

Fig. 1. Showing distribution of limestone outcrops and their relation to topographic features. The solid lines define the approximate base (west) and top (east) of the Pelham Solution Escarpment. Deep funnel-shaped sinks in Miocene-Oligocene limestones are near or at the base of the escarpment and other exposures (generally Eocene) are in the Dougherty Plain. Numbers refer to exposures in the descriptions of localities.

BIRMINGHAM GROTTO NEWSLETTER DECEMBER 1981

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

Subscription and Membership fees are now due. Annual subscription rates are included in the \$4 membership fee. Outside the Birmingham area, the subscription rate is only \$2. All are prorated from October.

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Submit materials for publication directly to the Editors. Deadline is the 20th day of the month preceding the month of issue.

ALL OFFICIAL GROTTO MAIL (INCLUDING EXCHANGES) ADDRESSED TO ANYONE OTHER THAN THE EDITORS SHOULD BE SENT TO THE GROTTO PO BOX. THIS ASSURES THAT THE MESSAGE WILL GET THROUGH.

P.O. Box 3302
Birmingham, Al. 35205

Officers for the 1981-82 year are:

CHAIRMAN - Greg McGill
956-1267

VICE-CHAIR - Mike McEachern

SECRETARY - Dottie Alexander

TREASURER - Joe Domnanovich

TRIP COORDINATOR - Steve Hall

You are cordially invited to a Christmas Party at Lynn and Greg McGills house. The festivities begin at dark, December 19th.

December Newsletter Review

The December issue of the Cave Cricket Gazette contains a report on the paleontological and archaeological remains found in Jaguar Cave, Tenn. Human footprints were found in the main trunk passage. Charcoal associated with the footprints has been radiocarbon dated to 2640 ± 75 B.C.

The D.C. Speleograph reports on the controversy over the Nss building addition. The report includes letters from NSS members, mostly pro, concerning the NSS office addition. Most members favor the addition to the Huntsville office.

The December Valley Caver features an article by Eric Popoff on being in Church Cave, Ca. during a California earth quake. He reports that the cave took the quake well, and he thinks the cavers were probably safer being in the cave than outside due to rockfall.

The December Windy City Speleonews includes a letter sent by Larry Cohen, who has recently moved to Monterrey, Mexico. Larry reports on a local incident where a child was bitten by a vampire bat. Upon closer reading of the article the report was that the child had been bitten not by a vampire bat, but by a real vampire!

*****NOTICE*****

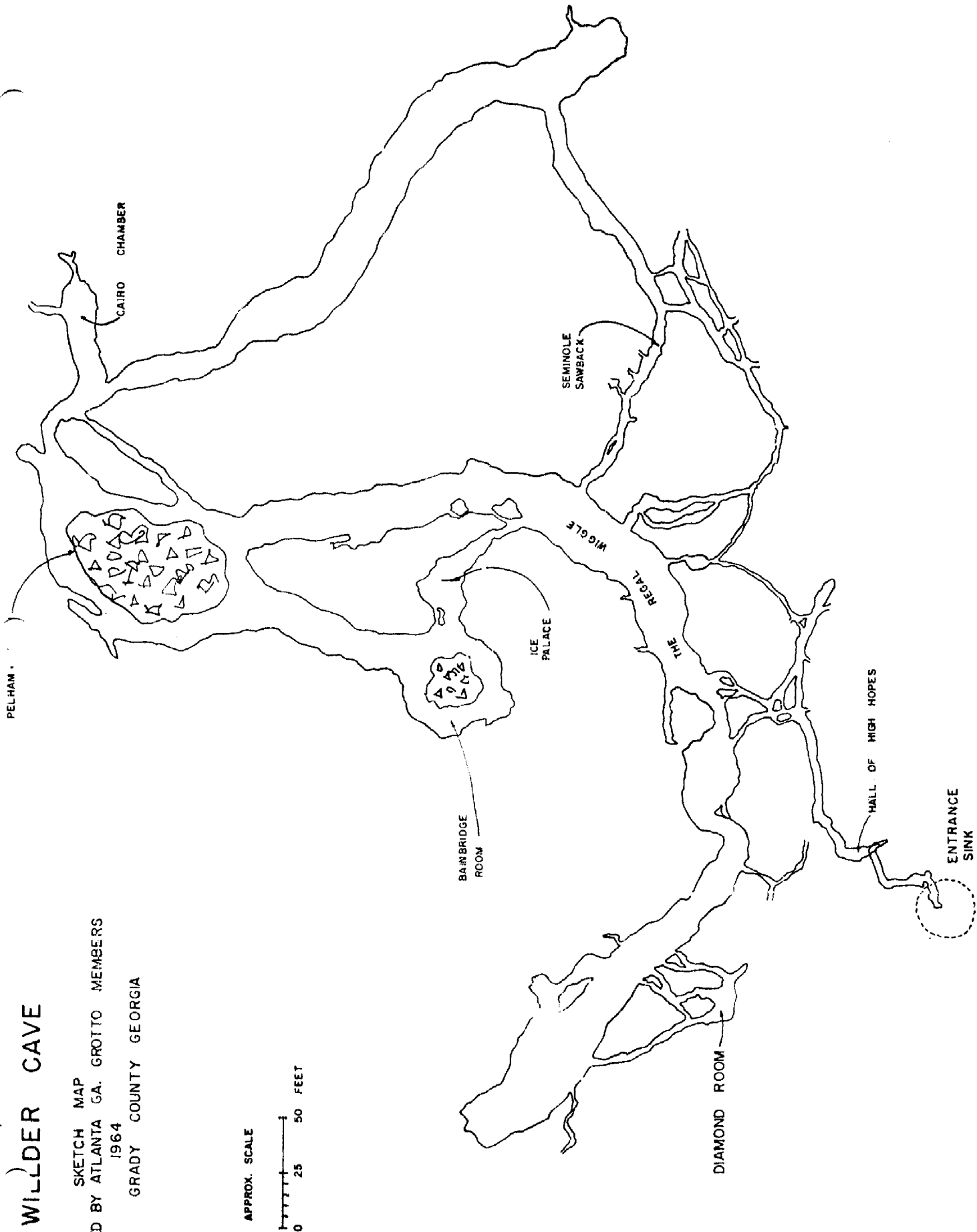
The road to Trenton Well is closed until after hunting season.

The B'ham Grotto trip for January 17th is to Dowells Deep Six. contact Steve Hall 879-2540.



WILDER CAVE

SKETCH MAP
MAPPED BY ATLANTA GA. GROTTO MEMBERS
1964
GRADY COUNTY GEORGIA



BIRMINGHAM CROTTO NEWSLETTER DECEMBER 1981

Expedition to Falling Springs Cave

September 5, 6, and 7th, 1981

Ken Brown

Dorothy Mathews

Larry Moore

Mark Polster

Steve Spencer

Falling Springs is one of the largest caves in Alabama with over twenty six thousand feet of passage. Most of this passage is in the form of one main canyon with multiple side branches that usually rejoin the main passage at some point. The cave is well up Jefferies Hollow between one and two miles after the hollow begins to narrow. At this point the hollow is only some seventy-five yards wide with south bluffs at some points close to one hundred feet high and a more gradual north slope. Falling Springs is located on the south side of the hollow in an eighty to ninety foot bluff. As the name implies, the entrance is a ten foot climb up with a respectable water fall coming out of the opening.

The cave is on the property of Tom Bean. I had obtained permission to cross the property and camp on it through Colonel James Hamrick who owns the Property just below Mr Beans' land. I would suggest to anyone considering a trip to Falling Springs that they follow the same procedure before actually visiting the cave. The Beans and the Hamricks are very friendly to cavers but they are also quite rightfully careful about who they let on their land.

The road into the hollow is gated at the beginning of the Bean property. I left my car perhaps one hundred and fifty yards from the gate in front of an old barn. This was again at the Colonels' suggesting. The first mile of the treke in, is not bad at all as it follows a good dirt road. Once the hollow begins to narrow, the going goes from fair to poor; still I have seen worse. We were able to camp right across from the cave entrance, and, after evicting one three foot timber rattler, set up a fairly comfortable camp site.

Once we had camp set up, some of us decided to do some exploring. Ken and Steve went up-stream to where the hollow forks while Larry and I elected to go up the north side of the hollow. Larry and I went nearly to the top of the hill following an old jeep track. We then worked our way down and began to follow a line of small filled sinks that run along the side of the hill. We found several small cracks, some of which were blowing air, and finally a thirty foot pit that appeared to have some passage at the bottom. By the time Larry and I had returned to camp, we had reached a decision to hike out to the car to get a length of blue water two and some verticle gear. We found ourselves returning to camp in the dark, tired and hungry, so we agreed to put off the pit until the morning.

This pit is about four hundred feet up the hill across from Falling Springs and about an equal distance up the hollow. Although the pit looked interesting from above it was a major disappointment. The only possible lead is very narrow, starts about five feet above the bottom of the pit, and leads toward a dry stream about ten feet away. Despite this Larry and I feel that the north side of the hollow has a great deal of potential. There still remains the El Dorado of a connection going under the mountain into Russell Cave. Falling Springs is just across a rather narrow plateau from Russell Cave. Dorothy, Ken and Steve decided to hike across the southern mountain in order to visit Mr. Graham, an old friend of ours that lives in the next cove south. That left Larry and I to explore Falling Springs on our own.

I am somewhat ashamed to admit that I could not bring myself to make the climb up into the cave unassisted. The water was quite low but the rocks were still very slippery. After several attempts I resorted to a jummar. The map that we had was totally inadequate. There is at least one side lead to the right that was not shown on the map. Once we were in the big room we never could find the Emerald Well. Finally, after several false leads, I blundered into the canyon passage. It was all worth while. Both sides of the passage are heavily decorated with beautiful white formations growing both out and down the walls. Many of these formations were the much searched for helectites. We never did get enough, but we had spent so much time getting to the canyon that we soon had to turn back. We spent over five hours in the cave.

The next day, on the way out, we encountered Ed Bean and his family cutting wood. He was able to confirm a suspicion that Dave Howell harbours concerning a small cave up at the end of the hollow that has an inflowing stream. Mr. Bean related to us as to how his family used to run a sawmill just above this cave. In the course of the day sawdust from this mill would spill into the stream. On their way home in the evening they would see evidence of the sawdust in the water flowing out of Falling Springs.

Once we reached my car Monday morning, we set out again to search for a cave on Colonel Hamricks' property. Unfortunately the Colonel and his family seemed to be away for the whole holiday. My directions were definitely second hand, having come to me through my answering service. At any rate, after a through search of over an hour, we still failed to locate the site that the colonel had described.

Despite the long walk in and the mentioned disappointments, I am still looking forward to a return trip. Falling Springs is one of the most beautiful caves and camping areas that I have seen in Alabama.

Going Way Down Under 16A Waco Tribune-Herald Sunday, November 22, 1981

Cave Explorers Seek Record

By JAY JORDEN
The Associated Press

It will be something like a journey to the center of the Earth, provided that those who fear devil worshippers don't interfere.

A team of cave explorers, led by two Texans, plans to push for a world depth record next March within a remote tropical plateau in southern Mexico.

Inhabited by superstitious Mazatec Indians, the high plateau is riddled with passages. The search for the world's deepest passage will be in an area where inhabitants, believing the cave seekers are devil worshippers and warlocks, have cut explorers' ropes.

The attempt to link a newly discovered cave with an interlocking system of shafts and water-filled passages will require weeks underground and strategy resembling the reverse of a mountain-climbing expedition, said Bill Steele, co-leader of the Huatla Project.

The project, named for the plateau in Mexico's Sierra Mazateca, has already discovered about 9,000 feet of vertical cave and descended 500 shafts in two years of exploration there, he said.

Sistema Huatla is presently the third deepest cave in the world, but Steele said linking it with another cave, Nita Nanta, would add 150 meters in depth.

A connection would place the network close to or beyond the 4,624-foot depth of Reseau Jean-Bernard in France, now considered the world's deepest cave.

Plans call for 15 spelunkers to camp in a cathedral-sized room 2,460 feet underground in the new cave, Nita Nanta, and search for unexplored passages that may join the system.

Descending the 49 drops to the room will require a half-mile of rope and hundreds of pounds of gear and

compressed, freeze-dried food, said Steele, a paid Boy Scout official from San Antonio.

To achieve greater depth in Huatla, cavers have searched for higher entrances on an 1,800-foot ridge and also extended the lowest point downward, sometimes by climbing high walls and backtracking.

The size of the terminal room where explorers turned back during their last expedition in May — 300 feet wide and 400 feet long — rivals a football field, with 200-foot ceilings and three waterfalls, he said.

Expedition members, including Steve Zeman of Austin, pushed one passage in Nita Nanta to a depth of more than 3,000 feet before discovering a side route that leads to the large room.

The cave, discovered in 1980, is considered meter-for-meter a world-class challenge, said Dr. Bill Stone of Washington, a structural engineer and cave diver who with Steele dove a flooded passage in 1979 to set the present Huatla depth record.

"To get to the leads (possible passageways), they have to go almost to the bottom," Stone said.

Members of previous caving expeditions have been taunted by Mazatecs who cursed them with shouts of "brujo," meaning witch or warlock, he said.

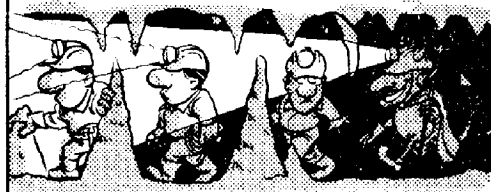
Caving ropes have been cut and stolen. Two years ago, local inhabitants stole 1,000 feet of rope from the entrance of the system's main cave, Sotano de San Agustin, Stone said.

In 1968, a spelunker watched in horror as an Indian chopped through a rope with a machete, hurtling an explorer who was climbing on it onto a ledge 200 feet above the bottom of a pit. In 1978, Stone said other local villagers wielding rocks threatened him as he guarded ropes for other cavers.

NEW RECORD FOR GUINNESS?

according to GUINNESS

The deepest cave is the Reseau de Foillis in France, which was penetrated to a depth of 4,773 ft. in February, 1981.



Pelham Solution Escarpment
Marshall Taylor 12650

Most of the Georgia caves are located in the north western area and numerically decrease as one goes southeast. The plains area of Georgia possesses limited limestone outcroppings except for the Pelham Solution Escarpment.

The Escarpment starts in southwest Georgia; runs northeast through Climax, Pelham and Bridgeboro; and swings north through Cordele and Perry. It averages only two miles with numerous sinkholes and caves lying along the contact of the Escarpment and the Dougherty Plains.

In 1916 the State of Georgia's Geology Dept. studied the Escarpment for potential mining operations. Each limestone outcropping was numbered and the stone analysed. These results were printed in the Georgia Geology Report by Brantly (1916 p 168- 179). In 1960 the limestone was again analysed (Georgia Geology Report 1960 p 49 - 54). Several known caves such as Climax, Waterfalls (Maloy's) and Blowing Cave (Glory Hole or Wilder Cave) were mentioned.

The limestone in the area is Miocene -Oligocene, a fairly soft fossiliferous limestone. At Glory Hole the limestone was found to be 155 feet in depth and composed of 95.88% Calcium carbonate and 1.59% Mg. carbonate.

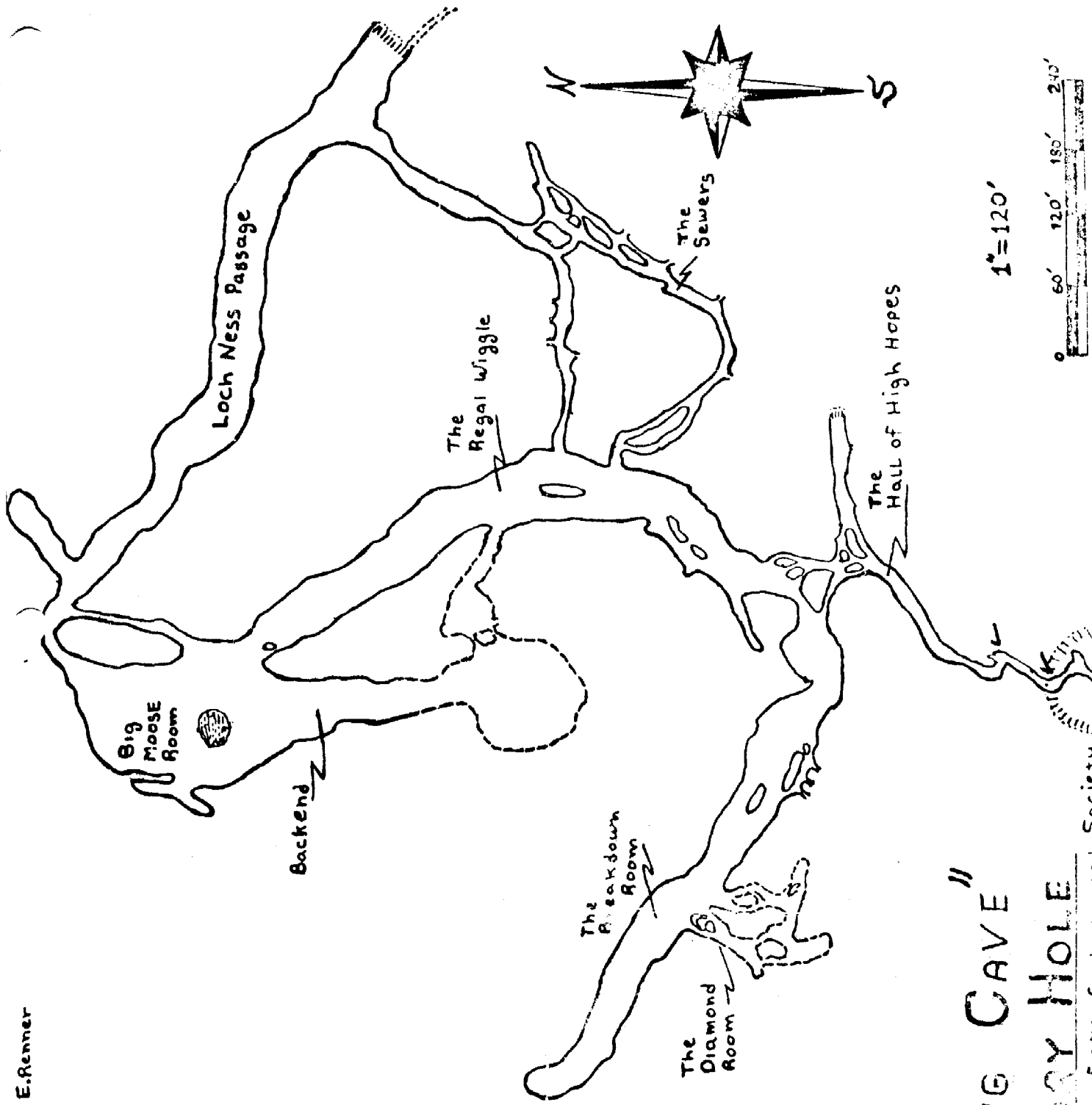
By extending the pattern of the Escarpment north, Marion Smith and myself were able to narrow our search for caves. Using this technique we found Rockhouse, Whaleys' Well, Dakota, Indian and Clinchfield caves plus a large sinkhole south of Cordele.

Many of the sinkholes along the Pelham Solution Escarpment need to be rechecked for potential caves.

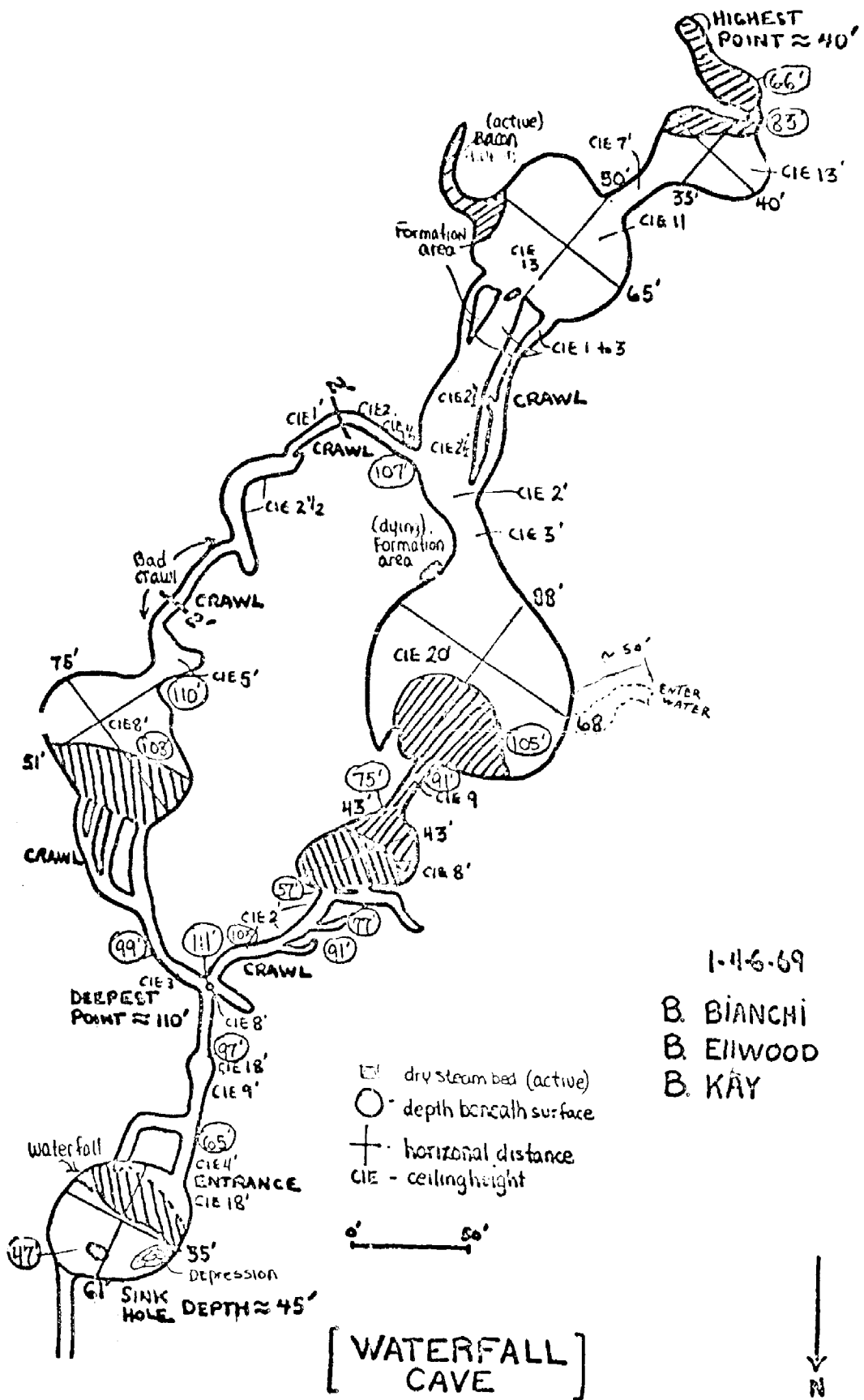
Along with this article, Marshall sent some old maps that we have printed on the following pages.



Photo reduction by E. Renner



"BLOWING CAVE" GLORY HOLE



1-4-6-69

B. BIANCHI
 B. ELLWOOD
 B. KAY

The Chairmans' Corner

←The Newest Threat to Cave Conservation

Last week, I was given a magazine to read. It was one of the new "survivalist" publications, full of good advice for the day after The Bomb. Near the back of this magazine I noticed the ad printed on the facing page.

I asked myself why the US Government would place that ad in that magazine. My answer led to some sobering thoughts. Since the ad appeared in a "survivalist" magazine we should assume that the ad was aimed at the self-styled "survivalists" who compose the readership of said magazine.

The available survivalist literature stresses the need for a secure, secret bomb shelter. How about a mine, or a cave? Obviously, the government had some reason to place the ad. Has there been a sudden increase in abandoned mine accidents? An increase in trespass violations?

Whatever the reason, we can assume that all of this attention will bring back the notion of using caves as fallout shelters. I doubt that many of these persons have the proper equipment or training for cave exploring, yet it is inevitable that they will attempt it while looking for their own secret shelter.

This idea of secret shelters does not mix well with the idea of asking the landowners permission. We'll have to see what develops. Remember that some of these persons may be armed and perhaps will feel some need to protect "their" secret shelter.

I expect to hear the first trouble reports from California since the "survivalist" movement got its start there.

What should we do? What can we do? Well, we can hope that I've overstated the case. We could think about a little education. We could try to control the dissemination of cave locations while trying to put out information on safety and techniques.

What do you think? Or do you think?





Abandoned Mines Can Be Dangerous Places to Explore.

Rotted timbers can cave in or fall from above, plunging or crushing victims to death.

Toxic air stagnating inside old mines kills silently but quickly when stirred up.

Abandoned mines are also hiding places for poisonous snakes and other unfriendly wildlife.

Don't let curiosity get the better of you.
Stay out of abandoned mines.

U.S. Department of Labor
Mine Safety and Health
Administration



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