

President's Message



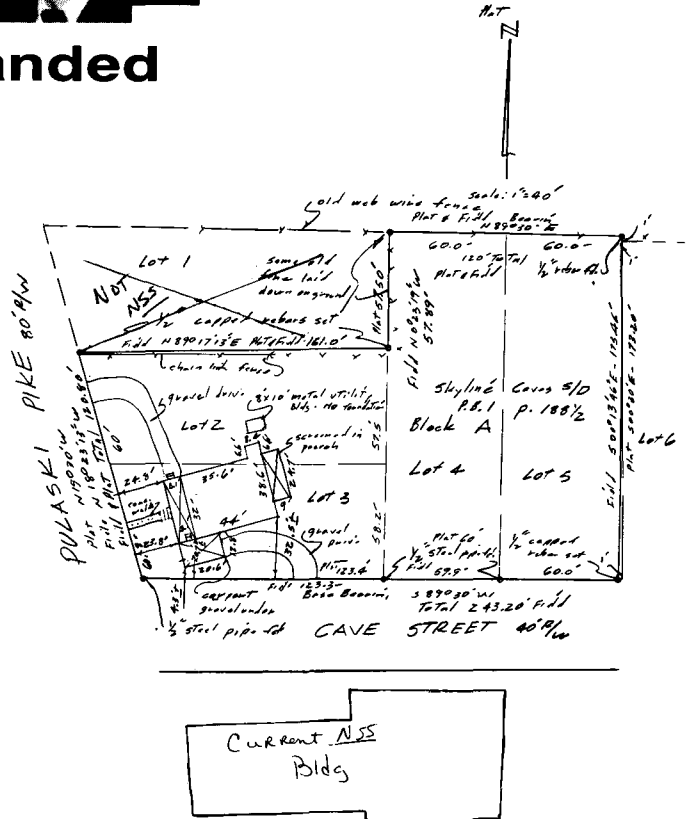
NSS Headquarters Property Expanded

The NSS has recently acquired additional property in Huntsville, Alabama, in order to insure that adequate space would be available for future expansion of our headquarters. The property, which became available for sale during this past year, is located on the corner of Cave Avenue and Pulaski Pike, just across the street from our present headquarters (see map).

The property contains a small house and four lots that were owned by Mrs. Katherine Smith. This property had been her home for a very long time, but she is now retired and was purchasing a new home elsewhere. About a year ago Mrs. Smith had indicated to the office staff that she might be interested in selling the property to the NSS.

In March, 1991, the NSS Board of Governors held its meeting in Huntsville. Following considerable discussion, the Board of Governors decided that it would be in the best long-term interest of the Society to secure the property for the future needs of the organization. Even though the property would not be immediately needed, it was the consensus of the board that it would be better to acquire the property while it is available now, than to be faced with no room to expand in the future. The Board authorized the president to negotiate and acquire the property if it could be done within certain financial constraints that were established later in closed session.

Following more than six months of negotiations, the property was acquired in late October for a purchase price of \$75,000. The property acquisition will be financed through \$20,000 from the General Fund and the balance on a mortgage loan from the National Speleological Foundation for 10 years.



Continued next page

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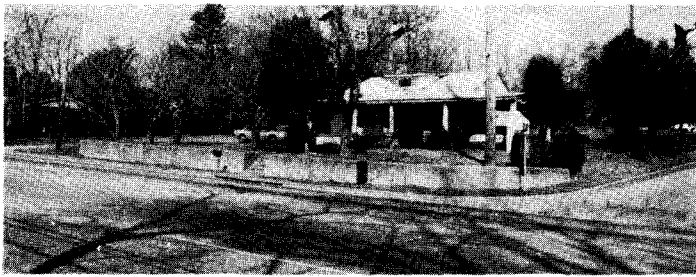
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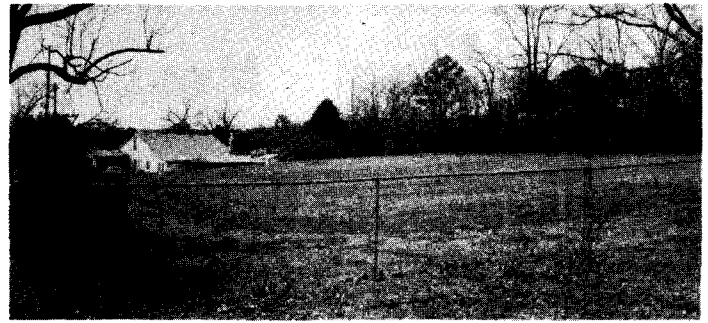
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COVER: Cavers of the next generation, Allan and Ray Beasley strike a pose while waiting for the rest of the crew to catch up in Howards Waterfall Cave, Trenton, Georgia. This black-and-white photo is by Gary Beasley.



Lots 2 and 3 looking East.

Photos by Joe Skipworth.



Lots 4 and 5 looking West.

It is interesting to note that the money is essentially borrowed from ourselves. The monies administered by the NSF are various restricted funds, such as the Life Membership Fund, Research Fund, etc. that the NSF financially invests to generate income back to the NSS to support the annual expenses of life members, research grants, awards, etc. The repayment of this mortgage loan will be paid back with interest in 10 annual installments. All payments, plus interest, are essentially paid to ourselves.

Although various fund raisers and donations will be needed to pay back the loan, the money from a number of new programs within the NSS has already been designated towards loan repayment. These include the continuous income from royalties on the use of the NSS VISA credit card, Executive Travel Service, and Alamo Car Rental (currently at \$3,000 to \$4,000 annually). The proceeds from the sale of the special 50-Year NSS items have also been designated for this purpose (at \$8,000). A certain annual income can also be generated by renting the existing house on the property until such time as the NSS needs the property. Specifically, the NSS Board of Governors has directed that there will be *no dues increases for mortgage payments!*

I am sure that many will question whether this purchase was necessary. However, consider some of the problems that are quickly approaching the NSS. The current NSS Office Headquarters building was acquired in the late '60s when our membership was about 3,000. Today we have over 10,000 members: by the year 2000, maybe

15,000. The existing building houses our library, the largest in the world, the NSS Bookstore and the administrative offices. Space is currently at a premium. There is no room to house the NSS Cave Files, the museum collection nor photo archives, let alone allow space for future expansion.

The NSS is now 50 years old. In addition to the materials we already have, many of our long-time members have accumulated large and priceless collections of books, manuscripts, maps and other speleo-important information. Many would like to donate these collections to the NSS in their wills if we had a permanent and secure home to accept them.

The NSS is also at a point when it soon must look at some full-time management staff. We are becoming a large and influential group that will need to expand its education, conservation and research programs. Most importantly, we need to maintain and increase our level of services to all our members.

It is not a question of whether the NSS needs more space; it is more a question of when. Realistically, the answer is probably in about five to 10 years. By acquiring the property now, we have reserved the space for our needs when we need it. This is good planning and an investment in our future.

—John P. Scheltens
President

Cavers' Forum

Footnote: What Are Cave Cookies?

Ever since I had the pleasure of interviewing Sarah Foote (*NSS News*, August 1991), many people have been asking a question that I couldn't answer. What are cave cookies? "Are they shaped like bats or gypsum flowers or carbide lamps? What's in them? What are they made of? Mud? Guano? Wheatgrass?" Many months and cave-cookie queries later, I realized that this mystery wasn't going away. Finally, I asked Sarah to help me out. Here's her response.

"Cave Cookies were whatever kind I made. I used to bake about three times a week. I had three recipes. Molasses, oatmeal and chocolate. Having three children, and they had friends, cookies didn't last long. Spelunkers liked them too. On long cave trips I'd make all three kinds. Regards, Sarah Foote, NSS 847."

"Footnote" was the column that LeRoy Foote wrote while he was NSS treasurer in

the 1940s. It was here that he discussed a wide variety of topics such as the society's finances and how the Leather Man survived in the wild for over 30 years and how his methods might be employed by cavers when lost in the woods overnight.—Neal Lieberman, NSS 30401, Bronx, New York

Cave Laws for West Virginia Are Not the Same as Those for Virginia

I was recently on the phone with someone who runs a cave tour business in West Virginia. During this conversation we began discussing South and North Quarry Caves which are owned by the West Virginia Highway Department in a large quarry on US Rt. 220, about five miles from Franklin.

I have been to both of these caves and they are quite decent. The formations in South Quarry are absolutely marvelous, but in my phone conversation the tour guide told me that the highway department could blast the

caves out of the mountain if they wanted to. *That is a travesty!* A cave is a place of natural beauty, and come along people who can destroy it just because they own it. That is ludicrous.

It is a policy of the NSS that people follow the cave conservation code, and blowing a cave from the mountain is not a way of protecting a cave.

I feel that a law should be passed protecting the cave and the environment within. The law should state that no one in the state of West Virginia has the right to damage or demolish a cave for ulterior motives ostensibly serving mankind.

Another thing, South and North Quarry should be bought by the NSS to preserve them as they are. Quarrying can continue on that mountain unless they open up another cave further back.

Should anyone wish to assist me in bringing this to the attention of the Board of Governors of the NSS for further relay to the government of West Virginia, feel free to contact me. I would be happy to have your