

# Trip Reports

## SMOKEY CAVERNS CHRONICLE

### Continued

### LOOKIN' FOR THE BIG ONE

#### THE TRIP

Well I had finally done it - I had gotten a group of people who agreed to survey in the new section of Murphys 2. This was no easy feat, but John Neack (that's right-John had actually agreed to survey,

against his better judgement of course), a new caver Janine, and Steve Hauser had signed on. After the necessary hassles (Steve called in sick at 6 am) we were off.

We got to the cave in record time and sloshed around in the mud getting dressed. We headed into the cave and soon reached the bottom of the drop. This was Janine's first in cave climb so John went up first so he could rain ridicule from the top while I would assist him from the bottom.

Janine got up fine but we agreed that my two point climbing system (one harness Jumar and a foot Gibb) might not be the right thing for that first adventure. Then we faced the obstruction that has left many a fine caver in tears, the pinch in the crawl on the edge of the pit. This is a small canyon passage through the bottom of a breakdown pile. It would be easy except for one rather large rock in the middle of the canyon. The largest person to pass has been Paul Gooseman and he barely fit (the largest person not to make it is a tie between Bigbird and Lance). We made it, sans battery belts. We started the survey at that point, moving first through a wide low passage with a ceiling channel large enough to stand in. The longest shots in a

passage like this are (of course) at the bottom so Janine got the pleasure of learning to shoot compass while laying in the water on the bottom of the passage. She can blame John for that.

The passages continued through a breakdown area where we diverted into the ceiling channel.

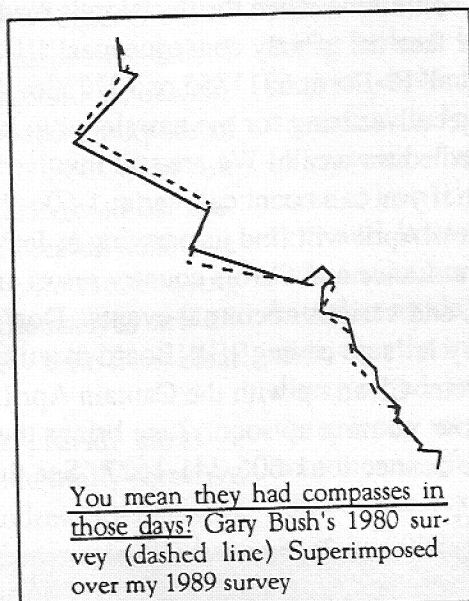
At the end of the breakdown we dropped into a thin winding canyon with some standing water.

We continued on for a few stations. The breeze through this part of the cave was more like a wind, flickering our carbide lights and freezing us. We stopped to see how much farther we would survey

in the canyon ( I remembered only being in the canyon for a short time). I was wrong, the canyon wound on for a good distance, winding almost 180° at times. I was facing a major mutiny so we decided to cruise up the passage to warm up.

We continued up till the passage goes dry - here there are magnificent areas of gypsum snow, looking more like wool then snow in places, other places look like snow drifts. John named this passage the Frostline.

At one point a canyon lead led checked it out and suckered us into it. This canyon is about 9" at its thinnest (I had to remove kneepads to get through it). Not a cave for fat people. This led us down and dropped us into the same type of small passages we have seen in other places in the cave. It was a maze of passage going in all directions and many junctions. These were mostly damp, if not wet and carried the charcoal that characterizes the lowest parts of the cave. It was also here that we noticed a localized severe sloping of the bedding plane around us. I haven't been able to fit that into the picture yet. After wearing us out we returned to where we left off surveying and ate. I was now facing a full mutiny and so headed out after only 16 stations.



You mean they had compasses in those days? Gary Bush's 1980 survey (dashed line) Superimposed over my 1989 survey



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### THE CAVE

The cave is definitely connected to Smokey at the top end. This can be confirmed by both local history having the smoke from the upper valley exiting the murphy 2 entrance and the charcoal throughout the lower passages. One interesting point - we have never found the charcoal in the murphy section below the pit nor in the first wet section above the pit. The wet section ends abruptly on the uphill side indicating that it is backponding that causes it, not water flowing from the upper cave. This in turn could mean that the water in these passages comes from another source.

We also know that all of Smokey/Murphy 2's water drains into Surprise/Murphy 1. This would mean that the water from Smokey is draining into Surprise at a different, lower level that we have only been glancing at though the smaller passages below the main one. It is significant that we have not found any lower passages running water, we might not be near the lowest passages.

Once we connect Surprise/Murphy 1 to Murphy 2 (I think this can be done) we will have a cave of well over a mile. If we can connect Murphy 2 to Smokey (I am not to sure about this) we'll be talking about one of the biggest caves in Jackson county!

### THE PLEA

Well, as you can tell I am stuck on this cave (or cave system as it is better described). I need surveyors galore to survey all the different sections of it. It has something for everybody, climbs, rappels, wetsuit passages, and even a little crawlin'. Give me a call!

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