

The Southeastern Caver

Newsletter of the Southeast Regional Association of Grottos



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Brian Roebuck - Editor



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A Note from the Chair

Welcome to the 2007 SERA Winter Business Meeting! I have been truly honored to be your Chairman for the year and hope to have contributed to the success of SERA in my own small way. Being part of any organization and especially serving that organization as an officer has taught me that you only get out of it what you are willing to put into it. It is easy to sit on the sidelines and watch things get done but it is quite another to volunteer, lend a hand, support a cause, take a stand, or just simply speak up when the situation demands it. Many cavers are not the outspoken type of people that go out of there way to voice an opinion but it is usually those same conservative cavers that can get great things done when they put their minds to it.

I have seen much change in SERA and some of it is quite disturbing. All too often we see caves threatened by developers, land getting split up and sold leaving caves and karst vulnerable to damage, and caves damaged by other outside influences. We can't save or buy them all but we can try to educate those responsible for land management and development so that damage is minimized by those that do not know better. It takes all of us watching, reporting, educating, and speaking out in public to help keep the caves and karst we love as safe as possible. Change is inevitable but with hard work it can be less damaging and even tolerable. Please take the time and effort to help us do this important task for our caves and ourselves.

There is no place I have been that has better volunteers than SERA. You are the backbone of countless projects involving cave survey, discovery, mapping, cleanups, protection efforts, education efforts, and caver goodwill to land owners. As our former chairman stated last year your bat sticker shows you to the world as an ambassador of caver goodwill. Be proud of being a caver and be respectful in all things you do therein. Show the SERA region just how great cavers really are! I have to end this blab with a sincere thanks to all the Chattanooga Grotto volunteers that are hosting this meeting for SERA. I can't forget to thank Lynn Roebuck taking over for Don Hunter hosting the SERA photo salon and xxxxxx for taking over for Brent Aulenbach in supporting our SERA map salon this year. Remember to support SERA's own SKTF cleanup tomorrow as well by showing up ready to volunteer with other caring cavers who get out there and make a difference in our caves and karst areas.

Brian Roebuck
SERA Chairman 2006

2006 SERA Winter Business Meeting

Hosted by Central Alabama Grotto February 18 2006

The 2006 SERA Winter Business Meeting was held in Sewanee Tennessee at the American Legion Post. The Central Alabama Grotto hosted the event with assistance from the Sewanee Mountain Grotto. The weather was cold with snow falling and ice forming on the roads and sidewalks. Despite the weather, forty cavers attended the event. The NSS office came and set up.

The meeting was called to order by chairman Peter (Mudpuppy) Michaud at 9:30 AM central. Peter introduced the SERA officers, announced house keeping items and thanked the Central Alabama Grotto (CAG) for hosting. Don Hunter announced the Photo and Art Salon. Brent Aulenbach announced the Map Salon. Jim Wilbanks spoke about the SERA awards. Brian Roebuck introduced the latest issue of the Southeastern Caver.

Michael Gilbert (CAG) made several announcements about the building and lunch options. He also spoke about the upcoming SERA Cave Carnival. He said the grotto wants to put the "carnival" back in the event with attractions for the entire family. He spoke about music options and about CAG's cleanup target, Manitou Cave.

Next were the grotto reports. Lynn Roebuck reported the Southport Chronic Cavers were doing a lot of exploration. Gerald Moni reported on Nashville Grotto's project mapping. Brian Roebuck reported that Spencer Mountain Grotto had young leaders and was rebuilding. Jason Stacey reported that CAG had many new members and were focusing on SERA. This year's SERA will take place at Buck's Pocket State Park on June 1-46th. Myrna Attaway reported Birmingham Grotto was partying as usual. Maureen Handler reported on Sewanee Mountain Grotto. She said the grotto was focusing on conservation projects. She spoke about the SKTF cleanup for the next day on Orme Mountain Road. Cheryl Pratt reported that East Tennessee Grotto had been caving and camping together. She reported ETG was celebrating its fiftieth anniversary with a banquet and slideshow this fall. Marty Abercrombie reported Chattanooga Grotto is also celebrating its fiftieth anniversary this year and is planning a celebration. Don Hunter reported Athens Speleological Society is supporting the University of Georgia's outdoor recreation department and is gaining new members. Anne Elmore reported Upper Cumberland Grotto is not doing much. Martha Mills reported that the NSS Board of Governors is looking for committee chairs. The Great Expectations fund raising was getting matching donations. She appealed for southeastern cavers to run for the BOG. Brent Aulenbach reported that the Georgia Speleological Survey had recorded cave #600 this year. The GSS is supporting the resurvey of Fricks Cave with survey

classes, which have been well attended. He reported the GSS together with the Tennessee Cave Survey and the Alabama Cave Survey will have another combined spring meeting in April. The NSS bookstore requested updated address changes from members. Mark Joop reported the Southeastern Cave Conservancy Inc. had taken possession of Hollow Ridge Cave in Florida. He also spoke about the cleanups in Byers Cave in Georgia.

Chairman Michaud spoke about lunch eateries and the meeting was adjourned at 11:30.

The meeting was reconvened at 1:25. The roll call of grottos revealed the following grottos were present and the voting representative.

Chattanooga Grotto- Marty Abercrombie, Dogwood City Grotto- Jim Wilbanks, East Tennessee Grotto- Cheryl Pratt, Georgia Speleological Survey- Brent Aulenbach, Huntsville Grotto- Avis Moni, Nashville Grotto- Gerald Moni, Sewanee Mountain Grotto- John Attaway, Southport Chronic Cavers- Lynn Roebuck, Spencer Mountain Grotto- Brian Roebuck, Upper Cumberland Grotto- Anne Elmore, Athens Speleological Society- Don Hunter, Birmingham Grotto- Myrna Attaway, Central Alabama Grotto- Jason Stacey

The 2005 minutes were read and approved without correction. The Treasurer's Report was read and approved (see attachment). The SERA awards committee's report was read and discussed. (see below). Lynn Roebuck moved and Jason Stacey seconded that the report be approved as the awards procedure. The procedure was adopted unanimously. Mark Joop reported that the SERA Attendance Committee was not finished. The same committee was reappointed for another year.

Officer elections were held. For Vice Chairman, Michael Gilbert, Lynn Roebuck and Gerald Moni were nominated and declined. Martha Mills was elected by acclamation. For Secretary/Treasurer, Jim Wilbanks was elected by acclamation. Vice chair Brian Roebuck succeeds to chairman automatically.

Jim Wilbanks delivered the SKTF Report.

Merit Awards were considered next. Merit Awards were given to:

Avis Moni for years of service to the NSS. Carl Bishop for dedication to the region's cave resources. Mark Murrell for dedication to the region's cave resources. Peter Michaud for outstanding service and hospitality to the caving community.

Chairman Michaud spoke about the Sunday cleanup on Orme Mountain Road.

The business meeting was adjourned at 2:30 PM. Awards committees met thereafter.

Award Committees were established.

Francis McKinney: Brian Roebuck, Marty Abercrombie, and Gerald Moni

Richard Schreiber: Jim Wilbanks, Mark Joop, and Lynn Roebuck

Larry Adams Landowner: Avis Moni, Myrna Attaway, Anne Elmore

Alexis Harris Conservation: Martha Mills, John Attaway, Cheryl Pratt

The Business meeting was adjourned at 3:30 PM

Awards Committees met with the following results:

Francis McKinney Award: Keith Filson

Richard Schreiber Award: Anne Elmore

Larry Adams Landowner Award: Mark Dunnavent / Buddy Baldwin (Southport Cave Owners)

Alexis Harris Conservation Award: Steve and Rosemarie MacDonell

Photo Salon Results:

<u>Category</u>	<u>Award</u>	<u>Photographer</u>	<u>Title</u>
Color Print, Entrances/Exterior Scenes	Best of Show	Tim Curtis	"Steven's Gap Double Entrance"
Color Print, Entrances/Exterior Scenes	2 nd place	Cheryl Pratt	"Untitled Cave Entrance"
Color Print, People/Animals	1 st place	Cheryl Pratt	"Into the Darkness, Cuyler's Cave"
Color Print, People/Animals	2 nd place (tie)	Cheryl Pratt	"Cricket in Diamonds and Fur"
Color Print, People/Animals	2 nd place (tie)	Anne Elmore	"Gating at Mammoth"
Color Print, People/Animals	3 rd place	Cheryl Pratt	"Walking the Line"
Color Print, Artistic	1 st place	Jerry Wallace	"Rimstone Pools and Paddy's"
Color Print, Artistic	2 nd place	Tim Curtis	"Steven's Gap Double Waterfalls"
Color Print, Artistic	3 rd place	Lynn Roebuck	"An Old Feller in Old Yeller"
Color Print, Artistic	HM	Anne Elmore	"Pretties"
Color Print, Humor	1 st place	Lynn Roebuck	"Conservation is Contagious"
Color Print, Humor	2 nd place	Anne Elmore	"Waiting Room at Surprise Pit"
Color Print, Humor	3 rd place	John Attaway	"Early John"

Art Salon Results: (all Electronic submittals with no significant alteration/enhancement)

<u>Category</u>	<u>Award</u>	<u>Artist</u>	<u>Title</u>
People/Animals	1 st place	Jerry Wallace	"Coral and Camille"
People/Animals	2 nd place	Jerry Wallace	"Stream Passage"
People/Animals	3 rd place	Jerry Wallace	"PSP and LB in Rusty's"
Artistic	1 st place	Alan Cressler	"Byer's Cave, Big Room"
Artistic	2 nd place	Alan Cressler	"Alabama/Georgia Cave w/Brent"

Cartography Salon Results:

There were not enough maps this year to have more than one category, so all maps were entered in the open category.

Best of Show went to Brent Aulenbach for Little Frick's Cave, Walker Co, GA (GWK14).

The three other maps all received merit awards by meeting the required high standards:

Lee Cave, Walker Co., GA (GWK589) by Tom Moltz

Sadi-Gavin Pit, Walker Co., GA (GWK593) by Tom Moltz

Lita's Lovely Line Lead, Walker Co., GA (GWK592) by Tom Moltz

Thanks also goes to the very qualified judges who took a lot of time and effort in judging the maps. The three judges were: Gerald Moni, Lynn Roebuck, and Mark Joop, all from Tennessee.

Banquet

A wonderful banquet was cooked and served by CAG grotto members at the hall. The banquet speaker was Chris Clark of the American Cave Conservation Association in Horse Cave KY.

Respectfully submitted, Jim Wilbanks

Secretary/Treasurer SERA 2006

A Trip to Varnedoe Cave

By Jon Cammon

Photos by Evon thompson

Saturday morning, 1-6-06, found seven members of the Cullman Grotto meeting at the library at 8am. The participants on this trip included Harold, Richard, Becky, Tommy, Evon, Scott, and myself. Once everyone had arrived we all loaded into Evon's Jeep and Richard's ford truck. I rode in the *NASCAR* jeep, or at least we all thought we were because our driver thought she was on a race track. We finally arrived safely in Huntsville, and headed up the road to the fire station. When we arrived there were three Huntsville Grotto cavers at the parking area. They were Jack, Fred, and Suzie (I hope I remembered their names correctly). We all decided that we would combine our trip from the bottom of the first drop. We rigged our rope, and they rigged their rope in the 71' pit, and the plan was they would use our ropes on the other drops after which they planned to head back out.



Jack and Scott at Entrance



Scott and Harold Calvert

Tommy and I went down first on opposite ropes, and while Richard and Becky were descending I rigged the second drop of around 30' with the same rope we rigged the entrance drop with. Once the second drop was rigged the four of us went on to the bottom of this drop to wait on the others and for more rope they were bringing for the next two drops. While we were waiting we took the passage back to see the nice dome room on this level. There are fossils everywhere in the walls in this room. When we heard the others coming down the second drop we went back and headed down to the third drop. We had to climb down through a small window into the room containing this drop so we helped pass packs and rope down. I went ahead and rigged the third drop of 60' with a 130' rope, and once it was rigged we decided to wait for everyone to get to this room before we went farther. Once everyone caught up I asked who had the third rope for the last drop. It turned out nobody did. It was left at the entrance of the cave so Jack was kind enough to volunteer to return to the surface and bring the rope back. While he was gone after the rope the rest of us, except Fred and Suzie, went on down the third drop to wait on the rope. Fred and Suzie decided to go practice vertical skills on the entrance drop.



Becky and Richard Wooten with author looking over lip.



Richard Wooten

We went ahead and passed gear through the tight passage to the top of the last drop, and Richard, Becky, Scott, and Tommy waited here while Evon, Harold, and I waited at the bottom of the third drop. Jack soon arrived with rope in hand, and I took it and headed off to rig the last drop. They were going to wait here until it was rigged because of limited space at the lip. This fourth and final drop of around 75' is very tricky to rig. First you have got to belay yourself to a bolt while you reach out over the top of the pit and wrap the rope around a natural bridge and then back the rope off to the same bolt. When the rope is finally rigged it makes for a fairly easy lip, just reach out to get the rope, rig in, and just swing out into a totally free drop. Once everyone had rappelled to the bottom I climbed first followed by Jack, then Jack said that he was gonna head on out so we said our good-byes and we was off to get the other two in his group and exit the cave. I stayed at the top of the last drop until everyone had climbed, and de-rigged and followed the others out. One-by-one we climbed the remaining drops, and pulled the ropes up and out of the cave.



We all had a wonderful time in this challenging little multi-drop cave. The hike back to the fire station is where our adventure turned a little towards the bad side because you have to make a steep uphill ascent to the base of a bluff and then ascend to the top of the bluff where you must hike about 1.5 miles back to the station. When we reached the main road we were greeted by Jack pulling up in his vehicle asking if we wanted him to drive our gear the rest of the way to the vehicles for us and we happily agreed. Harold even got a ride back as well.

Grotto Trip to Ward's Cave

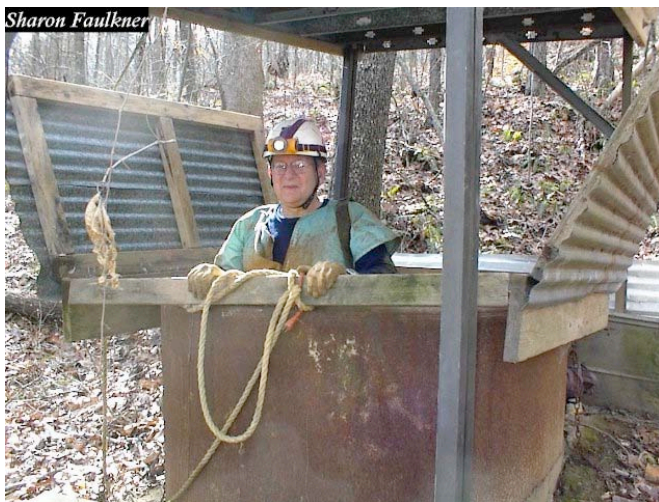
By Sharon Faulkner

(All Photos by Sharon Faulkner except as noted)

Saturday, February 4, 2006 was a cold morning to be outside, but a perfect day to spend inside a cave. Once we had geared up, and signed release forms, Mr. Ward and his son, Shannon, offered to drive us to the cave in their four-wheel drives. No one objected to that, the day was cold and windy and the ride was appreciated.



The natural entrance to Ward's Cave (ABA 3372) is a small, sloped sink, but located right beside this entrance sits an approximately five-foot diameter metal pipe that at first glance I thought was an old well-pump house. This metal pipe is covered and has a ladder attached inside leading down to the cave. Mr. Ward hand dug this entrance into the cave, which is around 15 to 20 feet deep, with a pick and shovel. One may need to see this to grasp the full effect of the amount of work involved in excavating this entrance.

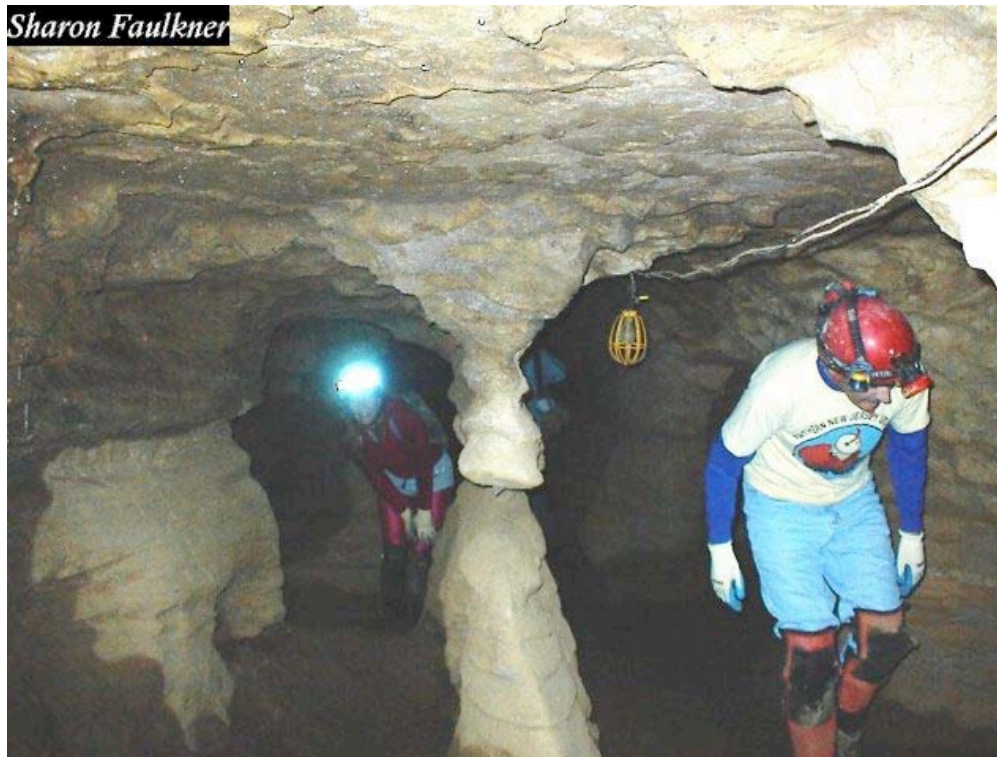


Sharon Faulkner

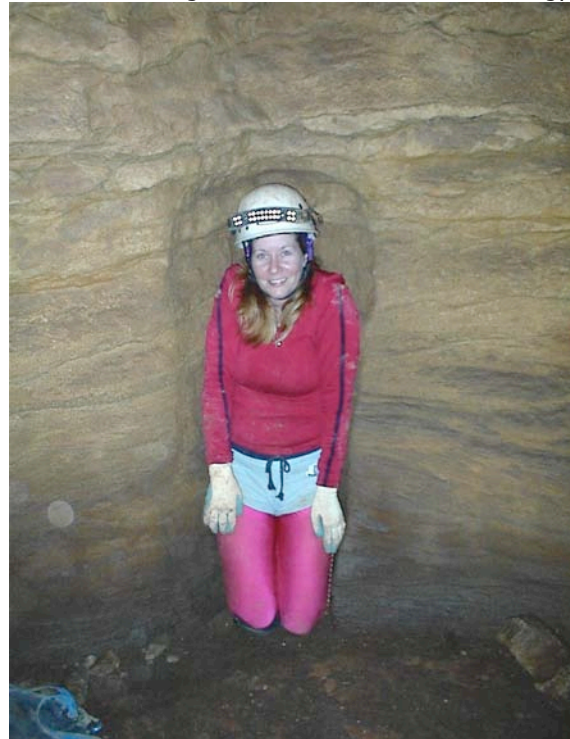
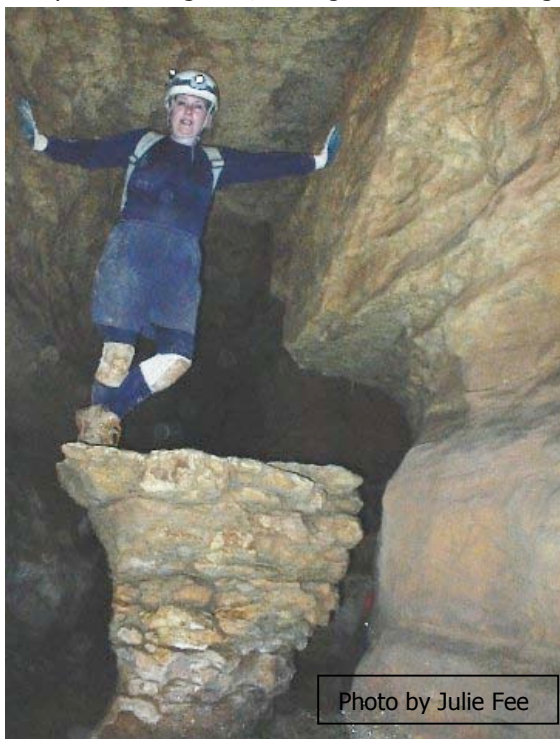


Photo by Scott Fee

Our group, one by one, climbed down the ladder accompanied by Mr. Ward and his son. As we meandered through the front portion of this maze cave, we saw the remnants of electric lights once strung thru the cave. Much of the passage here is walking canyon passage with many interconnecting side passages. Mr. Ward left us just before a short belly crawl that leads further back into the cave, but Shannon, who knows the cave quite well, gave us a tour of the rest of the cave.



One passage led to an area with a crystal-clear pool of waist deep water that none of us felt an overwhelming need to venture into to test the depth for ourselves. Another led to a small pit with an old nylon rope and a cable ladder rigged from an earlier time. We could see passage leading off from the bottom, but did not find a way to free climb down this pit. Also found in this area is a scaling pole leading to an upper area of the cave, which Shannon and Dave, who has visited this cave before, said didn't go very far. Leaving here, we began our exit following a different route through the cave and found areas with gypsum



lined walls, and several fossils. We did note a couple of dozen pips scattered throughout the cave, a healthy population of cave crickets, and one tiny salamander.



As we wound our way back to the entrance, we ventured off the beaten path and did a cursory exploration of some of the side passages we had passed coming in, though by no means did we see the entire cave. Ward's cave has not been mapped and could certainly use it, though the many loop closures that will be required could become a mapper's nightmare. In any case it's a fun cave and an excellent place to spend a cold winter day.

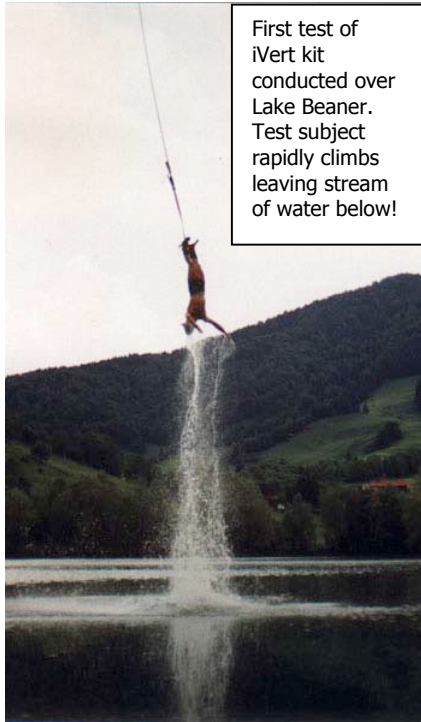
iCave System Product Review

By Dr Beaner

I've often been asked "Hey Dr Beaner – why don't you make some cool caving gear?" Indeed that is a good question! So I got my crack team sent off to dry out and get off crack long enough to invent some slick new things for all you cavers. It turns out we couldn't do it on our own though so we ended up with a cool new partner. So here it is cavers!

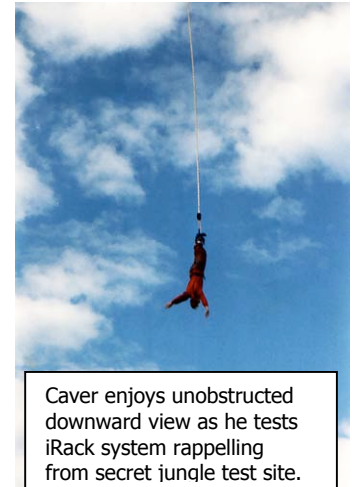
Beaner Industries in cooperation with Applet Computer LLC are proud to present a new synergy of design, style, and function for the modern caver. Introducing the iCave system - blending high technology with good old fashioned simplicity for the discerning caver of today available exclusively from Beaner Industries/Applet Total Caving Help (B.I.A.T.C.H.) Systems. Yes you heard right. Now you too will not only look like the high performance stylish cave-exploring risk-ignoring master of the underground that you are - but you will actually perform like one too! This new BIATCH package has been specifically designed to equip you with all new technology for advancing the state of the art in caving.

Do you crave a new way to rappel? If so then start rappelling in style with the iRack! No need to be afraid of vertical caving anymore folks - it's here and it's cool! We asked the design bunch at Applet to start with a clean sheet and design a rappel device like no other incorporating their unique sense of style, coolness, functionality, and ease of use. They did not disappoint us! Traditional low tech racks use heavy stainless steel or hard to machine titanium parts and support cavers at waist level keeping a caver upright when rappelling! The buffoonery! The new iRack (made from hardened unobtainium) weighs much less and mounts to simple yet efficient ankle harnesses (the iGotcha system) letting the caver simply rig in and easily crawl or even jump over any lip to have an unobstructed view of what lies below. Worried about rockfall hitting you on top of the head? Not with the iRack you don't! Having trouble seeing if you short-roped the drop?

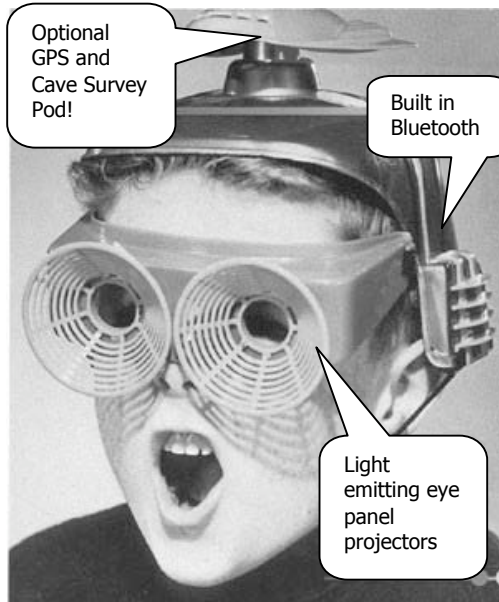


First test of iVert kit conducted over Lake Beaner. Test subject rapidly climbs leaving stream of water below!

Again the iRack saves the day as you can see the end of any rope well before you ever get there! Worried about harness hang trauma? No worries with the iRack! You can hang all day without it cutting circulation in your legs! Other features include built in remote with controls just like your iPo.... errr ... MP3 player! You can easily adjust rappel speed with your thumb, start a new song (earbuds included), or take a photo of yourself as you rappel! Not only that but the built in bluetooth microphone kit allows you to interface with your iDome caving helmet for remote voice actuated rappel commands. The optional iBounce kit gives you the ability to reverse course without changing over and begin your iVert system climb back up. How do you climb while upside down? Just swing those arms back and forth and zoom - up you go thanks to the Applet pendulum powered rope ascender system! In no time at all you'll forget a ropewalker ever existed! It's cool, stylish, and easy to use! Besides if hanging upside down is so good for cave dwelling bats it sure has to be better for us cave dwelling cavers! But I digress.... Let's go over a few more iCave innovations shall we?



Caver enjoys unobstructed downward view as he tests iRack system rappelling from secret jungle test site.



Optional GPS and Cave Survey Pod!

Built in Bluetooth

Light emitting eye panel projectors



Secret Remote jungle rappel testing tower



iGotcha harness system during product testing

iThought you'd never ask! Yes you read it correctly. The new iDome is the latest in technology for cranial protection, light distribution, cave communication, and safety that has ever been invented. As has been mentioned the iDome features bluetooth communications for voice actuated caving device control. This not only makes it truly hands free but intrinsically safer while using the iRack due to a special voice stress algorithm that detects if you begin to go out of control while on rappel. As your tone goes up - you slow down! Accelerometers also measure rate of decent and quickly respond to arrest your fall with smooth deceleration forces. Not only that it comes with the latest in Applet patented light emitting eye panel projectors that concentrate all the light to exactly where you are

looking! They are also capable of projecting large format full length HD movies onto cave walls or other suitable surfaces! It's

enough to make you stare wide-eyed with your mouth hanging wide open! Additionally the quad sound system built into the iDome makes you think you are in a concert hall while you playback your favorite songs and display video downloaded from the Applet iTunage Store. Real time iCaverchat sessions run automatically between iDome equipped cavers (handy on those waterfall drops)! Optional built in GPS and laser equipped Cave Survey Pod encourage the hip caver to never ever take his or her iDome off! And talk about style! European cavers will be green with envy as you slide by stylin in your shiny new iDome! So what are you waiting for cavers? I'm happy to report that B.I.A.T.C.H. Systems will be coming out with even more integrated cool caving gear in the weeks to follow. Start your journey into modern caving with the new iCave system. So grab an iRack and matching iDome too! Available in SERA Silver, Bat Black, Marion Mauve, and Avis Pink! Just thirteen easy payments of 39.99 will get your preorder locked in (Actual gear will be ready as soon as the Chinese factories gear up production)! Act now and all your caving buddies will ask you "Ain't that a BIATCH?" when they see your new cave gear!

Send your checks made out to C.A.S.H (Common Accounting Short Hand) to B.I.A.T.C.H. Systems Innovations, P. O. Box 777, 1 Infinite Drop, Cupertino, WA. Don't delay - order today and you too can say "they walked for their ropewalkers but iRan for my iRack!"

Dr Beaner

Editors Corner

All submissions to "*The Southeastern Caver*" are gladly accepted in the following forms, written text, MS Word, plain text files, jpeg, tiff, scanner size prints (8.5" x 11" max), photo slides (I have a slide scanner), pdf, Adobe Photoshop and Illustrator native, and many others (please contact me if you have any doubt). Please send all submissions, photos, etc to the editor by the last day of January for possible inclusion into the next "*The Southeastern Caver*" electronically to: solow@charter.net (broadband) or via snail mail to the following address:

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Please visit our website at <http://www.caves.org/region/sera/> for the latest information and to view older newsletters etc.

Coming soon! A new SERA Karst Task Force (SKTF) website is being created for your enjoyment and to provide information on cave conservation and education in the SERA area. Look for an announcement online soon through the links below!

Caving related discussion forums and websites of interest to SERA members can be found here:

<http://www.caves.org/phpBB2/>
<http://nssmembersforum.proboards28.com/index.cgi#Other>
<http://www.hiddenworld.net/tag-net/>
<http://www.webwhisper.com/tcs/default.html>
<http://www.caves.org/survey/fcs/>
<http://ourworld.cs.com/alabamacaves/>
<http://www.caves.org/survey/qss/>

NSS Cavers Forum
US Cavers Forum
TAG – Net
Tennessee Cave Survey
Florida Cave Survey
Alabama Cave Survey
Georgia Speleological Survey

"Every Caver is some other Caver's weirdo"
Dr Beaner

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Brian Roebuck – Chairman

Martha Mills -- Vice Chairman

Jim Wilbanks – Secretary/Treasurer