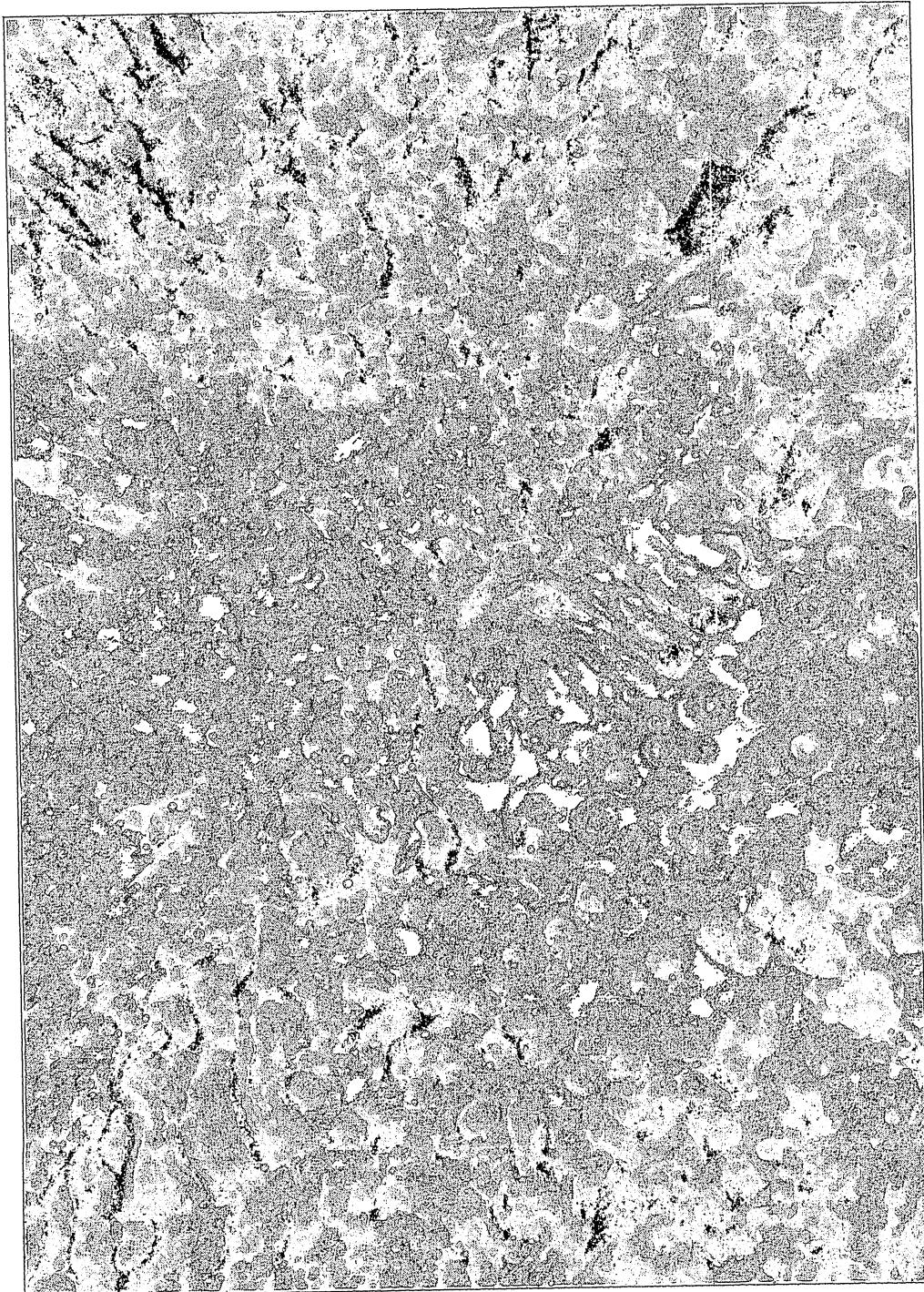


The Tech Troglobyte



Fall '98

The Tech Troglodyte

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

Fall Semester, 1998

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A Carbide Lamp Tip

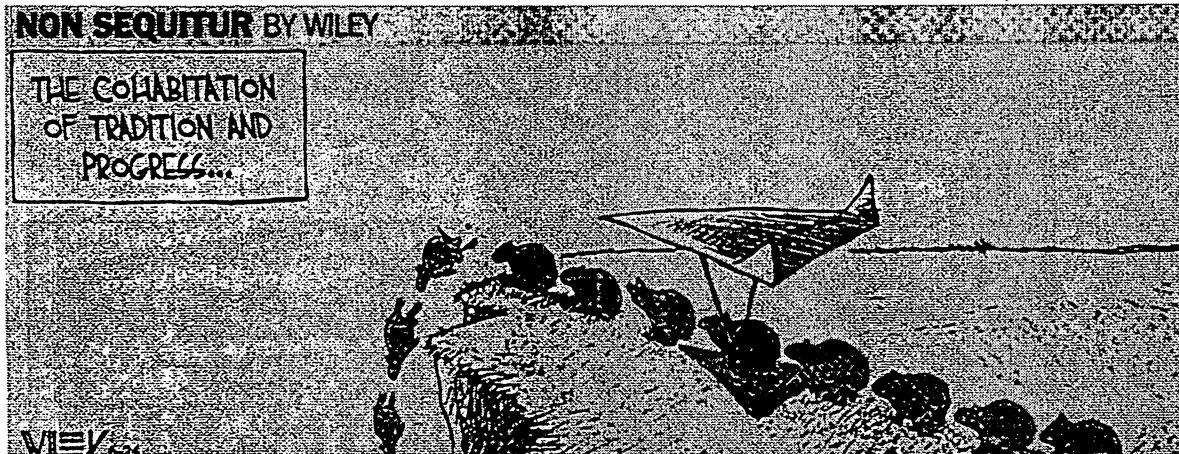
by Walt Pirie

Ever find your burner tip so clogged that even the tip cleaner won't penetrate it? There's a product I've found that solves the problem so it's not necessary to buy a new tip. It's called Lime-a-Way and is available at the supermarket. It usually works with a one-hour soaking, although one stubborn tip took overnight.

That's right, it won't help you in a cave, but you aren't likely to need it there if you remember to check your

lamp before leaving for the trip. This usually only happens when your lamp sits for a week (or weeks) between trips and totally dries out. The gunk can really harden then.

And while you're at it, if you use your lamp bottom to soak it in, it'll also do a good job of clearing out that hardened carbide sludge in the bottom.



The Stay High Pole Trip Adventure

by Amanda Stiles

It all started out with a phone call. I could hear Chris talking on the phone, "No way am I going; there is absolutely NO WAY. Well, you could ask Amanda but she never caves." So I got the phone. "Hey, do you want to go on a pole trip to Stay High tomorrow?" asks Steve Wells. A pole trip, what's that?

A pole trip involves carrying five foot metal sections of a gigantic pole through the cave so you get even more tired than usual. "You carry these metal pieces through the cave and set them up so you can check out a really cool high lead in the cave," Steve says glibly. "What time would we be back? Three in the afternoon? That's not bad". I hear a snort from Chris. "What, he said 3:00! Ok, sure I'll go, see y'all tomorrow!"

How exciting, checking out a lead that no one has been to before. Virgin passage, it could go anywhere, a new 10 miles of cave, a brand new entrance, a newly discovered species of bat... fame and fortune at my fingertips. Well, maybe not, but it would still be interesting.

I showed up the next morning at Signout and surveyed my companions and the equipment we were taking with us. Steve and Steve, Joe Thompson, Danny Zo and I. Perfect. Five people for five sections of pole. The equipment pile was impressive: ropes, a cable ladder, rock hammer, survey tape, bolt kit, lots of webbing and carabiners, and of course the five sections of pole. We divied up the equipment, got into cars, and headed for the cave.

It wasn't long before we arrived at the cave. We all got changed into our cave clothes and boots and fired up our carbide lights. Since I had the lightest pack, I picked up the rock hammer and survey tape and stuffed them in. I carried the cable ladder and my section of pole. Hmm, much more stuff than usual; this should make caving that much more interesting.

The rappel into Stay High is a little scary because you need to step over a hole part of the way down. If you fell in, it wouldn't be so bad, you'd just have some trouble getting out again. So stepping over this place (especially with a large metal pole attached to my side) I got a little nervous. Unfortunately, my lamp got even more nervous, jumped off my head, and kamikazied into the drop. "NO!" I cried, distraught for my faithful little carbide light. At this point my Petzel (being offended, I assume) refused to turn on. Hmm, this was a fairly bad situation. Hadn't I heard something about "three sources of light"? Maybe situations like these were reasons why. "LePera," I called meekly.

"What's going on down there? Are you down yet?"
"I carled my lamp." Did I hear a sigh? I could have sworn I heard a sigh.

"Alright, stay on the ledge, I'm coming."

Shortly thereafter a brave carbide lamp rescue was enacted and harmony restored. Unfortunately, the Petzel still refused to turn on until supplied with new batteries. Batteries with a name more like Energizer as opposed to Wades special AA's.

The trip passed...and passed...and passed....

Finally we were almost at the place to set up the pole. Boy was I glad, because I was exhausted. This would provide some much needed rest. "Ok we're going to be going over a really pretty rimstone pool. There's nothing underneath it so you can't fall onto it because you'll break it." I could hear Steve [Which one? Never mind; they're both the same. -Ed.] up ahead explaining what to do. It was my turn to go across and I listened to the explanation.

"All you have to do is straddle the pool, then sort of do a one armed push-up as you bring your legs across and another one armed push-up to get the rest of you across." One armed WHATS?! I felt resigned to the fact that I would destroy the pretty formation. Fighting this urge, I made the attempt to get across without crashing through. Thankfully I succeeded. Looking at it from the other direction, it was very pretty. A long ledge about an inch thick and filled with water. Underneath was nothing.

Arriving at the lead, you could see a dark hole about 25 feet in the air. We began putting the pole together. You slide the pieces together and then screw in two bolts to hold them together. With some effort the pole was placed up in the air, leaning against the wall with the top just poking into the virgin passage. Steve Wells was first to climb the cable ladder to the passage. I belayed him to such comforting comments as, "You know, if he falls you're going to be pulled into the pole. The pole will crumple and Steve, the pole and ladder will all fall on top of you." Luckily he got to the top of the ladder safely and negotiated the scary lip off of the ladder to go explore the passage.

"It dies after a few feet" he called down and began his descent. He reached the bottom, belay off, much to my relief. "Do you want to climb?" he asked me. No, of course I didn't want to climb up the ladder. If you just tap the pole, the whole apparatus crumples. I was afraid of ladders. The passage didn't go anywhere anyway. Its was cold in there and I wanted to go home.

"Sure." I tied in to the belay rope and began the ascent of the cable ladder. Filled with dread I felt myself spinning closer and closer to the pole. Inevitably I would touch it and the precarious setup would come crashing around my ears. Later I realized it wasn't nearly as precarious as I thought, but at the time it seemed quite terrifying. I climbed to the top, the pole

wavering on and off of the stone ledge. I poked my head up. "Nope, doesn't go anywhere, I'm coming down." I headed down the ladder and was relieved to feel solid ground beneath my feet. LePera climbed the ladder after me and then we began to pack up the equipment.

Heading out we went through a slimy crawl which somehow had seemed only half so bad on the way in. I pushed and struggled, but somehow the cable ladder and my pack seemed cemented in the mud. Eventually I wiggled through, but not without discovering that neither yelling at the pack nor explaining why it should move would cause the pack to budge.

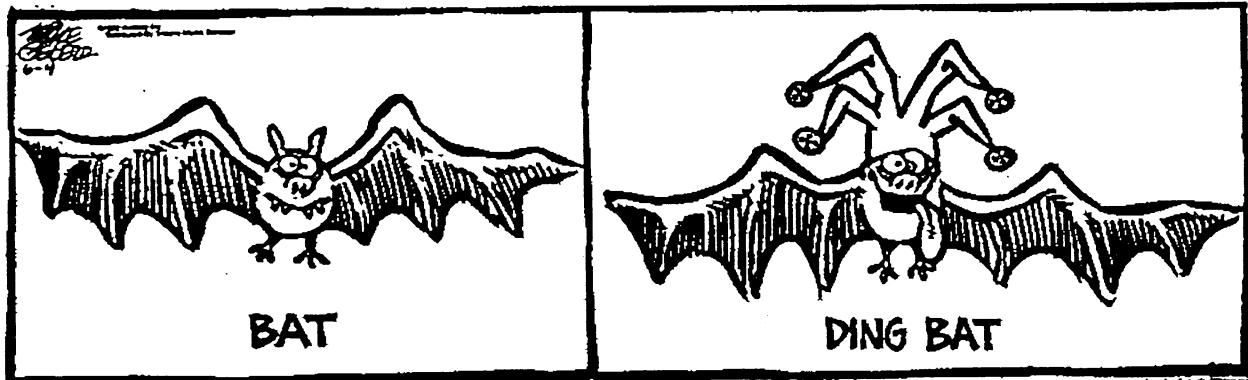
Everything seemed more difficult on the way out. I was cold and tired. Rather than carefully negotiate the waterfall climb, I chose to climb straight up it. Rather than avoid the stream, I sloshed on through. The words "I'm never going caving again, I'm never going caving again. I hate caving." echoed through my head.

"You and Danny doing ok?" asked Steve.

Two nods and cheerful smiles were his reply. I wondered if Danny was having the same thoughts I was.

Finally we reached the dreaded self belay climb out. I'd been to Stay High once before and remembered how hard it had been, hanging on with one hand while trying to push my helical up the rope with the other. I was going to stay in the cave tonight; good thing I had my granola bars. Luckily, this time I had brought an ascender with me. To my surprise, the ascender made the climb out a breeze. Suddenly I was out of the cave. Suddenly caving didn't seem so bad after all.

We headed back to the cars. Joe handed out Fosters, and much to my surprise everyone started socializing (why do people DO that?). I guzzled my beer, hoping that everyone would get the hint. Instead I just got sort of dizzy and stopped minding the fact that it was taking a while to leave. We finally headed back to town and signout. I headed home and tumbled into bed with the satisfied feeling that I had survived my most difficult cave trip yet.



Cartoon submission by Amanda Stiles.

Tawney's Survey!!!

by Matt Stec

I awoke early one Saturday morning in September, still buzzing from the previous night's Speleo-seminar, only to realize that today was the day. The day I'd been waiting for since I'd started caving. I had finally broken into the group of real cavers: the surveyors. Oh yeah. And where was I to go on my first trip? To the nether regions of Tawney's, the legendary cave of Giles County.

The cave has been traversed many times, but few people have experienced the cave in all its glory, and the former surveyors ignored a lead thinking that it didn't go. Cavers later learned that this was not the case, and the Seashore was discovered but never mapped. Thus, the first assignment of the newly formed Giles County Cave Survey team was to finish the process. We were to map this most wonderful area of the cave.

I was excited to be surveying, but caving is always enjoyable with wonderful friends. On this beautiful day I was to head underground with Joel Bergstein, the trainee who first convinced me to begin caving, and Matt Burnett, a member and highly skilled surveyor. Matt had actually done a large amount of surveying in another, more obscure cave, Starnes. A three-man survey team is apparently the most efficient group, allowing one person to handle a lead tape (measuring distance between survey points), one to take measurements, and one to sketch the passage and record data. Our trip was complete.

I met Matt at the Owen's Food Court at around 10:00 a.m. or so, and we headed over to Smythe to meet up with some new trainees and Joel. While at Smythe, Matt began an in-depth discussion on the use of the Brunton, a surveying instrument that measures both azimuth and inclination/declination through the use of a compass-type gauge. While this instrument takes some getting used to, Matt was such a wonderful instructor; Joel and I learned to make near perfect measurements in only a few minutes.

However, though we were both very competent, only one of us could take on the awesome responsibility that comes with the Brunton. It was decided that we would have a small, but fierce, competition to see whose measurements came closest to Matt's. I think the test would have been much more effective had Matt not picked a magnetic post to use as a survey point (which threw the measurements off by at least 90 degrees), but my numbers were closer, so I was given the Brunton for the remainder of the trip. It was an honor I did not take lightly.

We finally got to head out to the cave, after a quick stop at Signout and Wades, of course. We were motivated to get underground as soon as possible because we had approximately one hundred or so feet to survey, and we expected it to take some time. So we got ready, ate lunch, and went into the cave. I won't detail the things

to see in Tawney's, as words can't do them justice; one truly must experience the cave to appreciate its beauty.

We sped to the back of the cave where the survey was to take place. I was having trouble with my light, though, so I was a little slower. I finally got to the back after fixing my lamp, and we went through a small canyon-type section that led to a pinch. We got through it, though it involved a weird bend up and was not the most comfortable of experiences. Luckily, I dropped the trowel I had in my pack down a nasty little drop, so we got to wait around while that was retrieved.

I won't bore you with the dialogue that my minor accident brought about. Let's just say that our trip leader wasn't too happy. But we all knew that beyond this inconvenience was the Promised Land of Tawney's. We forged ahead.

For those of you who don't know the passage right before the Seashore, it is a beautiful place to spend hours and hours. The way you can sit in knee-deep, sticky small clay mud is wonderful. The experience of having your boot sucked off your feet by some gurgling beast underneath is not one to miss. This is where we were to begin surveying. How exciting.

Joel jumped to attention, not complaining a bit. Good ol' Joel, you can always count on him to be chipper. He scouted out two good survey points in just under 20 minutes, I believe. I think we measured a total of six feet between the two and then it was my turn with the measurements. Meanwhile, Matt went off to a corner of the small room we were in and sat. He was very trusting in my ability to call out the proper numbers.

It's very different measuring in a dark cave than it is outside. Angles have to be proper to use the mirror and levels have to be right, and all this has to be done while keeping your light source out of the way, but still providing light to read. It was rough, definitely a challenge, but I rose to the occasion and, after many harsh words were thrown to and from every member of our survey team, I took those measurements. Joel then picked another point.

We thought he was getting really good at it, having already picked two others. After probably 30-plus minutes trying to get measurements at this new point, Matt realized that the point went around a corner, thereby making the mirror on the Brunton ineffective. A few more words were exchanged. Communication is good.

We found another point, and determined that Matt was in a better position to take the measurements. So we let him. Little did we know Matt would actually tear down half the wall in the room in order to get a 4-foot shot, but cave alteration is sometimes necessary to really see everything. Besides, he's a member; he knows what he's doing. After more words were exchanged regarding the condition of the Brunton, we got the shot. At this point

we've spent approximately two or so hours in the mud. After cramming all three of us into a tight little area for about 20 more minutes, the majority of those with Matt on my legs, we determined that it would be wise to turn around; we were getting cold. Besides, we meant to survey 100 feet, and we got eleven done. Well, that's 11%. And that's good. That's 11% more than would have been surveyed had we not gone.

Forget about the fact that we quickly realized that the place we stopped surveying was where we were supposed to start. That's not important. Just focus on the eleven feet we did get done. For the sake of everyone else in the club though, we decided not to tell them how

much we had surveyed; we didn't want to seem pretentious. So we headed back out. Very quickly. And that's about it.

I'm excited about the opportunities to go back. I really expect that we'll find something interesting back there. I'm thinking booming virgin passage and 90-foot pits and large waterfalls. Yeah, Tawney's definitely has a lot to offer.

Hmm... I just reread Steve LePera's trip report in the Trainee Trog and he mentioned beverages. I didn't get any beverages...

The Frog System Revisited

article and drawings by Allison Barth

A little while ago, I decided I wanted a climbing system that was faster than knots but still affordable, so I set out to build a Frog system. It seemed easier to use and quicker on-rope. Little did I know what I was getting into. I asked around to find out what materials I would need, how the Frog worked and how to assemble it, and no one could give me a straight forward answer. Paul Hess published an article on building the Frog system in the 92-93 Trog, but that can be difficult to find, so for all of you out there interested in building a Frog system who want a straightforward plan, here is what I have discovered.

The Frog system was originally developed for European caving; the philosophy there is that bolts should be placed at a rub point so the attached rope can hang freely instead of padding the rope at a rub point. The Frog gave European cavers a mechanical system that enabled the climber to be efficient and easily and safely pass bolts, or rebelay's. The Frog has become more popular in the United States because it is cheaper than a Rope-walker, but still more efficient than Prussiks. My Frog system cost around \$185.

There are many advantages to the Frog climbing system. It is very lightweight and compact for a mechanical system. This comes in handy when you don't have a lot of room in your pack (you know, because of all the ice-cube trays). The Frog is quick and easy to attach to the rope and ideal for use with rebelay's and change-overs. With practice, the system allows you to down climb easily. Because the Frog's two attachment points are both at or above the users center of gravity. It would be nearly impossible to be flipped upside down in a "heel-hang" or upside down should an ascender fail.

The Frog is also good for those of you who are interested in a mechanical system but may not be proportioned well enough to use a chest plate with a rope walker comfortably. The Frog can be more comfortable and suited to your shape. And it costs around \$150 less than a ropewalker.

The Frog is not always the most wonderful system for climbing, though. The motion incurred when climbing with the Frog system causes a lot of bouncing. This stresses the rope and rig points more than other systems and can cause the rope to abrade. Also, the Frog only has two points of attachment to the rope. It is preferable to have three points of attachment on-rope for redundancy. If the system is not adjusted properly, it can quickly tire the upper body. This could make you one very unhappy caver on a long climb. If climbing drops greater than 300 feet, a Rope-walker may make life easier. Of course, this depends on your level of fitness and machismo: "When I was a trainee, I climbed el Sotano...hand over hand, and I liked it!"

There are four basic steps when building a Frog system. The first is determining what you want to do with your system and how much you can afford to pay for it. This will help determine what equipment you will need. Next, you will need to purchase the equipment. The third step is actually building the system. Lastly, you must refine the system for optimum performance.

What follows is basically a step-by-step analysis of building a Frog system. Please keep in mind that this is just one way to build a Frog system. I am by no means an expert with the Frog, so it is a really good idea to ask around. See if anyone has anything to add, or can tell you the pros and cons to building this system as this or any other way.

Step 1: What Can You Afford?

The Frog system consists of five basic parts: the seat harness, the chest harness, the foot loop, two ascenders, and the cow's tail. You can buy all of these parts from vendors, but that can get pretty expensive and you may not always have the time to drive several hours to your favorite vendor to buy a cow's tail and foot loop. Chest harnesses, cow's tails, and foot loops purchased from a vendor usually have extras to make them more comfortable and easier to use...for a price. But these extras are not necessary and you can make your own for much less money.

Step 2: What You Will Need

Quantity	Item	Comments
1	Seat harness with a low attachment point	I recommend buying one of these since making one for a Frog can be difficult and may not be as safe.
1	Full size mallion rapide half round	
15-20	9 mm to 11 mm rope feet	
10 feet	6 mm cord	
12 feet	½ inch webbing or super tape	
1	½ inch metal buckle	
2	Non-locking carabiners	You can also use locking carabiners.
1	Chest ascender	A Croll is ideal.
1	Top ascender	
1	Large oval quick link	
1	Small (non-life rated) quick link	optional

You should wet all webbing and rope and allow to air dry out of sunlight several times before starting to build your system. The nylon will shrink and according to the '97-'98 New Member Issue of the Trog will stabilize the elasticity of the rope and tighten the sheath over the inner core to prevent dirt from penetrating to the inner core of the rope. Also, if you pre-shrink the ropes, you will not have to worry about re-tying and adjusting your system after it gets wet in a cave.

Step Three: Building Your System

The Seat Harness

The first, and often most expensive component is the seat harness. The harness should be a "sit" harness with a low attachment point. A low attachment point allows the Frogger to be more efficient and get a longer climbing distance with each motion. A Petzl Fractio, Petzl Super Avanti, a diaper harness, or harnesses of a similar design are preferred. Black Diamond Bod Harnesses and other "belay loop" harnesses are not recommended because of their higher attachment points.

You can tie or sew your own seat, but it is not recommended for safety reasons, and also because it might not work as well with the system.

Figure 1 shows the difference between seats with low and high attachment points. Delta H shows the difference in the amount of rope that can be traveled in one motion.

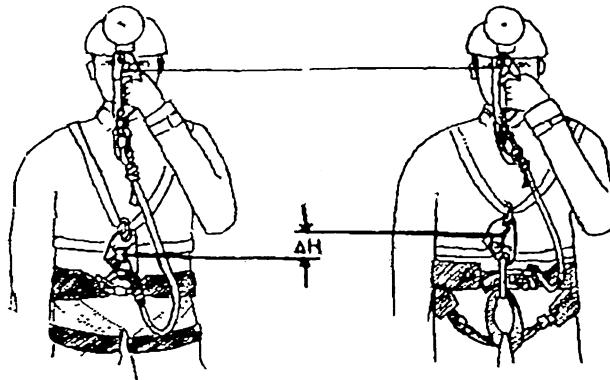


Figure 1: Seat Attachment Points

Chest Ascender

You will need a chest ascender, preferably one that will lie flat against your chest when you are wearing it. According to Nylon Highway No. 34, the Petzl Croll ascender was built for this purpose and is therefore recommended as your chest ascender. The Croll costs around \$35.

The Chest Ascender

The chest harness can be bought for approximately \$10-12 or built from webbing and a few screw links. The purpose of the chest harness is to keep the chest ascender close to the body and to pull the chest ascender cleanly up the rope when the climber stands in the foot loop. It also keeps the climbers body close to the rope for more efficient climbing. When the chest harness is

worn, it should be so tight that the Frogger cannot stand upright and is hunched over.

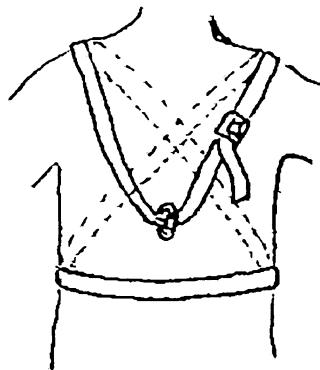


Figure 2: Back of the Chest Harness

Alternatively you can make your chest harness by doing the following. Tie the 1/2" webbing onto one end of the buckle using a water knot. If you know how to sew webbing, you can sew the webbing onto the buckle instead. Thread the webbing around your body as shown in Figure 2 and thread the end through the buckle for fit. Remember

that while you are wearing the harness on rope, it should be as tight as possible, but while walking around in the cave you may want to keep your harness looser so it is more comfortable. Cut off the excess webbing keeping this in mind. You should leave at least a six inch tail.

You can either thread the chest harness through the top hole of the chest ascender or attach the chest harness to the chest ascender using a small quick link is shown above.

The Cow's Tail

The cow's tail consists of a pair of safety cords that are attached to the seat harness. The cow's tail is designed to be a life-supporting safety backup in the event your chest ascender should fail, so it should be constructed of rope 9 mm or larger in diameter. One cow's tail should be longer than the other. The longer cow's tail is attached to the top ascender and used when climbing. The shorter cow's tail is used to pass rebelay's and will stay clipped to your harness and out of the way most of the time.

To make a cow's tail, take the 9 mm rope and tie a figure eight on a bight at one end. Tie another figure eight on a bight (or a butterfly knot) close (about 6 inches) to the first figure eight knot. Tie a third figure eight about 16 to 18 inches from the last knot. You will now need to put on your seat harness and clip the middle figure eight knot to the mallion rapide half round. Clip a non-locking carabiner into each of the remaining figure eight knots. The carabiner attached to the shorter cow's tail should just barely reach your chin. The carabiner on the longer cow's tail should hook over

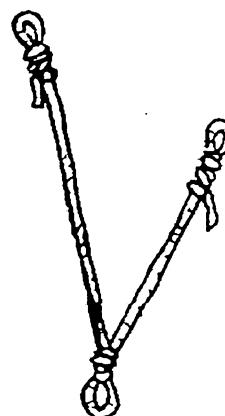


Figure 3: The Cow's Tails

the bridge of your nose. Adjust the cow's tail until these lengths are correct. Load the cow's tail so that all of the knots tighten and make sure the lengths are again correct. Cut off the excess rope. The cow's tail should look like Figure 3.

The Top Ascender

You will need to purchase a top ascender. There are many different types of top ascenders out there, such as Petzl Basics, Petzl Ascensions, Jumars, and many others. All are acceptable. You should purchase one according to which you find most comfortable and easy to use.

The Foot Loop

The foot loop is attached to your top ascender via a quick link. Although you bear your weight on the foot loop, it is not a lifesaving device so you can use a smaller diameter rope to make it and save some space. The foot loop probably take the most adjusting. There are three basic types of foot loops; the single foot loop, the double foot loop and the double sling foot loop.

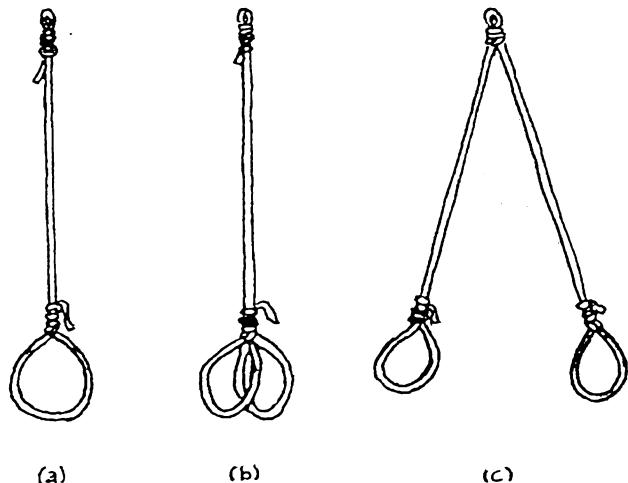


Figure 4: Three Types of Foot Loop

The Single Foot Loop (a)

Tie a figure eight on a bight in the end of the 6 mm cord. A few feet down, tie another figure eight on a bight. Leave a loop large enough to put both of your feet through while wearing your cave boots. The top figure eight should be attached to the top ascender via a large oval screw link. When both feet are in the foot loop and the ascender is raised vertically, the cam of the top ascender should be just above the cam of the chest ascender. Adjust the foot loop until this length is correct.

The Double Foot Loop (b)

Tie a figure eight on a bight in the end of the cord as above. Tie a double figure eight (life knot) or a bowline on a bight a few feet down. There should now be two loops in the end of the foot loop. Make sure these loops are large enough so you can fit one booted foot in each loop. Adjust the length of the foot loop as described above.

The Double Sling Foot Loop (c)

Note: This foot loop will require approximately twice as much cord as the other foot loops and may take longer to adjust.

Tie a figure eight on a bight in the end of the cord large enough to fit your foot. A few feet down, tie a smaller figure eight on a bight. This figure eight will attach to your top ascender. Tie a third figure eight on a bight farther down leaving the same distance between this knot and the second knot as between the first and second knot. Make the last knot large enough to fit your foot through. This is the loop for your other foot.

Before you cut any excess rope off your foot loop, keep in mind that you will probably have to adjust the system after climbing for the first time. Leave enough extra to adjust the loop, but not so much as to interfere with climbing.

Assembling The System

Put on your seat harness and chest harness. The mallion rapide half round should be attached to the front center of your seat. If you have a Petzl Super Avanti or a Petzl Fractio, the mallion rapide half-round will be closing the seat. Put the bottom of the chest ascender through the mallion rapide. Clip the top of the chest ascender to the quick link on the chest harness. Put the cow's tail on the mallion rapide and clip a carabiner to each of the tails. Clip the carabiner on the longer cow's tail to the quick link in the top ascender. Also clip the foot loop into the quick link on the top ascender. You can clip the shorter cow's tail to your seat to keep it out of the way. You are now ready to climb.

Step Four: Fine Tuning

To make sure your system works correctly, try climbing rope out of a cave, preferably at a rope-running session. This will let you work out the bugs and work on tuning the lengths. The carabiners on the long cow's tail should reach over the bridge of your nose and the top of the carabiner on the shorter cow's tail should touch your chin. When standing up straight in the foot loop, the cam of the top ascender should be high enough so that it doesn't hit the cam of the chest ascender. Your chest harness should be tight and cause you to hunch over when tightened properly.

Tips On Climbing

As with any system, there is an efficient way to climb and an inefficient way to climb with a Frog. Here are some tips to maximize efficiency:

- Try to keep your body as vertical as possible. This will keep you from wasting energy to keep writing yourself every step.
- Do not raise your top ascender higher than eye level when climbing or you may really tire out your arms.

- Attach your pack to your harness by a cord. The pack on your back can make it difficult and tiresome to climb. If you have extra cord left over from making your foot loop, you may want to use it for this purpose. Make sure when the pack is hanging from your harness that it is hanging below your feet. It can be very annoying to climb with the pack banging against the back of your legs or your feet.
- Always inspect all gear before climbing. Make sure all quick links and mallion rapides are tightened correctly and situated where the rope will not open the gates if it runs against them.

As I said before, this is just one way to build a frog. If you are interested in knowing more, ask some Old Farts or members with Frog systems for some ideas and recommendations before starting. Happy Caving!

References:

Bussey, Bill and Peter Grant, *Nylon Highway No. 34* Chattanooga, TN, June 1991. P 6-10.

Padgett, Alan and Bruce Smith, *On Rope*, New Revised Edition, Huntsville, AL. 1996. P. 159, 173-174.

The Tech Troglyte '97-'98 New Member Issue, p.27.

Grotto Grapevine

by A.I. Cartwright

CONVENTION AND FIELD CAMP

Once again Sandy Knapp got the club involved in a huge project. This summer it was the pre-convention Field Camp held at the Bat Ranch. Around fifteen people from other states spent the weekend caving and relaxing before heading to TAG. All of the visitors were pleased with the set-up which included a shower stall in the back yard. Sandy did a great job of organizing.

A few VPI cavers who went to Convention went pit bouncing with one of the guests, another guest has since contacted VPI just to say hello.

Only a handful of club members made the TAG convention this year, but VPI managed to come home with some rope-running prizes. Steve LePera, Jim Washington, Eileen O'Malley, and Ray Sira participated in the medley, landing a second-place finish. (Okay, so there were only two grottos racing.) Steve placed in the top four for men's 400-meter mechanical, and Eileen won first place in the women's 100-meter sit-stand. (While Steve had actual competition, Eileen was a lone participant.)

OTR

This year was the first year of the Sivtac Reunion (also known as ATR [alternative], No-TR, and OTR-lite), a splinter group of former OTR attendees. The gathering was held close enough to the Dailey site to allow visitors to pass between the groups. Highlights of the weekend were Spotty Dog Rapier's rambunctious four-wheeling (they say his cruiser got louder and slower each time up the hill) and the fire on the river. As tradition deems, the More Wine Party took place on Sunday afternoon leading to more than a few tipsy campers.

Suzie Warren and Ko Takimizawa road their bicycles to the Sivtac Reunion from Blacksburg. It took them two days and two sore butts, but they made it.

Jerry Redder camped at Sivtac and biked to the OTR site for a visit. He was excited when he noted a posted list of Known Troublemakers, but disappointed when he couldn't find his name on it. Jerry and many Elvis Grotto members bicycled to OTR but left just a few hours later. Philip Balister biked over, too, but despite much effort the cavers at OTR couldn't get him to leave with the others.

VPI launched a major push for participation in the contests and tied for second place in Overall Grotto Partic-

ipation. This included rope running, surveying, trivia, and beer guzzling. Club members took home several first, second, and third place awards. Quite a feat for a grotto which many OTR regulars didn't think would attend this year.

During the awards ceremony, the OTR chair had a slight oversight and omitted naming the grotto as each winner was called to the stage. Kirk Digby kept matters in line by calling out "Which grotto?" and sometimes "More wood!" whenever a VPI caver was announced. Rance Edwards got elected to accept all of the VPI prizes.

OFFICERS, ETC.

After much deliberation, Chris Rourke decided to postpone his college career and head back to Northern Virginia because he dearly missed his parents. He said, "I just couldn't stand the thought of Mom washing all those dishes without help."

Thus decided, he sadly relinquished his position as Vice President. Guido (Chris) Garguilo quickly abandoned his post as Secretary and was voted in as Vice Prez. Allison Barth stepped in as Secretary. Jessica Dorr remains President and the Treasurer goes without saying.

There was quite a boon of new members as Rourke tried to shovel as many trainees as possible through the trainee program before his departure from town. The Yeagle (Andy), Matt Stec, Joel "The Hair" Bergstein, Amanda Stiles ("Huh?"), Mike McCavoy, and Joe ("I'm gonna have to kill you for that.") Thompson rose to the challenge. Remember, these are the upcoming officers. Does that scare anyone else?



Getting Signed Off for Changeover
in Full Python Gear

EXTRA ⚡ Roanoke Times & World-News, Thursday, Nov. 10, 1994

Cavers aren't as stupid as they look

COMINGS AND GOINGS

Amy Johnson met up with Carl Bern in Idaho just long enough to take a job in Denver, Colorado. Will Carl be following her?

Allison Dineen is moving to Florida after December, hoping for a job with Disney World. She leaves an opening at Steve Wells' House o' Cavers.

Shannon Bircham moved out to the West Coast right after OTR. Now she's in the same state as her boyfriend.

Dave Warren's company shipped him to California. Is it sunny in California caves?

Several people we thought we finally got rid of are moving back to town. Ko Takimizawa sparked the trend of going back-to-school last semester and will be followed by Spotty Dog Rapier and possibly Jake Brown. Suzie Warren returns to continue her fine Virginia Tech education as well.

ELECTRONIC INSULTS

Much bitterness circulated on the club listserv as long-time buddies Steve LePera and Wil Orndorff called it quits on their friendship. Said Wil, "I just can't pretend to like that son-of-a-bitch any longer." Angry words were exchanged on the listserv until Philip Balister, Ruler of the List, kicked them off.

The duo then scheduled a caving "duel to the death" for late December to put an end to the dispute. Steve claimed that "only one of us will come out alive." However the pitiful pleas of his wife and kids prevailed, and Wil bowed out from the competition.

HALLOWEEN PARTY



Steve vs. Steve

Attendance was low at this year's Halloween Party, but those who showed had as much fun as ever. Cartoons, comic strips, and foreign skits came to life at the Bat Ranch. The Scooby Doo crew arrived with Doug Bruce as

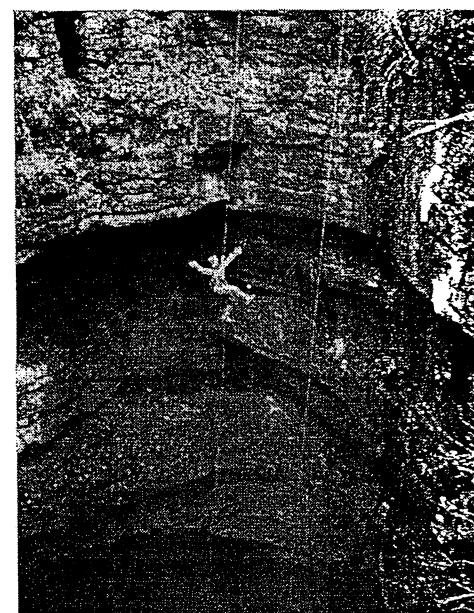
Fred, Sue Setzler as Daphne, Zenah Ornorff as Velma, Mike³ Horne as Shaggy, and of course T.J. Ornorff as Scooby. Steve & Steve became Spy vs. Spy and tossed bombs at each other all night. Matt Burnett, Matt Stec, Andy Yeagle, and Joel Bergstein came as a Monty Python skit, but most people didn't notice they'd dressed for the party. (Don't they always look dorky?)



The Monty Python-wannabe Players

THE HAMS HAVE IT

The number of amateur radio operators in the club is increasing dramatically, this time with Philip Balister as the major instigator. Rumors suggest that he's planning a coupe of the club membership test to make all of the ques-



Sandy Knapp Enjoying Neversink in TAG
(No, this trip isn't mentioned. I just think it's a great photo.)

tions ham-related. Says Philip, "I can't understand why having your ham license isn't a membership requirement by now."

Actually, his current project with Craig Ferguson and Ko Takimizawa involves building a system of cave radios. Adding radio-assisted surface locations will improve the accuracy of future cave surveys.

CHRISTMAS IN MEXICO

Once again VPI cavers shirked family responsibilities and spent Christmas and New Years in Mexico. The group totalled one truck and then bounced El Sotano de Barro just days later. Be sure to catch the next *Trog* which will reveal all of the pictures and scandalous tales. (And ladies, guard your belly button!)

UPCOMING BANQUET

This year's Banquet will be held in the usual place on the usual Saturday. Special features are the VPI vs. Sivtac rope running contest and the home brew contest. Dust off your gear and make your favorite beverage get you more than just drunk.

On the Lighter Side

by Joel "The Hair" Bergstein

"Ugh!" was the first thought in my mind the morning of my first survey trip. Matt Burnett, Matt Stec and I were planning to survey a bit of unmapped passage in Tawney's.

Most people think of Tawney's as a nice trainee cave. Boy Scout trips often peruse its passageways, et cetera. Few, however, are aware of the hell which awaits those who dare venture towards... THE SEASHORE!!

While it is a deceptively short passage, waiting within are tight awkward pinches, extremely dense mud, annoying crawlways, and a good bit of standing water. Needless to say, I was not looking forward to spending six to eight hours in this area.

I get up the morning of the trip, after being woken several times by Matt Burnett, about fifteen minutes before I had to meet the rest of the trip at Smythe. Neither the day nor I was happy. Feeling not quite refreshed from the few hours sleep ended and having nothing available for breakfast, I headed out the door in a foul mood. It was cold. Eventually I struggle my way to Smythe only to find that we must wait there for an hour in case there were any straggling trainees on their way to the vertical session being held at the quarry.

This was the time Burnett chose to instruct Stec and myself on the surveying methods. Here, he not only introduced us to a Brunton for the first time but said that one of us would have to be instruments. Unfortunately he wasn't kidding. Stec and I competed and I won. I got lead tape.

Eventually we made it to the Bat Ranch. With the little energy I could muster, I donned the garb of a caver: overalls with the entire rear torn out, a mud caked and torn polyester sweater, and soggy boots. I lit my lamp and snagged the tape. We headed into the cave at about 1:00 p.m.

As soon as we entered the cave the troubles began. Stec's lamp was being quite fickle this day. Approximately sixty feet from the entrance we had to stop for that to be worked out.

The travel through the tourist section to the beginning of the seashore was no more exciting than the past seven thousand trips there. When we finally reached the first pinch on the path to Hell, we were about a half hour into the cave.

It took us each about twenty minutes to push and twist

ourselves and our packs up a sticky mud slope and through the pinch. On the other side of the pinch is a thirty foot dropoff. Of course, something had to fall down there. Stec took the opportunity to drop the trowel at the appropriate time. "Clink, clank, CLUNK!" So Burnett proceeded to bitch profusely and climb down to get the trowel.

We then came upon the mud. Please allow me to explain, as this is no ordinary mud. There are many styles of mud. There is, for instance, the relatively dry mud of Links, which will actually remove other mud for your clothes as you cave. At the other extreme is the Falas room [Anyone care to tell him what it's named for? Would that even change his spelling? -Ed.] mud, which is saturated enough to accommodate standing water. Then there is the seashore mud. This mud has the consistency of taffy, the density of steel, and the adhesion of duct tape. It can and will stick to everything. This is the mud born of Hell.

We proceed to attempt a first shot. The longest straight shot down the passage is about one and a half feet. Hoping to reduce the number of shots we take it through a small side passage, getting a seven foot shot. Unfortunately, despite many attempts by both Matts, we are unable to get a straight shot from there into the main passage. Eventually we move the mud around a bit, actually just get more mud on ourselves, and are able to make a five foot shot into the main passage. We are now about four hours into the trip.

Then we reach the real pinch. We decide that the best way to take the next shot is for me, lead tape, to go through the pinch and come back head first to light the survey point. The pinch itself is not extremely tight, but it is very awkward and painful. I started into the pinch at a crawl, then made the ninety degree turn up, then the ninety degree turn left, then got stuck. I had never freaked out in a cave, not even the previous two times through this pinch, but when I tried to back out and couldn't move, I cracked. Fortunately I eventually twisted and turned enough to get back through and called the trip.

Needless to say, I was not very happy on the way out. Then I began having trouble with my lamp. Upon returning to the Bat Ranch and stripping down I was able to calm myself, but I never, NEVER want to return there to survey again. I will, but I don't want to.

Quotable Quotes

by Various Folks (caught unawares)

KD to SW: "Why is my bedroom door on delay?"

CM to SH: "Not in my ass crack!"

SH to CH: "Oh, you know it tickles."

EOM to SW: "I've gained ten pounds of LePera!"

JB to MB: "At the house I can just pay people to use their thing."

SP to JB&MB: "I thought one of you was radiating your meat."

SL to AS: "Yeah, but mine didn't barely stick and then fall out pathetically like his because it was so weak."

PB to CF: "Well that sure makes me want to run home and play with my drill."

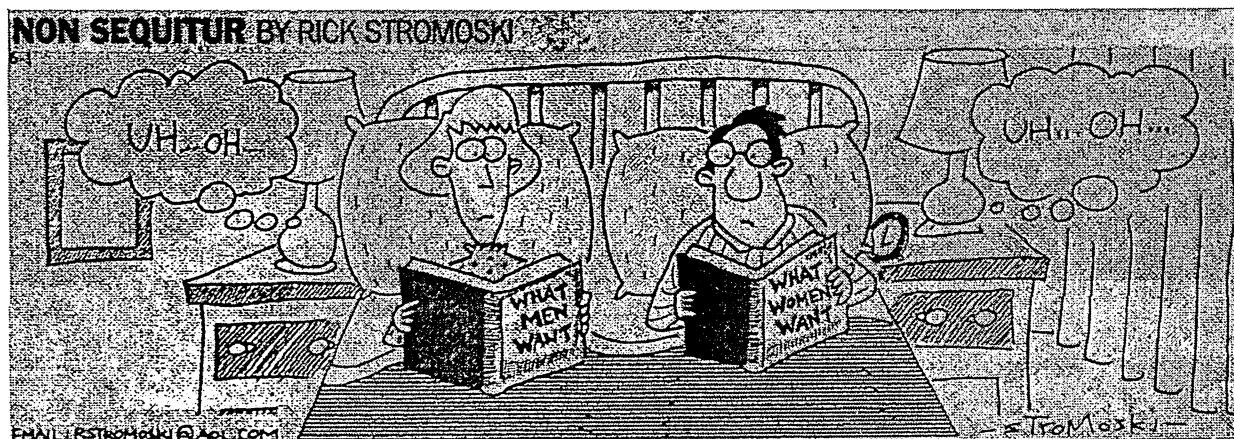
NO to crowd: "My daddy did it to my mommy!"

LB to SK: "You can do the honor of getting us off so we've each participated."

CR to MM: "Do you want to do me or should I do you?"

JB to MB: "Do we have Cox?"

NS to EOM: "I think we have every right to go in a corner and tout our tool."



Jesses'

by Steve Kark, VPI #92, first published in '68

A caver is a dirty bum,
he runs in caves all day.
For skin he has hardened scum,
and his heart is made of clay!
- S. Kark

I wish to dedicate this trip report to all those fools who, unlike us, are too smart to go caving. They have never felt the cool mud oozing down their chests, nor tasted the seven-year guano. They think a crawl is a baby walk and a lead a good singer! They have never climbed a waterfall, nor been bitten by a rabid bat; instead they walk around above, always knowing where they're at. To them I say, "May the bat of paradise drop a flea on your hair cream!" And to those of you who have tasted the sweet nectar of caving, "Go to hell" For the rest, "Bon Appetit!"

Besides my trip to Banes' where I was attacked by a lusty cricket, I suppose my most interesting trip was to Jesses' Cave. Ed Morgan tied us up and loaded us into his car and with shouts of delight he whisked us off to Jesses'.

At the cave entrance he untied us and Dave McCloy bit him in the leg. After we assured him Dave wasn't rabid, we loaded ourselves with gear and entered the cave. We changed in the entrance room, despite Bob Lewis' weird behavior. Then we pushed through the cave and began mapping where we last left off. I got out of most of the work by running around flashing my camera at the others. Ed Morgan posed for a few shots but I hardly think they'll make "Sports Illustrated."

After some "fun" climbing we came to a deep fissure that Ed had explored before. We chimneyed down, mapping all the way. At the bottom a stream passage pushed into the darkness. We followed the stream until we found a section of quite large rooms.

From here on the cave was all running, and to our great amusement it all appeared virgin. While the rest kept mapping, Dave McCloy and I walked through the big rooms completely thrilled. At what appeared to be the last big room were three leads. One was behind a huge formation; this we checked. Directly behind the formation were the most intricate rimstone dams both of us had ever seen. The crawl got a bit tight in places and even filled with water at others but from beyond we could hear a huge rumbling of a waterfall that pulled us on.

After awhile the passage appeared to get a bit bigger and by now the waterfall was a roar. Beyond, the passage (about three feet high) had a swift current of water running through it. Here we decided to go back. We never made it to the falls but shall try damn hard the next time.

The big rooms (I prefer to call them the Minotaur rooms) had quite a few leads heading off in all directions, some with a draft. We all agreed that we'd come back again some day soon. [Didja ever get back there, Steve? -Ed.]

After we had reached the entrance room and changed, we packed into Ed's car. We were all very tired and the only thing that kept us awake was the fact that Ed kept drifting into the left lane. He was so tired!

Although it was hard, I did fall asleep. When I awoke for an instant we weren't moving and all I could hear was a stream. I went back to sleep. (Ed had stopped to get a few hours rest). The next time I awoke we were very near Blacksburg. It took me a few days to get back my natural surly energy and soon I was negative as ever!



Cartoon by Mike McAvoy.

Way Back is a series of articles pulled from the club archives. The idea and this first submission came from Lawrence Britt, keeper of the club files. As for the author, Steve Kark can sometimes be found underground on Friday nights — The London Underground, that is!

My Trip to Stralies' Cave

by Andy Yeagle

In the fall of last year, I saw a unique cave and did a bit of ridge walking and bush whacking with Bill Steier, Suzie Warren, and Matheus ???.

We visited Stralies' cave. Stralies' is somewhere near Angel's Rest. It sits in a very nice valley on the Stralies' farm. The day we went was clear, sunny, and a little windy; nice for late fall.

When we got there, we talked to Mr. Stralies, the owner, for a while and then started hiking to the cave. The cave is farther down the valley. We walked along some pastures and went under a fence where we had been told. We found the entrance just a short ways up on the side of the next hill and got ready to cave.

One nice thing about short caves is that you don't need to carry nearly as much stuff. No food or vertical gear required. Other than my helmet, lamp, and cave clothes, I had water, carbide, and a piece of Wrigley's Spearmint. All in one of those gas mask bags. Bill and Matheus were going to hike instead. So Suzie and I went caving.

Just inside the entrance is a bit of a drop — maybe four feet. The passage made a small loop and at the far end was a pit. I believe Suzie said the pit was about 80 feet (give or take 80 feet). But crawls are always more fun any ways. Fortunately the rest of the cave was a dry

crawl way. So we crawled. There were some nice formations there. Mostly small stalactites and a few soda straws.

So we made it to the other side of the cave and crawled out of another exit. It was the tiniest hole I ever hope to come out of ever again. It required you to remove your helmet and hand it through. I also remember getting a face full of dirt.

After exiting the cave, we walked a few hundred yards back to the other entrance and waited for Bill and Matheus to return. We were all supposed to meet back in half an hour. Then we were off ridge walking. We hiked up a steep mountain with some thick brush in places. At the top there was a nice view. Hiked along the ridge and back down, but we didn't find any new caves.

We all had a nice walk back to the vehicles, heading up the valley, and enjoying the view of a very beautiful farm. Even if you didn't grow up in the middle of nowhere Pennsylvania, you too would be impressed.

Stralies' is unique in that it is small, but it has, I believe, six entrances. Some being suited for nothing larger than your arm. The entire trip took maybe 30 to 40 minutes. But small caves can be good fun. I also recommend Spruce Run, another cool small cave.

From the Signout compiled by the editor

VPI cavers and their guests logged in 287,124 caver hours from 4/13/98 to 12/5/98.

4/30/98	Murder Hole	Joel Bergstein, Chris Gargiulo, Kirk Digby	Confucious say: is good for lady to meet guy in park, is better for guy to park meet in lady. Hmm.
5/30/98	Starnes	Amy Johnson, Kirk Digby, Ray Sira	Connected two passages and got good and wet on the way out.
6/7/98	Baines Spring	Steve LePera, Joe Thompson, Philip Balister	Were actually in Hamilton's, and found Baines waterfall hole, but couldn't find Baines Spring.
6/11/98	New River	Matt Burnett, Brad Atkinson	It was a fun trip. Now we are going home to pick the ticks out of our asses.
7/4/98	Links	Amy Johnson, Joel Bergstein, Suzie Warren, Jessica Dorr, Bryce Bolton	The Pres. and Vice Pres. had some troubles, but the trainees helped us through... oops!
7/25/98	James	Sandy Knapp, Joe Thompson, 8 Camp Modve girls	Joe's skirt trip.
7/29/98	Clover Hollow	Matt Burnett, Amy Johnson, Joel Bergstein	Joel learned two important lessons. 1) Never throw your pack too far in front of you in a crawl. 2) Where that backpack-sized hole goes.
8/9/98	Gardner's Cave	Kirk Digby, Paul Montgomery, Scott Long	"It will only be a 1/2 hour dig."
8/13/98	Smokehole	Katherine Shelor, Jessica Dorr, Chris Gargiulo	Okay so we couldn't find anything... We were only 2/3 officers.
8/30/98	Newberry Baines	Eric Waldman, Dave Colatosti, Chris Hibshman, Kirk Digby, Charlotte Krittenden, Rick Altman, Janet Altman	Attractive females make the trip so much better.
9/27/98	Caldwell	Matt Burnett, Chris Rourke, Joel Bergstein, Andy Yeagle, Sandy Ramsey, Andy Oberhardt	A lot was accomplished in a long time.
10/3/98	Stay High	Chris Rourke, Mike McAvoy, Matt Stec, John Deighan, Cristina Faustino, & others	I don't think I got too much blood on the rope.
10/10/98	Clover Hollow	Sandy Knapp, Jerry Redder, Doug Perkins	Good mobile antique show.
10/18/98	Rehobeth Church	Chris Rourke, Kevin Rock, Amanda Stiles	Oh yeah, we're meeting Dave here. Glad we didn't go to a different cave.
11/21/98	Ellisons (TAG)	Steve Wells, Steve LePera, Sandy Knapp, Eileen O'Malley, Ray Sira, Kirk Digby, Berta Kirchman, Les Good	Steve and Steve ditched us for discount chicken.
12/5/98	Clover Hollow	Sandy Knapp, Ed Fortney, Phil Benchoff	Pighole sure looks a lot like Clover Hollow.

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