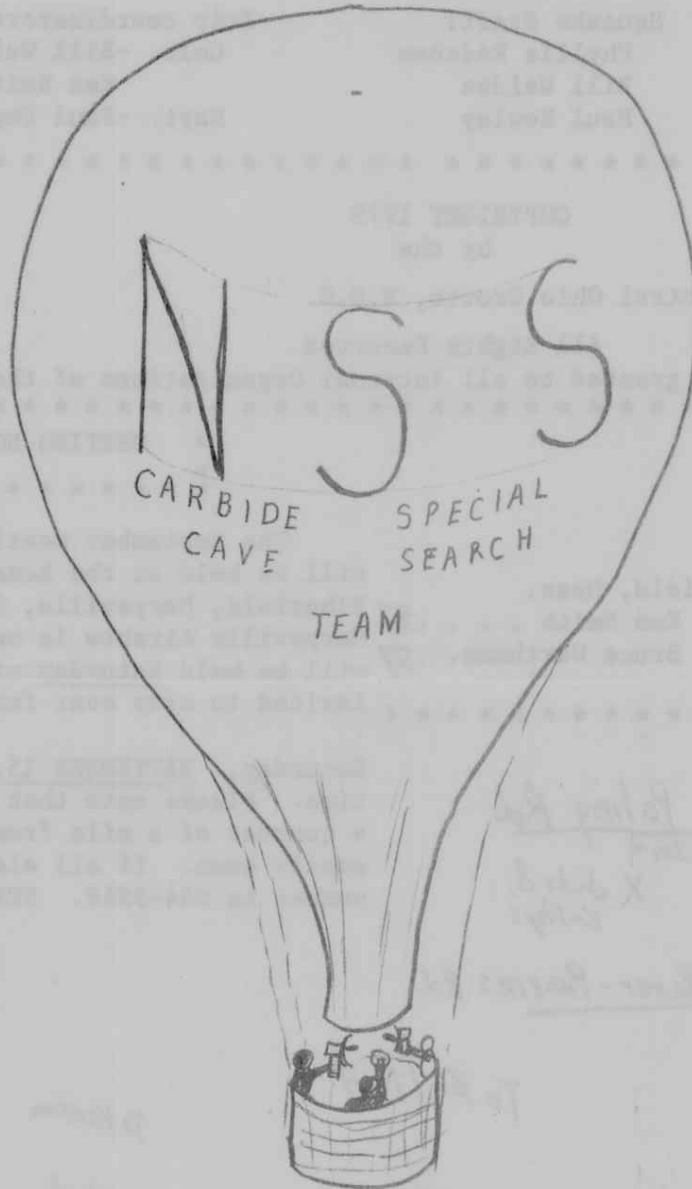


COG SQUEAKS

VOLUME 22

July -
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1979

NUMBERS 7&8



MARYSVILLE AIR SHOW

1979

You-all come now!

THE CENTRAL OHIO GROTTO OF THE NATIONAL SPELEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

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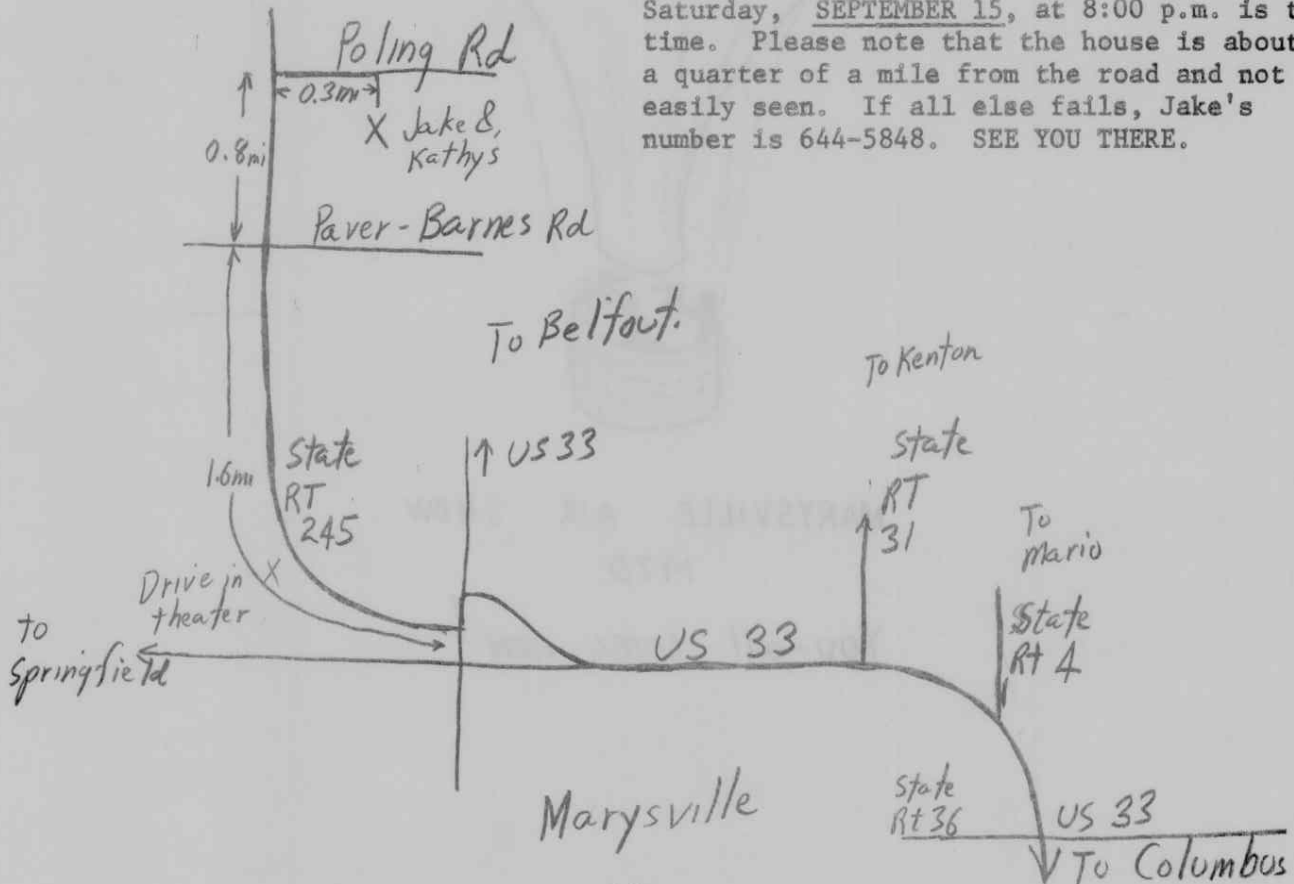
* MEETING NOTICE *

Not very darn much:

NSS Convention, Hittsfield, Mass.
 --- Ken Smith . . . 57
 CAVE, Part 3 - --- Bruce Warthman. 57

The September meeting of the grotto will be held at the home of Jake and Kathy Elberfeld, Marysville, Ohio; since the Marysville Airshow is on Sunday, the meeting will be held Saturday night, and all are invited to stay over for the show.

Saturday, SEPTEMBER 15, at 8:00 p.m. is the time. Please note that the house is about a quarter of a mile from the road and not easily seen. If all else fails, Jake's number is 644-5848. SEE YOU THERE.



N.S.S. CONVENTION

PITTSFIELD, MASS.

by Ken Smith

This year's convention at Pittsfield, Mass. was, in general, the best I've attended in years. COG members participating in the festivities were Ken Smith, Dean and Phyllis Redshaw, Ed and Marilyn Herel, Bill and Karen Walden, and Jim and Donna Weisenberger. Former COG members in attendance were Lou and Barb Simpson and Rick Day.

widely attributed to them by non-bat sympathizers.

The banquet speaker, Roy Davis, failed to arrive in time due to problems with flying weather; however, an outstanding last minute replacement was found who gave an entertaining account of the caves of the Bahamas.

Next year's convention is to be held in Minneapolis in late July or early August. See you there.

CAVE

THE CRADLE TO GRAVE STORY OF A CAVE

PART 3 BY BRUCE WARTHMAN

The Howdy Party featured an Alpine Slide, in which carts are ridden down a mountain on concrete chutes. Well - you're supposed to stay on the cart, but Ed Herel found that short distances can be traversed with the cart riding you. One of the most unusual and most pleasant aspects of the affair was the absence of long food lines. I went back several times and never had to wait more than three minutes. There was a band for entertainment, but a number of people retreated to a more secluded area following "Pied Piper" Phyllis. Rane Curl was persuaded to do a Highland Fling.

At first it seemed like a routine trip to Wolf River Cave in Fentres Co., Tennessee. They had driven all the way from Cincinnati. After stopping briefly at the beer store on the Tennessee border and driving down the winding curves of the big hill beyond, they came to U.S. 127. But instead of turning left they turned right. A mile further they took a left on a county road that went down a hill and into a broad valley. A dirt road ran alongside the river and turned off and went up into a narrow hollow where it stopped at a wooden house.

Nightly activities included movies, multimedia presentations, and of course the Photo Salon. This year's Salon was not the best I've ever seen, but I believe this was due to a drop in the number of entries and the failure of many of the NSS's best photographers to enter in particular. The black-and-white print category was especially poorly represented. Hopefully, there will be more and better entries next year. Other presentations which made a notable impression included a 3-d slide presentation by Rick Day. Cave scene and formations leaped out from the screen in realistic depth.

"The hollow extends farther, according to the topo, and there ought to be something in it at least," one member of the caving party said. "You're sure it's never been explored before?" replied another. "Not that I know of. Everyone's been to Wolf River and that area and never bothered to check out this place."

Other nighttime activities included the now (in)famous hot tub and sauna. Probably as a result of the complaints in the News, this year's area was away from the bulk of the campground and was screened off. Anyone offended by these activities this year had only themselves to blame.

At the small house a middle-aged man wearing bib overalls greeted the cavers. The cavers talked to this friendly farmer for a half hour and secured his permission to explore on his farm. Then they set out to explore.

As usual, the sessions included both the excellent and the pits (no pun intended). A special symposium was held on bats, in which evidence was presented that bats do not present nearly the rabies threat that has been

The ridge walking was a major effort. Five members of the expedition took to the hillsides while three followed the stream. It was pleasant fall weather for cave

CAVE, (continued)

hunting and most of the leaves had fallen from the trees. Much of the ground could be seen. The clear stream was easier to follow except at one place where some climbing was necessary. Suddenly they found that the stream disappeared into the hillside. There was a hole, but rocks blocked it. Cold air was blowing out. Eagerly Mike and Bob tugged at the rocks and eventually cleared out enough rocks to form an opening to crawl into. Using a hand-held flashlight, Mike was the first one to push it. He went in for a few minutes and came back out very excited. He shouted only one word: "SCOOP!"

So it came to be that Hormuth Cave was discovered and named after the first person to enter it. The ridgewalking was interrupted and everybody went back to the cars for caving gear. It turned out to be a twelve hour trip as passage after passage was discovered. Here was the scoop of the year. All of it was virgin and when the cavers left the cave late that night they had barely scratched the surface in exploring it.

Soon news of the big discovery made big stories in caving literature in Kentucky, Tennessee, Ohio and Indiana. Articles about it appeared in the Kentucky Caver, the COG Squeaks, the Cave Cricket Gazette, the Cleve-O-Grotto News, the Electric Caver, the Johnhouse News and several other publications. Cavers from all around were in on the project of exploring and mapping it. Many stories mentioned huge trunk passages, spectacular formations, and a huge room that was even larger than the Astrodome in Wolf River. The cave was surveyed and the length of the known passages amounted to more than 10 miles. Three interconnecting levels were discovered and another entrance was dug.

The cavers exploring this fabulous grotto soon realized that they were not the first to explore the cave. They found several Indian footprints in the mud along with numerous bits of charcoal. A sandal was found and taken to the Ohio State University in Columbus for a carbon dating. The time of the Indian visitation was taken as occurring between 3000 and 2600 B.C.

One day a vertical freak dropped a 120 foot pit at the end of a huge passage. As his foot came to rest at the bottom it brushed against something light. He looked down and gave out a startled yell. It was a complete human skeleton. A week later a team of archeologists was at the scene. The bones were photographed, labeled, and removed, then sent to the Ohio State University for carbon dating and study. Later the skeleton was put on display in a museum in Cincinnati until protests from Indian movements prompted its removal from public display on the grounds that it violated the Indians' honors to the dead.

A siphon was discovered and pushed with wetsuits and scuba tanks. This revealed 1130 more meters of cave. The NSS News took an interest in the project and featured a lengthy article about it. Before the exploration and survey wound down in 1984, the total surveyed length amounted to 53.6 kilometers and the cave was listed among the top 25 in the world in length. Slide shows were made, sold, distributed, and shown to cavers all over the U.S. and Canada.

All too often too much publicity can hurt a cave. Thrill seekers and inexperienced cavers made frequent visits despite protests from respected cavers. In the course of one year, three rescues were performed, much to the displeasure of the landowner; next year there was a body retrieval. Because Wolf River was not far away, it also suffered from overvisitation. Consequently both Wolf River and Hormuth Suffered from vandalism and trash. Graffiti appeared in several places. Some sparkling white formations turned dull and brown, while others were broken off. Some of the Indian footprints were stepped on and obliterated. Because of the extent to which the cave was hurt, conservation concerns within the NSS resulted in the cave being gated. The owner, once friendly, turned hostile and turned back many indiscriminate (and sometimes legitimate) cavers, but there were occasions when desperate intruders sneaked onto the property and broke into the cave.

By the summer of 1987, the ever-worsening shortage of gasoline got to the point where the U.S. government was forced to implement a very strict rationing system

CAVE (continued)

because dwindling supplies had to be reserved for military use. This cause a drastic decline in caving and Hormuth cave was visited seldom that year. This practically solved the vandalism problem because only serious-minded cavers were willing to put up with the transportation hassles to make their week-long, once-a-year caving trip. For awhile the cave and its owner enjoyed a period of peace and quiet.

In three years the passenger railroad service was expanded in an effort to replace automobiles for out of town travel. It so happened that one rail line passed close to the area where Hormuth cave was located, and occasional three-day weekend trips there were once more feasible for those who were willing to pay the cost of getting there. Meanwhile, the owner, now growing old, decided to sell his land and move away in search of rest and peace. A young businessman from Kentucky bought the property with the idea of commercializing the cave and developing a rural resort in the hills of Tennessee. He hired engineers and a few trustworthy cavers to go into the cave and plan a tour route that would display some of the best features there were to see. Knowing the conservation problems of the past, he sealed the dug entrance and installed a burglar alarm at the stream entrance. Outside of those people he hired, he admitted only organized caving and archeological expeditions.

In the spring of 1991 work was started in constructing the tourist trails and installing the electric lighting system which was powered by a solar generating unit set up outside the cave. Business was expected to start soon and bring a large profit.

But world politics did not favor further development of the cave, and in fact was probably the best thing that occurred to save the cave. The growing tensions in the U.S.A.-U.S.S.R-China power triangle put a shadow on global security. Cuba, under the instigation of its new premier, invaded Mexico where a bloody revolution was taking place. The U.S. stalled the invasion and occupied Cuba at the cost of severed relations with Russia. Israel and the neigh-

boring Arab states were at war with one another and oil-hungry nations in western Europe were in sympathy with Israel. But Israel was nearly defeated and committed her last act of desperation. Israel launched her few atomic bombs against her neighbors while the world watched aghast as giant mushroom sprouted over Egypt, Jordan and Syria. The U.S.S.R, aggravated over this appalling incident and the destruction of one of its military bases on the Mediterranean, invaded Israel. This intensified the war which soon involved the U.S. The fighting continued for two months, after which the Soviets began using tactical nuclear weapons. What resulted was intensified anger and all-out nuclear fighting, so it came to pass that the first great massacre of men against men left the Northern hemisphere as a virtual radioactive wasteland.

The cave, being in the country, and away from targets, was spared from the blast and heat of the thermonuclear explosions that devastated the cities. What few people there were locally who managed to take refuge in the cave from the fallout eventually ran out of food and water and left the cave into the radioactive world outside to perish.

-(to be continued)

AGAIN WITH THE PLEA FOR WRITING!

Sparse pickin's again. Thanks to Ken and Bruce for saving us from blank pages completely.

Cavers from COG and Michigan are descending en masse upon Dan and Frances Murphy over Labor Day weekend at their new home in Tennessee. We hope somebody will give us a report of those festivities for the next issue.

We hope that going to the NSS convention will inspire some cavers to actually GO CAVING sometime soon.

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