

A synopsis of what is going on in the world of the Near Normal...

## Fall Picnic at Clark Falls

The annual fall picnic was held at Clark Falls Farm Sept this September 26. Several members and their families attended for a beautiful day of picnicking, conversation, hiking, and rope work. It was a beautiful day and our gracious host Alice joined us for the picnic.



Picnickers at the 2010 Near Normal Grotto Annual Picnic at Clark Falls Farm

Photo – Ralph Sawyer

## In This Issue

The Near Normal Grotto had a large turnout for an “introductory/moderate” trip to Sullivan Cave on September 18, followed by a trip to Buckners on the 19<sup>th</sup> for many. George Mattson recounts his experience there with his son. Bill Roth regales us once again with his well thought out crossword puzzle, and the answers to the last one for those who were stymied. The minutes for the last two meetings are enclosed



At the 2010 picnic  
Photo – George Mattson

*The NEW meeting area is in the Heart Center Classroom in Bromenn Center – check the website for directions!*

## Minutes – July and September

There was no meeting in August. The following are minutes from July and provisional minutes from September.

### July-2010.

Present: Ralph Sawyer, Todd McCartney, Bill Roth, Chris Haydel

Todd called the meeting to order.

Minutes of the June meeting were examined and approved.

#### **Trip Reports:**

Todd reported on a trip to Smith's Blowhole in Indiana. The trip involved Todd penduluming to gain access to a side passage fifty feet above the floor of the pit. The next day Todd, Laura, Ralph, Bill and Nick Morrow did a circle route in Sullivan Cave.

#### **Old Business:**

July 17<sup>th</sup>: Missouri caving. Echo Pit. Hauling gear for divers (no diving this trip though).

August 28: Effort to connect Crevice Cave and Mertz Cave in Missouri. Need sherpas to assist divers who will attempt to make the connection.

September 18: moderate trip in Sullivan Cave, Bedford Indiana

September 26: Near Normal Grotto Annual Picnic

August 13-15: Tennessee-Alabama-Georgia vertical caving, by invitation only.

Ellison Cave crossover trip.

September 26 NNG annual picnic

#### **New Business:**

Ralph has a new vertical training area at his home. Two anchors, thirty-five feet and forty feet up in a tree.

Meeting adjourned.

#### **Program:**

We watched the movie "The Cave" while eating delivered pizza and making smart aleck comments.

### September-2010.

Present: Ralph Sawyer, Troy Simpson, David Carson, L. J. Tognetti, George Mattson, Bill Roth, Gerry Woltering, Bill Morrow

L. J. called the meeting to order.

Minutes of the July meeting were examined and approved.

Treasurer Dave Carson reported that NNG has approximately \$619.00 in the treasury. We discussed annual dues, contributions NNG has made in the past to various organizations.

#### **Trip Reports:**

Ralph reported on an attempt by divers to connect Mertz Cave and Crevice Cave in Missouri. The next day Ralph, Jeffery Gosnell, Jason Kern, and Don Coons scouted Half Mile Cave near Waterloo, Illinois.

L. J. and Andrea Tognetti reunited with Georgia Tech cavers, tourist caving Mammoth Cave, Lone Star Cave, Bucket Cave, and others. Most of the trips accommodated children, but at least one trip was aimed at adults.

## Minutes - continued

Bill Morrow reported on a trip to Tennessee-Alabama-Georgia. McBride's Cave was a multidrop "pulldown" trip – cavers rappel a series of pits, pulling the rope as they go until they emerge from the lower entrance of the cave. Members of NNG, SE Missouri Grotto, Little Egypt Grotto, and Dogwood City Grotto completed the crossover trip in Ellison's Cave. Among other pits, Ellison's features Incredible Pit at 440 feet deep and Fantastic Pit at 586 feet deep.

Dave Carson reported that sons Matt and Justin took the Trog Tour in Mammoth Cave – kids only, no parents. Dave described decontamination procedures and other measures meant to limit the spread of White Nose Syndrome of bats in Mammoth Cave. Measures include deconning boot soles and wearing cave gear provided by the Park Service.

Troy Simpson guided the University of Illinois Department of Geology in caves in the Kankakee area. They discussed theories of cave formation.

Gerry Woltering caved Lamplighter Cave and Flowstone Cave in Indiana, with Windy City Grotto and Bloomington Indiana Grotto.

Ralph reported on a trip in Crevice Cave in Missouri.

### Old Business:

September 18: moderate trip in Sullivan Cave, Bedford Indiana

September 19: cleanup in Buckner's Cave, Bloomington Indiana

September 26: Near Normal Grotto Annual Picnic at Clark Falls Farm near Utica

October 17: Vertical practice at Illinois State University ROTC tower. The practice is not open to the public, but grotto members may bring guests. We will conduct a brief business meeting during the practice.

NNG has a vertical training area at Ralph's house.

### New Business:

Bill Roth moved that we make the Snickerdoodle the official cookie of the Near Normal Grotto. Motion passed.

Bill Roth passed out Snickerdoodle patches that he had produced in anticipation of the success of his motion.

Cave Research Foundation (CRF) has a workday planned for Columbus Day weekend.

TAG Fall Cave In is Columbus Day weekend.

MVOR is in October near Hannibal Missouri

NNG meets in the Heart Center Classroom A & B

Meeting adjourned. No program.

## Sullivan Cave Trip – A Beginner's Perspective

By George Mattson

My 10 year old son Eric and I did our first trip with the Near Normal Grotto to Sullivan Cave. Our only previous caving experience before this had been a few trips to Maquoketa Caves. I had this trip on the calendar for a few months ever since Ralph told me that he would schedule a beginner trip then. Somewhere along the way, it changed to a moderate trip. But since nobody steered us away, we came along.

Friday night, we picked up Chris Haydel in Champaign and went to the Sullivan property where we camped. It was great having Chris along. It made the drive more enjoyable, and I may have never found the entrance in the dark without him. He also suggested that we get knee pads for the trip. Ralph had an extra pair, and we stopped to pick up a pair for Eric on the way. The property was great for camping. It didn't occur to me that there would be no mosquitoes there. Aren't bats great.

## Sullivan Cave Trip – A Beginner's Perspective--continued

Everybody else showed up Saturday morning. Since there were so many people, the group decided to split into two separate groups. Our group was going to do a 6 hour trip to the Spiral Room. We let the other group go first, and we left about 15 minutes after them. Eric was a little impatient while waiting, and kept saying "Let's go". He was very excited to enter the cave. The descent into the cave was a good drop. I was a little shaky at first, but made it down with no problems.

Next we made our way to the Backbreaker. Ralph wanted the young cavers (Eric and Ben) to read the map and tell us where to go. I also watched as he explained how to read the maps. They were pretty easy to figure out. The Backbreaker wasn't as bad as I had heard. My strategy was to go through fast and take stretch breaks at the domes. That way, I didn't have to be bent over for too long.

After the backbreaker, Ralph had the kids pick the path to the Mountain Room. Then we took a little break. Eric "Let's go" Mattson didn't have much patience for the break. This continued through the entire day. He never tires out and always wants to keep moving. They went down the cave until they got to the Mountain Room passage. Ben picked one way and Eric picked the other. They ended up following Ben. Before I went in, Ralph said that Eric picked the right path. I followed them in to the other passage anyway. It turned out to be a different path to the Mountain Room. It wasn't as easy as the Mountain Room Passage, but it wasn't a "wrong" turn. I went back to the Mountain Room passage and crawled through. This is the first place that I had to belly crawl. I remembered how afraid I was the first time I went into a passage this small at Maquoketa. I turned around and left. But the second time there, I went through passages like this. I may not have gone as far in Sullivan if it weren't for the Maquoketa trips.

On the way into the Mountain Room, we passed the other group going the other way. We didn't spend much time in the Mountain Room. Then we headed out down to the "river". We saw some cave crayfish and bluegills in the wet passage on the way to the river. I think this passage would have more running water after a good rain. We got to the river, and it was pretty amazing to me. It looked like a normal creek, but in a cave. Here I read the map with Eric and took the lead with him. We came to a place where the water got deeper. I kept trying to find a shallow path across the river to the other side where it looked shallow. Let me say here that I had to slow down Eric many times already by saying "slow down, be careful" because I thought he was jumping around too much and would get hurt. Well, I took a step into a hole in the river and fell in. When I got up I heard a voice behind me say "be careful". I turned around to see about 7 headlamps pointed at me. I think some joker was giving me a taste of my own medicine. We continued down the river until we got near the Spiral Room. Most of the group was behind. So Eric and I decided to look for the room on our own. It was pretty easy to find, and I had Eric read the map and point us in the right direction.

The Spiral Room was a large room filled with breakdown. There was a large pit in the middle and the outside of the room seemed to spiral up. We took a group picture here. Then Ralph and Chris wanted to find the "Manhole", which was another cave entrance. We looked around the perimeter of the room and went down several holes. On one hole, Ralph went down first, Eric followed him, and I went third. After about a 10 foot descent, I came to a place where I wasn't comfortable. I shouted down to Ralph and told him I was going up. He said that he would watch Eric down below. I decided to do a little exploring with Jerry then, and we looked into another room. Jerry had been exploring on most of the breaks, and it was a lot of fun to do it with him.

Chris finally found the entrance to the Manhole. Six of us went down. It was a good drop. Maybe 20 feet. Then we had a long, tight crawl. Here, I found out that I did a bad job duct taping my kneepads on. They both fell off. I decided to go back up. I went back through the passage past everybody until I came to Ralph. He didn't want me to go up alone, and he didn't want to go back up with me. He told me I could stay in the passage and wait. But I still don't like staying in small passages like that yet. So I decided to continue on to the Manhole with him. The Manhole was a hole leading to a pool of water. Ralph measured it using some webbing tied to a rock. It was almost 6 feet deep. He didn't want to go, and didn't want the beginners to go. He was afraid we might panic because of the deep water and limited headroom. Chris and Bill Roth went out through it and came back a few minutes later. Here Ralph said that this trip ended up being more than a moderate cave trip. So much for our beginner trip. We went back to the Spiral Room and Ralph said that we were already at 6 hours. So our trip will be longer than planned.

## Sullivan Cave Trip – A Beginner's Perspective--continued

We went back up the River to the Mountain room. Eric and I were in front for a while, but fell behind when we looked for the entrance to the Mountain room in a few wrong places. Ben finally found an entrance. Eric and I followed him, and I realized that it wasn't the same way we left the Mountain room. At one drop, I had to ask Eric to direct my feet to a safe place. I did the same for Bill who was behind me. We made it into the Mountain room in time to see the rest of the group coming up through the easy passage. Then we went back through the Mountain room passage to the No-No Crawl. This was a very narrow passage that Ralph hadn't done before. He decided to try. He tried several positions and finally got into the hole. Chris followed him. Jerry, Eric and I found the other end of the No-No Crawl and crawled in to wait for them. I wanted to get out of the narrow passage, so I went back and sat on a rock. I turned off my headlamp and enjoyed the quiet and complete darkness. I also started feeling the oncoming headache from dehydration. I had only packed one small water bottle for the 6 hour trip. Normally I pack too much water. I'll have to do that the next time I go caving. Then I heard Eric coming out. His batteries were dying, so I got him a different headlamp from my pack. Ralph made it through the No-No Crawl with a little help from Chris. At one point, he asked Chris to crawl over him and show him how to get through a section of it.

When they got out, Jerry and I went to look for the Merry-Go-Round Room. We got close to it when Chris and Eric came back to tell us that we were getting too late and should leave. We all went back to the Backbreaker. Here, Eric and I went through fast. Ralph said that he wasn't going to break any speed records. We waited for him at the end of the Backbreaker with many bats flying by. They were fun to watch. When the other caught up to us, we exited the cave. Eric had a little slip while climbing up, but didn't get hurt. The rest of us made it out ok. I immediately went to our campsite where I had a water container, and drank about a quart of water to hopefully avoid the bad headaches of dehydration.

Everybody was going out to dinner. But it was late and I know Eric needed to get some sleep. I was also tired, so we stayed in camp and ate the food we brought. I wanted to go out with everybody to hear the stories though. Maybe next time.

Eric and I both had a great time on the trip. The ten and a half hour, tough trip wasn't what we were expecting for our first trip. But we were ready for it and it worked out great. Our Maquoketa Caves experience got us over the fear and claustrophobia of caving. And we were both in good enough shape for the long day. I enjoyed going through the cave, and the great people I got to do it with. It was an enjoyable experience. Next time, we'll bring kneepads and more water. And hopefully be able to go out to dinner with the group.

## Ending Notes

October 17<sup>th</sup> is our last official vertical practice day of the year at the Illinois State University ROTC Tower! This is a great place to learn vertical techniques (gear will be available) and a nice place to hang out in general. If you would like to come and learn, post on the Yahoo Groups list to give a heads up. Or just show up!

Stumped by Bill Roth's last devilish puzzle? The answers from the last one are included below AND the next puzzle is on the following page!

### Cave Puzzle One Answers

**Across:** 4 Rappel, 7 Two, 9 Polypro, 10 MRE, 11 Rocks, 12 Gypsum, 14 Pit, 16 Three, 19 Speleologist, 20 Ascend Shaft, 24 Invertebrate, 26 Guano, 27 Dam.

**Down:** 1 Rope, 2 Belays, 3 Pipistrelle, 5 Passage, 6 Led, 8 Formations, 10 Map, 13 Chert, 15 Tag, 17 Rooms, 18 Cleaning, 19 Spelean, 21 Robin, 23 Flood, 25 Aid.

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## Near Normal Grotto

P.O. Box 813  
Normal, IL 61761-0813

Meeting at Bromenn  
Medical Center,  
Normal, Illinois.  
Second Friday of the  
month.

E-MAIL:

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We're on the Web!

See us at:

<http://www.caves.org/grotto/nng/>

### Across

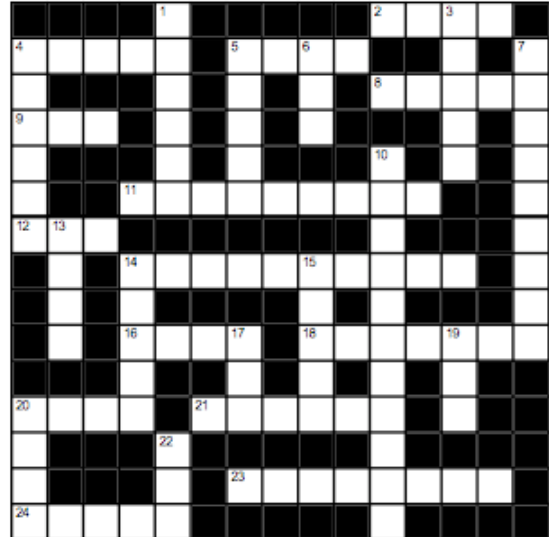
2. Not funny to rock this  
4. Used in making explosives  
5. \_\_\_\_\_ straw  
8. Rimstone \_\_\_\_\_ Cave in MO or Lost \_\_\_\_\_ Cave System in IN  
9. Deep vertical opening  
11. Trickling water deposits this on wall or floor  
12. Hot lunch, soldiers pronounce as "mystery"  
14. Look up and see it hanging down  
16. Carbonic \_\_\_\_\_ dissolves limestone
18. Disintegration of rock  
20. Cave version is too thin for you to float on  
21. Ropewalker or frog  
23. This will help give you a lift  
24. Limestone terrain

### Down

1. Ancient plant or animal remains  
3. Don't call this one a spelunker  
4. White or colorless mineral  
5. Simple, fragile stalactite

## CAVE PUZZLE TWO

by Bill Roth



6. Rimstone barrier  
7. Rock fallen from walls and ceilings  
10. External conditions around that troglobite  
13. Stream surfaces here  
14. Another name for 9 across. Shut your mouth, I'm talkin' 'bout \_\_\_\_\_  
15. Black or brown nodule  
17. No running water in this kind of cave  
19. This kind of cave can be chilly  
20. See lots of it in a cave  
22. WNS victim