

# T.A.G. GAYOT

Sewanee Mountain Grotto  
Volume 3 Issue 1



## TAG Caver ~ Volume 3 Issue 1

**Spring 2012**

TAG Caver is the official newsletter of the Sewanee Mountain Grotto & is published on a quarterly basis. Sewanee Mountain Grotto is a non-profit internal organization of the National Speleological Society dedicated to the exploration, mapping and conservation of caves. If you are interested in joining the Sewanee Mountain Grotto we invite you to attend one of our monthly grotto meetings. Meetings are held the second Saturday of each month at various locations in the heart of TAG. A typical meeting starts with a potluck dinner at 6pm CST, followed by the meeting at 7pm. On occasion we also have special presentations following our meetings. Annual dues are \$10 per person and are due in January. Please email [sewaneemountaingrotto@caves.org](mailto:sewaneemountaingrotto@caves.org) or one of our editors for more information on the location of our next meeting. You may also visit our website at <http://www.caves.org/grotto/sewaneemountaingrotto/>

### 2011 Sewanee Mtn Grotto Officers:

Chairperson: Jason Hardy  
Vice Chair & Programs: Maureen Handler  
Treasurer: Blaine Grindle  
Secretary: Kelly Smallwood  
Member at Large: Bambi Dunlap  
Conservation Chair: Maureen Handler  
Webmaster: Will Urbanski / Tina O'Hailey  
Trip Coordinator: \_\_\_\_\_

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Email articles and photos for submissions to one of our editors. Content may include articles/photos from non members as well as other caving regions. Statements and opinions expressed in the TAG Caver do not necessarily reflect the policies or beliefs of the Sewanee Mountain Grotto or the NSS.



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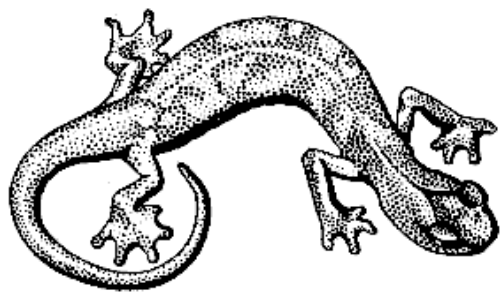
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*Design by Kelly Smallwood*

# Calendar of Upcoming Events



**April 14<sup>th</sup>** – SMG Meeting at Marty Abercrombie's house near Trenton, GA. Potluck dinner 6pm, followed by meeting at 7pm.

**April 28<sup>th</sup>** – Grotto trip to Byers Cave. Contact Mark Ostrander for info.

**May 3<sup>rd</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup>** – SERA Summer Cave Carnival 2012. Hosted by the Birmingham Grotto at the Paint Rock Valley Lodge in Alabama. Look for more information soon! For registration form go to <http://www.bhamgrotto.org/sera2012/SERA.pdf>.

**May 12<sup>th</sup>** – SMG Meeting at John Attaway's house in Sewanee, TN. Potluck dinner 6pm, followed by meeting at 7pm.

**May 25<sup>th</sup> – 28<sup>th</sup>** – 41<sup>st</sup> Kentucky Speleofest hosted by the Louisville Grotto at the Lonestar Preserve, Bonnieville, Kentucky. More info at [www.Louisville.caves.org](http://www.Louisville.caves.org).

**June 9<sup>th</sup>** – SMG Meeting at Jacob's Mountain, an SCCi Preserve. The grotto is on the calendar for the entire weekend at the preserve. Camping is encouraged and there will be cave trips to nearby caves. Potluck dinner starts at 6pm, followed by meeting at 7pm.

**June 19<sup>th</sup> – 22<sup>nd</sup>** – NSS Convention in the Greenbrier Valley of West Virginia. Visit <http://www.nss2012.com/> for registration and more information.

**July 14<sup>th</sup>** – SMG Meeting at Maureen's Campground in Sewanee, TN. Potluck dinner 6pm, followed by meeting at 7pm.

## Connect with the Grotto

If you're new to the Grotto, here are a few ways you can get to know other members:



Join us on a Grotto Trip, Survey Trip or a Cleanup.

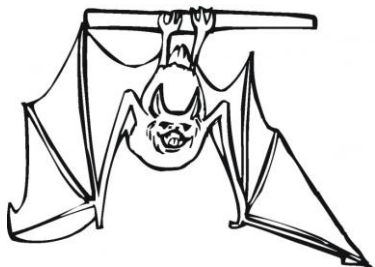


Sewanee Mountain Remailer

After you have joined the grotto, join our mailing list to keep up to date with cave trips and meetings. Go to: [http://sports.groups.yahoo.com/group/sewanee\\_mountain\\_grotto](http://sports.groups.yahoo.com/group/sewanee_mountain_grotto) and click join. Please provide your real name so we'll know who you are.



Facebook – Join our official unofficial Facebook Page to meet other area cavers and plan trips. Search for Sewanee Mountain Grotto under groups.



## Support the Grotto ~ Grotto Merchandise

The Grotto has Baseball Hats for \$15, 14oz mugs for \$5 and 3' patches for \$5. All items have our grotto logo on them. Please contact Kelly Smallwood at [rowland7840@bellsouth.net](mailto:rowland7840@bellsouth.net) to purchase any of these items.



# THE TAG SCOOP

\*Welcome new SMG members: Ruth Odonahue, Jeff Cody & ET Davis.

\*\*You can download an updated Membership List from the Yahoo Group.

\*\*\*Membership dues are \$10. You can pay at the next meeting or you can send them in via snail mail. If you are mailing your dues please send a check payable to Sewanee Mountain Grotto, 482 Wild Heart Lane, Sewanee, TN 37375. Make sure you include your contact information (name, address, phone number & email address) & your NSS number.

## Grotto Merchandise...!



The Grotto has hats featuring our logo embroidered on the front. The logo is approx 2 inches in diameter and the hats are \$15 each. Supplies are limited.



3" grotto patches featuring our logo, \$5.

14oz mugs featuring our logo in black/white. The mugs were purchased for our annual fundraising event and are \$5 each.







## Wet Cave Watershed Clean Up By Maureen Handler

The Sewanee Mountain Grotto (SMG) and the SERA Karst Task Force (SKTF) have begun a new watershed restoration project. Like the Russell Cave Watershed, the Wet Cave Watershed has been the site of historic dumping on Roarks Cove Road. SMG grotto members 'discovered' the dumps on the side of the road and approached the SKTF to assist with the restoration project.

On Saturday, January 14, the first clean-up effort began about 1.5 miles from the top of the mountain. Thirty six cavers from all over Tennessee, Alabama and Georgia convened on Roarks Cove Road. The haul system was set up by 10 AM and the volunteers began hauling debris up out of the cove. For the next 2.5 hours, tire after tire came up out of the ravine. The pile of tires just kept getting bigger and bigger. Over 150 tires were hauled out of the dump site by lunch time. It was an amazing sight.

After a lunch break, the hauling continued. Franklin County had been unable to provide a dumpster, so we just kept piling up the debris. Bag after bag of trash was hauled up out of the ravine. Large totes of old fence wire were hauled up during the afternoon as well. These would go to the scrap yard for recycling. The pile of trash just kept on growing!

I wish I could have been there when the Franklin County workers showed up to pick up the trash. I'll bet they are used to road side clean ups that gather 500 or 1000 pounds of trash. I'm guessing we removed 6 to 7 TONS of trash and tires! This was a great start to the watershed restoration.

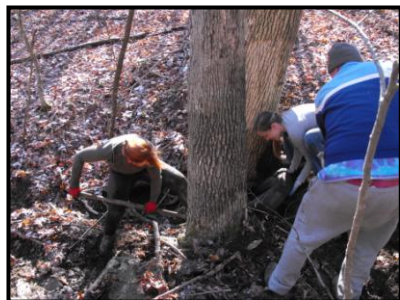
As we were de-rigging the haul system and cleaning up our equipment, a car drove by and yelled "Thank You!" In unison, about 20 volunteers chorused "You're Welcome!" It turns out, the driver of the car was the owner of Wet Cave. He was very impressed with and appreciative our efforts. All the volunteers can be very proud of the results this effort. More clean up events will be scheduled in the future.



Participants of this clean up were:

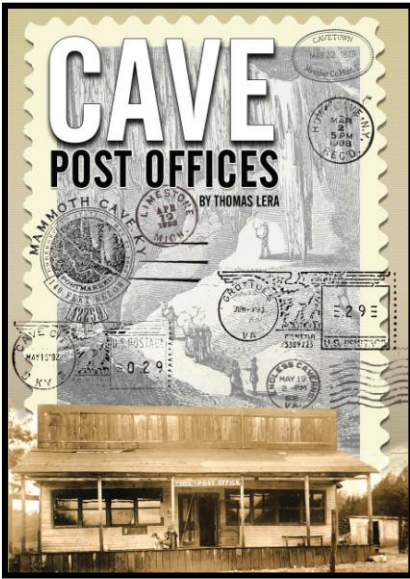
Steve Holt – Kimball, TN  
 Hazard Bryant – Birmingham, AL  
 Mark Ostrander – Madison, AL  
 Jessica Trifoso – Atlanta, GA  
 Jason Walburn – Atlanta, GA  
 Alicia Nelson – Marietta, GA  
 Jim Wilbanks – Rising Fawn, GA  
 Don Hunter – Athens, GA  
 Bambi Dunlap – Sewanee, TN  
 Stephen J. Collins – Columbia, TN  
 John Attaway – Sewanee, TN  
 Amy Smith – Knoxville, TN  
 Marty Abercrombie – Trenton, GA  
 Richard 'Woody' Woods – Sewanee, TN  
 Bonnie Creel – Sewanee, TN  
 Judy Chancellor – Huntsville, AL  
 Billy Chancellor – Huntsville, AL  
 James DeForest – Huntsville, AL  
 Tommy Royston – Huntsville, AL

Kelly Smallwood – Jasper, TN  
 Jason Hardy – Jasper, TN  
 Shari Lydy – Lilburn, GA  
 Lynn Buffkin – Roswell, GA  
 Andy Zellner – Bridgeport, AL  
 Cheryl Pratt – Oak Ridge, TN  
 Nick Stubblefield – Sewanee, TN  
 Sherron Ostrander – Madison, AL  
 Thomas Ostrander – Madison, AL  
 Teri Stephens – Clinton, TN  
 Tom Loring – Kingston, TN  
 Tina O'Hailey – South Pittsburg, TN  
 Danny O'Hailey – South Pittsburg, TN  
 William Mchiney – South Pittsburg, TN  
 Anne Grindle – Sewanee, TN  
 Blaine Grindle – Sewanee, TN  
 Maureen Handler – Sewanee, TN





## Cave Post Offices

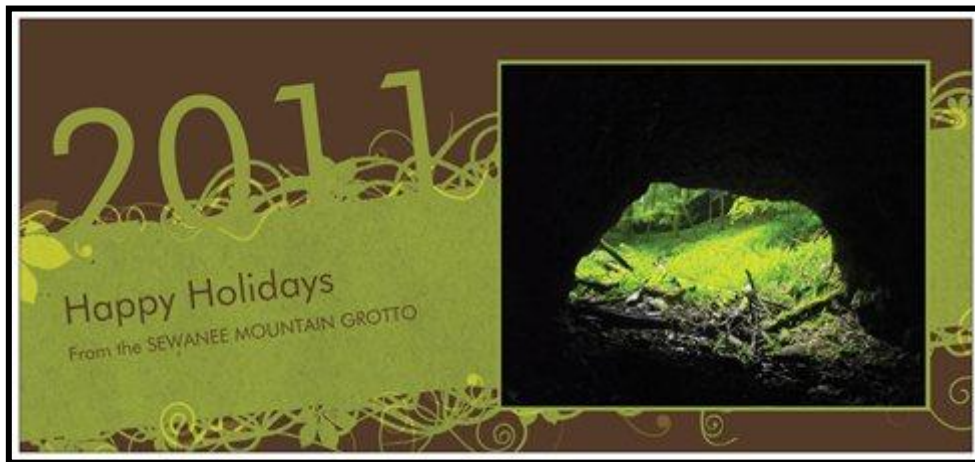


Cave Post Offices takes a look at towns named after a cave, cavern, or grotto, and their post offices. Where was the town located? From what was their name derived? When did the town's post office come into existence, and is it still operating? What types of postmarks and cancellations were used? These questions and more are answered.

The first chapter is a primer on the various types of postmarks and cancellations used by postmasters, from the early manuscript cancel, to the circle date cancel, to the slogan cancel promoting the town and the cave. Subsequent chapters contain detail listings, state by state, of towns and post offices with "cave, cavern, or grotto" in their name. Examples of postmarks and cancellations used are illustrated, and an extensive reference list is included.

The study of postal history is never complete, as new postmarks and cancellations are continually found; historians will find this book as comprehensive as current research allows. It provides a different look into a communication medium that helped shape our nation from the mid-19th century to today. It will become the guidebook to a new hobby-speleophilately.

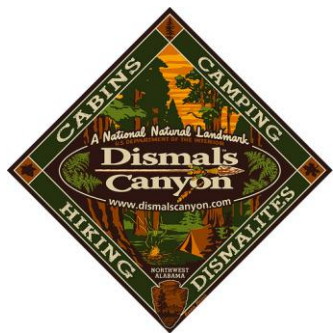
Written by Thomas Lera - ISBN: 978-0-939748-76-1 - Copyright April, 2011 - \$29.95



In December of 2011, the grotto sent out 65 Holiday Cards to landowners across the TAG Region.

We partnered with the Dogwood City Grotto & the Huntsville Grotto to combine our lists so we could all reach more landowners.





## *Noteworthy Hike in TAG*

### *Dismals Canyon Conservatory – A National Natural Landmark*

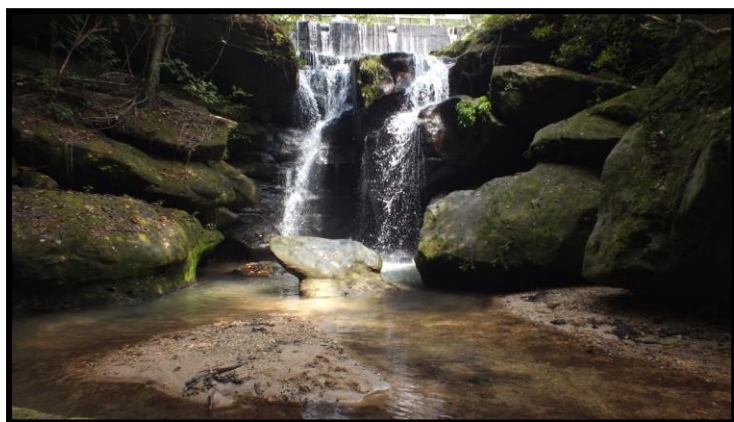
*Activities: Hiking, Photography, Nature Appreciation, Camping*

*Rating: Easy*

Located in Northwest Alabama about 30 miles west of the Sipsey Wilderness is an 85 acre Natural Conservatory that is privately owned and operated known as Dismals Canyon. It is not a state park or national park however it was designated a National Natural Landmark in 1975 by the National Natural Landmarks Program. Once a primeval swamp, this area was lifted upward during the geological events of the late Paleozoic era (roughly 300 million years ago). Over time, the force of draining waters helped to carve a canyon and gorge system punctuated throughout by dozens of sandstone sheltered grottos, waterfalls, natural bridges and giant moss covered boulders strewn about by ancient earthquakes. This natural wonder contains one of the oldest primeval forests east of the Mississippi River untouched by ax or fire.

From artifacts found among the bluff shelters, grottos and other areas it was learned that many cultures of Stone Age man were at Dismals Canyon. "Temple Cave", a bluff shelter in the canyon was once home to a tribe of Paleoamericans about 10,000 years ago. The shelter has never been excavated but Paleo spear points have been found nearby. The area has also been home to the Chickasaw and Cherokee Indians. In 1838 US troops rounded up the Chickasaw forcing them from their lands to Muscle Shoals where they embarked on the Trail of Tears. Other early settlers of Scotch-Irish descent built a water mill, cotton gin, and sawmill.

Alabama ranks as the fourth most biologically diverse state in the nation and it is on the canyon floor where you will find this undisturbed special terrain known as Dismals Canyon. It contains a rich diversity of native plant life, including a stand of old growth virgin timber composed mostly of Hemlock, Tulip Poplar, Sweet gum, Big leaf Magnolia and Beech. More than 350 different species of exotic flora have also been identified by botanists exploring the canyon. Until an ice storm destroyed one of them there were two Canadian Hemlocks towering up from the canyon floor. One of them remains and continues to look sturdy for its 360 years! It is 138' tall, 8'9" around and has a crown spread of 50'. It is the largest of its species in Alabama and thought to be one of the largest anywhere in the world. The hemlocks are in an isolated spot hundreds of miles from their normal range of growth. It is believed the twins are sole remnants of arboreal flora pushed south during the age of glaciers.



Through the heart of the canyon flows Dismals Branch, a winding stream that enters the canyon with a roar at Rainbow Falls. Rainbow Falls was once the source of power for a mill that was destroyed by a flood about 60 years ago. You can still see the holes bored in the rock which was used to support the wheel and the grinding wheel is still below the falls where it landed after the flood. The pool at the top of the falls was once used to baptize members of local churches in the 1800's. From

here following a 1.5 mile hiking trail on the canyon floor you will come to a secret world of sky reaching boulders, waterfalls, ferns and giant trees. Along the trail you will come to sites known as Phantom Falls, Pulpit



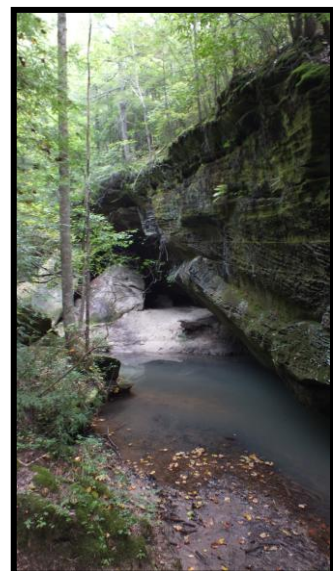
Rock, The Kitchen, Stove Pipe, Indian Head Rock, Temple Cave, Weeping Bluff, Secret Falls, Dance Hall, Fat Man's Misery and Witches Cavern. Each of these areas has their own special offerings. In 1925 the Girl Scouts built a fireplace in the kitchen which still remains today and in the Temple Cave area you can still see the depression in the large rock in front that was used for grinding corn by Native Americans. At Secret Falls within 100 feet there are 27 species of native trees.

Dismals Canyon is also home to Dismalites, the larvae stage of a unique, native, and endemic species of insect that emits a bright blue-green light to attract food, in the form of other flying insects. Dismalites require a select habitat to survive: humidity to prevent it from drying out; hanging surfaces to allow it to build sticky webs to trap the food; an adequate food supply of insects; a still atmosphere to prevent lines from tangling; and darkness to allow it to show a light. The canyon provides the perfect habitat for them. The large number of them makes the Dismals Canyon population unusual. On nights when conditions are right the rock faces look like a star filled sky. Best viewing times are May through September, although they can be seen in smaller numbers year round. If you plan on taking the Dismalite tour make sure to bring your own flashlight.

In 2006 a Hellbender (giant salamander) was also found at the canyon. It is currently the most recently encountered hellbender in Alabama, and one of only three specimens that have been found in the state in the past twenty years. It was about 2 feet in length and was donated to Auburn University. Unfortunately the hellbender was found by a dog that killed it so its exact location in the canyon was unknown.

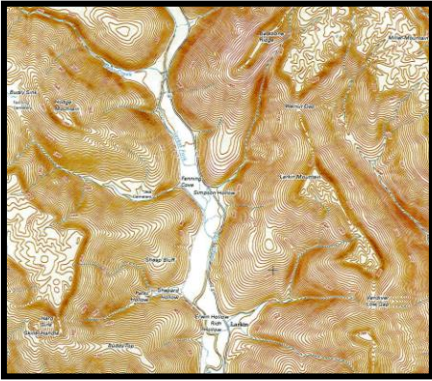
Dismals Canyon is open daily from Memorial Day to Labor Day. Weekends only during March, April, May, September, October & November. Closed December, January & February. There is a fee to enter the canyon. You can take a self guided tour of the canyon during the day or take a guided tour in the evening to see the Dismalites. Dismals Canyon is intentionally private. You will not see big road signs pointing you to the area. Because of this you will need to do your own research to find it. However once you do you will be glad you did!

If you do make the trip to Dismals Canyon another site nearby worth checking out is Natural Bridge, Alabama. Here you will find the longest Natural Bridge east of the Rockies, spanning over 127 feet.



## Doodlebug Hole (Alabama No. 195), 54 years later...

By Kelly Smallwood & Jason Hardy



Located in the northern portion of the Paint Rock River Valley in the Estill Fork quadrangle of Jackson County, Alabama is Doodlebug Hole. It is situated at an elevation of nearly 1,400' in a 30' diameter sinkhole on the south side of Hodge Mountain. While it is unknown who first discovered the pit we can certainly see why it was named as such. It resembles on a large scale an ant lion trap, also known as a doodlebug hole. The pit had long been known about by locals when on November 18<sup>th</sup>, 1956 three members from the Tullahoma Grotto of the National Speleological Society made their way to the site. They were joined by local John Henry Judge. The cavers believed that it was possible to get a 500' pitch in the soluble limestone

because it is at the 1400' contour and the chert is at the 900' contour. After hiking nearly 2 miles and climbing 700 feet of elevation they reached the entrance. Using manilla rope Daniel E. Bloxsom was the only one of the three that day to enter the pit. He noted when he literally reached the end of his rope he was on a slope which he could scramble down to the bottom. After spending 10 minutes exploring the bottom and eating a candy bar given to him by Cord Link he then spent an hour and half climbing back out of the pit. After arriving back at the top he rested and informed the others of what he encountered. He noted how magnificent the pit was and how the pit opened up so large he could not make out the far walls or see the top. At one point he said, "I was sure I would run out of rope before touching bottom and considered climbing back out". He estimated the pit to be 425' deep and thus it became the deepest known drop in Alabama.

The following year in 1957, Alabama's deepest pit was once more visited by cavers. On September 8<sup>th</sup>, 1957 Bill Cuddington, Cord Link, Bob Nygaard and Fritz Whitesell made their way up to the entrance pit. Once again only one caver descended the pit that day and it was Bill Cuddington. He spent four hours exploring Doodlebug Hole while the others set off to find nearby Horseshoe Cave. Cuddington confirmed Bloxsom's description of the pit and followed passage for about 600 feet to another 20 foot drop. At this point he down climbed the drop and estimated he was at a depth of 450'. He continued to follow passage for what he estimated to be about 2,000' following the stream. Eventually he was stopped by pooled water and he indicated the presence of a strong outgoing breeze. Cuddington felt he was only about 50 yards from the entrance to Blowing Cave, which is another cave on the ridge about a half mile southeast from Doodlebug. From his stopping point he estimated the cave was at 530' deep and that it connected to the entrance of Blowing Cave. Cuddington then made his way back out to meet the rest of his party which by this time they had returned from exploring Horseshoe Cave. Horseshoe Cave derived its name from the oval depression of its entrance. It is a vertical walled sink about 150 by 200 feet and 75 feet deep. It has a talus slope leading into a narrow winding passage anywhere from 2-6 feet wide and 20-60 feet high. They estimated that it was only about 200 yards away from Doodlebug and is at a slightly higher elevation. Due to lack of time they only explored about 500 feet of passage but it appeared that a hydrological connection exists between the two. As the party left Doodlebug Hole they tossed in smoldering logs from a fire. Once down the mountain and back at the Blowing cave entrance they noted clouds of steam/fog were blowing out with the faint smell of smoke. They speculated that if the two caves connected it would be almost





three quarters of a mile long and approximately 530 feet deep. This kept Doodlebug as the deepest pit known in Alabama at that time.

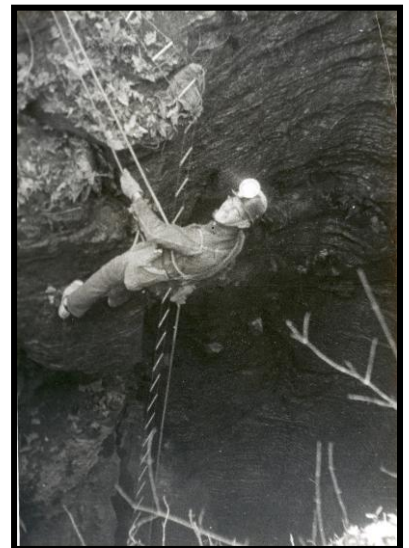
With numbers like 530 feet deep, three quarter of a mile long through trip and deepest pit in Alabama it was no wonder that cavers across the country would soon hear about and become very interested in Doodlebug Hole. In 1957 a group of cavers from the Nittany Grotto in Pennsylvania decided to make plans to explore Doodlebug. The group consisted of Tom Turner, Jay Edwards, Bill Glosser, Chuck Landis, Roy Willie, Anne Weaver, Peg Fowler and Carolyn Allison (later Landis). They were very ambitious and not only did they want to just visit Doodlebug but they decided they wanted to map it as well. Knowing what a hard task this would be living so far away they enlisted the help of some local Alabama cavers to accomplish this task. Reading in the NSS News that Cuddington had done the pit they reached out to him. Cuddington informed them of the gear they would need and they began to assemble items for their trip. They all pitched in and purchased a brand new 480' 7/16 rope and also built a 340' cable ladder long enough for the drop in Tom's engineering department lab at Pennsylvania State University. It was also recommended by Cord Link that they use a phone line for communication in the cave for helping to make the connection between Doodlebug Hole and Blowing Cave.



On December 26<sup>th</sup>, 1957 eagerly with all their gear, the group from Pennsylvania made the long drive to Alabama to start the survey and exploration of Doodlebug Hole. Not long after setting up camp near the Blowing Cave entrance the sheriff of Estill Fork and his deputy came to their camp to find out what the group was doing. The sheriff had suspected them of operating a still in the nearby shack and just couldn't believe that they had driven nearly 1,000 miles to go into a hole in the ground. After inspected their vehicles, their packs and anywhere else suspicious looking he finally left them to do what they came for.

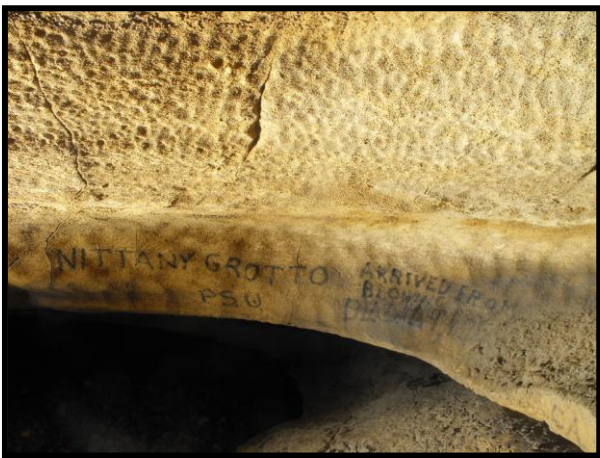
Armed with their topo map, rope, cable ladder and other gear they made their way up the mountain to the entrance of Doodlebug Hole. Along the way up Chuck mentions how impressed he is with the deep grooves in the floor of the mature forest below the entrance. "It was hard to believe the grooves, now more of a vegetated trench, were still there from where the original loggers' mules had drug logs down to the valley floor" he says. Once at the entrance Bill Glosser noted that it was a gaping maw of an entrance. Due to time, for now they would leave their gear and return the next morning to start their survey and exploration.

The next day Chuck, Jay, Bill, Roy and Tom made their way once again up the steep mountain side to the entrance of Doodlebug Hole. As the cavers geared up Chuck recalls looking straight down into the shaft and feeling terrified. He felt as if his whole body quivered and was electrified. Jay, Bill and Tom were the first to rappel in. They were using a new rappelling technique which consisted of feeding the line through several interconnected carabiners which were attached to a seat sling. They claimed this new method was comfortable and easy to control even on wet, stiff rope. They found that the new double D link rappel was great for long free rappels but was a little hard on the rope. The three guys made it down past the first ledge, which they estimated at 165' and then to the second ledge at approx another 60' down. From here they observed that the entrance shaft breaks into another parallel shaft which in turn breaks the flat ceiling of a rather large complex room. A waterfall cascades down for approximately 95 feet on the opposite wall



and other streams enter from all directions. The floor is made up of a huge breakdown pile which is broken up with small pits and side passages. They continued their rappel down the breakdown and explored downstream to a room with a balcony which they named the "rotunda room". Here they also explored a side passage that contains four waterfalls, two of which are 40 feet high. They noted the bones of a small mammal and an extremely high ceiling. They appropriately named the room "Thunder Canyon". They then made their way one by one back up the pit using the cable ladder and informed Chuck and Roy of their findings.

The next day two parties entered the cave. Roy, Chuck, Carolyn, Peg and Ann entered through the Blowing Cave entrance. They made good time and explored several thousand feet of virgin passage. Since they were running out of carbide, they put their names on the wall and returned back to the entrance. Chuck and Roy then made the hike up the mountain to the Doodlebug Hole entrance to wait for Tom and Bill. Meanwhile, Tom and Bill had entered the cave at the Doodlebug entrance to start the survey. They were using a brunton compass and a tape. The scale they were using was 1" = 20'. They mapped the shaft and then Thunder Canyon. They made their way down the Rotunda Room and began exploring the stream passage. The stream passage became very low and wet and they discovered what they believed to be the cairn placed the year before by Cuddington. They continued to crawl through the wet passage for about 100' until it opened up. During the crawl Bill remembers, "Tom looked down and since the back of his helmet was against the ceiling his carbide lamp was forced under water and was doused. Luckily he was able to get it re lit from my lamp".



Once on the other side of the crawl they discovered footprints. They became very excited and there was a lot of whooping and hollering as they knew these were the footprints of their other crew who entered at the Blowing Cave entrance. The connection had been made. They ran down the passage and came to the spot where the others had put their names on the wall only a few hours before. There were also some arrows so they assumed they must be almost out. About 2,000 feet later they weren't so sure. They had lost the footprints in a maze of interconnecting meanders and parallel passages. They passed a huge dome pit and waded what seemed to be another thousand feet of

stream passage. Finally within site was the entrance of Blowing Cave. Upon exiting the cave they barralled through the woods yelling with excitement. They had just made the first through trip through the cave system. Meanwhile, Peg and Ann were back at camp cooking hot food when they saw Bill and Tom. Chuck recalls, "Roy and I were at the Doodlebug entrance waiting to belay Tom and Bill. It was getting very cold and the sun had set. We were starting to worry when in the far distance we could hear women's voices screaming in a wild way. Since there was no other habitation anywhere near we knew it had to be "The Rover Girls". Our first thought was they were being molested, perhaps the sheriff had returned? So we ran and stumbled down through the forest in a total panic, only to find they were all celebrating the connection".

On the third and final day the rest of main passage of the cave was mapped using a compass and tape. The team knew there were a lot of side passages that they were unable to survey on this trip. Their main goal for this trip was to get a more accurate depth of the entrance pit and to have made the connection between the two entrances. For the pit their survey showed a depth of 395' deep from the surface to the bottom of the breakdown slope and an estimated length of 4,500' for the cave. This kept Doodlebug Hole at the top of the list for deep pits in Alabama.



The next morning the team packed up all their gear and headed north to Cumberland Caverns to celebrate at a New Year's Eve party. On their route home they even had time to stop and explore several other TAG caves such as Sparkman Indian, Lost Creek, and Big Room. Jay later mentions they had a wonderful time in the south even though some of their clothes and equipment that was left outside the entrance to Big Room were stolen. This continues to be a problem at this cave still today.



For three consecutive days the teams entered the cave from the Doodlebug and Blowing cave entrances. Chuck and Bill recall to me taking photos during one of those days. Chuck said, "Bill took one particular photo of Jay dropping through the ceiling of the big entrance room. I remember setting off a flash powder explosion. We thought the room was too big for flash bulbs to handle". He jokingly goes on to say, "Flash bulbs... What are they"?

Bill recalls, "I actually won an honorable mention for the photo of Tom rappelling into the big room at the bottom of the entrance shaft at the NSS convention in 1958. It was probably due more to the subject matter rather than the photography".

Doodlebug continued to hold the title of deepest known pit in Alabama and it would soon attract even more attention. Unfortunately some of that attention was not the kind we like to see as cavers. In April of 1959 a group of 13 cavers from the Birmingham Grotto decided to make a trip into the Blowing Cave entrance. They wanted to see if they too could make the connection between the two caves. The group consisted of Louis Klein, Charles Armstrong (Grotto Chair at that time), Ray Gilbert, Wilfred Smith, Frank Dansby Jr, Ronald Nelson, Harrison Steeves, Jim Davis, Steve Blackwelder, Jerry Robertson, Jay Rolling, Roy Turner and Mike Whiteside. Others had also planned to be on the trip but on their way to the cave Bill Hobson had a projecting rock puncture the oil pan of his Cadillac. He and Charles Rooker went back to town for repairs and planned to later re join the group. Tom Bennett and John Stade arrived late and did not make it in the cave with the original 13. After the group of 13 explored the cave for a few hours and not knowing where to make the connection to the Doodlebug Hole entrance they decided to head back out. Meanwhile outside and unknowingly to the cavers it had begun to rain heavily. After the group waded back to the low 3' entrance they found it completely filled with water. They quickly made the decision to turn around and head back to higher ground to get out of the water. Inside the cold, dark cave the group spent the next 24 hours huddling together and using small carbide lamps for heat.

Meanwhile on the surface outside, many hours had passed since the expected return of the cavers and their families began to worry. They phoned local authorities who then contacted the Huntsville rescue Unit to help look for the missing group. Upon arriving on scene the police and rescue unit had found the cavers parked vehicles along with Bill, Charles, Tom and John waiting on the group to exit the cave.

Bill Varnedoe recalls, "I remember the incident when the Birmingham cavers were trapped. We, the Huntsville Rescue Unit, got the call from Birmingham that the party was overdue. The caller didn't know where, only the name of the cave. I had thought it might be Doodlebug and with the rains we had I guessed what had happened. We found their cars parked near there. We could see the spring sumped and we knew there was plenty of room up the hole, so we just waited them out".

Back inside the cave while some huddled to stay warm others still wanted to see if they could make the connection. Some even took turns checking the water level at the entrance throughout the night. Charles later reported to a local newspaper, "We were never in any danger, but the damp, chilly cave was none too comfortable. No one slept during the night and everyone shivered".



It is during this time they were trapped that we suspect the group discovered what is now known as the Birmingham Dome inside the cave. Next to a hidden breakdown pile they had left markings on the wall with their carbide lights "B'hm Dome" with an arrow. The dome is so hidden that it is also suspected that until the 2011 survey not many cavers, if any, had ever seen this quite impressive area in the cave.

By Sunday morning the water at the entrance had receded enough, about 4 inches, to allow the cavers to exit. They were able to make their escape by maneuvering the low 3' entrance on their backs with their faces nearly on the ceiling sucking for air. It took them almost 3 hours for all 13 cavers to safely exit the cave. Outside they found the local authorities, rescuers and the other 4 cavers who did not make the fateful trip. The rescuers supplied the cold and tired cavers with food, water and a nice warm fire.

Local headlines in the newspapers read:

From the Washing Star, "Water Traps 13 Men In Cave For 24 Hours".

From the Birmingham Post Herald, "13 Trapped Explorers Escape Cave".

From the Huntsville Times, "13 Escape Cave after 24 hours".

From the Birmingham News, "13 Local Cave Explorers Trapped For 24 Hours".

The story was even published in the NSS News Volume 17, Number 7 (July 1959 p.104).

In September of 1959 several members from the trapped group decided to make a return trip into the entrance of Blowing Cave. This time they went armed with over 1,500' of telephone line. They carried this line in the Blowing Cave entrance with them to keep a constant check of weather conditions outside. There are no reports if the cavers were ever able to make the connection but unfortunately the telephone line still remains in the cave from their trip.



Later that year and still determined, several Nittany Grotto members that were involved with the survey two years earlier became interested in making a return trip to survey the side passages that they were previously unable to do. They had already produced a map of the main passage that is nearly 8' long and 36 inches high. Their goal this time was to survey the side passages and complete the survey in three days. On December 27<sup>th</sup>, 1959 the five members (Peg Fowler, Chuck Landis, Carolyn Allison, Jim Allison & Jay Hagenbuch) joined with 6 members of the Huntsville Grotto to finish this task. When they arrived at what was to be their base camp near the Blowing Cave entrance they decided to go ahead and hike up the mountain to find the Doodlebug Hole entrance. After 2 hours of searching they found it. By 1:30pm they had the pit rigged and were ready to send two cavers down. They used twelve 30' cable ladders and 450' half inch braided gold nylon mountain climbing rope for safety. Jack Allen and Francis McKinney were to make the decent while Chuck, Peg, Jay and Jim went back down the mountain and entered into the Blowing Cave entrance. Their goal was to meet up at the bottom of the pit inside the cave. Jack decided to descend first using a seat harness attached to the safety line and the cable ladders. Due to some difficulty of the cable ladders piling up on the first ledge it took Jack nearly an hour to reach the bottom. The plan was for Jack to send the harness back up on the safety line for Francis. After yelling for nearly 30 minutes at the top Francis decided to start down using a bowline in place of the harness. He got about



60' down and could hear Jack shouting. The Nittany group had already reached the bottom of the pit and due to time they called the survey off for the day. They left the pit rigged and made their way hungry, cold and wet back down to the shack near the Blowing Cave entrance. Later that evening 4 of the Huntsville Grotto members (Vern Reckmeyer, Merrill Amsbury, Jack Allen and Francis McKinney) left because they had to be at work the next day. Remaining were the 5 Nittany members along with Tom Sawyer and Bill Garrison of Huntsville Grotto and Fred Mauk who had arrived that afternoon from Texas.

Throughout the afternoon it had rained periodically and during the late evening it turned into a downpour. The next morning everyone awoke around 8am to find it was still raining. Everyone's spirit was dampened. They knew there was a possibility of the Blowing Cave entrance sumping because they had all heard of the trouble the Birmingham Grotto had just five months earlier. By 9am three more cavers, Dick Radford, Bob Estes and Terry Tarkington had arrived to help with the survey and for a day of caving. The majority felt the only choice was to continue their exploration through the Doodlebug Hole entrance. They knew they could make the descent but there were time concerns with everyone using the upper entrance. Dick Radford wanted to try to get through the Blowing entrance and meet up with the crew at the bottom of the pit so he went into Blowing while everyone else went up the mountain. By 11:30am Bob was ready to go first and he reached the bottom of the pit within 30 minutes. Bill started next using his rappel hammer and a harness instead of the cable ladder. He used the ½ inch braded rope that was being used as a safety line for his rappel. Almost immediately Bill experienced difficulties due to the friction on the hammer so he had to lift the rope up and help it around in order to descend. After he passed the first ledge he continued to experience difficulties. Suddenly there was no comforting wall in front of him and he was rappelling in water. His carbide lamp went out and he recalls spending a very anxious 30 seconds trying to locate a backup flashlight. After composing himself he continued his rappel and within minutes was at the bottom beside Bob. It took Bill 20 minutes to descend the pit.

Bob removed the harness and connected it along with the rappel hammer to the rope. He signaled the top and they began to pull it up. Terry was to come down third using the harness, safety line and ladders and Tom was to be fourth rappelling on the hammer same as Bill. Forty minutes later Bob and Bill saw no signs of Terry descending. They concluded that Terry had not even started down and wondered what the holdup was. They made the decision that if they did not see Terry within 30 more minutes they would either have to try and exit through the Blowing Cave entrance or try and climb back out on the ladders with only a 70' safety line they had brought down to the bottom. Judging from the volume of water they could see coming into Doodlebug they ruled out the possibility of exiting through the Blowing Cave entrance. Bill decided to make the first climb up about 30' using the cable ladders. From there he belayed Bob up. They repeated the process and made their way up to the ledge near the waterfall. Because Bob had an electric light and Bill only a carbide on his helmet Bob went up the next pitch first. It took him about 15 agonizing minutes to get up the cable ladder under the waterfall only to find their 70' safety line was too short to reach back down to Bill. After some time trying to yell back and forth with no success Bill was happy to see the original safety line lowering back into the pit. He later found out that when Bob had reached the first ledge he encountered Terry finally trying to make his way in. The long delay was because when pulling up the safety line, harness and rappel hammer it became stuck on one of the ledges taking nearly an hour and a half to get it released and back to the surface. So while they were trying to make their way out, Terry was trying to make his way in. Terry made his way down to the ledge where Bob was and then climbed back out. After arriving on the ledge Bill and Bob then pulled the ladders up to where they were. They then both made their way out of the pit. By the time they reached the top they were completely exhausted so they left the de rigging to Tom, Jay, Chuck and Jim.

When they all arrived back down to the shack near Blowing they were greeted by Dick with hot cups of coffee. Dick informed them he was able to make his way into Blowing but was stopped at a 10' flowstone climb up and had to turn back. The team had succumbed to the Cave Gods, declared defeat and decided to call off the rest of





# Doodlebug Hole Blowing Cave

JACKSON COUNTY, ALABAMA  
ALABAMA CAVE SURVEY NO. 195  
TOTAL HORIZONTAL EXTENT: 7,359 FEET  
TOTAL VERTICAL EXTENT: 450 FEET



LEICA DISTO D303, SUIVANT COMPASS & KESON FIBERGLASS TAPE  
GRACE SURVEY BY THE SEAWEE MOUNTAIN GROTTO OF THE  
NATIONAL SPELEOLOGICAL SOCIETY  
DECEMBER 4, 2010-APRIL 10, 2011

JASON HARDY  
KELLY SMALLWOOD  
ELIANE GRINDLE  
ANNE GRINDLE  
NANCY KULMBACH  
JOHN STEMBEL  
NICOLE MILLER  
MARK JOHNSON  
JIM NICHOLS  
ANDY SELLNER  
JULIE SCHENCK BROWN

CARTOGRAPHY HAND DRAWN BY JASON HARDY: NSB #56363, 2012

SPECIAL NOTE:  
DODDLEBUG HOLE WAS FIRST DESCENDED ON NOVEMBER 16<sup>TH</sup>, 1988  
BY JAMES E. BLOOMER OF THE TULALUM GROTTO OF THE NATIONAL  
SPELEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

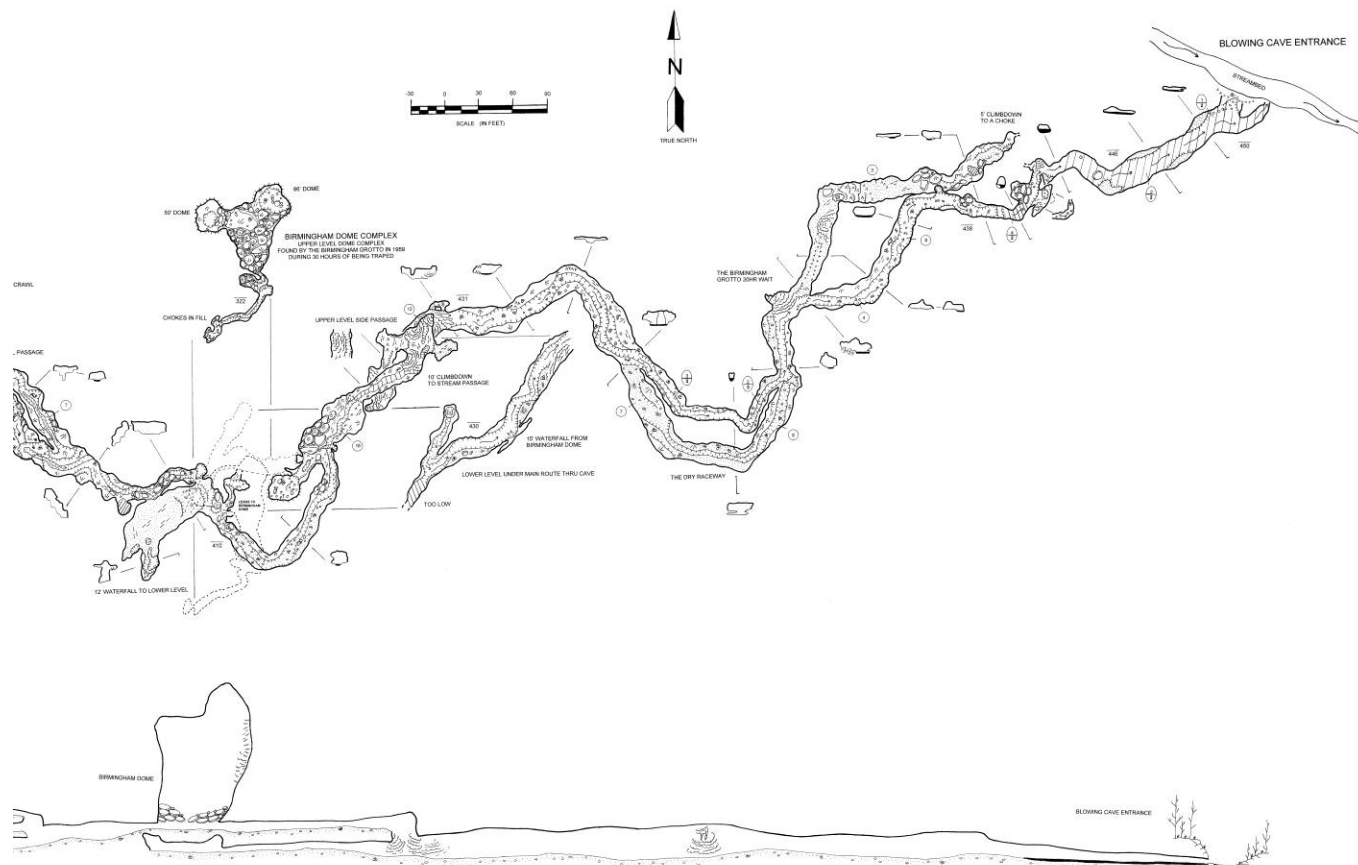
MAIN PASSAGE WAS ORIGINALLY SURVEYED BY MEMBERS OF THE  
MOUNTAIN GROTTO IN 1981 INCLUDING TIM TURNER, JAY EDWARDS,  
BILL GOSSETT, CHUCK LANDER, ROY WILKIE, ANN HESLER, PEG  
FOULDER, & CAROLINE ALLISON. A SECOND ATTEMPT WAS MADE IN 1985  
TO COMPLETE THEIR SURVEY BUT WAS UNSUCCESSFUL DUE TO RAIN.  
(IT WAS DURING THEIR FIRST SURVEY ON DECEMBER 29<sup>TH</sup>, 1987 WHEN  
THEY MADE THE FIRST CONNECTION BETWEEN DODDLEBUG HOLE &  
BLOWING CAVE)

THEIR ORIGINAL MAP WAS RE-DRAWN TO FIT ONTO STANDARD PAPER  
AND NEVER MADE IT INTO THE ALABAMA CAVE SURVEY UNTIL 2011.

MEMBERS OF THE SEAWEE MOUNTAIN GROTTO COMPLETED THE  
SURVEY 12 YEARS LATER.

## LEGEND

	PASSAGE WALLS		FLOWSTONE		CORBEL FLOOR
	CEILING HEIGHTS		SAND FLOOR		FLOOD DEBRIS
	FLOOR LEDGES		STALACTITES & STALAGMITES		PIT DEPTHS
	CEILING LEDGES		AIR SPACE OVER WATER DEPTH		DEPTH RELATIVE TO ZERO DATUM
	BREAKDOWN		WATER		
	SLOPE		DIRECTION OF WATER FLOW		
	SLOPE (steep slope to less steep)				



the survey. Dick, Bob and Terry left that night and the remaining crew packed up and headed to Tumbling Rock Cave the next morning. From there they made another trip to Cumberland Caverns where they were greeted by Roy Davis. They visited Cripps Mill Cave and saw the glow in the dark gnat larva and spent the afternoon caving with Roy in Cumberland Caverns. This brought an end to their Christmas week of caving activities in TAG. Although nothing more had been accomplished on the survey of Doodlebug they all agreed they had a wonderful time which was the main reason they were exploring anyways.

For the next few years Doodlebug continued to receive visits from cavers such as Richard Schreiber who placed the first bolts in the pit at the ledges, Rusty Mills and a few others as noted in recorded cave logs from the early 60's. Several hand drawn sketches of the main pit and cave were turned in to the Alabama Cave Survey by various cavers but none are identified as to who made the sketches. Unfortunately the 8' long map produced of the main passage by the Nittany Grotto in 1957 was never turned in to the ACS until 2011. When Surprise Pit inside Fern Cave was discovered by Bill Torode in June of 1961 Doodlebug virtually fell off the radar because it was no longer the deepest pit in Alabama. In the following years other deep pits such as Fantastic inside Ellison's Cave also began to receive much more attention. Over the next 50 years Doodlebug rarely received visitation from cavers. This was most likely due to the remote location and access issues.



*(Photo by Tom Whitehurst)*

In the summer of 2010 while looking for a cave to visit, Jason Hardy & Kelly Smallwood of the Sewanee Mountain Grotto came across the loosely drawn map of Doodlebug that was in the ACS. Perplexed by looking at the map Jason boldly said he wanted to re survey the cave. He felt it would be a good project and that the cave needed a better more accurate map. After doing some research and finding out the current landowner we realized what a small world this really can be. The owner, Kathleen, is known by several of our other grotto members Anne & Blaine Grindle and Leslie Lytle.

A few weeks later, Jason phoned Kathleen and arranged for a meeting to go over his plans with her and to obtain permission for the re survey of Doodlebug. On November 24<sup>th</sup>, 2010 Jason and Kelly drove to Sewanee, Tennessee to meet with her. We met her at her place of business and spent about an hour chatting with her. Jason showed her several of his other maps he had previously produced and we informed her all about caving and surveying. She was quite impressed. She herself had lived on the property during the early 70's in the "shack" after she purchased the land and had never been inside the cave. During the few years she lived on the property she had only ever encountered one group of cavers. She did however use the Blowing Cave entrance to cool off during the hot summer months. She was very excited about the project and graciously granted us permission to access her cave and property. She was also able to arrange contact with the neighboring landowners for us to have access through their land to hers.

Without ever having visited Doodlebug Jason eagerly began enlisting the help of other cavers for this project. We knew starting the project in the winter would prove to have its own difficulties such as hunting season, the lower entrance being sumped and the cold ripping air through the cave.

On Saturday December 4<sup>th</sup>, 2010 Jason Hardy, Kelly Smallwood, Nancy Aulenbach, John "Rocco" Stembel, Andy Zellner, Jim Nicholls and Julie Schenck Brown met near the entrance to Blowing Cave to start the re survey of Doodlebug Hole. Since it was currently hunting season in Alabama, Jason decided it would be best to split into two teams which would both enter the cave at the Doodlebug Hole entrance. As we hiked up the mountain, gaining nearly 500 feet of elevation we couldn't help but notice the neighboring land is very clearly and heavily





posted by a hunting club. Once at the top the goal was for Jason's team which consisted of him, Kelly and Nancy to survey the pit series while team 2 which consisted of Andy, Rocco, Jim and Julie to start at the bottom of the pit heading out towards Blowing Cave. Andy and Rocco had both been to Doodlebug before so Andy agreed he would enter first and take care of the rigging. He was to be followed by Rocco, Jim and then Julie. One by one the cavers began their descent into Doodlebug Hole. Jim, who was visiting from Alaska, was excited he was able to make this survey trip. It had been a while since he had done much rope work so the previous day Kelly along with two other Sewanee Mountain Grotto members (Bambi Dunlap and Anne Grindle) took him to a Southeastern Cave Conservancy preserve, South Pittsburg pit in Tennessee to freshen up his skills. When it was Jim's turn to descend he got on rope and peered into the darkness of Doodlebug Hole. He then decided he just wasn't feeling it that day so instead he opted to sit the day out and go

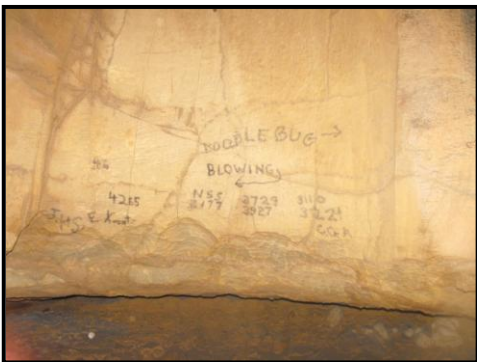
back down to camp near the Blowing Cave entrance. Julie then rappelled down and team 2 began to survey at the bottom. Next it was Jason, followed by Nancy and then Kelly. After making some sketches at the entrance, Jason made his way down into the pit to the first ledge where he and Nancy measured it at 153 feet. On this ledge there is a re belay that leads down a slope to a 99 foot drop which then takes you down to a major ledge. From this major ledge we found horizontal passage which ended up being more extensive than we anticipated. We surveyed over 500ft of passage at this level and as it turned out a majority of this area of the cave was virgin. The reason it was mostly virgin was because most groups who had previously visited the cave did not stop on this ledge. They would continue there rappels past this major ledge to the bottom of the pit series. This passage took up the rest of the day for team one.

Meanwhile, team 2 was very successful in surveying around 600ft of horizontal cave leading to an area of the cave called Thunder Canyon. Thunder Canyon is a major infeeder for the majority of the water in the cave. They finished their survey about 200ft shy of the 18ft climb down in the cave. After nearly 9 hours of surveying team 2 began to make their way back up the ropes to find team 1 still surveying in the side passage of the major ledge. Due to time we all decided it would be best to come back the next day to finish surveying on the ledge, down the rest of the pit series and to tie in the two surveys. Since we knew we would be coming back the next day we decided to leave the pits rigged. Julie and Andy decided to exit the cave thru the Doodlebug entrance while the rest of the group which consisted of Kelly, Nancy, Rocco and Jason decided to do the thru trip. As we were making the thru trip Jason asked himself, "What did I get myself into?" As it turns out, the cave is very complex and was a much bigger project than what he had expected. He knew the next few months working on this project was going to be one he would never forget and that it would definitely push him as a cartographer. He was very excited knowing this project was going to be the biggest and most difficult wet cave survey project that he had ever encountered in the two years that he had been a cartographer. He had thought to himself while caving that day that nothing could be harder than surveying Solution Rift and this was going to be a piece of cake. Boy was he wrong. This cave was going to push him to his limits and over the next 9 surveys trips he would become amazed with the dedication to the project from a few members on the Sewanee Mountain Grotto.

After we all made it out of the cave we were very happy to find our pre arranged camp dogs, Blaine & Anne Grindle, who already had a fire started for us and dinner cooking. Those of us who had made the thru trip were very wet and cold so we quickly changed clothes and warmed up by the fire. By the time we exited the cave Andy & Julie had left so those of us remaining enjoyed some of Anne's homemade vegetarian chili along with baked potatoes they had cooked in the fire. Soon after eating, Nancy and Rocco said their goodbyes and headed back to Atlanta. This left Jason, Kelly, Anne, Blaine and Jim to camp and it turned out to be a cold one. The next morning

we woke up to some snow on the ground and frozen gear. Our breakfast consisted of left overs from the previous night's dinner and some bacon. Since Julie did not have 4 wheel drive on her vehicle, Jason headed back down the mountain to pick her up along with Mark Dickinson. Once everyone was back at camp we discussed the best plans for the day. Kelly still had to make the drive back to Georgia that afternoon and Anne & Blaine needed to get back home as well. This left Jason, Julie, Jim & Mark to finish the survey in the pit that day. Around 11am they along with Anne made 500 foot elevation gain hike back up the mountain. After everyone descended the pit Anne made her way back down to pack up and take Kelly back to her car in Scottsboro. After another nearly 9 hours of surveying the team was able to finish up the survey in the side passage on the major ledge, down the rest of the pit series and tie in where team 2 had started the day before. They then made their way back out of the pit and de rigged as they went. As it turned out it was a great weekend because we finished the survey of the pit and knew that all future trips we could enter through the Blowing Cave entrance.

The next trip was on a weekday, February 1<sup>st</sup>, 2011. Jason met up with Blaine Grindle and they drove down to Alabama to meet Julie. Once at the entrance to Blowing Cave they all made their way to the back of the cave near the 18ft climb up. When the group did the thru trip during the first survey in December they had left this climb up rigged to make it easy for the next survey team to get back to the pit area. The goal for this day was to go up the climb up and pick up where team 2 had left off on December 4<sup>th</sup>. At some point on the way in the cave Julie had agitated an old ankle injury. Due to this they had to call their survey short. After nearly 8 hours of caving and surveying they had only set 7 stations for a total of 146 feet. After this trip Jason was left feeling down. He knew this was going to be a big project and he started wondering how many cavers would come back to help him with the survey.



Two days later on February 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2011 we decided to make another go at it. This time we would have two teams enter the cave at the Blowing Entrance. Team one consisted of Jason & Kelly. Our goal was to continue where the team had left off two days before. It took us nearly an hour and half of non stop caving to make our way to the 18ft climb up. After nearly 13 hours of caving and surveying we had set 31 stations for a total of 804 feet. We felt we had made a lot of progress because we had also surveyed the first major water crawl in the cave. Team two consisted of Julie and Anne & Blaine Grindle. They had decided they did

not want to make the long journey to the back of the cave so instead they started at the entrance of Blowing Cave working their way in. We knew how cold this would be and tried to persuade them differently. Because of the two entrances and the very low temps outside that day the air was ripping in thru the Blowing Cave entrance. So not only did they have to endure the extremely cold air they were also surveying the entire time in the water. After 8 survey stations for a total of 213 feet they had to call it a day. They will probably never forget that trip! That night after exiting the cave we were both very cold and wet. Jason felt his dedication to get the project completed was picking up. He knew he wanted to finish the survey before the spring rains and the possibility of the lower entrance being sumped.

The following week Jason received a phone call from Chicago caver Nicole Miller. She wanted to make a trip down to TAG and as it so happened he had already planned on making another survey trip the following weekend. On February 19<sup>th</sup>, 2011 Jason, Nicole and Blaine made their way to the entrance of Blowing Cave to get another survey trip in. They made their way back to where Jason and Kelly had left off the weekend prior and their goal was to make it to the 86 foot dome room. Jason knew this would be a big day. 40 stations were set for a total of 1,075 feet and during this trip they surveyed where the Nittany Crew made the first connection between





the two caves in 1957. Each trip was starting to get easier for Jason as he could feel his momentum picking up because he knew with each trip we were getting closer to the entrance of Blowing Cave.



On February 26th we decided to make another go at it with just the two of us. We spent nearly 12 hours in the cave and set 36 stations for a total of 746 feet. Most of the area of the cave we surveyed that day was multi level parallel passage off of the 86ft dome area. Fortunately, we only had to survey one very short water crawl this day and after this trip we knew that we only had a few more survey trips to finish the cave. That night on our hike back to the truck we could hear coyotes close by. Upon looking up on the ridge we had about ten sets of eyes looking down at us. Jason got a good laugh out of the situation while Kelly on the other hand did not think it was that funny.

The next trip was planned for March 12<sup>th</sup>, 2011. The team consisted of Jason, Kelly & Blaine. Our goal for the day was to survey the rest of the complex area of the cave and down the 15ft flowstone climb down to the major stream passage of the cave. We felt if we could make it this far we would probably only have one more survey trip to complete the survey of the cave. As we were making our way we came to an area where the lettering "Bham Dome" was written in carbide on the wall. Puzzled because there was no dome, Kelly began pushing through the large breakdown pile under a ledge. As Jason was literally writing on his survey notes, "What Dome? Do they know what a dome is?", Kelly shouted back, "I found the dome". We put down our gear and all headed up in awe to check it out. Because we were using the Sewanee Mountain Grotto Survey gear we had on us a Leica D330 Laser. We placed a shot on the ceiling to find it was nearly 100 feet. This dome complex was very large and similar to some of the other domes and pits found in the Paint Rock River Valley. We knew we were not going to be able to survey the dome on this trip so we headed back down, set a recoverable and continued on to survey to the 15ft flowstone climb down. We set 29 stations for a total of 834 feet. Our goals were met this trip but we knew with the size of the dome that it was going to take more than one more survey trip. We also suspect that the Birmingham Dome was originally discovered by several of the Birmingham Cavers who were trapped in the cave in 1959.

We had scheduled our next trip for March 26th, 2011. However, the night before we received a considerable amount of rain. We could only hope that the cave and stream would drain all the water and not be sumped but we also knew there was a real possibility it would be. We decided that we wanted to make the trip either way because it would be nice to see how much water it can take. So we made our way that morning over to the paint rock river valley with Anne & Blaine. As we drove down from the north end of the valley we quickly realized that we were not going to get into Blowing Cave that day. We were amazed at the amount of water that was pouring off of every mountain in that valley and it was probably one of the best displays of karst hydrology that we have ever seen in TAG. We made our way up the four wheel drive road to the blowing cave entrance to find it sumped. We spent some time taking photos in the cove and even did a little ridge walking above the cave. We found and dug open a small cave that did not qualify but still had a great day in one of the most remote areas of TAG.



With April upon us and the threat of heavy spring rains we decided to return the weekend of April 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> of 2011. Our April 9<sup>th</sup> trip consisted Jason, Kelly and Blaine & Anne Grindle. Our goal for the day was to survey the Birmingham Dome area and then as much of the lower stream passage in the cave as possible. Upon entering the Blowing Cave entrance we set off to survey the Birmingham Dome Complex. We were able to make our way up to the top of a major slope where the majority of the water was coming into the dome. We pushed thru some

breakdown and surveyed about 180ft of horizontal stream passage. We followed the source of water which ended in a sandstone boulder choke. With the dome now finished we made our way back down to the 15ft flowstone climb down to our last recoverable station and picked up where we left off just a few weeks earlier. We were able to make great progress and even get in a few 100ft survey shots in the main passage of the cave. Due to time constraints we had to call the survey short to make it to that night's grotto meeting. We knew we could have finished the survey that day if we only had a few more hours. We elected to come back the next morning to finish up the survey. We set 32 stations for a total of 1,072 feet.



The next morning on April 10<sup>th</sup>, 2011, which was also Jason's 30<sup>th</sup> birthday, we made our way once more with Blaine down into Fanning Cove to the entrance of Blowing Cave. We surveyed for 4 hours for a total of 26 stations for a total of 912 feet of passage. We were very pleased to be able to call end of survey. We spent the rest of the afternoon enjoying the 70 degree temperature and the copious amounts of blue bell wild flowers outside. In total the Doodlebug cave survey footage came out to be 7,359ft with a total depth of 450ft. To date this is the longest and deepest cave the Sewanee Mountain Grotto has surveyed. It has also been one of the furthest caves from where a majority of the survey team

members live. We endured 1.5 hour drives each way to the cave and had 10 survey trips where each time you came out soaked head to toe in cold water from the beginning to end of each survey trip. PVC suits, one piece thick poly under suits and wet suit tops became the normal cave attire while surveying this cave.

This project could not have been possible without the help of a few special people that should be recognized. Jason would like to thank Kathleen O'Donahue, the Shirley Family, The Langlois family, Anne and Blaine Grindle, Keson Survey Tape Company, Kelly Smallwood and last but not least the entire Sewanee Mountain Grotto and supporters of the grotto. Without all of your support this 54 year old project would have never been completed.





# GUY STOVER PIT CAVE CLEANUP: THE BIG HAUL

OCT 1-2 2011 By Brenda Shultheis



Earlier this year Gary Robertson and Rand Heazlitt contacted the owner Mr. Boone to see if they could try to get into Guy Stover pit cave. Looking for a possible connection to Binkley cave. After opening the cave and finding a connection it was decided the cave should be cleaned up. I was asked to coordinate the cleanup and I gladly accepted. The cleanup was started in April with the help of many cavers.

John and I had been working for a few months to get all the gear ready for the cleanup and the time had finally arrived for the big haul. Pulleys, rope, webbing, and bags had all been gathered and ready. We worked the whole week prior to the big haul out, making sure we had everything we needed to make it happen. The list of attendees was slim, so I started making personal phone calls, hoping to round up a few last minute cavers. I figured they couldn't say no to my girly charm. I was right: we now had at least 15 cavers coming, which was not as many as I had hoped for, but enough to get the job done.

It was the Friday before the cleanup, and we had planned to leave the house by 7:00 am. Tim McLain arrived right at 7 and we didn't get out of the driveway until 7:15. We were to meet Bill Greenwald at 7:30 in Greenwood; needless to say, we were late. On the ride down, I got a call from All Gone dumpster service, saying that they did not have the 30-yard container like we had ordered, but would bring a 20-yard one instead. This was not a problem that we were worried too much about at the time. We had to meet the dumpster people at noon, and made it, arriving at the cave just in time to see Mr. Boone pulling in at the same time, with Jim Houghton pulling in right behind us all. We spent some time talking with Cecil Boone, and waited for the dumpster to come. Sure enough, a few minutes later, here comes our dumpster. We showed him where we wanted it and then went on to the cave.

It was now time to rig the pit for the haul system. Mr. Boone stuck around and we took some pictures with him; he watched as Jim, John, Bill and Tim rigged the pit for the haul out. I was surprised how quickly it went up. It helps a lot when you have had practice! Doing the Houghton Hole cleanup made it easy not to make the same mistakes. The haul setup was done and we had time for Mr. Boone to see it work before he had to leave, and then we all said our goodbyes to him. All finished with the haul system, we headed to Rand's to bunk down for the night.

We all woke up early to grab a quick breakfast at the usual place of Fredrick's Café. The meeting time for the cleaning crew was 9 A.M. so we then headed to the church to get ready. I stayed at the church



to wait for the others, while Tim, John, Bill and Jim headed to the cave to get some last minute prep done. The first to show up at the set meeting time were Jonathan Annonson and Pat Burns. Soon, Dave Everton and Bart Nott pulled in, and the others trickled in slowly. With everyone finally there, we were able to give out assignments. John (pit boss), Pat, and Jonathan were to go in the pit to help load the haul bag on the bottom. Dave was the haul bag controller; he would man the rappel rack that kept

the bag centered in the pit. Tim (surface controller) would guide the tractor that Jim used to pull the haul bag to the surface, and would also be keeping others on task. Bob Jackson took care of the safety prussik on the main haul line. Bill Greenwald took care of the haul line, keeping it straight and coiling it up each time the bag was raised or lowered. Bart was our truck driver; he drove Jim's truck back and forth from the pit to the dumpster. Gary Roberson was the bag handler. He would unhook the bag for the haul line every trip out of the cave. John Benton, Shane Myles, and Scott Ferriell (a friend of Mr. Boone's) would unload the haul bag and load the contents into the truck, then ride back to the dumpster and unload the trash into it. So they had double duty. Way to go, guys! I was not feeling well this weekend, so I didn't do much.

The crew being all in place, we were ready to get started. After a little on the job training, the bags started come up in a flurry, with the first one up at around 10:30 and the last one at 12:30. A record pace was set, mainly because of the knowledge we gained cleaning Jim Houghton's cave. After all the trash was hauled to the surface, we took a lunch break. I had fixed some Taco soup, chips, and seven layer dip, along with ham sandwiches for those who didn't like soup. As we were eating, Brad showed up ready to go caving. After some friendly ribbing that he was over dressed for fence building from the hard working crew, Brad, Dave, and Shane went inside the cave to do some exploration and check an upstream lead.

After lunch, we started unrigging the pit. We hurried Brad and the boys down the pit and started getting things down from the trees. After that, we started on the fence. Jim had his posthole digger for his tractor, and started digging the holes for the corner posts. This made setting the fence a breeze, compared to digging them by hand. Worried about how many rocks we would encounter, Richard Newton (who donated all the fence posts) had brought a large metal rock buster, but we didn't even have to use it. Mr. Boone had given us all the fencing and barbed wire, and also gave us the metal fence posts to use in between the cedar posts which Fig (Richard) had donated. Jim had already built a gate to install (for safety reasons) with a lock. Before we knew it, the fence was done. We didn't even think that we would get that far in one day, but with some very good help, everything got completed in record time. By 6:00 P.M. we had a clean cave and a fence put up; something we had planned to get done in two days. It goes to show you that these Binkley cavers get things done.

Well, this project has been a joy to coordinate, and I have many acknowledgements and thanks to make. It's a long list, but I want to thank each one. I have gotten the chance to get to know Mr. Cecil

Boone and his family, who didn't know us from anyone, but still let us come and dig great big holes on his property. Also, Scott Ferriell (a good friend of Mr. Boone's who helps with his property and hunts on his ground) came out and helped us with the cleanup and was paying it forward. Jim Houghton also paid it forward by helping, after we helped with his cave cleanup.

I thank the many cavers who came and spent many hours bagging tons of trash in preparation for the haul day, as well as all who came and made a two-day job into one. Several organized caving groups donated money to help make this all happen: the CIG (Central Indiana Grotto) made a generous donation of \$200; the IKC (Indiana Karst Conservancy) and the BIG (Bloomington Indiana Grotto) made a donation of \$100 each. Also, Hoosier Cavers contributed \$60 which helped pay for the little extras.



Several cavers helped in different ways; Kent Koster loaned us webbing and use of his pulley. The CIG let us use some of their pulleys and vertical gear. Richard (Fig) Newton provided a timely last-minute donation and delivery of the cedar fence posts. Jim Houghton helped in many ways: he built the gate, hauled down his tractor and post hole digger, and provided nails, screws and such. Rand Heazlitt provided us a place to stay throughout the course of the project. Bob Jackson bought the lock for the gate and some staples.

A special tip of the helmet goes to the following persons (in no particular order), who came and bagged trash at the top and bottom of the cave and performed various other duties: John Shultheis, Tim McLain, Bill Greenwald, John Benton, Gary Roberson, Pat Burns, Jonathan Annonson, Bob Jackson, Dave Everton, Bart Nott, Brian Leavell, Elza Marvin, Eric Edelman, Mike Lorance, Shane Myles, Scott Ferriell, Jim Houghton, Richard Newton, Rand Heazlitt, Aaron Valandra, Todd Webb, Ty Spatta, Chris Bell, and Kevin Smith. Lastly, thanks to the ISS (Indiana Speleological Survey) for taking on this worthy project and coordinating the fundraising.



Guy Stover Pit Cave is now connected to the longest cave in Indiana (Binkley), which through this entrance will allow exploration to some of its far reaches, which even the hardest cavers of the past did not often have the chance to visit. This cave cleanup offers many benefits, one of which is a very happy cave owner who welcomes conscientious cavers. Also, it affords a better and cleaner environment to cave in, and a beautiful cave to be enjoyed by all who enter.

Once again, a good time was had by all under the sinkhole plain south of Corydon, Indiana!



## As the Grotto Turns (Trip Reports and other buffonery)

### New Year's Weekend 2011

Ah, a day off. I had been waiting for this weekend for quite some time. Christmas was finally over and we had been planning a small get together & some caving with close friends for the long New Year's weekend. I had recently chipped a tooth and it started giving me issues just before the weekend. But I was not going to let that stop me. I had a choice; I could either go to the dentist for a root canal or go to Cagle's with some cavers who were down from Pennsylvania. For me, the choice was easy. I'll suffer a bit for some caving...! Just before Lynn arrived at the house around 9:00am, I received a text from J.D. requesting to meet up an hour later as they were all tired and hung over from the day before. So Lynn and I gathered fire wood for the evening's festivities and I proceeded to take a pain pill that the dentist had given me to deal with it until after the New Year.

Lynn and I loaded up our gear in my car and since Jason didn't have to be at work until 2:45pm, he decided a quick bounce at Cagle's was a welcome stress relief for a long day ahead. So he loaded up his gear in his truck. As we were getting ready to leave, my dog Jasper had the notion she wanted to go with us. She jumped in the back of my car and there was nothing I was going to do to get her out. Finally, we were off to meet the Pennsylvania Cavers (J.D., Brian, Eric, Emily, Jeoff, Robert, Tim, Aaron and John) & Nuke who were in town for the week. We arrived at the Krystal's in Kimball and went in for some breakfast. The Pennsylvania crew & Nuke had been staying up on the mountain at Maureen's and they arrived shortly after us. We all greeted and shared a few stories before heading to the pit. As we all geared up at the parking spot, Jason and a few others headed up to start rigging the main pit.



At the parking area, as those who have been there know, there is a big dog pen that has a mixed assortment of dogs. There were a few pit pulls that seemed a little aggressive and would do anything to get out. Jasper didn't seem too interested to get out of the car but I had brought a leash for her since she had never been around a pit before. After a little petting, I put on her leash and she reluctantly got out and started the journey up the mountain with us. On the walk up to the pit, she persisted to pull ahead so I let her off the leash knowing she would stay close by. When we got to the top, Jason had the main pit rigged and was just getting ready to go down. A few of the PA cavers decided to go ahead and rig Jeep Side. The plan was to go in one and come out the other and vice versa and just have a good time. We had also noticed that another one of the neighborhood dogs, a beautiful golden retriever, had followed us up the mountain and kept us company for the day. One by one I watched the cavers descend & ascend the pits. Not being used to taking pain meds, I was still feeling a little loopy so I opted not to bounce the pit. When one of the Pennsylvania crew asked me, "Are you not going to bounce the pit?" it occurred to me. I now live only 15 minutes from here so my reply was, "No because I'd rather be safe than sorry since I was on meds". Instead I decided to enjoy the beauty of the morning, take pictures and watch everyone bounce the pits. After a short while, it was time for Jason to head back down and go to work so we all said our goodbyes to him and knew we would see him later that night.

After everyone was finished bouncing the pit, we gathered up all our gear, coiled the ropes, and headed back down the mountain. Once back at the cars the plan was to head over to South Pittsburg Pit. When I got in my car I noticed I had received a text message and that alerted Lynn to look for her phone. She couldn't find it

anywhere and feared that somehow she might have left it at the pit. As we began looking for it, we didn't want to hold up the rest of the crew, so we decided to give them the directions and coordinates to South Pittsburg Pit and let them go on while Lynn and I stayed back to look for her phone. After looking carefully through her gear pack, purse and the back of my car, her phone was nowhere to be found. I reluctantly looked at Lynn and knew that she wanted to walk back up to the pit to double check for it. As we walked back up to the pit we carefully looked along the route making sure to follow the same path we came down. We made it back up to the pit and still no phone. As we were heading down she was starting to accept that it was gone forever. Once back at the car I insisted that we go through all her gear and the car once more. There is no cell service at the parking area, so I started walking down the road to see if I could call her phone. As I turned to walk up the driveway, I heard a buzzing sound (that familiar sound of a phone on vibrate). Somehow, Lynn had placed her phone in the crevice of the trunk (you know where all the leaves get stuck) and since the phone was small and black, we never saw it. After laughing hysterically for a few minutes at the silliness of it all, we were off to meet the rest of the crew once again.

Due to time, Lynn and I had no plans on bouncing South Pittsburg pit. We just wanted to hang out with our friends while they enjoyed their day in TAG. While we hiked up the mountain, I again let Jasper off her leash to lead the way up to the pit. By the time we arrived they had already rigged two ropes into the pit, one on each side. I was not paying close attention to Jasper when all of a sudden I noticed her running towards the pit. My heart stopped as I saw her running down the slope towards the pit with curiosity and I yelled out to her, "JASPER!". Luckily I have a good dog that listens and she stomped on the breaks and headed back up the slope of the pit to safety. I immediately put her on her leash and apologized to everyone for the scare.

Lynn and I watched as each of the cavers descended over the lip. After about an hour, the sun was starting to disappear and it was getting dark. Neither Lynn nor I had actually brought a headlamp (since we didn't bring our gear), so we knew that we needed to get off the mountain and back to the car while there was still enough light. I also knew that I had other guests that were soon to arrive at my house for the evening's festivities. After the first caver ascended back up we said our goodbyes, invited them to the house later and headed down the mountain in the haze.



When we got back to the house, Jim & Rachel had already arrived. After opening some beers we sat down at the table and started telling stories and playing drinking games. Jim was the first to spill a beer, but certainly not the last. Soon Amy arrived, then Danja & her friend Scott. As Amy sat down at the table, she whipped out a can of her favorite brew (Bud Light) from her purse. We all got a good laugh and so began the evening of jokes and hilarity. I proudly taught them all how to play spoons but of course we turned it into a drinking game and they also taught me how to play the card game Asshole. After a few hours Amy was

off to stay at another friend's house and the rest of us stayed up prank texting Jason until he arrived home from work at nearly 2am. After a few more beers we all knew we had to get up early the next morning to go caving so we decided to finally get some sleep.

Saturday morning I awoke to the smell of bacon cooking in my kitchen. This is not a smell that occurs often in my kitchen as I am a vegetarian. Rachel & a few others had gotten up and decided they wanted to cook breakfast before our cave trip. It was then that they asked me, "Kelly, where is your coffee maker". They quickly

found out that Jason nor I drink coffee and we had no coffee maker. The coffee drinkers were shocked and I can't remember who, but one of them quickly ran out to the nearby convenience store to purchase some of the instant kind to save the day. They jokingly said they were going to buy us a coffee maker for a house warming gift so they could have coffee when they visited.

Soon after breakfast, Amy met us at the house as did Marty. We packed vehicles and drove over to Woodville, Alabama to meet up with Mark, Michelle, & Bruce at Joe's Pizza. The plan was to condense vehicles from here and to do the thru trip at Kennamer. After arriving at the parking spot, we all geared up and in small groups started the hike up to the upper entrance. Because of all the recent rains, we opted to rig the entrance for safety. One by one we all made it safely down into the cave. For the majority of us this was our first trip thru Kennamer. As we all made our way through the cave we all enjoyed it very much and it definitely did not disappoint. I had always heard about Moby Dick and upon seeing it for myself, it was quite a bit larger than I expected. We headed over instead of under it and continued on through the cave. After a few stops admiring the cave and some pack rocking, we all made our way out of the entry entrance and back to the vehicles covered in mud. Before heading back for dinner at Joe's Pizza, a few of us opted to enjoy a Sweet Water Happy Ending to celebrate another good adventure underground.

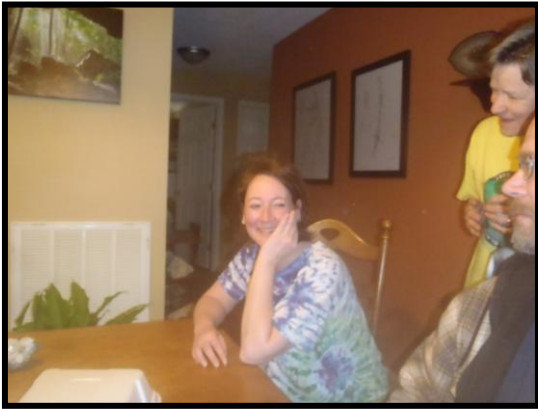


After dinner, we all headed back to mine & Jason's place for an evening of partying and hanging out to ring in the New Year. Anne & Blaine met us back at the house and we all celebrated Blaine's birthday with some home brews & more Happy Endings! Jason built a nice fire out back in our new fire pit and we all enjoyed the evening telling stories. Since half of us were Eastern time folk and the other half Central we decided to celebrate bringing in the New Year's twice. We counted down at midnight for each time zone: 10,9,8,7,6,5,4,3,2,1, HAPPY NEW YEAR...!. At some point during the evening, Jason, Jim & Mark thought it was a good idea to build

a carbide bomb. I on the other hand didn't think it was such a great idea to do it in the neighborhood. Jason spent nearly 20 minutes just looking for the garbage bags in the kitchen. Boy, you can tell who changes the trash in our house! We all got a good laugh at him not knowing where to find them so he had to opt to use an old bag that had a hole in it. Mark proceeded to tape up the hole and I quickly grabbed the can of carbide that was sitting on the table. You would have thought I stole a baby from its mother by the way the guy's reacted. Jim was after me first and then Jason and I somehow ended up on the floor wrestling over it. Obviously he won so I decided to let them have their fun and hoped the neighbors wouldn't call the cops on us. Back out by the fire we barely heard a pop as their concoction finally went off. Of course they blamed it on Jason not being able to find a good garbage bag! Next time they said. I am sure my neighbors, if they heard us, thought we were quite crazy. One by one, cavers started disappearing to bed just as a few of the Pennsylvania crew stopped by on their way back up to Cavers Paradise. A few of them had gone to Ellison's during the day to bounce Fantastic Pit. They were unable to find any fast food restaurants open on their way because it was New Year's Eve, so we fed them some leftover deer stew that had been made in the crockpot for the weekend. After hanging out by the fire for a while Jason surprisingly looked at me and said, "I have to go to bed." I was very puzzled because Jason normally outlasts everyone. I couldn't believe that I was actually staying up later than



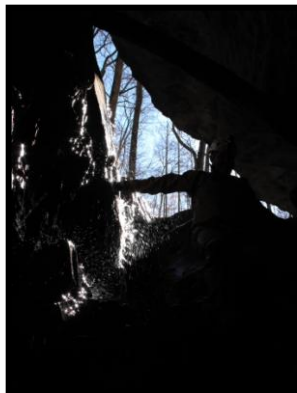
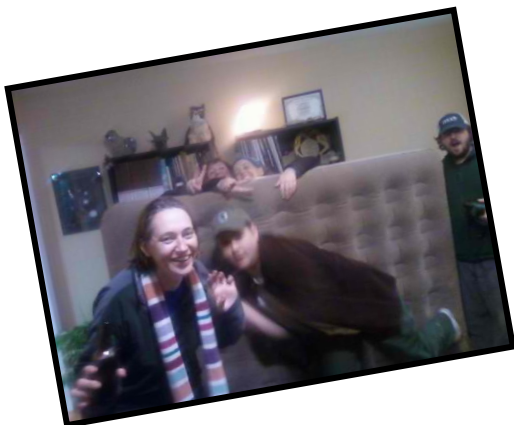
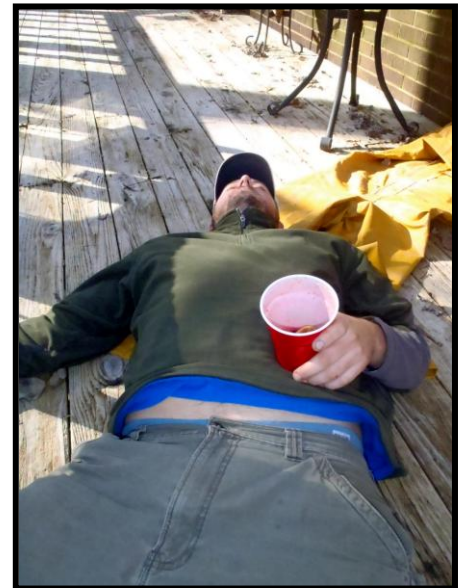
him and he was going to bed with company still awake at the house. Shortly after, those of us who were still awake said our goodbyes to the Pennsylvania crew and wished them safe travels back to PA for the next day.



The next morning I decided I would cook breakfast for everyone. By the time I was up the coffee drinkers were already making their instant brew except Jim who had already decided that hair of the dog was better than coffee. As I entered the kitchen, I heard Anne asking everyone "Who crawled into bed with me and Blaine last night?" Because it was dark she was unable to see who it was and only remembered she felt their hair and it was soft. Everyone looked at each other in bewilderment. Nobody was fessing up, so she began going around the kitchen and feeling everyone's hair. After lots of hysterical laughing and

moments remembered, it was determined that Lynn was the one that had crawled into the pallet on the floor with Anne and Blaine that evening. The laughing and discussion over the evening's misadventures continued for a while and we eventually dubbed Lynn "The Secret Sewanee Mountain Snuggler."

After breakfast, Mark, Bruce and Michelle said their good-byes and headed back to Huntsville. Shortly after, Amy, then Marty headed their respective ways as well. The only ones left were Anne, Blaine, Jim, Rachel, Lynn, myself and Jason (who was still in bed). We all decided to hang out on the back porch for a few minutes to talk about the day's plans: Anne & Blaine volleyball on the mountain and Jim & Rachel to North Carolina to pick up the kiddos. Anne had made a few bloody mary's and I distinctly remember Jim saying, "Anne, can I have another one?" Next thing we know we look over to find Jim passed out and spread eagle on the porch and this was all before noon on New Year's Day. As we laughed, joked and pointed - Jim grumbled and got up and went and sat in a chair next to Blaine at the fire. A few minutes later, they were both asleep in their chairs. Eventually Rachel was able to get Jim in the truck as they both had a long drive to North Carolina to pick up the kids who were at their grandfather's house in Ashville. Rachel kept telling Jim to use the restroom before they left because she was not going to stop every 30 minutes along the way. With that being said I went and got Jim an empty Powerade bottle and wrote Jim's Pee Bottle on it with a sharpie for their ride. Blaine, Anne and Lynn left about the same time and Jason and I spent the rest of the afternoon relaxing.



## Haggard by Anne Grindle



January 21 was one of the few cold days this winter, but it was not raining, as was predicted. Kelly, Leslie, Shari and Anne headed over to South Pittsburg, to check out Haggard Cave. We parked on Hank Lee's property, next to his giant sinkhole. Mr. Lee is a generous fellow who now has a bat sticker on a tree near where he wants cavers to park. We headed down the road for the short walk to Haggard. Anne rigged the first drop and Shari went on down and headed in to rig the second. Once all were down, we stashed vertical gear and climbed over a flowstone choke. That little chimney and slide area is one of the challenging parts of the cave. Leslie slid a bit too quickly and banged her elbow on the slick floor below...ouch! Then we were all in the haystack room, with several pretties. We all poked around and took photos, then hunted for the way into

the rest of the cave. There are lots of elephant tracks in there, because of several ways to get in. We found the tricky climb-down next to the biggest room and traversed further into Haggard. Then on through the mouse hole, past an alcove with totems. The route was familiar and Anne knew we were close to an area where she wanted to show the gals a very nice formation. Could not locate it...dang! Anne and Shari *did* find a stream passage that Anne had never seen before...it kept going, but was not getting bigger. Not sure if it was virgin passage or not. The cave is surveyed at 1500 feet in length, but there is surely more cave in there! We exited the cave and it was a pretty raw day outdoors. After piling on the dry clothes, we enjoyed a beverage and headed home. Fun trip!



Photos by Kelly Smallwood





Recently the Membership Committee within the NSS Marketing & Advertising Committee created and funded a trial membership project. They sent out eleven one year free trial memberships to individuals chosen by their peers as newer cavers that have demonstrated significant interest and activity in their grotto or regions and made worthwhile contributions as well. The experiment is to expose these new cavers to the benefits of the NSS in the hopes that when their one year free trial membership is complete they will renew and continue being NSS members. The results of this experiment will not be known until their free membership expires. The office and the membership committee will monitor these memberships to

learn if they renew or not.

We are very proud to announce that one of our own, Travis H. Houston received one of these memberships. Several of our grotto members nominated Travis for the membership and Travis recently wrote: I want to thank everyone who nominated me for the NSS membership! I received a letter in the mail today congratulating me on my new membership! It says my peers have selected me as an outstanding caver that the NSS would be proud to have as a member! Thanks for talking me up guys! ;-) Can't wait to get this new job squared away so I can get underground again!! Love you all.

Travis first came to the Sewanee Mountain Grotto as one of the band members who played for us at Pupfest. Anne took him caving and he was bitten! Since he's joined the SMG he has already visited several TAG classics such as Thunderhole, Mystery Falls & Deep Well.



## Panic Under The Mountain

By Hubert Crowell

As he lay in the tight crawl panic, frustration  
flushed and overwhelmed with humiliation,  
one power drink and hypertension ensued  
a very serious problem I did conclude.

Three hours of climbs and crawls we had come,  
two hours and two tight crawls or would he succumb,  
the five hour loop with side trips seemed like fun  
until someone calls it quits, had it, enough, done.

Could I get him through the tightest squeeze,  
placed him in the middle and prayed he would not freeze,  
removed all gear, head first feet in the air,  
all was quiet as he struggled did I hear him swear.

Gradually it opened up to an easy crawl  
as I joined him and we proceeded through the small  
Mason-Dixon passage to the Volcano Room  
as I talked to take his mind off the gloom.

One more crawl, the main room is not too distant,  
on getting out of Pettyjohn Cave he was quite insistent,  
an uphill crawl and turn over near the end  
so your body can make that awkward bend.

Through twist and turns we raced ahead  
not a word spoken, it was better left unsaid,  
When I reached entrance and climbed up in the light,  
he was no were to be found, to the car, out of sight.

## My Caving Adventure.



"Boom Boom!" The cave shook. "Splash Splash." Went the water fall. What an amazing cave. The Caves name is Splashing Wall. It was recently discovered by Kelly Smallwood, Jason Hardy, Anna Grindie, Bianca Grindie, along with me & self, Dakota Rowland. It was the most beautiful cave ever found in history. Jason Hardy is just now finishing the map on it. Splashing wall was surveyed on 11/28/11 - 1/15/12. Splashing wall was found on 10-19-11. At the end of the survey was tragic because we had to leave. But we had a great time in the Cave. Water as well as mud, creepy crullies, Bats (but don't worry, no white noise Sydnrom) (we cleaned our gear) I could go back there one million times. Splashing wall is a great place for adventures people that love caving. There is a drop deep down in the cave but its only 50 feet. This cave could be for kids that only are experienced with repelying. As well as getting dirty and wet. I would suggest kids older than 9



## Sewanee Mountain Grotto: 2011 Survey Projects

By: Julie E. Schenck Brown, NSS 30493

### Introduction

As a project oriented grotto, Sewanee Mountain Grotto is one of the most active survey and conservation organizations in the southeast. Sewanee Mountain Grotto's Psycho Survey Bitches and Our Entourage of Manly Men continued to work on survey projects throughout Tennessee and Alabama under the direction of several cartographers. This past year, we had several veteran surveyors, as well as new surveyors participate on our survey projects. This article provides a brief summary of a few of the Sewanee Mountain Grotto survey projects that I led in 2011.

### Blue Spring Cave, Tennessee

Last year I was approached by Bill Walter about surveying in TAG's longest cave. Since the 1990s, Bill Walter has been the survey project leader of Blue Spring Cave, a well known horizontal cave. With 37.207 miles surveyed since the 1990s, this has been an enormous undertaking that has involved numerous surveyors, yet Bill continues to be the driving force behind this project. The cave ranks at 42<sup>nd</sup> in the world for long caves, and as survey efforts continue throughout the cave there is still potential to see it move up the list.

Our survey objectives in Blue Spring Cave operate under Bill's direction, whether or not he is able to participate on our survey. Bill's young protégé, Clinton Elmore, has been instrumental in discovering and documenting new species of fossils, as well as leading exploration efforts in Blue Spring Cave. Clinton knows Blue Spring Cave almost as well as Bill and is an asset to navigate the further reaches of the system.

During the grotto's first survey trip into Blue Spring Cave, Clinton Elmore led Teri Stephens (Happy Bitch), Julie Uselton (Graceful Bitch) and me (Book Bitch) past Crashing Spire Plunge and onto Baghdad Breakdown. Bill had sent us our survey objectives and estimated a 6 hour traverse time each way to Baghdad Breakdown. There were a few areas that were not sketched to scale and thus this area of the map could not be updated by Jason Richards and Mike Rogers, who are producing digital and hand drawn copies of the map respectively. Our travel to Baghdad Breakdown went smoothly and as Survey Bitches, we paced ourselves to have the energy reserve for a productive survey and return trip. After all when you have a 12-14 hour round trip just to get to your survey objective, you want to make it worth the crawl. Arriving at the outlying areas of Baghdad Breakdown, we were all captivated by the sheer grandeur of these sections of the cave, as well as the intricate beauty. This is clearly an area that does not see much traffic and was quite a pleasure to survey. Our front and back shots corrected survey blunders, while Clinton documented the survey efforts, dubbing this trip "Journey to the Center of the Earth-Part I." Clinton who is an amazingly strong and talented caver is a true gentleman to survey with and thus the Bitches granted him an Entourage Name of "Our Young Stud."; without him this journey would have never been possible. Returning to the surface, 18 hours later, we all made the mistake of driving home, but vowed to return.

Despite our lengthy survey trip to the Baghdad Breakdown area of Blue Spring Cave, there were additional areas that Bill Walter wanted us to re-survey. Again, our team consisted of Happy Bitch, Graceful Bitch, Book Bitch and Our Young Stud; during part of our trip, we were joined by Marion O. Smith (The Old Goat) and Terry McClanathan, who were going to survey at Preacher's Dome. This time we not only re-surveyed areas that were not sketched to scale, but worked on a few side leads and investigated one of the most remote areas of the cave for future exploration. Surveying in this section of the cave was challenging for all the delicate formations that you must work around, but we were successful in our objectives. This trip was planned for 24 hours, but we were able to complete our survey and exploration in 21 hours. Clinton dubbed this trip, "Journey to the Center of the Earth-Part II." Rather than drive home, The Old Goat insisted that Graceful Bitch and I crash in his cave room, which is completely dark. This was a welcome change rather than trying to drive home after an exhausting 21 hour day of survey. After sleeping several hours, Graceful Bitch and I headed to Pup's house to clean for his homecoming from out west. We missed our survey partner, Pup, and declared he would have to join us on the next survey.



Focusing our attention on new survey, Bill Walter (The Legend) led Graceful Bitch, Our Young Stud, Mudpuppy and me to a section of the cave that was less than 2 hours from the entrance. Bill had a hanging survey in a meandering stream channel and advised we would need wetsuits, although he does not wear them. Following Bill's lead, I did not bring a wetsuit either. The passage was tight and with the high velocity of wind, survey conditions were miserable. We did manage to add new footage to the length of Blue Spring Cave and I pushed ahead to provide a detailed account of the passage morphology. Survey work still remains in this area of the cave.

Our next set of survey trips were also led by Bill and focused again on new survey leads. Our Young Stud joined us to free climb and set a bolt for a hand line into an upper level chamber, but had to route as he was fighting a bad cold. While Clinton was setting the bolt, The Legend, Graceful Bitch and I had to re-sketch an area for Jason Richards. The Legend gave me the old notes to verify the accuracy of the instrument readings from the initial survey; he and Graceful Bitch played a few tricks on me, but we managed to re-sketch this area before heading into an upper level area. Now it was our turn to joke around with The Legend, who is truly a joy to survey with and one of the most humble cave surveyors despite his great feats of exploration and survey. At the end of our survey, Bill amazed Graceful Bitch and me with a traverse across a huge crevasse and partially up a nearly vertical wall, an area he had partially explored but never surveyed. The Legend also treated us to a demonstration of how to body rappel, while Graceful Bitch and I opted for our racks.

The next month, Nancy Aulenbach (Famous Bitch), joined The Legend, The Old Goat, and me to return and survey across the huge 100-foot crevasse, which we dubbed "The Cataclysmic Void." While Famous Bitch and I surveyed, The Old Goat climbed up the near vertical wall and set a hand line amidst fractured rock. Climbing the rope was harrowing as boulders went careening by and we all wondered how The Legend and then The Old Goat managed to free climb this area; their love for survey and exploration that's how. Again, we added new footage to the length of Blue Spring Cave to maintain it as TAG's longest cave. Survey in Blue Spring Cave continues and anyone interested should contact Bill Walter. It has been an enjoyable project to sketch and see Jason Richard's updates of his digital map.

### **Bible Springs Cave, Tennessee**

With 3055 feet surveyed in 2010, this project was still far from over and work continued in 2011, although at a much leisurely pace. This summer, Matthew Setchfield (The British Gent) returned to our survey ranks and helped Graceful Bitch, Mudpuppy and I with a survey he dubbed "A Gentlemanly Survey." Together, we surveyed small leads and began to survey a very large formation gallery that still requires detailed sketching. During another trip, Graceful Bitch, Mudpuppy and I surveyed more side leads towards the end of the cave. We also dug and pushed a virgin lead that we dubbed "The Hot Dog Debacle." Exploring while the water conditions were low, we estimated at least 1,000 feet of stream crawl that remains to be surveyed. We also vowed to name the stream crawl, "The Paul Baggett FTS Memorial Passage." Since our push of the stream crawl, I have talked extensively with Wm Shrewsbury, a veteran explorer of Bible Springs Cave, and expect we will easily surpass a mile of survey, but plan to wait for the lower water levels of the summer.

### **The Fool's Progress: An Honest Cave, Alabama**

While visiting Scorpio Cave in February, Mark Dickinson (Mister), Graceful Bitch and I investigated a small hole that was listed on Torodes' map of Scorpio Cave as being too tight. This small surface hole was blowing air and as it was enlarged, I discovered two vertical holes that were fist sized and golf ball sized. We were able to drop rocks down the entrance pit and knew we at least had a qualifier, if we could get it dug open. Upon returning home, I asked Jon Brown about why he had never dug open this lead as he was on Torode's survey team to map Scorpio Cave. I pondered whether it was worth returning to dig, but had to go back and investigate as these small holes were blowing so much air. Mister returned with me on the first dig trip, but we still did not manage to enlarge the entrance enough to fit past a constriction. Again, I was ready to abandon hope, but Graceful Bitch was more than supportive, encouraging me to return to work on our dig on two separate occasions. Finally we had nearly cleared the entrance, but a ~200 pound sand stone boulder was

blocking safe access at the lip. I quipped we must be fools to work so hard on a dig, but rather than give up, we invited Mudpuppy to the ridge to help us dig. At Jon Brown's suggestion, we brought along a come-a-long to hoist the monolithic bolder as he reasoned that the boulder went in, so it can come out. In April, we were finally able to use the come-a-long and a Progress Capture Device to hoist the ~200 pound sandstone bolder into a position where it could be launched down the pit. I was the first one down the entrance shaft, but Mudpuppy and Graceful Bitch decided not to enter the new pit that day as they were both exhausted from digging.

In May, a final enlargement effort of the vertical entrance was accomplished and Mudpuppy, Graceful Bitch, Doug Moore (The Estrogen Bastard) and I then proceeded to survey the cave which was still mostly virgin passage. Mark Dickinson (Mister) had already given his blessing to survey and explore without him as the entrance was too tight. The cave consists of a 7 foot climb-down (hand line recommended) to a tight and awkward pit opening that is a 56-foot free drop; the vertical drop at the entrance should not be attempted by cavers who cannot descend or ascend past an 8 inch opening as a caver could easily become stuck. There are several large sandstone blocks in the ceiling that are notable after the tight squeeze, when the pit becomes a free drop. At the bottom of the entrance drop there is 75 feet of horizontal passage. Traveling in a southwest direction leads to a duck under and a 58-foot pit that is blind; a 36-foot dome is adjacent to the pit. To the northeast, a 15-foot exposed climb-up leads to an 88-foot pit which is also blind. The cave is very drippy, regardless of surface conditions. The cave was named for Edward Abbey's "The Fool's Progress: An Honest Novel" as a reflection of the discoverers lives and pursuit to open a cave that probably would have been written off if not for the constant encouragement of each other during the four dig trips.

## Alabama Pits

In addition to working on the larger survey projects, I have also enjoyed surveying a few pits in Alabama this past year including Double Dog Drop, Hill Mountain Pit, Rat Rift, Stewart's Well and Dog Collar Pit. Mark Dickinson (Mister) has been a constant survey partner on these pit surveys, but John McMacken and Angie Reim joined us for their first survey at Double Dog Drop. Surveying these pits has given Mister and me the chance to meet some wonderful cave landowners, as well as discover some hidden gems.

## Conclusion

My sincere appreciation for everyone's assistance with the grotto survey projects; I hope the publicity that the grotto receives from our survey projects, such as the article detailing the exploration and survey of Solution Rift in the *NSS News* gives everyone a sense of accomplishment as surveys proceed with the work of many grotto members. Cavers are welcome to join us on a survey project and no previous experience is needed, as we are always happy to teach new surveyors; surveying with Sewanee Mountain Grotto may even earn you a coveted "Bitch" name or "Entourage" nick name.



## Dr. Sheppard



Dr. Ralph Sheppard, age 86, of Scottsboro, passed away peacefully Monday, January 9, 2012 surrounded by his family. Born June 10, 1925 in Hartsville, Tenn., to Richard Madison and Jennie Walker Sheppard, he was the fifth of eight children. With the coming of World War II, he left high school to volunteer in the Tennessee State Guard before entering the Army Air Corps in 1943. Trained as a radio operator and tail gunner for the B-25 bomber, he served throughout

the South Pacific. Honorably discharged as a staff sergeant, he returned home and enrolled at Middle Tennessee State University and earned a Bachelor of Science degree. In 1949 he married his high school sweetheart, Mary Ruth Arnette of Dilton, Tenn. After completing his Doctorate of Dental Science at the University of Tennessee, Memphis, the Sheppards moved to Scottsboro, where he practiced dentistry for 43 years. As an active community leader, he served as a deacon at the Broad Street Church of Christ for 52 years, a Scoutmaster with the Boy Scouts of America for 25 years, for which in 1962 he was honored with the Silver Beaver, Scouting's highest award for volunteers. He was a member of the local Civitan Club, Chairman of the Jackson County Republican Party for many years, and President of Scottsboro-Jackson County Chamber of Commerce twice. Through the Chamber and other local organizations, he was instrumental in the movement to preserve several local landmarks, including the Scottsboro Heritage Center and the Railroad Depot. He established a newspaper, The Jackson County Advertiser, and the first FM radio station in Jackson County, WCNA (now WKEA). Throughout his life he restored several Ford Model A cars and participated in local parades and car shows. As a certified Master Gardener, during his retirement years he developed a garden beside the Chamber of Commerce, which was named in his honor in 1995. After a lifetime of giving back to his community, the city of Scottsboro recognized him on April 30, 2008 with Ralph Sheppard Day. Cavers also recognized Dr. Sheppard's contribution to the caving community by awarding him with the Larry S. Adams Landowner Appreciation Award at the 1995 SERA Winter Business Meeting.

He is survived by his wife of 62 years, Mary Sheppard; his sisters, Dora Palmer of Franklin, Tenn., and Sara Garrett and her husband Samuel of Hixson, Tenn.; his daughters, Gwen Camaratta and her husband Frank of Huntsville, Gale Taylor and her husband James, Gina Tek and her husband Arthur all of Nashville, Tenn., Gill Reed and her husband Elijah of Scottsboro, and Geri Looney and her husband Dale of Auburn. He is also survived by 17 grandchildren and 14 great-grandchildren. Services were held at Broad Street Church of Christ, Friday, January 13. The family welcomes donations to the Sheppard Garden Memorial Fund in care of the Greater Jackson County Chamber of Commerce, 407 E Willow St, Scottsboro, AL 35769.

As of this time, Scottsboro Mountain is still open for visitation. In January the Sewanee Mountain Grotto made a donation of \$100 to the Sheppard Garden.



