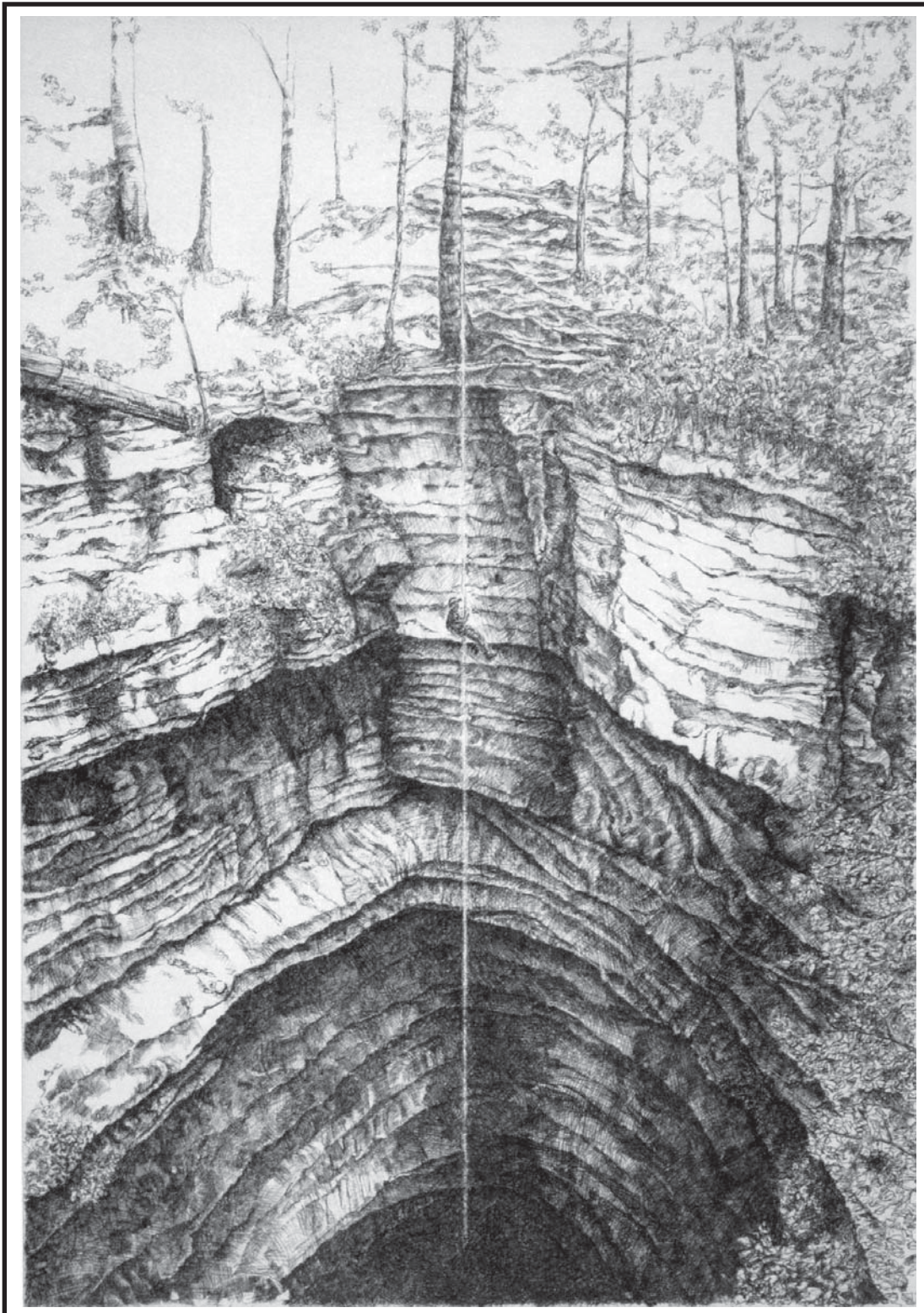


ILLUMINATIONS

The Publication of the NSS Arts & Letters Section

Issue No.2

January, 1999



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HEY, DUPE! YOU FORGOT TO SAY "OFF-ROPE"!!

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Front cover

"The Thin Line" by Ken Storey.
*This is a pen and ink drawing of
NeverSink Pit in northeastern Alabama.
This pit was bought by the Southeastern
Cave Conservancy and is considered a
classic TAG pit.*

Inside cover

"Cartoon by Jerry Wallace"

Back cover

by Linda Heslop

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Hello All,

It's 1999 already and the Section is one year old! Thanks to all who participated in the Section elections. Paul Steward was elected to Chairman, John Tudek was elected to Vice-chairman / Treasurer, and we have our first elected Secretary, Marian McConnell. Watch for Marian's first cave fiction novel Emergence to be released this year, published by Cave Books. Thanks for all the suggestions everyone wrote-in during election. We got a lot of good ideas. I hope to continually improve the Section and our publication. Keep the suggestions coming.

The Section now has two committees. The Section Convention Committee, and the SpeleoArt Committee. The Chairman for the Convention Committee is Tonya Smothers. We would like to have a Section meeting at Convention this year. Maybe have a reading of some poetry or short stories and also show off some of our artists work. If you would like to help out or have any ideas please contact Tonya. Tonya has also volunteered to get a Section web page up and running. This will be a great place to show Section art work and writing. (Tonya Smothers—205-785-2287, tsmothers@path.uab.edu)

Lois Lyles is the Chairman for SpeleoArt 99. This is an enormous job. Contact Lois for more information or if you would like to help her out. See the SpeleoArt story in this issue. (Lois Lyles—505-286-4059, lois@rt66.com)

I'm already starting on the next Illuminations, but I need more art work. We will use half tones for those pictures which require it. Deadline for the next issue will be July 31. Keep those pens and pencils moving.

Stay Dirty,
Paul Steward

La Cueva del Oro! (The Cave of gold!)

by Sam Bono

Staring at the small dark opening in the shallow depression in the middle of New Mexico's *llano estacado* (staked plains) I had to remind myself that I really do enjoy caving. Why else would a relatively sane person, like myself, leave the sunshine and bright blue skies of a lovely summer morning to crawl into a muddy dank gypsum cave that has a year round temperature of about fifty-two degrees and almost 100% humidity. Not to mention blood sucking ticks and all that washed in sheep crap. Hey, but you never know when you will find that Spanish gold that my non-caving friends are always suggesting that I go caving for. Yeah right. The early Spanish settlers in New Mexico were so poor, they were lucky to have two copper coins to rub together besides gold or silver ones. Well at least this particular cave is one of my favorites. At over 11,000 feet and going, I find Scrooge Cave with its complicated series of cross-parallel maze passages fun and challenging.

So at this mornings GypKap meeting I volunteered to lead one of three survey teams going into Scrooge. As always we were reminded that we had to survey as we explored and that "scooping" was not allowed. So, what else is new?

After the usual running around making sure we had all our gear we jumped into my beat up vintage Toyota 4 X 4. Jackie joined me up front, while Deb and Liz crawled into the back under the camper shell. The drive over to Scrooge went quickly since we didn't have to dodge too many cows or stop to open and close a lot of gates.

Reaching the cave we parked off the road within a hundred feet of the entrance. Oh! That's another thing I like about Scrooge and most gypsum caves is that you can park right next to the entrance. Not like some of New Mexico's more famous limestone caves in the Guads near Carlsbad, where you may hike for miles (usually uphill) and if you're really lucky you might find the cave entrance.

We quickly geared-up and hiked over to the sink. Of course it's not recommended that you just dive into Scrooge, or for that matter most other West-

ern caves. Common sense and high medical costs requires one to first probe the entrance for rattlers and other resident critters. So after tossing in a few small rocks and in general making a good amount of noise to hopefully frighten away any snakes or whatever we entered the good old bowels of the earth.

With Liz in the lead we carefully climbed down the short entrance drop to main passage. Walking down the wet and muddy passage while being careful not to step on any unwary salamanders, we soon we reached one of

Scrooge's more typical dry and dusty side passages. Oh, how I just love crawling around in dried up sheep turds!

The goal for today as discussed in this mornings business meeting is to continue the L- survey. After getting lost only a few times we arrive at the last L-survey station, and go to work. I was handling the compass and inclinometer, Deb the measuring tape, Liz sketching and taking notes, and my good friend Jackie setting stations and exploring ahead.

Lucky for us, today it's mostly walking passage making the surveying quick and relatively painless. So in a few hours, that included lunch, we manage to map over 800 feet. About 3:00 pm or so, I unanimously decide it's time to pack away the survey gear and do some good ol' All-American scooping. What rules? With Deb in the lead we leave behind our last survey station chanting "scoop, scoop, scoop," and enter *cueva incognitus*. Within minutes size five Deb disappears down a small hole followed by the only slightly larger Liz, while Jackie and I continue down the passage. Reaching one of Scrooge's famous you can go left, right, or you can go straight ahead intersections, Jackie heads right, while I turn left. After forty feet or so my passage turns into a classic round gypsum sewer tube and starts heading up. The approximately four foot diameter tube soon ends in a good sized upper-level room. From past experience in Scrooge I know that these rooms usually go nowhere, but I decide to check it out anyway before exiting and leaving it for some future survey team.

On the far side of the room is a large breakdown pile. Maybe a collapsed entrance? As I move closer I notice a number of bones in and around the pile, confirming my suspicion that the room may be an old entrance. Though some of the bones in the

breakdown look way to big to be the remains of the usual cow or sheep, maybe a large horse?

My light reflects off something shiny near the edge of the breakdown. Always curious, and having seen old cans and bottles in these collapsed entrance rooms before, I move closer for a better look. Wow! Laying on its side on the floor is one of those funky high ridged helmets that the Spanish conquistadors always wear in the movies, except this one looks awfully real! The dusty and dented helmet even has the remains of its leather chin strap still attached and a name etched on an inside edge of the helmet, E-s-q-u-i-b-e-l. Great! I have always wanted to find some neat artifact in a cave. Now where did those fun-loving conquistadors leave all that gold? Making a point not to disturb the battered helmet (a job for the GypKap Bio-Arc Team), I continue circling the room.

A small crack in the wall twenty feet or so behind the helmet catches my attention. The opening is no more than a few feet high, and about as wide. Quickly I crawl into it. The small passage goes straight for about eight feet and then left before ending in a little flat floored room. The room is quite ordinary, except for the four small heavily built wooden chests sitting in its center!

Padre Castillo watched closely as the four sturdy chests containing Mission Santa Cruz's gold and silver were loaded onto the large horses. Castillo was well aware that the horses' precious cargo represented almost eighty years of profits from the mission's lucrative salt trade with old Mexico, and that such valuable church property must be protected at all costs. The Padre also realized that the year of our Lord 1680 had surely gone from bad to worse.

First the dry winter and spring had destroyed any chances of a decent crop, no matter how hard the lazy Indians were beaten. Then in early summer a large part of last season's bountiful harvest was stolen by pagan Apaches. Now on August 10, weeks before the fall harvest, the normally docile Pueblos had risen up in a bloody revolt against their Spanish benefactors and were even now approaching the holy mission by way of the Camino Real.

Blocked from escaping west to the Rio Grande and the King's Road by the rampaging Indians, Padre Castle decided to slip away east into the vastness of the llano estacado, and then south to El Paso del

Norte and hopefully safety. The good Padre realized of course, that in the desolate estacado, one risked becoming lost, dying of thirst, or being murdered by the Apaches. Still, it was the only alternative to facing the wrath of the rapidly approaching Pueblo Indians, who were bent on vengeance for years of repressive Church rule in New Mexico.

After the mission's precious gold chalices and crosses, and its hoard of gold and silver coins (the richest in all of New Mexico!), were loaded onto the horses. Padre Castillo and the two other Franciscan priests, accompanied by a few loyal native servants and guarded by six of Governor Otermin's surviving soldiers quickly disappeared east into the llano, as the flames of the burning mission competed with the setting sun.

Trapped, but determined not to let the Mission's sacred gold fall into the hands of the surrounding heathens, Padre Castillo ordered Sergeant Esquibel to drag the four heavy chests deeper into the cave. The old soldier was the only other survivor of the group that had escaped Mission Santa Cruz less than a week ago. While hardly much less a heathen than the Apaches who had them trapped in the cave, it was only the old veterans' excellent marksmanship that had kept the savages at bay during the long day. But, the growing shadows cast by the dying sun reminded the Padre that night would soon fall over these God-forsaken plains, and Esquibel's muskets would be of little use in the darkness.

Resolved to their fate, the Padre placed their last powder keg in the entrance of the cave, and lit the makeshift fuse. Quickly stepping around the keg and the body of Esquibel's arrow-ridden horse, the good Padre and the old soldier, armed only with cross and sword charged into the advancing darkness toward the Apaches.

Oh, oh, here comes another interruption to my pleasant dreams of Spanish gold. After helping staff the grotto booth during the Organ Mountain Days for the last three years in a row now, I can usually spot the guys that walk up, smile, and ask, "Do you go spelunking, looking for Spanish treasure?" Smiling back, I always tell them that if I do, I obviously haven't found any yet, otherwise why was a lovely lady like myself still living in Cruces? But then again sometimes I'm wrong, and all they want is a date.

Damn, it's hot! Well only another hour or so of answering questions about caving, then I can jump into my shiny new red Land Cruiser (with all the expensive options, including leather), crank the AC up to sub-Arctic levels and cruise on home in cool comfort.

Incident at Dog Pit

A Rescue Report

by Mark Stover

Where: The Alabama woods

When: August, 1998

Who: Mark Stover & dog

It's Tuesday morning at Convention and we're out walking the Alabama woods, looking for Gourdneck Cave, which was one of the plums from the '89' Convention and worth a repeat visit. As we're looking around I happen to find a hole in the ground, about three feet across and eight feet deep. Much to my surprise there's a beagle at the bottom of the hole, standing on a little mound of dirt, with eyes big as saucers and whimpering to break your heart.

He doesn't look skinny so he probably hasn't been down there too long and the pit doesn't seem to go anywhere else, so he probably hasn't made a solo trip from Gourdneck's main entrance. I figure he just fell in the hole. Done the same thing once or twice myself, as a matter of fact. So I climb down into the pit, which, as I said, is only about eight feet deep, and although it has dirt walls and an unpleasant dog odor, it bells out nicely into a small room. Kind of like a Cagle's Chasm for Barbie Dolls.

Anyway, the dog now smells freedom for the first time in who knows how long and starts bouncing around the bottom of the pit like a cross-eyed kangaroo. The room is small and the situation could turn dangerous so I take up a defensive position at the top of the little mound of dirt and crouch down to wait until the beagle's momentum carries him within striking distance. He's moving left and he's moving right in a fit of excited frog hopping, as if my arrival needs to be properly celebrated before we can do anything else. When he gets within range, I grab him around the belly and take two greedy

swipes of dog slobber right across the face. He's wiggling in my arms like a fish on a riverbank, but I have him in a hammer lock hold that I picked up from a professional wrestler in an airport cocktail lounge, and he's not getting away.

I lift the beagle over my head and try to pass him to Andrew Foord, who's up at the surface and reaching down into the pit. But it's hard to stay steady on the little mound of dirt and the next thing I know the dog's tail is whacking me in the face and his front paws are churning up the edge of the pit like a rototiller loose in a snow bank and the daylight above me is lost in a shower of dirt and sticks and spiders and rocks and so I shut my eyes and push as hard as I can.

Somehow there in the darkness, the business end of the dog seems to swell to the size of Cleveland and I'm losing ground fast. The little mound of dirt is pancaking beneath me and so I heave up desperately as hard as I can in a kind of shot putting action that I remember from high school gym class and then wham! My thumb jams right up into the worst possible place.

I'm not too sure what happened next. Maybe the dog barked, maybe not. Maybe I barked. Who knows? It was one of those moments when time expands in order to cause you the most anxiety possible. My thumb told my brain where it was, but the brain wouldn't accept the message. The brain asked the other fingers, one by one, for independent confirmations. They all came back with basically the same story: that the thumb was in a bad place and they recommended that the brain tell the arm to extract the thumb. The brain coughed and stumbled and blinked once or twice before giving the order, and then the arm responded with a snap like an industrial rubber band. All of this couldn't have taken more than a second or two, but it seems like I spent a whole year that day standing at the bottom of an Alabama pit with a beagle for a finger puppet.

Well, the next thing I know, Andrew has the beagle up at the surface and he's saying things like "Nice puppy!" and "Good doggy!" and I'm standing at the bottom in stunned disbelief. I've had my fingers in lots of interesting places over the years, but this was new territory. A first descent, so to speak. Oh well. What are the chances of finding a dog in a pit in the middle of nowhere? A million to

one? And then sticking your thumb up the dog's butt? The odds were too staggering to contemplate, so I stopped trying. I climbed up out of the pit and explained what happened. Andrew shook his head and then said, "I wouldn't have told anybody about that."

In Contact

by Ellis

There's an inevitability when going in that more than just the feet will get in contact with the rock. The tickled surface of abraded grains leaches forward to a moleculed wetness sparkling artificially in a dissecting beam. The space leans faceted with jagged ribs and mantel shelves stripe the walls. Hands jerk out to stabilize limp balance, for the finger to press unknowingly soiled structures of solid matter. Now it's the turn of knees to roll the pebbles and reshape the floor. Temporary dints pop away minor discomfort, even in pads. Scarce sound from the rub, the worn soled boot, the wearing elbow as a helmet thud is taken in surprise by a dazed interloper. A tad too hasty a rise! Whereas forearms on walls, calves on the ledges, torsos on the slopes do, momentarily, provide the security of a cold hard medium. Sometimes it's good to be in total contact.

Middle Town

by Marian McConnell

(This song won a Merit Award in the Cave Ballad Salon at the '98' NSS Convention)

The people of Middletown took a good look around
"Our city's as tidy and clean as can be
But the water tastes strange, I'd guess we'd better
change
We won't hide our trash in the sinkholes and
streams"

'Cause underneath Middletown a river flows
underground
A wondrous place of caverns and caves
It took a little time but once they drew the line
The people cleaned up the mess they'd made

The river flows in, the river flows out
What happens in the middle is what comes out
The river flows in, the river flows out
What happens in the middle is what comes out

North of Middletown a city called Newtown
Flourished and grew, so did their trash every day
They said it'd be a pity to keep it in their city
So they used the river to carry it away

Well the people of Middletown all began to wear a
frown
"Think about the rest of us living downstream
We're all in this together, you can do better
We'll teach you how to keep the river clean"

Chorus:
You can solve the riddle, it's environmental
What happens in the middle is what comes out

Bridge:
We are all connected, everyone's affected
Trash or treasure, it all flows through
Takers or givers, we're just like the river
What will you do when it comes to you?

Chorus:

Top Ten Signs You're a Lard Ass Caver

by Lou Simpson

10. You order the meat-lover's special at Pizza Hut and just eat the toppings.
9. When you go caving, the rescue squad goes on alert.
8. The rescue squad nicknamed their "jaws of life" after you.
7. You think "Thin Man's Misery" is thin.
6. If you can't drive to it, a cave is too far away.
5. When you attempt to go through a low air space bathtub, it sumps.
4. Other cavers stand next to you for shade.
3. You are always the only person in your two-person raft.
2. People won't let you climb on their rope.
1. When there's nothing else to rig to, the group ties their rope to your body.

Cave Searching

by Debora I. Runyon

Humps and hills and hummocks
Punch up through grass that's dead.
As dreams and schemes and imaginings
race madly in my head—
to dance perchance to an entrance
of a cave in a limestone bed.

Tiny buttons of rainbow cactus
shyly show the way,
while raucous ravens overhead
officially join the fray . . .

Brachiopods and Gastropods
Decorate with flair,
The massive limestone ledges
I navigate with care.

Tall, small pinyons
With finger-like needles beckon.
Up dry stream bed, down deep ravine
To a sink, a collapse, worth checkin.'

The Puckish January breeze
slyly whispers, promises, and teases
leading me into a delightful quest.
Wandering on, I won't stop to rest.
Onward! I travel to find the virgin—
My heart is strong, high hopes are yearnin.'

Let the day be long in the warm sunshine
As the distant trail ascends,
Through Canelo Hills, and a treasure, found—
Secret place, secret cave to descend.

First One Down

by Martha Hendrix

I drift down the slender thread of nylon
Deeper into the darkness below.
Looking up I see the fading headlamps
As further and further down I go.

I look deep into the darkness and see
The thin rope which is guiding my way.
As I descend, I see a waterfall and
I feel on my face the gentle spray.

My lamp's silver beam reflects in a pool.
Slowing down, I take time to look around.
I see the waterfall pounding the rocks.
It echoes and makes an awesome sound.

Too soon it is over. I must touch down.
I savor the sounds and the solitude.
Reality calls. My friends are waiting.
Too long a delay might be considered rude.

I must move on, and give the signal.
Removing my rack and walking away,
I call, "Off Rope," and sit back to wait.
Faintly I can hear them answer "Okay."
"On Rope!" "Okay!" A light descending.
My time alone will soon be ending.



"Tawney's: The Moon Room"
Marion

THE FROSTED CAVER

by Ellis

I have been a frosted caver
on two cracking night-dark walks
off the high snowed hills.

The first,
On exit I was struck by the external
cutting wind-torn array
of icy motes in the drifted dene.
Trapped moisture from an internal
flowing temperate streamway
soon glazed onto the neoprene.

Arms half-bent into an arthritic lock
padded knees in desperate straits.
A tackle bag hard with rigid rope.
My body in rigorous core hock
to increasing icicled weights
as I stumbled down the slope.

Kettles and pans of heated water
poured over the suited surface
thawed flexibly in pretense
to roll inside outside slaughter
as only my toes recovered some sense.

The second.
In minus ten and soft metre snow;
crystalline sparklers in a sharp black sky.
Clad in TSA, wellies and slipping kneepads
down the darkening footsteps I go.
Shrinking flakes crackle in a stilling sigh
to regenerate the climatic fads.

The outer layer stiff with frost,
neoprene pads enameled in ice
with coated belay belt as a corset strap.
The whitened wellies off were tossed
and solid knee rings did just suffice
to hold upright the hollow chap.

Crystal Clear

by Debora I. Runyon

I.

“Hey, Dave. The caving trip to Crystal Cave still on for tomorrow? I’ve been out of town the last few days and haven’t talked with anyone about it.” Brent inquired after the Friday night’s caving club meeting had adjourned and the members had gathered for pizza and drinks at Pizza Hut.

“Yep. It looks like everything is a go. Tom reserved the key by phone and the Ranger Station O.K.’d us to head in tomorrow. I guess we’ll meet at the MacDonald’s at the corner of Craycroft and Speedway around 5:00 a.m. It’ll take us at least three hours to drive to the Chiricahua Mountains. The key will be waiting in the mailbox next to the turn off,” Dave answered as he stuffed a large piece of pepperoni pizza into his mouth. Little bits of red sauce clung to his mustache and dangled like plump red cherry tomatoes.

“Cool,” Chris interjected, catching most of Dave’s instructions, as he and C.J. joined their friends at the long row of tables that the thoughtful employees of the restaurant had pushed together to accommodate the twenty-five rowdy cavers.

Voices rose and fell like twisting winds whistling through solution tubes in limestone. Topics about caves and caving dominated the conversations. Three old-timers discussed the latest climbing gear while a group down the table argued the reasons why a failed cave rescue attempt in Fantastic Pit occurred. New-comers listened and hoped to learn something. Some folks just sat back and watched, trying to catch wind of a new cave or a secret dig. Caving politics was as complicated as any Washington DC cover-up / conference could ever hope to be.

The seven friends at one end of the table discussed their upcoming trip to Chiricahua Crystal Cave on the east side of Arizona they’d planned for the next day.

“We finally got the permit from Joe Snyder yesterday. The U.S. Forest Service over there in Douglas can sure be slow, sometimes. I double checked and we’re all clear of the necessary paperwork. I guess Chawnigan Carbide can’t make this trip. He

told me he's visiting his sister in Phoenix this weekend. Does anyone know if anybody else wanted to go on this trip?" Tom asked.

The seven people looked back and forth, heads swiveling and shoulders shrugging like pop-up figures in a preschooler's cloth book. Nobody could think of anyone else they wanted to invite.

"I think the seven of us will make a great team and have a super trip," Lisa enthused as she sipped her Coke and smiled around at the others.

"I think so, too," C.J. chimed in. "We'll have the best time. But, speaking of time . . . I don't want to be a party-pooper," she apologized as she glanced at the huge overhead clock.

"I know. I know," Diane moaned, as she too, stared at the timepiece situated over the doorway leading to the restrooms. "We need to call it a night. We have to get up really early tomorrow. We need the rest."

But Dave, always the pulse that drove the group, interrupted his long swig of beer, "Now Diane. You know my favorite saying . . ."

Everyone turned to Dave and blurted out in chorus, "Yes, Dave. You can rest when you're dead!"

Pleased they'd listened to his oft repeated lecture, the group's leader shook his head and raised his arm to order one more round of pizza and beer.

II.

The next day, which was actually later that same morning, spilled ahead of the explorers like an unbound roll of brightly colored Christmas ribbon. Expectations soared as the sun sparkled like a massive diamond nudging its way over the Chiricahua Mountains. The Caribbean-blue sky offered limitless expanses as three trucks twisted and twirled like dervishes in their meanderings up and down the rutted tracks towards Crystal Cave.

Once the key was secured, the seven cavers arrived to park vehicles, load packs, change gear and clothes. They followed the streambed which cut across the face of the hillside like an old healed scar. The line of people scurried like an army of serious ants following a trail of picnic leftovers.

They hiked for fifteen minutes through bedrock walls of limestone and igneous rock. The path led the adventurers to the impressive entrance of Crystal Cave.

"You know, they used to mine in this area," Dave began as he recited a brief history of the area where Crystal Cave had been discovered. As Dave lectured, Tom unlocked the gate. He indicated that the key would be left under a rock near the entrance. The gate was closed and they started their journey. The traveling band reflected on the years of mining that had chewed into the cave. Rockhounds had managed to make off with treasures formed by pressure, heat, and water. A massive fault line had shifted, creating numerous rooms with miles of passage where crystals glittered on walls, ceilings, and floors. The insides of Crystal Cave resembled a strange diamond-world, where large and tiny crystals winked. Mice eyes of jewels, caught in the parade of caver's headlamps, shifted with the passage of feet. Limousine-sized gems offered massive crystals to be admired. The team continued to crawl, climb, and wriggle through the inner maze of Crystal Cave's gut. They peeked into several rooms along the main passage, marveling at the splendid display. Time had stopped in the minds of the explorers as they carefully traversed along undefined pathways.

III.

"Lunch stop," Dave announced after a few hours of exploration. "We'll eat in the Crystal Ballroom."

"I am having so much fun! I'm glad you guys let me come along," Brent grunted as he chimneyed up the final section of tight climb to the relatively flat surface of the Crystal Ballroom floor. He was the last person to navigate the twenty foot chute.

"Yeah. No problem," Chris answered as he belayed Brent carefully up the semi-dangerous climb. "We like to teach new cavers the safe way of caving vertically with gear and rope. You're doing great!"

The seven friends sat in a lopsided circle and ate lunch over opened plastic bags. They were careful not to drop any crumbs onto the floor of the cave. The light from their headlamps sliced paths through the ebony darkness like a sharp paring knife shaving through the skin of an orange.

Miniature wintry scenes of snow-like sparkling stone sprang to life wherever lamplight illuminated the nearby walls. The cavers were surrounded in a great ice-cube jewel. The temperature belied the impression of coldness as a few people removed outer sweatshirts and fanned perspiring faces. Even though they'd walked many meters, they were only about a half hour's walk to the cave's entrance.

“Hey, Dave! Would you look at that?” Tom’s voice suddenly erupted from behind a large piece of breakdown.

Wandering over in the direction of Tom’s call, stuffing a tortilla filled with string cheese and jerky into his mouth, Dave stopped to stare at the opening Tom had discovered.

“I don’t remember ever seeing that hole there, before.”

“You’re right, Dude. We’ve been in this room more than a dozen times. That crevice is definitely new!” Dave’s voice rose in excitement as he crouched near the modest pit and peered into it with interest.

“I think we need to explore,” C.J. immediately stated as she hurried over to the puzzling abyss.

“It’s a free-fall drop,” Diane analyzed, “thank goodness Dave hauled that hundred foot of rope.”

The other six cavers had razzed Dave for wanting to drag the extra rope into the cave that morning. No one had had any idea that the extra baggage would come in handy.

“O.K. We can assemble descending and ascending gear if anybody brought some. Let’s tie off to that breakdown. Do you see a back-up safety?”

As the crew set about, busily tying off and securing a stable safety, Dave looked around the group. He wanted desperately to drop the pit first, but he felt obligated to offer the opportunity to the team. He’d been caving much longer than any other, except for Tom, and vested an ownership in the cave. He wanted to explore the virgin area first.

“Well, who wants to go?” he asked.

“Dave, man, you can go. You’re the trip leader,” Tom immediately responded with an encouraging shake of his head.

The others quickly agreed. The rope was ready. A huge figure eight was tied in the end for protection, then the rope was tossed into the blackness. Dave secured his caving gear to rappel and climb. He stepped up to the yawning pit with a foolish grin cracking his face into two happy halves.

“Be careful, Babe,” Lisa admonished as she stepped forward to give her husband a hug, “we want you back in one piece.”

Tom reached out to punch his friend in the arm. “Come back to us, Dude. Remember, you still owe me that six pack of Samuel Adams,” he joked.

IV.

Less than a half hour later, all seven cavers had slid like spiders on webs down the rope to land successfully in an undiscovered, unmapped region of Crystal Cave. The atmosphere crowded thickly against the cavers, immersing them, so they felt like they were surrounded by murky water; it was the utter blackness of the walls that projected the image Dave informed them while they removed and restored gear.

Crystals of blue-black hues thrust from the walls, imitating drawn daggers with sharp points glinting menacingly. The darkness seemed to wait, half-crouching like a panther on the hunt. Voices whispered where the curious wind found entrance into the somber nether region.

“I don’t like this place,” C.J. whispered to Chris as the group pulled together to plan the next stage of exploration.

“Don’t worry; we’ll stay close together,” he promised as he squeezed her shoulder in reassurance. She smiled back.

“Two teams split up,” Dave began, “Tom, Diane, and Brent take the left fork. Lisa, Chris, C.J. and I will go to the right. Let’s meet back here in a half hour. Tom, do you have flagging for trail marking?”

“Yeah, Dave. I’ve got blue flagging material left over from our last survey trip into Cave of the Bells. Let’s go.”

When the cavers split up to explore the new section, seventy feet under the old Crystal’s floor, all participants knew the importance of marking a new trail in an unexplored and unsurveyed section of a cave. They feared impacting the cave. Conservation and safety outweighed random exploration by the members in the group. They were very careful and methodical as the two groups set out to push the cave.

V.

“Tom, it’s been over an hour since we returned to our designated meeting place. Where are those guys?”

“Hey, you know Dave. He’s always late. They probably found something really cool and just lost track of the time.”

“But we said to be here at a certain time.”

“Don’t worry.”

"I don't think we should sit here any longer. I think we'd better go look for them," Brent interrupted. He was tired of listening to them argue about waiting or searching for their friends. He was a man of action and had enough of sitting.

"I agree," Diane promptly inserted, standing abruptly. The two cavers looked expectantly at Tom.

"Sure, whatever you guys want," Tom reluctantly gave in. He wanted to stick with the original plan, but he was beginning to get worried.

VI.

"Dave! Dave?" Lisa screamed her husband's name again, her eyes frantically searching the ragged hole into which he'd fallen. "Why don't you answer me? Oh, please God, let him be all right!"

"C.J.? Are you O.K.? Did you get hurt?" Chris called loudly after hearing her muffled yell.

She had crawled into a tight solution tube in an effort to discover where it led. Chris had watched the bottom of her boots disappear as the sharp-pinching mouth of the tube seemed to swallow the brave explorer . . .

The team of four had further divided into teams of two at a T-section further down in the passage. Lisa and Dave had turned to the right where a massive black crystal clung overhead. Dave had immediately been drawn to study the bizarre formation while Chris and C.J. had waved and continued following the passage.

While examining the sticky substance that had oozed from the strange crystal and crawled down the wall underneath, Dave had removed his glove to grasp hold of the mass; he suddenly cried out, shook his hand violently to discharge the searing goo, and inadvertently stumbled. Clawing frantically at the air for purchase, he'd plunged backwards into a deep crevice. Sudden silence buzzed the air like an angry wasp.

"Dave, Dave," Lisa's voice was hoarse from the constant strain of screaming out the name. She lay stretched out on her stomach, staring into the blackness where Dave had fallen. Concentrating with all of her will to catch any movement or whisper from her husband, Lisa didn't notice the tarlike substance that slowly flowed from the crystal on the wall. Like a malignant growth, it inched towards her prone form.

"C.J.!" Chris hollered for the tenth time, "I'm coming in after you!"

Twisting and writhing like a contorted bath towel caught in a washing machine wringer, ripping and tearing skin and clothing, Chris fought his way through the shark-tooth tunnel. Up ahead, he could make out C.J.'s form where the opening widened enough to rise to hands and knee; why was she just lying there, staring at him?

"C.J.? Hey, what's going on? Why didn't you . . ."

Suddenly Chris realized he could see only part of C.J.. Her body had been severed at the waist. Only her upper torso remained. Her hands were clutching the cave floor, fingernails imbedded in the rough stone where she'd tried to drag herself away from the danger before her death.

"Oh no-o-o-o!" Chris moaned as he slowly crept forward on his hands and knees in the widening passage.

Without warning, a low grating snarl rumbled directly in front of Chris. Looking wildly around for an escape, the man's brain barely registered a gigantic dazzling form hurtling forward like a shooting star illuminated brilliantly in his headlamp and flashing in a multitude of facets. Razor sharp teeth sparkled as jaws busily crushed his awkwardly scrambling body.

"No!" Chris shrieked once before the entity snapped into his body, cracking his bones like a handful of dry spaghetti.

Soon the crystal creature left the dead cavers to join its family in search of more human prey.

"Dave?" Lisa wheezed in a dull voice as she lay curled next to the wickedly laughing hole where the mouth seemed to voice silent mirth at her misery. She didn't move of her own volition, but her body trembled regularly in confusion and cold. Her shivering went unnoticed.

Stealthily the crystal that had caused Dave's death had disengaged from the ceiling and slipped down the tarlike rope it had spun across the ceiling and cavern wall.

The grieving woman's legs were unexpectedly jerked backwards and her body raked across the jagged limestone. Piercing pain gripped Lisa in a vice as she spun to see half of her body captured in solid stone. The horrendous jaws of rock opened and closed, opened and closed, devouring the dead caver.

VII.

“They couldn’t have just disappeared into solid rock,” Diane reasoned in answer to Brent’s frustrated speculation after they’d found both Dave’s and Lisa’s packs but no people.

“But how can four people just vanish?”

“I don’t know.”

“They wouldn’t just leave their stuff like this. They’re good cavers and know better than to desert their packs and their friends.”

“Listen! Did you hear something?” Tom cautioned. “Hey, Dave! Over here! Lisa! Chris and C.J.! Where are you guys?”

The three paused in their search to listen. They had found Chris and Lisa’s backpacks and returned to where they’d found Dave and Lisa’s things. The whole thing was weird.

They’d prepared for a rescue, but no injured bodies had reclined anywhere. Nothing.

“Hear it?” Tom questioned again.

“Yes! I heard something. Kind of like a dragging noise. How strange,” Diane paused to listen intently.

The rumbling noise approached from two directions; in front and behind the three cavers. Like ebony images from a nightmare, two forms landed into view.

“What . . . are . . . they?” whispered Diane when the threatening creatures halted, gnashing teeth-like crystals in hungry mouths.

“I don’t know, but they appear to be formed from Fluorite; that’s the black crystal. I think I know what happened to C.J. and Lisa. Isn’t that plaid cloth caught on the side of the thing C.J.’s shirt? And I think I see Lisa’s boot caught on the other one.”

All three adventurers stared in horror as the imagined how their friends must have died. Revulsion caused Trent to turn. He suddenly swooped down, gathered a handful of debris, and flung it wildly at the nearest rock-creature, screaming in anger and fright as he ran at the them.

The creatures moved swiftly forward like a matched pair of boulder-sized bowling balls on the rampage. Trent didn’t have time to react; he was instantly crushed between the two monsters.

“Run, Diane, run!” screamed Tom as he sprinted down the passage towards the rope and safety,

looking back to see the body of Trent disappearing from head to feet between the feeding maws.

“I’m way ahead of you,” his girlfriend yelled back over her shoulder as her disappearing form turned at the tee junction and sped ahead to the climb.

The two cavers threw on their gear and began tandem climbing as the thundering crystal creatures crashed into view. Hurrying with the speed born of raw fear, the two scaled the rope. Stray pieces of deadly sharp crystal rocketed upward like shrapnel. Tiny pieces punctured Tom and Diane’s arms and legs, but luckily, none found their marks on exposed faces or vulnerable necks. The climbers grimly reached the top in record speed surrounded by echoing roars reverberating from the chasm far below; they quickly withdrew the rope.

“Let’s get out of here,” Tom pleaded as he hugged Diane tightly; I don’t think anyone is still down there.”

“I totally agree,” Diane answered as the two began to charge along the long trail to the entrance.

VIII.

“Where did you ever find dynamite?” Diane gasped into the phone when Tom called the next day with a plan to destroy the rocks and Crystal Cave.

Neither caver had thought of anything else besides the underground nightmare they’d survived. The police had laughed at their crazy story about human eating crystals, but they had indicated a willingness to file missing persons reports on five individuals after the required passage of time that the law indicated. Even the newspaper had turned them away with scorn for such a ridiculous tale. Nobody believed them, except for John Sommers.

John was an eighty-five year old hermit who lived near Crystal Cave on five acres of posted land. He had been a miner in the early thirties and remembered the strange stories he’d heard while working in the mines. He’d worked the massive cave system of Crystal as a young man. He had vowed to get revenge on the cave when a wall had collapsed on him, crushing his right arm and leaving him crippled when he’d dared to explore the back regions. He’d received Miner’s Compensation through the Union to live on.

When the two had burst from the bowels of the earth, it had been John who had happened upon

them first. He'd contacted Tom and offered to help him destroy the cave shortly after they exhausted cavers had arrived home. John had stolen the permit from the Ranger's Station that held the group's phone numbers and addresses.

"Let's meet in Benson and head over to Crystal Cave," Tom suggested to Diane at the end of their conversation.

"Sounds good. We can eat lunch in Paradise then meet with Mr. Sommers. I can't wait to blow that awful place all to hell and back!"

IX.

True to his word, John Sommers was waiting at the turn off to Crystal Cave with a backpack full of dynamite. As Tom and Diane pulled up, they thought back to a few days before when they had stopped at this very spot to fetch the key to Crystal.

John climbed into the truck to ride the rest of the way to the parking lot for visitors. He was closed-mouth about where he had gotten the explosives. He would only say a friend from the old days had agreed to help out. He explained how to use the dynamite very thoroughly to Tom and Diane since they would be the ones to set the charges and detonate the explosives.

At the parking lot and trailhead, Tom volunteered to carry the explosives up the trail. When they'd reached the entrance and John had produced a key, he stood staring at the opening, shuddered, and retreated. Too many ghosts haunted his memory, so he'd wait outside. He cautioned the couple once again to handle the explosives with care. He ventured to sit under a mesquite tree and wait.

They walked silently to the Crystal Ballroom, eyeing every crystal as if expecting an attack. Nothing moved. Within twenty minutes of fast walking, crawling, and squeezing through the maze, they were standing at the rocky knoll where they'd recently eaten lunch with their lost friends.

"Let's do this as quickly as possible. I don't like this place. I can't wait for this stupid place to collapse and die, so it won't ever hurt anyone again," Diane defiantly proclaimed.

"O.K. Line up the dynamite like John said. I'll set the fuses. We'll need to move out fast when everything's ready to blow."

"Let's go for it."

They worked quietly and efficiently; soon everything was ready. Tom placed the last of the fusing material into the connecting blaster and stood up.

Careful placement of the dynamite, according to John's instructions had created a spoked-wheel effect. The concentration of explosives ringed the newly opened sore where the ill-fated trip had killed five cavers.

Hurrying in retreat to the entrance, Diane glanced back once more to bitterly acknowledge a final good-bye to the sparkling chambers; no one would enter the silent and deadly splendor ever again.

Tom detonated the explosives and a grumbling roar, muffled by tons of limestone, blasted from the mouth of the cave. The three stood a safe distance back to watch and listen.

Without warning, huge chunks of rock began quivering, then sinking into the protesting mountainside. The hollow interior of the mountain closed into itself like a fist grasping at air. It was over in minutes.

The two men and woman stood like stone vigilance, wanting and needing to be sure that the cave entrance would seal and never offer another adventure to venturing people. John hobbled to his post under the mesquite while Tom and Diane climbed over the fallen boulders and debris for fifteen minutes before returning to John to report that no opening existed. The three were satisfied, said their good-byes, and went their separate ways after they'd ridden back down the road to where John had begun the final hours of Crystal Cave's demise.

"Destroying that cave was a hard thing to do," Diane began as she viewed the scenery outside of the passenger's window. Tears cascaded down her cheeks like water following a flume.

"I know. We always promote cave conservation. It was difficult for me, too."

"John seemed pleased that he could help."

"I think he feels that his personal vengeance has arrived."

"Yes. I agree. Tom? Let's go mountain biking tomorrow. I don't want to go caving again for a very long time, if ever."

"Sounds good to me. How about a ride in the Canelo Hills? I found a great little trail down Pápago Springs Road a while back."

“I’d like that.”

The two continued to make plans for the rest of the day and evening. A disturbance in the landscape behind them stretched the land. They didn’t notice the wavelike movement as the vehicle turned, dropped beyond the view, and sped back towards Tucson.

A new opening on the other side of the mountain slowly widened. At first, it was only large enough for a ground squirrel to poke its nose into to investigate. But it kept growing until a full-sized javelina could squeeze through if it wanted to. It continued to expand. This entrance was at a much lower elevation than the original opening of Crystal Cave; it was, in fact, about seventy-five feet lower. The shifting ground settled into a new pattern with rocks burrowing and dirt sliding to form a path.

The setting sun began its final descent below the tops of the Chiricahua Mountains. Orange-gold rays glinted warmly across the face of the new entrance to Crystal Cave. A captured beam glittered momentarily on subtle movements just inside of the opening. Two large pitch black crystals suddenly appeared, twinkling in the retreating sunlight; they were surrounded by more crystals of smaller sizes. The crystals stood stone still; then, with stealthy scrapes, they all slunk backwards, rolling to disappear deep into the cavern to wait the arrival of the next explorers.

Back in the good old days of Flint Ridge caving when Floyd’s body was still in the cave, we sometimes used to hear him behind us.

“Wait for meee...” he would cry. Rather spooky.

One time some cavers were crawling along and they kept hearing this noise behind them, a sort of “cough, cough, cough.” Finally they stopped and one of them yelled back:

“Is that you, Floyd?”

“Nooo...” an eerie voice came back. “It’s not Floyd. It’s Floyd’s coffin.”

—Thanks to Red Watson

EDEN UNDERGROUND

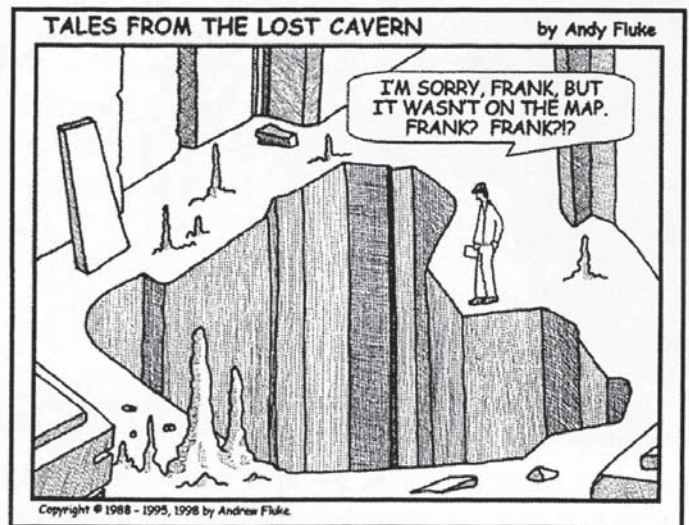
by Juliet Bishop

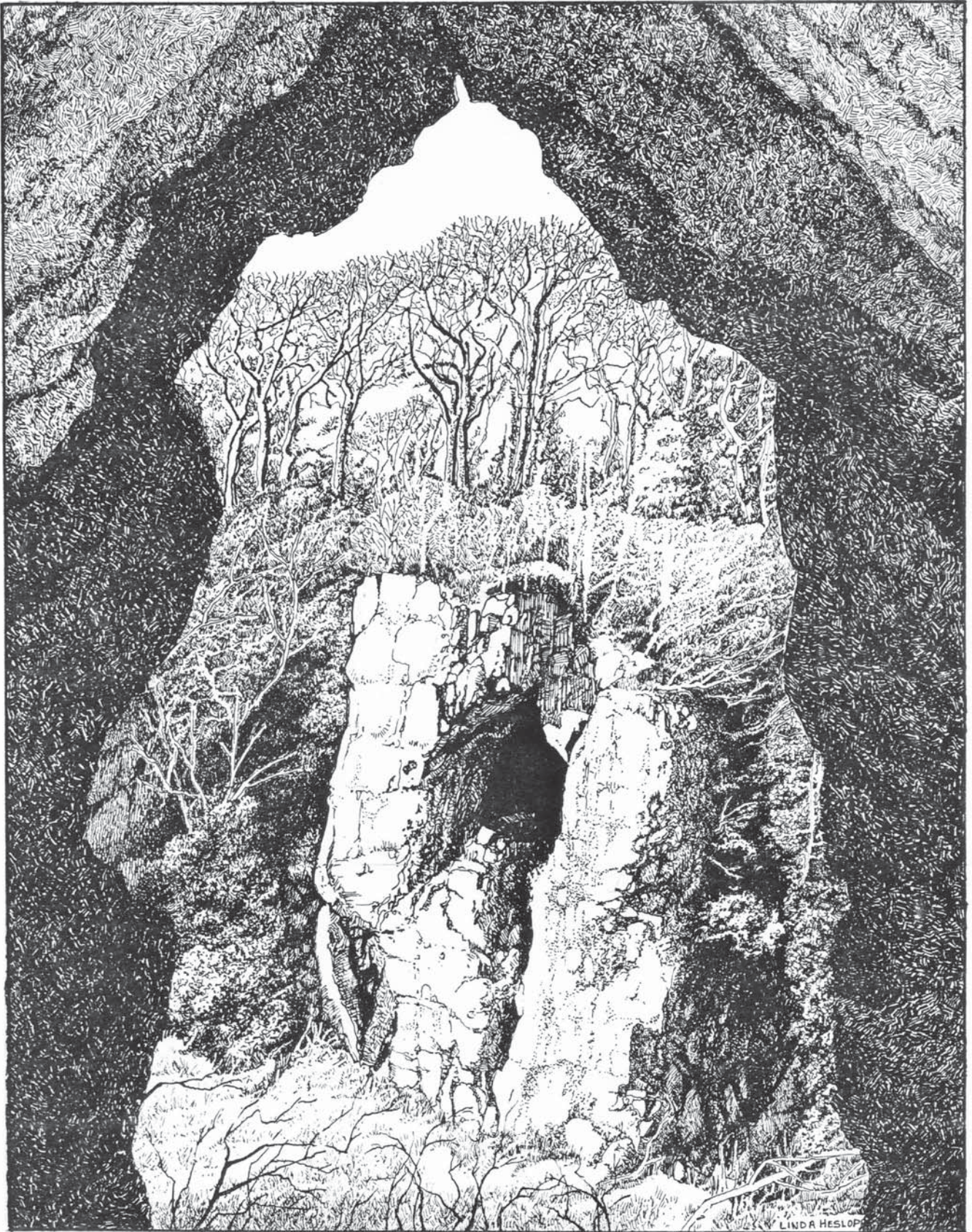
I’ve heard the tales of gypsum crusted walls
And ceilings raining dusty diamond snow
Of crystal coated floors and waterfalls
And gypsum flowers blooming down below.

I enter with these images in mind
Afraid that when compared the truth will pale.
I know that caving stories of this kind
Are usually embellished in the tale,

But as I round the bend I stop transfixed
By what must be an Eden underground.
For here are flowers, jewels together mixed,
And splendors meet my eyes from all around.

Surpassing all the pictures in my head
Surpassing even all that they had said





The Man

by Paul Steward

For years I heard legends of "The Man." Few cavers had actually really seen him, most just said they felt his presence or had the feeling someone was watching them close by. Lost packs, falling stones, and little noises were all blamed on him. I never paid much mind to the stories. I wish I had now. Some say he was a hobo who lived in the caves of Kentucky. Others said he was a murderer on the run. Many unsolved crimes were thought to be because of him. If only they really knew.

I don't expect you to believe this story anymore than others you have heard. But it's true, every word of it. Why he chose to talk to me, I'll never know. Perhaps loneliness or just the longing to talk with another person.

My first encounter with him was a few months ago. I was in Unknown Cave checking on a few small leads which were recently found. As I was passing the Brucker Breakdown, I saw a light coming down from the top. I waited for over a half an hour, and to my amazement appeared an old man carrying a lantern. He was as shocked to see me as I was of him. The first words out of his mouth were, "Where does that passage go?" pointing up Pohl Avenue towards the entrance. I just stared, speechless.

"Don't just stand there young fella. Take this light and give me a hand," he demanded. "My left leg is killing me again."

He was a thin man, looked to be in his late fifties, without any helmet or pack.

"Does the park service know you're in here?" I asked, as I helped him down.

"Don't be silly. I live in these parts and no damn park ranger gonna tell me where I can and can't go. Now, where does that passage go?"

"It leads to the entrance," I told him.

He looked at me kinda strange. "What entrance you talkin about?"

"The Austin Entrance to Unknown Cave."

"You mean to tell me I'm in Unknown Cave right now?"

"You sure are," I answered.

All of the sudden he started jumping up and down and laughing quite excitedly. "I knew it! I told'em. I told'em these caves were all connected. By golly I knew they were."

"You know they've been connected for over 25 years."

He became real quite after I said that.

"I'm heading out now. Would you like to join me?"

"Well, just to the entrance. Then I'll turn around and go back the way I came."

"Where would that be from?" I asked cautiously.

"I came in from Salts Cave," he answered.

"How did you get past the gate?" I asked.

"Ain't no gate gonna stop me."

We talked all the way to the entrance, mostly about all the connections and the people who made them.

"You sure you don't want to come out with me?" I asked at the gate.

"Na, you go on. I'll be fine."

"Does anybody know you're in here?"

"Ya, everyone knows I'm in here. I'll see ya around."

With that said, he turned and headed back down Pohl Avenue.

"Hey, I never got your name," I yelled.

"You know it," was all he yelled back.

I dared not tell a soul of my encounter with him. The park service would be furious and they'd want to know why I was also caving alone. So I kept my mouth shut. I did some research and found out that cavers had been talking about him as far back as the early 50's. Even some Mammoth Cave guides suspected his presence at times.

Several weeks later I was heading back into Unknown Cave to check on some survey stations. As I opened the big steel door there he was again, sitting on a big rock.

"I've been waiting for you," he said. "Follow me. I've got a surprise for you."

"How did you know I was coming here? Where are we going?"

"Just follow me," was all he said.

We headed down Pohl Avenue all the way to Ralph Stone Hall and then down into Ralph's River Trail. From here we entered a small hole he had dug open and crawled quite a ways in a low, wet, cobble filled passage. After about an hour of crawling we squeezed up into a crack in the ceiling and entered a large room. Something about this room looked familiar.

"Ya know where ya are yet?" he asked.

“I’ve been here before. I just never came in this way.”

After following this man for several hours and being shown something I had already seen had me quite annoyed.

“Damn right you never came this way before. You’re in Great Onyx Cave my friend.”

My mouth dropped. He was right! I WAS in Great Onyx Cave. I remembered eating lunch here on one of my first Flint Ridge cave trips. It was the one cave nobody has ever connected to Mammoth Cave. The missing link in the whole system.

“How did you find this?”

“I went and picked up that book you told me about, *The Longest Cave*, and I read how you boys never did connect to this cave. So, I figured I’d give it a shot and find that connection, and sure enough I did.”

“Well it looks like you and me just added another chapter to that book didn’t we . . . ah . . . I never did get you name.”

“Common kid, we better get surveying back to Unknown and then you’ll have your proof.”

I pulled out my survey gear and we surveyed all the way back to Ralph’s River Trail. When we reached the Brucker Breakdown we stopped for a break. After a short rest he started up the pile.

“Where are you going? I asked.

“It’s about time I head on home now. You take care of yourself.”

“I never got your name,” I yelled.

“Look down at your feet boy, just look down. You’ll see.”

A chill ran through my body then and still does to this day when I think back to that moment. There on the rock next to my foot, smoked in black letters, was the name Floyd Collins.

The Word Guy

by Rob Kyff

Ed. Note-This is from a column in my local newspaper “The Trenton Times.” All writers out there, take notes. I hope to include a little education with each issue. Used with permission.

“The idea is to marry the two cultures together.”

With these words, Harvery Weinstein, co-chairman of Miramax films, stepped into not only the big to-do of a new media partnership, but the deep doo-doo of redundancy.

Of course, in Hollywood, where anything is possible, perhaps marrying the two cultures separately was actually an option.

Weinstein is not alone. As the following repetitious repetitions sent to me by readers show, wearing a belt and suspenders leaves many of us with our pants down.

Televised TV, for instance, has recently echoed with these sentences:

“This thunderstorm is currently going on right now.”

“This rally could potentially backfire.”

“Traffic is heading southbound.”

“Both teams are at equal strength.”

“This is the single most destructive hurricane.” And here is something to chew on. “Nicorette gum will help you quit smoking successfully.”

Almost all of us are guilty of redundancy. Sometimes we forget that the last letter of an initialism or acronym actually stands for something; we repeat ourselves with “PIN Number,” “ATM Machine,” “HIV Virus,” and “SAT Test.” This is most likely to happen at “5 a.m. in the morning.”

Let’s continue on and focus in on unnecessary prepositions: “continue (on),” “focus (in) on,” “join (with) me,” “for free,” “not that big (of) a deal,” and “get off (of) my back”

Time and time again we hit the rewind or fast-forward button with “past history,” “revert back,” “pre-recorded,” “déjà vu all over again,” “pre-planned,” “future plans,” and “harbingers of things to come” as opposed to those harbingers of things that have already happened.

We also do double takes when we hear “false illusion,” “new innovations,” “close proximity,” “difficult predicament,” “very unique,” “free gift,” “completed suicide,” “wall murals,” “armed gunman,” “paid mercenary,” and “consensus of opinion.”

And we cry, “Why, oh, why?” when we hear “the reason is because” or “the reason why is” when a simple “the reason is” will do.



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The Other Huautla

by Bill Steele

I had never heard of Huautla, or San Agustin, or even Oaxaca, I suppose, before meeting Richard Schreiber at Fern Cave, Alabama in January, 1969. He said he had just come back from caving at Sotano de San Agustin in Mexico. The way he said it made it sound like a cave I should have been familiar with. Before I saw him again, in March at Ellisons Cave, I had learned that Sotano de San Agustin was the deepest cave in the Western Hemisphere. I knew the Canadians and British cavers from McMaster's University in Ontario had led the way and pushed it over 2,000 feet deep. But I did not know about the mushrooms.

In the fall of 1971, while caving and traveling in Mexico with Skip and Kathy Roy, I talked with an American hippie traveler who had been to Huautla. He had walked around and avoided the military road block. He told me of the crazy magic mushroom scene that had happened in the late sixties and had been forcibly stopped in 1970. This hippie traveler also gave me a Mexican "head comic," a drug culture comic book reminiscent of the type common around college campuses in the states at the time. It was about Marina Sabina and her mushroom ceremonies. In it she turned an adversary into a dog using magical powers gained from tripping on the psychedelic mushroom.

Later I became acquainted with the Association for Mexican Cave Studies, the AMCS, and read the first account of cavers going to Huautla in 1965. William Russell wrote in AMCS Newsletter Vol 1, No. 7,

"Arriving in town we found we weren't the first Americans to reach Huautla, but that the town was the place the really far-out people came to eat the magic mushroom. The Magic Mushroom is a small local mushroom that grows on cow droppings during the wet season, and when eaten this mushroom produces vivid hallucinations. The local people were happy to learn we weren't interested in the magic mushrooms as they did not appreciate the mushroom people. The mushroom people did not cause any real trouble, though one of them was thrown in jail a few years ago when he tried to eat a live

turkey in the town square, but mostly they just annoyed the locals. They would steal the penny rolls from the street vendor while he was immobilized by a barrage of unintelligible questions. The one mushroom woman went barefoot and carried a cane covered with strange carvings, and some of the locals feared she was a witch. Mushroom men would haggle for hours in the market, only to decide after a price was agreed upon that they didn't want any after all. But the local people retaliated. The mushroom eaters would enter a store, point and ask for some of that, but the store owner would answer with we don't have any. It took us half an hour to convince the owner of the gas station that we really weren't mushroom eaters, and they might not really be out of gasoline. (The gas is kept inside in barrels and they bring it out to you in a gallon can, so one can't really tell if they do have any.) Though the mushroom eaters were all from the United States, their language was almost unintelligible to the uninitiated."

The mushrooms had a lot to do with caving, or at least with halting caving in the Huautla area for several years. A military roadblock had been set up just up the hillside from Teotitlan del Camino, where the climb into the Sierra Mazateca begins. The roadblock was for one purpose, and this was to keep "hippies" out of the mountains. And Teotitlan del Camino was somewhat of an armed camp. The garrison housed there was aggressive and had to be driven past to get to the road leading to Huautla. The last trip of the first era of caving in Huautla, the last of the Canadian led trips at Christmas, 1970, had a run-in and confrontation with the army in Teotitlan del Camino. Welsh caver, Eoin Finn, wrote in the Canadian Caver,

". . . we recombined in Teotitlan del Camino, where the local presidente took an immediate dislike to our unwashed features and demanded 1,000 pesos penalty for having no license plates (they had been stolen). Piling into the van and attempting a getaway didn't do much good a maximum of 10 mph and three gesticulating police at the corner favored an about-turn and a renewal of negotiations with the presidente. We were searched and the van was emptied onto the street."

"When we refused to be herded at gunpoint into what was obviously the town jail, John Fish and

Mike Boon were beaten with clubs by the warden and his henchmen. Only a timely grab of the warden by Pete Thompson save Boon from being shot when he attempted to retaliate. The presidente then gave us to understand that the punishment for our still-unstated crime would be three hours in jail, while Fish remained outside watch over the equipment. So—in we tramped to a highly depressing courtyard with six barred hovels dug in the far wall. During the course of our “term” the presidente, besides asserting in turn that our teabags and our oatmeal were marijuana, made it clear to John that 500 pesos would deter him from either planting marijuana on us, selling the truck and equipment, or both. *Fait accompli, si?* So, in a private deal, we settled the matter, jumbled the kit aboard and roared off (at 10 knots maximum) minus the van registration and insurance, John’s drivers license and many items the presidente had arranged to keep.”

This episode became known among cavers as “the oatmeal incident.” It wasn’t until six years later that the roadblock was relaxed. The roadblock was still there when I took my first trip to Huautla in the spring of 1977, but they let us through and we did not pay them as we had official letters of introduction from the Mexican consulate in Austin.

That first trip to Huautla, sitting across the desk from the presidente, arranging permission to be in the area, I saw what cavers called “the letter”. It was under the glass on top of the desk and positioned so to hardly be overlooked by someone sitting and facing the presidente. It was from a Mexican army general addressed to the presidente and directed him to expel “hippies and other undesirable people” from the area.

“The letter” was referred to by the presidente as I sat looking at it. “We are not hippies,” was our reply. “We are cuevadores,” or cavers, “we have no interest in the mushrooms.” This was not entirely true. I was curious about them. I wasn’t interested in eating them, but I wanted to know the full story as part of the lore of Huautla. Over the years I learned plenty; I also ate them twice.

My first trip, I was offered mushrooms. We had been there three weeks and I had spent almost the entire time underground. We were packed and pulling out and I decided to hike from the village of San Agustin Zaragoza to Huautla. The trail follows the

spine of a ridge and ends up on top of the highest ridge overlooking Huautla. The truck would drive the slow, rocky road and I would meet the others in Huautla.

When I got to the overlook and looked down to Huautla I heard, “Psst, psst.” A man leaned out from behind a tree and asked me something I did not understand. “Quieres hongos?” he asked. I did not know the word for mushrooms other than the one used in restaurants. Curious, and looking for a souvenir anyway, I followed him a few hundred yards to a compound of thatched roofed houses and entered one. The man handed me a glass jar with mushrooms suspended in the honey. “No gracias,” I said. Then I asked if I could take his picture.

As we had approached the compound I had wondered about an unusual white wooden house we passed. This man told me that was the home of Maria Sabina, but she was not home. I told him I had heard of her and he responded that she was the most famous Mazatec. People from all over the world had traveled here to see her and eat mushrooms with her. Even the Beatles, he said. With that, and to my utter amazement, this Mazatec man sang some of the lyrics to the Beatles song, “Fool on the Hill.” “Day after day, alone on a hill, the man with the foolish grin is keeping perfectly still,” he sang with a smile, proud of his English. It was heavily accented, but recognizable.

As we departed Huautla that first time, we had our run-in with the police. As we crossed the bridge across the Rio Huautla, soldiers in light blue uniforms poured onto the bridge behind us and stopped us. What followed was a grueling hour of fear as we worried they might plant something on us and arrest us. We showed them our permission letters, poured them cups of drinking water and cut up a pineapple for them, and in the end they let us go without even ordering us to unload the truck. Caving trip after caving trip to Huautla occurred and many times I heard the, “Psst,” and was offered mushrooms. But we had a firm rule that no one on an expedition have anything to do with them. We wanted serious cavers who were clear headed for the technical caving. Also, we wanted to maintain our separation from the other outsiders who came to Huautla. It was always the same: the Americans or Europeans we would run into in Huautla were there for the mushrooms.

As four of us were leaving Huautla following the 1978 Sotano de Agua de Carrizo expedition, we drove past the bridge below Huautla to the waterfall. We bathed and changed clothes and were ready for the drive to Texas. A man walked along the road and stopped and offered us mushrooms. Immediately we responded with our habitual, "No, gracias." Then Richard Schreiber and I looked at each other and smiled. This was a golden opportunity to buy them when not in Huautla where we could be identified as cavers. We were on the road home and already beyond Huautla. There had been no roadblock. We could hide the mushrooms deep in dirty gear and we could not imagine that they would be found. Besides, they would not be what anyone would be looking for. They would be looking for marijuana, not mushrooms.

We bought them and drove for two days across Mexico to Micos, near Ciudad Valles in northern Mexico, a series of waterfalls where cavers liked to camp. Our intent was to swim there and camp for the night. Well into tripping, laughing, listening to loud music, ohing and ahing at tropical plants, butterflies, and so on, we saw that clouds were boiling and a storm was approaching. Schreiber attempted to drive his van up a steep dirt road up from river level but it was too heavily loaded. Tripping, and marveling at how he was coping with driving and reasoning what to do, Jan, Andy and I stood aside to lighten the van and watched as he backed down and then charged the hill with some speed. He made it. We climbed aboard and drove a couple of miles to higher ground and sat out the rain and lightening storm.

The next time I ate the mushrooms was when I departed from the 1981 expedition and was leaving with Jan and three others. Minton had driven us into Huautla in his 4-wheel drive school bus and we were going to leave in the commercial bus for Teotitlan del Camino. We bought our tickets and had a couple of hours to wait. Deciding to walk out the road to the east from Huautla, toward the airstrip, and see if a friend of ours was home, we were asked along the way if we were interested in "hongos." We said no but then looked at each other with that knowing look which meant why not?

In the dirt floored, thatched roofed house, fresh mushrooms wrapped in banana leaves were laid on a table. They were the size of the largest I had ever

seen in a grocery store. We were advised to eat one apiece. I was surprised at how tasty the large one I ate was. I like mushrooms, but normally raw ones seem tasteless. Not this magic mushroom. It was savory. We were beginning to feel the tinges of effect as the bus began to load. Dino Lowry noticed that the Mexican bus had a cassette player up by the driver and speakers back through the bus. She borrowed a tape from Minton's bus; Ry Cooder.

As the bus progressed at its creeping, twisting speed, tossing us back and forth as we stood in the center aisle, the effect came on and everything was funny. We were in great spirits anyway. The expedition had been successful. We were strong and healthy and planning to return to Huautla the following year.

When the bus stopped for a lunch break Dino asked if she could play our cassette tape. We rolled again to Ry Cooder. Tripping, laughing, making jokes, smiling at Mazatecs and talking to them as they smiled back, we progressed toward Teotitlan del Camino to Ry Cooder's folksy style. Then his song, "I Hate the Yankee Nation" came on. That was the highlight. We got the giggles. All the Maz seemed to be smiling and rocking to the song.

We tripped along, changing buses in Teotitlan and then again in Tehuacan. It was late night when we arrived in Mexico City and bought train tickets for Laredo. Too trippy to sleep in the train station to wait for the early morning train, some of us walked around the surrounding streets. We encountered some elephants standing just outside a circus tent. Our pleasant "trip" wound down as we walked among cages of circus animals bedded down for the night.

So I learned what the effect of the mushrooms was but never ate them in Huautla. It was frustrating to our close Huautla friend, Renato Dorantes Garcia, that I never asked to meet Maria Sabina. I wanted to set an example for the other cavers and keep my distance from that whole scene. Janet met her, though. She and Jill Dorman walked up to the compound of houses where she lived high on the hill above Huautla and asked to meet her. They were asked if they wanted to eat mushrooms with her. They were about to catch a bus back to the states and did not. But they were introduced to her. She was short and thin, with a dignified air. This was in 1980. The mushroom ceremony would have

taken all night. The Mazatecs will experience such ceremonies only at night and only when guided by a curendera or curendero. They will only do so as a remedy for a sickness of some kind. One such sickness and ceremony to cure it was told to us by Lucinda, a wife and mother from San Agustin. In the late 1980s her son, Isaiah, had been cured of a serious case of *el mielo*. This word literally means the fear. He had been sitting on the bank of the Rio Iglesia when a snake wrapped itself around his leg. He was so shaken by it that his health began to fail. They took him to the medical doctor at the clinic in Huautla, but they could find nothing wrong. His health continued to fail, so they set up a curing ceremony with a curendera. It turned his health around and he recovered.

In 1994, I was invited to Hollywood by Disney Films to serve as technical advisor for the remake of "Journey to the Center of the Earth." While there, Janet, Audrey, Matt Oliphant and Nancy Pistole and I drove to nearby Huntington Beach and visited with George and Florence Cowan. They had been linguists who lived in Huautla most of the time between 1936 and the early 60s. We had spoken with them on the telephone and corresponded by mail, but had never before met in person.

Our visit with them was a whole other story, but an enlightening aspect of what they said was that Gordon and Valentina Pavlovna Wasson, who are credited with discovering and popularizing the fact that the prehispanic practice of eating the magic mushroom continues today, learned about the Mazatecs from Eunice Pike and the Cowans when they met in Mexico City in the early 50s. In the May 13, 1957 issue of LIFE magazine, the Wassons told the world about the mushrooms and the Mazatecs.

In the mid to late 60s the elite of pop music went to Huautla to meet Maria Sabina and take mushrooms. Renato, who was the agent, between outsiders and Maria, told me that Bob Dylan, Donovan Leitch, the Beatles, Canned Heat, and others had come and he had taken them to spend time with Maria. Others have told me that when the Beatles came an article ran in the Puebla newspaper about them being there. I was told by a vendor in the market who sold cassette tapes and a man on the bus going to Huautla that all four of the Beatles came to Huautla first, then John Lennon and Ringo Starr returned.

In 1993 I was in Huautla following a caving expedition to the Cerro Rabon. Janet and I were staying in a hotel with three Swiss who had hiked around with us to see archaeological sites we know of. We went by Maria Sabina's house to see what was going on there. Maria had passed away several years prior.

To our surprise, a young man was among Maria's family in the houses of her compound, and he spoke English. He said he was related to the family and had gone to high school in Laredo, Texas. He showed us a photo album and brought up the Beatles and Donovan with no prompting. He asked me to follow him outside and he pointed around the ridge to a clump of trees. "There," he said, "is where John Lennon sat with Maria's guitar and wrote 'Fool on the Hill.'"

"What other Beatles songs were inspired here?" I asked.

"'The Long and Winding Road' and I think 'Yellow Submarine' were written here," he said. "And Donovan's 'There is a Mountain.'" That's my favorite," he said excitedly. "It really describes Huautla the way I know it. First there is a mountain, then there is no mountain, then there is . . . , is about the clouds and the way they whisp along the ground. You see nothing but clouds and then a mountain, and then the clouds. You know."

He was right. I told him I had bought Donovan Leitch a beer once following a concert in San Antonio. It was a small club and I waited until he finished and the place was almost empty. I asked him if I could buy him a beer and ask him about his travels in Mexico; that I was writing a book. He did not seem to remember Huautla by name. When I described the area as very mountainous, with a long, scary, muddy road into it, or an airplane flight in a small plane and landing on an airstrip that probably seemed too short, he seemed to remember. When I mentioned mushrooms with an Indian woman singing and chanting in an unintelligible language he looked off and muttered, "Those days. Those days. Yes, I remember. There were so many places."

Janet had also mentioned Huautla to Donovan a couple of years before. We had gone to hear him in concert in a small hall in San Antonio. We were given carnations at the door, reminiscent of the flower power hippie days. At the end of the concert, people went to the front and threw their carnations to

Donovan. Janet got to the stage after he had taken his bow, had picked up two handfuls of flowers and was turning to leave. She held up her flower and said, "Donovan, have you been to Huautla?" He turned, came back to her, took her flower with a broad smile and nodded his head yes.

Though I never heard that The Doors went to Huautla, I was told a story by a native Huautla hippie about giving Jim Morrison a bowl of mushrooms. During a caving expedition in the late 80s we learned of a new restaurant in Huautla owned by a German and a Huautla partner. The Huautla partner was a round man, who spoke a little English, had a full, dark beard, and constantly wore flowery embroidered shirts. He told me that when The Doors played Mexico City he had worked his way up to the front and held up a heaping bowl full of Huautla mushrooms. Morrison saw them and between songs leapt from the stage and ate them all. Then he got back on stage and got right into the next song. From what one lone mushroom did to me while riding the bus down from Huautla, I shake my head in wonder that he could even walk or think, let alone remember lyrics and keep time with his band.

I had an uncanny occurrence concerning Huautla and the mushrooms happened in a San Antonio used bookstore. I was browsing in the autobiographical section when I saw the title, *LSD: MY PROBLEM CHILD*, by Albert Hofman. Hofman's research at Switzerland's Sandoz Laboratories had resulted in his accidental ingestion of LSD and the subsequent spread of the use of the synthesized drug throughout Western youth culture.

I took the book from the shelf and opened it. It fell open to page 128 which was headed "Ride through the Sierra Mazateca." A chill swept my body that it fell open to this page. Hofman went to Huautla? Why? When?

I bought the book for \$4.98 and read about his trip to Huautla in September, 1962. He had learned from Gordon Wasson of the psychoactive mushrooms the Aztecs called *teonanacatl*, as well as morning glory seeds and a dried and crushed plant leaf called *ska Maria Pastora*.

During his two weeks in the Sierra Mazateca, Hofman collected plants used by *curenderas* and finished his trip by visiting Maria Sabina. He said in his autobiography:

"A day later we made our formal visit to the *curandera* Maria Sabina, a woman made famous by the Wassons' publications. It had been in her hut that Gordon Wasson became the first white man to taste of the sacred mushrooms, in the course of a nocturnal ceremony in the summer of 1955. Gordon and Maria Sabina greeted each other cordially, as old friends. The *curandera* lived out of the way, on the mountainside above Huautla. The house in which the historic session with Gordon Wasson had taken place had been burned, presumably by angered residents of an envious colleague, because she had divulged the secret of *teonanacatl* to strangers. In the new hut in which we found ourselves, an incredible disorder prevailed, as had probably also prevailed in the old hut, in which half-naked children, hens, and pigs bustled about. The old *curandera* had an intelligent face, exceptionally changeable in expression. She was obviously impressed when it was explained that we had managed to confine the spirit of the mushrooms in pills, and she at once declared herself ready to "serve us" with these, that is, to grant us a consultation. It was agreed that this should take place the coming night in the house of Dona Herlinda."

Hofman's true goal was to test his synthesized *psilocybin*. This active ingredient of the magic mushrooms had been identified from samples sent to him in Switzerland by Gordon Wasson.

"After fall of darkness, we all proceeded into the room in which the ceremony would take place. It was then locked up that is, the door was obstructed with the only bed available. Only an emergency exit into the back garden remained unlatched for absolute necessity. It was nearly midnight when the ceremony began. Until that time the whole party lay, in darkness sleeping or awaiting the night's events, on the bast mats spread on the floor. Maria Sabina threw a piece of copal on the embers of a brazier from time to time, whereby the stuffy air in the crowded room became somewhat bearable. I had explained to the *curandera* through Herlinda, who was again with the party as interpreter, that one pill contained the spirit of two pairs of mushrooms. (The pills contained 5.0 mg. synthetic *psilocybin* apiece.)"

"When all was ready, Maria Sabina apportioned the pills in pairs among the grown-ups present. After solemn smoking, she herself took two pairs (corresponding to 20 mg. *psilocybin*). She gave the same

dose to Don Aurelio and her daughter Apolonia, who would also serve as curandera. Aurora received one pair, as did Gordon, while my wife and Irmgard got only one pill each.”

“One of the children, a girl of about ten, under the guidance of Maria Sabina, had prepared for me the juice of five pairs of fresh leaves of hojas de la Pastora. I wanted to experience this drug that I had been unable to try in San Jose Tenango. The potion was said to be especially active when prepared by an innocent child. The cup with the expressed juice was likewise incensed and conjured by Maria Sabina and Don Aurelio, before it was delivered to me.”

“All if these preparations and the following ceremony progressed in much the same way as the consultation with the curandera Consuela Garcia in San Jose Tenango.”

“After the drug was apportioned and the candle on the “altar” was extinguished, we awaited the effects in the darkness.”

“Before a half hour had elapsed, the curandera murmured something; her daughter Don Aurelio also became restless. Herlinda translated and explained to us what was wrong. Maria Sabina had said that the pill lacked the spirit of the mushrooms. I discussed the situation with Gordon, who lay beside me. For us it was clear that absorption of the active principle from the pills, which must first dissolve in the stomach, occurs more slowly than from the mushrooms, in which some of the active principle already becomes absorbed through the mucous membranes during chewing. But how could we give a scientific explanation under such conditions? Rather than try to explain, we decided to act. We distributed more pills. Both curanderas and the curandero each received another pair. They had now each taken a total dosage of 30 mg. psilocybin.”

“After about another quarter of an hour, the spirit of the pills did begin to yield its effects, which lasted until the crack of dawn. The daughters, and Don Aurelio with his deep bass voice, fervently answered the prayers and singing of the curandera. Blissful, yearning moans of Apolonia and Aurora, between singing and prayer, gave the impression that the religious experience of the young women in the drug inebriation was combined with sensual feelings.”

“In the middle of the ceremony Maria Sabina asked for our request. Gordon inquired again af-

ter the health of his daughter and grandchild. He received the same good information as from the curandera Consuela. Mother and child were in fact well when he returned home to New York. Obviously, however, this still represents no proof of the prophetic abilities of both curenderas.”

“Evidently as an affect of the hojas, I found myself for some time in a state of mental sensitivity and intense experience, which, however, was not accompanied by hallucinations. Anita, Irmard, and Gordon experiences a euphoric condition of inebriation that was influenced by the strange, mystical atmosphere. My wife was impressed by the vision of very distinct strange line patterns.”

“She was astonished and perplexed, later, on discovering precisely the same images in the rich ornamentation over the altar in an old church near Puebla. That was on the return trip to Mexico City, when we visited churches from colonial times. These admirable churches offer great cultural and historical interest because the Indian artist and workmen who assisted in their construction smuggled in elements of Indian style. Klaus Thomas, in his book *Die kunstlich gesteuerte Seele* [The artificially steered mind] (Ferdinand Enke Verlag, Stuttgart, 1970), writes about the possible influence of visions from psilocybin inebriation on Meso-American Indian art: ‘Surely a cultural historical comparison of the old and new creations of Indian art . . . must convince the unbiased spectator of the harmony with the images, forms and colors of a psilocybin inebriation could also point to such an association.’”

“As we took leave of Maria Sabina and her clan at the crack of dawn, the cuandera said that the pills had the same power as the mushrooms, that there was no difference. This was a confirmation from the most competent authority, that the synthetic psilocybin is identical with the natural product. As a parting gift I let Maria Sabina have a vial of psilocybin pills. She radiantly explained to our interpreter Herlinda that she could now give consultations even in the season when no mushrooms grow.”

“How should we judge the conduct of Maria Sabina, the fact that she allowed strangers, white people, access to the secret ceremony, and let them try the sacred mushroom?”

“To her credit it can be said that she had thereby opened the door to the exploration of the Mexican

mushroom cult in its present form, and to the scientific, botanical, and chemical investigation of the sacred mushrooms. Valuable active substances, psilocybin and psilocin, resulted. Without this assistance, the ancient knowledge and experience that was concealed in these secret practices would possibly, even probably, have disappeared without a trace, without having borne fruit, in the advancement of Western civilization.”

“From another standpoint, the conduct of this curandera can be regarded as a profanation of a sacred custom—even as betrayal. Some of her countrymen were of this opinion, which was expressed in acts of revenge, including the burning of her house.”

“The profanation of the mushroom cult did not stop with the scientific investigations. The publication about the magic mushrooms unleashed an invasion of hippies and drug seekers into the Mazatec country, many of whom behaved badly, some even criminally. Another undesirable consequence was the beginning of true tourism in Huautla de Jimenez, whereby the originality of the place was eradicated.”

Maria Sabina died on November 22, 1986. Her obituary ran in the San Antonio newspaper and most likely around the U.S.A., possibly the world. A friend sent me a copy of it from Miami, Florida.

While on expedition in 1985 and staying in one of the houses we rented in the village of San Agustin, a knock on the door came and I heard a soft voice ask if I was there. Janet let a young woman in and she smiled at me. I recognized her from years of passing in the village and on the trails. She said that she was the niece of Maria Sabina and the daughter of Maria’s sister Marianna. I knew from the story of Maria’s youth that the healing of her older sister Marianna being the start down the road of becoming a renown curandera. Marianna lived in San Agustin and was elderly.

Marianna’s daughter said her mother was ill and bedridden, close to death. We expressed how sorry we were to hear that and would pray for her. Her daughter said that she had come to get me for me to visit Marianna and touch her with my “power of the caves.” They saw me as powerful from my journeys underground. I could not refuse.

Jan and I followed her to a Mazatec thatched roofed house around the hillside and were taken to

her bedside. Visions of this backfiring came to mind. What if she took a turn for the worse? Would they appreciate my coming and leave it that? Or would they think that allowing us entry into the caves did nothing for them and make it more difficult in the future to gain entry? These thoughts ran through my mind as I stood at bedside of a very old, apparently dying woman.

She managed a smile as I was introduced as Guillermo Acero. I said my name in Mazatec, Cha Mo Keecha, which brought another feeble smile. She murmured God’s name in Spanish and other words in Mazatec and I nodded my head yes. Then we left. I went back to caving.

Before we left that year Marianna’s daughter came to us and thanked me for saving her mother. I was embarrassed at taking any credit, but thankful that she had taken a turn for the better.

While on the 1987 Huautla expedition I took a day hike around the vast Rio Iglesia sinkhole and walked up to Maria Sabina’s compound. I was planning to someday write a book on the Huautla Project and intended to include the story of her and visits by rock music elite. I was looking for a picture her family might have of Maria with any of the Beatles.

As I entered the compound calling out, “Dali,” the Mazatec greeting, I saw movement inside the darkened interior of one of the houses and then heard, “Guillermo Acero.”

I said, “Si, Guillermo Acero.” I was welcomed in and offered coffee. It was the same niece of two years prior. I asked about her mother and was told that she was fine. I was thanked again for visiting her and helping with her recovery.

Then she asked me what I wanted. I told her I was interested in purchasing a photograph of Maria Sabina. Were there any photographs? Yes, she said, a few.

In Mazatec she gave instructions to a little boy who went to a pile of books on a shelf and pulled out a photo album. In it were many black and white and color prints of family, and a handful of Maria Sabina. None pictured her with anyone from the outside. My hope of snagging a picture of her standing arm in arm with John Lennon was dashed.

One photo in particular caught my eye, however I sensed that I was obligated to purchase a photograph anyway, since I was known, welcomed, had helped them two years before, and had said that I

was interested in a photograph of Maria. A black and white photograph of Maria in her native huipul, or traditional dress, was cut out. I asked if I could buy it. The response was giggles. I wanted to be sure to offer them an amount of money they thought fair, and I was keenly cognizant of the danger of offending their customs. Delicately, I asked if they would be interested in selling this photograph. An immediate smile and, "Si," was the response.

How much, was my next question, asked in Spanish. There were whispers between the four people in the room. I heard my name Guillermo Acero said and that of Marianna. The amount then stated equated to about \$5.00 U.S. dollars. I asked if they would take twice that. No, was the reply, that is what they would like for the photograph.

Then they asked if I would like to see Maria Sabina's possessions in her house. This was an opportunity I had not considered.

I was taken to the white, wooden, portable house I had been told years earlier the Mexican government had brought here for Maria. There were two rooms, perhaps twelve foot square. In the room on the right sat a large wooden footlocker heaped with framed photographs, clothing, a violin, and other personal possessions. This was what remained of the possessions of a world renowned person.

Would I like something else was asked me. Yes, thank you was my reply. Here is a shirt which may fit you, I was told. A neatly folded, embroidered, flowered shirt was held up. Was this Maria's I asked, seeing that it appeared to be a man's shirt. No, it had belonged to a famous curendero; I took him to be a close colleague of hers. She may have told me his name, but I did not write it down and do not recall what she said.

I left with the shirt and the photograph. The shirt hangs in a closet and has not been washed. Occasionally I look at it and wish I knew what all it had witnessed. It is a link to an ancient and disappearing world. It was worn during a practice thought to have been stamped out in the 1500s by the Spanish conquerors.

Two years later, I was on expedition and residing in San Agustin Zaragoza again. This time my son, Brian, joined me along with his girlfriend, Liz Leonard. They had come on their own from Indiana and I was in hopes of tempting them to move to Texas and live near me.

Brian had become a skilled guitarist. He was playing with a rock and roll band. He enjoyed caving and picked it up fast and competently; he was also very interested in the stories of famous songs having been written here in Huautla and the Beatles and others having come to eat the sacred mushrooms with Maria Sabina. I encouraged him to walk up to the compound of houses I had visited and ask about the violin I had seen.

Brian and Liz did so and came back with a guitar. He had paid the equivalent of \$80 U.S. dollars for it. It was not well made, and appeared to have been well used. Brian had been told it was Maria's own guitar she used for singing during mushroom ceremonies, and that John Lennon had played on it constantly while staying with her the two times he had come.

I gave the guitar close inspection. It had steel strings on it but they were very old and rusty. We removed them and upon looking inside the body I saw plant residue stuck in a corner. Scrapping it out with my thumbnail, and holding it in my hand, someone who knew announced over my shoulder that it was marijuana. "Then for sure this is not going back to the states," was my immediate response. There was an intense war on drugs being conducted back home and there was a zero tolerance policy at the border. This was enough to be detected by a drug sniffing dog and no story in the world about this being an important artifact would dispel prosecution.

Brian was dejected. He had got an incredible deal on an unbelievable possession and now he would have to leave it behind. Upon discussing it our plan materialized. We would present it to our dear friend Renato Garcia Dorantes upon leaving Huautla, asking him to add it to the materials he was collecting for the museum of the Mazatecs. Janet and I shared this idea with Brian and the rest of the expedition members who then decided to reimburse Brian his \$80 and make the gift to the museum from all of us.

Renato had visited us in San Agustin during the expedition and asked us to be his guests in his home upon departing. He said he and his wife would prepare native Mazatec dishes. Knowing we were filming on this expedition, he said we could film in his home.

Renato was immensely surprised when we pre-

sented him with the guitar. He asked how we had gotten it. When we told the story of Brian walking up to Maria's house and buying it, he wanted to know how much he had paid for it. I told him and he shook his head in disbelief. He was thankful to have it for the museum, however. It was apparent that he saw how easily cherished artifacts of their culture could leave the Sierra Mazateca.

A Tale of Two Caving Huts

by Alfie and Reg

This is a story from the book "A Strange Device, Seven Tales Of A Imaginary Caving Club." Used with author permission, S. J. Collins, illustrations by Robin Grey. " 1995 S.J. Collins.



I.

It is midnight on Mendip, after an unusually hot summer weekend. The last tints of colour have not long faded from the sky, and now the moon shines brightly down on drystone wall and hawthorn tree alike, turning them all to the same silvery sheen. All is still, apart from the soft tearing sounds as, here and there, cows still graze. From afar off, on owl hoots.

The vast army of squat little concrete huts which comprise the local council's Caving Estate at Nor-drach—which by day disfigures the face of Mendip almost as much as does the nearby University of Charterhouse—now looks slightly less revolting in the moonlight. Its horde of Hut Wardens, Tackle Officers, Caving Secretaries, members and guests who comprise the weekend inhabitants of this dreadful place have all gone home. The long rows and columns of the huts and the network of concrete paths which connect them, now gleam softly in the pale light of the moon and somehow contrive to look slightly less like some enormous camp for displaced persons.

A solitary car, however, still stands in the car park, looking lost amid that huge expanse of tarmac, and a yellow gleam from the windows of Hut 213 single it out from the silvery ranks of its fellows. Inside the hut, surrounded by a mass of paperwork, sits Sam Strangeways—the new Secretary of the Haselbury Plunknett Spelaeological Society—taking his duties very seriously as indeed he must if his club is to keep abreast with the furious pace of modern caving.

Before his predecessor cracked up through overwork, he had managed to achieve a diplomatic breakthrough by concluding an agreement with a local farmer for the sole rights of access to Dribble Hole. Although this cave is only fifteen feet long, Sam is weighing up how this agreement can be used to the best advantage for his club. He is moderately certain that the Perronarworthel Pothole Club might be induced to back his application to ratifying this agreement. This move, if successful, would then give both clubs a lever against the Kingston Bagpuize Caving Group, although the reaction of the Nunney Association for Spelaeological Regression would still be unpredictable. It is quite a problem.

But thinks Sam, as he sits and ponders over the delicate balance between the five hundred clubs on the estate, it is a typical problem of present-day cav-

ing. He sighs as he realizes that the next weekend will be just like all the others. It is hardly likely that his club will find the time to look for another hole as large as Dribble Hole in the immediate future. Saturday mornings will be spent as usual in a hectic round of visits to other huts on the estate, sounding out opinions and listening to rumours, then rushing back to Hut 213 to keep the members informed about the latest shifts of policy, so that they will be able to deal with the secretaries of other clubs, who will be rushing about with equal determination.

After all this, there may be time for a quick bite to eat before all the secretaries meet in the Great Hall of the University of Charterhouse for the weekly meeting of the Southern Council. This will be followed by the usual session at the students' bar, where the give and take will be less formal but equally hard. At the end of the day, he will stagger back to hut 21, worn out by the strenuous caving activity and too tired for anything except to fall into his bunk and try to get some sleep.

Sunday morning will be spent in planning the next week's campaign, and in holding a post mortem on the last meeting of the Southern Council. No wonder, Sam thinks to himself, that the club's last secretary had cracked up, and he wonders how long he will last. But, he reflects sadly, that is the way that modern caving works.

At last, Sam wrenches his mind away from these problems and begins to stack his papers into his bulging briefcase. With a final glance round the hut, he turns off the lights and makes his way thoughtfully to his waiting car and, one presumes, to Haselbury Plunknett.

II.

It is now Saturday, on the following weekend. The weather, as if ashamed of its temporary lapse, has now reverted to its normal summer behaviour. A heavy, damp mist hangs over Mendip, turning everything to a uniform dull gray and penetrating the many chinks resulting from the over-hasty construction of the University of Charterhouse. Sam is in his car, about to set off for the weekly meeting of the Southern Council. His head is full of complex policy decisions. The matter of the Dribble Hole agreement is fraught with danger and will require knife-edge diplomatic moves. With a sigh, he starts the car and drives mechanically through the mist.

Suddenly, Sam realizes that he is on the wrong road. With a frown, he concludes that he has been on the wrong road for some time, as he should by now have completed the short journey from the Caving Estate to the university. He stops the car and peers into the surrounding mist. None of the terrain looks familiar. What with the non-stop activity of the Caving Estate and the meetings at the university, Sam is like most of the cavers of his own age. He has never had the time to explore the rest of Mendip.

With a sudden feeling of panic, Sam realizes that he will be late for the meeting. Without his vote and his opportunity to speak, the Kingston Bagpuize Caving Group might even side with the Perranarworthel Pothole Club!

All around him, Mendip lies still and silent, much as it has done through all the centuries before any cavers appeared on the scene. As Sam lets his gaze fall on the dim outlines of the old walls lining the road, he wonders whether Mendip really cares much about the Kingston Bagpuize Caving Group or the Perranarworthel Pothole Club or, for that matter, the Haselbury Plunknett Spelaeological Society. As he muses on this theme, a strange peace begins to steal over him. Gradually, the stresses of modern caving disappear and, possibly for the first time since he started caving, the University of Charterhouse begins to feel as insubstantial as its crumbling concrete and bits of glass and aluminum really are.

He wonders whether the Caving Estate and the university will last as long as the old walls which he can dimly see, and realizes with some surprise that he does not really care. With a sudden, decisive movement, he winds the window down and flings his briefcase into the field beyond the wall and watches the vague shapes of two cows as they amble over to inspect it. A great load seems to have been lifted from his mind as, with a faint smile on his lips, he lets in the clutch and drives slowly off into the unknown.

III.

It is later that same afternoon. Sam has now left the car feeling, quite rightly, that walking is the only proper thing to do. As he slowly walks across a mist-covered field, he finds himself going steeply downhill and realizes that he has stumbled across a swallet. At the bottom, there is a locked cave entrance. Sam wonders what cave this is, for, like all modern

Caving Secretaries, he deals with caves almost entirely on paper. Caves, Sam realizes as he looks at the locked entrance, have become pieces in the complex game that is played every weekend at the Caving Estate and the University. Some caving club, he realizes, must have spent many hours plotting to control it, leaving no time for actually going down. He gazes at the entrance with unaccustomed longing, and is about to turn sadly away when he hears the muffled sound of people approaching through the mist. He can soon distinguish a number of scruffily dressed individuals who are carrying caving gear. Their leader, a large powerfully built man, gives Sam a long, appraising look.

“Want to go down, lad?”

“Yes, please.” Sam replies, suddenly realizing that his wishes are about to come true. “Get the lad a spare helmet and some clothes, Fred, while I pick this ruddy lock,” the large man roars at a wiry looking individual, who promptly disappears through the mist on this errand of mercy.

IV.

The Great Hall of the University of Charterhouse is packed, stressing some of its badly designed and poorly assembled girders close to breaking point. The General Secretary is calling the roll of constituent clubs.

“Glastonbury Spelaeos?”

“Present”

“Goblin Coombe Caving Club?”

“Present”

“Gordano Exploration Club?”

“Present”

“Haselbury Plunknett Spelaeological Society?”

There is a silence, as four hundred and ninety nine delegates look at each other, wondering what could have happened. They think variously of falling asleep at the wheel; collapse due to overwork; heart attack and so on. Not a single delegate imagines anything as wildly improbable as the truth. The secretary of the Haselbury Plunknett Spelaeological Society has gone caving!

V.

It is now very much later on that same fateful day. Sam is now lying in a bunk within a caving hut whose very existence he has never imagined. It is

not on the Nordrach Estate. It is, in fact, the Brewery, the caving hut of the V.E.C.

As he relaxes, in a pleasant half-sloshed condition, he is recalling the events of the day—a day which has given him more pleasure than he had thought possible. There was the joy of being underground with pleasant and experienced companions; the feel of rock and rung and water; the coming out tired but happy. This was followed by the stew; the beer; the jokes; the songs, the journey back from the pub and the final cup of coffee.

Sam’s only regret is that tomorrow he must return to Hut 213 and face harsh reality once more. Just how he is going to explain his conduct to his fellow members of the Haselbury Plunknett spelaeos, he cannot think. There is, however, a problem of even greater urgency that must be tackled in the morning before he leaves the Brewery. He is sure that these friendly, carefree cavers must be some sort of unofficial club which, sooner or later will find itself caught up in the complex machinery of real caving. With their complete ignorance of the cut and thrust of cave politics, they will never survive for a moment. He must somehow warn them so that they can learn to survive in the real world of caving before it is too late. Sam is still thinking along these lines when he falls into a deep and refreshing sleep.

VI.

It is now Sunday morning. Sam has just woken up and been handed a steaming mug of coffee by Fred Ferrett, who has already got up and dressed in order to perform this humane task. Sam notes that the others are all stirring. In one corner of the bunkroom, Ron Runnit is sitting up in his bunk drinking coffee. In another, the bulky form of Pete Pushem stirs under a pile of assorted cast-off blankets, and finally heaves into view. He stretches out a great hand for his mug of coffee and focuses his eyes on Sam.

“Morning, lad. How’s the ruddy head?”

Sam, after a quick check, is able to assure Pete that his head is still attached to his body. This information is well received.

“That’s the ruddy stuff, lad! You’ll never make a member of this ruddy club if you can’t hold your ruddy beer!” At the words ‘member of this ruddy club’, Sam remembers his mission to acquaint these good folk with the harsh facts of caving life. He looks round at the cheerful disorder of the hut, mentally

comparing it with the antiseptic cleanliness of Hut 213, cleaned once a week by the council, and realizes the enormous gap that he must somehow try to bridge. His face falls at the prospect.

“What’s the trouble, lad? Ruddy gut?”

With much misgiving and the feeling that he is making a fearful hash of things, Sam flatteringly tries to explain. A sound like an earthquake interrupts his efforts as Pete’s bunk rocks with his great roars of laughter. It is just as well that Pete’s bunk is not in the Great Hall of the University of Charterhouse. After several attempts to speak, Pete finally becomes coherent.

“You’re all right, Sam!” he says at last. “You’ll do! Trying to warn us about all the ruddy trouble at ruddy Nordrach, were you? Telling us that if we didn’t watch out, we’d be organized out of existence? Is that what you were trying to ruddy say?”

Sam merely nods his head. He is speechless.

“You didn’t think, lad, that all the ruddy trouble between all those clubs at Nordrach was happening naturally, did you? It takes ruddy organization to cause all that ruddy trouble.” There is a note in Pete’s voice that one might hear from the lips of a craftsman who takes a simple pride in a job well done.

“You see, lad, with so many clubs springing up like ruddy mushrooms, it was getting damn nigh impossible to get down ruddy caves. Nobody wants to queue up for ruddy hours to get into ruddy Swildons, so we got down to a bit of ruddy thinking. We reckoned that we couldn’t stop ‘em coming to ruddy Mendip, so we decided that we’d give ‘em something else to do when they ruddy get here to stop ‘em cluttering up all the ruddy caves.”

Sam’s brain is rapidly getting into gear. He will make a member of the V.E.C. yet. He is still, however, a trifle confused. He has, after all, only just woken up.

“But how do you do it all? You’d need an army of spies to find out what was going on, and then . . .”

“Bugging!” interrupts Ron Runnit.

“Pardon?”

“Bugging, I said. Concealed mikes in every single hut. You see, my old man got the contract to build the Nordrach Estate. We’ve got the whole place wired. We run the tapes back every Wednesday in the pub. Gives us a couple of days to drop a hint here; spread rumour there; do a bit of stirring some-

where else and Bingo! They’re all at each other’s throats again, with no time left for caving. We’ve got it to a fine art.”

Sam’s brain is now shifting from third to top. He sees both sides of this shrewd scheme, but he is not altogether happy about it.

“It’s a bit unfair,” he diffidently suggests, not wishing to give offense, “Those poor beggars don’t stand a chance.”

“Yes they ruddy do!”, roars Pete. “Look, lad, proper cavers are ruddy individuals. They’d never stand for it. All we’re doing is to give all those blokes with no minds of their own something to keep ‘em out of the way of real cavers. Nobody’s making them play the damn silly game we’ve invented for them. Look at yourself, Sam. You kicked over the traces, and you’d have done it without any help from us.” Before Sam can do more than start to think about this philosophy, a more practical note is sounded by Ron, who points out that if they don’t soon get up; have breakfast; muck the hut out and get moving, the pubs will be open. Ever conscious of the more serious aspects of life, the inhabitants of the Brewery take this sound hint.

VII.

It is late on that same Sunday evening. The Nordrach Estate is once again deserted, as it was when this tale began. Its exhausted inhabitants have all gone home to recover. The girders beneath the Great Hall of Charterhouse University are slowly creeping back to something approaching the shape hopefully envisaged by their designer.

Meanwhile, in a friendly Mendip pub, the members of the V.E.C. are enjoying a convivial evening. They are relaxed and cheerful. Sam has just adroitly maneuvered Fred into buying the next round, a fact which impresses Pete more than a little. In Pete’s opinion, Sam will prove an asset to the club. Pete is listening to what Sam is saying.

“ . . . but the only thing that worries me is that whatever is worth doing, you tend to—how shall I put it?—do it, perhaps, to excess. You’re driving them too hard. There have been several nervous breakdowns this year already. What you need is a bloke on the spot who can see how things are going by keeping his eyes open and using his loaf. We can then adjust the pressure to keep them at full stretch without crippling them.”

Pete thinks that this is an interesting idea, but continues to listen as Ron takes up the conversation.

“It’s a good idea in theory, Sam but you would be the natural choice for the bloke on the spot and we can’t expect you to go back to that ghastly estate and those horrible meetings. Besides, my uncle’s firm put up the girders under the Great Hall in the university and I wouldn’t risk sitting in it for five minutes all by myself, let alone with five hundred other blokes.”

Pete Pushem is still thinking. He can already see great possibilities in having a bloke on the spot. Of course, Sam couldn’t actually be a secretary any more. He was going to need every Saturday free for caving. Perhaps he could be offered a job with the management of the Estate? He remembers that Ron’s brother-in-law is on the local council. With luck, things might be arranged.

Pete has reached an important decision. He turns round to face Sam.

“Drink up, lad. The next ruddy round’s on me!”

Several pairs of startled eyes swivel rapidly in Pete’s direction. There is a moment of stunned silence, until those present realize that Pete never does anything without good reason. Then, as one man, they bang their pots down on the bar. Pete is actually grinning as he pays up.

The V.E.C. is about to improve its technique still further.



Cave Crickets

by John Tudek

Scott and Bob exchanged glances as they peered past the rusted gate. The fence connecting the gate was of the army base variety, high chain links with lots of barbed wire. It extended for miles in both directions, blocking the road that Bob’s red jeep currently occupied. A military-like guard station lay on the far side; deserted it seemed, for ages. The road continued past the gate, curving before disappearing among the trees.

There was a sign on the gate. Scott read the large black type out loud. “U.S. Government Research Facility Number 4709. NO ADMITTANCE.”

“It looks abandoned,” Bob said.

“It certainly does. I wonder why? What did they do here? How long has it been here?”

“In the order you asked . . . I don’t know, I don’t know and I don’t know. I never even heard of this place until last week when we met that old guy in Cuddleback. I didn’t even know there was limestone in this part of the Counties.”

“There’s some. Not much to speak of compared to places like the Moonscape or the Fallen Hills, but its pretty much the same stuff.” Scott paused for thought. “Well, at least the old man was right about it being abandoned. I wonder if he was right about the cave?” He grinned. “And are we man enough to trespass onto Federal property to find out? This isn’t like sneaking by some farmer, you know.”

“Well, if we have to leave the car here, I’m not for it. Let’s look around here for a minute and see what turns up. I really can’t believe that this place hasn’t been broken into, sitting here all unguarded like this.”

Scott nodded and got out of the jeep. Leaving the fence to the left for Bob, he started following the wire wall off to the right. After a few feet he found what he was looking for, a sizable hole cut along the base of the fence. Crawling on hands and knees, Scott slipped under the fence to the other side.

“I’m through,” Scott called to his friend. Only then did he notice that Bob was also standing on the inside of the fence.

“Me too,” Bob shouted back. They each walked back towards the gate. “Let me guess,” he added when they met up. “Hole in the gate?”

“Yep. Looks like the fence is Swiss cheese. Guess this means we’re not the first. I’m also taking it to mean this place is really abandoned. Now how do we get the jeep in?”

Bob looked at the gate. “It’s gonna be hard. That stuff is probably rusted shu . . .,” his jaw dropped as the gate opened of its own accord. Creaking metal hinges came to life again as electrical current poured through long dead motors once more. Bob stared transfixed as the gate rolled open completely. “Scott, we’d better get out of here . . . Scott? Scott?” His friend had vanished.

“In here!” came Scott’s voice from the guard post. Can you believe this stuff actually works?” Bob ran to the post.

“You are going to get us into a lot of trouble one of these days, you know that,” Bob said when he entered the one room station and found Scott sitting in the guard’s chair.

“Never mind that. I found a map of the place. Here, look.” Scott handed Bob a large sheet of paper. All the buildings were clearly labeled with alphanumeric designations, though it was impossible to tell what they were for from the designations.

“Typical,” Bob muttered to himself. His eye caught a different symbol next, one he recognized instantly. A short road leading out from the main complex of buildings led down a slope to a very familiar ‘Y’ on the map. A glance at the key confirmed Bob’s guess. Cave.

“Well, now we know where to go. I’ll go get the jeep. Scott, stay here. I want to close the gates behind us.”

On a computer console somewhere a light began flashing. The man working there, a short, fit well-dressed man in his thirties immediately noticed it. “Oh great,” he grumbled. “I hate calling the chief. He gives me the creeps, big-time.” He picked up the phone and hit the speed dialer. “Yes sir. Yes, this is Finley . . . Yes, sir. Sir, we have a red light on 4709. Yes, sir. Right away. I will continue to monitor it, and report any changes.”

“See you do so Finley,” the man at the other end of the phone answered. He let Finley get off and then he dialed another number. “Mr. Steward? This is John. Get your men together. We have a break in at Alpha-prime. You know the situation, contain and reseal. I will await your report.”

“Yes sir,” the man known as Steward responded. “My men will take care of the situation. Expect us back in less than five hours.” Paul hung up and hurriedly left his Spartan office. As he exited, he hit a button alongside the door.

Many floors below him, in what could be best described as a recreation room, alarms went off. Eleven men with identical marine style haircuts rushed about everywhere to the repetitive tune of sirens. After only a couple of minutes, they reassembled in a nearby room in formation. Almost exactly as the last person got into line, the alarms ceased and a door on the opposite side of the room opened. Mr. Steward, now garbed in army khaki stepped in, clipboard in hand. One of the men called out “ten-hut!” and the entire group snapped to attention.

Mr. Steward surveyed his troops for the briefest of moments, then spoke. “Today’s objective is 4709. You know the drill. I will meet you in the vehicle bay in five minutes. ETA is forty. Captain.” Steward nodded to the man who gave the attention order, then walked out the way he came in.

“Yes-sir!” The Captain shouted, then turned to his men. “You heard the man! I want battle-suits, pulse rifles, slugthrowers, and VID helmets. MOVE!” The room cleared as each soldier hurried to his locker. Four minutes and thirty seconds later, they were in the vehicle bay, climbing into a V-TOL.

Scott and Bob mused about the research facility as the jeep bounced over deteriorating roads.

“Maybe this is one of those secret bases that they used to hide aliens or something on,” Bob grinned conspiratorially. Scott grinned too. Bob’s imagination was well known, and definitely one of the best. Scott’s wasn’t half-bad either, especially since the two spent so much time together. “If we’re lucky, we’ll find a spaceship or a corpse.”

“If we’re lucky, we’ll find a spaceship and a corpse. Of course, in the counties, I don’t think anyone would notice if space aliens landed. As long as it didn’t mess up the corn.” Scott laughed, thinking of the miles and miles of corn that was harvested each fall.

Up ahead, the forest was thinning. “I think we’re getting close. Time to be serious again,” Bob said.

Scott watched as the last trees gave way to an uncut field. In the distance Scott caught his first view of the research buildings; stumpy, drab gray

structures that seemed more at home in some developing nation than in the Counties.

Bob slammed on the brakes, pitching Scott forward, his head hitting the windshield. "Ow!" Scott complained. "Am I gonna have to start wearing my helmet when you drive?" Scott rubbed his forehead. "What did you stop for?"

Bob backed the jeep up a few feet. "Look," he pointed to the field.

It took a moment for Scott to separate the shape from the tall grasses that had since grown up around it. "It looks like a van or something."

"Yeah, and it's been tossed aside like last week's trash. That's an expensive vehicle lying there. I want to have a look at it. Come on. Bring your pig-sticker with you too." Bob got out of the jeep and walked across the road. Scott reached into the back of the jeep and pulled out a large duffel bag. Bag in hand, he got out of the jeep too.

Scott put the bag down alongside the jeep and unzipped it. Reaching inside, he lovingly removed something almost laughingly incongruous to the modern age. An ancient longsword, exquisitely carved, sheathed in a fine leather scabbard and belt that cost Scott over a month's pay. Scott clipped the belt onto his waist, almost beaming with pride. The pride turned into a blush as he realized Bob was staring at him trying hard to suppress his laughter.

"Are you quite ready, Don Quixote? Our windmill awaits."

"Shut up Panza," Scott returned. "A knight-errant's work is not to be rushed." Scott crossed the road to join his friend at the edge of the grass.

"Now, why don't you use that thing to cut us a path through the grass?" Bob suggested, pointing at the chest high field of green.

Scott unsheathed the weapon and let a few strokes fly. Grass flew away in clumps and bunches, neatly sliced in two with each swing. Even Bob couldn't help but be impressed as a path quickly formed from the edge of the road towards the vehicle.

A sharp clang and flying sparks announced some hidden part of the vehicle under the grass. "Damn!" Scott cursed.

"Watch it!" Bob warned. "You're liable to notch it doing that."

Scott looked at the blade, and shrugged. "Looks like I got lucky here. No marks."

"Let me see that." Scott handed him the weapon. "You're right. It looks very good. How much sharpening did you do to it?"

"None. I haven't done anything except polish it."

"It's in amazing condition. I would have expected some wear." Bob handed it back and turned his attention to the metal the sword hit. Pushing aside the remaining grass, he found it. It was the engine's hood.

Bob whistled. "Hey, look at this." He pushed the grass aside further for Scott to see. A fresh, six-inch gash ran across the metal. "Here's where ya hit it. Nice one."

Even Scott was amazed. "It felt like I was cutting through paper. I hardly felt it at all."

"Well, whatever you do, don't swing that thing at me. If this is what it does to metal, I'd hate to see what it does to flesh. Now let's check this thing out."

The van was a complete wreck. It had hit a boulder after it had run off the road, and it was lying tilted on its side, half in a gully. All the windows were smashed. There were several torn duffel bags inside, their contents spewed out over the rear seats. One back tire was deflated, the other was in total tatters.

"I guess the tire blew out, sending them off the road. Looks like they hoofed it after that."

"Think so? Then why did they leave all their stuff behind?" Scott looked in the back seat. "And what's with all the cigarette burns in the car?"

Bob looked at the upholstery. It certainly looked like someone had burned holes into the cloth. As he made his way through the grass, his foot kicked something. He reached down and picked it up. It was a bone, about two feet long and shaped like a femur. Horse or maybe it was a cow? For some reason he didn't think so. He was about to show it to Scott, but Scott had found a bone of his own. Now he was staring at it intently, white with fear, because the bone was staring back at him with a toothy grin.

"Twenty minutes," the Captain told his squad. "Get yourselves ready. I expect perfection."

"Yes sir!" ten voices bellowed out. The Captain nodded and made his way to the front of the VTOL. The man known as Steward was sitting in the co-pilot's seat, next to the pilot.

“Sir.” The captain saluted Steward.

“At ease,” Steward said, returning the salute.

“How’s it look, sir?”

“About what I thought. Spy in the sky is out so we have no visual. Damn electronics. We’ll have to do this the grunt way now. Old fashioned-like. I already put through to ‘Him.’ He is appraised of our situation, and understands a minimal delay for lack of eyes. Of course we are going to do it in the usual time anyway.”

The Captain smiled enthusiastically. “Yes sir!”

“Good. We’re not top dog around here for nothing. As for what recon we have, the last three reports have increased activity from ‘Tom.’ It’s been localized to just around the entrance. ‘Dick’ and ‘Harry’ have been quiet since we flamed them. But it’s Tom we have to worry about.” He pointed at a map attached to the clipboard.

The Captain looked over the map, tracing a road from the compound down the hill to a cave at the base. “Tom’s the closest, right?”

“Yes. That’s the one. Let’s hope that whoever’s trespassing is a local or something looking for fun and not a caver. If it is . . .”

“We could have a bloodbath on our hands again.”

Excitement mixed with apprehension as Scott and Bob drove up to the first building. There were six buildings in the complex, not counting small storage sheds and such. Bob counted off the buildings until he found the road that would take them to the cave. He turned down the road.

“Wait a minute,” Scott said. “Let’s check these buildings out. There might be a map of the cave inside one of them.”

“I’m not too sure I want to know what’s inside there.”

“Yeah, but if it’s mapped, then we can just take the map and go. We might not even have to see the cave.

“Okay, it’s worth a shot. But not too long, though. This place give me major chills.”

“You and me both.”

“Which building do you want to start at?”

“How about that one over there? The one with the sign that says ‘Development’ on it.”

“Sounds good.” Bob drove over to the front door. “Get your lock pick. That door looks solid.”

The door to the building was thick oak, but Scott’s blade made splinters of its center. “We have to get that thing looked at sometime,” Bob commented after Scott sheathed his weapon. “That’s just not natural.”

“Come on. Let’s look inside.” Scott gestured inward. The duo ducked and stepped inside.

The atmosphere inside was stale and dry. The two picked their way over office debris and down a narrow hallway lined with doors. The glass window on each door was labeled. They passed by several scientific sounding titles before they reached the door Scott was looking for. It was labeled ‘Development Manager.’ Scott peered in through the glass and found what he was looking for tacked up on the far wall. Bob had wandered off down the hall, looking through some of the other windows. Scott raised the sword, intending to smash the window with the pommel when Bob’s voice called from down the hall.

“Did you check to see if it’s locked first?”

Scott looked back at his friend who was again engrossed with one of the other rooms. Shrugging his shoulders, he tried the knob. To his surprise, the door opened easily. Scott entered, passing by a disassembled alarm clock on his way to the map on the far wall.

“Well?” Bob appeared in the doorway. “What’s the story?”

“It’s a big one all right. The map is wonderful. I’ve never seen one so detailed before. I’d love to see how accurate it is. Let’s take it down and get out of here.” He began to remove the tacks holding it to the wall.

“Wait a second.” Bob waved his hand for Scott to stop. “Come with me.” And he disappeared down the hall.

Scott met up with him two doors down the hall. “Look inside,” Bob said.

Scott peered in. “What am I looking for?”

“Look at the machinery. Anything mechanical. Appliances, tools, etc . . . What do you notice about them.”

“They’re all in pieces. Like someone took them apart. So?”

“Look in the next room . . . and the next . . . In every room, everything even remotely mechanical has been ripped apart, and in many cases, parts are missing. Then there’s this . . .” He opened the

door and stepped inside. Scott followed him to a place along the side wall, hidden from view by some cabinets.

“Weird,” Scott scratched his head. “It looks like a giant mousehole.” Indeed it was a perfectly formed arch burned into the wall about two and a half feet high in the middle.

“Look closer, you’ll find out the edges of the wood have been charred.”

“Charred? How?”

“I dunno. Laser maybe. Something with a lot of heat did this. It looks like they did it to go from room to room. There’s one in the opposite wall, too.”

“They? Who’s they?”

“Whoever wiped out those people in the van, I guess.”

“This is weird.”

There was silence as the two pondered the implications of the giant mousehole.

Bob broke the silence. “I’m thinking that maybe it’s time to cut our losses and head out.”

Scott nodded. “Let’s at least drive down to the entrance. It’s right off the road.”

Bob grumbled. “Okay. We’ll do a drive by. Bring the map.”

The road down to the cave was rudimentary at best. A more apt description would be to call it two poorly dug ruts in the side of the hill. The forest closed in on the two again, filling the world with shadows. Bob took the road slowly, expecting death with every bump, wondering if his jeep would make it back up the hill. Three quarters of the way down the hill, the sound of a low flying aircraft broke the forest stillness. The two paid it little mind, despite the infrequency of planes in the area.

At the bottom was a parking area, just as the map promised. A small stream passed its edges and made a beeline for the base of the hill. Scott hopped out of the jeep. Folded map in one hand, sword in the other, pausing only long enough to put his helmet on, he started down the path. Bob sighed, got his helmet out and followed his friend.

At the top of the hill, the V-TOL landed. The Captain jumped out first, rifle in hand, followed by Steward and the rest of the squad. The aircraft promptly took off again, and stayed in a holding pattern several hundred feet in the air.

“Check your weapons,” the Captain ordered.

“Building 4A has been broken into,” one of the men reported.

“Okay. First Squad, check it out. Be careful. We don’t know the situation yet.”

Three men broke off from the group and headed off for the building.

The Captain checked his map. “Squad two, check out ‘Dick.’ Squad three, check out ‘Harry.’” Two groups of three ran off in opposite directions, leaving only one soldier with the Captain and Steward.

“That leaves ‘Tom’ for us,” the soldier whispered. He’d read the reports and knew what awaited them.

“Yes it does,” the Captain answered. “Let’s hope they’re in a good mood.”

There was something strange about the cave. Scott sensed it as soon as he passed into the walking entrance. The stream flowed along the right wall, hugging it and occasionally disappearing under a ledge. Scott couldn’t quite place the odd feeling, but it both intrigued him and repulsed him. Cautiously, he stepped further into the gloom, the glow from his carbide providing more and more of his light. He pulled out the map. Up ahead, the passage narrowed to a hall. He wanted to get to that hall. There was something just a little ways down there, a symbol on the map that he thought he knew, but couldn’t place. He checked the map again, tracing his finger down the hallway, paralleling the stream until it dropped over a short waterfall. The symbol was located there.

Bob caught up with him. “What are you doing? I thought we agreed to just drive by.”

“Sorry. But there’s something here that’s been bugging me ever since I saw the map.” Scott shoved the map in Bob’s face, his finger pointing at the falls. “What do you make of that?”

Bob scratched his head. “I don’t know. Looks like the symbol for electrical power or something.”

“Power! That’s it. It’s a generator. That’s why it’s by the falls. Now what’s a generator doing here?”

“Maybe it was some sort of experiment. Underground hydroelectricity or something.”

“I’m with you up to an experiment. But I don’t think it was power related. That wouldn’t make sense. This stream is way too small.”

“What if they needed something down here to have its own source of power?”

“Or wanted to keep whatever was down here completely separate from the outside world. Do you think whatever it is could still be down here?”

“Probably. You sure you still want to find out?”

Scott grimaced. They had been walking while they were talking, and they were now getting very close to the falls. “Might as well.” Scott held up his hand to stop. “Shhh . . . Listen. Hear that?”

Bob strained his ears. In the distance he could hear the sounds of a small waterfall echoing. There was another sound, a deep mechanical drone. “The generator?” Bob guessed.

“Sounds like it. Okay. I’ve had enough. Let’s get out of here.”

The duo quickly turned back. They retraced their steps through the narrow, sinewy passage back to the big entrance hall. It took only a few minutes to reach the big hall, and at the far end Bob and Scott could see daylight pouring into the entrance. They traded a grin, thinking the worst was over. A second later, it was shattered. The floor of the room was glowing with dozens of blood-red eyes. There was no longer any danger of them finding the sinister experiment hidden in the caves. The experiment found them.

On the surface, the man known only as Steward led his squad down the slope at a brisk run. Behind him, the Captain and the soldier guarded his flanks. The packs they were carrying would have been almost impossible for most men to lift, much less run with, but their training made the packs seem almost feather-pillow light.

As they came within a hundred yards of the entrance, they stopped and put on special military goggles. Part infrared and part night vision, they gave their wearer a composite image that made the enemy show up as plain as day. The army would have killed for equipment like this, if it had known it existed.

“Arm pulse rifles,” Steward ordered. Three switches on three rifles were flipped to the on position and the weapons hummed to life. “Okay. Let’s try to avoid a bloodbath here, but just the same, be ready. Things could get ugly real quick.” He adjusted a small microphone attached to his helmet.

Meanwhile, the soldier was adjusting a flat plastic console with a large display on it. Satisfied with his work, he pointed it at the entrance. Glancing at the results, he turned pale.

“Sir,” he began. “The civilians are in there. The RUNTS are awake. I count at least thirty patterns on the scope.”

The Captain caught the import of the number first. “But weren’t there only . . .”

“Twenty in the experiment?” Steward responded. “Yes. It appears they have learned to reproduce and repair. There weren’t more than ten left after the last nosebleed we gave them. They are learning way too fast for me. Anything else?”

“Yes sir,” the soldier continued. “It looks like they have the civilians surrounded at the far end of the entrance room. I don’t see any blood yet. Wait . . . One of them is down. I can’t tell why. Now they are closing in on the other one. He’s backing down the passage towards the generator. He’s getting out of range. He’s . . .” “Yes?” Steward asked anxiously.

“He’s down too.”

Their eyes seemed almost mesmerizing to Scott and Bob. They stood transfixed as the bobbing red balls advanced. The two backed up towards the passage they’d just come, but their movement only accelerated the speed of the eyes towards them.

“Stop,” Bob whispered. “I don’t think they want us to go back down the passage.”

“Well, I’m not too happy with staying here,” Scott whispered back.

Just then one of the pairs of bobbing eyes came into the cone of Bob’s light.

“Oh my god. They’re metallic,” Bob mouthed. “They’re robots. Tiny, little robots.” He bent down to get an eye to eye look at the little bot.

The robotic creature looked at Bob with an innate curiosity that transcended its programming. It scurried forward on its six legs to get a better look at him. Bob marveled at the likeness it had to an insect, half remembering the advantages the insect design conveyed to robots. This one looked like a fist sized grasshopper.

Now it was less than a foot away and studying Bob intently. It had antennae-like ears that quivered about in the cave air. Just as suddenly, they stopped quivering and it became perfectly still. It rose up

on it's hind legs as if it was listening for something, then just as quickly, lunged forward and grabbed Bob's face.

Bob screamed, sprang up and back, clawing at his face. It held on for dear life, squeaking and chirping while Scott tried to grab it. At last, Scott got a hand on it. It panicked and sent a jolt of electricity through Scott's body, pushing him back against the nearest wall. Bob crumpled to a heap on the floor, while it jumped free and back into the gloom.

Groggy, but still on his feet, Scott could hear the clicking and chirping sounds that were the creature's language. Seeing his friend lying prone, his first instinct was to go to him. Yet the look from the corner of his eye said differently. All around him, the eyes were advancing. Scott backed his way down the passage and drew his sword. They weren't going to get him without a fight.

Immediately, the first wave was upon him, and Scott knew he wouldn't last long enough for a second. Scott felt like he was fighting locusts, the air was so full of metal. The only way he knew he'd hit one was the clang it made when it ricocheted off his sword. Even though he was backing up, he felt them coming up behind him. They were on his back now, clawing and shocking him, trying to bring him down. A leg went numb from the electricity, and he slumped against the wall. He caught one bot with the edge of his blade, slicing it in two, and for a moment he had peace. Then they were on him again, shocking him, clawing him, bringing him down like a prized animal. He felt an arm go, then the other leg. Lying on the floor, he saw the biggest of the group land on his chest, bend its head down, and sent a jolt straight into his heart.

At first, there was just darkness, never-ending absolute darkness. Then Scott became aware there was darkness and he knew that was an improvement. At its farthest edge the darkness melted, turning into gray. The gray became brighter and brighter and a flaming white ball formed at the center, growing with each passing second. It was picking up speed as it grew, its painful light burning now deep into Scott's mind and soul. He let out a silent scream, a maddening scream and if he could he would have clawed his own eyes out to stop the pressure.

Then he sat up.

Scott shook his head. His eyes, open now, looked up and saw the much reduced ball of flame burning

in its rightful place in the sky. He looked away from the sun and took in his surroundings.

He was back in the Base's village. Bob's jeep was parked nearby, seemingly intact. Bob was lying next to him, groggy, slow to regain consciousness. Scott tried to crawl over to his friend, but overcome with dizziness, fell flat on his back again.

"Rest, son." A voice came from beyond his field of vision.

Scott jumped to his feet, nearly fell down again, and managed to just hold his balance and his stomach together. A man in a plaid shirt and a wide brimmed hat was looking at him, kindly it seemed, but Scott still felt like a newborn baby cornered by a tiger.

"You're a good caver, son, but this time you went in over your head."

"What . . . happened?" Scott grabbed his head, trying to remember.

"What do YOU remember?" the stranger asked.

"I'm not sure. I think I remember some things, but they keep slipping away. Mostly I remember just feelings. Fear, loathing, and then, at the end, understanding and acceptance."

The man's eyes grew wide. He coughed, and seemed to compose himself. "Well, the human mind is the most powerful computer ever created. When it holds memories like that back, it does so for a reason. Don't let it bother you. I think you've learned your lesson here. Stay out of caves."

"But I'm a caver."

"Not anymore you're not. Caves are dangerous places."

Scott grumbled, but was afraid to counter the man. He changed tactics. "Who are you?"

"My name is Steward, and I know these parts better than anyone else around here. You were lucky that I was by when I was."

By now, Bob had completely stirred and was awake. "Where am I?" he groaned.

"Outside," Scott answered. "Are you okay?"

"I think so, though I feel like a sack of wet sponges. What hit me?"

"I can't rightly remember."

"All I remember is . . ."

"Don't try," Scott interrupted. "You'll only make your head hurt more. This here is Mr. Steward. He saved us."

Now the man was starting to look a little uneasy. "Please. Just 'Steward.' It was the least I can do. But now I have to be on my way. Son, you'll find that pig-sticker of yours in the jeep. I thought you'd might want it. If you'll excuse me." He tipped his hat and began walking down the road.

Bob stood up and moved next to Scott. The two watched the stranger until he was obscured by the shade and the trees.

"My sword!" Scott said, instinctively feeling for his side. The two stumbled their way to the car. Scott reached it first. There it lay, resting across the front seats. A robot grasshopper sat squat across it's middle.

Scott raised his eyebrow at it, then turned to Bob. "How much DO you remember?"

"Almost all of it. Before and after the shock. I wanted to cry out to you, that everything was okay, that the little critters were just trying to communicate. Poor things. Overzealous, that's all they were. They were starving down there."

"I know, the leftovers of an experiment abandoned. The trouble was, the experiment was halted before they could be given proper speech. This was the only way they knew how to talk." Scott shook his head, it was still buzzing from the inflow of information. "Thank god they talk fast."

Scott slowly reached into the jeep for his sword. The robot jumped off it and landed on the dashboard. Scott replaced the sword in its scabbard and tossed them both in the back. The robot looked at them expectantly from the dashboard.

"Don't look now, Scott, but I think it wants to come home with us."

"I think you're right." It shook its head up and down vigorously in agreement. "You can understand us?" It nodded again. "Is it okay . . . I mean is it allowed for you to leave?" It nodded slower this time, more solemnly. "What do we do?"

"I can't take him. I have two kids. They'd think he was some kind of a toy and probably break him within a week." Bob blushed for a minute, embarrassed because he was afraid he might have hurt it's feelings, then wondering if it even had feelings. "Sorry, but you understand, I have a family to take care of."

It seemed to consider this and found it satisfying. It turned its attention to Scott. "Are you sure

it's okay?" Scott found himself asking. The last thing he wanted to do was offend the group as a whole. Bot-napping was probably as serious an offense as kidnapping. Scott thought hard about it for what seemed forever.

At last he spoke. He knew, deep down inside what he would say from the very beginning. There couldn't have been any other choice for him. He'd always done things a little differently, always found another way to the same solution, always marched just slightly out of step. So what if it was one of the most extensive artificial intelligence ever created that wanted to live with him? So what if it thought it was actually alive, rather than just a really sophisticated program. Who was he to judge? "Okay," he smiled. "Why not. I've never had a roommate before. It could be fun."

The two cavers climbed into the jeep, started her up and pulled out of the compound into the setting sun. As the dust settled from their departure, the compound filled with low clicking and chirping sounds. Hundreds of red eyes crawled and hopped out of their hiding places into the clearing and resumed their ordinary lives.

Bat Dancers

by Jo Schaper

They flutter from trees, from caves
in the last blue mist; black against the dimming
light
swoop like living leaves
 night butterflies defying gravity
 zigzag
mosquito to moth
 leave air trails
like tiny kites
 erratic dancers doing sky pirouettes
 sweeping curtseys in noiseless display
until bat on black
 they fade away.

SpeleoArt

by Carolina Brook

What has art got to do with Speleology?

This was the first question I was asked when I first presented my own artwork at the 1993 British Cave Research Association Conference in Bristol, GB.

I am an artist. That is my profession and the field I work in with children of all ages. I have also been an active caver for more than 20 years. Firstly in college as a sport and means to go out, drink a lot, then slog oneself silly on a 'hard trip' the next day. It has always been brilliant fun and I have met with the most wonderful people in the process, even married to two of them!!

One day in 1985, I was on yet another photographic trip in Switzerland, when an incident occurred that changed my whole view of the cave and the life I led within speleology. A boy I knew as Koebi, from the next village to where I lived, had accompanied us to take photos with his brother. He wanted to take a photo of a passage from the level of a small pool, where a small passage went off behind and the camera could be positioned. He sent his very reluctant brother off into this small passage to do the photographing, while Koebi walked up

the main passage to pose. His brother, though, was bigger than Koebi and was having a real struggle to get into this small space, he did not want to do it. Koebi started getting a bit upset at this and made him even more determined to get the shot, as it was obviously one that was going to be difficult for anyone else to reproduce, it was also getting his brother mad and Koebi was a bit of a teaser! Eventually after a huge row and a bit of fisty-cuffs, the camera was set and the brother was still reasonably dry but precariously balanced over the pool that was threatening to overflow. Koebi was standing ready at the top of the passage when his brother opened the shutter on the camera. For some unknown reason, except to himself, he broke out into a run down the passage towards the pool, then took a huge leap into the middle and like a tidal wave the water swept over the camera and his brother. The scene was captured on our camera, but the photo was not in good condition and was eventually discarded. I painted the scene, just for fun. That was it. It was **fun**.

I continued painting things like that for several years. Scenes from my exploits. Great stuff to give to pals at Christmas, birthdays etc. as I never have enough money to get nice things, I knew a picture of an event they can relate to, always would go down well. When the editor of the BCRA publication, 'Caves and Caving,' said he wanted to see some pictures I had done years before and found another artist, Bud Hogbin the owner of some famous cave photos of the Berger, who had used them as an inspiration for her own work, he decided he wanted to publish them in the magazine. The reaction was explosive.

There were reactions positive to the very negative. My own thoughts to this was a kind of bewilderment. I had taken up caving at college as an art student and I kind of had the view that everybody went caving because they felt about it like I did. It was beautiful, there was a lot to learn and gave a curiosity as to the nature of the earths makeup. I feel so close to the earth and the basic elements of earth, water and air. I love to move through the cave. I love the grace with how one can approach an obstacle and overcome it with a few swift skilled movements. This is the art of caving. How can anyone miss that? So we have the obvious natural beauties of the cave in the calcite deposits. That is the caves

art and is beautifully captured by the photographer. How many photographers have said to me, "I don't understand art, hey, I'm not an artist." Who do they think artists are, in that case?

In 1993, I initiated ISSA, International Society of Speleological Art. A now growing group of dedicated speleological artists, not all cavers, but professional and very careful in their approach to the subject. They are very much painting artists and not involved in any other aspect. I do not run ISSA, I have left that to the experts of fine art. They know where they are going and it is not quite the same direction as me.

I wanted to explore the world and find exactly what the extent is of the interest in speleological art? It is a huge job and as yet unfinished. In order to accomplish this, I started by organising and coordinating an exhibition at the Swiss National Congress of Speleology 1995, in Breitenbach, a small town near Basel, in Switzerland. This was all done by phone call and mostly old fashioned postal system! Initially, I had expected the members of ISSA to participate, as that is why I got them together in the first place, to provide a small showpiece to a speleological public that would be of an international representation. ISSA voted unanimously, at the eleventh hour, not to have anything to do with it and I was given very strict conditions not even to mention its existence and that I was not to ever mention again my actual part in forming the group. They rewrote their own history books and I was written out. They now have their own 'Founding group.' One of the members had booked with me to go to Breitenbach, the day before the flight, she backed out and I received an extremely terse letter from the group as to what I could and could not do. I was literally left alone, rather distraught, to turn up at our meeting with the Swiss Speleological Society in Switzerland to arrange the 'exhibition with no artists.' What could I do? I asked them. I did not want to do it on my own. That would completely lose the point of it. There was no point displaying one artist with intention of introducing the subject as a valid interest within Speleology that needed to be taken seriously with the object of becoming more than just pictures at an exhibition. As far as I could see, speleoart was something that could be introduced as a simple and attractive subject that gave an understanding to ev-

eryone that speleology is a science that is also an art. **It is beautiful and it is clever.**

With the help of my team in Switzerland and their friends, a lot of writing to book publishers and magazines, I got a mix of cavers from all over Europe and one Linda Heslop of Canada, whom I'd found looking through the small ads in an old copy of the NSS magazine. We put up 17 paintings all around the main banqueting hall. A hastily arranged 3 minute light show and 10 minute talk later, I received a standing ovation and an invitation to work with a team in SubLime to coordinate for a big international exhibition that was to become a main feature of the UIS Congress in 1997. The object here was that now I knew that the artist/speleologist existed I could now reinvent my quest for recognition for speleoart. Halfway through the organising of the event, SpeleoArt was born, a natural birth and went straight into the technological age. We started with a Fax machine and a borrowed email address, the email was not used that much then, though the fax bill was horrendous it was invaluable with regards to the quick and efficient communication that we needed in order to get the exposure Speleoart needed at the congress. It all paid off. with several new artists from around the globe, all speleologists. We had trips to local caves for sketching and sign language. We discussed what we each expected of SpeleoArt.

WHAT IS SPELEOART?

SpeleoArt is what I have named this...organisation, for want of a better word. On its own. It is not a group, club or society, for the simple fact that to become one of these would immediately politicise it and I would once again have people breathing down my neck saying I can and cannot do this and that.

SpeleoArt is about gathering speleologists from all over the world who are creative. I now have my own email/fax/phone/permanent address and have a wonderful daily communication with the artists. These are the things they and I want and have already partly achieved. Now we are well onto the path of being recognised as a valid and valued part of speleological interests, we have established annual exhibitions. We have started getting small groups together to have workshops all over the world, in and out of caves! For example, for 3 months, I have

been meeting a group at our local church hall creating a scene-without-a-frame entitled, 'Dances with Stalagmites,' which is to be performed at a Speleological Arts Festival in Paris.

For 6 months I worked with another speleoartist, Caroline Jacquin-Pentillon on a huge project based on topography where we had to make several trips down a particular cave to sketch out landmarks along the route of the surveys we were working on, this involved travelling between 3 countries and a lot of faxed sketches between studios!

SpeleoArt, at the moment, has visited four countries right across the globe. The activities have been given a wary finance, by that I mean it has not been easy to obtain, but those who entertained our talent, benefited themselves financially through the publicity we attract. Our main event of course, is the exhibition, in the future, I want to be able to introduce other creative talents within SpeleoArt. SpeleoArt at my domain, will remain the database, introduction centre, contact base, help-line, organiser of new events, project manager, and artist in residence at SpeleoArt. In the countries I have visited, I would hope that they can set up their own SpeleoArt organisations, create their own finance, and work in the name of SpeleoArt's aims.

- 1) SpeleoArt is to promote the understanding of science through art.
- 2) SpeleoArt is to promote a further interest in conserving karst and cave areas.
- 3) SpeleoArt is to promote opportunities to all interested in speleological art, to encourage creative dreams to come true and to be taken seriously in their interest.

SpeleoArt exhibitions:

National Speleological Congress, Breitenbach, Switzerland. October 1995.

International Speleological Congress, La Chaud-de-Fonds, Switzerland. August 1997.

National Speleological Society Convention, Seewance, Tennessee, U.S.A.

FORTHCOMING:

National Speleological Society Convention, 'A SPELEOGEM' Filer, Idaho, U.S.A 12 -16 July 1999.

13e Festival de Speleologie, en Ile-de France, Paris, France. November 1999.

SpeleoArt sections are now:

SpeleoArt EURO-Carolina Brook

<carolina@speleoart.demon.co.uk>

SpeleoArt US-Lois Lyles

<lois@rt66.com>

SpeleoArt Gallery-Emily Davis Mobley,

<http://www.albany.net/~oldbat/art>

SpeleoArt Gallery By Speleobooks

Speleologist

by Jo Schaper

Step right up, step in here
see this formation, the Elephant's Ear,
only eight bucks, folks,
for an hour of cool. We've got
walkways, stairways, rampways
and always good Ozark entertainment.
Your guide has been trained
scientifically, knows all them facts
of caveology. Yeah, folks, it's twice
as dark in a cave at night
we know it cause we measured it
with an eighteen inch yardstick.
Directly below this point
lies the center of the earth.
That formation there contains
a million dollar's worth
of rare travertine cave onyx. Here's
the Madonna formation, and there's her son.
We have something to please everyone.
Watch your head please,
watch your step. The exotic
cave plants are to your right,
Jesse's treasure to your left.
We've got nine miles
of undiscovered passage here
but we haven't found it yet.
Guano Mountain's just ahead.
Watch where you step.

Back From The Depths

by George Clappison

I've gone down, and come back
From underground, through a crack.
It was muddy, it was wet
Just how cruddy, I won't forget.
Oh so dark without a sound
But peace, I think, is what I found.
It sends my mind, my soul takes flight
The earth supplies, that inner sight.
The sun, the moon, the stars at night
All left behind, in search of fright.
What I found, was quite a sight,
Shall I do it again? I think I might!
To search, to find, investigate
We'll all be there some day,
Unless we cremate.
Wiggling through constrictions in stone
The tighter the better, am I alone?
Ice cold water, pulses in veins
Through passages inside, that wax and wane.
Crawling and climbing and wiggling along
Pulling, pushing, do I hear a song?
The earth, she speaks, to the gathering throng
Of enchanted realms, bejeweled and adorned
The loss of which, we'll all mourn.
So honor our Mother, show her respect
There is no other, so let's not neglect.

Speleo-Theology: A Parable

by Ronald H. Jones

Half-seriously, half in jest, Jesuit-educated cavers espouse a belief that “God is a cave.” In some ways I believe this to be true. I feel this assertion accurately reflects notions that my friends and I have about God.

Speleo-theology is derived from Saint Anselm’s ontological argument stated thusly: “God is that, greater than which, cannot be said.” White caves are often referred to in imaginative and personal ways, a cave as such is not an object but a void, as antimatter is Opposite from matter.

A cave is not the ceiling above, nor the floor below, neither is it the walls nor the formations hanging from them. It continues beyond where humans can travel, on down to minute spaces between rock molecules through which water percolates, us dissolved H₂C₀₃ (carbonic acid) slowly eroding away rock until there is the void. For a cave to exist, it must be open to, and part of, the entire universe. A cavity in rock is not a cave unless it has a surface opening, it becomes a “cave” when a human can enter it.

One can interact with a cave but one cannot essentially change it. Vandals litter and deface cave formations but they cannot alter the void. Darkness, dampness and quiet prevail long after they depart. Like mountains, caves have periods of youth, maturity and old age, A cave may eventually cease to exist if filled with formations, but water will find other weaknesses in the rock and another cave will be born.

These thoughts may be inadequately expressed but many people do find proof for the existence of God in nature. Though I am not one to say that man is divine or doesn’t need God, neither will I say that man is inherently evil. The creative and good works that man can perform are almost limitless.

Caving is a strange hobby. It might be considered a figure or metaphor for descent into the unconscious, return to the womb, confrontation with the id, etc. People who find great pleasure in “finding themselves” in nature are not necessarily anti-human or misanthropic. They merely find the fantastic experience of the out-of-doors the most convincing reason for them to believe that truly, there **MUST** be a God.

High Praise Indeed!

by Clay “Dog” Abemathy

How many times have you heard it said,
“You cavers must have a hole in your head”
There could be some truth to this, I can say
There’s a hole in my head, I pushed it one day

Once past the first squeeze, it opens into a void
Was all turned around when I met good ol’
Floyd
He laughed at me good, my smile turned to
gloom
“I ne’er seen the like, ya got lost in the first
room!”

“Ya know I been cavin’ all these long years.
but I ain’t seen nothin’ like what’s ‘tween yer
ears”
He adjusted his flame, then turned to me and
said
“Boy, ya got bats in yer belfiy and rocks in yer
haid!”

SpeleoArt US

**Application for Exhibition at the
National Speleological Society Convention
July 12-16, 1999
Filer, Idaho USA**

SPELEOART



Theme for this year's exhibit: A SPELEOGEM

Explore your memories, search out your favorite places underground.

What existing creatures from beneath the earth, fill you with a curious awe?

How have nature's subterranean sculptures, captured your imagination?

Who do you most admire, as a hero of cave exploration?

Does an item used for plunging the depths, bring on that feeling of...I must use that to go there...

SPELEOGEMS Our favorite things, from the world of speleology.

Name _____ Phone _____

Address _____ e-mail _____

City/State/Zip/Country _____

Enclose color slides or prints of your work (maximum six) Number of slides enclosed: _____

Enclose a check or money order for a one-time, non-refundable entry fee of \$15.00

Approximate size of the work you wish to exhibit. Artists are limited to exhibiting three works larger than 3' x 3', or 6 smaller pieces:

Please write a few words about yourself and your inspiration:

PLEASE NOTE: while this is not a juried competition, the exhibit is thematic and we have limited space. Therefore, not all work submitted for consideration will be accepted into the exhibit. Artists will be notified of acceptance within 6 weeks of the deadline of MARCH 26, 1999. No glass in framed pieces, only plexiglas please. SpeleoArt US is not responsible for damage to artwork during shipping; all care will be taken to keep the artwork safe and undamaged during the exhibit. A 20 percent commission on all sales will go toward SpeleoArt US and the NSS. Artists who are accepted for the show and plan on shipping work to Idaho, will be expected to provide postage to cover the return shipment of their work. PLEASE ENCLOSE A SELF-ADDRESSED STAMPED ENVELOPE FOR THE RETURN OF YOUR IMAGES!

NEW EXTENDED DEADLINE FOR APPLICATIONS IS MARCH 26, 1999

Send all applications and slides to:

Carolina Brook
35 Parkside Road
Meanwood, LEEDS LS6 4LY
Great Britain

For more information, contact:

Lois Lyles, SpeleoArt US Coordinator
P.O. Box 23252
Albuquerque, NM 87192
505/286-4059
e-mail: lois@rt66.com



LINDA HESLOP