

SECTION 5 --- INTERNAL AFFAIRS

Much of the real work of the Society is carried out by members working in smaller, local groups. These groups are of four types: Chapters (or Grottos), Regions, Surveys, and Sections. Each Internal Organization is chartered by the Society to help carry out the Society's purposes on a local level. The privileges and responsibilities of Internal Organizations, the criteria by which they are chartered, and the rules they are expected to follow are set out in the Policy for Internal Organizations which has been established by the Board of Governors for this purpose. This policy is included in this manual as Appendix D of Section 3.

The Internal Organizations exist to make Society membership more meaningful. Each Society member should try to become a member of at least one Internal Organization and take part in its activities. The Society places no limit on the number of Internal Organizations to which a member may belong.

A group of members who wish to form one of the Internal Organizations described below must first obtain a charter from the Society. The authority to charter Internal Organizations has been delegated to the Internal Organizations Committee. The Chairman of this committee is listed on page 4.34.

A Congress of Grottos meets yearly at the convention. At this meeting all Internal Organizations can present their views on problems or issues relating to operation of the Society. The report of the Congress is advisory to the Board of Governors, however the Board is required to consider each item on the report.

Chapters are organizations of Society members who live in the same general locality. Most chapters are known as "grottos". The two words mean the same thing within the Society. Chapters generally hold regular meetings and trips, organize projects, train new members, publish newsletters, and provide social functions for their members. A special type of chapter, a student grotto, can be organized at an educational institution to serve the needs of students, staff, and faculty at that institution. A complete list of all chapters, past and present, is presented in Table 5A.

Regional Associations, or Regions, are Internal Organizations made up of grottos, sections, surveys, and individuals in a general geographical area. The purpose of a region is to maintain communication among Internal Organizations and isolated members whose speleological interests cover the same general area. Most regions organize at least one annual project, meeting, or get-together. Some regions also publish a newsletter. A complete list of all regions, past and present, is presented in Table 5B.

Speleological Surveys are Internal Organizations made up of individuals and organizations engaged in gathering speleological data in a general geographical area. The primary purpose of a survey is to maintain a centralized file for the cave area and to prevent duplication of work among members. Copies of maps and information compiled by the surveys should be sent to the National Cave Files Committee. The Chairman of this committee is listed on page 4.34. A complete list of all surveys, past and present is presented in Table 5C.

Special Sections, or Sections, are Internal Organizations made up of individuals with a specific common interest related to caves. Sections are generally nationwide in scope and serve to maintain communication among the members. A complete list of all sections, past and present, is presented in Table 5D.

Other Groups -- The Board has established four categories of "NSS Activities". These Activities are not Internal Organizations but are intended to help members promote the purposes of the Society. Each is further defined in Appendix P of Section 3. The categories are Expeditions, Projects, Conservation Task Forces, and Conservancies. Groups are formally designated upon application to the proper committee as defined in Appendix P.

General Membership -- The Society is membership oriented and is composed of approximately 11,000 individual members residing mostly in the United States. All applicants for membership must submit a written application for membership. The applicant also signs a statement to the effect that he agrees to practice and promote cave conservation. There are various categories of membership to serve the needs of most individuals. These categories are defined in Section I.B. of the Bylaws (page 2.2.1).

Early History and Growth -- The NSS was founded in 1941 with approximately one hundred members. About 1944, a serial number was assigned to each member based on the date of joining, a practice still in use today. Increases in membership were steady and by 1948 the total number of members was about 700 and the highest NSS number was 925. The following eight years was a period of rather rapid growth although the number of members dropped also increased at a rather high rate. Between 1956 and 1970, the Society was in a state of uniform exponential growth. During this time, periodic dues increases caused a leveling off of the growth trend. After 1970 growth was less rapid but the number of members continued to climb slowly. In the late 1980's rapid growth was again experienced. An outline of the membership growth pattern is given by Table 5F.

Annual Conventions -- An annual convention has been one of the most important parts of the Society's activity. The forerunner of the Conventions was held on October 17-19, 1941, at the Brookside Inn in Aurora, West Virginia. This meeting was called the Symposium of Speleology -- First Annual Conference of the National Speleological Society. Members presented papers, the Board of Governors held a meeting, and the attendees were treated to field trips by the organizers. This pattern has held for most conventions since that time. The principal field trip of this first convention was led by John F. Meenehan to Schoolhouse Cave.

Owing to wartime conditions, no conventions were held in 1943 and 1944. From 1945 to 1947 they were held during the winter in Washington, DC and were called annual meetings. In 1948, under the chairmanship of Burton S. Faust, the meeting was called a convention for the first time and set the standard for all those that followed. At this convention the International Salon of Photographic Art was inaugurated by Faust and Earl Porter. The month of the meeting was changed to April when weather for field trips would be better than it had been in the winter.

Conventions were held in April for 1948 to 1960 when the date was changed to June to coincide with the beginning of school vacation. In that year also, publication of a field trip guidebook became a regular part of convention planning. At present, conventions are held during the summer at the convenience of the host area.

A typical convention consists of a combination of learning opportunities and entertainment. Several planned parties and many spontaneous ones are mixed with a number of formal sessions where papers on many subjects are presented. Sporting contests are held and publications are sold. Some people camp; others stay in dorms or motels. Almost everyone can enjoy the week long festivities. Table 5E lists all the NSS National Conventions held to date.

International Meetings--In the past twenty-five years, there have been a large number of international conferences or meetings of speleologists. Some were general, such as the current series of International Speleological Congresses, which occur every four years. Some were of specific sport or scientific subjects, such as the meeting on sport potholing held in Belgium in 1972. Meetings of the International Congress of Speleology are listed in Table 5G.

The international congresses are directed by the International Speleological Union (UIS) which elects its officers at each quadrennial meeting. The United States has had an official delegation at each international congress. The officers and U.S. delegates to the International Speleological Union are listed in Table 5H.

The Society has an International Secretary, with committee chairman status, (see page 4.26) whose duty is to coordinate the activities of the Society on the international level.