

# BATS NEWS

Sharps Falls  
photo by Winnie Miller



BATTLEFIELD AREA TROGLODYTE SOCIETY

Fall 2006

# FEATURES

## A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR:

I was worried this time about getting enough articles together for the newsletter, but several people came through at the last minute. If you enjoyed this newsletter, please thank Nikki and Steve Bennett, Winnie Miller, and Meredith Hall Johnson. As always, enjoy the newsletter!

See you underground,  
April



Photo by April Cantrell

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## THE CULPRITS ...

### OFFICERS

*President*  
Meredith Hall Johnson

*Vice President*  
Laura Schaefer

*Treasurer*  
Seth Lake

*Secretary*  
Nikki Bennett

*Representative*  
Allan Weberg

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Meredith Hall Johnson  
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# CALENDAR & EVENTS

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## DECEMBER

December 9 ... Trip to Church Mountain Cave

Led by Nikki Bennett, but not technically a BATS trip. Meeting in Harrisonburg

December 29 ... BATS Party, 6:00 P.M.

Party at Meredith's. It's potluck, so please bring food and drink.

## JANUARY

January 20 ... Gating Rapps Cave

WVCC is gating Rapp's Cave. Please contact Bob Handley ([gbrbat@ntelos.net](mailto:gbrbat@ntelos.net)) for more information.

## MARCH

March 10 ... Grotto Trip to Sinnett Cave

Trip currently full, but contact Meredith to put your name on the wait list.

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## FROM THE PRESIDENT'S PEN

**Happy Holidays! I'll try not to get too sentimental, but this is the season to give thanks for what we have. I myself am very thankful for BATS. This is the best grotto! I appreciate how so many members came through to help out with the NSS Board of Governors meeting that we hosted in early November. It was a mostly wonderful weekend, though very tiring, and we got rave reviews from everyone. I don't think any host grotto has ever done door prizes or "goody bags" before. Look for some photos in an upcoming NSS News on the burning of the mortgage for Great Expectations Cave in Wyoming!**

**Something else the grotto did this year that brought us national attention—hosted the "Howdy Party" at the 2<sup>nd</sup> National Cave and Karst Conservancies Forum. This was held in Lewisburg right before the Fall VAR in September. I went to the Forum and learned so much from cave conservationists from all over the country and, indeed, the world, as there were two Australian cavers there. Our logo will appear in the reprint of the guidebook for the weekend, and it also was included on all promotional literature. Once again: Way to go, BATS!**

**And the cave trips and fun weekends we've shared this year have been great. I thank all who helped out with and came to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Weekend back in July. We had a record turnout, a scrumptious potluck dinner, and lots of fun both tubing and caving. The potluck dinner at OTR was pretty delicious too! I love the way the grotto came together at OTR to try to stay warm and the way we all participated in setting up and taking down camp and making sure everything and everyone had a safe way home. We truly are a caring bunch of people.**

**I am grateful that you all have supported me as your President. I tried a couple of new things, like having meetings "more north" and publishing a Members List. The former did not seem to go over too well, but I want to give it another chance sometime. The latter seemed to be much appreciated. I'll try to keep that up-to-date, but only if you send your information when it changes. And just a note: only paid-up members are in there and received it. If you're reading this, and you're a former BAT or a "friend of BATS," then feel free to pay your 2007 dues and I'll send you the PDF.**

**I guess that's about it. Let's continue the BATS tradition of cave conservation, caver education, and safe caving, all the while having fun and enjoying each other's company.**

Meredith

# MEETING MINUTES

## BATS SEPTEMBER MEETING MINUTES

September 12, 2006

### ATTENDEES

Nikki Bennett, Mike Hill, Ken Hornung, Meredith Johnson, Kevin Martin, Winnie Miller, Allan Weberg, and Mike Kubatz

### PRESIDENT'S REPORT

- The 2006 BATS members list has been sent out! A couple of quick changes Josh's cell phone starts with 410, and disregard home phone numbers for Susi Weston, Sarah Pearse, and Mike Hill. They've cancelled their services and gone cellular.
- We are up to 44 members. Please volunteer to be on the nominating committee to nominate next year's officers!

### SECRETARY'S REPORT

Filled out the paperwork today to ensure that we still have our spot at the Salem Church Library for 2007.

### TREASURER'S REPORT

None.

### REPRESENTATIVE'S REPORT

If you have any problems with the Web site (downloading, etc.), let Allan know so he can fix the problems.

### BATS BUCKS

Allan	OTR—Winnie Miller	\$1
	OTR—Mike Hill	\$1
Winnie	For Mike in Sharps Cave	\$1
	Moore's Cave (through trip!)	\$1
	For Grace at OTR (for all the good information)	\$1
Kevin	OTR	\$1
Ken	OTR	\$1
Mike	OTR	\$1
	Sharps Cave	\$1
Meredith	OTR	\$1
	For Kelsea going to WVU	\$1
<b>Total BATS Bucks for September 2006:</b>		<b>\$11</b>

### TRIP REPORTS

- Winnie: Moore's Cave (OTR)
- Allan: Sharps Cave (OTR)

# MEETING MINUTES

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*(continued from page 4)*

## OLD BUSINESS

**BOG Update:** Meredith sent out an e-mail to the NSS officers & board members to see who's coming to the BOG meeting. She will be sending out a list of food needs and volunteer jobs to the BATS list so people can start signing up for things they want to help out with.

- We need volunteers to pick people up from the airports on Friday, November 3, and to take them back on Sunday, November 5.
- We need volunteers to provide crash space for board members (preferably up in the Northern Virginia area).
- We need people to volunteer early Saturday morning to set up the meeting room at Allan's school and Saturday afternoon to clean up.
- Saturday night will be the dinner at Don Pablo's. We need cave pictures to show in a loop presentation. Jim McConkey is going to give a talk after dinner, possible party at Meredith's to follow.

## NEW BUSINESS

- **Nominating Committee:** We need volunteers for the Nominating Committee! We need three people and one to chair. Kevin Martin has volunteered to be on the committee—so we still need two more! Also, start to think about whether you'd be willing to run for one of the offices.
- **Grotto Tarp:** Our big tarp is getting a little bit used. Meredith made a suggestion about possibly replacing the tarp. Would cost about \$500.00.

## GROTTO TRIPS

- VAR in September
- Island Ford Cleanup on October 15<sup>th</sup> (Sunday)
- Cave Week. There's a lot of neat stuff going on at Crystal Caverns. Some of the grotto plans to go up there on October 14<sup>th</sup>.
- Bridge Day
- Sinnett Trip on November 11<sup>th</sup>. Please see Allan to sign up.

## PROGRAM

Slideshow presentations on the BATS Anniversary Weekend, NSS Convention, and OTR

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# BATS OCTOBER MEETING MINUTES

October 10, 2006

## ATTENDEES

Nikki Bennett, Chris Graham, Mike Hill, Ken Hornung, Meredith Johnson, Winnie Miller, Allan Weberg, Erin Hart, and Tim, Zach, and Madison Baxter

## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

BATS currently has a total of 44 members, with 30 current voting members (belong to NSS). If you want to vote or run in the upcoming election, you need to join NSS before November 1<sup>st</sup>.

## SECRETARY'S REPORT

None.

## TREASURER'S REPORT

None.

# MEETING MINUTES

(continued from page 5)

## REPRESENTATIVE'S REPORT

None.

## BATS BUCKS

Allan	Mike Hill—Vertical practice at Allan's	\$1
	Took brother and nephew to Glade Cave	\$1
	Donated a buck just because he wants to win a prize in January	\$1
Winnie	For Chris in Starnes (and another cave I didn't write down)	\$1
	Allan—For teaching vertical	\$1
Meredith	For the National Cave & Karst Conservancy Forum. Went to the Howdy Party that the BATS grotto sponsored	\$1
	Fall VAR	\$1
Ken	My Cave	\$1
<b>Total BATS Bucks for October 2006:</b>		<b>\$8</b>

## TRIP REPORTS

I don't know if anybody talked about caving trips or not. I was kind of lax in taking notes, and I didn't write it down if there were any.

## OLD BUSINESS

- **BOG Update:** We discussed the schedule, and who would be doing what. We passed around food sign-up sheets for the party, etc. Meredith is going to send something around to the BATS list when the time draws closer.
- **New BATS Tarp:** We decided to shelve this until next month when we could get more information on cost.
- **Elections:** Kevin Martin, Nikki Bennett, and Mike Hill make up the Elections Committee this year. They will be sending out further e-mails on the subject, but if you want to nominate someone for office, please let them know.

## NEW BUSINESS

**November Meeting:** Since we can't use the library next month due to elections, we will meet at Pancho Villa's in Stafford at 7:00 p.m. for food, fun, and a meeting too! (Directions: Take the Garrisonville exit. It is right near the Wal-Mart almost as soon as you get off the highway.)

## GROTTO TRIPS

- Island Ford Cleanup on October 15<sup>th</sup> (Sunday)
- Cave Week: There's a lot of neat stuff going on at Crystal Caverns. Some of the grotto plans to go up there on October 14<sup>th</sup>.
- Bridge Day
- Sinnett Trip, November 11. See Allan to sign up. We'll be staying at Thorn Springs Campground Friday night.

# MEETING MINUTES

(continued from page 6)

## BATS NOVEMBER MEETING MINUTES

November 14, 2006

### ATTENDEES

Nikki Bennett, Mike Hill, Meredith Johnson, Winnie Miller, Kevin Smith, and Allan Weberg

### PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Thanks to everyone for helping with the BOG meeting. We have had only good compliments from everyone who attended.

### SECRETARY'S REPORT

None.

### TREASURER'S REPORT

None.

### REPRESENTATIVE'S REPORT

None.

### BATS BUCKS:

Allan	Nikki, Winnie, & Mike— Sinnett Cave	\$1
	Allan—For leading the Sinnett trip	\$1
Winnie	Nikki—Sinnett Cave	\$1
	Allan & Mike—Sinnett Cave	\$1
	Meredith—BOG	\$1
Meredith	BOG	\$1
	Island Ford Cave Clean-up	\$1
	Mt. Etna Cave Gating Project	\$1
Nikki	Meredith—BOG	\$1
	Sinnett Cave	\$1
Mike	Allan—Sinnett Cave	\$1
<b>Total BATS Bucks for November 2006:</b>		<b>\$11</b>

### TRIP REPORTS

- Allan talked about the trip to Sinnett Cave that Allan, Nikki, Mike, and Winnie attended last weekend. It was a great trip. We got to the Waterfall Room, Mike and Allan climbed to the Big Room, we saw lots of Virginia Big-Eared Bats, and Allan saw a cave rat.
- Meredith spoke about the Island Ford Cave clean-up. Amanda, Meredith, and some folks from the Blue Ridge Grotto attended. Also, there was a gating trip at Mt. Etna Cave in Maryland and some surveying.

### OLD BUSINESS

- BOG Update:** We are done!!

# MEETING MINUTES

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- **New BATS Tarp:** Tabled until next meeting—Winnie is looking at prices.
- **Elections:** The nomination committee has a slate for the elections. Nominations can still be made from everyone until the meeting in December. So far, we have:
  - President: Meredith Johnson
  - Vice President: Laura Schaefer
  - Treasurer: Mike Hill
  - Secretary: Nikki Bennett
  - Representative: Allan Weberg

## NEW BUSINESS

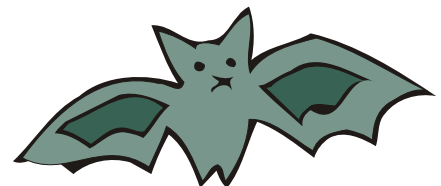
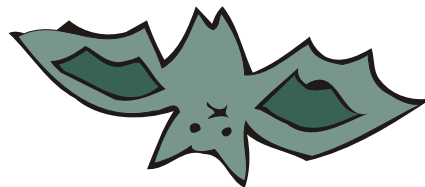
- **Eight Rivers Safe Development Organization:** A wastewater treatment plant is planned to be built right over (or near) Sharps Cave in West Virginia. Eight Rivers Safe Development Organization is a group that has applied for non-profit status and is looking to litigate this proposal. Building the plant would also affect the family's farm, as it will be taken by eminent domain to build this plant. Meredith made a motion to have the grotto send \$50 to the organization. Kevin seconded the motion. The motion will be voted on at the December meeting.
- **OTR Fundraiser:** Meredith brought up an idea to buy wood and sell it at OTR as a fundraiser. She will look more into this and give another report at the next meeting.
- **Holiday Party:** It was tentatively decided to have a holiday party at Meredith's on Friday, December 29. We will have a normal January meeting next year instead of a meeting at Carlos O'Kelly's.

## GROTTO TRIPS

- December: A trip to Scott Hollow is planned during Christmas Week. Contact Allan if you're interested.
- January: WVCC is gating Rapps Cave on January 20, 2007.

## VBATS REPORT

- TinY has given Allan permission to teach the NSS vertical course at his house on Tuesday nights (except on meeting nights) in Woodbridge. Please call Allan and let him know you're coming; don't just show up. Classes will start in the afternoon and finish by 9 or 9:30 at night.
- Kurt is still able to host vertical at his place in Maryland as well, but he's currently out of town.





## TRIP TO SINNETT CAVE

By Nikki Bennett

On November 11, Winnie Miller, Mike Hill, and I went on a Sinnett Cave trip led by Allan Weberg. It was such an awesome trip; we had loads of fun and saw tons of Virginia Big-Eared bats.

Winnie and I drove up Friday night to Thorn Springs Campground, where Allan and Mike had already arrived and checked out a cabin. When we got there, we weren't sure which cabin was ours—there were a lot of party-sounding noises coming from the last cabin so of course we headed to that one – but it turned out to be a bunch of other cavers. Winnie had met one of them at MAR, so we talked with them a little bit. They were all heading out to cave when we got there, and they invited us along, but we figured we'd better save our energy for Sinnett.

Allan and Mike had the cabin next door, so we all settled in for the night, figuring we'd get an early start the next day. Of course that didn't work, because after all, we are cavers. We woke up leisurely, Winnie made some coffee, we girls had to braid our hair, and then we moseyed on over to Thompson's Restaurant for a good breakfast. By the time we got back, packed up the caving gear, and drove to Sinnett, it was about 11:00, but that's still pretty good for our group!

I think I grumbled quite a bit that all caves should be level with the road as we climbed up the steep (but short) mountainside to the cave entrance. Not far, but I was huffing and puffing! Once we got in I felt better, and we started off. Practically as soon as we passed through the gate, we came upon a huge cluster of Virginia Big-Eared bats hanging on the wall. Allan also spotted a cave mouse, but it ran off before the rest of us got to see it. The bats were awesome, though.

After we 'oohed' and 'aahed' over the bats, we headed toward the Big Room/Waterfall Room junction. For those of you who have never been to Sinnett (and you really should go!), there are two cool areas to visit: the Big Room,

which I still haven't gotten to yet, but is about 900 feet long by 100 feet wide by about 30 feet high, and the Waterfall Room, which has a beautiful 20-foot waterfall cascading down into a little pool. You have to climb a bit to get to the Big Room, so when we got to the junction, Allan went up to rig a rope for us. While he did that, we started heading toward the Waterfall Room.

To get to the passage to the Waterfall Room, you have to

army crawl through a gap in the rock about 18 inches high. Luckily, it doesn't last long, and it's fairly easy (it's much harder on the way back for some reason). The passage then opens up to walking water passage. There's a little four-foot waterfall that you hit first (although it echoes so much in the passageways that you think you're coming to the huge one). It's a bit of a surprise when all the noise you've been following just takes you to a tiny stream of water, not even as tall as

you. Next, there's some fairly easy canyoning over a couple of not-so-deep crevices, and finally you get to the Waterfall Room.

Allan caught up to us when we got to this point, and we sat next to the pool and had a snack. Mike and Winnie took pictures, though unfortunately none of them turned out. There's another passage that kept going past the Waterfall Room, but we decided to go back so we'd have time to climb up and explore the Big Room.

Of course, by the time we got back to the junction, I started really thinking hard about whether I had enough energy to climb the 30 or so feet to the Big Room. The last time I was in Sinnett, all I remember was totally losing energy halfway back from the Waterfall Room, and TinY, Kelsea, and Meredith had to practically drag my sorry butt out. I was hoping I was in better shape this time, but decided not to risk it. There was still a lot of passage to get through before we were outside again.

Allan and Mike climbed up to the Big Room to quickly



Photo by Winnie Miller

# ARTICLES

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look around and take down the rope. Winnie and I started back up the passage to the entrance. I was pretty proud of us—we managed to get through some tough climbs without one of the big guys having to give me a push up. (Winnie was a great person to cave with!) We finally got to a crevice that was fairly deep (by my acrophobic standards), and I swore up and down that we hadn't gone over it on the way into the cave. We waited for the guys, got across the crevice, and kept going, but I still don't think we had ever crossed that one before then. Later, we decided that originally we must have taken a lower passage and somehow missed it on the way back.

We made a couple of other wrong turns on our way out, but wrong turns are always exciting in a cave because you find new things. Winnie found a stalactite forest that she said was so cool—I wish I had seen it—because there were bats flying around it. When the bats passed the crystals on the stalactites, it looked like someone was turning a light on and off.

We finally made it back to the entrance, said goodbye to the bats who were just waking up and were busy grooming themselves while they were hanging, and climbed out. It was dark already, and we figured it was about 5:30 PM, so we had at least a good six hours in the cave. I have to say that I outdid my last trip. I still had energy, was slightly surprised that we were at the entrance already, and felt absolutely exhilarated with the whole trip. We drove to Fox's Pizza Den for dinner. Afterward, Allan and Mike

drove home, and Winnie and I, totally pooped by this time, crashed out at Thorn Springs again. I fell asleep almost right away, though Winnie went next door and hung out with the other cavers for a bit before she crashed.

It was a fantastic trip. I hurt like the dickens the next two days, could barely move my arms, and had more bruises than I'd ever had in my life (except the time I rope climbed Harpers Ferry while my frog system chewed up my legs). Of course, you have to rate the awesomeness of a cave trip by the amount you hurt afterward, so I'd say our trip to Sinnett ranked an eight... Maybe a nine... Heck, I'm still sore—I'll give it a 10. ♦

## SHARPS CAVE AND MOORES CAVE

By Winnie Miller

**O**n Saturday, September 2, 2006, I was fortunate enough to join a group of cavers exploring Sharps Cave during OTR. Sarah Richards and Allan Weberg led the trip, imparting caving advice and other tips along the way. After a little exploration, Sarah found the book to record the names of everyone in our little adventure. (I think there were nine of us total.)

This is a wet cave, and I enjoyed walking in the stream and listening to the falls. The recent rains probably made these features more impressive than at a drier time of the year. There was a lot of rock fall to travel over, and we periodically saw a cairn. Mike “Clive” Hill helped to keep me from getting lost or separated from the group. I really like the safe caving practices I'm learning.

I was just admiring some of the natural rock formations when someone brought the cave art to my attention. Wow, some people spend many hours creating sculptures from the abundant mud found here. The level of detail and the sometimes comedic and sometimes respectful and somber subjects of this art can only be truly appreciated when viewed in person. I felt honored to view this gallery, but I was also aware that the art took up most of the easier crawling spaces. Good thing I was with experienced cavers who helped me to continue. Before we knew it we were at the

Photo by Nikki Bennett



# ARTICLES

(continued from page 10)



Photo by Winnie Miller

## Brent leading in the cave

falls. B-E-A-U-tiful (to quote Bruce Almighty)! We hung out for a bit, just enjoying it and talking. We took a few pictures and then headed back to the daylight. There were other groups doing Sharps Cave that day, and we picked up one more caver on our way out. The caring nature and camaraderie of the caving community reassures me that I have chosen the best of all sports.

The next cave I visited on OTR weekend was Moores Cave (on Sunday). I thought this cave was very secluded, and it took a while to reach it. This adventure involved five people and was organized and led by Brent Grist of Indiana. There were three places at the base of a mountain to enter, the middle one being best and the one we used. All the cave conversations we had on the way there got Brent, Hank, and me pretty pumped for the adventure.

We went through some spaces walking sideways with our feet in the stream, which is easier for men than for full-hipped women. I managed by crawling under the tightest spots. The beautifully carved walls widened to an area of rockfall and rooms. The rock had such sparkle. I saw pale green, silvery white, and golden areas sparkling from even the smallest amount of light. I asked about the green, and I was told that it is not a natural color found in caves and indicated that something from topside must have found a way in and begun growing there. The knowledge didn't lessen its beauty.

I might not have the exact sequence of events right, but at one point we came to a huge table-like rock just leaning on some smaller rocks right in front of us. Going carefully

and one at a time, we crawled around it. As we went, I thought the rock was varied enough in appearance to keep our attention and probably would help us remember which way we had come. There were many places we could have explored more, but we pressed on with the notion that we would look into a few on our way back.

There were a few more crawls, and in one place we 'stepped' down with one foot on either side of a passage and the stream about 20 feet or so below us. I guess if I'm going to successfully relate my caving trips, I need to get better at estimating distances.

We saw many critters along the way too: several salamanders, one bat, and lots of cave crickets. We journeyed on and started seeing debris and signs of animals (mostly raccoons). Then we saw the light up ahead and on our left – sunlight! After a difficult

climb out, we found ourselves at the top of the mountain. WOW was I thrilled since I had talked so much the day before about wanting to do a 'through' cave. It was a great trip and well worth the drive. ♦

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## BATS HOSTS THE BOG

By Meredith Hall Johnson

**I**t all started more than a year ago when I decided that it would be a good idea or fun or something for our grotto to host an NSS Board of Governors meeting. The grotto agreed, and I wrote up our bid. We competed against the Western Region and the folks who are hosting the 2007 Convention. I've heard that it is unusual to have multiple host bids, but we won. To even put in a bid, a grotto must already have an idea of where the meeting will be held; the rules are very strict about the number and placement of the tables, room requirements, and other things.

Allan Weberg was very helpful in getting us a room—the band room at the school where he works, Potomac Senior High School. It was large enough and had enough electrical outlets. We also had his chorus room to hang out in. Allan was very helpful throughout the actual weekend too—making sure that there were directional signs, running out (with Ken Hornung) to get lunch for the attendees, and setting up the room before anyone got there. He, Nikki Bennett, Winnie Miller, and Ken also got the

# ARTICLES

*(continued from page 11)*

coffee pots ready and the breakfast foods set out. Nikki and Winnie were the official bathroom cleaners after the BOG meeting was over.

The whole BOG weekend began with the choreography of getting the Board members and officers rides from various airports. This was all arranged in advance. Ken and I both went on airport runs. Many of the attendees drove, which is why I think we won the bid—it was easy for many Directors to attend without having to spend big bucks on airfare.

BOG member Gary Moss and his wife, Barbara, graciously offered BATS the use of their home for the Friday night party, which worked out very well. Gordon Birkhimer brought his turkey fryer and fried up a turkey along with other delicacies. There was a lot of food, thanks to all the BATS who came and also thanks to Barbara. Shirley Birkhimer, April Cantrell, Ellie Florance, Todd Hageman, Ken Hornung, Phyllis Johnson, Winnie Miller, Sarah Richards, and I were the BATS and Friends of BATS who partied until the oh-so-late hour of about 10 p.m. I was already pretty tired from the week's last-minute glitch-fixing and running around, so I was glad the travelers were tired enough to end the party early.

During the party we handed out quite a few door prizes. The idea was Ken's, who donated a 41-LED flashlight that Gary Moss won. Gordon and I donated most of the other stuff, ranging from Impaired Caver T-shirts to all sorts of "bat crap." Alex Sproul won a set of plastic bat straws and was looking forward to giving them to his grandson. I think everyone had a lot of fun with it, since most people either got to pick a name out of the box or won a door prize. We also handed out "goody bags" to the Directors and officers. Secretary-Treasurer Peri Frantz of California was delighted with the VDOT ice scraper.

Saturday morning came early, at least for the six cavers who braved sleeping in my flood-damaged house. Craig Hindman and I went to 7-11 to get coffee for the crowd, and we then headed south to Dumfries for the meeting. I was pleased to see that the room was set up to the strict specifications and that my grotto-mates had everything under control.

The meeting started pretty much on time. There were several spectators watching the weird way in which the NSS conducts its business. They have an antiquated button system—when they vote, they must hold up a hand and hold down their button, which causes a light on a board to light up. The Recording Secretary, Lee Stevens in this case, takes notes and the votes are cast. I ended up watching only parts of the meeting, though I think Ken watched most of it.

Winnie, Nikki, and Allan were there as well.

One of the neatest things to happen occurred right before the Board broke for lunch: we all went outside to burn the mortgage paper for the now fully NSS-owned Great Expectation Cave in Wyoming. President Bill Tozer had a hard time getting the lighter to light in the wind, but he finally succeeded. He put the burning paper into the "Great X" can I had made out of a coffee can that morning. That should show up well in the many photos that were taken.

Allan and Ken went to Paneras to pick up the huge lunch order. I didn't hear too many complaints even though several of the orders were wrong. I think everyone had plenty to eat. The BOG meeting went into closed session during lunch, so the BATS and other spectators hung out mostly in the hall for a couple of hours. The meeting ended and everyone helped clean up the room. Nikki and Winnie, saints that they are, went off to clean the bathrooms. [Ed. Note: Bless their brave souls!]

Allan had given out directions to the Mexican restaurant where we were having dinner. By the time I got there, nearly all of the others were also there. I was irritated to see our long-planned arrangements had been ignored. But we talked to the manager, and, as soon as some other diners left, we got to take over the whole back "room" as arranged. We set up a screen and set up some VAR cave and caver slides to loop while we ate. After dinner, Jim McConkey gave a customized talk on the VAR-sponsored survey project and long-time cooperation at Grand Caverns and Cave Hill. I think all the non-VAR cavers really enjoyed both.

For most of the grotto, the BOG weekend ended after the bills were paid that evening. For me, it kept going until my six houseguests finally left. I even made one airport run at 5:15 on Sunday morning. Later Alex, Peri, Bob Vandeventer (Vice Chair of the 2007 Convention), and I went off to the new Air and Space Museum to try and find a rocket nozzle that Peri's Dad had donated to the Smithsonian years before. We had a great time looking at all the planes and forms of air travel that the huge museum holds. We dropped off Peri and Bob at Dulles, and Alex took me to dinner. I finally got home a bit after 7 p.m., tired as a dog. The BOG weekend was finally over!!

On a final note, I want to mention that we got rave reviews. Everyone said they had a wonderful time and that we had done a very good job of hosting. I think that made it worthwhile. Thanks to everyone in the grotto who helped out and supported our efforts. ♦

## ISLAND FORD CAVE CLEAN-UP

By Meredith Hall Johnson

Back at Spring VAR, I volunteered the BATS grotto to do the annual clean-up in Island Ford Cave over the summer. Well, you know how summers go, too many things going on and not nearly enough weekends. So Fall VAR came and went and I had to admit that we had not done the clean-up, but had it scheduled for October 15. The date was a Sunday to accommodate some of my grotto-mates who work on Saturdays. In the end, only Amanda Freund and I (of BATS) went. But we were joined by several members of Blue Ridge Grotto (Mary Sue Socky, Bob Thren, and Brian Williams) and by the West Virginia Cave Conservancy (Alex Sproul, John E. Pearson, and Dave Cowen). Mark Manor and Dave's friend from California rounded out the group.

What had started out as a plan to pick up every piece of broken glass from the entrance room—that was my overzealous desire—turned into a multi-group effort at both that and power washing graffiti off the entrance walls.

One by one, members of BATS backed out of the trip. If all those other folks had not committed to going, I might have backed out too. It was a four-hour drive for me, but luckily, Amanda met me in Strasburg, so the ride was fun. She had not been caving in quite some time and was excited about our planned quick-trip through the cave after the clean-up.

Brad Blase, a Virginia Speleological Society Director, had noticed back in late September some new blue paint on the walls just outside the cave. He sent an e-mail to a caver friend in Washington State who in turn forwarded it to the VARlist. Personally, I think everyone in the region should be on the VARlist, especially VSS and the West Virginia survey folks, but that's another story.

E-mails flew about among several of us in the West Virginia Cave Conservancy. I had been by the cave just a day after Brad, and only after looking at my photos did I recall

the blue paint. Oh yeah, I had noticed it, but did not think anything of it. Anyhow, John E. Pearson and Dave Cowen worked it out to bring a power washer and generator to the cave the same day of the BATS clean-up. John said Saturday might have worked better, but it's more fun working with others.

That is how this disparate group of cavers came to be at Island Ford Cave that day. While John and friends set up the



Alex Sproul (Friend of BATS) and Amanda Freund (BATS) at the Island Ford Cave Clean-up

power washer and went to work on the graffiti, the rest of us squatted down in the dirt of the large entrance room. Each of us scraped with the garden tools Mary Sue had brought until we could find no more tiny bits of broken glass. Apparently I found the mother lode, an area just in front of a large rock that Alex surmised was a great rock to throw bottles at to watch them break. I felt like I was on an archeological dig, but without the exacting detail work. I did find several pieces of broken, thick, white porcelain, which was probably an old teacup. I dug down a couple of inches and made a hole about two feet square. I finally had to stop.

After a couple of hours, the glass pickers wandered over to observe the power washers. They mostly succeeded in washing off the dirt that had covered the other several layers of painted graffiti, so now, instead on new blue, several different colors of paint are visible. Oh well, it was worth the try.

Alex, Amanda, Brian, Mary Sue, and I took a quick hour-and-a-half tour of the cave after we had declared ourselves finished for the day. I saw passages in the cave that I've never seen. Mary Sue and Brian talked me through a couple of high scary traverses—thanks. It was Alex's first cave trip since his “incident” in Washington, and it was Amanda's first trip in years. We took it slow and looked at just about everything.

We got out and helped gather up all the cave-cleaning stuff. Mary Sue had brought up most of it from Blue Ridge Grotto. We ended up hauling about five or six very full and heavy garbage bags of trash out of the entrance room that day. All in all, it was a pretty successful cave clean-up. Thanks to everyone who showed up and helped! ♦

## CAVE AVOIDANCE 101

By Dave Hughes, NSS 14550

Several years ago, the famous Scottish mountaineer, Tom Patey, spared the climbing world a lot of unnecessary labor by explaining how to appear to be a great climber without actually climbing<sup>1</sup>. Fortunately, caving has certain similarities to climbing—akin, some say, to indoor mountaineering. As a result, Patey's clever theme is easily adapted to the pale, anemic troglodyte<sup>2</sup>.

It is well known, of course, that there are considerable fringe benefits to being a legitimately great caver—money, muscle cars, fast women. But no reasoned individual fails to recognize that caving is also a whole bunch of hard work.

Worse, even a cursory glance underground drills home the heart-throbbing reality that caves are dark and scary places. The fact is, a man could get his bum kicked down there.

To this end, we hereby present a selection of tools, techniques, and methods that should allow the practitioner to masquerade as a speleological hero without actually having to venture underground.

### The “Too Much Like Hard Work” Ploy

The is the Virginia caver's favorite gambit when he finds himself butting heads with some Southern hard men at a S.E.R.A. Cave Carnival. Many Alabama caves are admittedly a little remote in comparison to, for instance, Luray Caverns. But, I have heard this sort of generalization directed at the Huntsville area where one can scarcely leave the main road without falling into a pit. No, this simply will not do! Far better is to use:

### The “Off Form” Ploy

This one is as old as the limestone itself, but still is widely employed. Few cavers will ever admit to being “on form.” Surely, everyone would feel uneasy if they did.

Fortunately, a caver who was “on form” during the morning can be feeling “off form” by early afternoon. If an interval of 48 hours or so has elapsed between descents, he may talk of being “out of condition.” If the layoff has been a week or longer, he may justifiably consider himself to be “out of training.”

### The “Bum Lamp” Ploy

Often, it is best to blame an inanimate object for one's troubles. Such a participant will flood his carbide lamp at the Waiting Room above Surprise Pit and then let the others

in the group share his consternation when the only remaining dry felt is “accidentally” dropped into the abyss.

Unfortunately, some cavers carry such a myriad of spare parts that it is possible to be saddled with a veritable equipment vendor while feigning such a predicament. To defeat such eventualities, it is best to rely on an exotic illumination device permanently riveted to one's helmet. Any single failure will then ensure the safety of non-participation. Suggested examples include a fluorescent lamp controlled by a Septium VIII microprocessor, a bunch of fireflies in a phosphorescent tube or, perhaps, a pair of moose antlers painted Day Glo.

### The “Wrong Gear” Ploy

The key to this ploy is to always leave for the “push” trip with completely inappropriate equipment. “I'm an experienced sump diver” is a fairly safe assertion at Big Bone Cave, where it is unlikely that you will be called upon to demonstrate your skills.

Such a character will show up for a downstream assault on Ellisons wearing a pair of tennis shoes and a T-shirt. “Good heavens! The water didn't seem so high on our last push. I'd love to join you guys, but I demolished my wetsuit in Proventina.”

Or, for an afternoon's tour of Hoopers Well, he will unveil a 9-bar Super Rack. “Not much good for these rabbit holes, I guess, but it sure was mighty handy at 'drinas.”

Any off-the-cuff comment of this nature generally goes over very well with the hordes of novices present. You'll be so mobbed signing autographs and recommending carabiners it'll be abundantly clear that you are far too important to waste the day underground.

### The “Phony Cavern” Ploy

The cornerstone of this gambit has been laid by the uprising of the netherworld conservationists. Official policy advocates being purposely vague regarding the whereabouts of caves. Indeed, major publications frequently locate caverns only to the nearest county.

With such parameters firmly in mind, merely select a county, pick a Regional Correspondent, and away you go.

*For Immediate Release.  
Bulletin!*

*A major new system has been unearthed in Jackson*

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County, Alabama by none other than the Carbide Kid.

*“Exploring for days in the labyrinth of passageways, we were finally stopped by a seemingly bottomless abyss. The 800-foot rope that we always carry 'just in case' proved inadequate for the task and we eventually exited the cavern without incident,” reported one of the team.*

*Dauntless, the Kid returned the following weekend to solo the drop (later estimated at 1095 feet), and, upon returning topside, permanently sealed the entrance with some well-placed Tovex.*

*“This is no place for the novice,” he explained while coiling the longest section of kernmantle that this reporter has ever seen.*

*We can only hope that further information will be forthcoming in the months ahead.*

Such information is, in fact, never “forthcoming,” but is easily explained away by invoking the ubiquitous “Anti-Publication” ploy.

## The “Pseudo-Scientist” Ploy

The essence of this ploy is to cultivate an aura of intellectual respectability. Once the mystique is formed, it is hard to go wrong. Encumbered with a myriad of collection bottles and verbose nomenclature, such a genius is hardly an appropriate companion for a sporting trip to the dreaded netherworld.

I once accompanied such a lad on a supposed “push trip” to the New Section of a well-known cave. While I refettled a temperamental lamp before heading underground, my companion sulked just inside the drip line, minutely examining the underside of an insect with his reading glass.

“Bugs are my business,” he finally admitted after much probing. “And everyone knows that such multilingual, polygamous, isolated tripods are never found beyond the entrance region. You guys go ahead and push on downstream. I'll linger here a few hours longer and, perhaps, join you on the way out.”

## The “Responsible Family Man” Ploy

This gambit is nearly infallible because it exploits the very foundations of our existence.

“Don't seem to get underground much nowadays,” they mutter despondently. “Can't take the same risks anymore; unfair on the kids.”

So saying, they leap into their hemi-powered SUVs and become urban charioteers, mowing down crash barriers and terrorizing the walking populace.

“Sorry you had to wait up for me, dear,” they apologize

after shrieking home in a cloud of dust. “Just stopped in for a quick one with the boys and got a bit carried away.”

Some aging cavers, no longer able to cut the mustard in the netherworld, have been known to contemplate matrimony as the only honorable way out.

## The “Speleo-Politician” Ploy

This technique relies on the premise that the character in question is, in fact, too busy determining the Future Direction of caving to be frittering away time in self-serving exploration.

“All this talk of BOGs, COGs, and Ph.D.s bores me to tears,” he explains. “Oh, how I long for the easier days of Sump II in Gouffre Berger. But, some of us seasoned veterans have to make the sacrifice, and I am only too glad to do it. You wetsuited youngsters continue your playful ways and I'll see to it that the caverns remain open for all of us.”

## The “Quasi-Veteran” Ploy

Historians have recorded that Doug Medville only begins to function properly when he is hundreds of feet below the surface of the Earth in a jagged crawlway. This adds up to a pretty considerable handicap when you consider how much of his life must be spent topside. It is all part of the mystique which surrounds The Men who are expected to Go Deep.

To utilize this ploy to its fullest, it is advantageous, but not strictly necessary, to have an NSS number below 7500. Nevertheless, a certain vocabulary of “buzz words” needs to be cultivated. For example:

Swildon's VI  
Gouffre Berger  
the spool  
Lew Bicking and I  
the PSM  
that crazy Mike Boon  
Proventina  
Vertical Bill  
minus 2,000 meters  
freefall  
totally unjustifiable rigging  
deep  
quite deep  
very deep  
a hare-brained escapade

## The “Landowner Relations” Ploy

Axiomatic to this ploy is that no landowner, regardless of outward friendliness, really wants anyone fooling around under his property. If everyone remembered this simple

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fact, we would all be spared a lot of needless caving. Acting like a rich city slicker, four-wheeling around on his front porch, making a pass at his underage daughter, or shooting a couple of cows usually does the trick.

At the next grotto meeting it is all very easy to explain. "We arrived in good shape and intent on diving the final sump. However, the red-necked hick that owns the place was in a crummy mood, so we visited with him only briefly and then left to maintain good landowner relations."

## The "Speleological Opportunist" Ploy

Perfecting this trick facilitates killing two birds with one rock. Start by inviting the most beautiful woman in your office on her first cave exploring trip. Experience demonstrates that she will show up in fishnets, heels, and a leather skirt.

As luck would have it, a short distance underground this costume proves inappropriate for tough caving. Befuddled, the lass anxiously asks to return to the sunshine outdoors. At this juncture, simply jump to the breech with a well-rehearsed one-liner. Something like, "You know baby, there is a way out of here."

## The "Rescue Squad" Ploy

The technique of being appended to the local cave rescue team opens up a wealth of scenarios. Clearly, for one who is perpetually "on call," it would be the height of irresponsibility to risk going underground at any time. Doing so might distance you from the telephone and, hence, confound a time-sensitive rescue call out.

What if a rescue was officially initiated? Who can attend a cave rescue wearing dirty or worn out speleo garb? Best to stay home, stay safe, and wait for the emergency alert. If worse comes to worst, you can always volunteer in the First Aid tent.

Besides, whenever a real disaster actually happens, rescue groupies generally come out of the woodwork and serve up some pretty good sandwiches.

## The "Entrance Photographer" Ploy

A prerequisite for the application of this ploy is a good collection of entrance shots. Such a portfolio may then be used during an endless series of grotto presentations where everyone will assume that you actually 'bottomed' the cave pictured.

"This, folks, shows the main entrance to Fern," one explains. "Such tranquil surroundings barely hint at the terrors which lie within."

Then, advancing to the next frame: "Now, we peruse the

top of Cemetery Pit, which is clearly very different from Golondrinas, as seen on the following slide."

And, upon showing the New Entrance to Ellisons: "Behind this unassuming crack lies the deepest freefall pit in the United States. We found a descent of the shaft to be a bit tricky and it is likely that a rope would have been useful."

Many variations of the above ploys are possible. Indeed, it is frequently necessary to synthesize additional gambits for particularly embarrassing situations. Perhaps, the "Support Team" ploy or the "Solo Man" ploy will eventually find their way into our repertoire. It is hoped, however, that the above list summarizes an adequately comprehensive series of tricks to maintain an elevated ego for even the most ardent loafer. If not, perhaps it would be easier to simply go caving. ♦

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(1) Tom Patey, *One Man's Mountains*, Victor Gollancz, Ltd., London, Pages 231-240, 1972.

(2) An abridged recitation of these techniques previously appeared (in a somewhat different form, and under several titles) in the *Baltimore Grotto News*, the *Birmingham Grotto News*, the *Cave Crawler's Gazette*, the *Georgia Underground*, the *Massachusetts Caver*, and several issues of the *SpeleoDigest*. It is being reprinted here with permission.



## BATS QUOTES FROM 2006

Compiled by Meredith Hall Johnson

### THE FOLLOWING QUOTES WERE HEARD AT OTR THIS YEAR:

“If found, please return to BATS grotto.”

–The back of Tommy Kinson's nametag (after his Thursday night adventure)

“I was mostly dancing.”

–Josh Babcock

“That's when you know you're really drunk.” (Allan was so drunk, he couldn't even do 'Prinderella'.)

–Sarah Pearce

*“I'm calling you from the Wal-Mart in Elkins. Where are you?”*

–Meredith Johnson (the BATS were sneaking up behind her at that very moment)

“We thought she was a caver. Turns out she's a model.”

–Ken Hornung commenting on KVRGRL

“It's not Labor Day Weekend; it's OTR Weekend.”

–Kevin Martin

**“There is no back door to the BATS Camp.”**

**–Unknown, but I'm sure we all laughed**

“Tommy, you shouldn't go in a bank like that.”

–Someone to Tommy Kinson when Tommy had on a Jackass mask

### THE FOLLOWING QUOTES WERE HEARD AT VARIOUS OTHER TIMES

#### DURING 2006:

“A cave mile is equal to 100 feet.”

–Ken Hornung (September 2006 BATS meeting)

“Hi, I'm Mike. I'm a caver.”

–Mike Hill (August 2006 BATS meeting)

“I'm Kevin Martin, and I'm a caver.”

–Kevin Martin (June 2006 BATS meeting)

**“I tried every wiggle way to get through.”**

**–Winnie Miller (November 2006 BOG Party)**

# ANNOUNCEMENTS

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## SPRING WVASS MEETING

The spring meeting of the West Virginia Speleological Survey will be held in conjunction with the May project weekend of the Shavers Mountain Cave Survey. The meeting will be held at 4 PM on May 5, 2007 at the old CCC cabin on Shavers Mountain.

The old CCC cabin is located at the Forest Service Three Springs (Glady Creek) Campground, which is about 5 miles (as the crow flies) north-northeast of the restaurant and motel at Alpena. The WVASS agenda will include reports from each of the county coordinators within the state, as well as reports on future WVASS bulletins and publications. The meeting is an open meeting, meaning anyone can attend, and anyone with an interest with studying and surveying West Virginia's caves and karst should attend. Everyone is also welcome to come and help ridgewalk, dig, and survey with the Shavers Mountain Cave Survey Project on both Saturday and Sunday. There will be camping at the campground and old CCC cabin, and there will be rooms at the Alpena motel, the Alpine Lodge.

**DIRECTIONS:** From Alpena (and U.S. Route 33), travel north on the country road for 4.6 miles to the bottom of a steep hill. This road parallels the east side of Shavers Mountain. Do not cross the Glady Creek bridge. Make a very sharp turn, and drive 0.3 miles to the CCC Cabin, which is on the left. Do not park on the grass!

For more information on the meeting, contact George Dasher at 304-965-1361 or [wvcaver@juno.com](mailto:wvcaver@juno.com).

For more information on the Shavers Mountain Cave Survey, contact either Rocky Parsons at 304-452-8625 or [sandrock@wvcentral.com](mailto:sandrock@wvcentral.com) or contact Barry Horner at 301-309-1634 or [bcavin@hotmail.com](mailto:bcavin@hotmail.com).

The phone number of the Alpine Lodge is 304-636-1470.