

RAINSHELTER CAVE

Well, here it is, bright and early on a Sunday morning and that means its time to go caving. I find myself and two others (Jeff Streba) (& Paul Kramer) stuffed into the cab of my little S10 pickup. Luckily, we only had to survive until we reached John Neack's house. John had asked Ralph Mann to come along since he was leaving town soon and most of us had never been caving with him. Unfortunately, a flat tire and some jammed lug nuts kept Ralph from attending. Mark Suer and Dennis Schoeney arrived safely however and we were soon on our way. The plan was to meet Don Mauney and Dawn Hornsby in Horse Lick Valley between 10 and 10:30 AM, that's read eleven-fifteen because we are talking about Don.

We were half-way up the trail to the cave when Don arrived and quickly captured our attention to inform us that the parking lights to a pickup were ~~on~~ left on. Thrilled to death, I hiked all the way back to the cemetery and then back to the cave, catching up with everybody in the lunchroom. Eight people meant that we split into two survey groups: Jeff, Mark, Paul and myself in one group and John, Don, Dawn, and Dennis comprising the other.

Our first job was to pick up a side loop off the main canyon and hook that into the A survey. This was complicated by the fact that we had trouble finding a survey point at the end of the loop to complete the connection. Next, we headed down the canyon to a dead-end side passage that required a short 3 meter shot followed by a 17 meter short. This side canyon was named the Bird Bath for reasons embarrassing to Jeff. Our third survey lead was Howard's Pit. We dropped down to the bottom of the pit, leaving Paul behind to courageously guard the rope so that it wouldn't be stolen by Hodags. Interesting things were happening at the bottom of the pit. Mark Suer informed us that he had flunked cairn-building school twice as he had spent ten minutes trying to make a pile of rocks. Even worse, he built the cairn in a puddle, and both Mark and I had to lay in a puddle while being rained on from above. We called it the Shower & Bath Combination. Surveying down the drain from the

pit, we found another smaller drop a short ways down the passage. We sent Jeff down to set up a survey point and then Mark and I ascended the rope while Jeff walked around (the drain from the pit comes out quite near the Big Rock and is only a short walk to the top of the pit). I was lucky enough to learn that lips aren't any fun at all, at least not the kind you find at the edge of pits and especially when you're hanging 50 feet in the air. I said afterwards that I wouldn't do any vertical work for a while. I kept my word until the next Sunday.

After picking up the vertical gear, we headed back to the bottom of the second drop to continue our survey and along the way we ran into John who said that Don, Dawn, and Dennis had exited the cave already. The five of us set up at the bottom of the second drop and we let John shoot the foresight because he said he was good at hard shots. We neglected to mention the cairn was built in a pool of water and it was directly under the waterfall. Paul came to John's aid by blocking the falling water with his body while John lay in the pool. We quickly connected into the canyon near the Big Rock and the only thing I'll say about our last shot is that a compass is hard to get when the inclination on the shot is something like + 68°. John said that I'm too honest, I keep telling him exactly what the compass says.

The other survey crew picked up a loop, so for the day we picked three loops and one side passage. Rainshelter now has nearly a half-mile of surveyed passage and that will increase after the next trip.

One last thing,...This trip was Paul Kramer's first Grotto trip. A new member in the Grotto isn't any reason to get excited. However, his first cave trip was a GCG-led Boy Scout trip. Many people don't seem to enjoy running the Boy Scout trips, but it is a good way to recruit new members.

Cave Softly,

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