

THE SOUTHEASTERN CAVER

Volume 20 February 2015



On the wall....

The Southeastern Caver is the official newsletter of the Southeastern Region Association (SERA) of the National Speleological Society and is published once a year for distribution to SERA member grottos and the NSS archives. Statements and opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the policies or beliefs of SERA or the National Speleological Society. Reprinting of articles is allowed if proper credit is given to the author and/or photographers represented in this publication. Send correspondence and exchanges to: The Southeastern Caver, c/o Don Hunter, address given below.

2015 SERA Officers:

Chair: Ohad Newton

Vice-Chair: Candice Eagle

Secretary/Treasurer: John Hoffelt

The Southeastern Caver Editor:

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Featured Photographers Gallery, Back Cover

On the cover:

Clinton Elmore bolting a 40-foot traverse over to what turned out to be almost 4,000 feet of new walking passage in Xanadu Cave, Tennessee. Photo by Chris Higgins.

64TH ANNUAL SERA SUMMER CAVE CARNIVAL

Hosted by the East Tennessee Grotto

May 8 - May 10, 2015

East Fork Stables

Jamestown, TN

The Cave Carnival will be held at East Fork Stables in Jamestown, Tennessee. This beautiful location offers luxury camping in level forested camp sites and hot showers. There are approximately 2000 caves within a 50 mile radius and over 70 miles of cave passage on the property, within the beautiful Obey river gorge!

FEATURE ARTICLE IN THIS ISSUE OF THE SOUTHEASTERN CAVER, "MUSINGS ON CAVE PHOTOGRAPHY"



The ledge above Surprise Pit, Fern Cave. Photo by Amy Hinkle. See more of her and other photographers in the feature article, page 9.

Editor's Corner

First off the bat, thanks to Brian Roebuck for doing a fantastic job editing and producing the Southeastern Caver for the past 12 years. He graciously took over the reins from me back in 2003 and I guess, now that I'm retired and have the time, it's only appropriate that I step back up and give it another shot.

I know that I will be dealing with the same problems as before, the problems that most newsletter editors face, and that is coming up with enough material to cobble together an interesting and informative accounting of what has transpired in the previous year in what we call the SERA region. I cast a wide net a month ago, covering all the grottos in the SERA region, requesting a brief write-up of what everyone had been up to and got a response from one person representing two grottos. I was somewhat more successful in my request of well-known and respected cave photographers for little stories or anecdotes, or simply shareable wisdom, regarding interesting or challenging photo shoots. These submissions and what I gleaned from the SERA website regarding orders of refusal for the Winter Business Meeting and Summer Cave Carnival constitute this edition of the Southeastern Caver.

This coming year, I'm going to try and make use of the available modern technology and plant periodic reminders on my calendar to use Tag-Net, Facebook and the massive IO email list to occasionally remind folks to send me material that would make for a good newsletter next year.

Anyway, thanks one more time to Brian for the past 12 years and welcome to this year's Southeastern Caver.

Don Hunter, Editor

SERA Winter Business Meeting Order of Refusal

The SERA Winter Business Meeting is the annual meeting of SERA. It is hosted by a grotto or cave survey on a rotating basis. SERA organizations are alphabetically organized in the order of refusal. There are separate order of refusal lists for the SERA Winter Business Meeting and the SERA Summer Cave Carnival. SERA organizations are allowed to trade their position in the order of refusal with another organization. A SERA organization may also choose to co-host an event with another SERA organization.

2015 SERA Winter Business Meeting Right of Refusal

River City Grotto
Sewanee Mountain Grotto
Six Ridges Grotto
Smoky Mountain Grotto
South Carolina Interstate Grotto
Southport Chronic Cavers
Spencer Mountain Grotto
Tampa Bay Area Grotto
Tennessee Cave Survey
Triangle Troglodytes
Upper Cumberland Grotto
Alabama Cave Survey
Athens Speleological Society
Augusta Cave Masters
Birmingham Grotto
Bryson City Grotto
Central Alabama Grotto
Central Florida Cavers
Chattanooga Grotto
Clarksville Underground
Clock Tower Grotto
Crescent City Cavers
Cullman Grotto
Dogwood City Grotto
East Tennessee Grotto
Flint River Grotto
Flittermouse Grotto
Florida Speleological Society (Cont. next page)

Gadsden Grotto
 Georgia Speleological Survey
 Huntsville Grotto
 Jackson County Grotto
 JUST Cavers
 Middle Georgia Grotto
 Montgomery Grotto
 Mountain Empire Grotto
 Nashville Grotto
 Obey River Grotto
 Pigeon Mountain Grotto

SERA Summer Cave Carnival Order of Refusal

The SERA Summer Cave Carnival is the annual caving event of SERA. It is hosted by a grotto or cave survey on a rotating basis. SERA organizations are alphabetically organized in the order of refusal. There are separate order of refusal lists for the SERA Winter Business Meeting and the SERA Summer Cave Carnival. SERA organizations are allowed to trade their position in the order of refusal with another organization. A SERA organization may also choose to co-host an event with another SERA organization. **Note: This is 2014 list.**

2014 SERA Cave Carnival Right of Refusal

Central Florida Cavers
 Chattanooga Grotto
 Clarksville Underground
 Clock Tower Grotto
 Crescent City Cavers
 Cullman Grotto
 Dogwood City Grotto
 East Tennessee Grotto
 Flint River Grotto
 Flittermouse Grotto
 Florida Speleological Society
 Gadsden Grotto
 Georgia Speleological Survey
 Huntsville Grotto
 Jackson County Grotto
 JUST Cavers
 Middle Georgia Grotto

Montgomery Grotto
 Mountain Empire Grotto
 Nashville Grotto
 Obey River Grotto
 Pigeon Mountain Grotto
 River City Grotto
 Sewanee Mountain Grotto
 Six Ridges Grotto
 Smoky Mountain Grotto
 South Carolina Interstate Grotto
 Southport Chronic Cavers
 Spencer Mountain Grotto
 Tampa Bay Area Grotto
 Tennessee Cave Survey
 Triangle Troglodytes
 Upper Cumberland Grotto
 Alabama Cave Survey
 Athens Speleological Society
 Augusta Cave Masters
 Birmingham Grotto
 Bryson City Grotto
 Central Alabama Grotto



The Jellyfish, in Flowing Stone Cave, Walker County, Georgia. Photo by Amy Hinkle (Sunguramy)

WBM MINUTES, 2011 THROUGH 2014

The following is a summary of the minutes of the 2011 through 2014 Winter Business Meetings, provided by John Hoffelt, Secretary/Treasurer. A full digital recording of each meeting is contained in archived audio files. Map and Fine Arts salon winners are not included in this summary but can be found on the SERA website (<http://caves.org/region/sera/>).

2011

Hosted by the Georgia Speleological Society, March 19, 2011, at the Bank of LaFayette Community Room, LaFayette, Georgia

Key items of business:

- Add 2010 WBM notes to Southeastern Caver; Brent Allen to post online
- Send invites to host the 2013 WBM
- The Southeastern Caver will now be published online to minimize printing cost, with a few made available for distribution at the WBM each year. Color copies of the Southeastern Caver are to be forwarded to the NSS Library
- There was discussion to find or purchase a suitable case to house the four SERA Awards plaques. It was approved for the SERA Secretary to find or purchase said case. There was also a motion, passed, to contact the NSS Office about hanging the SERA Awards plaques, in a suitable location, at the NSS Office.
- There was a motion and discussion regarding posting the SERA financial statements on the SERA web site. The motion was passed, by a vote of 7 to 2. These were to be forwarded to Brent Allen for posting to the SERA web site.

Elections:

Vice Chair: Kelly Smallwood

Secretary/Treasurer: John Hoffelt

SERA Awards and Committee Members:

Alexis Harris Conservation Award - Committee: Anne Elmore, Brian Williams, Bambi Dunlap
Awarded to: Central Alabama Grotto

Richard Schreiber Award – Committee: Anne Grindle, Sheri Lydy, John Clare
Awarded to: Jason Hardy

Larry S. Adams Landowner Award – Committee: Gerald Moni, Avis Moni, Kelly Smallwood
Awarded to: Ron Johnston

Francis McKinney Award: Not awarded this year

Meritorious Service Award to Gerald Moni for his contributions to caving in the SERA region.

Banquet speakers: Brent Aulenbach and Tom Moltz “Georgia Cave Exploration over the Last 20 Years”

2012

Hosted by the Huntsville Grotto, February 11, 2012, at Lake Guntersville State Park, Guntersville, Alabama.

Key items of business:

- Report on 2011 SERA Summer Cave Carnival
 - Hosted by SERA Officers
 - Net profit: \$948
 - T-Shirt sales by Michael Gilbert and Central Alabama Grotto provided \$1,700 donation to Alabama tornado victims fund (Red Cross?)
- 2012 SERA Summer Cave Carnival to be hosted by the Birmingham Grotto, with a Western theme
- 2013 SERA Summer Cave Carnival to be hosted by the Central Alabama Grotto, with a Luau theme
- Proposal for SERA representative to Congress of Grottoes at convention to sponsor a motion to scan all NSS News and other publications for current NSS members to view online and to print. Kelly Smallwood was selected as the representative.
- It was brought up that Brent Allen, SERA webmaster, needs JPG images of SERA Cave Carnival guidebook covers for the years 2006 through present.
- A question was asked about the completeness of the SERA and NSS libraries (what is present, what is missing??) and a committee was formed to investigate and answer this question. The committee members are John Hoffelt, Kelly Smallwood, David Hughes and Jim Wilbanks.
- Motions were made for donations to be made by the SERA organization and the following donations were approved:
 - SKTF: \$200
 - NSS Buy-A-Block Campaign (10 blocks): \$500
 - SCCi General Donation: \$300
 - Tumbling Rock Buy-A-Brick Campaign (3 bricks): \$300 (donation from Southeastern Regional Association of the NSS)
 - NSS Guide to Responsible Caving Brochure update for WNS and proper WNS decontamination procedures): \$200

Elections:

Vice-Chair: Bambi Dunlap

Secretary/Treasurer: John Hoffelt

SERA Awards and Committee Members:

Francis McKinney Award – Committee: Ohad Newton, Marion Smith, Avis Moni, Chrissy Richards, Kelly Smallwood
Awarded to: Charles Lindquist

Richard Schreiber Award – Committee: Jason Hardy, Jason Richards, Jason Stacey, Chrissy Richards

Awarded to: Kelly Smallwood

Alexis Harris Conservation Award – Committee: Emily Davis, George Plumlee, Bambi Dunlap, Chrissy Richards, Kelly Smallwood

Awarded to: Jim Wilbanks

Larry S. Adams Landowner Appreciation Award – Committee: Anne Elmore, Terri Stephens, Gerald Moni, Chrissy Richards, Kelly Smallwood

Awarded to: John Attaway

Meritorious Service Award to: SERA Officers for hosting the 2011 SERA Summer Cave Carnival on short notice with small staff

Meritorious Service Award to: Michael Gilbert for elevating the presence of the NSS at the Birmingham Zoo

Meritorious Service Award to: Jason and Chrissy Richards for their underwater exploration in Blue Spring Cave.

Banquet speaker: Dr. Richard Finch “Caving in Some Highly Unusual Caves”

2013

Hosted by the Nashville Grotto, February 16, 2013, at Cumberland Caverns, Warren County, Tennessee.

Key items of business:

- In the matter of old business, SERA Summer Cave Carnival guidebook covers have not been scanned, as proposed at the 2011 WBM, for the SERA website.
- In the matter of old business, supply guidebooks and T-shirts to NSS archives. This business is on hold, until the new NSS headquarters is ready to accept them.
- In the matter of old business, acquire the archived SERA material from Jim Wilbanks.
- Joel Silverman proposal for SERA film/video. Died for lack of a motion. There was no word from Joel, as to the project. M. O. Smith agreed to contact Joel about continuing interest in project.
- Ron Miller provided an update on SCCi
- Ron Miller and John Hoffelt give update on opening of caves managed by the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation.
- Kim Smith gives update on NSS Campground, new construction, renovations and future plans.
- Jay Clark gives update on NSS BOG and need for financing new NSS Headquarters.
- Jay Clark gives update on Tumbling Rock Cave, SCCi activities and meetings.
- Chattanooga Grotto motioned to donate \$250 to SKTF; passed unanimously.

Elections:

Vice-Chair: Ohad Newton

Secretary/Treasurer: John Hoffelt

SERA Awards and Committee Members:

Francis McKinney Award - Committee: Ohad Newton, Marion Smith, Anne Elmore
Awarded to: Jason Richards

Richard Schreiber Award – Committee: Jason Hardy, Brent Aulenbach, Jason Richards
Awarded to: Marty Abercrombie

Alexis Harris Conservation Award – Committee: Emily Davis, Candice Eagle, Jeannie Trowbridge
Awarded to: Maureen Handler and the Sewanee Mountain Grotto

Larry S. Adams Landowner Award – Committee: Alan England, John Attaway, Dianne Cousineau
Awarded to: The Neal Family

Meritorious Service Award to: Jay Clark for service to NSS, SERA in the areas of legal advisor, fund raising and administrative duties.

Meritorious Service Award to: Jody Bailey and John Hoffelt for logistical support for hosting the WBM in Cumberland Caverns.

Banquet speakers: Dr. Ric Finch, Larry Matthews, Ed Yarbrough “Tank Gorin and Cave Stories from Cumberland Caverns”

Post meeting cave cleanup in Cumberland Caverns:

On Sunday morning and afternoon, a number of meeting attendees, along with several Cumberland Caverns employees, convened at the Volcano Room for a SKTF sponsored cleanup. Numerous bags of trash, tires and old plumbing lines were removed from several areas of the cave.

2014

Hosted by the Pigeon Mountain Grotto, February 22, 2014, at the Bank of LaFayette Community Room, LaFayette, Georgia.

Key items of business:

- In the matter of old business, the scanning of SERA Summer Cave Carnival guidebook covers had not been done. Originally brought up at the 2012 WBM.
- In the matter of old business, the subject of supplying SERA Summer Cave Carnival guidebooks and T-shirts to the NSS for archiving was revisited. Still on hold, pending notification from the NSS that they are ready to receive these materials.

- In the matter of old business, the SERA archives have not been obtained from Jim Wilbanks.
- In the matter of old business, the WBM notes and reports need to be loaded onto the SERA website.
- In the matter of old business, Jennifer Foote needs to be contacted regarding WNS material to be included in a revised NSS Guide for Responsible Caving brochure.
- Brian Roebuck provided notification that he will no longer be serving as editor of “The Southeastern Caver”, the official newsletter of SERA. Don Hunter volunteered to assume these duties.
- A motion was made, and approved, to donate \$200 to SKTF.

Elections:

Vice-Chair: Candice Eagle

Secretary/Treasurer: John Hoffelt

SERA Awards and Committee Members:

Francis McKinney Award – Committee members: Anne Elmore, Gerald Moni, Natalie Pheasant
Awarded to: Cheryl Platt

Richard Schreiber Award – Committee members: Allen Padgett, Dianne Cousineau, Paul Spiliotis
Awarded to: Clinton Elmore

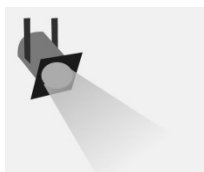
Alexis Harris Conservation Award – Committee members: Candice Eagle, Karen Padgett, Chris Kerr
Awarded to: Cheryl Platt

Larry S. Adams Landowner Appreciation Award – Committee members: Alan England, John Attaway, Cheryl Platt
Awarded to: Ben Long

Meritorious Service Award to: Kelly Smallwood for service and volunteerism to NSS and SERA

Meritorious Service Award to: Brian Roebuck for SERA service and editing the Southeastern Caver (SERA Newsletter)

Banquet Speaker: Bill Putnam “The Golden Age of Caving”



SPOTLIGHT ON:

Florida Speleological Society

(Ed.: Summarized from information provided by Philip Walker, FSS)

2014 was a very busy year for the Florida Speleological Society, with lots of fun trips but also a lot of community outreach and conservation activities. Over 320 man hours of service was dedicated to various projects, including

Seven educational group trips, introducing over 100 non-grotto folks to caving

Seven cave and property clean-up trips

One cave gate installation assistance

One commemorative dedication service (Bill Oldacre at NSS Warrens Cave Preserve)

One community education booth at Lubee Bat Festival

The grotto, with about 40 members, also made several philanthropic donations to worthy causes, including \$150 to help fund transportation and operation of Cave Sim at the 2014 NSS Convention and \$500 to the SCCi for gating and protection of Hollow Ridge due to a trail being constructed in close proximity of 4 entrances.

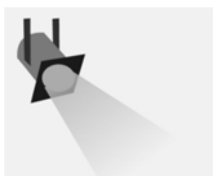
The Commemorative Dedication to Bill Oldacre at National Speleological Society (NSS) owned Warrens Cave Preserve included purchasing a bronze plaque that was mounted on a large karst bolder outside the cave entrance, improving the roads and area around the cave, and planting a commemorative citrus tree at the entrance. The Oldacre family was in attendance, as well as cavers from all over Florida, for a memorial to a man that had been instrumental in the early years of Florida caving and saving Warrens Cave, which is Florida's longest dry cave.

Community service highlights include repairing the road, removing invasive plants and cleaning up the property for the owner of Catacombs Cave and assisting the current stewards of SCCi-owned Jennings Cave preserve by removing over 2,600 pounds of trash from the cave and surrounding property in three separate cleanup trips.

They also:

- Surveyed and mapped Screech Owl Cave,
- Obtained permission and provided oversight for a model shoot inside one of their locally managed caves,
- Located, trapped and removed a small, undernourished kitten that survived a 35-foot fall into the entrance pit of Jennings Cave, and
- Removed a 250 pound wild pig carcass from Jennings Cave.

All in all, it was a very successful year for the Florida Speleological Society.



SPOTLIGHT ON:

River City Grotto

(Ed.: Summarized from information provided by Philip Walker, RCG)

The River City Grotto, out of Jacksonville, FL, with approximately 35 members, is one of the newer grottos in the NSS and have hit the ground running. In the past year, in addition to sending members to the NSS Convention, the SERA Summer Cave Carnival and the TAG Fall Cave-in, they have led educational trips, conducted three cleanups, surveyed a cave and conducted cave trip leadership training.

They also donated \$150 for transportation and operation of the Cave Sim exhibit at the 2014 NSS Convention and donated \$500 for gating the SCCi-owned Hollow Ridge

MUSINGS ON CAVE PHOTOGRAPHY

Several cave photographers share their thoughts and insights on the challenges of cave photography, as well as sharing a few of their images.



AMY HINKLE AKA SUNGURAMY

"There are lots of ways photography in caves is challenging. But the key in any situation is to remember that the camera is the canvas, and light is the paint. Any camera is capable of cave photography provided enough light is used and in the proper manner. To this end, my photography technique has revolved around small and lightweight kit. My camera of choice is a trusty Lumix LX3, a point-and-shoot camera. One of my first more widely recognized shots is of Surprise Pit, taken from where the rope touches ground at the 404 rig. The mist and fog in the air that day was incredible, and I remember as I rappelled it was almost as if I was going through clouds. Just like high beams on a car in fog at night make a wall of blank light without detail, so it does the same to caves. The trick became how to cut through it for a photo? The answer is all in the angles of the light to the pit to the camera. Master the paint and the rest becomes easy - but remember - true mastery is to never stop experimenting, never stop learning, and of course, never stop exploring."

404-foot deep Surprise Pit, in Fern Cave, Alabama. Amy used her vertical panorama technique to capture this beautiful pit photo with her Lumix LX3.

MUSINGS ON CAVE PHOTOGRAPHY (CONT.)

CHUCK SUTHERLAND

“As a novice cave photographer, I can honestly say that every single photo I take in a cave begins and often ends as a total disaster. It is only occasionally that I am able to salvage anything usable from the experience.

Here are actual excerpts from cave photography trips with me, “When I tested those batteries an hour ago they were all at full charge, how are they all dead now?”, “How is it that all my flashes have stopped working?”, “Why is the radio slave suddenly not working?”, “You dropped my flash into the breakdown pile?”, “You dropped my flash into the river?”, “S***! I’ve dropped my camera into the river!” Yes, I have yelled all those things at some point on a trip.

But I keep coming back because occasionally, the planets align, all my gear manages to all work simultaneously, I don’t drop my camera into the river, and I get to bring a photo of the cave back out with me, to share, and to keep forever.”



F Passage in Blue Spring Cave, White County, Tennessee. This is a classic shot, captured by Chuck with crisp attention to detail and true color. The lighting, front to back, accentuates shape, form and textures in the passage walls and floor. Chuck has also produced some very nice caver portraits.

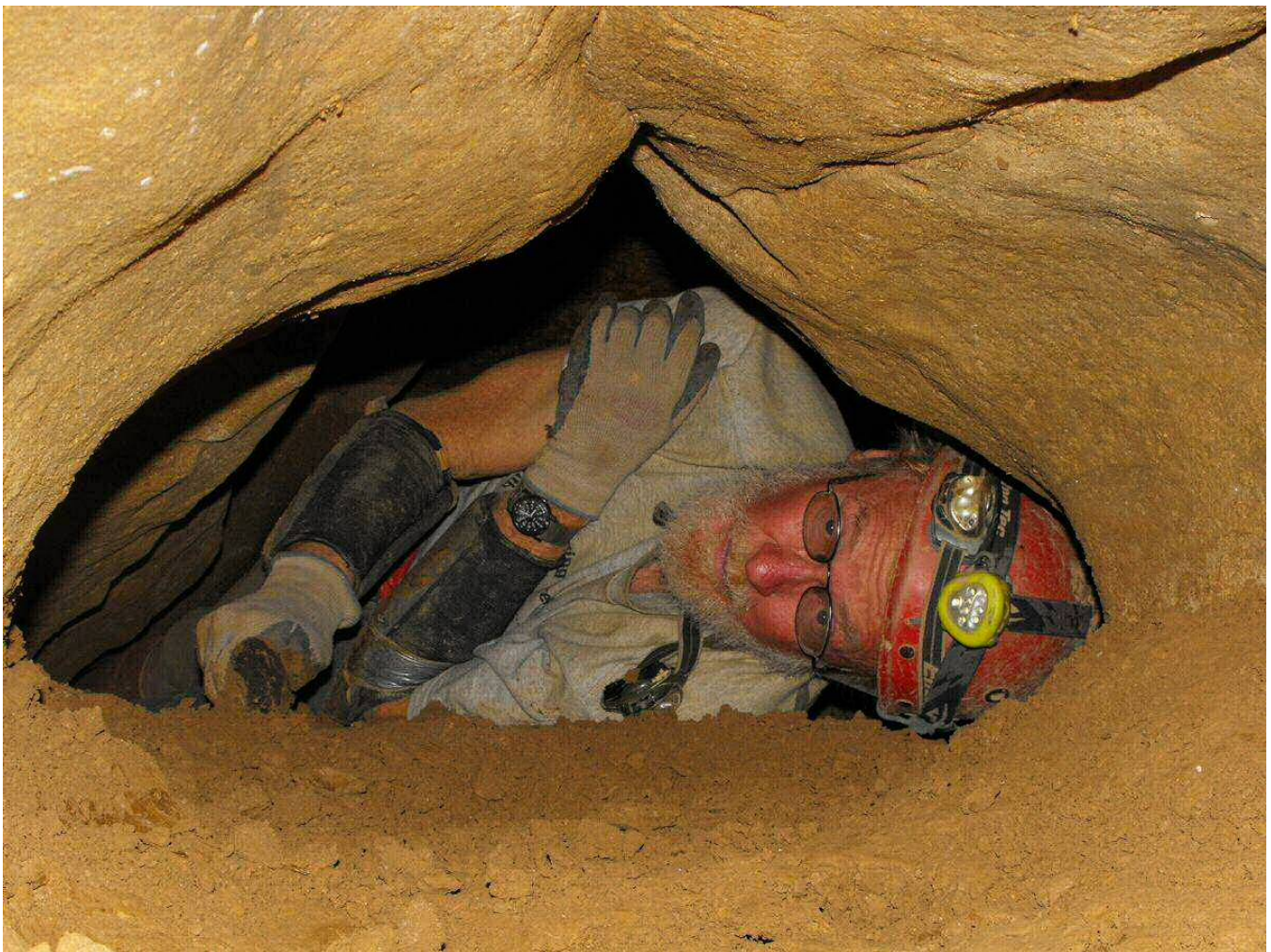
MUSINGS ON CAVE PHOTOGRAPHY (CONT.)

KELLY SMALLWOOD

Kelly is another accomplished cave photographer that has learned to capture amazing images with small, compact cameras. In addition to the “art” shot, she also documents her trip with shots of trip participants and activity, such as survey trips.

“I work fairly simple, using my Fuji camera (right now, that would be the Fuji Finepix S1000fd, a compact ultrazoom camera) and Vivitar 283 flashes. I don't do much, if any, manipulation to my photos (except now with that Fotor HDR app for the iPhone). There are usually some challenges in most caves we visit like water, mud, moisture in the air, etc...”

It's clear Kelly has learned to overcome most of the obstacles to capturing nice in-cave images.



Kelly captured this image of one of the most photographed cavers in TAG, Marion O. Smith, during a survey trip in the Phone Booth Passage, Blue Spring Cave, White Co. Tennessee.

Featured Photographer's Gallery

Upper right – Beautiful gypsum
formations in Cumberland
Caverns, Chuck Sutherland photo.

Lower right – Black and white
rendering of Mose's Tomb pit,
Alabama, Amy Hinkle photo.

Lower left – Orange centipede,
Kelly Smallwood photo.

