dark between Blacksburg and Bristol.

Several things are significant about the discovery, exploration and mapping of this cave. First of all, it is an excellent indication of the possibilities yet remaining in Southwestern Virginia. In fact, a good half dozen mile-or-more-long systems have been discovered in Virginia since Interstate 81 Cave was mapped. Secondly, it causes one to speculate on how many more caves, both large and small, await some fortuitous incident such as the building of a road before they can be entered by explorers.

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R. E. Whittenmore

### THE PEAT CAVES OF THE GREAT DISMAL SWAMP --A SURVEY

In the vast reaches of the Great Dismal Swamp of Virginia and North Carolina lie an unravished and unheard of myriad of caves. These are the magnificent and forbidding Peat Caves of the Great Dismal. Over a thirteen year period the author and the world renowned speleologist, A. I. Cartwright, systematically explored the known peat caves of the swamp. The survey abruptly ended with the untimely death of the author when he was eaten by a giant Troglobitic alligator. But his work shall live. This report is to the Virginia Tech Grotto of the National Speleological Society and dedicated in memory of the intrepid author.

The geologic development of peat caves is as interesting as it is vacuous. During extremely dry seasons the water table in some portions of the swamp is drastically lowered and the peat, which underlies the whole swamp becomes dehydrated and inflammable. During these periods, chance fires may flare up and burn great holes down into the peat. These fires, upon reaching the water table, spread out, smoldering their way through the organic material and form the bewildering maze of underground passage well known to swamp speleologists. The next heavy rain fills the new caves, quenching the fires, but leaving giant caverns ready for exploration by cavers during the next dry spell.

The most famous of the Dismal Swamp Peat Caves is Hog Hole. This is a totally vertical cave with a 268.9 foot entrance drop through the peat ending on a floor composed of Pre-Cambrian organic sand. The cave's unusual name was arrived at when the author's girl friend first discovered the pit by falling through the covering mat of vegetation. The system was completely mapped during the rescue attempt by Dr. A. I. Cartwright.

The author's favorite and the most interesting from a biological standpoint is Phoney's Cave. It appears to be the oldest of the known peat caves and over the centuries has developed a population of cave-adapted creatures known nowhere else. The troglobitic Cave Catfish is an interesting example. It dwells in the maze of waterfilled lower passages where it feeds on excretory droppings of Myotis alba, the White Cave Bat, and the Cave Alligator, Caiman arbora. Myotis alba is the

world's only known cave bat - completing its total life cycle within the peat cave. The bat's sole source of food is the abundant Cave Firefly which arises by spontaneous generation from the peat. The Cave Alligator, another ecologically restricted creature, feeds on dead Cave Bats, the smaller cave Catfishes, the larger Fireflies and its own tail, when nothing else is available. These alligators attain a very large size, some developing to nearly 23 feet long and up to 328 pounds. They are true cave creatures which lack pigment, eyes, ears, and teeth. They kill their prey by grabbing hold with their fleshy lips and sucking their prey to death-- a truly remarkable animal.

The largest peat cave in the world is the Maids-Rising Creek System. It is found deep in the south interior of the Great Dismal. The north entrance is about one half mile east of the northwest bend of the Pervertamuck Creek and a quarter mile west of the Leechalot March. So far 869,000 feet have been mapped in eight horizontal levels. The formations in the upper sections of the cave are amazing, graceful cypress stalactites and brilliant toadstools mushrooming from the floors. The colorful bacon rind formations found scattered in the top section actually are the preserved remains of a herd of prehistoric hogs which burned to death in the cave. The name of this cave system comes from an old ante bellum legend concerning a runaway maid chased by a leecherous old southern planter whose plantation was on the edge of the Great Dismal. The maid, during her escape, found an old dugout canoe and paddled up the Pervertamuck Creek deep into the forbidding swamp with the planter following close behind. At the time rain from a hurricane coming up the coast deluged the swamp and flooded the creek. The planter had almost caught up with the maid's canoe when it was swamped by the flood in the rising creek. Her body was swept into the cave which drained the creek during flood conditions and was lost to the planter forever. In dedication though, he named Maid's-Rising Creek Cave.

One of the more accessible peat caves is Beenhadovitch's hole. It is named in honor of Molly Beenhadovitch and it is the only fully explored peat cave, having no virgin passage. Molly, an old swamper, has made a living in the cave for the last 89 years, since she moved there from Keystone, West Virginia. This cave, the only commercial peat cave, is one half mile from the author's home in Poccosin Sink District of Pungs Parrish. Another occupied cave in the vicinity is Horney's Saltpeter Cave, dwelled in by Caleb Horney, a hermit. This cave's name does not refer to deposits of saltpeter in the peat, but to Caleb's unusual diet of marsh greens, catfish, and saltpeter. He has kept a great stockpile of saltpeter in the cave since his return from college in the southwestern Virginia mountains where he became addicted to the nutriment. He obtains the saltpeter through distillation of gunpowder which he also uses in his never-ending tries to blow a passage through the peat to Beenhadovitch's Hole. So far he has not succeeded.

The last and most recently explored of the Dismal Swamp Peat Caves is White Lightning Hollow. It has an unusual series of pools in the lower section which average 59% corn liquor by volume.

Apparently, the drainage pattern of the swamp above is such that when several large moonshine stills were destroyed by revenoors a few years ago, all the alcohol settled in these pools. Several more trips will have to be made to truly ascertain the value of this cave.

In conclusion, it must be said that these few discovered peat caves of the Great Dismal Swamp warrent increased notice by the world's cavers. It is hoped that this report will spur many speleologists to forsake personal comfort and safety and to help in the great cause of exploration and discovery.

D. S. Fox

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Even in writing a short collection of poems, I find it best to define a few terms for my non-caving readers; to those who find mud uninspiring and to those who consider moonshine a foul-smelling toxic drink.

a caver - unlike most, his life begins 6 ft. under

moonshine - a foul-smelling toxic drink

mud - the wet form of dirt

guano - the dry form of dirt

carbide - a dry chemical that, when mixed with water, smells like Tom Vigour's long underwear and the gas formed is combustable also like Tom Vigour's underwear

swill - the most rotten and bad tasting substance known to man... which is eaten by cavers

#### SWILL

A can of beans, a bottle of beer,  
a loaf of bread, a rabbit's ear.  
A jug of wine, a cricket's leg,  
a dash of salt, a turtle's egg.

A slice of pork, a chuck of ham,  
a piece of cheese, a potted lamb.  
A cup of flour, a speckled newt,  
a pair of pants, a dirty boot.

We gather round the old tin pot  
at the bottom of the hill.  
We cook it til it's boiling hot,  
and then we eat the swill.

Ol Vigour grabs his spoon  
and Yeatts, he grabs a cup.  
While Pablo's already chewin-  
Big Moose is throwing up.

(Due to the inexperience of the editor,  
the last two verses were put on the  
next page. Sorry !bout that, Steve.)





Some one says "it's good for you  
puts hair upon your chest!"  
Yes, these are the privileged few  
who achieved the highest crest.

Somewhere in a quiet land  
behind the farthest hill,  
there sits this grubby little band-  
a dying on their swill.

## MOOSE STEW

Icky-sticky, gooby-goo  
gobs of grubby grits,  
it's greasy and it's hard to chew,  
and besides it gives you .....!

## SCUPPERNONG

It's not like beer, and not like bourbon  
It's effect on cavers is awful disturbin  
some sing, some dance, and others get sick  
some get lovin' with a cute young chick  
But me, I different, wierdest of all,  
I hold hands with a guy named Hall.

S. Kark

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## FROM BEHIND THE PINK LAMP

Explain a pun? A feeling? No, it's been tried since the beginning  
of Man. When I talk on the phone, I make gestures to explain myself.  
I'll feel when I write this, hoping it will come through the wire.

Sure, I had the traditional "trainee come as you are" garb. But  
that's not important. The important element was behind the pink lamp:  
the wide eyes of a first trip. Wide eyes don't see names of caves  
brightly lighting an entrance or leading to rooms, so that's not  
important either.

Approaching the entrance, my mind raced back to history classes of  
the 16th century period, "Hell is believed to be located beneath the  
earth's surface". The newness of a first trip, anywhere, holds excitement,  
I thought, twentieth century-like. And a new world opened up--no noise,  
no devices of the modern world--no floor.

After many feet of calm crawlway, I wondered about the wildlife,  
I'd been warned would attack. Suddenly, the walls expanded. We had  
emerged from an area too small for comfort, to a disaster area too large  
for a house. Little thought was given to wildlife, the wild life was  
each step I took. Through the breakdown, I thought I was through. I  
wholeheartedly applauded myself on my sanity and willingness to go on.

The worst was still to be shown these wide eyes.

Tennis shoes love mud as waxed skis love snow. "Wide eyes, please close as your feet slip over that drop," I whispered. I sometimes felt a firmly clasped hand, after I closed my eyes.

There were pauses in my new adventure of life and death, pauses that filled my eyes with the wonder of creation. A drop of water, and another, the passing of time and a bit of magic made the lively sparkle of untouchable forms.

Too soon there was a solid floor, too soon the quiet magic was like a dream.

T. Huttlinger

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#### FROM PETE'S LOG

11/12/66 "Mike Frieders, Bob Amundson, Terry Pick, Danny Wright, Gary Coony, went to Pig Hole. General exploration and got attacked by bats."

11/19/66 "I can go thru a smaller hole than you can!nanananana!"  
 $H_2S$   
 "...There were a bunch of formations on the ceiling of one room, Whitt, Vig, and Keat all said they were a worm's eye view of a turnip patch. I thought they looked like boobs.. Minds run in strange ways....

Annie

1/14/67 "I've got my SPACE Blanket, things should be cozy in Tazewell tonight."

Vig

2/20/67 "Today the VPI Cave Club was represented by a large contingent of members and dates at the annual 'Day After the Night Before of the Orgy Following the VPI Cave Club Annual Banquet and Awards Presentation Cave Trip'. We honored Greenville Saltpeter with our attendance and confusion!" .. a

1/21/67 "Everybody's Looking For it, Nobody's found it, Trunk Channel, Trunk Channel" Mapping Slusser's again

Cletus



?



4/1/67 "Would you believe- All Fool's Day? What a day for cavers to go fooling. Boy, you should see Cletus fool! Cletus found some virgin passage in Repast Saltpeter and four other fools followed him through a partial siphon. I was smart, as usual. I'm no fool."

Annie

4/23/67 "Radford Ski Club: Caving in Starnes. Good trip. See George Petitt and receive free 'God's Simple Plan for Salvation'"  
J.O.M.

"Nobody Believes Us  
But we really mapped it.  
Trunk Channel, Trunk Channel." "We finally finished  
Slussers Chapel. Mapped 1286 feet today bringing the total  
to 4065 feet.

THE END (thank God)  
Cletus D. Lee Inc.

6/17/67 "Virginia State Police \*\$#\$!2\*& I was only going 66 tiny itty bitty mph's and that lousy fuzz puts the clumps on me. A tiny little green box sitting on the side of the road, and screeecch soooooommm wrrrrrrrrrrrrrr. GD fuzz. Would you believe \$34.75. \$2 for every MPH over and \$12.75 for court costs. Yeah, you read it right-12.75-worse than Roehr. And we couldn't find Starnes when we got there."  
anonymous  
(Keat?)

5/13/67 "We thought we'd seen it,  
But there's more of it.  
Trunk Channel, Trunk channel. ...so the cave (and song,  
thank God it finally ends--at 1 mile, 78 feet, and 6 inches!  
This makes Slusser's Chapel the largest cave in Montgomery  
County, the Twenty-fourth largest in Virginia, and the  
closest mile-long cave to campus. (But it is still the  
second best. Miller's Cove being first, of course.)"  
R.E. Whittemore

7/15/67 Attention: There is a cave in the town of Pearisburg. It has a twenty-foot entrance drop and about 120 feet of crawling passage.

#### THE CAVE ON THE STREET WHERE I LIVED\*

I have often walked  
Down this street before  
But I never saw the cave  
Beneath my feet before

\* Sung to the tune of "On the Street Where You Live"  
Words by: Cletus D. Lee Inc.  
Music by: Oscar Hammerstein

10/22/67 Went to Maybrook today...MEOW! Whitt

Today Gary Moss tried a single brake bar,---left his ass-print on the sand(stone)s of time.

11/11/67 Guess what - GDRC\* got another tag from the \*&\$/#&' (state fuzzies again). Same place as before, same speed as before, same price as before: \$34.75. When will he ever learn?

\*For our uninformed readers, GDRC is synomonus with God-Damn Rock Climber.

11/18/67 Tony's Cave (Tawney's?) We came out wiser than when we went in. Mike Clifford.

2/11/68 NEW RIVER....hearyee, hearyee, THE FOREST ROOM IS OPEN AGAIN! Whitt

2/11/68 We went to saltpeter cave mit Ed Morgan! We went in, ate a cookie, got sick, and came home.

Steve Kark.

2/17/68 YAHOOOO!!! ..... WOMEN OF THE WORLD'S MOST ACTIVE CAVING ORGANIZATION CONQUER STARNES CAVE TOGETHER.

Anne Whittemore

Marie Christine Noble

Eileen Aldridge

Arabia Vargas Benitz

Sharon Priest

2/25/68 Just am recovering from the big orgy after the Banquet. I found out that a steak dinner, wine, whiskey, and beer don't mix too well. Oh well, chocolate milk for me next week... (maybe). Steve Hall

"Eat at Eggleston"

Come to the Canadian Rockies where the big ones are.

G. D. Pembroke and their police. Gary (the speeder) Moss Damn cop let me go so I could come to court.

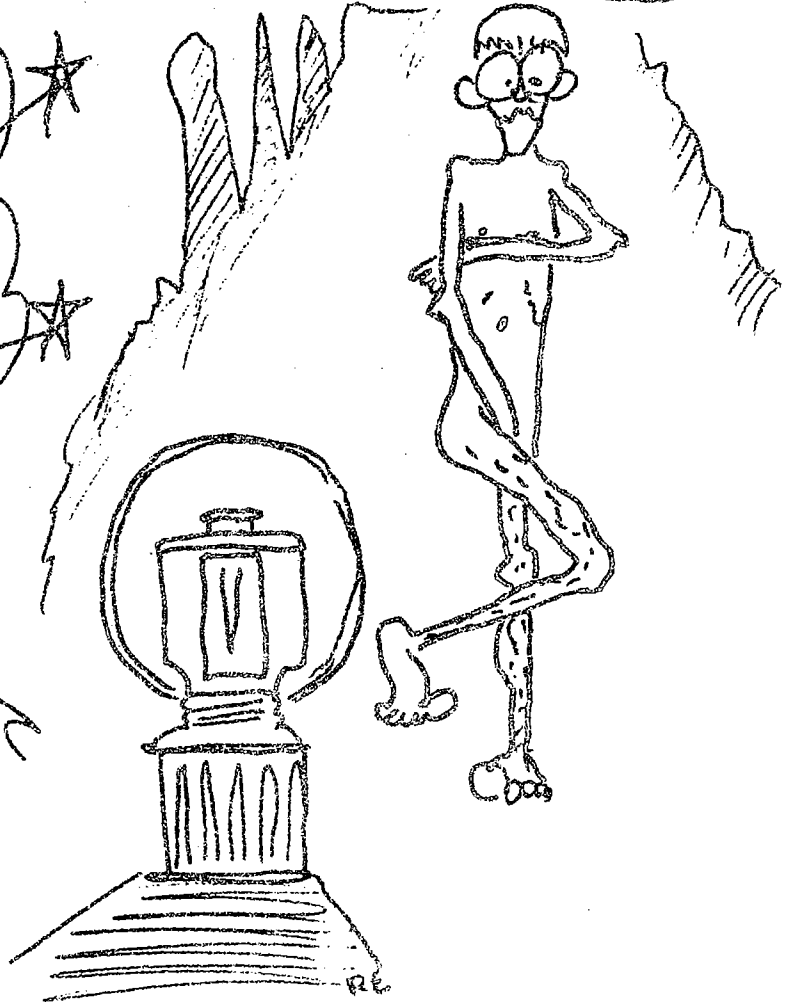
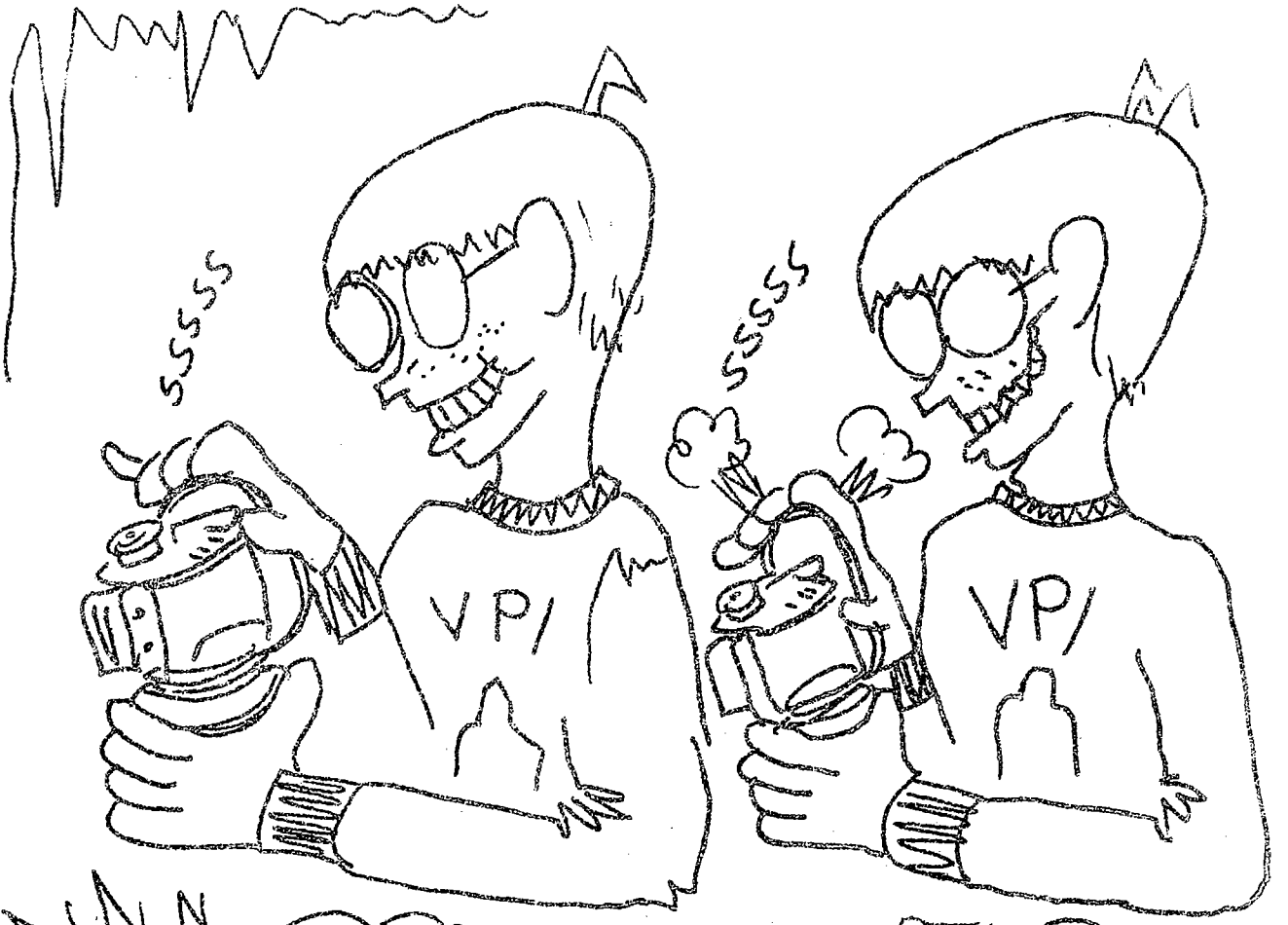
POLICE BRUTALITY - join the "wipe Pembroke off the maps with a firecracker Society".

PS. That Pembroke cop (THE Pembroke Cop) has stopped two state troopers and the mayor of Pembroke for speeding.

Today ladies learned to make themselves absent so the men can take a whizz! Learned to come out faster than go in! (a cave that is). Tired, but happy. Sarah Critzer

R.E. Whittemore is ubiquitous.

You can climb in a cave, but can you cave in a climb? AJK



## TRIP REPORTS

Trip reports seem to be the mainstay of every caving publication with authorship spanning from budding journalists to journalizing butts. Only the most dedicated reader dares brave his way through the entire trip report jungle, but is usually rewarded for his efforts by seeing his name mentioned (if only derogatorily) or being able to compare notes with his fellow sufferers. So don your hip boots and bat repellent for here we go once more. The selections following hopefully hit the major events of the caving year, in part, starting on January 1, where else?

## THE BROTHERS WHITTEMORE UNDERGROUND

or

## GRIM FAIRY TRAILS

On New Year's Day, while enjoying the last two days of my Christmas leave, I was determined not to return without getting into at least one cave. So, that night, Whitt and I decided to go to nearby Slusser's Chapel Cave. I had heard a great deal about this cave and was quite curious to explore it.

We reached the cave at about 7:30 p.m. and without hesitation entered its comparative warmth. Believe me, after six months of just the Monterey Peninsula and the Big Sur country, it was nice to be back in a Virginia cave.

After the first crawlway I found Slusser's Chapel to be a fine cave. There was a satisfactory amount of formations, enough geology to keep anyone interested, and, to my pleasure, plenty of cave life. Besides the usual bats, salamanders, and other fauna I also observed Slusser's Chapel's claim to biospeleological fame: its "living pools". I was truly fascinated by the speed and agility with which these fairly numerous creatures could reach up and grab your feet as you attempted to cross them. (Author's Note: Do not let this form of life cause you fear. They are certainly less dangerous than the well-known Maidenae formius, which many have survived.)

Whitt and I proceeded directly to the trunk channel, thereby missing most of the famous small side passages. Upon reaching the main river channel we turned right (naturally) and continued downstream a short distance until we came to the first siphon. Here I decided that it was time for a rest. After considering the dampness of the continuing passage, the amount of cave to be seen, and the outside temperature (approx. 10<sup>OF</sup>.), I objectively concluded that I wasn't quite up to it. Having spent a lot of time in bed at the Fieldhouse on the previous night, I was suffering from a lack of sleep.

Unfortunately, the only way out of the cave is the way you came in. But, being the interesting cave that it is, it was no bother at all.

After leaving the wettest part of the cave, we had wrung out our socks and hoped that our clothes wouldn't freeze; but we lost to the snow and ice, a frigid midnight, and half mile walk back to the car. However, upon reaching it and dry clothes, we enjoyed the inner warming satisfaction of reproving the old adage: Good things come in small flasks.

Spec. 4 Barry T. Whittemore  
Ft. Myer, Va.

TO CASS CAVE, OR ABANDON HOPE  
ALL YE WHO ENTER HERE.

We're going to Cass! We're going to Cass!

During the Easter holidays, our infamous leader, Bob Thrun, and his cave rats consisting of Dee Snell, Jette Feduska, and Gary Moss left for the PSC Block House. After parking and watching the eclipse of the moon (during which Jette was violently molested), we spent a warm snugglie night at the Block House. (Gary arrived later--5:30 a.m.) Chortle, chortle!

The next morning was a promising one (for what we don't know). Spam, spam, glorious spam -- our breakfast at a roadside table. We spent most of our time flagging down innocent motorists looking for a match to light our stove. We finally reverted to more primitive methods and used our carbide lamps.

We finally made it to the cave entrance after trudging about a quarter of a mile through a hollow. We got there about 12 or 12:30 pm. IS THIS REALLY CASS?????

We charged up our "stinkies" and proceeded inward. Gary was in the lead, with Jette and Dee following cautiously tiptoeing from rock to rock trying to stay dry. Bob followed, carrying 300 feet of "white lightening" (sampson 2 in 1).

We kept asking, "Is the water low, is the water low?" The boys' reply was, "Yes, yes, quite low. Brother, what a bunch of magpies."

Staying fairly dry through the crawl, we reached the chimney to the Belay Loft. Many other remains were found there also. One could conclude that this was a well lived-in place. Snicker, snort.

The rope was rigged and Bob rappelled into the bowles of the cave. Dee was next - "tweet, tweet, rappelling - tweet, tweet, off rope." Jette rigged in "tweet, tweet, rappelling - tweet, tweet, off rope." This cave sounded more like a bird sanctuary, but actually the tweets were from our vertical whistles swiped from an Alabama caver. Gary, last but not least, rappelled down. One of the most impressive aspects of vertical caving is the sight of someone rappelling down, and all you see is the reflection of their lamp.



After climbing over much breakdown in the Big Room, and seeing the beautiful rimstone pools we came upon the register in the toilet bowl--which was in great need (not the registrar, the "bowl"). We signed the registrar and only a few blank pages were left. (The register has been there since 1961). A new one is needed--HINT.

We went back to the "Cat Crawl" Bob took many pictures of the numerous formations. Afterwards we headed back and Gary started jumaring out. He was up the rope in a very short time.

THEN! It was Dee's turn to start up--on polypropylene prusicks. About 90 feet up the rope--they started slipping. Gasp, Gasp--\*#!\*#\$. Bob tied another sling and carabiner on the rope and Dee pulled it up and put it on. It worked fine for about twenty feet and then they all started slipping! Dee suddenly became quite religious. After loosing many nails and making many imprints in the rope she finally made it to the Solar Ledge and there many foot and hand holds were supplied to assist her way out.

Meanwhile Jette was catching quite a chill. In her well-equipped cave pack she carried a NRC Rescue blanket (which she willed to some poor unfortunate soul who may need it) and a can of sterno--ahhhh, warmth. She and Bob made good use of them in trying to keep warm--smirk. I wonder what went on--ask Jette!!! Finally a faint "off rope" was heard over the roaring waterfall. Since "poly" prusicks did not seem to hold very well for Dee, Jette demanded loudly for Gary's Jumars to be sent down. (It seemed to be the only word in her limited vocabulary.) Up went the rope; down came the Jumars. Jette rigged in and started the long ascent. The waterfall and the big room left her speechless--Jette speechless??? She became quite philosophical when she realized how much further she had to go. After reaching the solo ledge the "windbag" was no longer speechless. She was heard sputtering "I have seen the coming of the Lord." Upon reaching the belay loft she mumbled, "I have reached the mountain top." After Jette bellowed "off rope"; Thrun came speedily up the rope.

The rope was coiled and our gear packed and we started our exit, demanding occasionally a shoulder or a head to assist us down from the belay loft. Instead of tiptoeing through the water, we tromped through it, knowing we had warm and dry B.V.D.'s waiting for us. We reached the car between 11:30 and 12, changed our smelly, wet attire, and proceeded to the "field house" which was packed for the Easter holidays. The next morning we socialized with the multitudes of people, and then packed our goodies and headed for home.

Cass Cave is truly a magnificent and beautiful cave, but an extremely difficult one. It was well worth the trip, and everyone got their jolly's.

## WITHEREST WITHERO'S

During the fourth annual Speleo-Go-Go, held at Aqua Campground beside the blue-green Bullpasture River in Highland County, Virginia, in July 1968, the intrepid team of Annie and "Whitt" Whittemore led a third ~~assault~~ in search of the elusive Withero's Cave in Bath County, Virginia.

At the first Speleo-Go-Go, the team was joined in their efforts to discover the location of this cave by Barry Whittemore, Jim Cooper, and Jack-the-Gypsy, only to hike through miles of wet undergrowth and high weeds finding no cave. Then, at the second Go-Go, the team made a second effort to locate the cave. This time, they were aided by Chief Running-Mouth, Alex Pipe, who is famed for eternity due to an amazing performance in Catawaba Murder Hole, and none other than Barry Whittemore. This time we found holeless sinkholes and old cars.

Does Withero's Cave really exist? I've heard that some people have been there. Gretchen Reich said it was hard to find. An understatement. But, still, the cave is mentioned in the "Dook". It couldn't be a figment. Or could it?

The team decided that this was to be the last assault. Either we found it this time, or never. "Whitt" decided that we should ask someone for advice, and who should have been there once before, and even remembered how to find the cave, but the notable Bill Plummer. Good ole Bill. Bill could even pinpoint the cave on a topographic map, and supply accurate directions. Wonders will never cease.

So, in order to document this memorable assault, the team was accompanied by the illustrious twosome from the Holston Valley Grotto, Sam Pinkerton and Tom Hodges; and none other than everyone's friend, Thomas S. Roehr; not to mention the Scuppernong Kid, Steve Kark; Nancy DeJarnette, and the ever-popular, Linda Heitz.

After parking at the next house up from the one we stopped at two years before, and getting all our gear together, we tromped up a "holler", through a pasture, and would you believe it, to the cave! There it was, in the middle of the field, just down the hill from the cars we had found on the last trip. My, my,

Well. Withero's Cave has three entrances. We all went in the third (so called by the map), and at the first intersection, split up into two groups consisting of "Whitt", Sam, Linda and myself, and, the others, of course, in the second group. The game was to see the whole cave without seeing the other group, and to go in and out all the other entrances, ending up at the one we started at. According to "Whitt" there is a fourth exit being a small hole which issues one into the third entrance. He thought he had found it through a tight fissure. It was sad that he had to retrace his way back up that nasty place. Tsk.

One place of great interest is the Flat Room. But the best place is "Hole-in-the-Wall" Passage. You get to it from "Whitt's" fissure. The hole is about two feet in diameter, and is at the bottom of the wall



in a stand-up passage. And, it is the only way into the parallel passage. I enjoyed crawling through the hole so much the first time, that I had to do it again. Wheee!

Anyhoo, once we were all back on the surface, we trekked back to the cars, and thence to Millboro Springs for liquid refreshment. Before returning to the campground, we stopped off at a swimming hole on the blue-green Bullpasture River, and spent several enjoyable hours.

Now that Withero's has finally been located and explored, the intrepid team can assault another well-known cave of questionable location. I believe Hupman's Saltpeter Cave will serve. Any volunteers?

Anne Whittmore

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CONVENTION 1968  
OR: GROT HOLLOW REVISITED

The 25th annual convention of the National Speleological Society was held in Springfield, Missouri during the third week of August. Hosting the convention were the Missouri Geological and Speleological Surveys in connection with Fantastic Caverns and the Southwest Missouri State College.

Being centrally located, the convention drew a good number of cavers (about 530 to be exact--a record) from all over the country. The Fantastic Caverns Campgrounds filled up rapidly as cavers started pouring in (literally) on Sunday and Monday from parts unknown and pre-convention field trips. A better than average representation from VPI, Nittany, Iowa, and the Missouri groups was present. Conspicuous by their absence was the Shining Mountain Grotto of Montana. This was particularly noticed by most of the convention goers, since the SMG is to host the 1969 convention somewhere in northern Wyoming. The Greater Guano Grotto was present in force led by the fearless Squire Lewis and Dick Bishop, but was there really a Greater Guano Grotto Ghetto?

By now you are probably wondering what Groat Hollow is. When my crew (consisting of the notorious Jetta Feduska, and "Whitt" and Annie Whittmore) pulled in, Groat Hollow was occupied by Jim Wolff (Oregon), Al Armstrong, Glenn Davis (VPI), and the Vigor-Biggers cabin. The campsite filled quickly thereafter, and soon became home for about 13 VPI partiers, Monongahela Grotto, York Grotto, Streak, Dave Irving (ETG), and a number of others in about 1 1/2 tents total. Groat Hollow was proud to have 2 of the three picnic tables in the campgrounds. Needless to say Groat Hollow was where the action was.

Of course cavers like to cave, so Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday saw many trips to few caves. On Monday our group and about 20 others headed out (and we do mean out) to Indian Creek Caverns. A typical Missouri cave with relatively large passage, Indian Creek had a thin film of moisture and mud on the floor about 2 feet deep. It was a very enjoyable cave done in the true VPI blitz tactics by "Whitt", Annie, Jette, and myself. Our total time in the cave was about two hours after covering 2/3 of the 12,000 foot cave.

The next day we tripped out to a cave near Willard, Missouri called Big Cave. Our leader insisted on remaining silent as to the nature of the cave. When we got to the cave entrance we found out that one must do about a 100 foot belly crawl through about a foot of water to gain entrance to the larger passage, also filled with water. This cave, which our leader said was a mile and a half long, took almost one and a half hours to do. One of the best aspects of this trip was the chance to come clean a few feet from the entrance to the cave by lying down in the warm water of the Sac River.

Most of the evenings in the campsite were a scene of cavers gathering to watch the sun go down (and the temperature too, hopefully). The dew that fell during the night came like a heavy rain making it necessary to cover everything or things were not worth saving in the morning.

From all indications the field trips were a success. About fifty cars banded together for a geology field trip along Missouri's highways. Gary McCutchen, Patty Wick, Jette and myself took the Biology field trip to the Ozark Underground Laboratory (Tumbling Creek Cave), a truly unique cave. Unlike the other Missouri caves we had seen, it had a distinct lack of water filled passages and wasn't near as muddy. A number of us decided to stray from the fifteen hundred feet of walks and do the rest of the cave. The cave had large passage throughout and a few large flowstone formations.

Wednesday was the start of the indoor sessions headed by the internal organizations and the Congress of Grottoes. Wednesday night's costume ball turned into a buffet supper, costume parade, and a first run look at the ABC filming of Russ Gurnee's expedition to a number of Mayan caves. Other indoor sessions on history, geology, and other cave related topics rounded out Friday and Saturday's schedule. Of particular interest was a fantastic slide show on Fort Stanton Cave and other caves of New Mexico.

Due to the absence of the 1969 Convention chairman, Dave McClurg, delivered a slide show presentation of the planned convention in Wyoming. He stressed that the theme will be to hunt for caves.

Nevin Davis's gasoline powered ascendor made Saturday's practical session one of the most talked about. The twenty-three pound device equipped with a jumars safety could propel a two hundred pound man up a rope at a fast rate to say the least.

In the anything goes category connoisseurs of art could feast their eyes on the many grotto emblems and banners. For the more advanced observer the AMCS field truck and Jim Hixon's caving machine were certainly photogenic. If you were in the market for anything, Galen Heckais would have gladly sold you a pair of hiebler ascenders or you could have had a "whale tail" from Sammy Taylor at more than a modest price. One of the best selling items was a bulletin on Sotano de las Colondrinas by the AMCS including a map and eight color prints.

More cavers rolled in from Blacksburg early Saturday morning to catch the last day of the convention. The crowning event of the week was the banquet Saturday night highlighted by Doc Halliday's talk on Lunar caving. After the banquet a number of Groat Hollow residents did some further cleaning up (much thanks to Don Cournoyer) then Whitt and I braced ourselves for the twenty-two hour ride back to Blacksburg and D.C.

The immortal words of Jette Feduska do the best job of summing up my week in Missouri: "Where's the party?"

Mike Frieders

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#### THE PARABLE OF THE PARTY

And there went out a decree from Charleus Schwabus that all cavers should in Franklin gather, even at the Old Mill should they congregate for to have the Old Timer's Reunion. So they came from the south, from the west, lo even from Yankeeland did they come. And many were they, yea, more than three hundred drank at that place. Upon Friday eventide many found that there was no room at the mill and camped at Thorn Spring. And there was in the same County, Cavers abiding in the caves, watching the Bats by carbide light.

Suddenly, it came to pass that Saturday morning occured and there were many Billus consumed. When, with a great shout, the Cave Olympics were announced to begin. Some Cavers, that is those who go caving, crawled, climbed, on 31" ladder rungs did they climb, and prusiked. It was recorded, by him who kept records, who it was who won. Even did he record the name of Gene Harrison. And when the sun declined, behind the Blue Rockies did it go down, a party again commenced. And there was dancing and much lightening, species blanco. And so it continued all through the night.

There was on the next morning a rising of the sun and in the afternoon a rising of the Company. Those who were able discussed caving and even talked of going to a cave. Some, although few in number were these, went and did this great feat. Lo, upon their return, there was great Rejoicing and an excuse for The Party to happen. And it happened, even did it start and lasted until it stopped.

With the morning of the third day, it was realized that a great tragedy was occurring and there was wailing and gnashing of carabiners. For it was Monday and all must return to their homes and assume disguises, even of normal people. Yet, rejoice, give thanks, and sing, for I say unto Ye: The Decree shall go out again

Lynn Vinzant

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#### FALLEN ROCK CAVE, TAZEWELL COUNTY, VIRGINIA

Date: October 5-6, 1968

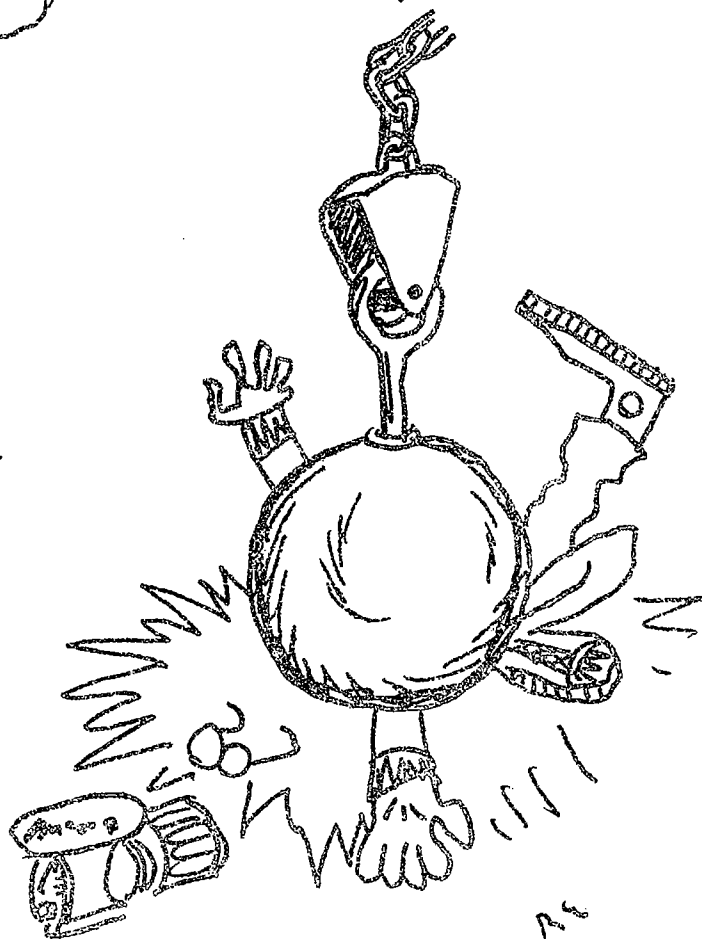
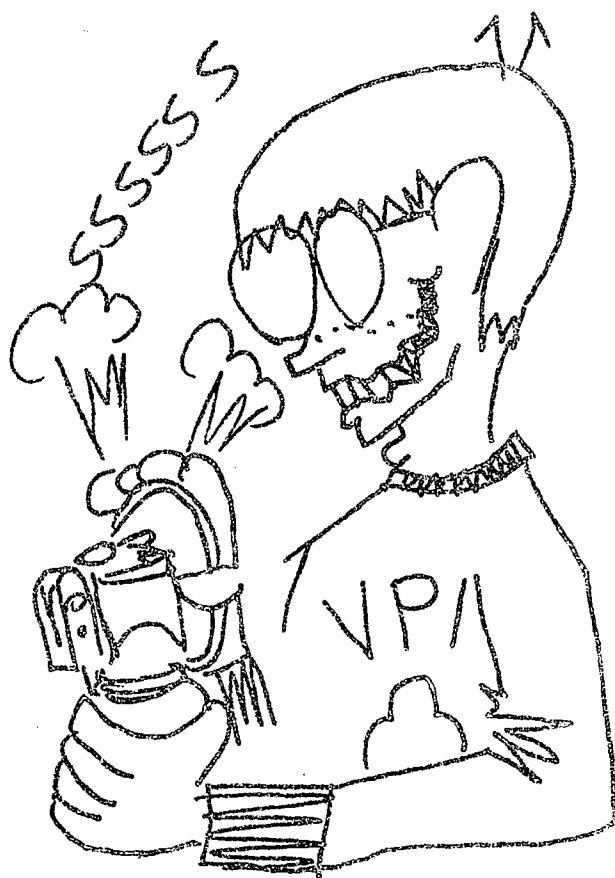
Personnel: Mr. and Mrs. R. E. Whittemore, Cletus Lee, Tom Spears,  
Paul Braughton, Russ Peterson.

Our one car and a Bronco party set out at 6:00 a.m. Saturday to map Fallen Rock Cave. We bounced into the cave  $4\frac{1}{2}$  hours later and raced on hands and knees to the Big Room so we could start mapping. Whitt had hopes that this would be a "hellofa" long cave - and he was right.

My job was to observe the steel tape as it stretched between the stations and make sure that it wasn't kinked. After sometime, feeling that this job required a more qualified and concentrate-on-what-you're-doing type of person, I retired to the front with Russ and we explored virgin passage. While up front, another caver joined our party. He was a mysterious fellow and he must have kept wandering off at every station because Cletus and Tom were constantly hollering for him. I never got to meet that guy, but I know his name was Mark.

I practiced caving conservation by dumping my spent carbide in a Baggie which doubled as a tummy-warmer throughout the whole trip. Not being spiritually endowed, we all had to walk through the waist-deep water and not on it. There was a short stretch of crawlway with sparkling rimstone pools, sodastraws and lots of stalactites and stalagmites. It was too far from the entrance to be considered for commercialization.

Having set 68 stations and mapped over 12,000 feet, Whitt decided it was time to lash out. The visions of drinking water and food that waited for us on the outside helped us mush toward the entrance.





Cletus and I picked up our swill and bacon that we left at the entrance and after we had shivered into our dry clothes, we drove to the school house to spend the night. We had to throw away the bacon because a rat had chewed a hole in the corner of the package. Nothing tastes better than hot coffee and steaming swill. Since this was my first swill I am including the recipe.

#### SWILL

2 cans Armour Hash  
1 can Campbell's Tomato Soup  
1 can corn  
1 can peas, greenbeans or mixed vegetables  
salt and pepper  
favorite spices  
Camel ashes (optional)

Cook over a two burner Coleman Stove until hot.  
Eat it up fast, 'cause it warms your innards.

We still have not finished mapping and the trunk channel keeps going and going and going and.....

Sarah Critzer

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#### THE COLLIN'S TRIP

or

#### LOOK AT THAT SIX FOOT PILE OF MUD WEARING A CARBIDE LAMP

Well stocked with peanut butter, cheese, bread, jelly, and assorted "canned Goods". Tom Vigour, Jim "Moose" Dawson, Russ Peterson, and I left Blacksburg for the Regional Project at Pennington Gap, Virginia. When we arrived at the Moccasin Hill Country Club, we checked our reservations and contentedly bunked down in the bath house - plush accommodations with electricity and running water, I might add.

Early the next morning we resumed our pilgrimage to our destination, Collin's Cave; our purpose being to complete the mapping operations initiated by Vig, Moose and Russ earlier. At 9:30 AM we entered the sloppy mud-bowl entrance and commenced mapping. At this point I feel it necessary to digress and give a description of Collin's type mud. Varying from brown and ochre hues to near red, it has a tendency to crust thinly, concealing below as much as eighteen inches of glop, with a sticking capacity rivaled only by a throat-full of peanut butter and cheese. In some sections the cave offers the double thrill of having 36 inches of extremely heavy humidity over the mud; however, according to Moose, the mud in such areas can exceed eighteen inches.

Another enchanting portion of the cave featured precariously balanced, hanging breakdown, horrendous in dimensions, directly over the keyhole passage--Whisper, Daby! Before exiting at 5:00 PM we located the much sought-after connection to nearby Blair Cave, which combined with Collin's Cave yields over a mile of passage.

At 7:00 PM accompanied by Doug Yeatts and Sharon Priest, and slightly rested we advanced the evening assault on the cave. Another physical and spiritual experience awarded by Collins was the redonning of wet soggy thermal underwear.

In the course of mapping Doug and I commenced a climbing contest to compare the attributes of his golf-spiked footwear to my "engineering slicks." Contrary to expectations, he emerged victor and I in the throes of physical frustration managed to lose the greater part of my pants. Everyone seemed to agree that my indecent attire was a very chic way of celebrating my birthday. Finally at 4:30 AM Saturday, we emerged cold, wet, and tired, but still courageous enough to sing praises of Collins Cave.

To our dismay on Saturday morning we discovered that seventeen hours worth of survey notes were unaccounted for. A hysterical search, including every Main Street garbage can in Pennington Gap yielded nothing. On Sunday we returned to Blair Cave with John Holsinger to validate the Collins connection. Later that rainy afternoon, while returning home, Moose gave a "he-man's" exhibition of how to handle a Rambler sliding out of control. His feat was so inspiring that Doug gave an encore minutes later at the same location.

Just last weekend--October 12--Moose, Vig, Russ and Company returned to Collins to remap the section of which the notes were lost. Fellow cavers can certainly appreciate my extreme regret in not being able to accompany them.

Steve "Tink" Williams

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#### AN OUTSIDER'S VIEW

Until Labor Day of this year my contact with cavers had been very limited and all I had heard were stories told to me by two member of the VPI Cave Club. After Labor Day I have come into contact with a great many cavers and have found a new and interesting group of people. I cannot attempt to explain what makes a caver, but have seen that most cavers have a great fondness of the out-of-doors. A caver must also be a little bit of a masocist. He must learn to enjoy crawling in mud, on rocks, and living on candy bars and soggy cigarettes. On Saturdays the caver must be ready to begin life with a hangover, and drive hundreds of miles to go underground and enjoy life.

One would think that a caver is crazy and I have sometimes wondered if this wasn't a little bit true. Fortunately, I have come to know these people and this has been done, not by being a constant caver, but by coming East with the right people. The most notable fact of the majority of cavers I have met is their ability to regard people for what they are and not what they think people should be. This and the fact that cavers are what they are and don't try to put on airs makes them the easiest and most enjoyable people to know. In closing I would like to say I came to Virginia to rest and have come across a group of people that have made life very enjoyable. These people have made Virginia and VPI a place that I am very happy to call home. If I have to leave, I hope that I can find people who have the same philosophy on life as the cavers I have met and life will be enjoyable.

Paul "Pablo" Davis

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#### THE VPI COLOR CODES

The old, old question, "Is this thine, or mine?" has always come up in the aftermath of a caving trip, when the trunk of a car is filled with muddy breakdown. Even more persistent than this is the problem of finding just who belongs to a carabiner or a muddy Swiss seat, and, in a club where many persons use the same brand of brake bars and carabiners, there is the oft-repeated phrase, "Are you sure it's yours? It looks like mine."

The genius of cavers is noted, (or notorious), and many answers have been suggested. Perhaps one way is the use of metal stamping dies for placing initials or names on metal equipment. This is one of the best ways, but when the carabiner looks like a mudball, it is hard to read the name on its side. However, blessed be the name of the Minnesota Mining and Manufacturing Company, and anyone else who makes plastic tape in colors. This is a way that usually provides cavers with a quick and ready identification of their spelunk junk.

Colored tape is the basis of the color code system of the VPI Grotto, and has been successfully used for a number of years. The plan involved is simple. First, the Grotto looked at the dealer's rack of brightly colored tape, and just listed available colors. Then, with much thought, prayer, and agony of soul, the cavers chose colors in various permutations from the list of basic colors, and applied to the secretary for a "patent" on their combination. Anyone who has paid his dues, either as a trainee or voting member, has the right to create and use exclusively a particular color code. As long as a code is not being used by some other member, there is no question as to whom a carabiner or Swiss seat belongs, if it has the bright colored tape on it. Any

overlap in color patterns is not usually allowed, but sometimes two people used the same code after making an agreement of some kind. The person who had the code first usually wins any contest over possession of a particular pattern.

Bob Barlow

### VPI COLOR CODE LIST

Black = bk  
Brown = br  
Blue = b

Green = g  
Orange = o  
Pink = pk

Purple = p  
Red = r  
White = w

Yellow = y  
Grey = gr

| NAME                    | COLOR   | NAME                      | COLOR     |
|-------------------------|---------|---------------------------|-----------|
| XAdmundson, Bob ✓       | r-w-r   | McCloy, Dave —            | br-y      |
| XArmstrong, Alan ✓      | bk-br   | — Hills, Bruce ✓          | b-g-b     |
| — Armstrong, Bill ✓     | bk-w-b  | +Morgan, Ed ✓             | g         |
| — Barlow, Bob —         | y       | OMoritz, Phil —           | bk-r-y    |
| +Berge, Karl ✓          | r-y-b   | — Nelson, Jan ✓           | plaid     |
| XByrd, Bruce ✓          | r-g-bk  | ? O'Meara, Jack ✓         | w-r-w     |
| XClark, Roy —           | b-bk-r  | XPark, Bill ✓             | r-y-bk    |
| — Clifford, Mike ✓      | br-g    | XParrott, Dale ✓          | bk        |
| — Critzer, Sarah ✓      | b-b-w   | +Peduzzi, John ✓          | b-w       |
| XDavis, Glen —          | bk-g-bk | — Perkins, Doug ✓         | bk-w-r    |
| +Dawson, Jim "Moose" ✓  | w-b-w   | — Peterson, Russ ✓        | b         |
| XDay, Ed ✓              | r-g     | XPick, Terry and Arabia — | r-br-b    |
| XDouty, Bill ✓          | y-gr-r  | — Roehr, Tom ✓            | r-o-r     |
| OEddy, Carl ✓           | o       | +Schnarrs, Pete ✓         | r-w-b     |
| — Ellenfield, Craig ✓   | g-w-b   | XSkaggs, Gary —           | w-bk-r    |
| — Frieders, Mike ✓      | y-r-y   | XStevens, Henry ✓         | r-br      |
| — Good, Karen (Boots) ✓ | pk-o    | OThorne, Wes ✓            | bk        |
| +Hall, Steve ✓          | r       | +Vigour, Tom ✓            | g-w-g-w-g |
| — Harmon, Winston ✓     | p-o-br  | OWeber, Sandy ✓           | b-bk-y    |
| — Harrison, Gene ✓      | g-r-g   | — Whittemore, Annie ✓     | r-g       |
| OHeitz, Linda —         | g       | — Whittemore, R. E. ✓     | w-bk-w    |
| XHuttlinger, "T" ✓      | pk      | XWhite, Chris ✓           | b-y-b     |
| XHixon, Linda ✓         | br-w    | — Wright, Danny ✓         | g-r-b     |
| XKayes, Mike ✓          | b-g-w   | XYeatts, Doug +           | w-y-w     |
| OKeat, Jack —           | y-bk    | OXolton, Dave —           | o-g-o     |
| — Klein, Dan ✓          | p-p-bk  |                           |           |
| — Laffoon, Don ✓        | br-w-r  |                           |           |
| — Lewis, Bob —          | w-y-b   |                           |           |
| XLee, Cletus ✓          | b-b-w   |                           |           |
| +Laud, Ed ✓             | b-r-b   |                           |           |

This list is current for Winter Quarter, 1969 as of 15 January.

