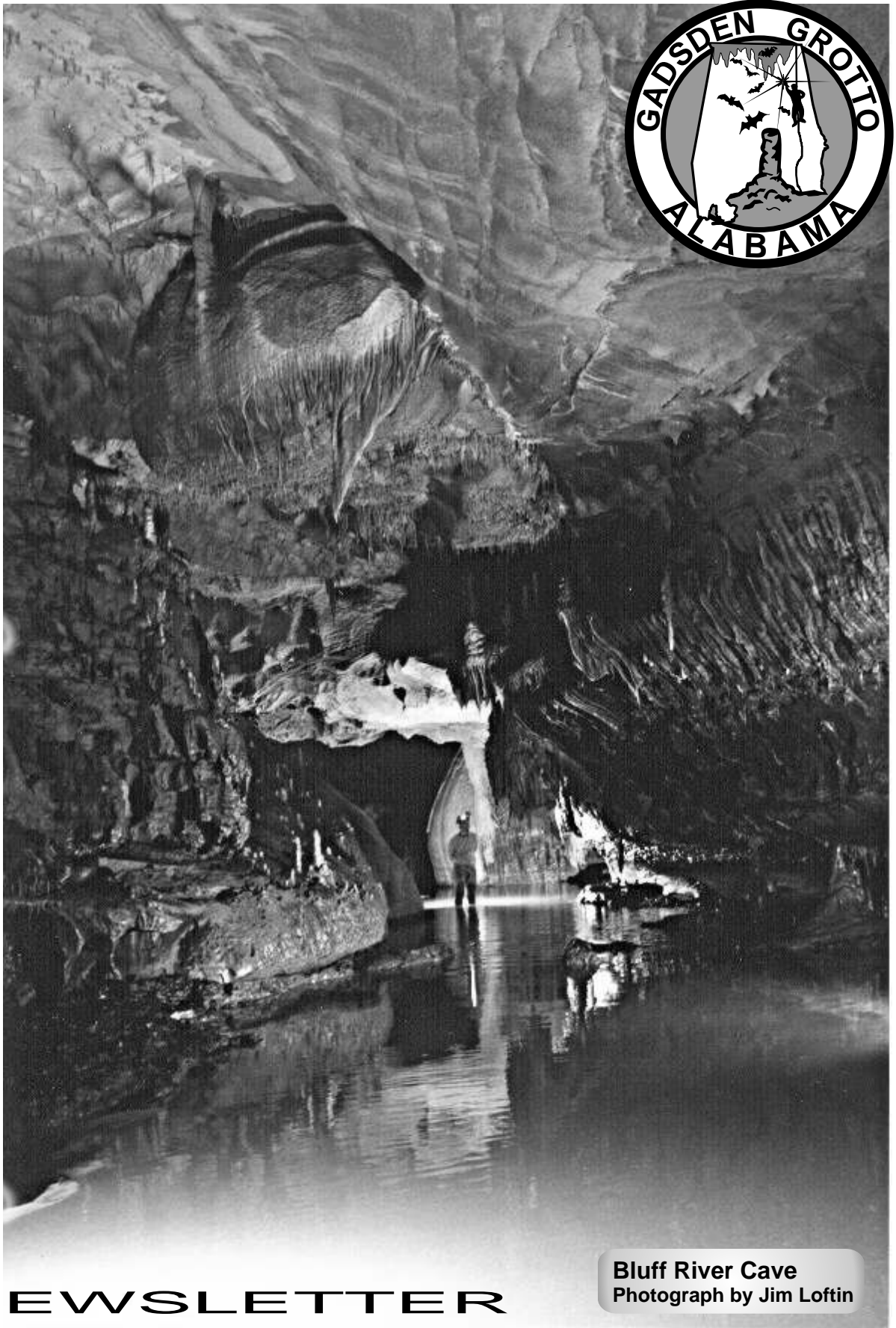


Dec.
2001

Vol. 15
No. 2

Gadsden Grotto

NEWSLETTER



Bluff River Cave
Photograph by Jim Loftin



From the Chairman:
Derick Mitchell

●—————●
Thank you for your support of the Gadsden Grotto. My first year as Grotto Chairman has gone by

quickly. I would like to invite you to attend the regular business meeting as often as possible. We can plan more cave trips and design the trips to fit your interest better if you are there to make comments and suggestions.

Don't forget to send your trip reports, book reviews, safety tips or other cave related items to our newsletter editor. The newsletter helps hold our membership together.

Want to know more?

Come to the
Gadsden Grotto

Meeting at the
Gadsden Public Library
254 College Street
When: 2nd Tuesday
of every Month

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

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Got News?

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



Trip Reports

Lookout Mountain. Push Trip: Stone Finger Cave

By: Kelly A. Keener (Gadsden Grotto)

Mark, myself, and David Teal went to Stone Finger Cave on Lookout Mtn. to push a lead with a low gravel crawl. The cave is about 300'ft. above the valley floor and it takes a lot of water during wet weather season. Mark and I found it about a year ago at that time it was dry so we went on in and ran a tape down through it and measured 100'ft. to the low crawl-way. We went the 2nd time and it was taking too much water and we couldn't get into it. This time when me, Mark, and David reached the entrance, it wasn't taking any water.

We geared up and headed on in. Mark and I got to the gravel crawl way and took turns removing the rocks and scraping gravel out of the way to clear the low wide crawl way (belly crawl). Mark went back further about 100 more feet through the gravel, and into a elliptical shaped tube that's about 2-1/2'ft. high and in 3 inches of water. Mark turned around and decided that we all need wetsuits to push the passage, and we didn't bring them so we turned around and headed back out. When we go back, with our wetsuits, hopefully the cave remains semi-dry.

On this next push trip, we are going to survey as much passage as we can. It winds up turning into clean passage with water going down stream, hoping that somewhere ahead of us is a nice deep pit.

A Tree Falls In Neversink

By: Derick Mitchell

Glenn Ledbetter and I made a late afternoon run to Neversink today. We met at 4 p.m. for a quick bounce of this great pit.

The trip uphill was normal except for a few stray pups that decided to follow. As we topped the hill we saw a stump where a large tree used to stand on the southwest side of the upper rim. As we climbed down to the rappel point we saw more storm damage to the smaller tree near the rappel point. We

quickly noticed that although there was little sunshine this afternoon we were seeing a lot more of the sun than normal. We rigged to one of the few trees left in the rappel zone and made our way to the bottom. On the bottom there were limbs and trunk pieces scattered every where. The

bench constructed of the old register kiosk took a direct hit and now is in many pieces. There was a hole near the impact area that I assume was made by the end of the falling trunk. The leaves of the branches were still green. Wish I could have heard the sound of this event! We had a good trip but I can't help but wonder when erosion and wind damage to the trees will change this TAG classic forever.



Another trip to Tumblin Rock

By: Derick Mitchell

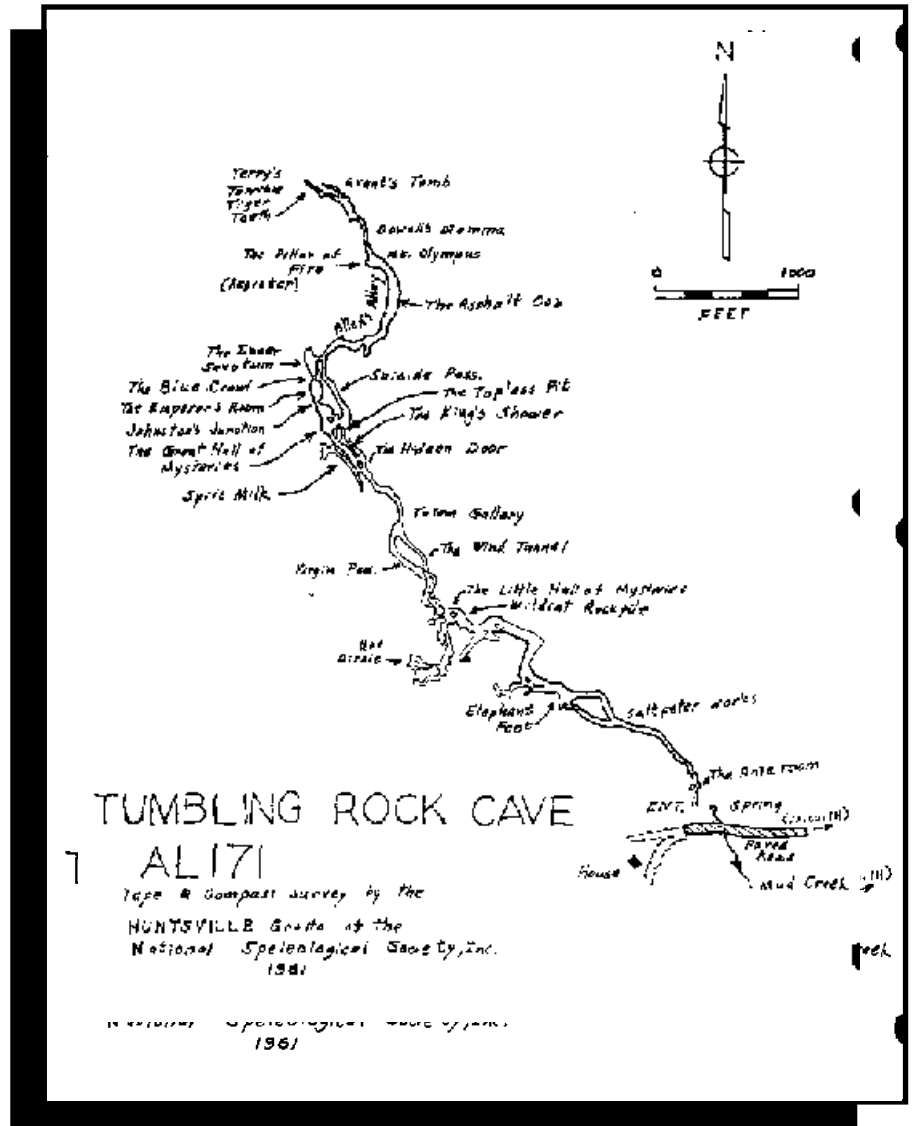
Last Saturday morning I was a participant in a twenty person journey in Tumbling Rock Cave. The trip was organized for a group of Tiger Cubs (scouts) but also included some parents and sisters. Mack Butler was trip leader and guide for this trip. Mack's two older children Morgan and Kalab were the only kids in the group that had ever caved. The other experienced cavers were Larry Isable, Josh Mayben, Becky Mitchell and myself.

The trip was like so many trips to T.R.cave. There were the bold hard chargers and the cautious thinkers but all the kids had a good time. It had been several years sent I had been to the cave so I spent a little time looking at the map and took up my position at the rear of the group. At one of several climb ups I passed a part of the group and became scout for a portion of the trip.

I have to confess that with me in front we missed our entry to The Hidden Door and had to do a bit of back tracking. We made it to The King's Shower and Topless Dome.

The group made it out O K and everybody was smiling at the end of the day. Today there will be other groups that will line up and make there first trip to a real cave. The majority will remember it but never cave again a few will start a life long obsession. Sometimes I forget just how special caves like Tumbling Rock are. It takes the

enthusiasm of the kids to remember how much fun such a cave is. Morgan and Kalab Butler were the real leaders of the day as they encouraged their new caver friends. Thanks for the trip Morgan and Kalab, I had a great time.



Weaver Cave 1917 Historical Review

By: Kelly Keener

A couple of days ago I drove past Weaver Cave, so thought I would do some research about the history of the property. I went to the Alabama Room in the Anniston Public Library and this is what I learned about Weaver and Lady Cave. I read an article from the Anniston Star Newspaper that was dated all the way back to January 6 1917. The Anniston Star reads as follows....

TWO GREAT NATURAL CAVES WITHIN HALF A MILE OF CAMP McCLELLAN, ELECTRICALLY LIGHTED, OPEN TO SOLDIERS & CIVILIANS. For years the majority of the people of Anniston have lived here in ignorance of these wonders of nature. It remained for the coming of the soldiers to reveal the possibilities of these great assets. many of the Kaki lads have visited them as a result of which they now have a clearer idea of the subterranean, arrivals of the fighters around Cambrai and other battle fronts. The first of these caves is within a few yards of the public road that leads from Division HQ past the Pantaze Building, Westward toward Weaver. Near the mouth of the cavity, will be seen the remains of trenches and dirt embankments behind which the Confederate fought when resisting the Northern invaders during the War Between The States. This is known as the "Creek Cave", so named because there is a stream running through it. A large auditorium down in the bowels of the earth that would easily accommodate one-thousand people. It is in this room that old residents before the war, and after, used to have their dances, and many are the enjoyable parties that have been held there. The place is ideally adapted for picture show purposes. It is worth seeing in itself, however, and to the right of this cave there is a tunnel that connects it with the other cave a half a block away, although this tunnel is now impassable. If you have never seen stalactites and stalagmites, don't neglect a chance to visit the famous "Lady Cave". Just why this cave was so named, no one has been able to explain, but it has been thus designated by the natives for many years. You can go in this cave and ramble about for hours & hours with out seeing day-light. It was formerly necessary to carry a ball of twine with

you every time you entered it, unraveling the twine as you went along to prevent getting confused by the scores of labyrinthical tunnels that shoot hither and thither at almost every angle of the great excavation. This has been made unnecessary now, however. Electric lights now show up the beautiful marble and other wonders of nature to the best advantage. It was in this cave that the Confederates secured practically all of the saltpeter used in the manufacture of munitions of war at furnaces near Oxford, or "Lick Skillet", as it was called, and at Rome Georgia. You can see their tracks throughout the various passageways, as well as the names of scores of old residents of this section carved or written on the marble deposits. The building of new entrances, which have been covered and enclosed; the removal of all great impediments in the way of a person going through, and other work has made it easy for men and women to see these great wonders with out danger. Score have been there to get photographs and many of the soldiers boys are having their pictures taken there to send to the "The Girl They Left Behind Them". Thus she is given an idea as to what they will face in the European dug-outs when they go "Over There". Both of these caves will be open all day today, and you can see the two for only 25 cents. If you can't come today visit them later, for they will be open every day in the week, the weather permitting. "No matter how cold it gets up on the surface it is always warm down in the bowels of the earth".

This is another article that I read from the Anniston Star. It was dated back on May 5 1951. The "Anniston Star" newspaper reads as follows....

"ALMOST FORGOTTEN WEAVER CAVE ONCE POPULAR, CROWDED SPOT"

Weaver Cave-If the huge boulders that form what is known as Weaver Cave can speak, they

continued on next page →



Trip Reports Continued...

probably would tell fascinating tales of the Indians finding shelter or protection there. The cave dates back as far as the oldest citizens can remember.

Many newcomers to Anniston have never heard of one of the more popular spots in this section a half a century ago-Weaver Cave. And at that time, there were three so-called caves in the vicinity; The big one which remains unchanged today, a deep well-like cave where the young people spent their leisure hours, and another remembered rather vaguely today, called "Lady Cave". The place generally referred to as Weaver Cave is about a quarter of a mile from mouth to mouth ,and an icy stream of "cloudy" water flows through it which the old-timers called Cave Creek. The cave and the surrounding area was one of the more popular places at the "Turn of The Century",and Sunday School classes and other groups of young people planned their annual outings there. One man stated a vivid memory of attending a Fourth of July picnic there in 1898," and the whole area was covered with buggies and wagons and large families.....who spent the day in a good, old-fashioned "dinner-on-the-ground style". The well like cave is remembered by some as the Wingo Cave, so named because of a family by that name owned the property around it. Others referred to it as Whim Cave, since it was the source of saltpetre during the civil war. The local source of potassium nitrate was not found until near the close of the war, and shipments had been started for the potential gunpowder when the shooting ceased. For years afterward, visitors went out of their way to see the cave. Two others near by... Lady Cave and Whim Cave are both near the larger Weaver Cave, but are not usually known except by the older residents of that section. David F.Weaver who gave the

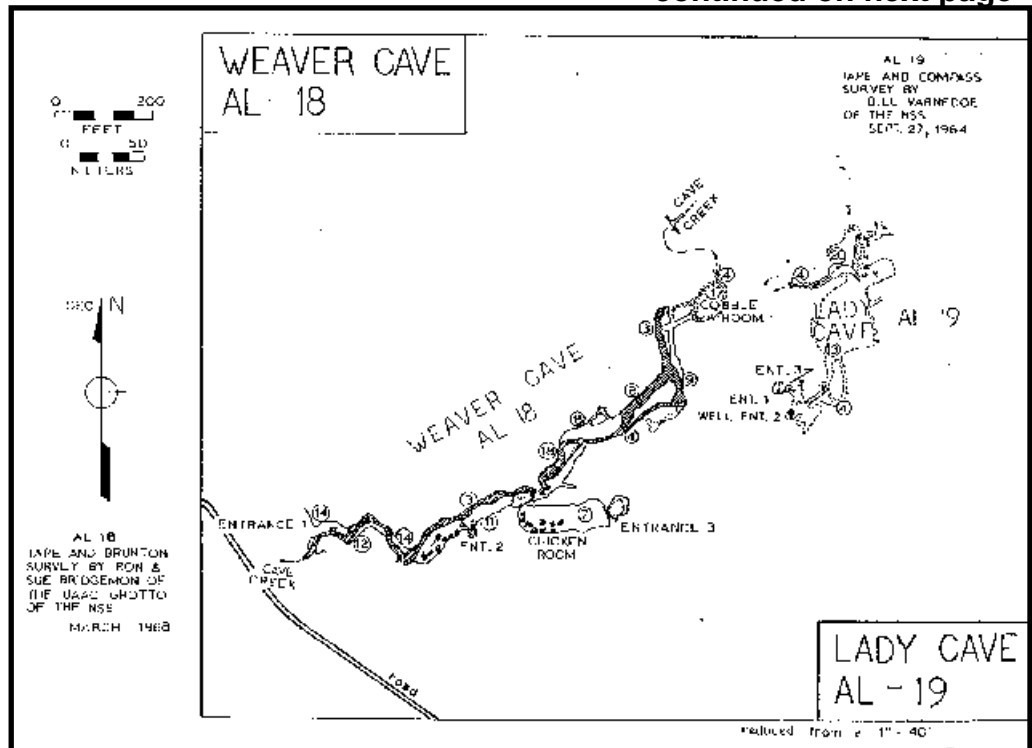
settlement it's name. The oldest child of a large family, he had the responsibility of supporting his younger brothers and sisters, and settled "West of the Anniston-Jacksonville Road, which is now Weaver. He gave a tract of land on which was built the first depo in the settlement,and it became known as the Weaver Station. The railroad passing through there at that time was called the "Selma, Dalton, and Rome Railroad. It was on some of these early runs that the saltpetre from the cave was hauled to distant points, and used for ammunition. David Weaver suffered a wound in his left foot during "The War Between The States" that left him crippled for the rest of his life. It was during the Battle of Atlanta, and the young soldier was riding down Atlanta's Peachtree Street, when a bullet struck him in his left heel. The continues progress of Weaver today, is proof of the firm foundation laid in those early days by future-minded citizens.... Like the Weavers.

Weaver's Caves are Hidden Under The Hills

Here are some facts that I read about Weaver cave....Back then....

- 1.) Fronted by picturesque Cave Creek, the caverns are passed daily by hundreds on the Weaver Cave Road.

continued on next page →



2.) Appointed a picnicking site for over a century, the caves were mecca community gatherings. And exploring by torch-light those subterranean passages was a goal to be accomplished by the more adventurous souls.

3.) Long ago soldiers of the Confederacy hauled nitre out of dark chambers once roamed by Creek Indians who had moved to Tallasseehatchee Town from the north in Revolutionary times.

4.) There can be speculation only on earlier visitors since formation of the caves some 25,000 years ago, when according to former state geologist, Walter B. Jones, this section of Alabama was then covered by a vast sheet of ice and snow in the last ice age.

5.) Water for Dave Weaver's first cotton gin was hauled by wagons from the Weaver Caves. And still extant, outside the caverns entrance are pits dug during the Civil War.

6.) Pounds of saltpetre was leached and hauled to Blue Mountain for shipment to Rome for gunpowder for the Confederate Army.

7.) On early forths of July, the train leaving Weaver at 10 o'clock would be packed by travelers to the caves, who then returned on the 3 o'clock run.

8.) Sunday School Picnics at the site, cave exploring would start at the front, with crawling, scrambling, and climbing through the inside of the hill. But not all those attending the picnics would venture into the cave.

9.) Traveling the 9 miles by wagons, the 60 members reached the caves at 10 o'clock A.M. and were met by a party of the same number from Weaver's Station. After a program at 11 o'clock, "all repaired to a most picturesque spot at the foot of a high cliff of rock, and sang with the Rev. Miller offering a prayer." Then they explored the caves.

10.) As late as the 1930's, children from Weaver School were taken by their teachers, and trips by flashlight through the caverns.

11.) One man remembers crossing Cave Creek three times in a trip inside the caves, of 25 cents admission fees, and that one Sunday, a light made from a Coca-Cola bottle filled with kerosene, and a rag for a wick, was lowered to the floor through an opening at the top of the hill.

12.) Area dynamiting in the 1950's, is said to have put cracks in the walls and sent huge rocks tumbling down on the cavern floors.

13.) Brief business ventures, of the caves have included use as an experimental raising of chickens by artificial light, and a storage area for large scale ripening of bananas for grocery sales.

14.) Other caves are across the Weaver Cave Road, and in the surrounding area. But those who remember the torch light excursions, and those who will never explore the deep passages, the enigmatic Weaver Caves remain among the most intriguing of nature's wonders in Calhoun Co.



**Check our temporary
web site at**
<http://personalpages.tds.net/~mray9>



Kelly at Thor Natural Bridge

Scottsboro Mountain

"The Camp"

By: Kelly Keener

On September 9 2000, after a good day of caving, Me, Mark, Jim, and Marion Smith went to eat at the Tripple RRR Restaurant had been sick all week and I was still recovering from it, and after a rough day of caving I was ready to eat "The best Catfish in Rainsville". We left there and Marion followed us to camp at Scottsboro Mtn. As we were pulling into the camp, John Swartz and his freinds were with him. John walked up to our SUV to say hello. They were camping there too. We parked our vehicles and set up our camp.

We didn't have to look for firewood because someone had cut some up and was ready to burn. Mark got the fire going and we sat around the campfire. John and Marion came and joined us. They were talking about going to drop Doodle-Bug Pit the next day and talked of survey & maping caves. John offered to help us to survey and map some caves with us. They told a lot of interesting stories about their caving trips. Marion was talking about wanting to drop a 100'ft.pit that he has never dropped. It was getting pretty late so I decided to get into our X-Tera and tuck in for the night. We had planned to drop Scottsboro Pit the next day.

Scottsboro Mountain "The Pit"

It was very early that morning when I was woken up by a Black Lab Retreaver sniffing my toes. I could not go back to sleep because the new friend "sweet dog"

wanted me to keep her company, and the sun was coming up, so me and sweet dear dog sat together and watched the sun rise. A while later Mark woke up and then Jim. We went to eat breakfast at Hardees and we saw Marion there. He invited us to come along with them to drop Doodle-Bug, but we had already planned to go drop Scottsboro Pit. It was Jim's first time to ever drop this pit.

Jim went down then me. During that time, Mark was off ridge-walking around that area while we were taking photographs of the hollowed out log that is covered with calcite formations and the cave pearls. This pit has beautiful formations in it. If you have never been to it. You would be surprised. It is also a good pit for learners to start off with rapelling and ascending. I rappelled back up and then Mark went down. When they climbed back up, we went to eat lunch. When we came back form eating, Mark went ridge-walking around there again. He came back with no luck. We cooked supper on the grill and hung out around the fire pit. Later that evening a van pulled up and it was Steve and Sharron Brewer. They were going to drop Stephens Gap and Scottsboro Pit the next day, so they joined us at camp after they set their tents up. We sat around and talked for awhile and I decided to go on to bed because I was worn out from the week-end. The next morning, we told Steve and Sharron good-by and we headed back home to recover and relax.



Cave Pearls by Jim Loftin

Trip Report

By: Kelly Keener

Mark and I and another member of our Grotto was going on a caving trip Sunday morning 930 1, but we woke up late and the other member had important things to do. Mark and I still had "Cave Fever" in our blood. With it being later than usual, (We usually head out on a caving adventure near 7:30-8a.m.) We decided to do a quick 300+ft multi-drop. We hiked up a steep trail and as we were crossing the mud holes, there were about 40-50 frogs every where. Jumping in pool from all directions. I have never seen so many frogs in one day. We got to the entrance of the hole and Climbed downward about 200 ft before we reached the first drop. We rigged 3 drops and one climb down. The climb down was very slippery but with my adrenaline pumping, made it more fun to challenge trying not to rappel down doing (The Kelly System) which Becky and Derrick calls it.) The 3 drops were pretty drippy which made it even more exiting. The cave has pretty formations, and a couple of salamanders. Next time I would like for it to come a good rain and go back and drop that *PHAT* cave again. It would be pretty awesome with lots of water pouring down into it.



**Forgotten Springs
by Jim Loftin**



Kelly at Invisible Springs

Caving with Boy Scouts

Written By: Kelly A. Keener

Boy Scouts in dressing booths changing into their old clothes,

Next to the cave where the hard wind blows.

Take out your \$5 dollars to pay to get in,

So you can explore Tumbling Rock Cave's beauty within.

Sliding across the slanted slope, slippery and all,
Down below, about a 20 ft.fall.

Sitting and sliding down the steep slippery mounds,
Getting their back-sides muddy as the reached the ground.

Just a little bit further to the Totem Pole Room",

We will take a lunch break before we resume.

See all the water pouring out of that hole?

Above that is a topless 400 ft.dome.

Entering through the "Hall of Mysteries",

The Boy Scouts minds, all full of Tumbling Rock's history.

They read old dates on the ceilings and walls,

They saw salamanders, blind crawfish, cave crickets,
and all.

Let's head back to the big waterfall,

They're climbing up in the hole that is wet and small,
Helping each other so they won't slip and fall.

Climbing, and grunting with all of their power,

Just to gaze with awe at the beautiful "King's Showers".

Are all of you Boy Scouts having fun yet?

As the climb down through the hole all soaking wet.

Back out of Tumbling Rock where the hard wind blows,
Scouts in the dressing booths changing into clean dry clothes.

Saying to each other about the fun the just had,

With smiles on their faces, all happy and glad.



Cave News

Cedar Ridge Cave

By: Buddy Lane
(Signal Mountain, Tennessee)
blane@scci.org

Hello TAG Net,
Last week after a long study The Chattanooga Grotto decided to change the lock on Cedar Ridge Cave. Any NSS members may obtain a new key for \$20.00, paid to the Chattanooga Grotto. We are sorry about the high cost, but this is a special lock costing near \$200.00 and the keys are registered and computer cut, they cannot be copied. The Grotto decided that due to the high cost of the keys and lock that \$20.00 was a fair price to keep the gate fund maintained. To order keys mail your check to:

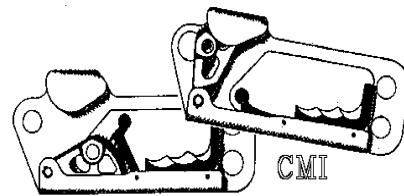
The Chattanooga Grotto of the NSS
POB 71857
Chattanooga TN 37407-0857

In the amount of \$20.00

Happy New Years to all,
Buddy Lane NSS 12054LF SCCi 43
Cedar Ridge Cave Committee
The Chattanooga Grotto of the NSS



Glen Ledbetter in Peggy Pit



Guffey Access

By: Jim Loftin

The main entrance to Guffey is affirmatively closed only during hunting season. Do not go during hunting season or you could be arrested and have your vehicle towed. If you want to go to the cave during non-hunting season, you must call the owner Dan Harbin, (256) 878-9489, and ask permission. He has been really nice to us over the years, because we have been nice to him and have communicated with him. But because he & his property have been abused by some cavers and it has been getting worse, he has finally purchased a generator and will have gates constructed by the time hunting season is over. We will have to call him to get through the gates at that time. Please respect other people's property and landowners! They owe us nothing! Do good! Be a contributing member of the SCCi! Keep on cavin'!

Guffey Cave Access

By: David Teal

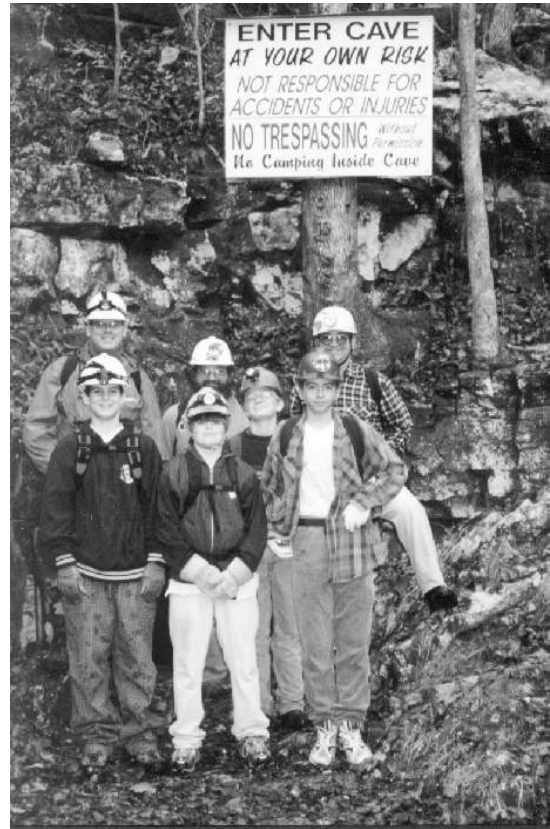
When Guffey cave is open you must use the new road coming in. The owner is Danny Harbin and he has asked cavers to stay away during hunting season. I would suggest Russell Cave for Scout trip. As a added note to the rest of the world, Bluff River is open but the number of vehicles should be kept to 3 or 4. A lot of vehicles on the little dirt road is what closed the cave several years ago.

MORE CAVE STUFF

Women Cavers

By: Kelly Keener

I have to agree with Marhta and Raeme on the subject about needing more women cavers. I know what it is like to have to cave with mainly male cavers. I'm real active and enjoy getting all muddy, belly crawling through 1'ft.high passages in 2" in. of water, virgin break down hoping that it won't crash down on top of you, and chimneying up and down deep slippery chasms. What I am saying is, I have been wanting to cave with more women cavers also. Like one of my caver friends say, "It's good to have other women cavers around to share "hormonal sympathy" with sometimes". *Hee-Hee*. Most caves I explore, especially the ones I cuss and growl when I am squeezing through very tight passages etc. I still love to cave. Caving to me is a lot like Lays Potato Chips "I will always come back for more."
Everyone cave safely



Boy Scouts at Tumbling Rock



Gadsden Grotto
P. O. Box 2092
Gadsden, AL 35903

Calendar of Events

Jan.	9	Gadsden Grotto Meeting
Feb.	13	Gadsden Grotto Meeting
Mar.	12	Gadsden Grotto Meeting
Apr.	10	Gadsden Grotto Meeting
May	14	Gadsden Grotto Meeting
Jun.	11	Gadsden Grotto Meeting
Jun.	24	NSS Convention in Camden, Maine
Jul.	9	Gadsden Grotto Meeting

