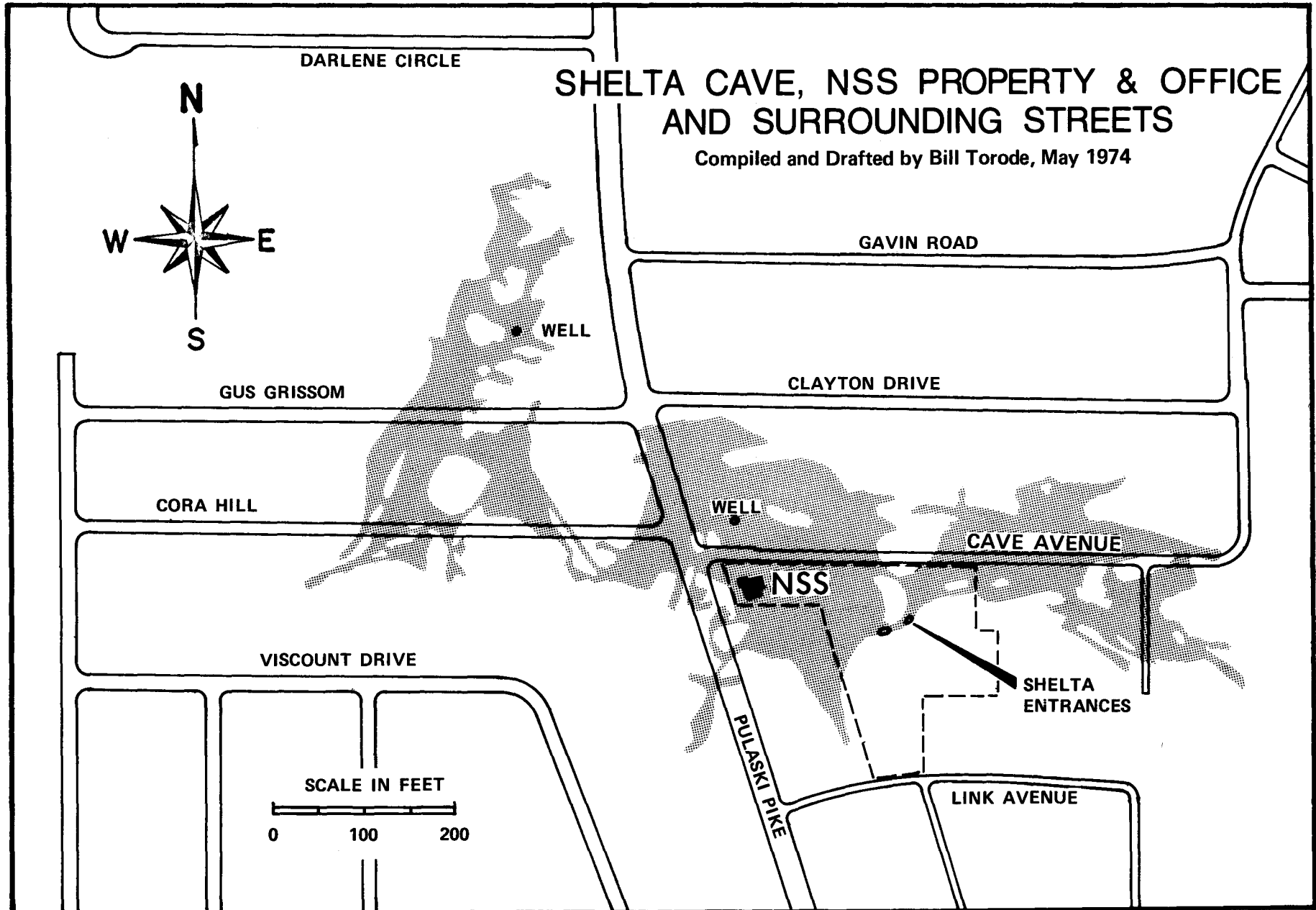


NSS NEWS

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History of the NSS Office

by Don Cournoyer, NSS 850

Over the past twenty years, the NSS membership and Board of Governors have repeatedly heard me say, "The Office is the heart of the Society in servicing the members." With the exception of Bill Stephenson and perhaps a few others, no one knows the history of the NSS Office as well as I do. Our new office marks the fulfillment of a dream for the NSS "Founding Fathers," and for those of us who followed in their footsteps. Here are my recollections about the fulfillment of that dream.

During the early years of the NSS, the Society operated much like our present-day grottos and regions. All of the Society's operations were being performed by volunteers. One of the hardest working volunteers was John ("Pete") Petrie who was NSS Secretary.

In the early years, the NSS had only a few members, and many of them were in the military service doing their share in World War II. Pete maintained an active correspondence with Society members in the service. Almost every weekend, Pete would pick up some caver-soldiers on leave at the Union Station or Greyhound Bus Depot, and they would be guests in his home.

The NSS was organized in 1941 in the District of Columbia, and most of the Society officers lived in the Washington area. During the war years, the US Patent Office was moved to Richmond, Virginia. Steve and Pete, along with many other NSS members, were patent examiners. While they were in Richmond the NSS maintained an address in Washington (510 Star Building) to comply with the Society's D.C. charter. Society mail was either forwarded to Richmond or picked up on trips to Washington.

In 1946 the Patent Office moved to Gravelly Point, across the Potomac from National Airport. World War II had ended and the servicemen were returning home. In the spring of 1947 the Patent Office moved back to the Commerce Building at 14th and E Streets NW in Washington. A few of us still remember Pete dashing out of Commerce in the morning to pick up the NSS mail at the Star Building. He also stopped at the main Post Office to pick up the latest stamps. We were amazed that Pete could keep up the pace.

Pete also ran the NSS Office out of his pocket in Richmond or while going on caving trips. I had been caving with another patent examiner, Dave Seltzer,



Don Cournoyer, NSS Secretary-Treasurer for many years; and Betty Mayo, NSS Office Secretary.

and so Pete kept bugging me to join the NSS. I insisted on waiting until number 850 came up. Pete got tired of hearing me say that, and one day he came in with membership card 850, asked me to sign an application, and collected my three dollars.

Burton Faust, another employee of the Patent Office, was Chairman of the NSS Program and Activities Committee. Much of the NSS business took place in the Commerce Building, in hallways, in the men's room, and in the cafeteria. We had a lot of free time on our hands, because if we examined more than six patent applications a day, we were working too fast and not doing our jobs properly. The NSS Office was about half at Pete's house and half at the Patent Office.

Here is a list of the various NSS Secretaries and their Office locations:

1943 - 1951	John S. Petrie Washington, D.C.
1951 - 1954	Ellen Moffit Arlington, Virginia
1954 - 1955	Lois Cutler Arlington, Virginia
1955 - 1956	Mary McKenzie Falls Church, Virginia
1956 - 1958	Frances Cross Vienna, Virginia
1958 - 1961	Dorothy Kincaid Alexandria, Virginia
1961 - 1962	Elizabeth Harmon Arlington, Virginia
1962 - 1964	Mary McKenzie Arlington, Virginia
1964 - 1971	Beverly Frederick Vienna, Virginia
1971 - Present	Betty Mayo Huntsville, Alabama

In 1949 the Board of Governors authorized part-time secretarial help for Bill Stephenson, and he hired Ellen Moffit on an hourly basis. In 1951 the Society went through its first major reorganization. Burton Faust was elected Administrative Vice-President. NSS members scrounged a desk, typewriter, adding machine, file cabinets, and miscellaneous office equipment to set up the first real NSS Office. The Office was an unused bedroom at the Fairlington Apartments in Arlington, Virginia, and Ellen Moffit was appointed secretary.

In those years all Society mail went to Ellen's address, while checks, money orders and cash went to the Society Treasurer Lew Kibbee, and later to his replacement, Howard Sloane. Sometimes members who failed to pay their dues were not dropped. The back issues of the *NEWS* and *Bulletin* were being stored at various places all over the East Coast. Membership records became so confused that it was difficult to make lists or know how many copies of the *NEWS* to print.

In November 1954 Lois Cutler became the new Office secretary. We moved the Office across the court at Fairlington Apartments into a basement storage room. Shortly thereafter, Lois gave birth to twin boys. In April 1955 Burton asked me to help with the office work. Lois taught me the routine, and with a great deal of help from George Moore I became Lois Cutler for the next nine months. Occasionally I fed one of the twins, but I drew the line at changing diapers.

About that time George and I discovered that the Society had a membership of 2800, but that 1300 of these people had not paid their dues. Some hadn't paid since 1948! Joe Lawrence, NSS Vice-President for Organization, became alarmed when we dropped 900 members from the rolls in a two-month period! C.N. Bruce and others were running a membership drive, and yet members were dropping like flies. Joe made a fast trip to the Office to find out what the hell we were doing. We explained the situation, and he agreed with us.

The Office secretaries had also been sending publications to dealers and NSS members without receiving payment. The NSS ended up with a list of bad debts. It took George and me about four months to reorganize the Office so that it was operating more efficiently and better serving the membership. We also cut the ditto masters for the monthly mailings and the BOG minutes. Burton



The NSS Office, Cave Avenue, Huntsville, Alabama 35810.

picked up these masters and ran them on the NSS Ditto machine which he babied at his house.

Lois eventually felt that running the Office and taking care of her twins was just too much, so she retired in December 1955. A month later we appointed Mary McKenzie and moved the Office to Falls Church, Virginia. I was appointed Office Manager, Burton was NSS Treasurer, and John Dyas Parker was Administrative Vice-President. Burton kept the Society funds in something like nineteen different savings and checking accounts. I found it difficult to find cash enough for stamps, Mary's salary, and other expenses, and often I had to advance my own personal funds to keep the Society going.

My wife took over the monthly billing service on a volunteer basis from 1956 to 1962 to save the overtime money. Mary McKenzie resigned in June 1956, and we appointed Frances Cross and moved the Office to Tapawingo Street, Vienna, Virginia. Frances was a former model, and although she might have been the most beautiful secretary the NSS ever had, she was not the most efficient. Three or four times a week my wife and I went to Frances' home to catch up on the backlog of work. Her mother had worked in the Weather Bureau with my wife and me, so we didn't let Frances go for quite a while.

Finally in 1958 we moved the Office to the home of Dorothy Kincaid in Alexandria, Virginia. The NSS bought an Addressograph, and we discontinued the Society account with Blatt Bates. The company was making too many errors by not removing plates for dropped members and failing to make address corrections. These address labels were mailed to Sam Davis who headed the *NEWS* mailing staff in Philadelphia. About that time we started mailing the *Bulletin* from the Office rather than from Philadelphia.

The Office had been moved six times in a ten year span. Mail was often delayed or lost. The Board of Governors

felt that the NSS should have a permanent mailing address. In 1961, 2318 N. Kenmore Avenue, Arlington, Virginia became the official NSS address. Like the previous offices, this was also a private residence, in fact one that I have known well for 23 years. Many Society members thought that 2318 Kenmore was the Society's property, and that Don Cournoyer and his family lived there by the generosity of the Society and its membership. My wife, her mother, and I are grateful that the NSS allowed us to live there all this time, even though we were paying all the expenses. Today both we and the postman are delighted that the mail is only trickling in. For ten and a half years, we received fifty or more pieces of mail a day!

After Dorothy Kincaid resigned in 1961, the Office was at Betty Harmon's home for a period of seven months. Betty found it objectionable that out-of-town members were dropping in at all hours, in the evenings and on the weekends. She missed her privacy, and finally resigned.

Next we moved the Office to Mary McKenzie's new home in Arlington, Virginia. Originally Lyle Conrad was the Office Manager, but a few years later Jerry Frederick took over that position. In 1964 Mary McKenzie resigned. Jerry appointed his wife, Bev Frederick, as the new office secretary, and we moved the Office to 609 Meadow Lane, Vienna, Virginia. After ten years of physically helping at these Office moves, I appointed myself chairman of the Beer Committee. It was a pleasure to drink and watch others do the work.

Bev Frederick was one of the best secretaries the NSS ever had. After fifteen years of mailing the *NEWS*, Sam Davis and his family were getting tired. Jerry found a group of volunteers to do the mailing in Falls Church. Jerry and Bev supervised this group, and Jerry even became involved with the editors of the *NEWS* and *Bulletin*, and helped get those publications back on schedule.

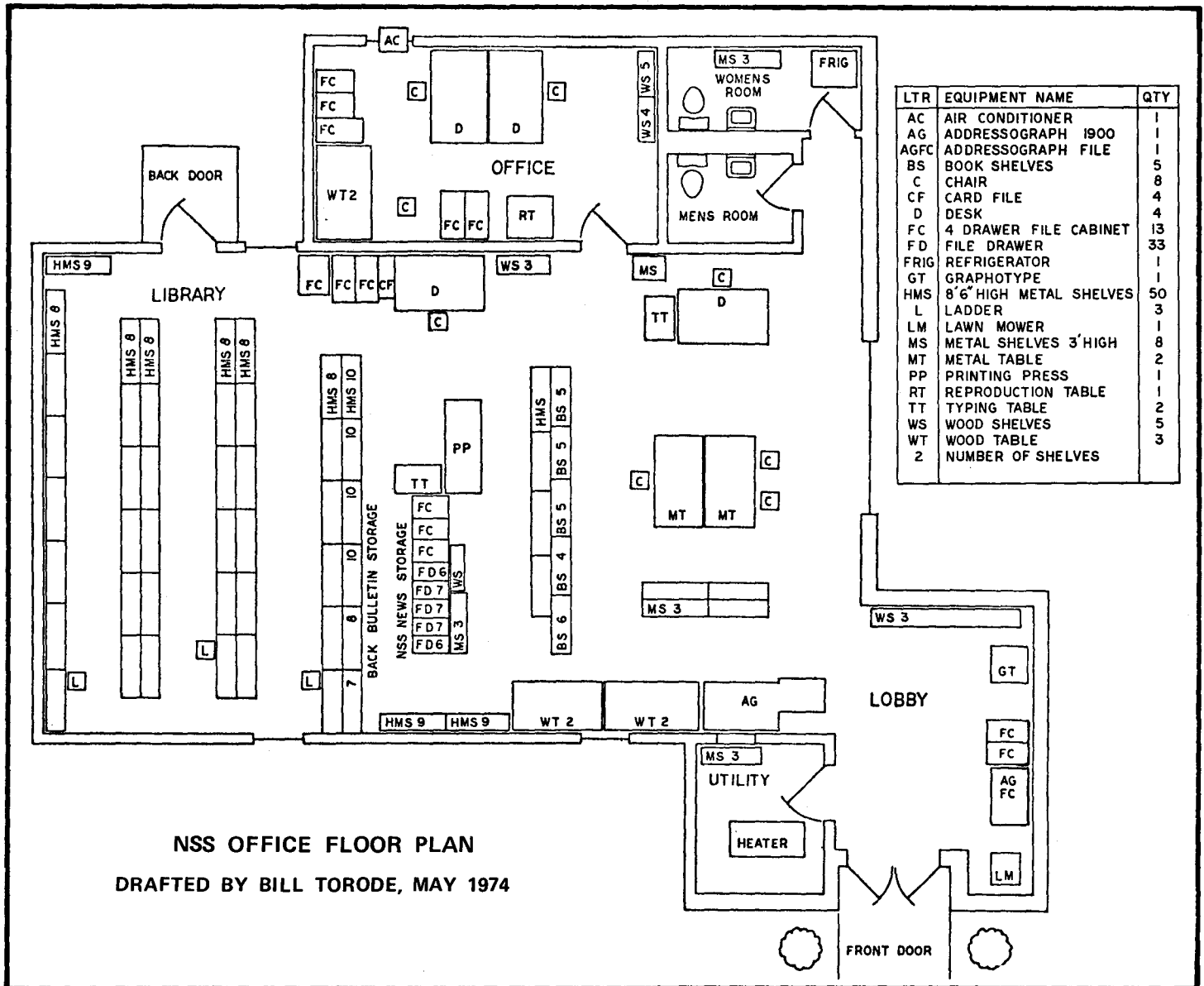
Except for Betty Harmon, every one of the NSS Secretaries between 1954 and 1966 became pregnant while in the Society's employ. Curiously, these pregnancies always followed one of Brother Nick's visits to the Office. Repeatedly, I asked Brother Nick not to visit the Office. I warned the Office secretaries to be absent from home since Brother Nick would be bringing the blessings of the Lord. These blessings were apparently very powerful. When Nick and I visited with Peggy and Al Mueller, Peggy asked Nick to examine her cat which she thought might be pregnant. Nick, a biologist, told Peggy, "Never fear. This cat is a male." A few weeks later that male cat had a litter of kittens. A most unusual phenomenon.

When the NSS was reorganized in 1951 the Board of Governors realized that some day the Society would need an office building and staff. Therefore the Board established a Headquarters Fund which was to be administered by the trustees of the Endowment Fund. While he was treasurer, Burton Faust would wait until he had received the interest before withdrawing money from any of the Society's nineteen accounts. The interest was used to add money to the Headquarters Fund and repay loans from the Endowment Fund. In the early days, we had to borrow money from these funds to keep the Society solvent. The Headquarters Fund continued to grow with a percentage of the sales of back numbers of the *NEWS* and *Bulletin*, and with contributions.

Over the years, the NSS has received several offers of property. In 1956 we received an offer to purchase property on Columbia Road, NW. in Washington for \$17,500. Today this property is worth more than \$200,000. The NSS could not seriously consider buying that land since it had neither the funds nor the membership to support such a venture. On several other occasions Russ Gurnee, George Moore and I chaired committees to investigate the possibility of buying land for a permanent headquarters. Each time we recommended that the NSS not go through with a purchase, because it could not afford to pay for real estate.

In 1968 I offered to sell the NSS an acre of commercial property in Fairfax County for \$5,000. I also offered to donate three prefabricated office buildings and have them moved to the site. Nothing came of this offer and frankly, I was delighted. The property value increased, and I obtained financing for a shopping center. Today that acre of land has a gas station on it, and the station yields an excellent rental.

There was some criticism when the



NSS OFFICE FLOOR PLAN
DRAFTED BY BILL TORODE, MAY 1974

NSS purchased the Shelta Cave property in Huntsville, Alabama. Nevertheless, the NSS membership was very generous, and just twenty months after the purchase, Jack Stellmack and I appeared with representatives of the Nature Conservancy for a mortgage burning ceremony. Quite frankly, we did not believe that the membership would support the Shelta Cave Fund and help us meet our debt to the Nature Conservancy. Much of the credit for convincing the BOG to buy Shelta and for raising the money must go to Russ Gurnee, Doc Jones, and John Cooper. Once we owned property in Huntsville, it seemed natural to have a headquarters there, too.

After we paid for the Shelta property, Jim Johnston and Doc Jones began working on the purchase of the Bafford property, so we could control both Shelta sink holes. No one on the Board had even thought about buying headquarters property until Jim made his written proposal. I read the proposal

and discussed it with a number of NSS members. NSS Office operations had been in the Washington area for twenty-nine years, so I didn't favor a move. At the Board meeting, I had every intention of voting against the purchase of the church site and building. I felt that little thought had been given to the overall problems involved in the purchase of property by a non-profit organization. After some discussion at the BOG meeting, Rane Curl appointed me chairman of an Office Headquarters Committee with Jim Johnston and Mason Sproul as members.

The more I got involved in this Office Committee, the more I became interested and excited about the purchase of the church. I became convinced that this building would meet the Society's needs for housing. Most importantly, I could visualize better and more efficient service for the membership. There was a great deal of opposition among Board members, especially those from the West

Coast. I also conducted a survey of grottos and members, and found considerable support for the purchase and the associated thirteen resolutions. The Committee report was presented at the Board of Governors' meeting on 6 March 1971, at Huntsville, Alabama.

I arrived in Huntsville early in the evening, and partied with members of the Huntsville Grotto, and with other BOG members. To say the least, there were many discussions about the pros and cons of purchasing an office. I refused to join in on the discussions, and went back to drinking the good booze and doing some dancing. I was determined to enjoy myself and not give the BOG agenda any thought until the meeting the next day.

The BOG meeting started out like every other meeting with corrections to the minutes, officer reports, appointments, and committee reports. The resolution concerning the purchase of a Huntsville headquarters was Item Six.

Some other Board members had already told me that they would support my report and conclusions provided that I was convinced that this purchase would be best for the NSS and its members. The vote on the resolution to purchase the Kingdom Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses

was twelve in favor and three against. NSS President Rane Curl announced that while he could only vote in the event of a tie, he planned to vote in favor of the purchase.

The next day Rane Curl and I ex-

cuted the loan agreement obligating the NSS to pay \$24,000. It is a great responsibility to obligate the Society to such a large debt. I was delighted to learn that thanks to the dedication of the NSS membership, this debt was paid in full as of March.

How We Paid for the NSS Office

By Gerald G. Forney, 6056

The NSS is 33 years old this year. During most of these 33 years, the Society has been a truly underground organization operating out of a basement or spare bedroom. However, a few far-sighted NSS members have always dreamed that someday the Society would move into a building of its own.

Eighteen years ago, in 1956, the Board of Governors decided to establish a building fund to receive money for a "Society Headquarters Building." Burton Faust was one of the prime movers in establishing this fund and looking for real estate. The original plan was to build the office near Washington, D.C., but every year, real estate prices rose and the possibilities shrank.

There are no records of who gave to the Office Fund in the late fifties and early sixties, but the fund did not grow rapidly. In 1964, the NSS Board gave the Office Fund a needed shot in the arm by providing a constant source of income. The Board decided that 75% of the money received from the sale of back numbers of the *NEWS* and *Bulletin* should go to the Office Fund. In recent years, this amount has exceeded \$2000 a year.

This money from publications was entrusted to the National Speleological Foundation which invested it. The funds earned interest, dividends, and capital gains, and by February 1973, the NSF Office Fund contained \$11,600. In that month, the NSF turned over the money to the NSS which applied it to the office mortgage. Since then, cavers have purchased another \$2,743 worth of old NSS publications. About half the money for purchasing the office in Huntsville was raised by selling back numbers of the *NEWS* and *Bulletin*!

One of the reasons that the NSS purchased the Office was that the property was adjacent to Shelta Cave. The Shelta Cave project proved that fund raising was possible within the NSS. At the 1967 Convention, many cavers learned that Shelta Cave in Huntsville was about to be paved over for the construction of a supermarket. The NSS Board voted to buy 2.39 acres of land around the cave entrance. Nature Conservancy loaned the

NSS the money, and we agreed to pay them back.

Some people felt that the NSS would never raise the \$11,000 or so that was needed. For others, Shelta Cave marked a real opportunity for NSS members to put their money where their mouths were. John E. Cooper organized a fundraising campaign that included a direct mailing to the NSS membership. Thanks to the generosity of many cavers and non-cavers, the campaign took only a year and a half. By June 1969, the Shelta Cave Fund had more money than it needed. The final tally was:

Contributions	\$12,590
Paid Out	10,726
Surplus	\$ 1,863

Much of this surplus money was used for the recent purchase of the Bafford or Shelta East property. This 150 x 150 lot cost \$4500, and allows the NSS to control all of the entrance sink at Shelta Cave.

A little more than a year after the NSS paid for Shelta Cave, the Society was offered an adjacent piece of property, the Kingdom Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses with its 1,782 square foot "brick veneer building." At the August 1970 Board meeting, the NSS took out



Amanda Stokes, NSS Librarian, shown in library, June 1974. Photo by Stan Luker.

an option to buy "headquarters property" in Huntsville.

After consulting the membership by mail, the BOG made the decision to buy the Office at the 6 March 1971 meeting. The NSS made a down payment of \$2500, and received a 15-year mortgage at 9% interest on the \$21,000 principal. No one planned to take the full fifteen years. Originally the NSS leadership was talking about six or seven years to pay off the mortgage. But the office was paid for in three years rather than six, seven, or fifteen! Here's what it actually cost:

Down payment	\$ 2,500
Principal	21,500
Interest	4,341
Total	\$28,341

If we had chosen to pay for the office over the full fifteen years, it would have cost \$41,536.32!

After the NSS purchased the office, fund raising got off to a slow start. There were no special appeals other than short lines that said things like "We have just purchased an office. Please send money." About \$758 came into the Office Fund between March 1971 and April 1972. There was much confusion in the move to Huntsville, and fund raising remained in the back of everyone's mind.

Next came "Phase II," a whimsical take-off on Mr. Nixon's imposed austerity. Rane Curl and Connie Pierce designed a brochure asking for money for the NSS Office. The brochure was mailed to the NSS membership, and \$3,313.87 arrived during the last nine months of 1972. One day in September 1972, in Salamander Cave, I complained to Rane Curl about the slowness of the fund raising effort. A month or two later at the BOG meeting, I found myself chairman of the fund raising "committee."

The members of the committee knew that fund raising would "play in Peoria" if only someone would come up with a gimmick. Most everyone remembers Sergeant Preston's cereal-sponsored "Buy a square inch of Alaska" promotion. At the BOG afterparty, Rane Curl proposed a "Buy a brick" program. Everyone who donated \$5.00 or more to the Office

Fund would receive a certificate signed by the NSS President and "suitable for framing" indicating that he or she had donated a certain brick in the NSS Office.

Bill Torode patiently counted the number of bricks (5,193) in the facade of the NSS Office. Jim Johnston made a list of random numbers so the bricks could be handed out randomly. Diana Emerson designed the brick certificates, and they were printed by the Windy City Underground Press. Rane Curl signed all 1,000 of them while our hard-working office staff, Betty Mayo and Jeanne Pridmore, added the official seal and mailed them.

The Windy City Grotto also volunteered to print and mail the ballots for the 1973 NSS election. Dave Larson suggested that some sort of fund raising appeal ride piggy-back on the ballots. A letter was sent in the envelope with the ballots and platforms. The letter cost only \$47.76, and yielded many times that much money. In some measure because of this appeal, individual cavers donated \$1,649 to the Office Fund during the first three months of 1973.

By March 1973, the "Buy a brick" program was in full swing. There were announcements of one sort or another

in every issue of the *NEWS*. Irene Ludwig and I prepared lists of contributors for the *NEWS* using lists provided by Jeanne Pridmore and Betty Mayo. To keep the membership informed, some measure of how far we had come and how far we had to go was needed. The problem was that the NSS didn't know how long it would take to pay for the Office. Since the mortgage had interest payments, the longer we took, the more the Office would cost.

In October 1972, Rane Curl came up with an equation to measure the progress in paying for the Office:

$$\frac{(18)(218.08) + x(218.08)12}{(15)(12)(218.08) + 2500} = .35$$

To decide how far we had come, Rane had to arbitrarily choose an end date. Here it was $x = 4$, or four years. If we took four years to pay for the Office, we were 35% or roughly a third the way there. Of course the Office was paid for a year and a half later, so the percentage was not exactly right!

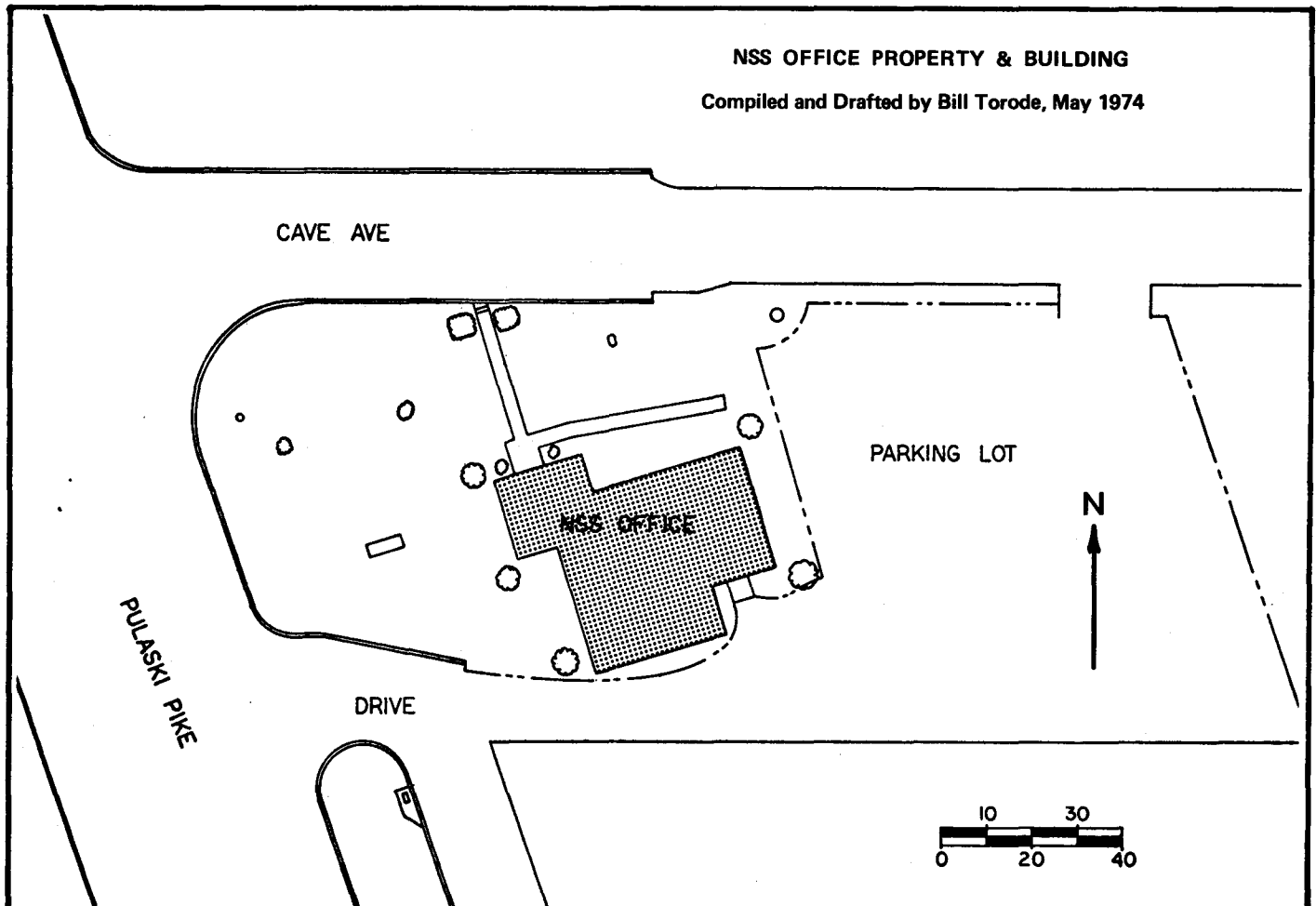
In April 1973, Lou Klein prepared a series of "scenarios" to help establish monthly fund-raising goals. If the NSS wanted to own the office in early 1978, members would have to contribute \$136

a month. Three years or 1976 would require \$252 a month. If we were to own the office in two years, \$386 a month had to be donated. But actually the Office was paid for in just a year, so the NSS received \$776 a month along with money from the sale of back issues.

No matter which "scenario" Lou proposed, it looked like the NSS had to raise \$9,000 in what was vaguely described as "the near future." The traditional thermometer was scrapped and replaced with a pile of bricks. Bill Mixon had pointed out that fund-raising thermometers look quite different when you place your finger over the bulb. Gradually the percentage climbed:

October	1972	35%
April	1973	58%
June	1973	72%
August	1973	80%
September	1973	84%
October	1973	85%
November	1973	87%
December	1973	89%
January	1974	92%

Individual cavers donated nearly \$5,000 between April 1973 and April 1974. Toward the end of the fund-raising drive, money came pouring in as cavers tried to get brick certificates before the offer expired. Over \$1,500 arrived during the first three weeks of February 1974.



Here is a summary of the individual donations:

March '71 to April '72	\$ 758
Phase II —	
April to December '72	3,313
NSS Ballot —	
January to March '73	1,649
April to June '73	1,144
July to September '73	787
October to December '73	837
January to March '74	2,022
Total Individual Contributions	\$10,511

Many NSS members also followed the precept "I gave where I caved." Nearly forty grottos passed the hard hat or dug into their treasuries to send money to pay for the Office. Seven non-NSS caving organizations and companies also sent contributions. The grottos and organizations that donated more than \$50 include Chouteau, DC, Dogwood City, Huntsville, NNJ, Salt Lake, Smoky Mountain, and Tidewater Grottos, and also the Cave Research Foundation. The total amount contributed by organizations was \$1,678.48.

During the last two years that he was *Bulletin* editor, Dave Irving donated his honorarium to help pay for the office. This yielded another \$1,000.



Bill Torode moving the Office lawn. Photo by Stan Luher.

Another major area that yielded money for the Office, was what Lou Klein calls, for want of a better term, "activities." These were various fund-raising gimmicks and activities, most of which centered around the 1973 NSS Convention in Bloomington, Indiana. These included:

Speleomemorabilia Auction	\$ 573.00
T-Shirts	530.00
Rappellstein Drawing	122.00
Wine Tasting	24.00
Bumper Stickers	262.50
Cave Ballad Record	371.00
Others	95.50
	\$1,978.00

The Speleomemorabilia Auction was an idea hatched by Bill Mixon, but it was a success thanks to the 35 or so people who bought or donated the various historical items. The T-Shirts were produced by Diana Emerson trading as "D. Emerson Enterprises." The Rappellstein Draw-

ing and Wine Tasting were brain children of Don Shofstall. Joe Saunders produced the bumper stickers. Bill Zarwell organized the cave ballad contest at the 1972 convention, and then produced and sold the resulting record.

And here is the grand total showing where the money to pay for the Office came from:

Old Publications	\$14,342
Individual Contributions	10,511
Grottos and Organizations	1,678
"Activities"	1,978
<i>Bulletin</i> Honorarium	1,000
	\$29,510

Of course, the fund raising campaign was not free. But there was only one special appeal, and most of the requests were carried in the *NSS NEWS* and in other society publications such as the *IO Newsletter*. Therefore, the total expenses were only \$308.

The total amount raised is about a thousand dollars more than we actually spent on the office. This extra money will probably go for major improvements and repairs, or possibly for the acquisition of more land in the immediate area.

The Office fund raising drive also had impact in other areas of NSS activity. The various appeals and pledge cards mentioned all three Society funds and encouraged people to give to them. This resulted in money for the Ralph Stone Research Fund and the Save the Caves Fund that would probably have not been otherwise donated. Between January 1973 and April 1974, this meant \$612.75 for conservation and \$441.50 for research.

And that is the story of how the NSS members bought an office. It took lots of money from lots of cavers, along with the efforts of quite a few hardworking volunteers. The fund raising effort has proved beyond a doubt that cavers will contribute to something they think is a good cause.



Left to right: Betty Mayo, Jeanne Pridmore and Vickie Cothren. Photo by Stan Luher.

THE FUTURE

It might seem that the purchase of the office building, and the transfer thereto of many of our administrative operations, is the "end" of a long story. It is that, but to a very large extent it is really a beginning. In 1971 we began, one might say, with a society owning (or rather, then, just occupying!) its own building. We also departed from the practice of hiring members as part-time secretaries, and truly went professional. The "business" of the Society is now being handled with an accuracy and efficiency that was impossible before. But as I have just said, this is, and really should be, only a beginning.

One question that has concerned us since acquiring the office and two full-time secretaries is how many societal functions we should try to centralize there. It is a great temptation to ask our employees to take on more and more responsibilities, especially ones that at any given moment are not being done too efficiently by volunteers. Of course, there are space and time limits to how far this can be carried out but, even more important, we have come to realize that there is a distinction between the types of "jobs" that should be done by employees or volunteers.

Volunteers are best at those non-repetitive jobs that call for knowledge of the Society and its members, and which can be scheduled (i.e., delayed!) with some flexibility. The keeping of membership records, financial accounting on a day-to-day basis, and the mailing of publications — for over 4000 members — is not a "volunteer" activity! In deciding what should and what should not be done in or at the office, we have moved the NSS Archives "out," and moved the NSS Library "in" (but managed by a volunteer librarian). There will undoubtedly be further evolution of "office" functions in the future as we try to do the best possible overall "job" with the facilities and employees and volunteers that we have. One thing is certain, however, and that is that our office is getting busier and more crowded.

You will probably find this hard to believe, but our "brand-new" office is already stretching at the seams! The business-office portion of it is really just one small room, which will probably remain adequate for some time, but the work and storage space is getting crowded as we expand activities such as the NSS Bookstore (and its inventory); the number of stored back NSS publications increases (the sale of these provided nearly half the cost of buying the office, and are now a source of income — but they have to be kept somewhere); and

as we install new (and bulky) equipment such as the Addressograph machine recently donated to us, and a printing press also recently acquired. Our insurance company is worrying (and worrying us) about the storage of maintenance supplies, and the adequacy of the electrical wiring for our new machinery. All in all, we will probably have to find at least additional publication storage space in the very near future. Herein lies not only a problem, but an opportunity.

Our situation in Huntsville reminds me somewhat of the Pengelly Cave Research Centre (now the William Pengelly Cave Studies Trust) in Buckfastleigh, Devon, England. There, in 1962, was founded a small organization to develop the research and educational potential of the caves at the site. The Pengelly Trust has since converted two nearby buildings to a speleological museum and laboratory, and a lecture building with simple accommodations for visitors. They have also published, since 1964, *Studies in Speleology*, a journal similar to our *Bulletin*. The Pengelly Trust now has an active lecture program, a group of caves in which research continues, and an internationally-recognized publication. They have managed this having only about 600 members.

The NSS today has a much larger membership, an established speleological journal — and an office on top of a cave. The opportunity that confronts us is to develop that combination into an educational and research facility that will implement the purposes of the NSS. And, perhaps, also solve our space problem.

A problem which presses upon us all is the frequent promotion of "spelunking" in the popular press. The recreational press, in particular, publishes articles glorifying "heart-chilling adventures into the stygian unknown," and all that journalistic claptrap. The NSS has recently adopted a semi-official policy to maintain a "low profile," but this is essentially a negative approach. It would be a positive approach to at least start educating the "rest of the world" about caves, and the very good reasons for our seeking their protection.

A little of such education is done at the more responsible commercial caves, but it is a secondary objective, if it is an objective at all, that loses in confrontation with the need to "entertain." It is hard to think of any American institution that actually attempts to educate the general public about cave phenomena, cave life, and the need for their preservation. (The Ozark Underground Laboratory, and a few general-purpose museums, are the exception.) It would seem to be a very appropriate implementation of the NSS policies on cave study and preservation to take advantage

of our unique circumstances of owning an office, a biologically important cave, and some property upon which we can build, to establish a cave research and educational center. I would urge this as a future objective of the NSS.

Over the past three years, while we have been paying off the office mortgage, I have often been led to think of the contrast between the actual size, and the actual accomplishments of our Society. The NSS has among its members most of the cave and caving expertise of the United States. In addition, we are the only national membership society that considers caves as its special concern and trust. But we are a tiny organization! With 4,391 individual members we are among the smallest of "small towns." Our annual budget is less than the collective income of a dozen average members. The accomplishment of our buying our office is similar to a single member buying a home. We should pause, when we are in the midst of an internal controversy, to realize what an "insignificant" group we really are. But I believe that our present influence, and certainly our potential influence, is much larger than our numbers. In many ways our office stands as a symbol of the determination and cooperation of everyone seriously interested in caves, and what we can accomplish if we really try.

Rane L. Curl
President

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LOCAL NEWS

CENTRAL AREA

Cave Capers

One hundred and ninety-seven cavers registered for the twenty-first annual Indiana Cave Capers, sponsored by Central Indiana Grotto 21-23 June at Blue River Stage Stop near Corydon, Indiana. Highlights of the weekend included Coors beer on tap (well received and in sufficient quantities to have some left over) and typical southern Indiana caving convention weather, large amounts of rain in a very short time. The campground was a quagmire which presented an interesting challenge to the four-wheelers, and even more of a challenge to those vehicles without 4WD.

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