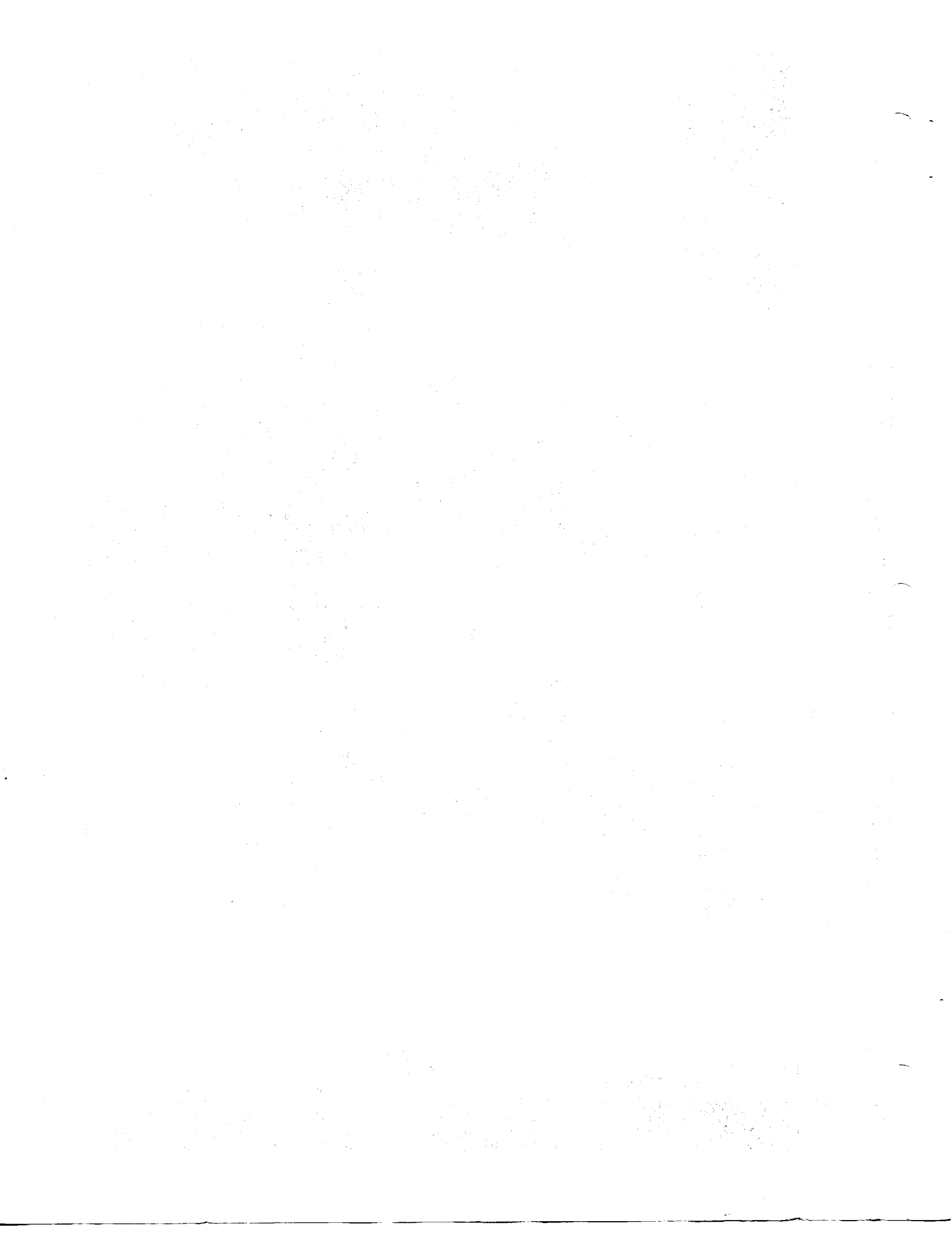


BIRMINGHAM GROTTO NEWSLETTER

AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 1975

NATIONAL SPELEOLOGICAL SOCIETY





BIRMINGHAM GROTTO NEWSLETTER

September, 1975

Editor's Page

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Birmingham Grotto of the National
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Grotto mailing address:

938 South 80th Street

Birmingham, Alabama 35206

(THIS IS NEW ADDRESS!)

Editor: Kathy Spencer
833-4773

Printer: Joe Domnonavich

ELECTIONS are coming up at the
October meeting. Plan to be
present especially at this meeting
to vote in the Grotto's new
officers.

DUES: Everyone's dues are due in
October. Make sure you get your
check to Joe Domnonavich by the
October meeting or you won't get
an October Newsletter. Dues are
\$4.00 annually.

MEMBERSHIP LIST: Will definitely
be printed in October Newsletter
after dues are paid and the
membership list is corrected for
addresses, etc.

CONGRATULATIONS are in order to
our Chairman, Gary Barnes, and his
wife, Lolie. Their first child
(maybe last?) was born on August 1,
1975. Kevin is the name given
to our new caver!

BANKHEAD SURVEY TRIP: Sept. 13-14
See Kathy or Steve at meeting or
call 833-4773.

TOM LAMB is recuperating from a
beautiful fall while on his way
to a cave. Hopefully, we'll have
an action-packed report on the

COVER: Kathy Spencer & Lin Guy modeling
Anderson Mud by David Howell

accident at the next meeting.

PLEASE NOTE!!!!!!!!!!

The Grotto meeting for September
will not be held on September 1
due to the Labor Day holiday.
Also, as some of you have been
advised (in error) the meeting will
not be held on September 2 either.

Gary Barnes, Chairman, had a conflict
in schedule and could not attend
the meeting scheduled for 9/2/75.

SO, THE SEPTEMBER GROTTO MEETING
WILL BE HELD:

September 8 (Monday after Labor Day)

WHERE: Building #2 at the University
of Alabama in Birmingham. Room #220
7:30 p.m.

This is one of the new buildings
at UAB and is located between 10th
and 9th Avenues, South on 13th Street.
The room is on the outside of
the building so walk around the
outside of the building until you
find Room 220.

Our October meeting will be held
at the usual time and place.

GOT ANY GOOD TRIP REPORTS? SEND
THEM IN.

We had a fantastic showing of 19
on the Glory Hole trip to Georgia.
We'll have a report in the next
Newsletter on it. It was a great
trip and if you missed it, you
should feel deprived!

TAKE NOTHING BUT PICTURES, LEAVE
NOTHING BUT FOOTPRINTS, KILL NOTHING
BUT TIME.

A boy was given time in jail and fined
for defacing Glory Hole recently.
Wonderful, should happen more often!

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

The following comments were received from Jay Clark, Grotto Member:

Dear Kathy:

In the last edition of the Newsletter there was an editorial comment made by someone which I found disturbing. The essence of the comment was that because nobody or very few people showed up for the Limrock trip, that all of us "no shows" contributed to what is called the "Ho-hum" motto of our Grotto.

I resent anyone inferring that we are all lazy because we don't show up for a Grotto trip to Limrock. Personally, I have been to Limrock about 5 times and have been from front to rear on a solo trip. My six year old has done the majority of the cave. I don't care to go back there again and if the monthly Grotto trips are scheduled to caves that we all have visited quite a few times, I don't intend to go on the trip. Because I am joined by other "No shows" is no reason for the editorial comment that we have a "ho-hum" attitude. The fault lies more with those who are scheduling and publicizing the trips, than with those who have been and don't want to go again.

Now I am doing more caving than I have done in a good while and I know that with our recent influx of new, good members our whole Grotto is doing more different types of cave work. The caving community cannot get a very good picture of what we are doing here if we have such derogatory comments concerning our activities in the Newsletter. I'm sure whoever was responsible for the remark meant well, but let that party write a few newsworthy articles for the Newsletter rather than nasty comments about what some of us are not doing.

Sincerely,

Jay Clark # 3896

EDITOR'S COMMENT: Labeling the "ho-hum" remark as an editorial comment is not exactly correct, since the Editor (myself) did not make it. The culprit is welcome to write his rebuttal to Jay's letter and any other comments by other Grotto members are welcomed,

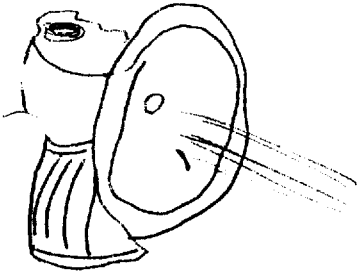
Kathy

SEPTEMBER TRIPS:

September 13-14

Bankhead mapping session. Everyone welcome.
Call Kathy Spencer 322-0627 or 833-4773 for info.

CARBIDE REPORTS



Blount County, Alabama

Reporter-Jay Clark

August 3-1975: I went looking for McClung's hole in Blount County, but had my usual bad luck with directions, so I wound up first at the Quarry and then at the Sulphur Springs of Blount County. There I ran into a nice fellow from Vinemont, who showed me where the cave was behind the old "Country Boy's" waterfall.

Because of carbide lamp trouble, we only explored around 500 feet, but it seemed to be nicer than some of the other Blount County caves. I was told of another cave up the river a short distance from this one, but didn't go looking for it. If anyone who's been through this cave would tell me about it, I would be grateful. Anyone wanting directions, call and they will be gladly given.

The Sinkhole

Reporter-Jay Clark

August 2, 1975. Myself, Tommy Arnold, Glenda Fleming, and Lin Guy went to War Eagle and then wound up at the sinkhole.

A while back I heard of the new discovery around South Pittsburgh, Tenn. of a new pit around 160 feet deep. That area has always been one of my favorites and I began inquiring as to how to find this pit. At SERA, Larry Matthews showed me on his map where it was. I tried to locate it while on my way back to Birmingham, but found the wrong cave. David Howell gave me directions, but fortunately I was able to get a guide before striking out on my own again.

Lin told Glenda he wanted to go to War Eagle and if I would go with him there they would take me to the sinkhole. Two days before leaving I ran into Tommy Arnold at the Blue Water store and he wanted to join us. We all got to War Eagle early Saturday morning and found the owners to be very hospitable. Glenda did not find the pit quite as nice. She got stuck on the way down by catching a breakbar in the sling that has been rigged by the lip. I understand that the lip on the way out also gave her a little bit of difficulty. The Register at the bottom of the pit did not indicate a great deal of recent activity.

After changing clothes in the rain, we left for The Sinkhole. Lin had previously mapped the cave for 500 feet and Glenda kept telling me how pretty the pit was. From the top it looks like an L-shaped pit, but the trip down reveals how beautiful a pit it is. The drop is an easy 160 foot freefall. There is a large ledge about 40 feet from the bottom, where it is possible to get off and take pictures. At this point, the rope goes down into a canyon to the bottom. At the bottom a talus slope leads upward to the small cave area. I only went through the easy 100 feet of passage and left the harder 400 feet for the others.

On the climb up, I went slowly to look all around and up. Looking up there is a large stone bridge like at South Pittsburgh pit. To the left, while going up,

Sinkhole -Clark

is the waterfall and a pool located on an upper level.

There are several different ways to rig the pit, but the deepest is from the far side and it also keeps you off the ledge. I intend to go back soon on a photography trip and expect it to yield some of the best pictures yet as the subject matter is fantastic.

FIRELIGHTERS CAVE

Steve Durham-Reporter

Myrna Attaway
Steve Attaway
Greg Jordan
Ken Brown

During the June 14th Family Outing, our group, tired of bull sessions, decided to go caving. After talking with Milo Washington, we decided upon Firelighters; however, the directions we received were quite confusing.

We stopped at a corn field and asked a farmer the location of the cave. He knew of no caves in the immediate area, but informed us of another cave we believe to have been Cedar Grove River Cave. We asked his permission to search the area, and within 15 minutes found one of the several entrances to Firelighters.

We pushed a "storm sewer" like stream passage past several more openings before the cave ended in the bottom of a 15 foot deep crevice. The ceiling and walls of this lead are cluttered with twigs and leaves caused by flooding. A menacing thunderstorm was approaching so we did not push any side leads.

We informed the farmer (Mr.A.H. Reed) that he owned a cave, and thanked him for his hospitality. He asks that all persons wishing to explore Firelighters or Cedar Grove River Cave check with him first

NEWSOM SINKS

Sam Reames
Steve Durham
Steve Attaway
John Attaway
Myrna Attaway

Greg Jordan-Reporter
(Wolf, Hughes, and Eudy Caves)
August 2-3, 1975

After spending a two week vacation with my Uncle Sam at Camp Shelby, Mississippi, the diagnosis was an acute case of Flowstone Fever as the cause of my itching feet. In attempting to scratch up a trip to effect my cure, I came to the realization that I was not going to get myself included in someone's plans this time. Trepidation filled my heart as the harsh reality forced itself upon me--I would have to organize a trip!

However, as I learned upon my father's knee, when just a small boy of 17, "Necessity is a Mother." My mind flashed back to Steve Attaway's

Newsom Sinks-Jordan

promise to go caving with me. I remembered his telling me that he was a habitual visitor to Anderson's Cave, and a slow smile crept across my face as I realized that he could probably be talked into anything.

I dialed the phone, made the appropriate introductory comments, then squeezed both triggers; "Steve, I'm going to Newsom Sinks this weekend. Who can you get to go with us?" Eight o'clock Saturday morning found John, Steve, and Myrna Attaway, Steve Durham, Sam Reames and myself consuming Krystal coffee cup cleaner and planning the day's endeavor with the aid of the Decatur Grotto's fine publication "Newsom Sinks -- Our National Landmark."

We drove unswervingly to the dirt road which the maps indicated was the most convenient to Wolf Cave (A1.#1). I called at the house at the end of said dirt road and introduced myself to a lovely Grandmother who gave us permission to park and walk on her land.

By careful analysis of the topo map, close interpretation of the terrain, and also by walking downhill, I directed us to the bottom of the sinks. John and Sam found the cave. Wolf Cave's entrance occupies the lowest point of a sink containing three other cave entrances. An extremely beautiful cleft in the Bangor limestone dips steeply down to terminate in a walk-in entrance curtained by a waterfall. (It's not necessary to get wet.)

Canyon passageways about 15 feet wide and 60 feet high, but devoid of speleothems, lead past a 40 foot high waterfall named The Queen's Shower. About 600 feet in, the main passage turns left and tightens down to a mud crawl which we postponed. To the right is the beginning of a 50 foot high by 30 foot wide by 700 foot long room which terminates in a mud and breakdown slope. Thus far the cave has little but size and waterfalls to recommend it.

Back at the beginning of the Big Room, the lead farthest to the right (East) is a chimney up into a saltpetre mine maze. Passages to the right terminate in a 40 foot drop to the main passage near the Queen's Shower. In the opposite direction (left from the maze entrance) many small leads are found in addition to a two-step drop down The Elevator Shaft. 50 feet of now muddy passage at the bottom of the shaft slope down to an extremely slick funnel-shaped ant-lion trap. Negotiating this feature can be perilous. Ask Sam.

Below the funnel is the lower level stream passageway. All water in the cave drains down a unique spiral crawl hole in the floor of the downstream end of the passage. Upstream the formations start. Very little in the way of small or medium-sized formations is found. However, this passage contains a series of rimstone dams, some with the bottoms gone, which fill the 12 foot wide passage from wall to wall and present a 15 foot high barrier to the spelunker. One of these dams can only be scaled by using the freshly-cut sapling provided as standard equipment by the gods of the cave. (This sapling has 3 inch long sprouts at the top with no chlorophyll development.) We found the use of a belay advantageous on one dam and on descending the funnel.

Newsom Sinks-Jordan

On returning through the maze to the major fork in the main canyon, we decided not to push the mud crawl to the left. This passage opens up and continues for a couple of thousand feet according to the map. However, hunger, exhaustion, and the climb back to the trucks prodded us out of the cave.

We plodded directly back to the trucks and ate lunch where the little old Grandmother informed us that there were two caves in Newsom Sinks, one of which is a hole "that ain't got no bottom", that she couldn't eat nuts without her teeth, and that I could take off my clothes in the corn crib but don't let the dog out.

Camp was pitched at Lynn Dam. Swimming and bathing beneath the waterfall were most refreshing. (Biodegradable soap, Kathy!) So was the doorless privy. Best view from an outhouse in Alabama.

Morning found us headed for Hughes Cave (Al. #1). The main entrance is located about 20 feet up in a small face. 30 feet of passage slopes down to a large chamber. A large dome arches over a flowstone-covered block of breakdown. Saltpetre excavations in good condition are much in evidence; unfortunately, so are the marks of litters and vandals. The heavily vandalized upper passage extends both left and right from the main room. To the left is located the chimney named the Sixty Foot Wall, which actually drops 25 feet into a breakdown room. Circuitous lower passages through keyholes, stream slots, and breakdown; all of which lack significant formations, eventually lead to the Lost Fox Entrance. At the bottom of this deep dome pit we found a broken flashlight and a puddle of blood. We later discovered that someone had fallen the day before and was aided by a rescue squad. Any information on this accident will be appreciated.

Hughes Cave may be Alabama's most heavily vandalized cave. Spray paint, bottles, cans, paper, and other trash nearly obliterate the upper and middle levels. We departed the cave with a sober realization of the significance of that puddle of blood, and with a sense of disgust for species "Homo Ignoratus."

Sunday afternoon was devoted to Eudy Cave (Ala. #1). The wide, multiple mouthed, walk-in entrance overlooks a water-filled pothole -- the source of a medium-sized spring. 40 feet inside, this pothole's twin must be circumnavigated by means of a rather slippery mud bank. In the chamber beyond is a very small siphon which pirates water from the inside streambed and generates a perpetual toilet flushing sound.

The left side of the chamber is occupied by a well-developed but localized three dimensional anastomatic maze. Everplay inside a sponge? The lower maze levels are flooded with crystal clear phreatic water. The cave obviously "goes" under water. Upper maze levels have beautiful petromorphes, some speleothems, and a whole lot of alternate leads. One may stumble blissfully around, however, giving no thought to his location, as by simply working consistently toward larger passages one quickly comes within hearing of the "toilet flushing."

Newsom Sinks-Jordan

A less well developed maze also connects with the right side of the pool chamber, and may be followed to the passage which is normally accessed by keeping close to the right wall. This passage has been heavily mined to a depth of about four feet. Screenings are piled along the left wall, and tally marks are scratched on the limestone.

The 4th area of the cave is by far the best-developed formation area, and is located to the left of the mined passage. Formations of many descriptions are found intermittently along this passage, and one opening high and to the left, leads into a heavily decorated chamber. Two leads branch off this chamber but no major speleothems are found.

The group's consensus of opinion seems to be that Eudy was the prettiest and most interesting cave of the weekend.

Over 45 caves may be found within a one and a half mile radius in Newsom Sinks, many of them requiring vertical work. The entire area is very beautiful and the camping facilities excellent. The county is dry and the Deputy Sheriffs prevalent. If a fat Deputy named James stops you and shakes your cooler down, tell him Greg says hello.

FIRST AID AND THE LEGAL LIABILITY OF THE RESCUER

Jay Clark (Grotto Member and Attorney at Law)

I was pleased and concerned at the last meeting (July) with the lively discussion we had concerning giving first aid to an injured caver. My first thoughts were toward protecting our group from the possibility of being on the wrong side of a lawsuit. It sounds strange to have people worried about being sued when there is an injured person involved, but there are very many cases on the books where a well-meaning volunteer has been sued for the efforts he made to help an injured person. For this reason, many doctors are reluctant to stop and render any aid to an injured person.

The law does not place any duty on us as a rescue squad to render any first aid, and if we fail or refuse to aid an injured person we cannot be held liable in a later damage suit. But, if we were to act to aid an injured person and render such aid in a negligent manner, then we would be liable. Since we are incorporated, the Grotto itself would be liable for the negligent acts of any of its members committed while acting as representatives of the Grotto.

Alabama is a Common Law state and we follow the rule that "... one who volunteers to act though under no duty to do so is thereafter charged with the duty of acting carefully." Beasley vs MacDonald Engineering Co. 49, So. 2d 844 (Ala. 1971). Because this common law liability worked a hardship on certain well-meaning groups, our Legislature passed in 1966 what is called a "Good Samaritan" statute. It reads as follows from

First Aid

Title 7, Section 121(1) of the Alabama Code:

"When any doctor, nurse, member of any organized rescue squad . . . gratuitously and in good faith renders first aid or emergency care at the scene of an accident, casualty or disaster, to a person injured therein (he) shall not be liable for any civil damages as a result of his acts or omissions in rendering such first aid or emergency care, nor shall he be liable for any civil damages as a result of any act or failure to act to provide or arrange for further medical treatment or care for the injured person."

Since we are an organized group, this statute protects us to a certain degree. The care must be rendered free and must be done in good faith. If you have a very limited knowledge of first aid, don't try to do something for an injured party beyond your capabilities. The idea of learning first aid is fine, but anything more than initial routine care should be avoided unless it is considered necessary to save a life or prevent further immediate harm. If there is any question about what to do, wait until a qualified expert comes along.

Our job should be to locate a lost or injured person, then let a qualified person give the necessary medical care. Any care given by our group should only be elementary or that which is necessary to prevent serious harm.

REPORT ON FIRST AID CLASS

Kathy Spencer

This is an appropriate spot to add the report on the Grotto's first aid course taught by Tom Lamb, a Grotto member and a certified first aid instructor with Red Cross. On the second Saturday of August, the following folks from the Grotto showed up to take the much-talked-about first aid course: Larry Moore, John Moore, Myrna Attaway, Steve Durham, Kathy Spencer, Steve Spencer, Barbara Kifer, Ken Brown.

The course was a fast-paced 8 hour instruction period and I can truthfully say I learned a great deal in the course. Though there is no way to remember it all there are things I learned about stopping the flow of blood from a wound that I never knew before. I learned things about poisoning that will come in handy at home more than in a cave, but which is still valuable knowledge. Those of you who didn't take the course and are outdoors quite a bit will suffer most from your lack of knowledge. Hopefully, you will never confront a broken limb, a snake bite, a bleeding wound that won't stop bleeding, a heat stroke, heat exhaustion (there is quite a bit of difference in the two by the way), hypothermia, etc. However, if the thought of running into these problems bothers you maybe you can talk Tom into giving another course.

SERA REPORT

July 4-5

Reported- Jay Clark

Friday, July 3, I got teamed up with the wrong group and drove around in their 4-wheel looking for Upper Verbal Hollow Falls. They were supposedly going to Ferris Pit, but didn't. I left them and drove to Ferris and as I got there I ran into John Reid from West Georgia Grotto and the Chairwoman of that Grotto also. They were leaving for Thunderhole and I followed along with them.

When we found the pit we ran into 2 cavers from Bloomington who had rigged their new Bluewater III, but were afraid to go down because the rope was so fast and there was so much loose rock around the lip. We rigged John's rope and the two of us went down together with me on the fast new Bluewater III. We were followed by two more. The pit is about 150 feet deep and freefall all the way from the lip. It's a real pretty drop and has a small chamber at the bottom so we were able to hide from falling rock. John and I got out pretty quickly, but his girlfriend-- climbing with prusick knots--had a great deal of trouble with the lip, which was not particularly easy.

We left there and started hunting for Macedonia Pit--the directions in the guidebook were terrible and it took us about an hour to find the drop. It's located just off a logging road. Two others had preceeded us and rigged the 97 foot drop for us. Only John and I did this drop, which is part freefall and part against the wall.

Unfortunately, some local people have dumped a good deal of household garbage there and you have to watch out for glass--and snakes--at the bottom.

The next day I left early for Ferris Pit and joined up with John Mitchell, Jim Smith and "Teddy Bear" from Dogwood City. We were the first at the pit that day. The drop is all freefall from the top lip and is around 250 feet. Jim and I went down first with only one light, so I wasn't able to see a whole lot of the pit while going down or coming up. "Teddy Bear" calls it the prettiest pit he has ever done and it certainly is one of the prettiest I've ever seen. It's a nice Green's Well-like shaft and at one place you can see a parallel shaft of some depth.

By the time we got to the top, the waiting list had grown substantially. I was fortunate in teaming up with some good people and feel like I got to see some good Tennessee pits.

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