

# Carbide Dump

A photograph of a cave interior. The cave walls and ceiling are covered in various types of mineral formations, including large, white, fibrous structures that resemble stalactites or flowstone. A person wearing a helmet and a red jacket is standing in the middle ground, looking up at the formations. The lighting is warm and focused on the central area, creating a dramatic atmosphere.

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The Blue Ridge Grotto holds its monthly meetings every third Friday of the month at 6:30p at Jersey Lily's Roadhouse, 1650 Braeburn Dr. Salem, VA 24153. See the Grotto meeting announcement in this issue.

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You can access the *Carbide Dump* electronically at: <https://blueridgegrotto.org/carbidedump.htm>

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**Contributors:** David & Mary Sue Socky, Marian McConnell, Susan Burr, Nick Socky, Meredith Weberg, Janet Tinkham, Bob Gulden, Maureen Handler, David Hughes, George Dasher and Jerry Fuller.

**Cover:** Nick Socky (in stocking feet) among formations in upstream Covert Creek in Sweetwater section of Maxwellton Sink Cave, WV - Photo by Dave Socky

# CAVERS CALENDAR

**Sept 16:** BRG meeting, 6:30p, Jersey Lily's-Salem, VA.

**Oct 1:** VAR Sinkhole Clean-Out, Leesburg, VA. See page 64.

**Oct 6-9:** 44<sup>th</sup> Annual TAG Fall Cave-In on Lookout Mountain, GA. Hosted by Dogwood City Grotto. You must be a current NSS member to attend or be the guest of an NSS member. Pre-registration is open! See <https://dogwoodcitygrotto.org/TAG-Fall-Cave-In>

**Oct. 14:** Banff Mountain Film Festival 2021/22 World Tour – 6:30p Elmwood Amphitheatre, **FREE**

**Oct 14-16:** Roanoke VA GO Fest <https://roanokegofest.com/#>

**Oct. 21:** NO MEETING. GO TO VAR!!

**Oct 21 –23:** Fall VAR, at the RASS property in Bath County. Sponsored by VPI Cave Club. Contact Nick Socky at [sockynss@vt.edu](mailto:sockynss@vt.edu) see info on page 67.

**Nov 12:** Annual West Virginia Cave Conservancy Banquet, at the Alumni Center of the West Virginia Osteopathic School in Lewisburg, WV. Happy hour (cash bar) starts at 5 pm, dinner at 7 pm. George Dasher is the guest speaker. Contact Bill Balfour at 304-667-7099 or [billbalfour48@gmail.com](mailto:billbalfour48@gmail.com) for more info.

**Nov 18:** BRG meeting, 6:30p, Jersey Lily's-Salem, VA. Elections!

**Dec 10:** WVACS XMAS Party, at the WVACS Field station north of Frankford, WV. Dinner starts ~6pm. Contact Tisha Springer at 740-541-3558 or [momtocsns@gmail.com](mailto:momtocsns@gmail.com) for more info.

**June 26-30, 2023:** NSS Convention Elkins, WV. Sessions and vendors will be held at Davis & Elkins College; camping @ OTR site, Dailey, WV. See <https://nss2023.caves.org/> for info.

## Long Cave Lists

*maintained by Bob Gulden*  
USA Long & Deep, World Long & Deep, & World Big Rooms  
[www.caverbob.com/usalong.htm](http://www.caverbob.com/usalong.htm)  
[www.caverbob.com/usadeep.htm](http://www.caverbob.com/usadeep.htm)  
[www.caverbob.com/rooms.htm](http://www.caverbob.com/rooms.htm)  
[www.caverbob.com/wlong.htm](http://www.caverbob.com/wlong.htm)  
[www.caverbob.com/wdeep.htm](http://www.caverbob.com/wdeep.htm)

## Treasurer's Report 09/16/2022

Cave Bucks	\$ 40.96
Conservation	\$ 1.00
Equipment	\$ 104.12
General	\$3,906.96
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$4,053.04</b>

# ANNOUNCEMENTS

**BRG Meeting Minutes** – can be read on the BRG webpage at: <https://blueridgegrotto.org> under the ‘BRG Organization’ button.

**NSS Membership:**  
Would you like to join or renew with the NSS? See this [link](#) for details.



**Al Stewart’s memorial:** Thank you, everyone who attended or sent fond memories to Al Stewart’s memorial at Catawba Murder Hole.

**Bill Cuddington** was an Life Member of BRG. He had an amazing caving career. His story is on page 60.

**No October BRG Meeting:** The Fall October VAR will conflict with our BRG monthly meeting. So, we agreed to **cancel our October 14<sup>th</sup> meeting** – Marian told the Jersey Lily’s management that we would not need the room that night. See you at Fall VAR!

**Friar’s Hole:** WVCC bought some of *Friar’s Hole Cave Preserve* for cavers; do we want to donate some funds to replenish the Cave Acquisition Fund? Dave Socky made a motion to donate \$50; Susan Burr seconded it. The vote passed it unanimously.

**OCR:** Larry Manning announced that the **OCR (Orientation to Cave Rescue)** that was cancelled due to the VAR will be held in April 2023, tentatively.

**Thailand Cave Rescue:** Lynn Ott recommended watching “13 Lives” about the cave rescue in Thailand directed by Ron Howard; it’s on Amazon Prime.

**NSS Bricks:** (*Facebook, 7/28/2022*) Our next order of celebration bricks will be going in around the middle of September. We need 50 more bricks in order to save on shipping costs. If you want your brick included, now is the time to get your order in! To see a high-resolution photo (courtesy of Chuck Sutherland) click on this [link](#). An editable Buy a Brick donation form is available at this “[Form Link](#)”. Let everyone see your support for our awesome headquarters property! For additional information, contact the office staff at

[NSS@caves.org](mailto:NSS@caves.org) or the NSS Operations Vice President, Maureen Handler at [OVP@caves.org](mailto:OVP@caves.org)

**VAR CLOSED CAVE LIST:** lots of information needs to be updated. Please send changes, additions to Brad Blase [blase@virginiacaves.org](mailto:blase@virginiacaves.org)

**Cave Bucks** – Are voluntary donations from cavers who have recently been caving. Most people donate a few dollars for each cave trip they have been on. Then send the money where it will do some good and buy some caves!

**Bat Cave Closures** - We are now in **Winter Bat Cave Closure**. Some designated caves are closed so bat species can have critical habitat to hibernate. This closure affects some, but not all caves. If the cave you want to visit is closed, go elsewhere! There are thousands of caves in the Virginias.

- Winter closure for bat caves in **West Virginia is Sept 1—May 15.**
- Winter closure for bat caves in **Virginia is Oct 15 – April 15.**

*Please respect all cave closures.*



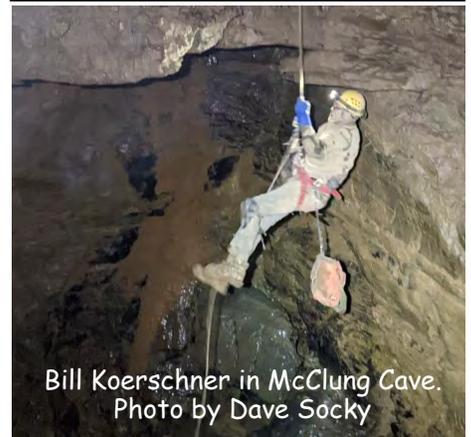
## BRG Meeting & Trips Notice

The **September 16, 2022** meeting of the Blue Ridge Grotto will be held at **Jersey Lily’s Roadhouse 1650 Braeburn Dr, Salem, VA 24153**. Dinner or appetizers with socializing starts at 6:30pm with the meeting starting soon after.

The program this month will be a video from the 2022 NSS Video Salon called *Merlin Cave* by Mike Sandone. The video is 14 minutes long.

## Grotto Trip

To Be Determined



Bill Koerschner in McClung Cave. Photo by Dave Socky

## Membership

There **WILL** be a **September 16, 2022, BRG meeting at Jersey Lily’s - Salem.**

Blue Ridge Grotto currently has 56 members and 6 subscribers. A limited number of updated BRG membership lists will be available at the September meeting.

**Subscriber Proposal:** Gordon Smith, NSS 8847 RL, PH, FE, and owner of Diamond Caverns, KY, asked Dave Socky if he could subscribe to the *Carbide Dump*; Dave said yes and to comply with our Bylaws, he moved to allow Gordon in, Lynn Ott seconded, and the votes were a unanimous yes. Gordon is our newest subscriber.

**Old BRG Members, past BRG Members** – if you were previously a member of BRG and left in good standing, your membership can easily be reactivated:

fill out and sign the BRG Membership Agreement and pay your \$10.00 annual dues to the Treasurer. (No, we do not make people eat bugs anymore.)

Know of a potential caver? Bring them to a BRG meeting, sponsor them on a BRG activity, do lots of fun things with the best cavers around ~

## Membership Updates

Lynn Ott new email: [duriandestiny@aol.com](mailto:duriandestiny@aol.com)

Doug Feller new cell: **540-618-1295**

**Gordon Smith**  
1900 Mammoth Cave Parkway  
PO Box 250  
Park City, KY 42160  
h/502-552-2038  
[glstis@aol.com](mailto:glstis@aol.com)



# In Memory of Bill Cuddington

Text by Dave Hughes  
Photography by Louis Towles

Dear Bill:

In your later years, you were a little bit hard of hearing. So, instead of simply speaking, I have decided to write you a letter. I trust that you will not mind if I share some portions of this letter with the folks that are gathered here today in honor of you, and in support of your wife Miriam.

Wow, Bill...what a life God entrusted to your care. Few people have had the impact on American caving as you. You became one of the most admired...and most recognized...personalities in the history of speleology. Colleagues sometimes refer to you as the Father of Vertical Caving, or simply as their Hero. All along the journey, you were unfailingly focused, determined, devoted, and humble.

I suppose that it is not so tricky to be gracious and kind *after* you are finally acknowledged as a revered icon. But it must be a whole lot tougher to display a cheerful smile...and to believe in yourself...when you are the object of ridicule, of derision, and of outright hostility. For you will recall, way back in 1952...when you initially began your development of what we now consider to be vertical caving...you quickly became the target of many slings and arrows.

In that long-ago era, pits were something to be avoided. Only during emergencies—or sometimes as the necessary evil during massive assaults—were vertical caves even allowed to be placed on the radar. Simple avoidance, or industrial-strength steeple-jacking involving winches and the like, were the order of the day. In contrast, messing about with ropes...that was the province of daredevil mountain climbers, the unwelcome emergency kit of a spelunker caught in a pickle, or an attention-getting accoutrement flaunted by the lunatic fringe. But a *single rope* intentionally relied upon for life-support...not no-how; not no-way.

Well aware that a serious accident at the beginning would probably derail the entire enterprise, you were extraordinarily careful, and especially meticulous. But even that was not good enough for certain members of The Establishment.

At one point, they even pushed an initiative to get you thrown out of the coveted National Speleological Society.

But you continued to *believe*.

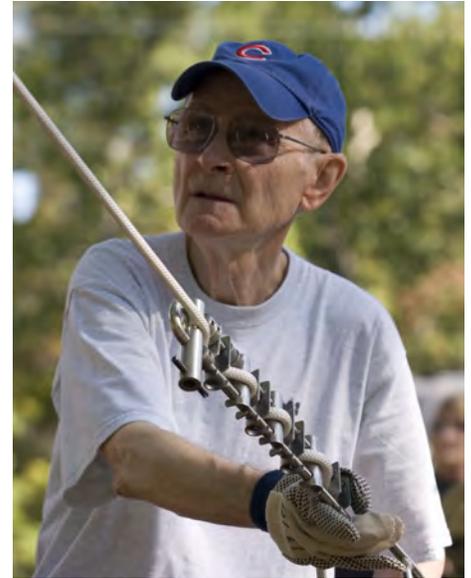
On one memorable occasion, you journeyed to a crowded campground that was hosting a caving event in West Virginia. You went there with the hopes of employing your rappel and prusik methods in what was then deemed to be the deepest pit in that cave-rich state. Although you necessarily intended to explore that deep cave alone, it sure would be comforting to have several people standing-by on the surface...if only for moral support. As such, you walked through the crowd of experienced spelunkers asking for companions.

But because your exploration methods were so innovative, and so *avant-garde*, these people avoided you at all costs. They wanted nothing to do with the controversial Bill Cuddington, with your ropes, or with your methods.

On that day, as your disappointment and discouragement grew, suddenly one man...only *one single solitary man*...stepped forward to volunteer to accompany you. His name was Richard Sanders and, like you, Richard was considered an outcast also. For Richard's body had been ravaged by polio when he was younger and that disease had left Richard a cripple.

In short, *you*...the ostracized innovator...and *Richard*...the crippled man...*you two boys*...made up the entire team. You carried all of the requisite gear, including a very long rope...while Richard courageously hobbled along on his polio crutches and his aluminum leg braces. You descended the fearsome pit...all by yourself...while Richard waited nearby in support of your efforts the best that he was able.

Later that afternoon, you and Richard returned to the camping ground after completing one of the most amazing vertical caving explorations conducted up to that point in time. One member of the crowd was moved to change her tune about you...and she went on to compliment you with the nickname "Vertical Bill." In return, you—with typical Cuddington humility—explained that, in



fact, Richard was actually the real hero because he came along in spite of his polio handicap, and that Richard was not ashamed to be seen with you.

Looking back, those in the exploration community are truly glad that you were not dissuaded by the naysayers. Indeed, your caution, your skill, and your down-home demeanor eventually turned the tide...allowing your rappel and prusik methods to become mainstream exploration tools.

In the course of your journey, you did more amazing things than most people could click off in multiple lifetimes. It would take several full-length monographs to list all of your accomplishments, and it is hopeless to even hint at doing so in a letter of this length. So instead, and as only a few examples, you were involved in the first negotiation of a 200-foot-deep pit using single rope technology, you did the first exploration of a 400-foot pit with such methods, you performed the first 1,000-foot *rappel...on a rock face*, you were a key member of the team that did the initial descents and exploration of the first 1,000-foot *pit* via rappel and prusik.

You were an early stockholder in a rope manufacturing company, you performed a spectacular demonstration at the New Orleans Super Dome, and you set up and

(Continued on page 61)

(Bill Cuddington continued from page 60)

employed long drops on a significant number of big mountains. After retiring from the Huntsville school system...and at an age when many such folks would have thrown in with the nursing home crowd...you and your wife Miriam ascended a massive rock face on El Capitan in Yosemite Valley, California. This was a cave-equipment-ascender negotiation of a single sheer drop approximately 1/2-mile in vertical extent...using nothing but the gear and the methods that you had pioneered decades earlier.

You had a very substantial rope climbing gym constructed as a separate out-building at your house in Alabama. A building very clean and organized, you and Miriam used this facility a number of times each week to test gear, to tune up rigs for cave exploration, and to train for climbing contests. If one showed up at the Cuddington residence, then he'd better be prepared to climb!

During such sessions, you would often volunteer to lead off...ascending, say, 600 to 1,000 feet on a mechanical rig in order to "warm up." Subsequently, you might switch to a much more difficult prusik-knot rig and rip off a couple of 200-foot timed intervals.

You had gear for caving, gear for training, and gear for rope climbing contests. Typically, components of each individual system were labeled, placed in separate Ziploc bags, and positioned in their respective duffels and bins for vehicle transport to the next event. I recall being asked to help you and Miriam unload the back of your SUV at one of the NSS Conventions. Upon opening the hatch and seeing your packing modality, I thought to myself, "Man, it looks like the Dewey Decimal System in here!"

In some ways, it is a shame that you guys never had kids of your own, because you would have made a great grandpa. You were constantly teasing, and smiling, and joking. For instance, warning customers perusing a speleo

vendor, you admonished them, "Don't buy any *wooden* carabiners!"

Another time, a young lady at a Convention was seen clutching a photo and apparently seeking you out for an introduction and for an autograph. Pointed in the general direction of the gymnasium where the Climbing Contest was ongoing, she spotted a distinguished-looking gentleman near the top of the bleachers who was operating a big rappel rack used to feed the competition rope through an overhead pulley. As you know, in caving lingo, one often refers to a rappel rack as simply a "rack." Perhaps concerned about mispronouncing your unusual last name in her excitement, this girl nervously blurted out, "Excuse me sir...are you *famous*?" To which you replied, "No ma'am, I am just the *Rack-ateer*!"

You were enthusiastic about training, about fitness, and about nutrition. You worked out like a professional athlete...doing weightlifting, cardio, and the like up until the days when you became gravely ill. Indeed, even after receiving a pretty serious-sounding diagnosis, you were highly suspicious of the prognosis of the medical community. One gets the sense that you believed a few Shaklee protein shakes and a couple of sets of bench presses would be all that you needed to outdistance Father Time, and to somehow effect a complete cure.

Shortly before your passing you received your 70-year membership pin from the National Speleological Society. Perhaps because of your difficulty in getting accepted by the NSS back in the day, you were especially proud of your membership...and of your membership number "2177."

You wrote "2177" on much of your gear, including helmet and gloves. For a long time, your Huntsville telephone number included the sequence "2177." As your fame grew, "2177" was a widely recognized icon. For instance, a highly accomplished Arizona-based caver,

climber, hiker, and pilot uses "2177" as part of the password on his personal computer. He is an admirer of you...even though, to the best of my knowledge, he never even *met* you. The name Bill Cuddington is the stuff of legends. Indeed, you *are* a legend.

As I was sitting in a darkened bedroom of your Alabama residence holding vigil shortly before your passing it occurred to me that this must have been what it was like with Edmund Hillary; with Christopher Columbus; with Neil Armstrong. All great explorers, and all now gone. But, none of them forgotten. Indeed, none of you *could ever be* forgotten.

To be sure, cave exploring without your physical presence will be different. There is no doubt about that. But we acknowledge to God that your passing is not a tragedy. In contrast, we joyfully recall the life that you have lived. Nearly 89 years of filling each hour with 60 minutes run. Bringing light to unimaginable depths...where it had been dark since time immemorial.

Co-founding the Vertical Section. Proposing the Climbing Contest. Developing tools and techniques and training methods. Jolting The Old Guard out of its malaise. Rattling the cage of the naysayers. Setting records. Teaching students of the sport. Telling corny jokes to enthusiastic newbies. Making discoveries around the country, and in foreign lands. All the while, demonstrating that pit caving could be conducted in a safe manner.

You lived life your way; the way you chose to live; the way you preferred to live; the way you insisted on living.

As one of your greatest legacies, you are the man that made vertical caving *possible*. And, you are the man that made vertical caving *respectable*.

God Bless You, Bill Cuddington.

Dave Hughes



Photo by  
Dave Socky

McClung Cave soda straws

# AL STEWART'S CELEBRATION OF LIFE

by *Marian McConnell*

It was a bittersweet day of remembering Fossil #1 - Al Stewart - at the Catawba Murder Hole property on Sunday, August 21, 2022. We had a great turnout - 23 - and were able to set Al's ashes free in the daylight cave from the top of the big drop, between rainstorms.

Present were Marian McConnell; Dave, MarySue, and Nick Socky; Nick Schmalenberger; Cindy Hutchison; Tom Beaman; Mary Lou Holland; James Wellman and his daughter Ashley Solomkin; Barry and Helene Ferguson; Walt Pirie; Bob Alderson; Carl Cornett; Doug and Cheryl Feller; Doug Perkins; Kelly Perkins; Leonard Rowe; Keith Goggin; Lynn Ott; and David Rose. Thanks to all who brought potluck goodies to share. *[Not present but kind thoughts and good memories were sent to be read from Ben Johnson, Joey Fagan, John Tichenor, and Susan Burr.]*

Special thanks to Mary Sue and Dave who took care of most of Al's final arrangements, and who brought many wonderful pictures, souvenirs, and memorabilia from Al's collections. Dave and Doug also created a slideshow with their and Joe Banks' hundreds of photos of Al from "back in the days."

Thanks to Ashley for taking the group shots. BRG is truly like a second family!

*(Continued on page 63)*



Al Stewart's Memorial Service 8/21/2022

L-R First row: Lily, Marian McConnell, Mary Sue Socky, Carl Cornett. 2<sup>nd</sup> row (standing) Kelly Perkins, Walt Pirie, Bob Alderson, Lynn Ott, Keith Goggin, Barry Ferguson, Tom Beaman David Socky, James Wellman, Doug Feller, Cheryl Feller, Nick Schmalenberger, Cyndi Hutchison, Doug Perkins, Leonard Rowe, Mary Lou Holland. (Photo by Ashley Solomkin)



L-R: Doug Perkins, Nick Schmalenberger, Walt Pirie, Bob Alderson, Kelly Perkins, James Wellman, (white hat- Keith Goggin), David Rose; (seated) Ashley Solomkin. (photo by Marian McConnell)



(Continued from page 62)



L-R: Kelly Perkins, David Rose, James Wellman, Keith Goggin (white hat, blue shirt), Carl Cornett, Helene Ferguson, Barry Ferguson. Seated - Ashley Solomkin. Photo by Marian McConnell



L-R: Leonard Rowe, Bob Alderson, Keith Goggin, Barry Ferguson, Tom Beaman, Doug Perkins, David Socky At the Catawba Murder Hole entrance pit. Photo by Marian McConnell.



At Catawba Murder Hole pit entrance. Photo by Marian McConnell.

### Upcoming BRG Nominations (one month early!)

BRG usually nominates its officers for the next year in October, and votes in November. However, we will not have an October meeting due to VAR. We will have to hold **BRG Officer Nominations** one month early, at the **September 16, 2022, BRG meeting!**

Who can run for office?

- ◆ Any current adult Regular BRG members who have held BRG membership for more than a year can run for grotto office.
- ◆ Consider becoming a BRG Officer – see BRG by-laws to see the requirements and responsibilities for each office. The by-laws can be found at: [https://blueridegrotto.org/organization\\_set.htm](https://blueridegrotto.org/organization_set.htm)
- ◆ All current Officers have served the maximum of two years and must step down from their current position. Which means – **we need a new Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary, and Treasurer.** *PLEASE step up!* The current officers are *so* tired of playing musical positions.

#### Current Officers:

Marian McConnell	NSS # 37358	Chair
Lauren Appel	NSS # 69253	Vice Chair
Mary Sue Socky	NSS # 24206	Secretary
David Socky	NSS # 16334	Treasurer



# Tawney's Cave Trip Report

By *Susan Burr*

8/6/2022

Doug Feller, Susan Burr, Kelly Perkins, Kat Watson (Kelly's friend/newbie), Lauren Appel, Cheryl Isom (Lauren's friend/newbie)

I originally set this cave trip up to take Erin Bejjani & her son, Nuriel, who missed it the last time. Unfortunately, at the last minute they could not go. We did however have, first time in a wild cave, Cheryl Isom & newbie, Kat Watson on the trip. Doug Feller, Lauren Appel, Kelly Perkins & I successful got everyone through the cave & out safely in just under 3 hours. We went to the sinkhole entrance area and back out. We got back to the Bat Ranch & changed before the rain hit. We did hear the thunder while we changed.

Cheryl learned a few things today. One, that her boots sucked!!! She lost the sole to one boot on her way out of the cave & the other just before reaching the Bat Ranch. She also discovered that her pack

was not very good because she couldn't secure it to her body & it kept sliding around in front of her. She did struggle a bit, but did great. I do feel she will be very sore the over next few days...or weeks.

Blacksburg was having some event so we just headed back to Roanoke afterwards. We ended up driving through a monsoon just before getting on the interstate at Blacksburg. We did eventually drive out of it thank goodness! 🐾



Gang scouting around the Moon Room. Photo by Doug Feller

## SINKHOLE CLEANOUT

SPONSORED BY VAR CONSERVATION COMMITTEE



**Saturday October 1, 2022** (may carry over into Sunday)

**Beginning 9 a.m.—?**

**Location** – 42517 Farm Lane, Leesburg, VA 20176  
\*\*Follow signs to “Glamping” and look for signs for sinkhole parking.

- Lunch fixings and water will be provided but please bring your own snacks and extra water. Feel free to bring food to share for lunch.
- We'll be cleaning out at least 3 trash-filled sinkholes located in the Leesburg Conglomerate along the Potomac River.
- If you have a truck (or trailer) with a winch and are available for transporting trash from sinkhole to dumpster, please let us know.

**Supplies Needed:** CHAINSAWS • WIRE CUTTERS • WEEDWHACKERS • 5-GALLON BUCKETS • RAKES • SHOVELS • OLD TARPS • ROPE • CHAIN WITH 3/8 SLING HOOK ON END OF CHAIN • TOOL TO SEPARATE TIRES FROM RIM • LOPPERS • WORK GLOVES • BOOTS • INSECT REPELLANT

RSVP — It helps with planning: [merecaver@yahoo.com](mailto:merecaver@yahoo.com)  
[janete@shentel.net](mailto:janete@shentel.net)



# Grotto Trip Log

**8/13: McClung Cave, WV.** Participants included David Socky, Nikki Fox, Silas Springer, Daniel Wilson. Other team – Nick Socky, Kelly McCarthy, and Cooper Pearson. We first surveyed the two leads in the northeastern section of Crystal Canyon. Nikki sketched. I couldn't fit through a tight spot for one of the leads, so I checked other stuff we had to do and took a nap. After they returned, we finished off that section. We then moved to the north western part that connects back to the main passage. I had forgotten about the squirrely, awkward tight stuff we had to do to get to our lead. Luckily it wasn't a long survey. I did sketch since Nikki was burned out. We again came to the same conclusion that we couldn't climb down from the overlook. I collected water samples for Tyler Huth - one in the Crystal Canyon area and one in Liberty Bell passage. On the way out at the First Breakdown, I looked at my watch. It was 1:15am! Holy shit! My callback was 2am. At this point, I pretty much rushed out. Got out in 25 minutes. Called Mary Sue at 1:45am. After everyone else was out and we were changing, Nick drove up with Kelly and Hunter. We were late and they had come to save us! We were in the cave for 15.5 hours and surveyed 790 feet. Nick's team didn't make much progress on the dig, but they did find where the air goes. It's a technical dig now.

**8/6: Tawney's Cave, VA** - Doug Feller, Susan Burr, Kelly Perkins, Kat Watson (Kelly's friend/newbie), Lauren Appel, Cheryl Isom (Lauren's

friend/newbie). I originally set this cave trip up to take Erin Bejjani & her son, Nuriel, who missed it the last time.

Unfortunately, at the last minute they could not go. We did however have, first time in a wild cave, Cheryl Isom & newbie, Kat Watson on the trip. Doug Feller, Lauren Appel, Kelly Perkins & I successful got everyone through the cave & out safely in just under 3 hours. We went to the sinkhole entrance area and back out. We got to the Bat Ranch & changed before the rain hit. We did hear the thunder while we changed. Cheryl learned a few things today. One, that her boots sucked!!! She lost the sole to one boot on her way out of the cave & the other just before reaching the Bat Ranch. She also discovered that her pack was not very good because she couldn't secure it to her body & it kept sliding around in front of her. She did struggle a bit, but did great. I do feel she will be very sore the over next few days...or weeks. Blacksburg was having some event so we just headed back to Roanoke afterwards. We ended up driving through a monsoon just before getting on the interstate at Blacksburg. We did eventually drive out of it thank goodness!

**7/16-21: NCRC Week-long** held in Covington, VA. Nick Schmalenberger and Larry Manning both attended. Larry is an instructor and Nick was in Level 3. Other BRG members who participated were Mystik Miller and Steph Petri. Our guest Stuart Candler was in Level 1. Nick went in **Paxton's, Crossroads, Lowmoor, and Catawba Murder Hole.** [Nick later went to California and went to *Devil's Post Pile* and **Take It For Granite Cave.**] Larry went into Island

**Ford, Lowmoor, and Crossroads.** This year's class had almost 100 students and 44 staff!

**8/28: Unnamed cave, WV.** Participants included David Socky, Bob Alderson, Mark Minton, Yvonne Droms, and Gabby Zawacki. This was a trip that Gabby set up just south of Franklin, WV. The cave had a short Entrance pit with a steep slope down to high canyons, with lots of climbing. We ended up having to use two ropes and webbing to do some of the climbs. We didn't make it to the end because we needed more rope and bolt climbs to continue. The cave was well decorated, with a dig and high lead at the end. There are plans to go back. It was a fun 5.5 hour trip.

**8/30: McClung Cave, WV.** Participants included David Socky, Bill Koerschner, Joe Zokaites. We went back to finish off the lead past the tight spot in the subway below Minilithia. It was the lead after the tight squeeze over a rock that I almost didn't get back over. Joe didn't fit on that trip. I brought a hammer this time and beat the knob off the rock. But then Joe dug underneath and got the whole rock to move/shift down. There was now plenty of room to get through! We surveyed 258 feet until we reached a dig. Bill got through about 12 feet into a bit higher passage, but then it devolved back into a wide sloping dig that was only 4 to 5 inches high and went around a corner. Bill deemed it too much work. We called it quits after that. Done with that section of the cave! Good 9 hour trip.

Joe Zokaites comfortably surveying in McClung Cave.  
Photo by Dave Socky





Photo Montage by Dave Socky

Bob Alderson in a cave in WV



Aragonite in McClung Cave



Naturally broken formations in McClung Cave



Helictites in McClung Cave



White soda straws in McClung Cave



# 2022 FALL VAR REGISTRATION

October 21-23, 2022

Hosted by: VPI Cave Club, Student Grotto of the NSS

Location: RASS Field Station  
6076 Deerfield Rd  
Millboro, VA 24460



Registration is online at <https://var.vpicave.club/e/1/var-2022> or by mailing this form to PO BOX 588, Blacksburg, VA 24063 with a check made payable to the VPI cave club

**Early registration: \$20 + Optionally \$15 for Saturday Dinner**

**Onsite registration: \$40. DOES NOT GUARANTEE SATURDAY DINNER**

**Children under 5 are free**

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ NSS #: \_\_\_\_\_ GROTTTO: \_\_\_\_\_ DINNER?: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_ CITY: \_\_\_\_\_ STATE: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE NUMBER: \_\_\_\_\_ EMAIL: \_\_\_\_\_

SECONDARY REGISTRANTS: NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ NSS #: \_\_\_\_\_ DINNER?: \_\_\_\_\_  
(SAME HOUSEHOLD)

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ NSS #: \_\_\_\_\_ DINNER?: \_\_\_\_\_

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ NSS #: \_\_\_\_\_ DINNER?: \_\_\_\_\_

NUMBER OF REGISTRANTS: \_\_\_\_\_ x \$20 = \_\_\_\_\_

NUMBER OF DINNERS: \_\_\_\_\_ x \$15 = \_\_\_\_\_

TOTAL AMOUNT INCLUDED: \_\_\_\_\_

CHECKS MUST BE MADE OUT TO: VPI Cave Club

MAIL THIS FORM TO: VPI Cave Club, PO Box 558, Blacksburg VA 24063

FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY RCVD \_\_\_\_\_ PAID \_\_\_\_\_ BY \_\_\_\_\_

Location: RASS Property in Bath County - <https://goo.gl/maps/YRxZwxZnvdLy1d1B8>

Online registration link should be live by 5 pm Friday, 9/8/2022

Dinner is most likely going to be a barbeque meal.