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Curvin Metzler

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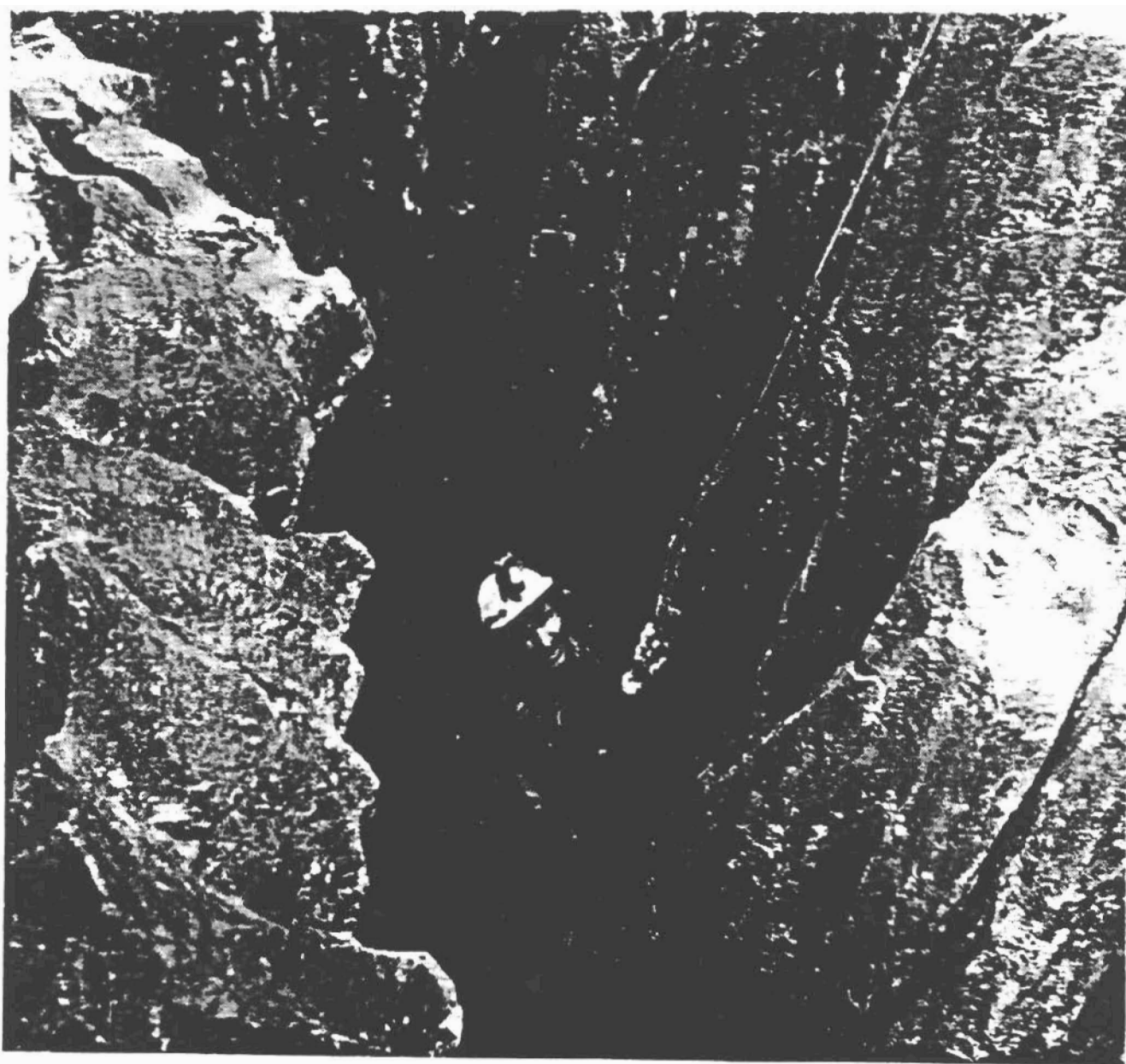
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The **ALASKAN CAVER**

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NUMBER 2

APRIL 1990



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Editor	Curvin Metzler	P O Box 100738	Anchorage	AK	99510	333-8766	333-8766
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NW Reg Rep	Dave Klinger	P O Box 537	Leavenworth	WA	98826	548-5480†	548-5880†
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† The area code for Dave Klinger in Leavenworth, Washington is (509) (both numbers)

Cover: Kevin Allred ascending out of Drip Drop, on Perue Peak, Prince of Wales Island, Alaska. Photo by Curvin Metzler, August 1989; article found on page 8.

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Explorations on Perue or Perue Peak or Bust
by Kevin Allred

Perue Peak, over 3000 feet high, appeared to be the most promising of karst located on aerial photographs. It is all limestone from its hole-perforated summit to an almost dry streambed near sea level. Needless to say, many members of the expedition were anxious to airlift in, with visions of bottomless voids and subterranean torrents to encourage our spirits. Unfortunately, as the expedition progressed, the weather began shifting into stormy fall patterns which would soon prevail. Harvey and Sandy Bowers and I took their four-wheel-drive out near the base of the mountain in one day, but found the road deadly and impractical.

On August 9, after a few days waiting for clouds and rain to clear in the alpine areas, ten of us were geared up and ready for a full scale assault on Perue. Rick Bridges and I first flew out and quickly scanned the potential from the air. Most of the holes were shallow and we felt there was not enough guarantee of a deep system to take the chance of ten people being stranded for weeks on a remote and stormy mountain. We aborted Perue for another camp on nearby El Capitan Peak; Buddy Lane, Hank Moon, and Neeld Messler would drop Snow Hole (-448 feet) and other discoveries would be made. After the bumpy reconnaissance flight, I asked the pilot how often it got that rough. He replied that "you know when it's rough when your shoulders are bruised from the safety straps". I was glad it wasn't rough.

Nine days later, most participants had already left the Island and the expedition seemed to lose some momentum. However, Steve Lewis and Curvin Metzler had just

arrived from elsewhere in Alaska and seemed excited to take a several-day backpacking trip into the beckoning Perue Peak. In spite of my pack and other gear being destroyed in a helicopter mishap, reasonable substitutes were made and the trip was on. We drove surprisingly close on a recent logging road not on our maps. Though it was raining as usual, we anxiously flagged a route through karsted, moss-floored rain forest on the first day, with Steve using his compass in the mist. Small vertical holes along the way hinted at hopes of more magnificence to come. After some three miles, we felt that the alpine karst was probably close. We dropped the loads and hung food in small trees, then hiked to the road to spend a rainy night. The next morning we began the second haul to high camp, and got there in good time. By now most of the gear was wet, but perseverance and stupidity won out and we struck out into the rain and fog to see what caves could be found. We carried a couple hundred feet of rope with vertical gear and determined exactly where we were in the low visibility by using the aerial photographs.

Soon after reaching the alpine karst, Steve discovered Macho Peekaboo (a takeoff on Machu Picchu in Peru). It begins as a forty-foot shaft with a nearby horizontal entrance and huge amounts of snow and ice. In initial explorations, Curvin made his way, without a rope, down a rather precarious-looking snowy incline further into the depths while Steve and I discussed how crazy he was. He didn't fall anywhere, though, and discovered from the light above that there should be another deep shaft



Kevin Allred and Steve Lewis discuss routes across the alpine karst while searching for caves on foggy Perue Peak. Photo by Curvin Metzler.

further up the mountainside. After Steve and I looked about for the shaft, Curvin finally directed us to the one he had looked up. It was a dandy and seemed about 200 feet deep.

With plans to further explore and map Macho Peekaboo the next day, we continued into the very heart of the alpine karst. Here we wandered around in the eerie, rugged, fog-enshrouded terrain, where distance and sound were deceptive. We soon cached the rope and vertical gear where we hoped it could be relocated. As the weather worsened, it was with great effort that we remained together in our hole-checking activities. Without the aerial photos and compasses, there would

be absolutely no hope of finding a way back to camp. Often we had only a general idea where we were. At one point Curvin seriously expressed his concerns as to our welfare, but soon resigned himself to whatever fate would come. The winds increased to about forty miles per hour and the rain turned into stinging sleet. After clambering to the summit, we headed back towards our rope and gear. I still can't believe how we happened upon it on all that karst, but our luck held and we started down to the selected caves to explore the next day. Soon the way was barred by a tremendous cliff and Steve said "I don't remember this at all", at which time I became totally baffled as

to just where we were. Curvin grimly shrugged his shoulders. After some debate, we went the opposite direction, which turned out to be the right way.

By the next morning, everything was wet and the backpacking trip had turned into a truly miserable epic. After exploring and surveying a hundred-foot shaft (Drip Drop), we dropped into the deeper of Macho Peekaboo's shafts, which turned out to be 150 feet. Then a steep thirty-foot-high snow and ice slope lead to the floor of a large room. The Ghost Room is eighty feet wide, 170 feet long, and contained groups of white ice stalagmites up to four feet high. A couple of small waterfalls poured from the ceiling into the breakdown. In surveying,

we discovered that all leads soon pinched off, so mapped our way towards the horizontal entrance. Curvin had to leave the cave because of the cold, and even with warm clothes, dry suit, coveralls, and rain gear, I was chilled. Steve endured without complaint. At the base of the 15-foot shaft, a waterfall disappeared into a grim six-foot-diameter hole out into the ice. We plumbed it to 37 feet, but refrained from entering. The survey was 991 feet in length and 223 feet deep.

After another we night in camp, we headed back to expedition headquarters for other adventures. It was the end of a memorable trip and at least an attempt at what might lie hidden under Perue. □

Macho Peekaboo Cave

Prince of Wales Island

Technical Preliminary Report #15

by Kevin Allred

November 14, 1989

Description

Located on the alpine karst of Perue Peak, Macho Peekaboo was first discovered by Steve Lewis, on August 19, 1989, while doing a cave inventory with Curvin Metzler and Kevin Allred. In the initial exploration of the shaft of the cave and its horizontal entrance, Curvin discovered an additional 150-foot-deep connecting shaft located further up the steeply sloping bedrock mountain-side. The 991 feet of survey was done by Curvin, Steve, and Kevin on August 20. The overall depth is 223 feet; the lowest point being the ice chute (see map).

Macho Peekaboo is a cold trap and contains snow wherever it can drift and accumulate each winter.

Where this snow has built up it has, over many years, compressed into firn ice. In a few spots, melt and rain water dripping down from the surface has drilled vertical holes into the snow and firn. One drill hole in particular is below the deeper shaft and was six feet in diameter and plumbed at 37 feet. The floor of this hole appeared to be rocks, but it was not entered because of the large amount of water pouring into it. This could be a good site to study the paleo-climate from ice layers.

The large room (80 feet by 170 feet) at the bottom of the deeper shaft is called the Ghost Room. It is accessible by rope or handline down the steep snow and ice slope. At the bottom of

the slope is a forest of ice stalagmites up to four feet high, looking from a distance as if they are ghosts. In a few places within the Ghost Room are small waterfalls emerging from the ceiling to disappear in the breakdown floor. All surfaces of this room seem to have been fractured and broken by frost action. Of interest is a sink-like depression five feet deep in the breakdown under one of the waterfalls. This was probably formed from a large ice column or stalagmite being built there and deflecting breakdown falling from the ceiling creating the large depression after

melting. For lack of a better term, I call it a pseudo sink.

Safety

This cave is cold and wet with vertical hazards, so only experienced and prepared people should enter it. Warm wool or pile clothing with a waterproof suit of some kind is recommended.

Management Recommendations

Because of safety considerations, the location of this cave should be restricted from the general public. □



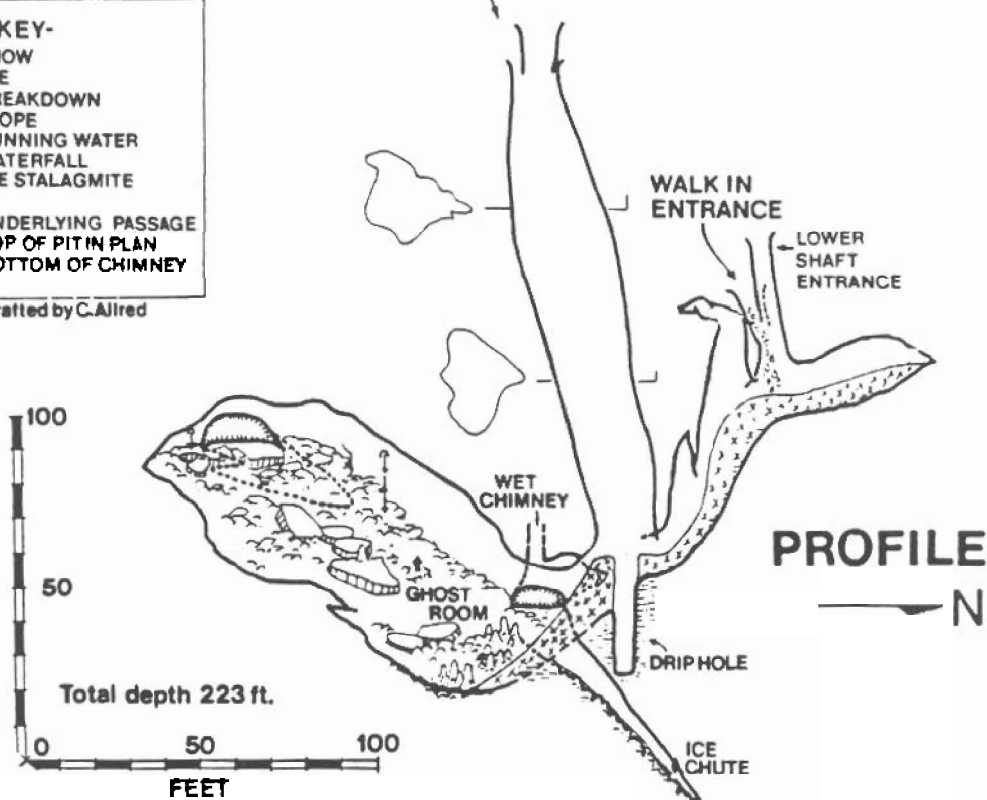
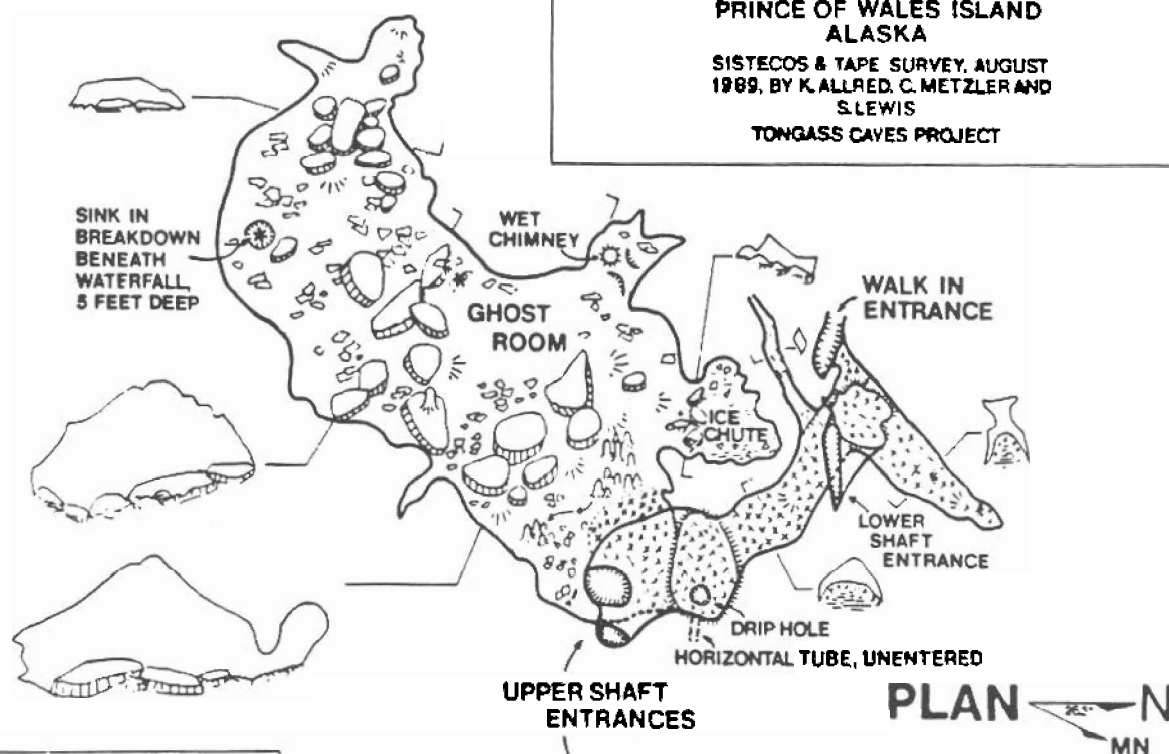
Steve Lewis prepares his gear while Kevin Allred descends into the upper entrance shaft of Macho Peekaboo Cave. Photo by Curvin Metzler.

MACHO PEEK A BOO CAVE

PRINCE OF WALES ISLAND
ALASKA

SISTECOS & TAPE SURVEY, AUGUST
1989, BY K. ALLRED, C. METZLER AND
S. LEWIS

TONGASS CAVES PROJECT



Drip Drop
Prince of Wales Island
Technical Preliminary Report #16
by Kevin Allred
November 14, 1989

Description

Formed in Heceta Limestone, Drip Drop was discovered on August 19, 1989, by Curvin Metzler while searching for caves with Steve Lewis and Kevin Allred on Perue Peak as part of the cave inventory. This is an alpine shaft with a total depth of 102 feet. It begins as a 65-foot drop and continues to the bottom in several more lesser drops. Drip Drop is just one of many similar fissure-link shafts in Perue Peak. This particular one was explored because it appeared deeper than most. It contains no snow or ice; it had a draft at the bottom, but became too small for further penetration. There were copious

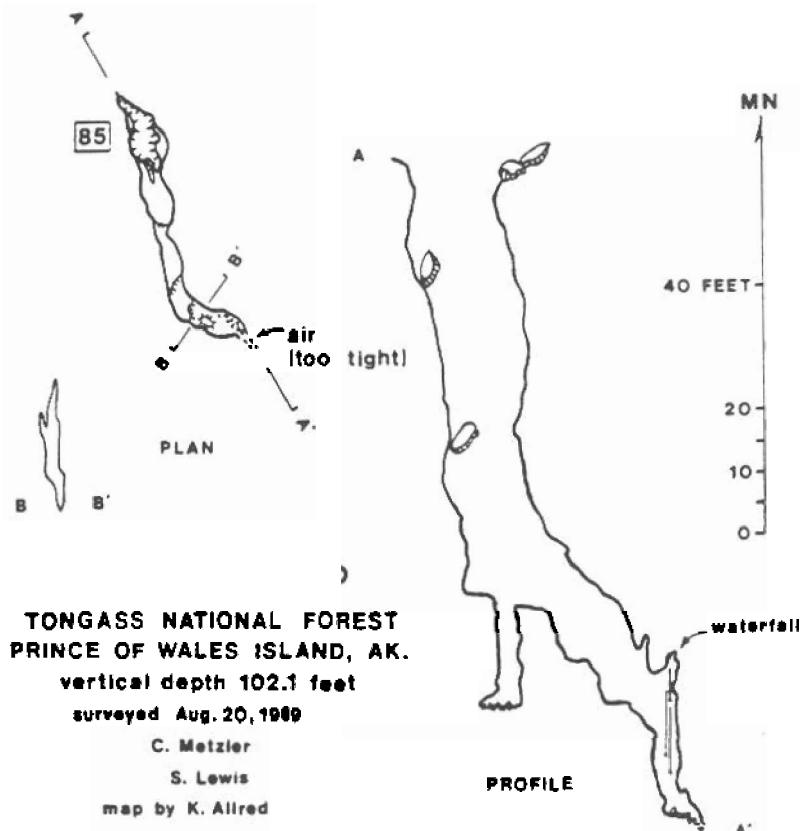
amounts of runoff pouring into the shaft because of heavy rains during the survey, on August 20, made by Curvin, Steve, and Kevin.

Safety

As usual, with alpine caves, Drip Drop is cold and possibly very wet. With its vertical nature, visitors should prepare accordingly.

Management Recommendations

Although this cave contains no speleothems, its potential dangers to the unprepared visitor demand that its location should be restricted from the general public. □



Members in the News (Contributions invited)

- Kevin Allred and others were mentioned in Rodney D. Horrocks' article, "Hours under Neffs Canyon", in the May 1989 issue of The Utah Caver 1(2):32-33, in which Rod describes a 13-hour trip to the Bedroom Complex to conclude Neffs Canyon Cave Project.
- Kevin and Carlene Allred's map of El Capitan Cave and Kevin's report of POWIE II, which appeared in the February 1989 issue of The Alaskan Caver 9(1):6, are mentioned in "Ray's Review" in the August issue of NSS News 47(8):202.
- Kevin and Carlene Allred's map of El Capitan Cave, Kevin's report of POWIE II, and Carlene's article, "Kicking Horse Glacier Cave", all which appeared in The Alaskan Caver 9(2):1(cover),10,11, were mentioned in "Ray's Review" in the September 1989 issue of NSS News 47(9):230.
- Richard A. Bridges' report in the January-February 1989 Southwestern Caver, telling of pushing the Lechuguilla Cave survey another 33,538 feet to be the seventh longest in the U.S. (at 28.82 miles), was also mentioned in "Ray's Review" in NSS News 47(8):202.
- William R. Halliday's 1987 article, "Nitrate and Mining Bureau Covers and Saltpetre Caves", in the Confederate Philatelist (33), and reprinted in The Speleo Stamp Collector 31:23, was cited in Current Titles in Speleology, Number 21--the literature of 1988, a publication of the British Cave Research Association, page 33.
- William R. Halliday's article, "A visit to the Post Office at Cave Creek, Arizona", in The Speleo Stamp Collector 29:14, was cited in Current Titles in Speleology, Number 21--the literature of 1988, a publication of the British Cave Research Association, page 34.
- William R. Halliday's article, "Bibliographic notes on some Spelean Post Offices of the U.S.A.", in The Speleo Stamp Collector 29:15, was cited in Current Titles in Speleology, Number 21--the literature of 1988, a publication of the British Cave Research Association, page 34.
- William R. Halliday's article, "More on the Federal Cave Protection Act of 1988", in The Speleograph 24(8):85-87 was cited in Current Titles in Speleology, Number 21--the literature of 1988, a publication of the British Cave Research Association, page 31.
- William R. Halliday's 1989 article, "1988 Report of the Mount St. Helens Caves Conservation Task Force--Part II", appeared in last May's issue of The Speleograph 25(5):61.
- William R. Halliday's 1989 article, "1988 Speleological Activities in East Asia",

appeared in the July 1989 issue of NSS News 47(7): 178-179 along with corrections in the September issue of NSS News 47(9):211.

- William R. Halliday's 1989 article, "SW Oregon Reconnaissance, July 1988", The Speleograph 25(8):90-91, covers southern Oregon and littoral caves on the Oregon coast.
- William R. Halliday's article, "East Asia 1988: Part V. World Class Lava Tube Caves of Cheju", appeared in the April 1989 issue of The Speleograph 25(4):49-53.
- William R. Halliday, according to Dale Green in his article, "Harold Goodro", in the March 1989 issue of The Utah Caver 1(1):12, spoke up for safety and good planning in several of his books. Bill's name appears again in another of Dale's articles, "Antelope

Springs Cave", on page 20 of the same issue.

- Miles (Milo) Hecker was credited, in Paul Hill's article, "Fossil Mountain Ice Cave", in the March 1989 issue of The Utah Caver 1(1):14, for digging out the AAA Crawl to Milo's Annex in 1977.
- Mike Mauser's article, "Tidewater Sea Cave", in the June 1989 issue of The Alaskan Caver 9(3):3, was mentioned in the December 1989 Cave Cricket Gazette 14(8):86.
- Jim Nicholls' name appears frequently in Rod Horrocks' article, "Utah's Deepest Pit", in the March 1989 issue of The Utah Caver 1(1):2-6. Jim, Rod, and Ken Stahley extended the known length and depth of the cave on October 31, 1978, to beyond that of the previous visit of Jim and Stan.

Caves in the News by Warren Phillips Luther

reprinted from
Pholeos 10(1):11-12
January 1990

a publication of the
Wittenberg University
Speleological Society

summary and comments
concerning our article

"Record Pit Found in Alaska"
by Julius Rockwell, Jr.
The Alaskan Caver 9(4):3-4
October 1989

The setting of records brings out the sporting aspect of cave exploration ever since the French began taking speleology seriously nearly a century ago. In the United States, which has the proverbial lion's share of caves measuring well up into two-digit mileage (and greater), depth records are perhaps not yet on a world scale, so the discovery of any deep caves or pits causes quite a commotion in speological circles. Recently, a pit was located in Alaska on Prince of

Wales Island which promptly broke the old record held by Ellison's Cave in Georgia (Fantastic Pit, at 586 feet). Alaska's El Capitan Pit (as it has been named) surpassed the former record at 598 feet, not by much, of course, but that's not the point. Six hundred feet (an approximation for both pits) is a significant free drop anywhere underground, and if a 100-foot pit was a formidable obstacle in speleology's infancy, it now seems that a mere 600 feet will become routine, as is already happening in countries with much deeper caves. Mr. Rockwell points out that it should not surprise anyone, this record-breaking on Prince of Wales Island, since Alaska is after all a land of superlatives; next, after scaling the highest mountain in the United States and plumbing the deepest pit, these single-minded explorers might perhaps find the deepest cave (current record: columbiaian Crawl, Wyoming, at 1,550 feet) and the longest one (surpassing the Mammoth Cave system at more than 330 MILES). The latter speculation is rather like counting your trophies before the game begins (and with the odds against you anyway), but, although improbable, it is not impossible. Long caves have been found in mountainous regions of folded, tilted, and deformed strata, and some of these are in alpine regions; Switzerland's Hölloch ("Hell-Hole") surpassed Mammoth Cave during the era of cave-length battles, but when Mammoth's mileage suddenly increased by a factor of ten during the current Great Age of Connection all the other contenders put down their plane-tables and compasses--and went on to other worthy matters. But remote, or little explored, parts of this continent are yielding some surprises: caves of all types and sizes are being found where in

previous generations nobody would have wasted time looking. The islands on the Pacific coast, from Vancouver Island northward, are wild and rugged; they contain much limestone and other carbonates which have been deformed and raised into what are now the peaks of submerged mountains; it was only a matter of time, and necessity, before explorers investigated them for caves. Both Canadian and Alaskan portions of the islands have proven cavernous; the climate along the Pacific coast is mild, though cool (at least in its southerly parts), and receives considerable rainfall--which is in some ways analogous to a wet tropical climate, where caves can form fast, and large.

The pit takes its name from El Capitan, the mountain which contains it. Surveys have already shown over 9,000 feet of passage in El Capitan Cave, about 2,000 feet below the pit, with many unexplored possibilities. Near El Capitan Pit is Snow Hole, which at a depth of 450 feet is already the third deepest pit in the United States; the potential of the entire karst area on this single island seems enormous. Fortunately, the Forest Service is co-operating with the Glacier Grotto (who are given credit for discovering the pit) to map, study, and protect this important speleological resource--yet vandalism has been a problem already. No matter how remote or inaccessible a new discovery may be, it is never safe from abuse and destruction as soon as anyone else finds out about it.

The remainder of this issue of The Alaskan Caver is mostly devoted to the Prince of Wales Island karst, including accounts of discovery, exploration, and assessment of the caves, and Kevin Allred's interesting geological summary of El Capitan Cave. □

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★
★ Grotto Meeting ★
★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

at 7:30 pm
on Thursday
June 14, 1990

at the home of
Julius Rockwell, Jr
2944 Emory Street
Anchorage, Alaska

brief business meeting
followed by discussion of
Prince of Wales Island
costs and transportation
(POWIE IV logistics)

bring your POWIE slides
also bring cave trip reports

refreshments provided

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During the summer, from now
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which cannot wait until September
for publication should be sent to
the assistant editor instead of
the editor. Materials not time
critical, or mailed in September
or later, should be mailed to the
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