

SAG RAG

MAY-JUNE 1992

VOLUME 11

NUMBER 3

** TENTH ANNIVERSARY **

SHASTA AREA GROTTO



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.

1992 NSS CONVENTION

August 3 - 7

Salem, INDIANA

Mark your calendar now and plan to come to what is guaranteed to be the largest NSS Convention ever! The campground has a private lake, beachfront, barefootin' grass, cabins, lodges, and plenty of camping. Caving will be highly encouraged with a guidebook which will highlight over 80 Indiana Caves.

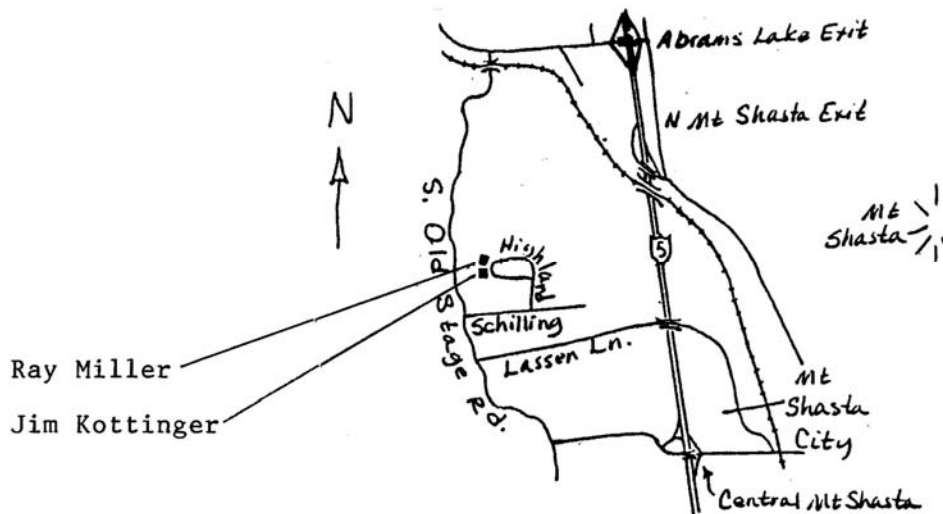
INDIANA, THE HEARTLAND OF THE KARSTLAND

CALENDAR

July 10, 1992	Grotto meeting at Ray Miller's 7:30 PM.
Aug. 3-7, 1992	1992 NSS Convention at Salem, Indiana.
Aug. 14, 1992	Grotto meeting at Kottinger's at 7:30 PM.
Sept. 25-27, 1992	Western Regional at Berkeley Tuolumne Camp.

July SAG meeting at Ray Miller's home, 1870 Highland Dr., Mt. Shasta (916) 926-2440.

August SAG meeting at Kottinger's home, 1922 Highland Dr, Mt. Shasta (916) 926-3975.



OBITUARY

Bob Richardson 1946 – 1992

Bob was a familiar figure to Marble Mtn. cavers. His tall frame, small grin hiding underneath a bushy mustache, and bright glint in the eye were recognized far and wide. He was a gentle man with a dry sense of humor. His death came as a surprise to everyone. He seemed born with a God-given grace and talent that is remembered by many who knew him well. He was a man of many talents, who didn't have a need to be noticed.

Bob caved in many areas and was responsible for finding, exploring, and mapping several virgin caves. He was one person in the KMCTF who could be counted on to find at least one new cave a year. He loved to dig into tight caves if there was the slightest hint of moving air or darkness lurking beyond the rocks.

He was an avid videographer, making movies in the Marbles & other areas. His film exploits began while he was in high school taking surfing pictures for movies like "Endless Summer" and "Glass Wall". In recent years he had been working on caving videos in the Marble Mtns. to show what the caves are really like. His love for the caves and the karst areas was obvious in the videos.

Bob is survived by his wife Michelle, daughter Melissa, & stepson Eric. Contributions in his name may be made to the National Speleological Society's exploration fund, Cave Ave., Huntsville, AL, 35810. Parts of this obit. were cribbed from the Santa Cruz Sentinel of Friday, May 29, 1992.

He will be missed by many cavers and friends.

Liz Wolff

May 8, 1992 Shasta Area Grotto meeting review

Present were Jim & Liz Wolff, Bill & Cheryl Kenney, Jim & Bea Kottinger, George Reel, Bill Broeckel, and Neils Smith. Jim K. (host and chairman) called the meeting to order. Treasurer's report: \$524.98. Old business: George asked about contacts with Siskiyou County SAR. Bill B. said that Bill Balfry is a good contact, & probably most sympathetic to cavers. SAG T-shirts: eight shirts ordered so far, we need new ink. Still no word on the special use permit for cave registers. New business: Mark Fritzke will have his Alpine Chest Box for sale soon. There will be only 50 available. SAG will be giving a slide show for the public at Sisson Museum June 20. It will be based on, and expanded from the slide show put together for the museum display. Bill B. put an ad in the Siskiyou Daily News for the grotto meeting with contact people; no responses. Bill B. will be carrying first aid stuff to the Marbles May 30th. Neils moved and Liz seconded the meeting be adjourned at 8:25 PM after 33 minutes of meeting time.

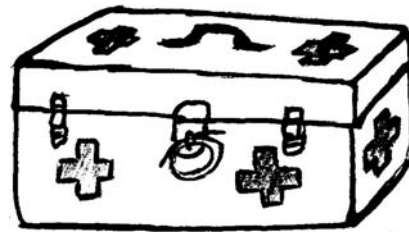
GROTTO NEWS by Bill Broeckel

New Member: Welcome to new member Ben Sutton. Ben has a passion for virgin caves and a willingness to take on horrible passages in hopes of greater spaces beyond. Wow! That is some great combination of caving virtues. Ben lives in Mt. Shasta with his wife and daughter, Esther and Camilla respectively.

HAWAII: Congratulations to Dick and Kathy LaForge regarding an upcoming pleasure trip to the Big Island of Hawaii. We understand that this trip is something of a honeymoon, but we certainly expect some cave reports out of this anyway.

NSS NEWS: With pride we see that the SAG RAG received mention in the most recent issue of the NSS News, on the weight of Bruce Rogers' map and description of Rollerdrome, a LBNM lava cave featured in the Sept-Oct. issue of the SAG RAG last year. Calling all cavers! The SAG RAG needs maps of new caves this year too. I might have to dig out a ruler and start measuring stuff myself although it would be a sad thing to afflict the caving community with the miserable caves I have in mind.

FIRST AID KIT: SAG has installed a first aid kit in the Marble Valley grain shed. This kit is intended for the use as needed of anyone injured or hurting in the Marble Mtns with access to the grain shed. The metal box looks something like the picture here. Red crosses are painted on the box. SAG RAG will publish a list of contents as space is available.



OBITUARY: We will all be missing Bob Richardson, and feel sad to lose him so suddenly and unexpectedly. Bob was a true Marble Mtns caver, and one of the highest caliber. There are caves out there which will now never be found because Bob died too soon. Last fall I remember Bob crashing around in the underbrush, looking for entrances. We couldn't even see him. "I found a cave" he said. Then louder "I found a cave!" "It's blowing air!" It took 10-15 minutes just to reach his location. He was holding back a wall of bushes, revealing a body sized hole in the rock exhaling cool, humid cave breath. "OK Bill" he said, "Go in there and check it out." He may as well have been talking to all of us.

June 12, 1992 Shasta Area Grotto meeting review

Present: George and Dorothy Reel, Ray Miller, Jim Kottinger, Liz Wolff, Ben Sutton, & Bill Broeckel. Jim K. opened the meeting in the Reel's trailer at Trout Cr. Camp. Treasury: \$504.03. The new ACA and Cave Conservationist, & an ad for a new Ozark cave book were circulated. Old business: cave register use permit; still no action by USFS. T-shirts; ink on order. Siskiyou County SAR; new sheriff contact living in Big Springs needs new ACA copy. New Business: Jim W. invited to Wash. DC to work on the Cave Resources Protection Act for the USFS. SAG meetings as announced, also Sept. 11 at Ben Sutton's in Mt. Shasta (bring lawn chairs). Interested cavers; a Weed dentist, and two Mt. Shasta men. The death of Bob Richardson, Marble Mtn. and Santa Cruz caver, announced. Trip reports: Reels and Jim K. went to 3-Level; Jim W. and Neils went to Catwalk; Bill B. and Ben went to Sign and Porcupine Butte caves. Bill B. introduced the grotto to "Bat Child Found in Cave" in the latest Enquirer. The meeting was ended at 8:13 PM after 28 minutes.

A HISTORY OF THE SHASTA AREA GROTTO

by Liz Wolff

The Early Years 1979-1983: Before the Shasta Area Grotto formed, there was the Gaping Holes Gang, consisting of Tom Hesseldenz, Steve Knutson, Arley Kisling, Claude and Mary Belle Smith, and Jim & Liz Wolff; all were NSS members. The gang caved in the Marble Mtns, on Tombstone Mtn, around Shasta Lake, and in the caves east of McCloud. It was Claude's work that actually organized the grotto, with the addition of several Redding cavers.

The first meetings had similar agendas: pizza, business, and a slide show. An application to form a grotto was filled out, signed, and sent to the NSS. February, 1982, our first meeting included elections and discussion of each article of the proposed constitution. Incorporation was looked into, and dues were set at \$2 per year. The first official meeting included a trip to Samwel Cave. We were formally chartered as the Shasta Area Grotto March 14, 1982. During the summer, meetings were held in such diverse places as a fire lookout, a helispot on the flanks of Tombstone Mtn., Willow Creek, Eureka and Cecilville.

In later months members worked out a liability waiver, designed a membership form, set up a safety committee to create a safety and equipment handout, and an equipment fund; design logos for the grotto; and the first grotto rope was bought. Cave trips were held in diverse areas; Shasta Lake, Tombstone Mtn., lava areas, Willow Creek, and on the coast. A clean-up trip for Samwel Cave graffiti was also discussed. We became involved with the Boy Scouts and bat boxes; with the Forest Service and cave management; and the KMCTF in the Marble Mtns. SAG members appointed a conservation chairman; began cave mapping and inventory (including entrance photos) efforts; and attained a minimum of vertical competence for each member.

A delegate was chosen to attend the Congress of Grottos at the NSS convention in Bend, OR; at the convention SAG found several interested cavers from Red Bluff, Susanville and Eureka areas. SAG joined the Western Region. As a consequence of joining the Region, SAG was host to the 1983 regional. It was held in the Labor Day weekend heat at Salt Creek campground on Shasta Lake. Many grottos were represented, and lots of caving was done.

Most organizational business had been ironed out early in our first year, but in the late fall elections came again. We hadn't set any form for the nomination and election of officers. So by-laws covering elections and membership requirements for new people were set up.

By the end of 1982 SAG had also began publishing a newsletter. The 1982 newsletter issues contain a history of myths and actual exploration of Tombstone Mtn; fiction; trip reports of caving areas all over the western United States; the by-laws; and the joys and vagaries of electric lights. There were only two issues that year. It was not named the SAG RAG until 1983. The newsletter was done entirely on a computer printer with only the occasional Xeroxed cover, cave map, or direction to meetings.

1984-Present: During the next 8 years SAG grew with the addition of cavers from southern Oregon, Mt. Shasta, Yreka and Eureka. SAG members took part in putting on an NSS convention locally; a second grotto rope was purchased; many new caves were found and mapped, with several survey projects begun and most finished; a few members participated in bat studies; another Western Regional meeting was hosted; editorship of the RAG changed hands and the entire newsletter is Xeroxed; an exhibit for the Sisson Fish Hatchery Museum was planned and executed. A project for putting registers in many of the most heavily visited caves is currently ongoing; restoration work continues at Oregon Caves; and recently members have been working on a rescue plan and cache for the Marble Mtns. Caving areas are still pretty much the same with most work being done in the Marble Mtns and the lava fields east of McCloud.

It may sound busy, it was all fun, but mostly we went caving. After all, what is an underground organization for anyway?

COUNTING BATS (THE BATS WON)

By Ray Miller

The phone rang. It was Liz Wolff calling to say we could get to Bat Cave, so let's go count bats while they were still hibernating. It was April 2nd, and it wouldn't be very long before the little critters woke up. When we got there the moths were plentiful, so bat awakening day was at hand. But I am getting ahead of the story.

The road was clear and free of fallen trees as had been advertised. Our first obstacle was a most welcome sight. A grader and roller were overhauling Obsidian Road. A short consultation with the road crew resulted in ground rules allowing each of us to go about our business without disrupting the other's operations.

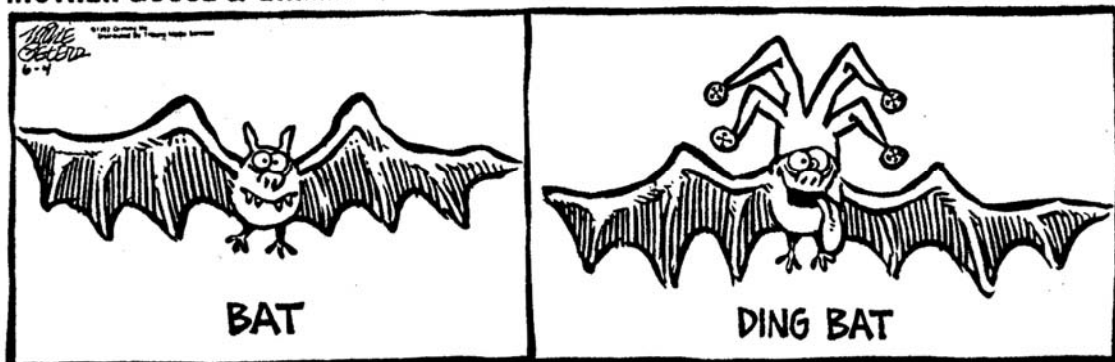
At the cave Liz discovered she had forgotten her boots. Rather than take the time to get mine out of my cave box I decided I would also tennie tour. Bat Cave has a mostly smooth floor. As we left twilight Liz found her head light wouldn't work. I lent her an extra conventional flashlight I had. Onward and downward. Two bats later my 6 volt bat spotting lantern quit. We could see well enough with my headlight and the flashlight Liz was using, & besides we still had plenty of backup lights if needed. CHARGE!! Total bat count for the cave was 3 Plecotus.

On the way out the cloth top of my sneaker hung up on a projecting rock, and I tripped. Did a swan dive, and ended up with a knee that looked like it belonged on a kid learning to roller skate. But just to show the old silver lining is still around, my 6 volt lantern started working again.

Things learned number one: there were three bats hibernating in Bat Cave in early spring of 1992. The important thing here is the fact the bats were counted. Finding three bats this year is as meaningful as finding 97 bats in past years. Any time you are in a known bat hibernaculum when it should be in use please check for bats and give your results to Liz or myself. This information is for an ongoing study under the direction of Dixie Pierson at UC Berkeley.

Things learned number two: us old guys need all the help we can get. We have enough trouble under the best of circumstances, so we should not handicap ourselves with improper equipment while caving. Like sneakers.

MOTHER GOOSE & GRIMM



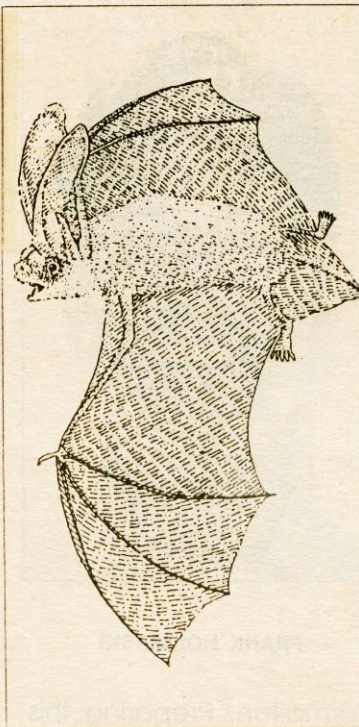
BATS ARE MORE AFRAID OF US THAN WE ARE OF THEM

The following article was published under this title in the April 1992 issue of Siskiyou County Adventures, a monthly feature of the Siskiyou Daily News.

Big-eared Bat

They're furry little animals and people usually like furry little animals, they fly and people usually like birds, butterflies and such. But bats have been hated and feared by most throughout the ages. Vampires turn into bats to sneak in windows and Halloween brings bat costumes out of the closets. They are actually sensitive little creatures that stay out of our way in the daytime and eat unloveable insects for us in the evenings.

The Townsend's big-eared bat (*Plecotus townsendii*) is found throughout California but the details of its distribution are not well known. Once considered common, this bat is now considered a species of special concern due to sensitivity to disturbances of roosting sites. A



single visit from a spelunker may result in abandonment of the roost. All known nursery colonies in limestone caves in California apparently have been abandoned. Numbers repor-

tedly have declined steeply in California. Local populations have been spotted in remote limestone caves in the Klamath National Forest.

Big-eared bats are just emerging from hibernation about now. They hibernate from October to April. They are nocturnal and tend to stick close to home. They make their homes in caves, mines, tunnels, building, bridges of other human-made structures and may use separate sites for night, day, hibernation, or maternity roosts. They need free water and often require two openings from their roosts.

Small moths are the principal food of this species. Beetles and a variety of soft-bodied insects also are taken. They capture their prey in flight using echolocation, or by gleaning from foliage. Flight is slow and maneuverable. They are capable of hovering.

It may sound batty but the Townsend's Big-eared bat would seem to fall into the old more-scared-of-us-than-we-are-of-them category.

Information provided by Jan Johnson-Knight, a wildlife biologist for the Klamath National Forest Service.

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

Hilo, Hawaii, August, 1991 Part three.

By Bruce Rogers

Returning to the highway, we then stopped at Lava Trees State Park. In 1790, so the story goes, the Russo-Swedish War ended with the treaty of Wereloe and a series of fissures split the countryside open in the middle of an ohia forest in Hawaii, disgorging sheets of lava nearly 15 ft. deep. The burbling lava coated the trees, many of which burst into flame, then drained back into the fissures from whence it came. Today, upright and collapsed molds of the trees can be seen spotted around the landscape. The fissures themselves are deep but unexplored ... and for a very good reason : the commodes in the park drain into them, discouraging all but the most nasally handicapped. For his part, our driver practiced, con mucho gusto, his Karaoke Bar singing, belting out such favorites as "Be My Baby Tonight", and a veritable cascade of Elvis tunes; it wasn't half bad at that. His smiling companion with the technicolor eye makeup slept through the whole affair. After driving the rest of the park visitors from the grounds, we again boarded EI Autobus Lau Pahoehoe and launched ourselves toward what appeared to be the latest pop metal sculpture among the papaya trees. Seems back in 1973 the state began drilling geothermal wells in an attempt to ease Hawaii's dependence on imported oil. In addition to several blow-outs which showered adjacent houses with drilling mud, clouds of sulfur dioxide, and 3:00 AM, 90+ decibel shrieks of uncontrolled steam have greeted the attempts to harness the geothermal below the Puna district. In addition to these delights, the new drill pads are located within yards of burial caves important to Native Hawaiians. It appears that someone needs to take these boys by the hand and teach them the correct methods of playing with live steam.

After viewing this scene of possible future disaster, we passed south, crossing several low areas of road posted with "Road Floods At High Tide" signs ... and under nearly a foot and a half of sea water. Continuing, we arrived at MacKenzie State Park and spilled from Lau Pahoehoe like blooded marines over the beaches of Peleliu. After looking at the surf crashing into several blowholes and surging into the blocked sea cliff entrance of Main MacKenzie Cave, ... [we] rambled up the tube past imperfectly formed tube-in-tubes, lava balls, and lots of floor channels. Exiting via a crumbling ledge and loose breakdown slope, we thrashed back through the jungle and casurine trees and entered Dwelling Cave. Bypassing a thermally heated crawl way, we ambled down past a skylight enclosed by a ring of banyan tree roots and exited through a thoroughly trashed out End of the Hippie Trail grotto.

After a short pause to watch the rain fall and waves crash against the shore, we boarded the bus and continued past the local clothing optional beach and three natural bridges (one carrying the road). Here we dodged the falling passion fruit and looked into a fortified cave. The cave was small, the entrance rocked in to only allow a single person to slither in, and the jungle behind the cave covered with terraces and walls of a long abandoned village. After this we sped past Trash Cave, nearly filled with garbage but compacting – it may reopen in a few years – to the eastern end of the lava flow at Kehena, a hamlet near the now buried Kalapana Black Sand Beach (now covered with nearly 35 feet of lava) and the ill-fated Kalapana Homesites (now covered with a 70 foot deep lava flow). A short stop near Kamalii Road was made to view the 30 foot high spatter cones which grew in 1955 in the back yard of the first propagators of the multi-colored anthuriums which bring so much mula to the Big Island's nurseries. Arriving back at the Fish Fry, 14 of us hastily showered, dressed, and tore back over to the Volcano House for a sumptuous Congratulations-You've-Survived-The-Doctor-Bill-Show dinner.



Saturday, Aug. 10: After a late start we journeyed to Kaumana Cave and began videotaping our way through the cave. Due to the heavy rains, the interior of the cave was very drippy, which suited the drips wandering through the passages. A short ways downstream in the tube, a real live stream wound its way along the floor, disappearing and reappearing with disconcerting regularity. Further along the passage it emerged from a lining crack as a 3 foot high waterfall, flooring the passage for nearly a hundred feet with a shallow pool. Among the highlights of this cinematographic endeavor was upwards of four tries to photograph a red, wrinkled floor, several burnt out lights necessitating a run back to the surface for reinforcements, a here unnamed camera operator walking away from their camera, forgetting the power cord connecting same to operator's battery pack, ... and a lonesome white cricket ambling over the breakdown near the bottom of the cave as the glare of ersatz Hollywood lights nearly blinded it. At last sanity prevailed, the roots became too thick to dodge, and it was dinner time. A quick return to Hilo netted a fairly passable Mexican place – Roulo's – with midori margaritas and a moderate case of indigestion.

Sunday, Aug. 11: Due to a revolt of the camera snuffies and cast, the day was spent in frivolous pursuits. A leisurely breakfast at Uncle Billy's was followed by a serious shopping spree at Hilo Hatties. The road beckoned and we headed west along Saddle Road for a sunny view of Rainbow Falls and The Boiling Pots – a series of plunge pools in columnar basalt which had been the favorite playground of Hawaiian royalty in years past. Altering course, we then headed north along Highway 19, then turned off onto the old highway. We wound our way past old abandoned cane mills and quietly rusting small towns, mossy bridges spanning swimming holes, and flower-decked jungle gorges. Eventually we became lost in the cane fields, ambled through a working cane mill – dodging 22 wheelers, each filled with 14 tons of sugarcane, – and wound up turning off to Akaka Falls State Park. Here we again traversed the trail backwards from the signs and viewed the 420 foot falls, nearby 360 foot Kahuna Falls, and the profusely flower-decorated jungle and bamboo groves in the gorge. Returning to Honoma, we stopped at the noodle shop for miso soup & passion fruit floats, then headed north after watching the staff make innumerable shaved ices – sort of a grand-daddy ice cone the size of the Trans America Pyramid Building. The day's adventure ended up at the lip of Waipo Valley, the end of the turista road. The mile wide, six mile long valley was King Kameamea's old sod (he who united the various Hawaiian Islands into one nation by force and negotiation between 1790 and 1810) and also marks the southern edge of a large wilderness area which comprises the northeast corner of the island. The day was complete with a return to the small town of Kanapaa where we entered a somewhat laid-back, tired looking hotel and were treated to one of the best \$9 dinners fish or chicken we've ever had. The rest of the return trip to Hilo was uneventful.

Monday, Aug. 12: After a leisurely breakfast at Uncle Billy's and a raid on the Basically Books store, we broke ranks, the longer-staying contingent returning to Kaumana Cave to shoot additional footage and play tourist for three more days, and the rest of us heading to the airport for the long flight home. The return to the hubbub of the work-a-day world was decidedly anticlimactic.



NEWSLETTER REVIEW 6/20/92

By Dick LaForge

This review may not make it into the June Rag, as it is a week late getting to the Editor, Judy Broeckel. Last week your dilatory correspondent was under his house in his spare time, fixing wires and pipes, rather than noticing the RAG deadline on his calendar. The problem was that his house fell off its foundation during the recent earthquake, and was raised up and a new foundation was being made. When the house was sitting right on the ground I thought of a humor photo to set up and take: stuff a shirt arm and glove, carbide lamp in the hand, have it sticking out from under the house, maybe half a helmet showing, and title it "Hazards of Pseudocaving in Earthquake Country". You will have to use your imagination, as I didn't have time to do it.

I actually was under the house 2 days before the earthquake, but a close miss is still a miss.

This RAG is ahead of schedule, so not a lot of newsletters have arrived. I note an article by Jim Wolff in the April 92 Cal Caver on the 1991 Regional late last summer, you already know about that, but 3 cheers for Wolff & all the others of you who helped put on that event.

For reprinting I have 2 choices for the Editor, who will choose which and how many will be reprinted. To add to your storehouse of technique, there are instructions on tying a bowline on a coil, (the coil goes around your waist), which is very useful for belaying when you have no seat harness.

The other is of the Adventure type, a lengthy article by Peter Bosted in the San Francisco Bay Chapter Newsletter, April 1992, on his participation in the Sistema Culcateco system in Oaxaca State, Mexico. His article gives a good idea of the hard and often frustrating work involved in finding & exploring caves in Mexico. Of course, there is also the incredible excitement of finding new and potentially major cave. Having been on two of Steve Knutson's Lost World expeditions to Mexico, I highly recommend a Mexico trip to all experienced cavers as the experience of a lifetime.

Good Caving!



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From SFBC Newsletter, Vol. 35, No. 4, April 1992, pages 3-6

The 1992 Cheve Expedition by Peter Bosted

Sistema Cuicateco is a large cave system located in northern Oaxaca State, in Mexico. With a depth of 1386 m, it is the fourth deepest in the world, and the deepest in the western hemisphere. With over 24 km of passages, it is one of the longest caves in Mexico. Although the cave has long been a major religious and ceremonial site for the local Indian groups, modern exploration began only six years ago. This year's expedition was my fifth annual pilgrimage to the area, and I was hoping for a better trip than last year, when the tragic death of Chris Yeager near Camp II provided a very unhappy ending.

Getting Started

This year's expedition began on February 18. During the three previous weeks, another group of cavers from Indiana, Illinois, Poland, and Mexico, had successfully removed Chris's body, which was buried near the accident site last year. When I arrived on February 20, I met Don Coons and Manuel, a caver from Oaxaca (sorry, I forgot his last name) in Cuicatlan to discover that they had just spent two days in Oaxaca obtaining influential letters of permission. We stayed in the village of Papalo that night, and in the morning the Mayor said we could go ahead with starting the expedition, as long as somebody went to Mexico City to get even more paperwork. We drove up the llano (the meadow at 2800 m elevation where the Cueva Cheve entrance is located) in the afternoon and met up with Matt Oliphant and Nancy Pistole (this year's expedition coordinators), Stan Allison, and Mike Frasier. Louise Hose, Bill Storage, and Tom Miller were away for a few days to look for cave entrances near Hierbabuena.

Cueva Palomitas

After setting up camp, we decided to go for a little hike above the 80 m cliff that towers over the Cheve side of the llano. Mike and I used a 100 m rope to check out a little cave that Dan Clardy and I had found last year. Mike and I went down the first 30 m drop over nice flowstone, then down several more shorter drops to a 10 m long crawlway. We stopped at the end of the crawlway at the top of a 5 m pit. We exited just before dusk after a two hour trip. A rainstorm came in that lasted all night. Fortunately, this was the last heavy rain of the expedition.

The next day Mike and several others went off to the Pinnacles area to look for a deep fissure he had found last year. They didn't find it, but they did find a new trail that cut the travel time each way from 4 to 2 hours! Stan and I decided to return to the cave I had visited the day before. We went down the 5 m pit that had stopped progress the day before, and found ourselves at the base of an infedding dome. Just beyond this was a 100 m section of narrow, popcorn-filled canyon that made the earlier crawlway look

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From SFBC Newsletter, (continued)

like piece of cake! Stan deserves credit for pushing this nastiness while I ate lunch. I met him on his way back, right at the tightest part. Somehow my helmet got stuck, and while I was pulling it out, the right stem of my glasses broke. I carried on without them - fortunately the passage was small enough I didn't need to see very well. Stan helped me get down a tricky 8 m pit (we didn't have any rope along) and we went a few meters past his turn-around point to find ourselves at the top of a 20 m unclimbable pit. We surveyed out, naming the narrow canyon the "Gnarly Fissure". After 30 stations and 100 m it was getting late, so we left the survey up the entrance pitches for another day. It was dark by the time we headed down the mountain, and I managed to take a wrong turn in negotiating the complicated route through a series of sinkholes. After an hour of thrashing, we finally got back on route just as a dense fog settled in. Next time, we'll mark the route and look at the compass moré often.

We decided to name this cave Palomitas (Popcorn) after the most conspicuous feature in the crawls. I didn't get a chance to return, but later in the expedition Nancy, Dan Clardy, and Lisa DeThomas (both from SFBC) surveyed from the Cheve entrance to Palomitas. Peter Haberland joined Dan and Lisa for the survey from the entrance to the beginning of the Gnarly Passage. The following day (February 29) Mike, Dan, and Peter surveyed another 45 stations beyond the Gnarly Fissure, following a nice canyon passage with good airflow and a small stream flowing from pothole to pothole. We had been expecting the cave to connect to the Surprise Stream passage in Cheve, but a line plot made back in camp showed the cave to now be too deep (-160 m) and heading towards Camp II instead of the Cheve entrance area. This was born out during the final trip to this cave, by Dan and Stan. The next pitch turned out to be 120 m deep, with strong wind and a waterfall that chilled the explorers enough to make them turn back in going passage.

Rigging the main cave

By February 21, the Hierbabuena crew had returned (they found a few small caves, the biggest being a 37 m dead-bottomed pit) and Karlin Meyer, Peter Haberland, and Chris Welsh had arrived. Don took off to Mexico City to get more permission papers, while Matt and Manuel went to Cuyamacalco and Santa Ana to see about getting permission to cave in these areas (it had not been granted last year, forcing the cancellation of a planned trip to the Resurgence area). Meanwhile, Karlin, Stan, Tom and I went into Cheve to rig the first 10 drops in an eight hour trip. This took longer than usual due to recent body recovery expedition. The next day I went with Mike and Nancy to again look for his famous deep blowing fissure, but again no luck. We had

beautiful weather though! A few more drops were rigged that day in Cheve before unintentionally running out of mallions. Two more cavers joined us that day: Roman and Philippe, both from Switzerland. The next day they joined Karlin, Stan, Tom and I for another rigging trip. This time we got all the way to the end of the Turbines, which is the wettest and loudest section of the cave. With the first 28 drop rigged, and only a few more before Camp II, we were now reading for camping trips. The Swiss took pictures on the way out, and we had all exited by about 3 a.m. While we were rigging, the other members of the expedition gave a slide show and vertical demonstration in Papalo, which is the municipal seat in and the closest village at a distance of 6 km. The slide show was very well attended (over 400 people) and helped the locals understand a little better what we were doing. It was especially good having a native Spanish speaker (Manuel) giving the presentation and answering questions.

Camping at -1200 m

We spent Monday resting up and packing. On Tuesday morning Dan and Lisa finally arrived: they had had trouble with the truck and getting insurance to enter Mexico. In the afternoon eight of us (Matt, Stan, Tom, Karlin, Louise, Roman, Philippe and I) went in the Cheve entrance for a week-long camping trip. Our packs weighed from 15 to 30 pounds, I would guess, and we mostly were wearing expedition-weight kapalene or polypro under PVC suits. We were able to save a little weight because there were five sleeping bags stored at camp II, and three at camp III. The first day we made it to camp II in about eight hours, rigging the last few drops on the way. The next day we took another eight hours to get to camp III, near the bottom of the system. I had never been in this far, and was impressed with how much warmer the cave gets (about 55, versus 47 near the entrance) and how many boulders one has to clamber over. Most of this section is in dry borehole, but one constantly has to go up and down over (or through) boulder piles. The wet section ("the Swim Gym") was really beautiful, with deep green pools punctuated by short noisy waterfalls flowing between absolutely clean-washed redish bedrock. There were lots of pendants to use as handholds, and fixed ropes protected the hardest sections. There had obviously been a lot more water during the wet season, as several ropes more than 2 m above the stream were heavily frayed, and one was even cut completely. I had a pretty sore back after this 5 km of boulder hopping (not to mention the 30 or 40 ropes climbs, drops, and traverses) and took a big dose of Nuprin. As usual, we had freeze-dried meals for dinner, supplemented by a healthy ratio of mashed potato powder and some margarine. We had the same thing for breakfasts, and granola and chocolate bars for lunch.

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From SFBC Newsletter, (continued)

Pushing the breakdown choke

After a good night's sleep, Louise and I set off to survey a new passage that Stan had found the night before (he and the Swiss had stayed up until four a.m. scouting the breakdown, as the Swiss were planning on heading right back to the surface). We started our survey right from our sleeping bags, and headed into a tight crawl that soon opened up to typically 3 m by 4 m passages that followed three distinct joint trends. After a while we connected back to the breakdown area, having established a much shorter, but much tighter route. We started mapping a way into the huge breakdown maze that marks this part of the cave, trying to follow the air. In the meantime, the others were busy pushing various squeezes. No breakthroughs were made, unfortunately. By the time we mapped some side passages on the way back to camp, we had added 350 m to the map in 60 stations.

We returned to the attack the following day. This time Stan and I surveyed 120 m in 35 stations, first going up, then down low in the breakdown. Stan was very energetic in pushing into every conceivable hole. The area where we stopped seemed the most promising to me: we had gotten beyond where anyone had poked before, and were heading to the NE in large boulders, with not much mud or small rocks to fill in the openings. But, there wasn't any way on without "passage modification" and the wind wasn't blowing very well, so it was hard to know such activities would be most likely to succeed. In the meantime, Matt and Karlin worked in another part of the breakdown without success, and Louise and Tom mapped an upper area (about 120 m long) that had seen a lot of work two years ago, but hadn't been surveyed.

On our last day at Camp III, Matt and Karlin finished a 100 m climb that Matt had begun last year. It got muddy and pinched out at the top. Tom, Stan and Louise went down to the sump at the very bottom of the cave, and Louise continued her geologic observations, slowly working her way back up the Wet Dreams section towards camp. In the afternoon, Tom, Stan and I went upstream in the AS borehole to the Mud-floored borehole. This section is great - you can actually run around without having to climb over unstable boulders all the time! Stan did a short aid climb up to an obvious lead, which unfortunately ended after only 30 m. We toured the pretty flowstone area near there before heading back for our final dinner. The retreat to Camp II the next day was uneventful, although reversing some of the traverses in the Swim Gym proved to be a bit of a challenge. Louise and I camped at Camp II that night, while the hard-core crew continued on to the surface, arriving not long before sunrise. Louise and I made it out that night, with

some help from Don, Mike, and Chris, who we had met at the top of 150 m deep Sacknussen's Well.

Even though we hadn't made any big breakthroughs, the trip still felt like a success because no one had gotten hurt, and our surveys, combined with Louise and Karlin's geologic observations, would help future parties make sense of the confusing breakdown that seems to be taking all the air, but so far no cavers. A few days later, Nancy, Dan, Mike, and Peter went back to Camp III and pushed the breakdown a little more, apparently with no luck. Louise and Stan pushed leads and studied the geology in the middle part of the cave, and Stan found a 200 m segment of virgin borehole not far from camp II. He stopped at a short climb, with passage apparently continuing beyond.

Cueva Palomora

While this was going on, Don, Lisa, and I decided to head back to the middle karst area. A dye trace has shown that the resurgence for the system is 14 km away and 1000 m below the present end of the system. Two years ago, we mapped a 7 km long Cueva de la Mano near the resurgence, and it extended 1 km upstream towards the main system. Our goal this time was to try and find a new cave that would connect into the 13 km gap between Sistema Cuicateco and Cueva de la Mano. We decided to look in the vicinity of San Miguel Santa Flor, the village that is closest to the present downstream end of the system. The people there were very friendly, and invited us to stay in the municipal headquarters building. We talked to a lot of people, but everyone agreed that there were only a few caves nearby. The people here are Miztec (or Cuicatec, depending on who you talk to), but everyone seemed to know Spanish, and only the older generation seemed to talk in Miztec among themselves. There were three teachers, and they said most children attended school up to sixth grade. Those who wanted to go further had to move to Papalo or Cuicatlan. The economy seemed to be mostly subsistence farming of corn, beans, sugar cane, and some fruits and nuts.

The first day we were shown a tiny cave in metamorphic rock, a few km down the valley from the village. We then cut east over to the limestone, and tried to roughly follow the limestone contact back up to the road. We noted a small sinking stream and a tall limestone cliff, but found no caves. None of the people tilling their corn fields on the steep slopes knew of any, either.

The next day we found two guides. They first took us upstream from the road and showed us a few cracks in the limestone where the stream loses a little water. Nothing big

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From SFBC Newsletter, (continued)

enough for use to get into, unfortunately. This stream flows near the contact for most of its 15+ km journey to the Rio Seco, but although it sometimes cuts right through limestone cliffs, it never completely sinks into the master system that must lie below. The best hope seems to be to find a fossil entrance above the stream that hasn't been plugged by boulders and runoff from centuries of farming. We then climbed up to the east into an area of steep, heavily vegetated sinkholes, mostly used for grazing goats, sheep, and a few cattle. They led us to the only real cave they know of: it turned out to have a nice 4 m by 4 m entrance in the bottom of a blind valley. A tall canyon leading off the entrance chamber looked promising, but ended in flowstone after only 30 m.

On the way back to the road, they showed us a small, fresh-looking sinkhole in a sloping karst valley. It was taking a small stream (the only one we saw in the area) and the older guide said that it blew a plume of steam on cold days. That day it was blowing a little cool air, enough to make a noticeable noise. I started moving rocks, and after a while Don and Lisa got interested. By dusk we had a 2 m deep hole, and the air was coming through an unpromising 2" hole in the bottom. We checked out more of the sinkholes in the area the next morning. In the afternoon Don wanted to finish his Lord of the Rings book, and Lisa had gotten a bad case of dysentery, so I returned to our dig, this time armed with a hammer. I clawed at the clay and after a few minutes was amazed to find I had punched through into a new hole blowing a lot of air in my face. I tossed a rock in and could hear it rattle down a pit, so I spent the next three hours working like crazy until I finally had a hole that looked big enough to maybe squeeze into. I didn't want to try it alone in case the overhanging dirt and clay decided to collapse, so we all returned after dinner. I couldn't fit, but Don managed it and found himself at the top of a 6 m pit. We had decided not to sleep in town that night (it gets pretty rowdy on Saturday nights), so it was only a five minute walk back to our campsite.

The following morning Lisa and I enlarged the entrance some more and went down the first pit to the top of another. Don joined us and rigged down three more drops of 10 m, 18 m, and 20 m. The way on was a very wet crawl blowing a lot of air. Lisa checked it out, and reported another pit about 100 m further on. Don and I balked at doing the wet crawl (we were only wearing jeans) and we surveyed out. I was hopeful that this cave would continue on down another 500 m or so and connect to the hypothetical borehole about 3 km downstream of the present end of sistema Cuicateco, but that was not to be. I had to return to the States the next day, but later in the week Don, Lisa, Stan, and Matt returned for two

more push trips. They went down about 70 m in 155 m of often tight passage before being stopped by a flowstone squeeze. There is still a lot of air, but a lot of work will be required to open up the constriction. We decided to call this Cueva Palomora, after the name of the ranch on which it is located.

Conclusion

All in all, it was a good trip. We made new friends, enjoyed hiking in beautiful surroundings, found two significant new caves, and learned a lot more about the geology of Sistema Cuicateco. We were very fortunate in receiving a large grant from Richmond Area Speleological Society which paid for all freeze-dried food and much of the rope. PMI gave us very good prices on rope, and several other companies made smaller donations.



Illustration by Linda Heslop in The Explorer June 1992

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From The Explorer, June 1992

Tips For Beginners

Bowlne-On-A-Coil

by Steve Koehler

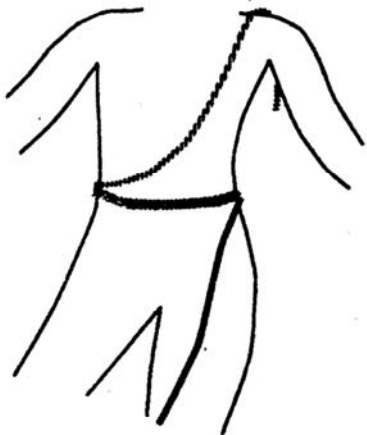
The bowlne-on-a-coil is a practical caving knot for tying yourself to a belay rope if you are not wearing your seat harness. You will find frequent opportunities for using this knot in caving. For example, you may have left your harness with your vertical gear at the bottom of the big rope drop, but need a belay over a short climbing move. It takes only a matter of seconds to tie yourself to the end of the belay rope using this knot. The advantages of the bowlne-on-a-coil over alternative knots are 1) it is easy to tie securely so it doesn't ride up on your ribs, and 2) it forms a number of coils around your waist, which provides some padding.

The bowlne-on-a-coil was used for many years in mountain climbing before the seat harness was in common use. Early climbers would even risk a leader fall with a bowlne-on-a-coil. Of course, when there is a possibility of a hard fall this knot's advantages are most apparent. In a leader fall you cannot afford to have the rope ride up on your ribs, and the extra padding it provides is essential.

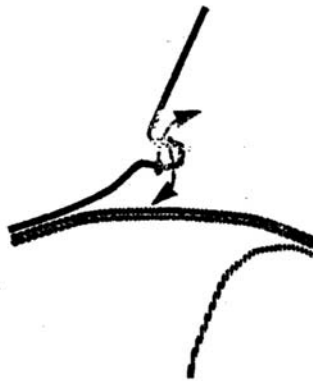
Surprisingly I have met many cavers (even experienced cavers) who do not know how to tie the bowlne-on-a-coil. This is unfortunate, because this knot works better than any other for its purpose, and it's quick to tie.

The following instructions show one way to tie a bowlne-on-a-coil. There are probably other ways to tie this knot, but this way is easy to remember. BE AWARE THAT IF YOU DO STEP 2 IN THE WRONG DIRECTION YOU WILL NOT MAKE A SECURE KNOT!

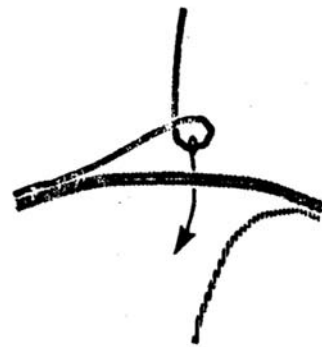
In figures illustrating the instructions, every figure except the first is oriented as if you are looking at the knot on your own waist. When I say "a small loop of rope sticks out at the top", you will see the loop of rope toward the bottom of the figure. The different shadings for the ropes are for clarity of the instructions. There is only one rope present in these pictures.



Step 1



Step 2



Step 3

Step 1: Wrap 8 feet, or so, of the end of the rope around your waist with enough rope left over to put the end over your shoulder. It does not matter how many times around you wrap the rope, but the more times around, the more padding it provides. Two or three wraps is sufficient. Wrap the rope very snugly, as any play in the rope will allow the knot to ride up on your ribs in the event of a fall.

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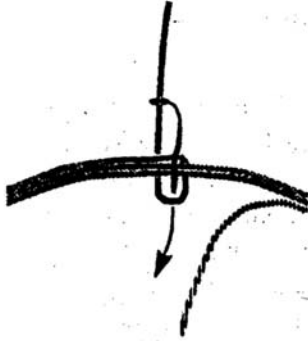
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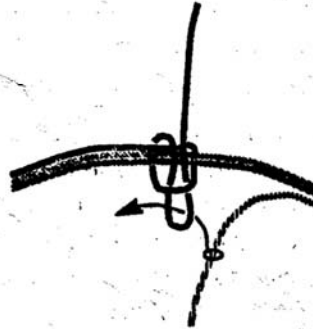
From The Explorer, (continued)

Step 2: Take a loop of the standing line (the rope that goes to your belayer) and give it a half twist so that the standing line is UNDERNEATH the rope that goes around your waist, and the loop is oriented toward you.

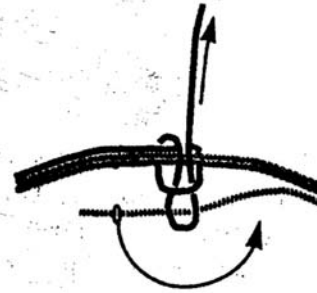
Step 3: Push this loop up behind the coils at your waist from below so that a small loop of rope sticks out at the top. I will call this Loop A.



Step 4



Step 5

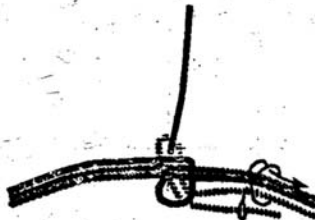


Step 6

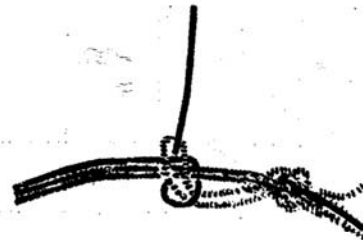
Step 4: Take a loop of the standing line, and insert it into Loop A. I will call this Loop B.

Step 5: Take the end of the rope from your shoulder and insert it into Loop B.

Step 6: Now, pull on the standing line, and allow the end of the rope to reverse back on itself as Loop B is pulled through Loop A. Loop B will disappear entirely.



Step 7



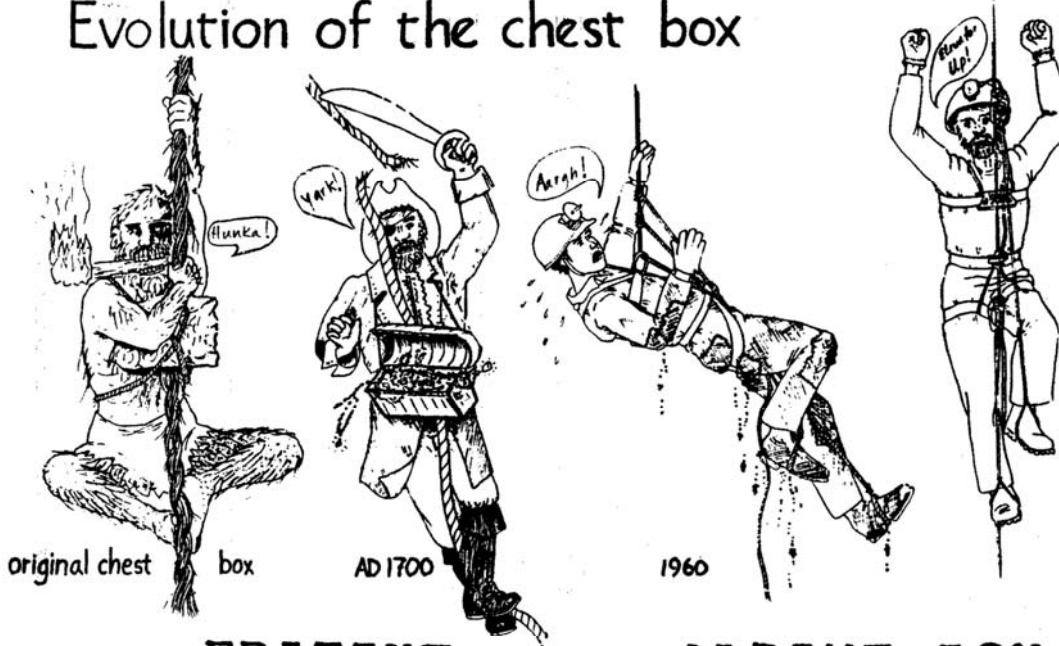
Step 7: "Tie off" the end of the rope by making an overhand knot around the coils at your waist. This prevents the primary knot from coming undone.

You should examine the knot carefully before you entrust your life to it to make sure that it is really a bowline-on-a-coil. You should see a knot (the bowline) tied securely around the coils at your waist. Try untying it without undoing your tie-off knot. You should not be able to do it. If the knot does not hold, you have tied it wrong. Tie it again paying particular attention to Step 2.

For practice, try twisting the rope the wrong way in Step 2 to see how that results in an insecure knot. One suggestion for making Step 2 foolproof is to twist the rope twice (a full twist), or more. That way, it doesn't matter which direction you twist it. Try this out, twisting the rope first in one direction, then in the other. I think it is preferable to make the knot with only a half twist (it makes a cleaner knot), but, by all means, use more twists if you think you will forget the proper direction.

Practice this knot. I think you will find many opportunities to use it.

Evolution of the chest box



original chest box

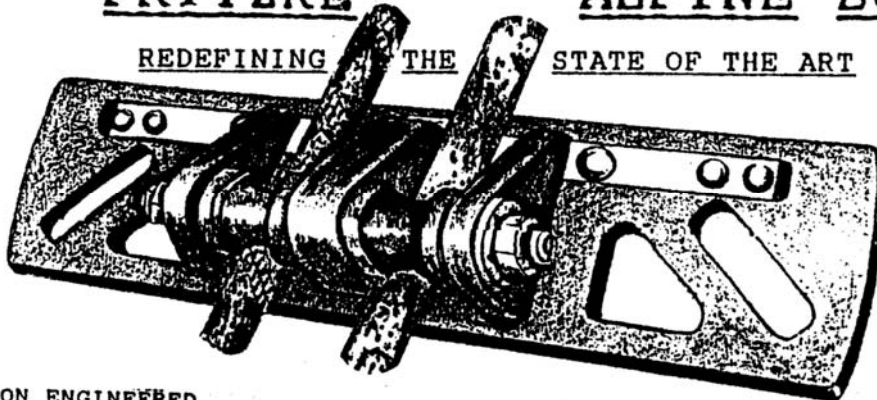
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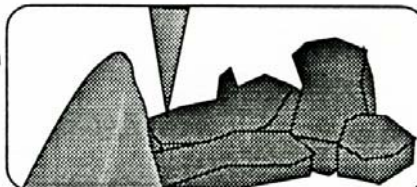
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May 1992

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