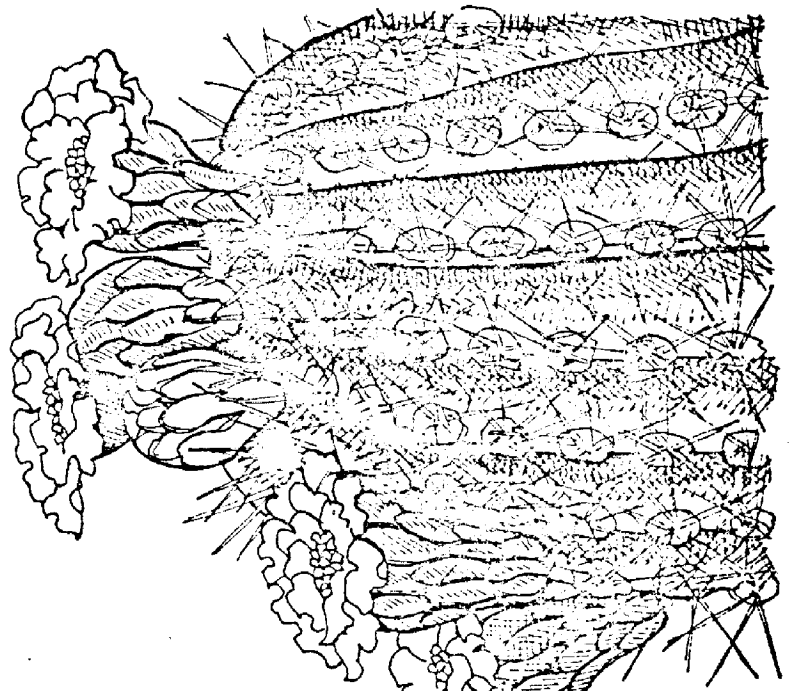


BIRMINGHAM GROTO NEWSLETTER
NATIONAL SPELEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

APR., 1981

NEWSLETTER

Birmingham Grotto



BIRMINGHAM GROTTO NEWLSETTER - APRIL 1981

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

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Grotto Officers -

Chairperson - Valerie Howell
323-3143

Vice-Chair - Gary Barnes

Secretary - J.E. Thomas

Treasurer - Edna Caudle

The SERA Silk Screening party will be held at Nancy Boice & Mike McEachearn's on SUNDAY May 31st. Come early to 1260 22nd St. So. 939-0032.

This issue of the BGN has an article by Karl Smith on his trip to Birthday Pit. This cave will be featured at SERA 81. Also we have a reprint on bats and some poetry by Nancy Boice.

IT HAD TO HAPPEN DEPARTMENT

The San Fransisco Bay chapter Newsletter reports that a grotto member was denied a security clearance because - you know it- he was a member of "an underground organization".

BE PREPARED DEPARTMENT

A real timely publication by the Adirondack Grotto (NY) will be of interest to all draft-age cavers. Special Publication #2 by John Mylroie, CAVES OF EL SALVADORE is available for \$2.

NEWS FLASH!!!!!!

It seems BGN meetings are a bit too rowdy. We've been kicked out of our meeting place. We will temporarily be meeting at the Park Memorial Library in Five Points South, located at 1814 11th Ave. So. Meetings begin at 7:30 on the First Monday of each month.

Grotto members should send their SERA registration money A.S.A.P.

BIRMINGHAM GROTTO NEWSLETTER - APRIL 1981

The Stanislaus -
- Nancy Boice

For many years cavers, scientists, river enthusiasts, and the conservationists have fought the Corps of Engineers over the inundation of the Stanislaus River in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada in California. At present the dam has been built, but the battle is not yet over.

To cavers, this means the loss of many fine caves along the river. These caves contain archaeological material and rare species of cave fauna. Many of these caves are small, but heavily decorated. A survey of these caves was made (McEachern and Grady 78) and recommendations were made to the Corps in regard to preservation and mitigation of the cave material. The Corps and other officials have totally disregarded this report.

The original poem was written by Bret Harte in 1866 when a controversial human skull was found in a cave near the Stanislaus, causing quite a stir in the scientific community. It seemed fitting that an updated version of the poem be written in regard to the current controversy.

The McEachern & Brady report, entitled "An Inventory and Evaluation of the Cave Resources to be Impacted by the New Melones Reservoir Project, Calaveras and Toulumne Counties, California" can be purchased from the NSS Bookstore.

THE SOCIETY UPON THE STANISLAUS

*I reside at Table Mountain, and my name is Truthful James;
I am not up to small deceit or any sinful games;
And I'll tell in simple language what I know about the row
That broke up our Society upon the Stanislaw.*

*But first I would remark, that it is not a proper plan
For any scientific gent to whale his fellow-man,
And, if a member don't agree with his peculiar whim
To lay for that same member for to "put a head" on him.*

*Now nothing could be finer or more beautiful to see
Than the first six months' proceedings of that same Society,
Till Brown of Calaveras brought a lot of fossil bones
That he found within a tunnel near the tenement of Jones.*

*Then Brown he read a paper, and he reconstructed there,
From those same bones, an animal that was extremely rare;
And Jones then asked the Chair for a suspension of the rules,
Till he could prove that those same bones was one of his lost n.*

*Then Brown he smiled a bitter smile, and said he was at fault
It seemed he had been trespassing on Jones' family vault;
He was a most sarcastic man, this quiet Mr. Brown,
And on several occasions he had cleaned out the town.*

*Now I hold it is not decent for a scientific gent
To say another is an ass,—at least, to all intent;
Nor should the individual who happens to be meant
Reply by heaving rocks at him, to any great extent.*

*Then Abner Dean of Angel's raised a point of order, when
A chunk of old red sandstone took him in the abdomen,
And he smiled a kind of sickly smile, and curled up on the floor,
And the subsequent proceedings interested him no more.*

*For, in less time than I write it, every member did engage
In a warfare with the remnants of a palaeozoic age;
And the way they heaved those fossils in their anger was a sin,
Till the skull of an old mammoth caved the head of Thompson in.*

*And this is all I have to say of these improper games,
For I live at Table Mountain, and my name is Truthful James;
And I've told in simple language what I know about the row
That broke up our Society upon the Stanislaw.*

BRET HARTE
1836-1902

THE SOCIETY UPON THE STANISLAUS 1862-1866
(BRET HARTE REVISITED 1962-1981)

I reside at Table Mountain, and my name is Truthful James
I am not up to small deceit or any sinful games;
And I'll tell in simple language what I know about the row
That will inundate the wondrous caves upon the Stanislaw.

But first I would remark, that it is not a proper plan
For any scientific gent to whale his fellow man.
Nor for any Corps of Engineers to fill the dam with glee
And inundate a human being in the form of Mark DuB---

Now nothing could be finer or more beautiful to see
Than the gleaming white formations and even the taphonomy.
Till the great Corps of Engineers decided to empound,
And build a mighty dam all the way up from the ground.

But the Friends of the River knew they weren't at fault
And they knew their battle to save the land was not for nought.
And a row it did develop between the people and the State
To save the beautiful river before it was too late.

And the archaeologists were much in despair
Because of all the prehistory that remains there.
But they did argue amongst themselves and several have filed suit
Against their fellow colleagues for a lot of loot.

Meanwhile cavers and many others, they reconstructed there,
From bones and critters and artifacts that the caves were extremely rare,
And others in charge of all the plans suspended all the laws
And declared the caves of the Stanislaus to be a lost cause.

For, in less time than I write it, every member did engage
In a warfare with the remnants of a pleistocene age.
And the way the Corps will flood the caves is a mortal sin,
For the keys to unlock the past will never be seen again.

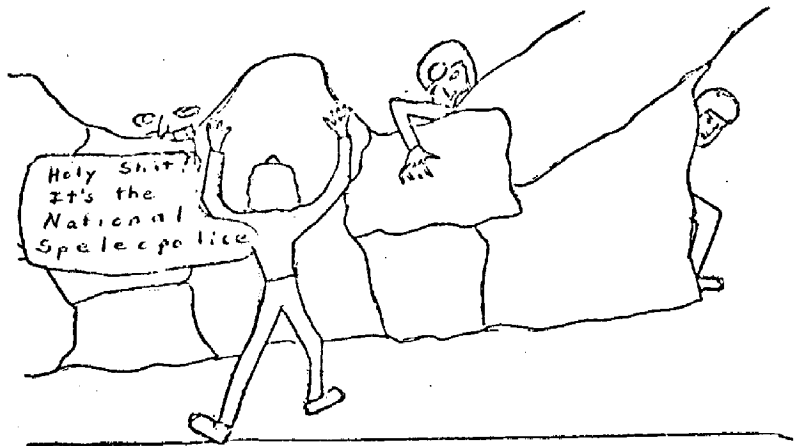
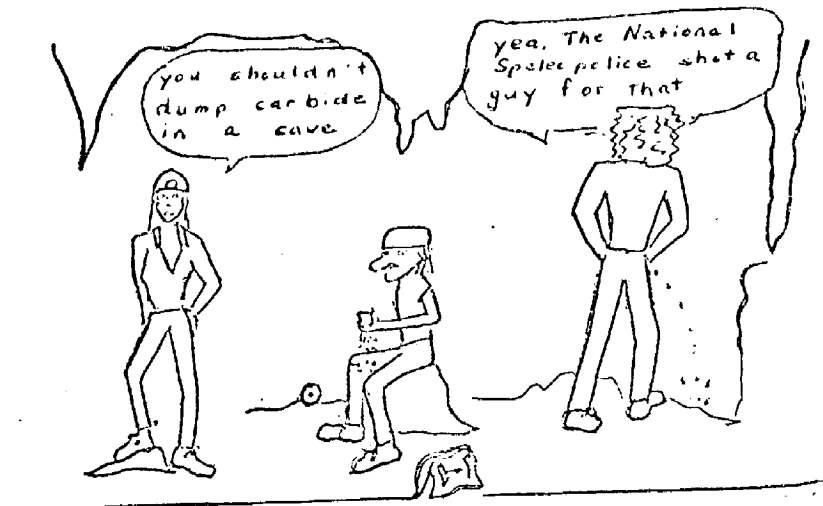
So cavers and all the rest continue to fight time,
Because they know that time is short for old Camp Nine.
To take a long last look at the magnificent caves
Before they disappear in the murky watery haze.

And this is all I have to say of these improper games,
For I live at Table Mountain, and my name is Truthful James
And I've told in simple language what I know about the row
That will inundate the wondrous caves upon the Stanislaw.

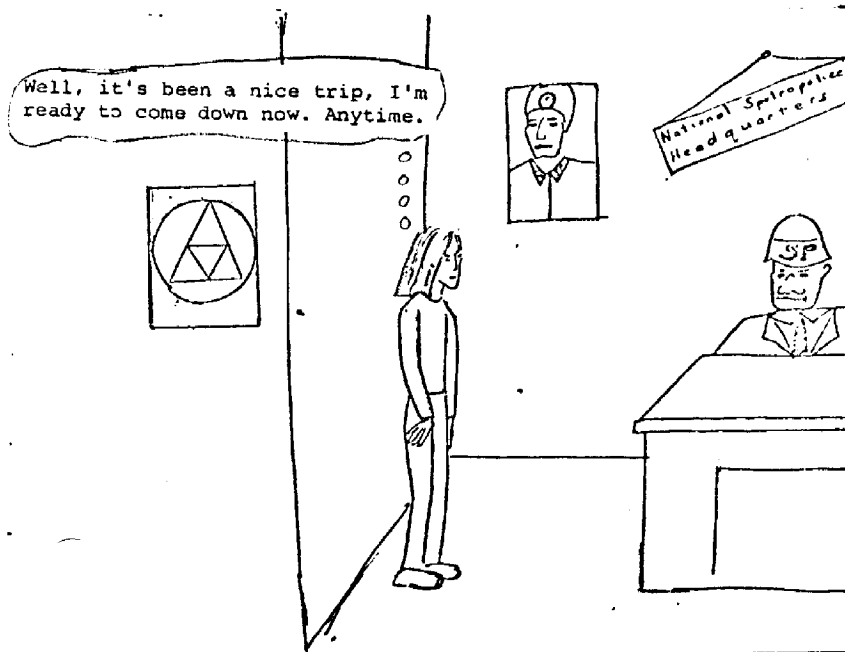
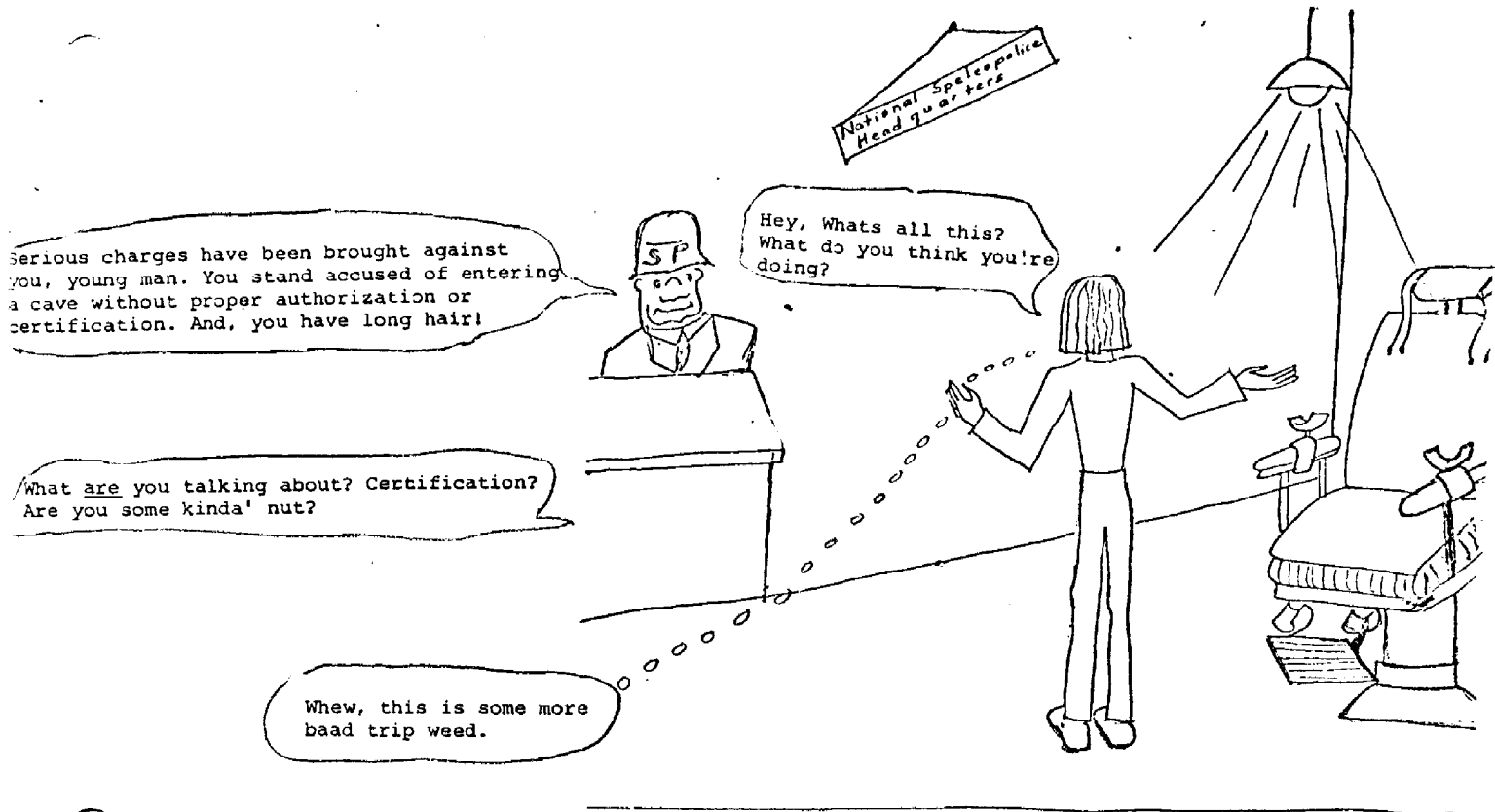
Nancy Boice

BIRMINGHAM GROTTO NEWS-

THE SPELEOPOLICE



What does this mean?
Will the carbide dumping caver be shot?
Or worse yet RE-EDUCATED!!!!
....To be continued in the next issue
of the BGN.



Young man I'll have you know that the N.S.P. are the guardians of Amerikas morals, we have a holy duty to cleanse society of those found lacking in moral character.

And you must certainly know about the Caver Certification Bill, passed by the congress last night. We have to move fast to stamp out moral decay.

Now, if you will fill out this 20page test, we will see about your moral character!

to be continued - - -

TVA GOES TO BAT FOR CAVE ANIMAL

Evil tales of vampire bats winging through the night and latching onto screaming victims have cast a grisly shadow and given the entire bat species a bad name.

The Tennessee Valley Authority, bat lovers and watchers say the image is distorted and does not adequately portray the nocturnal mammal's worth to man. TVA, with help from other government agencies, and private citizens joining in helping to save the bat - threatened by the encroachment of man.

"The bat is sort of a symbol of a night creature and people mistakenly identify all bats with vampire bats," said James Jordan Jr., a TVA biologist who has been working on a program to protect the bats.

"The bat also has been identified with rabies. But all the studies indicate that the instances of rabies in bats are no higher than with the raccoon and the opossum," Jordan said.

TVA, the Tennessee Wildlife Federation, the Fish and Wildlife Service and the Indiana-Gray Bat Recovery team have been coordinating their efforts to save the gray bat, a sparrow-sized mammal that once numbered in the millions in the southeastern United States.

The goal is to increase the bat population to the level it enjoyed before man entered the caves and began to disturb and kill the leather-winged creature. Jordan figures it might take 10 to 20 years.

The gray bat once thrived in limestone caves through the Tennessee Valley. TVA's main thrust in the project is the restriction of access to caves on Norris and Nickajack reservoirs in Tennessee and Guntersville Reservoir in Alabama.

The agencies also have placed bat houses throughout the region to help in improving the population.

"At one time there probably were 800,000 bats living in these three caves," said Jordan. "Now we estimate there are around 8,000 gray bats roosting at the Norris Dam cave, 30,000 at Nickajack and 10,000 at Hambrick Cave on Guntersville Reservoir."

TVA has placed steel bars and chain-link fences across the entrances to the cave.

Gray bats roost in the caves in Tennessee and Alabama during the spring, summer and early fall, then migrate to a hibernation cave in north Alabama. Jordan said 80 percent of the gray bats in existence hibernate in the Jackson County, Alabama cave.

The cave serves as the winter hibernation roost not only for gray bats from eastern Tennessee and northern Alabama, but also for those from Florida.

The Florida bats migrate northward in the fall, following a course that winds in an arc to the vicinity of Meridian, Miss. and then back to the northeast into northern Alabama.

"About dusk, when the bats come out to feed, they will number 30 to 40 feet across and will exit the cave for a good 45 minutes," said Jordan, the son of the late Auburn football coaching legend, Ralph (Shug) Jordan.

The bats feed along the top of the water at the reservoirs - taking insects such as Mayflies and midges. Jordan said it was estimated

that one colony of some 127,000 gray bats at the Blowing Wind Cave in Alabama would consume 900 pounds of insects a night, or about eight tons of insects during a single foraging season.

"These bats are doing a tremendous service for mankind and are an important part of our ecosystem," said Jordan.

Jordan said the bats have become threatened because man has wandered into the caves.

"These caves are where the bats roost and the slightest disturbance will force them out," Jordan said.

He said the caves also have been vandalized.

"There was one incident where someone with a propane torch went into the cave and burned thousands of bats. We had figured there were 300,000 bats in there and after this incident the population had dropped to 20,000," said Jordan.

He also said people had taken old tires and smoked out the bats.

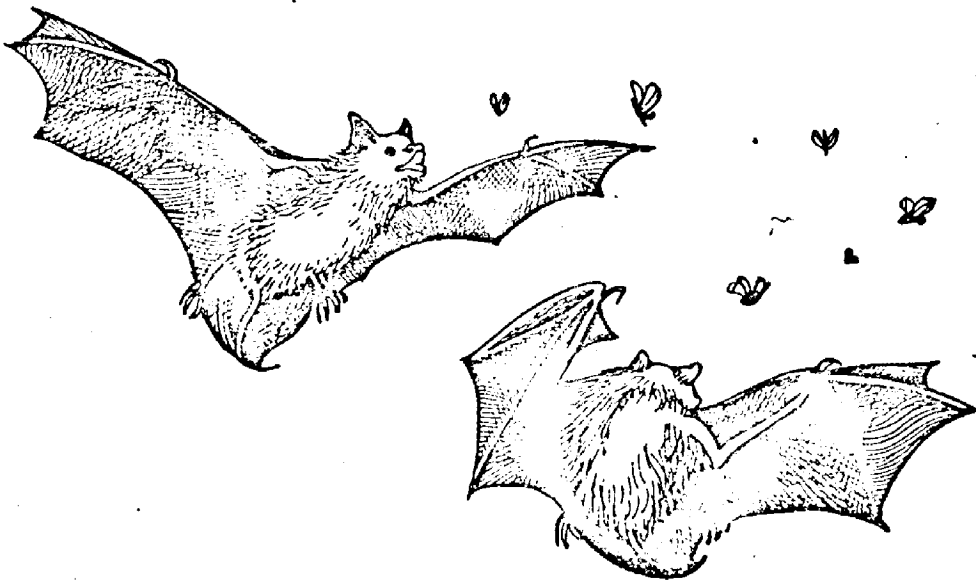
Jordan said scientists also believe the bat is being threatened by pesticides. TVA officials said large deposits of DDT and other pesticides have been found in the tissues of dead bats in recent years.

Jordan said there are about 22 caves where the gray bat is found. He said the gray bat population had stood at about 1.2 million in 1970 but dropped to about 600,000 in 1976.

"We believe the population is probably back up to about 1.2 million now," said Jordan.

Jordan said the bat-houses resemble birdhouses, except the opening is located on the bottom. "This is a new idea developed in Europe. So far, all we've been able to attract is wasps," he said.

Reprinted from Der Fledermaus April, 1981



BIRMINGHAM GROTTO NEWSLETTER - APRIL 1981

Trip Report March 8, 1981
Birthday Pit & Carnation Pit

Jay Clark
Dottie Alexander
Karl Smith - Reporter

After a brief meeting with Greg and Lynn McGill at the Krystal in Tarrant, where they discussed who should look for what to best give aid with the upcoming SERA festival; I was invited to help search for two pits near Stevenson Al. Jay and Dottie took turns driving the jeep and I was supposed to navigate using the topographical map, until I noticed I didn't know what I was looking at and quickly gave it back to Jay, who got us in very close vicinity to the pits. Dottie drove us up a jeep road to about the right elevation and we began our search. The area consisted of a hillside with several ravines and harbors a mean crop of thorny vines which will no doubt be worse in the summer. The hillside was fairly steep in some places with a few rocky bluffs and points.

We searched about twenty minutes or less and decided we had missed them and we were just about ready to turn back, when I saw a pile of rocks neatly stacked on a rock bluff. So, after hollering to Jay to see if this was significant, we investigated and found them both. The first one was Birthday Pit, all 185' of it with the roar of a waterfall easily heard when close to the pit. The second pit was Carnation Pit with its first drop of 77'. Being smaller, we went in Carnation Pit first since these were the first pits I had ever been to. At the bottom of this first drop was a fairly tight crawlway that soon widened enough as a fissure with room for the three of us. Towards the back this fissure became once again a crawl with a narrow crack which was deep and gave a glimpse of the second drop. The short crawl led directly to the edge of the second drop. Being in such a tight spot, Jay decided it would be no fun backing into a pit from a crawlway while burdened with gear. We then proceeded to leave Carnation and get ready for

Birthday Pit. Jay and Dottie seemed to travel on rope easily, while I had trouble at the lip.

During my struggle at the lip I badly frayed a section of rope attached to one of my ascenders and because of this I didn't go in the deeper Birthday Pit with Jay and Dottie. After a ledge about 80' or 90' feet below, Jay went deeper and found the waterfall which was strong and aggravating enough that he decided to change direction before he quite reached the bottom and finally came out throughly wet.

While looking around the area, we saw a large spring coming out of the hillside which went about fifty yards before disappearing back into the hill. We met some of the local people there, Mr. Ralph Leroy and another fellow called Dooney, who told us they had a cave on their property which they were using to get water from. But, instead of seeing their cave, we took their advice and went to the very end of the road to visit an older gentleman named Mr. Graham, who, we were told had a much nicer cave which went back about 1000'. After talking to Mr. Graham, we persuaded him to ride in the jeep and drove through one of his pastures with his dog, Benji, leading the way to the cave. After driving across the creekbed a couple of times, the trail wound back through the woods and ended soon near the cave. Mr Graham and Benji then led us up the hillside to the entrance which is low and slope. After climbing down from the entrance the cave, (Dry Cave), widens and is sort of tunnel shaped with a fairly high ceiling. Mr. Graham enjoyed showing "his" cave, which is not really on his property, but he owns the only access way to it. After thanking Mr. Graham and his spelunking dog we visited some of Jays' friends in the area and headed home.

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