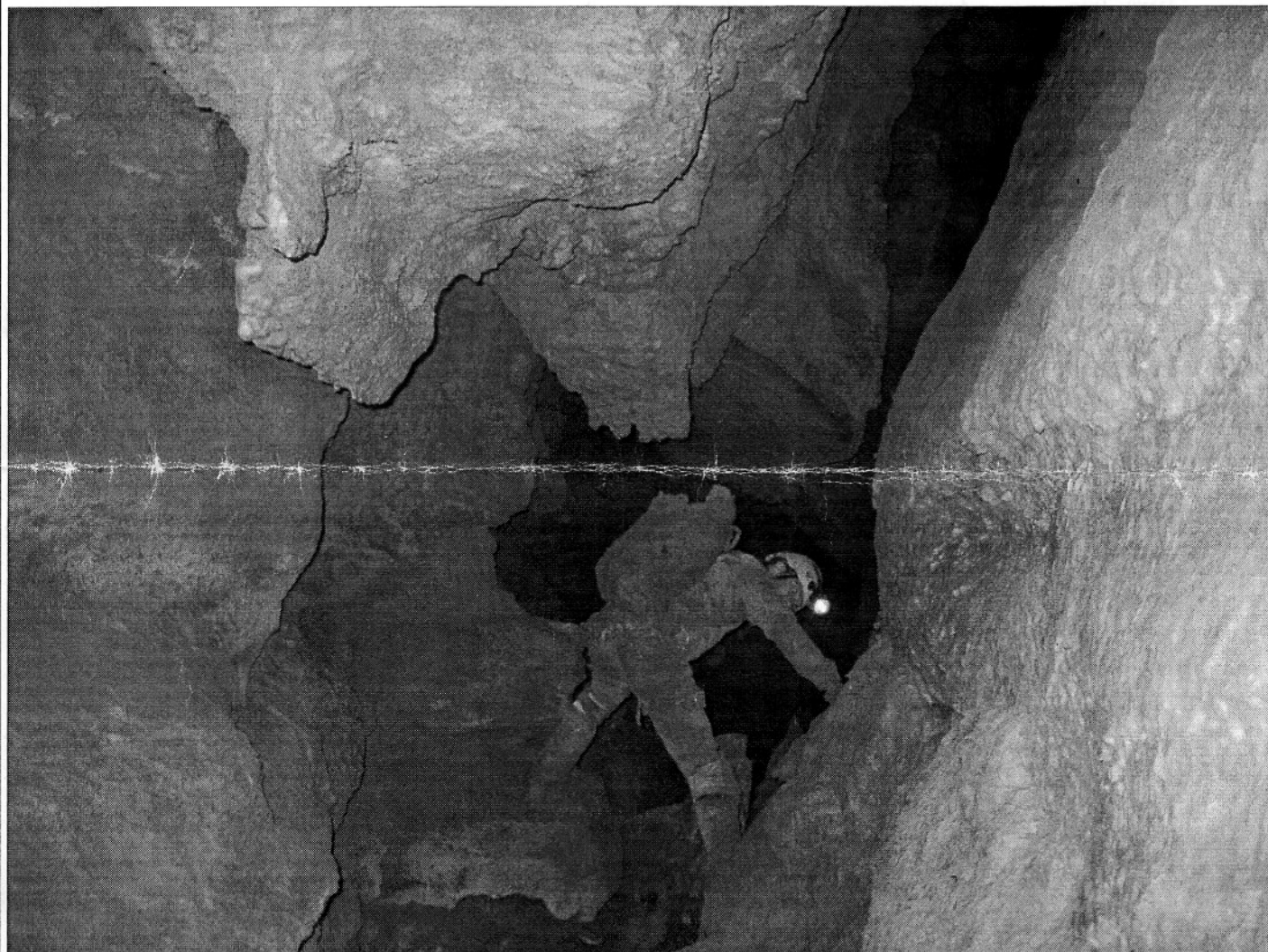


GADSDEN GROTT NEWSLETTER

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JANURARY-FEBRUARY 2005



"INTO THE ABYSS"

THE NATIONAL SPELEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

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Membership Fees: \$10.00 yearly per person to join. Each Member receives a bi-monthly subscription of the Gadsden Grotto Newsletter.

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.

E-mail: jimloftin@juno.com

FRONT COVER: JIM LOFTIN COVERED WITH THICK MUCKY MUD IN LARGE CANYON PASSAGE (PHOTO BY: KELLY A. KEENER)

BACK COVER: GREEN VALLEY/INDIAN SPRINGS CAVE. (FROM LEFT TO RIGHT) GARY STEWART, MARK MEDLEN, JIM LOFTIN, DAVID TEAL. (PHOTO BY: K. KEENER)

Send your articles, or photos to...

k_kenner@bellsouth.net

Or to...

Kelly A. Keener

P.O. Box 252

Wellington, Al 36279

Up Coming Events

February G.G.G.G: Wednesday nights, Gadsden Grotto German-food Get-together at the Sports Nut Bar & Grill. Highway 21 N, Jacksonville, Al. Meet at 6pm.

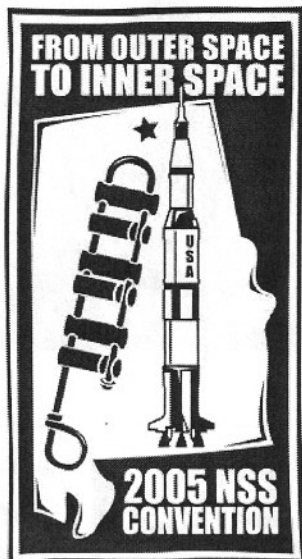
Great food and beer.

Call 256-892-1388 for more details.

March 8 : Gadsden Grotto Meeting at the Rainbow City Recreation Center, Rainbow City AL. From 6pm-8pm.

Call Jim Loftin or David Teal for directions etc.

Grotto Caving Trips: Call Jim Loftin for info.



A Word From The Editor: Thank you Gary Stewart for the article in this months newsletter. Anyone willing to help with pictures/ articles etc. will be greatly appreciated. Turn them in at the meetings, and they will be put in the next Newsletter. Kelly A. Keener

Greens Valley Cave aka Indian Springs Cave**1-16-2005**

This past grotto meeting it was decided that we would have a trip to Greens Valley Cave in Etowah Co. on Saturday. This would be the first cave I'd been into in a while and the first time I'd been into this cave in 33 yrs. This was the second wild cave I ever went to, back in the summer of 69 when I was 12 yrs old. I remembered that it looked like a mine when you first went in and the owner didn't want anyone up there so we had to sneak in.

Saturday was a little cold but beautiful day. Although I was just recovering from a back injury I couldn't resist going back on more time. At 7AM I went down and got my big black box from storage, threw it in the back of my Blazer and took off to meet everyone for the trip. When I arrived at the store parking lot a new caver and grotto member Becky Noah was already there. We began to talk; she was excited about going. I opened my gate and got out my box and when I opened it I was immediately upset; I had grabbed all my extra gear and all my primary gear was still in storage in Guntersville. Jason arrived and we all talked some more and soon David arrived then Mark, Kelly, Sadie and Jim showed up. I told Jim I didn't have my helmet or light and he said not a problem he had one I could borrow. We all loaded into 2 vehicles and left for the cave.

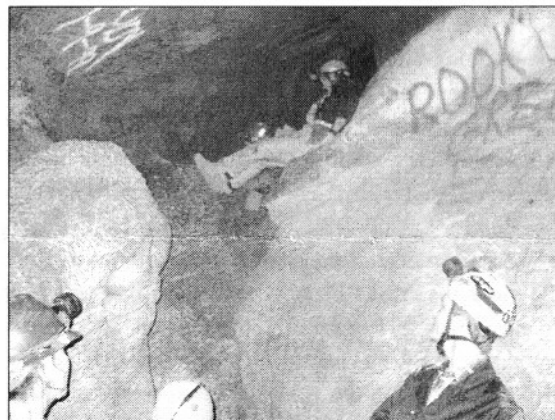
When we arrived a game warden pulled up thinking we were hunters. David, Becky, and I talked to him for a while. Turned out that he was up in Alaska with another caver from our grotto on a trip to Denali State Park while I was at Ft.

Greeley in Delta, Alaska working at a missile base. We talked about how smoky it was from the 5 ½ million acre forest fire that was taking place at the time, he wished us luck and he left.

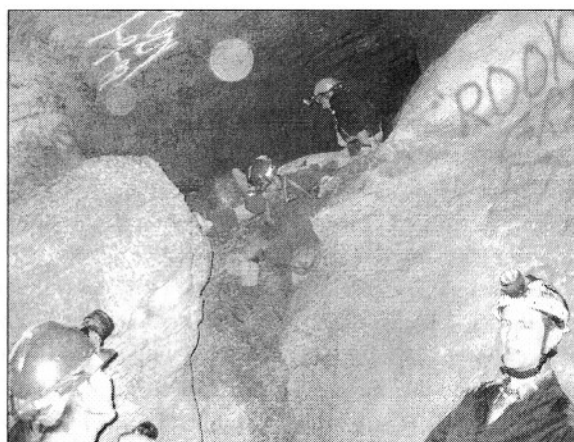
We all geared up and took the short hike up the trail to the cave. While everyone else was scouting around the area, I went on inside. As I went in I noticed the crack to the left that went up and the old string of light wiring, that's where I remember almost getting killed the last time I was here when I was 15 and slid down a hole head first and got stuck. I went on down and found the way I remembered going down into the cave but I heard David holler for me so I came back up where everyone else was at. They were all heading up the crack to the left. David, Jim and Mark are three of the best cavers I know and we've done a lot of caves together but when I saw that traverse I had some serious flashbacks. I started to go under but I was glad I decided to go over the top instead. The rest of the cave was pretty much as I remembered it except for all the spray paint on the walls. When we got down to the lake Mark took us up through a belly crawl stream passage I'd never been through. I was the last one through and I really thought I wouldn't make it because it was so slick and sloping up with no had or foot holds. When I got through that there was another slick muddy hill we had to go up that gave everyone a bit of a challenge. When we all got up Mark took

us into the register room where we all signed our names and took a rest and snack break. The way out seemed shorter than the way in and everyone made it out without an injury. All in all it was a good trip but I doubt that I'll ever see the inside of this cave again, I hope my memory serves me well for another 33 yrs.

Gary Stewart-NSS# 38127



"Gary... You better go boy, before I scoot my butt under you!!!" (Photo By: Kelly A. Keener)



Bottom Left: Becky Noah, Right: Jason Earnest
(Photo By: Kelly A. Keener)

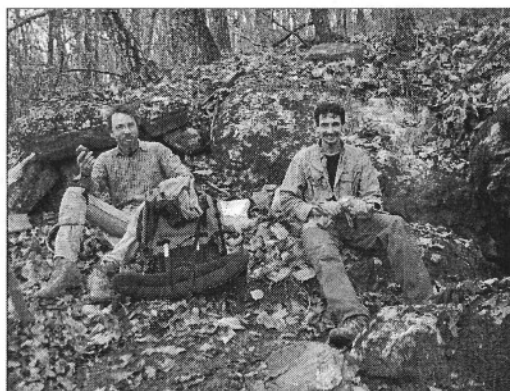
DIG TRIP TO THUNDERDOME PIT

It was a dark cloudy mourning when I was watching the local weather on TV and it was 55 degrees outside. It was cloudy like it might rain but it didn't. The whole day was going to be in the 60's and the wind was supposed to start picking up around noon the weatherman said. Jim pulled up and loaded his cave gear and digging tools into Mark's Jeep. We arrived at Mr. Black's house and parked in our usual spot that he told us to park and we headed to the ridge to "Thunder Dome" This lead is a dig with a deep looking canyon. When Jim spotted it, he threw rocks into the void, it sounded like thunder. Mark and Jim dug for a good 2-3 hours until they decided they needed more than just a little rock hammer to crack apart the sandstone. We're bringing the drill and straws on the next trip and try to blast that booger to pieces. Maybe then we could drop it so we can explore some. It sounded a bit deep, and there was loud echo when hooted in it. We left there, and went to check out some other leads we found. The mountain ridges have large karst features which reminds Mark and I of pictures we've seen of mountains in China. We nick-named that area "Little China" Because of the way the karst looks. We found a couple deep holes, but when we reached the bottom, it didn't go anywhere. I found a climb down in which we had to climb down onto a couple green slippery slimy rocks to

get to the bottom of a stand up room. To the left was a formation that looked like a blocked nasal passage, two holes with a small boulder blocking the left side. As I climbed into the cavity looking area, It was still standing up area, to the right of me in that part of the cave was a canyon it looked like a pretty deep canyon too. I scooted over there and squeezed my booty in between the walls of the canyon and was trying to decide if I wanted to chimney my way over across the dark void about 25 feet or so. I decided to wait until next time we went when we had longer rope to be on the safe side. I came back out of that area and found another small area that I climbed up and then down into another walking passage. This passage was quite narrow but wide enough for me to explore. On the right side of the wall were two bats. On the ceiling was a tiger tooth shaped calcite formation that had a tint of bluish grey to it. The left wall had soft white chalky like calcite formations that looked really neat. While I was exploring that area, Mark and Jim were exploring other parts of the small cave. I decided to turn around and head back out of that passage because I didn't want to disturb the bats and mess up any of the pristine formations. I had my cell phone in my pocket and took a couple of pictures while I was down under. Motorola picture cell phones are good to have sometimes. They came out pretty good actually, to be a cell phone. We exited the cave an

headed down the ridge a bit, going back toward the Jeep. We were still searching for new leads as we were heading back, Jim found another hole so we stopped there to let him check it out. During the time, we were walking though, my pack felt a little bit heavier that it's supposed to. As I was taking my water out of my pack, I realized some one "Rocked My Pack" The funny thing was... His pack was already rocked before he got to mine, and when he went to look down into a hole... I rocked his pack again, but with the rock he had put in my pack. (Hee, Hee). I sneaked it into his side pocket when he least expected it. Mark, he was the lucky one, his pack wasn't tampered with. The wind was really blowing hard on the ridge, and we ran out of holes, so we were done for the day. We arrived back to the Jeep and went home.

Written By: Kelly A. Keener
(Photo By Kelly Keener)



Left: Jim Loftin eating an apple for descent break after a hard digging. **Right:** Mark Medlen getting ready to drill and hammer the sandstone boulder that's blocking the pit.

A Reason to Spend a Week (Caving) in Alabama ®

By: Tim White, SE Region Coordinator (with Jane Morgan)

June 25 - July 2, 2005 (the week before the NSS Convention in Huntsville) will see a large number of cavers converging on the North Alabama community of Union Hill. Participants from all over the U.S. and a few other countries will gather a few miles south of Huntsville for over a 100 hard hours of caving activities in the famous Newsome Sinks caving area. These cavers will be students at the National Cave Rescue Commission - 2005 Cave Rescue Operations and Management Seminar.

“This seminar consists of extensive classroom and field work in all phases of cave rescue including underground environment, vertical rescue, hauling systems, extrication techniques, medical management, communication systems, and the organization and management of cave rescue operations. Basic and advanced course material is presented for students who typically include cavers, emergency service personnel, and emergency managers.” ...that the standard line, but you ask why should I, the recreational caver, the hard-core caver, the expedition caver, the cave mapper, the ridgewalker, the pit bouncer, the new caver or Joe Grotto caver be interested in or take part in NCRC training?

As the NCRC Southeastern Region Coordinator, I could go for paragraph after paragraph telling you why I feel you, as a caver, should experience a NCRC training. I also could bore you to tears for paragraph after paragraph, so that is why I chose to include a reprint of an article by Jane Morgan that appeared in the Dogwood City Grotto's publication, *The Georgia Underground* (Vol. 39, No.1) titled “Why NCRC?”. Here is what Jane had to say about the Level 1 class that she was a part of in 2003.

“Safety is a reoccurring theme when it comes to caving and yet we all seem to find ourselves in situations that remind us just how fragile we really are. NCRC offers training to equip our selves when those situations occur and the ability to recognize when it is time to call for help. Sprained ankles can happen by just stepping off a curb or over a root. Not many people stop to think how much work would be involved in exiting a cave with an injury, or that much of that work would have to come from their caving partners or strangers. I am amazed when I think about how many people my husband and I have introduced to caving in the last decade, and have not had an accident. As much as I would like to believe that it is a result of how safe we are, accidents do happen. We can do everything in our power to prevent them, but it is not always a guarantee. We have had small things like dehydration to deal with and our group worked as a team to remedy the situation, which was only more reason for us to further our education and skills.

When I first heard about cave rescue training several years ago I was equally intrigued and intimidated. I was not yet vertically adept and although I had been climbing for several years, was not comfortable rigging on my own. On the other hand, I'm the kind of person who likes to solve problems. When it was announced at our grotto meeting that a modular NCRC course might be offered in the coming months, the anticipation was incredible. There were no longer any excuses; the course would be offered within my state, on two weekends rather than a week long session, and at a price I could afford.

What I discovered, during this course, is that there is so much more to gain besides learning basic rescue techniques like diagnosing dehydration, hypothermia, or low blood sugar in fellow cavers and good teamwork/rope working skills. This can also be a place to find a higher level of self-confidence that some desire. I never expected the self-esteem boost that came with picking a fellow caver off a rope, packaging a patient, rigging a pulley system or simply becoming one link in a complicated plan to find, treat, and bring lost and/or injured people from a cave. Many students may never be involved in an official rescue, but will find themselves with the ability to solve small problems on their own trips before they become big problems that require outside help.

For those of us who have never served in the military or worked in rescue/law enforcement jobs, we may try to imagine the kind of bond that exists, but without success. In fact, the term “co-worker” must have such a different, inconceivable meaning when your very life may depend on them on any given work day. I can only attempt to describe the intense emotion that I experienced for my peers and instructors. I don't know if these courses become routine for the instructors or if they wonder why a student would feel this way from a training program. A bond now exists for me with my peer group that is more than just fellow “grotto member” or “caver”. Even those terms shouldn't be taken lightly. Every time you set foot in a cave, especially in a vertical environment, you become interdependent with your fellow cavers. NCRC training is a powerful reminder of this and is valuable to all cavers.” What more can I say?

For more information see the web site at: <http://caves.org/io/ncrc/2005Seminar/seminar2005.htm>

or e-mail the seminar registrar, Berta Kirchman at: 2005registrar@ncrc.info

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