

SAGRAG

JULY - AUGUST 1995

VOLUME 14 NUMBER 4

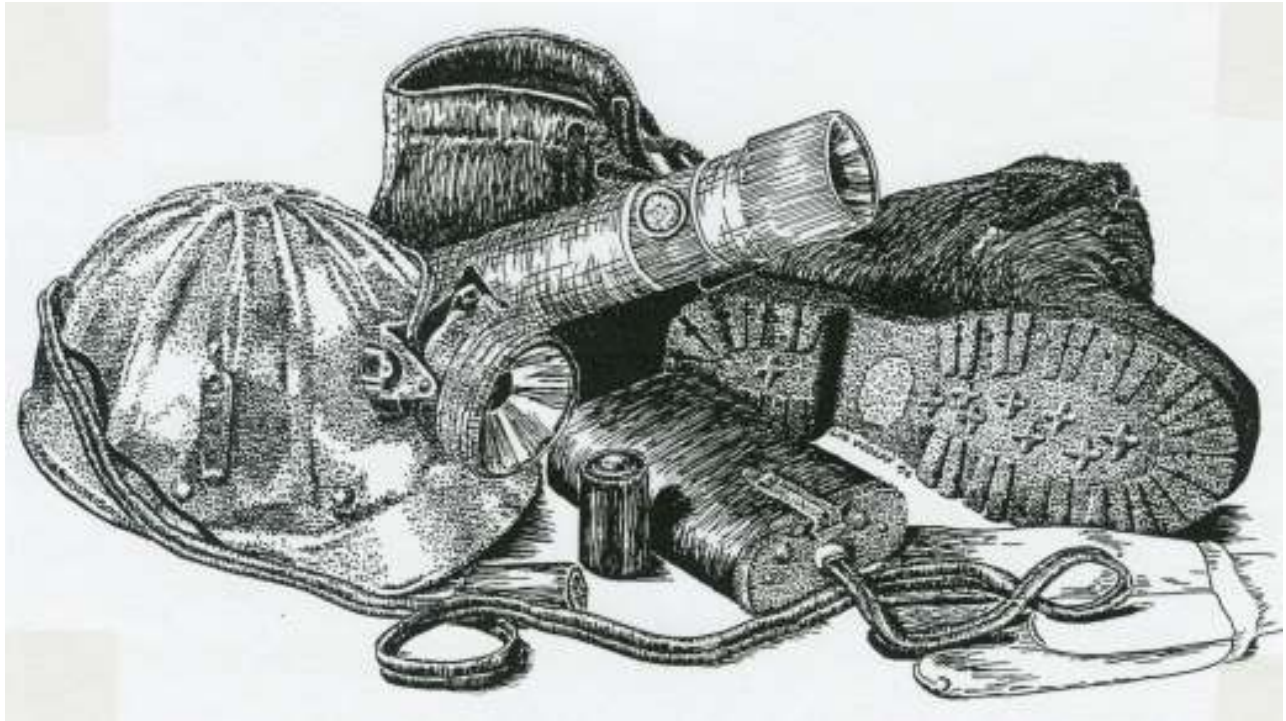


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The SAG RAG is published by the Shasta Area Grotto of the National Speleological Society, Grotto meetings are held at different locations the fourth Friday of each month at 7:30 p.m. Meeting locations are announced in the SAG RAG, Membership dues are \$6 dollars per year and include newsletter subscription. Original material not otherwise noted is copyright to the SAG RAG. Such material may be copied with credit given to the author and the SAG RAG. For use outside of the caving community, please seek the permission of the author or editor first. Send material for publication any time to Bighorn Broeckel, 2916 Deer Meadows Road, Yreka, CA 96097. Material intended for the next newsletter is due by the 10th of the even month.

EDITORIAL You will notice three holes along the side of your RAG. I recently acquired a box of opened and unreturnable paper with pre-punched holes, for free, so ... cavers like holes anyway.

With Bat Cave getting closed up, some are suggesting that the cavers should offer up another easy walking tube as a replacement sacrificial cave. We can't think of any, and come to think of it, why should we? Lava Beds and Subway Cave are already well suited for the recreational demands of the masses. On the southern side of the Medicine Lake Shield, Roadside Complex and Jot Dean are on line for general use and visitation. I suspect there may be a competitive promotional desire at work here, but I say that is not enough reason to mess up another cave.

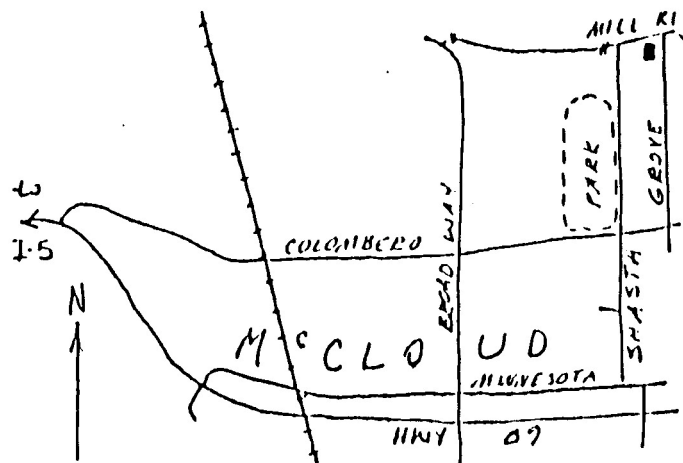
Bill Kenney's leg has been healing up and the last time we spoke, he was planning a trip to the Marbles. He brings us a first hand account of his injury and rescue last July.

The Oregon Caves History Celebration this weekend promises to be a very unique event that you won't want to miss. All cavers are invited and encouraged to attend.

Add in a bit of news and review, hey, we've got ourselves another SAG RAG, pre-punched holes and everything. **BB**

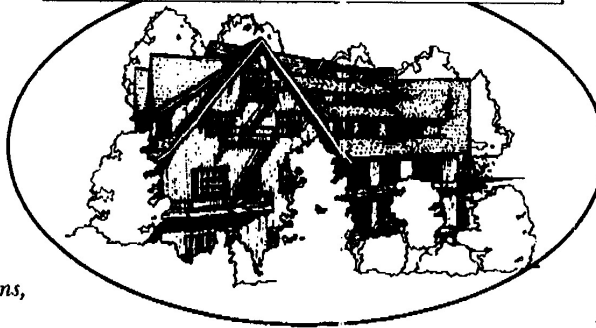
CALENDAR

Aug 26-27, 1995	Oregon Caves History Celebration
Sept 1-4, 1995	Labour Day Rescue Practice and Speleocamp in the Marble Mtns
Sept 8, 1995	SAG meeting at the Wolff's home in McCloud at 7:30 PM.
Oct 6-9, 1995	Joint Regional at Lava Beds National Monument



1880 — 1890 — 1900 — 1910 — 1920 — 1930

Oregon Caves
History Celebration



*Demonstrations,
lectures,
walking tours,
and exhibits*

*Celebrate the
rich history of
Oregon Caves and
the Illinois Valley*

August 26 and 27, 1995
 Oregon Caves Chateau
 Oregon Caves National Monument

EVENTS

Speakers will highlight the top stories of each decade:

Saturday, August 26

10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.:

Archaeology - Historic Artifacts Demonstration
 Mining history - Logging history

Sunday, August 27

10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.:

Historic Buildings Tour - The Forest Service years
 Concession history - Cave mapping and restoration

Plus, on both days:

2:00 p.m. - Natural history talks near the upper waterfall
 8:30 p.m. - Evening Programs in the historic Chateau

SATURDAY, AUGUST 26:

10:00 am - Janet Joyer: Archaeology of Southwest Oregon
 11:00 am - Larry McLane: Early Commercialization of the Cave
 12:00 pm - Exhibits and Videos
 1:00 pm - Roger Ramsey: Mining History
 2:00 pm - Ranger Guided Walk: Trees of Oregon Caves
 3:00 pm - Roger Ramsey: Mining Artifacts Demonstration
 8:30 pm - Evening Program: The Amazing Cave Zoo

SUNDAY, AUGUST 27:

10:00 am - Steve Mark: Walking Tour of Historic District
 11:00 am - Chas Davis: Concession History
 12:00 pm - Steve Mark: The Forest Service Years
 1:00 pm - Steve Knutson: Cave Mapping
 2:00 pm - Ranger Program: Carbide Lamp Demonstration
 3:00 pm - John Roth: Cave Restoration
 8:30 pm - Evening Program: The Value of Caves and Old Trees

- All talks will take place in the lobby of the Historic Chateau.
 - Demonstrations and walks will begin outside the Chateau
 near the upper waterfall.

Sponsored by:

National Park Service - Friends of Oregon Caves - Oregon Caves Company
 Illinois Valley Historical Society - Siskiyou Regional Education Project

For more information, call 503-592-2100

1940 — 1950 — 1960 — 1970 — 1980 — 1990

SAG MEETING REPORTS

SHASTA AREA GROTTO MEETING July 14, 1995

This meeting was held from 7:30 PM to 8:00 PM at Melanie Jackson's home in Yreka. Present were hostess Melanie, Bill Broeckel, Bill Fitzpatrick, Don Gibson, Bill Kenney, Jim Kottinger, Ray Miller, Neils Smith, Denise Wiley, Jim Wolff and Liz Wolff. The June minutes were approved. Treasurer's report: \$523.41 July balance. Under correspondence, Bill Broeckel and Jim Wolff both responded with comments on the McCloud District Watershed Analysis. Old Business: The Joint Regional is Oct. 6-8, 1995 at Lava Beds. Rescue Practice will be Sept. 2-4, 1995 in Marble Valley. Two cave registers were lost and need to be replaced. The Roadside Complex register had water and rat damage. The Jot Dean register was smashed and the book was found 10 miles away. New Business: The Scott River Ranger District contacted Ray Miller regarding mine shaft inventory starting on 7-17-95. This includes bat counting. Jim Wolff had a copy of the draft report on the Bat Cave Closure Project. Four alternative plans were presented in view of protecting bat habitat. Work may begin this fall. Bat Cave will also not be shown on future recreational maps, and directions to the cave will no longer be made available. Jim Nieland has seen the draft and has given positive responses about it. Trip Reports: Bill Broeckel and Bill Kenney reported on cave trips to the Marbles. Popcorn and lemonade were served at the meeting, next meeting at the Wolff's

SHASTA AREA GROTTO MEETING August 11, 1995

This meeting was held from 8:05 PM to 8:50 PM at the Wolff's home in McCloud. Present were Jim Wolff (host), Grace Wolff (Jim's mother), Bill Broeckel, Melanie Jackson, and Neils Smith. Grace made the popcorn. The July minutes were approved as amended. Old Business: Bill Broeckel met the Red Buttes Wilderness Ranger and gave a favorable report on work toward keeping cows away from the springs that drain into Sinking Waters Cave. The cows drift in from a neighboring allotment and have no business in Hello Canyon. Therefore the existing stock wall has been repaired and a new gate will be installed on the Pacific Crest Trail. Regarding Marble Valley, KMCTF reminds us that there should be no camping in front of the grain shed. Also, lawn chairs are not to be stored in the shed, and Remove all locks from bags and boxes. Expect a general housecleaning and elimination of junk from the shed this year. New Business: On Aug. 26-27, 1995, a special program is planned at Oregon Caves, 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM each day. The theme is "Down thru the Decades", with talks on history and restoration (John Roth) and mapping (Steve Knutson). Everyone is invited to attend the lectures. Trip Reports: On July 15, 1995, Liz Wolff, Melanie Jackson, and Bill Broeckel surveyed S Canyon Cave and most of Escapade Cave. Meetings: Sept. 8 – Wolff's. Oct. – Regional.

SPECIAL NOTICE Please remember to turn in all of your used up alkaline batteries to Jim Wolff. Jim has access to a recycling and disposal system for these batteries through his work. All sizes of alkaline batteries will be accepted. Jim attends most if not all SAG meetings, so bring the batteries to the meetings.

WHEN IS TWO HOURS AN EON?
CAVE BITES MAN By Bill Kenney

When is two hours an Eon?

Saturday July 1, 1995 in the company of Roger Jones and his nephew Tim Studebaker, I headed up the karst just behind the grain shed. We were to map Eon Cave then survey to RP-5. It's a small cave estimated at 200-300 feet, so I figured an easy afternoon.

Just inside the entrance, the cave splits in opposite directions. Surveying the downkarst leg first past another entrance, we then proceeded back to the entrance and then surveyed the upkarst branch which ended at a pit. I went down the pit with the end of the tape to measure the depth. At the bottom Roger told me that we would need another station up top since the vertical missed our last station by a couple feet. We measured and set a station.

About that time I started getting a little bit of rockfall and asked Roger and Tim to move down passage away from me, which they did. When things quit dropping (I was in the clear), I started to climb out. On reaching a ledge attached to right side of the passage (facing out) on the same level as Roger and Tim, I placed both hands on the ledge to raise myself up. I had just managed to get my right leg up when the ledge collapsed pinning my left leg solidly against a blade of rock on the left wall of the cave. After determining that everything was pretty well stabilized we sent Tim back to camp to get help and some equipment.

My left calf was squeezed to about half its normal size and the pain was terrible but no bones seemed broken. The rock which was holding me was about 6 feet high, two feet wide and 4 feet long. At first I had Roger put both his feet just below my knee and push as hard as he was able but my leg was as solid as the rock itself. Throwing some loose rocks between the ex-ledge and the cave wall to prevent further crushing, Roger then tried using rocks for hammers to break the blade from the wall of the cave, he broke a lot of rock hammers and skinned up his hands during the next hour (and I thoroughly appreciate the effort), at which time Steve Knutson arrived.

Steve Knutson and Ruth Schwartz brought in a very large bar, leaving Bonnie Crystal at the entrance with a radio. Two people levering on the bar did not budge the rock in the slightest but may have bent the bar. We radioed camp for a five pound hammer. In the meantime Steve took over where Roger left off, using rocks for hammers giving it his best for about a half hour, at which time a real 5 lb. hammer arrived (the radio saved me about a half hour of pain).

Steve then attacked the wall blade with great vigor, within 15 minutes I was broken out (thanks again), I hugged Steve and laughed some (I was very elated). We loaded the tape, instruments and log book in my pack. While I was changing batteries (mine had died during the rescue), I mentioned we needed one last shot to tie the pit to the rest of the survey (at which time my sanity was questioned).

Being only about 100 feet underground I got to the surface pretty much on my own. I exited the cave at about 7:15 PM. I had become trapped about 5:00 PM, it was only 2 hours but I've never been pinched that hard that long before. On the surface I was greeted by some very happy people with a Stokes Litter. I got bandages, an air splint, strapped in the stretcher and a very nice ride to camp (sorry about the wet feet crossing the creek guys).

In camp they removed most of the rock chips from my calf, added some disinfectant, new bandages and repackaged me in the litter so I would be warm for the night. I was placed next to the fire and watched all night (these people worry a lot and I am very grateful).

Sunday Morning Cynthia Ream called reveille on the troops about 5:30 and I was packed to the upper meadow, where we met a CHP helicopter that had been arranged for by 3 members of the forest service hotshot who had to check out a lightning strike near camp on Saturday. I was taken to Siskiyou General treated and released to Bill and Judy Broeckel who cared for me until my wife arrived on Tuesday.

While I may not have been lucky for having the accident, I feel very fortunate that my fate could have been much worse. No broken bones, one puncture wound, one cut, and some massive soft tissue (read muscle – maybe fat) damage to my left calf. According to the doctor I should need the crutches less than two weeks and should be my old self in a couple months (notice I didn't say normal). The drainage tubes were only in 3 days and the stitches and staples come out next week.

I have a lot of people to thank, Roger Jones for his rockbreaking efforts and help carrying, Tim Studebaker for running for help and carrying, Ron Studebaker for carrying, Bonnie Crystal communication, first aid, carrying and directing, Ruth Schwartz first aid, helping with the bar and carrying, Joe Slivinski his friends George and Jim and their families for carrying, Cynthia Ream for standing watch all the late night keeping the fire stoked, Ed Keudell for carrying, Steve Knutson for breaking me out and carrying, Scott Linn first aid and carrying, Mark Harder first aid and carrying, Blair Petrie carrying, Rich and Midori Sundquist feeding me, Gary and the other 2 forest service personnel who arranged for the CHP helicopter and finally Bill and Judy Broeckel for help in Yreka. If I omitted anyone I'm very sorry.

Bill Kenney

ED. Bill Kenney also wanted to make sure that Steve Knutson, Mark Harder, and Cynthia Ream were thanked in specific for hiking out his stuff, especially his internal frame pack, and for driving his truck out to Yreka.

SUMMER CAVE ROUND UP By Bighorn Broeckel

DOUBLE HOLD CRATER FLOW

Progress on this lava flow continues with a Shasta Area Grotto trip on 7-15-95. Jim Wolff and Neils Smith got distracted by car repairs, but Liz Wolff, Melanie Jackson, and myself went caving. We completed the survey of S CANYON CAVE at 1001 feet. It features 30-40 foot side walls, hanging side passages, skylights, near-miss skylights, and a double bridge.

Next comes ESCAPADE CAVE, surveyed to 1200+ feet with a bit more still left to complete. Escapade is a good caving cave, with icy lower level passages, a ledge traverse to an upper level, and a room with a welded boulder pillar. A crawlway with a breeze continues to emerge in the floor of another walking passage, with entrances at both ends. This escape hatch from the crawlway allows for a fun through trip of Escapade Cave.

Another trip is needed to finish Escapade and to pick up the next 2-3 smaller caves.

MARBLE MOUNTAINS REPORT

The big news from the 4th of July Speleocamp was the successful rescue of Bill Kenney from EON CAVE. The cave had Bill by the leg, but a combination of fortunate circumstance and decisive action resulted in a good outcome. The survey of Eon Cave was one shot from completion when the accident happened. All involved shifted attention to the rescue except Bill Kenney, who still wanted to finish the survey! (See Bill's story).

Rich Sundquist found a new cave, and it had a stream running through it. Of course, all the caves had running water this 4th of July, with the snowpack still in the process of melting. Further exploration and survey of this cave awaits drier conditions. The party with Cynthia Ream surveyed 800-900 feet of passage in PLANETARY DAIRY CAVE.

On another week-end, Jim Wolff, Patrick Smith, Bill McGahey, and? explored and mapped CLAUDE SMITH'S LIQUID PLUMBER C., with more to go inside that cave.

Ranger Tamm, the only back-country ranger for the Marbles, is serious about wilderness ethics. He will be checking on us at the Labour Day Speleocamp to remind us to not camp within the view of the Pacific Crest Trail. Please plan accordingly.

MARBLE MOUNTAIN QUARRY CAVE

Very recent vandalism has occurred in the cave, and suspects have been identified. The cave owner is considering his options. Obviously, this would be a poor time for any cavers to attempt clandestine visits to the cave.

Map production is inching along, with Liz Wolff entering all data previously compiled in her computer, which can generalize survey error. With that in hand, I will try to get the courage to draw a detailed map.

RED BUTTES WILDERNESS AREA

We have been urging the USFS to keep cows away from SINKING WATERS CAVE. Two years ago, SAG guided geologist Dan Sitton to view the situation first-hand.

On 8-10-95, Backcountry Ranger Susan Menanno informed me that steps have been taken to protect the cave. The existing stock wall has been rebuilt, and a new gate is being installed at the critical point along the Pacific Crest Trail. Three cheers for Susan and the Kangaroo Karst!

NEWSLETTER REVIEW

By Dick LaForge, 8/12/95

Newsletter time again! Amazing how time goes by. We are now in the middle of caving season. You will read elsewhere in this issue about Bill Kenney's entrapment and rescue during the 4th of July weekend in the Marbles. What calmness of mind and self-control to endure two hours of muscle-crushing! Again, the attitude of the "victim" is very important to the progress of the rescue. Hats off to him and to the rescuers; this success is a good precedent. Three cheers for Bonnie Crystal and her radio.

From a trip some weeks later, Mark Fritze reports finding a new cave high on the Karst above the cabin. He followed it to a pit, and not being caving-equipped at the time, will continue later. He points out that new walk-in caves (or crawl-in, anyway) can still be found in the Marbles.

My own caving activities will be increasing – in late summer I have a photo and mineral inventory trip to Hurricane Cave, in Sequoia National Park, on Sept 16 - 24. Anyone interested in being on (part or all of) this or subsequent (next year) trips is welcome to call me about it. You would be primarily a photo sherpa, but this is not a bad place to do it. Also I have a Lech trip at the beginning of October. This will be the next-to-last exploration trip into Lech for a while (there is a Learn trip in November). The news is that CCNP is closing Lechuguilla to exploration in 1996 and perhaps beyond. For reasons I have only indirect information. Evidently some cavers are not respecting the cave and the caving rules. I am told that four piles of poop have been found recently, at least one apparently maliciously placed. And other things. If the cave managers at CCNP cannot trust the supposedly best cavers in the USA, what can they do? Give it a rest seems to be the answer. I'm sure they will be thinking of other management options for the future, such as privately arranged trips led by trusted individuals (these have always existed along with LEARN trips). I don't know if the evidence shows that private trips have a better conservation record than LEARN trips. Science trips will continue. In fact, one rationale for restricting access further is to not bother the microorganism studies, which the Park thinks are very important.

A related question is the health and survival of LEARN. LEARN's primary function is to organize personnel and trips for the Park. I don't really know how LEARN is doing, as there has been no newsletter this year, nor information from our Western representative. Though I suspect that the latter circumstance is due to the arrival of El Poco Bambino.

There are, as usual, lots of good newsletter articles to steal. I am including plenty in case Bill F. wants to spread them into two monthly issues of the SOG ROG. Many cave trip reports describe drives and treks through snow and high water, even in Nevada, some ending in retreats to favorite eateries and sleeperies. Morley confirms that eateries continue to be an important part of caving life! I am, however, going to swipe more peripheral caving articles for this month's review.

The Valley Caver is, as usual, very prolific. In the summer '95 issue editor Bill Papke describes a home-made 100 watt 12 volt quartz halogen light for cave video work. It was actually created by Rich Sundquist and is built around a measuring cup, a funnel, and lead-acid batteries.

For Safety and techniques, I am sending for reprint Zach Neuman's account of a vertical self-rescue class taught by Mark Bowers at Mount Diablo State Park. This is from the aforementioned Valley Caver. Self-rescue is Soooo important! I am hoping we will have these sorts of classes up here.

Along with this is an intense little article from the SF Bay Chapter Newsletter, July 95. By Dan Clardy, who knows from experience, it is about Safeties and Carabiners. Read it and think.

The Underground Express, Vol 15 #1, Willamette Valley Grotto, has two items which I will mention and not reprint due to lack of space. First is a Proposed Management Plan for Dynamited Cave. As you know, this cave is a popular lava tube cave near Mt. Adams, Washington. It is notable for its size, verticality, and its drip castles in sand. The latter are mostly destroyed, and inept and inconsiderate visitors have been degrading the cave, hauling in stuff, and endangering themselves. Thus the Proposed Management Plan. The past few decades have been lauded as "The Golden Age of Cave Exploration," and rightly so, as new techniques and equipment (such as single-rope vertical caving), and caving in new areas, have resulted in discovery of tremendous lengths of new cave. Unfortunately, we are realizing that what we find we degrade. I predict that the next caving period will be called "The Age of Cave Management", as new discoveries become scarcer and we try to preserve what we have. This new period will be more golden to some than others, but in general less fun. Since we are an exploratory culture there will be resistance to it. Those of you who are on the recent "Too Much Government Interference" bandwagon should consider the results of unregulated access to caves.

In the same issue is a map of Christmas Canyon Cave. The best description is on the map: "Christmas Canyon Cave is an erosional channel beneath recent-era basalt containing numerous lava-cast logs and tree stumps. The cave floor consists of streambed cobbles, sand, and mud. Average ceiling height is 1.8 feet." Its mapped length is 2637 feet and it is remarkably complex. Interesting.

If there is room, here is an article from The Explorer, July 95, about bats and bat houses. It is from the Christian Science Monitor, July 5, 1994. The message is that Bat Conservation International (BCI) has been continuing research on design of bat houses, and many commercial ones (such as I got 1.5 years ago for Christmas) may not be the best design or might not be sited well. For latest information, buy The Bat House Builder's Handbook from your bookstore or get one by sending any size donation (hopefully more than \$6.95) to BCI, PO Box 162603, Austin, TX 78716.

There is a very interesting article on Electric Dimmer Switches for Electric Cave Lights by Art Fortini in The Explorer, June 95. I have been using Willie Hunt's Device, like it very much, and have written about it in past Newsletter Reviews. Mine doesn't have the dimming feature.

Bighorn Broeckel sent in "You know you're a caver if you get a lot of tooth decay, and it makes you sort of happy." I didn't get it (the joke, not the tooth decay (and I'm not happy about it)). Bighorn explained that cavities are cavities, in a tooth as well as in limestone, so a caver might like them. Perhaps Liz Wolff can draw for us a cartoon showing a dentist, with caving light, and perhaps a hammer and chisel in hand, peering into another caver's mouth, saying "IT GOES."

O yes, two more episodes of Randy Rogers.

Caringly, Dick

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From San Francisco Bay Chapter Newsletter, Vol. 38, No. 7.

Safeties and Carabiners *by Dan Clardy*

At a recent vertical practice I was having people use a safety ascender until they had inspected their rappel racks and carabiners, or quick links, loaded with their weight. Later, no one repeated this procedure so I want to give examples of why I do it.

After having done a lot of caving on slow dirty ropes in Mexico I was in Rio San Ramon Cave in Guatemala. I rigged my rack into a rope and started to lean back with my hands and feet on smooth rock. I expected the rack to tighten on the rope but the rope was new and fast. Suddenly, I was falling into the river. I should have used a safety.

Biners (carabiners) often unlock themselves. The worst biners have gate locks that screw up against the biner body when they close. The biner bends under load and the lock becomes loose and will open freely or jam closed if turned. A good biner should have a little gate movement when locked. The fancy biners that will not accidentally open will jam when dirty.

I heard a caver talking about how unnecessary chicken loops were. Later that day in Lechuguilla, my trip leader started up a 10 foot rope using a Texas system. The webbing turned his biner gate lock open and the gate opened inward, to the side and then outwards releasing the upper ascender and lower ascender safety. He did a heel hang narrowly missing a rock with his head. Only his chicken loop saved him from falling down a 100' slope and drop. He said he should have used separate biners to hold the ascenders.

Rappel racks and safety/ascender lines often hang-up on the biner gate which is very weak. A caver in Cheve weighted his rack on the biner gate and the gate suddenly snapped off. Fortunately, a rebelay loop caught under his arm saving him. He told me he should have used a safety while checking his biners.

Biners are inherently dangerous unless the user is extremely vigilant. A rappel rack can easily come out of an unlocked biner ANY TIME you take your weight off your rack. The rack eye will move down onto or turn against the gate opening it. The rack will fall or pull out of it. The best way to use biners is to use two of them and turn them so one hinge end is up and the other down. Then turn one so the gate is inside your harness. Double non-locking biners work well.

The caver that didn't like chicken loops brought a friend named Chris to Mexico for his first serious deep cave. Chris exchanged the biners he had for a safer pair and made it halfway into Cheve. He fell in a pit leaving his rack on the rope below a rebelay. His "safe" biner had come unlocked or was left unlocked and the rack came out of it. If he had used a safety EACH TIME he loaded his rack it could have saved him. Helping haul and bury him in the cave made me much more safety conscious. Chris lost his rack down a drop before the accident and his friend lost his rack into white water soon after the accident. Don't think your rack won't come off. Mine has done so several times. It's quite alarming when your about to rappel and your rack falls off. I HATE CARABINERS!

Mallion quick links are much more dependable than biners but they occasionally come open when in use. They are left open less often than biners are left unlocked. Inspect them often and replace ones that are too easy to open. The hardware store quick links made in Taiwan are very weak and will bend out straight if left open.

When I started caving with seasoned expedition cavers, I was surprised how cautious they were. The drops in Cheve usually have a rope going out to the rig point at the top of the drop so you approach the lip with a safety on. The cavers are encouraged not to hang by only one ascender or cows tail and to always check their biners before starting on rope and at the rebelays. They use cows tails in the rebelay loops and safety ascenders.

You should rappel with a safety ascender but if you have only one ascender and you use it, your ascender will be stuck on the rope. Remember, you can't rappel past a knot or a short looped rebelay with cows tails or a single ascender. I can Texas through anything by rappelling with a safety ascender and a Rope Walker (floating/knee) ascender or a lower Mitchell ascender. The frog system is also quick and easy to rappel with.

I use a double safety with a safety ascender on one side and a cows tail (biner on a safety line) on the other. The middle of the safety is attached to the harness. I'm experimenting with a small detachable link between my safeties and

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From SFBC Newsletter, (continued)

my rack that will hold me if either harness attachment fails. Using one harness attachment for your safety and your rack will jam the safety line against your rack making it hard to open.

Caving is dangerous. Bill storage knew eleven cavers that died caving. Safeties and safe equipment prevent falls when we use them. Do you use them?

From Valley Caver, Summer 1995

Hanging Out On Mount Diablo

by Zachary Neuman

I originally planned to do an Avalanche overnight trip prior to this and had committed my time as such. Weather being what it has been, snow was left where we had planned to cave. So, suddenly finding myself with a "free" weekend, I made the mad rush to get in touch with the people who were going to Mark's training session. I ascertained that the session was being held at the Rock City Camp ground within the Mount Diablo State Park. Our meeting time was set for 8am both Saturday and Sunday and the day was expected to last until five or six in the afternoon.

Armed with this knowledge and the bits and pieces that make up my vertical gear, I set off late Friday afternoon in pursuit of a decent camp spot. I had figured the weather to be inclement to the needs of a vertical practice, (only because that's usually the way it goes), but had not anticipated the onslaught of summer temps., (Saturday was about a hundred and five and Sunday was about a hundred and six). The evenings were a little better at around eighty five.

When I arrived, I found out that the Rock City Camp ground was closed and took up residence at the Junction Camp ground. I picked what I considered to be the best spot, being the second of two campsites occupied, and set up camp. I was mortified to discover the the other camp was inhabited with a group of teens discovering the great freedom of being away from parental supervision and investigating their own sexuality. ALL NIGHT LONG! I kept thinking to myself, "when I get up before dawn I'm really gonna make some noise around here". But, they had yet to go to bed by the time I had woke, eaten, and moved on.

If you have never taken a class from Mark, you are in for a work out. Mark is a gifted instructor that has the ability to keep things moving at a fast clip without loosing anything. On Saturday, he had Cindy to help out, and the benefit of their combined knowledge served all of us well. (Even block heads like me, that sometimes take more than once to be told how to do it right.)

Most of us had gathered at Rock City by about eight thirty and Mark began. We had a brief introduction and then reviewed knots. We were guided through the Figure 8, figure 8 on a bright, figure 8 follow through and bend, The double fisherman's knot, Prusik Knot, Water Knot, Munter Hitch, Butterfly, Bowline, Bowline with Yosemite tie off, and the Chicken Loop. Mark and Cindy also showed us how to use webbing to tie a seat harness. By the end of the knot tying session, most of the people had arrived and all the rope was in place.

We had strung a two hundred and seventy five foot rope four times around a pinnacle like protrusion on a rock that had a sloping face of forty five feet to about sixty at the max. At the base of the protrusion was a trough like walk way. Ideal for our purposes. This rope made three anchors for three lines of hundred foot rope. Each line was doubled and gave us six working ropes to use. Opposite this rock was another with a nice little drop of about thirty five feet. Two ropes were strung from this also.

We geared up and everybody got on rope. It was kind of like kids at recess for a few minutes there. We paired up and hit the rock face with enthusiasm. Up and down. What we did was prove to Mark, (and our partners), that we had the ability to go up the rope and over the lip at the top and rappel down safely. Before we knew it, we were working on Change-overs. Rappel to ascend, ascend to rappel, changeover to a pigtail on ascend and then change over to pigtail on rappel.

Then came knot passing. On a good day, with a nice cool cave around you, you might work up a little sweat. On a sizzling day, in direct sunlight, you will loose ten pounds and die of heat exhaustion. That's were Merv comes in. That is, Merv's high powered squirt gun. Such a relief. We passed knots on ascent and on descent.

This pretty much ended the first day and we de-rigged the ropes and packed up our stuff and went to Denneys for a little dinner and a lot of Ice Tea and Lemonade.

Later that night we returned to my camp site, (myself and three of my brethren). I had so much wanted to pay my respects to my neighbors from the previous night but decided to wait until the proper time. Like maybe four in the morning or something. To my chagrin I found them rather quit in comparison and even somewhat docile. I can only suppose that their lack of sleep had caught up with them. I was asleep by ten.

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From Valley Caver, (continued)

Sunday found us starting off with practicing what to do with a jammed rack or eight. We had ten seconds to get the load off the rapell device or face possible death, (in a real life situation). We did this using only one hand and not looking at what your doing. (We all passed.) We also practiced what to do when your kroll gets jammed up. During this time Mark showed us how to thread a rack on a rope while under load. A most difficult task, (Martin tied it and had considerable trouble duplicating Mark's efforts). This is something I would like to work out for myself.

The meat of the day came with "pick off". In most of the scenarios we used two ropes. A "victim" would climb to a spot on the rope and feint unconsciousness. The "rescuer" would go up the rope next to the victim and pick them off. One type of pick off was to attach the victim to your seat harness using a prusik line and releasing their ascending/rapell equipment from their rope. Then lowering the both of you down on your rack with the victim between your legs. Another method was using

the victims equipment and rack to lower them down on their rope. Both may require a two to one haul system in order to raise the victim up far enough to release their ascenders.

My favorite pick off is the one rope pick off. The victim finds trouble somewhere on the rope and you go up the same rope and pick them off. This entails climbing over the victim to gain a position over them in order to get them down safely. This could lead to ugly comments from bystanders. (May they never be rescued.)

Our days training ended with a Z-rig catch cam, munter hitch belay, haul system. This is a very complicated piece of work and I would have great trouble duplicating it. I would have to run through the construction of it several times before I got the hang of it. The one thing I can say is YES, it does work.

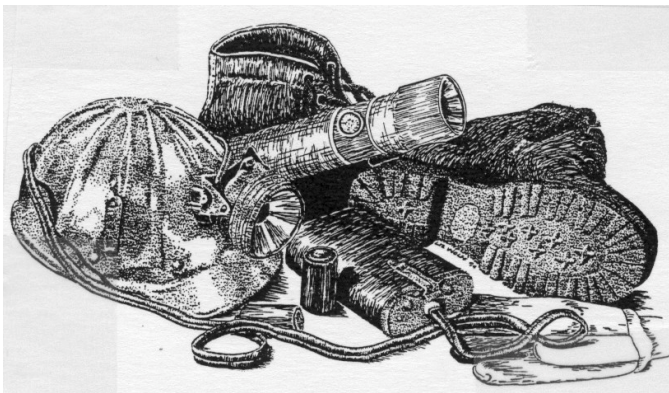
After we de-rigged the ropes and packed up our gear, we hauled our sweaty bodies into town and enjoyed pizza. I am glad I had the opportunity to utilize Mark's wealth of information and know how. Just small parts of what I learned will take up months of passing on the information to other in the Grotto. Thank you Mark.

SAG RAG
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