



VOLUME 17 NUMBER 6

NOV-DEC 1998

ENTER HIS GATES WITH THANKSGIVING,  
AND HIS COURTS WITH PRAISE!

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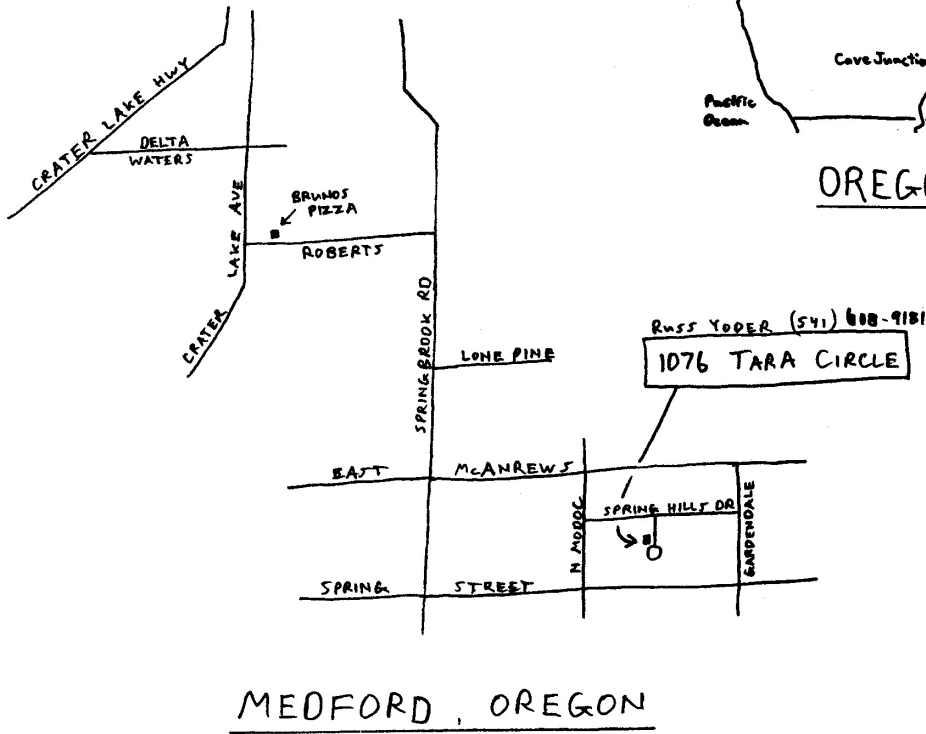
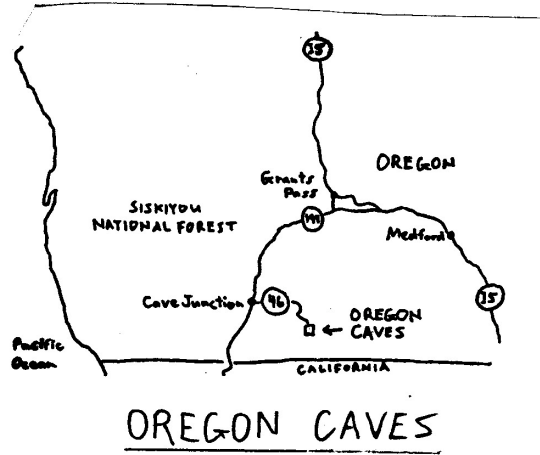
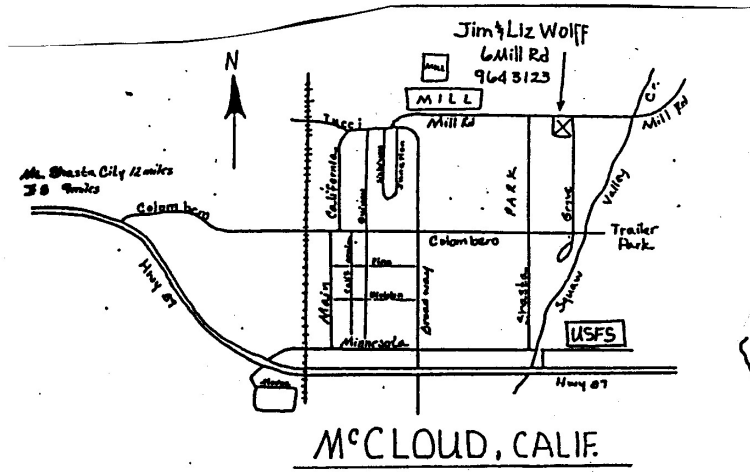
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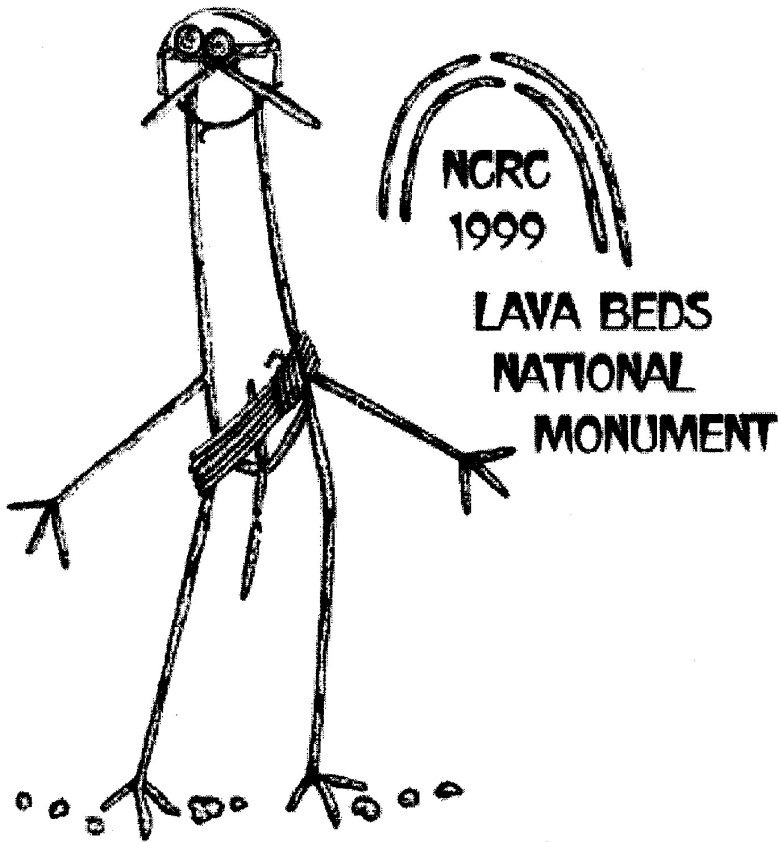
**EDITORIAL:** Many thanks to Mark and Linda for opening their home to the grotto. The November feast of food, fotos, and friends continues to be – fantastic! Mark’s memorable Marble Mountain article arrived just in time to expand the last issue into a real blockbuster. Those funny zigzag symbols in the article were meant to be dashes. They just came out of the e-mail that way, and in my rush they got slapped right into the printing process. While we are patching things up, please note that the last issue was part of Volume 17, not 7, so just draw a 1 in front of the 7 on your copy, and fix it for your obsessive-compulsive SAG RAG editor.

This issue is coming out a little early to announce the Calendar in a timely manner. The winter schedule solidified real well at the November meeting. Merry Christmas, everyone. What a great privilege to be a caver, and what a nice time of year to reflect on the joy and interest that caves bring into our lives. **BB**

### **CAVE CALENDAR – 1998 & 1999**

- Dec 11, 1998 Shasta Area Grotto Meeting and Christmas Party in McCloud. Dinner before meeting, dessert after. Call Jim & Liz Wolff for details (530) 964-3123. Possible vertical limestone caving Saturday in Wellhella Cave.
- Jan 5, 1999 Southern Oregon Grotto meeting at Russ Yoder’s house 7:00pm, 1076 Tara Cr, Medford, (541) 608-9181.
- Jan 16-18, 1999 Oregon Caves restoration work weekend and SAG meeting. Call Jim & Liz Wolff for details (530) 964-3123. John Roth has lots of work in mind for us to do.
- Feb 2, 1999 Southern Oregon Grotto meeting at Russ Yoder’s house, 7:00pm, 1076 Tara Cr, Medford, (541) 608-9181.
- Feb 12-15, 1999 SAG meeting & “Cave Conservation” weekend (i.e., skiing) in McCloud. Call Wolffs for details (530) 964-3123.
- July 3-10, 1999 NCRC training at Lava Beds. See enclosed.
- July 12-16, 1999 1999 NSS Convention, Twin Falls, Idaho. Plan ahead.





## National Cave Rescue Commission - 1999 Seminar

- Seminar Information

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*We, of the Western Region Training Committee, invite you to join us at Lava Beds for:*

The National Cave Rescue Commission  
of the  
National Speleological Society, Inc.

### **1999 Cave Rescue Operations and Management Seminar**

**Seminar Dates -- July 3, 1999 to July 9, 1999**

**Facilities** - The seminar will be held at the Tulalake Fairgrounds in Tulalake, California. Demonstrations, skills check offs, and meals (breakfast and dinner) will occur at the fairgrounds. A sack lunch will be provided each day of the seminar to facilitate field work. Meals will be provided by a local caterer who is well known in

the local community, comes highly recommended, and has past experience providing high energy meals for fire crews. Camping, RV hookups, and showers will be available at the fairgrounds. Classroom instruction will be conducted at the Tulelake Basin Joint Unified School District building, which is conveniently located directly across the street from the fairgrounds. There is even a museum on site at the fairgrounds which features a mix of geological, historical, and cultural items of both local and regional interest; a tour of the museum is being planned for one evening during the seminar week. More information about the seminar.

**About the Area** - Tulelake has a population of about 1,000 and is geographically located 4,035 feet in elevation in northern California, only a few miles from the Oregon border. Average temperatures for July during the day range in the mid 80s with lows dropping into the 50s. Precipitation in the summer months averages near zero. Several motels are located a few miles from the fairgrounds while downtown Tulelake has several restaurants, markets, and other businesses within walking distance of the fairgrounds.

**Local Caving** - We have the full support and cooperation of Lava Beds National Monument for the seminar. With over 370 caves within the monument boundaries and a vast number of caves in the surrounding areas, this region provides abundant caving opportunities. Come and cave with us in Lava Beds in 1999!

For more information about the courses to be offered and a registration form, please complete the form below and mail to:

NCRC Seminar 1999  
Marianne Russo, Registrar  
Post Office Box 230  
New Castle, CA 95658-0230

Please send me information and a registration form for the 1999 NCRC Seminar.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

*Optional Information*

Email address \_\_\_\_\_

Grotto affiliation (in any) \_\_\_\_\_

SAR affiliation (if any) \_\_\_\_\_

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## **AVOID IT LIKE THE PLAGUE** by Ray Miller

If the mountain lions don't get you maybe the fleas will. Why? Because the fleas that carry the bacteria causing plague are primarily associated with rock squirrels, ground squirrels and pack rats.

There are 3 types of plague. Bubonic plague is marked by swollen lymph glands. Septicemic plague circulates in the bloodstream and is hard to diagnose. Pneumonic plague infects the lungs and is particularly dangerous because it can be transmitted by coughing. This is the Black Death that did in a quarter of Europe's population in the 14th century. Infected people become sick 2 to 7 days after infection. Symptoms are fever, chills, headache, muscle pain, nausea, vomiting and diarrhea. There were 394 human plague cases in the nation from 1949 through 1997. Sixty three of the victims died. The disease is treated with antibiotics, and the sooner treatment starts less likely the illness will prove fatal.

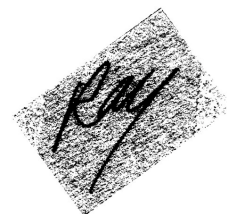
The plague bacteria entered the U.S. from China about 1900 through San Francisco and quickly spread to wild rodents. So far the disease has not traveled very far east of the Rockies. The Incidence of plague appears to be linked to the rodent population, and typical El Nino winters that are mild and wet increase rodent survival. Cats are more susceptible to plague than dogs, and plague can be contracted by handling infected animals. If you become ill and there is a sick pet in your house it is advisable to see a doctor.

### **To reduce plague risk:**

- Avoid sick or dead animals.
- Teach children to avoid dead animals and rodent nests or burrows.
- Don't use tents or sleeping bags near rodent nests or burrows.
- Use insect repellent on skin and clothes.
- Don't allow cats and dogs to roam free.
- Treat cats and dogs with a product that kills fleas on contact.
- Have sick outdoor pets examined promptly by a veterinarian.
- Hunters, trappers should wear gloves when handling dead animals.

### **Human plague at a glance:**

- A bacterial disease of rodents generally transmitted through flea bites.
- May be transmitted by direct contact with infected rodents, wildlife or pets.
- Most people become ill two to seven days after infection.
- Symptoms may include fever, chills, swollen lymph nodes in groin, armpit or neck, headache, muscle pain, vomiting, nausea, diarrhea.
- Can be cured by prompt treatment with appropriate antibiotics.
- Can be fatal.

A handwritten signature, likely "Ray", is enclosed within a diamond-shaped border. The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

**A WEEK IN MARBLE VALLEY** By Cynthia Ream

FRIDAY, July 3, 1998: After a late start from home, I began to feel civilization start to lose its grip on me as I emerged from the heavy traffic of the Willamette Valley into the more open, mountainous central and southern regions of our state. Winding up one mountain, down the next valley, then summiting a peak just north of Grants Pass I broke out of the dense cloud cover we'd been living under for the past two months. I was hootin' and hollering in delight, and my speed picked up with my excitement. There are never troopers in those hills, right? Wrong! Watch your speed in that area, especially on holiday weekends, or I'll see you in traffic court.

Despite my efforts to "make time", I ended up hiking part way up in the dark with an incredibly heavy pack, and was very happy to arrive to a cheery welcome by a group of cavers and a warm fire. Another week begins in the Marble Mountains.

SUNDAY, July 5, 1998: Yesterday Steve Knutson, Midori Sundquist and I went to the Kneegrinder in Bigfoot. There was a huge snow bank in the sinkhole, 15' to 20' high, which made the way in very slimy, with a nice little waterfall trickling down the drops. The wind was whipping out of the entrance, strong enough to blowout my carbide lamp, and the streams below were quite lively.

We made good time getting out there, surveyed 550', left going leads, took a long time coming out, went smoothly up the ropes, and emerged at sunrise. The red sun rising in the East enflamed the bushes on cool, blue marble.

I forced myself to eat and drink something, then slept for four hours – 2 hours longer than Midori and Steve. It was a lazy day recuperating around camp, washing and drying gear, visiting with Steve and Midori, and playing Space Ship and Capture the Deer with Forrest, Midori and Rich's son.

I left camp around 6:30 pm to hike up the Gap to check out the wildflowers, the view, and, of course, the karst. The glacier lilies were thick, sprouting up almost as fast as the snow melts. The upper karst didn't have too much snow left, and I was able to walk from the rim, down the karst to camp with no problem.

I spent some time on the ridge, watching the sun set over Rainy Valley, stretched out 600' below my feet, distant mountains glowing red in its light, 3/4 moon rising to the south by the Trinity Alps, feeling grateful to be here.

TUESDAY, July 7, 1998: Before Steve left, he handed down the mandate, "Go into Bigfoot and survey." He worked all winter inputting data to describe the walls in Bigfoot, and Tom Kline and Gary Petrie had provided printouts, so the groundwork has been laid to find new passage. All this work must be rewarded!

Midori and I went to the Upper Discovery Passage in Bigfoot yesterday, and scoured it pretty thoroughly, but couldn't find one lead worth mapping, in our estimation. It was fun to explore a part of the cave we hadn't been in much, but we felt pretty skunked.

We had a great time just ambling along, trying to figure out where we were and how it related to what we were looking at on the map. There were several question marks which either led nowhere, or to a one shot deal, or followed existing survey.

WEDNESDAY, July 8, 1998: Yesterday Rich Sundquist, Roger Jones and I went into Bigfoot to do leads and survey in the Lower Discovery Passage. Rich had led a trip in a couple days before, and found more cave than they cared to survey in one trip.

As Roger neared the bottom of the last drop, an incredible crashing started from above. He had time to pendulum over to a blade on the side, and got out of the way in time to see a football-sized rock fall right where he had been seconds before. The melting snow pack in the entrance makes the ground the consistency of runny oatmeal, and has uncovered several large rocks which are very unstable. Be careful out there people!

We did several side leads, a couple in sight of the bottom of the ropes, all of them before reaching the breakdown pile. Rich also did a dome climb, and we ended up with ~350' of survey for the trip. It just goes to show, you can never assume that a cave has been pushed as thoroughly as you might push it. You have to check it out for yourself, and these new maps really show you what's been surveyed and what hasn't.

This trip I didn't bring a helmet-mounted back-up light, which was not smart. A push caver needs two lights on her helmet at all times. So many times I leave my pack behind to push into some tight thing, which is where your light is most likely to go out. I've had it happen a few times, and it's not nice.

5-year-old Forrest and I are playing a lot of Space Explorers. We make up stories about our space travels, our ships, planets we go to, aliens we meet and kill, and people we save.

FRIDAY, July 10, 1998: On Wednesday, Midori and I went to Hanging Rocks to check some "?"s on the map. We found a good, if short, overhead lead off the main passage, and some low, wet digs off a side dome. Midori found a passage heading off into some breakdown. It didn't look too great to me, but it was actually passage, and you never know what will happen.

We took a couple of shots in, dug a little, and got into a dome. We figured that was that, but we found an upper lead on, which led to a dig and another dome. We climbed that to a tall, narrowish passage taking off horizontally!



We pulled a tape to the end of that, figuring that was the end, then looked up ~6' to see another crawlway taking off. We mapped that a ways, past at least two dome pits, then decided to quit for the day. We were cold, it was past our agreed upon exit hour, and we knew we couldn't finish it all that night.

We mapped 207', 47' of which was a resurvey tie-in. We were thrilled, as at every step we thought the passage ended, yet it continued. It seems to be heading back over the main passage, towards the Discovery Passage, paralleling the Hanging Rocks connection.

Today I slept into the afternoon after an all night trip into the Kneegrinder with Rich. The weather has held, despite some clouds passing by yesterday.

It took us 5 hours to get to our lead, and an incredible amount of crawling. We surveyed ~600' of virgin cave, all crawlway, and left many new leads, some of which we marked "?!!!". We've got to find an easier way into this area. It's a very exciting survey, but extremely tiring to get to.

Michael, a guy from the Motherlode Grotto, is up here for the first time with his 9-year-old son Isaiah. The boys are having a great time exploring the woods and stalking the wily deer. After a day of rest and renewal, I spent a little time poking into holes on the karst just above camp, noting a couple interesting holes worth taking another look at.

We drank the last of the wine by the light of the full moon. It was a gorgeous night. We totaled all survey. 550' and 630' from Kneegrinder, 250' and 350' from the Discovery Passage, 150' from Hanging Rocks, and 20' from another party in Monkey River, for 1950'. Pretty good for a week up here, especially considering that mainly represents one team a day. Midori and I plan to go to Hanging Rocks today and get the last 50' or more to bring our week's total to 2000', our unofficial goal for the week.

This has been a great week. I got lots of caving in, punishing my body in all ways imaginable. We found some neat passage, and I always enjoy my time in the mountains with my good friends. The area is teeming with life – hummingbirds, wildflowers, rushing streams. Once the sun comes and the snow melts, things come to life in a hurry here, completing the cycle in the 3 or 4 months before the snow returns.

SUNDAY, July 12, 1998: The Marble View Motel – We hiked out and made it as far as Ft. Jones, and Rich, Midori, Forrest and I checked into this little motel. All the restaurants in town were closed, since it's Sunday, so we made a run to the store and picked up victuals for some dinner. The gal at the motel offered us the use of her BBQ, and we had a fine feast of cheeseburgers, chips, salad, ice cream, and beer.

We had a fine, mellow evening, sitting on the little wooden benches out front, frying burgers, eating, drinking brews, watching the sun set, the dusk settle in, the deepening blue sky, a couple bats zipping by. This is a nice place to pause before jumping back in to the work-a-day routine of life in the big city.

Saturday, Midori and I went back to Bigfoot to try to locate a connection passage to the Kneegrinder, altering our original plan for the day. We intended to go to the upper level of the Illusion. We had our maps and our leads all picked out. We made good time to the donut, then found we needed a rope to make the move to get into that level. It could be done without one, but it required stepping down onto a ledge, reaching around a corner, and lunging for the other side with ~20' of exposure. That was a little farther than we cared to hang it out, so we considered an alternative plan.

We headed back to the 3-step climb-up and looked at a side passage that I was interested in, then found the connection to the middle level of the Illusion. We found a couple “?”s, but they were real LFAGs (better Left For Another Generation), not worth doing that day. At the end of the side passage was a dig with air, so I said let's go for this – it was the best thing we'd seen that trip.

We dug for hours, and it did reveal more passage, but it was a grim dig, and getting grimmer. Another LFAG, and one more trip with no survey. It was fun, though. We got out at 3 am, and Rich joined us by the campfire to entertain us with stories of their hike to Little Black Mt. and Sky High Lakes that day. We ate and talked, and I noticed that the moon was really lighting things up. It was pointed out to me that at that hour, it was probably more likely the sun's influence, as it prepared to rise. We scurried off to bed.

I'm so thankful for a wonderful week: beautiful clear every day, warm, moonlit nights, good campfires and company, full mapping trips, and fun, if exhausting caving. Oh – and the hot shower tonight was like ambrosia, a little bit of heaven.

**CR**

**CHRISTMAS TREE CAVE – REVIEW**

By B. Broeckel

This Christmas Tree Cave is a lava tube of Northern California, not to be confused with the important bat cave near Mt. Adams in Washington, also called Christmas Tree Cave. Walker, Evans, Braithwaite, and Cunningham surveyed this more southern arboreal cave in October '62. The cave map was published with an article describing the cave in March, 1963. The caves were being evaluated as potential fallout shelters. The Christmas trees left inside the cave were already observed in 1962, with the authors stating that the poached trees were placed in the cave "several years ago".

The Wolffs shared this article with me in 1992, and that summer I made several trips looking for the entrance. I became obsessed, eventually learning that Lassen National Forest was well aware of the cave, and in October, Law Enforcement Officer Jim Barnhart very kindly walked me through the cave. I was so excited that I took some pictures of the tree remains, wrote a short article, and put a copy of the old 1962 map on the cover of the grotto newsletter.

In 1993, the grotto stopped by long enough to GPS the entrance. But other projects called, and it wasn't until June 14, 1997 that Jim Wolff, Liz Wolff, and Melanie Jackson set out to resurvey Christmas Tree Cave. They went a little too far along the poor dirt road, and found some other caves, which they mapped. These caves all lined up nicely, and got published as the Grinch Caves, because they stole Christmas (Tree Cave). Some good leads were left going south.

The Grinch crew returned on December 13, 1997, and I joined them to continue the survey south. The curious little pit in the back of Carbide Can Cave had lots of small animal bones, but the lead did not go. However, the survey flourished in another small entrance off to the side. When we emerged from the next entrance south, we recognized the main entrance to Christmas Tree Cave. This entrance effectively divides Christmas Tree into two caves. The survey of Christmas Tree North was completed from entrance to entrance, and included the nicely decorated side passages which wrap around the Carbide Can Pit, without connecting, in a most unusual manner. The total length of Christmas Tree North was 738 feet.

January 11, 1998, the same crew returned with the addition of Kyle Haines. We surveyed most of Christmas Tree South, which we often refer to as Christmas Tree Cave, because it is the longest piece and it has the trees. Another wallet was found in the short upper level. There was no ID, so the cash was stashed in the grotto treasury. On this trip we were delighted to push the survey into a major passage not shown on the original map. Eventually this passage ended at a tiny hole that connected to the surface.

Liz Wolff and I zipped back on January 23 to clean up the survey, adding a grim 100 foot crawlway and marking the tiny back entrance by poking out a stick with a pink ribbon attached. On the surface, this marker was located coming out of a small, insignificant looking sinkhole. We came back with Jim Wolff on March 7 and surveyed a 75 foot cave beyond the pink ribbon. Connection with Christmas Tree Cave eluded us due to a key rock which we couldn't move. It was stubbornly cemented in ice.

Finally, after survey school on June 6, 1998, Jim Wolff, Russ Yoder, and I started in at the back door sinkhole. The stubborn rock, no longer welded in ice, lifted out quite easily. Russ Yoder then tore into the dirt and loose rocks like a badger, and soon trenched out the connection to Christmas Tree Cave. Then we mapped back through the connection. At this point the Frank family arrived, and Chuck Franks III and IV, Scott Frank, Russ Yoder, and I walked over to the main entrance and proceeded to make the first through trip of Christmas Tree Cave. Russ Yoder led the way through the new crawlway at the back door entrance. The final survey length for Christmas Tree (South) is 1,987 feet. And yes, the Christmas trees are still in there.

**BB**

(Ed. See May-June 98 issue for map, references, and more articles about Christmas Tree Cave.)

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The time has come to renew our yearly SAG membership dues and SAG RAG subscriptions. The prices still remain the same as before! Due Jan. 16.

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ NSS# \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ SAG dues (includes RAG) \$6 per person or family.  
Membership category (family or person)? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ I want to subscribe to CAL CAVER too. Thats another \$6.

\_\_\_\_\_ SAG RAG subscription only, without SAG membership. \$6.

\_\_\_\_\_ TOTAL. Make checks payable to Shasta Area Grotto, and  
send to Liz Wolff, POB 865, McCloud, CA 96057.

**SAG RAG**  
524 Annie Street  
Yreka CA 96097

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