

The Near Normal News is published by the Near Normal Grotto #363, P.O. Box 813, Normal, IL 61761. Subscription price is \$10/year or free with the purchase of a grotto membership (also \$10/year). Issues are published in January, March, May, July, September, and November.

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The Near Normal Grotto meets on the second Friday of each month at 7 P.M. in the Community Room of The National City Bank, 202 E. Washington, Bloomington, IL. Adverse weather, holidays, and our annual September picnic may affect meeting times. Our website address is <http://oldsci.eiu.edu/physics/len/grotto/nng.htm>.

2003 Executive Committee:

President: Troy Simpson

Vice-President: John Schirle

Secretary: Jim Jacobs

Treasurer: David Carson

Member at Large: Marc Tiritilli

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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Huntsville, AL 35810-4431
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www.caves.org

On The Cover:

Group shot of those that attended the Utica picnic and vertical practice. Troy Simpson photo.

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.

Photographic and graphic submissions may be sent to Brian Braye at brbraye@ilstu.edu. Generally, photographs should be in JPEG format. Check with Brian if your photograph or graphic 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. Graphics on disk may be mailed to 1503 S. Madison, Bloomington, IL 61701.

Written submissions may be submitted to Jeffery Gosnell at jeffery@greatoakscamp.org. 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. Articles on disk may be mailed to 1380 County Road 900N, Lacon, IL 61540. 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

Ramblings of A Troglodyte

by Jeffery Gosnell

I love caves. I hate heights. Since some of the best caves in the world require vertical work, something has to give.

So, as many of you know, I began aggressively facing my fear of heights this summer through reading, through learning how to use vertical equipment, and through practicing on ISU's rappelling tower and on the cliff faces of Clark Falls Farm. The experience has once again reminded me of how fortunate we are to have a caving community right here in the flatlands of Illinois.

So far the pinnacle of the Caves v. Heights battle came at the September 2003 Near Normal picnic. There I stood on the rim of Clarks Falls, looking down at the canyon floor 85' below me, convinced I could not make the descent. It was just too high, and I was just too scared.

Then Marc Tiritilli asked me if I was ready to try it, and the next thing I knew I was attached to a rope on the lip of the chasm. However, it was those final steps over

the edge—the point of no return—where Marc's encouragement and instruction really paid off. Though I was terrified the entire way down, I came to the bottom thinking, "I can do this! I really can do this!"

I have a long way to go in gaining vertical competence. However, I want to thank Marc and everyone else in our grotto who has loaned me a rack, provided a belay, given advice, or offered encouragement.

Speaking of vertical competence, I recently had an e-mail discussion with Allen Padgett, co-author of "On Rope," about self-belay devices. The discussion began with a posting from him on Tag-Net Digest, and he has given me permission to print the discussion here:

Excerpt of Allen's Posting to Tag-Net Digest #3344:

"Without any real data, let us suppose a theory. Just a theory. Without a belay device one in ten thousand rappels results an out of control incident or a total failure of the rappel device. Total injured/dead 1. Now suppose if the rappeller uses a belay device and there are five out of control incident or total device failures. (remember diverted attention causes problems) for each ten thousand rappels. The belay device works most of the time so three rappellers are saved but two are injured or die. The safety device just made rappelling twice as dangerous as a result of unintended consequences arising from an apparent safety system.

"That is why until testing and data confirm a safety system we refer to it as a conditional belay. At this time we do not know whether it makes you safer or less safe. My personal opinion is that to use a rappel belay system makes me less safe. Your opinion may be the opposite. Do the testing, convince me. Safe cavin, Allen Padgett"

My response to Allen:

"In your Tag-net posting, are you referring specifically to self-belay devices? After several years of horizontal caving, I'm [learning] vertical. None of the climbers & cavers I've been practicing with use a belay of any sort. I've questioned why that is, but no one has given a clear reason.

"However, I'm frightened to rappel without a belay (A little voice in my head keeps nagging me that if I let go of the rope I die.). So I recently purchased a Petzl Shunt as a self-belay device. I used it once

in practice, and thought it seemed a bit too awkward.

“Anyway, your post has got me wondering if the Shunt was such a good buy, and I thought it wouldn’t hurt to ask. Thanks, Jeffery Gosnell”

Allen’s Response:

“As for using some sort of extra device on the main line most find them awkward and need both hands to properly rappel. Testing data also shows that they are simply unreliable.

“The Petzl Shunt...must be tended (kept open) with one of your hands. If you use a rack to rappel it requires two hands for proper technique. I feel it is more important to use the primary device properly than provide a backup of questionable merit. If you are using a rappel device which does not require two hands such as a figure 8 or a bobbin the shunt can be tended with the free hand.

“The real problem arises when you begin to fall and need to activate the shunt. You have to let it go. In humans we are hard wired to grasp when falling. Our brain senses falling and the brain stem sends signals to the muscles to grasp. The nerve circuits are similar to the blink reflex. The nerve impulse never gets into your higher brain. You fall, the hand grasps, and the device fails to function properly. Some other vertical authors call these devices ‘psychological belays.’ I prefer the term ‘conditional.’ Testing shows that when you need it the most it just isn’t there for you.

“The best advice I can give is to learn proper technique and develop a ritual for checking all of the components. I use a technique learned from pilots, not only do I look at each critical piece, I touch it with my index finger. My sense of touch confirms what my eyes are seeing. Then trust the technology and enjoy the rappel. Safe cavin, Allen Padgett”

Thanks to everyone who came through at the last minute to make this issue possible. In this issue you’ll find:

Troy Simpson writes his final “In the Twilight Zone” as grotto president.

Troy also provides us with a trip report of the September picnic.

In “Near Normal Neighbors,” we bid farewell to Brian Bray as co-editor of the Near Normal News.

Don Kerouac provides us with an update of the KCI survey efforts in Pautler Cave.

“News From Other Caving Organizations” brings us messages from the ISS and NSS.

“Upcoming Trip Announcements” gives some of the details for a CRV trip in December.

On the back page you’ll find the absentee ballot for the upcoming officer elections in December.

In The Twilight Zone

By Troy J. Simpson

It is hard to believe that my second term as President is coming to an end. It seems like just yesterday, Julie Angel was asking me if I would be interested in serving as Grotto President. Well, two years have come and nearly gone, and the Grotto is looking always forward. You may have already noticed the absentee ballot in this issue of the “Near Normal News.” Marc Tiritilli has accepted nomination as President for the 2004 year. Many of you already know him and are familiar with his caving expertise. He has served as Member-At-Large for the past 3 years, is a certified Cave Rescue Instructor, has instructed vertical classes, and has lead numerous trips to caves in Indiana, Illinois, and TAG. Marc has also contributed with great advancements in lighting technology with his work on LED arrays. In fact, I’m looking forward to trying out the next generation this Saturday at Illinois Caverns. As the outgoing president, I fully endorse Marc’s nomination and look forward to the working with him in the upcoming year. Filling out the rest of the ballot is John Schirle for V.P., Dave Carson for Treasurer (still waiting for that Grotto paid trip to Hawaii!), and myself for Secretary. This year we do have a “battle” for the Member-At-Large position of the Executive Board. Jeffery Gosnell and Don Kerouac have been nominated for the position. I believe either one would do an excellent job on the board and it is up to the membership to decide. Related to the ballot, if you wish you may also write in other candidates (Arnold is not eligible, he is not a NNG member!).

I will attempt to keep this column short this time and save reminiscing for another article. I want to remind everybody that we are voting at the December meeting. Also, we need to make plans for this year’s Christmas Party and the ever popular “White Elephant Gift Exchange!”

Other news... check with either Don Coons or Jim Jacobs about information regarding the Karst Conservancy of Illinois. They are in the process of completing purchase of Pautler Cave and are looking into other properties. Also, the Indiana Karst Conservancy is paying off their purchase of Wayne’s Lost Property. Their website is linked to both the NNG and NSS websites. Finally, once again, we are still seeking articles for the Near Normal News. I will have an index for 2003 ready for the January issue. Reminder, the next Grotto meeting is November 14, at 7:00pm at the National City Bank in Bloomington, IL. See You All There!!

-The Pres.

Troy J. Simpson

MINUTES OF THE MEETING October 10, 2003

Present: Jim Jacobs, Marc Tiritilli, Ralph Sawyer, Jeffery Gosnell, Don Kerouac, John Walther, David Carson, Matthew Carson. We welcomed guests Rick Delany and John Moritz from Minonk.

Treasurer’s report: David Carson reported that we have \$297.90. Approved.

Secretary: The last meeting took place at the picnic. President Troy Simpson made some welcoming comments, and thanked Jim Jacobs for his long service as grotto secretary and editor of the Near Normal News. No official business was conducted.

Old business: We discussed the proposal for Karst Conservancy of Illinois membership. Jim J. reported that the organizational membership has been set at \$75/year. (Individual membership is \$25/yr). The proposal should be voted on at the November meeting.

New business:

- Nominations were accepted for the NNG Board of Directors for the next year. The nominees are: President: Marc Tiritilli, Vice President, John Schirle, Treasurer, Dave Carson, Secretary, Troy Simpson, Board member at-large, Jeffery Gosnell and Don Kerouac. This information and an absentee ballot will be published in the November NNN. The vote will take place at the December meeting the new officers will seated in January.

- Christmas party: The general feeling was that the theme of the party last year was pretty good. We had a short meeting,

shared goodies to eat, and had a “white elephant” gift exchange. Everyone who wanted to participate brought a wrapped present of some kind. Something new, something used, something serious, or a gag gift. Nothing expensive. After the first person opens a random present, the next person has the choice of opening a new one of their own, or taking the present that the first person opened. We’ll discuss the party in more detail in November.

- Brian Braye is “retiring” as co-editor of the Near Normal News. We had a short discussion of printing options and costs. John Shirle will assist Jeffery Gosnell as co-editor and will probably take care of the printing.

- Marc Tiritilli conveyed thanks from Tracy to NNG members who responded to her request for photos of people having fun while caving. She is making a brochure as part of a school project.

- The Illinois Speleological Survey has opened its membership at no charge. Jeffery G. will gather further information Trip Reports:

- Don Kerouac reported on the survey trip that he and Don Coons took to Pautler Cave. They went beyond 200ft. through a water crawl into big booming passage. There has also been some progress on the dig on the other side of the sinkhole.

- Upcomint trips: Sullivan in January or February (Ralph Sawyer), to TAG (Marc T.), Owlsey Sinkhole Plain (Jeffery G.).

Adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Jim Jacobs
Secretary

4th Annual Near Normal Grotto Picnic *by Troy J. Simpson*

The 4th Annual NNG Picnic took place once again in the beautiful sandstone canyons of Clark Falls Farm in Utica, IL. This is the second consecutive year that we have had the privilege of holding our picnic here, and each time has been a landmark experience. This year the picnic expanded beyond just a picnic, with the addition of an extra day for formal vertical training.

Marc Tiritilli led instruction, as 10 of us learned basic concepts of vertical caving and put those concepts to good use. The first part of the class was instructional based as we worked through the NSS



Don Coons on the Tyrolean traverse. Ralph Sawyer photo.



Ambra Deering tries a rappell. Ralph Sawyer photo.

Vertical Guidebook. The afternoon was spent practicing what we were learning. The canyon provided an excellent setting as we rappelled down the ~100 foot sandstone cliffs. For me, I used this opportunity to fine-tune anchoring techniques and learn better ways to set up ropes. Before too long, it was getting late and time to call it a day. A group of us ended to Delaney’s with Larry Bird for an enjoyable dinner.

Sunday morning didn’t come soon enough as the day would be spent “playing” on the ropes. My wife and I headed to Clark Falls mid morning, and I soon found myself helping Don Coons with the set up of a Tyrolean line across the canyon. I could just imagine myself hanging from the rope ~120 feet above the canyon floor! Just as we were finishing setting up, the rest of the Grotto began to filter to the picnic site.

We had very brief meeting and continued to practice our techniques, zipping down the ropes we had set up. Once again, we offered a number of options for those in attendance in the afternoon. Marc and Don led groups who wanted to work on the ropes at the Falls, while Larry and I led a group for a tour of the Utica Cement Mine. The mine trip for me is always an enjoyable time, as I have the opportunity to see cave formations at their beginnings.

This year marked a banner year for the picnic in many ways. There were about 40 people in attendance, including several from other Grottoes. The event was expanded to a two-day affair, a variety of activities were planned so there was something for everyone, and we had another large turnout. In fact, the Near Normal Grotto Annual Picnic is rapidly becoming a mini-MVOR or OVR event. A testament to value we, as a grotto, place on getting together for special events. I would like to thank all those who could be in attendance and tell those who could not make it, "we missed you!" I also want to thank Larry Bird who helped with the contacts and leading the Utica mine trip, Marc Tiritilli for instructing the vertical class, and Alice Fredericks for generously allowing us to use the Clark Falls Farm for our annual picnic.

Each year I wonder, how are we going to top the previous year? Without fail, it gets better and better!

Pautler Cave Survey Trip Two

By Don Kerouac

The weekend of September 13th, I tossed my gear in my van and pointed it south. There is something pleasantly decadent about leaving town and heading for the lands of hollowed ground (hollowed, not hallowed). It's a feeling of freedom that surface dwellers do not comprehend.

This was to be my second trip into Pautler Cave. I originally entered Pautler on July 13, 2003. Don Coons led a trip to survey and photograph from the mud crawl to the rim stone dam formation in the large stream passage.

Also on that first trip were Ralph Sawyer and Bill Morrow. We were there to cave of course but also to learn the finer points of surveying. Don's reputation as a caver and surveyor thereof precedes him. Consequently, we were all anxious to get started and add a widely needed skill to our caver resumes.

It was a great trip with Bill, Ralph and I rotating places with the compass, clinometer, and measuring tape. Don made passage drawings and took notes. Pautler was very wet and muddy (the rain soaked spring didn't help) and surveying through the mud crawl was particularly unpleasant. However, after we paid our dues the cave rewarded us with large stream passage and a beautiful cascading, multi-level rim stone dam formation that ran from ceiling to floor. All too soon, our trip ended and I enjoyed dinner with the others at the local Denny's before the long drive back to Kankakee.

My second trip to Pautler was in September. Troy Simpson, Jeffery Gosnell and others had also hoped to participate but life's obligations kept them away. So, about noon Don, Barb Capocy and I drove to Pautler Reserve. Don C. had brought along a large hand pruning saw and we proceeded to cut up much of the logs and tree branches that had been dozed into the entrance pit. After considerable effort, we had quite a stack to be hauled out (another trip, another time!).

Don and I then studied the "dig" on the opposite side of the pit. A six mile cave system is known to exist very close to the Pautler entrance pit. It's only known entrance is unavailable and is extremely difficult to passage. A new entrance to this cave in the Pautler pit would make the KCI purchase a real bargain. Two caves for the price of one!

Don, Barb and I entered Pautler in the middle of the afternoon, made our way to the far stream crawl, past the breakdown in the main stream passage. We took up the survey there and measured through the crawl getting very wet in the process. Near the center of the stream crawl the passage almost sumps with only about twelve inches of space between the rock and the water. While not physically difficult to passage, it leaves very little of you dry! Crouching uncomfortably in cold water while trying to take meaningful and accurate measurements gives you a real appreciation for the cavers who surveyed the endless miles in Mammoth and other great caves.

Finally we worked our way out of the stream crawl and Pautler rewarded us with big, booming passage covered with countless speleothems. It was classic caving; hard work in miserable crawls with a nice payoff for our intrepid party.

We explored into the big passage and

saw leads continuing in various directions. There is much yet to survey in Pautler Cave.

Tired, wet, cold and a little hungry, it was time to head out. When we finally emerged out of the cave about 8:30PM, we were greeted by a dark and starry sky. We made our way out of the entrance pit, through the woods to our vehicles where we cleaned up as much as possible and changed out of our cave gear. We headed over to Denny's, had dinner and talked over the day's events.

I really enjoyed exploring and surveying in Pautler Cave and look forward to going again. It was great working with cavers like Don Coons, Barb Capocy, Bill Morrow and Ralph Sawyer. I'd like to thank Don Coons who organized and led the trips and patiently taught us the importance of accurate surveys.

BTW, check out the Karst Conservancy of Illinois homepage (www.caveresource.com/kci) and join by sending a tax deductible donation.

Near normal Neighbors—Brian Braye

Editor's Note: This issue of the Near Normal News marks the farewell of Brian Braye as co-editor. Rarely the focus of attention, Brian has given many years of volunteer service to this newsletter, and his quiet contribution will be missed. Brian's answers to the following questions were direct and to the point. However I am certain there are many rich stories behind these brief responses.

How and when did you first become interested in caving?

Bruce Anderson, who at that time was a NN member got me involved on a caving trip with some young men from our church. Before that, my wife and daughter and I visited Round Spring Cavern and Fischer Cave in Meramec State Park, while on vacation. These were undeveloped caves that a park ranger would guide.

What was your first wild cave?

That would be Fischer Cave above.

Where all have you caved?

I have been in caves in Missouri, Iowa, Illinois, Indiana, and Kentucky

What is your favorite cave?

I guess that would be Mammoth Cave in Kentucky. My family spent 5 or 6 years there doing the weeklong restoration field camps, when Norm Rogers was coordinating that. I have always liked Illinois Caverns too.



Exploring through the Utica Cement Mine. Photo by Troy Simpson



Above: Troy and Amy before entering Utica Mine. Below: One of the large rooms of the Utica Mine. Photos by Troy Simpson



How did you become involved with the Near Normal Grotto?

Bruce Anderson invited me to a meeting of the NNG. There I met (among others) Jim Jacobs. He and I went to my first restoration field camp at Mammoth together.

Aside from caving, what other activities fill your life?

I am very active in all aspects of photography. I am currently the KodaRoamers Camera Club President, and teach part-time at Heartland Community College, in photography, digital photography, and Photoshop software. In addition I have a small photography business called Boomerang Photo. I have been know to throw a boomerang or two once in a while.

What's left for you in caving?

I will probably assist our scouts, and young men's groups, on trips to Illinois Caverns occasionally.

News From Other Caving Organizations

ISS Calls For Members

The Illinois Speleological Survey (ISS) has undergone reorganization and is now calling for individual members. Previously the ISS was an organization of organizations, with various grottos being represented on the ISS Board of Directors. Now, the ISS is a member driven organization open to all who agree to uphold the purposes of the ISS:

1. To protect, conserve, locate, record, explore, and study the caves and karst resources in the State of Illinois.
2. To provide a permanent, non-profit, non-sectarian, cooperative organization for the pursuit of speleology.
3. To establish and nurture a professional atmosphere among Illinois' speleologists.
4. To cooperate with all individuals and organizations consistent with the foregoing purposes.

If you wish to be a cooperator (the name of members) of the ISS, all you need to do is write to Jack Wood (e-mail or snail mail) and state that you agree with the Purposes of the ISS. Currently, there are no dues. Please include the following information for your membership request to be fulfilled:

Name / Preferred mailing address / Contact phone number / Alternate phone number (optional) / Email address
Principle Grotto (or independent) / NSS number / Birth date (optional)
Once Jack receives your email or letter



Soda Straws at their Genesis. Troy Simpson photo

of support with the above requested information, you will be added to the membership roster. At the next meeting, the Board of the ISS reviews the applications and gives a final approval.

If you have any questions email Jack Wood at speleo30@yahoo.com or you can call him in the evenings at his home (773) 728-9773. Jack's mailing address is: 848 W. Lakeside Place #2R, Chicago, IL 60640

Great X Matching Donation

By: Scott Fee, NSS President

Have you been considering making a donation to the NSS in support of the acquisition of Great Expectations (X) Cave in Wyoming? As you may recall, the NSS purchased the cave and surrounding acreage for about \$200,000. To date we have raised about \$70,000 due to the extreme generosity of our caving family.

Colorado Cavers Gerald G Forney and Irene Ludwig have now put a challenge grant in front of us. We have until December 31st to raise another \$5,000 which they will match dollar for dollar! Therefore, if you have been postponing your donation please consider going to www.greatx.caves.org and making a contribution on our secure server.

Don't trust the net? Then give Stephanie at the NSS Office a ring at 256-852-1300. Checks or money orders can be mailed to NSS Office, 2813 Cave Ave., Huntsville, AL 35810-4431.

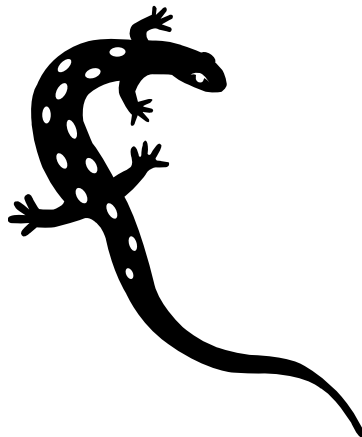
You can buy a "vertical foot" of Great X for \$100 which also entitles you to a stone-washed green or stone-washed blue,

custom designed, owner/donor t-shirt. For \$250 you can be the proud owner of an embroidered Great X Polo shirt. (All the shirts can be viewed at www.greatx.caves.org.)

Every donation dollar counts, so please consider assisting the NSS pay off this huge debt!

UPCOMING TRIP ANNOUNCEMENTS:

December 13-14—Cave River Valley. Join us after the grotto Christmas party for a trip to Washington County, Indiana. A through trip of Lamplighter Cave and a possible excursion into Dorsey's is planned. Contact Jeffery Gosnell at (309) 246-4005 or gosnell@greatoakscamp.org.



Dear Near Normals,

It seems like a very short 10 years. It seems like only a year or two ago Jim and I started working on the NNN. Working on the newsletter was fun, but it was always great to have another one put to bed.

I remember early on, going back to my office at 8 pm and meeting Jim (he would usually be coming from bowling, and have a sandwich in one hand, and a soft drink in the other). We would work until 11:30 or so putting another NNN together.

I miss seeing you all regularly, but don't worry, I will pop in from time to time and say hello.

I was really sorry I could never make it to the Utica picnic. It always turned out I would be teaching or photographing a wedding on that day.

Well, I'm sure the NNN will be a first class publication in the future. I do not worry as it is in good hands.

Thanks to Jim Jacobs for advice on writing and formatting, and for faithfully getting it all together each time. Thanks to Dave Carson for keeping the mailing labels coming and for writing out those checks for printing and postage. Thanks to all for your support in publishing the NNN. Till we meet again, happy caving!

Brian

Absentee Ballot For The Election of the 2004 Near Normal Grotto Officers

Mail ballot to:
Near Normal Grotto #363
P.O. Box 813
Normal, IL 61761

Deadline to receive absentee ballots is 4pm, December 12, 2003.

Election is at 7pm December 12, 2003 at the Near Normal Grotto meeting.

Check no more than one (1) name for each position. You do not have to vote each position.
You may write in a candidate's name, if you so choose:

For 2004 President:

___ Marc Tiritilli

___ (Write In)

For 2004 Vice President:

___ John Schirle

___ (Write In)

For 2004 Secretary:

___ Troy Simpson

___ (Write In)

For 2004 Treasurer:

___ Dave Carson

___ (Write In)

For 2004 Member At Large:

___ Don Kerouac

___ Jeffery Gosnell

___ (Write In)