



# CAVE OWNERS' NEWSLETTER

Published by the **VIRGINIA CAVE COMMISSION**

of the Department of Conservation and Economic Development  
Commonwealth of Virginia

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## *Thanks*

to the fifty-five who returned the questionnaires sent out with our first newsletter. Where you reported that there was some limitation on access, this information will be turned over to the Virginia Region of the National Speleological Society, which maintains an up to date list of caves in the area with some restrictions on entrance. This list is widely circulated within the organized caving community. Unfortunately it probably does not reach many independent cavers or commercial "adventure" outfits or youth groups such as Boy Scouts who go caving.

One project of the Virginia Cave Commission is to establish contact with the many groups in the Commonwealth who include caving in their programs, in order to share with them information on such matters as the Cave Protection Act, safe caving procedures, and word on caves with limited access policies.

*You can help if you know of groups sponsoring caving trips in your community or to your cave by sending the Commission addresses for such groups.*

While only twenty-three of you reported any cave-related problems such as trespassing or vandalism or littering, it's entirely possible that careful monitoring of those caves with easy access would reveal existence of more of these problems. Cleaning up caves, with removal of trash and obliteration of graffiti, is often willingly undertaken by groups of responsible cavers. This is one way in which cavers can cooperate with cave owners for mutual benefit.

A few years ago the Richmond Area Speleological Society removed pounds and pounds of trash from Island Ford Cave (owned by the Virginia Highway Department and visible from I-64 between Clifton Forge and Covington). That entrance is large enough to accommodate automobiles and therefore is often used as a "party" cave. Luckily most of these litterers do not penetrate beyond the spacious entrance room. More recently a group from the District of Columbia did considerable cleaning of graffiti including confusing "OUT" arrows from Crossroads Cave in Bath County.

*If you would like help cleaning up your cave, ask the Commission if there is a grotto of cavers near you who might help.*

## *Where are the cavers?*

There are several hundred of us all over the Commonwealth. In some locations we have banded together into clubs, usually called "grottos," affiliated with the National Speleological Society (NSS). The NSS has over five thousand members in the United States and in a few foreign locations. NSS got its start in 1939 when a member of the U. S. Patent Office read a feature story in the Washington Star

about caves and decided to take his church hiking group into a cave. During the Second World War the Patent Office was moved to Richmond VA. It was from this base that key founders of the NSS continued their interest in cave exploration during the war years.

Information about meetings of the Virginia grottos can be secured from the addresses shown below or from the Cave Commission. Cave owners are Very Important People to cavers and you'd be welcome at meetings.

BLUE RIDGE GROTTTO, c/o Joe Fagan,  
4711 Eden Dr., NW, Roanoke VA 24012  
D. C. GROTTTO (has many members in northern Virginia), c/o Driscoll, 5421  
31st St., NW, Washington DC 20015  
MADISON UNIVERSITY STUDENT GROTTTO,  
c/o Mike Artz, P. O. Box 167,  
JMU, Harrisonburg VA 22807  
MOUNTAIN EMPIRE GROTTTO (in Abingdon area), c/o Tony McGee, Rt. 5,  
Box 338, Bluff City TN 37618  
NEW RIVER VALLEY GROTTTO, P. O. Box 5718,  
Radford University, Radford VA 24142  
RICHMOND AREA SPELEOLOGICAL SOCIETY,  
P. O. Box 7017, Richmond VA 23221  
SHENANDOAH VALLEY GROTTTO, c/o A. Loyd,  
Rt. 4, Box 16, Waynesboro VA 22980  
TIDEWATER GROTTTO, Box 62642, Virginia Beach VA 23462  
UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA STUDENT GROTTTO,  
Box 431, Newcomb Hall Station,  
Charlottesville VA 22901  
VPI STUDENT GROTTTO, Box 471, Blacksburg VA 24060

New groups are also being formed in Warrenton VA and Big Stone Gap VA, but do not yet have official recognition.

All of these are included within the VIRGINIA REGION of the NSS. The Region also counts cavers from North Carolina, West Virginia, East Tennessee, and the Washington DC area among its members. The current Region chairman is Jerry Redder of Pearisburg VA. The Region is one of the major funders of this newsletter for cave owners (the Commonwealth currently provides no funds for Commission projects or operation).

## POSSIBLE CHANGES SOUGHT IN LEGISLATION

The Cave Commission had hoped during the current session of the General Assembly to put through possible stiffening of penalties for violation of the Cave Protection Act (thus providing more of a deterrence factor to vandalism) and separate procedures for collecting of paleontological materials, as opposed to biological and archeological. As we write, fate of such proposals is uncertain.

### Collecting in Caves

Of course, indiscriminate removal of formations or other items from caves will not only destroy their natural character and value, but is illegal under Virginia law. Legitimate collecting for scientific purposes is allowed. To distinguish between the two some centralized system of control is needed. After all, it wouldn't make much sense if every biologist visiting XX Cave removed a few crayfish for identification, when this identification had already been carried out through earlier collection. That would be one way to destroy the population entirely.

We hope that you as cave owners and we as responsible cavers can work together to control what is removed from the caves of Virginia. The Commission has established a permit system for biological collecting, and the Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission has such a system for collection of archeological materials.

*We would be glad to hear from you if individuals approach you about collecting for scientific purposes in your caves. This could help to avoid unnecessary duplication of effort and consequent depletion of resources.*

Archeological and paleontological remains are also usually very fragile and should be removed only by qualified experts, not curious amateurs.

## WHAT'S IN YOUR CAVE?

Probably not antique gold coins from Colonial days or a map to buried treasure, and most of the readily accessible caves of rare beauty have already been developed as show caves. Some caves do provide a water supply or cool storage for their owners.

A few caves have been designated as significant by the Cave Commission because of geological features, rare plants, living creatures, size, etc. As we reported in the last newsletter, there are two species of freshwater crustaceans found in Madison's Cave that are not found anywhere else in the world. So what? As it happens, the world needs a diversity of species if adaptation to new situations and problems is going to be possible. For the first time in the world's history, humankind is destroying species at a faster rate than new ones are evolving. Some of the villains in the piece are acid rain caused by such activities as burning coal, and pesticides lethal to some species, and habitat destruction.

*If you're curious about what's in your cave and would like to have it checked for significant content, ask the Cave Commission. It may be possible to have a team of responsible cavers conduct a preliminary survey. This could be followed by a more detailed study, depending on their findings. They may be able to provide you with photographs taken inside the cave and a sketch map.*

In turn, you may be able to share with them something of the early history of the cave, when it was discovered, rumors or facts about the contents from earlier days. You may have old newspaper clippings about the cave. Maybe it was mined for saltpeter in the War of 1812 or the Civil War.

*Members of the caving community have developed considerable expertise in the design and installation of cave gates. Ask the Commission for advice if you believe that your cave should be gated. They can suggest whether it is feasible and should be able to find the manpower to do the work.*

## GATES AND SUCH

Last year in accordance with wishes of the owners, cavers from southwest Virginia installed a heavy steel gate just inside of the mouth of Unthanks Cave in Lee County. This is one of the largest caves in the state and considered "very significant" because of factors of size, biology, esthetics, geology, and hydrology. Keys to the gate are held by the owners and by three representatives of caving organizations responsible for management of the cave.

Management is a fairly new byword in the caving field. It doesn't mean ownership or turning a profit from that muddy crawlhole down in the field. It is simply a proper word to describe planning how to preserve the cave in (or restore it to) as nearly a natural state as is feasible, and then carrying out that plan.

In a management plan one asks what is the current state of the cave; what access policy will preserve this; if the cave has been badly treated, what policies might restore it to a better condition; what special features or sections of the cave need special treatment to protect them, etc. Management plans are, of course, developed in consultation with and concurrence of the owner of the cave.

The management plan for Unthanks Cave limits trip into the cave to (1) surveying, conservation, and scientific study; (2) education; (3) training sessions on basic caving techniques, safety, rescue, photography, and conservation; and (4) occasional visits by close friends and relatives of the owners.

By contrast, some caves could be classed as primarily recreational, left open at all times, with anyone allowed to enter. Not all managed caves have limited access.

## TEST OF CAVE ACT DISAPPOINTING

Members of the Richmond Area Speleological Society caught cave vandals in the act last October, exiting from publicly owned Fountain Cave in Augusta County, formations in hand.

But when the case came to court, the defendants--students at James Madison University--were able to convince the judge that they just didn't know about the Cave Protection Act and hence their removal of formations was an innocent act. The judge let them off with instructions to publicize the Act at the University. If they came back with a clean record in about six months the case against them would be dismissed.

Unfortunately cavers had not yet installed a sign at Fountain Cave containing provisions of the Cave Protection Act. It went up a week later! If it had been there when the students entered, they could not have pleaded innocence of the law. Yet even the simpler law on the books since the 1960's made removing formations from caves illegal and should have been common knowledge.

*Owners particularly of significant caves are urged to arrange with the Commission at an early date for installation of these signs at their caves.*

Commission members require permission of the owner before a sign is installed. Such permission conveys no rights connected with the cave at all. It does put anyone entering the cave on notice that certain acts are punishable under Virginia law.

## FISH & WILDLIFE GATING/FENCING

If your cave contains an endangered species, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service will, with your permission, gate or fence it at government expense. You still own everything except the gate or fence and you get a key. One way to cut down unwanted traffic!

## OTHER CAVING ORGANIZATIONS

It's getting so you can't tell the caving organization without a program! Besides the NSS, the Virginia Region, and the NSS grottos, the Cave Conservancy of the Virginias (CCV) was founded in April 1980. It's headed by John Wilson of Richmond (himself the owner of Perkins Cave in Washington County), and is dedicated to the conservation of caves in Virginia and contiguous states, and promoting the science and technology of cave management and scientific study of caves. It was involved in the gating of Unthanks Cave (p. 3) and Madison's Saltpetre Cave, and in fund-raising (a) for the reward fund for information leading to the conviction of persons violating the Cave Protection Act and (b) to set up a revolving fund that would help purchase significant caves that might 'come on the market and be closed or destroyed otherwise. (Quarrying operations often destroy caves.)

CCV directors are all members of the active caving community and meet several times a year. An annual meeting, open to all CCV members, is held in the fall, when directors are elected (their terms are for three years, staggered) and discuss questions of general interest. All members receive occasional newsletters. For more information or to join the Conservancy as an individual member at \$10 a year, write CCV at P. O. Box 7017, Richmond VA 23221.

## CONSERVATION/MANAGEMENT SYMPOSIUM SCHEDULED FOR VIRGINIA Nov. 1982

Subsequent to the formation of CCV, John Wilson moved to found a national organization, the American Cave Conservation Association (ACCA), also currently headquartered in Virginia. It is the primary sponsor of a National Cave Conservation and Management Symposium set for Nov. 4-7 in Harrisonburg VA. Featured on the program, besides field trips, will be sessions on management of non-commercial caves, on biology, geology, etc. It'll be a fine chance to meet others interested in underground resources here in Virginia and elsewhere. More details later., as registration information becomes available.

*The following article is reprinted by permission of The Nature Conservancy in whose March-April 1980 News it appeared. Virginia M. Tipton is a member of the Virginia Cave Commission.*

## *Winged Fingers, Seeing Ears*

**by Virginia M. Tipton**

**with Alan R. Tipton**

One morning, I received a frantic call from the rector of a local church. "There's a bat in my son's room—what can I do?" "Well, just open the window and let it fly out," I told him. But a lengthy conversation made it clear that nothing would induce him to go back into that closed room to open the window. So that afternoon, I went to his home, carrying a pair of gloves and a cage. The rector immediately led me to his son's room, cautiously cracked the door open and peeked in. "It's hanging on a curtain," he said. I slipped into the room, quickly shutting the door behind me. The bat was asleep, clinging upside down to the folds of the curtain. With gloved hands, I gently and easily removed the lethargic bat and placed it in the cage. Before reopening the door, the rector had to be assured that the bat was really secured in the cage. Afterwards, he was amused and a little embarrassed; nonetheless, his reaction was indicative of the prevailing attitude toward bats.

Why do bats evoke such feelings of fear and repulsion? For most of recorded history, little was known of the creature's habits—they were seldom observed close at hand. This ignorance of bat biology and behavior led to groundless fears and misconceptions. Negative attitudes were reinforced as bats became central characters in tales of the supernatural and occult. Unfortunately, a bat's appearance does not improve its maligned reputation. Because of evolutionary adaptations for flying, feeding, and hearing, some are proud owners of huge ears, grotesque facial features, and shrill voices.

What actually is the truth about this creature that elicits such fear, that has a reputation for flying into one's hair and carrying rabies?

First, let's set the story straight about rabies. Bats can and do carry rabies; however, experts have estimated the frequency of the disease in bats at less than one percent, as compared to three to four percent in skunks and foxes.

Like all other mammals, bats give birth to live offspring, which subsist on their mother's milk. However, because of a series of remarkable adaptations, bats are the only mammals that have achieved true flight. A bat's wing is structured much like the human arm—it has an upper arm, a forearm, wrist, and hand. The fingers of the "hand" are greatly elongated and occupy most of the wing, allowing it to be intricately manipulated. The wing membrane itself is a thin, tough, and flexible double layer of skin. Small, thin bones and a much reduced pelvis minimize weight for flight. Since these bones cannot support the entire weight of the bat in an upright position, it hangs upside down or lies on a flat surface on its belly. Consequently, the animal does not "leap" into flight, but rather "falls" into it.

Though commonly believed to be blind, all bats have functional eyes. Some of the larger species, called megabats, have big eyes that are specially adapted to enable the bats to gather food in dim light, such as at dusk. Their primary food sources are fruit, flower nectar, and pollen.

Another major group of bats, the microbats, have smaller eyes and rely more heavily on their ears for navigating. These species maneuver in the dark using an intricate sonar system. They emit high frequency sounds (ultrasonic pulses that we cannot hear) and interpret echoes as the sounds bounce off solid objects, thus enabling the animals to navigate around obstacles. Most of the "echolocating" bats are small, prey solely on insects, and have large, oddly shaped ears, which are specifically designed to catch returning echoes.

Although the majority of bats live in the tropics, some of the microbats are adapted to more temperate areas, including parts of the United States. Most American bats are insectivorous, feeding on those insects that are active at night.

When foraging, an insectivorous bat uses its sonar system to locate prey. It catches the insect

in flight, either in its mouth or by "scooping it up" in the wing or tail membrane and then transferring the bug to its mouth. A single bat may eat one quarter to one third of its body weight in insects each night. Since many of the insects are agricultural pests, the bat acts as a "natural insecticide," eliminating the need to use damaging or potentially harmful chemicals.

Unfortunately, insectivorous bats are faced with a disappearing food source during the winter—a problem they have solved in two ways. They either migrate to the southernmost states and Mexico where insects can still be found, or they hibernate until their food source is once again plentiful and reliable.

Most American bat species hibernate—although many will migrate a little further south to do so—and the hibernating period varies in length depending on the severity of the winter. Roosting sites include trees—in hollows or under the bark—and some caves. But few caverns are suitable because hibernating bats require precise combinations of temperature and humidity.

Before winter, the animals accumulate and store fat, which supplies them with a food reserve during hibernation. While dormant, a bat's body temperature drops close to that of its surroundings (but always just above freezing or the animals will die); heart and breathing rates slow drastically. Overall reduction in metabolic activity allows them to survive on the relatively small amount of stored food. This is a very critical period for the small predators. If disturbed during hibernation, a bat is totally helpless for 15 to 30 minutes—the time it needs to arouse itself sufficiently to fly. Moreover, if "awakened" too many times while in this torpid condition, it will use all of its food supply and die before spring arrives.

Bats emerge from hibernation when insects are again available. Then, in the early summer, females give birth generally to one offspring. Cave-dwelling bats occupy "nursery roosts" where they raise and care for their young, though some species, such as the big brown bats, prefer attics. Like hibernation, nursing time is a critical period. Mother bats must leave the roosts at night to forage. Totally helpless and unable to fly, the young are left hanging—literally—until the females return. Mothers locate their offspring by smell, sound, and memory.

#### Unappreciated Allies

Bats are of immense and unrecognized benefit to the environment and, in turn, to the human species. Most bats are insectivorous, devouring a total of millions of tons of insects annually. (In Texas, Mexican free-tailed bats are reported to consume 20,000 tons of insects each year.) Caves inhabited by bats contain vast amounts of their waste, or guano, which supports many other cavern-dwelling species and is a nitrogen-rich fertilizer. Furthermore, by studying the highly special-

ized creature's unique sonar and echo-locating systems, we may eventually possess the knowledge needed for developing similar systems to enable blind persons to navigate around obstacles with "seeing ears."

Although most bats are not harmful to humans, the inverse is not true. Like many other forms of life adversely affected by the haphazard growth and ignorance of the human world, bats are declining rapidly. Reductions of U.S. populations were reported as early as 1952. The Mexican free-tailed bat (*Tadarida brasiliensis mexicana*), a "non-endangered" species, provides a striking example of dwindling numbers. In 1936 the population at Carlsbad Caverns in New Mexico was estimated at over 8,000,000. It dropped to just over 3,000,000 in 1956, and was down to about 250,000 by 1962.

Several bat species have been declared endangered species by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The Indiana bat (*Myotis sodalis*) has been on the Federal Endangered Species list since 1966. The gray bat (*Myotis grisescens*) is also listed. On November 30, 1979, two big-eared bats, *Plecotus townsendii virginianus* and *Plecotus townsendii ingens*, were officially classified as endangered. All of these species are cave-dwellers.

There were two major reasons for listing them as endangered. One was the documented observations of alarming reductions in total numbers, or the disappearance of entire populations from certain previously used caves. The other reason is that the hibernating and nursery roosts required by the four bat species are extremely scarce. It has been estimated that 90 to 95 percent of the total hibernating gray bat population, about 2,000,000, is now restricted to only five caves. Over the past 20 years, colonies in excess of 100,000 individuals have vanished from five other caverns. About the same percentage of the Indiana bat population—numbering around 500,000—hibernates in only 13 caves. This species has virtually disappeared from the northeastern U.S. Fewer than 5,000 of the two big-eared bats remain, inhabiting only a few caves. When a species' population is concentrated in so small an area, a local catastrophe such as flooding could greatly affect its size.

Evidence is still being accumulated, but virtually every bat biologist has observed or strongly suspects a high correlation between human activities and the continued decline of our four endangered bats. Many caves, having been opened to the public as tourist attractions, used heavily by spelunkers, or surrounded by urban development, are no longer suitable habitat for bats.

In some cases bat populations have been exterminated deliberately. In one report, an estimated 10,000 bats were killed in a single cave. Three boys tore hibernating bats from the ceiling, stoned and trampled them, or let them fall into a stream where they drowned. Summer nursing colonies of

gray bats are particularly sensitive to human disruption. Merely shining a light on them will cause mothers to drop their young, resulting in high infant mortality. Also, entire maternity colonies of other species have disappeared from disturbed caves, or have significantly reduced their numbers.

Even the activities of bat biologists who enter caves trying to gather information on the status of bat populations are probably detrimental to hibernating or nursing species. Consequently, many researchers have curtailed certain methods, such as banding, or have refined others to disturb the bats as little as possible.

Like many other disappearing species, insectivorous bats—both endangered and not—suffer from the use of pesticides. Organochlorine pesticides are a particular threat. Bats apparently eat insects that have survived DDT poisoning. Unfortunately, the toxic substance accumulates in the bats' bodies, eventually reaching lethal doses. Studies have revealed that bats are approximately 10 times more sensitive to DDT than other laboratory animals. The large decline of the Carlsbad population has been attributed to this insecticide. Despite the ban on some of the organochlorine compounds, such as DDT, bats are still succumbing to the chemicals that remain in the environment. Some of the newer organophosphate and carbamate pesticides may be killing the species as well.

Clearly, protective measures must be initiated to preserve America's flying mammals. Those species with endangered status are protected by law. The penalty for harming or harassing them is up to a year in prison or as much as \$20,000 in fines. Under the Endangered Species Act, federal agencies are prohibited from any actions that

might result in losing what has been designated as "critical habitat" for endangered bats; some states have passed similar legislation. In a few cases, an attempt has been made to protect caves by securing them behind gates and fences. Because many caverns are not on state or federal property but on privately owned land, government agencies and private organizations are attempting to protect those caves as well, by acquiring them or through other conservation methods. The Nature Conservancy, for example, has preserved four properties, two in Illinois, one in Ohio, and another in Oklahoma, which contain caves used by hibernating or nursing colonies of endangered gray and Indiana bats.

The public is encouraged to follow the example of the National Speleological Society, which instructs its members to avoid caves that harbor endangered species of bats or large numbers of any bat species during critical periods of hibernation and nursing. Education is the only way to counteract the ignorance that has developed over centuries. These remarkable creatures—our only winged mammals—are vital to the environment and deserve our respect.

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**Dr. Virginia M. Tipton and Dr. Alan R. Tipton** co-authored our article on insectivorous bats. Virginia Tipton was trained in biospeleology (cave biology) and teaches general biology, cell biology, and comparative animal physiology at Radford University, Virginia. An assistant professor at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Alan R. Tipton teaches wildlife population ecology and the relationship of the populations to their environment. Both authors are studying endangered bat species in Virginia through a grant from the state's Commission of Game and Inland Fisheries.

*In line with our belief that cave owners are Very Important People, we asked Don Anderson of the VPI Cave Club to share with you something about "Buddy" Penley, an owner well known and loved by cavers.*



## *A Caver's Friend*

Cavers in Maryland, West Virginia, Virginia, North Carolina, Kentucky, and beyond will sooner or later hear about John Starnes Penley--"Buddy" to his hundreds of caving friends and neighbors. Buddy's farm is in Bland County, Virginia, along Virginia Route 608. He owns two caves (Buddy Penley Cave and Paul Penley Cave) and controls access to the Newberry's entrance of the Newberry-Banes Cave system. On any given weekend or holiday the chances are very good that at least one caving group is somewhere underground at his Skyduskee Angus Farm at Point Pleasant. Mr. Penley requires each group to check in with him and sign his cave register.

When asked about the obviously good relationship that he has with the cavers, both locally and from other areas, Buddy modestly answers that it's a simple matter of philosophy and personality. "The children really enjoy exploring the caves and I enjoy their visits." Buddy says that he hasn't lost anything in those darn holes, although admits he should have accepted the Cave Club's offer to take a tour when he was younger. Buddy's daughter Dotty has been in Buddy Penley Cave.

As long as the spelunkers come at a decent hour to check in, they're greeted with Buddy's firm handshake and warm welcome that matches his smile. One thing that amazes the cavers is Buddy's phenomenal ability to remember names and faces. Over the years a great deal of mutual respect has developed between Mr. Penley and the cavers. It's not uncommon to arrive at Buddy's and find a couple of cavers there just visiting--just dropped by--or just checking on Buddy! The VPI Cave Club has been coming to one particular field for a dozen years or so for an annual picnic--all with Mr. Penley's blessings.

About ten years ago, due to the heavy caver traffic, two of Buddy's wooden gates finally became somewhat unstable. Don Anderson (NSS 3767), an active caver with the VPI Cave Club, spearheaded a campaign that resulted in the purchase of two new metal gates. The VPI Cave Club bought one and the Virginia Region (VAR) funded the purchase of the second. The new gates complete with appropriate plaques were presented to Buddy at that year's picnic. Buddy promptly gathered up the cavers and supervised their immediate installation.

Mr. Penley affectionately refers to the cavers as "the children." When asked about any problems encountered over the past years with the hundreds of cave explorers on his property, Buddy is quick to reply, "The children have been right respectful of my land and pastures." "In fact," he continues as if an afterthought, "I don't believe you could find a cigarette butt or snap-top anywhere in the fields." Buddy goes on to say (in a rather loud proud tone), "The VPI cavers have especially been considerate to me and my family!"

Cavers have been coming to Mr. Penley's to explore the map the caves since the late 1940's. "We didn't keep a record of the people in those days," Buddy regrets, "but the real increase in caving came in the 60's." Buddy said his



recollection of the first cavers "being in there" was Earl Thierry, Larry and Betty Sabatinos, and Bill Cuddington. Buddy recalls that his wife babysat one night with the Sabatinos' child while the parents went cave exploring in Newberry's.

A good example of the kind of cooperation that can exist between landowners and cavers is the time the road to Newberry Cave through Buddy's pasture became rutty. Word got back to the VPI Cave Club that the road was becoming impassable; if they would supply the manpower Buddy would supply the field rocks (. . . "Hell! That's practically all I've got here!") and equipment. The club turned road builders one Saturday. Today the road is still in good shape. As an expression of admiration and gratitude (and downright fun), the VPI Cave Club has also helped Buddy round up a stray bull, split fence posts, replace fences, and put up hay.

Why would a group of college students and other cavers make such a fuss over . . . "a damned cantankerous old cuss like me?" Well, take for instance the cold evening (after a plentiful meal prepared by his daughters) Buddy drove up to check on a group of cavers due out of Newberry's. "The group was cold, wet and muddy, and half starved!" Buddy said. "They couldn't get their small stove started and couldn't half talk for shivering. I told them to change clothes and drive on down to the house. We had sufficient leftovers from supper and I told the girls in the group to warm them up!" After a most gratifying meal, Buddy asked the kids how they all felt. "Fine," was the reply. "Well then," Buddy said, "Get out there in the kitchen and wash the dishes; I'm not doing your darn work for ya!" The children were most happy to comply. Another time a group from out of state (Buddy won't mention names) got their car stuck sideways in the road up near Newberry's. Buddy was called upon to pull them out with his tractor rather late that night. "The boys got one heck-of-a-lecture from Daddy," his daughter said. Buddy felt bad about it later, but said that he had had the flu at the time and the children caught him at a bad time! Buddy Penley has had very very few bad times with cavers. This incident happened about two years ago--"The one boy is still apologizing," said Buddy, rather amused.

According to Mr. Penley, as long as the children obey his rules (very few indeed) he's happy to see them come and have a good time, but if a group steps beyond Buddy's wishes he tells them not to return (this happened only once or twice in the last forty years). Buddy said, "Closing or restricting access to the caves would be most unfair to all the other children."

With this kind of neighborly attitude, is it any wonder that the "children" who cave at Buddy's go away with the farmer-cave owner held in high esteem. For the science of speleology and the sport of spelunking are interwoven with the threads of understanding, mutual respect, and cooperation.

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*A few more words to describe Buddy Penley's background. His family goes back five generations in Bland County and he himself has farmed these five hundred acres on the side of Big Walker Mountain most of his seventy years. He has a herd of 109 cattle, a few hogs, and sixty acres of corn and hay. Although he has four daughters, there is no heir to continue to work his land, as none of them married a farmer. Meanwhile this active widower, who has lived alone a dozen years, continues to farm and also to welcome new generations of cavers as well as old friends to his Skyduskee Angus Farm.*