



The Resto Report



Aug. 2017 edition

At first glance, Mammoth Cave Restoration cavers are comprised of men and women with a wide variety of personalities, backgrounds and expertise who travel from near and far –at their own expense– to meet in Kentucky four times a year.

But despite their differences, the common factors that unite all of them into a family of sorts are their love of cave conservation and desire to preserve Mammoth Cave for future generations to enjoy.

A crew of 25 cavers was on hand for the Restoration Field Camp that took place from August 6-12, 2017.



In addition to a full slate of work over five days, the event also marked a changing of the guard as the role of Camp Director transitions from Bill Copeland to incoming leader Brian Hunsaker.

Convening on Sunday, the 6th, the group met at the Hamilton Valley research station facility near Mammoth for a prep-talk dinner that Bill and Brian prepared. It was Bill's famous pork recipe, seasoned with his usual words of encouragement and wisdom.



"Everyone, be safe," Bill advised. Following the meal, NSS caver Charlie and Cat Bishop, members of the James Cavers group, presented a slide show and explained some history associated with the near-Coach Cave.

The James Cavers are part of a valiant effort to return the now closed former Park Mammoth Resort tourist attraction of Coach Cave back to its natural state. With the effort expected to take several years, it had been agreed that the Mammoth Resto cavers would help out at the 2-1/2-mile-long cave for a couple days.

Monday dawned with a hot breakfast of scrambled eggs and sausage for



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the group. After preparing their own sack lunches, cavers made the short 15-minute drive to Park Mammoth Resort.

Participants split into two teams before descending the concrete stairway and passing through the bat-friendly gate installed at Couch Cave. One group was to remove old wiring and switch boxes, much of which was buried.



The other group split into three smaller teams that helped the James Cavers remove a wooden bridge that spanned Mark Anthony Pit. National Cave Rescue Commission coordinator Anmar Mirza and others previously had rigged three rope lines in preparation of taking out the bridge. Help was needed to pull two ropes that each were rigged from above in a 3:1 haul system. The third team pulled the bridge from over the pit to the passage where it would be dismantled.



With military precision, Anmar shouted directions and the operation proceeded smoothly. With the help of pry bars and a sawzall, the bridge then was cut into pieces that were toted to the cave entrance gate.

Hungry cavers enjoyed an evening meal that consisted of Caesar salad, Pasta Bolognese, peas with basil and onions and a lemon cake dessert.

Tuesday meals included pancakes and bacon for breakfast, sack lunches of deli meat and a dinner of meatloaf, horseradish mashed potatoes, green beans and caramelized banana splits for dessert.

As for the the day, cavers formed and wire up rappelled more wood more wood

Bill, Brian House dismantled a rotas Murder After obtain-dinner cave



work portion of the Resto cav-

a bucket brigade to pass wood the stairs of Couch Cave. Brian and Larry Bundy down 20-feet into Mark Anthony pit and removed from the bottom. Other cavers brought over and wire from other areas of the cave.

and Gary Gibula then were shown the Dome trance of Coach Cave, where they carefully dis-ting wooden stairway next to a small pit known Hole.

ing a permit, a few people departed for a post-trip to the Daleo Entrance of Roppel Cave.

As the new-est member of the Resto Cavers, 18-year-old Aurora Creamer traveled from Monclova, Ohio, to be part of the group.

“When I was little, my family went to Mammoth Cave almost every year,” said Creamer, who also participated in the 2016 week-long camp. “Every time we went, I wanted more and more to go off the tourist path. And now, every step I take off that path is a privilege. That’s why I came back after last year’s camp, because this is amazing!”

A seasoned veteran of Mammoth Cave restoration, Larry Matiz has been participating in the weekend and week-long events since the 1990s.

“I’ve missed a few over the years, but I’ve been to 27 of the week-long camps,” said the soft-spoken Matiz, who is 72. “My main reason to keep doing this simply was to get myself into Mammoth Cave. Over the years,



I grew and my mindset changed.”

Matiz said he began realizing more and more that it was important to preserve the cave for others to enjoy.

“I’ve got children and grandchildren who are going to want to visit Mammoth, so a lot of my motivation was maintaining the cave as a nice place to visit for future generations,” he said. “Another thing is that the people around me became like a second family.”

Wednesday (August 9) began with a delicious breakfast of Mexican scrambled eggs and sausage.

This was the day that Linda Bundy and her crew of ‘dust bunnies’ were to start cleaning the Historic Route in Mammoth Cave. Later, at dinner, she explained that her team found more human hair than lint, and that she decided to rechristen her team the ‘Hairball Heroes.’

Meanwhile, the rest of the group attacked a problem that had been on Park Ecologist Rick Olson’s



list for several years. Above ground, at Echo River Spring, was a stream bed where unwanted gravel (from previous Green River flooding) had been diverting and slowing the flow of water coming out of the cave, which affected the in-cave water level. The Resto Crew’s job was to dredge gravel and reshape the path of the stream so that natural hydraulics would be restored.

Most of the team set to work shoveling gravel and filling grass sacks with the mud and rock. The unsung hero of this operation was Brian Hunsaker. Using a 300-foot rope

(provided by Chuck Schubert), and



with help from Gary, Brian expertly rigged and tensioned a zip line that would be used to haul the grass sacks from the stream bed up the hill for loading into a pickup truck.

It truly was a team effort, one that had not been seen since the removal a few years ago of an in-cave concrete pad where tour boats formerly were lashed. There were the dredgers, who included workhorses Brian Lantz and Ken DeJonge, who seemed to never leave the shin-deep stream



with their shovels. There were crew members who

filled grass sacks and brought them over to the zip line, including Roy VanHooser, Paula Cormany and several others. There was a level zip line crew who attached



the streambed. The zip line crew who attached the sacks to the zip line pulley, including Bill, Larry Bundy, John Kirk, Everett Pulliam and others. And there was the group who pulled the gravel bags up the zip line at the top of the hill (who Bill dubbed the High Perch Haul Boys), which included Gary, Tim Grass, Dave Ruth, Larry Matiz and the sturdy Zach Copeland (and others, at times). It also should be mentioned that Ranger Rick, now fully recovered from a previous shoulder problem, did a yeoman’s job of hauling and sack-handling.

An amazing 81 bags of gravel were hauled up to the top of the hill, necessitating Rick to make two trips emptying the pickup truck bed (–the gravel was redeposited along park roadways where the culverts were too deep).

It was toward the end of the work day when who should casually stroll up to





us –alone, by himself– but newly-installed Mammoth Cave National Park Superintendent Barclay Trimble.

A 26-year veteran of the National Park Service, Mr. Trimble most recently was Southeast Regional Chief of Staff, managing 30 superintendents at National Parks in Florida, Kentucky, North Carolina, Puerto Rico, South Carolina, Tennessee and the U.S. Virgin Islands. His NPS career has included being superintendent of the Outer Banks Group of National Parks, including Cape Hatteras National Seashore, Wright Brothers National Memorial and the Fort Raleigh National Historic Site.

Mr. Trimble has served as the Deputy (and Acting) Superintendent of Grand Canyon National Park and in several business finance positions including Recreation Fee Manager for the Intermountain Region, Chief of Finance for the Washington Office Concessions Division, Acting Chief of Business Management at Glen Canyon National Recreation Area, and Management Assistant with Denali National Park in Alaska. Wow!

So who should walk right up to the High Perch Haul Boys and ask “how’s it going,” but Barclay himself.

After exchanging introductions and pleasantries, the crew explained (and demonstrated) what we were doing. It was simply great to make Barclay’s acquaintance and for the crew to have the opportunity to literally show him, through their work, how much we all care about Mammoth Cave.

With the workday ending shortly, the crew invited Barclay to join them at the mid-week pizza party, which was to take place in a couple hours at a pavilion near the Visitor Center.

He accepted!

Although the Wednesday pizza was intended to provide the camp chefs a brief respite from cooking dinner, Chef Mark Williams and Assistant Chef Chuck Schubert showed up with 20 pizzas as well as some Greek salad and a cheesecake dessert. It was nice that Barclay rose at one point and thanked the Resto Covers with some encouraging words.

Following dinner, the crew posed for their annual group photo. Unfortunately, a handful of participants had to be ‘photoshopped’ into the final version seen here.



After that, Rick led several covers

down the elevator entrance for an educational trip to see the elusive Anna’s Dome, a trek that included ‘many ups and downs,’ according to Bill. Several others went to the outdoor amphitheatre and enjoyed a presentation on the origins of Mammoth Cave delivered by Ranger Kennetha, who was well-spoken and very interesting. She did a great job, as she also did with last year’s presentation on the history of guides and families in and around the Park.

On Thursday, the group returned to Echo River Spring. After climbing a ladder, tree-hugger Brian adjusted the zip line to a higher and more efficient angle. This time, no fewer than 93 bags of gravel were hoisted up from the stream bed. Meanwhile, the Hairballers returned to a different area in the cave.

Breakfast that day was French toast and bacon, and the Spanish-themed dinner included taco lasagna, fresh salsa and guacamole, Mexican rice and spinach salad with strawberries. Dessert consisted of delicious apple enchiladas with a caramel glaze.



A few intrepid cavers made a quick after-dinner look-see visit to Adwell Cave, which is right there at the CRF property.

In a pensive moment on the back patio, incoming Resto camp director Brian Hunsaker praised Bill's ongoing dedication.

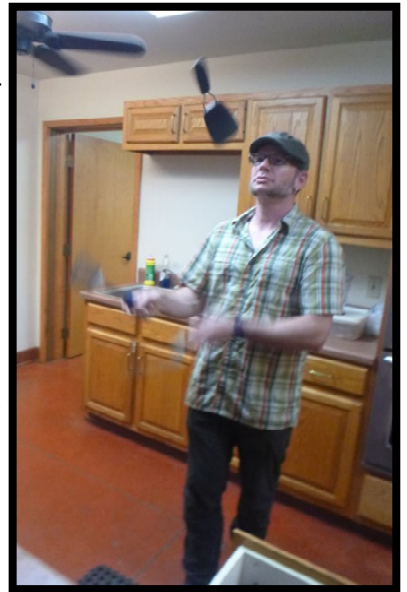
"It was at the end of November camp last year," Hunsaker recalled.



"Bill said it was approaching his seventh year and he wanted to know if I would be the next camp director. Everyone can see that Bill spends so much time making sure everything is right for everyone that I think he loses a little of the sheer enjoyment of being part of this. I think he's looking to get back to that enjoyment."

Hunsaker said his commitment to being the next director would be open-ended and without any seven-year limit, which coincidentally also happened to be the length of time that previous director Roy VanHooser served.

"I talked about it with my wife, Katt, because I wanted to make sure that if I make this commitment, it's something that I'll continue wanting to do for seven years, like Bill even longer," Hunsaker said. to feel that everyone here is part



and I feel a real connection with everyone."

Already being a supervisor, task-assigner and people-his day job in suburban Chicago, Brian said he hopes his transfer well to the Resto Crew.

"I've watched Bill do a great job of assigning the appropriate certain tasks," he said. "I like to think I also have a way of ple's strengths and suggesting tasks they'll not only com-ones they honestly will enjoy."

Roy VanHooser was camp director from 2003 until 2010.

"I was the guy who cornered Bill and suckered him into the VanHooser chuckled. "Kidding aside, Bill had the organiza-the experience and the connections to be a good camp di-

VanHooser said it can be difficult to predict what kind of a will do when appointed to a task.

"With Bill, he has met and exceeded all expectations, for same good feeling about Brian, and I wish him the best of camp director in 2018 and beyond."

Breakfast on the final day (Friday, August 11) of the week-long field of eggs and the traditional southern favorite of biscuits and gravy.

With Friday traditionally being a half day of work, the full Resto Crew met at the Historic Entrance of Mammoth, broke into teams and descended the 862* steps downward. (* number may be off)



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Some of the team removed 25 grass sacks loaded with construction gravel (–actually just sand) from Audubon Avenue, others went to Black Snake Avenue to haul several rolls of old electrical wire and 3-inch-diameter trunk cable and others trekked to the off-trail Washington Pit in order to measure it for a new tarp (which prevents drip water from mixing with the creosote chemical in the wooden bridge over the pit before it can drip stream below). For the record, the bridge is 21-feet, 7-inch long.

Friday’s dinner always is a camp highlight because it includes the distribution of Resto Camp awards –not to mention the standing dinner of grilled pork chops, Tennessee bread stuffing, roast-



ing with the creosote chemical into the inches includes the out-salad, corn-tatoes, paragus and bourbon sert.



in-ble Bill eve-few

Honored guests accepting invitation to the banquet included Rick and Colleen Olson as well as Barclay Trim-and his wife and two adorable children. cleared his throat and addressed the group, thanking ryone for their participation. Rick and Brian also said a words.

But it was simply Barclay’s presence in the room that was the most inspir-ing. Never, in the history of Resto Camp, had the very superintendent of the Park and resource the Resto Crew pledges to conserve, with his busy schedule and multiple departments and employees to manage, and being only one week into his new position, previously had the availability to hang with the Restoration Cavers and be there for the awards dinner. It never had happened before.

“We couldn’t do it without you guys,” Superintendent Trimble said.

The Resto Crew can now beam with pride that Barclay’s recognition of their work validates their efforts and serves as a sign of future cooperation, more work projects to be accomplished and a warm friendship with the NPS leadership. Thanks, Barclay!



Accomplishments for the Week

Coach Cave

- removed 20 cubic yards of wood debris
- removed 500 feet of wire and numerous light bulbs and switches
- cut and prepared the old wooden staircase at Murder Hole for removal next year

Echo River Spring

- removed over one ton (175 bags @ 30#/bag, or 5,250 pounds) of gravel from Echo River Spring streambed
- caused the in-cave water level to drop by 5.25 inches

Mammoth Cave Historic Route

- removed 12 pounds of lint and hair from tourist trails
- removed 25 bags of sand from Audubon Avenue
- removed 150 feet of wire from Black Snake Avenue
- measured the bridge over Washington Pit for a better-fitting tarp
- donated 768 'man-hours' to Mammoth Cave (equal to NPS savings of \$18,816 at prevailing wage of \$24.50/hr)

Awards

- Mammoth Cave National Park awarded everyone a really cool carabiner with an embedded compass (and everyone also received unique, hand-made bat-themed cloth drink coasters)
- Better Working Through Better Eating Award: Mark Williams and Chuck Schubert (each received a t-shirt and bottle of wine)
- Sack Rat Award: Brian Lantz (who also was given the 'Webbed Feet Award' of a t-shirt since he never got out of the water at Echo Spring)
- Notable Week-Long Newbie Award: Mary Schubert (received a t-shirt)
- Stephen Bishop Award (We Can Do It): Mark Williams (our highest honor to the guy who donated his time to cook for the group)

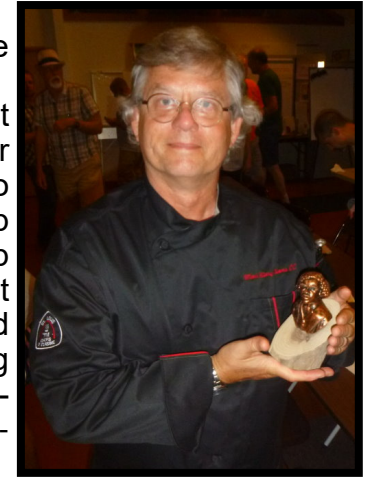


"When I was camp director, the biggest challenge was keeping people well-fed," VanHooser said.

"Food is 50-percent of camp, if not more," Hunsaker echoed. "If we didn't have Mark us, it would motivate every morn-knowing breakfast then you you'll return ner, instead weenies



Brian said find out about camp, what they don't enjoy, dislikes and camp facility likes and dis- "I'm also wanting to convert our web which will allow anybody to upload their said. "Instead of our current three web Yahoo and stand-alone), what I'd like and steer everyone to the one, central



he intends to poll Resto Cavers by email to what they enjoy food menu likes and likes.

site to Word Press, photographs," he sites (on Facebook, to do is consolidate and modern Word Press web site that have all the capabili- of all three web sites one."



Larry Matiz summed-up the overall experience with some sage realizations. "This can be a very fulfilling experience, but it's really up to the individual," he said. "At times, this can be hard work and some people may not be used to that. But for some people who have desk jobs or are lawyers and doctors, they may think this is just something really different to do."



will ties in

"Helping with restoration in Mammoth Cave is a very special experience," said Aurora Creamer. "You get to go off the trails and see things that the general public does not, and you get to meet some really great people. I just love it!"



- by Gary Gibula