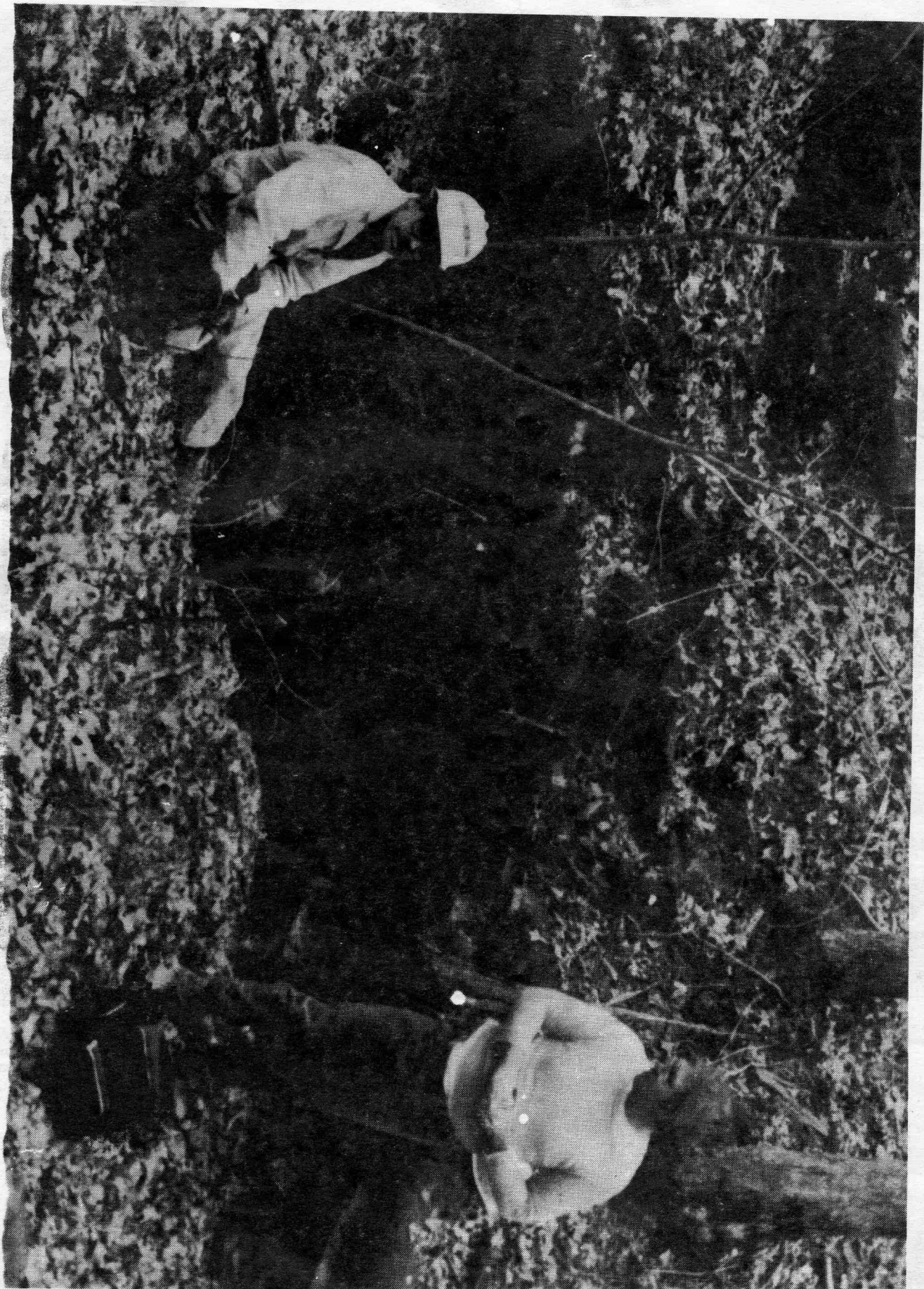


BIRMINGHAM GROTTO NEWSLETTER
NATIONAL SPELEOLOGICAL SOCIETY
SEPTEMBER 1977



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DATES TO WATCH

August 27, 1977

BANKHEAD FOREST CAVING TRIP

TRIP LEADER: Kathy Spencer

Steve Spencer

Dave Howell

Originally this was planned as an over-nite trip; however, none of the trip leaders will be able to stay over Sat. nite. However, anyone who is interested is welcomed to stay over and more maps and information will be made available for those who wish to stay on. Camping places are abundant.

MEETING TIME:

7:00 a.m. Woody

Restaurant in

Forestdale

Highway 78 West

for breakfast

8:00 a.m. (we

won't wait for

you to eat if you

get there after

7:00 a.m. and

aren't through by

8:00 a.m.

CAVES TO BE VISITED:

Salt Peter Cave

(Home of the rare Tennessee Cave Salamander)

Mountain Springs Cave, one of the largest in the forest, beautiful formations, etc.

There will be others, but it depends on how many folks show. Bankhead Caves are

not the longest in the world but there is enough to keep us busy. It will be

a leisurely trip; however, and if you want to bring your families to explore

the woods while you're caving, do so. We'll have a picnic lunch together if we

can all arrange to be at the same place at the same time. Depends on number of

folks, caves visited, etc. It will be a good trip, with lots of good caving,

beautiful Bankhead Forest to see, etc. YA'LL COME.

ON THE COVER: Larry Moore, Tom Lamb, and Steve Spencer prepare to enter Lamb Cave in the Bankhead National Forest.

EDITOR'S PAGE

BIRMINGHAM GROTO NEWSLETTER

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967-2509

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GROTO MEETINGS:

Once monthly, FIRST MONDAY of each month.

WHERE: Red Mtn. Museum

2230 15th Avenue, So.

Birmingham

TIME: 7:30 p.m.

SEPTEMBER MEETING will be held on 9/12/77

DUE TO LABOR DAY WEEKEND

OCTOBER MEETING: October 3, 1977

SERA to be hosted by Dogwood City Groto

and 16 at Sequoyah Caverns (North Alabama).

More information will follow.

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

FIASCO AT DOGWOOD SINK
Marion O. Smith

For a number of years one of my frequently told horror tales has been about the time several of us almost died of hypothermia in a cave on Lookout Mountain and then got lost in the woods all night. Even now it still rates high among my many misadventures.

STORY BEGINS

The episode took place as a result of Richard Schreiber acquiring some aerial photographs, looking at them through a stereoviewer, and noticing that there were some prominent sinks on the east side of Lookout Mountain in Georgia which weren't on the topo. Richard was in the Air Force in Illinois at the time and organized a spring ridgewalking trip while he was on leave.

On May 15, 1970, a late afternoon walk was made just south of Round Top by Richard, Allen Padgett, Steve Hudson, myself and Indianians Ted Wilson, Steve Gelfius, John Bassett, and Bill Steele. The forty foot diameter sink shown on the topo was located in addition to one almost as large which wasn't shown. However, neither had a cave.

DISCOVERY OF DOGWOOD SINK

Two days later the same group returned to the mountain and walked an area just south of Moore Gap. We angled down-slope about 300 vertical feet and soon found one of the sinks Richard was looking for. It too was about 40 feet in diameter and had a small stream disappearing in the rocks and gravel at the west end. At first people tried to dig there, but Ted soon started digging in the east end. He began to make progress and eventually everyone helped. Steve and Allen felled and wedged a huge boulder, creating a dangerous looking hole underneath. Only Steve volunteered to squeeze into it. He went down 10 feet to a small offset room and shouted for someone else to come in. Richard and I obliged. A crack, too small to squeeze through, was at the edge of the room with air blowing through it.

It was decided that digging tools and vertical gear would be needed so Steve, John and Bill returned to the vehicles for equipment while Richard and the rest continued ridgewalking. Remaining alone in the little cave for an hour I yielded to temptation and managed to move enough rocks to climb down two 15 foot chimneys to the top of a pit that would have to be rigged.

DOES IT GO?

Steve, John and Bill were soon back, with two 150 foot ropes, and rigged the pti as well as the second fifteen foot chimney. Steve descended the 40 foot drop first, followed by the rest of us. From the rope we climbed down breakdown and then up to a passage at the end of the chamber. John and I entered a crawl to the right and chimneyed about a 100 horizontal feet along the top of a crevass which, judging by the rattle of dropped rocks, seemed to be about a 100 feet deep. Meanwhile, Steve had gone straight and found a 44 foot pit which he and Bill, and later John, descended. They explored a short ways ahead but turned around because of time. An estimated depth of 150 feet had been reached in the new cave, which was named DOGWOOD SINK.

SURVEYING BEGINS

Surveying was begun May 23 by Richard, Allen, Steve, myself, and newcomer, Chuck Horton. We brought six ropes totaling over a 1,000 feet but found little to justify having them. Richard and Steve set bolts at the 40,44, and 15 foot pits and explored 200 virgin feet along a tight channel named the "Rendering Passage" to another 15 foot drop. The rest of us slowly mapped down to the Rendering Passage and while Allen and Chuck mapped it the others withdrew with the excess rope. 435.7 feet of mean passage was the meagre result of the first day's effort.

Dogwood Sinks

Lott Hall. Besides a rope for the 40 foot pit before the Crevass we had 241 and 23 foot Bluewaters and two 42 foot Goldlines. We entered at 12:10 P.M. and took 3 1/2 hours to drag the gear to the beginning the the bad crawl which we now referred to as "Glory Road." Things began to go haywire. The plan to map the crawl had to be scrapped when I lost the compass(which Lott found on the way out) and clinometer in the water. Richard went ahead to place a bolt at the 25 foot pit. David, Lott, and I had entered the crawl to survey when I lost the compass. Since were were already wet we kep crawling, getting "strung out", and leaving poor Jim with the terrible chore of getting all the ropes through. He struggled mightily but they soon wadded up and wedged. Lott, David and I had to go back and help Jim move the ropes.

At the Sit-Up Room, David began noticeably shaking from his drenching in the crawl. To keep him from further stages of hypothermia I let him use the wet suit vest I was wearing. Eventually, an hour after Richard arrived at the 25 foot pit, the rest of us joined him. A Goldline was rigged to a small formation[bolts were not necessary] and I went down and explored several 100 feet of passage. It looked good for a while, but the ceiling lowered until it was too tight to follow, with the stream disappearing down a 20° slope. There was bare limestone, floor and ceiling. Richard soon joined me and also declared it impassable. Disappointment.

We started back to the others about 7:30 p.m. Again getting soaked at the 25 footer the rout began at its top. Richard crawled through the Pseudo Syphon and wasn't seen again for 13 hours. The rest of us were cold and lagged badly. We abandoned the 23 and two 42 foot ropes at the 25 foot pit and slowly cralwed back along "Glory Road" with the 241 foot rope. At the Sit-Up Room Lott and David took the lead. Lott got through the last wet place and out of the crawl before Jim and I caught up with David. David's carbide lamp was about out and he and I swapped lamps. He got through but I was soon in the dark. A few moment's later, Jim's light went out also. We were in total darkness. Jim fumbled through the contents of his pack for his waterproof matches, but they failed to work. We yelled for David, who was in the little sit-up"room" at the end of the crawl, to shine his[mine actually] light our way. But it too went out. The situation was poor. Jim and I were shivering by now and we both were nearing panic. David shouted for Lott to come back. Luckily, he wasn't out of earshot. Lott's lamp bracket had torn off his hardhat and he was using a regular two-cell flashlight, which he gave to David to shine into the crawl. I abandoned the 241 foot rope in the water just before the last turn. Jim and I emerged from the crawl shaking violently, as was David. With much difficulty, David and I lit a carbide lamp and slowly we three, plus Lott, who had been waiting 10 feet higher in a chimney position, continued toward the entrance. We stopped frequently, to carbide, rest, make carbide fires for warmth, and once to eat. Progress was exceedingly slow. The Crevass chimney was painful. Energy seemed slow in coming and every muscle ached. At last, about 1:30 a.m. we reached the surface, but our night's adventure wasn't over yet.

THERE'S MORE?

The light rain soon quit and there was a thick fog. About 2 a.m. we started up the mountain to the car but we got lost in the fog. Not just slightly disoriented but hopelessly lost. We found a trail which was unfamiliar to me and walked up and down it. After about an hour we stopped and attempted to build a carbide fire, but with no success. Still later we body-piled under my space blanket, but by 5:30 a.m. I was shaking so much that I re-carbided and left the others. I wandered north, then south, on the trail we had been on earlier. Then I went through the brush to a stream and waded down it. My carbide went out and I was unable to relight it. I found another north-south trail and wandered up and down it without locating any familiar sights. Then I plunged upslope through laurel and pine thickets and in time, after losing my canteen, made my way to the paved road. But where was I? I turned south, but learned from a boy and his father, I was headed wrong. I dropped my gear to the ground and walked about 1 and 1/2 miles north on the paved road and 1/2 mile off the road

Dogwood Sink

Three weeks later Richard, Bill Steele, Allen and Wade Padgett, Don Hunter, and I continued the survey, with the first three mapping beyond the Rendering Passage and the rest of us the Crevass Passage. The Crevass crew, after only 150 feet, was forced to climb the tight, popcorn coated meandering passage, making voice contact with Richard's crew about 4/5 the way down. Continuing horizontally a short distance we found the others in a steam passage. For a while it looked like the cave was really going to open up, with the ceiling at least 50 feet high. Then things got back to normal. A 100 foot crawl was encountered, followed by an awkward, tight, upper level to an 11 foot climb down back to the stream. Only Richard and I reached this point and the stream crawl ahead was definitely BAD, even if there was a strong breeze. All 6 of us then exited via the Crevass, after 10:40 hours underground. A whopping 782.8 feet had been surveyed.

The elevation of Dogwood Sink's entrance was thought to be at about 1,660 feet. Below it, at 1,000 feet, is Peacock Cave, explored and mapped May 16, 22, and June 12 [including 1,100 virgin feet] to a distance of 6,614 feet. Peacock's left fork ended at some 60-80 foot wet domes. The stream from these domes flows through the cave, joins another stream from the right fork, and resurges at the entrance. Interest was heightened in Dogwood Sink because of the possibility of beating Bull Cave [then at -600 feet] in depth and having the second deepest cave east of the Mississippi in Georgia.

ANOTHER ASSAULT

Curiosity got to me and on Wednesday, July 1, David A. Young, an old west Georgia Grotto member who had just returned from the Army, and I conducted an after-school trip. We proceeded to the miserable stream crawl that had been reached the previous trip. With David as a back-up I attempted to push it alone. Almost immediately there was a sharp bend to the left, with a shelf sticking out in a 6 inch pool of water with about 6 inches of airspace. I got thoroughly soaked as I contorted through, drowning my carbide in the process. I had a flashlight which worked about half the time and continued forward, scraping aside gravel in order to move. The passage was six to eight feet wide, with the floor to ceiling distance less than a foot. Further along, it got a little better with the ceiling often two feet high and in one place, dubbed the Sit-Up Room, four feet high. About 275 feet from David I got to another wet duck (Pseudo Syphon) and decided to turn around. On the way back I found David near the Sit-Up Room. We both were shaking and withdrew from the cave after a 6 hour's stay. David's brand new pair of fatigues were demolished. His shirt was in tatters and both his pant's legs were ripped from the crotch to the ankle hem.

A few weeks later I saw Richard and informed him about the trip. He was upset with me and felt that we were to jointly explore the cave. I agreed not to go on any more trips until he could go. Consequently, on August 1, he, Kirk Holland [just returned from Vietnam] and I mapped the lower Crevass Passage [377.5 feet] and went downstream to the bad crawl. Kirk waited while Richard and I crawled to and beyond the Pseudo Syphon where I had gotten earlier. Only 50 feet beyond we found a 6 foot high standing pocket and a 25 foot drop. We had no rope and crawled back to Kirk, after being gone 2 hours. All our shoulder muscles ached from pulling our bodies along. Our trip lasted 8:50 hours.

THE FINAL PUSH?

Amazingly, we had had 5 trips to Dogwood Sink, mapped only 1,596.2 feet, and had failed to reach the end. The final push/mapping trip was scheduled for October. This time there was to be no turning back because of inadequate tackle and/or want of enthusiasm. We were going to get to the end.

The personnel for this memorable trip were Richard, myself, David Teal, Jim Young and

Dogwood Sinks

to where my car was parked, arriving at 9:00 a.m. Richard had had little trouble finding his way and had been at my car since 2:15 a.m. where he had slept. He was wondering what had happened to us and was about to drive away to start rescue operations. Within half an hour Jim, David and then Lott arrived, from different directions. Lott had walked down the mountain, found a farmer, and gotten a ride to the car. Bad luck continued. On the drive back to the pavement my car's antenna got knocked off and when I stopped to pick up the vertical gear I had left on the side of the road it was gone. Someone had gotten it.

CONCLUSION:

So, in minute detail, that's the story of the 1970 efforts in Dogwood Sink. There was no inclination for a return trip, even to get the abandoned ropes. Subsequent ridgewalks turned up two small caves between Dogwood Sink and Peacock Cave, 200+ foot long Come Along Cave and 100 foot long Penny's Cave. It seems probable that the water from Dogwood Sink flows through the two small caves and into the dome area of Peacock's left fork, though no dye tracing has been done to prove it.

Finally, in 1976, I, at last, decided to finish the map. Caving had changed in TAG country during the interim period, for now many people were using full wet suits and good, dependable electric lights and were exploring far wetter and more demanding caves than Dogwood Sink. On November 20, myself with new generation[but also veteran] cavers Charles Clark and Martha McGlasson of Knoxville, Tennessee, and Jim H. Smith of College Park, Georgia, all wearing full wet suits, in a strictly routine 8 hour trip, finished the survey[829.1 feet] and removed my 241 foot rope from its watery grave.

Jim said the trip was a joke, implying, I assume, that the cave was much over-rated. Charles was kinder when he said, "It's difficult and it sucks." It, to me, seemed much, much easier in 1976 than 6 years before. All those groad holes explored during the in-between years gave a more accurate basis for comparison. Nevertheless, even though it is nearly a half mile long[2,425.1 feet] and Georgia's second deepest, at 303.4 feet, it will probably continue to have little or no visitation.



VOICES FROM UNDERGROUND

VALHALLA - Jay Clark, Reporter

Carl Cathey and I had not been to Valhalla since last summer when we had a run-in with the man who owns the property on the traditional route. While we were there, we noticed a jeep trail that appeared to have been recently used. Because of the problems with getting in the old way, we decided to try and find the jeep trail from the top of the mountain. In looking at the topo map we found what appeared to be the right trail, but we had a good deal more trouble finding it when we got to the woods. We finally checked with some locals who knew how to get there.

The trail to the pit goes off of a fairly heavily travelled woods road. Parts of the trail seem to have been recently cleared, but it is a very rough trail. My jeep made it fairly easily, but the trail is completely impassable in rainy weather. There are a couple of mud banks where it would be almost impossible to get any traction. So, if you intend to go there by driving, don't go down there after a rain for two reasons: (1) it will mess up the road even more and (2) you probably won't be able to get back up the hill without a winch.

It took us a long time to find the right trail, and it was a rough ride, but worth it. The pit has to be one of the most spectacular in the State and when the sun is directly above the pit, the rays cast down are beautiful.

Since finding the trail we have been back twice. The last time there we started checking out the high water marks, and it appears that at some time the whole bottom of the pit was flooded and the water was probably 50 feet deep in some places. We found logs and leaves at an area well above the floor level.

If the register is any guide there does not appear to have been much traffic lately. As far as I know, the old way is closed so go the new way if you must go. If you don't have a four wheel drive the walk the new way is a good deal shorter, but the elevation change is about 400 feet, which can be difficult with 300 feet of rope and climbing gear. Anybody who wants instructions, please let me know and they will be furnished. You can drive to within 50 yards of the pit.

GLORY HOLE (Georgia Cave)

Reporter-Joyce Attaway

Myrna Attaway, John Attaway, Steve Attaway
Greg Jordan, Jane and Stan Tew, Jimmy
Harrison & Jane & Tim Moore

On November 27, 1976, this party converged upon Glory Hole Cave near Pelham, Georgia to record its splendor on film.

The cameras were placed tenderly in amo boxes to protect them from the rocks, mud and cutting grit of sand. The trip into the cave was uneventful. After 6 hours of photographing, I became cold and exhausted so John, Jim Harrison and I decided to return to the surface. The exiting trip was also uneventful until we came upon the 12 foot deep crevice which had to be chimneyed to gain access to the surface.

Since my caving experiences were few, I was not adapt at this new type of maneuvering and had some difficulty in making the climb. I had not realized just how depleted my strength was, but with Jim ahead to "talk" me up and John behind to give me a little push, I made it up the climb with only minor abrasions, hematomas, and mental trauma. I rested for a while in ignorant bliss, gulping down M & M's, not recalling how steep the descent into the cave was.

We traveled for approximately 25 to 30 feet and the realization that the worst wasn't over hit me. I still had to twist my sore and weary body into unnatural positions in order to ascend the tight winding exit. Jim went first carrying an amo box containing one of the treasured cameras with the record of the beauty of this cave. As he ascended he placed the amo box on a ledge so that he might obtain better handholds. The amo box became dislodged and came tumbling down the narrow opening. I heard the crash as the amo box began to bounce from side to side. Jim yelled "rock." What to do? Here I was, caught in a space my fat body would barely fit into with a potentially deadly missile coming at my head. My first reaction was to move out of its path, but there was no where to go. I curled my body into a ball, letting my helmet take the brunt of the flow. The amo box came to a crashing halt on top of my helmet. I still could not move so Jim climbed back down to obtain the amo box and we started the climb again, exiting the cave to a

8 WAR EAGLE
Reporter-Myrna Attaway

It was a cold, winter day in Guntersville. Weather conditions only allowed us to drive half-way up the road to War Eagle.

While gear was being put on I started working on my carbide lamp. The water valve was plugged as usual, I pulled my hair back the way I usually do to blow into the valve. I had momentarily forgotten that I had just gotten my hair cut. A few wisps of hair got into the flame and started a merry little fire on the side of my head. It was almost a reflex to reach up and slap it out and there was no further incidence with the lamp.

We descended the pit and went around the corner to traverse across the ledge above the stream rather than try the jump across. I had a lot of difficulty making one of the moves and had to have help from Greg. On the way back even with help I could not make the move and I fell into the water backwards. The water was only waist deep but I got wet up to my neck. We were all wearing cover-alls so I removed my wet clothes and put on Greg's dry coveralls. I had forgotten my boots and was wearing tennis shoes so I also traded socks with Greg because his were wool.

I felt warm and dry so we decided to do more of the cave. We had not gone far when Steve Attaway decided to take a multiple flash picture of the large passage in War Eagle. If you have ever been caving with a photo-bug you know that this is a long process. Steve and Greg worked on the picture while I sat and waited. By the time the picture was taken I was quite chilled. I told Greg and Steve we needed to go out.

Steve went up first while Greg and I put our gear on. I was very confused and had to have supervision. Steve went to the truck and got an extra rope to rig at the lip to help me get over the lip without being hauled. While waiting at the bottom, I wrapped up in an emergency blanket and used my lamp for a heater. Since I was pretty frightened, Greg and I climbed out tandem. I climb a 3 jumar Cuddington rig so it was easy for me to do the lip using the extra rope.

When I got to the top I wrapped back up in the space blanket and went on to the truck, while Steve and Greg hauled up the ropes.

Half way back to the truck I noticed small white things falling from the sky I didn't feel cold and stopped and looked at them for about 5 minutes before I realized that it was snowing and that I was suffering from hypothermia. I put on warm clothes and cranked the truck heater up.

By the time Steve and Greg got back I realized how close I had come to having real problems. Steve and Greg suffered the hot temperature of the truck until we got to Reeds Restaurant in Guntersville where several cups of hot tea warmed me considerably.

When I think back I wonder how much having my boots could have helped me. I could not make that move but extra traction of the lug soles might have held me on the ledge better. I don't know if that would have helped me. I cannot say if I would have warmed up had we kept moving. Being the victim, I know that my judgment was impaired and because I know at the time that cold can hurt you without you knowing it, my life was probably saved. If I had not known this I probably would have charged on after the photography session and had a real problem deeper in the cave. The importance of knowing what the cold can do to you needs to be stressed.

EDITOR'S NOTE: I believe both Myrna and Joyce have given us some lessons in safety. 1. Don't go caving without proper equipment. 2. Watch falling objects. 3. Know your own capabilities and don't let your ego push you on beyond what you can do. 4. Don't go caving with Greg Jordan. Since he was on both these trips, he's obviously a bad luck charm. (Kidding, Greg).

NOTE NOTE NOTE NOTE
The Spencers have within their basemr an assorted accumulation of Grotto publications, NSS News, etc., that are received at our house. These publications are available to all Grotto members. Just

BICENTENNIAL CAVE
Reporter-Myrna Attaway
July, 1976

David Howell, Valerie Haden, Greg Jordan, Steve Attaway and I were invited by Lin Guy to come up and help map Bicentennial Cave. We arrived at Lin's trailer late Friday night and found fourteen people sleeping on the floor, under the table, and in the bathtub. Saturday morning we rushed off to eat at a restaurant so small that they could just seat all of us. While we were there, we decided to split up considering the cave would only hold 8 people at the most. The Birmingham Grotto members therefore trotted off to Summer Cave in the Tri-State area of Alabama.

Summer Cave drains the limestone quarry it is in and was full of diesel fuel fumes and thus, we did not push it and returned to the cars. We decided then to try some caves in a sink in Wild Man Cove (Tn.) which John Reid had found and reported to Dave. We got there and found an entrance room with two entrances and no passage and another cave with a 40 to 50 foot pit that had a corkscrew siphon at the lip.

It was still early in the day so we decided to head off for another cave and lunch. We were stopped by curiosity at a fork in the road where a spring flowed into a shallow pond and a cave entrance had been dug out and a picnic table set up. We pulled out the old peanut butter and jelly and sat down for a long awaited lunch. A man came up and introduced himself as Mr. Frank the owner of the property.

Mr. Frank told us about his new mule and his neighbor who owned

some caves. He told us how to get there and we waved goodbye to Mr. Frank and his mule.

We went to Mr. Frank's neighbor, Mr. Roberts. Greg talked to him and found out that he had been harassed by cavers so much that he had closed his caves. When he heard how far we had come he agreed to let us into his caves under the condition that we sign a disclaimer. That done we headed for his cave.

The cave is called Big Mouth Cave and it was named appropriately. The entrance is about 150 feet long and 30 feet high. The floor is flat, dry and sandy so a Sharlea bull and his women use the cave for a barn. The cave was full of cave life other than the white cave cows.

It had blind crayfish everywhere, several six to eight inch white fish, and a blind white Salamander. We were very pleased with the cave and wanted to thank Mr. Roberts again for letting us see it but he was out doing the chores so we talked to his wife, who asked if we had seen Wonder Cave, a commercial cave in the area.

Saturday night Lin's was not quite as crowded as the night before and the next day Lin, Glenda and I watched David Teal, Jim, Greg and Steve do the Sink-hole, a 60 foot pit in Tennessee. They finished early and believe it or not, the terrible trio, Greg, Steve and I, were back home by sundown.

NOTE: Mr. Roberts has Big Mouth for sale as well as another cave on his property. If you are interested get in touch with me and I will give you his address. Myrna

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