



The Southport Digs

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



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SCCG URL: <http://www.angelfire.com/tn/southportcavers/>

2004 SCCG Officers (the "Bobs") :

Buddy-Bob Baldwin (Chairman)

Brian-Bob Roebuck (Vice Chairman - Newsletter Ed)

Bob-Robert Sewell (Secretary)

Lynn-Bob Roebuck (Treasurer)

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Featured Article:

Southport Cavers Attempt to Save Bishop Cave!

By Brian Roebuck (photo by Lynn Roebuck)

Background:

Back in the "early days" of Southport Chronic Cavers (way back in the year 2000) it was discovered by some Southport members that the state of Tennessee had decided to widen highway 41A along the stretch of road that entrance of Bishop county. Grotto Roebuck and others and decided to keep progress of this and others told us survey of Bishop info Lynn and I father who lived in us contact son Hal who at the Washington State. data and agreed to from the late 1970's now defunct



lies close to the Cave in Bedford member Lynn took notice of this a keen eye on the effort. Gerald Moni about an earlier Cave and with that called Hal Bridges' Tullahoma. He gave information for his time was in Hal found his old send what he had survey effort of the Cumberland Grotto

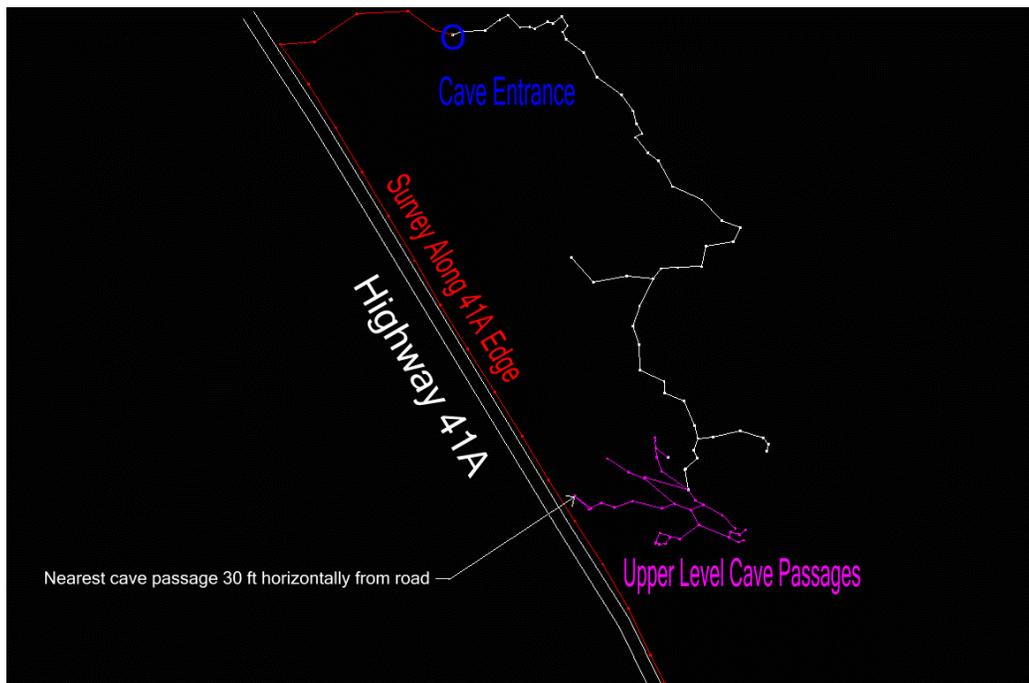
that was based in Tullahoma. Hal sent his data to the group surveying Bishop and a two dimensional working map was drafted by Marbry Hardin from these data. They intended to use it as a basis for continuing the survey but unfortunately it did not contain vertical data which is needed for grade 5 TCS maps. Since the cave has many upper and lower levels that could be affected by road modification a new survey had to be done in order to find out if the cave would be in danger. Sometime in 2001 a fledgling survey effort of Bishop Cave was started by several grotto members. At that time however there was no actual threat to the cave and soon the survey efforts tapered off for several reasons. Many newer SCCG members at that time were unfamiliar with cave surveying and needed training to get proficient. Also Bishop is a cave that has a minor problem. The entrance passage can flood in rainy weather making prolonged survey trips difficult and

possibly even dangerous. The initial survey attempts netted some surveyed passage but the overall effort faltered. In the meantime Lynn and the others kept a wary eye on the situation near Bishop. Brian and Lynn were later contacted and recruited by Dr. Mick Harvey (cave biologist) in 2002 to guide him through local caves along highway 41A to look for bats etc. This effort was paid for by the State of Tennessee (TDOT) through a sub-contractor. No rare or endangered bats were found in Bishop or any other cave studied. With this development it became clear that something would happen in the near future. It would not be until the year 2003 that the threat to Bishop would become more real to the cavers of Southport.

TDOT Makes Plans for Highway Expansion.

In 2003 the grotto learned of specific sections of highway 41A that were to be widened. The karst section near Bishop was one of them. In August 2003 SCCG members Bull Snook, Ray Heerey, Lynn and Brian Roebuck, area cavers from other grottos, and others took a really good look at Bishop cave. We wanted to see if the cave contained any cultural, biological, or historic resources before they could possibly be affected by highway expansion. Biologists from several Tennessee affiliations and the Tennessee Nature Conservancy came along and searched the cave stream and passages noting cave animals including a likely sighting of the rare Tennessee Cave Salamander. Joe Douglas and the Roebucks (all trained in cave historic and cultural resources) did a careful inventory of the cave passages noting possible historic and cultural evidence throughout the cave passages. Other cavers checked out the various passages noting formations, large rooms, domes, and passages in an area of the cave that could be endangered by road construction activities. We all came away with a new respect for this wonderful stream cave but at the same time learned what we might lose to road development.

By September 2003 the cave was once again being actively surveyed by teams led by Bull Snook and anyone who wished to help. Many Southport members volunteered to survey but this was truly a multi grotto survey effort and other cavers eventually volunteered to help Bull and SCCG get the cave surveyed. Even though it appeared the state was serious about highway expansion it was still tough at times to get good cave surveyors serious about surveying this cave. Bull and I sent out invitations for surveyors to help out in this important effort and it began to pay off. Later in October local cavers Bull, Lynn, and Brian noticed the state had posted plans to widen highway 41A in front of the cave. Lynn searched the TDOT websites and other resources such as the local library to find the environmental impact statements for this project. To our



amazement TDOT did not see Bishop cave as being threatened by the road project at all. They simply had no idea the cave could be impacted or at worst had simply ignored the possibility. The most alarming thing grotto members learned was that a public meeting had already been held on the expansion project and we had missed it! Only two days were left to make public comments spurring Lynn and Brian Roebuck to write a lengthy email message full of the dangers of widening the road without knowing what effect it could have on the cave, ground water, and cultural or biological resources within. It must have struck a nerve. The state

officials soon contacted the Roebucks and arranged a meeting for the last day of October to talk to us and visit the cave. It was Halloween! Bull, Ray, Lynn and I met the entourage that morning at the cave.

Working with the State

As it turned out the state appears to have become a bit more friendly to cavers and the sensitive nature of Karst terrain since the Rumbling Falls efforts by Nashville Grotto, many cavers, and a coalition of Environmental groups. Perhaps the public awareness from all this had done some good for the efforts of cave conservationists and cavers alike. Tennessee Department of Transportation officials, biologists, archaeologists, and even a karst hydrogeologist showed up to talk about the road plans, the cave, and the cave resources we had observed to date. A few even toured parts of the cave with us. We told the TDOT folks that we were surveying the cave and were willing to share our data with them to assure the road cuts would not impact the cave or surprise the construction crews when work begins in 2005. An uneasy partnership thus began and subsequently has become a rather unique relationship between cavers and TDOT. TDOT began to learn that we were good surveyors, and came to trust our data and talents as we showed them where the cave passages lie in relation to the highway. Unfortunately for all involved the initial proposed plans would have cut into the upper levels of large cave passage that happens to lie parallel to the highway slightly higher than the existing road bed of the highway. Lynn suggested surveying from the cave entrance to the road and up the highway edge to tie the road location to cave passages surveyed to date. Even with this information I had a tough time finding a way to show TDOT officials this but eventually found a way to show 3D moving images of the cave survey versus the road edge with a computer file called an animated GIF. This seemed to have the desired effect and TDOT began to look at alternate paths for the road widening near the cave.

A New Survey of Bishop Makes a Difference

As stated earlier Bull Snook persuaded, begged, coerced, and manipulated some grotto members to help him survey Bishop. He had never taken on such a large project to date and many Southport members helped him out. Lynn and I asked our survey buddies to help as well. While Bull coordinated where we all surveyed in Bishop, Lynn and Brian concentrated on working with the survey data and coordinating the issues with the TDOT officials as well as helping with actual cave survey. Without the help of many other grotto members and non Southport Grotto member survey volunteers we could not have surveyed so much so fast. Most of the cave near the road that can be affected by construction has been surveyed. Enough has been located close to the road that TDOT cannot ignore the possibility they will impact the cave, have possible collapses into cave passages, and become the focus of bad publicity should they choose to go ahead with their initial plans. So it is that the story of Bishop Cave continues. To date our efforts have netted thousands of feet of surveyed cave and shown the state that there is a unique and valuable natural resource near the highway that must be considered before the bulldozers are turned loose.

Please help me in thanking all the volunteers that have given so much to this effort and please consider helping out with this worthy project.

Brian

Survey and Exploration

Winter for Southport cavers is a good time to survey and explore caves. Many of the members were involved in such activities throughout the cold months. As you recall On September 21, 2003 Southport Grotto members gathered for the first survey project to be undertaken as a grotto project, Hubbels Post Office Cave in Maury County. On February 29, 2004 the grotto returned to finish the survey of this fine cave and did so in grand style! A map is in the works and should be interesting as this is a complex meandering multi-level cave. This is a new cave for the TCS and has been turned in. Many thanks again to the surveyors of this cave. This cave is a really nice find for Southport founding members Buddy Baldwin and Mark Dunnavent. Note that landowner relations here is tenuous due to the land being passed into the hands of multiple heirs. It should be considered "closed" until further notice.

More about our exploits will be exposed in the trip reports section.

Conservation

Southport cavers again worked on conservation issues in several areas. Many attended multiple SERA Karst Task Force clean-ups at Pettijohns in Georgia, Rocky River in Tennessee, and of course Bishop in Tennessee.

Grotto Cave Trips

<u>Cave Name</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Those in attendance</u>
Buffalo River Cave	Oct 4, 03	Buddy Baldwin, Steve Tyndal, Mark Dunnavent
Topsy Cave	Oct 4, 03	Buddy Baldwin, Steve Tyndal, Mark Dunnavent
Godwin Cave	Oct 5, 03	Gerald Moni, Carl Bishop, Mark Murrell, Jenifer Pinkley, John Hoffelt, Chrys Hulbert
Pettijohns Cave, GA	Oct 11, 03	SERA Karst Task Force Cleanup (28 cavers attended including Lynn and Brian Roebuck of SCCG)
Window Cave	Oct 18, 03	Bull Snook, Ray Heerey, Robert Sewell, Josh Tate
Bishop Cave	Oct 31, 03	Paul Snook, Ray Heerey, Lynn & Brian Roebuck met with TDOT for Meeting and tour of cave for highway widening project.
Blue Spring Cave	Nov 1, 03	Bull Snook, Ray Heerey, Carl Bishop, Josh Tate, and Nashville Grotto members Michael? & Chris?
Yell Cave	Nov 1, 03	Brian & Lynn Roebuck look for cave beetles for Dr. Thomas C. Barr
Southport Cave	Nov 28, 03	"Friends from Mississippi" (honest – that is all I have – <i>ed.</i>)
Bedford Cave	Nov 29, 03	Gerald Moni, Joe Douglas, Brian Roebuck, John Stinson, John Smyre (this is a new TCS cave found by accident located in Moore county)
Silvertooth Cave	Nov 29, 03	Same as above (second cave of the day)
Southport Cave	Dec 6, 03	Jim Clark and friends
Cumberland Caverns	Dec 13, 03	Cumberland Caverns Christmas Party – Lynn, Brian, Rob Robbins and Connie Sue. Oh yes - several hundred other cavers attended ;-)
Rocky River Cave	Dec 13, 03	SKTF clean-up before the CCCP event later that evening attended by Lynn and Brian Roebuck and many other cavers.
Alice Cave	Dec 13, 03	Buddy Baldwin, Bill, and Philip
Southport Cave	Dec 23, 03	Buddy Baldwin, Mark Dunnavent, Steve Tyndall, and Greg Johns

Thus ended the cave trips of the year 2003 (More next issue)

Calendar of Events

***May 15th – 19th - TAG Fall Cave-In Work Weekend (New TAG Site!)**

Starting the first weekend of June and every weekend after there will be a work weekend at the new site. Visit <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/tagonthemountain/> for more info.

***May 20th-23th - SERA 2004: 53th Annual SERA Cave Carnival**

The [Appalachian Grotto](#) is hosting the 2004 SERA Cave Carnival. The Cave Carnival will be held Thursday May 20th - Sunday 23rd 2004 at Camp Davy Crockett Boy Scout Camp in St. Clair, TN (40 miles NE of Knoxville).

For more information:

<http://www.caves.org/grotto/appalachian>

or email Curtis Ellison CaveMan@charter.net

***June 5th - Annual Huntsville Grotto Cave Rescue Unit Tyrolean Traverse at Desoto Falls**

Hosted by the Huntsville HART rescue team.

***June 25th – 27th – Karst-O-Rama:**

***July 12th – 16th , 2004 NSS Convention:** Marquette Michigan. Check out www.nss2004.com for more info!

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!!

Last Minute Additions

The grotto is getting a new website soon. Member Robert-Bob Sewell volunteered his vast computing talents for this task and is seeking inputs for the new grotto website. It is hoped to add some humor as well as good information about who we are and what we do through this new site. Although brimming with ideas and talent he needs some of your ideas too! Send your suggestions to Robert-Bob ASAP at bsewell@united.net !

Last months' meeting was held in Lewisburg under a picnic shelter at Henry Horton State Park. We will continue this meeting location and see how things work out. We meet on the first Monday of every month at 7:00 PM. Bring snacks and drinks and we can all get even bigger! The shelters provide a great place to grill if so inclined (hint hint).

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!

Carl Bishop (Carl-Bob) and Doc Ed Shackelford (Shack-Bob)

Editors' note:

Wow it's May already and this is the first issue of the year! What gives? Well I am delinquent but at least we have some of our 2004 exploits now in print. I also sent copies of the earlier 2003 issues to the NSS for their records so at least we will have some grotto history with them. Let me know what you want to see in the "Digs" and send me some good photos or articles real soon. Next issue to come soon – or you can fire me and get a "real" editor!

