

Gadsden Grotto Newsletter



C a v i n g w i t h
F a m i l y a n d f r i e n d s

**Gadsden Grotto of the
National Speleological Society**

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Or to

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Wellington, AL 36279

Gadsden Grotto Meetings

2nd Tues of every month at 6:30 P.M. At the East Gadsden Community Center Across Highway 431 Goodyear plant Parking lot.
(256) 549-4673
Gadsden, Alabama



Gadsden Grotto Newsletter

The Gadsden Grotto Newsletter is printed upon submissions and is included in grotto membership for \$10.00 due each May.

Our newsletters are published about two- four times per year due to lack of turning in articles and or pictures.



Mission Statement

The Gadsden Grotto of the National Speleological Society (NSS) was established to organize cavers of the East Alabama area to better promote the objectives of the Southeastern Regional Association and the NSS as well as to promote the studies of geology, biology and hydrology and other cave related sciences associated with caves and karst regions.

S E Q U O Y A H C A V E R N S C A V E C R A W L I N '

On MAY 11 , 2006, Mark noticed an article about a cave on the front cover of a newspaper, so we grabbed a paper from the bin and read an article in the Gadsden Times news paper about Sequoia Caverns.

The article and photos were taken by Tammy McKinley the newspaper reporter and photos, of The Gadsden Times.

This is how her article read...

CAVERN CRAWLIN'

Tours take visitors to seldom-explored areas of cave

Valley Head — There is a new way to enjoy Sequoyah Caverns & Ellis Homestead.

Wild cave adventures offer visitors a chance to see parts of the caverns seldom touched by anyone.

Reservations are required to join a guide for an exciting and intense trip into parts of the cave that only a few get to see. An overnight trip is also available for scouts and youth groups, according to the web site www.sequoyahcaverns.com. There is a five - person minimum for these tours, and reservations must be made at least 48 hours in advance

The guide takes guest about 300 feet beneath the entrance of the cave on what is described as to light to moderately strenuous hike. The journey winds about 2 miles through the cave in darkness, with only head lamps to light most of the way.

Explorers can see all types of geologic formations, including stalactites (which "grow" down) and stalagmites (which "grow" up from the floor). Residents of the cave— Brown bats, salamanders, and spiders- make occasional appearances.

Adventurers should be prepared to get muddy, and appropriate attire is recommended. Tours between 60 - 90 minutes costs \$20 per person. Two-and-a-half to three-hour tours are \$30 per person.

The caverns' owners also offer two other types of tours. Guided Lantern tours are offered in the evenings from Memorial Day through Labor Day. Children must be 8 years old for this tour, and the Wild Cave Adventures. Admission is \$14.95 for adults and \$10.95 for children between 8 and 12 years old. Groups of 15 or more get a \$2.00 discount. For the less adventurous, Guided Looking Glass Tours depart regularly from the gift shop. Guests can see the reflective pools, the Grand Ballroom and a number of unusual formations. Admission is \$10.95 for adults and \$5.95 for children between 4 and 12 years old. Discount admission for groups of 15 or more is \$8.95 for adults and \$4.95 for children. Those who prefer the great outdoors above ground, can tour the Ellis Homestead. James Ellis moved his family in 1641 to Valley Head from Tennessee. He and his family built a log cabin and, later, and a frame house where the campground is today.

The land has passed down through the family, and direct descendants still live on the site.

From March to November, the grounds are open seven days a week. Hours for tours and other amenities are 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Saturdays and 11p.m. to 5 p.m. Sundays. December through February, the site will be open on weekends only.

From interstate 59, take exit 239 to US 11 South. Go 3 miles and look for County Road 731. Turn right onto 731 and go 1 mile to the entrance to

Sequoyah Cavern & Ellis Homestead.

To make reservations, call

(800) 843-5098 or (256)635-0024; e-mail roy@atsequoyah.com; or write to 1438 County Road 731, Valley Head, AL 35989.

ESSAY BY:
TAMMY McKinley :
The Gadsden Times Newspaper

Gadsden Grotto Trip Reports

We found another Pit Yesterday. HUUURAAAY!!!

We went to go pit bouncing yesterday and Mark my sweet ole man, my caving friends Jim Loftin, and David "Hazard" Bryant went on a Pit bouncing Spree and found a 97' ft. pit. We were just hiking to an area which had a series of pits, one 100' ft called "Rocks A lot Pit." then "Nag Well Pit", 112' ft. but we didn't do that one due to finding the new virgin pit. We had to dig it open so that's how we know that it is not on the survey.

The 103 footer was in-between the two pits I mentioned above. Mark decided to call it "Poke Her Well" and in Mother Earth's beauty. There were several smaller pits that had big openings but all the blackberry bushes.... ouch!!! We are going to have to go back and walk that

ridge again I know more caves or pits have opened up.

No one likes to go there because of all the blackberry stickers. Under a huge Like 260,000 volt like power lines were under us we could hear the buzzing sounds of the current running through the power wires. A huge power coal plant was banging their buckets loading them onto the freight train cars sound like a sonic boom. I felt

the rumble in the pit. Mark did too. Man, that was a weird

feeling being around all that excitement.

**Photos/Articles By:
Kelly Keener**



Mark Medlen inside his new pit find, "Poke Her Well"



Hazard Bryant in Rocks-A-Lot Pit



Jim Loftin in Rocks-A-Lot Pit

Gadsden Grotto's Caving At SERA

It was Saturday morning at SERA we managed to scramble our things together to Meet us with the group.

We all headed toward Nag Well. Our group consisted of Mark Medlen, Michael A. Davis, Jim Loftin, Marion O. Smith, Alan Cresler, Manuel Beers, Jason H., Andy Zelner, and Ashley Chan.

We parked across the road and swiftly marched up the mountain in unbearable heat.

We soon crossed the power line and made off across into the Briary Alabama Jungle.

The first cave we came up to was Rocks-A-Lot, a 100'ft pit. It was rigged, and some of those who have not done the pit dropped it. The rest of us headed over to Poke Her Well. We rigged it, and Alan

went in, then Alan and I measured it. The drop on the inside ended up being 91 feet deep with a total of

103' ft deep. Then Ashley, Andy, and Mike bounced the pit while some of the others went over to Nag Well and rigged it. When every one was done at Poke Her Well, the group headed to Nag Well.

Marion was stuck in the hole cursing when we got there, then Manuel came up. Mike and Alan, Jim and Marion talked about politics... Mark stayed out of it. After everyone was done climbing out, Mike rigged on

first trying to figure out how to fit going down into the pit. After redirecting himself, he slid through the tight hole, and found himself dangling directly above the 112' ft. pit. After Mike went down, Mark went down.

We climbed back out and went on back to the camp at SERA.

Oh by the way Jim... How did you enjoy the walk?

By: Mark Medlen and Mike Davis

CRACKER JACK PIT

Joe Hughes and Danielle Purvis who are good caving friends of ours came over and spent the weekend to go to Cracker Jack Pit.

It was my first time since I broke my arm...I wanted to challenge myself to see how my wrist and elbow held up. We arrived at the house... and Danielle volunteered to get out and ask the owners if we can go to the pit? The lady of the house allowed us to go, but we had to sign a release form. The owners are very kind and generous to let us go. We drove down the road in our little Honda Accord as far as the road would allow us to go. We got out of the car and changed into our caving clothes, then headed off down the old torn up rutted paved road. We turned off to the right of the road and hiked down the hill on a small trail to the pit. Mark went down the entrance first, then Joe, to help can Mark rig the pit. There was enough room for Danielle to go, and then I went.

Danielle and I sat at the top of the main drop waiting patiently for them to place the rope pad in place and glide on down.

Finally... Joe went down, then me, then Danielle, then Mark.

We explored the bottom of the pit. There was not much cave but it pretty formations. We took a video of Danielle singing the credit card fraud commercial with the man singing Unbreak My Heart try to love me again bla bla bla until you stepped out of my life-a. It was so funny the way it echoed in the cave. Is sounded just like the commercial. Danielle climbed back up... then me.

I didn't have any problems going into the cave and climbing back out. I am ready to take on a deeper pit now. When I got to the top...

Danielle was down in the hollow cleaning off in the waterfall.

I was a little dirty and sweaty from climbing up so I just stood off in the center of the waterfall. It was cold and refreshing, it really felt good on that hot day. During that time... Mark and Joe were climbing the pit. Joe... he-hee... rocked Mark's pack while he was de-rigging it. Mark wondered why his pack felt heavier than usual.

We gathered our things, went back to the car and put on our dry clothes. What a great day of pit bouncing. I am so excited that I'm back in caving mode. The Doc unleashed me and said to finish that goal that I was reaching for... and that goal is to do more caving, and cave as many as possibly can, and go to all the caves that I want to explore.

Written By: Kelly A. Keener

(Photos By: Kelly Keener and Mark Medlen)



From top to bottom: Mark Medlen, Kelly Keener, Joe Hughes, Danielle Purvis

Bouncing Coronation birthday pit

It was a hot rainy day in July when Mike Pearson, Michael A. Davis, Jim Loftin, Becky and Richard Wooten, Mark Medlen, and Kelly Keener hiked up the mountain on a four wheeler trail which took up straight to the pits.

WE CAME UP TO THE FIRST PIT CORONATION DROP... IT IS AN 80 FOOTER WITH MULTI-drops, BUT NO ONE WANTED TO GO THROUGH THE TIGHT SPOT... SO WE JUST RAPPELLED DOWN THE to the first level .

While everyone else was dropping that pit... Mark rigged the rope to Birthday Pit and he went ahead and dropped it, then climbed back up.

EVEN THROUGH IT HAD BEEN DRY... THE PIT STILL HAD A WATERFALL COMING DOWN FROM IT. THE PIT IS SMALL AT THE TOP... BUT BELLED OUT AND YOU COULD SEE A LEDGE 60 FOOT below with water coming out of a passage from the far wall After reaching the LEDGE... YOU RAPPEL DOWN THE FLOWSTONE INTO THE 120 FOOT WATERFALL.

While Kelly was not on rope... she was taking pictures of people of both pits.

It was hard for her to keep up running back and forth from pit to pit.

THEN MARK AND KELLY'S CAMERA TORE UP WHILE TAKING PICTURES IN THE RAIN.

LUCKILY MIKE (V.W. DUDE) PEARSON HAD HIS CAMERA SO SE TOOK PICTURES WITH HIS Camera for the rest of the trip.

Written By: Mark Medlen

Cave Poem Mother Earth's Birthday

As I gently slide slowly into her dry... but somewhat moist hole,
I manage to feel the urge... the urge of shoving myself further...
further into her tight little depth of her glorious slippery form.

As I go on down on... upon the walls of her beauty... So shapely...
I suddenly feel...her juices saturating my whole body... so hard...

that I get completely drenched by her pure force.

All of a sudden... I have the need... the need...

to gasp for air... gasping for air while she tries to suffocate me...
my face... with her wet juicy sprinkles.

I finally begin to pull myself up slowly... feeling so cool... so relieved.

My face is shiny...and dripping wet as I keep raising up from curved her form.

I feel one last hard plunge... so hard... I feel my heart pounding...
pounding harder and harder, trying to slide out of her tight wet crack.

I stop for a brief moment... just enough to catch my breath,

I wipe the juices from my face and chin... then I continue to slide out....
out from her opening to rest and cool off.

It was a good Birthday for Mother Earth's Womb...

But I was the one who iced the cake... and ate it too.

Written By: Kelly A. Keener

2006 TAG FALL CAVE IN



Caving Trips To Wills Welch Well and Paul's Cave/Cataract Pit

September 2006

It was a nice day when Mark and I decided just at the "Spur of the Moment" that we would go camping at Scottsboro Mtn.

It has not been too awful long since my arm has been healed... sooo... since we had cabin fever... I asked Mark if he wanted to go caving in Jackson County some where. I heard there going to be some cavers there... so we packed little that we could and went camping. We were there and Chuck Constable of Team Thor (did the longest descent and repel in the world at around 4200 ft.) also a local from Scottsboro (can't remember his name)

came up for a short while. Dirk pulled up also Team Thor member and set up his camp. Ben Holley and Kim Hunter pulled

up to camp and to caving with Chuck Ben Holley is apart of Team Thor. We got our camp set up and shortly afterwards... Danielle Purvis and Joe Hugse showed up to camp and go caving with us. All of us sat around the campfire and was deciding where to go caving Saturday and Sunday. We finally decided to go to Wills Welch Well on Saturday and then go do Cataract Pit on Sunday. Sounded good to us since Mark and I have never been there before.

There were other cavers who were camping there that was going caving with Andy Zelner early Saturday morning. We all tucked in around midnight for the big day of hiking and Caving. Every one woke up the next day I had to drink some coffee along with others and we ate b'fast and headed out. We got to the place where we were to park...

got out and hiked through the Bean field and then up the mountain. We found the entrance right away.

Chuck, Ben and Dirk went into the cave first... rigging as they went. The first pit is 23 feet down to a ledge of a 140 footer pit. At the bottom of the 140 footer pit is a 12 feet pit which has 2 bolts set for it... and at the bottom of the 12 footer is a 50 foot pit. After you get to the bottom of the 50 footer the cave is then walking passage until you get to the "Duck - under" where you have to get your chest wet as you duck into a pool of water.

From there... it turned back into walking passage until it opened up into the room where the "Nozzle" is.

The nozzle is a funnel shaped tube that all the water in the cave flows through. After coming out of the nozzle is a 10 feet climb-down... and at the bottom of the short climb-down is the last pit which is a 100 footer called Carol's Cascade. We all bottomed that cave and we headed back to camp.... and we ate some good chicken that Ben grilled. We stayed up and sat around the fire and was discussing about Cataract Pit....

TO BE CONTINUED ON THE SAME BAT CHANNEL.

We woke up the Sunday morning got our thing ready from the previous caving trip and went to Shoney's and ate a good Breakfast Buffet... then we went on to go drop Cataract Pit. We got out of the truck... and we walked a half a mile across and down the mountain until we came to an extremely large sink hole with a waterfall pouring off of one side of the sink. The entrance is located off to the side in a pile of break-down. We entered the cave and we started to climb down about 15 or 20 feet until we entered a small room. From there we had to go through a really tight crack on our sides about a body length... then it popped out into a belly crawl. From there.... the cave turned into walking passage. After just a few hundred feet of walking passage we came to the 300 feet pit called "The Cataract" Chuck and Dirk rigged the 40 and the 260 drop... while Mark and Ben rigged the 300feet drop.

Everyone but Mark ,Kelly and Ben did the multi-drop... they did the 300 freefall drop. Next time Kelly is going to do the multi-drop because she likes climbing up waterfalls. We hiked back to our vehicles... changed into some clean dry clothes... and we go back on the road again. It was getting a little and we were quite hungry... and we had our camping gear and all loaded up in our SUV so we followed everyone to eat at Joe's Pizza in Scottsboro.

Really good food after a hard caving trip. We stood around in the parking lot and we hugged and said our good-byes **then Mark and I drove back to our home sweet home. We had a really good "Spur of the Moment" camping trip...** and we got to go to 2 great caves that we have never been to before.

Written By: Kelly Keener & Mark Medlen

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Richard and Becky
Tied the knot.