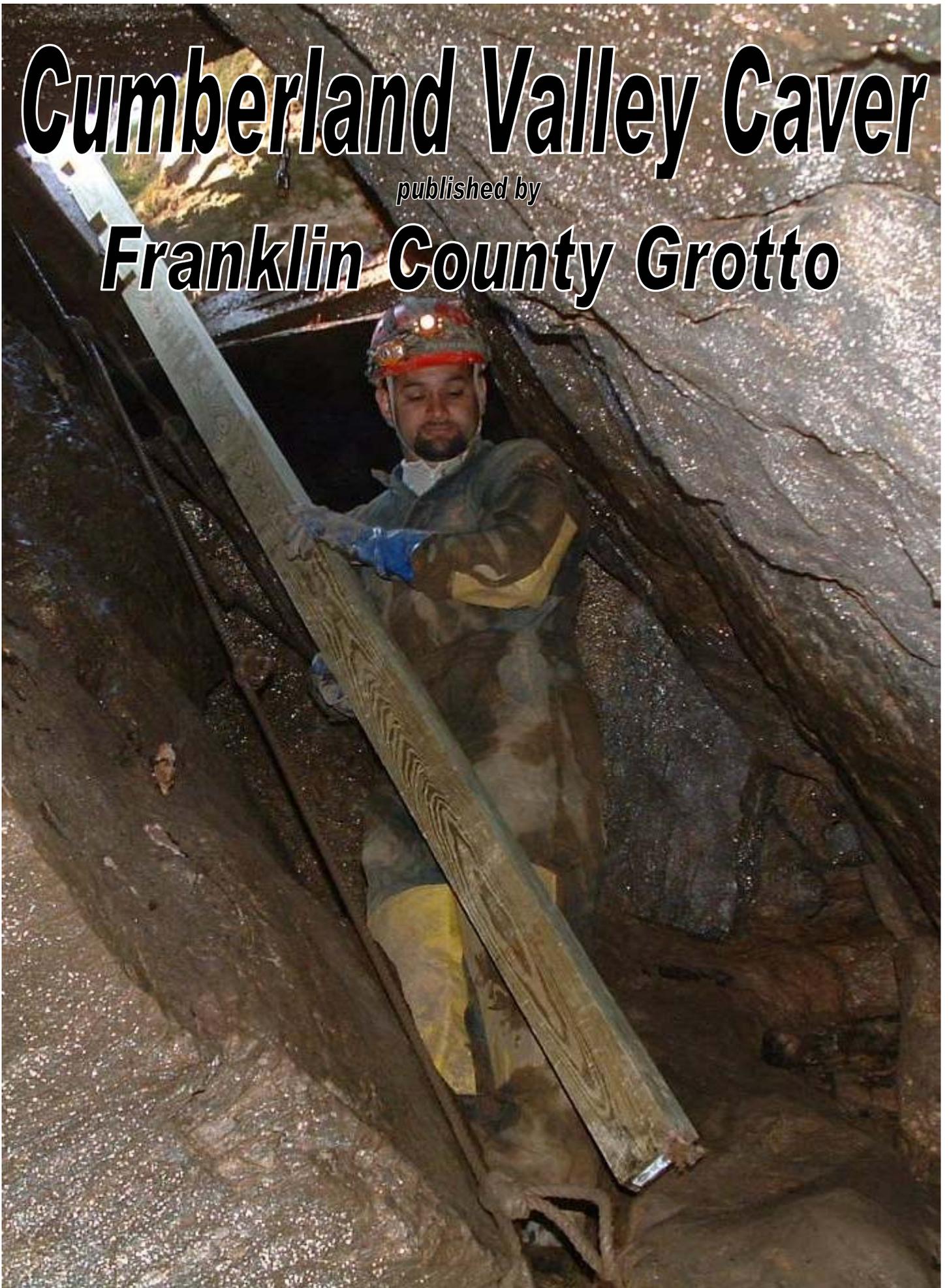


# Cumberland Valley Caver

*published by*

## Franklin County Grotto



# CUMBERLAND VALLEY CAVER

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Franklin County Grotto meetings are held the 3rd Monday of the month in New Franklin Fire Department, New Franklin, PA. The fire department is located on PA Route 316, 3 miles east of I-81 (exit #14). The meeting starts at 7:30 PM. Both grotto caving trips and smaller individual trips are planned at these meetings. All members are invited depending on their ability to safely participate. You must attend at least one vertical training session in order to participate in vertical trips. Contact any of the above individuals for more information.

The Cumberland Valley Caver is published a couple of times per year by the Franklin County Grotto PA. All cave related articles should be submitted to the editor for publication. The contents of this publication are not copyrighted unless previously copyrighted by the author. Material from this publication may be reprinted by other official organizations of the National Speleological Society without prior permission provided credit is given to the original author and this publication, and the article is not changed in anyway. Other interested parties must request permission in advance. Franklin County Grotto actively participates in a newsletter exchange program. All exchanges should be mailed to: Ken Jones, 4446 Duffield Rd, Chambersburg, PA 17201. Information regarding exchanges should be coordinated with editor so the exchange list can be updated.

**Cover: Istvan Urcuyo lowering ladder sections at Cleversburg Sink, PA** *photo by Jim Hart*

**Back cover: Long tailed salamander in Long's Quarry, PA** *photo by Istvan Urcuyo*

# Table of Contents

From the Editor.....	3
Speleo-Spotlight: Jim Schweitzer <i>by Ken Tayman</i> .....	4
Hellhole: The End of a Saga? <i>by Terry McClanathan</i> .....	5
Long Quarry (follow-up dig) <i>by Istvan Urcuyo</i> .....	11
Cleversburg Maintenance <i>Jonathan Peterson and Ken Tayman</i> .....	13
Cave Cartoon “In Cave Too Long”.....	13
Culverson Creek (Wildcat & SSS) plus Lost World Caverns <i>by Ken Tayman</i> .....	14
Vertical Practice Sessions / IUP Graduate (Helen) .....	19
Culverson Creek Trip Addendum .....	19

## ***From the Editor.....***

Thanks goes out to Ish, Jonathan and Terry for contributing input for this issue. FCG members are doing a lot of caving with plans to keep up the pace as the year continues. Pat’s vertical practices seem to be a hit and he plans to keep scheduling them through the summer months. Thanks to Pat for coordinating the vertical sessions. We plan to try and put on a couple vertical trips, so we can put all this vertical training to good use.

Our Cumberland Valley Caver, March 2008 issue, got a pretty decent review in the Underground Update section of the May issue of the NSS News. It was nice to receive a few emails from FCG members when they read it. I am sure the “Striking” cover photo of Terry ascending Southwest Dome in Hellhole grabbed the editor’s attention.

There is a lot of interest in getting back down to Greenbrier County, WV for a return visit to SSS and perhaps a through trip to Fuller. That will also present the opportunity to do some vertical work if we want to work it in. Fuller has a multiple waterfall drops, Cabbie’s 92’ pit is in the area and there is always Lightner’s Pit with its multiple drops into the backside of McClungs.

Also, we have been discussing a possible dig in a BFS that seems like it just has to lead to some cave. I guess all it will take is someone to ramrod the effort. Any volunteers?

I’d like to announce that my daughter Helen, long time FCG member, after years of hard work, just recently graduated from Indiana University of Pennsylvania with a BA in Psychology. Good job Helen!!

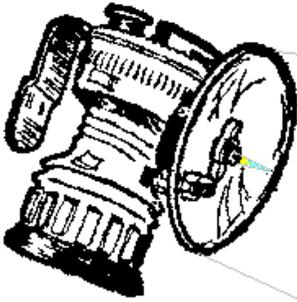
Sincerely,

Ken Tayman

# Speleo-Spotlight...

Jim Schweitzer

NSS# 24697

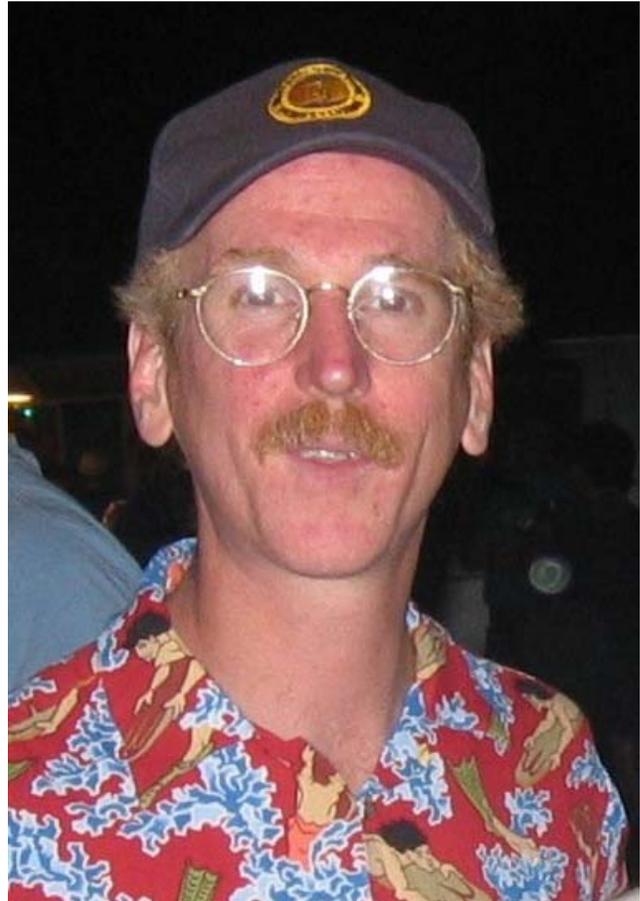


Jim started his caving career in 1982, while a student at Shippensburg University. He describes his first caving adventure as a “dormitory trip” to Cleversburg Sink led by Frank Hartman. He remembers climbing down the ladder as frightening. His fear was soon overwhelmed by a massive “mud-ball” fight in the Sand Room.

He was hooked. He did lots of local caves with the Shippensburg Outing Club which included, Carnegie, Hersey-Coy and Aughenbaugh, plus many other holes in the ground, the names of which he can’t recall. He once caved 10 days in row. He got into organized caving in 1984 when he joined Franklin County Grotto.

Having cut his teeth on Pennsylvania caves, he considers small, muddy, tight passages to be the norm. Big, large, walking passages are the oddity. He has done some large caves in Virginia and West Virginia including, Butler-Sinking Creek, Scott Hollow, Organ, Destitute and a memorable through trip/ rescue in Bowden during OTR.

Without a doubt, his worst caving experience was a night time trip to Hershey-Coy. Two experienced cavers and two novices. The trip started at the Coy entrance at 9 PM. The tight mazy passages eventually got to one of the novices, who freaked out and demanded to get out of the cave “Right Now”. He wouldn’t go another inch and retraced the route back to the Coy entrance, even though it would have shorter to continue forward to Hershey entrance. He describes the sight and sound of someone falling to pieces in a tight crawlway as memorable. Route finding issues and problems with the carbide lights resulted in the four cavers exiting with just two functional carbide lights, at 2 AM. The temperature had dropped and it had snowed while they were in the cave. He got hypothermic while changing clothes and was shivering uncontrollably. He ended up, fully clothed, in a hot bath for a long time, before he stopped shaking. He can now recognize all the symptoms of hypothermia.



Jim Schweitzer at OTR pavilion Photo by Ken T. Tayman

Other interests are sailboat racing in Long Island Sound. He mans the foredeck, which primary responsibility is not getting washed overboard and trying to stay a step ahead of the crew in the stern of the boat. He has never been overboard yet, but has been waist deep in capsized boat. He remembers beating out the top sailor in the area in a race once, by a second, making them, at least for that brief moment, the best boat in the water.

He is also a rail fan. It is a passion of his that has led him to 41 of the 50 states and even to China where the last mainline steam railroad still ran.

Jim graduated from Shippensburg in 1989 with BS in Logistics and is currently Webmaster of FCG website. He does some cave survey and mapping when the opportunity presents itself.

Written by Ken Tayman ☐

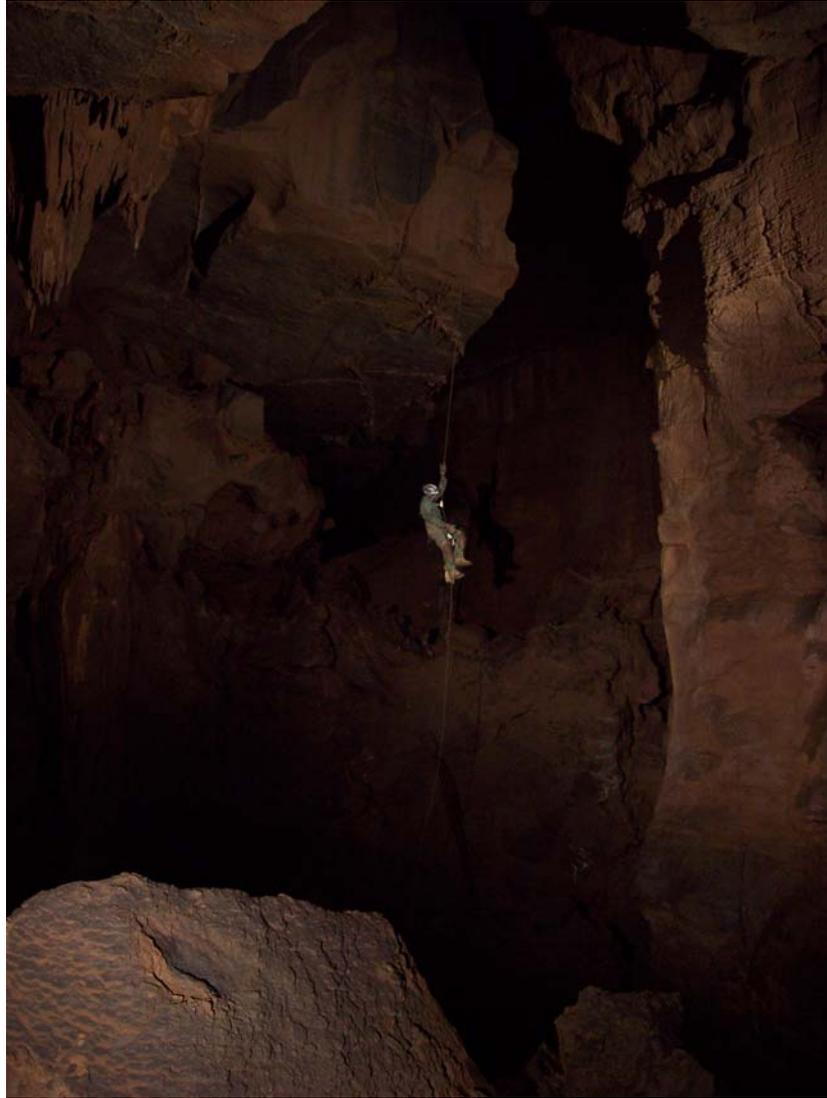
# HELLHOLE: THE END OF THE SAGA?

By Terry McClannathan NSS# 12103

There are maybe half a dozen legitimate candidates for “greatest cave” honors in the state of West Virginia. I’m sure we all have our favorites. Personal feelings aside, a truly great cave should be very long, contain impressive passages, have a bit of depth, be well endowed in the pretties department, perhaps have some historic significance, and some nice pits( okay, so I allowed a little personal prejudice to creep in on that last item). Certainly a strong case could be made for the inclusion of the Friar’s Hole System, Organ System, Scott Hollow, Cass, and a few of the other Greenbrier-Pocahontas-Monroe county gems. As the title of this article suggests, my nomination for greatest cave in the “Mountain State” is not to be found in the three above-mentioned cave rich counties. It’s a bit further north, and is nestled in Pendleton’s Germany Valley.

Few areas of the country can boast of more historical roots to caving than Germany Valley. Hellhole and Schoolhouse have been household names in caving for over half a century. Hundreds of old-time cavers have delighted in trips to these caves throughout the 50’s, 60’s, 70’s, and even into the

80’s. Such easy access to popular caves often comes with a price. Schoolhouse was essentially



**Terry climbing the 270’ Southwest Dome in Hellhole, 2<sup>nd</sup> highest dome in WV. (actual rope drop is 247’), This photo was the cover of March ’08 Cumberland Valley Caver. Photo by Brian Masney**

closed by the early 70’s due to over visitation. A moratorium on Hellhole was initiated to protect bats endangered by too many cavers in the cave at various times of the year. An unconditional total closure on Hellhole occurred in 1987; just two years after the ’85 flood blasted open the passage at the bottom of a pit called Little Hellhole, leading to several miles of virgin cave. By this time Hellhole was by far the largest cave in Pendleton County, but it was dwarfed by the mega-caves in the states south central counties. The Hellhole map published in Caves and Karst of Pendleton County by George Dasher in 2001 shows approximately eight

miles of passages. In just six short years all that would change.

In 2001 PSC caver Gordon Brace was able to negotiate arrangements with Greer Industries, which owns the quarry and hence controlled access to the cave since the ’87 closure, to remap Hellhole.

Due to endangered bat species, the Department of Fish and Wildlife dictated that the cave could only be surveyed during the period lasting mid-May to the end of August. Initially this was to be a three year project. It was decided that up to 45 cavers could work in the cave during any given year. These people would have to be included on a list submitted before the start of the work season with all necessary paperwork (releases, trip report obligations, etc.) completed before anyone could enter the cave. Gordon graciously accepted the task of coordinating everything. So much new cave was discovered during the first three seasons that a fourth and fifth were added to attempt completion of the project. At the end of the '06 season there was still a lot to do, and although Gordon confessed to getting a bit weary of all the administrative duties, he decided to give it one more summer. As far as is presently known last OTR (07) marks the end of explorations in Hellhole. The cave is once again unconditionally closed, except for sanctioned bat counts conducted every two year by Fish & Wildlife.

Here are some of the highlights of efforts in the cave over this six year period. According to compilations by Gordon Brace, 95 different cavers spent a total of 1043 days (that's days, not hours) working in the cave. Most of the effort was spearheaded by a core of about forty cavers who



**Rimstones in Holy Cow-Batman passage on the way to 306' Batman Dome.**  
*Photo by Brian Masney*

accounted for over 80% of those 1043 days. The time was not wasted. The cave increased in surveyed length from eight miles to over twenty eight miles. Spectacular virgin passages were added to the awesome rooms (Shipp, Coon, Dune, Moon) found in the early '70's. Besides the multi-mile Flood Section, opened after 1985, new additions included the Bob's Big Break Borehole (BBBB), discovered by Bob Anderson, who was able to squeeze his way through breakdown in the Bat Room, little more than a hundred yards from the entrance, into walking borehole leading to a 90 foot drop into an even bigger complex of high domes and breakdown rooms. Beyond this Anderson dug his way through another breakdown blockage into a continuation of the BBBB which lead to the understated "Hundred Foot Room".

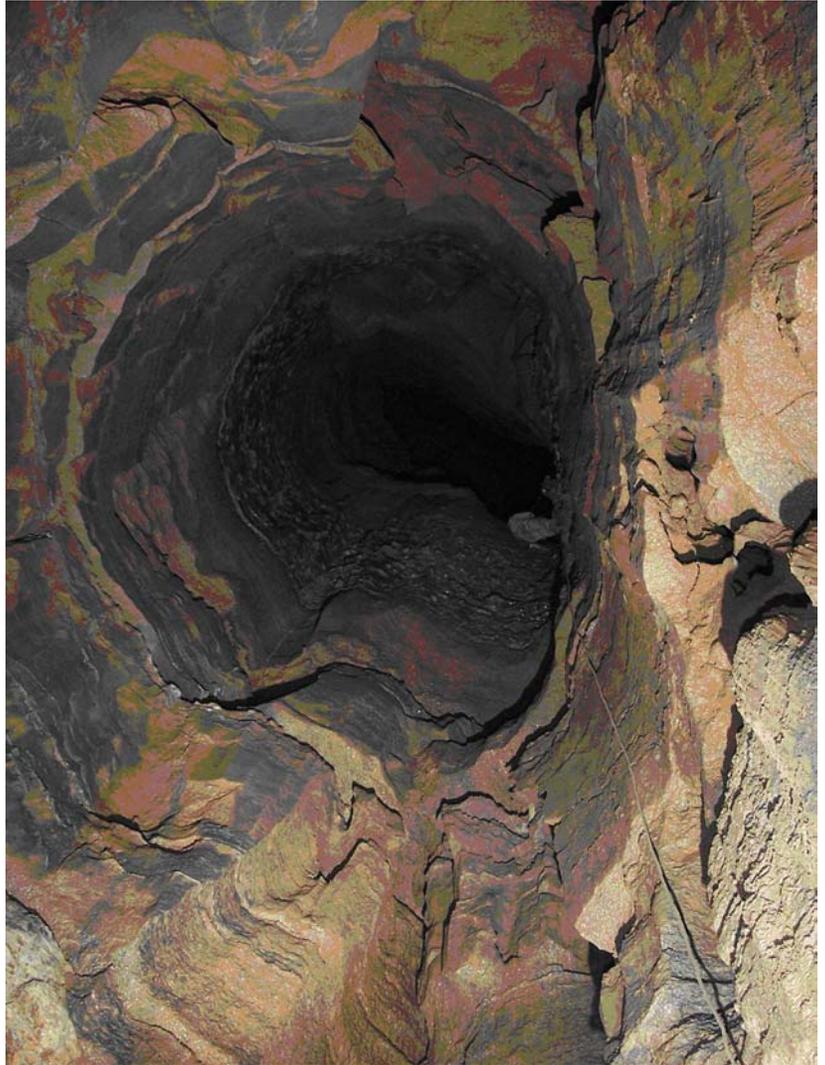
This was the extent of current exploration as it existed in 2001 when the GVKs (Germany Valley Karst Survey) became involved thanks to Gordon's efforts. The "Hundred Foot Room" proved to be a pivotal location for several major boreholes which would extend the southern portion of the cave "off the charts". Above the room, a mile long borehole dubbed Southwest Express lead to incredibly decorated galleries, a complicated series of extensive parallel passages, and several high domes. Bill Stone led a team which succeeded in climbing one of these domes to a height of nearly 270' with a spectacular 247' drop. The largest side passage from Southwest Express proved to be a major conduit in itself and was named the Holy Cow Batman passage. It extended for several thousand feet through forests of formations to terminate in another high Dome. Stone also led a team which scaled this dome to a height of 306', giving Hellhole the two deepest (highest) pits in the state.

Taking off from the lowest point in the "Hundred Foot Room" is the Tiny Trunk borehole. This extends for thousands of feet, once again through incredibly decorated sections, to a large lake. About midway along Tiny Trunk a series of crawls leads still further

downward to the very extensive Silent Stream. This goes for a couple of miles as a combination borehole, consisting of breakdown rooms, active stream sewers, large canyons, drops, and one low airspace christened the "Ear Canal". Silent Stream beyond the Ear Canal is the most remote part of Hellhole. Trips back to that area tend to be long and arduous. Day trips typically run 20+ hours and physically waste most cavers. A camp was established about a mile beyond the "Ear Canal" in 07 in an effort to make the trip less grueling, provide safeguards against flooding, which happens with some frequency in this part of the cave, and make it more humanly possible to continue the survey in that direction. The current end of Silent Stream is about three and a half miles from the entrance, and one way travel time can range from 4 to 9 hours, depending on familiarity with the route and speed and endurance of the cavers. The majority of the 95 cavers involved in the Hellhole project over the past six years have not seen the Silent Stream section.

I have been involved with GVKS in Hellhole for just the last three years and have made fourteen trips to its nether reaches in that span. I regret missing the first three years when major discoveries came quickly. Things have been slower during my tenure, but I have been fortunate enough to at least get in on some nice booty. In an earlier article for the DDD (Sept/06/vol.21) I recounted some of my adventures up through the '06 season. This year I was on five additional survey trips into Hellhole. Three were rather routine mop-up or lead checking trips. Two were noteworthy and a short account of each follows. I can't locate the trip report from 7/14 so I'll just summarize it briefly here.

Second weekend of July a large group of us were lead by Miles Drake and Darrel Worsham into the Flood Section of Hellhole. Both Miles and Darrell knew the area well. None of the rest of us had ever been to that part of the cave. I had been as far as the old "end" prior to the '85 flood on my first trip there in 1969. At that time this "end" was a clay plug located a few hundred feet from the bottom of Little Hellhole pit. Our objectives for the July trip were lead checking and survey, Brian was doing photography, and, oh yes, there was a deep pit I'd not



**View looking up from the bottom of the 306' Batman Dome climb. You can see me climbing along the right side of the pit. I'm about 80' up here, so there's a long way to go. Photo by Brian Masney**

been to before (fortunately I was able to scrounge a 132' rope out of the trunk of my car for that purpose).

Steve Collins (Tenn.) and I dropped the pit and taped it right at 100'. Miles took David Riggs and Mary Schmidt (Morgantown) to search out leads at the end of one of the large breakdown rooms, but came up empty. Darrell showed Brian some nice areas to photograph.

After our lunch break we went looking for more leads in the area around the Window Dome. This dome had an enticing lead on its far side, but no one had thus far been able to reach that lead. A complex of large passages existed in the vicinity of the dome, so we started systematically checking the tops of the breakdown slopes for a possible backdoor to access the far side of the dome.

I soon found a small hole which appeared to open up after about 10-12 feet. Steve produced a pry bar from his pack and the dig was on. Brian was done with his photo work and soon joined us. He got in about a body length in short order before things got a little more restrictive. I laboriously got another body length in cramped quarters to an awkward rock which I couldn't get past. Mary was able to squeeze through to the other side, where she was shortly joined by Dave Riggs. The two of them were able to enlarge the dig from that end until all of us could fit.

After a short crawl, the virgin passage opened up into a nice canyon averaging about 10-15 feet in width and up to 30 feet high. We mapped 450' before it ended, but also found a promising side lead which Miles later mapped in two later trips, getting another 1200 feet. All in all the dig I initiated netted over 1600' of new survey in an area of the cave which had been declared finished over 20 years ago. Midway along the large canyon passage was a pit about fifteen feet in diameter and occupying a large portion of the floor. It appeared to have a depth of about 30-40 feet and was filled with deep water. It was also quite drippy. The survey and dig took us a good while and it was getting very late, plus I really did not want to be soaked for the chilly trip back through

the long blowing crawl connecting the old cave to the Flood Section, which had been flushed out in the '85 flood, so I decided to leave my rope and the virgin pit for my next trip. We spent 18 hours in the cave.

My next trip didn't turn out as I expected. Here is the trip report I submitted to GVKS detailing how plans sometimes get changed.

Trip report  
Aug. 25-26 Silent Stream

I was looking forward to a fairly easy trip into the Flood Section to check out the still virgin 30ish foot pit in TLM, and maybe do some mop-up in some nearby breakdown areas, with an easy de-rig on the way out. I was also hoping to get a chance to tour some of the passage found on our earlier trip and subsequently mapped by Miles Drake and crews on two later trips. Miles claimed this passage had the prettiest helectite displays he'd seen in the entire cave.

My mistake was showing up at Gateway at 8AM where the Silent Stream crews were eating breakfast in preparation for an early start. There were six, including Yvonne, who I knew wasn't going in because of her broken foot. That left only five. I no

sooner walked through the door than six smiling faces turned in my direction. I offered every excuse I could think of (all legitimate of course). "But I only brought a poly top".

"I have an extra poly bottom." Dave Socky replied.

"But I only packed enough food for a short trip"

"We'll find extra food for you." was the response from everybody.

"But I don't have my wetsuit booties". This was a real issue because I get painfully arthritic when my feet are cold and wet. It's an age thing I guess.



Formation lined corridor near the end of Holy Cow-Batman passage in Hellhole.

*Photo by Brian Masnev*

“I’ve got some real fine insulated socks you can use,” Mark Minton offered.

“But I already have an assignment to map and derig in the Flood Section”.

“That’s been taken care of.” Yvonne assured.

I remembered how beat I was from the Silent Stream trip last summer which David Cole, Yuri Swartz and I did on the YTS survey, so I’m getting real desperate now and trying to think fast on my feet, “But my lawn is a foot high and out of control from the recent rains and I was going to mow it on Sunday.” I didn’t even get a response on that one. And so it was decided that I would make up the third member of the slower moving team.

Everyone made good on their promises and I was soon provided with everything I needed to survive. Mark even threw in a real warm insulated top to go along with the socks. Our team consisted of David Socky, Dan Zinz, and me. Mark Minton, Mark Stover, and Bob Alderson made up the fast team. We were all pretty much at the bottom of the entrance by 9:30. The fast team took off and we never saw them past the 90 footer. Dan said we were shooting for 1000’ of survey. I assumed the fast team had a similar objective. We made pretty good time getting there and had no problems. Dan and David seemed to have the route nailed pretty solid. The water in the low air space Ear Canal was down a bit due to the summer dryness. You could keep your whole head and back out of the water.

We decided to work on some of the leads that were closest to the Ear Canal. Our first was near the Stonehenge rock at STH4. This was a high lead on the right noted, I think, by Ed Devine on an earlier trip. We designated our survey TSI (Terry (got) suckered in). David was sketching and keeping book. I did foresights while Dan set stations and did backlights. The passage was clay floored, damp, but not too muddy. It appeared to be virgin after the first



Helectite display in side passage off TLM Survey (Flood Section, Hellhole).  
*Photo by Susan Posey*

couple hundred feet. Most of it was walking dimensions and varied from a couple of feet to around five feet wide, not borehole but not small either. Near the end the passage became somewhat larger, lifting our hopes before it abruptly shut down. About half way along the passage there was a side lead from which air was issuing. We were just about to head for this when Dan noticed an obscure lead beneath a ledge near floor level. A little troweling by Dan yielded penetration into a side passage that reversed direction from the one we had been surveying. This was a little more crawly, but still a fairly pleasant passage to survey. Our blowing lead turned out to be partially blocked by breakdown within a short ways and we did not survey that. Our total for our first lead was right around 800’, so we thought we were doing very well.

Still 200 feet short of our goal, there was some discussion as to which of the Silent Stream leads we should head to next. We finally decided to head back towards the Ear Canal and work on a lead reported by Bob Alderson near, I think, FGB 24. Bob said it was a couple hundred feet long so it sounded like a pretty sure bet for picking up the 200 feet we needed to reach Dan’s projected goal.

Bob’s lead is accessed by climbing up a near vertical wall on the left (going in, but on our right as we were coming back out). It starts as hands/knees, then belly, then up over a small breakdown pile.

Shortly beyond this it attains walking dimensions. At a little over a hundred feet in, the passage splits into an upper and lower level. Bobs tracks went into the upper level. It didn't look like he had entered the lower level. We surveyed the lower level first. It went about a hundred feet and ended, but there was an obvious higher level above it which appeared to extend further. We assumed the upper level at the split would take us to this point and beyond, so we were surprised when, after setting just two or three stations, Dan reported a shut down.

Back at the lower level lead we were accessing the chances of gaining the passage visible about 12 feet above. The rock was shattered and there were few holds. The walls looked chimneyable but proved to be deceptively slippery. I was the lightest, so using Dan for human footholds; I was able to get up high enough to peer into the passage enough to tell that it did indeed go. It was tight at the top and a knife edge slab was preventing me from squeezing into the passage. Several attempts only convinced me that there was a possibility my flailing might dislodge the slab. I thought I could make it if I removed my cave suit. Time for another debate. We had already surpassed our goal with 1100 feet of survey and it was only about midnight. A daybreak exit from a Silent Stream trip was looking mighty good. In the end we thought it best to go ahead and see if the lead did anything, since it was unlikely anyone else would be back here to check it out any time soon.

I removed my cave suit, used Dan for footholds again, and gained the passage with little trouble. Dan and David didn't think they'd fit through the vertical squeeze. I did some scooping and paced the passage at about 300' of pretty easy survey. Dan produced a hammer, passed it up to me, and I enlarged the squeeze to comfortable size. I threw all the rock slabs I'd removed down to Dan and David who used them to make stepping stones which made the climb easier. We got about 320 feet from this section before it ended.

We felt pretty good, having completely closed down two leads, and with a total of 1420' of new survey. We did not include any of the tie-in stations from Silent Stream in our 1420 total. It took us around five hours to make a leisurely but tiring exit. A very productive 23 hour trip.

End of report

The fast team of Mark Minton, Mark Stover, and Bob Alderson got almost as much footage from their 19-20 hr. trip, so we netted over half mile of new survey that weekend from the two Silent Stream teams. It had been Gordon's hope that we could move Hellhole up to the # 13 spot on the U. S. long caves list. Our combined efforts shot us right past the 13<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> spots and put us within just a few hundred feet of claiming the # 11 position. This generated enough enthusiasm that another group decided to go into the Silent Stream section over OTR (the last weekend for any work in the cave). Let it be known that during OTR three intrepid cavers weathered a 27 hour trip in Hellhole and got the necessary footage. Who says there's no hard caving done over OTR weekend? And, no, I was not on this 27 hour marathon. I was happily enjoying a six hour trip to drop a small virgin pit and see some gorgeous helectites, along with Dan Zinz(Ohio), Bob Zimmerman(Md.) and Steve Collins.

And so, has the saga come to an end? I seriously doubt it, but for the present all caving in Hellhole has. The cave now stands at 28.289 miles in length, solidly holding the 11<sup>th</sup> spot on the longest U. S. caves list. It is also a respectable 519' deep.

Hellhole contains six pits that are at least 100' deep. These include the two deepest in the state, Batman Dome (306') and Southwest Dome (247'). The classic entrance pit is 154', and other interior drops are Mystic Dome (134'), Triple Wells (110'), and Clean Dome (100'). There are still other high domes which have not been scaled. There is certainly potential for a lot more, but the extended six year survey is over.

Since my first trip as a 19 year old in 1969, I have enjoyed 28 trips into Hellhole, and spent a total of 284 hours pit bouncing, exploring, surveying, and having just plain old caving fun. I hope I have not seen the last of it, but if that turns out to be the case, I will treasure the memories until my dying day. For my money, West Virginia's Hellhole is tops in the state, and could truly be in the running for best overall cave in the country.

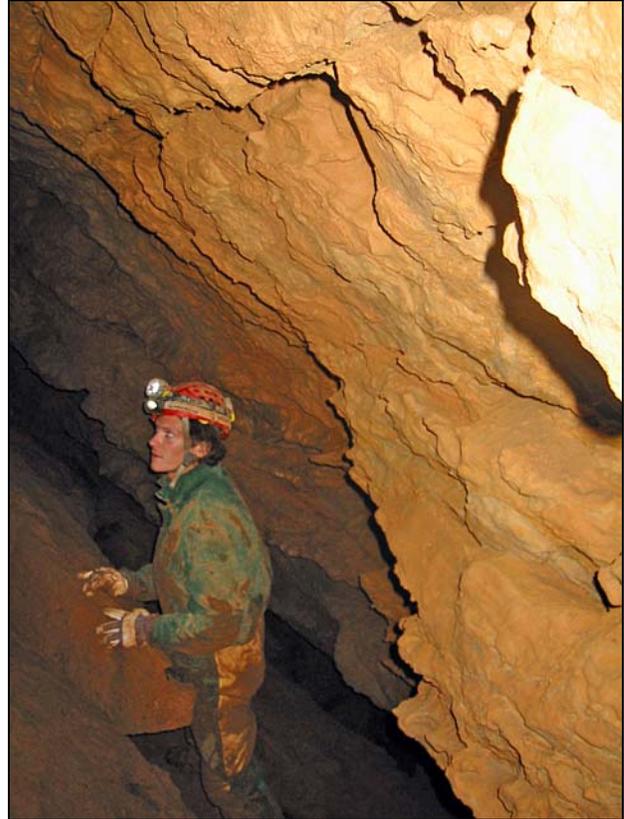
It is a cave that is easy to fall in love with. □

# Long Quarry Cave

(follow-up trip) by Ish Urcuyo

**Cavers:** Doug Wilt, Dave Scamardella, Don Arrowood, Ted Valcis and Istvan Urcuyo

Entered the cave and first thing we did was drop down to the stream passage since Dave had never been down that way. Don and Ted waited for us in the main passage. Dave was skeptical that the descending passage actually led to the stream passage but he decided to humor us and give it a try. At one location in the passage, it seemed to choke with breakdown and mud but Doug led the way through it into the stream passage. Along the way we learned that Doug likes to describe his caving activities as “frolicking” which is not to be confused with “Froglicking.” So, the three of us frolicked down into the cave passage, passed some very interesting dissolution carvings on the walls along the way and saw lots of fossils embedded on the ceilings and side walls. Once we reached the dried stream bed, we followed it until it ended in a mud plug, however, a tight upslope passage to the right lead to a couple of small rooms (one of these rooms has a mud-chocked tunnel that appears to lead back in the same direction as the stream bed). Dave was by now a “believer” and was very happy because the stream bed was “new 400 feet” of long quarry cave that he had never visited before. We climbed back out, up-slope



**Doug in new extension passage.** Photo by Ish Urcuyo

towards the main passage to meet with Don and Ted.

After a short meeting, they decided to remain around the entrance to take some pictures and encouraged us to continue to the end of the cave.

Doug led the way past the first squeeze after which we came to a room with a very, very sticky mud floor.

At first glance the floor appeared to be highly perforated but upon closer inspection we found that the mud on the floor was marked with thousands of claw marks from what appeared to be raccoon tracks. These tracks were all over the floor, up the mud embankments, inside small crevices, even on the ceiling of

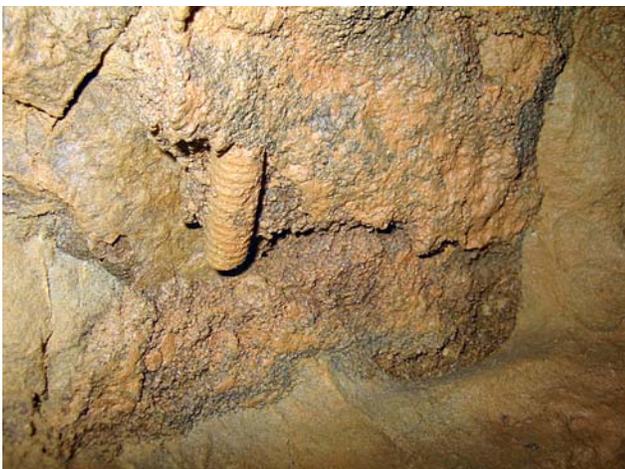


**Pretties on ceiling.**

Photo by Istvan Urcuyo

some of the small narrow tunnels at foot level. The poor raccoon (or whatever it was that was trapped there) must have been desperately trying to find its way out. How it got in this far inside the cave is another interesting question. We continued our trip moving deeper into the now mostly linear passage, but we stopped here and there to frolic around painfully small side passages diversions and admiring the many crystal formations typically found underneath ledges and inside small concealed cavities formed by breakdown.

There are three major “squeeze” passages that must be endured to reach what appears to be the end of the cave. At least one of these painful passages can be by-passed by climbing high over breakdown. The room at the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> squeeze ends in a large breakdown which makes it confusing since the map also ends with a large breakdown room. But, this is not the actual end of the cave. The last time that Doug visited this cave, he came to the conclusion that a dig was necessary in order to extend the length of the cave because indeed it appeared to end here. One of the goals of this particular trip was to find a way around the breakdown (to find a by-pass or dig our way) and for that purpose Doug had endured carrying a particularly heavy implement in his cave pack. After dropping down into a passage on the lower left side of the first breakdown room, Doug and Dave spend about 30 minutes searching for all possible nooks, crannies, passages, breakdown, torturous orifices and such others for the elusive connection to the “new section” of the cave. Finally, near the place where Doug was going to begin the digging, we found one tighter squeeze passage that led us to the promised land. After squeezing through it, accompanied by the necessary beneath-your-breath



Crinoid fossil.

*Photo by Ish*



**Constriction just past connection. This is looking toward the entrance of the cave.** *Photo by Ish*

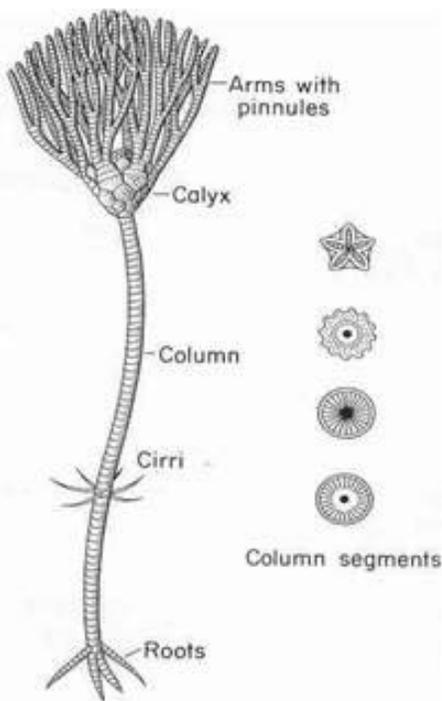
grunting and associated expletives, we gained entrance to the final passage. This passage begins with a high-ceiling room with breakdown on the floor and two streams merging beneath the breakdown, there is also a side passage on the right that follows up-stream at angles greater than 45 degrees (Dave followed it up all the way and reported that it was a really “interesting” passage and that he “was glad he did it but would not care to do it again”). Following the main passage over some large breakdown eventually led us into the final breakdown room. This room currently houses an empty registry PVC container and a container with assorted pens and pencils. At the back of the room there is a small mud/breakdown pit about 10 feet deep which contain engravings of names and year of previous visitors. There is also a message written on the muddy wall that warns that “this is the end of the cave”, however, there is narrow crack on the floor of the pit with a tantalizing stream passage below big enough for a skinny brave soul to push. So, is this really the end of Long Quarry cave?

This cave is truly a lot of fun, the mud is particularly abundant in some sections and always unbelievably sticky (it would be fair to compare it to a mixture of dense molasses and fly paper). If you want to keep your footwear through the trip, you need to make sure that you have a reliable pair of shoelaces along.

By the time you are half way through the cave you will feel like you are carrying an extra 20 pounds of mud and your boots acquire the size of snowshoes. The map does not appear to be accurate in many locations (particularly towards the back half of the cave) and revising the map may be a worthwhile future project. Another characteristic of this cave is the abundance of marine invertebrate fossils embedded in the walls of the cave. In some sections of the cave the entire passage is composed of fossiliferous rock. Most of the fossils observed looked like cylindrical sections or rings resembling “cheerios”. These are the fossil remnants of the stem body sections of ancient marine life forms belonging to the taxonomic class Crinoidea (i.e. Crinoids). These ancient marine animals belong to the same group as the Sea stars, Sea urchins and Sea Cucumbers.

Crinoids were extremely abundant all over the world’s ocean back around 440 Ma (Ma = million years before the present) but were largely wiped-out during a major extinction event that took place around 250 Ma (Permian extinction). They still have descendants around today (~540 species), most of which are found in deeper ocean water, and are commonly referred to as “Sea Lilies” or “Feather-Stars”. They live attached to the sea bottom where they capture food particles from the water current flowing past their multiple and delicate arms.

Time In: 10am Time out: 4:30pm



Example of Crioids

## Cleversburg Sink Check-Up

June 1, 2008

Franklin County Grotto members Ken Tayman and Jonathan Peterson stopped by Cleversburg Sink Cave on June 1<sup>st</sup> to check water depth and check status of gate.

The gate was locked, but was covered with lots of mud due to recent heavy rains. We cleaned off mud around the hinges and edges of gate, and removed some smaller size branches a pedestrian had apparently dropped into the cave through the lock hole.

We determined the water level was high into the entrance room with only the very tops of the large breakdown boulders protruding out a few feet. The water was 22.5 deep down to the floor of the passage at base of ladder. This would make it about 4 feet above the top of the new 19 foot ladder. We did some maintenance on the lock as we exited the cave. We cleaned off some mud and oiled it with the stowed 3-in-one oil. On the way back to the car we policed up some trash along the way. Ken Tayman



He’s been in the cave too long!

# Culverson Creek (Wildcat & SSS) Lost World Caverns

*April 11-13, 2008 by Ken Tayman*



**John Pearson at Culverson Creek (Wildcat) entrance after aborted blast mission.** *Photo by Ken Tayman*

event and we didn't even attempt to go in. A year or so later, we tried again and found the entrance crawl was partially collapsed. It looked so unstable; we again decided to do a different cave.

So, a couple of more years goes by, and after a lot of work by John Pearson and associates including several other Greenbrier County cavers, and even a project day by a few Tri-State and Franklin County Grotto cavers, a new entrance was dug and stabilized. Finally we should be able to get back in.

I started coordinating a Franklin County Grotto trip for the weekend of April 11-13, 2008, when I received a note from John Pearson advising of a significant sized rock fall that blocked one of the entrance squeezes to the cave. He would try and have it cleared by the time we got there. I continued to coordinate with other key persons regarding the cave. Got with Bill Balfour, who would let us park at his place and also offered to provide a few copies of a large scale map of the sections we were planning to visit. Also, as usual we tried to set up an alternate trip in case we were flooded out again. I got

permission from Cliff Lindsey to do both the Fuller and SSS entrances to the same system.

I had been trying to get back into the Culverson Creek (Wildcat Entrance) for the last several years, but it seemed trip always was blocked for one reason or another. It had been 12 years since I'd been in there. This cave is notorious for flooding when there are any significant thunderstorms or prolonged rainy spells. Our first recent attempt was blocked by a significant rain

The FCG cavers on this trip were Jonathan Peterson, Gordey Ley, Dane Wagle, Todd Roberts, Danny Cumbo, Pat Minnick and me (Ken Tayman). Only Pat and I had been here before.

We all pulled out on Friday in 3 different groups planning to meet at the Bubble Cave Conservancy Property near Renick, WV. We drove through several significant thunder storms on the way down. There had been several recent storms, and there were more predicted for the weekend. This is not a good sign, but we would play it by ear and see how the wet weather situation would affect the cave.

Saturday morning everyone arose early, ate and were ready to move out around 9:30. First stop was John's for a status on the rock fall. He was walking out of the house when we pulled in. He advised they had not cleared the rock fall yet, but he would stop by Carol Bassett's, grab the blasting kit and we could all help get it open. Only a few of our group had done any of this type work before and it sound interesting. Off we all went to Carol's work shop.

Carol greeted us and gave us the very interesting nickel tour of his shop, put together a medium rack with hyper bar for Todd, offered a few tidbits

of blasting concept and we were off to the cave.

We arrived at Bill's around 11:00, he refreshed our memories on the cave, gave us a couple map sections and we all got dressed and headed to the cave to work on the blockage, after which we would do our trip (water level permitting).

Jon went in along with Todd, Gordey, and Dane. Perhaps 20 minutes later they emerged saying they had managed to move the rock with webbing and manpower. No blasting would be required. This actually disappointed the few who had not blasted before. I was back in Wildcat after 14 years!!!

I thought I would remember the entrance passage from my first trip, but I hardly recognized it at all. The couple of tight spots surprised me, and the slope of the passage was all wrong. I was hoping my memory of the rest of the previous trip was better. As we approached the plateau 15 -20 feet above the river thing seemed familiar. One look down at the river however raised new issues. On our previous trip the river had been knee deep



Wildcat passage just above the river. L-R Dane, Danny Jonathan, Gordey, Ken, Pat and Todd

*Photo by Todd Roberts*

with plenty of walking space along side. Today the river was raging torrent, chest deep or deeper, swirling and rushing through the canyon with no exposed floor on either side. We knew that down stream a ways the passage would narrow down from 20 feet to maybe 4 or 5 feet, and that would probably make the water 10 – 20 feet deep as it roared toward the waterfall. It was impressive to see, but we knew at that moment we wouldn't be continuing this trip.

We decided to turn around and do Plan-B. Todd set up a few remote flashes, took a couple group shots and we exited the cave.

When we got back to cars we decided we would try and do either The Fuller Entrance or SSS. I figured we could get about an hour into Fuller before having to deal with the stream level, plus there was some alternative horizontal passage we could explore. As before this would be new cave to all except Pat and me. We decided to let Bill know we were changing caves in case we had problems and he would know where we were. After all, this is a 20 mile system and would be tough to find someone if you were in a different section.

Bill advised that if we had that much water in Wildcat, then probably Fuller would be taking lots of water into the entrance, and there would be no such thing as an hour of dry caving there. He suggested we try SSS. This would be new cave for us all. We thought we'd been looking at the entrance to SSS for years as we drove by and couldn't understand Bill's directions because our reference point was all wrong. Bill offered to show us the SSS entrance and we all drove down to the pasture and when we arrived at the cave, the normally dry entrance was taking a nice stream. It would be a wet stream crawl for 100 feet or so, but then once we found our way to an upper section we'd be walking the rest of the trip.

We got our gear on (again) and headed into the stream crawl. No too bad. Basically hands and knees and if careful didn't get chest wet.

At the canyon the water rushed down and was making lots of noise. The cave sounded alive.

Really impressive. We were supposed to stay high out of the canyon and look for high crawl to the left which would lead to the big walking cave. We did pretty well for about 5 minutes and then we were straddling the canyon. The water was rushing below us in a 2 or 3 foot wide canyon ranging between 20 to 40 feet deep. A little scary! Either we'd missed the left hand passage or hadn't gotten to it yet. We kept straddling our way in. Canyon just kept getting deeper and wider. Not Good!

Pat, Danny and I were in front and had opened a little gap between the other 4. We figured they were taking a photo opportunity and decided to find a comfortable spot at the top of the crevice and wait for them to catch up. While waiting, I notice this 3' by 4' passage on the left that seemed to have some open space in about 10 feet in or so. We had basically already crawled passed it, but when we stopped it was more obvious. Danny crawled across and up the passage and called out that it was big walking passage.

We all crawled up and started the walking tour. The way to the left looked good so we headed out that way and after 10 minutes or so, found ourselves hand and knee crawling through three feet high, ten feet wide passage with few foot prints, so we decided to return and go right. In the meantime, Gordey had found a low crawl off to the left which led back to the canyon, and we felt that if we took that on the way out we might be able to avoid straddling all that high canyon. We continued to the right.

We determined that we were high above the meandering canyon, in nice big, wide passage. We crossed over the canyon a couple times only to see more big rooms and pretty formations. It was big, easy and the side rooms had some pretty stuff. This passage doesn't seem to get a lot of traffic. Very enjoyable!

Todd took liberal amounts of time to set up a few pictures. We all poked around the several big rooms. We had planned a three hour trip in here and if we turned now and took our time we would easily get out on time. As I think back, I am not quite sure where the passage would continue on?



SSS - Peterbilt Section (I think) Jonathan in decorated room near our turn around point.

*Photo by Todd Roberts*

We might have to search it out at a different level or hand and knee it out the back of one of the side rooms? There was plenty of canyon passage and a few big rooms below us that I am sure went somewhere.

We headed back out using Gordey's shortcut, thus avoiding the top of the canyon. He did have this consistent tendency to want to turn left and head back into the cave. Three people attempted to draw a sketch and try to convince him that "right" was the way to go. I am not sure to this moment if he is convinced we went the correct way, we did however go upstream all the way to the entrance crawl and popped out next to cars.

After doing the "Naked Balaclava" thing a few minutes, we changed and decided to drive over the hill and check out the Fuller Entrance. It was taking a couple surface streams and a few more from down in the sink. It was definitely flowing heavily. I am sure that due to the narrow four foot wide passage just inside that it was probably really

roaring through the cave. It appears we made the correct cave selection for this weekend.

Throughout the day we had received three invitations to Bill's 60<sup>th</sup> birthday party. So we cleaned up and dropped in. Lots of cavers there: Bill, John Pearson, Bob Handley, Bob Leibman, Carol Bassett, Cliff Lindsey, Fred Grady, Larry Fisher and others.

Had few burgers and sides, grilled tuna, chicken, couple beers, socialized with renowned WV cavers and really enjoyed ourselves. Around 9:30 PM we said goodbye to Bill and his guests and headed back to camp.

We arrived to find Gordey and Dane untwisting the wind damaged shelter they'd had over their tent. We promptly build a nice campfire, tramped through the dark looking for Todd's wind blown sleeping pad, and eventually around midnight all drifted to bed.



**Selecting trees to rig 120' natural discovery entrance drop into Lost World Caverns** *Photo by Todd Roberts*

We planned for a rushed Sunday morning. We would have to get up at 7:30, eat, cleanup, break camp by 9:15 and head out toward Lost World Cavern (grapevine) where I had arranged a 10 AM arrival with Steve, the owner, to do the 120 foot natural pit entrance to his commercial cave. This would be the first time rappel in the pit for Gordey, Dane and Danny. The rest of us had done it at least once or twice before.

We pulled in about 09:50 and Steve was coming down from the Entrance in his golf cart to meet us. After a few (re)introductions, he offered to cart the ropes and gear up to the cave.

Pat rigged the drop with Jonathan's 330' rope, using one end for the drop, and the other from a different tree, in conjunction with a pulley to redirect the rope directly down the center of the hole so it would be easy-on and no rubbing.

Everything went smoothly. Todd took pictures. Danny did his longest rappel to date. I had a

smooth drop. Larry Fisher, from Frederick grotto, showed up and joined us. Everyone one dropped the pit. (Todd twice), and Pat, Todd and Larry climbed out. We impressed a small group of tourists with our vertical caving abilities. We de-rigged, ate a small lunch, thanked Steve and were on our way home about 30 minutes after noon.

Since we had eaten Saturday diner at Bill's party, I still had a mess of Korean Ribs my wife had put together for me. Jonathan, Pat and I pulled over at a rest stop just south of Harrisonburg, fired up the grill for ribs, a stove for some wild rice and had a nice Korean rib diner on I-81. Really great!



**After rappelling the first 90' from the entrance, Danny breaks out into big room for the final 30'** *Photo by Todd Roberts*

Got home around 7:30 pm. Great trip. Lots of new cave for everyone. Lots of reasons to go back for more. □

## Vertical Practice Sessions

March 2, 2008

First vertical practice of the year only drew 4 participants: FCG members Pat Minnick, Jonathan Peterson, Chris Edenbo and Tri-State Grotto Tina Blaik .

Showed up around 2 PM, rigged rope. Set up a rope walker for Chris who was honing his rusty vertical skills. Pat and Jonathan worked with Tina at a more introductory level.

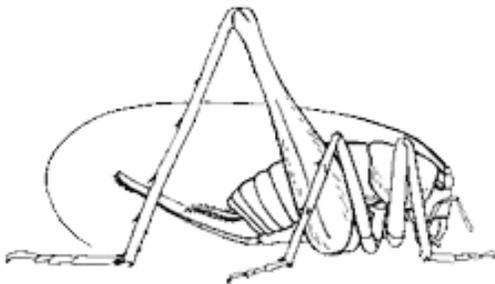
March 24

Pat, Ken T, Jon, Todd, Danny, Dane. Doug, Tina, and Todd's friend Karissa participated. Ken Jones stopped by. Rigged three ropes did lots of drops. Started @ 6pm, finished in the dark around 9pm. Worked off a lot of rust. Large group, some confusion. Need to be a little more formal.

May – Both practices were rained out!

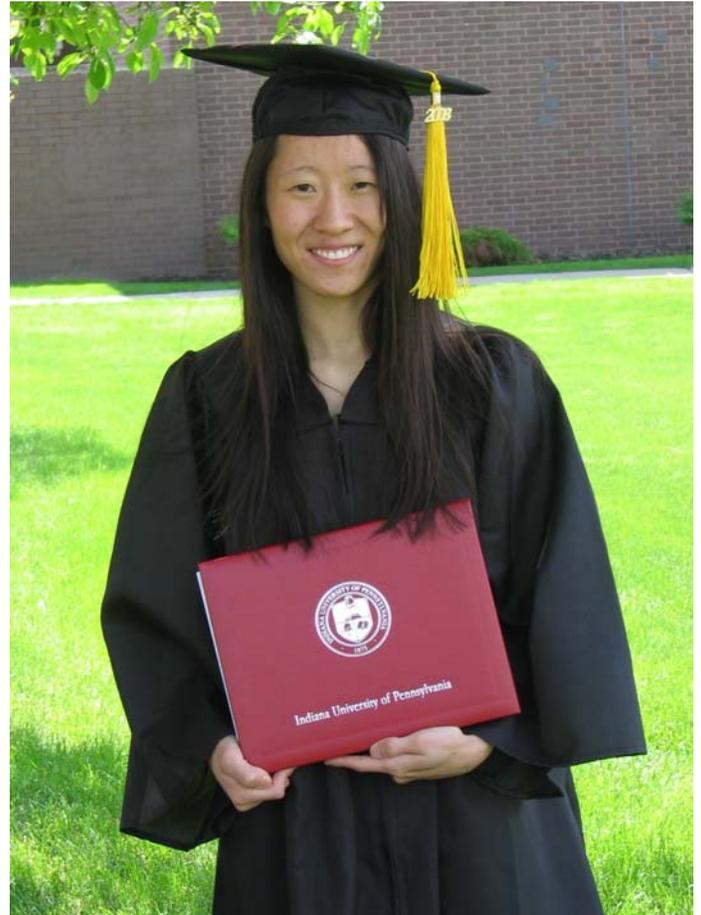
June 2

Small practice group consisting of Pat Minnick, Gordey Ley, Danny Cumbo and Ken Tayman. Our regular practice area was occupied by a group of rock climbers from Hershey, PA. We rigged a shorter drop a 100 feet or so further to the west. Even though it is a shorter drop, it has an overhung lip and more of a freefall on the bottom half of the drop. It does give you a chance to work on a few different skills. Lots of mosquitoes. Started @ 6pm and departed after 9 PM. Good work out. □



Cave Cricket

## 2008 IUP Graduate



Long time FCG member Helen Tayman, recently graduated from Indiana University of Pennsylvania with BA in Psychology.

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### Addendum to Culverson Creek SSS trip:

At various times throughout the weekend, the following cavers joined our group:

Cotton-Caver, Kodak-Caver,  
Naked-Balaclava-Guy, No-Peaches-For-Me,  
Wrong-Way-Ley and  
“3 AM-Cell-Phone-Music-Man”

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**Long Tailed Salamander, Long Quarry Cave**

*photo by Ish Urcuyo*