

C.O.G. Squeaks

Summer 2011



Great Saltpetre Cave Preserve, Karst-o-Rama weekend, 2011

THE CENTRAL OHIO GROTTO (COG)

The Central Ohio Grotto (COG) of the National Speleological Society meets at 7:00 p.m. the fourth Tuesday of most months at the Presbyterian Church on the Square in Worthington, Ohio. Please contact a grotto officer to confirm meeting time and place or better subscribe to the COG list server at cog@ontosystems.com by sending an email to cog@ontosystems.com with the subject "subscribe". The meeting site will be announced there and on the Grotto WEB site.

Grotto Mailing Address:

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Email: joegibson6591@sbcglobal.net

Grotto Membership Dues:

\$15 per individual or \$20 per family.

Grotto Officers Name Telephone

Chairman	Pat Gibson	740-967-0717
Vice Chair	Bruce Warthman	614-459-8345
Treasurer	Joe Gibson	614-855-7948
Secretary	Mark Swelstad	614-202-0349
Exec. Committee	Richard Hand	

The C.O.G. Squeaks

The C.O.G. Squeaks is mailed to dues paying members and to grottoes with which the COG exchanges newsletters. The C.O.G. Squeaks is also available by E-mail as an Adobe Acrobat file (PDF) or Word Document. The Squeaks is produced using Open Office. Please notify Mark Swelstad, if you would like a file of the Squeaks to reprint. The Squeaks is available as a PDF at: Website <http://www.centralohiogrotto.com>
List Server cog@ontosystems.com

Please send trip reports, caving articles, cave fiction, cave poetry, and cave photos to Mark Swelstad for publication.

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Karst Calendar

August 13th 2011 – Grotto Trip to Pine Hill Cave - Kentucky. Will be staying at GSP. Email Mark Swelstad at mswelstad@gmail.com for details.

September 2011 – Possible Grotto trip to Sloan's Valley. I am unsure who the contact is on this one.

October 2011 – possible Grotto trip – unplanned.

October 1 – Grotto trip to Hocking Hills

From the Editor:

In the past couple of months cavers have received more bad news about White-nose Syndrome – it's been found in Indiana and most recently in Kentucky. It's more important than ever that we follow strict decontamination protocols. Go to <http://caves.org/WNS/index.htm> to learn more. Be educated!

But hey – we can still go caving!

Mark Swelstad

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Cover photo by Joe Gibson. Great Saltpeter Cave Preserve – Karst O Rama – June 2011

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Message from the inflatable pool chair

As I scramble to put pen to paper, one theme keeps surfacing. I need to start this earlier. Don't know about you, but this summer is going by way too quickly. To sum up the last several months, I am encouraged each and every month by our meeting attendance. Thank you for showing your support. While my time left as chair is coming to an end, I am excited to look forward to see where my talents can be of use to the Grotto. Keep an eye out for an exciting special monthly meeting within the next couple of months.

I don't want to let the cat out of the bag but next year is our 60th anniversary as a Grotto. What should we do? Do you have a skill that would benefit the Grotto? Are you a planner, organizer, relentless partier or faithful supporter? We'll need a little bit of everything in the coming years. I look forward to celebrating our 75th in 2027. I wonder, how many original charter members are still living? Other than flipping through old Squeaks, how should we capture and present our history to new and perspective members? I am afraid that we will lose that knowledge and history from our famed members, past and present. Is it right to hoard our knowledge or share it responsibly with our other members. I agree that some information should be protected and not freely distributed to the public. But if that knowledge dies with the person, is that any better? Just some thoughts I have been struggling with lately. I would be willing to talk about any of these points with anyone whether you agree with me or not.

Looking forward, our Grotto calendar is taking shape and I look forward to seeing you at a meeting, in a cave, or in the grocery.

Ask yourself not what your grotto can do for you, but what can you do for your grotto?

See you soon!
Patrick Gibson

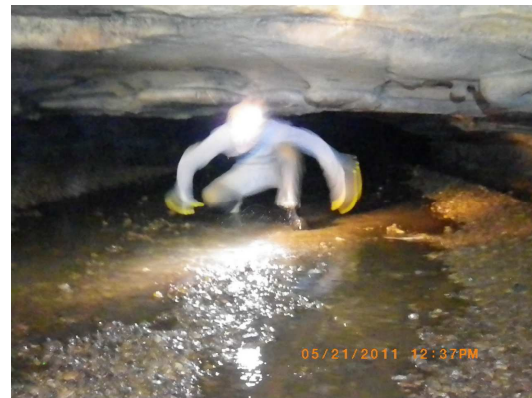


Photo by Joe Gibson

Seneca Caverns, Bellevue, Ohio Trip report – the Cliff Notes version By Pat Gibson

I was spending a weekend in Huron, OH and the group we were with decided to go to the Railroad museum in Bellevue and then to Seneca Caverns just outside of Bellevue. I thought, alright, a show cave. It'll be a good time. They bill themselves as "The Caviest Cave in the USA." I would have to agree. It was surprisingly unimproved for being a show cave. We could only experience three of the eight levels because of the high water level from all the spring rain. If you are near Sandusky, check them out! <http://www.senecacavernsohio.com/>

Trip report to GSP and Pine Hill

By Pat Gibson

The trip down to Rockcastle County, KY was peaceful and uneventful. I met Joe Gibson and his retreaters at GSP for what promised to be a relaxing and fun weekend. Little did I know, all that would change in the coming hours. I will spare everyone the gory details but I'll suggest one addition to your first aid kits. Imodium. Needless to say, I was pretty ragged from being up all night and was probably dehydrated. I did start feeling better by the time rolled around to head to Pine Hill. Pine Hill was my first and I could not wait to get back in there after so many years. It was a good trip with great people. By the end, I was pretty tired. Back at camp, I took a nap and tried to rehydrate. Dinner smelled so good but I was apprehensive to try much food. I stuck to bland. The weekend was cut short when while listening to my radio, I heard the weather warnings springing up to our southwest and it sounded like it was heading straight to us. So I made the decision that a nice night's sleep in my own bed was the best place for me. Overall, I had a good time considering the circumstances.



An Etruscan Warrior

Photo by Joe Gibson

Dillon Cave - By Richard Hand

This was a biological trip organized by Horton Hobbs and Erin Hazelton

Dillon cave is a small, multi-roomed talus cave of sandstone in eastern Ohio, but it did contain a small stream. By the dry entrance a woodchuck (*Marmota monax*) had made its own door. The cave has been the home for generations of raccoons (*Procyon lotor*). This was evident from their skeletal fragments and feces in several locations. It was probably a raccoon that had brought a fish into the cave from the reservoir about 10 meters away. Actually the fish was in pretty good condition; a few splinters of the skull, gill filaments, and part of its vertebra column. An opossum (*Didelphis virginiana*) had died in the cave or at least it had left its skull there. The opossum is an opportunist and will eat food where ever it finds it. That is why I gave credit to the raccoon for binging the fish home for dinner. There were two skull fragments that had at one time belonged to two muskrats (*Ondatra zibethicus*). It is unlikely that they had come so far from the water and into the cave to die. They had most likely been the dinner of a mink (*Neovison vison*). The mink's tooth marks were on the muskrat skulls.

Horton found some invertebrates also.

Richard Hand

Cave descriptions

By Richard Hand

HAYNES (BURWELL) CAVE

Monroe County, West Virginia

The entrance is a small sinkhole on the side of a wooded hill. Only the entrance area has any water. On a flowstone cone sets a wooden trough, placed there so many years ago by saltpeter workers to collect water from the dripping ceiling. Now the trough is completely encased in flowstone.

The general pattern of the cave is one level passage meandering over a lower passage. Where the upper one crosses over the lower there are pits connecting them, and the miners have placed wooden bridges over these pits. The cave is very dry and gypsum crystals abound. The dryness has helped preserve saltpeter vats, and near the end is a windlass that still works. It was used to raise buckets of saltpeter from the lower level.

Thick guano deposits on the walls indicate that a thriving bat population once resided there. Fred Grady has documented Pleistocene-Recent mammal bones and teeth from the cave floor. Over the years the walls have been heavily inscribed with historical and not-so-historical remarks.

POOR FARM CAVE

Pocahontas County, West Virginia

This cave consists of a series of large, intersecting borehole passages developed in the Hillsdale Limestone, Greenbrier Series. Its entrance is a hillside sinkhole in an open woodland.

The floor is immediately cluttered by several large slabs of fallen limestone, but soon becomes a level clay walkway. I will not bore you with details of all of the monotonous walking that we negotiated in the main tunnel, but we did get to slither through two breakdown obstructions before we got to the terminal breakdown that may end this passage. Formations were scattered along the way and in one place a curtain of stalactites nearly blocked the passage. A second trunk passage separates from the above tunnel about five minutes in from the entrance. Immediately it ascends a series of shallow rimstone dams into the well-decorated Dutch Oven Room. The Dutch Oven is a large flowstone formation. This room was formed when an over going stream passage broke through its ceiling. Centuries of leakage from the upper passage had formed all of the impressive flowstone in the room. Now the water trickles down the rimstone dams back into the first passage. In the other direction the upper passage is a long walking, clay-floored route and canyon that eventually leads to Jackie's Grotto, a well-decorated area. If one walks beyond the Dutch Oven Room, and descends to a lower level a long walk ends in a series of domes. This is one of the places where the cave takes in water. Another nearby cave vents water to the lower passages of this cave, and a sixty-foot pit penetrates from above. I have a feeling that there is a lot more of this cave to explore.

May 20-22, 2011

caving trip

By Joe Gibson

I organized a retreat for our bible study group that was called “CCC Retreat”.

Christ, caving and camping.

There were 16 people from our bible group and Pat Gibson from COG assisted.

Some had camped before and only one person, other than Pat and my wife Lisa, had been caving before.

Lisa and I arrived at GSP on Friday around 2pm.

Most everybody arrived by Friday night.

Two families came down on Saturday.

I led a group of nine people through Pine Hill. Thanks to Brad Boseker for being our car watcher.

I wanted to do something fairly easy to moderate for the trip.

Just before we entered the cave and before I gave my usual “how to move through the cave safely talk”, I slipped on a slick rock at the entrance and fell on my butt!

That wasn’t a good start. I wasn’t hurt, except for my ego, so we went in.

We poked into the domes near the entrance and went to the stream passage. We went back to where the tower domes area starts and some people were getting cold so we left after about 3 ½ hours in the cave.

That night we had a great meal that was cooked by the others that didn’t go caving.

After dinner Pat Gibson heard on his weather radio that a bad storm was coming in about 2-3 hours.

A few people broke camp and went home, including one family that came down on Saturday.

The storm wasn’t that bad, ½ hour of rain with lightning and then it cleared up by 3am.

Sunday was beautiful. We made breakfast and broke camp.

Mark and Laverne left about 8:30 with their pop-up camper in tow.

On their way out, about 2 miles from GSP, their camper broke free from their hitch and went off the road. Thankfully no one was hurt, but the camper was a total loss. Laverne told me later that they have been trying to get rid of the camper for a while. The guy that towed it away said that some family would be able to use it.

Everybody had a great time. This might be an annual event for our group.

Thanks to Pat Gibson for helping out on the trip, even though he had no sleep on Friday night due to “something he ate” that didn’t agree with him.

A few people in my group may be coming to the Music in the Mountain show.



Photo by Joe Gibson



All photos by Joe Gibson

KOR 2011

By Joe Gibson

On Thursday morning, my son Eric and me left for Kentucky for KOR.

We left the usual hour or so later than I wanted to.

We arrived around 2pm and staked out an area for the rest of our COG group that were coming later. It wasn't real hot. We got camp set up and didn't even break a sweat.

I spent the afternoon helping Bob Dobbs set up the sauna area hanging tarps, hooking up lights and whatever was needed. There were about 6 people helping, so the work got done quickly. Then I could get down to the more important things at KOR, drinking beer, relaxing, seeing old friends, checking out the vendors and did I mention beer? Mark Swelstad and Jamie Thompson arrived that night, and Mark Mayerchak arrived on Friday.

On Friday I went caving on Mark Swelstads trip. Originally, we were going to go to Mullins Spring cave, but with thunder in the distance, we opted for Pine Hill.

I really like Pine Hill cave. There are all aspects of caving there, mostly walking, some crawling, canyoning and also vertical.

I saw a part of the cave I've never seen before, the tower domes area.

We had 10 people in our group. After coming out of the tower domes area, 2 people in our group were cold and wanted to leave.

Jamie wasn't sure of the way to lead them out, so I went with them and started out.

I let Jamie lead the way out to get familiar with the cave.

When we got out, it was sunny and hot.

Thanks to my son Eric Gibson for being the “car watcher” for the trip.

Jamie became the car watcher then Eric and I went back to GSP.

On the way, we stopped at the coalmine area by the RR tracks.

I have not been through there before, pretty cool.

Friday night was the Howdy party with more beer and the Bluegrass band.

Friday night there was gelatin wrestling. It was similar to the Ramen Noodle wrestling of the past, but slimier. Pretty funny. On a serious note, there were a few wardrobe malfunctions.

Saturday morning, were greeted with the usual KOR thunderstorm.

I opted not to go caving and stayed at GSP.

Eric went on the Arthur Singleton cave trip with Mark Swelstad.

I sat in my van while the storm went through. The rain filled my new pop-up shade’s top with water and the top collapsed, no damage done, I just tightened it up and it was OK.

When Eric got back from his trip we went to Sinking Valley Winery.

I picked up a case of wine, 4 bottles were for a friend back home.

Saturday evening we cooked mass quantities of steaks, baked potatoes and steamed veggies.

I didn’t win anything in the door prizes or RKC raffle as usual.

The Rick House band was great.

We walked through GSP cave and made it back to camp to hang out and have more beverages.

The only injury I had was at camp on Saturday. Mark Swelstad lit a mosquito repellent stick and put it in the ground under my pop-up.

On one of my trips to the cooler, I forgot about the repellent stick and as I took a step, in my sandals, I dragged my bare

toe across the 1” hot burning ember.

After some hopping around and cussing I realized what happened and put some ice on it. Long story short, 2nd degree burn, lots of blistering and my toe is still black after 2 weeks.

On Sunday morning it rained again, so wet camping gear stuffed in the van quickly.

It rained just about all the way home too.

Had a great time at KOR. Can’t wait to go next year.



Photo by Joe Gibson

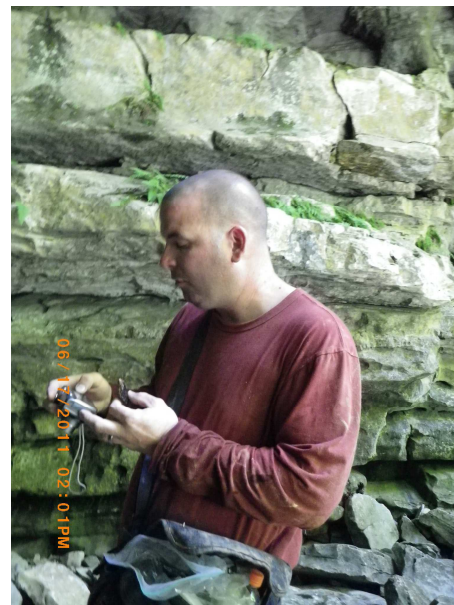


Photo by Joe Gibson

COG Caver Q & A

This is not an original idea but I think it's a good one – each Squeaks we will feature a different member of the grotto. This time I interviewed our Secretary, Mark Swelstad. – Ed.

1) Tell us a little bit about yourself – what do you do for a living? Where are you from?

I am married to Andi, 2 kids, Jon (10) and Amanda (9). Jon has been caving with the grotto a few times. I work as an application development manager for American Health Holding in Worthington. We are a medical management company. We currently live in Gahanna, but my family is originally from Indiana. I've been here long enough to consider myself a Buckeye now!

2) When and how did you start caving?

My parents met at Indiana University on a fraternity/sorority event in a cave near Bloomington, Indiana. Years later, when I was 9, Dad took me to that cave – and I was hooked. Through the years, we did a lot of canoeing in Indiana and Missouri so we would often stop to explore caves. In high school, a church group I was active in then was doing a lot of caving in Rockcastle County. When I stopped going to the church, I found the NSS and started caving mostly with the Cincinnati grotto.

3) Where are some places that you've caved?

I have caved in Kentucky, Tennessee, West Virginia, Indiana, Virginia,

Missouri and Ohio. By far, most of my caving has been done in and around Rockcastle County, Kentucky. That area has become a second home for me and is one of the most beautiful parts of the country, in my view.

4) What else do you like to do?

I am an avid bird watcher. I tend to bird mostly in the spring and then whenever I travel somewhere new, I bird there. I enjoy reading and am often found sitting in my garage, reading something.

5) What advice would you give to new cavers that are just getting started?

Ask a lot of questions, go caving a lot, and learn to do things the right way. But also understand that someone else's style of caving may not be right for you. There is room in the NSS for all sorts of people who are interested in caves and caving. You are no less of a caver if you stick to easy horizontal caves than the person who rappels into the deep pits of Mexico. There is a lot of diversity in the caving world – embrace the differences and get to know people. You will make lifelong friends.

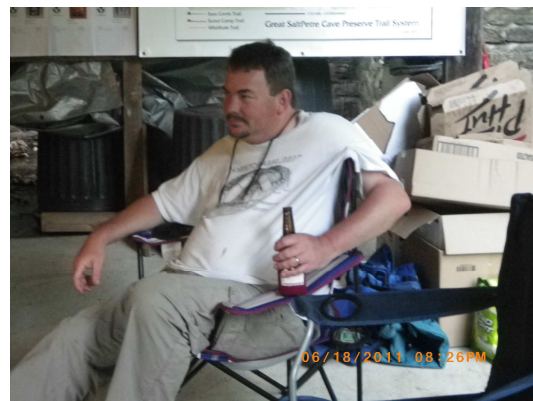


Photo by Joe Gibson

Karst O Rama – 2011

By Mark Swelstad

Jamie Thompson and I drove down Thursday night and met up with Joe Gibson out on the point. Our campsite was alongside the road going back to the sauna so we got to see a lot of interesting people going back and forth.

I had agreed to lead a trip to the Left side of Mullins Spring Cave on Friday but when we got ready that morning, it was threatening rain – not wanting to make the wrong decision, I opted to go to Pine Hill Cave instead. Some of the people on the trip hadn't been back to the Tower Domes section before so we all agreed that would be a good alternative.

After the usual problems getting everyone organized, we finally made it to the cave and got everyone in. We quickly made our way up the stream passage, around the mid section bypass, through the hands and knees crawl through the stream to the Y junction. Here we took the right fork and went as far up there as we could without doing some significant crawling, intentionally passing the route to the domes, just to see that section of the cave. There is some interesting passage down there and I'm told that way way back up there, you can see roots in the ceiling but I don't recall ever seeing that there. On the way back to the main passage, we turned right into the domes area. It had been years since I'd been there – I knew about where they were but couldn't remember exactly so when we all chimneyed up, I went to the left while some others went to the right. Their way was the correct way and I spent a few panicky seconds stuck in a tight opening from one chamber to another. Ah caving.

The Tower Domes are very impressive – I think some of them probably approach 200 feet but I don't really know.

They're HUGE. Some of them have some layers of fossilized coral in chert about 6-8 feet from the floor. These were formed in a coral reef probably sometime between 318 and 359 million years ago. It's humbling to think that these fossils were embedded in solid limestone for 100's of millions of years before the cave was formed not quite so long ago. We didn't see all of the domes back there, but we spent probably 30 or 40 minutes poking around. Some of the cavers we were with weren't equipped for a long trip so we needed to be mindful of our time.

When we got back to the Y junction, some people wanted to leave so Joe and Jamie led them out while the rest of us turned upstream towards the waterfall. We slogged through the occasionally knee-deep water and found the waterfall. Despite the recent rains, there didn't seem to be a lot of water. Some of us climbed it to check out the dome up top – there is more chert-fossilized coral here. It would be interesting to know if this represents the same formation as that of the tower domes. By now, everyone was pretty much ready to leave. We hauled ourselves out of the cave and back to GSP.

We visited with some people, hung out near our camp, and relaxed. We made dinner and watched the jello wrestling event near the sauna. Eventually we all slept...but the campground stayed pretty boisterous most of the night as I recall.

It was raining when I woke up on Saturday....that's not quite right..it was POURING. It was like someone was taking a bucket of water and throwing it on me over and over again. Despite this, the cave I had planned on taking an easier trip to wasn't known to flood (at least in the parts we were going) so we were a go. The few hardy souls that showed up to go caving were hard to see through the rain but we all managed to figure it out.

Arthur Singleton's Cave is just off Crooked Creek so I was a little concerned that the creek would be high and make it difficult for us to get over to the entrance. I was also concerned about the steep climb down the hill from the parking area. I could see how easily this could get very muddy and difficult to get down. I was surprised that both were seemingly unaffected by the rain. We went into the cave and made a nice loop around. We went to the Empire room, where you can climb an enormous pile of breakdown to see some interesting columns at the top. Slipping on your stomach under a rock, you come to the 'art room', where decades of cavers and scouts have turned a 10x10x4 grotto into a mud art display – little figurines of mud line the floor and walls – almost every nook and cranny has something. Some of them are very creative.

From here, we descended into the famous one-legged passage. This passage would be a belly crawl were it not for a leg sized notch on the bottom where you can sort of drag your leg under you. After a short time, you're forced to get down and crawl on your stomach through some water – it's refreshing after working through the crawl. Just past this, you resume the

one-legged passage for another 100 feet before finally popping back out into the main entrance room.

We exited the cave to a stunningly gorgeous day – the rains had passed, the skies had cleared, and we all headed back to enjoy the rest of the afternoon.

Saturday night was the usual KOR party – we skipped the banquet in favor of making our dinner. Steak and potatoes could not have tasted better. Joe and Jamie did a really nice job. We went up and listened to the raffle drawing and the program. Gary O'Dell talked about early years caving in Rockcastle County. The band came onstage a short while later – I think we might have gone up to GSP at some point, but I didn't make it up too late. A couple days of caving and KOR 'activities' had worn me out; I slept right through the night.

Sunday morning we quickly tore down camp and left. Another fun KOR. 2012 isn't that far away!



Photo by Joe Gibson

Greetings Cavers!

Let me introduce you to *The Rockcastle Karst Conservancy*

Cavers nationwide are feeling the threat of increased cave closures (WNS, government land closings, and land owner issues). The Rockcastle Karst Conservancy protects Kentucky's karst environments and supports access to caves in the Rockcastle County region. We currently own properties cavers know and love to visit, such as Great Saltpeter Cave in Rockcastle County and Misty Cave in Jackson County. We have even secured ongoing access to Goochland Cave!

RKC's Vision is to be the leading non-profit organization owning and protecting significant cave and karst resources. We manage cave resources to support continued enjoyment by the community through wise stewardship and ownership.

The Rockcastle Karst Conservancy is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization run entirely by volunteers, cavers and your fellow grotto members.

Help us grow, protect, and preserve caves for cavers. Join other cavers, from yours and other grottos, The National Speleological Society, and concerned individuals, by becoming a member today at www.rkci.org.

Membership Options starting at \$15 include:

- Annual
- Sustaining
- Life

The new Sustaining membership is a simple way to support Kentucky's only local karst conservancy. By having a small monthly amount (\$5, \$10, or more) charged to your credit card you keep RKC moving forward in its efforts to be the leading non-profit organization in owning and protecting significant cave and karst resources.

Your membership in RKC supports efforts to increase cave holdings and open more caves to all cavers. Do your part.

Join the Rockcastle Karst Conservancy today and help *Protect Kentucky's Interior*.

50 Years Ago

There was a great deal of talk about doing an Ohio Cave Survey. Larry Matthews, the COG chair in early/mid 1961, was asking for cave names and locations and was planning on assigning each grotto member a different county to be responsible for. COG Squeaks – July 1961

In the April 1961 issue, a lengthy trip report described some grotto members driving a Model A Ford (!) down to West Virginia for some caving.

Earlier that year, a notice in the COG newsletter reminded members that buying multiple toll tickets for the Portsmouth bridge crossing “reduces the cost of a crossing from 25 cents to 15 cents!!” COG Squeaks – March 1961

25 Years Ago

In the July/August 1986 edition of the COG Squeaks, Bill Walden wrote an article about his family’s drive out to that year’s NSS Convention in New Mexico. His daughter had read a book about the Santa Fe Trail a year or two before and she reread it for the trip out west. The Walden family followed the route of the trail through Kansas all the way to Santa Fe (quite a long distance), and the article describes a few of the high points of the trip.

In that same article, Bill mentions the horrible storms and the resulting flooding that occurred as a result. At least one car belonging to cavers was washed away with cavers inside and the security that was hired for the convention was credited with saving the occupants.