

THE NEAR NORMAL NEWS



THE NEAR NORMAL NEWS is published by:

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Membership in the NEAR NORMAL GROTTTO is \$10.00/year and includes a subscription to the *NEAR NORMAL NEWS*. Six issues are published per year in alternating months.

Send address changes or membership requests to David Carson at the4carsons@verizon.net or to the address above.

Editors

Lead Editor, David Carson the4carsons@verizon.net
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Submissions

We accept most cave-related submissions. Trip reports, pictures, reviews, scientific articles, announcements, cartoons, and artwork are all welcome. Submissions must be received by the 15th of the month prior to publication. Scientific articles require extra time for review by our Science Editor.

Send all submissions as an e-mail attachment to David and Angela Carson at the4carsons@verizon.net or on disk to P.O. Box 405, Mackinaw, IL 61755-0405. Please use the guidelines below:

Written submissions should be in one of the following formats: Microsoft Word®, OpenOffice®, plain text, or simply incorporated directly into the body of an e-mail.

Scientific and technical articles are expected to be of a high standard, citing evidence of statements and crediting references, where appropriate. These articles will be reviewed by our Science Editor, Bill Morrow (wsmorrow@mchsi.com) as well as our lead editors.

Photographs and graphic submissions are best made in JPEG format. Other formats may be incompatible with certain software. Inquiries should be made to the editors if you wish to use other graphic formats. Photographs should list the cave, general location (ex. Southern Illinois, or Monroe County, IL), names of any persons included in the photo, and the name of the photographer.

THE NEAR NORMAL GROTTTO is an Internal Organization of the **National Speleological Society** (NSS). We strongly encourage those interested in caving to join the NSS. For membership information about the NSS consult <http://www.caves.org/info/member.shtml>.

National Speleological Society
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THE NEAR NORMAL GROTTTO meets the second Friday of each month at 7 p.m. in the Community Room on the basement level of:

National City Bank
202 E. Washington St.
Bloomington, IL

Holidays, special events such as vertical training and the annual September picnic, and inclement weather may affect meeting times and/or places.



NEAR NORMAL GROTTTO EXECUTIVE BOARD:

President, Ralph Sawyer sawyer@mtco.com
Vice-President, Marc Tiritilli marc_tiritilli@hotmail.com
Secretary, John Schirle jds217@juno.com
Treasurer, David S. Carson the4carsons@verizon.net
Member-at-Large, Don Kerouac k9nr@juno.com

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About the Cover

Front cover: Nathan Marcier in a passage in Sullivan Cave, near Bedford, Indiana. Photo by Troy Simpson.

DUES NOTICE

2007 membership dues are now being collected. Your dues grant you voting privileges and entitle you to a copy of the grotto publication, the *Near Normal News*.

It is important to note that dues have not changed since they were set when the grotto was formed more than 15 years ago. Dues remain at \$10.00 per year for both Full Members (NSS members) and Associate Members (non-NSS members).

If you have any questions, please contact me at the4carsons@verizon.net. Disregard this notice if you have paid your 2007 dues. Thank you!

David Carson, Treasurer

Near Normal Grotto Business

MEETING MINUTES FOR DECEMBER 8, 2006

Present: Don Kerouac, Billie Kerouac, Sheri Lewin, John Schirle, Jeffery & Debbie Gosnell & family, Bill Roth, Chris Haydel, Ralph Sawyer, Troy Simpson, Marc & Tracy Tiritilli, Larry Bird, Dave & Angie Carson & family

President Troy Simpson called the business portion of the meeting to order.

Treasurer's Report—Treasurer David Carson reported a fund balance of \$386.18 as of 12/07/06. He also reported that printing costs have gone up considerably on the Near Normal News. We were getting an excellent deal when Jeffery Gosnell was able to print it at cost at work, and now have to use commercial printing. The most recent issue, with a color cover, cost about \$2.13 per copy, plus postage. Future issues will be printed in black & white only. (Those receiving the News via email as a PDF file will still get the full-color issue.)

Ralph Sawyer moved, and John Schirle seconded, that we approve the treasurer's report as presented. All approved.

Trip Reports

- ◆ Nov. 11-12: Many from our grotto and others participated in another work day at Pautler/Dains. The installation of the culvert sections into the entrance was completed and a cover attached, as well as photographic documentation of the cave and the work done.
- ◆ Dec. 2: Ralph Sawyer, L.J. Tognetti, Bill Morrow, and Bill Roth went to Buckner's. It was Bill Roth's first ever wild cave trip, which he reported in glowing detail.

Old Business—There was no old business.

New Business—As previewed in the Near Normal News and by email to the membership, Executive Board elections for the coming year are to take place at the December meeting. The following have been nominated for these positions and indicated their willingness to serve:

- ◆ President—Ralph Sawyer
- ◆ Vice President—Marc Tiritilli
- ◆ Secretary—John Schirle
- ◆ Treasurer—David Carson
- ◆ Member-At-Large—Don Kerouac

No additional nominations were received prior to or during the meeting. Jeffery Gosnell moved that we accept the entire slate of nominees as presented for approval by voice vote. Bill Roth seconded. All approved.

Upcoming Events

- ◆ Dec. 9: Boy Scouts trip to Cave River Valley—Chris Haydel

- ◆ Dec. 23: Buckner's clean-up day
- ◆ Dec. 30-31: tentative trip, probably Sullivan's
- ◆ January: weekend trip to Wayne's—contact Bill Morrow for info
- ◆ Jan. 26-28: Carter Caves Crawlathon in Kentucky
- ◆ Feb. 3-4: tentative trip to Sullivan's—two groups: wet-suit trip and shorter, less-wet trip.

Next meeting will be Jan. 9, 2007, 7:00 p.m. at the National City Bank in Bloomington, IL.

John Schirle moved to adjourn, Angie Carson seconded, all approved.

The evening concluded with the Christmas party and the customary white elephant gift exchange.

~Respectfully submitted, John Schirle

Editorial by David Carson

In this issue, we are pleased to be able to provide you with information on the 2007 Karst Field Studies at Mammoth Cave, which are offered by Western Kentucky University in cooperation with Mammoth Cave National Park.

Last summer, my wife and my boss, the two women who grant or deny my requests for extended vacations, both signed off on a week-long trip, allowing me to attend Dr. Stan Sides' *Exploration of Mammoth Cave*. Dr. Sides, a past president of the Cave Research Foundation (CRF), takes you back to the early days of exploration, highlighting many of the people and places mentioned in regional history books. He speaks authoritatively, as if he personally knew each individual. As a member of CRF, he continues the tradition of exploration to this day.

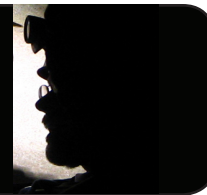
Lectures included slides, handouts, and *lots* of information. Underground trips, covering over 33 miles of passage, nicely supplemented discussions and incorporated many miles of passage no longer open to the general public. These trips covered many known entrances, including a portal-to-portal trip from Bedquilt Cave to Colossal Cave.

During the week I had the pleasure of meeting many well-known cavers, including Art and Peg Palmer and Gordon Smith, as well as local historian, Norman Warnell. These folks are as down-to-earth as they come. In addition, I made new friends from many places. It is an experience that I will always treasure and look forward to having again. I urge you to consider this wonderful opportunity.

President's Column

I'll Never Do That

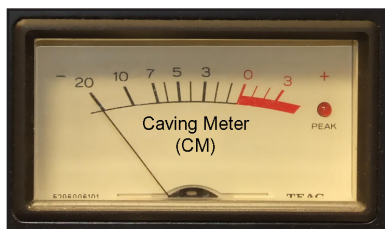
by Ralph Sawyer



I can recall the first time I attended a meeting of the Near Normal Grotto. My intention at the time, which I stated when I introduced myself to the members, was to use the Grotto as a resource for caving expertise for my Boy Scout Troop. "I'll never become really active in this group," I thought to myself. I might have even said it out loud that evening.

During the meeting Marc Tiritilli demonstrated a new type of headlamp (an LED) to the group. "I'll never own one of those. Too expensive. Not worth it," I thought. After the meeting Marc showed video of his descent into a deep pit in Tennessee. "I'll NEVER do that, and I certainly would not drive all the way to Tennessee to go caving!" I thought.

It occurs to me that we all have dozens of "I'll Never Do That" meters inside of us. If you are reading this, you have a meter that deals specifically with caving. Your meter shows caving experiences that you would



consider but that involve some pressure—pressure in the form of physical exertion or endurance, will power, an empty wallet, or fear. The greater the pressure, the farther to the right the experience will appear on your meter. My meter, I believe, has demarcations for the following:

I'll Never . . .

- cave without a guide (e.g. park ranger, show cave tour guide).
- cave vertically.
- spend hard-earned money on vertical gear.
- get above my waist in water in a cave. (When in high school my friends and I waded knee deep in the Sullivan River, deep in Sullivan Cave, Indiana. When the water got deeper, we pronounced that to be the end of the cave. We sincerely believed that was as far as anyone had ever gone in Sullivan Cave.)
- ascend through a waterfall in a cave.
- own a wetsuit. Swim in 48 degree water in a cave.
- see the Rise of the Sullivan River.
- help survey a cave.
- take any cave rescue training.

- descend and ascend 550 foot Fantastic Pit in Georgia. Photograph it.
- be relied upon in a cave rescue situation.
- discover a cave.
- do a sump.
- cave dive.

To my surprise, and to the distress of my poor aged mother, I have done the checked items (in the order given) on the above list—none of them with any great expertise. The needle on my "I'll Never Do That" meter lodges solidly between the checked and unchecked boxes. Vertical caving and seeing the Rise of the Sullivan River have really been life-affirming experiences, the kind one walks away from feeling changed for the better somehow. Those unchecked items, well, that's another story. Some I will consider, and some (do a sump and cave dive) I'll NEVER do. Really.

Where is the needle on your "I'll Never Do That" meter?

(Next: the "My Body Won't Let Me Do That Anymore" meter.)



delicate nature of the cave environment and the "potential hazards in this wild, unimproved cave system." The only disappointment is the short hours of operation, between 8:30 and 2:30. It really necessitates a push if you want to see as much as possible.

Our plan was to drive the 5 hours from the Chicago suburbs the day before. That would afford us a good night sleep, an early pre-cave breakfast and being at the entrance gate 8:30AM. The drive was interesting. We have hardly been southwest of Springfield on prior road trips. We witnessed the urban sprawl this side of St. Louis and saw the world's largest catsup bottle in Collinsville. For

Illinois Caverns Trip Report

by Jesse Bahr and Linda Mark

We were excited to receive Dave Carson's e-mail proposing a visit to Illinois Caverns and the chance to see the cave with fellow members of the NNG. Some of you might have made a visit there during the course of your caving experience. If not, look at the great website they have:

<http://dnr.state.il.us/LANDS/LANDMGT/parks/R4/caverns/index.htm>.

On the website is a history of Illinois Caverns and information on the cave's

geology, flora and fauna. It also covers Karst landscapes in Illinois and general cave development. Along with this are the rules of the road for the cave itself. References are made to protective head covering and clothing, three sources of light per person, appropriate footwear, and their required minimum of four people per group. Readers are informed against taking souvenirs, disturbing the biology and leaving litter. The permit application reinforces this, pointing out the

those interested in this visit: (<http://www.cruisin66.com/stl/catsup.html>).

We met up with Troy Simpson, Marc Tiritilli, and Dave Carson at the Nature Preserve Sunday morning and waited for the gatekeeper to allow access to the property. The morning had been stormy. There was enough rain in the area to question the safety of the cave beyond the Sand Crawl. This was a wet cave; most of our adventure would be in a stream. Marc had the greatest amount of experience at Illinois Caverns and was comfortable in reading water levels to determine safety. After registering, parking, gearing up and packing much needed supplies of water, Slim Jims, Snickers and snack bars, we began our trip toward the cave at 9:15AM.

To reach the entrance, take a short walk to the edge of the woods and descend a narrow concrete stairwell. This feature appears to be one of the few, either inside or outside of the cave, which indicates its prior commercialism. Inside are short metal stairs, walkways, ladders and large stones set into the floor to aid navigation. We began in a comfortable walkway maneuvering over fallen rock structures. Most of the cave was a long corridor with intervals of open rooms. Navigation was varied. We walked upright or hunched over, did some belly crawls or went down on all fours. Some areas were taxing and occasional dome structures enabled you to stand up and rest.

Inside there are many healthy formations. I would have enjoyed more photo opportunities, but that would work against the quick and efficient plan we made. There were some nice dome formations, lofty canyons, waterfalls, dripping features, considerable stalagmites and stalactites, and more side passages than time to explore. As mentioned, most of the trip was walking in water and the volume was impressive. Some sections of the stream were waist high while one passage was chest high. It was never alarming, just a startling wave of cold to keep you alert. The challenge came after the sand crawl where we ended up in the sloppiest of situations. The cave website calls it "Muddy Mush." It was surprising our

boots stayed on our feet. Each step made a deep impression into sloppy muck and it was difficult to retrieve your foot. I found it a bit amusing and am considering acquiring taller and tighter caving boots. Never have I had so much mud and gravel inside my boots. The walk back through the stream did help with cleanup.

There was a lot of life in this cave. We saw bats, amphipods, salamanders, frogs and sculpins. The frogs surprised us as they were deep in the cave. One was very boney and we felt badly. We know you can't intervene and help them. There was a beautiful leopard frog leaping away as I tried to take a picture. We came upon some odd fatalities, one resembling chicken bones and something that might have been a possum or other mammal. After finding these two we entered into the section of the cave that had a very bad odor. This might be located under a sewer, farm waste or some other noxious thing. You want to move quickly through that. When we neared the end of the cave, Marc wanted to go all the way back to the sump so the rest of us waited. According to Marc, there was a lot more water back there than during his January trip to the same area. Nearing turn-around time, I was more interested in a few pictures and some refreshments.

The return trip was a slower pace and we were able to explore the side passages a little. The cave does have interesting features for all levels of exploration. We thought one could spend an entire day in the first third of the cave. The cave is certainly alive and other than the footsteps worn into the rock and a few broken features the cave looked quite natural. The climb back up the stairs quickly introduced us to temperatures 20+ degree warmer than in the cave, and bright sunlight to help dry the gear. The changing stations and bathrooms were very convenient. The DNR representative at the office also was helpful and polite.

We can't mention enough our amazement at how nice Illinois Caverns is. We were surprised that the cave was more substantial than the three miles surveyed by the Windy City Grotto. There is a nice map and brochure at the nature preserve's office and a decent map on their website. What a surprise to have such a large, beautiful, healthy cave in Illinois. We also enjoyed the company of Dave, Marc and Troy. Thank you all for a safe and enjoyable outing. This trip was a nice pairing of people, skills and cave.



Marc Tiritilli, Jesse Bahr, Linda Mark, David Carson, and Troy Simpson just before the Sand Crawl at Illinois Caverns. Photo by David Carson.

Beyond the Sand Crawl by David Carson

“The lure of caves in Mammoth Cave National Park is not dimmed in the least, either, by the reexploring of old cave passages. New explorers, like children growing up, experience again the age-old thrill, and old explorers relive the past. If it looks like virgin cave to you, it is virgin. The old cave is ever new.” -- Roger W. Brucker, “Introduction to the New Edition” of *The Caves Beyond*. (July, 1975)

I have personally experienced that age-old thrill many times in the caves of Mammoth Cave National Park. At Illinois Caverns, I relive the past. But on Sunday, August 27th, Jesse Bahr, Linda Mark, Troy Simpson, Marc Tiritilli, and I did more than relive the past. All but Marc experienced the thrill of the exploring beyond the Sand Crawl of Illinois Caverns for the first time. Troy and I expanded our horizons, and Jesse and Linda saw a lot more on their first trip than many ever do; Marc shared in our triumph. This was definitely the “More for Your Money” tour.

Illinois Caverns *is* ever new. As many times as I have been there, I always experience something that I had not before, and many places remain that I have yet to explore. No cave is ever completely explored in my opinion. There is always more, always something missed. With that, I decided to pursue an unusual trip with the goal of pushing beyond the Sand Crawl. This area is mostly walking passage and is not often visited. It is beautiful in its own right, but rather than exceeding the beauty in the most traveled passages, it extends it.

What impressed me more was the amount of main passage *before* the Sand Crawl about which I had forgotten. It was new again! It begs me to come back! And, there are definite reasons to return here . . . mainly photography.



Marc Tiritilli, Troy Simpson, and David Carson preparing to tackle the Sand Crawl at Illinois Caverns.

Photo by Linda Mark.

The trip was fast and furious due to the extensive amount of passage covered and the limited time in which to complete the task. It was both challenging and extremely rewarding. A combination of boot-sucking mud, a gradually lowering tube, and water near our destination pushed me to my limits.

After exploring a side passage near the Colossus, my knee ached mightily with each step to the entrance, nearly 7,500 feet away. Cold water was a blessing. I immersed the knee every chance I got. Marc, of course, accused me of losing my cane. In spite of my pain, I hobbled up the steps and into the daylight with time to spare.

Although it was hard to put the camera aside for this trip, the push was well worth it. I can hardly believe how many years I’ve been going to Illinois Caverns and how little I have actually seen! What a shame. I understand now why it was once called “Mammoth Cave of Illinois.”



2007 Karst Field Studies at Mammoth Cave

by David Carson

A group photo taken at the Bedquilt–Colossal connection point.

Photo by Maria Perez.



If you are interested in learning more about speleology, cave surveying and cartography, karst geology, karst hydrology, cave geomicrobiology, or the exploration of Mammoth Cave, Western Kentucky University’s (WKU) Karst Field Studies are for you! Offered through WKU’s Center for Cave and Karst Studies, these six courses provide unique and exciting opportunities for the not-so-scientific individual to learn from the world’s leading experts in each subject at the world’s longest known cave system.

WESTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY, CENTER FOR CAVE AND KARST STUDIES COURSES FOR 2007

- ◆ *Intro to Speleology*
June 3-9
Dr. Rickard Toomey
- ◆ *Cave Surveying and Cartography*
June 10-16
Ms. Patricia Kambesis and Dr. Nicholas Crawford
- ◆ *Karst Geology*
June 10-16
Dr. Arthur N. Palmer
- ◆ *Karst Hydrology*
June 18-22
Dr. William B. White and Dr. Nicholas Crawford
- ◆ *Exploration of Mammoth Cave*
June 17-23
Dr. Stanley D. Sides
- ◆ *Cave Geomicrobiology*
June 24-30
Dr. Hazel A. Barton

Each course is available as a workshop for a fee of \$425.00, with the exception of the *Karst Hydrology* course which may be taken as a workshop for a fee of \$895.00. Continuing education credit is available for an additional \$20.00. In addition, most courses have the option of being taken for Undergraduate or Graduate credit for an additional fee; however, enrollment at WKU is required.

All courses, with the exception of *Karst Hydrology*, are taught with daily lectures, field observations, and excursions at Mammoth Cave National Park. Accommodations for these courses are available at the Cave Research Foundation's Hamilton Valley Facility. *Karst Hydrology* is taught in Bowling Green, KY, and is more surface-oriented.

Please note that all participants are required to provide proof of medical insurance and must be high school graduates, who are in good physical condition.

For complete course descriptions, course requirements, registration forms, or other information, see the Center for Cave and Karst Field Studies web site: <http://caveandkarst.wku.edu/kfs.htm>.



Left—The 2007 Executive Board members pose for a photo after the December election. From left to right: Member-at-Large—Don Kerouac, President—Ralph Sawyer, Vice President—Marc Tiritilli, Secretary—John Schirle, and Treasurer—David Carson.

Photo by Angela Carson.

Right—Honorary Life Members: John Marquart, Jim Jacobs, Don Coons, and Kevin Rasmus pose for a photo at the 15th Anniversary celebration on November 10, 2006. Not present: Alice Fredericks, Marty Jacobs, Norm Rogers, and John Walther.

Photo by David Carson.



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