

The Smokey Cavern Chronicles:

*Where John Neak decides to
take a vacation from caving
and
John Wisher decides he likes the
pit so much,
He does it twice*

It was just one of those trips where everything goes wrong but nobody's smart enough to notice it. We decided to go back to what I had been calling Smokey Caverns. It is on a side draw of a side valley of Station Camp Creek. The locals had shown us a lower entrance and told us that smoke had come out of it when wood was burned for charcoal a mile up the valley. Sounded to bad to be true but too good to pass up. So a few weeks ago we decided to look at the lower entrance. No-go, it went back a few hundred feet and ended in a big pit with a high lead (a very high lead and we had to tie Neak down from trying to launch across to pit to it).

We started to ridge walk and John Neak and I came across a small upper upper entrance at the same time John Wisher Stumbled across a lower upper entrance (got that? There will be a test at the end) We all went into Wishers big entrance with one flashlight (ever seen the 4 stooges?) I demonstrated the art of cave flying after I slid a huge rock into a pit we found.(I wanted to be elsewhere when it hit bottom).

So 5 of us went back last week. The first thing we did was knock off 800 feet of quick survey from the upper,upper entrance to the lower upper (or was it the upper lower?). Easy survey with lots of upper level leads. Don did real well on his first time as compass man(good memory Don)

Then we went back to the U-L entrance and started to move downward. We entered a tall thin canyon. As I moved down I kicked loose a huge rock that headed

straight for John. He was not pleased. The combination of him flying straight up (he didn't even have to flap his wings), and that cold hard stare that froze the boulder right where it was, kept him from getting hurt.

The canyon ended at the lip of a thirty foot drop into a huge room. It is 140 feet long by 50 wide and high. We rigged up and dropped it. From this point on we believe it was all virgin.

We split up after we hit the ground. Jacques and I found a high sandy lead that I believe goes to the lower entrance (nobody else does so !@#\$ 'em) while John and John and Don climbed around in a pit. We pushed the high lead for a while past two breakdown spots and it will go with more pushing. Then we headed for home.

Back in the big room I asked if anybody had gone into the drain. 'It pinches' John N. said, so I took a look and found the walking passage we should have been pushing in the first place (I know John is going to deny this).

As we were climbing the drop

Don: " Won't somebody hold the rope?"

Us: ""

Don: " Aww come on "

Us: ""

Don: "!@#\$"

John: " Tie your pack on the end

I Do. It will never fall off...ever"

Don: "It'll never work"

John: " I'll do it I'll Show you!!"

The Moral of this story:

Never tie your pack to the rope with an overhand knot- It will fall off and you'll have to do the drop twice. Or even worse you'll have to do the drop twice while Don Mauney is yelling at you the whole way.

So after John was done double dropping we headed out. About 100 ft from the entrance John Neak screams and falls over (wait, I say to myself, we haven't even started drinking yet. Then I start looking for the punji sticks) John walks it off but he finds later its broken in two places. What a way to get a vacation.

All in all it was a good trip with lots of going leads but I still get this feeling we all should have stayed in bed that day.