

The Carbide Dump

A photograph of a man wearing a white long-sleeved shirt, dark trousers, and a white hard hat. He is standing in a narrow, deep crevice between large, layered rock formations. The rock has a reddish-brown hue and shows distinct horizontal sedimentary layers. Another person in a white shirt is partially visible behind him, looking towards the camera. The lighting is bright, highlighting the textures of the rock.

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The Blue Ridge Grotto holds its monthly meetings every third Friday of the month at 7:30 p.m. in the second floor meeting room of the Vinton Firehouse, 120 Jackson Ave, Vinton, VA 24179.

GROTTO OFFICERS AND COMMITTEES

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You can access the *Carbide Dump* electronically at: www.members.cox.net/sockydr/brg/dump/brgdump.htm

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Contributors: Dave & Mary Sue Socky, Brian Williams, Marian McConnell, Susan Burr, Jerry Fuller, Carol Tideman
Cover: *Topless Caving* - Dave & Ryan Wickersham (Jimmy Richards is around the corner) in "Spooky" slot canyon in Utah.
Photo by Dave Socky

CAVERS CALENDAR

Oct 12-14: Joint Fall MAR/VAR, and Philadelphia Grotto's 60th Anniversary event. Daily, WVa. Hosted by Philly Grotto and Triangle Trogs. Contact amincin@aol.com or <http://www.philly60th.org/>

Oct 19: BRG meeting, 7:30p Vinton Firehouse.

Oct. 20: BRG trip to Straley's Cave, VA. Leader is Doug Feller.

Oct 19-21, 26-28, 31: Dixie Caverns Haunted Cave. Volunteer to scare for cave conservation. Contact Mary Sue Socky 540-989-7693 sockymss@cox.net to sign up!

Oct. 27: Sinkhole Cleanup Project near Monterey, VA. Series of sinkholes to be cleared of trash. Four wheel drive pickups would be useful for dragging and

hauling. Friday & Saturday night camping at Rick Lambert's house in Monterey. **Please respond if you will be attending so we can prepare enough food for everyone.** Contact Janet Tinkham janete@shentel.net for more info.

Nov 3-4: VAR Resurvey of Grand Caverns/Cave Hill. Contact Carol Tideman ctider@us.ibm.com to reserve a slot.

Nov. 10: WVCC Banquet, Greenbrier Valley Theater in Lewisburg, WVa. Starts at 9p. Contact Jeff Bray at wvhodag@earthlink.net or 304-645-5359 for more info.

Nov 16: BRG meeting, 7:30p Vinton Firehouse. Elections.

Dec 21: BRG Christmas Dinner & Party, 7-10p, (New Place!) Mama Maria's in Salem, VA. Info soon.

Dec 22: BRG grotto trip TBA.

Jan 18, 2008. BRG meeting, 7:30p Vinton Firehouse. Trip TBA

Jan. 2008: Carter Caves Crawlathon. Olive Hill, KY. TBA

June 5-8, 2008: Joint VAR/SERA meeting in Bristol, TN. More info later.



Meeting Notice

The **October 19, 2007** meeting of the Blue Ridge Grotto will be held at **Vinton Firehouse, 120 West Jackson Ave.** The meeting will start at 7:30 pm.

PROGRAM this month will be a video on *Straley's Cave* by Dave Socky.

Grotto Trip

Straley's Cave, WVa

Date & Time: Meet at Hanging Rock Orange Market at **9:00am** on Saturday, **October 20, 2007.**

Leader: Doug Feller 540-384-5047
doug@felleronline.com

Requirements: Regular caving gear.

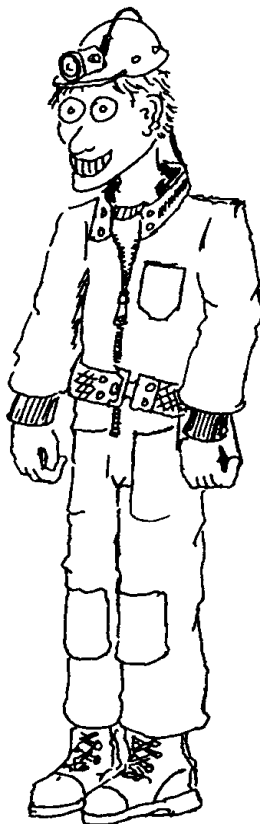
Trip Limit: 12 cavers

Description

Straley's is a small maze cave containing an interesting variety of speleothems. The cave is dry, and has many short, dead-end canyons. The right hand section of the cave contains a 120-foot blind pit. The left-hand entrance gives access to a room that was once mined for saltpeter. Be careful around the fragile mining artifacts. Straley's Cave is developed in Middle Ordovician limestone, and contains 1,800 ft. of passage.

November Cave Trip

Was supposed to be to Repass Saltpeter Cave, VA—but we found old notes that said “this cave is closed in the winter for bats”. Let's check the status of this cave, or choose an alternate. Stay tuned!



ANNOUNCEMENTS

TREASURER'S REPORT

SEPTEMBER 21, 2007

General Fund:	\$ 4861.11
Conservation:	\$ 578.92
Equipment:	\$ 321.00
Cave Bucks:	\$ 85.30
Total	\$ 5846.33

Pool Party Expenses

Pool rental fee:	\$61.00
<u>Food/drink/ice/supplies:</u>	<u>\$53.91</u>
Total:	\$114.91

BRG Meeting Minutes – can be read on the BRG webpage at <http://members.cox.net/sockydr/brg/dump/brgdump.htm>

GROTTO NEWS

BRG receives NCRC Award

The National Cave Rescue Commission (NCRC) bestowed a Certificate of Appreciation on the Blue Ridge Grotto of the NSS for helping make the 2007 Week-long NCRC Cave Rescue Seminar a success, and a special certificate to Mary Sue Socky, who helped with cave location logistics and landowner permission for some of the in-cave classes.

Conservation Contributions

BRG is renewing its group membership with WVCC and BCI. We can send these and other cave and bat conservation organizations additional donations later.

BRG Christmas Cards

BRG WILL be sending out **2007 Grotto Christmas Cards** to cave owners. Bring your ideas, photos, designs to the Oct 19 meeting. If you have any cave owner address updates, please bring them, too.

BRG Does A VAR?

Susan Burr is interested in hosting a future, Fall 2008 VAR: **Desperately seeking a campground, preferably with electricity near the 220N corridor or Lexington area of I-81.** Reply to Susan Burr, pondlady97@cox.net or 540-989-5809. If you have any ideas or “ins” for a good campground, please let Susan know.

Membership Updates

“The Dirty Dozen” – yup, 12 cavers and friends showed up for the Sept. 21 BRG meeting.

The program: “**July 2007 – Sump Diving Trip into Roppel Cave, KY** (Mammoth Cave System). Photo DVD and script by Brian Williams. It was great (once we got the DVD to run)! Thanks to Al Stewart and Doug Feller, who finally got the show up on the screen.

Just in from FLA, Shawn Hinchy, NSS

#41102RE attended the meeting, and offered to get a BRG webpage up and running. The members took him up on his offer. Shawn is working at GE in Salem VA.

Know of a potential caver? Bring them to a BRG meeting, sponsor them on a BRG trip, let them experience caving at its finest, with the best cavers around ~

Cave Softly and Safely

Grotto Trip Log

7/21: BRG trip to **Windy Mouth Cave, WVa.** Rick Shortt, Pat Sims, Susan Burr. They took 3 hours to find the cave entrance! They almost gave up, but it was a nice cave once they found it. It also sounded like Susan was bumming beer off the locals down the river, after the cave trip. Oh yeah, exiting the cave, it took them 10 minutes to get back to the car!

7/21-27: It was an outstanding NSS Convention. Dave, Mary Sue & Nick Socky visited **Marengo Cave, IN.** Dave, Alex Sproul, Carol Tiderman and Craig Hindman visited **Wyandotte Cave.** On Monday, Mary Sue Socky visited **Wyandotte Cave, and several caves and springs** during a NSS Field trip. They even saw a Shoe Tree! Dave Socky went caving in **Hanging Rock Drop Cave, IN.** Nick Socky did lots of caving with JSS: a wild trip into **Mammoth Cave, KY, Endless Cave** and **Flowstone Cave,** both in Washington Co. IN. For vertical, he did a 105' rappel in **Parker's Pit** and a 43' drop in **Bordens Pit,** both in Harrison Co. IN. Meredith Johnson went caving just about every day! EVERYONE went to the **Marengo Limestone Mine** for Photo Salon and Banquet.

7/28: Dave, Mary Sue & Nick Socky visited **Bluespring Caverns, IN.** Tourist cave navigated by boats! The cave was 'lousy' with white crawfish, AND – we got to see Blind Cave Fish!

7/30: Doug Feller, Carl Cornett, Aaron Moses, Rick Shortt, Leanne Barley went to **Newberry Cave, VA.** VERTICAL. They dropped Triple Wells, climbed back up, went over and did Bill's Rappel, came out via the Devils Staircase.

8/4: Susan Burr, Pat Sims, etc. finally got into virgin cave in **Grand Caverns, VA.** After digging and other

numerous persuasive techniques, Scott Davis, Craig Hindman, and Larry Baer got the passage to "Susan size". Susan, Scott, Pat & Jay squeezed into a small room and app. 100' of passage. More small rooms lay beyond, but no one could fit into them.

8/18: BRG Pool Party, Spring Run Swim Club, Roanoke, VA. It was a good one! The weather cooperated, the food was great, and everyone had a good time.

8/25: Trip to **Hellhole.** Bob Alderson, Bob Anderson, Dwight Livingston, David Socky, Dan Zinz - Silent Stream. See trip report.

8/26: Aaron Moses, Doug Feller, Rick Shortt, Pat Sims, Susan Burr went to the **Higginbotham Caves, WVa.** They did #4, #3 and #1. First, they did #4. It was dry, the cobble crawl was no problem, and water levels were down low enough to please Susan. Then they did #3 – Rick and Aaron did a through trip out the entrance or #1, and the rest of the group bushwhacked overland to find the entrance to **Higginbotham's #1.** Everyone had lots of fun.

9/8: While everyone at OTR was basking in the river, Aaron Moses, David Socky, Rickey Shortt went on A "sporting" trip in an unnamed cave. It had a 30 foot entrance drop. Low crawlways, mud, water. Nearly 4 miles of mapped passage. Went down to the lower level stream passage. Got to the 'Bad Passage' and ran out of time. Never made it to the waterfall or the two pits which lead to the Natural Bridge area. Hauled all our vertical gear plus 2 ropes for nothing. Good trip though. Lower level canyon was narrow twisty, with convoluted walls and protrusions which made it a real challenge to get through.

9/8: Maxwellton Cave, WV: Dave Socky and Brian Williams surveyed muddy crawlway off of XZ9, which is past and above the 40 foot waterfall in the Cove Creek main passage. The lead looped back into the same passage we started in, at XY9. Total footage of 248 feet surveyed in 8.5 hours

9/15: Dave, Mary Sue, Nick Socky and Elliot George went up to **Grand Caverns.** So did Pat Sims & Susan Burr. **Grand Caverns** had been hit by lightning, BAD, in August 2007, (in some places, the plastic switches had melted) and it still is not safe for people go to off trail in the cave. The whole place will probably end up having to be re-wired. Anyway, Pat & Susan went seeking waterfalls; while the Socky's, Elliot George, Bob Thren, Carol Tiderman, Craig Hindman, Kevin Mulligan & Anya, Crane, and Scott Davis first went ridgewalking (no caves on THAT hill!) then drove to **Cave Hill Farm Cave.** Supposedly there were a couple of mop up stations to be surveyed from when Scott & Craig were in there a few months earlier (it was a wet cave then). But now it was a dry cave, and virgin passage was found and explored! Nick and Elliot got into virgin cave, and Dave, Scott and Kevin taught Anya how to survey. Small, flexible surveyors are needed to finish up the new leads.

9/15-16- Trish Geiger vacationed in **Carlsbad Caverns, NM.** She didn't take too many photos, but took the **Tourist Tour of Carlsbad Caverns National Park, NM** She also took two "off trail" trips, to the *Left Hand Passage*, and to the *Lower Level of Carlsbad Caverns.* The Bat Flight was impressive. Trish met 2 members of ESSO Grotto while she was out there. She also visited White Sands, NM and saw a Hot Air Balloon Festival.



Haunted Cave 2007

**Dixie Caverns Haunted Cave is rapidly approaching.
Volunteers who wish to haunt for cave conservation are needed!**

Haunting dates will be **Oct. 19, 20, 21, 26, 27, 28 and 31** (mostly weekends). Hours are 7p-11p every night, except Sundays - which are 7p – 10p. Volunteers need to be at the Dixie Caverns cabin as close to 6p as possible to get into makeup & costumes.

David Hawks is director of the seven-night underground production.

We will need a minimum of 4 caver volunteers, max. of 10 volunteers per night. Free tent camping for volunteers is available at Dixie Caverns Campground.

If you are interested and would like more information, or can't wait to sign up, please contact me at sockymss@cox.net or 540-989-7693.

Mary Sue Socky
DCHC 2007 Volunteer Coordinator

Exploration Beyond a Sump in the World's Longest Cave (continued from Last Month)

Brian Williams



Brian at the Sump

On June 30, 2007, at 1100 hours, 18 cavers entered Roppel via the Weller entrance. The trip leader was Scott Bauer. A haul line was rigged from the entrance down the ladder drops to facilitate gear movement to the bottom of the entrance pit and the beginning of Shit Canyon. This technique was slow but deemed necessary for safe handling of the tanks and other heavy bags. Gear consisted of 10 bags plus 10 tanks. Tanks used included: 2- Al 45's, 2- steel 40's, 2-steel 38's, and 4- steel 80's. The steel 80's

were staged at sump 1 for use by Jill and Jerry on the subsequent dive to push the upstream sump 2. Tank and gear movement down the entrance drop and through the first set of narrow canyon passages were the most logistically difficult of the trip. Once all the gear was moved to larger walking passage, each sherpa could continue on with an individual load between 20 and 45 lbs each. All gear arrived at the sump in approximately 3 hours and 45 minutes.

Matt Vinzant, Mark Wenner, and I began kitting up on tarps located in the alcove above sump 1, as Scott Bauer and Hazel Barton were cutting steps and rigging webbing down the mud slope to the Logsdon River. At 1630 hours, Matt and Mark entered the 54 degree water on the downstream side of sump 1 and continued in low airspace for 75 feet before submerging and following the line through to the other side. Brian followed 30 minutes later. The delay was due to getting the dry bag of gear, including climbing gear, rope, bolt kit, various climbing pro, survey instruments, polypro, caveralls, and food, weighted down enough to get through the sump. The gear

weighed 30 lbs and 15 lbs of weights were added but not effective in sinking the bag. The entire bag was repacked into individual dry bags and the main bag was flooded. This did the trick, and I proceeded through the sump. Sherpas exited the cave when the last diver through did not return after 10 minutes. This allowed the divers to focus on their task without worrying about hypothermic cavers awaiting their return.

The water level in Logsdon River was lower than average; the first 75 ft was traversed with a surface swim. Two lines were found intact in the sump: the original knotted survey line along with a heavier line that had been added later. Visibility through the sump was approximately 5 ft for Matt, the lead diver, but quickly diminished as he pulled the lines from the sediment. One hundred and seventy-five ft in, the heavier line was buried too deep to be recovered, so Matt found the survey line nearby and continued following it for approximately another 100 ft at which time he broke the surface and continued on in low air space. Another 500 ft further, the lines were tied off at the first area where one could exit the water. This area became known as "the beach"

and it is where we all removed our dive gear and proceeded upstream in walking stream passage. The survey line through sump 1 follows the right hand wall and has various areas where it slips under ledges, causing slight line trap issues, but still fairly easy to negotiate in the low vis. Total underwater section traversed was approximately 200 ft; and 400 to 500 lbs of air were used by each diver. For future planning, we know that many additional trips could be made back and forth through sump 1 with 30 to 45 cu ft tanks. If river levels were higher, we would need to plan for a much longer underwater section and more air consumed, but 45's would still be ok due to the shallow depths; a maximum of 10 ft was reached on this dive.

After regrouping and doffing our gear at the beach, we made our way upstream toward the second sump. A waterfall dome was observed and photographed about 100 feet upstream from the beach area. Water entered from this dome through black, friable rock outcroppings. This was noted as a possible sump 1 bypass and may be bolt climbed on a future trip. Continuing upstream, the team checked all possible side leads up to the breakdown room at the second sump.

Ron Simmons's original survey line was found tied off in the breakdown room at sump 2 where the line ran into the water to an additional tie-off point. The remainder of the line had been blown out by the flow and we were able to uncover a rusted out partial spool with additional knotted line that Ron had used on his first dive here. We recovered this line and later it was sent to the Cave Diving Museum and Library in Florida. Preparing for our main objective of the Swicegood Avenue area, we changed from wetsuits to coveralls and polypro tops. Mark chose to stay in his wetsuit and Matt and I kept our dive-skins on to help them dry out for the return trip, but this was not very effective as our cave suits were wet and muddy from the trip through Cumquat. This was going to be a long cold trip.



Eric's Splashdown in the mud

The entrance to Swicegood Avenue is a scramble up a steep embankment for approximately 30 ft where you encounter a small squeeze and the passage remains low, maybe 12 inches, as it continues uphill for another 25 ft. The crawl was slippery and difficult while dragging gear. The passage does eventually open up to walking height where we began searching the noted leads. We had maps of Swicegood Avenue prepared for us by Doug Hynes from original survey notes by Ron, Wes, Roberta, et al. These were a huge help in identifying leads suggested by the previous team. Some of the leads that seemed promising from the sketches, turned out to be dead ends after a bit of squeezing and rock removal. Several dome leads were noted for possible future bolt climbs. The two best leads discovered were not on the maps at all, a huge dome previously undiscovered and a new waterfall pit with going canyon passage. The pit passage was the first new discovery and involved twisting through a small slot in the floor which leads to a low, rocky, nasty crawl that seemed to parallel Swicegood Avenue in one direction. I followed it for 100 feet until it became lower and tighter. To the left, a few rocks were removed and Mark Wenner squeezed on past a small in-feeder and 25 more feet down the passage he discovered a pit approximately 35 feet deep with a small waterfall cascading down from the stream crawl. Climbing out on a very thin rock shelf, Mark snapped a few pictures and returned to report. There was going canyon passage seen at the bottom of this pit.

Returning to the main passage, we continued on in Swicegood Avenue, checking off leads as we went. Another lead was discovered when I made a climb up through a jagged fissure into a small, wet dome. Looking up this dome and back toward Swicegood Avenue, a large borehole type lead was observed another 30 ft up. Matt and Mark joined me near the bottom of the climb and we took some pics and debated about making a climb here or going back to survey the pit Mark had previously discovered. The walls here were slick and jagged in some places and coated with



Hazel in Cumquat Passage

mud and loose rock elsewhere. We named it "Blade Pit" for the knife-like limestone projections surrounding the bottom. We were all shivering and decided that we were not in the best condition to make a very technical climb that would need precise bolting and one slip could cause serious damage where immediate extraction was impossible. I climbed up a few more feet to get a better look at the borehole, and we debated a few more minutes on this lead before deciding to head back to survey the pit. Some interesting coral fossils were discovered and photographed here, including quite a bit of Horn Coral in the walls. We also documented some very delicate coral forms tentatively identified from pictures by Jerry Murphy as a type of Tabulate coral of the genus *Syringopora*. This was found protruding from walls and also just laying out on the wet shelf of rock we had climbed up to gain access to this hidden area.

Heading back to the new pit area, we tied into the old survey at station A30. After making a few survey shots, we reached the pit, which we all agreed to name "Simmons Pit" in honor of Ron, the first explorer through the sump back in '84. I noticed how friable the surrounding rock above the pit was, especially the shelf hanging out into the pit. I hammered a few chunks off to make the rappel safer, however, this was a dangerous shelf and we needed a safer lip and more stable rig point. Backing up a few feet, I was able to enlarge a hole which dropped 1 foot to the stream bed. where I crawled through water to the edge of the pit. All the possible rig points proved to be quite unstable. I suggested we rig further back and possibly set a re-direct bolt near the lip. We struggled back up the crawl and into Swicegood Avenue to don harnesses and vertical gear to make the descent. We were cold wet and beat. Matt had even fallen asleep while on station during the survey to the pit. A few minutes of discus-

sion and consideration of our condition, it was decided the best thing to do at this time was route before we made any mistakes in the "D.F.U" zone. We headed back to the river and 20 minutes later we slid down the exit slope of Swicegood, changed back into very cold wetsuits, and slogged out way back to the beach area.

Gearing up and diving back through the sump was accomplished without incident and upon reaching the downstream side, we climbed back up to the staging area with all our gear still attached. This proved to be exciting as both Mark and I slipped in the same spot and tumbled back down to the sump. We were definitely tired and ready to head out. It took another hour to pack gear and drag a few bags toward the nasty section of Cumquat to stage for the gear haul out the next day. We spread out the tarps in preparation for team 2 coming in the next morning, loaded up with one large pack each, then made it back to the entrance at 0500 hours. The total trip time was 17 hours, with 10 of these spent on the upstream side of the sump in exploration and survey.

At the CRF station, we briefed Team Two during breakfast. They left for the cave at 0800, and explored sump 2 to a total length of 850 ft. Zero visibility on the return prevented them from obtaining survey data on this dive. Jill and Jerry had made three trips each through the stream beyond sump one to move gear up to sump two. They later commented they had become a bit too familiar with this stretch of cave. They exited the cave at 1300 hours the following morning. After getting some rest, team one prepared sketches on Doug's maps and provided information on each lead we checked as references for future exploration. Copies of these were turned over to Scott Bauer and the originals sent to Jim Borden. We completed trip reports and scanned in survey data at the CRF station.

Matt, Mark, and I also made a "tourist trip" over to Sand Cave and the historic entrance to Mammoth to experience the rich history of this area.

On July 2, 2007, we had a fresh team of sherpas to retrieve gear. We re-entered the cave once again at the Weller entrance. There were still 17 bags of gear and tanks at the sump. We had split into two teams for the haul. The first team in would go all the way to the sump and shuttle gear through the Cumquat where team two would replay it on to the Crow-Bar Dome and the beginning of the canyon passages. Total time in the cave that day was 6 hours and all gear was recovered from the cave.

Even though at times it was a logistic nightmare, everyone pulled together to get the job done.

It was a privilege to get to work with so many talented and strong cavers. A future trip will be much more efficient with the knowledge gained to date and we have already discussed logistics and gear configurations for a return trip through the sump to Swicegood Avenue. None of this could have been possible without the help of so many dedicated cavers. Special thanks go out to Scott Bauer for guiding us to the sump and humping gear on every trip, Pat Kambesis and Hazel Barton for keeping the energy up and getting folks on track, Barbara am Ende for "cracking the whip", and John Delong for organization. If I failed to mention everyone on the

trip, my apologies as I gained this info from separate trip reports. I'd like to thank everyone who hauled gear or supported the expedition in various ways to enable addition exploration and survey of the world's longest cave.

Roppel Sump Exploration 2007 trip participants list:

Scott Bauer, Brian Williams, Matt Vinzant, Mark Wenner, Jill Hienreth, Jerry Murphy, Beth Murphy, DeWayne Hyatt, Barbara am Ende, John Delong, Matt Mezydle, Hazel Barton, Eric Weaver, Johanna Kovarik, Pat Kambesis, Sue Hagen, Steve Omeroid, Judy Omeroid, Brian Ham, Seamus Decker, Erin Lynch, Ann Kensly, Ed Klausner, Dick Market, et al.



Muddy gear at the entrance ladders

Hellhole Survey

Silent Stream TSI Survey - August 25, 2007

By *David Socky*

Team: Terry McClanathan
David Socky
Dan Zinz

Goals: Survey leads in Silent Stream

This was the second to last weekend for the last of the Hellhole survey, and thus there was a fairly good turnout. There were supposed to be four teams this weekend, two in the Silent Stream. The first team for Silent Stream included Mark Minton, Bob Alderson, and Mark Stover. The second team

was myself, Terry, and Dan.

It was another early morning at the Gateway with breakfast at 7:30am. It was at breakfast that we talked Terry McClanathan into joining myself and Dan as the second Silent Stream team and resulted in our survey designation – TSI (the "Terry Suck In" survey).

Breakfast over, we all headed for the cave. Yvonne came along for moral support. With just a little of the 'milling about factor', eve-

(Continued on page 68)

*Hellhole Cave is **NOT** open to the general caving public. They are only open for survey by the Germany Valley Karst Survey under contract to Greer Industries. All other caving in Hellhole is strictly forbidden.*

ryone was at the bottom of the entrance by 10:15 am. By the time Dan and I got down, the first team was gone and the last we heard from them was at the bottom of the 90 foot drop. We never saw them again because they more or less 'ran' to the end of Silent Stream, getting there in a record time of 4 hours! We were just a little slower.

We decided to go down the SOW drops on the way in and up the Q drop on the way out, just to give Terry more vertical drops and climbs to put under his belt. At the top of the nuisance climb when first getting into Silent Stream we had to decide whether to bring our vertical gear further into the cave. We hadn't decided yet whether we would make for the end of the Silent Stream survey, which required our vertical gear. The other possibility was to check leads around STH4. At this point, we decided to bring the vertical gear because we didn't want to give up on the possibility of getting to the end of the survey this soon in the trip.

The rest of the way in was pretty uneventful. We found STH4 with few problems, and realized that this was the lead that we had checked 3 weeks ago. Bob Alderson reported that there was enough to survey, but (I thought) he had said it ended. We changed into our dry polypro and started surveying. Within 70 feet we found a lead on the left which headed back in a south west direction. The lead was good looking, about a two by four foot tube with a lot of air blowing out of it, which led us to believe this would be an excellent lead if our main passage fizzled out.

The main passage was not large, but quite pleasant. It was dry and mostly walking with a floor of damp mud with little breakdown. It was actually quite easy to sketch, so we made good time. We were also able to get fairly long shots since the canyon headed in a straight line in a north-north east direction, pretty much paralleling Silent Stream. It wasn't long before we reached the last of Bob's footprints from three weeks ago, so we were now in virgin cave! It kept going. The bedding in this passage was pretty vertical, with fins of rock sticking out of the ceiling every now and then. There was a parallel passage to the left (west) which was way too small to get into. It broke into our passage every now and then. We had to go through a couple of crawls and stoop walks, but for the most part it was walking – anywhere from 7 to 15 feet high and about 3 to 4 feet wide. There were a couple of very nice natural bridges, and in one place a blade of rock stuck up out of the floor like an upside down keel of a sail boat.

But all good things sooner or later come to an end. I heard Dan call from up ahead that we only needed to do foresights, since the pas-

sage PUDed. We did the last shot and then I started sketching in the end. Aaah, but wait! Dan found a dig on the right side of the terminal room and he could see it opened up on the other side! He got his trowel out and scooped dirt out until he could just squeeze through. Dan disappeared! Our hopes were raised once again, but after 5 minutes, he returned with the report that this lead also ended, but there was a good 200 feet we needed to survey.

We fixed the PUD, and continued the survey through the dig. This passage took a turn and headed 180 degrees from our previous direction. The passage ended in just 40 feet, but part way down was a scalloped window sitting 3 feet up off the floor on the left side. This window immediately turned 90 degrees to the right and headed back in the same south-south west direction. After 90 or so feet the passage bent around to the left and made another 180 degree turn. Weird. However, in just another 50 feet, our lead finally came to a final and decisive end. In this last section of cave, there were many chert nodules sticking out of the walls in a ceiling channel. Plus, the very end of the passage contained a lot of large sandstone cobbles.

Back at the start of the TSI passage, Dan checked the blowing lead, but within 30 feet, it was blocked by some fairly hefty rocks. It would take a lot of pounding with a hammer to get through, but it did look like it continued. Just 40 feet past our lead in the main Silent Stream passage was another lead that Dwight had looked at 3 weeks ago. Dan and I climbed along a ledge to find a climb up of only 10 feet which led to another 4 by 4 tube going both left and right. But the climb was overhung with plenty of loose rocks and if you lost your grip and fell back, you'd bounce on the ledge and drop another 25 feet to the floor of the passage. Not a good thing. It looked like the right hand tube would probably connect with our blowing lead, so we went back and beat on the rocks blocking the way to see if we could get through quickly. No luck. The rock was really hard, so we figured it would take too long to get through. This remains a pretty good lead.

We had lunch (dinner?) and decided to go back to the FGB survey where we knew there was at least 200 feet of passage to survey. We tied into FGB24 and surveyed up a ledge on the south east wall of Silent Stream and into a passage which bore south-south west this time. After about 100 feet, we found a lower route and an upper level route – one on top of the other. We went low first. Still in a straight line, the lower passage ended after another 100 feet,

but there was a hole in the ceiling leading to an upper level. We figured this would lead us to the same upper level we had gone under a hundred feet back. But no, the upper level ended in breakdown after only 60 feet, so we went back to the ceiling hole in the lower passage. With a boost from both Dan and I, we got Terry up high enough that he was able to squeeze through the 10 inch slot and gain access to the upper level. Just like Dan from before, he disappeared. But, again like Dan, he came back to report that it ended, but there was more than enough to survey.

Dan went back to get his 4 pound sledge hammer and passed it up to Terry. Terry was able to pound away flakes of rock which opened up the slot enough for Dan and I to fit through. Luckily there was a small lip half way up one wall which allowed us to get a needed foothold so both of us could climb up into and through the slot. This time I went back to get the survey gear. Within an hour we had finished off this lead with an additional 13 shots, giving us a total of 52 stations. Not bad for one survey trip into the depths of Silent Stream.

It was 2am when we finally got back to the FGB survey. We found a note from the first team – they had headed on out at about 1:30am. They had surveyed 1387 feet. Wow! But by Terry's crude calculations, we possibly had 1400 feet! Over a half mile.

Another lunch/dinner and we headed on out. As usual, it was further to the wet part then I thought it should be, but the water levels still seemed to be low, which was good. Dan thought the Ear Canal was maybe a little higher then when we came in, but I didn't think so. The climb out of the stream passage at the "Rock Jaws of Death" was easier this time since I now had the technique down for getting up the first few feet. At the rope room, Dan discovered that the drip at the Q drop was actually a steady stream of water. We would get pretty wet climbing out. Both Dan and I decided to go out the SOW drops because we didn't feel like getting soaked. Also, I was still concerned about the struggle of getting up through the tight slot of the Q drop. Terry, wanting to get another new climb under his belt, elected to do the Q drop in spite of the water. The climb out the SOW drops was not as bad as it was the first time. I think I had a bit more energy this trip, plus I knew what to expect. We met up with Terry at the 100 foot room.

Trudge, trudge, trudge. We finally made it to the entrance Sunday morning about 8 am. We signed out for the day at 9 am, making this a very long, but successful 23 hour trip. At the cars, Terry used a calculator to add up our footage. We came out with 1420.9 feet! What a day.

The Annual BRG Christmas Party

Friday, December 21, 2007 - 7 pm to 11 pm

The Blue Ridge Grotto Annual Christmas party will be held in the spacious back banquet room of **Mamma Maria's Italian Restaurant at 2025 West Mail Street in Salem, VA 24153. (Exit 137 off I-81)**

- Family & Friends are welcome!
- Dinner is a buffet style mix of favorite Italian foods. Salad, antipasto, bread, dessert, etc. will also be on the buffet.
- We need to have a minimum of 25 adults to hold the reservation.
- **You MUST pre-pay to attend the party.**
- Dinner per person, including taxes and 18% gratuity, is **\$16.00**.
- Dinners for children under age 9 are half price.
- Your drinks are separate.
- Make checks payable to **Blue Ridge Grotto**
- Deadline to pay the BRG treasurer is December 10, 2007.

BRG Christmas Party 2007

12/21/2007 7p – 11p
Mamma Maria's Restaurant in Salem, VA.

Name	cost	total
1	\$16.00	
2		
3		
4		
5		

Amount Enclosed: _____

Pay at the October or November BRG meeting, or mail everything to:
Susan Burr, BRG Treasurer
4544 Cordell Drive SW
Roanoke VA 24018

Mamma Maria's Menu

OK, BRG, we need to choose FOUR entrées from the column below to create our Christmas Party Buffet. Whatever is overwhelmingly selected, will be on the buffet.

There are a LOT of pastas on the menu, so you might want to select items that have meat in them.

Mamma Maria's Entrées. Choose 4 to create the buffet.

- Lasagna
- Fettuccini Alfredo
- Penne ala Pomodoro
- Cheese Ravioli
- Meat Ravioli
- Sausage Peppers & Onions
- Mussels Marinara
- Spaghetti with Garlic & Oil
- Meatballs
- Buffalo Wings
- Manicotti
- Stuffed Shells
- Pasta Primavera
- Penne Sunrise
- Penne Napoletana
- Stuffed Rigatoni
- Sausage Napoletana
- Penne ala Pomodoro

Show up at the BRG meeting and vote for your 4 favorites, or email you favorites to Mary Sue Socky sockymss@cox.net 540-989-7693. Thanks!

BRG NOMINATIONS

The other thing we have to tackle this month is Grotto nominations for BRG officers. Why? 'Cause someone's gotta do it! Our present officers have been efficient as always. The current slate of officers is:

Chairman	Marian McConnell	NSS # 37358
Vice Chairman	Pat Sims	NSS # 52145
Secretary	Mary Sue Socky	NSS # 24206
Treasurer	Susan Burr	NSS # 53888

This past year, 2007, was everyone's first term, so no one should have a problem predicting the outcome of the upcoming elections. The floor is open for nominations!

In order to nominate a candidate, you must be a regular BRG member.

In order to hold office, you must satisfy these qualifications:

- 1) You must have been a BRG member for at least one year, and
- 2) You must be an active NSS member.

A lot of BRG members satisfy these qualifications - you know who you are! Being an officer does not require a whole lot of work; just one or two hours maximum each month and attendance at all meetings. So, if you want to be an officer, or don't like how things are being done now, consider throwing your helmet in the ring.

BRG VOTING REQUIREMENTS

In order to vote in the November BRG elections, you must be a member of the Blue Ridge Grotto, **and** you must be an active (paid up) member of the National Speleological Society.