

Aug. 2015 edition

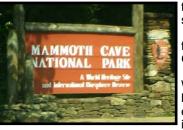
Well, it's that time of year! A couple dozen cavers gathered once again at the Maple Springs Research Station over the first week of August to participate in the 2015 Mammoth Cave Restoration Field Camp.

Cavers have been helping the Park Service for nearly three decades now, and proud accomplishment that evidences the love and respect we all have for the history of the world's longest cave.

This year's activities began by the Mammoth and watermelon It was a welcome into camp. He and week-long restorafrom another weeknoe and kayak ex-Turkey and Mississip-

This was Mark's of the nicest guys Chefs de Cuisine As-





that's certainly a significance and

for and prepared Grilled burgers

Williams drove bert, made the elling directly is an annual ca-

cursion that this year went 106 miles from Elkander, Iowa, to Savanna, Illinois, along the pi Rivers. Thanks, Mark and Chuck, for your commitment and sacrifice!

third year planning the menu and running the kitchen at resto camp. A true pro and one you'd ever meet, Mark is a member of the American Culinary Federation's nonprofit sociation of St. Louis.

Day One

Monday morning dawned with a 7am breakfast of scrambled eggs and sausages. Fording the River for the first of dozens of times throughout the week, the group then drove over to the Historic of Mammoth Cave.

The 24 cavers split into several work teams: those digging old wire out of the ground, the dustcrew and four people working on a drainage project.

Your humble narrator was part of the third group, working at a site located a couple hundred the cave from the entrance.

Years ago, it was thought that the Mammoth Cave air flow also could help cool the hotel main passage. So a 10-foot-diameter ventilation shaft was drilled. For the first two or three idea worked. But then, officials noticed that the moist air was causing mold to grow on all the hotel. The shaft then was plugged at the top.

The drilling had passed through a layer of shale that routed a trickle of water that even today lightly rain down the shaft. Officials noticed that historic logs previously used for water pipes in the salt petre tion now were starting to grow white mold, presumably from the humidity and moisture.

It was thought that the water dripthe now-useless shaft The water had been ing into the ground.

Leave it to the resto saker, Scott McGlamery, under a constant shower Brian's dogged persever-18-inches below the sur-

We tried poking a footwith sand and muck. We the appropriate paperwork hole we dug gradually



ping down the ventilation shaft was not helping the problem. Although reportedly had a brass drain at the bottom, it was buried in sediment. forming a shallow pool at the bottom of the shaft and gradually dissipat-

crew to attack the problem! With a few rudimentary tools, Brian Hun-Ken Dejonge and I went to work. After nearly an hour of digging while of water, I voiced my skepticism that the drain even existed. But it was ance that finally uncovered the prize: a shiny brass drain-head, about face. Truly an "ah-ha" moment. Way to go, Brian!

long length of rigid wire down the drain, but it was thoroughly clogged reported the findings and were told that maintenance staff would file and seek the go-ahead to clear the drain pipe. In the meantime, the

filled with muddy waters but never quite overflowed into the main passage. Stay tuned! The resto cavers all emerged and enjoyed lunch outside the Historic Entrance before returning to their crew jobs inside the cave. A couple hours later, everyone returned to Maple Springs.

Dinner was a delicious pasta meal, with pesto bowtie and fettucine bolognaise.

But the day's work was not yet done. After dinner, about 17 cavers went back to the Historic Entrance to meet Dr. George Crothers, tucky

who is the Park Archaeologist, a researcher and professor at University of Ken-George met us at the entrance and walked us down to the Rotunda Room, where about the salt petre mining operation that took place in the 1800s. It was a wonderand we were honored to hear it from the man who likely is the preeminent authority Mammoth Cave's history. (--thanks, George!)

Caver manpower was needed in order to move some very large and heavy logs the trail to the other. By sizing up the average log, and by the grunts I involuntarily carrying them, we figured each log weighed nearly half a ton. One by one, we more than a dozen of the monster logs and transported them a few hundred feet ed new locations.

At first, we lifted the logs and didn't fully realize that some cavers are taller than others

he explained all ful on this aspect of from one side of emitted carefully to their designat-

(which left shorter what equally.

education.

while

lifted

fellas dangling from the middle). In short order, we lined up the workers by height and shared the load some-After a couple hours of work, we then drove back over Green River ferry (which closes at 9:55pm), promising to be back the next evening.



the months, the wood in the

continues to mining opera-

Day Two

I couldn't believe how fluffy Chef Mark was able to make the pancakes that were enjoyed at breakfast. While most of the resto cavers returned to the cave, some of us joined staff worker Eric Ford (and his assistant, Wayne) on a side trip mission. We were to ridgewalk into the thick woods, locate Running Branch Cave and get the gate open. Along with Ken, Brian and John Kirk, and using handheld GPS units, chetes to hack our way through the thick, jungle-like foliage, dodgwe used our ma-

anacondas, ing OK, actually, it got a little ry, According to quarters of a however, was to woods.

After about and found the 3-foot-square

and leaves (and

It took a good half-hour, but with some moderate effort, Eric was smith tools and open the main lock. In addition, there was a second padlock the same fashion.

The steel gate finally swung open!

The six of us then slid quick look-see and cool-off. first time in any cave.

While John, Ken and Briused some lube spray to oil then piled some flagstones, newed natural state.

With it being just shy of But we made it, with the six for beeping the horn, Eric!).

Following lunch back at Maple, we drove to the Historic Entrance

removing wall Jonathon Lewis and sleeves out of ing. We were closed bathrooms. to future similar In addition, we'd tric line that was fully-qualified and was hooked up mination for toursteps at the end of Larry!

Dinner



wild boars and swooping predators.

was some light woods with a few spiderwebs. Sorcarried away.

topographic maps, this cave was about threemile south of Maple Springs. The most direct route, park along the ferry road and hike West into the

45 minutes of travel through some very uneven terrain, we finally rounded a hill cave entrance at the level of a dry stream bed. Ice-cold air poured from the small cave gate. I immediately jumped down to start clearing away dirt

also to cool down after a

anchors.

that



was put in charge of the wall, something with working on a small man It was our "practice work to be done in received the go-ahead at the same location. certified electrician, and provided some ists descending some the Fat Man's Misery stoopwalk.



evening was a delicious meatloaf and mashed potatoes.

But there was no rest, as we then headed back to the Rotunda to help George with more logs. The job was slightly different this time, as several logs of varying sizes needed to be transported up to several hundred feet from their current display spot to the area where they would be examined and treated for mold. George and his three university assistants all were grateful for our team efforts.

Day Three

tasty breakfast of Mexican scrambled eggs, served with slices of fresh pineapple. Thank you Chef Mark and Chuck prepared a again, guys! crew got in their vehicles and drove to Wondering Woods

cial operation that was long ago closed and now owned

of us had ever encountered a drive to the cave like There were overgrown woods and brush, but they

ered a nice blacktop-paved single-lane road. Alt-

hough an occasional drizzle rain was falling,

This day, the entire resto Cave, a former commerby the Park Service I'm sure none

this one cov-

trac-Our of a dozfinally point ping last in line, a handicapped window and to the front of the

tion. long line vehicles en reached a stopat the cave trail. Being Jonathon playfully waved parking hang tag out his car asked if he could move his vehicle line. Ha!

We geared-up for a 'rain hike' and set off up the hill, finally reaching the steel door entrance in about 15 minutes.



sweaty hike).

able to use his lockthat he got open in

Cave to have a in, stating it was his

the passages, pin. When we left, I left the cave gate in a re-

midday, the hike back to Eric's truck was guite a bit hotter and more humid. men emerging from the woods at all different spots along the road (--thanks

and hiked to Great Relief Hall to work on

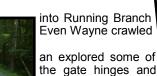
supervising a procedure to get lead bolts which he'd had previous experience do--made wall that was in front of some nowwall", intended to refine our technique prior other areas of the cave.

to install a light fixture at the end of an elec-With the expertise of caver Larry Matiz, a the light

extra concrete Nice

illujob,





dirt and leaves and



But it was not to be, that day, as Bill Copeland had given the wrong key to get into the cave. He tried and tried, but it just wasn't happening.

The look of was evident faces, as we about-face down the hill and take the

road.

zle could not dampen our spirits. We headed back to Mammoth and met back at Historic Entrance at

10:30am. Cavers split into three crews: lint, wire and wall anchors, and headed underground.



treacherous drive back through the over-foliated

But the non-cave-trip and now-diminishing driz-

disappointment everyone's on now had to and hike back to our vehicles semi-





I joined those who were being supervised by (former resto camp director) Roy Vanhooser, hiding and removing wire near the trail leading down from the feature known as the Giant's Coffin. After first eating our sack lunch in an out-of-the-way alcove at the bottom of the stairs, we got to work.

Next was a return to the Great Relief Hall, where some of us removed wire from a maintenance area located behind the (closed) bathrooms. After that, we removed a few wall anchors from a low-ceiling area near the bench seating area at River Hall.

Traditionally, Wednesday is a day when the camp cooks are given a break from preparing a full dinner for the cavers. After exiting the cave, we headed for an enclosed (and air-conditioned) pavilion located in the picnic area near the Visitor Center parking lot to enjoy an early dinner of pizza, salad and desserts.

This also was time when the group posed for the annual camp photo of participants. (Photo by Ken... well done!)

While some cavers then returned underground for an 'educational trip' to see Miller Avenue, a few of us stayed topside to see a slide show and lecture from Ranger Kennetha Sanders at the campground amphitheater.



It was excellent! Kennetha explained about the history of the families many who were in and around the Park. showed photographs from her personal own and collection finally revealed to



the audience of 30 people that she herself is a fifth-generation Guide. Wow.

There was another 'wow' when we all returned to Maple. In gratitude for everyone's help with the logs at the salt petre area, George had brought over a couple cases of beer for cavers to enjoy. And it wasn't just the cheap stuff ... there was Summer Shandy, Guinness and Budweiser. He later told us that, for cavers, beer is the 'universal currency.' Thanks again, George! If you ever need help with other tasks, just whistle!

Day Four

Food, to me, was a major factor of the week-long camp. And I can't forget the breakfast of French toast and bacon that was served Thursday morning.

Following the previous day's disappointment, Bill was given the correct entrance door key and we



to Wondering Woods Cave. It's only a couple hundred feet long, very nicely decorated. Brian and John the hill at the end of the cave and (re-) small back room. Meanwhile, Bill, Ken impromptu on-site cave photography shot a bunch of tripod photos. Our official being there was to evaluate what it would move any existing old wire in the cave, environmental evaluation.

After an hour or so in the cave, the and met at the Mammoth Cave elevator



but the cave is clambered up discovered a and I held an workshop and purpose in take to reprior to an

group then exited

entrance patio for lunch. We then went down into the cave, passed a group of people from AmeriCorps in the Snowball Room



and hiked down to Boone Avenue.

Our job was to improve areas where electrical cable had been plastered to the cave wall in a less-than-aesthetic fashion. Using hammers and chisels, we chipped away plaster and mesh screening, wiring and pried away some anchors that were in the walls.

The group exited the hours later, and a

met George and Park Ecologist Rick Olson Violet City entrance. The drizzle rain had did a 'grid search' and I was able to find mark that was located about 30-feet into roadway. George also tried getting a soil core mouth of a nearby spring feature but instead the hole. Oh well.

removed a bit of old non-lead cave some

couple of us at the cave's returned, but we the USGS benchthe woods off the sample from the



found that there was an old concrete pad beneath the dirt in front of

Back at camp that evening, it was a Mexican dinner with baked chicken enchiladas, steak tacos and a delicious apple enchilada dessert.

Day Five

Today was the best breakfast of week, in my opinion, because Mark and Chuck served grits as well as two kinds of scrambled eggs

(plain and Mexican). Bill had an of work that would We parked at the trance, pressed the level) button on the pad and descend-Some cavers interest in returnished work in another but follow Roy for walk down to opted for the work.

The work strenuous. der along the wall,

chipped away at the ugly plaster. It

we were told to wear safety glasses, as there were chunks and nasty dust thrown in all directions. We positioned a

each work area to catch the detritus and swept-up any crud that splattered off to the side. I ate my sack lunch in the peaceful solitude of an open area

near the Mammoth The ensome enjoyed а Dinner shortcake floor. When

and Bill be-First was a which was and a couple 'Germinator'! Another

Maggie ployee who activicamp a commemo-

Recognition Chuck and their hard work throughout the caver is a hapall! Each was wine as well as applause of Next was an



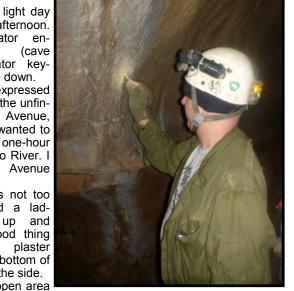
nounced that Friday would be light day end before mid-afternoon. elevator en-"CL" (cave elevator keyed on down. had expressed ing to the unfin-Boone Avenue, group wanted to

the

Boone

itself was not too positioned a ladclimbed up and was a good thing plenty of plaster tarp at the bottom of

the Echo River. I



work site. Before long, it was time to clean up and say good-bye to Cave for the week.

tire group was out of the cave by 2pm. Having the afternoon 'off', chose to see the Visitor Center, others took a shower and some well-deserved afternoon nap.

that evening was pork chops with asparagus, salad and strawberry for dessert. A few pitched-in to help clean the kitchen and mop the Chef Mark finally declared the kitchen to be 'closed,' he sat down gan the Awards ceremony.

thank-you to the only 'first-timer' who helped with resto camp, Bill's grandson, Jeremy Copeland. He was given a small geode other items suitable for a 9-year-old. Thanks for helping, (--his pee-wee football nickname)

thank-you went to Mudd, a Park emhelped with resto ties, who received rative t-shirt.

next went to Chef Mark for dedication and week. A well-fed py caver, after given a bottle of a rousing round from the group.



award for work done

shower drain covers in two of the camp bathrooms. I don't know how he did it, but Eric Buckelew to replace the somehow created a bronze (-looking) award figure in the shape of a drain, mounted on a wooden base. This was given to Brian and John for their diligence to replace the cracked plastic drains in the showers. They also found that the wrong size drain had been installed on the drain pipe that runs to the shower floor, a condition that causes the plastic drain to not allow water through the holes fast enough. The situa-

The two Next sented to always is or who hardest For 2015, is, in part technique wall. Where-

technique wall. Whereproviding the tainly is dehis hard to camp interand pleasant done, Jon!



tion was solved by drilling one additional small hole through the center of the new drain. cavers were instructed to share the award and take possession of it one year at a time. came the restoration camp top accolade, the Sack Rat Award. This traditionally is pre-

the caver who is the most helpful, or seen carrying a sack of debris out of the generally is acknowledged as being the worker.

the Sack Rat was given to Jonathon for his guidance in showing the proper for removing lead anchors from the as everyone did a great job pitching-in teamwork to do everything we did, Jon serving of the recognition. In addition work, he also is webmaster of the net web page. He's always very up-

to be around, funny, intelligent and a friend to all.



Bill summarized all the work done throughout the week, including four bags of lint picked up by the 'dust bunnies', a dozen lead annors removed, three ______ or four plaster sections in Boone Avenue cleaned, identifying the live electrical wires in the Great Re-

chors removed, three lief Hall, installing one evaluating the wire logs at the salt petre camp bathroom showeveryone. That's quite

Next, Park Ecologist al Park Service. He vides invaluable help "It's phenomenally

guys come from long also really appreciate With that, Rick stainless steel water logo. Thanks, Rick!

Bill then told Rick Bishop Award as Rick and his wife Finally, a drawing quilt contained lots

Grass, who took it home :)



light fixture there, opening the gate at Running Branch Cave, removal at Wondering Woods Cave, helping move heavy display, drain work in the ventilation shaft, drain work at the ers and removal of about 1,000 feet of old wire. Nicely done, a list!

Rick stood up and thanked everyone on behalf of the Nationsaid it's our ongoing commitment to conservation that profor maintaining the world's longest cave.

impressive what this army does, every year," he said. "You distances to be here. And, as Colleen has said, the Guides it."

shook the hand of every caver and presented each with a bottle emblazoned with the date of the camp and the NSS

to not sit down just yet, and gave him the annual Stephen well as the gift of a small tour guide's oil lamp, which is an item Colleen collect and have display in their beautiful, rustic home. was held for a beautiful quilt that Linda Bundy had sewn. The of bats and was glow-in-the-dark, too! Congrat's to caver Tim

With that, cavers began saying their good-byes, with hugs all around. To cap off the evening, cold libations included beers, wine, tequila and Fireball whiskey, to the background of lively conversation and guitar-playing.

Day Six

Saturday was a day for Onyx Cave, led by Bill, and Cave (which has been Participants on the Great Onyx Trip included Bill, John, Roy, Jonathan, Larry Matiz, Dave Ruth and Brian Lantz. According to Bill, "we basically followed the tour route up Edwards Avenue till we got to the rimstone dams, then down Cox Avenue. Larry showed everyone where the tour



'reward trips', including a visit to Great a longer trip to the seldom-visited Salts connected to the Mammoth system).



took off to do the in-cave boat ride. We were in the cave for 2.5 hours." (There has been no word from anyone on how the trip to Salts Cave went.)

Summary

All in all, it was another great restoration camp. I've participated in every single camp for the last five years, and I've observed that each one always has new elements... from swinging a sledgehammer, to helping at sinkholes and other area caves, to picking up candy wrappers and lint. There's no doubt that you all agree how fulfilling it is to be part of this. It makes us feel good knowing that we're helping the cave, helping our National Park Service and setting an example... to visitors from across the country and around the world who come to see this 'grand, gloomy and peculiar' place. See you at the Nov. 7 camp!