

Northeast Alabama Cave Digest  
— and —  
The Gadsden Grotto NEWSLETTER



Duncan Lill  
in  
Stephens  
Gap

RC

July 1990  
Vol. 4, No. 2



The NORTHEAST ALABAMA GROTTTO: chartered December 20, 1986 - G 321



The GADSDEN GROTTTO: chartered May 13, 1980 - G 267

# Northeast Alabama Cave Digest — and — The Gadsden Grotto NEWSLETTER

July 1990

VOLUME 4, NUMBER 2  
ISSUE 13

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To all those who helped with this issue, turn to page 53. And to all who smoke, page 53 is also for you. Issue 14 is open for a public forum on this issue which threatens to divide the nation!

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The NORTHEAST ALABAMA CAVE DIGEST is published quarterly by the Northeast Alabama Grotto, and, with this issue, is combined with the GADSDEN GROTTO NEWSLETTER. The GN began with the March/April 1980 issue and was sent out independently by the Gadsden Grotto through January/April 1989. We hope this joint effort will be a success! Subscriptions are included with membership in either grotto, or are available to non-grotto cavers for \$7.50 during 1990. Make checks for non-member subscriptions payable to the Northeast Alabama Grotto.

The editor welcomes trip reports, maps, articles, opinions, and inquiries related to caves and caving. Statements made by contributors to the EACD do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the editor or that of either Grotto's policies. Please send materials for publication to

EDITOR: Lin Guy; 817 Fairmount Ave.; Signal Mountain, TN 37377  
or pass them on to Dave Teal of the Gadsden Grotto or Robert Crumley of the Northeast Alabama Grotto.

N.A.G. ON TOUR - GROTTO TRIPS

June 2, 1990 through Sept. 29, 1990

June 2:

O'SHAUGHNESSY PIT (AL 903) - Moontown Quad

The two-mile hike to this pit is mostly level walking. There are three other pits nearby so that an entire day can be spent in this area. O'Shaughnessy is 120 feet; Doug Hill Sink (AL 114) is 163 feet and Short Drop Pit (AL 902) is 69 feet. The third pit is B.E. Cave (AL 550) and is 42 feet. All are along the Warpath Ridge Hiking Trail.

June 16:

WAR EAGLE CAVE (AL 565) - Swearengen Quad

127-foot entrance drop. There is a stream passage at the bottom: going upstream the passage averages 50 feet wide and 20 feet high, and goes that way for 2500 feet.

July 7:

NATURAL WELL (AL 5) - Huntsville Quad

A 180-foot freefall pit. About 300 feet of dry crawl, stoop, and walking passage leads back to the 100-foot high Fapp Dome where the register is located. This pit is an Alabama classic!

July 21:

LITTLE RIVER CANYON Cliff Day - Little River Quad

Bring your dinner and climb all day!

August 4:

GROSS-SKELETON CAVE (AL 224) - Swearengen Quad

A horizontal wet (but fun) cave. Great formation room.

August 18:

NEVERSINK (AL 197) - Mud Creek Quad

Huge 162-foot TAG classic of classic pit. If time permits we will venture over to Stephens Gap Cave (143-foot entrance drop you don't have to climb back out of).

September 1:

PEARSON'S PIT (GA 61) - Trenton Quad

ARMPIT II (GA 99) - Trenton Quad

GA 61 is a 199-foot drop, and GA 99 is an 83-foot pit.

September 15:

KUIZU CAVE (AL 734) - Sulphur Springs Quad

Pits of 65, 48, and 110 feet with 2189 feet of horizontal passage.

September 29:

CAGLE'S CHASM (TN MN 5) - South Pittsburg Quad

186-foot entrance drop, and if time permits, the Jeepside entrance drop of 110 feet.

...continued on page 33

TOUGH DAY AT ENTOMBED WELL

\*\*\*\*\*

\* "Where are you going Saturday?"  
\* Billy Bob Carson \* Billy Bob asked.  
\* Bobby Bob Lawson \*  
\* Johnny Mack Brownson \* I hesitated a moment, but knew I had  
\* Mary McIntire \* to go ahead with the course of action we  
\* Johnny Bob Quickmeyer \* had plotted. There was some doubt wheth-  
\* February 29, 1986 \* er the others would be willing to go a-  
\* \* head with the plan. For several years  
\*\*\*\*\* we had been plagued by a 'friend' who  
would ask to help us ridgetalk and then  
call other ridgetalkers to our chosen spot the next weekend. We had  
lost three major areas to other groups this season alone, and now our  
actions were turning desperate.

"We're going to...uh...Blood Creek in No Business Hollow. Bobby Bob and I found a multi-drop system last weekend up there which we figure would make a nice pull-down trip, although we may have to uncoil the rope to get it out the lower entrance. It's tight and there are some dangerous breakdown blocks wedged in there."

"What time you meetin'?"

I replied, "About eight at the Possum Breath Cafe in Rising Fawn. Food may be bad, but you sure get enough of the swill!"

"Well, if I'm there, I am. If I ain't, I ain't."

"If we don't see you by 8:30, we'll figure you ain't."

As soon as Billy Bob hung up the phone I called Johnny Mack. "Hey, this is Johnny Bob. Billy Bob will meet us at eight tomorrow. Now we got five."

"Damn your hide! Billy Bob will tell every egg-suckin' ridgetalker within a hunderd miles that we're over in Blood Creek, and by next weekend there won't be nuthin' left to pick over. He's done us in a dozen times!" Johnny Mack screamed with barely controlled anger. "What if he don't show up?"

"Well, if he does we'll fix his wagon. If he don't, we'll have another unmolested weekend in No Business Hollow. Heads we win, tails we win. Be there or be square." I rolled over and turned out the light.

Mary whispered, "Never thought things would ever get this bad in TAG Country."

"Well, if you mess with fire long enough, sooner or later you're bound to get scorched. Same thing happened to your old flame, Laughdin McBlaine. And by the way, no one ever found who put those silver-painted plastic hangers into his bolt gear pack, did they?"

"No, but I figured it was probably Angelo Stronghorse. That half-

wit was crazy enough to try anything, and he was always jealous of that thing Laughdin and I had going. Laughdin would be here today if he'd used one of those plastic suckers down near the bottom of Ex-con Dome instead of up near the top! Can't say I was sorry to see him take that big dive, though. I was kinda tired of him always giving me a proficiency rating, anyway. If he'd found out what the president of the Baltimore Grotto and I had going, he'd have jacked my Gibbs for sure!"

I assured Mary I wasn't going to write any egotistical bull such as Laughdin did in the April 1974 Huntsville Grotto Newsletter. We cleared the bed of a few seed ticks and drifted off to sleep.

Saturday began clear and bright, and the breakfast at the Possum Breath Cafe was especially crunchy. Bobby Bob leaned over as I was prying some egg shell out of my teeth, and commented, "It's time to leave and Billy Bob ain't showed. What are we gonna do?"

"What difference does it make? Either way, Blood Creek stays a secret."

"Shucks! I ain't gonna let them make fun of you for bein' stupid. You got more brains than all the rest of us put together!" Bobby Bob said with an embarrassed grin.

"I wish I could think of that as a compliment...shut your face, here comes Billy Bob!"

Billy Bob strutted in thirty minutes late, and although he said he was starving, we paid our bill, left a quarter tip, and hustled him back out to the car.

"Being late means never havin' to say your sorry," he said. "I was up real late watchin' that quintuple horror-rama at the Rainbow Valley Drive-in. You know, Color Him Dead, She Came From Halley's Comet, The Parson's Gone Amuck, Revenge of the Entrail Eaters, and Blood Bath Himbo..."

"That's quite enough, Billy Bob, we've just eaten," I interrupted hurriedly. "Anyway, looks like a storm brewing, so we better get packing."

After a four-mile ride over rough terrain in our four-wheel-drive vehicles, we parked and walked 500 feet vertically up the mountain. Mary explained to Billy Bob that seven ropes were required for the cave system unless you 'pulled-down'.

"I need to be outta here by five, cause I didn't tell Tulip where I was goin' today, and we're supposed to go to a Twisted Sister concert tonight at eight," Billy Bob explained. With that we began our descent of the first two drops of 51 and 35 feet.

Several hours were eaten dragging gear to the third drop of 115 feet, during which time I noticed the water picking up in the stream. The 115 was a classic TAG pit, dome-shaped and completely freefall to a wide ledge. When we pulled the rope down to this ledge, Billy Bob asked why we didn't rig the third and the next drop of 165 feet with one rope.

"Guess you wern't here when Angelo tried that. When he got to the bottom of the 165, he gave the 600 foot rope a yank and it fell to this ledge and became snared in that little crack over there. His only option was to prusik back up to the ledge and free it, but halfway up he got to bouncin' too much and managed to wiggle it loose...and the rest is history!"

Billy Bob and I were the only ones left on the ledge as I got rigged in. On the way down I played my light along the hundred-foot stalactites lining the pit and thought what a pity it was that TAG cavers no longer played fairly with one another, sneaking into each others territory and "stealing" each other's caves. Seven TAG cavers had disappeared thus far without a trace. We were prepared to make it eight!

When I hit bottom I hollered up to Billy Bob to stay away from the rope because it had worked loose, and before he could think twice I had pulled it down behind me. Mistrust had finally reached a maximum! He could choose between free-climbing 115 up or 165 feet down; neither one seemed very likely to be successful. We set out for the 66 foot drop nearby, ignoring the screams from high above.

"Now we can finish ridgewalking Blood Creek and not have to worry about anybody finding out about our project," Johnny Mack hollered.

The descent of the 12-foot drop was uneventful, and we pulled the long rope down from it and walked over to the last drop of 22 feet. Mary looked down at it and looked back at me, saying, "Looks like Laughdin had an ounce of brains more than you!"

When I got over to where she was standing and could see down, I saw in horror that the pit was filling with water because the loose rocks we had squeezed under the previous weekend had fallen. The tiny crawl out to the lower entrance was tightly sealed!

JOHNNY BOB QUICKMEYER

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#### N.A.G. ON TOUR

...continued from page 30

October 1 through the spring of 1991:

There will be many trips into TAG Country, especially ridgewalking. This is the best time of the year for finding new pits and caves.

So stay in touch with your crotto; it's your lifeline to the Land Down Under.

Your Chairman,

Jerry Reeves

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## LECHUGUILLA AND ME

by Michael A. Ray

NSS # 23006

April 1, 1990

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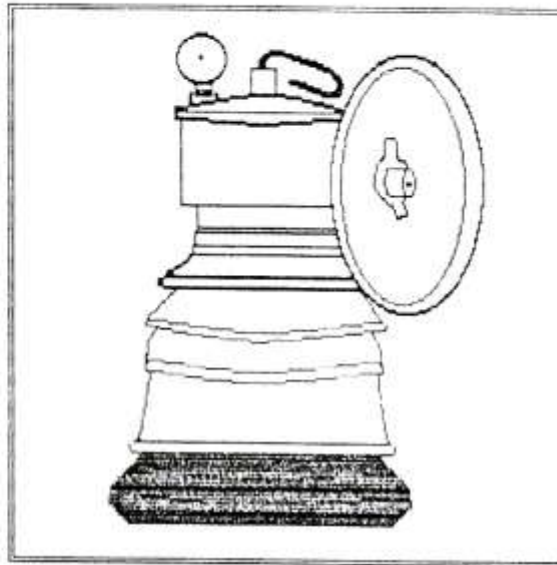
December 20, 1989, a -17° wind chill and packed to the gills in an '89 Mitshubitshi truck, Jim Loftin, Michael Ray, Mary Anne Ray and one screaming cat headed west for the adventure of a life time. Jim and I were members of the Winter '89 Lechuguilla Cave Project Expedition. Our hopes for the trip were to make photographic documentation of areas in the cave that have never been photographed before. Jim had been asked to photograph some areas that were difficult for most cavers to get to and areas which most photographers did not care to photograph. The memories, experience and friends we gained from this cave trip will never be matched. This is a trip report covering the basics of each cave trip and the gear carried. To discuss the beauty of the cave and all the features we saw would take an entire volume.

The trip to New Mexico was cold - very cold. Temperatures across the nation were hitting all time record lows. We had planned to camp along the way,

but decided to use hotels due to our fragile female companion and the need to stay in the best health (i.e. we whimped). Jim remembered he might not have left enough antifreeze in his truck in Alabama. It seemed we mentioned that everyday.

We arrived at Carlsbad Caverns expedition headquarters a day early and had to wait until the next day for the field houses to open.

Claiming our bunk beds the next day, we began getting gear organized. Things seemed to move slow at first. It wasn't until the following day and after an introduction to the expedition leaders, rules of the cave explanation and orientation that the cave trips began.



This was a new experience for Jim and myself. Neither of us had ever been on such an intensive trip which covered 30+ hours of continuous underground caving. We were filled with questions. How much food? How much water? Is there water inside? How far to



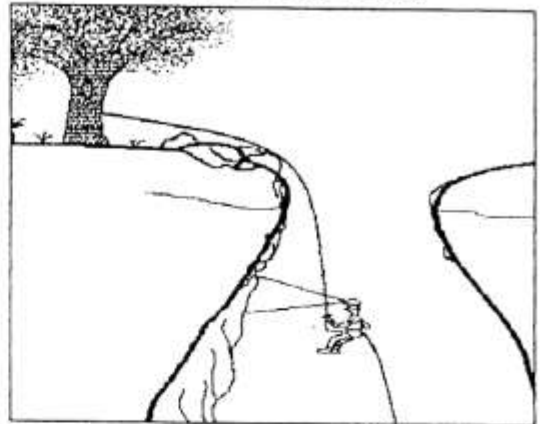
the first water in the cave? What is the best sleeping gear? What to wear? We had no Izod caving apparel and feared rejection from potential "preppy cavers". Some wore shorts, others wore pants, while others we discovered wore nothing at all. After getting into the cave for a few hours we realized that good hard-core TAG cavers should never have to worry about their abilities in any type of cave. It reminded me of the first NSS convention Jim and I attended in West Virginia when we were just beginning to cave. There too we were unnecessarily concerned of our ability.

Several expedition groups were formed on the morning of December 23. Most were headed to the eastward extension. After signing out and indicating approximate return times, the groups headed to the cave in intervals. The staggered trips were important to keep the waiting to a minimum at each rope drop.

"WE ARE SURROUNDED BY INSUR-MOUNTABLE OPPORTUNITIES."

POGO

### The First Trip



The leader for the group Jim and I were assigned to was an energetic, 18 year old named Evan Gerring from Wyoming. He proved to be an expert rock climber and knew the cave well. The other trip members included Sherry Lity from Birmingham, Alabama and Stewart from Pennsylvania. We were assigned an area in the Little Chicken Room to check for new leads and finalize that section so that the survey for that area could be considered closed.

An early gloom over-shadowed the trip Jim and I were assigned to. We had two virgin light systems and a virgin camera tripod to pack. These items should have been blessed by the great cave god before the trip. We paid dearly for our sins. Even our packs resisted our efforts to get everything gathered and arranged in them.

The following is a list of supplies I packed. Later in this report I list the items packed in the second trip.

Comparing the two lists will show what was needed or not needed in the preliminary trip.

1<sup>st</sup> Trip Supplies:

Wheat lamp, a micro-Petzl, an eight-pack of AA batteries for the Petzl, 3 pint bottles of granola-raisin mix, 3 quarts of water (2 with gator-aid mix), one 12"x12" foam pad, polypropylene top, bottoms, gloves and hat, garbage bag, space blanket, can of beanies-weenies, small first-aid pouch, carbide lamp, 8 oz. bottle of carbide, candle, matches, carbide parts, spare light bulbs, mini-mag lite, dry t-shirt, camera tripod for Jim, and standard vertical gear with the addition of a figure eight. All this was packed in a standard size TAG pack from Lost Creek company. A jacket and wool cap were carried to the cave entrance for after the trip. These were left at the entrance in a garbage bag.

We all loaded into my truck and headed to the parking area for the cave. Our first problem occurred due to the unblessed virgin gear. Jim could not find his spare batteries for his Petzl lamp. He had to leave it behind and use the old faithful Wheat Lamp. The cave entrance was about a mile hike and we could feel the altitude difference in our breathing. Having come from an area only 400 feet above sea level to the New Mexico mountains was a real burden on my air intake.

The first eight hours of the trip was a solid sprint through the cave to reach the area we

were assigned. Most of our vertical gear could be left at the bottom of Boulder Falls pit in the Colorado Room. I only carried a Petzl safety, one Petzl ascender, seat harness, a safety line cow tail, and a figure eight. This lightened our load considerably.

As we ran the safety line along the Freak-Out Traverse, which has a 90 foot drop if you made a wrong step, we learned of Stewart's limited vertical experience. Evan told everyone to hook on with a cow tail to the safety rope. Even though a short safety line hooked to a seat harness may be called everything from a safe to a horse tail to a cow tail, most cavers would have an idea of what is needed at such a traverse without knowing the terminology. Stewart had no idea of what we were talking about. I took the time to instruct him. As he was about to round the boulder which had been reported to move in the first crossings made, he began to un-clip his carabiner. I yelled in disbelief and had him stay clipped in. This was the most hazardous part of the traverse and I was horrified at seeing him un-clip.

The virgin camera tripod began its un-christened revenge. Somewhere along the Great White Bastard some of the tripod parts came off. Because my Tag Pack was not very large the tripod had to ride strapped to the outside of the pack. The Bastard is a very tight, sloping, rough down-climb. You really just slide down it and hope for a smooth landing.

There was a safety line rigged, but to clip on it just slowed you down too much. The tripod took some punishment on the ride down. This area was rerouted on a later trip by another team which proved to be a very grateful re-route. Going up the narrow, slick slope of the Bastard took a lot of time during expeditions. We knew where it had gotten it's name.

We found our first water near the Lebarge Borehole and refilled our containers. Stewart had vertical problems again at See-Saw Canyon where we had to use a Texas system. Since he used a Gibbs system he was unfamiliar with converting to a Texas system. This sloping climb took several hours to climb due to his inexperience. The next break was at the Chandelier Ballroom. The beauty of this room deserves a complete trip report all its own. We finally reached the Chicken Little room and decided to take a short nap. We slept for about 3-4 hours. It was a very uncomfortable nap. Not much sleeping went on. Jim and I continued past the Chicken Little room to photograph some areas while Evan and the other group continued to look for passages. Our photographic efforts were hindered because of little cooperation from the group and from Sherry who constantly complained about the photo efforts. She had evidently misunderstood the dual purpose of the trip according to our conversation with Pat Kambesis after the trip.

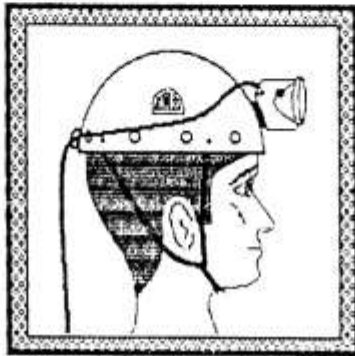
I became a bit upset when Evan told us that this trip was mainly to check out our ability to handle the cave. I do not know if this was a standard for the expedition, but I feel a lot of time and effort could have been expended on other areas if the project heads had reviewed resumes and references a bit more carefully. Some of the people on the expedition should never have been allowed into the cave. A better review of credentials is necessary.

We exited the cave after over 30 hours with little incident. I had some difficulty just after the culvert. We were told that the winds were blowing above 40 miles per hour in the culvert. The culvert was put in place to hold the dirt back and maintain a passage into the cave. Jim and Evan were at the open pit when I got up the culvert and closed the gate. The route to the pit was to the left with a short rope/chimney climb of about 30 feet. I could see their lights and hear their voices straight in front of me. Being very tired and not thinking, I continued to climb toward the lights. I had not realized that their were two ways to reach the cave gate from the open pit. The climb I was doing had many loose rocks which I pulled down on top of me. I realized my mistake and exited the correct route after clearing the rocks from the top of the gate so the others could get out. We arrived at the truck at about 8:00 pm.

During this trip I found that

my TAG pack was insufficient for this type of cave. Fully loaded this pack tends to stick straight up when you lean over instead of following the curve of your body. In most caves this would not matter, however, in a cave filled with formations it proved detrimental to the cave formations. Each time I would bend over to go under a feature the pack would stick upward and hit formations.

#### The Second Trip



Jim and I went to El Paso and spent Christmas with Mary Anne's sister and refueled our energy. After a two day rest we were ready to get back in the cave.

This trip was a pure photo-trip with David Huges from Colorado, Paul from England, myself, and Jim. Our assignment was "The Void" and the "Land of the Lost". Our crew was more experienced and we expected the trip to run smoother. David Huges was the trip leader since he had been on previous expeditions to the cave.

I had changed over to a Jansport Day-pack with a waist

strap added for stability. This system really made a big difference both in comfort and maneuverability.

#### 2<sup>nd</sup> Trip Supplies:

The only difference in supplies from the first trip was the change in packs which would hold the tripod inside the pack, only 2 quarts of water, 2 foam pads instead of one, Reeses-cup candy for more energy, and only 4 AA batteries. The mini-mag light died in the cave. I found the main bulb broken when we settled down in the cave to sleep. The spare bulb in the bottom of the mag light was also broken. I will not carry this kind of light again.

This trip covered most of the same route as the first. At the Chandelier Ballroom we took a left turn instead of going straight. This took us towards the "Land of the Lost" area. Gypsum hair longer than six feet could be seen on the walls on this direction.

Jim and Paul photographed many areas. One side trip took the group down to a lake. It was "naked caving" time for most of the group. This proved to be one of the most spectacular areas of the cave I was told. A rubber raft was there to take Jim and the photo gear across the lake. We were told that this water was un-potable, but we had found some water in another area.

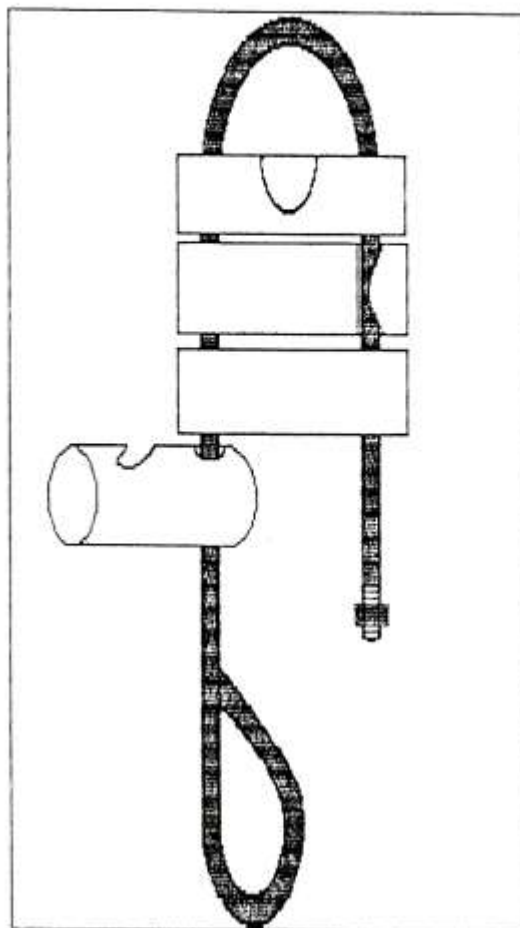
This trip was very tiring and I used all my energy I had left. It was a few hours

longer than the first trip which was again over 30 hours. Jim and I had learned to sleep a little better on this trip. I decided this had to be my last trip of the expedition because my energy reserves were getting too low. What should have been a quick, easy 10 minute climb out at the Boulder Falls 150-foot pit took me closer to 15 minutes. I was very tired. Packing more high energy foods may have helped. Before the trip I ran two miles everyday in leg weights. This trip required getting in better shape than that due to an elevation change which meant less oxygen to my muscles.

Jim went on another photograph trip down Apricot Pit. When he got out I returned from El Paso to pick him and the rest of the gear up. We headed toward Alabama on New Year's Eve. The weather was much better for the drive back than it had been going to New Mexico.

Sitting around a campfire at a KOA campground in some forgotten town, we drank a toast to the New Year and to an unforgettable cave. As the fire light reflected in our eyes and we stared back in a daze, memories of never-ending passages, pure white formations and new friends drifted through our minds like a dream.

Was it real?



## The Spirit of the Bat

By: Tim Pope

Somewhere in the hills around Glencoe, Alabama there lives an all knowing force that strikes fear into the heart of even the most avid caver. This is a presence so vast and powerful that most just try to sneak in without disturbing it; yet some derive great pleasure in knowing yet refusing to acknowledge its existence.

It was on a trip to a cave that would be known as "Star Driver" that I first heard about the spirit that seemed to induce sheer madness into some while others simply became perplexed. I heard stories of near psychotic behavior, of crushed carbide lamps for no apparent reason, of normally safe cavers taking unnecessary risks that proved near fatal.

David Teal told us about the spirit, but Jerry and I were somewhat skeptical even though the week before David had "lost the handle" on a bolt driver and let it fall to the bottom of a virgin pit without which there was no way to reach the inner sanctum of the cave.

Just as we stepped into the trees I began to notice an almost gothic appearance to the hillside. The moss and foliage growth was abnormally abundant even though the weather had been mild. The boulders around the cave looked as if the earth had simply burst open waiting for us, and a cold mist crept out the main orifice.

The rappel to the mouth of the main pit was uneventful and the echo from a couple of tossed rocks inspired J.R. to begin hammering on the bolt driver with great fervor and it wasn't long before the pit was bolted and ready to be

violated.

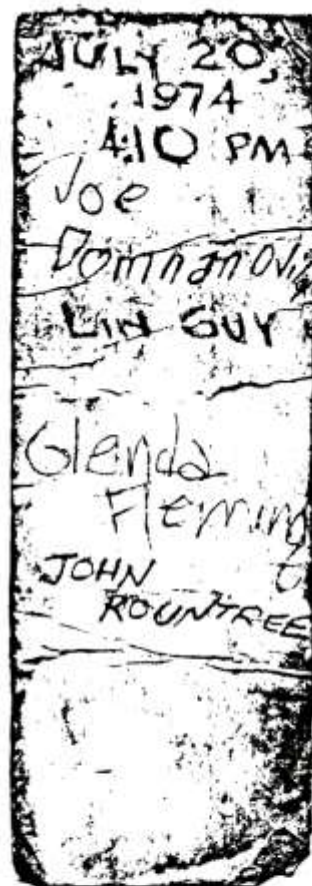
It was a tight squeeze into the main channel and even more restricting once on rope backing into the chasm. Suddenly I had a strange desire to reconnect my pack, I had just secured it to my harness but I unhooked the pack connection and dropped it straight down the shaft where Jerry and David sat waiting. The pit was a magnificent sight and there was almost a glow to the walls as I carefully lowered myself into the pit.

Since it was a blind pit and I had almost killed my companions I thought it might be best if I started climbing out. Making sure my pack and the push rope were very securely attached to my harness I started my ascent. Reaching the mouth of the pit my ascender got twisted somehow and I found myself releasing the straps on the pack to slide through the tight gap in the rocks. Just as I released the buckle holding my pack on I realized that the rope was also connected to this tether and while I was thinking the rope was crashing down the pit on my friends. As I slid through the second crack in the wall and let them know I was off rope, I heard J.R. yell, he said he was o.k. but when he got to the top of the drop I could see the front of his pants leg was soaked with blood. He explained that he had climbed onto the small ledge near the bottom of the pit and had slid off cracking his shin on the edge in the process.

Convinced of the hex (psychological or not) I decided that it was best if I got out alive, so I climbed as fast as I could to the top and crawled out into the warmth of the sun, moved a safe distance away and waited for my comrades to exit.

The spirit may not exist and all the things that have happened in those hills might just be coincidence, who's to say; however, this particular phenomenon has made me evaluate some things and of these things I am convinced of at least three:

- 1) You can never be too careful.
- 2) Don't tempt fate.
- 3) Beware the spirit of the bat...



SIXTEEN YEARS AGO THIS MONTH: After Gerald Moni, Beth Elliott, and Joel Chamberly headed for the entrance, the above four managed to find the elusive Steward Spring Waterfall and sign their names on a candy wrapper. The register paper was pretty much waterlogged!

#### WHERE THE CAVERS CAVED...

- Oct. 15, 1988: Ridgewalk north of Fisgah  
Jerry Reeves, Glenda Fleming, Lin Guy
- Oct. 22, 1988: Ridgewalk from I-59 to Keener; Trapped Turtle Swallow  
Jerry Reeves, Glenda Fleming, Lin Guy
- Oct. 30, 1988: Rusty's Cave  
Jody Baker, Glenda Fleming, Lin Guy
- Nov. 5, 1988: Ridgewalk from Keener to Tidwell Gap; Surf  
Zombie Pit; Tidwell Gap Cave  
Jerry Reeves, Robert Cruzley, David Lee,  
Philip Hamrick, Glenda Fleming, Lin Guy

WHERE THE CAVERS CAVED...continued

- Nov. 20, 1988: Stephens Gap Cave (horizontal novice trip)  
Lynda Joyce Tucker, Jerry Reeves, David Teal,  
Ian Rains, Glenda Fleming, Lin Guy
- Dec. 24, 1988: Ridgewalk South of Hope Cave; Christmas Eve Hole  
Jerry Reeves, Lin Guy
- Mar. 19, 1989: Ridgewalk Above Hurricane Blowhole (in I-59 cut)  
on Fox Mountain  
Glenda Fleming, Lin Guy
- Mar. 25, 1989: Ridgewalk Above Delta Truck Stop on Fox Mountain;  
Hurricane Cave  
Duncan Lill, Jerry Reeves, Glenda Fleming, Lin  
Guy
- May 6, 1989: Hope Cave; Portersville Bat Cave  
Tom Coker, Shirley Sotona, Jerry Reeves,  
Robert Crumley, Glenda Fleming, Lin Guy
- May 7, 1989: Coon Creek Cave  
Glenda Fleming, Lin Guy
- May 14, 1989: Kelly Girls Cave  
Tom Coker, Shirley Sotona, Lin Guy
- May 21, 1989: Ridgewalk Near Kelly Girls Cave, Griffin Falls  
Jerry Reeves, Glenda Fleming, Lin Guy
- June 10, 1989: Pleasant Valley Cave, Buzzard Point  
Jerry Reeves, Lin Guy
- June 11, 1989: Crow Gap Cave  
A.J. Brown, Jerry Reeves, Glenda Fleming,  
Lin Guy
- June 17, 1989: Tidwell Gap Cave mapping  
Jerry Reeves, Glenda Fleming, Lin Guy
- July 1, 1989: Bicentennial Cave  
Jerry Reeves, Glenda Fleming, Lin Guy
- July 8, 1989: A.J. Cave  
Ann Guy Caudell, A.J. Brown, Jerry Reeves,  
Lin Guy
- July 29, 1989: Flutter Futter Bat Cave mapping  
Jerry Reeves, Glenda Fleming, Lin Guy
- July 30, 1989: Bluff River Cave, NSS Convention  
A.J. Brown, Jerry Reeves, Glenda Fleming,  
Lin Guy



- Aug. 4, 1989: Bluff River Cave  
Bill Dragoset, Lisa Dragoset, Renee Dragoset,  
Jessie LeBlanc, Kathryn Guy, Lin Guy
- Aug. 6, 1989: Tidwell Gap Cave mapping and the Timber Rattler  
Jerry Reeves, Lin Guy
- Aug. 12, 1989: Flutter Putter Bat Cave ladder trip; Neversink  
A.J. Brown, Jerry Reeves, Glenda Fleming,  
Lin Guy
- Aug. 26, 1989: Coral Falls Cave; Hidden Stream Cave  
Robert Crumley, Jerry Reeves, Glenda Fleming,  
Lin Guy
- Sept. 3, 1989: McCallie Cave mapping  
Jim Smith, Wayne Prince, Lin Guy
- Sept. 10, 1989: Diggings Pit  
Jerry Reeves, Glenda Fleming, Lin Guy
- Sept. 16, 1989: NAG's Head Hole  
Steve Turner, Tommy Wright, Robert Crumley,  
Jerry Reeves, Lin Guy
- Oct. 7, 1989: The Sinkhole  
Jerry Reeves, Robert Crumley, Glenda Fleming,  
Lin Guy
- Oct. 14, 1989: Wynne's Pit; Jeffries Cove Cave  
Jerry Reeves, Glenda Fleming, Lin Guy
- Oct. 21, 1989: Jeffries Cove Cave  
Tom Coker, Teresa Williams, Glenda Fleming,  
Lin Guy
- Nov. 11, 1989: Ridgewalks on West Side of Sand Mountain North of  
Norwood Cove  
Jerry Reeves, Glenda Fleming, Lin Guy
- Nov. 18, 1989: Ridgewalk Near Ryan deGraffenreid's Crash Site on  
Lookout Mountain  
Tom Coker, Nicholas Coker, Teresa Williams,  
Robert Crumley, Jerry Reeves, David Lee, Lin  
Guy
- Nov. 25, 1989: Ridgewalk Near Collinsville  
Robert Crumley, Jerry Reeves, Glenda Fleming,  
Lin Guy
- Dec. 17, 1989: Ridgewalk From Tatum to Bible Gulf  
Marion Smith, Gerald Moni, Lin Guy

LOST CREEK CAVE  
and  
MYSTERY BONE CAVE  
By: Tim Pope

Holidays are a wonderful thing and since it was Friday the Thirteenth it was especially nice to receive an invitation to bolt and bounce a virgin pit. The original group included Jerry Reeves and me, so we were glad to see Lin Guy Glenda Fleming at the truck stop that morning.

The drive toward Guntersville by way of Morgan's Cove was very pleasant as the temperature began to rise and in no time we came to a dirt road which trailed off between the ridges and, after clipping in the four wheel drive, eventually came to a parking spot some one hundred yards from a cluster of deep sinks, two of which were open at the bottom.

The biggest of the two sinks had a very large opening down a steep slope and there was obviously a good bit of water seepage even though it hadn't rained in about a week. The handline rope was rigged to a big tree above this hole and the actual entrance was just to the right.

With some quick maneuvering it is possible not to get completely soaked as you weave through the seepage and start down the very muddy slope to a dual shelved area. Here the rope for the first drop is rigged to a nodule, and secured to the end of the handline. At the bottom of the ten foot drop, the water drains off down a small bed and disappears underneath some rubble (Never mind that suspiciously human-like bone in that stream bed).

As you turn the corner there is a steep mud slope

with formations resembling the sides of the grand canyon that just have to be seen (please keep to the path). After climbing the slope you come to a relatively flat area where we spent a great deal of time waiting on J.R. to drive the now infamous Petzl bolt into the wall as some of the most bizarre names for caves in history resounded through the passages and thankfully faded away. This main passage narrows considerably and you can squeeze through the crawl to the edge of the pit, but there is really no room here to get up right to rig on to the rope.

If you climb up, you will find a bolt to your right and the pit is through the opening at your feet. It is about twenty-eight feet down to the ten inches of mud standing in the bottom of the pit (it should be noted that the end of the room where the rope hangs is the deepest in mud and if you swing out from the wall you can keep from having your boots sucked off of your feet. There are several items of interest on the way down so keep an eye out.

At the bottom of "don't get any on you pit" you find the single biggest area in the cave. There is a small passage leading off to the right as you walk out of the pit area, but it is small and tapers down very rapidly. The dome type ceiling is nice and adds an ominous air as you start the treacherous climb to the rubble that constitutes the end of the cave.

Making a speedy exit to the front room, (I was getting

very interested in what the other sink had in store) I stood in the dripping water (not advisable) and waited on the rest of our group. Not wanting to seem too anxious, I made my way to the outside and was followed very shortly by J.R. who made an obvious bee-line to the pit. Before I could get my gear situated, J.R. had the rope rigged and was starting his rappel into the thirty or so foot pit which I will leave nameless since as

far as I know it is still unnamed.

The pit is very spacious for its depth and the waterfall in the back makes a very nice prism for the sun which shines in late in the day. Keep an eye out for the turtle shells in the bottom of the drop, (and don't mind that bone either).

A very nice holiday indeed and some really pretty caves to boot. And some of the hardest limestone in the world, just ask J.R..

EDITOR: Unfortunately because both of us or was explored and mapped by Jimmy Harrison and others from the Birmingham crotto on December 17 and 18, 1951, but since we went to so much goldang trouble to survey these holes ourselves, we drew the maps up anyway!

Arer't we glad the times have changed since Nov. '51 when Nat. Geographic ran this picture of "collectors" collecting these formations from a cave in Arizona!



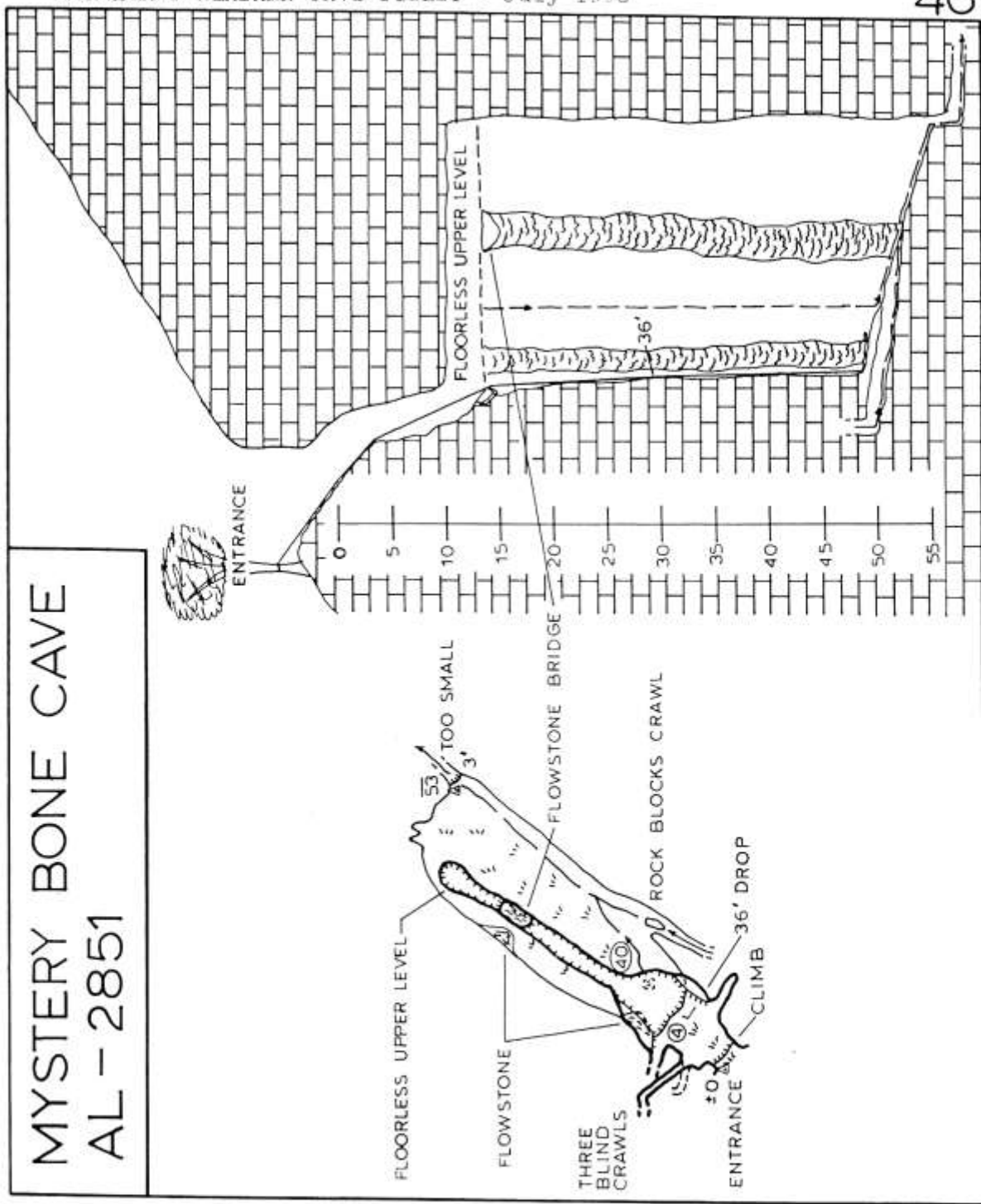
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National Geographic Photographer Willard R. Carter

#### Collectors Emerge from an Arizona Cave with "Icicles" of Calcite

Water, dripping from the ceilings of limestone caves, builds layers of calcite, the basic ingredient of limestone. Eventually the deposits grow, icicle-fashion, into weirdly beautiful stalactites and stalagmites. This cave in the Santa Catalina Mountains yielded clusters of aragonite crystals (lower right). Calcite and aragonite have the same chemical formula (calcium carbonate), but differ in crystal structure.

# MYSTERY BONE CAVE AL - 2851



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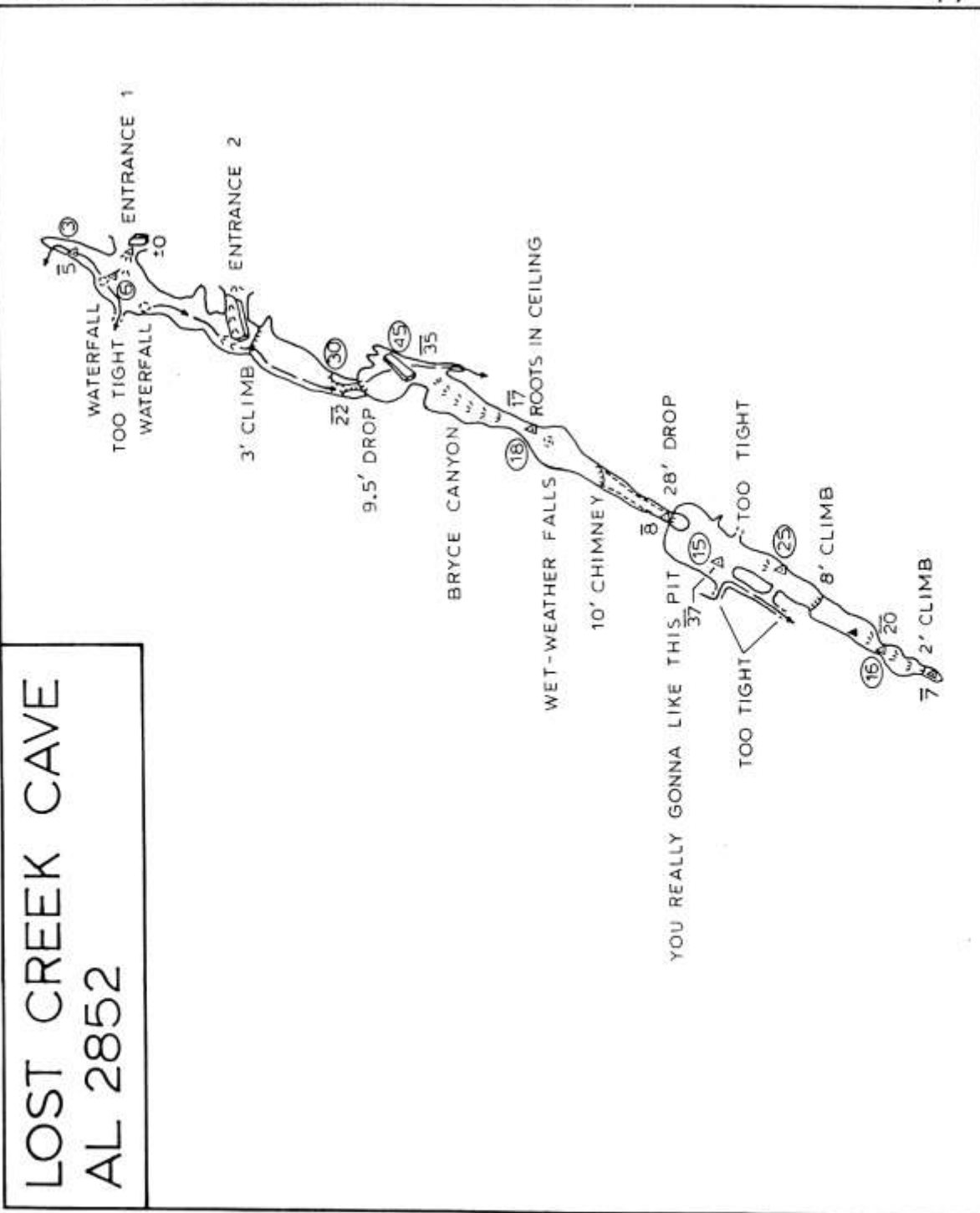
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METER

0° GN MN  
1983

TAPE AND COMPASS  
SURVEY (grade 5) BY  
LIN GUY  
GLENDA FLEMING  
OF THE NSS  
APRIL 7, 1990

LENGTH: 28 FEET  
VERTICAL EXTENT:  
53 FEET

Copyright © 1990



**LOST CREEK CAVE  
AL 2852**

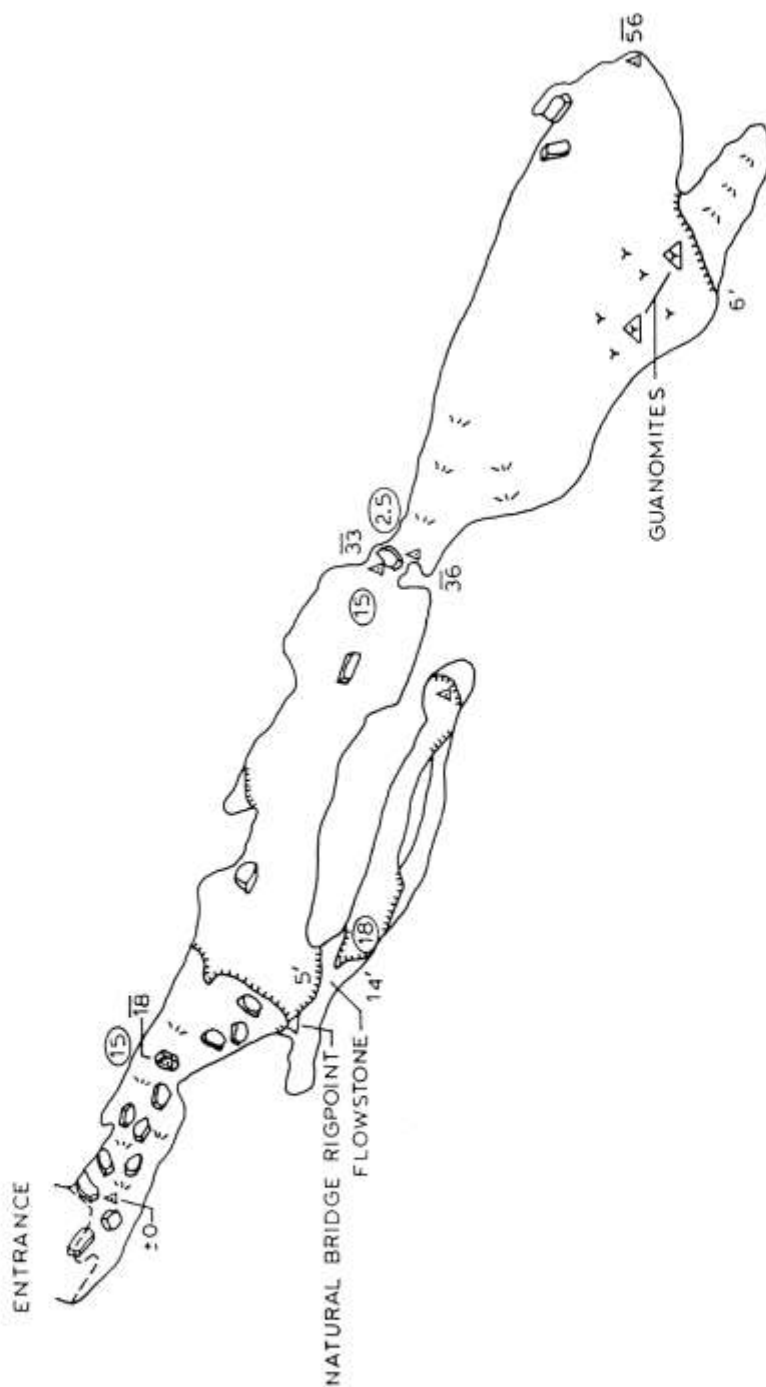


TAPE AND COMPASS  
SURVEY (grad & 5) BY  
LIN GUY  
GLENDA FLEMING  
JERRY REEVES  
TIM POPE  
OF THE NSS  
APRIL 7, 1990  
APRIL 13, 1990

LENGTH: 199 FEET  
VERTICAL EXTENT:  
37 FEET

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FLUTTER PUTTER BAT  
CAVE - AL 2896



TAPE AND COMPASS  
SURVEY (grade 5) BY  
LIN GUY  
GLENDA FLEMING  
JERRY REEVES  
OF THE NSS  
JULY 29, 1989

LENGTH: 229 FEET  
VERTICAL EXTENT:  
56 FEET

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## IN SEARCH OF CRUMBLING ROCK

November 14, 1989

Sometime in 1971, Jerry Reeves showed Marion Smith the sinkhole where Crumbling Rock Cave is located. (Richard Schreiber later closed the cave for unknown reasons). Marion had been trying to find Crumbling Rock for three or four months before our party set out to look for it one Saturday morning. Ken Pennington implied he could go straight to it...maybe...?

After getting permission from the current land owner, Jerry and Marion discussed the difference between locations on their topos, 1,500 and 2,000 feet. No one was sure of the correct location; after all, it had only been eighteen years!

We found Nine Pit Cave first. Several of us who fit went in, finding names and dates from 1914 and 1932. Down at the bottom lay an old pick, a sledge hammer, a kerosene lantern (with kerosene still in it), a wedge, a pry bar, and two coke bottles, one broken and one intact. One spot looked like a lead. I pushed it to a very tight little spot where I wouldn't fit, so I snaked back out. We exited the cave and went on.

Jim Youmans and Ken Pennington found a small sink at about 1000 feet on around the mountain. They said Nicolas Coker might be able to fit into a small hole at the bottom, but no one thought it was Crumbling Rock. Marion and I started digging. Marion came out, dirt all over him, fussing as usual. I rigged a 50-foot rope and snaked down the hole in short order, finding a small breakdown room (15 x 20 feet x 15 feet high) and a hole in the floor at one end. "It goes, Marion!", and I was gone. This passage was hands and knees, sides and belly, twist and turn, TIGHT! It ended after a while over a 15-foot climb down into a limestone room, then back into a small crawl leading to a 40-foot pit. This is where I was sure someone had been before. An old style piton with a ring on it was driven into a crack at the top. Marion was just behind me, raising Hell about how I had managed to get through that small hole above the climb down.

"Hey, don't worry about that, we need a push rope!" Marion was already on the climb down. He said he heard Teresa not too far behind. Teresa and I went back for a push rope, returning with two ropes. Marion rigged the drop (a very good rig, too, I might add). Marion and Teresa down-climbed. I went down on a 'biner. After a 10-foot climb down and a small wide crawl, the cave changed to a 30-degree slope, left to right, with hard crumbling mud rock. Marion found a virgin passage and pushed it about one hundred feet. Marion turned and asked where my back-up light was. Well, it was back in the truck...!! I was getting hungry anyway, so we started out.

It was sunset when we came out of the cave. No one could agree. Had we been to Crumbling Rock or not?

Tom (Bushbaby) Coker

## RUSSELL WHITE, INEZ, and HARTLINE CAVES

David Nunnally told me he found Hartline Cave on November 21, 1969, and said we should go over and take a look at it and do a map of it, if it didn't have one. Well, we did...and we did...and it didn't, but organized cavers had known about it since at least 1963, when they wrote about it in The Georgia Spelunker (see page 55). It was not turned into the Alabama Cave Survey until the early '80's. But in the July 1989 NACD (page 53) we reported three other caves, all over a mile long which weren't turned into the ACS immediately. In fact, the original explorers might never have reported them to the survey, except for Wolfhead Caverns, which became known as Stanley-Carden. Recently, Bill Lorde and others mapped Upper T.R. Cave, first explored by Marshall Fausold some time around 1960 (see pages 28-29; SERA Cave Carnival Guidebook 1990). I wonder how many more caves are out there, forgotten by their original explorers and lost in time!

On March 25, 1990, Richard Lentz and I mapped 184 feet of passage in Russell White Cave, 71 feet in Inez Cave, and 337 feet in Hartline Cave. At the same time, David led Richard Moore, Bill Smith, and Laura Vinson up to Moses Tomb; later in the day they dropped in on us as we mapped Hartline. Bill became interested in diving the 11.4-foot deep pool just inside, and planned to return with tanks. Many old names were copied from the walls of Russell White and Hartline, and the oldest dates found were 1841 and 1842. The formation room mentioned in the SERA report on page 55 was pretty nice, nice enough for someone to have harvested some of the stalagmites. One of the damaged ones was carried as far as the tight mini-canyon just south of the Natural Bridge (see map, page 52), where it became wedged in a slit in the floor and discarded. Richard and I managed to extract it, not without much difficulty, and carry it back where it formed...now called the Refurbished Stalagmite.

On April Fool's Day, Glenda Fleming, Richard, and I finished the Hartline map, squeezing out 712 feet and finding the cave extending a depth of 77 feet (18 feet above Entrance 1 to Entrance 2, and 48 feet to the pool's surface, plus water 11.4 feet deep). During the course of the day, Glenda wandered up the hill from Russell White Cave and stumbled into a nice 35-foot pit with no passage in the bottom. Bill Smith eventually dove the pool and found no significant extension of Hartline Cave below the water line. I showed the owner of the caves the names we copied from the walls and his mother joined us. They knew who quite a few of them were. Hartline is a family name of early residents of the area.

LIN GUY

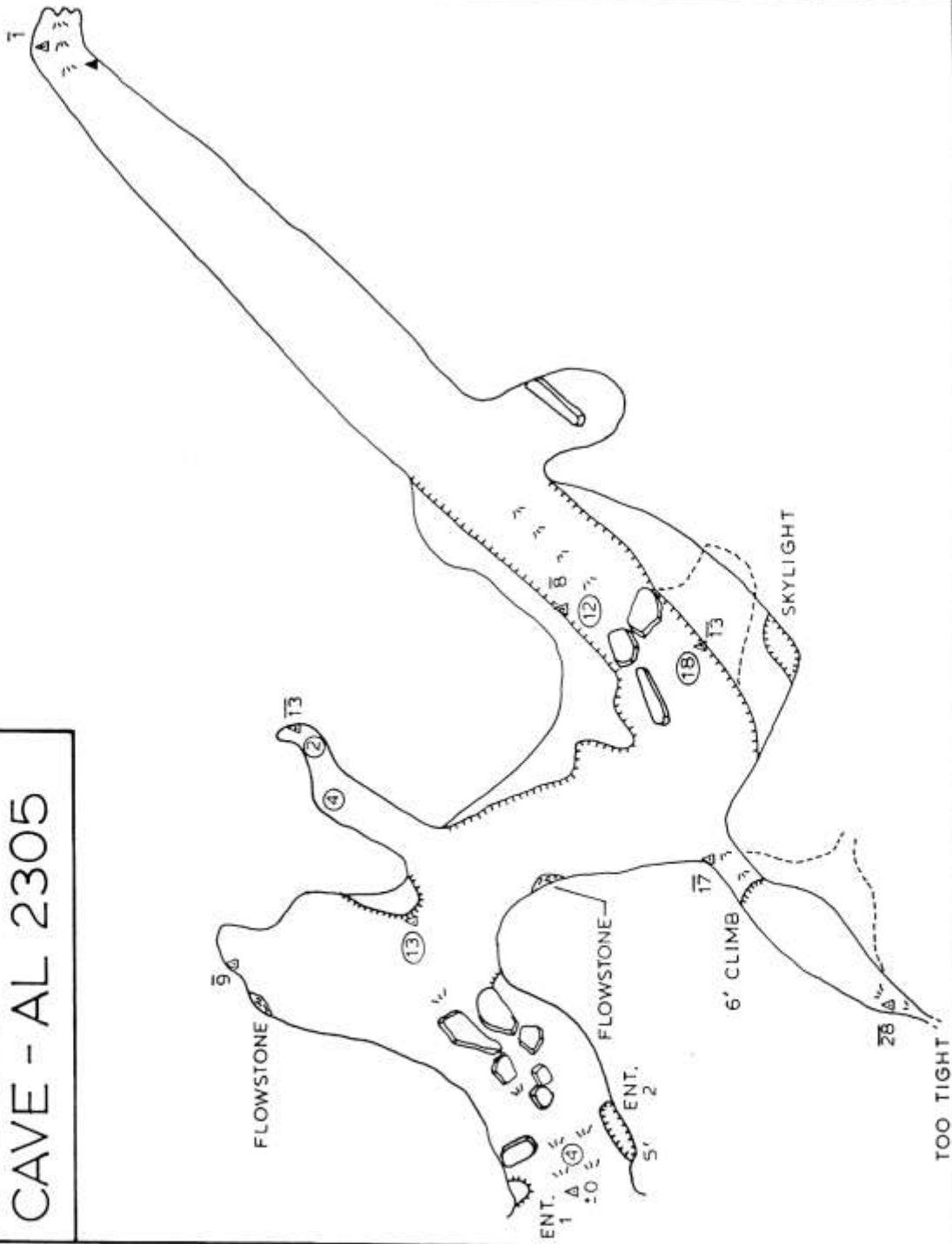
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Welcome to new members of the NORTHEAST ALABAMA GROTTTO:

47. RICHARD LENTZ; 3428 Mansfield Lane; Snellville, GA 30278;  
ph. 404-979-9048
48. GARY R. PHELPS; 226 High Avenue; Oshkosh, WI 54901



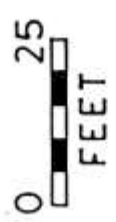
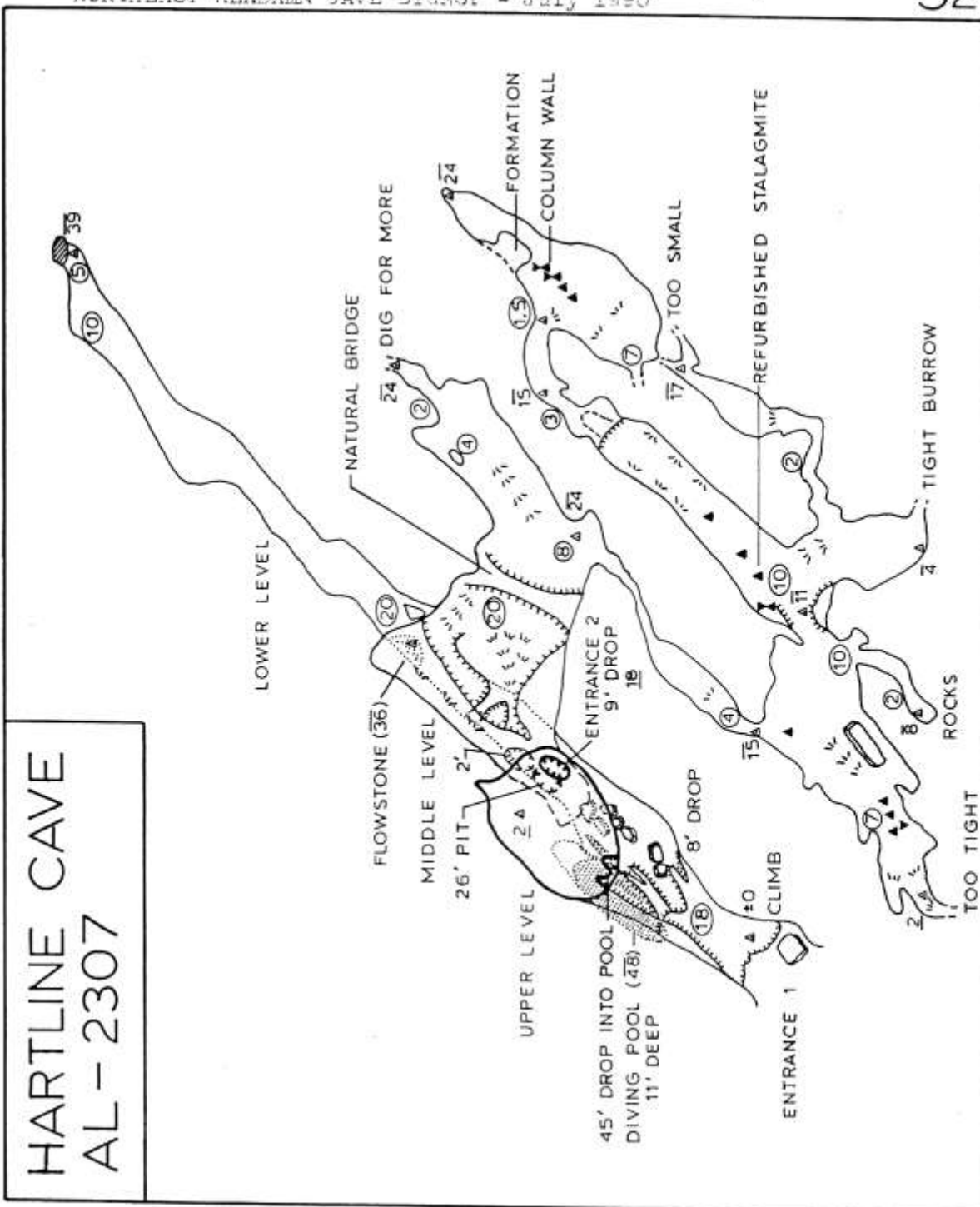
# RUSSELL WHITE CAVE - AL 2305



TAPE AND COMPASS  
SURVEY (grade 5) BY  
LIN GUY  
RICHARD LENTZ  
OF THE NSS  
MARCH 25, 1990

LENGTH: 184 FEET  
VERTICAL EXTENT:  
28 FEET

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TAPE AND COMPASS  
SURVEY (grade 5) BY  
LIN GUY  
RICHARD LENTZ  
GLENDA FLEMING  
OF THE NSS  
MARCH 25, 1990  
APRIL 1, 1990

LENGTH: 712 FEET  
VERTICAL EXTENT:  
77 FEET

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## FROM YOUR EDITOR...

Thanks for the continued support of the newsletter, currently a joint one with both the Northeast Alabama Grotto and the Gadsden Grotto. This actually means that it would be nice to have equal participation from members of both clubs in determining the content. And to start things off in the right direction, Marvin Jenkins of the Gadsden Grotto has kindly agreed to be the editor of the third newsletter of 1990 (Issue 14), and Tim Pope will try his hand on Issue 15. Seriously guys, I think you'll be surprised at the rewards of accepting this task, but some of the folk need a friendly reminder that it would be nice to publish a big article on Entombed Well or some equally fascinating place. Don't be bashful to prod occasionally, especially when the stack of articles gets thin.

The purple heart for writers this time goes out to Robert Crumley, for the nice cover shot, Jerry Reeves, for the list of trips, and article writers Johnny Bob Quickmeyer, Michael Ray (Gadsden Grotto), Tim Pope, and Tom Coker. Two additional articles by Tim are being held over for Issue 14. Thanks to Glenda Fleming for again helping with some of the typing, and to Michael and Tim for doing such a professional job on their own PC's.

As I mentioned at the last NAG meeting, it might be a good idea to come up with a new name for this newsletter, perhaps one that doesn't refer specifically to either grotto. If anyone has a suggestion, let me know. We might even offer a door prize for the winning idea. The combined name as it now stands is too long to put at the bottom of each page.

## ...and WHY ALL THE CIGARETTES?

Why are people who have been exposed to all the evidence that these damn little paper rolls can...and Will...kill you before your time, still taking up this obnoxious habit? I come from a family of smokers and we've had to bury a number of them who died from tobacco-related diseases. Due to a life-long history of respiratory and allergy problems, it has become an extreme aggravation to me to eat in public places, although the environmentally sensitive ones do offer a ten-foot "smoke free" table section for those who prefer it. Caves are one of nicest places to escape to for a few hours a week for some clean fresh air (guano and a few air-borne molds notwithstanding), but increasingly somebody's got to screw it up with a little smoke. A few years ago I saw half the members of a grotto trip sneak off from the rest to escape those that can't spend an hour at a restaurant without lighting up.

All these people who blow smoke on us are people we know and love. We just want you to think of others and not inflict all this bad health on the rest of us. And we want you to believe the findings of scientists who have determined that there is nothing good which will come out of smoking these damn little things for the rest of your life!

## TERRIFIC TRIO

By: Tim Pope

When was the last time you got to visit a rest area, fix a car, shower in gasoline, visit Wal Mart, get a bargain, cross a creek, climb a mountain, walk in the rain and bounce three pits in one day? That's the way it was April 14, 1990 in the land of the cavern dwellers. Jerry Reeves, Jim Lofton, Steve Turner and I all made history that day by successfully surviving this masochist marathon. It started out peacefully enough, we were going up above South Pittsburgh to do three pits that were close together and are considered classics by some. Just as we got into Tennessee, J.R.'s car began bucking and jumping like a wild horse and we had to pull over at a rest stop to try to find where the problem was. A quick word of advice, don't stand near the fuel pump when Jerry takes all the hoses off and asks you to look at it while he tries to crank the engine. After tinkering with the motor for a while we decided that the problem could only be fixed with a fuel filter, so we hopped and skipped down the interstate to the nearest Wal Mart for some replacement parts.

We shopped around and soon found what was needed to correct the problem, along with batteries, grease, etc. that we desperately needed to fulfill the mission. The machine was resurrected in just a few moments and there was plenty of time to grease the running gear of the Toy as well. After all the excitement it seemed like only seconds

before we pulled up at the edge of a stream that was our next obstacle in our quest.

After crossing the stream in became increasingly obvious that this ridge was more like most mountains I had seen except more steep. It seemed as if one foot in length rendered one foot in elevation, and some of us were nearing exhaustion some fifty yards up the "trail". After losing the trail and wandering around the woods for a while Jerry bo rang out around the ridge and Steve and I walked with great diligence in the direction the cry came from but as the next call sounded, we both realized it was coming from a different direction. We Chased the voice until we finally saw J.R. and dragged ourselves up the ridge where he was.

If you follow the trail like the guide book tells you, it will take you directly to Clod Hole, and you can see Will Well and Rhonda's Well easily from there. The pits are spaced some forty feet apart along the same elevation, and are very accessible. It is convenient to rig all the pits at once if you wish and walk between them. Although my favorite is Rhonda's, I would recommend them all especially since there are in such close proximity to one another.

I went for depth first, and so as the name Clod Hole suggests there was water and dirt, a striking combination that makes for some fun mud. The worst of it comes as you are crawling in, make sure to keep the rope pushed over to

the left or it makes for an interesting situation when it comes to climbing out. It was sort of spooky being in this pit, I think it was the way the walls looked like pipes for a magnificent pipe organ sculpted out of mud, and the way there was huge air spaces behind these slabs of mud and the potential for a mishap that did it. When I reached bottom I changes over immediately and came back up so as not to be another mud statistic. There were loose rocks around the entrances to both Clod Hole and Will Well and I think it was probably due to the heavy rains that we have had this year. Will Well is a very interesting little drop, and will deceive you about its depth, it looks much deeper than it actually is.

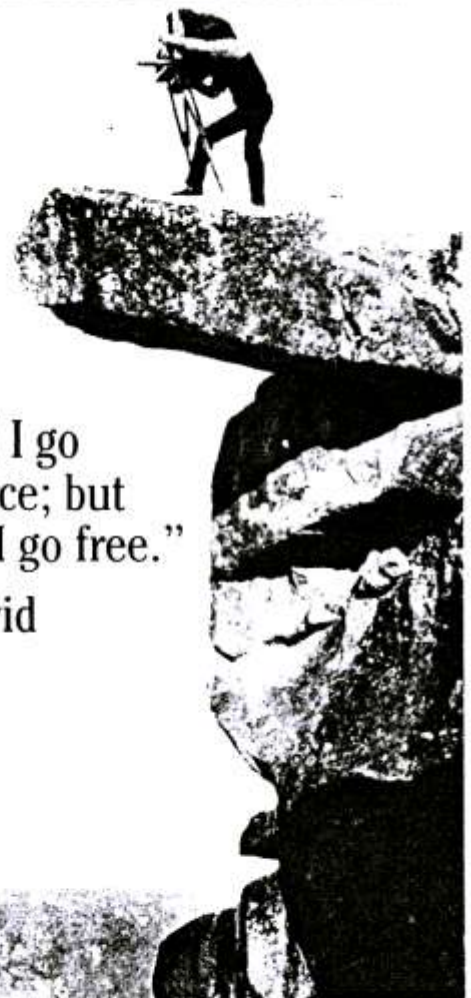
Rhonda's Well is my favorite of the triad and I can't say enough about it. It has a very complex structure with smooth flowing wall formations and chutes and sections leading off all the way down. Not much cave here its just a pit but it is worth climbing the hill for by itself. I really enjoyed this trip more than I thought I would, and I can't believe that there are three pits of this caliber so close together anywhere, but now I have seen them with my own eyes and I definitely would like to go back.

It had been threatening rain all day and by the we crossed the creek it had started to increase in intensity but even with the rain it was a nice trip and I look forward to doing these pits again.

## HEARTLINE CAVE, AL 2307

"This cave is located in the valley floor at the base of Fox Mountain near the Georgia-Alabama line. This is another cave Fred Byers showed us last year; he said he hadn't been in it in over ten years. Heartline is a small cave with two main passages; one is walking, one involves a little crawling. It contains some very attractive speleothems, one of which is a two-foot soda straw with a root growing down the middle. The ease with which the cave is negotiated makes it ideal for small children and the lazy photographer."

The GEORGIA SPELUNKER ; SERA Issue  
1963 ; page 29



"Eastward I go  
only by force; but  
westward I go free."

-Henry David  
Thoreau

The NORTHEAST ADKALIA CAVE...  
Signal Mountain, TN

