

# THE FLOWSTONE



Volume 31 | Issue 1 | Quarterly Newsletter of the Cullman Grotto of the National Speleological Society

## Upcoming Events 2025

- ACS Annual Meeting – April 26-9AM – NSS HQ
- SERA Cave Carnival – East Fork Stables Campground – Jamestown, TN – May 2-4
- NSS Convention 2025 – Cobleskill, NY – June 21-28
- TAG Fall Cave-In – Tommy's Lazy G – Union Grove, AL – October 9-12
- Bridge Day – New River Gorge, WV – October 18

## Inside This Issue

PG. 2 Grotto Info and Officers  
PG. 3 Varnedoe Cave  
PG. 4 Turn on the "Microwave"  
PG. 5 Photos of Chris Barton's Exploits  
PG. 6 Under a Rock  
PG. 7 Vertical Practice  
And more....

# About our grotto

- Membership to the Grotto is \$15 per year for individual or \$20 per family. Dues are payable at the first meeting of the year (January) and includes subscription to the Flowstone.
- Grotto meetings are currently held on the first Tuesday of the month at 7:30 PM (2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday when holiday conflicts)
- Location of meetings: 920 st. Joseph Dr. NW  
Cullman, AL 35055 (In the Church Basement)
- The Flowstone is the published by the Cullman Grotto of the National Speleological Society. The club will exchange by request with any publishing grotto. Republication of any items with in the Flowstone is allowed provided that credit is given to the author and source.



## Grotto Contact

Micah Sims  
670 County Road 1139  
Vinemont, AL 35179

### Find Us At:

Facebook

[Cullman Grotto of the NSS](#)

Website

[www.cullmangrotto.org](http://www.cullmangrotto.org)

## □ Front Cover Photo – Neversink

A beautiful TAG classic – Varnedoe Cave on Green Mountain, North Alabama

*Photo by Micah Sims*

## Grotto Officers and Appointments 2024

- Chairman - Micah Sims  
256-708-6116 [micahsms93@gmail.com](mailto:micahsms93@gmail.com)
- Vice Chair - Scott Murphy  
[smoothys1@gmail.com](mailto:smoothys1@gmail.com)
- Treasure - Harold Calvert  
[webecavers@hotmail.com](mailto:webecavers@hotmail.com)
- Trip Coordinator - Chris Barton  
[chrisbartonlifesource@gmail.com](mailto:chrisbartonlifesource@gmail.com)
- Safety - Christian Harris  
[stina1212@gmail.com](mailto:stina1212@gmail.com)
- Webmaster - Kuenn Drake  
[kuenn.drake@gmail.com](mailto:kuenn.drake@gmail.com)
- Newsletter  
[flowstone25@gmail.com](mailto:flowstone25@gmail.com)





## Varnedoe Cave

By: Micah Sims

Once again, the two Grottos joined forces for an epic trip to an Alabama cave. Members from both Montgomery and Cullman came together on a cold morning in Huntsville to explore the depths of Varnedoe Cave.

This cave is fun multi drop trip that doesn't require a wet suit. The drops are close together so there isn't a lot of traversing with a boat load of gear. With the longest drop around 100' or so a lot of rope isn't required. This is a trip that newer vertically proficient caves can go on due to all of the drops are easy to navigate.

The hike to this gem covers the spectrum. It starts out in a neighborhood walking down the sidewalk but then enters the tree line and is probably more challenging than the cave. It is down a bluff side that is slippery and rocky. The hike isn't that long compared to other TAG caves.



There are a couple of entrances you can take but we chose the easier one. Our group was made up of seasoned and new cavers. A total of 9 cavers made the journey. With this many we opted to sort of spread out and not have a lot of people waiting at the drops.

After reaching the bottom of the last drop the smaller cavers can navigate a long canyon section that ends up in some dome rooms with some formations. A few of our group decided to make this trek while the others started climbing out. Everyone made it out and we derigged as we went. The group made the hike out and the majority made it to a local eatery to end the trip.

**M. Sims**



## Turn on the "Microwave"

By: Chester Copperpot

Caving isn't always gearing up and venturing underground. Sometimes it is about walking around in the woods looking for some prospective caves to plan future trips to.

On this cool rainy day that was the case. I made my way up to Jackson County to find a cave that has been on my list for a year or two. I first got turn on to this cave just because of location. This one is located on the WMA and isn't that far of the road. I found the listing just scrolling through the cave survey and found the description. This one, according to the description, can be a challenge. This cave is a multi-drop wet suit cave and seems to check most of the boxes for a butt kicking trip.



As I found the area to park, I immediately found some caving gear that was left or dropped by a previous caver. The hike to this gem isn't that terrible as it follows a road for the most part. There is some gradient change, so you have to deal with that on the way out. There isn't a trail so to speak but if one leaves the road at the right location, it is sort of obvious where to go.

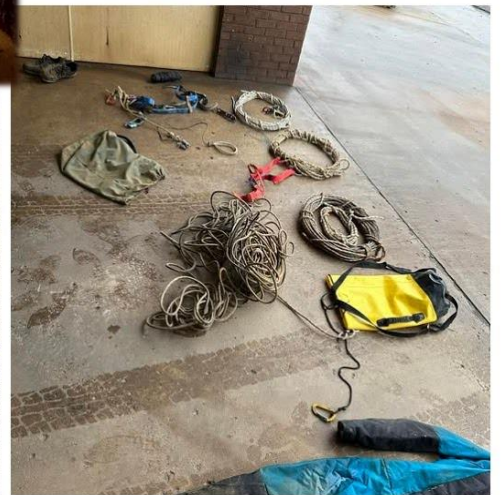
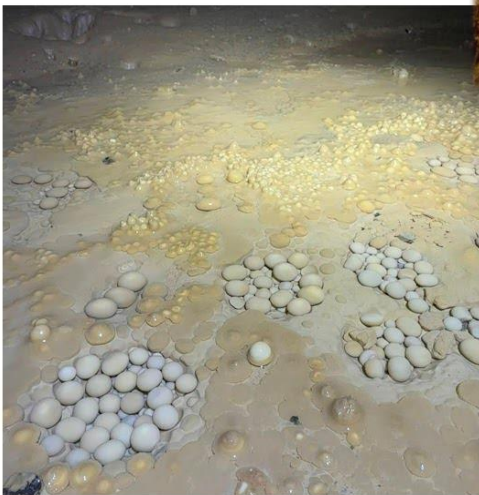
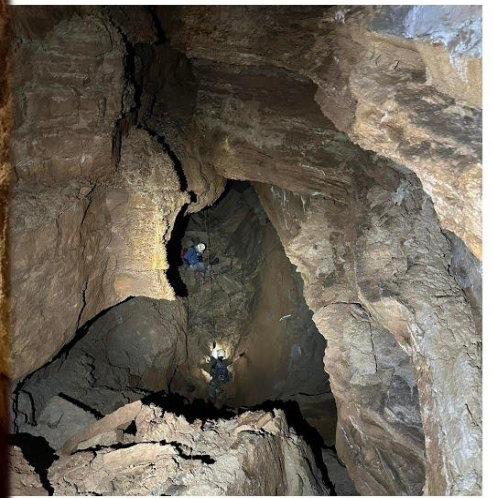
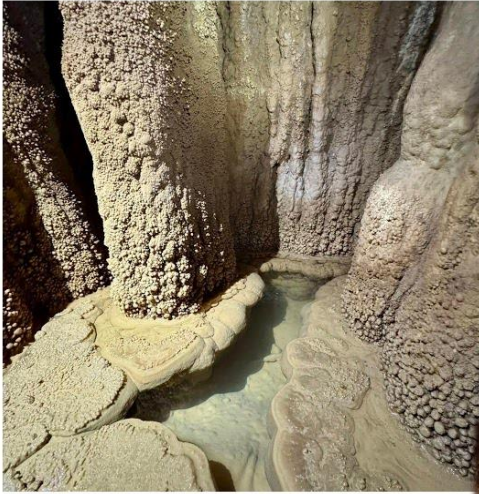
I didn't enter the cave but did take a look around the entrance and took a couple of photos and now can put this one on the "to do list", So look for a trip report on this one later this year.

Until next time, Be safe, Cave softly, & get vertical.

Your adventure guide...

-Chester C





Photos from the exploits of  
Chris Barton

Paint Rock River Cave



## Under A Rock

By: M. Sims

The rain was steady as we pulled in the parking area on a Saturday morning. Harold pulled up the radar as we were in route to the parking area and it looked like we would be out of the rain in around 30 minutes or so. We discussed our options and decided to wait it out before we headed into the woods. As the last drops fell on the windshield, we started gearing up to make a hike to a - new to us - cave. Only one person in our group had been there before, Chris, the leader of this bunch of refugees for the day.

This cave had been on my radar for a while. The map had some really nice formations in it and the description hooked me in as well. Chris had been several times so he had planned a trip for the group. We started up the trail and made it to where he thought it was located. After a little searching we found the entrance. Unlike most caves this entrance is not in a sink. It is an obscure hole below a rock, so you have to do some searching to find it.

We started rigging and made our way in. Chris and Harold went ahead to rig everything. Cody and I hung back a few minutes to let them get a good start. Doing it this way keeps everyone from bunching up in one spot.

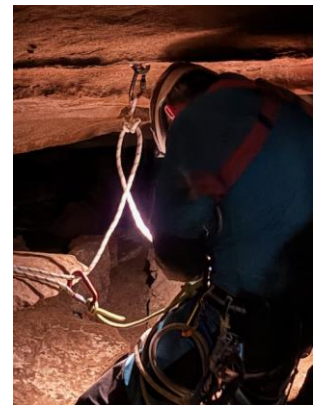
Space is limited in the passageways so if you can space people out it works out a little better. This was also Cody's first trip with our group so it gave me some time to see if he was going to need any assistance at any of the re-belays. After the first couple of rigs it was clear he knew what he was doing and didn't need me to hold his hand, so to speak.

We all made it to the bottom and started looking around at the formations that make this trip well worth the effort. We poked around and climbed up to see new stuff at every turn. We then started our way out. As a couple of us climbed, others still poked around to see what else they could find. This cave still holds surprises around each corner.

Going out is somewhat slower due to the fact you have to de-rig everything, and that takes some time. We slowly made our way out, pulling ropes and bags at each drop. Finally, we emerged from the depths to a nice day. We made our way back to the parking area and then to find a Mexican restaurant to finish the trip right.

Until next time.

M. Sims





## March – Grotto Vertical Practice – Camp Hulaco



Vertical Practice is typically held on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday of each month, schedule and location does fluctuate, so watch for changes on **Cullman Grotto of the NSS** Facebook page. Everyone is invite, regardless of experience level. Gear is available, if needed.



1996



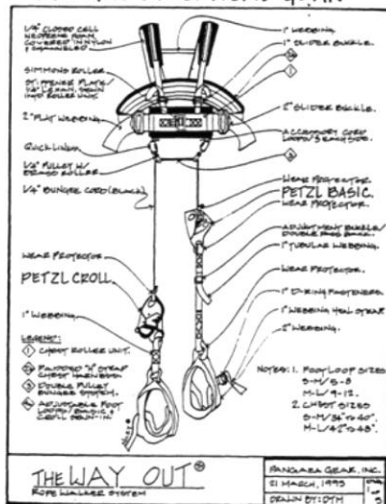
Trip Report  
Montgomery Cypsum Cave - Texas  
By: Patrick & Missy Lynott  
December 1, 1995

We left our home in Austin, TX at 4pm and arrived in San Antonio at 5:30. We met some members of the San Antonio Grotto at Rio High School. The man leading the trip was Joe Joy, a professional speleologist that we met at the Texas Caving Seminar last fall. Accompanying Joe was his wife, Linda, another S.A. grotto member named Gary, 3 high school teachers (2 male, 1 female) and 6 members of a group known as the Junior Explorers.

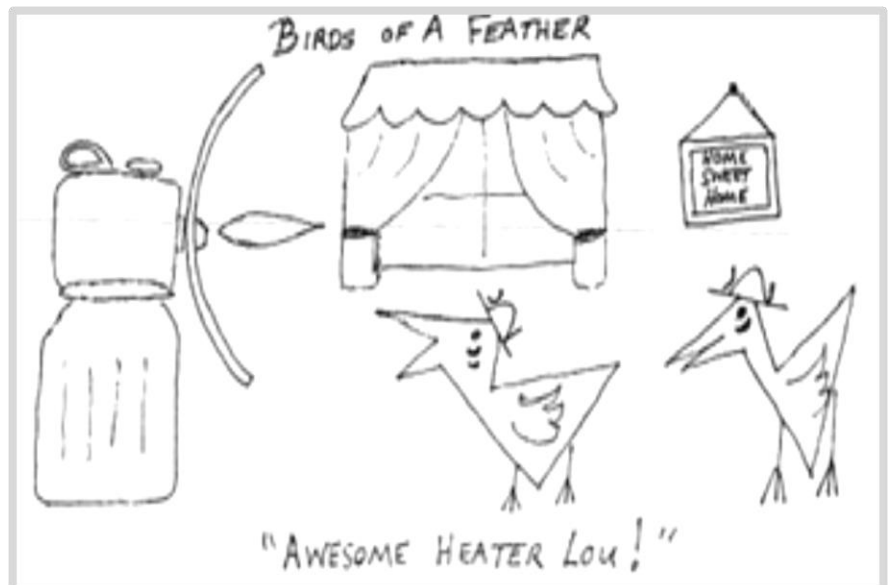
We left San Antonio at about 7pm after stopping for a quick bite at Taco Cabana (like Taco Bell, but better!). We stopped again in Honda, TX for a pit stop & some snacks. From there, we continued on to Bracketville, TX (you know - where the convention was last year). Then, it was on to Del Rio (about 2-3 miles from the Mexican border). The next town we drove through was Langtry (home of Judge Roy Bean - "the only law west of the Pecos!"). Everything came to an abrupt halt here, as we were stopped by the U.S. Border Patrol looking for illegal aliens. We finally arrived at the dirt road entrance to the ranch the car is on at about 10:30am. While we stopped to let everyone catch up, we asked the infamous question, "How much farther?" We were told, "I'm not sure; all I know is that we need to cross 6 cattle guards". Well, nothing like specific directions is there?

With that, we started out again. We finally arrived at the cave at about 2am, after traveling about 30 miles on a rough, one-lane, dirt road on this private

INTRODUCING THE MOST ADVANCED  
DESIGNS IN VERTICAL GEAR



PANGAEA GEAR INC.  
ADVANCED ASCENDING SYSTEMS



The above snapshots were taken from the Newsletter section of the grotto's website ([CullmanGrotto.org](http://CullmanGrotto.org)) The Flowstone 1994-2000, 1996 Edition. Continue ready there for the rest of the story... and plenty more!



## From the Chairman

Welcome to 2025. It is going to be an exciting year. Let's get into what we got going on. First, we have had an uptick in new people inquiring about the Grotto and a few have come to check us out. New people: Welcome to the Grotto, I hope you end up joining our group and participating in some trips.

As far as trips, Chris has taken on the role of trip coordinator for this year, and He has some good stuff planned for the next couple of months. Please send him trip ideas as he is always looking for places to go. For the newer people we will throw some good "first step "trips in there to help build your skills too.

We have started using the Facebook page and the flowstone email to communicate more this year, so keep an eye on it. For the paid members we have a grotto email ([Flowstone25@gmail.com](mailto:Flowstone25@gmail.com)). You may have noticed getting your copy of the flowstone newsletter from this address. Look for more correspondence from this throughout the year. If you haven't gotten anything from it please get in touch with me because it means I don't have your current email address.

You may also have noticed we moved to the church on ST. Joseph Street. This was an unexpected move, but it was necessary due to the United Way moving locations and the city taking over the depot to use as office space. We hope we can plant our feet here for a while and not have to find another place.

Talking about the newsletter, we changed it up a little bit last year. We went to a quarterly edition from a monthly and changed the overall look and format of it. Please feel free to send in trip reports, photos, or articles that may be interesting to others. Please send anything you want included in there to the flowstone25 email and we will get it in there.

Now keep a lookout for our newsletter and attend the meetings for other information. We will touch on other stuff like SERA, TAG, Convention. & Bridge-Day. These can be fun events, and you may want to participate in some of those.

Let's go caving,  
Your Chairman  
Micah Sims

