

ANVIL CAVE RALLY OCTOBER 9, 1976

AL279

TAPE & COMPASS SURVEY
BY THE HUNTSVILLE GROTTO
1964 NSS

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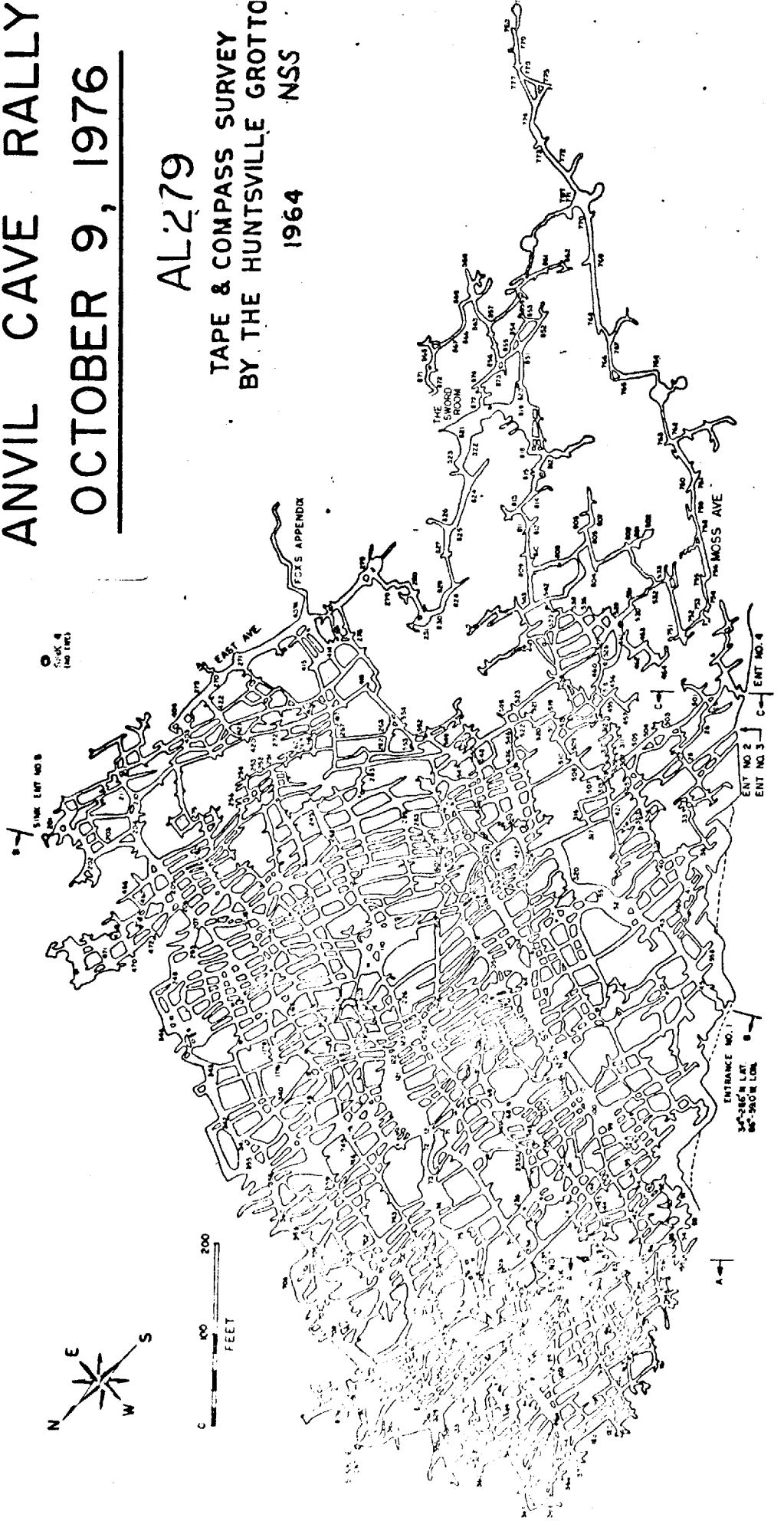
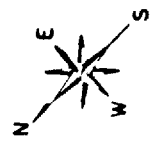
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5000- FLINT CREEK

BIRMINGHAM GROTTO NEWSLETTER

NATIONAL SPELEOLOGICAL SOCIETY | AUG. - SEPT. 1976



EDITOR'S PAGE

Birmingham Grotto Newsletter

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

Subscription rate: \$4.00 yearly pro-rated as from October to October.

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Secretary: Myrna Attaway

Treasurer: Joe Domnanovich

MEETINGS: Grotto meetings are held the first TUESDAY of each month(until further notice) at the Alabama Gas Corporation Building 1918 1st Avenue, North Birmingham, Alabama

SEPTEMBER MEETING: Sept. 7

OCTOBER MEETING: Oct. 5
7:30 p. m.

DATES TO WATCH

OCTOBER 9: ANVIL CAVE RALLY
Caving, Food, Fun, and all those other good things.

FEB. 5, 1977: SERA WINTER B.M.
Fairfield Glade near Crossville, Tenn. More at a later date.

NOTES ON SERA: What a great time everyone had(except me--I had a cold!) I heard nothing but compliments, we had more than enough food, the cave trips went well, the camping spot was excellent, it didn't rain, etc., etc. It was just plain good and fun and if you weren't there to support us, you missed a gre at time.

As you can see, we got one letter of praise, which we appreciate very much. There were several folks who did an awful lot of work preparing the food there that hot weekend: David & Edna Caudle were invaluable! Barbara Kifer shucked her share of that 500 pieces of corn, Jim McDowell led a trip and then helped serve, Kent Burchfield showed up(I think he led a trip), Jay Clark led a trip, John Attaway and Myrna led the Gross Skelton trip. Tom Lamb was the best chef in the world and worked his fingers to the bone(for the first time in his li , Vivian Lamb, Les Miller, Tommy DeShazo were present the entire day doing cooking and getting ready for the big event. Lest we forget, Ken Brown, Larry Moore, David Howell, Valerie Haden, Joe D., and Bob Smith, were either at the registration table at terrible hours of the night or taking tickets or something the whole weekend. Even Steve managed to help out, and especially he preserved our SERA '76 in unforgettable pictures. We thank our pick-up for not breaking down, and Greg Jordan for helping lead trips and putting up tents(which didn't have the right poles). If I've not mentioned anyone who helped out, I'm sorry, but you are thanked anyway. (I just remember Bill Siler, too!)

BIRMINGHAM GROTTO, YOU DONE GOOD!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

SECRETARY'S REPORT

MINUTES OF GROTTO MEETING

July 6, 1976

The meeting was called to order by Joe Domnanovich, Vice-Chairman. Minutes were read and approved by Myrna Attaway, Secretary.

Treasury was reported at \$73.14 by Joe.

Under SERA business, David Howell reported that Grotto members will be contacted personally and asked to work.

Kathy Spencer announced that the guidebook is complete except for a few updates.

A SERA meeting was called 8:00 p. m. Thursday, July 8, at David Howell's.

Tom Lamb asked for the use of trucks to haul food in, cooking pots and some gallon milk jugs for Bar-b-que sauce.

Three visitors were recognized.

Trip for the month was to be the SERA cave carnival.

TRIP REPORTS REPORTED: Kathy Spencer-Skidmore; Tom Lamb-Lynn Dam has a new owner and no camping is permitted (Newsom Sinks area). Camping is available at Skidmore cave if you stay out of the owner's field with vehicles. There's a road around to the cave which you can follow.

Jay Clark-Valhala (now closed). Fern, looking for Hall's Pit, Stephen's Gap, Ingal Double (cave is closed because of a hunting lodge and poor cave owner relations). Jay then delivered one of his famous sermons on cave owner relationships. (It was a timely lecture.)

Joe D. reported on the NSS convention and the Grotto's stand at the convention. Joe said he felt that the Southeast as a whole did well at the convention.

The Sierra Club cave trip was announced for July 17. The trip is to be led by Steve Spencer.

Joe D. asked for letters of recommendation for the Francis McKinny award.

After a short break John Attaway presented his slides of Fern, the Speleofest, Anderson, Graves and Fallings Springs.

After the slide show we adjourned to Guido's for pizza and beer.

AUGUST 3, 1976

Meeting was called to order by Steve Spencer, Chairman. The minutes were read and approved.

Joe Domnanovich reported \$83.00 in the treasury with another \$50.00 due from SERA.

It was generally agreed that the Grotto presented a good SERA Cave Carnival. Charcoal lighter, paper cups and towels, plates, etc. left over were put up for sale by the Grotto.

Jay Clark reported on the Fern trip of SERA which had only 3 people present.

Steve Attaway reported on the War Eagle trip which had 15 people, 5 of which were inexperienced despite precautions taken.

Myrna Attaway reported on the Gross Skelton trip, Steve Spencer reported on the Guffey trip and Bill Siler reported on Stephen's Gap trip for novices. Tom Lamb reported on Banana.

Steve told the Grotto that the owner of Guffey Cave (Daniel Harbin) would like the Grotto to help him gate the cave. In return, we would receive a key to the cave.

It was announced that the Grotto was out of carbide.

A cave protection law in Georgia was discussed along with the NSS publication of closed caves and the proposed spraying of DDT on bats to control rabies. A motion was made and carried that Steve Spencer write a letter to the EPA and other involved organizations to represent the Birmingham Grotto and its stand on the bat spraying issue.

A family outing was proposed to be the Grotto trip for the month. A tentative date was set for Sunday, August 29, at the Caudles.

After a short break, Steve presented SERA slides and reported on the Sierra Club outing to Lamon's and told of some incidents that occurred.

Movies and slides were shown and 8 visitors introduced themselves.

We adjourned to Guido's for pizza and beer.

NOTE: Owner of Guffey, Daniel and Christy Harbin and their friend, Ernest (didn't get his last name!) took the Banana trip with Tom Lamb, etc. Hope to see more of them on future trips.
Editor

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

Toward the end of July, I was contacted by John Randolph, an attorney, who is also Chairman of a Committee in the Alabama Conservancy created after it was made known that the Bureau of Land Management is intending to lease Federally held lands to strip-miners. This, unfortunately, includes just about all of the Bankhead Forest (minus the Sipsey) and the Smith Lake Area. I am afraid that before it is over it will also include a lot of our primary caving areas here in Alabama. The Bureau asked for papers from both industrialists and conservationists on lands which they might want to strip or save and made a deadline of July 30. John called to ask me if the Birmingham Grotto would join in asking for the exclusion of the Bankhead Forest area and mainly to get its name on the mailing list for further information and development. I signed the letter in behalf of the Grotto along with the Sierra Club, the Alabama Wildlife Federation, the Audubon Society, and the Conservancy. I will have copies of the letter at the next meeting for those interested. Also, I will make periodic reports to the Grotto in our Newsletter and at meetings and if anyone is interested in especially working on this Committee with John Randolph contact me. Probably there will be some petitions, etc. later on, but this is something that will cover a period of a few years before anything is accomplished. Not only is the Bankhead a caving area (Doug Welker found 70 or more and we've found 5 or 6) but it's one of the most beautiful wilderness areas left in Alabama. Thank you.

VOICES FROM UNDERGROUND

Jay Clark

6/26/76 Carl Cathey and I had a weekend of Pit work planned and Steve Attaway joined us. I had just acquired a slightly used 670 foot Bluewater II rope and wanted to try it out. Carl was also anxious to get a little more trail work on his new four wheel drive. Therefore, the three of us decided to drive the upper road to Doodlebug.

We got the distinct impression that it rains fairly constantly in the Paint Rock Valley-Swain area. The fields were all soaked and there was a small waterfall behind the farmer's home below the pit. The owner very graciously allowed us to cross his land, but said that the upper road was about washed away and that we wouldn't be able to drive to the top. We knew better and took off. We made it a pretty good way until it got real steep and we realized that the farmer was right. So we started to back out and the four wheel got stuck on a good-sized rock. While I made ready to chop a cedar down, Steve directed Carl out. The farmer got the last laugh.

Green's Well -just down the road-- was out for obvious reasons, so we decided to try and get into Engel Double. Mr. Clemmons wasn't home and his son said return later. We decided to go elsewhere. When we got to Paint Rock we decided to drive to Fern by the upper road. A new "no trespassing" sign was up, and since we could find nobody at the home we decided to put Carl's truck in four wheel drive and go anyway. Needless to say, this road was not in very good condition either. We made it about 3/4 of the way and it became obvious that we weren't going any further. We turned back, and by this time half the day was gone and we had done nothing.

We decided to go to Valhalla. Before we got there the rains started. We decided to go anyway and talked with the boy who lives in the nearby house. He told us it was all right to go and went part of the way with us. It drizzled most of the way there, but all of us finally did the pit. Before we left, the sun started to come out just enough to let Steve see how really pretty Valhalla is. I think it's the prettiest pit in Alabama. On the way back we noticed that a new four wheel drive path has been cut that apparently comes from the Neversink area.

When we got back to our parking area we found a very irate farmer who was going to arrest us for trespassing even though there were no signs posted. In light of what he said, Valhalla would have to be considered closed. Certainly the traditional route of getting there is very closed, so don't go that way anymore.

The rain slacked off so we drove to Tennessee for supplies not available in Jackson County and then went to Falling Cave to camp. Carl's four wheel took us right up the hill to the camping area. It was wet but we didn't get anymore rain until early in the morning. Steve and I decided to do the pit anyway and even though it was wet, we made a quick trip down and up. Then we packed up and got back to Birmingham before it rained some more. Naturally, the weather was good coming back.

Editor's Note: I have 5 more handwritten pages from Jay on trips he's made for future publication. Wish everyone would be that considerate of the Newsletter! (HINT!!!!!!!!!!!!!!)

GROTTO MEETINGS ARE ON TUESDAY NIGHTS FOR NEXT YEAR. FIRST TUESDAY OF EACH MONTH.

Ridgewalking in Little Coon Valley on January 5, 1975, was a day of significant discovery. E. T. Davis and Tommy Thurman had walked upon a large diameter sink not located on the topo. This 100 foot in diameter sink has 3 large gaping holes that had soon sent a whelp of screams and "hollers" that brought me up from a lower elevation. I gazed upon these pit-like entrances with great enthusiasm.

Tommy and E. T. were already uncoiling a 200 foot rope to descend the deepest of the 3 pits. Once the deepest shaft (a 15 foot in diameter hole with an overhanging shelf) was rigged we paused to gaze upon the 3 holes. We then decided before descending this pit to figure out some kind of orientation because we did not know where we were in such a featureless area. A compass coordinate was taken to a house and a prominent hollow to potentially insure a way of refinding the pits.

E. T. descended first to a major ledge about 50 feet down the main shaft. He yelled up for Teddy Bear (Thurman) to follow. They stopped on this ledge and discussed how dangerous the continuation of this shaft looked. I was on top not really sure what was going on. We figured this pit had several ledges since a rock had bounced several times going down. Finally, a signal was given for my descent. I rappelled cautiously into a pit that resembled a canyon with a boulder choke for a ledge that Bear and E. T. were on.

Once on the ledge, I found that they had passed judgment on the pit as being quite dangerous. A quick glance around seconded the situation. I moved closer to the edge of the slope dislodging an avalanche of boulders to

Contributed by: Jim Smith# 14529
College Park, Ga.

the next ledge 15 feet below. I kicked out a few more rocks and went down to the next ledge. There, I could see further across this canyon. I peered as far as my carbide light would allow me to see. I saw that the continuation of this pit was still quite dangerous. The pit was at one time a canyon until the ceiling collapsed, filling a section of the pit with sandstone and limestone slabs.

I elected to continue the descent after shoving a few hundred more pounds of boulders in. I descended the wall drop to the pit floor, de-rigging quickly. I was quite excited to be in virgin cave.

A large log 4 feet in diameter lay on the edge of a slope. I noticed two leads, one an incoming stream crawl and the other an obvious ramp leading down to a large bore-hole passage. I went down the slope about 60 feet to see no end so I retreated to check leads closer to the entrance shaft.

I poked into a couple of passages that led to high domes. One dome impressed me as it had a nice waterfall, later named the "Dripping Dome." With this scant reconnaissance, I returned to the rope. Teddy Bear was on the second ledge watching me ascend. He yelled "rock" and I ducked into the wall to hear a large clap below me. When I reached Bear he said a 50 pound boulder had missed me by about a foot. By this time, E. T. was already on surface awaiting our ascent. Finally, we arrived at the surface and derigged. Before we left the area to continue ridgewalking, I mentioned that we should build a stone cairn to the valley floor level so we could easily refind the cave. I was out-voted and we left the sink.

SECOND TRIP: Months later, during the summer month of June, we decided to return to the sink to continue exploration. Jim Youmans, Tommy and I stomped the mountainside for nearly half a day in vain looking for the cave. By this time, the cave had already earned

Neoprene Highway #5

the name "Stoned Well" at an approximate depth of 120 feet. We gave this venture up until we could return with more ridgewalkers.

THIRD TRIP: Soon autumn arrived and the leaves were down. We had once more decided to search for the illusive Stoned Well! This time Randy Siebold, Bruce Die, Tom Pogue, Tommy Thurman, Jim Youmans and I returned to the ridge to try to refind the cave. We walked the ridge again and again. We thought we had covered the ridge really well but to no avail. We were becoming slightly discouraged because we could not refind Stoned Well in a 100 foot in diameter sink.

We left the ridge again almost believing we had dreamed of finding Stoned Well rather than actually descending the cave. This trip we had really hoped we would find the cave and I don't know why we didn't find it before. It was actually a challenge of some sort I guess. It's a minor miracle to have found the cave in the first place.

FOURTH TRIP: March 28, 1976
E. T. Davis, Janice Williams, Tommy Thurman and I once again decided to hunt for the illusive Stoned Well. We walked up Boston Hollow and walked the ridge at about 100 feet in elevation apart. A few more dud caves were found at about 26' and 23' depths.

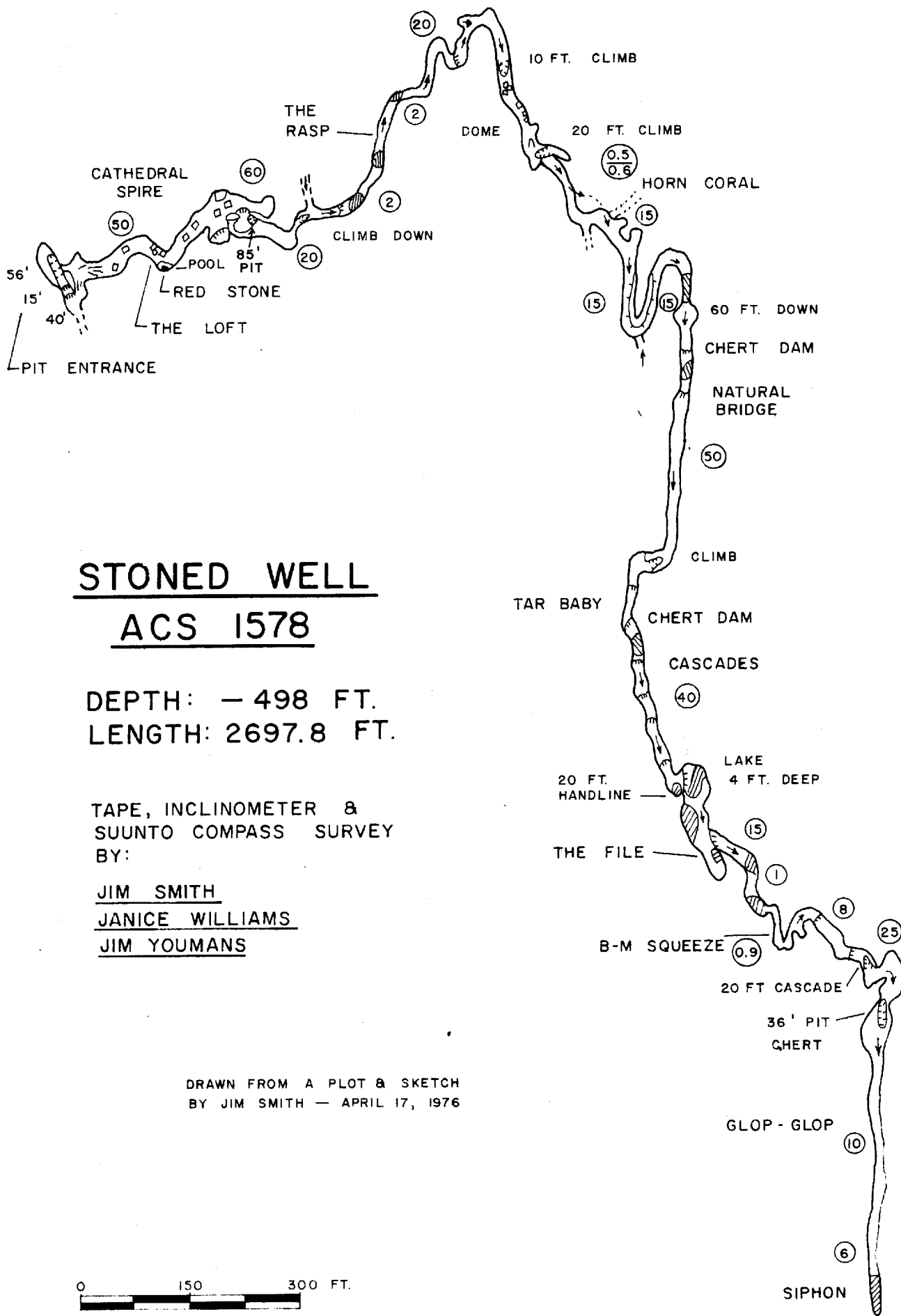
Finally, Teddy Bear walked across Stoned Well from below while I entered the sink from the top. We had found Stoned Well, finally! We had decided to do the lesser pits first this time. Yotter Stinks Pit is a slit 40 feet long, 15 feet wide and 50 feet deep with no leads. The other pit turned out to be a blind 26 foot drop.

We were finally getting around to Stoned Well. The pit was rigged and I descended first to place a bolt to keep the rope off of the loose boulder slope. The bolt was placed on the left hand wall rendering a free-fall pit. Next, Tommy descended and we took off into the cave down the boulder slope.

At the base of the slope we were in a high canyon passage 60 feet high and 40 feet wide in places. We were soon confronted by some massive blocks jumbled together in an enormous heap. Tommy and I found a route between the boulders to emerge in the same size passage. At one end of this passage stands a large flowstone formation 60 feet high. This is called the "Redstone" because of its red ochre color.

At the base of the flowstone is a wide deep pool. So far this cave offers some pretty neat formations. Tommy and I climbed back through the boulders and found an interesting free-climb to the top of the boulder pile. We named this perch "The Left." Here we could see the top of the Redstone. Also, in The Left some flowstone draperies were covering one wall. We awaited the others' arrival so they could share in the raving of this virgin cave.

Soon the others arrived and we climbed down to continue exploring the cave. We traversed this borehole passage to find another beautiful formation. Here a large flowstone resembles a cathedral spire. This "Spire" is multicolored having shades of brown, white and red. Ahead the passage pinched down to a height of 20 feet. On the left hand wall the passage came to a pit. It looked like a blind pud, but once a rock was tossed into it the entire team was gripped with excitement. The rock had fallen about 100 feet. This pitch stopped our advance for we were not equipped for a second drop. So, we checked out a few more leads and left the cave.



STONED WELL
ACS 1578

DEPTH: - 498 FT.
 LENGTH: 2697.8 FT.

TAPE, INCLINOMETER &
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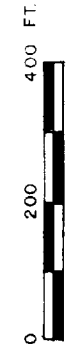
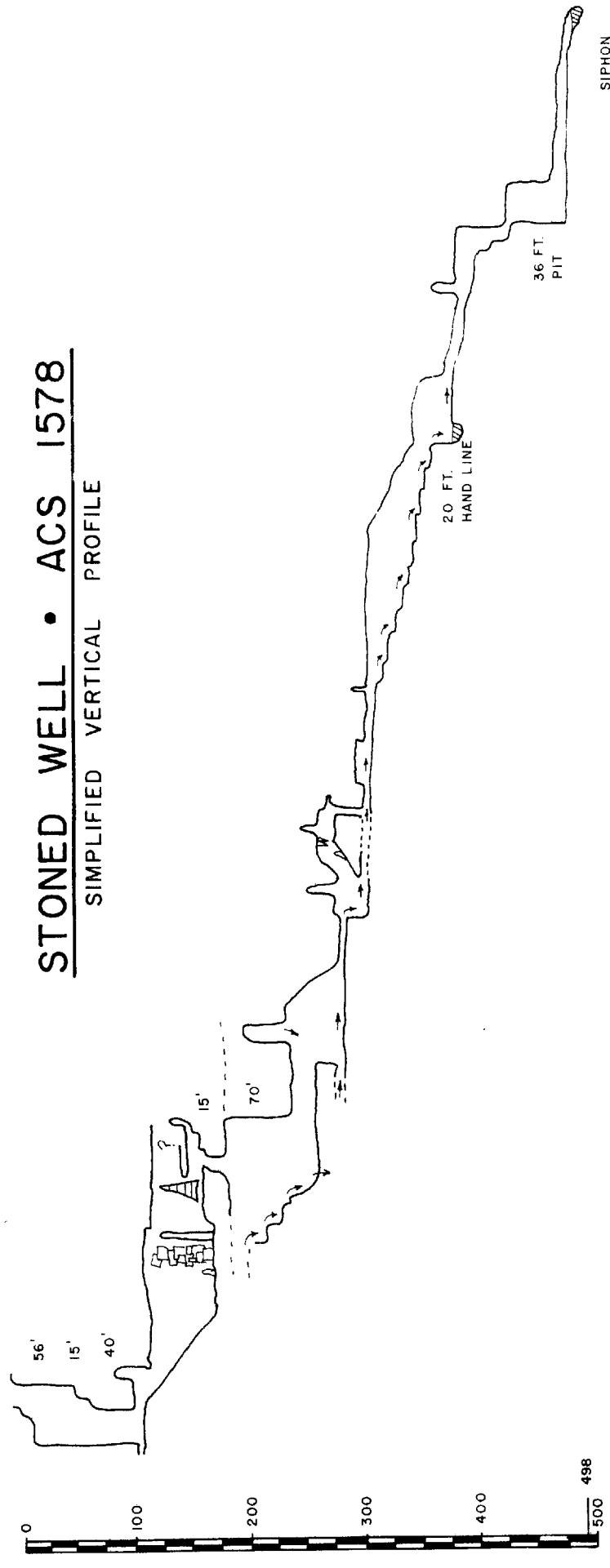
JIM SMITH
JANICE WILLIAMS
JIM YOUMANS

DRAWN FROM A PLOT & SKETCH
 BY JIM SMITH - APRIL 17, 1976



STONED WELL • ACS 1578

SIMPLIFIED VERTICAL PROFILE



500 498

FIFTH TRIP: April 2, 1976

This date marked the return to Stoned Well. This time we were equipped with bolts and an extra rope. This team consisted of: Gary Keppler, Janice Williams, Mary Saunders, E.T. Davis, Jim Youmans, Tommy Thurman and me (Jim Smith).

We returned to the new pit and I placed two bolts and descended the drippy pit. I rappelled about 35 feet to a ledge then backed off into the pit. I could see I was rappelling down a rift 20 feet wide and a 100 feet long. On bottom, the pit was taped to 85 feet in the middle of a furious drip.

I waited for Tommy and headed into the cave. The passage headed off as walking size passage. At the end of the passage I squeezed up into an upper level to find some nice formations and a high dome. I returned to the lower passage to climb down into the lowest passage which is a stream level passage.

I continued more or less alone until Mary caught up with me. We were in a stream crawl named the "Rasp" as it was laden with many sharp rocks that can brutalize the knees. This 100 foot crawl emerged into some stooping to full walking passage. Here we descended a 15 foot climb to follow the cascading water. The passage continued off as a narrow thoroughfare to a climb that by-passed a section where the ceiling had become too low to permit entry.

The climb led to a passage filled with flowstone and some quite nice formations. Soon after this another climb was encountered down to the stream. This passage is about 30 feet long with 6 inches of water and at its lowest point, 4 inches of air

space. A narrow rift provided a by-pass around the stream that had suddenly disappeared under another wall.

Once on the other side we continued down a passage that was mixed with crawling and walking passage. We then popped out into a nice walking passage 20 feet high, 15 feet wide and several 100 feet long. The cave all the time was angling downward to the valley floor.

At the end of this walking passage the cave contorted to a narrow rift stair-stepping in cascades. A lot of these cascades were over chert dams four feet high. The walls were also studded with chert projections. The meandering stream passage finally topped out over a pit.

Here, I climbed down to view that this 20 foot pit would need a handline. The water cascading down the climb pools up into a lake at the head of a fairly large room. I chose to be the guinea pig and jumped 5 feet to the water to find the water was nearly chest deep! With the aid of a handline, I bridged the climb with the length of my body, finding that it was not too much trouble to get back up.

The others came on down and we trucked to another crawl, later named the "File" (another knee-ripper passage.) This crawl is essentially over 300 feet long through pools and an occasional hands and knees traveling. At the end of this long crawl (sometimes in gross mud) we emerged into clean limestone beautifully scalloped and pitted. Ahead, we heard the roar of a cascade.

By this time the only cavers who elected to come this far without wet-suits were: Jim Youmans, Mary Saunders and me. I climbed down the 20 foot cascade being very wary of the chert projections as to avoid using them as hand holds. On the bottom of the cascade a big sand bar clung to one edge of the room as the stream went into

another crawl. I followed the stream onto a false floor, noting a new pit of about 40 feet. The false floor is about 4 inches thick, made of chert and not to be trusted. At this point, we had no more rope and returned to the surface after 6.5 hours of caving. We estimated that we had attained a depth of over 400 feet.

SIXTH TRIP: April 10, 1976

The following weekend, Jim Youmans and I returned to Stoned Well to start the survey and bottom the cave. We surveyed 571 feet of passage to the bottom of the 85 foot pit. This gave a depth of 282 feet. Then we left our surveying gear and proceeded down the cave.

This time I wore a wetsuit top as I did gettchilly on the last trip in. Jim decided not to wear a wetsuit since he is very warm-natured. We traversed the cave to the handline drop and placed one bolt and a 20 foot rope. We continued caving to the taped 36 foot pit. Here I placed one bolt and Jim placed the other. We descended the wet drop to find a passage with very sumpy walls. This indicated that we could be near the end of the cave as this vaseline mud is from settling flood water.

We slithered down this passage, later named "Glop-Glop" to a beautiful narrow, green siphon. I swam out into the siphon to see if I could find any air space beyond the sump. I merely extended my body under the wall and kicked for air space. I found none and deemed that the siphon will have to be dived on a future trip.

We bottomed the cave wondering about its mysterious depth. We left the cave rigged with the exception of the first two drops. We vowed to return the next weekend and survey to the bitter end. We completed the

SURVEY COMPLETED? April 17, 1976
Jim, Janice Williams and I returned to finish the survey in full wetsuits. This trip had taken 17 hours. The only yield on the trip was that the siphon was plumbed at 8 feet in depth.

Stoned Well was mapped to a length of 2,697 feet and a depth of 498 feet. It could be made deeper if the siphon is by-passed to find another drop. This is unlikely, however, since we are probably 20 feet from the valley floor. But the siphon must be dived!

Stoned Well is technically the third deepest in Alabama. But eyes must be focused on Fowler II as its next mapping trip will put it at about 505 feet deep. Stoned Well is probably always wet. It is best done during the rainy season as the cave will be more comfortable in a wetsuit top. A bottoming trip for four people should take 10 hours. This cave is worth doing as it is a challenge to explore as well as a beautiful cave.

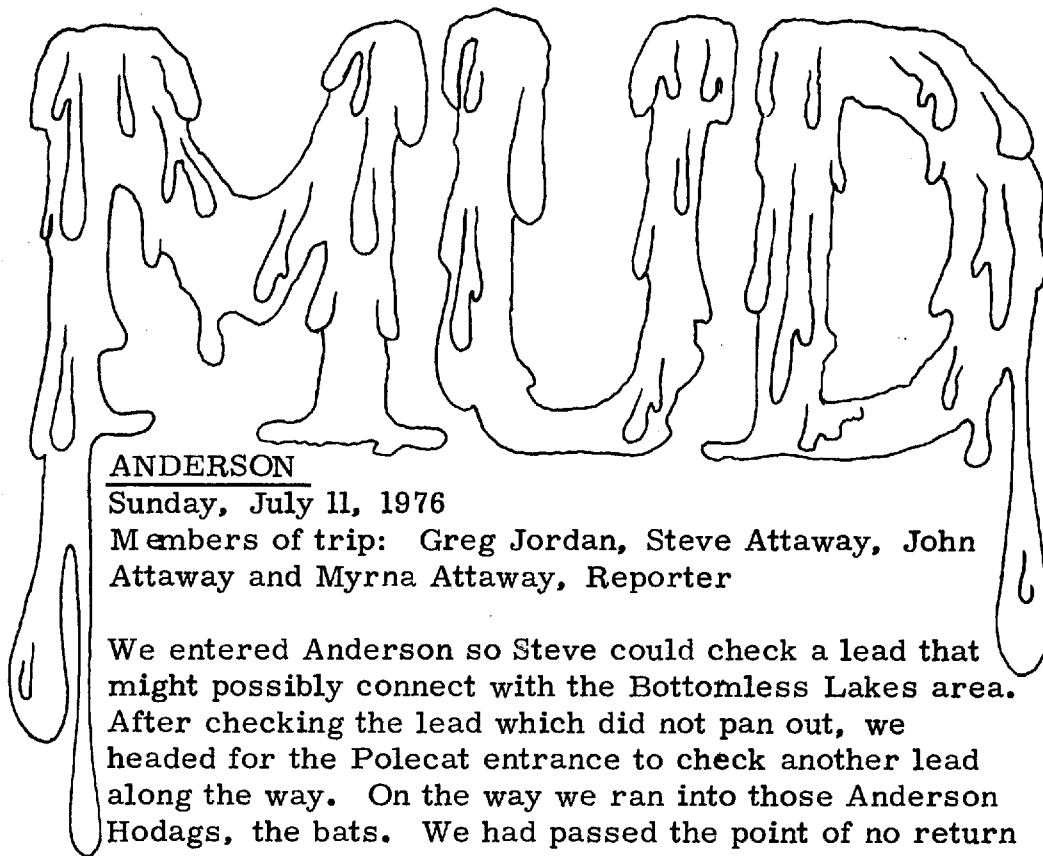
"Ask not what Speleology can do for you, but rather what you can do for Speleology."

The End.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Jim Smith of College Park, Georgia submitted the above article to Our Newsletter for publication and we are grateful to him for the honor of publishing it. It's a fascinating story.

NOTES & NEWS: Myrna says there's a remap Tumbling Rock move going on. See her at the next meeting for information.

VALERIE HADEN & DAVID HOWELL, two Grotto members(who deserve one another) have set their wedding date for September 25, 1976, but not in a cave!



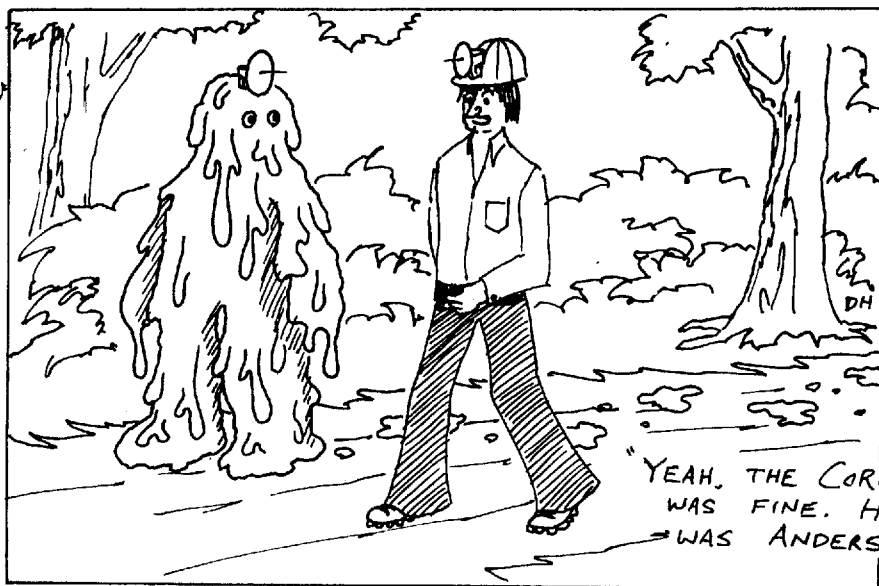
ANDERSON

Sunday, July 11, 1976

Members of trip: Greg Jordan, Steve Attaway, John Attaway and Myrna Attaway, Reporter

We entered Anderson so Steve could check a lead that might possibly connect with the Bottomless Lakes area. After checking the lead which did not pan out, we headed for the Polecat entrance to check another lead along the way. On the way we ran into those Anderson Hodags, the bats. We had passed the point of no return so we tiptoed on through the bats.

Kathy would have been proud of the way we got through the bats without disturbing all of them. While among the bats we noted that one of them had been banded. If anyone has any information on local bat studies please let me know.



"YEAH, THE CORKSCREW
WAS FINE. HOW
WAS ANDERSON?"

June 21, 1976

To the Members of the Birmingham Grotto:

We would like to express our thanks to the Birmingham Grotto for the wonderful time that they showed us during our two month stay in Birmingham. Shortly after we arrived in town we attended a club meeting on a Monday and were invited to go caving at Anderson Cave on Wednesday night.

We have spent all our spare time caving and we visited Fern Cave, War Eagle Cave and Gate City Cave in addition to Anderson Cave and several caves in Kentucky at the Speleofest.

Each time there was a cave trip we were phoned and invited along although our hectic work schedule did not allow us to go caving as often as we would have liked.

We are leaving behind warm friendships which we look forward to renewing during the conventions to come.

Everyone is always welcome to come visit us in Austin, Texas.

Sincerely,

Nancy & Mike

Nancy Boice
Mike McEachern

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

July 28, 1976

Dear Folks:

On behalf of myself and the Smoky Mountain Grotto, I would like to thank all of you for putting on such a fine SERA Cave Carnival. Other Grottoes should take tips from you when it comes to getting together a SERA event. Everything went quite smoothly and was put together well.

Thank you.

Good caving,

Martha
McGlasson
Martha McGlasson

BIRMINGHAM GROTO

c/o Kathy Spencer, Editor

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