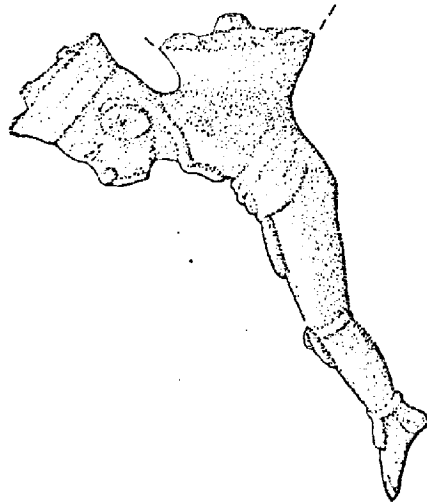
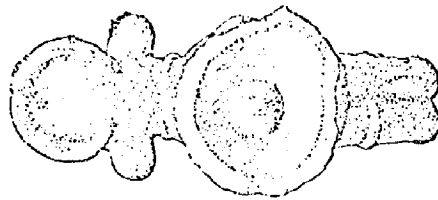
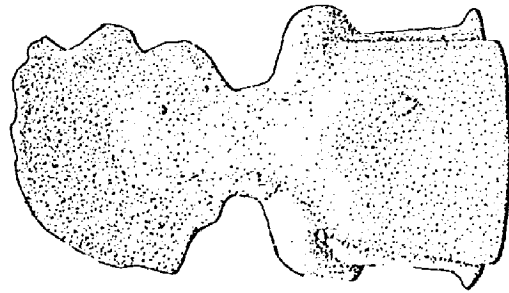


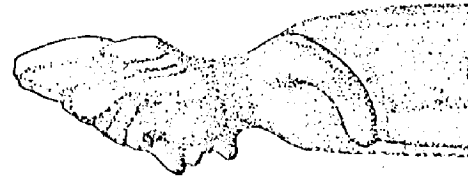
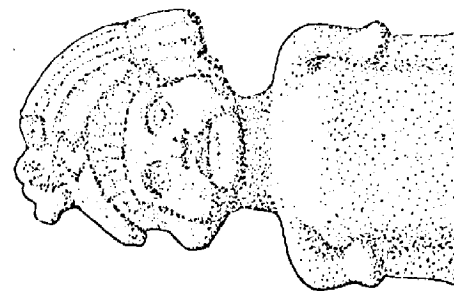
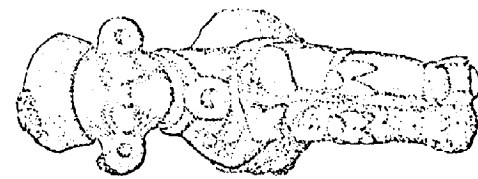
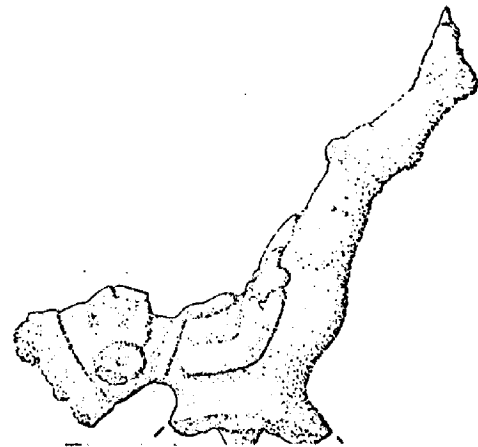
BIRMINGHAM GROTTO NEWSLETTER

NATIONAL SPELEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

OCTOBER 1981



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BIRMINGHAM GROTTO NEWSLETTER, OCTOBER 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.

Editors: Lynn McGill & Nancy Boice
5279 Paramount Drive
Birmingham, Al. 35210

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

Many thanks to Joe Domnanovich for continuing his vigil at the xerox machine. Without his help the Grotto Newsletter could not be reproduced at such a reasonable rate.

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

The November 14 Grotto Trip will be to Doodlebug. Contact Jay Clark(967-1838).

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Cueva de la Culebra - An Ancient Burial Cave
Nancy Boice page

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of Kentucky - John R Moore page

The Sylvan Beauty of Lamons Cave
Tom Chamblee page

***** Cover *****

On this months cover are drawings of the figurines found in Cueva de la Culebra

We are sad to announce that John and Joyce Attaway will be moving to Pensacola Fla. Dear John and Joyce we miss you and desperately need your new address so the whole Grotto can converge on your domicile when the cold settles in Northern Alabama.

**** Cumberland Caverns Christmas Party ***
December 11-13

If you plan to attend remember all registration will be accomplished by mail in advance and pre-paid. Trips will be assigned in advance. All registration will be by name and on an individual basis. The fee includes cave trip, Banquet. (No reduction for cave-trips only). I called Cumberland Caverns and was told that no price had been set but they should know by Thanksgiving. If you feel the urge to write call.

Cumberland Caverns
McMinnville, Tennessee 37110
Phone (615) 668-4396

***** NSS Building Fund *****

To date the B'ham Grotto has been able to raise over \$200 for the NSS Building Fund. We are raising the money by selling TAG T-shirts for (see design on back cover) and giving all proceeds to the NSS Building Fund. Anyone interested in purchasing a T-shirt can contact Greg McGill (205) 956-1267. We only have 8 (xlarge & small) left so place your order while they last.

BIRMINGHAM GROTTO NEWSLETTER, OCTOBER 1981

Local Cavern used as set for TV Movie

DeSoto Caverns, a commercial cave in Childersburg Al. will be the set for "The Further Adventures of Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn." Synthetic Moss, lighted torches, a trained snake and piercing screams set the mood for 12 hours a day as the film crew followed. Sounds like we may at long last have discovered the perfect use for commercial caves.

*****Newsletter Review*****

A trip report in the CIG Newsletter (Vol XXV No 8, Aug. 1981) by Dave Black reports that Roppel Cave in the Central Kentucky Karst region is now mapped to a length of 27½ miles.

The Windy City Speleonews (Vol 21, No.5, Oct. 1981) had a very entertaining article on cave lore. In her article, June Moore told of several cave recluse from all over the country. She mentions the use of caves as saltpetre mines, "speakeasy's" and Operation X-Ray, where during WWII Texas bats were to be fitted with incendiary devices and released over industrial centers throughout Japan. The Atomic bomb made Operation X-Ray obsolete before it could ever be used. Legends of creatures and animals inhabited by evil spirits abound in cave lore. Someone could have fun writing a Masters Thesis on this one.

The Richmond Area Speleological Society has published The Brass Light, a special issue on cave management and cave conservation. It is packed full of conservation news mostly pertaining to Virginia caves. Anyone interested in Virginia cave conservation may purchase a copy from RASS, P.O. Box 25594, Richmond, Virginia 23260 for the price of \$1.00.

The Windy City Speleonews (Vol 21, No.5, Oct. 1981). Geoffrey Frasz wrote an exploration story about Couch Cave in

Monroe County, Illinois. The exploration held many exciting adventures some of which contain 3 near siphon pushes, a mammoth molar and tusk which are being carbon dated, and some pretty sticky landowner relations. The total distance surveyed so far is 4526", and the cave is closed to everyone except the mapping crew. Anyone interested in helping with the survey is asked to contact Geoffrey Frasz or John Moses.

The CIG Newsletter published by the Central Indiana Grotto (Vol XXV, No.9, Sept. 1981) reported that "Secretary Watt has agreed to abide by a decision of the House Interior Committee to block oil and gas leasing in the Bob Marshall Wilderness. However, he is being sued by his former law firm on the grounds that the special federal provision which Rep. Williams persuaded the Interior Committee to accept is unconstitutional. No Senate action is currently pending." A number of long cave systems are being explored in this mountainous snow covered Montana Wilderness, so prepare to write your Senator.

Richard A Watson wrote a short article on caving for the readers of CO-Evolution Quarterly (Fall 1981). He reviewed and recommended several books to introduce people to caving. He was careful to note that the NSS is the only caving organization in the US and that it is not soliciting for new members, only those truly interested in Speleology and cave conservation.

MINUTES OF OCTOBER 5, 1981

Valerie Howell presided. First, the following officers were elected for the coming year:

Chairman	Greg McGill
Vice-chairman	Mike McEachern
Secretary	Dottie Alexander
Treasurer	Joe Domnonovitch

Following the election, Greg McGill presided. Visitors to the meeting were Steve Connors, who is staying with the Attaway's for several months, and Ray Tony from Huntsville.

The treasurer's report, given by Edna Caudle, showed \$875.58 in savings and \$245.62 in checking. Dues for the coming year were due at this meeting.

Old Business

Edna Caudle asked about the SERA T-shirts that had been special orders. Greg said he would mail them to the various recipients if he could get the postage from the Grotto.

A report on the ACS revealed that all but four ACS books had been sent. The next ACS meeting will be in Gadsden.

New Business

Greg McGill talked about the new T-shirts made up for TAG. The design is by Dave and Valerie Howell. Mark Poulster suggested taking the screen to TAG to make more in case those already prepared were sold. No motion was made on this. Greg said he might prepare more to take to the Cumberland Christmas Party. The T-shirts sell for \$5 each.

In giving a trip report about the Grotto trip last month to Roaring River, Jay Clark discussed the lack of interest and participation in this trip and in previous scheduled Grotto trips. Dave Howell and Greg McGill also made comments about the lack of interest over the past few years. Dottie Alexander made a motion to have a Grotto office for a trip leader; Ken Brown seconded. With some persuasion, Steve Hall volunteered for the office. Jay Clark and Kent Burchfield volunteered their help in planning the trips. A trip was scheduled for Saturday, November 14, to Doodlebug Cave. Lee Stubbs suggested scheduling the monthly trip for the week-end following the meeting.

Trip Reports

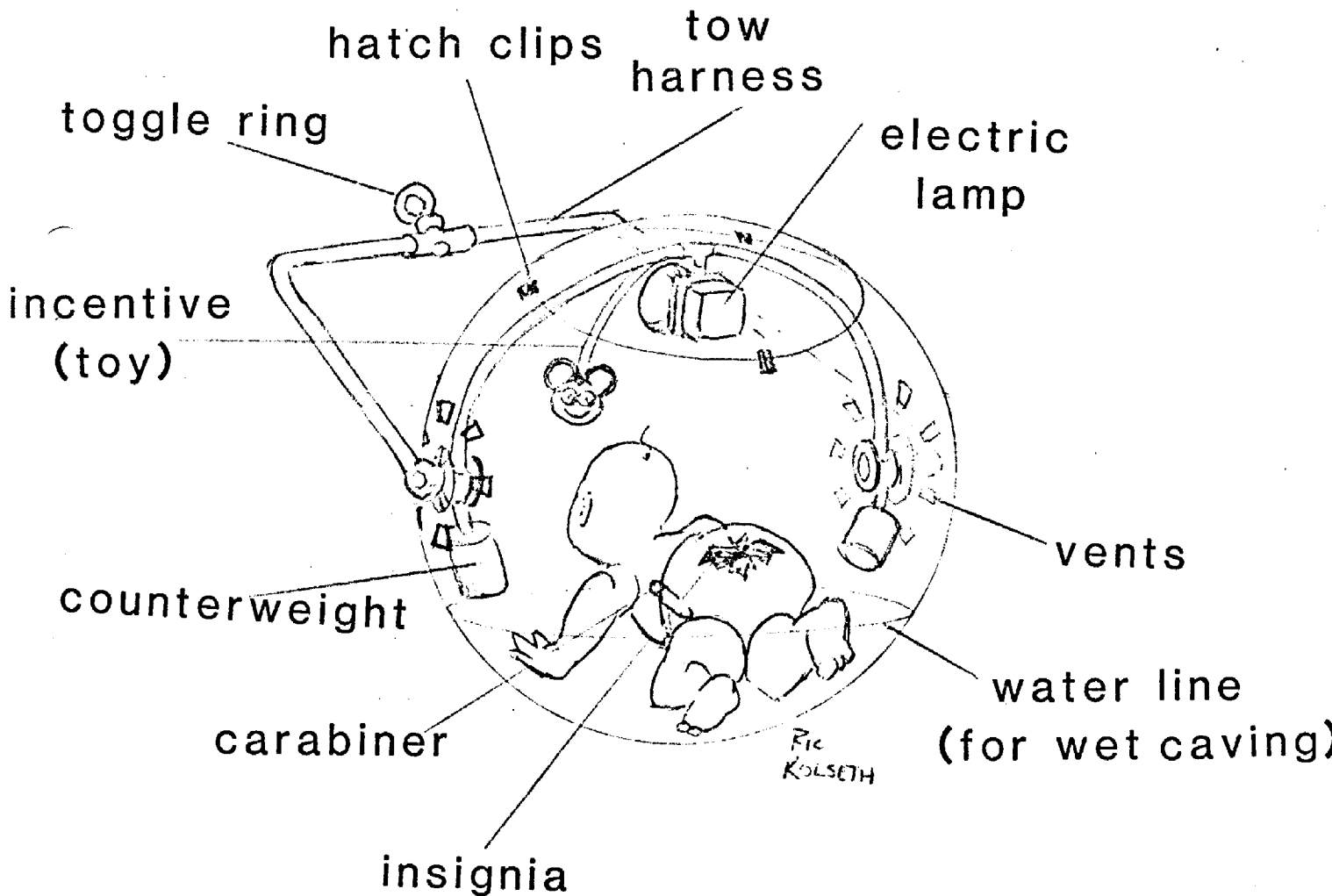
Jay Clark	Roaring River	
	Gary Self	
Steve Connors	Ellison's	with people
	Mystery Hole	from Georgia
		Tech
Larry Moore	Mammoth Cave	

Mark Poulster said he had a trip to Tumbling Rock scheduled for October 18.

Slides were shown by Jay Clark of a trip to Engel Double. This was in September with members of the Huntsville Grotto.

Ric Kolseth (former BG member and artist extraordinaire) stopped by the other night with his wife Kristina and new daughter Megan. This is the result of a discussion we had about children in caving and getting around the lag time before they can walk on their own. Valerie Howell

☆ KOLSETH'S UNPATENTED INFA CAVER ☆



Cueva de la Culebra--An Ancient Burial Cave
Nancy Boice

It is a sultry, hot afternoon in the jungle. The cave entrance looms open and inviting to the birds and animals of the jungle. A six foot fer-de-lance rests lazily in the shade of the ledge overhang. Gradually, the afternoon quiet is interrupted by the muffled voices of approaching men. Slowly, the procession makes its way through the dense jungle vegetation of overhanging vines to the cave entrance. The men are dressed in elaborate costume with large feathered headdresses. They carry a litter with the royal body prepared for burial laid upon it. Torches are lit. As the procession moves slowly into the cave, copal is burned in broken pottery sherds. Torches are left along the path to light the way. The procession chants in solumn, reverberating tones as they move to the last great chamber. There the body is laid out and a ceremony follows. Pottery used in the ceremony is placed in niches in the wall. Ceremonial idols are left in the passage to guard the dignitary's remains through time. Only bats flutter through the dark, deserted passages for centuries until

* * * * *

Recent discoveries of Mayan glyph caves in Guatemala spark memories of Mexico trips of the past. Nothing is more exciting than discovery of unexplored caves, especially the discovery of a burial cave. It was a glimpse into the ancient past.

In January of 1976 cavers from Austin, Texas on a trip to Mexico decided to spend a few days in a remote area in the state of Oaxaca. After setting up camp near a small spring, cavers were anxious to scout for new caves. The area had potential for new, long caves. Several interesting caves had previously been located in the area and the karst and jungle looked inviting.

One evening, after a day of scouting and searching for new caves, the group settled in camp for the evening meal--except for Preston and Jim. Imaginations ran wild as to their whereabouts. Later, they returned to camp and the look on their faces told the tale. They had found a long, horizontal cave that was well decorated with sheilds and gleaming white formations. But that was not all. They told of long, walking passages leading to a great chamber in the far back of the cave. There they found ancient pottery, stone and bone artifacts, and even a skeleton laid out in the center of the floor of the chamber. We were extatic!

Jim christened the cave, Cueva de la Culebra meaning Cave of the Snake because when he found the entrance the day before, he disturbed a large fer-de-lance sunning in the entrance. The snake startled him, to the point that he felt like abandoning exploration of that particular entrance. After all, there were other new entrances to explore. But somehow, he had a feeling that this one

was special. So he returned with Preston to see what secrets lay in store.

The next day, the entire group rose early to prepare for a long trip into the cave to map, photograph, and document the find. It was a trip I will never forget. Entering the cave was like entering the past-- imagining the smell of burning copal and seeing the flicker of torch light. As we moved through the easy walking passage leading to the main cave we noted pot sherds strewn along the way.

The main trunk passage was interrupted by a series of 3 pits which dropped about 4 meters into the lower section of the cave. It was necessary to carefully climb over and around these pits to continue down the passage. Just past the third pit a ceiling entrance allowed light to enter the 2 meter wide and 4 meter high corridor leading to the rear of the cave. The corridor continued for over half a kilometer, gradually becoming wider and higher. At scattered intervals along the passage, clusters of potsherds marked the locations where whole pots once sat. At one point along the corridor, the ceiling sloped to less than 1/2 meter and it was necessary to crawl for about 10 meters before the ceiling rose and it was again possible to walk. The corridor led to a junction with large canyon which was 4 to 5 meters wide and over 6 meters high. The corridor joined the canyon about 4 meters above the canyon floor and it was necessary to negotiate a 4 meter climb to reach the canyon floor. The presence of pot sherds at the top of the climb indicated the same route was used in prehistoric times to reach the rear of the cave. To the right of the corridor the canyon led past two pure white dripstone columns and an unusual shield formation for a distance of 55 meters where the canyon was completely plugged by a huge pure white flowstone cascade. In the opposite direction from the corridor, the canyon continued for over 200 meters to an area where a small skylight in the ceiling allowed a wierd glow to penetrate the darkness. There, almost a kilometer from the main entrance broken pots, artifacts, and human bone gave silent testimony to the prehistoric use of the cave.

We first saw broken sherds and gleaming white projectile points when entering the room. Small bone tools also lay scattered on the floor. Next was a small black ceramic figurine with puffed cheeks and an elaborate feather headdress guarding the passage. Finally, in the center of the floor was the fully articulated skeleton of the individual laid to rest there. No jewelry or adornment accompanied the body, but nicely decorated pottery was nearby. In a nearby nitch was a superb clay vessel decorated with an incised flower design. The pot had a handle and a spout shaped in the form of an animal.

An unforgettable red clay figurine lay on the floor. It had been a handle or foot on a larger vessel that was broken off. The figure is quite unique, having only one arm, odd decoration, and a plug in his mouth. Only the ancients who placed him there know what he meant.

Hours were spent in drawing, photographing, and mapping the cave and burial chamber. We wanted to do a thorough job in our documentation. Just as the cave was important to the prehistoric visitors, it was equally important to us. No artifacts were removed or disturbed. We respected the rights of the prehistoric people by leaving everything just as we had found it. After hours of exhaustive documentation we made our way back to camp. It had been an unbelievable trip into the past.

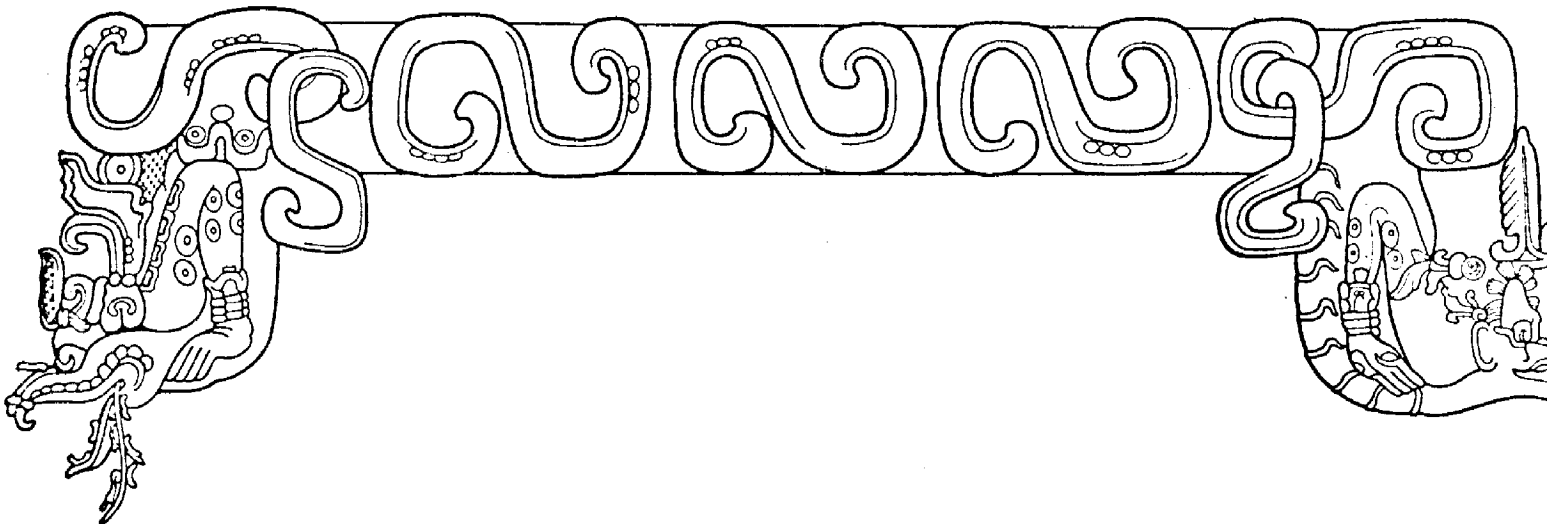
Back in Austin, hours were spent in the Latin American Library at the University of Texas searching for details to discover the origins of the artifacts. No real conclusions could be drawn, but after research and consultation with a MesoAmerican archaeologist, we attributed the burial material to the Mazatec culture, the native Indian culture inhabiting the area before contact times.

The cave is still a mystery. Hopefully, the remains that lay there will remain undisturbed for centuries to come. It is hoped that future researchers will learn more about this ancient culture.

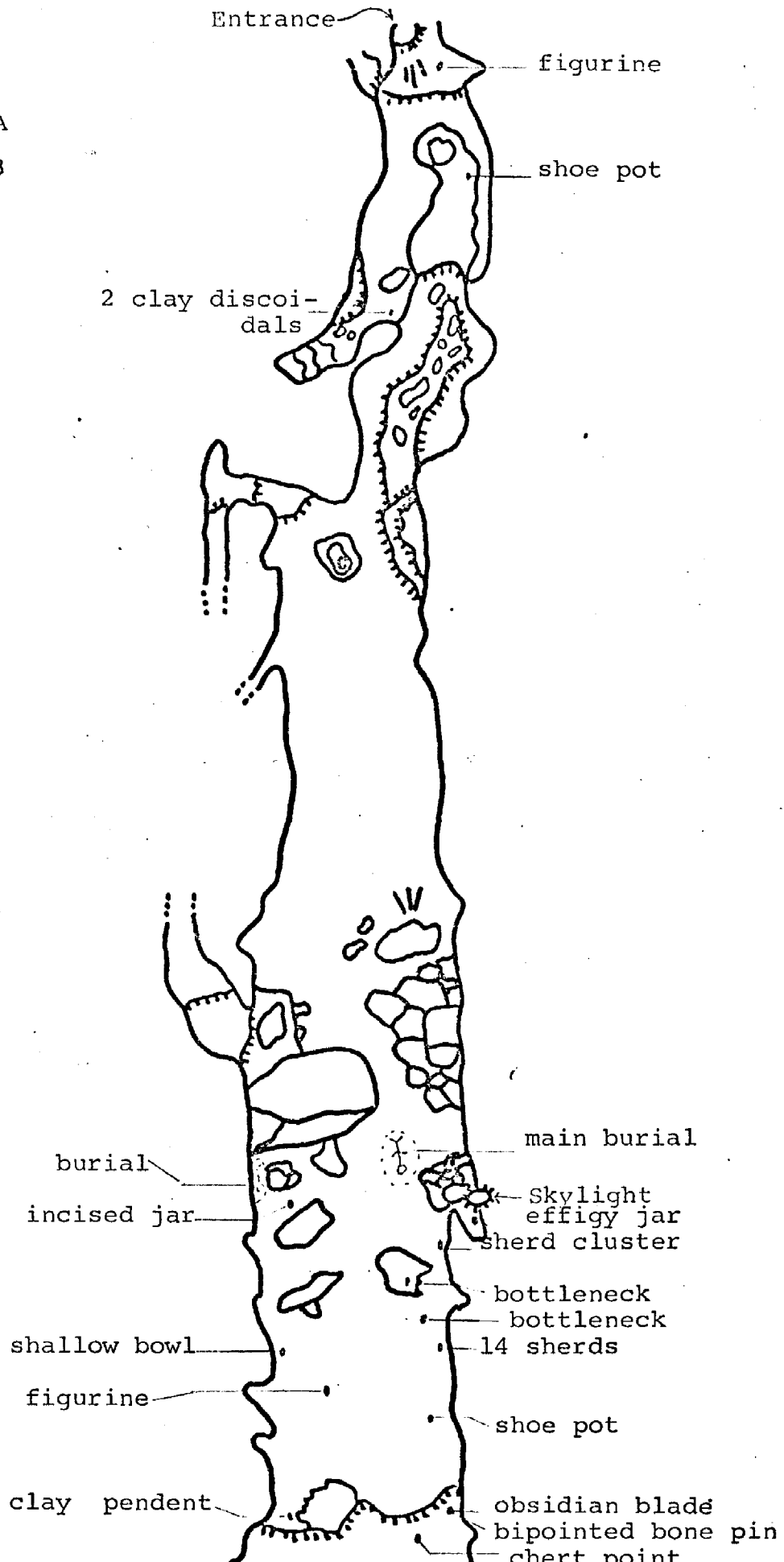
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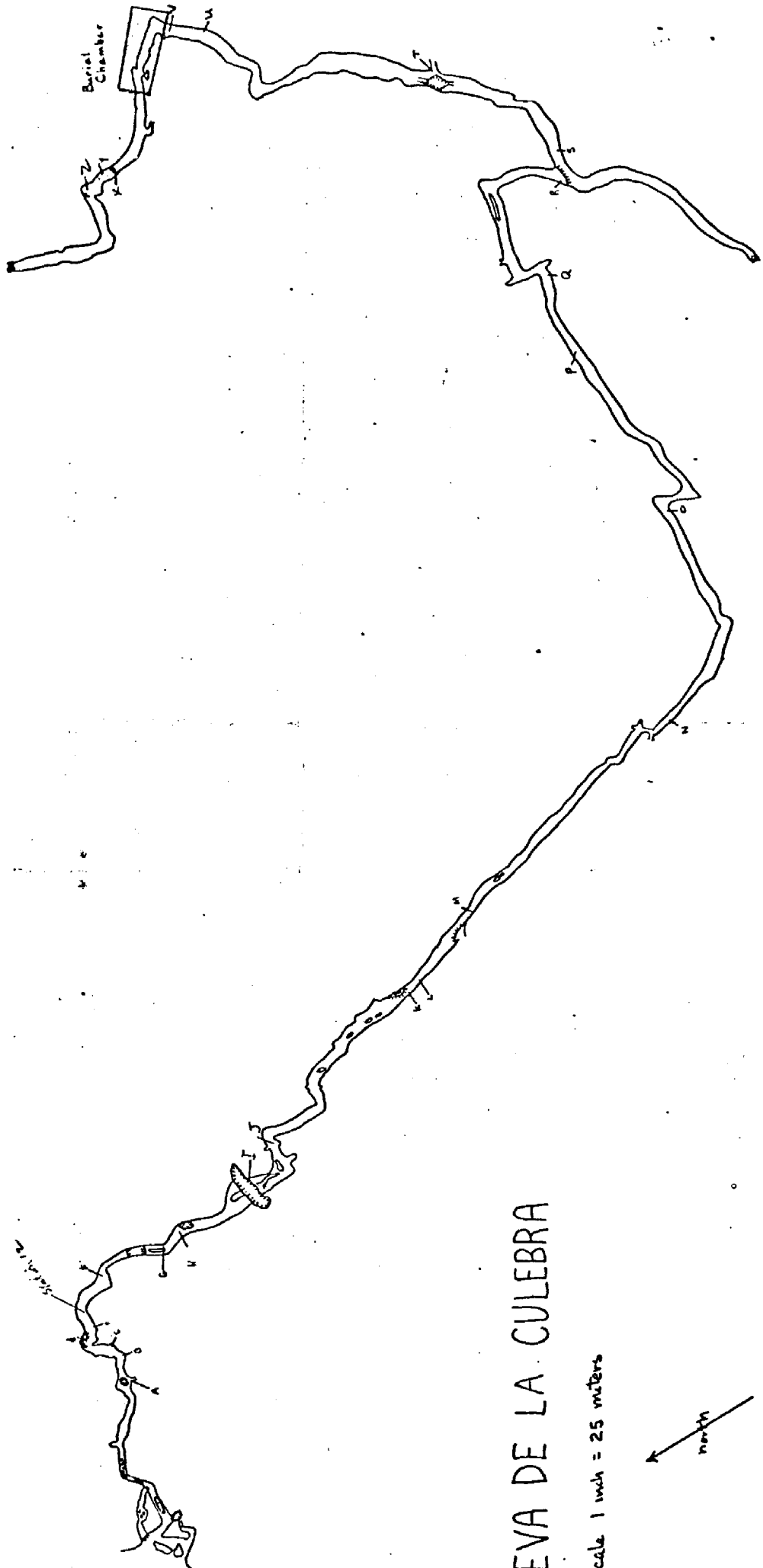
drawings-George Nelson

map-Mike McEachern, Nancy Boice, Preston Forsythe,
Maureen Cavanaugh, Ann Schnake, Jim Rodemaker



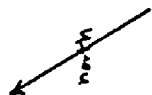
BURIAL CHAMBER
 CUEVA DE CULEBRA
 Scale 0 3





CAVE DE LA CULEBRA

scale 1 inch = 25 meters



ALL HALLOW EVEN

Thou art mirthfully compelled to attend The
Definitive Pages Ritual celebrating that most high
of holidays - Halloween. Revelry to commence
at dark thirty New Sidereal Time October
thirty first nineteen hundred and eighty one, at the
domicile of Sir John and Mistress Joyce of A??away
bring thine own buzz & munchies
costumery mandatory



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