

The Central Ohio Grotto of the National Speleological Society

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CONTENTS

Rappelling Safety Tips - Svekric - - - 53 Return to Tranquility - Baldwin - - - - 57

Near Miss in Sawdust Pit - Barnes - - - 56 Summertime Caving - Barnes - - - - - 58

52

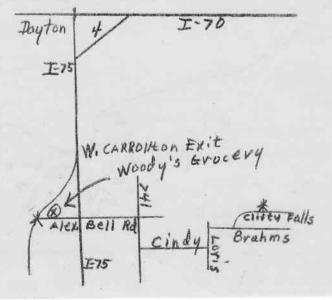
encouraging. We spent 2 hours getting back to station 90, 3000' in the cave, with maybe 400' of stoopwalk or higher passage enroute.

The first stretch is Knee-Crusher Crawl. with numerous large cobblestones. Kneepds are a must, and elbowpads handy here. Then there was Chocolate Covered Crawl, where two inches of mud covered the cobbles. The final stretch is called Plain Vanilla, because the limestone here is a pleasant white and has no mud on it (which also indicates very fast water flow in this area). At station 90 the parties split, Carolyn, Woody and I to the right, the others to the left. We mapped 800' of passage that ranged from a low bellycrawl to stoopwalk. A sidelead had a 4' drop into foot-deep water, which Woody checked. He found 2 leads that would require crawling in water to push. Lou's party had better luck. They found trunk passage (protected by thigh-deep water) and mapped 2000' heading straight for Buck Creek.

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Take nothing but pictures; Leave nothing but footprints; Kill nothing but time.

Since we really do have hopes of getting two issues of the Squeaks out before the October meeting, you are again reminded that the October meeting will be held OCTOBER 20, at the home of Paul Unger, 2629 Clifty Falls Rd, West Carrollton, where our guest speaker will be Roger Brucker, who will give us a preview of his latest book on Floyd Colling. If you happen to be in contact with cavers from any of the other nearby grottoes, please extend an invitation to them also.



RAPPELLING SAFETY TIPS

BY BILL SVEKRIC

(Learned from many sources and a few personal near misses)

Over the years it has come to light that the cause of most climbing accidents during descents "fall" into three major groups: 1) inexperience, 2) haste, and 3) false economy. Much may be said for inexperience that isn't always obvious. Certainly some practice is required to overcome the initial fear of purposely doing something we have been prevailed upon not to do since childhood -"Stay away from cliffs," "Be careful you don't of the outer sheath. (Don't forget to fall," and all other such admonitions. Common sense always goes a long way toward overcoming the difficulties encountered during practice sessions. It is imperative to be instructed by an accomplished climber who will be present to assist and offer aid if any unplanned event should occur. A practice area should be selected such that the height is not too great. It is also wise to rig a second rope near the practice rope as it is not possible to descend quickly and easily an already weighted rope to help someone in trouble. Choose a spot that will not quickly fray or otherwise damage equipment; old carpet scraps placed over sharp edges may help reduce rope wear. Another way to reduce wear on the rope is to shift the upper rigging point away from the "middle-mark" on the rope by a few feet to prevent concentrated stress always being applied to the same spot.

Incidentally, if the "middle-mark" on your rope is becoming hard to find, it may be restored by applying a water-based enamel paint using a cloth dampened with the paint and a wiping technique to lightly coat only the outer fibers. Dipping or brushing the paint applies such a heavy coating that embrittlement may occur and cause fibers to break as the rope bends. Marking with solvent-based paints is not recommended as it is not easy to predict the likelihood of chemical attack on the rope. Ropes which are known to be damaged and dangerous are retired and so marked by painting both ends black. Ropes which have been used to tow cars should be retired. Ropes which have

caught over four or five "lead" falls are often retired by experienced climbers. Avoid stepping on your rope and always inspect it and your other equipment for damage. Ropes damaged a few feet from the end should be cut at that point and have the cut end taped, whipped, heated or otherwise brought back to original condition to prevent fraying or slippage relocate the "middle-mark."

The trip leader or instructor of this practice session should rig the upper attachment point of the rope. The rope is normally doubled around at tree or some stout anchor point near the "stepped" edge of some "jumping-off" point. The best spots permit gradually walking downward and away from the anchor point to let the rope provide more and more support until you finally are entirely held by the rope. Since "arm" and "body" rappelling, as well as rappelling with mechanical aids, must be learned and practiced, no mention will be made as to the method of engaging the climber to the rope. The instructor at hand will be best able to provide this information.

A party of three or more is best for practice sessions. The first man down . may act as a safety man by pulling on the lower end of the rope to slow or stop another climber who has let go of his "control rope" or is otherwise in troubles This is particularly important if the climber lets go of the "standing line" and becomes inverted. Once inverted, any movement can cause the climber to fall out of his sling and lose his purchase on the line. Inverted climbers must be instructed not to move until help is close at hand. To demonstrate how the saletyman can stop the climber in rappel, an experiment with a button and sewing thread can be performed. Run the thread through a button from back to front and then

RAPPELLING TIPS (continued)

using another hole, run the same end of the thread from front to back. We now have the button trapped on the thread. Place the trapped button in the middle of a thread about a foot long. Using one hand at each end, hold the thread firmly in tension and position it vertically; the button should remain in the middle. Relax the tension and the button (large ones work best) should slide downward. Reapply the tension and the button stops. It is easy to see that when a climber is unable to apply his own tension for some reason, that this tension can be supplied by an accomplice on the ground.

Another safety method used by some groups is called a "prusik knot safety." Such a knot is made in a short sling from the standing line to a chest harness. The hope is that failure of a rappel device will not leafe the climber defenseless. The method of tying the prusik knot can be learned from your instructor. It is enough to say that this knot slides when grasped at its point of attachment to the standing line, but is so contrived that it holds fast when tension is applied to the strands coming out from the knot. In ideal conditions, the climber holds the knot with his upper hand, sliding it down the rope as he goes. In an emergency he begine to fall and the prusik knot tightens to arrest his too rapid descent. This system will actually work if the "fear-crazed" climber can remember to let go of the knot so it can tighten on the rope. My natural reaction would not permit me to let go of anything, except maybe my sphincter muscle as I fell the full distance, holding desperately to the safety knot. Another interesting feature of this safety system is that sometimes a sling too long is employed, and with "luck," actually stops the climber's fall leaving the knot about three feet higher than he can reach. Unless he can unweight the prusik knot he is now trapped on the rope hanging by his chest harness. The point of the above comments is that each climber must eventually decide just exactly what is best for him. The reader can tell by now that I do not favor the "continuous prusik safety" for rappel. I do, however, always carry a spare sling in the event that my rappel device becomes jammed. This provides a method of unweighting the rappel device to clear the jam. Incidentally, the sling is long and attaches to the rope about head high and hangs low enough to stand

in with both feet.

Your trip leader will caution you about many violations, and he should be heeded. The violations are so common that they can be listed like old re-run movies:

Violation

Result

- 1. loose clothing clothing jams rappel
- 2. long hair
- 3. gloves
- 4. no end knot
- 5. single anchor a point with chocks, slings or pitons in absence of tree or outcrop

device
hair jams rappel device
glove slips off rope
or jams rappel device
climber rappels off
end of rope
anchor point fails and
no redundant safety
rigging is available.
(always use two independent anchor points
and always in two
different cracks one piton driven into
the same crack loos-

ens the other)

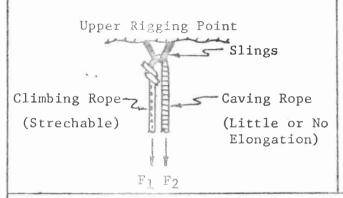
Cheapness causes as many accidents during descents as does haste. Violations #4 and 5 are good examples. A typical scenario: As a storm approaches it becomes imperative to make a rapid descent. The most rapid is jumping - the next best is rappelling. Why waste time and double-rig everything? So we forgot to knot the bottom ends of the rope and we are in trouble before we start - usually the second man down the rope is the one that falls. As a matter of fact, I remember one sick incident in which I was to be second man down and spent what seemed to be a year sweating bullets redriving a piton which kept working loose during the first climber's rappel. Needless to say, I added another piton and independent sling prior to my descent. We lost twice as much equipment as we had planned, but we are still here to complain about the loss. The nightmare I had that evening was one in which St. Peter told me, as he turned me away from the Pearly Gates, that "Climbers that die because they are cheap, go to hell!"

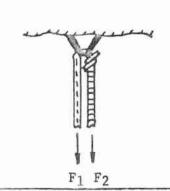


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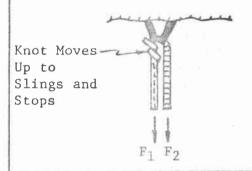
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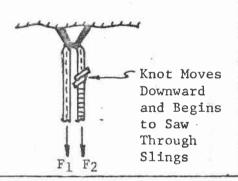
Stage I: Rappel just started





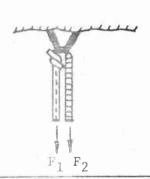
Stage II: Rappel partially completed





Stage III: Rappel completed

Stage III: Slings severed!





Mechanics: F2 increases compared to F1 giving a tendency to pull the knot past climbing rope elongate more than the the sling. Since this will not occur because of the restriction offered by the sling the slings remain intact.

Mechanics: F₁ equals F₂ letting the caving rope. This lets the knot move downward (also happens with two different size ropes) and the rope saws the slings. A rappel ring will prevent this.

RAPPELLING (continued)

Returning to our practice session, we note that our initial fears have now turned to an anticipation of adventure such as one experiences during a rollercoaster ride. The tendency is to want to rappel over and over again just for the fun of it. This is an error. We invite trouble simply based on statistics and cause unnecessary wear on our equipment.

Two more things that new climbers are likely to do should be noted. The first is immediately to attempt to improve on the equipment by concocting home-made devices don't do this! Wait a year or so to see why store-bought equipment has reached a certain popularity before reinventing the same device which was discarded years ago, as it was probably found to be both awkward and dangerous. The second thing new climbers sometimes do is to invent a safety system to empky while testing their own devices. This one I have in mind is deadly but subtle in nature; if you die using it, you will probably not go to hell. The system is one which employs a main rappel line and a "safety line" manned by a second climber in an upper belay position. What ultimately can happen is that the rappel goes well to the point where with certain cliffs the climber is completely free of the wall and begins to rotate. This is much worse with laid ropes such as Goldline. but can occur with perlon types also. The "safety line" attached to the climber now begins to wrap spiral fashion around the main line, making it impossible for the climber to move up or down without a lot of special equipment and techniques.

Another subtlety is the main reason for taking the time to write this article: long rappels. When heights exceed about half of the rope length it is necessary to join two ropes to complete the descent. Once again we wish to leave as little equipment at the top as possible. Let us say we have found an outcropping and can rig two independent slings conveniently. We do not have any rappel rings and must use the joined ropes in direct contact with the slings. Here comes the catch: the likelihood of having two ropes which will elongate the same under load is remote. Let's take an extreme case where two ropes the same diameter and length are to trying to find some working batteries for

to permit almost no elnngation; the other rope is a climbing rope designed to elongate for the purpose of absorbing part of the energy involved in arresting a leader fail. The ropes are joined by a fisherman's knot or some bulky knot that is easy on the rope and not likely to "capsize" as is possible with unsecured square knots or bowlines. Always secure a knot by tying a half-hitch in "tag" ends. In the case of this long rappel, a blky knot at the bottom end which joins the two ropes is mandatory so the climber cannot rappel off the end. The key problem is to decide which side of the anchor sling to place the upper knot. If the knot is placed on the side of the rope with the least ability to elongate, it will move away from the sling and go downhill several feet. This is permitted by the elongation in the other rope. The result is that the rope will literally saw through the sling before the rappel is completed. The important lesson to learn is to put the knot on the side of the most stretchable rope or to use a rappel ring.

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(Here's another little hazard that John Barnes has contributed - seems most appropriate to follow Bill's comments)-Ed)

NEAR MISS IN SAWDUST PIT BY JOHN BARNES

Bob "Woody" Wood, Carolyn Herel and I went to Sawdust Pit Cave in Pulaski Co.. KY, on June 10. We wanted to continue surveying a drain out of the Sand Room, where we had stopped mapping last Nevenber with just over a mile of cave. We rigged the entrance pit in the usual manner: six wraps around a tree above the pit with a bowline securing the free end of the rope and a figure-8 knot clipped into a bolt near the breakover. The rope pad for the breakover was tied to the bolt by a piece of shroud line tied to a carbiner.

I rappelled in first, then Carolyn and Woody. Woody found a blind crayfish near the bottom of the pit, so I spent 45 minutes trying to photograph it, mainly be joined. One rope is a caving rope designed my strobe. With this task accomplished,

NEAR MISS (continued)

RETURN TO TRANQUILITY II.

we headed for the Sand Room. BY LARRY BALDWIN

At the Sand Room I couldn't find the route down via C-Canyon, so I took the route that I knew - chimney down C-Canyon to a ledge, follow the ledge to a step-across with twenty feet of exposure, belly-crawl along a sloping ledge, and finally climb down to the floor of the Sand Room. Woody and Carolyn balked at the step-across, so by checking both the top and the bottom of C-Canyon we found the easy route. They chimneyed down, then we headed into the drain. We picked up the survey at G14 and continued mapping the main passage, which averages 7 to 12 feet high by 2 to 4 feet wide, beautiful stuff for mapping. We checked many side-leads, mostly 50 to 200 feet long crawls. Five hours later we reached the end of the passage, 880' from G14 with 18 side-leads unmapped. We estimated that the side-leads alone have over 1500 feet of passage.

The trip back to the entrance pit was uneventful. I prusiked up the rope first so I could help Woody and Carolyn at the breakover. While I was climbing over the breakover the rope pad started to slip so I grabbed it and carried it up. I thought it strange that the shroud line frayed near the knot, but the others were ready to come up so I tied the ends together and rerigged the pad. Then the others climbed out.

When Woody was derigging the rope he called me over - an animal had chewed on the rope, at the knot going to the bolt and on the end going up to the tree. Then we checked many branches going in all directions. the rope at the tree. The rope had been chewed in five places there, one of them 2/3 around the sheath. We were very glad that the animal hadn't chewed any farther because we could have had a serious accident.

That evening I cut the rope at the gnawed spots, converting a 150' Bluewater III into 94', 24' and 20' pieces. We may have to take drastic measures to protect the rope during future trips into Sawdust.

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OCTOBER MARKS THE BEGINNING OF "DUES-PAYING TIME" - SEND YOUR DOUGH IN NOW AND AVOID THE RUSH ! !

Ron Schwing, alias the "Snake," a name given to him due to his ability to 'slither" around in a cave, and I returned the following weekend with my canoe. We had debated prior to leaving Hamilton whether or not to try wading to the entrance but this was ruled out due to deep pools and vertical banks, plus carrying our back packs full of gear. This time we started from the Rt. 1003 bridge, which made the boat trip to Tranquility only 1/2 an hour instead of the 5 hour trip last week. Ron was really impressed by the air flow before the entrance came into sight; by the time we stepped out on the gravel bar the anticipation was overwhelming. After changing into our caving gear, we carried the canoe back into the cave far enough to be out of view from Buck Creek (which was later found to be the smartest thing we did that day.) No time was wasted in getting to the hands and knees gravel crawlway; passage at this point was about 20 feet wide by 3 feet high, with the stream flowing through an undercut in the gravel. After about 50 yards we encountered a large pool disappearing around the bend, with a half water filled passage leading out of it on the left. The (halfway) dry passage we were following continued on our right, so in order to stay out of the water as long as possible, we decided to keep on "groveling in the Gravel," as Tricky Dicky would have put it. Another 100 yards, some of it belly stuff, and the ceiling fell away to a comfortable 12 to 15 feet high walking passage with We followed what looked like the main passage to its termination at a flowstone choke, and what appeared to be some upper level stuff, perhaps 25 to 30 feet above the floor. We tried to free-climb the walls, but due to the large overhang the idea was abandoned for safety's sake, plus I had lost my nylon handline out of my coveralls somewhere in the crawlway. Other possibilities existed at the top of one of the canyon passages that we had been in previously, so it was decided to check that one on the way out. We checked all visible/passages, which all pinched out but one; it was a low, 11/2 ft. with a cobbly floor, and had a considerable air flow. It was planned to check this one

TRANQUILITY (continued)

out after returning to the entrance for dinner. I chimneved up the canyon referred to earlier, while Ron searched for an easier way up. It appeared to be an upper level that the floor had collapsed into the canyon beneath, leaving a wide shelf on each side with a good display of speleothems sprouting from the shelf and ceiling. These were the most decorations seen in the cave, the rest was pretty much devoid. Up ahead I could see Ron had found an easy way up through a maze of breakdown and joined him about where the false floor of the upper passage closed over the canyon. As we walked along this thin crust, it being about 40 feet above the lower floor, the talk drifted to the fact that we could very easily become part of the breakdown below, so it was somewhat of a relief when it became bellycrawl, and we turned back. It was at this time that we agreed to the fact that this was definitely a virgin cave on this level, no footprints except ours, in fact, we had seen no evidence from the first crawlway of human intrusion. Feeling good about this possibility, we decided to head on out, and then return to the blowing lead that we had left unchecked. Somehow in our haste (and growling stomachs) we both failed to notice that we had missed the way we came in, and were well into an unknown passage that wasn't seen on our way in. had travelled perhaps half an hour before either one of us would admit that we didn't know where we were. As we had come through a complicated series of passages and breakdown, it was decided to push on rather than try to find our way back to our lost junction; besides, this passage was going down steadily. which in all likelihood meant that it was heading for Buck Creek. The passage was good walking size (about 6' wide and 20' high).tion. On July 28, Carolyn Herel and I and very interesting, but we hadn't expected to hit water; it started out ankle deep, then knees, waist. To make matters worse, the ceiling started dropping fast, and we expected a siphon at any minute, which would mean backtracking this passage, plus trying to find where we went wrong. About the time our heads touched the ceiling and the water was still chest-deep, we emerged into a waterfilled intersecting passage, with a gravel bar on the other side. Neither one of us recognized this area, and were about ready to start prayin' (or cussin') when I spotted a white object lying in the gravel across the pool. No one will ever see the smile

that crossed my face as I recognized the nylon rope dropped on the way in. After wading the pool and looking back from whence we emerged. it all became very familiar; this was the half-filled water passage seen on the way in. The real rub came when Ron said, "I knew where we were all the time." (You also go to hell for lyin'.)

Another surpise greeted us on exiting from "Tranquility;" although it hadn't rained there, in the 5-plus hours we were in the cave, Buck Creek had risen halfway to the entrance, and was a raging torrent of brown water. Evidently it had rained heavily north of our position, and our cance would surely have been gone if we hadn't carried it into the cave. We were preparing to eat when I noticed a rock slowly being swallowed by the water; in a matter of minutes it was gone, the creek was still rising fast. It was suggested that we had better eat downstream, and in what was probably the world's fastest canoe ride (we almost missed the bridge), Tranquility was abandoned, and although it was out of sight, it still is not out of mind.

SUMMERTIME CAVING

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BY JOHN BARNES

I returned from vacation early Wednesday morning, June 28. I spent three days recovering from the long trip back from Mexico, and on Friday headed for Mammoth Cave, where I spent the 4th of July weekend caving with the Cave Research Foundadrove down to the fieldhouse and met Bill Thoman, Don Pollack, Lou and Barb Simpson, and Greg Kalmbach. Saturday we decided to try opening up an entrance that Bill, Don, and Brian Baker had found back in February. We planned to spend a couple of hours enlarging the hole, check out the cave, if any, and then tour Hail's Cave. Well, it didn't work out that way. We took a small winch, crowbars, hammers, shovels, and one gallon of water. We winched out two small boulders from the hole and spent several more hours digging, hammering, and chipping away at rocks that blocked us. The amin problem was a sharp right bend

SUMMERTIME CAVING (continued)

at the very beginning, impossible to get past. After three hours hard work we were out of water. Carolyn, Barb and I volumteered to get some more since there was only room for two people to work at a time in the entrance (one hammering and the other holding onto their legs so they didn't slide headfirst into the pit.) We spent two hours trying to find water, and when we headed back to the entrance of Wild Turkey Pit, wa met Don heading for the cars. The other 3 were inside the cave. We left them two gallons of water, a bottle of beer, and returned to the fieldhouse with Don. The others returned an hour later. The cave had 2 drops, the first 40' deep, and a tight one 25' deep. A few animal bones were at the intermediate level, but no passable passages were found.

Sunday we made a fun trip into the main Hail's Cave, with some mapping as a side objective. Near Jacob's Well we mapped some side passages for another couple handred feet of cave. Then we headed for the new entrance via the small intestine, a crawlway at the top of a deep canyon. The crawl was difficult because the sides sloped steeply and the canyon narrowed toward the bottom, with few hand- or footholds anywhere. A very real hazard would be to slip and fall, ning to spend the next 5 days caving. I not because of the distance, but because you might get jammed in a tight spot and not be able to get out. Finally we reached stoopwalk with a floor which we followed for 150%. Then we had to climb up 40' through a corkscrew chimney to pop out the New Entrance. We almost didn't make it out, though, because and entered another cave of the Hail Sysjust 20' away the hillside had been bulldozed tem. The cave continued as a crawl with to form a sedimentation pond. We were that close to having to retrace our steps and leave via the main entrance. I was especially concerned because I was beginning to feel ill inside the cave, and I was supposed to pick up my brother Jerry at the Lexington airport in two hours. Needless to say. Carolyn and I were a little late doing the latter.

Saturday, August 12, a group of us were back in the Hail's Cave area. We had Greg, Lou, Barb, myself, Bill, Don, Brian Baker, and my brother Jerry. The djective was Foxhole Pit, discovered Friday by Greg. Greg and Lou rappelled in and we measured the pit as

58' deep. They reported a tight lead under breakdown. Bill started to rappel in, but Low and Greg velled that a lot of rocks were falling near them and that the lead was too dangerous to try. Bill climbed back out, then Lou and Greg prussiked out. We decided to run a ground survey from Red Goose Cave to Foxhole, and then on to some other entrances. Don, Brian and Barb and Iheaded for Red Goose to start mapping, while the others headed for the cars to get a longer tape. We were mapping along the road and the weather looked really threatening. We worked faster. We tied in Foxhole and Cavity Spring, and it began to rain. We headed back up the hill to Foxhole to get our gear. The others drove up, so we crammed ourselves into the cars and went to the house near Hail's Cave. There we sat on the porch and snacked while it rained like hell outside. Finally the rain let up and little groups headed for Hail's. Barb, Greg and Jerry went touring. Bill and I dug at mudfill 70' from the entrance and opened up a short virgin crawlway. A while later we came back from wherever we had been and returned to the fieldhouse for food, drinks, and partying.

Tuesday, August 22, Lou, Barb and Greg were back in Lexington. They were planfoisted off Jerry on them, and they headed for the Sloan's Valley fieldhouse. Wednesday, Bob Wood, Lou and Greg were searching in the north end of the gorge with the main entrance to Hail's Cave. They found a blowing hole behind some washed-in logs lots of debris. However, the weather was good, so they started mapping. In 6 hours they mapped 1100'. Thursday they were back, and mapped another 2000'. Friday nobody went caving and Saturday we had 9 people at the fieldhouse.

Saturday's weather was threatening, so we went ridgewaking near Wolf River Cave in Tennessee. We were looking for Grapevine Hollow Cave. Jeff Vansant spotted the entrance while driving up a jeep trail, so he parked his 4x4 there. Jeff, Bruce Warthman, Lou and Barb headed into the cave. We decided that a party of 9 was too big. ao Woody, Greg, Jerry, Carolyn and I conSUMMERTIME (continued)

tinued ridgewalking. We found Tater Cave, a well-known cave used for parties by the locals. Woody and Greg had lights along, so they checked it out. They reported that it was 400' long, had lots of beer cans and bottles scattered about, and didn't have any worthwhile-looking leads.

We continued ridgewalking as two parties. A quarter-mile from the cave it began to rain. We headed downhill to the road, figuring that it would be faster, and when we got there the rain quit. We headed back for the cars, walking along the road, when Carolyn spotted an intersting pile of rocks. Sure enough, we found another entrance, this one to Statehouse Ridge Cave, which we had also heard about. After some confusion with the cars (the other party had come out of Grapevine Hollow Cave and wer driving around doing more looking), we finally got our cave gear. Carolyn and I went into Statehouse Ridge Cave to explore. The 70' entrance crawl terminates with a low crawlway on the left and a squeeze at waist-height on the right. The squeeze opens up to stoopwalk with a couple of crawls, and then a nice 10' high room. I checked out an upper level of the

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room, about 150' long with nice slippery mud banks, while Carolyn checked a lower level. Hers ended after 75', so we returned to the entrance crawl. The crawlway on the left intercepted a U-shaped crawlway with a small stream. We checked both directions, and both ways the ceiling dropped and would require belly-crawling in water to continue. We crawled back to the entrance and popped out 45 minutes after we had entered, having explored about 600' of cave.

Sunday we returned to the Hail's Clave area, where Jerry and Bruce dug in the bottom of a pit, while the rest of us broke into two survey teams and completed our surface survey.

Saturday, Sept. 9, we returned to Main Drain Cave (the one found August 22). Lou, Barb and Greg were one surveying team; Woody, Carolyn and I another. The weather was beautiful - no rain for the last week, a stagnant high pressure zone over the area, and no rain expected until Sunday evening. We climbed over the logs and into the cave. Sticks, leaves and logs scattered throughout the passage were not (continued on p. 52)

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