

A Deep Regret

A poem by Russ Yoder

Like a long dark descent into the voids of the world do I send my dreams
out of caves long past and of new darker yet voluminous frontiers left unchallenged.

Is this in truth a certain vision that proceeds me?

I float aloft down through huge passage in which I feel has no connection
with the world above.

Oh how ancient loneliness be this void's testimonial,
that of being unchallenged throughout all of time's existence.

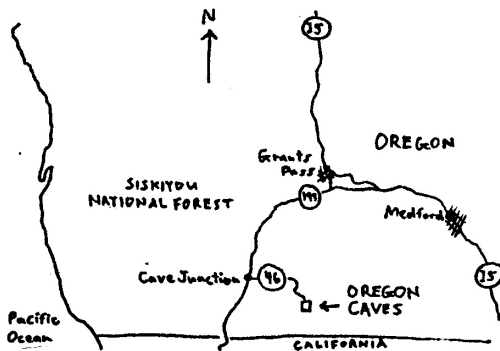


The SAG RAG is published by the Shasta Area Grotto of the National Speleological Society, Grotto meetings are held at different locations the fourth Friday of each month at 7:30 p.m. Meeting locations are announced in the SAG RAG, Membership dues are \$6 dollars per year and include newsletter subscription. 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 or <jbroeckel@snowcrest.net>. For more on SAG, check the web site at <http://www.caves.org/grotto/sag>.

CAVERS CALENDAR 2004

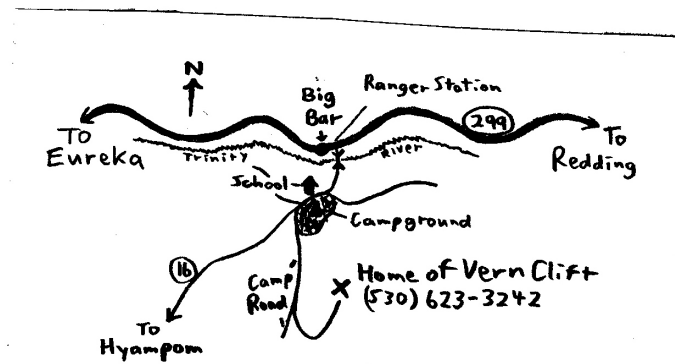
March 12-14	Oregon Caves work trip, call Liz Wolff 964-3123.
April 9	SAG meets 7:30PM at Vern Cliff's in Big Bar 623-3242.
May 12-21	XI International Symposium Volcanospeleology, Azores.
June 12	V.C. & Research Facility dedication at Lava Beds.
June 18-20	NCA Regional event by WVG at China Hat CG near Bend.
July 12-16	NSS Convention at Marquette (Upper Peninsula), Mich.
July 24-Aug 2	ASS Speleofest at Alberta, Canada.

Maps to Meetings



Bring sleeping bag and caving gear for work trip.

MARCH



Bring camping and caving gear for the weekend.

APRIL

SAG RAG SUMMARY (for convenience of CAL CAVER)

Every year since 1982, the SAG RAG has reported something on the activity of the KMCTF. The Jan-Feb 2005 issue reviews the 2004 KMCTF field season, and includes a newly drafted map of an old cave that goes back to the 1990 NSS convention in Yreka. Actually, Convention Cave is even older than that, but 1990 is when cavers seem to have taken notice. Liz Wolff also adds a blurb on Oregon Caves, with another work trip coming up there very soon. Robert Nixon updates us with plans for the grotto within the worldwide web.

BB

**SHASTA AREA GROTTO MEETING
JANUARY 9, 2004**

The meeting was called to order at 7:55pm.at the Kisling's home in Lake Shastina.

Present were: Bill & Cheryl Kenney, Jim & Liz Wolff, Arley & Sharon Kisling, Ray Miller, Melanie Jackson, and Robert Nixon.

Minutes: accepted as corrected.

Sec/Treas. Report: Jan. Balance is \$635.97.

SAG RAG: Nothing to report.

Website: Is now running well. Robert has been tinkering with it ant the calendar.

Correspondence: We received and advertisement from EZ Specialties Design. They make pins, patches, key chains, and do silk screening etc.

We have a request for people to join the Western Cave conservancy.

Old Business: The Oregon Caves weekend for SAG is March 12-14. Liz needs to know the number of people who will be going by the end of January. That information will be passed on to Deanna DeWire. Jim is saving the SFBC Speleographs directly from their website. They have maps and color pictures. Bill Broeckel asked if No Name Cave had been gated, but no one here knows.

New Business: Arley wants to know why SAG doesn't have a grotto patch. The reason is because we don't have a design. We've had a couple of T-shirts in the past and we still have the silkscreen patterns for them. The grotto is soliciting ideas for the making of a grotto patch. When we have your ideas or sketch Liz Wolff and Sharon Kisling can design a patch or logo for SAG. Let these ladies know your ideas.

Trip Reports: Liz Wolff and Eve Proper performed a hibernating bat count at Pluto's Cave on Dec. 20, 03. They counted 295 bats. The previous count was 284 bats.

The meeting was adjourned at 8: 20 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Melanie Jackson

MJ

Checking It Out

Another great cave adventure

By Russ Yoder

Prelude: In explanation to some of which you are about to read, I give you this. As time goes by and many other experiences intrude upon us, we cavers have a tendency to misplace our caves. This is why we are now working very hard at making sure these caves stay exactly where they were when we had last seen them.

CHECKOUT 2000

It was Jim Wolff's fault. Somewhere around 2000 a lead had come up in what would later be classified by myself as the Lower Water Caves Project. This lead was given to Jim as a cave in this area that had a forty foot pit in it. Sounding interesting, Jim had begun a grid search to locate the entrance. I then joined him in this venture and soon found a hole. This I explored enough to agree on this original description, on it being a hole. Jim put his red striped tape up on a bush to proclaim this discovery. So thus the name Flag Hole Cave.

We then proceeded northerly more so and found another cave. We pried some boulders out of the way to enter and found other boulders along the way. We called this place Boulder Cave. This cave is approximately 300 feet long and ends with some daylight entering from a small hole through breakdown.

Once back outside we walked above the cave to this hole which was at the bottom of a sink. This happened to be in sight of yet another sink and cave. This looked like the entrance that we had been looking for. So in we went to find a good amount of cool breeze blowing out. The "pits" were found shortly and are the result of short lower level channels on either side of a high sealed lava dam. Walking up a short catwalk along the right wall brings you closer to the ceiling which gives you a high look down the other side but no forty foot pit.

Climbing down this and just a bit further the cave ended with a small low passage which began under a small upper level room that one could climb up to.

We were wondering where all that air we had felt had come from since we were less than 300 feet into what seemed to be the end. Had we passed by a lower level on the way in? Just then we felt a strong cold breeze blasting out of the small low passage. Taking a closer look we could see that this air flow was coming through a tight space just above a tube-in-tube that was blocking the passage. The air was blowing through in regular cycles. This gave us the impression that there might be another entrance further up that connected down to this restriction.

Back outside we ate lunch and then headed on upflow in the direction of the cave. We came out on a broad ropy pahoehoe flow covered by low brush. Continuing on we found various surface tubing indicative of a master tube below. This finally led to a very large sink with a big entrance heading back downflow underneath us.

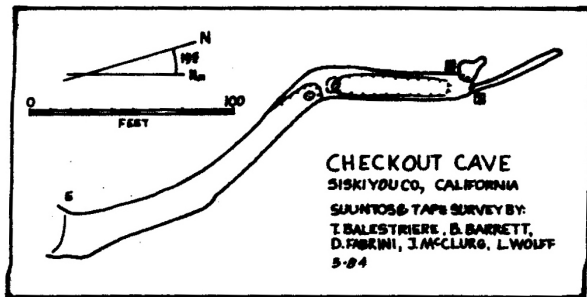
Feeling the need to escape the heat of the day's hike and to scoop big cave we entered. After what I estimated was about 800 ft. of large rooms and passage with low lower level segments we came to an area of near seal. This had a small passage up on the left side that was taking in air.

Upon sliding in, the passage got a bit roomier. This led to a ledge that opened up on my right to a twelve foot high passage reminiscent of Wildcat Cave in Washington. Further down this neat intact passage I came upon a 17 foot drop! Also the roof began to rise making for a spectacular intact canyon passage winding off before me. It rounded a corner on out of sight up ahead and given the fact that there also was large passage heading underneath me going back upflow, had the result of my heart beating a little faster.

As there was no way to climb such a sheer drop I finally returned to a rather cold Jim. He

had stayed outside of the squeeze as I had pressed on ahead. As I described what I had seen I had the feeling that he thought I was exaggerating. This I took as a sign that he may have been feeling the onset of hypothermia and since his blood sugars were getting low we decided to exit the cave at this time.

There had been something familiar about the layout of the lead cave that had given us a heads up as to the existence of the large entrance above. After looking thru some of the cave maps of the few caves that I hadn't seen yet, I came across the plan layout of Checkout Cave in the NSS 1990 Convention Guidebook. It had been surveyed back in 1984 and drawn up by Liz Wolff.



Map: Checkout Cave

With my interest piqued now in this area, I began to survey the entire Lower Water Caves Flow. This began July 4th, 2000. That four day weekend produced the bulk of the Lower Water Caves Project Map showing all caves up from the main all weather road up to the lower entrance of a rather large and long master tube later to be called Blue Ribbon Cave at midflow.

CHECKOUT 2001

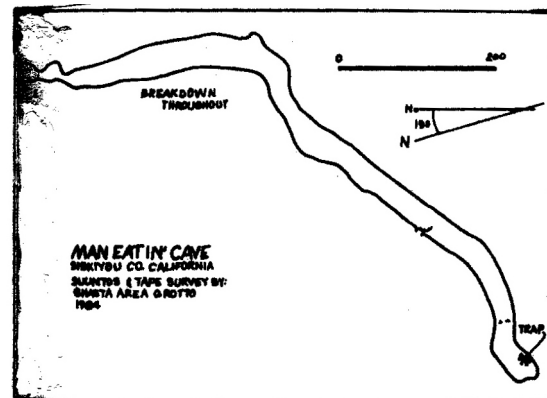
Other projects with the Shasta Area and Oregon High Desert Grottos soon took up much of my time until, I think about June of 2001, I decided to do a little thing that most people wouldn't do, solo, and no one shouldn't.

In respect to digging and pushing caves that are difficult to go through or even get to, the Southern Medicine Lake Highlands have a

lack of people motivated to do the job, especially if it is in the Lavas. Therefore the possibility of a Checkout connection with the as yet not fully explored upper cave, had sat idle for a year. I had spent the winter months thinking and even dreaming about this though, and I was jazzed.

The first cave I went to was actually a cave downflow of Checkout that I had at first assumed didn't go. Later I had realized that this must be the entrance sink to Man Eatin' Cave. So I had come back to see for sure and this time enough air was blowing out that I found my way through.

The passage was big and with mountains of breakdown throughout it was a bit of a challenge to go through. This cave was surveyed to 857 feet by the Shasta Area Grotto in 1984. Near the end is why they called the cave Man Eatin'. During the discovery/survey trip somebody had to be rescued when he tried to gain access to a lower level via a small hole in the breakdown. The breakdown moved in and pinned him with more rock on the way. If there hadn't been others with him he would not have survived. This lead had yet to be pushed. Well seventeen years later it was about to be.



Map: Man Eatin' Cave

The breakdown was filling a lower level trenching that appeared to have a solid roof and intact passage going downflow with air movement coming out of it. As I had come in with a hammer and pry bar it was fairly easy to reorganize the breakdown. In less than twelve minutes I was in virgin and intact passage.

At what I estimate was about 160 feet past the original large lava seal above, this lower level passage suddenly got low and too small to proceed further. Through a three inch high slot I could see continuing low passage ahead. The airflow seems steady and wet here and I do not think that there is any other entrance. Since the floor to ceiling is solid there was nothing to do now but to head up to Checkout Cave.

Once inside Checkout again I headed up to the tube-in-tube blockage and began beating the hell out of it with my twelve pound short-handled sledge. Nothing to worry about as this was just a common feature. I stopped hammering only long enough to remove large chunks of broken rock in order to continue hammering some more. This lasted for four hours until I could finally squeeze past this restriction, only now to find myself looking straight up a narrow high slot with thin sheets of laminations hanging right over my head. Even though I could see that passage did continue beyond this choke I felt that it would be too risky to push this from the bottom.

I then went back outside and to camp in order to have lunch and to warm up. Afterward I took my sixteen foot cable ladder, anchors, five pound sledge and breaker bar up to the large entrance above Checkout.

Back inside that cave and having rigged the cable ladder in order to get down to the bottom of the drop that had stopped me the year before, I paused for just a moment. This was a very anxious moment, to climb down this cable ladder by myself, gear and all, into the dark unknown. By myself... I could hardly wait, I had to do it, I had to go. Down I went.

I explored upflow first. This has nice large very intact passage with nice features and decorations. There was a place where these huge lining blocks had given way, but that you could still walk under them on original floor was very neat. This passage eventually gets low and ends in breakdown.

I then headed downflow towards Checkout. I eventually walked under an opening in the ceiling to an upper level. The ceiling had dropped to about twelve feet high now and some boulders made the climb up look okay. I decided to go on down this level first. This section has the best decorations yet. The slope gets steep at the end with further passage visible past a too tight five inch high opening. This, we found out during survey (more than two years later), actually went under and past the entrance sink to Checkout. I then headed up to the next level.

Once up I could go two directions. I chose downflow and soon found myself at the slot looking down past that thin loose lining to where I had dug to. I cleared the obstruction and climbed down. I then crawled through to the Checkout passage and on outside, thus completing the first through trip from entrance to entrance and making it all one cave finally.

There has been many a dig, but this was one of the few when everything worked out very well, living up to and even surpassing my expectations.

I loved every minute of it. I was on cloud nine.

RY

Checkout Cave — the Rest of the Story

— Liz Wolff

Russ Yoder had been bugging me for about two years to go survey a “really neat” extension he had found to Checkout Cave in the Water Caves (WC) lava flow. It had a great, mostly breakdown-free lower level which required a ladder climb and led to another entrance. Checkout was discovered and surveyed to 192 feet in the 1980’s by SFBC people and had been considered finished then. I didn’t remember the WC flow fondly, as it is rougher and brushier than the rest of the cave bearing flows in the area, so I had resisted doing the cave.

Well, one day it happened, we had mostly finished other projects and were on to Checkout Cave. On October 11, 2003 Russ, Jim Wolff & I met at a camp spot along the Mayfield Road, set out to GPS entrances and end up at the upper entrance to Checkout Cave. Once there we began the survey at the drip line into a large, spacious, breakdown floored room which began the cave. The passage narrowed and got wider, with holes down through the breakdown to more breakdown and then climbed up again to the original level. A short lower level, mostly breakdown free, led to a breakdown blockage with air flow. Here we found a white stalactite on one wall. Back up in the breakdown, we came across a breakdown ceiling as well as floor and walls, at one point. After an interminable time of climbing over loose rock, we came to a tight intact tube that must have been an upper level bypass. This body sized tube near ceiling level exited into more intact tube. A tube in tube continued down flow, which at one point gave a peek into deeper blackness below. Following a short duck we found ourselves at the lip of an unclimbable drop. It was taped at 17 feet deep at the station. Russ set the ladder he had lugged through the cave, and we exited via the upper entrance, leaving the tape hanging over the drop to mark the station in the lower level. We had surveyed 593.1 feet to that point.

October 18 we three were back to survey the lower level and resurvey the lower Checkout Cave. We entered the lower entrance and proceeded quickly to the former end of the cave, and prepared to squee-ee-eeze through an extremely awkward tight spot nearly totally blocked with fallen laminations, where Russ had broken a bit of rock in a tube in tube to continue. From there we came to the climb down to the lower level. Jim opted not to try the climb, so waited for Russ and I to take up the survey at the hanging tape and return.

At the tape, we set a station and surveyed up-flow underneath the breakdown passage, in mainly intact passage. It went through some huge tilted and balanced slabs of fallen laminations and finally ended at a breakdown blockage. We surmised it must be near the end of the short lower level we had surveyed before. This part of the cave is very well decorated with lava soda straws, stalactites, and coralloids. From the tape again, we surveyed down flow to the climb up, through some well decorated passage, then continued on the lower level to where the cave continued intact but too small to permit passage by anything larger than a rat.... On the way we came across some little people, or lava stalagmites, and in a crawl, a short lava fall near the end of the level.

Back at the climb up point we set a station and exited the cave for lunch. Our first objective was an intact upper level passage that went across a ledge and headed back up-flow. Here we found roots, mud, and lots of popcorn and coralloids. After the up-flow portion we surveyed through the tight awkward spot through breakdown, and on to the entrance through the previously surveyed cave. On the way are two lower level “rooms” that nearly connect underneath an almost bridge; both sides have a lava seal and are less than a foot apart. At the lower entrance we found some old bat guano and moth wings in nearly intact tube. The total survey is 2562.8 feet in length. **LW**

Time to Renew Memberships and Subscriptions

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- _____ Sag dues (includes RAG) \$6 per person or family (circle one).
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- _____ TOTAL. Make checks payable to "Shasta Area Grotto", (not "SAG")
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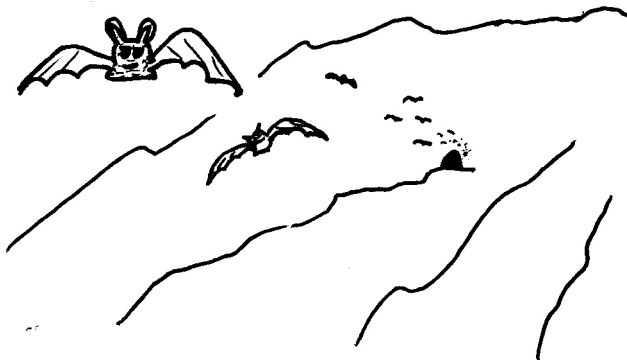
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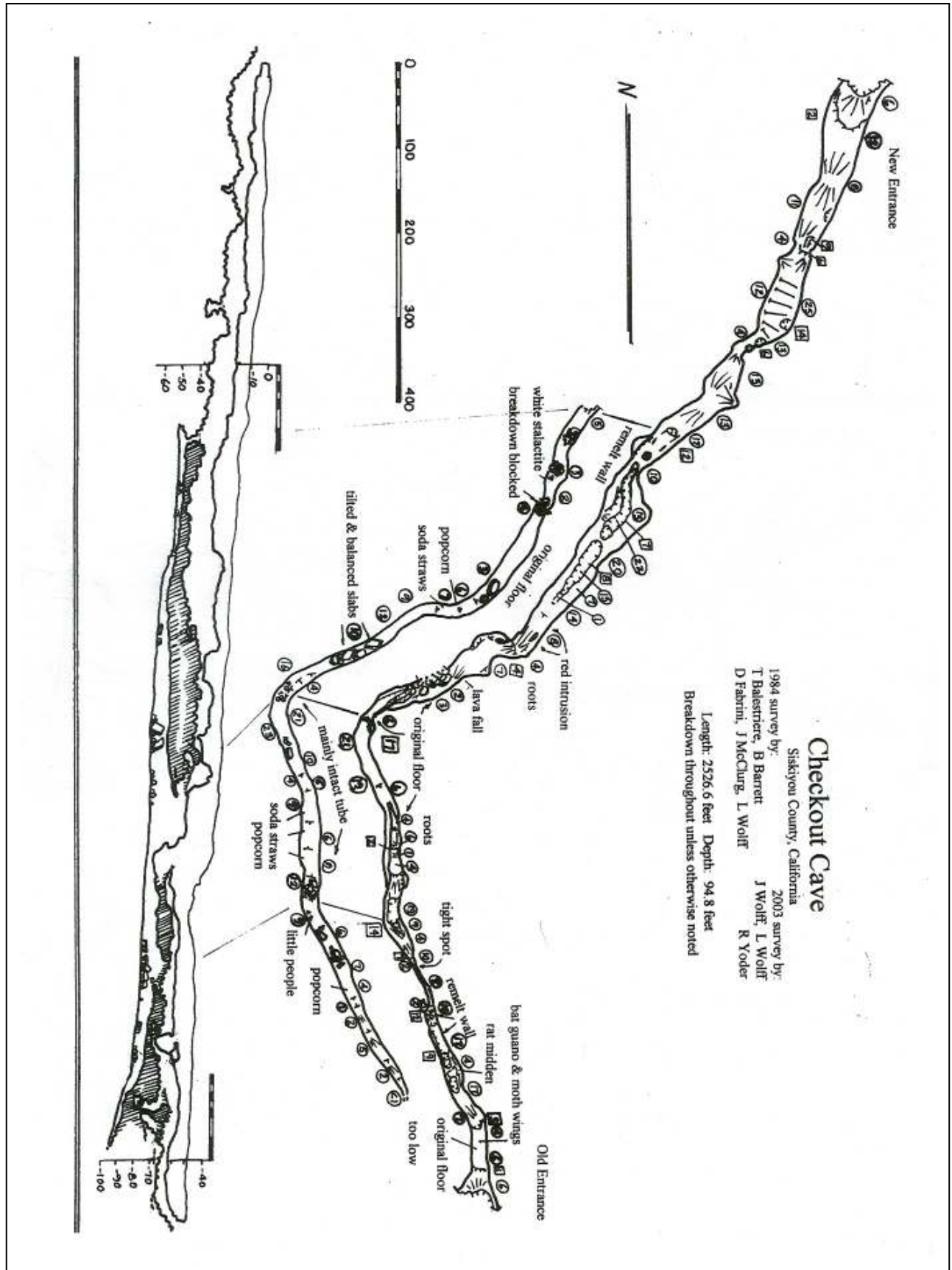
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Map: Checkout Cave