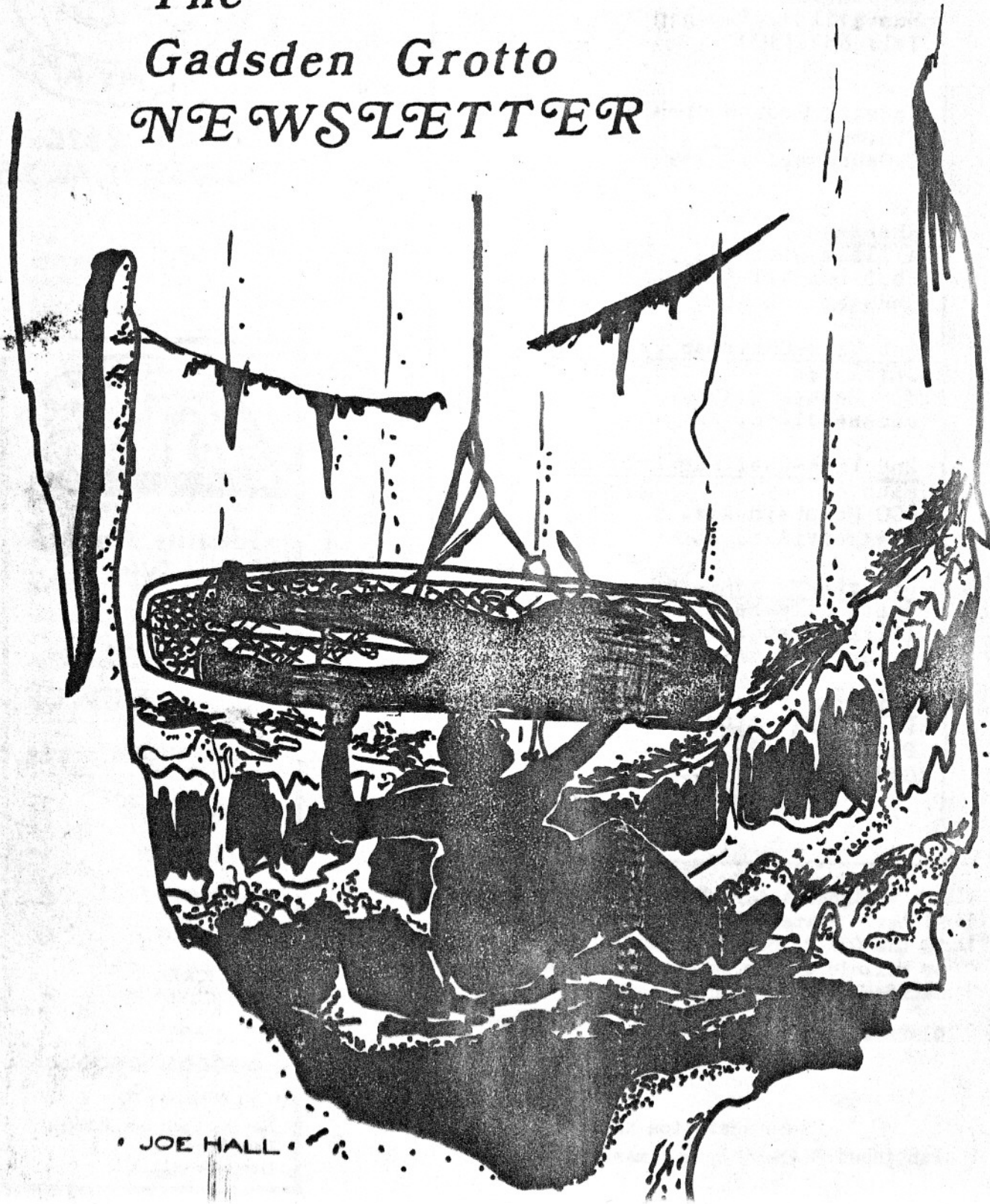




The
Gadsden Grotto
NEWSLETTER



• JOE HALL •



The
National
Speleological
Society

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A C C I D E N T R E P O R T S

Vast Caverns

--Jeff Machen

 ** Jeff Machen **
 ** Linda King **
 ** William Garrett **

On the morning of November 13, 1982; William Garrett, Linda King, and I, Jeff Machen, departed from Gadsden and headed off for Jackson county.

Our objective was three pits in the 200 foot deep category. We were trying to get Linda a little more vertical experience in hopes she would be able to do Fantastic within a few months.

We arrived at the parking area for Vast Caverns at about 12:00 a.m. We got our gear together and proceeded to the cave. We rigged the entrance drop with a new 600' P.M.I. rope. William rappelled into the 227' deep pit at about 12:45. We decided that since we had only two sets of ascenders William would go down followed by Linda. I would then wait at the top for William to climb out before I descended with Williams ascenders for Linda to use. All was going well when William climbed out and I rigged in at about 1:25. I rappelled down and unclipped from the rope. I moved over to where Linda was setting about 25 feet from the rope. The location where Linda was setting appeared to be a good location as it was clear of the entrance and partially protected by a 50' high rock wall. We were sitting close together and we were talking. She had just removed her hard hat for comfort. We were deep in conversation. I didn't hear the rock until it was almost on us. Linda never heard it. There was no time to react. I drew closer to Linda hoping to protect her and it hit. I felt it brush my right shoulder and heard it hit something solid. Linda was on her back and I heard her scream. I saw blood on her face and that scared me. I immediately checked her for a head wound. She was screaming from pain and shock. She said her arm and her leg were hurt bad. I told her to listen to me and do what I said and we would get her out. I asked if she hurt anywhere else and she said no. I was relieved to find the blood on her face was due to a minor abrasion. She couldn't stand for me to touch her arm and I had no knife with me to cut her clothing away. It was obvious to me that her left forearm was broken. There was no blood and I moved on to her leg. I yelled up at William and told him that a rock fell, Linda was hit and had a broken arm and maybe a broken leg. I called for him to rappell down so that we could get together on the situation. Linda's leg was bloody and I was concerned with the possibility of a compound fracture. I could feel that the bone was not displaced and I felt fairly sure that her leg was not broken.

William rappelled down with his pack. We covered Linda with a space blanket and quickly discussed the situation. We were confident that we could execute the rescue ourselves but we decided that William would ascend and try to contact the cave rescue group from Huntsville. I would remain with Linda give first-aid and try to stabilize her condition until help arrived.

Accident reports cont.

The rock had hit Linda at about 1:40. It was 2½ hours later when help finally arrived. During this time I moved Linda under an overhanging ledge where she would be completely protected. I then made a sling for her arm to help keep it stationary. I wrapped her completely in the space blanket and tried to keep her from going into shock and from hyperventilation as well as hypothermia.

After 2 long hours I heard William at the entrance. He said help was on the way and asked me to tie the rescue pulley and extra binners on the rope. I did and he pulled up the rope and rigged the rope for the rescue.

At approximately 4:50 p.m. John David Jordan, a member of Scottsborro Emergency Ambulance Service, rappelled into the pit. He asked for a belay and I gave it. He was spinning very badly and his descent was pretty much out of control due to his equipment. He was using a "Genie" variable friction descending device. This device proved to be unsatisfactory for descent down our P.M.I. rope. After he was off rope we carried the stokes, which had previously been lowered, over next to Linda. I cut part of her gear off. We splinted her arm and leg and put her in the stokes. We then carried her over to the rope where I rigged the stokes onto the rope.

I was concerned that Linda would be facing the wall when she finally met the wall during ascent. I suggested John David be rigged into the rope directly above the stokes and that both of them be pulled up together by the rescuers on top. They pulled and I attempted to keep the stokes ascending smoothly by controlling a rope attached to the bottom of the stokes.

About the time they reached the lip I heard what I thought was another rock. I flattened myself against the wall and waited. What hit the bottom was a 3-cell flashlight that dislodged from John David's harness. After all the waiting I was anxious to get Linda to the hospital. When everyone had moved away from the entrance I climbed out. I moved to where Linda was laying.

Since the rescue party had very limited lighting, I walked directly in front of the stokes lighting the way for the very steep one-mile descent to the ambulance. The rescue members performed well under the circumstances. Even so the descent down the mountain was very painful for Linda. In the ambulance I helped the E.M.T. cut her clothing off to get her blood pressure, etc. She was in Jackson County Hospital at 8:05.

In my opinion the rescue squad and ambulance service personel as well as the other rescuers on hand performed very well considering they had no previous experience. Never-the-less I was very thankful that William Garrett was directing the rescue from the top the whole time. His experience could have saved Linda's life.



Rescue at Vast Caverns

--William Garrett

William Garrett

Jeff Machen

Linda King

The three of us left Gadsden at around 9:00 Saturday morning.

We arrived at the pit at around 12:45. I rigged the rope (600') and went down first.

While I was waiting on Linda to rappell in, a couple of small rocks landed near me, so I moved across the pit to a place where the entrance would not be seen. Then I waited until she arrived.

Soon after I headed out. No rocks fell while I was on rope and at the lip only dirt and leaves. Jeff was the last one down. No rocks fell while he was on rope.

A few minutes later I heard a muffled thud and at the same time a loud piercing scream from Linda. "I thought she must have fallen into one of the holes at the bottom". Then Jeff yelled up that a rock had fallen and she was hurt. Broken arm and possibly a broken leg.

I rappelled back in "being very careful at the lip" carrying my space blanket and carbide lamp for warmth. (2 racks should have been used as a splint for her arm). Jeff and I got the blanket under and around her, and I started for help. The closest we can come to the time of the accident is between 1:30-1:45. I got up to my car at 2:35, I drove out to the highway turned right and went to the first house.

First I called "911" but it was busy so I dialed the operator. Huntsville information would not find the number of the cavers rescue. She gave me the Jackson County rescue. The man I talked to there said he had the number I needed and that he needed details of what happened and where. When he had this he asked for the number from which I was calling, I told him and asked again for the cavers rescue number. He told me that he would call them "right then" and call me back. Five minutes later I got a call from the Bridgeport PD. They also wanted where, who, and why. This I told them and again asked for the cavers rescue. He said they had been called already.

Next I headed back to the cave. I asked one of the people at the house to ride with me and wait for the rescuers at my car, and point them in the right direction.

I gathered a wool sweater, down vest, toboggan and a rope 160' and ran back down to the pit.

Once at the pit I got Jeff to put my rescue pulley and extra binners on the end of the rope. I pulled these up, and sent down the clothes.

There was nothing left to do except wait for help. Around a half hour later the guy I left at the car came down. He informed me that six county Sheriff Dept. were on their way down the hill "Oh Boy".

They stood around and asked questions about us and what we were doing. One said that we were probably all "fools for going in them damn holes".

Sometime later the first of the rescuers from Scottsboro came. Somehow they had the idea that a 2 year old girl was trapped under some rocks. They were taken completely by surprise by the real situation on hand.

I then found out that no cavers had been called. So, I started rigging the haul to get Linda out. I rigged the 160' across the pit, and hung a pulley in the middle, the rope was fed through the pulley and the

Accident reports cont.

stokes were tied on the end and lowered into the pit.

With some discussion it was decided that a fire medic "John David Jordan" would rappell in and secure splints on her arm and leg. He would also be hauled out with her. I offered him the use of my rack but he said he would rather use his genie descender saying it gave (more control). Just before he started down I reminded him to ask for a belay if he got out of control. He had no real problem with going to fast, but, the way the rope winds through the device caused him to spin wildly once he was free of the wall.

There was nothing to do on top but wait now. I warmed myself by the fire and checked my rigging one last time.

Fifteen or twenty minutes later Jeff yelled up that they were ready. Four or ten people got ready to pull. I had the safety, and there were at least 12 more people standing around waiting for their turn.

One old man (76) made it up the hill to the pit after dark with no light "Just to see what was going on." (It was overcast and got dark early).

When the pull started I had to remind them to go easy and not jerk her around. Jeff also had a tag line to help keep the litter from swinging around to much or hitting the wall at the top. (The tag line was the rescue squad rescue rope, oversized 7/16" ski rope).

As soon as she was out I derigged the haul, and rigged the rope for Jeff to climb out.

When he was out we derigged and others pulled while I coiled the rope.

We had decided long before then to carry Linda down rather than up the hill. The trail was already blazed and the ambulance had been there for at least an hour. It took almost an hour to get her the 1 mile to the ambulance. This was because the trail was steep and rocky.

The worst problems other than the cavers not being called were the total lack of gear for a rescue of this sort proper rope, pulleys and binnars etc. and also there were around 25 people up there and only 2 flashlights between them. One of which was dropped into the pit almost hitting Jeff.

Otherwise all partys involved Jackson County Sheriff Dept. Scottsboro Fire Dept. and Emergency Ambulance Service and the Jackson Co. Rescue Squad cooperated very well. None of them came in and tryed to take over. They all had the attitude that the only important thing was to get Linda out of the pit as quickly and easy as possible with no more injury to her or anyone else.

Later at the hospital the Fire Medic John David told Jeff and I that they could not have done it without us, without someone else getting hurt, or killed.

Linda came out of it with a broken radial in her left arm, a deep puncture wound in her left leg and a minor cut on the left side of her face.

Jeff and I thank all partys involved very much for all their help and cooperation.

Analysis

--Dave Teal:

It is obvious in this case that the falling rock just "turned loose" by itself from the roof 250' above. The fact Linda had removed her hard hat reflects inexperience on her part as well as Machens. The area below the entrance hole is very unstable and automobile size. Boulders can be seen teetering on edge waiting on the next rain or the next freezing and thaw to nudge them into the 220' free fall.

Deep conversation (ie. kissing) should be left to more stable passages or the outside world.

It was lucky for their sake that the Sheriffs Dept. did not take over as is their usual way.

References: Personal Communication Buddy Lane to Dave Teal Dec, 4, 1982
Scottsborro Times "Spelunker Hurt in fall" Nov. 14, 1982

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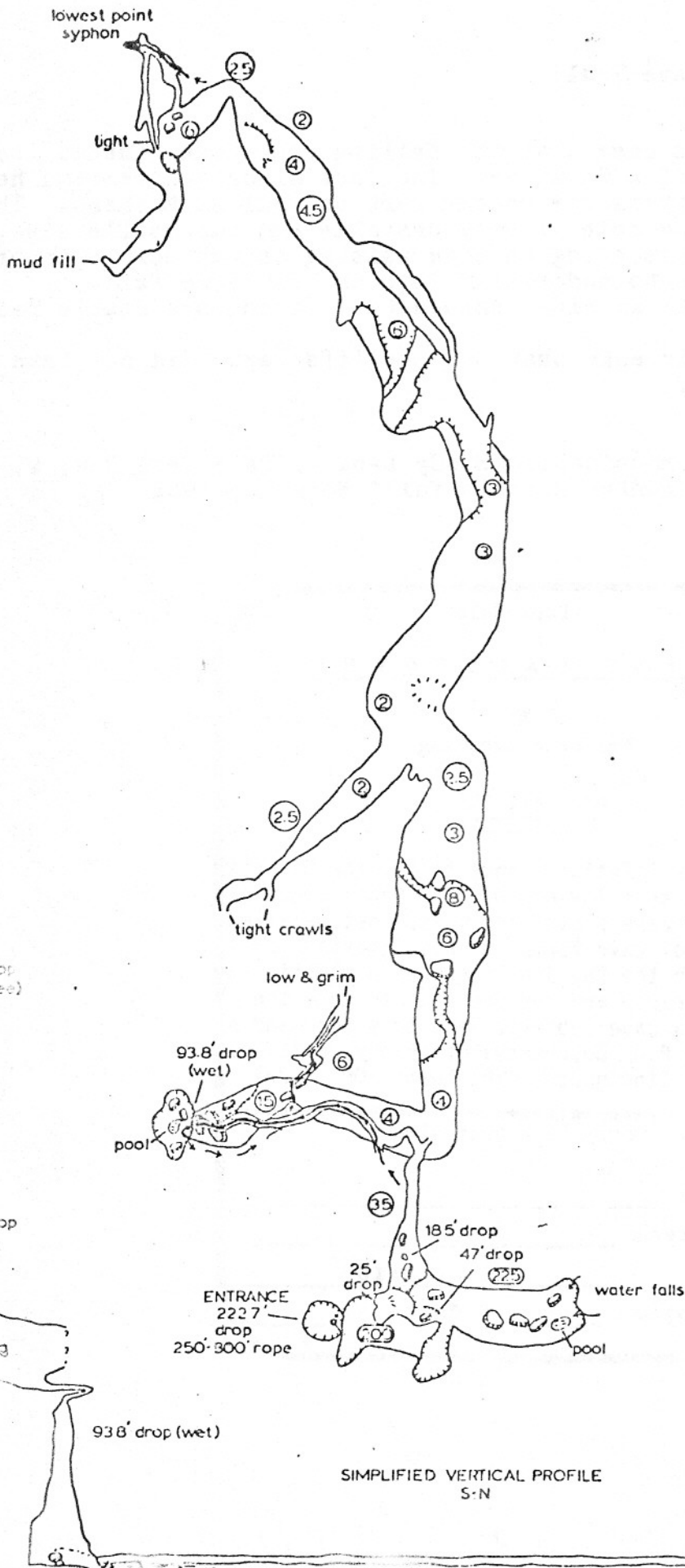
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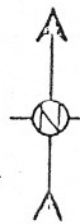


VAST CAVERNS AL-1860

TAPE AND COMPASS SURVEY ON:
MAY 13, 21, 27, 1978 by:

Lona Brown Ron Lewis
Rick Buice John M. Robinson
Will Chamberlin Marion O. Smith
Charles Clark

Length: 1612.3 feet
Depth: 416.7 feet



plot by: M.O. Smith
draft by: R.D. Kissing
8-2-78

Green Valley Cave

--Bobby Whorton

On Thursday, November 11, 1982 approximately 1:30 pm, Becky Brown female age 18, of Ragland, Al. was attempting to negotiate a chimney climb, up into, what is known as "The Slide" some 300 ft from the entrance of Green Valley Cave, Al. 818, known to the locals as Indian Springs Cave. The girl reportedly fell 25 to 30 feet down to the sandy stream level of the cave.

The girls companions had a call into the Etowah Co. Rescue Squad by 2:00 p.m. and by 3:00 p.m. were in the cave working. A friend of Jeff Steele who had been listening to a scanner and knew Jeff had saving gear drove by Jeffs house, by 3:30 we were inside working. The Squad members saw we arrived truly prepared and lead us immediately to the point where the girl was, which was where a key hole traverse 30 feet above the lower level some 225 feet from the entrance. Squad members calling for more light and workers, asked for someone small enough to traverse in and under which is where I began working with them hauling the girl through by a human bridge through the fissure, one of the rooms, through another fissure 125' from the entrance and out of the cave by 6:45 p.m.

Upon arrival at the hospital the girl was found to be suffering from lower back injuries, leg injuries and lacerations to the face and head areas. The girl was very lucky and listed in satisfactory condition.

Analysis --Bobby Whorton:

Had the girl and her companions thought more about what they were doing and been better equipped and experienced the accident would have likely been avoided.

Had more of the rescuers been equipped with helmet lighting and proper boots along with more experience with rope rescue techniques, underground, then the girl would have been out the cave even sooner.

If newspapers would cease printing almost detailed maps of cave locations, so would a lot of inexperienced would be caver visitations, as have happened before.

Source: Reported by Bobby L. Whorton N.S.S. 20052, GG, Article: The Gadsden Times

FRANK AND ERNEST



GREEN VALLEY CAVE

AL-818

0'
10'
20'
30'
40'
50'
60'
70'

DEPTH
BELOW
ENTRANCE
↓

ENTRANCE (EL 320 feet)

ENTRANCE

PROFILE

25' CLIMB

100'
110'
120'
130'



0 50
FEET

AL 951
SMALL CAVE ENTRANCE

0 15
METERS

TAPE AND COMPASS
SURVEY BY
KENNETH KIFER
LIN GUY
DAVID TEAL
OF THE NSS
JUNE 18, 1968
DECEMBER 22, 1971

PLAN

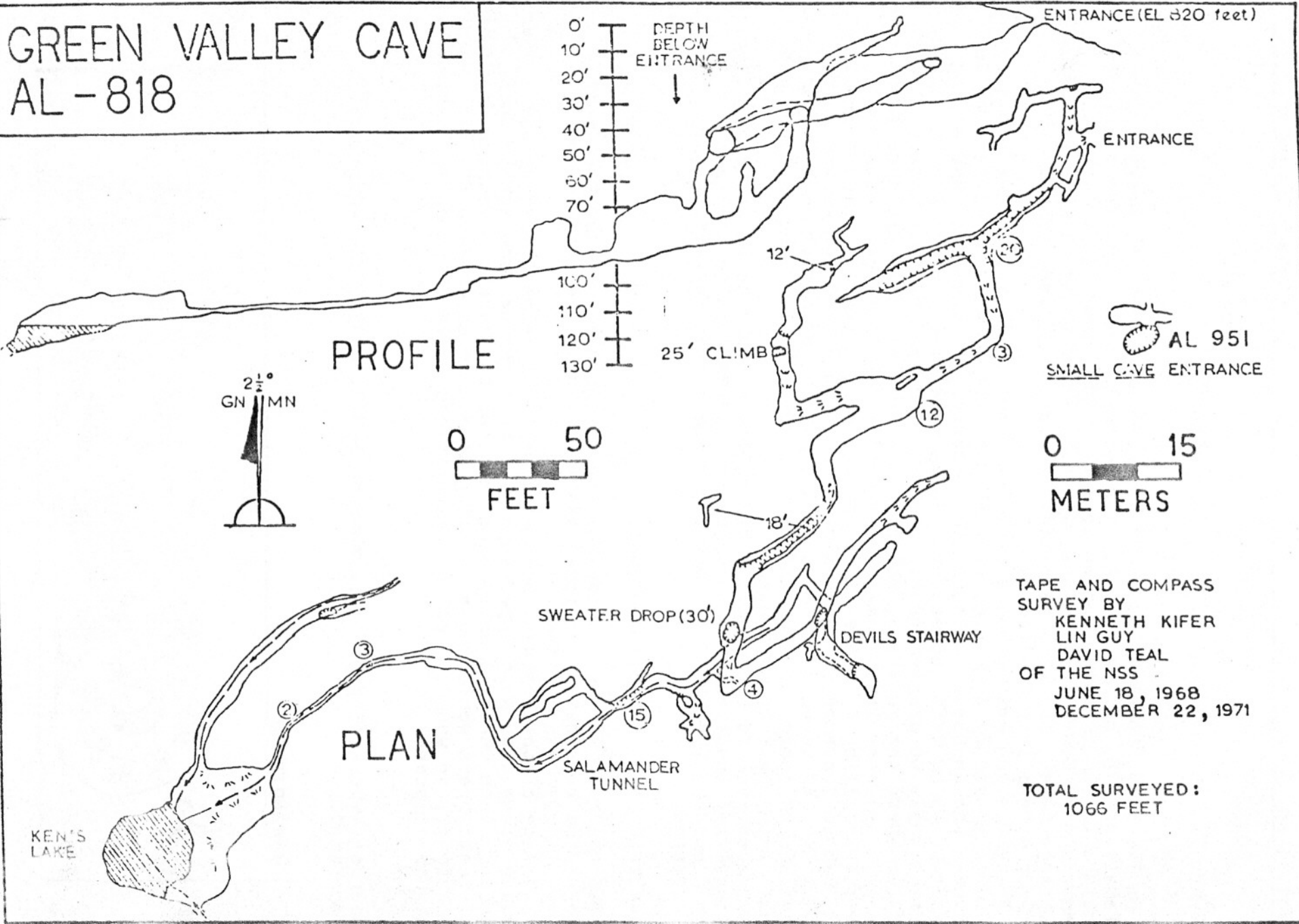
SWEATER DROP (30')

DEVILS STAIRWAY

SALAMANDER
TUNNEL

KEN'S
LAKE

TOTAL SURVEYED:
1066 FEET




Coming Events

All trips will depart from the Attalla Waffle House at 7:30-8:00 a.m. unless otherwise stated.

Jan. 9	Horse-Adock Cave	Blount County
Jan. 16	Estill Fork Ridgewalk	
Jan. 29	NSS Office Addition Dedication	
Feb. 1	Grotto Meeting	East Gadsden Recreation Center
Feb. 13	Sharps Cove Ridgewalk	
Feb. 25	Teal-Whorton Birthday Party at	Whortons House
Feb. 27	Crownover Saltpeter Cave	
March 83	Ala. Cave Survey Meeting	Date Forthcoming
March 12	Spring NSS BOG Meeting	Denver, Colorado

Table of Contents

Accident Reports-Vast Caverns.....	3
Rescue at Vast Caverns.....	5
Vast Caverns Map.....	8
Green Valley Cave Rescue.....	9
Green Valley Cave Map.....	10
Coming Events.....	11
Table of Contents.....	11

CAVERNS ARE
GOOD TO THE
LAST DROP 

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