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Chuck Pease

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THE
ALASKAN

COVER

Volume 1

Number 1

January - March 1970

THE ALASKAN CAVER

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This publication will be distributed free to NSS members in Alaska. It is starting out as a quarterly and will increase if interest is high enough and enough material turns up. The ALASKAN CAVER was started in order to try and interest NSS members here in caving here. Contrary to what a lot of people think; Alaska does have limestone caves. And there should be some very large glacier caves also. If you have explored any caves here, write up a short report. Draw a map too, if possible. This issue contains a listing of the known cavers in Alaska. If you know of any other NSS members here please send their address. The ALASKAN CAVER also hopes to keep everyone informed as to cave discoveries made while this state grows and more and more people settle here. I am also working on a bibliography to Alaska caves, it will appear here. If you know of any book, magazine article, newspaper clipping or anything else that mentions a cave, rock or glacier, please send the reference information to me. I hope that I will hear from each of you and that we can plan some caving trips together. I already have a few leads on limestone caving areas and these will be described in the next issue. I have a very large cave library and anyone wishing to borrow any books may do so.

Edited by

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BYRON GLACIER CAVES

July 12 & 29, September 7, 1969

Located near Portage Lake, five miles from the head of Turnagain Arm.

My first acquaintance with the Byron Caves was on Saturday, July 12th. Dave Albert, April Allen and I found two caves at the toe of the glacier. On the right side of the stream were two entrance that soon joined into one tunnel that was about 600' long and averaged 15' wide and 7' high. In a couple of places small waterfalls emerged from the ceiling. The floor was glacial moraine. A second cave was located above the left stream and consisted of a single large chamber with a stream. Both up-stream and downstream exploration was stopped by siphons.

On Tuesday, the 29th, April and I returned and discovered enough snow had melted to reveal another huge cave entrance. This was the cave that the right-hand stream exited from. A little boulder hopping and a climb over a ten-foot high snow bank in the cave, since melted, enabled us to penetrate 300' before the river hit our wall. The water easily swept away 75 pound boulders when we attempted to bridge it so we retreated.

On September 7th, the two of us were finally able to continue exploration of the main cave. Entering along the left side this time, we were able to go all the way to the end where the roof met the floor. This passage is approximately 1500' long and averages 25' wide and 9' high. The last 400' is a series of steep cascades and involves numerous stream crossings. A small rock cairn and register were placed in this last level room, prior to the cascade section. Up until here the stream is too large to successfully cross on boulders. Two and a half hours were spent exploring the cave. It will be interesting to return in a year or two and see if any people have explored the cave as far as the register. I am also planning on returning to survey the cave and maybe measure the ice flow rate also.

Glacier caves are not considered a true ice cave and are certainly more dangerous than limestone caves. Ice caves are defined as caves in rock in which ice accumulates either to stay year round or to melt each summer. Glacier caves are subject to continual change both through melting and collapsing action. Ice blocks or flakes weighting hundreds of pounds can and do fall, usually near a cave's entrance. Anyone attempting to explore a glacier cave should be on the lookout for areas that appear ready to collapse.

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National Speleological Society Members in Alaska.

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