

## The Flame Trip 2012

(Well sort of)

Submitted by Rick McHenry

The annual Flame light trip was a step back to the glory days of my generation.

Preferred sources of light for the flame trip would include carbide lamps, Candle lanterns, and perhaps a torch made from the spike of a mullein plant smeared with tallow (loincloth optional).

A well equipped Caver of the era would have a carbide lamp, backed up with a candle lantern and a mini mag lite. Here is a link to carbide info (<http://carbidecaver.tripod.com/intro.htm>)

Glow in the Dark helmets (see Jeff's get up) with spare carbide in baby bottles and a squirt bottle filled with water to fill the top reservoir were desirable additions.

An empty baby bottle or heat resistant container with a loose fit for spent carbide would keep cave Fauna safe. Loose fit as some gas may continue to be generated.



Luna Moth over *Stonington Inn*

We arrived late and saw the Luna moth perched over the entrance to the beloved Stonington Inn. Was it an Omen, would this trip be luney, we'll know by tomorrow

We convened at Stonington and caravanned over to the selected Cave and broke out the gear.



Michelle and James get all fired up



Chris Dick with Mike Lite (carbide lamp milled from poly type material)



Spike and Jeff discuss moles law, acetylene production and how not to burn your nose hairs



Dave Seng

Let us pause to reflect on the sad demise of the carbide lamp. Once the *Premier* source of portable light, but now pushed into obscurity by the LED. The hue seemed *just rite*, a soft glow compared to the harsh blue of the overdriven LED. Never mind the occasional charred rope whilst rappelling, those singed coveralls of the caver ahead, and the smell of burning hair on the girl with pigtails. You could light the way with it, cook with it, or warm the near hypothermic caver with a trash bag used as a poncho to collect the heat. What's that? \$175.00 it's yours!, Compadre.



Rick with Prototype cave vest and Petzl Explorer system with a custom duo conversion (gear freak!). While your posing for your mug shot who's watching the Club Gear

There were actually three caves on the property. We were after the one feeding a stream.



The Cave Entrance

Upon entering it was found to be less than hospitable to the carbide entourage.





Michelle: So I heard these things could flame up if they had a crack.

James: Word is that's how Rick got that haircut.

Michelle: I thought they said those things were safe:

James: Yeah Right check out a couple of the other members.

We later learned from the property owners that a beaver had been at work trying to dam the entrance. I say dam the beavers.

Spike reverse engineered the dam and helped to lower the water level substantially, without using his teeth.

By that time we had retreated and switched to electric, but we had entered the cave with carbide equipment. I guess any caver has to remain flexible and prepared for unexpected circumstances. (yeah, a cop-out but pragmatic)



For certain Cavers Acetylene has a euphoric effect

The cave began with a walking entrance quickly converting to a wet crawl. The usual whoops and hollers confirmed the 54 degree water as it crept up the torso. Sopranos, season 1.

Onward, Forward, and upward lead to several formation rooms and some rather unstable breakdown.







We headed back and exited the caves. The groups split up and several explored the other two caves.



Now who could we get to check this out, oh yeah Chris, the new guy. It didn't go far we were told or was he just saving the discovery for himself, HMMMMMMMM?

We switched over to clean clothes , cleaned up the area and packed up.

Dave, Michelle and James headed back to civilization.

Jeff, Rick, and Chris joined Spike of Wild Goose expeditions in search of the mythical Stump plugged Cave.

It was a magical day with the redbud and dogwood in bloom and unseasonably warm.

An extended tour of the country side ensued with many cave sites pointed out by Spike, just not the one we were looking for.

Caves have a way of finding Spike and as he stopped to ask directions from a fellow in his front yard in the course of thirty seconds we were invited to see a cave on the local gentleman's property. How does he do it?

We grabbed some hastily improvised cave gear, jumped in the back of Chris' pickup and headed toward the back of the property along the river.

Hard to believe the hospitality of a new found friend. Unselfish and welcoming are the traits of many folk who live in the southern Indiana rural environs.



Improvised cave gear that 70s style. Note high water mark. The current was strong enough to command caution and that was the end of dry shoes for me for the trips duration.



The cave was across the river and up a hill but curiosity and adventure had been kindled and Jeff and Rick set out across the river. So much for clean and dry clothes.



The "new" cave entrance

Jeff was first in followed by Rick and Chris was summoned from across the river to explore the tighter passages.

Spike stayed with the landowner , no doubt extracting about 80 new cave leads. He just has the magic.

The cave continued for about 150 feet or more and contained some interesting fauna.



Sammy Salamander



Freddy Frog

Talk of a survey fueled the adrenalin. Further investigation by our buddy and gps location guru Dave Everton showed we had been scooped by earlier explorers. It was a real adventure and a new cave to us none the less.



Above , the view as we left “the new cave”

We continued touring the country side. Spike pointed out Cave sites throughout the rolling karst topography and collected going on thirty bird species identification

I pointed out an owl and he called it as a great Horned owl as it flew away. I didn't let him know that this was going to be my big year.

The sun moved toward the horizon and it became a bit cool in the rear of the pickup. We abandoned the search for the stump plugged cave and headed for a source of food glorious food.

Oh about that Luna month, all I can say is that we had a ***Crazy Good Time.***

Comments, opinions, and accounts are not necessarily shared by the NIG, Space Aliens or Humanoids of this planet. Names of the caves and landowners were omitted to protect our great underground resources.

And if you're a Caver or you want to be remember to ***Get Down*** whenever you can do it responsibly.

**Many Thanks to the kind and gracious Landowners  
who allowed us to have a great time in  
underground Indiana.**

