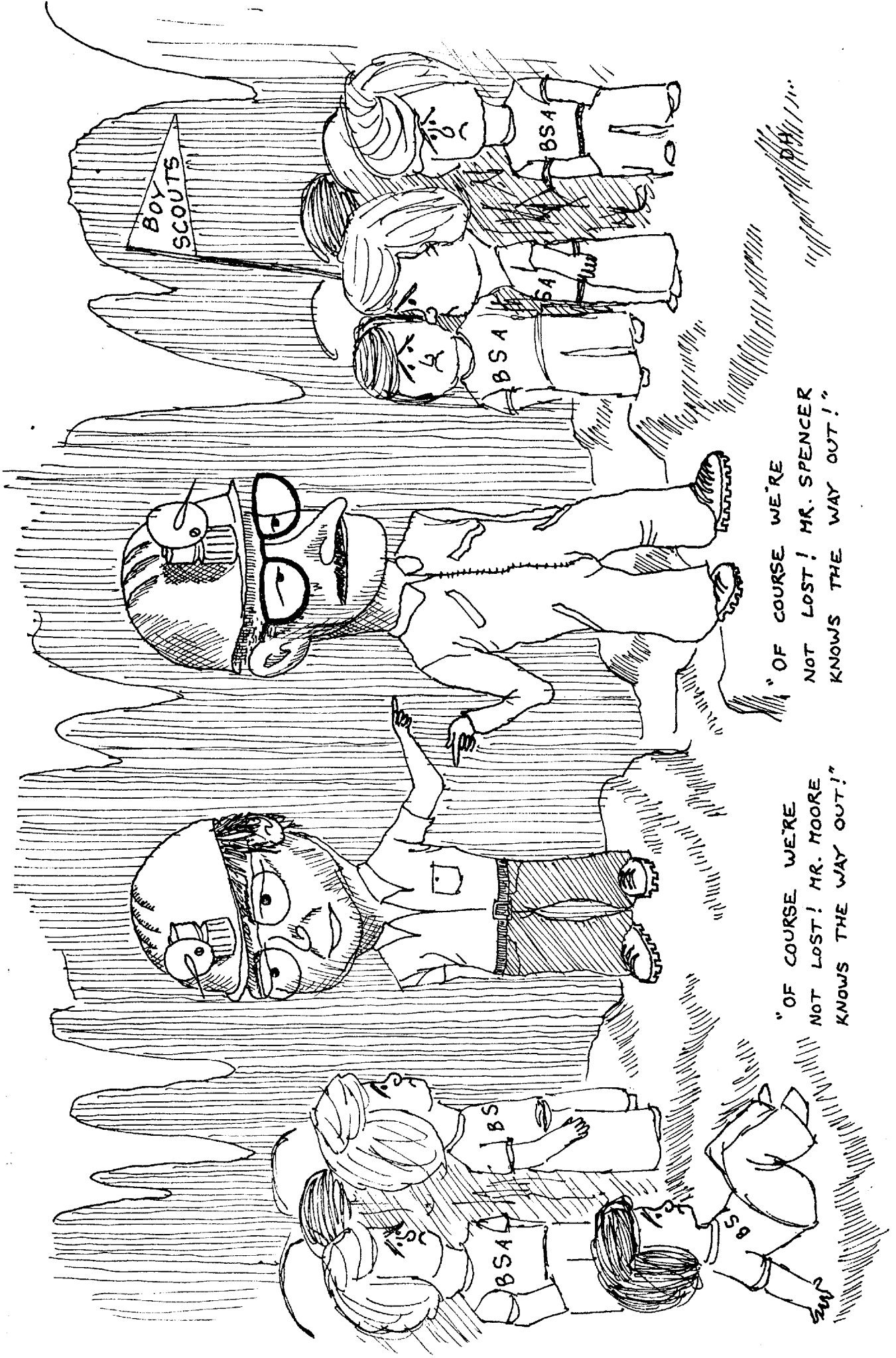


BIHMINGHAM GROTTO NEWSLETTER

JUNE 1975

NATIONAL SPELEOLOGICAL SOCIETY



"OF COURSE WE'RE NOT LOST! MR. MOORE KNOWS THE WAY OUT!"

"OF COURSE WE'RE NOT LOST! MR. SPENCER KNOWS THE WAY OUT!"

June, 1975

BIRMINGHAM GROTTO NEWSLETTER:
Published once monthly by the
Birmingham Grotto of NSS.

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B'ham, Ala. 35206

Co-Editor: Joe Domnonavich

GROTTO MEETINGS: First Monday
of each month at 7:30 p.m.
at Alabama Gas Corporation Building,
1918 1st Avenue, North, B'ham

JULY MEETING: July 7, 1975
PROGRAM: Bring your Own Slides.
Plenty of New Slides Being Shown.

COVER: Drawn by Dave Howell.
See Tumbling Rock Scout Trip
report for more detail!

SERA, 1975 July 4,5,6. See
inside for more info.

JUNE & JULY TRIPS:

FAMILY OUTING

Everyone come! We'll have a good
time and renew acquaintances.

WHEN: June 14-15, 1975
WHERE: David & Edna Caudle's
lot at Smokerise (same as last year)
DIRECTIONS: Go North on I65.
Take the Blount Springs Exit.
Take the first left, then the first
right on Mill Creek Road. It's
Lot # 714.

TIME: Meet at 8:00 -9:00 a.m. to
go caving. Plenty of fairly easy
caves nearby.

1:00 p.m. LUNCH TIME! Bring your
own lunch. David will have plenty of
ice.

ENTERTAINMENT: Caving, swimming
in the creek for the kids, and
an auction. Bring any camping, caving,
etc. gear that you want to get rid
of. Set a price you want and we'll
auction it off. Any amount over
your price goes to the Grotto
treasury!

June 15

SUNDAY MORNING there will be a
trip to Limrock cave led by Milo
Washington. Leaving Birmingham
at 8:00 a.m. from the Krystal
in Roebuck. Folks spending the
night at the Caudles' place, can
meet with them at the cave.

For more info. on outing call
Kathy Spencer at 833-4773 or
Milo Washington at 252-3924.

During July we will have another
trip in addition to the SERA outing,
with David Howell as trip leader.
More info. at the July meeting.

RESCUE SQUAD: Much discussion was
had on our rescue squad, prompted
by Tom Lamb's article in last month's
Newsletter. On the second Saturday
in August (August 9th) we will hold
a training session (8 hour) taught by
Tom Lamb, who is a certified Red
Cross First Aid instructor. If your
name is on the rescue squad list, you
need to be sure and attend. More
info. on this next month.

NEW MEMBERSHIP LIST: Please take
a minute and either call me or
drop me a note giving me your current
address and phone number and NSS number.
833-4773 or 322-0627. This is very
important to insure that the new
membership list is correct so do it
NOW! Thank you.

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

TUMBLING ROCK AS SEEN THROUGH THE EYES OF A NEW CAVER

(Editor's Note: Even though you may have been to Tumbling Rock a "hundred" times, don't pass up reading this trip report, written by a new caver. It might bring back some memories of the good old days when you were a new caver and seeing this magnificent cave for the first time!)

Reporter: Jim Coble

Members on trip: John Attaway, Steve Attaway, Charlie Benjamin
May 10, 1975

We arrived at the cave entrance around 9:30 a.m., and upon reading the sign posted at the gate "OBTAIN PERMISSION TO ENTER FROM OWNER" we drove back up the small country road to locate the Dolberry residence. We were not certain we had the correct house, as no name was on the mailbox. I was somewhat reluctant to enter the premises, and my reluctance was shared by my companions because two HUGE dogs were orbiting our truck, snarling at us and snapping at the tires.

Finally, it was decided (by the others) that I should attempt to reach the front porch, while my companions attempted to keep the dogs entertained on the opposite side of the truck. This was to be accomplished by their rolling down the window and talking to the animals, offering them tidbits, etc., etc. This worked... until I was half-way up the front porch.

Fortunately, the dogs don't bite much. If you can't locate the house when you make this trip you will recognize the puppies.

Mrs. Dolberry was very friendly, and as soon as we had signed a released form and paid \$1.00 each, she gave us permission to enter the cave. NOTICE: If you plan to take cavers under 18 years of age into Tumbling Rock, YOU MUST HAVE A SIGNED RELEASE FROM THE PARENT. Mrs. Dolberry was very adamant on this point, and because of my youthful appearance, nearly refused me entrance.

Most of our group's caving experience has been at Anderson's Cave in Shelby County, and we were delighted with the size and beauty of Tumbling Rock. Where Anderson's is rather a small and somewhat muddy cave, Tumbling Rock is the opposite. Gary Barnes had loaned us a copy of the "Caves of Alabama" published in 1967, for the N.S.S. Convention. We read and reread the section devoted to Tumbling Rock, during the drive to Scottsboro. If anything, the book and all comments we had heard regarding this cave system undersold the magnificence of Tumbling Rock.

We proceeded into the system, uttering many exclamations, ooohs, and aaahs, along the way. Although we had been warned of an unimportant side passage to the left which dead-ended in breakdown, we did not realize we had entered this passage until we were brought up short at the end. We retraced our steps, searching for the way to the King's Shower. If you should make this trip without a guide who has been there before, please note the route to King's Shower appears to be a side passage to your right as you proceed into the cave from the entrance. The dead end passage mentioned above has all the appearances of being the main route, and it is easy to miss the twist to the right.

Tumbling Rock-Coble

John Attaway did locate the correct route and we followed him through several breakdowns, crawlways, and tubes, finally to stop beneath a stream of water pouring from the cave roof.

Milo Washington had told us one person could climb up into the small chamber above us and sit in a hole the water was coming through. This would enable the other members of the party to make the traverse without getting wet. It was decided (again by the others) that I should perform this task. Unfortunately, when I got up to the chamber, I couldn't figure out the mechanics of this operation. John, however, came up to join me and with the adequate equipment he inherently possesses, immediately stopped the water flow by jamming his fanny into the stream. Of course, I would never have been able to stop the water completely anyway, not being quite so well-equipped as John.

We followed the pebble-strewn stream a short distance as the sound of the falling water grew louder. We rounded a bend and arrived at the source of the noise. WE COULDN'T BELIEVE IT!!!! Ahead of us a dome reached up beyond the power of our lights to penetrate. Cascading from high above, a waterfall crashed at our feet. Water was splashing all around us before we scooted off into the stream we had just waded up. As I attempt to put our feelings into words, I begin to understand why this cave is never described properly.....words are not adequate.

The rest of our trip was exciting and interesting, but somewhat anti-climatic after the above. We pushed on through Suicide Passage (we couldn't find the Blue Crawl) and on to the Pillar of Fire. I found the Asphalt Ooze particularly of interest, and we were all impressed by the Pillar of Fire.

We had one exciting incident while maneuvering through a very low crawlway: Charlie Benjamin was carrying our spent carbide in an empty carbide can with the top tightly shut. When we had traversed about 75 feet of the knee/back punishing crawl, the carbide can exploded in Charlie's pack. I turned around soon enough to see Charlie bouncing off the floor and ceiling in one direction, as his smoking pack careened the opposite way. Although it was funny at the time (except to Charlie) it could have had disastrous consequences on a steep climb. Our group promptly named this passage "The Boom Room."

Our trip out of the cave took about 3 hours and we arrived at the entrance around 7 p.m., exhausted but well pleased with the day's exploration.

I would like to comment on some of the writing we found on the cave walls and ceilings. Evidently a good deal of this damage is recent, for in one location we noted someone had written "Are you getting your dollar's worth?" Maybe this is humorous to some folks, but as far as we are concerned, the cave speaks

Tumbling Rock- Coble

its own story, and each mark, scratch and scribble dims this voice. If such destruction continues where will we find another Tumbling Rock???????

GROTTO FIELD TRIP, May 25, 1975

MILO WASHINGTON

The May field trip, dubbed "Milo's Annual Outing" by some critics, was well-performed by an all-male cast of eleven. (Nostalgically, the ladies sat home, knitted, and fretted about their virile menfolk). (Editor's Note: The Editor was home working on a damn term paper in order to finish college, Milo!)

Cavers in attendance, representing three states and four Alabama counties were heard to comment "Hit of the caving season," "excellent leadership," etc. Incidentally, the cave visited will not be identified with deference to its spectacular beauty.

LOST COVE CAVE

Tom Chamblee

On Tuesday, April 21, 1975, I headed north through Stevenson, up 117 N into the Tenn. section of Crow Creek Valley. It is in this section that Crow Creek(5 mile north of Sherwood, Tenn) roars from the tremendous mouth of Lost Cove Cave, a huge outlet for Crow Creek, which subsides into the floor of Lost Cove at Big Sinks several miles distant.

The entrance is one of the most impressive scenes in existence: being 100 feet wide x 80 feet high in an amphitheatre-like cliff 170 feet tall, out of which Crow Creek cascades 40 feet into a beautiful cliff-rimmed canyon abounding in tall hardwoods. Once inside, the cavern opens into vast chambers of Cathedral proportions. The largest of these rooms measures 200 feet wide x 300 feet long x 40 feet high(at the low ceiling portion but in excess of 100 feet at the top of the breakdown mountains).

The roaring stream and three entrances which fill the cavern with sunlight make this one of the most awesome speleological spectacles; truly a masterpiece of God's might hand!

KEITH CAVE

Tom Chamblee

On Wednesday, April 22, 1975, after a restful sleep in magnificent Crow Creek Valley, I crossed over the plateau at Sewanee(the valley floor elevation is around 600-650' while the top of the plateau is between 1800-2000' MSL) to Cowan, Tennessee. Here, in Keith Cove on the northern spur of Keith Springs Mountain, is one of the most awesome, single chamber caverns in the region.

Keith Cave- Chamblee

After crawling down a small down-slope entrance, through a decorated stoop chamber, one enters near the top of a vast cavern room which exceeds all comprehensions. After climbing cautiously down the speleothem-covered talus mountain one looks up to a sun-filled room which measures 200 feet wide x 300 feet long x 120 feet high! The sun beams down on a stalagmite and curtain-column forest that reaches nearly from top to bottom (this speleothem forest reminds one of Alabama's Cathedral Caverns formation zone) Truly, a spectacle worth seeing.

TUMBLING ROCK SCOUT TRIP

Kathy Spencer

Kathy Spencer, Steve Spencer, Larry Moore, Becky Moore, Kathy Mashburn, Jim Mashburn, Ken Brown

I had received a call from Jim Kacker, a Scout leader, about taking some 15 Scouts caving to Tumbling Rock. Jay Clark had shown some slides of the cave to the Scouts and had given them a talk on caving (at their request) and they were really enthused about going. In fact, the original 15 Scouts had swollen to 30 plus leaders when we arrived at the cave.

We had no trouble with Mrs. Dolberry letting us in since I had sent word through Jim Coble that we were coming and had written her. (NOTE: Any minors must have releases signed by their parents before entering the cave!)

Assembling in the room designated as the camping room near the entrance, we held a session with the Scouts relative to safety measures, conservation viewpoints of our Grotto and NSS, etc. and divided into three groups, with at least two of our people in each group, one in front, one in back. In my group, I was blessed with Kathy and Becky as assistances. We let five minutes lapse between each group so that we would not bottle-neck at some of the tighter points. This proved a bad idea later, because Larry and Steve (both leaders of their group) got confused and kept running into each other. At one point they met with Larry going back out of the cave (unknown to Larry) and Steve heading in. Both were lost and thought the other might know the way through. This did manage to get their groups back to Suicide but due to the lateness of the hour, proceeded back to the campsite in a very tired condition! In fact, the leaders were probably glad that they didn't have to go any further!

Meanwhile, Kathy, Becky and I were wondering why in the world we hadn't run into Larry's group (which left ahead of us) and why Steve's group (which left behind us) hadn't caught up with us. Being the wonderful FEMALE cavers that we are, we managed with no trouble to get our group of 13 Scouts back to the Pillar of Fire and up Mt. Olympus to sign the Register.

Tumbling Rock-Spencer

Though we have been critized by some for taking Scouts caving, I feel that this still is the best way for them to be oriented into the caving world. To be led through by experienced cavers, who will stress conservation and good safety techniques, seems to be a better way to indoctrinate these potential Grotto and NSS members into caving and a good way to protect the cave from uneducated vandalism! I have not seen any Scout on any of our caving trips deface the cave in any way. Usually, I'm embarrassed to see the writing on the walls, broken formations, and carbide dumps, after I've given such a long talk on conservation. Scouts also take out any trash they bring in with them along with any other that they see near their camping areas.

We had an enjoyable trip and made some good friends in the Scouts and their leaders.

To be perfectly fair to Larry and Steve, neither of them had been in Tumbling Rock more than once before and I had been there 8 to 10 times!

Trip Reports -- Grover's Grotto	Summer Cave	David Howell
Singing Spring Cave	The Sinkhole	

The Dry Cove area near Sauta Cave (Swearengin Quad) is indeed an attractive-looking place on the map; a large "box canyon", it is shown as having no less than seven inflowing streams and a profusion of sinks. Alas, this area has for years been off limits to cavers (or to anybody else, for that matter). In view of the fact that it had been seven years since any caver had approached the owner of the Dry Cove area (who lives at the mouth of the Cove), Lin Guy, Glenda Fleming, Greg Jordan and I decided it was high time to recheck the Cove's entry status. After so checking on Saturday, May 10, our findings were definite: DRY COVE IS OFF LIMITS TO CAVERS.

We were able, however, to obtain permission to walk the upper western slopes of the Cove, as this area is under different ownership than the Cove floor. Acting on a tip given us by the landowner's son, we succeeded in finding a very interesting new cave, which we named Grover's Grotto after the owner's dog which followed us to the entrance and then stood howling because he couldn't come in too.

The cave entrance is an inflowing stream; while we did not think that the cave floods entirely in wet weather, the entrance passage does flood, so the cave would be no place to go in wet or threatening weather. The cave proved to be a unique one: it averaged two to three feet wide and perhaps 60 feet tall, although due to the passage's vertical convolutions it is usually possible to see only 20 or 30 feet of the cave's overall height at one time. As might be surmised, much chimneying is necessary to traverse the cave. The stream which flows into the entrance continues downward until it reaches two 25-foot drops in quick succession and then doubles back under itself. Due to the fact that the passage bells out somewhat below the second drop and the fact that we had no rope with us, we were unable to descend the second drop. We did, however, map the upper portion of the high crevice passage.

If you should decide to go walking in or near the Dry Cove locale, take heed: it is important to ascertain on whose land you are walking, and to obtain permission to be there.

That evening Greg and I drove over to Lawrence County to rendezvous with Tom Lamb and Vivian Kingry. We camped that night in Bankhead, then proceeded on Sunday to Singing Spring Cave, Ala. 1604, to try to finish mapping there.

Grover's Grotto-Howell

In driving down a trail to save walking 200 feet, Tom attempted to cannonball his Toyota through a mud hole, but succeeded only in getting it stuck. Despite the time we spent in freeing it from its bondage in the quagmire, we were able to get an early start at mapping in the cave.

The mapping was highly successful in that we mapped 1000 more feet of passage, much of it previously unexplored; we were, however, unable to finish the mapping as we'd hoped to do. The total surveyed length of Singing Spring is now 2606 feet, and there are still several good leads to be checked. We all feel that the total length will exceed 3000 feet without trouble.

For over a year now Lin Guy has been trying to finish mapping Falling Spring Cave, Ala. 1302, but due either to poor conditions in the cave (i.e. high water levels) or to a lack of mapping personnel, the map remains unfinished. Acting on a long-standing plan to go mapping in FS on Sunday, May 18, Tom Lamb, Vivian Kingry, Greg Jordan, Eddy Harding and I drove up to Stevenson to meet Lin Guy and Glenda Fleming Saturday evening. Once again, however, our efforts to enter Falling Spring were cursed with bad luck: rain had continued throughout the week and into Saturday, and Sunday dawned grey and overcast. Reluctantly we again postponed our plans to enter the cave.

As alternate activities we went first to Summer Cave, Ala. 589, to determine whether or not it existed. (Due to the marked similarity between the maps of Summer Cave and Edgfield Cave, Ala. 614, it had been suggested by a Huntsville caver that the two were in fact the same cave, with an incorrect location having been given for Summer.) We found the cave (which does exist) without trouble and entered it. It is a pretty cave, trending rather sharply downward from its quarry entrance. Despite the interesting scenery which we found there (which consists mostly of passage configurations rather than formations), we turned back after pushing it only a short distance. It is interesting to note that in actuality Summer Cave bears not the slightest resemblance to Edgfield Cave, proving only that Summer is badly in need of remapping.

We went next into Tennessee to visit the Sinkhole, a brand new 160-foot pit near South Pittsburg. The trip to the Sinkhole is well worthwhile even if one doesn't intend to do the pit; the entrance is one of the prettiest I've seen. The pit is formed in a huge L-shape, 50-60 feet from the top of the L to the angle, and 40-50 feet from the angle to the foot; a beautiful cascade of water falls into the upper end of the L. Numerous ledges around the pit allow good opportunity for climbing about, and also afford the climber some terrific views down into the pit. At several points it is possible to view the 160-foot drop in its entirety, and to watch the people who are rappelling or ascending. While there we noted an interesting phenomenon: the pit "breathes" at 5- or 10-minute intervals, alternately lying idle and then gently spewing out cool breeze and mist from the waterfall. Eddy, Glenda, and Greg did the pit, and were very favorably impressed by it.

Tom and Vivian, after doing a bit of ridgewalking in the area, located two small pits up the cove from the Sinkhole. After finishing at the Sinkhole, we all proceeded to investigate these finds. One proved to be a 30-foot-deep dud hole, but the other, a 25-foot drop, proved to be the entrance to what appears to be a very nice cave system. By that time, though, the afternoon was rapidly becoming evening, so we placed this new find on our ever-growing list of "Trips to Take Sometime".

After enjoying an evening meal in Kimball, Tennessee, we parted company and returned to our respective abodes.

BANKHEAD SURVEY -- MAY TRIP

Steve Spencer, Reporter

Tom Lamb, Jr., Vivian Kingry, *
Kathy Spencer, Fenn Spencer, *
John Moore & Larry Moore *

6:00 a.m., Sunday, May 4, 1975, John Moore, Tom Lamb, Jr., Vivian Kingry, Kathy Spencer, Fenn Spencer, and I met at Larry Moore's house for the May trip of the Bankhead Forest Survey.

We all piled into our Dasher and headed North (Larry would join us later in the day). After a couple of stops for various reasons, we reached our jumping-off place about 9:30 a.m. Our little car sighed a sigh of relief as we got out (No one in this group, except Fenn, could be called "small"). (The Editor will deal with Steve about this snide remark at a later date!)

Orienting our maps, we began looking for our day's first objective -- Mountain Springs Cave, Ala. 1198. After wandering around the mountains for about an hour (during which time we found some interesting fossils, including a large Crinoid Flower found by Vivian), John located the cave. John and Fenn searched for more openings while the rest of us entered the cave.

It was soon obvious that this was one of the largest and by far, the prettiest cave we have checked into in the Forest to date. The entrance leads directly to a rather large and steep drop, which is impossible without a rope and climbing gear. However, a corkscrew to one side led to the bottom. The climb down goes by and through some beautiful formations which we agreed were reminiscent of the Christmas Tree area in Sauta cave. At the bottom of this climb, there is a dome pit and a beautiful waterfall - our most conservative estimate puts it over 100 feet.

After taking in these sights, Kathy and Vivian began the climb out, while Tom and I set out to explore various leads. We found that the rest of the cave was multilevel stream passage and did partial exploration on three levels. While moving along a ledge on the second level, I managed to knock a boulder loose, which weighed between 500 and 1,000 pounds, and almost had a heart attack on the spot! Other than this though the rest of the trip was uneventful.

On the lowest level, we explored the passage and found the mud was strangely similar to Anderson and since we were supposed to rendezvous with Larry in the afternoon, Tom and I decided to start back. After climbing out, we joined the rest of the group for the long walk to the car.

About 1:30 p.m. Larry joined us and we began some ridge walking on the other side of the road from Mountain Springs Cave. There were no caves found on this trip, but the day was beautiful and no one minded. Tom, Larry, Fenn and I got back to the car at 5:30. At 6:00 p.m. just as we were about to set out in search of them, Kathy and Vivian showed up, protesting that they had never been lost. They reported finding an abandoned double boiler still.

Bankhead Survey

At 8 p.m., we returned to the Moores' house where Grandmaw Moore surprised us with a delicious meal. THANKS AGAIN, MRS. MOORE !!!

BIRMINGHAM GROTTO NEWSLETTER
c/o Mrs. Kathy Spencer
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