

# THE NEAR NORMAL NEWS



*THE NEAR NORMAL NEWS* is published by the:

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#### ARTICLE SUBMISSION INFO

We accept most cave-related submissions. Equipment reviews, scientific articles, trip reports, announcements, cartoons, artwork, and pictures are all welcome. Most submissions must be received by the last Friday of the month prior to publication. Scientific submissions need extra time for review.

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

**Photographic & graphic submissions** should generally be in JPEG format. Query the editor if your submission uses a different program. Photographs should list the cave, general location (ex. Southern Illinois, or Washington Co, IN.), names of any persons included in the photo, and name of 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.

Adverse weather, holidays, and our annual September picnic may affect meeting times.

#### 2005 Executive Committee:

President: Marc Tiritilli

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<http://oldsci.eiu.edu/physics/len/grotto/nng.htm>

The Near Normal Grotto is part of the **National Speleological Society (NSS)**. We encourage all persons interested in caving to join the NSS. Membership is \$35/year. Members receive the *NSS News* (monthly) and other caving publications.

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**On The Cover:** Jeffery Gosnell disappears around a corner in Sullivan Cave, IN  
Photo by: Ralph Sawyer

# Near Normal Grotto Business

Minutes from February 11, 2005

Call to Order at 7:13pm

Present: Ralph Sawyer – Vice President, Troy J. Simpson – Secretary, Dave Carson – Treasurer, Don Kerouac – Member-at-Large, Amy Simpson, Jeffery Gosnell, Jason Kern, John Schirle, and Andrew Rasmus

Introductions by membership including what their first caving experience was. Many members trace their caving involvement to their earlier years and in commercial caves.

## REPORTS:

- Troy read the minutes from the January meeting. Jeffery motioned to accept, John seconded. Motion passed.
- Troy has submitted the NSS Annual Report and submitted changes to the Exec. Board and website address to the NSS.
- David reported \$378.79 in the treasury. There are about 20 people that need to pay the 2005 dues. David is contacting them to see about current membership status. Jason motioned to accept, Don seconded. Motion passed

## OLD BUSINESS:

- John updated on website. Len Storm has done an excellent job, and it was felt the grotto has not done a good job getting him information to update the site. Discussion continued about our own domain. The cost for the NSS to host would be \$12/year with a page on the NSS, \$22/year if the NNG would have a sub-domain on the NSS site. Both would have 25mb of space available for us to use. We could register our own domain name such as “nearnormalgrotto.org” for about \$8.50/yr. Ideas such as calendar of events, photo gallery, etc... to add to the page. John suggested we check with Len and see what he is willing or capable of doing. Jeffery motioned to have John contact Len about the possible updates/upgrades/changes to the website content, followed by forming a subcommittee to discuss further website developments. Seconded by Dave. Motion passed.
- Recruiting: Ralph discussed tonight’s program and had posted flyers in his area. Troy had contacted Olivet Nazarene University’s geology club. Troy suggested going to groups to present, instead of having them come to us. Dave mentioned his experience as a ISU outdoors club member and how their trips often dovetailed into potential grotto members. Ralph stated the best recruiting method is being active. Troy mentioned his e-mail is listed on the website, and he often gets e-mails for information. Jeffery suggested someone be appointed to do public service announcements. John suggested trips that tie directly into previous meetings. This would encourage meeting attendance. Jeffery motioned to table recruiting discussion to a later date. Seconded by Amy, accepted by the membership.

## NEW BUSINESS

- Discussion of Sullivan Cave Trip tabled for after the meeting.
- Discussion of a New Caver’s Trip was tabled until later.
- Ralph discussed the possibility of accommodations other than motels for future trips. There was positive feedback that camping might be an option for warmer months, but a motel would stay the tradition for the annual February Sullivan Trips.
- Jeffery mentioned a vertical workshop the first weekend of April at Great Oaks Camp.
- - Troy motioned the NNG contribute \$75 to KCI to continue organizational membership. Seconded by Don. Motion passed.
- Jeffery stated the NNN is always in need for variety of articles.

## TRIP REPORTS

- Ralph, Jeffery, Jason, John, Troy, and Nathan went to Ava Cave January 29. They ran into ridge-walkers of the ISS on the surface. The group met Laura Alexander (Windy City) and had the privilege of finishing the through trip of Ava with her.
- Jeffery, Ralph, and Jason visited Illinois Caverns on the way down to Ava. Jeffery clarified that Chris Hespini’s position was not cut at IC, but rather he was bumped by seniority. The future of Illinois Caverns continues to be uncertain.
- -Dave visited Illinois Caverns shortly after Jeffery’s group left. His group made it to the ladders and had a great time.
- Andrew visited IC in December with boy scouts. His group spent 6 hours in the cave and were able to make to “The Dragon.”
- Someone mentioned that a Regional Youth Directorship would soon be in place with the NSS.
- There was a brief discussion of “Karst Politics.”

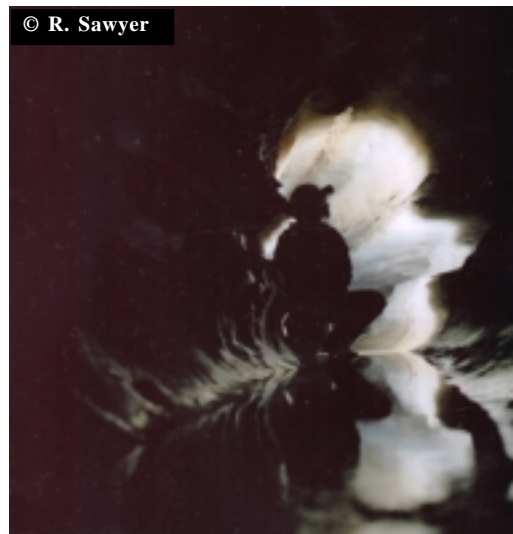
## UPCOMING EVENTS

- Sullivan Cave Trip; February 18-20
- Mammoth Cave Clean-Up; March 5-6
- Next Meeting is March 11; Don Kerouac will give the program.

Meeting Adjourned at 8:45 pm

Respectfully submitted by,

Troy J. Simpson, Secretary, Near Normal Grotto



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# PICK ME! PICK ME! *by Don Paquette*

*Reprinted with permission  
from the CIG Newsletter*

Acquiring vertical skills includes learning how to rappel and how to climb, most likely with a variety of devices and systems. Good training will also include system troubleshooting skills and recovering from a multitude of device failures. Once competency is gained, many enjoyable hours of vertical caving adventures are within one's grasp

However, if a member of a trip would get into unrecoverable trouble while on rope, basic vertical skills will probably not be sufficient to remedy the situation. Among the skills that should be in the toolbox of the competent vertical caver is the pickoff.

Pickoff techniques vary in degrees of difficulty and take time and practice to master. As with other kinds of skills, master the easier ones first, then continue to the more complex. The basic pickoff is the conscious cooperative patient.

Since the pickoff is really a study in device loading and transferring those loads, having a conscious cooperative patient simplifies the evolution.

The procedure described below assumes the rescuer has available a Quick Attachment Safety (QAS), which is a spare ascending device that is not used during normal climbing. It is attached to the main rope prior to removing one of the primary devices to eliminate being attached at only one point. The rescuer also has a tether sling, similar to the cow's tail used in a frog system.

The steps of the conscious cooperative pickoff are:

1. Recognize the person is in trouble.
2. Climb to the patient.
3. Tether the patient quickly.
4. Maintaining at least two points of attachment on the patient, begin removing the patient's climbing devices.
5. Climb above the patient.
6. Connect your QAS to the rope.
7. Attach your descending device to the QAS.
8. Pull the rope up & connect the bottom of rope to the patient's seat harness.
9. Pull the rope as tight as possible and rig your descending device.

10. Pull out all slack and lock off the descending device.
11. Remove your tether.
12. With assistance from patient, unload and remove remaining climbing devices.
13. Patient loads descending device.
14. Unlock descending device and lower patient to ground.
15. Change over & rappel to patient or continue climbing to go for help as situation warrants.

To practice pickoffs you only need a partner and a single rope rigged to allow you to get a few feet off of the ground.

They are fun to do, once you get the hang of them, and will put a skill in your toolbox that may save a life. Or put a skill in your caving buddy's toolbox that may save yours. After mastering the conscious cooperative patient, you will be ready to move on to more complex procedures.

A practice pickoff is described below. This skill should be practiced until performing it becomes second nature and it can be done almost without thinking. Remember, in an emergency time can be a very important factor.



1. Recognize the person is in trouble.



2. Insure that you have a QAS, a tether sling, and a descending device. Climb to the patient.



3. Clip the patient to your tether quickly. At this time you do not know the nature of the problem, but you have the patient clipped to you.



4. Maintaining two points of contact on patient, begin removing climbing devices (Below the patient you have easier access to lower devices.). The tether counts as a point of contact.



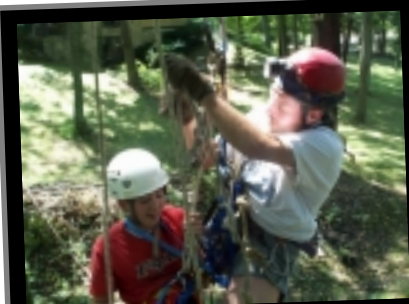
5. Climb above patient. You must be above the patient to shift loads and lower. As you remove and reconnect your climbing devices to pass the patient, remember your tether counts as a point of attachment. Remove all of the rest, except one of the patient's climbing devices. Once above the patient be sure both your primary devices are reconnected. You will be removing the tether and using your QAS for the patient load.



6. Connect your QAS to the rope above your lead climbing device.



10. Pull out all of the slack and tie off the descending device.



13. Carefully allow the patient to slide down & load the descending device.



7. Attach your descending device to the QAS.



11. Remove your tether from the patient. If you forget to do this you will regret it later. This is very easy to forget.



14. Remove the tie off from the descending device and lower the patient to the ground. When the patient is off rope, unrig the descending device.



8. Pull rope up and connect bottom of the rope to the patient's harness.

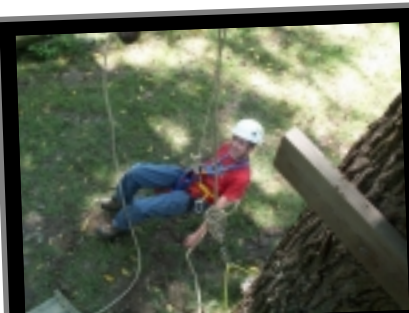
*In this simulated practice, Ron Adams rescues Elliott*



12. With assistance from the patient, unload and remove the remaining climbing device. You now have the patient connected only to the descending device.



9. Pull the rope as tight as possible and rig the descending device. The less slack between the patient and the descending device, the better.



15. Change over and rappel to the patient or continue climbing to go for help as the situation warrants.

# FIFTEEN HOURS OF TORTURE AT SULLIVAN CAVE

by Laura J. Alexander

On Saturday, February 19, 2005, I joined members of the Near Normal Grotto for a bit of caving in Sullivan Cave in southern Indiana. There were two groups going. My group consisted of Ralph Sawyer, Jeffery Gosnell, and myself. Our intended plan was to go on the wet route, with the goal of reaching the emergence of the Sullivan River. Unfortunately, we were unable to recruit a fourth individual. So we altered our plan. While the other group took the traditional semi-dry passage [Edit. note: see John Schirle's trip report], we decided to skip the Backbreaker and attempt to connect the Endless Crevice with the Flood Route. Read on as I hope you enjoy my recollection of the most difficult caving that all three of us have ever done.

We entered the cave around 8:00 a.m., me garbed in my brand new coveralls and Swaygo pack. A short drop into the entrance, around a few twists, and we spilled out into a little room with a pretty waterfall. We preceded the direction of the Backbreaker, and Ralph briefly showed it to me. Then we headed northeast up Endless Crevice to see what was in that direction. We found a tiny crawl, poked around in it, but decided not to attempt it. We continued a bit further up the path before deciding to head back toward our main route.

Endless Crevice lives up to its name. We had to walk sideways for the most part, but none of it was difficult. We encountered many bats in most of the areas of the cave and had to do some interesting contortions to avoid them.

Our next detour came when Jeffery wanted to push the Waterfall Crawl. This, too, was not that hard, though there was more crawling involved. We eventually came to a crossroads where Jeffery proceeded ahead of us and encountered a tight spot. He became wedged, and because he could not turn his head around to work his way back, Ralph talked him out slowly. After this energy draining ordeal, Ralph found the way into the tiny room where the waterfall was. There was a 3' x 4' crack in the floor near the wall of the room where the water was rushing

out, and I watched Ralph lower himself into the crack. He poked around to make sure that was the end of the trail, and then we crawled back to Endless Crevice.

We found what we thought was the second Y. We turned east and crawled a bit until we encountered our first bit of wriggling. I took off my helmet and pack, and we slithered on our bellies. After emerging in a larger tunnel, we came to a point where it was safe to slide down or continue up into another little crawlway. Ralph decided to push through a passage in the lower level, and Jeffery attempted the upper. I stayed in between to keep voice contact for all of us. After a great

to Ralph, because, according to the map, we should have been en route to go beneath the Backbreaker. With some studying of the map it appeared this section of passage didn't follow the stream anyway. So it was possible the correct route was above. Ralph and I headed back to our lunch area and climbed up the crevice to its upper portion. The three of us chimneyed some difficult passage for about 75-125 feet.

After reaching the end, I laid my head back against the wall and nearly screamed. Yes, I can act like an actual girl sometimes! On the wall opposite me a small cave salamander wiggled a bit in our light. Cute.

Then we came upon complete and pure torture. Even writing about it now I can feel the icy tendrils of fear grip my heart. The "Side Crawl." 150 feet of inching along through a 12 to 14 inch wide passage on our sides! Ralph led, with me in the middle and Jeffery sweeping. We were able to keep our helmets on, but packs were a no-go. I hooked my Swaygo to my ankle and dragged it behind me. Ralph also hooked his over his foot. Jeffery pushed his ahead of him.

Knowing this spot of hell would eventually end, we pushed on, but with the growing minutes my heart thumped in my chest, and several times I had to fight down panic, something I have never had to do before. For the first time in a cave I could only think about getting out, being above ground, climbing to the car, falling into a soft bed, soaking in a hot tub, eating a good meal, and etc. In the past, I had always loved being in caves, being able to forget the world above with all its worries and tasks and responsibilities.

Knowing panic would only make things worse was probably the only thing that kept me from freaking out. I flung intermittent questions at Ralph, inquiring as to the space ahead. Was it getting better yet? How about now? What's it like up there? Finally, the passage opened up enough for us to sit up. We emerged



*The author neat and pretty in her new coveralls.  
Photo by Ralph Sawyer*

amount of strenuous pushing, neither option seemed right. Jeffery decided to head back through the belly crawl to see if there could possibly be another route. I waited for Ralph, and before we followed after Jeffery he attempted another passage. This option also did not seem right. So with much chagrin, I climbed back into the slither. Ralph came shortly behind me.

After emerging back in Endless Crevice Jeffery called down to us from above. He had found the way, which was a surprise

*Continued Next Page*

into a much larger area that had a lot of breakdown in it. To our left was a 5' x 6' gap in the floor that fell away about twelve feet. After peering at the map again we decided to continue over the breakdown, fairly certain we had not entered the Bat Room yet. Jeffery noted there was another tight passage before the emergence of the Mud Room. With this knowledge shredding our stamina, we decided to press on. (*What else could we do? Go back? Ha ha!*)

Eventually we found the Bat Room, and Ralph found another hole in the floor, though this one was only about 1' x 2' around. We continued searching the room, having a difficult time because of the amount of breakdown. Ralph decided to climb down into the level below us to see if that was the way. Unfortunately, it was not.

Growing despair replaced the heat in my body as I thought of the Side Crawl we would have to struggle through again if we could not find the right passage. The whole time we scavenged the Bat Room an underlying despondency wailed in my soul. Jeffery and I helped pull Ralph back up, and we went to try the large hole back in the direction of the Side Crawl.

Then Jeffery spotted another tunnel. Ralph and I let him check it out, and after a few minutes he yelled back with, "*I think this is it!*" We immediately fell to our hands and knees and crawled after him. After a wee bit of this and a short belly slither the passage opened up enough to become a rather nice walking crevice.

Elation began to replace my misery. We were going to make it now, and we were not going to face another side crawl. We saw carbide survey markers that counted down and down. Then, just as our confidence had joined us anew, the passage fell away into a twelve foot deep chasm with seemingly no way to climb down.

We discussed several options for quite a bit of time. Then Ralph decided he could climb down on tubular webbing. He did this successfully, and his landing in thick, sticky mud pretty much assured us we had found the Mud Room.

We were not yet defeated. There was only another 35 to 40 feet to go through a passage called the "Connection Spring," which would dump us out into the Flood

Route.

Ralph searched the Mud Room with a vengeance. Then he re-searched the south wall at the bottom of the room. He found a small passage and climbed into it a bit. It grew tighter and tighter around him, as the mud gradually rose, and he could no longer squeeze through it. He struggled and shoved mud aside, but still to no avail. Meanwhile, both Jeffery and I felt our hope dwindle with our strength and the heat of our bodies.

We have to go back. So, so close and no possibility of pushing any further.

A sort of depressed calmness overcame me, and I gave in to the inevitability of our backward trek. We slumped back through the passage into the Bat Room and sat down for a break to drink water and eat our energy bars. We prepared mentally—as much as was possible—for the Side Crawl, our spirits disheartened. Physically, we had very little reserves left.

Jeffery was concerned about the time, as we had told the others to expect us at 10:00 p.m. It was 6:00. Ralph told us we needed to worry only about ourselves and getting back to the surface safely. If we were anxious over the others, then one of us might push too hard, too quickly and chance hurting ourselves.

It was decided to let Ralph lead the way through with Jeffery in the middle with both our packs connected to his ankle (so that I did not have to worry about my pack snagging behind me where there would be no way to reach back and untangle it). Onward we went. For an agonizing hour, we struggled and inched and rested our way back through that dreaded, unholy passage. I have to admit, though, despite the sheer physical effort it required, I did not find myself panicked at all. I knew this time the tunnel had an end. I think that made all the difference in the world. We talked ourselves back through, sometimes discussing the passage itself, and at one point even telling Twilight Zone tales. Then Jeffery asked Ralph how it looked ahead, and Ralph announced he was about to stand up. Relief flooded through both Jeffery and me. We even laid still in the tunnel for another few minutes as we talked about how happy we were.

The chimney section immediately following was definitely a challenge

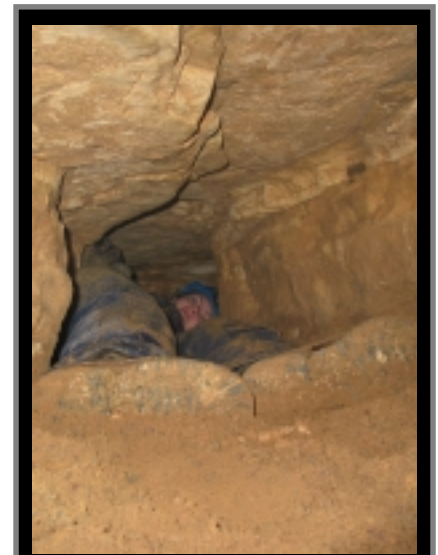
because of our complete fatigue. Ralph said this section was even more difficult for him than the Side Crawl, and Jeffery was not sure he would be able to manage it. I told him he could do it, even if he had to move at only one inch every five minutes. We would make it out.

And so we went along, slowly and as carefully as possible. Eventually, we dropped down. We traversed back through Endless Crevice at a steady pace. We frequently checked the map, compass, and flow of the stream for direction. Noting the carbide survey markers on the way also helped. Even graffiti became welcome signs.

We rounded the two "roundabouts" with no trouble, but missed our tunnel towards the exit. Heck, it had been fourteen hours since we had been in this section of cave. When I sighted the date 12/14/1972 spray painted onto the wall, Jeffery was sure we had gone the wrong way. He scouted ahead for our off-to-the-side belly crawl and found it.

Back we went—10:00 having come and gone. When Ralph found the last crawl, I dropped to my butt in a rather ungraceful manner. I was tired!

I went first through this last section not truly remembering it, but trusting all our indications that we were on the correct route. I dragged myself along, weary and aching. Eventually, I crawled up and out into that first small room with



*The author breaking in her new coveralls the hard way.  
Photo by Ralph Sawyer*

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## Calling Cave Rescue, Our Experience

by Jeffery Gosnell

This is not an authoritative statement on calling Cave Rescue (CR), but just a few thoughts.

First, cavers should *always* have people on the surface who know where they are. Sullivan Cave holds 9 miles of passages. At the entrance, we had left a marked map of our route.

Second, the contact should have an "expected" time of return and an "absolute" time of return. Our contacts expected to hear from us at 6:00 p.m. Our absolute time out was 10:00.

Third, our "absolute" time out was the time to contact CR. When John Schirle called at 10:30 p.m. he was *not* calling to say we were 30 minutes late. He was calling to say we were 4 hours and 30 minutes past due (Remember our expected time was 6:00.).

Our group slogged out before John had a chance to give CR the details. However, they called back later to get them. Had John said, "They're 30 minutes late," CR would have told him to wait, but because of our planned "expected" and "absolute" times, they agreed John called at the right time.

Fortunately, our lateness was due to impassable passage and not an emergency. Yet it still gives me chills to envision being injured and waiting for help at 6:00, only to have CR think we were 30 minutes late at 10:00.

## Fifteen Hours Con't.

pretty waterfall. Jeffery and Ralph were still behind me, but I let out a long cry of triumph, and I think I even jumped up and down a few times. Relief washed over me, and I knew we were going to be okay.

About five minutes later the other two also emerged into the room just in time to hear the guys yell down to us. We climbed up and out. When I looked up and saw Troy Simpson above us with the open gate, several sobs wracked my body.

Troy climbed down to help boost me up and out, because I was too tired to pull myself up alone. At 10:45 p.m. Troy, John Schirle, and Dave Carson greeted us and were extremely happy to see us alive and unhurt. John had called the Indiana Cave Rescue and was in the process of explaining our situation when they heard our shouts.

We walked up to the cars and changed out of our muddy clothes. Our friends and "rescuers" went and got us McDonald's, while we drove back to the hotel. Never have Sprite, french fries, and a cheeseburger tasted so delicious. I guess fifteen hours of caving and gut wrenching torture will give a person quite an appetite.

Jeffery had not been sure he would cave again after that night, but by the next morning he was feeling better about it. I know neither of us will ever do that Side Crawl again. Ralph has not ruled it

out completely though, assuming someone really wants to go for it! And assuming he can find the Connection Spring from the Flood Route side.

Monday, following the trip, we learned the crawl Ralph was attempting was the correct one, and it does indeed connect. Samuel S. Frushour, who holds the copyright to the Sullivan map, told Ralph the passage is just extremely tight and difficult.

While it is disappointing we were unable to push it, we at least know it is possible, and it gives us something to look forward to achieving on our next trip when we do the wet route! And it was a warming gift Mr. Frushour gave us when he said in his email to Ralph, "Getting all the way to the Mud Room is pretty good if you only have a vague idea of how to get there from a poor map copy."

This experience falls under the category of, "I've done it," and not, "I want to do it." And for perhaps the first time, I truly understand how a cave can be a complete, separate entity from anything else in the world. They are as unique as each human being. I left something of myself back in Sullivan Cave and took a part of it out with me—of course not in the physical sense! I feel a new found respect that Sullivan and all caves deserve.

## AVA CAVE


by Jason Kern

What a trip! We were real close to getting there at our designated time, despite the snow, slick roads, and seven people coming from different directions.

Into the cave we go! Hey, string! Yes, there was string and other garbage, but not bad. Jeffery Gosnell picks it up. Ralph Sawyer wanted to experiment with photography, and we were all happy to comply. In the cave we were greeted by some college students enjoying a little fun, except maybe for their heads—no helmets.

Coming out we happened upon some fellow cavers from the Illinois Speleological Survey. They were looking for sinkholes and new caves in the area. We were planning to go back inside, and one of the ISS cavers tagged along.

Hey, look, more string! And what's that smell—pot? Jeffery began winding up the string and lo and behold, we found two very "stoned" kids looking for their string. Troy Simpson pointed the way out for them.

It was a new experience for me. All I can say is "wow." So we ended up finding the other entrance we were looking for. Hungry, we followed our noses to a Mexican joint, feasted and swapped stories. The roads were good driving back home. The muscles were sore, and I think it would be safe to say everyone had a really good time. Can't wait for the next trip! 





# WHY DO I CAVE? LET ME COUNT THE WAYS...

by John Schirle

I've often proclaimed there are three principal reasons why we go caving:

- 1 – *Because it feels so good when we come out.*
- 2 – *So we can take pictures of ourselves.*
- 3 – *So we can have an excuse for eating out afterwards (Mexican, Chinese or steak, please).*

After a trip to Sullivan Cave in Indiana, I think I can add a few more to the list.

Eight made the trip: Dave Carson, Jeffery Gosnell, Don Kerouac, Nathan Marcier, Ralph Sawyer, Troy Simpson, myself, and, on loan from the Windy City Grotto, Laura Alexander. We decided to make a full weekend of it, traveling to Bedford Friday, so we could hit Sullivan first thing Saturday morning, and another cave on Sunday.

We planned on splitting into two groups, one to do the “wet-suit trip” in the Flood Passage, and one to do a “dry” trip. However, since the wet-suit bunch (Jeffery, Ralph and Laura) only ended up with three, and could not persuade any of the rest of us to defect, they decided to try something less daunting. They would set out earlier, bypassing the “Backbreaker”, and striking out from the Crevice Passage near the entrance.

Our group (me, Troy, Nathan, Don and Dave) first made an obligatory stop at Bedford Army Surplus for MREs, kneepads, glowsticks, and etc. Then it was on to Sullivan.

We descended into Sullivan via the gated crevice and up into the Backbreaker, 800' or so “duck-walking” – a little hard on the back, but it sure beats crawling. The Backbreaker ends at a T-junction, and from there we went left. We came to the short, low crawl that leads into the Mountain Room. As the name suggests, it is a big room with a massive mountain of breakdown. Perched at the top is a huge stalagmite.

In the Mountain Room we stopped for lunch, and I became a True Convert to the glories of MREs in caving. Previously, I had managed to cave on just granola bars and Vienna sausages—the good eating, I figured, was reserved for *après-cave*. Once Troy, Dave and Nathan had coached me through the arcane process of heating up my entrée, I had HOT chicken and rice, and was a very happy caver. Better yet, after eating, I found I could tuck the little cardboard box with its heating unit



right into the chest of my coveralls, and the residual heat felt great.

Going around the base of the Mountain Room, we descended into the lowest level of the cave, with active stream flow. We traveled to the “Sorry” Room—so-called because of the breakdown that blocks any further progress. This section of Sullivan had wide, booming passages and lots of water flow. Briefly, we got wet up to our chests, but most was much shallower.

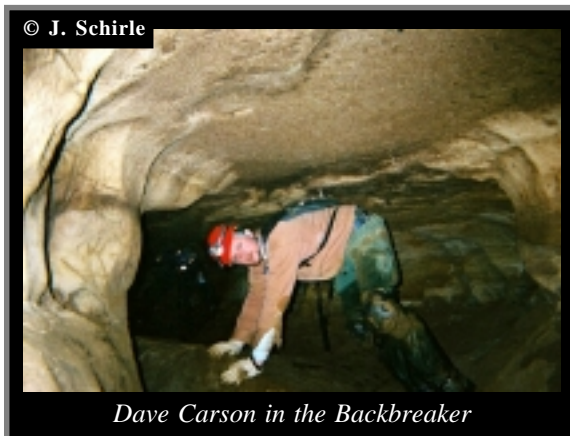
Our final stop was the Spiral Room, which was very impressive. Unlike the Mountain Room, the Spiral Room’s mass of breakdown has formed a deep bowl, rather than a mountain. The slabs form an upward spiral around the edge of the room. Troy, Dave and Nathan tried to find the Speed Hollow exit from there, but were unsuccessful.

Through our seven or so hours in Sullivan’s, we covered a lot of ground, but our pace was relaxed. We stopped for photos, food, rest and talk. We laughed a lot. And I came to realize that I really enjoy the *people* part of caving – traveling together, caving together, sharing the stories and pictures afterwards.

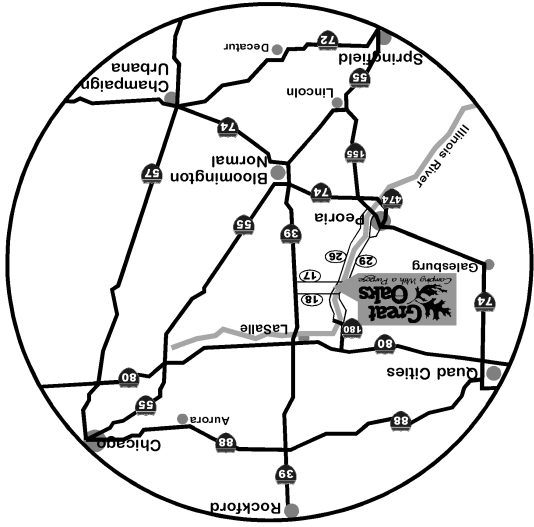
When I first started caving, I think my prime motivation was a little Star Trek-ish: “to boldly go where no man has gone before”. I’ve always loved reading the adventures of explorers of bygone eras, but in this age there are not many places where an Average Joe can feel like a Captain Cook or Henry Morton Stanley. I still love the sense of exploration, but I have grown to appreciate even more the fellowship. I’m glad caving requires a team to be safe. To me, the experience would be less if it weren’t shared.

Why do I cave? I think from my weekend at Sullivan I can now add a few more good reasons:

- 4 – *Because the motel’s hot tub feels like a well-earned reward.*
- 5 – *Because MREs are fun..*
- 6 – *Because I get to have a blast with some really terrific, Nearly Normal people.*



**VERTICAL RESCUE PRACTICE**  
**GREAT OAKS CAMP, LACON, IL**  
**SUNDAY, APRIL 3, 2005 AT 1:00**  
 Basic vertical skills  
 (rapelling & ascending) required.



**From Bloomington**

- I-39 north to Rt. 17 West
- In Lacon, right at Rt. 26 (north)
- 2 miles to County Rd 900N. Follow Signs.

**From East Peoria**

- Rt 116 north to Rt 26 north
- 2 miles past Rt. 17 junction in Lacon.
- Follow Signs @ County Rd 900N.

THE NEAR NORMAL GROTTTO  
 P.O. Box 813  
 NORMAL, IL 61761