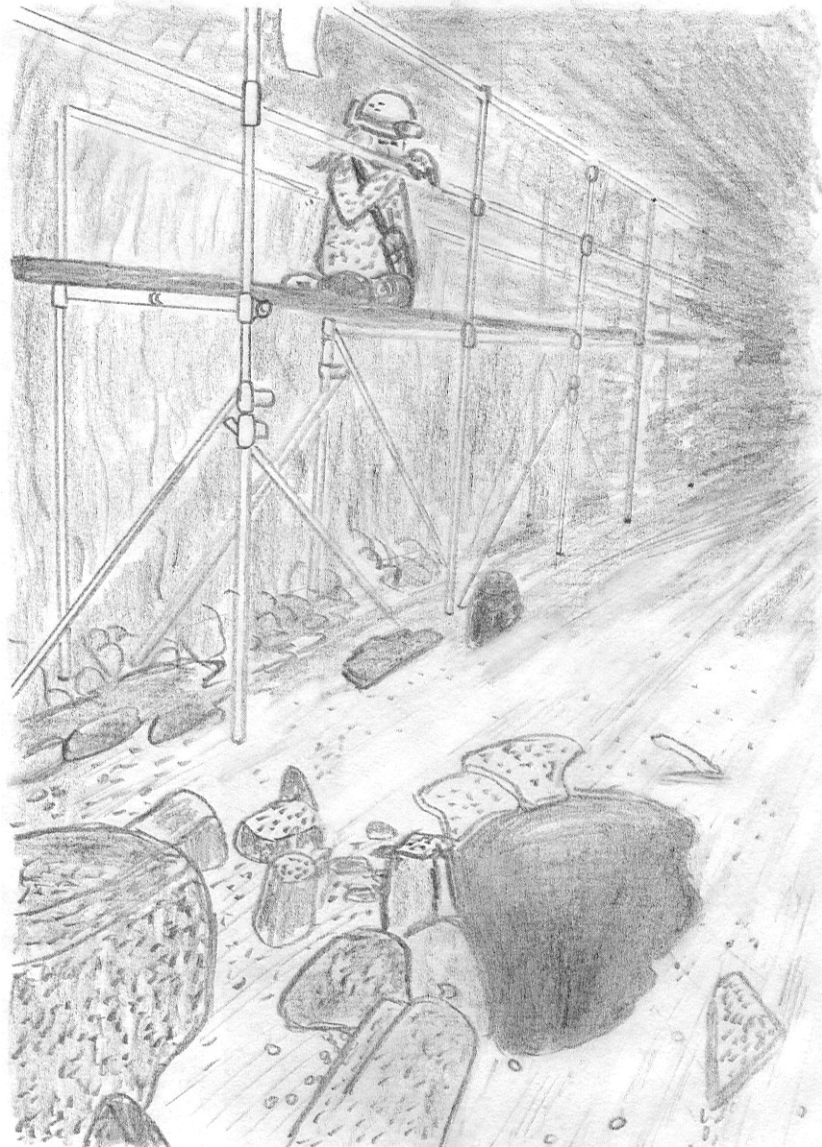


Sag Rag

SHASTA AREA GROTTO NEWSLETTER **NATIONAL SPELEOLOGICAL SOCIETY**
MARCH-APRIL 1998 **VOLUME 17 NUMBER 2**



A new hole opens in the ice floor under the catwalk
in Merrill Ice Cave at Lava Beds National Monument

INSIDE: Modoc County gets some new caves, Russ Yoder brings us the Cracker Cave discovery article, while Bruce Rogers introduces Chris' Cupboard in Part 16 of "The Earth Shook, The Sky Burned, And All The Bunny Rabbits Ran Away"

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: The COVER shows the situation at Merrill Ice Cave, one of the developed caves at Lava Beds National Monument. On March 21, 1998, little Becky Broeckel is surprised to see a big hole in the ice floor that reveals a significant hollow space underneath the ice. Visitors have been walking on this ice floor for years! Ranger Sarah tells us that the hole opened up spontaneously in November, 1997. Monument people went into the hole and found an interesting domed ice chamber with walls of breakdown cemented in ice. There was no going passage (yet), but some air seemed to be leaking through the up-flow breakdown.

This new hole adds 10 feet or so to the depth of the cave. Also, it is interesting to see that a third level in Merrill was anticipated by both Charlie & Jo Larson and the USGS. On page 42 of Lava Beds Caves the Larsons write that "it is possible that still lower levels exist, and even if choked with breakdown, would probably include even more ice than is presently visible." And on page 55 of USGS Bulletin 1673 by Waters, Donnelly-Nolan, and Rogers we read that "the (ice) pond marks the site where the floor of the ice level collapsed into a third, and probably larger, lava tube below."

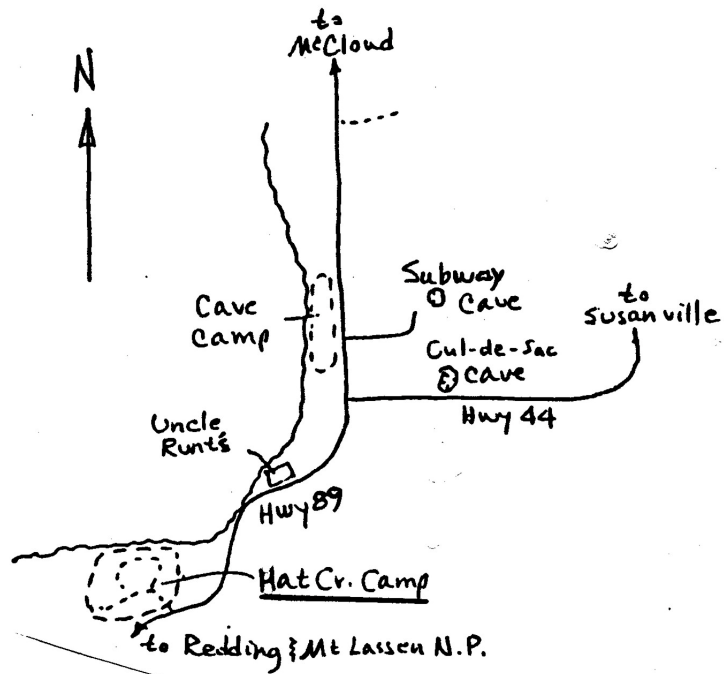
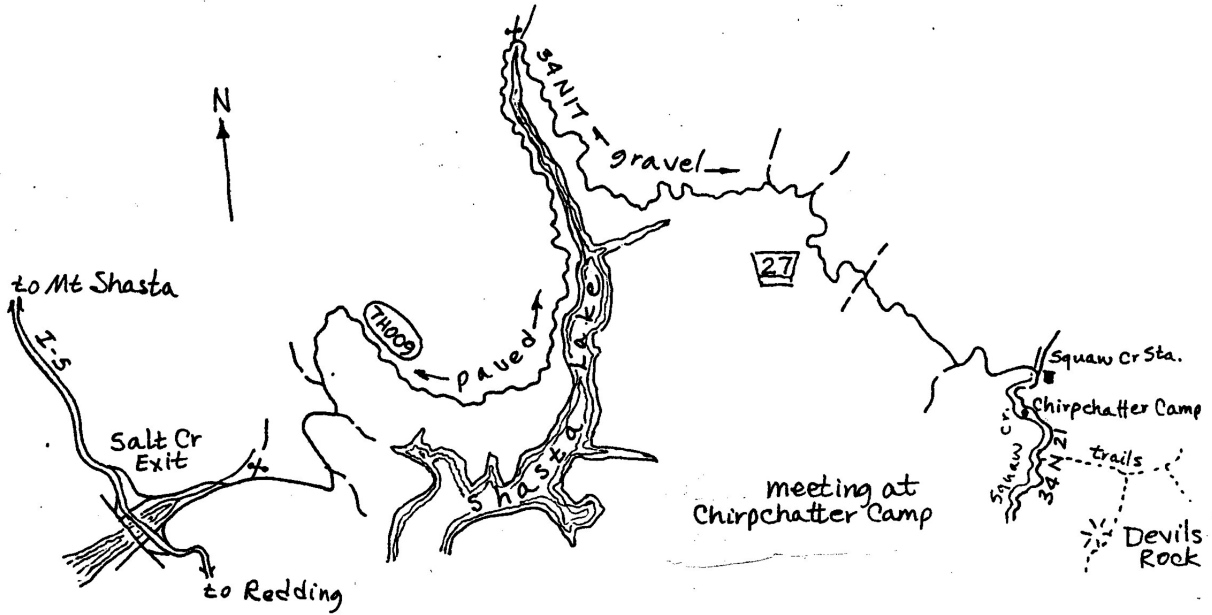
We have a good article and map of Christmas Tree Cave which we promised to publish this issue, but we will now wait until Volume 3 or 6 of this year. We still need to connect the extension, and the article is perfect for the Christmas issue . . .

The SOG LOG appears in this issue of SAG RAG as a courtesy to SOG. This could be continued for awhile if Southern Oregon Grotto likes it and there is material. Let's welcome Russ Yoder to the newsletter pages. In his article you will find out about the late Bighorn Broeckel. Hey, I was born late, and I've been late ever since. I'm even late when I'm supposed to be meeting myself. However, late can cause trouble, so I'm working on it (sorry everybody, I'll do better). So how about let's go caving already! **BB**



CAVE CALENDAR - 1998

- May 8-10 SAG meeting cave camp at Chirpchatter Campground. On Saturday plan for bottoming the bottomless pit.
- June 5-7 SAG meeting cave camp at Hat Creek Campground. There are a number of good options here for survey training sites.
- July 3-5 Marble Mountains Speleocamp.



SHASTA AREA GROTTA MEETING

March 13, 1998

The meeting was held in Klamath Falls at Bill & Cheryl Kenney's. Present were Chuck Frank III, Chuck Frank IV, Jim Kottinger, Ray Miller, Russ Yoder, Jim & Liz Wolff, Bill Broeckel, Bill & Cheryl Kenney, and guests Susan & Tara Champion. The meeting was called to order by chairman Jim Wolff at 7:45. Minutes were accepted as read. The treasury showed a balance of \$420.58. SAG RAG report: B. Broeckel remains optimistic.

Conservation: Oregon Caves National Monument Management Plan – The Park Service favors Option C (expanded property lines, Park Service cave guides), while the concessionaire favors Option A (no change). The USFS has doubts about Option C, due to timber and grazing considerations. The concessionaire is no longer allowing cavers or Earthwatch workers at the cave to stay in their buildings, and is placing full page ads with misinformation about Option C in the local newspapers. Bill Kenney recommends the Park Service build a campground within walking distance of the cave, and that Park Service personnel give interpretive talks.

Correspondence: Bill Kenney received e-mail from Tom Miller on bats and children's books. Jim Wolff received a letter from Dave Nicholson, SAR coordinator for Siskiyou County. He's writing a cave rescue plan for the county and wants a list of local cavers who might be interested in participating. The 1999 NCRC will be held at Lava Beds with the SAR personnel attending. He would also like a joint rescue practice in the spring, including vertical practice. A new USFS flyer covering the Medicine Lake Highlands mentions caves. Juan de la Fuente, Klamath National Forest geologist, will meet next week with Jim Wolff to talk management strategies. He wants ideas on how to deal with a group of caves. He will eventually involve the public. Jim Wolff received an e-mail from the USFS bragging about saving bats and finding a new species during a Cave Research Foundation contract. The 1998 Western Regional is near San Diego this October.

Old Business: None.

New Business: Ray Miller will be beginning a study on bats and ice caves this summer. He is looking for information on perennial, natural water sources on the southwestern part of the Medicine Lake Highlands.

Trip Reports: Chuck Frank IV did a clean up trip in Pluto Cave to the very far end of the crawlway. He lost a good hat and his lunch to a large rat. Bill Kenney went to Oregon Caves (see SOG LOG section of this newsletter). He further adds that the visiting paleontologists took 40 pounds of sediments to screen, and that all the bones taken will eventually be returned to the cave. B. Broeckel, Jim & Liz Wolff went to Christmas Tree Cave to finish the survey and picked up another 100 feet in an extension beyond a dig.

Next Meetings: April 4, Saturday, following a 4 pm barbeque at Fritzke's. May 8 campout at Shasta Lake with Caving at Lo Pass, Devil's Rock, or Chirpchatter. June 12 campout at Hat Creek with a survey workshop for anyone interested in learning to survey or improve survey skills. Note trip tomorrow (Mar 14) to No Name Cave with strenuous 2 mile hike to the cave.

These minutes were respectfully submitted by Liz Wolff

LW

SHASTA AREA GROTTO MEETING

April 4, 1998

The meeting was held at the Fritzke/Villatore home in Bayside. Present were Dan Downes, Bill Broeckel, Chuck Frank III, Chuck Frank IV, Dick LaForge, Mark Fritzke, Jim & Liz Wolff, Neils Smith, and guests Scott Frank and Eric Crane. Chairman Jim Wolff called the meeting to order at 8:01 pm. The minutes were accepted as read. The date for the June meeting will be June 5th instead of the 12th, to accommodate work and travel schedules. The treasurer's report showed a balance of \$373.75. SAG RAG: next issue will be out near the end of April.

Safety/Rescue Committee: Mark Fritzke went to a rescue/safety workshop for rafting, noting similar techniques for river and vertical rescue teams and equipment. Flexibility of decision making in rescue situations was discussed. Rescue training for grotto members is needed, to include knots, rigging systems, and equipment.

Correspondence: The KMCTF Newsletter came by e-mail. Jerry Davis's research proposals for the Marble Mountains were located on the internet. National NCRC training will be in West Virginia in June. Kyle Haines responded to the Oregon Caves management plan options. Some magazine article cave references came up. The May 1988 Smithsonian featured underwater caves. Ozark caves appeared in the April 1998 National Geographic.

Old Business: None.

New Business: Should we have "virtual grotto meetings"? It would require a "hyperterminal" to do it.

Trip Report: Chuck Frank IV found Porcupine Cave in sandstone on Oberlin Road right in Yreka. Passage was blocked by a large porcupine unwilling to share his cave. Several other small caves are in the area. Russ Yoder, Bill Broeckel, and Liz Wolff went to three caves in Modoc County. Cracker Cave was dug into by Russ & was named for the 8' deep 1' wide crack running the length of the floor. They mapped it. Next was Coyote Cave where they found interesting junk including a large carbide tin. They didn't map it. Coyote was mapped by the Golden Gate Grotto in 1986. Next was Damon's Cave, a short and intricately complex lava tube that needs mapping. Jim Wolff, Bill Kenney, Chuck 3, and Chuck 4 went to Shasta Lake ridgewalking. All they got was wet, and Jim got poison oak. They found short phreatic tubes and formations on the cliff face. They looked at the entrance to Melvin Cave.

Next Meetings: May 8 at Chirpchatter Campground with caving in pit cave(s). June 5 at Hat Creek Campground for survey workshop. USFS may be guests. July 4 in the Marbles with cold wet vertical caving expected.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:55 pm. After the meeting, a knot tying session took place. Perfection, directional figure eight, and bowline with Yosemite tie-off were all practiced.

These minutes were respectfully submitted by Liz Wolff

LW

The Earth Shook, The Sky Burned, And All The Bunny Rabbits Ran Away . . . Part 16: Chris' Cupboard

By

Bruce Rogers, Regular Fellow

The time of Chris' Cupboard's genesis was modestly late in the history of Medicine Lake Volcano's attempt to pave over Lava Beds National Monument. Some 10,000 years ago as the Ice Ages finally melted into history, the volcano was largely as we see it today – sans big trees, of course, as the fir and pine forest had yet to be replaced by warmer climate-loving Ponderosa pine and Juniper-Pinyon woodlands. On the west side of the mountain, a thin tongue of lava burbled its way out of the ground to the north-west, attempting to make suburban Tulelake before dark. Soon after this lava tube-fed lobe formed, it crusted over and partly cooled. Inside, however, the molten stuff cavers know and love still seethed, abet at a lower rate than in the magma chamber far below. Contraction cracks formed in the taffy-like surface and the ever probing lava took full advantage of one of these. Slowly oozing out of the depths like Antarctic toothpaste, the lava welled up to form a small, linear blister (swelling strains of "The Pines of Appian Way" by Respeggi in background). Released from the confining pressure of the crust, the molten basalt bubbled carbon dioxide and other trapped gasses, bowing up a part of the blister even further and forming a hollow. Eventually the thinning walls stretched just a little bit too far and the blister blew its north side out into the smoldering countryside. Cooling air rushed in, freezing the basalt even as it trickled back down towards the crack from whence it cometh . . . or something like that (musical score ends on thunderous note).

The lava containing Chris' Cupboard cooled off and lay quiet for some time after this supreme effort. A few hundred meters to the east another crack developed in the cooling crust over a lava tube and yet another shower of flame and twisting and tumbling blobs of lava flew into the smoky skies. This feature, however was better supplied with lava from a larger tube and formed a spatter cone nearly 93 m high and some 400 meters in diameter. Then it, too, blew its west side open and partly drained down past the solitary lava spine Chris's Cupboard lay in.

Time passed.

As the earth healed herself, the first lichens colonized the still warm rock, breaking down the stone into bare mineral soil and paving the way for further incursions of the vegetal kingdom. A multitude of grasses, arid lands shrubs, and finally coniferous trees had their heyday surrounding and mantling the lava spine. With these plants came a cornucopia of natural food stuffs that local animals utilized as they cautiously returned to the lava fields. Birds and beetles by day, and moths and beetles by night flitted through the trees . . . and were suddenly gobbled up by night patrolling bats. Spencer the Spider ambled into the grotto, hopefully spinning a web for their dinner (actually we don't know if it was Samantha or Spencer – they're so modest about these things you know). Beetles, millipedes, and a host of other wiggly, crawly things of vastly more ancient heritage than our own also availed themselves of the grotto. Inquisitive by nature, some pioneering Western Long-eared Bat (*Corynorhinus townsendii* to be specific) probably ventured into the little grotto nearly 10,000 years ago and found the accommodations suitable for midnight snoozes . . . and the rent cheap.

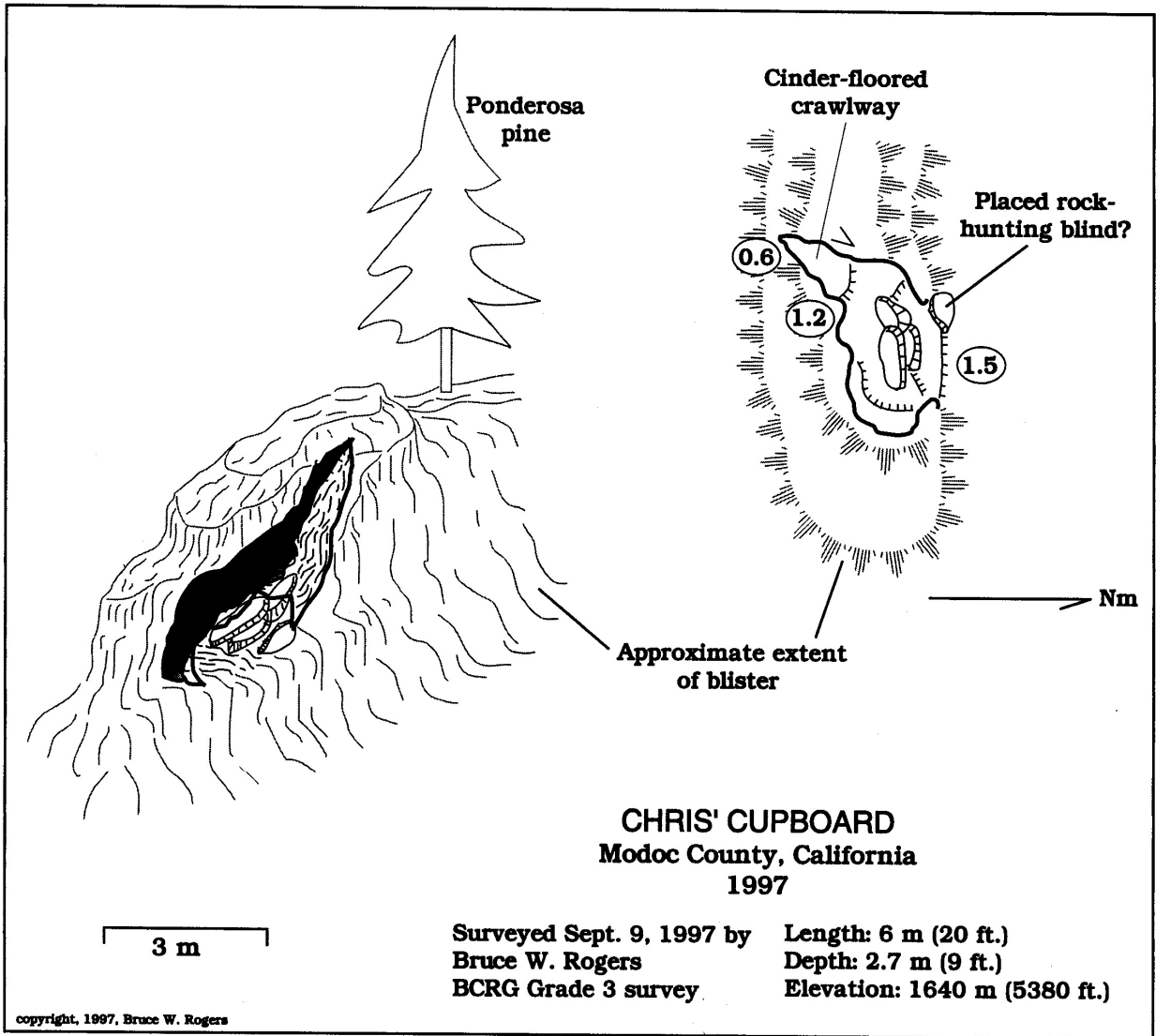
Modestly sized, Chris' Cupboard was not of the magnitude to challenge Labyrinth Cave or the Gaping Holes System for title of the longest lava tube on

Medicine Lake volcano, but it performed a vastly more important duty. Each night since time immemorial a small colony of *Corynorhinus townsendii* swarmed out of the echoing halls of Cave Loop and began their midnight creep. Actually it was quite a bit before midnight, but by the time they had a snack on the wing in the trenches of The Loop and quenched their thirst in one of the nearby ice caves, it was well within striking distance of the Witching Hour. With a full belly and desiring a short rest break from gobbling up flying vermin on the wing, often the bats would take stock of local hang-outs and select a suitable local to snooze a bit while digesting the late evening snack. Chris' Cupboard was admirably suited for these short nocturnal siestas with a protected roost well above the reach of most marauding animals that might think how tasty a bat would be for their dinner.

All this changed, of course, when wo/man arrived on the scene. While the Modocs and their predecessors undoubtedly looked into the little cave on their foraging trips over the volcano, there was little to see or utilize. Even the floor was too rough to use as a sleeping place in inclement weather. Apparently some thoughtful Native American, however, did see the utility of using the grotto as a hunting blind and moved a large, flat slab of rock across part of the open maw. Nothing remains today to attest to their luck or lack thereof. Much later, "western civilized" wo/man arrived and immediately began eyeing the volcano as a source of timber. The rugged slopes defied the loggers, however, until the early part of this century when a spur of a narrow gage logging railroad was built a few tens of meters to the south. Shorn of the old growth timber, Chris' Cupboard again was forgotten until the 1960's and '70's when loggers again skimmed the forest for lumber. After the ruckus stopped, the grotto again was forgotten until a solitary *Corynorhinus* equipped with a tiny radio beacon flew in from Hercules Leg Cave and ventured into this refuge one cold and windy night. Followed by a sputtering blue van piloted by a biologist, the secret lair was again discovered and suitably recorded, then everyone went away and peace and quiet again descended on the flanks of Medicine Lake volcano.

And therein lies the end of our tale of basalt lobes, bat wings, and spiders.





Map: Chris' Cupboard



This page is devoted to the Southern Oregon Grotto, which continues to meet at Bruno's Pizza on Roberts Road in Medford on the first Tuesday of each month at 7:00 pm. Good contacts are:

Bill Kenney (541) 883-2781 very active caver.
Ron Osborne (541) 855-9635 Scorpion Cave project.
Bill Fitzpatrick (541) 779-1201 So.Or. BLM limestone project.
Ernie Coffman (541) 471-1202 well-connected active caver.
Russ Yoder (541) 608-9181 ridgewalking active caver.

THE RESPONSIBILITY OF KNOWLEDGE

By Russ Yoder

I think as long as other cavers are ethically and conservatively minded, with a great love and respect to the individuality of Caves and their biota, and have a good sense of the sensitivity and value of Cave location data, then there is no reason not to share such information. Many people I would like to share information with, I would first like to see become more active and involved in a Grotto like SAG or SOG or other Caving Community group. These individuals would be made more conscious towards the plight of Caves from an ignorant public on both sides of the fence.

Maybe when we're tired of sharing the love of Caving, and instilling the respect with conscientious and conservatively minded ethics to those Caves and to their surrounding areas, as well as to the biota inside and out, then perhaps we should just gate them and throw away the key and say "that Cave is now protected". Never this beauty to be seen again. These halls of wonder wait in their silence to be observed by the only animal species on this planet that can fully comprehend, experience and appreciate such incredible beauty, awe-struck wonder and joy that these passages were truly meant for.

TRIP REPORT – OREGON CAVES MARCH 98 By Bill Kenney

Just got back from 6 days at Oregon Caves. Friday Steve (Knutson) and I dug in LoHopes till almost midnight. Saturday morning Garry and Blair Petrie, Ed Keudell and Cynthia Ream showed up and finished off the dig while Steve and I ridgewalked, the dig netted only about 40 feet of new passage, though it was larger passage than most of what we had found so far. The cave will probably map out around 200 feet. For now we decided to leave the cave alone as it is very wet and muddy, should dry out about July.

Sunday morning all but Steve and I left to go back to Portland. Sunday afternoon the 6 paleontologists arrived from Northern Arizona University (Flagstaff). We started right off that night in the cave and stayed pretty busy digging bones until this afternoon (Wednesday), at which time we all went home, everyone decided it was a very successful trip.

By the way, Sunday while Steve and I were waiting for the Arizona people we worked on a dig, got lucky and broke through to a tagged survey station in Oregon Caves, so now the cave has five entrances, we may try later on this year to find a sixth entrance above the 'Bone Dome' to satisfy the scientists as to where the bears and jaguar entered the cave.

THE GREAT CRACKER ADVENTURE

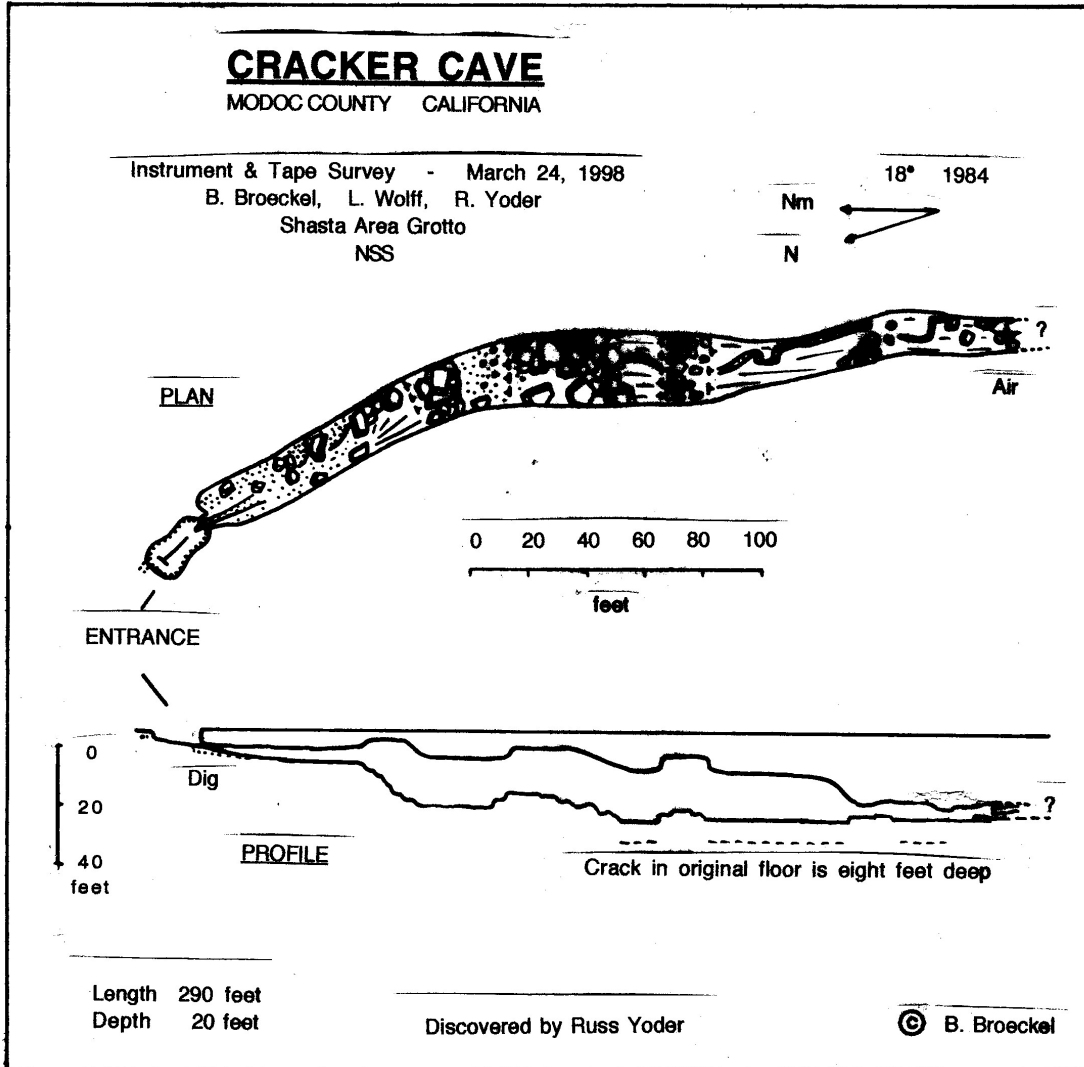
(Or How I Spent The Day Out On The Desert On Mon. Sept.29th '97)

By Russ Yoder

As is typical when I find a new Cave, I was in fact looking for an altogether different and more well known Cave. I did find that Cave the next day, as well as another Cave that I got lost in later that day. Now back to the Cave that I had found the first day. I had been driving around on some dirt roads while attempting to figure out where I was, when I saw this Cave like little shallow sink from the corner of my eye. As I stopped to take a look at it the poor thing had the appearance of having at one time been nearly completely buried. It may have been buried by a natural fallout event or by the bulldozer operator that had made the road. I've heard that bulldozer operators don't like holes. In any case I took a closer look. At the far end I noticed a narrow dark crack partly hidden by some tall grass at a place where sand met rock and the grass was moving. I had to dig a little bit just to get my face down to it. As I peeked in a steady cold breeze hit my face. That was all it took. Sand and breakdown rock were flying everywhere. Eventually I stopped just long enough to get a shovel and bucket from the truck. I then proceeded in a more orderly, if not any less determined, fashion. I made a trench through the berm of sand and rock blocking the entrance. Proceeding ever deeper inside the Cave, at a belly crawl at first over sand stopping only to let a mouse go by me. Then on hands and knees over breakdown to ever bigger passage. Then around some final breakdown boulders I saw large tube passage before me

Tuesday March 24th 1998 I was racing against time to get to the meeting site by 10:30 a.m. Frantically driving my truck through the desert I topped the last rise and swung into a stop. It was 10:30! But all was well, I was the first one to arrive. So I opened the morning paper and had a cookie. During the previous SAG March meeting at Bill Kenny's (thanks for the pizza and putting up with me for 30 minutes before anyone else showed up Bill. A warning to any other hosts to SAG meetings that I attend.) saw me talking to Bill Broeckel and Liz Wolff about what I have come to call Cracker Cave because of the last lava flow to go through it having such large contraction cracks as deep as eight feet down to its original floor in some places. I suggested that we make a trip out to it. So on this Tuesday morning I sat in my van reading a newspaper. At about 10:47 a.m. Bill Broeckel and Liz Wolff arrived and soon after we were on our way to do some serious Cave mapping. After relocating the entrance and proceeding into the Cave after momentary glory in front of Bill's camera next to the entrance. We made through to the "end" of the Cave. While relaxing in lovely wide crawling passage we talked about whether or not the Cave continues just past some breakdown blocks: Liz "It doesn't go"; Bill "It might," Russ "If we could just get past that one block it could go for miles." Since we didn't have a hammer we surveyed from that point back to the entrance.

Back up on the surface again it was either following a rodent down a 2½" hole on the opposite side of the sink for some down slope possibility (I was game) or go to another Cave not to far away. The Cave that I in fact had been looking for when I had found this one. Since I now knew exactly where that Cave was we went there instead. Then we went to yet another Cave. Then we all drove off into the sunset of another fine day.



Map: Cracker Cave



March 24, 1998 – Russ Yoder at the entrance to Cracker Cave.

ON THE TRAIL OF BATS By Ray Miller

One of the benefits granted bat researchers is the occasional opportunity to visit exotic places often overlooked by tourists. While involved in a study of bat species diversity and population density in Northern California forests one of our research sites was Hyampom. In case you need directions to this metropolitan area, travel Highway 299 between Redding and Eureka. When you get to Douglas City turn south between the general store and the chicken coop. Some 20 miles down the road is the town of Hayfork, and here you turn west onto a road mostly notched into the cliffs. The road is often one way, but that doesn't matter because there is seldom traffic. When you run out of road you have reached Hyampom. Hyampom's claim to fame is its per capita donut consumption, which is the highest in the United States. The store sells nearly a dozen per day.

The town isn't very well equipped to cope with visitors. Overnight tourist accommodations are 2 unimproved Forest Service campgrounds. Food service is at the store, and consists of donuts or a can of whatever is available. The locals entertain themselves by making paperclip chains, going to the dump to watch bumpers rust and wiping powdered sugar off their faces. When we showed up with our mist tents and lights it was like the circus had come to town.

We used a bug trap with a deep blue light. About 1 a.m. as we were completing a night's work a young lady in her 20s approached very cautiously and asked if we were from outer space. She had seen the bug trap light soon after dark, and thought it must be part of our spaceship. It had taken her a large part of the night to summon the courage to approach, but she reasoned if we tried to abduct her she could scream and the townspeople would save her.

Hyampom had two memorable events in 1997. In January there was the Big Storm, and in July the Bat People arrived. **RM**

SAG RAG

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STAMP

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Cover: Shows photo of tavern window in Yreka

NEXT ISSUE: Hat Creek Report

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