

GOT TO BIRTHDAYS

MONTH OF OCTOBER

Tina Blaik, Ken Carter, Bob Denton, Debbie
Floyd, Margaret Hanson

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

TRIP REPORTS

Caving during OTR

By Terry McClanathan

It's been many a year since I've actually attended OTR, the event. However, I'm always out that weekend, usually taking folks to some of my favorite pits in Greenbrier and Pocahontas counties. Anyone who is vertically competent is welcome to come. The main caving day is generally Saturday, but sometimes we caved into Sunday as well. The agenda for this past OTR went as follows...
Participants: Bob Alderson, Corey Hackley, Adam Lake, Keely Owen, Gerry Adams, and myself

On Saturday we first visited Briar Pit. This is located near Alta ten miles west of Lewisburg on the Robert Tuckweller Farm. Robert is very friendly and likes a brief chat with cavers who drop by. The pit is only a couple of miles north of Piercys and Piercys Mill caves. Without a guide it would be very difficult to find as it is a small hole with no sink near the top of a substantial hill.. Hike is about half a mile. The entrance is snug with a sloping dogleg a body length down. After that it is a freefall drop in a shaft approximately twenty feet in diameter, Depth is 121 feet. All six of us bounced it and I yo-yoed it a couple of times.

Next stop for the six of us was Cabbie Pit. A heavy downpour preceded us and everything was sopping wet when we arrived. The landowner, Sam Warren, informed me that nearly an inch of rain had just

fallen in about twenty minutes time. Sam prefers to keep visitations to a minimum and requires a waiver, but otherwise has always been cordial to me. There are actually two pits on Sam's farm so we took two ropes with us. Sam allows cavers to drive back a lane to a large machine shed in the middle of the farm. From here it is a short hike through some fields onto a wooded hillside to the main pit entrance in a sizable sink.

Cabbie #1 is a very nice fluted well. In my opinion it is the prettiest open air dome pit in the state. Three separate mapping teams on three separate trips spaced years apart all arrived at 107' for the depth of the drop (how bizarre is that?). The walls are perfectly smooth and the pit is elongated with a steep debris slope at the bottom. This slope makes the total depth about 140 feet. A high alcove looks appealing and has been checked, but dead ends just around the corner. At the other end of the dome a crawl leads to a fifteen foot high dome. Corey said he climbed this and reported another small dome above it.

I split our group and took Gerry and Keely across a gully to Cabbie #2 Pit a short distance away. This is also a very nice pit but is only 51 feet deep. We kind of ferried each other back and forth between the two pits until everybody had bounced each. I yo-yoed Cabbie (107) several times. After bouncing the pits Corey and Adam checked some sinks in the pasture for leads. Afterwards we headed back to Lewisburg for dinner and Keely and Gerry headed home while Adam went off to join some other cavers. Bob, Corey, and I spent the night at the WVACS fieldhouse. A dense fog had set in following a line of storms and it was a harrowing drive up there.

Sunday morning it was still very foggy. Our plan was for an early pre-breakfast assault on Curry pit, then home for Corey, and Bob and I would go down to Grapevine after a bite. Though I'd been to Curry Pit three times back in the early nineties, I'd recently "lost" the location. A couple of years before when I tried to take some of my GVKS caving friends to it in summer, I couldn't find it. I

recalled that the entrance was in a small sink, but very overgrown with briars and multiflora rose. On this summer day I knew could easily have walked within ten feet of it and still missed it. I resolved to come back in winter thinking a steam plume might help. This past Christmas, after nearly an hour of playing phone tag at a friendly neighbors house with the landowners whose property we'd have to cross, I, along with some TAG friends who own a cabin nearby, successfully "found" the entrance.

On this (OTR) foggy morning with limited visibility I turned off the pasture lane too soon and at the wrong turn and nearly missed it again. After some flailing around through tall grasses that were dripping from the fog (we were soaked up to our waists) I managed to get us back onto the lane and found the proper turn-off. In the thick fog and not knowing where they were, following an old buffoon who seemed to be going in circles, I can only imagine the thoughts that must have been going through Corey and Bob's respective heads. I did eventually locate a trail I'd flagged to the entrance back at Christmas and we finally reached our destination. The walk is a good mile without any detours gaining about 600 feet in elevation, but today we probably doubled that.

Curry is a seldom visited hard to find cave featuring a nice 105 foot entrance drop followed by a long slope to a second pit of 48'. If rigged with one line the entire affair will consume a 250 foot rope. We used two ropes. The entrance pit was much nicer than I remembered, smooth walled, roomy, and leading off about halfway down into a spacious flowstone lined canyon. Decades earlier I'd set a rebelay bolt at the top of the second pit to facilitate rigging. We used this and tied our second rope into the main line as a backup. Next time I come here I'll put in another bolt so this drop can be rigged independently with a Y-hang.

The second drop is very pretty and would sport a waterfall in wetter conditions. Today it was just a nice steady fast dripping. Dimensions are about fifteen by forty feet. The water filtered into a small jagged hole which Corey

examined, finding air and hearing falling water somewhere ahead. He thinks it's a good lead worth some effort to push. Curry is high up and Bone Norman is just a few miles to the south. Above the 48 foot pit a high canyon extends up into blackness. On my way back up the entrance pit I pendulumed part way across the flowstone canyon mentioned earlier to where I could grab hold of a crack in the wall. From this vantage point I could peer around a corner in the flowstone canyon and see what appeared to be a drop off. I thought this might access the high dome above the 48 foot pit but the distance was too far to pendulum any further than the crack I was clinging to. On his way out Corey checked a small infeeder, which seemed to be the source of the water dripping into the second pit. He reported that it ended just around the corner. It would appear that Curry Pit may be worth some further investigation in the future.

After our early morning adventures at, and on the way to Curry Pit, Corey headed home and Bob and I went down to Grapevine (Lost World). If I'm in the area and time allows I like to stop by (pre-arranged by phone the week prior), chat with the two Steves, and yo-yo the very fine 118' historical entrance pit. On this Labor Day Sunday there were lots of tourists in the cave and they seemed to enjoy watching Bob and I drop into the cave the old fashioned way. For my part it's a real treat popping into the massive formation filled room when everything is lit up and people are walking around on the various trails. I yo-yoed the pit and then we secured the gate at the top. Bob had not been through the "wild" part of the cave, so before we said goodbye the two of us took a quick tour to the back formation rooms.

And so ended another fun Labor Day weekend of pitting in W. Va. Always fun, and I never get tired of returning to these fine caves and pits. As I said earlier, anyone with vertical experience is welcome. Just drop me a line, and it really doesn't have to be OTR weekend for those of you with a passion for the Doo-Dah parade or who just like to party too much to make the drive down to Greenbrier County.

"Tanglefoot is an ongoing project and access is sensitive. The cave is one of the most physically demanding in the east, and hence is not suited for recreational caving. For more information regarding the project, please contact Corey Hackley."

Tanglefoot 1/28/12

This trip was executed by Ryan Boyce, Joe Clemens, and Corey Hackley. Dave was unable to attend, but offered us the use of his truck and bikes. Not wanting to complicate our logistics or his, we declined, and instead made our way to the cave on foot. While this was no easy trip, with our heavy duffels, it afforded us the opportunity to look at some features over which our curiosity had grown since the last trip.

Firstly, I wanted to check the area to the west of and lower than the MSRQ spring, for the possible existence of yet a lower outlet for water draining out of the mountain. To my disappointment, no such spring was immediately evident. However, this is not to say one does not exist; it is still possible that water is emerging in the bed of Jennings run. It does appear, now, to be slightly more likely that all the water in the system is resurging at MSRQ.

Downstream, however, is the impressive series of spring that Donnie identified and investigated some weeks or months ago. Suspecting that these springs are associated with a cave system in the thin Wymps Gap limestone, we walked over to give them a close

look. There are two main springs, both of them producing high volumes of water. Some limestone chunks are evident in the further east of these two. It is possible that this spring is in fact draining the thin union member, the existence of which at this locale is still debatable. Other than this, no openings or digs were evident.

Back at the quarry, we toured Joe briefly before donning our packs and trudging up the steep hill. Resting briefly at the tracks, and poking our heads in the railway crawl, we then walked the rest of the way to the entrance, stopping again at Swigger Cave to check airflow. Tangle and Swigger were both exhaling strongly, as expected. At 1:00 PM or so, we entered the cave.

Things were the wettest we have seen them yet. Many areas in the cave were steadily dripping, making the mud all the worse. We resumed our survey where we left off, searching for our stations. Ryan had brought a little white out this time to mark important stations. The area we had to map through is probably one of the most irritating in the cave, and many of our shots were less than 5' in length. After about 2 hours in this area, we gratefully emerged into the rectangle room, where the pace about tripled. After 3 hours, our quota for the trip, we set our final station in the room above the number 4 infeeder, and set out to push deeper areas.

Joe was exceedingly useful. Though he has pulled tape in Crystal Grottoes with me on many occasions, I'm fairly certain that this was his first time using a Suunto. Whether his measurements were taken before or after Ryan's, they were reliably within a degree. This testifies to both Ryan and Joe's abilities. Although much of the passage in Tangle is tight, our survey pace will explode once we are able to leave the joint complex. In many of the deeper passages, even those 1' in height, being able to see 50-100' is not at all

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uncommon.

We traversed the canyon pretty quickly, but before we hit our bellies again, Joe and Ryan took a break while I did a quick push in one of the many strike-oriented passages departing from the top of the gorge. This passage had many leads coming in from up-dip, and many heading down-dip. Choosing a few down-dip leads, I was led through some smaller parallel strike passages, and after maybe 200' from where Ryan and Joe stopped, I came out over the waterfall and plunge pool at the North end of the belly crawl that connects the upstream section of the canyon to the shorter downstream section. Backtracking, I returned to where the others were resting, and we took off for the aforementioned belly crawl. This passage is long, low, and sloppy, before suddenly emerging over a body sized hole in the floor through which one must climb down into a waterfall. At the base of the waterfall, perhaps 7 feet high, is a broad, circular, knee-deep plunge pool. Immediately after the pool, the passage is walking, controlled by a prominent joint in the Loyalhanna member. It is interesting to note that here, for a mere 15' or so, the ceiling of the passage is truly in the Loyalhanna; this is the only place in Tanglefoot's ~1 mile of explored passage where this has yet been seen to happen.

Shortly beyond the joint is a fairly spacious room, and then a gentle turn back down dip into a gradually lowering keyhole passage. Then, suddenly, the passage turns back strikeward, broadening to ~15' and lowering to an impassable 6". Shortly before this is an odd tube, also heading strikeward. In a couple short and awkward climbs, this passage climbs up into the Deer Valley, and into perhaps the most peculiar passage in a cave defined by peculiar and varied passages. This was my previous limit of exploration.

At this point, we diverged, Ryan and Joe pushing some strike passages a short distance upstream. For a perfectly straight 200', the passage is 2' wide and 3'-6' high. These dimensions, however, are misleading, because the walls are densely covered in projections that may extend nearly all the way across the corridor while being only an inch thick. It is as if some sadistic power took a perfectly fine passage and shoved thousands of dinner plates into slots in the walls for an interminable length. Occasionally, a softball-sized cobble could be seen resting on top one of these plates: a baked potato, if you will.

While this may sound a little hellish, this area had some redeeming qualities. For one, the passages was perfectly dry; not a drop of water entered at any point, and it looked as if none had for the better part of the last 20,000 years. Also, the projections all shatter with a simple and satisfying whack from the nearest available cobble. Cobble in hand, I worked my way, foot by foot, through the passage, which remained perfectly consistent in character. The roar of the stream behind me faded, and I was beginning to wonder where the hell I was going, when, ever so gradually, the roar returned, this time ahead of me. My pace quickened.

The passage ended in as bizarre a manner as it began, at a body sized rabbit hole straight down 7' to the base of the Deer Valley. My first priority was to again reach the stream, and moving through the intricate lattice of broad strike and dip passages, I eventually did. Unfortunately, it was no longer entrenched very deeply into the soft limestone below. Moving further through the lattice, I did reach a short stretch of more spacious canyon, which, after only 100' or so, degenerated into yet another enormously wide and horrendously low strike passage. I turned around here, picking a different route back, weaving in and out of the path I took in. The floor was thickly patterned with raccoon tracks. This area, downstream

from the projection crawl, is apparently infinite. I picked routes through somewhere between 400 and 1000' of passage, but there is evidently much, much more.

In my haste to reach the stream, I had exited the projection crawl without so much as looking back underneath to see if there were other passages below. Now, from the other direction, I very nearly missed the hole upward into the crawl, continuing instead directly underneath it. To my amazement, this passage opened up after only 30' or 40' into a corridor extending down-dip to the stream and up dip though some nicely sized and shaped passage in the Deer Valley. Although this passage took only a light trickle of water, it was evident that it had at one time been the main stream passage of the cave. Passing a very major junction with large strike passage traveling North, I continued up-dip into nice Loyalhanna canyon. This abruptly ended at a waterfall of 15', which I could not easily or safely climb. However, the water dropping over it was muddied, and sure enough, I found I was able to make voice contact with Ryan. We played the yelling game for a long while, but he simply could not seem to get close enough to communicate effectively. This was a shame, because I wanted to share the discovery of this area with him, and also wanted to converse a bit about our next move. After some unsuccessful minutes, I retreated down-dip.

On my way back, I was simply unable to help peeking ahead into the large strike passage. At its mouth, it was large enough to stoop walk, though within 100' this had changed to hands and knees. The ceiling was perfectly flat, and I'd say the passage was about 15' wide. Over 100' from the junction was an in feeder, which I had a good feeling about, and was to investigate on my way back. Through multiple down-dip passages (many of them passable), I could see a lower, parallel passage, which was apparently increasing in size as the passage I was in was decreasing. This is somewhat misleading, however, since the

conduit I was in seemed to be decreasing in size due to increasing fill rather than a true decrease in dimension. I stopped when the passage degenerated into a belly crawl. At this point, I could hear a large volume of water moving ahead, and I was too far from the main stream for this to be the source of the sound. I suspect a rather major canyon lies ahead. The airflow was consolidating as I moved northward, and getting much colder. The floor proved this passage to be a veritable raccoon highway. These two pieces of evidence, combined with very similar passage morphology to MSRQ#3, lead me to believe that this passage will yield an entrance into the face of the quarry. By my estimation, the point where I turned around was not more than 500' south of the end of MSRQ #3, and possibly more like 200-300'.

Now to investigate the infeeder. As I suspected, the passage gradually increased in height, on average, upstream, as the floor became lower and lower stratigraphically. Two climbs, one with a traverse across a relatively accommodating ledge that gave you 10-15' of exposure, were encountered along the way. After a couple hundreds of feet, a sheer waterfall interrupted the passage. A traverse across a ledge here may have been possible, but far from my companions and running out of time, I did not want to risk getting hurt. Large canyon was still visible above the drop.

I headed back to the projection tube, vowing not to explore any more. I had to follow my own tracks to figure out just which strike passage I needed to follow to put me back in the proper area. A short distance into the projection passage, I spotted a light ahead, which, from its coolness, I recognized as Joe's. I gave a good shout, but, to my surprise, there was no return. Obviously moving, it seemed pretty obvious to me that he wasn't seriously incapacitated. I gave another yell, this time at the top of my lungs, and still got no return. As I got closer, I began to hear a regular "tink-

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tink” sort of noise, very high pitched, and at the same time, noticed that Joe was beating on the wall projections with a rock. But the noise was not at all the sound made by two rocks colliding. It was more akin to the sound of someone throwing a washer at a concrete floor. It started to dawn on me what was happening... the incredibly irregular walls were bouncing the sound around to such a degree that it simply couldn't travel very far at all. The high-pitched tone of the blows can be explained by the fact that higher frequency, higher energy wavelengths are somehow able to resist absorption by the walls more effectively than the lower tones, and so I was simply hearing only a part of the sound. This is the only passage in which I have ever noticed this phenomenon.

Shortly, we were reunited. I had to eat most of my trail mix and drink most of my powerade before I could move again. By that time, I was cold, and Joe and Ryan were doubly so, having waited on my return from the new areas. We tore back through the crawl and back up the canyon. One of our objectives for the trip was to take pictures. We were already destroyed, and just wanting to leave, but we set up a couple brief shots in the trident room before continuing. We had to take two breaks on the way out. I was utterly exhausted, the most tired I have ever been in Tangle, and I know the others were about in the same place. We popped out of the entrance and into the crisp and clear winter night at around 10 PM. I have never been more grateful for dry, warm clothes. Ryan's gear had taken on an incredible amount of water, and as a consequence, his duffel was probably heavier than he was. Considering issues of balance and directness, we chose to plummet straight down the ravine all the way to Jennings run. This way, if Ryan fell over, he would not fall 60' to the rocks below. For those of us with the lighter loads, the hike back down was easier than the hike up. Soon we were at the cars, and minutes later were en route to

bed. Unfortunately for Joe, he would not reach home that night... due to his car overheating, he only made it to rocky gap, and, too polite to call, slept there.

We learned a lot about Tanglefoot this weekend. Some of these gains in understanding were welcome, others unwelcome, others simply overwhelming. The area beyond the projection crawl was expanding exponentially, and, as mentioned in an earlier email, we left the cave with at least twice the number of going passages we entered with. In this area, there is apparently more space along the contact than there is rock. The passages weave in and out of one another, a braided pattern that has resulted from dozens of former stream routes. The time spent by the stream in a given passage seems largely responsible for its size, and the abandoned canyons in the Loyalhanna run parallel to and north of the present day stream canyon, carrying mere trickles of residual water. I got the impression that there was much, much more in the way of canyon up-dip.

We have seen roughly a mile of passage in Tanglefoot, but I suspect that 2 miles would be a conservative projection for the “final” length. Unfortunately, about half of this length promises to be 1-3' high. Exploring is becoming a very high-endurance task, and the cave is extremely physically demanding. As the survey continues, we will have to establish new methods of exploration. Establishing a camp in some area of the lower cave is not out of the question.

Corey Hackley



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Jerry Downs birthday party



Sinnett Cave (Jerry B)



Stephen & Emily - Sinnett waterfall (Jerry B)



Eric crawling out from under a rock! (Jerry B)



CAVIN CALENDAR

OCTOBER 6TH - NOVEMBER 16TH



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Oct 6	Oct 7	Oct 8	 Meeting 7pm Annual Auction	Oct 10 Whittings Neck dig - see Tom Griffin Fall TAG Cave-In Lookout Mt, GA	Oct 11 Fall TAG Cave-In Lookout Mt, GA	Oct 12 Fall TAG Cave-In Lookout Mt, GA
Oct 13 Fall TAG Cave-In Lookout Mt, GA	Oct 14 COLUMBUS DAY	Oct 15	Oct 16 Assault on the Apollo 6:30 pm	Oct 17	Oct 18	Oct 19 Bridge Day
Oct 20	Oct 21	Oct 22	Oct 23	Oct 24	Oct 25	Oct 26
Oct 27	Oct 28	Oct 29	Oct 30	 ALL HALLOW EVE	Nov 1	Nov 2
Nov 3 DAYLIGHT SAVING TIME ENDS	Nov 4	Nov 5	Nov 6	Nov 7	Nov 8	Nov 9 SADIE HAWKIN'S DAY WVCC Annual Banquet 7 pm
Nov 10	 VETERAN'S DAY	Nov 12	 Meeting 7pm Nominations for Officers	Nov 14	Nov 15	Nov 16 Adam Stephen Dig 9am

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Norman Cave (Mason Griffin)



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