



The Southport Digs

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



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

2003 SCCG Officers (the "Bobs") :

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Bob-Robert Sewell (Secretary)

Lynn-Bob Roebuck (Treasurer)

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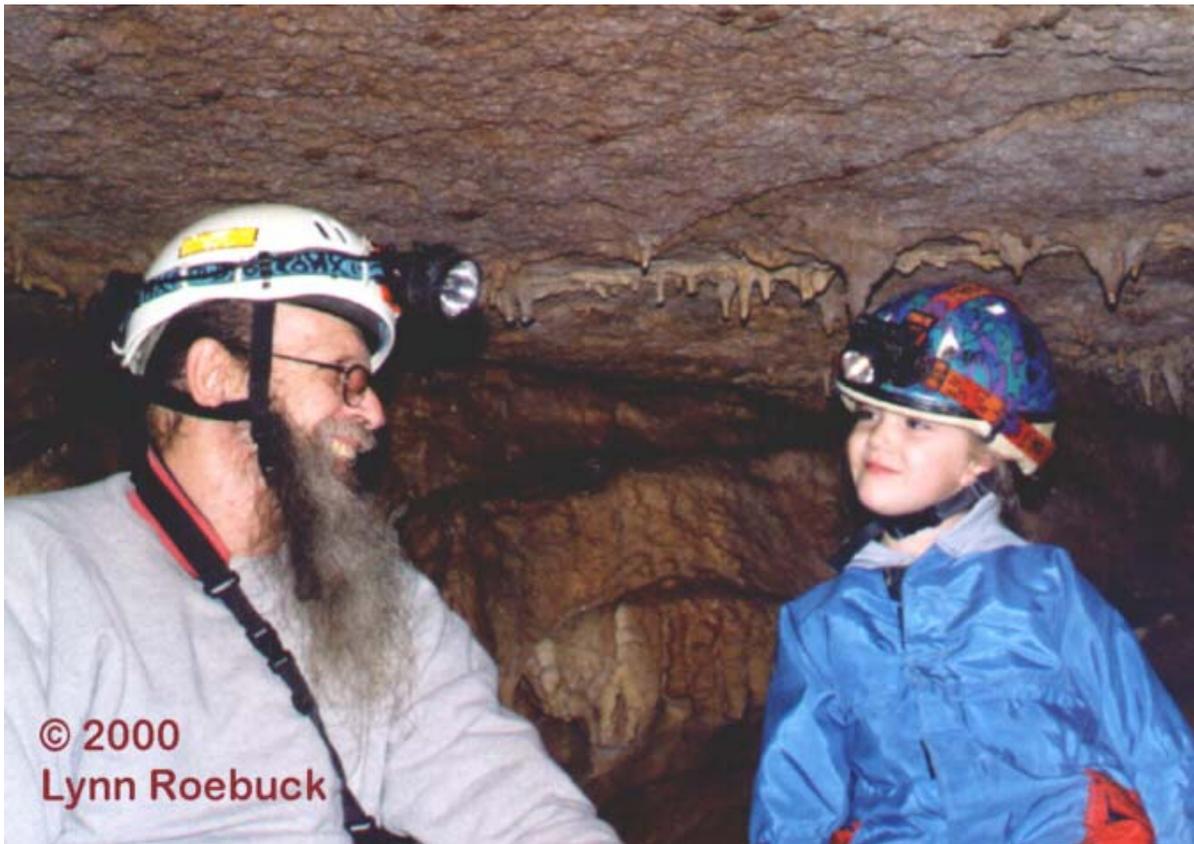
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Featured Buffoonery:

Rob Moves "Up North"!

A fictional account by Dr. Beaner

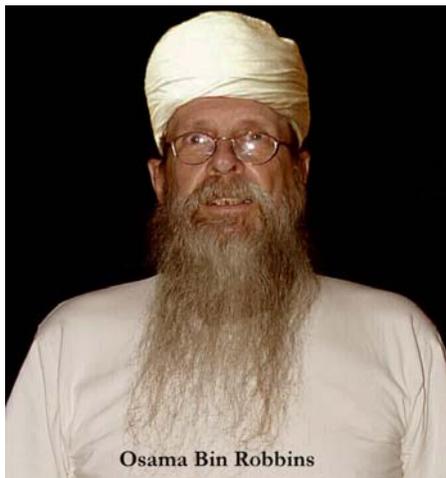


Rob and Alexandria Oeser in House Cave in 2000

Rob Robbins, co founder and guru of SCCG, has moved out of our beloved TAG region and gone back "up north"! The results of this earth shattering circumstance have caused changes in the very climate structure of the entire TAG area! Have y'all noticed how cool it has been this summer? We actually had a "real" spring season and the fall has started early as well! Strange indeed my friends. Does Rob have some secret powers that extend over the TAG region? Perhaps. Yes Robs' departure has left a void in the heart of TAG and SCCG. Let us investigate the facts leading up to the actual event and determine for ourselves what may have led to this occurrence...

"Love Child" Theory:

As many have suspected it appears that Rob may very well be the "Love Child" of some prominent cavers in the TAG region (whose names will be held in strictest confidence – ask me later!!) If this is indeed true Rob was doomed from the beginning to be a caver. His caver parents left him abandoned in a basket on the front porch of the old TAG house at the tender age of 20 where hippie influenced caver culture he immediately fell into the prevailing back in the day. beard was first grown and Rob was a regular there and enjoying the caving lifestyle Rob enjoyed those lazy days caving, partying, etc. In fact if



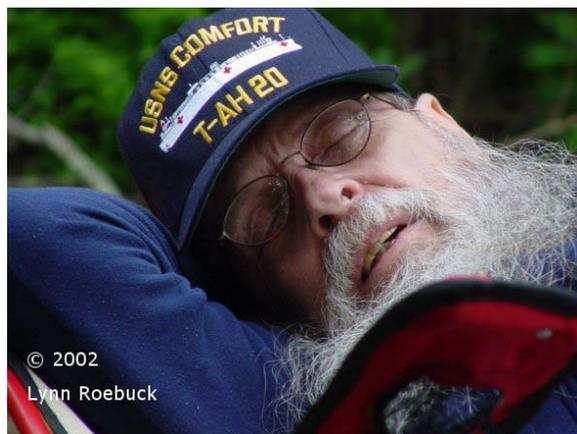
doesn't even remember any leader and inspire the others new major cave systems, and caving. Many don't know it nearly every major caving was made from a cardboard end. Rob would put film in light. After minutes of choking

Many of his early photos came out too smoky and he yearned for more modern equipment. Thus Rob left TAG for employment in the burgeoning auto industry up near Detroit. Leaving all his cave gear behind he set out on foot to secure the funds needed for becoming a big time cave photographer. Rob lucked into a good job at GM and soon was amassing plenty of cold hard cash. It seemed he would soon return to TAG and pursue his dream of "professional cave photographer" when tragedy struck!

Rob was perusing the latest NSS News issue when he spotted a picture of someone very familiar to him. The resemblance was striking indeed. It had to be... Yes!! ... the woman in the photo had exactly the same beard that Rob had. Could it be his mother? The photo was taken in deepest Africa where an NSS team was on cave safari investigating the Pygmy Caves on Mulu Bonga peninsula. What a stroke of bad luck! Rob was compelled to find his mother and see why she left him stranded in diapers on the front porch of the TAG house in the early 1970's! And so the journey began way back in 1974. Rob hopped aboard the USNS Comfort bound for darkest Africa as a deck hand and cook. Before leaving Rob did pick up his first real camera – a Kodak Brownie!

Mulu Bonga – Where the heck is that?

Arriving off the coast of Mulu Bonga peninsula in the spring of 1975 Rob jumped ship and began to



search for the caving party he had read about in the NSS News. He talked to local natives who gladly showed him caves and pits but Rob could find no trace of the cavers or of dear ole Mom. Were they eaten by Pygmies? Lost in virgin borehole? Out of supplies and wandering in the jungle? Nobody knew. Rob returned to shore only to find his ship had sailed on. He headed out on foot alone with no supplies and only a cavers' sense of dead reckoning and dumb luck to carry him through. Years went by as if in a dream filled with jungle rot, native rituals, eating things that had no names, and despair. Suddenly one day Rob arrived in Paris France not quite knowing how he got there! By sheer coincidence the International Speleological Congress was meeting there

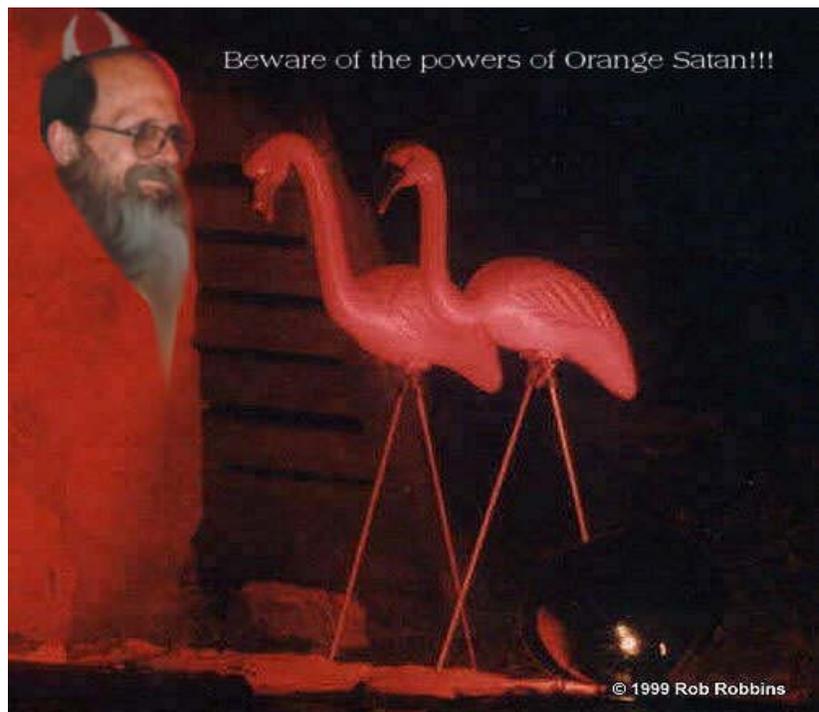
at that very time. Rob found a group of local cavers in a café discussing European rope techniques over wine and croissants. He introduced himself and began to tell of his caving exploits in darkest Africa. The cavers, fascinated, fed him more wine and croissants until they were totally engrossed in his amazing tale! Soon he was literally carried through the streets of Paris on the shoulders of the French cavers! He became an instant celebrity and was invited to speak before the ISC where he was given their highest honor – La Baguette de Speleology Extraordinaire! Rob asked in vain if anyone had knowledge of the caving party he sought out in Africa. Alas he found nothing about them. At the end of the conference he was given first class passage on a fast freighter back to New York City where he headed out to Detroit again to make enough money to return to TAG. His union job awaited him complete with seniority!

Is there Life on Uranus? What about Saturn?

Rob soon found the life of an auto worker to be less than grand especially in a cave poor region. Then opportunity knocked and Rob came to Spring Hill Tennessee landing a job with Saturn! It was here that Rob finally was at peace and became a "BNC" (Barely Noticed Caver) among the hundreds of TAGs' finest! He traveled TAG and gathered experience and friends as he went and soon was well known enough to be shunned by even the most elite of TAG's cavers! Controversy surrounded him as he set about doing things and trying to fit in amongst the gud-ole-boyz. Things often went wrong for Rob but his amazing power to confound us all with his personality and email prowess began to change his destiny! It was by accident during a particularly dark TAG Fall Cave In that Rob was discovered by those around a small camp fire to be The Orange Satan Hissel! Yes - in the flickering fire light the orange glow set off a chain reaction of events that ultimately led to Robs' moving to Northern latitudes! Soon strange events surrounded Rob. Pranks of all kinds began to be played on many of his friends. Nothing really evil but nonetheless bizarre! Wherever Rob went people laughed and pranks occurred. It was as if a crayola box of satans were unleashed that Fall night near the fire! Soon many lesser cavers feared Rob as if pranks would spontaneously erupt from being in his presence! Many would only dare reproach him via the internet under assumed names! Robs power and legend grew daily! Something had to give.

A Legend is Born - "O.S."

Vicious rumors were made up about him. Rob laughed them off – a horrible orange satan sort of laugh! It kinda went like this: Muuuuaahhhaahhhaahhaaaaaahhhaa!!!! You had to be there – trust me on this one. By now Rob figured TAG was getting way too hot! But where to go? He had been all over the world, done most everything, hitmotized Flamingos, and yet only one place was frigid enough to handle Rob – The Orange Satan Hissel! That place was "up north"! And so on a fateful day in the summer of 2003 Rob Robbins left dear ole TAG and headed where the sun don't shine (much) - errr - up north somewhere. Since we in TAG don't care much for "up north" we really don't have a clue where he is exactly. It is just somewhere "up north" as far as we all know. We can only sit back reminiscing about the good old days having Rob around. It appears all of TAG has been thus affected and perhaps even afflicted. Evidence is everywhere. In fact it seems we all wait his return during the full moon over Valley Head, Alabama each year where his 1000 plus O.S. minions worship the huge orange flames whilst writhing to musical interludes and screaming out for Simmons Rollers..... Simmons Rollers.....



We miss ya Rob ;-(

Survey and Exploration

Many Southport members have been involved during the summer with the re-mapping project of TNC's Hubbards Cave near Irving College Tennessee. This large salt petre and Gray Bat cave has been previously mapped by others to a length of over 5000 ft. After TNC acquired the cave covers a group of researchers found a need for a more detailed map of the cave and decided to work together to create one. Since original survey data were unavailable the entire cave had to be mapped again and with some important new virgin cave discovered in the south passage area . Since this is a large hibernaculum for Gray Bats the cave is closed for the winter and summer months are the only time available for surveyors to work in the cave. Several important trips were taken this year and regions on the west passage known as the "Forever Crawl" were pushed to the limit by such noted cavers as Bill Walter, Tony Pugh, Keith Filson, and April Moore. Southport members Lynn and Brian Roebuck worked on other passages as well with help from veteran HR3 surveyors Marbry Hardin (project leader) and Don Lance. Yet another team consisting of Tim Curtis, Marion O. Smith, Maarten Poot, Nathaniel Mann, and others pushed the farthest lead in the south part of the cave below tons of breakdown known as the "Deep South" section. This project spans several years of survey and exploration efforts with much more to push and explore in the future. Time is on our side and the gated cave's virgin leads are likely safe from would be scoopers! The survey effort is open to all qualified cave surveyors and has both horizontal and vertical sections to continue with. Contact Brian Roebuck for details if you are interested in helping next summer.

On September 21, 2003 Southport Grotto members gathered for the first survey project to be undertaken as a grotto. The survey and mapping of Hubbels Post Office Cave began in earnest in Maury County. The list of cavers included Buddy Baldwin, Mark Dunnavant, Jim Clark, Robert & Matthew Sewell, Greg Barrett, Kelsey ??, and Lynn & Brian Roebuck. Many of the folks involved had never surveyed a cave before and after some quick training and a few on the job pointers they did just fine! About 650 feet of nice stream passage was surveyed out of an estimated 2500 feet. More trips are planned to finish this fine cave up. A map will also be generated! This cave amazingly was not on the TCS database. Plans are to turn it in after it is surveyed. Buddy and Mark tell us there are many more caves around that need to be explored, mapped, and turned in. Maury county and surrounding regions have much to offer "SouthPorters" whenever they get ready to go look! SCCG should produce some fine cave surveyors and map makers soon enough.

What about Bull? Well the young man has also been busy finding, surveying, and mapping some caves this summer! Yes Paul "Bull" Snook and his trusty side kick Ray Heery have been racking up the survey mileage in at least a half dozen caves that we know of. Bull may even have some secret projects he isn't talking about! Now that he has a computer we fully expect him to produce fine grade 5 TCS cave maps! Watch out – Bull is coming on strong!

Canoe Caving

This summer the usual canoe trips and cave spotting was at an all time low. Reasons vary but it just didn't happen like last summer. Oh well there are too many leaves out to see much in the summertime. Maybe this fall we can get some paddle time in and spot a few more riverbank caves! Besides the ubiquitous Stinging Nettle will be died down by then! Whew!

Conservation

Southport cavers traditionally volunteer for conservation efforts and this summer was no different. Starting in the Spring at the SERA Cave Carnival a bunch of us helped out the SERA Karst Task Force sponsored clean up of the horrific trash heap in the sink entrance of Rocky River Cave in White County. This massive project took all the effort we could muster, braved a serious thunderstorm assault, muddy slopes, muddy ropes, and dangerous heavy trash slides careening down the east side of the sink. Tons and tons of appliances, tires, wheels, and car parts were hauled out with a Herculean effort by dozens of hard core conservationist cavers!

There are still tons of trash left and future plans are being made for cavers to work on the sink yet again until it is cleaned up once and for all.

Other efforts included work in various caves to determine biological, cultural, historic, and aesthetic resources in area caves all over Tennessee. Working with other cavers and agencies Southport members were involved with many different projects. Some include caves near the Fall Creek Falls State Park area near Spencer TN and bat and beetle research working with Tennessee Nature Conservancy and Dr Thomas Barr. Repairing cave fences downed by storm damage at Yell Cave in Bedford County is yet another example. This area of caving never ends and always needs help. There appears to be a never ending supply of useful projects in cave conservation – enough for two lifetimes it seems!

Grotto Cave Trips

Many grotto members held varied trips throughout the summer although no grotto sponsored trips occurred until the September trip to Hubbels Post Office cave was held. This cave is supposed to be a grotto survey project and it appears that many good trips will be taken here. But this is just one project that the grotto is getting behind for now. Plans are being made to have more grotto cave trips and other functions as time and energy permits. It would be a shame if some of us didn't get to go caving enough now wouldn't it? So speak up members! Forward your suggestions to our officers for trips, paddles, picnics, calf ropings, whatever and we'll see what happens! Heck there are only 10,000 caves in TAG and just one lifetime to see 'em all! Let's get caving!

Upcoming Events

- ***October 9th – 12th - 2003 TAG Fall Cave-In (hosted by the Dogwood City Grotto):**
Hosted by the DCG as always this is the event to be seen attending in TAG! The event is taking place at the Sequoia Caverns Campground in Valley Head , Alabama. For information see <http://www.dcg-nss.org/2003Cavein.htm>
- ***October 13th – 17th - 2003 National Cave and Karst Symposium (NCKMS):**
Hosted by the NSS cave Diving Section in Gainesville FL this year. For information see <http://www.cavediver.org/necks/nckms.htm>
- ***November 7th-9th - Nashville Grotto 50th Anniversary Celebration:** Montgomery Bell State Park. Contact Chuck Manglesdorf at chuckmanglesdorf@aol.com to register.
- ***December 10th or so – Cumberland Caverns Christmas Party:** For those of you not on the invitation list already please contact the business office at Cumberland Caverns. Do it **now** and you may be able to get tickets! Send email to info@cumberlandcaverns.com or call 931 668-4396
- ***February 7th – 8th , 2004 SERA Winter Business Meeting:** Hosted by the Athens Speleological Society at the Best Western, McMinnville, Tennessee with featured speaker Chris Anderson of Darklight Imagery. Conservation project hosted by SKTF planned for Sunday as well! Check out www.caves.org/region/sera/SERAWBM.htm 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 stuff at grotto meetings or through the US Mail. Send snail mail to 94 Magnolia Lane, Normandy, TN 37360. Thanks!!

Featured Article

Eleven at Cumberland Caverns

Paul "Bull" Snook

On Saturday January 11th, 2003 nine friends and two tour guides met at Cumberland Caverns (Higgenbotham Cave) in Warren County, TN for a wild cave tour. The group was led by two tour guides named Chris and Jeff with the rest of the group consisting of Ray "N-Da-Ho" Heery, Roger Wilson, Barry (from Rogers' Church), Joe Whorley, Greg Johns, "Rug", "H", and myself. The group was led on foot and by Jeep to the Chandelier Ballroom where they all geared up for the cave trip. From there we made our way up the tourist trails across the Mountain Room to the infamous benches where they enjoyed the nostalgic "On the first Day" Audio and Light Presentation given to all tourists.

Next it was on to Virgin Avenue after some scrambling across the breakdown beyond the presentation area where they were led into the famous "Sewing Room". Our group marveled at the long fine gypsum needles present in the sandy floor. Some of the white and clear needles were up to three feet long! We then went to the Crystal Palace carefully sliding down into the beautiful room and taking in the sights of some of nature's finest cave formations. Plenty of "oohs", "ahhs", and even some [expletives deleted] were heard within this famous Cumberland Caverns treasure chamber. Gypsum crust covered the walls with angel hair and gypsum flowers scattered about in all their glory! I used up more than 30 frames of film taking photos of this wonderful room! Young Mr. Joe Whorley coined the phrase "Pimpin" to show his amazement with this room! Everyone thoroughly enjoyed this part of the cave.

Later it was off to the "Rock of Ages" areas of the cave for a short stay until the group was finally led back to the ballroom and eventually out of the cave. To those of you who have never been on this tour it is well worth it. I will definitely be willing to go back and see even more of this great cave! To the owner Roy Davis and especially to the guides Chris and Jeff I wish to say "Thank you so Very Much"!

Editors Note:

Having been to this cave on similar trips in the past I can also attest to the beauty and awe of this special place. With prior arrangements most cavers can contact Cumberland Caverns and arrange for a wild tour. Many ex tour guides are now NSS cavers that can lead tours for small groups. Now you have no excuse – go there and go caving!

2003 Southport Chronic Cavers	Grotto Members List
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Eric Johnson NSS 44639 3908 W. Crestview Dr. Huntsville, AL 35816 215-536-6040 ejohnso4@att.net	Paul Snook NSS 48780 8251 Short Creek Rd. Christiana, TN 37037 cavemein@yahoo.com
Mike "Spike" Jones "Whereabouts unknown" Tennessee	Jonathan Snook 8251 Short Creek Rd. Christiana, TN 37037
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