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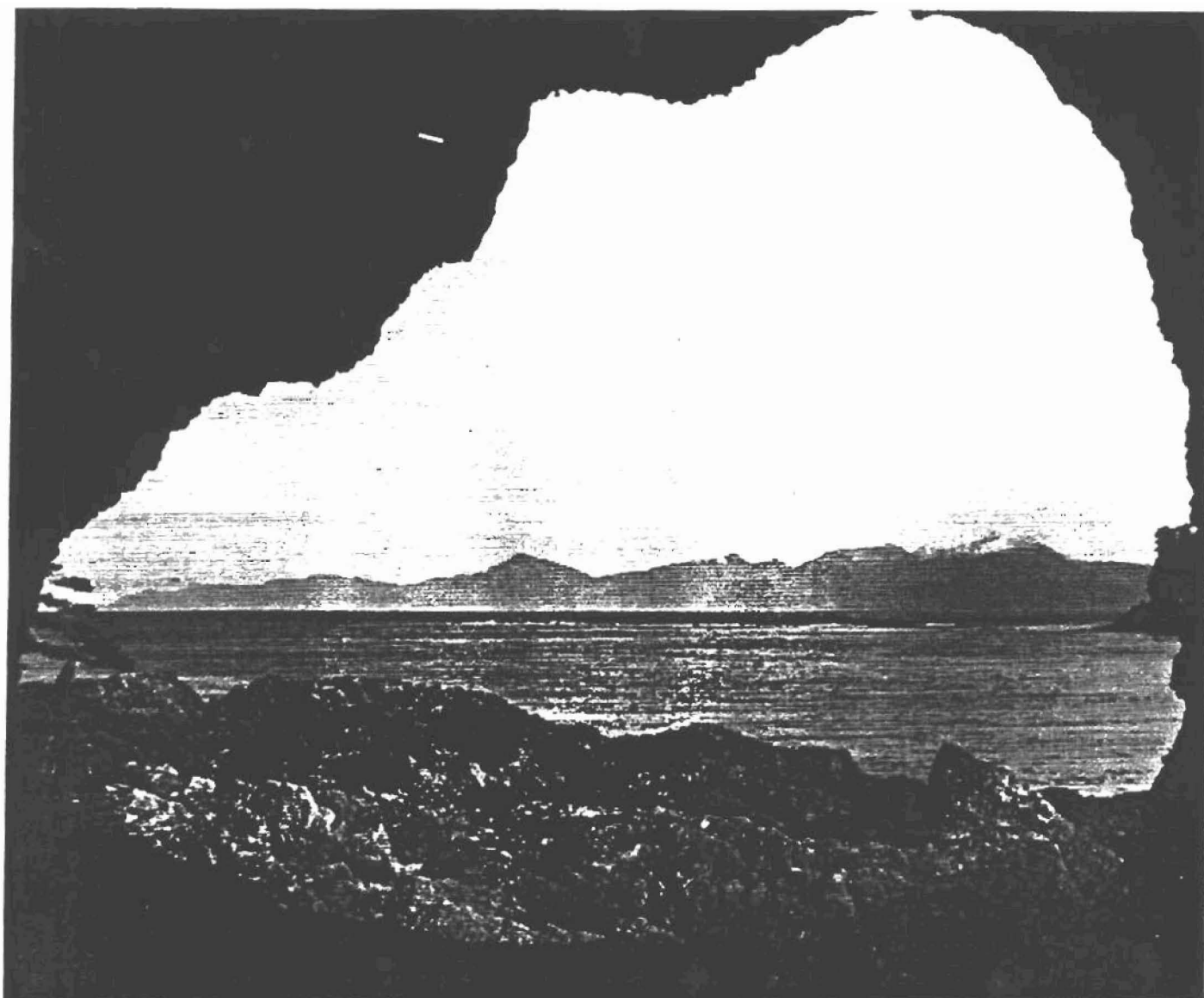
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The **ALASKAN CAVER**

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Membership is open to all interested in Alaskan cave discovery, exploration, description, survey, mapping, photography, hydrology, morphology, biology, geology, history, speleogenesis and other spelaeon processes, conservation, management, adventures, and the fellowship of Alaskan cavers. Dues are \$7.50 per year for the first member of a mailing address and \$1.00 for additional persons at the same address. Overseas air mail requires an additional \$10.00.

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* Messages may be announced to Kevin daily via radio station KHNS at (907) 766-2020

† The area code for Dave Klinger in Leavenworth, Washington is (509) (both numbers)

Cover: View from a cave in Egg Harbor, on Coronation Island, Alaska, looking north to Kufu Island. Photo by Steve Lewis, 1988. Article found on page 6.

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No Shopping Here by Don Hampton

Cave. The name strikes terror into unsuspecting bystanders near the scene of action. The yawning hole, full of mysteries, makes the hair on their necks crawl and creep, as do the little white and pink things that live in these voids. The thought of entering a cave is foreign to most people. There probably isn't any air in there, and certainly no light and what would we do?

Can you shop in a cave? That seems to be the most pressing question. No! That seems to be the overwhelming answer. Sure, there is Carlsbad, but what is Carlsbad but the Disney version of caving. One can animate caving with paved trails, and telephones giving cute explanations in four or more languages, including adolescent. What is the big room of Carlsbad or any other cavern, but a natural mall? I've never been to Wind, or Crystal, but they're all the same. I can see the handrails, the switches for the light power, the asphalt trails with OSHA stripes so that we can walk by and see "nature", but not have to really touch it. I can hear the interpreters assuming we

have the understanding of sixth graders, while we fulfill the prophesy; we react in kind.

Yes, one can "popularize" caves and caving, but what do we gain. The caves become freak shows, like seeing bears in Yellowstone, sitting by the side of the four lane highway, squatting on their hind legs begging for the hot-dog buns and potato chips. The caves become the exception, not the rule. The rule becomes parking lots, intersections with hot angry people in hot cars, thinking the thirty seconds they have to sit waiting an eternity. The rule becomes roads; a labyrinth with the Minotaur waiting patiently at its heart.

And the rule so much becomes the rule, that we wonder why we keep the exceptions. Life is so much simpler when there is only the rule and not the exception. Sure, we'll keep the zoos and parks, because there people can see how it was. But we don't need it any more. Who needs to go into the woods when we can shop? Who wants to go into those caves anyway? They're so dirty! □

Members in the News (Contributions invited)

- William R. Halliday's 1989 article, "Speleophilately in East Asia", appeared in The Speleo Stamp Collector 32:21-24.
- William R. Halliday's 1989 article, "Field Trip Report --The Big Island of Hawaii in June 1989", appeared in last June's issue of Speleograph 25(6):74-75.
- William R. Halliday's 1989 article, "July 1989 Mount St. Helens Pseudokarst Studies", appeared last July in Speleograph 25(7):79-81.
- William R. Halliday's 1989 article, "The Big Island, Hawaii", Cascade Caver 28(9-10):61, mentions Kevin Allred's visit to Apua Cave ten years ago.

January 22, 1990

Dear Concerned Citizen:

I would like a few minutes of your time to tell you a story about using one of the world's seven wonders as a toilet. Approximately 700 Kentuckians with the help of around 2 million tourists and state and federal bureaucrats are in effect using the caves underlying Mammoth Cave National Park as a sewer system. As the person charged with the responsibility of keeping this from happening, I desperately need your help to convince government officials to cut through the red tape and provide the funding necessary to build an adequate sewer system.


Although the town of Park City and many tourists who visit the area are flushing toilets daily into the underground system of streams and caves which are part of the longest cave system on earth, the National Park Service claims to be unable to spend money to protect itself outside the Park boundary. Park City is too poor to build a treatment facility by itself. Two nearby towns, Horse Cave and Cave City, are already paying proportionally more than their fair share for a sewage treatment facility built specifically to handle additional wastes from Park City and Mammoth Cave National Park.

National Park Service lands belong to all Americans. The National Park Service has a mandate to protect our parks "by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations (16 USC 1). It is shameful that they must be dragged kicking and screaming down the road towards protecting the natural resource which makes the Park famous. It is equally disgraceful that other federal agencies and the State of Kentucky have not stepped forward to solve this problem!

If you're as mad as I am about this, please call, write, or FAX any or all of the federal and state officials listed on the other side of this sheet. Tell them you want them to do something about the sewage problem at Mammoth Cave National Park. (Please send a copy of your correspondence to: ACCA, P.O. Box 409, Horse Cave, Kentucky 42749)

Please pick up the phone or write a letter NOW while you are still angry! We can fight City Hall if everyone does their part!

Sincerely,



Ed Councill, General Manager
Caveland Sanitation Authority, Inc.

PLEASE CONTACT THESE
GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS
TO LET THEM KNOW YOU
CARE!

Governor Wallace G. Wilkinson
State Capitol
Frankfort, KY 40601
Phone (502) 564-2611
FAX (502) 564-2735

Secretary Manuel Lujan, Jr.
Department of the Interior
18th & C Streets, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20240
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401 M Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20460
Phone (202) 382-2090



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and further information can be obtained through contacting them via

American Cave Conservation Association
P. O. Box 409
Horse Cave, Kentucky 42749

Spring 1989 Explorations on Coronation Island

by Don Hampton

with help from Steve Lewis and Anne Ruggles

Seventy miles SSE of Sitka and seventy miles SW of Petersburg, Coronation Island is the first place to meet whatever weather the Gulf of Alaska sends toward SE Alaska. Recently designated as wilderness, it has never been commercially logged, although miners supposedly used many trees on Pin Peak for their operations in the 1920's. In its area of 28 square miles, Coronation Island has no permanent human inhabitants.

But Coronation Island does have deer. In fact, they are the only large terrestrial mammals on the island. Steve Lewis and Karen Flatau spent the summer of 1988 and winter/spring of 1989 studying the deer. While investigating deer habitat, they verified that much of the island was limestone and did indeed show signs of caves. They even catalogued quite a few interesting holes, sinks, pits, and yes, caves. But there was not enough time for exploration.

After the first season, Steve and Karen contacted Anne Ruggles and Don Hampton, of Fairbanks, about a possible joint exploratory venture in the spring of 1989. Anne and Don contacted Paulette Struckman, of Fairbanks, and Curt Black, of Austin, Texas, (formerly a member of the Cascade Grotto). Plans were made for a late May meeting on Coronation Island.

Trip Log

[Editor's Note: Steve and Karen are already on Coronation Island; this Don's account of events as he and Anne travel from Fairbanks to Coronation Island, with Curt and Paulette close behind, and

as they all explore the island together in search of caves.]

May 26

The packs and caving gear were prepared and loaded into the cars, and we left bright and early at 10:30 am. Clear, sunny weather and moderate interior temperatures smiled on our caravan, as we made good time up to the Canadian Border.

May 27

More driving.

May 28

This was the final day of the road trip. We crossed the pass back into the U.S., or at least Alaska. We hit Haines and Haines did not notice. At 7:30 pm we boarded the Alaska State Ferry System's MV Taku, en route to Petersburg.

May 29

I'm not sure that Petersburg was ready for us. Anyway, it was Memorial Day and a big fishing derby was going on. We called our contact for airplane flights and discovered that he had been up since 3:00 am, fishing. He did not look too lively, and said that Coronation Island was socked in by fog, even though Petersburg was sunny. From his show of energy, we decided that was not so bad; we didn't need our pilot falling asleep fifty miles out. He offered the use of his hangar for sleeping accommodations.

An exploration of Petersburg revealed ravens, that sound like chickens, sitting in the big Sitka spruce trees along the road. And, Wow! There are bald eagles all along the shore.



She Devil's Hell Hole, Coronation Island. Photo by Steve Lewis.

May 30

The thirtieth dawns foggy, cloudy, and drizzly. We resigned ourselves to more exploration and a visit to the library for much non-technical reading. We eat a freeze-dried meal on the pier of the state ferry, and slog off to Butch's hangar for another night.

May 31

More waiting.

June 1

It looks the same as the day before, and in an early morning meeting with Kermit, the Forest Service dispatcher who is in daily contact with Steve and Karen, who are already on the

island, it sounds the same. But at about 10:30 am, we happen to see Butch driving around. He says that Coronation looks good. So Anne and I ride back to the hangar, get what we need, and pile into the plane.

We were circling Egg Harbor in about an hour, with Butch sounding pessimistic about landing due to a swell coming in off the open ocean. After circling and talking to Steve, Butch found a spot where the swell was smaller, and in we came, skipping over a small point. Steve came to meet the plane in the Zodiac. After loading a few items no longer needed for deer studies, Butch took off to get Curt and Paulette.

Meanwhile, Anne and I found cookies magically appearing in the small cabin at the head of Egg Harbor. In another two hours Paulette and Curt were safely delivered to Coronation Island. (This was when it finally hit me; we were on a desert island. It was not very much removed from the stories in the books like Treasure Island. The last bit of sound from the Cessna reverberated off Pin Peak, and then all that could be heard were the waves lapping on the gravel beach and the grouse drumming in the dark forest. I realized that this was it. If I wanted company, it is in the little cabin where the chocolate-chip cookies were smelling so nice. Other than that, I was all alone. It was both exciting and a little sobering.)

We had a rope practice just to get everyone back on track. Then we made plans for the next day, and tried to get to bed 'early'. At midnight we still had plenty of things to do; but somehow they got done.

June 2

Another bright and early morning, and we set off for one of the cave-rich regions, the closest of which was several miles from the cabin. Steve and Paulette transported gear via Zodiac to Aats Bay while the rest of us slung on caving equipment for the hike up to Aats Pass. In about two hours our two parties met again, at the muskeg on top of Aats Pass, and took a short break. Steve and Karen had found several nice sinks just to the west of the pass.

All made it to the first promising pit, and Steve and Curt decide to give it a try while the rest of us continued down the ravine running almost

due west of the muskeg. This first cave, later called Grote Hole, consisted of one main entrance room after a thirty-foot sloping entrance. A north-south passage, three feet by four feet, angled down to a rubble choke. Several tight or steep, unprotected upward-leading lines were left for another day. A hole dropping through the floor into a small room required too much digging for Curt, and after a very quick sketch, they exited.

Meanwhile, the rest of the us found a large sink about a hundred yards down the ravine, where several enticing holes called. The whole ravine ended abruptly in a conical sink about fifty feet across. The small stream that had reappeared some tens of yards up the ravine ran into a vertical pit of substantial depth. I dropped a rock and made an estimate of forty feet. South of this and up the slope of the inverted cone, another pit angled back and tied in to the first about 25 feet down.

Anne was scrambling on the western slope of the sink and found two interesting holes. She lit her lamp. The one to the north pinched after about fifteen feet, but the southern one did not. Still in voice contact, she found that after 25 feet the passage made a sharp 'Z' into a larger room. Paulette and I soon followed. We found a large sloping room that, from the entrance fissure, sloped up muddily to the north, and to the southwest into a mud-bottomed hole. After exploring both ends, we found no more leads. The most prominent features were the long soda straws, nearly fifteen feet above the floor, which became the namesake of this fun little cave, Last Straw.

After coming back out, the pit still beckoned. It had

earned the name of Promise Pit. Steve and Curt soon appeared with ropes and slings and the pit was rigged around a three-foot-diameter windfallen hemlock. Steve dropped the pit and confirmed that the other pit did join about 25 feet down. I followed, and after both were down, Anne lowered the tape a healthy seventy feet. A passage leading north split into an upper and lower passage, both leading west. The lower slipped under a low overhang into a five-foot by five-foot room that had no exits at all. The upper passage swept around on a muddy slope and up over an eight-inch-high mud-covered wall into more passage. There was large breakdown mixed into the muddy floor, but no apparent exits from this section. However, as we headed back out, I stuck my foot through a hole in the floor that we thought was solid. This revealed a small opening into which an arm could fit up to the shoulder.

From this, and from signs of very high water in the cave, it is thought that the cave is subject to frequent flooding. Perhaps exploration after the next major rain will reveal a totally different cave. The floors did not seem like the 'true' floors, and there may be more cave below. After ascending, a new name was proposed--(False) Promise Pit, in which the False maybe could be removed some day.

A search further down the ravine revealed a few small holes, but no leads. In the sinking sun, a few naps were taken; but Karen, Steve, and Anne set out to explore some sinks close to the muskeg. They found two very promising leads. The first entered a passage where a stream could be heard. A tight squeeze through sharp limestone was halted by a large rock beyond which the

passage seemed to open up and fall toward the sound of the stream. Thwarted, they returned to the top. This cave was given the name Rock Block. Pry bars and strong backs may allow a future party to greatly extend this lead.

Aat-To-Go Cave was another squeeze through sharp limestone. Bridging and chimneying down drops, Anne and Steve heard a stream far below. The ever-growing sound of running water and a fifteen-foot drop into a small room with more passage angling back under were enticing. With no rope and darkness quickly approaching outside, we had to leave this for the future. Hopes are high that Aat-To-Go and Rock Block will be connected on the next Coronation Island expedition, and the stream may offer a passage to greater things.

That was the end of cave exploration for the day. The party loped down the hill and found the Zodiak on the beach safe and sound. Two shuttles were sufficient to deliver all to the camp site at the head of Aats Bay.

June 3

Steve and Karen had two objectives for the next two days. They still had some plants to collect near Needle Peak, the top of the island, and there were several holes to check out. It is just over a mile as the crow flies from Aats Bay to the ridge near Needle Peak. However, it involves a climb of nearly 1800 feet. While Steve and Karen had been doing similar things almost daily for four months, others had been sitting in offices in the flat lands. Curt volunteered to keep an eye on camp, and with some trepidation Anne, Paulette, and I decided to try the climb. A little after noon, we found ourselves looking

over the east side of Coronation toward Prince of Wales Island in the distance. We ate a quick lunch on the edge of a yawning pit below several acres of Rillenkarren. The pit was not quite vertical, and had two steps, the first at 25 feet and the next at sixty or so. Steve rappelled first, followed by Anne and Karen. Steve went all the way to the bottom. The total distance from the lip to where he stopped was just over ninety feet. It was not a pleasant pit, due to very loose walls and loose scree on the steps. Rubble choked the lower passage. In honor of Karen's nickname, the pit was given the name She-Devil's Hell Hole, especially appropriate in light of its ill-tempered nature.

Not far from She-Devil's Hell Hole, several sinks were found with no leads in any of them. We moved to the vegetation transect, where a cursory search of the area showed no caves, but a lot of snow. Many sinks dot the Needle Peak area and most of the prime areas were still snow-covered.

After a quick trip to the south side of Needle Peak to look out over Windy Bay, we headed back down the scree slopes to camp. Several ratholes under a large limestone overhang were delivering large amounts of cool air, but time did not allow for exploration. At camp, Curt was waiting with a hot meal. Even the lumpiest ground felt soft what night.

June 4

With one more survey to run on the top of the island, another climb began after breakfast. This time a party of four made the trek--Steve, Karen, Anne, and myself. Steve showed Anne and I an interesting hole that Karen had found earlier. While Steve

and Karen worked, Anne and I explored.

Sliding down the muddy slope to the small hole, I saw no end. We rigged a rope. The passage was at an angle (seventy to eighty degrees) alternating between vertical and steps of scree and mud. I dropped first, and after three of these steps entered a larger room and dropped about fifteen feet to the scree floor. The room measured twenty to 25 feet in the direction of the passage, and about six feet across. The main ceiling was twenty to 25 feet high, with two chimneys that went much further. The depth was measured as 84 feet from the lip to the very bottom of the room. Mud Slide Pit was the highly-original name given this pit.

After regrouping, we returned to camp by means of a traverse below Needle Peak. Our progress was commented on by a pair of red-tailed hawks playing on the cliffs above. Camp was struck and Steve piloted three fog-bound trips to the cabin at Egg Harbor as dark approached.

June 5

This was to be the day that we four visitors were to fly back to Petersburg, but gale force winds blowing into Egg Harbor lifted a swell that made float plane landing impossible. A short trip to the littoral caves in Egg Harbor ensued. These caves are roomy but short and have been impacted by fishermen and miners, some of whom apparently lived in one while working the deposits on Pin Peak early in the century. Tradition has it that natives used the caves for waiting out storms when they came out to Coronation and the Hazy Islands to collect sea bird eggs. There is a large amount of air blowing out of a

small hole at the back of one of these caves, which may warrant some digging. Another has a spectacular chimney full of decorations, which has the remains of an old home-built ladder still stuck in the muddy slope leading to it.

June 6

Another day of wind and clear skies, but no long trips were possible since the weather might break at any time. Short trips to Alikula Bay and Seal Cove were interspersed with culinary delights such as a Karen Flatau Boston cream pie.

June 7

On the morning of the seventh, Steve finally decided that the plane could land. Of course Murphy's Law decreed that it would be low tide, and we slogged out the long mud flats with a mountain of caving and scientific gear, flooding our gum boots as we loaded the Beaver. Two trips were sufficient to get all people and the mountain of gear to Petersburg, where we waited another two days for the ferry. A trip with a boat-owning friend to see the seals pupping on the ice in LeConte Bay made this wait seem worthwhile.

As for the cave situation on Coronation Island, Steve will tell anyone that we barely scratched the surface. The hills south of Windy Bay are a Swiss cheese of sinks, and holes abound west of Pin Peak. An exciting lead awaits near Gish Bay, and Aat-To-Go Cave beckons from Aats Pass. The area south of Needle Peak is full of sinks from summit to sea, and all the high country has great potential. The south and west coasts abound with sea caves, many containing colonies of puffins, murres, or cormorants.

The caves are appealing, but the even bigger attraction is Coronation Island itself. Time has purged the memory of sore legs and maybe our luck in having really nice weather has given me false impressions. But I have never felt the exhilaration of the astounding solitude and wildness of a place like Coronation Island ever before. It is nice to know there are still some places like this, even though they seem to be vanishing quickly. One hopes that there will always be places like it. □



Karen Flatau entering
She Devil's Hell Hole,
Coronation Island.
Photo by Steve Lewis.



Grotto Patches Available

Designed by Carlene Allred and produced by Sharon Dunaway, assisted by Liz Rockwell, some of the attractive Glacier Grotto patches are still available. A copy of one appears below a copy of an NSS patch just to the left. The Glacier Grotto patches cost \$5 each postpaid, and may be ordered from:

Ms. Sharon Dunaway
3440 W 86th Ave #8
Anchorage, AK 99502

Checks or money orders should be made out to "Glacier Grotto". But hurry, as supplies are limited and the patches are going fast.

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