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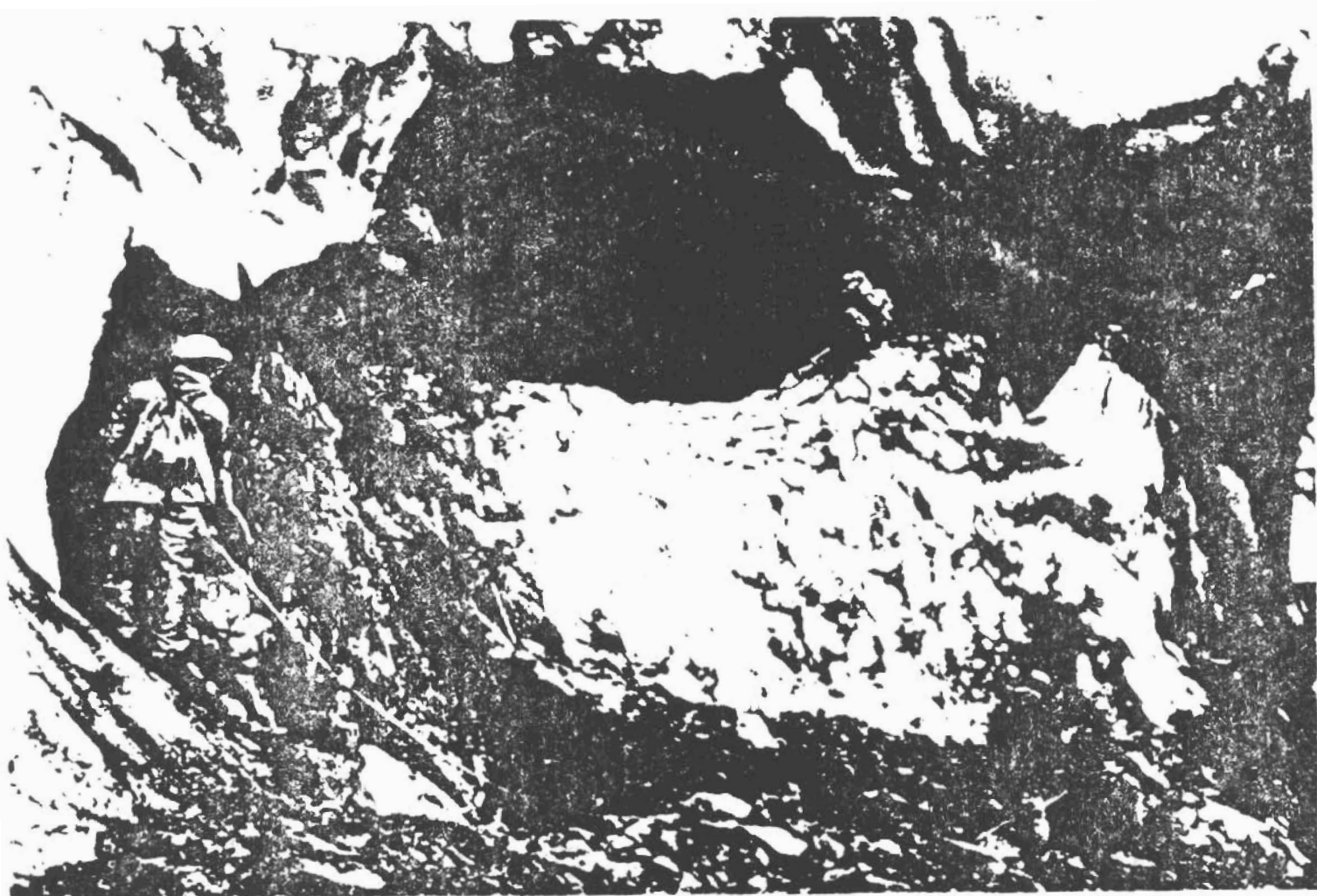
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THE ALASKAN CAVER

Volume 7 No 1

January - February 1982



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- March 18 Glacier Grotto Meeting. Meetings are held on the third floor of Grant Hall, Alaska Pacific Univ. at 7:30 pm.
- April 15 Glacier Grotto Meeting. Meetings are held on the third floor of Grant Hall, Alaska Pacific University at 7:30 pm. The program will be an NSS slide show.
- May 20 Glacier Grotto Meeting. Meetings are held on the third floor of Grant Hall, Alaska Pacific Univ. at 7:30 pm.
- June 11 Glacier Grotto Meeting. Meetings are held on the third floor of Grant Hall, Alaska Pacific University at 7:30 pm. The program will be a slide show on Caves of Alaska.
- June 19-20 Weekend caving trip somewhere; call Rich Hall for details.
- June 27-July 3 NSS Convention in Bend Oregon. Don't miss the Convention that is and will be the closest one to Alaska in years.
- Labor Day Possible caving trip to Chitistone Valley.

The cover picture is a picture of Crescent Cave and is copied from the September 29, 1978 issue of the Japanese magazine Asahi Graph and appeared in the article beginning on page 3 of this issue of the Alaskan Caver.

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CURRENT TITLES IN SPELEOLOGY

We have received two publications recently from Anne Oldham in Rhydydyr, Crymch, Dyfed (Wales) U.K. They are in exchange for our sending them copies of the Alaskan Caver. The first is 320 Caving Books, their 1982 list of caving books they have in stock for sale on all cave topics from all over the world. The second is Current Titles in Speleology, 1981 International which lists 3136 caving articles by topic and location. The articles are from over 200 publications in 80 countries. They can be borrowed from the Grotto library in Jay Rockwell's office anytime. Rich Hall

TH GLITTER OF UNDERGROUND CASTLES OF GLAS
by Takamine Fujiki

[This article (in Japanese of course) appeared in the September 29, 1978 issue of the Japanese magazine Asahi Graph which has a format similar to Life and was sent to Jay Rockwell by a member of the expedition. An English version of their trip summary including maps of the two caves explored appeared in Vol. 5 No. 1, January 1980 issue of The Alaskan Caver.

We are gratefully indebted to Yukio Ozawa, M.D., a visiting professor / cardiologist at North Carolina Memorial Hospital, Chapel Hill, N.C. who is affiliated with Nihon University, Tokyo, Japan for the translation of this article from the magazine article and to Sydney Jenkins for obtaining it. Some grammatical changes were made by the editor. R. Hall, Ed.]

The expedition of the Kwansai Gakuin University Exploration Club tried glacier caving which is called a drama in the darkness.

They went to Alaska, and discovered two new caves during three weeks beginning July 23rd. When they investigated these caves, they recorded some beautiful ice formations which had been previously unreported, and got many data which will contribute to the field of geology.

Seven young members went to Portage which is about 80 Km southeast of Anchorage on July 23rd. They set up their base camp in the camping area of Chugach National Forest near Portage Lake; then they started to scout around Byron Glacier.

The expedition of the Kwansai Gakuin University planned to go into a glacier cave and made preparations for caving.

In Japan, caving is a popular activity for expeditions of many universities and as big an activity as diving.

However, the subjects were limited in limestone, volcanic rock caves and littoral caves. Furthermore, most Japanese caves were completely explored, so many expeditions have tried caving abroad. But nobody had planned to go glacier caving.

Last summer, five members of this expedition went to Alaska for the purpose of preparatory investigation, because glacier caves were not seen in the mountain glaciers of the Himalayas and the Andes.

They confirmed a glacier cave at the terminus of Byron Glacier as they were told by the Alaskan caving club. However, when they went to the same place this summer, they were startled to find that the glacier cave had disappeared. The glacier cave had changed into a river at that time. That cave had been investigated by the Alaskan caving club six years before.

The total length of this cave was reported to be approximately 300 M. They couldn't believe that the cave had disappeared. They thought that the reason was due to recession of the glacier, because recession was seen not only at Byron Glacier but also Portage Glacier at the time.

They tried to enter the monster's mouth.

They were unable to sleep well for many days because they lost their main object. However, they found a new glacier cave higher on Byron Glacier at 670 M above sea level.

They saw a big ice fall which covered the entrance of the cave and seemed to fall down. The length of this ice fall was about 250 M.

Members of this expedition of the Kwansai Gakuin University were :
Shuzo Kondo (coaching), Hiroshi Matsuzaki (chief), Kazuo Ikeda (subchief), Toyofumi Okuda, Manichiro Ikuta, Yoshiaki Takamoto, and Toshinori Kitano.

At first, three members entered the dark entrance that looked like a monster's mouth. The front of the route went over a precipice nearby. Left and right routes stopped at an ice wall also. Then, they entered a narrow vertical pit which seemed to be impassable and was to the left of the entrance.

About one hour later, they reached an open space in the cave 45 M from the entrance. Other members reached the open space too.

That vertical pit was only 25 CM in width, and they went down about 7 M, then they had to pass through a small tunnel by laying down flat to go through the open space.

Their jackets and overalls were covered with earth and sand, because there were many glacial deposits on the ice wall. They were surrounded by ice walls and many stalactites.

The temperature of this open space was three degrees Celcius (30 C), and water drops fell continuously.

The bright object d'art of ice

While taking a photograph, part of a big stalactite fell down at their feet with a crash. They escaped by a hare's breath from the big mass of falling ice.

They investigated the cave in Byron Glacier four times and got many data of measurement, temperature, photographs, etc. The length of the cave was 159.2 M. The humidity of this cave was 90% at mean value. The temperature of the ice was 0.10C.

They saw some ice formations in this cave but less than they expected.

Mr. William [Harvey] Bowers who belongs to the Alaskan caving club came to their base camp, then told them a friend of his had told him he saw a glacier cave-like entrance in Raven Glacier about three years ago. They tried to go to Raven Glacier but the approach was too long to get there within their limited time.

On August 3rd, they arrived at the entrance of Crow Glacier's Cave which was their second goal. The entrance looked like a long and narrow crevasse 50 KM southeast of Anchorage and 1360 M above sea level.

They went down an ice wall by means of ropes then turned right and passed through a narrow tunnel-like ice hall, then dropped down about 15 M. Then they went into a dome. When they moved their headlamp slowly, they could find the bright object d'art of ice which was the real glacier cave that they expected. There were many kinds of icicle formations which stood out in every direction. That spectacle was likened to a beautiful bright glass castle. They were lost in the wonder of the spectacle.

The castle of glass was seen continuously for about 40 M to a turn in the distance.

Ice worms which you are unable to find in the daytime.

They investigated this glacier cave for three days. Their measurements were very difficult to do because of the narrow passageway and dangerous ice wall. The glacier cave was a total length of 159.7 M. Mean temperature of this cave and the ice were 2.50C and 0.10C respectively.

They had heard of ice worms which are one of the creatures of a glacier cave. They could not find any in the cave, however they found them several times on Byron Glacier. They took samples of the ice worms.

Many rangers of the forest park visited them one after another in order to know the place where they found the ice worms, because rangers heard they found ice worms. An ice worm seems to be very rare for a ranger to find also.

They went there in the night only in order to avoid the many dangers of breakdown of the glacier, the falling ice wall and falling rocks.

In the Alaskan summer, dark night is very short. This ice worm is active at night only. they come out on the surface of the ice approximately 2:00 AM, and they shorten and lengthen their red-black body of the approximate size of 2 CM. They look like chips. After 5:00 AM. they hide under ice before sunrise. If we want to see them in the daytime, it is very difficult to find them out on the ice. An ice worm eats pollen, plankton of duckweed etc. However, their mode of life is unknown.

The expedition had finished their investigation August 10th, and returned to Japan.

THE ISSUE OF POPULARIZATION
by Doug Buchanan

A good thing divided among 10 people is no longer a good thing divided among 100.

That old axiom fits most things. The caver who "discovers" a new, interesting, or beautiful cave, then publishes it; takes the first step toward turning the place into a popularized, crowded, litter strewn state park with a nearby concession stand. And 10 years after his discovery he doesn't understand why there aren't any uncrowded, untrashed, unsterilized caves to conveniently visit.

Of course I am using terms that relate to extremes, which are especially hard to relate to in our sparsely populated Alaska, but the mechanism is the same. Only the degree is up for question at any one time.

Far more important than the trash, crowds and physical trompling of the cave features, is the effect of popularization on the wildlife habitat in and around the caves. Some of it is genuinely "delicate". I speak as a wildlife biologist by education, not a "posie sniffer". Anyone who knows me knows that I am a conservationist, and have ill respect for preservationists. Nature conserves everything and preserves nothing.

Even the "delicate" wildlife species can be quite resilient and can tolerate occasional nearby meanderings of humans. But sustained impact by human visitors is sometimes a problem.

When, among cavers, "word-of-mouth" is used as the cave location mechanism; and used with discretion; the inherent limits help protect cave environments. This "right-of-passage" mechanism using association with the local group of cave "stewards", helps maintain a high standard of ethics among cave visitors. With this mechanism, people tend to become aware of caving ethics before they become aware of the caves. This "saves" the caves.

When the threshold is crossed to the printed word as a mechanism for cave discovery every Joe Doe learns about all the caves before he learns about the ethics. The results are very real.

So what to publish in the club newsletter? Its a tough decision. I speak as an assistant editor to an Alaska mountaineering rag. For caving in Alaska, there is much to offer in print without listing cave locations. This requires a little more imagination and membership participation, but such policy is worth considering.

Do we need a fancy newsletter? We shouldn't fall into the trap of publishing for the sake of publishing. It is a common trap. Pretty soon the publishing becomes more entertaining than the caving. It becomes a hobby for "editors". Maybe the club needs only a notice of meetings and an occasional page of other information if issues or education can find no writers. The club should not become the publication. The publication should be a part of the club.

For the sake of Alaska and our "good thing", no matter what else we do, we should keep attractive Alaskan stories out of the national rags.

I offer these thoughts because the "Alaskan Caver" once presented a feature story on an easy access area that is an extremely critical wildlife habitat for a rare wildlife species; easily disturbed. It is quite unique, and if disturbance is minimized, for a number of years, it has the potential to build back to a level that can sustain more disturbance.

This area is/was also a popular rock climbing area; but the climbers (except for a certain few hypocritical Sierra Club types) have taken it upon themselves to stop climbing there in deference to the wildlife. Because of its location, that is a significant sacrifice. The sacrifice relates to our ethics.

We have even put considerable effort into preventing an adjacent government proposed wayside and picnic area (with a private use cabin) that was also supported by these pro-Park "environmentalists" who regularly claim to be "saving the wilderness". If the recreation oriented government agency involved finds out that this area is also a potential caving site; that will be the the straw they need to make it a Park for the people: wildlife be damned! It will become a sterilized wayside attraction. A significant, rare wildlife species will be lost to that area.

Government recreation agencies build budgets off recreation. They can't build budgets off wildlife protection; that is the Game Department's bailiwick.

"Alaska" is another spelling for "magnificent wildlife habitat". Most cavers enjoy the wildlife around Alaska cave areas and do not want to sacrifice it merely to popularize these areas.

I think the Glacier Grotto should debate the issue of popularizing areas and form a policy for the newsletter. This is quite important since cave areas, like most areas in Alaska, are commonly associated with rich wildlife habitat. Caveing is a growing activity in Alaska, that impacts sites often not yet impacted by less site-specific activity groups. Ergo: we are talking about a detriment to wildlife habitat sites with popularization (not occasional visiting).

A rational compromise exists in gendering high standards of caving ethic, and limiting (by natural mechanisms, NOT laws and permit systems) the number of people at cave sites. Cavers have a history of high ethical standards. The problems have historically been centered among novices not yet aware of the sub-culture standards. These problems are largely alleviated by using word of mouth as a cave location mechanism, instead of using print.

In addition to these considerations, by avoiding print, we also allow a cave to be "discovered" over and over again. We can give the next caver no greater gift. A thousand bagged caves are little compared to one "discovered" by pure individual exploration. Word-of-mouth for the true enthusiast is no hinderance, and general caving knowledge is quite sufficient.

We don't really need to be the published egotist who claims discovery or early exploration of a cave. Its just not that important to matters that count.

Let's keep a good thing; a good thing, and assist the wildlife in the process. Keep the caves to the cavers. Print only the issues and education surrounding them.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR...

In addition to climbing, kayaking, and caving, that he will not reveal, Doug Buchanan became known in previous years for advocating a "non-popularization" philosophy for Alaskan adventurers. He has since become an outspoken opponent of National Park Service mountaineering regulations. He is currently the Executive Director of the statewide Alaskan Alpine Club, and Chairman of Fairbanks's Alaska Alpine Rescue Group. He is active in the Alaska Sportsmen's Council, the state affiliate of the National Wildlife Federation. He considers himself an Alaskan adventure bum; when not behind the typewriter expounding adventure issues.

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