

# BIRMINGHAM GROTTO NEWSLETTER

NATIONAL SPELEOLOGICAL SOCIETY



"SOUTHERN OUTDOORSMEN  
MUST TAKE SPECIAL  
CARE IN SPRINGTIME  
TO AVOID VENOMOUS  
SNAKES WHICH SUN  
THEMSELVES ON ROCKS  
DURING THIS SEASON."



The BIRMINGHAM GROTTO NEWSLETTER is published twelve times per year by the Birmingham Grotto of the NATIONAL SPELEOLOGICAL SOCIETY. Other organizations may reprint our material when credit is given to this publication.

Subscription and membership fees are prorated from October. Annual dues are \$4.00 which includes the newsletter. The subscription rate of \$4.00 is available to persons outside of the Birmingham area.

The Grotto meets on the first Monday of each month at 7:30 pm at the Parke Memorial Branch Library located at 1814 11th. Avenue South (corner of 11th. Ave. South and 19th. St. South). Park at the rear of the building. The meeting after the meeting is at Burly Earl's, 2109 7th. Ave. South, at about 9 pm.

Exchange newsletters and other Grotto mail should be sent to:

Birmingham Grotto  
PO Box 55102  
Birmingham, AL 35255-0102

The 1985-86 Grotto Officers are:

President	Jet Thomas	933-6162
Vice-President	Everett Bagby	780-6478
Secretary	Shari Lydy	595-5268
Treasurer	Andy Zerbe	933-2111

NEWSLETTER EDITOR: Shari Lydy. GRAPHICS: Dave & Valerie Howell. ARTICLES: Milo Washington and Jet Thomas.



## UPCOMING EVENTS

April 12 - Mapping trip to Trussville Cave. Call Greg McGill (988-2420 days) or Mike McEachern (226-6137 work) for details. Meet at Shoney's in Roebuck at 8:00 am.

April 18 - Guffey Cave. Les Buryn, Milo Washington, and Gary Barnes are trip leaders. Meet at Hardees in Tarrant City at 8:00 am.

May 31 - Kennamer Cave. Trip leaders are Gary and Milo. Meet at Hardees in Tarrant City at 8:00 am. This trip is conditional on weather. If there is rain, forget it. Also there is a drop which will be prerigged with a cable ladder. Call Gary if you have questions about the vertical extent of the cave. Most of the cave seems do-able without the drop according to a guidebook.

## Minutes of the Birmingham Grotto meeting - April 6, 1987

There were 46 Grotto members present. Guests were Tai Richardson, Mike Gross, Lynn Threlfall, Matt Fowler, and Hao Ying, and Bill Siler.

The meeting was called to order at 7:40 pm. The minutes of the last meeting were read and Andy reported that Grotto funds were the same amount as last meeting.

### Old Business

None

### New Business

NCRC is offering a cave rescue operations and management training session June 6-13 at Abingdon, VA. The cost varies from \$165-200 depending on when you register. For anyone who is interested, Shari has the registration form. Huntsville Grotto will again be sponsoring the Anvil Cave Rally the second weekend in July. We should be receiving information on this shortly. Greg McGill and Mike McEachern want to start some Grotto cave mapping projects and are willing to teach people how to read instruments and basic mapping fundamentals. Trussville or Wilder Cave will be their first project. Kathy Cooley of Ruffner Mountain Nature Center has again inquired about the Grotto helping to gate Gate City Cave. Since the Grotto is already a member of the Nature Center, anyone helping would essentially be a volunteer and remain nameless. The gating project would strictly be under Ruffner Mountain control and they would assume liability. However, Jay Clark warned that volunteer identities would not remain anonymous in a court of law. He is checking into the legalities of the matter to see if there is a way that any of us can help build a gate without being jeopardized by potential future liability suits. Kentucky Speleofest '87 is May 23-25 in Rockcastle County near Renfro Valley. This is a premier caving area in the heart of the Cumberland Plateau. Joe D. brought the map updates for the 1987 ACS update. Anyone who was a member of the 1986 ACS is eligible to receive a map update. This is a bonus of 200 pages of maps! Greg McGill commented that the Alabama Cave Survey was chartered in 1979 and published the first survey in 1981. There are presently 350 miles of mapped Alabama caves; it is noteworthy that Bill Torode is responsible for much of this mapping. More cavers need to get involved with mapping because Bill won't be around forever. Alabama also has 66 caves over 1 mile in length.

### Special Presentations

Bill Siler is an old time Birmingham Grotto member who is about to retire and move to Florida. Milo Washington decided that it would be fitting for the Grotto to give Bill a send off party. In lieu of champagne at the meeting, cookies were passed around. A cookie toast was proposed by Milo, extolling Bill's passion for caving. Shari offered another toast: Cookies, cookies, crunch crunch crunch; Here's to Bill Siler, we'll miss you a bunch! Bill's retirement present was a carbide lamp attached to a cane. This appropriate? gift was a Mike McEachern original.

This grotto meeting was also the special reunion of the Jess Elliot Four (wounded survivors of the March 8 Grotto trip car accident). A Grotto motion was proposed to the membership and voted on over the phone before the meeting. As a result of that proposal and on behalf of the Grotto, Everett Bagby was happy to present Richard and Larry with a copy of the complete 1987 ACS Survey Book. Both had wanted to attend the ACS meeting before the accident and have been very active caving the last few months. This way, now they can plan a hit list of new caves to do when the casts become past history. Thank you Birmingham Grotto!

### Trip Reports

quantities of concrete have been dumped down a hole in Meadowbrook Corp. Park.

### Program

Gary Barnes presented a very interesting program on Wind Cave near Custer, SD. The cave has 5 million cubic feet of air volume. The geology of the area is unique because the cave was formed by an artesian percolating effect. The result is a profusely decorated cave distinguished by vibrant colors and boxwork. The Wind Cave we saw was 1970 's vintage when Gary was a Windy City Grotto member.

### Upcoming Trips

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The meeting was adjourned at 8:51 pm and everyone headed to Burley Earl's for the meeting after the meeting.

## **PAWPRINTS IN THE MUD**

A few words from your editor, please. As you all know, the Newsletter has been running about one month late. This is a direct result of not having any articles to publish; I've been forced to really scrounge other publications for material. YOUR NEWSLETTER needs trip reports, special articles of interest, trip logs, etc. YOUR EDITOR needs some interested and committed HELP! This may take the form of typists, article writers and gatherers, special columnists, and graphic artists. Many thanks go to to Jet, Milo, Dave and Valerie who have helped to keep this publication afloat. Everyone likes to read the Newsletter, but it certainly takes the dedicated effort of more than one person to get it out.

Now that I have gotten your attention, I regretfully announce that I must resign the editorship of this Newsletter effective June 1. I love working on the NEWSLETTER and always find myself doing so at the exclusion of things I really need to do like my research. When I became editor, I had (and still have) certain feelings concerning the NEWSLETTER. There should be a certain format to give the publication continuity from month to month. This skeleton of the NEWSLETTER is the minutes, trip log, upcoming events, trip reports. Specialty articles lend spice and variety. Other articles fall under the heading of caver general information and come from other grottos or the NSS. I've tried to get the NEWSLETTER out on a timely basis although lately this has become a frustrating goal to achieve. Burnout is not my problem. I simply need to spend much more time on my research right now. That has to be my priority for the next few months. As long as I have the NEWSLETTER to worry about, my attention remains divided. I want to be editor again in the future, but hopefully someone will take responsibility for the NEWSLETTER now and carry on. We need to keep the publication coming out on a regular basis not only for our Grotto members, but also because we are now regularly exchanging newsletters with 35 other grottos. Although I've heard some grumbings about the present quality of the NEWSLETTER, there have been requests from other grottos asking to exchange with us. Even prestigious and well-done newsletters like the Texas Caver, Windy City News, and CIG

## OLD BLOWING CAVE

Personnel: Huntsville Grotto, Gerald Moni, and Shari Lydy

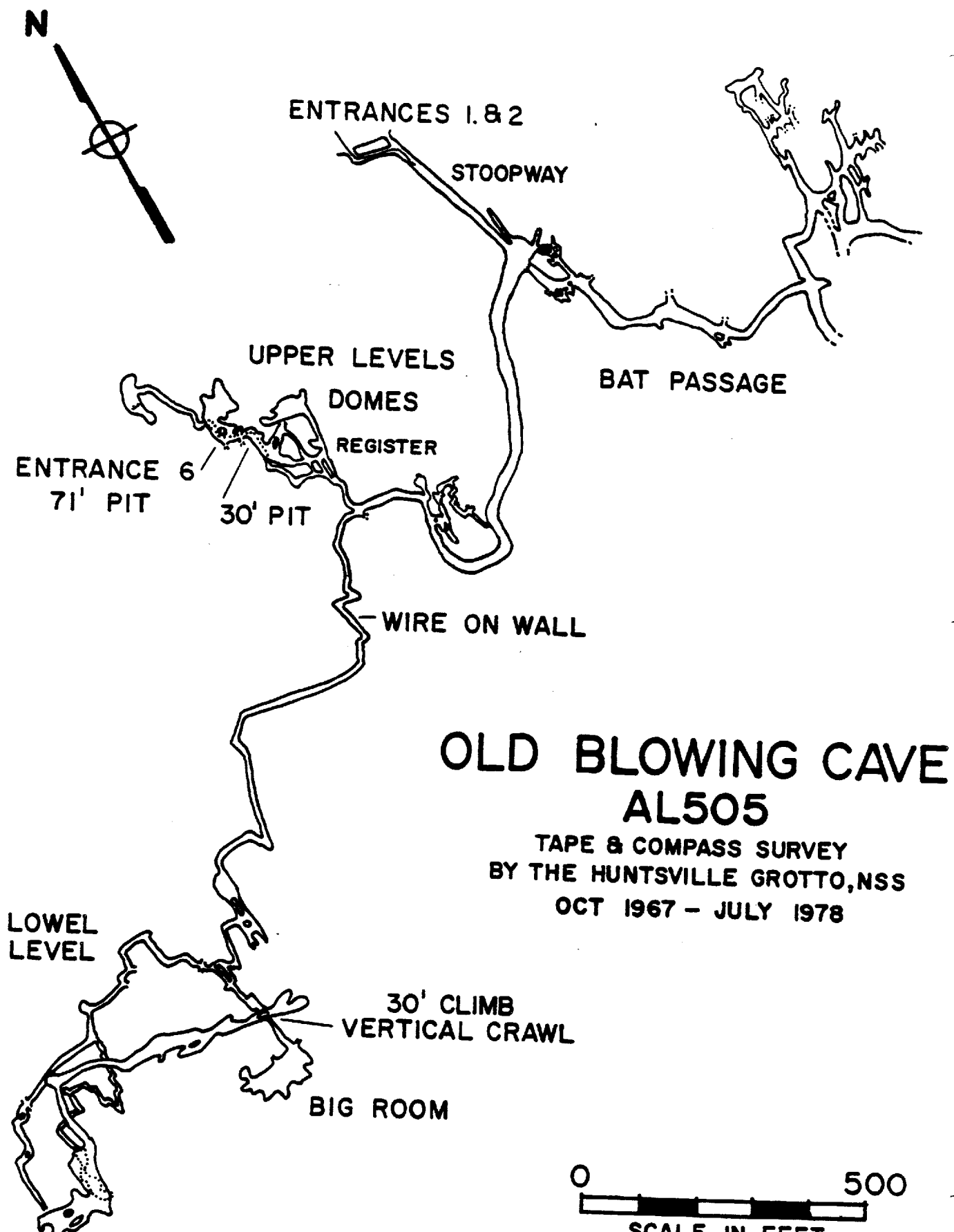
Cave Date: April 4, 1987.

I arrived at the Phillips 66 Quik-Stop on U.S. 231 just north of Morgan City about 9:15 am last Saturday morning. Pretty soon Lee and Linda Tucker drove up, along with the group from Huntsville. We caravanned over to Union Grove, left extra vehicles at the church parking lot, and proceeded to the landowner's property above the cave. After gearing up, the group walked down the road which passes through a pasture, the woods, and a lower field. At the power line cut on the ridge overlooking the lake inlet, we split into two groups. The other group headed down the mountain to the left of the power lines to the lower entrances (1 & 2). We headed to the right of the power line cut toward the upper entrances (3, 4, and 5).

Gerald and I had discussed doing the 71' pit entrance, but we didn't have another short rope to do the 30' in-cave drop. At the upper entrance, a handline was rigged at the 15' climbdown. Carl Craig rigged a rope at the 20' entrance drop for body rappelling to speed things up. From the entrance room, we went into a lower passage off the right wall which lead to a breakdown room more or less overlaying a pit area. We traversed the left wall and crossed a rock bridge over an exposed part of the pit. From here, the passage is mainly hands and knee crawl until arriving at the Vertical Crawl. The alcove there is highly decorated with flowstone and some stalagmites. The vertical crawl is a 30' snug canyon climbdown which is done by moving horizontally and vertically through the wide spots. At the bottom, walking passage and some crawling leads to another 20' dome climbdown. The passage at the bottom here either leads to the Big Room or to the rest of the cave and the spring entrance. J.V. spent quite a while photographing in the Big Room where we met the other group.

From the climbdown, we followed the passage opposite that to the Big Room which led to big walking passage. Past the Wire in the Wall, the passage splits and one can go to the Waterfall Room and the upper domes, or to the Bat Passage and the spring entrance. We found the register and wandered around the dome area, seeing where the 30' pit connected with the passage we were in. According to the register, Les and Jet had visited the cave in 1982. We returned to the main passage to explore the Bat Passage. There was lots of bat guano but no bats except for a few solitary Pipistrells here and there. According to Joe Skipworth, the area was thick with grey bats earlier in the morning when the other group came through from the spring entrance. The last 500' feet of the cave we found pockets of 50-100 grey bats crammed into nooks and crannies here and there. Usually their clandestine presence was betrayed by angry chirping at our intrusion in the passageway. The last 200-300 feet of stream passage to the spring entrance is stoopway. The adventuresome can exit through the spring - we opted for the upper dry exit.

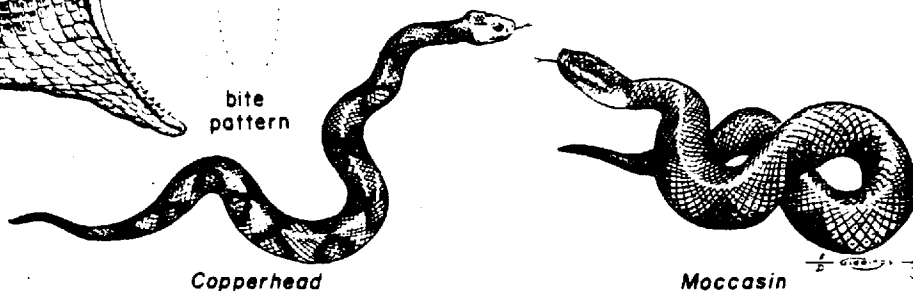
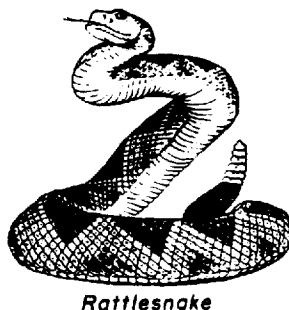
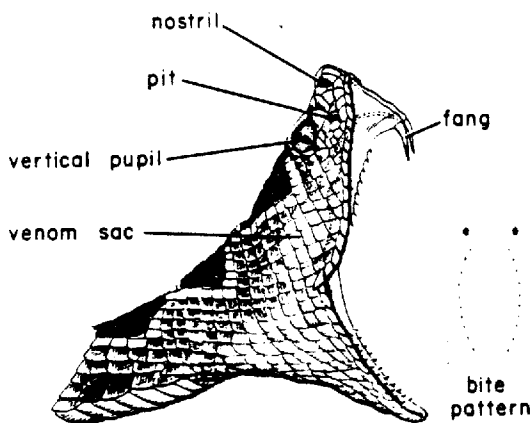
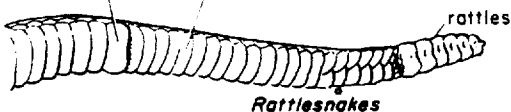
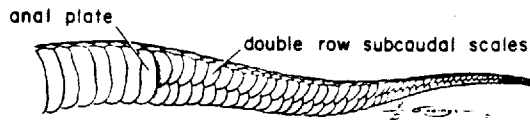
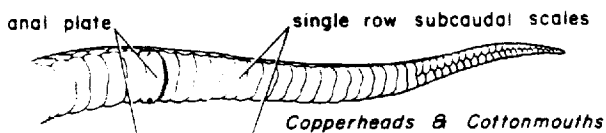
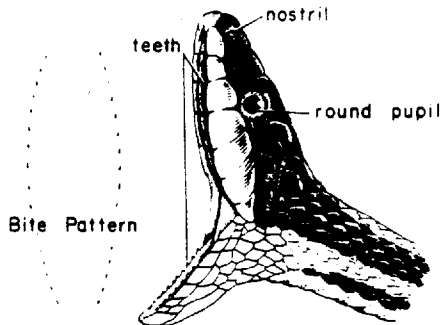
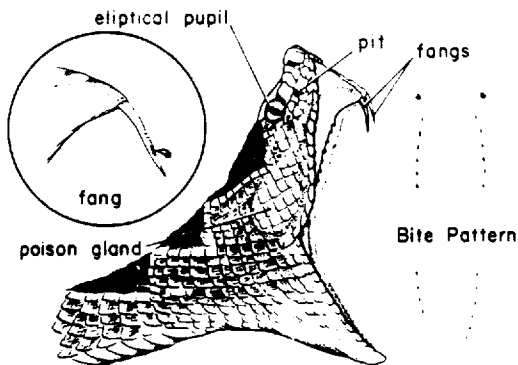
Once outside, Carl, Gerald, and I walked up the hillside and looked at the 71' pit entrance. There is a sinking stream on the hillside opposite this entrance and we wondered if it might be the source of cascading water in the Waterfall Room? Continuing up the mountain, we found a logging road on the ridge and followed it back to the power lines. The three of us returned to the upper entrances to retrieve the handlines and Gerald's pack. Then we marched straight up the mountain to the lower field, up another hill, and into the first pasture near the vehicles. The road we followed in the morning is the long way around. J.V. offered to give everyone a ride back in his pickup. With the mass of bodies, three brave souls literally let it all hang out while fiercely gripping the tailgate. We ended the day by eating at a little place in the country known as Walkers. Sitting amongst good friends and food was a fitting end to a good cave trip.



# IT'S THAT TIME OF YEAR AGAIN.....

## POISONOUS

## HARMLESS



Pit vipers are characterized by heat-sensitive pits located between the eye and nostril (arrow). A pit viper uses fangs to inject its venom. The fang is a tooth that has enlarged and is curved and hollowed out — a kind of hypodermic needle. A fang is attached on each side of the upper jaw to a bone that is movable. Each fang lies against the roof of the mouth and, except for its tip, is sheathed in a casing of flesh. Every few weeks the fangs are replaced by new ones.

The venom to be pumped through the fangs is stored in glands at the side of the snake's head just behind the inner ear. Ducts in these glands extend to the base of the fangs and into openings in the fangs.

As a pit viper strikes and as its jaws open to touch its victim, the fangs come forward. The gland muscles push the venom into the ducts and thus into the fang openings from whence it flows into the puncture wounds in the victim's skin.

## EMERGENCY CARE FOR SNAKEBITE

### POISONOUS OR NONPOISONOUS

Poisonous or nonpoisonous, a snakebite should have medical attention. A snakebite victim should be taken to a hospital *as quickly as possible*, even in cases when snakebite is only suspected.

### Emergency Care

1. As stated above, *get the victim to a hospital fast*. Meanwhile, take the following general first aid measures:
  - Keep the victim from moving around.
  - Keep the victim as calm as possible, preferably lying down.
  - Immobilize the bitten extremity and keep it at or below heart level.

If a hospital can be reached within 4 to 5 hours and no symptoms develop, this is all that is necessary.
2. *If mild to moderate symptoms develop, apply a constricting band from 2 to 4 inches above the bite but NOT around a joint (i.e., elbow, knee, wrist, or ankle) and NOT around the head, neck, or trunk. The band should be from ¾ to 1½ inches wide, NOT thin like a rubber band. The band should be snug, but loose enough to slip one finger underneath. Be alert to swelling; loosen the band if it becomes too tight, but do not remove it. To ensure that blood flow has not been stopped, periodically check the pulse in the extremity beyond the bite.*
3. *If severe symptoms develop, incisions and suction should be performed immediately. Apply a constricting band, if not already done, and make a cut in the skin with a sharp sterilized blade through the fang mark(s). Cuts should be no deeper than just through the skin and should be ½ inch long, extending over the suspected venom deposit point (because a snake strikes downward, the deposit point is usually lower than the fang mark). Cuts should be made along the long axis of the limb. DO NOT make cross-cut incisions; DO NOT make cuts on the head, neck, or trunk. Suction should be applied with a suction cup for 30 minutes. If a suction cup is not available, use the mouth. There is little risk to the rescuer who uses his mouth, but it is recommended that the venom not be swallowed and that the mouth be rinsed.*

### IF THE HOSPITAL IS NOT CLOSE (*cannot be reached within from 4 to 5 hours*)

1. Continue to try to obtain professional care by transportation of the victim or by communication with a rescue service.
2. *If no symptoms develop*, continue trying to reach the hospital and give the general first aid described above.
3. *If ANY symptoms develop*, apply a constricting band and perform incisions and suction immediately, as described above.

### OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

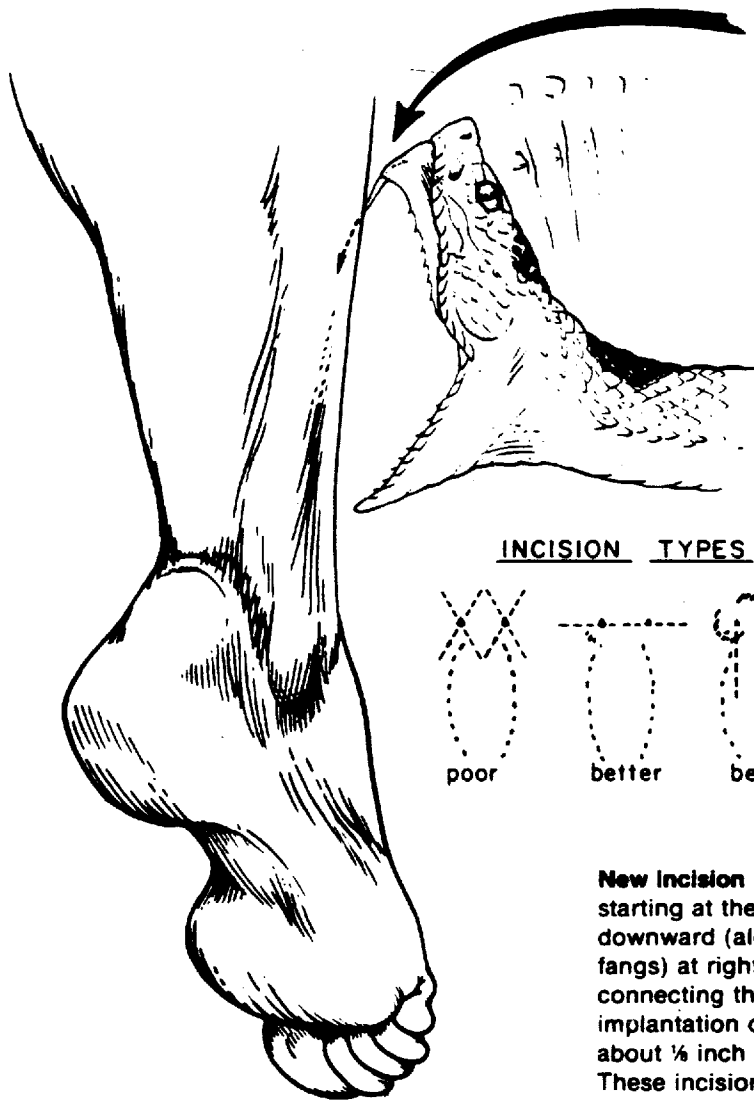
1. **Shock:** Keep the victim lying down and comfortable and maintain body temperature.
2. **Breathing and heartbeat:** If breathing stops, give mouth-to-mouth resuscitation. If breathing stops and there is no pulse, cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) should be performed by those trained to do so.
3. **Identifying the snake:** If the snake can be killed without risk or delay, it should be brought, *with care*, to the hospital for identification.
4. **Cleansing the bitten area:** The bitten area may be washed with soap and water and blotted dry with sterile gauze. Dressings and bandages can be applied, but only for a short period of time.
5. **Cold therapy:** Cold compresses, ice, dry ice, chemical ice packs, spray refrigerants, and other methods of cold therapy are NOT recommended in the first aid treatment of snakebite.
6. **Medicine to relieve pain:** A medicine *not containing aspirin* can be given to the victim for relief of pain. DO NOT give alcohol, sedatives, aspirin, or other medications.
7. **Snakebite kits:** Keep a kit accessible for all outings in snake-infested or primitive areas.

### SYMPTOMS

1. **Mild to moderate symptoms** include mild swelling or discoloration and mild to moderate pain at the wound site with tingling sensations, rapid pulse, weakness, dimness of vision, nausea, vomiting, and shortness of breath.
2. **Severe symptoms** include rapid swelling and numbness, followed by severe pain at the wound site. Other effects include pinpoint pupils, twitching, slurred speech, shock, convulsions, paralysis, unconsciousness, and no breathing or pulse.

Note: The treatment outlined here is still the accepted treatment recommended by the American Red Cross. This protocol is also recommended in *Medicine for Mountaineering*. Administration of snake antivenin should only be done in a hospital setting by qualified medical personnel. Cold therapy in the field (or elsewhere) is not recommended.

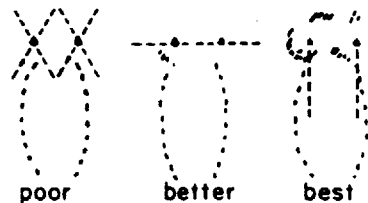
## INCISION TECHNIQUE FOR SNAKEBITE



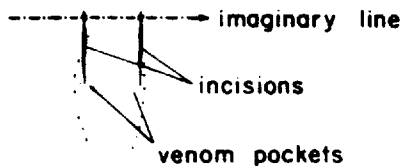
### Motion of strike

Shallow, slanting penetration is typical of snakebite, since snakes tend to hold the head level when striking. Wound depth and venom deposit vary with the species, the length of the fangs, and the snake's excitement. Even if the 1½-inch fangs of the Eastern diamondback rattlesnake penetrate almost their full length, the slanting wound may be no more than ¼ inch from the skin surface.

### INCISION TYPES



**New incision technique** calls for two parallel slits starting at the punctures and extending downward (along the presumed path of the fangs) at right angles to an imaginary line connecting the punctures. Because of the shallow implantation of venom, the incisions need be only about ¼ inch deep and about ½-¾ inch long. These incisions should reach the main concentration of venom, thought to lie in two parallel oblong pockets. (Some authorities, however, believe the venom spreads rapidly and uniformly in the subcutaneous tissue, so the pockets don't exist for long; they thus include the puncture in the *middle* of the incision.)



# Trip Log

## HALLEY'S HOLE (ACS 2667)

March 28

Jay Clark, Pat Starne, and Shari Lydy

## TUMBLING ROCK (ACS 171) - Mud Creek Quad

April 4

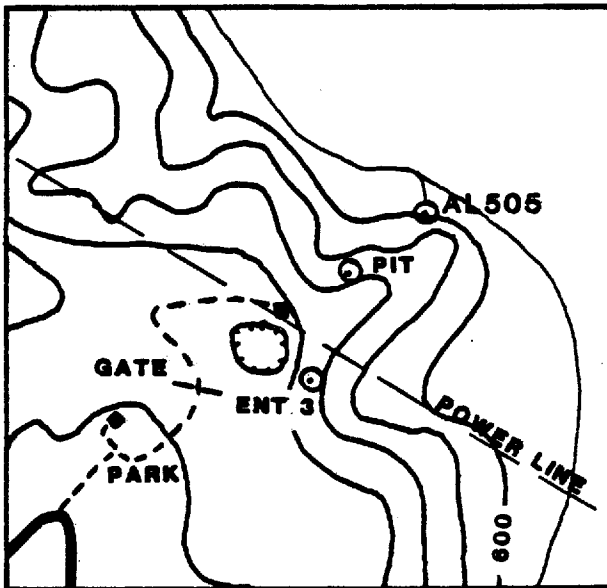
R.B. West, John & David Parks, Bruce Dillon, Frank Chambless, and David Howell

Uneventful "routine" trip to Queen's Shower and Topless Dome after first trying to go to Montague Cave but being unable to find the owner to get permission.

## OLD BLOWING (ACS 505) - Guntersville Dam Quad

April 4

Gerald Moni, Shari Lydy, Joe Skipworth, Carl Craig, Avis VanSwearingen, John Van Swearingen IV and other Huntsville Grotto members.



## The Far Side

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Venom pushers

IF INTERESED IN BEING A PART OF THE 1989 NSS  
CONVENTION STAFF, CHOOSE A COMMITTEE AND CONTACT BILL  
STRINGFELLOW

10

(404) 751-1257 (H)

(404) 257-3287 (W)

1989 NSS CONVENTION

JOB DESCRIPTIONS

These are the basic job descriptions for each committee. Full job descriptions will be developed by the executive committee and the committee chairs.

CAMPGROUND COMMITTEE - is responsible for developing the campground; arranging for on-site sanitation, water and electricity; road improvements; and site restoration.

REGISTRATION AND PRE-REGISTRATION COMMITTEE - responsible for handling all aspects of Convention registration; preparing forms and working with the Public Relations committee to arrange for their publication in the NSS News; receiving the registration forms; working with the Convention treasurer to deposit the funds; preparing registration packets; handling on-site registration each day during the convention.

SECURITY COMMITTEE - responsible for on-site security, coordination of rescue activities working with appropriate agencies; operation of first aid center; and arrangements, and protocols for use, of all Convention communications.

FOOD SERVICE COMMITTEE - responsible for working with the University food service and other committee chairs to coordinate all food service needs for Howdy Party, Banquet, luncheons and coffees; making arrangements for daily food service, such as daily meal plans and fast food service.

PUBLICATIONS - responsible for Convention Guidebook, Convention program, and daily Convention newsletter; coordinating with vendor committee for the solicitation of advertisements.

FACILITIES - responsible for dormitory accomodations and the scheduling of all meetings and events; working with registration committee to make dormitory assignments; scheduling all section meetings, Board meetings, and other meetings as needed; providing and scheduling space for special events such as the vertical contest; providing all equipment needed by program presenters and special events; and seeing that all facilities, with the exception of the campground, are adequately stocked and maintained.

TREASURER - responsible for receipt and disbursement of all Convention monies; establishment of bank accounts as needed; and preparation of all financial reports.

SPELEO-OLYMPICS - responsible for the planning, building, and operation of an obstacle course that gives all participants an equal opportunity to compete and win; responsible for prizes and their award, and working with the chair of the vendor committee to obtain same; responsible for returning site to its original condition.

PUBLIC RELATIONS - responsible for working with the media to publicize the Convention; providing material to the NSS News in a timely manner; informing the local community and its businesses of the size and needs of the Convention and its attendees; working with the local and state media.

VENDOR COMMITTEE - responsible for soliciting vendor participation; preparing and processing vendor registration forms; working with the treasurer for the deposit of funds; working with the campground committee on site selection for self-contained speleo-vendors, and working the facilities committee for site selection for indoor vendors.

SPECIAL EVENTS - responsible for banquet, Howdy party, geology field trip, photo salon, speleo-auction and all recreational activities; coordinating events with the foods service and facilities committees as appropriate; working with the executive committee to develop appropriate themes, menus and entertainment; and for developing a program of recreational trips and opportunities.

TRANSPORTATION - responsible for all on-campus transportation needs and for coordinating the transportation needs of the special events.

SYMBOLIC DEVICES - responsible for all themes and logos representing the Convention; for organizing the Convention theme and logo competition; for solicitation of bids and for production of all items bearing the Convention symbols; for all consignment sales; and for working with the registration committee to coordinate on-site sales.

CAVE TRIP COMMITTEE - responsible for pre and post Convention cave trips and for working with landowners in the Convention area; for organizing the pre and post Convention trips and campsites; and for informing the landowners of the nature, dates, and scope of Convention activities and working with them to maintain harmonious cave owner relations.

SECRETARY - responsible for the taking of minutes at all staff meetings; maintaining copies of all Convention related correspondence and papers; organization of this data for presentation to the NSS at the conclusion of the Convention.



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