

SAGRAG

Newsletter of the Shasta Area Grotto
National Speleological Society

Vol 15 No 2

March 1996



The entrance slot to BLANCHET CAVE from a photo taken by Melanie Jackson.

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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

Do not be alarmed. This is just an extra issue of the SAG RAG needed to clear out some left-over material and make way for the funny issue coming out in April.

If you haven't re-upped your membership/subscription, see the form given below. Last chance to get your name on the membership list to be published in the May-June issue. Still only \$6!

The NSS dues, however, are up this year, but still worthwhile. The NSS can make you a better caver. Just send \$30 to NSS, Cave Ave, Huntsville, Alabama.

If you are really committed to caving, there is a membership opportunity for you right now. Lifetime cavers can become lifetime members if they can spring loose the dollars. The old price: \$450. The new price is \$540. The old price is good until 5/1/96. Buy the lifetime now, and in 15 years it pays for itself. After that, you've got a free ride with the NSS for the rest of your life. Definitely something to think about.

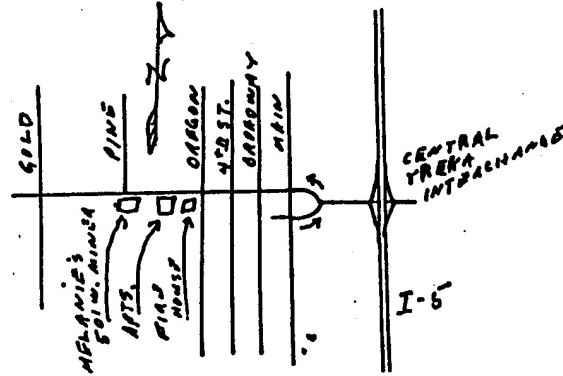
At any rate, keep your membership with the NSS current, and keep over 50 years of caving knowledge and experience in your back pocket. Striving for the best in caving ... **BB**

CALENDAR

March 29-31, 1996 Chirpchatter Cave Camp. Three new pits. Call Bill at 842-3917 if interested.

April 12, 1996 SAG meeting at Melanie Jackson's. See map.

May 11, 1996 (Saturday) SAG meets at Dick LaForge's. More details in the April issue.



NAME: _____ NSS# _____

ADDRESS: _____

_____ SAG dues (includes RAG) \$6 per person or family.

Membership category (family or person)? _____

_____ I want to subscribe to CALCAVER too. Thats another \$6.

_____ SAG RAG subscription only without SAG membership. \$6.

_____ Total enclosed. Make checks payable to Shasta Area Grotto. Send to Liz Wolff, POB 865, McCloud, CA 96057

SHASTA AREA GROTTO MEETING
February 16, 1996

The meeting was called to order at 8:21 P.M. at the Wolff's home in McCloud.

Present were: Bill Broeckel, Bill, Cheryl, & Zane Kenney, Jim & Liz Wolff, Jim & Bea Kottinger, Melanie Jackson, Dave Pryor, and Ellen.

Correspondence: Jim Wolff gets a lot of e-mail information over 2 different Net services associated with the Forest Service and the Bat Association.

Cave nominations will be faster after the initial cave nominations finish in the Spring (March). They can be turned over to the local Forest Service.

Article on cave fossils (Bear fossils) in Prince Wales Is., Alaska – research.

Abstracts from Bat Conferences that Ray Miller and Dixie Pearson attended.

Advertisement on a new rope manufacturer, new static rope called HIGHLINE from Ontario, Canada.

A portion of a contract on the timber sale preparation for Tongass in Alaska. The timber people are to notify the Forest Service of any cave formations they come across. Bill Broeckel had a letter from Robt. Hammond for SAG notification of the Chippy Spur Timber Sale. Bid had handouts showing the sale was closer than 1/4 mile to the Giant Crater Lava Trench. We have an opportunity to respond until May 20, 1996. There are caves along the trench. We should possibly have a grotto field trip and invite the Forest Service people to walk the trench with us so we show them the areas of our concern as well as voicing them in the paperwork. There needs to be a grotto response to this timber sale. B. Broeckel will send a draft of the paperwork to Bruce Rogers and John Tinsley, who worked on the crater mapping project.

Old Business: This weekend there is a WVG work trip at Lava Beds Nat'l Monument. Jim Wolff rented 4 cave videos for our up coming SAG meetings (Mar. thru June). In regards to the gating of Bat Cave, SAG members will voluntarily stay out of the cave for the first year and publish an article in the SAG RAG to make other grottos and cavers aware of the need to stay out of the cave. Suggested Steve Knutson be contacted for information about special materials available for gates.

New Business: Bill Broeckel brought a copy of the Lava Beds Draft of the General Management Plan & Environmental Impact Statement that was done in Nov. 1995. We have until March 1st, 1996 to respond. Bill Broeckel will make comments before the deadline as an individual.

Jim Wolff passed around a very nice brochure on Cave Conservation and Ethics that was backed and produced by: the NSS, BCI, Dept. of Interior Land Management, Nat'l Park Service, Dept. of Agriculture, and the U. S. Forest Service.

There is a BOG Meeting March 15-17 in Seattle. There will be a bop trip of the Catacombs at Lava Beds Nat'l Monument Sat. March 9 for the new people who have joined SOG. This will be a joint SOG/SAG trip. March 29-31 there is a Chirp Chatter Karst Walk.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:05 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Melanie Jackson

SHASTA AREA GROTTO MEETING March 8, 1996

The meeting was called to order at 8:00 PM. at the Kenney home in Klamath Falls.

Present were: Jim Wolff, Bill, Judy, Becky, Benjamin, & Benyam Broeckel, Bill, Cheryl, Joel, & Lane Kenney, Melanie Jackson, and guest Robert Nixon (Klamath Falls).

Treasurer's Report: The March Balance is \$550.19.

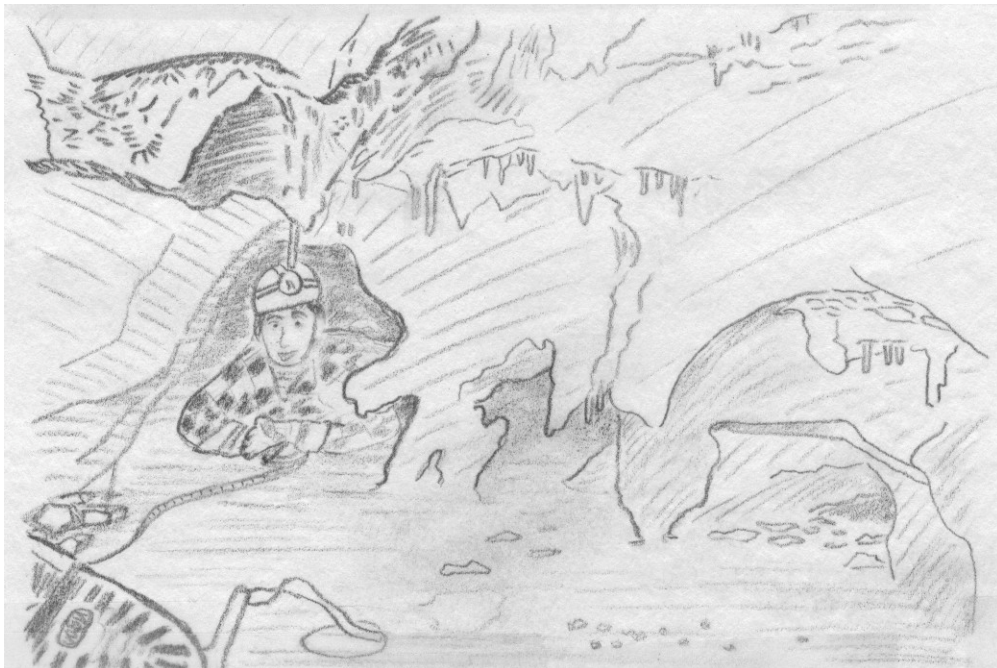
Correspondence: Rec'd a copy of the OREGON CAVES UNDERGROUND a paper the Park Service prints once a year. Bill Broeckel is planning a March issue of the SAG RAG.

Old Business: Bill Broeckel made a reply before the March 1st deadline to the Lava Beds draft of the General Management Plan & Environmental Impact Statement. He sent copies of his comments to: Janet Sowers, Bill Devereaux, and Jim Wolff (for the SAG library). He also suggested that the Lava Beds should consider acquiring Bertha's Cupboard and Ticknors Caves. The NSS did it again. We have rec'd no videos for our meetings yet. Regarding the Chippy Spur Timber Sale: Jim Wolff asked the Forest Service to invite our grotto to give them input on the sensitivity of this area because of its prehistoric and cave sites. Bill Broeckel hasn't sent them a letter yet, but will before the May 20, 1996 deadline. Oregon Caves, Lava Beds, and SOG (BLM connections and No Name Cave gating), Shascade (proactive & training & has NSS Conservation Task Force), Marble Mtns., and SAG mop-up projects, are available and Jim Wolff would like each member to consider getting involved in some of these.

Coming events to be aware of: Lava Beds Memorial Day Weekend, contact Bill Devereaux. 1st Marbles Trip scheduled for July 4th, contact Steve Knutson (No Memorial Day Trip). Big Horn and Horse Thief, contact Ed Keudell.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:48 PM.

Respectfully submitted, Melanie Jackson



140' into Blanchet Cave.

FEAR !

By J. and L. Wolff

When descending into a pit on rope or free climbing a wall, I've always wondered what my wife would do if my gear was to fail me or if I was to make a miscalculation on footholds and I die in this cave....

The fear of falling is a genuine concern. Rather, the sudden stop at the end is what most cavers try to avoid! What really goes through your mind when you are hanging it all out? Fear or the healthy respect of a situation helps make usually safer decisions. To make a critical decision, ask yourself: is the situation hours from the cave entrance; how remote is the cave; do you have a rescue plan; can you live with the consequences? Sometimes aborting a climb because of lack of proper gear or the right person for the climb doesn't mean anyone is chicken. The situation is discussed by all in the party and decided upon by the trip leader. The decision to continue or not is made.

Fear is healthy, but it is definitely a limiting factor in the development of a new caver. Sometimes all it takes to get that new caver from ungluing him or herself from a ledge and making that fearful step to the other side is simply offering a belay, or offering to "spot" them through the difficult section. Sometimes encouraging words don't help and fear holds them fast to their perch. What should come next to get them moving? Previous training should have given them faith in their gear and a demonstration that the move can be done should be given. Let them know that their decision to go or not will be supported. After all, the trip should always be limited by the weakest member of the party.

The fear of falling is a genuine concern, and is healthy. To some, it is the above scenario, but to the more experienced caver there are "Plan A" and "Plan B". Choose your route and moves to gain the objective, and consider the "what if" something wrong happens. Plan B is your emergency move or alternative landing spot, but is that all you have to rely on? No, you must use similar experiences to help you govern your every move. You know your own capabilities and limitations so you measure these against the situation. Use fear as one of the governing factors in your decisions, because it's one of the elements that keeps you alive.

Now, all caving situations aren't hazardous, but there are times when the situation calls for caution; approaching a shaky-looking breakdown plug is a good example. Sometimes travel through a cave demands your undivided attention. Nobody is going to rush you through it. We all want a successful and accident-free trip, don't we?

Be safe out there!

Bible Passage for Cavers

"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom;" Psalms 111:10.

Fear in this text is seen as a positive item, something to think about and pay attention to. I like to couple this passage with Luke 2:10 – "Fear not, for behold, I bring you tidings of great joy." Caving is wonderful, because the emotions of it are very intense and real. In religion and in caves, moments of fear, which bear attending, are often followed by deep joy.

BB

BLANCHET CAVE

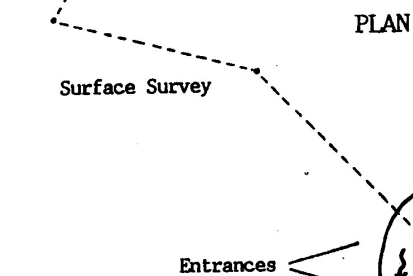
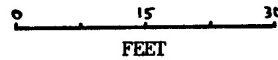
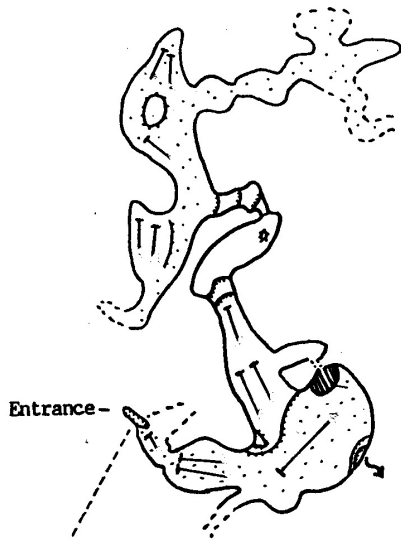
SHASTA COUNTY CALIFORNIA

Length 150 feet

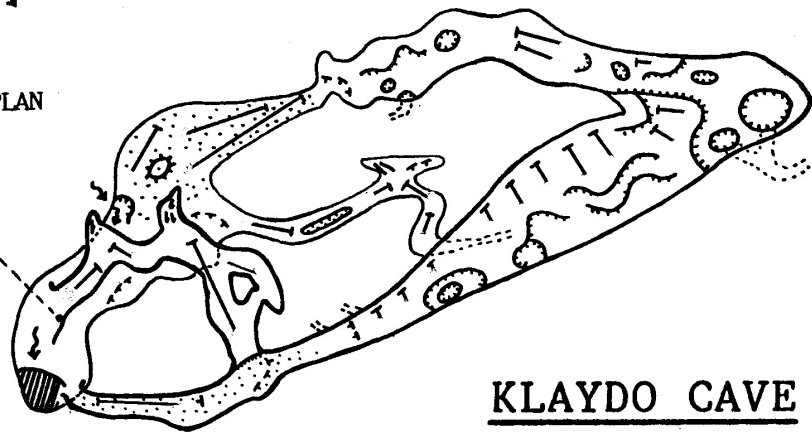
Instrument & Tape Survey

Depth 22 feet

B. Broeckel
M. Jackson
B. Kenney
P. Showalter
1-7-96



PLAN



KLAYDO CAVE

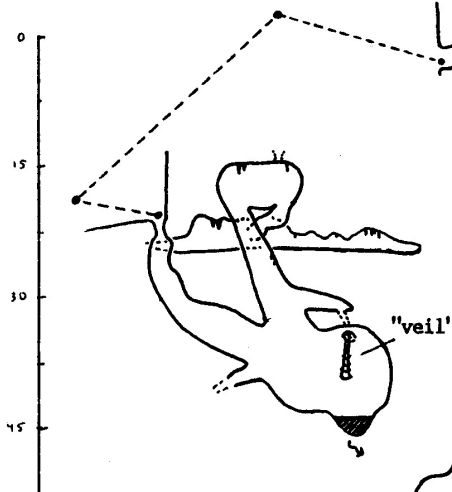
SHASTA COUNTY CALIFORNIA

Length 308 feet

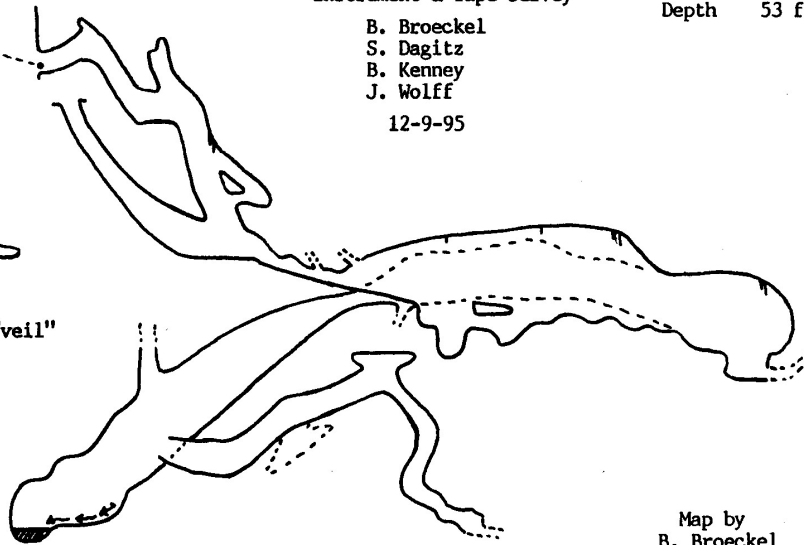
Instrument & Tape Survey

Depth 53 feet

B. Broeckel
S. Dagitz
B. Kenney
J. Wolff
12-9-95



PROFILE



Map by
B. Broeckel

Map: Blanchet Cave, Klaydo Cave

KLAYDO CAVE By B. Broeckel

Sparsely decorated Klaydo Cave is located near Shasta Lake. The Shascade Caving Society recently dug open Klaydo and about 300' of new passage. Steve Dagitz, Jim Wolff, Bill Kenney, and I had a good chance to do a survey project trip in Klaydo on 12/9/95. The 2 entrance passages join at a crawlway leading to the larger part of the cave. The entry areas support populations of spider, harvestman, cricket, millipede, and moth. But no bats were seen.

Bedding planes tilted at 45° control the angled passage cross-sections. Sporadic soda straws spring from the ceiling. A soft, greasy coating occurs, and this slippery clay material is prominent through much of the cave and suggested the name "Klaydo". Calcite crystal coating covers the clay in some cases. Not beautiful, but pristine, Klaydo Cave will not bear heavy traffic very well. That is why it is kept covered up like it was when it was found.

The cave doubles back and down a sandy slope to a spring, stream, and sumped flood room directly below the entrances. One side passage continues to a low crawl. Here the survey ended. We softly retreated and covered up the cave.



Jim Wolff under Klaydo Cave's best stalactites.

BLANCHET CAVE

Melanie Jackson, Bill Kenney, and I returned on 1/7/96 and managed to wiggle into Blanchet Cave. Luc Blanchet first entered this cave, now named for him. A dirt slide ends at a pool room. Above the pool hangs the veil the best formation in the cave. A tiny hole contains running water heading towards Klaydo Cave.

A 34' climb tops out at a safe perch with room for three. Kenney rigged a double rope pull down to make the climb safer. A few rocks were moved allowing us into a crawl to the side of another passage with a dirt floor, 2-3' ceiling heights, and a few nice details such as popcorn, small nodular stalactites, and soda straws. Left goes about 15' to a harvestman colony and a tiny sub-human entrance. Right goes about 30' to a low turn-around room with a few soda straws and digs.

From this point we surveyed out of the cave and continued the survey on the surface over to the entrance of Klaydo Cave. Paul Showalter helped with the surface traverse. Blanchet is a small cave that serves up a number of difficulties and occupied our whole day to survey it. Please note that future project caving in this general area should be pursued in cooperation with the newly formed Shascade Conservation Taskforce.



The veil.

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Excerpted from Dick LaForge's Jan/Feb 1996 Newsletter Review

For this month's plagiarism, I am offering Adventures South of the Border by Nancy Pistole, from the Nov. 1995 Explorer. It details travel to Systema Cheve from Texas and the ensuing 10+ day push into breakdown chokes at the bottom of the cave. As if this wasn't enough fun, they followed it with a river rafting trip down the Usumacinta River, along the Guatemalan border. This was great fun until they were attacked by banditos from the Guatemalan side. Three cavers were wounded by bullets; this led to a nighttime run down class III rapids and involvement with the Mexican Army!

ADVENTURES SOUTH OF THE BORDER

by Nancy Pistole

Systema Cheve:

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Our trip this year started out in February, in our typical fashion—I stayed up all night doing last minute packing, so Matt Oliphant had to do most of the driving to Texas. At our friend's house in Texas, I stayed up all night doing last minute "business that had to be finished in the US", and the next day Matt did most of the driving to and in Mexico. Joe Ivy, a speed demon from Texas, convinced us that the fastest and most hassle-free route to Oaxaca was through Mexico City, and gave us detailed directions. We usually go down the east coast of Mexico, a scenic but slow route. We avoided most of the outrageously expensive toll roads, but just about rattled our teeth out on the free highways. We also could not figure out how Joe could make it to Mexico City in the time he said he could without help from Star Trek's transporter room. We went got to Mexico City about 5 a.m., and although Joe's directions were pretty good, we didn't have a map, and none of the streets were marked. We made quite a few wrong turns, and got pulled over by the police three times for very contrived reasons. The most outrageous one was "you can't drive in this lane with a full truck". As the police officer and I were standing there, I pointed out truck after full truck that was driving in the lane we had been in. He finally gave up and let us go. We arrived in Oaxaca City in the afternoon, found a hotel room, and fell into a much-needed deep sleep until the next day. We then walked miles back and forth through the city until we had gathered all the permission letters and supplies we needed, and headed up to Cueva Cheve.

We got to the parking area a few hours ahead of Joe and a group from Texas, then started the unexciting job of carrying all our gear a kilometer to the meadow next to the cave entrance, called the llano. Over the next several days, cavers from New York, Georgia, Pennsylvania, Colorado, and Minnesota joined us. We even had three from England, one from Canada and one from Russia. During the first week there were several rigging trips into the main cave, and several trips into Palomitas, a smaller cave near the entrance that might be connected into the main cave someday. We also spent one day reviewing first-aid and patient packaging using a SKED stretcher. The weather was not fully cooperating—we had several days of cold and drizzle. Usually that kind of weather tempts people to hide in their tents, but we had a motivated group. Rain or shine, they wanted to go caving.

After one week of prep work, we were ready to move to Camp III and start our assault on the breakdown at the end of the cave. From 1986, when the cave was discovered, until 1989, kilometers of passage and meters of depth were surveyed on every expedition to Cheve. In 1989, the cavers found that the huge borehole that promised to lead deeper and farther into the mountain was choked by a big, breakdown pile. On every trip since 1989, side passages were checked and even a dive lead was pursued trying to find a way around the breakdown, with no luck. (Right now the cave is over 23 km long, and -1386 m deep.) Some exploration was done in the breakdown pile, but it was unstable and confusing, and who wanted to travel all the way to Mexico, and into a grand cave, to squirm their way through nasty breakdown? However, almost all the other options were exhausted, so this was the year to concentrate on the breakdown. On the encouraging side, there was air blowing through the boulders; a good sign that passage was waiting for us on the other side.

Despite the work required, just about everybody wanted to go to Camp III. There were 13 people, but only 10 sleeping bags divided between Camps II and III. After debating the pros and cons of different options, Matt had a plan. One extra bag would be carried in, four bags would stay at Camp II for people in transit through the cave, and the remaining seven bags would end up at Camp III. Everybody would be assigned either the 12-hour a.m. or p.m. shift, and the sleeping bags would be shared. This system worked

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out well—it forced people to stick to pushing the breakdown for 12 hours, and then they could relax for 12 hours. I had already been to Camp III, and I had no desire to grovel in the breakdown, so I volunteered to be surface coordinator. My job was to make sure that all the group gear went to the appropriate spot in the cave with the groups that were going in. Also, we were expecting a few more people that hadn't arrived in the llano yet. Over a period of five days, everyone headed into the cave in groups of two to four, including some new arrivals. Most people stayed at Camp II the first night, then continued to Camp III. Some of the faster cavers who knew the route well blasted down to Camp III in one shot.

All of the easy holes in the breakdown had already been looked at, and abandoned when they got small and nasty. Now the plan of attack was simple—find one promising lead, and then keep burrowing in the same direction until either open passage or solid rock was encountered, no matter how nasty it got. It turned out that the route of least resistance was in an upwards direction. Progress was slow, but it worked. Each shift continued where the other left off. A dive line was rigged along the push route, since it was easy to get turned around in the maze of boulders. The breakdown was very unstable in places, so loose rocks were labeled with a carbide X—a "DO NOT TOUCH" warning. However, the route had at least one place where every rock had a big X on it. Mike Frazier had several close encounters with boulders. At one point, Mike went ahead to check a lead. He started yelling and kicking his feet. Matt and Charley Savvas had been waiting for him, but got excited when they heard his calling. "Must be a breakthrough!" They were disappointed when they found out they had to dig Mike out because a big rock had pinned his head.

Six days after entering the cave, they got the first break. Charley and Mike pushed their way into a big room, about 50 m long and 25 m wide. Coincidentally, they ran out of dive line as soon as they entered the chamber. After jumping up and down and running around the room, they went back to tell the others. Mike and Charley were going to try to fool Matt and the group into thinking that they hadn't found anything, but they couldn't get their stories straight, and finally had to tell the truth. The room, now called the Half-way Room, was an inspiring find, but it ended in more breakdown, so the grind continued. Back at Camp III, Matt pulled out a one-meter inflatable hammer, that he had snuck down for some humor. When it struck a target, it emitted a squeak, so "pounding" on people's heads became the standard way to wake up the next shift.

The next big find came ten days into the trip. Mike and Denis Provalov were working on a lead, when Denis (the smaller of the two) managed to squiggle into a small room. He then moved rocks aside so Mike and the others could get through. Mike and Denis continued pushing through more breakdown, and found a really, really big room. It even had a fair amount of decorations, including helictites and aragonite bushes. Denis went back to tell Matt and Charlie the good news, but in his English—as-a-second language (Russian was his first), he told them that they had discovered a room about three times as big. Matt and Charlie thought he meant three times as big as the small room they were sitting in, and they weren't overly excited. Denis meant three times as big as the Half-way Room. Mike couldn't believe Matt and Charley weren't coming up to see the new room, so he went back down to clear up the misunderstanding. Not only was the new room, called the Gypsy Palace, the biggest find on the trip, but it had a solid ceiling and wall. Maybe they could follow the wall to find the illusive big borehole!

As luck would have it, this was the last push trip. Several people had already left Camp III for the surface, and others were getting ready to go. The explorers didn't have survey equipment, and the two that were going to survey had turned around because they didn't feel well. Although the room ended in more breakdown, it would be a good place to start on the next underground trip.

Luckily, the day most people came out from Camp III was warm and sunny. The solar showers were busy all day. That night we had a big fire and told lots of stories. Everybody was in a good mood, because even though we hadn't added any depth to the cave, we had finally gotten somewhere in the breakdown.

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Cerro Rabón:

It took just about a week to completely derig Cheve and pack up all the equipment. Most people headed back to the US, but Matt and I still had several projects to visit. We drove to a small village between Huautla and Tuxtepec, and hiked into the mountains to meet the group exploring the Cerro Rabón plateau. Most of the cavers were from Switzerland, with some from the US, England and Poland. They had already been working on the biggest cave in the area, Kijahe Xontjoa, for several weeks, and had now reached a depth of -1240 m. Matt and I were debating whether to go down to the underground camp, but the weather on the surface helped us decide. It was much hotter than the llano, and there were bugs everywhere. The cave would be comfortable and bug-free. We were right in time to join the last group going into the cave for a four-day stay. It was a pleasant, laid-back trip. We did some clean-up survey close to camp, and then helped pack up the underground camp. All the camp gear was stored in the cave, so we had light packs coming out. Two years before, a 500-meter cave had been connected into the system, called P17. Matt and I joined Pierre-Yves Jeannin while he resketched part of this alternate route out of the cave. The P17 route wasn't going to be used as the main route, so for Matt and me it was a chance to see a pretty and different part of the cave.

When we arrived back at the surface camp, we heard the news that seems so typical on expeditions: a big, booming borehole lead was discovered in the Kijahe, and could be a bypass around a maze that had hindered deeper exploration. However, it was the end of the trip, and people had planes to catch and other commitments. Also, it hadn't rained in weeks and there was a severe water shortage. The lead would have to wait until the next expedition.

River rafting:

We helped pack up the surface camp, then met most of the group in Palenque for a river rafting trip. Scott Davis, who had caved in Mexico for a long time, owned a river rafting company. He had boats and gear in Mexico, and agreed to do a special trip down the Usumacinta River (the big river dividing Mexico and Guatemala) for the Cerro Rabón group. Our group was big, 22 people, with three big oar boats, one paddle boat, and a flock of little one-man inflatables.

The trip was a blast. The weather was great and the water was warm, so water fights were common. So was sneaking up on a small inflatable and sabotaging the rider. We spent a day at the Mayan ruin of Yaxchitlán, and spent a morning exploring another ruin called Piedras Negras. There were several people along with a keen interest in the Maya, so it was better than a guided tour. Much of the river flows through virgin jungle. Everyday we heard howler monkeys and parrots, and saw four-foot monitor lizards sunning on the banks. We even visited a cave full of bats. Ordinarily on Scott's trips, the guides do all the work, but this was a special caver trip without paid guides. However, with 22 enthusiastic people, setting up camp and cooking meals was hardly much work.

On day five our idyllic trip took a bad turn. We stopped by some beautiful travertine falls for lunch, and took turns jumping off the ledges into the pools. After lunch we got somewhat spread out along the river. The first two oar boats and a kayak were flagged down by a man on the Guatemalan shore with a automatic rifle. The man wanted the boats to go to shore. Scott said okay, and started rowing to the opposite shore. Without warning, the man shot at both boats. Scott's boat got hit in the bow, but no one was hurt. However, the bullets found their mark on the second boat. Gill Ediger got a bullet in the leg, Karlin Meyers got hit in the elbow, and Ursi Sommer got one bullet in the back, and several in the arm and hand. Scott and Gill rowed over to the Guatemalan side of the river, and tried to appease the shooter. All together there were four men, most with masks over their faces, although not all of them had guns. They seemed nervous, like

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they wanted to rob the group but they weren't sure how to proceed. Scott offered them money, cameras, anything he thought they wanted. He just didn't want them to shoot any more. Besides acting inexperienced, the robbers didn't know how to open Fastex buckles or ammo boxes. Any Guerrilla, Zapatista, or misguided military man would have been able to open an ammo box. Just our misfortune to run into anxious banditos-in-training.

Meanwhile, the rest of the group had time to stop on the opposite shore, a ways upstream. But now we didn't know what to do. We couldn't see everything that was happening, and in fact, we didn't even know that anybody had been wounded. Finally, Scott waved to us to come down river. Matt and I were in small inflatables, and we were prepared to dive into the river at the slightest hint of gunfire. We joined Scott and the robbers, and saw how grim the situation really was. Before we could start unloading our boats, we heard a helicopter overhead. It was thousands of meters high, too high to see us in trouble, but the robbers got even more fidgety. Then, to our amazement, the helicopter circled around and flew by much lower. The robbers ran up to the tree line, and we seized the opportunity to escape. We grabbed what we could on shore, and pushed off into the current. The helicopter flew by again, this time about 50 meters above our heads. We waved frantically and pointed to the wounded people who were covered in blood. Scott pulled out a signal mirror and flashed them. The helicopter then disappeared down the river. We thought for sure that we would see the helicopter or another form of help shortly. After a quick stop to bandage the wounded and make them more comfortable, we quickly continued down river.

Hours later there was still no help in sight. It was getting dark, and we were approaching a big canyon. This section was supposed to be the highlight of the trip, because it had a series of class II and III rapids. Scott knew there was a town on the other side of the canyon where we could get the wounded to a doctor, but we also knew we couldn't wait until morning. We decided to stick together and go through the canyon in the dark. We had several lights, but using them blinded the oarsmen. We got through the rapids by having Scott shout out warnings before each rapid, and then just going for it. We got to the town about 10 p.m., and found a bus and a driver to take the wounded to a good doctor in Palenque. The rest of us camped by the gear.

The next morning we talked to a Mexican Military Unit, and told them what happened. They vowed to help us. We packed up all the equipment into a truck and then got a military escort, complete with Humvees and lots of machine guns, to the nearest military base. They gave us redcarpet treatment, and fed us lots of food. However, we got the impression there wasn't much they could or would do to apprehend the robbers. After all, we were robbed on the Guatemalan side. The most confusing part was meeting the helicopter pilots. After profusely thanking them, we asked why they circled back in the first place. They said the situation looked suspicious. Then we asked why they didn't send for help when they saw we were in trouble. They said when they took a closer look, they didn't see anything wrong, and although Scott had flashed a mirror, he didn't flash the SOS signal. In hindsight, we probably should have pressed them with more questions, but they were trying to pretend everything was okay.

We spent several days in Palenque mentally trying to recuperate from our encounter. Ursi's lung was punctured, and was repaired by the doctor in Palenque. Then she and Karlin were flown to Miami for further medical treatment. Gill opted to have the bullet taken out of his leg in Mexico, since it was a lot cheaper. Matt and I were invited into the operating room to take pictures. The prognosis for all three of them looked good, except Ursi would take the longest to recover, since some of the nerves in her arm were damaged.

REPRINT from THE EXPLORER, November 1995 By Nancy Pistole

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TRIP REPORTS

from Bill Stewart THE EXPLORER, February 1996

You also know Roy Barton who wrote to me also quite recently that he and his wife Marian are staying in Indio like 12 months ago, and will go back home to Prescott at the end of January. They never mapped Hell's Canyon that lies between Paulden and Ash Fork. Roy reports, "we have not found any significant caves in that area. . . they are mostly holes going in 6 or 8 feet. Fab 4 Cave has been surveyed. My best cave trip in 1995 was a month ago in Pishiboro's Hole near Young, Arizona. This cave has four selectors to get past in the first hour and eliminates about 50% of all cavers. Your girth and length being the main determining factors for passage. After that ordeal, you are travelling in the main stream passage which is large most of the time. After a second hour of travel, you arrive at a small lake whose downstream boundary is a wall up to the ceiling. Ten feet below the lake surface is a 4-foot diameter hole through the wall and about 30 feet long. It then goes vertical up to the normal stream level again. In short, this is a sump that dries up about once every 2 to 4 years."

"This year it dried up and we got another 3.5 hours farther into the cave making a total of 11 hours round trip, I would estimate 1.5 miles from the entrance. Many parts of this cave have lots of formations. A geologically interesting aspect is that the main passage is always cutting downward, and far beyond the sump it cuts down through the layer of limestone and into the sandstone beneath it. You are now in a sandstone passage with the limestone contact zone getting higher on the walls as you go downstream. This passage was still going strong when we begrudgingly turned around and headed back out."

"It is a very interesting cave and not fully explored yet. The temperature is about 50° F and very damp. Getting bivouac gear through the four selectors would be next to impossible, which is also true of a rescue operation. You would have to either get well inside this cave or die there."

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