

The SAG RAG is published bi-monthly by the Shasta Area Grotto of the National Speleological Society. Editors: Jim and Liz Wolff, PO Box 865, McCloud, Ca. 96057. Printing: Ray Miller. Grotto meetings are held the second Friday of the month at 7:30 pm. Meeting places are announced in the newsletter. Membership dues (including newsletter) are \$6, due January 1, and prorated by quarter. Newsletter subscriptions are \$6/year, due January 1, and prorated by quarter.

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MEETING MINUTES

Nov.9 meeting at Reels. Present: Jim & Liz Wolff, George & Dorothy Reel, Ray Miller, Neils Smith, Jim Kottinger, Bill McGahey. Meeting called to order 7:38 pm, no minutes. Treasurers balance: \$285.51.

Correspondence: Usual exchanges, NSS bookstore list.

Old Business: Register to be installed in Roadside Complex Nov 10. Letter of thanks to be sent to Oregon Caves. Regional sites – Lake Siskiyou quite expensive, Trout Creek and Harris Sprs free and available. Would need to bring port-a-potties for Harris & water for Trout. Lava Beds hasn't been contacted yet. Tentatively July 4.

Museum display in Mt Shasta: let them know ASAP size requirements & display cases. We'll have free hand and 1 1/2 months to build. Liz was volunteered to head project.

The grotto will be ordering rope soon, cost will be \$102.50.

New Business: Nominations: Chair: Neils, Jim W, George; Vice chair: Jim Bill M; Secretary: Dorothy; Treasurer: Ray.

Bill M has a trip planned Ice caves in the Lava Beds February 2. Anyone wanting to go should let him know ASAP.

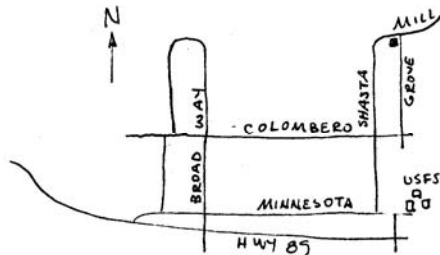
Meeting adjourned 9:07pm.

December meeting, not held. Several new people met at Wolffs', along with several SAG members to party and visit. Members Neils Smith, Jim & Liz Wolff talked caves with Troy Burkner, Dave Pryor, Dennis ?, and Mary Faustini. Saturday evening an informal meeting was held after a potluck dinner. The upcoming regional was discussed, by Jim & Liz Wolff, Jim & Bea Kottinger, George & Dorothy Reel, Neils Smith, and Bill & Judy Broeckel. July 4 was the date and Harris Springs, the place. Other facilities such as port-a-potties and generators, games, banquet, and name badges were tentatively set. Jobs were delegated to those there.

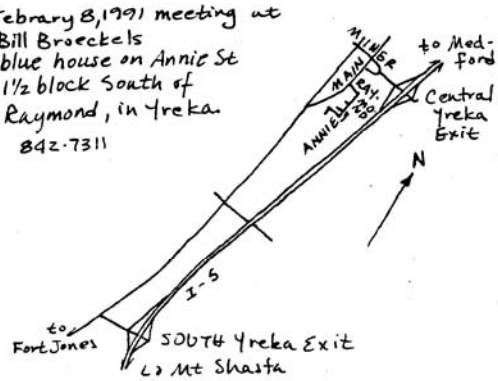
CALENDAR

- Feb 2 – Fern & Crystal Ice caves, Bill McGahey leader, 503-826-9272 to sign up. He has room for only 4 cavers, sign up early.
- May 25-27 – Speleo-Ed Seminar at Berkeley-Tuolumne Camp hosted by Diablo Grotto. No other info at this time as to cost, but they fed us royally on \$30 last year
- July 4-7 – Regional at Harris Springs Campground.
- Labor Day weekend – Eastern Nevada: Whipple Cave and others.

January 11, 1991 meeting at Jim & Liz Wolffs, in McCloud. 964-3123



February 8, 1991 meeting at Bill Broeckels blue house on Annie St 1/2 block South of Raymond, in Yreka. 842-7311



EDITORIAL by JW

Greetings out there, potential members, faithful subscribers, and hard-working grotto members! It has been many years since we took on the task of editing this newsletter. The job has been made a lot easier with all the support we've received from our members' contributions in the form of compliments and articles. Although we don't foresee a monthly RAG (mainly because of the time and money factors) we still can offer more! The newsletters the grotto receives as exchanges are of high quality and ought to be reviewed for our readers. Most members attending the monthly meetings don't have a chance to read each one, and in reviewing them, they might find one or more articles of interest and want to check them out of the grotto library. This would encourage use of the library and an interest in the happenings of our fellow California cavers. We will start this regular feature, and will be looking for a newsletter review editor. Any volunteers out there?

This newsletter has an unwritten deadline of the week following the even-numbered (Feb, Apr, Jun, Aug, Oct, Dec) grotto meetings. You can submit your material to us at any time, just expect it to be printed in two months and no later, if you miss that deadline! We encourage maps, drawings, cartoons, and black and white prints of good contrast. The copy machine that we do our newsletter on does ok, but a more suitable method to make covers is definitely needed – so, if anyone has an idea of where we can get this done, at a reasonable price and good quality, we might start putting out some issues with fancy covers! So, stay with us, and thanks!!

1991 Western Regional To be Hosted by SAG by Jim Wolff

It is our turn again to host this event. The last time we hosted it was in 1983. We profited from the experience, altho there seems to be very few of the original SAG cavers still on our rolls. Many other grottos and individuals usually volunteer to help put the regional on. There is a badge expert who makes name tags. There are other people that put on a slide show in conjunction with the region's general meeting, and others that normally volunteer to help out with a few of the other jobs. It sounds like everything is taken care of, but not quite! Even though the lack of electricity is no problem, as portable generators can be used, other things need to be tended to as well. What do we need to do to help with the get-together? Basically, all we need to provide are facilities and a few caves. Some of the jobs that have been identified are: Registration, Campground and Facilities, Banquet, Cave and other Field Trips, and Clean-Up. Call, write or see me and I'll fill you in on the particulars. Really, it's everybody's regional...

As of the December meeting we decided to have the regional over July 4 weekend at Harris Springs Campground, the site of the '79 Western Regional.

Oregon Caves Restoration Project: Mud Rock Surveying and Fun

Introduction:

Eight SAG cavers attended this event in the Marble Halls of Oregon hosted by the Oregon Caves National Monument personnel. The excitement began even before any cavers arrived with a couch catching fire twice! In the cave Chaz Davis was taking videos for publicity, so watch for our smiling grimy faces on the evening news some time. The weekend was further enlivened with the presence of the only surviving member of the 1930 survey crew. The tales that man could tell! We did so much work, so fast, that the monument wants us back. Who else will work hard underground for peanuts, (or turkey & dressing) and enjoy it? So long as we're fed we'll do almost anything!

Part One: by Bill McGahey

I knew we were in for an exciting weekend when I found Chuck (Chaz) Davis pouring water on a couch as I drove up to the lodge at Oregon Caves. An ember from the fire had ignited the cushions, but fortunately, he caught it in time. After opening several windows to clear the smoke from the lobby, we settled in front of the fireplace to wait for other cavers. Just after dark, the couch ignited again, and we got a second adrenaline rush along with discharging two more fire extinguishers.

About that time Jim & Liz Wolff, Neils & Sharon Smith, and Steve Knutson showed up and we got into a conversation involving spontaneous human combustion. This aided in making it a bit eerie when Jay Swofford arrived with the announcement that the Power Wagon was on fire. Some time later we all slept, at least some, a few of us armed with personal fire extinguishers.

Saturday we were greeted with a sumptuous breakfast and headed into the cave with arms full of buckets, and late arrivals Dick & Evan LaForge as well as Jay's friend Lisa. We worked under the Spiral Staircase removing rubble and dirt, and it was fun to see the physical changes our efforts made on the cave. Several passages were widened considerably, a small room was emptied of rubble, and an area of previous excavation was refilled.

After lunch, we broke into two survey groups. Liz, Dick, and I mapped several small side passages while Steve, Jim, Jay, and Neils worked in another area. When we left the cave for dinner, we felt like we had done a day's work; and we were rewarded with a delicious roast turkey dinner. We were joined that evening by Charlie Wells, and his wife. Charlie had worked on the cave mapping project in the 1930's. He told of setting a fire in a "nearby" cave and later smelling the smoke in the Ghost Room. Discussion was lively and theories about which cave and where were propounded. The myth and the search goes on!

After a couple hours relaxation in front of the fireplace in the lodge (during which a second interview with Charlie Wells was videotaped), Dick, 'JD' (one of the tour guides), and I went back into the cave to map a small passage JD had found near the Spiral Staircase. It was a tight U-shaped passage, and contained the most delicate soda straws I have had the pleasure of lying next to. Sleep came easily for me that night.

Sunday began with another excellent meal, and was followed by an inordinately lengthy political discussion between Dick and Steve, while Neils & Sharon packed and left for Susanville. Jim and I finally convinced them (with pantomime) to continue the dialogue in the cave, and we eventually got our last trip under way. We began by taking some measurements along the River Styx to reflect recent restoration excavation. Similar data was collected in two other places on the way to the Ghost Room. From there, Steve led us to the Bone Room. The intrigue of this crawly, blocky breakdown laden area of the cave was excelled only by the conversation with my companions.

It was a rare privilege for me, and a weekend of pleasant memories I will not forget.

Part Two: by Liz Wolff

After the excitement of Friday evening, the cave was very calming on Saturday. We picked up our loads of empty buckets and digging implements for the short hike up to the 110 Entrance, and short way to the Spiral Staircase. We dug, filled, hauled, and dug until there were no more empty buckets. Coincidentally that occurred at lunch time, so we each took our buckets and hauled them in various manners (Igor and Igor drag them, being shorter than all the rest) through the stoop way passage back to the 110 Entrance.

On our way back into the cave we picked up those now empty buckets and refilled them. Great relief was expressed that we didn't have to haul all those 40 - 50 pound buckets back out of the cave. Paid employees would get to do that.

After refilling buckets and having an impromptu surveying lesson on keeping the book, the two teams set out for adventure. Jay led us, Team 1, to the start of Paradise Alley and pointed out a lead right beside the trail. He told of other wonders and leads down there too, and left to go survey with Team 2.

Evan, who began the survey with us, crawled into the small hole by the trail and promptly said it didn't go. We already knew that, but needed to know how far it did go so it could be added to the map. We re-charted ceiling heights in the main passage since the efforts of other cave restorers had lowered the floor considerably. Other side passages had been exposed as well, and Bill, being of sound mind and good wind, "volunteered" to crawl, squeeze, climb, and force himself into all the holes Dick and I could talk him into. Evan soon surmised that surveying was even slower than photography, and left for greener pastures, outside. We were joined by Jim and Neils when we were about to start on the passage underneath the Grand Column. Down there were crystal lined pools, clear soda straws, pure white formations and one wafer thin flowstone shelf, also pure white, with miniature columns and other formations. That one side passage was worth laying face down in frigid mud to survey.

DUES ARE DUE!

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Other Cave Trips by SAG Members and Friends

– On 11/10/90 a grotto trip comprised of Neils Smith, Jim Kottinger, Bill McGahey, Liz and Jim Wolff visited **Deep Ice Cave**, **Pallet Cave**, and other unnamed caves. Pallet Cave was an amazing trip for all. Not all of us braved the three ice slides to the far end of the cave. Other small but photogenic caves were seen as we mapped. Deep Ice Cave is free of ice to where one can now slide down through the chute to the lower ice chamber. The work that Dave Cowan, Ernie Coffman and Jim Wolff did in early season '90 was just enough to let the warm air and sunlight to get to the back of the entrance chamber and melt the plug.

– A cave register was placed in **Roadside Complex** on Nov. 11th. This is the third register that the grotto has placed in caves of the McCloud Ranger District of the Shasta/Trinity National Forests. This cave complex is right next to the Medicine Lake Road, a heavily traveled route to Lava Beds National Monument and points north. **Bat Cave** register was checked and twelve bats were noted on that date. The same day a new cave was found just a few hundred feet north of **Island Ice Cave**. This "new" lava tube has many fine crystalline formations of unidentified origin. A photography trip is planned ASAP. Other caves may exist in the area. Also, one other cave lead was checked near **Certainly-A-Cave** and found that the blowing crawl at the end was breakdown-filled and there is no way on.

– Some poking around by Jim & Liz Wolff and Jim Kottinger just south of **3-Level Ice Cave** revealed several short but very interesting caves. One good blowing lead was left for a future trip, with a handline.

BLACK DEATH OR Don't Kick That Dead Rat by Bill Broeckel

On November 9, 1990, Lava Beds National Monument in cooperation with the Public Health Department, reopened the developed caves for the recreational use of the public. This was just in time for the 1990 Pathfinder Club Teen Invitational Caving Trip. There were 86 teens from all parts of Northern California gathered for fellowship and adventure in the caves.

The monument caves had previously been closed for 3 1/2 weeks because some of the rats in the caves carried fleas that carried the Plague. The caves were fumigated and some of the rats were even individually dusted. As it is possible to pick up the Plague by being bitten by a flea in a cave, a few words about this interesting disease may be in order.

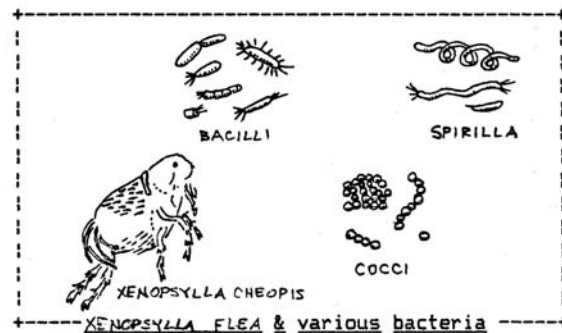
Plague is caused by a bacillus called *Yersinia pestis* first described in 1894. Bacilli are long, rod shaped bacteria, as opposed to cocci (round), or spirochetes (spiral). Sounds like Christmas ornaments to me.

These rods are potentially deadly. In fact, this "plague" we're talking about here is the same stuff known in history as "Black Plague" which wiped out whole towns in the middle ages, killing 100 million people during the reign of Justinian (524 AD), and is mentioned in the Bible (1 Samuel 5 & 6). Plague was also called "black death" which seems particularly apt for a cave disease.

In 1900, rats climbed off ships and brought Plague to San Francisco. From there the disease spread and became established within rodent populations throughout the southwest. Thanks a lot Bay Area! Antibiotics effective against Plague became available in 1943. Without treatment, your chances of surviving the illness are about 50/50. Sporadic human cases are reported in the United States. "People become infected most frequently by direct contact with a sylvatic reservoir of infection." This sounds like caving doesn't it?

Rat fleas don't generally jump off rats and bite people. In fact, they don't even like people. Being rather discriminating, they much prefer the company of rats. But if the rat dies, the flea will bite a human as an act of final desperation. This is small comfort, however, for a flea can survive in an empty nest or on a dead rat for as long as a year. Imagine waiting all those months in the dark, getting hungrier and hungrier, when along comes a bobbing headlamp with a warm, juicy body attached. Yum! McCaver! coming soon to a cave near you!

So what happens if you get bit and the flea unloads some *Yersinia pestis* into your system? In a few days you get sick, like the flu, with a high fever. Then you get bubos, which is why this disease is sometimes called



“Bubonic Plague”. Bubos are large painful lumps in the groin, armpits, or neck. These would be the size of marbles, or walnuts, or even golf balls. OK, how about large cave pearls?

Next the disease may attack the liver, kidneys, or brain. The real killer, though is the severe and deadly pneumonia. The important thing here is that if this stuff starts happening to you, get your doctor to try for some cultures and start you on some Tetracycline. Even if you don't believe in antibiotics, this is a time for you to consider giving in. 50/50 chances are nothing to mess with. Would you rappel off a 50/50 rope?

If you are 10 days past the fleas and feeling fine, you are home free. Even the longest human incubation times do not exceed 10 days. You have it made in the shade, so to speak, and might as well start planning your next cave trip.

The real message here is to avoid the hungry fleas. Watch out for old rat nests and dead rodents. There is at least one cave lead in Scott Valley that remains unchecked because it is blocked with the sticks of a rat nest. This may seem extreme to the devoted caver, but at least remember this one last caution to help you avoid the Black Death:

Don't Kick Dead Rats!

DIVERSITY NEEDED by R. Miller

Something is happening to the Shasta Area Grotto that most hate to see. The organization seems to be turning into a closed group of people who reside, with a few notable exceptions, in southern Siskiyou County. This is not the intent of SAG. The grotto needs the input and support of each member. The intent of having our monthly meetings in members' homes was to spread the meeting sites throughout northernmost California. Perhaps those of you who feel uncomfortable about hosting a meeting in your home, could find a public meeting place. Try libraries, schools, senior centers and such. SAG could probably pick up nominal charges for utilities.

The slate of nominated officers for the coming year is another syndrome to reinforce the appearance that SAG is closed to “outsiders”. Such is not the case. We simply must draw our officers from those who attend the meetings, even if their attendance is sporadic. There is no present or nominated officer who wouldn't gladly relinquish his office.

We try to inform the membership of the happenings in the Grotto through the condensed minutes of the monthly meetings in the SAG RAG, but that is nothing like being there. We want each of you to share the responsibilities, work and comradeship of active participation in your Grotto.

Notes from Members All Over....

– **Don Quinton** in Barstow... Don is still involved with the Sheriff's Dept. Search & Rescue Squad. He has been their training officer for two years now. He enjoys the successful rescues and keeps the squad busy learning and practicing rope work. Quite a few of their rescues involve retrieving victims from mine shafts, rock cliffs, and a lot of tracking through the desert. His son Noah, 6 1/2, enjoys camping, rock climbing, and hiking with him.

– **Tim Rich** of Redding sends this clipping from the Redding Record Searchlight's junior page: What are Stalactites and Stalagmites? The answer covers the definition of the formations and how they form, and includes some places that they can be viewed. Tim also sent an article from the outdoors page about Spelunkers Love the Dark, Dank. It is about Missouri caves and cavers in this “Year of the Cave”, 1990. Interviews with some geologist cavers, the NSS secretary, and other cavers covers their love for the caves, and the lure of the underground environment.

DUES DUE JANUARY 1

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BAT SEARCH EXPANDED by Ray Miller

Dixie Pierson, who is engaged in bat research at UC Berkeley, is expanding the study area to include all of northern California. This study is for the California Dept. of Fish and Game. The end result is to determine if any bat species should be placed on a protected list of some kind. Her primary interest is the Townsends Big-eared Bat (*Plecotus townsendii*).

Bat locations are needed to make the study as comprehensive as possible. Please send your bat-grams to Ray Miller, P.O.Box 475, Mt. Shasta, CA 96067, who will compile the information and forward it on. Here is what Dixie wants to know:

Specific location – Information will be kept confidential.
 Type of habitat – Attic; tree, cave, etc.
 Type of use – Roost, nursery colony, hibernation site, etc.
 Bat species – if known.

If the information you have is sparse, that's OK. Just say, "Hey, I saw a bat in _____" and then fill in the blank. It will be better than nothing, and where possible reports will be field checked. Of course, the more information given the easier the study will be. Please remember the information you supply will be held within the scientific community. Only the study results will be released.

The SAG RAG

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