

# ***The FLOWSTONE***

Vol 25 Issue 8

September 2018



## ***Gross Skeleton Cave***

*A Monthly Newsletter of the Cullman Grotto of the National Speleological Society*

# CULLMAN GROTTO FLOWSTONE

September 2018  
Volume 25 Issue 8



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The Cullman Grotto will exchange by request with any publishing grotto. Republication of items within **The Flowstone** is allowed provided credit is given to author and source.

Membership to the Cullman Grotto is fifteen dollars (\$15) per year for individual or twenty dollars (\$20) per year for family. Dues are payable at the first grotto meeting of each year (January) and includes subscription to **The Flowstone**. Subscription rate for non-members is fifteen dollars (\$15) per year.

The Cullman Grotto meets on the first Monday of each month unless the first Monday falls on a holiday or otherwise noted. In those cases the meeting will be held on the second Monday. Meetings begin at 7:30 p.m. and are held at the old L&N train depot, Arnold St., Cullman, AL. All visitors and prospective members are welcome.

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**Front Cover:** *Hiking to the cave*

**Photo by:** *Scott Murphy*

**ECHO)))) CHAMBER**

**Tennessee Cave Survey - Fall Business Meeting**

By: Chuck Sutherland

The Tennessee Cave Survey (TCS) meeting will be 10/20/18 in Bell Auditorium in the Nursing Building at Tennessee Tech University in Cookeville, Tennessee. The meeting begins at 9am CST and lasts until approximately 1pm. Afterwards we'll all go eat Mexican food and go caving or head to Nashville for whatever their grotto is doing. I became aware of this scheduling conflict with the Nashville Grotto too late to make changes. My apologies.

I'm soliciting speakers for the event. If you've done something cool and wanna share it with the community, this is a great opportunity. I am looking forward to hearing from you.



**Do You Have the Right Stuff?**

By Prof. Lee R. Berger  
September 3 at 9:20 AM



We are looking for volunteers to participate and train as underground astronauts (actually as scientists and lead excavators) working in the extreme underground environments of the Rising Star cave system where the early hominid species *Homo naledi* was discovered in 2013. As with the previous call, successful applicants must be fit, capable,

ideally have some experience in caving, possess strong demonstrable excavation skills, climbing skills, not be claustrophobic and work well in teams under very stressful, often dangerous conditions. Of course, one must be able to fit through, and climb up and down the Chute (squeezes within the Chute approach 18cm). Applicants must have at least a Masters degree in a suitable field of study (archaeology, geology, palaeoanthropology etc.) but preferably engaged in a Ph.D. program or already have their doctoral degree. Candidates must be available from mid-October 2018 through the first week of December and have passports valid for travel to South Africa. Along with participation in the adventure of a lifetime, travel costs, food, accommodation and a reasonable living stipend will be paid to successful applicants. Strong preference will be given to applicants from the continent of Africa, but all qualified applicants are invited to apply. If you want to know what the job will be like, you can get a good idea by watching the documentary *Dawn of Humanity* (available on YouTube or Netflix) which was filmed during the original Rising Star expedition. The possibility of future scientific involvement and employment with the project is good for individuals who show an aptitude for this rewarding but dangerous work. Applicants should send a CV, at least two professional references, and a letter of motivation to Dr. Bonita de Klerk of the LRB Foundation at [leerbergerfoundation@gmail.com](mailto:leerbergerfoundation@gmail.com)

I look forward to hearing from you and please share widely with your networks!



**TAG Calendar**

**September 10**  
**Grotto Meeting**  
L&N Train Depot, Arnold St 7:30PM

**September 15-16**  
**Whiteside Rappel Practice**  
Highlands, NC

**October 4-7**  
**TAG Fall Cave-In**  
Lookout Mountain, GA

**October 20**  
**Bridge Day 2018**  
New River Gorge, WV





## Gross Skeleton Cave

By Scott Murphy

I really loved this trip for some reason. I was sort of worried about the mandatory swims. I had my dry bag in my backpack with my camera inside for floatation. Didn't take any pictures in the cave, disappointed about that.

We hiked in with our hiking clothes on (next time I might put my wetsuit on before starting the hike in and I'll have a full suit) The first thing I noticed (after getting our wetsuits on) about the entrance of this cave is outside the cave. I noticed we were at

the bottom of a creek that flows into the cave. In the cave not far from the entrance there was a huge brush pile. Then you come to the climb down. We used a handline to get down this drop.

We stopped not far down this passage and waited for the rest of the group to catch up. After here we sort of got separated from the group a little. When we came to the first swim I didn't really know where to go (low ceiling but the air was blowing really hard through this section) I swam out and then backed up. We had Roger with us and I made him go first.

After we ran into him he disappeared again. We made our way around the large flowstone room and back down to the stream passage. Here is where Leginia twisted her ankle.

There was a few spots where there is some bright white flowstone in the stream passage. The flowstone before the breakdown room was huge with really nice stalactites.

On this trip there was 17+1(Kuenn). Kuenn came in from the bottom. I was happy to see the exit sunlight. I was on the cold side after I got wet.....







### Solo Sneaky Caving

By Kuenn Drake NSS 36723

The Grotto had a planned monthly trip to Gross Skeleton Cave, a thru trip that I have wanted to do, but alas, I knew I wasn't going to be able to be there on time....at least for the top side swim-down.

I did think, though, I might just sneak in the bottom and play the spook-a-boo caver role. Entering the cave about 2 ½ hours after the main body the hope was to meet them at the formation junction. Timing

worked out just perfect.

I must admit that solo caving in this cave can be a bit ghastly, as the English would say. If the chilly water temp doesn't get you the gurgling water sounds lapping up against the passage walls and then echoing out the alcoves will start playing tricks on you, for sure! "What's that?" "Is someone there?" "My role is to scare you, stop reading my lines!"

And so it goes, solo caving needs to be done with a stiff upper lip. No

sign of weakness here!! (cough, cough)

I made the swim-thru-the-tunnel section and could hear voices approaching. The conversation sounded a whole lot like "lost cavers". (I've heard that dialog a few times before.) Not recognizing the voices, I decided not to scare the wee-wee out of them. Although, they were chest deep in water, no one would have ever known. Dang it!

"Are you with Harold Calvert's group?", says I. "Yes" (In a sorta

who-the-crap are you voice.) “I’m just doing a solo trip.” Brief introductions and conversation ensued. “Are we at the formation junction yet?”, the two cavers asked. “Actually, you just passed it.” “Let’s go back the way you came.”

Upon arriving at the junction I spotted Scott and Leginia. This is going to be fun, thought I. “Heya Scott, Leginia!” “Kuenn? What are you doing in here?” “Uh, caving?” Leginia was nursing a sore ankle which later on in the week would be diagnosed as a fracture. (Tough woman, that Leginia is!)

There were a few more like encounters for the next several minutes with unsuspecting cavers in the party. It was fun! Sneaking up from behind seemed to be the most enjoyable howdy.

After locating and then rambling around in the formation area for a while it was time to head out. I’m always impressed each time with the “land of desolation” room near the formation area. Always looks like fresh break-down. Spooky, it is.

The trip out always seems shorter than in. Leginia was managing under her own power...did I say tough woman? And she still had the hike back to the parking area ahead.

Although it wasn’t a very long trip, it was enjoyable just the same.

Caving, whatever the plan of attack, is a fine sport!



### **Minutes of the Meeting of the Cullman Grotto of the National Speleological Society**

August 6, 2018

The regular monthly meeting of the Cullman Grotto of the National Speleological Society was called to order on Monday, August 6, 2018, at 7:35 p.m. by Harold Calvert, Chairman. 9 were present.

The minutes from the July meeting were read. Motion was made by Tracy Calvert to accept the minutes as read and seconded by David Drake by proxy. The motion was approved.

The treasurer's report was given. The editor needs submissions for the Flowstone. Send stuff!!!!

#### **Announcements:**

TAG will be held from October 4th through October 7th.

The August grotto trip will be on August 11th to Gross Skeleton. Meet at 10:00 a.m. at McDonald’s in Guntersville.

#### **Old Business:**

The grotto picnic will be held on September 8th at Palisades Park. The park opens at 9:00 a.m. Get there when you can.

There is nothing new on the door project at Rickwood Caverns.

#### **New Business:**

Sharon Clayton, editor of The Flowstone, resigned as of the end of the year.

The Cullman County Public Library requests assistance with a lunch and learn on caving in August or

September.

#### **Trip Reports:**

Harold Calvert gave trip reports on Guffey Cave and Weaver’s Point. Special Note: According to Vic, if you brag on dogs or kids you can get in any cave.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:50 p.m.