



Carbide Dump

July 2023
Vol 58, No 07

The **Carbide Dump** is published monthly by the Blue Ridge Grotto of the National Speleological Society in Roanoke, Virginia. Distribution date is approximately the second week of each month. An issue may be skipped if insufficient material is received. Contributions of articles and artwork are invited and will be gratefully acknowledged. Art work originals will be returned. Contributions should be sent to the editor. Regular and associate grotto membership (\$10) includes a **Carbide Dump** subscription. Subscriber rate is \$10.00. Exchanges with other grotto and caving organizations are invited. Direct exchange mail to Mary Sue Socky.

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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, Doug Feller, Cheryl Feller, Marian McConnell, Kelly Perkins, Maddy Schreiber, Earl Sutor, Rick Shortt, and Jerry Fuller.

Cover: Gypsum curls in Mammoth Cave, KY taken during the July 4, 2023 CRF Expedition. Photo by Dave Socky

CAVERS CALENDAR

July 14-16: Karst-O-Rama held at Great Saltpeter Cave Preserve, Mt. Vernon, KY. <https://karstorama.com>

July 21: BRG meeting, 6:30p, Jersey Lily's-Salem, VA.

Aug 4-6: Indiana Cave Capers. Click [here for the web site](#).

Aug. 18: BRG meeting, 6:30p, Jersey Lily's-Salem, VA.

Aug 31- Sept 5: [Sewanee Mountain Grotto Cave Fest](#), Sewanee, TN. Annual Grotto Fundraiser. Event includes music, food, auction and LOTS OF CAVING! The event is free. Camping is \$10 for the weekend. All proceeds go back to the caving community.

Sept. 1-4: OTR, Dailey, WV. Click [here for OTR info](#).

Sept. 15: BRG meeting, 6:30p, Jersey Lily's-Salem, VA.

Oct. 5-8: TAG Fall Cave-In, Menlo, GA. Click [here for more info](#).

Oct. 20: BRG meeting, 6:30p, Jersey Lily's-Salem, VA. Nominations.

Nov 17: BRG meeting, 6:30p, Jersey Lily's-Salem, VA. Elections.

Summer 2024: NSS Convention, Sewanee, TN. Details at [this site](#)

Treasurer's Report 7/21/2023

Cave Bucks	\$ 40.96
Conservation	\$ 2.00
Equipment	\$ 104.12
General	\$3,698.06
Total	\$3,845.14

Long Cave Lists

A legacy of Bob Gulden, now maintained by Paul Berger

<https://cave-exploring.com/index.php/long-and-deep-caves-of-the-world/>

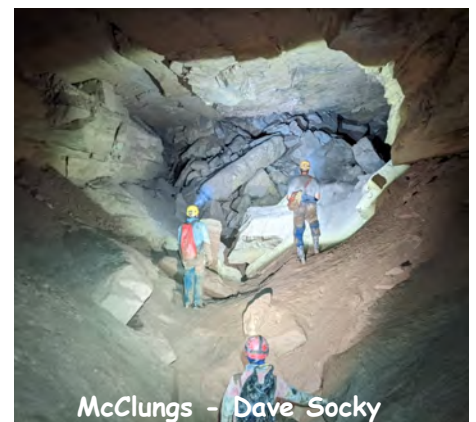
Membership

BRG currently has 56 members and 5 subscribers for 2023.

Updated BRG Membership lists will be available at the July 21 BRG meeting.

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 ~

Cave Softly



McClungs - Dave Socky

BRG Meeting & Trips Notice

The **July 21, 2023** 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 23 minute video about the "*Cave of the Crystals*" in Naica, Chihuahua, Mexico.

Grotto Trip

Norman Cave, WV

Date & Time: Saturday, July 22, 2023. Meet at Hanging Rock Orange Market at **8:30 am**.

Leader: Jeff Huffman

Coordination: Susan Burr 540-580-9409
pondlady97@gmail.com

Requirements: Horizontal trip. This is a wet cave. This trip will be dependent on weather conditions. If you wish to go, let Susan Burr know.

Note: Afterward the cave trip, we will go visit "Friendly Goat Fruit Farm". This is a pick your own blueberry farm that has some goats you can pet from outside their pen. They may have a baby goat that you can hold. They also allow you to eat as many blueberries as you wish while picking. The price is \$2.00/lb. under 5 pounds or \$1.90/lb. 5 pounds and over. If you don't want to go here, then you may need to drive yourself. Parking is limited to about 3 maybe 4 vehicles. We will also stop to eat after visiting the farm.

Description

Norman is an interesting cave, with an active stream passage and high canyons. It also has a breakdown slope, a beautiful waterfall, and some stunning formation areas, including the Great White Way. Norman is the "Wet" half for the 14 mile Bone Norman Cave System, which is infamous for its 8-inch-high Devil's Pinch. This months' trip will

NOT be visiting the Devil's Pinch. Norman Cave is formed in the Hillsdale Limestone, Greenbrier Series.



Norman Cave by Rick Shortt (2007)

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.



NSS Bricks: The next engraved NSS brick order will be placed in *September 2023*, with brick installation happening in December.

BUY A BRICK! For each **\$100 donation**, have your message laser engraved on a brick for all to see on a patio area, walkway, or other ornamental feature at the NSS HQ. The first 700 bricks were laid in January 2021, and 800 more are still available! See this [link to donate](#).

BRG decided to honor BRG caver Al Stewart with an NSS Brick. The order for this brick will be placed soon.

The *CARBIDE DUMP* editors are taking a vacation. See you in September!

Bat Cave Closures -

We are now in Summer **Bat Cave Closures**. Hibernacula may be open, but other caves will be closed due to bat maternity colonies. VA and WV have differing schedules.

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

See [wv-list-2012-03\(3\).pdf](#) for more WV closed cave information.

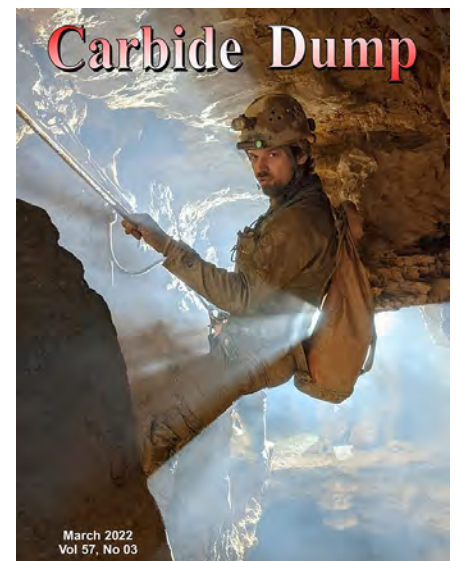
This closure affects some, but not all caves. If the cave you want to visit is closed, go elsewhere! There are thousands of caves in the Virginias.

Please respect all cave closures.

VAR CLOSED CAVE LIST: lots of information needs to be updated. Please send changes, additions to Brad Blase blase@virginiacaves.org The Closed Cave List can be viewed at [this link](#).

Carbide Dump Cover Winner

The March 2022 Cover of the Carbide Dump won an **Honorable Mention** in the 2023 NSS Graphic Arts Salon. In addition, it was selected as the "**Cavers Choice**" at the convention. Congratulations BRG!!



March 2022
Vol 57, No 03

Poor Farm Cave trip report and rescue from the caver/patient's perspective

June 17, 2023 - By *Doug Feller*

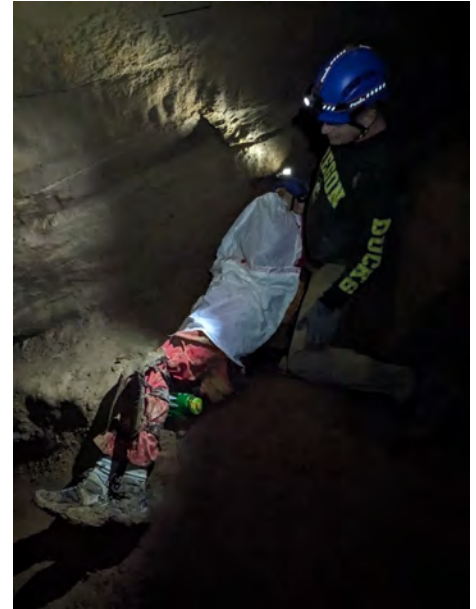
I will start off by giving a big "THANK YOU" to everyone involved in my rescue.

The BRG caving trip started off good. In our group, besides myself, were Susan Burr, Jeff Huffman, Kelly Perkins and her father, Randy Perkins. Kelly had wanted to take her dad caving with us on this Father's Day weekend. It was his first ever cave trip and he was a natural. We entered the cave going to the passage on the right with our goal to see the nice formation room at the end. Not too far in, there is a low belly crawl and immediately after the crawl you work your way to the bottom of a 20' pit by either going down through a tight hole in the floor or traverse the pit to the other side and climbing down the mud bank. Kelly, Randy, and I chose to traverse the pit. Parts of this cave are prone to flooding leaving the breakdown boulders with a coating of mud after the water subsides. I have tried to keep track of my cave trips since joining the Blue Ridge Grotto in 1977. According to my list, I have been to Greenbrier Poor Farm Cave 11 times over the years. I have maneuvered these muddy boulders before and in other caves that are a lot worse.

After getting sidetracked down a right-hand passage we continued down the main passage. This passage goes over and around slippery rocks and mud slides. We climbed up and over a mud-

dy boulder which sloped down to the other side that seemed dry. I even tested my footing. As I took the next step to go down the slope which seemed ok at first, and was getting ready to take another step, the footing of my left foot busted loose... big time. When that happened, I tried to compensate by swinging my right foot around to catch myself. That in turn had me going down the slope airborne. I remember slamming down on my left side hitting a rock, apparently where a nubbin was sticking up. The point of impact was directly on my femur below my hip socket. I heard a CRACK that sounded like a broom stick breaking which Kelly said she also heard. I slid down the rock until it leveled out enough to stop me. The others turned around when they heard the fall and were looking down at my legs. Seeing the expressions on their faces made me look down and to my horror I saw my left leg twisted underneath my right leg that had my left foot up by my right side in an impossible position. The pain took my breath away. I knew this was not going to be a self-rescue. With no use of my left leg, I don't think I could have even gotten a few feet without passing out in pain. Susan and Jeff got out quickly to make the many calls for help and support for which I am very thankful. I knew the sooner the calls were made the sooner the rescue would be by having helped

carry the stretcher on a few cave rescues. Susan also called my wife Cheryl at the same time. I looked at Kelly and Randy and asked if someone would move my left leg around straight and align it with my right leg while I still had my adrenaline rush. I could barely catch my breath. Randy, who I had just met that morning, took on that task. I was thankful he was willing and had the nerve to do



Doug soon after he fell, with Randy Perkins helping.
Photo by Kelly Perkins

that for me. As he slowly put it back in alignment, I could feel my muscles thump back into place. That really hurt but was necessary because of the twisted position I was in.

I knew it was going to be a long day. Kelly and her dad used rocks, water bottles and everything they could find to put around my broken leg to stabilize it because even moving my left foot a fraction of an inch caused extreme pain. Yes, I moaned in pain with every movement of my left leg and foot. The back of my head was against the right-hand side of the wall with my upper body bent over. With help, I managed to get my head and upper body straightened out, so I would be in a better alignment. I ended up laying on the sloping rock with my feet down and my right side against the cave wall. It didn't take long for my muscles in my broken leg and then eventually in my good leg to start cramping big time. Without a way to walk it off, I had to lay there in pain. I tried reaching down with one hand to massage my leg to see if it would help to keep the blood flowing and ease the cramping. Kelly and her dad saw what I

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Doug traversing the pit without any problems!
Photo by Kelly Perkins

(Continued from page 59)

was doing, and both started massaging my legs which really helped. They are a father / daughter team that need to be proud of each other. I can't thank them enough. I have had cramps before after long cave trips which have taken me to the floor in pain but nothing like this. The top of my left thigh was so tight during the cramping it felt like it was made of steel. I really thought the cramping may be doing permanent damage to my muscles.

Laying on that cold rock started pulling the heat out of my body and I knew hypothermia would be a concern. I started shivering due to a combination of muscle spasms and cold seeping in. Kelly and her father used anything they could including knee pads to pack around me to try and keep me as warm as possible. I remember thinking it would be a good time for someone to come in with warm clothes or a blanket. Not too long after I thought that, Jeff came back with a bag of all the clothes he and Susan could find. He also brought me Advil. With what they brought in, I started warming up. Susan had gotten in touch with Larry Manning, a BRG caver that is rescue trained, who just happened to be at his cabin near Marlinton. I think Larry was the one that got to me first. I was in so

much pain and in a position where I couldn't see very well that I had to ask his name even though I recognized his voice. Larry stayed with me and kept me talking so I would stay awake. He told me calls had been made and troops were on their way, which was exactly what I needed to hear.

Jeff offered to lead Randy and Kelly out. Randy went with Jeff, but Kelly said she was okay. She stayed with me and toughed it out to the end. After Jeff got Randy to the entrance he immediately returned. Mystik Miller also showed up around the same time as Jeff. Mystik brought some candy and food. She also loaned me her beanie and neck gaiter for warmth. Larry let me know what was going on while the others managed to get clothes under me to insulate me from the cold rock floor.

Around the same time, Susan came back in with Jessica Lee Reep, who is an EMT, and Cass Springer. They happened to be at WVACS field station when the calls went out. She monitored my vitals and wrote everything down. Cass had given Susan his Carhartt jacket to put over me which helped in keeping me warm. He also had the wire for the comms that Carroll Bassett had given him. Susan and Jeff helped Kelly with the leg massages.

I had resigned myself to the fact that this rescue was going to take a while. From the time of my accident (11:45am) until I was brought out of the entrance was around 9 1/2 hours. Although I remember being awake the whole time, in thinking back some of those hours seems to be missing from my memory. That's got to be a good thing. While staying with me, they told me Cheryl was on her way. I told the next person heading out of the cave to tell Cheryl that I loved her, and I was okay. Mary Sue Socky had called



Starting the haul out.
Photo by Kelly Perkins

Cheryl to let her know she had gotten in touch with Dave. Dave, who was on a hike, would go directly to our house so he would be able to ride up with her. Mary Sue had packed up Dave's cave gear along with a requested cooler of water and met him at our house.

Jeff and Susan returned to the surface. I heard there was a rescue helicopter on site but it had to go on another call when they found out it would be some time before I would be carried out. A caver, who is a doctor, showed up and was pleased to find out Jessica had documented everything up to that point. I was impressed when I found out that there was a total of 3 caver/doctors in on the rescue.

The doctor who was with me gave me something stronger for pain, but I really couldn't tell a lot of difference because it was so painful. He gave Kelly the task of feeding me as much as I could eat. She and I had a little feast eating out of a bag of food and candy that Mystik had brought in.

I knew of 2 main obstacles that would be on our way out. One was navigating the pit, the other was the low belly crawl. I

(Continued on page 61)



Doug packaged in the first sked
Photo by Kelly Perkins

(Continued from page 60)

also knew a stretcher basket may have fit through the crawlway by itself but probably not with a patient in it. Right after those fun thoughts we got word that there was a Technical Rescue Team from the Blacksburg Volunteer Cave Rescue Squad working on enlarging the crawlway and rigging the pit with a haul line. They are cavers who are highly trained in cave rescue and did a fantastic job. Cavers showed up with a SKED soft stretcher and a harder one. I knew I was going to have to be moved to the stretcher and it was going to be painful. But I also knew that was my way out. The rescue team carefully slid a tarp and a wool blanket under me then packaged me in the soft (taco) stretcher first by sliding me down the rock I was on and into the stretcher. It was painful but necessary. Once I was packaged in, I was moved to the harder stretcher basket. They knew exactly how to pack me in to keep me warm and tied me off to keep me immobile. My assumption was in case the hard basket didn't fit in the crawlway that they would possibly have to go back down to just the soft one to

get me through. Luckily that never happened.

We got word that the pit was rigged, and the crawlway was ready to go. Dave Socky came into the cave with a stretcher team of cavers. His job was to scout out the best route and lead the stretcher team out. Even though there may only be basically one passage, in places, there are many ways to maneuver through it. I could hear Dave in the background giving directions. As they started moving me, I told them to "be careful that it was slick in here – I know firsthand". Hopefully I got a chuckle out of that. As they moved me the first 20 feet or so with a few expected bumps on the stretcher I realized it wasn't going to be as painful as I had thought it might be. The way they had me packaged in the stretcher, the ride out was going to be almost relaxing as compared to laying in pain on the cold cave rock. I was toasty warm. I was being carried up and down over slick boulders and mud slides. They were very careful to get into solid footing before passing me on. They would get foot placement, pass me

through, then the ones in the back would leapfrog to the front to do it all over again.

The stretcher team stopped - maybe to rest or to look at the next hurdle. Someone came up to me and said, "Hey Doug, I am a preacher do you mind if I say a prayer for you?" I said something like 'By all means, Please do'. I don't know his name ,but I like that guy.

As the inside stretcher team was doing a great job of passing me through, Joe Zokaite talked to me a little and I saw a lot of familiar faces go by. I thanked them as much as I could as they passed me down the line to the next person.

We arrived at the bottom of the pit. As I was waiting, a girl that I had seen before came to me and told me her name which I have

since forgotten. She explained how I would be hauled up the pit with my body vertical, head up. Having done a lot of vertical caving this did not bother me a bit. She also said she would be going along side of me on rope as an attendant while the haul team pulled me up and out of the pit. So, I relaxed as I was being brought around a tight turn, from a horizontal position to a vertical position. The haul up went perfectly. I was put back horizontally to go through the crawlway which had been enlarged enough to hopefully get me and the basket through. I think I heard someone say this needs to be called 'Doug Crawl' now since they 'Dug' it a little larger for me. I was put in the crawlway feet first and asked if it was ok to undo my head strap so I could move my head up just enough to see what obstacle was coming as they pulled my stretcher through very slowly- I believe I heard just 3 inches at a time. Since the ceiling was lower in certain spots, I had to watch so I could move my head from side to side to make sure it didn't scrape. As far as I could tell, there was only room for one person on his belly ahead of me and one behind me, each fine tuning the front and back of the stretcher as I was slowly pulled through by a rope. At one point in the crawl the floor and the ceiling dropped on one side and if I had slid down in there, I may have become wedged in. One of my guides simply said "stop" so they could get into a better position to prevent me from sliding down to the side. It worked perfectly as they pulled me past that spot. Hopefully there were no fingers smashed in that maneuver. As they pulled me out of the crawlway the next stretcher team was ready to carry me down the passage to the entrance. I remembered a section near the entrance had a flat peanut butter mud floor, and I was hoping no one would slip. I really could not tell where we were until I saw the entrance light, then I knew I was pretty much home free. A haul line had been rigged to pull me out of the very steep entrance which worked well. As they carried me up to flat ground, I was happy to see Cheryl beside me.

The helicopter was back and ready to pick me up. The pilot asked Cheryl if she wanted to fly to Carilion Hospital in Roanoke, VA with us. She did, and thought it was a cool ride. It surprised me when they said it would be an 18-minute flight. Cheryl said it didn't seem long before she saw the Mill Mountain

(Continued on page 62)



A rest spot on the way out.
Photo by Kelly Perkins

(Continued from page 61)

star in Roanoke. Dave kindly took her car back to our house - a 2-hour trip. Once I arrived in the RMH ER, I was x-rayed and found to have a femoral fracture just below the hip. The orthopedic surgeon said it was a spiral fracture which made things a little messy. A rod was placed in the femur that went from my hip to knee with some wire around the spiral part of the fracture for added stability. I ended up with 4 incisions from my hip to my knee with 37 steel staples to hold it together. The surgery was done on Father's Day. Dr. Owen said I could put weight on it (depending on the pain) using a walker. I think he said it would take 8-12 weeks for the bone to fuse together to make it stronger. They let me go home on Monday evening. Lisa and Keith Goggin were there to help me escape to the front of the hospital where Cheryl was waiting to pick me up. PT has been coming twice a week to the house, having me basically practice things that are too painful to do. Somewhere I heard that PT meant Physical Terrorist. I had 2 caver friends reach out to me telling me that they knew exactly what I was going through. Alex Sproul and Aaron Moses had broken their femur, and both felt my pain. They each told me to do what the Physical Therapist says. They know what they are do-

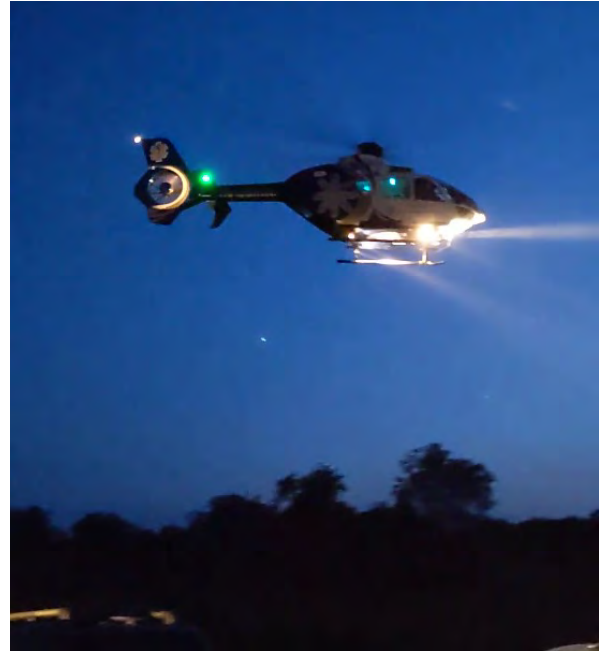
ing. Alex and Aaron were right. I have found that if I do what they say I keep getting better. Truly no pain no gain.

From my perspective the rescue couldn't have gone better. Obviously with the pain, every minute counted to me. I will sympathize more when I hear someone has a broken femur. I did a Google search which stated: The femur is often put at the top of the most painful bones to break. The femur is the longest and strongest bone in your body. Breaking this bone is an incredibly painful experience. That about sums it up.

Since this happened, I have heard some chatter about collecting rescue gear and storing it somewhere in the Greenbrier caving area with the purpose of saving time. This makes sense. I have had other accidents and close calls (like falling off a cliff in Colorado) but in over 45 years of caving, this was my first cave injury and hopefully my last.

I appreciate hearing how during the rescue, Cheryl was kept up to date by the cavers and rescuers on the surface. They showed her where I was on the map and play by play on everything that was going on. She also stayed in touch with the cave owner post rescue giving her updates on how I was doing. I would personally like to thank the cave owner for letting us visit her cave. I am also thankful for the cavers that lobbied for the WV Cave Law which among other things states the owner is not liable for injuries sustained by any person using their cave if there is no charge for use.

I was able to hear only bits and pieces of everything that was going on outside the cave to support the rescue. I wish I could personally name and thank every person involved, but I



Doug and Cheryl in the helicopter heading for Roanoke Memorial Hospital.
Photo by Kelly Perkins

would never get them all. I was told over 40 people were on site Wow!! What a great caving community.

As I am writing this, I'm thinking about the many visitors that brought me flowers or my favorite snack food. I had many emails, cards, Facebook posts, text messages etc. saying things like "wishing you a speedy recovery", "our thoughts and prayers are with you", and offering help. I know there were a bunch people who were emailed that have been thinking about me also. I have a great bunch of family and friends. Thanks to everyone!

Doug Feller 🐶



At the entrance at last
Photo by Kelly Perkins



X-Ray after the surgery

Doug's Rescue

June 17, 2023 - By *Cheryl Feller*

To EVERYONE involved in Doug's rescue (too many to attempt to name names)

- ◆ To the ones that were responsible for starting the rescue process quickly
- ◆ To the ones that coordinated contacting fellow cavers and rescue organizations
- ◆ To the ones that stayed with Doug in the cave while help was on the way, keeping him as warm and comfortable as possible
- ◆ To the ones that 'packaged' him carefully and skillfully for his trip out on the stretcher
- ◆ To the ones that hand dug out the belly crawlway to make it stretcher accessible
- ◆ To the ones that pushed and pulled him inch by inch along the cave, through the belly crawl
- ◆ To the one that acted as the guide for the rescue team calling out the safest route out
- ◆ To the ones responsible for rigging the pit and getting him over the pit
- ◆ To the ones that made sure I was kept informed as to how the rescue was progressing and his condition
- ◆ To the ones responsible for providing food for the rescuers
- ◆ To the ones responsible for the coordination of the rescue workers and keeping communication going between cavers inside and outside the cave
- ◆ To the First Responders.....

THANK YOU FROM THE BOTTOM
OF MY HEART
Cheryl

Cave Rescue Call Out Texts 2023

In the past month, text alert messages and emails were sent out to cavers who had signed up as volunteer responders for cave rescues. It was a great time saver! It worked 100% for the Greenbrier Poor Farm and My Cave rescues.

A **TexCom** alert message reads:


"Injury in ZZZ Cave. Call Coordinator if available. 999-999-9999."

or

"Stand-Down All Clear for ZZZ Cave Rescue."

If you would like to be added to the **TexCom** list, update your info, or check to see if you are on the list, please contact Earl Suitor at the following email: wvcaver216@gmail.com or Cell: 703-431-2661 [text or call any time].

Earl Suitor NSS 50640 RL/CM

Eastern Region - National Cave Rescue Commission. Deputy Resource Coordination Section Chief.
Sub-region coordinator, WV SR 4, VA SR 4/5, MD SR 1.
Manager John Guilday Cave Preserve, Sites & Cave Rat Caves. **Amateur Radio: WV4NSS** 

CCV Grants Available

Fall deadline is August 15, 2023

Dear friends and colleagues,

The Cave Conservancy of the Virginias (CCV) has a grants program to fund a variety of projects, including education and outreach endeavors, cave and sink-hole cleanups, purchase of significant properties for protection, original scientific or humanities research on cave and karst systems, among others. Projects should promote or facilitate conservation, management, knowledge or acquisition of cave and karst resources in Virginia and West Virginia.

The deadline for proposals to be considered at the fall CCV board meeting is August 15.

Project leaders must submit their proposal through an appropriate organization (see proposal guidelines) as grants

are not made to individuals. Please carefully review the grant proposal guidelines, available on the CCV website, before preparing your proposal:

[https://
caveconservancyofvirginia.org/
grant-proposal-guidelines/](https://caveconservancyofvirginia.org/grant-proposal-guidelines/)

More information on the attached best,

Maddy

--

Madeline Schreiber
she/her/hers

Professor and Associate Head
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540-231-3377

Vertical & Caving Gear BRG Auction

Carl Cornett has donated his large cache of vertical gear and some of his caving gear to the BRG. It was decided that the best course of action is to auction the gear off with the proceeds to go to the Blue Ridge Grotto.

The gear includes a full Frog system, a full rope walker, and a full Mitchel system. There is a fully loaded long rack, plus 4 or 5 other racks of various lengths. Cave packs, cave suits, knee pads, biners, ascenders, chest rollers, and more.

We will make up a full detailed list of what is available and post it in the Carbide Dump and on the BRG web site. The auction will probably start sometime late summer or early fall.

Keep your eyes peeled for further information on the BRG Gear Auction!



Grotto Trip Log

4/22: Paxton Cave, VA. Participants included Susan Burr, Doug Feller, and Matt. Basically everyone had things to do other than caving this month. It was a cooler, rainy day, but Doug & his coworker, Matt, wanted to go caving so we had a nice 2-1/2-hour trip. We did the normal tourist route & then went to see part of the "Historic" section...the section with the large room at the front of the cave near the entrance.

4/25: Dixie and New Dixie, VA. [Above ground only] – Karen Powers (Cave Rat Study) with Mary Sue Socky and Marian McConnell. Spent the day setting up cameras to capture cave rat activity.

5/20: Patton Cave, WV: Susan Burr and group went on a trip to Patton's Cave. The water was high. Lisa fell in a pool of water toward the end of the trip.

5/21: McCoy Mill, WV. During Spring VAR at Thorn Spring Campground, WV Mary Sue Socky, Trish Geiger, Jeff Huffman, and Lauren Appel took a quick tour of this small cave.

5/30: Red River Gorge, KY: [not caving, but a great hike] Susan Burr, Lauren Appel, Doug Feller, and Randy Michael went hiking in this beautiful place.

6/17: Poor Farm, Cave, WV. Participants included David Socky + 40 or so other cavers. I was hiking with Dave Wickersham when I got call from Mary Sue about Doug Feller breaking

his hip (it was his femur) in Poor Farm. We turned around and headed out. I met Mary Sue at Doug Fellers' house. She brought my cave gear. Cheryl Feller and I then drove to Poor Farm. When we arrived, a doctor had just gotten to Doug. There were 10 to 15 cavers in the cave. Hunter and crew were using straws and hammers to make the crawl before the pit bigger. There was a team rigging the pit. There was the medical team for Doug. We waited outside for about an hour or so before 12 of us went in to be the haul team. We got to Doug in about 15 minutes. He was in about 500 feet past the pit. We waited until he was fully packaged and ready. I was assigned the job of finding and directing the specific route out. The 'extraction' went smoothly. Hauling him up the 20 foot pit went without a hitch. Dragging him out through crawl went well, but his face did get close to the ceiling. We started hauling at 7:15pm and he was out the entrance about 9:15pm. They took him by helicopter, with Cheryl, to Roanoke Memorial Hospital. I drove Cheryl's car back to their home. Mary Sue picked me up. It was about 12:30 am. What a day, especially for Doug.

6/20: McClung Cave/Lightner Ent., WV. Participants included David Socky, Derek Bristol, Josh Williams, Lawrence Cen, Joyce Mok, Gandalf McNabb, Nikki Fox, and Rob Keith. The plan was to have two teams of 4 surveying in the Third Breakdown. As it turned out, Rob was a bit out of shape, so Nikki and Gandalf helped him exit the cave from the Champaigne Squeeze (with some added help from other WVACS cavers).

The remaining five of us surveyed 12 stations, about 200 feet, in the Third Breakdown.

6/21: McClung Cave, WV. Participants included David Socky, Joe Zokaites, Allen Rush, Josh Williams, Joyce Mok, and Lawrence Cen. Through trip from Lightner entrance, north Freeman Ave, the Seven Fingers loop, Bat Bone Crawl, First Breakdown, and out the Entrance Canyon to the Historic Entrance. We got out right at 4pm. It was raining. Good meal by Jessica and Jamie Reep for Cave Camp.

Nick Schmalenberger:

4/23: **Greyledge, VA area** – Martin DiLeggi and I ridge walked around the property.

5/16: **Cemetery Pit, AL** – Nick Schmalenberger with NCRC.

5/17: **Byers Cave, AL** with NCRC.

5/18: **Pettyjohn's Cave, AL** with NCRC.

5/19: **Tumbling Rock, AL** with NCRC.

2/20: **The Diggings Pit** with B. Stickney.

2/21: **Bluff River Cave** with B. Stickney and Mystik Miller.

5/27: **Newberry-Banes, VA.** through trip with Joe Zokaites, Sonya Erickson, Jon Mnich.

5/28: **Pig Hole, VA** with Jon Mnich and Sonya Erickson.



Crawdad in Seven Fingers in McClung Cave. Photo by Dave Socky

A Great 2023 NSS Convention in Elkins

By *Marian McConnell*

The 2023 NSS Convention was in Elkins, WV June 26-30th with over 1,000 cavers from all over the USA and the world. I went up Thursday and came back Friday. I wish I could have gone all week; but I still had a great time with my friend Mary Socky and visiting with so many caving friends from the past 3 decades. I was glad to see many BRG members there - including Bob Alderson, Kevin Johnson, Carrie Doupnik, Mary Sue & Dave Socky, Barry Ferguson, Keith & Lisa Goggin, Ben Johnson, Dr. Michael Rowland, Sarah Rowland, Gordon Smith, Nick Socky, Meredith Weberg, Joey Fagan, John Taylor, Nick Schmalenberger, and Alex Sproul. (Sorry if I missed anyone!)

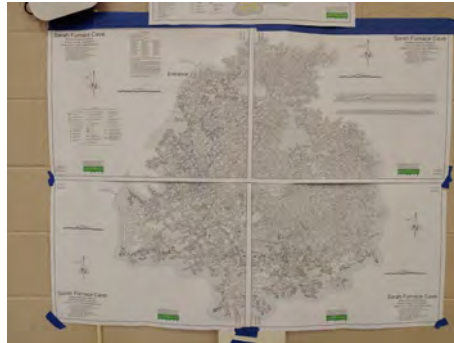
I had a few pieces of art in the 2023 NSS Convention Fine Arts Salon; and was blown away by the talents of the other artists this year! So great to see Carolina Payne Shrewsbury and so many past and



Marian and Mary Sue at the NSS convention

new artists. Very inspiring.

David Socky was busy the whole time, especially with the Thursday night Awards show, working behind the scenes. One of the cave videos was about Sarah Furnace Cave, PA; apparently the most densely passaged cave in the world - check out the map from the



Map of Sarah Furnace Cave, PA

cartography section.

Our Blue Ridge Grotto's newsletter cover won an Honorable Mention award with a photo of Nick Socky on the cover! It was also won the 'Cavers Choice' Award!

CaveSim was there and made the front page of the local newspaper for all the great work they do in education about cave conservation and safety.

There were lots of great vendors, and I found my new favorite bat hoodie, wine

sippy-cup, and bat earrings at Speleobooks. There were amazing displays, such as Gary Storricks's display of over 3,000 vertical devices used for caving, climbing, etc. The display is shown



One of Gary Storricks's (left) display panels with Bob Montgomery

below with Bob Montgomery helping pack up the 90+ display boards.

We ate dinner with friends, checked out the host site of Davis & Elkins College. Special thanks to Meredith Hall Weberg and Rich Geisler who did a phenomenal job with the team to make this Convention happen! The town was friendly and the drive up was interesting on the backroads. Driving up all the views were shrouded in the haze of the Canadian wildfires; but coming back was gorgeous. 🦇

Dano SRT Retirement

By *Marian McConnell*

Much appreciation was expressed to Dan McConnell at our June 16th Blue Ridge Grotto meeting for almost 30 years serving as our Safety & Techniques Officer (1994-2023). He has been outstanding with his teaching skills, doing hands-on practice with LOTS of gear, mock rescues, real rescues, and being "the voice" and a caver in many of the famous David Socky music videos like "Cavers & Rescuers," "Vendor's Row," "Born to Be Wild," "Mayacon

Theme Song," "Her Father's Worst Nightmare," "Beyond the Lost Waterfall," and more. He set the bar really high for his vast knowledge of cave rescue, single rope techniques, heavy & tactical rescue, rigging, and cave safety and conservation. He is always willing to share his knowledge and help keep everyone safe. Thank you! Everything I learned about caving, I learned from him! His unique qualifications also enabled us to become the owners/stewards of Murder Hole Cave, VA.

Congratulations to Nick Schmalenberger who has agreed to be our new S&T Officer. 🦇



Dan McConnell - Congratulations!
Photo by Marian McConnell

CRF July 4th Mammoth Expedition Surveying for a Week In Mammoth

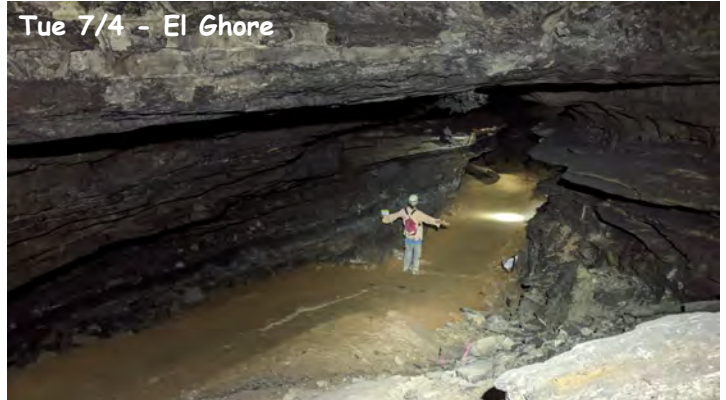
Article and Photos by *Dave Socky*

Since I didn't get to do any caving during the NSS Convention I decided to attend the Cave Research Foundation (CRF) July 4th weeklong expedition at **Mammoth Cave, KY**. Of course, I had permission from my better half to do this, so on July 3rd I headed down to the Hamilton Valley field station with Bob Alderson. Bob was good enough to drive since my car was in the shop.

During the week, I surveyed in five different sections of **Mammoth Cave**, plus one trip into **Great Onyx Cave**. Below is a photo montage of my week in Mammoth Cave:



Tue 7/4 - El Ghore



Wed 7/5 -
New Discovery



Thur 7/6 - Austin Entrance



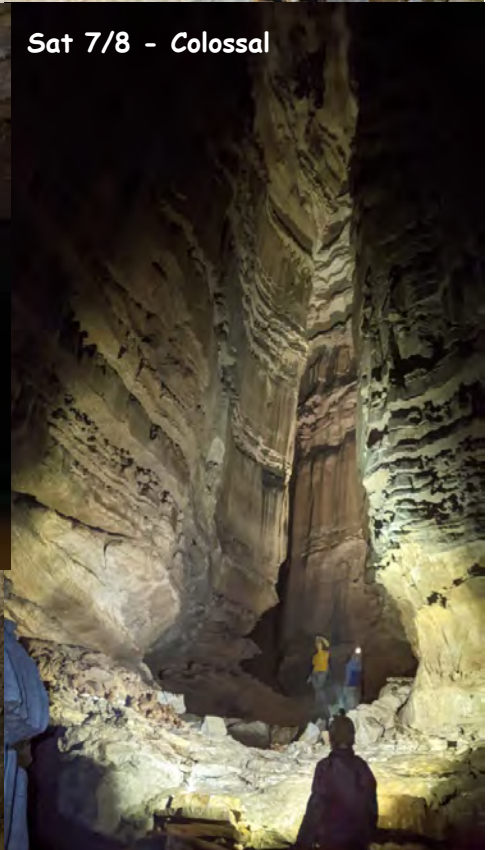
Fri 7/7 - Great Onyx



Wed 7/5 -
New Discovery



Sat 7/8 - Colossal



Fri 7/7 - Stans Well

