

sag rag

27:3 May-June 2008



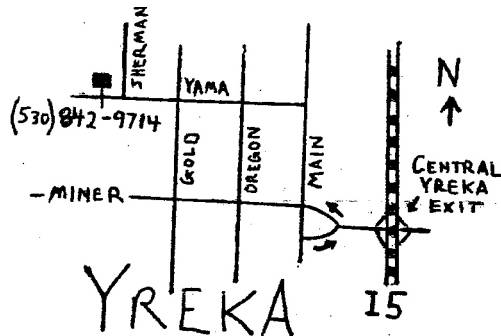
**Survey crew at the entrance to Del Loma Cave on 9-22-07.
(L-R) Dick LaForge, Jim Wolff, Dave Smith, Judy Broeckel.**

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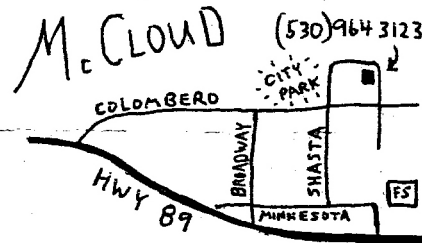
CAVERS CALENDAR 2008

Jul 25	SAG meeting at Melanie's home in Yreka. (530) 842-9714.
Aug 11-15	NSS Convention in Lake City, Florida (352) 271-3203
Aug 22	SAG meeting at Wolff's house in McCloud. (530) 964-3123.
Sep 1-5	International Symposium on Volcano Speleology, Korea
Sep 12-14	Public Lands Day II caving in Oregon Desert. (541) 536-1900.
Sep 26	SAG meeting (location to be announced) (Dave Smith's birthday)
Oct 24	SAG meeting (location to be announced) (Nominations)
Nov	No SAG meeting this month (wow! the world might stop turning)
Dec 5	SAG meeting (location to be announced)

MAPS TO MEETINGS



July 25 - Yreka



Aug 22 - McCloud

SAG RAG SUMMARY By Bill Broeckel

With the usual June campout all up in flames (cancelled due to wildfires), our readers will be spared one of this year's little lava tube reviews. I try to make a big deal out of tiny tubes as short as 30 feet, with names like Pipsqueak, Silly Sally, or Mighty Mouse. If they're short enough, it doesn't matter what you call 'em. Never mind that these are new discoveries, after all, they are JUST LAVA.

So, with this issue of the SAG RAG, we will go to the other opposite extreme. This entire issue will be devoted to an old, beat-up ruin of a limestone cave with a modern human history that goes back to the gold rush days of the mid 1800s. In the last couple years, Shasta Area Grotto has made a minor project out of the sometimes exaggerated Del Loma Cave, and put together a casual re-survey just for the heck of it. We also managed to extract what looks to be the original cave description from a standard text "The Annals of Trinity County."

Thats the facts, folks, there you have it, some true dirt on Del Loma Cave, which happens to be made of REAL LIMESTONE.

BB

INTRODUCING DEL LOMA CAVE By Bill Broeckel

"Wow, that's one downright ugly cave!" That might be the exclamation of a caver emerging from the depths of Del Loma, all covered with soot. Whatever color the suit might be going in, it comes out a uniform dark charcoal. Even what's left of the flowstone is stained black, as if from many explosions or fires. Every caver I talked to about this cave invariably gave me some kind of warning. "Don't go there." "The ropes are rotten." "The entrance is unstable." "I always get a rash from that cave." "There is a terrible smell." "Watch out for bad air." "The place is infested with rats," "People have died in there." Stuff like that.

Of course, I didn't know about all that when I stopped by with my kids, back in 1996. General maps showed the cave not far off the paved highway. When we arrived and saw the "cave information" kiosk, that seemed like a good sign. Nobody was in the booth, but we picked up a nice hand-out that talked up the cave and showed a trail leading to the entrance. The pamphlet sounded quite inviting, so we gathered-up some cave gear and optimistically headed up the trail, armed with the brochure. My kids ages were 7 and 8.

Nov 16, 1996

Well, the trail wasn't in very good shape. Most of it was way too steep. Someone had actually chopped steps into the dirt, but these were either eroded out or covered with landslides. Madrone leaf is especially slippery. Eventually we topped out on a large rock slide, and found the entrance. A posted written notice said that certain persons were digging here and that we shouldn't disturb anything, and that we better not do any digging ourselves. They must have been very close to reaching the treasures back then in 1996.

The first bit of cave looked good enough. A short rock slope went down to a walking passage headed into the side of the mountain. I was imagining something along the lines of Boyden Cave over in Sequoia-Kings Canyon, or perhaps Injun Joes Cave on Tom Sawyers Island in Disneyland. This cave, however, did not have a built-in lighting system. Never mind, we had our own lights and we were ready for a great family fun adventure.

Off we went down the quarry-like passage. Very quickly, we found ourselves in a crawlway with some deep holes in the floor, the kind that could very easily swallow up a small child or two. We made it past those hazards, and tumbled into a small room with stale air. It smelled like something had died. The room had some problematic leads. The best one was a low, descending crawlway down near the floor. It doubled back under the previously mentioned pits.

Dad went first, and found that the crawlway became the top of a very steep crevasse. A moldy and badly frayed handline plunged down into the darkness below. Yes, it was indeed the proverbial old, knotted rope, caked with mud and hanging down the pit. I looked back at my kids, teetering there on the edge of oblivion, and their wide eyes met mine. What I said was, "You know, I can see the end of the cave, right there! Wow, wasn't this a great cave. I'm so glad we came here." All the while I'm thinking, "This is a developed cave??? You can't be serious!"

So that was the end of our first trip into Del Loma Cave, back in 1996. Many times I wondered about the rest of the cave, and made a couple return trips on survey with Shasta Area Grotto in 2004 and 2007. Both times we were based at Vern and Linda Cliff's place out at Big Bar. That first survey trip was personally memorable because I was caving with a bum . . . bum. We didn't finish the cave. Then last fall we got back and finished up the survey to a certain level, and called it good. The same old rope was still in there. Other writers will be reporting further on this most recent survey trip.

BB

LONG STORY OF A SHORT CAVE By Bill Broeckel
Some history of Del Loma Cave

Even before Del Loma was called Taylor's Flat, the Indians had names this nice spot along the Trinity River. The Chimariko name "Chichauma" meant "Manzanita Place," and referred to the village at Del Loma. The Wintu called it "Boloy Xerel" which meant "Manzanita deserted place." (All this from some inscrutable ethnology sites on the internet under Del Loma.)

Del Loma is Spanish for "of the hill," which immediately brings to my mind that precipitous trail up to the entrance, all lined with poison oak. Spanish place names are less common up here at the north end of the Golden State, and it turns out that Del Loma once had a more English sounding appellation, namely, "Taylor's Flat." Thus we find an early writing on Del Loma Cave in "The Annals of Trinity County" (p.69), using the name "Taylor Flat Cave."

This county history was penned by a man named Isaac Cox in 1858, and apparently this is the first California county history ever published in book form. It helped that Trinity was one of the original 27 California counties, and so, was born when the State formed in 1850. It appears that Isaac Cox was also "dropped by the Damsel." No biographical information is forthcoming, but here is his early rendition on the cave in question, for your scrutiny.

1858

"This locality (Taylor's Flat) must have been discovered some years after the Phoenicians brought tin from Albion, or even after they discovered Ultima Thule ... The first mention that known history has of this locality, is from 1853, when the name was given to it by a Taylor, whom the Damsel hath henceforth dropped. Life and stir was imparted to it, by, through, and with the Washington Fluming Company, who at great expense and vast amount of labor, (\$60,000), constructed a water-race from French Creek, three miles in length, with eighty sluice-heads of water ... thereof, a guaranty for the future prosperity of Taylor's Flat is at hand, for which twice sixty thousand dollars would be a small purchase (Ed: we are talking gold here, folks). Taylor's Flat has one hotel, three stores, blacksmith and butcher shop, and about fifty miners."

1853

"In the vicinity of this place is exhibited a great natural curiosity — the Taylor Flat Cave. It is believed that Henry Curtis, in 1855, was the American discoverer of it, while from him is the description here inserted."

1855

"The cave is entered through an opening of 5x10 feet, yet some begloved pilgrim from Broadway — no doubt an Upper-Ten, grown tall in that thoroughfare or Fifth Avenue — has entered complaint for damages, with costs, for ungraceful attitudes, as squeezing and crawling, the cave forced the complainant aforesaid to assume, as a condition of admittance to her sanctuary; a perpendicular descent of twenty feet has to be made immediately upon entering, and it may now be explored to any imaginable length, provided the peril of getting lost is braved."

"This subterranean labyrinth has thus been explored by white men for a distance of half a mile only, but Indian tradition relates that once upon a time two of their tribe entered it, through the opening described above, and that one of them losing himself in the labyrinth, perished, and the other, after swimming a large lake and suffering various hardships, emerged a haggard, emaciated parcel of skin and bones, on the other side of the mountains."

“Now this story is hardly probable; the Indian must be mistaken about swimming that lake, lying off in utter darkness, so long as the tradition that records it is allowed to forget where he came out. For the rest of the description, the cave is, so far as explored, adorned with stalactites of the most fanciful shapes, partitioning it off into singularly symmetrical compartments, where uncouth wildness of nature and precision of art struggle for supremacy over the awed mind of the beholder. Petrified human and animal remains, spread all over the floor, testify that the peril of getting lost is true, and imminent. “

Dr. William Halliday in his 1959 book “Adventure is Underground,” gives the next story we have coming out of Del Loma Cave, on pages 169-170. He tells of an unnamed caver who crawled way back into the cave and found pictographs in 1861.

1861

“The difficulties of which he told must have discouraged visitors, for it was more than 20 years before the skeleton of a miner who had disappeared shortly afterwards was found just inside the entrance of the cave. His bones and a borrowed rifle were found beneath the skeleton of a huge bear which must have revenged its mortal wound as its last act.”

1881+

“Trinity” is the official yearbook of the Trinity County Historical Society, based in Weaverville. The 1985 edition contains a good historical review of Del Loma Cave written by Craig Williams. Not surprisingly, the article is entitled “Taylor’s Flat Caves.” This article draws from the May 1, 1947 Trinity Journal where we find another early visit into Del Loma Cave.

“R. C. Keeney, editor of the Trinity Journal, recently received a letter from W.A. Huestis that told of Huestis and Jessey F. Carey spending several hours in the Del Loma cave in 1892. Mr. Huestis said, ‘I doubt that we got back into the mountain very far as we were soon confused in our directions and couldn’t tell which way we were going.’”

1892

The ‘Del Loma’ name appeared in the 1920s. California place name author Erwin C. Gudde states that the Del Loma post office was named in 1927. A new gazetteer of Californian geographic names was published by David L. Durham in 1998. It gives some more details as follows:

“Postal authorities established Del Loma post office in 1928 and discontinued it in 1953. A man named Taylor settled at Taylor’s Flat in 1853. After James King and his wife moved to the community about 1926, Mrs. King changed the name of the place to Del Loma.”

1920s

It is not clear if it took one year or two years for Mrs. King to change the name of the town. Either way, it didn’t take long for the name change to climb 800 feet up the hill and apply itself to the cave.

Now we go back to the Craig Williams’ reference to the Trinity Journal of May 1, 1947 for a more modern account of the cave. Nearly 100 years after the Henry Curtis discovery in 1855, we see that the cave remains well decorated — something which presently can no longer be said. The article is entitled “Del Loma Cave is Explored.” Evidence was noted at the end of the article that might bring the Henry Curtis discovery claim into question.

1947

“The Trinity County cave explorers have searched the passages of another of Trinity’s limestone caves on Hwy 299, subjected to a minute inspection by Harvey Arbuckle, Trinity County undersheriff and three U. S. Forest Service

1947

officers Roswell Leavitt, Fred Varney, and John C. Hunt. The party spent five hours inside the cave in what has been well defined as dark, damp adventuring. Outfitted with headlamps, ropes, a compass and an abney level, the cave was carefully explored and mapped.”

“Unfortunately, it did not begin to conform to the wild stories which have been told of this cavern for many years. Local legend tells of a passage fifteen miles long emerging in New River and another that goes under the Trinity River and comes up in the Del Loma Mountains on the west side of the river. Still another passage is said to have its outlet in Manzanita Creek, seven miles east of Del Loma.”

“Actually, the main passage was found to penetrate the mountain about 300 feet, with about 150 feet of side passage explored as far as it was possible for a man to go. However, some of the passages continue for an unknown distance after they become too small for further exploration.”

“The largest room in the cave is approximately 20 feet long, 8 feet to 12 feet wide, and 6 feet to 20 feet high. There is another room which is about 10 feet directly above the main passage and reached by a well opening. This is the most beautiful part of the cave, having active lime formations of stalactites, stalagmites and thousands of small crystals that sparkled like diamonds in the beams from the headlamps.”

“There is a perpendicular drop of about 20 feet at one place on the main passage with a difficult route around it. There are two bottlenecks on the main passage which are just large enough for a man to squeeze through. On the trip out Harvey Arbuckle, who weighs 220 pounds, approached the smallest of these openings and asked, ‘Did I come through that hole? I don’t believe it. But to get out of here I’ll have to go back through it.’ It was necessary for him to remove every item from his pockets. Then, after he wedged himself into the opening, to exhale and deflate his chest before he could squeeze through.”

“Fred Varney went into a side passage and found that he could not get back out of it until he enlarged the opening with a small miner’s pick carried by the party. Near the end of the main passage there are several holes in the floor of the cave. While Jack Hunt was exploring one of these holes, an extra flashlight which he was carrying in his pocket fell into another hole and could be heard for several seconds as it fell. Many names, initials and dates were found on the side walls. The oldest were C.H. and E.F., 1849.”

1849

According to William Halliday in his book “Adventure is Underground” (1959), cave historian Charles Erfttenbeck had ideas to commercialize Del Loma Cave in 1950. Details of some of Erfttenbeck’s exploits in the cave are included, along with other legends and lore. In 1951, the USGS published the 15 minute topo map of Ironside Mountain, which names the cave and shows the location with one of those “Y” symbols that stand for both mines and caves. (You would think that the USGS would differentiate between mines and caves). The publication of the quadrangle probably brought on the modern demise of any decorative values that remained in the cave. This is what I like to call the “Fifteen Minute Curse.” Any cave shown on these maps ends up thoroughly impacted and trashed by the so informed denizens of modern society.

1950

1951

Halliday was not done with Del Loma Cave. It is included in “Caves of California,” his exhaustive review of all things speleo in the state, published in 1962. George W.

1962

Moore's cave map is shown just before p. 99. An excellent cave description found on p.129 reads as follows:

"Del Loma Cave is located in a massive, heavily fractured and veined limestone which dips about 60° SE. It is a maze of interlacing crawlways and fissure-like passages with occasional small chambers (Erfttenbeck, C., pers. comm.). The entrance is about 4 feet high and 6 feet wide. Inside is a small, barren chamber. Beyond is a short crawlway to a smaller chamber containing a rather treacherous pit. Below is an irregularly shaped chamber from which several small openings lead off. On the far side of this room, a hole 12 feet up the wall forms the continuation of the main passage, which slopes down a slippery slide for about 35 feet. At the bottom is a turn to the left, and the passage passes beneath the large chamber. A steeply sloping crawlway about 50 feet long leads to the bottom of a small chimney. At its top is a small room containing a black stalagmite 5 feet high and 10 inches in diameter. At the base of this chimney is the tight Erfttenbeck's Hole, beyond which is a partially explored series of small passages. (Erfttenbeck, C. pers. comm.)"

Moore's map and Erfttenbeck's description match pretty well with the cave we saw on the SAG survey trips in 2004 and 2007. Elsewhere in Halliday's "C of C," moonmilk is discussed on p.36, with the statement that it is "not yet recorded in California." This pronouncement is then appended on p.130, and again on p.187 under "Addenda and Errata" with the following update: "Moonmilk is now known to be present in Del Loma Cave and probably others."

Later, an author named GPC wrote an article in the March 1970 Cal Caver entitled "Moonmilk," which definitively listed a fair number of occurrences in California caves. George Moore is quoted in the Del Loma Cave portion.

"In the spring of 1962, George Moore collected some moonmilk from this small cave: '... I wrapped the small specimen in paper in the cave, and by the time I was ready to analyze it at home it was dehydrated. A few grains of sand were in the moonmilk, so I gently pressed it through a fine screen to remove them. I immediately noticed the very characteristic odor of a 'damp cave' even though the moonmilk was completely dry. Evidently the aromatic properties of the actinomycetes which produce the smell are not inhibited by dehydration.' X-ray analysis showed that the moonmilk was composed of calcite."

Moore's 1962 Del Loma Cave map makes a reappearance in the March 1970 California Caver. The deceptively simple outline of this map actually shows most of the passages we saw on our recent trips to the cave. Although there were at least two other mapping efforts (one in 1947 and the other in the 1970s), George Moore's map is the only one I've seen in print.

Steve Knutson remembers a trip to Del Loma Cave in the 1960s. In his KMCTF e-mail to fellow cavers on May 24, 2004, he wrote:

"Del Loma had soot all over the walls in the lower part, and there was a full gallon jug, presumably kerosene. A dig might be interesting, but very messy, if it is still like that. I collected a luminous insect larval form there at that time."

1960s

Knutson was instrumental in forming the Klamath Mountains Conservation Task Force (KMCTF) in the 1970s, a sub-group of the National Speleological Society that remains active in cave exploration and conservation to this day. Oral tradition has it



Moonmilk area in Del Loma Cave. 9-22-07

that the KMCTF did a survey of Del Loma during their first early flurry of speleological contributions, but that the field data has been lost over the years. In the Winter 1977 Underground Express, Mike Sims gives a run down of KMCTF "Cave Management Recommendations" that includes the following statement:

1977

"Also in Trinity National Forest, the KMCTF prepared a history and conservation message to be posted in Del Loma Cave, a well-known and often visited cave along side the road."

Trinity National Forest, now part of Shasta-Trinity National Forest, inherited guardianship of Del Loma Cave when the Forest was first formed back in 1907, by proclamation of President Theodore Roosevelt. The Forest Service remains in charge of this public cave, a responsibility retained to this very day. We have seen that three of the four cave explorers on the 1947 trip were from the Forest Service, and so there was government awareness of the cave at least as early as that.

Through the Clift family in Big Bar, Shasta Area Grotto was able to review some historical Forest Service cave files kept by Gay Holland, which included some paperwork on Del Loma Cave. She had personally been in the mouth of the cave, and stated that it was "easy to get to." Gay Holland herself completed an Inventory Site Form for the National Register of Historical Places, dated Nov. 14, 1972, including the following comments:

1972

"Limestone cave of geological and historical significance. Many legends about cave in the old days — was even suggested to have had a part in the

Indian's burning of Burnt Ranch, that they either escaped or sneaked up on settlers through the mountain via the cave. Cave was said to be seven miles long. Now there is the possibility that increased breakdown in the cave has considerably limited the length. Cave is an old landmark with some historical significance, although most stories cannot be verified. Cave is an interesting geological site."

William Halliday's 1959 book "Adventure is Underground" probably has the best and most detailed versions of the stories. These and other various versions usually involve the Indians using the cave in strategic ways, incredible lengths of cave passage to other distant entrances (often conveniently blown up by the military), or buried treasure such as Chinese gold. Items of interest reputedly found in the cave include very old human and animal remains, pictographs, two hand guns, the bones of a bear and a lost hunter, his gun, a gallon jug of gasoline, and a large lake. The most valuable items, of course, are still in there, somewhere.

Halliday does not emphasize the treasure aspect at Del Loma. However, other authors have not held back in this regard. The "Goldengirl" internet site, for example, elaborates on the Indian raiding days as follows:

"In the 1850's, hostile Indians plagued the California miners, stealing their gold and, in some instances, killing the gold seekers in an effort to force them to leave their lands. Soldiers were finally brought in and traced these hostile Indians to Del Loma Cave where it is believed all the stolen gold and their valuables were hidden."

As we have seen, Halliday's book (p.170) does mention Erftenbeck's desire to develop Del Loma as a commercial cave.



Ceiling detail in Del Loma Cave. 9-22-07

"In 1950 his plans were well under way when someone apparently dynamited its key passages, effectively blocking most of them." 1950

He goes on to describe a booby trap involving the gallon jug of gas, and the theory was that Indians were working against him and his plans for the cave, so he gave it up. My favorite lore, and I think the weirdest, is that if you go in Del Loma Cave on a foggy day, you will surely die. So far all my Del Loma trips have been on nice days with blue sky and clear weather. But I'm thinking it might be interesting to go in during the thickest fog of the year, just to see what might happen. I mean, you know, what would Harry Potter do?

Erftenbeck may have given it up, but the dream to commercialize Del Loma Cave did not die. Although the cave is in the public domain, the beginning of the access trail is private. Some of the local land owners feel proprietary about the cave. They do have some reasonable interest in the cave. For one thing, any loosened rock or pebble at the cave entrance rockslide ends up rolling all the way down to do damage to cabins and structures. A dislodged boulder has a good chance to rumble right through somebody's living room, cross the highway, and end up in the Trinity River. That is the truth, too. Any caver poking around up there is personally responsible for any rockfall that occurs for up to one week before or after the visit. So be very careful, and here is a hint. If they ask you if you saw any deer up that way, the answer is a definite "Yes, there were lots of deer," because that gets you off the hook for the rocks that are constantly coming down every day from natural causes.

Anyway, one of the recent landowners dreamed of promoting the cave, as one of the attractions of the Del Loma destination resort and wild river adventure basecamp, or something like that, and perhaps even charging a few bucks for the cave trip, at least for use of the trail. Never mind the 20 foot pit just inside the entrance. These promotional ideas must have led to the construction of the cave information kiosk, the printing of the brochure, and the "improvements" to the access trail such as we encountered on our family outing back in 1996. Besides attracting denizens of the general public such as my kids and I, these efforts also resulted in Del Loma Cave being added to lists of commercialized caves in the State of California. (Yes, I saw this on the internet.) I suspect that the profits were low, and the stockholders were not happy. Also, there were, no doubt, some issues: such as liability, restrictions on the business use of public lands, special use permits, and what not. 1996

The upshot is that the current landowners are no longer interested in the venture. They were friendly, but I think they would rather that people just didn't go up there very often. Of course, this is still an unrestricted public cave. It is difficult, but not impossible to reach the entrance without crossing private property, in part using what might be a section of the old Washington Fluming Company water-race from French Creek. Just be careful not to start any rocks rolling down toward the houses. 2007

California State University at Chico has offered wild cave tours to "explore Del Loma limestone cave" at a cost of \$37-48. I wonder if that includes transportation. The cave also scored a short write-up in the 1990 NSS (Yreka) Convention Guidebook on page 111. 1990

Dave Pryor of the Shascade Caving Society formally nominated Del Loma Cave as a significant cave under the implementation criteria of Federal Cave Resource Protection Act of 1988. The date of the nomination was Nov. 1, 1994. Besides Taylor's Flat and Del Loma, other names for the cave include Pelletreau, Canadian Bar, and French Flat. French Flat is upstream from Del Loma, where Big French Creek joins the Trinity River. Canadian Flat is downstream from Del Loma, and Pelletreau is the name of the creek that comes down at Del Loma. So this cave seems determined to have a geographic name. 1994

In summary, we have a once beautiful cave subjected to various forces over 150 years, including rock hounds, treasure hunters, and the other denizens of modern society. This cave is really beat up, stripped, and possibly blasted. We have the stories, the soot, and Knutson saw the gallon jug of fuel (I know, the gas changed to kerosene, but still!). Yet the cave of today seems much like the "pre-dynamite" cave described on the 1947 trip. It would sure be nice to see the 1947 cave survey. There are always more questions, but so ends this overly elongated history of a cave with less than 1,000 feet of passage, and tiny Swiss cheesy holes going off in all directions from every juncture. What the future holds, I do not know. The next ice age might grow back some new calcitic decor. Meanwhile, I think Del Loma Cave is a pretty fun, warm cave to crawl around in without causing very much harm.

Is Del Loma a vertical or a horizontal cave? I guess it is one of those in-between caves, depending on the caver. Erftenbeck's Hole is not that bad if you just turn on your side going through. It may have been enlarged some over the years. The main route to the back of the cave might be a reasonable horizontal caving trip for some cavers, but there is climbing and crawling encountered along the way. Other competent cavers might opt to rig the entrance pit, or back off from a pinch point.

BB

ON SURVEY IN DEL LOMA By Bill Broeckel

Vern and Linda Clift hosted the SAG meeting back on April 9, 2004. Many grotto members crashed at their place, and the next morning some were ready for a cave trip. Vern Clift and his daughter Kristy had recently scouted out Del Loma Cave, so we decided the time had come to start a re-survey of that famous cave of legend.

Apr 9, 2004

Access issues were circumvented by a novel public land approach to the cave, involving steep, loose slopes without trails. We passed by some random limestone outcrops, but found no new entrances. An old water-race across these slopes has been completely landslided away. However, we were able to pick up the hanging end of the flume, which we then followed to the rock-slide below the cave.

The entrance measured 9 ft wide by 4 ft high. Interestingly, this matches the 1855 measurements (10x5) better than the Charles Erftenbeck measurements (6x4) published in 1962. Vern Clift and Jim Wolff were daunted by the 20 ft climbing pitch found inside the cave, not far from the entrance. They decided to stand guard at the entrance, watch the packs, and await our safe return.

For my part, I was the returning "be-gloved pilgrim from Broadway or Fifth Avenue" (actually the timid caver from Deer Meadows Rd), back here determined to get down further into the cave. This time, instead of my kids, I had Brian Marshall and Russ Yoder. I was not ready for a 20 mile underground journey, crossing large lakes, and following the Indians to Denny at New River. Getting down the entrance pit was going to be enough for me this time.

I didn't have vertical gear, but kind of remembered a possible way down in the back of the crevasse. There was that old knotted rope again, the same one that looked old a decade ago. The knotted rope served as a guide down a climbing route which amounted to a pretty easy chimney climb set at a 45 degree angle. There was a vertical drop-off at the bottom, but at this spot it was close enough to the floor to be do-able. The angle given above was actually measured in the course of our survey at 41-43 degrees.



Kristy describes her Del Loma Cave experience
(L-R) Linda Clift, Kristy, Liz Wolff and Jim Wolff. 4-9-04

I have to admit that I grabbed the rope a few times, just because it was handy, but not in a way that my life depended on it. Other parts of this over-all vertical feature of the cave looked more intense to me, but I noticed on the later trip that Dick LaForge was free-climbing all over the place in there, just for fun.

We surveyed the entrance, pit, room, and the slip-and-slide down to the next room at the bottom of the cave, 68 feet below the surface. We sent a couple more shots up the continuing passage to Erftenbeck's Hole, and that was all I could do that day. I was still pretty happy with the findings and the 191 ft of survey. Del Loma Cave was a real cave and there were lots of leads left for later.

We got back on Sep. 22, 2007 after another good SAG meeting / sleep-over at the Clift's house. This time it was Dave Smith who was daunted by the pit, and then served as entrance monitor. Jim Wolff, not to be denied again, brought full-on vertical gear and did the drop in style. We surveyed like map-crazy-maniacs everything we could crawl through, and came out with 453 ft of new survey, bringing the total for the cave to 644 feet. About half way through the survey, Wolff started feeling cold, so he went back to do the vertical and check in with Dave. The survey included the passages beyond Erftenbeck's Hole, and we measured the room above the Hole, where it was once a beautiful spot. Survey notes fell out of my pocket in a crawlway up there. I had to go back to retrieve them, but we still made it home to the Clift's house in time for supper.

Sep 22, 2007

The nature of the cave is such that it is hard to say that the survey was complete. There were little holes going everywhere in all directions all the time. We found snails, slugs, and centipedes, but no bats. We found a bucket, pick-axe head, re-bar, shovel, bottle, boards, and a rope hanging down from a dome-pit at Erftenbeck's



Judy Broeckel runs tape in Del Loma Cave. 9-22-07

Hole. We did not find any old bones, weapons, gold, or treasure. There were arrows, dates, names, and initials written on the walls, but no prehistoric pictographs were noticed. Apparently, Geary Beal and Amie Don were in the back of the cave in 1959.

1959

Dick LaForge found a blowing hole at a far end of the cave, and we left a lead or two in the ceiling back there. Judy and I, at least, were starting to get tired. Our friends were waiting for us, and Linda Clift was making dinner. I had enough bling to make some kind of map. I suppose the definitive map of Del Loma Cave will have to show the big lake, and the miles of passages going out to Denny, to Manzanita Creek, or at least that one that goes under the Trinity River. Star gates. I think maybe the Indians somehow used caves as transporters, as in "beam me up Scotty." Think about this, even if there was an actual 20 mile cave passage to Denny, would it be really practical.

BB

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- Halliday, William 1959. Adventure is Underground. P. 168-170. Best weird stories from Del Loma Cave.
- Halliday, William 1962. Caves of California. P. 98-99, 129-130, 187. Provides written description and map of Del Loma Cave.
- Williams, Craig 1985. Trinity 1985. Taylor's Flats Caves. P.53-57. Stories, reports, and many newspaper references (by year only).
- Broeckel, William 2004. SAG RAG 23:2 (Mar-Apr 2004), Meeting Notes. Disgusting story includes trip into Del Loma Cave.

DEL LOMA CAVE ALL MOPPED-UP?! By Jim Wolff

After the October grotto meeting, held at Vern and Linda's, we did a mapping mop-up trip to Del Loma Cave. Dick LaForge, Bill and Judy Broeckel, Dave Smith and myself geared-up for the vertical cave. I carried a huge assault pack and everyone else had meager, cave packs. Was I prepared for the cave, you bet! Well, kinda.

2007

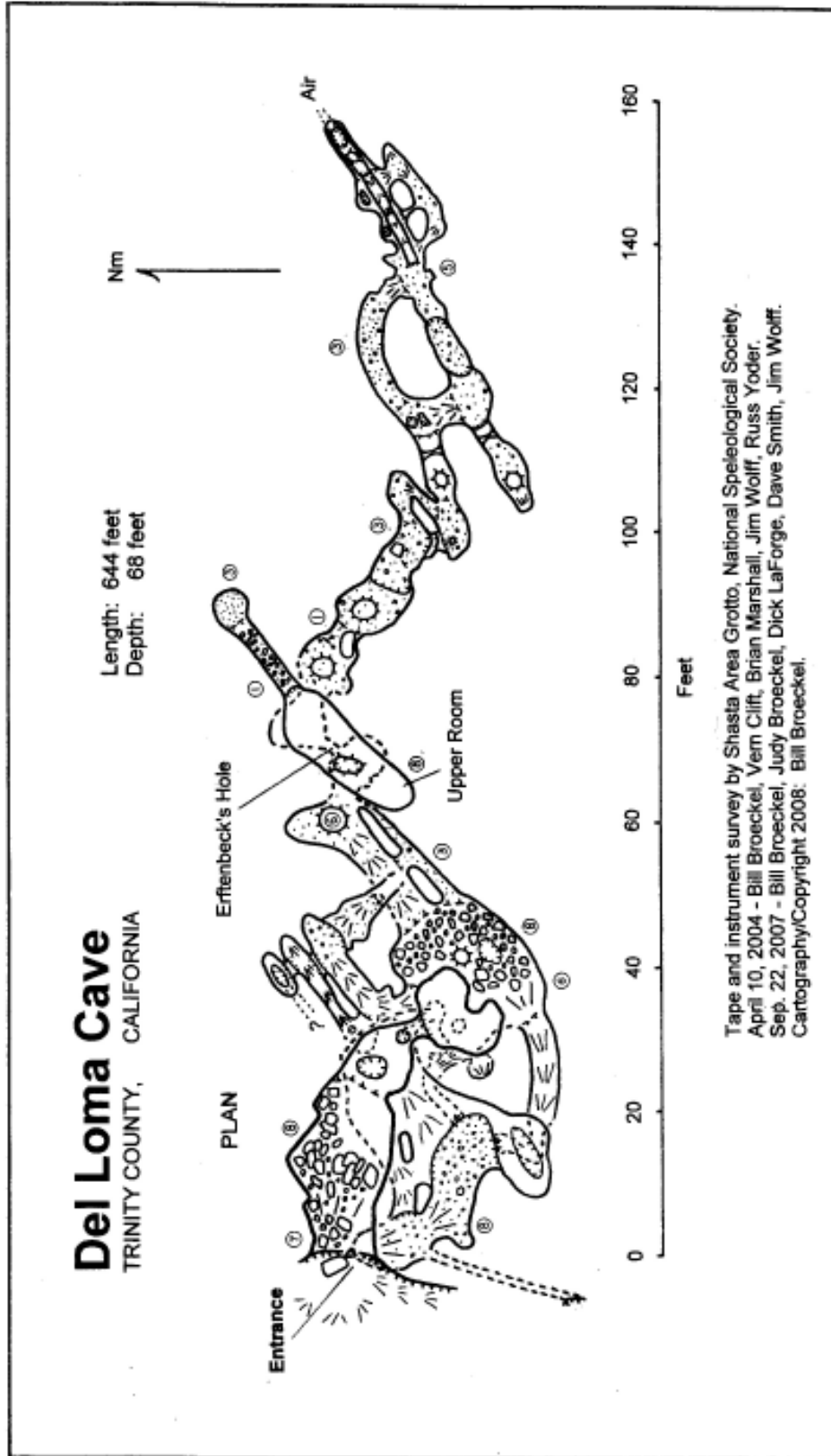
I handed the rope to Dick, to kindly rig the drop for me, while I was getting dressed for the cave, mostly since he was ready to go into the cave, as soon as we got there! Anyway, by the time I was ready, everyone else except Dave and myself, was free-climbing down the pit! Apparently, Bill knew what to expect from the cave, having been near the bottom on an earlier mapping trip, and Dick just plain didn't know any better, so he free-climbed the pit not twice, but three times that day! This was my second time here, where during my first, I didn't go all the way down the drop — so I knew personally, that a rope was needed, even minimally as a handline.

Once at the bottom, I finally caught up with the survey crew, as they made steady progress "towards the unknown." I seemed to be in the way at times as I occasionally took the instruments to get that second or third re-reading of the compass. Awkward spots always take a lot more time to accomplish and we / I got cold with inactivity.

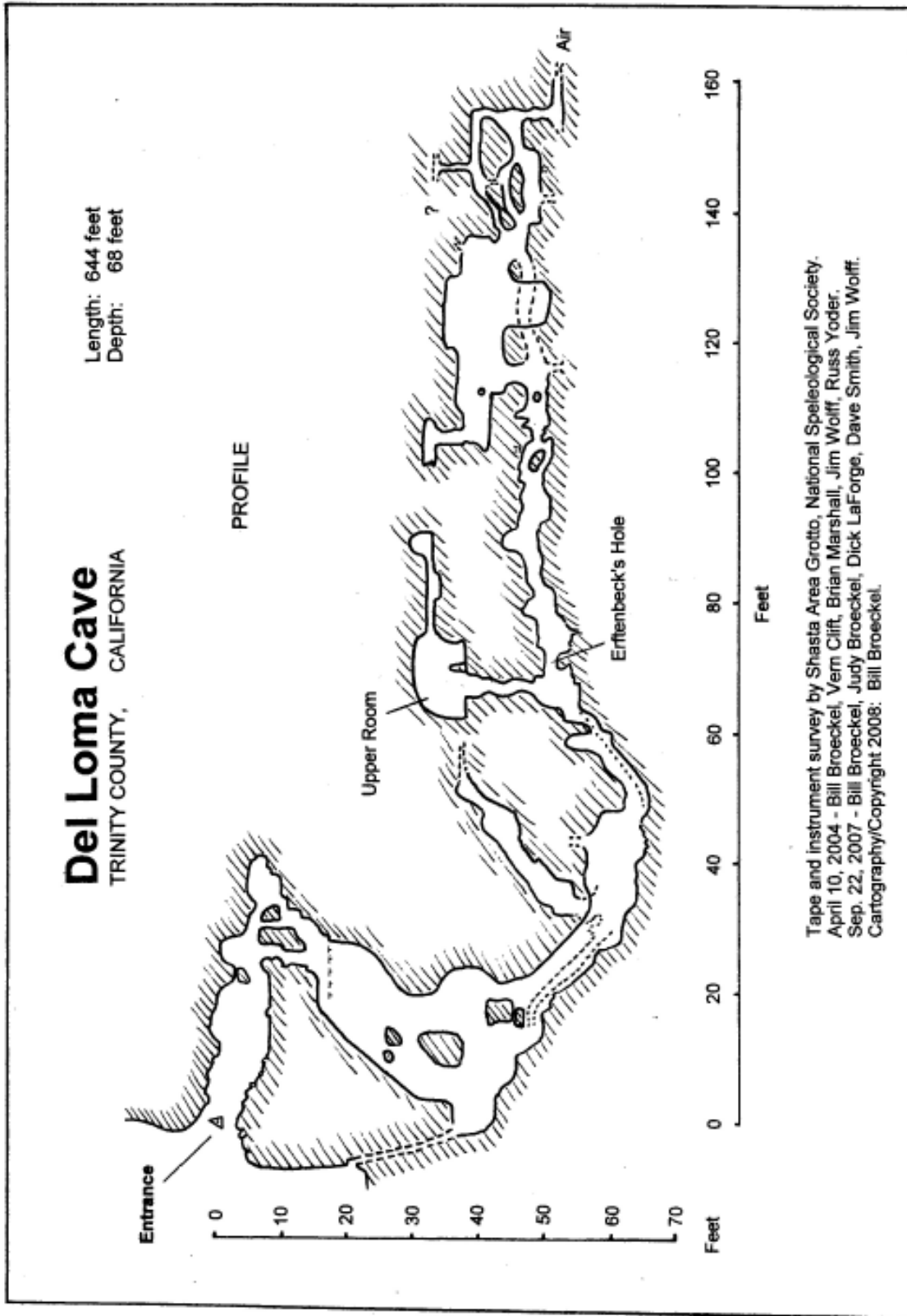
I would wander around the cave and climb up into some accessible domes where the walls allowed it, just to get warm. At one point when I was sitting down in a steep-inclined tube, I saw two egg-like thingies in a little alcove. Salamander eggs? Then, later, I saw a SLUG! Now, we are starting to see biological values here!

The trip out was uneventful, and at the bottom of the hill we met the property owner, who in the past has asked if we could / would be influential in getting the cave gated. The cave is on Forest Service land and now that we have found some biological values, there might be some leverage to see if the gating could actually happen someday.

JW



Map: Del Loma Cave



Map: Del Loma Cave



Bill Broeckel checks out some damage in Del Loma Cave. 9-22-07

BIG FUN IN A SMALL CAVE By Dick LaForge
Del Loma Cave Trip Report

2007

I have heard of Del Loma Cave for decades and have whizzed by it on Hwy 299 dozens of times without stopping. What I heard, or imagined was: small maze of crawlways half full of rat pee saturated dust. No big attraction. But the thing about caves is you can't see 'em without going in 'em, so let's go in and see, especially with good caver friends and a nice weekend at Vern and Linda's. To my pleasant surprise, it was fun every minute.

First, the entrance is about 800 steep and almost trailless feet above the road level — more work than the cave itself. So steep that a rock set rolling can land on the cabins in the little valley below, one reason the cabin owners want access to the cave restricted to responsible persons only, such as ourselves. The entrance, far from crawly and dust-choked, goes in largely and then vertically down a nice little tube with plenty of holds. Then a steep, wide, and low slope which is a bit tricky ... which dumps off a very entertaining 15 ft vertical cliff at the end. All Riiiiight!!! After we all got down (except for Dave, who opted to "guard the entrance") we continued further down a good sized tube to the end of Bill's former survey.

The cave develops some complexity, with parallel passages, little squeeze holes, more fun climbing, side passages almost big enough to get through, and a different type of obstacle every five feet. At the "end," or one of them, is a five foot pit with a corner at the bottom. Getting upside down, I felt a nice breeze coming from a too-



Judy Broeckel works her way down the slip and slide to the bottom of Del Loma Cave. 9-22-07

small bedrock crevice. We mapped everything, except an area stacked over a larger passage. A body size tube leads steeply upward into a very small room but I got jammed and could not get into it. Further down the lower passage another small tube goes up and back towards the same area. I probably could have gotten into it, but by now Bill and Judy had finished mapping and started out. Perhaps there is a room up there with borehole leading off, perhaps all the way to the old settlement of Denny as legend has it. O well, every cave map needs a ?? on it.

I don't think we got very far into the mountain, but the mapping and checking every little crevice made the cave plenty adequate for a long afternoon of good dirty fun.

DL



Shasta Area Grotto on the nice part of the trail to Del Loma Cave.
9-22-07

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR**(SAG RAG Editor can't spell good)**

"In case you are interested, the correct spelling of gyrrilloblotid [sic], on your map of the Tag 04 Caves, is actually grylloblattid. But, no big deal."

Larry McTigue 4-7-08

"We salties tend to say 'anchors aweigh' and generally not 'anchors away' unless that is where they are going.

Dave Smith 6-4-08

Of course these guys are absolutely correct. The sad thing on the grylloblattid is that I actually double-checked on it, but then never got around to fixing it on the map. The other one just exposes me for the landlubber that I am. Good work guys. They also said a lot of nice things about the newsletter, but the critiques are always more interesting. By the aweigh, I can too spell good. It is G. O. O. D. So, good then. **BB**

THE MISSION STATEMENT OF THE SHASTA AREA GROTTTO

The Shasta Area Grotto is a conservation organization devoted to the protection and study of caves and their contents.

SPECIAL DEL LOMA CAVE ISSUE

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STAMP

TO:

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page 1	Cover: Del Loma Cave entrance
Page 2	Caver Calendar, Summary
Page 3	Introducing Del Loma Cave
Page 4	Some history of Del Loma Cave
Page 11	Del Loma Survey - Bill Broeckel
Page 14	Del Loma Mop-up - Jim Wolff
Page 15-16	Del Loma Cave Map - Bill Broeckel
Page 17	Del Loma Trip Report - Dick LaForge