

As we drove south, I looked out the window. Just above Lexington, the rivers were brown and out of their banks.

“Great” I thought “gonna be a wet one”

We had already rescheduled the trip to Grouse Pit. Last two times I tried to pull off a Grouse trip, people kept backing out, so I invited a ton of people. And true to form, they all came. And invited friends. The current survey in Grouse ends at a dig in a cobble stream passage. I could just see 6 people waiting for John Neack and I to dig it out and start the survey. Too many. So the night before the trip, John and I talked about rerouting the trip to Rainshelter to get ready for the Grotto trip I was planning to take later in the year. The trip would go fine as long as it didn't rain to hard, I said. The cave is fairly impervious to rain, but the creek you have to cross can come up fast and high.

In the late 80's a group of grotto folks were in Rainshelter during a Speleofest. A rainstorm rolled in and dumped a ton of rain, pretty much just in Horeslick Creek Valley. The cave started pouring water out of all types of little holes, but since it such a high cave, there really wasn't much danger. We got out of the cave only to find the sun shining, but we stopped smiling when we came around the corner to the Creek. The 6' high creek we had passed over at 10am was now 4-5 feet deep and about 5 times wider now. We were discussing if we could pull the Cars across when a few trees floated down. That pretty much sealed the bargain. I settled down to spend the night (I had a can of Beef Stew and a Carbide light, what else did I need?). But Jacque Ramey wasn't happy (no beef stew for him!). He and Marc Rockland somehow found a route out of the valley that included driving up the face of an old cofferdam. And even more amazing was my old jeep made it with all 6 people from the trip jammed in it. I'll never forget it, even though I seemed to have forgotten the way out (I went looking for it a year ago and couldn't quite find the old dam).

So all this was going through my head as I drove down watching the creeks get higher and higher. Past Lexington, it didn't seem quite as bad though.

Pam and I pulled into Jeans at 9 sharp and met John Neack and Kim & Kenny Hedges and Phil Davis. We explained the issue with all of us going to Grouse Pit, plus the added bonus of the 1.5-mile hike in the rain. I was still a little nervous about the water height, but we all agreed it was at least worth the trip up there to see if the creek was too high to get across. We set off.

When we got to Horselick Cemetery we parked (after getting the cars stranded on the other side, we now always park on the near side in inclement weather). Walking down to the creek we found that it was only up a foot. John promised he would do a water rescue on me if it got too high after we got out of the cave, so off we set to the entrance of Rainshelter.

The walk is fairly short and easy, even if we did cross over the valley too soon (like I do EVERY time). This was everybody's first time into Rainshelter except for John and I. Kim had asked how hard it was, and I replied “touch and go in places”. When she got to the entrance and saw the 15 foot climb-down, she remarked “if this is touch and go, I hate to see a hard cave” but after rigging the handline we all got down without trouble.

We all got through Kirkwoods Full moon crawl, and to the cable ladder. Pam reminded me how much she hated cable ladders, and Kenny agreed with her. But this 12-foot climbdown is perfect for a ladder and things go much quicker with one. Pam got a little hung by the hooks on her boots about a foot off the floor, and Phil came to her rescue. We all dangled and thrashed our way down the ladder and set off for the attic. The attic is the nicest spot in Rainshelter. It sits way above the main passage and is full of nice formations. It is always the first stop in trip. I showed everybody the wimp way and the hard caver way to the attic. The Hard Man route is a quick climb about 40 feet off the floor, and the wimp way is a crawl around. We all took the wimp way across to the attic, but Kenny was complaining about his huge Cajones not fitting through the crawl and he went across the climb. John and Phil must have had the same problem because they followed him across. Pam and Kim of course didn't have to worry about this issue, and crawled around. I (being the real hard man) ignored the discomfort and also crawled around.

We cruised to the A-27 Junction where three levels of cave are stacked up on one another. It is a touchy climb down a few boulders. Pam felt a little uncomfortable with the exposure, so she and I took off for a another way down. I got into a wrong passage and John had to come back and show us the right way. “Of course” I said “I was looking for the DDJ survey and I am in the DDDJ survey” This dates back to when surveyors were trying to piss me off with really torturous survey designations. They knew I had to type each survey station in by hand. Ah things have changed now!

We joined up and set off for the Cairn room. From there we took off down the Needle Passage. At the top of a high canyon climb Pam and I waited while the others went off to visit the waterfall and needles. John

said there were a lot of needles, but not as nice as the first time we saw them. We have never been sure as to why they seem to wax and wane.

On the way back to the Cairn room, Phil caught his ear on the sharp canyon wall and cut it. After watching the most recent survivor episode, we all offered to piss in his ear to keep it from getting infected. When Phil turned down these selfless acts of help, we offered many tips on how he could do it him self. He turned these down too, saying he didn't think he could move fast enough.

After a quick break in the Cairn room, we took off to the entrance. Another entertaining climb up the cable ladder, a quick duck through Kirkwoods crawl, and we climbed out of the cave into a gray wet day.