

Gadsden Grotto

NEWSLETTER

Volume 15 • Number 1

April 2001

P. O. Box 2092



Gadsden, AL 35903

Grotto Cleans Seven Room



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*From the
Chairman / Editor
Michael A. Ray*

Thank you for all the articles you have submitted for the newsletter. Although you may not think a newsletter makes a

difference, let me assure you it has a real purpose. Newsletters tie our grotto members together, especially for those that do not get to go on as many trips. The newsletter also serves as our written record of our activities, accomplishments and fun. We also link to the NSS through our newsletter and the articles you submit. And finally, our paper links us to other grottos through our exchange program.

So please continue sending in your written records of trips, reviews of material you think the members would be interested in, safety advise, cave news like ownership relations, cave equipment technical stories, and other material.

Be sure to include photographs and drawings! The ole saying that a thousand words can be said in one picture is true.

Want to know more?

Come to the
Gadsden Grotto
Meeting at the
Gadsden Public Library
254 College Street
When: 2nd Tuesday
of every Month
Time: 6:30 p.m.

Gadsden Grotto Newsletter is published on a semi-regular basis by the Gadsden Grotto of the National Speleological Society (NSS) as its official newsletter. All material submitted for publication is subject to editing for clarity, grammatical considerations, and to meet space limitations. Any opinions expressed herein are those of the author(s) named and do not necessarily represent the views of the Gadsden Grotto or the NSS. Unsigned material may be attributed to the editors. Reprint permission provided that both the author and the source are credited. The Gadsden Grotto Newsletter is distributed free of charge to Gadsden Grotto members and in exchange for the publications of organizations with similar interests. All materials for publication should be submitted to Michael A. Ray at 12725 Co. Rd.31, Centre, AL 35960 or email to mray9@tds.net.

PLEASE ASK FIRST

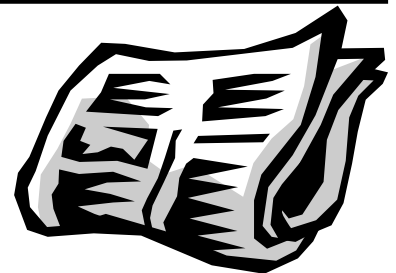
Blanket Access
By: Derick Mitchell

Glenn Ledbetter lives on the mountain and spends most of his time after work putting together caving trips for our group. We enjoy access to many closed caves.

Glenn is a member of Milton`s grotto and has friends in the hunting club that leases the land around War Eagle. When ask about about access we always refer them to Milton. We don`t want people to think they can just go to the area.

Always ASK FIRST.

TAG has it`s underground mazes but the ones above ground are much harder to find a way thru. Getting to the cave is often harder than the trip underground.



Got News?

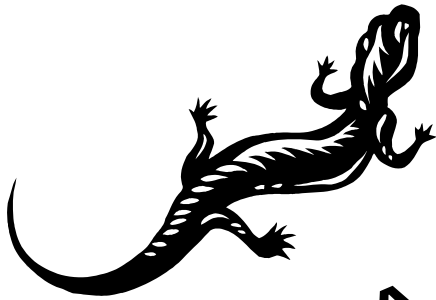
We need your trip reports, book reviews, technical cave information, first aid topics. Send your articles by mail or e-mail. E-mail attachments must be in ASCII (or plain text format). Send photographs or sketches for the article when possible.

TO: **Michael A. Ray**
12725 Co. Rd. 31
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E-mail: mray9@tds.net



ROLL CALL

Gadsden Grotto Current Membership List. This list is not to be given to any non-caving organizations or persons.



Not Available
for Internet
Version





Trip Reports

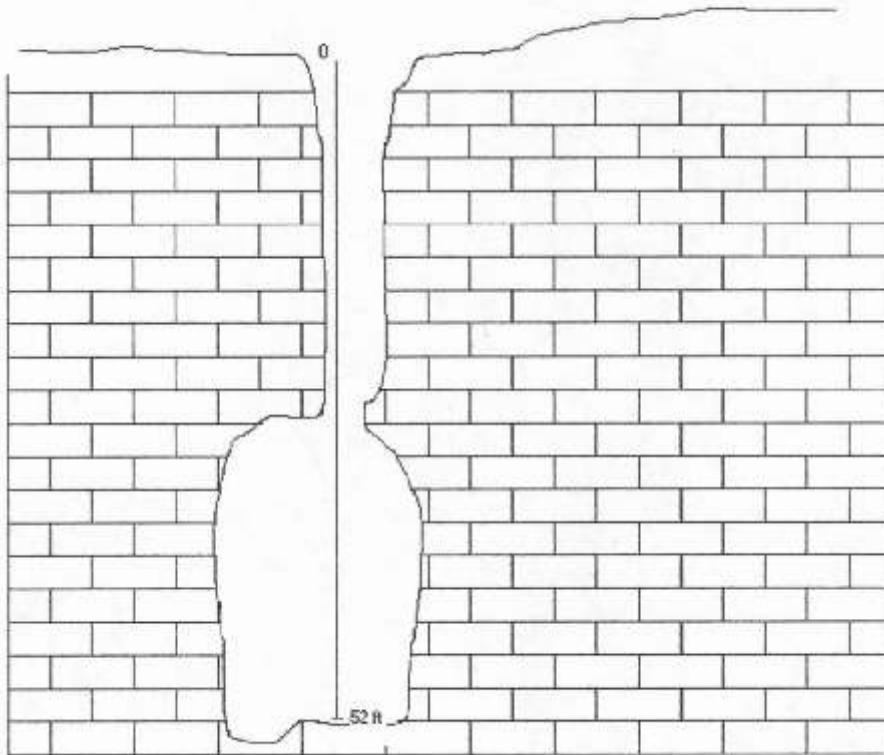
Engle Single Pit

by: Mark Medlen

On Sunday 10,15 2000 Kelly and I went to Collinsville and dropped Engle single Pit. Its a 52 ft deep pit that top begins in mud and the last 30 feet is a free drop down a clean washed limestone crack. We measured and mapped this nice little pit. Then we dug in a nearby sink for awhile with no luck.

AL 1199 Englesingle Pit

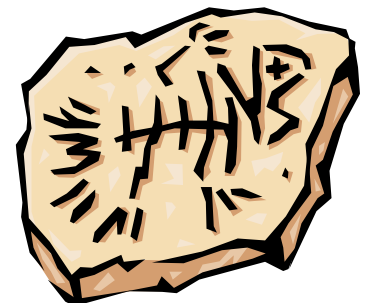
tape and compass survey by
the Gadsden Grotto of the NSS
Mark Medlen
Kelly Kenner



Fricks Cave

By: Mark Medlen

On sat March 3, 2001 the S.E.C.C. held a open house at Fricks Cave in, Georgia. Our group(David Teal, Jim Loftin ,Anthony Cline, Mike Davis, Kelly Kenner and myself) left Gadsden around 8:30.when we arrived at the cave there were already many other cavers there .We logged in at the pavilion and the entered the huge classic cave entrance. the cave began with large walking stream passage and got larger at a breakdown room with a nice hay stack. Jim took some steam passage shots and we moved deeper in to the cave. As we continued father the passage began to get smaller and we were passed by many wet and muddy cavers returning from the low stream crawls. We continued on until the passage became a low wet crawl and there we all wimped. We then stopped for lunch and made our way out.



Trip Reports Continued...

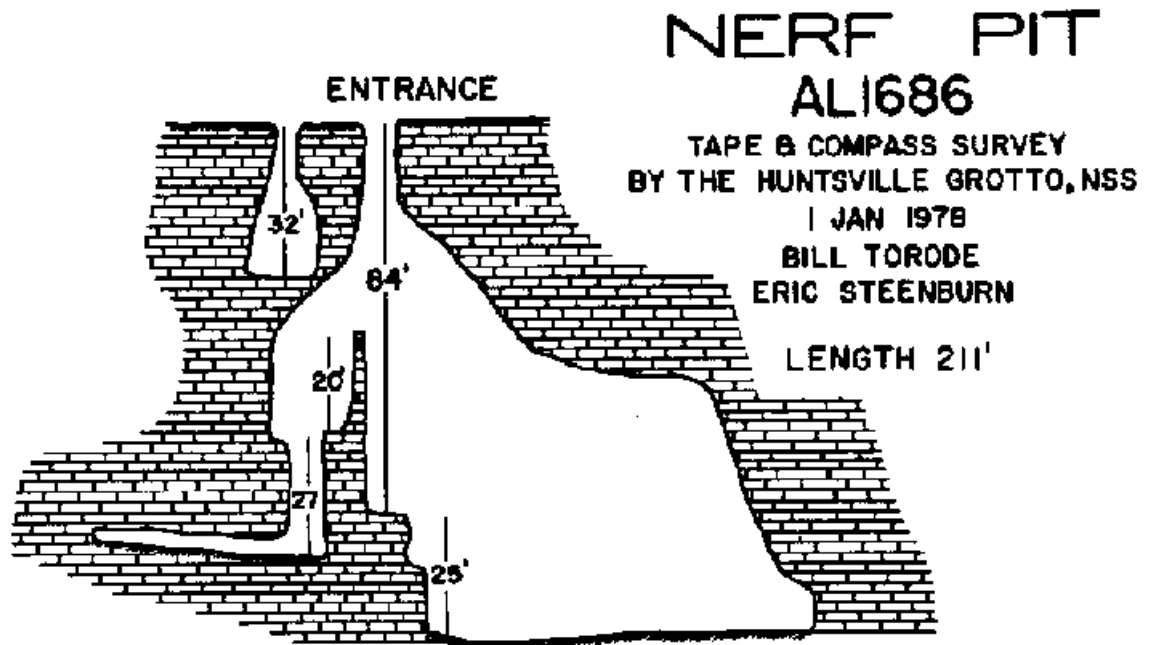
Nerf Pit/Bice Mountain

By: Derick Mitchell

This past spring we visited

Obscure Magnificence and Hung Well on Bice Mountain in Jackson County. Today Glenn Ledbetter and I returned to the mountain to find Drano Drop AJK1687 and Nerf Pit AJK1686. We rewalked our path to Hung Well and then continued our walk until we found Drano Drop.

The cave is in a large sink with the potential of a in flowing stream, if we ever see that much water on the mountain again. We explored the entrance and then started our search for Nerf Pit. Moving down hill we looked at several dry stream beds and soon found this fine little 109 foot pit. The entrance offers several routes of entry but if rigged correctly you can get 84 feet of drop before hitting a shelf and the remanding 25 feet of the drop. Torode's map shows a window into a second shaft but fails to show a huge stalactite directly in it's center. There is several hundred feet of passage in the canyon like pit and enough cave prettys to make this pit good enough for a return trip. I suppose the name came from the large stalactite that kind of looks like a nerf football. We had intended to return to Drano Drop but we started walking in the opposite direction and time got the better of us before we returned. I guess we can save it for next year.



We never saw Winter Well AJK1688 with it's 151 foot drop, that gives us another reason to return to Bice Mountain.

BTW: I have mentioned in past posts that I am a electrician, I work for a fellow caver, Mack Butler. The majority of my work is commercial buildings but for the past few weeks I have been working cell tower sites. You may have noticed a number of new cell towers on highway 72 in Jackson county. The towers are joint use towers and you will soon see several wireless providers with improved signal in cave land. I also noticed a Ruby Tuesday going up at the 72 and 35 intersection. There is a Starbucks in Unclaimed Baggage now. Whats next for Scottsboro as they come into the real world?



Trip Reports Continued...

A Very Exciting Trip With The Boy Scouts To Tumbling Rock Cave

Saturday, March 1, 2001

By: Kelly Keener NSS # 48045



On Saturday March 17, some of the Grotto members led a troop of Boy Scouts to Tumbling Rock Cave. Mark &

I, and my nephew Adam decided to Scottsboro and camp on the mountain by Scottsboro Pit, and we were going to meet the Grotto members at Camp Jackson (the Boy Scout Camp).

We arrived in Scottsboro by the gate to camp around 10:00 p.m., and there was a brand new shiny chain length gate with a brand new lock on it. We were tired, so we tried to find a camp to go to but with it being so dark, we couldn't see where to find one. We ended finding a dirt road somewhere in the middle of nowhere, and we parked on the side of the road and we slept in our vehicle. We had planned on sitting by the camp fire and relaxing for the trip the next day.

As soon as we woke up around 7:00 a.m. we got ready and went to Jacks to eat Breakfast. When we finished eating, we headed on to Tumbling Rock to meet Michael, Jim, David, Gary and his step-son, Anthony, and John, and also with 14 Boy Scouts, and 4 Scout leaders. They arrived with the Boy Scouts at 9:45 a.m. We were ready, we had everything that they needed to go into the cave. Some of the scouts seemed to have enjoyed it and some didn't.

David got all of the scouts to climb up into the King's Showers to see the 400'ft. topless dome with a waterfall gushing down it. The

hole that they climbed into was gushing out water, but a lot of them really enjoyed going to see the tallest waterfall in the U.S. Even a couple of scout leaders went up into the King's Showers. As we were heading back out of

the cave, we all were pretty exhausted, so everyone changed into dry clothes and the Scouts went back to camp at Camp Jackson and the Grotto members went to eat at the Western Sizzlen to eat and then we headed home.

All and all everyone had a safe trip, and the cutest thing was that the scouts went into the cave dry and they came out ringing wet. They



**Check our temporary
web site at
[www.caves.org/
grotto/gadsdengrotto](http://www.caves.org/grotto/gadsdengrotto)**

Trip Reports Continued...

Zuber Quarry Cave # 1

By: Kelly Keener

Monday, March 19, 2001

It was around 12:30 p.m., Mark didn't have to work that day so he asked me if I wanted to go check out Zuber Quarry Cave #1. I agreed and off we went. We got to the quarry and no-one was there since it was a work day. We walked up the quarry a little ways and there it was.

Mark rigged the rope and he rappelled down first. We brought the tape measure to see how far the cave went and to see if it had opened up more since the last time whoever went down into it. I handed the tape down to Mark and it measured from the lip to the first bottom drop 12'ft. Then I rappelled down. Mark went another 26'ft. down into a tiny room and then another 10'ft. He didn't go any further after that.

While he was down into the cave I was being entertained by a bat, and an orange and black spotted salamander. The bat was grooming itself, cleaning all in between his toes, and scratching his ears, and cleaning his face. Believe it or not, they groom just like a cat. The salamander kept creeping out of his little crack to spy on me. Every where I moved his neck will stretch out as far as it could to follow me. He was as curious about me as I was about him. Every time I would look into the crack at him, he would creep back further into it, but he would still be watching me. He was a brave little salamander.

Mark ascended back up to the level where I was, then I went and ascended up the pit to the outside world. Mark was right behind me. Then we went back to our truck and went home. It is always exciting to go into caves that I have never been into.



Look Out Mountain

by: Kelly Keener

Sat. 2/10/01

Jim, Mark, and I decided to go ridge-walking on Look-out Mountain. We spotted and checked out a few dud-holes but they didn't qualify. We kept searching for more holes and after we walked about 1-1/2 to 2 miles, Mark and Jim spotted a fairly big walk-in hole at the same time. We all put on our helmets and went in to check it out. Much to our surprise, the cave ended up turning into a pretty good sized chasm. Mark got out the measuring tape to see how far back the cave went. We had to straddle the chasm, and

then we climbed down about 8-10'ft. to the bottom of the floor. The cave ended up being 100'ft. (as far as the tape would stretch) and then some.

Inside the cave had 2 bats and alot of cave crickets. Something was either living in that cave or it visited it quite often, because it was the S-T-I-N-K-I-E-S-T cave that I have ever been. Pew-weeee, that cave smelled. It smelled just like passing the Tyson Chicken Plant in Glenco on a HOT summers day. (If you can catch my drift.) Any way, Jim went back into the cave as far as he could because the water at the bottom the stagnant water went up to his knees and he decided to wait another day to push the cave any further, but the cave still had more passage to push.

Mark dropped his cap into the nasty water as we were heading back out. Jim had to put on his extra pair of clothes that he brought with him because of the water and it was windy and cold outside. As we were walking back through the mountains, we searched for more sink-holes. Mark walked up on one and we stopped and ate lunch there. We climbed down and sat in the sink so that the rocks would block the wind from blowing directly on us. Mark placed the GPS under the ledge in the hole where we ate lunch. He must have forgotten to put in back in his pack when he was getting out his lunch. Well, at least it will give us a good excuse to go back and push more of that stink hole, also to survey and map more of it. When we got back to our X-Terra, we saw writing on the hatch that said that "The Brewers have been there."

They went to drop Moses Tomb and they spotted our SUV. Steve said that he searched for us on the ridge for about an hour, but he never could find us. We were happy that we found that "virgin cave". Ridge-walking is great exercise and well worth the long walks on the steep mountains. It might be a lot of hard walking and a lot of effort, but when you find a fresh cave, it is well worth the hikes.

Trip Reports Continued...

UNDERGROUND EXPLORING

by Bo Bowen, Cedar Bluff School Student

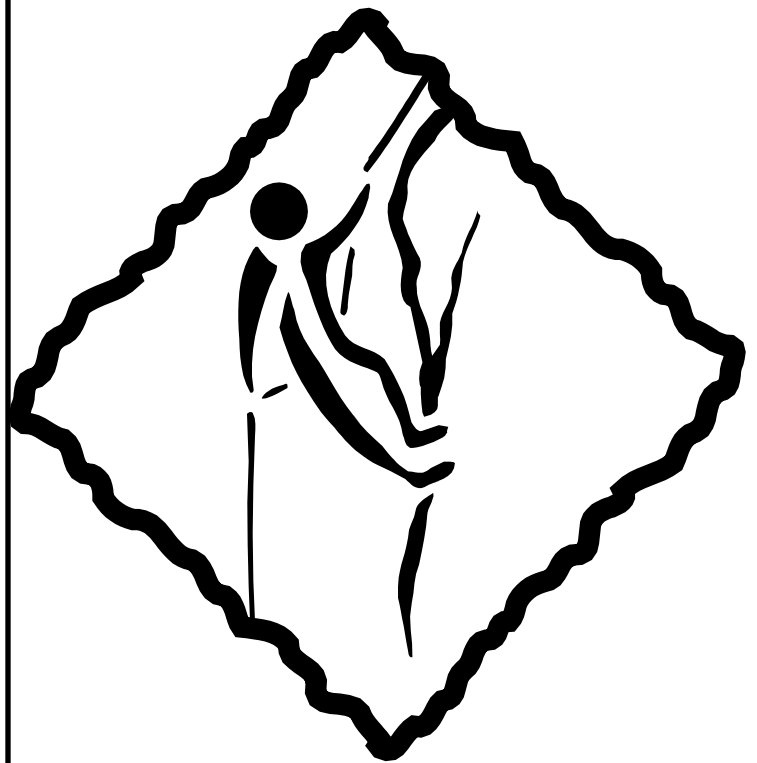
It is 5:00 a.m. and I'm going caving with my Uncle Ricky. The cave is called Rusty Cave. It has a pit that is as wide as a desk. It's also 45 ft. deep. We rig our rope around a tree and descend into the cave. When I got to the bottom I yell, "Off rope" so that Uncle Ricky knows he can descend on down. He yells, "Repelling," then starts down the pit wall. When we are both on bottom we start our journey through the cave. When you're exploring a cave you always stay in more hours than you expect. We study closely all the beautiful rocks called stalactites and stalagmites. Sometimes in a cave you will see salamanders, cave crickets, and bats. When you're in a cave you usually have to squeeze through tight places. The climbing is pretty easy. I just don't like tight spaces. The thing you always remember is, take nothing but pictures, leave nothing but footprints, and kill nothing but time. After spending awhile in the cave we start on our way back to the entrance. We come across a beautiful formation. It's a stalactite and stalagmite grown together to make a column. It takes a stalactite or stalagmite 100 yrs. to grow just one centimeter. Remember a stalactite holds tight to the ceiling and a stalagmite might touch the ceiling.

When we get back to the pit's bottom, we prepare for our ascent back up. I use a system called the Frog System which Ricky uses. When using the rope climbing system, you simply pedal your feet and ascend right up the cave wall. I get halfway and kick off the cave wall to get better traction and I kick a rock off a tiny ledge. It's a pretty good sized rock. I yell, "Rock." That tells Ricky to get out of the way. I get to the top and yell, "Off rope." Now he starts up. He's using the frog system. It's more difficult to use. I can't even use it. When he finally gets to the top, we unrig and start the hike back down the side of the mountain. This has been a long day. We go home dreaming about which cave we are

going to conquer next.

I'm still just a beginner. I've only been in five caves and only descended four cliffs. Rick has been a caver and rappeller for a real long time. Just the other day, I asked him how many caves he's been in. He said, "I've been in so many caves I don't remember."

Always remember not to wear clothing that's going to get in your way, but wear enough to keep you warm. I'm certain that there will be a lot of tight squeezes or keyholes you have to inch through. Never forget to always wear a helmet, take three sources of light, and a bottle of water. Now, if you're planning to stay a little longer bring a M.R.E. (meal ready to eat). Always be read to have fun.



Trip Reports Continued...

A New Deep Cave Found

Saturday - 1/27/00

by: Kelly Keener

On Saturday morning at 7:30 a.m., Mark and I met David and Jim at Shoneys in Gadsden (our usual meeting place) to eat B'fast. (Since none of the other Grotto members didn't show up), we decided to go ridge-walking. The wonderful exercising sport. As we hiked up the mountain, the four of us separated, and we walked along the contours of the ridge at different elevations. David and Jim walking at the bottom of the mountain, and Mark, and I at the top. As we were searching for sink holes, David a couple of contours down, hooted and Mark and I headed down the mountain to see what he found. David was already in the hole when we got there. He climbed back out of the hole, Jim, Mark and I took turns going in. The hole was mostly dirt and roots. We all dug for awhile and cleared away some roots. As I was popping back out of the hole. I heard "Lunch Time", so I hurried out to eat. Dirt got all in my hair and clothes when I was breaking off the roots to try and see if there was more passage. While I was in the hole, my pack got rocked (I wonder how that rock got in there?) because it felt heavier when I was taking out my lunch to eat.

After we finished lunch, we once again separated with Jim, and David taking the low trail, and Mark and I taking the high trail. Mark was an elevation higher than me and all of a sudden we both spotted a place at the same time. We rushed to the area and sure enough, it was a cave that had multi-entrances to it. One entrance, I had to squeeze down into, another one I had to crawl down into, and there were two that has walk-in entrances. One crack went pretty far. Mark, and I hooted three times, and Jim and David walked up the ridge to see what we found. Mark, and Jim threw a couple of rocks down into the chasm, and all we could hear was Ploop-ploop-ploop-ploop-ploop. We counted about 14-15 seconds before the

rocks hit bottom. Mark got on-rope and he squeezed down into the tight crack. He ended up being in pure virgin darkness. Mark couldn't go down into the chasm any further because we only had a 60'ft. rope, and it wasn't long enough to go all the way down .This is going to be a pretty deep cave if we can squeeze through the horror chasm without getting stuck, because like I said, "It opens up into Pure Virgin Darkness."

I am so full of curiosity about how deep this cave is. If this is a deep cave, my dream has finally come true. It has been decided to call this cave "Rumbling Rock" because the rocks that were thrown down into it kept on rumbling further and further into the depths of the crack. Ridge-walking has given me a whole new meaning. It's not just hiking around in the woods, it's an adventure. It has made me more optimistic about walking those long hikes in the mountains, because you never will find and explore the underground-beauty if you don't. The purpose of ridge-walking is "To find that cave of your dreams." try it some time, you'll really like it. It's worth it once you get the hang of it.



A Hole in the Ground

By: Kelly Keener NSS# 48045

As I was walking through the woods

I stumbled upon a hole.

I stuck my head in it and said,

"Oh \$#!" "Oh \$#!" it goes.

I went to grab my shovel,

I went to grab my pick,

I picked and picked and

shoveled and picked, until

the dirt was 5'ft.thick.

It turned out being a little hole

until I picked away.

And now it is a big one,

that might soon wash away.

And if that hole becomes a pit

It might turn into cave.

Then you wouldn't mind if you

Picked and shoveled all day.



Cave News

Mountain Work Day

May 5/6

By: Andy Zellner (Marietta, Georgia)

Thanks to everyone who responded about helping Dr. Sheppard out on Scottsboro Mountain. We have tentatively set a work date as Saturday May 5th, though if more people can make it on Sunday, we'll do that instead.

While none of this is a requirement for us to have access to the mountain at all, it would still be a good gesture to give him some of our time. Dr. Sheppard will supply all tractors/brush-clearing equipment/tools, though you

might want to bring some gloves.

Dr. Sheppard was requesting that cavers staying there maybe spread out a little bit, I guess that one corner of the woods is getting a bit worn out. I think he wants to set things up almost like a campground, with different little parking spots. We will also get access to the gate worked out for everyone (probably will be a combination lock).

Of course all work and no play wouldn't be much fun, so I'm sure we'll do some caving that afternoon or evening too! There are at least three known pits right on that hill, maybe we'll find some more? How about bringing a BBQ grill and having a little feast?

Anyone and everyone's help would be appreciated, if you could mention this in your local grotto's newsletter next month that would be great. Just so I can get a rough head count, if you're pretty sure you'll be there, please email me at andyzellner@hotmail.com.

THANKS!! --Andy Z.



Journey into Amazing Caves

When I first heard there was a IMAX caving film in the works I had a vision of what we would see. I thought about those guys on snow boards doing crazy stunts and those people in hang gliders risking their neck, jumping off steep cliffs, soaring high in the sky. Those no fear kind of people who don't have real jobs, guys looking for the next thrill. I later heard that a Tag caver was involved, and of course I thought the person would be some dare devil they plucked from the center of the party at a SERA or TAG. I was sure we would see long rappels into deep pits and steep pitch dome climbs. I later learned the film company would bring some science

into the picture. I was sure they had picked someone from a karst study group to keep the film from being a daredevil stunt film. Well the film is here and Sunday afternoon Becky and I took her kids and granddaughter to see Journey into

Amazing Caves. We viewed the film in Birmingham at the McWane Center, the theater was great. While eating lunch we gave the kids a intro to the film as we ate falafel, kafta, and homos dip at the Purple Onion. The adult kids had been to the McWane theater and Becky's sixteen year old son had been to a Imax theater. Our three year old granddaughter was in a good mood so I was sure we had a good afternoon in front of us. We tried to prepare them for the beauty, thrill, and science of the film. All of the kids have caved and rappelled with us, they are well behaved, educated group that I wanted to share the film with. The film has all the awe and splendor shots that make a Imax film great. The science was there and Hazel Barton gave us more than enough information to let us know it was real science. The Moody Blues sound track impressed our adult musician son-in-law. The starring roles being filled with girl cavers impressed our adult daughter. The deep rappel in the ice cave made the sixteen year old son happy. Becky was impressed that Liam Neason gave voice to the sound track. I was happy to see my favorite SPORT being shown in a favorable light. The TAG caver who costarred in the film was Dogwood City grotto member Nancy Aulenbach. We have seen Nancy in a number of photos in the NSS News and she is very photogenic. In the film see looked great and left no doubt to our family that she was fearless, well trained and most of all very friendly. The film producer let her get a nice ya'll in once. Nancy thanks for being a great representative for caving and TAG! I confess I would like to see a Imax film shot in Drinus, Fantastic, or Surprise Pit. I have tried to explain to my family and friends the feeling and memory deep pits can bring. I wonder if the Imax experience could translate the same feelings to those not willing to make the descent and climb?
Derick



CONSERVATION COMMITTEE REPORT

Gadsden Grotto Cleans 7 Room Rock

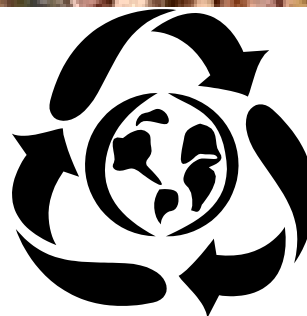
by Rebecca S. Mitchell

On Friday, November 24th, David Teal, Mark Medlin, Kelly, Derick & Becky Mitchell met for breakfast at Shoney's in East Gadsden. After fortifying our bodies, we were off to 7 Room Rock on Scenic Hwy., Gadsden for clean-up duty. David picked up wife, Susan and Jim Loftin met us at the 7 Room. Several hours and many trash bags later, 7Room was cleaner than it has been in a number of years.

The air was a bit nippy, but bearable, a small fire was built by David and manned by Susan under the big bluff. Derick, Mark, Kelly, David and Jim geared up and rappelled the biggest of the drops. By TAG standards not very big, but at least they got on rope.



Susan and Becky chose to stay by the fire and watch. Close to noon, the weather began to turn rainy and the group broke to go our separate ways. We all felt a sense of accomplishment in having a part in cleaning 7 Room Rock. It may already be trashed again by now, but at least we put forth a good effort.



Gadsden Grotto
P. O. Box 2092
Gadsden, AL 35903

Calendar of Events

- Apr. 10 Gadsden Grotto Meeting
- Apr. 28 ACS, Sewanee, TN
- May 8 - Gadsden Grotto Meeting
- May 25 Cave Diving Section Meet, FL
- May 25 30th Kentucky SPELEOFEST
- Jun. 12 Gadsden Grotto Meeting
- Jun. 22 SERA
- Jul. 10 Gadsden Grotto Meeting
- Jul. 23 NSS Convention, Mount Vernon, KY

