

The Southeastern Caver

Newsletter of the Southeast Regional Association of Grottos



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Brian Roebuck - Editor



Bill Walter happily works his way into a tight lead in Hubbards Cave, TN

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A Note from the Chair

Well, the 2008 SERA Cave Carnival/VAR held in Bristol Tennessee was very hot! It was a long way for some of us to travel, and with gas being \$4.00/gal expensive to travel to. But the event was fun for all who attended. Thanks to the Pine Mountain Grotto for hosting.

Also this year's NSS Convention was held in the Southeastern Region, that being Florida.

I would like to commend all of the Grotto's that carry on their own clean up projects.

I would also like to thank the SKTF for their work on cleaning up our region. Without all of the volunteers the SKTF could not exist. For each and every one of you who volunteered for clean up's I extend my personal thanks.

I would like to suggest that this year we all look for the small things in caving and enjoy visiting the small caves. Don't think that you have to do all the big caves and out do everyone else. I think then you will find that you enjoy your caving a lot more and will not do as much damage to the popular caves that we love so much.

Thanks also to East Tennessee Grotto for hosting this year's Winter Business Meeting.

John Attaway

SERA Chairman 2009

SERA Winter Business Meeting 2008

Minutes for the 2008 SERA Winter Business Meeting 2/03/08

Hosted by Dogwood City Grotto

The 2008 SERA Winter Business Meeting (SWBM) was held in Lafayette GA at the bank of Lafayette at 105 N. Main Street. The event was hosted by the Dogwood City Grotto. Sixty three cavers were in attendance.

Chairman Martha Mills called the meeting to order at 9:15 AM. Also in attendance were vice-chairman John Attaway and Secretary/Treasurer Jim Wilbanks. Mills introduced the map salon run by Brent Aulenbach, and Glenn Mills who was running the photo/art salon. She spoke about the SERA awards mentioning that no landowners had been nominated. She introduced Brian Roebuck who had produced the SERA newsletter.

Don Feathers of the Mountain Empire Grotto spoke about the upcoming 2008 SERA Cave Carnival. He showed a presentation on the site and spoke of the caves and other recreational possibilities in the area.

Mark Joop with East Tennessee Grotto reported on the 2007 SERA Cave Carnival. He spoke about the record attendance and the beer consumption.

Matthew Garrett from East Tennessee also spoke about the upcoming SWBM they are hosting. He also spoke about a conservation project which will be featured at the meeting. Grassy Cove Saltpeter Cave is being acquired by the state of Tennessee. In order to keep the state from gating the property, several grottos are going to attempt to clean it up. There ensued a general discussion about gates and spray painters.

Mark Joop then reported about the Cave Carnival Enhancement Committee. Mark distributed a survey to be distributed to SERA grottos. He spoke about the purpose of a region and financial reward.

Jim Wilbanks began a discussion about White Nose Syndrome. Several attendees spoke about the problem and discussed the SCCI's warning and about means to minimize risk of transmission. The main method is washing caving gear between caves.

Next were the grotto activity reports.

Lynn Roebuck reported the Southport Chronic Cavers were busy with exploration, and mapping. John Attaway said that Birmingham Grotto was celebrating its fiftieth anniversary soon and had taken up management of Anderson Cave for the SCCI. Gerald Moni reported the Tennessee Cave Survey has passed 9100 documented caves. He reported there were 205 over one mile in length. Avis Moni spoke for Huntsville. She said the grotto was busy with the Fern Cave Survey, The Bankhead National Forest and had two grotto trips every month. Mark Joop reported for the SCCI on the purchase of Frenchman's Knob and Tumbling Rock. Alan Padgett reported for Pigeon Mountain Grotto and their continuing efforts to clean up Pettyjohn's cave. He stated 10,000 people accessed the cave every year. He spoke of their role in opening up the caves in Cloudland Canyon State park. Nathan Gatlin reported for Central Alabama Grotto that they were mapping a small cave and working with Birmingham Grotto gating Graves Cave. They continue to work at Talladega Speedway and have a new website. John Hoffelt talked about Tennessee Central Basin Grotto. They have moved their meetings to Middle Tennessee State University and are working on mapping and managing Snail Shell Cave for the SCCI. Chrys Hulbert said the Nashville Grotto was hosting SERA 2009 and had a site selection committee. They have also been cleaning up Indian Grave Point Cave, managing Swirl Canyon, Hardin's Cave and Logston's for the SCCI. Anne Elmore reported Spencer Mountain Grotto was managing Rocky River and working on the trails in Blue Springs Cave. Jane Morgan reported about Dogwood City Grotto. They finished the Frick's Gazebo for the SCCI and a new pavilion for the TAG site. Chuck Canfield is the chair of the upcoming TAG. They still have the "adopt a mile" in Dade county, and participated in the Case and Sittons caves cleanups. They have a weekly ropes course and a new webmaster. Carol Jackson reported for the Augusta Cave Masters that they were doing karst education. Don Feathers spoke for Mountain Empire that SERA/VAR was coming along and they are surveying Perkins Cave, Omega Cave and Corkskrew Cave. Brad Barker reported the Clock Tower Grotto cleaned up Talley Cave and are training members to survey. Matthew Garrett spoke for East Tennessee Grotto about the Grassy Cove project. They have also adopted the highway nearby, worked the Cherokee Caverns Haunted House, worked on Cumberland Gap Cave and are hosting the Board of Governors Meeting in March as well as next year's SWBM. Matthew also spoke for Smoky Mountain Grotto's work on secret mapping. Jonny Prouty reported for Chattanooga Grotto. They have lots of new members and are meeting at the Chattanooga Nature Center. Maureen Handler spoke for Sewanee Mountain Grotto. She said they had 25 members. Two members became fellows of the NSS last year. They are working on the Orme Mountain Road project, Horseshoe Bend Cave cleanup. Their recycling efforts at TAG and SERA recently totaled to 800 pounds of Aluminum cans. They are teaching surveying and hosted Pupfest Labor Day weekend for 80 people. Nancy Aulenbach reported for the Georgia Speleological Survey on the book Caves of Bartow County, a compilation bulletin from the eighties, and the Fricks Cave survey. Brian Williamson reported the Middle Georgia Grotto was surveying south Georgia Caves.

The meeting was suspended for lunch at 11:50 AM

The afternoon business meeting convened at 1:20. The grottos and their representatives were:

Augusta Cave Masters, Bill Jackson

Birmingham Grotto, Myrna Attaway

Central Alabama Grotto, Nathan Gatlin

Chattanooga Grotto, Jonny Prouty

Clock Tower Grotto, Brad Barker

Dogwood City Grotto, Jane Morgan

East Tennessee Grotto, Matthew Garrett

Georgia Speleological Survey Nancy Aulenbach

Huntsville Grotto, Avis Moni

Middle Georgia Grotto, Bryan Williamson

Mountain Empire Grotto, Robby Spiegel

Nashville Grotto, Chrys Hulbert

Pigeon Mountain Grotto, Alan Padgett

Sewanee Mountain Grotto, Maureen Handler

Smoky Mountain Grotto, Cheryl Pratt

South Carolina Interstate Grotto, Carol Jackson

Southport Chronic Cavers, Lynn Roebuck

Spencer Mountain Grotto, Anne Elmore

Tennessee Cave Survey, Gerald Moni

Tennessee Central Basin Grotto, John Hoffelt

Next elections were held Tennessee Cave Survey nominated Anne Elmore for Vice Chairman and she was elected unanimously. Birmingham nominated John Hoffelt for Secretary/Treasurer and he was elected unanimously.

The SKTF report was tendered by Maureen Handler and is attached.

Myrna Attaway reported on the Sunday cleanup at Pettyjohn's from 10-3.

Mark Joop reported that the Cave Carnival Enhancement Committee would remain in force and would tabulate the surveys.

SERA Meritorious Service Awards were next. Two were unanimously awarded.

Jim Wilbanks for nine years of service as the Secretary/Treasurer.

Maureen Handler for the Orme Mountain road cleanup.

Jim Wilbanks moved and Maureen Handler seconded to award the SCCI a \$500 grant which was approved unanimously.

The SERA awards committees then met.

Francis McKinney Award- judges were Gerald Moni, Myrna Attaway, and Brad Barker. The winner was Peter "Mudpuppy" Michaud.

Richard Schreiber Award- judges were: Lynn Roebuck, Mark Joop, and Nathan Gatlin. The winner was Paul "Bull" Snook.

Alexis Harris Conservation Award- judges were: Cheryl Pratt, John Attaway, Anne Elmore. The winner was Kristen Bobo.

The Larry Adams Landowner Appreciation Award- was not awarded.

The business meeting was adjourned at 2:25 PM.

At six a banquet of barbeque was consumed along with 70th birthday banana pudding in honor of John Attaway.

The SERA awards were presented.

The 14th annual SERA Map Salon was held. The goal of the map salon is to encourage mapping of SERA caves and to improve cartographic skills. There were 7 maps entered for competition by four different cartographers representing caves from all three TAG states. Maps were separated into beginner and veteran cartographer categories. All the maps entered were of very good quality and most caves entered were about a mile long or longer in length.

Four of the 7 maps received awards. Merit awards went to maps that reached a certain standard of high quality. Merit awards went to Julie Schenck Brown for Varnedoe Cave, Madison Co., AL (AMD 660) and to Ken Oeser for Bellamy Cave, Montgomery Co., TN (TMY 1). First place in the veteran's category went to Jack Thomison for Welch-Blowing Cave, Putnam Co., TN (TPU 301). First place in the beginner's category and Best of Show went to Johnny Prouty for Pen Fifteen Cave, Dade Co., GA (GDD 622).

Congratulations to all the cartographers for your great maps!

Judges were Brian Williamson, GA, Brian Roebuck, TN, and Brent Aulenbach, GA

A Photo and Art Salon was also held. This year it was hosted by Glenn Mills. There were 3 entries in the Art Salon, 9 entries in the Cave Category, and 21 entries in the Cave Life Category.

Art Salon:

First Place: Myrna Attaway for "Batty Bat"

Second Place: Glenn Mills for "Sinking Cove"

Honorable Mention: Scout Aulenbach for "Growing Columns"

Photo Salon:

Cave Category:

First Place: Anne Elmore for "Spiral"

Second Place: Brian Conners for "Tranquility"

Third Place: Cheryl Pratt for "Sunburst Pit"

Honorable Mention: Brian Conners for "Reflections" and "Rimstone Oasis"

Cave Life Category:

First Place: Brian Conners for "Molting Cricket"

Second Place: Larry Brown for "Reaching for the Stars"

Lynn Roebuck for "A Glimpse Underground"

Third Place: Cheryl Pratt for "Reflections"

Honorable Mention: Larry Brown for "Love Bats"

Cheryl Pratt for "The Sketcher" and "Bolt Climb"

Brian Conners for "Diva Too"

Anne Elmore for "Yum" and "Cute as a Bug"

Lynn Roebuck for "Amidst the Underground Forrest"

Tie for the Best of Show:

Anne Elmore for "Spiral" and Brian Conners for "Molting Cricket"

Following the banquet the audience was privileged to see a digital 3D program by Al Hess. Following that was a presentation by Dave Hughes on his book "The Cave Art of Tom Culverwell."

Respectfully submitted,

Jim Wilbanks.

Gear Review: New Princeton Tec Apex

By Robert Sewell

My old headlamp is fried; a failure to check my work for short-circuits before powering it on after modding it with a new 200 lumen LED caused one of the transistors to protest my error with a smoky demonstration. I needed a replacement asap, so I started hitting the shopping web. I couldn't find the same headlamp I had for less than \$50, and since I didn't like the lack of side light it gave off, I started looking for something else.

I had seen where Petzl was going to release a new version of its MYO XP, the MYO RXP, that boasts of a 140 lumen LED, and lets you adjust how bright each of its four settings are. The price will be \$100, about the limit of what I was willing to spend. But it wasn't available in American stores until the end of January. In the meantime, I chanced to read a post on the NSS forums about the new Apex. The new version looks the same as the original; it has one 3 watt "maxbright" LED that provides a long throw for seeing distant objects, and four "ultrabright" LEDs on the sides for close range. But its light output is more than twice that of the original. The main LED measures at 130 lumens on high, and 85 on low. Battery life is about the same as the old one: the maxbright runs from 1 hour on high to 9 hours on low, the four ultrabrights will last from 8.5 hours on high to 14 hours on low. It will run much longer than these times, but with less light, from 72 hours to 150 hours total runtime on one set of batteries.

There are three versions, the difference being the type or number of batteries it will take. I bought the one that takes 4 helmet-mounted AA batteries (Alkaline, Lithium and rechargeable NiMHs are supported). The PRO runs on two CR123

batteries, while the Extreme runs on 8 AAs in a belt pack.

Rummage Cave provided the maiden voyage of my new Apex. The output is excellent. Very, VERY bright on all but the lowest setting, which is still fine for walking through normal borehole or crawls. On high, the four ultrabrights are bright enough to light up a 40 foot ceiling almost as well as the 3 watt LED on low. The 3 watt on high is VERY impressive. All the LEDs in all four power levels give great side light so that I don't have to keep aiming it down to see where I'm walking.

I can easily recommend this as your main light. Most places have this fellow priced at around \$85, but brightguy.com has it for \$69. Add just under \$10 for S&H for UPS ground delivery (it'll get to you in two days, brightguy is in Ohio), and you've got a sweet headlamp for under \$80.

http://www.brightguy.com/products/Princeton_Tec_APEX.php

The Witch's Needle

By Myrna Attaway

It was the summer of 1975. I hadn't been caving a full year. All of a sudden there was a wave of excitement in the Birmingham Grotto. A trip to Glory Hole, in southern Georgia had been arranged. It was the longest drive I had ever taken to go caving. We gathered up and drove to Ozark Alabama where we piled on the floor of Jimmy Harrison's house.

After a three hour drive we arrived at the home of Coy and Granny Gainus. We had a great visit with them as they asked all of us to sign their log book. They loved the company of cavers more than any other landowners I have ever met. There was a long delay at the entrance as we waited for the large sized folks to get through a constriction. I was beginning to wonder if we would ever get into the cave. This was a large group so there were several more delays because of a tricky climb down and a sandy crawl that had to be dug out on every trip. While we waited we looked at a dig that eventually what is now known as the Birth Canal.

Then came the crawls. Long, low, sandy and wet. Boy was I glad I was wearing coveralls. Those that weren't were dealing with chaffing issues in places I don't want to think about. One of the crawls was known as the Regal Wiggle, and it was well named. Giant versions of the Butterfly of Sonora had to be crawled around and under very carefully. Then we got to the decoration room. We were no longer looking at butterflies. There were now full fledged angel wings. Just when I thought there couldn't be anything more spectacular in this cave my turn to see the "42 Incher" or Witch's Needle came.

There are no words to describe that moment. It was one of those spiritual moments. That moment was memorialized by my Father as he was taking a photograph of my brother with it. In the original photograph my headlamp can be seen in the background.





When we got home and got the slides back that one image stunned us all. The owner of the camera shop we frequented put an enlargement on display in his store. We had several 8x10's made of it and submitted it to the NSS Photo Salon. We were disappointed when it won no awards, but it placed and was in the show at the 1977 convention in Alpena. At the time we didn't know how big just showing is.

Over time all of the prints and the original slide were lost. There was only one 8x10 left and it had not had a good life. It had hung on the wall for years, turned interesting green colors and had something spilled on it that caused flaws and smears. Because it has a textured surface it doesn't scan well, but it still haunted me.

When my father bought me the computer program that converts pictures to cross stitch patterns I knew the image had been resurrected. After a small practice piece, scanning, rescanning, repairing the image with Paint Shop, and working with the cross stitch program, I finally had a suitable image. All in all I probably spent 20 hours to get to the point of printing out the pattern.

I became obsessive with the work and after three weeks, about 80 hours of work, I finished the piece. I think it was worth it.

When Good Intentions Go Bad

Brian & Lynn Roebuck

In the past decade Lynn and I have become involved in many cave related activities that eventually began to intertwine and overlap. For most cavers focusing on any one of the many areas of caving can put one at an opposing position to the activities of another area related to caving activities. Thus it transpired that we became entangled in the relationship between preservation of cave resources and studying historic and prehistoric use of caves in the SERA region all the while continuing to explore and survey new caves. Too add even more complexity into the mix we became involved with the formation of the SERA Karst Task Force which is an organization dedicated to Karst cleanup and protection. Initially the SKTF focused on graffiti cleanups in a few caves. This ultimately became very problematic for both of us!

Where is this rant going you may ask? The various markings found on cave walls throughout the SERA area can be categorized (at least by Lynn and I) into three branches - prehistoric, historic, and graffiti. Most cavers are familiar with the latter two and know the difference between obvious civil war signatures from 1864 and the modern spray paint gibberish that covers the walls of many area caves. Lynn and I recently had the opportunity to visit a cave known to cavers for decades that a few months ago was found to have prehistoric native American art through a large portion of the passages. The cave was somewhat protected from harm by it's owners but years of random trips by spray paint toting locals had left an ugly legacy on the walls that



Prehistoric "dog" pictographs partially destroyed by scrub brushing

sometimes covered older historic and prehistoric markings. Our visit to the cave let us observe the art and historic signatures as well as surfaces riddled with cane

torch stoke marks indicating the possibility of numerous native American cave trips. Lynn took the photos for this article in this cave. Carbon dating methods will conform the age of these stoke marks utilizing the charred torch remains left behind so long ago. The cave turned out to be a wonderful mix of historic civil war era graffiti and prehistoric art with most of the modern spray paint graffiti removed with scrub brushes etc. Lynn and I were thrilled to be there to see and photograph these important cave resources. However despite the wonderful art and history present we were also very disturbed to see what had happened to some of the caves' priceless resources.

We came to find out that the cave owner (not knowing native American art lay inside) contacted some people to clean up the graffiti in the cave in an effort to make it appear more natural. Thus several years ago a spray paint cleanup was done by volunteers who worked very hard to make the cave look nice again for a nice cave owner. Unfortunately some of the volunteers removed or destroyed both historic and (even worse) prehistoric markings and art in their zeal to clean the walls of

the cave. There is no doubt that the graffiti cleaners meant to do a service for the owner and the cave and no blame should be cast upon them. It was simply a matter of the cleaners not knowing what to look for, avoid, or not touch that caused this problem. To put things in the simplest terms those that do not know what to look for and avoid should refrain from removing any markings from cave walls or ceilings until a qualified person can determine if it is safe to do so. Often modern "artists" use the same patch of wall that civil war soldiers used to write their name, date, and unit records on. Under the civil war signatures one may even find faint inscribed native American symbols. In other words cave art or signatures of great value may lie beneath the most foul



Prehistoric pictograph partially destroyed by scrub brush.

bright fluorescent green spray paint you hate to look at every time you visit a cave. Until you are familiar with finding such art you may never see it. It takes experts hours of careful searching using various lighting techniques to find some of the faintest work. Yet it is still there and tells a tale of our ancient world.

Note that there are many forms of cave art that can be damaged or destroyed so easily by careless or clueless cave visitors. Mud glyphs are often used to draw names and images on cave surfaces. Ancient foot prints or hand prints are also found in clay covered usually by a dark patina that coats cave clay and mud after hundreds or thousands of years. Rock and clay wall surfaces can be drawn on directly using charcoal, paints made from minerals and natural materials, smoke from candles or small torch sticks, and perhaps other materials yet to be discovered. The last method involves carving or incising signatures or art into rock, clay, or as stated before mud. Materials such as bits of torches, rock scrapers, and other tools used to create the art can be very important in determining the age of this resource. Please do not handle or remove any of these things should you find them. Instead take photos, make notes, and tell the right people all about it so that proper handling and study can be initiated.

Our message is not one of blame or contempt but rather one of encouragement for cavers to find the right people to research the cave, check it for possible valued art and signatures, and clear the way for graffiti removal before ever taking in the first scrub brush. The resources in a cave remain fragile and may hold the key to our understanding of historic and prehistoric times. The art itself also has great value showing us a glimpse into what were surely some of the most important ideas and belief systems of the native peoples that enjoyed our SERA region long before we came crawling down the passage. Please help us preserve cave resources by not being hasty in choosing cave cleanup locations, by getting help from the right people, and by learning enough about these resources to avoid damaging them.

Caves of Tennessee
With profuse apologies to Dr. Thomas C. Barr
By Lynn Roebuck

New Tennessee cavers always ask about caves they can visit. Some of them think most experienced cavers have visited every cave in the great state of Tennessee! For anyone that has the goal of visiting all the caves in Tennessee (currently 9, 200) here are a few useful stats.

If a caver went caving 365 days a year it would take approximately 25 years to see all the caves in Tennessee.

If a caver went caving both days of each weekend it would take approximately 88 years to see all the caves in Tennessee.

If a caver went caving 1 day of each weekend it would take approximately 177 years to see all the caves in Tennessee.

If a caver went caving 1 day a month it would take approximately 766 years to see all the caves in Tennessee.

If a caver went caving 6 times a year it would take approximately 1,533 years to see all the caves in Tennessee.

If a caver went caving 2 times a year it would take approximately 4,600 years to see all the caves in Tennessee.

There is much more than a lifetime of caving in the Caves of Tennessee.

Editors Blurb

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.

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

http://uscaversforum.org	US Cavers Forum
http://www.caves.org/phpBB2/	NSS Cavers Forum
http://www.hiddenworld.net/tag-net/	TAG – Net
http://www.webwhisper.com/tcs/default.html	Tennessee Cave Survey
http://www.caves.org/survey/fcs/	Florida Cave Survey
http://ourworld.cs.com/alabamacaves/	Alabama Cave Survey
http://www.caves.org/survey/gss/	Georgia Speleological Survey

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

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John Attaway – Chairman Anne Elmore -- Vice Chairman John Hoffelt – Secretary/Treasurer