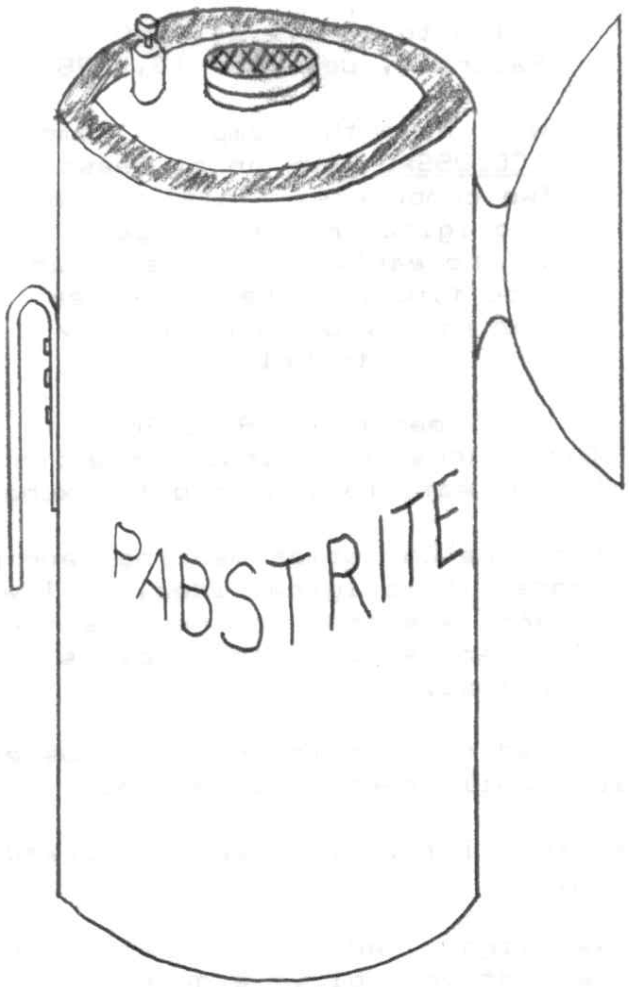
CENTRAL OHIO GROTTO
SQUEAKS
DECEMBER 1986



READY FOR THE 1986 GIFT EXCHANGE ?

COG SQUEAKS DECEMBER 1986
MERRY CHRISTMAS

NOTICES
D E C E M B E R M E E T I N G

The December meeting of the COG will be hosted by Bill and Karen Walden at their home. THIS IS THE ANNUAL CHRISTMAS PARTY AND GIFT EXCHANGE. Plan your gifts now.

Bill and Karen Walden
223 Fallis Road
Columbus, Ohio 43214
614-268-5865

Plan to arrive at 7:00 PM
Saturday, December 13, 1986

Will have the computer game
COLOSSAL CAVE on at least
Two computers. (This is the
original mainframe game
of the early seventies!) Can
you find all the treasures
or will you find your way
to Hell?

Meeting at 8:00 PM
Gift exchange following meeting.
Party and eats following gift exchange.

The gift exchange for the Christmas meeting and party has been a COG tradition for many years. The original idea, so I was told when I first joined the grotto in 1968, was that the recipient must use the gift on his next cave trip. All sorts of useful gifts have been made by the giver. Some of these include:

Insulated cave pad for insulating ones posterior from the damp cave floor while resting or eating.

Pabstrite carbide lamp. It really worked! Made from a Pabst beer can.

Emergency cave light made from a wheel cranked by the caver. The wheel drove a bicycle generator which in turn powered the cave light on the caver's hard hat.

Dual purpose cave food which not only provided food for the caver but provided fuel for a methane burning cave light later in the cave trip! (Really quite ingenious. The lamp used a small mantel similar to a Coleman lantern! I'll leave the plumbing arrangement to your imagination.)

A beginners cave camera kit guaranteed to work with any lighting and provide infinite depth of field. A real + for a cave camera. And if you broke it or got it wet, easy to repair. (It was a pin hole camera.)

In later years cave games became popular. We saw wood blocks the size of dominoes with passage sections drawn on the blocks. The game was played like dominoes by lining up the like cave passage sections. A cave game played like Monopoly and another played like the Hungry Ant only far more complex were made by cavers.

Other years have produced articles of clothing which the recipient must wear on his or her next caving trip. One of the more memorable included an armored bra for female cavers!

Straight gifts are acceptable and usually appreciated. Some include carbide repair kits in a film can, cave food such as gorp or goup already to use in the cave. Even a can of beer or a baby bottle of wine have been appreciated and consumed on the next cave trip.

Cave cakes and stalactite candy or cave rat muffins and cricket candy never made it to a cave but were consumed by people at the Christmas party.

Don't spend much money on these gifts, its the idea and the written instructions which make the fun.

So, plan your gift, write the instructions and plan to attend the 1986 COG annual Christmas party. If you're unsure of a gift or don't feel you can write ridiculous instructions, a straight gift is most acceptable. Plan to attend.

If you have any questions please contact any COG officer or me, Bill Walden.

As guests arrive at the Christmas meeting each draws a number from a hard hat. The number drawn determines the order in which guests may select their gifts from the pile under the tree. None of the gifts are identified as to who made the gift -- thus more fun in trying to determine who made the gifts!

Come -- Eat -- Exchange Gifts -- and have fun! Bill and Karen Walden.

WHO TO CONTACT

Jim Blankenship	Chairman	614-497-0402
Bill Walden	Editor Squeaks	614-268-5865
Nancy Mahoney	Secretary	614-866-6767
Karen Walden	Treasurer	614-268-5865
Paul Unger	Trips	513-839-4258
Andy Franklin	Vertical Com.	513-767-9405
Chuck Daehnke	Trips	614-263-7011
Mark Rakowski	Photo trips	313-856-1733

General Information

The Central Ohio Grotto meets on the second Friday of each month. Some meetings which require special preparation or outdoor activities will be held on the Saturday following the second Friday. Watch the Squeaks for meeting dates and hosts.

Squeaks Articles are always welcome. Please send me trip reports, survey results (Cave locations are not given unless it is a commercial cave or such a well know cave that it would be pointless not to give the location.)

I now have a modem again and am anxious to receive your articles via modem (saves my poky fingers, you know!) -- Bill Walden

Caving activities are centered around Pulaski County, Kentucky. One of the COG members, Paul Unger, has a cabin and barn which we use as a base of operations. Paul asks only that we keep the cabin clean, remove our trash, and help maintain the grounds by mowing the lawn occasionally. Paul has about 27 acres surrounding the cabin. The cabin is 27' by 27', has electricity, has a porch on three sides of the cabin, and a well outside provides water.

Paul Unger has been instrumental in starting a joint project with the National Forest Service in the Boone National Forest in Kentucky. The project is growing in scope and in the number of grottos participating. Paul will report on progress at coming meetings.

A reinterest in the caves of Cave Springs Cemetery has occurred in the COG. (See past issues for maps and cave descriptions.) The Erismans, particularly Greg Erisman, have found new passages which do not show any evidence of prior visitation and do not show on earlier maps. Please read Paul Unger's article and Dale Harmon's article in this issue.

THIS ISSUE

TRIP REPORTS

No Name Cave

by Paul Unger

For nearly twenty years we have longed for the dry fall weather, marking the lowering of Lake Cumberland, hopefully opening passages in our favorite haunts -- Sloans Valley Cave, Cave Creek, and others. This in fact has kept us from looking at some seemingly unlikely prospects.

No Name Cave has been looked at by many cavers over the years, including myself, all finding the same thing. The 40' wide entrance narrows to a canyon, and after several drops, would hit lake level. Everyone would backtrack, climb to higher levels and eventually reach a point downstream high above the pooled stream with no ledges left, only a wide canyon and beckoning air flow.

The last week end of October saw myself again in this cave, being sucked in with tales of Sloans type passage.

The trip to the cave involves nearly 3 miles of jeep trail. Greg and Tony Erisman spent 2 weekends forging this trail through abandoned fields and a tornado strip of downed trees.

My enthusiasm soon was dampened, having to negotiate the 10' first drop on a cable ladder, and I twisted under the stream of water coming off the ledge. Another drop, and the first signs of mud and lake sediments were present. Several more drops, and the mud was like Cave Creek. While I was anxious to see the high dry Sloans passages, Greg made me survey this twisting passage for nearly 400 feet. Some times the flow stone sides nearly pinched off the walking passage requiring surveying on my side in running water.

When I saw the deep pool of lake Cumberland, I was ready to quit. I refused to "play Cave Creek" again. But, Greg said to wait. While he helped Doc (Tony Erisman) up, I found a protected corner, and casually observed the white crayfish in a small pool.

After shoving Doc through and up, Greg related they were in a side canyon and were going to chimney up. From the echoes of the grunting and plop-plop of mud falling as they climbed, it was obvious their canyon connected at a higher level to the main passage I was in. After several minutes, I saw them pass 25' or so above as they crossed an opening. Greg, peering over the side, said "your turn".

The 60 degree notch was a bitch, primarily so due to the mud, but after 5 minutes and 5 feet, I emerged into a 4 foot wide canyon, 15 feet high, with Greg at the top, peering down in silence. I started up and soon learned there was 20 feet of exposure, to the main passage. Now I won't go into all the details, but this was one of the most difficult climbs I've ever done, and consumed 1/2 hour. The only thing that kept me going was the thought "Doc did this", and Greg's comments "It's easy after this."

Later, on the way out, I found the reason for the difficulty. 1) Don't go straight up, bu follow a downward meander 15' to the side, 2) Start with your back on the opposite wall, 3) Shift your battery pack to the left side and 49 Most importantly, grow your legs 6" longer to match wall width, like Doc and Greg's.

The 20' wide bedding plane at the top appeared to follow the canyon course. We surveyed several hundred feet to a breakdown choke, with a crawl around the side. This was a 4 way intersection of walking passages, 2 of which were unpushed. A couple of shots later, we popped up through a mud slope and entered a large room. Wow! Sketching became much more difficult, but I was primarily concerned with locating all side leads.

The end of the room intersected another 50' wide passage, with lots of formations and virtually no mud. "Greg, is this the Sloans passage you promised?"

"Well, sort of. We're surveying the breakdown <u>under</u> the Sloans passage!"

A more than cursory inspection confirmed that fact, and a couple of shots later, we were standing in a "Sloans" passage, dry, no lake effect. Many large formations, some delicate. I asked "where does that

50' diameter bedding plane go?" Greg replied, "I don't know, I'm saving the small leads to last!"

The survey really slowed, as after the readings were taken, I would walk along the tape, check side leads, and sketch. I really hated to quit surveying, especially in a passage whose darkness our 3 wheat lights wouldn't penetrate.

The climb down was done in unison, and their technique was revealed. Emerging from the cave the stars greeted our satisfaction. 42 stations and 2200 feet really wasn't a bad trip.

Slide in Cave

by Dale Harmon

Editor's Notes -- Slide in Cave is another of the Cave Springs Cemetery caves. These caves are fairly well known among Kentucky cave explorers. Slide in Cave was explored and connected to other nearby caves 25 years ago by Ron and Phill Erisman the fathers of Greg and Tony Erisman. Later these caves were mapped by the Central Ohio Grotto and again in 1980 by the Greater Cincinnati Grotto. These maps do not show the connections to other near by caves. The map of Slide in Cave may be found in the Convention Guide book for the Frankfort convention. That map does not show the canyon Dale Harmon describes in this article.

Saturday, November 29, 1986 COG personnel resurveyed Slide in Cave. My account will however cover the Sunday trip into Slide in Cave by Jim Blankenship and myself, Dale harmon.

During the Saturday mapping an interesting canyon passage was located. Jim and I talked ourselves into returning to explore this lead on Sunday. Instead of a head banging jeep ride we had to hike to the cave. The weather was perfect for the 1.5 mile walk.

Entering the cave at 12:30 PM we proceeded to the bottom of a massive 15 foot high flowstone formation which was in a short side passage. We chimneyed to the top and over and down into a tall narrow, winding canyon passage. The ceiling was about 40 feet high and the walls were about 1.5 feet apart. The passage wound back and forth so much that in many places a six foot survey shot would be impossible. There was a small stream flowing from ahead of us. At the top of the passage it appeared that beyond the top edge there might be a dry upper passage.

Anyway we squeezed, climbed, squirmed, and chimneyed our way deeper into the cave. Jim wasn't particularly enthused by this type of scraping caving. After maybe 300 feet we reached a nice flowstone room about 8 feet by 5 feet in size. There were rimstone dams on the floor and a 12 foot high flowstone wall. The exit on through the canyon was very tight. Eventually we reached an area that was to tight to proceed. I chimneyed up about 8 feet and proceeded on. Jim stayed at the stream level. After about 150 feet the stream had risen to the level I was at. The passage at my level again became to tight to squeeze through. A side passage led up to the ceiling breakdown area. I did not push it or seriously attempt to chimney over the tight area as I was alone at this point. I rejoined Jim and we exited the cave at about 4:30 PM.

Jim's carbide light gave him a lot a grief during the trip. It constantly lost water and the flame was irregular. When I changed carbide, I had a spectacular fire around the base of my lamp. Screwing

the base on completely solved the problem. Then Jim did the same darn thing!

Thanksgiving Weekend at Paul's Cabin

by Bill Walden

Thanksgiving afternoon my daughter, Katie, and I drove to Paul's cabin for a weekend of caving and tom-foolery. We arrived about 8:00 PM and found the Weisenburgers and Greg and Tony Erisman at the cabin. The cabin somehow seemed alive with kids! Friday night would be mild compared to the next when Chris Erisman showed up with his family!

Friday Paul, Jim and I went into Somerset to buy a length of wire to run from the cabin to the barn. The barn will soon have electricity and lights. After purchasing the wire Paul announced that we were going caving. Jim returned to the cabin to continue his reading (A true armchair caver!).

Friday afternoon Paul and Greg did a surface survey to connect the entrances of several of the caves and surface features in the Cave Springs area. While they did that, the rest of us entered several of the caves to look around then hiked the surface looking for other entrances. We were hoping to find something new. I checked out a pit Greg had found earlier but not entered. I found that the 15' deep pit did nothing that a man could follow.

Saturday we returned to remap Slide in Cave. Dale discovered the canyon which he describes in the above article. We did not map it that day because I did not want Katie to climb over the flowstone without a belay. Our mapping efforts essentially duplicated earlier surveys. We'll return later and mop it up.

That evening Donna and I prepared a spaghetti feast for the crew. After dinner we lugged the Crack-of-Dawn to Steamboat Rock where we enjoyed listening to the echo of the carbide cannon's roar which would fade into the distance and then return. The echoes lasted several minutes! As I said, tom-foolery. I wonder what the local people think of us?

Sunday Katie and I visited with the MVG members over at the Sloans Valley field house. They demonstrated their version of the Crack-of-Dawn, a black powder cannon. The black powder cannon is not anywhere near as noisy as Paul's carbide cannon, but it does produce an impressive amount of smoke.

After the visit Katie and I continued to the end of the railroad grading where we heard another and obviously louder blast from the black powder cannon. From the old railroad grading we followed the trail to the Minton Hollow entrance of Sloans where Katie wanted to observe both pigmented and non-pigmented crayfish for a school science project.

We found the crayfish as expected in the pools after the "duck-under". Katie observed how both varieties moved and how they responded to light and disturbances in the water. Both were observed closely to see how they compared. Look for Katie's report sometime this coming spring.

Finding traffic heavy on the freeway, we exited and followed back roads

home. With several stops for snacks, a meal, and gas, we made it home in just under 6 hours. Normal time, considering the number of stops, that it takes on the freeway with normal traffic.

Karst Encounters II

by Lou Simpson

Members of Lou's party included Dorothy and Harry Goepel, Sheryl Hilton and Lou Simpson.

On Saturday afternoon when we reached the campground in Miltown, Indiana, everybody was off caving someplace. After we set up our tent, Jake Elberfeld, Don Conover, Jay Kessel, Paul Unger, Bill Walden and others returned. They suggested we visit the limestone mine. We did that instead of going to the banquet and the Marengo Cave tour.

We loved the mine! It was much more extensive than other limestone mines I had seen. We even felt lost at times. The passages were all 50 by 50 foot tunnels intersecting at right angles. There were entrances along two sides of the ridge. Since we arrived near sunset, the sun penetrated far into the tunnels which opened on the west side of the ridge. We didn't wear caving clothing. However, I managed to get dirty exploring a natural canyon crawlway that the mine had intersected. It went forty feet or so. The floor of the mine tunnels was sometimes dry, rocky, muddy, or wet. We emerged after about an hour at a different entrance than the one we had entered. we had fun finding our way back to the car by following various paths along steep drops. Harry found a way down to the river and several large concrete structures which were probably used to process the limestone from the mine.

The next day we visited Wells Cave. Sheryl and I had been there during Karst encounters I. At a point where the passage got low, Harry and I went on to look for more cave. We saw an upper level through a tight opening but couldn't get through. Soon we came to the continuation of the 25-foot high canyon. We followed it for fifteen minutes, stopping before it ended. The cave is very scenic and we would like to return. While waiting for the others to chimney the entrance pit, Harry explored the passage that heads the opposite direction than the rest of the cave. He said it continues in that direction. Wells Cave is said to be 3500 feet long.

Next we returned to the limestone mine. Following all left turns, we explored the back of the mine, where there were no entrances for a considerable distance. I found a natural dome with formations in it. Finally we reached the entrance area on the south side of the ridge, along the highway. I wonder if anyone knows whether cavers have mapped this mine. It would be fun to do and I am considering it.

Moaning Cave, Calaveras County California

by Lou Simpson

There are three commercial caves in Calaveras County: California Caverns, Mercer Caverns, and Moaning Caverns. We didn't visit California Caverns because it didn't appear in our travel literature and we didn't know about it until we saw signs on the road. We arrived at Mercer Caverns at 4 PM and they had just closed for the day. There was a sign on the road to Moaning indicating that the road was closed, but we drove down it anyway and got there.

We were able to get on the last tour. Moaning has three tours: a standard tour consisting of climbing down and back up a spiral staircase for 100 feet, a 180 foot rappel into the same pit for $11, and a three hour spelunking tour. We took the staircase. There were people rappeling down as we descended. We first descended about 40 feet on a steep wooden stairway in a very narrow canyon, emerging at a balcony 100 feet from the floor. The guide said the cave had once been a geyser. He demonstrated the depth of the pit by dropping a coke can. The spiral staircase was enclosed in a comfortable web of welded iron rods. A large slab angles out from one wall but we were assured that it is stable. We could see where the cave continues to greater depths. There were nice draperies, and an impressive display of flowstone covered the wall near the spiral staircase.

I was surprised that a commercial cave would offer a rappel, but then I remembered that rock climbing is popular in California. I got the impression that Moaning Cave was commercialized by cavers. The guide talked about the cave like a caver familiar with caves, not having to convince me that the cave was worth what I paid for the tour.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

If Ash Cave is the cave I think it is, I know about the back entrance mentioned in a article in the July-August, 1986 Squeaks. John Barnes took me to a cave once which he wanted to connect to a bat cave. To get to the cave we left the highway, turning left on a jeep trail that fords a stream that comes out of a spring. I drove my 1972 Dodge Dart down the road several times, bottoming out on the rocks and nearly getting stuck. This jeep trail follows the left side of a river. We passed an impressive entrance in a cliff, which I think is named Cave Hollow Cave. Then we turned left up a steep jeep trail away from the river, practically on top of Cave Hollow Cave. The entrance we connected to a bat cave is just off the jeep trail to the right and it is a vertical hole between boulders. After we surveyed it, we did a dig and connected into a bat cave (Ash Cave?), coming in at the bottom of a small dome through a sandy crawlway. The bat cave consisted of a walking stream passage with breakdown in it and a cross section that sloped from left to right coming out. There was one side passage that becomes a low crawlway. The entrance was large. I don't remember a gate, but this was in 1980 or 81. I remember being told that the cave was a habitat for rare bats.

Lou Simpson, November 16, 1986

FROM THE EXCHANGES

CARE AND FEEDING OF THE CARBIDE CAP LAMP

by Tom Moss
Published in the Huntsville Grotto Newsletter
September, 1986

Since time immemorial, the finest cavers in the world have utilized the wonderful carbide lamp. This often balky critter features a low mean time between repairs, and rewards its user with a very high mean time between failures in addition to providing a friendly light, heat, and a warmly romantic ambience for your caving pleasure. These words of

wisdom that follow cover many of the common problems that the uninitiated have with carbide lamps, as well as ways to fix and circumvent such difficulties.

STARTING

The first thing to know about a carbide lamp is how to start it. First load the bottom chamber 2/3 full with carbide, then fill the top chamber with clean water. While the lamp is apart, adjust the lever on the top until the water drips at a rate of about 1 drop per second. Put the lamp back together, and check gas flow out of the burner tip by putting the lamp up to your face, and feeling the gas against your lip. Light the lamp in whatever way turns you on. Remember that acetylene is lighter than air.

RUNNING THE LAMP

A carbide cap lamp runs 2 to 3 hours on the average from each charge of carbide. Most lamps will use more than one tank of water in this time.

The length of time that a charge will last is dependent upon the size flame that you generate. For efficient use, you can run a 3/4 inch flame with a parabolic reflector, a 1 inch flame with a 2 1/2 inch Justrite and a 1 1/2 inch flame with a 4 inch Justrite reflector. For assisting the electric caver in front of you through a tight spot, turn up the water momentarily until you achieve a 4 to 5 inch flame. This will work well with ANY reflector, or without one at all.

To adjust the flame, turn the water lever on the top one 'click', then wait a minute or so for the pressure to equalize before adjusting further.

Sometimes the spent carbide packs around the dripper near the end of a charge, and turning the water lever up a little does nothing. If this happens, you can try turning the water lever up 4 or 5 'clicks' for 5 seconds or so, then turn it back down to its' previous setting. This usually flushes out the blockage.

THEORY

The lamp consists of two major parts. The lamp bottom is the chamber where the carbide, and eventually the spent carbide, resides.

The top consists mostly of the water tank. A rotating valve goes vertically through the center of the water tank, and a lever on top controls the amount of water dripped into the carbide chamber. The "felt" filter and felt holder reside inside the threads which attach the top to the lamp bottom. This filters the gas produced, after which it goes through the gas tube (which runs inside the water tank) to the burner tip in the center of the reflector.

The theory of operation is simple: Water added to calcium carbide, and the reaction produces flammable acetylene gas.

FUEL

A baby bottle full of carbide will run the average lamp for 18 to 24 hours, and is the standard container. Be sure that your container is water proof. The average lamp will also use 1 to 2 ounces of water with

each charge, so you have to bring enough water for yourself as well as your lamp.

TYPES OF LAMPS

The only decent lamp now manufactured is the Premier. It is worthwhile to search out a good antique lamp: Autolite, Justrite and Guy's Dropper are the most common types.

MAINTENANCE

If you carry a repair kit with you, you will have very few problems that can't be easily fixed. This should include a spare felt, flint, gasket, tip and a tip cleaner. Take an old toothbrush for digging out the carbide and cleaning the lamp. A small piece of fine sandpaper is good for working on the tip seat or the gasket sealing surfaces. A pair of ignition pliers is handy for changing tips and good for other caving tasks as well. Always take a dump container with you; ziplock freezer bags work well. Spent carbide is a poison to cave life and in no case should be dumped in or outside the cave.

After each 15 to 20 hours of use, clean the lamp thoroughly. Wash the lamp top and scrub the bottom of the water chamber with a toothbrush. Scrape carbide residue off of the threads, top and bottom, with a knife. Run water through the dripper mechanism to flush out any foreign material. Don't take the tip out unless you have to -- the tip seat is the most fragile area of the lamp.

PROBLEMS

A good, well-maintained carbide lamp will provide you with light and heat with very little trouble. Most problems encountered are caused by improper use of the lamp. Some common ones:

CLOGGED TIP -- This sometimes happens when firing up the lamp and can cause gas to back up into the water chamber. Clean out the burner tip with a tip cleaner or a piece of wire.

WET FELT -- Usually a result of running too high a flame; a wet filter prevents gas from coming out of the burner tip and can cause a "soupy" charge.

This can be prevented by ensuring that the drip control lever is not set too high. Change the felt and blow water out of the gas tube.

LEAKY GASKET -- This is always a fun thing to have happen, especially when the whole lamp spectacularly bursts into flame when the gasket has been lost. Do this occassionally to keep the electric cavers entertained! Change the gasket or turn the old one over; if the lamp still leaks gas, go over the sealing surfaces with fine sandpaper. Sometimes a lamp does not run very long on a charge because it is leaking just a bit. You can check for this by running a flame around the gasket.

TROUBLESHOOTING

Some common symptoms and their causes:

Water coming (sometimes shooting) out of the top of water chamber: The gas is backing up due to clogged tip or wet felt. Sometimes you just hear the gas bubbling up into the water chamber.

Flame goes up when you turn the water down: You need to add water.

Low flame: Check the charge. If there are no lumps of carbide left, change carbide. If the charge looks ok, turn the water feed up and flush out any clogs. If you want to get the utmost out of each charge, you can stir it up and get a little more time before changing. I prefer to change a bit prematurely as it is easier to get the spent carbide out.

Sputtering flame: Check for wet felt, or trash in the gas tube.

Sideways or double flame: Clean burner tip. If the problem persists, replace the burner tip.

IN CONCLUSION

For those interested in a more technical approach, there is a great article on carbide lights in the NSS publication CAVING BASICS. More wise words from the caving ballad:

> Life is like a carbide lantern
> With a plugged-up water drip;
> As you sputter through existence,
> You will carbon up your tip.
> Though you never make your closures,
> And your stations wash away,
> Keep your mind upon Life's purpose:
> Try to map a mile a day.

TRIP REPORTS CONTINUED

Vertical Caving at the 9th annual fall T.A.G.

by Tom Gilleland

October 10, 1986 marks the beginning of the 9th annual fall T.A.G. cave-in hosted by the Dogwood city grotto. This year there were a good showing of cavers eager to explore the vertical and horizontal caves of the Tennessee, Alabama, Georgia area (T.A.G.). The hearty group included Mark Pansing (COG), Vic Self, Judy, and Jason Omroid, Steve Wonn and myself, Tom Gilleland (COG). Also meeting the group from Ohio were Ken Davis, Russ, and crew; and from Florida, Terri and Wes Skyles, Paul Smith, Lamar Hires, Woody Jasper and crew; and Ron Simmons from Virginia and probably others I have forgotten or missed.

The first group; Steve Wonn, Vic Self, The Omroids and others were off to the infamous "Mystery." This cave has a 300 foot drop which has a waterfall that can be plugged while you rapell down the drop. Upon reaching the bottom and getting out of the way, someone can dump the dam and let forth a thunderstorm of water. Then after replugging the dam you have to climb the rope before the water overflows and drenches you in a chilly shower.

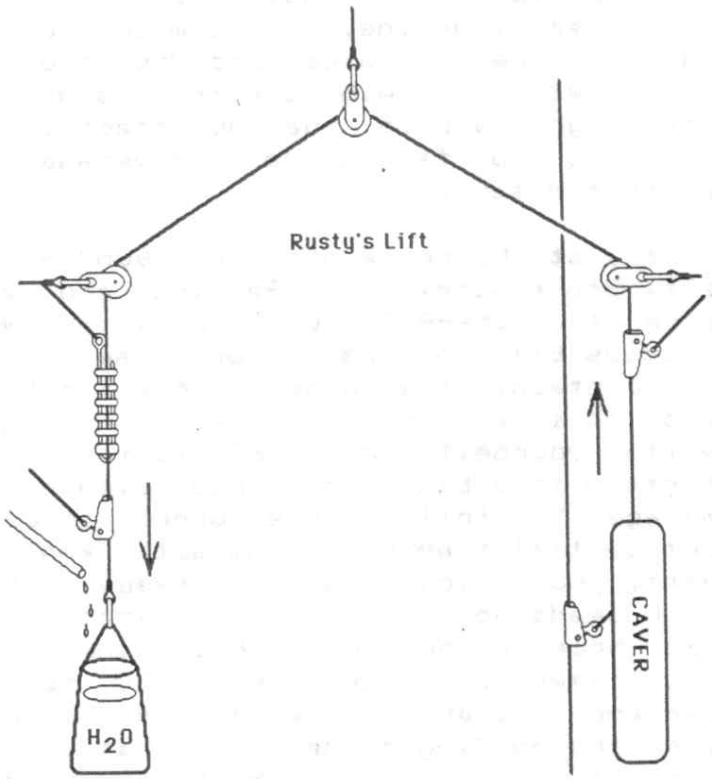
While the first group was off at "Mystery", Mark Pansing, Wes and Terri Skyles, Ron Simmons, and myself were off to "Mose's Tomb". After stopping and talking to the landowner, Russell White, we were up the hill to our pit. (By the way, Mr. White is a really nice old guy who likes "speeo-lunkers" and beer. If you fo pit boppin here, bring him a sixpack.) This pit consists of a small hole (3 by 3) that bells out (30 by 30) for a pretty much free drop of 225 feet. Flowstone and draperies decorate much of the walls with the bottom of the pit terminating in several small drains. To warm up for the next day's activities, Mark and I did the pit twice, and Wes "the veritable caving machine" bopped in thrice! The T.A.G. Bonfire was well ablaze by the time we got back that night, and in the TAG tradition the spirits were flowing. After consuming our fair share of beverage, thus appeasing the caving Gods, we hit the sack.

Sunday, at the crack of noon, found Steve, Judy and Jason Omroid, Vic Self, Steve Wonn, Mark Pansing and myself treking up Pigeon Mountain (like the rope-PMI). One hour later we arrived at the entrance to the infamous Ellison's cave. For those of you unfamilar with it, Ellison's Cave contains the largest/deepest pit in The United States, at 510 feet. This was our goal. One of the biggest challanges of Ellison's is getting yourself and a 600 foot rope to the edge of the pit. The cave starts with a blast collapse climbdown into a relatively dry stream passage. You follow this tunnel through some ups and downs to a 110 foot partial freedrop most aptly known as "warm-up". Upon reaching the bottom you follow a canyon passage (150 by 50) up over a breakdown pile which leads you to a 30 foot exposed climbdown precareously over a 70 foot hole in the floor. Following a small canyon you come to another aptly named "nuisance drop" of 20 feet. On and off with the vertical gear and you are at the edge of "Fantastic Pit" (510 feet!). Oh! did I miss the bedding plane crack that you must crawl along which is only partially shielded to the 510 foot drop! Oh! And did I forget to mention the part where you swing your feet out over the canyon.

Upon arriving at the edge we found that two ropes were already rigged, and we should have left our 80 pounds of 600 feet of rope at the bottom of the mountain, in the car. To our surprise there were already about six Ohio cavers waiting for a ride on "Rusty's Lift" (see diagram following this trip report). Rusty (one of the guys from PMI) had put together a quite ingenous system for raising cavers by using a counter weight consisting of a bag of water. The only problem with this system is when there is not enough water to fill the bag, as we witnessed while we were waiting. One of the Ohio cavers who thought he was going to get a free ride out of Fantastic Pit got to the bottom, only the waterfall wasn't falling. Good thing he had all of his ascending gear with him. Since the lift system wasn't working too well, most cavers headed out the entrance. This left two lines that we could descend and climb on. Those left to make the final drop included Paul Smith, Steve Wonn, Mark Pansing and myself. Now clipping in my rack to this line was no dangerous than all of the little 30 foot drops I had done, so why was Fantastic Pit so foreboding! Rappelling down into the mist (or maybe a cloud) gave you a bizarre feeling. You could look up and down and see only a line going off into a dark fog. Another interesting point to mention is the effect of the weight of the rope on your rack. It is as if you are on a constant bottom belay, until you get down to probably 200 feet over the floor. At this point I had to add bars to my rack to slow me down. Arriving at the bottom I could only see the other cavers coming down out of the mist probably 200 feet in the air. This only gave a small proportion of this most massive canyon. After a quick

exploration of the main canyon, and signing the register, we began our long climb out. It took us about 40 minutes to make the climb using our ropewalker ascending system. Another few hours of climbing and derigging and we were out of the cave. I know that this trip will be one of my personal favorites. Rumor has it there will be a through trip going sometime in January. We'll be sure to check on how many ropes will be needed.

Rusty's Lift



MAP TO MEETING