



GADSDEN GROTTTO

Winter 2012



White Plains Cave

Pictured at top: Stephen Brewer; Yellow helmets- Tyler & Kristin Horton; Right back- Sharon Brewer; Left in red shirt- Michael Ray; Helmet off- Benjamin von Cramon

Gadsden Grotto

Executive Committee

- Chairman: Stephen Brewer
- 1st Vice Chairman
of Programs and Projects:
Anthony Cline
- 2nd Vice Chairman of Public
Relations: Michael Ray
- Secretary/Treasurer:
Sharon Brewer
- Newsletter Editor: Michael Ray
- Web Page Design: Michael Ray

Newsletter

The Gadsden Grotto *Newsletter* is published on a semi-regular basis by the Gadsden Grotto (GG) of the National Speleological Society (NSS) as its official newsletter.

All material submitted for publication is subject to editing for clarity, grammatical considerations, and to meet space limitations.

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All original materials submitted for publication will be returned to sender. Electronic materials will not be returned. Digital photographs need not be greater in size than 800 pixels wide.

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Web Page

<http://www.caves.org/grotto/gadsdengrotto/index.html>

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New Chairman Elected

At the regular October meeting of the Gadsden Grotto, the members elected a chairman to fill an office vacancy. Stephen Brewer was elected. After the election Brewer commented "...after the vote last night I actually felt a little sad that I would no longer do programs. I rather enjoy it, although I do like being chair..."

The grotto has great confidence that Mr. Brewer will continue to lead the group in a positive direction.

As a result of Brewer moving to the chairman office, a new Vice-Chairman of Programs and Projects had to be appointed. The executive committee met and discussed the appointment. Mr. Anthony Cline as Vice-Chairman of Programs and Projects to fill the empty office.

Chairman

Stephen Brewer

**Not Available on
Internet Version**

stevebrewer@cablone.net



Vice-Chairman

Programs & Projects

Anthony Cline

**Not Available on
Internet Version**

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The following are summaries of the minutes from the Gadsden Grotto Regular Meeting.
For full details of the minutes, see the grotto secretary/treasurer

June 12, 2012

By Sharon Brewer, secretary. 11 Attendees

Treasurers report: General Fund \$359.32 Rope Fund \$75.00

Old Business:

Steve Brewer gave a trip report on his first trip to Fantastic pit. A trip report on Limrock was given. The trip to Ulla Cave was discussed. The trip took seven hours, and seven people went. When discussing a recent trip, Misty Mashburn said, "I was fine until I almost drown." Steven Argo added, "I froze. I needed better clothing." Gene mentioned, "I have no idea where the bream (fish) came from."

New Business:

Bobby Whorton and his health were discussed. Several talked of his contributions to the caving community including the founding of the grotto, discovery of Bluff River with Gary Stewart, supporting others on cave trips, getting the grotto banner done, and helping design the patch. Gene Reeves brought up the "adopt a mile program" again. Grotto Cave information signs, cards, or some kind of poster was brought up (by David Teal) as an idea to put at the entrance to sacrificed caves to invite other cavers to join up with groups. Gene brought a case to show an example of things you might want to have in your cave survival pack. A couple of items were discussed. A space blanket (\$3 @ Academy), first aid kit, and batteries were passed around the room. A trip to Case Cave June 23 was planned. Steve Brewer in charge of the details.

Program: Steve Brewer showed 25 minutes of Underground Mysteries.

July 10, 2012

By Sharon Brewer, secretary. 8 Attendees:

May and June minutes were approved with two changes added. The donated rope pad is in storage with the grotto custodian, Michael Ray. June minutes were approved with a note that the entrance cave signs were David Teal's idea.

Treasurer report for the month of June General Fund \$365.59 Rope fund \$75.00 Total = \$440.59

Since Chairman Gene Reeves was absent, Steve Brewer filled in as chairman.

New Business:

The passing of Bobby was discussed. A motion was made, seconded, and voted unanimously to purchase an engraved brick in his honor. Sharon Brewer was directed to make the purchase. Bobby's name and NSS number is to be placed on the brick. Michael Ray had two founder's list that he showed to David Teal for verification. David Teal mentioned a mapping project at Bluff River. If you are interested, you may contact David Teal or Lin Guy.

Old Business:

Cave reports included Ken Lofgren's visit to Cathedral Caverns, Steve Brewer and Michael Ray discussed the Grotto Camp/Cave trip to Case Cave, and Michael's camping trip to a tunnel. Sign ideas were presented. Michael Ray is going to work on 2-3 ideas for us to choose from at the August meeting. David has talked with Joel at a company about signs that will last. The admonition to KISS "Keep It Simple Stupid" idea. The Facebook page has an issue that needs discussed. Some members have felt locked out and hurt by the page. They blamed the admins. One of the admins resigned and appointed two new admins, Sharon Brewer and Selena Morton. Steve Brewer, Sharon Brewer, and Selena Morton are now in charge of helping the facebook page to stay positive and create a connection point for info about cave trips, photos, and member news. An email was created and sent out explaining past issues with glitches associated with Facebook.

Program: Bobby's memorial slide show.

August 14, 2012

By Sharon Brewer, secretary. 8 Attendees:

July Minutes read and approved with a note being added that Michael Ray had paid the NSS WEBSITE Fee

Treasurer report for the month of July. No income and \$100.00 expense for Brick for Bobby.

General Fund \$265.59 Rope fund \$75.00 Total = \$340.59

Old Business:

Brick for Bobby was purchased and NSS notification sent to Polly. Gene apologized for any issues surrounding Facebook.

Trip reports:

David Teal spoke about the wonderful time had by all especially Selena Morton at the "WELCOME BACK, JIM" party held at Michael Ray's. David Teal also mentioned the remapping trips of Bluff River. Steve Brewer talked about Mystery Falls trip and how high the water got. They had to swim out in 4 ½ feet deep water. Art Molter, Steve Brewer, Shanon Poss, and a friend from Georgia went to Little River Canyon to practice vertical. Jim Loftin spoke about doing some digging with Mark and Kristine to Cave Mountain Preserve in Guntersville. Steven Argo took Emily and Beau to a local cave and is looking to help plan a beginner trip. The grotto cave sign choices were discussed with plans to return with a final sign in September. Adopt a mile program was motioned by Marina Starks, seconded by Ken Lofgren, and passed by 6-2 vote.

New Business:

Future Cave Trip for beginners will be set up. Future Fern trip tentatively planned for October 1st. Suggestions for fu-

Minutes continued....

ture cave trips included Mutt Canyon. A card for E.T Davis was signed by the grotto, and mailed to him with a NAS-CAR T-shirt for his hospitality during the reunion. Matt Crook is the owner (of Weaver Cave), and he has given the Gadsden Grotto full permission to enter the cave.

Program: DVD from National Geographic.

September 11, 2012

By Sharon Brewer, secretary. 11 Attendees:
Since the Chairman Gene Reeves was absent, Stephen Brewer called the meeting to order

Opening Business:

Polly thanked the Grotto for their purchase of an NSS brick in honor of Bobby. David Teal gave us a report on Susan Teal's father.

Treasurer report for the month of August No income and no expenses.

General Fund \$265.59 Rope fund \$75.00 Total = \$340.59

Old Business:

Trip reports

Steve Brewer talked about a trip to Neversink with Charlie and Shanon. Jim Loftin spoke about a pull down trip through Sinking Cove with Mark, Kristine, Dirk, and Chuck. They did the trip in 1 to 1 ½ hours. September TAG Cave-in was discussed.

New Business:

Sign for cave entrances-Selena Morton made a motion that the executive committee discuss and decide on the printing and ordering the signs. David Teal encouraged the committee to call 256-458-1135 for an estimate. The Post Office bill was discussed. The motion was passed that the secretary pay the bill. Dressing Rooms at Tumbling Rock and Limrock could possibly be areas of advertising our grotto. It was decided to check with them to see what they need the most. Maybe hooks to hang clothes or mirrors could be provided by our grotto. An Amendment to the By-laws was put forth for notification to the membership. The amendment will be voted on at the October meeting. The mission statement was presented by Michael Ray. An affirmative vote by the members made the mission statement official.

Adjourned to the Program: Personal pictures

October 9, 2012

By Sharon Brewer, Secretary

Attendance: 11 Attendees:

Since Gene Reeves stepped down as chairman, Stephen Brewer called the meeting to order.

Opening Business:

September Minutes read and approved with a very small note added about the post office being paid for a whole year.

Treasurer report for the month of September
Income +\$20 in memberships Exp -\$48 for full yr PO box

General Fund \$237.59 Rope fund \$75.00 Total = \$312.59

Old Business:

Trip reports: Jim Loftin shared about a trip to Anderson Springs Cave with Mark and Kristine. Moses Tomb report. What exists of a trail to the cave is horribly obscure and hard to differentiate among the tornado damaged woods. Sharon Brewer obtained copies of newsletter archives from the NSS headquarters.

New Business:

Jay Clark, NSS board member attended the meeting to encourage us to stay involved, ask questions, and express concerns. Jay Clark also informed us of SCCI acquisitions. This year, Johnson's Crook and Lost Canyon Cave were added. The lease on Jacob's Mountain expired. With 11,000 acres and 65 caves, letting it go was sad. Valhalla and matching fund programs through major donors were also discussed. Jay Clark mentioned that the changing rooms at Tumbling Rock needs painted and encouraged us to be involved in updating the place with mirrors or paint. Jay also updated us on news from Tumbling Rock. After an incident of smoking, drinking, and dumped carbide inside of Tumbling Rock by uninvited guests, the cave will operate under a Locked Gate Policy at all times. Visitors will lock the gate when they enter and again when they exit the cave. The Tumbling Rock Christmas Party will be the first weekend in December. Camping will be allowed for guests with pre-arranged permission. The cost will be \$20 per person.

Election for Chairman:

Since the chairman vacancy was announced two weeks prior, we held an election to fill the spot. Steven Argo and Steve Brewer were nominated. After nominees left the room, votes were cast and Steve Brewer was elected as Chairman.

Program: Presented by Steve Brewer: Ridgewalking



Rope Practice at Little River Canyon

Left to right: Stephen Brewer, Shannon Poss, and Charles Neiswenter.



OFF ROPE

In Memory of **Robert L. Whorton**

NSS #:20052

February 23, 1956 - July 1, 2012

Memorial Services were held at Heritage Baptist Church, Pilgrims Rest Road, Southside for Mr. Robert L. "Bobby" Whorton, 56, Glencoe who passed away Sunday, July 1, 2012.

Bobby was a native and lifelong resident of Etowah County. He was a member of National Speleological Society, founding vice chairman charter member of the Gadsden Grotto, sustaining member of the Southeastern Cave Conservancy Inc., Bat Conservation International and Arbor Day.

Bobby was a dear friend of the Gadsden

Grotto. Through the years, Bobby served as an officer in many capacities. He is best known for his find, exploration and mapping of Bluff River Cave. Bobby's article on Bluff River can be read in the January-April 1989 Gadsden Grotto Newsletter. This newsletter can be found at: <http://www.caves.org/grotto/gadsgrotto/newsletters/GGNewsJan-Apr1989.pdf>

Bobby had a love for handicapped children, conservation, wildlife and animals. In lieu of flowers the Gadsden Grotto donated funds to the National Speleological Society in the amount to have a brick with his name engraved on it.

Our brother from another mother and life long friend will be missed. Once again, we have another grotto member to say "Off Rope" for the last time.



TRIP REPORTS

First Time with the Gadsden Grotto

by Tyler Horton

Today, for the first time, we met several members of the Gadsden Grotto. Man what an amazing group of people! All were very knowledgeable about every aspect of the caves. This came in very helpful because we, as novice cavers, had several questions about cave features, cave structures, gear, and general caving. To start the day off we met in White Plains and set off to explore the "unnamed solidier." After a quick lesson on surveying, mapping, and GPS we gave it the name White Plains Cave. But the fun didn't stop there.

We then convoyed over to the widely known Weaver Caves. The caves in this area are simply amazing, with intricate paths and tunnels that wind throughout the caves. As new cavers with not much experience we had explored these caves in the past. But little did we know that there was a whole world of tunnels that we had never heard of. We proceeded to crawl through one of the elaborate tunnels on our bellies until finally we emerged into the "Ladies Cave." We had previously seen this cave as well, but we obviously had never been into the largest room in the whole area. This room is enormous, with stunning rock formations.

After some exploring we proceeded to head to the lesser known New Cave. This cave was also amazing. This place has obviously not been tampered with by masses. This cave is secluded and beautiful. Only spanning about 400 feet into the Earth, this place was still a great adventure. The stalagmites and stalactites made the crawl to the back worthwhile.

We would like to thank Sharon, Steve, Michael, and Benji for the great adventure today. Me and my wife Kristin had a blast. We are definitely very excited and looking forward to the next trip.



Tyler & Kristin Horton

Gadsden Grotto Trip to Case Cave

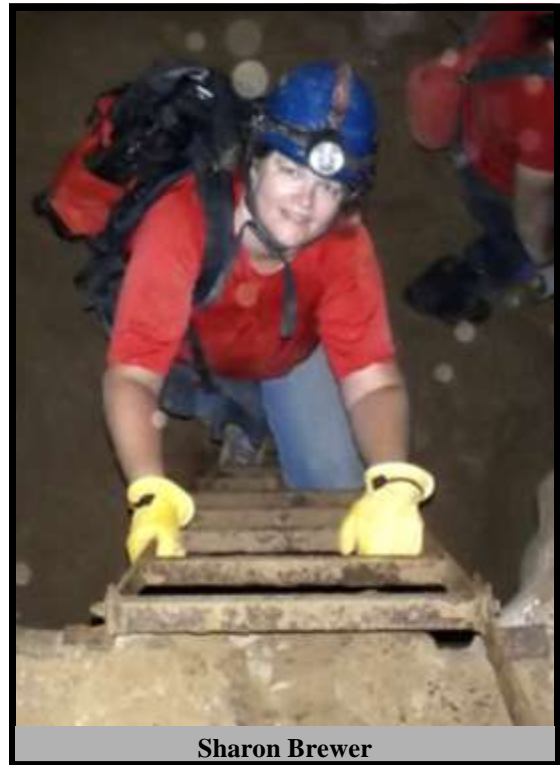
By Sharon Brewer

On June 22, 2012, Steve and I packed and headed to Moses Tomb Camping area. When we arrived at the gate, we were surprised to find the combination lock hanging off to the side with key locks in place. We had no way to get in. We called several people looking for an answer. While we were looking for a remedy, Gene Reeves pulled in behind us. We preferred not to bother the owner unless it was necessary. No one else had answers, so we called the owner. The owner told us who to contact to get in. Once in, we set up camp.

Looking around, we decided to set up camp in the middle of the field next to a campfire ring. Absent of mowers, we did the best we could to clear the tall grass and avoid any poison ivy. We lit the fire to cook our foil veggie wrap, while we continued to set up camp.

We were all set up when Michael and Marina pulled in. Michael, determined not to set up camp in the field, looked around and found the cleared out camping area up in the trees. It was so nice in the trees that we all moved our tents and reset camp. I left the shower hung up in the field since it was so hard to get it set up in the first place.

Once our camp was moved, we settled in for dinner and talk. We told stories and jokes that need not be repeated. As things were settling down for a good night's sleep, there were odd noises coming from Gene's tent. Marina was in another tent giggling until she almost choked to death trying to get a breath. A little while later, Michael shouts as if his tent had a snake in it. Following his shout, he says, "Payback is h___!" followed by, "Someone's tent is coming down." I could barely stop laughing in my pillow. I had waited up to hear what response the prankster "frog" in



Sharon Brewer



Stephen Brewer finds a friend in his "crawl-way" adventure

your bed would get, and I was certain that he thought Gene had placed it there.

At 3 a.m., our air mattress was flat. We pulled the thing out of the tent and over to the car to re-inflate. The loud whining noise mixing with my sleepy thoughts brings so much joy. At this point my only hope is that the mattress will last until morning. Morning comes with milk and cereal. Someone else cooked eggs. After breakfast, we headed to the park to sign the necessary papers and permits.

To the cave, we hiked. The guys rigged the rope, while the ladies prepared to descend. The entrance has a small crawl about 6-8 feet long where you stage your drop into the 40 feet pit. About 15 feet down, the metal bar spans across the canyonned pit. Through a series of ledges and squeezes, you reach the bottom. It is not a fun, free-fall type of descent, but more of a wiggle around, ledge-stand and drop.

Once at the bottom, there was plenty of cave to explore. We waited until we were in the bigger rooms to set up the camera gear. Being only the second trip to take my gear into, I still feel odd asking people to wait on me while we are on a "caving" trip. Michael, Marina, Gene, and I stayed in the main room working with flashes, while Steve headed to explore. Gene eventually fell to sleep. After Steve came back, we divided into two parties. Marina, Gene, and I headed towards the small ladder to join up with Michael and Steve who went to explore. Maybe one of them will tell about the crawl-way excitement.

Trip Reports continued....



Left to right. Standing: Sharon Brewer, Marina Starks, and Stephen Brewer. Sitting: Michael Ray, and Gene Reeves.

On the way out, we again split up. This time, Marina and Michael went ahead. Gene, Steve, and I traveled slower but headed the same way. We came to a T where it was decided that I would head on out and they would explore. They said they would only be about 10 minutes. I was fine with the arrangement, until I missed the turn and came to a dead end with walls on three sides. The massive stone seemed to taunt me as my mind raced with thoughts of being alone and lost. I went back to the spot where we had split up and waited. I knew they had only one way to come out. In less than a minute, I decided to look and see if I could find the spot where I had missed the way out. I found it, but by this time I was uncertain and afraid to venture into an area where I would have no point to meet up.

Their ten minutes was longer than my ten minutes. While I waited, I decided to get all my gear out and take photos in the walkway. It took my mind off of being alone. I was not totally sure that there was not another way out as well. Ringing loud in my mind was the admonition to stay where someone last saw you. I knew even if they found another way around they would know where to find me. So, I played with flashes and cameras realizing once again how hard it is to be the photographer and the subject.

A very long ten minutes later, they came. Steve sounded very disappointed that I had not geared up and climbed out

already. I reminded Gene that the arrangement was for him to climb up first and be lead assistant for Marina. Come to find out, it was me who needed to help the most. Gene had so much trouble getting past a certain spot that it was decided that he would climb up to a mid level ledge, rework the rope around, and assist Marina to climb to the level with him. Once Gene and Marina were out, I started. Inch by excruciating inch, I climbed. I have a fire rescue harness which I used with the Texas system. Never have I had so much trouble with the main attachment loop moving ever so slightly up and then settling back down. One area of squeeze was horrid as my knees had no room to bend.

Steve and Michael below me were at my mercy. Once I was out, Michael began the climb and ran into the same spot where my knees had trouble. He reworked the rope so that Steve would not have the same trouble. Once we were all out, we locked the gate and took a group picture.

On the way to return the key, I heard all about my slow descent and lack of practice on rope. Everything I heard was true, but I also realized once again, that Steve and I cave on two different levels. I have turtle speed, while Steve has "not patient" speed.

We returned the key to a campground host and begged two showers in the bathhouse. The lady was real nice, but seemed unsure about giving permission. She did grant permission with, "Just hurry." We stopped in Trenton to get a foam pad for the flat air mattress and headed back to camp.



Stephen Brewer and Gene Reeves back at camp.



Mystery Falls Trip Report

By Stephen Brewer

Participants: Stephen Brewer (AL), Greg Mathis (GA), Shanon Poss (GA), Dave Thomas AKA "Cracker" (GA)

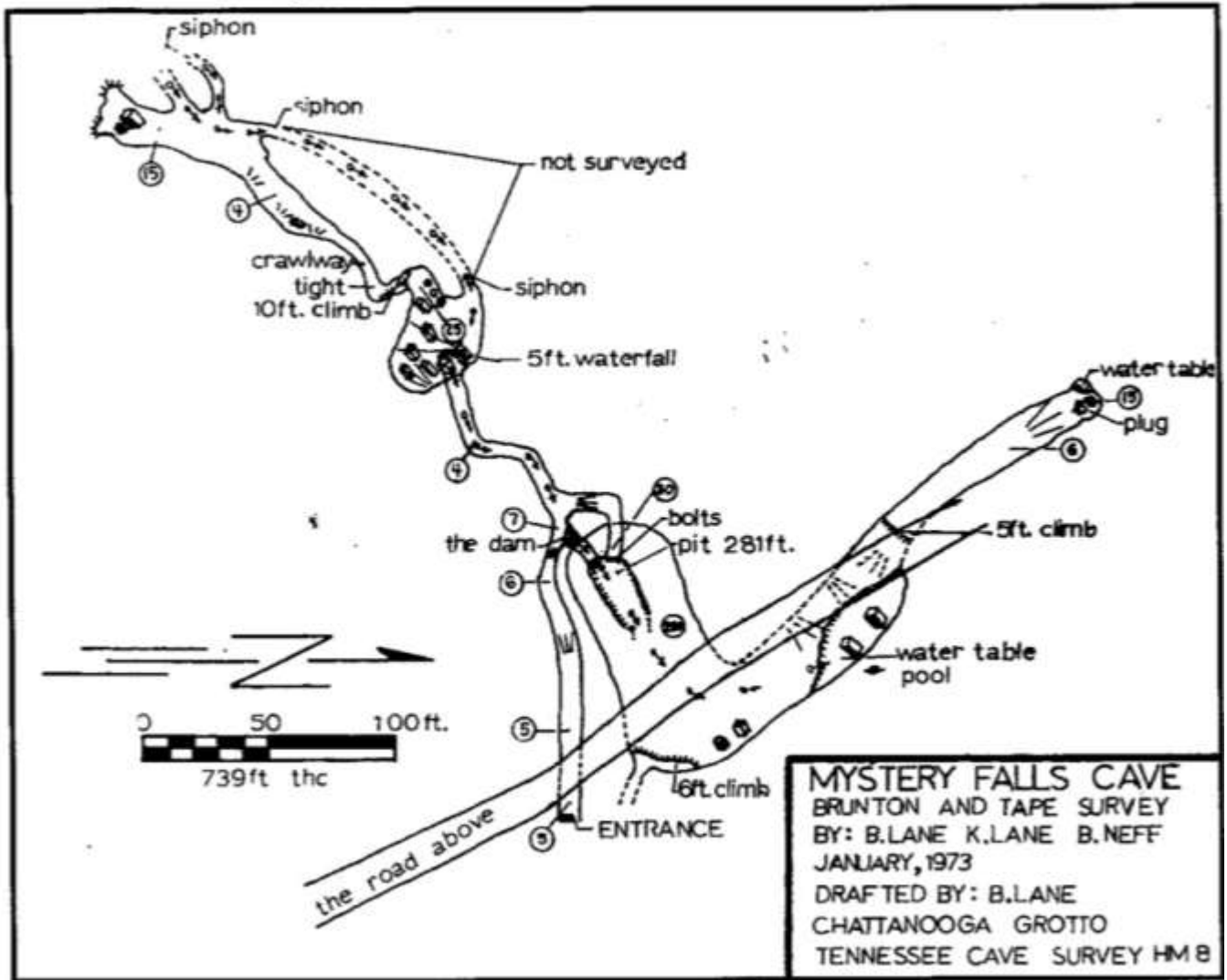
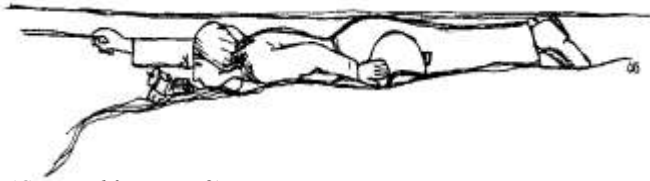


Figure 2.1. Map of Mystery Falls Cave. Survey by Buddy Lane and the Chattanooga Grotto of the NSS, 1973.

On July 21, 2012, the four of us met in Chattanooga to do Mystery Falls pit. This beautiful 270' pit is one of the easiest TAG caves to access, being about 20 feet away from the parking spot. The cave is gated, since it is located in the heart of Chattanooga, on the side of Lookout Mountain. The man-made entrance tunnel goes about 200 feet before intersecting the stream passage. At this location is an old dam, which was once used to restrain and channel the water into a twelve inch pipe for the city's drinking water. Just beyond the dam, the water pours out of the pipe and down the pit into a large shallow pool at the bottom. The huge chamber below tapers down until it eventually ends in a sump. Prior to the construction of Nickajack Dam, the cave was accessible through a small, wet crawl cave known as Anderson Springs near the Tennessee River. This passage is now flooded, and the only way to enter is through the manmade tunnel.

The weather had been rainy, with spotty light showers from time to time. When we entered the cave at about 10:00 AM, there was a light rain falling, and we could hear a little thunder. The flow of water in the cave was filling approximately two-thirds of the pipe, and the water did not look very high. The only water in the tunnel on the way in was a very small puddle. We rigged the pit and I descended first. By this time the water appeared to be rising some, and it was a rather wet drop. Oftentimes cavers will put a plywood block over the pipe to make the drop drier and easier. However, we did not attempt to block the pipe, since we realized that it would probably overflow very quickly anyway. Greg Mathis, the most experienced among us, came down next, followed by the rookie of the group, Shanon Poss, and then Dave Thomas. We looked

Trip Reports continued....



(Continued from page 8)

around a little at the bottom, but it was difficult to see anything because the chamber by this time was filled with heavy spray and wind. So we decided to make a hasty retreat. I climbed out first, with Shanon right behind me climbing tandem. The water was hitting us pretty hard about 90% of the way up, and we feared for our well-being. Shanon's deepest drop prior to this was Neversink, so I was naturally a bit worried about her. Considering her inexperience, Shanon did an excellent job of remaining calm and focused throughout the climb out. Every time I stopped to rest, I could feel the rope bouncing below me, so I knew she was still pressing on. Time seemed to stand still while we climbed, but we eventually arrived at the top. Due to the poor communication factors, Greg thought he heard someone yell "off rope," and started climbing while there were still two of us on rope. (I realized later what he probably heard was me shouting down encouragement to Shanon.) So we were climbing three at a time, although the rigging and the rope did not seem to mind. Shanon had some difficulty at the lip, in part because of the extra weight below her. She remained calm and worked through it, and was very relieved to finally get off rope. Less than five minutes after she got off rope, Greg arrived at the lip. We saw that the water was now filling the pipe, and also overflowing the dam and flooding the passage. The three of us headed out, and had to swim through the passage with approximately one foot of air space near the end. Dave made it up about twenty minutes later, and I swam back in to assist him in de-rigging. The water was still high by this time, although it did appear to be receding somewhat. The rain was no longer falling when we got out.

The only weather station report I got from Chattanooga for the day showed only a fourth an inch of rain for the entire day. I suspect it was locally much heavier than that, although the ground being saturated probably contributed to the rapid rise of water in the cave. (I learned later that the area had gotten four inches of rain the night before. After completing the climb out, my next concern was the entrance tunnel being sumped. I suppose if it had been we could have waited it out and exited in a few hours. I was glad that the water was mostly rain water, and not your typical cold cave water. We were not really dressed for a total soaking, which is what we all got. Afterwards, I told everyone that we should go again during drier weather, since Mystery is much more picturesque when the dome chamber is not full of spray and water.

Although the trip was wetter and more challenging than we had anticipated, we still had a good time. It is good to face adversity and difficulty sometimes so that you can build your confidence knowing that you have overcome it.

Improvised Knee Pads

By: Kgirl (Kristin Horton)

When I and my husband first started exploring caves we didn't realize what we were getting into. After our first cave experience we had "knot heads" and bruised knees from the low ceilings. We didn't want to go into our next cave without the proper protection so we went by the local hardware store and bought some inexpensive hard hats, head lamps, and thick rubber knee pads.

As a couple on a limited income we were not able to purchase the greatest quality protective gear so we had to improvise a little. Our knee pads would not stay on very well while crawling around so we used the fix all solution-Duct Tape! After wrapping a little duct tape around the Velcro straps of the knee pads, I had no issues with my knee pads slipping and no bruises! We plan to fix our hard hats soon by cutting off the bill and attaching chin straps.



Tyler & Kristin Horton





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