

COG SQUEAKS

SQUEAKS

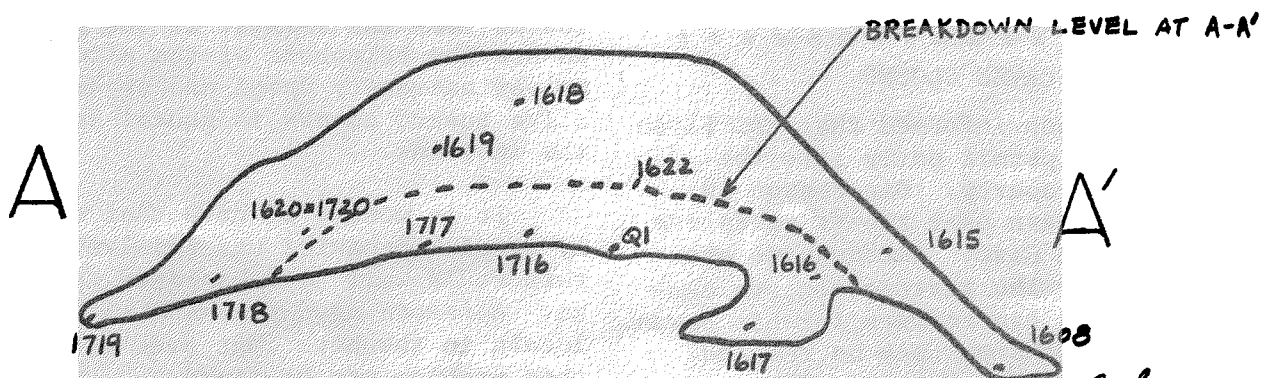
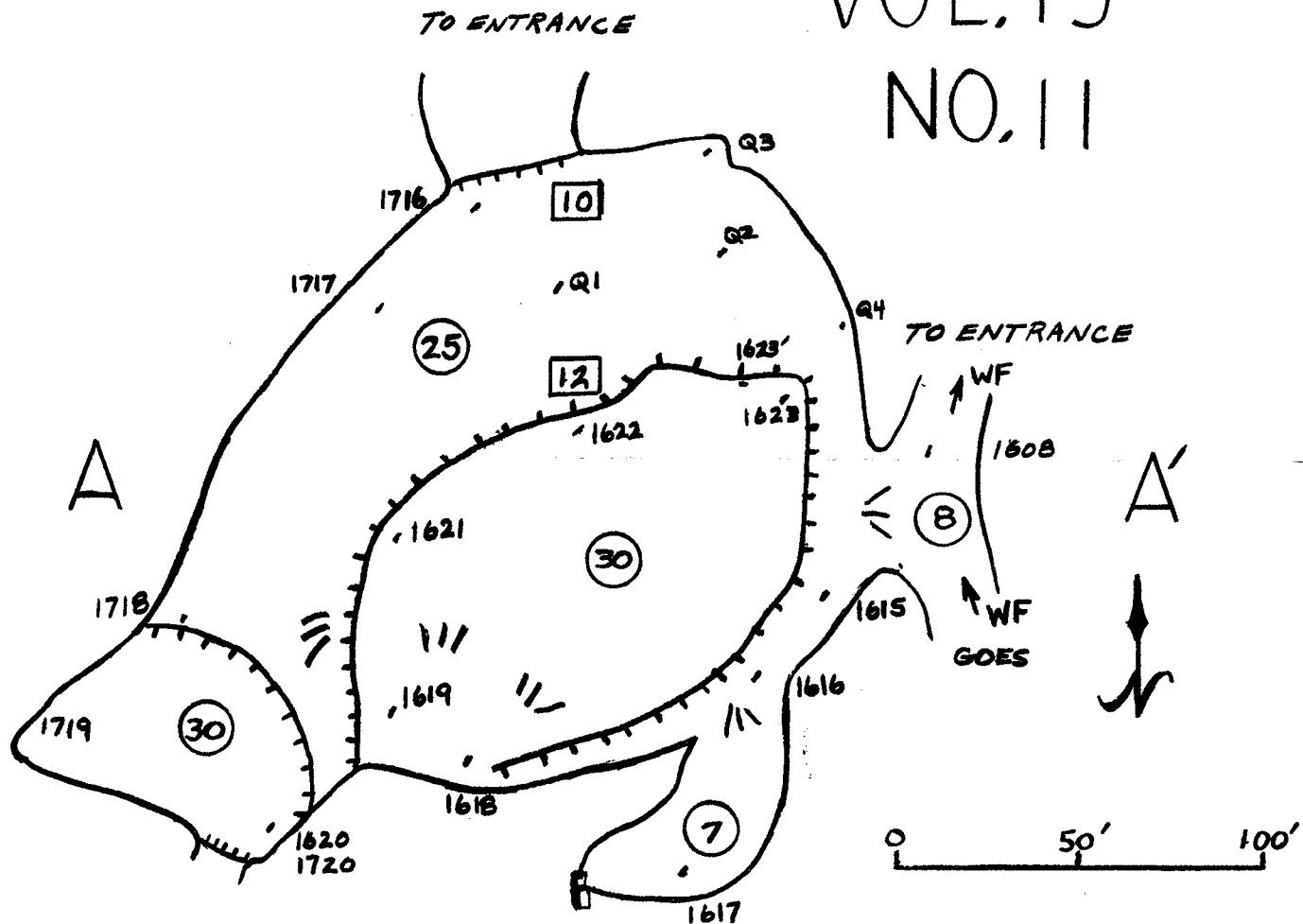
NOV 1976

THE ASTRODOME

WOLF RIVER CAVE, TENN.

VOL. 19

NO. 11



L. Simpson

The Central Ohio Grotto of the
National Speleological Society

MEETING NOTICE

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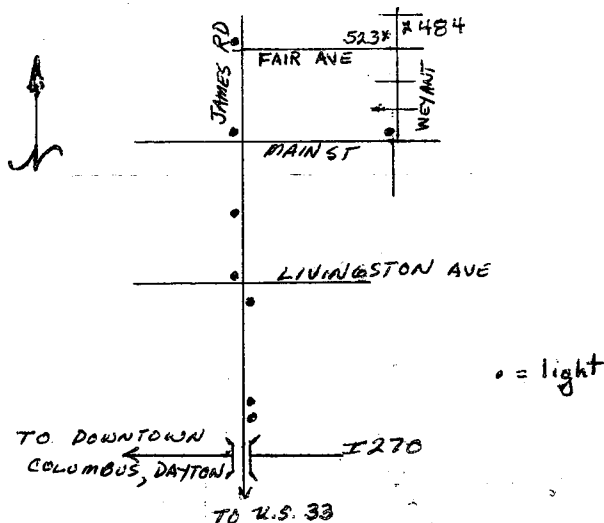
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FLYNN CAVES CLOSED

We have been informed that Mr. Flynn will no longer permit entry into the caves on his property. His reason is founded on concern over recent vandalism in Sally Turpin Cave. Although we are disappointed by the restriction, we cannot but applaud his concern for his caves. Perhaps some agreement may be reached which will limit but not cut off access.

The December meeting of the Central Ohio Grotto will be held at the home of Bill and Karen Walden, 484 S. Weyant Ave., Columbus, Ohio, on Dec. 10 at 8:30 p.m. There is a chance that the Waldens may move before the meeting; if this happens, the meeting will be held at Ken Smith's, which is just across the street (523). Please note that this is our annual Christmas meeting. A gift exchange is the high point of the festivities, but participation is by no means required: if you bring a gift you will receive one. If you haven't time to put a gift together, come anyway. Watching is as much fun as doing. For those who may not be familiar with this rite, the gifts should be cave-related, inexpensive, and preferably home-made. Humor is the primary intent. Past gifts include carbide lights made from beer cans, build-a-cave game, do-it-yourself wetsuit, etc.



(GRS cont. from pg. 92)

local people from congregating there for whatever purpose. Unfortunately, this was not the sole intent of the owner. When the rescue team was called, it was necessary to use the telephone of the actual owner. He was extremely upset and apparently negative toward cavers in general even before the incident.

It is worthy of note that no typically nerdish behavior was involved here; this could well have happened to any of us. Attempts are being made to contact locals in the hope that some solution to this problem may be found.

SECOND SKELETON FOUND IN WOLF RIVER CAVE

By Louis Simpson

A party of six - Andy Karolin, John Agnew, Dave Socky, Dave Voelker, and Barb and Lou Simpson - returned to Wolf River Cave in Fentress Co., Tennessee, on September 18 to continue mapping the newly discovered "Horrendous Trunk." This impressive passage, discovered Sept. 4 by Joe Martin, Tom Ramsey, and Lou Simpson, features a roaring six-foot high main stream water-fall and a long stream passage with an upper level trunk intersecting the meandering stream passage. The two Daves went ahead to photograph the passage. After several trips back and forth through one particular passage, they chanced to see what looked like bones sticking out from under a flat slab of breakdown! The entire group considered what to do and decided to mark the two breakdown slabs over the skeleton, photograph their position, and then carefully set them aside to expose the rest of the skeleton. Further study will be left to the paleontologists. The general appearance of the skeleton is illustrated in Figure 1.

In a low crawlway very near this skeleton, Lou and Dave Socky discovered several well-preserved examples of animal tracks, shown in Figure 2.

After mapping a portion of Horrendous Trunk, all six began exploring the upper level trunks together. In the second segment we were able to see a path of animal tracks in soft sand in a room below an overlook. In another virgin room, we encountered three bats trapped in a six-inch wide, ten-inch deep drip-hole. We rescued two of them with a gloved hand, but the third, which was down in water and could not be grasped, had to be extracted by applying pliers to its nose!

Climbing up a precarious breakdown pile, we emerged into a big room, 100 feet wide and four hundred feet long. A black opening at the far end beckoned, so we passed up possible leads on the lower right and headed for it.

At the threshold of the black void, even John Agnew's Coleman lantern failed to

1 meter

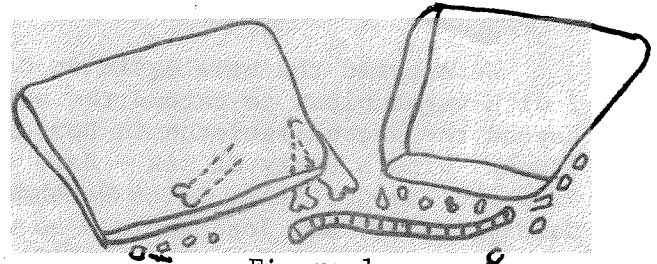


Figure 1

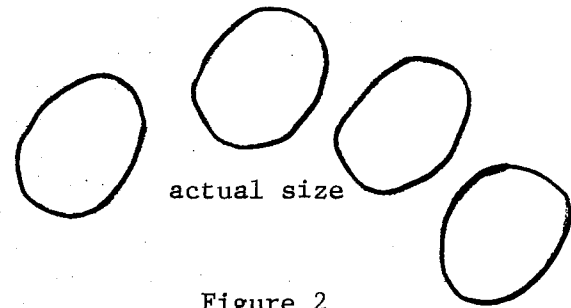


Figure 2

illuminate the room so we could see it. We climbed down into a canyon and saw that this was but the edge of an even larger room with a huge domed ceiling! Climbing back up breakdown, we found ourselves in a huge, domed chamber which will probably be all of 300 feet in diameter! An appropriate name for this super-room is "Astrodome." The ceiling above the circular part of the room is about thirty feet high, and one can climb down an additional twenty feet along the edges. We sat in silence in the glow of John's lantern while he wandered over to the far side of the plateau and treated us to a harmonica concert. John complained, however, that he couldn't catch his breath enough to play much.

Several obvious possibilities for extending the cave beyond this room were checked, but only a steep breakdown reconnection to the stream passage continued. This turned out to be only a hundred feet past my exploration on September 4. Upstream we followed the water, climbing up into another large breakdown room. We explored a series of big rooms for another hour and left the cave, not wanting to push too much farther because we were somewhat satiated with the thrill of discovery. Many obvious leads remain. The survey of 1301 feet brought the total to 3.83 miles. We've only just begun

MAPPING THE ASTRODOME

Also by Louis

We entered the cave again on October 2 with vague plans to extend the survey beyond the second skeleton in Horrendous Trunk. With a party of six - Barb and Lou Simpson, Tom Cottrell, Bruce Warthman, Carolyn Herel, and Joe Martin - as well as another party from Knoxville - Bill Deane, Chris Kerr, and Jim Nicholls - we were able to map almost 4000 feet. Tom, Joe and Bruce began mapping the main stream passage upstream. Bill's party mapped several large come-arounds which connect with the stream passage. They built rock barriers near the cat tracks and slide marks in the Cat Track Room to protect them from being stepped on. Carolyn, Barb, and I mapped upstream from the Cat Track Room until reaching the breakdown rooms beyond the Astrodome. Then we mapped into the Astrodome itself (shown on cover). Cottrell's party, and later Bills, also joined us in the Astrodome to help map it.

As in many previous large rooms, we thought it best to map around the adges of this largest room of all. We also put stations along the edge of the breakdown plateau to define it for the sketch and tied in two loops to test our accuracy. One loop had a 1.3% error and that was the worst closure of the two. The Astrodome is impressive because of its circular shape, rather than any spectacular dimensions. There are other places in the cave where you can see for 200 feet, but here you can stand at the top of the room, station 1618, and see 150 feet in any direction for 120 degrees. Also, the tension dome ceiling is fascinating. An alternate name of "Planetarium" has been suggested, to describe the dome shape. Perhaps this would be more appropriate, but the name "Astrodome" conveys more immensity. Perhaps yet another name, such as "Universe Room" or "Galaxy" would fit. All these have something to do with space, which is abundant in this immense chamber.

The entire party of nine cavers then followed the passage beyond where Dave Voelker had explored two weeks earlier. Following a short low crawl, there was a long stoopwalk and walk. Then another low crawl, somewhat wet, was pushed by an ever-decreasing number of people, until finally

the last frontier was seen only by Bruce and Chris. They turned back when they were in waist-deep water with a couple feet of clearance, probably because of lack of support more than anything else. (That is, lack of cavers, not lack of flotation, although that might be needed, too.) The large rooms and come-arounds in this part of the cave are confusing, and hopefully a survey will explain this soon.

The total survey is now 4.6 miles. It goes!!

* * * * *

MORE ON GREAT ROCK SINK

by Smith

A few months ago I made some remarks in the *Squeaks* about the closing of the Great Rock Sink Entrance of Sloan's Valley. I recently received a letter from Lou Simpson, in which he related the specifics of the incident as he had heard them from one of the people involved. As you read them I'm sure you will realize as I did that my remarks showed some prejudicial assumptions (viz. that nerds were involved and that their dilemma resulted from stupidity). Such was not the case.

Five people entered the Great Rock Sink Entrance and proceeded to the Big Room via the south overlook (hairy climb). They were crossing a sloping ledge in the lake room between the Big Room and the Hogback Room when one of them slipped off and fell about eight feet onto the breakdown below. He became wedged between breakdown blocks, with one moving slightly to pin him. The others were unable to free him and had to go for assistance. The Somerset-Pulaski County Rescue Squad sent two men with a hydraulic jack, and they were able to shift the rock to free the trapped caver. He was able to leave the cave under his own power and recovered completely within a few weeks.

When the group first entered the cave, they had encountered the new fence and keep out signs, so they inquired at the nearest house (a trailer) where they were told that the obstacles were designed to prevent dumping and (cont. on page 90)

CAVE PHOTOGRAPHY (PART III)

By Ken Smith

First of all, let me apologize for the fact that this segment did not appear in last month's issue as had been promised. This was due to the fact (and I'm certainly not complaining) that the issue was filled before I knew it. It should happen again!

FILMS

I'm almost afraid to start this section, since there's no other topic in photography (with the exception of development techniques) that seems to precipitate any greater or more vociferous differences of opinion. For this reason I want to state in the beginning that the films I mention here are merely those I've tried and either continued to use or now disdain.

My preference in all-around black and white films is Kodak's Plus-X (PX). Please note that I said all-around. The advantage to this film is the reasonably good (re: grain) prints I can get up to 11x14" without sacrificing too much in speed (the ASA is 125). This factor is of more importance for passage and big room shots than for close-ups, in which toning down light intensity is generally more of a problem than having too little. I see no reason why a slower film, e.g., Pan-X, shouldn't work as well and even better for close-ups. My objection is that I have neither the resources or disregard for my back to carry an extra body loaded with another film nor the inclination to fiddle around changing rolls in mid-cassette. I understand that there is an Ilford film of comparable speed (HP-3?) that enjoys a dedicated if not fanatical following. I've never gotten around to trying it, but I know that I do like their B/W papers. I normally develop the PX in Microdol-X 1:3, following standard temperature-time relationships. (I can almost hear someone tearing his hair out.) It gives me results I can live with; if you've got a pet process, I'd be the last to try to change your mind. The futility approaches that of arguing religion or politics; everyone makes his points most eloquently, and then each clings steadfastly to his original beliefs.

I guess I should mention Tri-X, since 93

it seems to be a popular film because of its great speed. I've never yet encountered a situation that Plus-X could not handle, and an 11x14 from a TX-135 negative always makes me fear momentarily that I've left my lens exposed to a sand storm.

I've made greater samplings of color films. When I first started, I was convinced by others that High Speed Ektachrome was the only film on the market. It didn't take me all that long to decide that it was miserable; almost every picture looked flat and washed out (yes, even with proper exposure). It's bad enough at its normal ASA rating of 160, much less pushed to 400. I liked the results that I got with Kodachrome (ASA 25); but I couldn't seem to do anything with a film that slow. I finally settled on Ektachrome-X (ASA 64) as the best overall slide film for the type of caves I frequented. I've since switched to a different type of film for reasons I shall point out later, and consequently I've never tried the new Kodachrome-64. What I've heard about it sounds good. I gave Fujichrome a try (I was enticed by its intermediate ASA of 100), but every shot had a slight greenish cast to it (no fluorescent lighting).

By now you've probably decided that I must be a frustrated movie critic, since I don't seem to like anything. I have found a film that suits me for several reasons. The film is Eastman 5247, which should not be confused with Eastman 5254. The film is normally shot at ASA 100, and although it can be pushed to 200, I don't recommend it. This speed seems to be about as fast as one can go and get pictures with decent color saturation, and it has the additional advantage for me of being close to that of my usual B/W film. I have a tendency to "shoot by the seat of my pants;" this way, if I forget whether I'm shooting B/W or color, it doesn't make a fatal amount of difference. I must admit that the film permits only about 1/2-stop exposure latitude. The primary advantage to this film is that it is a negative film. I prefer to do my own color printing, and I'm not equipped to work from positive originals. At the time I started there was no do-it-

Cave Photography (continued)

yourself system for making prints from slides that gave decent results. Since that time, a good system (Cibachrome) has come on the market, but it's expensive. The paper costs nearly \$1.00/8x10 sheet, and the chemistry comes only in 1 gal. lots (not 4 qt. as with chemistry for printing from negatives) with a shelf-life of a couple of weeks. I just couldn't use it fast enough to keep from losing my shirt. For those of you color printers who, like me, can't afford a color analyzer, I'll mention that I use a starting filter pack of 45M+45Y with Ektacolor 37 RC paper and a tungsten light source. I was unable to find this value in the standard literature, and it took me many trials to arrive at this value; even Kodak had no idea, or at least none they were prepared to communicate to me. You can get decent B/W prints from the negatives by using Panalure paper. For those who want only slides, my recommendation would be Kodachrome-64 as a starting place.

TAKING THE PICTURE

At last we come to putting all this gear to use. The complete darkness of the cave is both an advantage and a disadvantage. The control that the photographer has over the lighting is absolute; this is a great advantage, assuming the photographer has some skill in lighting techniques. If you are the kind who prefers to let electronic hardware to the work for you, you'll either need a large budget for strobes that adjust the light intensity by reading reflected light during the exposure or have to settle for nothing but entrance shots. The primary disadvantage of complete darkness which can not be circumvented is in lining up the shot and in focusing. Here are a few tricks that may help.

The major difficulty in focusing lies in the fact that a reasonably strong light source is needed. This is more true of split-image focusing than ground glass, but it applies with the latter as well. Your strobe is certainly a powerful light source, but I at least cannot focus in 1/1000 sec. Carbide light will do it you get it close enough; however, this necessity has obvious dangers if the subject is alive and especially if, as is the case with bats, heat sensitive. The best answer is a flash-

light. You get the best light/weight ratio from a Mallory (the size that takes 2 AAs); the beam is bright and cold. The shape of these flashlights has the additional advantage of permitting them to be held beside a strobe so that you can know where the strobe is pointing while you're looking through the viewfinder; if the strobe isn't pointed correctly the flashlight won't be either and you won't be seeing much of anything at all. The same flashlight can be used to line up big room and passage shots when you don't have ten people with you to light up the area. Look through the viewfinder and move the flashlight until the beam is pointed at whatever is just on the edge of the field. By moving your eye from the viewfinder you can see the part of the cave that is on that edge of the picture. Repeat the process for the other three edges of the field. This should pretty well define the area that would be photographed with the camera aligned as it is. (continued next month)

TALES FROM THE FIELDHOUSE

By Lou Simpson

Wolf River Cave Date: October 16, 1976

Personnel: Lou Simpson, Barb Simpson, Dave Taylor, Ron Wilson, Darwin Horn, Harold Molter, Don Pollock, Dave Socky, Dan Molter, Jake Elberfeld, Paul Kruger.

While the group was getting ready to enter the cave, two men drove up in a jeep and proceeded to survey a property line running north-south almost over the main entrance. Other local people walked over to the entrance to assist them by clearing brush. Mr. David Davis, who was sharpening a large knife for the brush clearing, told us that the land east of the line belongs to Mr. Pyle, while the entrance itself and land west of it belongs to Warren Copley.

Dave Taylor, Barb and I mapped 1500 feet in Indian Trail. A virgin pit, over 40 feet deep, remains the most promising lead in this passage.

Darwin Horn, Harold Molter, and Don Pollack helped Ron Wilson remove the bones of another animal from the Carnivore Corridor section of Horrendous Trunk. Ron

Tales (continued)

believes this animal, like the other specimens recovered in September from the lower level of Tremendous Trunk, was a jaguar - a female - or it could be a large mountain lion.

Dave Socky, Dan Molter, Jake Elberfeld, and Paul Kruger mapped part of a large, confusing breakdown room farther south in Horrendous Trunk - the Rumpus Room. The day's survey brought the total length surveyed to just under five miles. Jake Elberfeld had an accident during the drive back to the fieldhouse, damaging the side of his car when he collided with a jackknifed truck on KY 90.

Date: November 5, 1976

Personnel: Lou Simpson, Barb Simpson, Bruce Warthman, Tom O'Hair, Mike Carberry, Don Pollock, Jeff Vansant, Mary Kalmbach, Greg Kalmbach, Dave Socky, Dave Sholar, Bob Wood.

We drove to the cave in only two vehicles to minimize calling attention to our continued visitation to the cave. During the trip to the south end of Horrendous Trunk, over a mile of walking into the cave, a serious hazard was pointed out when several persons slipped on the unstable breakdown at the beginning of Horrendous Trunk. On the return trip, we all traversed this section one at a time.

The group essentially mapped all the explored unmapped rooms and passages beyond the Rumpus Room, for a total of .67 mile for the day. A party attempted to pursue the survey into the deep water upstream, but decided to leave exploration and mapping for a party equipped with wet-suits and inner tubes. The mileage on the map now totals 5.67 miles.

The stream was higher than usual, and water was standing in a come-around on the entrance level which had dried up for the past two months. The six-foot falls in Horrendous Trunk was more impressive this time. Bruce and Dave Socky took pictures of it.

CAVE CREEK

The revision of the system map nears completion. Before publishing the maps, I

wanted to do some more surveying. Some projects include:

1. Campground Caves
2. Surface tie-in of Aromatic Pit
3. Surface tie-in of pit near Fossil Pit.
4. Leads in Cloaca
5. Leads in Hyden's Cave
6. Slurp Crawl and Raft Route in Barnett's
7. High level beyond 100' exposed traverse in Walter's Folly
8. Surface tie-in of new cave behind Hyden's house
9. Explore bottom of Smith Recluse Cave
10. Push north in Firestone toward Barnett

Unless Lake Cumberland drops below 682, many of these in-cave projects won't be possible. Or so we thought. What was planned to be a clean-up of upper level crawls in Campground Cave #2 turned out to be otherwise.

Date: November 7, 1976.

Personnel: Lou Simpson, Bob Wood, Dave Socky, Greg Kalmbach, Mary Kalmbach, Barb Simpson.

Mary and Barb tied in Aromatic Pit, but failed to find the pit near Fossil. Greg and I mapped to a sink swallow-hole east of Campground #2, which turned out to be nearly over the downstream end of Smith Recluse Cave.

Socky and Wood rigged the ten-foot pit entrance of Campground #2 with my cable ladder and proceeded to map a miserable crawlway to the left right at the bottom of the ladder. Greg and I entered the cave after our surface work and discovered that the lake level was low enough (686) to allow further progress under the wall and into a passage that went. I summoned the other two from their miserable crawl and gave them the opportunity to scoop beyond a lake while Greg and I resurveyed the rest of the cave. They returned over an hour later, soaking wet. Beyond the lake, which was waist deep unless you slipped off the ledge (which Woody did - twice), it went another 500 feet to breakdown. Dave suggested a hammer and chisel would get a caver through it at least into a room. There were footprints in the water where there was no need for them, which

More Tales (continued)

indicates a party was fortunate enough to visit the cave within the last month when the lake level dipped briefly to 681.5 feet above sea level. The cave seems to trend west, toward Lake Cumberland. We had to leave for Ohio, but plan to return as soon as possible, before the lake resnarfs the lower level.

READ THE LONGEST CAVE

Roger Brucker certainly did a fine job. His latest caving book, The Longest Cave, transported me right into the heart of Flint Ridge and kept me there until the final connection, a week later. It is as much a story of the cavers as a story of the cave. Tension mounts as cavers try again and again to push the most promising leads. The game of Connection has a very concrete goal and anything, short of tunneling through solid rock, goes. I found myself speculating wildly about the potential of Wolf River Cave and Cave Creek and every other cave I've explored. It almost seems that wishing can make it so — that

caves will connect if you give them half a chance.

Many of the "characters" in Roger's story are known to COG cavers. The Cave Research Foundation started in the Central Ohio Grotto, after all. I like the list of contributors in the back of the book. I have always felt that putting the name of absolutely everyone who helps map a cave on the map is a good idea, no matter how little they contributed. Roger said something good about everybody he mentioned, but he didn't hesitate to point out the mistakes, either.

The book is warm, full of affection for fellow cavers. And in the background lurks the cave itself, the mighty Flint Ridge-Mammoth Cave System, longest of them all.

The Longest Cave is available through Speleobooks and CRF. Since it has been widely reviewed and has considerable popular appeal, it is also on sale at many regular bookstores, and was also a selection of the Natural History Book Club recently.

-- Lou Simpson

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