

CASCADE Caver

Published by the Cascade Grotto of the NSS

December 2007, Volume 46, No. 12



Cascade Caver

ISSN 0008-7211

Copyright 2007 by the Cascade Grotto. All rights reserved

The *Cascade Caver* is published periodically throughout the year by the Cascade Grotto, a local chapter of the National Speleological Society. Any material in this newsletter that is not copyrighted by an individual or another group may be copied or reprinted by internal organizations of the National Speleological Society provided that credit is given to the author and to the *Cascade Caver* and that a copy of the newsletter containing the material is sent to the Editor. Other organizations must contact the Editor.

Opinions expressed in the *Cascade Caver* are not necessarily those of the Cascade Grotto, the editors, or the NSS. Unsigned articles may be attributed to one of the editors. Great pains is taken to assure proper attribution of copyright and to use works in the public domain when the copyright is not clear in the case of illustrations. If you feel that this publication has infringed upon your copyright, please let the editor know immediately.

All material to be published, subscription requests, renewals, address changes, and exchange publications should be sent to the Grotto address.

GROTTO MEMBERSHIP

Membership in the Cascade Grotto is \$15.00 per year. Subscription to the *Cascade Caver* is free to regular members. Membership for each additional family member is \$2.00 per year. Subscription to the *Cascade Caver* is \$15.00 per year. Subscription via email is \$11.00 per year. Members can save \$4.00 per year by subscribing to the e-mail version of the caver

GROTTO ADDRESS

Cascade Grotto
P.O. Box 66623
Seattle, WA 98166.

This post office box should be used for both the grotto and for the *Cascade Caver*.

GROTTO OFFICERS

Chairman Kari Doller (253) 797-1606
Vice Chairman Robert Mitchell (360) 802-5131
Sec/Treasurer Marla Pelowski (253) 835-7404

OTHER POSITIONS

Trip Coordinator Open Position
Librarian Stuart Monson (425) 271-2258
Regional Rep. Dave Decker (360) 675-3791
Program Chair. Robert Mitchell (360) 802-5131
Conservation Hester Mallonée (253) 838-6464
Safety Dave McElmurry (253) 951-1995
Editor Michael & Nikki McCormack
 (425) 377-1978

Email: michmcco@microsoft.com

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

Willamette Valley Grotto's Annual Vertical Practice

Saturday, March 15, 2008 at 9:00 AM
Contact Vertical Bob at 503-665-4449

COVER

This month's cover was shot by Jansen Cardy. Ann and Peter Bosted pose on old trashed bikes in the Maelstrom Puka entrance.



'Twas the Night Before Caving

December 24, 2007

By Puppy, KING of the Beetles

aka Thomas Evans

'Twas the night before Caving,
When all through the dwelling
Not a caver was stirring, not even rappelling;

The ropes were coiled neatly by the door with care,
In hopes they'd soon be removed from there;

The Cavers were nestled all snug in their beds,
While visions of formations danced in their heads;

All ready to go in my 'coveralls, and helm,
I sat longingly dreaming of the caving realm,

When out on the lawn there arose such a clatter,
I sprang from the bed to see what was the matter.

Away to the window I flew like a bat,
Tore open the shutters to yell at the cat.

The moon on the breast of the new-fallen snow
Gave the luster of an Apex 3 to objects below,
When, what to my wondering eyes should appear,
But a miniature caver, and eight cavers with vertical gear!

With a fine young leader, so lively and quick,
I knew in a moment it was a hot caver chick.

More rapid than eagles her Sherpas they came,
And she whistled, and shouted, and called them by name;
"Now, Puppy! Now, Michael! Now, Aaron and Dave!
On, Ron! On Hubert! On, Danny and Jacob!

To the top of the pitch! To the top of the falls!
Now climb away! Climb away! Climb up the walls!"

As bats after wild insects fly,
When they meet with an obstacle, mount to the sky,

So up the PMI pit rope they flew,
With ascenders and pulleys and other toys too,
And then, in a twinkling, I heard on the roof
The ribbing and joking of each caver goof.

As I drew in my hand, and was turning around,
Down rope came the chick with only one bound.

She was dressed all in vinyl, from her head to her boot,
And she was tarnished with mud on her cave suit;

A bundle of gear she had flung on her back,
And she looked like a peddler just opening her pack.

Her eyes -- how they twinkled! Her dimples how merry!
Her cheeks were like roses, her nose like a cherry!

Her luscious flushed lips drawn up like a bow,
And the mud on her chin was from a cave, I know;

A stump of sausage she held tight in her teeth,
And a helmet encircled her head like a wreath;

She had a soft face and a mighty fine rack,
That jiggled gently, I had to step back.

She was slender and ripped, a right shapely lass,
I stared when I saw her, checking out her class;

A wink of her eye and a swing of her hip,
Soon gave me to know she might use her whip;

She spoke not a word, but went straight to work,
Filling all our cave packs; then turned with a smirk,
"ON ROPE", she called, and began to ascend.

And giving a nod, away went a friend;
Unclipping she happily yelled "OFF ROPE",
And away she climbed leaving nothing but hope.

But I heard her exclaim, ere she climbed out of sight,
"Safe Caving to all, and to all a good-night."





But WHY Does it Take So Long?!

January 2, 2008

By Michael McCormack

Well there are lots of reasons that the Caver is perpetually delayed. I'm sure Mark Sherman knows them as well as I do. Probably better, as his long tenure as the Editor of the Cascade Caver released more issues than I can image ever trying to edit.

But no excuse is good enough. Frankly, I've been blessed with content. The cover was provided by Jansen months ago. The Caver articles have been floating in my inbox for months as well. The biggest problems I have are a complete lack of time, conflicting and out of sort priorities, and perhaps even a dash of laziness. Fortunately, Nikki McCormack has agreed to help edit.

Putting together an issue is a creative deal for me. I like to have themes, I like great pictures, and outstanding articles, and it seems I like write an editor's column. This all takes energy and enthusiasm. I don't just cut and paste articles out of e-mail; I (and now Nikki) actually read and edit every one of them. Pictures get processed, balanced, leveled, and color-corrected.

Perhaps I go too far, but it's my desire to have quality content, not just content. So for those of you who have been waiting for this issue, I hope you'll forgive my tardiness, and enjoy. For those of you who wish to see it more often, I would suggest that you consider editing the *Caver*, the position is available.

Until then, I will endeavor to increase the number of issues that people are seeing and, perhaps more importantly, spread them out more evenly throughout the year so that when summer hits we'll actually see issues and get more news.

Oh yeah and though I've said I was blessed with content, I would like to point out, there is now officially a shortage of good caving stories to publish in the *Caver* as I work my way through the existing backlog.

Hawai'i Expedition 2007 - Part 1

June, 2007

Text and Photos By Jansen Cardy



It was the day after Valentine's Day, and I had arrived back on the Big Island of Hawai'i. After spending considerable time in the islands, I can confidently say this one is my favorite.

It's called the Big Island because it has a 4,000 square mile land mass, larger than all the other Hawaiian Islands combined. It contains 6 of the 10 longest known lava tube systems in the world, including the top 4. And for those who like their caves vertical, the island also boasts the deepest open-air pit in the US, at 862 feet. Don't forget that active volcano, too!

I was headed to the seasonal home of fellow cavers Don Coons and Barb Capocy. Their house is located in a sparsely-populated gated community, built on part of the southern flank of Mauna Loa – the world's largest mountain by volume. You get a great view of the Pacific Ocean 1,000 feet below and a couple of miles away, across the sparsely-vegetated lava. On a clear day, you can almost see New Zealand (just kidding). Each year, this semi-communal speleo-home near the small town of Ocean View is generously shared by Don and Barb with a relentless hoard of visiting project cavers.



Mike Warner suffering a sharp squeeze in Misery Maze

Friday February 16 was Caving Day One for me. At last, I finally get underground again for the first time in months! I joined Mike Warner, Ken Kloppenborg, and Steve Lewis on a survey trip into the Ohana Kai Maze, at the southern end of the Kanohina System. With over 20 miles of lava tube already surveyed, this system is currently the world's second-longest. We began surveying in an area that I had scouted at the end of last year's caving season. Tying into the last existing survey station, we belly-crawled through the first constriction with me in the lead. I tried to stick to something resembling a main passage trend heading makai (downhill), but side leads abounded. It was slow going on the sharp lava, mostly hands-and-knees crawling occasionally punctuated by painfully low stoop-walking.

For a while, almost every station was a passage junction. Using my laser Disto to measure distances made progress slightly more efficient, but with so many parallel and interconnecting passages nothing was easy. After a while, we unofficially dubbed our new playground the "Misery Maze." Several more days spent surveying this over the next few weeks yielded over a thousand torturous feet of new passage.

The next day I was enticed into another un-surveyed cave. This trip involved a short drive followed by a mile and a half hike in the company of Peter and Ann Bosted, and Ric Elhard.

We made our way down into a large puka (a pit formed by the collapse of a lava tube ceiling), and waded through a thick layer of goat droppings into the darkness. Just inside this newly-named Goat

Drop Cave, we reached a 15 foot nuisance drop.



Ric Elhard with goat bones found in the back of Goat Drop Cave

Fortunately we'd planned for this, bringing rope and vertical gear with us. After the drop, we headed makai in a high-ceiling canyon passage until we reached a belly crawl. On the other side, we found ourselves in a small chamber with a lava sump at the end – complete with a set of goat bones.

Above our crawl, there was chamber which we were



Ken Kloppenborg moving at a crawl in Misery Maze

able to chimney up and onto a high ledge overlooking the canyon passage we came through earlier. Even in that remote spot, as with everywhere else in the cave, there were charcoal fragments showing evidence of ancient torch-wielding explorers before us. On the high

ledge we stopped for lunch, took some photos, and then started surveying back. Unfortunately my trusty Disto soon started having problems, culminating in its permanent retirement. It was

sorely missed for the rest of my time on the Big Island, and I have since replaced it with a newer model. Other than that misfortune, a good day's caving was had by all.

Sunday was the annual Cave Conservancy of Hawaii meeting, held at Don's house. Knowing how these



things can sometimes go on for a while, I eavesdropped for the first half hour or so before quietly sliding out to go caving. I joined Norm Thompson and the

Bosteds on a photo trip into the nearby Maelstrom section of the Kanohina System.

After just a couple of hours of shooting, we were joined in the cave by several attendees from the

meeting. Dr. Fred Stone got busy placing cricket traps near the underground tree roots, as part of one of his latest projects to study cave critters. I shot some more photos, and got to chatting with some of the cavers.

Arriving back at the house, I found Don trying to spark some interest in a nearby cave that needed surveying. That evening, Fred took me for a short walk across the lava to find this Lani Kai Cave. We found some entrances here and there, but our main goal proved to be elusive as darkness fell. The next morning, Don took me straight to the entrance – a mere few hundred yards away from the house. After a brief tour of some of the cave, he talked me into the idea of putting together a survey crew to finish mapping it later in the week.



A rare and tiny blue formation in Maelstrom Section, formed by sulfur and copper elements

On Tuesday, I joined Ann, Ken, and Mike Nardacci for a lava hike in Volcanoes National Park. In keeping with tradition we had a late start, enjoyed a leisurely lunch on the way, and arrived at the end of Chain of Craters Road mid-afternoon. We were well-armed with food, water, cameras, headlamps, and marshmallows.

For two and a half miles, we followed the trail of people along the line of marker posts. Arriving at the viewpoint before sunset, we were treated to a

fantastic view of the lava flowing into the ocean barely two hundred yards from us. After multiple photos, 'someone' decided to cross the rope safety barrier for a better shot – and received a prompt scolding from a park service staff member lurking in the background.

As darkness fell, our group made its way inland a third of a mile to where lava was breaking out in slow-moving tongues. Then we broke out the marshmallows. Taking brief turns crouching in the heat wasn't the most efficient way to toast them, but it made for a fun photo op and some light entertainment. A passing hiker innocently asked me if I was measuring the lava temperature with a probe! On the return hike we stopped for more ocean-lava shots, before finally making it back to bed in the wee hours of the morning.



Jansen toasts a marshmallow on the open lava.

Stay tuned folks – more Hawai'i caving adventures to follow next time!

Additional photos of these caves can be found on Peter and Ann Bosted's website:
<http://www.cavepics.com/> (Hawaii, February 2007)

Cave Conservancy of Hawai'i website:
<http://www.hawaiicaves.org/>



Not Just Knots: A New Look at Webbing

May, 2007

By Thomas Evans

Welcome to the third installment of our repeating column on vertical gear and technique. - ed

Most of us use webbing of some sort in our climbing systems or rigging, but have we ever really thought about ways to improve its performance?

We are taught the basics about webbing when we first get involved with any vertical work. Only tubular webbing of climbing grade should ever be used since the potential forces placed on it can overcome the strength of flat webbing. Similarly we are taught that only Water Knots should be used to tie webbing ends together (Figure 1).

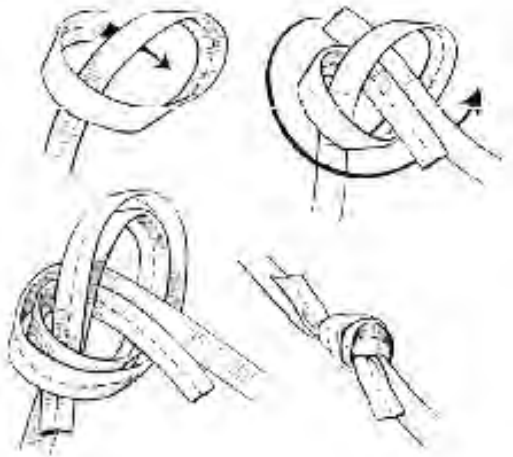
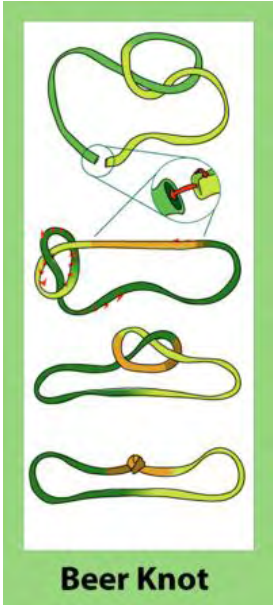


Figure 1, The Water Knot (www.ruckus.org)

In some instances Beer Knots (Figure 2) would be more appropriate since they impart a greater strength. Unfortunately it is hard to tell when the knot is loose or slipping since it is impossible to observe the knot tails. When making etriers, Frost Knots (Figure 3) and overhand knots are appropriate as well. These basic rules will keep us safe, but we can do better.

Water Knots have been known to slip loose at times. Research was conducted to find out why and it was

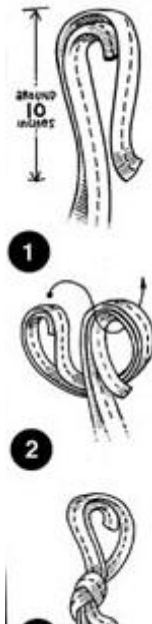


Beer Knot
 Figure 2, The Beer Knot
 (www.wikipedia.com)

discovered that when a water knot is cyclically loaded and unloaded the knot slips. One human body weight is enough to load webbing, so care should be taken when this knot is used. The knot should be tied tightly, dressed, and should have long tails. The tails can be tied with a backup overhand knot for additional safety. If cyclical loading is expected, tie your webbing sling with a good deal of extra webbing, and check it periodically to make sure not too much webbing is slipping through

the knot. Ideally, when used in rigging, it should be possible to position the knot on the far side of the object being rigged to, and with enough wraps around the object, the knot may not experience any loading (i.e. a wrap three pull two).

Since the fibers in webbing are subject to abrasion, unlike kernmantle rope, it is easy to abrade through, quickly losing strength and its associated safety. One solution to the problem of abrasion is slipping an abrasion protector over wear points. Wear protectors can be made rapidly and very cheaply by cutting an appropriate length of tubular webbing the same size, fusing the ends, and slipping it over the original piece of webbing. If the wear protector webbing is made of a different color than the base webbing, excessive abrasion that wears through the wear protector will be obvious upon inspecting your




Frost Knot
 Figure 3, Frost Knot
 (www.climbing.com)

gear after a trip. The wear protector can then be replaced and the life of the main webbing extended.

Most climbing equipment must meet rigorous gear standards established by the UIAA, and webbing is no different. Climbing spec webbing is manufactured to have a 4000 lb (19kN) breaking strength. This is much higher than the maximum amount of force a human body can survive (~12 kN). Strictly speaking, it is not necessary to increase the strength of webbing. However, during a rescue it is fully possible that equipment can be stressed beyond the 19 kN limit. In this situation we can either double up the webbing or we can do something else to increase its strength. One alternative is to line (thread through) 1 inch webbing with 9/16 inch webbing which is rated at 9 kN of breaking strength. Most cavers will never have to worry about the added strength, at least with new webbing. However, if their equipment is old or abraded, it is possible that their webbing could be compromised. Having an internal strand of 9/16 inch webbing could add an additional safety factor to ones equipment, as well as provide additional resources in an emergency (pull out and use the 9/16 inch webbing separately).

I do not mean to imply that our current use of webbing is dangerous, only to suggest that it may be possible to make our systems more robust and more versatile in an emergency. My suggestions are intended to increase the number of tricks in your vertical tool kit. As always, cave safe!



The Cave Chronicles: Part 1
January 2, 2008
 By Thomas Evans
 Photos By Michael McCormack

The photos combined with this article are all of the Survey trip to Date Cave. - ed

Episode 1: Date Cave-The beginning

All good stories start over a pint of beer.

Unfortunately I don't drink, so this story starts many

years ago when I was sober in college. I used to be a member of the University of Washington Archery Club, really a militia organization bent on slowly taking over the world one person at a time. However, one weekend we decided to forgo planning our world takeover (our range was closed for a holiday) and chose to take a hike up to Rattlesnake Ledge. It was a short drive from Seattle (off exit 32 on I-90), and the walk was pleasant (1 mile, 1200 elevation gain). The view from the ledge was spectacular even with the omnipresent cloud cover, and I vowed I would return some day to soak up the beauty without insane college friends around me.

Time passed and I forgot my promise, then I went off to grad school in Missouri. It was there that I met a fantastic caver who dragged me along on my first cave trip. I was instantaneously hooked. After some years of schooling in a karst heaven, I moved back to the Seattle area, and found myself lusting after my subterranean adventures without any release. Then I remembered Rattlesnake Ledge and that promise (better late than never, right?).

What piqued my interest was the memory that Rattlesnake Ledge had one big crack that extended downward with what appeared to be additional passages leading off of it. In college I had not yet discovered the joys of becoming wet, dirty, broken, and in pain from traveling through caves, so I didn't even think to explore the depths. But now, newly unemployed, single, and desiring some caving, I decided that I would make a trip up there to explore.

Having no social skills, I couldn't find a date, so I was forced to call my good friend and hiking buddy Sarah Temus to come along with me. Since she is gainfully employed, she couldn't get away until a Friday evening after work.



Danny Miller on the Hike up Rattlesnake Ledge.

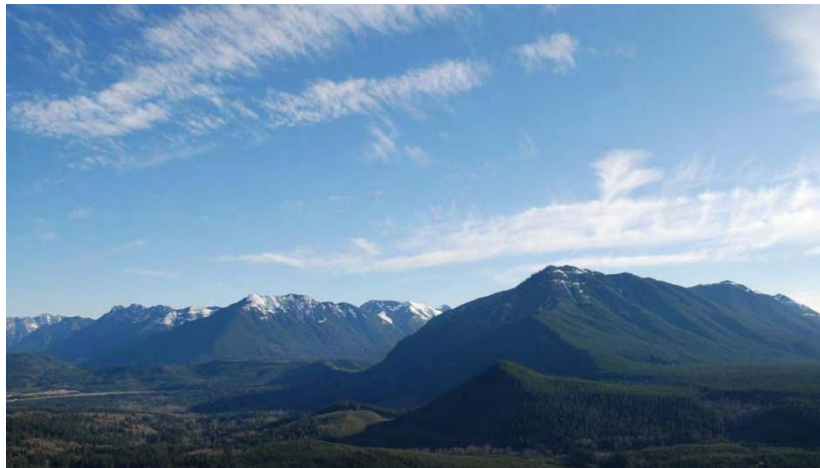
On Friday August 4th, 2006 she picked me up after work and we drove out to the trailhead and hiked up the trail. In the years since I had been there the trail had been lengthened to make it gentler (2 miles, and 1200 foot elevation gain). We hiked in the twilight and eventual darkness to the ledge where we relaxed looking out over the valley and enjoyed one of the simple pleasures in life; mint hot chocolate. It was then that I made my move. Yes, I invited her to go caving with me. Right then, right there, and I just happened to have all the gear we needed.

We chimneyed down the main crack and slipped into a small entrance to the cave. We explored two rooms and had fun crawling around in some of the tighter side passages along the two main levels of the cave. I noted that the cave was relatively small,

developed in a crack system along the cliff face, and that there were not many passages I had not already been in. Though it obviously was not a large cave, it clearly warranted another trip. We exited having after a short time in the cave since she had to go home and get some sleep before work the next day (Yes, on a Saturday).

She had fun and so did I. However, upon packing up the gear and looking out at the valley and lake below

I realized I really should not be taking friends to do such romantic things. Once again I had squandered a perfectly good romantic evening with someone who just “wants to be friends.”



The view from Rattlesnake Ledge near the cave is breathtaking on a rare clear day.

You would think I would learn my lesson after night hiking Granite Mountain, Mt. Rainier, and watching the Leonids on Rampart Ridge, all with Sarah. Clearly I needed to get a date.

The hike down was uneventful and we returned back to civilization invigorated and having converted yet another sorry soul to the sport of caving. I vowed I would go back; next time with different company.

Episode 2: Birthday on Cave Ridge

Since I am a sucker for anything outdoors, I can be conned in to doing anything simply by being asked. Being unemployed makes it even easier to go out whenever I want, so everyone I know hits me up to go outdoors. Once again, Sarah Temus enters the picture. Her little brother, Joey Temus, heard about our little escapade up at Rattlesnake Ledge and decided he had to go caving for his birthday. Seconds later I received a phone call from Sarah asking me to

take her brother and one of his friends caving for his birthday. Fortunately, the happy day was on a Saturday, August 19th, 2006 so the four of us had all day.

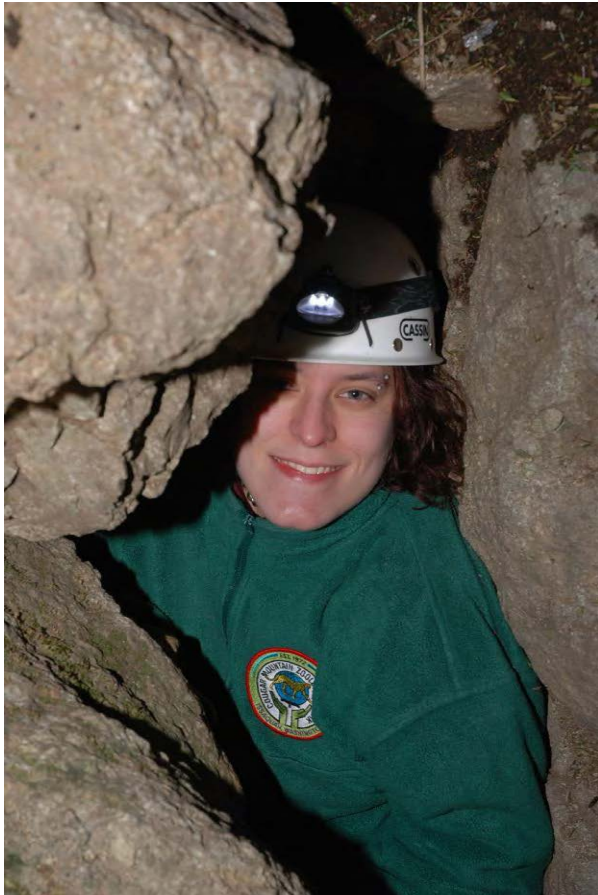
We decided that we would head up to Cave Ridge and explore whatever caves we could find that were not vertical. I sent them all packing lists and basic cave etiquette information, and answered any questions they had. The day arrived and we met in

the Alpental parking lot for a gear check. Much to my dismay, the boys had brought HUGE handheld flashlights nearly the size of car batteries, even though headlamps had been suggested (and required by me). Both boys were 18. The hike

up was simply divine with a clear sky, moderate temperature, and absolutely stunning scenery.

Upon reaching the ridge top, I was amazed to see so many classic karst features surrounding me since I had never seen any in the state of Washington. It was incredible. We first found Lookout Cave, and I entered far enough to know we would not be going in that cave. Cascade Cave was our next stop and I decided we would go elsewhere for our caving fun since I didn't want to get into any real vertically developed caves. The first cave we all went in was the back entrance to Hell Hole. It was simply magical once in the entrance. The pits were deep, inviting, and simply tantalizing to all young males present. The flowstone was magnificent and added greatly to the birthday festivities. Since we were only able to explore one small room in Hell Hole we decided to exit and find another cave to explore. We found

another cave (Danger Cave I think) with more extensive horizontal development in which we explored until one of the younger members of the trip was forced to leave (Joey had to go to a wedding reception with his girlfriend). Sarah and I stayed up on the ridge a while longer to soak up the sights and sounds of that marvelous place without the noise made by two teenagers, then headed down.



Nicole Chauran squeezes through a tight spot in Date Cave.

The trip was incredibly successful, even though I did not know the names of any of the caves when I was there. All parties had fun, safely, and obtained a greater love of caves. For me it was an opportunity to get up there to see what the caves were like, and learn just what all the talk was about at grotto meetings. I also walked away with a new favorite ridge in the Cascades, as well as another great date idea.

Episode 3: Dating at Sanger's Talus Cave

At the end of December I managed to find a young lady who captured my attention enough that I decided to take her caving as a first date. December 27th of 2006 I picked her up having just met her the night before. We drove out to the trailhead of Sanger's Talus Cave and soaked in the sights. The trailhead is at an overlook that affords a view as far south as Mt. Rainier, west to the Olympics, and looks out over the San Juans. The day was crystal clear, crisp, and full of promise. The hike in was tremendous, though I was feeling the copious quantities of Christmas cookies I had recently consumed. The forest the trail moves through is young, but charming and well used. The cave was easy to find, particularly since the young lady and her fire fighter brother had scoped it out the previous day just to make sure I wasn't taking her somewhere dangerous. Clearly they trusted me.

We geared up surrounded by huge boulders and a cliff face just begging to be rappelled, and slipped in to the entrance next to this cheesy warning sign about all the various ways you could hurt yourself in a cave (speleophobia?!?!?). It was clear from the very moment she squeezed through the first tight entrance that I had converted a new caver and that I would be asking this girl on another date. Courtney Lyons, my companion, was excited about the prospect of adventure, exploration, and trying something new. We climbed from room to room and explored some of the various side passages we encountered. Rapidly Courtney developed her 'cave legs' and started leading me through the cave. However, she did not remember how to get out, which was my job; at least she kept reminding me that it was my duty. We scampered through the twisted pile of rocks, discovered the lake, viewed and counted nine bats, and discovered some large cracks that seemed to require ropes to get down. (It wasn't until my third trip, with Ron Zuber on January 31,

2007, that I learned you can get to the bottom without using ropes.)

After nearly two hours of crawling through the cave we decided to eat. As any new romantic relationship should start, we had to have a candlelight meal. This time it was a candlelight lunch in a big room between three large boulders. Admittedly, the

lunch was cut short by rapid cooling, so we packed up, and continued our exploration. After 4.5 hours of slithering through small holes, exploring cracks, and getting completely turned around, we exited the cave on the other side of the rock we entered next too. Neither of us had any idea how close we were to our original entrance.

Upon exiting the cave we warmed up, ate a little, and started the walk back. We managed to get back to the trailhead in time to see part of the sunset over the sound and the San Juans, and revel in the feeling of being alive.

The conclusion was that she and I both enjoyed the cave, each other's company, and decided to head out to find Jackman Creek Cave. Sadly we were stopped by too much snow on the access road.

The trip was a complete success since I got to experience a new type of cave (talus) which I had never been in before. I've been told there are a number of excellent paintings in the cave, none of which I have found on any of my three trips there. In the future I would dearly like to find them and bring back photographic evidence. Courtney was (and is still) quite excited about caving, and will pursue it



Danny Miller (Left) assists Rachel and Thomas Evans survey.

further in her life. In fact, I was more than happy to help her with it four days after our Sanger's trip.

Episode 4: Date Cave-First (really fourth) Date

New Years Eve 2006 was begging for something spectacular. I had a girl to impress, some caves to explore, and

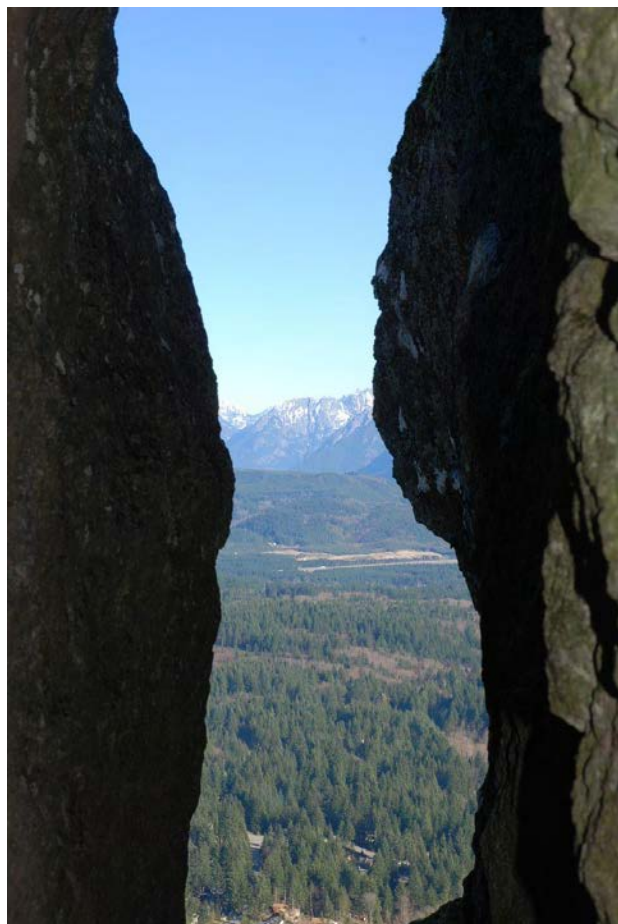
some time off. The timing could not have been more perfect. So I invited Courtney Lyons out for a day of outdoor fun.

I picked her up in the morning on the 31st and we drove to Gasworks Park where I set up a basic rope climbing/rappelling teaching system. The day was clear, a bit chilly, and sunny, holding the promise of a perfect New Years Eve date. We then spent two hours practicing ascending, descending, changing over, and knots. She enjoyed it. A lot. Needless to say, I was smitten. However, the fun had just begun.

Around noon we pulled down the ropes and drove out to the Rattlesnake Ledge parking area. We hiked fast up to the ledge and watched the sunset over the hills as the air cleared and the moon rose. I rigged the main crack using a single rope with a high strength tie off and a pre-tensioned backup some seven feet away. We both rappelled into the cave (Courtney used a rack and I used a rescue 8), an unnecessary but exciting way to enter the cave, and took off our vertical gear. From there we explored! We had a couple of hours of crawling through passages, exiting on the cliff face, then crawling back into the cave to see where leads went. We ended up

exiting to a ledge below the main ledge where we stopped to have a snowball fight by moonlight. (I couldn't have planned that, so I can't take credit for it, but it was INCREDIBLY fun). After risking our lives for a few snowballs to the face we collapsed in a heap preparing for the climb back up through the cave. Ascending the rope Courtney used a standard Frog system while I used a basic Texas system with two CMI Ultrascenders. Once up top we had fondue (yes, over a camp stove) and French hot chocolate (again with mint). Sated we returned to the car to head out for pack rafting off of Alki to watch the fireworks over the Space Needle.

The trip was far better than I could have planned with perfect weather all day long, an enthusiastic companion, and a cooperative moon. I explored nearly the entire cave and got Courtney solidly



The view from a fissure opening in Date Cave.

hooked on caving. While that was only the first half of the date, I will admit that it was spectacular and would recommend it to everyone.

P.S. We missed the fireworks due to a very long new year's kiss (3.5 hours). Come on. I couldn't leave you all hanging. I had to let you know how it turned out.

Episode 5: Sanger's Talus Cave Returns

Sunday, January 14th, 2007, Megan McGovern arranged a cave trip out to Sanger's Talus Cave for a couple of her friends (rock climbers) and invited members of the grotto along. I answered the e-mail and took part in the adventure. The day started early with Meg picking me up at home (my car broke down the day before) and we headed up to the trailhead. The approach was hazardous since the previous weeks weather had dumped copious amounts of snow over the area. As a result the trailhead was absolutely stunning. Looking over the water and the valley was breathtaking, as was the view of the Olympics. The hike in was slower than on my previous trip due to the snow and ice. The forest was shrouded in snow, giving the entire experience a mystical air that was invigorating. Crossing the few streams along the trail was divine since they usually had spectacular ice formations all over them.

When we reached the cave it was similarly enchanting, though with a dangerous twist. The cave is developed in a series of boulders that fell from the cliff above. When snowed over, it is impossible to tell where the rocks begin and end. Traversing over to one of the entrances was hazardous, yet fun in its own way. Once in the cave, it was absolutely captivating. The rocks were the same, as were the rooms and passages, but everywhere there had been water in the cave there were now ice formations. There were stalactites, stalagmites, and salt and pepper shakers all formed out of ice. In some places it was hard to move through the passages without breaking them. This change in character was

intoxicating and has made me very interested in doing more winter caving. Unfortunately, we had time constraints so we were only able to spend about two hours in the cave. We did explore some areas that I had not seen on my previous trip, but we only saw one more bat.

The hike out was fast, since Meg and I planned on camping out for a night while our companions had opted to leave after the caving. We hiked out quick, shuttled them to their car, and then hiked back in quite quickly to our camp site and warm sleeping bags. The night was cold but well worth camping out since the morning was crisp, clear, and beautiful. We hiked out without any caving and returned home ready for warm showers, hot drinks, and warm beds.

The trip was a success, though I would have preferred the opportunity to explore the cave more. The cave's character changes considerably in the winter. I found it to be absolutely enchanting after a good snow and would recommend that others take advantage of it in the future. Just be considerate of the bats!!

Episode 6: Date Cave- The Survey



I had mentioned the presence of Date Cave to Michael McCormack who showed a great deal of interest in using it as an opportunity to practice his cave mapping skills. Additionally, a number of my friends and family expressed a desire to go caving. Clearly another trip up to Date Cave was needed. Saturday January 27, 2007 was the date agreed upon and the trip was organized.

We met in the trailhead parking lot, with myself and my twin sister Rachel showing up late (I blame her entirely for showing up 30 minutes late at my house). The crew consisted of Rachel Evans, Tom Evans, Nicole Chauran, Danny Miller and Michael McCormack. Rachel and Nicole were first timers, while the rest of us were more or less crusty old cavers.

The hike up was pleasant with clear skies, a marvelous temperature, and good company. At the top it was simply divine, which lent to it to being crowded with other hikers. We geared up and descended into the main fissure and spent some time stowing our gear in the first room of the cave. Unfortunately, since the trail is well used, we were quickly the source of much interest, much to our dismay. I ended up fielding some geology questions from local high school students who were doing a project on the ledge. I have no idea what the project was, but they seemed very happy to have the answers told to them while they videotaped the interview, which was somewhat unnerving. The survey was a little disorganized in the beginning as we learned our jobs, getting used to the pace and learning how to relate to each other. Once we had the basics worked out the survey moved much faster. It was held up by a small group of young girls who decided to sing very loudly the theme from Aladdin near the cave entrance. This distressing performance was halted, rather abruptly, when Michael scared them to death by putting his head

out the entrance. I have never heard such a loud, sustained scream in my life. It was quite charming really.

After we had surveyed about two thirds of the cave, we adjourned to a ledge that can only be accessed from the cave. There we enjoyed a scenic lunch complete with skittles, M&M's, and me nearly killing myself to stop some litter from blowing away. At this point, Nicole had to leave, so she left her gear and headed down the hill while we stayed behind to finish the survey. The end of the survey was relatively fast, so we had an opportunity to mess around a little in the cave before leaving. The reality is they got some incriminating photos of me in the cave, which they have yet to send me copies of.

During most of the survey, Nicole and my sister were engaged in cleaning the cave. There was so much trash that we ran out of trash bags. The net take was two full trash bags full of refuse (double-bagged so they could be pulled through the cave squeezes). The cave looks markedly better after their efforts, but another trip is needed to clean it of the remaining trash, glass, and other small bits that the new cavers missed. *(Special note, this cave will require regular maintenance trip, and should have special posting since it is regularly littered in and vandalized if a dent is truly to be made – ed.)*



**Rachel Evans proudly displays the two full trash bags.
We told her later she would have to carry them down.**

The hike down was pleasant and we stopped by the lake for a few scenic pictures before heading back to reality and the comfort of our own homes. This trip was immensely productive. First, we cleaned the cave, not completely, but very close. Second, we finished mapping the cave in one day, helping us to relearn mapping and to practice it in a practical

place. Third, we exposed two people to the joys of caving, both of whom enjoyed it and learned the importance of cave restoration first hand. Fourth, we interacted with the public during much of the trip, explaining what we were doing, how to cave, and helping educate people on safety concerns in and around caves. Finally, we had fun. The company was fantastic, the views were second to none, and we got to know each other and made friends. One can hardly expect or want a more successful cave trip. We even trained Nicole in proper cave etiquette, since of her own free will she remarked to Danny, "More wiggling, less whining." A caver was born.

Final thoughts:

I have been in the grotto for only a short time, and found people generally interested in caving, yet hesitant to do so in the winter. There is talk of a 'caving season' and a lack of caves during the winter. I have found this to be untrue. There are caves available to us during the winter, we just have to get

out in them. Cave Ridge may be too hard for some of us in the winter, but that doesn't mean we can't go up north in the hills, or down south to the lava tubes, or even to Oregon or eastern Washington. It is my personal goal to get underground more this year than I ever have before, even while I lived in Missouri (a karst heaven). I invite you all to join me in my adventures since it is better with more people, not to mention safer.


To that end, I will be developing a cave database for Washington. I will first focus on the caves outside of the Mt. Hood area. There are too many caves down there to worry about yet and there are a lot of politics surrounding them. If you know of any caves and are interested in helping me, I would appreciate any names, locations, maps, and reports you can give me.

This brings me to my last point. Michael McCormack has guilt-tripped me in to volunteering as vertical chair. This means that I will be hosting a number of vertically oriented classes and trips in the upcoming months. I invite you all to come to them when you can. I will start with simple events designed to teach the basics to those who need it and provide practice time for more experienced climbers. After these basic sessions, more advanced opportunities will be provided for rope work and gear-making parties. My hope is that, by the time the summer rolls around, all those interested will be up to speed so we can run vertical trips as desired. All this will start after February since I will be out of town for most of the month. If you have any requests, comments, concerns, or other thoughts, please do not hesitate to contact me. I only know what I want, and will slowly go about creating those experiences for

myself. I hope others will find it educational and fun too.

Take care and cave safe!!



 **H.R 4113 – Impacts on Cave Ridge**
January 2, 2008
By Michael McCormack
Map provided by Roger Cole

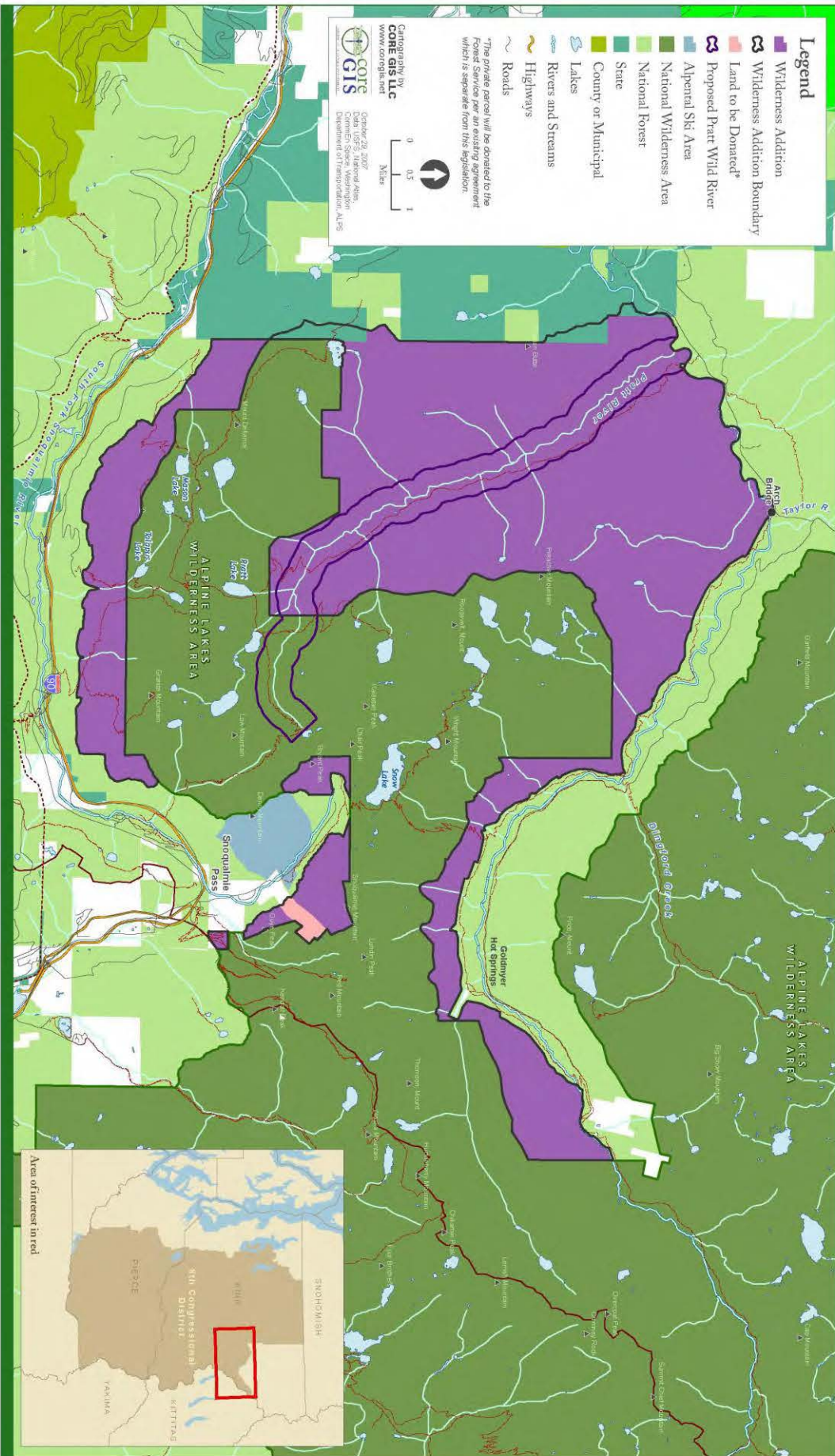
Representative Dave Reichert of Washington's 8th District has introduced legislation that will expand the Alpine Lakes Wilderness Area to include Cave Ridge and several other areas.

The Bill *To expand the Alpine Lakes Wilderness in the State of Washington, to protect the complete watershed of the free-flowing Pratt River as a Wild River, and for other purposes.* was introduced on November 13, 2007 and has been referred to a house subcommittee.

The Cascade Grotto should act to discover the value of this bill and either support, or oppose the act, in a timely manner. A map of the proposed change follows. The text, and material is available at: <http://www.house.gov/reichert/alwawpra.shtml>

Alpine Lakes Wilderness Additions and Wild Pratt River Act of 2007

October 2007



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.



Cascade Caver
P.O. Box 66623
Seattle, WA 98166