



# CASCADIA Cavern

Newsletter of the Cascade Grotto of the National Speleological Society

May 2004, Volume 43, No. 5

# Cascade Caver

ISSN 0008-7211

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## GROTTO MEMBERSHIP

Membership in the Cascade Grotto is \$15.00 per year. Subscription to the *Cascade Caver* is free to regular members. Membership for each additional family member is \$2.00 per year. Subscription to the *Cascade Caver* is \$15.00 per year. Subscription via email is \$11.00 per year.

## GROTTO ADDRESS

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This post office box should be used for both the grotto and for the *Cascade Caver*.

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Sec/Treasurer	Marla Pelowski	(253) 835-7404

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## MEETINGS

Regular grotto meetings are held monthly at 7:00 pm on the third Friday of each month at the Shoreline Community Center in the Hamlin room. The Community Center is at 18560 1<sup>st</sup> Ave NE in Shoreline. Please see the back cover for directions.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

August 14	Dynamited Cave – Trout Lake. Call Jon McGinnis for information.
August 20	Grotto Meeting. 7 p.m. Shoreline Community Center
August 21-28	Weymer Creek area Vancouver Island. Contact Rick Coles.
August 23 – 25	Survey Practice at Jackman Creek Cave. Date not set yet. Contact Michael McCormack.
September 17	Grotto Meeting. 7 p.m. Shoreline Community Center
October 2-3	NCRC Orientation to cave rescue practice at Trout Lake. Contact Dave McElmurry.
October 15	Grotto Meeting. 7 p.m. Shoreline Community Center
August 2006	NSS Convention Bellingham, WA

**COVER:** This picture, from Pinnacle Cave, was taken by Michael McCormack. Please see the article starting on page 29 of this issue. Thanks again to Michael for designing this cover.

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## Things To Do In Vegas

By Niki McCormack

We (Michael McCormack, Dave Decker, and myself) arrived in Las Vegas, Nevada around 11:00 Thursday night after a flight that was delayed almost an hour. We were picked up by Dave's mom, Kathi and transported to their home where we would live (or at least spend the night) for the next three days (thanks!).

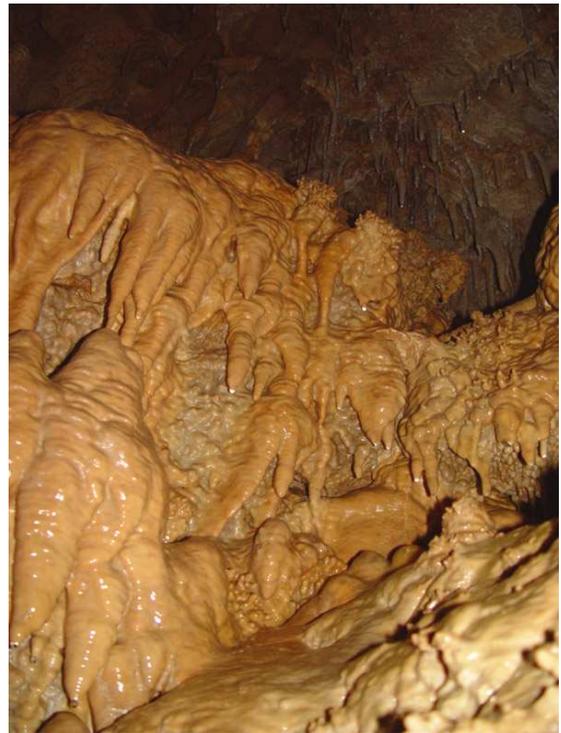
The next morning we loaded up the caving gear, stopped for a nice breakfast at Coco's and headed up to Pinnacle cave. This required a fair drive on paved roads, followed by a short trip along a mild mannered dirt road. The blazing heat of southern Nevada (ok, blazing by Seattle standards) welcomed us as we parked and loaded our gear on our backs. A short hike, made difficult only by that big yellow ball in the sky shining down on us from a clear blue sky (you could not quite see the smog of Vegas from there), led us to a large hole in the ground at the top of a ridge of limestone.



A brief rigging job and a nice staged photo of the daring adventurers, and we were ready to brave the unknown depths of Pinnacle cave

(well, unknown to a large percentage of the human population).

Michael was the first one down the 125 foot drop, discovering quickly that a Petzel Stop barely qualifies as a stop on a clean dry rope. I followed on my Stop, pausing briefly near the bottom so Michael could take a few pictures, and then got off on the steep slope of loose dirt and rock. I moved off into a cubby out of rock fall range while Dave followed on his *mini rack* pausing for his descent photo and then joining us. At the bottom of the slope we discovered that our rope descent was not complete, but there was fortunately enough rope for it to reach the bottom with about 3 feet to spare above the knot.



Once off rope we stashed our vertical gear and signed into the well maintained log before beginning our exploration. The first portion of the cave offered a plethora of formation, mostly inactive, discolored and with a great deal of breakage, but testament to a once grand beauty. We searched several areas in this section then moved on through the cave climbing up through spacious passage. When

faced with two different holes going to the same passage, we slipped through the smaller one just because we are cavers and our soundness of mind is, by the very nature of our sport, somewhat in question.

Further in, we were faced with a few tricky, and slightly slippery down climbs, but were well rewarded with some nice live formations. Moving further into the large passage we found a dirt floored room, dry now, but sporting water marks a good three feet up the walls and a large, dry rimstone dam towards the back. A large column and drapery adorned the upper portion of this passage. We moved on into an area of large breakdown blocks and began climbing and exploring possible passages to the occasional pleased cries of "It just keeps going, damnit". With a bit of searching and squiggling around through breakdown blocks Dave discovered a passage that led into a room overloaded with flowstone and formations. We moved through here slowly and cautiously, looking around with respectful admiration at the fantastic room. Coming up out of this room we found a large room with a number of formations and a large, nicely formed stalagmite protruding from the floor. We emerged alongside the large column and drapery we had seen from the rimstone room below and paused here for an effort at a group photo.



From there we headed back out. The first to ascend, the final rope climb, I checked the rigging and sat around in my gear while Michael and then Dave came up. We made the top almost 5 hours after starting the trip. A quick staged photo of the battered and weary adventurers, then we unrigged the drop and returned to the car. We were fortunate enough to see a lone wild horse and hear a few wild burros braying as we headed back. We made a quick dash back to Dave's parent's house to clean up then dashed off to the Howdy Party. Here we mingled about and learned some more about Pinnacle cave from the locals. The decorated room was the Organ room, above the Lunch room where the rimstone dam was. They had recently set up the new log book, which explained the nice condition.

We hung out for a while, learned some more about the BOG meeting schedule, and got the coordinates for a cave out near the Valley of Fire (which we were planning to visit anyway) that was said to have been collapsed some seven years ago, but had not been confirmed by anyone there. We got back to the house late that night and crawled into bed, setting the alarms for early the next morning.

Groggy and sore, we all crawled out of bed and showered what seemed a surprisingly short time after crawling into bed, and dashed off again to make the BOG meeting. The convention portion of the meeting started around 10:00, an hour later than it was supposed to. First there was a review of Porterville, which revolved mostly around the challenges of registration and budget. There was a brief update on the 2004 convention in Michigan, already boasting a pre-registration number of 98 (Ouch!). Next came a follow-up report via conference phone on the Huntsville, Alabama proposal for 2005 which was initially proposed at a meeting in Gainesville, Florida. This was a bit alarming (the proposed school is still being built), but hey, at least they have caves.

It was our turn now. Our packages received numerous comments, including praise on the organized budget and appreciation of the CDs. Some concern was expressed over the cost, but Michael's explanation that we had tried to be very conservative and that the cost of living in general was higher in that region seemed to appease everyone. The BOG as a whole seemed to be pleased with Michael's presentation on behalf of the Cascade Grotto (and additional volunteers) and several people present expressed interest in attending. Scott Fee even asked if we wanted to move it up to 2005 (don't worry, we said no).

Indiana proposed for 2007, and also seemed to be well received. We stuck around until a recess was called, then chatted with a few people before heading out again to our adventures. Grabbing a breakfast/lunch and the nearest McDonalds, we drove out through the Valley of Fire and out another dirt road, following the directions we had been given for Salt Cave. Loading up with sunscreen and three bottles of water, we began our trek out into the desert in the blazing sunshine.

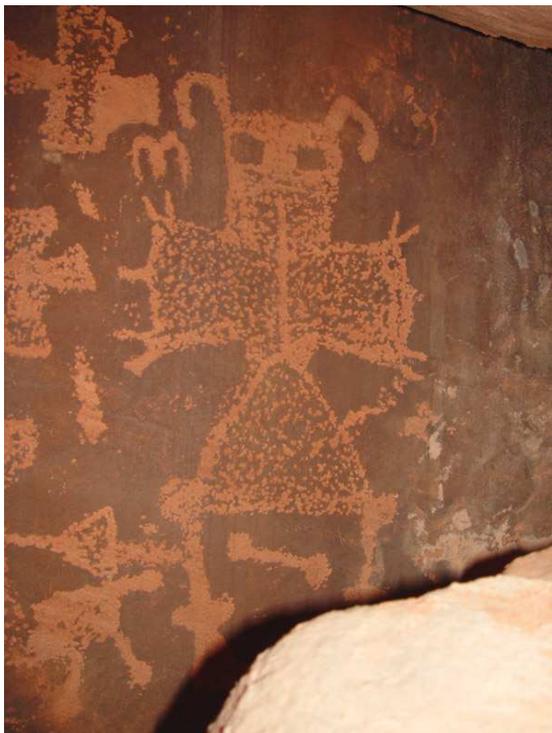
For the record, three bottles is not enough, especially for north westerners. We discovered gypsum crystals and petrified wood on the arid, rocky landscape, and I was good enough to discover the wicked little thorns on some of the bushes (twice). The coordinates led us to a box canyon, never to a real cave, indicating that the cave entrance had indeed collapsed. We spotted a nice looking piping cave up on one of the walls of the canyon, but were unable to reach it due to the crumbling nature of the surrounding incline and the precariously perched large block in the way of the entrance. On the way. A

After about a three mile hike in the hottest part of the day with only a bottle of water each we were pleased to get back to the car and guzzle down some more water. By now I had

a rather significant headache, but this was not about to end the day. We headed back to the Valley of Fire and began our search for any wind cave in the brilliant red sandstone that we could fit our bodies in. We crawled, climbed, slithered into and through every opening that was big enough, then moved on to the visitor center to replenish the water.

Continuing on, we went up to the trail that led to a pool in the rock called Mouse Sink. At the head of the trail was a list of the petroglyphs that could be along the trail and we instantly knew we had to find Mystical Bat Woman. Along the trail we (mostly the inexhaustible Dave) continued to crawl into every opening in search of something that might pass as a cave. Through this adventuring we found a fantastic, larger representation of Mystical Bat Woman hidden behind a large rock that you had to climb out a slightly precarious ledge to even see. We were all deeply moved by our brief communion with Mystical Bat Woman and continued to the Mouse Sink pool, finding, on our way, a wind cave that was actually almost large enough to pass for a cave. In spite of my headache, I crawled up and passed through this passage after Dave and Michael. It was almost dark in there (or perhaps that was because I never took off my sunglasses).

On the way back to the car in the low light of dusk, we were graced with the presence of numerous pallid bats starting their search for food. A few darted down very close to us, clearly recognizing that we had visited with Mystical Bat Woman and were therefore worthy of the visit (or we were just sweaty enough to attract a lot of insects).



Back at the car we munched down the jerky and teriyaki sticks was rushing towards Vegas to try and make the banquet. We made the hotel San Remo just in time and darted in, making a quick stop by the restrooms to clean our faces and hands. We picked a dinner table and gathered our food, our stomachs rumbling loudly. After sitting we were joined by Scott Fee, Hazel Barton, David Irving and his wife.

Dinner was pleasant, but since there was no program, we departed soon after and started yet another hike down the main strip in Las Vegas. It turns out that, in addition to some great hiking and caving, Las Vegas has a pretty active nightlife as well. We visited several flashy, overgrown hotels, dropped maybe \$100 between the three of us, and made it back home some time after midnight.

The next morning we staggered slowly out of our beds and Dave called Steve DeVaney to politely decline his invite from the Howdy Party to go up to Wounded Knee cave with a group of other cavers. After a pleasant late breakfast with Dave's mom, we headed out to Gypsum Cave. Yet another easy road drive

followed by a short trip out a mild dirt road. Gypsum is a cave well suited to its name. The large opening leads to a very large room and some other short small passages, all full of gypsum. Unfortunately, due to its easy access and presence on every major map of Nevada, the gypsum has been chipped at and the cave is badly discolored from use, including frequent parties, as evidenced by the numerous campfires and trash. Still, the strong imagination can see what the cave once was back in the days when giant sloth's were rumored to make their home there.

Outside of Gypsum we searched about some, finding one of the other caves there, but the general mood was a bit mellow. Perhaps this was the heat, or maybe we were wearing out, or it could have been the impending departure that had us more pensive (so much limestone, so little time). We ran out of time quickly and had to head back to meet Dave's parents for a casual dinner. After dinner, Dave caught his flight back home. Michael and I squeezed in one last hike (ok, neighborhood walk) with Dave's mom that night before catching our flight the next morning, our adventure at an end.

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## **Boulder Cave – 17 July, 2004**

By Dave Decker

“OOWWWW!!!” I yelled as I reached over my shoulder to scratch an itch, “SON-OF-A-*&%\$#!*” I pulled my hand away to see a small red welt rising on my palm and half a bee still clinging to my shoulder. What a great way to start a caving trip! Not even there yet and already getting stung by bees. Oh well - Charlie Hubbard and I continued down I-5 to the 405 and met up with David Weaver from the Diablo Grotto at the SE 8<sup>th</sup> St. Park & Ride. David was in Seattle from the Bay Area of California looking for a new job and decided to join us on our little jaunt to Boulder Cave.

We took the scenic route by way of Enumclaw and the Mt. Rainier National Forest, which took us about two-and-a-half hours from Seattle. It was a gorgeous day; the sun was shining and not a cloud in the sky. The temp was around 80° F with a light breeze. Mt. Rainier was poking up from behind her ring of courtiers, all sparkly and white with a hint of blue on her shoulder.

When we arrived we found a parking spot and were immediately greeted by the local ranger who advised us we must pay the \$5.00 parking fee. No problem, can we get out of the car first? After handing over the dough, he moved on to his next victim while we grabbed our packs and helmets and sauntered up the short trail to the cave.

On the way there an overlook provided a view of Devil's Creek and some teens sliding down a natural slide carved in the basalt by the flowing water. It made me wish I'd brought a change of clothes; it looked like a lot of fun. We continued up the well-defined path to the entrance where we put our helmets on then climbed up to the waterfall at the head of the canyon. It was a pretty little thing with some development behind it, but not enough to call it a cave. I decided to climb a large moss-covered boulder to see if I could see beyond the falls up-canyon, but had to abort about 15 feet up when some yahoo with a kid decided to follow me up barefoot. I traversed over a couple of feet so I wouldn't fall on him if I slipped and then worked my way back down. Meanwhile, he decided he'd had enough when he got about five feet up and couldn't keep a good foot-hold. When I got back on terra firma we walked back down-canyon and entered the mouth of the cave proper around 2:30.

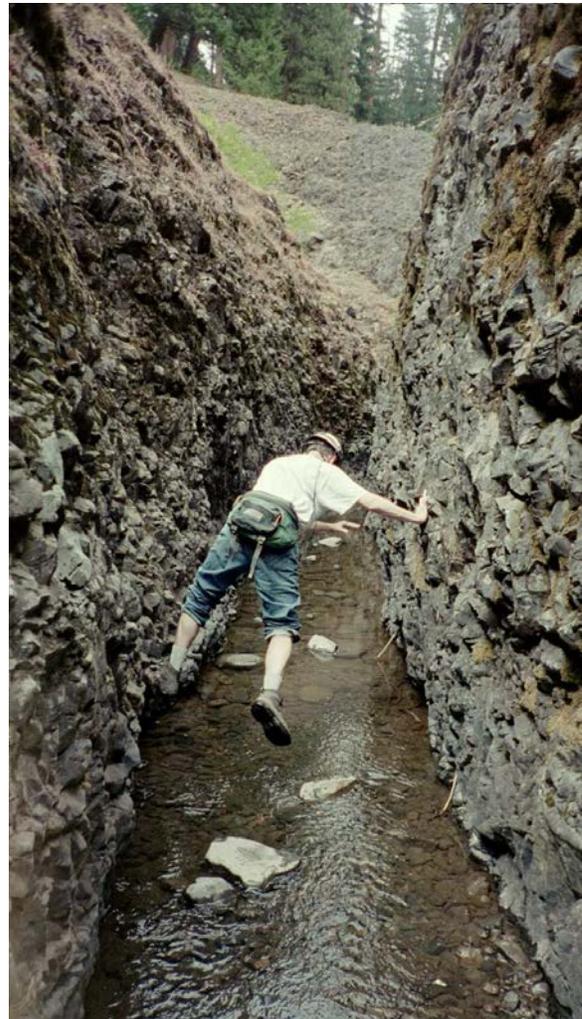


Boulder Cave is formed in the Yakima Basalt group by the down cutting of Devil's Creek and subsequent erosion into the soft interbedding between basalt flows. Once undercut, the overhanging rock collapsed and formed this 400' long cave, while Devil's Creek continued to wash away the interbedding, enlarging the cave.

As we entered and let our eyes adjust, we could see the creek flowing by at our feet and the polygons formed by the basalt in the ceiling. A cool breeze issued out of several cracks between boulders which led to an upper level room that smelled of guano and packrat urine. We followed the north wall of this room back out to the main room via another crack, and then I climbed up a narrow fissure to a third room above the first two. Once there I could see a packrat's nest below me made of half plastic bag and half natural

material, and a large iron gate about 30 feet away which blocked off access to the upper entrance. This is where the Big Eared bats winter over, so it is protected for their safety and comfort. I then climbed down another crack and met up with Charlie and David, who joined me in climbing the steep slope back up to the gate to sit and watch all the people go by. One of the funniest things we heard while sitting there was a teenager referring to the calcium deposits on the ceiling as bat guano and his friend saying it couldn't be because, "Dude, bats can't poop up!" Any way, we sat there for a while enjoying the cool damp air and the remarks of all the people that were passing by below us, then we started exploring the large room again. Charlie found a crack leading up to a skylight that I climbed into, and as I poked my head through a hole formed by three boulders I came face to face with one of the large packrats inhabiting the cave. He stared at me for a second then continued to clean himself and ignored me as I watched, fascinated. On the other side of the room David had found a small room with some deer bones in it and a crevice with two packrat nests and one camera-shy packrat.

Unfortunately, this cave was only so big, so after an hour of messing around we headed out and decided to follow the creek downstream instead of the trail back to the parking lot and it was a refreshing change from all the people. We found the small slide we'd seen from the trail above, but none of us wanted to get wet, so we continued on without sliding down. We finally got to a spot in the narrow canyon where the water filled the entire floor and we had to either straddle the stream for the next 100 feet or just go ahead and get wet. Charlie chose the latter option while David and I decided to try and stay dry since we'd been told by a group of three red necks that there was no way to do it. David made a valiant effort but ended up falling in about halfway and getting soaked up to his shoulders! I did make it all the way, but only as Charlie says, "because of my freakishly long legs".



Once back at the car, David changed into dry clothes and we headed out to find a place to eat. Gold Creek Restaurant was the first thing we came to, so we stopped for a burger, fried chicken, a BLT and some cold beer. We then decided to leave another way, via Yakima and I-90, to see if it was any shorter time-wise than the way we had come. Other than being hotter (100° F) and less scenic, it was no different. It took us two-and-a-half hours to get back to Seattle where we dropped David off, and then another hour-and-a-half to get home to Oak Harbor.

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## Description of Connection Trip in Highwater Cave, Rockcastle County, KY

By dogE

[aka Clay Abernathy, Middletown, OH]

(Ed. Note: This was written by an Ohio friend of Van Bergen)

Yes, I can say that the connection from the upper pit in Highwater to the rest of the cave would be hard to find. But not impossible...

Just go down a bunch of death slabs hanging by chock pebbles coated with slick mud. When you finally stop tumbling, there's a passage near where your carbide lamp lands after it becomes dislodged from your helmet. Of course you'll have to wait until the cobwebs clear from your head. Just shake it off and continue to a spot where there is no possible way you could get through...no freakin' way. Continue on your belly saying, "What moron dug this out, Plastic Man?" and "There's no freakin' way I can make it through here" and "You guys may as well turn around back there, this can't possibly be the way."

Look for a place to turn around and go back. Any place. Anything resembling a place turn your HEAD would be appreciated. Since there is none, keep going. When the passage widens just a bit so that you're not breathing dirt anymore, there's a hole in the floor. Dangle one arm down, dislocate your shoulders, start down into the opening. Get your first look at the really tight place.

Realize that your next move is 180 degrees wrong from how you've oriented yourself. Try to back up, listening to your \$110 coveralls shredding. Understand that you're committed now and groan. Yell back to the others, who can't hear you because your body completely fills the opening, "Don't do it this way! I've screwed up! Take everything out of your

pockets!"

Struggle to calm down. Being unable to calm down, surge forward in a panic. Wonder out loud "Am I bleeding?" Having no clue how you did it, make it through to the 90 degree turn facing the wrong way. Understand completely what it's like to be accidentally sealed in a coffin. Struggle to roll over, listening to the sound Alex Sproul most likes to hear...coveralls disintegrating. Think to yourself "I paid \$110 dollars for these things and now I look like a bag lady."

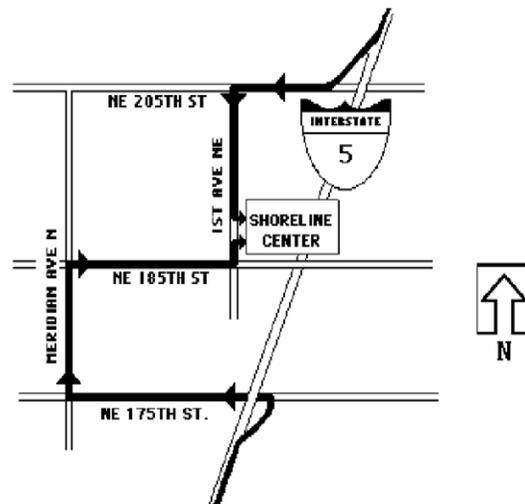
Try to make the 90 into the really tight passage. Hear the rim of your helmet scrape the ceiling and the floor at the same time. Work through to your shoulders and stop. Say "This cave better be worth dying for..." and exhale. Push forward with your toes, arms are totally useless here. Make a couple inches. Realize you can't suck any air in and exhale some more. Totally encase your rib cage in limestone so you can't possibly do more than pant. Hang your tongue out and pant like a dog. As soon as you begin to swoon from lack of oxygen, push forward in a panic. Exhale ALL your air, make a final survival instinct push. Now you've made it into the large part of the squeeze where you can take half breaths. Don't let the hallucinations distract you here, you've still got 20 ft' of squeeze. Finally, slide out into the top of a deep canyon over a pit, not caring if you fall into it. Lay there hoping the others don't bail and leave you alone.

Other than that, it's a piece of cake.

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The Cascade Grotto meets at 7:00pm on the third Friday of each month at the Shoreline Community Center. The Community Center is located at 18560, 1<sup>st</sup> Ave NE in Shoreline. To get to the Community Center from Seattle, take Exit 176 on Interstate 5 (175<sup>th</sup> St. N) and turn left at the light at the bottom of the off ramp. At the next traffic light (Meridian Ave. N) turn right. Turn right at 185<sup>th</sup> St. N (the next light). Turn left on 1<sup>st</sup> NE, which again is the next light. The Community Center is on the right. Don't get confused with the Senior Center, which is on the end of the building. Enter the building on the southwest corner and find the Hamlin Room.

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