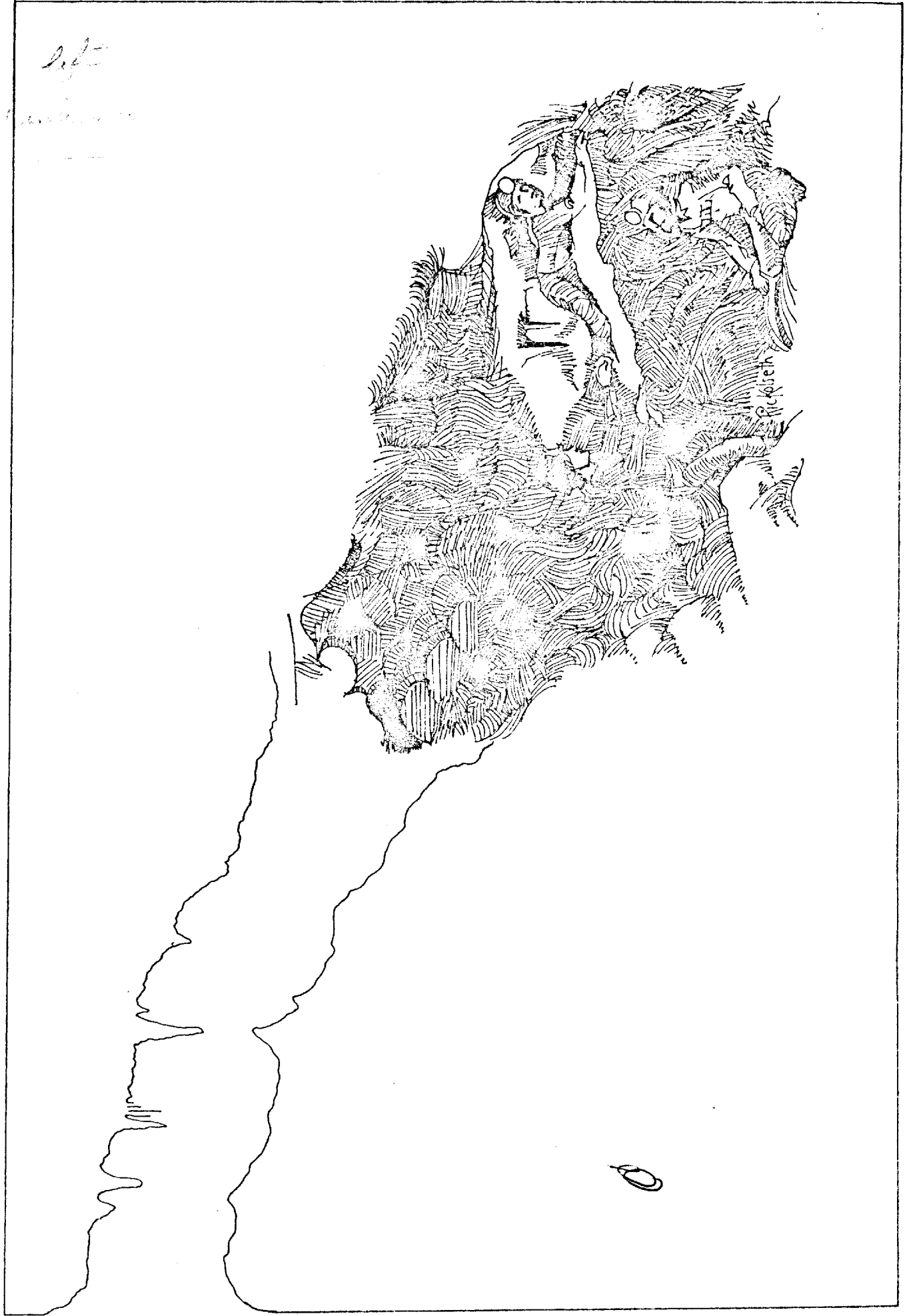


**BIRMINGHAM GROTTO NEWSLETTER**  
**NATIONAL SPELEOLOGICAL SOCIETY**  
**OCTOBER**



*left*

*unlabeled*

*Q*

October is a busy month, as you can see by the DATES TO WATCH next door. Election of Grotto officers is at the top of the list - you have to be a paid up member for 1979 in order to participate. The dues also entitle you to receive this newsletter, which, as you can see by this issue, is getting better all the time. So be sure, for whatever reason, to get your \$4 in as soon as possible!

Running a close second in the important events department is the impending marriage of DONNA MATTHEWS and JET THOMAS on Oct. 28 at 10:30 am, Grace United Methodist Church. There will be a premarital square dance and party the night before (Friday) - at 7:00 pm at the Homewood Elks Club (I think that's just off Hwy. 31, but check around if you're not sure). BYOB questions should be directed to either Donna or Jet. All the grotto and their families are invited to both events.

Donna and Jet are both active cavers, which qualifies them for the fast-becoming-traditional benediction, "Two cavers who deserve each other." Our best wishes to you both for a long, happy life together.

We've again received some excellent contributions to the BGN. MARION O. SMITH has sent a trip report on the VAST CAVERNS survey as well as a map of the end result. BILL VARNEDOE submitted a well written reply to our Editorial on State Cave Surveys published a few months back. We appreciate the response and hope the readers will give it special attention. RIC KOLSETH has again brightened our pages with his art work - he tells me he hasn't been in many caves yet...imagine what he could draw if he got into some of the more spectacular caves! Let's make sure he gets into as many caves as possible! JOE DOMNANOVICH gives an evaluation of the Grotto over the past two years - read and decide how you'd like the Grotto to change or stay the same. LETITIA KORBLY has two trip reports with special messages: to warn about the dangerous situation at the entrance to DOC'S DELIGHT which may cause it to be closed; and to give an account of a typical (?) Huntsville Grotto trip to TONEY SINKS. Finally, you may notice that we are missing a CAVE CROSSTIC puzzle this month - is it something we said, Bill? If I promise to try to get everything about it correct (even underlining the example), will you give us another chance?

## DATES TO WATCH

- Oct. 2 - GROTTO ELECTIONS
- Oct. 7 - Tennessee Cave Survey annual business meeting (See Dave Howell for details)
- Oct. 13- 1st Annual TAG Fall Cave-In  
15 Sequoyah Caverns KOA (Details in last newsletter and at meeting)
- Oct. 27- Celebration of/and marriage of  
28 DONNA MATTHEWS and JET THOMAS.
- Nov. 11 - Tentative date for weekend Grotto trip to XANADU CAVE. Trip Leader - Dave Howell. More details at meeting and in next newsletter.

The Birmingham Grotto Newsletter is published approximately twelve times a year by the Birmingham Grotto of the National Speleological Society.

Subscription rates: \$4.00 per year, prorated from October.

Editors: Dave & Valerie Howell  
1429 17th Avenue South  
Birmingham, AL 35205 (323-31...)

Submit materials for publication directly to the Editors. Deadline for receiving materials is the 20th day of the month preceding the month of issue. Materials received after this date will be published in the following issue.

### GROTTO OFFICERS:

- Chairman: Joe Domnanovich  
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Birmingham 35214 (798-2728)
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# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editors,

Bill Torode tells me that there was a comparison article in the B'ham Grotto Newsletter among state cave surveys recently. I didn't see it, therefore, I'm commenting on hearsay evidence, but I think the comments are in order anyhow.

First, I understand the article was quite complimentary of the ACS - thanks. This is a no-funds job. I do it all; some don't understand this and that is the reason for the policy of replying only to mail that includes a stamped, self-addressed envelope! On the other hand, I hear (and from other sources, too) there is much criticism of my tendency to redraw or change submitted maps, often to their cartographic degradation. I plead guilty. But there is a reason in every case.

It is ACS policy not to redraw or "correct" the map if it will fit the format size, and has the correct information. Changes are kept to a minimum and only occasionally is a re-draw necessary. In fact a majority of the maps are originals or others (mostly Bill Torode, to be sure!).

May I explain a few of the reasons changes may be needed. Perhaps if the originals can incorporate them, no changes need be made.

1. TITLE BLOCK: Must contain the name of the cave as logged in the survey. Occasionally someone will misspell the name, causing a "correction." (Herring Cave, AL 6, has been spelled Herring, Herrin, etc.)

Must contain the ACS cave number. It is prefixed AL (for Alabama).

Should contain the organization and names of the mappers, including the NSS, if appropriate.

Should not contain the county or location. Maps may later get printed in newspapers or no telling where. The cave number keys it to the ACS list where the location is pinpointed; and that doesn't get as wide a distribution as the map might.

2. LEGENDS : Must contain a North Arrow, or a short statement that north is unknown. This includes pits drawn in profile only, too.

Must not contain a scale in words, such as:  $\frac{1}{4}" = 400'$  or  $1" = 25'$ . These

become worse than meaningless, they are downright wrong when the map gets reduced or enlarged in copying or photographing.

The scale is often quite awkward such as:

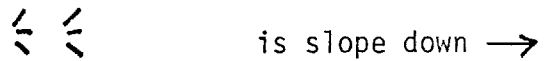


Just figure out each division of this and you'll see. Much better is:






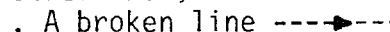
Now each section is 10' not 12½', see? I will occasionally correct scales to graphics that are easier to use.

3. MAP SYMBOLS: The ACS uses a more-or-less standard set of symbols. Some use or misinterpret them in other ways; however I will standardize symbols on maps. When a book is issued, only one set of symbols can be issued also. It is highly inefficient to put the legend of symbols on each map just because someone uses non-standard symbols. Worst offenders are:



that way  is abrupt drop

in the direction of the  's. Where I've been there and know that it is a slope or drop, I'll change the symbol; (sometimes a section or profile will show which it is, even though I haven't been there).

Streams. In Alabama,  means a dried up stream bed, a stream is solid . A broken line  is a theoretical stream connection, example:



I will often make stream symbol corrections because the text clearly indicates a stream, not a streambed only.

4. LABELS: I don't object to total length or depth, although it is not required. If it is used, however, it should be total cave length, not a sum of survey legs (ex.: across a room, not around it).

I don't object to "up" or "down" on drops (on the way in) but they are redundant to the symbol and confusing to 2-entrance caves.

Each entrance must be labeled as to its number (entrance number) to correspond to the data sheet turned in on that cave. Each entrance is logged and its coordinates recorded. The map ought to match the other continued...

data.

The ACS has no funds. I can bootleg ordinary Xerox copies (8x10) if the demand is not too numerous. But there is no way I can "reduce" maps by any ordinary copying process. Therefore, if the only copy I have is longer than 8x10, I will use the grid, square system to (painfully) redraw it to a smaller scale on an 8x10 size page. Often, too, even a photographic reduction to 8x10 will make the legends too small to read and they need to be re-lettered.

Finally, some occasionally add to an existing cave map, or discover a new connection or entrance. This causes a modification to the map, or, if no map was submitted with the new discovery, I'll just put a note on the map.

In all cases if the original draftsman wishes to redraw (with my "corrections") I will be only too glad to use his version and throw mine away.

It is true I'm no cartographer. My maps are not works of art, but they do contain factual (as known at the time) information in a useful format. I submit their data are valid. Get the facts recorded while the iron is hot, let future generations "pretty it up."

I once wrote an article in the NSS News, "In Defense of Inaccurate Cave Maps." In it I stated that I'd rather see 95% of all caves sketched than 5% surveyed with a transit and 95% with no map. I still hold this "druther." But, of course, all sketches are replaced by Tape and Compass maps as they are made available!!

Thanks,

Bill

W.W. Varnedoe, Jr.  
NSS 3160F  
5000 Ketona Way  
Huntsville, AL 35803



"QUIT WORRYING - NOTHING THAT LIVES IN A CAVE  
IS BIG ENOUGH TO WORRY ABOUT!"

## CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

### TWO YEARS AS THE HEAD MUDCRAWLER

These are my thoughts from during my term as chairman of our grotto.

We have formed a solid group of cavers. Our membership now stays between 40 and 50, which is big enough to publish yet small enough for everyone to be known to the others.

We have started many projects, finished few. Not enough manpower on any job for long enough.

We are doing quite well in mapping and exploring

While more people belong to the N.S.S. than ever and our attendance at regional events is increasing, I believe we can take a much bigger part of NSS and SERA activities.

As for pure down and out caving we are as dirty as any.

Now for the poor side of these years.

Too many risks being taken by vertical cavers, not enough experience before pits by young cavers, not enough respect for what a pit can do to you.

May failure to generate any interest in the Cumberland Plateau National Forest throughout SERA. I still think it's needed now, not later.

So as not to end on a down note we are caving, caving, caving well and having fun. Enough said.

Joe

The Grotto elections may take up most of the next meeting. Should it not, the following items might be covered.

First of all, Steve Spencer is trying round up slides of the WALLS OF JERICHO area, actually in-cave shots. I'm sure if you give Steve a call, he could give you a list of the caves in that area. At any rate, should you have any slides of the above, bring them to the meeting and we will have a showing of them to select the best.

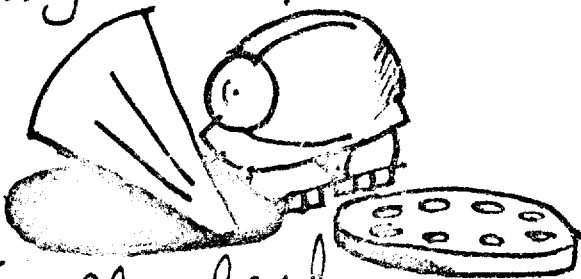
Steve also mentioned that the Conservancy has acquired an older building that it is in the process of fixing up. It has offered free use of a room to us, if we will agree to come in and fix it up ourselves. Now, this would be a great chance to establish a Grotto Library, instead of the widespread, piecemeal arrangement we now have. It would require work on our part, possibly setting up a grotto trip there to work. Think about it and, if you're willing, volunteer!

We have talked in the past about updating the Grotto patch - and not a whole lot has been done about it until now. Ric Kolseth has submitted the three designs seen here for the grotto's consideration.

is is another item that needs to be discussed at a Grotto meeting sometime. If anyone has any ideas/suggestions about getting the patches made, or any other design ideas, let us or the officers know.



*Coming Next Month:  
Caving the Light  
Fantastic!*



*in Cleveland,  
Ohio*

# VOICES FROM UNDERGROUND

\*\*\*\*\*

VAST CAVERNS, ALABAMA \* For several days  
By Marion O. Smith \* in December 1977,

\*\*\*\*\*  
\* Georgia cavers  
\*\*\*\*\* E.T. Davis and  
Don Brown extensively ridgewalked portions of north Alabama, making a number of discoveries. Near the end of their last day, the 23rd, Don found a dry surface pit which he and E.T. conservatively estimated "at least a hundred feet in depth."

The return trip didn't occur until April 8, 1978, with Don's involvement in an automobile wreck and the cold weather being the main causes of delay. On that day Don, E.T., Richard Schreiber, Jim Smith, and 'Bear Thurman, in that order, descended the pit, in the presence of Jill Dorman. The entrance drop was over double the estimated "100 feet," and was predominantly freefall down a twenty by forty foot shaft, with a 200 foot high canyon extending about a hundred feet straight ahead.

A twenty-five foot drop a few feet away led to the uneven floor of the elongation (or "canyon"). From there a breakdown climb led to an eleven foot better-rigged-than-not drop which led in turn a few dozen feet to a tight crawl. Here E.T. stopped, not wanting any grunge passage to mar his "high" from descending such a fine entrance shaft. 'Bear who descended sometime after the others, didn't go that far.

Don, Jim and Richard dug through the tight beginning of the crawl and, soon intersecting a somewhat higher rocky water route, followed it about 160 miserable feet to the edge of a wet ninety to ninety-five foot drop. Jim pounded in his only 3/8" bolt and they descended.

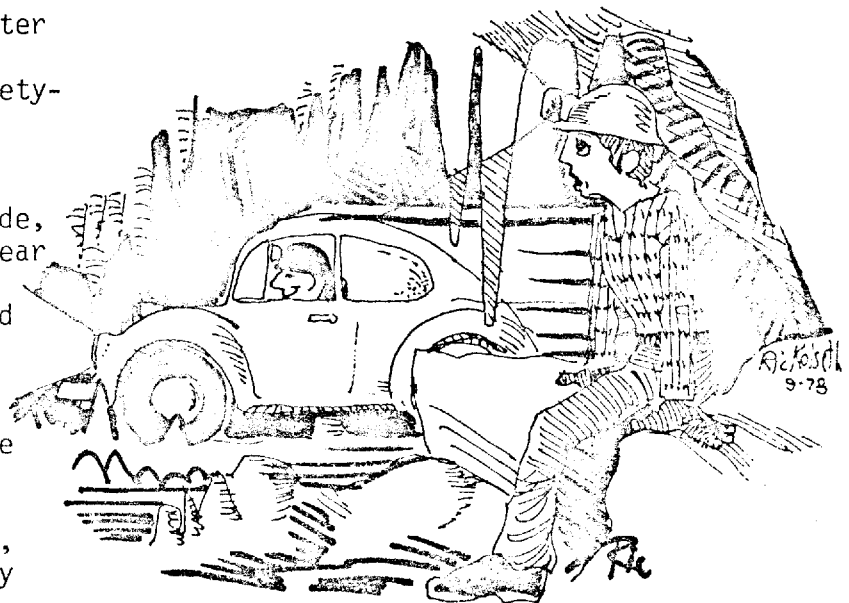
At the bottom they explored at least 1,200 feet of passage, mostly a dry, wide, and low abandoned overflow route, and near the end squirmed through muddy, sleezy holes down to the stream level which led immediately to a pool with very little airspace beyond. They stopped there and returned to the surface after about an eight hour trip. They estimated that the cave was at least 400 feet deep.

The next day the same five, plus Jill Dorman (whose left wrist was in a cast), Jim Coffroth, Marion O. Smith, and Buddy Lane yo-yoed the entrance drop and unofficially measured the drop at 226 feet.

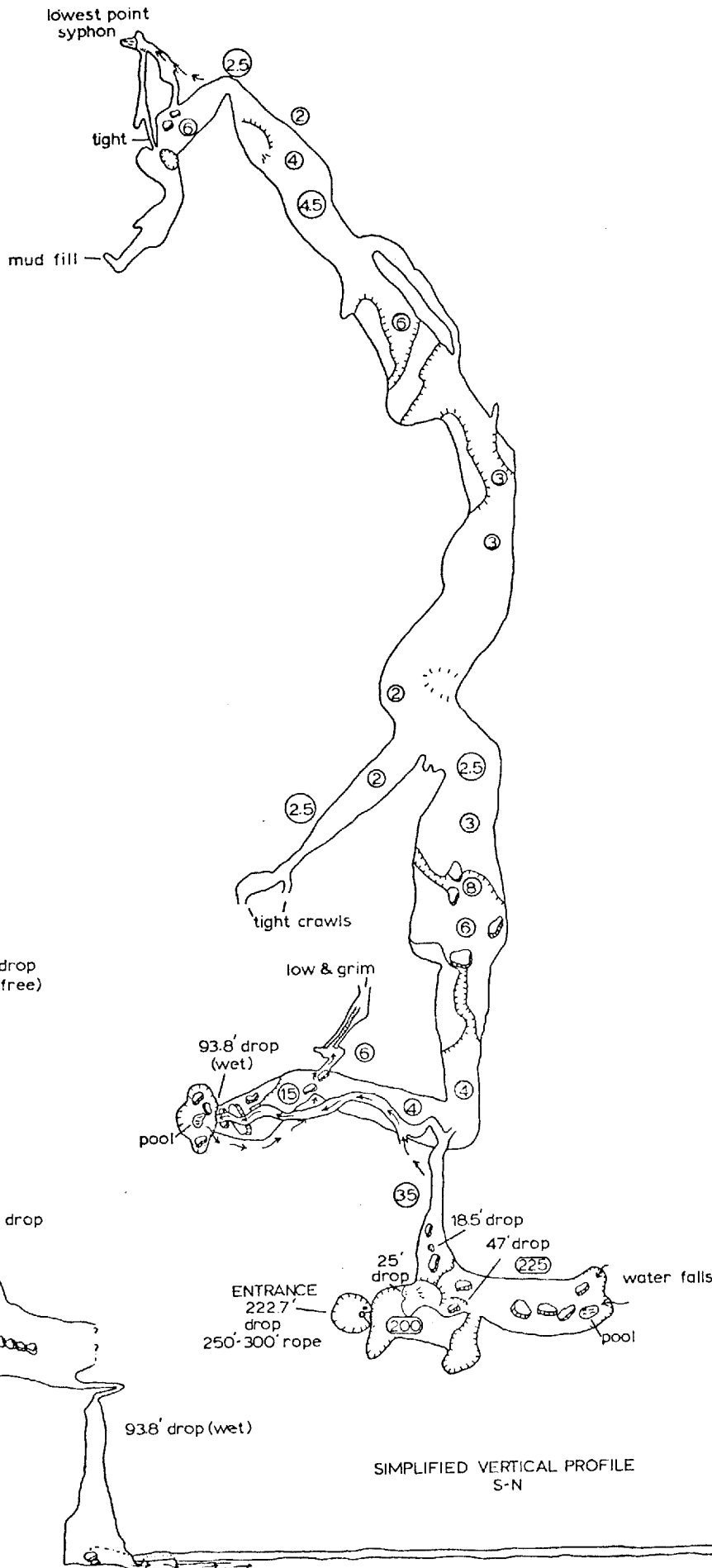
The succeeding weekend (April 15) Buddy and Mark Lassiter installed a register at the base of the entrance drop which by the end of May was virtually filled by hordes of yo-yoers from Tennessee, Georgia, Indiana, Illinois, Alabama, the Virginias, etc.

On May 13, amid much chaos caused by large numbers of people converging on the pit at once, Marion, with the very excellent cooperation of Charles Clark, Will Chamberlin, Rick Buice, and Ron Lewis, began the survey. In a nine or so hour trip they mapped 1,213.5 feet from near the bottom of the entrance drop to the end of the dry lower passage. In addition, Buice installed a backup bolt for the 93.8 foot pit.

The next week, May 21, Lona Brown, Buddy Lane, and Marion surveyed down the entrance shaft, determining officially that it was 222.7 feet deep from the lowest rim of the sink, with 200.8 feet being freefall. The horizontal distance to tie to the first survey was only 83.7 feet. Surveying was brought to a close on May 27 when John M. Robinson of Lexington, Virginia, and Marion mapped side passages at the bottom level and to the final pool, which was a total syphon as it had been also on May 1. The total surveyed length came to 1,612.3 feet, while the depth was 416.7 feet. Another moderately deep cave for Alabama had been completed, a cave which has an entrance zone sufficiently nice to attract tourist cavers.



"--THOSE VW'S WILL GO ANYWHERE!"



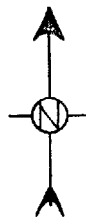
# VAST CAVERNS

## AL-1860

TAPE AND COMPASS SURVEY ON:  
MAY 13, 21, 27, 1978 by:

Lona Brown	Ron Lewis
Rick Buice	John M. Robinson
Will Chamberlin	Marion O. Smith
Charles Clark	

Length: 1612.3 feet  
Depth: 416.7 feet



plot by: M.O. Smith  
draft by: R.D. Kissling  
8-2-78

SIMPLIFIED VERTICAL PROFILE  
S-N

\*\*\*\*\*

DOC'S DELIGHT \*

Saturday, September 16, 1978 \*

Ken Banasiewicz \*

Letitia Korbly - Reporter \*

Larry Moore \*

Charlie &amp; Rusty Seese \*

Jet Thomas \*

John Van Swearingen, III \*

\*\*\*\*\*

Van had already spoken to the landowner, Mr. Kennemar (sp), so we dropped into a hollow and found the cave. The entrance is a high chimney. We used a handline to drop eight feet or so into a high canyon and began a series of low twisting crawls down to the Cherokee Climb.

Ken and Jet had already dropped the 35' chimney and Charlie and Russ had been belayed down when Van started to descend.

About 3' below the crawl where we lay was a wedge-shaped flat ledge formed by a slab of rock that must have been 4' on a side and 8-10 inches thick. This rock, a perfect entrance to the chimney, rested on the smaller blocks which were tightly jammed to form a stone wall on the near side of the crack. The blocks composing the wall were about a foot to a foot and a half in size and eight to twelve inches thick. Near the top they formed narrow steps. As Van descended this he told us that the third or fourth stone down was loose. With people below and most of the top of the climb resting on the block, he did not attempt to clear it. Larry and I climbed very carefully.

We proceeded through more crawlways, canyons and climbs to a lovely rimstone area which has never been disturbed. We crawled through about two or three feet of formations, under soda straws and over flowstone. This was the end of the tour. Jet, Charlie, Russ and Letitia explored a little of the breakdown, observing several other levels before we started out.

Russ was getting tired and fussy and we had several interesting climbs and wet crawls before we arrived at the Cherokee Climb with its handline.

Ken and Van were the first up and again, as Van was below the loose stone, he saw it move. He then finished without the handline, moving very carefully so the loose rocks would not be disturbed.

The rest of us climbed in the other

side of the crack, where it was first wide and then light. Ken belayed several of the rest of us. Russ had a very hard time.

With nothing but routine struggle, we left the cave and climbed the hill.

Because of the dangerous situation on the climb, Van recommended the owners close the cave until the Huntsville Grotto can clear the top of the climb (with dynamite).

It's a great cave. (I have retired from caving with Russ) Look out for the rocks.

#### A TRIP REPORT OF SORTS

Marion O. Smith - Reporter

7/27/78

Immediately after the Convention I nerded around in the heat neat Bustamonte and Monterrey 4 days with Larry Adams - never got on a rope once and 2 of the 4 caves we saw were commercial! Then I spent till July 4 in College Station and Gorman Falls, Texas, arriving back to work July 5.

I spent July 8-9 checking out holes (one was a 4000' spring), etc. near Sherwood, Tennessee wizh Mark and Charlotte Stock and Gerald Moni. July 15 I gave Wil Howie of Mississippi a grand tour of ELLISON'S and July 16 helped John Reid bottom and explore 700' passage in YEAST CAVE, Tennessee near South Pittsburg. July 22-23 goofed around in Alabama with Schreiber. Yoyoed RAINY CAVE, checked water levels in ROUSSEAU CAVE and yoyoed a couple pits (tourist types).

July 15 Jim Smith, Brad Neff, and John Yust pushed LUMINARY PIT, Tennessee to a depth (length is estimated at a mile) which they think will beat out BULL CAVE (-741'). This coming Saturday I'll help survey and will report what I think of the cave. The reports are that it's another JEWETT.

7/31/78

Well, LUMINARY is another JEWETT, perhaps worse. We had illusions of grandeur when we thought we could go 1500' from the entrance pit and send teams mapping in two directions and possibly knock most of it off in one survey trip. Collectively, with two teams, we might have mapped 1200', 1/4 or 1/5 of the known passage! Buddy Lane, Lona Brown and Karen Padgett were in the cave 14-15 hours. Allen Padgett and I were in about 18½ (we went further and were much slower in exiting, being the "old men"). This one will be a bitch to map.

\*\*\*\*\*

Hinch Mountain and Grassy Cove \*  
Cumberland County, Tennessee \*

\*\*\*\*\*

in Chamblee - Reporter \*

\*\*\*\*\*

While being stationed now at Crossville, Tennessee, on a soil testing project, I have had the privilege of walking the nearby Crab Orchard Mountains surrounding Grassy Cove. The Crab Orchard range is a group of isolated mountains sitting atop the Cumberland Plateau and standing from 1000' to 1300' above it. These mountains are composed of massive bedded Mississippian limestone and are capped by very thick Pennsylvanian sandstone and conglomerate sandstone. Obviously the Crab Orchard range is a remnant overthrust sheet formed by a compressive thrust movement during one of the Appalachian uplift periods. Grassy Cove (elev. 1500' MSL) is an incredibly beautiful "solution" valley surrounded completely by these mountains (local names of the mountains are: Black Mountain, Brady Mountain, and Hinch Mountain). The top of these mountains range in elevation from 2700' to 3000' MSL or from 1200' to 1500' above Grassy Cove's floor. All the drainage from these mountains flow into MILL CAVE and later emerge as a large spring in Devil Step Hollow at the head of the Sequatchie Valley. I understand that some incredibly large stream cavern passage has now been mapped in this system called RUN TO THE MILL CAVE.

One afternoon, I proceeded to ascend Hinch Mountain (elev. 3048' MSL) to enjoy what I expected to be a breath taking view of the Sequatchie Valley below. Once on top of Hinch one encounters an FAA airplane guidance installation and on the highest point stands a 25' tall rocket "nose cone" like structure known as, I think, VORTAC. I got the feeling of walking into a science fiction story in this environment. I proceeded to climb a 100' tower to gain a glimpse of one of the most stunningly awesome views that I have ever seen! Looking first to the south, one is looking straight down the 5 mile wide pastoral Sequatchie Valley. The valley elevation at the foot of Hinch is between 750'-800' MSL giving Hinch Mountain nearly 2300' of vertical rise in a very short distance! On the east side of Sequatchie is 2500' high Walden Ridge

rising precipitously as an immense, green wall. To the west rises the cliff rimmed Cumberland Plateau, elevation on top ranging from 18-0' to 2300' MSL. I still can't imagine the awesomeness of this magnificent scene! Looking north, up the Crab Orchard range, one looks into the "gulf-like" south end of Grassy Cove. Turning to the east, across the Plateau, one can see Watts Bar Lake on the floor of the East Tennessee Valley and on a very clear day, probably the whole Great Smoky Front!

After gazing at this scene for over an hour, I reluctantly descended the tower and headed for Grassy Cove below.

Once in Grassy Cove, I conferred with Mrs. George Hemmer concerning entrance into MILL CAVE. She said I would have to gain permission from her husband who was not present at the time. Seeing that it was about 5:40 pm I headed for some high bluffs atop Brady Mountain 1300' above MILL CAVE.

I met a young lad named Kenny Ford, a 15-year-old native of the cove who said that he would climb the mountain with me. The whole mountainside is tall deciduous trees (hickory, poplar, white oak, etc.), very free of undergrowth. These slopes are very similar to the mountainsides and forests in Jackson County, Alabama.

Once on top of the bluffs (elev. 2800') 30 minutes later, we encountered some of the thickest mountain laurel and rhododendron stands that I have ever seen! We crawled through these and walked on top of the ridge again in a clear oak forest. The view afforded from these bluffs of Grassy Cove is another breathtakingly awesome scene worthy only of the Master's Hand. We stayed on top until dark and then commenced to descend the precipitous face of Brady Mountain by carbide lamp. This was quite an enjoyable experience, sliding down steep slopes through sandstone bluffs and hopping slick talus piles with my old 8 hour Justrite! These woods are beautiful at night!

I hope to catch some clear fall days and return with my Pentax camera to capture these scenes on film. Anyone who appreciates forested mountain grandeur would love this country and should, if at all possible, to visit this area as soon as they can.

\*\*\*\*\* I got a copy of the  
TONEY SINKS \* Huntsville Grotto News-  
September 10, 1978\* letter in the mail and  
\* decided to go on the  
By Letitia Korbly \* horizontal trip an-  
\*\*\*\*\* nounced there. I showed  
up at 8:15 for the 8:30 trip. There were  
about three cars and about five people there.

- 8:35 (or so) Left to park cars at NSS  
headquarters
- 9:10 (or so) Other cars arrive. (Trip  
leader Bill Torode had showed up  
unexpectedly.)
- 9:30 ...Left NSS
- 10:00 ... Stopped at store in Paint Rock  
Valley where we spent about 20 - 25  
minutes.
- 10:50 ... Stopped for JV to say hello to  
Lynn, who was with a group that was  
to finish mapping GARY SILLS (?) that  
day. It is supposed to be the  
deepest in Alabama after it's mapped.  
Jill (Dorman) had a broken arm and  
came with us.
- 11:05 ... Stopped at landowner's house to  
confirm permission previously obtained  
by Torode. The cave is closed and the  
owner seems to be important.
- 11:30 ... Enter gate onto dirt road, pick-  
ing up stray cavers. By now there  
were 18 or so of us, but I don't know  
if Jill, who couldn't enter the cave,  
was counted or not.
- 12:00 or so... Entered cave.

This entrance is an inflowing stream  
with a large, dry, sandy-floored passage.  
The ceiling is a thick flat edge that  
seems to form the roof of the cave in  
several places. All the strata the cave  
was in seemed level. A couple of hundred  
feet into the cave the large main passage  
was blocked by sand. Someone (Craig?) dug  
out a side passage and we slowly trickled  
into it. Most of us kept our hats on,  
but it was very low. Since the bottom was  
sandy, it didn't seem too bad. We were  
told it was 75'. It didn't seem that long.  
Most of the rest of the numbers are my  
wild guesses aided by my rather feeble  
memory. I did hear the cave was more than  
9,000' long, for whatever that's worth.  
We were in a fairly goodsized sandy-  
floored room with breakdown blocks and a  
couple of high leads. Several people were  
attempting to dig out a low blocked crawl  
which was supposed to lead to the rest of  
the cave. Those of us sitting around

decided to try to climb the high leads.  
They didn't go. We all left and headed  
for the sink entrances. (I just want to  
mention that the air flowed out and the  
stream in at both of the entrance places  
I saw. But the drainage is complicated.  
Inside the cave we encountered another  
stream passage which Torode called "up-  
stream" and still another stream junction  
had a confusing turn farther in.)

We rode down a very long mile or two to  
the sinks. One was an irregular squarish  
hole about 20 feet across and 20 feet  
deep with several large and small holes  
in its boulder strewn grassy bottom. A  
low crack entered a chimney down a small  
narrow slit near the right hand edge. I  
was beginning to climb down when they  
began to bring in the ropes. I was hesi-  
tating at a place where the chimney  
became rather airy when someone dropped  
a rope. I waited there with my feet on  
rather shadowy footholds while the rope  
was tied off. I was very glad I'd waited  
for the rope as I found only one or two  
shallow holds near the top. (It turned  
out the guy ahead of me had sort of slid  
in.) I then climbed one of the smaller  
holes into the pit, finishing on top of a  
large boulder about nine or ten feet off  
the floor. Someone talked me into coming  
on down and I somehow managed. I was real  
proud of myself. The guys after me rap-  
peled in. This took hours since this was  
a horizontal trip and most people had no  
gear. I recarbided (that long!) and looked  
around...

The entrance room connected through a  
short lowish wide passage with a round  
green mossy sink. We stooped through it  
and looked up forty feet to the sky. It  
looked a lot easier to climb if you had  
no gear than the way we'd come if you  
could reach the first ledge about 10 feet  
up. Back under the drop they were rappel-  
ing into the big hole in the sunlight now  
instead of my little crack high on the  
wall. J.V. stood in a high round hole  
surveying the mob.

People were parked on breaking boulders  
in the sun and all around. A small clear  
pool trickled off to the right. It was  
fed by a small waterfall flowing out of a  
hole in the ceiling over a rather nice  
flowstone and rimstone formation that  
broke up the connection to the other pit.  
I couldn't climb it. Torode and someone  
else decided to put a tree that had washed

(Continued...)

TONEY SINKS continued...

into the cave in the high tunnel J.V. had been standing in, since the ladder he'd put for the '67 convention had disappeared.

Followed J.V. and Marilyn around to the right into a round tube that was absolutely the nicest sewer I'd ever been in. Fifty or a hundred feet later we came to a five foot drop into a clear pool. There was considerable backing and filling as some of us thought we could stay dry.

Those who'd come down the tree trunk didn't want to climb out and were throwing stones at the base of the climb to raise the floor and make it easier to climb up where we were climbing down. They were making an unbelievable amount of noise and splashing an enormous amount of water. I yelled at them to stop and climbed down. I was sort of wet already from the waterfall and found a new hold and yelled for help and did it. They immediately resumed the rockthrowing. Several of us started looking around. More people were struggling down the tree trunk and joining the ritual at the pool.

The walls seemed to be some semitranslucent crystallized rock. I thought it was onyx, but someone said quartz. One high side passage led to a small dome-pit maybe 12' down and 25' up. Suddenly the crowd stopped throwing stones and went on downstream, our direction all the way into the cave. People were still coming down the log and more were lined up before a four foot flowstone step in the passage, which was now about four feet wide and 20-30 feet high. The roof and floor were both level and the floor striped with black. Side passages led off in several places. We came to Torode's ladder stuck over a hole in the floor in a perfect position to climb on up to the next level. Since there was a line for the ladder I followed someone up a couple of convenient ledges and around the obstructing formation to the high corridor. The floor was covered with washed in leaves and twigs. It was still about four feet wide and high. Someone told me to stay out of the middle because there was no bottom there. We cut off into a side passage there and began a series of low crawls over and under and around and down. It was fun going in. We rabbed over rimstone pools in the low twisting passage without muddying the water and elbowed our way through a low sandy tunnel that branched several times.

Then we stoopwalked for a while and dropped under the edge of the passage to another low crawl. The wind here nearly blew out my lamp. We had to wait before every crawl and climb, but we were still very spread out. Once we were in a walking passage with formations. I could walk anyhow; some of them were too tall. Torode was taking a lot of ribbing about walking passage then. The passage, still low, became sandy and regular, at least 20 feet wide. Once a formation hit me on the back as I bent through. Finally we were at a shallow pool, and I recarbided. The mob was here, but some went on and some turned back.

The water was not even knee high, and I felt fine, so on I trotted. We came out a couple of hundred feet later in another low level, wide passage where we walked bent over. And out of the water and into the water we continued, with the passage hardly changing, but it was interesting. About the time it began to get boring, the stream branched and a hole about six feet deep and 4 feet wide suddenly opened in the path. There was another like it just behind. The stream could be seen flowing in the bottom of both. The main passage seemed to end about 200 feet beyond when the ceiling met the sand, but J.V. and Marilyn climbed up some big breakdown boulders and on up a big sandy slope to an enormous room; high, but much wider than long. It seemed to continue on and on, regular, dry, and dead.

But we did come to the end with the passage again choked with sand. There were nine of us left and several people recarbided. Doc took pictures of a dead buz still white strip of bacon along one wall. There were several stalagmites there on the sand from six inches to six feet tall, but all perpendicular and all the same width - 4-6". When I climbed up to model with them, I noticed the sand had a couple of dozen fallen soda straws sticking up at all kinds of angles, some a foot long and all still translucent.

Before we turned back, someone suggested we put out our lights and flash one of the white stalagmites with an electronic flash. It faded fast, but we could still see it fluorescing several seconds later. The guy who suggested it said any white formation would do this when flashed with an electronic flash.

I was glad of the rest we'd had. We turned back and tried another high rocky

Continued....

TONEY SINKS continued:

passage leading off the breakdown. We struggled over the breakdown to the stream again and again. Once the high level roof was freckled with fist-sized nodules of flint, black against the gray. We climbed on the breakdown beside the stream to stay dry. Where the stream got really deep some of us were on a high ledge about 15-18' off the stream floor. Here at least one dry tunnel led off in both directions sort of parallel to the main passage. Just after I'd passed a rather slick narrow sloping place, someone called back that there was no way down and we had to go back and wade the stream. I wasn't a bit happy about it so I looked too, but none of us found a way down and we all turned back. I was kind of tired by now and would have quit and turned back, but one of the three of us in the tail plunged in and, when the second followed, I did too.

The water was waist deep on them, and I managed to find a hole to wet myself almost to my shoulders. The cold made me gasp. We climbed on around one deep pit while others walked under. The passage seemed to be getting narrower and the breakdown rougher. I'd have quit, but J.V. said we were making a loop and were on the way out. Very shortly someone passed word he'd promised to turn around at 3:30 and it was later than that by now. I thought we'd been in the cave at least 3½ hours, but...

We met Torode as we went out. He showed us where to climb the ledge to miss the deep pool in the stream. We followed him back a side passage that brought us to the series of shallow stream passages and low stopwalks. After a while I felt I could not walk another minute bent over in the water. I'd managed to fall into the only sumpy part of the stream a few minutes back. They thought I needed to re-carbide, so I did.

Marilyn and Craig caught us and rested and went blithely on. Both of them are older than I; Marilyn has a grandchild... We were absolutely the end of the line. I was really tired and it seemed to me that some of the others were too. I dragged on. The rimstone pools which had sparkled so when we nimbled our way over them going in were mean and muddy as we dragged through coming back. We picked up stragglers on the way. When we got to the

entrance pit there were only six of us left. One guy was rigging; J.V. was rigging Marilyn. Another guy was in line to ascend on the gear the first was rigging; it would have to be passed down. I felt too tired to freeclimb the way I had come down. I could use J.V.'s rig after Marilyn; it would have to be passed too.

I was freezing and exhausted, but I figured I'd be better off attempting the climb than waiting. I tried and couldn't make it, but it warmed me up a little. The guy who was rigging finally got off. He seemed awfully slow to me. Another guy attempted the climb. I was so shot, I can't remember if he made it or not. J.V. rigged Marilyn and free climbed out. Another guy tried to climb - he got farther than I had, almost quit, but went on and up and out. I could see what to do now and decided to try again. I got a little further, but had to call for a hand and advice to get over the big rock, but it was worth it. It was warmer in the grassy pit and besides, the climb warmed me. I watched J.V. and the last free-climber slipping in the airy chimney and decided to wait for the ladder. They went on out. The last guy at the bottom climbed out on the and went on up the wall. I struggled up the cable ladder against the wall, dropping dirt and small stones all over myself all the way up.

I was on the tailgate of the second truck out in my clean clothes, exhilarated. I really felt like a cowboy when I pulled my bandana over my face to keep out the swirling dust. J.V.'s driving provides considerably more than a thrill a minute. Once my bare feet hit the ground. At the gate we split a watermelon into eight pieces and ate six before the next truck showed up. We picked up the cars and had dinner and I was out of Huntsville by 7:30. (By the time I got home, my throat was sore, but it was a great trip.)

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