

Trapped by a landslide...

Weekly World News
 SUN 6/16/87

Girl, 13, is buried alive for 40 days

TERRIFIED SCHOOLGIRL who was trapped in a cave by a landslide survived 40 harrowing days and nights in her hellish tomb, according to overjoyed rescuers who dug the dazed girl out of a mountain of rubble.

James Connors, a 13-year-old seventh grader, had been missing ever since he went out alone to explore a cave on her family's property near Aberdare, Wales.

Leadstrong

Connors, a 13-year-old seventh grader, had been missing ever since he went out alone to explore a cave on her family's property near Aberdare, Wales. Leadstrong



IT TOOK six men more than month to dig Kristen out of this cave, after tons of rock blocked the entrance.

James Hartung, "and she drank rainwater that seeped into the cave from the ground."

"Kristen is a remarkable girl. Most people would have become totally disoriented in the darkness of the cavern."

"But Kristen apparently

made up her mind to survive—and succeeded in doing so."

It took a crew of six men 40 days to dig through the rubble at the cave's entrance and extract Kristen from her dark, cold living grave.

"We had to stop digging

She ate mice and insects to survive

by **CHRISTOPHER LUKE**

several times because of equipment failure, fatigue and bad weather," James notes.

"By the time we finally broke through, we'd pretty much given up hope."

Stunned

"We were stunned when we found the girl alive, cowering in a corner of the cavern."

"We watched in amazement as she plucked a bat right out of the air with her hands and proceeded to

She has 5 accidents voiding black cats



SEVERELY TRAUMATIZED by time spent in her living grave, Kristen Connors hasn't spoken since being rescued.

for malnutrition and shock.

Doctors fear her chilling experience may have caused irreversible damage to her psyche.

"She has been extremely traumatized by the ordeal," says Dr. Cleveland Barnes, "but she's alive, and that is a miracle."

Cops can't make AIDS hooker quit

A HOOKER WHO has already admitted she has AIDS is still roaming the streets and there's nothing police can do about the shocking case.

The 25-year-old woman is the first prostitute in Rochester, N.Y. to admit she has the deadly disease, according to a police spokesman.

cause patient confidentiality laws prevent them from obtaining medical records. But the district attorney hopes to get a court order

EDITORS' PAGE

The BIRMINGHAM GROTTO NEWSLETTER is published approximately 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 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. 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 9:00 pm.


Exchange newsletters and other Grotto mail should be sent to: Birmingham Grotto
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The 1986-87 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 STAFF: Dave & Valerie Howell, Jimmy Harrison, Shari Lydy, Jet Thomas, Milo Washington, and YOU.



No time to type up your caving adventures?

1. Fill out a Trip Log form
 - or
 2. Call 591-5127 and tell us about it
- 

Minutes of the Birmingham Grotto Meeting - August 3, 1987.

Visitors: Pat and Mickey Peoples and Bruce Dean

President Jet Thomas called the meeting to order at 7:45 pm. Twenty members were present. The Grotto Treasury has \$1784.40.

Old Business

Part II of the I/O annual report still needs to be filled out and sent in. As a result of this not being done, the Grotto was not listed in the NSS Membership Manual, has no vote in the COG at Convention, and will no longer receive Administrative Memos from the NSS. Shari has not yet sent a letter to John French inquiring about the status of the Alabama Cave Law. Also the Grotto needs to participate in the NSS membership drive since half our members are non-NSS.

New Business

The Federal Cave Resources Protection Act (H.R. 1975 and S. 927) was introduced in Congress April 1987. It is imperative that all cavers and other interested parties in the Southeast write their state Senators and Representatives to gain support for this bill in committee. Mike McEachern is presently negotiating with Gordon Bell to write a paper on the paleontology of the Southeast.

Trip Reports

Jim Harrison reported on visiting Bangor Cave, Whiteworm, Adcock's, Blowing Spring, and Mammoth and Horse Cave in Kentucky. Donna Knoke participated in a Red Mountain Museum sponsored dig in Bell Cave near Muscle Shoals. It was an exciting experience to find sloth and sabre tooth tiger bones besides learning archeological techniques. Andy Zerbe, Dave Howell, Jet Thomas, and Squirrel went on the Grotto trip to Firelighter's Cave and Cedar Grove River Cave. Everett and Mike Gross visited Tumbling Rock and watched the bat flight exit Soute Cave at dusk. someone also reported that Neversink is once again trashed out. Cedar trees along the trail to the pit were cut and the burning logs thrown into the pit. Also the cave was heavily spray painted. This kind of vandalism could be prevented with an Alabama Cave Protection Law so we all have a more urgent reason to work for such a law. Everett talked to Mr. Bevers, a landowner near Anderson Cave. It appears that limited access to the cave is actually protecting the cave. Myrna mentioned that there is a sandstone cave in Oak Mountain. Also Tony Cooley found an unusual cave under the foundation of a building on Red Mountain. He described it as siltstone which can form a void in non-carbonate rock.

Upcoming Trips

Graves Cave - August 15. Meet at the cave at 10 am or call Squirrel for details.

Palisades Park in Oneonta - August 8. Picnic from 1-5 pm; bring food, drinks are provided. This is a work session sponsored by the Alabama Trail Association.

Respectfully submitted,

Shari

Shari Lydy, Secretary

Trip Log

CAVE: Blowing Spring Cvae

LOCATION: Near Lacon, Alabama

WHEN: June 7, 1987

CAVERS: Jim Harrison, John Meadows

DETAILS: After passing a snake in the entrance we rambled throgh several miles of maze passage underneath the mountain.

CAVE: Catfish Cave

LOCATION: Blount County, Alabama

WHEN: August 2, 1987

CAVERS: Jim Harrison, John Meadows

DETAILS: Poked around in this cave located in a quarry near Bangor and generally had a good time. Some very nice formations are still there even though it is a much traveled in cave by the local beer drinkers.

CAVE: Bangor Cave

LOCATION: Blount County, Alabama

WHEN: August 2, 1987

CAVERS: Jim Harrison, John Meadows

DETAILS: MADE ME SICK. It looked like a garbage truck had backed up to the entrance and unloaded. Smelled like shit outside. Three locals standing around outside drinking beer. It's really xx amazing the things you

CAVE: Horse Cave

LOCATION: Blount County, Alabama

WHEN: June 18, 1987

CAVERS: Ray Bish, Jim Harrison, Jett Thomas, Andy Zerbe

DETAILS: Chimneyed across a conyon into a room visited possibly only one time before. Beautiful white formations, soda straws, columns, cave popcorn, etc. seen. Another entrance to the cave was found in this room but was only a 4" X 6" hole to the surface.

CAVE: Blowing Saltpeter Cave

LOCATION: Blount County, Alabama

WHEN: June 18, 1987

CAVERS: Ray Bish, Jim Harrison, Jett Thomas, Andy Zerbe

DETAILS: After much searching we finally found our way through the breakdown passage and then onx to the big dome. Andy swears there is an easier way.

CAVE: Mammoth Cave

LOCATION: Mammoth Cave National Park, Kentucky

WHEN: July 14, 1987

CAVERS: Jim Harrison, John Meadows

DETAILS: Took the Historical Commercial Tour. Interesting cave. Bet there is more cave there than we saw on the tour.

VOICES FROM UNDERGROUND

CEDAR MOUNTAIN RIDGE WALK

Jimmy Harrison
NSS 10993

Date: August 30, 1987

Who; Jimmy Harrison, Ron Sparks, John Meadows

After looking over the Argo Quadrangle and talking to Ron Sparks about the geology of the area Ron, John and I decided to ~~x~~ take off on this Sunday afternoon and check out a good looking stream that was coming off the mountain. This area is between Trussville and Argo and is shown on the map as Cedar Mountain. The land owner was very nice but said there "was no caves" on the mountain. He did give us permission to look there if we wished. We wished.

After following the ~~stream~~ stream bed to the foot of the mountain we spread out along the southern flank but found nothing of real encouragement. Coming back to the stream Ron went on up the bed just a short distance before finding what looks like a wet weather resurgence. The damn hole is small but you can tell that quite a bit of water flows out of it during the rainy seasons. Also, there was some very cool air flowing out of it. This does suggest either a lot more cave than what we could see into, an upper entrance, or the combination of the two. Digging will be required

As darkness fell we left the mountain and except for running into some donkey shit with the car and almost hitting the donkey that left ~~me~~ it, we returned to ~~Birmingham~~ Birmingham uneventfully.

See Next Article ...

RETURN TO CEDAR MOUNTAIN

Jimmy Harrison
NSS 10993

Date: September 5, 1987

Who;;Jimmy Harrison, Ron Sparks, Jet Thomas, Andy Zerbe, John Meadows

This was the day we decided to return to the small blowing hole that we had found on Cedar Mountain the previous weekend. This time the land ~~owner~~ ~~was~~ owner was still friendly BUT would not give us permission to go onto his property. Returning as quickly as we had I guess scared him. I could just see him thinking: "Holy shit, here they are, back in less than a week. This could turn into a circus and I can tell you the owner of the land that the elephants will crap on. MINE." Like I say, very friendly, but we were not going onto his property that day. We did find that the entrance is not located on his property but about 10' passed his. WE SHALL RETURN.

At that point we decided to go farther up the mountain and do some ridge walking. Parking near Argo Cave we spread out into the poison ivy and snake infested mountainside. Results of the walk were a few groad holes, one snake, and two mountain goats.

At this point we had to, BY GOD, get into a cave. Three of us had never been to McCluney's Cave so we flipped a double headed coin and headed in that direction. I WAS IMPRESSED... a cave in Jefferson County that you COULD WALK INTO. It really is an interesting cave. The height of the ceilings alone is impressive. (Remember, I have just returned from years of Florida caving.) There is a lot of history to the cave. I have found articles refering to the cave as far back as the 1850's.

Ron told me that ~~the cave~~ some cavers have alledgely contracted histoplasmosis from the (Cough) cave, but I (Whizzzz, Ugh) haven't noticed (Cough, Aaagh, umh, cough) a n y thi ng (spit, Mmmmmmm, ooooooh, cough) f un n y sin c e.....

FIRELIGHTER'S & CEDAR GROVE RIVER CAVES Jet Thomas

This trip took place last week. I mean no offense to anyone in reporting it. Specifically, I mean no offense to Squirrel Warren.

The official August Grotto trip was to Firelighter's and Cedar Grove River caves. I wrote an article for the newsletter about a past trip to stir up interest. Then I invited as many grotto members by phone as I could reach. I got 2 yeses and 9 maybes. We'd see who showed up at the Jack's in Fultondale.

I was 5 minutes late to Jack's. Andy Zerbe was there. We ate and waited. No one showed up. Finally we drove to Dave Caudle's house. Dave and Edna greeted us and talked while Dave got his gear ready. His last carbide light had a leak between the water tank and the carbide can. He was going to be a flashlight caver. Edna scolded him because he didn't have any tennis shoes to cave in. He hated to shop so she bought his clothes, but she refused to buy his shoes, and he hadn't done it either. He was going caving in slick-bottom boots.

We stopped at the convenience store at the turnoff so Dave could buy batteries. They were selling a cute little pocket flashlight, with the yellow light part on a hinge. You could fold it up to turn on. It looked like it wouldn't turn itself on in a pack. We all liked it, but agreed it was too fancy for caving use. The hinge and electric contacts wouldn't take mud or rough treatment.

We drove to the cave and met Squirrel Warren coming the other way. He was going caving with us; we'd wait for him. After a while he came back. His truck could go all the way to the old cemetery, so we'd ride in back. He was deeply offended by my trip report, and demanded a retraction. Andy and Dave suggested he write his own version, but he insisted that I retract my mistaken comments instead. He said I had destroyed his reputation. We bounced down the logging road until it was blocked by a woodpile. Then while we walked to the cave, I got Squirrel to note the items that he wanted retracted.

Soon Squirrel found an entrance. We ducked into a nice entrance room with several leads. Squirrel led us into the lowest of them, a wide stream crawl. With careful duckwalking, I got through without getting wet above my calves and elbows, but Andy was too big to go that way and got pretty wet. The crawl ended in another entrance room. Again we ignored the upper leads and took the stream crawl. Squirrel called back "You aren't getting too cold are you, Jet? We don't want you getting hypothermia!" I didn't remember coming this way before. It was pretty, but totally unfamiliar. I did remember the entrance rooms, though. Dave had taken cub scout groups through. At each entrance they lost a few more parents.

Firelighters had some pretty formations, including a really nice active rimstone section. I didn't remember so many low ceilings. I recognized the climb-across where I got wet before, and did it easily. Andy asked about the side leads, and Squirrel said he'd checked every one of them and they all quit within 30', there was no point in looking at them. I found a side stream that joined the flow, but it was a low stream crawl so no one wanted to do it. We got into walking stream passage. I remembered it. I got to the place where the plunge pool should be and started to poke around for it, but Squirrel said we were nearly out of the cave and to come on. He said that plunge pool didn't exist. When I thought about it, it made sense that it shouldn't be there. The stream was at one level. Why should some of the water go down a 10' waterfall when the rest stayed in the stream? Dave said he remembered a plunge pool near the end of Firelighter's, too. He'd taken a bunch of cub scouts down it. That didn't sound like the one I remembered.

We followed the stream out of Firelighter's and about 30' outdoors, then into Cedar Grove River Cave. This was like Firelighter's, but bigger. Andy wanted to know why they were called 2 caves when they were clearly part of the same system and used to connect. There were more side passages, which Squirrel said didn't go. It was pretty. Dave remembered that on the other trip Les and Squirrel got into Cedar Grove first and found a water snake in the entrance. It went upstream, so we

it up. Squirrel kept telling me I'd ruined his reputation and I owed him a retraction. I promised to write another trip report which would include his corrections. After a bit we left the water and came out into the sunlight at a big sink. Andy wanted to try an upper lead which Squirrel said didn't go. Sure enough, within 80' there was a tight spot. A drapery was broken so someone could squeeze through, but it was even tighter further on at a formation choke. I didn't want to try it. It seemed to open up on the other side, though. We should check it any time we go back in case someone breaks the formation to get through. The upper lead had a real cute rat's nest too. It was well-built and soft, like a good bird's nest. I wouldn't mind sleeping in something like that if it was big enough.

Squirrel led us down to the stream level. This started out as a stoopwalk, but quickly turned into 8' ceiling and then 30'. There were formations at the ceiling, but at our level just water-worn rock. We quickly got to the big formation we had to crawl under. I'd remembered it as 1000' down the passage, but it was less than 200'. The water was down 6", so I stayed dry except for my right elbow and right knee. Dave complained about the spot and vowed to go over it on the way back. We started seeing stalactites at our level, but streamlined. We imagined how they grew while they were dry, and then got worn down when the cave flooded, and then grew some more. We walked a long way.

Squirrel led past the climbup. The passage got to swimming depth and eventually sumped. We walked on ledges on the sides, and chimneyed. Squirrel said the water was down and if he'd brought a wetsuit and some backup, he'd push it. He pushed it before and got 300' before he ran out of airspace. We came back and then climbed to the upper level. The climb looked trickier than I remembered, but not so high. Dave pointed out an easier, less elegant climb. I went that way; I could do it while Andy did the other climb. We followed Squirrel. People pointed out the 'inverse stalagmites', stalagmite shaped holes in the floor. There were some beautiful formations, sparkling crystal things. Dave got interested in the breeze and started checking each upper lead for a way out, but they were all choked with breakdown. He said when the Grotto was first formed this was a popular cave with them. They thought it might be one of the biggest in the state, because they hadn't seen really big ones. There were some raccoon tracks. We got into sandy walking passage, still with nice formations. No vandalism. At the end of the passage was an upper crawl that Squirrel said he'd helped dig, and a lower climbdown back to the water. Squirrel had pushed the stream crawl, but it didn't go. There was a nice breeze. We started back. I tried a parallel passage which headed back the way we came. Squirrel refused to tell me what it would do, but he'd obviously pushed it before. He said, "Come on, Jet, I want to see you push it. You're a supercaver, aren't you?" It turned into a breakdown maze. There were several places to get back to the main passage, the side leads I'd seen coming in. I passed up the tight breakdown leads that headed off sideways, staying with the biggest ones which always paralleled the main passage. Andy followed me a ways, but popped out a side way when it got tight and I didn't encourage him. Eventually I came out behind some formations. The breeze was coming from a slot I couldn't get through. So were the raccoon tracks. But coon tracks were everywhere. Dave said the raccoon was probably lost and pushing everything.

I changed carbide hurriedly because I was the only carbide caver there and the others were waiting for me. We left the upper section. At the stream, I pointed out other upper leads, which might go. The first one, across from our climb, was a very hard climb. Dave tried an easy climb elsewhere and then got in trouble traversing across. Maybe if he had a real light. Andy chimneyed up and slipped. His special caving suit didn't give him enough friction for a bad chimney. It helped him slip through tight crawls and kept him warm, though. I made a half-hearted try and moved on to another lead. Squirrel grinned but wouldn't say if he'd checked it. The next lead was even worse. It was pretty much unclimbable. Andy offered to let me stand on his shoulder. I climbed up on his knee and then

foot. There was an 8" crack that I could use opposing pressure on, slick and shallow and steep, and nothing else. I could imagine using it and friction to get up, but it would be hard to get down safely. It looked like there was a small room at the top. I didn't see a lead off it, but there could have been small ones. I started down. Squirrel pulled my leg. I panicked. I could either rupture myself or fall over backward. I shifted my weight to Andy, kicked at Squirrel, and stood up again on Andy's shoulder. "You going up or down, Jet?" I dropped down and slid off Andy the rest of the way. It felt strange. I had always been able to trust Squirrel caving. Now I didn't know if he was trying to kill me. He acted like he hadn't noticed anything wrong. I was sorry about the trip report. I really hadn't meant any harm, and now I distrusted a fellow caver.

The next lead looked promising but very hard. There were several places to climb up, all virgin. We each tried a different one. I could have done mine on arm strength but I was getting cold and tired and didn't really want to. Before Dave or Squirrel had gotten up theirs, Andy called to them from the top. He'd gone around the corner and found an easy way up, with some traffic. When we looked at it, it was obvious why our leads were all virgin. The upper passage paralleled the stream passage until the stream passage turned away. Then it continued as a crawl that Squirrel said got too small. There were 2 parallel passages over the stream. Dave braced himself to stop Squirrel's fall in case Squirrel slipped getting into the closer of them. He pointed out that he'd do it if Squirrel braced for him. Squirrel said it didn't go. No one tried the other one.

By this time we were all getting cold (except Dave) and no one wanted to push more upper leads. My light started failing; maybe I'd gotten the felt wet. I stood in the stream to fix it and then remembered how stupid I'd felt for doing that last time. I put the light away and got out a flashlight and dropped it into a pool of murky water. People discussed why it didn't float and how much easier it would be to find if I'd turned it on first. I found it and turned it on. Now the group had 2 flashlight cavers. While we stopped Squirrel got out a black and yellow flashlight just like the one in the store. He said he liked using it for a backup light because with the hinge he could point it wherever he wanted. We asked him if he'd had any trouble with it and he said he'd been using it for a long time.

Squirrel and Andy moved out fast; Dave was slower and I came last, shining my light at each upper lead to try to remember it. I fell behind. Then, approaching the entrance, I found Dave with his flashlight off. He told me to turn mine off. There were lots of little points of bluish light on the ceiling, like the ceiling was just a thin layer of breakdown with daylight shining through. I turned my light back on and saw solid rock. Dave found a light down at our level. It was a white worm about 1/2" long. It had a transparent tail which was the glowing part. The light was bluish, not the greenish-yellow of fireflies. We were impressed. We wondered what they ate and why they glowed. Milo Washington and Tom Chamblee had reported similar lights before in Gross-Skeleton. Now we were seeing them. Normally we'd have just barrelled on past and missed them. There's something to be said for flashlight caving. Entranced by the glowworms, we left our lights off and walked in the dark. The little lights showed turns in the passage but nothing else. Occasionally I had to step up onto something and slowed down while I felt for the step down on the other side. There wasn't any step down. The floor was just higher. It's fun to go caving in the dark when you have a safe place. When we got out we told Andy and Squirrel about the glow-worms. Squirrel said he didn't see them, but he'd seen them in 30 or 40 other caves. They were pretty common.

On the way back to the truck Squirrel repeated his demand that I publish a retraction. He said he knew a good lawyer who could help him sue me for libel. I again agreed. I was tired of it. I'd gotten the idea I wasn't taking it seriously enough, back when he was twisting my foot. I'd never meant any harm. Here it is: Squirrel has never been a flashlight caver. He says he's had an electric coon-hunting light on a hardhat since he was 15. I was mistaken. I've been a

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confused with someone else. Squirrel denies there's a place in Firelighter's he declined to climb, and I didn't find it again. Firelighter's was not my first cave with him, Hamilton Mountain Spring Cave was. Dave confirmed this. Incidentally, I believe that Squirrel has a reputation that couldn't be damaged by a couple of trip reports. Squirrel, please accept my apology. My memory was faulty.

I saw Les Bury, who was on the first trip but not the second. He vividly remembered the water snake in the entrance. Also, he remembered the first sump in Cedar Grove. "Yes, we were chimneying out over that deep water, and then Squirrel slipped. He went right down all the way under water, and the air was coming floop floop out of his clothes, and I reached down and yanked his collar and pulled him back up. The water was just pouring out of him..." I'd forgotten it completely.

Cedar Grove River is a nice summer cave. It's pretty, most of it's easy, and there are some hard climbs that probably haven't been done. I'm going back, maybe in the hot days of September. But this is my last trip report on it.

CRYSTAL CAVERNS, Jefferson County, Alabama

by Jimmy L. Harrison, NSS 10993

In Sketches of Alabama by Mary Gordon Duffee, during the latter part of the 1800's she refers to the cave we know as Crystal Caverns or McCluney Cave:

"Upon Friel's land was a cavern of great extent and beauty, which, if explored and measured should be a source of pleasure and information to the people of Birmingham."

This same cave was described as a "newly discovered cave" in the Jones Valley Times, November 10, 1854. Called Cedar Mountain Cave, it was located twenty miles above Elyton, one mile west of the Springville Road, 100 yards above the base of Cedar Mountain. The inside of the cave was described as "various windings and apartments under a solid arch of limestone 100 to 200 feet above."

GADSDEN TO CHATTANOOGA UNDERGROUND?

by Jimmy L. Harrison, NSS 10993

In the Birmingham News published in 1930 it was reported that "investigations by engineers indicate that Lookout Mountain is a sort of peanut-shaped mound covering a system of caverns extending from one end to the other. It is the belief of the engineers that eventually some sort of a motorized transportation will be put into operation to convey passengers from one end of the mountain to the other, 1500 feet below the surface."

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