

# THE SAG RAG

March-April 1985

Vol. 4 No. 2

Published bi-monthly by the Shasta Area Grotto of the National Speleological Society. Editors are Jim and Liz Wolff, PO Box 865, McCloud, Ca. 96057. Ph. No. (916) 964-3123. Subscription rate is \$4.00 per year for non-members. Back issues available for 75¢ each. (These are new rates, as of 3/8/85.)

Shasta Area Grotto meetings are held at 7:30 p.m. on the second Friday of each month. Grotto dues, including subscription, are \$4.00 per person, and \$6.00 for families. Meeting places are announced in this newsletter.

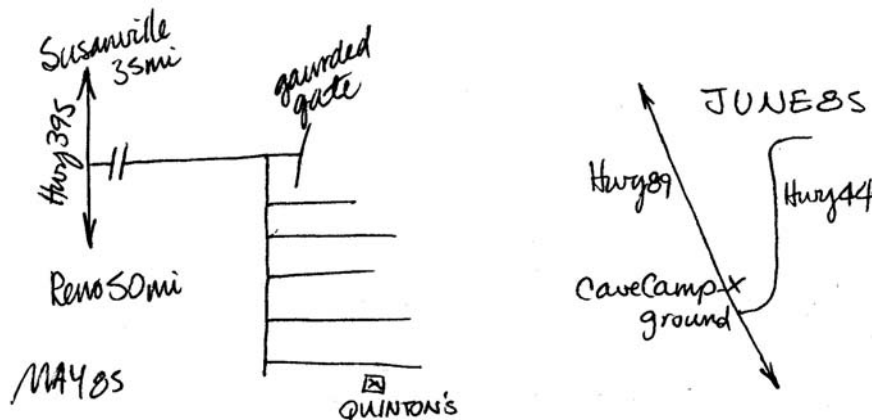
## CALENDAR:

- May 10-12 Grotto meeting at Quinton's in Herlong (see map). Address: 15 Manzanita; phone: (916) 827-2610.  
Possible rock/rope climb with Great Basin Grotto, also hard rock(?) mine tour near Virginia City, Nevada. Ladies day in Reno – "shopping."
- June 14-16 Grotto meeting – Hat Creek campout, at Cave Campground, Lassen N.F. Lotsa lava tubes – bring your survey gear, if you have it and we'll have a survey school – make your reservation NOW for this weekend. Call or write to Don Quinton, POB 172, Herlong, CA 96113.
- June 15-22 1985 Natl. Cave Rescue Commission Seminar, Carter Cave State Resort Park, Olive Hill, KY. (see April issue of NSS NEWS).
- June 23-29 1985 NSS Convention, Kentucky State Univ., Frankfort, KY.

- LOOKING FORWARD TO:**
- August monthly meeting – 2nd Annual Houseboat/Caving Adventure – Shasta Lk., near Redding.
  - Joint Regional with the NWCA, and possibly with the Rocky Mountains Region – Ely, Nevada. – usually held on Labor Day wkend.
  - 1st week of Sept. – SPELEOCAMP, Marble Valley, Marble Mtns.
  - Tombstone Mtn. – early June, or maybe late May – call Wolffs.

## WELCOME NEW MEMBER JIM KOTTINGER

Jim and his wife, Bea, have shown up at many grotto functions, planned and unplanned caving trips. Jim has already shown his worth and interest in caving dating back many years, including the (then wild) Shasta Caverns, and even has looked on Tombstone Mtn. for caves! Welcome to this club, Jim!



**LAVA TUBES IN A PORTION OF THE PLUTO CAVE LAVA FLOW,  
Shasta Valley, Siskiyou Co., CA.      by Ray Miller NSS 25724**

**WINDY (Wind) CAVE** – From about 1900 to 1940 litter was deposited in the area from mining and railroad operations. The Yellow Butte Copper Mine, located some ½ mile south and on the NE side of Yellow Butte, utilized the constant wind from this cave to operate their blacksmith forge.<sup>1</sup> The cave entrance was sealed with sandbags and a natural crack in the cave ceiling<sup>1</sup> was reshaped. The basalt outer surface was chipped out to make a forge “nest”.<sup>1</sup>

Toward the end of mining operations the mine consisted of 318 acres of patented land in the W½ of sec/25 assessed to the Lone Hill Mining Company.<sup>2</sup> In 1948 the shaft was caved 10’ from the collar.<sup>2</sup> A 1935 report states an inclined shaft, about 300 feet deep, had been retimbered for 35 or 40 feet.<sup>3</sup> No further mining activity has occurred. Yellow-Butte is a narrow horst bounded by faults of great throw which restricts the limits of practical mining. Production was limited to copper on a small scale, but pyrite, molybdenite, chalcopyrite and chrysocolla are also present in the tailings.

The Weed Lumber Company constructed a logging railroad from Weed to Grass Lake (in) 1903-05.<sup>4</sup> This line passed the NW base of Yellow Butte. A camp was located in the vicinity and the predominately Italian construction and maintenance crews used the cave as a wine cellar. The rail line was sold to the California Northwestern Railway Company in 1905 and they opened the line to the public in 1906.<sup>4</sup> The line ended at the Grass Lake Hotel And passengers transferred to stages for the trip to Klamath Falls via Butte Valley, Lairds Landing and barges over the Lower Klamath Lake. This line was bypassed when the Southern Pacific main line was constructed from Black Butte to Klamath Falls.

Wind Cave is in the Klamath National Forest. I could find no published map showing its location.

**BARNUM (Wind) CAVE** – This cave is commonly known as Wind Cave, but it does not fit the older description of Wind Cave as reported above, and nowhere can a reference to this cave as Wind Cave be found when the above reported cave is also mentioned. I feel the location but not the name of Wind Cave was lost and the name was hung on this more noticeable cave a half mile away. This cave is described fully enough to leave no doubt that it is not Wind Cave.<sup>1</sup> This is also supported by artifacts in the area of the real Wind Cave. Although the name Barnum Cave is referred to as not “authentic”,<sup>1</sup> it is the only name L. Brown had ever heard of in referring to the cave, and the fact that Barnum is a pioneer name should carry weight in assigning a name.

**SAND CAVE** – This cave was discovered in the 1950’s when road building equipment broke through into the cave. I may be in error as to the name of this cave. This was the name as I understood it, but the name Sand Cave is not very descriptive.<sup>6</sup>

**TEETER ROCK CAVE** – This is a fairly large cave with 2 uphill entrances pointed out to Jim and Liz Wolff in early January 1985. The above name is suggested based on the great number of balanced slabs littering the floor.

**References:**

1. Brown, L. The Siskiyou PIONEER. Siskiyou County Historical Society Yearbook. Vol. 3, no. 4. Pages 43-44; 1960.
2. Williams, H. Geology of the Macdoel Quadrangle. Calif. Div. of Mines Bulletin 151. P.58; 1949.
3. Averill, C.V. Mines and Mineral Resources of Siskiyou County: Calif. Div. of Mines Report 31. Pp.255-338; 1935.
4. Lewis, F.E. The Siskiyou Pioneer. Siskiyou County Historical Society Yearbook. Vol. 3 no. 10. Pp 54-56; 1967.
5. Kottinger, Jim. Mount Shasta, CA. Personal communication; 1985.

## PLUTO'S CAVE – A Human History      By Ray Miller

Until quite recent times the Pacific Northwest was wilderness with narrow corridors of travel. Primarily along the railroads. The discovery of a cave of consequence within these corridors would draw visitors for the Chance of a Lifetime. Such a cave is Pluto's Cave in southwestern Shasta Valley some 11 miles northeast of Weed, California. For many years the largest lava tube known.

The gold rush came to Siskiyou County in 1850-51. Standing in ice cold streams all day with little success had caused some of the miners to have second thoughts on how to earn money for beans and sow belly. Nelson Cash was one of those who switched to cattle ranching. Cows may not smell very nice, but at least they were not aquatic. One early spring day in 1863 while hunting stray cattle he discovered Pluto's Cave. From his horse he could see the cave was large, and by following the collapsed sections determined the cave was quite extensive. Nelson had gone out equipped to hunt cows, not caves, so he made a mental note of the location and proceeded with his roundup. The story of his cave made good conversation after church next Sunday.

Two of those he talked with were Elijah Heard and George Tyler. These friends of Nelson Cash also ranched in Shasta Valley. Spring is a busy time for ranchers, but in April, 1863, Elijah and George took the time to explore Nelson Cash's cave. They entered at the up hill (eastern) end of the cave scrambling down the large blocks of basalt. The first 1,200 feet were easy. The route was through short sections of cave and over areas of roof collapse. Within the vaulted areas the floor was soft wind-blown volcanic ash, and the light was subdued.

Further exploration revealed a cave with an entirely different character. As they went beyond the last collapse the light grew less and less intense. Volcanic ash no longer covered the immense blocks of lava that littered the floor. It was necessary to stop and light candles. Rounding a curve all indications of daylight were gone. The two men, each with a candle, groped their way through blocks of basalt a yard and more in height in a cave 50 feet high and 40 feet wide. That first exploration ended at a rock fall 1,100 feet from the last daylight, and for years this was thought to be the end of Pluto's Cave. At the time the total length of the cave was estimated at from 1½ to 2 miles. In reality they had explored just under a half mile.

Elijah Heard and George Tyler felt a cave so grand should have a grand proprietor. They turned to Roman mythology and the brother of Jupiter and Neptune and named it after the god of the underworld. In recent years the name has been corrupted by dropping the possessive suffix and calling it Pluto Cave. This apparently started as an error on a U.S. Geological Survey map published in 1954.

Long before white men found Pluto's Cave it was known to the Indians. Early references to the cave note baskets and the remains of campfires and soot blackened walls. Those sections of the cave with frequent skylights provided shelter without the perpetual darkness of deep caves which the Indians feared. John Muir visited Pluto's Cave around the turn of the century, and he wrote in his book "Steep Trails" that in these areas he found "many of the heads and the horns of the wild sheep and the remains of campfires---." There are many references to collections of Big Horn sheep skulls in caves, and this poses an interesting question. Did these collections represent trophies, was there some sort of religious significance or did the Indians hunt in times of severe weather when the animals would seek shelter in whichever caves were uninhabited? Starting about 1980 much of the cave floor was dug up by people looking for artifacts.

Pluto's Cave has never had a trail cleared to make walking easier. With nothing but large rocks for a floor in most of the cave each visitor must find his own route through the rubble. Walking consists of climbing over and among the boulders while holding on for balance much of the time. Walking is difficult. But imagine how much worse it would be if we replaced our electric and carbide lights with kerosene lanterns or, worse yet, candles and burning pine knots. Many women visited the cave in the 1800's, and for them the trip must have been an ordeal. Custom would not allow them to dress in anything but long full skirts and "ladylike" shoes.

Continued on next page

Pluto's Cave has had its share of graffiti. Early messages were done in carbon, and diligent effort is required to find those authentic and not obliterated by time or vandalism. 1874 was the oldest apparently authentic date noted in March, 1985. An 1871 date was visible a few months earlier. The earliest names identifiable in local history were two children of Stephen H. Soule who moved to Little Shasta in the early 1860's. George and Annie, his first and sixth children, visited the cave in 1884. Other Soule names are visible, but the first names are not legible. This could be a productive source of information for someone wishing to do original research. The name John Muir could easily be there for the finding.

The prize for best done graffiti must go to a notation in white paint commemorating a meeting of the Improved Order of Red Men held in the cave on September 8, 1917. This large and lengthy message is located between the second and third collapse, and it is high enough on the wall to be beyond the reach of casual vandalism. It was painted by U.F. Brown, a painter and decorator from Yreka. The dividing line between historical graffiti and vandalism seems to be about fifty years.

Pluto's Cave has been a well known and popular place to visit for well over one hundred years. In that time it has seen the thoughtless who wish to destroy the cave and those who try to remove the litter and erase the more objectionable graffiti. Currently the cave suffers greatly from Spray Paint Dermatitis that is transmitted by an organism called Young People (other names for them have been used). The thoughtless seem to be winning, but let's hope the trend reverses so that Pluto's Cave can continue to be a source of wonder and enjoyment for hundreds of years to come.

### **DOES YOUR CARBIDE LAMP HAVE PLAQUE? !** By J. Wolff

I found that I could solve that sudden "Fire-Bomb-On-Your-Hat-Syndrome" by simply cleaning the threaded portion of the upper and lower parts of my lamp. Seems that because of corrosion deposits, the low points of the threads become high points and the high points become low points – over a lot of time and use. Threads changing roles?! Yes!, and why not?! So git wit it and keep your ol' rusty trusty in tip top shape, and here's how it's done ...!

I use a stiff tooth brush with solvent to get off the easy deposits, but most lamps will probably need a deeper cleaning! So please, think of your lamp as your teeth if you will; you clean your teeth at least once a day, don't you? With regular "preventative maintenance" (brushing) your lamp too will profit from a little "T.L.C." After a caving trip I always, at least, dump the spent carbide and wipe out the receiving or upper end of the lamp and the threaded bottom with a rough cloth rag. Reassemble with the bottom slightly loose – in order to let the felt "breathe". Beyond that, if you have the time at home, and a wire brush, brush the treads and shoulder of the bottom, as an easy way to clean things up fast. Take out your felt retainer, felt and felt plate and rinse with fresh water – then dry parts and reassemble lamp.

The tool I use for the most difficult deposits on the threads, for that "deep cleaning", is a strong, sharp-pointed object to flake and chip my way down to the brass of the lamp. Carpenter nails do well, as they have tapered ends and likely have a sharp edge or side to use. My technique is to invert the upper lamp half and use the water pipe stem as a fulcrum point and lever "the stuff" off with my nail or similar instrument. Use careful judgment when chipping away, save scratching up your lamp badly. Also take care not to chip any of that stuff into your gas tube, or you'll have to remove your tip and blow out the tube.

You will do well to go through this process just once, and then regular maintenance after each use thereafter, rather than having to resort to using an "o-ring" to keep a good seal. Altho the use of an o-ring is a temporary solution to the problem of gas leakage, it still is nice to have in your repair kit – just in case. And remember to always test your seal by generating your lamp by exposing an open flame around your gasket. If any leaks remain, it'll flame up then, rather than later, while on your hat in some crawlway or other inopportune time!

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SHASTA AREA GROTTO – NSS  
P.O. Box 865  
McCloud, CA 96057

NEWS DATED MATERIAL

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