

BIRMINGHAM GROTTO

NEWSLETTER

AUGUST 2011



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BGN Calendar

AUG 19 AUG 20	Grotto trip to Gourdneck Cave. Camping Friday night, trip Saturday. Contact President David McRae for more details.
SEPT 1 SEPT 4	62nd Old Timers Reunion. More information available at www.otr.org .
SEPT 13	The Birmingham Grotto Meeting begins at 7:00 PM, at the Homewood Library, 1721 Oxmoor Road. (Note: Annual dues will be collected at the October meeting. Get ready!)
OCT 6 OCT 9	34th Annual TAG Fall Cave-In on Lookout Mountain, GA. More details available at www.tagfallcavein.org .

The Grotto Calendar is being continually updated and is available online at www.bhamgrotto.org. Check it out!

(cont. from p. 53)

While they were in the pit I decided to watch the cicadas and walk over to Proton Pit which wasn't too far. I did some ridgewalking. The results were one pit and a digging prospect. Stephen and Art were in the pit a long time. Stephen was mapping it. The hammered squeeze was just beyond the entrance. He made it bigger but someone had already enlarged it some. Here is what he found (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X1cwvx7jB-w>) Stephen had found another pit about 70 ft. deep. Then there was a 10 ft. pit. He dropped that. On the other side was a fixed rope. He climbed up that, and he was in a low muddy crawl and the rope continued. He was by himself, and wisely turned around. He had gone as deep into the cave as Neversink is deep. Later I was telling someone about this, and he told me that he knew who had put that rope there. This was the project of Dave Quillen and Bob Carter. There were even more pits. He considered this to be one of the toughest and nastiest caves in TAG. When Dave enlarged some of the holes, he only made it large enough for them. These two were not finished surveying the cave, and the word was out that they would appreciate if no one disturbed the survey markers which lay ahead in that muddy crawl. Secondhand, I also heard that the total depth of this multi-drop cave was around 500 ft. Also it was rumored that one of the pits was so tight, that one of the cavers was not sure if he was going to make it out. Perhaps we will hear in the future directly from them about their finds.

After leaving Hammered Squeeze we relocated the leads that I had found. One was in a dry creek-bed, and it did not go. The other we dug open. It went down about 15 ft vertical and 6 ft. horizontal and got too small. After that we headed back. Near where you leave the trail to go to the rock shelter, just before that, if you go to the left, down the hillside and below a nearby bluff, is Humongous Maze Cave. Its cool air was a relief after the hot climb out. We went in it for a while, and indeed it is a maze. We found the waterfall room, and it had a death rock. It was only being held up by what I considered to be weak shale like rock. I am not sure, if anyone has climbed to the passage we could see at the top. On the way out one of the others took a wrong turn, but it soon intersected the passage I was in again. This cave is a maze partly because huge chunks of the ceiling have fallen down creating this breakdown maze. After leaving the cave, we finished the climb back to the Cumberland Plateau and Hytop cemetery. The gates to the forest trails are closed for the summer now. I am looking forward to when they re-open, and I can go "ridgeriding" again.

Disclaimer

Caving trips posted are led by volunteers. No grotto committee reviews any trip leaders' qualifications. New cavers should inquire about the nature of the trip and the experience of the leader in advance. Those participating in the trips should be aware of their limits. On vertical trips all participants are expected to supply their own gear and be knowledgeable about rigging and safe practices.

The *Birmingham Grotto Newsletter* is published twelve times a year by the Birmingham Grotto, Inc. of the National Speleological Society, Inc. Other NSS Internal Organizations may reprint material provided credit is given to this publication and the author.

Annual dues are \$15.00 per individual and \$20.00 per family which is payable on October 1st. Dues are prorated for anyone joining during the year. The subscription rate is \$15.00 per year. The Birmingham Grotto will exchange publications with other NSS Grottos. Exchange newsletters should be sent to:

Birmingham Grotto
PO Box 59607
Birmingham, AL 35259

Articles, Trip Reports, Graphics, Poetry, and any other speleo-related material should be sent to the Editor via email at the address noted below. Naturally, the Editor will accept typed text in practically any form; however, electronic submission reduces the risk of typographical errors. Submissions via e-mail should be directed to: editor@bhamgrotto.org. The deadline for publication is the 25th of the month; however, the Newsletter is limited to 12 pages and often fills up quickly.



On the cover...

Alan Cook dropping into Sinking Cove.

(Dave McRae)

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**Guess Cave
Alan Cook**

June 25, 2011. Jeff Harrod, Daniel Wood, Randy Donaldson, Alan Cook
 From the parking spot the cave is maybe a five minute walk. None of us had been here before and did not know what to expect. Also, there is no good map. The entrance looks to be manmade, maybe five to six feet round, almost a perfect circle, 20 feet deep. Looking down, we saw running water. Ice cold air was rushing out. We wetsuited up and Jeff rigged the rope. I was the first one down. As I walked around the edge of the pit and got on rope, leaves fell into the pit and the air lifted them up and back out and it took a while until they dropped down. Never seen that before.

Once we all were down, we left our rappelling gear there and took off. We really couldn't stand up unless we were under the entrance, and in the 1.5 feet of water. The crawling started just about then. Soon we had about a 30 inch ceiling with six inches of running water, and plenty of rocks big and small. Well, then the ceiling got a little lower and the water a little deeper. By now our helmet chin straps are undone and again the ceiling gets a little lower and the water is getting deeper. We are now in a maybe 20 inch tall passage with 14 inches of water. Here our helmets are off to keep our mouths above the water. The wind is very strong. The water gets deeper and the ceiling stays the same. Now we can walk, and then we are swimming and cannot touch bottom. My helmet is on top of my Swago pack I am pushing it in front of me while swimming and trying not to hit my head. This was my favorite part of the trip. Finally we can walk again and the ceiling gets taller. We are bent over a little while, walking and sinking about eight inches in the sandy bottom. I notice lots of albino crawfish in these areas. After a short time we are at a breakdown pile of rocks and go up into a very large room with some trails from other cavers so we follow them. If we walked off the trails the ground would crack or crunch it was so dry. Imagine that, just came out of plenty of water. We notice lots of formations and several large flow stones. We follow several passages. Now back to the main large breakdown room. We went up a tricky climb which led us on the edge of a larger room, about 60 feet down, 80 feet across and 150 feet long. Following around the edge we get back to solid ground and follow a nice passage. To the left is a hill like the one to the Pillar of Fire. I went up. At the top I notice everything is just a big flowstone. It looked like it really didn't go further so I came back down and had to take off my wetsuit top, leaving my farmer John bottom on. I was about to overheat. Past this hill was probably the nicest decorated passage we came across. Lots of white soda straws and formations; flagging tape was marking areas to walk because of the fragile floor. We took several pictures here and on our way out Jeff took some time-exposed pictures of the large rooms while we lit them up with our lights.

We decided to head on out so back down to the water. Everything was the same except now we are going downstream, not up. Helmets were off in the same areas. Everyone had a really good cave trip. Not seeing all of this cave, I would go back if someone knew the way. This trip was the first time I have ever worn a full wetsuit in a cave and I was so glad I did. I have been in many wet caves before but in this cave, it is very necessary. Chili Heads, poly top and bottom and head cover then full wetsuit gets two thumbs up from me! We were in the cave just over five hours.



2011 NSS Convention Martha Mills

Glenn and I traveled to Convention in Glenwood Springs by way of Alabaster Caverns in Freedom OK. This is a gypsum show cave. The cave was not highly decorated but was however an interesting cave. After touring that cave we headed to Colorado Springs where we drove to the top of Pike's Peak.



Glenn & Martha

We finally arrived at registration for convention on Sunday afternoon, July 17, 2011. Due to the set up for on-site camping Glenn and I had made arrangements to camp at

an off-site campground. The campground we had chosen from searching on the internet was actually very nice. We set up camp and relaxed.

Monday morning we went to the school and visited vendors and friends. Monday afternoon we drove to a place called



Larry & Kitty

Rifle Falls just outside of Rifle CO. This was a site of a former hydroelectric plant and there were actually some small caves near the very pretty waterfall.

On Monday night a bus or tram ride to the top of "Iron Mountain" was required. At the top of the

mountain our food was waiting. Best thing about the party was the microbrew beer on tap. The top of the mountain is an amusement park and commercial caves. They had some interesting rides. We had free run of the place and were allowed to take self-guided tours of the caves. At the party

we visited with former Birmingham Grotto members Larry Mullins and Kitty Wooldridge who now live in Hurricane UT. Mike McEachern, a former grotto member now living in Montana, was also at the convention. Also saw Mudpuppy a former grotto member who now lives in Sewanee TN.



Myrna Attaway & Mike McEachern

Tuesday Glenn and I road tripped to Arches National Park in Moab, Utah. We got back late and missed the NSS



Andy Zerbe & Milo Washington

70th Anniversary Party. We saw pictures of Ramen Noodle wrestling that took place at that party.

On Wednesday Glenn and I drove through Aspen Colorado and Independence Pass returning by way of Leadville CO. Wednesday night the campground party again offered good microbrew on tap and the Terminal Syphons entertained the crowd. Glenn had donated a painting to the NSS auction which was purchased by Peri and Bill Frantz of California.

Thursday morning we spent some time at the school visiting vendors and salons. Myrna Attaway had a very nice cross-stitch picture on display in the salon but had not submitted it in time for judging. Next we did our laundry (not very exciting but necessary) and ate Pizza at nice "non-chain" hole in the wall place. Thursday evening was the photo salon which as usual was very good.

Friday morning we listened to some of the NSS BOG meeting discussions about the NSS office relocation. The vote was to accept the recommendation of the commission appointed to study the issue. The vote was to accept the location in Huntsville. After lunch we helped Jeff and Nina Martin of Inner Mountain Outfitter breakdown and pack up their store. We then showered and prepared for the banquet. The food was good except they ran out of bread before half of the attendees had been served. We did not get any bread.



John Attaway, Dave & Edna Caudle

On Saturday after convention we headed north and toured Tetons National Park and Yellowstone National Park. We spent three days there. After leaving there we headed northwest to South Dakota and visited Mount Rushmore and the Badlands National Park. We arrived home late Thursday night (07/28/11).

Overall, it was a nice convention in a beautiful area of the country. It was good to see grotto members and old friends from other parts of the country. We also made some new friends while we were there. Throughout the week I snapped pictures of grotto members as I saw them. If you have never attended an NSS Convention consider that next year in 2012 the convention will be a bit closer to home. It is going to be in West Virginia.

Ridge Riding the Big Coon

Don Harter

My hobbies are riding my ATV and ridgewalking. So I try to combine the two of them. Instead of ridge walking we ride our ATV on trails, and look for new caves. By doing this you can travel great distances in one day. We have ridden all the way from e Narrows to Tennessee and the Little Coon. All the heavy digging gear is carried by your ATV not your back. Of course not everything can be seen from a forest trail. But there are many of them. We also carry equipment that allows us to clear the trail of a fallen log. My friend Dan Lopeman has a winch on his ATV, and he has used that to pull fallen logs off the trail. Lowes sell a nice razor sharp hand saw. Until the recent F5 tornado, the trails of Skyline WMA probably have not been as open for years. This also makes it easier for the hunters to retrieve their game during hunting season.

More land has been added to Skyline WMA in recent years. So one day this last spring, we entered through the formerly closed gate at Hytop cemetery. We parked and unloaded our ATVs. I have also been using my GPS tracking feature, to enable me to someday make a map of all the ATV/forest trails. That could be useful in a cave rescue situation, and also for finding the easiest path to some of Skyline's more remote multi-drops. Unfortunately some of the trails have 6 ft. deep gullies in them and are impassable. So we headed down a trail that we hadn't been down before. We were looking for a trail that would take us to the bottom of Devers Cove. We were on a trail and it started heading down. It was narrow and next to it on the left side was a bluff with overhanging rock and to the right a steep slope on the other side. We were in the Pottsville Geological formation. Just ahead was a rock about 3 ft by 2 ft by 1ft in size. It was blocking our way and had fallen after being eroded. We man-handled that rock, and soon it was crashing down the steep slope on the right side. We then continued ahead. The trail was heading down where we wanted to go. Perhaps even the trail to the bottom that we were looking for. Soon we came to a small stream that had eroded the trail, and on subsequent visits would be dry. Up to the left was what appeared to be a rock shelter. Dan and I climbed up and yes it was a rock shelter. There was a mound of dirt there; could it be a grave?; it was probably too small for that. (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-I7-dsPboFc>) After looking around we headed back down and continued on the trail downward. There were two trails to the left which we would check out on the way back. Yes this was the trail that led to the bottom of the valley. At the bottom we failed to find another trail which I thought existed, that climbed back out on the Northwest side of the cove . We headed east until we came to private property and turned around. We weren't too far from the Blue Hole and Jess Elliot Cave. Trying to find a way to those on public land and on an existing trail, we did not succeed. So we headed west and started searching for Devers Cove saltpeter cave. We found it to the east of where the GPS said it should be. It is only about 300 ft. long and mostly walking. We saw in it

what might have been a log left over from previous saltpeter mining operations. After that we headed back up out of the valley towards the Cumberland Plateau. On the way we took a trail to the right that we hadn't on the way down. Dan was in the lead and pointed out a pit just to the right of the trail. I took a GPS reading, and it seemed that this was not a know pit. It measured about 40 ft. deep. Being rather excited now, I headed upwards again and took another trail to the right. This one also led to the top of the plateau. On a later visit we cleared it of its fallen logs and now it is passable again. Dan and I then rode up past the rock shelter to the top and our cars.

I wanted to go back and check out this "new" pit. It wasn't until after the gates closed at Skyline that I could get back. I went back with Sonya Erickson. It was about a 1.9 mile hike one-way and a good part of it downhill. After arriving I wanted to take a breather, but Sonya soon headed down the pit. It was about a 30 ft. drop to a 6 high pile of dirt in a chamber. Sonya yelled up and said that it "goes" but it would be too tight for me. So she proceeded to explore and map it by herself. She thought that it was virgin because there were no footprints. Perhaps they had washed away?

Later we found out that where we were, was most likely Proton Pit. The coordinates that I had were wrong, and so that it why my GPS did not show it there. Well anyways, there is now a map of Proton Pit courtesy of Sonya Erickson.

A possible candidate for the pit was Hammered Squeeze pit. I had heard that there was a digging prospect there. So I went searching for it with Stephen Brewer and his friend Art Molter. On the way I stepped on a rock in the middle of the ATV trail. It was a slick as ice for some reason. I fell and sprained my wrist while breaking my fall. My coordinates for the pit were off, but Stephen Brewer had it plotted in a different location. I had walked down the ridge to where I thought it might be, but nothing was there. So we went to where Stephen had plotted it and spread out. Not too long later, we found it. It was pretty big at the top, but it was tight at the bottom before it opened up into a small chamber. The others went down to the bottom and waited. Art Molter was a newby, but he had done Neversink the weekend before. I went down with my Mitchell system and my cave pack on. It got tighter and soon I was almost caught/stuck and hanging from my cave pack. I took that off and handed it down to them. Now I lowered myself some more and soon I was stuck between two knobs of rock about 5 ft. from the bottom. I would have to move over to the right and then lower myself some more. Easier said than done, since when one hangs on a rope it wants to hang vertically. I decided that I did not want my climb out to be an ordeal. My wrist was sprained so I changed over with difficulty in the tight passage, and climbed back out. I had been reminded of when Stephen Brewer was in MH Roadside pit in a similar situation, and we had to pull him out by hand. *(cont. on p. 50)*

Birmingham Grotto Meeting Minutes
July 12, 2011

Pres. McRae called the meeting to order at 7pm at Matthew's on Morris Avenue.

Visitors

Kelli Howell (no relation) and Matt Freeman

Minutes

June meeting minutes were accepted with the following correction to the report on the National Cave Rescue Commission (NCRC) training: Damon Moats is also taking the classes.

Treasurer's Report

The following accounting was presented by Edna Caudle on behalf of Treasurer Dale Douglas:

Starting balance 6/14/11	\$3,641.12
Expenses	
Printing & postage (Mar-May 2011)	-238.95
Income	
Dues	0
Getaway Auction	+38.25
Ending Balance 7/12/11	\$3,440.42

NOTES: 2011 Auction Balance Owed - \$299.50

We are under \$300.00, 2/3 of Bidders have Paid!

Announcements

July 18-22: NSS convention, Glenwood Springs, CO

July 24 (Sunday): Grotto Splash at Scott and Amy Parvin's Smith Lake house. Dave McRae to provide burgers, attendees to pay \$3 and bring a side dish/dessert and a chair as seating is limited. See grotto egroup for more information.

August 12: Grotto meeting at Homewood Library and deadline for Birmingham Grotto-hosted SERA 2012 T-shirt and window decal designs.

October 6-9: TAG Fall Cave in. Pre-registration ends 9/1/11. Glen & Martha Mills are TAG chairpersons.

Old Business

SERA 2012: The Daves (Howell & McRae), the David (Caudle) and Scott (Fee) unanimously recommended a location in northeast Alabama for the event. The date and details should be resolved by the next meeting.

The following SERA 2012 chairperson spots have been filled:

SERA 2012 Chairpersons: David McRae and Scott Fee

Location Committee: The Daves, the David and Scott (see above)

Pre-registration: Edna Caudle

Onsite Registration: Magz Sims

Banquet (if it's decided to have one): Allen Bullen

SERA Guidebook: Dave Howell, assisted by Donna Cobb

A Vendor Chairperson is needed. Martha Mills has offered advice from her previous experiences.

There are plenty of other tasks that will need your help so be ready to volunteer!

Meeting location: Next month's meeting (August 9) will be back at the Homewood Library room 101, where it will be decided whether to move future meetings to Matthew's or stay at the library (or consider any other locations that might be presented). If you have feelings one way or the other be sure to attend!

New Business

Acoustic Bat Surveys: David Caudle reported on this project by the Fish and Wildlife Service. It involves attaching a bat detection device (Anabat) to your car (along with a caution sign) and driving a set route (30 mile loop) at 20 mph to record bat calls. Edna reported that after a time she could distinguish the calls of different bats.

David Caudle suggested the grotto adopt this as a project. It would require an Anabat (costs about \$2,000) and willing grotto member drivers. This only happens in June and July of each year. It was suggested that this might be partially funded with an NSS grant if anyone is interested in writing one up.

Grotto Splash Gas: A motion was made and carried to allot \$50 each to cover fuel costs for the ski boats being provided by Scott Parvin and Tony Tomasello.

Grotto Trip: Jeff Harrod is leading a trip to Limrock this Sunday (7/16/11).

Trip Reports

(Want more details? Encourage reporters to send in trip reports to the newsletter!)

Thanks for Damon Moats, Alan Cook and David Caudle for contributing to this month's newsletter.

- Howdy (Chris Davis) reported on trips to Garrison and Graves
- Bruce White on the Hazard-led trip through Sinking Cove
- Magz Sims on Sinking Cove
- Howdy and Damon Moats on the NCRC training, week 2
- David Caudle on the remapping of Mill Ridge Cave and helping a U of AL biologist looking for crawfish
- Alan Cook on a trip to Guess Cave, the Sinking Cove pull down trip and a trip to Mill Cave
- Dave Howell on his horizontal trip through Sinking Cove
- Jeff Harrod supplemented reports on Guess Cave and Mill Hole
- Dave McRae on Debris Dropping Monster
- Judy Ranelli on her Week Of Rivers, paddling 6 days in a row

Program

David Caudle projected Jeff Harrod's "Best of 2011: Part 1" slide show. Excellent program, well suited for the larger screen.

Meeting transitioned around 8:30pm, with the meeting after the meeting beginning in the next room.

Respectfully submitted by The Howells, Secretary

Birmingham Grotto Newsletter

Old Timers Reunion 2011 – Information Update

Welcome to the OTR 2011 annual cavers reunion.

This year we celebrate our 62nd gathering, and it's time we shake it up a little. Many of you are aware that our attendance has dropped over the last decade. There are some positive benefits that have resulted from this, such as more camping space and fewer problems, but we also have less money to work with and ever increasing expenses. Last year we were down to 1500 attendees. That's starting to cut it close for the type of event we are putting on.



WWW.OTR.ORG

So for this year's theme, we have "OTR Hauntings, Halloween comes early", and many events are tailored to the theme. Especially be on the lookout for a large turnout in the Doo Dah parade where we will have special prizes in various costume categories. We will have a haunted house, a murder mystery, campground trick-or-treating and a masquerade ball. Probably the most requested item is to bring back pre-registration and speed up the process for getting into OTR. We are working on this, and hope to have an online system where you can register and pay for the event via credit card in advance, and thus reduce the time to get to the party. There are many ghoulish surprises in store for you at OTR this year. I hope to see you there.

Charlie Williams
(OTR Chair)

Early Arrival/Late Departure Policy: OTR begins on Thursday September 1st this year. We do not receive rights to the campground until noon, which is when the gates open. I will do everything I can to get you through registration quickly and on to enjoy your weekend. The line that forms outside of the gate prior to noon is a traffic hazard so please be considerate of our neighbors and try and arrive after the noon gate opening. OTR closes at noon on Monday September 5, and the only people on the site before and after OTR are those who have received permission in advance to setup or cleanup.

Registration: will be open around the clock from noon Thursday to midnight Saturday. Staff and hours may reduce after midnight Thursday and Friday. Registration CLOSES at midnight on Saturday and reopens at 8:30 AM Sunday. OTR closes completely to new registrants and guests at 6:00 PM on Sunday. If you plan on arriving after 6:00 PM on Sunday, you must make prior CONFIRMED arrangements with our registration coordinator, Leanne Barley (leanne@otr.org); and you must pay the full registration fee for Sunday. It is your responsibility to make these arrangements and receive confirmation if you will be arriving after registration closes. If your name is not on their list, you are not confirmed. Don't wait until the last minute.

With careful budget work and some generous donations, I have been able to maintain the same entrance fee as the last few years. In an effort to keep people attending OTR it was important to many of us to try and keep our event prices the same. One change is the addition of a pre-registration rate.

2011 OTR Registration Fees				
Arrival Day	Adult 18+	Junior 12-17	Child 3-11	Guest
Pre-registration	\$47	\$43	\$34	+\$20
Thursday	\$47	\$43	\$34	+\$20
Friday	\$45	\$42	\$32	+\$20
Saturday	\$43	\$38	\$28	+\$20
Sunday	\$37	\$34	\$27	+\$20
Infants under 3 years are permitted free entry				
* Day starts at 4:00 AM				

Day Passes: Passes are good for the day purchased from 8:30 AM until 6:00 PM. To stick around after 6:00 PM, go through registration and purchase a regular pass. Without exception, day passes are \$15 and include the non-refundable insurance surcharge, regardless of length of visit.

Guests: Guests are welcome at OTR, when invited and sponsored by a TRA regular member. I can't emphasize this enough; **you are responsible for the behavior of your guest.** TRA regular members may sponsor up to 2 adult guests. Guests of all ages (except infants) pay the regular registration fee plus \$20 guest surcharge. Family companions 18 and over are considered guests, unless they are TRA members. Non-adult guests must be children of adult sponsors or the adult sponsor must provide proof of guardianship. We cannot permit entry to guests under 18 who are not lawfully in the custody of their adult sponsors. Legal verification may be required. Please choose your guests carefully; this is a cavers event, please invite only cavers.

Children of TRA Members: Children of TRA members up to the age of 17 are not considered guests and do not pay the guest surcharge. Caving children may apply for their own membership (\$10) <http://membership.otr.org>.

Photo ID: You must provide legal photo ID at registration, even if you do not intend to consume any alcoholic beverages on site. OTR staff are authorized to request and see ID of any individual on-site. You MUST be 21 or over to consume any alcoholic beverages on-site; and staff may ask for validation at any time.

Checks: OTR accepts cash or checks written in US funds and on US banks. OTR charges \$30 on returned checks and reports nonpaying registrants to the authorities. OTR does not accept registration payment with credit or debit cards at OTR.

Drinking Age is 21: The drinking age for alcoholic beverages in West Virginia is 21 years and older. Underage drinking is a concern and it is taken seriously. Please be considerate. Underage drinking puts us at risk.

Pets: No pets are permitted at OTR, including the gate area or chained to/inside vehicles at the gate.

TRA Membership: If you need a TRA membership you have until July 31 to submit your paper work. The cost is \$10 and you can download forms at <http://membership.otr.org>. Note, that if you were a junior member or family dependent and are now over 18, you will need to upgrade your membership to a regular member to avoid paying guest fees. Please see the web site for more information and forms or contact Scott Baker (membership@otr.org) the membership chair.

Music at OTR: I'm happy to say that Huckelbuck has agreed to return to the stage again this year for Friday night in the pavilion. Saturday night, returning after 11 years, and sponsored in part by some creative fund raising of the Commander Cody Cave Club and the Philly Grotto,

News & Notes

Dave Howell

*** It's already August, and we're in the middle of a savage heat wave that's been gripping much of the nation this summer. Perhaps that's why the July Grotto trip to LIMROCK was so popular - hear tell there were 20 people on the trip, including a number of kids. Glad to hear it, slim attendance at Grotto trips has long been a bugaboo. Although I have to say, almost *any* in-cave trip is welcome in this heat, stream passage or not. Who knows, if global warming steepens, it may be that humanity will seek shelter underground to escape the vicious heat and relentless solar radiation above ground. Perhaps this is how humanity splits into 2 components, the surface dwelling Eloi and the sinister subterranean Morlocks, as H.G. Wells' *Time Machine* postulated. Well, all I can say is, I know which group I'm going to be in!

*** The Grotto bids a fond farewell to DEIRDRA HAHN, who is moving to Knoxville, Tennessee. Good luck in your new endeavors, Deirdra, we'll miss you at Grotto meeting. However, Knoxville is still in TAG, so we'll be looking forward to seeing you underground now and again, maybe in that one in east Tennessee that comes up in a manhole in downtown Chattanooga.

*** As of this writing the question of where we're having the 2012 SERA

SUMMER CAVE CARNIVAL is still not finalized. The Location Committee has unanimously recommended one particular site in the heart of northeast Alabama cave country, but negotiations (read: bargaining, haggling, horse trading) are still in progress. An announcement should be forthcoming, possibly by the time you read this (i.e. August Grotto meeting), or shortly thereafter. Stay tuned.

*** I hear that DANGER JUDY has recently been paddling rivers in Idaho. Never been there to canoe or kayak myself, even though my very first wild cave trip in 1966 was in Idaho. (Indian Tunnel Cave and Boy Scout Cave, both in Craters of the Moon National Monument.) but I know there is some awesome white water in the northwestern states. Since paddlers are a growing subgroup within the Grotto, I think I speak for a significant chunk of our members in saying that a trip report on your river adventures would be welcome, Judy. Maybe in the September BGN?

*** In other water-related news, I hear that MISTY TOMASELLO injured her leg while wakeboarding at the GROTTTO SPLASH. Don't know many details about the injury, just that it was initially feared to be a broken bone, but was later found to be only a sprain.

Glad it wasn't any more severe than it was, Misty, and we all hope you can snap back quickly. Crutches are such a hassle.

*** If you're around the south side of Birmingham much, you may have noticed that Avondale Park is getting a makeover; they've removed the old tennis courts (I've played on them, they were cracked and weedy, ready for replacement), and the amphitheater, long unused and gradually falling into disrepair, is getting renovated. With the recent renovation of the Avondale Villa, the park should end up being quite nice again. The question, however, is what is the plan for AVONDALE PARK CAVE, AL 1421? After the Bham Grotto rescued 2 teenagers out of the cave some years ago (they had lost their only light), the city quietly poured the rather small entrance full of concrete. However, entry to the cave was still possible more recently if you knew where to look for the impromptu second entrance. President DAVID McRAE got a call a couple of weeks ago from a local resident who lives across from the park, concerned about the cave - that's interesting in itself - and since then David and I have been trying to get some word on what the future holds for this cave. As of this writing nothing yet, but stay tuned. More on this subject later.

Birmingham Grotto Newsletter

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