

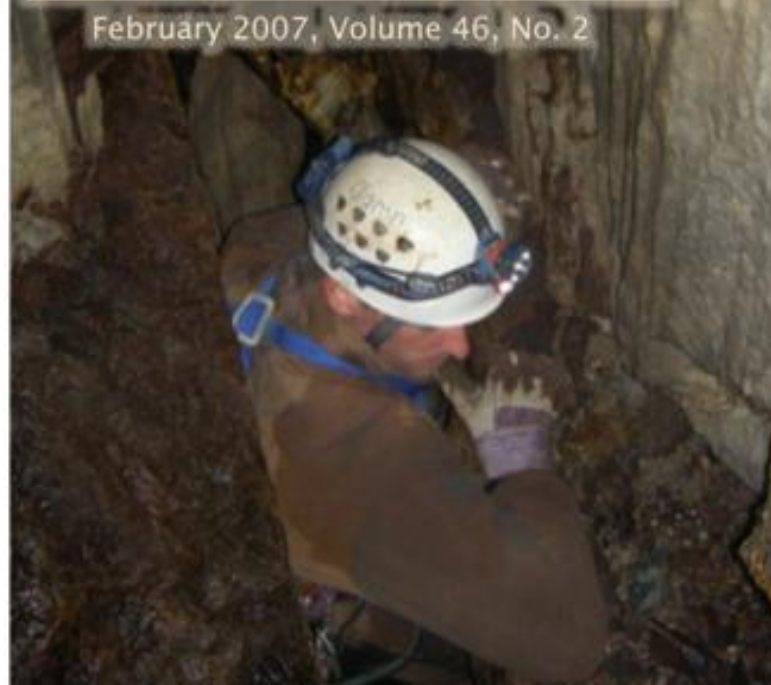
NEWTON!



CASCADE Caver

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Cascade Caver

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MEETINGS

Regular grotto meetings are held monthly at 7:00 pm on the third Friday of each month at the Shoreline Community Center in the Hamlin room. The Community Center is at 18560 1st Ave NE in Shoreline. Please see the back cover for directions.

UPCOMING EVENTS

3/17/7 WVG vertical practice in Troutdale Oregon.

Contact Vertical Bob.

5/6/7 Cave Ridge Gear carry up

5/21/7-5/22/7 Lava Beds for Western and NCA combined regional.

Around August 15, 2007: Trip to Lagufer Gieser Montanta
Contact Ron Zuber.

Cave Ridge Survey Camps, Contact Michael McCormack:

5/27/07 Cave Ridge Gear Carry up, backup

6/16/07-6/17/07 Danger Cave Survey

7/14/07-7/15/07 Danger Cave Survey

8/18/07-8/19/07 Danger Cave, etc.

9/15/07-9/16/07 Lookout, etc.

10/13/07-10/14/07 Cascade

11/03/07-11/04/07 Cascade

COVER

Newton Exploration is the theme of this month's cover. Photos by: Michael McCormack (upper left) and Dave McElmurry (the rest). 3-D render of Newton Cave by Garry Petrie.

Margaret River, Western Australia

7-10 October 2005

Text and Photos by Dave Decker

Wow! What a great trip. I was met as advertised by Kym Smith, an Australian Customs Officer, at Shed F in Fremantle. After a quick trip back to her place so she could change and grab her gear, we were off to her fiancé's house where we met up with Ian Collette, a Vertical Technician and the trip leader, and Des Patterson, a Geochemist from New Zealand. Kym's fiancé, Paul Hosie, was on a dive/push trip on the Nullarbor Plain and would join us later. The three hour trip from Perth to the Margaret River area was broken up by a couple of stops for food, gas and beer. Unfortunately, it was night, so we didn't get to enjoy the scenery on the way down, but the time passed quickly with the conversation ranging from caving to the helium nucleus! After a short stop to pick up the keys to the different cave gates, we found ourselves at the Western Australian Speleological Group's caving hut. The hut was well done with a corrugated roof, sleeping room for 20 (comfortably, mattresses included) and a dining area.



A small female Huntsman spider greeted us from the wall and waited around just long enough for a couple of pictures before retiring to a quieter area. There were several photographs of the local caves on the walls giving the place a homey, lived in look.

It wasn't long before the beer and booze were flowing and we commenced celebrating our new found friendship. Eventually we decided we were

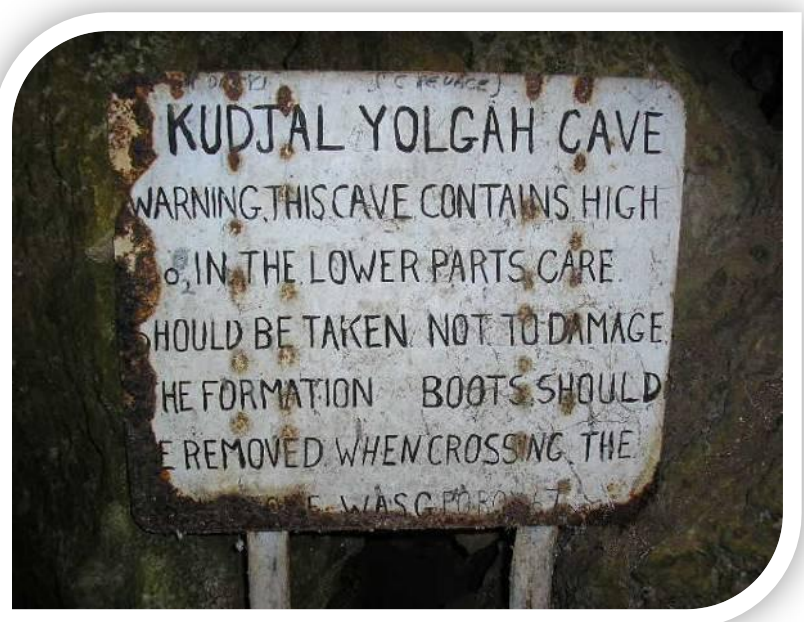
limber enough to start the stupid caver tricks and soon I found myself following the others through a wire coat hanger that Ian provided. I hadn't done that in years and was surprised to find that I still could. Of course the beer masked any pain it may have caused, so doing it again sober might be a different trick altogether. We partied into the wee hours and the last of us ended up going to sleep around 4:30 in the morning.

Three hours later Ian was waking us up to start the caving day. Uggghh, I was still drunk! What's this bull\$&!t about getting up at 7:30! Doesn't he know we're not supposed to be underground until well after noon? Oh well, I suppose it's noon somewhere, so a couple of Motrin and a liter of water later I was dressed and ready to go. We stumbled outside amidst a profusion of wildflowers and piled into Ian's Toyota Landcruiser (he had stopped drinking hours before the rest of us and was OK to drive), then headed down the road through the eucalyptus grove, past a rival club's hut to the first cave. Dingo Cave was located just off the dirt road in a small sink. Nearly hidden in the ferns, a warning sign betrayed the presence of the cave beneath the eucalyptus trees. With a caution from Ian to keep an eye out for snakes, we entered the small cave via one of three gated solution pits that opened into the entrance chamber. The solution pits are formed in the limestone by water percolating along tree roots creating a vertical tube in the rock usually no more than a meter or so in diameter. Eventually, when the tree dies and rots, or is burned out by a brush fire, the tube is all that remains and will often lead into a cave. Lucky for us this tube was just the right diameter for chimneying, making the 10 meter climb very easy. A hand line was rigged just in case, then Kym led the way down. A soil cone at the bottom of the pit allowed us to step into the chamber easily without having to down climb the chamber's walls. Once the four of us were safely in the cave Ian introduced us to the trail marking scheme, white for

in, yellow for out, red for off limits and blue for a survey point. The trail markings were 2 cm diameter reflective circles hung from fishing line or stuck in the dirt with a stake. We made our way down the soil cone to a small pit at the base of the room, opposite of where we entered, then down climbed into another small chamber with several leads. Here Ian told us of the tricks that he likes to play on neophytes by having them go round and round through the many holes that lead back to this room until they figure out they've gone nowhere. We went to the left and climbed down yet another short pit, around some breakdown, over a crevice, up a crack, through a horizontal slot and into to the main room of the cave. This room was shaped like an L and full of breakdown. Upon turning the corner a group of pure white stalactites and stalagmites greeted us looking like nothing less than dripping, melted wax. A little further along, hiding in the ceiling, a vug absolutely full of calcite spar awaited. Several meters beyond that, a gallery of flowstone, soda straws, dogtooth spar and rimstone glowed brilliantly in our white LED lamps. Ian told us of some young explorers who didn't know any better and traipsed right through this delicate area breaking off a formation known as the Christmas Tree. It has since been repaired, and looks none the worse for wear. At this point Des and I just wanted to go back to sleep with hangovers kicking in full bore, but since this was only a warm up cave we didn't stay long enough for a nap. We made our way back to the entrance room via a different climb than we came down, through the mid-level room and finally to the top of the soil cone where we individually chimneyed back up the solution pipe to the surface. On the way up Ian found a small frog climbing our hand line, picked it off-rope and took it to the top with him. Unfortunately, once at the top, he inadvertently tossed the frog too far and it fell back into the cave via another one of the solution

pits! Back at the truck I downed another liter of water and had a small snack while Des rolled his own smoke, then we all piled in and headed off for the next cave.

A couple of kilometers away, down some bumpy dirt roads and across the highway from a viewing area, a trail led through the woods past wildflowers of every color. Deep purple, azure blue, bright red, glaring orange, vivid yellow and ghostly white, an artist's palette dripped haphazardly across a pale green and



earthy brown background. Beneath this riot of color, a small hole, locked by yet another gate, awaited four intrepid explorers.

Kudjal Yolgah, a cave well known to contain high levels of CO2 is a little larger and quite a bit more decorated than Dingo. We left some bushwalkers that had followed us along the path at the top as we climbed down the entrance pit, this one more of a collapse than a solution tube. At an intersection we could see a corroded, hand lettered sign warning of the dangers and beauty waiting below. We made our way through a hole in the floor, past several small spiders and into a room tilted at approximately

a 45 degree angle. To the bottom we went, where Ian remembered that he was supposed to take water level measurements in the small pool and seasonal stream that issued forth from beneath the breakdown. Leaving me with a small butane lighter to test the CO2 levels, he made his way back up the boulder pile and disappeared while Kym, Des and I took a much needed nap. Who knows how much later, Ian finally reappeared with his log book as the rest of us slowly woke from our hangover induced slumber. After several measurements against permanently installed markers and a declaration that this was the end of this part of the cave, we all climbed back up to the entrance chamber (swearing up and down that our breathlessness came from "high CO2 levels" and not the alcohol from the previous night) and then down through another hole in the opposite side of the room. It became obvious at this point that we had been in one large U-shaped room dissected by the entrance collapse and nearly filled with the rubble. At the bottom of this side of the room a large mud bog covered the floor. Here Ian explained to us that we'd have to take extra care not to get muddy as we traversed this part of the cave since we would be going into a pristine section later on that would require the removal of all mud covered clothing (a fact he conveniently forgets to mention when caving with Ouigies). The problem was that the mud covered the entire floor a little farther up passage, and the ceiling dropped to within half a meter of the floor! We were able to negotiate this obstacle with a little patience, the help of several small rocks poking up out of the mud and the innate ability of all cavers to walk like a crab. Even so, I still got the toe of one of my boots muddy along with my kit bag. On the other side of the muddy duck, we found another water monitoring station so we took measurements and then headed deeper into the cave. We climbed over several large breakdown piles, Kym even got off track once trying to avoid climbing over some flowstone, but in the end we skirted the edge of it and continued on to

the back of the cave. Along the way we saw several rootites, Eucalyptus tap roots that were covered in calcite. Some were as thick as my thumb, but most were the size of soda straws, the only difference being the rough appearance and sometimes obvious root sticking out of the end! Eventually we arrived at the point where we had to remove our muddy clothes to continue. I took off my boots, helmet, gloves, overshirt and knee pads and gingerly climbed on to the plastic sheeting that led the way into the last grotto. On hands and knees I made my way past beautiful stals, shawls, gours and columns. White, orange and yellow, the colors muted and earthy versions of the ones many meters away in the bright sunlight of Western Australia. It was as if I were crawling through a fairy wonderland, with the fairy wings frozen in stone before me. Kym had followed me in, so after I got my fill, I let her in to the small ante-chamber I was occupying and carefully made my way back to the waiting room. Here, Ian was mesmerized by a large, light-yellow, flowstone curtain. He examined it inch by inch gleefully reflecting his helmet light off the calcite crystal matrix. Shortly thereafter, the two of us made our way a few meters down passage to where the stream disappeared in a sand floor beneath an overhanging calcite shelf. There was another metering station here, so we took measurements and duly recorded them in the log book while waiting for Des and Kym to return from fairyland. As we made our way out of the cave, the three of us who had never been there before remarked how beautiful the cave was and looked forward to the next, as it was supposed to be much better!

From Kudjal Yolgah we made our way to the Lake Cave Kiosk, a lunchroom, gift shop and visitor's center for Lake Cave. We had a quick lunch here (burgers, chicken wings and "chips") and then perused the gift shop while Ian sweet talked our way into the visitor's center so that Des and I could be properly "indoctrinated" into W.A.S.G. by crawling

through a small faux cave passage built into the wall of the interpretive center. It was fun, but Ian forgot to mention the stalagmite poking up from the floor just prior to the climb over – ouch! We had a nice chat with one of the managers, Lindsey, and then went to the viewing platform where we could take in the full magnificence of the Lake Cave Doline. It was quite impressive and Des and I let our eyes wander down the limestone cliffs and into the darkness as Ian described the interior of the cave to us. We didn't dally too long though; we had bigger and better caves to explore.

Strong's Cave is located in a small doline near where

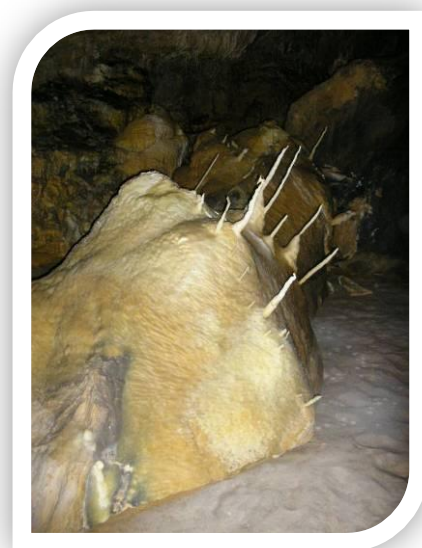
we had started that morning. We made our way from the parking area, taking caution not to be seen by anybody driving down the road, and carefully descended the steep dirt slope that lead to the double gated entrance pit. Ian had a little trouble with the gate, but that's the point isn't it? If it were easy to open, it might as well not be there. Once through the one meter square primary gate, a short crawl led to the secondary gate in the floor, beneath some breakdown. This gate allowed little room for error as it was only 40 cm square and the hole beneath it dropped 3 meters to a steeply sloping soil cone. The chamber we found ourselves in was



rather large, but lacking in any formations. I was the last one down the short drop and found Ian and Kym at the bottom of the slope waiting for Des to negotiate some spare lumber that had been left in the cave from a set of steps that had been built into the soil cone to limit erosion. We popped through a small hole in the floor, climbed down a four meter high rubble pile, traipsed across the base of another soil cone and then found ourselves in stream passage. Western Australia has been experiencing an extended drought, so there hasn't been any water for several years. The stream passage was fairly linear, sandy floored with some breakdown here and there. We followed it for several meters to where it stopped at a wall and then we turned right and climbed up and over some more breakdown blocks, through a small room and down another pit into the continuation of the streambed. This is where things got interesting.

Beyond a weir built for water monitoring purposes, the passage was triangular in shape with the apex at the bottom. The stream bed was straighter than most, and with a grey calcite bed, seemed almost man made. A little way up stream the dark brown eucalyptus roots nearly choked the stream, or would have if there were any water there. The root mats were so thick they looked like they could support the weight of a human. From the ceiling, white stalactites erupted in quiescent beauty, nearly blocking the passage and forcing us to negotiate the passage with extreme care. We stayed out of the stream bed by stoop walking along the sandy bank for about 20 meters until we came to a large white and yellow shawl dripping from the wall. We negotiated some breakdown and made our way around to a second shawl that was part of a large flowstone curtain hiding a miniature sandy beach. From here we had to walk on our knees across the sandy floor to avoid the masses of speleothems jutting from the roof and overhanging walls. Many pendulites graced the way and led to several fanciful

descriptions such as devil's head and batwing. Shortly, we came to a series of large breakdown blocks that showed evidence of having slowly rolled down from the wall as they were undercut by the stream. Several stals were growing from these blocks at very odd angles, and seemed to show a progression that would lead to the above hypothesis. After these odd formations and another climb over some rubble, we found ourselves at the "Beach", a large, sandy floored room where the stream spread out to form a pool before diving into the rubble we had just negotiated (we had been walking up stream by the way). The trail here was marked by plastic pipes, so that it was not as easy to stray off the marked path and for good reason. All over the room hung beautiful stalactites, delicate soda straws and thin, banded curtains. The centerpiece of



the room was a large shawl, twice the size of the previous ones we had seen, named the Judges Wig (see cover). The Judges Wig was easily two meters across by one meter wide and a meter and a half to two meters tall. It hung from the ceiling by no more than a few centimeters of calcite. An up close look revealed calcite crystals a centimeter across looking like a frozen crust of snow. We stopped here for several minutes in order to get some glamour shots and then moved on down the passage. As we made our way further along, the passage started to widen and gain height. The floor remained sandy and was strangely devoid of breakdown blocks for many

meters. Ian stopped along the left side of the path for a minute or two to take a water depth measurement via a pipe in the sand that had been placed in a hole dug to the current water table. It seems the water was only about a meter below the floor on this particular day. We moved on down booming passage until we ran into a large section of breakdown that we had to climb through on the right side of the passage. It took several minutes to worm our way through this twisty bit, but we all managed quite nicely (after I freed Kym's boot from a Floyd Collins-like trap) and climbed down a two-

meter cliff at the other end to find ourselves in the terminus room. This was the largest room we'd been in so far today; I can't even guess the dimensions. There were several very long soda straws, one of them being the second longest soda straw known on Earth at 6.2 meters! There were also otherworldly rootites and very large tap roots blasting through the room from ceiling to floor. Imagine an old, abandoned gothic cathedral with large twisting vines running up the walls to the arcing remnants of ceiling. These particular vines were easily 12 to 13 cm across, each, and twisted together to form a braided column no less than 10

meters floor to ceiling. I've never seen anything like it! Very cool. We lingered here for several minutes enjoying the ethereal beauty and then began making our way back. Just before we reached the little two-meter climb down from the squeeze, Ian noticed a splotch of blood-colored flowstone on the wall. None of us could figure out what it was, not even

Des, the Geochemist. It looked just like somebody had cut their hand badly and then leaned against the wall. And that's exactly what we would have thought it was if there hadn't been a millimeter or so of calcite over the top of it! We pondered this on our way back through the squeeze and then hiked happily along the sandy trail back to the Beach where we took a 30 minute break. I took a nice little nap; I think Kym did the

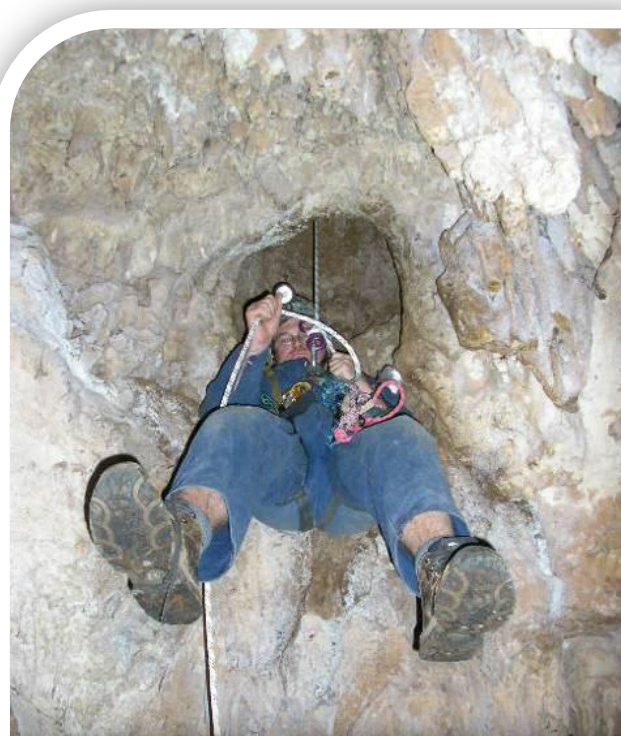
same while Ian and Des chatted away and ate a light snack. Eventually we all forced ourselves to get up and continue out of the cave. It was still daylight when we got out a little over four hours after we entered, so we hiked back to the truck and took a drive down to Conto's Beach for a sunset stroll. The waves were breaking large on the white sand beach, the green water swirling back to sea around red and black banded Gneiss. The sky was light blue with few clouds and the grey limestone cliffs reminded me of Ritidian Cliff in Guam. It was a fantastic end to an awesome day.



Later that evening after cleaning up from the day's fun, we headed to the local pub for a few drinks and dinner. Kym and I decided to forgo the alcohol since we had imbibed a little too much the night before and just stuck with water and soda. We ended up waiting nearly an hour for our food, grumbling under our breath as the tables next to us were served before us even though they had arrived later. After dinner we retired to the bar for a game of pool, and without warning Kym's fiancé, Paul, appeared out of nowhere! Kym lit up like a Christmas tree, a big smile breaking across her face like a wave as Paul took her in his arms. There was much ado about his long trip from the Nullarbor, and many questions about his push trip up a 25 meter aided climb after a sump dive to see if a lead went. Unfortunately it petered out after a few meters; it went just far enough to entice a couple of intrepid explorers to check it out. We stayed a little while longer, long enough to figure out we were getting screwed by the guys already at the pool table, and then headed back to the hut for a few more drinks. I was the first to crash that night, instead of the last, what a day!

We were awakened again at 0730. We could have slept another hour, but Kym misread the time on her phone so Ian thought it was 0830! No worries though, after a good night's rest I felt good as new and was rarin' to go. We had a quick breakfast of Muesli, some breakfast bars and coffee, and then packed all our gear since we wouldn't be returning to the hut. An hour later we were ready to go and hit the road. As soon as we were back on the main highway we had a cell phone signal, so I checked in with the boat to make sure there'd been no schedule changes. There hadn't been, so we continued south to where we'd eaten dinner the night before, so Ian could check out a glassblower's shop he had seen. We were soon on the road again and shortly came to the parking area for Labyrinth Cave, the driveway of a local cattle farm. We grabbed our gear and set out for

the short hike through the woods to the entrance. Along the way we saw several burned out stumps, there had been a bush fire through here recently, which cleared out all the undergrowth making it easy to walk. There were several varieties of orchid in bloom and many other wildflowers as well, a pleasant view for a short stroll. Once we reached the entrance, Ian began rigging to a large Eucalyptus tree using a fat blue strap more suited to craning box cars than holding a rope, but it sure was bomb proof! The primary anchor was then attached to a jug handle and a boss on opposite sides of the 17 meter deep pit. About 3 meters down was the gate, which



unlocked fairly easily, and from there it was another 14 meters to a 1 meter by 3 meter ledge. I was the first one down; therefore I got to be the snake checker. There were no snakes on the ledge, so I put my feet down and got off rope. Des and Ian followed shortly thereafter as I got out of my gear. The ledge we were on was the top of a soil cone overtopping a flowstone wall. There was a narrow path cutting across the 60 degree slope leading another 5 meters down to the floor of the chamber we were in, so we followed it to the bottom where we waited for Kym and Paul to rappel down and meet us. While waiting I played with one of the small spiders that was hanging around and admired the plethora of dry, but still beautiful speleothems decorating the room. Once everyone was down and degeared, we continued to the Lunchroom via a short climb down over a flowstone encrusted wall, avoiding several large tap roots that, while tempting as handholds, would likely break off if used as such not only killing the tree above, but leaving the caver who grabbed it flailing through space with a handy club with which to ward off Hodags in the depths. At the base of this short cliff was a sand floored room with a small display of soda straws, little did we know what awaited us as Paul and I stopped to take pictures. Ian impatiently urged us on with the knowledge of what lay ahead! Once in the Lunchroom, Ian broke out a map of the cave and quickly showed us where we were going, he then suggested we leave our packs behind and bring only a camera since we would be coming back to the Lunchroom before heading off in another direction. So, sans bags and with cameras we followed Ian to the next chamber, albeit slowly 'cause we were still taking pictures of everything we saw since it just kept getting better! Exasperated by our unwillingness to travel faster through the beautifully decorated passage, Ian left Paul and me to our photos while he shuffled Kym and Des further along to view the real beauties. When we finally got to the Elfin Hall we realized why he had been in such a hurry to get here. It was

absolutely astonishing! I can't even begin to describe the subterranean beauty that befell our eyes. White, cream and ochre stalactites, stalagmites, soda straws and columns, shawls, draperies and helectites brimming from every crevice, stumps and wings, dragons and rings, otherworldly shapes beyond imagination, it was absolutely incredible. I have no idea how long we stayed here trying (and failing miserably) to capture the beauty of what lay before us on film. The pictures included here can only show you a shadow of what we actually saw in that room. The profusion of speleothems was so great that it prohibited the further exploration of the passage! Luckily there was quite a bit to see and even with five of us in the room there was plenty of space between us and enough room to move around without damaging anything. Eventually, and reluctantly, we turned around and headed back the way we had come. It was time to move on and see the rest of the cave.

Once out of the Elfin Hall, we could actually see the cave walls and even without the decorations of the previous room, there was much to see. The cave was quite obviously phreatic in nature as evidenced by the spongework. Pendants hung everywhere and old floor levels could be seen where calcite shelves had once carpeted the soil. Calcite lined drip cones decorated the sandy floor in undisturbed alcoves, and a miniature Great Wall of China separated white limestone from dark, everywhere I looked there was something new to see. The passage meandered lazily along sprouting beauty at every turn. We eventually made it to White Chamber, where again we were dazzled by the spectacle before us. Everywhere we looked pure white helectites grew at every conceivable angle. Curlicues, rings, horns, lizards, totem poles, the descriptions could go on for pages! The room itself was split in two horizontally by a 15 cm thick false floor which supported a layer of mud and several large stalagmites. Off to one side was a playroom of sorts in that visitors to this room

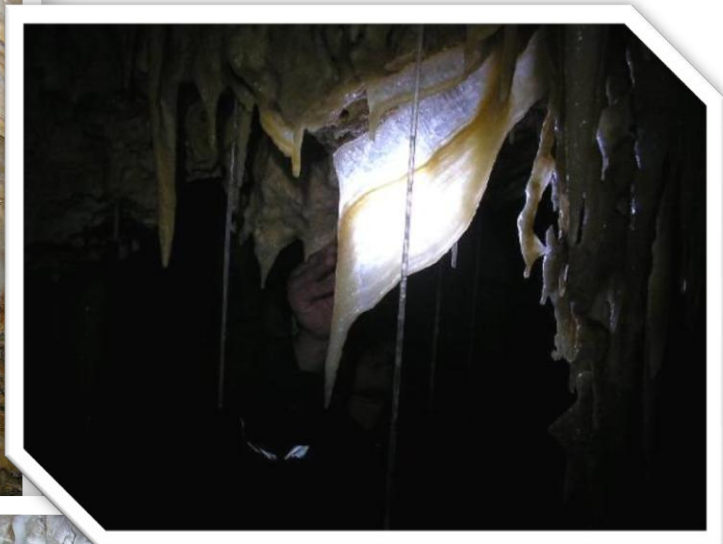
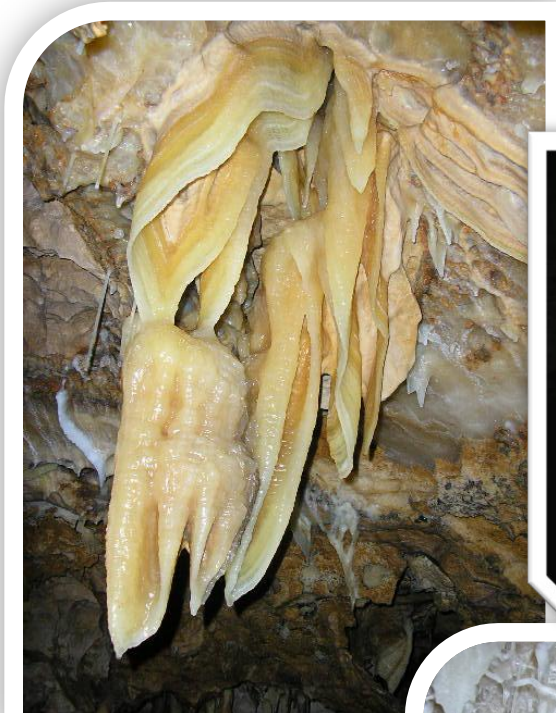
had built small mud figures, snowmen, houses, yes, even a penis and some boobs! Beyond that a large orange and white flowstone wall flowed down from a huge stalagmite that was framed nicely by several pure white stalactites. Again, I have no idea how long we actually spent in this room, but it was too short and before

I knew it, it was time to move on. We slowly made our way back ooling and awing at new shapes and colors that we'd missed on our way in. About halfway back we took a turn to the left and went a

slightly different route back so that we could see a very unique speleothem. I'm not even sure what to call it, a bell is the closest description I can think of. It hung down about a meter and a half from the ceiling in a large crack at least 60 cm wide. The formation itself was about 40 cm wide, 8 meters long and hung to within 25 cm of the floor. The weird thing about it was that it was hollow! I was able to stick my head underneath and peer up into the heart of it, while Kym shined her light on it from the outside, it was fascinating. As for speleogenesis, the only way I can think of that it formed is that it's similar to a flowstone wall in that there was mud nearly filling the crack and the calcite laden water flowed down the sides forming the bell

shape, then later, the mud was washed away leaving it hollow. Just a guess. Shortly after that we returned to familiar passageway and within a few minutes we were back in the Lunchroom where we took a short break for water and a snack.

Once rested, we headed north into the largest section of the cave. We meandered through several large, mud-floored rooms that had remnants of

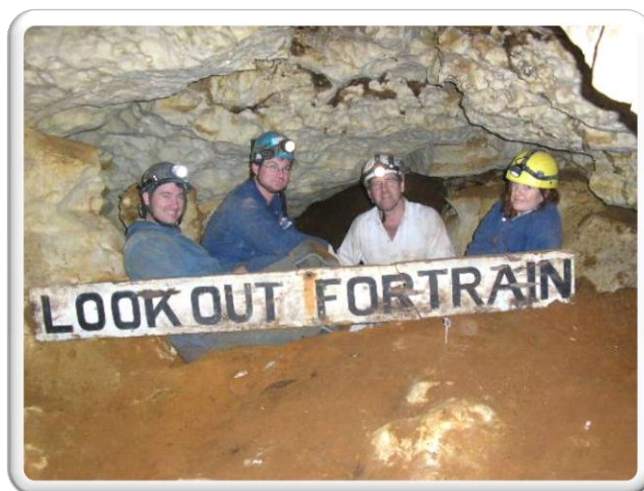


calcite covered floors throughout. We zoomed through a couple of constrictions and before we knew it we were in the Artistic Chamber where several amazing speleothems greeted us. The first was a large stalagmite that had grown on a false floor and then had the floor removed around it by erosive action leaving it on a mud pedestal. An

offshoot from the formation had been polished smooth and showed several differently colored layers of calcite making it look like marble. Next to it was another bizarre formation that resembled an upside-down L with two bumps on top. I have no idea how this one formed, it's just too weird.

Several feet away, a very large stalagmite squatted in the mud. It was at least two and a half meters high and nearly four meters in diameter, upon closer inspection it was found to be hollow! This room had to have been underwater for some time after the formation of these 'mites in order for the strange shapes to emerge. Lest we forget, the ceiling was covered with abundant, multicolored stalactites just for good measure. We moved on through a low, crystal covered passage, and then into a narrow tube with just enough room for a caver and his (or her) pack. We popped out into another calcite lined room; this one had a large false floor remnant 10 cm thick and extending several meters back along another passageway. On the left side two 12 cm thick tree roots burst from the ceiling, fell to the false floor and then draped themselves over the edge only to plunge into the mud floor below. The whole scene just oozed geologic time. We stopped here for several minutes to admire the view and take a few photos. The calcite floor was not the only item of interest in this small room, there were also several very nice draperies, helectites and one pendulite. All were perfectly white and beautifully translucent. After several tries I finally got one good picture of the pendulite which made me very happy. On the other side of the room there was a group of chocolate brown stalactites rimmed by an icing of white, and growing from one was a perfectly white stalagmite! We slowly worked our way through this room and into the next, where an odd site befell us. A large white sign, lettered in black, block letters that read **"LOOK OUT FOR TRAIN"** was propped up on a couple of rocks. This sign marked the area known as Piccadilly, and for the life of me I can't imagine how anybody could have gotten that large of a board that

far into the cave without damaging something! We posed for a group shot here with Paul volunteering to man the camera while the rest of us packed in behind the sign for the photo. This was the farthest into the cave we'd get since Paul needed to get



home at a reasonable hour to unpack from his two week diving trip to the Nullarbor before returning to work on Monday. He had driven straight to Margaret River, some 800 km, just to be with his sweetie! Ian led the way back, passing formations that in most caves would garner at least a 5 minute photo stop, without even a glance. We saw more false floors, a few rootites here and there, and even one flowstone ledge that had a root embedded in it, not from the root burrowing, but being calcited over! Eventually we made it back into the Lunchroom, gathered our packs and exited the cave a full five hours after dropping in, to a beautiful sunny day.

After de-rigging the drop, we all posed for another group shot, this time Paul was included, and then hiked back to the vehicles where we said our goodbyes to Paul and Kym as they headed home. Ian, Des and I jumped in the truck and headed for Hamlin Bay, a beautiful beach spot on the south-

western edge of Australia. I gathered another sand sample before we headed back north to drop off the keys. On the way we visited the entrance pit of Bridal cave where Ian had helped to construct a rappel ramp keeping hordes of absailers from damaging the fragile limestone lip. We also stopped for a short visit to Calgardup cave, one of several tourist caves in the area, and took a quick look down the tourist trail as far as we could go without lights. We were able to see three or four solution pits in the ceiling and make out the half round holes left by them where the roof collapsed to form the entrance. The drive home was punctuated by a quick stop for sandwiches and soda at a Margaret River bakery, a stop for coffee about two-thirds of the way back to Perth and a final stop for gas on the city limits. Ian dropped Des and I off at Paul's house and then left for home. Paul and Kym invited us in to clean up while Paul finished unloading his truck, Des then



took off on his Honda motorcycle while I looked at incredible pictures from some of Paul's diving trips to the Nullarbor and ?Kalgoordie? (The Beehives area). Paul went and picked up some Chinese food for dinner, we enjoyed duck, squid, and chicken, and of course my favorite, fried rice. After dinner both Kym and Paul drove me back to the pier where I caught the liberty boat back to the ship.

The next morning I was supposed to go on a Morale, Welfare and Recreation (MWR) trip to the Pinnacles National Park up north. Unfortunately, since the ship had changed plans and was going to depart early due to weather (and instead ended up extending the port visit for two days), all the MWR trips for that day had been cancelled, unbeknownst to me. I was there bright and early Monday morning, waiting for the office to open only to find out I wasn't going anywhere. As luck would have it Eddy Ha (Edgy) and Mark Matthys (Spaz) were headed out on a trip to Yanchep National Park which was not as far north and easily accessible by train and bus, so I joined them after a quick call to Johanna. We caught the train to Perth, then another to Clarkson and finally jumped on a bus which dropped us off in the middle of nowhere. The bus driver told us to "follow the orange signs" and to be back by around 3 PM when he would pick us up. We followed the signs through a beautiful grove of eucalyptus, grass trees and bottle brush bushes passing several cave entrances along the way. One was too grotty to enter without caving gear, the other two were gated and locked, so we just continued up the path until we eventually came to the park entrance. We found the trail we were on to be part of a network of trails all up and down the coast, the one we were on was the "Yaberoo Budjara" trail. The park itself was well groomed and obviously well attended. The real entrance was off the main highway, but not on the bus route, hence the hike in for us. We wandered around for awhile, poking our heads into the gift shop just long enough to get a time table for the Crystal cave tour, and then made our way over to the Koala pen to see the Koalas. We then went down to the lake where we watched several types of birds making the rounds for food. I got some good pictures of a couple of grey, pink-headed cockatoos and then was nearly attacked by an iridescent blue stork-looking thing as I bent down to get a picture of a duck. Evidently it thought I was handing out bread crumbs as it nearly jumped

in my lap! We still had about an hour before the cave tour, so we decided to take the Wetlands trail around the lake. The lake and surrounding wetlands are fed from springs, which run along the contact point of sand overlain by a bed of limestone. The caves here are somewhat unusual in that they form from the bottom up instead of the top down. As the water runs through the sand, it chemically erodes the bottom portion of the limestone, which eventually breaks down mechanically. This process continues forming a void and eventually breaks the surface. The wetlands trail was supposed to be a loop, and was absolutely stunning. A fire had burned through only nine months before charring the landscape, but new growth had rapidly filled in the stark scene. Wildflowers were sprouting everywhere, birds were singing, frogs were croaking, it was an awesome little hike. With about twenty minutes to go before our cave tour, and three



quarters of the way around the lake, we discovered that the bridge that led back to the gift shop had been a victim of the fire and had yet to be replaced! It would have been nice if the sign reporting the bridge out, loop trail closed, had been posted at the beginning rather than at the burned out stumps of what used to be the bridge. We turned on our heels and hoofed it back to the visitor center just in time to meet the cave guide, Inga, and have her drive us up to the entrance, which would have been a fifteen

minute walk. Two other people were waiting at the kiosk near the gated steps that led down to the entrance, so after a quick introduction (they were from England) we all followed Inga into the depths. Crystal cave is a project cave of the Yanchep National Park, they are using the cave as a test bed to see if they can save a species of prawn by pumping in tons of water daily to try and keep the water table at a certain level, which gives the eucalyptus root mats a chance to grow which in turn gives the prawns a habitat. No standing water, no roots, no shrimp. It doesn't really seem to be working, but I give them an A for effort. The rest of the cave was somewhat of a disappointment after having been down south, there were a few formations here and there, mostly broken and dull. The most interesting formation was the elephant's feet near the back of the tourist route, stalactites that had grown to the surface of a pool and then spread out as shelfstone from there. Later, the water receded leaving the shelves high and dry and looking like nothing less than a couple of elephants embedded in the rock with their feet hanging out. There were several locations where the management was monitoring the movement of rocks in the walls and ceiling as well. A hole was drilled on both sides of a crack formed by moving rock, and then bolts were cemented into the holes after which a glass plate was glued between the bolts. The theory is that if the rock moves in any fashion, the glass will shatter, or at least crack. Fortunately we didn't find any broken ones. At another stop we noticed a rusty looking layer on top of the sand, I was able to interrupt the barrage of facts and fallacies spewing from Inga's mouth long enough to find out it was the remnants of a failed attempt at bringing water into the cave. Apparently when the water reached the surface, the high iron content oxidized leaving the "rust" on the sand. We were in Crystal for a little over an hour, quite a long time considering how short the actual tourist route was. Back on the surface, Edgy, Spaz and I decided to take the long route back to the visitor's center, so we

procured a map from Inga, along with directions, and headed out along the Caves trail. We saw a profusion of wildflowers, grass trees and smoke bush, made all the more beautiful by the stark, burned out surroundings. We took about 45 minutes to wander down this trail, visiting the entrances to several small caves (we were asked not to go in due to archeological studies in progress), choking and hacking our way through a smoke cloud from a nearby burning rubbish pile and then making our way back past the visitor's center and eventually all the way out to the bus stop. We were there about 30 minutes early and passed the time chatting and having a muesli bar snack.

That evening I met Paul and Kym at the pier and took them on a tour of the Nimitz, since Paul is a LCDR in the Royal Australian Navy, serving on submarines, and Kym is a customs agent, they were both used to being on ships. It was a pleasure giving a tour to them since they already had an understanding of boats and could appreciate some of the finer details they were seeing. After the tour we went out for dinner in Fremantle then once again said our goodbyes at the pier.

**Cascade Grotto Business/Regular Meeting Minutes
November 17, 2006**

By Marla A. Pelowski, Secretary-Treasurer

Attendance:

Dan Crape, Kari Doller, Jeff Dwyer, Tom Evans, Jim Harp, Michael McCormack, Nikki McCormack, Marla A. Pelowski, Hubert Shen, Mark Sherman, Aaron Stavens, and Ron Zuber; and guest Yoav from Tasmania – used to go to school at UW.

Old Business:

Treasurer's Report: \$2,397.89 combined savings, checking, and petty cash as of 10/31/6.

8-River Safe Development Task Force donation check hasn't gone out yet. Marla Pelowski will call Dave Decker to follow up to see if it's still needed.

Michael has not yet sent follow up letters regarding Convention Guidebook to apologize for the insults to the National Park Service due to Larry McTigue's comments. He will work on it.

Dave Decker has grotto patches. Michael McCormack will email him with grotto address. They sent the patches to Maryland to Dave's address since he ordered them. Gary ? in Wisconsin – Ron would like a patch sent to Gary ? in Wisconsin.

Aaron Stavens, Hester Mallonée, and Ron Zuber met at Renato Dalle Mule's house regarding the caving presentation for the Mountaineers. They have a draft of the outline for the presentation. Mark Sherman has some information for a previous slideshow he's used in the past for presentations – 35 mm slides – he'll get together with Ron Zuber to see if anything may be useful.

New Business:

Jeff Dwyer has carabiner mugs for sale. \$20.

The grotto wants to work more on public outreach. Perhaps approach universities. In doing such things we may want to offer a course that includes a caving trip for hands on experience. Ongoing discussion is welcome and we will work on this as projects come up.

The nominations for grotto officers occurred at this meeting. They are:

Kari Doller – Chairman nominated by Michael McCormack, Nikki McCormack seconded.

Robert Mitchell – Vice-Chairman nominated by Robert Mithcell, Aaron Stavens seconded.

Marla A. Pelowski – Secretary/Treasurer nominated by Michael McCormack, Kari Doller seconded.

Nominations were closed and a vote taken; all in favor, none opposed.

Trip Reports:

International Technical Rescue Symposium in Golden, Colorado, was attended by Aaron Stavens. Not many cavers in general in attendance. It was more a discussion environment than a teaching environment. Some things he found interesting: Sling testing made of dynema and spectra – failing at factor .5 falls. Plastic split washer against pullies to keep prusiks from riding up into pullies. Mt. Thor rapel death – rack – perhaps due to j shape of rope hang, rack couldn't control rapel.

Aaron Stavens found Rescue Rigger software - not intended to tell you that your system is safe and not really in 3D. He paid about \$100 for it.

Aaron Stavens made contact with Fran Sharp of Tacoma Mountain Rescue. Good idea to have some relationship as they'll probably be the ones making any cave rescues in this area.

Garry Petrie, Blare Petrie, Megan, Michael McCormack, Nikki McCormack, Ron Zuber, Adam Zuber, and Matt Cavanaugh went to Deadhorse and Dynamited. Deadhorse was a lot bigger than Michael remembered it. The bottom was sumped. They did Damascus (actually it's "the Masochists" – ed.) maze. Many stayed at Garry Petrie's house – thanks Garry! The first two drops in Dynamited were done. Megan used the ladder to get down the first drop since she didn't have vertical skills – she did the Sand Castle room while the others did the second drop. Per Ron, both Adam and Matt really enjoyed both caves. Previous weekend Adam did Newton on Cave Ridge and really enjoyed it. Went back and made it to bottom of fourth drop – a lot of water coming in, but he enjoyed it even more.

Dan Crape went on the family Ape Cave trip taking some pics. with his high resolution camera. Richard Hill played the model while Dan was trying to take a discreet pic. from the back while dad was taking the pic. from the front – came out as an interesting pic.

Kari Doller and Tom Evans went to Three Mile Creek (the hill's garbage can). Geological funnel – will continue to fill at a rapid rate unless the top can be capped. It's going to take a lot of digging and re-digging to reveal all passage.

Yoav went to an electronic dance party in the tunnel on Stevens Pass – tunnel has stalactites forming and other interesting sights to see. This was in early September.

Upcoming Trips:

December 2, 2006 Senger's Talus. Contact Hester Mallonée. Ron Zuber volunteers his place if anyone needs to spend the night beforehand.

December 16, 2006. Saturday, Grotto Holiday Party at the McCormacks', 5 or 6 start time, dinner around 6:30 or 7; 3219 132nd Avenue SE, Snohomish, 98290. Grotto has paid for roast beast. If not raining – tyrolean will possibly be set up.

January 1, 2007. Mt. Si hike. Contact Aaron Stavens.
January 1, 2007. Ron Zuber floats the Upper Skagit – can be a different date. Lots of Eagles. Puts in at Marblemount and floats to Steelhead Park. Approx. three hour flow. Can't start float before 11 am. Let him know if you're interested. Probably a class 2 river. Powerful river and extremely cold water. Ron has two canoes and a raft.

February 18-21, 2007. Oregon Caves Conservation Trip. Contact Hester Mallonée.

March 17, 2007. WVG vertical practice in Troutdale Oregon. Contact Vertical Bob.

May 18-20, 2007. Week before Memorial Day holiday – Lava Beds for Western and NCA combined regionals.

Around August 15, 2007: Trip to Lagufer Gieser (sp?) in Bob Marshall Wilderness area – 70 ft deep pit filled with snow. Will be attempting to open it up. Looking at 7 days at the cave, one day in, one day out. Expedition. Horses in. Excavate and melt snow. Contact Ron Zuber if you're interested.

Unknown. Ron Zuber brought up that Skeleton Cave near Bend, OR, is a hibernacula for Townsend Big Eared Bats which is a Species of Concern (one level below endangered species). Ron Zuber will be participating in a gating project at the cave. The gate will be state of art and designed by Jim Nieland. He doesn't have a date yet, but contact Ron and let him know you're interested and he will keep you posted.

Program:

None.

**Cascade Grotto Business/Regular Meeting Minutes
December 16, 2006**

By Marla A. Pelowski, Secretary-Treasurer

Attendance:

Dan Crape, Kari Doller, Hester Mallonée, Michael McCormack, Nikki McCormack, Robert Mitchell, Marla A. Pelowski, Aaron Stavens, Ron Zuber; and Guests Marc Graham, Albert Mallonée, Hester Mallonée, Rosemary Mallonee, and John Tichner

Old Business:

Treasurer's Report: \$2,459.89 combined savings, checking, and petty cash as of 11/30/6.

Ron Zuber needs the digital photos for the Mountaineers program. Please contact him if you have any high quality photographs.

The grotto has received the patches from Dave Decker. We need to set a price. Discussion ensued.

Michael McCormack motioned \$3. Nikki McCormack and Kari Doller seconded. All in favor.

New Business:

Ron Zuber discussed a potential outreach program regarding a Boy Scout presentation. The Boy Scouts are looking for a date, perhaps February or March. He needs high quality photos for presentation.

The Boy Scouts will be having a University of Scouting convention and have invited us to set up a booth. We would probably have a 20x20 space right in the middle of a gym and could perhaps hang ropes for vertical. This event is for scout leaders, not for scouts. 120 people registered, expecting 400-450 registered. January 2007. Arlington Middle School. For handouts and the like, perhaps the grotto could find some funds to put on a good presentation. Michael McCormack motions for the grotto to pay up to \$200.00. Hester Mallonée seconded. All in favor.

The programs that we set up for this could be a guide for future programs. Perhaps get a permanent type of program set up – one short 15-20 minutes, one longer 55-60 minutes. With Q&A sessions afterwards. We could use these for ongoing outreach programs.

Ron Zuber is working with State of Washington biologists and State Parks Department regarding where bats go in the winter in the NW. Also with State Parks Department.

Upcoming Trips:

In January, Hester Mallonée, local cave artist, will be having a showing at the Municipal Gallery of Enumclaw. She will let everyone know when. She is intending to have an artists gathering one night where we'll all be invited.

January 1, 2007. Mt. Si hike. Contact Aaron Stavens.
January 1, 2007. Ron Zuber floats the Upper Skagit –

can be a different date. Lots of Eagles. Puts in at Marblemount and floats to Steelhead Park. Approx. three hour flow. Can't start float before 11 am. Let him know if you're interested. Probably a class 2 river. Powerful river and extremely cold water. Ron has two canoes and a raft.

February 18-21, 2007. Oregon Caves Conservation Trip. Contact Hester Mallonée.

March 17, 2007. WVG vertical practice in Troutdale Oregon. Contact Vertical Bob.

May 18-20, 2007. Week before Memorial Day holiday – Lava Beds for Western and NCA combined regionals.

Around August 15, 2007: Trip to Lagufer Gieser (sp?) in Bob Marshall Wilderness area – 70 ft deep pit filled with snow. Will be attempting to open it up. Looking at 7 days at the cave, one day in, one day out. Expedition. Horses in. Excavate and melt snow. Contact Ron Zuber if you're interested.

Unknown. Ron Zuber brought up that Skeleton Cave near Bend, OR, is a hibernacula for Townsend Big Eared Bats which is a Species of Concern (one level below endangered species). Ron Zuber will be participating in a gating project at the cave. The gate will be state of art and designed by Jim Nieland. He doesn't have a date yet, but contact Ron and let him know you're interested and he will keep you posted.

Program:

A great holiday party!! Thanks everyone for all the good eats!

Cascade Grotto Business/Regular Meeting Minutes January 19, 2007

By Marla A. Pelowski, Secretary-Treasurer

Attendance:

Kari Doller, Jeff Dwyer, Lane Holdcroft, Hester Mallonée, Michael McCormack, Nikki McCormack, Robert Mitchell, Marla A. Pelowski, Aaron Stavens,

Ron Zuber, Guests Jon Tichner, and Matthew from Colorado

Old Business:

Treasurer's Report: \$2,257.47 combined savings, checking, and petty cash as of 12/31/06.

Tacoma Mountaineers Presentation: Ron Zuber has Renato Dalle Mule's and Dan Crape's information. He's looking at April or May for a presentation. Matt Farnell may have more cave pictures in digital format – someone should check with him.

Previously, the grotto approved \$200 for Hester Mallonée for supplies for the Grotto cave banner to be used at the NSS 2006 Convention. Hester has unfortunately lost the receipts and Marla A. Pelowski as Secretary-Treasurer would prefer to have the grotto reapprove payment without receipts. Hester mentioned that she spent just over \$200.00 and would very much appreciate reimbursement. Hester Mallonée motions for reimbursement up to the original \$200, Robert Mitchell seconded. All in favor.

New Business:

The votes are in and new officers as of January 10, 2007, are as follows:

Kari Doller, Chairman
Robert Mitchell, Vice-Chairman
Marla A. Pelowski, Secretary-Treasurer

Congratulations to all!! For the record, 19 ballots were returned with 17 votes for Kari Doller, 15 votes for Robert Mitchell, and 17 votes for Marla A. Pelowski. Other votes were for write in candidates.

In 2005, the grotto approved on a yearly basis payment of regularly occurring budget expenses and Marla A. Pelowski moves to approve automatic payment of the following expenses up to the amounts indicated for 2007. Any expenses above and beyond the amounts indicated and expenses not

listed below will be brought up for approval by the membership at a regularly occurring meeting:

cascade_grotto@caves.org	\$10.00
Shoreline Conference Center meeting room at \$46/month for 11 months	\$506.00
PO Box Fee	\$62.00
Postage (other than for <i>Cascade Caver</i>)	\$39.00
<i>Cascade Caver</i> copying/printing/postage expenses	<u>\$150.00</u>
Total	\$767.00

Tom Evans seconded. All in favor.

University of Scouting. Looking forward to 450 people in attendance. We have a 20x20 foot booth. Ron Zuber has been communicating with Boy Scouts and the NSS to find out where both organizations stand with each other. Bill Steele is an executive in the Boy Scouts of America. We will be handing out a contact list as opposed to a lot of paper that most will probably just toss. Ron is hoping to stress safe aspects of caving and a conservation message. The NSS and Boy Scouts have identical views on conservation. If a troupe wants a presentation, Ron Zuber would like to keep it as a Q & A session, providing them with information ahead of time. At the University of Scouting, the organizers want us to do vertical demonstrations which we will be glad to accommodate. We should have about three tables. Ron will be bringing various books, limestone, carbide lamps, and gear.

Tom Evans will be working on a map database. Michael McCormack will assist.

Trip Reports:

New Year's Day Hike up Mt. Si – caving get in shape trip. Aaron Stavens, Kari Doller, Hester Mallonée, Marla A. Pelowski, and Jon Tichner went. There was snow at the top. Overall a great day and great hike.

As usual, our 9:00 start time turned into 10:15, which didn't dampen anyone's spirits.

Tom Evans went to Senger's Talus Cave twice and exit 32 crack system once. Senger's was very beautiful after a snow. This crack system he found is on Rattlesnake ledge – 2 mile hike in. 1200 elevation gain.

Upcoming Trips:

Hester Mallonée's art is showing in Enumclaw. Though it's showing daily, she will be having an artist's reception on Friday the 26th 7-9. She will post more information on the list serve.

2/3 Next Mt. Si Hike 9:00 at trailhead.

2/16-2/19 Oregon Caves Conservation Trip. Cleaning of the upper cave. Volunteers can stay in the chalet. Ruth Stickney will be food coordinator. Work Saturday and Sunday – Sunday night there's a party. \$35/person for the food.

3/17/7 WVG vertical practice in Troutdale Oregon. Contact Vertical Bob.

5/21/7-5/22/7 Week before Memorial Day holiday – Lava Beds for Western and NCA combined regionals.

Program:

The grotto received the Indiana Convention promotional DVD and it was played at the meeting.

New Passage in Newton

February 15, 2007

By Aaron Stavens

It all started back in 1996 when I happened to bump into Scott Davis in Ape Cave. I was not really into caving yet. He told me of a 14 hour underground trip just an hour outside of Seattle. That sounded like big cave to me and it stuck in my mind.

Flash forward to late summer several years later. Simon McClellan, Jon McGinnis, and I made what was for me my first bottoming trip in Newton. The

Colon Crawl was exhausting and heat sapping. The Lightening Passage was a torture test as we contorted our backs in ways not intended by nature. But we made it through to the bottom of the 5th drop and back. It took us 11 hours.

It was on that trip that I found the lead. It is a small slot through which you can see a short section of wider passage before that passage goes out of sight around a bend. To me that was one of the most intriguing bits of cave passage I had ever seen in caving.

Clearly others had found this lead before me. The surrounding surface had been chipped away, but not enough to allow entry. The mud floor beyond appeared undisturbed. I had to come back!

It was also on this trip that Simon made his own discovery. He was so concerned that he might not fit back through the Lightening Passage that he went ahead to check it out. After poking around he looked around the corner. There was an alternate route through. That route is still tight but at least it does not require unnatural acts.

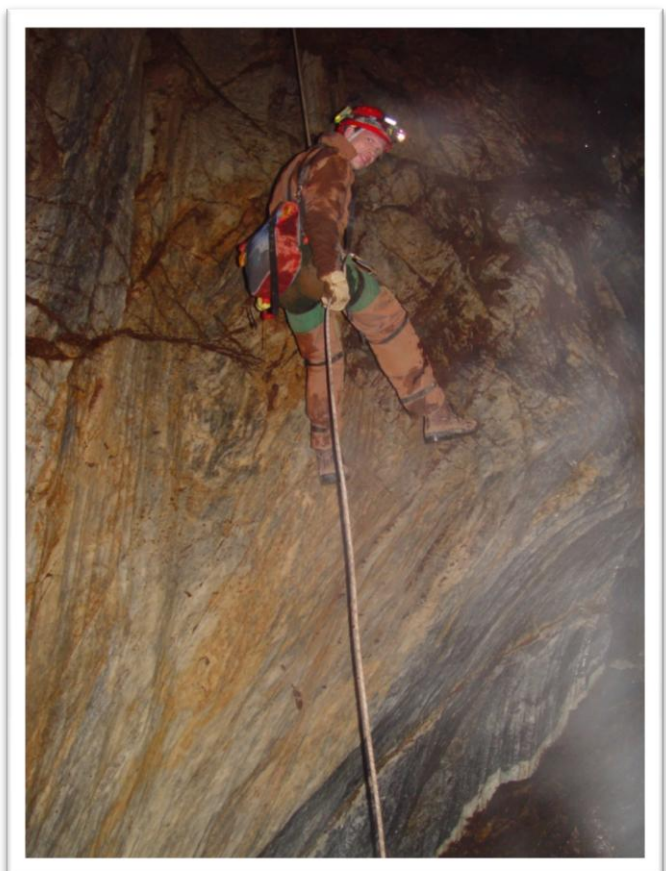
Flash forward again to another late summer trip. This time I was back with Dave McElmury, Scott Linn, a small sledge hammer, and a pointed pry-bar. We had structured the trip as an overnight. We all hiked up the ridge separately, met on the top, set up camp, and entered the cave. We rigged the cave as we went in. It took a while, but we finally reached the bottom. I immediately set to work on the lead.

The bar I had chosen turned out to be too long. The space was too tight to put the bar into an effective position. Consequently, I was left to hammer directly on the rock. Although I was able to take off a small amount of rock, I needed better tools if I expected to make significant progress.

I was relatively comfortable because of my physical activity, but Dave and Scott were not nearly as

active. It did not take long before they were chilled and needed to start the exit. I knew it would take them a little while to get up the rope so I told them to start and I would be right behind them. After a little more pounding I headed out.

As I was getting ready to climb I realized that I was, in fact, fairly tired. To save effort I decided to leave the ropes rigged in the cave. That was still the toughest trip out of a cave I have ever experienced. I had to talk myself down from near panic while trying to enter the Colon Crawl. My cave pack was in danger of falling down the crack and I was having trouble getting started in the crawl. I was cold and tired, and having thoughts of dying in the cave. I had to tell myself that losing my pack would not kill me and that I was going to make it out alive. I finally did make it through the crawl with my pack, but the ordeal was not over yet. I still had the fatigue to deal with while climbing up the ropes and through the cave. My forearms cramped as I climbed. To add insult to injury I believe I was as the top of the third



drop when I discovered my pee bottle had exploded in my pack and contaminated everything. Ugggh!

We finally made it to the surface. All I could do was crawl inside my tent, curl up in my sleeping bag in an attempt to warm up, and munch on trail mix. Dave and Scott seemed to be faring much better. The experience was so taxing and unpleasant that I wondered if I would ever go caving again. Time heals all wounds.

My next trip occurred with Mike Fraley, Michael McCormack, Nikki McCormack, and Rich Watson in the summer of 2003. This time I had a shorter bar along. I was going to make it through! Using the pre-rigged ropes, Michael and I made it as far as the bottom of the 4th drop. While we waited for the others to come down, Michael and I talked about how good we felt and how motivated we were to continue. That was not to be. By the time the whole group was down, Nikki reported she was cold and needed to exit. Honestly, by the time the others were down, Michael and I had both chilled and we were ready to exit as well. Newton had beaten us back again. *(It was this trip that helped me decide that 4 people was maximum for a bottoming trip –ed.)*

The next trip was a year later. This time it was Michael McCormack, Nikki McCormack, a caver from Arizona named Ben, and I. On this trip we made it to the 5th drop, but just barely. First we had to spend considerable time at the Colon Crawl. Michael's rib cage was almost too big *(yea right, though I appreciate Aarons circumspect remark, I was to FAT to make it through. That's trip is **the** reason why I weigh 45 pounds less today – ed.)* to make it through the constriction at the end. It was a real struggle. Then making it through the Lightning Passage took a while. The group leader (that would be me) had to re-educate himself about the size of the passage and the need to take off his vertical gear *before* trying to make it through. By the time we were all down at the

top of the 5th drop, Nikki again announced her need to exit due to the cold. That took courage and wisdom. On this trip I felt great. I was highly motivated to continue, but the safety of the group depended on our exiting. Therefore we turned the trip. While Michael and Nikki started out, I waited for Ben to bounce the 5th drop. Ben did not intend to come that close without bottoming the cave.

On the way out I still felt great, but Michael was not doing nearly as well. I could see signs of the same



malady I had previously experienced. Exiting the cave was hell for him. All I could do was encourage him and keep him moving, in the right direction, out of the cave. The lesson we took away is that Newton is a seriously challenging cave.

That brings us to the most recent trip on August 13th, 2005. Dave McElmurry had extended an invitation to Jon Panches and Jon Panches thought it would be interesting to see this dangerous cave everyone was talking about. Dave invited me and I saw it as an excellent opportunity to work on the lead some more.

To compensate for the strenuous nature of the trip we all hiked up Friday evening and camped on the ridge. After some breakfast and socializing we geared up and headed into the cave. Besides my interest in the lead, Dave wanted to move the rescue cache deeper into the cave and I wanted to replace the aluminum carabineers, used for the permanent rigging, with stainless steel screw links. Dave was able to move the rescue cache as far as the squeeze just before the third drop. The 5-gallon bucket simply would not fit. I was, however, able to replace all of the carabineers with screw links. Despite these tasks

bar was working much better than simple hammering alone. However, some of the rock was more solid than the other and, after a point, progress was slow. About this time John started to

The Newton Rescue cache is currently located at the top of the third drop.

ask how long it would be. I told him as long as they would let me keep going. He said he was starting to get cold. I suggested he come in and hammer for a bit since I was sweating from the effort. John came up to give it a try. Sure enough, after about 30 seconds of hammering he said he was warming up. Pretty soon I had Dave McElmurry in there as well. John and Dave took turns hammering while I was off exploring another lead. In honor of their efforts, I have dubbed that constriction “Tom Sawyer’s Fence”. If you have read Tom Sawyer you might recall that Tom managed to convince the other kids that whitewashing the fence was fun. I see definite parallels. If only I had convinced Dave and John to pay me for the privilege of hammering. 😊

After I finished checking the lead, which still needs further checking, I came back to check the progress and hammer some more. That solid rock was really slow going. Dave started eyeing the rock a little further up. It completely filled the crack, but it was made up of several distinct vertical layers. We started hammering on that and John really put in his all. Pretty soon large chunks of rock were falling out of the crack and we shortly had enough room to squeeze into the chamber beyond.

John could have gone in first, but because I was the one who had been working the lead the most, he waited until the crack was large enough for me to pass through. Once inside the room I immediately headed for the passage around the bend. No! It was



and the need to check the permanent ropes before use, we made the bottom in approximately 2½ hours. I was encouraged by how fast we were moving and how dry the cave was.

Once at the bottom I again immediately set to work on the lead. I was definitely making progress and the

too tight for me. The bedrock pressed close and there were a couple of knobs sticking out into the passage that prevented my forward progress. However, although I couldn't say for sure, it looked like the ceiling dipped down to about 2½ to 3 feet high, widened and continued around the corner to the left. I called John in since he is thinner than me. He could not make it through either so we passed the hammer forward. He knocked off the knobs and was able to squeeze through. My impression of the passage was correct. John crawled around the corner and shortly called for me to come through. I pushed my body through that space as fast as I could. I crawled around the corner and we were into new passage! Halleluja! The CRXP has its first significant result!

It appeared we were at the bottom some kind of pit or pits. There are multiple chutes headed upwards. There is no obvious way down. Below the breakdown floor we can see a muddy pool. Based on the muddy floor through the lead we suspect the 5th drop is the water's exit point through this new passage. Everything is unstable. There is crumbly debris everywhere. I managed to climb up 20 or 30 feet into one of the chutes while John hid from the rock fall I was generating. A short distance across another chute I could see a horizontal passage leading away. There appeared to be the remains of a mud flow coming out of the horizontal passage. To me that looks like the most likely passage to check first.

After this bit of exploration we decided we had scooped enough passage and had left Dave waiting long enough. We headed out. We all felt pretty good as we left the bottom of the cave, but Newton does not let go that easy. It fights you all of the way out of the cave. By the time we reached the surface, we were all beat and very glad we had decided to camp Saturday night as well.

A few parting thoughts about exploration in the new passage and Newton in general:

1. The nut on the rebelay at the 5th drop needs to be tightened. A second, backup bolt is probably a good idea.
2. The ropes and anchors should be checked before each use. Who knows what could happen between trips.
3. John Punches commented that if someone were to get hurt beyond the squeeze in the new passage it would be extremely difficult to get them out. Before further exploration is conducted we should bring more rescue gear into the cave. In particular, supplies to guard against hypothermia are probably the most important.
4. In general, Newton is a demanding cave. Anybody intending to go beyond the first drop should have appropriate gear and be prepared for a physically demanding trip. The cave sucks you in and then fights you all the way out.

Here is to finding more virgin passage on Cave Ridge!



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The Cascade Grotto meets at 7:00pm on the third Friday of each month at the Shoreline Community Center. The Community Center is located at 18560, 1st Ave NE in Shoreline. To get to the Community Center from Seattle, take Exit 176 on Interstate 5 (175th St. N) and turn left at the light at the bottom of the off ramp. At the next traffic light (Meridian Ave. N) turn right. Turn right at 185th St. N (the next light). Turn left on 1st NE, which again is the next light. The Community Center is on the right. Don't get confused with the Senior Center, which is on the end of the building. Enter the building on the southwest corner and find the Hamlin Room.



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