

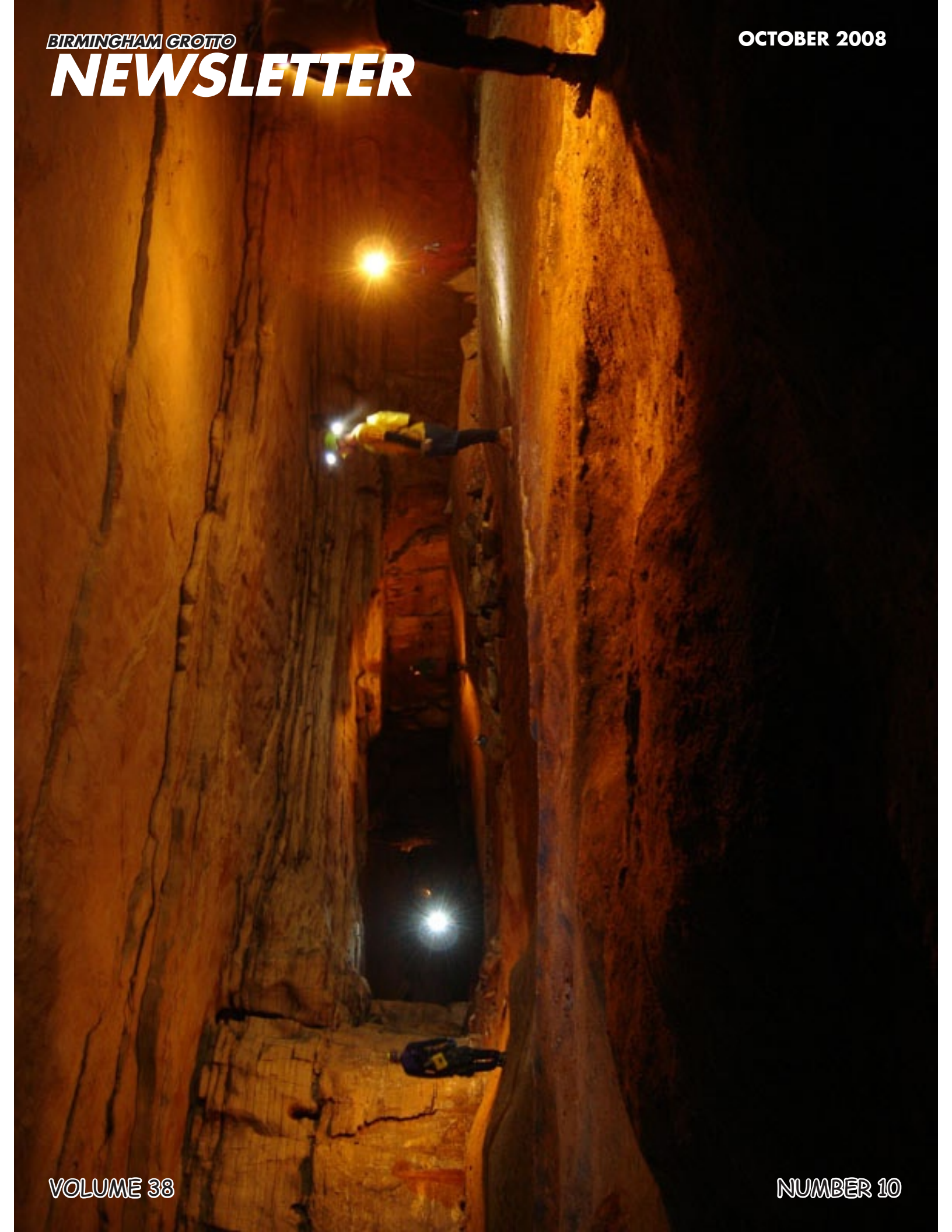
BIRMINGHAM GROTTO

NEWSLETTER

OCTOBER 2008

VOLUME 38

NUMBER 10



BGN Calendar

OCT 2	The Birmingham Grotto Meeting begins at 7:00 PM, at the Home-wood Library, 1721 Oxmoor Road.
OCT 9 OCT 12	31st Annual TAG Fall Cave-IN on Lookout Mountain, hosted by the Dogwood City Grotto.
OCT 16	GROBS starts at 7:30 pm. Ask a grotto officer for the current hot spot.
NOV 1	Grotto Halloween Party at Alabama Caverns.
NOV ??	Grotto trip to Anvil Cave. More details to follow.
NOV 6	The Birmingham Grotto Meeting begins at 7:00 PM, at the Home-wood Library, 1721 Oxmoor Road.
NOV 20	GROBS starts at 7:30 pm. Ask a grotto officer for the current hot spot.
DEC 4	The Birmingham Grotto Meeting begins at 7:00 PM, at the Home-wood Library, 1721 Oxmoor Road.
DEC 18	GROBS starts at 7:30 pm. Ask a grotto officer for the current hot spot.

Thanks to Scott Fee for assistance in maintaining the BGN Calendar.



*Entrance to Gross Skeleton.
(Scott Fee)*

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 55102
Birmingham, AL 35255

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 20th of the month; however, the Newsletter is limited to 12 pages and often fills up quickly.



On the cover...

Inside Gross Skeleton.
(Scott Fee)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

A special artistic presentation from our own Dave Howell!

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50th Anniversary Interviews

The following are interviews captured at the grotto's 50th Anniversary Party. Valerie Howell arranged the use of recording materials, set up the area for the interviews, and recruited Becca Caudle to assist her in doing the interviews. These are stories as told by the individual cavers. As are all stories told, these are filtered by the passage of time, through the memory and personal bias of, and perhaps colored by the amount of alcohol that has been consumed by the teller at the time of this interview.

Laurence Breland

Valerie: Now tell us this tale, Laurence

Laurence Breland: I remember we had a bunch of boy scouts that wanted to go caving, different boy scout groups, and there were 400 of them total. So we split up into two groups. 200 of them went to Sauta Cave for the weekend and two hundred went to Tumbling Rock Cave. At the last minute Tumbling Rock Cave. they were a little bit afraid of the liability. They wouldn't let them go in there, so they ended up at Sauta Cave. So there were 400 Boy Scouts.

Valerie: How many cavers?

Laurence: We probably had about 40; about 40 of us all together, wives, kids and everything else. And there was plenty of room. We camped out in the big room. They put up tents in the cave and everything. Why I don't know. (Laughter) That 400 Boy Scouts, they didn't even make a dent in that big room. They were just all in one tiny section. There was plenty of room for a couple thousand more of them camping out in there, in that room if they wanted to. They were all pretty eager beavers. We were trying to make money off the trip. We had the Coca Cola Company donate about 30-40 cases of drinks. I went

to K-Mart and bought about \$500 of flashlights and batteries and supplies. We sold and just like I figured, their flashlights all went out & they were all buying stuff from our store we had set up. We made some money and, with the free Cokes the Coca Cola Company gave us, we made some money off of them. I forget how much we took in. We did pretty good.

Valerie: I bet you weren't willing to lead another trip like that for a while. Wow. I wonder how many of those Scouts ended up coming back and caving more.



Laurence: I don't really know. But, I remember that trip pretty well.

Valerie: (laughing) I can imagine.

Laurence: Some of them brought their fathers along on the trip. You know, the Boy Scouts, and their fathers were afraid of the cave. The kids were just all over the place. They were up on ledges and places that --- J. B. Welden, he was one of the Spiders, that did a lot of repelling and stuff, and he got on top of this one rock, and he was actually frozen. He couldn't get down. He was scared to get down.

Valerie: J. B. Welden?

Laurence: Yeah. He got up there and we had to find a way to get him down. The next day, the Boy Scouts

were all over that rock, climbing around, walking on it. Didn't even know how they got up there. They didn't have any rope or anything.

Valerie: Was he around to see that?

Laurence: Yeah, (laughs). I think we scared him so bad, thought he was going to get hurt, the more he thought about it

Valerie: He just synced himself out?

Laurence: Yeah, he just did it to his own self, just got to scared to do anything. Just sat there.

Valerie: (Apparently they look at the Spider's patch.) I remember the story of the Spiders. I don't remember ever seeing that patch before.

Laurence, Well, yeah, the ones who did the repelling had their own little group in there and they called themselves the Spiders. It was Tommy Thompson, and J. B. Welden, and I don't know who else was in the Spider group. A little after that I think was when Tommy Thompson started caving down there in Mexico, down there in Golondrinas and el de Sotano (Sotano de las Golondrinas.)

Valerie: When was that?

Laurence: Back in the '70s. I know he made the cover of National Geographic Magazine. Tommy did. He'd tell me how they ----

Letitia Korbley: That's more famous than the NSS News

Laurence: They started paying for all his caving trips, when he went to these pits and stuff and give them supplies. All that. Coleman would sponsor everything, and all that they asked is that any time they was anywhere where anybody was doing any filming, or taking pictures, that they turn the Coleman stuff where they could read their name. (Laughter)



John Attaway

Valerie: We need to know who you are

John Attaway: I'm John Attaway

Valerie: What story are you going to tell us? How you got into caving?

John: Well, not how I got into caving. My granddad carried people into Anderson Cave only they called it Lake Purdy Cave. At that time it was Lake Purdy Small Cave, which is the big one as we know as the big cave that we know, and Lake Purdy the big cave.

Valerie: How do you know this?

John: Because my granddaddy told me about it.

Valerie: How did he know about it?

John: Because he lived right as you go through the gap of the mountain there. You actually parked on his property to go caving when you went in there. The creek that comes up by there is called Cox's creek and that's part of our family. So my grandfather - great-great grandfather actually - homesteaded up there. It's been in the family a long time.

Valerie: So he told you about it. You've been aware of it a long time?

John: No, I've been knowing about the cave all my life, to be honest. I just never did go into it. He used to carry people in there. He was a cave guide in Anderson Cave, Lake Purdy Cave a long ways back.

Valerie: How about that. So I wonder if he knew about Laurence

John: No, Laurence came along way after he was in there. In fact, we probably sold the property before

Laurence even started over there.

Valerie: Kindred spirits, obviously. So was that your first cave?

John: Yes, Actual Anderson Cave or Corkscrew Cave was the first cave I went to.

Valerie: What did you use for a light source. Laurence was telling us about his kerosene torch.

John: At that time, I think we went in there with a flashlight. The first time I went into Corkscrew, I went in on a rescue. Milo was involved with it, him and a friend of his.

Valerie: He wasn't the one being rescued, was he?

John: No, he was the one who came out and got the help. My brother, my father and myself went in there to help pull this guy out that had slipped and fell down a hole in there. So we went with our 1/2" manilla rope and pulled him up out of there. Hand over hand. That was the first caving I'd done.

Valerie: That wasn't enough to scare you away?

John: No, but I didn't go back caving for 4 or 5 years after that. Not because of that. I just didn't go caving. You can turn it off now.



(cont. from p. 107)

Scott Parvin went to Bowden Cave in West Virginia. He took along his new video camera and once he reached the muddy crawl he decided to turn back for fear of destroying the latest gadget.

TinY and Nikky went to Lost Mule Cave (110') and Jackpot Cave (190') the Sunday of Pupfest. Lost Mule was so named because a mule was dragged into the pit when the tree he was hauling fell into the pit. They bounced Lost Mule twice and Jackpot once, they also found a dead raccoon in the bottom of Jackpot.

Andy Zerbe traveled to Dan Morton Cave with Marion O. Smith, Lin Guy, and

Milo Washington to check for evidence of saltpeter mining; the decision was it had not been mined. Dave Howell is encouraged to turn in the map. Jerry Saulsberry collected several of Dave's maps and submitted them to the ACS for possible awards.

Andy was late to the meeting this evening because Milo Washington got the bright idea to use a leaky canoe to paddle up to the entrance of Anvil Cave, luckily they didn't have to bail out as there was only 1" of water in the leaky canoe when they got back.

David and Edna Caudle went to Bat Cave were they walked down the spiral staircase and enjoyed the beauty.

Dave McRae, Shane Stacey, Jeff Harrod, Kevin Bruff, Alan Cook, Jerry Saulsberry, and Bros. Wood (James and Daniel) did the Crossover trip in Fern Cave.

Kelly French, Jonathan Gladden, John Tracey, Jerry Saulsberry, and Daniel Wood almost went in Lamons Cave with Jimmy Romines, but played with snakes in briar thickets instead. They did visit the spring resurgence from Newsome Sinks to cool off and then went in the upper and lower entrances to Hughes Cave.

Program

There was no program after the meeting

Birmingham Grotto Meeting Minutes September 4, 2008

The September 4th, 2008 meeting of the Birmingham Grotto was held at the Homewood Library. The meeting was called to order just after 7pm by our president, Scott Parvin.

Visitors

Deirdre Hahn, a member of the Huntsville Grotto, SCCi (South Eastern Cave Conservancy, Inc) and NSS (National Speleological Society) came to visit us and is planning on becoming a member of the Birmingham Grotto

Benjamin Bush found us via the internet. Benjamin is not a member of any caving grotto but is interested in getting involved.

Steve Roddam has never done any caving but is an "adventurous fellow" and would like to try his hand at caving, he learned of the Grotto from Dale Douglas.

Treasurer's Report

Daniel Wood had an emergency PTA meeting and was unable to attend the meeting. He was able to provide Scott Parvin with the Treasurers Report. We currently have \$9481.14 in the bank. We also made a \$100 profit on the Sinking Cove food donation. Jason Wall recommends a new folding table to accompany the Grotto's smoker; the Grotto has had some of the best eats at events such as TAG.

Review of Minutes

The minutes were approved after the corrections of Forrest King's and Karl Weber's names.

Announcements

September 7th beginning at 10am is the Third Annual Grotto Splash. The event had been planned for the previous weekend; however, had to be rescheduled due to weather conditions. So far we have a definitely have a ham compliments of Leigh Dudrow and ice-cream thanks to Jeff Harrod and rumors of a blueberry pie. The water

park is in Blountsville, Alabama; Scott Fee has reserved the BIG pavilion, it is the round one with the table around it and about 10 permanent stools. The entrance fee is \$19, everyone is asked to bring a side dish.

October 9th-12th is the TAG Fall Cave-In. TAG will begin at noon at the TOTM site at Lookout Mountain, GA. This is the first time in several years that the Grotto meeting doesn't conflict!

October 10th at 4pm will be Nikky and TinY's wedding! They ask that if you plan on attending that you please send in your invitation so they can be prepared to accommodate all guests.

August 11th-15th was the 2008 NSS Convention in Lake City, Florida. It was a wonderful convention commented Scott Parvin. Several of our members received awards including David Caudle, whom was named a fellow, an award given to less than 10% of all NSS members. Myrna Attaway also won several awards for her bat painting and stitching. All members of the Fee household had pictures shown at the Photo Salon and received many compliments. Toby Kemp received two green ribbons for newsletter covers that he designed; Daniel Wood also received a green ribbon for a newsletter cover. Scott Parvin encourages all grotto members to nominate people for this and other prestigious awards given out by the NSS. Andy commented on the less pleasant encounters of red ants, which got into everything, at the campground, he described them as torturous!

September 4th, 1968 a wonderful caver named Julie came into this world! Scott Fee brought this fact to the attention of the grotto, at which time they burst into "happy birthday"; I believe her face quickly turned the color of her hair.

Van Cain reported on the closure of Cat Fish Cave. The owners have blocked the entrance with boulders and are continuing to have caver's cars towed. McClung's Cave is also closed due to

disrespectful people dumping trash on the property; Van is continuing to work with the land owner on measures that can be taken to protect these caves.

Andy Zerbe stated that Marion O. Smith learned of the owner of McBride cave suffering serious injuries after his tractor rolled over him. He broke several major bones including fracturing his pelvis. It is requested that the vertical cavers get together and send him a card.

Scott Fee announced that the young Scott Parvin looked Dashing in his white wigged hair similar to that of David Bowie in the Labyrinth (see pg 95 of the August '08 Newsletter)

Old Business

Halloween party date and location is yet to be decided. October 31st is a Friday, which puts bars out of the question due to expense as well as crowd. Mathews has offered to give us a section of the Bar to have a Halloween party, however, we cannot have the party on Halloween due to crowds, the area at Matthews would also only be a roped off area in the main building. Alabama Caverns is also an option. Discussions opened for whether Friday or Saturday would be suitable and where. A vote was made and passed to have the Halloween party on Saturday November 1st at the Alabama Caverns.

Lease renewal time! Its time to renew our lease on where we will be having meetings next year, Option 1. Remain at the Homewood Library and move to a larger room (we currently pay 15 per month); Option 2. Move to Southside library and pay a larger fee (\$50 per month); Option 3. Matthews Bar and grill, it's free; or Option 4. The new Ruffner Mountain Nature Center will be ready in April and the Grotto could use the meeting room for free. Discussions opened in regards to location. Matthews has been axed due to our continued efforts to remain a family friendly environment. Ruffner would be free with the occasional minimal "donation", around \$50 annually.

Birmingham Grotto Newsletter

Scott Fee made a motion to book the Homewood library thru June and then once Ruffners' facilities are finished (hopefully by June) we move locations. Ruffner is located near Century Plaza and is the largest city park; there is also a cave located on the property. The motion was passed to renew our Homewood Library room until the completion of the Ruffner Mountain Nature Center.

TAG festivities, primarily the dinner for the Grotto was discussed. Leigh Dudrow mentioned that the previous year we charged people for food and our estimate came out really close. The dinner for the Grotto is planned for the Saturday of TAG, October 11th. A motion was made, provided Jason Wall agrees, that we allocate \$200 for meat. Everyone would be required to bring \$5 and a side dish. Leigh also made an announcement that Danny and Donna Cobb will be celebrating their anniversary and TinY and Nikky will be getting married on Friday!

New Business

Judy proposed along with Dave Howell to travel to Anvil Cave and discussions were opened for what date to do the cave trip. Dave said that he wants to go on whatever dates Judy wants to go, they will continue to discuss at the meeting after the meeting and announce their decision at a later date.

The NSS Board of Governors has two meetings a year, in addition to Convention. The Central Alabama Grotto (Michael Gilbert especially) has managed to reserve the Birmingham Zoo Lodge in exchange for CAG volunteer hours. Scott Fee suggested the Birmingham Grotto co-host the fall 2009 NSS Board of Governors meeting with CAG and made a motion to that effect noting that the Grotto expense should be under \$300; the motion passed.

David Caudle has been attending meetings of the Friends of Rickwood caverns, he encourages grotto members

to pay the \$25 and become a supporter of the park as well. David Caudle also made a motion that the Grotto joins the Friends of Rickwood Caverns for an annual fee of \$100. The motion was passed!

The 2009 NSS Convention will be held July 19th-26th in Kerrville, Texas. David Caudle has several brochures about the convention. The 2009 convention is an extended 10 day event and people are encouraged to reserve hotels quickly.

Haunted House visits are in the works as Halloween approaches. Scott Fee will be posting on the E-group, several dates that he and other Grotto members plan on going.

On August 15th, 2008 the Grotto received a certificate in recognition of 50 years of service from the NSS.

NSS Board of Governors met to discuss several issues; Scott Parvin shared them with us:

-A vote was passed to increase NSS dues from \$36-\$40 per year; lifetime memberships are going up by \$80. People are encouraged to renew their membership ASAP.

-Hiring an NSS executive director is also in the works; more research needs to be done on the specifics of the job, this position would be a full time paid one.

-The official emblem of the NSS is still non-existent but they are working on that; several previous logo stickers have been ruled out as official emblems (ie the one with the caver grabbing the stalagmite).

-An information portal at The University of Florida has been setup to allow for the sharing of caving literature digitally; the Journal of Cave and Karst Studies is one of many journals to be included on the online journal site.

-The NSS museum is currently housed in several different places around the country and most of its contents remain inaccessible. The NSS has

approved to catalog and achieve, as well as combine the collection to allow for easier accessibility.

-A \$10,000 emergency fund has been setup to help further the research of White Nosed Syndrome. Grants can take time and the fund is designed to get the ball rolling on the research. Donations can be made directly to this fund via the NSS, just indicate that you wish the donation to go to the Emergency White Nosed Bat Syndrome Fund.

-The NSS Office Headquarters is being considered for a move. Many are opposed to this suggestion; however, there is an open bid for a new location. Anyone can submit a proposal and they must be received by spring of 2009. So far there have been three proposals. Proposal 1 was made by the Long-Term Planning Committee to move the headquarters to donated property in Indiana just outside of Bloomington; the land is a rural and large consists of several acres. Proposal 2 was for the headquarters to remain in Huntsville, Alabama. This proposal is still unfinished but several have suggested moving closer to the NASA space center or a more private site that would be cheaper. Proposal 3 is a move near the ACCA (American Cave Conservation Association) in Horse Cave, Kentucky. The idea is to take an existing building and remodel it; this could provide room for the headquarters and a library and museum complex. Leigh Dudrow questioned where the headquarters originated; it originated in Washington DC and has been around for about 62 years. Discussions are also being made about what to do with the current NSS headquarters building as well as cave that is located on the property.

Trip Reports

Van Cain traveled to Bluff River Cave, the trip was enjoyable.

Danger Judy and a bunch of people went to Gross Skeleton Cave. It was described as an awesome trip and very cool cave!

(cont. on p. 105)

News & Notes

Dave Howell

*** Welcome to October! Always and eventful month, bringing us the beginning of Fall - the autumnal equinox is on the 26th - the TAG Fall Cave-In - see the paragraph about that elsewhere in this column - and All Hallows' Eve, more popularly known as Halloween. Also! October brings the start of RIDGEWALKING SEASON, as the daytime temperatures ease off of their summertime highs, the leaves don their annual reds, golds, and rusts before obligingly dropping to the forest floor to improve visibility for those of us scanning the woods for holes in the ground, and the gates in the Skyline Wildlife Management Area open October 1st to May 1. What underground beauties await their first caress of light? What passages await the first footsteps of cavers? What seats of cavers' pants await hunters' buckshot? To help you avoid this last item, here are the 2008-09 season's gun days in the Coon (i.e. the Skyline WMA):

Deer: Skyline WMA: Archery October 13-January 31. Guns November 10, 12-13,

17, 23-27; December 7-8, 14-15, 27-31; January 4-5, 18-20.

Turkey: (legally hunted from sunrise to noon only) March 8, March 15-April 30.

And now, my annual litany of cautions: *Do not hunt by this schedule!* The actual State hunting schedule is a good bit more complicated, the above is just a general guide to let cavers know when people are likely to be shooting in the Alabama woods. *DO wear hunter's orange, DON'T wear white*, as hunters can mistake you for a whitetail deer; besides, an orange vest or cap makes it easier to see your caving or ridgewalking buddies in the woods. *Do know that cavers crashing*

through the woods tend to irritate hunters, as we scare away the game. Be safe out there, y'all. We don't want to become the game ourselves!

*** Looks like another change of GROTTO MEETING PLACE is upon us. This is something that happens from time to time and is an interesting part of ongoing Grotto history. Through the years the Grotto has met in a number of (very) different locations, and has changed from one to another for a variety of reasons. This time the reason is that we are simply outgrowing Room 116 at the Homewood Public Library - the last 3 or 4 meetings have been standing room in the hall only. After considering different ideas at the September meeting, here's what was decided: We will keep the Homewood Library room at least through June, at which time the new RUFFNER MOUNTAIN NATURE CENTER building will be ready, where we are offered use of the meeting room seating 75-100. This offer by the Grotto's own KATHY STILES FREELAND, Executive Director and Chief HooHa of Ruffner Mountain, free of charge! (But Grotto donations are welcomed.) Cool! Thanks, Kathy! Can't wait to see the new building!

*** For some time now BGN Editor TOBY KEMP has been doubling as Newsletter printer, turning out many outstanding full-color Newsletters. Alas, nothing is forever - I guess our ritual summoning Cthulhu to beseech eternal life for Toby as Editor-Printer was not successful - Toby will remain Editor, but cannot continue printing the Newsletter. (Well, maybe the ritual was partially successful.) Thanks, Toby for a job well done, and several covers that won awards at the NSS National Convention. As soon as we make other

printing arrangements, your Newsletter layout talent can again shine.

*** Congrats to DAVID CAUDLE, not only on his recent election to Fellowship in the NSS, but also for getting his picture on the cover of the September 08 *Birmingham Grotto Newsletter*, the first time in his 36-year-long membership! Kind of like getting your picture on the cover of the *Rolling Stone*, isn't it, Dave?

*** Don't forget about the 2008 TAG FALL CAVE-IN the weekend of October 9-12, at the usual place on Lookout Mountain, Georgia! TAG is always a special, not-to-be-missed event, and is a good opportunity to renew your memberships in the NSS and SCCi, restock caving gear and supplies at Vendors' Row, attend the miscellaneous Friday night wedding (did you send in your RSVP?), or just kick back, party, and socialize with your friends. What better way to celebrate Columbus Day? I will see you there!

*** Also! The GROTTO HALLOWEEN PARTY is coming up the evening of Saturday, November 1st (of course!), at Alabama Caverns as in previous years. Costumes are encouraged, or you could just come dressed as a serial killer. (They look just like everyone else, you know.) And if that is not enough to satisfy your longing for sinister lurkers in the shadows, you can always just come to Grotto meeting. If that's still not enough, there's also the Grotto's annual Haunted House venture, date, time, and exact meeting place (probably at or near the Sloss Furnace) to be announced - check with Grotto E-groups, or ask a member. (SCOTT FEE should know, when the witching hour draws nearer.) Bwa-ha-ha-ha!

Birmingham Grotto Newsletter

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