

**FIFTY YEARS WITH THE
PITTSBURGH GROTTTO
A CHAPTER OF THE
NATIONAL SPELEOLOGICAL SOCIETY**

1947 to 1997



by
Paul Damon

October 1997

FIFTY YEARS WITH THE PITTSBURGH GROTTTO, 1947 to 1997

AUTHORS COMMENTS

This anniversary publication is dedicated to the one person I have known in the Pittsburgh Grotto whom I feel personifies the true intent of the club, one of its founders — John Robert "Bob" Dunn. Although he "retired" from caving about 1962, he would be the first person who I would elect to a Pittsburgh Cavers' Hall of Fame. Such a Hall would honor those who for so many effective years advanced the cause and the name of the Grotto and/or caving in Western Pennsylvania. If you were looking for a quiet, unassuming, leader of the pack, you would find Bob Dunn.

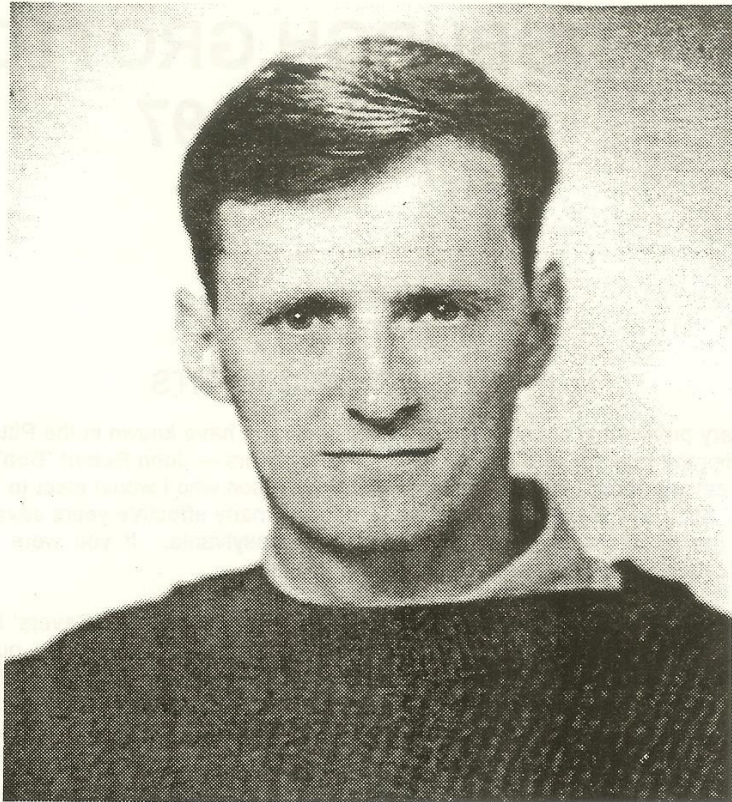
There are several others who I feel also deserve to be in a Pittsburgh Cavers' Hall of Fame. One certainly would be Allen McCrady who spent countless hours in many of the pursuits needed for a successful Grotto, including the Pittsburgh Grotto Press. Several others might be Ralph Bossart (more for his pioneering efforts in Western Pennsylvania caving), Julia Staniland (the rock-solid "den mother" of the Pittsburgh Grotto), and Hermine Zotter (long-time volunteer and amateur cave scientist). And, for those of you who were not around in the early days of the Grotto, we cannot forget Roswell Jones or Chuck Hempel or Gary Storrick or Janet Thorne, or perhaps a few others who deserve such recognition.

I feel honored to have been a part of the Grotto from almost the beginning. I have enjoyed every year of it, and even though you no longer find me in too many caves, I feel as much a part of the activity as anyone. I wrote the 30th and 40th year histories of the Grotto, so I was pleased when the present leaders of the club permitted me to prepare the 50th.

I have not tried to make this story a totally definitive history of the Grotto, and did not research all the aspects and information that could have been made available to me. This would have taken an amount of time that I just did not have. If anyone remembers things differently that stated herein, so be it, but please volunteer to prepare the 75th anniversary publication using your version of the history. I trust that most of the information I have presented is a statement of fact, based on the best recollections of those who contributed material.

There are a number of members I should thank for helping in some manner with this 50th history effort, but I would like to thank several in particular. They are Rick Kirscht who encouraged me to do this project in the first place; Walt Hamm who reviewed 25 years of newsletters to come up with a lot of material for me to use; Bru Randall who prepared a special article on the 1980s; Julia Staniland who many years ago provided me with a number of photos of the Grotto members; and Hermine Zotter whose efforts in recording the first 10 years of history of the Grotto were liberally included in this history. Many thanks to you, and to everyone else who gave support. I enjoyed the effort.

Paul Damon, Sr.
October, 1997



John Robert "Bob" Dunn
Founder of the Pittsburgh Grotto

Thanks, Bob

Paul Gorman, Sr.
October, 1997

**EVERYTHING HAS TO START SOMEWHERE, SOMEHOW.
IN THE CASE OF THE PITTSBURGH GROTTO,
IT WAS A SET OF CIRCUMSTANCES ALONG WITH THE INTEREST OF A
FEW INDIVIDUALS THAT LED TO THE FORMATION OF ONE OF THE
EARLIEST GROTTOES IN THE NATIONAL SPELEOLOGICAL SOCIETY, ONE
THAT HAS NOW EXISTED FOR A FULL HALF-CENTURY.**

**THIS IS THE STORY OF HOW IT ALL HAPPENED, AND WHAT THE
GROUP HAS BEEN DOING FOR ALL THESE YEARS.**

THE BIRTH OF A GROTTO

Aitkins Cave could be called the beginning of it all. It was August, 1946 when Penn Hills High School student Bob Dunn proceeded to his first cave in his 1941 Nash, led by a young lady who had heard of the cave through relatives. Bob's equipment consisted of a ball of twine, candle and flashlight. His companion preferred to remain at the cave entrance holding the other end of the string. However, it seems Bob braved the darkness for about an hour without the use of the life-saving twine and departed from the cave quite awed.

About a month later Bob saw Ralph Stone's book, The Caves of Pennsylvania at Carnegie Library and was quite surprised to learn that the largest cave in Pennsylvania was practically at his doorstep. He told his high school friends Dick Hoffmaster, Bob Ruffing and Ray Madsen about the book. Soon they were all studying the picture of Delaney's Cave and planning a trip.

It was the beginning of their senior year in high school when the four started out for their first formal cave trip. At the "Post Office" in Delaney's they met two other cavers, Bob and Lee Fisher, who were on their honeymoon. The group made several more trips that fall to caves in Western Pennsylvania.

On November 4, 1946, Life Magazine published an article on the exploration of Grapevine Cave by the Charleston Grotto of the NSS. This was the first time the Pittsburgh cavers realized that a national organization of cavers existed. Soon afterwards, the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette published an article on the discovery of Coon Cave near Blairsville by Carl Huttenstein and Sid Cellich from Pittsburgh. This article revealed that there were other cavers in the area. The group set out to locate the cave through the description furnished in the article. They failed. After several more unsuccessful attempts, they decided to ask an acquaintance, Dr. Graham Netting of Carnegie Museum, whose name also appeared in the article, for help. It was learned that Dr. Netting was an NSS member and that he had persuaded Carl and Sid to join. With Dr. Netting's directions, Coon Cave was finally located.

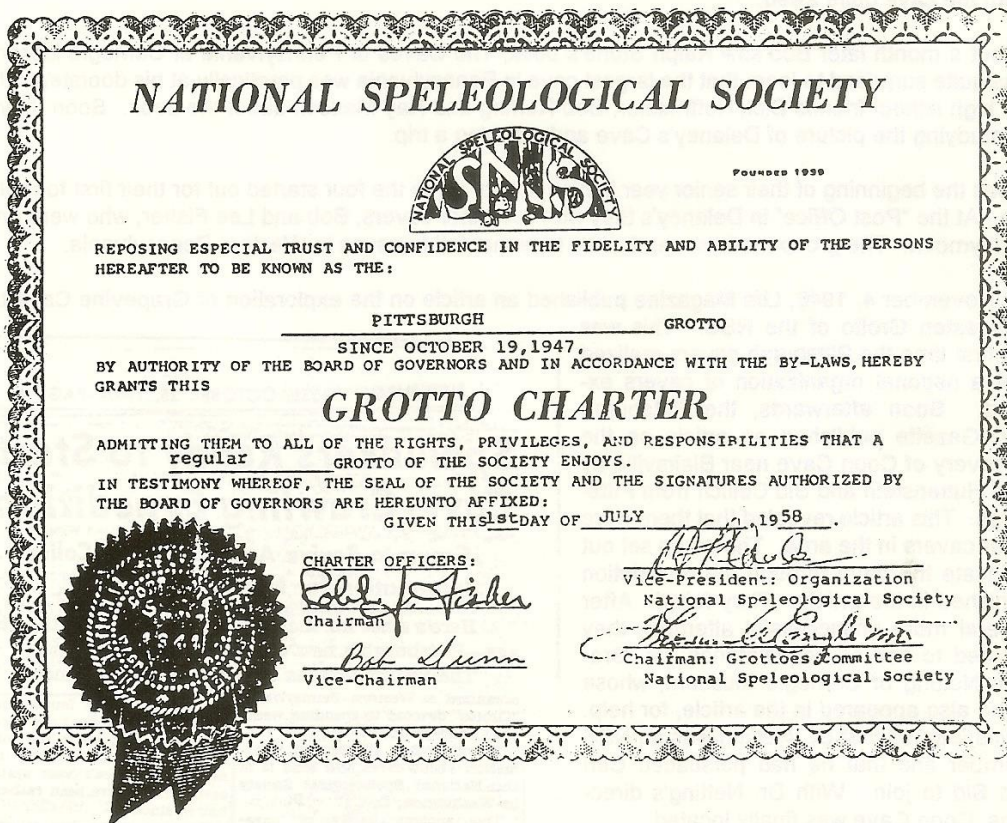
After that, Bob Dunn wrote to the NSS for cave data and information. On March 20,



1947, he received a letter from John Petrie, the NSS Secretary, forwarding not only cave data but also an application blank, a descriptive brochure and a Society membership list. Included was the statement: "Perhaps you would like to organize a Grotto?" Further inquiry brought more details and a model Grotto constitution. NSS President Bill Stephenson suggested a definite assignment of exploration work around Petersburg, West Virginia, in order to fill in a blank area on the cave map. By May, the Pittsburgh cavers had become NSS members and definitely planned to establish a Pittsburgh Grotto.

Permission to use the Herpetology Laboratory at Carnegie Museum for an organizational meeting was obtained and post card notices sent to local NSS members. The first meeting was held on Sunday, October 19, 1947 at 2:15pm. The following were present and constituted the charter membership: William Cellich, Clifford Davis, Bob Dunn, Norma Lee Fisher, Robert Fisher, Dick Hoffmaster, Carl Huttenstein, Graham Netting, and Bob Ruffing. Dr. Netting presided over the meeting, and Bob Dunn acted as Secretary. They adopted the model constitution for the grotto. In an early stroke of complex grotto-ship, they formed an excessive number of committees so that everyone would have some official capacity. The first Executive Board consisted of Bob Fisher, Cliff Davis, Dick Hoffmaster, Dr. Netting, and Bob Dunn. Fisher was elected Chairman, and Dunn the Secretary-Treasurer. This initial meeting then adjourned at 4pm.

Thus was the Grotto born.



**IT WAS HARD TO REALLY GET THE GROTTA GOING.
THE KOREAN WAR INTERFERED, BUT THE GROUP PERSISTED.**

EIGHT YEARS IN A STRUGGLE TO GROW

It took about eight years for the young grotto to really take hold, grow up, and mature. The Korean War period of American history, from 1950 to 1953, took a number of the more active members out of the area for a while, which reduced the level of activity somewhat for several years. Here is the story of the first eight years of Grotto history, a period while the group was struggling with identity and growth.

The young Grotto started holding monthly meetings at Carnegie Museum, and its membership increased steadily. The attendance at the next few meetings started including John Guilday, Allen McCrady, Ed Taylor, and Julia Staniland, among others. Within four months, about 45 persons attended the meeting. Each of these newcomers would eventually significantly contribute to the success of the Grotto.

The first official field trip of the club was to Delaney's Cave. Modest annual dues were established to help pay for expenses. Field trip schedules were published, either by postcard or by mimeo sheets.

These early fliers could be called the birth of the Grotto newsletter, but Bob Dunn finally suggested that the Grotto issue a format publication. Dick Hoffmaster was chosen to get it started.

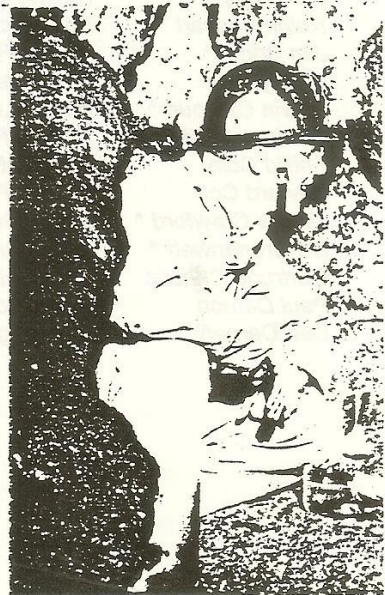
Through the first few years the club held meetings at locations other than the museum. Reportedly, this included several meetings at Mellon Institute. Finally, a permanent headquarters was found at the home of Mrs. Julia Staniland. It was located at 373 South Atlantic Avenue, between Bloomfield and Shadyside in Pittsburgh. Her home was completely at the disposal of the Grotto, and she donated a mimeograph machine for the club use. On August 10, 1948, the first "Netherworld News" appeared, edited by Dick Hoffmaster.

With a newsletter, a headquarters, and regular meetings, the Grotto made steady progress. The meetings usually had a very social atmosphere with movies, slides, and refreshments, and occasionally a guest of honor such as Dr. Stone, the Pennsylvania State Geologist. He would encourage field work for the Pennsylvania Cave Survey, and the Grotto took it to heart, helping with Western Pennsylvania.

However, all good things often come to a near-end. By late 1950, formal activity began to decline as some of the most active members left to serve in the Army. McCrady, Dunn and Hoffmaster temporarily left the area. Several who were left in the area, especially Bob Ruffing, kept the club going by electing officers, and sending in annual reports to the NSS. Several meetings were held per year, and field trips were down to one per month at the most. Still a fairly active group, but little growth.

As some of the members returned from the Army, by 1953, there was a small spurt of activity. Dick Hoffmaster and others were able to get more media publicity for the Grotto, and this helped attract some new members. Then, in early 1954, a surprising thing happened to the caving community in Pittsburgh. An annual convention of the NSS was held at the Webster Hall Hotel in Oakland. However, it was sponsored by the Philadelphia Grotto, not really a primary function of the Pittsburgh Grotto. Bob Dunn, Ed Taylor, and others both attended and contributed some of their talents to the success of the Convention.

Partly because of the convention, and the additional publicity, a number of newer cavers started joining the club. Paul Damon, a friend of Bob Dunn's, joined the club at this time.



Bob Ruffing
Delaney's Cave, 1948
From Carnegie Mellon Univ. News

AT THIS POINT, THE GROTTO WAS IN DIRE NEED OF EXPERIENCED HELP !

AND THEN WILLY ARRIVED

Sometimes it just takes one person to get a good thing going again after a rough period. The time was right for an experienced new caver to come along to help the Grotto move forward. Dr. William White, now known as an eminent Penn State professor, moved to Pittsburgh, and he assumed the needed role in helping the club come together again. Willy became an active NSS member in 1953, and joined the Nittany Grotto. In 1954 he helped form the Standing Stone Grotto. So, he was an experienced caver from another area. In 1955, he was not to be denied just because of his move to Pittsburgh.

After a few trips with the Pittsburgh Grotto, talk naturally got around to holding regular meetings again after so many years, and getting the newsletter going. Willy received permission to hold monthly Grotto meetings where he worked at the Mellon Institute in Oakland. He then accepted the editorship of the *Netherworld News*. His first issue in March 1955 announced a meeting at the Institute and the Grotto experienced the spurt in growth and activity it so desperately wanted. This crest of activity has never abated. At the first re-organizational meeting in March, 1955, everyone was asked to re-join the club even if they had previously been a member. Membership numbers were given out. Don Dragoo of Carnegie Museum spoke on the archaeological finds made at Jones' Quarry Cave.

Perhaps 100 people joined the club at some point between its founding in 1947 and its rebirth at the start of 1955. Although only 9 of these were Charter Members, all of these persons can be considered the Founder Members. Some of them whose names we can remember were:

FOUNDER MEMBERS (before 1955 reorganization)

<i>George Andrews *</i>	<i>Clifford Davis **</i>	<i>John Hinche</i>	<i>Graham Netting **</i>	<i>Donald Stevens</i>
<i>Vernon Bachelder</i>	<i>Frederick Dill</i>	<i>Dick Hoffmaster **</i>	<i>Robert Oates *</i>	<i>Constant Straub</i>
<i>Gilbert Bellino</i>	<i>Bob Dunn **</i>	<i>Fred Hoffmaster</i>	<i>Steven Paulick</i>	<i>Margaret Straub</i>
<i>Jordan Bihler</i>	<i>Eileen Dunn *</i>	<i>Paul Hollstein</i>	<i>Lewis Richardson</i>	<i>Edmund Taylor *</i>
<i>Jim Blake *</i>	<i>Ralph Feezel *</i>	<i>Arthur Hussey</i>	<i>Fred Rowland</i>	<i>Neil Taylor</i>
<i>Ralph Bossart *</i>	<i>Bob Fischer</i>	<i>Carl Huttenstine **</i>	<i>Robert Ruffing **</i>	<i>Walter Vogel</i>
<i>Jim Bright *</i>	<i>Verlee Fischer *</i>	<i>D. Kidwell</i>	<i>Russell Santmyers</i>	<i>Will White</i>
<i>L. Buvinger</i>	<i>M. Fisher</i>	<i>Howard Kling</i>	<i>John Saunders *</i>	<i>John Williamson *</i>
<i>Edwin Calhoun *</i>	<i>NormaLee Fisher**</i>	<i>Marion Lelong</i>	<i>Will Schnarrenberger *</i>	<i>Jean Winne</i>
<i>William Cellich **</i>	<i>Robert Fisher **</i>	<i>Warren Link</i>	<i>John Schwartz *</i>	** Charter Members
<i>Phillip Cole</i>	<i>Don Flister *</i>	<i>Frank Ludwig</i>	<i>Raioli Schweicker</i>	
<i>Edward Coll</i>	<i>William Foster</i>	<i>Delbert Matanin</i>	<i>Richard Shafer</i>	
<i>James Crawford *</i>	<i>Edwin Gage *</i>	<i>Allen McCrady *</i>	<i>L. Shields *</i>	<i>* Joined during first year, so would be 50-year members if still living.</i>
<i>Bill Cronenwett *</i>	<i>Jean Garity</i>	<i>Donald Mears</i>	<i>John Sochor</i>	
<i>Gertrude Christie</i>	<i>John Guilday *</i>	<i>Joe Melcher</i>	<i>Julia Staniland *</i>	
<i>Paul Damon</i>	<i>Peg Herdt</i>	<i>Lou Melcher</i>	<i>Michael Stavish</i>	
<i>Dan Darnieff</i>	<i>Edna Higbee</i>	<i>W. Merritt</i>		



NOW THAT THEY HAD SOLIDIFIED THEIR POSITION IN THE CAVING COMMUNITY, THEY WERE READY FOR GROWTH.

A NEW BEGINNING

The year 1955 marked the new beginning of a bright future for the Pittsburgh Grotto. The next 42 years have seen a very high level of activities, helped by a membership that was usually over 100 people.

Meetings were very well attended. New leadership emerged. Early, there were Dave Strunk, Dan Green, and others. However, the main sparkplug into the early 60's was still Bob Dunn, the quiet leader who simply kept things going.

Projects included the Pittsburgh Grotto Fieldhouse in Germany Valley, the Schoolhouse movie, the King Estate, the Speleo Digest, the Netherworld News, the NSS Library, and caving projects such as New Paris Sinks (paleontology), Jones Quarry (archaeology), and Swago Creek (exploration and mapping). An excellent balance of field work, and behind-the-scenes work, to keep everyone busy to the extent they wished.

Local cave areas became somewhat caved-out, so the field activity of necessity broadened its scope to include many other areas, especially Central and West Virginia.

Bob Dunn left Pittsburgh in the early 60's, and no natural leader emerged at this point. There was more fractured activity, but still plenty of activity. New leaders like Alan Haarr and Herb Black emerged, and took quite active roles both locally and in the NSS. And, there were still some people like Allen McCrady who started with the club in the 1940s and were still active sparkplugs. Allen, in fact, for years was the printing pro for the Pittsburgh Grotto Press.

In the late 1960s, there were three principal Grotto projects. First, the location, exploration and mapping of caves in Western Pennsylvania. Then, the location, exploration and mapping of caves in Tucker County, West Virginia. Lastly, there was a "special" project, kept somewhat quiet, to a large cave system in West Virginia (to protect the explorers, the name of the cave will not be revealed, meaning that your editor cannot remember which cave it was!).

By 1970 the Grotto had undergone a cyclic rise and fall in relative Grotto activity. An influx of newer active field cavers took the place of the former members. By this time, the Grotto headquarters in the King Estate was gone, the Speleo Digest project dropped, and the NSS Library moved elsewhere.

In its place, a new leadership of people like Charlie Williams, Don Schleicher, and Chuck Hempel

NATIONAL SPELEOLOGICAL SOCIETY PITTSBURGH GROTTO

MEETING MELLON INST. OCT. 22 1957 11:00 AM PIERRE SAINT MARTIN

10th ANNIVERSARY PARTY Oct. 26 1957 1:00 PM till ?

Treasure Hunt 1:00 PM DULANY'S CAVE

Spaghetti Dinner \$1.25 DULANY'S CAVE 5:30 PM

INTRIGUING ENTERTAINMENT AFTER DINNER

DON'T MISS IT

DEADLINE FOR RESERVATIONS 22 Oct. 1957

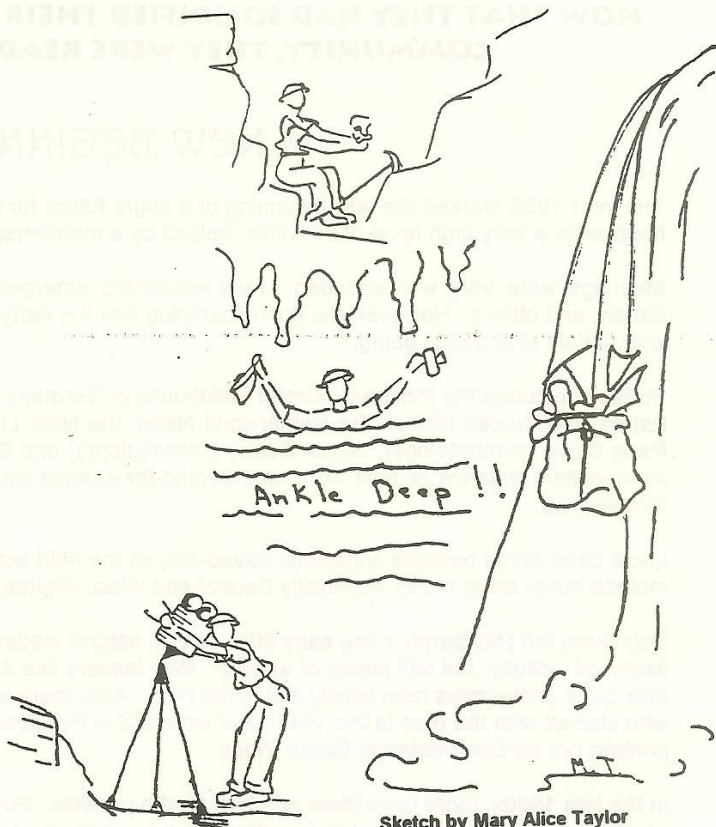
emerged, and led the club into a far-ranging program of field activity. The average distance for a regular club trip was greatly increased.

The trend was individual projects, with few Grotto projects. This in turn led to a somewhat smaller membership for a while, but still an active one.

Into the 1980s the new leadership consisted of people like Gary Storrick and Bru Randall. Bru was an experienced caver from other areas who moved to Pittsburgh.

Into the 1990s the Grotto persisted, with many new members and many new projects. New leadership like Ken Kramer took the reigns.

And so the Pittsburgh Grotto continues toward the 21st century.



Sketch by Mary Alice Taylor
From Netherworld News

THE GROTTA HAS BEEN A 50-YEAR SUCCESS, AND IS LOOKING FORWARD TO THE NEXT FIFTY; BUT, LOOKING BACK A FEW YEARS,

THE 1980s WERE BANNER YEARS

by Bru Randall

For me the 1980s were a big deal. In 1982 many Grotto members took part in organizing and taking part in the NSS Costa Rica Expedition. The organizers were all Pittsburgh Grotto members, John Weinel, Gary Storrick, and Chuck Hempel. Other Grotto members involved were Pam Long, Barbara Schomer, and Bru Randall. The Grotto also enlisted five members of the Explorers Club of Pittsburgh. for the expedition.

In June 1983 when the annual report was compiled the Grotto had only 43 members, of whom 29 were NSS members; by February 1989 the membership had grown to 131 with 70 being NSS members. Perhaps part of this growth was due to the initiation of an annual open house held each October, preceded by publicity in various media and through the universities. One program was a 3-D slide program given by Ralph Bossart and assisted by Charlie Plantz. (Ed note: In the late 50s we also had annual open houses, which worked just as well, and also had Ralph Bossart giving a 3-D presentation one year. How times can repeat themselves!).

During the 80s the Grotto met at its present meeting place in room 203 of Thaw Hall on the University

of Pittsburgh campus. This was due to the efforts of Vic Schmidt, a professor and Grotto member. During this time the Grotto was allowed to build a small storage cabinet in a room to store caving equipment so it would be available for use by beginners. Most Grotto meetings had a slide show or a guest speaker.

Grotto training included several vertical classes in which several of the Grotto's current officers got some of their initial training. There were classroom and bridge training, and in-cave trips. The Grotto also ran beginner and intermediate trips to many nearby caves, as well as to West Virginia.

Grotto members took part in regional and national cave rescue training both as students and as instructors. In November 1983 the Grotto sponsored a weekend cave rescue orientation course presented by the national Cave rescue Commission. The Grotto also organized a First Responder class that was tailored to cavers and other wilderness users. This was a predecessor to the present day Wilderness First Responder courses. This training paid off as several times the members were called to participate in cave rescues in the region.

Grotto members were actively involved in surveying projects in the Friar's Hole System in West Virginia, Roppel Cave in Kentucky, and Twin Columns Cave in West Virginia. Twin Columns was an "official" Grotto project led by Walt Hamm.

And then there was the mapping. Gary Storrick completed the map of Loyalhanna Creek Cave. Charlie Plantz wanted help mapping Bradys Bend Cave! Askon Hollow Cave was mapped, as well as Con and Copperhead and others in nearby Westmoreland County.

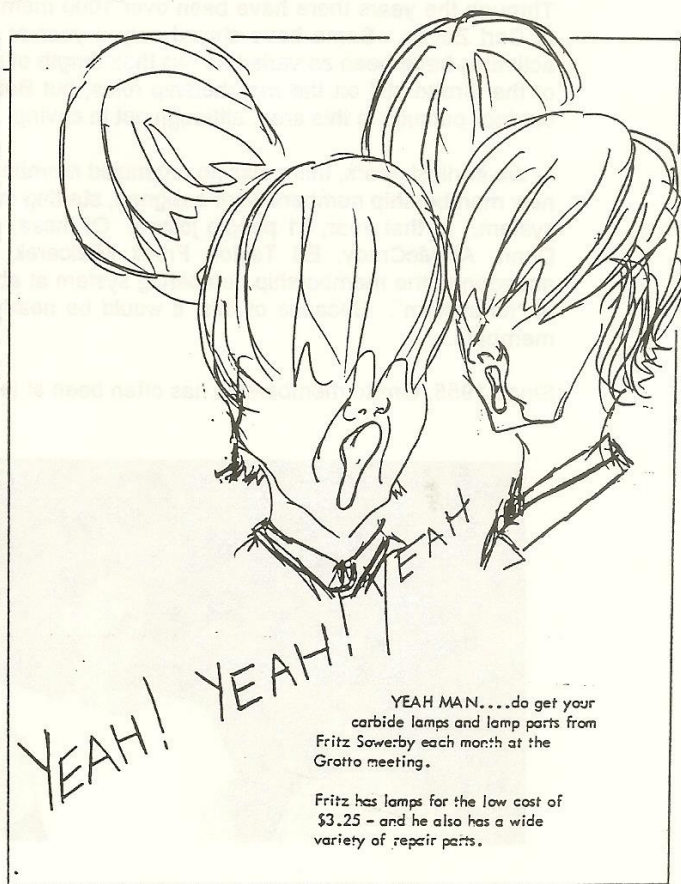
Grotto members went international as never before, including Mexican caves.

On the conservation front Walt Hamm served as Conservation Chairman of the Grotto for a number of years and set up a cave register program in coordination with the NSS cave register program. The register data was also used to invite non-organized cavers to our annual open house. The Grotto also worked with the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy to protect Askon Hollow Cave. And, many a cave cleanup.

In the area of cave science, Grotto members assisted in the collection of paleomagnetic samples in Bone-Norman Cave and with bone digs at the Trout Rocks caves, all in West Virginia.

Grotto cavers also caved for fun. Trips to TAG, Mexico, Central America and beyond as well as many local and weekend trips. On the fun side, there was the Old Timers Reunions. In 1987, Bill Bradwell and Marshall Fausold chaired the event. Grotto members still are active in making sure the OTR happens.

All together the Grotto was very active in the 80s. A great group of people did a lot of work and many of them are still active today.



AND NOW THAT THE CHRONOLOGICAL HISTORY IS ESTABLISHED, WE GET THE REST OF THE STORY

GROTTO FACTS AND FIGURES

The Present Grotto

In this 50th year of Grotto history, we find a large caving club still actively pursuing their goals and interests in the hobby. The current membership totals 111 cavers. Meetings are held, as they have been for some years, in Thaw Hall of the University of Pittsburgh. As they have been almost forever, they are on the fourth Wednesday of each month.

Several of the nine Charter Members of the Grotto are still "around", including Bob Dunn (who is in California), Dick Hoffmaster (who is in West Virginia), and Bob Ruffing (who lives near Pittsburgh). They were all high school students at the time of the Grotto formation. Several persons who attended meetings in the few months after the Grotto formation are also around. Coming to mind are Ed Taylor (who lives close to Pittsburgh) and Allen McCrady (who lives in Idaho).

Grotto Members Through the Years

Through the years there have been over 1000 members of the Pittsburgh Grotto, from Richard Accetta to Carl Zovko. Some have stayed only a year or less, some for 50 years. Their pursuits of caving activities have been as varied as has their length of membership. Bob Dunn is the only charter member of the Grotto still on the membership roles, but Bob Ruffing, another charter member is still active in outdoor pursuits in this area, although not in caving.

In the earliest years, there was no organized membership records. But, with the re-organization in 1955, new membership numbers were assigned, starting in March. All older members had to rejoin in the new system. In that year, 81 people joined. Of those, only 6 are still Grotto members (Paul Damon, Bob Dunn, Al McCrady, Ed Taylor, Frank Mielcarek, and Harold Hamilton). About 1970 the Grotto abandoned the membership numbering system at about 406, and depended again on the earlier system of "no system". Because of this, it would be nearly impossible to cull an entire listing of all the past members.

Since 1955, Grotto membership has often been at least 100 members, sometimes many more.



Charlene McElhinney and Al Kosmal
Active Grotto members,
and Netherworld News editors in 1965 and 66

**PITTSBURGH GROTTO OFFICERS
1947 to 1997**

Year	Chairman	Vice Chairman	Secretary	Treasurer	Programs	Editor
1947	Robert Fisher		Bob Dunn	Bob Dunn		
1948	Will Schnarrenberger		Bob Dunn			Dick Hoffmaster
1949	Will Schnarrenberger		Bob/Norma Fisher	Dick Hoffmaster		James Bright
1950	James Bright		Bob Dunn	Dick Hoffmaster		
1951	James Bright		Bob Dunn			
1952	Bob Ruffing		Bob Dunn			
1953	Bob Ruffing		Bob Dunn			
1954	Bob Ruffing		Bob Dunn			
1955	Dick Hoffmaster	Ralph Bossart	Allen McCrady	Paul Damon		William White
1956	Dale Acklin	Frank Mielcarek	Allen McCrady	Paul Damon		William White
1957	Thomas; Bossart	George Beck	Allen McCrady	Russ Howard	Diess; Stein	William White
1958	Dave Strunk	James Fisher	Graham Ward	Bill McWilliams	Rita Battistoli	Allen McCrady
1959	Dave Strunk	Jay Edwards	Wes McGrew	Jack Webman	Frank Mielcarek	Viera Kulamer
1960	Dan Green	Dick Hoffmaster	George Simon	Jerry Frederick	Wally Jones	Anne Ellisher
1961	Dan Green	Pat Weidner	Hermine Zotter	Jerry Frederick	Fred Kissell	Allan Haarr
1962	Guy Hubler	Frank Mielcarek	Herb Black	Jerry Frederick	Fred Kissell	Allan Haarr
1963	Al Haarr	Godwin; Brown	Black; Dan Perry	Frederick; Burns	Fred Kissell	Bev Frederck
1964	Al Haarr	Jim Burns	Sue Allardice	Dan Perry	Fred Kissell	Janet Davis
1965	Bill Hibler	Fred Donofrio	Sue Allardice	Dan Perry	Fred Kissell	Davis; Kosmel
1966	Herb Black	Moses; Hempel	Donofrio; Wick	Dan Perry	Sue Allardice	McElhinny; Damon
1967	Bruce Godwin	Dilley; Damon	Patti Wick	Donofrio; Hempel	Margi Shaw	Damon; Do Haarr
1968	Richard Schroth	Kevin Murphy	Wick; Calway	Wes Grady	Bruce Godwin	Doris Haarr
1969	Charles Williams	Bruce Kirchner	Kathy Knott	Ron Bergman	Vic Schmidt	Don Schleicher
1970	Charles Williams	Bruce Kirchner	Kathy Knott	Ron Bergman	Vic Schmidt	Don Schleicher
1971	Don Schleicher	John C. Hempel	Patti Taylor	Robert New	Alan Haarr	Don Schleicher
1972	Don Schleicher	John C. Hempel	Barbara Turner	Robert New	Robert Winner	Don Schleicher
1973	Francis Kacsmar	Tim Kilby	Barbara Turner	Robert New	Ann Poraczky	Don Schleicher
1974	Barbara Turner	Barry Walker	Bill Johnston	Ray Povirk	Alan Haarr	Tim Kirby
1975	Edmund Taylor	Gary Storrick	Pam Long	Marshall Fausold	Tim Kirby	Pam Long
1976	Edmund Taylor	Gary Storrick	Barbara Williams	Marshall Fausold	Haarr; Godwin	Charles Williams
1977	Mark Steed	John Zidian	Carol Vesely	Marshall Fausold	Cole Van Ormer	Long/ Hempel
1978	Don Schleicher	John Zidian	Carol Vesely	Marshall Fausold	Cole Van Ormer	Long/ Hempel
1979	John Weinel	Barry Baumgartner	Stan Flinger	Mary Alice Taylor	Cole Van Ormer	Long/ Hempel
1980	John Weinel	Frank Lincoln	Marion Imblum	Fred Held	Don Barchy	Pam Long
1981	Gary Storrick	Frank Lincoln	Lynn Taylor	Marshall Fausold	Don Barchy	pAM IONG
1982	Gary Storrick		Lynn Taylor	Marshall Fausold		bARB riTTS
1983	Bru Randall	Barbara Schomer	Lynn Taylor	Marshall Fausold	John Weinel	Barb Ritts
1984	Bru Randall	Bill Bradwell	Lynn Taylor	Marshall Fausold	Tony Knaus	Barb Ritts
1985	Bru Randall	Bill Bradwell	Lisa/Rex Hall	Lynn Taylor	Tom Freidline	Ritts; Schomer
1986	Marshall Fausold	Bill Bradwell	Marilyn Smith	Rich Fogel	Kramer; L. Taylor	Ritts; Knaus; Long
1987	Ken Kramer	Barb Ritts	Marilyn Smith	Rich Fogel	Schomer; Randall	Ritts; Knaus; Long
1988	Bru Randall	Lynn Taylor	Marilyn Smith	Rich Fogel	Paul Damon, Jr.	Ritts; Long
1989	Lynn Taylor	Brian Preaux	Lisa Hall	George Cebulka	Chuck Plantz	Ritts; Kennedy
1990	Barb Ritts	Brian Preaux	Alice Manko	George Cebulka	Lisa Hall	T and M Kennedy
1991	Brian Preaux	Randy Elder	Cindy Venn	Barb Ritts	Lisa Hall	Steve Kovach
1992	Ken Kramer	Chris Werner	Cindy Venn	Barb Ritts	Brian Preaux	Rick Kirscht
1993	Randy Elder	Brian Preaux	Debbie Elder	Barb Ritts	Rick Kirscht	Storrick; Elder
1994	Brian Preaux	Don Bennett	Mike Singer	Barb Ritts	Lisa Hall	Randy Elder
1995	Mike Singer	Don Bennett	Lisa Hall	Barb Ritts	Ken Kramer	Dennis Meiko
1996	Ken Kramer	Don Bennett	Mike Singer	Barb Ritts	(none)	Meiko; Kirscht
1997	Kramer, Pierce	Carl Pierce	Mike Singer	Barb Ritts	Lisa Hall	Rick Kirscht

1964 Grotto Party at the McCrady Townhouse

(l to r)

At left - Mrs Netting

On Stairs - Ruth Imblum, aul Implum, Mrs. Bossart, Nash Barton,
Guy Hubler, Graham Netting, Barton

Top Row - Ralph Bossart, ? , Leppla, Harold Hamilton,
Allen McCrady, Bert Loyd, John Guilday, Dan Green

Mid Row - Jack Leppla, Rita Hamilton, Mrs. Loyd, Alice Guilday

Front Row - Bev Frederich, Mrs Leppla, Jerry Frederich,
Marilyn McCrady, Mrs Barton



Grotto Histories

It was Hermine Zotter who first made sure the story of the Pittsburgh Grotto was chronicled before it was forgotten. In 1957 she gathered Bob Dunn, Allen McCrady, Bob Ruffing, Dick Hoffmaster, Ed Taylor and Julia Staniland to reminisce aloud about the gold-old-days since 1947. She then prepared an excellent history of the first 10 years of the Grotto.

The 20th anniversary went by without another history. But, in 1977 Paul Damon pulled together what information he could and published a 30-year story. In 1987, he did the same for a 40-year story. The information contained in these three publications helped form the basis of this 50th year story of the Pittsburgh Grotto.

**NOW YOU KNOW WHAT THE CLUB HAS BEEN LIKE, AND HOW IT HAS
FARED THROUGH THE YEARS. NOW, JUST WHAT HAS THE CLUB BEEN
DOING AT HOME AND IN THE FIELD?**

GROTTO ACTIVITIES AND PROJECTS

The story of the Grotto could not be complete without a close look at many of the projects undertaken by the club through the years. This is the story of a number of them, primarily ones involving most of the membership rather than individual or small group projects.

Scientific Projects

The New Paris Sinks Project and the Jones Quarry Cave Project were two of the longest-lasting and most important scientific projects ever undertaken as formal projects by the club. One was paleontology, one was archaeology, but both held much interest. Both projects were conducted in conjunction with the Carnegie Museum.

The New Paris Sinks Project perhaps started as a project of the Explorers Club of Pittsburgh (ECP), in that ECP member Ed Coll was the first to hear of the sinks and the elk skull that had been found there many years before. In 1948 the ECP and the Grotto had a joint field trip to the area.

Subsequently, it became a major "bone dig", with people like Allen McCrady and John Guilday of the Grotto helping lead much of the early work, along with direction by Drs. Doult and Kay of the Museum.

COME TO NEW PARIS

For a Gay, Fun-Filled Weekend

in an

Enchanting, Rustic Setting, (we warned you)

Modern Conveniences (Bears & Roebuck provided)

Free Food and Lodging (least they can do for 12 hours hard labor)

Charming Hosts (they allow coffee breaks now)

*Gala Saturday Night Party *-*

** Subsequent Hike - Optional*

MAKE RESERVATIONS IN ADVANCE -

CALL: R. Hamilton or A. McCrady

The excavation of the material from New Paris was extremely valuable from a scientific point of view. In 1956 Grotto member Ralph Bossart helped get things going again. Monthly trips to the site (in Central Pennsylvania) were conducted for quite a few years.

The Jones Quarry Cave Project started about 1955. In another case of "Davies Didn't Crawl", ancient human remains had been found in a part of the cave not mapped in Davies' book on the Caves of West Virginia. The Carnegie Museum also quickly took note, and in early 1955 a trip was taken to Falling Waters, West Virginia, to begin a study of the find. It was significant.



Tom Lageman and Yorich

Indian Remains from
Jones quarry Cave Project, late 1950s

Photo courtesy of Julia Staniland
and Paul Damon

In an early version of the famous blasting techniques for which the Pittsburgh Grotto had become famous, a new entrance over the bone area was opened. Paul Damon participated on this trip, and recalls the early methods of mapping to establish just where the blasting should occur, and the subsequent precision of the site selected!

Dick Hoffmaster, Bob Dunn, Ralph Bossart, Allen McCrady, and Walt Stein were some of the most active Grotto members on the project.

Scientifically the find was of considerable interest as the occurrence of Indian cave burials east of the Mississippi were rare. The main burial crypt was located such that there had to be another entrance somewhere in times past, because the Indians would not have traversed the route first taken by the cavers.

These Indians would place the remains of a departed person in a bag, or sack, and hang it from a tree. After decomposition was complete, the bones were placed in cracks and crevices in the crypt room, and thus were found in the same position by the cavers.

The above two projects took many years to complete. However, by the mid 1980s, another scientific project came to the Grotto. Paleomagnetism studies were done from samplings retrieved from the Bone-Norman system in WV during dozens of trips by Grotto members such as Ken Kramer over a three-year period. The results were published as a masters thesis by Bob Selfridge.

On the Art of Scrounging

Allen McCrady wrote. He wrote more. And then he wrote about scrounging! For those of you who are "not in the know", the Pittsburgh Grotto was famous for being the experts in the "Art of Scrounging". Allen even wrote an editorial about it back in '56. Paraphrased, it went something like this.

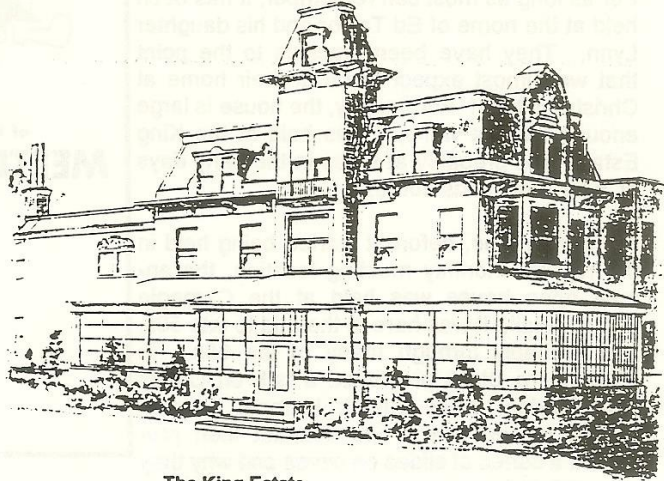
All non-professional societies have one problem in common, the lack of money to purchase equipment, supplies, and services. There are three possible solutions: Legacies from rich members; high dues; or by the exercise of the Art of Scrounging the items themselves rather than paying for them. That is, procuring by beg, borrow, or swap.

The Pittsburgh Grotto constantly scrounged. The majority of the members were experts in the art. At the time, the Grotto leased a field house and furnished both it and the Grottos' formal offices in Pittsburgh, both facilities obtained almost rent-free. Also, it owned a panel truck, a generator, a winch, movie cameras, sump pumps, mimeograph machine and supplies, a typewriter (for you youngsters, this was the predecessor of the computer - ed.), and had available a variety of technical and professional services available ranging from legal to laboratory. All obtained with almost no cash. Later, the Grotto had a full printing shop for cavers, in the form of the Pittsburgh Grotto Press.

Allen went on to propose that the NSS could benefit from the expertise of the Grotto.

Grotto Headquarters

Through the early years, the Grotto had two formal headquarters. First, there was the home of Julia Staniland near Baum Blvd. in Shady-side. This mansion-sized house was perfect. Then, by late 1955 it was moved to the King Estate near the Highland Park Zoo. Later, it was again at Julia Stanilands house. For the past 25 or so years there has not been a formal headquarters.



The King Estate

The King Estate was an estate presented to the City of Pittsburgh by a Mr. King, for the purpose of housing scientific and cultural societies.

The Grotto was offered two rooms on the third floor of the mansion, plus a storage room, which they accepted in November 1955. The City would maintain the rooms, and there was almost no cost for their use. The Grotto first used the space for an office, for Board Meetings, for storing equipment, and as a permanent mailing address. Later, it was used to house the NSS Library (later the Library moved to Julia Stanilands house).

Grotto Meetings

There have been a few changes in the monthly meeting locations of the Grotto through the years, but there has been one constant. For the most part, it has been in the Oakland area of Pittsburgh.

Meetings have usually been held on the fourth Wednesday of each month, but for a time, in order to get a meeting room, it was on the first Wednesdays.

First, it was at Carnegie Museum. At various times, it was Julia Stanilands home about 1 mile from Oakland. Then, in 1955, it became the Conference Room at Mellon Institute where Will White worked. This lasted for many years, at least into the mid 1960s. Sometimes in the 60s it was held again at Carnegie Museum. Then there was the Scaife Lecture Hall on the Carnegie-Mellon University campus, as early as 1968, probably arranged by Hugh Young. After this, there was a meeting room in one of the buildings on the University of Pittsburgh campus adjacent to the Carnegie Library. And, some years later, it moved to its present quarters in Thaw Hall, also on the Pitt campus.

At least two monthly meetings a year, sometimes three, have been held at alternate locations. For many

years the May meeting has been a Grotto auction. For a number of years it was held in the backyard (once in the basement) of Julia Stanilands home. Then, it moved to Ed Taylor's house in Mt. Lebanon where it is still being held. For most of the time it has been hosted by Ed's daughter, Lynn.

Every Christmas there is a Christmas party. For as long as most can remember, it has been held at the home of Ed Taylor and his daughter Lynn. They have been gracious to the point that we almost expect to be at their home at Christmas time! Fortunately, the house is large enough. For a while, it was held at the King Estate, and probably at times in the early days at Julia Stanilands home.

For a long time, before it started being held in the regular monthly meeting location, the annual open house was held at the Carnegie Lecture Hall. It was here in the mid to late 50s, and probably through many of the 60s. In 1966, Herb Black presented a talk on Caves and Caving, while Chuck Hempel demonstrated caving gear. Vic Schmidt then presented a series of slides on caves and why they are explored.



The Pittsburgh Grotto
of the National Speleological Society will hold a
MEETING - Open to the public

Program: "The Story of Caves"

Wed., May 20 8:00 pm

Lecture Hall, Carnegie Museum

Slide Show ●

Speakers ●

Refreshments ●

Admission: FREE ●

1966

Board of Governors meetings now days are held at various members homes. However, at one time they were held in the NSS Library, which was located at the King Estate. And, of course, in the early days it was at Julia Stanilands home.

Movie Making

Several early attempts were made by the Grotto to take movies in caves. About 1950 some movies were taken in several caves, including Delaney's Cave in Pennsylvania, and Cass Cave in West Virginia. In the Cass Cave work, a long electrical line was strung from the entrance, where there was a portable electric generator, back to the drop into the large room. Bob Dunn carried the equipment up to Cass with his jeep, then ferried people back and forth.

However, it is for a movie taken in Schoolhouse Cave, West Virginia, where the Grotto pioneered early cave movie making by Grottoes.

On Thanksgiving weekend, 1955, 27 members of the Grotto went to Schoolhouse, along with the Grotto truck and masses of very heavy equipment.

Borrowed equipment for the project included Ralph Bossarts portable generator, a larger portable generator from Monsignor Kushner, and 2000 feet of No. 4 double wire rubber-covered electrical cable from club member Challis Bruce (try pulling this through a cave! It seemed to weigh tons!). Generators and transformers were installed to sent 220 volts back into the cave, with 110 volt electric lights placed in a number of parts of the cave. Telephones were installed in several parts of the cave to permit communication.

Actual lighting was done with photofloods; three pairs of 375 watt bulbs were used, operated from the 220 volt line. Both a Kodak, and a Victor Animatograph were used to photograph the sequences. You should have seen the big room lighted with photofloods!

At least 7 trips were made to complete the movie, and over 2000 feet of film was exposed. The completed movie was a feature at the 1957 NSS Convention.

The final print was approximately 1600 feet in length, and ran about twenty minutes. It was a pictorial record of a trip through Schoolhouse Cave, from the planning stage to the Hodag Room and return. Because of different people who could make each trip, the three persons who are the stars in the movie were actually about six people. Paul Damon recalls that Jay Edwards was one of the stars.

Field Headquarters

Just what was the Pittsburgh Grotto Fieldhouse? Just one of the best things that could have happened to a club trying to establish themselves in the West Virginia caving scene.

This project started as a jest. Ralph Bossart had occasionally rented Mr. and Mrs. Smith's empty farm house near Seneca Caverns in Pendleton County, West Virginia, while doing some photography in Seneca Caverns. When plans for the Schoolhouse movie were made, Ralph suggested that the movie crew use the house as a headquarters.

While there, Dale Acklin jokingly suggested that they buy the house. Ralph said it could probably be done! However, when Mr. Smith arrived on the scene, Ralph asked if the house could be rented for \$150 for the year, and he said yes. Thus, a field headquarters.

It was here that the famous Pittsburgh Grotto "art of scrounging" was fully developed.

The house was empty, light fixtures were missing, the hand pump was broken, and there was the ghost in the attic. First, a wood stove was purchased for \$9.

Allen McCrady was also an attorney, so he prepared a lease agreement, and several members came up with the money. On New Years eve, 33 people gathered at the house for a party, the first of many famous New Years Eve parties. The house was then opened up to any NSS member who was willing to pay \$1.25 for a weekend stay.

Volunteers worked on the house and many improvements were made in a short time. The Bossart family and Dick Hoffmaster did much of the preliminary work, and Allen McCrady, Bob Dunn and Ed Taylor did much of



Pittsburgh Grotto Fieldhouse, 1950s

Photo shows back porch
Seneca Caverns entrance is 50 yards to the right
Outhouse is to the left!

Photo courtesy of William White

the mechanical work. Mary Alice Taylor would prepare meals for the workers. Bunks were built in the upper rooms with money from members who "purchased" them, retaining the right to bunk space whenever they visited.

By June 1956, an open house party was held for the purpose of getting acquainted with the neighbors in Germany Valley.

The field headquarters continued for a number of years. Mrs. Smith was famous for opening her nearby home and prepare meals for the hungry cavers, who were more than willing to pay for this pleasurable service. At one point, a private telephone was connected between the field house and Mrs. Smith's house so the cavers could know when the meals were ready. Somehow, Mrs. Smith's woodstove heating her house always was more effective in its effort that the Grotto members using their woodstove for the same purpose! Experience counts!

When the house no longer fit the needs of the Pittsburgh Grotto, the Potomac Speleological Club of Arlington, Virginia, took over the lease for a number more years.

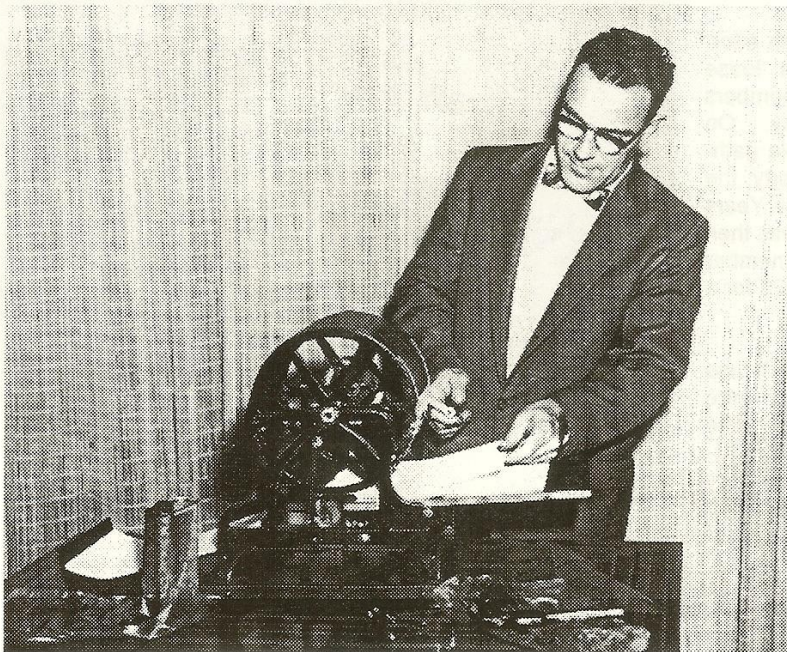
In addition to the Germany Valley field house, there was the Sugar Shack in the Swago Creek area of West Virginia. It was used for many, many years when caving in that area, and was on the property of the late Dallas McKeever, who was an honorary member of the Grotto.

The Netherworld News

In 1948 the Netherworld News, the Grotto newsletter, began its run of almost 50 years. Although sometimes monthly, sometimes bi-monthly or quarterly, and sometimes occasionally, it has persisted.

It all began in the summer of 1948. Bob Dunn, Dick Hoffmaster, Will Schnarrenberger and Julia Staniland were discussing the desirability of a headquarters and more efficient communication for the Grotto. Julia had an answer for both problems. She not only volunteered her home, but volunteered a mimeograph machine.

The first edition, edited by Dick Hoffmaster, is reproduced in this history. Thereafter a number of people, jointly and severally, produced issues as time and opportunity permitted. Bob Dunn, Dick Hoffmaster,



**Will Schnarrenberger
operates the original
Pittsburgh Grotto Press
About 1955**

Tex Cronenwett, Will Schnarrenberger, Jim and Clara Bright and Bob Ruffing all took a turn with typing stencils and hand cranking The Pittsburgh Grotto Press (early 1900s version). In 1949 a photo page was produced.

The formal version of the newsletter ceased in mid-1950, followed by a series of postcards and flyers.

The regular Netherworld News was again started in March 1955 when Willy White assumed editorship. It was again a monthly publication, and immediately started using quite a few pictures, a new masthead drawn by member Ed Gage, and cover photos. The content of the articles was unusually strong.

Scrounging around for a cheap way to produce the growing bulk of the Netherworld, in December 1956 Willy White arranged to have it typed on an IBM electric typewriter and reproduced on an electrically operated mimeograph. Julia Stanilands hand-operated machine was no more.

In 1959 Viera Kulamer started having the text, illustrations, cartoons and covers multilithed. Then, in April 1960 the multilith purchased to produce the Speleo Digest became available to the Grotto. The unit was acquired. It was a Model 1250, capable of reproducing at a rate of 6000 sheets per hour. At first, it was installed in the basement of the King Estate. Then, it was in the basement of several members until it was eventually unrepairable. At this point, the Pittsburgh Grotto Press ceased.

In the early 1960's, Bob Dunn would prepare the covers. Bev Hofecker would type the paper masters. The Grotto would help produce the issue. Later in the 1960s, an entire staff was producing the newsletter. There were editors, assistant editors, cover photo specialists, typists, printers, etc. A truly team effort. Allen McCrady was often the printer for many, many years, as only he could understand the intricacies of the Pittsburgh Grotto Press (or so others would say!). Also, several people hosted the Press by allowing it to be in their basement.

Today, editor Rick Kirscht does everything but copying, which is usually done commercially. But, I still think it was more fun to have our own press

The Speleo Digest

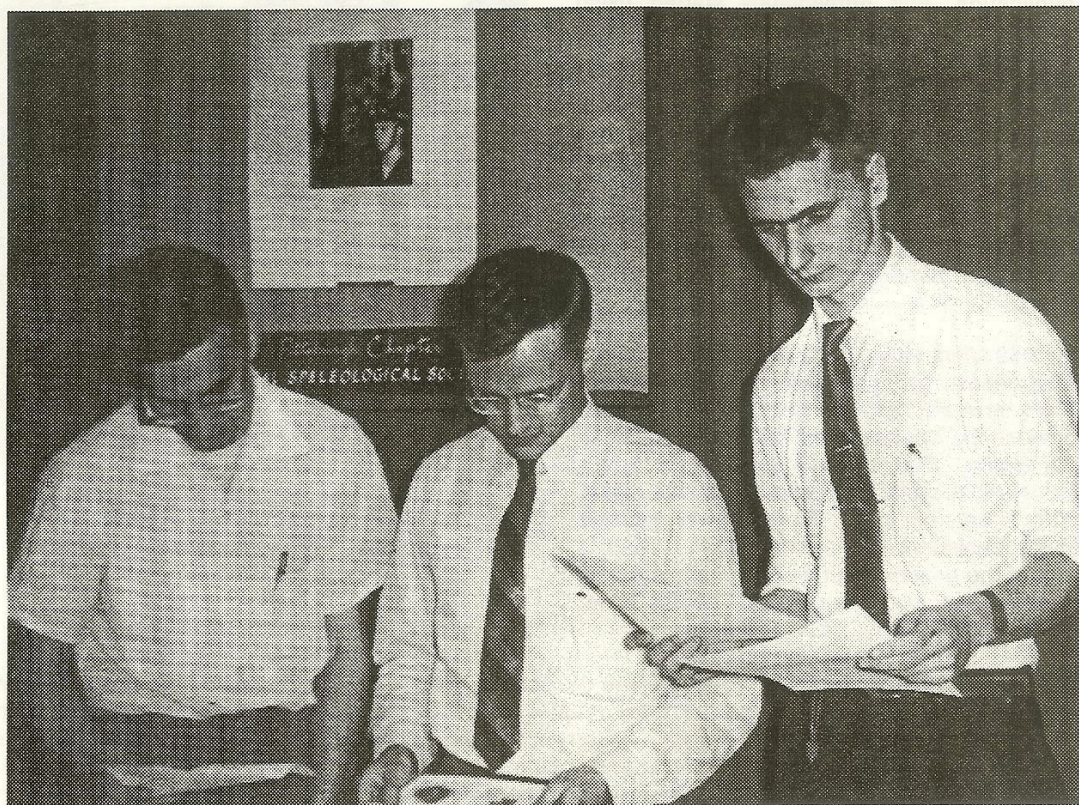
During the summer of 1956, Bob Dunn conceived the idea that all speleological articles of value published by various Grotto newsletters should be compiled under one cover in a more permanent form and made available to all persons interested in speleology. Bob made known the idea to Willy White and Russ Howard, who considered it an excellent idea and joined him as editors. By September, letters



The Pittsburgh Grotto Press, 1960 version
Model 1250 Multilith Duplicator
(l to r) Allen McCrady, Dick Hoffmaster, Alan Haarr

were sent to the Grotto newsletter publishers requesting permission to reprint material from their newsletters. Ed Thomas and Pat Condrón volunteered to do the typing job. The editors, wishing to aid the NSS Library, nationalized the project by providing that any profits would go to the Library as a special fund for the purchase of new publications. The 1957 NSS Convention was set as the deadline date for completion of the first publication, to be known as *Speleo Digest* - 1956.

Ed Taylor prepared the index and title page, and Hermine Zotter joined the typing staff. The Gulf Research and Development Printing Shop started printing at a furious rate. Finally, a large crew assembled at the King Estate office for final assembly of the 150-page book. The 1956 *Speleo Digest* was then taken to the 1957 NSS Convention and placed on sale for \$2.00. Paul Damon became a sales agent for the Digest and took a large number of copies to Washington DC, where he now lived, for sale to the people in that area.



Founding Speleo Digest Editors, 1957
(l to r) Will White, Bob Dunn, Russ Howard

The Cave Capsule

The Pittsburgh Grotto may also be unique in the caving community for their Cave Capsule. In early 1979, the story goes, Grotto Chairman John Weinell asked "If there are time capsules, why not a Cave Capsule?" This started the members thinking. Soon thereafter, this thinking turned to reality.

Where would you place a capsule? The Grotto had an obvious answer. Laurel Caverns. This commercial cave would be a protected environment for the capsule. Cave owner and Grotto member Dave Cale was happy to oblige. It was installed in a small nook to the side of the dining room in the cave, partially enclosed by concrete to be sure it stayed in place. A small section of the rounded side is all that can be seen.

Most important was the capsule itself, which was fabricated from materials donated by Jones and Laughlin Steel Corporation. Placed inside were several hundred documents which were intended to share the caving techniques and knowledge of 1979 with the cavers of the year 2079. The contents will show how equipment and methods evolved in one century into hopefully more efficient and safer caving techniques.

As a group effort, it went well beyond the bounds of the Grotto. Contributions of money and materials came in from cavers and cave clubs all over the United States. There were books, pamphlets, programs, Grotto patches, Gibbs Ascenders, climbing tools, carbide lamp, electric head lamp, a caving boot, rope samples, etc. Tim Kirby donated the cement.

Fred Held was Chairman of the Cave Capsule Committee, with a lot of assistants. Chuck Shaw got the materials from J & L. Paul Damon gathered up much of the books and historical items for the Capsule. Several dealers donated some of their stock.

The capsule was interred on September 15, 1979, at about 4pm, during the Fall M.A.R. held at Laurel Caverns. Each year thereafter, during the Grotto picnic in September, Grotto members traverse the cave down to the capsule and toast the event.

Cable ladders

The Pittsburgh Grotto was in the forefront of the development and use in the United States of cable ladders as a cave exploring technique. In fact, they were probably the first group to make one in the United States, and they apparently made many improvements in the design. This was therefore the FIRST first among several technique developments they pioneered.

Ed Taylor was among the group who started this revolutionary technique in the States. He recalls:

In the late 1940's, soon after the formation of the Pittsburgh Grotto, the group read with great envy about the lightweight French cable ladders. I contacted their inventor, Robert de Joly, who was quite willing to sell them to the Grotto. Unfortunately the price was too high for a student budget, so the group set out to make ladders of their own.

The French ladders used rungs made of solid rods of Elektron, a magnesium alloy. Holes were drilled near the ends for the cables to slip through. As I recall the rungs were also drilled and threaded axially and set screws were inserted to fix the rungs in place along the cables.

The first cable ladder in Pittsburgh and, to the best of my knowledge, in the U.S., was made in January, 1950. I was fresh from a course in strength of materials and felt that the design could be improved by making rungs of hollow tubing instead of solid rods. Accordingly, I procured the necessary materials and a group of us built about 21 1/2 feet of prototype ladder in Dick Hoffmaster's basement. The participants were Bob Dunn, Dick Hoffmaster, Bob Ruffing and myself. Dick had a very good workshop with a drill press and other tools for the job.

To save costs the rungs were of aluminum alloy tubing rather than magnesium rod and the cable was galvanized steel aircraft control cable. First we cut and drilled the rungs and strung them on the cables. A pin (actually a carpet tack) was then forced between the strands of the cable

inside the end of each rung. Molten type metal was then poured in around the cable and pin to form a solid plug which would keep the rung from slipping along the cable. Type metal was used because it was supposed to expand on cooling, thus filling up any voids around the cable and pin and fixing the rung more securely to the cable. A wad of paper had been previously inserted to keep the molten metal from filling up the entire hollow center of the rung. The rungs were spaced slightly more than 12 inches apart.

The prototype was tested a number of times over the next year or so and eventually retired as improved models were made. I still have it (the prototype). The pin and cast plug attachment method was the weakest point of the prototype and the crimped sleeves (used later) were much superior. Bob Dunn took the lead in making subsequent improvements.

Much of the improvements came during the 50's so that by 1962 a pretty good design was in use.

Paul Damon recalls that most of the early trips he participated in were using these ladders. They were used in most of the early explorations in the Swago Creek area in the mid- to late-fifties.

In the Netherworld News issue Volume 2 Number 3, issued February 27, 1950, there was a brief article about the ladders, reading as follows:

"Steel Cable and Aluminum Rungs". After many months of talking about it, somebody finally did something. For a long time we have felt the need of a compact lightweight ladder for use in speleological work. Rope ladders with wooden rungs have been used for this purpose but are extremely bulky. R. de Joly, our colleague in France, has invented a ladder employing steel cable and aluminum rungs which would serve admirably, but cost of importing them is prohibitive. Recently several of us were led to design a ladder similar to de Joly's "Echelles", and a few week sago a short test length was constructed. Preliminary trials indicate that our design is sound and will be perfectly satisfactory. The outstanding advantages of this all-metal ladder are: almost complete freedom from deterioration, light-weight (100 feet weighs approximately 10 lbs.), extreme compactness, and low cost.

In Volume 2, Number 5, there is a picture of Grotto President Jim Bright at Bear Cave Sink (March 5 trip) climbing one of the ladders. The rungs appear to be about 12" apart, if Jim was of average height.

In a 1958 article in The Netherworld News, Bob Dunn published an excellent article, with illustrations, on how to manufacture cable ladders, including specific sources of supply.

Much later, about 1962, the Grotto again made a number of cable ladders. Herb Black (paraphrased) recalls:

We are certain that the ladders the grotto now has were made in the spring of 1962. We are sure that participants included Bob Dunn, Vic Schmidt, Allen McCrady, Ham Hamilton, Herb Black, Dan Green, Rosewell Jones, and others. They were constructed in Dan Green's basement one Saturday. Dan had a source of the airplane control cable; I don't know who got the aluminum rungs nor the crimps. We rented the crimper - it looked like a big, long handled, tree limb lopper. We made 10 or more ladders that day, each 30 feet long, which for some reason was considered "standard".

Herb goes on to recall some history of the development of cable ladders:

The first ladders made in France had the crimps inside the rungs. This was not good, because the rungs couldn't turn and it was tough to roll up. The next model had copper crimps below the rungs. This too didn't work too well. The rungs tended to pull up as one climbed up, and the second man had to tug the rungs back down as he climbed. The third design had copper crimps

above and below the rungs. Big improvement, but after some use it became apparent that the copper crimps and steel cable were not electrochemically compatible. The cable tended to corrode under the copper. Ladders began to break. By the time we made the ones the grotto now has, the solution was to use aluminum crimps. If these corroded, you could see the corrosion.

It should be obvious that the Grotto should receive credit for much early effort in this commonly-used caving technique.

Dunn Bugs

Dunn Bugs were another Pittsburgh Grotto first. Again, as in the case of the cable ladders, Bob Dunn helped take the lead in making improvements to a caving technique where there were problems with the commonly accepted methods of accomplishing something.

Dunn Bugs were an improved method of underground stream tracing which employed tracing dyes, but was more sensitive than what was standard technology at the time. Instead of having to observe the colored dye, Bob used activated coconut charcoal, placing small containerized amounts in streams. If even minute quantities passed by, it would adsorb and be retained. It could then be chemically analyzed.

Bob was a chemical engineer, and his natural curiosity lead to this development. Both he and Hermine Zotter would use this technique on many field trips, especially to the Swago Creek area. In looking through literature, many others were soon also using this technique.

Another Pittsburgh Grotto first!

Field Trips and Field Expeditions and Field Projects and Just Plain Cave Exploring

Hundreds of people in the Grotto have taken hundreds of guests into thousands of caves in the past 50 years.

In the 1950's much work was still being done in Pennsylvania, with some diversions such as the Swago Creek and Pendleton County areas of West Virginia. Ed Taylor and others would walk the ridges of Fayette County. We investigated the report of a cave in the basement of the Butler County Courthouse (a cavity, true, but not a cave).

The Grotto was a leader in the Swage Creek cave area, and the project was initiated in conjunction with the Explorers Club of Pittsburgh. Overholt Blowing Cave is the best known of these caves, and had a major mapping project with Gary Storrick spearheading the work.

The 1960s saw some expansion of the areas of most of the caving, and a continuation of the work started in the 50s.

Who can forget Charlie Plantz and his "Help Map Brady's Bend Cave" project. Did you know there really is an endless cavern right here in Western Pennsylvania?

In the early 1970s it was The Hole, a large system in Greenbrier County, WV. It was being surveyed by Charlie Williams and friends.

At the same time, Chuck Hempel was working on the Monroe County, West Virginia WVASS Bulletin.

In the mid-1970s, Charlie Williams published his work on the Otter Creek area in Tucker County, WV.

At this point, major exploration and connections were being done in the Friars Hole Area of WV. Other members, however, were working on the alpine karst of the Tetons in Wyoming, including Charlie Plantz.

The first cave trip outside the United States by the Pittsburgh Grotto occurred from June 15 to 30, 1957. Bob Dunn planned the trip to Jamaica and was accompanied by Dick Hoffmaster, Willy White, Rita Battistoli, Lucy Nelson, Dave Strunk and Bill McWilliams. Arriving by plane in Jamaica they went to the Institute of Jamaica and met with the Director of the Jamaican Geological Survey. He provided directions to local caves, and provided several guides. It was planned that the American crew should devote most of their time to the vertical pits since the Jamaican Geological Survey was not equipped to do the job. In all, 14 caves were explored. Other VIPs from Jamaica also joined the Americans for part of the time.

In June, 1958, Willy White was on an Angel Falls, Venezuela expedition. While there, he studied the karst of southeastern Venezuela and the caves in the Caracas area.

In June, 1959, 13 Grotto cavers visited Haiti.

In the early 1960s Jerry Frederick and Vic Schmidt participated on some of the Rio Camay Cave expeditions to Puerto Rico.

Many years ago, Charlie Plantz and Jim Wolfe explored large lava caves in Iceland.

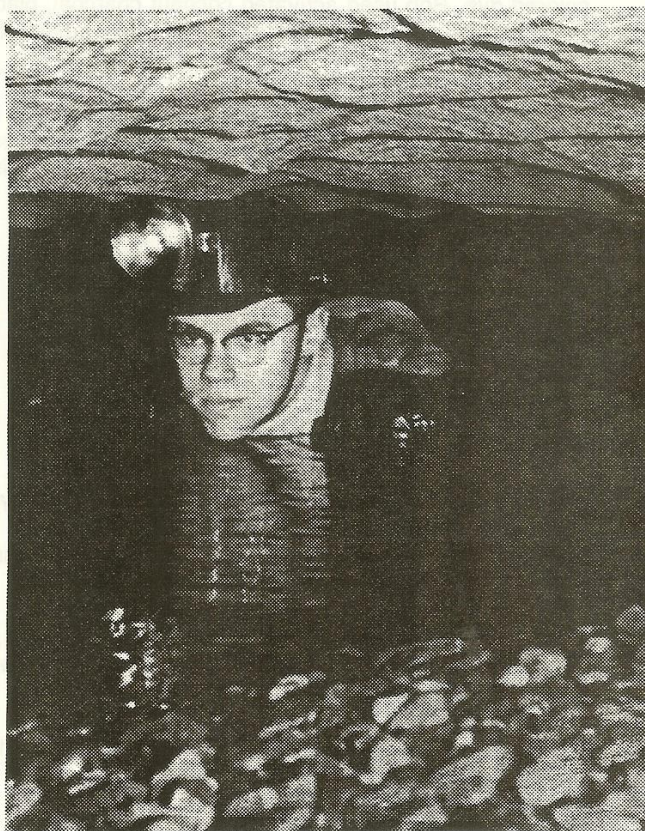
In 1982 there was an expedition to Barra Honda in Costa Rica. Other expeditions to the same country in 1989 and 1990 focused on the Rio Corredores basin near the Panamanian Border.

Gary Storrick dove a number of sumps at the base of the Huautla system in Mexico on the Pena Colorado Expedition in 1984.

Many times the club had trips to the large limestone mines of Western Pennsylvania.

Walt Hamm and Tom and Kim Metzgar returned caving in the mid-90s to Western Pennsylvania with their work on the cave survey of Westmoreland County, resulting in a recent MAR Bulletin.

Walt Hamm has produced some NSS award-winning cave maps through the years, and various club photographers such as Frank Mielcarek have won NSS awards for their work.



Bruce Godwin in Overholt Blowing Cave



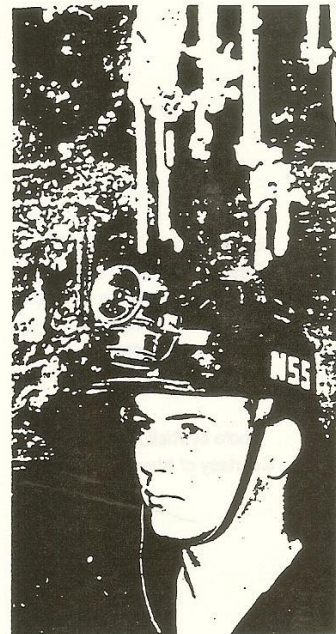
ROUGH GOING— Paddling a rubber raft through one of the "disappearing lakes" within the depths of Marvel Cave, two members of yesterday's exploration by spelunkers of the National Speleological Society make their way to a drier passageway. Water levels within the far reaches of the cave change almost constantly and new mapping is required for every new exploration. Sometimes crawling, sometimes almost swimming, the explorers—men and women—charted several new rooms and tunnels. Features of the convention here—running through tomorrow—will include lectures, business sessions, movies and exhibits concerning spelunkers and caves. The convention is being held in the Ozarks for the first time.

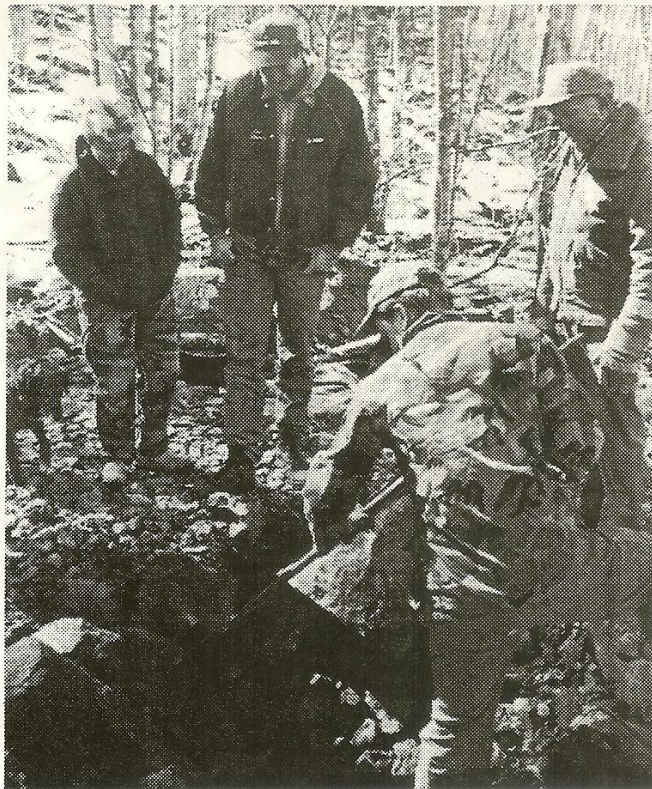


Above (l to r) Bill Buckingham, Paul Damon
in Marvel Cave, Mo, 1959

Upper right, Pamela Wells in
Warm River Cave, VA
Photo by Frank Mielcarek

Ed Glotfelty in Hourglass Cave, WV
Photo by Dick Hoffmaster



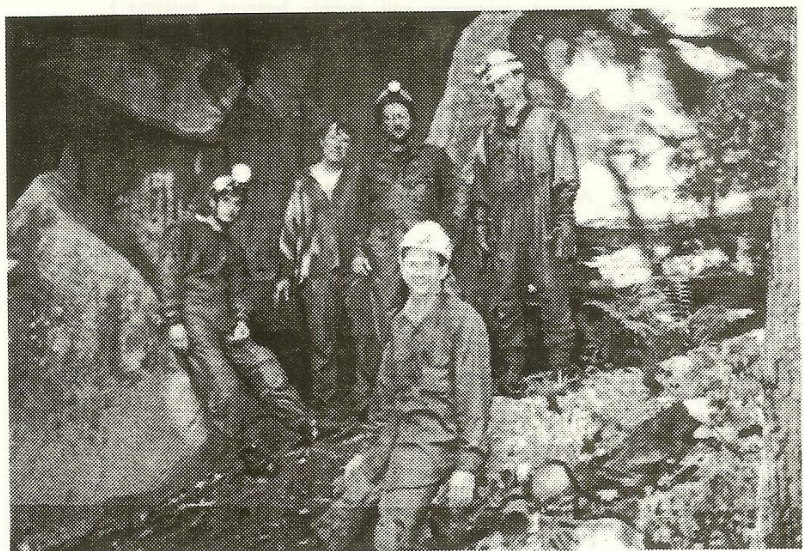


Digging at Friars Hole Cave Preserve, 1990s
(l to r) Barb Ritts, John Murray,
Rick Kirscht, Gordon Mothes

Photo courtesy of Rick Kirscht

Red Run Cave Trip, 1997
Foreground - Carl Pierce
Background (l to r) Oliver Coudert,
John Nestor, Steve Lesko,
Doug Moore

Photo by Rick Kirscht
Courtesy of Steve Lesko



Cave Rescues and the NCRC

The Pittsburgh Grotto has participated in their share of cave rescues, and a lot of the media attention regarding the Grotto has been because of the rescues. Some have involved Grotto members, some not.

One of the earliest was the Hellhole accident in 1957. Then, in 1958 there was a rescue for a Grotto trip to Copperhead Cave when a caver broke his leg.

One of the biggest efforts was the 1977 rescue in Twigg Cave in Maryland which occurred during the Grotto's 30th anniversary party, and unfortunately interrupted the party in mid-swing.

The National Cave Rescue Commission, or NCRC, has had a number of Grotto members who were quite active. This would include Chuck Hempel, Barb Ritts, John Appleby, Rick Fogel and Bru Randall who have been involved with the Eastern Region of the NCRC as instructors at dozens of practice sessions and mock rescues.

Lynne Taylor after the 1977
Twigg's Cave, MD, cave rescue



THE GROTTO MEMBERS LIKE TO HAVE FUN TOO!

THE PITTSBURGH GROTTO AS A SOCIAL ANIMAL

For good humor and good times, the Grotto has been a leader of the pack, not a follower. From leadership at the Old Timers Reunions to Friars Hole parties, the Grotto has enjoyed every minute of their caving efforts without sacrificing their serious caving accomplishments.

For 50 years the Grotto has tried to have entertainment as an integral part of their meetings. Early movies, such as Luray Caverns, Carlsbad Caverns, and our own Schoolhouse Cave, have been staples of many meetings. And the slide shows from members as well as from the NSS. And outside speakers such as the bat expert from Carnegie Mellon University. And then there was Ralph "Buzz" Bossart and his 3-D slides, presented several times at the Carnegie Lecture Hall. And, our most famous meeting guest, the French cave explorer and author Robert de Joly.

However, it is in purely social functions that the Grotto has also excelled. It started with a November 21, 1948 grand party in Delaney's Cave to celebrate the Grotto's first anniversary. It included a banquet, treasure hunt, and newspaper publicity. Invitations were sent to the Philadelphia Grotto, and over 50 people attended.

In the first 10 years, there were annual parties at Delaney's Cave, often formally with the Cleveland Grotto who caved very closely with the Pittsburgh Grotto in those years. In fact, the Cleveland Grotto held an annual Memorial Day festival at Delaney's Cave. Then, there were the annual New Years Eve

parties at the Pittsburgh Grotto Fieldhouse. There was also the annual Grotto picnics almost every year in the early fall, for many years at Laurel Caverns. These are still being held, now the second weekend of September.

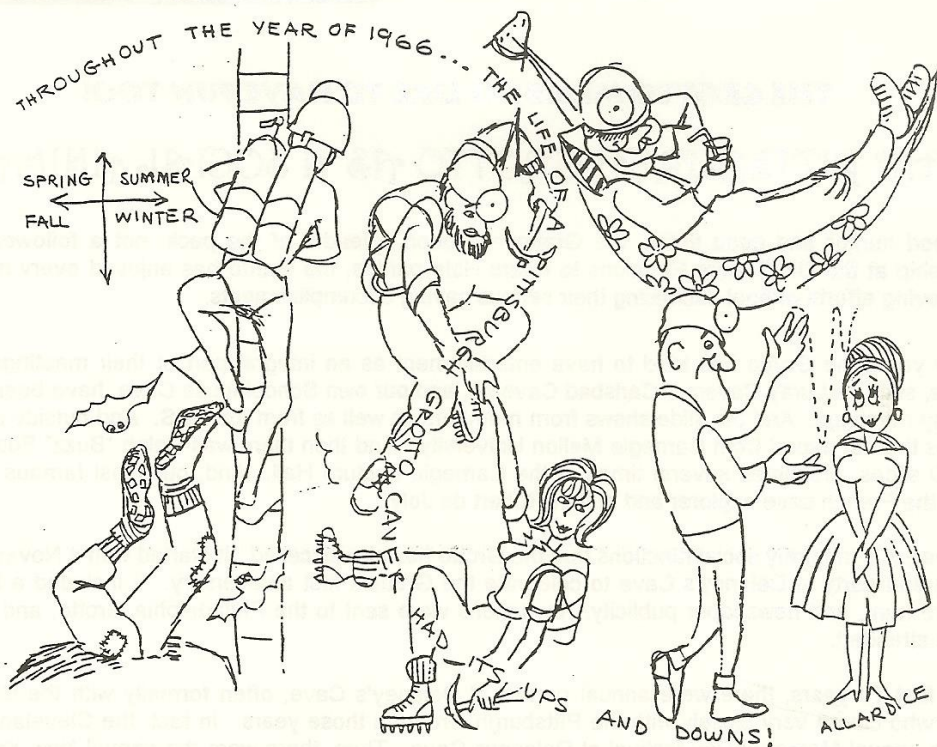
With the Pittsburgh Grotto field house available as a social as well as a caving base, many a party was held. Especially on New Years Eve when cavers from Pittsburgh, as well as across the east, would congregate. The entertainment one year was the showing of official autopsy slides! Almost every weekend was an enjoyable event.

For many years, there has been an annual Grotto auction, usually held at the home of Ed Taylor. There is also the annual Christmas parties, for many years held at Ed Taylors house in Mt. Lebanon.

Most every year the Grotto has hosted an annual open house at their meeting site for the community at large. This tradition started in the 1950s, and several were held at the Carnegie Lecture Hall. Bru Randall started an October open house at the Pitt meeting room about 1985, and it continues today showcasing caving with displays, intended to bring unaffiliated cavers into the club.

Official Grotto Campouts started many years ago. In the early 1970s one was held at Watoga State Park in West Virginia. About 5 years ago it took the form of Friars Hole Flings, work/caving weekends concentrated at the Mothes property in West Virginia.

But, there is the BIG one. Every year, for almost 50 years, an Old Timer's Reunion has been held over the Labor Day weekend. Although not truly a Grotto function, it has been a Grotto staple. Always in the Pendleton, Pocahontas, or Randolph County area of West Virginia.



Sketch by Sue (Allardice) Neff

ALWAYS BEING AN ACTIVE SUPPORTER OF THE NATIONAL SPELEOLOGICAL SOCIETY, OF WHICH THE GROTTO IS AN INTEGRAL PART, PITTSBURGH HAS HOSTED THEIR FAIR SHARE OF NATIONAL EVENTS.

NSS MEETINGS IN PITTSBURGH

Several Executive Committee meetings have been held in Pittsburgh (one at Paul Damon's house), and Janet Thorne, who is a trustee of the National Speleological Foundation, has hosted meetings of well-known cavers at her home in Pittsburgh quite a few times. But, the "biggies" have been:

NSS Conventions

Through the years Grotto members have helped on most all the NSS Annual Conventions. But, there were three that were close to the Grotto, including one held here in Pittsburgh.

In 1954, the Philadelphia Grotto asked help of the Pittsburgh Grotto in holding a convention in Pittsburgh. Dick Hoffmaster was asked to arrange local facilities. Little notice was given to the local forces at a time when the Grotto was not particularly strong, but the Grotto came through. The Webster Hall Hotel in Oakland was selected as convention headquarters with meetings scheduled at the nearby Carnegie Museum and Mellon Institute. The Hotel closed its doors many years ago, but it was located on Fifth Avenue near the corner of Craig Street.

A large, attractive program brochure was printed as well as an informational pamphlet on field trips, which included two location maps of Western Pennsylvania caves by Ed Taylor. Local cavers made themselves available as field trip leaders, and provided transportation for the visitors. Good newspaper publicity was received, and a number of local people first heard of the Grotto.

In all, it turned out to be the largest and most interesting NSS Convention held up to that time. The NSS News highly praised the Pittsburgh Grotto for the fine work done. It credited the Grotto with having done the most complete job of planning field trips ever experienced at a convention.

In 1970, the Nittany Grotto hosted the convention in State College, PA. Many Pittsburgh Grotto members contributed their time and talent to help make the convention the success it was.

In 1976, the Mountain State Grotto and the West Virginia Speleological Survey co-sponsored the convention in Morgantown, WV. Pittsburgh Grotto members filled a number of posts, including two of the three convention officers.

In all, Pittsburgh has performed their share of work to make the NSS Conventions a success.



The National Speleological Society

A national organization chartered under the laws of the District of Columbia devoted to the promotion and interest in all phases of Speleology, the science of caves.

ELEVENTH ANNUAL CONVENTION

Convention Sessions
Friday, April 2, 1954
Saturday, April 3, 1954

Field Trips
Sunday, April 4, 1954



CARNEGIE MUSEUM
MELLON INSTITUTE
HOTEL WEBSTER HALL

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

NSS Board of Governors Meetings

The Pittsburgh Grotto has hosted seven board meetings of the NSS. They were:

- April 2, 1954 - At the Webster Hall Hotel during the NSS convention
- October 8, 1958 - At Mellon Institute, with dinner at the Little Hungarian Restaurant
- September 24, 1960 - At Julia Stanilands home
- March 18, 1967 - At the Hunt Library on the Carnegie Mellon campus, with dinner at the Black Angus Restaurant.
- November 18, 1972 - At Salem Lutheran Church in Delmont, PA, hosted by Al Haarr, to celebrate the Grotto 25th anniversary. Dinner was at the Lamplighter Restaurant in Delmont.
- November 17, 1979 - At the Hellenic Center, in Forest Hills, PA
- March 22, 1997 - At the VFW Hall in Coraopolis, PA, hosted by Barb Ritts, to celebrate the Grotto 50th anniversary. Dinner was at the Hall.

THE PITTSBURGH GROTTO HAS HAD THEIR SHARE OF MEMBERS RECEIVE AWARDS AND SPECIAL RECOGNITION'S FROM THE NATIONAL SPELEOLOGICAL SOCIETY.

AWARDS AND RECOGNITIONS

I am sure that some awardees are not noted in this section, but hopefully we have noted many of them. Not all were current Grotto members when they served or were chosen, but are included as part of the story of the members of the Grotto.

Grotto member Julia Staniland became an Honorary Life Member of the Society in 1962 for her many contributions to the success of the NSS Library.

Roswell Jones has received the NSS Outstanding Service Award for his many years working caving event audio-visual logistics. Both Willy White (1975; science) and Janet Thorne (conservation) have also been honored with the Outstanding Service Award for their own significant accomplishments.

Four members of the Grotto have served as officers of the NSS, all vice presidents:

- Herb Black, Administrative Vice President in 1963 and 1964
- J. Robert Dunn, Executive Vice President in 1961
- Will White, Executive Vice President in 1965 and 1966
- Alan Haarr, Executive Vice President in 1967, 1968, and 1969

Through the years, the Grotto has bestowed Honorary Grotto Membership on at least 14 of its members:

Herb Black	Bruce Godwin	Dallas McKeever
Ralph Bossart	John Guilday	Victor Schmidt
David Cale	Alan Haarr	Sulia Staniland
Paul Damon	Roswell Jones	William White
Bob Dunn	Allen McCrady	

A large number of Grotto members have been elected Fellows of the NSS for their contributions of time and talents to caving activities. Awardees include

Paul Damon	Russ Howard	Julia Staniland
Bob Dunn	Jim Kennedy	Bill Stone
Jerry Frederick	Roswell Jones	Gary Storrick
Marshall Fausold	Al McCrady	Janet Thorne
John Guilday	Doug Medville	Carol Vesely
Al Haarr	Gordon Mothes	Will White
Do Haarr	Bru Randall	Tom Wolfe
Harold Hamilton	Rick Rigg	Hermine Zotter
Walt Hamm	Barb Ritts	
Chuck Hempel	Vic Schmidt	
Jim Hixson	Barbara Schomer	
Beverly Hofecker	Bruce Smith	

There may also have been others whose names are now forgotten to this compiler. I apologize.

The Certificate of Merit Award from the NSS, to honor specific accomplishments by Society members, has been given to at least nine Grotto members:

Paul Damon, for the 50th anniversary NSS history project
 J. Robert Dunn, for Speleo Digest efforts
 John Guilday, for New Paris Sinks efforts
 Russ Howard, for Speleo Digest efforts
 Harold Hamilton, for New Paris Sinks efforts
 Allen McCrady, for Speleo Digest efforts
 Vic Schmidt (twice), for conservation
 Bruce Smith
 Janet Thorne, for the Federal Cave Protection Law
 Will White, for Speleo Digest efforts
 Hermine Zotter, for stream tracing technology, and for NSS historical efforts.

The NSS Spelean History Award has been presented to Paul Damon, and to Tom and Kim Metzgar.

Tom Wolfe and Will White have received the Ralph W. Stone Research Award

Doug Medville and Bill Stone have received the Lew Bicking Award.

At least twelve members (perhaps more) have served in the capacity as a Director of the NSS. They were Janet Thorne, Chuck Hempel, Will White, Vic Schmidt, Jim Hixson, Herb Black, Bob Dunn, Richard Hoffmaster, Allen McCrady, Graham Netting, Rick Rigg, Challis Bruce, and Roioli Schweicker.

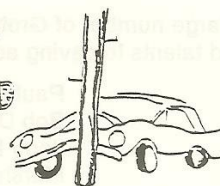
Numerous Grotto members have served both as committee chairpersons and committee members of the NSS. Several chairpersons were:

Janet Thorne, Conservation Committee
 Roswell Jones, Equipment Committee
 Paul Damon, Secretary to the Board; Finance Committee
 Vic Schmidt, Conservation Committee
 Do Haarr, Caving Information Series
 Julia Staniland, Library Committee
 Alan Haarr, Cavers Handbook
 Don Schleicher, Speleo Digest Committee
 Will White, Research Advisory Committee
 Al McCrady, Legal Committee
 Rick Rigg, Congress of Grottos
 Chuck Hempel, Speleo Digest

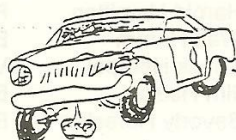
And, we must not forget some of the Grotto officers through the years who served in a number of capacities. There have been 34 chairpersons. Barb Ritts has the longest continuous stint as an officer, being treasurer for 7 years, and still counting. Don Schleicher was editor of the newsletter for 5 consecutive years. A complete listing of the Grotto officers for past 50 years is contained in a table presented in this history.

There has been at least one local Grotto award other than Honorary Membership. This was the **Hempel of the Month** award which was given out for a few years around 1970. Pat Black, Herb Black, and Jim Varner were some of the honored awardees (the sketch accompanying the award was several views of wrecked cars).

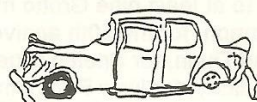
HEMPEL
OF THE
MONTH-AWARD



JULY 71



PVT. RAY 'SHORTY' POYER



VOLUME VIII

JUNE 1960

NUMBER 6

A NOSTOLGIC TRIP BACK INTO TIME

FACES I REMEMBER

By Paul Damon

I have been a Grotto member for 44 years (since 1953), but I knew most of the earlier members from the founding of the Grotto. I thought I would take this opportunity to introduce the current Grotto members, and those interested in the Grotto history, to the faces behind the names of the earlier Grotto leaders. Many of you already know some of them, but may not have known what their caving pursuits were, or what they did in the Grotto.

I have been a caver since 1948, and heard about the Grotto in some newspaper accounts as early as 1952. But it was not until 1953, when by chance I became Bob Dunn's lab partner in college, that I really took notice of formal caving. Bob started taking me on trips in 1954, and I have been active in the pursuit ever since, helping form caving clubs around the country as I relocated several times. Here are some of the people and faces I remember.

JOHN ROBERT "BOB" DUNN — As I noted earlier, this Grotto history is dedicated to Bob. I have not seen him for many, many years, but he is currently living in Southern California. He introduced me to organized caving, and I have always been grateful. He was a quiet and unassuming but commanding leader. When he spoke, people listened. In my mind, he was THE leader during the first 15 years of the Grotto. Allen McCrady once wrote of him, "Bob was the untitled organizer and planner of countless field trips, and 'Let Bob do it' was the motto". You knew it would get done. Quoting an editorial article in the 1964 Speleo Digest, "His record as inventor and developer of new (caving) equipment and techniques has few equals". Indeed, without Bob's leadership, the Grotto would not have been the powerful force it has been for so many years. He collected PEOPLE. It worked.

DALE AND CHUCK AND KEN ACKLIN — Many of you know Dale, as he still attends the Old Timers Reunions, and currently lives in Monroeville. You may have also met his brother Ken, a Merchant Marine rarely around Pittsburgh through the years, but who has been at several recent OTRs. And, you may also know Dale's son Chuck, who lives in Utah but has also been at some of the recent OTRs. But, even less of you know that they are all cousins of Bob Dunn, and part of one of the earliest families in the grotto. Dale was one of the experts at the Old Timers Reunion in 1957 who, being a medical student (dental), played a significant role in the Hellhole Cave rescue attempt. Ken is best known to me as the owner of the official Pittsburgh Grotto truck of the 1950s. Dale was a former chairman of the Grotto.

DAN GREEN — First, there is the historical artifact himself. Probably the oldest living formerly active member of the Pittsburgh Grotto. Dan Green admits to being "over 90 years old", but to see him actively walking around the Monroeville Mall these days you have to know how well a career in caving helps in getting a person ready for physical activity in the later years.

JULIA STANILAND — Julia is no longer with us, having passed away a few years ago while living in Hawaii with her daughter. But, to everyone who knew her, she personified only the best in the local caving scene. Only an occasional active caver because of physical limitations, she none-the-less probably spent more hours helping the Grotto than almost anyone else. Her house was the Grotto headquarters for years. She stored the Grotto files for even more years. Many Grotto meetings and auctions were held at her house and in her backyard. She cooperated in every aspect. Several cavers lived in her house at various times. Small in stature, she was the cavers version of Mother Theresa.

JOHN CHARLES "CHUCK" HEMPEL — I remember Chuck as a leader of the high school crew who started coming to Grotto meetings many years ago. He has accomplished much in the pursuit of caving in the subsequent years since the mid 60s. Without question most all of you know him, especially because of the Old Timers Reunions and many of the special Grotto functions. And, he is probably the newest father in the Grotto, with his wife Jennifer. They current reside across from the Old Timers campground in West Virginia.

RICHARD HOFFMASTER — Need the Grotto to use dynamite? You would go see Dick! A medical technician, he was also a founder of the Grotto. I remember him as chair of the Mid-Appalachian Region, and active in many caving pursuits. Now living, I believe, on Spruce Knob in West Virginia.



Julia Staniland, abt 1960
Very early and active Grotto member
Former NSS Librarian
NSS Honorary Member

ED AND SHEENA AND PATTI AND NANCY AND LYNN AND DOUG AND MARY ALICE TAYLOR — The "first caving family" of the Pittsburgh Grotto for 50 years. Ed is not a charter member, but he arrived by about the second meeting. My earliest recollection is when I visited their home in Edgewood in the mid-50s and got to know the young family. Ed later lived in Egypt and New Jersey, all the while maintaining a home for his family in Pittsburgh. Most of you probably know at least some members of this extended family. I understand they were all in attendance at the Old Timers Reunion this year. Ed is also a former chairman of the Grotto, and both he and several of his daughters are still quite active in caving.

ALLEN McCRADY — Legal eagle who preferred to be a museum expert. He now lives in Idaho, far from the Grotto, but is still in touch with most of us. Like Ed Taylor, he is not a charter member, but arrived by the second or third meeting. So, a 50-year member. As an attorney, Al headed the NSS Legal Committee and helped the Grotto with many legal issues. As a museum scientist, Al worked on such projects as the New Paris Sinks. He was also the "Olde Caving Philosopher", writing many an article such as "On the Art of Scrounging", and "On Cooperation". His biting editorials helped reform the structure of the National Speleological Society.

HERMINE ZOTTER — Hermine was a person who was not trained in science but who persisted in cave science through stream tracing and its many facets. I also recall that she was adamant that on Sunday mornings she attend Mass. The only person at the Fieldhouse to do so. She was also the ultimate volunteer, and was the first to record the Grotto history when she authored the 10th year history booklet. The results of some of her voluminous caving studies are in the possession of Gary Storrick, as she passed away some years ago.

JORDAN BIHLER — Not a leader. But, how many piano tuners have you met in the Grotto? Active and unassuming for many of the earliest years.

RAIOLI SCHWEICKER — Raioli is better known today as a New England area caver, but she started out in Pittsburgh in the 50s.

RALPH "BUZZ" BOSSART — Of all the old-time Pittsburgh Grotto members I have known, Buzz was one that I found most interesting. He was one of the earliest explorers of Delaney's Cave near Uniontown, and mapped it in the early 30s. He was a pioneer in 3-D cave photography, and exhibited his slides in Carnegie Lecture Hall. He saved the day in 1954 when my car broke down in the Delaney Cave parking lot, pulling me on a Sunday almost 10 miles to an open garage. He developed Delaney's Cave into Laurel Caverns, and developed and managed Coral Caverns in Central Pennsylvania. He was also a pioneer in using radio sounds to locate sub-surface voids. He passed away almost 10 years ago, and recently his daughter gave me what she could find of his cave files, which was almost nothing. He was not a paper pack rat.

GRAHAM "PORKY" WARD — I am only including him because of the nickname, as I do not remember much about him. But, he was very active in the 50s, especially at Coon Cave, and he lived beside the Carnegie Museum.

WILLY WHITE — I have mentioned him already in this history as helping save the Pittsburgh Grotto from extinction in 1955. He was extremely active, and is still around the caving scene. Most of you know him as a Penn State Professor and author, and as the banquet speaker at the NSS Board of



Hermine Zotter, abt 1960
Newspaper photo

Governors meeting here in Pittsburgh this past spring. He lives in State College, PA.

DOUG MEDVILLE — Yes, THAT "Dug" Medville. The famous Virginia cave digger and NSS leader. Did you know he has also been a Pittsburgh Grotto member?

ALLAN AND DORIS HAARR — Al and Do were very well known Grotto members both for their caving pursuits and social events. I remember them hosting many cookouts, with Do preparing the goodies. Al was also once a Vice-President of the NSS, and passed away some years ago. Dr. Doris Haarr has been a Professor of Geology, and lives in North Carolina. I understand she is not in the best of health at this time.

DON SCHLEICHER — Don was amazing. Single-handedly he typed many a caving publication. Some Speleo Digests, some newsletters. Don currently lives in the Greensburg area.

MIKE ULACKY — I'll bet I am right on this - Mike is the only former Grotto member who lives on an Indian Reservation, somewhere "out west". Several cavers are still in touch with him, and his father still lives in Pittsburgh.

WALT FORREST — He is now a fire chief in Monroeville.

CHARLES PLANTZ — Charlie has been around the Grotto forever, or so it seems. He joined about 1956, is still quite active, and still attends most of the Grotto meetings even though he lives somewhat far away in Brownsville in Fayette County. Charlie was at Hellhole Cave in 1957 when the non-cavers happened by and got themselves involved in the well-known accident; he assisted in the rescue attempt. His pet project? "Help Map Brady's Bend" He also is well-known for his 3-D cave photography, and his many summers climbing and hiking in the West.

RITA BATTISTOLI — Rita was an early member of the Explorers Club of Pittsburgh who then joined the Grotto. These days, she is the wife of Ham Hamilton, also a Grotto member, but she is probably much less known to the current members than he is. She was involved in the early explorations of the Swago Creek area.

DAVID CALE — I have known Dave since he was quite young, having visited his grandfathers' Delaney's Cave many times. Since then, he is better known to the Grotto as the owner of Laurel Caverns near Uniontown, PA. He has helped the Grotto in numerous ways, especially in permitting the members to visit and study his cave.

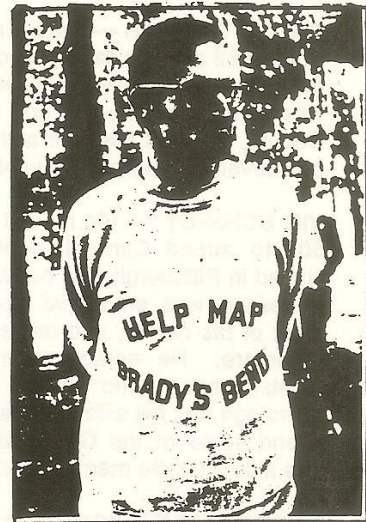
KEITH DAMON — I best not forget my own brother. He was a Grotto member for several years. He is now residing in Fairfax, Virginia, and is a semi-retired traveling computer training instructor for Learning Tree.

BEVERLY HOFHECKER — She is better known these days as Bev Frederick, last I heard living near Washington DC. She was a tireless worker for the Grotto and later for the NSS, as office secretary. Husband JERRY, also a former Grotto member, passed away some years ago.

BRUCE GODWIN — He is a long-time member, but more known for hiking and the like these days.

BILL STONE — I really did not know him while he was a Pittsburgh Grotto member, but he is today one of the best known American and international cavers. Did you know he got his start in our Grotto?

BRUCE SMITH — Bruce is not known as a Pittsburgh Grotto caver, but he started his caving career with



Charlie Plantz

the Grotto while a student at a Western PA college. He now lives in Tennessee, and is quite well known in the NSS for his vertical caving publications. You will always see him at the OTR.

"VERTICAL" BILL CUDDINGTON — No, Vertical Bill was not a member of the Pittsburgh Grotto, but he did have a close effect on the Grotto members. He is now known as an Alabama caver and founding father of all the vertical rope climbing contests held today. But, Bill was from Roanoke, Virginia, and in the mid-'50s would occasionally join the Pittsburgh Grotto for trips such as in the Swago Creek area. At that time, the Pittsburgh Grotto was very well known for their developments in the area of cable ladders, and that was about the only technique they were using for vertical caving. Vertical Bill came along and helped change that. He would bounce to the bottom of a pit and be back out before we could get the cable ladder unrolled! The Grotto then started experimenting with single rope techniques.

HERB BLACK — He is now a retired metallurgist living just south of Pittsburgh with his wife, former Grotto member Pat. At one time, he was a vice-president of the NSS.

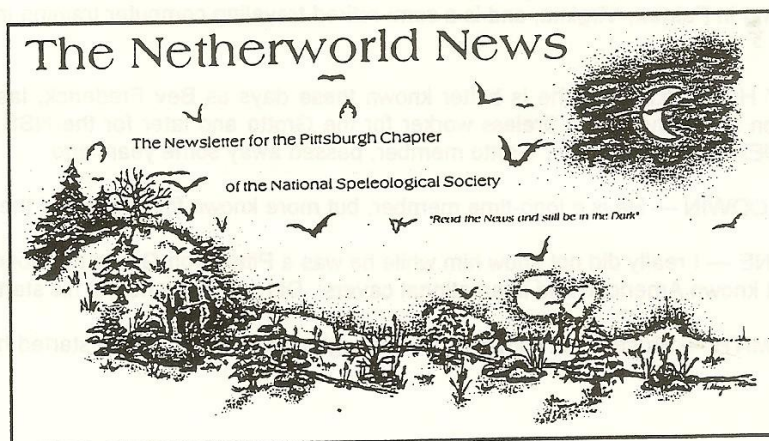
GARY STORRICK — Gary is a former Grotto chairman who is still actively caving, and still attends most Grotto functions. He probably joined in the late 1960s, and was from Finleyville. He now resides in Westmoreland County, and has been an active cave diver and Mexican caver, among other pursuits.

VIC SCHMIDT — Vic moved to Pittsburgh in the late 50s to attend Carnegie Mellon University, and he stayed in Pittsburgh. He has been best known as a Pitt professor, was an active caver and scientific caver most of his career, and came from a caving family in Baltimore. He worked on magnetism in cave sediments, among other things. He passed away a few years ago, but his wife Marji, and their two children, still attend some of the Grotto functions. **MARJI SHAW** was also a Grotto member and an active caver.

GEORGE "JIM" HIXSON — Another well-known geologist and caver who actually started with the Pittsburgh Grotto. He currently resides in West Virginia, and has been active in OTR and NSS activities for many a year. I believe he was from Mt. Lebanon.



Herb and Pat Black, abt 1962
Herb was Grotto Chairman in 1966,





Janet Thorne
Longtime Grotto member and
NSS Conservation Committee Chair



Beverly (Hofecker) Frederick
Longtime Grotto volunteer, and
former NSS Office Secretary



Frank Mielcarek
and his well-known
caving buddy
Photo courtesy of Julia Staniland



Patti Taylor
Longtime Grotto member
Photo courtesy of Julia Staniland



Rita Battistoli in Windsor Great Cave, Jamaica
Photo by Bob Dunn
Courtesy Netherworld News, 1957



Paul Damon in Glen Park Cave, NY, 1957

THE EARLIEST RECORDED MATERIAL IN THE GROTTO FILES IS THE

MINUTES OF THE FIRST PITTSBURGH GROTTO MEETING

The first meeting of the Pittsburgh Grotto of the National Speleological Society was held in the laboratory of Herpetology, Carnegie Museum, at 2:15pm Sunday, October 19, 1947. Dr. Netting, presiding chairman, received the name, home and business address, and telephone number of all those present and suggested that Bob Dunn act as secretary for that meeting. The constitution of the Grotto was adopted after the model constitution and it was decided that the Executive body of the Grotto meet at the Laboratory of herpetology on the second Sunday of every month at 2:15 pm, all other members being invited until further notice. After discussing their special interests, the members decided upon the following as Committee Chairmen:

- Fauna and Flora - Dr. Netting
- Equipment and Safety - Mr. Fisher
- Publicity - Mrs. Fisher
- Photography - Mr. Davis
- Exploration and Mapping - Mr. Cellich
- Folklore - Mr. Huttenstine
- Membership - Mr. Dunn

Ballots were distributed upon which each member was to write five names. The five names most often repeated would constitute the Executive Board. Mr. Ruffing counted the ballots and announced the following to be elected: Mr. Fisher, Mr. Davis, Mr. Hoffmaster, Mr. Netting, and Mr. Dunn. Mr. Fisher was elected for Chairman and Mr. Dunn, for Secretary-Treasurer. Dr. Netting then relinquished the position as Chairman to Mr. Fisher. Following the motion of Mrs. Fisher, twenty-five cents was contributed by each member for the Treasury. \$2.25 was collected. Dr. Netting suggested that Mr. Cellich list all the caves in the Grotto area (including directions for finding them) and have copies made for each member. Mr. Fisher was to prepare an article on "Equipment" for the next meeting. A general discussion of publicity, lights, etc. then followed, and the meeting was adjourned at 4:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted, Bob Dunn, Secretary

NOW, AFTER FIVE DECADES OF CAVING, WE CELEBRATE

CELEBRATIONS IN 1997, THE GROTTO'S FIFTIETH YEAR

The present Grotto leaders have recognized the significance of having their club celebrate its fiftieth year as a club by hosting a series of events.

The activities got started off on an excellent note when the Grotto hosted a NSS Board of Governors meeting in Pittsburgh in the spring of 1997. Cavers from around the country came to Pittsburgh and helped us celebrate. NSS President Dave Luckins presented Grotto chairman Ken Kramer with a formal recognition of our status as among the oldest continuously active Grottos in the Society.

In May, there was the fiftieth anniversary Grotto auction held at Ed Taylors house in Mt. Lebanon. Although not too well-attended, a great time was had by all who were present.

In September, there was the fiftieth anniversary Grotto picnic at Laurel Caverns, hosted by honorary Grotto member and cave owner Dave Cale. It truly was a fiftieth anniversary, for the first anniversary picnic in 1948 was also held at Delaneys Cave, before it became Laurel Caverns.

And, now, on October 18th, it is the formal Grotto fiftieth anniversary celebration, held at the Castle Shannon Fire Hall in Castle Shannon, PA.

PITTSBURGH GROTTO
NATIONAL SPELEOLOGICAL SOCIETY
30th ANNIVERSARY

BANQUET AND FAIR

October 15-16, 1977

SOUVENIR



PROGRAM

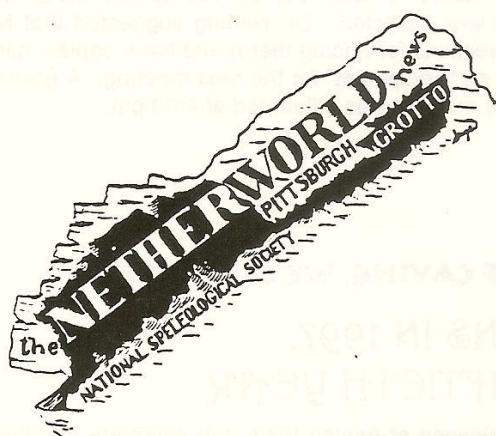
WELCOME

The Pittsburgh Grotto is now 30 years old. Each year we have had an annual anniversary picnic at Laurel Caverns (Delaney's Cave). At our 10th anniversary party in 1957 there was a special program at the cave, including a treasure hunt, spaghetti dinner, and entertainment. For our 25th anniversary in 1972 we hosted a meeting of the NSS Board of Governors.

This year, in celebration of our 30th anniversary, we have arranged what we trust will be a very special event for all of you, a Pittsburgh Grotto BANQUET AND FAIR.

This will be a special caving-social event unlike any that we have at a Grotto meeting, a regular party, or a field trip.

Enjoy yourselves.



EXPLORING A CAVE are members of the Speological Society.

Latter-Day Cave Men Observe Anniversary

By BILL SCRIVO

The National Speleological Society chapter at Pitt observed its first anniversary recently by having dinner 'in Delaney's, near Uniontown.

No, Delaney's is not a night club, but the largest cavern in Pennsylvania and in case you didn't know, speleology is the scientific study of caves.

The cavemen, with Will Scheinberger as head neanderthal, and Dr. Gordon Netting of the geology department and Carnegie Museum as sponsor, have an ambitious program of exploration of caves

ANNOUNCING

The Pittsburgh Grotto's 50th Anniversary Celebration

Saturday, October 18, 1997

At 4:00 p.m. in the Castle Shannon Fire Hall
3600 Library Rd. Castle Shannon, PA

Come help us begin our next 50 years underground with a buffet style dinner, cash bar, and ALL the old stories.

Menu items include: rigatoni, hot sausage, chicken, ham, turkey, roast beef, coppicola, plus

Tickets are \$20.00 before Oct. 1 and \$25.00 after that date
(and includes P. Damon Sr.'s work on the history of The Pgh. Grotto)

Please send your checks (payable to the Pittsburgh Grotto) to:

Barb Ritts
107 Mills Avenue
Pittsburgh PA 15104

For more info., or to find out how you can help contact any of the Grotto board members listed below.
Or check out our web page at http://members.aol.com/rtdrsch/pg_grota.htm

PITTSBURGH GROTTO
Natl. Speleological Soc.
373 So. Atlantic Ave.
Pittsburgh 24, Pa.

Vol. I, No. 1

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NEITHERWORLD NEWS

For Your Calendar

Aug. 14, 15 - West Virginia Caves (Assisting W.Va. Geologic Survey) Bob Dunn, Leader Sycamore TT76 W

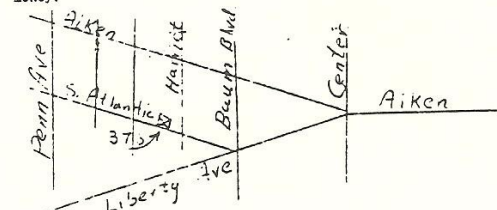
Aug. 21 &/or 22 Hineman Cave
Richard Hoffmaster, Leader Pe 7964

Aug. 28, 29 - W. Virginia Caves (Assisting W.Va. Geologic Survey) J. Crawford, Leader H1 8787

Sept. 7 - Monthly meeting at home of Mrs. Staniland 8:00 P.M.
373 S. Atlantic Avenue Movies (See map below)

Sept. 12 - Exploration Trip to Osterberg
Bob Ruffing, Leader Pe 1239

Just a reminder -- A fee of 25¢ is required of Non-members attending field-trips. The group-leader will collect the money.



Inquiry !!!!

We've missed seeing our old friends Andrews, Flister, and Gates. And what about John Saunders?

SIXTY-FOUR DOLLAR QUESTION !!! Who knows the admiral in the Pittsburgh Grotto?

The following list of committees need your assistance. Choose the group with which you'd like to work.

Flora and Fauna - Dr. Netting, John Guilday

Mineralogy - Richard Hoffmaster

Safety & Equipment - Bob Fisher, Robert Ruffing

Photography - Richard Hoffmaster

Personals

Why is it Mrs. Bright always falls in the biggest puddles?
July 11 Coon Cave

Incidentally, Johnny, (Guilday), how is the baby buzzard coming along? These days of meat shortages, we wonder.
July 13 Indiana Cave

Ralph Feasel escorted Bob Fisher and the Dunks to Bellrock Cave where they found selenite crystals growing on sandstone.
July 21 Bellrock Cave

Jim Blake's secret source of energy for digging out caves: pickled herring and pineapple eclairs.
July 24 Hineman Cave

Huttenstine, Blake, and Dunn are now versed in the legal aspects of bovine roving. Courtesy of Justice of the Peace Miller.
July 24 Hineman Cave

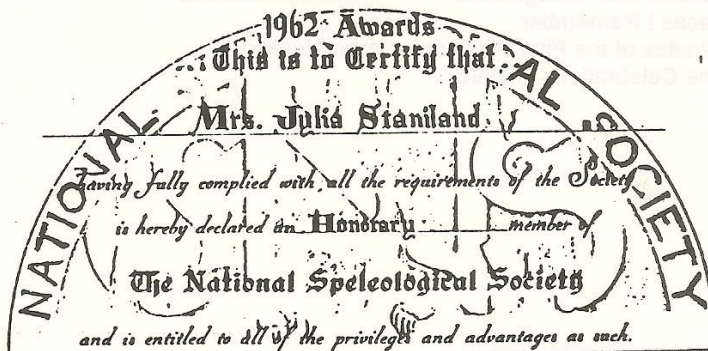
Bossart, authority on Dulany's Cave, proved to be an excellent guide on August 1. August 1 Dulany Cave

Odds and Ends

The July issue of the Carnegie (25¢ at the Museum) contains Guilday's commendable article on elk bones found in the New Paris sinks.

The Museum Library (not public) has a few volumes of the French magazine Speleologie.

The National Speleological Society



Given under our hands and seals this 16th day of June 1962

Eugene Vehalage
Administrative Vice President

Russell H. Currier
President

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1	The Birth of a Grotto
3	Eight Years in a Struggle to Grow
4	And Then Willy Arrived
4	Founder Members
5	A New Beginning
6	The 1980s Were Banner Years
8	Grotto Facts and Figures
8	The Present Grotto
8	Grotto Members Through the Years
9	Pittsburgh Grotto Officers 1947 to 1997
11	Grotto Histories
11	Grotto Activities and Projects
11	Scientific Projects
12	On the Art of Scrounging
13	Grotto Headquarters
13	Grotto Meetings
14	Movie Making
15	Field Headquarters
16	The Netherworld News
17	The Speleo Digest
18	The Cave Capsule
19	Cable Ladders
21	Dunn Bugs
21	Field Trips and Field Expeditions and Field Projects and Just Plain Cave Exploring
25	Cave Rescues and the NCRC
25	The Pittsburgh Grotto as a Social Animal
27	NSS Meetings in Pittsburgh
27	NSS Conventions
28	NSS Board of Governors Meetings
29	Awards and Recognitions
30	Faces I Remember
37	Minutes of the First Pittsburgh Grotto Meeting
37	The Celebrations in 1997