
The Carbide Courier

The Dayton Underground Grotto
of the National Speleological Society



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GROTTO MEETINGS

Grotto meetings are held the 2nd Sunday of each month. Meeting locations may vary, so check the DUG web and Facebook pages for details.

www.dugcaves.com

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/DUG.NSS>

Calendar of Events

- November 10 NSS Fall Board of Governors Meeting at the NSS Headquarters
- November 11 Regular membership meeting - 7pm at a location to be determined
- December 9 Regular membership meeting - 7pm at a location to be determined
- January 13 Regular membership meeting - 7pm at a location to be determined
- February 10 Regular membership meeting - 7pm at a location to be determined
- March 10 Regular membership meeting - 7pm at a location to be determined
- June 17-21 NSS Convention in Cookeville, Tennessee

From the Editor:

Hi everyone. Not much in the newsletter this quarter as the only thing I received was an article from Ergor Rubreck.

I know we have members out doing things. Please consider taking a moment to write a trip report, send photos, write fiction, satire, or poetry (we used to have a member who would write cave poems). Whatever you write, please send it to me so I can keep your newsletter going!

Thanks and cave softly!

Mike Hood
Editor

Grotto Committees in Need of Chairs

The following committee chairman openings are being advertised in accordance with Grotto Act 06-02.

- Landowner Relations Committee
- Safety and Rescue Committee
- Youth Groups Committee



Members interested in chairing any of these committees should contact the grotto chairman.

Has Any of your Information Changed??

- Address?
- Telephone?
- E-Mail?
- Joined the NSS?
- Other?

If so, please make sure you update your information on the DUG web page. Just go to www.dugcaves.com and click on the “Update Your Information” button, or contact our Membership Chairman, John Cassidy, with your update.

Is Our Grotto Still Relevant?

By Mike Hood, NSS 24166RL FE

What has become of the Dayton Underground Grotto? Are our 82 members no longer satisfied with the club, uninterested, busy with other things, so something else? Maybe even a little of all of these?

It's no secret the grotto's attendance at meetings and events aren't what they used to be. Perhaps it's because it's often the same core members who volunteer to take on committee chairs, officer positions, and other volunteer duties. It may very well be that our core members are burned out.

Grotto membership numbers aren't the issue--we have 82 paid members, so we must be getting something out of the grotto, or we wouldn't continue to pay dues every year.

The last two grotto meetings (September and October) were quite disappointing to me. Don Conover and I were the only ones to show up at the September meeting, and Dan Dimiduk and I for October.

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Ergor's Lost Book of Zoltar

By Ergor Rubreck

The dazzling white crystals of Rho Yerbote Cave left me breathless with excitement. My heart palpitated in wild astonishment. Could anything so bright exist in nature, except the noon Sun viewed without eye protection? 3-D white toothpaste commercials pale by comparison.

Those were my exact feelings when I first parachuted into Yucatan's impenetrable rainforest to check out a lidar trace of a dot next to some linear structures -- probably walls -- in a remote region of Mexico. I chose this mode of entry because Bill Steele had hired the helicopter for his Hauatla expedition that month. The JN-4 "Jenny" biplane, a relic of WWI, was affordable at 1,000 pesos (one way), but it limited me to caving alone (never safe.) I checked my gear: helmet, three lights, rope, inflatable boat, UV lamp, snakebite kit, MREs (Meals Refused by Enemy), and GPS. The dot was a cenote some 24m in diameter with water at the bottom.

Naturally I read the GPS while pumping up the boat and donning my gear. Unsurprisingly, the round cenote belled out to 38m at the

water surface and a main trunk passage led in a NNE direction. An hour of steady paddling glided me past smooth walls of limestone to a subterranean beach of pure white sand. High on one side of the beach I saw the blackened embers of an ancient campfire surrounded by the bones of three individuals, Bird of Paradise headdresses on their skulls, and decked with lavish lapis lazuli necklaces set in gold medallions. I left the skeletons in situ as archaeological remains are best studied in place rather than in a museum.

Beyond the beach lay a canyon two meters wide by four meters high. The left wall was covered with the white crystals I told you about. Fortunately I had brought my sunglasses and could see their facets reflecting white light in every direction. A typical crystal measured 47cm from wall to tip. A thick sheet of these crystals packed together covered the wall from floor to ceiling and reaching as far down the canyon as I could see. The canyon's right hand wall was black and undecorated. Nothing to see here, folks.

Imagine my feeling of awe and shock as I gazed at this gleaming display of natural grandeur for 30 minutes! Each individual crystal glinted more dazzling and unique than its neighbor. Then I remembered my UV lamp. All mineralogists know that when UV light falls on calcite crystals, they glow even brighter but with a eerie blue-greenish hue. When the UV lamp is switched off the glow continues, emitting stored photons for 30 or more seconds.

Bathed in teal-colored light, I caught a glimpse of a glow behind me in my Rolex wristwatch crystal. I turned around and was so startled I wet my pants!!

On the plain black rock wall behind me I saw glowing picture writing. It was pre-Mayan characters, a continuous coda of stanzas. I switched off the UV lamp and the glowing characters soon disappeared, leaving only the plain smooth black right hand wall of the canyon passage.

How could it be? An unmarked plain rock wall one minute, and the next, a veritable torrent of glowing

characters? It was no accident. With ordinary cave headlight the wall was plain, but under UV illumination the characters glowed.

Three questions consumed me. Why hadn't I brought a change of pants? What was the message? Had pre-Mayans made a solution of calcite and water, and painted the characters on the wall, invisible when dry? Fortunately, I had studied the Mayan language prior to my departure. The characters are not pictographs or representational artwork. And the characters are not individual letters. Mayan characters are words. But pre-Mayan language was largely unstudied. I could see a proto-serpent, I thought. And maybe an eye. I moved to the first character revealed by the UV lamp. (Maybe it was the last -- many languages read right to left or bottom to top.) It was a delta. A delta could be the end of a river, or the last fin on a fish. If the word was FINIS, that would be the end of the message, not the beginning! I took a chance and ran along the canyon to where the UV lamp revealed the beginning (or end?) character.

There was a suggestion of a human figure moving right to left. START? No, that would

call for a left to right direction. RETREAT? maybe. How about BOOK? The second character resembled a fan of cards. Or a rainbow? An arch? (not yet invented by Romans.) A flash of a childhood experience --age 6-- hit me. The carnival came to my town every year. In the penny arcade a glass case held a swarthy figure swathed in silk and wearing a turban. If you inserted a nickel lights inside flashed on, the closed eyes of the figure would open and stare at you. His bosom rose and fell. Then his hand would sweep slowly from left to right several times as his head turned to follow his hand over the fan of playing cards and crystal ball before him. Suddenly his hand would stop. His eyelids closed. And a printed card would fall out of the machine. His name: ZOLTAR. The fortune on the card I got said, "You will travel far and have good luck!"

Could that be it? BOOK of ZOLTAR? Since I had found it, maybe the LOST BOOK OF ZOLTAR? My UV lamp began to falter. I had lost track of time, so I hastened back to my boat and paddled back to fading daylight. I ascended and pulled my boat up after me. I knew it would be a long hike through the jungle to Cancun.

My trip report reached the Central Museum in Mexico City. A year later I called the curator to find out what had become of my discovery. Senior Rodrigo Gonzales said, "Glad you called, Ergor. We've translated the first four pages. It says, "You will inherit money." "You will go on a journey." "You will have good luck."...

I apologized for the interruption and thanked him, "Sorry, I have a call I must take on the other line." I said I would call him back. I was now certain I had found the LOST BOOK OF ZOLTAR.



Is Our Grotto Still Relevant? (continued from page 4)

I've been involved in many organizations in the past 30-plus years (not just caving organizations) and I know the signs and symptoms of a club that has run its course and ultimately cease to exist. Sadly, this grotto may be on its way to oblivion.

We've been around over 25 years, having been chartered in 1992. Since our founding, the grotto has seen many ups and downs. In the 1990's, it wasn't uncommon to have over 50 members at meetings. We held the Wormfest, Christmas party, and auction every year and they were well attended and looked forward to.

Sadly, the grotto has fallen on hard times the last several years (as far as participation goes). So, what has changed? Is it that our core membership has gotten older? We aren't recruiting enough younger members? Our programs (or lack of them) aren't interesting to our members? Probably all of the above.

So, how do we fix the problem? There is no one cure-all for the problem. We need members to get active again. Write trip reports so our newsletter isn't the same boring publication most of the time. Run for a grotto office, chair a committee, volunteer to get the Christmas party going again, organize Wormfest. The list goes on and on.

Nominations for grotto officers are next month, with elections in December. This election may very well determine whether the Dayton Underground Grotto continues or not.

It's up to all of us. All 82 of us as members. If we don't fix the apathy now, I don't see the grotto continuing for another year or two.

I'd hate to see the grotto dissolve, and I'm sure there are many of you who feel the same. So, for those of you who have read this editorial to this point, ask yourself how you can help, and then follow through!

Thank you for your time and consideration.





The Dayton Underground Grotto
 Of the National Speleological Society
MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FORM
 www.dugcaves.com

PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY

NAME:		NSS NUMBER: <i>(if member)</i>	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP CODE:
E-MAIL ADDRESS:			
HOME PHONE NUMBER:	CELL PHONE NUMBER:	WORK PHONE NUMBER:	
I AM 18 YEARS OF AGE, OR OLDER: <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO			

MEMBERSHIP TYPE AND ANNUAL DUES (check one)	
<input type="checkbox"/>	INDIVIDUAL (\$15)(\$7.50 if after July 1 st)
<input type="checkbox"/>	INDIVIDUAL STUDENT (full time students only)(\$7.50)(\$3.75 if after July 1 st)
<input type="checkbox"/>	FAMILY (family members must reside in same household)(\$20)(\$10 if after July 1 st) List family members:

NOTE: Members who join and are not NSS members are associate members and may not vote or hold grotto office. NSS members are regular members and have all grotto privileges.

WILL THE DAYTON UNDERGROUND GROTTTO BE YOUR PRIMARY NSS AFFILIATION? <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO

DO YOU WISH TO SUBSCRIBE TO THE GROTTTO YAHOOGROUPS E-MAIL LIST? Send e-mail to dugcaves-subscribe@yahoogroups.com

Signature Date

Signature of Parent/Guardian if under age 18 Date

Make checks payable to the Dayton Underground Grotto
 Mail completed form and payment to John Cassidy, 414 Michigan Ave., Troy, OH 45373