

The Month's Guano

March 2001

Kansas City Area Grotto

Volume 15, Issue 3

eBay Auction Angers Caving Community

by Carol Greenhouse

January 11, 2000 Stalactites from an unknown cave in California have been taken off the auction block on the popular Internet auction site eBay after catching the attention of cavers with the National Speleological Society.

Nine stalactites listed on eBay as rare and unattainable were touted as "excellent pieces for mineral collectors or for decorations...can be cut into slabs for jewelry making in your lapidary workshop." Owners James and Zenaida Hedjazi didn't realize that the formations, which weighed in at one pound, 15 ounces and carried a minimum bid of \$9.99, would create a stir when they put them up for sale last week. They'd been purchased at a northern California rock shop two decades ago, Zenaida says. But shortly after they went on sale, a caver noticed them and went to the National Speleological Society's Web site to discuss how such sales could be stopped.

Bureau of Land Management Senior Technical Specialist for Cave and Karst Resources Jim Goodbar says, "Cavers are adamant about not having people sell speleothems. The reason is they're non-replaceable. In tens of human lifetimes, they don't grow. And selling encourages vandalism. It creates a market. People think, 'I don't have to buy these; I'll just go find them myself.'"

The problem is not new. Increasing destruction of stalactites, stalagmites and other remnants of pristine caving environments prompted the U.S. government to pass the Federal Cave Resources Protection Act in 1988. The law instructed Federal agencies to inventory caves and establish a list of the most significant. It also protected the caves from destruction and prohibited the sale, barter or trade of cave formations—otherwise known as "speleothems."

In the wake of the act, some states passed similar laws to protect caves that weren't designated

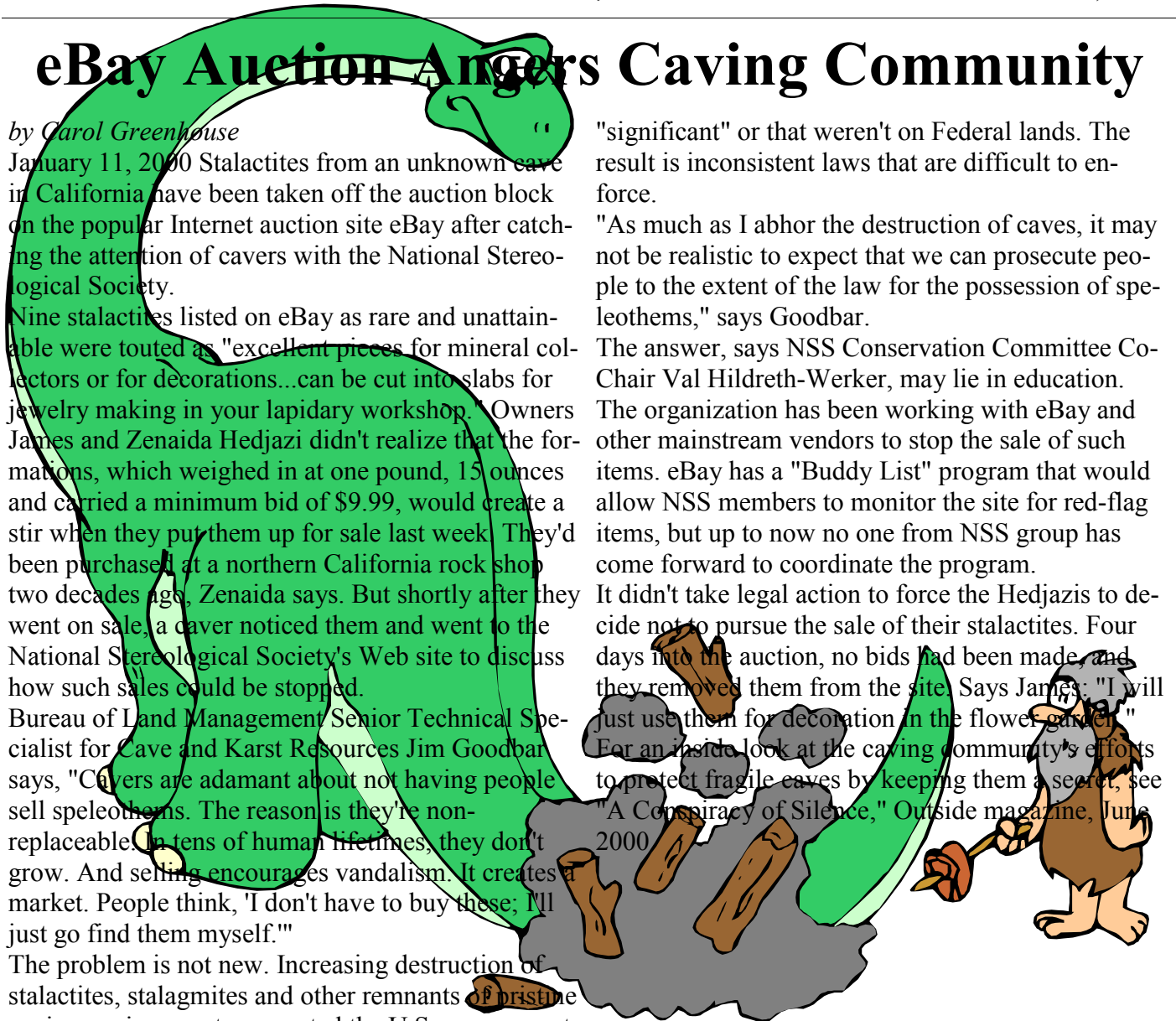
"significant" or that weren't on Federal lands. The result is inconsistent laws that are difficult to enforce.

"As much as I abhor the destruction of caves, it may not be realistic to expect that we can prosecute people to the extent of the law for the possession of speleothems," says Goodbar.

The answer, says NSS Conservation Committee Co-Chair Val Hildreth-Werker, may lie in education.

The organization has been working with eBay and other mainstream vendors to stop the sale of such items. eBay has a "Buddy List" program that would allow NSS members to monitor the site for red-flag items, but up to now no one from NSS group has come forward to coordinate the program.

It didn't take legal action to force the Hedjazis to decide not to pursue the sale of their stalactites. Four days into the auction, no bids had been made, and they removed them from the site. Says James: "I will just use them for decoration in the flower garden." For an inside look at the caving community's efforts to protect fragile caves by keeping them a secret, see "A Conspiracy of Silence," *Outside* magazine, June 2000.



February Minutes 2/14/01

Treasury Report

- Jeff Paige reported a beg balance of \$212.02
The grotto took in \$200 in dues and \$15 in trash bags
The grotto paid MSS dues and Jeff's travel expenses and purchased the a scout video
- Current balance \$349.78

Grotto Cave Trips

- Jeff Andrews is in charge of organizing 4 grotto trips per year, both novice and experienced. The first of these trips is scheduled for April 20th & 21st to Lowell and Little Smittle. Jeff is happy to lead this trip, is looking for a co-leader and participants. Contact him if you are interested.

Streamteam

- Mike Fraley is attempting to procure funds for cave clean up through a grant for wetland development. Terry DeFraties suggest hooking up with a project already in the work lend credibility to the venture.

IMAX

- The much anticipated IMAX film opens March 21st at the Kansas City Zoo. Lying low is our motto... the grotto decided to pass on nothing but our PO Box to link the NSS Website as a way to contact cavers in the area. Not concerned that there will be a big rush to go caving here in Kansas City as the travel commitment is a big one.

- Bryon Carmoney will present a Cave Ecology program at the Friends of Nature Center. The program is scheduled for April 10th at 7 pm, please contact Bryon if you would like to assist.
- Cave art presentation. February 10th through March 30th in Kirkwood, Missouri at the Powder Valley Conservation Center. For information call (314) 301-1500

NSS Listing

- The NSS will no longer cross-reference grottos who feel their membership crosses stateliness. Terry DeFraties made an executive decision to have the grotto listed in Missouri as that is where the majority of caving takes places as opposed to Kansas.

Constitution

- Take out Article 3, sect __, should only be 3 officers, ours says we have 5. Motion to have Bryon take care of it, motion seconded by Mike Fraley and carried.

Policy on Group Liability

- After much labor by Mike McKinney and other members of the grotto, a policy outlining the grotto's stand on liability was printed in the last issue of the Guano to allow all members to review prior to this meeting. The goal of the document is to iterate that KCAG is under zero obligation to cater to any groups requesting caving trips. The new policy keeps us in control of all trips and

Presentations

Minutes (Continued on page 3)

March 2001 Vol. 15 Issue 3

The Month's Guano is published on the last Wednesday of the month. Twelve issues annually. **Submit articles** to editor by the last Wednesday of the month. Guano subscription rate for nonmembers: \$ 6.00 annually.

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Kansas City Area Grotto is affiliated with the National Speleological Society, The Missouri Speleological Survey, and a Founding Member of Missouri Caves & Karst Conservancy.

Meetings held every second Wednesday at 7 p.m. (**alternate site in May**), Magg Hall, behind Spencer Laboratories, Volker Blvd. & Cherry, Kansas City, Missouri. Annual Dues: \$ 15 for Full Members (3 caving trips with KCAG, nomination and vote of membership required.)

NCRC Callout number Emergency use only

Central Region 502-564-7815. This number may be used for cave rescue emergencies in the states of, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Michigan, **Missouri**, Ohio and Wisconsin.

(Continued from page 2) **Minutes**

situations. Any group we do take caving, must return the signed policy. Mike stressed that the potential for education is great, but CAVE SAFETY MUST BE STRESSED!! The policy is put to a vote by Mike McKinney, Seconded by Bryon Carmoney and carried.

- NCRC-Texas, June 9th through the 17th. David Foran will be attending Wilderness EMT Training, other members also looking to attend additional classes. If you are interested in understanding the brevity of cave rescue and attending a week long “boot camp” incredible seminar...this is your chance!!

CAVE TRIPS

- Wind Tunnel trip with Richard Gindric Saturday April 28th. Must be vertical. Contact Richard if interested
- Novice Trip-Lowell and Little Smittle April 20th Contact Jeff Andrews.

PROGRAM

- Splinting—David Foran and Mike McKinney.

Thank you!!

A Word or Two

With any luck, the Guano will be out tomorrow. I did not need the time to write this, just a deadline. I even wrote a trip report, my first in a while, probably due to the weight of responsibility. However, as with most trip reports, you really had to be there to fully appreciate it. There are several trips coming up; and I am sure Bryon could use your trip report in the next Guano. (You will also become a published author.) Bryon needs information by the last Wednesday of the month. If you have something for the meeting agenda, I need it before then to add to the published agenda. I can add items at any time up to the meeting under “other new (old) business.”

(and this could be it.) I would like each meeting to have a short program when possible on “cavecraft.” This could be on such things as a knot, one first aid/medical topic, USGS quad map symbols, cave map symbols (again Richard or Tom, until I get them all straight,) a piece of gear, etc. Please let me know what you think, especially if you think of a topic good for 5-10 minutes, and more especially if you would like to present. In March, we will have a short medical/first aid vignette and explain, demonstrate and practice the prussic knot and the girth hitch using a stemple. It may be exciting

One moderately brilliant idea has occurred to me

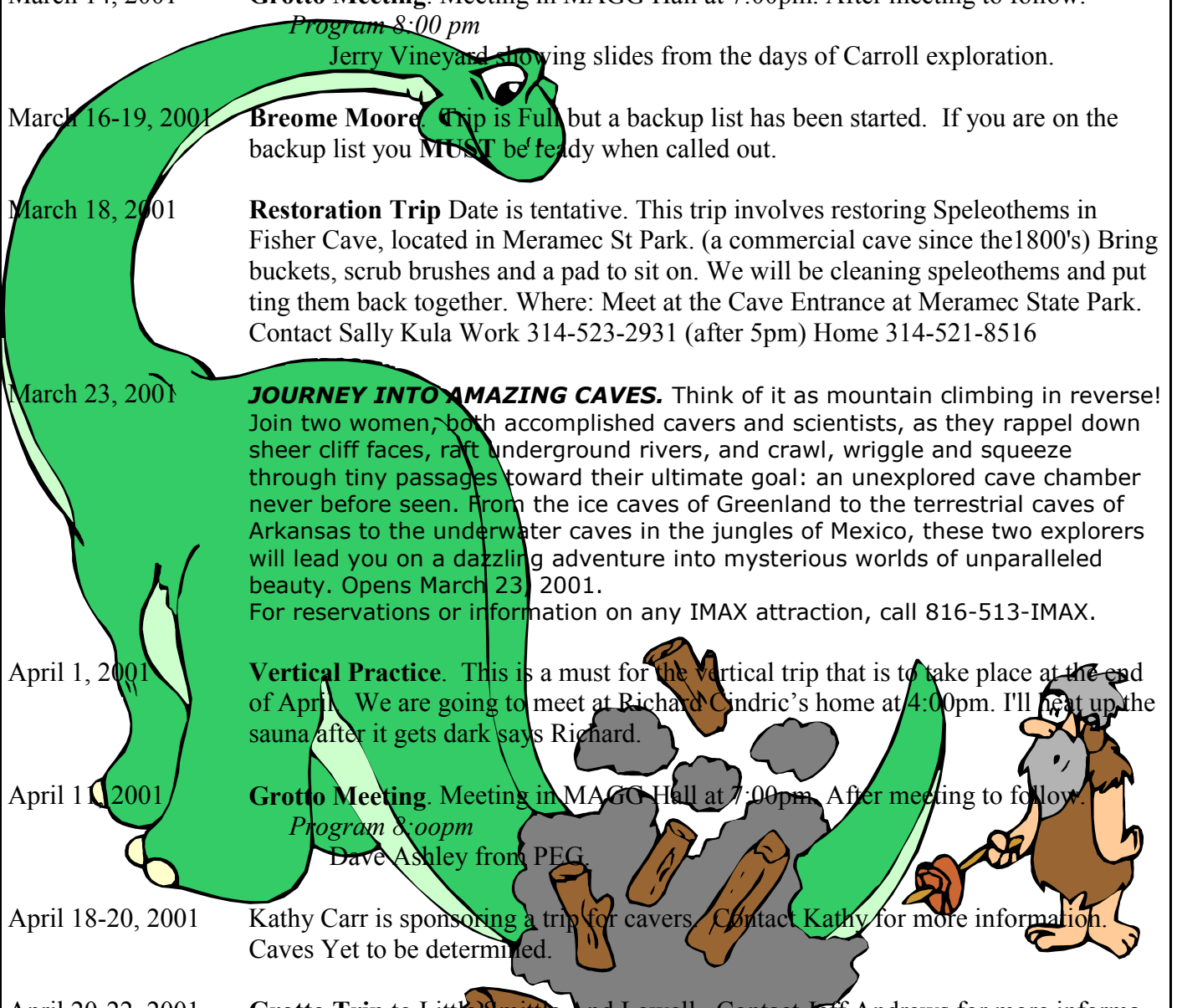
Agenda for Meeting of 3-14-01
(As of 2-28-01)

- Accept/correct minutes of February meeting published in this Guano
- Treasury report
- Old Business
 - Grotto organized trips—Jeff Andrews
 - Revise Grotto Constitution regarding “Executive Council” to comply with NSS?
 - Other old business
- New Business
 - NKC second grade class cave info presenta-

- motion request
- Other new business
- Trip Reports
- Upcoming Events & Trips
- Program (will not start before 7:15 PM)
 - Jerry Vineyard may be able to attend and show old slides of Carroll Cave
 - Alternate: First aid/medical vignette
 - Explain, demonstrate, practice prussic knot & girth hitch using a stemple—Terry DeFraties

UPCOMING EVENTS

REMEMBER OHG HAS AGGREGED TO LETS US CAVE WITH THEM. IF YOU ARE INTERESTED IN A TRIP YOU MUST CONTACT THE TRIP LEADER.

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- March 14, 2001 **Grotto Meeting.** Meeting in MAGG Hall at 7:00pm. After meeting to follow.
Program 8:00 pm
Jerry Vineyard showing slides from the days of Carroll exploration.
- March 16-19, 2001 **Breome Moore.** Trip is Full but a backup list has been started. If you are on the backup list you **MUST** be feady when called out.
- March 18, 2001 **Restoration Trip** Date is tentative. This trip involves restoring Speleothems in Fisher Cave, located in Meramec St Park. (a commercial cave since the 1800's) Bring buckets, scrub brushes and a pad to sit on. We will be cleaning speleothems and putting them back together. Where: Meet at the Cave Entrance at Meramec State Park. Contact Sally Kula Work 314-523-2931 (after 5pm) Home 314-521-8516
- March 23, 2001 **JOURNEY INTO AMAZING CAVES.** Think of it as mountain climbing in reverse! Join two women, both accomplished cavers and scientists, as they rappel down sheer cliff faces, raft underground rivers, and crawl, wriggle and squeeze through tiny passages toward their ultimate goal: an unexplored cave chamber never before seen. From the ice caves of Greenland to the terrestrial caves of Arkansas to the underwater caves in the jungles of Mexico, these two explorers will lead you on a dazzling adventure into mysterious worlds of unparalleled beauty. Opens March 23, 2001.
For reservations or information on any IMAX attraction, call 816-513-IMAX.
- April 1, 2001 **Vertical Practice.** This is a must for the vertical trip that is to take place at the end of April. We are going to meet at Richard Cindric's home at 4:00pm. I'll heat up the sauna after it gets dark says Richard.
- April 11, 2001 **Grotto Meeting.** Meeting in MAGG Hall at 7:00pm. After meeting to follow.
Program 8:00pm
Dave Ashley from PEG.
- April 18-20, 2001 Kathy Carr is sponsoring a trip for cavers. Contact Kathy for more information. Caves Yet to be determined.
- April 20-22, 2001 **Grotto Trip** to Little Smittle And Lowell. Contact Jeff Andrews for more information.
- April 27-29, 2001 **Wind Tunnel Cave.** This Trip is a Vertical trip. Contact Richard Cindric.
- May 4-6, 2001 **Spring 2001 MVOR** at the Stratfords' Chigger & Tick Ranch (right on 76 Hwy., south of Ava).
- May 9, 2001 **Grotto Meeting.** Meeting in MAGG Hall at 7:00 pm. After meeting to follow.

EVENTS(Continued on page 5)

June 9-17, 2001 **NCRC Training.** Contact David Foran. Camp Bullis, TX

June 13, 2001 **Grotto Meeting.** Meeting in MAGG Hall at 7:00 pm. After meeting to follow. Picnic instead?????? Lets vote on it!!!!!!!

July 4, 2001 **Party Time.** Fifth Annual 4th of July party. Hosted by Bryon and Michelle Carmoney. Bring a dish to pass, your beer and your fireworks. Starts at 5:00 pm until your tired. If you need to stay the night bring your sleeping bag and ground pad.

July 11, 2001 **Grotto Meeting.** Meeting in MAGG Hall at 7:00 pm. After meeting to follow.

August 2001 **Beaver Lake Trip.** This trip is for everyone that wants to come. They have boats, fishing, swimming, and scuba diving for those interested. There will also be a dig trip involved to yet an unnamed cave.

August 4-12, 2001 **Eastern Region NCRC Training,** Elkins, WV

Oct. 5-7, 2001 **TAG,** Valley Head, AL

Alexander Cave Trip(s)

On Friday night, Gerry and Robert Gattenby, Jeff Page, Joan Mandrea, Mike Fraley, Kaza Henson, Charlie Leap, Kathy and Tom Sumner and I drove to Blanchard Springs. We camped in the second group area since there were roadblocks keeping us from (legally) driving to the regular campsites. It had been flooding over the low water bridge. Unlike the group camp by the big bluff, this one is in the woods and actually closer to the rest rooms and hot showers. It was below freezing at least half the time we were there until it warmed up for our departure; but the weather overall was not too bad.

On Saturday, at the crack of afternoon, we got to the entrance to Alexander. There were some brief moments of excitement as we rigged webbing in three pitches to go up and around to the left of the pool which (thanks to the rain) made for (we think) waist deep access to the regular ropes. No one wanted to verify the depth. Fortunately, we had enough gear

(and had it at the right place) to deal with everything. We managed to see the cave we saw on the video trip. By about 8 PM, we were back at the entrance and out by about 10 PM. We rappelled in and climbed out with a belay. Several in our party were not very experienced; but we had plenty of help whenever assistance was requested. I had been thinking of this as a pretty easy cave but now would have to put it as at least "advanced novice." We all broadened some of our caving horizons.

On Sunday, our group split. Jerry, Mike, Jeff and I went back to look for the lower level while the others did the commercial tour at Blanchard Spings. They found it; but we were unable to locate the main lower passage. The only solution to this is obviously another trip after paying closer attention to how to find it.

Our return trip on Monday was routine.

MSS MINUTES. The Winter 2001 Board meeting of the Missouri Speleological Survey was called to order by President Matt Forir on January 20th in Rolla, MO. **Introduction of Officers:** Matt Forir, President; Joel Laws, Vice-President; Alberta Zumwalt, Secretary; David Webster, Treasurer. **Roll Call of Directors:** Chad Smith, HOG; Don Dunham, MMV; Susan Ianke-Mueth, Stygian; Joe Walsh, MCKC; Michael Carter, OHG; Bob Taylor, Independent Rep; Gary Zumwalt, LOG; Al Quamen, LEG; Lorin O'Daniell, PEG; Rita Worden, Onorreau; Jeff Page, KCAG; Kenny Sherrill, MSM; Marty Griffin, MVG. Absent was MTG. **The Minutes** of the Fall 2000 meeting were printed in the Nov.-Dec. issue of *Liaison*. Minutes approved. **Treasurer's Report.** David Webster reported: General fund \$14,364.65; Membership: (1999) \$59.00; (2000) \$1033.00; (2001) \$81.00. Photo Cave Files \$257.00; Public Relations \$495.56; *Missouri Speleology*: Vol. 34 (1994) \$1,476.00; Vol. 35 (1995) \$1,491.00; Vol. 36 (1996) \$1404.00; Vol. 37 (1997) \$725.10; Vol. 38 (1998-complete) \$232.65; Vol. 39 (1999) -\$163.15; Vol. 40 (2000) \$24.00. Back Issues \$8,790.38; Research Funds \$7,249.00 (includes \$749.00 for current research); M.S. Memorial Fund \$1,149.08. David also passed out an income statement and balance sheet for the year, along with a spreadsheet for calendar years 1987-2000. **Awards.** Joe Walsh suggested all three founding fathers of the MSS should get an award. Jerry Vineyard and Oz Hawksley were both given Honorary membership. Frank Dahlgren passed away a few years ago. Joe Walsh made a motion that Frank Dahlgren, one of the founding fathers of the MSS, be recognized for his contributions with Honorary membership in the MSS. Seconded and passed. **MSS Membership.** Alberta Zumwalt reported 143 regular members, 26 family, 2 honorary members (the third is deceased) for a total of 171 members. **Educational contact.** Jo Schaper reported that there had been a lot of discussion on Mocaves about the MSS. To encourage MSS support to students, Jo circulated a letter that could be sent to universities to make them aware of the MSS and it's Research Council. She asked Board members to look it over. It would need Board approval before following through with it. Pres. Forir suggested extending meetings to have workshops, etc. Hal Baker said the building would not be available in the evenings and favors informal morning sessions. Agreement that there should be morning sessions before the meetings and to publicize this in *Liaison*. Pres. Forir asked for a volunteer to organize the sessions. Jo said she organized the first morning

sessions. Jo suggested that a board member be appointed to organize the morning session each meeting, rotating around the Board. Pres. Forir suggested Jo organize the next one. **Affiliate Organizations.** Jon Beard said annual reports are due. The reports not ready at this meeting can be mailed to Jon. The annual fee of \$15.00 goes to the Treasurer, Dave Webster. **MSS Liaison.** Gary Zumwalt reported 172 subscribers, 14 complimentary, \$78.94 cash on hand. Gary said he needs all Directors to send reports in. *Liaison* is printed six times a year. **Missouri Speleology.** Bob Taylor reported Vol. 39 No. 4 (Carol Wicks, Phil Moss) is almost ready. Vol. 40 (Shelter issue, Beard & Potts) is completely done. Bob is now starting on Vol. 41. Bob wants to do a color cover on Vol. 40 (1-4) which would cost \$200-\$300 more. Estimated cost: 300 copies black & white - \$1400+; color - \$1700+. Al Quamen made a motion to go with a color cover. Seconded by Jeff Page. Passed. Dave Webster said \$6.00 goes to *Liaison* and \$9.00 goes to *Missouri Speleology* from each \$15.00 membership, \$2.00 family membership goes to the general fund. He suggested raising dues to \$20.00. Discussion to raise affiliation fee to \$20.00. Comments were made that there should be dates set when the new rates would take effect. Some expressed concern that the Grottoes should discuss the matter first. Motions were made but withdrawn so that Directors could take the matter back to their Grottoes and discuss it. Tabled until next meeting. **Missouri Speleology Circulation.** Bill Pfantz reported he has copies of all issues now. He sold \$220 in back issues before the meeting. **Research Projects.** Paleontologist Blaine Schubert from Illinois State Museum reported on work done in Little Beaver Cave near Rolla for his thesis. The research money from MSS went to dating a mandible. The latest date was 11,000. Short faced bear with Jim Kaufman making replicas on display at UMR. The Illinois Museum has 100,000 to 400,000 ice age specimens from Missouri, including Oz Hawksley's collection of 6000. Blaine was asked to send an update and info to *Liaison*. Pres. Forir was given \$400 for carbon dating in Lon O'Dell. Jo Schaper reported doing a poster session at Tan Tara on Tuffa, her Master's project. Amy McCann is looking for bacteria in caves and would like help with her project. Hal Baker volunteered to help. (Her email address is: amccann@umr.edu) **Carroll Cave Conservancy.** Tom Lounsbury reported a nine inch hole has been drilled down to T-junction. Next project is to make a three foot diameter hole, 120 foot deep (estimated to take 120 working hours

(Continued on page 7)

(Continued from page 6)

to complete) with an air lock on top. People are needed to survey, probably starting this spring. Tom said they have a 20-year lease, renewable at five-year intervals. There will be no recreational trips into the cave, only work trips. There are plans for a new gate to be constructed. Discussion. Marty Griffin made a motion that the MSS make a statement to the CCC to keep (perpetual) long term interest to protect bio-speleology and all cave contents. Seconded by Kenny Sherrill. Passed. Marty will draft the letter and the MSS President will sign it. **Cave Files Report.** Hal Baker reported nine new cave maps from Bob Taylor, update for SID from Joel Laws, and a cd from Tom Clifton. There are 2,405 scanned maps, 1793 edited and cleaned up, 1141 entered into database. Joel Laws passed out a report on data entry progress from Scott House, in his absence. Joel reported that hundreds of errors have been fixed. Twenty-eight counties are done. He reports scanning cave files, will compare the St. Louis files with the Rolla files, then Jefferson City files with Rolla files. DGLS will provide computer to scan files. Joel Laws asked the Board for funds of \$1500 to purchase a cd burner (\$200), a 35mm slide scanner (\$1000), a flatbed sheet scanner (\$300), and misc. supplies. A slide scanner could be used for *Missouri Speleology* and other things. Marty Griffin made a motion to give Joel Laws up to \$1500 for the purchase of these items for this project. Seconded by Susan Lanke-Mueth. Passed unanimously. **Mocaves.** Joel Laws explained the problems with adding attachments to Mocaves. He said not to use attachments but to say if someone wants it, they can email the sender directly. **MCKC.** Joe Walsh said to conserve caves through ownership requires vast sums of money. The MCKC applied for a grant to do a bio-

speleology inventory project. The MCKC plan to host the Fall 2002 MVOR at the Sinks of Sinking Creek. Chairman will be Mark Andrich. **AI Quamen** passed out an article on the banded sculpin project being done by Ginny Adams. **Dave Webster** reported Ann Johnson, wife of Paul Johnson, had passed away in October. AI Quamen made a motion the MSS show condolence for the passing of Ann Johnson. Seconded by Bob Taylor. Passed unanimously. **Bob Taylor** brought up the possibility of getting grants for publications, etc. Jo Schaper said to come up with a project first, then try for a grant. Hal Baker talked about the MCKC grant. Jo volunteered to write something up and throw it out to Mocaves. Directors should go back to their grottoes for ideas. **Dave Webster** expressed concern about the financial situation of paper copies versus online, etc. Discussion on cd versus paper copy. Jo said the question of who owns *Missouri Speleology* (MSS or author) has to be determined. Bob said the donation of a building for a permanent address for MSS would be good. Hal Baker said Onyx Mountain would be good for the MSS or the MCKC to buy for use. Price is \$750,000. **Michael Carter** is missing the Director's manual for OHG and asked how many others were missing the manual. **Research committee.** Members are Jerry Vineyard, Dwight Weaver, Oz Hawksley, and David Ashley. Pres. Forir suggested expanding the committee with experts in each field: biology, paleontology, etc. Tabled until next meeting. **Next meeting** will be May 13th 10 a.m., Rolla. There will be a show and tell that morning. Meeting adjourned.-- Respectfully submitted, Alberta Zumwalt, Secretary.

Update on Bill Klimack

Bill was a KCAG member roughly ten years ago. I recently got a delayed Christmas letter from him, so I thought I'd pass on an update on Bill for those of you who remember him.

The most important news is that his wife (Mary) is expecting a girl in May. They've already named her Anna. Very efficient!

Bill was recently promoted from Lieutenant Colonel to Colonel, plus he was reassigned from a Battalion Command in South Carolina to become a Professor of Systems Engineering at West Point. Actually, he's not at West Point yet because has to finish his dissertation for his PhD. He and Mary are in Ohio until that's complete.

Bill's letter didn't mention that he'd done any caving in the last year or so, but he and his family had done some diving in springs and rivers in Florida. Also, they climbed Mt. Cheaha in Alabama. Many of you know that Bill writes the "In the Media" section of the NSS News, but he's also a member of the Explorers Club and serves as the speleology chair on their Science Advisory Board. His email address is Bklimack@aol.com.

Richard

KCAG Grotto Sponsored Trips Defined by Jeff Andrews

A Grotto trip is a trip designed for Grotto members and their guests or prospective members (with one guest). Grotto trips will be of two varieties, Novice or Advanced.

The Trip Leader will define a Novice cave. In general this type of trip should be of moderate to a light physical challenge for the participants. **This is by no means absolute definition of a Novice cave.**

Well known to the grotto i.e. Little Scott, Lowell and Little Smittle, Mushroom, and Ennis, to name a few. Non Vertical

Advanced Caves in general should be Physically challenging to the trip leader, possibly vertical.

All Trips will consist of at least three to six participants excluding the Trip Leader. Trip leaders may on their discretion change the maximum but the minimum will be set for safety reasons. The trip leader will choose the cave. Novice trips are meant for Non-KCAG members and area on a first come first serve basis. Alternates will be listed for trips.

Trip Leader will set advanced trips size. Participants on an advanced trip will be per approval of the trip leader. (I.e. a first time caver may be qualified by a trip leader to participate in an advanced trip.)

If for some reason in a quarter a grotto trip is not already assigned the trip coordinator will step in to organize the trip.

If a quarterly trip is assigned then the trip leader will organize the trip with the assistance of the trip coordinator (if desired).

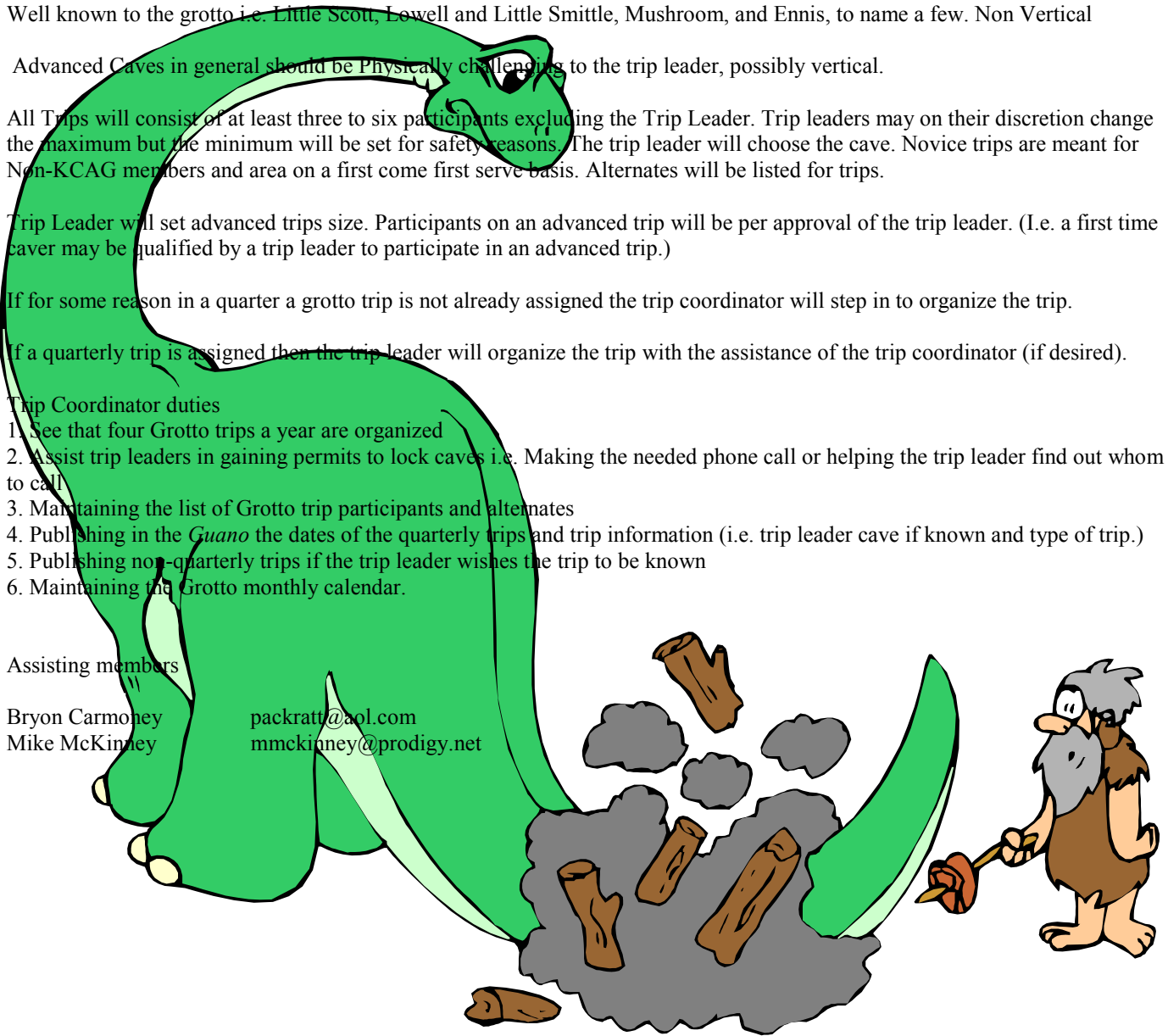
Trip Coordinator duties

1. See that four Grotto trips a year are organized
2. Assist trip leaders in gaining permits to lock caves i.e. Making the needed phone call or helping the trip leader find out whom to call
3. Maintaining the list of Grotto trip participants and alternates
4. Publishing in the *Guano* the dates of the quarterly trips and trip information (i.e. trip leader cave if known and type of trip.)
5. Publishing non-quarterly trips if the trip leader wishes the trip to be known
6. Maintaining the Grotto monthly calendar.

Assisting members

Bryon Carmoney
Mike McKinley

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UNDER THE HIGHLANDS

THE OHG NEWSLETTER

Volume 24, Number 2 / February, 2001

Edited by Lawrence Ireland

OHG MEETING CALENDAR:

MARCH 7 - BUSINESS MEETING at the Springfield-Greene County Library Center (south of intersection at 60 and 160 Hwys.) from 7 to 9 p.m.

APRIL 4 - BUSINESS MEETING at the Library Center, 7 - 9 p.m. Informal meetings afterward.

NEWS: Great news! OHG has been awarded yet another award – this one the first of its type! The Missouri Department of Conservation (Natural History Division) gave our grotto a “Certificate of Excellence” for cave restoration. The award lists a number of our recent and ongoing projects, and even has a couple photos on it. Look for this award to be posted on our website (which is due for a major overhaul) soon. We spent a fair amount of time at OHG’s February meeting talking about money: last year’s income and expenses, and opportunities for reimbursement, namely for a club photographer’s expenses. We decided that, for important events (like our work at Stinson), a club photographer may be appointed. As such, the grotto will be paying for Bob Taylor’s photo documentation in Stinson, and for Jon Beard’s digital photo collection (on a couple Zip disks). A **MVOR T-shirt design contest** will end with submissions at next month’s meeting. Themes and slogans were discussed (“Itchin’ to Cave”, for example). Our shirts will be red and yellow tie-dye. Lawrence Ireland (582-0888 or speleonut@juno.com) once again brought up the **MVOR bioinventory project**, and asked for specific commitments from those interested in helping soon. Bob Taylor mentioned that he’ll be mapping Lowell and other caves soon. If you’re interested, his e-mail address is rltcaver@hotmail.com

CAVER’S CALENDAR:

FEB 10 – Club trip to **Finley Creek Cave** (Pulaski Co.) – not pretty, but a caver’s cave trip, led by Ed Sim-

mons. Meet at the Northtown Mall parking lot (NW corner) at 9 a.m.

FEB 11 – Flutestone raising at **Stinson Cave**. Meet at the north Wal-Mart Super Center parking lot (NE corner) at 9 a.m. Be a part of this unprecedented resto project.

FEB 17 – More speleothem-gluing work at **Fisher Cave**. Michael Carter to lead (phone: 882-9342).

FEB 18 – **MVOR-planning meeting** and **POTLUCK DINNER** at “Casa Nacional” (National & Minota streets). Be there by 3 p.m.

FEB 25 – Mike Carter to hook up with Chuck Bitting at Buffalo Nat’l River to ridgewalk and locate some caves. Contact Mike if you’re interested.

MAR 3 – Douglas County trip(s), in preparation for our MVOR. Meet at the south-side Wal-Mart Super Center (SE corner of Not) at 9 a.m.

MAR 10 – **Berry Cave** trip (Pulaski Co.). Northtown Mall 9 a.m. rendezvous.

MAR 24-25 – **Conservation weekend** near Cassville. Camping at Crystal, working there, and at Jolly caves – with Lake Ozark Grotto. Contact Jon Beard (887-4231).

MAY 4-6 – **Spring 2001 MVOR** at the Stratford’s Chigger & Tick Ranch (right on 76 Hwy., south of Ava).

JUL 23-27 – **NSS Convention** (60th annual!) at Great Saltpeter Cave Preserve in Kentucky.

If you know of a business that would like to advertise in our Spring MVOR guidebook, contact Lawrence Ireland for an “ad agreement form”. The document can be presented to the interested party, and lists rates, details, etc.

A Conspiracy of Silence

Will Earth's most fragile unexplored ecosystems survive the age of adventure?

Summit Cave sits high in an intermountain wilderness, nearly a vertical mile above wind-raked seabland and half a day's drive from the din of Las Vegas's slot machines. It takes the better part of a morning to climb to the entrance, a steep, two-hour hump up slopes of stunted juniper and piñon that concludes with an exposed, scree-covered traverse across a 35-degree gully. Even if you knew your way up here, you could easily stand a few feet from the 60-foot-deep pit leading to the cave's first chamber and never know it was there. I've been brought here by a university geologist because—and only because—I have sworn not to reveal the cave's location (in fact, its name has been changed for this story). I also promised not to identify my guide, since he is one of perhaps six people in the world who know about this place. Having sworn my oath, we hitch a rope to a well-rooted shrub, don harnesses, and, in the gathering fog of a blistery March afternoon, rappel over the ice-crusted lip into utter darkness.

As caves go, Summit is not the biggest, deepest, or most geologically diverse in the country, but it is still considered significant because its half-mile of passages are lavishly decorated with stalagmites, stalactites, flowstone, columns, and other bizarre formations known in caving parlance as speleothems. Once safely on the cave floor, we carefully follow a route laid out by the beams of our headlamps to a unique collection of helictites, small calcite curlicues, some possibly as old as 50,000 years, which we find in a back passage sprouting in alabaster clusters from watery seams along the walls. "If this cave were well-known, there's a good chance these would be destroyed," my guide says, aiming his camera and speaking with hushed reverence in this sanctum. "When you see them in pristine condition, you begin to understand why we keep places like this secret." Such discretion is understandable. Subterranean ecology is so fragile that a mere fingerprint—rife with bacteria and oils—can end millennia of speleothemic growth. That's why strict secrecy has become one of the primary conservation strategies among

cavers. "I'd rather be kicked in the nuts than disseminate information to someone I don't know who might destroy that which has taken the earth so long to create," one caver proclaimed recently on an Internet discussion group hosted by the National Stereological Society. Up until the late 1970s, the NSS routinely published coordinates and even directions to cave portals. Such openness is now verboten.

Modern cave exploration in the United States began in earnest in the late 1940s, but only in recent decades have advances in climbing equipment, combined with a burgeoning interest in outdoor adventure, enabled speleo-crazy amateurs to delve into subterra incognita. The NSS now boasts 12,000 dues-paying members, and membership in "grottoes"—local caving clubs from California to the Carolinas—is swelling. But the growth has happened grudgingly. Cavers avoid any activity, such as enlisting sponsors, that would draw public attention to their activities. Too many have seen the heartbreaking consequences. "I've been on restoration trips where we've had to pin damaged formations back together like pieces of bone," says NSS vice-president Ray Keeler.

Vandalism is a daunting enough problem for cavers, but a greater issue one day may be simply getting underground in the first place. In the East, where more of the land tends to be private property, disgruntled landowners have dynamited, passaged, or gated portals. In the West, where many caves are on public land, the National Forest Service, the National Park Service, and the Bureau of Land Management will either gate caves, restrict access with permits, or both. The agencies enforce the 1988 Federal Cave Resources Protection Act, which does little to protect caves other than sending those caught removing speleothems to jail for up to a year. That threat hasn't saved scores of trashed caves, though, so the conspiracy of silence continues. "If someone were to inquire about new caves in Arizona," says Bob Buecher, a veteran Tucson-based caver, "I'd look them right in

Outside (Continued on page 11)

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the eye and say, 'Aren't any that I know of.'"

A testament to the endurance of cave confidentiality can be found in Arizona's Whetstone Mountains. There, in 1974, amateur cavers Randy Tufts and Gary Tenen found a new entrance to a previously discovered cave that "emitted a warm breeze and smelled like guano." The pair eventually pushed through two and a half miles of virgin rooms choked with massive, otherworldly speleothems, including a 60-foot column (the state's largest) and the world's second-longest "soda straw"—a 25,000-year-old formation that hangs 21 feet down from the ceiling like a strand of fossilized spaghetti. (The longest is in Australia.)

The discovery kicked off four years of covert trips to what is now Kartchner Caverns. Tufts and Tenen would walk different routes to the sinkhole to avoid cutting a footpath, and had a lawyer draw up a non-disclosure agreement that they asked their slowly expanding circle of confidants to sign, including Tenen's wife and the Kartchner family, who owned the land on which the cave is located. "We raised paranoia to a high art," says Tenen proudly.

They also came up with a bold idea to save the cave: commercialize it in such a manner that it would be preserved in its original condition—that is, as a "living" cave. The plan took them all the way to the office of Arizona's then-Governor Bruce Babbitt (who was also sworn to secrecy). The most ambitious park project in the state's history culminated last November when the \$30-million Kartchner Caverns State Park debuted—including a 23,000-square-foot exhibit center, a renovated walk-in cave entrance with steel airlocks, and precisely calibrated mist-spraying nozzles that keep Kartchner's humidity at a constant 99 percent.

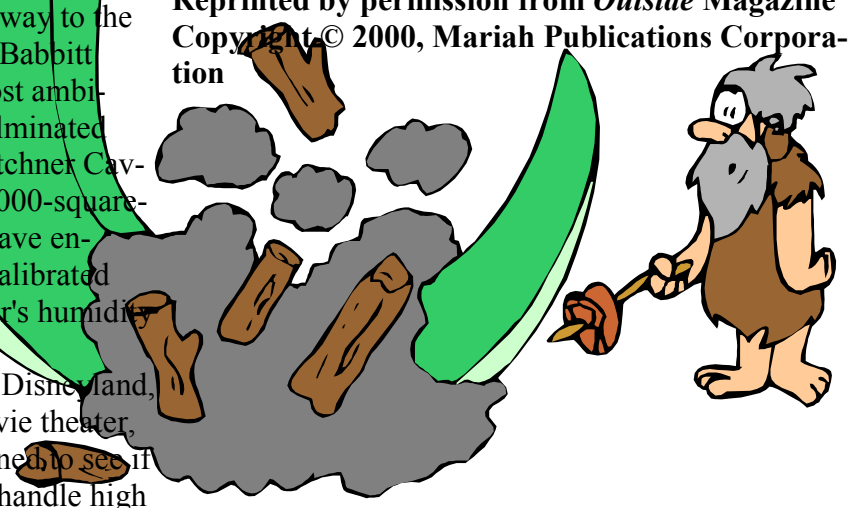
Aside from being a kind of speleological Disneyland, complete with gift shop and 100-seat movie theater, the park is an elaborate experiment designed to see if sensitive underground environments can handle high numbers of visitors; roughly 500 grade-schoolers, octogenarians, and other tourists parade through Kartchner daily. Some cavers have celebrated Kartchner as a diversion for a curious public, one that educates even as it steers attention away from vulnerable noncommercial caves. But others say Kartchner was developed with imperfect science, and that the high volume of human traffic is already deterio-

rating the cave. When Arizona State Parks staff ecologist Matt Chew published such views in a February *Boston Globe* editorial, he was promptly fired. (Though an attorney representing the state agency declined to comment, court documents allege Chew "used his position for personal gain" and "sought to bring discredit and embarrassment to the State." At press time, Chew was suing the state to get his job back.)

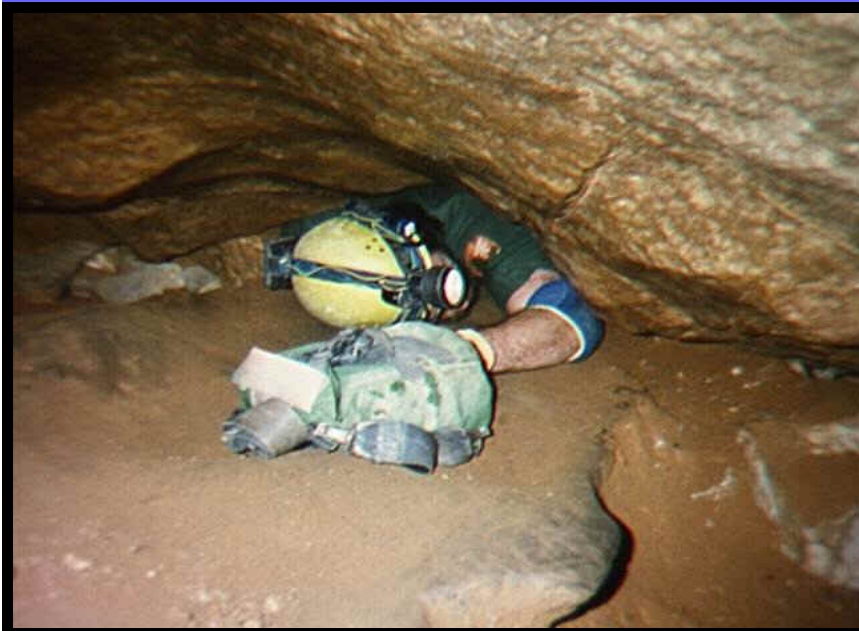
Whatever the outcome, the controversial Kartchner experiment will be watched carefully as caving is reluctantly yanked into an ever-brighter limelight: An IMAX caving movie is in the works, and recently discovered passages in New Mexico's Lechuguilla Cave lead experts to believe the system may be the largest in the world. With this kind of buzz, the code of silence protecting the nation's hundreds of rumored secret caves is likely to seal even tighter.

"This is an activity where, with \$200 worth of equipment, an average person can still discover a virgin passage," says Dave Jagnow, conservation chairman for the NSS. "If you were to discover that, you'd be pretty careful who you shared it with, too." —**NICK HEIL**

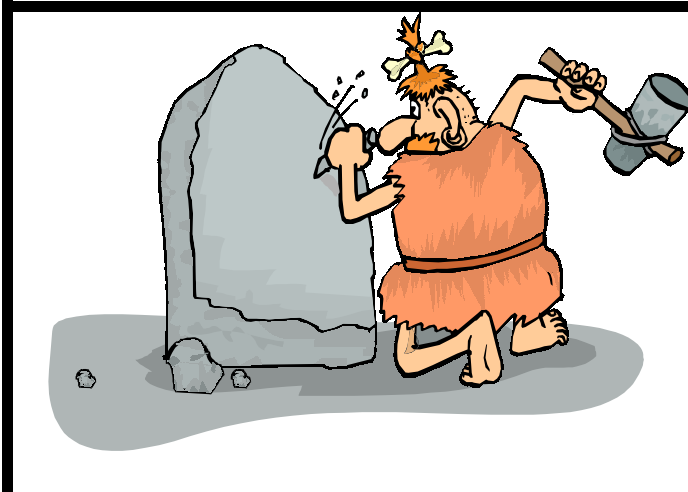
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Grotto Member Photo Gallery



Jeff Page's first trip into Mammoth Cave. This is the trip leader. All Jeff had to say about this was "Boy do my ribs hurt!"



I'll get there someday I Promise



Rick Hines submitted this photo for your viewing pleasure. Carroll cave dig site.

Surviving Berome Moore

By Lorin O'Daniell, Pony Express Grotto

So, you've decided to take a trip into Berome Moore Cave to see what it is like to spend two days underground. Good for you. Now you ask yourself the question, what should I take? The simplest answer is, whatever you are willing to pack in and pack back out.

Camping in Berome Moore is unlike camping out-of-doors. You can't just open your car door, dump your stuff on the ground, and call it home. You first must move all your gear to the base camp area inside the cave. This entails walking about ¼ mile through a farmers' field to get to the entrance, then caving about another ¼ mile to base camp. A military style duffel bag with shoulder straps or a small frame backpack work the best. Whichever you choose, please keep in mind whatever you take must fit through a 22" opening. Also, it will be dragged over rocks and through the mud, so it must be able to take some punishment.

As for where to sleep, all they provide for you is a plastic sheet to keep your stuff relatively clean. You will need a good insulating ground pad to protect you from the cold cave floor. On top of this, a good, mostly synthetic fiber sleeping bag to keep you warm. Why synthetic? For the same reason many of us cave in synthetics, it doesn't absorb moisture as readily as natural fibers. It is one thing to be cold, it is totally another to be cold and damp.

As for clothing, plan on wearing your cave gear into the cave. It is that much less stuff that you have to carry. You will need a complete change of dry clothes to wear at camp after caving. A temperature of 56°F may sound warm enough, but 56° and damp is a whole other animal. It is best to get into your dry, warm clothes before you get cold, because it is easier to stay warm than to get warm after you have cooled off. Pants or sweats, sweatshirt or sweater, thermal underwear and dry

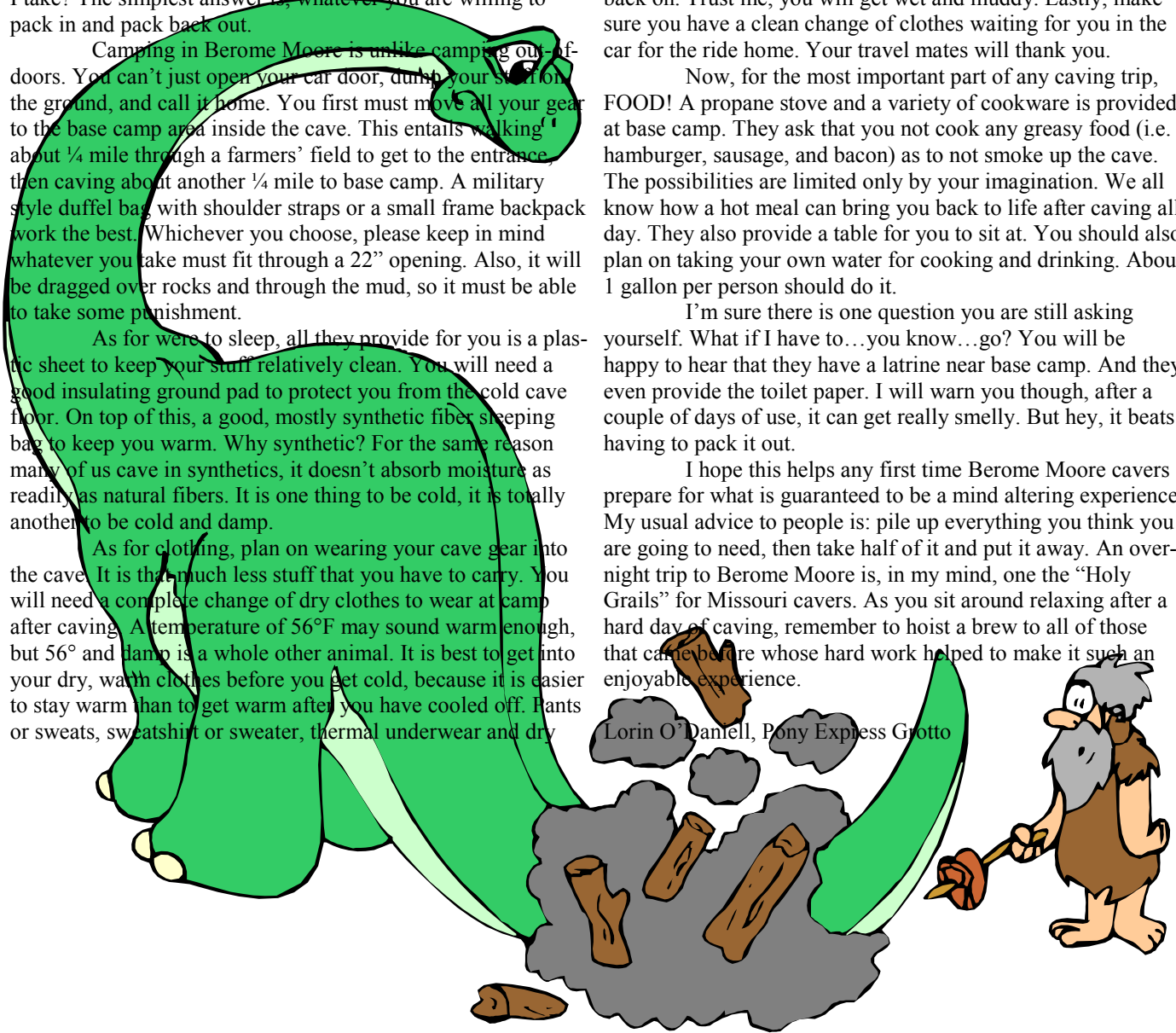
socks and shoes are all good things to have. A stocking cap is a definite must. Many people wear their camp clothes for the trip out to avoid putting their cold, wet, and muddy cave clothes back on. Trust me, you will get wet and muddy. Lastly, make sure you have a clean change of clothes waiting for you in the car for the ride home. Your travel mates will thank you.

Now, for the most important part of any caving trip, FOOD! A propane stove and a variety of cookware is provided at base camp. They ask that you not cook any greasy food (i.e. hamburger, sausage, and bacon) as to not smoke up the cave. The possibilities are limited only by your imagination. We all know how a hot meal can bring you back to life after caving all day. They also provide a table for you to sit at. You should also plan on taking your own water for cooking and drinking. About 1 gallon per person should do it.

I'm sure there is one question you are still asking yourself. What if I have to...you know...go? You will be happy to hear that they have a latrine near base camp. And they even provide the toilet paper. I will warn you though, after a couple of days of use, it can get really smelly. But hey, it beats having to pack it out.

I hope this helps any first time Berome Moore cavers prepare for what is guaranteed to be a mind altering experience. My usual advice to people is: pile up everything you think you are going to need, then take half of it and put it away. An overnight trip to Berome Moore is, in my mind, one the "Holy Grails" for Missouri cavers. As you sit around relaxing after a hard day of caving, remember to hoist a brew to all of those that came before whose hard work helped to make it such an enjoyable experience.

Lorin O'Daniell, Pony Express Grotto



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