

GADSDEN GROTTO NEWSLETTER

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"I'm all packed up and ready to go!!!"

THE NATIONAL SPELEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

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Membership Fees: Each Member receives a subscription monthly/ bi-monthly of The Gadsden Grotto Newsletter.

\$10.00 per year to become a member

Gadsden Grotto Patches:

\$7.00 each per member

\$10.00 each per non-member

Gadsden Grotto Meetings:

Rainbow City Recreation Center

4412 Rainbow Drive

Rainbow City, Alabama 35906

When:

Every 2nd Tuesday of each month

Time:

6:30p.m.

For more info. Contact President, Jim Loftin.

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**SEND YOUR ARTICLES
AND OR PHOTOS TO...**

**GADSDEN-
GROTTO@YAHOO.COM
OR TO...**

**KELLY A. KEENER
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Front Cover: Michael ray at cedar crystal ridge cave during tag fall cave in 2003.

Back Cover: Nick Medlen at the hole he found. I call him "The Boulder Meister" because he was tossing boulders the size of transmissions out of the pit entrance and it sounded like rolling thunder as he was throwing them down the mountain.



All unsigned material may be attributed to the Editor. Statements and opinions expressed in the GGN do not necessarily reflect the policies of the Gadsden Grotto

**A Word From The Editor:**

Over the past few months, I have been trying to make our newsletters interesting and exciting . I am asking everyone to **"Please"** send at least one or two articles, trip reports, and or photos to me, so you can receive a newsletter each month, and on time. It is "very complicating" to do one every month if there aren't any turned in.

To those who have already done so...

Thanks ,and keep up the good work.

Kelly A. Keener

Watch out for Bobcats!!!

MARK AND I WAS RIDGE WALKING . WHEN WE ARRIVED BACK TO THE JEEP, WE LOOKED OVER TO THE LEFT AND IN SIDE THE PASTURE FENCE LIES A DEAD BOB CAT. HE HAD BEEN RUN OVER AND HE MUST HAVE MADE IT TO THE PASTURE INSIDE OF FENCE TO BE SAFE. THE BOB CAT WASN'T DEAD TO LONG. BESIDE IT IS A CANADIAN MIST BOTTLE TO MEASURE IT'S LENGTH BY SCALE. HE IS AS LONG AS 3 WHISKEY BOTTLES. IT WAS A PRETTY CAT AND HAD LONG FANGS.



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WEAVER CAVE TURNS INTO CHRISTIAN RETREAT

WRITTEN BY: KELLY A.

IT WAS DECEMBER 29, 2003, NICK MEDLEN, MARK'S BROTHER CALLED AND ASKED IF I HAD READ THE NEWSPAPER ABOUT WEAVER CAVE. THERE WAS AN ARTICLE ON THE FRONT PAGE COVER OF THE ANNISTON STAR. I HUNG UP THE PHONE, WENT TO THE STORE AND GRABBED A NEWSPAPER AND STARTED READING. MARK & I AND MIKE DAVIS SURVEYED THE CAVE THREE YEARS AGO. SO FAR IT'S MEASURED TO BE ABOUT 4200'FT. LONG, AND STILL HAS MORE PASSAGE THAT WE NEED TO FINISH SURVEYING. JIM LOFTIN TALKED TO THE NEW LAND OWNER MR. CROOK. WE ARE NOT TOO HAPPY WITH HIS FUTURE PLANS. HE IS PLANNING TO RUN ELECTRICITY ALL THROUGH OUT THIS CAVE. I HAVE PREVIOUSLY HAD CONVERSATIONS WITH THE SCCI. ABOUT THE CAVE, (WHEN THE CAVE PROPERTY WAS UP FOR SALE) BUT THE CONVERSATION FELL THROUGH, I DIDN'T WANT TO TALK ANY MORE ABOUT IT, BECAUSE THERE IS A LOT OF WORK THAT NEEDS TO BE DONE TO GET THE CAVE BACK TO LOOKING NICE AGAIN. IT IS IN THE MIDDLE OF WEAVER, A NICE SMALL TOWN, BUT ALL THE LOCAL VANDALS GO THERE TO PARTY AND SPRAY PAINT GRAFFITI ALL OVER THE WALLS. TRASH COVERED ALL OVER THE FLOOR THROUGH OUT THE CAVE, ODORS OF KEROSENE WHERE THE VANDALS HAVE LIT FIRES INSIDE, EVEN SOME IDIOTS SPRAY PAINTED WITH NEON ORANGE THEIR FIRST AND LAST NAMES AND THEIR PHONE NUMBERS. DURING THE TIME WE WERE SURVEYING, I WENT TO THE ANNIS-

THEY HAD PICNIC TABLES SET OUTSIDE AROUND THE CREEK ENTRANCE FOR CHURCH SERVICES AND FAMILY OUTINGS. A CREEK RUNS THROUGH IT CALLED "CAVE CREEK, WHICH IS ALSO WHAT SOME LOCAL RESIDENTS CALL IT.

IN THE CHICKEN ROOM", THEY USED ARTIFICIAL LIGHTING FOR HATCHING CHICKENS. FITE'S GROCERY, THAT WAS ONCE ON NOBLE ST. IN ANNISTON, USED THE "CHICKEN ROOM" TO RIPEN THEIR BANANAS.

WEAVER SCHOOL TEACHERS TOOK THEIR STUDENTS THERE TO HAVE CLASS ON PRETTY DAYS.

ROME GA. WOULD TAKE THE 10 O'CLOCK TRAIN TO WEAVER STATION AND HAVE PICK-NICKS AND REUNIONS, AND THEN LEAVE FOR THE 3 O'CLOCK TRAIN BACK TO GEORGIA. FORMER PROPERTY OWNER, HARRY WEAVER WHICH THE CAVE WAS NAMED AFTER HAD HIS FANCY SIGNATURE ON THE CEILING, ALONG WITH WALTER B. JONES SIGNATURE.

LADY CAVE, THAT CONNECTS TO WEAVER CAVE, WHICH WE CALL THE "LOFTIN CONNECTION", BECAUSE JIM WAS THE ONE THAT CONNECTED THE WEAVER / LADY CAVE PASSAGES. IN THE VERY BACK OF LADY ARE STILL ACTIVE FORMATIONS. A LOT OF HELECTITES. NOT MANY VANDALS GO THAT FAR BACK INTO THE CAVE. GOOD THING THAT THEY DON'T, BECAUSE THERE WOULDN'T BE MUCH HOPE FOR THE LEFT,

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The Front Page of the Anniston Star Newspaper - Jan.29, 2003

In the Anniston Star Newspaper dated 12/29/03. The story was written by **Jessica Centers** and photos by **Stephen Gross**. Even with it's graffiti-covered walls and floor littered by crunched cans of Natural Light and Sunkist, there's still something beautiful — even spiritual — about the Weaver Cave. Stones from a slippery path along the cool stream that runs through a dark, narrow tunnel. A few careful steps up a rocky hill lead into an open space as if the cave had been made with a room inside. Mack Crook Jr., owner of the Faith Christian Store in Anniston, wants that room to be a non-denominational place of worship for drug addicts and alcoholics, people in mourning, ministers seeking rejuvenation and anyone else who happens to wander in. "This is going to be a place where the real presence of God exists," Crook said. In June of 2002, he bought 51 acres of the Weaver Cave Property for about \$100,000 to develop into the Seeds of Abraham (Crook says he hopes to keep the cave as natural as possible, but he will add an altar and a few pews to the stone comfort.)

SOLICE: CROOK TO BUILD A HORSE RANCH, 7 CABINS, AND A BUILDING WITH 14 SLEEPING QUARTERS

Alabama's future Christian Retreat. The land still looks untouched, but two years from now he plans to have it complete with a horse ranch, seven cabins, and a retreat building with 14 sleeping quarters, dining room, kitchen, setting room, conference room and three classrooms. He said the cave will be free of trash and spray paint, have decorative stone entrance added, a waterfall on the side, and bridges over the stream that leads to the comfort room. He said he will keep the cave as natural as possible, but add an altar and a few pews to the stone comfort room with the cave where a minister will wait 24 hours a day. Treasurer Pat Parris said the Seeds of Abraham Ministries is a non-profit organization, and the retreat's primary purpose will be to provide a quiet place for ministers to go. "We are accepting donations", she said. "We have not had responses from churches in the area that we would have hoped especially since we're starting it for ministers." Crook has sent letters requesting donations to churches in the area, and has not been able to solicit a single donation. In the letter, he has let go of antiques, retirement funds, savings, and real estate totaling about \$470,000 for the Seeds of Abraham. Aside from his own money and a few donations or loans from friends.



Mack Crook Jr. looks at the entrance of Weaver Cave that he is making into a Christian retreat. Crook hopes the Seeds of Abraham retreat will provide a quiet place for ministers to go.

Spelunking FOR SOLACE

Minister looks to turn Weaver Cave into a place of worship

Even with its graffiti-covered walls and floor littered by crunched cans of Natural Light and Sunkist, there's still something beautiful — even spiritual — about the Weaver Cave.

Stones form a slippery path along the cool stream that runs through a dark, narrow tunnel. A few careful steps up a rocky hill lead into an open space as if the cave had been made with a room inside.

Mack Crook Jr., owner of the Faith Christian Store in Anniston, wants that room to be a non-denominational place of help and worship for drug addicts and alcoholics, people in mourning, ministers seeking rejuvenation and anyone else who happens to wander in.

"This is going to be a place where the real presence of God exists," Crook said.

In June of 2002, he bought 51 acres of the Weaver Cave Property for about \$100,000 to develop into the Seeds of Abraham —

Please see Solace
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Story by Jessica Centers ♦ Photos by Stephen Gross



Crook says he hopes to keep the cave as natural as possible, but he will add an altar and a few pews to the stone comfort room.

Jack's restaurants has been the only group to contribute. Still, he has no worries that he won't have enough funds or support from local churches to get the ministry going because he believes the idea came to him as a vision from God. Juanita Hinton of Gadsden said the cave property was in her late husband's family for many years. Her father-in-law, Ed Hinton, had run a chicken farm there. The property was for sale for 10 years before Crook bought it, she said. She and her husband tried to keep trespassers out but never had any luck, especially after he died and she moved to Gadsden. "Maybe Mr. Crook will have better luck protecting it," she said. The cave has been a sight of drinking by minors, narcotics use and rumored devil worship in recent years. In the last century, it has housed a prohibition-era bar, munitions storage, and a salt peter mine before the chicken farm. Hinton said that Crook told her he planned to build a retreat there. She doesn't know anything specific about his plans, but she said a retreat sounds like a nice idea. The Weaver Cave property is within the Anniston city limits. Anniston Mayor Chip Howell said he doesn't know what the impact of the retreat development would have on the area, but that any development in that part of the county could potentially benefit the city's nearby McClellan area. From a retail perspective, it could affect the area business if it were to gain momentum and need services provided, Howell said. Regardless of any economic impact, he respects Crook's intent. "His desire to do this is admirable," Howell said. "I wish him well." ~ Kelly A. Keener ~

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"THE BOULDER MEISTER !!!"

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