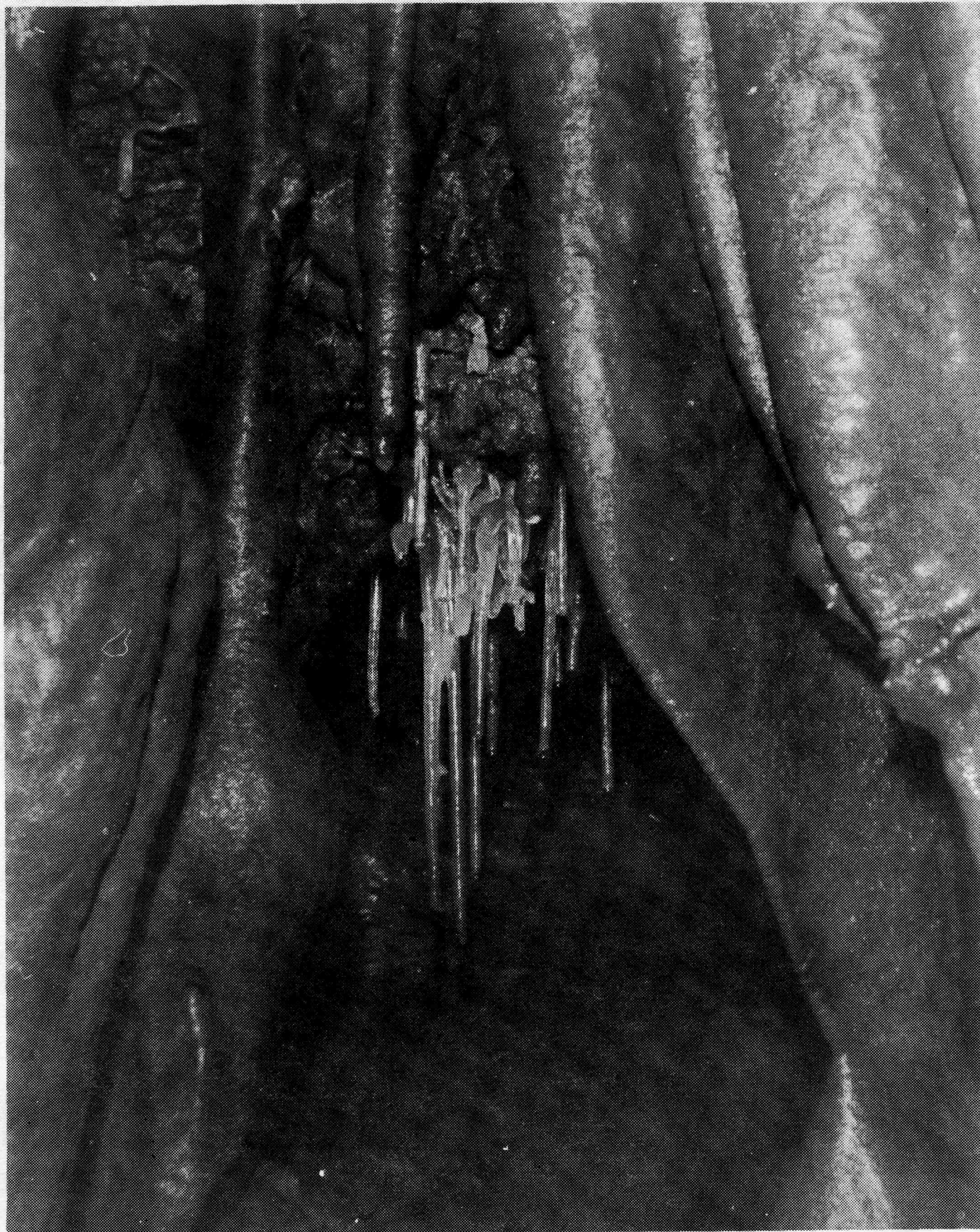


# BIRMINGHAM GROTTA NEWSLETTER

NATIONAL SPELEOLOGICAL SOCIETY      NOVEMBER—DECEMBER 1975



Byline: JOE DOMNANOVICH N.S.S. 13287

- DEC. 1, 1975--- BIRMINGHAM GROTTO MEETING- 7:30
- DEC. 6, 1975---CUMBERLAND CAVERNS CHRISTMAS PARTY --10:00 E.S.T.  
MCMINNVILLE, TENN.
- DEC. 14, 1975--JOHNSON CROOK TRIP  
MEET WRIGHT'S RESTERANT- TRENTON ,GA. 9:00 E.S.T.  
CAVE IS HORIZONTAL BUT HAS A 25 FOOT ENTRANCE DROP
- FEB. 7, 1976--SERA WINTER B.M.  
HUNTSVILLE , AL.
- JUNE 28-JULY 2, 1976  
N.S.S. CONVENTION  
MORGANTOWN, W.VA.

THE INTERIM CAVE SURVEY IS DUE OUT LATE THIS YEAR. IT WILL BE AN ALL NEW  
INDEX SHEETS WITH SEVERAL HUNDRED NEW MAPS.

-----PRE PUBLICATION PRICE--HUNTSVILLE GROTTO MEMBERS--4.50  
AL OTHER NSS MEMBERS-----5.00  
AFTER DEC. 3, 1975 ALL NSS MEMBERS-----6.00

MAIL CHECK TO HUNTSVILLE GROTTO

c/oJOHN B. STOKES  
2519SUZANNE TERRACE  
HUNTSVILLE ,AL. 35810

COVER:

Our thanks for the cover this month go to Steve Attaway.  
His relentless assault on Anderson Cave payed its reward  
in the discovery of these beautiful formations, tucked  
away and,for the present, unspoiled by the ever present mud.

# EDITOR'S PAGE

Published once monthly by the Birmingham Grotto of the National Speleological Society.

Editor: Kathy Spencer  
938 South 80th St.  
Birmingham, Alabama 35206  
833-4773

Co-Editor: Dave Howell  
Also in charging of Advertising, Design and any Cartoons, unless credited otherwise.

Printer: Joe Domnonavich  
Also is responsible for pictures on cover, mailing, etc.

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MEETINGS: Once monthly, First Monday of each month. At the Alabama Gas Corporation, 1918 1st Avenue, North, Birmingham, Ala. 7:30 p.m.

DECEMBER MEETING: December 1  
PROGRAM: Milo Washington presents a study of the Geology of North Alabama  
(Editor's Note: Come anyway!)

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### NOTE FROM CHAIRMAN, STEVE SPENCER:

I was pleased to see some of our members, who haven't been around in a while, show up at the November meeting or afterward at Guido's. Without mentioning anyone by name: "Kent Burchfield & Chuck Lawley, we sure hope you'll continue to honor us with your presence."

Kent, Kathy assures me that a copy of this Newsletter will make it to you.

The GROTTO TRIP for the month of November will be a clean-up of Corckscrew, one of our local caves. This will be a chance for some of us--such as me--to put into practice the cave conservation measures we have been preaching. I hope we have a good turn out. Jay Clark is the trip leader and it is tentatively set for the weekend of November 22. Contact Jay at 967-1838 for details.

STEVE

# SECRETARY'S REPORT

SUMMARY OF MINUTES OF NOVEMBER MEETING  
John Moore-Secretary

-----

Two new committees were formed--the Constitution Committee chaired by John Attaway and the ad hoc committee chaired by Jay Clark for cleaning Corkscrew.

Reports from other committees, such as the Rescue and SERA planning committees will be made in December, with a definite site for the summer SERA to be decided upon.

Several volunteers were given for the SIERRA CLUB Outdoor Review at Oak Mountain on November 15-16.

It was decided to buy carbide in bulk and sell it to Grotto members at a slight profit for the Grotto.

Trip reports were given on Anderson, Wilder Cave, Corkscrew, etc.

The program was given by Joe D. on his Puerto Rico slides, which were excellent.

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### NOTES FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK:

You will note the new look to the Newsletter. Dave, Joe and I have been working on a better looking Newsletter since I am not spending so much time concentrating just on getting articles. Dave, fortunately, is gifted with some artistic talent, and a job where he has access to materials, etc. that can help make our Newsletter better. Keep the articles coming in so this new look will encompass some good articles!

\*\*\*\*\*

SIERRA CLUB OUTDOOR REVIEW: Nov. 15-16, 1975. Oak Mountain State Park. Almost all outdoor clubs (and there are many) in the Birmingham area will be holding displays depicting their primary interests, equipment used, etc. Everyone is invited to attend. The Grotto is holding a booth and everyone is invited to participate. Call Kathy at 833-4773 if interested.

## VOICES FROM UNDERGROUND

FOWLER COVE & FOWLER PIT #2,  
ALABAMA'S THIRD DEEPEST  
 Marion O. Smith---Reporter

The discovery of Fowler Pit #2 was made years before it was explored. Bill Torode was probably the first caver to enter Fowler Cove when on February 7, 1965, he made a solo ridgewalk to look at 3 sinks shown on the topo map. He found two pits that day and on February 22, returned with Dick Mitchell and Bill Cuddington, promptly finding two more pits. They descended Fowler Pit #3, a 30 footer to a too-tight-to-do squeeze to a second 30 foot drop. Then they looked at Fowler #2, a small pit entrance just under a ten foot bluff with a waterfall, and quickly decided it was too wet to do. After that, Bill C. and Dick descended the ten foot climb down and 80 foot drop of Fowler Pit #1, a few yards from #2, while Torode found a 30-40 foot pit about halfway down the sink below #1 and 2, chimneyed into it, and made voice contact with Bill and Dick.

Time went by and the Fowler pits were more or less forgotten. Then, in 1971, there were at least 3 trips to the area. On March 21, Torode unsuccessfully attempted to chip off the wall to get through the squeeze in Fowler #3. A few weeks later, on May 1, a group of Dogwood City Grotto members: George Morris, Doug Strait, Neil Lennon, Joe Carlisle, Bill Griffin, Marion O. Smith, and Alabamian, David Teal, went to the cove to yo-yo some of the pits. They took off uphill on a compass bearing for #3. Teal, who was in the lead, soon found what they thought at the time and for years afterward continued to think, was Fowler #3. It was 93 feet deep followed by a narrow, wet 30-40 foot second drop. First, Marion and David

then all, but Joe, descended the entrance drop (years later, in early 1975, this pit was put on the Alabama Cave Survey as Fowler Pit #4.) While the rest were climbing out of the 93 footer, Teal and Smith searched for Fowlers 1 and 2. They had no luck but when they found the rest of the party they learned that Doug had found a 30 foot pit and George a 54 foot pit (due west and 43 paces from the 30 foot pit, later put on the Cave Survey as Section 26 Pit). Most left the mountain then, but Marion, Neil and Doug finally located Fowlers 1 and 2, yo-yoed #1, and also decided that #2 was too wet to enter.

Impressed with the ease of finding new caves and of the potential of the area, Doug Strait led several trips into the cove during the next few years. Later in 1971, on October 17, Doug, Anne Knox, and a friend from Georgia Tech, Bobby Jones, went to Fowler #2 and Doug and Anne, in that order made the first descents of the always wet 85½ foot entrance pit. A few feet away they found a second drop of 30 feet which Doug descended and traversed a few yards of narrow twisting passage to a third drop of about 10 feet. Also, on the same day, Doug and Anne entered Fowler #4 and did the second drop to find that the cave ended.

In 1972, Doug and Anne did a little ridewalking in the cove further SE and found another pit that took water which they dubbed Wash Pot. On July 15, they mapped it to a depth of 159 feet (89 and 34 foot pits), and a length of 172 feet. Doug explored a two foot by two foot crawl at the bottom for 200 feet and turned back before reaching an impasse.

Succeeding trips to the cove involved Fowler #2. After his initial descent in 1971, Doug believed that that cave had excellent possibilities for going deep, but it was two years before

# FOWLERS PIT NO. 1 AND 2 AL - 654 AND 655

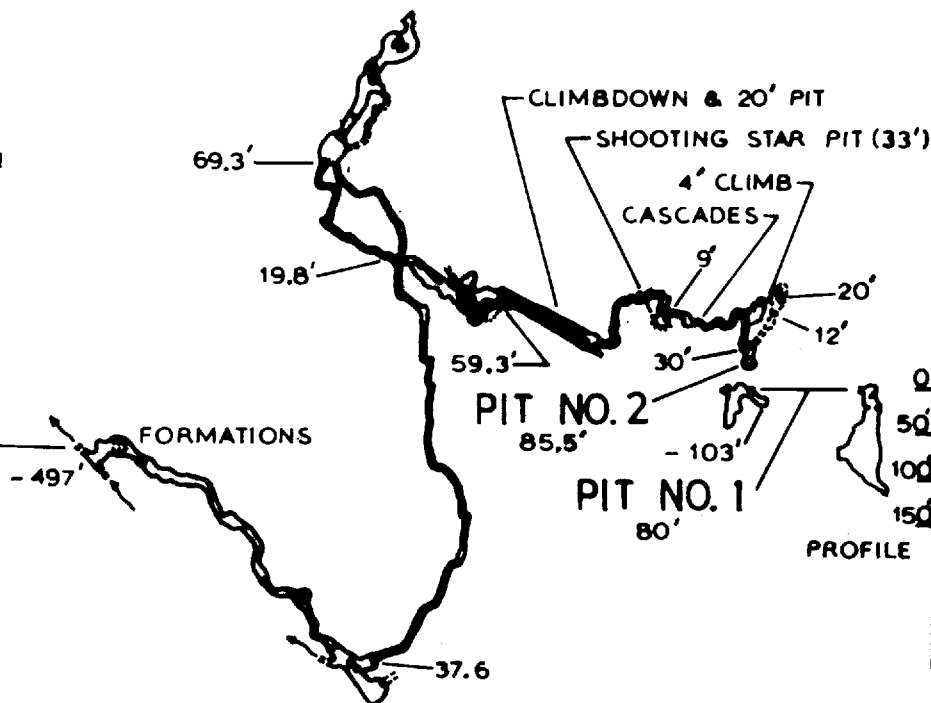


TAPE AND COMPASS  
SURVEY BY

RON AYCOCK  
E.T. DAVIS  
M.O. SMITH  
JIM SMITH  
ANNE KNOX  
DOUG STRAIT  
ALAN JOHNSON  
MARTHA MCGLOSSON  
CHARLES CLARK  
GERALD MONI

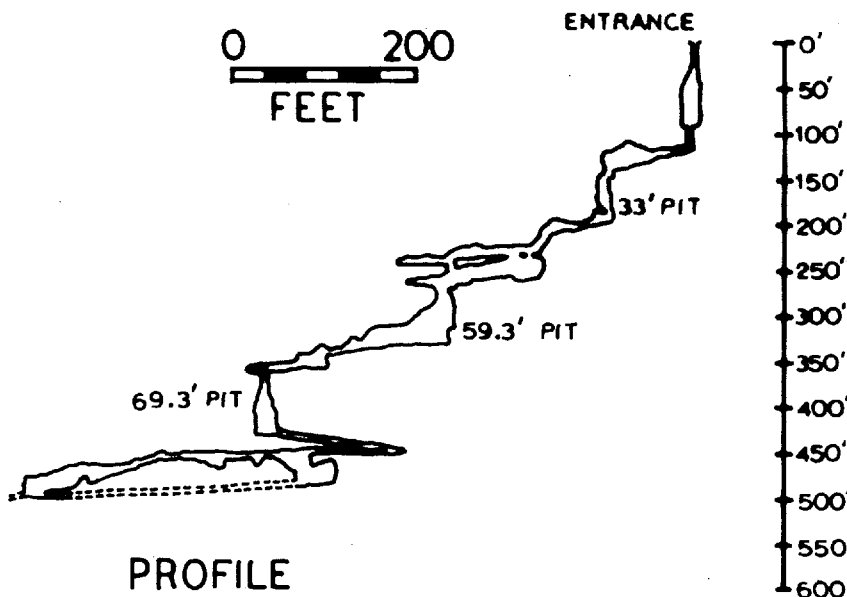
OF THE NSS  
SEPTEMBER 28, 1974  
JULY 19, 1975

STREAM CRAWL  
CONTINUES 600'  
TO SIPHON



TOTAL SURVEYED:  
PIT NO. 1 - 84 FEET  
PIT NO. 2 - 2470 FEET

PLAN



PROFILE

Fowler Pit

a return trip was made. In late September, 1973, Doug, John M. Robinson, and Alan Johnson, descended #2, with John going down the third (9 foot) drop to immediately find another 25-30 foot pit which again stopped progress. Anne Knox and her brother, Bill, meanwhile yo-yoed #1.

Again, nearly a year lapsed before another visit. But this time Doug had finally generated a little interest and a slightly more determined crew was recruited. Late in the morning of August 3, 1974, after deciding it wasn't going to rain any more, Doug, Anne, Alan Johnson, John Reid, and Marion O. Smith, entered the cave. Marilyn Hall decided discretion was the better part.....and wisely decided to remain outside. Inside, Doug started placing bolts to make rigging less awkward. He finished the 30 and 9 foot pits and started a bolt for the fourth drop. Everyone else was either at the bottom or top of the 9 foot drop where water shoots out in an arc to a four foot deep plunge pool. Suddenly, in two minutes' time, the water got muddy and tripled in volume, creating a furor of excitement among the visitors, who rapidly retreated upstream to a high-ceiling area. After a few minutes, the water leveled off and started to recede. So, after discussing the wisdom of continuing exploration that day it was decided to go deeper. Doug suggested that there was a narrow fissure crawl at the top of the 9 foot drop that probably led to a bypass of the 9 foot drop into the fourth drop as he and John went ahead to install a bolt to rig it.

Sure enough, the bypass worked but at a great loss of easy movement. The crawl to the rope was only 12 feet but proved to be very difficult to negotiate for all except Doug and John, who were the shortest members of the crew. Anne got stuck and

had much trouble getting into rappel. She dropped her lamp and rappelled to a ledge 10 feet down and got off rope. Marion was last and, as the tallest person present, had even more trouble. He also dropped his lamp and only got out of the crack by putting his right foot on a small projection below the bolt in the pit while his left leg was still in the horizontal crack. Luckily, the projection held or he probably would have sustained a broken leg. Finally, John threw the lamps up and Marion and Anne got to the "safety" of the floor of the pit by rappelling through to the other side of a rock partition to avoid being in the direct force of the waterfall which came down the 9 and 32.8 foot drops. Because of the lamp dropping episode, the bypass drop became known as the "Shooting Star Pit."

Once regrouped, the quintet explored about 150 feet of twisting solution channel dropping about 50 feet vertically in cascades and free climbs, to an 8 foot wide walking height passage visible for about a 100 feet. But there were holes in the floor and after chimneying down into one a 20 foot drop was rigged by tying off to a small column. At the bottom of this drop was a larger passage which was really just the lower level of the passage above. The stream at this point was under break down but less than a 100 feet away reappeared and true to form, flowed into another - the sixth - pit, which appeared to be over 40 feet in depth. Fifty feet beyond the top of this pit some flowstone and formations were found. Alan was astonished when he noticed an almost perfectly spherical two-inch in diameter cave pearl (The Billiard Ball). After the group all made comment on this discovery, they pondered what to do about the next pit. They only had 43 feet of rope left and the drop was definitely deeper. Doug and Marion remained

## Fowler Pit

to the bottom of "Shooting Star Pit" and burned the rope in two 30 feet from the end. Then they rigged the 20 foot drop with it and took the 42 foot rope which had been there and tied it to the 43 foot rope.

The sixth drop was rigged to a natural bridge with these ropes. The knot was underneath the bridge making it tricky to get on or off rope. Marion went down first reaching the knot just above a ledge. The waterfall was close by. After getting on the ledge, Marion waited for Doug to come down with his electric rig. Then both rappelled down a 15 or so foot cascade to a pool. Then they followed a high canyon for about a 100 feet to a flowstone choke, forcing them back to the stream. Fifty feet later they were looking at still another drop, this one estimated at 20 feet. Out of rope, they had further exploration.

The three at the top of the sixth drop were cold from inactivity and were glad to start out. So much trouble was had negotiating the crack at the top of "Shooting Star Pit" approximately one and a half hours for three of the five to just get off rope, that it was decided that on future trips it would be best to directly confront the water in the 9 and 32.8 foot pits. After about 10 hours all were outside to find that Marilyn was still at the entrance after having been lost on the mountain all day!

It was decided that since the cave was over 300 feet deep and would probably go deeper, a precedent of only visiting Fowler #2 once every year or two had to be broken. Therefore, a return trip was planned for the fall.

On September 28, Gerald Moni, E.T. Davis, Ronnie Aycock, Doug and

Marion entered the cave to start the survey; to bolt the drops already found; and hopefully to push deeper. Doug and Gerald went ahead to rig, bolt, and push while the rest slowly followed, surveying as they went.

Doug and Gerald descended the 7th drop (19.8 feet), pushed through a 150 foot water crawl to another pit, considerably deeper than the several previous drops. They installed their last bolt (3/8 inch) and descended the pit. Since there was no room anywhere else for it, the rope was run over the lip in the water. The rappel, naturally, was quite wet. At the bottom they explored nearly 900 feet of predominantly hands and knee crawl passage and were stopped by yet another pit!

At the bottom of the 7th pit the survey crew suspended operations. E.T. went out while Ronnie and Marion went through the water crawl to find Gerald and Doug. They descended the new pit, plumbing it at 69.3 feet. At the bottom they learned from Gerald about the 9th pit and went through the crawl and plumbed it at 37.6 feet. Then, except for a short excursion in a side passage by Doug and Marion, everyone headed straight out.

No more trips were conducted to Fowler #2 in 1974 but plans were made to bottom the cave in the summer of 1975. On July 19, a massive crew of 10 wet-suit clad people entered the pit under generally clear and sunshiny skies. Doug Strait, Jim Youmans, and Tommy "Teddy Bear" Thurman went ahead to install aluminum hangers at all the drops and new bolts at the 8th and 9th drops. Jim Smith, Anne Knox, and Alan Johnson were to map the crawl between the 8th and 9th, and Gerald Moni, Charles Clark, Martha McGlasson, and Marion O. Smith were to map the water crawl at the top of the 8th drop and the side passage at the bottom.

Everything went pretty much according to plan. The Marion Smith crew finished their survey first and passed

### Fowler Pit

the Jim Smith crew in the crawl, descended the 9th drop just about the time Doug had completed exploring 400 or so feet of passage at the bottom. Then, led by Doug, the survey was conducted to what appeared to be the "bitter end," a water crawl which had a total height, including the water, of no more than the width of Charles' hand spread out. Youmans and "Teddy Bear" didn't help with the survey due to having light problems.

About 6 p.m., they returned to the bottom of the 9th drop where it was apparent that the water was up. The pit was a pounding waterfall. No one else was present. First Charles and Martha, then all the rest climbed the drop. At the top was a note from Jim Smith explaining that due to "difficulties beyond his control" he had stopped mapping 75 feet from the 9th drop. Somewhat flustered, Marion got Doug and Gerald to survey the gap which turned out to be more like 150 feet, then at 7:25 p.m. they headed out.

Several hundred feet back in the crawl they heard the thundering roar of the 8th drop's waterfall and at 8 p.m. they found all seven of the others in a 3½ foot wide, 4 foot high muddy section of the passage about a 100 feet from the drop. There it was learned that due to the water being up, they were going to have to wait a while. Some, like Youmans and "Teddy Bear" had already waited two hours.

Everyone settled in for the wait, sitting as close together as possible to conserve energy. Considerable discussion was devoted to the possibilities of the water crawl above the 8th drop being syphoned. About 10 p.m.

Jim Smith, "Teddy Bear", and Doug went to the pit to check the water. The waterfall was impressive and the wind from it was almost enough to blow out a carbide lamp. "Teddy Bear" was of the opinion that the water had not subsided but instead had increased slightly. They reported to the others and it was agreed that an attempt to exit, without carrying out the ropes and extra gear, would be made at midnight even if the water hadn't subsided. Anne, who was suffering more from the cold than the rest, was already questioning whether she had the strength to get out.

At almost midnight, with the water level still not dropping, "Teddy Bear" broke the silence and started "whipping up" enthusiasm for the exit to begin. People began to move and Charles prusiked the 69 foot pit first, went to the lowest point in the water crawl, saw sufficient air space, and returned to the top of the pit shouting, "It's open! It's open!" Jim Smith, Martha, and the rest followed. The waterfall was shooting out so much as to make the climb partially "dry" and those still back in the passage at the bottom could tell when a person went over the lip because the water was temporarily stopped, followed by a louder than usual roar.

By 1:15 a.m. everyone was up the 69 foot drop. Super-wet prusiks continued to be the order of events. The volume of water was so much in the 59 foot drop that when Charles got into the direct force of the falls he was battered back and forth several semi-rotations and had his hardhat and lamp knocked off his head into a plunge pool below, not to be recovered. When he clawed his way over the lip in darkness, he shouted down, "Don't try it!" Jim Smith then realized that a lot of extra rope was on bottom and tied.

## Fowler

around rocks so that the climb was at a 45 degree angle but free of the water.

Eventually people reached the entrance drop area and while one person climbed, the rest hovered in the paralleled "dome" chambers near the 30 foot drop. The entrance pit chamber had such a sheet of water in it it was necessary for each person to walk around in the waterfall hunting for the rope! Gerald was first out, followed by Charles, whose prusiks washed back into the pit once he was up. By 6:20 a.m., just as day was breaking, and after a lapse underground of 19 hours, everyone was out. Anne, who had continued to feel quite cold, was pulled up the entrance pit. Several members of this group afterwards commented that they felt a strange esprit de corps and comradeship of the kind that only is obtained by enduring some kind of unique experience together.

The participants of this trip have since debated whether or not they did the correct thing in waiting six hours for the water to subside. They probably could have "gutted" it up the drops from the first. But it was assumed that at the time a hard, but brief, rain had fallen and that the water level would drop as it did on the August 3, 1974, trip. When the water didn't lessen after a reasonable wait the crew decided it had not choice but to exit. As it turned out, there had been a steady rain of one to two inches on Saturday and Saturday night and about three hours after they got out on Sunday, a very heavy half-hour downpour took

place in the cove. Therefore, the only conclusion is that they were lucky that they didn't wait longer.

While waiting in a side "dome" near the entrance pit, Marion noticed a lead but didn't push it. The results of this trip brought the depth of Fowler #2 to 497 feet and the horizontal distance to 2,470 feet.

As sort of an anti-climax to the July 19, trip, Jim Smith, "Teddy Bear" Alan Johnson, Tom Pogue, and Mark Stock conducted a rope pull-out trip on September 6. They toured the cave at the bottom of the 9th pit and Jim and Mark entered the stream at what had previously been the "end," crawled to the left somewhat, sticking their arms ahead and upward feeling for air space, and crawled through passage with air space in places of only two and a half to three inches. They traversed about 600 feet of virgin cave, finding only a couple of places high enough to stand, eventually reaching a definite syphon. Approximately 400 and 300 feet from the end they saw three and five inch long catfish.

On the same day, Marion O. Smith, supported by E.T. Davis, pushed the lead near the entrance pit which led down drops of approximately twelve and twenty feet to a narrow passage through which it was possible to talk to people in the passage downstream from the 30 foot pit. And after all the gear was hauled out of #2, Marion, Mark, and Anne Strait (Nee Knox) surveyed adjacent Fowler Pit #1 and, notwithstanding that 600 feet of super-low (in places) passage had been found at the bottom of #2, declared the survey finished. Any energetic Alabama Cave Survey member who can't stand to see dashed lines on cave maps has the complete graces of the explorers to map this last section. Have fun!

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GRAVES CAVE October 26, 1975  
Reporter-Myrna Attaway

Members of caving party: Steve Durham, Greg Jordan, Myrna Attaway, Steve Attaway, Ken Brown, Larry Moore, Fay, Jackie & Sherry Garner

Graves

My helmet webbing tore up before we entered the cave and Greg replaced it with some webbing from one of his helmets. We got into the cave and down the 30 foot drop when I realized Greg's webbing was not going to work in my helmet. We went back to the truck where Greg afro-engineered my webbing.

The three of us went back into the cave (Steve D., Myrna & Greg) and continued the trip. Graves is a very pretty cave and certainly well-preserved. The 300 foot crawl was not as bad as it was cut out to be and the other side was worth the crawl.

Our little trio headed for the neat rim stone dams at a fair pace until I developed helmet troubles again. This time, Greg just traded helmets with me and made use of the neat handles on my Justrite. We pushed on and found a couple of leads on the right just past the 3 foot rim stone dams which we connected by voice and lights but it was a low crawl.

When we got back into the main passage, we met Steve A., Ken, Larry, Sherry, Jackie and Fay. We sat around for a while shooting the bull, changing carbide and playing orthodontist before starting out. We left in about the same groups as we came in and met back at the beginning of the crawl.

We finished the trip to the entrance in one big group and got out just intime to eat.

\*\*\*\*\*  
 ROOT 66 GROTTTO, Ala. 1471 9/21/75  
 Reporter-Dave Howell  
 Members of Party: Stu Clifton,  
 Glenda Fleming, Lin Guy, David  
 Howell & Greg Jordan

Having determined to get in some vertical practice, we set out on Saturday evening, Sept. 20, for Red Barrel Pit on the slope of Lookout Mountain above Moccasin Bend

in Chattanooga. The way to the cave was not immediately apparent, and the rapid onset of darkness presented yet another obstacle to our efforts. We finally gave up the search after an hour or so of hunting through the darkened woods.

The next morning we journeyed to Little Coon Valley in Jackson County to visit Deep Throat, a 45-foot pit which Lin and Eddy Harding had found two years before. Once again, we were unsuccessful in locating the cave, but did find Root 66 Grotto, a vertical cave slightly deeper than Deep Throat.

We first rigged a nearby 31-foot dud hole for practice, then rigged Root 66. Just below the lip is a very nice formation grotto whose stalactites resemble carrots protruding from the ceiling; about 12 feet down is the second lip, and below that the cave bells out considerably. In one end is a much larger formation grotto with stalactites, stalagmites, and flowstone formations up to about 30 feet in height.

An abundance of life was noted on the pit's mud floor; frogs, toads, many salamanders, and -- surprise-- a small snake, later identified as an Eastern ring-necked snake.

Visitors to Root 66 should note that it is almost impossible to negotiate the cave's two lips without dislodging some rocks; those below must be constantly alert for falling rocks, particularly when there is a person on the rope.

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

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SIERRA CLUB PRESENTS AN OUTDOOR REVIEW....See Editor's Page for Details.

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# LONG ISLAND SALTPETER CAVE

AL1300

TAPE & COMPASS SURVEY

BY THE HUNTSVILLE GROTTA

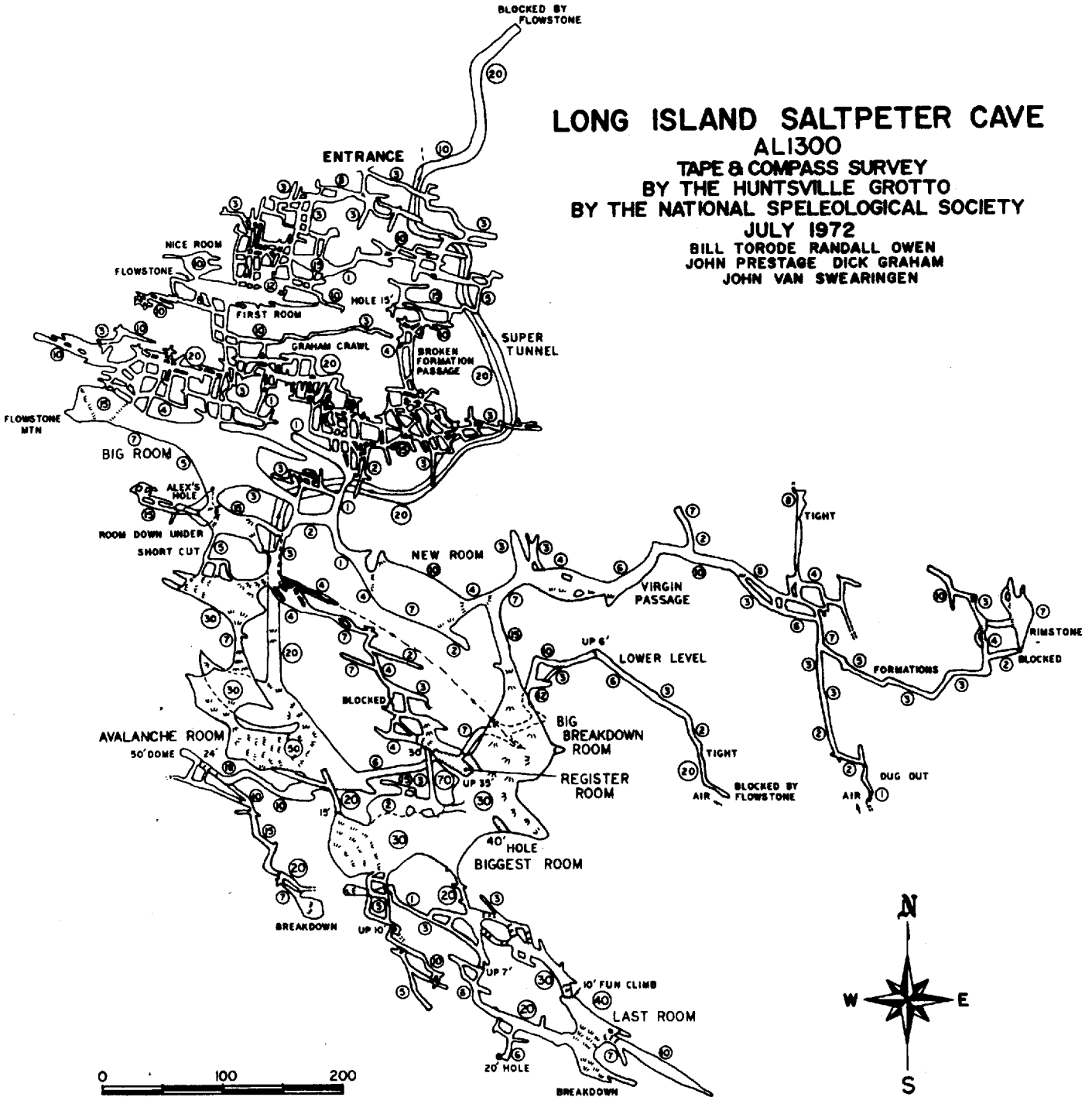
BY THE NATIONAL SPELEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

JULY 1972

BILL TORODE RANDALL OWEN

JOHN PRESTAGE DICK GRAHAM

JOHN VAN SWEARINGEN



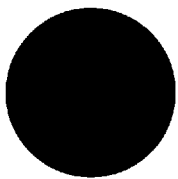
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SCALE IN FEET



LENGTH 13,493'

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