

January 1975

## Alaskan Caver, Volume 2, No. 1, January-June 1975

Alice Iliff

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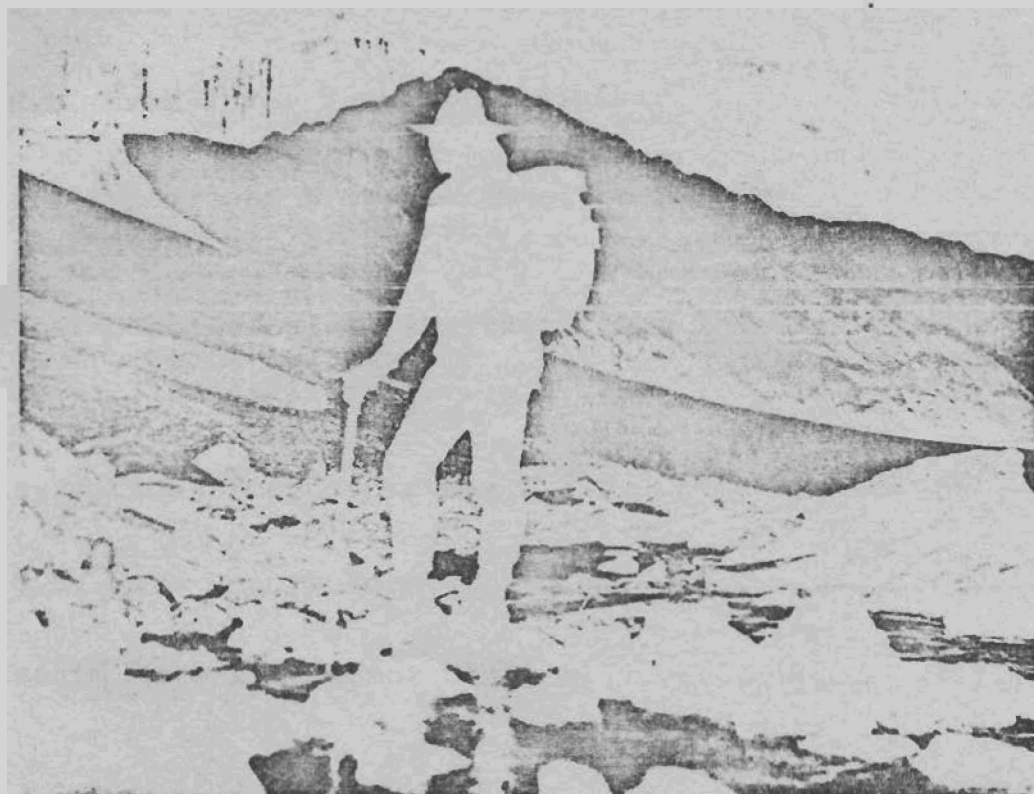
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T H E   A L A S K A N   C A V E R

Volume II, Number 1

January - June, 1975



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ALASKAN CAVE AREAS CONSERVATION TASK FORCE  
(National Speleological Society)

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Cover Credit: Photo of Byron's Glacier Cave, by Harvey Bowers

## EDITOR'S NOTE

The purpose of The Alaskan Caver is to present material on caves and cave areas of Alaska, and to inform readers of activities of the Alaskan Cave Areas Conservation Task Force. The success of this publication depends upon contributions of material from interested people. Articles of any length, mention of caves in travel brochures or newspapers, historical items, book reviews or abstracts, maps, or any other cave related materials dealing with Alaska, are more than welcome. The bulletin will be copyrighted, as suggested by the N.S.S., to protect materials of a sensitive nature. Please send any information to:

Editor - The Alaskan Caver  
2944 Emory Street  
Anchorage, Alaska 99504

I would certainly like to hear from all readers.

This issue contains a list of N.S.S. members in Alaska. If your name, or anyone else's, should be included on this sheet, please send it in; please send any address corrections, also. The Task Force would like to be in touch with all Alaskan cavers, and invites any N.S.S. members visiting Alaska to attend our meetings (held the first Tuesday evening of each month).

The Task Force cave file is ready to collect information on both known caves and rumored ones. I have included copies of the N.S.S. Cave Report form and a Task Force Cave Rumor form. If you can help us add to our files by providing any information, we would certainly appreciate your returning these forms. (If you are sending an Alaskan cave report directly to the N.S.S.; please send us a copy, also).

Looking forward to hearing from you,

Alice Iliff, Editor

## CHAIRMAN'S CORNER

The Alaskan Caver was first compiled in 1970 by Charles (4847) and Wanda Pease (14007) when they were in Anchorage. "In order to try and interest N.S.S. members here in caving here." Shortly after they left, the Alaskan Cave Areas Conservation Task Force was started by Robert Stitt (5403), James Hedges (3848), William Halliday (812), and myself.

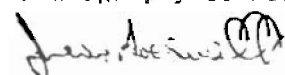
Partly because of pressing work load and the lack of danger to Alaska's little known caves, inactivity has been the best conservation policy until now. Caving has been inhibited by lack of knowledge of cave locations, by use of some caves by bears, by laws protecting archeological sites, and by great distances and high travel costs. This inhibition has worked in favor of cave and cave area protection.

Now, however, we see signs of increasing activity that precedes mineral development in the southern Brooks Range -- a limestone belt across the state that may parallel the one on the north side from the Bering Sea to Canada. Increasing use of Forest Service lands for recreation brings the rapidly growing public in close contact with the many glacier caves of the Tongass and Chugach National Forests. Increasing maritime activities -- fishing, oil drilling, recreation -- on our outer and inner coasts makes littoral caves more noticeable and accessible. For these same reasons, lava tubes probably will be visited often.

Most fortunately, the coming need for cave exploration and conservation has coincided with the assembly of a small, but enthusiastic group of N.S.S. members in Anchorage and Fairbanks. Our first step, mentioned elsewhere in this issue, was to contact all Alaskan N.S.S. members, and encourage former members to reinstate. We plan to recruit non-N.S.S. people who have caving related experience. Many members are needed to participate in expeditions, cave descriptions, keeping the files, and communications with caving and land owner communities.

A very important aspect of our communication is The Alaskan Caver. The Peases, Hedges, and Halliday have urged a continuing publication. The editor is Alice Iliff (13966). I invite all of you -- Alaskans, spelunkers, and friends across the land -- to send reports of any cave related trips in Alaska, references to articles on Alaskan caves, and cave report forms to Alice. Copies of cave rumor sheets should be sent to Chuck Iliff (13956), who is responsible for the cave files.

Any N.S.S. members coming to (or through) Alaska are invited to call me for further information on Alaskan caves, to facilitate exploration of known and rumored caves in the area of your destination. Our next issue will include a bibliography of Alaskan caves and cave areas.



Julius Rockwell (11308)

## TASK FORCE UPDATE

I. Status of the Task Force:

The Alaskan Cave Areas Conservation Task Force has been meeting monthly since February 1975, (no meeting in March), as a result of finding 14 N.S.S. members in the Anchorage area. Since its inception, Julius Rockwell had been chairman of the Task Force.

The first meeting of 1975 included introductions, slides of a Brooks Range limestone area, and a discussion on the possibilities of Alaskan activities related to caves.

The second meeting defined the objectives of the Task Force: to survey the speleological resources of Alaska, to determine significant areas, and to recommend retention of those areas by appropriate government agencies. Work began on reviving The Alaskan Caver, the Task Force bulletin that had been edited by Chuck Pease in 1970 (Volume I, Numbers 1 and 2). The executive committee was formed, with members volunteering for the following positions:

Chairman: Julius Rockwell, Jr.

Vice Chairman: David Street

Bulletin Editor/Corresponding Secretary: Alice Iliff

Membership/Recording Secretary: Merrie Duncan

Treasurer/Cave Register: Bruce Morton

Cave Files/Owner Relations: Chuck Iliff

Programs/Cave Surveys: Harvey Bowers

Expeditions/Training: Phil Duncan

Hearing Coordinator: Nancy Street

Trip Coordinator: Liz Rockwell

A slide program on glacier caves was given by Harvey Bowers.

The third meeting concentrated on cave reporting and files: how to handle miscellaneous cave rumors, how to record caves N.S.S. members have verified, and how to follow up reputable leads. In Alaska, location of caves or areas is of primary importance, and U.S.G.S. maps will be the standard used. The Task Force has applied for non-profit status. A short slide show featured West Virginia caves.

Nancy Hallinan, a member in Fairbanks, is coordinating information for N.S.S. members in that area. There are 3 known members in Fairbanks.

Future location/survey trips include Hope, Halibut Cove, Anaktuvuk Pass, the Wrangells, and Portage. There will also be weekend hikes, and sessions on vertical and glacier techniques.

## II. The State of the State:

Anchorage is a good base of operations, being 2,000 miles from the end of the Aleutian Chain in one direction, 1,000 miles from the southern end of the state, and 1,200 miles from the northern point of the state. Fairbanks is a good jumping off point for the interior. Most of Alaska's population is located in these two cities.

There are fewer roads in the state than in most counties. The pipeline haul road will span the entire state from north to south.

Aircraft are used extensively for travel, utilizing landing strips, glaciers and lakes both in summer and winter. Snow machines and all-terrain vehicles are replacing the dog-

sleds, so people can be more mobile all year round. Travel can be very costly and time consuming. Tundra areas can be impossible during insect seasons.

### III. Publications and Communications:

The Alaskan Caver will be published three times this year (June, September, and December). Publication will be quarterly after that. All issues will be copyrighted.

Contact will be made with the N.S.S. News to inform them of Task Force activities.

A cave rumor report sheet has been devised for collecting information for the cave files.

### IV. A Note on Cave Areas:

Known caves are generally small, and, except for littoral caves, tend to fill with ice and rubble. The average annual isotherm (0°) passes about 60 miles north of Anchorage. Some glacial caves are quite respectable (in size), but few found are inviting. However, there are many, many small caves in Alaska. Anything that goes back more than 30 feet is considered a deep cave.

Southeast Alaska has been covered by William Halliday's "Caves and Potential Cave Areas in Alaska." (The Alaskan Caver, Volume I, Number 1, 1970).

Prince William Sound has hundreds of littoral caves which Jay Rockwell has seen from flying over. Kachemak Bay (south side) is another littoral cave area as are parts of Turnagain Arm. Some of these have been explored and will be reported.



The Aleutian area and the Seward Peninsula are said to have lava tubes.

A massive limestone belt extends all the way across northern Alaska from the DeLong Mountains in the west to the Davidson Mountains in the east. Caves have been reported informally to exist the entire length of the Brooks Range. Also, there are said to be other areas which bonafide cavers have not verified. There are so many caves, all small, that it seems quite likely that larger ones (by Alaska standards) may exist, and will be found. This limestone is Mississippian, of the unconsolidated Cape Lisborne type. Fossil coral and what appear to be gypsum flowers have been observed. Rather lovely ice crystals have been found in the two caves that go into the permafrost. According to one geologist, the permafrost extends at least 400 feet into the rock at Anaktuvuk Pass. However, springs have been found at the northern foothills of this range that run at nearly constant temperatures all year round, and support relatively warm, but limited microclimates. This area holds many promises for exploration.

A knowledge and a disposition toward mountaineering and wilderness camping would be a useful attribute for a northern caver. The most easily found openings are often high and remote. After half a day's climb the cave is usually found to go in about five or six feet!

#### V. Cave Conservation:

No cave conservation problems have been found that are in any way comparable to those being experienced in other states. There is a possible problem with grave robbers looting for artifacts as some caves have been used for burial. The removal of artifacts from caves is in violation of the Federal Antiquities Act of 1906 and this has been strongly reinforced by Alaska law.

Enforcement remains a minor problem. There is limited interest in caving here, except by archeologists. The new trans-Alaska oil pipeline poses no direct problem as all known caves are on mountainsides and the oil pipeline and road are on the valley floor. The proximity of the existing road to caves is not likely to have much effect in the foreseeable future, as most people contacted feel caves are small and dull, and are primarily used by bears, for hibernation, by wolves for dens (not really) and are likely to collapse during the next earthquake.

The Alaskan Native Land Claim Settlement Act, which entitles native groups to select certain tracts of land, will necessitate a land owner liaison in regard to caves and potential areas that are under native control.

VI. Group Effort:

Enthusiasm at this point is high, and Task Force members are handling respective duties. Specialized and interested people will be encouraged to contribute to and participate in the Task Force.

\* \* \* \* \*

NEWSPAPER NOTE

The May 28 issue of The Great Lander newspaper (p. 18 of "Anchorage TODAY") had a short article advertising a wilderness lodge across Kachemak Bay. From a boat, the writer mentioned seeing several small sea caves, believed to be Indian burial grounds, near the entrance of China Poot Bay. This article is on file in the Task Force cave files.

-- Chuck Iliff

## N.S.S./TASK FORCE MEMBERS IN ALASKA

June 1975

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2510 Foraker Drive  
Anchorage 99503

272-5648

The following out-of-state members have contributed to or shown an interest in Alaskan cave study:

DeBee, Adrian (14919)	Hauer, P.M. (7391)	Rhodes, Doug (6746)
DeBee, Aleta (14918)	Hedges, James (3848)	Rhodes, Linda (11384)
Halliday, W.R. (812)	Pease, C.R. (4847)	Stitt, R.R. (5403).

## KARST TOPOGRAPHY WITHOUT LIMESTONE

By William Harvey Bowers

Is it possible to have Karst topography without Limestone? According to Clayton, (1964), "Karst topography may occur on stagnant, drift-covered parts of glaciers, such as the Martin River Glacier, South Central, Alaska. Glacial Karst features include ice sink-holes, tunnels, caves, sinking streams, blind valleys, large springs, natural bridges, lapies, humes, and residual soils or ablation till, to mention a few."

In 1955, (Gravenor) suggested a stagnant ice sheet is in many respects similar to a limestone formation, and may develop "ice-sinks," when the roofs of ice caves collapse. In 1901, Tarr-Martin-and Russell suggested that Karst was especially conspicuous on the stagnant and drift-covered margin of the Malaspina Glacier, South Central, Alaska. When flying over the Malaspina today, one may note the large number of ice-sinks located on the lower margin of the glacier where the caves have collapsed. During the Wisconsin time Karst topography was apparently more widespread throughout the margin of the continental ice sheet. (Gravenor and Kupsch, 1959)

Thornburg (1954) suggests the development of Glacial Karst as follows:

1. Soluble rocks. Ice, considered a mineral, dissolves (melts) very much like limestone; hence, Karst formation.
2. Dense, highly jointed rocks. Glacier ice is dense, impermeable, and usually well jointed.
3. Low ground-water-base level. Glacial Karst topography forms only where melt water can seep through the glacier and drain away.
4. At least moderate rainfall. Glacial melt water adds to, or

takes the place of moderate rainfall.

5. Glacier must be stagnant, movement would destroy Karst topography before it could fully develop. Ablation till is necessary to decrease general surface ablation, preserving the glacier long enough for Karst features to develop.

With Glacial Karst in mind, a new science has developed, that of Glaciospeleology. In referring to Glacier caves, glaciologists and speleologists have used the term "ice cave". But the term ice cave is now used to designate "permanent caves in rock formations, in which ice forms and remains far into the summer or throughout the year", (Henderson, 1933). Therefore, the term "Glacier Cave" should be used in referring to a cave within a Glacier.

Although not documented, the Tlingit Indians of Southeastern Alaska have a legend that when migrating to Southeastern they passed through an ice tunnel located somewhere around the Stikine River.

Glacier Caves have been reported in Norway, Stokes (1959) and Theakstone (1967); Antarctica and the U.S.S.R., Grozdetsky (1961), who stated, "Ice Caves of several types occur in different parts of the U.S.S.R. Some are wind caves, some are related to permafrost conditions."

There are two types of Glacial Caves, ablation caves - formed by circulating warm air and melt water streams, of which we are concerned here, and obstruction caves - where glacier flow is interrupted by bedrock, etc., (McKenzie, 1970).

The first mention of Glacier Caves was by Russell (1897) who stated,

(regarding the Malaspina Glacier near Yakutat, Alaska), "When the streams from the north reach the glacier they invariably flow into tunnels and disappear from view. The entrances to the tunnels are frequently high arches, and the streams flowing into them carry along great quantities of gravel and sand. Much of the work of subglacial streams is open to view, and enables one to infer what takes place within the tunnels, and to analyze, to some extent, the processes of stream deposition beneath glacial ice."

The most extensive studies in Alaska were on the Martin River Glacier, by Reed (1970) and his student Clayton (1964). They observed all stages of the Karst cycle in glacial ice. They also noted that two interconnected sink-hole lakes and four nearby lakes emptied and refilled at about a million gallons per minute, due to sub-glacial streams, Halliday (1970). This same type of lake drainage takes place at the Juneau Ice Field, Lemon Glacier Cave. Each year, usually in August, Lake Linda drains through the cave tunnel and refills. The lake drainage is rapid, catastrophic and prone to flooding Salmon Creek Valley, a residential area of Juneau. The cave tunnel not only serves as a drainage tunnel, but also as an englacial reservoir. The outburst of glacier drained lakes and englacial reservoirs has always posed a problem and seems to be quite common in Alaska.

Byrons Glacier Cave is located in the Portage Glacier Recreation Area, Chugach National Forest, South Central Alaska. Byrons was first studied by Pease (1969) who mapped a cave 600 feet long by 15 feet wide, 7 feet high. Another cave, with a high entrance was about 1500 feet long, averaging 25 feet wide and 9 feet high, this cave became inaccessible as of September, 1970, due to collapse.

The first entree by the author was September 1971, where upon the first cave entrance was found in its final stages of collapse. November of that same year the first and second entrances were mapped, see Fig. 1., November the following year this same area was again mapped, Fig. 2, and major changes were noted.

As of the first mapping, the first entrance was a 50 foot crawl beside the stream bed; this was the final stage of collapse. The second entrance followed the stream bed for approximately 600 feet. The ceiling height averaged 4 feet, whereas the width approximated 30-35 feet. The stream was down-cutting an out-wash which was made up of a metamorphic siltstone. Many snow fleas were noted in the water which had a very low turbidity. Ice stalactites and stalagmites, draperies, etc., were noted within the cave. The last 150 feet consisted of a large room which left the stream bed and was some 6 feet higher than the stream. The room was arched and had some very large ice flakes hanging from the ceiling, somewhat unstable. As of November 1972, this area was a huge sink, approximately 280 feet long by 175 feet wide and heavily crevassed around the edges. The first entrance was open, but the stream did not follow the main passage until well within the sink. The main portion of the cave was much the same as the preceeding year except for the collapse area (sink). The ceiling was higher towards the first entrance, or first 500 feet of the cave. The latter part of the cave, last 400 feet, was arched downward toward the second entrance. A third cave existed within the higher main portion of the Glacier, but was only traversed the first 200 feet.

The ice thickness of any portion overlying the cave was a maximum of 70 feet.

"Unless virtually all the snow cover melts from the surface of the glacier (in which case the glacier will soon disappear), the weight of compacting snow causes slow plastic flow toward the wastage area," Anderson, Halliday (1969). Plastic flow or deformation shows in Byrons collapsed area. The walls are moving inward, creating large crevasses and the ceiling is arched downward. The passages appear in direct proportion to stream size with wind ablation as a secondary factor.

Glacier drained lakes and other glacier Karst topography play a major role in Alaska's glacial streams.

Sub-glacial drainage has caused major catastrophic flooding in Alaska. For us to adequately plan for the future, we must study these and other glacial phenomenon.

Glacial Karst and Glaciospeleoogy, a new science within a new field.



# BYRON'S CAVES, ALASKA

## BYRON'S GLACIER, PORTAGE, ALASKA

Figure 1.

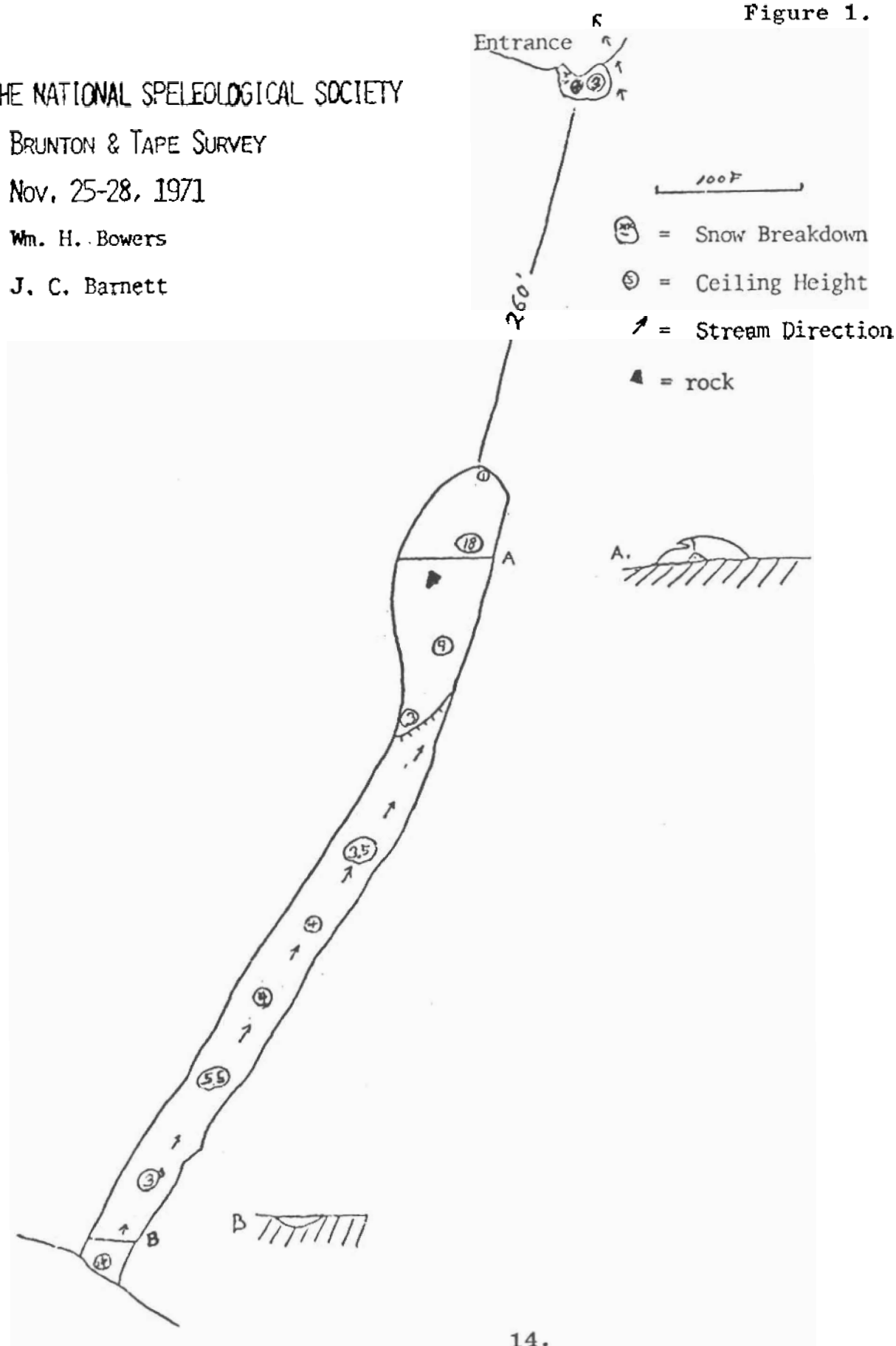
THE NATIONAL SPELEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

BRUNTON & TAPE SURVEY

Nov. 25-28, 1971

Wm. H. Bowers

J. C. Barnett



Byron's Glacier, Portage, Alaska

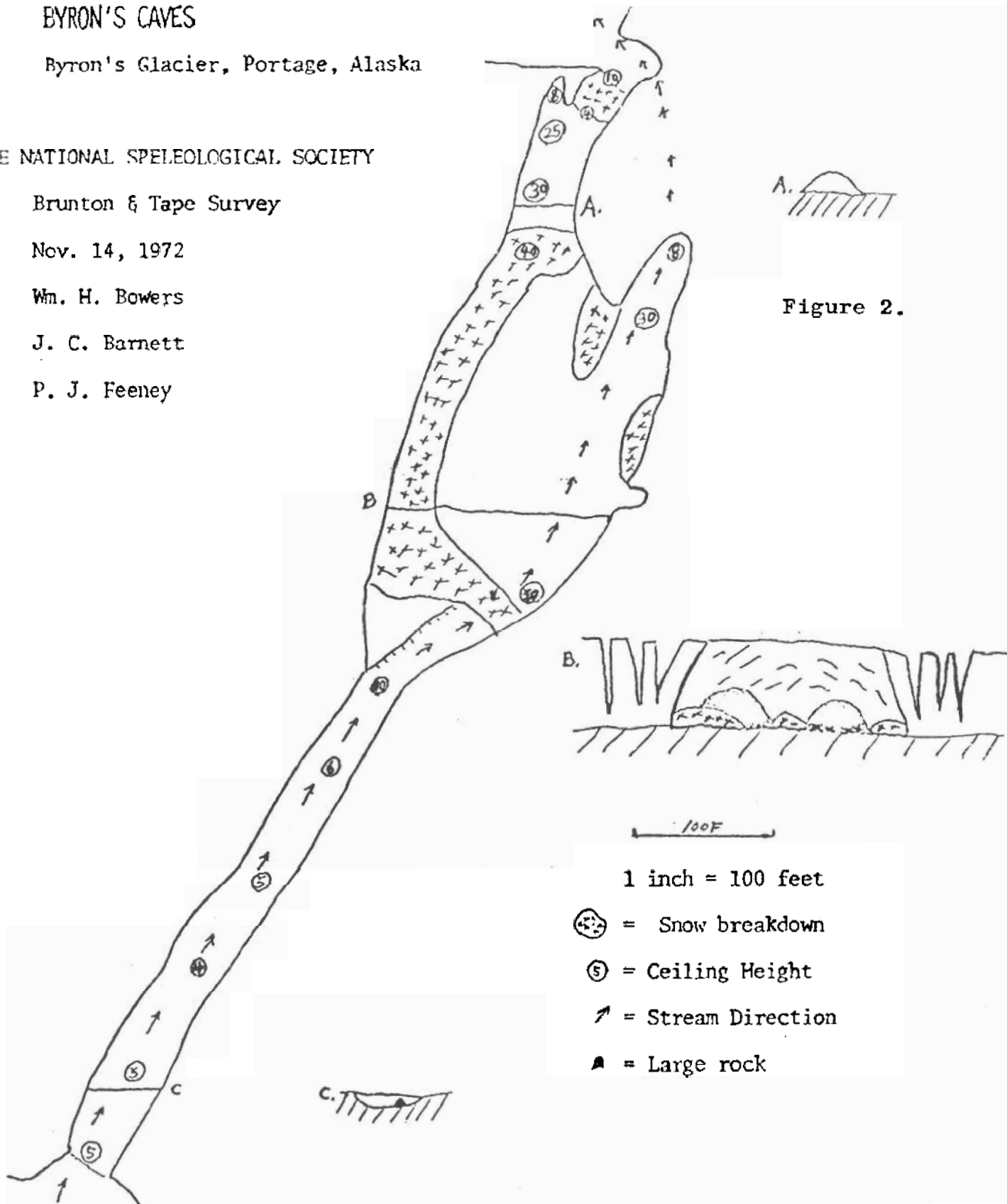
Brunton &amp; Tape Survey

Nov. 14, 1972

Wm. H. Bowers

J. C. Barnett

P. J. Feeney



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\* \* \* \* \*

#### CALCAREOSPELEOLOGICAL ABSTRACT

Tobin, Emery F., "Caves of Coronation," Alaska Magazine, August, 1973, pp. 24-26.

The writer, the former editor and publisher of The Alaska Sportsman, describes a visit to caves in Silurian limestone at Egg Harbor on Coronation Island, together with some background history on the area. He considers them littoral, but his photos suggest that they are phreatic. He mentions a "row of some six caves and three arched rock bridges in Egg Harbor... the caves are from 10 to 20 feet high at their entrances but gradually contract to their ends at distances of from 50 to 400 feet."

Of special interest is his quoting Dr. A. T. Owenshine of the U.S. Geological Survey as saying, "Such caves are common wherever limestone occurs in Southeastern Alaska."

-- William Halliday

INSTRUCTIONS FOR COMPLETING NSS CAVE REPORT FORM CR 1

1. Report only one cave per form. Type report when possible. If more space is needed, continue report on a sheet of typing paper. Do not write on back of the sheet. Send completed forms to the address listed below or to the National Speleological Society, Cave Avenue, Huntsville, Alabama 35810.
2. Cave name. Enter the most frequently used name and list after it in parentheses any other names by which the cave is also known. If you are naming the cave yourself, use a local name or name it after the owner if possible. Avoid using names already used for other caves.
3. Location. Include the state and county, owner and address, USGS Quadrangle, latitude and longitude or section-township-range (to the nearest quarter quarter section).
4. Remarks. Include such items as special equipment needed, unusual safety precautions necessary, source of information if not first-hand, and any other pertinent data not included elsewhere on the form.
5. Directions. Give specific directions for reaching the cave from some well-defined spot as main road junctions or the nearest town or village. Give directions in miles and tenths of miles and in terms of north and south (as opposed to right and left). Note any landmarks which would be necessary for a complete stranger to find the cave entrance. Include a sketch map and pictures of the locality of the entrance, if necessary.
6. Narrative description. Record your visual impression of the cave, making it as complete as possible. Include data on the number and type of entrance(s), necessary rigging, size and shape of passages, over-all length, and other pertinent data as number of levels, total depth, dome pits, water, fill, speleothems, biota, folklore, and special features of interest.
7. Map. Should preferably be based on a compass and tape survey, but a simple sketch map is better than no map at all.

NSS Cave Files  
H.E. Medville  
Box 697  
McLean, Virginia 22101

ALASKAN CAVE AREAS CONSERVATION TASK FORCE  
CAVE RUMOR REPORT

Please be as complete as possible, so that someone else trying to follow your lead will have specific information. One rumor per sheet; attach extra pages if you run out of space.

DATE OF RUMOR:

LOCATION/NAME: (Give map township, range, section, meridians; type of cave-limestone, littoral, rock shelter, etc.; give as much description as you can of the cave/area)

DIRECTIONS: (Give specific instructions, landmarks, etc.):

WAS THE SOURCE OF THE RUMOR A

PERSON: (Give name, address, phone, has person been to rumored area, etc.)

PUBLICATION: (Give title, author, publisher, date, pages, where can the publication be found, etc.)

VISUAL OBSERVATION: (Give coordinates, topography description, etc.)

OTHER

ANY OTHER USEFUL INFORMATION (Owner? On Federal land? Animal denning area? etc.)

YOUR NAME:

ADDRESS:

PHONE:

DATE:

Return this form to:

CAVE FILES - ACAC TASK FORCE  
2944 Emory Street  
Anchorage, Alaska 99504