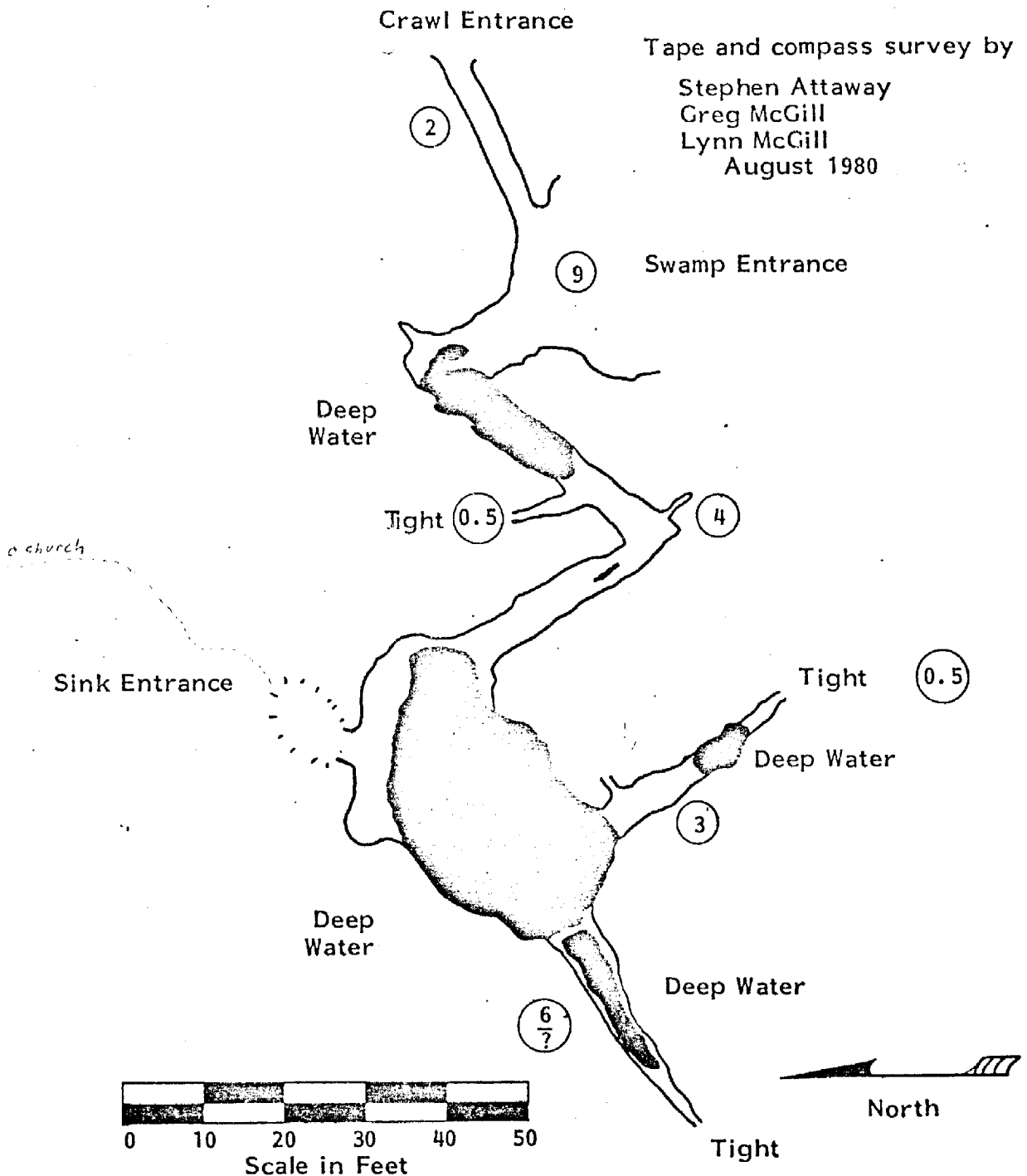


AL 689
MUSKRAT CAVE

Tape and compass survey by
Stephen Attaway
Greg McGill
Lynn McGill
August 1980



This issue of the BGN brings some real surprises. First of all let me mention the editorship of the BGN. As of this issue, Greg & Lynn McGill will be co-editing the newsletter.

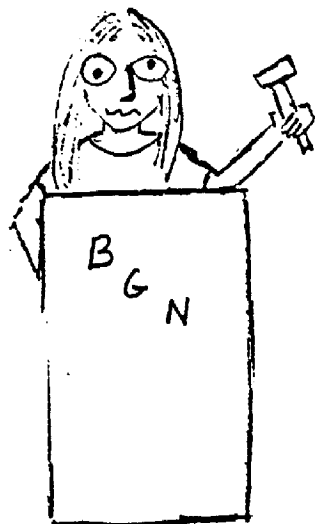
The outgoing editor says that all "missing" issues will be mailed and this issue will catch all subs up. However, due to the inconvenience caused, we will extend all subs until December.

The newsletter subscription policy is spelled out in detail for the first time and we are very proud of our low rates. We do intend to regain our high standing in the newsletter field.

Beginning in January, we will be printing volume numbers on all issues. Any guesses for the Jan. volume number?

The Marion Smith article on Buckeye Cave has been around for a while so we decided to print it. Also in this issue appears the approved release form for Grotto trips-read it carefully. Tom Chamblee reports on the Sinking Cove area and party-goers report on various conventions.

The next meeting of The Birmingham Grotto will be at Volker Hall, UAB Lecture room E at 7:30 PM on Nov 3. That's the first Monday as always.



The Birmingham Grotto Newsletter is published approximately twelve times a year by the Birmingham Grotto of the National Speleological Society.

Annual subscription rates are included in the \$4 membership fee. Outside the Birmingham area, the subscription rate is only \$2. All are prorated from October.

Editors: Greg & Lynn McGill
5279 Paramount Drive
Birmingham, Al. 35210

Submit materials for publication directly to the Editors. Deadline is the 20th day of the month preceding the month of issue.

ALL OFFICIAL GROTTO MAIL (INCLUDING EXCHANGES) ADDRESSED TO ANYONE OTHER THAN THE EDITORS SHOULD BE SENT TO THE GROTTO PO BOX. THIS ASSURES THAT THE MESSAGE WILL GET THROUGH.

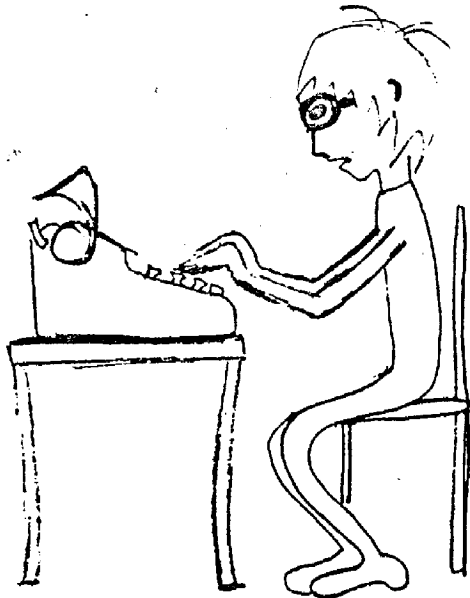
P O Box 3302
Birmingham, Al. 35205

Grotto Officers -

This crop was elected at the October meeting.

Chairperson: Valerie Howell
Vice-Chair: Gary Barnes
Secretary: J.E. Thomas
Treasurer: Edna Caudle

No secretary's report was received for the meeting of October 6, 1980.



Sinking Cove Cave and the
Cave per Little Crow Creek Valley
-- Tom Chamblee

Saturday morning (Sept 28) I met with a group of folks from the B'ham Grotto at the Tarrant Krystal. They were on their way to meet other cavers for a special tour of Sauta Cave system on the north end of Gunter's Mtn. I conferred with them briefly, told them of my plans to visit Falling Springs cave just NW of Stevenson, Al. in Jackson county. I bid them all a good journey and proceeded on my way towards my ultimate destination, the beautiful Falling Springs Cave. I took the scenic route from Scottsboro, north to Dolberry's Cove thence east by Goshen Cove, north up Roache's Cove and across Low gap below the summit of Russell Point and into the floor of Big Coon Valley. One then takes a right onto Jackson co. #54 by Little Coon, thence across the t. ks into Stevenson. This is a very beautiful way to go, in that it circumvents the southern terminus of the magnificent Cumberland Plateau. Once

into McMahan Cove, I chose the left fork of the cove which leads to a road that proceeds almost vertically up the side of the mountain to the top. Several hundred feet up the road, I met a farmer snaking logs uoy of a ditch that were deposited there by an overturned flatbed trailer that lost control while descending this precipitous route. They told me that the road had been there for many years and that it led to a small underground coal mine (pioneer mine) on top. The view from the top of the mountain (looking across to Tenn. River valley) is breathtaking! I still can't imagine anyone but Evel Kenivel driving a loaded coal truck down that steep grade! I was informed by this man, who has hunted all over this area, that he knew of no such cave as Falling Springs. He told me that it might possibly be in the right fork of the cove on Mr. Graham's farm. I made my way over to Mr. Graham's farm and met him at his home. He has 3 caves on his land (Dry Cave, Stillhouse Cave & Graham's Falls Cave) but did not know the existence of a Falling Springs Cave. He was born in the cove and has walked nearly every acre of mountain and canyon in the cove. We finally concluded that it must be in Jeffries Cove (between McMahan & Doran's Cove). Instead of hunting it down, I decided to visit the enormous Sinking Cove Cave in Franklin Co. (Tenn) at the head of Little Crow Creek (beyond Salt River Cave and Stubblefield Hollow).

The drive up Crow Creek Valley is impressive, the surrounding mountains standing 1000' to 1200' above the flat floor of the valley. Upon taking a left turn at the "T" onto a county road one enters the Little Crow drainage area, which finally crosses a saddle into the spacious floor of Sinking Cove, the largest solutional valley I have ever seen.

The downstream end is 85-90' wide by 40' high. In the ceiling in the far end is a sheer canyon-like dome about 80' high when measured from the ceiling, and adding to the intrigue and feeling that there may be upper solutional (vertical) development above. As one crosses this massive rock heap, heading upstream, his light fades into the yawning corridor beyond!

One is now looking down into the upstream portion of this hall, the stream rolling through its very open expanses. Here the proportions are 300' long X 90' wide X 70' high, clean, clear, and open. The smooth, clean massive walls and flat joint & fractureless ceiling increase its awesome character. The total length of the hall is approx. 600' long X 90' wide X 40-70' high. At the upstream end of this section is a balcony at which there is an upper dry passage above the stream level.

At this point there is no visible way to enter it from below. From here one proceeds up the creek in a 20' wide but rather high tube along which there are several points this upper dry tunnel is visible 65' above. The coarse alluvial in the stream bed is coated by black and contrasting bright orange mineral stain giving a halloween-like appearance in many places. Around 700' beyond the upper end of the cathedral hall, I came upon a place where it is necessary to stoop and duckwalk over this coarse alluvium to follow the main flow further. I noticed a high, narrow passage to my left before entering this duckwalk. I returned and entered this fork at which point are forests of large, stunningly beautiful rows of stalagmites from 3 to 7' long down a wall for several hundred feet back down the main stream tube.

A short piece up this narrow, high lead I climbed a dry, steep multi-colored flowstone which extends up 80' above its base into a large rotunda room crowned by pyramidal stalagmite columns 12' high, black in color. This calcareous flow completely covers the huge talus pile beneath it.

Upon my descent from the room, I noticed

ted a way into the upper, dry corner. I had been beneath since the Cathedral hall. This dry section is very "Tumbler rock" in appearance, having a white, chalk-like ceiling and a floor strewn with much moderate sized talus. Its width ranges from 60-85' wide X 12-20' high above the breakdown talus and has a fine view of the cathedral hall from the balcony I had seen on my way in.

There is much more to the system than what I saw on this trip, the input of the drainage heads up in Cave Cove several more miles upstream. This is a completely unmarked cavern and possesses many lovely striking features worthy of any discriminating cave gourmet.

The following day, I walked the wilderness areas around Custard Hollow and climbed the Plateau to a point crowned with massive (115' high) sandstone bluffs. From here, I was afforded an awesome panorama of the cove and its tributary canyons, the floor of the cove being 1000' below me. I absorbed this beauty and tranquility for a couple of hours before descending the mountain and re-entering the cave for a farewell trip.

This was one of the most enjoyable weekends I have spent in a long time. Thank GOD for HIS masterful CREATION.



EXPLORATION AND SURVEY OF BUCKEYE CAVE (AL 779), ALABAMA

By Marion O. Smith

Relatively few current cavers remember former Huntsville and Paint Rock Valley Grotto member Larry Ray McLennan, but for several years in the 1960s he was one of the leading cave finders in Alabama, Valhalla being perhaps his most notable discovery. Sometime during the late 1966-early 1967 period, he found a shallow pit near the head of Rousseau Hollow north of Gurley.

His discovery was a fortyish foot pit beneath an overhanging bluff at the edge of a streambed, and because a large tree of that name was nearby, he named it Buckeye Cave. There was obvious passage at the bottom, and although it is uncertain how many times McLennan visited the cave, on one early trip he and Bill Cuddington reached a high level lead about 1150 feet from the entrance. Each time McLennan went to the cave he got a little further than before. The tactic of grabbing six ropes and pushing hard on the initial trip would not become routine for nearly another decade.

Since Richard Schreiber knew McLennan, he arranged a trip with him to Buckeye. On June 25, 1967, Richard, Foxy Stafford [Ferguson], Dennis Blankenship, and I met Larry and his brother Tom in Paint Rock. This was to be my only meeting with Larry, but it would be a memorable one. It was not a good period in his life. He had recently been divorced and had taken to drink. He had consumed considerable alcohol before we met him that morning, but nevertheless all six of us piled into his Scout and we headed for the cave. Over a mile up the log road we had two flats at once, the left rear tire coming completely off the rim. Having no spare, Larry used his mobile phone and called Bob Clark in Huntsville, explained the situation, and said he would call again when we got out of the cave. We went to the cave and "explored" it, Larry leaving a bottle of scotch at the entrance. On our way out, he began to work on the scotch, chasing it with water from our canteens and from the streambed. He phoned Clark, and as we walked off the mountain, became

more obnoxious, firing his pistol a time or two, and making advances toward Foxy. At last, Bob Clark, Bill Garrison, and David Young met us at the foot of the mountain and took us to our own vehicles.

Events in the cave were dull by comparison with the outside activity, but at the time I thought the cave was "tough." It was of the stairstep variety with one eight foot drop besides the entrance pit being rigged. We did considerable crawling and explored a couple hundred feet of virgin passage. My roommate, Dennis, was the first to reach a 20 foot pit in the main stream passage. We had no rope but could see that there were more climbs or drops ahead. We had reached a depth of about 225 feet, although we did not know it at the time.

McLennan made return trips to the cave. Apparently, after descending the 20 foot pit, he by-passed a 42 foot pit and descended via a freeclimb route. The stream disappeared through breakdown and after probing a room above it, McLennan ceased exploration in Buckeye. He and his followers had reached approximately 340 feet vertically below the entrance.

The next recorded trip to Buckeye was by the Huntsville Grotto. On November 7, 1970, Bill Torode, Harold Tinsley, George Frohwein, Carl Craig, Reynolds Duncan, and David Cloyd had a long day in the cave, mapping a total of 3,414 feet. Torode and Cloyd mapped the wet route while the others did the dry route. They too by-passed the 42 foot pit and reached the breakdown zone. No virgin passage was explored, but still it was quite an effort to map in one day as much as they did. However, they made no return trips.

The cave was forgotten until 1979 when, trying to find another 400 foot deep cave for Alabama, I remembered that Buckeye was probably already deep, and perhaps had not been bitter ended.

On June 2 Jill Dorman, Richard Schreiber, David Teal, Dan Twilley, Bobby Whorton, and I met and started the long walk to the cave. En route, Teal got sick, and he and Whorton dropped out. The rest of us entered Buckeye and sur-

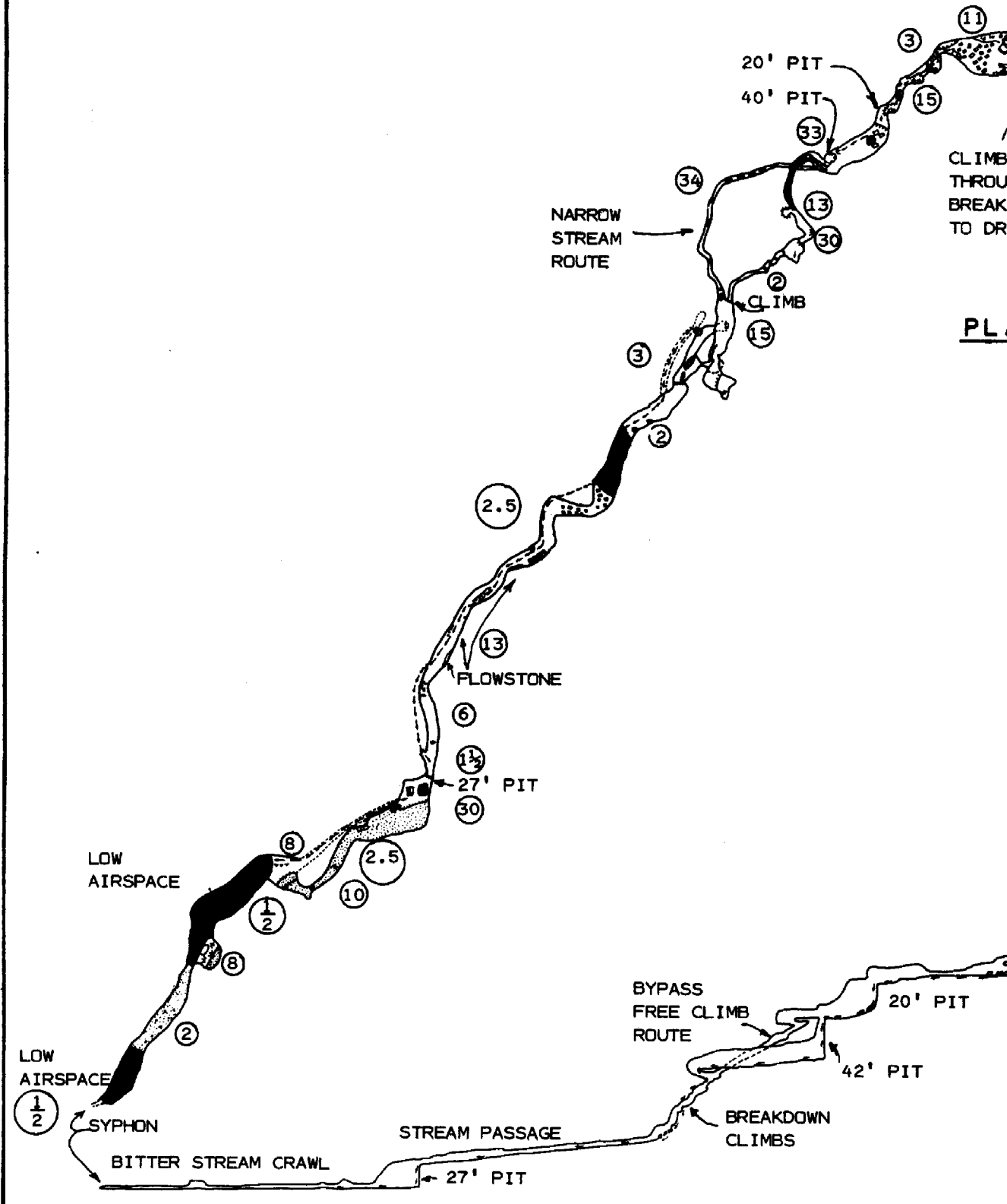
veyed 1,089.2 feet before stopping to explore. We followed the lower wet crawl route and rigged the 20 and 42 foot pits, soon reaching the breakdown "terminu We each probed the boulders. In time Dan managed to dig his way through to a series of climbs for a vertical loss of fifty + feet. Beyond that we got into regular stream passage, which we followed for about 800 feet before we were stopped by a 25ish foot wet pit above a sizeable room. Delighted at our success, we elected not to do the drop then but to return later with two survey teams.

Accordingly, on June 30, the same four plus Jim Smith, Will Chamberlin, Gerald Moni, Steve Attaway, and Stella Twilley entered the cave. Dan, Richard, Jill, and Steve proceeded to top of the 42 foot pit and began their survey there and the rest of us, after a few photos were taken, mapped from the last June 2 station through the lower water crawl to the 42 foot pit. Moni, who was not feeling well, soon aborted and left the cave. Bill Torode, Dick Sears, and Tom Cleland, all of Huntsville, also came into the cave and toured to the pools just below the Twilley breakdown climbs.

When the second crew reached the 42 footer, they rappelled it and went in search of the first crew which they found mid-way through the Twilley Extension on their way out. The cave had ended 500 feet from the bottom of the wet 27 foot pit, with the last 200 feet being very wet and low, and explored only by Jill. They stopped their survey at the start of this super wet section.

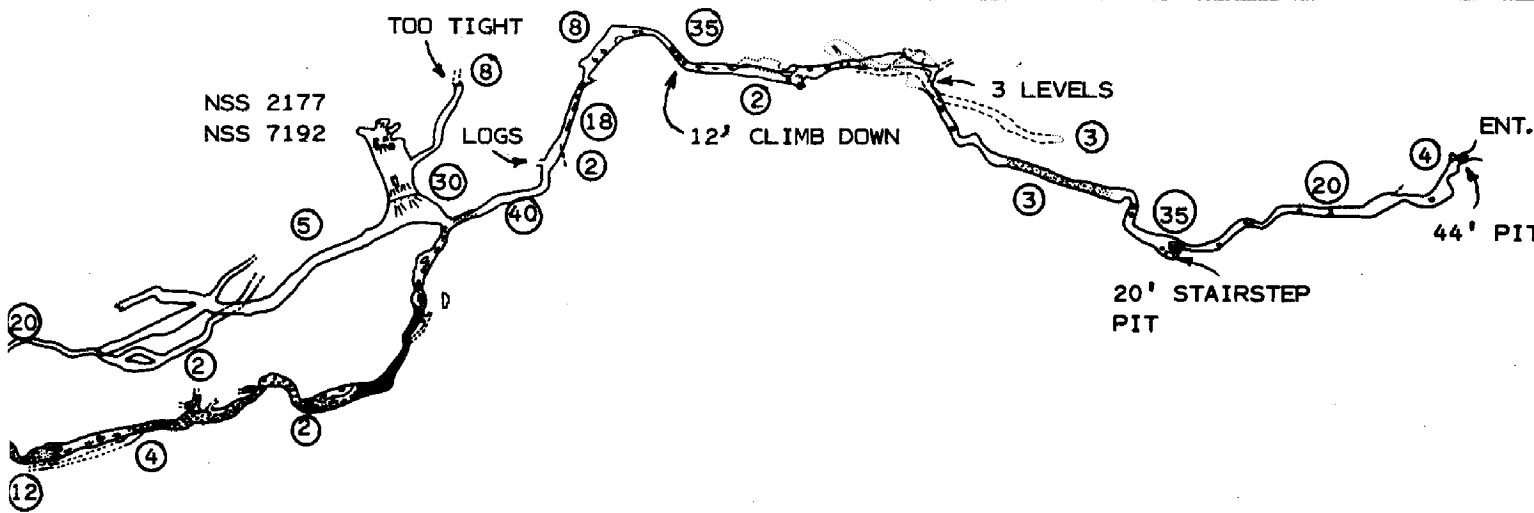
Stella joined Team A in their quest for the entrance, but Jim and I descended the 27 footer and proceeded ahead. Will yoyoed the drop and moved back a few hundred feet in the Twilley Extension to wait. Jim and I took the survey to the bitter end, getting quite CHILLED in the process, and then we too headed for the entrance. For some it had been a fourteen hour trip. Team A had mapped 1,332 feet and Team B 1,211.5 feet.

The cave was now bottomed and the virgin passage explored. Consequently,



CLIMB
THROUGH
BREAK
TO DR

PL



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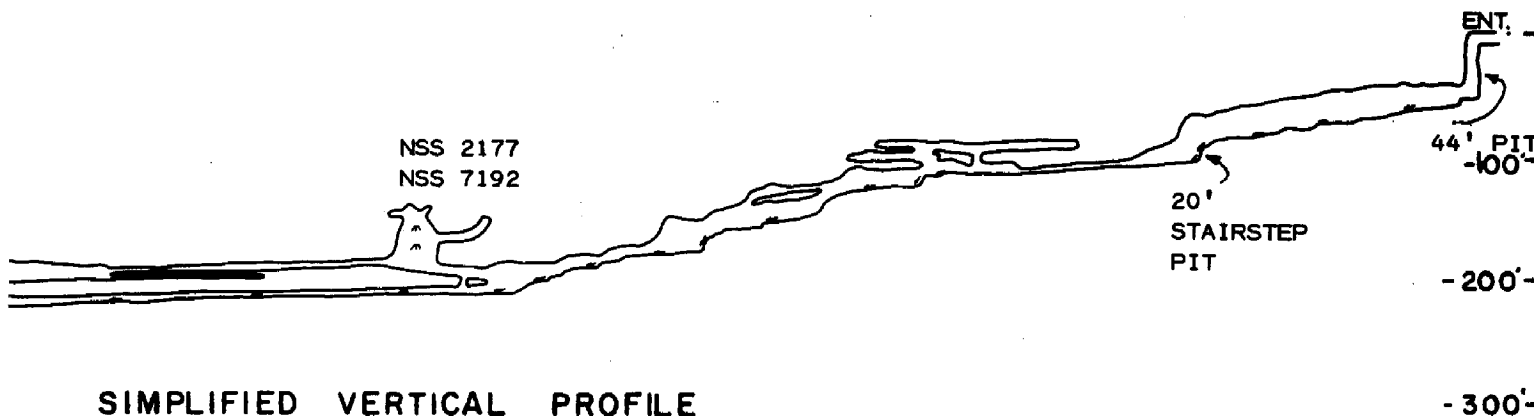
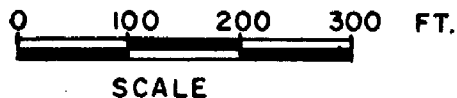
TAPE AND COMPASS SURVEY
 JUNE 2, 30, JULY 14, OCTOBER 27, 1979
 AND FEBRUARY 23, 1980 BY:

DARLENE ANTHONY	JIM NICHOLLS
STEVE ATTAWAY	RICHARD W. SCHREIBER
WILL CHAMBERLIN	JIM SMITH
JACK CHISLETT	MARION O. SMITH
JILL DORMAN	DAN TWILLEY
CHRIS KERR	STELLA TWILLEY
GREG MCGILL	LYNN WRIGHT
GERALD MONI	JOHN YUST

LENGTH (THC): 5,460.1 FEET

DEPTH (TVE): 457.6 FEET

PREPARED FOR PUBLICATION BY:
 JOE DOMNANOVICH



SIMPLIFIED VERTICAL PROFILE

N-S AXIS

BUCKEYE CAVE
 AL 779

enthusiasm waned and the obtaining of mop-up survey crews proved to be somewhat of a problem. On July 14, after visiting nearby Smith Pit, Greg McGill, Lynn Wright, Gerald Moni, and I entered at 5:18 PM for a short trip. We mapped the upper level dry route, for a total of 574.1 feet, and exited by 10 PM.

Months later, October 27, a Knoxville, Tennessee, crew composed of Chris Kerr, Darlene Anthony, Jim Nicholls, John Yust, and I had a bottoming trip. We mapped the by-pass route around the 42 foot pit and short leads in vicinity of the Twilley breakdown climbs, for a total of 443.7 feet. Then everyone except Darlene (who had no wetsuit) did the very wet 27 foot pit for sporting and photographic purposes.

Finally, February 23, 1980, Jack Chislett, a 26 year old Georgia Tech graduate student, and I spent nine hours mapping upper and intermediate level leads between the second and third rigged drops, for a total of 809.6 feet. With this, the cave was declared "finished."

Buckeye, though it has some nasty spots, is one of the easier "deep" caves in Alabama. Only four short drops have to be rigged (and one of these, the second from the entrance, could be free climbed), but the many climbs and gradient bring its total depth to a respectable 457.6 feet with over a mile (5,460.1 feet) of passage. Yet it was thirteen years after its discovery before cavers reached its unpleasant terminal syphon.

NEWSLETTER POLICY

One of the main expenses of the grotto is the newsletter. For about a year now, we've been sending out the newsletter under a non-profit mailing permit. With this we can (in fact, must) send out 200 newsletters for less than the cost of mailing 50 newsletters first class. Of these 200 newsletters, a great many are freebies, sent in the hope of inspiring paying subscribers and/or articles. Admittedly, we have gotten a few checks, a few more inquiries, and some excellent articles which we have swiftly published.

In an effort to re-vamp the newsletter policy along with the mailing list, the newsletters will be mailed out to the following categories with all charges prorated from October:

M=Dues-paying members of B'ham Grotto (\$4.00)

I=Instate subscriber/non-member (\$2.00)

O=Out-of-state subscriber/non-member (\$2.00)

E=Exchange publications

C=Complimentary (free to non-members contributing articles of minimum two pages for initial publication in BGN)

L=Library (NSS required mailing)

G=Grotto (info copy to club not publishing newsletter for exchange)

V=Visitors (entitled to 1 issue free)

P=Potpourri (whatever remains to make the 200)

These codes will appear on the mailing labels on the first line. It should be noted that the last three categories listed (non-exchanging grottoes, visitors, and potpourri) are used mainly to round out the total to 200 and aren't guaranteed deliveries. That is, unless they change categories. The rates could conceivably lower - if the proportion of subscribers increases enough to offset all newsletter costs at a lower rate, we would be the first to drop them (optimism in the face of inflation that's called).

RELEASE

READ BEFORE SIGNING - THIS MAY AFFECT YOUR RIGHTS

WHEREAS, The Birmingham Grotto of the National Speleological Society is a corporation organized in Jefferson County, Alabama and has among its goals the exploration of caves, pits or other underground cavities by whatever name known,

AND WHEREAS, The Birmingham Grotto as aforesaid acts through its individual members and officers,

AND WHEREAS, the undersigned is fully aware and has been advised by members of the Birmingham Grotto that there are certain risks which are involved in the exploration of caves and other activities undertaken by the Birmingham Grotto. There are also risks which may be involved in such activities which may not have been communicated to the undersigned, but of which the undersigned is aware. The individual members of the Birmingham Grotto have made no representations that the activities which they engage in are free from any hazards normally associated with such activities,

AND WHEREAS, the undersigned with the knowledge of the potential dangers involved in the activities undertaken by the Birmingham Grotto and its members does desire to participate in trips which are conducted under the direction or control of members of the Birmingham Grotto.

NOW, THEREFORE, IN CONSIDERATION OF THE PREMISES, the Birmingham Grotto does agree to allow or permit the undersigned to attend and participate in a trip conducted by its members on the _____ day of _____, 19__ to _____ (cave or pit) with the express understanding that while the trip is co-ordinated by and led by individual members of the Birmingham Grotto that no representations have been made that the trip will be free from all hazards that are normally associated with such activities.

In consideration of the members of the Birmingham Grotto permitting the undersigned to attend the aforesaid trip, the undersigned does hereby on his own behalf and on behalf of his heirs and assigns forever RELEASE, DISCHARGE AND HOLD HARMLESS the Birmingham Grotto and all individual members thereof from any and all liability for any injuries which might be sustained by the undersigned while on the aforesaid trip. This document is intended to be a release in full for any claims that the undersigned might have as a result of any and all injury or damage which might occur on the trip aforesaid regardless of negligence on the part of anyone.

I have read the aforesaid and agree to the terms and conditions therein. I understand the potential risks and desire to participate at my own risk in the trip aforesaid.

BIRMINGHAM GROTTO NEWSLETTER
P.O. BOX 3302
Birmingham, Alabama 35255

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WARRIOR, AL 35173

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The Alabama Cave Survey is proud to announce the upcoming publication of ALABAMA CAVES 1980 by Bill Varnedoe. This book contains data on 2020 caves and has over 1300 maps. It will be sold unbound and is almost 900 pages long. A few bound copies may be produced, write if interested.

Folks, I shouldn't have to tell you what 2 reams of paper costs, and thats about what this book runs. Printing/copying costs are incredibly high and we feel that this price is quite low considering inflation, etc. This is a pre-publication price so no telling what it will cost later. Send your order today. Shipment will begin in December we hope.

to:

A.C.S.
PO Box 3302
Birmingham, Ala. 35205

My NSS# is _____ . You must be a NSS MEMBER.

I wish to reserve _____ copies of ALABAMA CAVES 1980.

Enclosed is \$ _____ @ \$25.00 each Members price.

or \$ _____ @ \$30.00 each Non-A.C.S. Members.

Please do not send cash, make all checks payable to ALABAMA CAVE SURVEY.

If we can not make arrangements for delivery at a meeting or some other gathering there will be a postage charge