

COG SQUEAKS



SEPTEMBER 1991

GROTTO INFORMATION

The Central Ohio Grotto of the National Speleological Society meets the second Friday of each month at the First Universalist Unitarian Church located at 93 West Weisheimer Road, Columbus, Ohio 43214. Meeting time is 8:00 pm. Please contact a grotto officer or committee person for information and caving trips.

OFFICERS

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(EX. COMM. -- Executive Committee)		
(YOUTH -- includes Boy Scout cave trip coordination.)		

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The COG Squeaks is the official newsletter of the Central Ohio Grotto. Subscription is \$10.00 per year (per mailing). The newsletter is published 10 times per year. Articles may be submitted on disk, via modem, via fax, or the old fashion way -- on paper. Please send Bill Walden your trip reports for inclusion in the Squeaks. Free disks and mailers are available from Bill Walden at COG meetings.

For membership information please contact Janice Tucker or Bill Walden.

Articles and information in the Squeaks may be reprinted by member NSS organizations so long as credit is given to the Squeaks and the author.

ANNOUNCEMENT

Mr. Roger Brucker will be our guest speaker at the September 13th meeting. Mr. Brucker plans to talk about project caving and the importance of cave surveying. This meeting will be held in the main chapel of the First Universalist Unitarian Church at 93 West Weisheimer Road. Please plan to attend. Guests are welcome.

Alice Woznack and Darrell Adkins had the opportunity to meet with Roger last spring. Alice and Darrell were talking about the Farmers Cave project which they and the Erisman brothers have been working on for the past 18 months. Roger took an interest in the project and volunteered to give a talk at a future meeting. The date was set for our September meeting.

Mr. Brucker has authored and co-authored several books about cave exploring. Two of these are *The Caves Beyond* and *The Longest Cave*. Roger is a Honorary Life Fellow of the National Speleological Society and has been a banquet speaker for a past NSS Convention. His talks about cave exploration can be best described as inspiring.

MEETING NOTICES

September 13, 1991 Guest speaker, Mr. Roger Brucker, will talk to us about project caving and the importance of cave surveying. We will have our regular meeting but will try to keep it short. This meeting will be in the chapel.

October 11, 1991 Regular meeting.

November 8, 1991 Regular meeting.

December 14, 1991 (Saturday) COG Christmas party hosted by Bill and Karen Walden. Start planning your exchange gift.

ACTIVITIES

August 31 through September 2, 1991
Speleo-Rendezvous at the Bent Arrow cave supply shop located on West Eller Road, Bloomington, Indiana.

This event, hosted by the "Indiana Scientific Speleological Association" (ISSA), will be an opportunity for persons interested in activities related to caving and climbing, to come together for the purpose of sharing knowledge, experience, and techniques with one another and to have a lot of outdoor fun in doing so.

Activities include a race through a cave, rope climbing challenges, and a map reading/compass course.

August 31 through September 2, 1991 -- OLD TIMERS CONVENTION.

September 13, 1991 -- Roger Brucker at COG meeting

September 13 - 15, 1991 -- Karst Encounters VII. Please refer to the registration form in this issue of the Squeaks. Several COG members are planning to caravan to Karst Encounters after the meeting. Karst Encounters is the caving get-together started by the COG and now continued by the Ohio Valley Region. Since it was started by COGer's, it would be nice to have a good turnout by our grotto.

November 15 through 17, 1991 -- COG Fest 91. Sport caving week end in Kentucky. There will be led trips through the Minton Hollow section of Sloans and perhaps, if lake level is low enough, a trip from Great Rock Sink Entrance to Garbage Pit. Other caves to visit include Wells, Hale, Goldson's, and Punkin. Andy Franklin would appreciate help on his Pumpkin Hollow dig project. More on COG Fest 91 at the meeting.

August 3 through 7, 1992 -- 1992 NSS Convention in Salem, Indiana. Caving at this convention is highly encouraged. Make sure to pre-register early to get one of the special, one time offered trips into Mammoth Cave or Spring Mill State Park. A discount is offered for registration before December 31, 1991.

MINUTES

July Meeting

Committees: Most Committee leaders not present.

Farmer Cave System: Many feet surveyed over July 4th week end. Interested in assisting in survey?? -- Contact Alice Woznack or Darrell Adkins.

Vertical Committee: Suggestions when doing pits and surveying:

- 1) Break into survey groups before descent.
- 2) Send survey gear down rope early.
- 3) Set up shifts of small groups to descend/ascend rope.
- 4) Everybody inspect rig before descending.
- 5) Check everyone's ascending/descending gear before they begin.
- 6) Remember to clean and oil (WD40) ascending or descending gear shortly after each trip. (Make certain to clean all excess lubricant from equipment. -- ed)

Toy Committee: Titanium carabineers \$20.00

Convention: It was great. (Next year's convention is in Indiana, please consider going.)

Katie Walden won a metal in the Speleo-olympics.

Paul Unger and Bill Walden were both made Fellows of the NSS.

New Business: September 13, 1991 Roger Brucker will speak at the COG meeting.

NOTE: The July minutes are repeated because the August Short Squeaks was nothing more than a meeting notice. -- Ed.

NEWS

TWO CAVERS DIE IN CAVE DIVING ACCIDENT

by Louis Simpson

On Monday, June 3, 1991, I received a call from Mike Russell, a caver from Nashville, Tennessee. He told me that on Saturday, June 1, 1991, Cleveland Grotto cavers Bob Nadich and Dan Molter drowned in the entrance sump of Swimming Hole Cave, Fentress County, Tennessee. Otherwise known as Flat Rock Ridge Spring, the cave is located in the next ridge east of the ridge containing Wolf River Cave. Another Cleveland Grotto caver, Floyd Harold, waited at the entrance. Nadich and Molter were planning to be gone only about 45 minutes. The sump was first penetrated in about 1982 by Atlanta cavers, who have mapped over a mile in large air-filled trunk beyond the sump. When the two divers failed to return on time, Harold entered the sump with SCUBA gear. He saw lights, so he figured they were returning and went back to the entrance. After another fifteen minutes or so, when they still hadn't returned, Harold again entered the sump and found the two divers, both drowned. Nadich was tangled in the guideline and Molter was floating nearby. Both apparently still had air in their tanks. Nadich, 66 years old, was a veteran cave diver who was known for doing risky diving under ice, in storm sewers, etc. Molter had recently been fighting throat cancer. No further details about the incident were available yet.

Bob Nadich and I discovered Crump Avenue in Crump Spring Cave when the two of us went there with Tom Ramsey and Doug Welker. Even though we had just come out after over 24 hours, Bob and I had to rescue Doug Welker when he fell off the cable ladder near the entrance. Once Bob tried to take the same group of us into the abandoned Cleveland subway, but we chickened out when we found out Bob wanted us to climb the under structure of a Cuyahoga River bridge in the dark, using rivets for footholds.

Update on Doug Stecko:

by Louis Simpson

He is in a rehabilitation center, able to talk and feed himself. I haven't heard that there's any paralysis. He

can respond to conversation, but apparently doesn't always make sense. Source--Jay Kessel, Joe Morgan, and Bruce Warthman at Speleofest.

Status of Sloan's Valley fieldhouse:

by Louis Simpson

Joe Morgan is now managing the house. He told me Tom Crockett plans to build a strong gate to close off the north entrance to the railroad bed. The only access to the fieldhouse and the Minton Hollow entrances to Sloan's Valley Cave will be through Crockett's driveway. Cavers should get permission from Tom Crockett to enter Garbage Pit or Scowling Tom's. Joe said that who can stay at the fieldhouse will be more limited.

Gate

by Bill Walden

Kathy Crockett wrote me to let the COG know that Tom has constructed a gate across the railroad entrance to the fieldhouse and the Minton Hollow area. This is not to keep cavers out but to discourage vandals and other undesirables.

Entrance to the area is now via the Crockett's driveway. Please do respect the privacy of the Crockett's and avoid late night or early morning arrivals.

TRIP REPORTS

HAWAII

(The Honeymoon of Paul Unger and Jan Campbell)
by Jan Campbell

13 April 1991. Left cavers in custody of Leona Unger, with plenty of food to keep them entertained.

14 April 1991. Flew from Dayton to St. Louis to L.A. to Honolulu. Checked into Waikiki Circle Hotel, room on 3rd floor oceanside, with balcony. Waikiki Circle is a great place to stay -- right on the beach surrounded by high-price high-rise hotels. Paul contacted Dr. Fred Stone. Jan discovered one of her classmates gainfully employed in Honolulu.

The next day we went into Diamond Head Crater and hiked the 0.7 mile moderate climb trail to the top. The climb is very pleasant and well-travelled. Saw no need to purchase T-shirts reading "I climbed Diamond Head and survived!" however. Walked around like a couple of tourists the rest of the day. Interesting place. Glad we came "off season."

16 April 1991. Flew to Hilo on the Big Island and checked into Waimea Villas, located on 14 acres of park and waterways. Headed for the pool, where we met Mike

Rankin, who started up a Farmer's Market in Hilo a couple years ago. He just about convinced Paul to retire there and grow corn for the market. Corn can be grown continuously here.

The next morning our first stop was Farmer's Market, where Mike taught us about local produce and we bought ripe bananas and soursop. Then up to Volcanoes National Park. Saw steam and sulfur vents around the huge Kilauea crater. Drove past lava flow after lava flow. (Road construction would be a lucrative business here.) Drove a few miles down Chain of Craters Road and saw one crater after another. Vegetationally speaking, the area is quit desolate, with the exception of persistent ohia's tree, a native of Hawaii and the first vegetation to appear after an eruption. Has lovely red Lehua blossoms. We visited Thurston Lava tube just as a couple busloads of Japanese tourists were arriving. They say Thurston has some unique stuff in it, but it was hard to enjoy under the circumstances. The fern and ohia forest surrounding it is outrageously lovely. Another interesting place is Devastation Trail, a wooden bridge walkway through a 1959 lava flow. No one is allowed off the path, because they are studying how vegetation gets a new start after an eruption, and they don't want the results complicated by seeds and stuff from the feet of tourists, thank you.

Along the northern coast of the island is a 4-mile scenic route designed to lure the curious into a private botanical park. What we could see from the road was breathtaking, and so was the admission price. On up the road is Akaka Falls, set in a small tropical park. Akaka drops 420 feet--wish I'd had a wide angle lens then. As it is, I have to hold two frames together to see the whole thing.

On the 19th we returned to Volcanoes National Park and drove from Mauna Loa toward the coast (about 20 miles) down Chain of Craters road. We parked where the road ended and the lava began. Lava flows in recent years have eaten up the rest of the road. There we got out and walked one and a quarter miles across the crusty lava flow to the spot where the lava is currently entering the sea under water. We didn't get to see the lava flowing, but we saw lava rocks floating out to sea, still steaming from their chilling encounter with the Pacific. Molten lava is about 2,000 degrees F and the ocean is somewhere around 70 degrees. The pictures I took don't do justice to the colors of new lava crust. It is shiny black or silvery black, but a rainbow of colors appears in the crust. Then there are the fine, fragile golden strands of Pele's hair. (Pele is the goddess of the volcano, whose mythology runs rampant among the superstitious and the scientific alike.)

That evening we met Fred Stone at the University and got our hands dirty working on his experimental organic

gardening project. We worked hoe-to-hoe with people from all over the Pacific--it was an exercise in global awareness.

The next day we participated in a Hawaii Cave Conservation Task Force project with Fred Stone. Fred and Paul surveyed an area where a line of geothermal poles was being installed and there was concern that the poles would punch through into a lava tube. In Hawaii the caves are sensitive not only to cavers, but also to native Hawaiians. The caves have been used as burial sites and have sacred significance. Enough of them have been vandalized and disturbed to warrant keeping cave locations out of the public record. When the survey was complete we went to MacKenzie Park to play. There's a nice tube there that is said to be haunted by the King's Men, whose sacred highway passes above. The tube walls are shiny white in places, lined with Actinomycetes. We found fascinating lavacycles (there's some discussion about this nomenclature, but until they come up with a more definite term, this will suffice). They twist and curl in strange contortions--maybe because they dried on one side faster than the other? It's almost as much a jungle underground as above, with the ohia roots hanging down through the ceiling. The roots are a happy habitat for plant hoppers, which we found in abundance. Also found some cave crickets.

The next day after church we met Fred and a group of high school students from Oahu, who were cleaning graffiti from the entrance of Kaumana Cave. The Kaumana Cave Cleanup is an ongoing project of the Hawaii Cave Conservation Task Force, too. Kaumana is a beautiful lava tube open to the public in Hilo. Most people don't go very far in, but the upslope portion goes up about 5 to 7 miles. Anyone want to help survey?

22 April 1991. We flew to Kaunai, the "Garden Island." This is the island that "looks like Hawaii." You could drive around it in one day, except that the road doesn't circle the whole island. The western coast is very rugged, and access is limited. We stayed at Hotel Coral Reef in Kapaa, more or less half way between the two ends of the road. The first day we took the northern route to its termination at Ke'e Beach. We hiked a short distance on the 11-mile Kalalau Trail, which traverses a few of the valleys along the Na Pali Coast. Camping is permitted in the valleys, and the trail gets more rugged, the farther you go. It's something to come back for. We stopped at Lumahai Beach (aka Bali Hai in South Pacific). The surf is too rough for swimming there, but if you're immune to icy temperatures or just plain stupid (I apparently fit into one of those categories) you can swim ever-so-briefly in the mountain stream that empties into the ocean there. The next day we took the southern route, again to road's end. There's an unpopulated beach park there, if you don't feel uneasy being so close to a military testing

ground. From the south we drove up through Waimea Canyon, the "Grand Canyon" of Hawaii--pretty, but on a much smaller scale. It took some time for watching the clouds roll up and over the narrow ridge we were standing on. From there, we were able to look down on the Na Pali coastline. It almost looked like we could bushwhack our way down to the Kalalau Trail, but we were warned not to try. Does anyone have a 3,000 foot rope they'd like to try out?

On Kauai we took in a Luau (one of those things you just have to do). The roast pig and other items on the buffet were delicious. The poi poi, the bland past made from taro root and a staple of the Hawaiian people, probably tasted better when all foods were preserved with salt. Then, since we still hadn't seen much of the Na Pali as we wanted, we drove to the peaceful town Hanalei, nestled in an idyllic valley, and signed up for a picnic lunch, tour of the ruins of a Hawaiian village, and snorkeling on the reef.

27 April 1991. Time to get back to the "real" world. We took in the Spouting Horn on the south coast just before it was time to catch a plane back to Honolulu. The flight home was uneventful (no lost luggage, etc.) but we could have done without the 6-hour layover in St. Louis. It's good to be home. We want you all to return with us in a year! There's lots of cave conservation and survey work to be done. Save your pennies--it will be well-worth it!

1991 SERA CAVE CARNIVAL

June 14, 15, 16, 1991

by Tod Cramer

The fortieth annual SERA Cave Carnival was hosted by the Nashville Grotto and was held at the Holmes Creek Recreation Area in Smithville, Tennessee. The last SERA held in Smithville was in 1960

Dick Maxey drove his new Mazda 2600 four wheel drive truck which received quite a breaking in on this trip. Others who went were Cheryl Early, Christy Hill and myself.

The four of us arrived at the campground late Friday afternoon, put up tents and went into town for a fine fish dinner and to do some shopping.

Saturday we went to Cumberland Chasm which has a free drop 142 foot pit with 300 feet of passage at the bottom. This was Christy's first pit experience; she enjoyed it and had no problems.

Once everyone was safely out of the Chasm we proceeded just 400 feet along the mountain to Rope Eater Pit with a 90 foot, open air, free drop. The cave continues downward another 90 feet or so but requires a

hand line to get to the bottom. We rigged with a 150 foot rope and didn't have enough left to go beyond the pit.

A brave but unsuccessful effort was made Sunday afternoon to locate Conley Hole as we were on our way home.

FERN CAVE ALABAMA

August 17, 1991

By Tod Cramer

Six cavers left Columbus Friday morning intent on seeing some of Alabama's famous Fern Cave. Fern is the longest cave in Alabama extending 82,525 feet and also contains the deepest pit in the state, Surprise Pit (437 feet deep) named by Bill Torode.

The group camped at Nickajack Campground by lake Nickajack in northern Alabama. George Keeney, Gregory Keeney and Mike Crider arrived there shortly after Dick Maxey, Cheryl Early and myself. Once tents were up the group drove a short distance to an established bat observation platform near a cave entrance on the lake to witness the flight of Gray Bats from the cave. The total number of bats in the colony is believed to be around 3,000. The group looked on very curiously as the large bats swooped down toward the water and swarmed around the tree tops.

The group arrived at the base of the mountain late Saturday morning and with the much appreciated help of a number of George's friends Ron, Brenda, Dave, and Janet, transported the equipment to the waiting room at the edge of the pit.

Along the stream channel leading to the pit were observed approximately twenty five small brown bats and several blind cave crayfish.

Once everyone was safely at the bottom a brief photo session preceded the long ascent back up the ropes.

Mike and George were the last to make the ascent. Shortly after beginning to climb they experienced severe motion sickness as Dick Maxey's new Blue Water rope began to spin. George decided to go back down and switch to the other line which was two three hundred foot ropes tied together. His tribulations were not yet over as the bungee cord connecting his ascenders broke shortly after his restart. Eventually both cavers were safely at the top after nearly two hours on rope.

This is a very impressive pit with a small waterfall on the opposite side away from the rigging bolts which made visibility somewhat limited by creating a lot of vapor in the air.

As we departed the cave we were greeted by the bats we had seen earlier as they returned from feeding which resulted in many sudden stops and a few screams on the way out.

After camp was put away Sunday morning, Dick, Cheryl and myself drove to Russell Cave National Monument on Route 72 near Bridgeport, Alabama. This seven mile long cave with its large stream entrance room was used for shelter by many ancient peoples.

Clover Hollow Revisited

by Cheryl Early

Last December Dick Maxey and I accompanied 7 members of Standing Stone Grotto to Clover Hollow in Giles County, Virginia. This interesting cave has 5 drops (64', 20', 20', 75', 150') and several climbdowns, as well as walking and crawling passage.

On 20 July we returned to the cave as a warm up for Surprise Pit in Fern Cave which we would do in August. We were accompanied by Sheila Sands and Marlene Walton (Standing Stone Grotto).

Even though the entrance pit is near the road, Clover Hollow is a good cave for building vertical skills and endurance. A hand line is helpful for a couple of the climbdowns (or an etrier if one is available).

The cave has changed owners and you now need to sign in and out and obtain a 'permit' sticker for your vehicle from Jim Washington, 1 703 626 3386, who is affiliated with the Virginia Polytechnical Institute. Despite any inconvenience that this might cause, Clover Hollow is a fun cave for vertical cavers.

On the way back to Columbus we toured the Beckley Exhibition Coal Mine (in Beckley, W. Virginia) where 1500' of mine passage have been restored. In addition to the mine, a restored coal camp house and museum are open to the public. (The museum had a nice display of carbide lamps.) Well worth the \$5.00 admission.

S.E.R.A.

Tod Cramer, Cheryl Early, Christy Hill, and Dick Maxey drove to Smithville, Tennessee for the 40th annual Cave Carnival, hosted by the Southeastern Regional Association June 14, 15 & 16.

This year's guide book featured mostly newly discovered caves. We picked out 2 of them, Cumberland Chasm and Rope eater Pit. Cumberland Chasm was a 142' pit about 50' inside the bellycrawl entrance. Rope eater Pit was a newly opened sink hole with a small dirt entrance, similar to an ant lion trap. After the 90' free fall entrance

pit the cave continued for several hundred more feet down as a steep climbdown canyon which required a hand line.

HOOTING in Indiana

by Kathy Franklin

What is HOOTING, you say, and why does anyone do it, in Indiana or elsewhere? The answer to the first question is fairly simple. The second question - well.....

Long ago (Once upon a time?), cavers in Indiana were frustrated with the speleopolitics of the local grotto, and decided to revolt. (This is not to say that there are no cavers in Indiana today who are frustrated with speleopolitics, nor that they are no longer revolting.) At any rate, they decided to form a non-organization, which they called the Society of Honorable Indiana Troglodytes. There are no meetings other than one early in the year for planning, and one during the summer for holding, the annual HOOT. There is no formal membership, and the HOOT is deliberately NOT a major caving event. It starts on Friday evening, and runs through sometime Sunday. To date, all HOOTS have been held in Indiana (more on this later). There are several activities at a HOOT - one consists of running the course, and another consists of eating as much beans and cornbread as you can hold. Of course, you need beer to wash down the beans and cornbread, so you drink at least as much of that as you can hold, and oftentimes more.

The course is the challenging part. It came about as a means of practicing map and compass skills, to aid in finding cave entrances that are marked on maps, but no one in the group has ever been there before. After several variations, "running the course" now goes something like this:

The course is laid out by the previous year's winners, and consists of several stations - usually about 8. A station is a magic marker hanging from a string, marked with a "flag" of crepe paper, or sometimes we actually use flagging tape. The locations of the stations are marked on the master map, as numbered dots.

There are two people to a team. Each team gets an index card, with numbers on it corresponding to the stations on the map. You are expected to supply your own topo map and compass. The team gets 5 minutes to study the master map, and transfer the locations (numbered dots) to your map. You then leave the campsite and start looking for stations. When you find a marker, you color in the appropriately numbered spot on your index card, and head for the next one. You do not have to do the stations in order (usually), you just want to find them all in the shortest amount of time. You have to watch out for decoys, which are markers that do not

have corresponding dots on the map (but are usually close enough that you could think you were in the right spot, if you're not paying attention). Lately there has been one station that you had to calculate its location, using a protractor, etc., to get the dot on the map. This gives you two opportunities to goof up, but so far there have been no decoys in the area of the calculated station. The number of decoys is often dependent upon (1) the stamina of the team laying out the course, (2) the deviousness of the same team, or (3) the number of markers in the package that was purchased.

I have been participating in this madness since 1980. I have trophies for at least half of those years, not counting the year I laid it out (1988). There are trophies for first, second, third and last places. First second and third place trophies are the south end of a north-bound horse, with different sizes of pedestals to differentiate rank. Last place trophy is a simple cup-style on a low base. None of my trophies are for last place. In 1989 Andy and I did not place, because we did not find all the markers (along with lots of other people). Last year, Andy had already wrecked his knee, so I went out with Larry Mullins, from the Hoosier National Forest staff, and again did not place. I think we came in fourth. This year, Andy had again wrecked his knee, so I found another partner, Paul Ash. This year we came in second. We would have been first, because we had the quickest time, but we found the only decoy, and didn't realize it. This year's course had ten stations, and covered about 10 miles. It took us over seven hours to do it. It was held at Delaney Creek Park, site of next year's NSS Convention. Andy spent the day sitting in the shade by the lake, testing the beer. He wanted to be sure it didn't go bad while we were out. Scott Fee and Tim Hornaday laid out the course, and had left a cooler with assorted drinks under one station, but it was too close to the lake, and the local fishermen got it before we got there.

That explains the what. As to the why, I haven't the foggiest notion. I asked myself that question at least 50 times while we were stomping up and down the hills (make that cliffs), looking for stupid pieces of flagging tape. I guess it has to do with knowing that a lot of my friends are doing it too, and no way will I let them beat me without a fight. There are neat things to see (an unwritten rule is to place markers where there is something interesting, either at the station or nearby). And there is a tremendous sense of satisfaction in "getting them all". Of the nine or so teams that ran this year, only three of us even came back with 10 stations marked, and only one team had all ten right. It took them about nine hours, as I recall. The third place team was less than five minutes behind us, so it was close, but they made the same mistake we did. Andy and I are already planning on going next year. He promises not to

wreck his knee, and says we will bring the HOOT to Ohio. I'm not sure that's such a good idea - it's at least as much work to lay out the course as it is to run it, and there's no friendly competition out there in the woods to keep you on your toes. At any rate, we'll be trying.

The Hobble Hovel of Coble(skill)

by Andy Franklin

Kathy and I shared some unique experiences at this year's convention. Since I am sure that you will read several day-by-day descriptions of the events, I will write about our own time.

We went to Convention with an extremely limited budget. My knee surgery had kept me from working, so financially we were hurting. Kathy, however, needed to be there as her last act as the NSS Administrative Vice-President. We traveled with Don Conover, arriving at 3am. Since it was Convention, it was raining. Rather than set up the tent in the dark and rain, we slept in Don's car. At registration we discovered that meal tickets were not available! Fortunately, we had brought a stove to boil water for tea and oatmeal. You know, tea and oatmeal get real old after five days.....

Since the rest of the grotto was either sleeping in trailers (WIMPS) or the dorms (BIGGER WIMPS) we set up our humble tent with the Franz's and Bloomington, Indiana Grotto. I really did miss everyone camping together. However, we usually got together for dinner at the Unger's trailer.

Since I could not go caving (or do virtually anything else!) I spent my time going to the sessions. In fact, out of the ten possible half-day periods, I made seven. Some of the most fascinating subjects were Rane Curl's continuing postulations on zero-entrance caves (a subject dear to my heart), and the several analyses of Emily's rescue. Chuck Hempel has made the observation that an accident occurs roughly every 20,000 hours of caving. When you look at the traffic in Lecheguilla I think that they were overdue!

The greatest moment of the week occurred on July 4. Earlier in the year a group from the NSS went to the Soviet Union as part of the yearly exchange program. Three Soviets then came over for the Convention. While in the USSR all the cavers agreed to hold a toast - worldwide - at midnight (Eastern Time) July 4. The toast was to celebrate friendship through caving and for the freedom of the Ukraine. In addition to the group at Convention, there were cavers in Atlanta (Midnight), Denver (10pm), Kiev, Simferopol, and Chernobyl (7am!). We started with a strange (but good) Crimean wine that dissolved Dixie Cups before switching to real Russian

vodka. The spirit of the occasion was moving. But, I may never drink domestic vodka again!!!

All in all, after factoring out the ever-present police, the stores that raised the price for ice on Monday, the oppressive rules on the campus, it was a good convention.

ODE TO A HELECTITE

by Katie Walden

Aug 1991

You're as complex as a fairy castle
And white as a cloud on a summer's day.
You hang like a crystal chandelier
And you're delicate as a butterfly's wings.
You dazzle my eyes as you scatter
My lamplight to form a dozen rainbows on the mud.
You're the one clean object
In this small, muddy passage.
You look like a sugar coated statue
of baby snakes.
The crystalline drop of water
That emerges from your tip
Sounds like the highest note on a keyboard
When it touches the ground.
You move like a frozen lava flow.
I believe that the secret of your creation
Would reveal the nature of the universe.
I thank you for your clean beauty
That brightens this dismal crawlway,
And I give you my promise
That I won't touch you as I pass
For fear of breaking you.