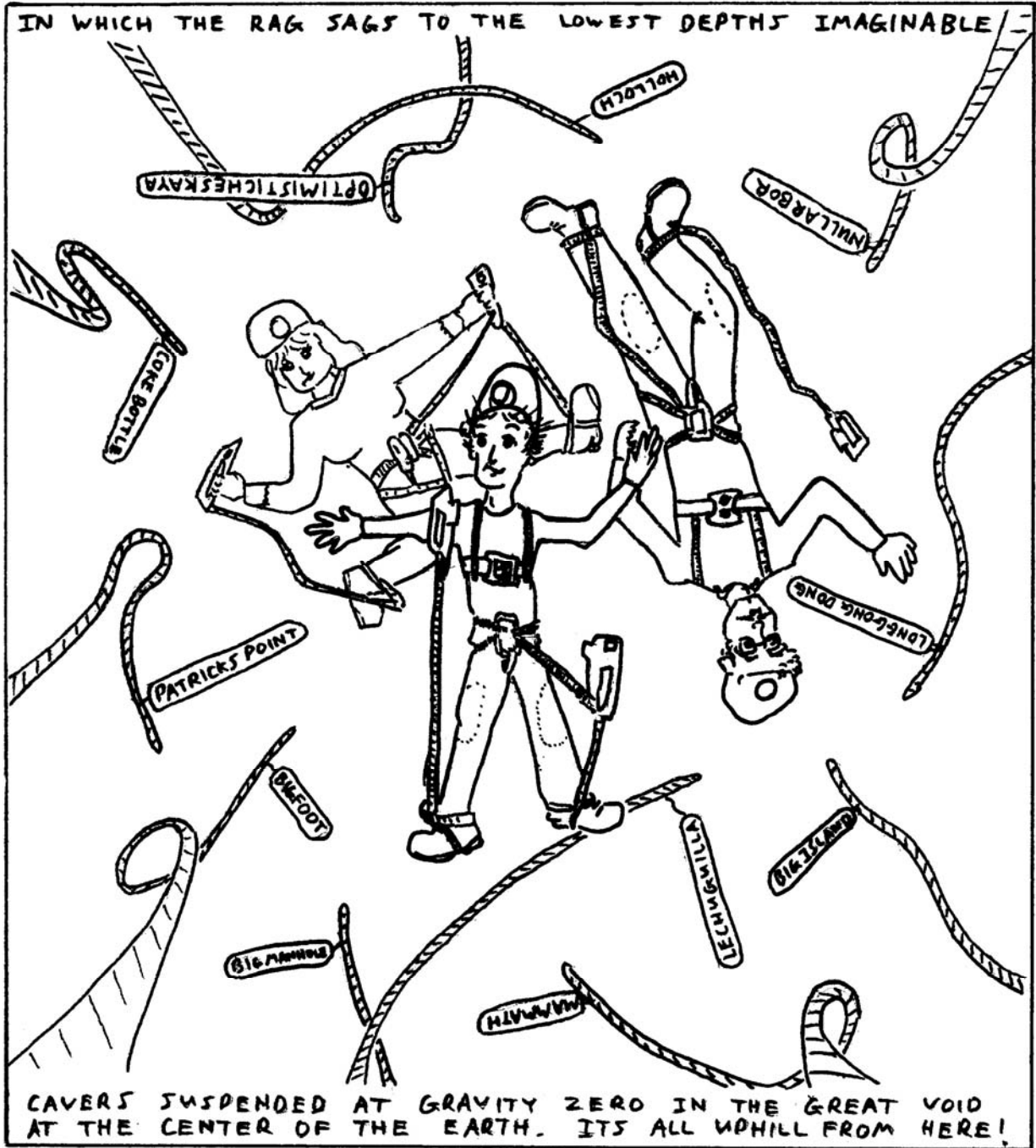


SAG RAG

MAR APR 1992

VOL II NUM 2



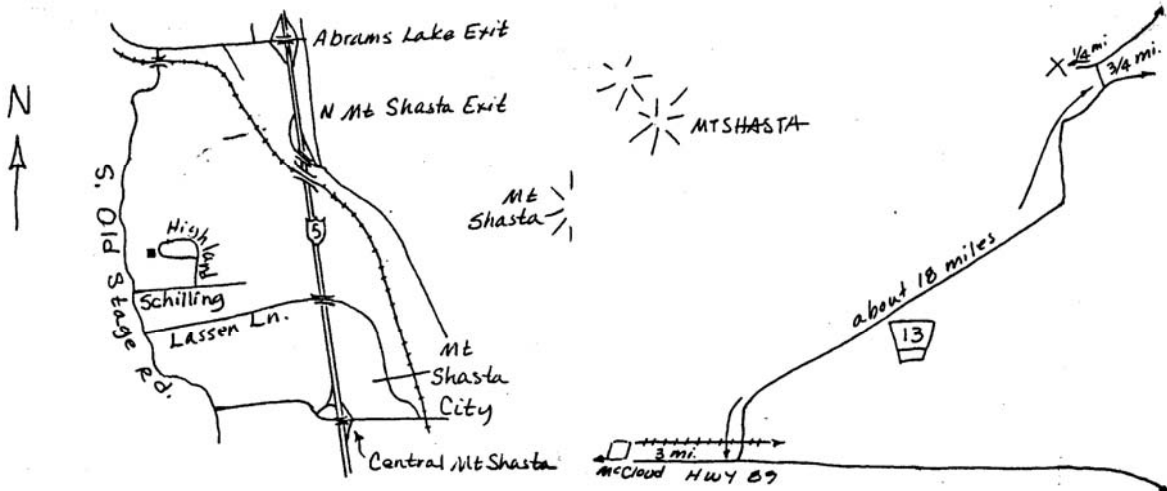
The SAG RAG is published bi-monthly by the Shasta Area Grotto of the National Speleological Society. Typist: Judy Broeckel, 524 Annie Street, Yreka, CA 96097-3015. Newsletter Review Editor: Dick LaForge, 450 Redmond Road, Eureka, CA 95501. Printing: Bill Broeckel. Grotto Meetings are held the second Friday of each month at 7:30 pm. Meeting locations are announced in the newsletter. Membership dues (including newsletter) are \$6, due January 1, and prorated by quarter. Uncopyrighted material may be copied, with credit given to the author and the SAG RAG.

CALENDAR

- May 8 Grotto meeting at Kottinger's 7:30 PM. See map for directions.
 May 22-25 Northwest Caving Association Regional Meet in Idaho. Contact Jim Wolff for more information.
 June 12 Grotto meeting camp-out at Trout Meadows 7:30 PM. See map below.
 Aug. 3-7 1992 NSS Convention at Salem, Indiana.

May SAG meeting: Jim Kottinger's, 1922 Highland Dr., Mt. Shasta, 926-3975.

June SAG meeting: a campout at Trout Creek.



Typist's Notes: At various times it has been suggested that the RAG be sent to prospective members. I would be happy to send a copy to anyone interested in caves or caving. I'd even be happy to send a copy to your grandmother so she can read your trip report. If there are people you'd like to have me send a copy of the RAG to, just send me their names and addresses. Regarding the cover of this issue, it was drawn primarily by Bill (and based on his odd humor) though I lent a hand on the drawing of the people. I appreciate the trip reports and other contributions sent to me (written, not financial as of yet!) and I guess I'm hoping that though we've been even a little more frivolous than usual with this "April Fool" issue, that all's well. Please note that if you haven't yet subscribed (that means paid your \$6 to Liz) this is your farewell issue. What I've been wondering about is where are all the cave maps? I thought it would be nice to put a cave map in each issue of the RAG. (Wouldn't that be nice?) But I'm going to need truckloads of help with this. Maybe someone will do some surveying after the May meeting? Finish the map of Rusty Cave or something?

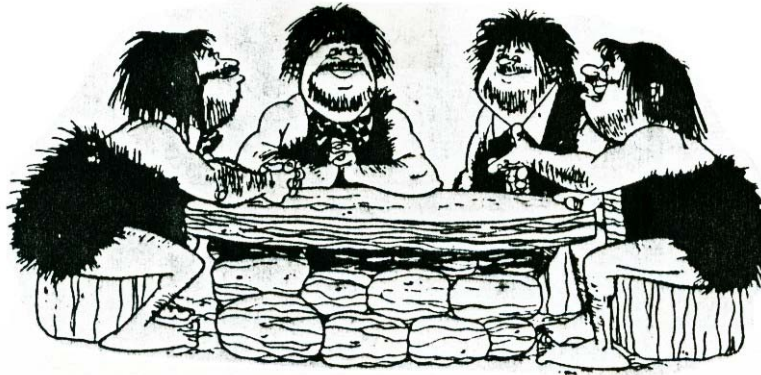
March 13, 1992 Shasta Area Grotto meeting held at Ray Miller's home in Mt. Shasta, CA. Present were Ray Miller, Jim and Liz Wolff, Bill Broeckel, Bill Kenney. Vice chair Jim Wolff officiated. Treasurer's report: Balance of \$587.92.

Old Business: Membership. Ray Miller suggested sending an issue of SAG RAG to prospective members; Bill K. suggested advertising in the Klamath Falls paper to inform the active cavers there about SAG.

- Bill K. asked if there is a "Good Sam" law in California. Yes.
- Jim W. passed around a copy of comments on the implementation of the Federal Cave Resources Protection Act that he sent as an USFS employee.
- The McCloud district USFS is giving SAG special use permit for the cave register program.

New Business: Bill K. and Bill McGahey went to Sentinel Cave and found a sign stating it closed for the bat hibernaculum.

- Jim W. will try to get USFS biologist to Bat Cave before the hibernating bats leave with the goal of closing the man-made entrance.



April 10, 1992 Shasta Area Grotto meeting held at Wolff's home in McCloud, CA. Present were Jim and Liz Wolff, Jim and Bea Kottinger, Ray Miller, Bill Broeckel, Bill Kenney, Neils Smith, and visitor/prospective member Ben Sutton. President Jim K. officiated. Treasurer's report: Balance of \$591.92.

Old Business: Marble Mountain Rescue: Neils has contacted the Lassen County SAR (a mine rescue unit) and states that they are willing to do some training in the field with some advance notice. One of their members may come to the May SAG meeting to talk with members. Bill B. talked with the medical director of the Siskiyou County SAR, describing conditions in the Marbles caves. The medical director stated that none of their SAR people are qualified to do a cave rescue. Ben Sutton, a member of the Siskiyou County SAR, said there is a rescue helicopter based in Montague. He told the SC SAR of SAG's interest in cave rescue. Their next meeting is May 6, 7 - 9 pm. Training is May 16. It was suggested that we schedule a meeting with Charlie Simpson to discuss Marble Mountains caves and potential rescue problems. It was also suggested that Dick LaForge put together a slide presentation.

New Business: Trip reports: Ray reported that roads to the south end of the Freudian Complex are being gated. Can we get legal access? Jim W. said gates are for wildlife.

- John Roth, cave specialist at Oregon Caves, had nominated SAG for the Take Pride in America Award given to groups and individuals for their volunteer efforts.

GROTTO NEWS – GROTTO NEWS – GROTTO NEWS – GROTTO NEWS by Bill Broeckel

New Member: Welcome to new Grotto member Bill Kenney of Klamath Falls! Bill brings knowledge, experience, enthusiasm, and lots of good stories to SAG. When you are ready to take on a really remote and wild cave, be sure to give Bill K. a ring. Now, how many Bills are there out caving?

Even Cleaner: March 1, 1992, Rene Bingham, Karissa Bingham, Genny Bacon, and two adults made a two year follow-up clean-up visit to Barnum Cave. We found this lava tube party cave remaining in relatively good shape. Cardboard boxes lined with plastic were used to remove small-scale trash such as paper bits and chips of broken glass. This requires perseverance although there is some gratification when every last bit of visible trash is removed from an area, and the natural surfaces and features of the cave can be seen and appreciated. Trash is visually very distracting, especially the glass shards which reflect light. The smallest particles of glass can be stubborn to pick off the micro landscape of the lava. Good gloves and “pick-up” tools are recommended for this tedious task. Watch out for the sharp points and edges on the detritus of those “smashing” cave parties.

Grotto T-Shirts: Celebrate 10 years of SAG caving with the purchase of a Grotto T-Shirt! Jim & Liz Wolff have kept everything pertaining to the Grotto over the years, and are now able to run a new batch of silk-screened SAG T-shirts. Shown here is an amateur reduction attempt just to give you readers some idea of what these shirts will look like. Call the Wolffs at (916) 964-3123 right away to get your order in, and to discuss details about what shirt to run through, size, price, and location of logo on shirt. The prices they entertained at the last SAG meeting sounded very reasonable. (Grotto lore regarding logo location: one SAG wag had the logo positioned directly over his “sagging” belly!)



Calendar Apology: The bi-monthly calendar looks pretty thin this issue, but don't be deceived. The summer caving season is upon us. Be sure and come to the next meeting. Note: even the socially impaired can cave with SAG. Just come to the meeting ready to cave the next day. That's how I do it when I can.

Oregon Caves: Another in a series of restoration work trips was conducted March 20-22, 1992. This was a little late in the “restoration season” but by all accounts was again a success. There have been a number of reports in recent issues of the SAG RAG, and this latest effort sounded like more of the same good stuff. Among other things, much work was accomplished in the North Canyon Passage. This time, cavers were removing fill material completely from and out of the cave. Loud applause for all those who participated (Bill Kenney, etc.) – good work, folks! And thanks to the Wolffs for coordinating the Grotto side of the ongoing project.

Mammoth Eggs: “It is quite possible that mammoth eggs are frozen in the ice caves of Modoc County and on the higher slopes of Mt. Shasta. If these eggs can be retrieved and then thawed under a totally controlled environment it may be possible to start a breeding program for the Imperial Mammoth ... Some of the most obvious (economic) values would be ivory, wool, protein, and tourism.” From Mike Slizewski, quoting a letter from the Friends of the Woolly Mammoth, in the Siskiyou Daily News 2/21/92.

Typist note: OK cavers, keep your eyes peeled for those Mammoth eggs!

1992 SHASTA AREA GROTTO MEMBERSHIP LIST

| Name | NSS # | Phone | Mailing List Address |
|-------------------|--------|--------------|---|
| Babros, Wayne | 7671 | 916-287-3408 | POB 965, Alleghany, CA 95910 |
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| Broeckel, Judy | 31703 | 916-842-3917 | 524 Annie, Yreka, CA 96097 |
| Fritzke, Mark | 16064 | 707-822-8227 | POB 4836, Arcata, CA 95521 |
| Henderson, Albert | 25329 | 916-527-7513 | 14500 Kenney Ave, Red Bluff, CA 96080 |
| Henderson, Phylis | 25330 | 916-527-7513 | 14500 Kenney Ave, Red Bluff, CA 96080 |
| Hesseldenz, Tom | 20516 | 916-926-2731 | 101 E Alma, Ste 100-E, Mt Shasta, CA 96067 |
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| Kottinger, Jim | 26621 | 916-926-3975 | 1922 Highland Dr, Mt Shasta, CA 96067 |
| LaForge, Dick | 16560 | 707-443-2626 | 450 Redmond Rd, Eureka, CA 95501-9526 |
| LaForge, Evan | 27121 | 707-443-2626 | 450 Redmond Rd, Eureka, CA 95501-9526 |
| LaForge, Kathy | 32171 | 707-443-2626 | 450 Redmond Rd, Eureka, CA 95501-9526 |
| LaForge, Seth | 22159 | 707-443-2626 | 450 Redmond Rd, Eureka, CA 95501-9526 |
| Marschner, John | | | POB 2671, Weaverville, CA 96093-2671 |
| Marschner, Lucas | | | POB 2671, Weaverville, CA 96093 |
| McGahey, Bill | 31128 | 503-826-9272 | 18508 W Fk Evans Cr Rd, Rogue River, OR 97537 |
| Miller, Ray | 25724 | 916-926-2440 | POB 475, Mt Shasta CA 96067 |
| Molter, Joe | 6531* | 916-243-8924 | 2871 N Bonnyview, Redding, CA 96001 |
| Quinton, Don | 18354 | 619-252-8615 | 1121 Teton Dr, Barstow, CA 92311 |
| Reel, Dorothy | 31877* | 916-938-4078 | 7908 Oak Ridge, Weed, CA 96094 |
| Reel, George | 31876* | 916-938-4078 | 7908 Oak Ridge, Weed, CA 96094 |
| Smith, Niels | 23836 | 916-254-6764 | 721-155 Alexander Way, Standish, CA 96128 |
| Smith, Wayne | | 916-926-2557 | 1737 Davis Pl. Rd, Mt Shasta, CA 96067 |
| Sobol, Todd | 28471 | 707-822-1751 | 1195 A Spear Ave, Arcata, CA 95521 |
| Sutton, Ben | | | POB 1597, Mt Shasta CA 96067 |
| Swofford, Jay | 28398 | 503- | POB 128, Crater Lake, OR 97604 |
| Tenscher, Max | 28397 | 503- | 1540 8th St, West Linn, OR 97068 |
| Wolff, Jim | 7572 | 916-964-3123 | POB 865, McCloud, CA 96057 |
| Wolff, Liz | 11701 | 916-964-3123 | POB 865, McCloud, CA 96057 |
| Wolff, Matt | 14117 | 916-964-3123 | POB 865, McCloud, CA 96057 |

NEW CAVE ROPE HAS ONLY ONE END By Ray Miller

A special committee was appointed by the Shasta Area Grotto to determine how to correct the newly purchased SAG cave rope. The rope as received has only one end. The first suggestion of returning the rope is not possible. It was purchased at a special sale without return privilege.

The rope is easy to rig, but with only one end there is nothing to place over the drop. One of our members tried to descend the rope anyway, and he disappeared for several hours. With much effort he was retrieved, but he returned dizzy and ran off babbling incoherently. It was suggested he be named SAG Chairman for next year.

As with most committees the individually dumbfounded ended up the communally confused. If anyone out there has solved this problem in the past, we would like to hear from you. We are sure one ended ropes are rather common. It's just that we haven't had much experience with this sort of thing.

Typist note: Lost rope ends? Maybe we should try checking the void at the center of the earth.

TRIP REPORTS (the typist is grateful for these reports!!!)

Natural Bridge Caves by Bill Kenney

April 2 Bill Kenney and Willie Ondricek were in Trinity County, CA and spent the day playing in the limerock. Natural Bridge doesn't require lights as the opening is large at both ends, a trough trip is only 170 feet. The ceiling is about 15 ft, and the cave is about 50 feet wide. The most notable thing is probably the rimstone pools at the downstream end (north). By spending a little time looking, we found many other caves in the ridge, mostly small, but we spent 2 hours in one and 2 ½ hours in another, finding a lot of tight passage in a small space. On the south (upstream) face of the cliff over the main cave we entered the highest entrance from a ledge and found it connected to the holes seen just above the main cave. On the north cliff we left unchecked some fairly large entrances that would have to be done on rope from above (another trip). These are well trashed caves as they are very accessible but a person could have a few days' fun if he likes small holes, it is a real Swiss cheese.

Hall City Cave by Bill Kenney

Thursday night, April 2 finds Bill Kenney and Ondricek a little further south in Trinity County. Hall City Cave being a bit further off the beaten track it is much less trashed than Natural Bridge. It is short (100 ft) and straight, all walking passage until the lake is reached at the rear. The lake is fairly clear and appears quite deep (our lights would only reach about 20 ft deep). The lake room is almost completely coated in white calcite with some decorations; pretty. I wouldn't drive all the way from Oregon if this were the only cave I were going to visit but as Willie said it was definitely worth the trip from Hayfork.

Devil's Rock Karst Walk by Bill Kenney

Saturday, April 11, Jim Wolff and Bill Kenney headed for limerock around Devil's Rock, Kenney because he doesn't know enough to get out of the rain, and Jim because he promised to lead. Unfortunately once they had hiked through the poison oak and rain to the top of the rock a fog blew in and the pit was not to be found as the fog had obscured all reference points. On the way down the mountain road Kenney checked a couple of roadside caves, one about 25 ft long, the other about 75 ft, very straight (you could see the entrance from the rear) 1 ft wide, 10 feet high with domes extending upward 30 ft or so about every 15 feet along its length. It appeared phreatic in origin. Not to have wasted the trip they then proceeded to Melvin Cave. [See Jim's report below. The typist.] I (Kenney) enjoyed myself and thank the Wolffs for their hospitality.

Melvin Cave By Default by Jim Wolff [abbreviated by the typist – sorry!]

We had to put in a bolt to go down the entrance drop. I had remembered the entrance climb as an extended chimney, but freeclimbable. Now, it was much wetter and slippery. The walls belled out to 4.5 - 5 ft apart below the halfway mark of the 20 ft climb, and it was smooth and fairly featureless. Bill had a 35' handline, plenty of bolts and hangers, so he put in a nice tie-in for us to use.

Once on the bottom Bill found his way towards "the Melvin", stopping to let me get in the lead again. I stuffed my way through to have a look at the ceiling that we used to shore up with timbers and car jacks . . . It didn't look all that bad, but I wasn't ready to carefully struggle on, so I asked Bill if he wanted to look at the rest of the cave, while I waited there. He said fine, and took off at a gallop.

Bill returned soon. He had found all the rooms I described, but the accuracy of the descriptions was a little off. My, how time flies when you are enjoying yourself, eh?

6TH INTERNATIONAL VOLCANOSPELEOLOGICAL SYMPOSIUM:
THE TEN MINUTE DOCTOR BILL SHOW!!

Hilo, Hawaii, August, 1991

By Bruce Rogers

(continued from previous issue)

(Frank Howarth had just broken through the crust, but had avoided injury.) Yes, Dorothy, sometimes the main tube roof is much less than a meter thick and readily collapses under the weight of a person. Definitely not a fun thing to think about. Despite these minor inconveniences we Bataan Death Marched back through the stygian landscape in heavier rain, eventually arriving at the cars at 2:30 AM and staggered hotel-ward.

Wed. Aug. 7: As announced, the bus, from Laupahoehoe Bus Company (Hawaiian for Point Pahoe) of scenic, rust-colored downtown Paauilo, came at 8 AM and a half hour later most of the recalcitrants were aboard. Our driver was a very friendly Hawaiian-English-Portuguese-whatnot fellow attired in t-shirt, rumpled shorts and lace-less tennies. His colorful companion, who ended up sitting next to Doctor Bill, wore lace-edged lycra shorts, a boldly Hawaiian shirt, enough eye makeup to sink the Arizona, & smoked like a stove ... & she was a real sweetheart. To the tune of Halliday bellowing "Ten minutes! You've only got 10 minutes!" we careened into the Safeway where provisions were secured for the day. Lots of canned ice tea; for the caffeine jolt, some low-cost, low-cal (!) donut holes (we couldn't afford the donuts themselves) and sundry other victuals were purchased. Off we went to Hawaiian Volcanoes National Park with Chief Ranger Jim Martin, who told us that we were in for a real thrill as the heavy rains the preceding days were the edge of a hurricane bearing down on us ... Continuing to the USGS's Hawaii Volcano Observatory we were addressed by both Jim and the Honorable Bob Wright, custodian of Madam Pele's Kilauea Condo.

Another "Ten minutes" in the visitor center and we were off around Halimaumau, the summit caldera, to a short "Ten Minutes Only" stop at Jim's favorite recurrently active vent and channel lined with iridescently glazed peacock-colored lava. Advancing down Chain of Craters Road, another 10 Min. stop at the 1979 flow to debate the origin of a tube Halliday crawled into 10 years ago was made. In addition to this small surface tube, we looked over several spatter cones and a few tree molds. Continuing down the road, we stopped for a late lunch in a torrential downpour at Kamoamo Beach. At this juncture in time, Jim cheerfully informed us by bellowing at the top of his lungs to be heard over the sheets of wind and rain that the typhoon was veering northward and was going to miss the island. The assembled multitude cocked an eye skyward and mumbled "Sure, Jim, Sure ...". The former low beach, early Hawaiian habitation site, and canoe launch area was covered by a huge, 8 foot-high black sand pile made of shattered volcanic glass (spelled. sharp!) which was slowly being eaten away by the high surf. After this semi-refreshing Ten Minute stop, we continued down to the end of the road and legally hiked out in the rain to the outflow. After a Ten Minutes observation time, we grudgingly returned to the bus ... Returning to the Hotel Fish Fry, we cleaned and assembled at a nearby eatery called Fiasco's ... and the name truly was indicative of the place. Actually the food was good, the marguerites outstanding ... & the speed of service abysmal.

Thurs. Aug. 8: Again getting aboard a more powerful old bus with a similarly old but definitely not cheerful driver, we repeated the 10 Minute Safeway Stop and headed for Big Game. Up Mauna Loa we ground until we stopped in the clouds and sheeting rain at about 10,000 feet at Relay Junction Cave. Pouring from the bus, we were led many miles (actually a quarter mile, but it seemed like miles) of broken ground to a relatively deep vertical entrance partially choked with a large lava ball. This, announced Doctor Bill, wasn't where we were going in, but wasn't it pretty? We all smiled, shook our collective heads, and trudged back over the brittle terrain to the entrance located approximately 70 feet from the bus ... The cave was short, but most of its floor was bright ochreous red and had piles of white sodium sulfate secondary minerals scattered throughout its length. After ohhing and ahhing an appropriate time, we scrambled out and returned through the rain to the bus. Next on our agenda was a (with apology to Bruce Rogers, portions of this article were also omitted.)

6TH INTERNATIONAL VOLCANOSPELEOLOGICAL SYMPOSIUM:
THE TEN MINUTE DOCTOR BILL SHOW!!
(continued)

stop at the Lava Ball System. Several tubes had formed and blown out gaggles of lava balls over the surrounding flows. In addition to the extensive, flat, nearly featureless lava ball field, the close proximity of the lightning flashes to the crash of thunder was something in the order of less than 3 seconds ... a calculated distance which caused many of the participants to casually sidle away from the several folks sheltering under several large, metal-shafted umbrellas. Properly impressed, we returned to the bus after the obligatory Ten Minutes Only Stop.

One of the trip's highpoints was then enacted. Arriving at the summit area's extensive observatory complex, the driver of the bus made a lengthy attempt to back the bus off the narrow road and roll it back to tide water. Failing this, he completed his turn around in the blinding rainstorm and we returned down the road to Black Tumuli Cave. A short series of natural bridges led to a very short cave that was lined with crusts and crystal coatings of white secondary minerals ... Exiting in yet another rainstorm, we then drove over to Skylight Cave ... Again, lots of colorful floor and wall colors and secondary deposits were observed. After the Ten Minutes Call was repeated several times, we slowly ambled back to the bus, the group becoming a bit fatigued and more than a bit tired of the Ten Minute war cry. The last survivor on board, the bus then headed downhill to the Hotel Fish Fry. Another exceedingly slow dinner at Fiasco's nearly finished off everyone left still standing.

Fri. Aug. 9: With the ever-feared war cry of Ten Minutes Only ringing in our ears, we again poured from our day-before Friendly Bus into the Safeway and again terrorized the bakery counter. New and wondrous things were seen to disappear into the sweaty little palms of the participants. Glazed donut holes, roast beef, strawberry horchata, yellow water melon, and other less acceptable food-like substances were squirreled away in the nook and crannies of the bus and we were off. Passing over long lava tubes hidden in the iris fields of Pahoehoe, we drove along a gravel road to ... Kazumura Cave, one of the longest lava tubes in the world. Once inside the shallow collapse sink, a low archway led down into a spacious, flat-floored passage averaging 30 ft. wide, 8-12 ft. high, and stretching onward into the darkness like a railroad tunnel. Recent rains from the typhoon had caused the cave to drip water like a leaky faucet throughout its length and made for interesting attempts to photograph the tube's features without getting one's camera gear soaked. Scattered pillars of Ohia tree roots hung down like ragged curtains and the several biologists in the groups carefully inspected each bundle for cave-adapted critters known to haunt such basement condos ... We continued into the cave ... More erratic lava helictites, lava tube slime, up to 1/2" thick, blue flowstone of as yet unknown parentage on the ceiling (!) a huge drained lava pool, and occasional mountains of breakdown were to enliven this portion of the cave ... The group retraced its steps back up the tube and emerged just at the end of a short shower. An impromptu lunch break was then staged. Despite Doctor Bill's incessant whining to take only Ten Minutes, an enjoyable lunch was had by all, including those falling into hidden lava fissures while photographing the roadside orchids.

(To be continued in a future issue)

CAVE QUOTE: "The prehistoric flows contain the longest caves so far explored (in Hawaii). Kazumura Cave has 11.7 km of passage, nearly all along a single tube, separated by just one choke from a downflow extension which is nearly as long again." From The Underground Atlas, Middleton & Waltham.

NEWSLETTER REVIEW By Dick LaForge

This month your enthusiastic newsletter editor eagerly looked forward to reviewing the Western caving scene as recovery from the customary encounter with the IRS.

First and most important, the Underground Express, Vol 11 #4, Fall 1991, has the usual yearly summary of activities in the Marble Mts. It is too long to reprint, and you all who are interested in the Marbles should be subscribing to the Underground Express anyway. (\$7 for 4 issues from Scott Linn, 2185 Kinderman Place, Corvallis, OR, 97330, or join the Grotto for \$6, subscription included.) Or check it out at the SAG library at Wolff's place. It is a long article because there was a lot of activity and discovery at the Marbles last year. Apogee Cave saw quite a few trips, and new caves were discovered and explored. Bigfoot Cave got some added footage and a new entrance. Bob Richardson, with helpers, did a lot of video in Bigfoot and elsewhere, and should come up with a very interesting production.

The Marbles are still a hot caving area and more newcomers are coming every year. Total cave mapped mileage in the Valley now exceeds 24.

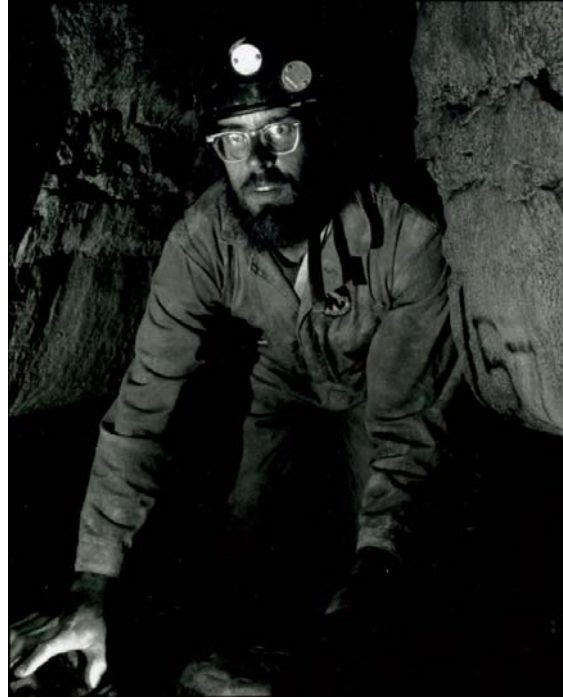
Speaking of that, the KMCTF Rescue and Evacuation Committee is still slowly gathering information and making plans. Hopefully it will have some rescue plans and equipment in place for this summer's season.

One cannot help but notice the lengthy and detailed article, well written I might add, by Liz Wolff, entitled Ice Caves of the Double Hole Crater Lava Flow. It can be found in the Cal Caver, Vol 41 #2, Summer 91. You should all be getting the Cal Caver, so if you missed this article, dig it out and read it. Three Cheers to Liz.

This month's technical reprint is another by Cindy Heazlit of the San Francisco Bay Chapter, Vol 34 #7, July 1991. It is about Chest Boxes, which are a key item in most (but not all) vertical systems. Seat harness, ascenders, descender, and some slings are what else you need. Chest boxes have been somewhat of a problem, as some of the older ones are no longer made. The Gosset Box, which was recently the standard item to use, was made right here in Arcata by Darryl Tomer, its co-inventor with Jim Gosset. Darryl sold out his production equipment to Bob Liebman (Bob and Bob) some years ago, and I was present at the transaction. I remember thinking, "This is the last we will see of the Gosset Box", as setting up to produce them efficiently and accurately is far from simple. Darryl is an experienced machinist and made all the parts in his shop. My prediction was correct, they are now not available.

My ulterior motive in discussing chest boxes is to announce that SAG's Mark Fritzke is going into commercial production with his own design, which has been in prototype testing by several people including Steve Knutson, who is no doubt ascending from a previously unexplored pit somewhere in Guatemala with it as we read this article.

Mark's "Alpine Box" has several innovative features, most notably a fixed rigid bar for the rollers (the Blum Box and the Simmons Roller use a quick release pin). This allows removal of the



Self-portrait of Dick LaForge in part of the Rubber Chicken System of West Virginia in 1984.

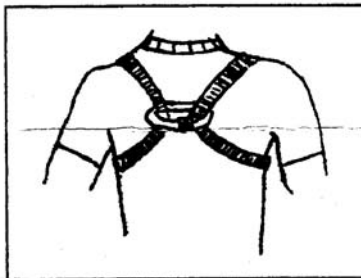
REPRINT REPRINT REPRINT REPRINT

From SFBC Newsletter, Vol. 34, No. 7, July 1991, pages 6-7

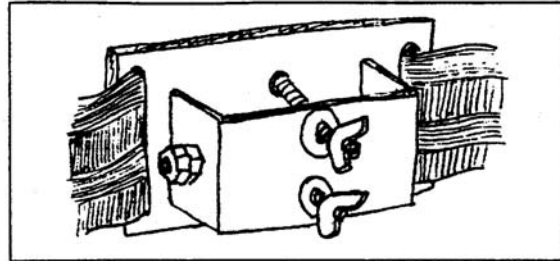
Equipment: The Chest Box

text and illustrations by Cindy Heazlit

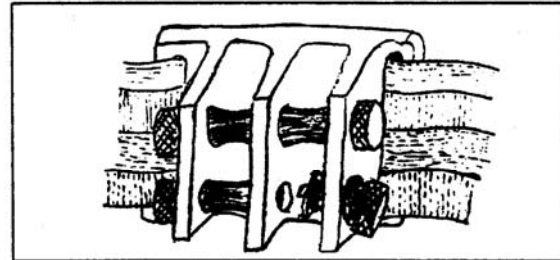
The Chest Harness The chest harness is used as part of a vertical ascender rig. Its purpose is to keep the climber close to the rope for climbing efficiency, as well as to prevent him or her from flipping upside down. When constructed with a cam or prusik knot, it may also be an attachment point in ones ascending system. To work effectively, the harness must be very tight. This can restrict breathing and can be painful. To offset the discomfort, many chest harnesses are constructed with wide webbing, which will make them heavier. The efficiency gained in climbing is the only asset to encourage their use. The Frog and some ropewalker systems have a mechanical ascender attached to the chest harness as an integral part of the ascent system. The exact location of the ascender on the chest depends on the type of system used. The Frog will have a device such as the Croll (mentioned in last month's article) mounted between the chest and the seat harness. The ropewalker system will have the ascender mounted either on the shoulder, or near the breast bone. In both cases, the chest rig functions as one of at least two points of attachment on the rope. It is considered to be a critical part of the ascending system. The chest harness has a different function when used as part of the Mitchell system, or certain ropewalker systems. Its purpose is to keep the climber upright, and to reduce friction when moving an ascender upward.



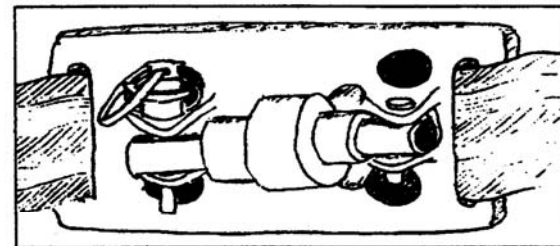
The simplest chest harness consists of a chest sling, often with a carabiner holding it together at the front. This type of harness tends to be sloppier and less efficient than most other harnesses, but is the lightest in weight. These work best in alpine ascending systems where weight must be considered. The home made chest harness and carabiner combination is also the cheapest, a boon for those on a budget. Commercial types are available for those with more money to spend (Petzl). The next step up is a box with a roller in it. This greatly reduces wear and friction during ascent, and increases climbing efficiency.



The Blue Water box was the first commercially available box in this category. It has two major disadvantages. The first is the wear the main tightening bolts can induce on the rope. A gritty rope can also induce wear on the tightening bolts. This problem can be solved by slipping some tubing over the bolts. The second disadvantage is that both sides of the box come open when a rope is being slid in or out of the box. This can be very awkward, especially on a rebelay or crossing a knot. There is no way I know of to overcome this problem. This box is currently available on the market.



The Gossett box was the next box to appear on the market. Its separate rollers overcame the problem of the Blue Water, but added in new ones. The four bolts increased stability of the box, but also increased the number of screws one had to deal with. It was also heavier than the Blue Water box. It works very well with a Mitchell system. It is also unavailable at this time.

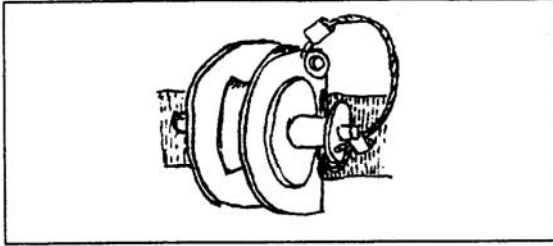


Two newer (and available) boxes are the Blum box and the Simmons roller. The Blum box has the widest availability. Its push pin gate makes opening and closing it a dream. Unfortunately, both sides of the box come open at the same time, like the Blue Water. One can also easily tangle the rope and the ascender line when crossing a knot.

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From SFBC Newsletter, (continued)

Continued from the previous page.



The second box is the Simmons Roller. It comes in both a single and double version. It also has the push pin plunger. The double Simmons has a plunger on each side of the box, allowing one access to one side of the box at a time. Simmons rollers have a low availability, but are worth the wait. There are many other types of chest boxes available, with varying degrees of availability. Currently selecting one depends not so much on function, as much as whether one can buy it.

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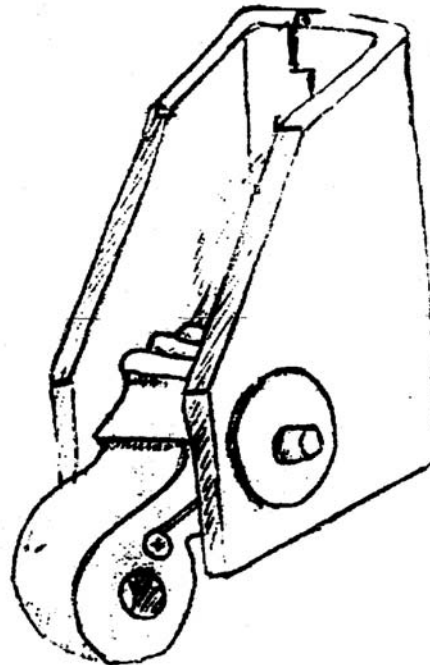
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A Review of the new Gibbs Ascender.

by Cindy Heazlit.

Gibbs has just introduced a new ascender. In theory, its hinged shell allows for one handed operation. This shell is now cast aluminum, which makes it stronger but much more brittle. The new Gibbs tests at 2500 pounds compared to the old version, which tested at 1100 pounds. It is also spring loaded. I had an opportunity to play with the new Gibbs at the convention and I can't say many good things about it. It is bigger, bulkier, and heavier than the old version. The spring loading also makes it grab the rope, so it no longer floats. I also had more problems clipping it on to the rope (with BOTH hands) than I did with my old Gibbs. This may be due to a lack of familiarity with the equipment, but I heard the same complaint from others. Judging from these reactions, I think that this particular ascender will only show up in rescue caches, where strength and durability are the major concern.



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rope or sling while under some load if desired. Also, either of the two sides may be opened independently by a very clever, easy-working cam mechanism. Mark is having the parts professionally machined and hopes to be selling soon.

Mark will be off to SE Alaska in about a month, as last summer, to find caves for the USFS. There are many square miles of karst there and quite a potential for record USA depth, but he has only found small caves so far.

It should be noted that there are vertical systems that do not use a chest box. Mine, for example, uses a Gibbs on a sling going over the shoulder from the waist carabiner to a loop on the back of my seat harness. This keeps me very upright without use of hands on vertical drops, and can be easily slipped off the shoulder for slopes. It is very light and compact, a characteristic not shared by chest boxes.

I have noticed, however, that people tend to stick with the system they start with, because they get used to it and it is paid for. I started with the three-Gibbs classic Ropewalker system just by copying someone else the day before heading off to the Guads for the first time. We tied it up and went off to a local park to practice by tossing a rope over a swing-set. It worked, and I have not changed it since, except to replace the 1" webbing every 5 years or so. Its disadvantage is in slowness on and off rope, a problem only in a few circumstances, for example rebelay. As young rock-climbers are getting into caving, and new leads are getting harder to find, there is a trend to more flexible climbing rigs that enable one to go up, down, sideways switch ropes, etc. with ease, as Bill Farr has been trying to teach us about.

I may be making up another system soon, however, as I cannot find my old one after taking it to the Fall restoration at Oregon Caves. It was all in a dark green nylon bag with a zipper. Anybody seen it?

That's all for this issue. Adios Muchachos! (Typist note: & Muchachas!)

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