



Cascade Caver

Newsletter of the Cascade Grotto of the National Speleological Society

April 2002, Volume 41 No. 4



Cascade Caver

ISSN 0008-7211

Copyright 2002 by the Cascade Grotto. All rights reserved

The *Cascade Caver* is published approximately 10 times a year by the Cascade Grotto, a local chapter of the National Speleological Society. Any material in this newsletter that is not copyrighted by an individual or another group may be copied or reprinted by internal organizations of the National Speleological Society provided that credit is given to the author and to the *Cascade Caver* and that a copy of the newsletter containing the material is sent to the Editor. Other organizations must contact the Editor.

Opinions expressed in the *Cascade Caver* are not necessarily those of the Cascade Grotto, the editors, or the NSS. Unsigned articles may be attributed to one of the editors.

All material to be published, subscription requests, renewals, address changes, and exchange publications should be sent to the Grotto address.

GROTTO MEMBERSHIP

Membership in the Cascade Grotto is \$15.00 per year. Subscription to the *Cascade Caver* is free to regular members. Membership for each additional family member is \$2.00 per year. Subscription to the *Cascade Caver* is \$15.00 per year. Subscription via email is \$11.00 per year.

GROTTO ADDRESS

Cascade Grotto; P.O. Box 66623, Seattle, WA 98166. This post office box should be used for both the grotto and for the *Cascade Caver*.

GROTTO OFFICERS

Chairman	Van Bergan	(360) 779-7837
Vice Chairman	Jim Harp	(425) 745-1010
Sec/Treasurer	Aaron Stavens	(253) 946-3431

OTHER POSITIONS

Trip Coordinator	Dana Poss	(425) 385-2147
Librarian	Stuart Monsoon	(425) 271-2258
Regional Rep.	Van Bergan	(360) 779-7837
Editors	*Mark Sherman	(206) 365-5386
	Email:	mark.sherman@flukenetworks.com
	Eve Proper	(206) 988-6237
	Email:	proper@drizzle.com
		* Editor for the current issue.

Regular grotto meetings are held monthly at 7:00 pm on the third Friday of each month at the Mountlake Terrace Public Library, 23300 58th Ave. W. Please see the map on the back cover of this issue.

UPCOMING EVENTS

April 19	Grotto Meeting. 7 p.m. Mountlake Terrace Library
April 27-28	Succor Creek Rapelling Trip, ID Contact Jennifer Dorman at idahocaver@gemstategrotto.org
May 17	Grotto Meeting. 7 p.m. Mountlake Terrace Library
May 25-27	NW Regional Shoshone, ID Contact Jennifer Dorman (see above)
June 6-9	Ely, Nevada Contact Jennifer Dorman
June 15-16	China Hat (Central Oregon) the trip leader is George DeSaegher of WVG.
June 21	Grotto Meeting. 7 p.m. Mountlake Terrace Library
June 24-28	NSS Convention, Camden Maine
July 4-7	Trout Lake – Peterson Prairie Campground. Contact Dana Poss
July 4-7	Bighorn/Horsethief Contact Jennifer Dorman

COVER: This photo of these large selenite crystals was taken from the April Smithsonian Magazine. Please see a copy of the article on page 19.

MEETINGS

18 Cascade Caver April 2002

Cascade Grotto Meeting Minutes

February 15, 2002

By Aaron Stavens, Secretary-Treasurer

Attendance: Lloyd Stevens, Aaron Stavens, Steve Sprague, Eve Proper, Van Bergen, Stuart Monson, Glennis Monson, Cameron McGinnis, Julie McGinnis, Erin Robert, Jon McGinnis, Tish Korbly, Adam Samuels, Robert Mitchell, Paul Lindgren

Old Business:

1. The Monsons are still trying to choose a date for grotto's 50th anniversary. July 4th is the preferred date. Glennis will contact Bill Halliday.
2. The TLC project still has lots to do. Both Jon McGinnis and Steve Sprague are interested in getting involved.
3. Steve Sprague had forgotten to talk with Rod Crawford about the grotto's topo maps and the cave rumors file. He still plans to do that.

New Business:

1. Dana is doing a great job as trip coordinator. Thank you Dana.
2. The grotto agreed to offer to pay Bill Halliday's airfare to the anniversary as well as put him up in a room at Trout Lake. Stuart Monson made a motion to limit the expense to \$500. There was no vote.
3. As Conservation Chair, Eve announced she is staying out of the Oregon Cave controversy.
4. With regard to conservation projects, Jon believes Dead Horse cave is a priority.
5. Van announced Jon McGinnis is the Safety & Vertical Training Committee Chair.
6. The New Member Committee Chair needs information on the new members. Julie McGinnis and Aaron Stavens will coordinate.
7. As part of the coming weekend's trip to Trout Lake, Aaron Stavens and Julie McGinnis will be testing the new cave information signs in New Cave.
8. Van brought up the subject of restricting access to the grotto's list server to grotto members only. The general feeling seemed to be that things are working the way they are. Until there is problem, we do not need to have a formal policy.

Cascade Grotto Balance Sheet

March 31, 2002

ASSETS

Current Assets

Checking/Savings

Checking 731.77

Saving 1308.14

Total Checking/Savings 2039.91

Other Current Assets

Petty Cash 23.00

Total Other Current Assets 23.00

Total Current Assets 2062.91

TOTAL ASSETS 2062.91

LIABILITIES & EQUITY

Equity

Opening Bal Equity 1592.82

Retained Earnings 347.76

Net Income 122.33

Total Equity 2062.91

TOTAL LIABILITIES & EQUITY 2062.918

Cascade Grotto Profit and Loss

January through March 2002

Ordinary Income/Expense

Income

Membership Dues 166.00

Miscellaneous Income 20.00

Total Income 186.00

Expense

Printing and Reproduction 65.28

Total Expense 65.28

Net Ordinary Income 120.72

Other Income/Expense

Other Income

Interest Income 1.61

Total Other Income 1.61

Net Other Income 1.61

Net Income 122.33

Mexican Miners Stumble Upon A Room Filled With What Could Be the World's Largest Crystals.

By John F. Ross (From the April Smithsonian magazine)

Deep below the surface of an isolated mountain range in Mexico sit two rooms of splendor: translucent crystals the length and girth of mature pine trees lie pitched atop one another, as though moonbeams suddenly took on weight and substance.

In April 2000, brothers Eloy and Javier Delgado found

what experts believe are the world's largest crystals while blasting a new tunnel 1,000 feet down in the silver and lead Naica Mine of southern Chihuahua. Forty-year-old Eloy climbed through a small opening into a 30- by 60-foot cavern choked with immense crystals. "It was beautiful, like light reflecting off a broken mirror," he says. A month later, another team of Naica miners found an even larger cavern adjacent to the first one.

Officials of the Peñoles Company, which owns the mine, kept the discoveries secret out of concern about vandalism. Not many people, however, would venture inside casually: the temperature hovers at 150 degrees, with 100 percent humidity.

"Stepping into the large cavern is like entering a blast furnace," says explorer Richard Fisher of Tucson, Arizona, whose photographs appear on these pages. "In seconds, your clothes become saturated with sweat." He recalls that his emotions raced from awe to panic.

Fisher says a person can stay inside the cave for only six to ten minutes before becoming disoriented. After taking only a few photographs, "I really had to concentrate intensely on getting back out the door, which was only 30 to 40 feet away." After a brief rest, he returned for another couple of minutes. "They practically had to carry me out after that," Fisher says.

Geologists conjecture that a chamber of magma, or superheated molten rock, lying two to three miles underneath the mountain, forced mineral-rich fluids upward through a fault into openings in the limestone bedrock near the surface. Over time, this hydrothermal liquid deposited metals such as gold, silver, lead and zinc in the limestone bedrock. These metals have been mined here since prospectors discovered the deposits in 1794 in a small range of hills south of Chihuahua City.

But in a few caves the conditions were ideal for formation of a different kind of treasure. Groundwater in these caves, rich with sulfur from the adjacent metal deposits, began dissolving the limestone walls, releasing large quantities of calcium. This calcium, in turn, combined with the sulfur to form crystals on a scale never before seen by humans. "You can hold most of the crystals on earth in the palm of your hand," says Jeffrey Post, a curator of minerals at the Smithsonian Institution. "To see crystals that are so huge and perfect is truly mind-expanding."

In addition to 4-foot-in-diameter columns 50 feet in length, the cavern contains row upon row of shark-tooth-shaped formations up to 3 feet high, which are set at odd angles throughout. For its pale translucence, this crystal form of the mineral gypsum is known as selenite, named after Selene, the Greek goddess of the moon. "Under perfect conditions," says Roberto Villasuso, exploration

superintendent at the Naica Mine, "these crystals probably would have taken between 30 to 100 years to grow."

Until April 2000, mining officials had restricted exploration on one side of the fault out of concern that any new tunneling might lead to flooding of the rest of the mine. Only after pumping out the mine did the level of water drop sufficiently for exploration. "Everyone who knows the area," says Fisher, "is on pins and needles, because caverns with even more fantastic crystal formations could be found any day."

Previously, the world's largest examples of selenite crystals came from a nearby cavern discovered in 1910 with in the same Naica cave complex. Several examples from the Cave of Swords are exhibited at the Janet Annenberg Hooker Hall of Geology, Gems, and Minerals at the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History.

These Smithsonian crystals you can visit, no sweat.

John F. Ross is a senior editor at SMITHSONIAN.

Lake Cave

By Lloyd Stevens

Participants (In no particular order): Dana Poss, Aaron Stavens, Eve Proper, Lloyd Stevens, Marjorie Bluestein, Ruth and Ken Stickney of the Willamette Valley Grotto, and their friends Amy and Teerza.

The trip started for me in Seattle on a cold, snowy note. After driving to Eve's and picking her and Dana up we began the trek south. With only a couple of brief stops, including a latte hunt in Fife (we had to settle for drip coffee and doughnuts) the three of us arrived at Jack's restaurant in the town of Cougar after a three hour drive. There we met the rest of the group.

After a hearty breakfast we picked up our Snow Park permits and headed for the Trail of Two Forests parking lot. Although the cave is only a short distance from the parking lot, we had a tough time finding the entrance. Probably because the area was covered with snow. But after splitting up we found a large snow-free depression, which turned out to be the cave entrance. I think all of us appreciated the warm, gentle breeze, which was flowing out of the cave.

Shortly after going inside we came to a 15-20' drop, which was descended using a metal chain ladder bolted to the top of the pit. As we walked along the passage Aaron pointed out various cave features to the group, including volcanic glass and re-melted lava.

For me, being in Lake Cave felt like being in an abandoned subway tunnel. The passage is large and fairly regular except for a few parts, which require a scramble over, under or around large piles of breakdown. The cave was more interesting than I had thought a lava tube would be. Apart from the various textures of the lava, the cave had ledges along its side in some areas as well as one very interesting side passage Eve, Dana and myself explored.

The passage begins with a winding, mostly empty stream channel where Eve and Dana found a large tree cast, which they proceeded to explore. I say large, but it looked a little tight to me so I stayed on the outside and waited for them to come out. Sometimes I get jealous of cavers who can crawl through tiny passages, which are off limits to me due to my size. But then I remember that a rat or a snake can do the same thing.

Anyway, we decided to go further into the passage. The winding streambed soon came to an end. However, at the end there were three smaller belly-crawl passages, which looked like they had some potential. So, like Gandalf in Moria, we tried to decide which of the three passages to take.

Dana took the left tunnel, but it looked like it just wrapped around and connected to the middle tunnel. Eve took the right tunnel followed by myself. Shortly after a 90 degree left turn, the right tunnel came to a "Y". Eve went a short distance into the right side of the "Y" then decided to call it a day and headed out. I did the same. After a brief belly crawl we were back out.

After we got back to the main passage we headed for the "lake". By this time Aaron, Dana, Eve and myself were pretty much on our own. We walked a short distance as the cave floor began to turn into a stream. More nimble folk like Dana and Eve tried to pick their way through the floor/stream. But after awhile, I gave up and just started walking in the stream. It was shallow, and I had wool socks, which were already wet anyway. After arriving at the end and seeing the "Lake" we turned around. It was then that we realized that, yes; Lake Cave isn't entirely horizontal but has a slight, but fairly consistent grade. You tend to notice it more going up grade than going down.

After some slogging, some walking and some scrambling over breakdown piles we could see light at the end of the tunnel, literally. I have to say, that's always such a cheery sight for me, seeing the light coming in at the cave entrance.

By, this time the other folks were already back at the parking lot and it was just us to slog back through the snow to cars and warm, dry clothes. Aaron eventually led us onto a snow covered, elevated wooden walkway. The snow was a couple of feet deep on the walkway and

provided excellent opportunities to slip off of the walkway. But the nice thing was that by the time we got to the parking lot our boots were very clean.

We changed very rapidly, said hi to the other folks, said bye to the other folks and Aaron, then Eve, Dana and myself piled into my car for the trip home.

We did stop for gas (1.19/Gallon) and junk food then it was off for Seattle. On the drive home Eve, Dana and myself discussed our love of alcoholic beverages. It began snowing heavily near Tacoma, enough so that I had a hard time seeing out the car window. Dana was worried about being able to get home to Everett. Fortunately, as we approached Eve's apartment, the snowfall subsided to a manageable level.

After dropping Eve and Dana off at Eve's apartment, I went home, drank a beer, ate a sandwich, took a bath and then went to sleep.

Concrete Trips: Jan. & Feb. 2002

By Steve Sprague

First, I would like to thank everyone who attended. I was surprised by the interest in the trip and everyone was flexible when I had to split those who wanted to go into two groups. I think it made the trips much more enjoyable and eased potential problems with landowner relations.

January 19 trip: Participants: Van Bergen, Dick Garnick, ? Garnick, Dana Poss, ? Poss, Eve Proper, Lloyd Stevens, Janet ?

We met at 8:30AM in Smokey Point and all of us southerners piled into Van's van for the bus ride up North. Our next stop was Sedro Woolley to hook up with Dick and his son. Then it was off to Concrete. The snow level surprised me; Van did an expert job of getting us to the parking area on the snowy road. I don't think we would have gotten much past the gate if we had wanted to.

We hiked up the road with brief stops at the entrances to Jensen and the former Cricket cave. We deviated from the normal path to Elderberry by taking the logging road a little farther up the hill and then cutting back East. This got Dick and I in unfamiliar territory. We both had our GPS's running and they were providing different answers! The GPS reception on this South facing side hill is difficult at best. Dick and I split up, each following a different path, leaving the rest of the group wondering what they had gotten themselves into, I'm sure. We eventually located the cave entrance and started getting our caving gear ready. Elderberry is the best cave in the vicinity and I think everyone enjoyed its sinuous passages in nearly white, fine-grained

limestone. I pointed out the side passages that Larry McTigue has dug open and we speculated where there were possibilities for further passage. Popcorn is prevalent and there are a few small stalagmites. There is even a sporting little squeeze near the end. This was Janet's first cave trip and she seemed to enjoy the tight spot.

We started working our way back out to the surface. A light drizzle had started since we went underground and it continued for the rest of the trip.

There has been logging activity since I last visited the area and while Elderberry was still in tree cover, it was plain that Razor Blade Straddle and Jensen were in the new clear cut. We decided to bypass RBS and head straight (well, as straight as you can in logging slash with 6 inches of snow covering it) for Jensen. At Jensen's entrance we were disappointed to find that it was blocked with some logging debris. Nothing was too large but we didn't have any tools to clear it out. In addition the snow made the steep sides of the entrance sink tricky. We decided that Jensen would have to wait for another day.

By now some of us were getting cold and wet. Dick took the dryer ones on a search for a promising sink that we think is in the clear cut. Since the site had changed so radically by the logging, the terrain was unfamiliar and Dick could not find the sink. I started back to the cars with the wetter people. It was nice to climb back into the car with a change to semi dry cloths, and we settled in to wait for Dick's party. At this point one of the owners of Ramsey and Cricket caves showed up. We had a pleasant chat about the caves in the area and her exploits hiking the Pacific Crest trail solo from Mexico to Canada in a single season. I didn't know that with so much walking your feet expand a couple of shoe sizes! This is one of the many details that must be planned for on a long trek.

February 16 trip: Participants: Julie McGinnis, Larry McTigue, Robert Mitchell, Stewart Monson, Glennis Monson, Aaron Stavens, Erin Robert

When I showed up a tad late for the 8:30 meeting time everyone was already assembled. We congregated into Robert's Suburban and my pickup, and then headed straight for Concrete. At the parking area it occurred to me that I might have a DNR key to the gate. I tested the lock and sure enough, I did. (Note to self: Next time ask the landowner if we can go through the gate and park further up the hill!) We decided to stay parked in the approved parking area.

This time we took the normal route to Elderberry. Well, more or less, I think Larry was wondering where I was going at times. We assembled at the entrance and slipped into the cave. I think everyone enjoyed

Elderberry, the only regret being that it wasn't longer. Larry busied himself by working at a solution to that shortcoming, digging at a few promising places with his shovel. After probably less than an hour touring the cave we met for lunch on the surface.

Since we bypassed Razor Blade Straddle on the last trip, I wanted to see its post logging condition. Most of the snow was gone under the trees but once in the clear cut we were again post holing in the snow over logging slash. Remarkably there was almost no debris in the RBS sink. We didn't try to enter the cave; it is small, wet, and well named.

Next we made a beeline for Jensen across the clear cut. I had brought a hand line, bow saw and machete to clear the debris blocking its entrance. Many hands made for light work and the way was soon clear. We made it into the entrance chamber, but unfortunately the constriction leading to the remainder of the cave was choked with detritus. Larry worked on it for a while but it was decided that it was more of a digging project than we were equipped to handle. We needed a container to fill for transporting the material away from the dig site. The consensus was that a 5-gallon bucket was too big, at least at the dig face. It would be nice to have a good sized group on the next visit to Jensen so that we can form a human chain to pass the debris, making removal less of a chore.

We reassembled at the surface. I unintentionally provided a little comic relief demonstrating my poor packing skills, delaying the rest of the packed and ready crew. Fortunately Jensen is near the trees and shortly we were making good progress downhill to the cars. We met for pizza again in Sedro Woolley to round out the day before heading home.

Thanks to all who came on both trips, I had a good time. As I have noted, access to the caves is dependent on good landowner relations. If you go, be sure and call to get permission. The owners are very friendly but don't want the site to turn into a circus. There is a lot of potential in the Concrete area. This site is fairly low and makes a good winter trip when the higher elevation areas are snowed in. The higher elevations can be explored later in the year. By being infrequent visitors to this site we will not overstay our welcome.

Beyond Mammoth Cave, by Roger Brucker and Jim Borden

Book Review by Van Bergen

Shortly after I started caving, I read *The Longest Cave* by Roger Brucker and Red Watson. It's the epic story of the connection of the Flint Ridge and Mammoth cave systems into the longest cave in the world. I couldn't put it down. I hadn't been caving that long, so I wasn't

sucked into the story because it was about caving. Rather, I was sucked farther into caving because the story was so great. Brucker instantly became one of my all-time favorite writers. Years later, I read *The Caves Beyond*, by Brucker and Lawrence, whose story predated *The Longest Cave*. Its scope was much smaller, but the writing was still captivating. I also read *Trapped – The Story of Floyd Collins*, by Brucker and Murray. That was another great book, almost impossible to put down even though I already knew the story.

See the pattern developing? Brucker always has a co-writer, but the books are always fine. Last year, I read his latest, *Beyond Mammoth Cave*, this time written with Jim Borden. It's another connection story (like *The Caves Beyond* and *The Longest Cave* – another pattern). This time, it's about the connection of the Flint Ridge/Mammoth system to the caves on Joppa Ridge, the third ridge in the area. There is an almost universal drive for cave connections among cavers who visit the Kentucky underground, no doubt fueled by the fact that there are so many big caves in that state, and by the fact that many significant connections had already been made.

The unique twist to this book is that Brucker and Borden were rivals during the connection attempts. They must be friends now; at least friends enough to collaborate on a book. Their respective chapters are written from their own respective viewpoints, and the rivalry is obvious throughout. Brucker had been one of the founders of the Cave Research Foundation (CRF), which was formed to facilitate the exploration of the Flint Ridge system and its eventual connection to Mammoth. CRF was a powerful force in caving politics, and CRF cavers enjoyed a working relationship with Mammoth Cave National Park and made many fabulous discoveries.

The success of CRF was a model for a new organization in the early 1970's: the Central Kentucky Karst Coalition (CKKC). Begun by Borden and other cavers from West Virginia and Virginia along with Kentucky native Jim Currens, the CKKC started caving in Toohey Ridge (the fourth in the area). Like everyone else caving in Western Kentucky at the time, they were obsessed with connecting caves together. The caves on Toohey Ridge were tough, so CKKC started exploring other caves on Joppa Ridge: Proctor, Morrison, and Roppel. Borden describes these hard-core trips in riveting detail.

While the CKKC cavers were making connections on Joppa Ridge and Toohey Ridge, Brucker and the other CRF cavers were pushing Mammoth outward. They were also doing hard-core trips, and Brucker's descriptions hold their own with Borden's. Brucker's chapters seem a little more personal and emotional than Borden's, but they're both captivating. How could they not be, with a story like this one to tell?

The most striking thing about this story, funny and infuriating at the same time, is the amount of backstabbing and dirty dealing that went on between the two groups. Neither wanted the other group to make a connection to "their" cave. They withheld information from each other, lied to each other, and generally acted like paranoid kids. These are some of the greatest cave explorers that ever lived, and they could be jerks. At one point, one of the senior CRF cavers invites Borden to see his "secret" map of Mammoth, to show how close they are to Roppel. Of course, he won't let Borden make a copy. So, of course, Borden sneaks back in and takes photographs of the map! Finally, the groups agree to a "truce" – they will both stop pushing toward the other group's cave. But of course individuals from each group secretly violate the agreement.

Eventually, word gets out and other cavers are moved to comment on this arrangement. At an Old Timer's Reunion in West Virginia – accurately described in the book as "the ultimate caving party" – Borden gets into an argument with a young upstart caver who was not part of either CRF or CKKC. This young caver berated the groups' politics, said he had heard that CRF had already made a connection, and said that even if they hadn't, someone would. He threatened to do it himself. Borden realized that a connection would have to be made, and soon, so he approached the CRF and the plans were set in motion. A combined team of CRF and CKKC cavers connected the Flint Ridge/Mammoth system to the Roppel system in 1983.

To be fair, each group had logical reasons for protecting its turf. CFR already had a good deal with Mammoth Cave National Park; they were pretty much the only group allowed to explore in the Flint Ridge/Mammoth system. Why should they let a group of outsiders have access to that? CKKC worked hard for their own discoveries; why risk being shut out of "their" own cave because it was suddenly part of the Mammoth system? And why should either group let the other one have the glory of making the connection? The happy ending is that they finally wised up and worked together to make a system three times longer than any other in the world.

There is a small section of excellent color photos in the book, and plenty of wonderful illustrations by Linda Heslop. One of the really fun things about this book for me is the fact that, of the huge cast of participants listed in the back of the book, I know about a dozen of them. The ones I know well are all in the category of "went on one trip and it nearly killed me and I never went back." But I've also met a couple of the principals, including CKKC co-founder Jim Currens, and Geary Schindel (who, in 1983, was that "young upstart" who baited Borden into going ahead with the connection trip).

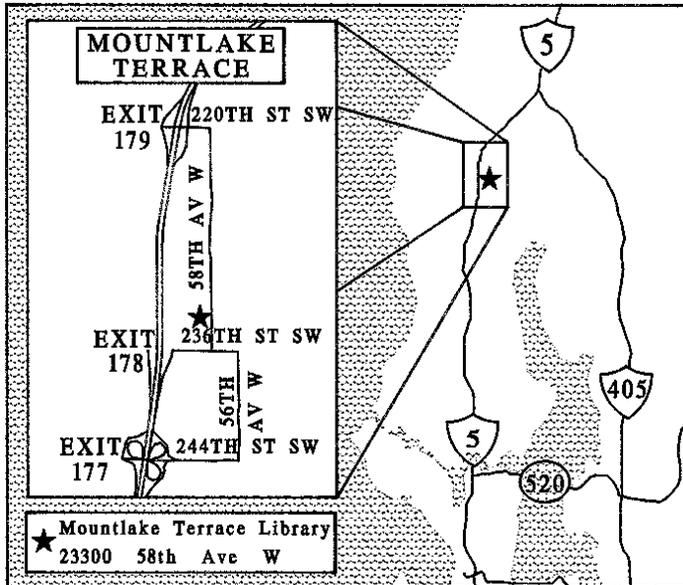
Finding out that people you know were involved in a drama like this is inspiring. They didn't know what they

were getting into when they went on a trip to Toohy Ridge or Roppel; they just knew that they were going caving. Who knows when the next trip you're on will be part of the beginning of a great new discovery?

Brucker is in his 70's and still caving strong. A couple of my young, strong friends caved with him just a few years ago, and he left them in the dust. Discoveries are still being made in the great Kentucky underground, and more big connections will surely happen. I hope Brucker is still around to write about them. Borden too; his style

is a lot like Brucker's: dripping with cave, sucking you in. In addition to his own storytelling skill, Brucker has a gift for choosing great co-writers.

Read this book. Even though you know the story, it'll make you feel like you're there – stuck in a tight passage, exhausted, cold, wet, limbs splayed across a deep canyon, shaking with fear. It'll make you want to cave more, longer, and harder. To push every lead. You won't find the longest cave (not around here, anyway). But you might find something.



The Cascade Grotto meets at 7:00pm on the third Friday of each month at the Mountlake Terrace Public Library, 23300 58th Ave. W.

To get to the Library from the Eastside, take Bothell Way to Ballinger Way. Head North on Ballinger and take a right on 19th Ave. NE (this turns into 56th Ave. W. at the county line). Turn left on 236th then right on 58th Ave. W. Go North 3 blocks.

We look forward to seeing you at one of our meetings.

Cascade Caver
P.O. Box 66623
Seattle, WA 98166