

CULTURAL EXCHANGE

by Brandon Waggoner

I was forwarded an email that contained Pauline Evard-Guespin's interest in caving in Arkansas. So I replied with an invite to help us survey this past weekend and she accepted. Pauline has been in America for 13 days now and will be staying six months on an internship with Falcon Jet. This is for her degree in environmental dynamics. Honestly this girl can out cave me. She has done Jean Bernard, a small pit in the Alps of 5,265 feet of depth. She dives in caves, but only to 50 meters, nothing deeper! Her boy friends father is the President of the French Speleological Society. She ridge walks the ALPS!

On Saturday we helped some of the M.O.L.E.S. survey a sandstone cave that is on private property in north Arkansas. The cave was pretty big, but definitely not pretty. It has pretty good depth, so the possibilities of hitting the Everton were certainly in my mind. Pauline and I help R.C. survey for the majority of the time. After getting chilled watching R.C.

sketch a massive room, we decided to leave him with his handy Disto and check out the rest of cave. There was simply a lot of big, brittle, scary sandstone and that was it. That night I was able to get R.C. talked into going to Alexander. I didn't want Pauline to think that we didn't have any limestone in Arkansas.

She loved Alexander. We only had time to do the horse shoe room, but it was awesome. It helps to have a guide that knows exactly where to go. Pauline is very interested in our culture that is partly the reason why she is here. So conversation is constant. The conversation at the mid-point of the horse shoe room, by the worlds largest flowstone shield, was the national anthem. Thankfully, I made the comment, "why don't you sing us your national anthem?" And off she went, singing the French national anthem as we stared at the beautiful formations. The French language is the probably the best sounding out of all the languages. And it is even better in the perfectly acoustical 75 foot tall horse shoe room. As the melody swirled around, R.C. and I just stopped. I stared at the 50 foot tall formations and listened as my new friend filled that cave with something that it has never heard before.

