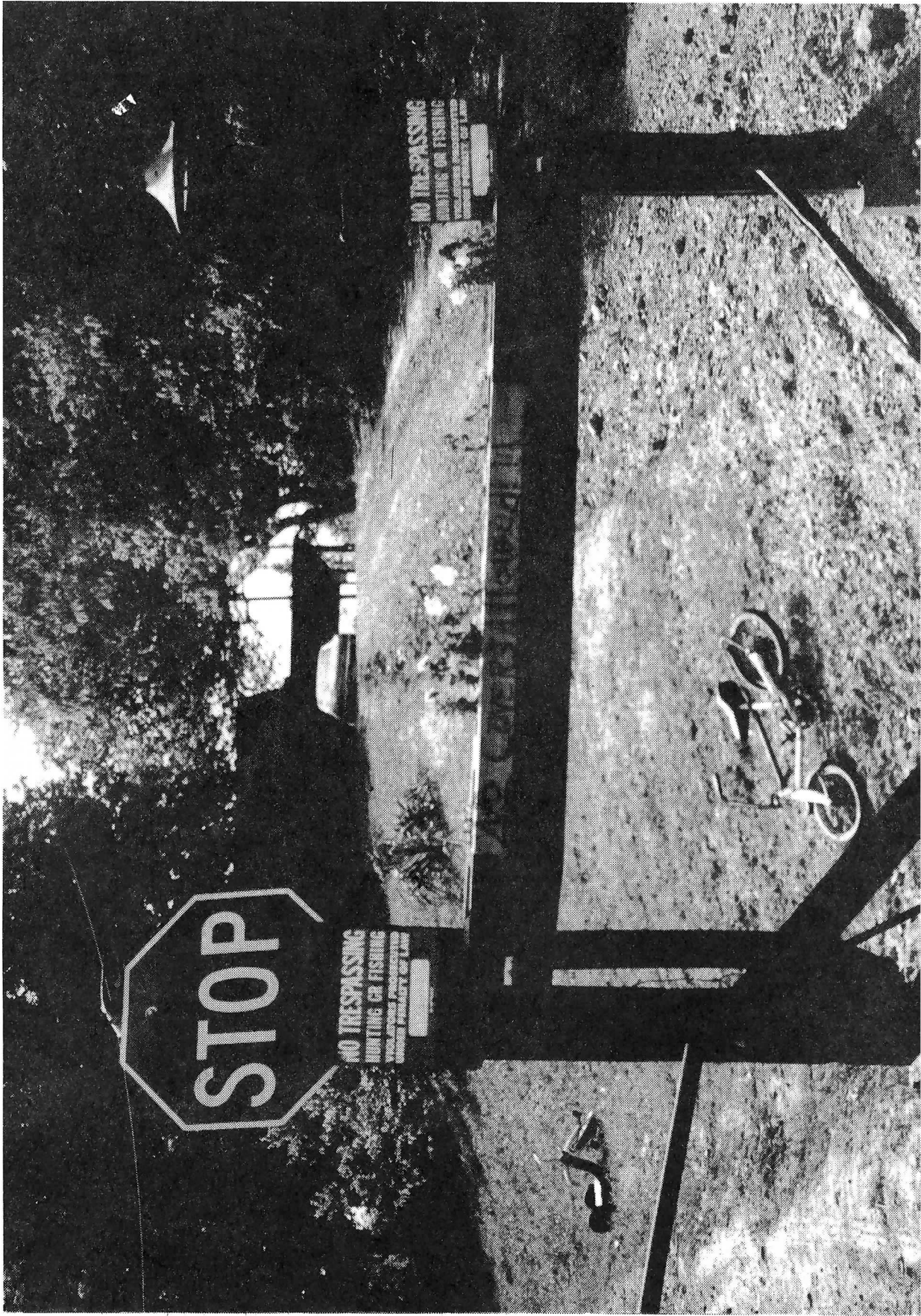


BIRMINGHAM GROTTO NEWSLETTER

NATIONAL SPELEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

JUNE - JULY 1981



Well, we did get an issue together. The newsletter took a backseat to SERA, but thats over now. In this issue we have a trip report by Mark Polster, an article by Jay Clark, part 1 of an article by Mike McEachern, and some other tidbits.

This space is still reserved for the grotto minutes.

SERA 81 seemed to go quite well. The grotto made a little money and I guess everyone had a good time. The local police authorities did feel compelled to "saftey check" a lot of our friends while they were returning to the camp. As far as we heard, no one was arrested but lots of people had some alcahol confiscated. Sorry 'bout that but it is a dry county and we tried to warn everyone.

Alabama is not like that all the time. My aploogies are extended to anybody that was unreasonably hassled.

This issue started out very angry but i've calmed down some. The cover photo was taken at the entrance to the cove containing WAR EAGLE CAVE. This landowner was (and still is) very angry with some cavers that played a VERY childish joke on him. The details are in Jay Clarks article and you should read them. I did want to have a wanted poster for our front cover but the sign was too good. If those ---- are out there please write and let us hear your side of the story.

GROTTO OFFICERS

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P O Box 3302
Birmingham, Al. 35205

Sat. Aug. 8th the B'ham. Grotto are invited to a pot-luck bar-b-que at the home of John and Joyce Attaway. The Attaways will supply the bar-b-que so remember to BYOB. Party starts around 6:30-7:00.

Aug. 14, 15, & 16 Acanthus mapathon. For a weekend of cave mapping, crawling, swimming, and partying call Lynn or Greg McGill 956-1267.

LAMONS CAVE 6/6/81

--Mark Polster reporting
Tom Chamblee
Steve Hall
Kay
Tony Cooley

Lamons is a fairly large and extensive limestone cave located a few miles from Morgan City, on the edge of the Cumberland Plateau. It is situated in a gorge of the same name, very close to the bottom of the mountain.

There are actually four entrances that I know of. An upper pit entrance, a small entrance in the same small sink that we used to enter the cave that leads back toward the pit, a larger, almost walk-in entrance and the resurgence. We were only interested in the lower portion of the cave.

This was my second trip to the cave. I had heard that Tom was very familiar with the cave, having been in it numerous times. I asked Tom if he would give us a tour of all those regions that he said he knew so well. He agreed and provided all of us with a memorable and enjoyable tour.

To begin with, Tom has a route that leads straight down from the top of the bluffs above the cave to the middle entrances. While the route is fairly steep, it is considerably shorter and easier than the route that I used on my previous trip; that is, down the ravine.

We entered the cave's middle entrance and proceeded downstream. After only a little of scrambling we found ourselves in large walking passage occasionally interrupted by some breakdown. Most of the time we stayed in or beside the stream though there are several areas where there exists an upper passage. We saw more of these on the way back.

Tom certainly knows Lamons well. I saw things on this trip that I did not see on my first trip in the cave. Not only is the cave bountifully decorated (even one area where there is an impressive area of helictites) but the size of the rooms is very impressive. I did not remember any of the areas being as big as Tom was able to show us. The old axiom of distances in a cave being deceptive still holds true. I am not going to say anything more about the nature of the cave but look for an article by Tom in which he goes into the beauties of Lamons in great detail.

Another interesting feature of the cave is the composition of the limestone. In many areas it is mainly fossiliferous biosparite. Tony is not only a very competent geological engineer, but he is also a very knowledgeable fossil freak. I think that Tony enjoyed the trip to Lamons more than any of us. I know that I enjoyed having someone along that could identify some of the many fossils that occur in the limestone there.

Eventually we penetrated all the way to the register room. After signing the register we made a somewhat quicker return trip. Along the way out we took alternate routes when they were available. Mostly these were the upper, dry passages that we had skipped on the way in. The one major exception was that we passed under the area with the most fossils and the helictites. The latter seemed to be a little-used route.

We finally emerged from the cave after about seven hours. We now faced the most harrowing portion of the trip, that long walk back up the mountain. It might not have been so bad except for the heat.

In all it was one of the best caving trips I have been on. I again want to thank Tom Chamblee for taking me and I recommend to anyone that really wants to see Lamons Cave that they talk Tom into guiding them.

HOW TO SAVE OUR CAVES & CAVING AREAS

-- Jay Clark

The recent closing of War Eagle Cave to cavers is very disturbing to me personally and should be a cause for concern for all of us. If this were an isolated example it wouldn't be so bad but, unfortunately, it is just a sign of the times.

The information I have at present has come only from the custodian of the property with whom I have always had very cordial relations. Some out-of-state cavers reported that THERE WAS A DEAD BODY IN ONE OF THE CAVES behind Mr. Millers house. That brought in the state Bureau of Investigation and the Marshall County Sheriffs Department for a full scale investigation. Needless to say, the Millers were not happy having all these lawmen going through their yard to search the caves behind his house. That led to the posting of the sign advising cavers that they were no longer welcome. With effort we may be able to regain the trust of Mr. Miller and regain access to his caves.

This latest closing should lead us to examine why caves are being closed and what can be done to prevent this. A large percentage of the caves I visit are on private property. Where there is a problem with locating the owner, I always make it a point to search out the owner and request permission.

It's important to remember that landowners in the country are just like us city homeowners. We don't want people coming onto our property and doing damage or trespassing without our knowledge. Most country folk are very hospitable and enjoy occasional visits from cavers. I have found that these people enjoy talking with us and have even given us leads to new caves. When we go by and talk with the landowners, we have rarely been denied permission. When this does occur we still try to stay in touch with the landowner in hopes of having that area later opened. The prime example of this is Mr. Clemmons in the Paint Rock Valley. For years he was subjected to all types of "cavers" who thought they could do whatever they wanted to at the TAG house, which was on his land. After a few problems, the local folks began to forget all the good people they had met over the years. Mr. Clemmons has now closed all of his land.

We have been by to see him several times and spent time talking with he and his wife. We are now getting access to some, but not all, of the caves on his land. Once his trust is regained we may be able to re-open that caving area.

The major problems have been cavers going into an area at odd hours, partying and generally causing a disturbance. Throwin around beer cans and changing clothes in full view of the owners home has not helped. (wait untill the Europeans start standing around in their underwear - ed.) Parking vehicles where they block access roads has done nothing to help relations. If we could put ourselves in the owners position, some aspects of our behavior might change.

I suggest taking time to find the owner and then identify yourself and your party. Tell the owner what you would like to do, (NOT what you are going to do - ed.) how long you will be gone and the acquaint him with you experience and your knowledge of his cave. REMEMBER, you are asking permission!

These people are reluctant to let people enter thier caves if there is a possibility of an accident or the party getting lost. If you get a chance, stop by after your trip - provided it is not at a bad time - and thank the landowner. He will be much more likely to remember you on a later date. We make it a point to stop by and say hello to some of the regular landowners we visit. On occasions we will have pictures of the cave or that area and leave them with the owner. A picture does'nt cost that much and can leave a lot of goodwill behind.

The initial contact is important in gaining entrance the first time. Behavior during the visit is instrumental to ensuring that a repeat trip can be made. This would include leaving the land just like it was found, not making any excess noise, not changing your clothes in public, and not blocking any access roads. It is a natural tendency to rejoice after a long, hard trip when seeing the outside. This is fine as long as noone living nearby is disturbed. Showing Curtesy and respect for the landowners peace & quite are just as important as the initial contact. Treat the property just as you would want yours treated.

Another problem that is causing caves to be closed is the accidents and lost persons situation. Landowners are now getting worried about being sued if there is an accident and someone is injured (maybe the new law can help this - ed.). The gentleman who owns the land near Conley Hole was very reluctant to let us go there for fear of getting sued. It took a little reassuring talk for us to gain access.

Just being careful and knowing your limitations goes a long way toward preventing accidents. Some vertical cavers have a tendency to think novices know more than they do, and an accident can result. Proper training sholud resolve this, but a little foresight by the trip participants could help prevent an accident. When a rescue team has to go after an injured caver, the landowner starts to get worried. When cavers get lost and rescue squads have to make a search, the landowners first thought is to close the cave to everyone.

I have a reputation for being too conservative, but I have'nt been hurt or lost & I go on more trips than probably anyone else in our grotto. I have more access to closed caving areas than most people because of the time I spend with the property owners, and showing respect for their property and feelings. I am not advocating that everyone follow my conservative policy, but I am issuing a plea for everyone to be more considerate and more careful. Plan your trips better - know the cave where you are going. If it is a new one, leave rock cairns or otherwise leave non-permanent route markers in the cave. Be constantly looking backwards to see what the passage will look like on the way out. Don't take novices to a place you don't know well. Don't take inexperienced vertical cavers to a pit that may be beyond the capabilities of any group member. It's just not that hard to work up to the deeper and trickier pits. Show offs and heroes cause nothing

My advice when with a group is:

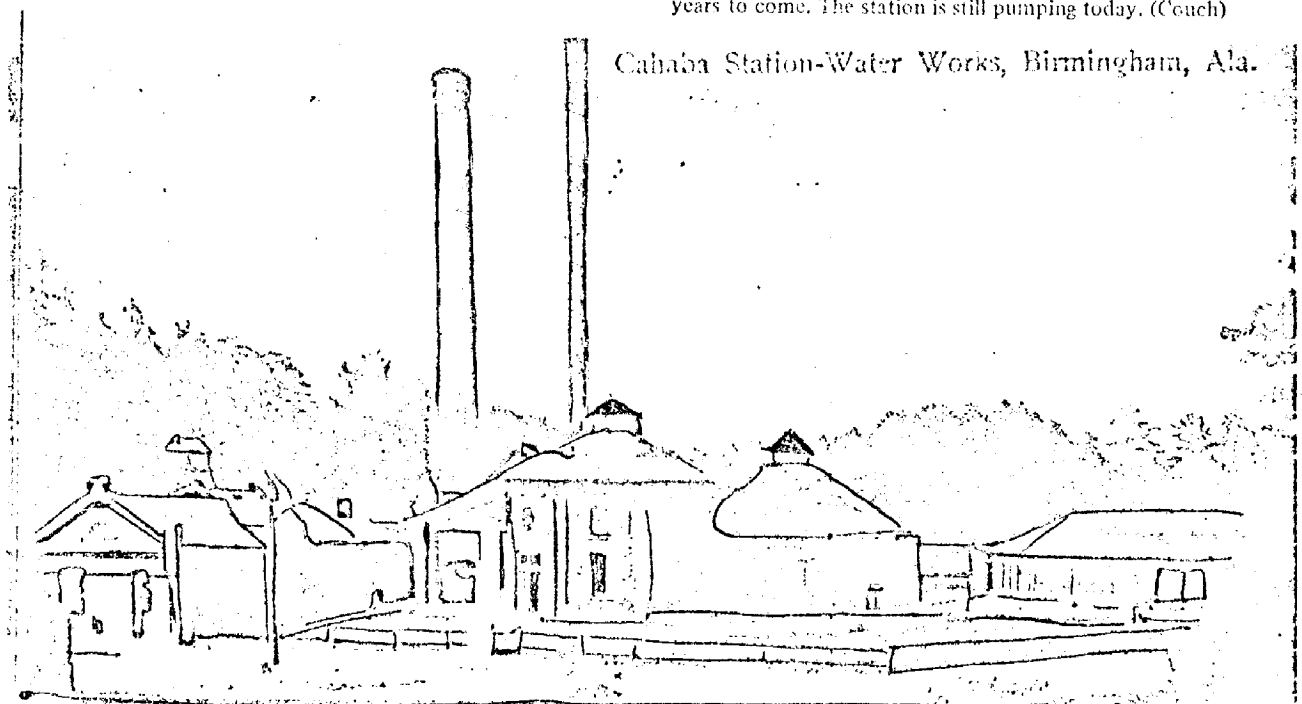
- 1) Know where you are going, and tell someone at home
- 2) have the proper equipment
- 3) know the limits of your group
- 4) don't take any chances

An injury or a group of lost cavers does as much to close a caving area as does disrespect for the property owner.

Really, all this amounts to is using common sense. Accidents are going to happen - people will get lost. But, the more efforts we make to prevent these problems, the more likely we are to keep our caving areas open. Show respect and be careful. I look forward to seeing many caves in the coming years in the fine caving areas of Alabama.

Birmingham Grotto members have developed an interest in the Birmingham underground water system. Nancy Boice, a grotto member, was able to find an old article that might be of particular interest to some.

THE CAHABA WATER WORKS were built in the late 1880s. Nine miles away from downtown Birmingham, the place was inaccessible, and the machinery for the works had to be hauled over the mountain by six head of oxen, each trip taking three days. A tunnel was cut through the mountain for free flow of water, and the brick for the building was made on the spot. This was one of the supreme accomplishments of the Elyton Land Company before its dissolution in the 1890s - it solved the city's water problem for years to come. The station is still pumping today. (Couch)



from the May 1981, Der Fledermaus

WANTED

CAVE VANDALS

\$500 REWARD

FOR INFORMATION LEADING TO THE CONVICTION OF PERSON
OR PERSONS VIOLATING THE CAVE PROTECTION ACT OF VIRGINIA
OR EQUIVALENT ACTS IN ADJACENT STATES

CAVES ARE PROTECTED BY LAW

IN VIRGINIA, MARYLAND, and WEST VIRGINIA CAVES IT IS ILLEGAL TO:

- Write or mark on cave walls
- Litter or dump spent carbide
- Break or remove mineral formation
- Disturb bats or other living organisms
- Remove or disturb historic or prehistoric artifacts or bones
- Tamper with or damage cave gates

(Code of Virginia 10-150.11 et seq.) (Maryland Natural Resources Code 5-1401 et seq.) (West Virginia Code 20-7A-1 et seq.)

Caves are a unique nonrenewable natural resource. They are protected so that future generations can enjoy them. Help enforce the law by reporting all persons violating the law to the cave owner or nearest law enforcement authority.

\$500 in cash will be paid by The Virginia Cave Conservancy
Box 25594, Richmond, Virginia 23260 Phone: (804) 355-5203

NEW LAW AFFECTS CAVERS!

The State of Alabama has passed a new law that should go a long way toward building good cave owner relations. The new law basically places the owner in a position where he cannot be sued by the people he allows to use his land.

There are, of course, some requirements on the part of the landowner. He must publically announce that his land may be used for non-commercial recreational purposes. A personal ad in the newspaper or a sign on the property fulfills this requirement. The landowner still has the right to refuse permission to specific individuals on a one-to-one basis, ie, he can see that someone is too drunk to do a pit.

This law may help to patch up some of the deteriorating landowner relations we have seen in the last few years. We hope to have a handout explaining this law prepared for grotto members who can give them to landowners as the opportunity presents itself.

Some pertinent passages of the law are reproduced below.

SECTION 3 INSPECTION AND WARNING NOT REQUIRED

"Except as specifically recognized by or provided in this Act, an owner of outdoor recreational land who permits non-commercial public recreational use of such land owes no duty of care to inspect or keep such land safe for entry or use by any person for any recreational purpose, or to give warning of a dangerous condition, use, structure, or activity on such land to persons entering for such purposes."

SECTION 9 OWNER MUST ESTABLISH PUBLIC USE

a) "The liability limitation protection of this act may be asserted only by an owner who can reasonably establish that the outdoor recreational land was open for non-commercial use to the general public at the time of the injury to a person using such land for any public recreational purpose. Any owner may create a rebuttable presumption of having opened land for non-commercial public recreational use by:

- 1) Posting signs around the boundaries and at the entrance(s) of such land; or
- 2) Publishing a notice in a newspaper of general circulation in the locality in which the outdoor recreational land is situated, and describing such land; or
- 3) Recording a notice in the public records of any county in which any part of the outdoor recreational land is situated and describing such land;"

ACANTHUS CAVE SYSTEM

July 3, 1981
John Hathway
Nancy Boice
Mike McEachern
Greg McGill
Lynn McGill
Sam McGill

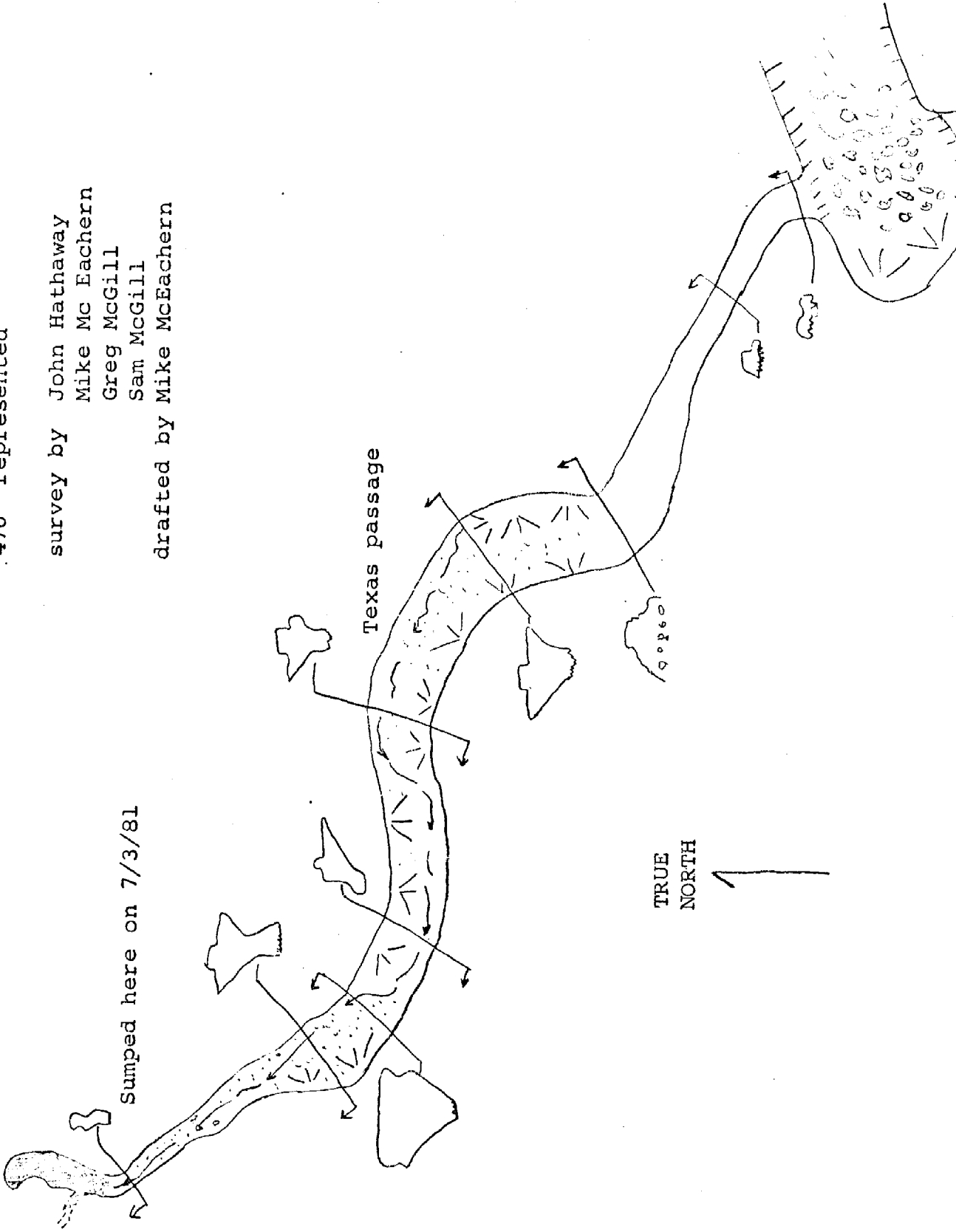
Our objective was to map in Acanthus 2, but a sudden thunder-shower cut our trip short. We did get to map about 400' in Acanthus 1, to the sump at what is usually just a few inches of water on the floor. This was the first trip into the system for Mike, John, and Nancy so we played around in Acanthus 2.

Lynn, Nancy, and Tama met the owners who invited us back for more cave trips. They are both retired but are interested in seeing the cave. EVEN after the cave was described in gory detail.

We hope to have a good turnout at the mapathon planned for August 14. There will be more details at the August meeting.

ACANTHUS I
Results of 7/3/81 trip
.470' represented

survey by John Hathaway
Mike Mc Eachern
Greg McGill
Sam McGill
drafted by Mike McEachern



EXPLORATION OF THE
SILVERTIP CAVE SYSTEM, SUMMER 1976

Mike McEachern

The summer of 1976 brought renewed interests in Silvertip Mountain in the Bob Marshall Wilderness, Montana. Cavers from California, New York, Montana, Texas, Colorado, and Indiana joined together for the biggest push of the Silvertip system. The objective was to link together the 5 kilometers of known cave into the Stairwell-Bell Cave System. Plans were to concentrate on the lower part of the system in the early part of the season with primary emphasis on connecting Blood Cave with Ann's Cave and possibly Stairwell-Bell. Later, when the snows had melted there were plans of pushing Getout Cave in hopes of a connection into Bell Cave. Additional survey of the surface of the cirque was also considered to be of major importance.

A warm-up trip into Ann's Cave by Jim Chester, Dave Black, and Tom Fehrmann led to torturous crawling and squeezing which netted only 109 m. of survey although the lead continued. A second trip found that the torturous passage continued on past the 9 m. drop which stopped the first party. Ann's Cave obviously wasn't going to be the easy cave that we had hoped, and it wasn't going to be the last disappointment.

Following a brief rigging trip into Blood Cave, Jim Chester, Bill Steele, and Preston Forsythe planned a major push into the back of the cave where Preston and Bill had been forced to give up two summers before. After a 5 hour trip of caving, rappelling down 3 short drops and a thousand meters of chimneying they reached the last survey point only to find that the passage ended in 32 m.

By moving a few rocks in a cave entrance low in the cirque and near camp Art Palmer, Peggy Palmer, and Mike McEachern broke into a section of cave which was later named Rainbow Cave. The proximity of the cave to camp encouraged mapping, and Dave Black, Tom Fehrmann, Maureen Cavanaugh, the Palmers and Mike mapped 120 m. The mapped portion consisted of about 90 m. of walking passage leading to a very tight squeeze in the top of a 20 m. dome which was intersected on one side by a second dome. The survey reached the bottom of the first dome, but the second dome remained unexplored. A passage off the bottom of the first dome led into additional passages all of which led to the dome floors. An estimated 300 m. of passage was explored but not mapped. The bottom of the cave was filled with sediments and bits of organic debris which were stuck on the walls and ceiling indicating the lower portion of the cave was at times under water. The tight squeeze into the top of the dome eliminated most of the cavers, and no additional trips were made.

Following the disappointment in the other caves, Bell Cave provided a pleasant interlude. A series of caving trips instigated by Thomas Moore started unwrapping the mystery of the passages in Upper Bell Cave. The effort concentrated in the

stream section of the cave with the initial push downstream. This was full wetsuit caving with a 34 F. stream flowing through the passage which varied from 1 m. to 6 m. wide with occasional pools too deep for wading. In a 17 hour push downstream Art, Steve, and Mike mapped over 660 m. of virgin passage and reached the terminal breakdown, while the stream flowed on through the breakdown to emerge on the cliff face below the lower base camp. The survey added depth to the Stairwell-Bell System.

Several major tributary passages joined into the stream passage indicating that major portions of the system remained to be explored. The problem of which lead to push caused much discussion among the cavers. Like the earlier Silvertip expeditions every mapping trip turned up more unexplored leads. Any of the leads could provide the connection with other caves in the system, but which one? Exploration up stream seemed to parallel Blood Cave without bringing the long hoped for connection. In the meanwhile the melting snow was attracting more interest in caves higher on the mountain. The final push in Bell saw the start of a G survey and the H survey which netted 330 m. of passage and an impressive 1500 m. of mapped passage in Bell for the season. The Stairwell-Bell system with over 3 km. mapped and its multitude of leads seemed more and more like the heart of the Silvertip System, but other more exciting leads diverted attention.

The discovery of Sunray Cave high on the side of Silvertip peak by Preston Forsythe caused a shift in interest to the higher caves. The entrance was found by moving a few rocks next to a low cliff face. Preston, who only had a flashlight, squeezed into a steeply dipping crawlway with a scree floor and followed it to a short drop. At the bottom of the drop a two by two meter passage sloped steeply away into the darkness. Sunray Cave was estimated to be about 420 m. above the Bell stream resurgence. Visions of beating the Neffs Canyon record swept through the camp.

Now the talk at camp shifted from Blood Cave and Bell Cave to deep caves and possible records. None the less, a final mapping trip was made into Bell Cave and the G and H survey lines were started. Another trip was made into Blood Cave and a brief search turned up a new lead, but the prime objective was to remove the rope which could be put to use higher up the mountain.

A few days later a crew of 5 made the 420 m. climb up to the entrance of Sunray Cave. Preston and Art led off as the rigging crew followed by the mapping crew of Peggy, Steve, and Mike. A hand line sufficed for the first drop into a tubular passage about 2 m. and 2 to 3 m. wide. The passage sloped about 10 m. following the bedding plane and a narrow stream slot was incised in the floor. In places scree and breakdown covered the floor that one could climb down on, but in other places the floor was bedrock and it was necessary to join into the stream slot for hand and foot holds. The passage continued for 33 m. to a silt plug. On the way out a side passage was found with a strong draft blowing into it. The meter high crawlway angled upward and in a short distance ran

into the side of a dome pit with a 15 m. drop obstructing the way. It looked as if the cave might go.

Field calculations indicated that we had reached a depth of 120 m. in the short 5 hour mapping trip into Sunray Cave which already placed the cave on Peter Sprouse's list of deep caves of the U. S. It was obvious that the time had come to move the base camp higher up the mountain. Some gear had already been moved up the mountain on the trip to Sunray, but hefty packs were required to move the remaining gear to the upper camp, 300 m. higher up the mountain. The upper camp was located at 2400 m. on the edge of the treeline and the scattered twisted trees were in marked contrast to the denser woods of the low camp. Silvertip peak, 300 m. higher, was often covered with clouds and mist and loomed over the camp while the surrounding alpine meadow was a yellow and green carpet of flowers and patches of snow. Our intrusion into this near alien environment seemed to be noted by the mountain and we were greeted in the evening by a thunder storm which brought bolts of lightning striking around camp and sent us running to our tents to ponder our fate.

The major planned objective of the upper camp, pushing Getoup Cave, was postponed in favor of the exciting Sunray lead which was 120 m. higher up the mountain. The excitement generated by the lead was almost overwhelming and August 5th found a 9 member party making the 140 m. climb to the cave entrance. The plan of action called for a division into 3 groups. George Cesnik, Bill Steele, and Steve Zeaman would lead off rigging followed by Frank Binney, Maureen Cavanaugh and Preston Forsythe mapping, while Nancy Boice, Dino Lowery and Mike McEachern would concentrate on up leads near the entrance to see if the cave could be pushed up as well as down.

The rigging proved to be difficult as there were few natural tie-offs and a diligent search was often required to find cracks for pitons and sometimes several pitons would have to be driven before two suitable anchors could be found. Loose rock had to be cleared from the edges of drops to minimize the danger of falling rocks. The first mapping team soon found itself stacked up behind the rigging team at the top of the first drop despite the latter's half hour head start. There was nothing for them to do except wait in the cold while the riggers completed their work.

The 15 m. pit led to a steeply sloping passage which quickly brought them to another short drop and another wait for the mapping team. Proceeding in this fashion the mapping team finally gave up after 5 hours due to the cold while the rigging team pushed on for several more hours. In the meantime, the other mapping team ran into a rock choke without getting any higher into the mountain. The days mapping effort netted about 220 m. of passage and the lower B survey reached a depth of about 135 m. The rigging team, which reached a depth of about 40 m. lower than the survey, came back with tales of an 25 m. drop that was so narrow that it was almost impossible to climb with mechanical ascenders and had to be rigged with a ladder. A small waterfall in the lower portion of the drop added misery to difficulty. Beyond was a canyon that was even narrower than the leads that had been abandoned in Ann's Cave although

it continued and there was a strong air flow. The cave went, but it was going to be difficult.

The difficulty caused by the mapping team backing up behind the rigging crew during the push trip indicated that a change in tactics was in order. The large team approach was discarded in favor of a small team-long trip approach. This would eliminate the problem of having to wait in the cold when rigging was slow and would leave more people on the surface to conduct a rescue if problems arose.

Previously established ground rules limited the length of trips to a 24 hour maximum. The time limit was instigated due to logistics problems in hauling large amounts of gear through the caves and the problem of exposure in advent of an accident. Each member of prolonged trips would normally carry a space blanket, a limited supply of high energy food, plus extra carbide for lights so they could be used as a heat source for an accident victim while waiting for aid. Means for preparing warm beverages were usually carried by one member of the party.

A 17 hour mapping trip by Mike, Bill and Steve pushed Sunray to an estimated depth of -240 m. The torturous narrow canyon, dubbed the Dreaded Singing Connection, led to a wider canyon with a short drop followed by a low crawl which pinched out after about 30 m. The air flow disappeared through a small upward sloping tube a meter wide and 10 cm. high. After half an hour of digging it was possible to squeeze through the tube to a slightly larger crawlway which immediately ran into the side of a large room. A tricky 10 m. climb-down provided access to the floor. It was the biggest room yet found in the entire Silvertip system, over 35 m. long and 8 m. wide. A 2 m. wide passage leading from the room was left to entice members of the next trip.

In the meantime, more people were arriving at the high camp which reached a summer maximum of 19 persons during the coming week. The camp circle was alive with talk of breaking the U.S. depth record. With an estimated 240m. depth and the biggest passage yet. There seemed little doubt that the next trip would push Sunray Cave past the Neff's Canyon record. It was agreed that Jim Chester, Bill Steel and Bill Stone would go for the record in the next push. Jim Chester had spent several years looking for a record breaking Montana cave and along with Newal Cambell had been the first cavers to map a Silvertip Cave. Bill Steele was a second year veteran with a record amount of time spent underground in Silvertip. Bill Stone, who had just arrived, was a Silvertip novice and it would be his first trip into the mountain's labyrinth. Bill, holder of the record speed for climbing a rope, would be needed later and the trip would give him a taste of what Silvertip was like. While Sunray was already 240 m. deep it was still several kilometers to the Bell Cave resurgence.

However, a problem, lack of rope, was starting to develop. Getout Cave was still rigged from the previous season with the exception of the entrance drop. Since we had planned on pushing Getout we had only brought 330 m. of rope since we had about 120 m. in Getout. There was one rope left at the bottom of Sunray and one rope left in camp, the entrance rope for Getout. Of the 12 ropes that we had brought there were two that were rigged in Stairwell-Bell; the 25 m. drop linking

the stream section to the entrance, and the drop connecting Stairwell to Bell. Those ropes were necessary if we were going to exit the cave from the bottom. The remaining 8 ropes had all been rigged in Sunray.

Over the previous seasons, a pattern of caving had developed which became a Silvertip tradition. Trip members would spend the morning getting their gear together and packing it into cave packs. On the rare, warm, sunny days wetsuits would be spread out over rocks to dry, but usually it was necessary to sit around the camp circle slowly drying the wetsuits by the campfire. The trip members would stuff themselves with a large meal of carbohydrates before entering the caves in the afternoon. Towards evening a meal would be prepared for the returning cavers ready to be warmed on the fire or stove. Usually several people would maintain a vigil for the explorers through the night. The first caver to reach the surface would yell down the mountain toward base camp and the fire tender would stoke the camp fire and start warming a meal. By the time the cavers reached camp hot food was ready and McEachern would be waiting with calculator and notebook to tally the survey.

Chester, Steele, and Stone climbed up from camp to Sunray carrying the last rope and entered around mid-day. They anticipated a long push and planned to exit the cave the following morning. There were no other underground trips that day but Roy Jamison and Patty Mothes pursued a favorite Silvertip diversion--hunting for new caves in the jagged and not completely explored karst. Roy returned to the party atmosphere of camp with a glowing account of a hole blowing air which he proudly christened Meander Belt Cave after a collapsed canyon passage near the opening. The opening was between Getout and Sunray and was about 45 m. higher in elevation than Getout. But interest was focused on Sunray and the more immediate problem of who wanted to do the next push and whether to derig Getout or the two drops in Bell to get more rope.

The party atmosphere continued into the night but as the evening grew on people slowly wandered to their tents for rest. No one heard the usual yell from up on the mountain. The haggared cavers stumbled into camp the disappointing story written on their faces. Bill Steele spoke first, "It's derigged. The ropes are stacked at B-1 somebody else can haul it up the tube." Jim Chester seemed particularly frustrated. His husky size had made the Dreaded Singing Connection especially difficult and the added bulk from hauling up ropes made the passage near impossible. In addition, he seemed to have a Silvertip jinx. In his first trip to the area no significant caves were found and every lead he tried was a dead end, first Ann's Cave, then Blood, and now Sunray.

The passage that Steve and Steele had run down ended in a short distance with the air rushing in a rubble floored upward sloping passage 1/2 m. wide, but only 5 cm. high. A stream which flowed out of the passage and disappeared in a small hole in the floor had cemented the rubble in place. With the right tools and some labor the passage should go, but for the present it was ended. Field estimates indicate the cave was around -480 m. and the deepest known in Montana, a consolation which made the disappointment bittersweet.



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