

Gadsden Grotto

NEWSLETTER

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P. O. Box 2092



January 2000

Gadsden, AL 35903

Reinstated!

As an NSS Grotto
with full rights and privileges
as of
November 4, 1999

On November 4th, 1999, the Gadsden Grotto received a letter from Evelyn Bradshaw. Evelyn is the chair person for the National Speleological Society's Internal Organizations Committee which governs the Grottos across the country. In this letter, Evelyn stated that she had verified all submitted executive board members for the Gadsden Grotto and found all to be active members of the NSS. This was the only real barrier to the reinstating of the Gadsden Grotto. The next statement in the letter was as follows:

"... reinstating the Gadsden Grotto as an NSS grotto with full rights and privileges at once."

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FROM THE CHAIRMAN
MICHAEL A. RAY

Thanks to the efforts of many people, the Gadsden Grotto is officially recognized by the National Speleological Society

once again. I appreciate the letter, signed by all the grotto, of thanks for my work in getting the grotto going again. I will be framing that letter because of how much it means to me. However, the credit is misplaced. If it had not been for the interest expressed by Derick Mitchell, we may have never done anything. His phone calls and e-mails caused several of us to realize it was time to reunite the grotto. A great deal of thanks go to the original founders of the grotto also. Those that signed the original constitution of the Gadsden Grotto took the first steps on April 14, 1980. They were David Teal (11982), Emily Deavor (20633), William Garrett (20055) who is off rope and missed greatly, Bobby Whorton (20552), and Jimmy Harrison (10993). These were the pioneers of the grotto and walked many mountains and added numerous caves to the survey.

A final thanks must be given to those that kept in touch and up to date with the caving community. David Teal, Jim Loftin, and Bobby Whorton were cavers from the Gadsden Grotto that continued caving without a grotto to stand behind them. Without their constant presence in the caving community the grotto would have never reunited.

Look out...we're back!

Gadsden Grotto Newsletter is published on a semi-regular basis by the Gadsden Grotto of the National Speleological Society (NSS) as its official newsletter. All material submitted for publication is subject to editing for clarity, grammatical considerations, and to meet space limitations. Any opinions expressed herein are those of the author(s) named and do not necessarily represent the views of the Gadsden Grotto or the NSS. Unsigned material may be attributed to the editors. Reprint permission provided that both the author and the source are credited. The Gadsden Grotto Newsletter is distributed free of charge to Gadsden Grotto members and in exchange for the publications of organizations with similar interests. All materials for publication should be submitted to Michael A. Ray at 12725 Co. Rd.31, Centre, AL 35960 or email to mray9@tds.net.

Gadsden Grotto Membership List

**Not Available for
Internet Viewing**

Want to know more?

Come to the
Gadsden Grotto
Meeting at the
Gadsden Public Library
254 College Street
When: 2nd Tuesday
of every Month
Time: 6:30 p.m.



Trip Reports

Gross-Skelton Cave Trip

Nov. 20, 1999

by: Kelly Keener

The group consisted of: Kelly Keener, Mark Medlen, Jude Powers, David Teal, Jim Loftin, Derick Mitchell, Rebecca Buckner, Gary, and John & Cristie Pauldula.

Mark and I invited Jude Powers to go on this trip with all of us. As we were walking up the trail to Gross-Skelton Cave, David Teal stopped us at a hole in the ground with water 2" to the top next to the riverbank and said "Well folks here it is!!!" Everyone was waiting for him to plunge in first. Then he said "No, this is not it. The cave is up here." Everyone was somewhat relieved that he was just joking. As we approached the opening, the water was at least hip deep (to me). Gary plunged in first then me. We approached the first crawl space before everyone else met us. The water was breathtakingly cold but it was the greatest feeling. After we went through the crawl space into the big room we were sliding all over the place stepping in mud and in some spots it sank to my ankles, and made it hard to walk. We ate lunch at the flow stone choke at the end of the big room. As we were leaving the entrance, I stepped on a loose rock that caused me to fall into the c-o-l-d



water. Mark and Gary heard me yell all the way from the back. I am sure glad that I didn't fall in the water on the way in the cave. This is one of my favorite caves. It has such beautiful formations, and it had crawfish the size of my fingers.

Gross-Skelton Trip

According to
Derick Mitchell

Saturday, November 20, 1999, the Gadsden Grotto despite the rain gathered at Shoney's in Gadsden to decide what adventure awaited us for the day. David Teal, Jim Loftin, Gary Stewart, Dr. John

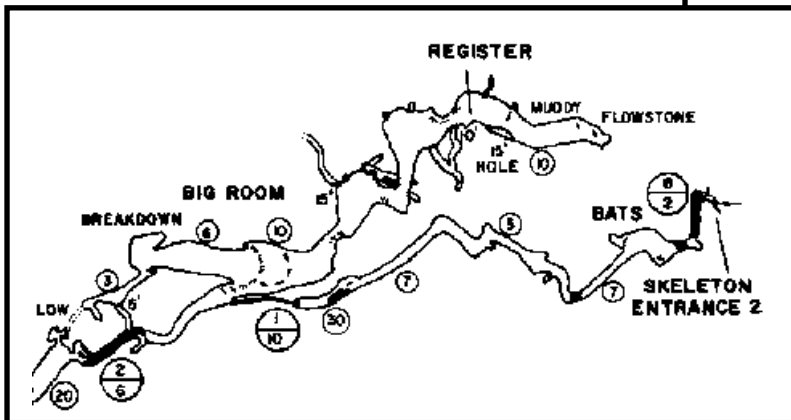
Padula, Crystal Padula, Derick Mitchell, Becky Buckner, Mark Medlin, Kelly Jones, and Kelly's friend Jude set forth on a trip to Gross-Skeleton Cave. Yes... Gross-Skeleton. Let it be said that we took no heed to water being a problem. Because some of the group was first time cavers, we used the upper entrance (Skeleton entrance). Water was low, but still required wading up to the thighs. Luckily, polypros and cave suits were available to all. Water was a bit frigid, but the group was still willing to "wade on."

We made our way through the stoop passage and quickly found our way to the breakdown bypass. As we entered the big room, I don't think anyone other than David and Jim could comprehend just how large and well decorated this room would be. Soda

Trip Reports Continued...

straws, bacon, draperies, and you name it, it was here for the eyes to see. And don't forget the mud... As we looked down into a fairly deep pit, David pointed out that some of the footprints in the mud at the bottom, were his. These were left there in the early 70's during the time that the cave was being surveyed.

be careful. As we approached the cave I looked down into the pit. Warm air was blowing out of it. Being my first real vertical cave, I went down 66 feet and it was awesome. My adrenaline was pumping as I was checking out all the beautiful formations around me. No problem going down. Actually I did great! When I got to the bottom we went down the first climb-down and then explored



the crawl way to the right. I had to remove my helmet in order to slither through the mushy clay crawl way. If I was a pig, I would be a happy one in the sunshine. I was muddy from head to toe. I think I may really have "Mud In My Blood." I even got a nasty taste of it, but I was having too much fun to even think about that. We went on into a passage that was muddy and full of formations and was large enough to walk. There were cracks and holes going everywhere. We

I don't know about the footprints, but David's knowledge of the cave was incredible. You could tell he had spent a lot of time in this cave. Jim Loftin also seemed at ease in this beautiful cave. I think we will see some of Jim's photography work in the future, entered in competition.

surveyed 208 feet of passage with much more passages to survey. We stopped at the edge of a 50 foot pit. In this cave I was albino spiders, cave crickets, and a giant millipede skeleton about four inches long. We also saw a formation that looked like frost crystals. It was an enjoyable rush climbing Mitchell system up against the pit wall. Now I am ready to drop the next pit and bottom the cave.

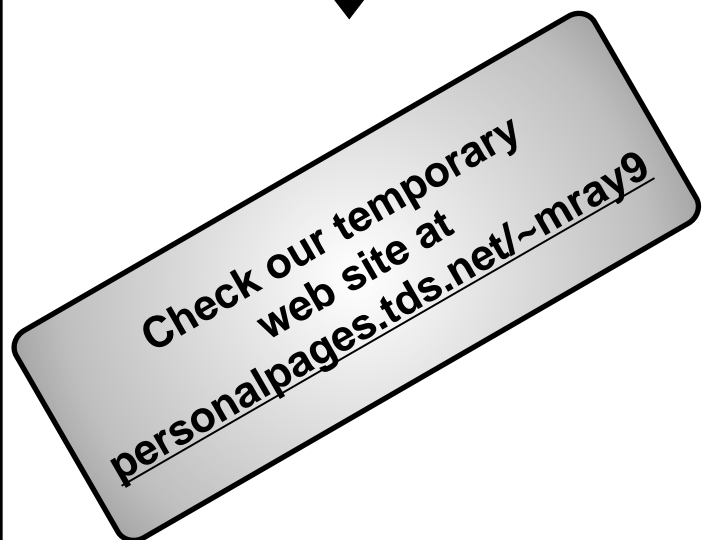
We all made it out of the cave safely and made it home for the hot showers and the Alabama/Auburn football game. The chili that night never tasted any better after the icy waters of Gross-Skeleton.

Derick Mitchell & Becky Buckner

The Devil's Well
by: Kelly Keener Jones

The couple that attended this trip was: Kelly Keener and Mark Medlen.

On Sunday morning November 28 we headed over to St. Clair County. We arrived at Mr. Abercrombie's house at 10:15 A.M. We asked permission to walk through his backyard to go to the cave. He told us to just

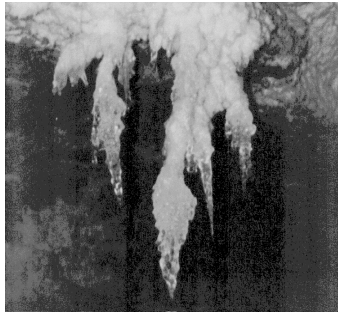


Trip Reports Continued...

Fantastic

by

Derick Mitchell



About three years ago, I was talking to my boss and caver friend, Mack Butler, about the people who bounce pits like Surprise and Fantastic. At that time the idea of 404 and 586 foot rappels seemed far from realistic to me. As I built a "vertical resume," the numbers kept climbing and so did I. Along the way, I made a lot of new caver friends and what seem unrealistic started to not only be feasible but a "must do."

July 17, 1999, I bounced Surprise. The 404 foot climb beat my deepest climb of 292 feet (Deep Well), by 112 feet. I thought I would never get out. It took me 35 minutes.

November 27, 1999, I bounced Fantastic. The 586 foot climb beat my deepest climb, 404 foot, (Surprise) by 182 feet. I knew I would get out... but when? Thirty minutes later I was out.

My climbing partner at Surprise was Glenn Ledbetter, at Fantastic Jeff Lynn climbed with me. At the top of both climbs, I was greeted by Micah Sims, David Drake and Patrick O'Diam. The Fantastic trip also included Harold Calvert, Tim White and Wendy Bowen. The Surprise trip included Ryan Madole and Evon Thompson.

Sharing an experience with good friends is what makes caving special. Thank you for being there with and for me.

I know that to some of this forum, these pits are warm-ups for trips to Mexico, but for me they seemed impossible. Thanks to everyone in TagNet for the vision and desire that your trip reports inspire in me.

Going Caving?



The Gadsden Grotto maintains a "Gone Caving" contact line. If you are leading a cave trip, or looking for a cave trip, call this number and let us know. The line is also designed for safety. Although you may not want any "extras" on your trip, please let us know where you are going for safety.



**Call David Teal
at 256-546-4526
before 8:00 P.M.**

Got News?

We need your trip reports, old trip stories, book reviews, technical cave information, first aid topics....

Anything and Everything (cave related)

Send your articles by mail or e-mail. E-mail attachments must be in ASCII (or plain text format). Send photographs or sketches for the article when possible.

TO:

**Michael A. Ray
12725 Co. Rd. 31
Centre, AL 35960
E-mail: mray9@tds.net**

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P. O. Box 2092
Gadsden, AL 35903

Calendar of Events

- January 11 - Gadsden Grotto Meeting
February 8 - Gadsden Grotto Meeting
March 14 - Gadsden Grotto Meeting
18 - Orientation to Cave Rescue. Elkins, West Virginia
April 8 - Alabama Cave Survey Meeting (?date unsure?)
11 - Gadsden Grotto Meeting
May 9 - Gadsden Grotto Meeting
June 13 - Gadsden Grotto Meeting
26 - NSS Convention, Elkins, West Virginia

