

THE NEAR NORMAL NEWS



THE NEAR NORMAL NEWS is published by the:

Near Normal Grotto #363,
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ARTICLE SUBMISSION INFO

Send submissions, using the guidelines below, to Jeffery Gosnell at gosnell@greatoakscamp.org. Submissions on disk may be mailed to 1384 County Road 900N, Lacon, IL 61540.

Photographic & graphic submissions should be in JPEG. Query the editor if your submission uses a different program. Photos should list the cave, general location, names of persons in the photo, and the photographer.

Written submissions may be sent as an attachment using Microsoft Works®, Microsoft Word®, or plain ASCII (DOS-text), or incorporated directly into an e-mailed text message. If you are uncomfortable with your writing ability, simply put together a basic account of the trip—ignoring spelling, grammar, and punctuation—and request the editor to help draft the finished product.

Scientific and Technical articles are expected to be of a high standard, citing evidence of statements and crediting references, where appropriate.

The Near Normal Grotto

The Near Normal Grotto meets the second Friday of each month at 7 P.M. in the Community Room of

National City Bank
202 E. Washington
Bloomington, IL.

2006 Executive Committee:

President: Troy Simpson
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Vice-President: Ralph Sawyer
sawyer@mtco.com
Secretary: John Schirle
jds217@juno.com
Treasurer: David Carson
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Member at Large: Don Kerouac
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<http://www.eiu.edu/~physics/nngrotto/nng.htm>

The Near Normal Grotto is part of the **National Speleological Society (NSS)**.

National Speleological Society
2813 Cave Avenue
Huntsville, AL 35810-4431
Phone: (205) 852-1300
www.caves.org

On The Cover: Larry Bird at the entrance to Hennepin Cave. Photo by Larry Bird

Near Normal Grotto Business

MEETING MINUTES DECEMBER 8, 2005

Call to Order at 7:15 pm. Present: Marc & Tracy Tiritilli, Ralph Sawyer, Troy Simpson, Dave Carson & sons, Don & Billie Kerouac, Jeffery Gosnell & family, Bill Morrow & son, Adam & Jason Stanford, Larry Bird, John Schirle, Trenton Carley, Nathan Marcier, Kevin Rasmus, Beth Reinke, and L.J. Tognetti .

Introductions & Trip Reports

- Marc T. went to Illinois Caverns with Timber-Lee Camp staff and also attended a National Rescue workshop.
- Several members attended the Twin Culverts Clean-up including Adam, Ralph, John, and Don. Ralph shared that it is one of the muddiest caves he has been in. Don mentioned that 2-3000lbs of railroad ties have been removed.
- Larry shared information about a possible Hennepin Cave dig.
- Jeffery mentioned his first Wayne's experience and noted the crawlway seemed a bit overrated. John and Bill also were at Wayne's and felt the crawlway was easier than remembered. Jeffery suggested a trip to Doghill-Donohue after Christmas.


Secretary Report – No official November meeting.
Treasurer Report – Troy reported \$312.05. Approved.
Old Business – No old business was discussed.

New Business

- Ralph mentioned becoming a grotto liaison for the IKC. The Exec. Board will make the recommendation to proceed with it.
- Troy brought to discussion changing the membership structure to include Honorary Life Membership to the Near Normal Grotto. The Exec. Board has discussed this possibility in light of honoring those that have made major contributions to the NNG. Dave has written the initial draft of requirements. The following people would be recommended for the 2006 Honorary Life Memberships, The 14 Charter Members of the NNG, Alice Fredricks, and Norm Rogers. After 2006, the Exec. Board will have the opportunity to grant one Honorary Life Membership, per year. Any current NNG member can nominate someone in writing. Jeffery brought up the how it will effect the grotto financially. Troy shared that only 3 of the charter members are current grotto members and the other new recommendations are not current members either. The new category will be presented to the membership via e-mail for possible discussion and then recommended for vote at the January 2006 meeting. The nominees will also be recommended at the January 2006 meeting for HL membership.

DUES REMINDER

It's that time of year, again. This is an official reminder that 2006 dues are, well, due. They remain at \$10 for a regular membership. You may send them to:
Near Normal Grotto
P.O. Box 813
Normal, IL 61761-0813
~Dave Carson, Treasurer

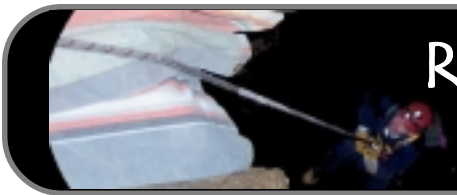
- Dave reminded the membership that grotto membership dues are \$10 and are due.
- Marc presented the nominations for the 2006 Exec. Board and the membership voted unanimously to accept the slate of nominees. [Ed. note: See page 2 for 2006 Exec. Board.]
Meeting Adjourned at 7:47pm. Annual Christmas Party followed with refreshments, fellowship, and an exciting round of White Elephant Gift Exchange!
Respectfully submitted, Troy J. Simpson, Secretary 

HENNEPIN CAVE BY LARRY BIRD



CORRECTION

The November 2005 NNN incorrectly listed the cover photo as Troy Simpson holding an NSS banner in Sullivan Cave. The actual photo was of a silhouetted caver in Shaft Cave, Indiana and was taken Ralph Sawyer.



RAMBLINGS OF A TROGLODYTE

by Jeffery Gosnell

As 2006 starts up, new things lie ahead:

NEW SCIENCE EDITOR

I would like to thank Bill Morrow for taking over the reigns as our science editor. Though we do not have many scientific articles (*Hint. Hint.*) It is good to know we have someone knowledgeable enough to help proof a submission.

NEW CABINET

Out with the old. In with the new. Well, kind of. Basically, Marc Tiritilli has rotated out of the cabinet, and John Schirle is back in. I personally nominated John as secretary, as he is on the editorial staff of the *NEAR NORMAL NEWS*, and it will make

for a more seamless editing of the Meeting Minutes into the newsletter.

And a word of warning to some of our newer members: when talk of elections role around in 10 months, many of you will have been in the grotto long enough to be tapped for nominations. Better get started on those campaign speeches now!

NEW PERSONAL GOALS

Sullivan Cave. Sullivan Cave. Sullivan Cave. Okay, my goals for Sullivan are not new. In fact, I have long-standing, unfinished business with that monstrous lybrith, despite 60 hours in her passages. However, my number one caving goal in 2006 is to finish that business, starting

with reaching the Rise of the Sullivan River in February.

In achieving that goal, I finally made right the fact I have not been a member of the Indiana Karst Conservancy. So in December, I back paid dues for 2005 and am ready to "renew" my membership for 2006. I encourage all cavers enjoying IKC caves to do the same.

While I remain open to any caving opportunity, the trips I intend to organize this year will be to my unvisited sections of Sullivan. So if you want to see this cave, let me know.

I hope to cave with more of you this year. See you underground!



IN THE TWILIGHT ZONE

by Troy Simpson, President

The Near Normal Grotto will be celebrating its 15th Anniversary this November, and I find myself president once again. It is interesting looking back and see all the significant events that have shaped each term our presidents have served and how the bar is continually raised. A big thanks goes to Marc for the past two years as president. The grotto has made awesome advances in vertical training, regular caving trips, and membership growth. This is a perfect stepping-stone for the upcoming year. I am looking forward to working with an experienced executive board and welcoming back John Schirle as Secretary.

Some things are already in the works, as I have proposed the addition of an Honorary Life Membership for members who have contributed significantly to the

advancement of the NNG. This will be voted on at the January meeting. Dave Carson and I have also worked through the list of every NNG Member since 1991. Would you believe we have had 130 individuals that have been a part of the NNG at one time or another? The thought of having NNG #'s similar to the NSS #'s is starting to take shape.

Also, there has been active conversation about the grotto contributing financially to various cave conservation efforts. We have done this in the past and I believe it sends a positive statement if we do so again. We will be discussing this at the January meeting.

Finally, time to start planning on how best to celebrate this 15th year. Sometimes we take for granted how significant 15 years being an active grotto is. We are the 3rd oldest active grotto in Illinois. We also have the 2nd largest active membership. Not bad, considering we are

based in the middle of the corn desert! So how do we celebrate? I definitely think a caving trip or two is in order. We are also currently out of t-shirts, so perhaps a new NNG t-shirt can be put together.

Anyway, these are just a few things on my mind. I am looking forward to caving with many of you this year and sharing many a caving yarn. The of the NNG, not so much as an organization, but more as a family. I just want to say I am privileged to serve again as President of the best grotto in the nation!

-The Pres.
Troy



MISSOURI WEEKEND

by Laura Lexander

On October 8 Spike Crews, Matt Goska, and I headed to Tunnel Spring Cave, Missouri for a Cave Research Foundation survey. Our survey brought the total for the cave to over two miles! It was cool to be part of the trip that did that. I am not sure exactly where in the cave we were surveying because I never saw a map, but I know we connected a loop and surveyed out a small tunnel to one of the cave's several entrances. When we were done surveying, Goska and Spike took me to a different entrance, a huge entrance. We had to hug tall dolomite walls to avoid walking in water for almost a half mile. It was quite different from most caves I have been to so far.

The next day we met Spike's wife, Amy, Michael Carter, Andy Free and two other guys. After a flat tire, we headed to Pittman's Cave. Michael and Andy gestured for me to enter first. The entrance was really low with a stream flowing out of it. Without a thought, I dropped to my hands and knees and started to crawl forward. Michael advised me not to get wet yet, but I did not see how that was possible! After a few more moments of deliberation, I hear behind me, "Would you like to go to the real entrance?" They got me good, which of course won them deserved punches in the arm.

At the true entrance I still went first. Once in, we took a few minutes to check out several small clusters of bats on the ceiling about 120 feet from the entrance. That was especially cool because the others told me they usually don't see bats in Pittman Cave. In one of the photos Michael took a bat appeared to be tagged!

My survey team took the left, main branch of the cave. The passage was pretty much all walking. It was also wet mud! In some areas we had to be extra cautious because it was especially deep.

I took instruments again for the practice, and I believe I did pretty good. I only had to re-shoot once. Michael took lead tape, and Andy sketched. The other two guys with us were fairly new so they explored around and watched us.

Towards the later part of the day, I reached into my coveralls for the plastic bag the compass was in. I found the

compass, but the baggie was not around it. I fumbled around for it with still no luck. Everyone was laughing at me as I struggled around in my clothes! Eventually I located it, down a pant leg and sitting near my ankle!

At the last station, Michael beckoned me over to a nice, muddy spot. I asked him how deep the mud was and he assured me I might sink in a little bit, but it would be fine. I went over to the station. I started to sink. And I continued to sink. "Um, I'm still sinking," I voiced. I sank almost up to my waist. It was pretty funny. Obviously I got out as I am now writing this report.

It was a good day, but too short. Our group was still rearing to go when it was time to turn around. I think we could have kept surveying for another 7 to 8 hours with no problem.

Before heading to the entrance, we decided to walk down to the end of the passage where it sumps. That was pretty interesting. The mud subsides some and it becomes a water passage. The level was only about mid-thigh deep at the time.

I am ready to visit Missouri again. It will now definitely vie for my attention between Indiana and Kentucky!



SOUTHERN INDIANA WEEKEND

by Laura Lexander

I always experience odd happenings when driving in Indiana. The weekend of September 30 was no exception! I drove down to southern Indiana with Jack Wood in order to complete the survey of a tiny cave west of Paoli called Midland Trail Cave with Dave Everton.

En route we stopped for a bathroom break near Indianapolis at Arby's. Unbeknownst to us, the restaurant was being robbed. We came out of the restroom to see the manager and employees on their cell phones. One girl explained to us what had just occurred and told us to leave. Since we had not seen the robbery, there was no reason for us to stay.

We arrived at the Sullivan Cave property around 11:00 p.m. Do you have any idea how hard it was to go all the way to the entrance of my favorite cave and not actually go in! At least it was late, and I was tired. Otherwise the torture might have been unbearable. The weather was nice, and we slept under the stars.

The next day we drove to Midland Trail Cave. Jack sketched, Dave took instruments, and I ran tape. At one part of the day, I pushed a small lead. The passage was minaret-shaped and only 10 inches across at its widest. It was

tough going because the walls kept snagging my coveralls. I made it through and found a tiny room. Dave and Jack declined to follow. There was another small lead off the room, but it did not look passable.

On our final lead I pushed a low crawlway and and popped out into a significantly-sized room for the cave. I was ecstatic that I could stand up and even walk around a few steps. The guys were both happy and unhappy, because it meant we were not done with the survey. Dave had to dig with a trowel to make the passage big enough to reach the room.

Jack sketched the room, and Dave continued down another crawl. He came back to tell us it was still going. However, we decided to halt the survey for a future trip. We had thought the entire length of the cave would only come to about 200-300 feet. MTC currently has 256 feet surveyed, and it is not done!

On Sunday, we met at Freeman's Pit. This was my very first real pit! It was 98 feet. I am so glad I am finally doing vertical, and every time I survey, get more practice. The more I do of everything, the better I will get so I can be a good benefit to whom ever I am caving with.

WAYNE'S "LOST" CAVE 12/05

RALPH SAWYER, BILL MORROW, L.J. TOGNETTI,
JOHN SCHIRLE, and JEFFERY GOSNELL,



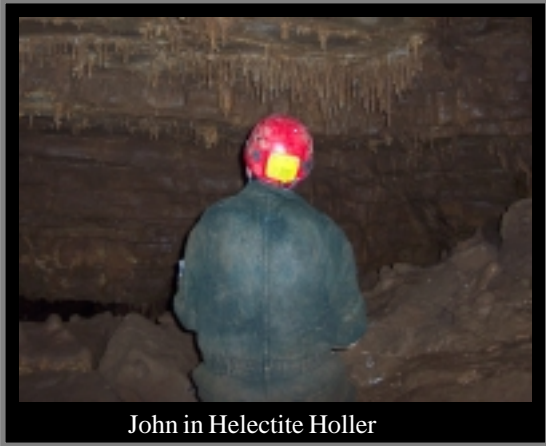
Jeffery en route to Camp II



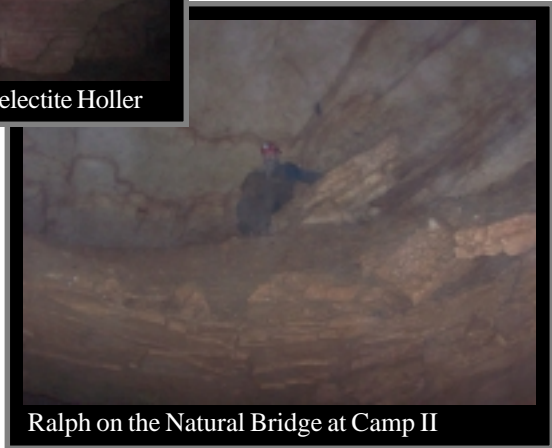
Bill in Helectite Holler



L.J. squeezes a lead

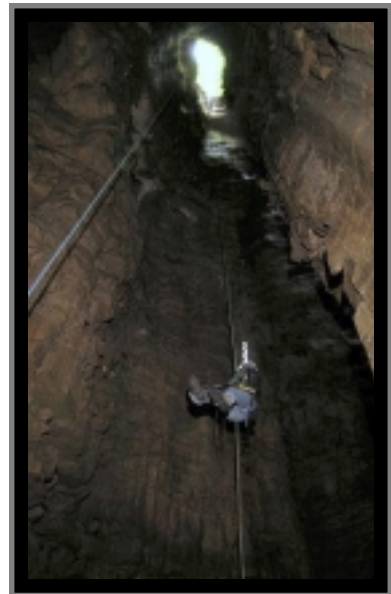
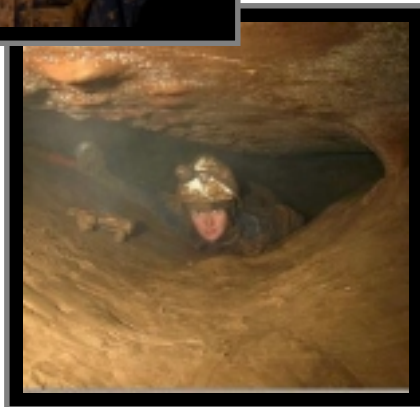
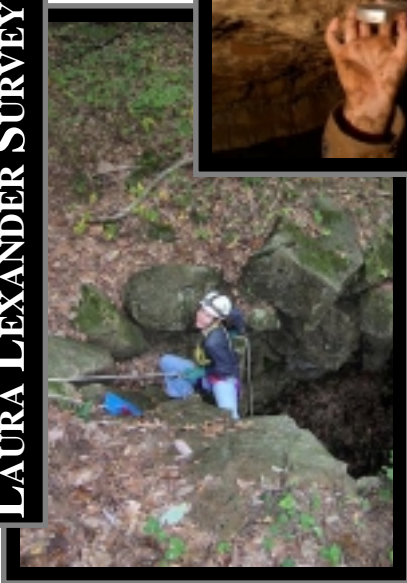


John in Helectite Holler



Ralph on the Natural Bridge at Camp II

LAURA LEXANDER SURVEY PHOTOS



This Space for Free

The Near Normal News needs to run even numbered pages for the postage address. You could be reading a really great article here. There could be people saying that YOU submitted a really great article here. Instead, you are reading a request for articles. Please don't make me start posting pictures of my kids to fill space.

~The Editor



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