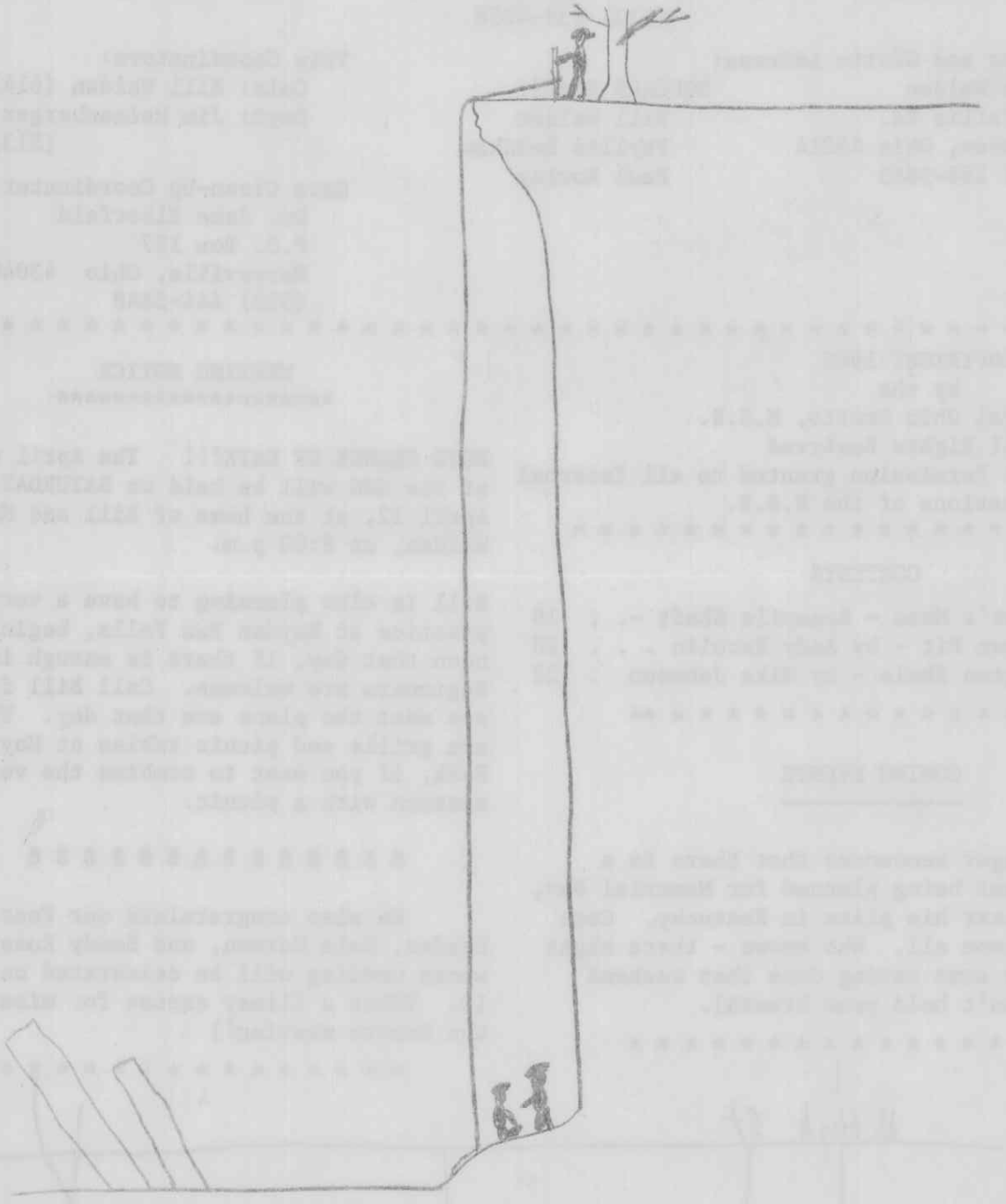
COG SQUEAKS

MARCH 1980 VOL23NO3



ROPE CLIMBING PRACTICE SATURDAY APRIL 12

COG SQUEAKS MARCH 1980 VOLUME 23 NUMBER 3

THE CENTRAL OHIO GROTTO OF THE NATIONAL SPELEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

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COMING EVENTS

Paul Unger announces that there is a pig-roast being planned for Memorial Day, at or near his place in Kentucky. Come one - come all. Who knows - there might even be some caving done that weekend (but don't hold your breath).

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MEETING NOTICE
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NOTE CHANGE OF DATE!!! The April meeting of the COG will be held on SATURDAY evening, April 12, at the home of Bill and Karen Walden, at 8:00 p.m.

Bill is also planning to have a vertical practice at Hayden Run Falls, beginning at noon that day, if there is enough interest. Beginners are welcome. Call Bill first to see what the plans are that day. There are grills and picnic tables at Hayden Run Park, if you want to combine the vertical session with a picnic.

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We also congratulate our Fearless Leader, Dale Harmon, and Sandy Russell, whose wedding will be celebrated on April 12. (What a flimsy excuse for missing the Grotto meeting!)

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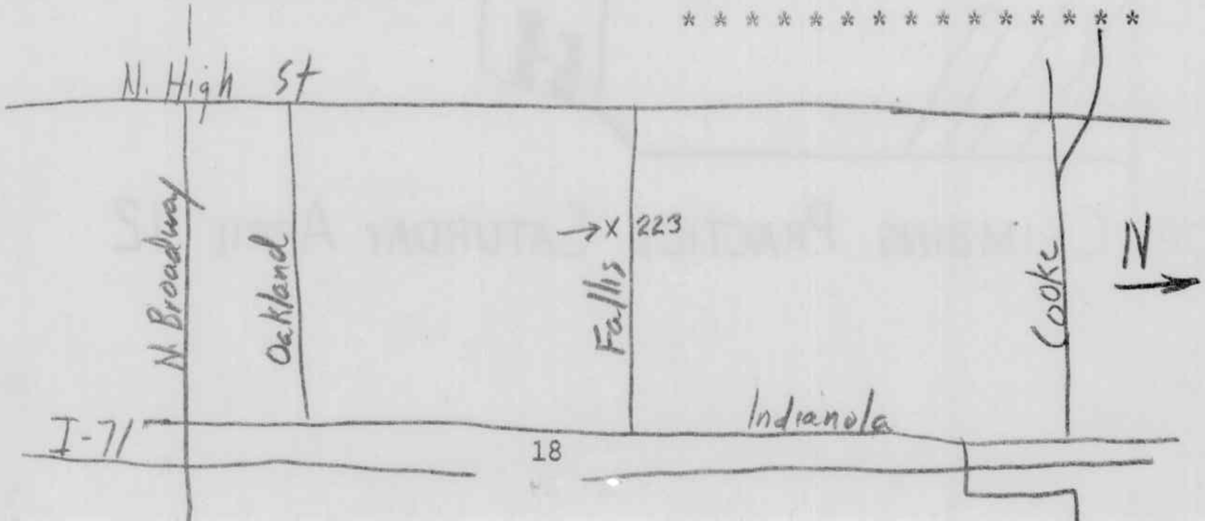

FROM THE CHAIRMAN'S MESS

BY DALE HARMON

On March 22, a number of COG cavers were involved in checking several pits and entrances near Sloan's Valley, KY. They included Paul Unger, Bill Walden, Richard Hand, Chuck Daehnke, Phil Erisman, Jake Elberfeld and myself. After scouring the hills and checking several leads, the group found the pit, which we have dubbed "Bone Pile Shaft." (When the pit was located, I was still scouring the hills and didn't reach the find until Bill had already dropped into it.

Bill reported that he was at the bottom and there didn't seem to be any leads, but that I might like the vertical practice. So I rigged up and rappelled in. Bone Pile Shaft turned out to be a large, bottle-shaped pit with an upper opening of about 10 feet in diameter and a vertical drop of about 80' onto a debris mountain. The bottom was another 30 feet or so down. With the light streaming in from above it was quite impressive.

Bill was at the bottom and I started down the slope. The first item to catch my interest was a vertical fissure on the left wall. It looked very promising. Bill said he still hadn't found any leads, and I asked him about the passageway I had found. When he looked at it, he was rather surprised, as he hadn't noticed it on his way down (He had checked the right wall). I led the way, and after a tricky chimneying effort, reached the bottom. Bill stayed back above that area while I checked around. I found one tight crawl out and told Bill I would be gone for a maximum of one hour, then send help.

As I entered the crawl I noticed small animal bones and signs that other cavers had been there. Bill later told me that he had found quite a few bones at the pit's bottom. After a short distance I came to a small pot hole in the floor; the soil on the other side was within six to eight inches of the ceiling. My cave had ended, so I did what many a caver has done - I dug, and to my surprise, the barrier was only a narrow ridge of dirt and small rocks. This proved to be easy to remove and after a few minutes I was crawling again. The best part, of course, was that everything beyond my little dig turned out to be VIRGIN.

From there on, everything got better. I broke into a stream cross passage which was walking passage for about 50 yards upstream before turning into a crawl. The downstream passage went also, but it was time to get back, as I was caving "alone." (A little note here - caving alone in virgin cave has to be one of the most exciting things in the world; the only thing that's better is to have someone along as an audience.) So back I went, past the soda straws, the bone, my dig, the flowstone, to tell Bill.

Needless to say, we didn't leave. Bill had the surface crew lower my rope, which we used as a safety line over the slippery chimneying spot. The next three hours were ones of great fun and effort. We headed downstream and after going through a short crawl, popped out into a waterfall passage. The waterfall was about 6 to 8 feet high with a sizeable flow. Very nice!

Downstream, the water flow dived down through the limestone, but no problem. We had two more choices. One apparently is a dead end (the route goes up and over the flowstone), but the other way went. Through two foot deep mud and down a high chimney we went. Bill led the way down the moderately difficult chimneying area. The passage was very high and narrow, with one end apparently blocked by flowstone. So away we went, down-slope toward the sound of flowing water. My heart skipped a beat or two when a large unstable rock fell out from under me at one stage, but no damage was done. We reached the stream, which had grown in size, and after going a little further, decided to turn back.

I refuse to give an account of my difficulties in ascending the rope except to say that I did make it. The cave is nice. It is over 180 feet deep and going. We didn't have time to check for very many leads, but we saw several possibilities. The pit and the cave both contain many animal bones, and we saw some bats and

MESS,(continued)

lots of cave crickets. The formations, although not spectacular, are numerous.

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BREAKDOWN PIT

By Andy Karolin

Huh, wha . . . . Oh, reality... The pain of it.

The alarm blared.

"What are these aches?" My mind inquired of itself. "So familiar... Feels as if... as if ... I have gone caving." The neutral chemical imbalance of morning languidity rectified itself. A someplace-attached hand halted the clangorous alarm.

Monday morning reality. The pain of it -- was almost ecstacy, the dream I had. I rolled out of bed, the carpet imprinting its texture upon my face, as I attempted to psych myself into morning exercises. I got up on my knees and searing pain registered in my semi-aware brain.

"No dream," I thought. "Kneepad burns; I WAS caving this weekend. It was the first time since .... WHEN?" No answer imposed itself, as the weekend slowly focused in my mind.

It all started Friday night. I gathered my cave gear, threw it into my vehicle and raced down to a MVG meeting where I met the clan with whom I was to go caving. The "clan" included Bruce Warthman, Fred Anderson, Steve and Sandy Dean, Dave Taylor, Barb and Lou Simpson, and Jane Schaeffer. Well, the Friday night meeting turned into Saturday, and a couple of hours' sleep turned into Saturday morning, and off we went to the underworld in Tennessee.

About 2 o'clock Saturday, March 8, 1980, we arrived at Wolf River Cave. Somewhere on the trip down, Terry Anderson and John Barnes joined us. So there were 11 of us enjoying the icy cold wade of knee-deep, or deeper, water in the entrance. Then we all had to hike all that boring walking passage to get to our destination, the pit at the end of Tremendous Trunk, where the true fun was to commence. Meanwhile, I had to make do with enjoying all the lumens of light joyfully bouncing down the large expanse of passage-way -- the light being emitted by the carbide lights of our large group.

Finally, our destination was reached. Lou, Terry, and I went to push the lead while the others went to visit the Enchanted Forest. Down along the wall and the edge of the breakdown, we descended into a small room formed of the breakdown. There was a small crawlway exiting to the pit. The pit started out as a tight crack, and belled out to the floor, 8 to 10 feet below. Access to the pit was difficult because of breakdown in the crawlway; however the pit never saw a more determined trio.

Out came a hammer, out came a chisel, into the crawlway went Lou, mercilessly attacking the breakdown, removing one boulder, and forcing another into compliance with sitting next to the wall. The top of the pit became easily accessible. Further hammering and chiseling widened the entry of the pit to human size. After much discussion, it was decided where to drop the ladder. The pit was rigged. I tied into the belay rope and began my descent.

This shouldn't be too hard," I thought to myself, "Although it is a bit tight." I wiggled the knot of my belay as it pinched against my chest, my chest against my back, and my back, the wall. Finally, my legs were dangling in free space, searching aimlessly for a foothold. My foot finally found a ladder rung.

"Good," I thought, "All I have to do is climb down the ladder." As a general rule, ladder climbing requires bending of the knees. I could not bend my knees in the narrow crevice. My only alternative was to lower myself until my knees were past the crack, hold myself in position with only my arms and my back and using friction holds, and somehow locate the ladder with my feet. I decided to climb back up, move the ladder to the other side of the crack, and try descending there. I encountered the same difficulties, and aborted my attempt.

It was Terry's turn. I showed him how to tie himself into the belay rope and off he went. Down the pit with no apparent trouble. Terry is smaller than I, but I

BREAKDOWN (continued)

think that he was a little braver and crazier.

"There are three leads that go," a message from the pit announced. Lou told Terry to check out a stream lead to determine if the passage was known lower level.

Ka-thunk! -- Lou started. "That's the warning," he said. I looked at him. He held up a piece of mud.

"This fell without any help. Where did it come from?"

We noticed that a wall of mud was beginning to crack off. About this time Terry showed up with his report. "It doesn't sound like the low level," said Lou. "Go check the other leads." Off Terry went.

Closer scrutiny of the wall revealed that a large rock was attached to the wall with mud, and it was cracking off. If this rock fell, it would close off the crawlway to the pit, and Terry was down there. There was nothing for us to do except wait and hope, and wait. And wait we did.

"I wonder where Terry is," I asked. "He must have found something nice and large."

"Maybe he is in a tight, bitchy crawl, and wants to push it so that he will not have to go back." Lou offered.

We did not want to mention the third possibility: Terry was in trouble.

And we waited. Bob and Fred came down to report of the return of the other group. We gave them the report of our situation. Things were not looking good. I was faced with the task of forcing myself down the pit, which I knew would be very difficult, plus being forced to mentally deal with the unstable breakdown situation, and all of the possible fates of Terry. Paranoia was finally resulting in action, and I began to pick up the belay rope.

"Hey! Is anybody up there?" A voice of relieved panic came from the pit.

A sigh of relief escaped me. Terry rigged up and started to climb out of the pit; however, the belay line kept on snagging in the crawlway. Since Lou was belaying, I had to go into the unstable crawlway and guide the rope. Terry got up quickly, but I was not done with the crawlway yet. The pit still had to be derigged.

As quickly as I could, I went through the derigging motions, as Lou explained to Terry, Terry's imminent danger. We also found that Terry was no further than 100 feet from the pit the whole time. He went down a muddy incline, and could not get back up. He also did a lot of yelling, of which we heard none.

I got the ladder up the pit, hurried out of the crawl, sat at the mouth of the crawl and started pulling out the equipment. Then, all by itself, with no incentive from me, a rock jumped out of the ceiling and cordially sat next to me. I counted. That was the ominous third warning. I quickly got everything together, got my pack and started my ascent out of the room.

Meanwhile, Lou decided to move the breakdown into a lower energy state in hopes of clearing out the danger.

Tap, tap, went Lou's hammer. I moved quicker. Tap ... CRASH! I turned around to see a pile of rubble where Lou had been. I noted that Lou had good reflexes. Loosening the one rock which was peeling off the wall, also brought down some ceiling.

The crawlway was effectively blocked. Lou continued to hammer at the breakdown until I convinced him that it was not necessary, at least while I was down there.

We left the cave, only to find that the water at the entrance was 6 inches deeper, and just as cold.

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I picked myself up off the carpeting and lumbered into the bathroom. I wondered where those leads might go ....

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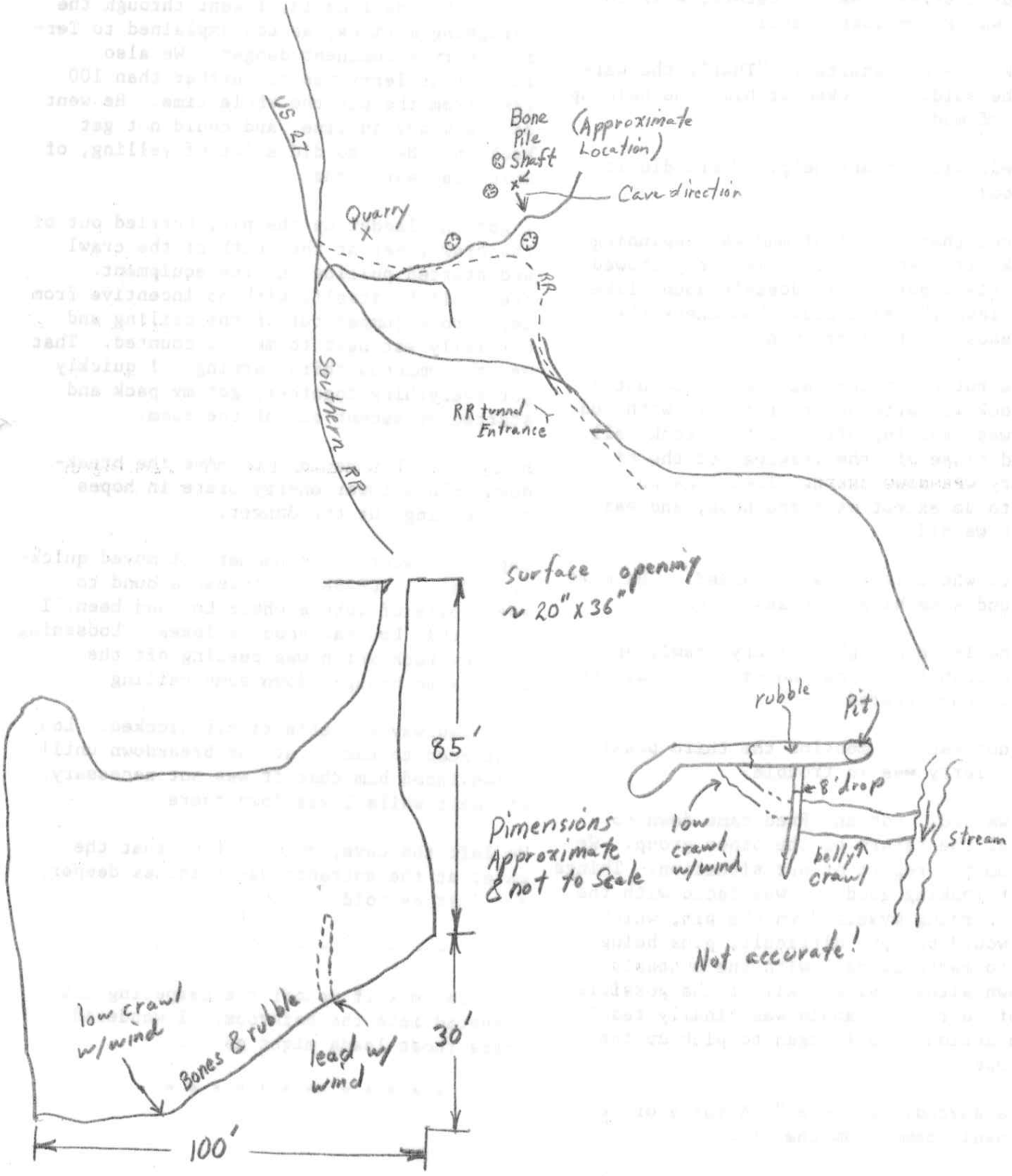
BONE PILE SHAFT



SLOAN'S VALLEY

Unfortunately, I haven't been in touch with anyone lately to give you an update on the landfill controversy at Sloan's Valley. At present, all I have is a rather third-hand rumor that for some reasons of legality or machinations, the proposal must run its course and the opponents are supposed to get a chance to present their case at the supposedly appropriate time. We'll try to have some more definitive information next issue.

In the meantime, the following article is of interest. Mike Johnson has contributed this copy of information on Pennington shale which he sent to Mr. Cressel Brown to use in their battle against the land-fill. The Pennington shale layer is the layer which supposedly is intended to contain the proposed land-fill, and which the local residents belive has been fractured enough in the land-fill area to be unable to do so.

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SOME GENERAL COMMENTS ON THE PENNINGTON SHALE

BY Mike Johnson

The Pennington Shale is present in Pulaski Co., and I have seen it at Sloan's Valley. However, it is an undependable unit. Its character can very greatly. Normally, it is a shale, but it can grade into limestone and sandstone character. Its thickness can also vary greatly. In the Somerset and Dykes quadrangles (just north of the Burnside quad), it can be anywhere from 0-150' thick. According to the Burnside GQ quad, it ranges from 70-165' thick in the Burnside quad.

There is an unconformity between the top of the Pennington and the overlying sandstones (Breathitt and Lee Formations). An unconformity means that the underlying Pennington was subjected to erosion and weathering before the overlying sandstones were deposited. As a result, the Pennington thickness will vary from point to point and may have even been entirely removed in places. For this reason, the Pennington may not even be present in places. This is very much the case in places in the Dykes and Somerset quads as little as 5 miles to the north of Sloan's Valley. The Pennington is, therefore, often discontinuous. It thickens and thins and occasionally pinches out altogether (on the Dykes quad). If the unit does this just five miles to the north, then it is certainly possible for it to do the same at Sloan's. I am not surprised that some well-drillers disagree with the thickness of 180'. Nor am I surprised to hear it is absent in some locations.

There are many examples in Pulaski County where the Pennington has water inputs to the limestones below. Examples are known in the Sloan's Valley Cave near Dixie Bend. The permeability (ability of the rock to transmit water) of the Pennington could certainly be appreciable, as these instances indicate. The statement that the Pennington would make a good seal to protect ground water is certainly questionable in the light of these instances in the caves, even far back under ridges.

I know of several instances of facies changes in the Pennington in the area 5 miles north of Sloan's. In these examples, I mean by facies changes, that the Pennington Shale gradually grades into another rock type. In this case it changes from a shale into an argillaceous limestone (i.e., a shaly limestone). The significance here is that my associates and I have observed and mapped cave passages developed entirely within the Pennington Unit. Some of these penetrate up to 60' into the Pennington. These occurrances are relatively rare, but again, I'm not surprised you mentioned people recall there were two sinkholes present before strip mine operations started at the site in question. We have several entrances to caves located in the Pennington.

SUMMARY

If the Pennington is present in sufficient thickness as a shale, any statement that a landfill would not be unsafe is justified in that the Pennington could serve as a seal to protect groundwater supplies. However, much controversy and factual data demonstrate that the thickness and character of the Pennington at the proposed landfill site could be questionable for the use intended.

1) The Pennington is known to be discontin-

PENNINGTON SHALE (continued)

uous due to unconformities just 5 miles to the north. Well-drillers indicate the same possibility at Sloan's Valley from direct experience.

2) Many examples of Water input from the Pennington into underlying cave passages are known in Pulaski Co., including a portion of the Sloan's Valley Cave under part of Dixie Bend. The notion that the Pennington, if present, is ALWAYS an aquitard (a seal to prevent ground water circulation) is certainly questionable as its permeability obviously varies from place to place.

3) Several instances of facies changes are known in the Pennington just 5 miles north of Sloan's Valley. Cave passages (solution features) are known to be developed ENTIRELY within the Pennington Unit and in some cases extend 60' into the unit, vertically. Sinkholes were reported to be present BEFORE strip mining began at the proposed site.

CONCLUSION

Careful study and investigation should certainly be conducted before ANY landfill site is developed on the Dixie Bend site. Serious doubts exist regarding the ability of the Pennington to function as an aquitard seal. Its integrity as a protective shield for groundwater supplies is certainly questionable.

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NSS CONVENTION - 1980

The 1980 NSS Convention will be held at Lakewood Community College, at White Bear Lake, N.E. of St. Paul, Minnesota, July 28 through August 1. Many activities of interest are being planned, including the Howdy Party being held in a restaurant in a cave.

I have pre-registration forms, if anyone wants one.

- Phyllis Redshaw

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