

THE CASCADE CAVER

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COMING EVENTS

MOUNTAIN CLIMBED 'INSIDE OUT' by Mike Nickel (The Wenatchee Daily World 3/25/63)

TONASKET--For would be explorers, the curious and those who like to climb their mountains inside out, a mountain-full of caverns at McLoughlin Canyon should be a joy forever. But if you huff and puff after climbing a flight of stairs, the caverns aren't for you, as a group of men found out Saturday.

John Picken, who grew up in Tonasket and lives in Brewster, was guide for the trip. It was arranged through the tourist committee of the Tonasket Chamber of Commerce. He estimates he has been in the caverns at least 100 times in the past 34 years.

Also in the group were his 15 year old son, John Jr., Bob Codding, Ed Hickey, Ashley Holden Jr., Dale Johnson, Doyle Ruark, (complete with miner's head lamp and walki-talki) and this writer.

A dirt road took us to the base of the peak seven miles southeast of Tonasket. A climb that left sweat on several brows brought us to the first subterranean part of the trip. The climb was partly over rocks slippery with rain. It was all plainly and painfully up-hill from the very first step. All but those who combined long legs with little caution required a helping hand at one point to bridge a gap between two rocks. Near the top Picken pointed to a crevice that opened down into darkness. Codding dropped a rock into the hole. It fell noiselessly, then struck.

"There's a ledge down there," Picken said. "You need a rope to explore a place like that. It's almost bottomless."

We peered into the menacing hole and thought how glad we were we didn't have a rope.

Once at the top we descended about 50 feet into a large fissure, paused for breath and plunged into an underground tunnel. The passageway led down and then up again into daylight. We pulled ourselves onto a narrow ledge, inched across it, hugging the rock wall and then started down once again into the dark. A slab of rock made the narrow tunnel even narrower at one point. Even the thinnest of us had to pull in our stomachs as we wiggled past the rock. A four-foot drop a few feet beyond brought us to one of the main caverns.

Roughly L-shaped, it was about 100 feet long one way and 75 the other. The ceiling towered between 75 and 100 feet above us. Neither icicle-like stalactites nor stalagmites graced the cavern. Above, below, and on all sides was dark, dusty rock.

" You can take off in any direction from here," Picken explained. "There are hundreds of passages and caverns.

"There's one," he said, pointing his flashlight at a small hole in the rock wall. "There are caves everywhere."

Part of one wall bore painted names of young spelunkers. "Someone's cheating a little," Picken said, indicating a name and a 1961 date. "That wasn't there when we were here last year." He brought his flashlight close to the rock. "That's from my time," he said, shinning the light on a faded white mark. "When we were kids we used to come in here with chalk and candles."

As other members of the party explored passageways, Picken talked about the caverns. He spoke in a tone that other men might use when remembering a first love. "We used to climb all over these hills. But this is the only one that has caves. One of the caves has tiny bats. My brother said he has seen insects that don't have eyes in some of these caverns."

There are stories about white fish which have no sight and no need for it because they swim in total darkness in pools in the caves. If the fish or the pools exist, Picken has never seen them.

"There's one cavern about a hundred feet deep that's so narrow you coundn't fall," he said. "You have to wiggle your way down. Once a girl got her hips turned the wrong way and got caught. We had to crawl beneath her and push her free. It took quite a while."

"You need ropes for a lot of these. Some are so small you have to crawl all the way. It's not a good idea to try any of this alone."

As we climbed the final feet to the top, feeling that we'd had a day's exercise, we met four boys, 11 to 14 years old, who had hiked to the caves from Tonasket in the rain. If they felt fatigue, it didn't show. They were Mike Holbrook, Mickey and Donnie Scriver, and Ivan Allen. They carried a can of paint.

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Following are excerpts from a letter by Rodolfo (Rudy) Musco, an exchange student from Italy, who is currently attending Gonzaga University, Spokane. He is an experienced speleologist, and has visited the caves covered in the previous article.

....."on the plateau, at the top of the hill, it is possible to notice numerous crevices and rock splits, some of them extremely deep, but not exceedingly wide or long; I saw about ten of them. In one of them, apparently larger than the others, we went underground to an upper room, then to the lower levels of the cave.

In my opinion, a relatively recent earthquake has formed many crevices in the rock. There are also caves with subterranean openings of the same origin. I do not exclude the possibility that underground streams could have started and erosive action in the lower part.I sincerely hope that we can arrange a trip here for a week-end either in April or the early part of May, as I must be returning to Italy soon. "

TRIP REPORT BY BOB ASHWORTH Lava Beds National Monument, California

Two friends and I have just returned from a caving trip to the Lava Beds National Monument in California. These are by far the most interesting lava caves I have ever seen or probably ever will see. It was well worth the trip.

The Park Rangers were very cooperative with us and we were able to go into two previously unexplored (?) areas of Sentinel Cave. There was a fellow from "Spelunking Unlimited" of Klamath Falls, who seemed to think that the Labrinth Cave System has great possibilities. While we were there, there was a report of a "mad coyote" in the Blue Grotto Cave, so we didn't go into that one. It was a real nice trip.

CAVE CONSERVATION

Your NSS Committee of Conservation is now undertaking a project to bring legal pressure to bear upon the sale of speleothems: (cave formations; stalactites, flowstone, etc.) We know that several of our National Parks and possibly some of our State Parks are engaged in selling cave formations, and we feel that this is one of the areas where we should make our start by contacting the National Park Service and getting them to put pressure of officials of specifically named State and National Parks, to put a halt to this practice.

In order to accomplish the above aim, we first need specific information as to which parks are selling cave formations in their gift shops and concessions. Accordingly, we are asking you to help by going to your nearby State and National Parks and inspecting the gift shops and concessions for any speleothems, and reporting the names and locations of these shops to your NSS Committee on Conservation. Thank you very much.

/s/ Roger W. Allen, 6 Fairview Avenue, East Brunswick, N.J.

RECOMMENDED READING

EXPLORING AMERICAN CAVES - 250 pages - by Franklin Folsom..... \$ 5.00
Their history, geology, lore and location. The first book to combine fully the sporting, scientific, and historical aspects of American Caves. Contains a directory of all commercial caves, complete lists of local caving organizations, practical advice to those who want to go spelunking, information on finding and exploring new caves, and a glossary of speleological terms. 1956

ADVENTURE IS UNDERGROUND - 206 pages - by William R. Halliday..... \$ 3.75
An authority on caves in the U. S. West, Dr Halliday recounts his varied experiences in discovering, exploring and charting numerous caves in the great limestone fields and lava beds of the West. He has written in a clear easy style which permits the work to be read as an adventure story but has included sufficient detail and factual information to make it a valuable reference work on western caves. 32 pages of photographs, with maps and line drawings, indexed - 1959. (Contains recipe for 8,000 feet of lava tube.)

THE END

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