

Mysterious Surging Water in Norseman's Well

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From the June 2000 Flowstone

The plan was to go to Whopper Well on Saturday, May 13, 2000. With the borehole passage being found the week before, it looked like Whopper was going to have to wait for a while. A few days before Saturday, plans changed again and the possibility of going to Whopper Well was working out, but then the suggestion of going to Norseman's Well was also made. Ether trip requires a rather lengthy ride on four wheelers to get to the entrance. Both are multi-drop caves with several drops and nice passage.

Micah showed up at my house about 6:00 in the morning and we were off, not really knowing where we would end up. I had never been to ether, but had wanted to visit both for quite some time. As Micah and I stunk up the basketball court at Glenn's, Jeff and Wendy soon showed up. They left it up to me to decide where to go, so I did the only thing I could: the call was tails, Norseman's Well.

Norseman's is a cave that is really closed. We did have special permission to visit it through Glenn for a small group to enter. By having a key to the gate, we drove on back to where Glenn's trailer is located, packed all of our stuff on the four wheelers and took off on the dusty roads at high speeds; I still have seven or eight oz. of sand in my eyes. I guess we road about 15 min. or so, and finally got to the area to pull off, about 100 yards from the entrance pit.

The entrance is very wide - much like Neversink. There seemed to be pits and rig points everywhere, each going in a different direction. The entrance drop is 80'; it was quickly rigged with a 300' rope. Glenn went down and put the remainder of the rope down the next drop, a 97'er just out of reach of the daylight. From the bottom of this pit, we went down the nice walking passage filled with active formations. Before long, we found a pit with tons of water going in, and no way of doing it without getting drenched. Micah and Glenn did not recall the pit looking like that, so we were off again looking for another pit. Up until this time, we were still dry, but soon entered passage with water about 6" deep. Only a small indication of what was to come.

The next pit of 25' was gushing water, but Micah rigged the rope to some formations out over the pit and we were able to rappel next to the water and only get a little splash now and then. The climb out was a little different, but that comes later. The drop landed in a pool of water waist deep or so. We all made it down and headed through some nicely scalloped passage with water raging beneath our feet. A small 6' climb was rigged with some webbing and we body rappelled along side the water that was shooting over the lip, being projected out quite a ways before tumbling down the to pool below. The next pit was one of 41' with a bolt as the main rig point. Upon reaching bottom, we went on to what had stopped Glenn and Micah the last time, the 18' pit, what we thought was the last pit. With that pit rigged, we proceeded down a drencher of a drop. Upon reaching bottom, Micah and Jeff soon returned and reported that there was yet another pit. It seemed to be about a 12' climb, but with the water raging, it could not be climbed without a handline. Only one problem: we were out of rope.

The passage back to this point was filled with nice formations so everyone made it to the lip of the undercut climb. Our packs were raided, searching for rope, webbing, or anything we could find. A knob

was rigged with about 2' of 7mm rope, connected to a beaner, then to about 5 feet of webbing, to 3 feet of webbing, and then to about 8 beaners which reached the pool at the bottom. I rigged an eight into the webbing, rappelled to the beaner holding the two webbing pieces together, and passed the knot, beaner and all, through the eight. The water pounded on my legs with a tremendous force. The others waited atop the drop for the report. I walked through beautiful passage filled with large flowstone and other formations. It went just a short way before getting very low, just before the sump. I returned and made the climb back up which was easier than anticipated. Micah was the only other one that made the drop; as he did this, the others headed out because the chill was starting to take it's toll on them.

Glenn, Jeff, and Wendy made their way toward the entrance as Micah and I derigged each drop. As we would make it to the next drop, Jeff would pull up the ropes and all that we had derigged and proceed onward. This made it nice because Micah and I never got bogged down with a lot of ropes and gear. It was quite evenly spread among the group. As I got on rope at the waist deep splash pool, I noticed that the rope was a foot or so closer to the waterfall than it had been on the way down. The 25' waterfall that was roaring loudly mysteriously quieted and almost dried up. I climbed like crazy for a few feet until I heard, "NOW!" Anticipating what was about to come, I could do nothing but hang on and wait for the initial surge to recede. That happened time and time again on the short climb. Seems the pool that was being dammed up by other's feet only took a few seconds to fill to overflowing. As I made it to the top, I made another minor adjustment in the rigging ensuring that Micah would have the same thrill as I did, if not more. As he proceeded up, taking frequent baths, he was heard to say, "I'm going to ge. . . blob, blob, blob!" He later said the water nearly knocked his climbing equipment off the rope it was so powerful.

Standing around the bottom of the 97' pit, I waited for the others to climb. By the time I got on rope, I was very ready. The cold was finally getting the best of me. It was very pleasant to climb up to the bottom of the entrance drop, and then to the top where the temp was in the mid 80's. I felt deprived because I was the only one who didn't get to climb the horizontal rope. The way the 300' rope was rigged, the others got on rope and climbed at a good angle before finally heading upward. I derigged the rope and pulled it up to the floor of the entrance pit, and then continued out. What a great cave!

With our drenched clothes, we climbed on the four wheelers and traveled back to Glenn's trailer. This time, the dust and sand stuck to all parts of me, not just my eyes and mouth. I feel very privileged to have had the opportunity to go on this trip and feel blessed that Glenn, a member of that hunting club, is also a member of the Cullman Grotto. Thanks Glenn. Thanks too to Micah for hauling me back there on his four wheeler. Jeff and Wendy also made the trip so enjoyable just by their company. By the way, Glenn can do a neat trick. He can make a squirrel do a double back flip up a hill. Very impressive!

