



Cascade Caver

The Newsletter of the Cascade Grotto of the National Speleological Society



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Cascade Caver

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GROTTO MEMBERSHIP

Membership in the Cascade Grotto is \$15 per year. Subscription to the *Cascade Caver* is free to regular members. Membership for each additional family member is \$2 per year. Subscription to the *Cascade Caver* is \$15 per year. Subscription via email is \$11 per year.

GROTTO ADDRESS

Cascade Grotto; P.O. Box 66623, Seattle, WA 98166. This post office box should be used for both the grotto and for the *Cascade Caver*.

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MEETINGS

Regular grotto meetings are held monthly at 7 p.m. on the third Friday of each month at the Mountlake Terrace Public Library, 23300 58th Ave. W. Please see the map on the back cover of this issue.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Please notify Dana Poss of any upcoming trips. Contact Jennifer Dorman at idahocaver@gemstategrotto.com for any Gem State Grotto trips.

March 24	Vertical practice - Steven Sprague, (360) 403-6718
April 6	Ape Cave cleanup - Eve Proper, (206) 988-6237
April 19	Grotto meeting, 7 p.m. Mountlake Terrace Library
April 27-28	Succor Creek, Gem State Grotto - Jennifer Dorman
May 22-24	Cave Rescue Workshop in Boise - Nola Morris, Gem State Grotto
May 25-27	Northwest Regional in Shoshone, Idaho - Jennifer Dorman and Chris Anderson
June 6-9	Ely, Nevada caves, Gem State Grotto - Jennifer Dorman
June 15-16	China Hat Caves, Willamette Valley Grotto - George DeSaegher
June 24-28	NSS National Convention Maine
July 4 weekend	Cascade Grotto 50th anniversary party - Glynis Monson, (206) 793-9725
July 4-7	Bighorn/Horsethief Caves, Gem State Grotto - Jennifer Dorman
August 3-4	Papoose Cave, Gem State Grotto - Jennifer Dorman

COVER

Ice Cave at Trout Lake. Photos by Julie McGinnis.

Skagit County caving just as good second time

By Larry McTigue

Participants: Steve Sprague, Aaron Stavens, Julie McGinnis, Erin Robert, Robert Mitchell, Larry McTigue, Stuart Monson and son. (If anyone else was there that I've forgotten, please forgive my poor memory.)

After the first shakedown trip to these caves that Steve led the month before, this trip on Feb. 16 went pretty smoothly. Except, as Steve mentioned, we still got skunked again at Jensen Cave. More about that later.

We met near Arlington. After a short rest stop and food break in town, we headed on up to the locked gate on the road to the caves. It was somewhat dark and cloudy and the weather looked unpredictable, but most of the day was actually partly sunny at times, but mostly overcast.

Once we were off the road, it was bushwhacking the rest of the way. This is a great time of the year to be out in the woods. The hike was cool rather than blazing hot like it is in the summer months and no devils club, sticker bushes, thistles, bees, biting flies or mosquitoes to worry about.

Steve was following his waypoints with his GPS unit. When he passed the buried water tanks and continued straight ahead, I thought he was off course, as we used to always go a more circuitous but familiar route. As it turned out, he was just following a straight line up the hill to Elderberry. Later, he found out his GPS was way off course, due probably to lack of any satellites being high enough on the horizon to be in line of sight. But he walked right up to the sinkhole entrance of Elderberry, hidden in the thick brush that surrounds it. He must have been going on his own memory of the way he remembered it was, in his head.

After changing into our cave gear and eating and drinking some more, we headed into the cave. While Steve gave everyone a tour of the cave, I spent time digging near the entrance in hopes of breaking into more cave. Unfortunately, the spot I had chosen later turned out to be one I had dug on years before, and I merely confirmed that it still doesn't go anywhere. There are some other digs in a side passage that may have more potential. I should have dug on those instead.

Soon everyone was coming back out after Steve had them all do the obligatory tight squeeze through the crawlway at the far end of the cave. Everyone seemed to have enjoyed it. It's a short cave, but it has a big entrance passage that makes me think there's more big stuff waiting to be dug into in one of the side crawlways that are filled with sediment.

Next we hiked north toward Razorblade Straddle Cave and out of the woods and across the new clearcut. We were blinded by the bright sun reflecting on the snow in the clearcut. There wasn't any snow on the ground in the woods. But out here in the open logged area, there was snow all over. Most of us managed to fall waist deep at least once into holes

in the piles of logging slash that we had to step across.

We finally made it, only to find the sink that the cave is in didn't fair too well with the logging operation. It is hardly recognizable as the area we once knew. Logging debris fills the sink, and due to the covering of snow, the unstable logging slash, loose rock and sediment and the deep holes we know are around there, it is now very dangerous to be poking around or trying to enter the cave.

After everyone got a look at the sink at Razorblade, we followed Steve down to Jensen. The brush he had mentioned that had fallen into the sink at Jensen wasn't as bad as I thought it might be. It actually would have provided something to hold on to while climbing down into the sink, which is quite deep and steeply inclined.

We nevertheless set to work sawing and removing the offending branches from out of the sink and cleared a wide path into the hole at the bottom of the sink that leads into the cave. Stuart's son took the lead and tried squeezing into the tight crawlway at the bottom of the entrance room. He soon gave up, finding it too tight for even him to do. I wasn't too surprised, as this has to be dug out each year, as it fills with sediment washed in by the small stream that floods the cave during heavy rainstorms and melting snow.

With the poor luck I had digging at Elderberry, I figured I could redeem myself by digging open Jensen for everyone and saving the day, so to speak. So, I climbed down into the cave and bypassed everyone who was crammed into the small entrance room and proceeded to the tight squeeze ahead. Knowing how tight it is and the proper technique needed to make it through, I removed my helmet and cave pack and rotated onto my side with one arm extended straight out in front of me and the other straight out behind me.

This always works in theory. But, in actual practice, it sometimes leaves a great deal to be desired. Such was the case this time. After squeezing head first into the crawlway on your side, you have to do an immediate right angle turn to continue and all the while doing it with your feet up in the air at a 45 degree angle and your nose plowing into the sand and gravel that lies on the floor of the crawlway.

As usual on the first trip of the season into this cave, I got nowhere real fast. The squeeze was plugged up with sediment and would have to be dug open. I fished around in my cave pack for the garden claw I had with me and pulled sand and stream pebbles out of the tight hole.

After digging for a few minutes, I had opened it up enough to try again. This time I made it through, much to the surprise of Stuart's son. He commented to the others that my technique was to remove my helmet to get through. He'll make a good caver if he continues to learn that quick.

After impressing him with my squeezing abilities, I

continued on page 15

Sign Up Now For the NCA Regional in May

By Jennifer Dorman, Gem State Grotto

This year's Regional will be held in Shoshone, Idaho, which is located in the heart of Idaho's Snake River Plain. The campground will be at the Shoshone Fairgrounds, the same location as the 1997 Regional. There are restrooms on site, restaurants and convenience stores within walking distance of the campground, and a public pool located in town. For those that may be showing up early for the Rescue training, the facility will be available. We have the Fairgrounds reserved from Wednesday through the holiday on Monday.

The caving will be plentiful and will include several guided trips per day. For those of you that would prefer to do some exploration on your own there will be plenty of opportunity for self-guided trips. Several of the cave trips offered will be within a half-hour of the campground.

The Gem State Grotto will be up to their normal caver games so bring your money and be ready to have fun playing "Nails." We will have the annual raffle to help raise monies for the NCA, so please bring some of those items that you have had lying around that your fellow cavers will find useful.

This year we have quite the line-up for meals on-site. We will have breakfast and dinner offered on Saturday and Sunday of the Regional. Please see the menus below for details.

Dave Kesner and Mike Choules will be hosting a 3D Slide Show of the Caves of Idaho on Sunday night. These guys take some of the best 3D pictures I have seen so be sure not to miss it!! We will have an indoor pavilion available to us at the Fairgrounds to do this show.

Schedule of Events:

Saturday

Breakfast, 8 a.m.
NCA Dinner, 6:30 p.m.
NCA Raffle, 8 p.m.

Sunday

Breakfast, 8 a.m.
Dave Kesner's Gourmet Dinner, 6 p.m.
NCA Region meeting, 7 p.m.
3D Slide Show hosted by Dave Kesner and Mike Choules of the Gem State Grotto, 8 p.m.

Saturday Morning Breakfast:

Scrambled eggs, potatoes, pancakes, buttermilk biscuits and bacon or ham. Beverages, plates, and utensils will be provided.

Saturday Night NCA Dinner:

Pasta bar to include three different pastas: spaghetti, fettuccine, and rottini; three different sauces: vegetarian marinara, red meat sauce (pork and/or beef), and white seafood sauce (mussels, calamari, cuttlefish, and imitation crab), sautéed mushrooms on the side, fresh grated cheese (romano - parmesan), tossed green salad with various dressings, and French bread and butter. All sauces will be homemade from scratch. Bring your own drinks, plates, and utensils.

Sunday Morning Breakfast:

Breakfast burritos consisting of egg, potatoes, ham, bacon, bell peppers, onions, mushrooms, and cheese (build your own). Simple and fast so folks can get on the cave trail earlier. Beverages, plates, and utensils will be provided.

Sunday Night Gourmet Feast limited to the first 25 people

Start off with an appetizer of fried calamari, followed by a bowl of clam chowder. Main course will consist of a pinwheel steak stuffed with wild rice, mushrooms, and pine nuts drizzled with a red wine demi-glaze, fresh steamed vegetables, and French bread and butter. The meal will be capped off with a dessert of cheesecake with fresh fruit topping and gourmet coffee.

Needless to say all items will be homemade from scratch (except the bread and cheesecake which will be from a mix). All plates, bowls, and utensils will be provided. Bring your own beverage.

Directions:

From Interstate 84 at Twin Falls, take Highway 75 north to Shoshone. At the intersection at the Chevron (the first main intersection before you cross the railroad tracks), take a right (east) and follow the road around that leads directly into the Fairgrounds.

For a copy of the registration form, visit hiptr.home.mindspring.com/NCA2002/NCA2002.html or e-mail Jennifer Dorman at idahocaver@gemstategrotto.org. Please have your registration in by May 10. ❖

Registration Form

Name: _____
 Address: _____
 City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____
 Phone Number: _____
 Grotto: _____

Item	Quantity	TOTAL
Registration per weekend Single-\$3 Family-\$5		
Saturday Night NCA Dinner \$7.25 per person		
Sunday Night Dave Kesner Gourmet Dinner \$15 per person		
Saturday morning Breakfast (Gem State Grotto) \$5 per person		
Sunday morning Breakfast (Gem State Grotto) \$5 per person		
Guidebook (1999 NSS Convention Guidebook) \$11each		
T-shirt Please indicate number of each size \$10 each Small___ Medium___ Large___ X-Large___		
Long sleeve T-shirt Please indicate number of each size \$15 each Small___ Medium___ Large___ X-Large___		
Sweatshirt Please indicate number of each size \$18 each Small___ Medium___ Large___ X-Large___		
TOTAL ENCLOSED:		

Mail to:
 NCA Regional
 c/o Jennifer Dorman
 4252 N. Cambria Ln.
 Boise, Idaho 83703

Mail checks payable to the Gem State Grotto.

See you in Shoshone!!

Trout Lake winter trip is really, really cold

By Eve Proper

I was under the impression that one of the few privileges of being an editor of the *Cascade Caver* was that it saved me the trouble of writing trip reports. Somehow, however, I found myself coerced by my trip-mates into writing this one. Perhaps if I embarrass them enough, they'll let me go back to editing in peace instead.

How did I end up on this trip, anyway? I was supposed to be in warm, sunny Las Vegas that weekend. Instead, I ended up getting suckered into spending March 22-24 freezing my proverbial body parts off.

The trip started off just fine – we all met at the Trout Lake general store for one right of comfort in real beds. “We” includes Jon, Julie and Cameron McGinnis; Erin Robert; Aaron and Kaylee Stavens; Van Bergen; and me. *Lethal Weapon III* was on TV. It's okay, but not the best of the series. (Personally, I'd have to give the nod to the original flick, followed by the fourth and final installment.)

The next morning we fed ourselves our last real meal before heading out into the cold, cruel winter. Van was on skies and the rest of us were on snowshoes.

We set out on a very short trek to New Cave, where Jon, Julie and Aaron attempted to put up a new cave register. What they in fact accomplished was the removal of the old register, followed by the realization that the new, eco-safe epoxy was about as strong as a Post-it note. However, the time wasn't completely wasted, as Kaylee did manage to get in quite a few rounds of Pokemon on Cameron's Gameboy, Jon finished off a few cigarettes, and Erin built a decent snowman with a flamboyant wig of green moss. (It was actually an educational experience, as those doing the work realized there was a whole lot of equipment they should bring next time, such as something more effective than a screwdriver to scrape the old sign off with.)

Van and I actually ventured into the cave and found it to be drippy. He was worried about his cross-country clothes being unsuitable for caving and turned back, and I followed his example not long after, thinking, “Yup, this cave is sure, uh, dark. And wet.” Take people you don't really want to cave with here, and you might not have to cave with them again. Mammoth it ain't.

Next we headed over to Ice Cave. This proved to be much more interesting, being filled with formations of –

come on, you know what I'm going to say – ice. It also made for very slippery walking, and most of my fellow cavers turned back. But not me. I made it out to the other entrance with Cameron and Kaylee. Obviously we know who the *real* cavers on the trip were.

At this point, Jon, Julie, Cameron and Kaylee headed back to camp, while Van, Aaron, Erin and I soldiered bravely on in search of another cave. I won't bore you with

the details of that, because Aaron and Van couldn't find it. We did find a hole in the ground, which Aaron was pretty excited about – until he noticed the brass cave marker bearing a “24.” That discovery was followed by the vision of what he swears was a bat, causing him to hightail it back out of the cave.

Hunger was setting in, so we returned to camp, with the exception of Van. Van is a smart guy, and I'm glad he's chairman. See, he had the good sense to go back to the cabin for the night, where he could sleep in a real bed and watch all the television he wanted. I think I want to be more like Van.

The rest of us ate dinner in the McGinnis-built kitchen (guarded by a cleverly built snow dragon) and tried desperately to dry out and warm up. Failing that, we went to bed in the cold and shivered through the long night. Did I mention we heard coyotes howling?

The morning finally came with beautiful weather. We poked around camp for a little bit. Aaron and I peered into a cave that looked as if animals might still be using it but didn't venture in; I wasn't suffering quite enough to consider being lunch. Then, we all broke camp, stuffing our cold, wet belongings into our cold, wet backpacks, and headed back down the trail.

Then we stopped for pizza, where I learned that I am the only person in the grotto who really likes Thai pizza. That's OK. I'll just eat my Thai pizza next time while all of you freeze in the snow and wait for coyotes to come get you. Don't say I didn't warn you. ❖



Erin Robert among the ice stalactites.
Photo by Aaron Stavens.

More Skagit County caving

continued from page 11

felt obligated to get around the next sharp right angle turn to the left that has to be negotiated almost immediately after the first one. I looked around for the way on and drew a blank. Where was the next turn to the left? At this point I was beginning to wonder if my memory was failing me.

But, after back tracking and turning my head in the tight crawlway and peering into every nook and cranny in the floor and up in the ceiling, I came to the realization that there was no way on. It dawned on me that so much sediment had filled the crawl at the second right angle bend that it was almost completely obliterated. Searching a second time, I found a familiar looking fissure just above the sediment fill and did my best to shine my light into it to see where it went.

It was extremely awkward, because my arms were pinned against the sides of the crawl and I could barely move them to position the light to see into the crevice. I was just able to see enough to confirm that this was indeed the way on and that the small fissure I was seeing went into complete blackness and what is known as the Waterfall Room in Jensen Cave. But, this fissure is the one located (above) the crawlway into the back of the cave and the sediment was just below the bottom of it.

That meant that the crawlway we normally squeeze through underneath it was completely filled to the top with sediment, most likely washed in as a result of the loosening of the soil cover caused by the logging operation. The crawlway always was tight and only about 2 ft in diameter. So, it would only have to be dug down 2 ft vertically. Unfortunately, the fill area is several feet long now due to the increased amount of sediment flowing into the cave. It would definitely require an entire day to dig open again.

I retreated to tell the others the bad news. The muscles in my legs and neck were starting to cramp up from the awkward position I had to assume while lying on the

cold, damp cave floor. When I finally groaned and grunted and squeezed my way back out, I was glad to be free once again from this grip of sheer death and horror that the cave had held me in. (Just kidding. I actually enjoy this stuff.)

Once we were all out of the cave, there was still a bit of sunshine left to warm my cold muscles and bones. We packed up our gear and headed back down into the woods, as that would be far easier than trying to hike through the clearcut. Most seemed satisfied that we had done all we could that day and it was time to head home.

As we hiked down from Jensen, we came across a stream gully. Steve said he didn't think anyone had checked the resurgence the stream comes out of. Being a sucker, I took the bait hook, line and sinker. I went about 250 ft uphill, before it dawned on me that Dick Garnick had sent me on this same wild goose chase before. I had only found the gully and stream continuing over the old road up above and on up the hill with no end or resurgence in sight.

In order to be fair to Steve and Dick, I should state that most likely neither realized this particular gully had no resurgence (others in the area do) and they were merely confusing it with one of the other ones. But, I got all excited, like I usually do, and ended up going on what cavers call somewhat fondly a rinky-dink.

Hiking back downhill to the vehicles went rather quickly. We quickly changed out of our muddy cave suits and hopped into the trucks for the return trip. The sun was starting to dip lower on the horizon and the temperature was falling now. It was good to get in the vehicles and turn some heat on. Steve suggested the traditional stop for pizza down in Sedro-Woolley before we made a bee-line for home.

The pizza was good, the caving was good, the weather was good and the new friendships we made were good. Thanks Steve for a great time. ❖

Tie a knot in it

By Aaron Stavens

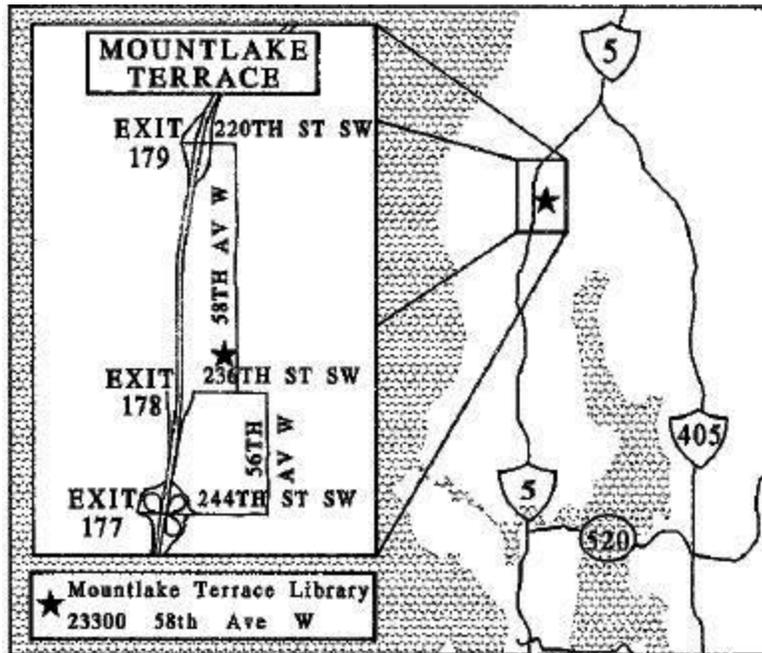
In my vertical work, I have been continually reminded to tie a knot in the end of a rappel rope. Too many injuries and deaths have been reported in the NSS' accident compilation when hapless cavers rappelled off the end of their ropes. A recent experience now prompts me to do the reminding. On a logical level I agree with the advice and, in general, I practice what I preach.

There are occasional exceptions but in those situations I know, beyond a shadow of a doubt, the rope either reaches the ground or comes close enough. I had that situation at last year's Willamette Valley Grotto vertical practice. One of their rappel ropes came within approximately two feet of the ground. I knew this to be the

case when I got on the rope and I judged it safe. Much to my chagrin I managed to rappel off the end of that rope. One moment I was completely under control. The next moment the end of the rope had slipped through my hand and my full weight was on the floor. There was no time to recover. Had this been in a cave or off a cliff and had the end of the rope been further from the ground, I would have been just another accident statistic.

I maintain that the WVG's rigging of that rope was safe. I do not fault them and I would not change it. The lesson was much more visceral than any amount of lecturing could accomplish. So, I remind you all, when rigging a rope for descent, tie a knot in it. ❖

Meetings and Directions



The Cascade Grotto meets at 7 p.m. on the third Friday of each month at the Mountlake Terrace Public Library, 23300 58th Ave. W.

To get to the Library from the east side, take Bothell Way to Ballinger Way. Head north on Ballinger and take a right on 19th Ave. NE (this turns into 56th Ave. W at the county line). Turn left on 236th then right on 58th Ave. W. Go north three blocks.

We look forward to seeing you at one of our meetings.

Cascade Caver
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Seattle, WA 98166