

GADSDEN GROTTO *Newsletter*



2015

GADSDEN GROTTO

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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.

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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/gadsgrotto/index.html>

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CHAIRPERSON 2015-16

Shanon Neiswenter Gadsden Grotto Chairperson for 2015 — 2016



At the May Grotto Business Meeting, Shanon Neiswenter was elected the grotto's very first lady chairperson!

Shanon has been with the grotto for several years. She started as a novice but has since earned the respect of all cavers. The same year that she received her vertical training, Shanon entered the TAG Fall Cave-in climbing event and won second place! Gene Reeves, Michael Ray and Stephen Brewer were planning a trip to Illiad Cave on September 17, 2011. This is an extremely difficult cave system with multi-drops and tight crawls. We invited other "experienced" cavers to join us. Shanon immediately wanted to go. We tried very hard to dissuade her from this trip. We did not think she was ready for such a hardcore cave trip. However, we could not convince her and she joined our group. She took on the cave with no trouble and hasn't stopped since. Later, Shanon married Charles Neiswenter in Stephens Gap Pit.

Shanon has worked hard to grow membership and train the new members. Our grotto is growing once again due to her efforts. She has brought a sense of a family of caving friends to the grotto.

Welcome the grotto's first lady chairperson, Shanon Neiswenter!

Front Cover Photograph by Jim Loftin

Top Picture: Checking the endangered grey bats, *Myotis grisescens*, for mites and any abnormalities.

Bottom Picture: Netting endangered Indiana bats, *Myotis sodalis*, at the Morgue en-

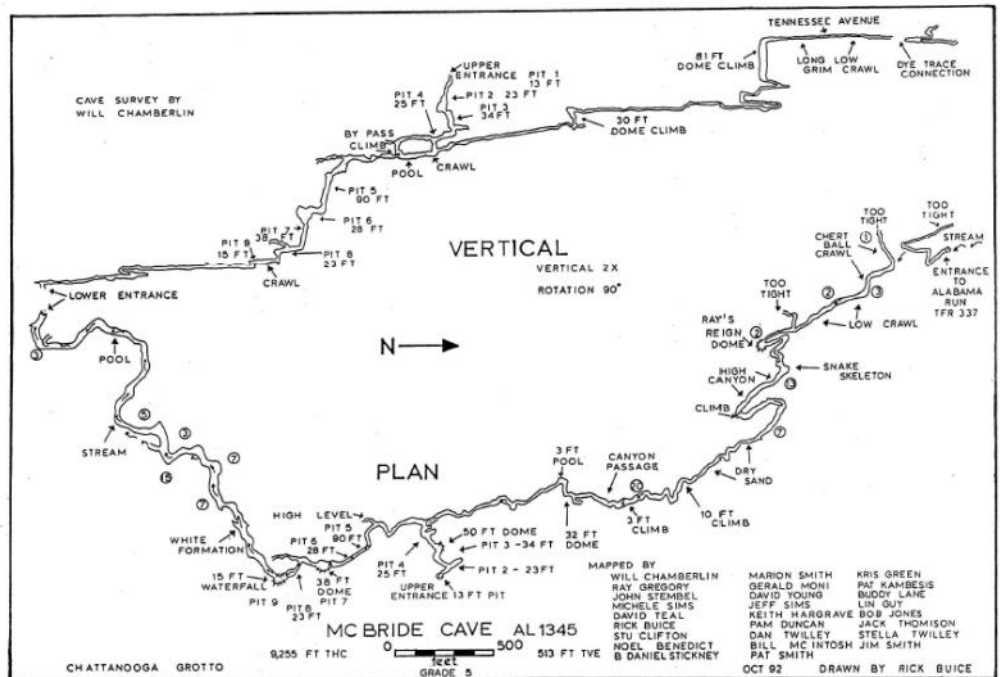
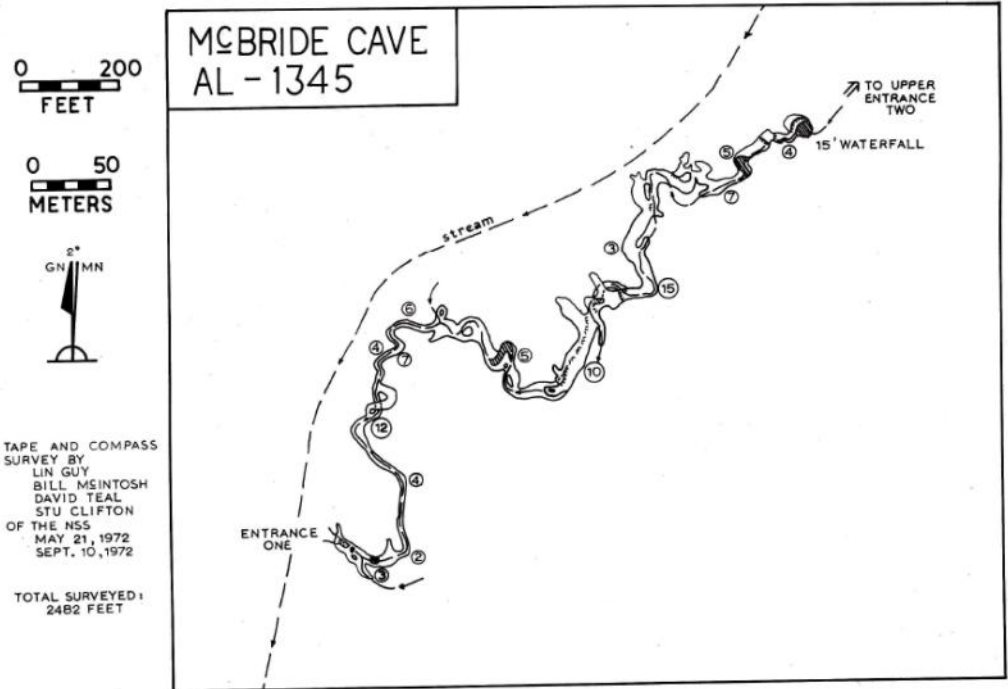


CAVE HISTORY

McBride Cave Discovery By Lin Guy 10235

It was David Teal that discovered McBride Cave. He heard there was a cave in the area on May 7, 1972, and he and I went to look for it on May 21 with Henry Steigerwaldt and Bill McIntosh. We missed seeing the entrance and walked way up the mountain, passing a 25-foot climbdown near a small natural bridge (the upper entrance?). Back at the bottom of the mountain David found the entrance and we started mapping. About 500 feet inside David spotted a possum. We quit after mapping 860.5 feet of stream passage.

Stu Clifton and I returned on September 10 and continued mapping to an unclimbable 15-foot waterfall 2,278 feet from the entrance. The thought of carrying a scaling pole or bolting equipment a half mile through water crawls didn't seem appealing. On April 8, 1978, Marion Smith led a group of five down an upper entrance and out the spring - 435 feet lower. Later the total depth was figured to be 513 feet!





TRIP REPORTS

Trip Report: Jess Elliot, Tate Cave, and Holiday Hole

By: Scott Brady

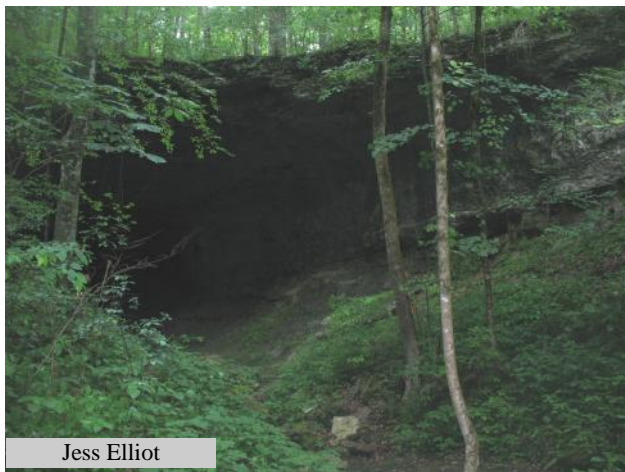
Around noon on May 16, 2015 during the Gadsden Grotto Reunion a group consisting of Jim Loftin, Charlie and Shanon Neiswenter, Ken Lofgren, Anthony Cline, and Scott Brady departed the camp site on Big Coon Creek for the two mile walk to Jess Elliott Cave, stopping 2/3 of the way at "The Blue Hole" for a break after walking the cornfields. The creek was dry so the entrance to the underwater cave system was pretty well exposed.



The Blue Hole

When we arrived at the cave entrance to Jess Elliott the first thing I noticed was the temperature drop in the area of the large cave entrance, the group stopped to take pictures, put on cave gear, and get ready to enter the cave.

The cave is very large, and contains decades of graffiti scratched, painted, and burned into it's walls, but also seemed to have a thriving cave crawfish population, and a whole lot of rimstone dams. It's a very wet cave, and Anthony was the only one who didn't punk out about getting wet, nobody really wanted to walk two miles back with wet boots. After we left Jess Elliot, we went to Tate.



Jess Elliot

Tate Cave was pretty much all breakdown. We didn't enter the cave very far, but there seemed to be a lot less graffiti, the temperature around the entrance seemed similar to Jess Elliot, but nowhere near as large. The group was ready to get back to the reunion site so we left with plans to return to the caves when driving to them, or at

least closer to them was possible.

On May 17th a group consisting of Jim Loftin, Charlie and Shanon Neiswenter, Anthony Cline, and Scott Brady departed the camp site to enter Holiday Hole. After a million mile walk up the mountain and several minutes of

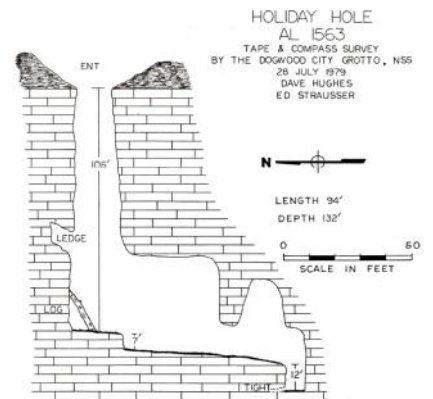


Holiday Hole

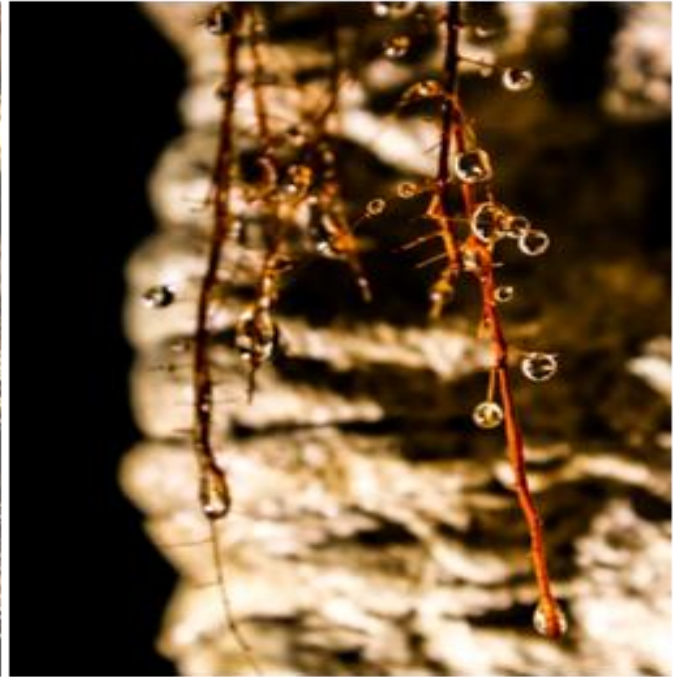
searching the mountain side when we got to the top we found the entrance to the cave. Jim set up the rigging, and was the first one to enter the cave. The whole group rappelled down into the 105ish foot deep hole. As far as wildlife in the cave I saw a salamander and those little birds that build nests on the walls of the pit. Jim told me the type of bird that it was, but it was my first pit and in the excitement of it all their name escaped me. The cave was drippy, but I didn't see any actual running water. The climb out seemed a lot longer than the rappel in, but it was a great experience, and for a first pit bounce I have absolutely no complaints.



Jim Loftin entering Holiday Hole



Cave Day
By Sharon Brewer



“Clinging to the Water” taken in Hepatica Cave by Sharon Brewer.

February 7, 2015 started early with a cool air temp around 28 degrees. We had packed the night before so all we had to do was throw in some last minute things, grab coffee, and drive the two hour trek to the Tate Cove Road in the Skyline Management Area.

The plan was to meet up with a friend and hike to a couple of new caves that Stephen had found. The caves needed a survey and map.

I slept most of the way trusting Stephen to get us safely there by 8 a. m. We got there at 7:52 and knew right off, plans would be changed. We were greeted by a locked gate with a big sign.



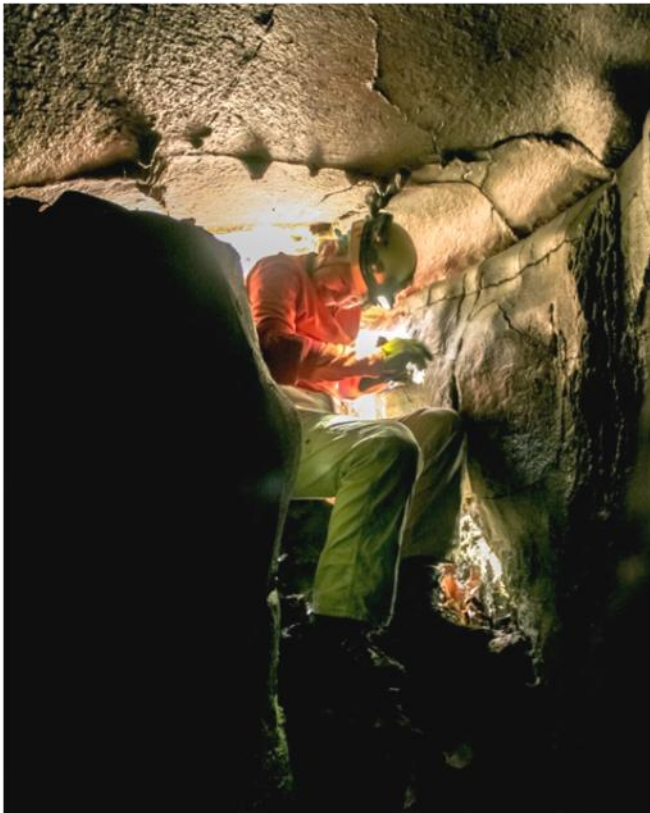
The friend arrived shortly after we did. While we were rethinking the plan, other trucks with four-wheelers joined us at the locked gate. We made sure we were not blocking the gate, and prepared for our hike. With mixed emotions, we hiked past the gate and headed for the caves. We were disap-

Trip Reports continued....

pointed that we would not have the aid of the car to carry us DOWN and back UP! We were thrilled at the awesome weather that invited us to hike the mountain.

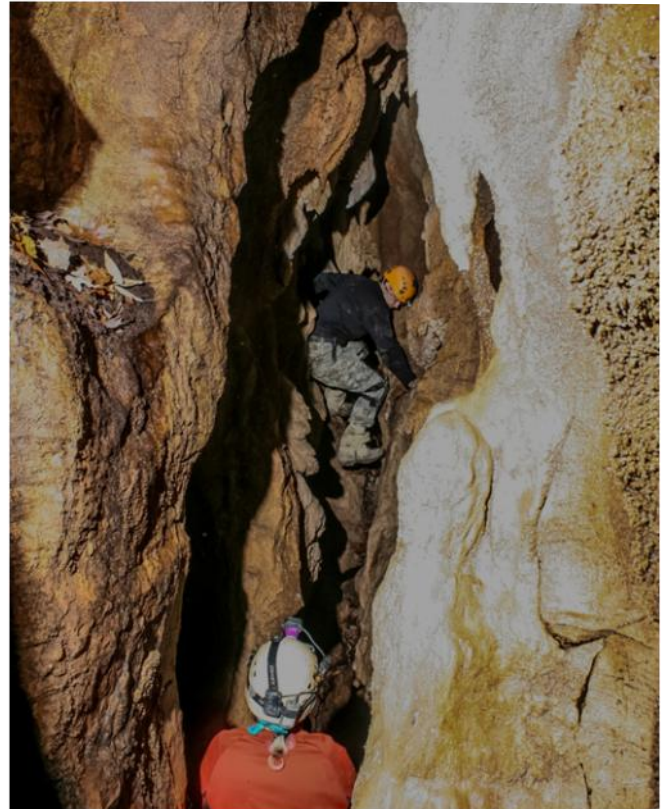
We hiked down the road and through the woods passing ice falls, cool rocks, and neat trees. After an hour and a half, we arrived at Hepatica Cave.

We set survey points at the entrance, climbed in, and gathered info for the map. There were some awesome acorns with roots covered with yellow fungus near the natural light. The hanging roots with water drops clinging to them were found off to the left



around the first turn.

The tight places were very minimal and easy to manage.



Steve thought the cave ended, but decided to climb up anyway and check. On the other side of the 15 feet climb, there is a drop that needs a rope and a rig point. Since we still needed to check into another cave, we left it for another day and headed out. I had a little time to play photographer.

We climbed out of Hepatica, loaded up and headed to check on the second cave.

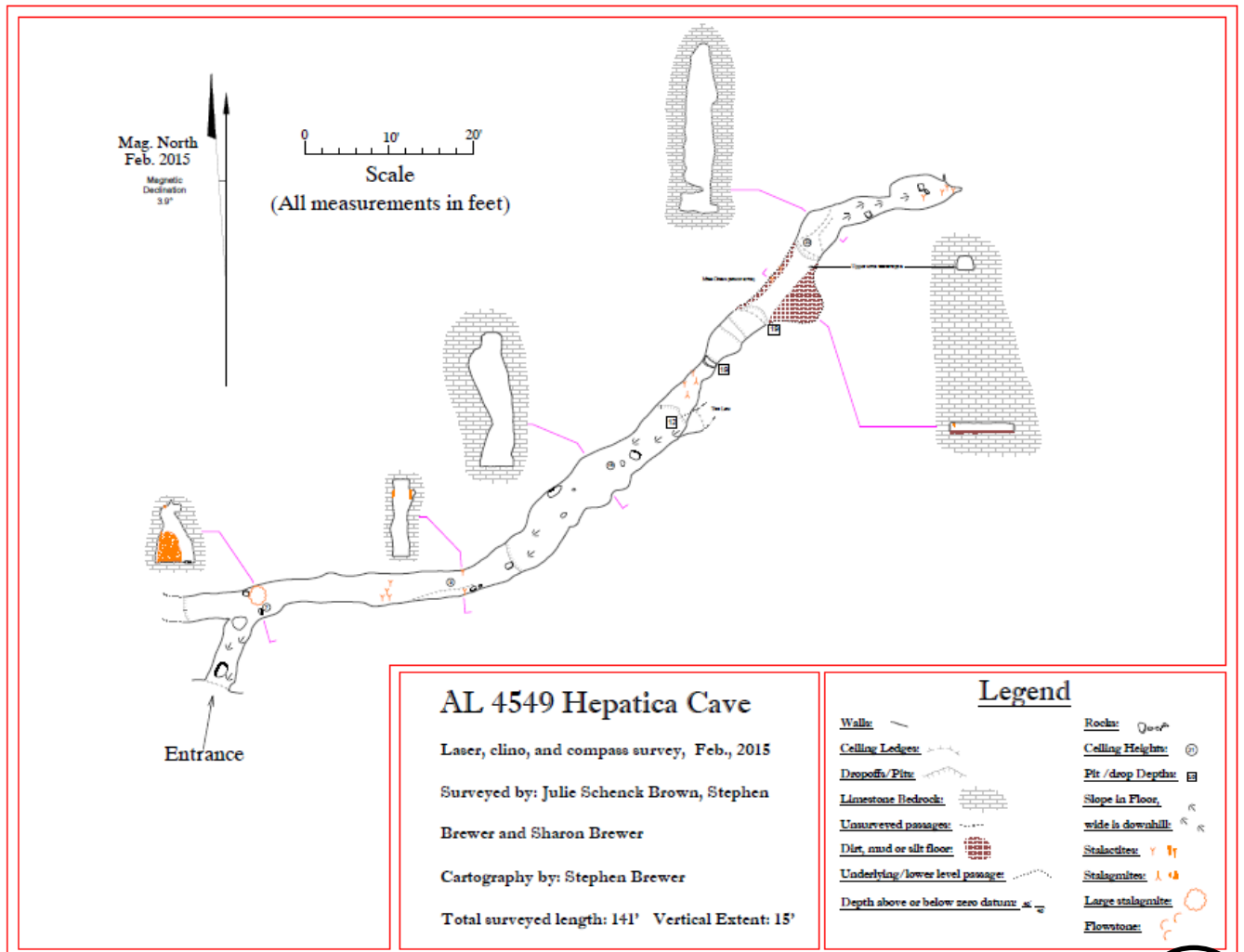
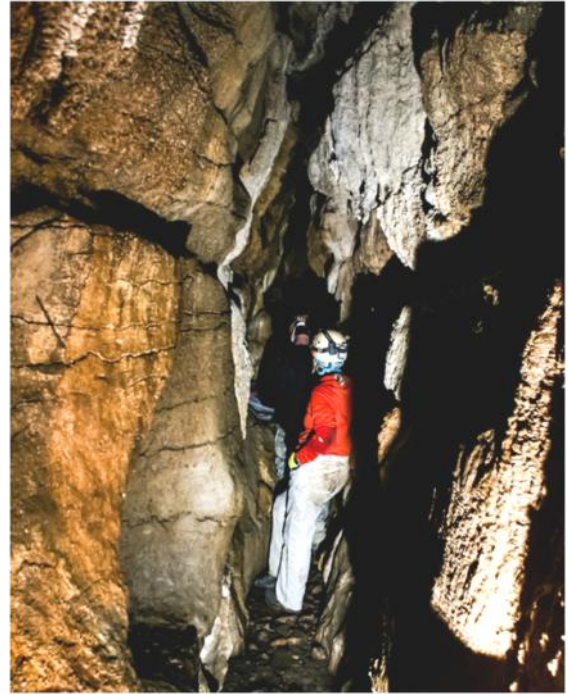


Trip Reports continued....

After checking the second cave and experiencing a slightly scary tight vertical squeeze, we headed back to the cars.

The hike out was steep and rough. We made our way through the cliffs where we could find breaks and roots to climb on. Once we were back to the main road, we realized that we had come out about 1.5 miles to the north of the parking area. Our friend agreed to make the trek along the road.

Happy Caving!!!



Trip Reports continued....

Shanon's Birthday Ridge Walking Party. March 16, 2105

The participants were Shanon Neiswenter, Charles Neiswenter and David Teal.

Location was near Hokes Bluff, along Big Cove Creek, and a quarter mile to the south. Group walked elevations running between 800 and 1000ft.

Topography consisted of mostly broken boulders with many crags and dead ends. Rattle snakes were a primary concern even though the temperature was in the mid 60's.

We explored an area of approximately a half mile in length searching between 800 and 10,00 feet elevation. We entered several crags and repelled in to two pit openings that looked promising but did not discover any thing that meet ACS specifications for a "cave".

Shanon did explore an interesting passage, basically a twenty-five to thirty foot long four foot high tunnel that ran down from a ridge at about 800 feet out to the side of the ridge and found a beer can.

The duration of our exploration was about three and a half hours and it was a nice day for a walk.



Shanon Neiswenter and David Teal



Rope!



700 foot Grotto Rope Purchased

After several years of fund raising, the Gadsden Grotto was able to purchase a 700 foot PMI Rope!

The grotto began raising funds in early 2013. In May of 2015 a rope was purchased from Buddy Lane Equipment Sales. The rope is a PMI Classic Sport-Max Wear, 11mm x 215 meters white/red. Date of Manufacture was April 14, 2015.

David and Susan Teal uncoiled the rope and laid it out in a straight line. He then measured the rope length two times to make sure his work was accurate. The rope is 728 feet and 8 inches. He then recoiled it into two coils for easy transport up a mountain by two people. He tagged one end with orange to indicate that this end should be lowered into the first pit. After the first use, the ends lowered into pits should be swapped on each trip to provide even wear of the rope. A plastic box for storage of the rope was donated by Anthony Cline.

The rope is stored by the grotto's assigned equipment person which is Michael Ray and can be checked out for use by paid grotto members. Those using the rope must be qualified for deep pits. It is requested that the rope only be used for deep drops.

Trip Reports continued....



Green Valley Cave trip, Fall 2015. Standing: Kim Meier, Ken Lofgren, Alan Carroll, Kasey Windom, Scott Brady, Josh Moore (behind Scott), Scooter, and Rebecca Smith. Sitting: Richard Meier, Jennifer Potts, Anthony Cline, Jim Loffin.

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