

GADSDEN GROTTO NEWSLETTER

VOL.17 NO.6

OCTOBER 2003



You Said The Water Is Only
“Ankle DEEP !!!”

THE NATIONAL SPELEOLOGICAL SOCIETY
 2813 CAVE AVENUE
 HUNTSVILLE, ALABAMA 35810-4431
 TEL: (256) 852-1300
GADSDEN GROTTO OF NSS
 P.O. BOX 2092
 E. GADSDEN, ALABAMA 35903
PRESIDENT:
 JIM LOFTIN

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 DAVID TEAL

Not for Internet Use

2ND VICE PRESIDENT:
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SECRETARY/TREASURER:
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Membership Fees: Each Member receives a subscription 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.



Front Cover: Brandy Sees in VA Cave. We went through a crawlway and ended up in a standing area with a waterfall. Brandy approached the pool of water and asked Mark "How deep is the water?", and he said "ankle deep." As she started walking, the water kept getting deeper and deeper. Actually it was nearly thigh deep.

Back Cover: Left Photo: Bobby Dodson inside of Lone Fern Caverns. Right Photo: (from left to right) Steven Brewer, Kelly Keener, Julie Morgan, Scott Fee, Bobby Dodson, Mark Medlen, and Jim Loftin, at Lone Fern Caverns..

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 GADSDENGROTTO@YAHOO.COM
 OR SEND THEM TO...
 GADSDEN GROTTO
 P.O. Box 2092
 GADSDEN, AL. 35903

The Gadsden Grotto Membership Fees Are Due!!!

Anthony Cline

Address
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6/11/2002 Paid - Member

Mark Medlen

Address
Not for Internet Use

6/11/2002 Paid - Member

Michael A. Davis

Address
Not for Internet Use

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John Padula

Address
Not for Internet Use

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Address
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Michael Ray

Address
Not for Internet Use

6/11/2002 Paid - Member

Kelly A. Keener

Address
Not for Internet Use

6/11/2002 Paid - Member

David Teal

Address
Not for Internet Use

256-546- 4526 - Paid Charter

Alan Little

Address
Not for Internet Use

3/15/2002 Paid - Member

Susan Teal

Address
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Jim Loftin

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Bobby Whorton

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Trip Reports

Micro-Shaving Trip

By: Kelly A. Keener
NSS # 48045, Scci.#1023

Sept. 25, 2003

Mark & I went ridge walking 2years ago, and I found a hole that needed to be dug open, so we started digging away. After we pulled out a lot of large sized boulders, there was a pit inside of the entrance. We geared up, rigged the rope, and repelled into a small hole. The depth of the pit is about 30' ft. to the bottom, but it didn't seem to go all that far. We spotted a passage up on a ledge which went into a second entrance. We unrigged ourselves from the rope in a nice room. In that room on the right was a lead that was all plugged with a big giant sandstone boulder. We threw a rock down into the blocked crack and there it was... Another pit, waiting for us to drop and explore. On September 22, 2003, Mark and I decided to go back to the cave and go micro-shave the lead that needed to be explored. Before we headed on our merry little way, Mark loaded up the soda pop straws filled with synthetic gun powder, packed it down real good and tight, placed the fuse made with Brillo pad into the straws, then placed a positive/negative wire inside it, mixed bondo that's inside a sealed container, and placed in into a plastic Ziploc bag. We got our caving gear together and loaded our packs on to the 4 x 4. Since it was a cool gorgeous day, sun was shining bright, and the temperature was not too hot, not too cool. Just perfect. We road between the ridges about 9 miles to the pit. We stopped on top of the ridge above the it, which is down in a gully. I named it "The Drowning Pool" because when it rains, the entrance is overflowing with lots of water. Another way to tell the pit is flooded is when the 4 x 4 trail up above the cave is nothing but a big deep muddy pool of water. This time the mud hole was dry, so we were able to enter the cave. We repelled into the upper entrance which is about 20' ft. down to a big ledge. On this ledge is a lead, with a large sandstone boulder blocking the hole. Mark took his hammer drill and drilled a hole into the boulder, then stuck a soda pop straw down into the hole, packed it with the sand that came out of the sandstone drilling, then he plugged the

hole with a concrete bolt, Then he plugged the rock with a little bit of already mixed bond.

We ran the wire to the point to where we were out of the blast zone. Mark then took the battery from his drill and set off the straw. It knocked off a pretty good sized chunk, and put many large cracks all through the boulder. The rock was bigger than mark expected it to be. He then proceeded to try and burst the rock once again. We got back out of the danger zone, and Mark set the other straw off. This time it knocked off another big chunk of the boulder and it made the crack larger. Sure enough, there is a pit there, that possibly goes down another 30' ft. We ran out of straws, and the cave got smoky, so we had to get out of there before we choked to death. We put on our Texas System and climbed on out. Mark and I are going back to the cave real soon to continue blasting the rest of that boulder down into the pit so it can be accessible for us to explore more virgin cave. Hopefully, there is more passage beyond this pit, and hopefully it goes further on into the dark depths of the mountain.

Who Knows... That's what caving is all about?

Exploring the unknown!!!

Kelly A. Keener





Gadsden Grotto TAG Fall Cave In Adventure



Trip Reports

Survey Trip To Lone Fern Cave

Written By: Mark Medlen

On a beautiful Saturday morning, Jim Loftin, Kelly Keener & I met with Bobby Dodson after Jim received an e-mail from him enviting us to help him survey a cave reported to him by Bill Torode. We met Bobby, Steve Brewer, Scott Fee, and Julie Morgan at a pull off next to I-20 and Coldwater exit. Then we followed Bobby into Munford to a

Steel Fabrication Company and drove behind their main building. Behind that building, where they have been grating with bulldozers to make a flat spot for another building, there is a large entrance, which is very unstable looking. The entrance was reportedly filled with dirt and boulders, but they were not able to fill it up, so they called the NSS office in Huntsville. Steve Brewer rigged the rope, and we all climbed our way down into the entrance, pulling tape and surveying as we went. We entered a large room and by climbing down, the hill of debris and loose rock. The room was quite large at about 100'ft. wide and 120'ft. long. We surveyed across the room into what seemed to be the main passage that started angling back up, then to a dead end. We started surveying back across the room to the left, and that's where we discovered crystals in the wall. These crystals were aragonite crystals, of which mostly was dusty. We then found passage which is a crack in the wall, that led to more walking passage. This passage was the only passage in the cave that was not part of the big room. This passage, in some areas, had large amounts of aragonite crystals and box work. The floor of the cave was thick with sticky mud. This passage continued to a climb up, but then we

Stop because we needed rope to continue further. Then we headed back toward the entrance and surveyed a few passages that were formed from large pieces of breakdown and around the edges of the big room in the entrance. We surveyed about 700'ft. of passage, and the cave is about 88.5'ft. deep.

Written By: Mark Medlen

NSS# 24445



Top: Steve Brewer taking a break between photo shots. Bottom: Julie Morgan of the Birmingham Grotto shining a light through a thin rock layer.

Trip Reports

5 Fun Days At TAG Fall Cave In

Written By: Kelly A. Keener

October 8-12, 2003

Wednesday evening near 6pm, Mark and I had our vehicles loaded up for the big weekend at the TAG FALL CAVE IN . Brandy and I took my SUV for Mark & I to sleep in. Mark took his Jeep to go caving . We headed to Valley Head. We arrived at the camp, Jim Loftin and Michael A. Davis waved us down. They had the camp already set up and looking nice. "Tarp City". Jim built a Gadsden Grotto sign to hang up at our camp. Brandy unloaded her things out of the truck, and set her tent up, then we took pictures of the things going on around Secoyah camp ground. It was a windy, cloudy evening with a few raindrops, which made the weather pretty cool there. Not much was going on at the camp ground due to it being only Wednesday, and the **Registration wasn't until 12pm Thursday. We just sat around and enjoyed the surroundings of the mountains the rest of the night. It was 12 or 1:00am so we decided to tuck in for the night.**

Thursday, October 9, 2003

Woke up ate a wonderful breakfast, I noticed that a quite a few cavers showed up sometime in the middle of the night because there were more tents and campers set up in the field area. 12:00pm rolled around, and it was time for us to go pick up our pre-registration packets. We got back to the camp, ate lunch and was waiting for Mike Pearson and his friend Justin from Arkansas to show up with his RV. Shortly came Michael Ray. They set their things up and then we all decided to see what was up at the Venders's Village. Not much yet, I bet tonight they will have them set up. It's supper time and Mike Davis cooked spaghetti. David Teal once told me that pasta is good Food, full of carbohydrates, especially if you are going caving the following day. I think it is good fuel for your soul. It was raining pretty steady, so we sat around inside Justin's RV for awhile until it settled down some. The rain finally stopped and we went walking around Vender's Villiage. I bought the light that I have been wanting ever since it came out. A Pro-lite II. I can't wait to try it out. We are going to Cedar Crystal Ridge Cave tomorrow, Friday. We decided we all needed to tuck in for the night so that we will be all good and ready for our fun caving trip. We are also planning to drop Jack Pot Pit, and then to

to the great beautiful South Pittsburg Pit. I can't wait for this fun adventurous day ahead of us all.

Friday, October 10, 2003

We all woke up, ate another wonderful breakfast in Compliments of Chef Mike. Mike Pearson, and Justin went to Vender's Village to buy some gear to go on all these good caving adventures that we are doing this weekend. We left as a caravan, and followed each other to the caves. We pulled off on the side of the roadway and parked, grabbed our horizontal gear and headed to the cave across the road. Jim had the key to unlock the gate, so he reached his arm inside the little square hole in the iron door surrounded by a big slab of concrete and opened the door. We went in one by one. Inside this door was a small room with some breakdown. As we were going in further, we passed Mr. Attaway, Julie Morgan, and Scott Fee, as they were heading out of the cave. We went over on across a little bit of breakdown rocks, turned to the right and followed the passage to the large formation room. This room had many different kinds of formations such as soda straws, helectites, flowstone, staglagmites. stalagmites, and columns. Just about every type of formation I could think of. It was so pristine, that it kind of reminded me of some fairytale land because of the way the walls were all glistening and sparkly. I surely understand why this cave is gated. This cave is too delicate for just anyone to visit with awe. I can name a few caves myself that needs to be gated so they can be protected just like Cedar Crystal Ridge Cave. We tuned back around and we once again popped through the little square hole, got in our cars, and headed for our next plan, Jack Pot Pit. We pulled our vehicles onto the property where the access to the pit is. Jim and Michael Ray drove on up the driveway to ask permission to go to the cave. A few minutes later, they drove back down the driveway. Looks like this plan has fallen through, so we went on to our next plan, which was to go and drop South Pittsburg Pit. We arrived at the park, pulled into the parking spot, walked up the driveway, then we went on a nice little trail up the mountain to the pit. Most of us bounced the pit, and some stayed up at top and watched. At the bottom of this 165' footer, (Cont' on Page 8)

Continued, TAG Fall Cave In Weekend

has nice formations. To the right of it was a little clear shallow pool along with some cave pearls. We climbed back out, and we headed back down the mountain. We arrived back to our "Tarp City Camp" Ralph and Andy were there to camp with us. They are also members of the Gadsden Grotto . Later on Bobby and Polly pulled up, and shortly after was Gary and his girlfriend. After we came back from caving, we got cleaned up and then we ate a delicious tender rib eye steak dinner, then I sat in my lounge chair and rested for a while. A good day of caving, good meal, and a good nap. It was about 11:30pm when Jason Record, Vice President of the Upper Cumberland Grotto in Tennessee, came up to Mark & I and asked us if we wanted to follow them to Moses Tomb and drop the pit. Mark & I, Ralph, and Andy threw our packs into the back of Mark's Jeep, and off we go. Jason, and his friends were already there opening the gate, so we drove on in. We are off to do the Midnight Run. When we got to the top, there were already 4 cavers at the bottom of Moses Tomb. One caver was climbing up. It was Jacob who found "Jacobs Pretty Well" from the TAG house. He was trying out a new type of frog system that sounded pretty easy. Another caver was one of the helpers at the Munchie Stand at TAG, and the other two were from Tennessee. We all stood around and talked for a little while. I just couldn't wait to try out my shiny new Pro-Lite II. I put on my gear and got on rope. My light was so bright that it lit up the whole pit. Everyone at the top of the pit couldn't believe how bright this light lit up the pit. I have never seen Moses so clearly lit up, all decorated with flowstone. We all saw the neat grooves worn into the stone from the ropes formed from many years by many cavers. After we climbed back up to the top, it was 4:15am. We decided to go back to camp and go to sleep. Jason and his buddies stayed at Moses to finish dropping the pit. Mark and I was worn out.

Saturday, October 11, 2003

We slept till 10:30 am. We never ever sleep that late, especially on Saturday morning at TAG. Everyone was already up and moving about. It took us awhile to finally get up. After breakfast, Mark & I, Brandy Sees, and Mike Davis decided to challenge the Squeeze Box Contest. I have never entered this contest before and it looked pretty easy, I felt pretty brave too. Believe me, It looks a whole lot easier than it actually is. My age was telling me a whole different story. Boy, I felt it.

Mark & I both made it through at 6-3/4'in. Brandy made it through at 7'in., and Mike made it through 7-1/4'in. When I squeezed through, a guy yelled out " Well you can fit a lot of Ass into a little box!!!" That got me laughing so hard that the board in the squeeze box put alot of pressure on my chest and it felt that I may have bruised, broke, cracked a rib. I really wasn't hurting that bad. I got a little scraped up when we finished entering the Squeeze Box Contest Afterward ,Mark, Mike Davis, Mike Pearson, and Justin went back to Fox Mountain to drop a couple short pits near Moses Tomb. They went and did Mystic Well and Sloopys Double Drop. Michael Ray and Jim Loftin went to help with the Petty Johns Cave Clean Up. Ralph, and Andy, lounged around in their lounge chairs watching the contests From the campsite, Bobby and Polly, Gary and his girlfriend walked around Vender's Village, while Brandy and I walked around the field taking pictures. Mud Puppy of the Birmingham Grotto who did a fabilious job with the "HUMMER", Friday nights bon fire, entered the Obstacle Course. I have been wanting to go through it ever since I watched them build it, so that encouraged me to challenge the course . Chuck Constable also from the Birmingham Grotto, and Brent Aulenbach, took the challenge too. I was the only girl in that age category to enter the contest so I didn't want to go back and challenge myself . Well, I made it in 4 minutes and 7 seconds. I was just curious how long it would take me to go trough it. That was also harder than I thought, but not like the Squeeze Box, The Obstacle Course, I had to stop a couple of seconds and take a few breath breaks along the way to the finish, where I had to stretch my arms out and knock down the wooden door. I finally made it through. I didn't realize how sore my rib cage was until I went through the course. I was really hurting after a couple of hours. I found out a week later when I went to the Doctor, that I had a cracked off set rib on my left side. Everyone came back from their caving adventures and cooked up a good warm batch of chili and crackers. That was a good meal. This is called stick to your gut type food. 7pm rolled around, and we headed to the stage, The fire had a fantastic firework display came shooting out and lit up the sky.

Written By: Kelly A. Keener
NSS# 48045 Scci.#1023

CAVE FACTS

ARAGONITE CRYSTALS

How do aragonite crystals form?

Aragonite (CaCO_3) is a carbonate mineral (it contains carbon joined to three oxygens - CO_3^{2-}). It is a polymorph of the much more common mineral, calcite. That is, it has the same chemical composition, but a different atomic structure (it's composed of the same stuff, the atoms are just arranged differently).

Aragonite forms primarily by (1) high pressure, low temperature metamorphism (application of heat, pressure, and/or chemically-active fluids to pre-existing rocks below the earth's surface), (2) precipitation (chemical deposition) from warm ocean waters, (3) as part of the carbonate skeleton of some marine animals (for example, snails and clams) and plants (algae), and (4) in hot springs.

Pearls (produced by oysters -- a type of clam) are aragonite, as is the mother-of-pearl coating on shells

ASPHALT OOZE

Millions of years ago, the area of Los Angeles and Rancho La Brea lay beneath the surface of the Pacific Ocean. During this time, marine sedimentary layers formed and in some places these eventually became rich with fossil fuels produced from ancient sea life. When the ocean levels receded some 100,000 years ago, the area of Rancho La Brea became land. New layers of gravel, sand, and clay formed by the erosion of the emergent hills, and settled on top of the much older marine sediments full of oil.

At Rancho La Brea, the crude oil has been seeping out of the ground through conduits and fissures in the coastal plain sediments for the past 40,000 years, the seeps forming pools in low-lying areas.

Foot Note!

Commonly called the "tar pits," the liquids that seep out of the ground at Rancho La Brea are actually comprised of asphalt, not tar. Tar is a commercial by-product made by the distillation of woody materials, such as coal or peat, while asphalt is a naturally formed substance comprised of hydrocarbon molecules.

fresh sediments from the surrounding hills continued to form new layers of sediments on top of the older ones and asphalt continued to seep to the surface. Over tens of thousands of years, this produced the cone-shaped asphalt deposits found at Rancho La Brea.

Foot Note!

Though asphalt seeps like those at Rancho La Brea are extremely rare, others have been found near Bakersfield, California and as far away as Peru and Iran. However, none have yielded the quantity or diversity of fossils that have been collected from Rancho La Brea.

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



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