

# Cumberland Valley Caver

Published by

## Franklin County Grotto



**March 2015**

# Cumberland Valley Caver

Published by

## FRANKLIN COUNTY GROTTO

An Internal Organization of the National Speleological Society

Vol. 16, No. 1

March 2015

### 2015 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE



#### CHAIR

Todd Feasley  
637 Greenfield Drive  
Chambersburg, PA 17202  
feasley@gmail.com  
(717) 977-9180

#### MEMBERSHIP DUES

REGULAR (NSS MEMBER)	\$10
NON-NSS MEMBERS	\$12
FAMILY MEMBERS	\$ 3
LIFE (NSS ONLY) 20 x Reg	

#### SECRETARY

Pat Minnick  
14220 Blue Mountain Road  
Waynewboro, PA 17268  
patanne@pa.net  
(717) 765-0521

#### VICE-CHAIR

Glen Sarvis  
21 Helen Avenue  
Mechanicsburg, PA 17055  
glensarvis@verizon.net  
(717) 766-5003

#### TREASURER

John Boswell  
45 Manada Creek Circle  
Carlisle, PA 17013  
boswellemail@yahoo.com  
(717) 386-5397

#### MEMBER-AT-LARGE

Don Arrowood  
5522 Montgomery Church Road  
Greencastle, PA 17225  
darrowood@comcast.net  
(240) 347-6318

#### EDITOR

John Boswell  
45 Manada Creek Circle  
Carlisle, PA 17013  
boswellemail@yahoo.com  
(717) 386-5397

#### MEMBER-AT-LARGE

Gordy Ley  
34 North Miller Street  
Fairfield, PA 17320  
[gordyley@embarqmail.com](mailto:gordyley@embarqmail.com)  
(717) 642-8970

WEB SITE: [www.karst.org/fcg](http://www.karst.org/fcg)  
Webmaster: Don Arrowood  
[darrowood@comcast.net](mailto:darrowood@comcast.net)

Franklin County Grotto meetings are held the 3<sup>rd</sup> Monday of the month. The location is at **"The Cottage Pub and Restaurant"** at 572 Wayne Ave, Chambersburg, PA 17201. The meeting starts at 7:00pm. 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. Visitors are welcome. Contact any of the above individuals for more information or email [fcg@karst.org](mailto:fcg@karst.org).

The Cumberland Valley Caver is published four 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 any way. Other interested parties must request permission in advance. Franklin County Grotto actively participates in a newsletter exchange program. All exchanges should be mailed to: John Boswell, 45 Manada Creek Circle, Carlisle, PA 17013. Information regarding exchanges should be coordinated with editor so the exchange list can be updated.

Cover Photo: Will Hepp highlighted in Subway Cave borehole in Highland County, VA. Foto by Filer.

# Table of Contents

From the Editor .....	3
Fall Cave Extravaganza <i>by Scott Markley</i> .....	4
Another Maryland First <i>by Terry McClanathan</i> .....	6
Germany Valley Update .....	11
Photo Spotlight – Helictite Cave <i>by Irina Efitimie</i> .....	12
Valentine’s Day Trip to Highland County, VA <i>by John Boswell</i> .....	14
TAG Fall Cave-In 2014 <i>by Terry McClanathan</i> .....	18

See the entire newsletter in **COLOR** on the website

<http://www.karst.org/fcg/fcgnewsletters.htm>

## ***From the editor:***

With winter’s last dying grip still clutching desperately for purchase, I present to you that other harbinger of Spring (besides the robin), the March edition of the Cumberland Valley Caver!

Old Man Winter did his best to keep us all huddled up inside our warm hobbit holes basking in the glow of our flickering hearth fires, but we still managed to get a fair bit of caving in during the dark months, including a great winter Valentine’s Trip to some new caves in Highland County, VA.

I’d like to thank Gordy, Scott, Andy, Dave, Don, and Terry for articles, pictures, and web support used in getting this issue out to our members and friends. Also thanks to Amos Mincin for his gracious hospitality at the Philly Grotto Field House!

As our Northern Hemisphere leans its head a little closer to the sun, let’s enjoy the sights and smells of a welcome Spring. See you all underground soon!

*~ John Boswell, Interim Editor*

## FALL CAVE EXTRAVAGANZA

by Scott Markley

On Friday the 21st of November myself along with Stitch, Emily L., Emily M., Laura, and Dave had a cave extravaganza that went into the late evening hours. Leading the excursion off, we paid a visit to good old Carnegie Cave to do some further explorations of potential alternative entrances and to check the logbook. One thing stood out from that trip to me was that the intermittent lake room was bone dry excluding about six inches of water at the far end of the room. We had thought maybe if the water was that low we would be able to see it leading into another passage, however there was nothing obvious. Stitch did some exploring at the end of the lake room as well and he said there are some potential dig spots. While half the group continued to explore the squeeze areas near the lake, Emily and Paul went towards the wet "Mud Crawl" because they didn't think the frost outside the cave was cold enough being dry haha. After a brisk walk back to the cars, we changed and headed to Frustration Pit and Corker Hill.

After arriving at the car park, we slightly hesitated getting out of the car because putting on wet and muddy cave suits is less than undesirable. After taking that last sip of hot



chocolate that we got at Rutters on the way, we jumped out and got suited up. We entered the somewhat newly dug entrance of Frustration Pit first, which put us at the end of the cave. From there we explored all areas and made our way to the "Halloween Room". In the "Halloween Room" we encountered a large undisturbed pile of likely raccoon feces. It was really neat looking though with its tall white hair-like structure. After that we crawled out the easier opening of the cave right near the "Halloween Room" with our head torches pointed at Corker Hill.

Most of us climbed into Corker Hill and headed towards the "Big Room" to the north. Dave and Stitch dropped into the cave then headed left down the "10 Foot Drop Passage" into the "Tall Canyon". Then I lead most of the group towards the "Stairway to Heaven" because I wanted to show them a fun downward chimney route into the "Tall Canyon". There are two short squeezes to get to the chimney, but I believe both are worth it to view a large amount of the white untouched formations and cave popcorn. Some of the group did well, while others were taken by surprise of the exposure involved with the chimney route. I like to think that this downward



Laura (?) Exiting Frustration Pit

chimney route is a fairly new route for cavers because the formations looked untouched and the only way to see them is to be doing the chimney route. One reason for that may be due to the fact that it is challenging and a squeeze to get to and I would only recommend the more keen and competent cavers to try it due to the sheer exposure. At this point it was getting late, so we briskly headed towards the exit to prepare for yet another cave.

Arriving at Peipers with frost on the ground, there was no question that everyone was excited to get into the cave. Stitch went ahead of us after changing in hopes to figure out the new lock system so we all would not be standing in the cold. After changing, the rest of the group walked to the cave and saw that Stitch was still trying to finagle his arm through the hole in the door. With patience and persistence, he finally got it. We all were impressed by the engineering and security that the cave had newly implemented. Once in the cave, we quickly formulated a route that would introduce us to the larger main passages of the cave in less than an hour. In my opinion, Peipers is a cave that has a higher level of complexity to it that requires a higher skill of map reading with all the maze-like pathways and underlying passages. Being that Stitch and myself had been in the cave numerous times, with both our knowledge combined, we had an idea of how to navigate the cave. Our first goal was to head towards the "Canyon" and then back to "Grand Avenue". We then

headed to the west to "Canopy Hall" to hit a squeeze that we found a couple years back that may be the most mentally challenging squeeze I had ever done to this day. This squeeze is doable for anyone with a figure like mine, but not much bigger. This squeeze is unnamed on the map and is also labeled un-surveyed which goes to show that it's long and tight. It starts at the most westward end of "Hanging Rock Hall" and heads directly east and drops to the east end of "Canopy Hall" through a helmet sized, diamond shaped hole in the ceiling. The dropping process requires to be done head first and at a completely vertical angle which is the scary point because there is no going back at that point because both sides are relatively inaccessible on either end. The trick to the squeeze is to ensure your body rotates from the horizontal crawling position during the first 15 feet to the completely vertical position while dropping into the lower passage. After getting into the squeeze, we decided we did not have the mental and physical energy to complete it so we headed back to the entrance and safely back to the cars. It was a long caving adventure for all of us, but well worth it.



**WOW! Poop!**

## Another Maryland First

By Terry McClanathan (12103)

Cavers are representative of a diverse cross-section of human attributes. Our interests in caving span a broad spectrum of cave related endeavors. Many of us just enjoy the sport of it. For some it's cave photography, while others may gravitate towards the biological wonders of the subterranean. For the diggers and surveyors the drive is exploration into the unknown. Most of us get a real thrill imagining what might be "just around the next corner". This latter group of booty crazed explorers employs various modes in the pursuance of their goal.

During the early 1990's Georgia caver Alan Cressler, who is a good friend of mine, maintained that the easiest place to find new cave was to take a harder look in old caves. He successfully implemented this philosophy on numerous occasions by turning insignificant pit caves into major finds. I was fortunate enough to be in on several of these adventures. To name just a few.... Walking Fern was an 80 foot pit in Alabama just inside an obscure entrance. Alan and crew traversed around this pit to a continuation revealing a cave over 400 feet deep, with several big pits including the very impressive Whopper Well (242' free), and Julies Well (a 229' dome), plus several large rooms and a profusion of beautiful formations. Shortly after this Alan and Andy Zellner initiated a dig in a low blowing stream lead at the bottom of a short cave called Frenchman's Pit, also in Alabama. After 500 feet of sub-foot high groveling, this opened at the top of a gaping chasm. This hundred foot diameter pit, dubbed Dental Floss Well and later taped by Doug Strait and I at 224 feet deep, lead to several thousand feet of fine cave which eventually connected into a known valley cave, thus creating a multi-

mile system which still ranks as one of the deepest in the state.

Not to be outdone, in Tennessee during the late '90's, Marion O. Smith (Alan was Marion's protégé) climbed two short waterfalls in Rumbling Falls Cave and extended what was a roadside pit with a few hundred feet of cave, into a fifteen plus mile mega-cave with passages so voluminous they rival Carlsbad.

Of course TAG cavers are not the only ones who have extended small caves into larger ones. In West Virginia, members of the Germany Valley Karst Survey (GVKS) have, within the past fifteen years, explored and mapped well over thirty miles of virgin territory in Hellhole (the cave was about eight miles long in the early '90's), bringing the cave to over forty miles in length.

A second method for finding new cave, which has been quite successful recently, involves seeking out blowing holes in areas already rich in cave density. GVKS cavers in Pendleton County's Germany Valley have been rewarded handsomely for their digging endeavors at several such blowholes. During the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Memorial Day Cave has gone from a blowing surface lead to over 24 miles of passages, making it one of the longest in West Virginia. Shoveleater Cave was up to over four miles in its own right prior to its incorporation as part of Hellhole. Cavers in Greenbrier County have also opened and/or extended caves of impressive length and potential. Over the past twenty years Virginia cavers too have been quite prolific using these methodologies to find new caves. Witness the Omega System, Burnsville Cove caves, Corkscrew/Higginbotham System, and many others.



It's perhaps not so surprising that determined cavers in cave rich areas like TAG and the Virginias have been so successful in their quest for virgin cave. In Maryland there is a third technique being employed which is bearing fruit. This third technique is to search in areas which, due to a perceived limited potential for success, have seen little in the way of systematic ridgewalking in the past. As a cave state Maryland has traditionally ranked somewhere just ahead of states like Delaware, Rhode Island, and Louisiana. However, Maryland does have one advantage over other cave poor states. There are carbonates consisting of limestones, dolomites, and marble in abundance in the four western counties. Until just the past few years, these counties have been generally overlooked in the quest for unexplored caves. Correspondence from Donnie Carn indicates that John Ganter and a few others may have had some insight into cave potential in western Allegany County as early as the 1980's, but while the larger caves such as

Crabtree, John Friends, Devils Hole, Twiggs, and Crystal Grottoes have been known for decades, it has only been during the last five years or so that there have been any major additions to this short list of thousand foot long caves within the state.

A small group of dedicated cavers including Ryan Boyce, Donnie Carns, Corey Hackley, and Dave Schoenadel have been criss-crossing the slopes of the Allegheny Front in Allegany County checking for tiny blowholes. While we're not exactly talking anything on a scale with discoveries in TAG, Virginia, or West Virginia, these cavers have compiled what is, at least for Maryland, a noteworthy list of firsts.

Dave (Schoenadel) related to me that during 2011 he, Ryan, and Donnie began enlarging a fist sized blowhole found about a year earlier on Piney Ridge, a spur of the Allegheny Front in the northern part of Allegany County. Following a few digging trips their work was rewarded by revealing an entrance to a cave they dubbed Tanglefoot.

Subsequent exploration spearheaded by Corey and Ryan, and supported by other masochists such as Dave and myself, has produced the longest cave in the state, and the deepest cave north of West Virginia. While few invitees actually attend trips (maybe they're the smart ones), Adam Byrd, Alli Crosby, Scott Walquist, and even Marion O. Smith have all endured the rigors of Tanglefoot as contributors to the ongoing survey. I think Marion remarked that he wasn't going back, but at 71 years of age, he'll probably always be the oldest caver to ever have his name included in the list of mappers. A second digging effort by essentially the same crew, along with Si Goetz and Mark Porter, that opened Tanglefoot's upper entrance has resulted in a lower entrance, allowing for a sporting through trip traversing nearly four thousand feet of cave with a vertical extent of about 450 feet. Currently a little over five thousand feet has been surveyed, but with leads too numerous to count, the total length will probably be in the two mile range before the project is completed.

Although its total depth will be around five hundred feet, there are no rigged drops in the cave. For a Maryland cave, Tanglefoot boasts many nice features, but these are interspersed with long crawls floored by copious quantities of mud. Exiting the lower entrance can be especially daunting during colder months (it's not especially pleasant during warmer months either) because the lower cave sucks in a continuous cold wind. This turns the hundred foot long low crawl through liquid mud just inside the entrance into a deep freeze. The upper entrance is no picnic either due to multiple contortions and a couple of tight squeezes. Despite the lack of a vertical component, Tanglefoot is a challenging cave, but it offers "dangling carrots" in the form of nice stream canyons, sizeable rooms, scenic waterfalls, plunge pools, and some interesting speleothems.

Across the valley, the same crew is working on a couple of other caves which have the potential to exceed even Tanglefoot in depth. Corey has informed me that one of these is already about 1200 feet long, and another is around 800 feet in length. Corey, Ryan, Dave, and Donnie have found around a dozen other viable leads, mostly scattered throughout Allegany County. Corey has also explored and partially surveyed passages in a Washington County cave which

have resulted in a once 100 foot long cave now topping the thousand foot figure.

The account of the most recent addition to this list of accomplishments began about a month ago when I received an e-mail from Corey regarding excavation of a vertical cave he'd just found not too far from Tanglefoot. Corey related that he'd moved some rocks to gain entry to a vertical hole which was climbable down to a pit. He described it as a "real bona fide pit" which he estimated by rocks dropped to be somewhere between 50-90 feet deep. The reader must understand that so far in Maryland "real pits" were a rarity. The few that do exist tend to be shallow and convoluted. In other words, their pit-worthiness tends to be speculative, and there are only a few anyhow. Karn Cave #2 in Washington County (an earlier Corey project which Corey, Jerry Bowen, Ben Doane, and I mapped in summer of '05 to a length of 240') has a marginally climbable 33' drop. Maple Pits in western Allegany County I taped at 23 and 34 feet deep (the latter has another drop for a total depth of 47'). Twiggs Cave has a 25 foot entrance drop and a pit in the forty foot range at the bottom. Washington County had a couple of small pits, but these have been filled in. This pretty much constituted the pit list for Maryland in its entirety.



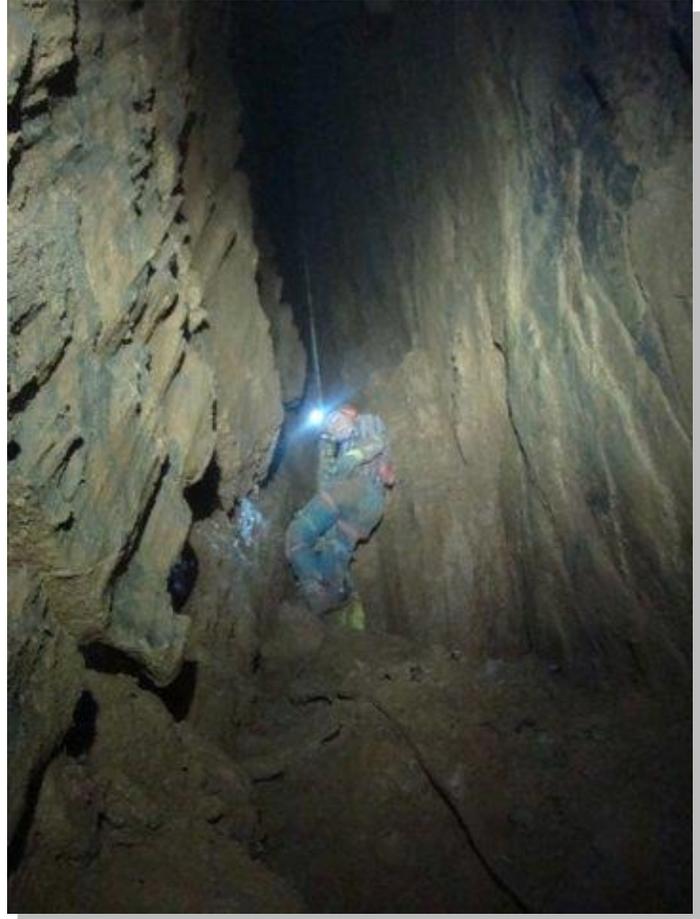
So, you can understand how I might have been skeptical of Corey's claim that he had found a pit in the 50-90 foot range. We set a date for exploration and Corey suggested that I bring a rope that was around 150-200 feet long. Again, I was doubtful, but I brought a long rope as per his request.

On the afternoon of February 24<sup>th</sup> I met Corey and the two of us joined Dave and Donnie who had already secured permission for us to drive within about half a mile of the entrance. On the hike up we noted

an abundance of turkey tracks in the snow. Corey located the small entrance with no miscues and after removing some camouflaging rocks we were ready to enter. We needed a name, so in keeping with the “foot” tradition, and noting all the turkey tracks everywhere, we christened Corey’s find Turkeyfoot Pit.

Corey climbed down to the lip of the actual pit and I rigged and fed the end of the long rope down to him. I also lowered a large carpet pad to him to protect the rope at the breakover since we were only rigging TAG style, meaning tie off, throw in the rope, and no rebelays. I did have a self-drive bolting kit in my pack in case safety considerations warranted setting bolts, but that turned out not to be necessary. I also brought a hundred foot survey tape with me which I figured would be more than adequate to measure the pit’s depth. I passed off the reel to Dave and started down with the “dummy” end of the tape to where Corey was perched above the pit. The cave started as a short series of climbdowns with minimal horizontal displacement. There was one awkward spot near the top, but the rest was roomy enough. We taped the distance from the entrance down to the top of the pit at 27 feet. I still wasn’t convinced the pit was as deep as Corey predicted, so I was not concerned that the hundred foot tape might not reach bottom. Dave kept the reel and Corey began his rappel with the end of the tape in tow.

Corey rappelled down about thirty feet and reported that the pit was belling out. This was much better than I’d anticipated. As he continued rappelling and I watched the numbers scroll past, I started doubting that the tape would be long enough. When the tape passed the 60 foot mark at my level (recall that 27’ of the tape was still above me) and Corey was still not on bottom, I communicated to Dave that I was going to need the reel or he was soon going to be out of tape. He lowered the tape to me so that we could put the entire length in the pit if needed. All the time I’m



thinking, “How can this be?” we’re in Maryland for heaven’s sake.

By the time tension on the rope released and I assumed Corey had reached bottom, there was only a foot or two of tape remaining on the reel. Corey set the tape and I began taking up slack, thinking there’d be a good bit to take in. I’d only pulled up a couple of feet when the tape went taut. I queried Corey as to whether or not he was on station and he answered in the affirmative. I had to take a second, and then a third, look at what I was seeing. At the lip I was getting a reading of 94 feet!! This was unbelievable! WE’RE IN MARYLAND!!!, and ninety foot pits just don’t happen.

Corey was at the bottom of the pit, but he reported that the cave still continued downward, and we were out of tape. I reeled it back in and tucked it in my pack to take down with me. I double checked to make sure I had a

full contingent of “uppies” with me, for I was finally convinced that this was a very real pit, and then I started down. The top part was shear and 2-3 feet wide. At 30 feet down the rope contacted with a very muddy patch on the wall, but remained vertical. Below this the rope was very slippery for a bit before the pit belled to larger dimensions. Here the walls were cleaner, exposing dark limestone, and the drop was basically free. Corey had established the landing point on a four foot high mud/debris cone. Hard to believe, but a determined digging effort to remove this debris could actually produce a pit nearly one hundred feet deep!!

From the base of the pit a sloping passage of large size continued to the bottom. Unfortunately everything at the bottom was plugged with sticky clay, and there was evidence of periodic flooding. Corey surmised that we had lost the air somewhere further up the pit, and in fact we did notice a small window in the pit wall on our ascent. The only lead near the bottom was a muddy alcove heading in the opposite direction from the base of the pit. From the -121 foot level (94 plus 27) we measured another 37 feet to the bottom at

a 45 degree angle, for an additional vertical of about 18 feet, bringing the total depth of Turkeyfoot Pit to around 139 feet. We did not do an actual survey at this time, and there are still a couple of leads to pursue. A couple bolts might improve the rigging a bit, but really doesn't seem necessary. There were only a few small loose rocks near the lip of the pit, and most of these I tucked safely out of the way before Corey made his descent. A little additional “gardening” and this should be a non-issue. We left my pad in place. I found having the rope rigged at the surface to be helpful for extraction from the top 27 feet of climbdowns, especially the awkward spot just below the entrance. I'm sure Corey simply levitated up this, but I flailed for a while.

So, in summary, Turkeyfoot Pit is essentially a 139 foot deep vertical cave with a 94 foot “bona fide” pit. While it may not raise any eyebrows or elicit any wows if it were in TAG or West Virginia, this Marylander got quite an adrenalin rush from the experience. It's a great find for Maryland. Congrats to Corey on another Maryland first.



**Please Read the Following Update on GERMANY VALLEY Caving Access:**

The following contains updated access for the major caves in Pendleton County's Germany Valley, current as of Jan 2015. Members of the Germany Valley Karst Survey have attempted to maintain friendly and cooperative relations with Valley landowners for many years, and recently became aware of local tension. Specifically, overuse of Shoveleater Cave, including both tourist and project caving, threatens caver access to many properties in the area. Over the past month, we've spoken with many local landowners (in person and via phone) and wish to make these agreed-upon restrictions public. Despite following the rules outlined here, if you encounter any local landowner while accessing these caves, **consider their wishes the final word on the matter:** permission or not, if you are asked to move a vehicle or stop "trespassing," please apologize and do as instructed.

**Hunting season:** Many landowners, who are otherwise open to us, close their lands during hunting season, particularly rifle season. Please refrain from caving during rifle season (week of Thanksgiving and following week). For the rest of the hunting season (much of the winter), it is best not to attempt trips without advanced landowner contact.

**Shoveleater Cave** – Gate is locked except for 2nd weekend of each month. Other weekends might be available for recreation if a GVKS Project trip might be happening. Absolutely no parking on Dolly Hill Road. 4WD vehicle is required to park at cave entrance. Car parking is available at the Fieldhouse Cave parking area (see below) but will now require a 20-minute hike. Contact anyone in GVKS for current information. Permission is still required from Danny or Lucy Kisamore: brick house near the intersection with Dolly Hill/GV Limestone Road and the Germany Valley Road.

**Fieldhouse Cave (Lawrence Domepit)** – Open; permission required from landowners (Danny & Lucy Kisamore) for entry and parking. Park only in small power line clearing well off Dolly Hill Rd. (*unchanged*)

**Harper Pit** – Open; permission required from landowners (Danny & Lucy Kisamore) for entry and parking. Park in gravel lot off GV Limestone Rd. (*unchanged*)

**Hellhole** – Historic entrance is (still) VERY CLOSED (fenced and locked) for endangered bats. Access to the southern extension is via Shoveleater, per those rules. Hellhole north of the Ear Canal (seasonal sump) is CLOSED per WV Division of Natural Resources. Unauthorized access risks closing Shoveleater. (*unchanged*)

**Schoolhouse Cave** – VERY CLOSED (fenced, gated, locked) for endangered bats. (*unchanged*)

**Memorial Day Cave** – Closed (gated, locked) except for exploration by GVKS on 2<sup>nd</sup> weekend only. (*unchanged*)

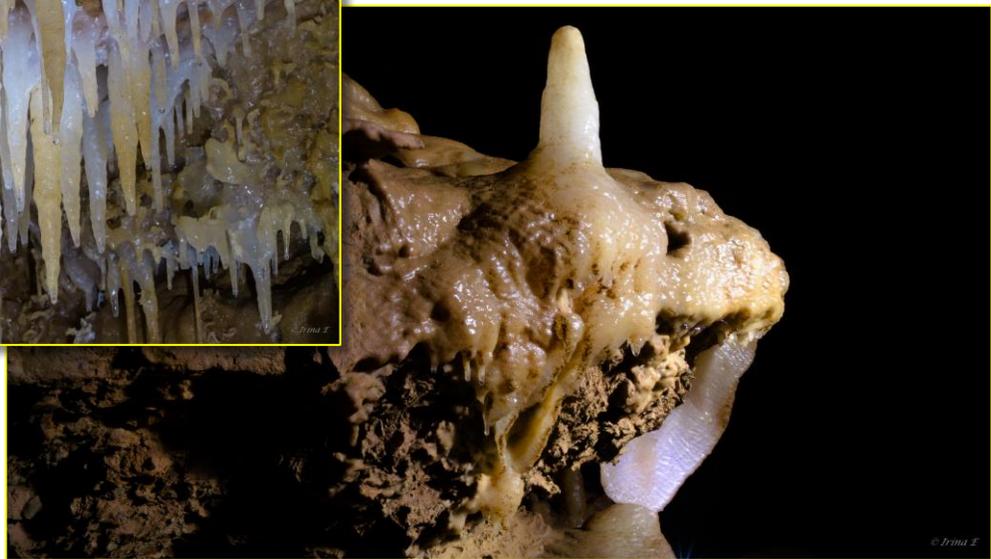
We ask that everyone respects these landowners' wishes, so that we may ensure future caving access in this sensitive area. If you have any questions, please contact any GVKS member, and they will find an answer for you.

Thank you!

**Germany Valley Karst Survey**



# Helictite Cave Photo Spotlight





# Photos by Irina Efitimie

See these and more in full resolution at [the FCG Flickr page](#).



## Valentine's Trip

By John Boswell

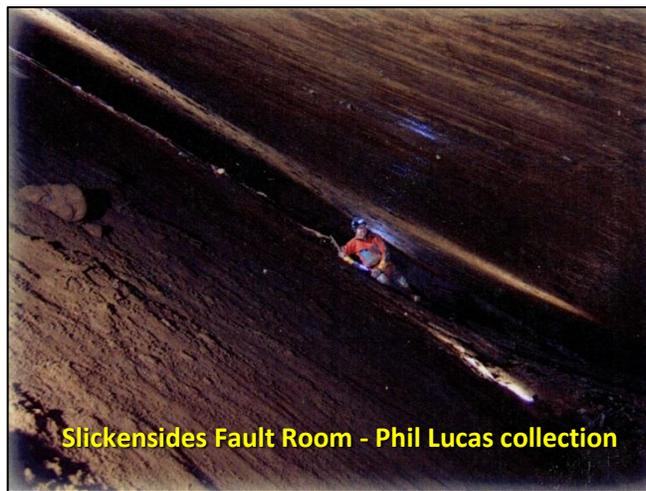
The weekend of our Valentine's Day trip to Highland County Virginia arrived and me, Gordy, David Briggs, Jason Ross, and Todd Feasley met up and hit the road. We stayed at Amos Mincin's Philly Grotto Fieldhouse on a beautiful patch of land on a rise in the Bullpasture River Valley in the Burnsville Cove. It is very nice (almost lavish) for a fieldhouse! Andy Filer, Giani and Irina Efitimie, Mindy Johnson, Will Hepp, and Amos from Philly Grotto met us there. The amazing, 5 mile long Wishing Well Cave runs right underneath the fieldhouse, so maybe one day there will be access right from the property.

Friday afternoon Dave flew his quad copter drone and did a video of the fieldhouse property and surroundings. He sent the drone out a mile from where we were and produced absolutely stunning, stable video footage. The thing was amazing. Here is a link to the footage: [http://youtu.be/\\_jV9jS49UD8](http://youtu.be/_jV9jS49UD8)

Saturday we went to Phil Lucas's beautiful property next door. We parked right next to the Water Sinks, a beautiful large sink with a 110 foot cliff rising from it. Holes galore were visible in the cliff face, evidence of several caves.

We met up with our guide Mark Hodge and went up the hill and into a deep narrow sink to the culvert entrance of Helictite Cave. The cave was dug open by Phil Lucas and friends over the course of several years and is now over 7 miles in length and decorated in many areas with spectacular speleothems including crystals, aragonite, pearls, white calcite sand, and the cave's namesake helictites.

We went down wooden steps in the sink and into the culvert entrance and down a ladder that put us into a narrow passage for a short distance and then we popped up into Helictite



Hall, which was covered in (surprise!) helictites. There were also some beautiful flowstone formations and a nearly clear drapery. It was beautiful. From there we climbed up and down breakdown and slipped down a hole that was nicely shored up for stability and entered some very large rooms with passage going in different directions and high and low. We crossed a few of these large rooms and came to the Crack Up, where you have to climb up a large rock and wedge yourself into a low crack between the top of the rock and the ceiling. Beyond this, we crossed the Slickensides Fault Room which is an apparent fault line where a large section of the roof has detached and created a room that is probably 3-4 feet high and tilted on an angle of about 30 degrees or so. The whole thing is a big, slick, unbroken slab that you have to toe your way across along a very slight ledge. It extends several hundred feet long and up to a hundred feet wide. I've never seen another room like it.

We came to a climb down and descended to stream level, where we found a small rivulet running through a very large paleo streambed that is believed to have once been the main dram for the entire Burnsville Cove. The water has been traced to Emory Spring, a mile away. The streambed is covered by a mud/sand floor



**Stream Passage - Phil Lucas collection**

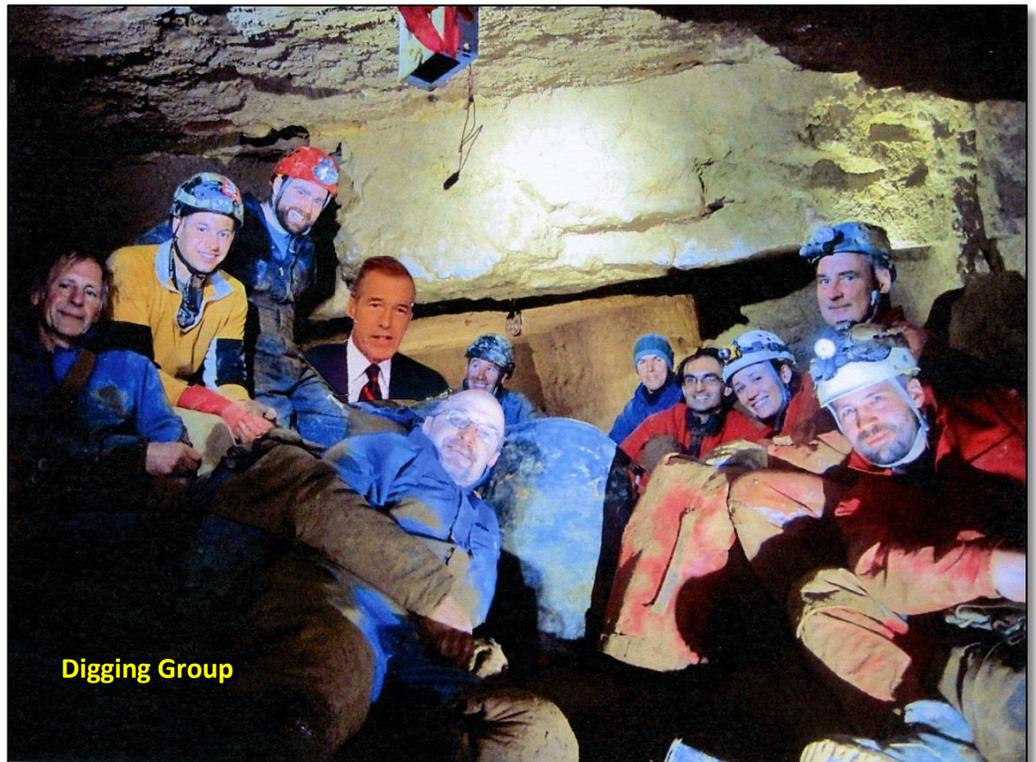
that is probably 50 or more feet wide in sections and is virtually undisturbed due to a marked pathway set up through in order to preserve it. This large passage continued for over a thousand feet. We then came to what I believe is called the Bullfrog Room, which contained many drip holes in the mud floor, some up to 6 feet deep, which produce bullfrog-like tones when water drips into them.

Eventually we reached our target destination – the Super Sweet Dig. This is a section of cave that is filled with sediment but trending towards known passage in the aforementioned Wishing Well Cave. There is hope to reach that passage, or perhaps an intersecting passage that will lead to it since the rest of the cave is very mazy and looks almost like a waffle on the map.

The Super Sweet Dig is reached via a 170 foot tunnel that has been

dug and intersects with another passage called the Blister Crawl. The dig face is 30 or so feet beyond the convergence of these two passages. A train-track of PVC pipes has been laid from the dig face back into the two passages and sleds are pulled back and forth along these tracks, allowing the dig spoils to be deposited away from the dig. Each sled holds about two buckets' worth of dirt. We broke into several teams and alternated positions between digging at the face, hauling sleds into the two passages, and packing the spoils into whatever space could be found. It was very efficient and in a matter of a few hours we had removed 135 buckets and advanced the dig face over 10 feet. It was very hard work, but Mark said it was a record day. That should go a long way towards getting us invited back to this and other promising digs in the area!

We backtracked through the cave and exited into near blizzard conditions.



**Digging Group**



Sunday we went back to Phil Lucas's property to make a leisurely visit to a part of Subway Cave. This is a large cave (over 9,000 feet) at the base of the cliff at the Water Sinks area. For years, the entrance area was filled with downed trees and debris that took water when the creek was in flood. In 2007 a promising opening appeared and the cave was explored.

The entrance to Subway is through a vertical culvert about 12 feet tall set in concrete. This brings you to a narrow, deep fissure that has been improved with wooden steps and rebar ladder rungs set into the rock. It would be a tricky climbdown without these improvements! Climbing down the fissure entrance puts you immediately in very large passage averaging 30 feet high and 20-50 feet wide. There are many lovely white formations in this area. It is daunting to think that this large passage periodically floods all the way to the ceiling, as evidenced by debris wedged in the nooks and crannies way up high.

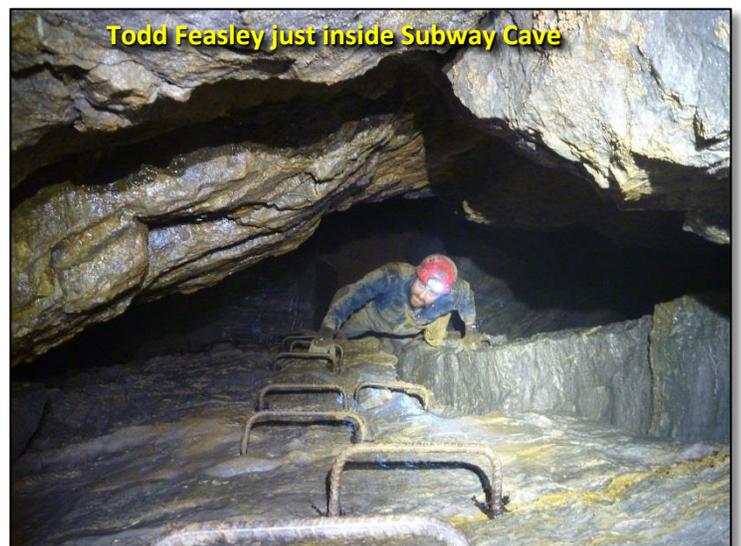
This large passage continues for several

hundred feet, and has a floor of breakdown and soft sand. We soon came to an intersection where the ceiling was very high and a rope hung down from the upper level high above. We turned left at this point and crossed a large section of soft sandy floor until we came to a clean-polished dark limestone passage that obviously carries water at high volume fairly often. There were large smooth-tumbled boulders and lots of potholes in this section, which was probably 10 feet wide and 15 feet high.

At one point in the recent past, the original culvert entrance was completely washed into the cave during a flood. I saw half of the original lid to the culvert wedged at the very top of this passage. There is video somewhere of the Subway filling with water to the ceiling during flood conditions. Water from the lower level of the Subway resurges in Lockridge Aqua Cave, at about the same level and flow.

The passage eventually became a low crawl, so we split into two groups. One group continued through the crawl and the other retraced our path back out to the large passage and planned to rendezvous with the other group in another section of the cave.

We poked around several passages and made our way up through some breakdown to a



higher level that contained a lot of fossils in the walls. After about a half hour or so, we met up with the other group and then made our way back out to the entrance.

After we all exited the Subway, we briefly poked around in the Water Sinks cave, which is a mazy series of passages in the prominent cliff face that rises over 100 feet from the sink, but the cold soon drove us back to the shelter of the truck.

It was a fun trip and staying at Amos's nicely appointed field house was nice. It was also enjoyable to see the different improvements and access aids that Phil Lucas has installed over the years. The caves were really cool, and hopefully we can get back down there to explore more in the future.



## TAG Fall Cave-in Oct. 10-12<sup>th</sup>

by Terry McClanathan

Corey could not join me this year for the cave-in due to obligations at VAR, which was scheduled for the same weekend. I had no specific caving plans for Saturday so I'd contacted Alan Cressler, an old time caving friend from Atlanta. He was taking a group to a large Georgia cave not far from the cave-in site. Case Cave is in the Cloudlands Canyon State Park, is gated, and requires a permit. It has a short entrance drop and several miles of passages with some very large rooms. The forecast for the weekend was stormy, and I passed through several heavy downpours on my Friday night drive to northwest Georgia, one particularly nasty storm just before I arrived.

The permit had a limit of fifteen cavers. I knew almost everyone in Alan's group and several were very good friends. Besides Alan, Marion and Sharon were there. So was Elliot Stahl and his new girlfriend Julia McMinn. David Stahl(Elliot's Dad), Brian Killinbeck, Paul Aughey, Tabby Cavendish, and Jeff Moore had also been caving with me on multiple occasions.

With fifteen of us, it took awhile just to get everyone down the entrance drop. This was a rather awkward broken pit of 45' just inside the gate. Once inside cavers split into smaller groups and started touring. Sharon and I were second and third down the entrance drop and we immediately took off in search of the large rooms. Alan and Marion opted to look for civil war era signatures. Some others were planning on photo trips to various parts of the cave. Passages were mostly well traveled and easy walking. Vandalism seemed scant for such an easy access cave, but then I have no idea how long the cave has been gated. The big room resembled more of a huge trunk passage measuring hundreds of feet long, nearly a hundred feet wide and much of it approaching fifty feet high. Down the center for much of its length steep, slippery banks descended to a

deep lake. One of the largest sections was called the Moon Room and was floored by giant mudcracks giving it a broken cratered landscape. At various times other members of our troupe of fifteen would mingle and sometimes form into new groups for additional touring. All in all it was a fun trip in a nice easy cave, and perfect for a rainy day. Most of us spent about four or five hours underground. This left plenty of time Saturday night for socializing and the cave-in and enjoying the colossal bonfire.

Sunday's agenda was pre-determined by Marion. It involved some unfinished lead checking in a pit cave he had taken Corey and I to during 2013 TAG. This was a Jackson County, Alabama cave called Seventeen Stitches. Upon exiting the cave last year Marion noticed a slot on the far side of the second drop. A rock toss indicated the existence of another pit on the other side. However, on that '13 trip it was already very late Sunday afternoon and Corey and I had to start home. He had to sit on that lead for a whole year, quite a feat considering that Marion is not noted for his patience where virgin pits are concerned.

Participants in Sunday's venture were Marion, Sharon, Elliot, Tabby Cavendish, Alan Grosse, and myself. It looked to be another stormy day but at least we all managed the 400 foot vertical hike to the entrance without getting dumped on. Elliot went first, followed by Marion and then me. The cave starts as a slide-in to a narrow twenty foot pit with a gnarly lip. This is followed by a 35' drop, then a 71, and finally 18 to the bottom. Marion's lead was on the far side of the second drop about halfway down. By the time I caught up Elliot had already successfully traversed over to the inviting slot, climbed down the other side, and was placing two bolts for rigging the undescended pit. The room around the top of

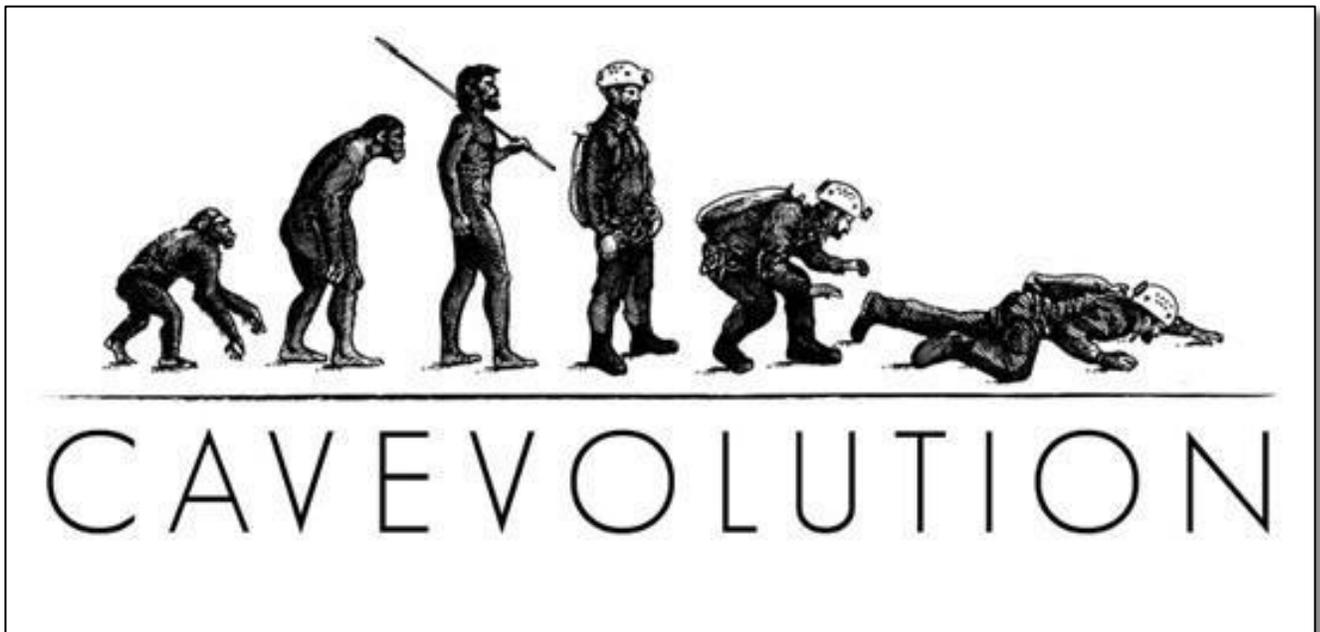
the pit was well decorated, in fact this was the prettiest area in the cave. We taped the new pit at 74', but unfortunately it was dead-bottom. All six of us bounced the pit. Our in cave time was only about two hours.

There were also two other pits on the hillside which most of the group had not been to. Sharon and I were the first to exit so we took the extra rope and went to rig the easier to find of the other two pits. I'd been to this one with Marion in '13. It has a large open air entrance beside an old logging road and is as nice 57' pit called Shining Rock Drop.

By now the clouds had darkened and thunder was echoing all around us. As Sharon and I were getting ready to climb back out the sky opened up and we got drenched. I was just starting a second ascent, hoping I could find a dry overhang at the bottom to get out of the rain, when the rest of the group arrived. All except Marion bounced the pit as quickly as possible. By the time we derigged the rain had slackened to just a steady drizzle.

I had not been to the third pit, so even though I was soaked and becoming chilled, and the hour was getting on towards late afternoon, I decided to stay a bit longer. Elliot's GPS point soon took us to the small entrance to Lloyds Pit. A climbdown over ugly breakdown led to a contortion squeeze into the top of the pit. Once you were past the squeeze and actually in the pit, Lloyds was a very pretty 82' shaft. There were some massive flowstone cascades at the bottom and we poked around for awhile, finding nothing that went. Getting back up through the constricted top of the pit was every bit as unpleasant as I imagined.

It was around 6PM when we got off the mountain, but at least the storms had subsided. I had dinner at a local restaurant with Marion and Sharon. Then it was time to start the 630 mile trek back up the interstate to Maryland. To keep me company on the way I had nice memories of another fine TAG Fall Cave-in.



**John Boswell, Editor**  
**45 Manada Creek Circle**  
**Carlisle, PA 17013**

# **Franklin County Grotto**

## **Franklin County, PA**