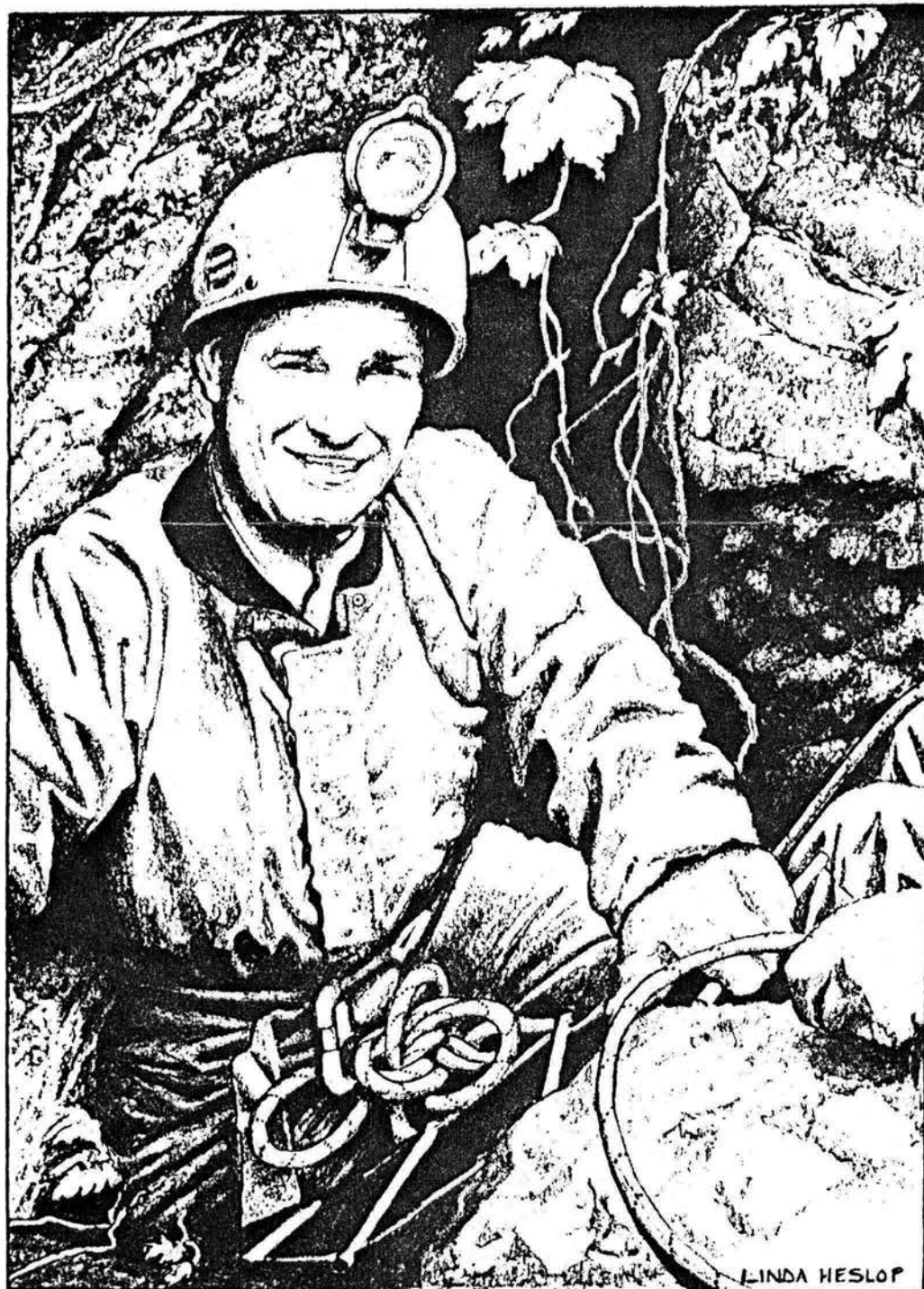


# *Cascade Caver*

Volume 29, No. 7-8 July-August 1990



# Cascade Caver

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**Correction** - The last issue, Volume 28 5-6, had incorrect page numbers. Pages should have been numbered 15 - 24.

**Cover** - This month's cover by Linda Heslop shows Rick Coles at "THAT CAVE". This Vancouver Island cave was just recently discovered by Rick, Linda and Graham Heslop. As Linda described it "the first ten feet is a vertical squeeze (with teeth), very awkward, then it bells out into a beautiful pit with another tight vertical squeeze leading out of the floor of the room. It blows like crazy ..."

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## Monthly Meetings

Regular grotto meetings are held monthly at 7:00 pm on the third Friday of each month at the University of Washington, Room 6, in the basement of Johnson Hall.

## Business meetings

Business meetings are held on the first Monday of even-numbered months at 7:00 p.m. The location varies so contact a grotto officer for specifics.

## Dues

Members and subscribers please note the date on your mailing label that indicates when your dues expire.

Dropped: Jeff Forbes, Robert Henderson, William Holmes, Rob Lewis, Karl Steinke

Overdue Apr-Jul: Boyd Benson, John Collins, Chuck Crandell, Rod Crawford, Dr. Stephen Gates, Kevin Greenwood, Jim Harp, Peter Henry, Alan Lundberg, Mike Ramey, Mark M. Wilson

Due Aug: Kevin Bagley, Robert Stitt,

Coming up Sep-Dec: John Benson, Walter Bjornstedt, Fredrick Dickey, Phillip Erickson, Dr. W. R. Halliday, Howard Hoyt, Richard James, David M. Klinger, Steve Moon, Curtis Rideout, Steve Sprague, Ben Tompkins, Marty Verbarendse, Mike Wagner, Scott Williams, Dan Zak

## Upcoming events

Here is our current list of planned and proposed trips. Call the trip leader or Mark Wilson, grotto trip coordinator, for more information. Any other trip ideas are also welcome, contact Mark at 283-3369.

- Aug 17 **Grotto meeting**  
Aug 25 Cave Ridge. Mark Sherman, 542-8780  
Aug 31 Papoose Cave, Idaho. Jim Harp, 745-1010. (Aug 31-Sep 3 Labor Day weekend)  
Sep 21 **Grotto meeting**  
Sep 22 Cave Ridge. Jim Harp, 745-1010.  
Oct 6 Windy Creek Cave. Jerry Thompson, 355-4900.  
Oct 19 **Grotto meeting**  
Nov 16 **Grotto meeting**  
Dec 21 **Grotto meeting** or Christmas Party (?)  
1991 Northwest Regional Meet (NCA), Trout Lake, WA, Memorial Day weekend (May).. Hosted by the Cascade Grotto.  
1991 NSS Convention in Cobleskill, NY  
1992 NCA Regional in Idaho (tentatively).

## July Grotto Meeting

The July meeting got off to a slow start when half of the people got locked out of Johnson hall. All campus buildings were locked by 6:30 or so as part of the Goodwill Games security. A couple of people got in just in time and then waited and wondered why the rest of us were still outside talking. Jim Harp finally got fed up with waiting and came after us. We were all just patiently waiting for the door to be opened.

Finally the meeting started with introductions and then trip reports. Grotto members had been to Jewel Cave, the Pryor Mountains, Bighorn Caverns, Lake Serene Ice Caves (which weren't open yet) and the NSS convention.

Bob Brown, who went to the convention, passed around a petition asking the US Government to designate Lechuguilla Cave as a wilderness area.

The upcoming trips were discussed next (see the Upcoming Events Calender) and then Larry McTigue showed an NSS program on Pappoose Cave in Idaho.

## Grotto Members in the News



Rod Crawford with a Cuban tarantula

Thanks to the popularity of the movie *Arachnophobia*, spiders are a hot topic these days. Local spider expert (and long time Grotto member) has been very busy doing radio and newspaper interviews. On Monday, August 6, the *Seattle Times* had about a 3/4 page article as well as the picture shown here about Rod and spiders. He will be signing autographs at the August Grotto meeting.

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## Caving Adventures

By Mike Wagner

I am relatively new to caving but one thing that became apparent right away was that there is almost always a great story behind most cave trips. Here are a few short stories of the more memorable experiences and discoveries my friends and I have had in 1989.

**Ex Pool 89** - When I said I was thinking of writing an article for the *Caver*, my friend Jim Nelson reminded me of one of our trips to Windy Creek Cave in April. For those of you not familiar with Windy Creek Cave and its wonderful Ex Pool, it's a low and constricted section of the cave where the

excess water collects. It's not bad going in since the water that you bail out of the pool runs nicely downhill out of your way. It's also not usually too bad coming back out provided you don't forget and leave the plastic bailer on the wrong side of the pool, especially on a day where a lot of snow is melting on the surface. As the reality of our dilemma hit us, Jim said "I'm going for it! See you outside." When I saw the near-freezing water pour down the front of his coveralls I just started laughing and I continued laughing until I realized that Jim never handed the bailer back through to me.



It wasn't as funny when it was my turn but at least Jim had soaked up a good amount of the water first. Jim Harp from the Grotto once told me how important it is to keep a journal of cave trips so you don't forget them later. It is a good idea but there are some things you never forget, like the look on Nelson's face as he braved the Ex Pool.

**A True Told Tall Tale** - Why is it that when you tell another caver you've discovered something new they automatically think you're trying to tell a fish story? On one trip to Senger's Talus Cave in the spring of 89, Jim Harp, his friend Alan, Jim Nelson, and I made a little discovery. In the Skylight Room, Jim spotted some white fish-like creatures under the water. We saw three of them, all about 5" long. Later I researched local amphibians and found seven species of newts and salamanders native to this area. I eliminated all but one because of the size of what we saw. If it's a salamander larva it's a Pacific Giant Salamander, 12" when full grown, and will probably make a low rattling noise if handled. It's green and black marbled pattern makes it very distinctive. Has anyone ever seen one in this area? If anyone else knows what these things are, please tell me.

**The Thrill of Victory** - And the Agony of Cold Feet - It was the middle of September when Phil Erickson and I decided to follow up on a hunch that I have had for over a year. We loaded up our gear and got in the car. It all started like a normal day, but then again what's normal? We headed north on I-5, our destination: Windy Creek Cave. Since my first visit I've wondered what was through a small hole at the end of the cave.

When we got there we found to our surprise that it was only a short plug of clay. In no time at all I was popping through with the belly wiggle motion that a Washington caver quickly becomes accustomed to. What a feeling knowing that you're the first to have ever seen something! A little scared and a lot excited! Soon with a little more enlarging, Phil was through what latter became Wagner's Dig and we started to look around. A small sloping room with a chimney at the top and an opening at the bottom we named the Discovery Room. The

hole at the bottom lead down to a passage I named Alan's Workshop.

It wasn't very extensive, maybe 150' of room and passage in all, but very clean and bright. We were impressed. There are some possible leads for small crazy people in this area.

By the time we signed out it was 9:30 p.m. We had never maneuvered the elk trail in the dark but felt confident we could handle it. About 12:30 a.m. we decided to accept that we were quite lost. We did the only thing we could, split the last of my corn nuts and started a fire. It got real cold and it didn't help being wet from caving. We didn't sleep much. The one time I dozed off I woke to Phil yelling "MIKE, MIKE," and something about "FIRE!" Then I noticed that I was a little warm and I don't think I have ever moved that fast before.

"Your gloves are on fire!", Phil repeated. False alarm -- my attempt to dry them was a little too successful.

The next morning as the sun started to rise we heard a chain saw, something I never thought I would be glad to hear. Somehow we had managed a 360 degree circle and were back close to the cave entrance. I think we will still be arguing when we're old geezers who's fault it was but we both agree on one thing, that it was a good learning experience. Phil says he's always carrying pizza and presto-logs with him from now on.

**Cascade Cave Calls** - I've heard a rumor about some first time cavers that went to Cascade Cave on Cave Ridge. They were poorly outfitted with only two hand-held flashlights for five people. There were six in the group but one had the sense to wait outside. They got lost for a few hours but found their way out eventually with one flashlight, each of them swearing never to cave again. At one point, after a couple of hours, they started yelling hoping their friend would hear them at the entrance. Well it just so happens that their friend went exploring down in the valley and heard his friends yelling, not from up at the entrance, but from somewhere down in the valley. Supposedly their voices were clear but he couldn't find the exact spot. Could this be a lower entrance to Cascade Cave?

I read in the register at Lookout Cave: "We didn't know this connected to Cascade Cave." It has also been rumored for some time that maybe Cascade connects to Hell Hole Cave. If all this indeed connects, we

would have a good sized cave, probably the biggest in Washington. Let's make it a Grotto project this year to map Cascade Cave. Some of you old timers need to teach some of us newcomers how to map.

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## Pryor Mountain Cave Survey

By Linda Heslop

The Northwest Cave Research Institute (NCRI) opted to have two back to back field projects this year. One was in the Pryor Mountains, a new area, and the other was our final year at Jewel Cave. Between the two was a trip to Bighorn Caverns for the few of us who had become addicted to radon gas through repeated exposures.

The Pryor Mountains lie close to Bighorn Caverns in southern Montana, but with elevations from 5,000 to 9,000 feet. The terrain is often alpine and the night temperatures colder. The caves are colder, too, ranging from Vancouver Island temperatures to snow and ice filled.

Our NCRI family geologist, John (the mutant) Buchanan, coordinated this project. He says that it is the same limestone as that containing Bighorn, Horsethief and Titan Caves but has never been checked systematically. The goals were to locate accurately all known caves, assess the accuracy of their surveys, and to locate and map new caves.

Big Ice Cave picnic grounds was our base camp at an elevation 7,600 feet. It was a magnificent spot nestled in pines and surrounded by fields of alpine wildflowers on one side, a canyon on the other, and views into Wyoming where the lights of Lovell could be seen at night. Five hundred meters down a path was Big Ice Cave, a large chamber with an ice floor and magnificent ice stalactites and stalagmites.

Bob Brown and Steve Sprague greeted us on arrival and had already found the first new cave on a brief walk that morning. After setting up camp we grabbed gear and were off to survey. It turned out to be a small phreatic tube with the astounding length of 30 feet. At least we got our suits muddy.

Steve found another on the way back to camp with a small room big enough to stand up in.

For some unknown reason all recorded caves in the region are less than 3000 feet long and tend to be horizontal rather than vertical. The thickness of the limestone suggests the potential for something larger.

The following morning was the first official work day of the project with three teams spread out along the canyon lip, floor and opposite wall of Commissary Ridge. Each team was equipped with map, compass, and altimeter and were to pin point accurately any significant hole or karst feature.

Our team scouted along the canyon lip, finding only solution holes but sighting three wild mustangs. Part of the Pryors is a designated National Wild Horse Reserve and there are more than one hundred mustangs grazing openly in the higher elevations.

The day had been very hot and clear but evening showed a more violent side of the Pryors' weather, bringing high winds which blew down the kitchen tarp. This is traditional. I don't think we've once had an NCRI field kitchen where the tarp didn't blow down the first night. No sooner was the kitchen laid bare and hurriedly moved downhill than the lightning and thunder invaded, followed by a pelting hailstorm which had everyone running for cover. The temperature suddenly dropped about thirty degrees and we quickly learned what evenings in the Pryors were to be like. Unlike Bighorn, it did not blow over but remained all night.

Flooded tents and frost greeted us in the morning. We huddled around the kitchen, eating breakfast with numbed fingers, dressed in full winter attire.

We took the truck up to the head of the canyon at about 8,600 feet and began hiking down through snow fields following the dry stream bed. While Bob and the others followed the bottom course we took ledges along the canyon wall following the base of the bluffs and found several noteworthy entrances.

One was a 25' pit which Ben partially descended with webbing until it belled out. One member of each team supposedly carried a helmet and light for quick checks but vertical equipment would have been too cumbersome for the ground we were covering.

The other entrances we found were horizontal and often pack rat infested. We marked these with cairns.

The days of hiking had made the younger ones leg weary so I took them up to the canyon top to hike along the flat ridge back to camp. Graham, Ben and Bob continued scouting. As soon as we reached the top of the exposed ridge another storm hit, pelting us with hail and wind for the mile back to camp.

Graham, Ben and others returned later to rig the 25' pit, named Purple Balloon Cave (PBC) since some freak chance of air pressure had landed a purple balloon on the floor of the entrance pit. The cave was only about 100' long but had some small unchecked leads plus a half dozen interesting mineral deposits.

Later, having only seen the Ice Cave in daylight, I geared up myself and the kids to properly explore it. Back off in a corner is a

gated hole in the ice which drops down to a lower level.

Wednesday was another very cold morning. We set off to check the Commissary Creek drainage, but as expected found it drained in seepage. That afternoon Graham and Ben went with walkie talkies to help guide Rob and Mike Lewis to holes in the cliff wall. They rappelled from the top of the canyon but could not see the holes they were aiming for from their position. It was an obstacle course of prickles, cactus needles and pack rat nests. They made it sound like such fun.

Another night of high winds, hail, and rain followed. We built a huge blaze and rotissoried ourselves around it while drinking naturally chilled beer.

An ominous storm approached on Thursday and made camp breakup swifter than intended. Some die-hards remained to work for the day but we headed for hot sunny Lovell, showers, and shopping before heading to up to Bighorn.

In summary we'd checked an estimated less than 1% of the area so our failure to find the mother borehole this trip did not daunt enthusiasm.

A meeting with the powers-that-be sound very promising for next year. We have been offered possible funding, a truck, campsite preparations and there was discussion of a possible infra-red fly over this winter. Two weeks next July will be at the Pryors and Bighorn. Nominal Costs are roughly \$70 US per week for meals. Anyone interested contact John Buchanan.

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## **Bighorn Caverns 3rd Annual Old Timers Reunion.**

By Graham Heslop

June 22, 1990

Participants: J. Buchanan, B. Brown, R. Elliot, J. Harp, G. Heslop, L. Heslop, R. Lewis, M. Lewis, M. Wilkin, B. MacDonald.

We all met at the visitor centre at 8:30 a.m. Friday, to sign permits and waivers then set off up John Blue Canyon to Armpit and Bighorn Caverns. The road was in its usual so-so condition but the only incident was a

broken steel belt in one of the Landcruiser's tires, no problem.

Dividing into two survey teams and another team to escort National Park Service staff, we dropped into the cave about 11 a.m. The survey teams went zooming off for the new section. They only got disoriented for half an hour before reaching the Gypsum Twist, the rolling body maneuver required to pass through into the big passage beyond.



My team picked up the survey where we left off last year whilst the other crew went in the opposite direction.

We slowly added about 500 feet of survey and pushed dozens of small leads, hoping to break out to the north and another trunk passage. Alas, it wasn't to be. We found many interesting rooms and displays of pretties but the passages seem to head south towards the known cave. Many leads and much survey remain in this area.

We headed back down the passage and had a look at Bill MacDonald's survey efforts. His team had to leave earlier than ours (their Mums wouldn't let them stay up). We found the passage, did a quick tour, and headed north. After about 300 feet and 10 stations we were in virgin passage. Matt and Rob

zoomed off for a 15-minute jaunt and reported that the trend was still north and chock-a-block with leads. On their return we headed out, running into three local cavers at the Keyhole. They were climbing up over the top, of all things, until we pointed out the safe and easy crawl at head level. We made a hot prusik out at about 9 p.m. and drove back to Armpit where Linda graciously cooked us all supper.

The next morning we left Armpit at 6:15 with Matt as insurance against another flat tire, and enjoyed some fabulous early morning views of the Bighorn Basin. Matt headed south for Greybull and a trip into Holy Sheep Cave. We turned east and started the long pull to the top of the Bighorns and I-90 to South Dakota.

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## Jewel Cave Project

By Linda Heslop

It was a long, hot drive from Armpit to South Dakota on Saturday. We settled in and watched a slide presentation by Art and Peggy Palmer about the geology of Jewel Cave. We got to bed early but nature provided a magnificent light show most of the night with a wild electrical storm.

I had arranged with Steve Sprague, project coordinator, for Graham and I to work on the surface radio location crew. After two years of grovelling through the Miseries almost every day, I felt it high time to pass the job on to fresher (more naive) candidates. As it turned out, this year no one person went through the Miseries more than once. Steve had arranged a day on/day off schedule for the caving teams this year since the work to be done was now farther from the entrance and trips were longer, usually a minimum of 12 hours.

We spent Sunday learning the radio location procedures. Father Paul Wightman, a priest not only of radio location but also of vocation, had refined his antennas and radios since last year. Along with his two small loop antennas (the "toilet seats"), he had built a new 12-foot diameter collapsible loop

which looked very much like a trampoline when assembled.

On Monday we started work. Our team of Ben Tompkins, Paul, Bob Brown, and ourselves set off to our first point, also our shallowest point at 250 feet. Things were off to a bad start as we waited well past the scheduled contact time and heard no signal from the underground crew. If they had started for the second contact point already they would pass near the tour route. Bob and Graham quickly commandeered any loose caving gear and tried to intercept them in the cave but failed. We also failed to contact the cave crew at the second point, 350 feet deep, and so the day's work was shot. The agreement was for both teams to abort after two consecutive failures. Unfamiliarity with the equipment, longer than expected travel time, and eventually dead batteries caused the failures.

As darkness fell the typical concerns for overdue teams began. Rick Bogue rustled up a rescue group to check on the Miseries inventory team but they arrived back safely before midnight, suffering only from bruises and fatigue.



Tuesday started out as poorly as Monday. Ben, Paul, Graham, and I trudged through the pine slopes only to listen to empty cave. Mile Wiles and Charlie Festersen were underground. Wondering if perhaps Mike's travel time estimates were off, Ben and I remained for an extra hour at the first point while Paul and Graham moved on schedule to listen at the second point. After a generous wait and no signal we packed up and headed downhill. We reached the road just in time to intercept Mike and Charlie driving up from the historical entrance. They'd had a loose connection in their transmitter which they had tried in vain to repair. At that point, with the temperature reaching 100°F, we were happy to slink off for the afternoon to the pool and water slide near Custer.

Graham, Ben, Bob, and Paul went out to Wednesday's first radio point and received the signal from the cave crew loud and clear. This made me fear that my presence was a jinx. I was on the crew that hauled the radio gear through the Miseries last year only to find the radio shorted and the batteries dead.

The cave crew would pass under the western well hole on their way so we drove out there next. The well hole is a 6-inch diameter pipe that has been drilled through to the cave at a point where it is only 100 feet deep. When there were cavers below we were able to see their lights. The hole provides contact and access for emergency supplies at the start of a difficult section of the cave. On this particular day the cave was blowing out and with the cap off it supplied constant gush of cave-chilled air while we sat in the hot sun. The kids amused themselves by trying to drop ants and bits of grass into the pipe only to have them fly up into the air above their heads.

Notes passed up and down by string established changes in the order of radio points. Bob, Ben and Paul then did the afternoon locations, again successfully. Communications seemed to work every time I was absent!

Two other teams that had entered the cave at 8 in the morning were still in the cave when we went to bed at 10:30 p.m., underscoring the reality of the longer trips this year.

Thursday's radio location route was the most important of the week. Having failed last year, the Jewel management was anxious for us to get locations for points beyond the Miseries. It is an unfortunate fact but clear that anyone injuring themselves beyond the twisting 1/4-mile crawl has no chance of being evacuated. Their safety record is good at Jewel, a surprising fact considering the old ropes, ladders, and unbelayed climbs in manganese to contend with throughout the cave. The potential for needing to drill a rescue hole at some time in the future, however, made locations on this route a priority.

The underground radio team would need both speed and stamina. Mike and Charlie had gotten 5 or 6 hours sleep since their long trip the previous day but claimed to be up to it. Two fresh cavers were along to help, South Dakota locals Steve Baldwin and Kevin Hackmeister.

The surface crew drove around to Lithograph Canyon and hiked to our first point. The point was a booming success. When the signal came from 400 feet deep it was clear as a bell and also answered another question. It seems I'm not a jinx after all.

The second location point was at the eastern-most end of the cave. The idea was for the cavers to race out fast while fresh and then work their way backwards towards the entrance. They must have had rockets on their knee pads because three hours later we heard their signal again.

By late afternoon the kids were tired, the chocolate bars and lemonade all consumed, so Graham elected to start them on the long trek back. At 6 pm Paul, Ben, and I heard the signal from point three. We soon realized, to our dismay, that they could not hear us in return. We successfully pinpointed the location but could not tell them to move on. By seven Paul was keen to quit because he had to drive all the way back to Minnesota the next day.

We got back to camp at 8:30 p.m., walking into the middle of Herb and Jan Conn's slide presentation which kept the kitchen dark and meant no dinner for us. A greeting team had already set out, in true Jewel Cave tradition, with grapes and grub to meet the returning

radio crew somewhere near the Miseries. In true NCRI tradition they had purchased both real and plastic grapes, leaving the latter to be found first.

A meeting was held that evening between NCRI directors and Jewel management to review several matters of dissatisfaction. These included respect for volunteer workers, rigging and safety practices within the cave, and the ability to be more in charge of our own work. The management was agreeable, on the whole, and also granted us recreational trips as long as one member of the group was familiar with the route and if we'd be responsible for our own surface watch.

We were in like a shot the next day. Ben, Graham, myself, and the three kids went out the Long Hall route. Encounters with tour groups delayed us twice before we got off the tour route and into the dark but were soon wallowing along in manganese.

Unfortunately our three Speleo Technic batteries packs had less charge than we thought and the demise of all three concluded the trip before we'd really had our fill.

Saturday was breaking up camp day but we awoke to find Faye broken out instead, swollen and blistered with poison ivy. We had seen and seemingly avoided the plant but had not realized how severe the symptoms could be. It so affected her eyes and nostrils that the trip home required two hospital stops in Wyoming for adrenalin and antihistamine injections. Not a fun end at all.

Thus finished year three at Jewel Cave. The three-year agreement with Jewel Cave had been fulfilled and no one seemed keen on driving back to South Dakota for a fourth year in a row. The NCRI may organize a return to Jewel as early as 1992 but for next year will be doing two week project in the Pryor and Bighorn Mountains.

