

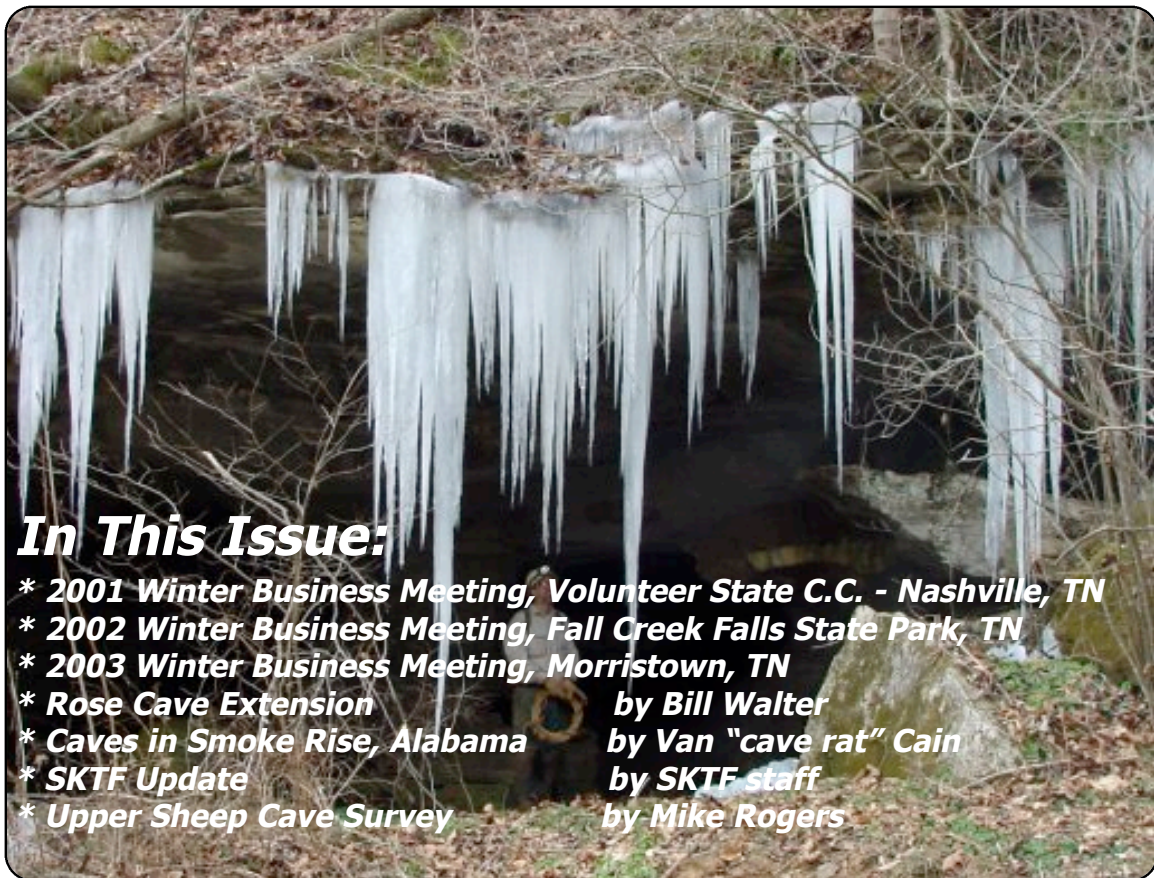
SERA Newsletter

Southeastern Regional Association of Grottos



Volume 9

February 2004



In This Issue:

- * ***2001 Winter Business Meeting, Volunteer State C.C. - Nashville, TN***
- * ***2002 Winter Business Meeting, Fall Creek Falls State Park, TN***
- * ***2003 Winter Business Meeting, Morristown, TN***
- * ***Rose Cave Extension*** by ***Bill Walter***
- * ***Caves in Smoke Rise, Alabama*** by ***Van "cave rat" Cain***
- * ***SKTF Update*** by ***SKTF staff***
- * ***Upper Sheep Cave Survey*** by ***Mike Rogers***

*Entrance - Caney Hollow Cave, Tennessee
photo by Lynn Roebuck Winter 2002*

The SERA Newsletter is published once a year by the Southeastern Regional Association of Grottos of the National Speleology Society and is distributed freely to member organizations.

Subscriptions for individuals or organizations not within the recognized SERA geographic area are \$3.00 per year. Material submitted for publication and requests for subscriptions (please send a check or money order) should be submitted to:

Editor, SERA Newsletter
c/o Brian Roebuck
94 Magnolia Lane
Normandy, Tn 37360

Comments expressed within are not necessarily those of the NSS or of SERA but are those of the author.

WELCOME

Welcome to this edition of the SERA Newsletter. Special thanks go to all of the individuals who took time to send articles, information, photos, and support for the creation of this issue. The last issue appeared in the year 2001 and since that time much has happened in the SERA region that has not been reflected in our newsletters. Being the new editor I feel I should help to address the recent SERA news "blackout" and attempt to get the SERA Newsletter back in good standing. Please assist me by submitting items of interest, articles, suggestions, photos, or anything else you might want to appear in our next newsletter. I humbly thank you in advance. I would also like to thank our previous editor Don Hunter for his years of hard work and dedication to SERA! Thanks Don!

Brian Roebuck, Editor

Table of Contents

Welcome	Inside Front Cover
Note from Chair	1
Minutes 2001 WBM	1
Minutes 2002 WBM	3
Minutes 2003 WBM	5
Rose Cave Extension	8
Caves in Smoke Rise, Ala	11
SKTF Update	14
Upper Sheep Cave Survey	17

2003 - 2004 SERA Officers

Chair	Lynn Roebuck
Vice Chair	Mark Joop
Secretary/Treasurer	Jim Wilbanks

Note from the Chair

Thanks to everyone that has supported SERA for the 2003 - 2004 term. Many great things have happened in the region during this year. The SERA Karst Task Force Committee has organized several conservation projects and as always SERA grottos, clubs, and surveys have also worked very hard on their many worthy efforts.

This year I am pleased to announce that the *SERA Cave Carnival Event Guide* and the *SERA Cave Carnival Guide to Vendors Row* have been completed. They will soon be available to organizations in the SERA region for any group wishing to host the cave carnival. A preview copy of each guide will be available for review at the SERA Winter Business Meeting on February 7, 2004. Plans are to make them available for download from the SERA webpage at

<http://www.caves.org/region/sera/index.html>

or to offer printed copies that can be obtained from the SERA executives as needed.

Thank you all for allowing me to serve the SERA region this year. I hope that you will give the next chair Mark Joop the same support that you gave to myself and my fellow SERA executives.

Lynn Roebuck, SERA Chair

2001 SERA Winter Business Meeting

Minutes for the 2001 SERA Winter Business Meeting 2/24/01

The 2001 SERA Winter Business Meeting was held in the dining hall of Volunteer State Community College near Nashville TN. It was called to order by SERA Chairman Rob Robbins at 10:15 AM Central. Vice Chair, Brian Williamson, and Sec/Treas Jim Wilbanks were present.

Morning Session

The roll call of grottos revealed attendance by: Athens Speleological Society, Chattanooga Grotto, Dogwood City Grotto, East Tennessee Grotto, Georgia Speleological Society, Huntsville Grotto, Middle Georgia Grotto, Nashville Grotto, Smoky Mountain Grotto, Southport Chronic Cavers, Tennessee Cave Survey, Upper Cumberland Grotto, and West Georgia Grotto.

Reports from the floor were next. Brian Roebuck, the Conservation Chair of Nashville Grotto spoke about the Spencer Sewage Treatment Plant fight and saving Rumbling Falls Cave. He stated the coalition of groups thought they had stopped the dumping into Dry Fork Creek. Recent developments have cast doubts on that assumption and the fight may have to be resumed. Brian thanked all the SERA grottos for their generous contributions. He stated more contributions may not be necessary, but would welcome pledges if the litigation had to proceed.

Jim Hall (Huntsville Grotto) spoke of grotto plans for the protection of Shelta Cave. He stated the fauna were suffering and the gray bats had disappeared since the installation of the current gate. Huntsville plans to remove the gate and install fencing around the entrance. They anticipate costs of 15-20 thousand dollars.

Several funding suggestions were offered from the floor. Jim said Huntsville might be asking for help in the future.

Nancy Holler-Aulenbach (Dogwood City Grotto) spoke about the upcoming IMAX film "*Amazing Caves*". She stated the caves featured were non-traditional caves. She said the film does not promote sport caving. A brochure available to all grottos was shown.

Jim Wilbanks spoke about recent groundwater education efforts by cavers in Northwest Georgia. He said the group used basic geology and the Project Underground materials for their presentation. The cavers were received well and felt they had made a difference.

Dan Barnick (Dogwood City Grotto) spoke about the SERA Photo Salon. He asked for help with judging and in forming a committee to recommend judging criteria.

Brent Aulenbach (Georgia Speleological Survey) spoke about the SERA Map Salon. He asked for help with the judging.

Joe Douglas recommended local eating establishments.

Wm Shrewsbury (Chattanooga Grotto) spoke about the 2001 SERA Cave Carnival. It is to be held on Smokey Cauldwell's farm near Lafayette Georgia on June 22, 23 & 24.

Lee Trowbridge (East Tennessee Grotto) spoke about last year's SERA Cave Carnival. He presented the Executive committee with a manual for running SERA. He spoke about the tee shirt arrangements they used. They had used Caverags who took the left over stock to sell.

John Hickman (Nashville Grotto) reported on the SCCI. He said there would be an open house at **Fricks Cave** March 3rd, a board meeting on March 24th, and the Members Meeting on June 30th.

Debby Johnson (Tennessee Cave Survey) mentioned the TAG survey meeting on April 28th. She asked for presentations. She also mentioned a Mapping workshop in March.

The attendees were then asked to identify themselves and speak about what they had been doing.

Bill Overton (Nashville Grotto) spoke about the field trips on Sunday.

The morning session was concluded for Lunch.

Afternoon Session

At 1:30 PM, the business meeting reconvened. The 2000 minutes were read and approved. The treasurer's report was read and approved.

The committee to review and revise the Constitution, Bylaws and Actions reported. All the proposed changes were read and approved unanimously.

Awards Committees

The Merit Award Committee report was given by Don Hunter (Athens Speleological Society). They recommend establishing a SERA Meritorious Service Award. The award is to be a more general award given for service, which does not fall into any of the established categories.

More than one can be awarded per year and there is to be no cash award. The award is to be moved and voted on by the Governing Committee. The committee's recommendation was adopted unanimously.

Lee Trowbridge (East Tennessee Grotto) suggested hearing all grant requests before doing any voting. The Chair agreed.

Jim Wilbanks spoke about the need for more direct involvement by SERA on conservation matters. He recommended SERA sponsor conservation activities at both SERA events, the TAG Fall Cave In and Cavestock. Joe Douglas (Nashville Grotto) spoke in agreement. Larry Matthews (Nashville Grotto) and Brian Roebuck recommended adoption of the activities. Paula Ledbetter (Dogwood City Grotto) asked about including education and safety in the mission of SERA. Chris Kerr (Smoky Mountain Grotto) spoke about his vision of SERA being a funnel for information and help. Brian Williamson (West Georgia Grotto) spoke about rural development and the need for coordinated action by cavers to protect karst through environmental activism.

Wilbanks moved that a SERA Conservation Task Force Committee be formed. It is to study the ways SERA can become more involved. It will be empowered to lend SERA's name as co-sponsor to conservation activities and help organize them. The motion was carried unanimously. Named to the committee were: Jim Wilbanks (chair), Brian Williamson, Jeremy Hill, Bill Overton, Debby Johnson, Shari Lydy, and Brian Roebuck.

Joel Sneed spoke about the Kingston Saltpeter Cave Preserve. He requested a SERA grant to help with dating artifacts in the cave. He estimated the cost would be near \$1300. Gerald Moni (Nashville Grotto) moved and Brent Aulenbach seconded that SERA give a \$400 grant. The motion passed unanimously.

Award committees were then formed:

Francis McKinney award the members were: Brian Roebuck, Shari Lydy, and Debby Johnson.

Richard Schrieber award: Holly Bunch, Don Hunter, and Jim Wilbanks.

Larry Adams award: John Klayer, Karen Marsh and Jeremy Hill.

Alexis Harris Award: Brian Williamson, Lee Trowbridge and George Plumlee.

Map Salon: Gerald Moni, Joel Sneed, and Brent Aulenbach.

Photo Salon: Jeannie Trowbridge, John Klayer, Holly Bunch, and Dan Barnick.

Chair Rob Robbins outlined the evening's events.

Elections

Election of officers was then held.

For Vice Chairman: Jim Wilbanks nominated and Nancy Aulenbach seconded. Debby Johnson, who accepted. Brian Roebuck and Jody Bailey were nominated, but declined. John Hoffelt nominated and Joe Douglas seconded April Hannah. Debby Johnson was elected.

For Sec/Treas: Jim Wilbanks was the only nominee and was elected by acclamation.

Shari Lydy moved and Don Hunter seconded that Jim and Gail Wilbanks be awarded the Merit award for their work on the Fox Mtn. Survey. The motion was carried unanimously.

Don Hunter moved and Jim Wilbanks seconded that Jeff Dilcher be awarded the Merit award for his work with TAG-net. The motion was carried unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned.

Awards committees met and the following results were announced at the banquet.

Awards committees met and the following results were announced at the banquet.

Francis McKinney Award: Randall Blackwood.
Richard Schreiber Award: Jeremy Hill.
Larry Adams Landowner Appreciation Award: Hattie Holder
Alexis Harris Conservation Award: Nashville Grotto.

SERA Map Salon:

Merit Awards:

Ken Oeser for **Poplar Hollow Cave**
Terry Ragon for **Bens Den Cave**
Terry Ragon for **Morgan Cove Cavern**

First prize Large Cave category:
Jack Thomison for **Milk Horror Hole**
First place Small Cave category
Terry Ragon for **Alabama Cave**

SERA Photo Salon:

Prints:

1st place: Ken Oeser
2nd place: Ken Oeser
3rd place: Rob Robbins

Slides:

1st place: Rob Robbins
2nd place: Debby Johnson
3rd place: Wm Shrewsbury

Best of Show: Wm Shrewsbury for a stereo slide.

Banquet

The banquet was held and Jeanne Gurnee presented a slide show on the discovery and development of **Rio Camuy Cave** in Puerto Rico.

Nashville was thanked and the meeting adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted

Jim Wilbanks
Secretary/treasurer

SERA Winter Business Meeting '02

The 2002 SERA Winter business meeting was held at Fall Creek Falls State Park in the Fall Creek Falls Inn on February 23rd, 2002. The Spencer Mountain Grotto hosted this year's SWBM.

Morning Session

The meeting was called to order at 1000 Central by chair Brian Williamson. Vice chair Debby Johnson and Sec/Treas Jim Wilbanks were present. Sixty-seven people were in attendance.

Announcements were made. Secretary Wilbanks reminded attendees that award nominations could still be made for the SERA awards. Dan Barnick asked for help on the photo salon, especially help in setting up judging criteria. Brent Aulenbach announced the map salon and directed attendees to the display.

Chris Kerr announced that the 2002 SERA Cave Carnival would be hosted by the Smoky Mountain Grotto on July 13,14 at the East Fork Stables near Jamestown Tennessee. The event will be held on an established campground with all the facilities needed. The link is <http://www.caves.org/grotto/smg/sera2002/sera2002.html>

John Hoffelt and Jody Bailey made a presentation on the hydrology study of the Cumberland Plateau surrounding Spencer, which includes **Rumbling Falls Cave**. The presentation was in PowerPoint with video segments.

Diane Cousineau reported on efforts to stop the quarrying of Pigeon Mountain. She urged everyone to write the Georgia governor and handed out information sheets.

There was a lunch break with attendees crowding around a TV to view a CNN segment on Spencer.

Afternoon Session

The meeting was called back to order at 1:15 Central. The grotto role call was made. The following organizations were represented: Athens Speleological Society, Augusta Cave Masters, Central Alabama Grotto, Chattanooga Grotto, Dogwood City Grotto, East Tennessee Grotto, Georgia Speleological Survey, Middle Georgia Grotto, Nashville Grotto, Pigeon Mountain Grotto, South Carolina Interstate Grotto, Southport Chronic Cavers, Spencer Mountain Grotto, Tennessee Cave Survey, and Upper Cumberland Grotto.

The SERA Karst Task Force reported. The committee moved:

"The SERA Karst Task Force is a committee. The chairman and vice chairman of SERA are members. The chairman appoints at least three other members who serve for that year. The SKTF is to sponsor and foster conservation activities in the SERA region. The SKTF is empowered to use the SERA name to encourage participation. The SKTF is to keep a record of conservation activities in SERA. The SKTF is to generate articles about itself and the record for use by SERA newsletters. The Yahoo group or its' equivalent is to be continued and its' use encouraged by the membership. A fund is set up for the purchase of cave cleanup supplies. This fund would take the form of a \$100 set aside in the SERA treasury, which can be spent by the committee for the stated purpose with the approval of the Executive Committee." The motion was passed unanimously.

Rob Robbins moved and Wilbanks seconded that SERA endorse the conservation efforts of the event called Cavestock. There was a discussion of the surrounding issues of Cavestock. It was asked if this was not the responsibility of the just formed committee. Wilbanks stated the 1998 act "not endorsing Cavestock" should be countered with one endorsing at least a part of it. The motion passed with 11 yeas, 1 nay (GSS), 3 abstentions (DCG, PMG, TCS)

Awards Committees

The awards committees were established. They are:

Francis McKinney- Lynn Roebuck, Steve MacDonnel, and John Klager,

Richard Schreiber- Brian Roebuck, Don Hunter, Jim Wilbanks,

Larry Adams Landowner Appreciation- Dan Barnick, Varie Ruskin, and Mark Joop,

Alexis Harris Conservation Award- Lee Trowbridge, George Plumlee, and Anne Elmore,

Jim Wilbanks spoke about the awards procedure as they work now. He said the original committee reports were somewhat different from the way the awards were judged now. He moved that a committee be formed to adapt the award procedures to current practice. The motion was carried unanimously. The chair left the membership up to the next chair.

The grotto reports began with Spencer who reported on cleanups at Camps Gulf and helping with the Blue Springs dig and gate, not to mention the SWBM. TCS reported on up coming events. The meeting will be at Sewanee April 27th and a survey class will be held May 4,5. Upper Cumberland reported on management issues with Wolf River cave.

Athens spoke about the importance of grottos sending landowners Christmas cards. Central Alabama talked about a brochure on sinkholes they are working on and a planned cleanup of Manitou Cave. They also talked about working at NasCar events for fund raising. East Tennessee reported a cleanup at Grassy Cove Saltpeter Cave and their battery-recycling program. The GSS announced it's meeting on April 6th at Fricks Cave. They talked about the resurvey of Fricks and reported their membership at over one hundred. Middle Georgia talked about the discovery of Flowing Stone. PMG talked about the great salamander hunt. Nashville spoke about hosting last year's SWBM, gating work at several caves, the munchy stand at the 2001 Cave Carnival, and their upcoming fifty-year anniversary. The SCCI reported on the acquisition of Snail Shell, the open house at Fricks March 16th, and the next board meeting in Atlanta on March 23rd. Jim Wilbanks read a letter from Larry Blair and Joel Sneed reporting on the grant for Kingston Saltpeter Cave from SERA the previous year. They said it was being used for the dating of material from the cave and anticipated publishing the results next year.

New Business:

Brent Aulenbach reported on additions to the new website including a calendar. Jack McCormick reported that the State of Tennessee had obtained a karst groundwater demonstration model, which could be borrowed for use in Tennessee.

Elections

Elections:

For Vice Chairman, Lynn Roebuck was nominated by Rob Robbins (Southport) and seconded by Nancy Aulenbach (DCG) and elected by acclamation. For Sec/Treas Jim Wilbanks was nominated by Don Hunter (Athens) and seconded by Dan Barnick (GSS) and elected by acclamation.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:30 Central.

Merit Awards

The awards committees met and the results were:

Francis McKinney- Tom Moltz

Richard Schreiber- Kelly Norwood

Larry Adams Landowner Appreciation Award- Sarah Choate who owns Bethel Cave

Alexis Harris Conservation Award- Pigeon Mountain Grotto

Map Salon

The 8th Annual SERA Map Salon Results were:

Short Cave- First Place- Terry Ragon for **Meek Shall Inherit the Cave**

Merit Award- Tom Moltz for **Chicken Slot Cave**

Merit Award- Tom Moltz for **Flowing Stone Cave**

Long Cave- First Place and Best of Show- Terry Ragon for **Horse Skull Cave**

Merit Award- Brian Williamson for **Three Amigos Cave**

Merit Award- Hal Love for **Wanamaker Cave**

Photo Salon

The photo salon results were:

Prints- First Place- Jody Bailey for "Hanging"

Second Place- Don Hunter for "Lookin' In Lookin' Out"

Third Place- Don Hunter for "Melting Pot"

Slides- First Place and Best of Show- Chris Anderson for "Rumble Room"

Second Place- Chris Anderson for "Camps Gulf"

Third Place- Hal Love "DePriest Branch Cave"

Banquet

A banquet was held in the meeting room followed by the award presentations. The program for the evening was Marion Smith telling the story of the discovery and exploration of **Rumblin' Falls Cave**. Also Hal Love told about the digging and gating of the new entrance to **Blue Spring Cave**.

Respectfully Submitted
Jim Wilbanks
Secretary/treasurer

2003 SERA Winter Business Meeting

The 2003 SERA winter business meeting was held at the Holiday Inn Conference Center in Morristown TN. Appalachian Grotto did a superb job of hosting the meeting.

Morning Session

Chairman Debby Johnson called the meeting to order at 10:00. She thanked Appalachian Grotto. Also present were vice chair Lynn Roebuck and Sec/Treas Jim Wilbanks. Internal organizations present were:

Alabama Cave Survey,
Appalachian Grotto,
Athens Speleological Society,
Chattanooga Grotto,
Dogwood City Grotto,
East Tennessee Grotto,
Flittermouse Grotto,
Georgia Speleological Survey,
Huntsville Grotto,
Nashville Grotto,
Smoky Mountain Grotto,
Southport Chronic Cavers,
Spencer Mountain Grotto,
Tennessee Cave Survey,
Tennessee Central Basin Grotto,
Upper Cumberland Grotto.

There were 54 attendees. Following this the floor was opened up for reports from various SERA Organizations. Avis VanSwearington announced the bookstore had items for sale outside the room. Charles Lundquist gave an extensive accounting of the Library Development Commission proposal recently made by Huntsville Grotto. The controversy over the NSS Library was discussed. Jack Thomison talked about the gating project on **Rich Mountain Blow Hole**. A video called Living On Karst by Benji Von Cramon was shown. SERA had given him money for research for the video in 2000.

Individual grottos then reported on activities for the past year.

Flittermouse is surveying **Blowing Springs** and planning a cleanup there.

Appalachian Grotto has helped the SCCI lease Rattling Pit and is managing it for them. They have been working on **Soard (or Fry) Cave**. They have an "adopt a highway" and have done three cleanups.

Nashville Grotto spent most of the year on the Rumbling Falls/Spencer fight. They have also worked on re-gating Bledsoe Park Cave. In November, they celebrate fifty years as a grotto.

The GSS has 87 members and is resurveying **Fricks Cave** for the SCCI.

Dogwood City hosted the 25th annual TAG Fall Cave In.

Huntsville helped gate **Sauta Cave** and has been working on the library commission.

East TN has made contributions to **Wolf River** and the **Rich Mountain Blow Hole** gating project. They are managing **New Mammoth Cave** with The Nature Conservancy and having cleanups there.

The Spencer Grotto has been caving and socializing.

Southport Chronic Cavers Grotto - inadvertently missed.

The Smoky Mountain Grotto hosted the Summer Cave Carnival, gave \$800 to the SCCI and donated to the Rich Mountain project. They are working to save **Meade's Quarry Cave** from a highway development project.

The TN Cave Survey has been supporting the Rich Mtn project. Their spring meeting is at Sewanee on April 19th.

Upper Cumberland has been working on **West Cemetery Cave**.

Chattanooga Grotto is rebuilding and will continue to host the Munchy Stand at TAG. The SCCI has had a banner year and has more acquisitions in the plans.

The meeting was adjourned for lunch.

Afternoon Session

The meeting was reconvened at 1:45 PM.

The minutes for 2002 were approved. The treasurer's report was approved. SERA has \$877.96 with \$100.00 set aside for SKTF projects.

The SERA Karst Task Force reported on its' activities for the past year. They have helped with six cleanups during the year and spent all the allotted money supplies.

The chair appointed award committee members.

Francis McKinney Award:

Chris Kerr, Brian Roebuck, Brent Allen

Richard Schreiber Award: Jim Wilbanks, Holly Bunch, Curtis Ellison

Larry Adams Landowner Award: Mark Joop, Dan Barnick and Jeannie Trowbridge

Alexis Harris Conservation Award: Darnell Lynch, Kristen Bobo, Lee Trowbridge;

The Tennessee Central Basin Grotto reported on SERA for this year on May 16-18.

John Hoffelt reported on further efforts in the Spencer area. There has been additional dye tracing. He reported on the overflow berm at the treatment plant.

Grants

There were two grant proposals. Jack Thomison asked for \$100 to help gate **Rich Mountain Blow Hole**. The grant was awarded unanimously.

The SKTF asked for a grant to cover the cost of a dumpster for the **Stephen's Gap** parking lot cleanup scheduled for TAG not to exceed \$250. The grant was awarded unanimously.

John Hoffelt moved and Jim Wilbanks seconded a resolution endorsing the Library Development Commission plan. The motion was carried unanimously.

A letter is to be sent to the NSS BOG asking that the NSS maintain ownership and control of the Library.

Merit Awards

Merit Award motions were proposed and all carried unanimously:

Brian Roebuck nominated a list of persons and organizations, which were instrumental in the fight to save **Rumbling Falls Cave**.

They were: Dr. Thomas Barr, Chuck Manglesdorf, John Hoffelt, Dr. Sid Jones, Chris Anderson, John Noel, Joe McCaleb, Dr. Julian Lewis, Tennessee Environmental Council, Tennessee PEER, Tennessee Scenic Rivers Association, Save Our Cumberland Mountains, The Sierra Club, and "The Rumblers".

Marion Smith supplied a list of the core group of "Rumblers".

They are: Marion Smith, John Swartz, Gary Chambers, Jack Thomison, Bill Walters, Debby Johnson, Misty Chambers, Gerald Moni, Don Reid Hunter, and Cava Chambers.

John Hoffelt nominated Bill Overton for the Merit Award.

Jim Wilbanks nominated Dan Twilley for all the preparation work on SKTF projects during the year.

Mark Joop nominated The **Blue Spring Cave** Gating Crew: Hal Love, Bill Overton and Lonnie Carr.

Lynn Roebuck nominated Bill Torode for 25 + years of service to the NSS Library.

Michelle Ellison reported on the planned-cleanup on Sunday

Elections / Appointments

Elections were held.

Andy Porter and Mark Joop were nominated for Vice Chair. Mark Joop won a close vote.

Jim Wilbanks was elected Sec/Treas by acclamation.

Andy Porter was appointed to manage the web page.

Don Hunter reported that Brian Roebuck will take over the duties of Editor for the SERA Newsletter.

Map Salon

Brent Aulenbach reported on the map salon results:

Best of Show went to Terry Ragon for **Glenns Hazardous Double Shot**, Jackson Co, AL.

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

Miss Ing Pit, Walker Co, GA by Tom Moltz

Hurt Tree Pit, Jackson Co, AL by David Cole

Lord Milo Cave, Chatooga Co, GA by Tom Moltz

SERA Awards Winners

Winners of the SERA Awards were as follows:

Francis McKinney: Marbry Hardin

Richard Schreiber: Mark Joop

Landowner Award: Cliff Adcock the owner of **Adcock Cave, Horse Cave** and **Blowing Saltpeter**.

Conservation Award: **Kingston Saltpeter Cave Preserve**.

Banquet

A banquet was held in the same room as the meeting. The food was excellent. Joe Douglas presented a show on historical artifacts and evidence found in caves.

Respectfully Submitted.

Jim Wilbanks

Secretary / treasurer

ROSE CAVE EXTENSION

By Bill Walter

My first trip to **Rose Cave** occurred in 1967. On that occasion I accompanied a group of Boy Scouts on a camping trip in Scotts Gulf. We arrived at night and camped under the spacious main entrance. Some of us did a short tour of the cave ending up at the breakdown near the end of the Refrigerator Passage. Did I really remember that ? Of course not, I was provided this information by Mike Rogers who said Robert Oakes had found a 1967 (BW) date in the breakdown. I did remember that the main stream seemed to be much warmer than the Refrigerator Passage giving rise to a conclusion that perhaps the stream had entered the cave not far up the valley.

It wasn't until 2001 that I returned to **Rose Cave**. This time I was leading the "Jack -O- Lantern" group of photographers spearheaded by the dauntless Jack Engle . For those not in the know , these are the famous Coleman Lantern Team, who have provided us with exceptional pictures of our favorite caves resulting in Blue Ribbons at the NSS conven-



tion. Also accompanying us was Anita Pugh of the Spencer Mountain Grotto.

Our first obstacle to get to the Cave was crossing the Caney Fork river , which on that day had enough volume to warrant caution. It was a cloudy day in December with Temps in the mid 40's,so no one wanted fall in the deeper pools. Crossing the river was a test of patience and balance.....similar to trying to pick a route through a room full of greased bowling balls. Everyone but me was carrying a Coleman Lantern adding to the difficulty factor.

Having made it to the opposite bank I turned around for some expected entertainment. Jack Engle and Dan Sylvestri were still on the other bank wandering up and down like two lost pups afraid to get in the water. The rest of us threatened to leave them and they gingerly waded across without falling inquite a feat for those two.

Since I really didn't remember where the cave was I decided to hug the west side of Bee Creek . It was not an easy route and Anita and I soon put some distance between the rest of them with their heavily laden packs. We found a large stream flowing from under breakdown and climbed up the hill to find a large sinkhole with an impressive bluff

above.

Somehow this did not fit the image imprinted in my feeble memory of the entrance where we had camped years ago. We summoned the others and after some delay they arrived. We climbed down to the bottom and realized we would have to cross the stream. A couple of openings on the other side were blowing strong air. After poking around we found the most obvious way. Soon we were in a dry upper level that had been mined for Saltpeter. The miners had accessed this upper passage by digging and the walls were lined with small shale like rocks they had cleared out. We entered a larger passage or room in which there were small clusters of bats hanging from the ceiling.

I was doing my usual airflow check and something didn't make sense. We headed into the wind going to the room from the entrance. It was flowing with us when we left the room going in cave. Hmmm, something going on here. I will investigate this if I ever come back.

We followed the Saltpeter Passage until it intersected with a large stream below. A 20ft climbdown led to a 40 ft wide stream. The water looked knee deep ...Then Anita said she had to be at church in 2.5 hours ! Great excuse to abandon the Photographers.....so Anita and I bolted for the entrance via the way we had come. (We did not realize that the main entrance was just a few feet down the stream passage) This was a good thing because when we returned to the Bat Room they were flying around. We had been careful not to disturb them coming in ,so what had affected them ? Then it dawned on me.....the Coleman Lanterns. Either the heat or the fumes had risen to the ceiling enough to rouse them.

A forced march over the ridge put us back to the river in one third the time it took to get to the cave. We crossed successfully ,or least Anita did. I had negotiated the difficult part and was feeling good about only being wet up to my knees when we came to an innocent looking pool 50 ft from the truck. To my surprise and Anita's delight ,I tripped and fell head first into the cold water becoming completely soaked. Yes, I know, I deserved it !

In the summer of 2002 , Thany Mann and I led Dr. Jerry Lewis , his assistant Salisa Rafail ,Heather Garland of TNC and Tony Pugh to place traps in **Rose Cave** in conjunction with the extended Rumbling Falls Cave survey of Cave Dependant Organisms to be filed with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. I led them to the sinkhole entrance and Heather immediately said it was not **Rose Cave**. This brought some doubts with the others. I insisted we go in this way because I wanted Heather to see the bat roost in the upper level. There were no bats, but fresh guano in a small area indicating that this may be a new site. Thany had noticed the airflow and we decided look at a breakdown opposite to the direction we would be going. It looked like it had promise, but we had more traps to put out. We eventually came out the other entrance...The Main Entrance. So Heather was right and I realized why she had been so hesitant.

About 10 days later Thany and I returned to Rose to pick up the traps. I was dying to have another look at the blowing breakdown again. I was very pleased when Thany said he had the same idea. We chose the left wall and after a little digging and rock removal we squeezed into a tight crack along the wall. After about 25 ft it opened into a small room. On wall were some old NSS numbers in the 6000 series. Not seeing an obvious way on I removed some rocks and entered a large passage above filled with large breakdown. At this point I summoned Thany with "I think it goes"! To my surprise he made it through. I was concerned about his pushing too hard as he had undergone a stent replacement in his heart some months before.

I doubted we were in virgin cave and we followed the 30 ft wide walking passage a few hundred feet to more serious breakdown. After about 200 ft of route finding we arrived at a promising lead. A hole in the floor of the passage led down to a dry dirt floor with air. This had to be the way and we would check it on a later trip.

Several weeks later Tony and I returned. Thany was unable to come, but gave us the " go ahead." We passed through the hole easily and encountered a boulder choke with a small window looking up into space with airflow. We hammered for a couple of hours to no avail. We eventually bypassed the hole another way, but it choked off .The cave had shut us out leaving us somewhat frustrated.

I said," There is one more place to look, but it is too small ". We went over to the opposite wall about 50 feet down the passage and stared at a less than 6 inch crack with a little air seeping out. I dug in the floor to try and get a peek before we left. The adrenaline started flowing when I saw a space between two shelves large enough for two skinnies to give it a try. I volunteered Tony and he volunteered me.....

Fortunately it was easier to negotiate than it appeared and we were soon on the move again. We threaded our way in and out ,up and down, and all around the breakdown filled passage. About 400 ft beyond the squeeze we came to a climbdown of 15 ft .At the bottom we found ourselves on a nice dry dirt floor....the base floor of the trunk. Heading along the left wall we progressed 100 ft to a large room extending upward 50 ft or more. Of course it consisted mostly of... "you guessed it "... breakdown. Poking around didn't reveal anything so we returned to the wall again. At that point Tony and I were tired and deflated that all our effort had only resulted in a terminal breakdown. As we stood at the bottom next to a trickling stream we felt air wafting out from under a low ledge. Getting down on our stomachs we were looking into a 12 W by 1 H stream crawl. YUCK !

As tempting as it was to leave and stay dry,we got past the whimpering stage and justified our cause with "We need to know how bad it really is."....for any future survey. Scooper rationalization. Donning garbage bags we squirmed forward. The water was very shallow and in some places we slithered along the banks. After 50 feet the ceiling rose and we could stand up. Then it was another sloppy mud crawl and into a walking sized passage with solid wall left and breakdown to the right. My compass readings were slightly north of west indicating we were heading away from Bee Creek drainage. I started imagining intersecting a large trunk with no breakdown. The air flow was good. After a few

hundred feet the little stream disappeared into a tight canyon below. We continued another 300 feet and my flickering light reminded me that we had left our packs behind at the room. The cave kept on going so we marked our forward progress and turned around.

On the way out I was glad we had marked our way coming in. Even so, we missed a few places and had to re-find our way through a few of the pocket breakdown rooms. We exited after a rigorous 7.5 hour trip.

On the way home I discussed what we had found. It was puzzling, but exciting that we had gone west instead of north, the way the rest of the cave was oriented. My plan was to entice Mike Rogers into doing a new survey of **Rose Cave**.

Mike was already involved with our **Ghost River** Survey Project which had already exceeded a mile in length. When I revealed that **Rose Cave** had a new extension of several thousand feet in length putting it over a mile, Mike readily agreed to begin a new mapping project updating the current status.

It was already October and I was concerned about the bats returning to their new roost. Mike seemed to be tied up, so I couldn't wait any longer and asked Anthony Crist and Mary Wilson if they would help me get the survey started. We picked a Sunday after a **Ghost River** Survey since they would already be there. They had caved all day on Saturday and were tired resulting in Mary staying at the entrance while AC and I did a short survey to establish a line plot. We quietly surveyed under the roosting bats. Anthony did a bat estimate and contended they were Indiana's numbering over 450. Our survey fell short of the squeeze, but we had 500 ft, enough to get a trend.

Anthony had sketched one of the bats and later confirmed they were indeed Indiana's. I forwarded the news on to Heather Garland. The survey would have to wait until Spring due to the bats.

The new survey of **Rose Cave** began on May 17, when Mike Rogers, Jim Smith, and Robert Oakes, surveyed the main stream passage for a total of 2136 ft.

June 28 Robert Oakes and Jack Thomison survey The Saltpeter Passage from second entrance to the river passage for a total of 1019 ft.

July 12 Frank Bogle, Gerald Moni, Robert Oakes, and Mike Rogers survey 1129 ft in Refrigerator Passage. On the same date: Tony Pugh, Hal Love, Bernie Eskesen, and Bill Walter survey 1200 plus feet in the Westward Ho Passage. In a side lead off Westward Ho Anthony Crist, Mary Wilson, and April Hannah map 220 ft.

August 23 Bill Walter, Maarten Poot, Tony Pugh, April Hannah, John Butler and Kim Abney map 300ft above Refrigerator Passage. Meanwhile Jack Thomison, Mike Rogers, and Robert Oakes add another 700 ft plus in the entrance maze and connect the two entrances via the stream.

October 23 Mike Rogers presents his draft, or working map, of **Rose Cave**. The survey is still in progress and so far the Total is 7562 ft.

A few reflections on **Rose Cave** that came to mind while preparing this article. The best part of **Rose Cave** is the main entrance area which is very impressive. I hope people will not tour the Saltpeter Passage in the period from September through May. This is to alleviate any threat to the new colony of Indiana Bats in that area. The stream passage should be avoided in the summer due to a large maternal colony of Grey Bats. I have suggested to TNC to place signs to advise the public of the bat roosts, but so far haven't seen any. We have suggested to TWRA that the signs pointing the way to **Rose Cave** be removed to lower the public traffic to the cave. So far they are still there.

Fortunately **Rose Cave** is somewhat difficult to get to in the winter because of the river crossing. Tony and I have met some of the large Copperheads that reside along the route to the cave in the summer, so be forewarned.

There has been some talk about a gate, but I think it would be of no value and unsightly. I hope it will never happen.

According to Dr. Jerry Lewis's Bio-Inventory report only 4 species fell into the management concern bracket. Only one was classified G2 and that was a millipede.

I hope we can finish the survey in 2004 and let **Rose Cave** return to its unique function of being both a maternal and hibernation site for several species of bats.

Finally I would like to thank all those who helped on the **Rose Cave** Project.

QUEST FOR UNKNOWN CAVES IN SMOKE RISE, BLOUNT COUNTY, ALABAMA

By Van "Cave Rat" Cain
NSS# 46542RE

There is a little known mountain, named Bryant's Mountain, hidden away in North Central Alabama, overlooking the communities Blount Spring's and Smokerise. This community, nestled in the foothill's of the lower Appalachian Mountains, has yielded it's secrets of karst and limestone for many years now. Bryant's Mountain is one of the hot spot's, when it comes to caving in North Central Alabama, that almost equals the counties in Northeast Alabama. There are about 56 caves in this area, with about 1/4 of them being on the mountain, that are worth checking out anytime. There are quite a few horizontal caves on the mountain along with about four or five vertical caves also. One of these is about 155' deep. It is also home to the famous **Bangor Cave** that used to be a bar and dance hall in the 20's and 30's.

Blount Spring's is home to seven bubbling sulfur spring that it is claimed can heal you of certain sicknesses when you drink the water not only if you can stand the taste and smell of rotten eggs! There used to be a hotel and hospital near the springs that bottled the water to use on patients staying there. You can still find the blue glass from the old bottles that is scattered all over the place out there. It is rumored that David Crockett passed through the area, got sick, stayed at the hospital, drank the water, and got cured.

I got my start in caving in this area 5 years ago and fell in love with the country around there the first time I saw it. About three years ago, I started to ridgewalk this area. In that time I have, often with help, found some pretty good finds worth the Alabama Cave Survey's time. In this article, I would like to go over the work we have been doing in this area in the last couple of years.

In the spring of 2000, Jon Uptain, a caver in the area where I live came to me saying that he and his cousin, Ronnie Wires had found a new cave about a couple of years before. They wanted to survey it but needed help in doing so. They also needed help digging it open. We sat around talking about the new cave and a date was set for the summer of that year. The day of the project; Jon, his wife and daughter, Ronnie Wires, his wife Sarah, and myself, made the trip over to the huge sink hole where the cave was. About four hours later, we had the cave dug open to start the survey. The cave is located in a huge sink depression that drains from four points of the mountain that takes a lot of water when it storms. If you are caught in the bottom of this sink or in the cave during a big rain you are dead!

We had the cave dug open, but we had one problem, no survey gear. So, we headed over to another cavers house we knew in the area, David Caudle. We all arrived to find just his wife there, Edna. She said that David had to run to the store and she did not know what time he would be back. About ten minutes later, David pulled up. After greeting David and telling him about the new cave he wanted to go with us and check out. He also wanted to give us a crash course in surveying. He quickly grabbed his gear and we all headed back to the cave.

We arrived back at the parking area and as we were gearing up again we were greeted by another local in the area, Bill Thompson, who lived down the road. He said he knew about the caves on the mountain and started to chat with us. When he found out about the new cave he wanted to see it for himself so we invited him along. We made it to the cave and started to map. About three hours later we came out with the cave surveyed at 117' long and 27' deep, and named it **Smoke Rise Sinks Cave**. All the survey notes stayed in my care for many months until I turned them into the ACS in the spring of 2001.

The mountain did not get ridge walked by me or anyone else that I knew of for about a year. Nobody that is until Jon Uptain wanted to use his new topo maps of the area. On August 28, 2001 we did just that. We both took a drive out to Smoke Rise and looked at another huge sink hole across the road from **Smoke Rise Sinks Cave**. We both walked down into the sink and felt a large amount of air blowing from all points of the sink. But there was no hole anywhere in the sink. The sink would have be dug on. It was getting late in the day so we decided to come back later.

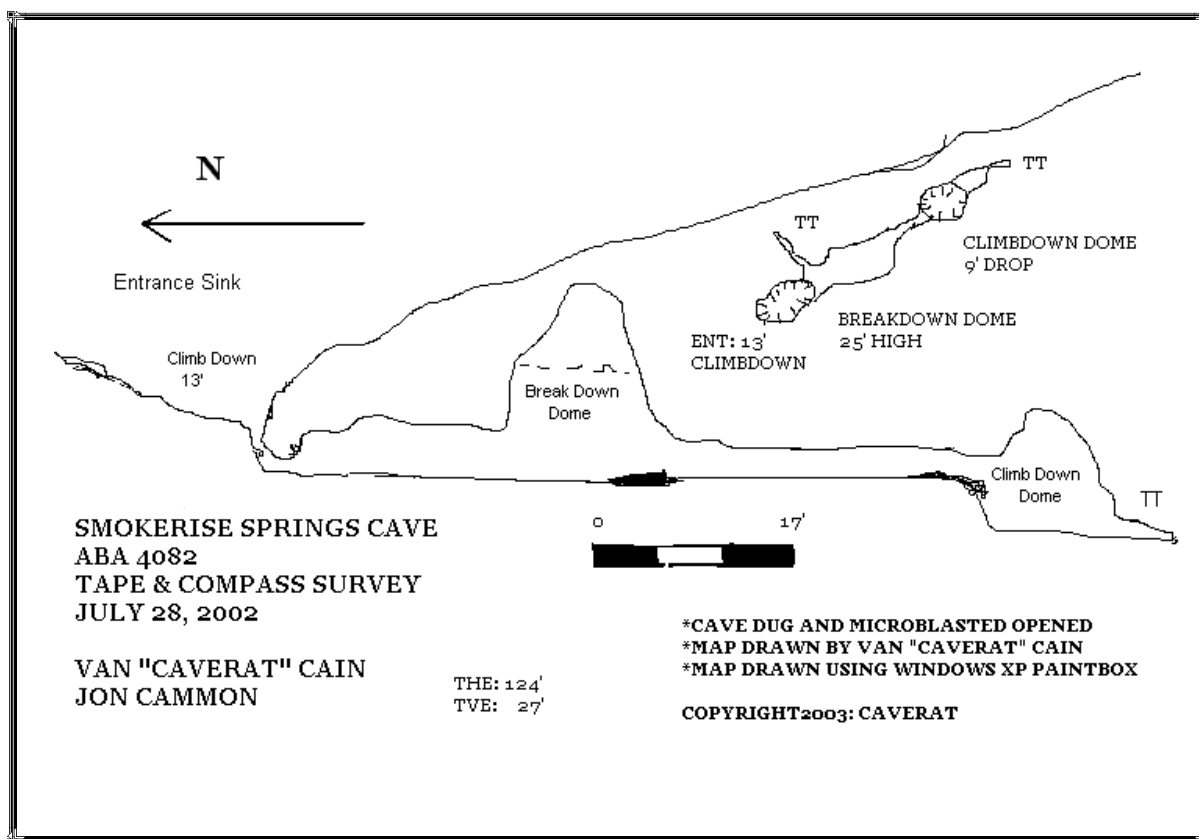
The huge sink stayed on my mind for the longest and did not get back to it for about a year. On July 14, 2002 I wanted to go back to it again and check the air blowing out of the ground. At this time I was caving with Jon Cammon and told him about the sink. The date was also a date of the Appalachian Foothill's Grotto meeting. I told Ronnie and Sarah about the sink at the meeting and we all decided to go over and check it out after the meeting. We located the sink and started to fan out to locate where most of the air was coming from. Jon found a spot on a wall where all the air was coming from and hooted. We all went there and started to dig. Jon and Ronnie went above us to look for any type of upper section while me and Sarah stayed below and dug. I dug through the soft dirt with Sarah's help and soon had a blast of air hit me right in the face. I knew we had hit the right spot. About that time it was getting dark so we held off to a later date on the dig.

A week later, me and Jon returned and dug some more. We dug for about five hours and removed a lot of rock. I guess the pile of rock was about three feet high. Jon broke through and found the entrance, but we were blocked by a huge rock that could not be moved by the two of us and we had to call it a day. We both returned again on July 28, 2002, with sledge hammers and broke that rock up so we could remove it and start our survey. We took a shot of the entrance climb down and taped it at 13 feet deep. After I put myself through the hole, we started to survey the cave. After about three hours, we had taped the cave at 125' long and a climb down at the end of the cave at 9' deep into a doom room. A very nice little cave if you can get into it. The cave was named **Smoke Rise Springs Cave**.

After we had gotten through with the survey, we decided to go ridgewalking on the other side of the road at a lower elevation and found a pit with two entrances. At one entrance you need a rope to get into and the other is a climbdown entrance with two pitches that I used to get into the cave. This pit was put off to another date. After Jon got home he found that he had left his radio at the cave. A couple of weeks later, we both meet up again to go to another grotto meeting. We had a couple of hours to spare so we decided to ridge walk to the pit to get his radio and see if we could find something new. We parked and headed into the woods. About 50' off the road, Jon stopped to check out an IKF. He hooted and I ran over to see what he had found. Between some boulders, he had found a pretty good size hole going down. We both threw rocks in and listened. When they both hit bottom a sounded like it was a good ways down. We both looked at each other and grinned. It was getting close to the grotto meeting time, so we headed there. We got there to find everyone. We told everyone about the new find. The only one that went with us there a another caver named Greg Durham. We headed over there and rigged a rope. When we all got to the bottom we found we had a qualifier but no survey gear. Greg and I returned a week later and started to survey. After about four hours we had the pit taped at 85' deep. It is named **Blount Springs Pit**. We both spent the rest of the day checking out some nerd holes on the mountain.

In my opinion Bryant's Mountain still has a lot to offer and there is no telling what you will find out there.

Cave Soft.



SKTF Update 2004

contributing authors: Jim Wilbanks, Lynn Roebuck, and Rob Robbins

In 2001, when the idea of the SKTF was born, there was already one organization routinely performing conservation tasks. Cavestock had already had cleanups in caves and on the surface. The first Newsome Gap Road cleanup had been a huge success. The SERA Karst Task Force (a committee) was formed during the SERA WBM at the urging of Jim Wilbanks. The idea behind this was to channel some energy towards cave conservation and land owner relations, based on what the Cavestock organization is doing. Rob Robbins was eventually selected to chair the committee. One of the founding principals of the SKTF is to foster conservation activities at the four main events. Dialog was initiated between SKTF and the Cavestock organization wherein assisting each other for their specific cleanups would increase the manpower at each clean-up. Members of SKTF participated in the first Stephen's Gap parking lot cleanup in April 2002.

At that time our direction other than cleaning up caves was not entirely clear. Dan Twilley had suggested a cleanup of **Lost Creek Cave** in White County, Tennessee. In early August of 2001, a site assessment was done by the Tim Curtis family and Brian and Lynn Roebuck. Then during the SERA Cave Carnival in 2002, Dr. Jan Simek (UT/K), Brian and Lynn Roebuck, Jim and Gail Wilbanks, Debby Johnson, Dan Twilley and the property owner's son Jim Rylander went to the cave and did an assessment as to the historical graffiti and also biological fauna present. Some initial clean-up was also done at the time.

On August 24th, 2002, a follow-up cleanup at **Lost Creek Cave** was attended by a large contingent from Cavestock and SKTF. In all 33 cavers representing 12 different organizations converged on LLC equipped with everything from garbage bags to an air compressor and sand blaster (furnished by Maureen Handler). In a matter of a day, much graffiti was removed from rocks around the cave as well as the cave walls themselves along with a large pile of trash removed from the cave and surrounding area.

In October 2002, Cavestock and SKTF joined with Dogwood City Grotto for a cleanup of the **Stephen's Gap** parking area during the TAG Fall Cave-in event. A large group attended this cleanup from many grottos and states and it was a huge success. On October 12th, 2003 seventy four cavers representing 21 caving organizations and 11 states converged on **Stephens Gap** to clean the parking area. This was the first joint effort between that of SKTF and the Cavestock organization. The Dogwood City Grotto, hosting the TAG Fall Cave-In, funded a huge 30 yard dumpster that was filled in a little over 2 hours! The group could have filled at least one or two more if more were available. Dave Robison of Cavestock donated 100 t-shirts emblazoned with a note about the cleanup.

In April 2003 Cavestock and SKTF sponsored a return clean-up of Newsome Gap Rd. This effort yielded dramatic results and filled three large dumpsters with garbage littering one of Georgia's prime karst regions. Saturday April 12th was a beautiful day in Dade County. Sixty-five cavers from eleven states converged on Newsome Gap Road in Johnson Crook for the second time. Even though the area is closed for caving, it has always been a special place for them. Johnson Crook is one of the three most significant areas of cave development in Georgia. Newsome Gap Road runs through the middle of the Crook. It is one of two dirt roads left in Dade County and is one of the most scenic. What is not scenic is the trash that gets dumped on the sides of the road, particularly near the top where the road sits on a cliff. Most of the road gets its' share of bottles and cans, but several places seem to be favorites for dumping furniture, appliances, household garbage, automotive gas tanks, tires and dead animals. One can only imagine why folks dump their garbage there. One idea is that it offers a discreet dumping site and the garbage is quickly out of sight. In response, the Cavestock Association with backing from the SERA Karst Task Force decided to clean the road again in hopes of curbing this practice. An army of cavers formed lines up the steep banks passing garbage bags hand to hand while others used caving ropes to haul larger pieces up the cliff face. Others walked the entire length of the road going down steep banks to find garbage. In all, 7.2 tons of garbage was removed in a little over six hours. In this tonnage, were 18 gas tanks and 42 tires. Volunteers noted some changes from the last cleanup. Litterers tended to change from Budweiser to light beers and from Mello Yellow to bottled water. A big change was the lack of tires. In 2000, cavers recovered nearly 300 tires. Since then, the County Commission has allowed residents to dump tires at the transfer station for free. The automotive gas tanks continue to appear, though. None of this would have been possible without the cooperation of the local county government. The cavers of the region want them to know what a special place Dade County is to them.

The Tag Fall Cave-in event is always a great place to find cave clean-up volunteers. In October of 2003 a group

left TAG to go put some finishing touches on the **Stephen's Gap** parking area using some heavy equipment to load up several dumpsters that were provided by the local county government. Tons of old shingles and other trash were removed there and special thanks should go to Dan Twilley and Maureen Handler for their organization efforts in this clean-up!

Was SKTF through yet? Heck No - the SKTF had yet another clean-up during TAG! On Saturday Oct. 11th the **Pettijohn's Cave** Clean Up volunteers met at 9:00 a.m. at Registration to leave TAG. Many volunteer's caravanned to the Pettijohn's parking area where we met other volunteers that had already arrived and also Alan Padgett. Alan is very familiar with **Pettijohn's Cave** and was able to help with organizing the clean-up efforts. Before the volunteers went into the cave Alan gave a demonstration on the use of Graff-Off as well as safety suggestions on how to use the product. The volunteers were shown the two target areas Alan suggested for graffiti removal on a large sketched map that he brought along. Additionally directions were given about historic writings that might be on the walls of the cave and warnings were given to leave all writings and markings alone if they were at least 50 years old as they are considered historic and should not be removed.

SKTF gear (brushes, goggles, Graff-Off, water, etc) was distributed along with other supplies from Georgia DNR among the 29 great volunteers who headed into the cave to make a difference and begin removing graffiti from the walls. Volunteers came in all sizes and shapes as well as levels of experience. Two volunteer groups removed paint using brushes, Graff-off, water, and old-fashioned elbow grease worked two areas fairly near the entrance! One room was hard to get into for anyone but the smallest of cavers. In all much spray painted graffiti was removed from these two areas. A third crew used the Swaygo Gear backpacks to haul water through the cave to the cleaning crews. They did such a good job that too much water ended up in the cave and was not needed! The waterproof backpacks did a good job and were instrumental in getting water into the cave easily.

SKTF members Debby Johnson and Lynn Roebuck were in the parking area and educated approximately 50+ locals about safe caving, why we clean up caves, and the NSS. They also handed out numerous copies of "A Guide to Responsible Caving", "NSS Brochures", The NSS "Discovering Caves" Brochures, and "Crockford-Pigeon Mountain WMA" Brochures. Many of the visitors thanked the cleanup volunteers for their efforts as they passed by in both large and small groups.

The clean-up was a success and many cavers were able to go away knowing that they helped clean a cave that sees 10,000 visitors a year from all walks of life and caving experience levels. With more volunteers the clean-up could have gone deeper into this cave and removed trash and graffiti from more remote locations. Perhaps another effort in the future will accomplish even more. The SERA Karst Task Force wishes to thank Alan Padgett for his tremendous assistance helping to organize this cleanup, Georgia DNR for donating the use of their Graff-Off and other supplies, and Scott McCrea (swaygogear.com) for donating the use of four of their waterproof packs to carry water into the cave as well as the proceeds (\$55.00 donation to SKTF) of one pack that was later auctioned off at TAG.

Photo Link: <http://albums.photo.epson.com/j/AlbumIndex?u=4045200&a=30912883&f=0>

Then on December 14th, 2003 during the day just before the Cumberland Caverns Christmas Party, 21 cavers met at Lost Creek Cave to continue the cleanup efforts there. A special "Thanks" to Carl Bishop of Dickson, TN is in order as he traveled back to **Lost Creek Cave** a couple of weeks later and carried off all the trash that had been collected but not yet removed.

During all this time, emails were coming in from everywhere telling the SKTF of caves to clean up. Several meetings were held with the committee members (Jim Wilbanks, Debby Johnson, Brian and Lynn Roebuck, Maureen Handler and Rob Robbins) in attendance where more strategy was planned. SKTF further agreed that they would help other grottos as a resource rather than actually do the clean-up for them. But which project would SKTF tackle next?

One suggested cave that really needed a clean-up did make it onto the SKTF "radar screen". The next big SKTF project was **Rocky River Cave** in Tennessee. This large sinkhole entrance cave is close to a major road in a remote area and has seen tons of trash dumped into it for many years. Rocky River Sink and Cave is a classic karst window surrounded by paved road on three sides. It has a steep bluff on one side over the cave entrance, two steep sides and a more gradual, fourth side making access easy. The sink contained all types of old garbage but the majority was old metal appliances and car parts.

On one of sinkhole's steep sides laid the major pile of trash. Two haul lines were rigged. Both were pulleyed from trucks or dumpsters and attached to trucks, which drove down the road next to each other providing the hauling power. A local resident who had come out to help powered one of the haul lines with her truck. Clem Adkins, Shane Stacey and Tim White rigged a high line, which allowed the appliances to rise up above any obstructions before traveling up to the road. The cavers on the bottom did the most difficult work by digging the trash out of the mud and attaching it to the rope. Then they also had the task of clearing the many obstacles on the way up. SKTF employed the use a cargo net for smaller items in the sink. The webbing used to construct the SKTF cargo was generously donated by On Rope One. Pam Baker volunteered her time to sew the massive cargo net. The cargo net was used whenever possible during the day but at times other items such as tires were best lashed to the haul line.

The crew of 36 worked through the morning and when they broke for lunch a sudden storm blew up. Most everyone dived for cars and trucks to avoid the drenching rain and lightening to wait out the storm while others just called it a day. During this time Ann Elmore's husband called her with concern for the crew and to give reports on the weather. When we received word that the storm was over the handful remaining members of the crew we went back to work in the sinkhole. Total amount cleaned up for the day: 2 tons of household garbage and 21/2 tons of scrap metal! The majority of the appliances and trash were removed from the sinkhole but some trash such as a truck bed still remain. Trash inside the cave entrance also remained for a later clean-up.

Last but surely not least was the SKTF attack on **Rocky River cave** yet again during the nearby annual 2003 Cumberland Caverns Christmas party. It was a cold night where Shane Stacey and Jim Wilbanks camped Friday night. They arrived to supervise the unloading of the Warren County dumpsters. Location was important as they intended to use them as rigging points. Weather reports were gloomy and it looked like a wash with Saturday morning dawning grey and cold. The two started sorting out the ropes and the tripod as volunteers began arriving. By the time the bottom crew had a load they were ready to haul.

You can see the system we used at

<http://albums.photo.epson.com/j/AlbumIndex?u=4045200&a=30997991&f=0>

The crew used a high line of 5/8th PMI which ran from a tree in the sink up over the tripod to a come-a-long attached to a dumpster on the far side of the road. At the first cleanup last summer, Mike Harrison saw the need to get the high line up off the bluff so the loads could make it to level ground. Mike had 12ft aluminum poles drilled at top and bottom to accept caving rope. They tied them together at the top and tied the bottoms together with the remaining rope. Appliances would rise to the high line before taking a ride to the surface. Thank you, Mike.

Also in use yet again was the 10X10 SKTF Cargo Net donated by On Rope One. It was used to haul up loose items too small to rig directly to the rope. Buckets were also filled and placed in the netting. The system worked very well and handled all but the pickup truck bed itself.

Twenty-three volunteers braved the 37 degree weather and filled the recycled metal dumpster to the top. It didn't start raining until they began to drive off. Tons of trash including appliances, tires, and even the front of a Ford pickup were removed from the sink!

There are a lot of rigging challenges ahead. Garbage further into the cave needs to be brought out for hoisting. Do you know of a crane or a wrecker we could use? Our ropes are a little too short as well. We need about 200ft of 5/8th PMI and about 250ft of 1/2 inch PMI. This rope will not be used for caving again. Like rigging challenges? Show up. We learn something each time.

This is a win-win situation for the caving community. We get great press in the local papers. The county, landowners and neighbors love us and we are right down the road from Spencer. We are cleaning up a small part of the ecosystem, and it's fun. So think about attending the next Rocky River cleanup. It's February 8th the day after the SERA Winter business meeting.

For more information and to become more involved in the SKTF please go to <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/sktf> and join in the discussions. You must join the yahoo group to be able to post (send an email to the moderator at pretzlgirl@charter.net or join online on the yahoo page). See you there!

The Survey of Upper and Lower Sheep Cave, White County, Tennessee

by Mike Rogers

The **Sheep Caves** are located in a deep sinkhole off the Virgin Falls hiking trail in Scott Gulf, about 3.2 miles from the parking area. The sinkhole is essentially a karst window formed by the Hartselle sandstone. A stream flows from **Upper Sheep Cave** and resurges outside on top of the Hartselle, then plunges 110 feet down into the sinkhole to enter **Lower Sheep Cave**. The sinkhole is quite picturesque: mosses and ferns abound, and the waterfall roars down steep limestone headwalls to enter the lower cave below.

On October 19, 2002, a group of cavers began mapping the **Sheep Caves**. On this day Jack Thomison, Robert Oakes, Kevin Zinn and I established a permanent station along the sinkhole rim and mapped 220 feet overland to the entrance of **Upper Sheep Cave**. We then mapped 1,145 feet in **Upper Sheep Cave** itself. This cave is primarily a 1,000-foot stream passage with a few side leads. Overall the stream passage is quite nice with scalloped walls and drip-stone formations. Breakdown marks the end of the main passage and a higher breakdown room can be reached by climbing up and to the left. Jack pushed 50 feet into the breakdown and reported that it seemed impenetrable, though he could still see the stream flowing below him in places.

It was November 9, 2002 when Jack Thomison, Robert Oakes, Gerald Moni and I started mapping **Lower Sheep Cave**. Using a handline for safety, we surveyed from the permanent station at the sinkhole rim down into the sink. Once inside the cave we continued down the main passage to a junction, then mapped side leads off this junction. One lead looped around to connect back into the main passage as a 15-foot pit. Another lead led up-dip to a passage split, with some airflow. Jack disappeared up a climb in the ceiling while Robert, Gerald and I continued mapping. Robert and I pushed through a low miserable mud-and-water crawl to enter virgin passage with leads going off. Jack joined us later and reported that he had found virgin canyon passage with leads, and a second entrance overlooking the sinkhole! Unfortunately this entrance was too small for human entry. We continued mapping and finished up the mud and water crawls. Our total mapped for the day was 940 feet.

Later on November 23, 2002 Jack Thomison, Robert Oakes, Kevin Zinn and I continued mapping in LSC. On this trip we mapped up Jack's Climb and into the upper levels. This is a neat area and contains some interesting climbs, domes, and formations. We mapped all the way to the entrance Jack found, then backtracked down into another chamber leading to a low muddy crawl. Insisting we check this lead, I crawled in and pushed on through, breaking off mud fins that were blocking access. After 30 feet I arrived at the top of a 15-foot pit. I could see the passage continuing below me as well as across the top of the pit. More for another day...we then retraced our steps and climbed back down to the main stream level, mapping all the way to the stream siphon just before a large breakdown room. In all we mapped 690 feet of passage on this trip.

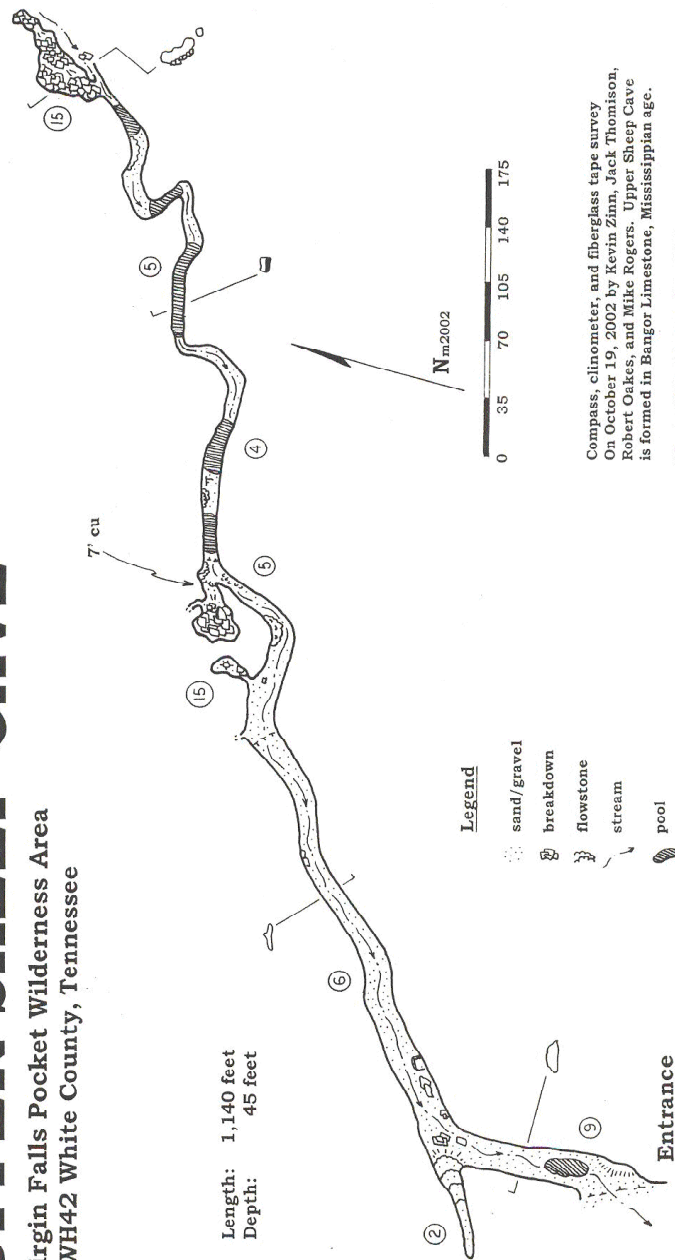
A year passed, with other projects taking precedence. We returned to **Lower Sheep** on October 4, 2003, and on this trip Robert took Jon Lillestolen to explore beyond the 15-foot mud pit while Jack and I mapped an infeeder just before the siphon. We all met up later in the day, with Robert and Jon reporting a canyon passage beyond the mud pit that needs surveying. We then continued mapping leads beyond the main siphon. In one passage we dug a ledge across a 25' pit to find virgin cave on the other side. Another lead we mapped was one Robert found on a previous trip. This passage starts out as a hole in the ceiling, and essentially involves thrashing your way up into the tight hole and through a deep pool of mud and water. It is horrible! However, this led to 250 feet of virgin cave that we surveyed. On this trip we mapped a total 776 feet of passage.

To date, we have mapped a total 3,551 feet of passage in the **Sheep Caves**: 1,145 feet in **Upper Sheep**, and 2,406 feet in **Lower Sheep**. The project continues in **Lower Sheep**, though it is anticipated that one more trip will finish the cave.

UPPER SHEEP CAVE

Virgin Falls Pocket Wilderness Area
TWH42 White County, Tennessee

Length: 1,140 feet
Depth: 45 feet



Legend

- sand/gravel
- breakdown
- flowstone
- stream
- ~ pool

Compass, clinometer, and fiberglass tape survey
On October 19, 2002 by Kevin Zinn, Jack Thomson,
Robert Oakes, and Mike Rogers. Upper Sheep Cave
is formed in Bangor Limestone, Mississippiian age.

Map by Mike Rogers, May 2003.

SERA Newsletter
c/o Brian Roebuck
94 Magnolia Lane
Normandy, Tn 37360

TO: