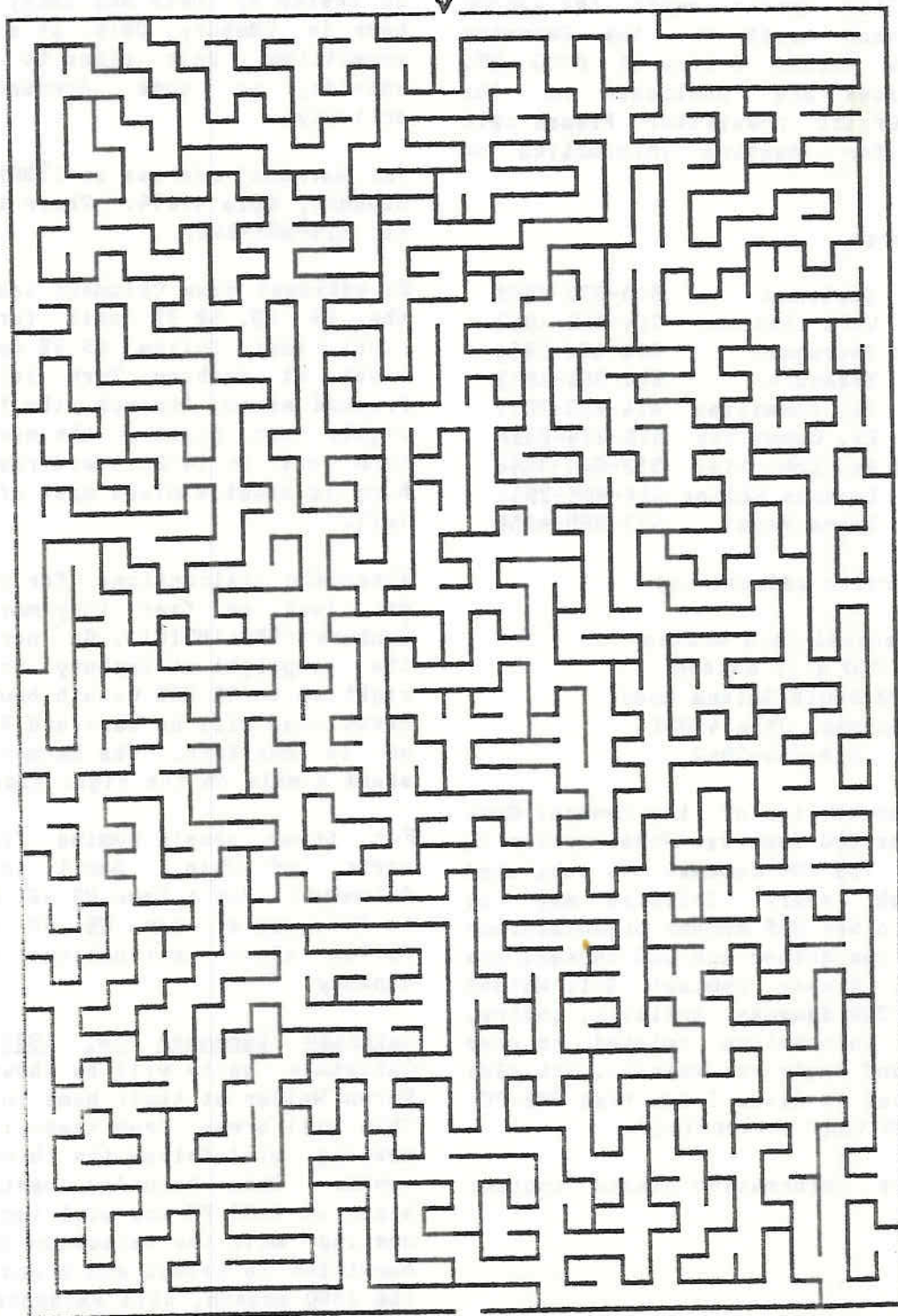


# COG SQUEAKS

CAVE →



November 1989

# COG SQUEAKS

## Grotto Information

The Central Ohio Grotto meets the second Friday of each month or the Saturday following the second Friday at 8:00 PM. Meeting notices are published in the Squeaks, the Grotto newsletter. Please call any officer for meeting information or caving trips.

COG officers are:

Don Conover	Chairman	513-372-7581
Bill Walden	Vice Chairman	614-965-2942
Bruce Warthman	Secretary	614-459-5854
Karen Walden	Treasurer	614-965-2942
Chuck Daehnke	Ex. Committee	614-263-7011
Mike Gray	Ex. Committee	513-276-2436
Jake Elberfeld	Ex. Committee	513-644-5848
Bill Walden	Squeaks Editor	614-965-2942
Paul Unger	Boone Karst	513-839-4258

The official grotto address is:

Central Ohio Grotto  
C/O Bill Walden  
1672 South Galena Road  
Galena, Ohio 43021  
614-965-2942

The official newsletter of the Central Ohio Grotto is the COG Squeaks. Subscription is \$10 per year. The COG Squeaks is published 10 times each year. Articles may be reprinted by other NSS member organizations provided that the author and COG Squeaks are given credit. Please contact Bill Walden regarding the COG Squeaks. Articles, poetry, fiction, and information related to cave exploration and study are welcome. Articles may be submitted on disk. I can read IMB PC-DOS or OS-9 DOS (any convention).

For membership information please contact Bill Walden.

## COVER

This month's cover is for you armchair cavers. Enter at one of the two entrances shown on the cover and find your way to the second entrance! Have fun.

## Meeting Notice

November 10, 1989 The November meeting will be hosted by Dale and Sandy Harmon at their home in Sunbury, Ohio at 8:00 PM. Weather permitting, Dale plans to have a bonfire outside, so come dressed for outdoor activity.

The Harmons' address is 13901 Hartford Road, Sunbury, Ohio 43074. Their telephone number is: 614-965-3497.

Directions: From Columbus take I-71 north to the US 36, SR 37 exit for Sunbury. Turn right (east) follow US 36 east to the stop light at Sunbury. Turn left on to SR 3. Proceed north through the flashing yellow light. Turn right at the next street, then turn left on to Hartford road. The Harmons' home is about 2 miles east of Sunbury on the left.

Alternate instructions for individuals who get lost or fear they may get lost in Sunbury (REALISTIC!). Go north on SR 3 from the stoplight at Sunbury to SR 605. Turn right on to SR 605 (south bound). The first cross road will be Hartford Road, turn right on to Hartford. The Harmons' home will be about a mile on the right side.

For those people coming from the Western parts of Ohio. Don't take I-70 into Columbus! Don't take US 42! Try taking SR 4 to Marysville then US 36 to Sunbury then follow above instructions from light in Sunbury.

Saturday December 16, 1989 The annual Christmas party will be hosted by Bill and Karen Walden at their home in Galena, Ohio. This will break from tradition in that the meeting will follow the third Friday of the month. This Saturday meeting/party will begin at 6:00 PM and will include dinner, a meeting with the selection of a nominating committee to select and propose officers for the 1990 season, gift exchange, and party.

The gift exchange is the real essence of the Christmas Party. All attending are asked to bring a gift. The gifts will be placed under the Christmas tree. At the appointed hour,



all who brought gifts will be given a number. This number will determine the order in which individuals may choose a gift from under the tree.

The receipt of the gift is supposed to use his gift on his next caving trip. Humor is the object! Gifts should be cheap even costless. The emphasis should be on humor. Instructions normally accompany the gift. These sometimes elaborate instructions are often the real gift.

Examples of past gifts are: Pabstrite carbide lamp—a working carbide lamp made from a Pabst beer can, Portable hand hold—a rock with a good hand hold, backup light source—an old flashlight which contained a plumber's candle and matches, games, etc.

Start thinking about those gifts now!

Contest! If there is interest I would like to sponsor a contest at the Christmas party. One year free membership to the two team members who can achieve the highest score playing the classic computer game, Colossal Cave. The prize is worth \$20. I propose that teams consist of two members and a time limit of two hours be imposed on each team. Please let me know if you are interested. If there is sufficient interest, I'll post the rules in the December Squeaks. Some rules are obvious — Mike Gray, Andy Franklin, and Don Conover may not be team mates!

## Grotto Patches

Twenty years ago the COG had grotto patches. Chairman Don Conover is looking into the possibility of having new COG arm patches made. He should have a report on this for the November meeting.

## Trip Reports

### 1989 NSS CONVENTION

July 30 — August 6, 1989

Lou Simpson, Sheryl Hilton, and Heather Hilton; Harry and Dorothy Goepel; John, Therese, John Jr., and Ellen Fichtel reported by Lou

Sheryl, Harry, Dorothy, and I stayed in a two-bedroom cabin at Jim Oliver's Smokehouse and Motel in Monteagle, Tennessee, arriving there around midday on Sunday, July 30.

Sheryl and Dorothy had chosen the cabin way back in January during a visit for that purpose. The cabin was luxurious, including a large living/dining room, a kitchen, two bedrooms with private bathrooms, and a screened porch. The TV even had a built-in VCR, which we used to play films we got free from the library at the University of the South. We had lunch at Jim Oliver's Smokehouse. The food was OK, but nothing to shout about. There was a neat player piano in the gift shop.

We drove to the University of the South where the convention was being held and picked up our registration materials. All the buildings were made of limestone and looked like churches. The guidebook to caves of the TAG (Tennessee, Alabama, and Georgia) area looked really well done. When we were back at the cabin, Mike and Susie Warshauer came by to visit. They were staying at the campground on the campus. They left and the four of us attempted to locate one of the caves listed in the guidebook, Monteagle Saltpeter Cave. We drove down I24 to the exit at the bottom of the plateau and followed the directions until the caving road deteriorated a mile or two before the cave. We had seen a couple four-wheel-drive cave cars driving down the road ahead, so we figured we were on the right track. It had gotten dark and it had rained, so the road was muddy. After a mile hike we reached the parked cave cars near a large rock in the road. The directions said the entrance was on the left a quarter mile beyond where the road crosses the now dry stream bed, but we couldn't find the entrance. We met the other party coming back and they hadn't found it either. After a fruitless half-hour wandering in the weeds, we gave up and returned to our cozy cabin.

On Monday the four of us went to the Speleolympics. It was hard to find the course. The course was set up to be reasonable for children to do and it wasn't muddy or overly wet this time, so Dorothy and I decided to do it. Some of the obstacles included a tyrolean traverse between two trees, crawling under some A-shaped boards, and going into the lake thigh-deep. We both ran it twice and had a time that was possibly the lowest in our age group. I don't know if there were prizes or



not. We got out of breath pretty quickly. Very few adults tried the course. Katie Walden enjoyed running the course many times.

At the international exploration session, we saw programs on caves in Oman, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Mexico, and the Phillipines. The Oman program was especially interesting because of the logistical problems in reaching the caves on a remote desert plateau in a very restrictive country. The caves in Oman were impressive pits and they were trying to connect them together. In Guatemala, cavers working with National Geographic discovered more Mayan cave paintings.

Monday evening we attended the howdy party at the campground. The food was OK. The band was from the Jack Daniel's Distillery. They had neat outfits and all looked like the Jack Daniel's ads, but the music wasn't too good.

On Tuesday, the four of us drove to Cumberland Caverns for the special tour and dinner in the cave. On the way we drove past the cave to look for a road sign Sheryl had seen in January that she remembered saying something like "Bear Bones Cave." We found the sign, but it said "Bear's Bone Cave Market." The market was out of business and for sale. It was in a place called Bone Cave on the map. We didn't know where Big Bone Cave was exactly, but at another store we were told it had been closed because of gas. Later, Dr. Warren Lewis told us it had been closed because of radon, but the NSS geology tour had gone there.

At Cumberland Caverns we took the commercial tour. As I had heard, a jeep was driven into the cave to bring in the food for the dinner. There were fumes. I wondered about carbon monoxide and radon. We passed the impressive Volcano Room where Roy Davis had mounted a huge glass chandelier over the dining tables. The guide said nobody wanted to sit under the chandelier. At an amphitheater we sat on benches and watched as the lights were turned on one at a time and a recording of a religious nature began "In the beginning...and God said, "Let there be light".... The tour ended at the Volcano Room where a bluegrass band entertained the

400 cavers before dinner. We received our dinners from a caterer and took seats not under the chandelier.

Roy Davis played an electronic organ during dinner. He used to have a pipe organ in the cave, but the humidity damaged it. Roy talked about his visit to Lechiguilla as a commercialization expert, brought there by citizens of Carlsbad, New Mexico to study feasibility for commercializing Lechiguilla. Roy's honest opinion was that it wasn't feasible. Another bluegrass band entertained after dinner, and a group of teen-age cloggers danced. Dorothy was one of the people selected to dance with the cloggers. We visited with Paul Unger, Chuck Daenke, Charles Gibbs and his son Chris, George Corrie, and Warren Lewis. Warren told me about his work with measuring air flow at the entrance of Coldwater Cave, Iowa, and how they could predict the size of the cave. Roy invited the cavers to his farmhouse. We went and were impressed with the neat things in the house. The pipe organ from the cave was there and Roy played it, with all the bells and whistles. There were large movie projectors, interesting antique furniture, a chandelier like the one in the cave, and in the basement Roy had printing presses. Roy has managed the cave all his working life. He majored in theater in college. We talked with cavers from the Greater Cincinnati Grotto about the management of Great Saltpeter Cave in Rockcastle County, Kentucky.

On Wednesday the Fichtels arrived while Sheryl and I were playing tennis. The Goepels had gone caving Russell Cave, Alabama. John and Therese Fichtel brought their two-month-old daughter Ellen and John's 12-year-old son John Jr. Little John was dressed in batman clothes and had batman cards and other batman stuff. At the convention I went to the United States exploration session for presentations on Lechiguilla cave and pits in TAG. They found more parts of Lechiguilla and are digging in another entrance nearby. Measurement of airflow predicted an 800-mile long system. While that sounded unbelievable, it might at least make a connection to Carlsbad plausible. The same kind of data analysis predicts over a thousand miles for Mammoth and 7000 miles for Wind-Jewel! Of course, much of the



volume of a cave might be too small to enter. That evening Heather arrived with her dog, Chandler. There was a party at the campground with a band.

Thursday morning John Jr. and I played tennis and went swimming. Then John Sr., Sheryl, and I went to the Geology session for Doc Dougherty's paper on sinkhole collapse in Pennsylvania. Doc did a nice job and had slides showing how a condominium complex was built on a filled-in sinkhole and it later collapsed. Since the surface was covered with a caprock of asphalt, the soil was eroded away underneath and the parking lot suddenly gave way. We also listened to Al Ogden's paper on radon in basements in Cookeville, Tennessee, especially one house built into the side of a hill with a cave under it.

Then John and I listened to some of the archaeology session. One paper was about how much was learned from examining "human paleofeces" in Big Bone Cave. They were able to identify bacteria and viruses by doing modern laboratory tests. They identified seeds and pollen to determine what the cave men ate. In another paper, Ken Tankersley used historic photographs to show that Lost John, a mummy found in Mammoth, had been initially found with a digging stick in his hand, which he could have been using to mine gypsum. Apparently he undermined the rock which killed him.

The Goepels participated in an all-day vertical class. Although they signed up for it on Sunday, they almost didn't get to do it because others apparently paid the fee during the week and they didn't know that you had to do that. Sheryl had signed up too, but decided not to participate so Dorothy and Harry could. Thursday night was the NSS photo salon. It was long, as usual, but at least it wasn't preceded by climbing contest awards. Most people left when a slide show about the 1991 convention in New York got out of synch. with the tape.

On Friday we vacated our great cabin and moved into regular motel rooms because the weekend rate was much higher for the cabin. The Warshauers, Fichtels, Goepels, and Sheryl and I drove to Wonder Cave, a commercial cave. We paid a reduced rate of about \$4.50 each and explored the cave on

our own. The main passage is a stream walking passage, but there is a complex formation maze. Beyond the commercial section we eventually reached a spot where there was deep water all the way across. We could have taken a rowboat, but didn't go any farther. It was an interesting cave. Then John Sr, John Jr, Dorothy, Harry, and I went to Monteagle Saltpeter Cave. This time we found it, about 1000 feet past where we had turned back on Sunday. It was the most vandalized cave I have ever visited. It would take a train to haul away the trash. The cave was very interesting and mazy. Although we took along a copy of the map, we weren't sure sometimes where we were. While we were in the cave, a family entered it to camp. They had a Coleman lantern, sleeping bags, and a cooler. John and little John made a video tape that we watched back at the motel. We went swimming in the ham-shaped pool. Chandler the dog stayed with Sheryl and me in our regular motel room. He was glad to get some rest after two days at the campground.

On Saturday the Fichtels and Sheryl and I drove to Gatlinburg, Tennessee and stayed in a condominium. On the way out of Monteagle we tried to locate the truck stop that a librarian had told Sheryl was used in the filming of the movie Starman. In Gatlinburg the traffic was pretty intense. We visited Ripley's Believe It Or Not and Guinness Records museums and bought candy. Heather went to Ruby Falls cave, near Chattanooga.

On Sunday we all drove up the mountain and walked up to Clingman's Dome, the high point, where there is an observation tower. On the way down the mountain we saw two bears at a roadside rest.

#### Great Saltpeter Cave

Rockcastle County, Kentucky

October 14-15, 1989

Sheryl Hilton, Lou Simpson, John Barnes  
by Louis Simpson

Sheryl and I stayed at a kamper kabin at the Renfro Valley KOA. We were fortunate to get the kabin, since every available rented space had been reserved for that weekend due to a special Barn Dance show. We had attended the Greater Cincinnati Grotto meeting the previous Friday and heard about the Great Saltpeter Cave weekend organized



by that grotto and the Bluegrass Grotto.

We arrived at the shelter house on the cave property around 7 p.m., just in time for the meeting. Don Pollock from Bluegrass and Wes from GCG were leading the discussion about the work yet to be done on the rental house. The two grottoes are managing the cave property for the Felburn Foundation. One requirement is that they obtain liability insurance, costing \$800 a year for \$500,000. In order to do that, the house must be inhabited full-time, so a tenant will be found. Too bad they can't just use the house for a fieldhouse. Cavers had worked all day to repair the roof and begin rehabbing the house. It still needs plumbing restored, a furnace, carpet, insulation, and kitchen appliances. The electricity is working. The group tentatively agreed to install propane for the furnace, the hot water heater, and the cooking stove. Although heating oil would be less expensive to operate, propane is the cheapest to install and maintain.

Four keys to the cave gate will be made, two for each grotto. The group also must come up with the taxes for 1989, about \$900. Don said maybe the taxes won't be required in future years.

We talked to John Barnes, whom I hadn't seen since 1981. Don Pollock said we could enter the cave at 10 a.m. the next morning. Sheryl and I toured the rental building, then left and had a pizza at Pizza Hut. The entertainment at the campground finally ended at 11 p.m. and we got some sleep.

We arrived back at the cave. Don said some cavers had not returned from a cave until 4 a.m. because they got lost in the woods for several hours. Don and John Barnes climbed the stairs to the cave entrance. Don unlocked the lock and when he opened the gate a snake fell on his gloved hand! It was nonpoisonous, Don said. Don turned on the electric lights. John, Sheryl and I entered. We took lights because we wanted to see everything, whether it was lighted or not.

The cave is very nice, dry, and easy. Almost immediately on the right is a canyon passage, which John said we would be coming through on the way back out, making a loop.

We turned left into a branch where I explored several crawlways and canyons. It looked like it might be worthwhile to dig or squeeze through a few places to find more cave. I didn't expect this in a cave that has been explored since 1790--something. There were wooden bridges, ladders, and even a climbing pole consisting of a none-too-sturdy-looking pine log with tiny branches. Several high leads beckoned. This area had a few formations and flowstone. The artificial lighting made it possible to take passage photographs without off-camera flash. The electric wires looked in good shape, but the wiring was not done subtly--sometimes wires crossed overhead, spoiling the view.

Returning to the main passage we continued walking for quite a while. There were numerous saltpeter-mining artifacts: holes where vats had been, remnants of wooden vats, a reconstructed vat, an ox-cart, and several cast-iron tubs. In a spacious area a hundred feet wide and forty feet high were the remains of a wooden dance floor. Wooden folding chairs rotted at the perimeter of the room. An area beyond this in a cul-de-sac was a stage where bands once played. The area behind the stage was used for a dressing room. John said the large group that entered the cave on Saturday had boosted a caver up the twelve-foot climb at the end, but it was filled. We continued in one of two large passages. We eventually came to the back entrance, which is also gated. Someone had sawed through two of the bars. The group on Saturday had bent the bars back in to place and were considering how to secure the bars so they couldn't just be bent back again.

While most passages had a smooth floor, a passage near the back entrance had more breakdown, probably because this is how the cave looked before it was fixed up for tours. This passage ended in breakdown. In fact, the party on Saturday had noticed that the dance hall was built up on fill and that a crack along the wall gave access to a hidden lower level. We took the remaining large passage out of the dance hall area and eventually came to another breakdown after hundreds of feet of easy walking in trunk. Then we backtracked and followed a nice canyon where many visitors had put their graffiti. There were names, addresses, and



dates, some as old as the mid-1800's. Throughout the canyon we read the fascinating history. An effort is being made to write the history of this cave for the NSS publications.

At the entrance we heard vehicles approaching. John turned off the tour lights as Don had told him to do. Darlene Heist and another caver were preparing to enter the cave to try digging some leads. They said others besides us were in the cave so John Barnes turned them on again. Soon John Agnew and another caver came out of the cave and asked who had turned off the lights.

John Barnes, Sheryl and I drove to Lexington where we had an Italian dinner at Florenz's and then visited John at his home, where he showed us his many bookcases, his workshop, his computer, the electronics book he wrote, his homemade dulcimers, and his boat.

#### UC Steam Tunnels

September 2 and 6, 1989

Rick Crawford, Dave McMonigle, Lou Simpson  
reported by Lou Simpson

I had heard that a steam tunnel connects the east (hospital) and west (academic) campuses of UC [University of Cincinnati]. When a new tunnel was built along Eden Avenue a year or two ago, I noticed that it was being connected to an existing tunnel from the Health Professions Building on the east campus. I located a door to that tunnel in the basement of that building and noted it for future use for when the construction was completed. This door was usually locked, but recently I found it unlocked and, after making sure I could open the door from the inside, I ventured into the lighted, hot, steamy tunnel. There was only a narrow space to walk between the hot pipes here, but after a few hundred feet it connected to the nice new part and I could see it going on quite nicely. It was too dark ahead, though, and I had not brought a light.

I told others about it, and Rick Crawford and I returned on September 2. We carried our lights in a macro bag and slithered into the tunnel, closing the door behind us. In my excitement I banged my head a good one on a low clearance electrical box, right where it was marked "danger." I guess the danger

is for your head. Besides the steam pipes there were communication lines on a shelf along the wall. We used our lights for the dark interval ahead and then encountered lighted parts again. At the place where pipes cross under Eden Avenue we could see a ladder following the pipes up through a locked trapdoor into the outside. The tunnel turned away from Eden Ave. toward the west campus. Then it turned left again and down an eight-foot ladder. Just as I had descended the ladder and was taking Rick's picture above, I heard voices ahead. I scrambled up the ladder and we ran back to the exit.

The next Wednesday, Dave McMonigle and I entered the tunnel at lunch time. There were a number of ladders, both up and down. Dave showed me that there were light switches. We soon passed where I had turned back before. There were skylights, covered by gratings held down by cloth straps either tied or buckled. We could go out one of these if necessary. Sometimes it was very hot, but the skylights let in some cool air, which helped. The floor was generally dry, only occasionally a little damp and dirty. There were sewer drains in some of the low spots. In a few places the tunnel narrowed or went through a circular sewer tube, probably where it crossed under streets, but we could always walk or at least slightly stoopwalk. We speculated about where we were and where the tunnel would end up. At one point we had to climb over a pipe that crossed the tunnel. Finally the tunnel ended at a door to the outside. We found ourselves behind the Scioto parking garage. If we exited here, the door would have to be left unlocked, so we headed back through the tunnel again.

Dave used to work for UC maintenance and had been in many of the tunnels, especially on the west campus. He said he had seen the beginning of a tunnel below the hospital by going down a level on the service elevator below the lowest (Receiving) level. I wondered whether we had failed to notice a side tunnel that would take us across Eden Ave. Perhaps it is where the old tunnel joins the new one, although I think they blocked that off when they connected the new one. The old tunnel was heading toward the hospital and I have seen lights in the manholes near the entrance to the parking



garage. So I wanted to look for a way into that part, but when we got back to the place where the pipes cross over Eden Ave., we saw a maintenance worker. Although I'm sure he saw us, we decided to go back through the tunnels again to avoid a confrontation. But when we reached one of the skylights, I climbed up and noticed that the strap holding down the grating was just tied, so we untied it, climbed out, and retied it loosely before closing the grating. We found ourselves along the new road that connects to Vine Street. It was a nice way to spend lunch.

Mexico on \$125 a Day  
Avoiding a Tan in the Yucatan  
My Vacation in Ruins  
A Real Dive in Mexico

by Lou Simpson and Sheryl Hilton  
September 7-14, 1989

ANTICIPATION

As a less expensive alternative to a third trip to Bonaire, Netherlands Antilles, Sheryl researched and organized a vacation in Cancun, Mexico, through Club America Vacations. (Cancun is pronounced "can-COON".) Alan Weldishofer also went on the trip. We looked at travel and language video tapes, travel guides (Fodor's Mexico 1989 and Frommer's Mexico on \$25 a Day), and maps of the whole country and the Yucatan. I memorized how to ask where the bathroom is: "Donde esta los baos?" (When I once asked for the restroom at a gas station in Quebec, the attendant kept pointing to the clock. Maybe I should learn how to ask what time it is, too.)

Alan couldn't go until September. "Bob Alan, the Channel 9 weatherman, says the hurricanes come later in the fall," Sheryl assured me. During the week before the trip, Hurricane Gabrielle threatened the eastern Caribbean. A week after the trip Hurricane Hugo tore up the Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, and Charleston, South Carolina. September 13, when we visited the island of Cozumel, the owner showed us pictures of the damage caused by Hurricane Gilbert on September 13, 1988. The deal was unbelievably inexpensive--\$409 each for plane fare and double occupancy in a deluxe five-star hotel for seven nights. I think it

was a hurricane special. Actually the weather was very nice. It rained three different days, but cleared up immediately. But I am getting ahead of the story.

I had never thought I would visit Mexico. I had heard horror stories. There was one tale of visitors being imprisoned for hitting a cow with their rental car and wealthy factory owners negotiating for their freedom. In another story tourists were slain by highway banditoes. I had heard that Mexican airline pilots were said to know so little English that when they landed in the U.S. they were unable to understand the directions given by the air traffic controllers. Several planes crashed in August (in other places.) The advice and video tapes did little to reassure me. One friend who had visited there had gotten swept out to sea by the undertow and nearly drowned. Another got very ill after returning. Yet another tourist reported a thorough search by customs in New Orleans on the way back where even their toothpaste was squeezed out. The video tapes warned of annoying vendors and time-share salespeople, pickpockets, taxi-drivers who would try to overcharge, and diarrhea from drinking the water. I expected to be a victim of liars, thieves, accidents, and amoebae.

DOCUMENTATION

At first we were told by experienced Mexico travelers that all you needed for identification as a U.S. citizen was a voter registration card. I went downtown and got one free at the Board of Elections one Saturday morning. But then a couple weeks before the trip, we received a contract from the travel agency which said you had to have either a passport or a notarized birth certificate. Sheryl went to Middletown to get hers and called my mother in Mansfield for mine. The contract said if you arrived at the airport without the necessary documentation they wouldn't let you on the plane. We put the precious documents in a yellow envelope and that inside a red folder in my carry-on luggage. I really didn't like worrying about losing something so important. I had daydreams about losing the birth certificates and having to wait for hours or even days at a customs check point and being told "I am sorry, seeyore, there is nothing we can do." I would probably have



to come up with a massive bribe or something.

## DEPARTURE

We left on September 7. We checked our limit of two bags weighing no more than 44 pounds per person. Sheryl had weighed them and repacked (taking out all the extras including three extra cans of "Deep Woods OFF" and wearing the heaviest shoes.) As the passengers returning from Cancun got off the plane at the Cincinnati airport, I looked at them to see if they looked like they had a good time. A few were sunburned. I was determined to use my sunscreen and not let that happen to me. They looked pretty good. As the plane began to taxi down the runway, Sheryl turned to me and said "I told Heather that if anything happened to us, our insurance would pay off the houses and she could live on the rents. Where are our wills?" I guess I wasn't the only one who was apprehensive. Several oxygen masks popped out during takeoff. I had heard about that and wasn't surprised. Some of the overhead storage doors also popped open.

The trip was smooth and only three hours long. The airline food was OK and I managed not to spill it while crammed into the center seat where I could only move one appendage at a time. We landed and without much hassle reached the bus that would take us to the Omni Cancun Plaza hotel. The Mexican tour guide introduced himself as Francisco and asked "How many have been here before?" None. "Then, welcome to Nicaragua!" Since he was passing out beer to us when we boarded the bus, I figured he was just kidding. Beer on a bus. That's something you don't see much in the U.S. I began to relax a little. The guide represented Pro Tours, the Mexican affiliate for Club America Vacations. Francisco assured us that all the water supply in Cancun was "ultra-purified" and safe for U.S. citizens to drink. I decided to trust this advice. He said to avoid the tap water outside Cancun. Even though it was only 6:30 in Cancun, it was very dark already. I reset my watch to their time zone, three hours earlier than ours. Sheryl maintained her watch on "God's time", which happens to be Eastern Daylight Time, of course. Actually, she can't remember to how reset her watch without the complex instructions, translated from the original

Japanese: "Press S3 and hold to 2 second, then press S3 once, the SECOND diggit will flash, now watch is ready for set time...."

I was rapidly (rapido) learning valuable Spanish phrases: "cerveza = beer, "agua purificada" = purified water, gracias = thanks, "buenos noches" = good evening, "quanto?" = how much?, "uno momento, por favor" = wait a minute, amigo. No problema. Cancun is bilingual; everything is labeled in both Spanish and English. Sheryl had some problems with "buenos dias." She said it like "buenos dios," which means "good God" instead of "good day." Very educational. Many words had the same Latin root. I took three years of Latin. Learn Latin and you have a head start in many languages. Give a man a fish, and you feed him for a day; teach a man to fish, and you feed him for a lifetime. When the customs man at the airport stamped my visa, I tried a feeble "gracias". He just stared at me. When we got off the bus I tipped Francisco and said "gracias". "You're welcome," he replied.

## CANCUN

The Omni was one of the nicest hotels I have ever stayed in, even including the Ramada Renaissance in San Francisco, which goes for \$178 a night. All the floors were pink marble. Cancun's hotel district is developed on a narrow strip of land with the Gulf on the east and a lagoon on the west, sort of like the Keys, only with a connection at the bottom. Alan's room faced the ocean and the swimming pools. Although our room faced the lagoon, the balcony was enclosed so our room was bigger. We considered moving to a room with an ocean view but decided to stay where we were because we had more beds and a bigger room and Alan's room seemed more humid. The TV provided several channels from the U.S., including two movie channels. There were also Spanish channels and it was amusing to watch Michael J. Fox speaking in dubbed Spanish with English subtitles. Each room was equipped with a "servi-bar", which is a small refrigerator packed with all kinds of drinks in small bottles, expensively priced at 4000 or 5000 pesos and billed automatically if you consumed them.

On Friday, September 8, we mostly toured the hotel and the surrounding hotels. The pools had "swim-up" bars and waterfalls you could



sit under. On the beach was a restaurant called the Pina Colada, where we ate breakfast on Friday. A red or black flag placed on the beach meant the undertow was dangerous. Usually the flags directly in front of our hotel were red or black. A green or yellow would indicate less hazardous conditions. I think the flag at the Omni's beach remained red all week. The beach was made of white sand and stretched unbroken for miles. The Mexican government owns all the beaches. There were limestone outcrops right at the edge of the water. Sheryl said hotels in Cancun don't care if you swim in their pools even if you aren't registered at their hotel. This hospitality didn't extend to the tiny grocery at the club to the south, however. You had to be a member to buy something at the store. We found a small grocery across the highway, however, near the "Captain's Cove" restaurant.

That evening, Alan and Sheryl took a taxi to downtown Cancun to go shopping. The vendors were so persistent and it was so crowded and sleazy, and the insects so annoying, that they didn't stay very long and didn't purchase much. I, wisely, elected to remain behind in the air-conditioned room.

## TOURS

We considered the various excursions offered through Pro Tours and decided on the following schedule:

Saturday, September 9: Alan and I would take the deluxe bus to Chichen Itza and Sheryl would go to Cozumel. Sheryl thought the insects in the jungle at Chichen Itza would be too intense for her tasty skin.

Sunday, September 10: We would all three take the triple-deck ferry boat over to Isla Mujeres for snorkeling and shopping. There would be a band and bar on the boat.

Monday, September 11: We would all three take the air-conditioned bus to the ruins at Tulum, south along the coast. On the way back, the bus stops at Xel-ha (pronounced SHELL-ha) for snorkeling.

## CHICHEN ITZA

The deluxe deal was really worth the price

of \$115,000 pesos. That's about \$46. (Divide by 5000 and multiply by 2. About 2500 pesos to the dollar. "Don't cash much U.S. money at a time because (a) the peso could inflate daily and (b) you won't be able to get U.S. money back for unneeded pesos.") The deluxe bus picks you up at your hotel. They serve rolls and juice for breakfast, but the juice was only orange drink. Alan and I sat at a table which had holes to hold the drinks. The bumpy road tended to spill the drinks. There were only about 15 paying passengers plus the driver and two English-speaking guides: one general guide (Jose') and one an expert on the ruins (Xavier, which he pronounced eggzavier).

Punctuating the 200 kilometer ride on the perfectly level, straight, and narrow paved road, there were 45 speed bumps. That way you knew you were in a town. Jose' told us about the region: Cancun was just a fishing village until the development began in 1974, the year Quintana Roo (pronounced kin-TAHN-a ROW) became the newest state. The state is named after a famous man. The capital, Chetumal, is way down at the southern tip, next to Belize. The land is all flat limestone jungle. The vegetation is only about six feet high, except for occasional taller palms. Most of the inhabitants of Cancun came there from somewhere else in Mexico to take the many jobs created by the development and the tourist industry. "Cancun is plastic, artificial," said Jose', "but you can see the real Mayan Mexico along the road to Chichen Itza. That's 'chee-chen EET-sa', not chicken pizza." We looked out at the many isolated Mayan huts, constructed in the traditional rectangle of vertical sticks with a steep four-sided thatched roof. There were doors in the center of the longer sides and no windows. Everyone sleeps in hammocks. In fact, most people who came to Cancun to work in hotels had never seen a bed. Jose' explained that people could obtain land here by occupying it for ten years and building certain things. Sounded sort of like homesteading in Alaska. The people were self-sufficient. The bus stopped at one Mayan hut so we could see the inside. There were magazine photos of women all over the walls of this particular hut. The people are very short, most adults no taller than four and a half feet.

We arrived at Chichen Itza about at noon. It



was very hot, probably over 100 degrees, and it began to rain. There were a few flies, but many more insects. I suppose more would have found Sheryl. Xavier explained the Mayan base-twenty numbering system, which including the invention of the zero, as we huddled under a tree in the shadow of the biggest pyramid. When it began to rain harder, Xavier took shelter in the restroom. Alan and I stuck it out under the tree with some of the others in our group. The rain let up and Xavier took us immediately to the back of the pyramid, where we entered a dark doorway. Just inside and around a corner, we could see a steep stairway going up inside the pyramid. Our guide explained that this inner pyramid had been covered by the outer one. Landsat photos have revealed that there are probably two more pyramids inside these two. A couple of us braved the steep, claustrophobic stairs and were rewarded with a peek at two tall rooms containing altars shaped like dogs. There was a small basin in the middle of their backs. The rooms were very humid and it was difficult to breathe. The steep, narrow stairway was a challenge to descend without slipping.

Next we walked down a causeway through the jungle to the sinkhole, or "cenote" (sen-OH-tay) where virgins (scarce) or children (more readily available) had been sacrificed. Xavier said people born on certain days were destined to be sacrificed to Chac, the rain god. This was considered a great honor and they would be able to skip all the intermediate levels of heavenly bliss and go right to the top. Kind of like skipping purgatory, I guess. The cenote was about 150 feet in diameter and it was 40 feet to the muddy, brown water. The water is sixty feet deep and some bones and gold jewelry has been recovered from it. The Mayans and their invaders, the Toltecs, mostly cremated their dead, probably because the rocky ground discouraged burial. Only priests sometimes were buried in crypts above the ground. The 110-degree heat at the rim of the cenote made it vital to purchase water or soft drinks at the pavilion nearby.

The buildings at Chichen Itza were not homes, but public buildings. We returned from the causeway, passed a foundation with bas-reliefs of skulls, and entered the basketball court. Two stone hoops, oriented vertically perpendicular to the wall were

located in the center of each long side, rather than at the ends as in modern basketball courts. The hoops were about twenty feet from the court floor, above an eight-foot shelf. Xavier demonstrated the acoustics of the court by clapping his hands once. You could hear a succession of seven distinct claps. Seven was a magic number, he said. A bas-relief below the hoop we looked at showed the captain of one team holding the severed head of the captain of the other. This is one game that you didn't really want to be competitive about, if you were to survive. Snakes emanated from the head and from the neck of the slain captain. Snakes play a large role in Mayan/Toltec art and mythology. It is thought that the basketball game was played for the honor of the winning captain being sacrificed in this way. I never cared for sports.

I climbed to the top of the wall at the basketball court where a young woman was lying on an altar and her boyfriend was pretending to stab her with a stone knife--great for tourist photos. I peeked into the dark stone rooms. The stairs were very steep and the sheer drops were scary. Next we passed an unexcavated pyramid about fifty feet high. A carved stone column lay upside-down on the slope. The sign showed a cross-section with a twenty-foot man-made pit in the center and a thirty-foot natural cavern pit below that. I climbed up later for a look, but the inner pit was not visible.

Xavier explained that the Observatory was constructed as three concentric rings with windows oriented at geographical, not magnetic compass points so the sun would shine through adjacent windows at certain times of the year. The innermost circle once had a spiral stairway. We were able to enter the building, but the way to the top was not open. Scary holes and pits beckoned, but I wondered if there might be snakes in the weeds.

At this point we were on our own for half a hour. Alan and I explored a ruined building which had been a nunnery. With my penlight I was able to explore some tunnels in the nunnery, cracking my head a good one on the way out of one dark tunnel. Finally, I climbed the ninety-foot main pyramid. There were rooms at the top and I saw a locked grating with a twenty-foot ladder



descending to a dark doorway below. I heard a bat in one of the rooms and recognized the odor of bat guano. I think they have vampire bats down here. I could see quite a distance from the top of the pyramid and again the steep climb down was difficult. A cable is provided for balance. It was raining quite steadily at this time, making the climb slippery.

A buffet was provided at the Mayaland Hotel, next to the ruins. Noisy parrots greeted me as I entered the dining room of this scenic hotel. The foods consisted of flounder, chicken, pork, refried beans (very dark in color), a green vegetable that was a cross between squash and sweet potatoes that I liked very much, rice, rolls, fruit, and a sweetbread I can't remember the name of right now but Alan knew what it was called. Drinks were extra. This was my favorite meal of the whole week.

The bus stopped in Valladolid (vi-uh-do-LEED), a city of 120,000 in the state of Yucatan, where hordes of boys selling gum and candy assaulted us as we looked at an ancient cathedral. Alan said he saw men directing the boys, the "chicle mafia" (CHEE-clay) to go to where the tourist buses were stopping. Chewing gum originated in the Yucatan when Adams, the American who later made a fortune selling gum, noticed natives chewing it. Now chewing gum is all artificial. The kids were selling Adams gum, I noticed. Women were selling things made of cloth. They were dressed in the traditional white dresses with elaborate embroidery on the top and bottom. There were tombs inside the church, with death dates from the nineteenth century. The rest of the trip was mellow, as we attempted to finish off the beer in the cooler in the bus and talked about everything we missed in the U.S. with some young women from Chattanooga.

Jose' said the Yucatan got its name when the first Spaniards arrived and asked, in Spanish, "Where are we?" The Mayans replied, in Mayan, "I don't understand what you are saying," which sounded like "Yucatan." Jose' also told the story of the real Montezuma's revenge: Montezuma prepared a meal for the Spanish as a peace gesture, lacing it with an herb that is a powerful laxative. It slowed the Spanish down for a while.

## COZUMEL

Not too long after we were dropped off at the Omni, Sheryl returned from her Cozumel expedition. Sheryl will fill in the details on her trip.

## ISLA MUJERES

On Sunday, September 10, the three of us took a boat to Isla Mujeres, the island of women. The pirates kept their women there. We took a taxi to Playa Linda (playa = beach) where we boarded a triple-deck boat with a bar on each deck and a band on the top deck. The rum punches were included in the excursion package. As the boat crossed the several mile-wide channel, we were able to look at the bottom, perhaps 50 feet deep at most. Occasionally we saw fish.

The first stop was at a snorkeling park, where we were given an hour and a half to snorkel. You could change in a small restroom and rent a locker for a thousand pesos. You had to pass through the reef in a narrow channel that was crowded with snorkelers. Then the view was pretty good; there were lots of colorful fish. Sheryl and I had our own snorkeling equipment, but you could rent it cheap. However, towels were not available. It was very hot out.

When we were allowed back on the boat, a buffet dinner was served. Then the boat sailed along the island to a shopping area. Alan and Cheryl went shopping. I saw the chicle' mafia waiting on the dock and decided to stay on the boat. Most people got off the boat for the shopping. Sheryl said the shopping was very disappointing.

On the way back across the channel, we joined the merry-makers on the top deck. We watched a beer-chugging contest where the contestants had to empty a baby bottle. The rules were no squeezing the bottle, no biting the nipple, and no removing the nipple. After that there was a mixer dance that got everyone dancing. Then they offered a drink of tequila, the Mexican national drink, as you danced by. We rated the excursion pleasant enough, but definitely not outstanding.



## TULUM AND XEL-HA

Sheryl, Alan, and I all went on this expedition to see the Mayan ruins down the coast at Tulum, followed by a visit to a spring called Xel-ha (pronounced shell-ha) where you could snorkel. The bus left from Plaza Lagunas (lagoon plaza, I guess), a shopping area reached by taxi. The time-share salespeople were bothersome. We took pictures of the Cancun Hard Rock Cafe. There was a 50's car mounted on a pole over the entrance. Sometimes its lights flashed and the horn honked.

The bus was supposed to be air conditioned, but it didn't work so the sixty-mile ride was tiresome. It was very hot when we reached the ruins of Tulum. We entered the walled city. We could see colored paintings called frescoes through barred windows inside some stone buildings. Flash photos were not permitted at Tulum to preserve the frescoes. The largest building was a pyramid near the forty-foot cliff to the beach. The climb was steep and the rooms at the top were barred so you couldn't go inside. There were no rooms you could enter at Tulum. The view of the beach was nice from the cliff top. The visitor facilities at Tulum were unsatisfactory. Only one small store seemed to sell many refreshments. Many other stores all sold the same boring trinkets and T-shirts. The only restrooms I could find cost 100 pesos (4 cents) to use them and were very small.

Xel-ha was much nicer. We had some lunch first and I got to try coconut ice cream, minus the Kahlua. The springs were beautiful blue holes with many fish. Iguanualizards wandered around the trails. You weren't allowed to wear sun screen so the spring wouldn't be polluted. Sheryl decided not to chance sunburn so she didn't snorkel. After I changed for snorkeling, I was recognized by another tourist who turned out to be Peter Quick from Michigan. Peter is a caver who goes to Fisher Ridge cave in Kentucky and he and another Michigan caver helped me get out of the cave when I was flooded into it in 1982. The water was cold, more like 75 to 80 degrees. The fish were abundant and colorful, though. That evening, back at the Omni, the three of us had dinner at the Captain's Cove. The restaurant is classy and fairly expensive, about \$30 each.

## SITE VISITS

Tuesday and Wednesday Sheryl and I did our own thing and Alan did his. Tuesday was Alan's birthday. Sheryl wanted to check out hotels, an activity she calls "site visiting." Sheryl and I took a taxi to the Calinda Hotel, near Playa Linda where we had taken the boat to Isla Mujeres on the northern leg of the island. The Calinda was one of the hotels we had considered staying at. It was not as plush as the Omni, but still nice enough. We had a late breakfast at their buffet, peeked into some rooms that were being cleaned, and enjoyed the pools and snorkeling in the ocean, which was shallow and not dangerous here. We relaxed in some hammocks and had a pina colada. Then we walked down the beach for about a mile, passing mostly condos. We saw some damaged buildings and wondered if the damage had been caused by hurricane Gilbert in 1988. We had to detour away from the beach because of the construction of the Hilton hotel. Finally we took a taxi from the Hilton and rode two miles past the Omni to the Holiday Inn. The hotel was very new and plush, with tall triangular cross sections in the lobby. We passed an indoor pool and reached the impressive outside pool. The far end of the pool was at a thirty foot drop to the ocean so that the pool seemed to blend into the ocean. A marimba band was playing as we arrived. We felt adventurous so we walked the two miles north back to our hotel from here, which took about an hour. We saw a man sitting near a gully over which he had placed a piece of plywood with several gallon jugs of water. It looked like he was camping there. With the temperate climate, a person could live outdoors. We passed all colors of surf condition flags, from black which is the worst, to green, the best. Either the conditions vary greatly from place to place, or they are not at all reliable. At the Pina Colada, we had several of the icy drinks. I started feeling stomach pain, possibly due to the coldness of the refreshments. Oh no, I thought. This was my fate; ulcers. Some people saw me carrying our snorkeling gear (several miles!) and suggested that we try snorkeling at the Omni's beach. A couple of other people were near the water's edge, so Sheryl tried it. After the waves threw her on the rocks twice and tried to break her grip on them and take



her out to sea toward Cuba, she gave it up. My stomach continued to bother me all evening.

### COZUMEL AGAIN

On Wednesday morning, September 13, Sheryl and I took a taxi to Playaa Carmen where the jetboat takes you twelve miles across the channel to Cozumel Island. It cost \$28, but we avoided having to go north first to Plaza Lagunas and then ride a bus. You couldn't see Cozumel from Playa Carmen. We had a nice lunch at a restaurant on the beach in an old hotel. A waiter asked me what the English word for cloud was. It felt more like Mexico in Playa Carmen, since the hotel wasn't brand new. Sheryl bought some jewelry from a street vendor and said "Don't worry, we'll have enough cash. We'll use VISA for the SCUBA diving."

The jetboat felt like an airplane, minus the seatbelts. It was a big closed cabin with a travelog on a big screen in the front. It rocked a little, but not too bad. At Cozumel, we got in a taxi and rode south along the coast to Chankanaab park. There were three SCUBA vendors in little huts, but the one that took VISA wasn't open today. A dive cost \$15 each plus \$15 for the guide. We got the deal for \$40 total because we were hesitant about cutting our cash too close. The guide described what we would see and that it included a brief visit to an underwater cave entrance. We were very apprehensive about the cave because only certified cave divers should enter underwater caves, but he assured us that it was just in one entrance and out another one within sight of the first. Still, we hoped we wouldn't be taken somewhere unsafe. We changed into our swim suits, paid \$2000 pesos for a locker, showed the guide our certification cards, and put on the rented equipment.

The dive started only a short walk from the vendor's booth, right off the rocky beach. Soon we were about twenty feet down and looking at an underwater gold statue about two feet tall. Then we swam through an arch that could have been the ribs of a boat. The guide pointed at two cannons on the bottom. I remember passing over sea fans and coral formations. Two lobsters peered at us from under a rock. Then we saw the cave. It was

about thirty feet high and looked very dark. The guide grabbed each of us by the upper arm and pushed us into the darkness. It got darker and darker. I kept looking back at the light of the entrance and then again into the deep blackness ahead, growing more and more apprehensive. Finally, when I had decided I could go no further, never mind what the guide wanted me to do, I saw the light of a round entrance on the right. Mercifully, the guide turned toward the light and we headed out of that entrance. I remembered the guide saying something about visiting a blue hole. I wondered if that meant we were entering a flooded sinkhole and would have to find our way back out through the cave again. Fortunately we passed through the boat ribs again and I knew we wouldn't have to do that. We swam around for awhile near the shore until the air was mostly gone and then surfaced.

We took a taxi back to downtown Cozumel and walked to Rinaldi's Pizza. The jetboat wouldn't leave for another two and a half hours, so we had some pizza and talked a lot with Mrs. Rinaldi. This store is one of three they own. The other two are in Cancun and Isla Mujeres, but they live in Cozumel. Mrs. Rinaldi said "One year ago today everything was a mess." "What do you mean," we asked. "Hurricane Gilbert was here one year ago today." She showed us pictures of tall palm trees that had been uprooted and fallen right where we were sitting on the patio.

Cozumel reminded us of the town of Kralendijk in Bonaire, Netherlands Antilles--small stores only a story or two tall, not much traffic except on the main street, not many tourists, friendly people. We think we might return to Cozumel and stay there, rather than Cancun. A retired boat captain sang to the passengers waiting to board the jet boat. The ride was bumpy this time and I felt queasy. On the jet boat we negotiated a bus ride back to Cancun. It was a little scary at the last minute before we got on the tour bus, since you were supposed to have pre-arranged a ride with Pro Tours to ride the bus and the employee to took our last 30,000 pesos ("How much do you have left? That's how much it is, amigo.") kept trying to spot another employee, Manuel or something, so we could ride on his bus. We gave Manuel our last cash for a tip and



arrived back at the Omni completely without cash. (Our alternative would have been to take a cab from Playa Carmen and then get cash from our room safe when we arrived.)

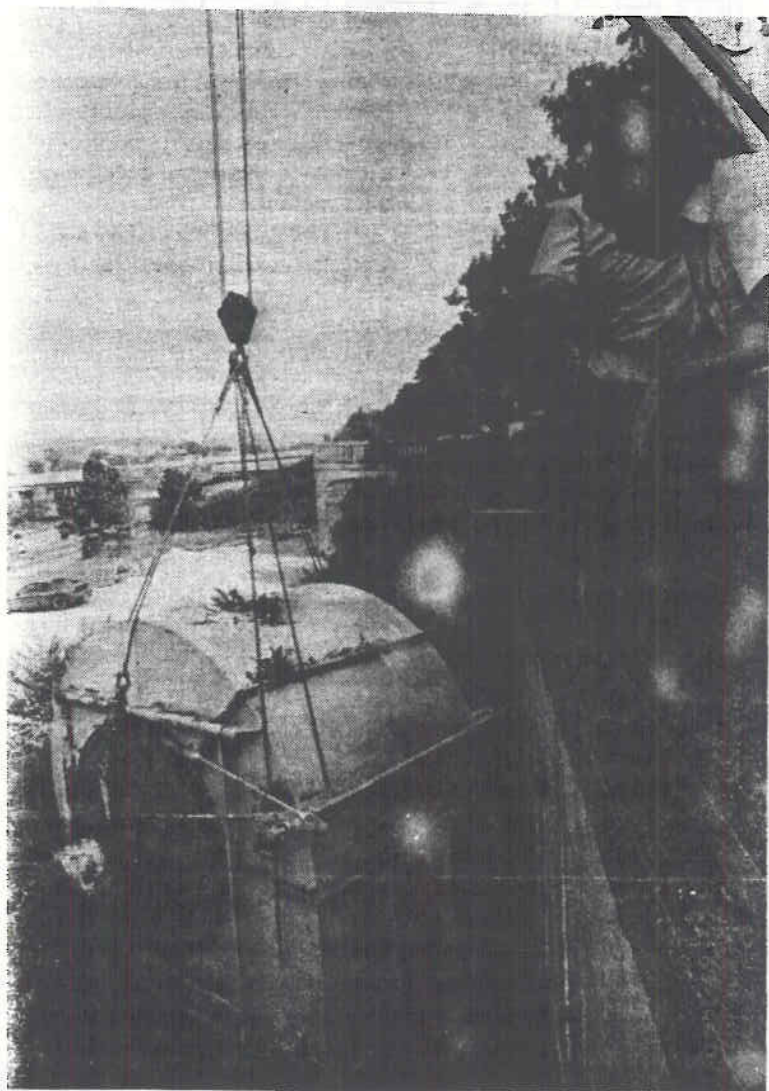
We found Alan and learned that he had overindulged in Tequila the previous night and had gone shopping the next day or something. The bus to the airport would leave at 7 AM. I paid the 270,000 peso bill for room service and the servi-bar so I could just return the keys the next morning. We packed, watched part of Crocodile Dundee II for the third time this week, and got some rest.

### ESCAPE

On Thursday morning, September 14, we returned the key and got on the bus. The whole day was basically spent waiting for one thing or another. We got our boarding passes and then waited an hour and a half for the plane to arrive. Then we waited to take off. Then we got off in New Orleans, waited in line for the rest room, and waited in a line for customs to check our documentation. ("Omigod, where is it!" Fumble, fumble. "Oh, here it is!") Then we waited for our baggage. Then we waited for customs again. They didn't look at anything at all, just passed us through. No strip search. No ripping the lining out of the suitcases. No squeezing of toothpaste. What a disappointment. Then we bought some frozen yogurt. (None in Mexico!) We waited for the announcement to return to the same plane. The sign said no food or drink could be carried onto the plane so everybody chugged down their yogurt. Then the crew walked by and down the boarding ramp with THEIR frozen yogurt. Finally we boarded. We waited for drinks. We waited for food. Food came. We inhaled it. The plane landed. We waited for our luggage. Rode the bus to the car lot. Drove home. Found out what happened while we were gone. Threw out the bouncer named "Boomer" who was mooching off us while we were gone. Like Ulysses back from the Oddysey. But that's another story.

### In Passing

Louis Simpson has written about his exploration of the Cincinnati subway tunnels in the past. This past week Louis sent me a newspaper clipping on the latest about the old tunnels. Seems a Dr. Peter J. Disimile has found a use for the tunnels that were never used.



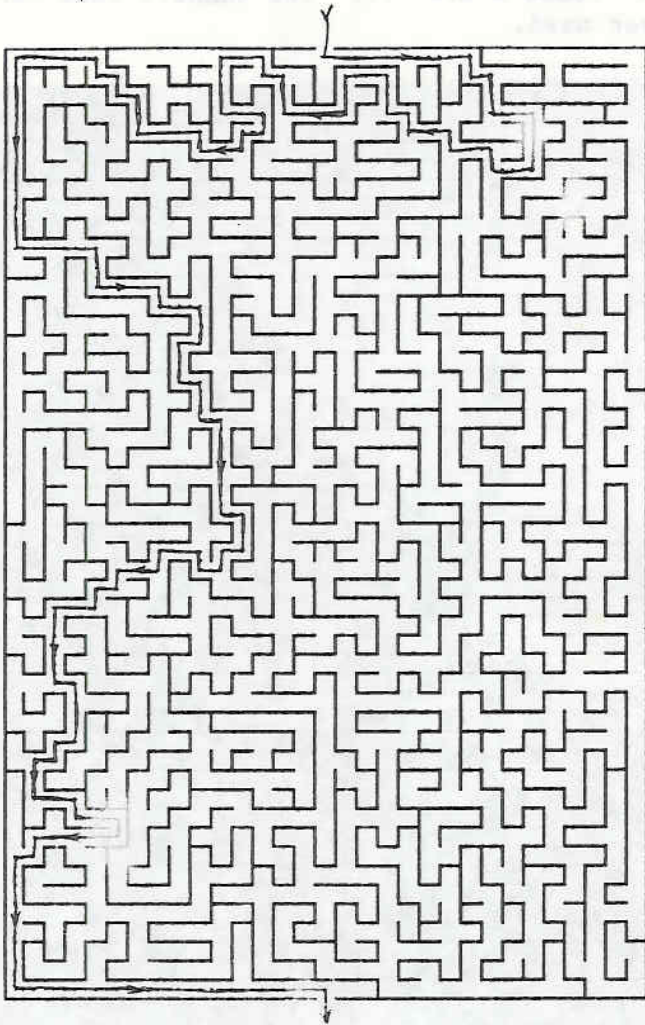
### Winds of change

Aerospace engineering professor Peter J. Disimile oversees the delivery of four giant fans from a scrapped Dayton Power & Light plant for a proposed wind tunnel facility inside two abandoned Cincinnati subway tunnels along Central Parkway. The fans would cost about \$500,000 new, but were sold to UC for just \$6,000. The proposed tunnel would be a world class facility available to industry as well as university researchers and students.



## Solution to Cover

For you armchair cavers who have difficulty finding your way through a mere two dimensional maze, here is the solution. I hope you enjoyed the puzzle. - Bill Walden, editor.



Two abandoned Cincinnati subway tunnels got a new lease on life this summer, thanks to aerospace engineering professor Peter J. Disimile.

MEETING 8:00 PM FRIDAY  
NOVEMBER 10, 1989

FROM I-71 TAKE US 36 EAST TO  
STOP LIGHT. TURN LEFT ON  
TO SR 3. CONTINUE PAST  
BLINKING LIGHT TO HIGH  
ST. TURN RIGHT ON TO HIGH  
ST. 1/4 MILE TO HARTFORD RD.  
TURN LEFT ON TO HARTFORD.

