



The Southport Digs

The Official Newsletter of Tennessees'
Southport Chronic Cavers Grotto
of the National Speleological Society



Volume 9 Number 1

Feb 2005

SCCG URL: <http://www.caves.org/grotto/sccg/>

2005 SCCG Officers (the "Bobs") :

Brian-Bob Roebuck (Chairman - Newsletter Ed)
Jim-Bob Clark (Vice Chairman)
Bob-Robert Sewell (Secretary)
Buddy-Bob Baldwin (Treasurer)

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Celebrating Our Tenth Year 1995 - 2005

Featured Article:

Deserting TAG?

By: Rob Robbins

I finally found and downloaded the September 2003 issue of the Southport Digs and read the article by Dr. Bea..., err Brian Roebuck about my deserting TAG. In all actuality some of it was true and some not so true; but that is okay. [*It was ALL True! I swear! – Ed*]

I really didn't desert TAG, I just returned to my hometown. Jokingly among friends, I claimed I was coming back home to die and I wasn't far from the truth – but enough of that. I am doing fine now. Knowing that you can't go back in time, the area I returned to brings back lots of both happy and sad memories. Am I happy I moved back? Yes, and No... I'm glad to be back in my old stomping grounds but also miss my many friends in TAG, especially grotto friends.

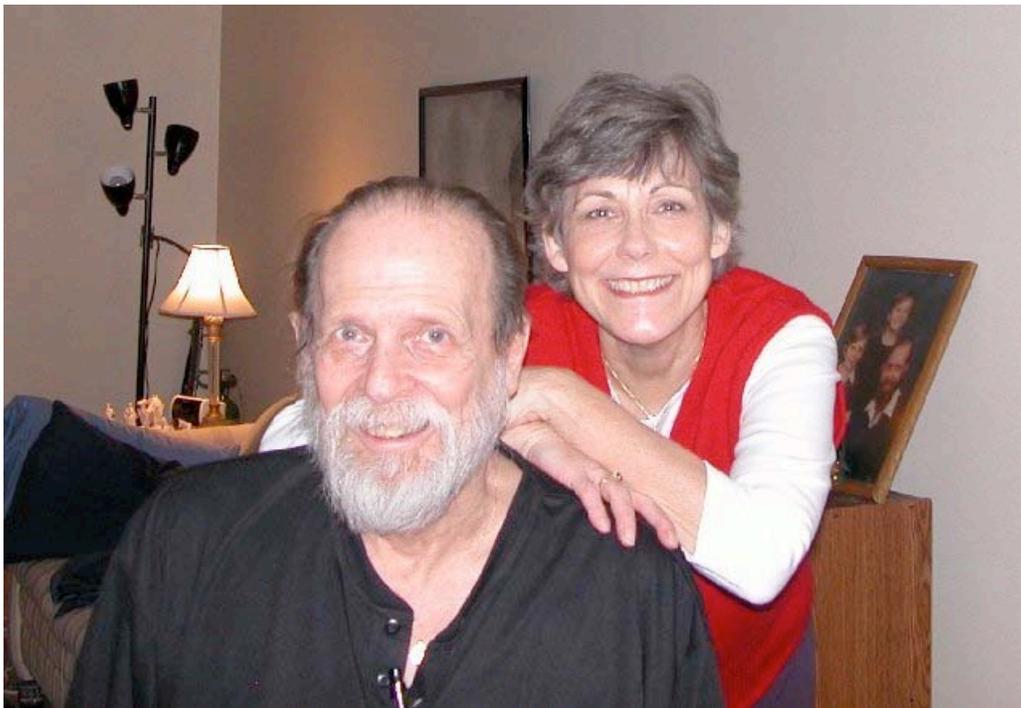


In the 10 years that I lived in TAG, I made a lot of close friends and was introduced to many others. I did return for the Cumberland Caverns Christmas Party the year before last but last year couldn't due to health – will be there for the 2005 party.

I hope to come down for the 10-year celebration of our Grotto. I want to keep up with the information of this event. I still subscribe to Tag-Net and email Dr. Barr every once in a while. I talk to Lynn quite frequently and she tries to keep me up on what is going on. I've been keeping up with the grotto on the yahoogroups list and am proud the way it is going. I think you all are doing a very fine job and are to be commended. When I talk to people up here about my life in Tennessee, I talk of all of you proudly. Knowing you all has made a better person out of me. Thanks to Buddy, Mark, Brian and Lynn along with the rest of you. Knowing you all has done me good.

I joined the Western Indiana Grotto, located here in Terre Haute and now the founding members are leaving the area and there is not enough interest to keep it active. I guess it is now in a state of dissolution. I like the new SCCG web-site and think Robert is doing a fine job. My only comment is I still like the old logo better.

I happened to run into an old (don't let her hear me say that) high school friend of mine and she decided to "Terre Hauterize" me – got my hair and beard trimmed as can be seen in the accompanying photos. The first photo was when we went to see Emmett Kelley, Jr., the world famous clown. The second photo was taken January 1st, this year.



I've been kayaking (when able) and running around taking photos of the area. I have really been pretty active lately and have never felt better. Coming home has given me plenty of time to reflect on what I think is important in life since I am not supposed to cave anymore.

As Bob Hope used to say in closing of his shows, "Thanks for the memories," you can be sure I will treasure those memories and years of TAG forever.

Thanks again,
Rob

[Don't forget to visit Rob's website <http://www.angelfire.com/tn/southportcavers/robs.html> for some of his super photos of his home area – Ed]

A Reason to Spend a Week (Caving) in Alabama

**By: Tim White, SE Region Coordinator
(with Jane Morgan)**

June 25 - July 2, 2005 (the week before the NSS Convention in Huntsville) will see a large number of cavers converging on the North Alabama community of Union Hill. Participants from all over the U.S. and a few other countries will gather a few miles south of Huntsville for over a 100 hard hours of caving activities in the famous Newsome Sinks caving area. These cavers will be students at the National Cave Rescue Commission - 2005 Cave Rescue Operations and Management Seminar.

"This seminar consists of extensive classroom and field work in all phases of cave rescue including underground environment, vertical rescue, hauling systems, extrication techniques, medical management, communication systems, and the organization and management of cave rescue operations. Basic and advanced course material is presented for students who typically include cavers, emergency service personnel, and emergency managers."that the standard line, but you ask why should I, the recreational caver, the hard-core caver, the expedition caver, the cave mapper, the ridgewalker, the pit bouncer, the new caver or Joe Grotto caver be interested in or take part in NCRC training?

As the NCRC Southeastern Region Coordinator, I could go for paragraph after paragraph telling you why I feel you, as a caver, should experience a NCRC training. I also could bore you to tears for paragraph after paragraph, so that is why I chose to include a reprint of an article by Jane Morgan that appeared in the Dogwood City Grotto's publication, *The Georgia Underground* (Vol. 39, No.1) titled "Why NCRC?". Here is what Jane had to say about the Level 1 class that she was a part of in 2003.

"Safety is a reoccurring theme when it comes to caving and yet we all seem to find ourselves in situations that remind us just how fragile we really are. NCRC offers training to equip our selves when those situations occur and the ability to recognize when it is time to call for help. Sprained ankles can happen by just stepping off a curb or over a root. Not many people stop to think how much work would be involved in exiting a cave with an injury, or that much of that work would have to come from their caving partners or strangers. I am amazed when I think about how many people my husband and I have introduced to caving in the last decade, and have not had an accident. As much as I would like to believe that it is a result of how safe we are, accidents do happen. We can do everything in our power to prevent them, but it is not always a guarantee. We have had small things like dehydration to deal with and our group worked as a team to remedy the situation, which was only more reason for us to further our education and skills.

When I first heard about cave rescue training several years ago I was equally intrigued and intimidated. I was not yet vertically adept and although I had been climbing for several years, was not comfortable rigging on my own. On the other hand, I'm the kind of person who likes to solve problems. When it was announced at our grotto meeting that a modular NCRC course might be offered in the coming months, the anticipation was incredible. There were no longer any excuses; the course would be offered within my state, on two weekends rather than a week long session, and at a price I could afford.

What I discovered, during this course, is that there is so much more to gain besides learning basic rescue techniques like diagnosing dehydration, hypothermia, or low blood sugar in fellow cavers and good teamwork/rope working skills. This can also be a place to find a higher level of self-confidence that some desire. I never expected the self-esteem boost that came with picking a fellow caver off a rope, packaging a patient, rigging a pulley system or simply becoming one link in a complicated plan to find, treat, and bring lost and/or injured people from a cave. Many students may never be involved in an official rescue, but will find themselves with the ability to solve small problems on their own trips before they become big problems that require outside help.

For those of us who have never served in the military or worked in rescue/law enforcement jobs, we may try to imagine the kind of bond that exists, but without success. In fact, the term "co-worker" must have such a different, inconceivable meaning when your very life may depend on them on any given work day. I can only attempt to describe the intense emotion that I experienced for my peers and instructors. I don't

know if these courses become routine for the instructors or if they wonder why a student would feel this way from a training program. A bond now exists for me with my peer group that is more than just fellow "grotto member" or "caver". Even those terms shouldn't be taken lightly. Every time you set foot in a cave, especially in a vertical environment, you become interdependent with your fellow cavers. NCRC training is a powerful reminder of this and is valuable to all cavers."

What more can I say?

For more information see the web site at: <http://caves.org/io/ncrc/2005Seminar/seminar2005.htm> or e-mail the seminar registrar, Berta Kirchman at: 2005registrar@ncrc.info

The Survey and Exploration of Hubbel's Post Office Cave

By: Brian Roebuck (photos by Lynn Roebuck)

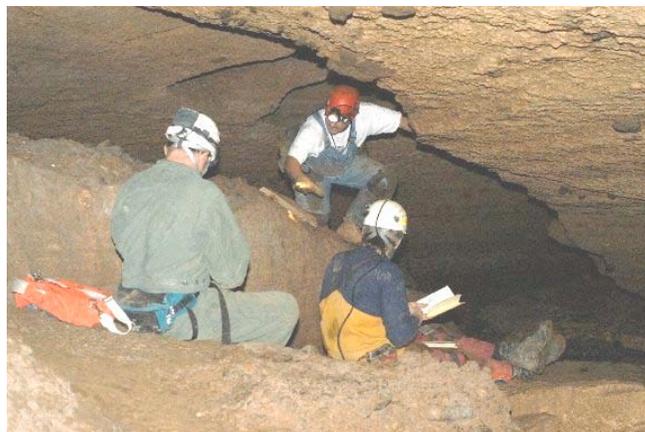
Back in September of 2003 the Southport Chronic Cavers decided to explore and survey a unique cave in Tennessee known as Post Office Cave. This cave has been off limits to most people for many years and through the hard work of Buddy Baldwin and Mark Dunnavent was made accessible to our grotto for this opportunity. The cave was formerly unknown to most cavers and most locals as well. Note that the access to this cave should be considered very "closed" due to the wishes of the owners. Nearby an old hand hewn log structure is reportedly one of the oldest post office locations in the state and has been used for many years for a variety of purposes. It still stands to this day.



cave is the multi level nature it has formed as well as the complexity of the passage shapes. The cave is home to typical cave adapted species as well such as Pippistrellus Subflavus (Pippistrell Bats), raccoons, crayfish, and cave rats. Various insects were also observed within. This cave is pretty easy going for most all cavers and made a great project for the grotto survey.

We surveyed the cave in two trips. Fortunately the cave is neither very long nor very complex. All passages humanly accessible were easily traversed and the survey went quickly. Many new surveyors were taught the subtle art of lead tape, data taking, use of the instruments, and setting points in the most difficult location for instrument readers to deal with <grin>. We had fun and took our time doing the survey and the results when plotted looked quite good. I did the sketching for a couple of reasons. First of all I was planning on producing the map and second – this cave was so tough to sketch in many places that beginners would be hard pressed trying to figure out how to accomplish a good sketch. Even later on trying to draw the map I would often have to refer to memory to assure the accuracy of the final map.

The cave entrance is located in a sink divided by a rock based road bed that appears to have been placed across the sink in years past. The crawl-in entrance is none too inviting where the caver is greeted by a short belly crawl across glass sherds from old trash dumpings etc to a small drop into the main passage of the cave. From there the cave is much more friendly and exhibits many surprises to the observant caver. In the cave traces of prehistoric use in the form of cane torch stoke marks and fragments of torch charcoal were found. The cave is a typical stream passage cave meandering beneath relatively flat terrain and exhibiting joint controlled layout much like other area caves. What becomes interesting in this



The first trip on September 21, 2003 included a group of surveyors and a group of explorers. We surveyed from the entrance as we went. The exploration team including Mark Dunnavent checked out the whole cave and reported what they found to us. The survey team was comprised of me on sketch, Lynn Roebuck doing data, Jim Clark and Buddy Baldwin on lead tape, and Robert Sewell on instruments. That first trip netted 624.58 feet of passage in 20 stations with a vertical extent of 22 feet. Lynn began to find what she suspected to be cane torch stoke marks about 400 feet into the cave. I also observed them and agreed they were indeed what we have been taught to be cane torch stoke marks.



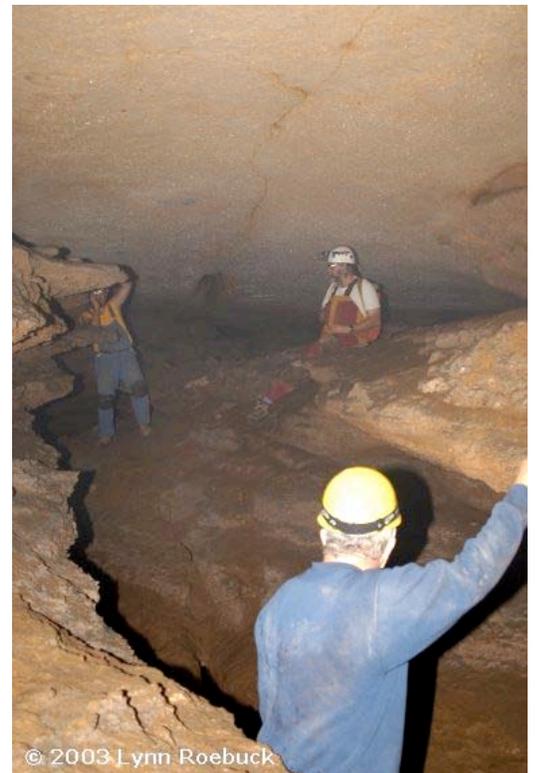
cave on February 29, 2004.

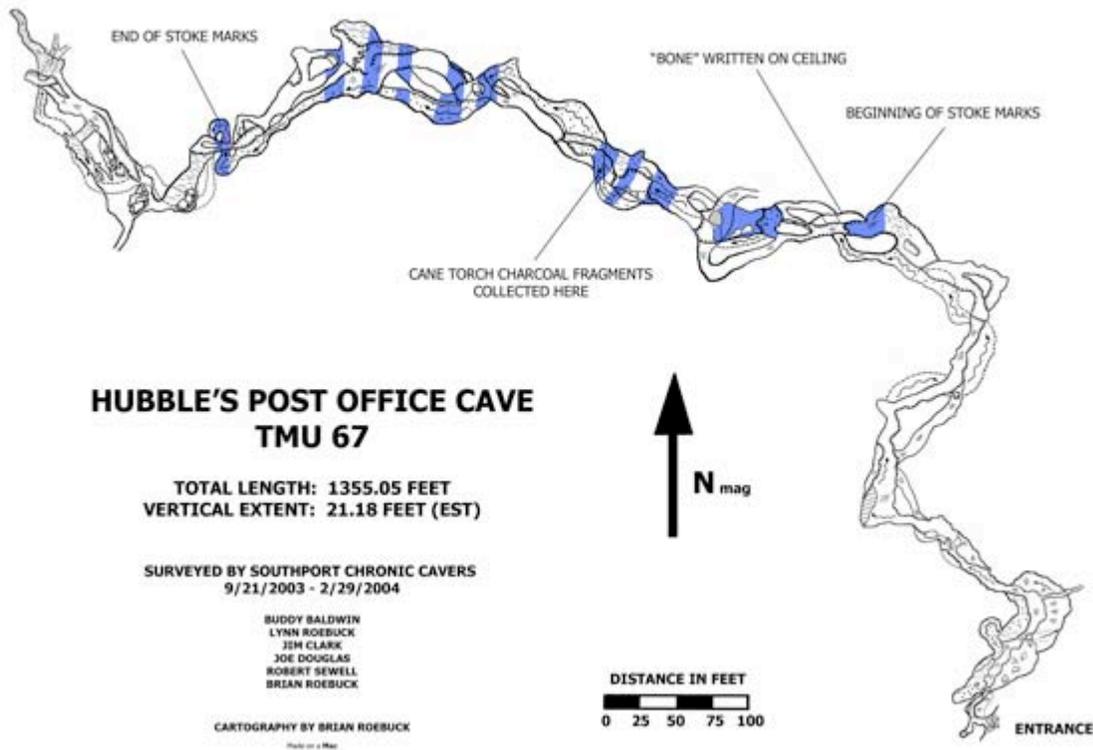
Lynn noted several stoke marks at station A-17, A-18, A-19, and "tons" of them on a big rock near A-20. She also noted charcoal residue left by the stoking action below this location. This would later prove to be quite interesting. The evidence of cane stoke marks got our attention and as we all began finding more we decided it would be neat to prove their authenticity. After Lynn and I tried unsuccessfully to contact renowned cave archaeologist Dr Jan Simek of UTK to come take a look we were at least able to get historian Dr Joe Douglas of Volunteer State University to come take a look as well as help survey the cave on the next trip. We all have caved and worked with Joe for years and he was as excited to see the stokes as we were upon our return to the

That trip was a survey and archaeology trip that netted survey of the rest of the cave as well as Joes' collection of tiny fragments of cane torch charcoal for carbon dating analysis. Like Lynn and I, Joe was almost certain these were prehistoric Native American cane torch stoke marks. We followed the marks all through the cave noting the locations as we surveyed along. Keen observations by Lynn as well as the rest of the survey team showed that most of the marks were clustered along the middle of the cave to almost the end of traversable passage. We guessed that the first part of the cave occasionally gets wet from stream activity that likely washed stoke mark evidence away from the walls long ago.

The second trip survey team consisted of Joe Douglas, Jim Clark, and Robert Sewell sharing duties on instruments, lead tape shared by Robert Sewell and Jim Clark, myself on sketch, and Lynn doing some data as well as taking notes on the cave archaeology, doing photos, and noting other interesting observations. We surveyed 730.47 feet in 26 stations with a vertical extent of 21 feet. The survey was completed that day and we talked about having me draw the map. Joe mentioned possibly getting carbon dating done on the charcoal samples. One noteworthy experience of the author was crawling near the entrance through a tight spot only to come face to face with a snarling Raccoon! Fortunately the beast was dead and the odor blew inwards away from my oh-to-close nasal passages! We all wisely avoided the carcass and continued the survey!

Joe couldn't find an institution willing to pay for the carbon dating so he paid for it himself resulting in a date of 1400 AD for the sample. Thanks Joe! That clearly puts it in a range typical of Middle Woodland Period occupation and appears to prove our theory of early Native American use of this cave. I have been working on the map and while it is still incomplete it is useful for illustrative purposes. It is interesting to note that the cane torch stoke areas (in blue) appear every hundred feet or so except for the more difficult areas of the cave to maneuver through where they are found more frequently deposited.





The grotto wishes to thank the owners of this unique cave for the opportunity to survey and explore this cave. Hopefully we can find other similar great caves in our area to provide similar enjoyment and purpose for our caving addiction. Thanks also to all the surveyors and explorers involved.

Conservation



Southport cavers continue to work on conservation issues in several areas. Many attended multiple SERA Karst Task Force clean-ups at Rocky River in Tennessee, and of course Bishop Cave survey efforts in Tennessee is ongoing to help assure the highway expansion does not affect the caves nearby.

The photo at left shows Carl Bishop gazing wistfully into the almost full dumpster at the last Rocky River Cave Sinkhole Cleanup after a long day of trash hauling and axe wielding. Carl and compatriot Mark Murrell are known for their extraordinary prowess with chopping up steel appliances with hand axes prior to hauling them out of sinkholes. Don't make these guys mad! Join them at the next clean-up!

Grotto Cave Trips

<u>Cave Name</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Those in attendance</u>
New Dug Open Cave	Jan 24, 04	Lynn & Brian Roebuck, Ron Zawislak, Marbry Hardin
Dug Open Cave	Jan, 04	Paul Snook, Ray Heery, Greg Johns
Southport Cave	Jan 24, 04	Jim Clark, Buddy Baldwin, and 10 Singles Club Members!

Yanahli WMA Ridgwalk	Jan 25, 04	Robert and Mathew Sewell
Yanahli Twins Cave	Jan, 04	Bull Snook, Ed Shackelford, Robert Sewell
Whoopers Cave	Jan, 04	Paul Snook, Ray Heerey, Greg Johns
Whites Basement Cave	Jan, 04	Bull Snook, Ray Heerey, Greg Johns
Gnatty Little SP Cave	Feb, 04	Brian & Lynn Roebuck ,Marion O Smith, Joe Douglas
Post Office Cave (survey)	Feb 29, 04	Mark Dunnavent, Buddy Baldwin, Jim Clark, Roebucks, Robert Sewell
Bedford Cave hwy survey	Feb, 04	Brian & Lynn Roebuck (tied hwy 41A to cave survey data)
Lick Creek Cave	Feb 15, 04	Carl Bishop, Mike Smith
Devils Den Cave	Mar, 04	Brian & Lynn Roebuck , Joe Douglas
West Cave	April 3, 04	Lynn & Brian Roebuck and 15 others cavers after TCS Meeting
Blue Spring Cave	April 4, 04	Robert Sewell, Bull Snook, Carl Bishop, Mark Murrel, Anne & Duane Gary
Topsy Cave	April 4, 04	Buddy Baldwin, Mark Dunnavent
Espey Cave	April 17, 04	Bull Snook, Josh Tate, Frank Maynard
SERA Cleanup Rocky River Cave	April 17, 04	Brian & Lynn Roebuck, Carl Bishop, many volunteers
Lost Creek Cave Rocky River Cave	April 24, 04	Carl Bishop, Randy and Joe Dunnegan
SERA Cleanup Rocky River Cave	Dec 11, 2004	Brian & Lynn Roebuck, Mark Murrel, Carl Bishop
Cumberland Caverns Christmas Party!	Dec 11, 2004	Brian & Lynn Roebuck
Blue Crystal Well Melton Well Harrison SP Cave Plunge Creek Pit	Dec , 04	Bull Snook, Frank Maynard, Jesus Martinez, Josh Tate, Cody ?, ray Heery, Mike? Bobby ? (some combination of this group per trip)
Yell Cave	Dec 30, 04	Bull Snook , Josh Tate, Bobby?
Yankee Hole	Dec 28, 04	Bull Snook, Josh Tate, Bobby?
Unknown Cave	Dec 31, 04	Ed Shackelford and Robert Sewell (Giles County)
Virgin Falls Cave Upper Sheep Cave	Dec 31, 04	Buddy Baldwin, Pink Pinkerton, Mark Dunnavent
Kelso SP Cave	Jan 2, 05	The Roebucks, Joe Douglas, Avis Van Swearingen, Gerald Moni

Thus ended the cave trips of the year 2004 & very early 2005 (More next issue)

Calendar of Events

***March 19th - SERA Winter Business Meeting**

To be held at the Stevenson, Alabama Church of Christ located on hwy 117 . Typically each grotto in SERA is represented by members that attend the WBM. These members make up part of the governing body of SERA and are allowed to vote on issues affecting the entire region. They also have a banquet, map and photo salons, and other things of interest at most WBM events. Be there! Contact Myrna Attaway for more info at <mailto:crazybatlady@aol.com>

***May 13th-15th - SERA 2005: 54th Annual SERA Cave Carnival**

The [Birmingham Grotto](#) is hosting the 2005 SERA Cave Carnival. The Cave Carnival will be held at Camp Comer Boy Scout Camp in Mentone, Alabama. Facilities include 1200 acres of wooded campground 110 acre lake, never ending hot water, and more to greet the attendees! For more information: http://www.bhamgrotto.org/SERA_2005/index.htm

***July 4th - 8th NSS Convention – Huntsville Alabama**

Go to www.nss2005.com for more info. Don't miss this rare nearby NSS Convention! If you have never been to an NSS Convention before you owe it to yourself to attend this one. It will be a great experience for all of us. Sign up today and represent SCCG at the convention!

WANTED!

Cave related stories, artwork, cave maps, trip reports, etc for the next issue(s)! If you got it get it to me! Send your stuff to Brian Roebuck, editor **Southport Digs**, at solow@charter.net or give me something at grotto meetings or through the US Mail. Send snail mail to 94 Magnolia Lane, Normandy, TN 37360. Thanks!!

Other Stuff of Interest

The grotto is working on a new website. Robert-Bob Sewell volunteered his vast computing talents for this task and is still seeking inputs for the grotto website. Go to www.caves.org/grottos/sccg to check it out. Although brimming with ideas and talent he needs some of your ideas and perhaps some photos, stories or whatever to put on the site too! Send your suggestions and other good stuff to Robert-Bob ASAP at bsewell@united.net !

Last months' meeting was held in Lewisburg at the Pizza Hut due to winter weather. It is usually held spring through fall at Henry Horton State Park in one of the picnic shelters. We will continue meeting at the Pizza Hut location until it gets warmer where we will likely go back to the park. We meet on the first Monday of every month at 7:00 PM. Show interest in our grotto and be at the meetings!

Bishop Cave News

A public meeting will be conducted on the SR 16 (US 41A) improvement project from SR 64 east of Shelbyville to west of Magnolia Lane in Bedford/Moore Counties on February 17, 2005. An official notice should be announced in the local newspapers by February 1, 2005. The location and time: Shelbyville Central High School, 401 Eagle Boulevard, Shelbyville, Tennessee, between 6 and 8 p.m.

Editors' note:

I bet you all are thinking we need more newsletters. You are right of course. But the newsletters are only as good as the news we make and send in to me the editor. If you send me some good photos or articles real soon I will try to get at least three out per year. Next issue to come soon – or you can fire me and get a "real" editor!