

# T.A.G. Caver

Winter 2010



Sewanee Mountain Grotto  
Volume 1 Issue 2



## TAG Caver ~ Volume 1 Issue 2

**WINTER 2010**

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/>

### 2010 Sewanee Mtn Grotto Officers:

Chairperson: Julie Schenck Brown  
Vice Chair & Programs: Julie Uselton  
Treasurer: Blaine Grindle  
Secretary: Bambi Dunlap  
Member at large: Maureen Handler  
Conservation chair: Maureen Handler  
Webmaster: Will Urbanski  
Trip leader: Jason Hardy

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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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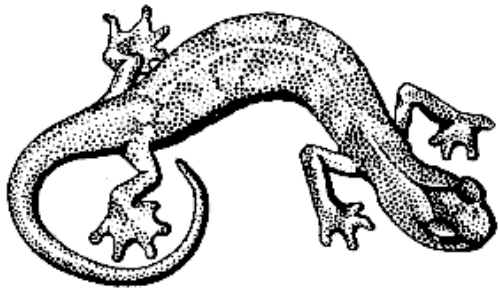
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*Front Cover: Kids Trip to Whiteside Cave during Pupfest, taken by Kelly Smallwood.*

*Back Cover: Photo of Will Chamberlin, taken by Marion O. Smith on August 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1980 during the first survey in Solution Rift.*

# Calendar of Upcoming Events



January 8<sup>th</sup> – Sinkhole cleanup at Big Room cave sponsored by SKTF & SMG. SMG will provide pizza for lunch. SMG Meeting at John Attaway's House. Potluck dinner 6pm, followed by meeting at 7pm.

February ? – SERA Winter Business Meeting

February 12<sup>th</sup> – SMG Meeting. Dinner 6pm, followed by meeting at 7pm

March 12<sup>th</sup> – SMG Meeting at Andy Zellner's house in Doran Cove, AL near Russell Cave. Potluck Dinner 6pm, followed by meeting at 7pm. Andy will give a presentation on his Peru adventures following the meeting!

May 26-30 – 40<sup>th</sup> annual Kentucky Speleofest hosted by the Louisville Grotto at the Lonestar Preserve in Bonnieville, KY. Go to <http://louisville.caves.org/speleofest.html> for more information.

July 18<sup>th</sup> – 22<sup>nd</sup> – NSS Convention in Glenwood Springs, Colorado. Visit <http://nss2011.org/> for more info.

## 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.



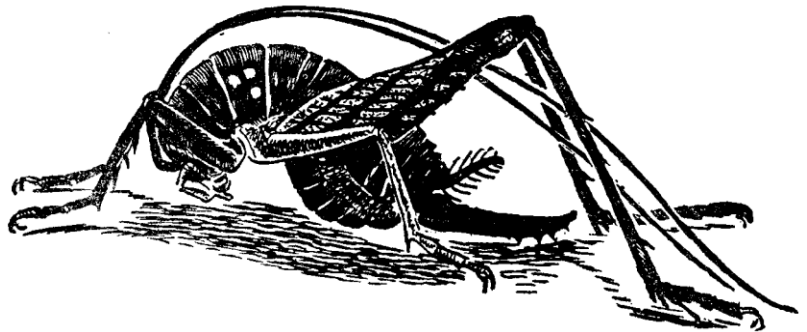
Sewanee Mountain Remailer

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.

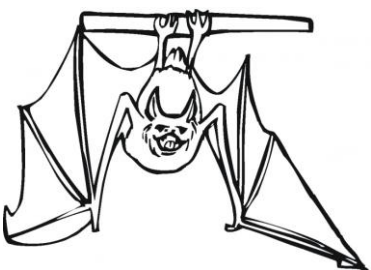


Facebook – Join our official unofficial Facebook Page to meet other area cavers and plan trips. Search for Sewanee Mountain Grotto under groups.



## Support the Grotto

The Grotto still has Guidebooks, Stickers and T-shirts remaining from the SERA 2010 event. The stickers are the new Logo for the Sewanee Mountain Grotto and are \$1 each. In T-shirts we have Large & XXL available for \$15 each. Guidebooks are \$10 each. Please contact Kelly Smallwood ([rowland7840@bellsouth.net](mailto:rowland7840@bellsouth.net)) to purchase.





# THE TAG SCOOP

\*Welcome new SMG members: Nancy Aulenbach, Jeff Bartlett, Eric & Kristen McMaster & Ginger Bankston.

\*Membership dues are due in January. 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 Senanee Mountain Grotto, 482 Wild Heart Lane, Senanee, TN 37375. Make sure you include your contact information (name, address, phone number & email address). Annual Dues are \$10 per person.

\*\*Planning on attending the 2011 Convention in Colorado? Check out the web site [www.nss2011.org](http://www.nss2011.org) for more information. Several grotto members from the SMG will be making a large presence this year in the Map Salon, Photo Salon and Cover Art Salon. Please come out and support them. Other grotto members are planning on attending as well so there are possibilities for car pooling.

## The Munchie Corner

### Cave Camp breakfast recipe Shared by Jeff Bartlett (totally stolen from mark Minton's Mexico "gruel" recipes and slightly adapted)

- \*2 packets instant oatmeal (maple & brown sugar)
- \*2 tablespoons powdered whole milk (I use Nido brand)
- \*Handful of dried cherries (Whole Foods or Greenlife 360 brand)

I double bag these in quart sized freezer bags. You can heat them in the Ziplocs but I usually bring a little cup. This takes more water than instant oatmeal normally would, or the milk flavor will be too strong, but that's the key ingredient because it spikes the oatmeal with a bunch of protein and fat that oatmeal normally wouldn't have. Lots of people say oatmeal doesn't stick with them long enough and they eat half a mountain house for breakfast on cave camps, but this little tasty 500 calorie bomb fixes that. Also, fruit has the fiber and oatmeal plus coffee each morning keeps one nicely regular.

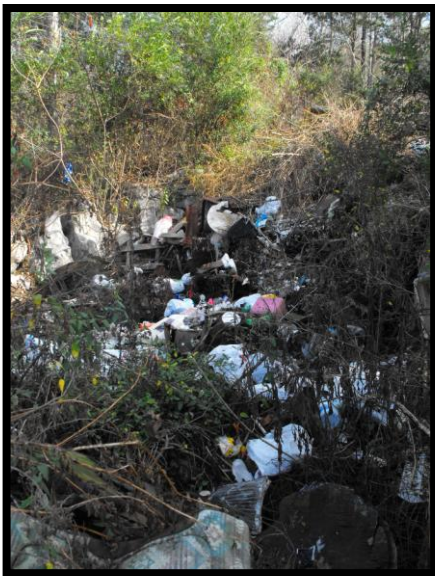
### P-Nut Butter Snacks by Nancy Aulenbach

For the highest energy output to weight ratio, I like to get a small plastic container of peanut butter. Get some corn chips and crunch them up in a snack sized Ziploc bag. Use a spoon and scoop up some peanut butter. Put the spoon into the corn chips, and let them stick to the peanut butter. It is surprisingly yummy and filling! Great to take on multi-day trips too.





## Conservation & the Sewanee Mountain Grotto



### Upcoming Cleanups

By Maureen Handler

The Big Room Watershed clean up by the SKTF and SMG will begin on **January 8**. We will be cleaning up a sinkhole adjacent to the entrance to Big Room Cave. We have been told that trash has been dumped in here for 40+ years and that the hole is mostly filled up. The water running into the sinkhole runs directly into Big Room Cave. This may be an extensive clean up with another date possibly scheduled in March or April, or possibly with the SERA WBM, depending on where that is held.

I also would like to schedule a clean-up day in Russell Cave Watershed to coincide with the February grotto meeting. We only have a December thru April window to do most of these roadside clean ups. I like to schedule the local clean ups in conjunction with grotto meetings to get better participation in our back yard. This clean up is within sight of the bottom of the mountain. If we can get this done, I want to submit the grotto for an NSS merit award. The project started in February 2006 in cooperation with the SKTF. The bulk of the big stuff was taken out in the first 2 years. The last 3 years, we have been working the roadside and hillside running down to the creek that enters Russell Cave 2 miles from the bottom. Over 100,000 lbs of debris has been removed and we are still finding batteries, cans of paint, gas tanks and other environmentally 'nasty' stuff. We are now within 0.25 miles of the bottom and have clean up nearly 4 miles of roadway.

Another project the SKTF is working on setting up is a clean-up of the Wet Cave Watershed. There is a large dump area just below the domain of the University of the South in Sewanee. We are currently working on landowner issues and may even start that project before spring really hits.



## Pupfest 8 Recap

By Kelly Smallwood  
Auction Chair 2010

Pupfest 8 was a huge success for the grotto. I would like to thank everyone who helped out with the event and to everyone who came and supported our grotto. We also give a big thanks to all of the vendors who supported our auction by making donations. Some caving vendors who donated were: Inner

Mountain Outfitters, Karst Sports, PMI, Highline Rope, The NSS Office & Petzl. We had led trips each day, including the very fun kids trip to Whiteside Cave, and a great dinner on Sunday night. The only unfortunate thing to happen during the event was when ET Davis broke his femur in 3 places on Saturday afternoon while playing volleyball. 911 had to be called and he was airlifted to Erlanger Hospital in Chattanooga where he later had to undergo surgery. ET is recovering and the grotto did send him a get-well card that was signed by all who attended the grotto meeting in September.



### PUPFEST 8: INCOME VS. EXPENSES

#### Income

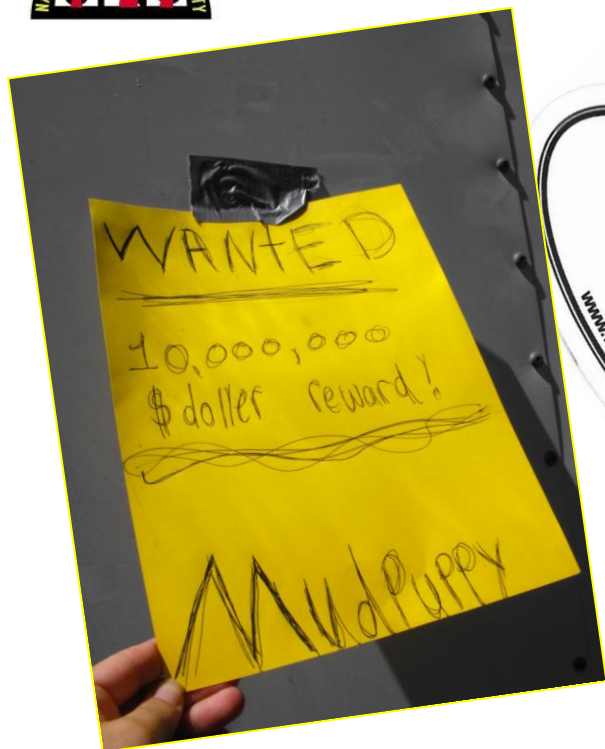
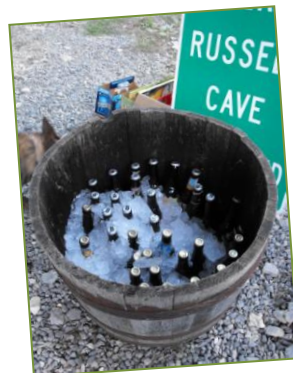
Auction	\$2,530.00
Yard Sale	\$170.00
Donations	\$125.00
online auction –	
painting	\$125.00
Total income	\$2,950.00

#### Expenses

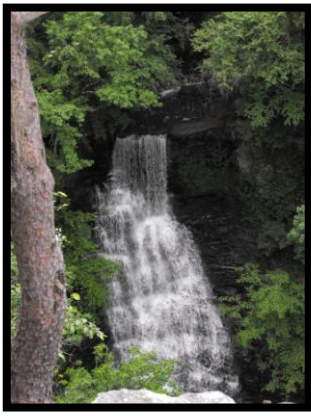
Pig and processing	\$200.00
Beer	\$260.43
Band	\$150.00
Port O Let	\$70.00
Picnic supplies & foil	\$63.22
Total Expenses	\$743.65
Income after expenses	\$2,206.35











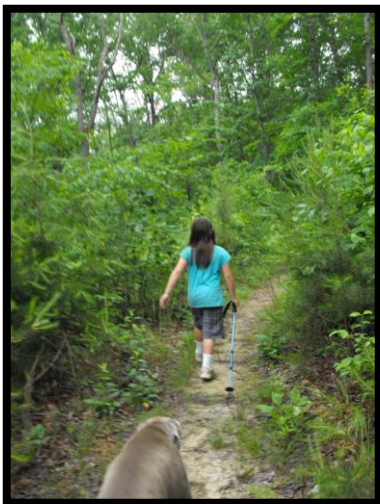
## Noteworthy Waterfall Hike In TAG

### By Kelly Smallwood

Pisgah Gorge, Sand Mountain  
Pisgah, Jackson County, Alabama  
Number of waterfalls = 3  
Easy to Moderate Hike



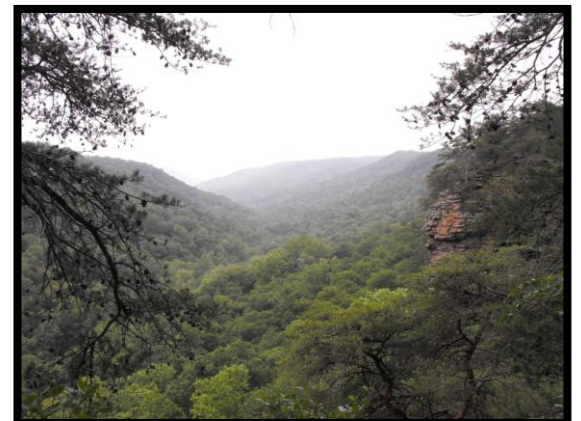
Sand Mountain is a plateau approximately 20 miles wide and 60 miles long. Atop the mountain, in the northeast corner of Alabama near the town of Pisgah there is a beautiful gorge that has been able to remain pristine for thousands of years. This gorge is known as Pisgah Gorge. It is here that three creeks form a canyon that run from the top of Sand Mountain and in just under two miles drops more than 1,000 feet into the Tennessee River at Jones Cove. It is unknown to many and it is seemingly one of the most beautiful natural areas in the state.



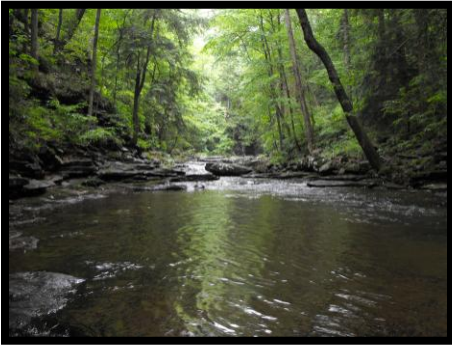
Access to the Gorge is through the Pisgah Civitan Park. The town of Pisgah is located off of SR-71 and can be accessed from the North via SR-117 or from the South via SR-35. From SR-71 take CR-58 and head North towards the town of Pisgah, turn left at the sign to the Pisgah Civitan Park. Once you make the turn a cemetery will be on your immediate right. Follow the road shortly until you reach the park on the left. Drive in past the ball fields and you will find a parking area along with a pavilion and picnic tables.

You will also immediately see a newly built amphitheater. It was built by the 7<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup> grade science classes at Pisgah School. They received grants from Lowe's "Toolbox for Education", Representative John Robinson & the Jackson County Legislative Delegation, and University of Alabama's "Science in

Action" grant program to construct a community amphitheater at the park. Walk just beyond the amphitheater into the woods and you will find the trail that follows the rim of the canyon along Little Bryant Creek. It starts at an old dam site and then follows the rim of the canyon above three waterfalls, two of which are at least 100 feet. The trail ends at an inspiring overlook 150 feet above the canyon floor atop a rock bluff. From there you can look upstream to view the second waterfall or look far down the canyon toward the Tennessee River. This is an easy hike, suitable for most anyone except for the fact that the overlook has no protective barriers. Dogs are also welcome.

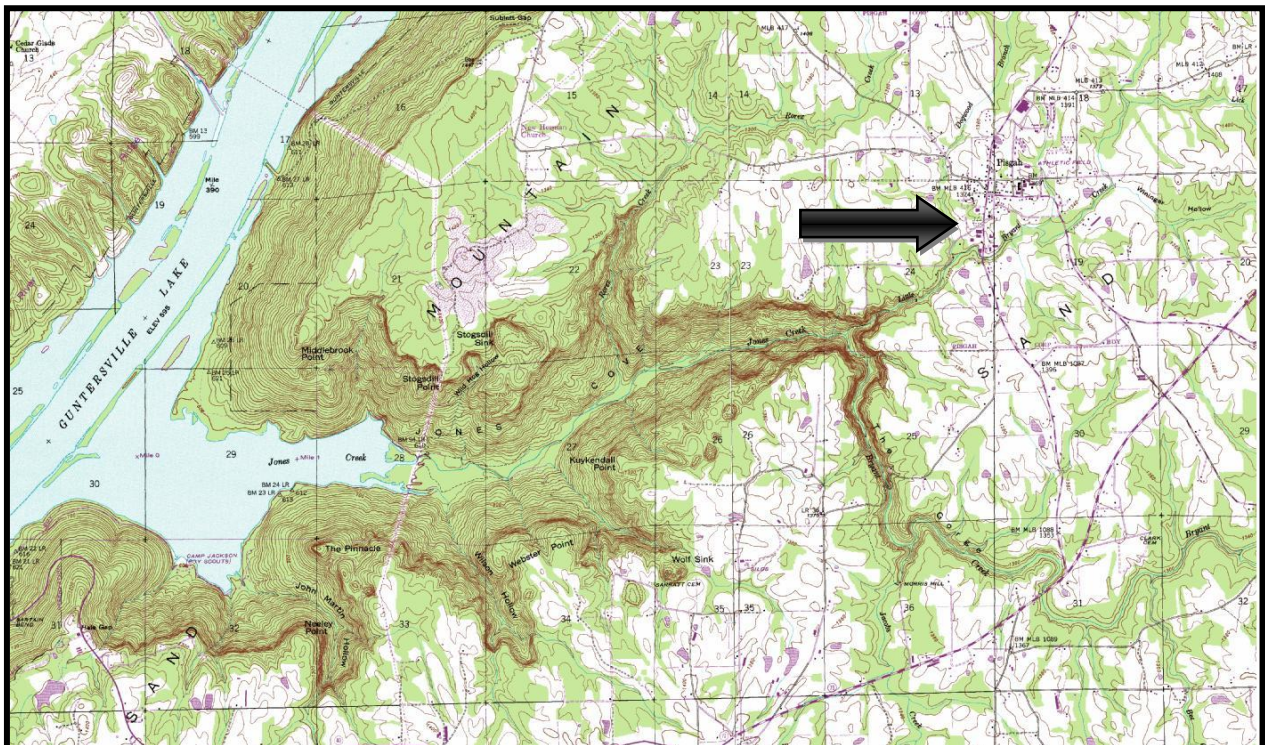






If you are up to the challenge there is a steep trail leading down into the gorge before the overlook. When following the trail along rim just after you cross over a wooden footbridge you will see the faint trail leading down below. Please take note that the trail can be steep and slippery. You may also find that some rocks and boulders could easily become dislodged. If you decide to make the journey to the bottom of the canyon you will be highly rewarded. Once at the bottom you will immediately be at one of the waterfalls and can even hike back upstream to get a view of another. It is one of the most beautiful places in the Gorge.

A few miles away, on the other side of Pisgah is another Alabama treasure of a different sort, Gorham's Bluff. One of America's top rated bed & breakfast lodges offers a spectacular view overlooking the Tennessee River Valley. They also rent cottages, offer gourmet dining and occasional entertainment in their amphitheater. If you are in the area it is worth it to stop by and check out the overlook.







## George Willard "Will" Chamberlin III

NSS #16402



George Willard Chamberlin III, who most everyone knew as "Will," passed away at the age of 57 on April 9, 2010. Will joined the NSS in 1975, became a sustaining member in 1988, which led to a life membership. Although he went to my high school, I didn't meet him until we both signed up for a trip to Doomsday Pit after a Tennessee Cave Survey meeting in October 1977. It immediately became apparent that this tall, lanky fellow was going to be hard to keep up with. Over the next twenty-plus years, Will enthusiastically accompanied many groups of TAG cavers on exploration and mapping trips, exploring some of the deepest and wettest caves in the region.

Will was born July 9, 1952 and grew up in Gadsden, Alabama, graduating from Gadsden High School in 1970. He graduated from Georgia Tech with a degree in Industrial Management in 1974, worked a few years in the Chattanooga area, where he became fascinated with caves, and moved to Athens, Georgia, where he worked for Reliance Electric for 20 years. Despite the long drive to cave country, many weekends would find him on the road and eager to go caving with his friends. In 1989 he and a friend formed Classic Race Services, a company that timed running race participants. This increasingly occupied more of Will's time, and TAG cavers got to see less of him.

Upon hearing that the Southeastern Cave Conservancy, Inc. had acquired access to Georgia's Byers Cave, Will called me to set up a reunion trip there. Along with Rick Buice and Stefan Eady, we set out through the woods in May 2005 for the cave, a day that somehow proved the cave had gotten a little more difficult with the passing decades. But our time caving with Will that day is priceless. The love of the caving community and road racing enthusiasts was evident on April 11, 2010, as a large crowd came to a Celebration of Life at the First Presbyterian Church of Athens. He was a much-loved member of the choir; at his funeral the choir performed a song that had been written in his honor. Rick Buice spoke about some of the wonderful caving trips with this man in years gone by, and others recalled his devotion to the pastime of racing. As is especially true of those we lose much too soon, he's very much missed by all of us who knew him.

Lin Guy  
NSS 10235





## Tribute to a TAG Caver

A few months ago, I was given the opportunity to inherit Will Chamberlin's entire collection of NSS News from the time he became an NSS member in 1975 until his death in April 2010. When I was given his collection I also received several other printed materials including old grotto newsletters, a few photos he took, his old survey tape, some survey notes and a few maps. I was very grateful to have received his collection from a few of his

long time friends/caving buddies. I think they knew how much I would appreciate receiving such a collection. As I went through it all I became very interested in knowing who Will was and what he accomplished as a caver. I discovered that Will was a fellow surveyor and a cartographer. He helped survey and map some of the best caves in TAG including Sinking Cove & McBride. Will's obituary, written by Lin Guy, was published in the October 2010 NSS News and with his permission I felt it would also be appropriate to re-publish it in the Sewanee Mountain Grotto newsletter as a tribute to a gone but not forgotten surveyor and cartographer. Will's work continues to live on through each of us every time we use one of his maps. Kelly Smallwood NSS 58745

Photo of Will from 1977 by Lin Guy



*Photo from Will's collection*

(David Maddox, Will Chamberlin, Dave & Mere Benler, George West, Katie Hackeny & Dan Twilley)

I met Will Chamberlin at the first meeting of what would become the Athens Speleological Society. I was a student at the University of Georgia and an ad appeared in the Athens newspaper announcing a meeting of all interested in caving to form a club. There were maybe seven people at the meeting and one was Will.

He was a tall quiet friendly fellow and younger than me if I remember correctly. The first thing we did was go learn how to rappel. The first drop was a country bridge and it may have been 12 feet. Will rappelled first and I distinctly remember him physically prying my left hand off the bridge railing because I would not let go! Our first pit was Rusty's followed by Cemetery Pit and then Moses Tomb. Byers cave and Hurricane were our playground.

I remember camping inside the concrete tunnel that lead to the old Byers cave parking lot with Will one stormy night and being awakened by night time four wheeling red necks. We also once were shot at by a rather unfriendly fellow in that same parking lot as we returned from the cave.

When I left Athens I lost touch with Will and saw him only at SERA or TAG and I never caved with him again.

Dan Twilley

My most notable trip with Will was one when I didn't go. Rick Buice, Will, I, and others were planning to map Sinking Cove Cave. However at the entrance, I decided that Rick had enough mappers and that I really want to ridgewalk in Round Cove. I solo walked all day in heavy rains and found nothing! When I got back to Sinking Cove Cave all of the entrances were sumped shut. They were in the cave for 33 hours in their wetsuits but still very cold. Late Sunday morning, when there were a couple of inches of airspace, they exited the cave.

Gerald Moni



## JOHNSON'S CROOK CAVE

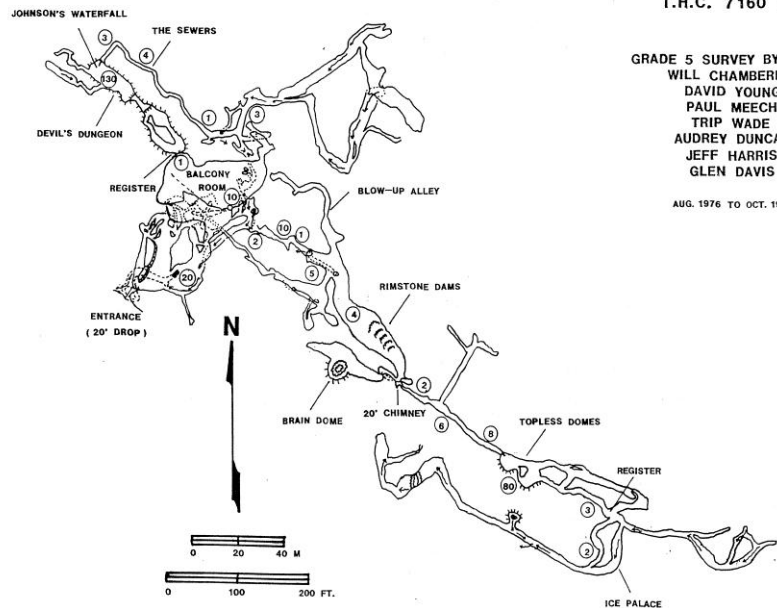
G.S.S. NO. 17

T.H.C. 7160 FT.

GRADE 5 SURVEY BY A.S.S.:

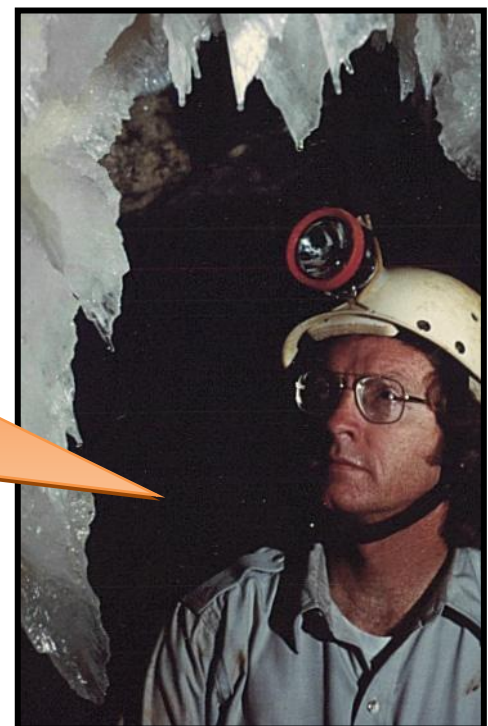
WILL CHAMBERLIN  
DAVID YOUNG  
PAUL MEECH  
TRIP WADE  
AUDREY DUNCAN  
JEFF HARRIS  
GLEN DAVIS

AUG. 1976 TO OCT. 1977



I knew Will briefly as the brother of Dan Chamberlin, with whom I worked in north Florida and north Alabama in the late 1970s. Dan was not an experienced caver, but would go caving when we were in TAG in order to spend more time with Will. Sometimes the interactions between hippy Dan and straight Will could be interesting. Will was a gracious host willing to show us neat caves and past guidebooks.

Buford Pruitt





I was two years younger than Will and so was always following around my 'big brother'. Our family moved up "on the mountain" on the outskirts of Gadsden, Alabama, when we were quite small. There were thick woods surrounding the house, and a nearby outcrop of rocks that looks over the valley, where we often played. On the underside of these large rocks was a small, tight tunnel of probably 10-15 yards long that we crawled through with candle stubs. That was Will's first caving. I am sure he was not yet 10 then.

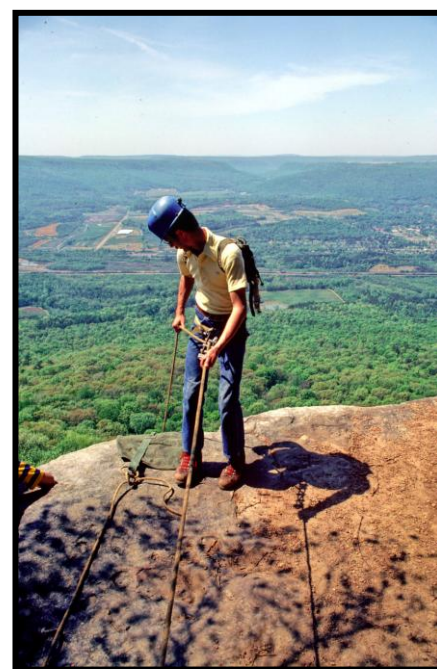
Later we spent as much free time as we could climbing around Noccalula Falls and the canyon downstream. Will was sure-footed as a mountain goat and fearless climbing around those cliffs, in contrast to my 'healthy' fear of heights. We had several 'secret' ways up and down the canyon walls on both sides, that involved crawling, climbing, chimneying, etc. We didn't know what we were doing except having a great time, but we were living a life that was out of the Mark Twain books we read as children, "Huckleberry Finn" and "The Adventures of Tom Sawyer".

I know Will was deeply affected by the two classic adventure movies "20,000 Leagues under the Sea" (1954) and "Journey to the Center of the Earth" (1959) based on the books of Jules Verne. Then a few years later the book (1972 by Rodney William Whitaker) and movie (1975 with Clint Eastwood) "The Eiger Sanction" truly sparked a thirst for adventure in him.

It was at least 10 years since I was out in the woods with Will. We were up in the TAG mountains the last time and had stopped to walk to a pit. Some people had dumped some trash at the edge of the road and the first thing Will did was go clean it up, all the while grumbling under his breath about those idiots. His example that day really helped me find an answer to the dilemma I sometimes faced when I came across trash in the woods. On the one hand I was upset that someone had thrown trash down, but was reluctant to pick up after someone else. But I now saw that cleaning up the mess was a very positive thing to do, it made me feel better and it left the area in better shape than when I came. I now pick up trash just about wherever I go thanks to his example.

I am working on the assumption that it is slightly more difficult for someone to throw trash down in a clean place than in a place that already has trash in it. I recently edited a paper on attitudes on vandalism in forest recreational areas and the authors cited other research which supports my assumption. Say for example, a person approaches a house. If the house looks abandoned and no one is taking care of it and it appears that no one will be coming around, then that person is more likely to vandalize such a place than one which appears to be maintained, and which appears as if someone might come around regularly to see about. So, the work that your organization does may have longer-lasting effects than merely cleaning up these sites.

Dan Chamberlin



Will rappelling off Sunset Rock in 1978.

Pic by Lin Guy



The SCCI is excited to announce our newest lease acquisition, the Jacobs Mountain Preserve.

Located in Jackson County, Alabama, Jacobs Mountain features 65 known caves that have been closed for many years. Eighteen of the caves

are considered significant, including Paint Rock River Cave, Guess Cave, Norsemans Well, Torode Pit, Williams Saltpeter Cave, Halley's Hole and many, many more. See below for a list of all the caves on the preserve.

SCCI members may receive a permit to visit the property at any time except 2 weeks prior to and during deer gun hunting season. If you're not a member of the SCCI, membership in the SCCI is available for as little as \$25 per year for a regular membership or a \$10 per month for sustaining membership. For more information on how to get a permit, where to park, and other information about visiting the preserve, contact the SCCI property Managers at [jacobsmountain@scci.org](mailto:jacobsmountain@scci.org). Property Managers are Alan Cressler and Brian Killingbeck.

Cave Name	Length	Depth	Pit Depths			
Alpha Pit	14	32	34	Willie Well	10	63
Williams Saltpeter Cave	1,035	200	140	Wee Willie Well	10	108
Guess Cave	25,017	223	29	Upper Shop Sink Cave	70	30
Torode Pit	500	225	190	Audible Ants Hole	0	62
Fortyeight Ten Cave	180	27		The Shaft	0	50
Sawyers Cave	0	0	18	Halley's Hole	50	218
Jacobs Well	0	36	36	Headache Hole	0	72
Shop Sink Cave	197	0		Threwer Point Plunge	0	61
Deweys Cave	24	29	29	Wind Fizzle Cave	50	90
Tommy's Cave	313	10		Gang Bangor Cave	1,000	180
Alpha Cave	600	5		Poplar Hollow Cave	4,000	300
Beta Cave	50	5		Classic Rock Shelter	125	2
Gamma Cave	200	20		In the Out Cave	250	10
Shake Well	20	75	50	Hopper Hole	100	60
Terrible Tommy Cave	0	70	40, 30	Dible Well	51	97
September Twenty-six Pit	0	70	70	Paint Rock River Cave	9,596	529
Mirkwood Caverns	2,000	60	60	Rainmaker Canyon	300	125
Wotring Hole	100		0	Letchergilla Cave	50	10
Geode in the Rock Pit	40	65	36	Mother of all Horror	100	124
Round Knob Pit	25	52	48	Little Shop of Chicken Heads	100	35
Real Fine Pit	20	65	64	Scenic Cave	200	25
Raintree Pit	132	175	81, 50	Brewer Sewer	400	175
Norsemans Well	3,892	391	80, 97, 25, 41, 18	Doosher Dome	60	15
Climbin Fool Cave	50	40		Generic Pit	25	59
Norsemans Double Pot	541	34	22	Comet Hale-Bopp Pit	100	116
Upper Norsemans Cave	107	6		Torn Flesh Pit	3	79
High Hopes Hole	75	45		Flowstone Wall Pit	6	50
Upper Miller Cove Cave	200	20		Megaroot Pit	50	58
Williams Cove Cave	2,279	50		Light Sabre Pit	40	70
Miniature Dam Pit	50	54	50	Detached Slab Cave	150	12
Green Boulder Grotto	250	90	67	Scorpion Pit	25	72
Hurt Tree Pit	808	323	69, 28, 142	A Twist of Fate Pit	100	186
				Little Cave	58	22





## One less 100 Footer in Tennessee By Kelly Smallwood



Friday September 10<sup>th</sup>, 2010 - My plans were to meet Jason Hardy at his new place near Whiteside, TN to help him move in. While waiting on him to arrive, I decided to drive around and check out the neighborhood a bit. Not knowing exactly where to go I just picked a country road and started driving up it. It was becoming clear very fast that this might not be an area I should be in alone but I still needed to find a safe place to turn around. That is when I came across an old timer driving a small 4wd Cushman. He was coming down the road towards me and he stopped me in the road to ask me what I was doing in the area. He introduced himself to me as Mr. Young and informed me that he was out patrolling his land because someone had been dumping trash recently and he was trying to catch them. After assuring him I wasn't there to dump trash and even offered him a look in my car I engaged in a lengthy conversation with him about many things, including the Sewanee Mountain Grotto survey and conservation work. And as it turns out at one point in his life he had also lived in Georgia not far from where I presently live and grew up. He also informed me that he had caves on his land but wasn't too particular about allowing cavers access. He was upset about an incident that had happened many years earlier where he was left feeling disrespected by some cavers.

Later that day while Blaine Grindle and I were helping Jason move in, I told them of the landowner, Mr. Young, and his story. I thought it would be a good idea for Jason, especially since he is living in the area now, to make good landowner relations with him and to try and rectify some of the caver issues he had.

Sunday October 10<sup>th</sup>, 2010 - A month later on the Sunday of the annual TAG Fall Cave In, Jason Hardy along with another grotto member, Jason Money were looking for a Sunday Pit to bounce near his house in Whiteside, TN. Jason recalled the story of the landowner I met and thought it would be a good opportunity to stop by and finally meet him. After stopping by and chatting for a while with the landowner (Mr. Young) he told Jason he would think about letting us come back to his pit and surveying it as well. Jason

exchanged contact information with Mr. Young and figured at this point that we wouldn't be hearing back from him anytime soon.

Sunday October 24<sup>th</sup> - Two weeks later Jason got a phone call. It was Mr. Young. He told Jason that we could come up there and take a look at his pit. Without wasting any time, Jason put together a survey team that included him, me and Julie Schenck-Brown.

Saturday October 30<sup>th</sup> - Jason, me and Julie met up to go and meet Mr. Young and to survey what we knew was at least one 100 foot pit on his land. Upon research we determined that there are several caves/pits on the land but the most significant is Swell Well. On the Tennessee State survey it was listed as a 102 foot pit with 40 feet of passage in the bottom. After arriving and chatting with Mr. Young for a bit he showed us pictures that Alan Cressler had provided him many years earlier on one of his visits to the pit. Mr. Young suggested we drive up to the pit instead of walking since he had a road on his land that goes right by it. He graciously said he'd ride in the bed of the truck so I



offered to ride on the back with him. Upon going up the road, he called out to Jason at all the big stumps and which way to go on the road. It was quite impressive that he knew just about every little bump and turn we were going to hit even though he couldn't see the road in front of him. Once up the steep parts he showed us another area where he had found a small hole many years earlier. He told us of how he had thrown rocks into the hole and could hear dings as it was going down. After inspecting it, Jason knew it would need a lot of digging to open up so we decided to continue up the road to Swell Well. Mr. Young took us right to the pit. It is a small sink with an entrance of about 6 feet by 3 feet. We knew there was supposed to be at least one other small pit nearby, Doesn't Smell Well so before starting the survey Jason and Mr. Young walked around while Julie and I geared up. After finding it and returning with Jason, Mr. Young waited around at the top while Jason and Julie went in the pit with the tape. Just before the pit was taped he said he was going to walk back down to the house to check on his wife, whom he'd been married to for 56 years! Julie and I thanked him for allowing us access and we informed him we would be stopping by on our way out before we left his property. We were all quite impressed with Mr. Young and that he went up to the pit with us and then even ridge walked around. To be an old timer he was in good shape and you could tell he really had a love for his land. With Jason on bottom and Julie at the top it was measured at 95.8 feet.



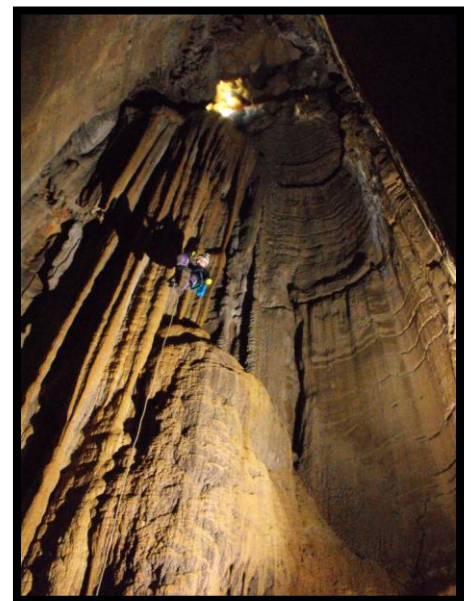


It was double checked because we knew this would remove it from the notorious 100+ foot pits of Tennessee list that cavers collect and it would alleviate any unnecessary stress of Mr. Young finding trespassing cavers on his property. Once at the bottom we set three stations for a horizontal length of 35.3 feet and the overall cave depth is 101 foot. I also took some photos of the pit and some detailed macro shots for Mr. Young. There seemed to be a lot of turtles that had fallen into this pit over the years. I counted at least 5 dead turtles along with some other animal bones that appeared to be canine. It was a very pretty pit with flowstone going down one side and

lots of smaller formations on the other. There is a ledge about 40 feet down and a large tree stump that rests on it. I also noted some Blastoid Fossils on the wall near the top of the pit but was unable to photograph them.

Once the survey was complete we headed back down the mountain to inform Mr. Young of how the survey went. He greeted us on his front porch and even offered us some of his wife's homemade sweet tea. He was so kind he told us that if he had some sandwich meat and bread he would have even offered us a sandwich. We sat on his porch with him for over an hour, enjoying the beautiful view of the Tennessee River and hearing lots of old stories from Mr. Young.

Mr. Young would like the caving community to know that his caves and land are not open for access. He loves his property very much and doesn't want people hiking around or trespassing on his land. Because his land borders land with the TVA he has had problems in the past of people trespassing and even leaving litter behind. He allowed us to map the pit so he could have a map of what is on his property and at the end of the day we were all very happy. Mr. Young will now have a map of his pit that he can show off to his family and we as cavers know that we have left a good feeling about us with Mr. Young. In the future, Jason would like to return to map Doesn't Smell Well for Mr. Young and to continue to keep good landowner relations between him and cavers.



# Swell Well

Marion County, Tn  
TMN 346

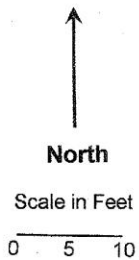
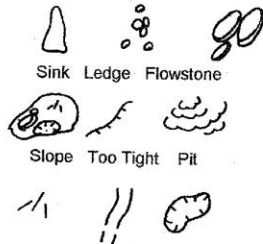
Total Vertical Extent: 101ft  
Total Horizontal Extent: 35ft

Sewanee Mountain Grotto, NSS  
Grade 5 Survey  
October 30<sup>th</sup>, 2010

Jason Hardy  
Kelly Smallwood  
Julie Schenck Brown  
Chuck Young

## LEGEND

Cross Section Gravel Breakdown



101

96' Pit Entrance

Profile

Plan 0

Plan 30

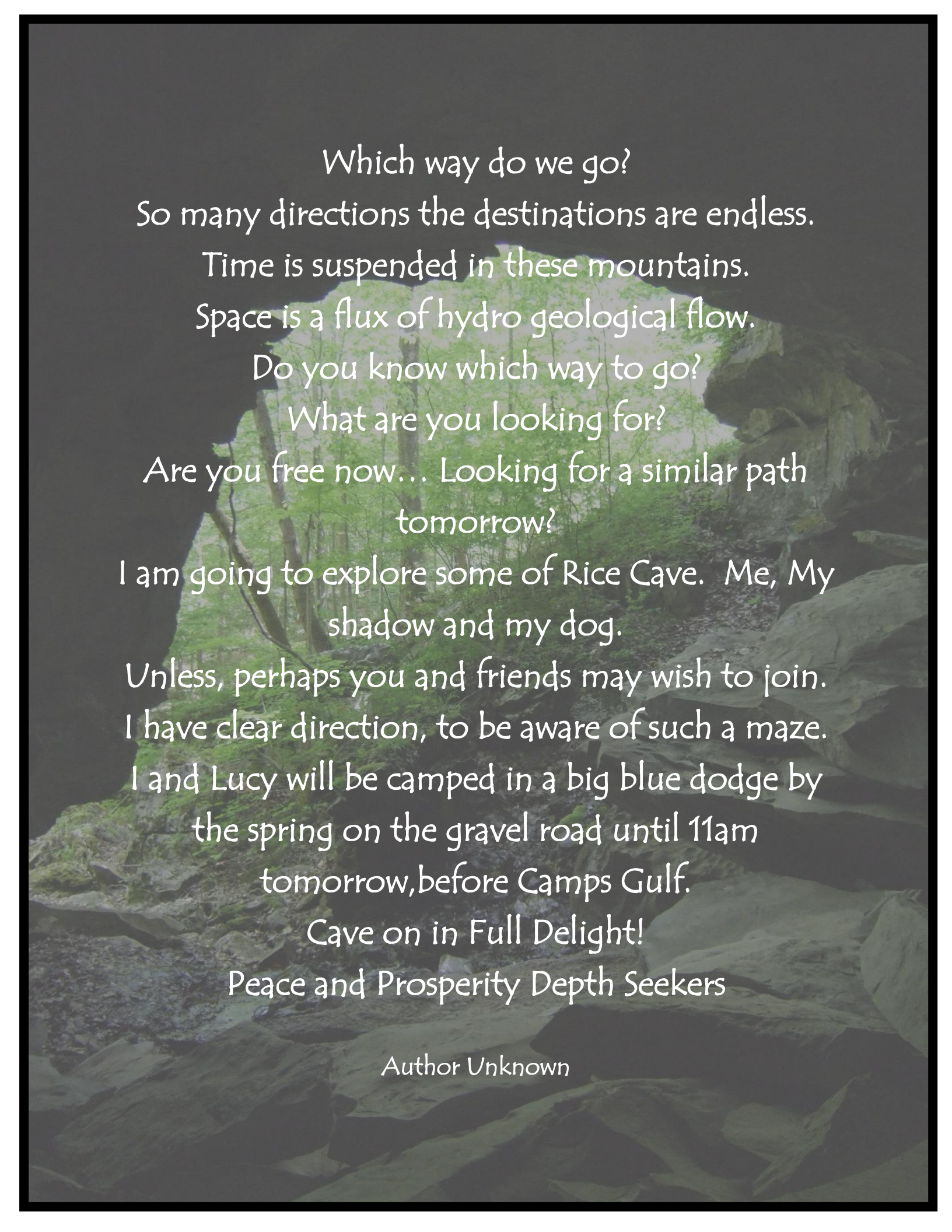
Plan 70

Plan 90

Plan

Plan 96





Which way do we go?  
So many directions the destinations are endless.  
Time is suspended in these mountains.  
Space is a flux of hydro geological flow.  
Do you know which way to go?  
What are you looking for?  
Are you free now... Looking for a similar path  
tomorrow?

I am going to explore some of Rice Cave. Me, My  
shadow and my dog.

Unless, perhaps you and friends may wish to join.  
I have clear direction, to be aware of such a maze.  
I and Lucy will be camped in a big blue dodge by  
the spring on the gravel road until 11am  
tomorrow, before Camps Gulf.

Cave on in Full Delight!  
Peace and Prosperity Depth Seekers

Author Unknown



## Anderson Springs Trip Report (TAG 2010)

By Anne Grindle

(Photos by Amy Hinkle)

On Friday October 8<sup>th</sup> nine of us headed down the old logging road on the west side of Pigeon Mountain, to Anderson Springs Cave. Even though the trail drops 700 feet in elevation, it is so gradual that it is not really a tough walk. Plus it is such a wide trail that we could easily chat with several people as we walked. We had folks from Florida, Michigan, Georgia, South Carolina and Tennessee. Amy Hinkle, from Michigan and David Rutter, from Atlanta were wearing FiveFingers shoes, those shoes that have separate toe slots and rubber soles, and that's about it! I was intrigued that they chose to wear such a "shoe" for caving, even though I had read that some people enjoy them for hiking. Asking the gal about the shoes, she said she had worn them for 3 months and liked them. The only drawback for hiking was the occasional twig that gets stuck in between toes. I was curious to find out how they did in a cave environment, with so much rock.

We entered the cave, which had the lowest water level I had ever seen. Such a cool, carved section right there after the entrance! Neat colors in the rock, too. Then we got to the water crawl and I took off and stashed my dry gloves, to put back on afterwards. Soon we arrived at the climb-up to the pretty section. It is kind of slippery, but the two with the toe shoes did just fine getting up there.

After quite a bit of time photographing the gallery, we headed back into the stream and made our way further into the cave. There are several side passages that lead up slippery slopes away from the stream. We toured one that allowed us to slide down afterwards! Boy did we have muddy butts and boy did I feel like a 10 year old (one reason I love to cave)!

We did not make it to the back of the cave. Several people were ready to head out and a few ventured on and got into a breakdown area with hopes of avoiding a fairly low stream crawl. That area was like most in the cave... the upper level rocks had some nice decorations. Three people were bolder than I and did proceed into the low crawl, but still did not find the end of the cave.

Making our way out was faster, of course. After the photo op at the entrance, we headed up the mountain. Amy and David seemed OK with the shoe performance in the cave. Amy did say that she banged her foot into a few rocks and that hurt some. I can imagine!





# Reams Cave

By: Julie E. Schenck Brown, NSS 30493 RL, FE

Several years ago, the survey of Reams Cave (TMN 111) was started. The survey team included Kristen Bobo, Lesley Colton, Jasmine (the Underground Hound) Colton, Brad Long, John Swartz and myself. This cave and others in the area are normally closed, but Brad Long was able to arrange access to the cave, based on his long term friendship with the landowners. This cave is part of the Russell Cave National Monument watershed, and is subsequently very wet during most of the year. Choosing a hot, summer day there was only a small trickle of water entering the cave through its massive sinkhole entrance. Brad replaced the bolts at the entrance pitch and we began the survey at a casual pace, setting 37 stations for a horizontal length of 640 feet and vertical depth of 161 feet, before we decided to stop the survey at the second pitch.

Over the next few years, the survey notes were kept in my field book with the intention of returning to this beautiful cave during another summer day. Every time I would see Brad and Lesley, we would discuss plans to finish the survey. As other survey projects would arise, the Reams survey would get further delayed. After finishing a few other major projects, I finally contacted Brad and Lesley to arrange access for the survey. Jason Hardy, who has been an invaluable survey partner on several other projects, would also join us to finish the survey. Sadly, Jasmine had passed and would not be able to join us.

We met at the parking lot of Russell Cave National Monument to drive over to the old Reams homestead. Brad and Lesley stopped to talk to the Reams family while Jason and I discussed other survey projects. As we geared up and walked towards the entrance, Lesley teased Brad and me about how much we did not remember about the cave. We also shared stories about Jasmine, and how this wonderful canine companion accompanied us on many trips throughout TAG, always greeting cavers with love and cheer when returning to the surface. The first Reams survey was also Jasmine's last survey, as her health began to decline around that time.

Upon entering the cave, there is evidence of major hydrologic activity, but during the second survey the cave was very dry. We made only one wrong turn, but were quickly back on pace towards the second pitch, checking to make sure we had not missed any side leads on the previous survey trip. The trend of the cave is at a steady downward dip and requires much down climbing through canyons and traverses.

Arriving at the second pitch, we discovered Brad had set new bolts, which required a very exposed traverse around the pit. The old bolts were so poorly placed that Jason knocked them loose with his hand and a small size rock. I was amazed at the ease at which Brad traveled around the scary traverse to rig the rope. There was no way to rig a safety and we all joked that the traverse to access Surprise Pit in Fern Cave and Earl's Ledge in Cemetery Pit were nothing compared to this. I made it across the traverse, surprised at the amount of mud and steep angle of incline on the ledge. Jason arrived next, also having as much fun as me and very happy to arrive at the rope. Lesley attempted the traverse, but opted to ridge walk instead, a decision which I praised, as I was not real happy with the traverse.

Finally getting off rope below the traverse, which we decided to name "Mr. Knarly," we continued to pull tape to the bitter end. Pass the second pitch and Mr. Knarly, the cave has several high domes and canyons, before the main passage becomes a tight, gravel filled belly crawl. As Jason pushed the low lead for us, Brad declared he was glad we had a hero on the trip, praising Jason's attitude. In my mind, both Brad and Jason were the heroes of the day; Brad for setting the bolts, rigging the pit past the traverse, and pushing a muddy lead later in the day; Jason for pushing the gravel lead and spotting me across Mr. Knarly on the way back out. We were all rewarded at the end of the day by beautiful formation galleries and the ability to call End of Survey, thus knowing we never had to go back across what I consider the scariest pit traverse I had ever encountered.

While routing towards the entrance, Brad found a tree frog near my foot, as I was checking for leads in a breakdown collapse. The frog was transported back to the surface in Brad's glove and released back into the wild. We met Lesley who had been ridge walking on the surface. After de-rigging the entrance pitch, we walked up to Reams Spring Cave, which is not physically connected, but probably has a hydrological connection to Reams Cave. Brad and Lesley expressed their desire to see that cave surveyed as well, but next summer when the water would be low and we would not interfere with hunting season.



My map of Reams Cave was dedicated to Jasmine Colton, NSS 47981, a faithful friend and companion to many TAG cavers. The final statistics for the cave surpassed the previously reported estimates of 1000 feet long and 75 feet deep. With a Grade 5 survey completed, the total length of the cave is 1265 feet and a vertical depth of 196 feet. Owing to the lower elevation on the mountain, Brad and I postulated that the main trunk of the cave probably goes below the valley floor as a major conduit of Russell Cave. Please note this cave is closed per the landowner's request as per their report, cavers have worn out their welcome by trespassing and general annoyance.



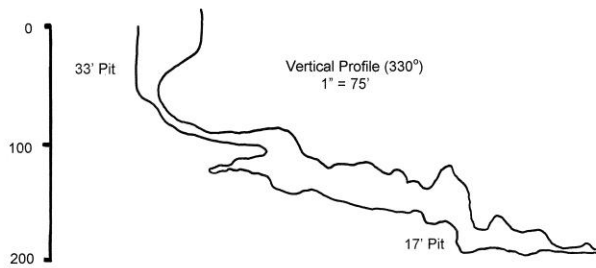
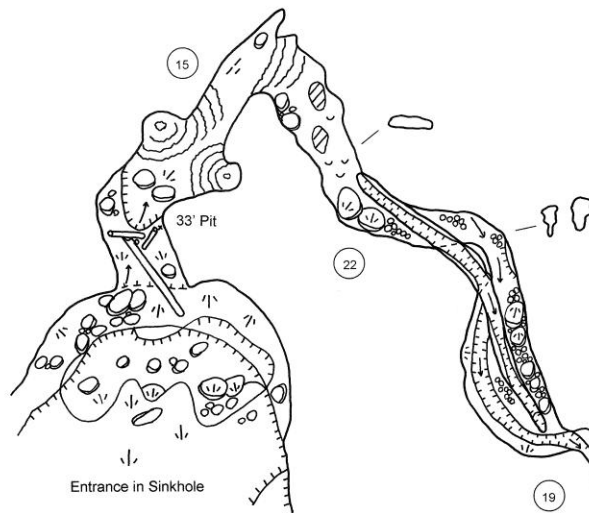
"Jasmine, the Wonder Dog, digging a new cave in TAG" Photo by Lesley Colton

**Reams Cave**  
Marion County, TN  
TMN 111

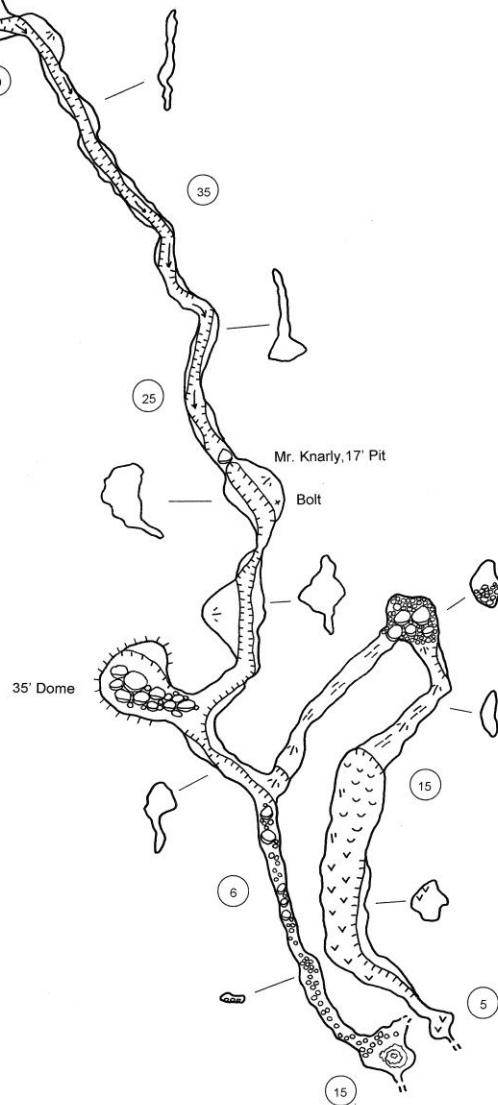
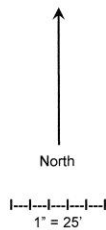
Length: 1,215 Feet  
Cave Depth: 196 Feet

Grade 5 Survey  
July, 2004 & August, 2008  
Dedicated to Jasmine Colton, NSS 47981

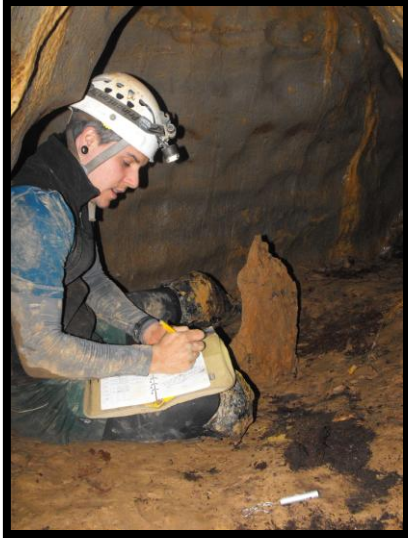
Kristen Bobo  
Jasmine Colton  
Lesley Colton  
Jason Hardy  
Brad Long  
Julie Schenck Brown  
John Swartz



LEGEND





## The many depths of Mystery Falls

By Jeff Bartlett

In the Summer of 2009, concluding a weekend of caving in TAG and dreading my long drive home to Arkansas, I had the pleasure of accompanying Jonny Prouty, Mae Kile and Brian Killingbeck to Mystery Falls Cave. At the time, it was the deepest pit I'd ever done, and surely the most spectacular; peeking over the lip at the tiny figures below, my heart was in my throat as I threaded my rack. I won't dare to admit how long it took me to climb out of the pit that day, but before I was off rope I knew two things: I wanted to move to TAG, and Mystery Falls was my favorite pit.

This September, I bought a house in Chattanooga, and I received a few emails suggesting that I make a new map of Mystery. I didn't need any convincing whatsoever. I was too shy to approach Buddy about it, so I had a friend ask on my behalf, and it was settled. I hadn't even managed to unpack all of the boxes in the my new place, but I'd made some phone calls and set aside a few dates to start mapping. Being new to the area, I was pretty excited to work on a cave so close by. Who knew you could cave on weekdays?

On October 19th -- a Tuesday! -- after dinner, Leah Bartlett (my wife) and I drove over to the cave and began the survey. In 3 hours or so, we managed 17 stations and 450 feet of survey in the entrance and upper area of the cave, terminating the survey line in the larger-than-expected room atop a short waterfall.

The following Saturday, we'd been able to arrange for two teams to be in the cave. Jason Hardy, Kelly Smallwood and Buddy Lane would have the unenviable task of surveying the massive pit and landing area, while Marty Abercrombie and I would run a line through the passages below the drop. After several hours of surveying in toasty-warm dry passage while the other crew froze half to death in the waterfall spray, I met up again with Jason & Kelly. It was my turn to learn the big news of the day:

"269.8 feet. Buddy taped it twice to be absolutely sure."

Whoa. It was around this time that I realized that maybe choosing one of the deepest pits in TAG as my first mapping project might not have been the best idea; I had visions of an angry, pitchfork-wielding mob chasing me back to Arkansas for "shortening" one of the classics. That day, after the survey, I started doing some reading. Just how deep was this thing *supposed* to be, anyway? 281 feet... right?



Researching the answer didn't provide as clear a picture as I'd hoped:

**1884:** Anderson Gillespie uses a balloon filled with hot air and a line to measure the height of the dome. According to *Caves of Chattanooga* by Larry E. Matthews, the *Chattanooga Times* (December 5, 1885) wrote that the pit was "nearly 275 feet in height," but Mark Wolinsky's article in the *NSS News* ("Mystery Falls: Birthplace of Deep Caving," Vol 43, 1985) reports 204 feet as the height recorded during this experiment.

**1938:** In May of 1938, W.L. Dodds & R.E. Blalock performed a survey of Mystery Falls as part of a commercialization plan. They recorded a measurement of 265 ft to the falls on the low-side lip; adding in the 8-foot height difference between the two lips would provide for a measurement of 272 feet on the high side. This measurement appears to be based upon USGS elevation markers on Lookout Mountain.

**1951:** According to *Caves of Chattanooga*, it was 1951 when Bill Cuddington and Roy Davis were first told of Mystery Falls. This discussion is described later in the November, 1953 issue of the *Nashville Speleoneers*: "Two years ago two men from Ruby Falls were lowered into this drop by electric winch ... (he) said that the Mystery Hole had a 41ft drop to the first ledge, then a 302 ft. free fall drop by a waterfall which falls the same distance."

**1954:** On June 12, 1954, Bill Cuddington famously performed the first modern descent of Mystery Falls on cable ladders. In closing his description of this historic event, Mark Wolinsky wrote: "By 1959, many other cavers had rappelled and prusiked Tennessee's greatest pit. During this time the official depth of Mystery was established as 281 ft freefall from the first ledge, with a total depth of 316 feet." [from M. Wolinsky's *NSS News* article]

**1967:** Richard Schreiber, on a trip with the Rockeater Grotto soon after the horizontal passage was breached by "unknown individuals," taped the low side of the pit at 274 feet. This would equate to a figure of 282 feet for the high side. [from M. Wolinsky's *NSS News* article]

**1973:** In 1973, Buddy Lane published the first modern map of Mystery Falls, noting a depth of 281 feet for the pit. It is not clear which rig point the pit was measured from, nor the technique.

**2007:** As part of an attempt to resurvey Mystery Falls, Brian Sakofsky and crew used a fiberglass tape to measure the pit. No map was ever produced from these surveys, but the following comment was posted to a cavechat.org forum: "From the high rig side, and from just above floor level (the beginning of the drop) the pit was measured to 273 ft with a 300 ft tape and a person holding the end to the bottom of the puddle beneath the drop."



All told, then, the high rig point of the Mystery Falls pit had been previously recorded as 275, 204, 272, 302, 281, 282, 281, and 273 feet... not to mention the kiosk outside the cave entrance that claims "286 feet." Of course, the techniques used for some of these measurements were not certain. What *was* certain, however, was that if we intended to publish a new map showing a depth of 270 for the big pit, we needed to be absolutely sure we were right.

Later that week, I came back on separate trips with Marty Abercrombie, Leah Bartlett & Brian Killingbeck to finish up the last of the survey work. It was not until November 5, however, that we would have our answer.

During our initial survey, Buddy had attempted to use a Disto D3 laser rangefinder, along with two other types of laser rangefinders, to measure the depth of the pit. This proved impossible, due to some combination of the misty air and the lack of a suitable target on the bottom. Hoping to find a way to confirm our original measurements, Buddy purchased a "target plate" directly from Leica, and I returned to the cave with Marty Abercrombie and Kyle Gochenour. Kyle brought another pair of D3 rangefinders, a "gorillapod" flexible tripod, Buddy's target plate, and a wild-eyed plan to affix the lasers to a handled ascender for sake of stabilization.

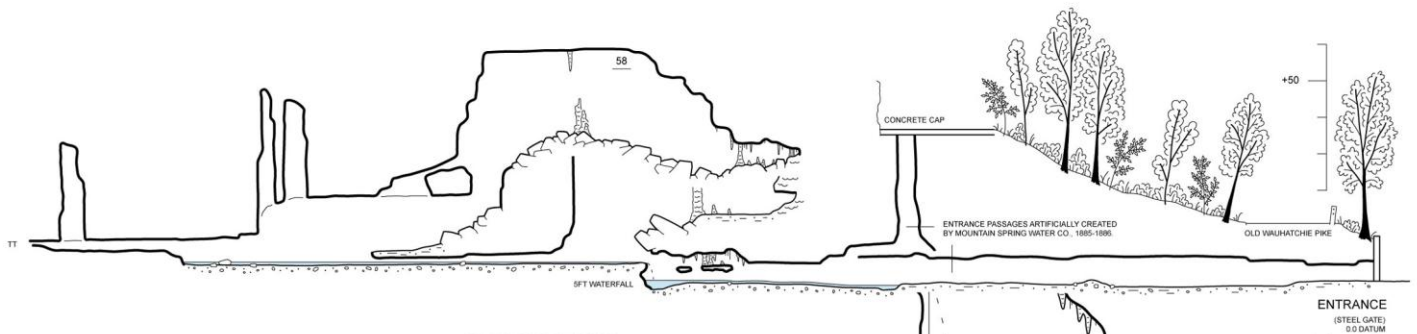


Friends in tow -- after all, who says no to bouncing Mystery Falls on a beautiful Friday evening? -- we sent the target plate down to the bottom of the pit, and Kyle assembled his laser rig. It was an immediate success. Using the ropes as a guide to place the target in the appropriate spot, we measured one side and then the other, three times each:

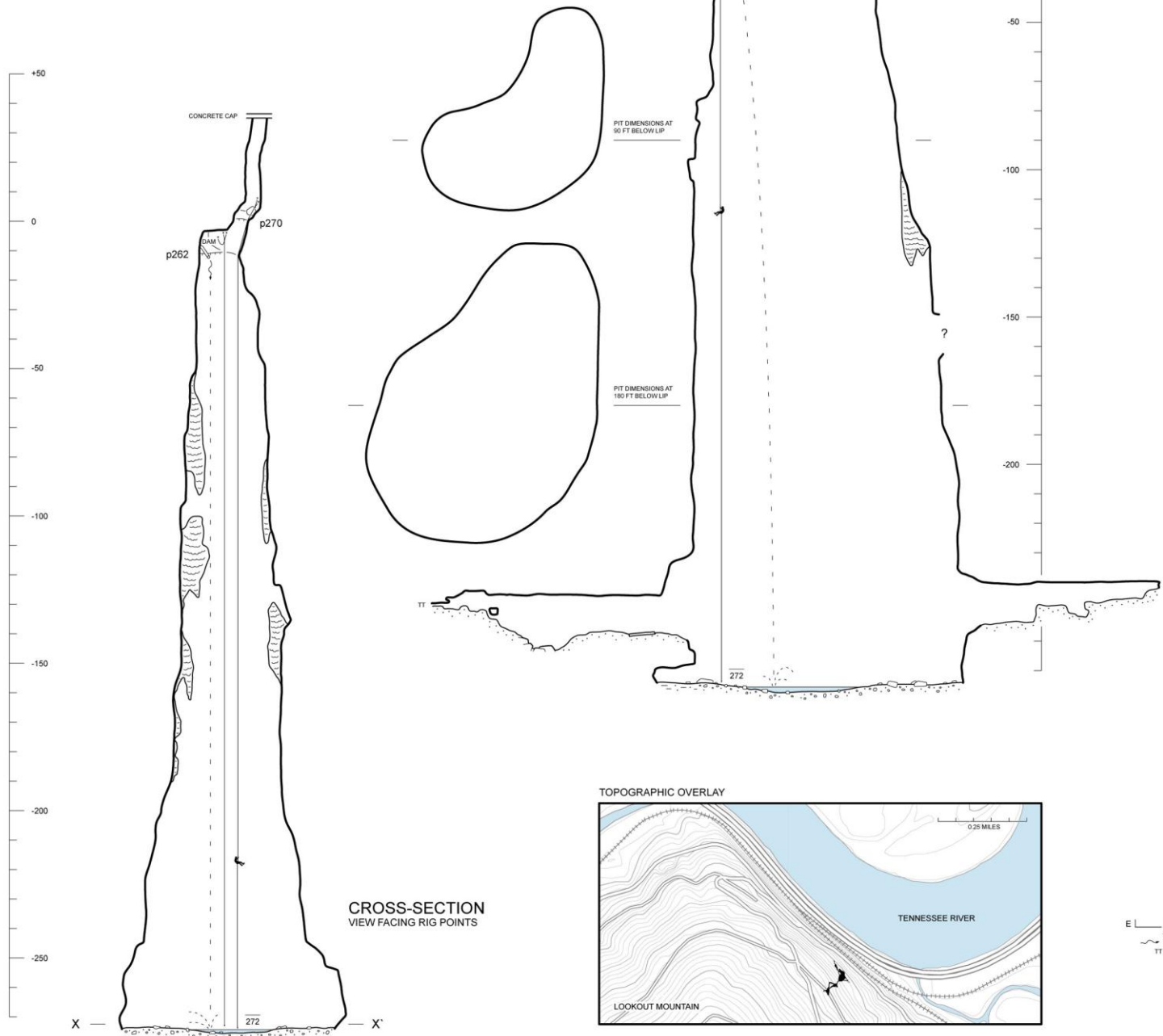
LOW SIDE	262.27	262.29	262.31
HIGH SIDE	269.79	269.77	269.75

Success! With laser measurements that mirrored the taped measurements almost exactly, we could now be confident in the numbers on the new map. Pleased, I enjoyed another rappel into my favorite deep pit, did a bit of mop-up survey work on rope, and called it a night. The survey was complete.

This issue of *TAG Caver* publishes the new map of Mystery Falls Cave. I'd like to thank everyone who helped with the survey, especially Buddy for allowing me to access the cave freely, and for taping the pit himself so I can't be held personally liable for the updated depth figure. I'd also like to thank Kelly for giving me a few extra days to finish the map when I know she was hoping to have this newsletter finished last Friday! In the end, there is a lot more to the cave than just the pit -- or exactly how deep it is -- and I hope the map reflects this.

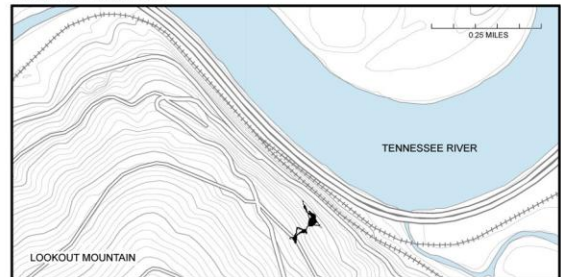


PROFILE VIEW  
NORTH-FACING PROJECTION



CROSS-SECTION  
VIEW FACING RIG POINTS

TOPOGRAPHIC OVERLAY



E  
TT



# MYSTERY FALLS CAVE

HAMILTON COUNTY, TENNESSEE ~ TCS # HM-8

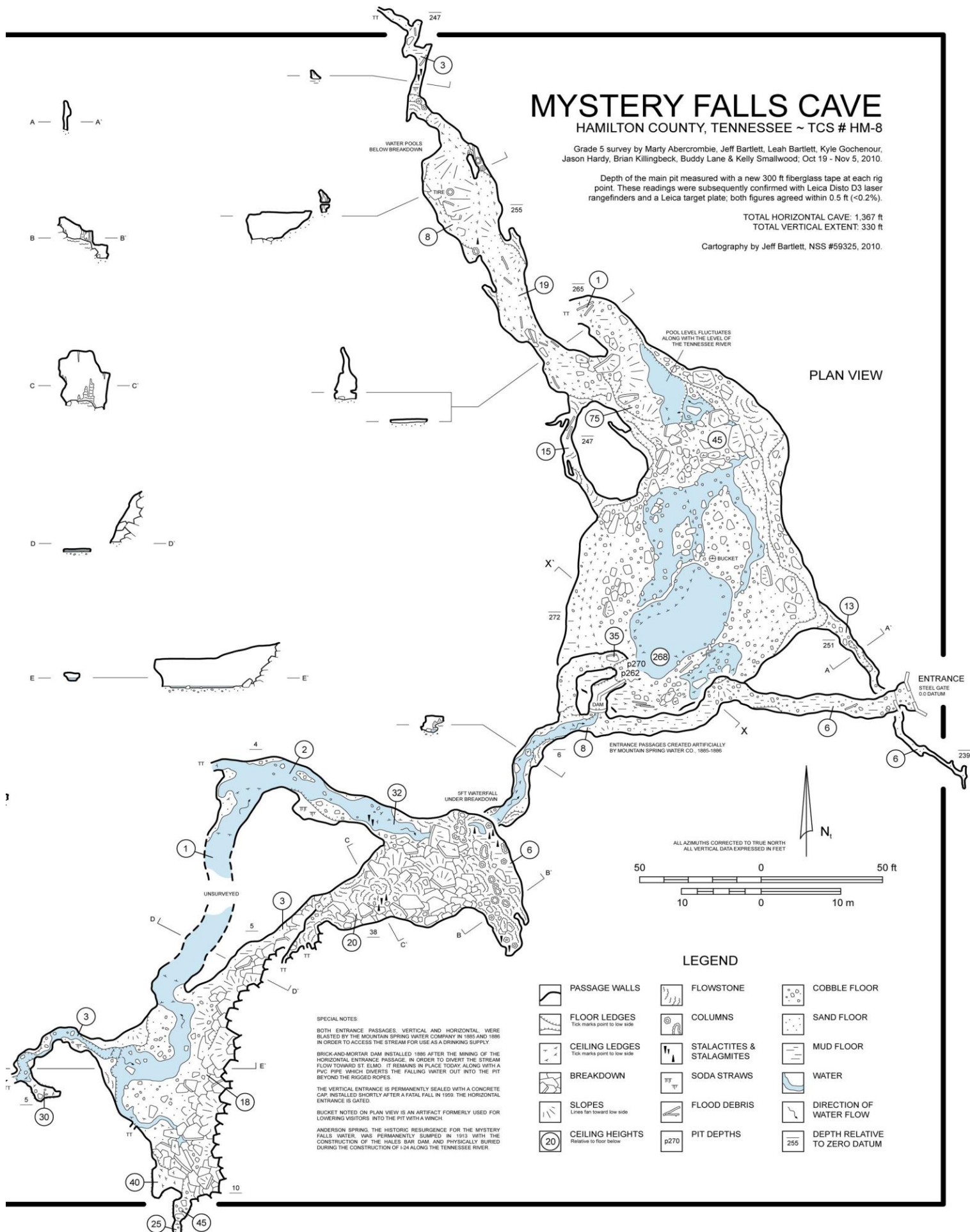
Grade 5 survey by Marty Abercrombie, Jeff Bartlett, Leah Bartlett, Kyle Gochenour, Jason Hardy, Brian Killingbeck, Buddy Lane & Kelly Smallwood; Oct 19 - Nov 5, 2010.

Depth of the main pit measured with a new 300 ft fiberglass tape at each rig point. These readings were subsequently confirmed with Leica Disto D3 laser rangefinders and a Leica target plate; both figures agreed within 0.5 ft (<0.2%).

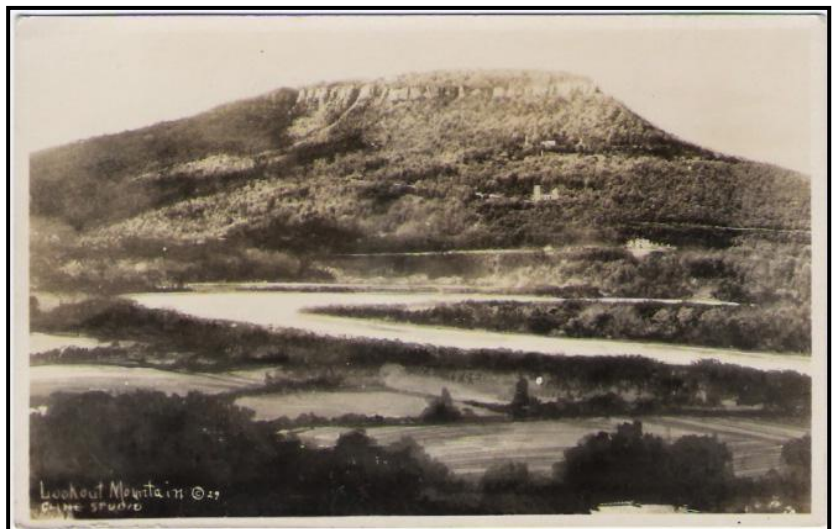
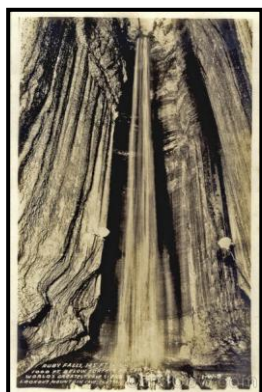
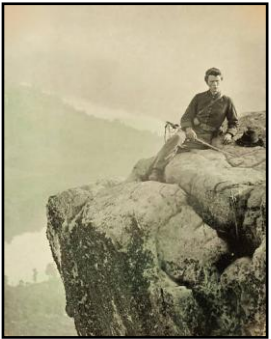
TOTAL HORIZONTAL CAVE: 1,367 ft  
TOTAL VERTICAL EXTENT: 330 ft

Cartography by Jeff Bartlett, NSS #59325, 2010.

PLAN VIEW









# LENGTH OF CAVE TRIPS

By Mudpuppy

We all have fun underground. The length of time of these trips differs greatly. Guess it all depends on your comfort level or ability to absorb pain.

***The Old In And Out:*** This cave trip is over so quickly, the caver's skin cells are still tanning. This usually happens during pit bouncing but can also occur at a horizontal entrance with deep water. It is then called, "The Old In And Out With Shrinkage".

***Hurry Up And Wait:*** The length of time underground seems like an eternity. You move quickly only to stop every few minutes to repair some piece of gear, change batteries or figure out where the hell you are. The trip becomes a tale told 'round many a campfire in TAG when the subject of buffoonery comes up. (Our version out west is called the Mojave Shuffle.)

***Time Warp Again (Lets Do The):*** Even though everything is setup before time, you barely get in the cave before noontime that day. Total time in driving and piddling is over four times the length of time you get to spend underground. If you keep up at this rate, you will never have to replace any of your caving gear.

***Grotto Meeting Day Cave Trip:*** It ain't long enough for the hardcores and is way too long for the newbies. At some point someone says they need at least 2 hours to cook their dish for the dinner before hand. (We have got a lot better at this, haven't we?)

***Epic:*** You enter the cave early Saturday morning. When you come out it is dark and you have no idea what time it is. On the hike back to the vehicles the sun comes up and you have no idea what day it is.

***The Limit (Your):*** You have no idea how long you have been underground but you sure want to get out of that cave. You can't understand why anyone would want to spend another minute in this slimy, nasty cave. You can also smell your beer in a cooler near the entrance.

"Greetings from the Mojave Desert!"

Pup and KT



